Children, Young People and Education

Kent's Strategy for Vulnerable Learners

2017-2020

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Kent County Council
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Vulnerable Learners Strategy 2017-2020

Preface

This Vulnerable Learners Strategy brings together all the actions we are taking across Children and Young People's Services, in partnership with schools, to improve outcomes for vulnerable learners. These are the children and young people who are vulnerable to poorer outcomes because of the barriers presented by disadvantage, poverty, learning difficulties and the social and emotional difficulties they have faced in their childhood and adolescence. Our education and children's services have a responsibility to ensure they achieve more success and experience the positive outcomes we want for all children and young people, irrespective of background.

This document is our updated and revised strategy, and it sets out what we have achieved to date and the priorities going forward. It also sets out examples of good practice in schools and the most effective strategies that are having some impact in narrowing achievement gaps and promoting greater social mobility.

"If Britain is to avoid being a country where all too often, birth still predetermines fate, we have to do far more to create more of a level playing field of opportunity." (Alan Milburn, Chair - Social Mobility Commission, October 2017)

Our starting points, both nationally and in Kent, are a challenge. Some argue that social mobility is less in the UK now than it was some years ago. This means that the circumstances of a child's birth and the family's social and economic conditions determine more than ever a child's success in the education system and in the labour market. The fact that this relationship between poverty, home background and life chances is more pronounced in the UK than in most other European counties makes it even more unacceptable.

The school system and our other services cannot solve this lack of social mobility on their own, but they can contribute a great deal to improving life chances for vulnerable children and young people. We aim to make more of a difference for those at greatest risk of poor outcomes. Schools matter and make a difference, and having access to a good school and good teaching matters even more. What matters most is that good schools are inclusive places which achieve good outcomes for all their pupils.

Education is the greatest opportunity young people have to achieve lifelong benefits. At present these benefits are greater for some and too limited for others, often through no fault of their own. For example, some of our most vulnerable children are excluded from school more often than others, and can suffer lifelong consequences through lost learning and poor self-esteem. There are 85,975 people in prison today, and 54,164 were excluded when they were at school. Pupils supported by the Pupil Premium have significantly less chance of achieving good exam results at school and far fewer go to university and get good jobs compared to other young people. Life chances are more determined by family circumstances and educational and other opportunities than they are by the abilities and talents of the individual child. These abilities can be wasted and lost if they are not nurtured and developed.

A recent IPPR Report – 'Making The Difference', reveals the extent of personal and societal cost to this social mobility failure. Delivering education's contribution to improve social mobility therefore demands the active engagement of all education stakeholders and all our services. By social mobility we do not mean only that bright poorer children should be helped to do well, but that all children and young people who experience disadvantage should be helped to achieve much better outcomes than many of them currently achieve. Your life chances should not be so determined by the circumstances of your birth.

For two decades, successive governments have made the pursuit of higher levels of social mobility one of the key ambitions of public policy. Indeed in July 2016, the current Prime Minister said outside of Downing Street that she wanted to make Britain a country that works for everyone, adding "when it comes to opportunity, we won't entrench the advantages of the fortunate few. We will do everything we can to help anybody, whatever their background to go as far as your talents will take you."

There are welcome signs of progress in respect of improving employment rates, raised numbers of working class young people entering higher education and fewer children in workless households that at any time in the last two decades. However, child poverty is on the increase and many working families do not earn enough to take them above the current poverty thresholds. Schools, early years settings and KCC services are experiencing increased demands related to children's learning, social and emotional needs, including services that are there to respond to children's neglect, mental health and behaviour, which all impact on their ability to make progress at school. This strategy is designed to ensure we work in the most effective joined up ways, and use our resources effectively, to support these children and young people to achieve more success.

Across the country and in Kent, schools have improved and standards have risen and the professions have started to recognise the benefits of being open to a far wider pool of talent than previously. In Kent the actual attainment outcomes for pupils supported by the Pupil Premium have improved for the last three years, although the achievement gaps remain very wide. This is very encouraging. However, the overall picture is far from positive. The Social Mobility Index published by the Social Mobility Commission in November 2017 shows that the chances of a child from a disadvantaged background succeeding in life depends on where he or she lives. It also ranks local authority areas in terms of their social mobility. Kent is ranked among the 20% best performing authorities for the Early Years but poorly in terms of school rankings for free school meal pupil achievement, where we are in the lower half of performance for local authority areas. In Primary schools in Kent 12.1% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. However good and outstanding schools have only 10.8% of pupils with free school meals while the figure for schools that require improvement is 20.3% of their pupils. In Kent Secondary schools 10.3% of pupils are eligible for free school meals overall, while schools that require improvement have 18.3% of their pupils with free school meals. The percentage of pupils with free school meals in selective schools is 3%. Our top priority, therefore, is to continue to ensure that every child and young person in Kent goes to a good school and makes good progress. The biggest challenges for the education system and for children's services in Kent are to improve social mobility by radically improving outcomes for these children and thereby improving their life chances.

The Social Mobility Commission recommends that every local authority should have an integrated strategy for improving disadvantaged children's outcomes. This Vulnerable Learners Strategy sets out our integrated approach. A key national policy has been the introduction of the Pupil Premium, with the expectation that this funding will be used effectively to raise attainment for pupils who are eligible for free school meals and thereby close achievement gaps between these pupils and their peers. The Social Mobility Commission recommends that Pupil Premium funds should be invested in evidenced based practice, and this focus is a significant part of the Vulnerable Learners Strategy.

Unlocking Talent, Fulfilling Potential – A plan for improving social mobility through education (December 2017)

The Government published its Plan for Social Mobility on Thursday, 14 December 2017. The document is structured around a set of guiding ambitions. These are intended to focus and drive activity and to provide a framework to transform equality of opportunity in the country. The ambitions and challenges set out in the Plan reflect the priorities in this Vulnerable Learners Strategy for Kent.

Overarching Ambition

The overarching ambition is that no community is left behind. The DfE intends to direct effort and resources towards the places and people where it is most needed, using Opportunity Areas to tackle the most entrenched disadvantaged, so that these areas may fulfil their potential.

'This plan is about putting social mobility at the heart of education policy. We must raise standards for all. And to do so we are determined to leave no community behind and we will target our efforts and resources at the people and places that need it most.' (Rt. Hon. Justine Greening)

The document indicates that Ashford, Gravesham and Thanet may expect to receive Opportunity Area Status as the programme is rolled out.

Life Stage Ambitions in the Plan

- **Ambition 1 – Close the 'word gap' in the early years**. Good early years education is the cornerstone of social mobility. Too many children still fall behind early, and it is hard to close the gaps that emerge. There is a need to tackle these development gaps at the earliest opportunity, particularly focused on the key early language and literacy skills, so that all children can begin school ready to thrive.

- **Ambition 2 – Close the attainment gap in school while continuing to raise standards for all**. The attainment gap between disadvantaged children and their more affluent peers is now closing. However, these pupils still remain behind their peers at each key stage at school. And there remain unacceptable differences in outcomes in different areas of the country. We need to build on the many more good school places and focus on raising standards in the areas of the country where it is now most needed.

- **Ambition 3 – High quality post-16 education choices for all young people**. Our technical education system has yet to fully benefit from a wider determination to drive up standards. This disproportionately affects young people in more challenging areas and from disadvantaged backgrounds. Three is a need for a skills revolution, heralded by expanding access to the best universities for young people from less advantaged backgrounds.

- **Ambition 4 – Everyone achieving their full potential in rewarding careers**. Young people from lower income backgrounds are less likely to have access to the networks of advice, information and experiences of work to enable them to turn aspiration into reality.

The latest Government plan therefore reflects priorities in our strategy, which focuses on increasing the take up of free childcare for eligible two-year olds and increasing the engagement of vulnerable families with Children's Centres and with other services in Early Help; closing achievement gaps in schools; and delivering our NEET Strategy to ensure as many young people as possible engage positively in education, training and employment to age 18 and beyond. There has been progress in all these areas of our work but there is more to do. By revising and updating this Strategy we are continuing to focus on this challenge and to find out more about, and disseminate, what works in making a difference. The Vulnerable Learners Strategy is our attempt to move this agenda forward in Kent in a more significant and joined up way.

Corporate Director Children, Young People and Education

Vision and Priorities

"Kent should be a place where families thrive and all children learn and develop well from the earliest years so that they are ready to succeed at school, have excellent foundations for learning and are equipped well for achievement in life, no matter what their background.

We have the same expectations for every child and young person to make good progress in their learning, to achieve well and to have the best opportunities for an independent economic and social life as they become young adults.

Every child and young person should go to a good or outstanding early years setting and school, have access to the best teaching, and benefit from schools and other providers working in partnership with each other to share the best practice as they continue to improve.

Our Vision is that every child and young person, from pre-birth to age 19, and their family, who needs early help services will receive them in a timely and responsive way, so that they are safeguarded, their educational, social and emotional needs are met and outcomes are good, and they are able to contribute positively to their communities and those around them now and in the future, including their active engagement in learning and employment.

We want to ensure that vulnerable children and families have their needs met early so that they do not experience the level of challenge and difficulty in their lives that require statutory interventions. They should have the same opportunities as all other children and families to flourish, to stay safe and well and succeed in the education system."

(Source: Education and Young People's Service Vision and Priorities for Improvement 2017-20)

Introduction

This Strategy aims to prioritise and coordinate all the effective approaches and activities across our services, schools and early years settings that are focused on ensuring every child and young person in Kent achieves their full potential and none is left behind. It focuses on championing better life chances and is intended to close educational achievement gaps for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. Most children and young people in Kent do reach their full potential by age 18, but a sizeable minority face multiple disadvantages which have a significant limiting effect on their development and educational achievement, as well on their future life chances.

The principles which underpin this strategy are to bring together and strengthen activities currently in place to support vulnerable children and young people and to challenge existing systems and structures to do more. Across Kent, there are significant gaps between the attainment of the majority of children and young people and those from particular groups that are vulnerable to underachievement and these gaps remain persistently wide. These poorer outcomes are unacceptable.

We continue to express urgency in the need to change and improve support systems and approaches to accelerate the achievement and progress of these vulnerable groups. Children have just one chance at education and early development, and opportunities in adolescence can be so easily lost if young people are not supported and guided to positive destinations. Educational outcomes across Kent typically improve year on year at every key stage and so in order to narrow the achievement gaps for vulnerable children and young people their outcomes must improve at an

accelerated pace. This strategy sets out activities and actions to address these gaps in outcomes. The size of this challenge is clear from the evidence given below:

- In 2017 25.7% of children did not achieve a Good Level of Development at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. However, the FSM gap narrowed from 20% in 2016 to 10.1% which is good news.
- At Key Stage 1, the gaps in achievement for free school meals pupils range from 19% to 21% in reading writing and mathematics. Standards of attainment improved compared to 2016, but the gaps remain wider than the national gaps.
- At Key Stage 2, aattainment outcomes for free school meal pupils improved in 2017 across all measures compared to 2016 but gaps remain wide. The proportion of FSM pupils who achieved the 'expected standard' in Reading, Writing and Mathematics combined was 42.3%, which is a 6% improvement compared to 2016. There remains, however, an attainment gap of 25.4%, which is similar to the 2016 gap.
- At Key Stage 4, 33% of learners who were in receipt of free school meals obtained good GCSE grades in English and mathematics, and the attainment gap with other pupils remains wide at 34%, and wider than the national gap.
- In Kent 9% of learners in receipt of free school meals go to Grammar school compared to 34% not receiving free school meals.
- Learners in receipt of free school meals are three times as likely to be permanently excluded as those who are not.
- 34% of the NEET cohort in January 2017 were vulnerable learners
- 16% of FSM learners in school gained entry to the top third Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) compared to 28% of non-FSM.

This stark contrast in learner outcomes, and other poor outcomes for young offenders, children in care and for pupils with special educational needs, requires an urgent prioritisation of the support for vulnerable learners in Kent in order to ensure better outcomes are achieved. There has been significant investment in recent years to address this issue through a range of interventions including £58m Early Years and School Pupil Premium funding into schools and Early Years settings in 2017-18 to address the needs of children whose families are in receipt of free school meals. The total number of pupils that benefit from the Pupil Premium in Kent in 2017-18 is 47,784. This includes 19,432 secondary pupils, 26,937 primary pupils, 1,367 special school pupils and 48 pupils attending pupil referral units (PRUs). Although there has been some small improvement in the attainment of this group of children, particularly in the Early Years and in Primary schools, we have yet to see the full impact of this resource.

Integral to the success of the Kent Vulnerable Learners Strategy will be a relentless ambition for all senior leaders to ensure good progress and high expectations for vulnerable learners to achieve better outcomes. Effective educational leaders set high aspirations for all learners and create a high quality inclusive learning environment, targeting resources and interventions to ensure maximum impact for all including the most vulnerable, so that gaps narrow and outcomes and destinations are more positive.

The educational landscape is changing rapidly and at the same time resources are reducing. At such times of change, often the most vulnerable children, young people and families are at the highest risk of poorer educational and life outcomes. This Strategy aims, therefore, to support the development of robust partnerships, identify good practice and ensure the effective use of all available resources.

In February 2017, a Pupil Premium Conference was hosted by KCC, attended by nearly 200 schools who participated in workshops to share good practice and receive presentations from a range of speakers including the Education Endowment Foundation.

In September 2017, Kent County Council (KCC) agreed to establish a Select Committee to review the impact of the Pupil Premium on narrowing the attainment gap for Kent's vulnerable learners. The findings and best practice that emerges, both locally and nationally, will inform and add weight

and focus to this Strategy moving forward. The Select Committee report is due to be published in March 2018.

The Government's new term for narrowing the achievement gap is Diminishing the Difference. We have produced two toolkits, for Primary and Secondary Schools, that bring together some of the most effective evidence-based approaches to Diminishing the Difference. These were shared at the conference and are available to purchase. A summary of good practice was shared with delegates and can be found at the end of this Strategy.

In order to make more progress we aim to support more schools to undertake Pupil Premium Reviews, recommended by the DFE for schools that need to make more effective use of the funding.

The Pupil Premium funding in Kent now exceeds £58 million in 2017-18, and we want to help to ensure that the most effective use is made of this additional resource. There is much good practice in Kent schools and we aim to do more to disseminate it. Schools are expected to have a Pupil Premium Strategy and to publish this on the school website. This is now a requirement and Ofsted inspectors check to see that this is available. All schools have a part to play in narrowing the persistent achievement gaps for vulnerable learners.

There are many factors which make a difference, including consistently good quality teaching, an appropriate curriculum and the provision of additional support. The Education Endowment Foundation highlights the importance of frequent feedback to pupils and other kinds of formative assessment for learning, which has the highest impact on accelerating progress. Their toolkit also provides helpful guidance to schools on the most effective ways to use teaching assistants, and the most effective intervention programmes to use. Schools are increasingly recognising that a strong focus on increasing pupils' emotional resilience and motivation, as part of their work on promoting emotional wellbeing, can also make a difference to improving outcomes for these learners.

Improving outcomes for vulnerable learners has been a priority for a number of national bodies and government departments, for a number of years. Sutton Trust research and the Social Mobility Commission reveals the current state of low social mobility in the UK and the disproportionate representation of the most affluent, often those educated in independent and selective schools, in top universities and professions. The economic cost of this inequity to the country's economy and social cohesion, and impact on the life choices of young people, is considerable unless change occurs.

This Strategy sets out our approaches to meet the needs of vulnerable learners, improve educational and other outcomes and significantly close achievement gaps. Kent County Council, as champion and advocate for children, young people and families, sets out in this document how we aim to ensure there is a high-quality range of support, and opportunities, to enable vulnerable learners to become confident individuals, effective communicators, successful and responsive citizens, to remain healthy and to achieve the educational and life outcomes which they deserve.

The Strategy also aims to ensure that the full range of Kent County Council's services and partners work together more coherently with Early Years and Childcare providers, schools and other educational settings to maximise the impact of available resources in further raising the attainment and improving the progress of the most vulnerable learners.

Priorities for this Strategy

Priority 1: Ensure all Vulnerable Learners go to a Good School

The first priority in our Strategy is to support all schools to be good or better, to do the core business well, which means ensuring all teaching is good, and teachers improve by working closely with other teachers and learn from the best practice.

Priority 2: Develop More Flexible Grouping Arrangements and Curriculum Pathways

Another priority has been to encourage schools to avoid in-school social segregation and grouping arrangements that hinder better engagement by vulnerable groups, reduce levels of motivation and engender less positive attitudes by learners, especially those that are likely to experience disadvantage.

Priority 3: Develop Character Education and Emotional Resilience

Schools are also paying more attention to character education, that is, focusing on developing children's and young people's attitudes and aptitudes, to improve well-being, resilience, self-motivated learning, perseverance and ambition. We see this as a priority.

Priority 4: Enrichment Activities

We also recognise the importance of greater engagement by vulnerable learners in enrichment activities that help to develop confidence and resilience. These activities, (including sports and outward bound, the performing arts, music lessons, after school clubs and trips) are taken for granted by many children, but more effort is needed to ensure pupils on free school meals participate in them and get the benefits.

Priority 5: Pre-Requisites for Learning, School Readiness, Inclusion and Attendance

An important part of this Strategy has been to ensure the basic pre-requisites for learning are being delivered for vulnerable learners. Ensuring children in the early years are well prepared for school and when at school pupils attend school regularly, are prepared for learning with the right equipment, and do not miss learning time because they are excluded from class or from the school, makes a big difference.

Priority 6: A Growth Culture

All the research shows that promoting a growth culture or mindset in schools which drives the belief that all children can do better than expected, makes a significant difference. Where schools act on the basis that all pupils' innate abilities and aptitudes can be improved with the right support, and that they do not give up on any child, it is more likely to get the engagement and effort by all children to do well.

Priority 7: Using Research and Guidance on Narrowing Achievement Gaps

A specific part of the Strategy has been to support all schools to make the best use of Pupil Premium funding by consistent use of the Sutton Trust's evidence papers, including the most effective and low-cost strategies in their Teaching and Learning Toolkit.

Priority 8: Effective Targeting of Resources

We recognise the importance of schools being able to target their resources efficiently so that vulnerable learners receive additional good teaching as individuals and in small groups, in addition to whole class lessons.

Priority 9: KAH Funding and School to School Support

We have allocated funding from the Schools Funding Forum to the Kent Association of Headteachers, over £10m in the last several years, to promote school collaborations and school to school support. We see this as one of the best ways to support teacher development and spread the influences of the best practice in improving teaching and raising standards, including narrowing achievement gaps.

Priority 10: Effective Use of High Needs Funding

In the past year we have carried out a review to ensure all schools make effective use of high needs funding, for pupils with special educational needs, to support earlier intervention and a more flexible approach to addressing pupils' additional learning needs.

Priority 11: Continue to Develop and Improve the Work of PRUs

Some of the most vulnerable learners in Kent are educated through alternative provision in our Pupil Referral Units. It has been a priority, therefore, to continue to develop the work of the PRUs, including the Education Health Needs Service, and ensure the devolved or delegated funding to local management committees run by Headteachers, or to groups of schools, is used well to improve these pupils' quality of education and their outcomes. The aim has been to ensure fewer vulnerable learners are excluded and those in alternative provision achieve good outcomes and destinations.

Priority 12: Early Help and Prevention

Central to this Strategy is the work of the Early Help and Preventative Service, working closely with schools and other services to identify the right vulnerable children for support. It provides the right level of responsive and timely additional help for vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people, and their families. This is a major resource which is designed to have an impact on improving outcomes for these vulnerable children and young people, on removing barriers to their learning and engagement and to narrowing achievement gaps.

Priority 13: Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing

The Strategy also recognises the importance of improving the mental health and emotional wellbeing of vulnerable learners. We have aimed to target resources for mental health and emotional wellbeing, in and out of school by re-commissioning CAMHS to work directly in schools and in Early Help units; by commissioning more mental health and emotional wellbeing support services through Early Help; by rolling out the HeadStart resilience programmes across Kent schools; and by making effective use of the Education Health Needs Service.

Priority 14: Parenting Programmes

As well as providing a range of family support services, this Strategy recognised the need for specific parenting programmes. The aim has been to extend the access to, and range of, parenting support and parenting programmes, through Early Help's family work.

Priority 15: Pupil Premium Reviews

A useful means of improving the use of the Pupil Premium in schools, to improve outcomes and narrow achievement gaps, is to have a formal review of the school's strategy. We have promoted this process and encourage schools to undertake Pupil Premium Reviews, where gaps are not closing and where there may be a need to develop the effectiveness of the strategies supported by

the funding. In order to support these reviews, we support schools that are effectively using the Pupil Premium to share their best practice.

Priority 16: Early Years Pupil Premium

Similarly, it has been a priority to ensure the Early Years Pupil Premium is used effectively in early years settings. Introduced in 2014-2015, it is worth up to £300 per child. The 2017 data demonstrates a significant narrowing of gaps in achievement between eligible children and others in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This means that more vulnerable children are leaving the Early Years Foundation Stage having achieved a good level of development.

Priority 17: The Vulnerable Learners Data Pack

To support the delivery and monitoring of the impact of this strategy we have developed a new District vulnerable learner data pack. This includes other indicators of impact alongside the attainment gaps to ensure that the resources available achieve maximum impact. The data pack also includes more information for schools using the Mosaic groups data L, M, N and O to indicate higher than average levels of deprivation to support the identification of vulnerable learners facing multiple disadvantages. The children and young people least likely to succeed are those facing multiple disadvantages, which are often a combination of low income, mental health, drug or alcohol abuse and domestic abuse in the household.

Priority 18: District Coordination

A key objective of the strategy has been to ensure that our services are joined up and coherent in the ways that we support vulnerable children and young people. We have focused on improving the coordination of services and activities at district level, to ensure support for vulnerable learners is well targeted and has maximum impact. This includes ensuring effective school engagement with, and links between, LIFT, Early Help, In Year Fair Access panels, PRUs and alternative provision, the Health Needs Education Service, the use of High Needs funding and outreach support by Special schools.

Priority 19: Develop E Learning Resources

In developing this strategy, we identified a gap in the resources available to support vulnerable learners with distance learning and catch up opportunities. Consequently, we have developed and extended the use of the new Kent E learning platform which provides a range of opportunities and teaching resources to support vulnerable learners and complements learning programmes in schools.

A Strategy to Close the Educational Gap - Influencing Academic Achievement

Good educational outcomes are vital to ensuring future life opportunities and outcomes. Evidence shows us that vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils have greater individual differences in academic performance than the wider population. Whilst there will be individual differences in cognitive abilities and personal attributes, a child's home background and environment, and the family's level of income, have a more powerful impact on life chances. It is the job of the education system to make more of a difference to counter-acting the disadvantages some children face. This Strategy focuses on four key factors which need to work together to mitigate the effect of such disadvantage and narrow educational achievement gaps.

Key factors that influence children's development, progress and educational achievement:

- Individual attributes, resilience and emotional wellbeing

- Parental influence, support and involvement

- High quality teaching and school leadership with moral purpose

- Effective use of resources to improve outcomes

Individual Attributes, Resilience and Emotional Wellbeing

Children and young people in good health, who are motivated, resilient and have positive emotional health and wellbeing tend to achieve well. Our focus, therefore, should be to give more priority to, and target resources for, the development of resilience and emotional wellbeing, in and out of school.

Youth Hubs and outdoor education can complement formal academic settings and provide the opportunities for achievement and confidence building.

Children and young people who have faced adversity or trauma often have difficulties in achieving their potential. Increasing the resilience of all students and promoting a better understanding of

mental health and wellbeing amongst professionals, parents, carers and young people can assist in understanding the barriers to learning.

We aim to support all schools through the HEADSTART programme to deliver programmes that improve wellbeing and resilience, and to identify and support children and young people who are experiencing difficulties. We recognise that services for children and young people that are focused on emotional wellbeing and mental health need to be more accessible and less stigmatising for young people to seek advice and support. The newly commissioned Children and Young People's Mental Health Service, with its single access point, is designed to deliver support more directly in schools, and in re-commissioning other emotional wellbeing services available through Early Help, we aim to improve this additional support. We also expect to see greater benefit through the work of the Health Needs Education Service and the focus on emotional wellbeing and mental health in the School Health Service, formerly School Nursing.

The new mental health service from September 2017, more support for emotional health through the School Health Service which began in April 2017 and the rollout of the Big Lottery funded Headstart programme in Kent are all designed, as part of this strategy, to provide more support for developing children's resilience and emotional wellbeing. The aim of the Headstart programme is to improve the mental wellbeing of at-risk 10 to 16-year-olds in Kent and specifically those who have been impacted by domestic abuse. Over the five years of the programme, which began in September 2016, 134 schools will benefit from the additional resources of Headstart and all schools can benefit from the resources available through the Resilience Hub.

Parental Influence and Involvement

Children's first few years of life, parental attachment and the development of language and social skills are critical for good early development and school readiness. The home environment in the early years, and good quality childcare, can help children develop well for school expectations and engagement in learning. Children's Centres and Early Years Childcare and Education settings can lay the foundations for encouraging a home learning environment that promotes future learning opportunities. The home environment will also support school transitions and life changes and development throughout the child's learning pathway.

The recent 'Time for Change' report in July 2017 published by the Social Mobility Commission, called for, in its recommendations to Government, the restoration of funding for parenting programmes in order to improve children's learning and help to ensure that every child is school ready by the age of five and that the attainment gap between poorer five-year olds and their peers is halved.

Our aim is to do more to promote support for and engagement by parents in the early years and through all the stages of schooling. Schools that strive to have good parental engagement, and reach out positively to those that are hard to engage, achieve better attendance, behaviour and motivation for learning. Children who are supported by their parents do better at school.

The Early Help and Preventative Service's family work focuses on working with and supporting vulnerable parents and families. We recognise that more can always be done within family work to promote parents' involvement in their children's learning and develop more positive behaviour and attitudes towards school. This is a priority for Early Help. The Service is also able to deliver parenting programmes and to advise schools about effective programmes that engage parents in their children's learning.

The provision of Parenting programmes continues to form an integral part of Early Help and Preventative Services (EHPS) support. This includes the creation of a bespoke Kent Parenting Programme called 'Understanding Yourself, Understanding Your Child'.

In the past twelve months Early Help has extended the parenting offer available to families across Kent. Each District has a comprehensive parenting programme offer, which ranges from one to

one advice and strategies to help behaviour to a selection of accredited courses available to all parents. These include the universal Solihull programme, the specialist Cygnet programme and the new evidence based in-house intensive level Kent Parenting Programme

There has been an increase in courses being delivered by colleagues in Community Learning and Skills which means that courses are delivered in a timely way which ensures that families do not have long waiting times before starting their course.

The introduction of the Kent Parenting Programme, and its joint delivery with schools and Specialist Children's Services, aims to help reduce the barrier of parental engagement through its use of Enhancing Families Involvement in their Children's Learning (EFICL) within its content.

Children's Centres also provide a range of parenting programmes and more effective joint working between centres and schools is helping to make these activities more widely available. The delivery of Solihull Parenting courses is also planned for all districts, led by Health Visiting colleagues and supported by Children's Centres.

High Quality Teaching and School Leadership

"Great schools are great schools for all children"... 'The Pupil Premium – next steps' Sutton Trust, July 2015

Leaders in schools that have been successful in raising the attainment of disadvantaged pupils know that there is no one single strategy which leads to success. Rather, successful school leaders, including governors, create a vision and culture, consistently communicated to staff, pupils and parents, in which the highest possible achievement of every learner is a priority and an expectation. Leaders in these schools have a resolute determination that every learner regardless of home background or starting point will succeed and they both enable and hold staff to account to achieve this. They know their schools and the needs of individual learners and use data to analyse trends, set targets and then implement the intervention strategies which will have the most impact on accelerating rates of progress.

The Sutton Trust highlights the importance of a designated senior leader and governor who have a clear overview of how funding is being allocated, including Pupil Premium funding, and the difference it is making to the progress of disadvantaged pupils.

In addition, Ofsted noted that these schools:

"allocated their best teachers to teach intervention groups…used achievement data to check whether their approaches were effective and made adjustments accordingly"

It also identifies that Teaching Assistants can have an important role in supporting vulnerable learners but they need high quality training in order to understand their role in helping pupils learn more effectively.

A further update from Ofsted in 2014, particularly noted the association between the overall effectiveness of the school and the impact of the Pupil Premium, finding that good and outstanding schools are committed to closing the attainment gap by targeting interventions and using robust tracking systems.

A recent NFER report commissioned by the Department for Education, identifies good practice in raising the attainment of disadvantaged pupils through seven "building blocks for success" by:

1. Promoting an ethos of attainment for all pupils, rather than stereotyping disadvantaged pupils as a group with less potential to succeed.

2. Having an individualised approach to addressing barriers to learning and emotional support, at an early stage, rather than providing access to generic support and focusing on pupils nearing their end-of-key-stage assessments.
3. Focusing on high quality teaching first rather than on bolt-on strategies and activities outside school hours.
4. Focusing on outcomes and progress for individual pupils rather than on providing general strategies.
5. Deploying the best staff to support disadvantaged pupils; developing skills and roles of teachers and TAs rather than using additional staff who do not know the pupils well.
6. Making decisions based on data and respond to evidence, using frequent, rather than one-off assessments and decision points.
7. Having clear, responsive leadership: setting ever higher aspirations and devolving responsibility for raising attainment to all staff, rather than accepting low aspirations and variable performance.

Supporting the attainment of disadvantaged pupils: articulating success and good practice (**NFER Supporting the attainment of Disadvantaged Pupils– November 2015**)

"Public resources should, over time, move from older generations to younger ones. In education, since the global evidence points to the quality of teaching being the key factor in helping close attainment gaps, the best teachers should have better incentives, including higher pay, to teach in the worst schools. Funding for schools should be made dependent, in part, on improvements in outcomes and the narrowing of attainment gaps". Alan Milburn, Chair of the Social Mobility Commission, 9 October 2017 Progress Magazine

These comments were a reflection on the findings of the Social Mobility Commission Report earlier in the year.

Time for Change: An Assessment of Government Policies on Social Mobility 1997-2017 was published by the Social Mobility Commission in July 2017

The report examined various public policies pursued over the last 20 years and assessed the impact they have had, for good or ill on social mobility in Britain. The report said that some policies - such as increasing employment and getting more working-class young people into university - have had a positive impact. However, overall the report concluded that 'too little' has been done to break the link between socio-economic background and social progress.

The report found that:

- Despite reforms to schools and success in improving results and raising standards, two-thirds of children on free school meals do not get good GCSEs
- There has been significant progress in reducing the attainment gap between poorer pupils and their better-off classmates at Primary school, but the gap increases substantially at Secondary school
- There is currently no prospect of the gap between poorer and wealthier children being eliminated at either GCSE or A level

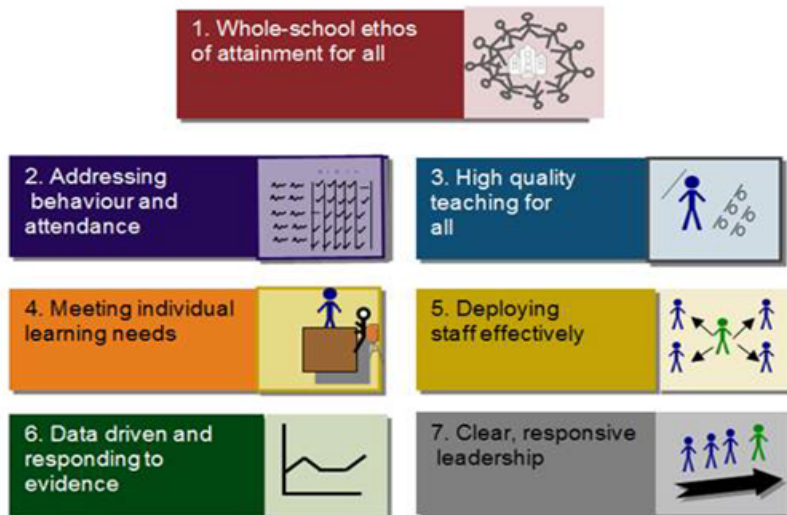The Commission recommended that the Government should, in respect of schools:

- Introduce a new ambition that, within a decade, the attainment gap between poorer children and their better off classmates should be closed at GCSE level
- Align inspection regimes and redistribute resources behind the new drive to close the attainment gap
- Focus on developing new collaborative approaches to turning around failing schools

- Introduce effective incentives to attract and retain good-quality teachers in the schools that need them most, including a new emphasis on continuing professional development

What is the most effective way to support disadvantaged pupils' achievement?

Based on interviews with senior leaders from more and less successful Primary, Secondary and Special schools, the NFER research found that schools which are more successful in promoting high attainment for all pupils have a number of things in common. It identified these building blocks for success:

Building blocks for success

1. Whole-school ethos of attainment for all
2. Addressing behaviour and attendance
3. High quality teaching for all
4. Meeting individual learning needs
5. Deploying staff effectively
6. Data driven and responding to evidence
7. Clear, responsive leadership

Outcome based, effective use of resources

Since the introduction of the Pupil Premium in 2011, it has added an additional resource to support the work of an inclusive school and to accelerate impact on achievement for disadvantaged learners. It offers the opportunity for leaders to find effective and innovative solutions to meet the needs of individual learners. To do this, leaders need accurate and timely data analysis and tracking systems which identify needs, monitor progress for individual learners and inform target setting for closing the attainment gap.

Effective schools prioritise consistent high-quality teaching for all and disadvantaged learners benefit particularly in achieving their full potential when attendance, behaviour and emotional support are seen as integral to academic success. Effective teachers are able to draw on a wide range of evidence based approaches to meet the needs of all learners. This will include varied teaching methods and flexible groupings, development of metacognition skills and appropriately tailored interventions. Evidence from the Sutton Trust and Education Endowment Foundation shows that significant improvement in narrowing the gap can be made when schools target funding towards:

- Improving feedback between teachers and learners
- Paired teaching
- Flexible small group teaching
- One to one tuition
- The teaching of independent learning strategies
- Peer mentoring and assessment
- Active encouragement of parental involvement in learning

An Ofsted review of the effectiveness of Pupil Premium spending in 2013 also concluded that successful schools:

"ring fenced funding for the target group of pupils and did not confuse eligibility for Pupil Premium with low ability…identified which pupils were underachieving, particularly in English and mathematics and drew on research evidence (such as the Sutton Trust EEF Toolkit) to allocate funding for activities most likely to have an impact on improving achievement"

A guide developed by the Teaching Schools Council (TSC), 'Effective Pupil Premium Reviews', in May 2016, stated that:

'The schools that are most successful at raising the attainment of their disadvantaged pupils differ in many ways but share certain important characteristics – their approaches to using Pupil Premium are strategic, evidence-based, ambitious and built on an ethos of high quality teaching for all.'

From September 2016, all maintained schools have been required to publish their Pupil Premium Strategy online, detailing how they intend to spend their allocation to address barriers to learning and the rationale behind the school's decisions.

A template has been created by the Teaching Schools Council to support schools in developing and presenting their strategy and can be found at Annex 2C (Primary) and Annex 2D (Secondary) of their guide (see hyperlink above).

How we use our resources to support and improve the attainment of vulnerable pupils is also essential to good educational achievement. This requires evidence of demographic need as well as evidence of "what works". The local authority can assist in ensuring we provide this information to support and review the use of resources. We will also articulate how the various strategies and support pathways work together so that there is not duplication and confusion of additional provision.

Ofsted introduced its Common Inspection Framework from September 2015. The School Inspection Handbook explains, in paragraph 141, that when judging the effectiveness of leadership and management, inspectors will consider:

How effectively leaders use additional funding, including the Pupil Premium, and measure its impact on outcomes for pupils, and how effectively governors hold them to account for this.

Paragraph 29 of the School Inspection Handbook, says that when preparing for an inspection, the lead inspector will analyse information on the school's website, including its statement on the use of the Pupil Premium.

Paragraph 152 says that during the inspection, inspectors will gather evidence about the use of the Pupil Premium in relation to the following:

- The level of Pupil Premium funding received by the school this academic year and in previous years
- How the school has spent the Pupil Premium and why it has decided to spend it in the way it has
- Any differences made to the learning and progress of disadvantaged pupils as shown by outcomes data and inspection evidence

Inspectors will recommend an external review of the school's use of the Pupil Premium if they identify weakness regarding the provision and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

The Pupil Premium – What Does the Research Tell Us?

Over the last five years the Pupil Premium has supported schools to rethink the way they raise standards for disadvantaged pupils. There have been a number of national reviews on the impact of funding for vulnerable learners. These reports attempt to evidence the impact of this additional resource and explain these findings in relation to learner outcomes.

We know that schools that are most effective in improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils always use evidence about what makes a real difference to change their practice.

There is more and more evidence that schools can and do achieve greater impact from the Pupil Premium. The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) Teaching and Learning Toolkit provides an accessible summary of this emerging evidence and their helpful 'Families of Schools' tool enables schools with similar intakes to learn about success from each other.

Effective schools recognise that disadvantaged pupils are not a homogenous group and employ targeted approaches for groups or individuals facing particular barriers. For example, whilst the Pupil Premium has focused many schools' attention on raising the attainment of low performing pupils, more able disadvantaged pupils are at risk of underachievement too. Analysis by the Sutton Trust[1] shows that many disadvantaged pupils who are high performing at Key Stage 2 fall badly behind their peers by Key Stage 4. This underachievement is also reflected in the low proportions of disadvantaged pupils progressing to higher ranked universities after Key Stage 5. Ofsted[2] has highlighted a lack of support for more able disadvantaged pupils, particularly during Key Stage 3, as an area that many schools need to address. Other groups of pupils that schools may not have focused on within their overall strategy include looked after children, children adopted from care or service children. All these groups may have similar challenges, yet research shows that identifying each individual's barriers to learning is the key to success with the Pupil Premium.

House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts - Funding for disadvantaged pupils - September 2015

Since the introduction of the Pupil Premium in 2011, there is some evidence that the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers has started to narrow. Headteachers have increased their focus on tackling this stubborn issue and there are many examples of schools using the Pupil Premium on interventions that work.

Approximately two million (29%) children aged between 4 and 16 (of the 7 million children in publicly-funded schools in England) come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Such pupils tend to perform poorly in public examinations relative to other pupils. As poor academic performance is associated with lower wages and higher unemployment in adulthood, this 'attainment gap' for disadvantaged pupils is a key way in which poverty is transmitted from one generation to the next. Between 2011 and the end of 2015, the DfE had distributed £6.0 billion of Pupil Premium funding to schools.

Since the introduction of the Pupil Premium, the attainment gap has closed overall by 4.7 percentage points in Primary schools and by 1.6 percentage points in Secondary schools.

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[1] http://www.suttontrust.com/researcharchive/missing-talent/
[2] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-3-the-wasted-years

Schools have demonstrated the potential of the Pupil Premium, but it is not yet a success in every school. The attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers has narrowed since 2011 at both Primary and Secondary school level in Kent, but the gap remains large and progress has been uneven across the county.

Too few schools have undertaken Pupil Premium Reviews, recommended by the DFE for schools that are not using the funding well. In order to support these reviews, it is important that schools who are effectively using the Pupil Premium, share their best practice.

Some children from disadvantaged backgrounds are starting school under-prepared and developing more slowly than their peers. Evidence shows that there may be more that can be done to tackle the impact of deprivation on a child's progress in the years before starting school. It will be important to monitor the impact of spending on the Early Years Pupil Premium, introduced in 2014-2015, worth up to £300 per child.

The Education Endowment Foundation reported to the Public Accounts Committee that research shows family engagement and family motivation is highly correlated with attainment at school. The National Audit Office similarly found that 91% of school leaders saw parental engagement as a barrier to closing the attainment gap of some disadvantaged pupils. However, only 57% of these leaders had an intervention in place to address this concern.

Some 64% of school leaders were now aware of and using the Foundation's toolkit to inform decisions about Pupil Premium funding. Many schools are found not to be using the Education Endowment Foundation's evidence toolkit effectively, for example not changing the way they use teaching assistants to help disadvantaged pupils in line with the Foundation's recommendations.

The Pupil Premium: Next Steps, Sutton Trust and Education Endowment Foundation, Report and Summit (July 2015) – [Funding for disadvantaged pupils - September 2015](#)

At this summit, The Sutton Trust and the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) discussed the future of the Pupil Premium bringing together policy-makers, academics and the teaching profession to discuss how best to improve attainment for disadvantaged pupils and close the gap between them and their peers. The summit meeting considered a new report [Pupil Premium: Next Steps](#) which includes new polling on the use of the Pupil Premium, its impact and the methods used by schools to decide how to spend the funding, as well as a number of short essays written by some of the summit participants.

The Education Policy Institute published Closing the Gap? Trends in education attainment and disadvantage in August 2017. This report examined how well the school system is serving disadvantaged young people. The research measures the gap between disadvantaged pupils (those eligible for Pupil Premium) and their peers and variations between LAs and whether they have closed the gap over time.

The report found that:

*'….the gap is closing, but at a very slow rate. Indeed, despite significant investment and targeted intervention programmes, **the gap between disadvantaged 16-year-old pupils and their peers has only narrowed by three months of learning between 2007 and 2016.** In 2016, the gap nationally, at the end of secondary school, was still 19.3 months. **In fact, disadvantaged pupils fall behind their more affluent peers by around 2 months each year over the course of secondary school.'***

Over the same period (2007 – 2016), the gap by the end of Primary school narrowed by 2.8 months and the gap by age 5 narrowed by 1.2 months. At current trends, we estimate that it would take **around 50 years for the disadvantage gap to close completely** by the time pupils take their GCSEs.'

Figure 2.3 in the report shows the disadvantage gaps in 2016, in months, between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in each LA and the national average for non-disadvantaged pupils.

Attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and all other pupils in Kent and some of our statistical neighbouring local authorities

Local Authority	Early Years	Primary Schools	Secondary Schools
Kent	-2.8	-10.5	-23.7
Essex	-3.7	-9.4	-19.8
Buckinghamshire	-4.1	-7.9	-22.6
Lancashire	-4.4	-10.7	-22.9
Hampshire	-4.5	-7.8	-23.0

When looking at all the data for 150 LAs, the data shows that there is a significant variation in the size of the gap between LAs, from no gap, to 7 months in Early Years, 5-13 months at the end of Primary School and 1 month to over 2 years at the end of Secondary school.

What Ofsted Looks for

'For pupils who are both most able and from a disadvantaged background, the quality of teaching and the determination of a school to stretch and challenge these pupils is essential if they are to realise their potential.' (Sir Michael Wilshaw's Annual Report 2015/16)

Ofsted's latest report on more-able pupils in the non-selective system identified that:

- one of the main reasons for underperformance was low expectations of the poorest pupils
- it is important to ensure that disadvantaged more-able pupils receive high-quality information, advice and guidance to prepare them for the future
- we must be robust in inspecting the performance of disadvantaged, more able and more-able disadvantaged.

Ofsted's has found that successful schools:

- do not treat pupils eligible for the Pupil Premium as a homogeneous group
- give disadvantaged pupils a high profile within a school
- often appoint a senior leader to raise the profile and champion the learning of disadvantaged pupils.

Common strengths in most effective support for disadvantaged pupils include:

- leaders at all levels, including governors, prioritising the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.
- valuing pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare needs and not using them as excuses for low achievement
- strategic planning at points of transition having high impact on outcomes and destinations.
- all pupils accessing a broad and rich curriculum – support is given to ensure that all pupils have full access to broad educational experiences
- prioritising consistently good and outstanding teaching as the first point of intervention for disadvantaged pupils
- expecting high levels of parental engagement and good attendance and pursuing these relentlessly.

Characteristics of successful approaches

Schools that spent the Pupil Premium funding successfully to improve achievement and narrow the gap:

- never confused eligibility for the Pupil Premium with low ability
- did not rely on interventions to compensate for less than good teaching
- tracked and monitored achievement data to check progress and if any interventions were working – and then made adjustments
- ensured that the allocation and spending of the Pupil Premium was given high priority in terms of staffing.

They…

- ensured that a designated senior school leader linked to a governor had a clear overview of how the funding was allocated and what difference it was making
- ensured that all teachers knew which pupils were eligible so that they could take responsibility for accelerating their progress
- made sure that support staff (particularly teaching assistants) were highly trained and understood their role in helping pupils to achieve
- thoroughly involved governors in the decision-making and evaluation process.

Demonstrating impact

- End of key stage data and other national benchmarks (e.g. Y1 phonics) compare favourably with national data for other pupils in all subjects.
- Diminishing differences over time are shown in RAISE online and inspection dashboard for different abilities, including the most-able disadvantaged
- School's own information and work in pupils' books demonstrate good progress for current disadvantaged pupils
- Case studies outline the additional provision in place and the difference this is making (progress and barriers being overcome)
- Attendance is improving or being maintained at least in line with the national average
- Personal development, well-being and behaviour are good and exclusion figures are below national average.

How are schools responding to the Pupil Premium?

The number of school leaders who said they consider research evidence before taking spending decisions on the Pupil Premium has increased from 52% in 2012 to 64%. Many learn from what works in other schools (62%) and most are using past experience before deciding what approaches and programmes to adopt. Almost half of Secondary school leaders (48%) and a third (32%) of Primary school leaders also say they make use of the Sutton Trust/EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit. The table below, taken from the report shows the main approaches schools take.

How does your school decide which approaches and programmes to adopt to improve pupil learning?
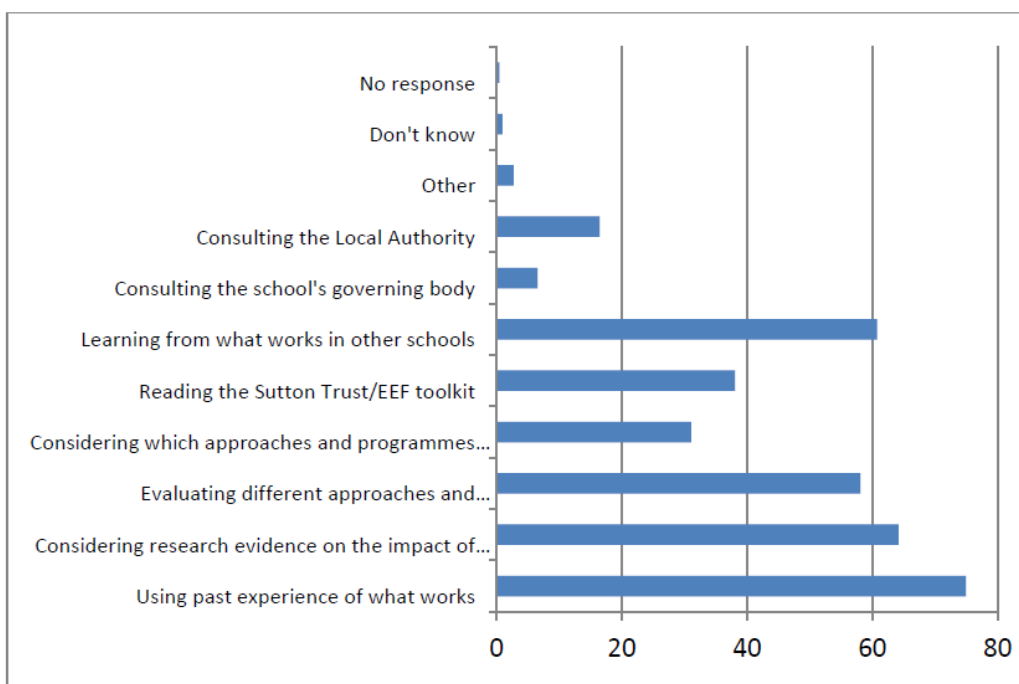
The Sutton Trust report notes that relatively few schools choose what it considers some of the "best low cost proven approaches" like improving feedback between teachers and pupils (4%) and peer-to-peer tutoring (1%).

Both of these national reports clearly show further work is required to demonstrate the significant impact of Pupil Premium funding on reducing attainment gaps. Attainment gaps are an important measure of impact and new approaches will also be used including improved attendance, raised aspirations and improved destinations at ages 16–18.

Self-Evaluation

Schools need to scrutinise their current Pupil Premium Strategy and consider the impact of the approaches they are taking to close the attainment gaps across the school. In undertaking a self-evaluation, schools need to identify the desired outcomes, barriers to learning, chosen approaches, implementation requirements and success criteria needed to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in the school.

- What is the current position at your school?
- What are the barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils in your school?
- What are your desired outcomes for pupils?
- How will success be measured?
- Which approaches will produce these outcomes?
- Which approaches are effective and which aren't?

How are Early Years and Childcare Settings Responding to the Early Years Pupil Premium?

The Early Years Pupil Premium introduced in April 2015 provides extra funding for three and four-year-old children whose parents are in receipt of certain benefits or who have been in care or adopted from care. It complements the government funded Early Education Entitlement by providing pre-schools, nurseries, schools and other providers with up to an additional £300 per year for each eligible child. The government committed £31m to fund the Early Years Pupil Premium in 2017/18 and estimates that 102,000 children will receive it nationally. In 2017/18 Kent

received £424,000 for its Early Years Pupil Premium eligible pupils, to support 1,400 eligible children.

The national advice and support offered through the Education Endowment Foundation has been extended to include ideas for the use of the Early Years Pupil Premium, however the impact of the interventions has yet to be fully evidenced.

Early Years settings in Kent are using the funding in a wide variety of ways including providing extra staffing, speech and language interventions, additional resources and activities as well as organising targeted training for staff. Their ideas are shared across the county on the KELSI website and more locally through Early Years collaborations. The impact of the interventions is monitored through individual child and group tracking processes. Practitioners are encouraged to show how the funding is having a positive effect on individual children's progress and attainment, on narrowing achievement gaps, school readiness and early identification of additional learning needs.

As with school aged children the success of the funding will depend on the degree to which it is spent effectively. This could mean settings working together more to maximise impact and build capacity, and the sustained effort by the Department for Education, OFSTED and others to make a genuine improvement in the progress and attainment of disadvantaged children, with appropriate accountability.

Key documents that schools may find useful in making effective use of the Pupil Premium

- The Pupil Premium: How schools are spending the funding successfully to maximise achievement: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-pupil-premium-how-schools-are-spending-the-funding-successfully
- The Pupil Premium: analysis and challenge tools for schools: www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-pupil-premium-analysis-and-challenge-tools-for-schools
- Effective Pupil Premium Reviews https://www.tscouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/PPR-guide-Spring-2016-refresh-FINAL-1.pdf
- Unseen children: access and achievement 20 years on: www.gov.uk/government/publications/unseen-children-access-and-achievement-20-years-on
- What maintained schools must publish online: www.gov.uk/guidance/what-maintained-schools-must-publish-online
- What academies, free schools and colleges should publish online: www.gov.uk/guidance/what-academies-free-schools-and-colleges-should-publish-online
- Toolkit of strategies to improve learning – summary for schools, spending the Pupil Premium – Sutton Trust/Education Endowment Foundation www.suttontrust.com/about-us/education-endowment-foundation/teaching-learning-toolkit/

Best Practice in Kent

Detailed in Appendix 3, 'Strategies for Diminishing Differences', is the work the CYPE Directorate have been undertaking with schools in 2016-17 to improve the effectiveness of the impact of Pupil Premium Funding. The Appendix sets out whole school strategies for schools to employ to narrow the gap as well as good practice at Key Stages 1, 2, 3 and 4. The document also details Pupil Premium good practice in PRUs and Special Schools in Kent.

In our most effective schools, there are a number of approaches and strategies that are having significant impact on diminishing differences for disadvantaged pupils. These common themes have been identified in a number of our schools where outcomes are above national. The approaches/strategies include the following:

- Highly effective speech and language support
- Outstanding early years provision in nursery and reception building characteristics of effective learning
- Strong, integrated and regularly accessed outdoor learning provision e.g. forest schools, tiger troop, science gardens, beach schools
- Specialist provision for the arts, music and PE
- A curriculum that builds cultural capital through rich and varied experiences e.g. theatre, museums, politics, religion
- Developing self-esteem, resilience and aspirations e.g. growth mind set, blooms taxonomy, Building Learning Power
- Using diagnostic tools effectively e.g. PASS, Pixel, Language Link, Boxall profiling
- Investing heavily in reading

Disseminating Best Practice across Kent

- Guest speakers from highly effective schools at Kent's conferences and training e.g. nursery conference, Pupil Premium courses and conferences
- Journey to Outstanding Programme – linking good schools with outstanding schools to share all aspects of best practice
- Increasing the of KLEs across Kent schools to offer school to school support
- Future development of the KELSI website to host best practice case studies and strategies from our most successful schools
- Focused agenda items on HT Breakfast Briefings
- Ensuring all Improvement Advisers have identified and shared best practice

Constant articulation and communication of our values and expectations, with reference to Pupil Premium Toolkit, making effective use of performance data, Sutton Trust Toolkit, our Vulnerable Learners Strategy and the use of Case Studies

Resources for Vulnerable Learner Support in Kent

Significant resources are allocated to support vulnerable learners across the county. £222.2 **million** is allocated directly to schools and colleges and a further £39.8 **million** is used to deliver early interventions and specialist support services. This is a significant resource and underpinning this strategy is the ambition of achieving greater impact by challenging the way resources are used in schools, collaborations and partnerships, to achieve more.

There is a need to develop new ways of working with vulnerable learners that are more effective in significantly narrowing gaps and reducing NEETS. We aim to develop other indicators of impact alongside the attainment gap to ensure that the resources available achieve maximum impact. These new indicators will be included in the new district vulnerable learner data sets.

Funding for vulnerable learners for 2016-17 is given below:

	Funding Allocations in Schools £'m	Local Authority Support Services £'m
High Needs Funding		
Special Schools	70.5	
Resourced SEN Provision (Units)	15.1	
Support for high needs pupils in Mainstream schools	23.8	
Support for high needs pupils in FE Colleges	8.7	
Support for high needs pupils in Independent Specialist Provision (post 16)	4.6	
Support for high needs pupils in Independent and Non-Maintained schools	24.4	
Support for high needs pupils in Maintained schools in OLAs	3.1	
Total	**150.2**	
Pupil Referral Units / Alternative Provision	12.2	2.6
Pupil Premium		
Free School Meals	52.1	
Looked After Children (supported by VSK)	2.8	
Post LAC (Adoption)	1.7	
Service Children	0.6	
Total	**72.0**	
STLS and LIFT		5.5
Early Help and Preventative Services		34.3
Total Spent by the LA on Vulnerable Learners		**262.0**

Defining Vulnerable Learners

For the purposes of developing this strategy vulnerable learners have been defined as all groups who are at greater risk of poorer educational outcomes either through life circumstances or events that occur in a child's life which can affect their educational outcomes, including:

- Children in Care and Children in Need
- Pupils who receive the Pupil Premium Grant
- Pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
- Children who qualify for a free place as a two-year-old and for the Early Years Pupil Premium at age three and four
- Young Carers
- Young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)
- Pupils missing education through prolonged or persistent absence and those excluded from school
- Pupils at risk of sexual exploitation
- Pupils with mental health issues
- Pupils from disproportionately affected ethnic minority groups
- Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children
- Pupils with physical health issues
- Pupils in workless families
- Pupils in low income families
- Teenage parents
- Pupils in troubled families
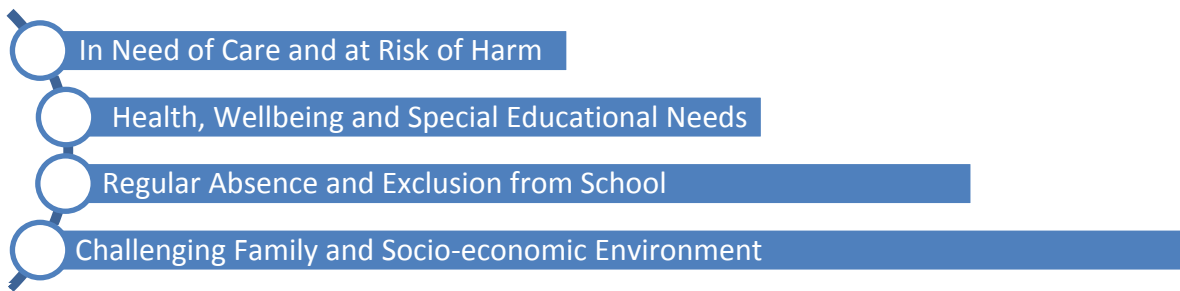- Children involved with the criminal justice system

This is not an exhaustive list, but these groups tend to be the most significant in Kent. Vulnerability can take a wide range of different forms, including physical and mental health difficulties, family problems, and risks of abuse or harm. While it is acknowledged that not all children and young people start from the same points, other factors in some children's lives such as poverty and family circumstances can have a significant limiting effect on their achievement and attainment and longer-term life chances.

In July 2017, the Children's Commissioner published 'On measuring the number of vulnerable children in England'. This report looked at identifying the number of vulnerable children who carry with them risk and difficulties which make it much harder for them to succeed in life, to be happy and healthy and have a change at a good future. From children in care to children with special educational needs or the children of parents with limited parenting capacity, to those with alcoholism and drug dependence, abuse, poverty, ill health and unemployment.

The report found that more than half a million children are so vulnerable that the state has to step in; 700,00 are in 'high risk' family situations such as living with drug or alcohol addicted parents or in temporary accommodation; and at least 800,000 with mental health disorders.

The report defined vulnerability as meaning the additional needs or barriers children face may make them less likely to live healthy, happy, safe lives, or less likely to have successful transitions to adulthood. Vulnerability can take a wide range of different forms, including physical and mental health difficulties, family problems, and risks of abuse or harm.

Interrogation of the Kent data enables indicators of multiple-disadvantage for vulnerable learners to be categorised into four broad groups.

- In Need of Care and at Risk of Harm
- Health, Wellbeing and Special Educational Needs
- Regular Absence and Exclusion from School
- Challenging Family and Socio-economic Environment

These categories can often overlap and potentially impact on one another. For this reason, vulnerable learners need to be able to access support that crosses the traditional boundaries of the agencies that work with them. The most prominent overlapping factor which links the groups of vulnerable learners together and, arguably, is the best indicator of a vulnerable learner is those pupils experiencing challenging family and socio-economic environments.

A statistical indicator of pupils living in a challenging family and socio-economic environment in Kent is pupils living in households with a higher than average level of deprivation and pupils eligible for Free School Meals. Data shows that pupils from this group are more likely to:

- achieve poorer rates of progress and development at the Early Years Foundation Stage
- have Specialist Children's Services involvement
- be persistently absent or excluded from school
- be supported by the Troubled Families programme
- engage in offending and anti-social behavior
- not achieve the expected standards at age 11
- not achieve 5 or more A* - C GCSEs (including English and Maths)
- have poorer post 16 and 18 destinations
- become NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training)

The experience of a single disadvantage can create difficulties for pupils and multiple disadvantages can often interact and exacerbate one another, leading to more harmful and costly outcomes for the pupil, the family, the school and society as a whole. The most vulnerable learners are those that span more than one of the 4 categories. Our Kent data *(2016 integrated data set)* suggests that almost one third experience challenging family and socio-economic environments.

There is a statistical correlation between pupils living in challenging family and socio-economic environments and poor outcomes. We use pupils living in households with a higher than average level of deprivation *(Mosaic groups L, M, N and O)* and pupils eligible for Free School Meals as the indicator for vulnerable learners throughout this strategy and accompanying implementation plans.

Primary Age Learners

- 33% (40,126) of learners experience a challenging family and socio-economic environment
- 4% (4,833) of learners who have a challenging family and socio-economic environment are also regularly absent or excluded from school
- 3% (3,251) of learners who have a challenging family and socio-economic environment are also in need of care and at risk of harm
- 6.5% (7,852) of learners who have a challenging family and socio-economic environment also have health, wellbeing and special educational needs

(CYP Integrated Dataset 2016)

Secondary Age Learners

- 30% (24,061) of learners have a challenging family and socio-economic environment
- 7.5% (6,070) of learners who have a challenging family and socio-economic environment are also regularly absent or excluded from school
- 2.4% (1,913) of learners who have a challenging family and socio-economic environment are also in need of care and at risk of harm
- 6% (4,830) of learners who have a challenging family and socio-economic environment also have health, wellbeing and special educational needs

(CYP Integrated Dataset 2016)

Research shows that successfully attaining GCSEs is strongly associated with higher levels of life satisfaction among young people. A UK study *(The Impact of Pupil Behaviour and Wellbeing on Educational Outcomes – University of London/Childhood Wellbeing Research Centre)* published by the Department for Education (DfE) found that pupil wellbeing predicted their later academic progression and engagement in school. For example, pupils with better emotional wellbeing at age seven had a value-added Key Stage 2 score 2.46 points higher (equivalent to more than one term's progress) than pupils with poorer emotional wellbeing. Pupils with better attention skills also make more progress across the four key stages. For example, pupils with no attention problems at age 13 had a total value-added GCSE score that was equivalent to more than one extra GCSE at grade A*.

In Kent there are 10,000 young carers *(Imago – Kent Young Carers).* Many Young Carers come from hidden and marginalised groups, including children caring for family members with mental illness or a substance dependency. Estimates in Kent suggest that the real number of Young Carers could be in excess of 30,000 *(Imago – Kent Young Carers).* The Children's Society report *(Hidden from View – the experiences of young carers in England, 2013)* reported that around one in 20 misses a significant amount of school because of their caring responsibilities. Young Carers have significantly lower educational attainment at GCSE level, the equivalent to nine grades lower overall than their peers e.g. the difference between nine B's and nine C's. Young carers are more likely than the national average to be NEET between the ages of 16 and 19.

Supporting Vulnerable Learners in Kent

Education and Young People's Services Vision and Priorities for Improvement 2017-20

There are a number of Kent strategies which set out our approaches to supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. Kent's Vision and Priorities for Improvement 2017-20 states:

> *Central to our ambition is the desire to create the conditions in which pupils experience the best learning and teaching, and where pupils' social, moral and intellectual development and confidence can flourish. We want every child in Kent to achieve well above expectations and not to be held back by their social background. We want every young person to benefit from a broad range of pathways to further learning and employment, for their own achievement and for the success of the Kent economy. We want to ensure that vulnerable children and families have their needs met early so that they do not experience the level of challenge and difficulty in their lives that requires statutory interventions. They should have the same opportunities as all other children and families to flourish, to stay safe and well and succeed in the education system.*
>
> *Ensuring the most vulnerable learners experience success is one of our top priorities. Children in care, young offenders, excluded pupils, learners with special educational needs and disabilities and children from families on low incomes all experience significant barriers to their achievement and attain less well than their peers. We want to close the attainment gaps that exist as a barrier to their future success.*

To deliver this ambition it is recognized that further work, new approaches and systems are required across Kent, if there is going to be a significant improvement in narrowing gaps and improving life chances for vulnerable children and young people. This strategy builds on a range of successful strategies, plans and activities already in place, which include:

- Revised Learning, Employment and Skills Strategy 2017 – 20 Available here
- Adult Learning, Employment and Skills Strategy Available here
- Early Years and Childcare Strategy 2016 – 2019 Available here
- Kent's Strategy for School Improvement Available here
- Strategy for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities 2017 – 19 Available here
- Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2017 – 2021 Available here
- Early Help and Preventative Services Strategy and Three Year Plan 2015-18 Available here
- Pupil Referral Unit and Alternative Provision Prospectus Available here
- Education and Young People's Services NEET Strategy and Action Plan 2015 – 16 Available here
- KCC Health Needs Education Service Prospectus Available Here
- Emotional Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2015 Available here; and Improving Support for Emotional Health and Wellbeing Available here

What Works for Vulnerable Learners – Turning the Curve

The Kent Vulnerable Learner Strategy is intended to build on existing policies and good practice that are already in place, but calls for a step change in activities and a review of some of our approaches. Better outcomes will be delivered by developing new strategies in greater depth and approaches that individualise interventions.

Six over-arching priorities continue to be a fundamental part of ensuring we are all focusing on those actions that make a difference:

1. Developing **aspirational cultures** and a growth mindset in schools and in KCC services which set high aspirations for all and allow all children and young people to make good progress and reach their full potential

2. Developing **individual and more personalised learning pathways** supported by approaches that address emotional wellbeing and barriers to learning.

3. Ensuring **parental engagement and involvement** - improving outcomes for vulnerable learners by supporting parents to be more involved in their children's learning and progress, with high aspirations for the future.

4. Promoting effective school leadership and teaching and learning so that we see increased capacity in early years settings, schools and post 16 providers for sustained educational improvement for vulnerable learners, especially in English and Mathematics.

5. Working in **collaboration across all partnerships** to ensure that transitions are supported and that improving outcomes for vulnerable learners is given the highest priority across all KCC services, schools and other education settings. A key aspect of this is to focus on coordinating district activities, service delivery and collaborations to target and align resources to show greater impact.

6. Encouraging the use of **outcome based planning and evidence based use of resources** through widely available data and research, for example by providing district vulnerable learner data sets to identify vulnerable groups that require targeted interventions and which help to monitor progress.

1.   Changing Cultures - The Relentless Ambition to Succeed

'Exceptional schools can make up for grave disadvantages faced by young people… Economic disadvantage in itself is not an insurmountable barrier to educational success… Some schools with high proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals do very well for this group, while others in the same geographical location do not." (HMCI)

Despite significant research into the range of vulnerable learner strategies adopted by schools and the use of the Pupil Premium, it is clear that there is no one single intervention that has led to success. Furthermore, schools need to develop a number of bespoke measures tailored to each school's circumstance. The DfE research report published in November 2015, [Supporting Attainment of Disadvantaged Pupils: Articulating Success and Good Practice](), found that schools have used a large number of strategies to raise the attainment of disadvantaged learners since 2011.

More effective schools appeared to be adapting their strategies with greater attention to detail over a sustained period of time.

The most effective and ambitious schools are those that are open to outside influences, welcome challenge, are reflective and self- evaluative, are keen to share their good practices with others, work collaboratively to support, and benefit from, the work of other schools and agencies and are actively seeking to learn from best practice elsewhere. New Kent case studies of whole school approaches to supporting vulnerable learners have been developed and are available on the [KELSI]() website.

Schools have a critical community leadership role and can have a significant impact on the community's development and sometimes regeneration of a local area in securing outcomes for this and future generations of children, young people and their families. Changing learners' mind-sets about their own ability and the value of education itself is crucial to improving outcomes for vulnerable learners. This includes setting a new cultural standard, giving opportunities for new ways of behaving and building new relationships between the school and the community, especially with local employers.

We aim to see more focused activity across all key stages in Kent Coastal communities, in particular, where there are the widest gaps in achievement and the greatest number of vulnerable groups not reaching their full potential. This will include more concerted effort to address low self-esteem and aspirations and poor employment prospects. A particular focus will need to be on improving the academic performance of boys from low socio economic groups and developing new careers and guidance systems in schools linked to local employment and training opportunities, with the active engagement of employers.

2.   Individual Learning Pathways and Support

In order to ensure that all learners succeed, learning programmes and activities need to be personalised and supported by an individualised approach to addressing barriers to learning and emotional support. This support needs to be constant throughout each school year not just at key transition points or leading up to end of key stage assessments.

Through this strategy (and the revised 14-24 strategy which seeks to reduce NEETs), we aim to increase 14 to 19 personalised pathways which lead to sustained employment or higher levels of learning. Many vulnerable learners face multiple barriers to progressing successfully to high quality learning or training pathways post 16, especially if they have not achieved good levels of progress and attainment in English and Maths. These barriers will only decrease if more personalised

support, mentoring and better progression in technical and vocational pathways are developed for 14-19 year olds.

Too many vulnerable learners in Kent continue to leave school and colleges without qualifications and experiences that will give them employment options and opportunities. Many schools with large numbers of learners in receipt of Free School Meals are in areas with limited employment opportunities particularly in the coastal communities. Many areas in Kent have lower incomes without access to higher-paid jobs. This isolates and disadvantages these groups further from the expectations and experiences that financial security brings. Schools can reduce the impact of this by subsidising a range of experiences that demonstrate that better jobs and economic situations are available further afield, and are linked to attainment and progression to suitable post 16 learning and qualifications.

The Kent **E learning platform** provides a range of opportunities and teaching resources to support vulnerable learners which complements learning programmes in schools. There is specific virtual live and recorded lessons for vulnerable learner groups, English and Maths, catch up programmes, revision, and extra support opportunities plus new resources, Careers advice and guidance.

The **Emotional Health and Wellbeing Strategy** ensures increased access to mental health support in schools and in community settings. There is a new emphasis on early identification through whole school approaches to understanding emotional wellbeing and mental health.

KCC, Public Health and the seven Kent Clinical Commissioning Groups, have been working together for some time to improve the quality and scope of universal, targeted and specialist Emotional Health and Mental Wellbeing provision across the County. There is a new whole system approach with support that extends beyond the traditional reach of commissioned Emotional Health and Wellbeing Services.

In order to ensure clarity and equality of provision across the County one new provider, North East London Foundation Trust, will deliver tier two and three services County wide from September 2017. Part of the offer will be Mental Health Workers in the Early Help Units and in Kent Education Health Needs Service. There will also be a single point of access for referrals to the new service. Public Health will be working in partnership with Kent Community Hospital Foundation Trust to deliver the county wide universal and targeted emotional health and wellbeing service.

Additionally, new mental health provision integrated with Early Help Units works with children and families and those young people with eating disorders, anxiety and depression, self-harming behaviour, OCD, ADS, and conduct disorder, who have traditionally not engaged with services and need an assertive outreach approach of intervention. Early Help also works with young people with problematic sexualised behaviour, post-traumatic stress disorder and liaises with adult services where an adolescent's parent has a mental health issue and there is a need for better social support for the family.

The service works closely with the Core CAMHS provision and where required ensures effective and timely pathways across all provision to manage levels of need. Any existing therapeutic or supportive relationship between professionals and families will always be considered alongside levels of emotional needs and safeguarding when determining which service will undertake work and hold the accountability for the child or young person.

The Kent **Health Needs Education Service** provides individual learning pathways and support for those learners who are unable to access mainstream education due to a mental or physical health need. The Service focuses on supporting the home and schools with engagement strategies and the reintegration of the learners back into these schools in a timely fashion. Support provided includes access to local hubs, off site tuition and E Learning platforms.

3. Parental Engagement and Involvement

Early Help and Preventative Services has developed new parenting programmes promoting strategies for early reading, reading for life and parental involvement in homework. The opportunities for increasing the involvement of parents and carers in Children's Centres and Youth Hubs are significant and all workers have a responsibility to ensure wide involvement that is linked to promoting parents' understanding of the importance of their involvement in their children's educational achievement and its importance for future wellbeing in adulthood.

Within Early Help and Preventative Services parenting programmes and family work have a rigorous focus on school attendance and educational attainment. Support often remains very much on the individual child or young person as opposed to their whole family and environment. Through work with the whole family, parents, carers and wider families will be involved in decision making and will be encouraged to be actively involved in children and young people's education.

Where parents are not supporting positive behaviour and learning, whether it be through more formal attendance or youth justice work, we consider the use of Parenting Orders. We will make better use of these strategies to ensure parental responsibility and ensure that workers are able to effectively challenge and support families. Workforce development plans aim to ensure all Early Help and Preventative Service staff are trained and confident to work with parents with a whole family approach.

There will be an increased focus on developing new strategies to improve outcomes in English and Maths across all Key Stages. New opportunities led by Community Learning and Skills (CLS) working alongside schools, Early Years settings and Children's Centres have been developed to support family engagement in literacy and numeracy programmes. They provide more opportunities for 16-18 year olds to achieve qualifications in English and maths.

This builds on CLS's Family Learning approach which successfully engages families through a range of practical, enjoyable courses from informal workshops on a variety of interest-based topics to more focused and extended courses in which parents develop their own English and maths skills. As they engage in these activities they learn more about how these topics are delivered in schools and Early Years settings and how they can better help their children with these skills.

All courses are targeted for families where adults have few formal qualifications and have not had a positive experience of learning themselves. There is a particular focus on communities with poor socio-economic circumstances across the County including "pocket deprivation" - those surrounded by areas of higher affluence - and those affected by additional disadvantage.

Courses are designed to be welcoming and inclusive, focusing on the positive skills that parents bring with them, rather than focusing on skill deficits. Whatever their personal circumstances, the main reason parents give for taking part is to support their children and courses build on that enthusiasm. Many courses involve parents and children working together and this active participation can greatly improve how adults and children see the value of education.

As parents grow more confident in their ability to learn, content can be included which focuses on parents' own maths and English skills. Skilled tutors continuously adjust learning plans to follow learners' interests, maximising immediate and longer term outcomes.

Close working partnerships with schools, Children's Centres and Early Years settings are crucial to shape an appropriate offer and encourage the most vulnerable families to take part and sustain commitment.

CLS Family Programmes engage with families so that there is improvement in parental confidence, relationships with schools and settings and in their ability to help their children with homework. Children's attitudes and behaviour also improve and there is feedback that children's school work

improves. Parents themselves report greater confidence in their own learning skills and in broader outcomes such as working positively with professional agencies. These responses reflect national findings and it will be a key element to develop and monitor the specific impact of Family Programmes for vulnerable adult and child learners.
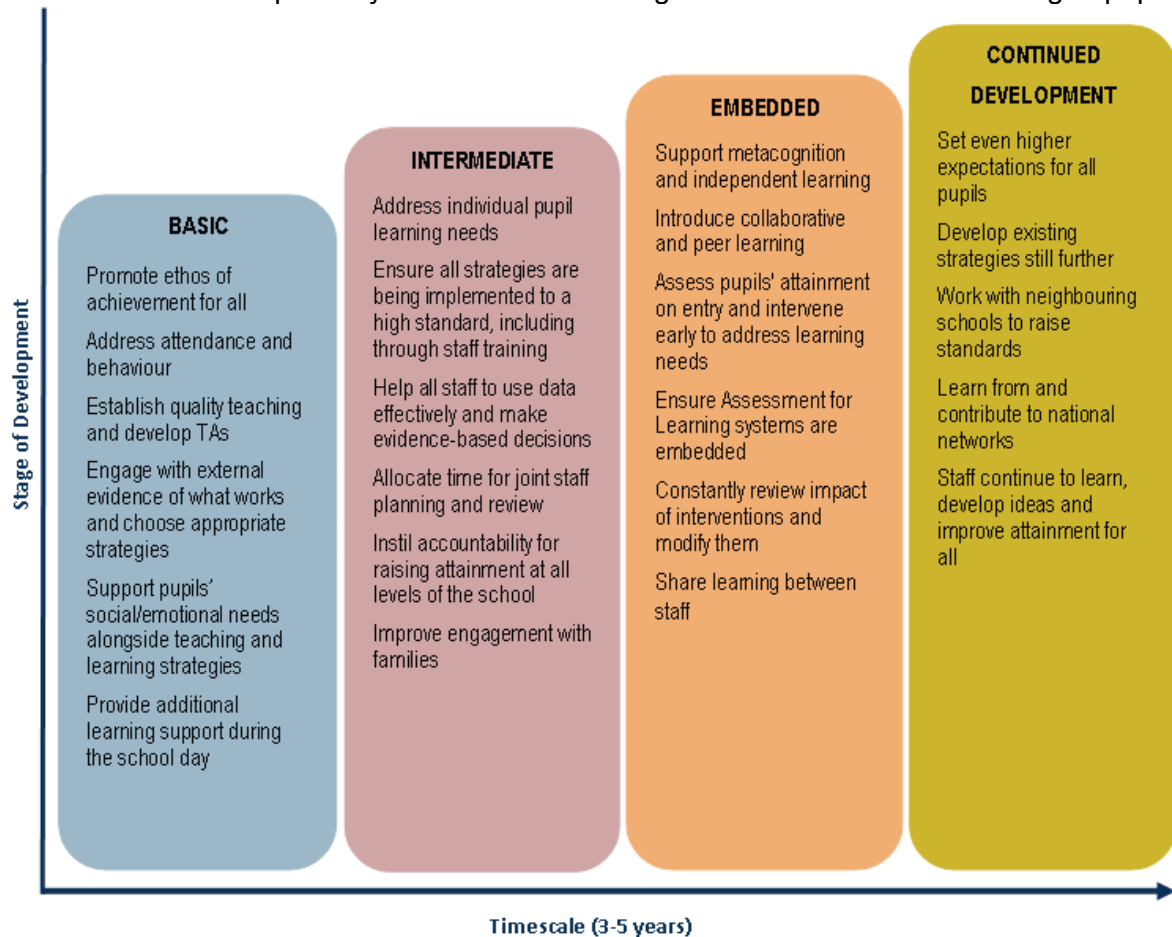
4.   Leadership, Teaching and Learning

Highly effective Early Years and School leaders set high aspirations, devolve responsibility for raising achievement to all staff, and ensure the quality of teaching is seen as a priority and teachers see every learner as an individual. One of the key lessons from research about closing achievement gaps is to build on high quality teaching for all learners, rather than focus on other one off activities and events outside school hours. Evidence from the Sutton Trust, the Education Endowment Foundation and DfE report show that significant improvement can be made in narrowing the gap by:

- Improving feedback between teachers and learners
- Paired teaching
- Small group teaching
- One to one tuition
- Independent learning strategies
- Peer mentoring
- Parental involvement

The model below taken from the DfE report shows how these teaching strategies are used in conjunction with other whole school activities. The stages of development used in this model are useful in supporting schools to evaluate their own priorities and school improvement plans.

An illustration of schools' pathways to success in raising the attainment of disadvantaged pupils

Stage of Development

BASIC
- Promote ethos of achievement for all
- Address attendance and behaviour
- Establish quality teaching and develop TAs
- Engage with external evidence of what works and choose appropriate strategies
- Support pupils' social/emotional needs alongside teaching and learning strategies
- Provide additional learning support during the school day

INTERMEDIATE
- Address individual pupil learning needs
- Ensure all strategies are being implemented to a high standard, including through staff training
- Help all staff to use data effectively and make evidence-based decisions
- Allocate time for joint staff planning and review
- Instil accountability for raising attainment at all levels of the school
- Improve engagement with families

EMBEDDED
- Support metacognition and independent learning
- Introduce collaborative and peer learning
- Assess pupils' attainment on entry and intervene early to address learning needs
- Ensure Assessment for Learning systems are embedded
- Constantly review impact of interventions and modify them
- Share learning between staff

CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT
- Set even higher expectations for all pupils
- Develop existing strategies still further
- Work with neighbouring schools to raise standards
- Learn from and contribute to national networks
- Staff continue to learn, develop ideas and improve attainment for all

Timescale (3-5 years)

This model suggests that there are certain basics (especially addressing attendance and behaviour and ensuring a supportive school ethos) that need to be in place, before moving on to more specific improvement strategies. Schools at an intermediate stage have taken several of the actions associated with more successful practice, but these have yet to become embedded in their systems and practice. This takes place at the third stage, where schools are able to focus more strongly on early intervention. Metacognition and independent learning, collaboration and peer learning are placed at this stage, as the findings of this study suggest that these are associated with schools at a later stage in the improvement journey. At the final stage, schools are in a position to continually seek opportunities for improvement, contribute to local and national networks and share their learning with other schools.[3]

5. Promoting Collaborations

'.....one of the most powerful ways of achieving improvement is through collaboration, with the best schools, settings and leaders supporting those that are more challenged. But it's not just the school or centre receiving support that improves – providing support gives even the most accomplished teachers and leaders an opportunity to gain new ideas and improve their own practice.' (DfE,2012)

There have been a range of successful collaborations between Kent schools and there is a need to focus elements of this work on achieving better outcomes for disadvantaged groups. 522 schools are working as part of a collaboration or partnership. There is a growing understanding from

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[3] [Supporting the attainment of disadvantaged pupils: articulating success and good practice](#)

research that the best guidance for raising standards for disadvantaged learners is to facilitate schools learning from others' good practice. This will continue to be the impetus for developing collaboration between schools in Kent and will underpin the success of this Strategy.

Additionally, over 450 of Kent's 700 Early Years and Childcare providers in the private, voluntary and independent sectors are now working as part of over 50 formal collaborations. The key purpose of these collaborations is to drive a faster rate of improvement and narrow gaps in achievement.

We aim to develop more effective district collaborations, optimising the use of experiences and resources between schools and KCC services to narrow achievement gaps for vulnerable learners. There will be more focused and coordinated work in the districts through Early Help units, LIFTs, In Year Fair Access Panels and 14-19 Participation and Progression Meetings to ensure that particular vulnerable groups have appropriate support to enable them to succeed in learning.

The Early Help and Preventative Service Units and Children's Centres in the districts will continue to work with schools to minimise the barriers that vulnerable learners face. Early Help teams will work with schools to support early interventions and provide more specialist family support.

The devolved PRU model will be developed further to support learners at risk of exclusion and will have a specific focus on developing approaches to reducing Primary school exclusions. The Health Needs Education Service will also provide additional support to schools for learners with mental health needs, alongside the Headstart programme and CAMHs. We will coordinate this work across the districts to maximise the impact and outcomes for learners.

6. Evidence Based Planning and Use of Resources – Data and Research

"It is sometimes said that 'schools cannot do it alone', but this is not quite true: exceptional schools can make up for grave disadvantages faced by young people… Economic disadvantage in itself is not an insurmountable barrier to educational success… Some schools with high proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals do very well for this group, while others in the same geographical location do not." (HMCI)

A new vulnerable learners district data set has been developed and will include other indicators of impact alongside the attainment gap data. This data set will be shared via the Kelsi website with schools on a quarterly basis beginning September 2017. The data will help schools to monitor pupil progress more comprehensively and to monitor the progress of specific strategies, so that schools respond quickly if the strategies for supporting vulnerable groups are not having sufficient impact. This data will also be used to review and evaluate the impact of resources that are used to support vulnerable learners in schools, KCC services and other partners.

Progress Against Priorities

The first priority in our Strategy is to support schools, and collaborations between schools, to do the core business well, which means ensuring all teaching is good, and teachers improve by working closely with other teachers and learn from the best practice. The test of good teaching is the achievement of expected, and better than expected, rates of progress for all pupils and too much variation in the progress rates for different groups of pupils would suggest the need to re-think teaching approaches. The quality of education in Kent has improved so that 92% of schools are good or outstanding and 93% of pupils attend a good or better school. The challenge is to ensure that disadvantaged pupils get the maximum access to and benefits from good teaching.

In the last school year over 500 schools took part in collaborative projects, and an increasing number of others were involved in collaborations within multi-academy trusts. 329 schools benefited from Kent Association of Headteachers (KAH) grants to support specific projects, and many more from the subsidising of leadership development initiatives related to the Leadership Strategy. 42 schools considered vulnerable, almost all of which had been judged by OfSTED as 'requiring improvement', received targeted grants as a result of bids made on their behalf by Senior Improvement Advisers.

Collaborative projects focused on three priorities:

- improving OfSTED outcomes
- raising pupil achievement
- narrowing the gaps between the outcomes of disadvantaged and other pupils

Trends evident in the successful bids included a sharper approach to raising achievement in Mathematics in primary schools, and an increased focus on improving pupils' mental health and wellbeing.

Overall standards have improved and outcomes at all key stages are now above the national average. Outcomes for pupils on free school meals also show an improving trend in the last three years although have narrowed only slightly.

Priority 2: Develop More Flexible Grouping Arrangements and Curriculum Pathways

Another priority has been to encourage schools to avoid in-school social segregation and grouping arrangements that hinder better engagement by vulnerable groups, reduce levels of motivation and engender less positive attitudes by learners, especially those that are likely to experience disadvantage. Social segregation, characterised for example by rigid ability and attainment grouping with little fluidity for learners, a hierarchy of subjects or curriculum opportunities and differences in access to the best teaching, limits opportunity and has a detrimental impact on engagement and resilience.

The evidence suggests that schools making a difference to narrowing gaps have more flexible grouping arrangements, promote the use of small group teaching and the use of nurture groups, as well as encouraging accelerated and enrichment learning approaches for more able learners. At the same time, we have supported more diverse curriculum pathways at Key Stage 4 and developed one year transition programmes in Year 12, for 16 plus learners without below level 2 qualifications including a level 2 GCSE or functional skills qualification in English or Maths. Six schools now have one year transition programmes in place and more schools are in the process of developing this kind of transition programme.

Priority 3: Develop Character Education and Emotional Resilience

Schools are also paying more attention to character education, that is, focusing on developing children's and young people's attitudes and aptitudes, to improve well-being, resilience, self-motivated learning, perseverance and ambition. This work is aided by rolling out the HeadStart resilience programmes across Kent schools, which is making good progress.

Priority 4: Enrichment Activities

We also recognise the importance of greater engagement by vulnerable learners in enrichment activities that help to develop confidence and resilience. These activities, (including sports and outward bound, the performing arts, music lessons, after school clubs and trips) are taken for granted by many children, but more effort is needed to ensure pupils on free school meals participate in them and get the benefits. Sometimes this will cost money for individual children and should be supported by the Pupil Premium. We encourage schools to use Pupil Premium funding to support some pupils to have these opportunities, when they would not otherwise do so. These opportunities help to develop social and cultural capital, confidence, self-control and self-belief, which research tells us are as important as cognitive ability for success in education and in the labour market.

- Senior Improvement Advisers act as 'Pupil Champion' for vulnerable learners and provide challenge to schools to ensure schools use data effectively to identity under-performing groups and focus effective strategies to support improved achievement for vulnerable groups, including effective use of the Pupil Premium to support enrichment activities
- 132 schools used the Kent Pupil Premium toolkit during 2016/17 and 118 schools attended the Pupil Premium Conference in spring 2017.
- We have provided guidance for leaders using KLE's, school to school support and brokering support and guidance from National Leaders of Education form outside of Kent who can evidence outstanding impact with disadvantaged cohorts.
- SIAs advise schools on proven teaching strategies and other evidence based approaches to narrowing achievement gaps e.g. the Sutton Trust Toolkit, Ten Steps to Success (John Durnford).
- The Children's University model has been developed to raise aspirations linked to careers options. This is currently being evaluated and a larger programme will be roled out in 2018.

Schools and local communities are giving a high priority to children's and young people's personal development including promoting their talents and interests to improve emotional well-being, resilience, self-motivated learning, perseverance and ambition.

This work is also supported by the Early Help Service, Specialist Children's Services, the roll out of HeadStart Kent and utilising the Early Help Mental Health Workers while also making the best use of the new Primary School Public Health Service and Children and Young People's Mental Health Service.

Headstart

The Headstart programme has been running since September 2016. The aim of Headstart is to improve the mental well-being of at-risk 10 to 16 year-olds in Kent and specifically those who have been impacted by domestic abuse. Headstart is working in partnership to implement a locally developed prevention strategy, with the child or young person and their needs at its core.

Over the 5-year lifetime of the programme, the aim is that Kent young people and their families will have improved resilience, by developing their knowledge and lifelong skills to maximise their own and their peers' emotional health and wellbeing; in order to help them to navigate their way to support when needed in ways which work for them.

HeadStart Kent School Grouping areas are resourced for a period of 18 months to 2 years within certain geographical groupings around schools. Over the 5 years, 9 groupings including 134 schools will benefit from the additional resources of HeadStart.

Participation in Sport

In order to support schools in ensuring that pupils get as many opportunities as possible to engage in healthy activities, KCC hosts annually, the 'Kent School Games'. This year, 7,120 children and young people participated in the School Games Finals. This event was complemented by the Physical Disability Summer Sports Festival, which was held in July 2017. It provided the opportunity for any mainstream or Special school physically disabled pupil in Kent to participate in a range of sports.

Priority 5: Pre-Requisites for Learning, School Readiness, Inclusion and Attendance

An important part of this Strategy has been to ensure the basic pre-requisites for learning are being delivered for vulnerable learners. Ensuring children in the early years are well prepared for school and when at school pupils attend school regularly, are prepared for learning with the right equipment, and do not miss learning time because they are excluded from class or from the school makes a big difference.

When absence and exclusion feature strongly for some individuals, schools are asked to avoid exclusion for vulnerable learners and to provide additional support to catch up when learning is missed. Schools that focus on reducing exclusion and improving attendance for vulnerable learners as part of their Pupil Premium strategy are less likely to see gaps widen or children fall further behind.

The SEND Strategy for Kent has also identified improving attendance and reducing exclusion as one of the priorities for learners with special educational needs, as their progress is adversely affected by above average absence from school and loss of learning time through fixed term exclusion.

Key to improving pupils' outcomes is school readiness. Investment in early education before children start school and investment in support for families through Children's Centres, helps to prepare children with additional needs, for school. Children who attend high-quality early years provision develop good social and communication skills. Early years practitioners are best placed to identify those children at an early age who need extra support, to give them the best start when they begin compulsory schooling, so that the gap in development is bridged.

One of the five Strategic Aims in the Early Years and Childcare Strategy 2016 – 2019 is to mitigate the effects of poverty, inequality and disadvantage through the provision of more higher quality early education and childcare, more effective support for parents and effective and permanent narrowing of the early development achievement gaps for all disadvantaged children.

We have refreshed the Early Years and Childcare Strategy in April 2016, which sets out our ambitions to achieve improved outcomes for children in Early Years and Childcare settings. We have embedded the 'Kent Progress Tracker' which enables settings to monitor all children's progress and also piloted a Children's Centre Progress Tracker for future county-wide use. At the same time we have introduced the 'Enhancing Family Involvement in Children's Learning (EFICL) Toolkit for Early Years and Childcare providers to raise parental and family involvement in children's learning. This won the Nursery World Award 2016 for Staff Resources and wider dissemination of the EFICL principles and the Pathways to Excellence Toolkit remains a priority. The following activity is taking place:

- – EFICL training for foster carers across the county

- The EFICL Training and toolkit continues to be offered as part of the wider Threads of Success offer for schools, settings and childminders and has been promoted nationally through Nursery World and Childcare Expo
- Development of a Key Stage 1 tool is intended to support teachers in evaluating their practice in helping families to be more involved in their children's learning
- The EFICL SmarterPlay App has been awarded 5 stars by the Educational App Store following a recent upgrade
- EFICL has won the Early Years Excellence Award 2017 (5 star rating)
- Canterbury Christchurch University is in the process of formally endorsing the EFICL Learning Links 10 week parenting course, and research has been undertaken as part of the evaluation. A research paper is being drafted as part of the endorsement strategy
- Approximately 800 people have accessed EFICL training across the county.

The 'Free for Two' scheme in Kent for parents of two year olds accessing their free childcare entitlement increased the take up to 74% in 2017. Work will continue to reach out and support the take up by eligible children and families to ensure that take up continues to improve.

The introduction from September 2017 of the Government's commitment for 30 Hours of Free Childcare for working parents of eligible three and four year olds has started well in Kent. This will also help to ensure more children gain from the benefits of good quality pre-school learning, including the children of working families who are eligible for the Pupil Premium.

74% of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage in 2017 achieved a good level of development, which is well above the national average. The free school meal achievement gap reduced to 10%, which is also one of the lowest gaps in the country. This means that many vulnerable children are getting a good start in the early years, on which to build future progress in learning, and well prepared for school.

The KCC Early Years Team provides an intensive, focused programme of support to all Early Years providers to narrow gaps in achievement, ensuring that providers are aware of and implementing the Kent Vulnerable Learners Strategy and the Ofsted document Unknown Children Destined for Disadvantage.

Exclusions for the 2016-17 School Year

Exclusion from school is a serious matter which impacts on the progress and attainment of pupils, often the most vulnerable learners, and all the efforts we make to reduce loss of learning time through exclusion contribute significantly to raising standards for these pupils.

The latest DfE exclusion data release indicates that Kent schools' overall performance in the past two years has improved to the level that is significantly better than the national average, which is very positive. This means fewer vulnerable learners are losing precious time for learning through exclusion.

However, the pattern of exclusions is very variable across Districts and schools, and depends very much on the local arrangements for inclusive schooling, behaviour support, managed moves, In Year Fair Access and the work of the Pupil Referral Units.

Permanent Exclusions

In the last academic year 2016-17 there were 68 permanent exclusions, which is a small increase of 2 on the previous academic year. The rate of permanent exclusion remains significantly better than the national average.

There were 19 permanent exclusions, in 19 Primary schools, which is an increase of 3 compared to the previous academic year. This includes 8 permanent exclusions of children in Key Stage 1, which is very disappointing. Most of the Primary permanent exclusions took place in East and North Kent, primarily in Dartford and Swale. Overall we should be encouraged that most Primary schools do not permanently exclude their pupils, who are most likely to be vulnerable learners.

In Secondary schools there were 49 permanent exclusions, which is a reduction of 1 compared to the previous year. Most of the excluded pupils were in Years 9 and 10 and of the 29 Secondary schools that permanently excluded, 20 schools excluded only one pupil. The greatest number of permanent exclusions took place in 9 Secondary schools and most of the exclusions (30) were concentrated in Dartford, Gravesham and Maidstone. Once again in Secondary schools few vulnerable learners are permanently excluded.

However, of those permanently excluded, 28 pupils were on free school meals, (reduced from 41 in 2016) 20 pupils were open cases for Early help and Social Care and three pupils had an Education Health and Care Plan. Our aim is to ensure that pupil supported by the Pupil Premium, no looked after child and no pupils with EHC plans are permanently excluded.

Fixed Term Exclusions

There was a slight reduction in fixed term exclusions in the last academic year compared to 2015/16, down 21 from 9,996 to 9,975 exclusions. The rate of fixed-term exclusion among Kent schools was much better than the national average.

The overall decrease was directly related to a positive reduction in Secondary School fixed-term exclusions. At the same time, there was an increase in Primary School fixed-term exclusions, up 324 from 1,725 to 2,049 exclusions in 2016/17.

It is a concern that among the pupils with one or more fixed term exclusions, 54% were pupils on free school meals which is the same percentage as the previous school year. It is disappointing that we are not seeing this percentage reduce.

The re-organised PRU arrangements continue to make a clear contribution to the reduction in permanent exclusions over time. This has been achieved through a review of the local offer, an improved curriculum and a commitment on the part of schools to find positive alternatives to exclusion and clearer pathways to post 16 training and learning.

The Inclusion and Attendance Advisers have adopted more preventative approaches to focus their interventions on the factors that make a difference to children's behaviours, which in turn affects the rates of permanent and fixed term exclusions.

These factors include the effectiveness of school practice and in-school support, including the use of the Pupil Premium; the cooperation of schools in the local 'In Year Fair Access' arrangements; the alternative curriculum provision and support for schools provided by the Pupil Referral Units; the availability of support to Primary schools for challenging behaviour; the Local Inclusion Forums; early identification of special educational needs and the use of High Needs funding and the LIFT process; and the use of support through Early Help notifications. We will continue to use this range of provision and resources to continue to provide the best support for pupils with challenging behaviour and other needs, and to continue to reduce the use of exclusion for all pupils, and especially for vulnerable learners.

Children with SEN

Against the background of overall improvement in helping schools to find good alternatives to exclusion, the exclusion of children with SEN has reduced in Kent. This measure is now better than

the national averages:

- o Nationally 54.9% of pupils who have been permanently excluded have an EHCP or SEN Support status; in Kent the figure is significantly lower at 29.8%;

- o In terms of fixed-term exclusion, nationally 44.8% of excluded children have SEN concerns, while Kent's figure is much lower at 36.3%;

- o For the pupils who have been excluded, the average number of days lost has been reduced to 4.2 better than the national average of 4.8.

Children in Care (CiC)

In the past 12 months, there has been no permanent exclusion of a child in care. Inclusion and Attendance Advisers (IAAs) are working in partnership with schools to successfully find good alternatives to permanent exclusions, so that in the past year we have successfully worked to reverse 49 possible CiC permanent exclusions.

Fixed-term exclusion of CiC has also been reduced with CiC representing 4.3% (419 episodes) of overall fixed term exclusions, a reduction from the previous year's 5.3% (529 episodes). This reduction was made in the context of the reduction in Fixed-term exclusions of all student populations.

Attendance

Attendance is a key priority and improving pupils' attendance rates can have a significant impact on outcomes, particularly for vulnerable groups where early indications of other more serious underlying problems can be reflected in erratic or poor attendance.

For example, nearly 50% of young people who become home educated have a history of persistent absence from school. Poor attendance is also a significant risk factor for children and young people who are excluded and those who become NEET.

The latest data on attendance indicates a persistent absence figure for Primary schools of 9.5%, which compares to a figure of 9.3% for the previous academic year. The available figure for secondary schools is 13.7%, up from the previous year's figure of 13.2%. This is disappointing, especially as more vulnerable learners are more likely to be absent from school compared to other pupils.

National data for 2016-17 shows that Kent has higher rates of absence than the national averages, for both phases, with national figures of 8.7% for primary and 12.8% for secondary. During the same period, the attendance rate for Kent Primary schools has stayed the same at 95.9% while the rate in Kent Secondary schools has declined slightly from 94.8% to 94.6%.

During the past 18 months we have developed a new delivery model refocusing on preventative, advisory and outcomes-focused support for schools and families to improve attendance. At the same time we reconfigured our services to form a single county wide school attendance enforcement team, in order to make the legal process more agile, consistent and effective when taking court action and issuing penalty notices. The new approach was based on shifting the intensive interventions in relation to attendance and exclusions, which Education Welfare Officers and Exclusion Officers traditionally carried out, to be delivered in the Early Help Units.

In order to make schools' access to the service easier and the legal process for taking court action in relation to attendance more outcome-focused, the service has piloted and implemented the Digital Front Door and the new Code of Conduct for issuing education related penalty notices.

A revised model school attendance policy was also published and shared with schools in April 2017.

We are very clear that an attendance rate below 96% is not good enough. Schools take the initial actions to help or intervene when a pupil's attendance rate falls below 96% without a justifiable reason. In some extreme circumstances where a pupil's unauthorised absence persists and attendance has dropped to below 90%, the matter is escalated for legal action to be taken, which may include an Education Supervision Order, a Penalty Notice or prosecution taken against the parents. In the last academic year, KCC prosecuted 223 parents for failing to ensure their children's regular school attendance.

A good Impact on improving attendance has been made in schools where:

- There are regular parent interviews where attendance targets are set.

- Heads of Year or other staff make home visits

- Taxis are arranged where transport may be a problem

- Reward trips are provided

- Texts and phone calls are made to the home for attendance at parents' evenings

- There is first day calling home for a pupil's absence

- Parental workshops are provided on how parents can support their child.

Gypsy Roma Traveller (GRT)/Minority Ethnic (ME) Pupils' School Attendance

Two years ago, Kent GRT children's attendance rate was worse than the national average. The more effective interventions and support provided by the School Liaison Officers and the Education Engagement Officers over the past two years has reversed the trend and resulted in the improvement in attendance of the cohorts who are now performing better than the national average.

The latest DfE attendance release shows that Kent Gypsy/Roma children's attendance rate is 88%, compared with the national average of 82.5%; and Travellers of Irish Heritage children's attendance rate is 82.5% while the national average is 82.1%.

Priority 6: A Growth Culture

All the research shows that promoting a growth culture or mindset in schools which drives the belief that all children can do better than expected, makes a significant difference. Where schools act on the basis that all pupils' innate abilities and aptitudes can be improved with the right support, and that they do not give up on any child, it is more likely to get the engagement and effort by all children to do well. A whole range of effective good practice follows from this belief which makes a significant difference to the outcomes achieved for vulnerable learners.

This approach has informed the School Improvement Strategy in Kent. In working with schools we aim to share the best practice through school to school support and promote growth cultures in schools which impact on pupil progress. Over the last 5 years, we have made a number of improvements to the quality of education in Kent schools, which is reflected in Ofsted Inspection judgements. The percentage of good and outstanding schools in Kent was 55% in 2011. Overall,

the latest Ofsted data shows that 92% of schools are rated good or outstanding. This has helped to ensure more vulnerable learners are receiving a good education.

A Select Committee Inquiry into Grammar Schools and Social Mobility was undertaken in 2016 in order to improve the representation of children from disadvantaged backgrounds in grammar schools, if suitable for their abilities. The report made a number of recommendations about disadvantaged pupils viewing grammar school as a potential option and how they might secure a grammar school place:

The recommendations are being acted on, for example to ensure that as the champion of pupils, parents and families, KCC will work with all Primary school Headteachers to identify those most academically able pupils and discuss with parents the opportunity to put their child forward for the Kent Test. Another recommendation was to ensure selective schools should engage fully with parents and families to address misconceptions and promote the offer grammar schools can make to all students irrespective of background. All 16 recommendations were agreed by the County Council and progress in implementing them is being monitored.

Priority 7: Using Research and Guidance on Narrowing Achievement Gaps

A specific part of the School Improvement Strategy has been to support all schools to make the best use of Pupil Premium funding by consistent use of the Sutton Trust's evidence papers, including the most effective and low cost strategies in their Teaching and Learning Toolkit.

These are used more widely and consistently than previously by schools to narrow achievement gaps, but there is still more to do to disseminate these more effective approaches.

These proven strategies include the regular use of helpful feedback to pupils, peer mentoring and peer assessment, the use of meta-cognition which encourages pupils to reflect on and develop their learning techniques and habits, and the development of mastery learning (which involves regular practice) and the use of coaching for children and staff. A recent report by The Sutton Trust concluded that while more than 60% of schools had accessed and knew about the Toolkit materials less than 10% of schools were using the strategies effectively.

In the past year we have done more to disseminate the toolkit materials in regular briefings for school staff and governors. We have promoted the evidence on the best use Teaching assistants regarding support for SEND pupils.

We have also developed KCC guidance documents for schools: The Diminishing the Difference Toolkit which was launched at the annual Closing the Gap Conference. Further guidance: Effective Strategies for Improving Progress and Attainment for Disadvantaged Pupils has been purchased by a number of schools.

We have also promoted the use of Pupil Premium reviews using intervention funding and serviced by KLEs, SIAs and external consultants. These reviews have been commissioned and targeted at LA schools with underperforming disadvantaged groups.

Training has also included a focus on the Governing Body Responsibility in SEN; NQT conference workshops covering the promotion of the toolkits and documents; and professional development for class teachers on how best to meet needs of vulnerable learners, including those with SEN and pupils supported by the Pupil Premium.

Emerging work with the Kent and Medway Strategic School Improvement Fund has been used to identify districts and schools where there is a need to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

Priority 8: Effective Targeting of Resources

We recognise the importance of schools being able to target their resources efficiently so that vulnerable learners receive additional good teaching as individuals and in small groups, in addition to whole class lessons. For example, we encourage schools to give some children more help and time in school to do homework, because they cannot, or will not get the help to, do it at home. At a time when it is estimated that 50% of children are having extra tutoring outside school, it is not unreasonable to expect that disadvantaged children would need additional teaching and coaching. They are also likely to need the support of nurture groups to build relationships and attachment to learning.

We have focused on these issues in Pupil Premium reviews and in the reviews carried out with schools into how our £23m investment in High Needs funding is best used to support pupils with SEND. These are critical issues for schools, as the use of resources is critical to achieving maximum impact.

We have also encouraged all schools to make good use of the devolved resources for special educational needs, including the Specialist Teaching and Learning Service, in District LIFTs (Local Inclusion Forum Teams) and support for the coordination of this work by lead Special Schools and the executive groups of Headteachers. These are designed to provide support to schools to achieve better outcomes and narrow gaps for SEN pupils.

We have developed new ways of targeting funding and supporting pupils at an earlier stage without the need for statutory assessment through the development of the Local Inclusion Forum Team (LIFT) and High Needs funding.

We have developed Best Practice Guidance for the Early Years sector. This guidance and newly established Early Years Local Inclusion Forums (LIFT) is supporting settings to increase their expertise in supporting children with SEND.

We have progressively increased the level of expertise in mainstream schools through a partnership between 12 lead Special Schools, the devolved Specialist Teaching and Learning Service (STLS), and the Local Inclusion Forum Team (LIFT). Schools report that 97% of LIFT activity has a positive impact (86% good or better) and 87% of schools rate the impact of the STLS as good or better. We have delivered a programme of training in each district through the lead Special school; over 40 different training modules were delivered to over 75% of schools. The evaluations demonstrate the staff who attended were more confident about their ability to support pupils with special educational needs, especially those with ASD and speech and language needs.

We have allocated £2m outreach funding to Special Schools in each District to provide advice and training for mainstream schools in supporting vulnerable learners with SEND. This is allocated through the LIFT process and is based on levels of need. It provides more bespoke training and advice to mainstream schools on more specialist aspects of SEN, including autism, emotional and behavioural difficulties, and speech and language needs.

We have put in place a core training offer in each district, developed in response to the local need identified at LIFT, to support the Universal level of Mainstream Core Standards and Best Practice Guidance in Early Years, provided within national frameworks such as Language for Learning. In addition to this, outreach services provide parent focused programmes such as Early Bird, Early Bird Plus and Cygnet to help parents with the early development of their children.

Priority 9: KAH Funding and School to School Support

We have allocated funding from the Schools Funding Forum to the Kent Association of Headteachers, over £10m in the last several years, to promote school collaborations and school to

school support. We see this as one of the best ways to support teacher development and spread the influences of the best practice in improving teaching and raising standards, including narrowing achievement gaps.

The KAH works in partnership with the Local Authority to develop a self-improving school system in the county. An important aspect of this process has been the promotion of collaboration and school-to-school support. During the past couple of years year 522 Kent schools were involved in collaborative projects for school improvement. Of the collaborating schools, 329 benefitted from successful bids for funding to the KAH Area Boards. These bids were focused on raising standards, narrowing achievement gaps, improving teaching, building leadership capacity and supporting schools to improve OFSTED inspection outcomes. Overall there has been a positive outcome, reflected in more good and outstanding schools, improved standards of attainment at each key stage and better outcomes for pupils supported by the Pupil Premium.

In partnership with KAH we have developed a new Leadership Strategy for Kent schools, which was launched in October 2016 with a 3 year implementation plan. The strategy was co-produced in partnership by the Local Authority, the Kent Association of Headteachers, the Dioceses, Kent and Medway Teaching Schools Network and the Kent Association of Governors. The strategy is aimed at ensuring Kent schools continue to have the quality of leadership that benefits all pupils' education, and especially impact on improving outcomes for vulnerable learners.

Priority 10: Effective Use of High Needs Funding

In the past year we have carried out a review to ensure all schools make effective use of high needs funding, for pupils with special educational needs, to support earlier intervention and a more flexible approach to addressing pupils' additional learning needs.

The funding has increased from £8 million in 2014-15 to £23 million in 2016-17, to top up the funding for pupils in mainstream schools with more severe and complex special educational needs. 60% of the funding is currently allocated to pupils who do not have statutory Education, Health and Care Plans. These pupils are a significant group of vulnerable learners.

Since March 2016 the number of pupils in mainstream school supported by high needs funding has increased from 1,475 to 2,500 in March 2017. Investment in SEN across Kent is significant and represents a greater proportion of the DSG than similar LA areas.

We have undertaken an in-depth look at how mainstream schools use their SEN resources and how these are augmented by high needs funding. The evidence shows that that where these resources are used well, pupils make good process and at review evidence indicates that the attainment gap has closed and the level of support needed can be reduced. However, practice across schools is variable and it will continue to be a priority for this strategy to roll out a new model of high needs funding in April 2018 and to continue to promote the most effective practices in supporting pupils in mainstream schools with special educational needs.

In the 2017 school results pupils with special educational needs improved their overall attainment but gaps between their achievement and that of other pupils remain very wide, and wider than the national gaps for SEN learners.

Priority 11: Continue to Develop and Improve the Work of PRUs

Some of the most vulnerable learners in Kent are educated through alternative provision in our Pupil Referral Units. It has been a priority, therefore, to continue to develop the work of the PRUs, including the Education Health Needs Service, and ensure the devolved or delegated funding to local management committees run by Headteachers or to groups of schools is used well to improve these pupils' quality of education and their outcomes. The aim has been to ensure fewer

vulnerable learners are excluded and those in alternative provision achieve good outcomes and destinations.

Overall, in 2017, the quality of provision in our PRUs has declined with one provision being judged inadequate by Ofsted and two others declining from good to requires improvement. This is disappointing, and reflects the need to continually review this provision and ensure the necessary continued improvement is achieved. At the same time outcomes at age 16 continue to improve for pupils in the PRUs and over 90% achieved a positive post 16 destination in 2017.

The schools in the districts of Canterbury and Ashford receive full devolvement of alternative provision funding to enable them to develop more creative alternatives to PRU provision. Headteachers in the districts of Swale, Maidstone and Malling, Dartford and Gravesham and Shepway, have reviewed their provisions over the past year and are using the funding more effectively in their schools to reduce the need to exclude young people.

The total number of young people being removed from mainstream school to attend a PRU in Kent has reduced from 0.33% in Nov 2015 to 0.18% in Sept 2017, compared to a National Average of 0.27%.

Whilst the Kent Health Needs Education Service has increased its support, the numbers attending behaviour provisions continues to decline and has reduced from 0.28% to 0.1% of the pupil population, for this same time period.

£11,486,277 of funding is available for the running of PRUs and development of alternative provision. Of this approximately £3.9 million is now going directly into schools through local arrangements to support schools develop more inclusive practice and more creative alternative curriculum offers for vulnerable learners who present challenging behaviour.

Of the young people who are educated in a behaviour PRU, 28.9% have been successfully reintegrated back into mainstream education in 2016-17 compared to 17.5% in 2015-2016. 93% secured an appropriate post 16 destination.

The Kent Health Needs Education Service supports young people with mental and physical health problems back into education. Last year the number of young people in the service reintegrated successfully back into education increased to 49%, (22.5% for the previous year) with placement time reducing to an average of 14 weeks.

Work has continued in the development of appropriate curriculum provision. There is a county wide statement of curriculum expectations for PRUs highlighting the importance of a 14-19 offer with pilot programmes being developed in Maidstone and Thanet.

The number of pupils attending a PRU or Alternative Curriculum Provision has reduced by 14% since January 2016, with further expected reductions as some districts transition to their new delivery models this September.

Nationally, the average number of young people accessing education through a PRU, including dual subsidiary is 0.29%*. For 2015-2016, the average for Kent was 0.34%. Currently, the average for Kent is 0.27% (*Source: DFE National Tables SFR20/2016)

All the provisions have been reviewed with significant changes being made in Swale, Maidstone and Malling, Dartford and Gravesham, and Shepway.

In Swale for example, in January 2016, 117 pupils were accessing the PRU and this number reduced to 45 in September 2017 which is 0.19% of the student population. The proportion of students receiving a Fixed Term Exclusion has reduced from 26% to 0.4% and there has been a reduction in the number of students receiving part time provision. The local schools work

collaboratively with the provision and deliver vocational qualifications across their sites for young people placed in the PRU.

In Maidstone and Malling there has been a reduction in pupil numbers to 45 for September 2017. Schools are collaboratively developing further inclusive curriculum offers in conjunction with Mid Kent College.

In Dartford and Gravesham an academy order has been issued for the inadequate North West Kent PRU, which was judged to have serious weaknesses by Ofsted. Inspectors recognised that there had been a review of the leadership and management and a new Headteacher appointed, but that this had not had enough time to impact on the quality of the provision.

KCC is investing in the improvement in the quality of facilities, with significant funding allocated to improve the resource. The restructure of the PRU has allowed funding to be distributed to schools to enable their development of more inclusive practices and reduce the number of pupils in the PRU.

In Shepway the provision has been redesigned to include support and reintegration for Key Stage 3 pupils. The proportion of the pupil population in the Shepway district receiving both fixed and permanent exclusions was high. In particular, the largest school in the district was one of the highest excluding Secondary schools in the county. The proportion of the student population in the Shepway district receiving a Fixed Term Exclusion is currently 0.6%.

The schools have recently committed to no future permanent exclusions and to a more creative, split model which better meets their needs, including one Academy, which is geographically separate, running their own provision. There have been no permanent exclusions in the 2017-18 school year to date, and we have seen a 50% reduction in fixed term exclusions compared to the same period last year. There has also been a reduction in numbers from 117 in the previous academic year to 34 in 2017-18, which is welcome. It means more vulnerable learners are being supported effectively in their own schools. In November 2016, 74% of PRU leavers In Shepway were in positive post 16 destinations, and following intensive support work 89% were in positive destinations by January 2017. Actions have been taken to ensure this continues to improve.

Priority 12: Early Help and Prevention

Central to this Strategy is the work of the Early Help and Preventative Service, working closely with schools and other services to identify the right vulnerable children for support. It provides the right level of responsive and timely additional help for vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people, and their families. This is a major resource which is designed to have an impact on improving outcomes for these vulnerable children and young people, on removing barriers to their learning and engagement and to narrowing achievement gaps.

The Early Help model is designed to ensure that families receive the right support at the right time, and this support is provided across our universal, additional and intensive support services. Partnership working with schools has improved in the last year, and schools, who are a key provider of early help services, are vital to ensuring successful outcomes for children and young people. Consistently, around 80% of Early Help cases close with positive outcomes achieved, demonstrating the positive impact that Early Help is having on the lives of children, young people and their families. The re-referral rate for cases coming back into Early Help Units is low, at around 12%, which is encouraging evidence that Early Help builds resilience in families to empower them to resolve their own concerns in future.

The service also focuses on improving school attendance. This takes place within intensive and additional support, as well as with involvement from the Inclusion and Attendance team. Attendance in Kent has improved in the last year. Attendance is a key criterion for success within the Troubled Families programme, and this is embedded in the Early Help Units. These children

and young people are frequently able to demonstrate sustained improved attendance over 90% across three terms, giving a firm foundation for future school attendance and better progress in learning.

A significant volume of referrals to Early Help are for young people with behavioural issues and emotional difficulties. Early Help workers undertake direct work with young people to develop strategies for improved communication and emotional resilience. In some cases young people may be supported by a mentor to further build skills and confidence, which in turn leads to improved engagement with both learning and other positive activities.

Priority 13: Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing

The Strategy also recognises the importance of improving the mental health and emotional wellbeing of vulnerable learners. We have aimed to target resources for mental health and emotional wellbeing, in and out of school by re-commissioning CAMHS to work directly in schools and in Early Help units; by commissioning more mental health and emotional wellbeing support services through Early Help; by rolling out the HeadStart resilience programmes across Kent schools; and by making effective use of the Education Health Needs Service.

KCC has been working on a number of developments in the last year to improve support services for children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing. These developments include a new CAMHS arrangement from September 2017, more support for emotional health through the School Health Service which began in April 2017 and the roll out of the Big Lottery Funded HeadStart programme in Kent.

KCC, Public Health and the Seven Kent Clinical Commissioning Groups, have been working together for some time to improve the quality and scope of universal, targeted and specialist Emotional Health and Mental Wellbeing provision across the County.

The new CAMHS model and joint commissioning approach aims to redress the current gaps and blockages in the pathways that children, young people and their families experience when accessing mental health services in Kent. With the new mental health provider there is now a single point of access and clear seamless pathways to support, ranging from universal support in schools into targeted support in Early Help, through to Highly Specialist care, with better transition between the services.

In order to ensure clarity and equality of provision across the County the new provider, North East London Foundation Trust, is now delivering tier two and three services County wide. Public Health is working in partnership with Kent Community Hospital Foundation Trust to deliver the County wide universal and targeted emotional health and wellbeing service. This Emotional Health and Wellbeing programme has been delivered since April 2017 and provides support for pupils' mental health and emotional resilience in schools. It is delivered through the School Health Team.

The HeadStart Programme which secured £10m of funding from the Big Lottery, has been running since September 2016. HeadStart complements the work of CAMHS. HeadStart is delivering an Emotional Resilience model for joint work with 134 schools, in order to improve the mental health and emotional wellbeing of at-risk 10-16 year olds in Kent.

This work represents significant improvement in the provision for, and access to, mental health services and support for vulnerable and at risk children and young people. Good progress has been made by all partners working together to address the gaps that were present previously, and it is very welcome that there a more coherent and seamless range of services to support children and young people from the lowest to the highest level of need.

Priority 14: Parenting Programmes

As well as providing a range of family support services, this Strategy recognised the need for specific parenting programmes. The aim has been to extend the access to, and range of, parenting support and parenting programmes, through Early Help's family work. The objectives have been to support parent's involvement in their children's learning; to expand the parenting programmes provided by Children's Centres to schools; to commission more parenting programmes for schools to purchase; and to extend Family Learning programmes to more schools. School leaders see parental engagement as a barrier to closing the attainment gap of some disadvantaged pupils but the Sutton Trust identified that only 57% of these leaders had an intervention in place to address this concern.

Over the past twelve months we have further developed a district wide parenting offer that provides a range of Parenting Skills programmes, including the new Kent Parenting Programme, 'Understanding Yourself, Understanding Your Child'.

This is now being delivered in every district in Kent. Initial feedback is encouraging with 117 of the 186 initial participants completing the course. This is a retention rate of 62.9%. Evaluation has been formalised through use of an internationally recognised tool (TOPSE), which measures parental self-efficacy and the distance travelled in a range of areas such as discipline, boundary setting, learning and knowledge.

The programme has received an enhanced Quality Mark through Laser Learning Awards and is subject to regular internal and external Quality Assurance.

The provision of Parenting programmes continues to form an integral part of Early Help support. This includes the creation of a bespoke Kent Parenting Programme called 'Understanding Yourself, Understanding Your Child' (UYUYC).

In the past twelve months Early Help has extended the parenting offer available to families across Kent. Each District has a comprehensive parenting offer. This ranges from one to one advice and strategies to help behaviour management to a selection of accredited courses available to all families. These include the universal Solihull programme, the specialist Cygnet programme and the new evidence based in-house intensive level UYUYC.

A comprehensive parenting offer, including the new UYUYC programme, is now being delivered across Kent. 21 Kent Parenting Programme courses have been delivered and the feedback has been broadly positive. Additional training has been secured for course facilitators, which will be available for school staff to undertake, thus enabling the course to be delivered in more schools in the coming year.

Priority 15: Pupil Premium Reviews

A useful means of improving the use of the Pupil Premium in schools, to improve outcomes and narrow achievement gaps, is to have a formal review of the school's strategy. We have promoted this process and encourage schools to undertake Pupil Premium Reviews, where gaps are not closing and where there may be a need to develop the effectiveness of the strategies supported by the funding. In order to support these reviews, we support schools that are effectively using the Pupil Premium to share their best practice.

At the same time, KCC has developed a Pupil Premium Toolkit which can be purchased via EduKent. The Toolkit looks at whole school approaches to improving the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and provides exemplars as to the best use of the resources. This resource is supported by training opportunities for school staff across the County.

Pupil Premium best practice was highlighted at a conference in February 2017 attended by 220 staff from across schools in Kent. Best practice case studies are available along with [Strategies for Diminishing The Difference](#) on the Kelsi website. Staff took the opportunity at the conference to share approaches for the effective use of the Pupil Premium, informed by collaborative activity by their schools. KCC also highlighted the availability of Pupil Premium reviews.

Schools need to consider how a Pupil Premium review best fits with their on-going cycle of improvement to identify when they would most benefit from the fresh perspective of an experienced system leader. A review will be a priority for any school where disadvantaged pupils are failing to progress to their expected attainment. Ofsted Inspectors will recommend an external review of the school's use of the Pupil Premium if they identify weakness regarding the provision and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

Senior Improvement Advisers monitor schools' statutory obligation to use Pupil Premium funding effectively, and challenge school leadership on the evidence of the impact of the use of the funding on the progress of pupils.

Priority 16: Early Years Pupil Premium

Similarly, it has been a priority to ensure the Early Years Pupil Premium is used effectively in early years settings. Introduced in 2014-2015, it is worth up to £300 per child. The 2017 data demonstrates a significant narrowing of gaps in achievement between eligible children and others in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This means that more vulnerable children are leaving the Early Years Foundation Stage having achieved a good level of development.

The Early Years Pupil Premium provides extra funding for 3 and 4 year old children whose parents are in receipt of certain benefits or who have been in care or adopted from care (approximately 13% of children).The purpose of the funding is to ensure that children make accelerated progress to close the gap between their attainment and that of their less disadvantaged peers.

Increased uptake and monitoring of the impact of the funding remains key to improving outcomes for disadvantaged children. Take up, measured as a percentage of the estimated 13% of three and four year old children eligible for the funding has increased to 47% in 2017, but clearly there is more to do to ensure more children benefit from this additional support.

The Early Years and Childcare Equality and Inclusion Advisers offer advice and support to settings to increase the take up and use of this additional funding. Early years settings that do not claim the funding receive regular telephone calls to offer additional support for increasing the take up. An Intervention Tracker has been developed to support settings to identify which of the Pupil Premium interventions are having the most impact.

Priority 17: The Vulnerable Learners Data Pack

To support the delivery and monitoring of the impact of this strategy we have developed a new District vulnerable learner data pack. This includes other indicators of impact alongside the attainment gaps to ensure that the resources available achieve maximum impact. The data pack also includes more information for schools using the Mosaic groups data L, M, N and O to indicate higher than average levels of deprivation to support the identification of vulnerable learners facing multiple disadvantages. The children and young people least likely to succeed are those facing multiple disadvantages, which are often a combination of low income, mental health, drug or alcohol abuse and domestic abuse in the household.

Considerable work has taken place in the last year to develop a richer picture of the data around vulnerable learners.

The integrated dataset has been refreshed again, with additional indicators included, to provide a detailed understanding of the links between vulnerability and outcomes, as well as factoring in the effect of multiple disadvantage. This has also been used to produce a tool that shows, at school level or district level, the distribution of vulnerable learners facing multiple disadvantage to the Mosaic groups, particularly groups L, M, N and O.

A vulnerable learners scorecard has been developed, pulling together relevant indicators from across children's services to give a clear view of all issues in terms of activity, attainment and outcomes. This is complemented by district data packs that provide more detail at a district level to inform local review and action planning.

These developments provide a deeper understanding of the issues facing a number of vulnerable learners and the more comprehensive data informs practice and the responses our services, and schools and early years settings make, in addressing the needs of children and young people.

Priority 18: District Coordination

A key objective of the strategy has been to ensure that our services are joined up and coherent in the ways that we support vulnerable children and young people. We have focused on improving the coordination of services and activities at district level, to ensure support for vulnerable learners is well targeted and has maximum impact. This includes ensuring effective school engagement with, and links between, LIFT, Early Help, In Year Fair Access panels, PRUs and alternative provision, the Health Needs Education Service, the use of High Needs funding and outreach support by Special schools. This District coordination is managed by the Area Education Officers, working with Senior Improvement Advisers, the Heads of Service in Early Help and the Assistant Directors in Specialist Children's Services and other officers.

Over the past eighteen months, twelve reviews of directorate wide district based working have taken place (one per district) to explore how joined up services are and how effective work is at improving outcomes for children, young people and families.

Each review was conducted through a series of meetings with managers and leaders looking at the purpose of, and interface between, CYPE with schools and other services. The reviews provided an opportunity to listen to the views of school leaders and to explore what is working well and identify areas for improvement.

The aims of the District Reviews are to:

- Investigate and explore whether services are joined up within the district and working effectively, with a particular focus on meeting the needs of vulnerable learners
- Monitor how well the CYPE services interface with schools and settings
- Identify what is working well across the district, what the challenges are, and focus the improvement priorities for the district

Summary of Findings

Strengths Identified	Improvement Opportunities Identified Across All 12 reviews:
- CYPE services have become more joined up with each other and with external partners - Consistency of access to services for families, young people and children has improved - Timeliness of CYPE response has improved (eg. Early Help waiting times, response to CME and EHE referrals)	- Transition at all phases, particularly for vulnerable learners - Narrowing attainment gaps at all key stages - Developing post 16 pathways and provision - Encouraging further collaboration between schools, and between early years providers and across all phases - Promoting understanding and application of

Strengths Identified	Improvement Opportunities Identified Across All 12 reviews:
• The Early Help offer is better understood by CYPE colleagues, schools and external partners • Early Help practice and processes have become embedded • "One front door" concept for access to support • Strengthening interface between Early Help and Specialist Children's Services and the Step-down/Step-up processes • District Management Meetings and Area Strategy Forums support integrated working across teams and ensure a strategic approach • Use of nominated link workers attached to schools and designated "champions" improve understanding and engagement with partners • A "Team Around the School" approach for priority schools has been working well • Effective collaborative working by settings and schools • LIFT process and STLS support is valued by schools	Thresholds by schools and partners • Improving consistency of assessment of need and referrals made by schools (eg. with respect to SEN identification, EHN, ECHP requests) • District responses to rapidly changing demographics • Engagement with hard to reach families and those just under social care thresholds • Enhancing school and partner involvement with Early Help cases, case closures and the onward journey of the child and family • Effective use of data to identify and forecast needs and then track and monitor outcomes, attainment and destinations • Communication of CYPE services' offer to schools and partners • Continuity of CYPE staff linking with schools and partners • Access to resources (High Needs Funding, LIFT) and assessment of consequential impact • Broaden scope of reviews to include Youth Justice and the newly commissioned emotional health and wellbeing pathway

Outreach in every district is now well co-ordinated and activity data evidences timely access in order to help mainstream schools increase their SEND capacity. Each District has developed a local plan overseen by the LIFT Executive to support its schools and there are good examples of joined up working around transition.

We have reviewed resources for pre-school children with the most complex SEND, establishing a County Lead role to improve the District co-ordination of specialist SEN and Early Years Services supporting providers. We have established new funding arrangements, SEN Inclusion Fund (SENIF) to comply with national policy for delivering additional funding for children with special education needs in the early years.

Priority 19: Develop E Learning Resources

In developing this strategy we identified a gap in the resources available to support vulnerable learners with distance learning and catch up opportunities. Consequently, we have developed and extended the use of the new Kent E learning platform which provides a range of opportunities and teaching resources to support vulnerable learners and complements learning programmes in schools. There are specific virtual live and recorded lessons for vulnerable learner groups, including English and Maths, catch up programmes, revision materials, and extra support opportunities plus new resources, and careers advice and guidance. New English and Maths functional skills E Learning opportunities are available and the 2017 results for students using these resources have been encouraging.

How will we know that the strategy is successful?

The measures that will indicate continued success with this strategy include the following:

- Reductions in the percentage of pupils supported by the Pupil Premium and those with special educational needs who are persistently absent, are excluded from school and who do not achieve the expected standards at each key stage

- Increased take up of the free childcare entitlement for eligible two year olds

- Increased engagement by vulnerable families in Children's Centres' support

- The percentage of children in need and those with a child protection plan who are registered with a Children's Centre and are benefitting from family support

- Increased readiness for school by Pupil Premium pupils at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage

- Year on year improvements in the standards attained at each key stage by pupils supported by the Pupil Premium and those with special educational needs, and narrowing of the achievement gaps

- Continued reductions in the percentage of young people who are NEET

- Improvements in engagement with education for young people in the criminal justice system and evidence that they are achieving better qualifications to enter the job market

- Reduced numbers of children in care who offend and are in the criminal justice system

- Reduced numbers of children and young people who need the statutory protection of a child protection plan or who are designated children in need

- Increased numbers of pupils supported by the Pupil Premium and those with special educational needs who take up apprenticeships and supported apprenticeships

- Reduced numbers of children and young people who need higher level support and specialist treatment for mental health and emotional difficulties

- Reductions in the number of pupils supported by the Pupil Premium and those with special educational needs who do not attend a good or outstanding school

- Increased numbers of pupils supported by the Pupil Premium, who are able, who access education in selective schools

More specifically we aim to achieve the following improvements in outcomes, by working in close partnership with schools and Early Years settings, by 2020:

- The FSM achievement gap in the EYFS will reduce to 8%

- The FSM achievement gaps at Key Stages 2 and 4 will continue to reduce from the 2017 baseline, and be less than the national gap figures for pupils from low income backgrounds. In Key Stage 2 the gap for FSM will reduce to 8% by 2020 and in Key Stage 4 the FSM gap will reduce to 23%

- The achievement gaps for Children in Care at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 will reduce to 25% and 35% respectively

- The achievement gaps for SEN at Key Stage 2 and GCSE will reduce to 35%, and actual levels of attainment and rates of progress will improve each year.

- We will reduce the number of KCC schools in an Ofsted category of concern year by year, so that by 2020 no schools will be in this category, and no vulnerable child will be in a failing school.

- There will be an increase in the number of good schools, with at least 95% of all schools judged as good or outstanding by 2020, so that fewer vulnerable learners will be attending schools requiring improvement.

- At least 95% of Education, Health and Care plan (EHC) assessments will be completed within 20 weeks (from 26 weeks) and pupils with plans will be making good progress and achieve above average outcomes when compared with national benchmarks.

- There will be no more than 1% of young people aged 16-18 who are NEET.

- The number of NEETs coming from vulnerable groups will reduce to no more than 70 by 2020.

- The Level 3 achievement gap for young people from disadvantaged groups will be above the national average and the gap between this group and other students will have reduced to 14% by 2020.

- By 2020, the number of assisted employment opportunities for vulnerable learners with learning difficulties and disabilities will increase to 175.

- Re-offending by young people will reduce to 25% by summer 2020 and ensure at least 76% engage in full time education. At least 85% of young offenders aged 16 and 17 engage in learning or employment with training.

- The attendance of children and young people will improve by supporting the reduction of persistent absence to 7.0% in Primary and 9.5% in Secondary schools.

- By 2020, no children and young people in care will be excluded from school, fewer than 4% will be persistently absent and their attainment will improve year on year from the 2017 baseline and be above the national average. The achievement gaps at Key Stages 2 and 4 will be less than the national gaps.

- There will be fewer than 25 pupils permanently excluded from schools by 2020.

- By 2020, all young people attending a PRU will have achieved good qualifications at age 16 including English and mathematics, and will have a positive learning or training destination at ages 16 and 17.

- By 2020, all Children Missing Education will be identified, tracked and monitored, and at least 90% of all new children referred who are found will be offered suitable education provision within 30 days.

- There will be at least a 30% reduction in the numbers of children in need and those with a child protection plan, and at least 90% of children and families supported through the Early Help units will achieve a positive outcome.

- The Troubled Families Programme will ensure that high numbers of families are 'turned around', up to 7,190 by 2019 out of the target cohort of 8,960 families.

Conclusion

Progress is evident in a good number of the priorities in this Strategy for Vulnerable Learners but there is clearly more to do. The attainment gaps for pupils supported by the Pupil Premium and those with special educational needs are still wider than the national gaps, although there has been steady improvement in their actual attainment outcomes. We have deliberately set ourselves challenging targets to achieve improved outcomes, to focus attention more on the issues and to express our sense of urgency that that these improvements are needed.

It should be clear from this Strategy that the needs of vulnerable children and young people are a priority in Kent, and we take seriously our challenge to do better for them. It is not acceptable that children's life chances are determined so much by their birth circumstances and that as they grow and move through the education system that they can often fewer opportunities to succeed. They are more likely to be excluded, to attend school less often, to have behavioural and emotional difficulties and to miss out on the enrichment activities that allow other children to thrive. They are also more likely to offend and to need the support of Early Help and Social Work. It is our mission to reverse and reduce these trends.

The Strategy is built on the premise that we can achieve greater impact by ensuring that all our activities and services work in a joined up way; that our responses and ways of working are coherent; that we work in a targeted way that is well informed by intelligent data analysis; and that we do not duplicate effort and respond in timely ways so that opportunities to do the right things for children and young people are not missed. They deserve nothing less.

Appendix 1 - The Kent Profile

In developing this Strategy a number of key data sets on vulnerable learner outcomes have been interrogated across all Key Stages. This data clearly demonstrates the need to develop approaches to supporting vulnerable learners if outcomes are to significantly improve.

Deprivation and Free School Meals

Kent is ranked 100th out of 152 county and unitary authorities in the English Indices of Deprivation, placing Kent within England's least 35% deprived local authorities. However, there are areas in Kent that are within the 20% most deprived wards in England, often coastal towns. *(Kent.Gov.UK – Area Profiles).*
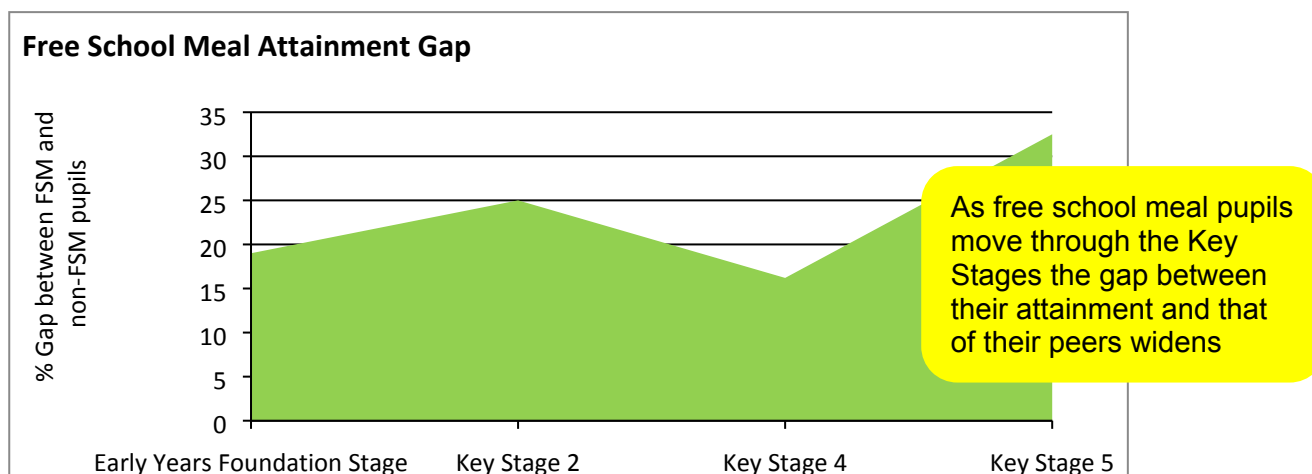
In Kent there are approximately 230,000 school age learners attending 552 schools, 22 Special schools and 7 Pupil Referral Units. 11.9% of learners in Kent schools are eligible for Free School Meals (FSM); the National average is 15.1% as shown in the table below. *(Kent Facts and Figures -January 2017)*

	Primary	Secondary	Special	Overall
National	15.2%	14.1%	37.4%	15.1%
Kent	12.2%	10.6%	32.7%	11.9%

In 2016-17

- 56% of Kent schools had a learner population of which less than 10% are eligible for FSM
- 24% of Kent schools had a learner population of which less than 5% are eligible for FSM
- 8% of Kent schools had over a quarter of their learners who are eligible for FSM
- 57% of PRUs had over a third of their learners who are eligible for FSM

> *(School Profiles – CYP Integrated Dataset – 2016)*

- 22% of Primary aged learners eligible for FSM were supported by the Troubled Families programme, compared to 4% who were not eligible for FSM
- 10% of Secondary aged learners eligible for FSM were supported by Specialist Children's Services as a Child in Need, compared to 1.7% of pupils not eligible for FSM

> *(CYP Integrated Dataset – 2016)*

The attainment gap, at different Key Stages for learners eligible for FSM, is highlighted in the chart below. Narrowing this gap continues to be a significant challenge for Kent. Progress has been made but it is uneven across the County.

Free School Meal Attainment Gap

Y-axis: % Gap between FSM and non-FSM pupils (0 to 35)

X-axis: Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 2, Key Stage 4, Key Stage 5

> As free school meal pupils move through the Key Stages the gap between their attainment and that of their peers widens

Indicators used in the above chart;

- Early years Foundation Stage – Good Level of Development
- Key Stage 2 - age related expectations in Reading, Writing, Mathematics*
- Key Stage 4 – average score in Attainment 8*
- Key Stage 5 – level 3 attainment by age 19*

Note – indicators denoted by * have changed basis of measurement for 2016
(CYP Scorecard 2016)

In Kent a child or young person who is eligible for FSM is likely to achieve less well than similar pupils nationally. Gaps are wider in Kent than the national average achievement gaps for the end of Primary and Secondary school at ages 11 and 16, and the situation does not improve by age 19. While standards of attainment continue to improve overall each year, with EYFS, Key Stages 1, 2 and 4 all above the National average, the outcomes for learners who are eligible for FSM have shown slower improvement in the last two to three years.
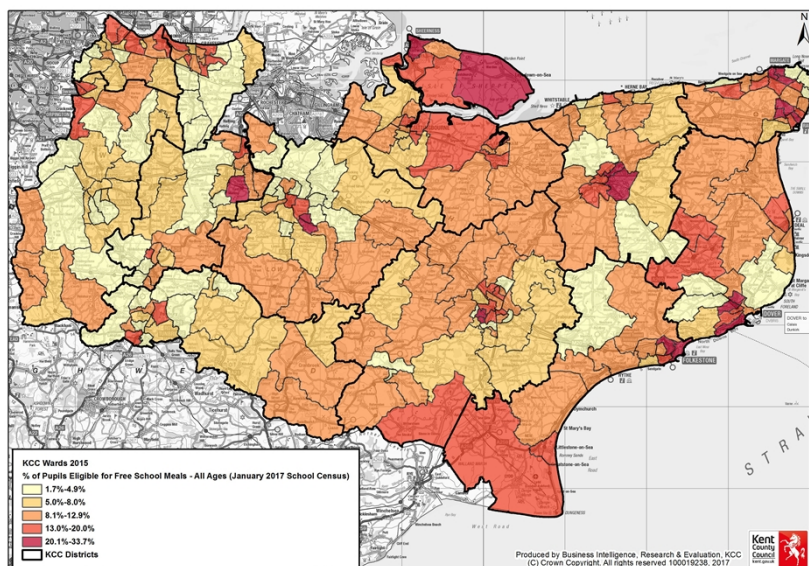
At the same time learners eligible for FSM are disproportionately represented in groups that require significant additional support. They are more likely, than other learners, to:

- be excluded from school
- be taught in lower sets and streams
- spend more time with Teaching Assistants
- have poor attendance
- have special educational needs
- participate less in enrichment activities
- have less access to music lessons and school trips where cost is an issue
- attend schools that have greater challenges
- be involved in youth offending
- become NEET
- have more difficulty finding good employment
- have less chance of going to university.

While these trends exist, they are not pre-determined and it is vitally important that there is not a lower expectation for children from poorer backgrounds. Learners eligible for FSM are not a homogenous group. They are individuals and it is vital that their individual needs are met and for their potential to be realised.

It is also salutary to recognise that learners from advantaged backgrounds achieve results above expectation in relation to their cognitive abilities and learners from poorer backgrounds achieve below expectation in relation to their potential. Schools have to challenge these embedded expectations and schools that make the effort to have more individualised and personalised approaches are more likely to break the cycle of disadvantage.
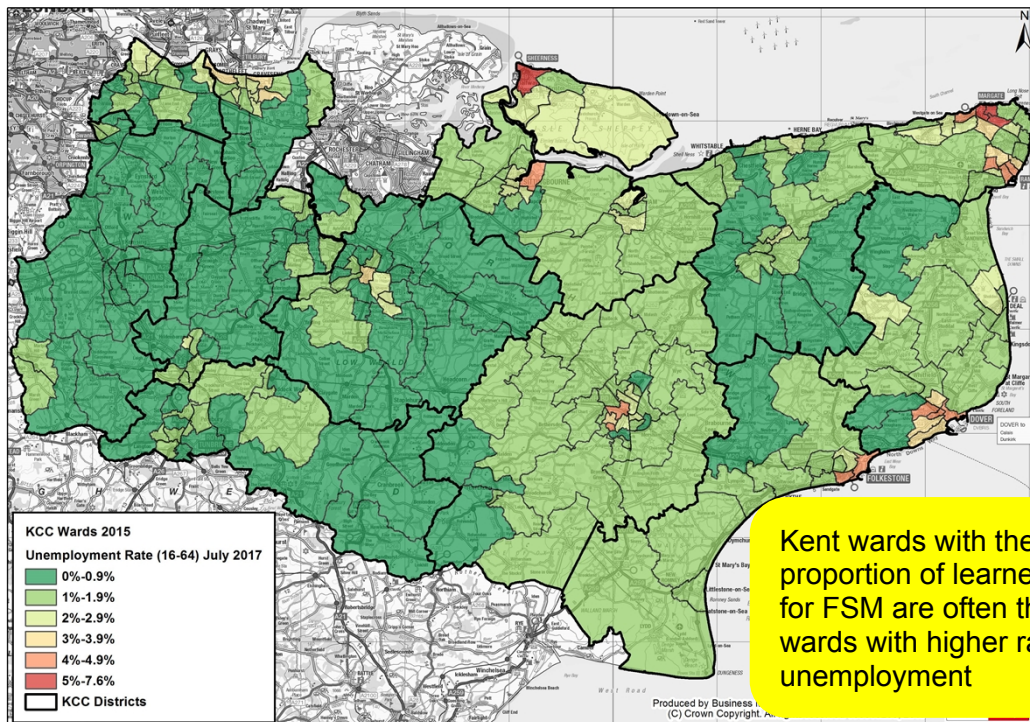
The map below highlights communities across the County with a high prevalence of learners eligible for FSM. These communities have a higher prevalence of vulnerable learners.

KCC Wards 2015
% of Pupils Eligible for Free School Meals - All Ages (January 2017 School Census)
- 1.7%-4.9%
- 5.0%-8.0%
- 8.1%-12.9%
- 13.0%-20.0%
- 20.1%-33.7%
- KCC Districts

Ward data shows in more detail the correlation between communities with a higher propensity for vulnerable learners and other indices of deprivation.

The map below shows the levels of unemployment across wards and the similarities to the FSM data, potentially showing a link between numbers of vulnerable learners, those entitled to FSM and aspirations for further education and work.

Free School Meals and Unemployment

KCC Wards 2015
Unemployment Rate (16-64) July 2017
- 0%-0.9%
- 1%-1.9%
- 2%-2.9%
- 3%-3.9%
- 4%-4.9%
- 5%-7.6%
- KCC Districts

Kent wards with the highest proportion of learners eligible for FSM are often the same wards with higher rates of unemployment

Further investigation of the FSM population in Kent schools shows an increasingly complex picture. The data identifies a correlation between progress and achievement at the Early Years Foundation Stage and GCSE suggesting that tomorrow's vulnerable learners at GCSE level are today's vulnerable learners at the Early Years Foundation Stage. The below chart shows the proportion of pupils by Foundation Stage score for both those that achieved five or more A*-C GCSEs and those that did not. It clearly shows that learners who did not achieve five or more A*-C GCSEs scored on average lower in the Early Years Foundation Stage than those achieving five or more A*-C GCSEs.
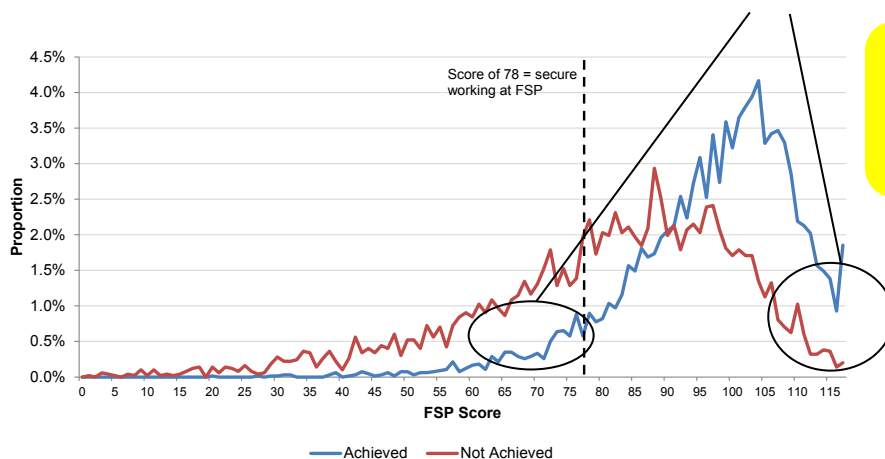
Knowing more about factors influencing the journey of these 2 cohorts will help us to deliver this strategy

Early Years

The *2017 CYP scorecard* data shows that at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage there was a gap of 10% between learners eligible for FSM and their peers. This compares to a gap of 18% reported Nationally. These outcomes should provide a strong enough springboard for future success for vulnerable learners. The 2017 data demonstrates gaps in achievement between the two groups in communication, language and literacy. This means that many vulnerable children are leaving the Early Years Foundation Stage below age-related expectations in key areas that underpin future achievement.

NEETs

In July 2017, 469 of the 1,048 NEET cohort were vulnerable learners. The largest number were Children in Care, SEND and Teenage Parents. Only 142 of the 1,643 Not Known Cohort were vulnerable learners. *(NEET Scorecard July 2017)*

Reducing the NEET group is a significant challenge. These learners face multiple barriers to progressing onto positive outcomes at ages 17 and 18, including poor English and Maths skills and qualifications, poor attendance, low aspirations and insufficient support at key transition points. New employability pathways need to be developed to support vulnerable learners into sustained employment and apprenticeships. The key strategies to reduce these numbers are set out in the NEET Strategy.

Exclusions

'There is... a wealth of evidence linking exclusion from school with academic under-achievement, offending behaviour, limited ambition, homelessness and mental ill health. For example, a Department for Education Youth Cohort Study showed that only 20% of pupils with a fixed-term or permanent exclusion from school in Years 10 and 11 achieved 5 or more GCSEs at A*–C (or equivalent), compared to 58% of children not excluded.' (The House of Commons Education Select Committee)

Kent aspires to be a zero permanent excluding authority. Secondary school exclusions are reducing but there is a slight increase in exclusions from Primary schools.

The CYP 2017 integrated dataset indicates that;

- 31% of Primary age learners permanently excluded are eligible for FSM
- There is some correlation between deprivation and exclusions at Primary level. Group M is a Mosaic Group characterised by moderate to low income and is over represented in relation to exclusion. Although learners living in areas displaying Group M characteristics represent just 18% of the total school population, 46% of the permanently excluded learners are from these areas.
- The correlation between exclusion and vulnerable learners is strong in Kent, with 50% of all multiple exclusions attributed to economically deprived families (Mosaic Groups L, M, N, O)
- 41% of learners permanently excluded are from families within economically deprived communities (Mosaic Groups L, M, N, O)
- 91% of learners permanently excluded were persistently absent from school
- 63% of learners with multiple exclusions, living within economically deprived communities (Mosaic Groups L, M, N, O), were persistent absentees from school

Schools

Currently (December 2017), 94% of children and young people attend Early Years Settings and schools that were judged by Ofsted to be either Good or Outstanding. This means that approximately 25,000 children and young people are attending settings and schools that are not yet good. *(MIU Ofsted Dashboard).* This is a steadily improving picture, the percentage of schools and Early Years settings judged by Ofsted as good or outstanding has continued to increase since 2012 (59% in 2012, 70% in 2013, 75% in 2014, 84% in January 2016 and currently 92%). *(MIU Ofsted Dashboard).*

Appendix 2 - Services Supporting Vulnerable Learners

Early Help and Preventative Services

Early Help and Preventative Services (EHPS) work in partnership with a wide range of statutory, voluntary and third sector organisations to deliver a systemic whole family approach for children, young people and their families. The principles of the service are that:

- We involve children, young people and families
- We strive to improve life chances and build family resilience by using the strengths of families
- Decisions are informed by professional judgement and the working relationship with the child and family
- We ensure that all service delivery and commissioned provision is outcome-focused and informed by evidence-based practice, performance data and evaluation.

Research shows that early childhood learning and experience has a fundamental impact on the way a child learns throughout the rest of life. Learning outcomes at age four are frequently correlated with GCSE outcomes at age sixteen. As Early Help works with children and young people between the ages of 0-19 (and in specific circumstances to the age of 25), the impact of interventions can often be seen and evidenced across all stages of childhood development.

Following an Early Help notification and assessment vulnerable learners are supported through a key worker engaging with the family, school and other settings. Each family has an assessment and agree an action plan which includes goals for the child or young person. Typically, the focus is on ensuring the family will be equipped with the skills and confidence to support the child in getting the best outcomes from their school or educational setting.

For older children who are vulnerable learners and who are at risk of becoming NEET the worker will work intensively with them to examine the options and ensure they get back on the pathway to learning and work.

Ofsted Inspection

Kent County Council's services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers were inspected between 6 and 30 March 2017. The inspection report was published on 13 June 2017, confirming that Ofsted found the Services' overall effectiveness to be 'Good'.

Inspectors found that Early Help and Preventative Services (EHPS) is making a tangible difference to children's lives, stating that children have access to and benefit from a wide range of early help services and performance in outcomes achieved continues to be above 80%.

The report states that: *Across Early Help and Specialist Children's Services (SCS) we have seen many examples of good quality work and effective achievement of good outcomes for children. Inspectors also found examples of early help preventing escalation to SCS. Recent analysis has helped to reduce re-referrals into both EHPS and SCS.*

It was recognised that staff have meaningful relationships with children and know them well. Early Help assessments are mostly good and the plans put in place for families are well targeted and set clear expectations for parents and professionals. The EHPS and SCS Quality Assurance Frameworks continue to show improvement in the quality of our casework.

District Step Down Panels are appropriate and families experience a smooth transition between SCS and EHPS. Children's centres and Youth Hubs ensure that support is available as soon as it

is identified and support at an intensive level is delivered successfully through Early Help Units and Social Work across Kent.

It was also noted by Ofsted that services are commissioned with a good knowledge of local communities and their needs. The use of Signs of Safety is improving the chievement of positive outcomes and children are increasingly safe and well supported. 90% of all Early Help Unit staff are now trained in the Signs of Safety approach.

Children's Centres

Prior to the birth of a child the midwifery service works in partnership with Children's Centres to ensure the identification, targeting and tracking of vulnerable families. Following the birth, Health Visitors continue to work with vulnerable families to promote opportunities to ensure the best start in life. Children's Centres work in partnership with targeted families and those who access the universal offer to enhance the 'core purpose' - of all Children's Centres – '' to improve the outcomes for young children and their families and reduce inequalities between families in greatest need and their peers.''

Central to this philosophy and way of working is the role that Children's Centres play in collaborating with schools and partners in the private, voluntary and independent sector to ensure that every child reaches their developmental milestones and is school ready. A key tenet of this is the promotion and delivery of the free early educational entitlement for vulnerable 2-year olds. Another core role for a Children's Centre is the engagement of parents, offering advice, guidance and training, so that they are both prepared and ready for the task of parenting and have aspirations for themselves and their children.

Throughout Early Years learning, Primary and Secondary school and beyond into sixth form, college and employment Early Help works in partnership to ensure that every child and young person is able to maximise their potential.

Youth Work

Early Help has an important role to play in motivating, engaging and integrating children and young people who might otherwise be at risk of social and educational exclusion and isolation. Ensuring and providing opportunities for positive activities through a universal or targeted youth offer, alongside the provision of targeted youth work in schools and the opportunities to undertake Duke of Edinburgh activities.

Early Help also works to ensure that the vulnerable groups amongst the population transitioning from Year 11, benefit from targeted support as part of our strategy to reduce the NEET population. The strategy includes the early identification of Year 10 students with particular indicators who are at risk of becoming NEET. Similarly, a multi-agency partnership approach with DWP and Job Centre Plus helps to identify an older cohort of young people and facilitate their engagement back into education or employment with training.

Young Carers

More than one in twenty Young Carers miss a substantial number of school days as a result of their caring responsibilities. The KCC response to the changes in legislation for Young Carers has resulted in a joint protocol which is a model of good partnership working between children's and adult services, Public Health and each of Kent's seven Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) as well as the numerous providers delivering services on behalf of each of them. The cross cutting nature of the initiative helps to deliver a coordinated approach to reducing the number of days lost to education and to reducing the achievement gap for one of the County's most hidden and yet vulnerable groups.

Inclusion and Attendance Service

The Inclusion and Attendance Service aims to intervene early and provide timely support to schools, children and families to address the issues of behaviour, attendance and exclusion. The Area Attendance and Inclusion Lead Officers work in partnership with schools to prevent exclusion where appropriate and to re-integrate excluded pupils with effective support. Working closely with practitioners, the service including the Health Needs PRUs, works to empower schools to manage inclusion, absenteeism and exclusion more effectively.

The Inclusion and Attendance service supports vulnerable learners by:

- Providing dedicated officers engaging with schools in an advisory capacity, undertaking group and project work with schools to improve attendance and to avoid exclusions

- Liaising with Early Help Units and schools to ensure there is effective attendance and inclusion support and advice is available and timely interventions can be made for families receiving more intensive support

- Managing enforcement work for Education Supervision Orders, Penalty Notices and Prosecution, and a more effective approach to enforce school attendance

- Providing an outreach service that supports the attendance, educational achievement and welfare of children from Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Minority Ethnic backgrounds

- Providing support to schools, for learners with challenging behaviour, mental health needs or physical medical conditions.

- Providing advisory services to PRUs to broker the appropriate support for pupils from a range of agencies to enable successful re-integration and positive post 16 destinations

In Year Fair Access cases and Managed Moves are discussed and decided at local Inclusion Forums, which provide a collaborative process that local schools set up and use to mitigate and minimise the risk of children being excluded from school. In most areas schools operate the Inclusion Forums as part of the In Year Fair Access Panel, although the former is a voluntary process while the latter is a legal requirement. The Inclusion and Attendance Service monitors the performance of school collaboration in Managed Moves and helps schools to identify and share effective practices. Supporting collaborative arrangements for Managed Moves, the service advises, facilitates and brokers support and intervention to help schools find alternatives to exclusion.

Early Years and Childcare

The Early Years and Childcare Service has a key focus on providing a programme of advice, support and training to promote and enable equality and inclusion and to narrow gaps in achievement. Key to the work of the service is continued and relentless close working, strategically and operationally with:

- The Specialist Teaching and Learning Service and Early Help to support practitioners to engage with the referral processes available to secure additional support, including the Early Years Local Inclusion Forum Teams and Early Help Notifications.
- Speech and Language colleagues deliver joint training to deliver consistent strategies to support children at risk of developmental delay
- The Virtual School Kent and Inclusion Support Service Kent ensure consistent advice and support for Children in Care and groups with protected characteristics

- Health colleagues help to deliver the Joint Reviews of two year olds in the Thanet pathfinder project, to ensure earlier identification of need and earlier appropriate interventions for vulnerable children and their families.

Additionally, the Early Years and Childcare Service works with Children's Centres to:

- Provide advice, support and guidance to ensure that the early learning ethos and any early learning activities are in line with EYFS principles and best practice
- Target activity to improve the take up of free places by eligible two year olds
- Ensure support for families to enhance their involvement in their children's learning

Enhancing Family Involvement in Children's Learning (EFICL)

EFICL is a programme to enhance family involvement in their children's learning. In consultation with multi-agency partners, EFICL has been developed to include a range of strategies in a 'toolkit' for Early Years and Childcare providers and parents to support increased parental and whole family involvement in children's learning.

Free Early Education for Two Year Olds (FF2)

Currently, approximately 40% of two year olds are eligible for a free early education place with effect from their second birthday. For a child to be eligible, parents must be in receipt of one of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseekers' Allowance (JSA)
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Support through Part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act
- Child Tax Credit and / or Working Tax Credit and have an annual income under £16,190
- The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
- The Working Tax Credit 4-week run on (the payment you get when you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit)
- Universal Credit

Children are also entitled to a place if they:

- are a Child in Care
- have a current Statement of Special Educational Needs or an Education Health and Care Plan
- are in receipt of Disability Living Allowance or
- have left care under a special guardianship order, child arrangements order or adoption order.

Approximately 6,000 two year olds in Kent are currently eligible for a free early education place, with a supply of over 10,000 places available in the maintained, private, voluntary and independent sectors and with childminders. Take up of these places is not as high as we would expect, although it continues to rise year on year, with an average rate of 74% in 2016-17.

Support for Pre-School Children with Special Educational Needs

Special Educational Needs Inclusion Fund (SENIF)

SENIF is a new statutory requirement (effective from September 2017) made available by KCC to settings supporting pre-school children with SEN to achieve better outcomes. SENIF is available under the following circumstances:

- When a child is attending a Kent setting and the SENIF criteria are met
- When the child is in receipt of the three and four year old Free Entitlement and for a maximum of 30 hours each week
- When the child does not have an Education, Health and Care Plan

SENIF is not statutory for funded two year olds although KCC is making this available for up to 15 hours each week. Integral to the introduction of SENIF in Kent is the appointment of SENIF Practitioners to work with and alongside providers to ensure effective use of the SENIF resource in supporting improved outcomes for pre-school children with SEN

Early Years Specialist Teaching and Learning Service (STLS) and Local Inclusion Forum Team (LIFT) Review

The Early Years LIFT was established county-wide in Kent in April 2015. The purpose of the Early Years LIFT meetings is to discuss concerns around inclusion and to ensure that settings are meeting the needs of all children. Settings are invited to attend the LIFT meetings whether or not they have children's needs to discuss as this enables setting to setting support and sharing of good practice between practitioners. All referrals for advice and Specialist Teacher involvement for pre-school settings come through the Early Years LIFT. Each setting has been allocated to a LIFT group which in most districts, meet termly. A recent review has showed that what is working well includes:

- 91% of settings feel that Early Years LIFT Meetings have been effective in providing advice and support for settings' provision for children with SEND
- 85% of settings feel that the Early Years LIFT meetings are effective in promoting collaborative working and joint solution focused discussions

Once Early Years LIFT has been accessed and recommendations have been tried and the impact of interventions recorded, further support can be offered through a SENIF request but there must be evidence of the "plan do review" process to support this. There is also an expectation that settings have a clear understanding of how SENIF is used to support children and this is part of the LIFT discussion.

Early Years and Childcare Practitioner Workforce Development

Bursaries and support are available for practitioners to apply for qualifications and higher education training in order to develop the workforce and quality of teaching in Early Years settings. In particular, the available resource is focused in areas of high deprivation, where the quality of provision can be less good than elsewhere and also on developing the workforce in relation to the early identification of and response to need, particularly for children with a special educational need or disability.

Supporting the use of the Early Years Pupil Premium

Research has shown that there is a 19 month gap in school readiness at age 5 between the most and least advantaged children. The introduction of the Early Years Pupil Premium for three and four year olds in April 2015 supports Early Years providers to bridge this gap with additional funding, approximately £300 a year for each eligible child. The criteria for eligibility are aligned to those for free early education for two year olds, hence the intention is that this additional resource follows the child from the a two year old place right through to the school-age Pupil Premium. Early Years providers have a key opportunity to maximise this additional funding to improve children's outcomes and to boost disadvantaged children's achievement. The Early Years and Childcare Service offers advice, support and training to practitioners to use this resource to maximum effect.

Kent Early Years Progress Tracker

The Kent Progress Tracker tool, and associated training, is used by over 500 Kent providers to track and monitor children's progress. It helps providers to capture, summarise, analyse and reflect on all the information that they have about children in their setting and to plan for a stimulating learning environment that will ensure all children reach their full potential. The Children's Centre Progress Tracker is now used by Kent Children Centres to monitor the impact of specific interventions and group activity in order to identify which support is improving outcomes for children. In addition an Intervention Tracker is about to be launched to support settings to monitor the impact of specific interventions such as the I CAN programmes and additional funding including Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP), Disability Access Fund (DAF) and the Special Educational Need Inclusion Fund (SENIF).

Skills and Employability Service

The priority for the Skills and Employability Service is to ensure all young people are engaged in learning or training and have the opportunities to achieve positive destinations until aged 18 (up to 25 for SEND, Care Leavers and Children in Care). In partnership with post 16 providers there is an annual review of 14-19 pathways, apprenticeships and employment opportunities through the district data packs. There is also a focus on raising standards of attainment, closing achievement gaps, increasing participation to age 18 and improving the quality of the 14 – 19 learning pathways.

The services uses performance data to analyse the educational gaps across the County in order to support Schools, FE Colleges and Training Providers in improving outcomes for vulnerable learners, to identify and address gaps in post 16 provision, alongside targeting resources to maximise impact on attainment.

There are a number of focused activities that support young people to participate in high quality learning pathways, these are:

- September Guarantee – working in partnership with providers in each district to ensure there is a post 16 offer of a learning destination that meets the progression needs of all young people. The data from the process is used to track our most vulnerable young people to ensure that they make successful transitions. It enables support to be put in place as soon as they are identified as being at risk of disengaging or not having a guarantee.

- Tracking participation and destinations and coordinating the integration of activity to reduce NEETs and provide targeted support for vulnerable groups who are over represented in the NEET group. The NEET Strategy sets out the roles and responsibilities for service leads in supporting the transition of vulnerable young people. It includes all of the support for Vulnerable Young People at risk of becoming disengaged and NEET.

- Developing transition year and inclusive curriculum models. This work includes ensuring that individuals who are not ready to access a learning pathway at age 16 can access up to a year of tailored and flexible support based on their prior attainment and aspirations. This includes maths and English, a technical qualification, advice and guidance and tailored work experience.

- Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance – continued development of the Kent careers framework, Careers Enterprise Company and briefings for schools to raise aspirations for vulnerable young people. The Kent Choices Local provides a wide range of information on careers options and local employment opportunities to reduce youth unemployment especially targeted to vulnerable young people.

- Employability Pathways for Vulnerable Learners which include supported internships and assisted apprenticeship programmes. Support for employers to recruit and sustain employment with vulnerable young people 16 to 24. There is access to apprenticeship ambassadors and careers advice for individual vulnerable learners at risk of becoming NEET. A bespoke apprenticeship advice scheme is available to support schools and their vulnerable young people in making the next step into employment.

- Employment programmes for vulnerable 18 to 24 year olds - providing one to one professional support for KCC Adult Social Care referred clients working closely with employers to find suitable and appropriate sustained employment opportunities. Develop a range of post 18 pathways including traineeships, assisted apprenticeships and full time employment.

Kent Children's University

Kent Children's University™ (KCU) aims to promote exciting learning opportunities and experiences outside normal school hours for children aged 7 to 14, and 5 and 6 year olds with their families. Its ambition is to raise aspirations, boost achievement and foster a love of learning, so that young people can make the most of their abilities and interests. Children earn credits for the time they spend in validated learning activities – one credit equals one hour of learning. Once certain thresholds are met the children and their families are invited to a graduation ceremony held at one of the three Kent Universities. Evaluation reports from the University of Cambridge have found that the scheme can benefit all participating young people but the greatest impact is seen by vulnerable learners, especially those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Special Educational Needs

Children and young people with special educational needs are at greater risk of underachieving than their non-SEN peers. In Kent, over 7,000 children and young people, almost 3%, have greater difficulty learning and it is necessary for the authority to put in place an Education Health and Care Plan, to ensure they receive the necessary support. Within this group there are approximately 600 pupils who face a dual disadvantage because they are in the care of the local authority as looked after children. The SEND Strategy recognises that pupils with SEN and disabilities are over-represented in families facing financial hardship and in the FSM group.

Over the last year we have fully embedded a statutory assessment process that recognises the importance of co-production and engagement of children and young people with special educational needs and their families. We have improved the way in which we gather their views, wishes and feelings, and those of their parents so that they are given more importance. We have targeted support to enable them to participate in decisions which help to achieve good outcomes for their children. By July 2017, over 4,000 Kent children and young people were benefiting from new co-produced plans and arrangements to support them.

We have seen steady improvements in progress and outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and significantly more children and young people with SEN in Kent are receiving a better quality education because of the improvement in the number of good or better schools. Children and young people with SEN in Kent are achieving better progress than pupils with similar needs nationally at nearly all key stages. However, it is disappointing that the gap between their attainment and that of other learners has remained very wide and shows little sign of diminishing.

We have developed new ways of targeting funding and supporting pupils at an earlier stage without the need for statutory assessment through the development of the Local Inclusion Forum Teams (LIFT) and High Needs funding.

We continue to monitor the increasing incidence of ASD and ensure all schools have access to training and support to develop the expertise needed to support and teach these pupils so that they make good progress.

We have invested significant capital spend on expanding SEND provision, improving Special Schools' buildings and learning environments and ensuring that new schools in Kent can host SEN Resourced Provisions.

We have structured our SEN Services to provide area and district lead officers to provide accessible locally based services for children and young people, their families and schools that support them. Working alongside District Co-ordinators from the Lead Special school, we are better able to identify which children need referral for observation and assessment in specialist nursery provision, statutory assessment and specialist placement.

SEN Area teams work closely with Early Help Services, Youth Justice and Virtual Schools Leads, contributing to district networks led by the Area Education Officer, in order to ensure effective communication, timely placement and review.

During the last year we have seen a significant increase in referrals for statutory assessment, which is costly and time consuming. Although this reflects the national picture, our approach to High Needs funding in Kent means that there are significantly more resources available to schools where pupils can be supported just as well through High Needs funding without the need for a statutory plan. We need to do more to give parents confidence in this approach.

One of the biggest challenges for the Strategy is to ensure that we can improve support for children with autism and speech and language needs across all schools, and that we improve our joint commissioning with the Health Service to ensure health inequalities and access to key services, such as speech and language, are addressed.

We propose to develop more provision and we continue to focus on improving both the outcomes and rates of progress for children and young people with SEND to keep pace with demand, to improve the quality of provision further and to ensure that more children and young people can have the specialist support they need in local schools and early years settings.

A key strategy to deliver more effective earlier interventions for SEND learners has been the devolved model for the Specialist Teaching and Learning Service (STLS), working with the 12 lead Special Schools. The partnership model is helping mainstream schools in each District to increase capacity to support learners with SEN to achieve better progress. Through the weekly Local Inclusion Forum Team (LIFT) process we are drawing together resources to support mainstream schools so that there is effective district based co-ordination of outreach activity. We plan to improve the level of engagement by schools in each district and ensure there is timely access to high quality specialist advice. There are also close links between LIFT and the Early Help and Preventative Service, with Early help workers attending all LIFT meetings to ensure the wider social needs of vulnerable children are addressed.

We continue to encourage all schools to make good use of LIFT and STLS. The range of advice and training for schools and direct support for SEND learners has improved and levels of satisfaction with the local arrangements are high. We know that across the county, 75% of schools are participating in LIFT and 6% of pupils with SEN are referred to the STLS.

School Provision Planning Team

Commissioning and securing a place in a good local school for every child is the core aim of the Education Commissioning Plan 2017-21. This plan sets out how we carry out our responsibilities for ensuring there are sufficient places of high quality, in the right places, for all learners, while at the same time fulfilling our responsibilities to raise education standards and be the champion of children and their families in securing good quality education. This plan ensures that vulnerable children have easy access to a good local school by addressing gaps in SEND provision and by commissioning maintained local provision in both Special and mainstream schools. This is delivered by the expansion of Special school places and completing a building programme for

Special schools. The expansion of the number of places in Specialist Resourced Bases in mainstream school is being achieved through commissioning a Specialist Resourced Provision (SRP) in every new Primary school being built.

Fair Access

The Fair Access Service plays a key role in supporting vulnerable learners. Senior Admission Placement Officers (SAPO) ensure that no child requiring a mainstream school place is without identified provision.   In the case of Children In Care (CIC) schools are approached directly and pre-admission meetings are facilitated, ensuring that schools who admit a child in care feel supported, have all the information they require to put the necessary support in place, to give the best possible chance of a successful transition for the learner. The SAPO works collaboratively with other professionals from Social Services and Virtual Schools, (both Kent and other local authorities) so that appropriate educational provision is identified and secured. Where necessary schools are challenged when admission is refused and the Fair Access team presents the case of any learners who are deemed to be hard to place for consideration at the In Year Fair Access Panels.

Some vulnerable learners need access to an interim Education Programme. This service is managed by the Education Co-ordinator who designs and provides bespoke education packages for Primary Excluded Pupils, Primary SEN/EHC plan pupils awaiting identified provision and Secondary age Pupils with SEN/ EHC plan also awaiting placement at another provision.

Where other local authorities place often vulnerable CIC into Kent without suitable provision being identified, they can commission this service as an interim measure whilst they identify suitable educational arrangements for the child in care. Some of the most vulnerable learners are taught away from the home by qualified teachers and supported by High Level Teaching Assistants who specialise in behaviour therapy.   This approach has been highly effective in enabling children to make the transition from an Education Programme back into school as the vulnerable learners have been supported both educationally and therapeutically to manage their behaviours.

To complement this work, when pupils accessing an Education Programme have an onward provision identified, transition support is available from Early Help and schools can access advice services from the Specialist Teaching and Learning Service. Cases are presented by the Inclusion and Attendance Advisor and the learner continues to receive the support of the HLTA during the re-integration into school for up to six weeks. This practice has prevented the same learner returning to the programme and it is hoped that these vulnerable learners will be more engaged and will be supported successfully in Primary schools.

Elective Home Education (EHE) officers identify those vulnerable children who appear not to be in receipt of education and for whom it may be in their best interest to return to school. These learners are being identified earlier. There is an important distinction between those families who have made a conscious decision to educate their child at home, and those who have felt pressured into home schooling because their child was not coping in a school setting. The EHE officers are working collaboratively with parents and In-year Admissions, SAPO and the Children Missing Education team to ensure that any child without a school place or not in receipt of education is identified and supported back into school.

Children Missing Education (CME) Officers record each young person who is without a school place and work collaboratively with SAPOs, In Year Fair Access, EHE and Early Help to ensure that education provision is identified at the earliest opportunity. Risk assessment procedures are in place to address those vulnerable children who cannot be tracked after extensive investigations. Processes have been put in place to ensure that these missing children are risk assessed and where the risk assessment highlights cause for concern, the information is shared with the Police and the child is recorded as a missing person.

School Improvement

In order to support vulnerable learners the School Improvement Team

- has clear roles and responsibilities for SIAs to act as 'Pupil Champion' for vulnerable learners
- challenges schools through SIAs to ensure schools use data effectively to identity under-performing groups and focus effective strategies to support improved achievement for vulnerable groups, including effective use of the Pupil Premium
- advises schools on proven teaching strategies and other evidence based approaches to narrowing achievement gaps
- brokers support for training and consultancy to improve vulnerable group performance including the provision of traded Pupil Premium reviews
- works closely with the Safeguarding Team to address safeguarding and e safety issues, commissioning support in a timely and appropriate fashion for vulnerable students
- ensures AEN briefings are delivered in each Area to support SENCOs in updating their knowledge and skills

Senior Improvement Advisers also work with schools and with the Kent Association of Headteachers to ensure support is available through school to school collaboration, often focused on supporting improvement for vulnerable learners and narrowing achievement gaps.

Educational Psychology

The Kent Educational Psychology Service (KEPS) works to improve outcomes for children and young people who are vulnerable because they have special educational needs or other barriers to their learning and development. Educational Psychologists (registered with the HCPC) have a specialist role, specified in the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice (0-25 years). The work of the service promotes a culture of inclusion and collaboration with other education professionals, parents and carers, drawing on evidence based practice to inform intervention and practice. In particular the views of children and young people are given significant weight.

The service's core offer includes SEN statutory assessment work, support to schools and settings in dealing with critical incidents and consultation with schools through the Local Inclusion Forum Teams (LIFTS). The advice of an Educational Psychologist must be sought when consideration is being made as to whether to issue an Educational Health and Care Plan (ECHP). During the last year there has been a significant increase in the demand for psychological advice as part of the statutory assessment process. The service also recognises the importance of early intervention and preventative approaches. Support can be purchased on a traded basis to deliver a range of interventions through a service level agreement or on a bespoke basis.

Community Learning and Skills Service

The Community Learning and Skills Service is a provider of education and training for all learners over the age of sixteen. CLS supports vulnerable learners across the county by targeting provision for 16 to 18 year olds and by providing programmes of study which lead to employment, delivering traineeships and apprenticeships especially for young people who are currently not in education, employment or training.

A number of the programmes provided by CLS are targeted to areas of deprivation across Kent, including those areas where skills gaps have been identified. These include the apprenticeship programme for over 19 year olds, and bespoke courses relevant to local needs and opportunities in the most disadvantaged communities.

A number of opportunities are provided for adults with learning difficulties and disabilities to gain and improve Independent Living Skills. The Response programme is focused on supporting unemployed and low waged adults progress into paid employment, further learning and volunteering. Family Learning has a range of opportunities for parents and carers with few formal qualifications and a poor experience of learning to enjoy discovering new skills with their children, enhancing their ability to support their children's learning and helping to build a positive approach to education for the whole family. CLS plays an important role by providing second-chance learning opportunities for people who have not succeeded in the education system to reach their potential and to improve their personal development and wellbeing.

Appendix 3 - Strategies for Diminishing Differences

Best Practice in Kent

In our most effective schools, there are a number of approaches/strategies that are having significant impact on diminishing differences for disadvantaged pupils. These common themes have been identified in a number of our schools where outcomes are above national. The approaches/strategies include the following:

- Highly effective speech and language support
- Outstanding early years provision in nursery and reception building characteristics of effective learning
- Strong, integrated and regularly accessed outdoor learning provision e.g. forest schools, tiger troop, science gardens, beach schools
- Specialist provision for the arts, music and PE
- A curriculum that builds cultural capital through rich and varied experiences e.g. theatre, museums, politics, religion
- Developing self esteem, resilience and aspirations e.g. growth mind set, blooms taxonomy, Building Learning Power
- Using diagnostic tools effectively e.g. PASS, Pixel, Language Link, Boxall profiling
- Investing heavily in reading

Disseminating Best Practice across Kent

- Guest speakers from highly effective schools at Kent's conferences and training e.g. nursery conference, Pupil Premium courses and conferences
- Journey to Outstanding Programme – linking good schools with outstanding schools to share all aspects of best practice
- Increasing the use of KLEs across Kent schools to offer school to school support
- Future development of the KELSI website to host best practice case studies and strategies from our most successful schools
- Ensuring all Improvement Advisers have identified and shared best practice
- Constant articulation and communication of our values and expectations, with reference to Pupil Premium Toolkit, making effective use of performance data, Sutton Trust Toolkit, our Vulnerable Learners Strategy and the use of Case Studies

Whole School Good Practice

	Strategies	Cost Implications	Evaluation Strategies
Self Esteem	• Ensure students have access to new uniforms and correct equipment • Ensure that system for getting lunch in school does not identify FSM students (credit card systems etc.) • Ensure there is a non-visible system for paying for trips • Ensure that PP students are not under-represented in rewards systems or over represented in behaviour points • Invest in extra activities for students – particularly residential and resilience building activities • After school tuition in English and maths	• Low • Low • Variable • Low • Medium • Medium	• Uniform being worn • Attendance records show students eating (breakfast)/lunch • Students attend trips • Check logs for both Improved behaviour pattern • Pupil feedback sheets show improved engagement with school • Attendance and achievement
Achievement	• Appoint a Pupil Premium Champion with direct accountability for the outcomes for students • Ensure a governor has direct responsibility for liaising with the PP champion • Have a high quality data tracking system, monitored regularly • Set challenging targets (e.g. 5 levels of progress from KS2 to KS4) • Ensure there is a strategy for able, gifted and talented students to access funding • Ensure that non-AEN students have access to funding	• None • None • Low • None • Proportional PP funding • Proportional PP funding	• Gap narrows in an improving trend • Minutes show governor monitoring, support and challenge • Data tracking in place • Targets set and met • G and T achievement of PP students improves • Achievement improves
Aspirations	• High quality information, advice and guidance at each transition phase (e.g. encourage to apply for grammar school/academic courses/university etc. as appropriate) • Have a parental engagement strategy where parents are also aware of 'next steps' • Have high expectations of attendance – ensuring that students are not over represented in persistent absence figures • Check the proportions of students at risk of exclusion	• Low • Low • School attendance officer plus EWO/FLO time • Low	• Increasing proportions of PP students aspiring to higher education • Parents attend meetings at school • PP students' attendance at least in line with main cohort • PP students not over represented in fixed or permanent exclusions

Good Practice at Key Stage 1

	Strategies	Cost Implications	Evaluation Strategies
Self Esteem	- Financial support for school trips/visiting speakers - Universal offer of free school meals from September 2014 will mean no differentiation at lunchtimes, but other ways of identifying vulnerable students will be needed. - A 'significant adult' or mentor to be attached to each PP child - Support with school uniform and equipment - Access to support with medical/hygiene issues e.g. clean school uniform	- Variable - Nil - Low - Low - low	- Attendance registers - Monitoring needed that students are eating a balanced lunch - Mentor training needed - Uniform being worn - Bullying log - no issues of bullying etc. due to poor hygiene
Achievement	1:1 reading support for PP children e.g. Reading Recovery or Better Reading Partnership - Free Breakfast Club - FLO to support parental engagement/attendance - Support for small group work 1:1 conferencing for pupil feedback - Teacher and TA support to reinforce learning - Staff CPD on "Quality First" teaching and learning	- Medium - Low - Medium - Low - Medium - High - Low	- Tracking of achievement in reading - Attendance records - Attendance records, parent voice - School tracking - Book scrutinies - Tracking data - Teaching and Learning profile improves, outcomes improve
Aspirations	- Home visits and regular engagement with parents to ensure a positive foundation for future partnerships - Prompt action taken to promote good attendance of PP children with link to significant adult to ensure behaviour expectations are enforced. - Outside speakers to broaden pupil aspirations - PP children to be targeted to engage in range of extra- curricular activities to broaden horizons.	- Low - Low - Low - low	- Parent surveys and attendance at meetings - Attendance and behaviour records - Feedback from mentor - Pupil feedback - Extra- curricular attendance registers

Good Practice at Key Stage 2

	Strategies	Cost Implications	Evaluation Strategies
Self Esteem	• Financial support swimming/school trips/residential events • Mentor – significant adult identified for PP children • Access to support with hygiene issues eg. clean school uniform • Nurture groups to support children with low self-esteem and at risk of exclusion	• Variable but may be high • Low • Low • Medium	• Pupil feedback • Pupil/mentor feedback • Staff feedback • School records
Achievement	• 1-1 reading support for PP children/Better Reading Partnership • Free breakfast club to support attendance and achievement • FLO to support parental engagement/attendance • Homework club • Support for small group works • 1-1 conferencing/pupil feedback • Mentor support for PP children • Free music lessons • Targeted TA support to reinforce learning • Easter school to support KS2 revision	• Medium • Low • Low • Low • Medium • Medium • Low • Medium • Medium • Medium	• Tracking of achievement in reading • Attendance linked to school tracking • FLO records • Club attendance records • Pupil tracking data • Pupil feedback and data tracking • Mentor and pupil feedback • Tutor and pupil feedback • Pupil tracking data • KS2 SATs results
Aspirations	• PP students and their parents to be encouraged to apply for Grammar Schools • Prompt action taken to promote good attendance of PP children with link to significant adult to ensure behaviour expectations are enforced. • Outside speakers engaged to raise career aspirations • PP children to be targeted to engage in range of extra-curricular activities to broaden horizons.	• Nil • Nil • Nil • Nil	• PESE applications • Attendance and behaviour records • Pupil feedback • Extra-curricular attendance records and pupil feedback

Good Practice at Key Stage 3

	Strategies	Cost Implications	Evaluation Strategies
Self Esteem	• Membership of clubs paid for (Music lessons and instruments , Sports equipment, Art materials, Cookery ingredients) • Uniforms and shoes, sports kit • Access to high quality mentoring/coaching • Residential trips paid for • High expectations to be set for attendance and appropriate early interventions	• Low • Low • Low • Can be high (e.g. ski trips) • EWO	• Attendance registers of clubs/activities kept • High standard of uniform worn • Students' feedback • Students' feedback • Attendance figures improve
Achievement	• Reading interventions (e.g. Accelerated reader, Reader Recovery) Reading buddies • Small group recovery work in English and maths • Breakfast and homework clubs • Access to ICT (including a lap top and broadband if necessary)	• High • High • Medium • Medium	• Reading ages recorded (and 6 months after programme ends) • Progress data in English and maths • Attendance registers • Monitor use of homework and revision programmes
Aspirations	• High quality guidance for options choices, involving parents • School 'heroes' – destinations of ex-pupils flagged and invited to speak in school if possible • GCSE courses in English and maths offered to parents and carers	• Low • Low • Low	• Academic and vocational options balanced • Student voice • Take up of offer and success in public exams

Good Practice at Key Stage 4

	Strategies	Cost Implications	Evaluation Strategies
Self Esteem	• Academic mentor appointed for each student with specific responsibility for outcomes • Life coach appointed to coach specific groups of pupils e.g. low aspiration girls • Free music/Art/Sports extra-curricular activities • Motivational speakers • Continue to support free uniform, sportswear and equipment and specialist equipment for GCSE studies (e.g. cameras, ICT, artist materials etc	• Low • Medium • High • Medium • Medium	• Student voice/outcomes data • Destination wishes change • Attendance at extra curricular activities • Full participation in GCSE couses
Achievement	• 5 A*-C including English and maths to be seen as the minimum aspiration – students to be targeted for A*/A/B grades to allow access to level 3 courses • High quality, early interventions identified and tracked • LSAs to do bulk of 'classwork' marking of literacy in all subjects and maths by extending marking to three colours (teacher for summative and formative assessments, peer and TA marking) therefore clearly identified. Students to respond to marking • Careful tracking of 3 tiers of offer universal/targeted/personalised	• Low • High • TA marking • Low	• Target setting and tracking for 'good' progress rather than 'expected • Higher targets achieved • Students literacy skills improved. Response to class work marking improves. Formative and discussion marking improves • Clear definition of PP spending
Aspirations	• Gap year students to be paid to coach and mentor students in school – including visits to their university • Local employers to visit school to talk to students about their recruitment needs • Residential visits to universities • High quality apprenticeships sourced and taster days arranged	• High • Low • Medium • Low	• Mentoring improves outcomes and aspirations • Pupil voice and outcomes • Increase in proportion applying to university • Uptake of modern apprenticeships improves. Reduction in NEETs

Good Practice at Key Stage 5

	Strategies	Cost Implications	Evaluation Strategies
Self Esteem	• Resilience training to help to maintain high aspirations at a time of personal crisis • E-mentoring with current undergraduates (subject and interest match) • E-mentoring with local employees (subject and interest match) • Good facilities for supported self-study • Personalised study programmes	• Low • Low • Low • Low • Low	• Retention from year 12 to 13 improved • Student voice • Student voice • Attendance registers • Retention rates and outcomes
Achievement	• Teach subject specific literacy and numeracy. • Subject specific residential stays to widen and enthuse love of subject • Support to achieve level 2 GCSE maths and English • Curriculum offer allows students to take 'facilitating' subjects: maths and further maths; physics; biology; chemistry; history; geography; modern and classical languages; and English literature. • 2-1-2 pick & mix personalised curriculum offer- combination of school, employment & training according to student aspirations for progression. • KCC Supported Internship and Assisted Apprenticeship scheme to support vulnerable level 2 learners into employment and training	• Low • Medium • Medium • Low • Medium • Low	• All students achieve level 2 • Retention rates and outcomes • GCSEs achieved • Curriculum match improves retention rates • Attendance at each of the three elements • Apprenticeships taken up
Aspirations	• Systematically sharing data with post 16 education and training providers to support young people who are 'at risk' of non-participation as well as those who drop out of education. • Encourage to apply for university – trips/interview support where necessary. • Engage with Apprenticeship Ambassadors to support young people into high quality employment pathways.	• Low • Medium	• Retention rates • Improved rates of PP students attending university

Good Practice in Pupil Referral Units

	Strategies	Cost Implications	Evaluation Strategies
Self Esteem	• All pupils given free hot meal at lunch from designed menu - good nutrition leads to better retention and energy levels	• Medium - one staff member to prepare meals for pupils and ingredients	• Attendance and achievement monitored
	• Pupils identified as needing new clothes given opportunity to go with senior staff member to shop - enables P.E lessons and pupil to feel comfortable at school	• Low	• Attendance and increase in subjects taken
	• 'Calming the Warrior' - specific training course designed to build self esteem and relaxation with martial arts.	• Medium - two staff members to accompany group and trainer	• Certificate for course completed, impact on wider learning tracked
Achievement	• High staff levels maintained - sessions take place predominantly at 1-1	• High	• Exams taken and passed
	• VLE environment being set up so pupils can access work in and out of school	• High	• Use of VLE outside of school hours and number of exams passed
	• High level of staff CPD in all areas of SEN, safeguarding and best practise.	• High	• Rigorous staff monitoring - range of observations and support structures
	• Gym memberships and equipment bought to aid sports qualifications and provide timeout opportunities.	• Medium	• Increase in sports qualifications taken and decrease in daily incidents
	• Subscription to on-line functional skills system (e.g. bksb).	• Medium	• Improving functional skills levels every two terms
Aspirations	• After school classes for parents set up - pupils can see parents taking interest in education	• Low	• Parent/carer contacts to be monitored alongside pupil engagement and attendance
	• Allotment rented for pupils to tend and work on as part of 'next step' work and vocational qualifications	• Low	• Increase in vocational qualifications taken and achieved

Good Practice in Special Schools

	Strategies	Cost Implications	Evaluation Strategies
Self Esteem	• Transition coordinators to work on students on resilience to change and the concept of 'moving on' – available to parents, carers and students • Engagement in creativity, risk taking and experimentation • Student Champions who facilitate changes by accompanying to interviews, being available to troubleshoot and champion the student with providers other than the host school	• Medium • Low • Medium	• Student voice reports students feel supported • Student outcomes in creative pursuits • Students go on to next stage in education/employment. No 'NEET' figures recorded
Achievement	• Improve parental engagement with their child's school, and their learning and progress by holding focussed conversations • Use a "2-1-2" pick and mix model enabling the school to commission a personalised progression pathway for students aged 14-24. This could include literacy/numeracy/life skills with the host school, additional qualifications at college, mainstream school r with a training provider and high quality work experience. This should focus on student aspiration and progress	• Low • High	• Parental engagement improves • Retention rates improve
Aspirations	• Ensure that adults working with SEND always have high aspirations for those children and that the children themselves have high aspirations for their own futures • High quality and consistent work experience opportunities referenced to student aspirations • High quality CEAG focussing on a realistic evaluation of what I can do, not what I can't • Focussed conversations with parents/carers building n long-term aims and aspirations from year 9	• Low • Low • Low • Low	• Outcomes improve • Work experience attended • All students progress to next steps • Appropriate KS4 and KS5 courses sourced