

From: Mr Rory Love, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills
Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education

To: SEND Scrutiny Sub-Committee – 31 October 2023

Subject: Parents Engagement and the Voice of the Child

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of report: None

Future Pathway of report: None

Summary: Parents engagement and the voice of the child, in particular Areas of Weakness 1 and 3.

Recommendation(s):

The SEND Sub-Committee is asked to note the report.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 On 26th July 2023, the DfE approved the final Accelerated Progress Plan (APP), with 116 actions (see Appendix D). This was published in September 2023 alongside a parent and children and young person-friendly version. The latest APP reporting round took place in August 2023. The Kent Accelerated Progress Plan Assurance Report is developed by the Partnership Delivery Group (PDG), approved by the Co-Chairs Christine McInnes, Director for Education, KCC and SEND, and Abigail Kitt, Deputy Director for SEND Transformation, NHS. It is shared with responsible officers of the Strategic Improvement and Assurance Board (SIAB). Reports are produced and submitted to the Kent Local Area SEND Strategic Improvement and Assurance Board and Department for Education every two months.
- 1.2 The next report is due on 15 November 2023. On this day there will also be a visit by the DfE to undertake a 6-month review of progress against the APP. A summary of Areas 1 and 3 has been requested by the SEND Sub-Committee. This is included in the body of this report, following information about the SIAB so that the Committee can be assured of the level of scrutiny which is being given to the work.

2. Assuring the APP - The SEND Improvement and Assurance Board

2.1 Board members of SIAB consist of:

Title	Organisation/Partnership Body
Independent Chair, SEND Improvement Adviser	Local Government Association (LGA)
Cabinet Member for Education and Skills	Kent County Council – Executive
Cabinet Member for Integrated Children’s Services	Kent County Council - Executive
Labour Opposition Lead	Kent County Council – Non-Executive
Liberal Democrat Opposition Lead	Kent County Council – Non-Executive
Independents and Green Party Opposition Lead	Kent County Council – Non-Executive
Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education	Kent County Council
Director of Education and SEN	Kent County Council
Director of Integrated Children’s Services	Kent County Council
Corporate Director for Adult Social Care	Kent County Council
Participation Manager	Kent County Council - Children and Young People Participation Lead
Chief Nurse, Chair of Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board (ICB), NHS	Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board (ICB), NHS
Interim Director of Children’s Services	Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board (ICB), NHS
Public Health/ Early Years Health services representative	NHS
Chair, Kent PACT	Kent Parents and Carers Together (PACT)
Chairs, Kent SEND Partnership Delivery Group	Director of Education and SEN KCC Deputy Director for Children’s Service – Kent and Medway ICB
DfE SEND Advisor	Department for Education
NHSE Advisor	NHS England
Chair, Kent Early Years and Childcare Provider Association	Kent Early Years and Childcare Provider Association (Early Years Representative)
Principal, Five Acre Wood School	Kent Special Educational Needs Trust (Special School Representative)
Headteacher, West Borough Primary School	Kent Association of Headteachers (Primary School Representative)
Executive Principal, Chair of Kent Association of Headteachers	Kent Association of Headteachers (Secondary School Representative)
Chief Executive Officer, East Kent College	Kent Further Education (Post 16 Education Representative)

2.2 SIAB Terms of Reference are included in full below:

- (i) The Kent SEND Strategic Improvement and Assurance Board (SIAB) will provide strategic system and partnership leadership, assurance and oversight of the 9 areas of weakness which are our collective focus for improvement. These were identified in the 2019 Local Area SEND Inspection (2019) and the Inspection Revisit (2022), across the local area system as priorities for significant improvement for children and young people with special education needs and disabilities (SEND) and their families in Kent.
- (ii) The Board will use its influence and accountabilities to drive forward improvements, at pace, across the Kent Local Area system, identifying any barriers, consolidating what is working well and improving what is not.
- (iii) The Board will provide transparent visibility of progress, constructive and robust challenge, as well as celebrating what is working well and improving. It will be self-critical and escalate appropriately where sufficient sustainable progress is not made.
- (iv) Whilst the Board's primary focus is rapid improvement and impact across the 9 areas of weakness in a shared partnership and system Accelerated Progress Plan, it also has an important role in the oversight and assurance of other strategic system-wide improvements as we move from an initial phase of critical actions towards delivering our longer-term vision and ambition for SEND improvement across the whole Kent Local Area system, alongside the Kent SEND Partnership Delivery Group.
- (v) The Board will use its authority to agree the necessary actions that are needed at a partnership and system-wide level on improvement priorities. The Board Members will be empowered with sufficient delegated authority to agree actions in principle on behalf of their organisation or partnership body, in order make swift and decisive progress. If necessary, decisions will be taken through appropriate organisational governance arrangements (for example Executive key decision by KCC's Cabinet Member, or NHS decisions through the Integrated Care Board).
- (vi) The Board will be focused on ensuring partnership actions make a difference in improving impact and outcomes, and ensure that the voice and lived experience of children, young people, carers and families with SEND is heard. It will champion extending our participation reach and engagement and ensure that children, young people, carers and families have an opportunity to provide direct input to the work of the Board and inform the development of improvement activities through co-production.
- (vii) The detailed delivery of the shared Accelerated Progress Plan and associated partnership projects and improvement activities will be delivered by the Kent SEND Partnership Delivery Group. The Board will receive assurance reports from both the Kent SEND Partnership Delivery Group and SEND Transformation Strategic Board (Kent County Council's assurance board for the Local Authority), to improve transparency of the activity across the whole system for the Board members. This will be supported by high quality, robust multi-agency data, monitoring and quantitative and qualitative analysis of impact, with advice from Data, Information, Intelligence and Analytics experts across the partnership.
- (viii) The Board will consider partnership/system level risks, issues and

performance monitoring, including a partnership RAID log and collectively agreed Key Performance Indicators, Impact/Outcome Measures and Key Risk Indicators. Data and evidence will be essential in developing and demonstrating improved services and regular communication and information flow will support this, alongside formal reporting.

- (ix) The Board will provide oversight and assurance for the partnership delivery of the SEND Strategy and Action Plan, and the SEND Communications and Engagement Strategy which contains additional and complementary work to the nine improvement priorities.
- (x) The Board will also maintain oversight of key transformation activity in relation to improving services and outcomes for children and young people with SEND across the Kent local area. This work of the board will be in the context of the Department for Education's Implementation Plan from the SEND Green Paper Safety Valve, SEND Code of Practice (including shared understanding of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessments), and the new national Inspection Framework.

3. Governance and accountability

- 3.1 Governance arrangements diagrams are provided in Appendix A – a supporting governance arrangement pack is available to explain the purpose and role of different governance functions within the Kent local area.
- 3.2 The Board is independently chaired by the LGA SEND Improvement Adviser, with administrative and business support provided by Kent County Council.
- 3.3 KCC's Cabinet Members for Education and Skills and Integrated Children's Services will be Members of the Board in their statutory role as Lead Members, in addition to a standing invitation to representatives from each Opposition Group within Kent County Council to strengthen cross-party oversight and transparency.
- 3.4 Wherever possible, the Board will seek to resolve and mitigate risks and issues within its remit. Where necessary, the Board will escalate risks and issues directly to Kent County Council's Chief Executive as the responsible Local Authority for SEND transformation and improvement. The Chief Executive will advise on escalation through KCC's political governance arrangements (including Cabinet Member, Lead Members and Non-Executive Oversight and other Strategic Partnership leadership) as required. For NHS Kent and Medway, the Integrated Care Board Chief Executive will be the escalation point to advise on escalation to the Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board.
- 3.5 The Board will be supported by the Kent SEND Partnership Delivery Group (PDG) and, as necessary, any time limited Task and Finish Groups to respond to improvement priorities. The Kent SEND Partnership Delivery Group will take forward the co-ordination of partnership activity through a shared Accelerated Progress Plan to monitor the progress and impact of delivery in detail. It will liaise with KCC's Operational Groups who are responsible for local authority project delivery.

- 3.6 The Kent SEND Partnership Delivery Group Chair will be a Member of the Board to ensure rapid tasking and clear accountability between the strategic and partnership delivery assurance arrangements. Via its membership, the Board will also agree appropriate sharing or escalation of issues into partner agency governance arrangements which include:
- Kent and Medway Integrated Children's Partnership Board
 - Kent and Medway Children and Young People's Programme Board
 - Kent Parents and Carers Together (PACT)
 - Regional Schools Commissioner Director for the South East
 - Kent Association of Headteachers
 - Kent Further Education
 - Kent Early Years, Special School and Mainstream School Representatives
- 3.7 The Board is accountable for reporting to the Department of Education and NHS England progress against delivery of actions and outcomes within Action Plan arising from the local area SEND inspection in 2019 and revisit in 2022.

4. Responsibilities and behaviours

- 4.1 To ensure that the partnership improvement and transformation activity is delivering the required impact for children and young people with SEND, at pace.
- 4.2 To provide opportunities for children and young people's participation, including to contribute to the work of the Board.
- 4.3 To ensure that co-production is embedded in the culture of SEND services.
- 4.4 To offer advice, challenge and support to secure sustainable improvement in a respectful manner.
- 4.5 To support the resolution of escalated risks and issues and remove all barriers to agreed activity, pace and performance.
- 4.6 To take a solutions-focused approach to ensure the best outcomes for children and young people.
- 4.7 To enable the meetings to be productive, members may be asked to maintain confidentiality on specific issues.
- 4.8 To provide regular communication about the work and impact of the Board to all stakeholders.

5. Board meetings

- 5.1 The Board will meet on a monthly basis, with clear minutes, actions and decision log, with a review at 6 months. There is a commitment to transparency for minutes and actions.

6. Review of Terms of Reference

6.1 The Terms of Reference will be reviewed in 6 months by the Board.

7. Membership

7.1 Board members are identified in the table below.

7.2 There is a leadership commitment from all Board members to prioritise the work of the Board and provide consistent representation and attendance at board meetings, unless there are genuine reasons for not attending. If they are unable to personally attend, partners have committed to providing an appropriate alternative senior representative to attend on their behalf.

7.3 There is an open invitation for children and young people to directly engage with the board, supported by the Participation Manager (e.g. at the board, in advance or via other engagement means).

7.4 A Director from Adult Social Care will be the permanent representation from March 2023.

7.5 Additional attendees will be asked to attend Board meetings for specific agenda items or to update on the progress of actions, including Participation Leads, SEND Transformation Programme Team, Assistant Director for Management Information and Intelligence, and Kent SEND Partnership Delivery Group representatives.

7.6 Participation from the Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise Sector (VCSE, or Third Sector) will be provided through membership and professional representation on Kent Parents and Carers Together (PACT) and Council for Disabled Children, who will also be represented on the Kent SEND Partnership Delivery Group.

8. APP Area of Weakness 1: The widely held concern of parents that the local area is not able, or in some cases not willing, to meet their children's needs.

8.1 Key actions under this area demonstrating improvement for both progress and impact are:

- (i) The Partnership Delivery Group are assured that 1B2: Development of a communications plan to support the phase transfer process for parents, carers and young people is underway and educational settings have been contacted regarding this process. Appendix A SEND APP Communications Analysis
- (ii) The Partnership Delivery Group are assured that 1C2: Soft launch of the SEND Enquiries Hub is on track and progress has been made by adopting the Soft System Methodology (SSM) whereby measures are focused towards impact rather than outputs. For example: In collaboration with Kent PACT and Analytics, a systematic process of Mystery Shopping has been developed which will measure parental satisfaction. Data from the first

months of the operation have captured families' replies to the information, *"Many thanks for all of your help, it really is so very much appreciated."*, *"Thank you for your prompt reply, XXXXXX. I have chased this for months, so hopefully we will get some clarification."*, *"Thank you this is really appreciated"*, *"Thank you for speaking with me and taking the time to explain and advise."*; *"Thank you so much XXXXXX. You've been the most helpful through this whole process."*

- (iii) The Partnership Delivery Group are assured that 1D2 on the delivering the SEN therapies EHCP Section F integrated Therapy review is on track and work is progressing with NHS providers for a deeper analysis of data collection streams and to understand data metrics for funding reviews
- (iv) The Partnership Delivery Group are assured that 1E1 on the CATIE Survey linked to Family Engagement Award is on track, progress has been made in co-producing the survey with Kent PACT and Education leads in KCC Analytics
- (v) The Partnership Delivery Group are assured that 1F3: Development of the Family Hub model. Close working between the local authority and health partners has meant that the development of the Family Hub model is positive for progress and impact
- (vi) The Partnership Delivery Group are assured that 1C4 Implementation of the SEND Redesign. Teams are fully staffed and a suite of training is being undertaking to ensure all officers have a consistent and competent approach. The cyclical nature of the assessment and review process means that communications should be made with families at key points. The consistency and regularity of these communications are being addressed through reviews of the phase transfer process and within the assessment, placement and casework teams.

8.2 Key aspects of Area of Weakness 1 which are of concern:

- (i) 1A3 Development of a plan for celebrating success and good outcomes is currently amber and impact on families, at this point, has not been demonstrated.
- (ii) 1B1 Finalising and implementing the communications plans to build trust and confidence in parents in the ability of local schools to support children and young people with SEND. Progress is underway however impact to date has not yet been demonstrated. There was a delay as work has been impacted by lack of communications resources over the summer which has been continued into the new academic year (September 2023)

8.3 The success of Area of Weakness 1 will be a culmination of all the work undertaken by the Local Area to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEN. The APP does not intend to set out every action that the Local Area is undertaking to make significant improvements in parental confidence.

9. Area 3 – The limited role parents and carers have in reviewing and designing services for children and young people with SEND

9.1 Area of Weakness 3 actions are progressing well with a 100% response rate for this reporting period. 4 projects reporting as beginning to see impact and 3 projects have brought forward the end date.

- (i) DfE has agreed to the next stages of the RISE project (3B2) which will include whole staff training around co-production and co-design working alongside Kent PACT, see Appendix B. The Council for Disabled Children will also be supporting SEND in the organising of a SEND event which will give Parents and Carers the opportunity to listen to people who are involved in the SEND services with varying experience this may include staff, members, young people and parent/ carers and stake holders
- (ii) The Partnership Delivery Group are assured that The Mapping exercise of Youth Voice and opportunities for young people with SEND (3D2) to participate has been completed, however, this is a live document that will need to be added to and amended moving forward
- (iii) The Partnership Delivery Group are assured that The SEND Engagement framework (3B5) has been designed using lessons learned and best practice from past activities. It has been co-produced with Kent PACT and with guidance from the Council for Disabled Children. This is in draft form and awaiting official sign off
- (iv) The Partnership Delivery Group are assured that Partners have collaborated to map all the CYP current groups/forums, etc across Kent to look at options for the best way to ensure CYP Voice is optimised, which may not be to establish an entirely new forum. There have though been some challenges in identifying the CYP cohort.
- (v) The Partnership Delivery Group are assured Area 3A1 To develop a Lived Experience Framework for Kent & Medway is complete and delivering impact.
- (vi) The Partnership Delivery Group are assured Action 3A2 to involve parents and young people in shaping the approach and priorities in the SEND communications and engagement strategy is complete and starting to have impact.
- (vii) The Partnership Delivery Group are assured that Action 3B4 on VCSE sector event on children and young people is complete and starting to have impact.

9.2 Appendix C includes a summary of workshop activity on a co-production charter which underpins all the development work in this area.

9.3 Areas of concern Weakness 3

9.4 The Partnership Delivery Group will escalate concern regarding action 3C2 to establish Kent PACT to act as a two-way conduit and strategic feedback loop between parents and carers and the LA, as it is due for completion by 20/10/23, and is reporting as amber for progress and red for impact, although it is recognised that much work has been undertaken.

- 9.5 The Partnership Delivery Group will escalate concern regarding action 3D2 on the commission NHS England EOI funding to support the voice of SEND CYP within health services, as it is due for completion on 31/10/2023, and is reporting as amber for both progress and impact. Challenges encountered were in relation to sourcing engagement with CYP. However, alternative routes are currently being explored.
- 9.6 The Partnership Delivery Group will escalate concern regarding action 3E1 to involve parents and young people in developing the revised communications sent by KCC in the EHC processes, as it is reported as red for both progress and impact, and the deadline has been delayed to the 20/9/23 whilst the team await feedback from Kent PACT.

10. Conclusions

- 10.1 Reports regarding the impact of the Accelerated Progress Plan are produced and submitted to the Kent Local Area SEND Strategic Improvement and Assurance Board and Department for Education every two months. Individual lines from the Accelerated Action Plan are reported monthly, with a dashboard to support analysis of the impact of the actions to date.

11. Recommendation(s)

Recommendation(s):

The SEND Sub-Committee is asked to note the report.

12. Background Documents

NA

13. Contact Details

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