

# **SENCO Conference 2024- Celebrating Inclusion**

## **Evaluation**

### **Overview**

In April 2024, the decision was taken to deliver a second Kent SENCO Conference. The decision was based on a number of factors:

- The increasing numbers of SENCOs engaging with the virtual Countywide SENCO Forums.
- A desire to give something back to SENCOs and Inclusion Leads in Kent by investing in this CPD opportunity.
- To provide an opportunity to come together as one group of professionals that support children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities in Kent.
- To provide an opportunity for schools to network in their newly formed Communities.
- To celebrate the excellent work going on in schools around Kent.

### **Changes made based on feedback from the March 2023 Kent SENCO Conference**

Using feedback provided from the previous Kent SENCO Conference in March 2023, The Education People made the following changes when organising this year's event:

- A 'one delegate per school' policy was put in place to enable as many individual schools to attend the event as possible. As a result of this, 319 different primary schools and 78 different secondary schools were represented at the event. An increase from the 231 different primary schools and 38 different secondary schools that attended in March 2023.
- More academy schools attended this year with large Trusts such as the Alethia Academies Trust, Aquila Trust, Coastal Academies Trust, the Deal Education Alliance for Learning Trust, Dover Federation of Arts, EKC Schools Trust, Golden Thread Alliance, Kent Catholic Schools Partnership, Leigh Academies Trust, Our Community Trust, Swale Academies Trust, Tenterden Schools Trust, The Galaxy Trust, The Tenax Schools Trust, Turner Schools Trust, Valley Invicta Academies Trust, Viking Learning Trust and the Island Learning Trust all being very well represented.
- TEP and KCC revisited the running order of the day to make sure that delegates would get the most out of their experience on the day.
- TEP and KCC organised the catering so that delegates with a specific dietary requirement would receive their own, named lunch.

- TEP and KCC organised extra screens in the main hall to provide clearer views of presentation slides.
- TEP coordinated the seating plan so that delegates could sit in their 'Communities' to enable more networking opportunities.
- Even more key people from the Local Authority and the Health Services were made available to speak to on the day.

## **Content Feedback and Impact**

Delegates were asked five questions to measure the impact of the conference. Scoring each question out of five (with five being the highest score), delegates then had the opportunity to go on and explain why they had scored each section in the way that they had.

- 1- Has the SENCO Conference impacted on the way in which you appraise your school's/trust's current offer for children with SEN (both SEN support and those with and EHCP)?**

<b>Score out of 5</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
5 (very much so)	9.52%
4	32.65%
3	37.41%
2	14.97%
1 (not at all)	5.44%

*'Useful advice and resources on developing inclusion across all stakeholders, e.g. the NASEN handbook for subject leaders, MCS audit to identify strengths and areas of development, The Education People's SEMH toolkit.'*

*'Amazing to hear from a great range of inclusion champions. I got a lot of ideas and accessed incredible resources that will support me supporting my colleagues and this will hopefully have a huge impact on our students.'*

*'It has really made me think about inclusion and what it actually looks like at my school.'*

- 2- Has the SENCO Conference impacted on how confident you are in the way in which your school/trust engages with your parental body to support the provision you have in place for children with SEN?**

<b>Score out of 5</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
5 (very much so)	6.12%
4	17.01%
3	42.86%
2	23.81%
1 (not at all)	10.20%

*'Ruth (Gately)'s presentation has helped me consider further ways of engaging parents.'*

*'It gave me ideas on how to rebrand some of our existing interventions to better engage with (the) parental body.'*

*'(I have) more confidence in how processes work and what support there is for parents and families.'*

**3- Has the SENCO Conference developed your ability/capacity to collaborate further with other schools and partners?**

Score out of 5	Percentage
5 (very much so)	21.77%
4	37.41%
3	23.81%
2	9.52%
1 (not at all)	7.48%

*'Networking on our table. The marketplace is excellent - I would like more time to do this.'*

*'We have an extremely strong Faversham SENCO forum which has excellent collaborative practices. This conference has given us the time which is very much needed to develop and extend our wonderful practice.'*

*'This was a strength of the day. Loved sitting with my Community.'*

*'I have now arranged with a local school to go and visit (them) to share practices.'*

**4- Has the SENCO Conference provided you with a range of CPD opportunities today (both formal and informal)?**

Score out of 5	Percentage
5 (very much so)	12.24%
4	29.93%
3	36.05%
2	17.01%
1 (not at all)	4.76%

*'I felt the workshops I attended were particularly useful.'*

*'I was able to select workshops that interested me. Most keynote speeches were relevant, interesting and practical.'*

*'It was great to hear Pooky speak, after using some of her resources and training materials in the past.'*

**5- Has the SENCO Conference provided you with strategies that you can use back in your school/trust that will help to improve outcomes for children with SEN?**

Score out of 5	Percentage
5 (very much so)	12.24%
4	28.57%
3	37.41%
2	16.33%
1 (not at all)	5.44%

*'Dr Pooky's opening has given me strategies on how to get staff to be think more positively.'*

*'Great strategies suggested in first presentation and video from SEMH workshop.'*

*'The talk from the Croydon team was very positive and helped some of the colleagues in our locality see things a little more positively.'*

### **'Takeaways'**

Delegates were asked a further question to outline what their main 'takeaway' would be from the day. A number of quotes have been lifted from the evaluation and added below:

*'Inclusion is an action.'*

*'Children who find themselves on the margins of school will find themselves on the margins of society! I had never thought of it in this way, but it so, so true. A sense of belonging is so powerful and empowering.'*

*'Remembering why I do the job I do! I can make a difference, even though it's very tough at the moment.'*

*'Reinforcement around relationships when supporting all children in school.'*

*'Very informative and supportive. I loved hearing about Pooky and how I can use her approach in class.'*

*'Revisit MCS and develop a system for staff to consider all factors before referring child to SENCO.'*

### **General Feedback**

Delegates were further asked to provide any general feedback that they may have had about the day. Please see a selection of responses below:

*'As my first event, I now feel extremely more able to know where to get support and for it to be effective.'*

*'Another fantastic and smooth running day. Well done to everyone, I can't imagine this was an easy task!'*

*'It would be great to have a collaborative conference next time. We are speaking a lot about working collaboratively and sharing of approaches/resources/knowledge. It would be fantastic to have the opportunity to share collaboratively at such a huge event.'*

*'Such a huge amount of work to organise such a great event. Thank you. Lovely lunch too!'*

*'Always useful, reduces SENCO isolation and although leaves me a list to add to my massive to do list, is inspiring!'*

*'This conference was a great idea for networking and sharing information.'*

## **Learning for Future Events**

Delegates kindly suggested areas to be addressed at future conferences, some of which have been listed below:

*'How to meet EHCP needs without any TAs...'*

*'Complex needs and planning and resourcing for those'*

*'Each of the areas of need being a focus for workshops.'*

*'Exciting new research and inspirational speakers. Introduce key SEND staff.'*

*'For future training, it would be beneficial to separate the primary and secondary school sessions during the breakout options. This approach would likely result in more relevant takeaways and examples of best practices tailored to our specific school settings. I found this model to be highly effective in the first year. Additionally, with the increased number of communications established to share new initiatives, it would be advantageous to ensure that information isn't simply repeated. Staff who are consistently engaged throughout the year found the redundancy challenging.'*

*'Question and answer sessions with KCC SEND team.'*

*'It would be useful to see Headteachers and SENCOs attend conferences alongside each other to ensure that all leaders are leading on Inclusion and being passionate and are supporting their SENCOs with improving inclusion in their schools. This will empower all schools to be inclusive, therefore reducing the disproportionate number of pupils with EHCP's/ HNF/SEND in some school and not others. It could potentially help schools hold each other to account to develop practice ensuring more children are attending their closest most appropriate school to their family home!'*

*'Managing anxiety in stakeholders including parents.'*

*'More specific training about types of SEN need.'*

*‘Practical advice and information. Use of technology to assist children and enhance teaching and learning.’*

*‘Sessions for new SENCOs would be good as some may have only been a month in post and feel completely overwhelmed by all of the acronyms and high-level government related information. Also, it would be nice to have sessions based on very specific areas with engagement from us as the participants.’*

*‘Strategies that address the needs of the children in the classes we have today - highly deregulated and physical - low language skills and more for SENCOs to do.’*

*‘What are KCC doing to ensure accountability at every level? What are the NHS doing to work with us to address the issue of mental health and wellbeing?’*

## **Conclusion**

Though there is still much to be learnt from the feedback provided by delegates, the general message received is much improved on the event that took place in March 2023.

Many delegates requested further information that wasn’t provided on the day. Subjects such as, how the Communities model will work and how the quality of EHCPs will be improved were regularly brought up in delegates evaluation responses. There were also requests for good practical strategies that can enable them to provide the levels of support needed for some children and young people in their mainstream settings. KCC colleagues have access to the full set of raw data provided within the completed evaluations, and these should be used to shape future events and future Countywide SENCO Forums, Keeping in Touch meetings and other SENCO and Headteacher events and CPD opportunities.

Delegates consistently fed back that the opportunity to network with colleagues in their newly formed Communities was a big positive of the day. KCC need to harness this positivity and develop sustainable ways in which SENCOs can continue to learn from one another.

The second annual Kent SENCO Conference then, can be seen as a success that has delivered what it set out to achieve- the celebration of inclusion in Kent. However, the success of this event must feed into the next stages of Kent’s SEND development journey to enable a system of support that is truly inclusive by design.