EQIA Submission – ID Number
Section A

EQIA Title
Ending the contract of the Together with Parents Service

Responsible Officer
Alice Unsworth - CY CC

Approved by (Note: approval of this EqIA must be completed within the EqIA App)
Ingrid Crisan - CY OICS

Type of Activity

Service Change
No
Service Redesign
No
Project/Programme
No
Commissioning/Procurement
Commissioning/Procurement
Strategy/Policy
No
Details of other Service Activity
No

Accountability and Responsibility

Directorate
Children Young People and Education
Responsible Service
Integrated Children's Services
Responsible Head of Service
Ingrid Crisan - CY OICS
Responsible Director
Ingrid Crisan - CY OICS

Aims and Objectives

Context

Together with Parents is a Kent County Council commissioned service that supports parents and carers whose child has received a neurodevelopmental diagnosis, is awaiting assessment, or is being considered for referral to the Neurodevelopmental Pathway. The service was developed following the Ofsted and Care Quality Commission joint review of SEND provision in Kent and the resulting Written Statement of Action. It provided early, practical and relationship-based support to families while they wait for assessment or diagnosis, and to help parents and carers build confidence, resilience and self-help strategies.

The service offer includes one-to-one family advice and reviews, peer support groups, workshops, evidence-based programmes such as Cygnet, information events and signposting. The model uses staff with lived experience and is delivered countywide through a mix of face-to-face and virtual support. The service has contributed to the Support First approach and the pre-diagnosis element of the Neurodevelopmental Transformation work across Kent and Medway.

The current contract, has reached the end of the allowable extension period. The decision under consideration is to end the service at the end of the current contract term, with service delivery ceasing on

30th April 2027. The service is not statutory provision. Ending the contract is the only viable option within the direction of delivering statutory provision only.

In order to conclude the contractual relationship with Together with Parents, a responsible decommissioning programme is required. The aims of the decommissioning activity are to:

1. Ending the Together with Parents contract in line with the approved contract term and governance requirements.
2. Ensure that parents, carers, referrers, partners and the provider receive clear and timely information about the end of the service.
3. Manage open children, referrals, waiting lists, final reporting, records and data in accordance with the contract and data protection requirements.
4. Reduce avoidable disruption for families through planned endings and signposting to alternative sources of support where available.
5. Capture learning from the service to inform future planning for parent and carer support, SEND improvement activity, the Neurodevelopmental Transformation Programme, Families First and any future commissioning or service redesign.

Summary of equality impact
The ending of Together with Parents is likely to have a medium adverse equality impact before mitigation. The principal impacts relate to disabled children and young people, children and young people awaiting neurodevelopmental assessment or diagnosis, and parents and carers who may rely on the service for practical advice, peer support and help to navigate complex systems.

The service itself is not statutory, however it was designed to address identified gaps and fragmentation in early support for families linked to the Neurodevelopmental Pathway. Ending the service may reduce access to lived experience support, one-to-one family advice, Cygnet provision, peer groups and community-based signposting. This could increase pressure on families already managing long waits, uncertainty, SEND processes or repeat contact with services.

The identified impacts will be mitigated through a planned transition to KCC's Families First approach and locality-based, whole-family provision. This will include early communication with families, individual exit planning, clear referral cut-off arrangements, active signposting and planned handovers where ongoing support is required. As all families currently receiving the service are already known to KCC, this will support continuity and enable their needs to be considered through the developing locality offer.

The impact can be reduced, not removed, through a managed exit plan. This should include early communication, clear exit arrangements, appropriate management of open children's files during the exit period and a cut off point for referrals, accessible information for families, and signposting to alternative support. The EQIA should remain under review through the exit period so that any emerging impact on protected groups can be identified and addressed.

Section B – Evidence

Do you have data related to the protected groups of the people impacted by this activity?
Yes
It is possible to get the data in a timely and cost effective way?
Yes
Is there national evidence/data that you can use?
Yes

Have you consulted with stakeholders?

No

Who have you involved, consulted and engaged with?

Evidence has been drawn from the original service specification, contract monitoring information, scorecard reports, options appraisal work, provider feedback, internal commissioning discussions and feedback from professionals who have worked alongside the service. This evidence shows that Together with Parents has provided early support to parents and carers through one-to-one advice, peer support, Cygnet delivery, workshops, Family Hub communication, community outreach and signposting.

Communication to date has included contract management discussions with the provider, internal commissioning review, SEND complaints discussions, work with Information Advice and Support Kent (IASK), to explore a controlled complaints support pathway, and feedback from professionals on the impact of the service. The evidence indicates that demand for the service has remained strong and that the service has been valued by some families and professionals. It also identifies capacity pressures, uncertainty about the future of the service and the need for clear exit planning.

The identified impacts will be mitigated through a planned transition to KCC's Families First approach and locality-based, whole-family provision. This will include early communication with families, individual exit planning, clear referral cut-off arrangements, active signposting and planned handovers where ongoing support is required. As all families currently receiving the service are already known to KCC, this will support continuity and enable their needs to be considered through the developing locality offer.

Has there been a previous Equality Analysis (EQIA) in the last 3 years?

No

Do you have evidence that can help you understand the potential impact of your activity?

Yes

Section C – Impact

Who may be impacted by the activity?

Service Users/clients

Service users/clients

Staff

Staff/Volunteers

Residents/Communities/Citizens

No

Are there any positive impacts for all or any of the protected groups as a result of the activity that you are doing?

Yes

Details of Positive Impacts

The main positive impact is that responsible decommissioning activity when ending a contract, creates a clear point to review what support parents and carers need now, rather than assuming that the existing model remains the right long-term approach. This is important because Together with Parents was commissioned in response to identified SEND improvement concerns. The wider neurodevelopmental support landscape is also expected to continue changing, including in response to future SEND inspection feedback, national SEND priorities and the implications of Local Government Reorganisation.

For disabled children and young people, the process can support better future planning by capturing learning from the current service about pre-diagnostic support, parent confidence, peer support and community-based signposting. For parents and carers, the exit process can identify what aspects of the service have been most useful and where gaps remain. This evidence can inform future commissioning, Families First development, SEND improvement work and the Neurodevelopmental Transformation

Programme.

The positive impact is conditional on the responsible decommissioning activity being managed properly. If learning is not captured, or if families are simply signposted without a realistic understanding of alternative support, the opportunity to improve future planning will be lost.

Negative impacts and Mitigating Actions

19.Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Age

Are there negative impacts for age?

Yes

Details of negative impacts for Age

The service supports parents and carers of children and young people up to age 25. Ending the contract, and therefore service, may indirectly affect children and young people who are awaiting neurodevelopmental assessment or diagnosis because their parents and carers may lose access to early advice, peer support, Cygnet provision, workshops and one-to-one family advice. The impact may be greater at points of transition, escalation or family stress, where parent confidence and timely support can help prevent issues becoming more complex.

Mitigating Actions for Age

Develop a managed exit plan that identifies open children, current referrals and planned group provision before closure. Families will receive clear information on when support will end, what will happen to any current involvement, and where they may be able to seek alternative support. Learning about age-related demand, particularly for young people approaching transition points, will be shared with SEND, Family Hubs and neurodevelopmental transformation leads.

Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – Age

Ingrid Crisian

20. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Disability

Are there negative impacts for Disability?

Yes

Details of Negative Impacts for Disability

Disabled children and young people are likely to be the group most affected, because the service is specifically linked to neurodevelopmental needs and SEND. Decommissioning may reduce access to early support for families while they wait for assessment, diagnosis or wider SEND support. This may be felt most by families who use the service to understand behaviour, develop home strategies, access Cygnet provision, build parent confidence or connect with peer and community support.

Mitigating actions for Disability

Ensure the exit plan clearly distinguish between ending this non-statutory service and any ongoing statutory SEND duties or assessment rights. Families will be given accessible information about available support routes, including SEND information, Family Hubs, IASK and relevant voluntary and community sector provision where appropriate. The service closure will also capture learning about unmet need so that future planning does not underestimate the impact on disabled children and young people and their families.

Responsible Officer for Disability

Ingrid Crisian

21. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Sex

Are there negative impacts for Sex

No

Details of negative impacts for Sex

Not Applicable

Mitigating actions for Sex

Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for Sex
Not Applicable
22. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Are there negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender
No
Negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Not Applicable
23. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Race
Are there negative impacts for Race
Yes
Negative impacts for Race
Families from ethnic minority communities, families with English as an additional language, and families who are less connected to formal services may face greater barriers in understanding that the service is ending and where to seek alternative support. If communication is only provided in standard written formats, there is a risk that some families will not receive or understand the information in time to plan for the change.
Mitigating actions for Race
Communication will be accessible and proportionate. Where needed, information will be supported by translation, interpretation or explanation through trusted professionals. The exit plan will avoid relying only on written notices and will include clear signposting that can be used by referrers and partner services when speaking with families.
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Race
Ingrid Crisian
24. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Religion and belief
Are there negative impacts for Religion and belief
No
Negative impacts for Religion and belief
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Religion and belief
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Religion and Belief
Not Applicable
25. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Are there negative impacts for Sexual Orientation
No
Negative impacts for Sexual Orientation
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Not Applicable
26. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Are there negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
No
Negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Applicable

Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Applicable
27. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Are there negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
No
Negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Applicable
28. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities
Are there negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities
Yes
Negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities
Parents and carers are directly affected by the ending of the contract and service because the service is designed for them. Some carers may lose access to one-to-one advice, lived experience support, peer groups and practical strategies for managing family life while waiting for assessment or diagnosis. This could increase pressure on carers, particularly where families are already managing SEND processes, education concerns, repeat complaints, emotional pressure or limited informal support.
Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities
The exit plan will include early notice to families, planned endings where possible, and clear information for referrers so that families are not left with unrealistic expectations about continued support. Alternative support will only be listed where it is genuinely available and relevant. Commissioners will use final contract reporting and provider feedback to identify the scale and type of parent and carer need that may remain after the service closes.
Responsible Officer for Carer's responsibilities
Ingrid Crisian