

**From:** Sue Chandler, Cabinet member for Integrated Children's Services  
Matt Dunkley, Corporate Director Children, Young People and Education

**To:** CYPE Cabinet Committee Meeting, 9<sup>th</sup> March 2020

**Subject:** Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Strategy 2021 - 2024

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Decision Number and Title:** 21/00019 - SEND Strategy 2021-2024

**Past Pathway of report:** SEND Improvement Board

**Future Pathway of report:** For decision of the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services

**Electoral Division:** list the electoral division/s, and local Member/s affected:

*Identify Members using this link:*

<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/mgMemberIndex.aspx?bcr=1>

**Summary:** An outline of the updated Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy, to replace the existing strategy that expired in 2020. The new strategy supports the work being undertaken for the Written Statement of Action and has been developed in conjunction with the NHS and in conjunction with parents and families.

**Recommendation(s):**

The committee/board is asked to endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services on the approval of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Strategy 2021 – 2024. Specifically to:

- recommend the adoption of the SEND strategy
- delegate decisions relating to commissioning of county wide solutions (under the value of £1m) to deliver against the strategy and its associated activities (including the support the delivery the County Inclusion agenda through the High Needs funding block) to the Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education.

## 1. Introduction

1.1 As members will be aware, the new SEND strategy has been developed, building on the previous strategy which was developed in 2017. The strategy has been developed alongside the delivery of the Written Statement of Action and forms part of Kent's response to the inspection.

- 1.2 The SEND strategy 2021 - 2024 was drafted in 2020 and was developed by a working group including representatives from KCC, Health, Healthwatch and Kent PACT (Parents and Carers Together). The draft strategy was reviewed by the SEND Improvement Board before being released for public consultation in December 2020.
- 1.3 A public consultation took place from 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2020 and was closed on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2020. Details of the outcomes of the consultation can be found in the Appendix B.

## **2. Outcomes from the public consultation**

- 2.1 The public consultation was widely advertised across KCC, NHS and parent forums to ensure as wide a reach as possible. It was downloaded over 1000 times and had 290 responses in total.
- 2.2 47% of respondents were parents and carers of a child or young person with SEND. Only 2% of respondents identified themselves as being SEND. This is a low figure and can be attributed to the inability to access young people and children throughout the lockdown over the December and January period. Several activities were planned with schools, supporting facilitated discussions and feedback with children and young people however these were curtailed due to school closures.
- 2.3 The SEND Improvement programme has recently recruited a Youth Participation Officer to ensure that the feedback from children and young people continues to be of a priority for the service delivery, and it is anticipated that activity in this area will increase significantly as schools return. Plans to support the implementation of the strategy will be developed with both parents, carers, families and children and young people at their heart.
- 2.4 The draft SEND strategy has been amended to reflect the consultation feedback with detail outlined in the consultation report.
- 2.5 Consultation feedback showed wide support for the SEND strategy, with over 90% of respondents agreeing with the vision, 90% of respondents agreeing with the priorities and over 84% of respondents agreeing with the outcomes.
- 2.6 During the analysis of the consultation responses, consistent themes emerged across all areas of the strategy. The next section outlines these themes, and the activities that are underway, or planned to address them.

## **3. SEND strategy – feedback themes from the public consultation**

- 3.1 The following sections outline the core themes that were thread through the consultation feedback. The themes align to work across the SEND Improvement programme, reinforcing that the programme is focusing on the right areas to deliver improvement.

### **Parent Engagement and Co-production**

- 3.2 Parent engagement, communication and the need to work together with families was the most prominent theme of feedback across the strategy consultation. This area of work is also prioritised across the improvement programme.
- 3.3 The SEND Programme and the SEND service has significantly strengthened its relationship with Kent PACT (Parents and Carers together). As well as Kent PACT being an integral part of the programme delivery teams across all workstreams, a Memorandum of Understanding has been agreed between Kent PACT, the NHS and KCC outlining how we will work in partnership moving forward. KCC has also committed to support Kent PACT in growing its membership and reach across the county through providing resource to enable Kent PACT to develop an area model aligning to the that of the SEND service and to deliver support to parents on a more local basis.
- 3.4 Consultation feedback included several references to the need for parents, families, children and young people to have access to relevant information. The Kent Local offer has seen a large amount of development, with significant content being made available, including videos and extensive content around Preparation for Adulthood. This work continues, with a detailed plan for further development over the coming 12 months. KCC have invested in a permanent team to support the local offer moving forward, and in partnership with the NHS and Kent PACT ensuring that information continues to be accessible to parents and families, and in particular reaching out to the seldom heard.
- 3.5 Co-production with parents, carers and young people is a commitment made in the strategy, and a coproduction charter is currently being refined by a working group of parents and young people. As well as co-producing work, a continuous feedback loop with parent groups is now in place to ensure parent/ carer views are at the forefront of communications and shaping service delivery.
- 3.6 A youth participation officer role has been created within the SEND service and is jointly funded with the NHS, to ensure the voice of the child and young person is part of our decision making and service design.

## **Inclusion**

- 3.7 A significant proportion of the comments received across the SEND strategy related to inclusion within education settings. A strong desire to see schools and settings becoming more inclusive, with more SEND children being welcomed at mainstream schools was expressed. The SEND Improvement Programme has a significant Inclusion workstream which is working alongside schools and settings to create a more inclusive education system in Kent.
- 3.8 The SEND strategy included the new Kent Inclusion statement (Appendix C). This statement was created by headteachers and was widely shared with schools and settings to gain feedback before being agreed. The statement outlines the joint commitment across the education system in Kent, and forms the basis and vision for the County Approach to Inclusive Education.
- 3.9 As the champion of families, children, and young people our priorities are to be certain that all children and young people are engaged with and included in the provision of inclusive high-quality education. Ensuring that, whatever their

circumstance or ability, our children have a sense of belonging, feel respected, are valued for who they are and develop the knowledge and skills required for adult life. To realise this, we will ensure:

- **Equitable access for all.** Sufficient, appropriate, quality education provision is available for all children and young people in Kent.
- **No child is left behind.** All CYP are supported to be engaged fully in their education.
- **Effective collaboration.** There is collaboration to build a self-improving, sustainable system which supports the education of all.

3.10 Schools and education settings are key partners in delivering this vision, working in collaboration with other professionals to ensure children and young people receive the support that they need to achieve their full potential in education. Specific aims of the strategy will include:

- Improving inclusive practice in our schools so that children and young people with SEND feel they belong, are respected, and valued and are supported to make progress and achieve their ambitions and aspirations through high quality teaching and a challenging, wide-ranging curriculum.
- Introducing a countywide programme of peer reviews of inclusion with an identified focus on SEND provision.

3.11 As a response to the areas of concern identified in the Local Area Review of SEND provision in 2019 and as a direct result of continued pressures on the High Needs Budget, both schools and the Schools Funding Forum supported KCC's application to the Secretary of State for a 1% transfer of funds from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block as part of setting of the 2020-21 school budget. In contrast to previous years, where this action has been taken to offset the deficit in High Needs spending, the aim of the 2020/21 transfer was specifically to consider a different approach and to support much greater inclusion in mainstream schools.

3.12 The County Approach to Inclusive Education will provide the plan for detailed support funded by the High Needs block. The priorities have been developed through consultation with schools and partners as part of the "Inclusion Conversation" with schools during Term 1. Feedback from schools, particularly Headteachers highlighted the importance of further developing the knowledge, skills and capacity of leaders as well as establishing mechanisms for peer review to achieve and sustain change within schools.

3.13 The County Approach to Inclusive Education will be consulted across schools, settings and partners during Term 4. The approach will align and deliver into the SEND strategy, focusing on Priority 4 but also delivering across other priorities and outcomes.

3.14 An outline of the commissioning activity to support the inclusion work can be found in Appendix D.

### **Waiting times for both diagnosis and statutory assessments**

- 3.15 The extended waiting times for diagnosis was raised across the strategy feedback, with many citing years to obtain a diagnosis and little support throughout the process. The SEND Improvement Programme has a workstream dedicated to this area of service provision, and a large programme of work around the Neurodevelopment (ND) Pathway and waiting times has been initiated.
- 3.16 A five year plan including the redesign of the delivery of Speech, Language and Communications Needs has been developed and includes co-designing the delivery with parents, families and young people as well as partners including educational settings and service providers.
- 3.17 The ND pathway has been re-initiated (following a pause due to Covid impact) with a new clinical lead identified and a new strategic lead recruited. An additional £1m of investment in this area has been agreed to reduce waiting lists with recruitment of care navigator posts to sit within health networks. This will deliver an additional 200 autism assessments and provide support for 17 year olds across Kent and Medway.
- 3.18 In order to improve timescales within the KCC services, additional capacity has been commissioned both within the Educational Psychology service and the SEN service to work through the current backlog of assessments and Education Health and Care Plans. There is now a clear plan to address the issues and progress has been made reducing the backlog over the last 3 months.

### **Skilled staff and capacity**

- 3.19 A critical element to implementing sustainable change is culture change within the SEND service. There has been a comprehensive training plan implemented since March, with all members of the SEND team undergoing training twice a week, delivering a clear message that children, young people and their families must be at the centre of the work of the service. Key to the training has been ensuring that all SEND colleagues understand the legal requirements and processes. To date, 50 officers have received legal training from IPSEA with plans in place for all officers to be trained over the coming months.
- 3.20 The SEND service currently has a number of vacancies which have been filled by temporary staff in preparation for a longer term approach to staffing requirements. With the appointment of a permanent Director for SEND the service has now started a process of service redesign, with the experience of the child and families as a central driving force for any new structure.
- 3.21 Additional capacity has been commissioned in areas where significant backlogs exist, the Educational Psychology service has a number of locums as well as a commissioned service from an external provider to support the backlog of assessments. The SEND service has also commissioned additional capacity with a third party writing draft EHC Plans. Both external commissions have extensive quality assurance processes implemented. The SEND service has also recently recruited into key leadership roles to support the culture change across the service.

## **4 Commissioned activity to support the SEND strategy**

4.1 To support the SEND strategy, a range of commissioning activity will be required to implement across Kent. These include:

- home tuition
- Kickstart proposal
- Parenting/ family support programmes
- therapies

4.2 Alongside the commissioned work above, the Inclusion work outlined in Section 3.9 and Appendix D has been outlined in the schools funding forum updates and includes:

### **Training to support our school-to-school system approach to Inclusive Education, including:**

- Leadership Inclusion– for middle, senior, HT and Executive
- Peer to peer
- Inclusive practices
- ILE training
- Governor Training
- NQT training

### **Targeted and specialist training to support the development of locality skills and expertise aligned with our graduated approach for CYP with SEND (see Appendix 2), including:**

- SPELL and other specialist training for Autism
- Attachment theory
- Trauma informed approaches
- Nurture
- The Balanced System – Scheme for Schools
- Supported Employment
- Mainstream Core Standards training

### **Other training which support the improvement of progress and outcomes for CYE, including:**

- Effective Kent Project, SEND Learning Behaviours
- Engaging with parents
- Improving progress and attainment for CYP SEND
- Training for other stakeholders, including KCC staff on how to support inclusive education
- offer directory made available on line for education settings to access support.

4.3 The SEND Improvement Programme is working with Children's commissioning to ensure KCC and schools get best value for money when commissioning across the programme. Where commissions reach the KCC key decision governance threshold of £1m they will follow the KCC key decision process. However, due to the volume of activity and the pace of rollout, this paper seeks to recommend that all commissions below the £1m threshold can be approved by the Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education.

## **5 Equalities Assessment**

- 5.1 The SEND strategy has an equalities impact assessment, and this was published alongside the strategy.
- 5.2 A detailed equalities analysis across the SEND service will be developed over the next 3 months.

## **6 Financial Implications**

The SEND strategy has no further cost implications outside of the 2020 – 2023 Medium Term Financial Plan which is monitored monthly. The SEND strategy reinforced the focus of the existing SEND Improvement Programme.

## **7 Conclusions and next steps**

- 7.1 Following a decision by the cabinet member, we will update the public stakeholders and staff on the results of the consultation and the decision taken.
- 7.2 We will continue to deliver the SEND Improvement Programme which will implement the strategy.

## **8 Recommendation(s)**

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## **9 Background Documents**

- Appendix A – Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Strategy 2021 – 2024
- Appendix B – SEND strategy Public Consultation Analysis report
- Appendix C – Kent Inclusion Statement
- Appendix D – Inclusion Funding Outline
- Appendix E – SEND Strategy Equalities Impact Assessment

## **10. Contact details**

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