



**Kent's Strategy for
Children and Young
People with Special
Educational Needs and
Disabilities
2021-2024**

**Public Consultation Report
February 2021**

1. Introduction

The proposed Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) strategy builds on the previous SEND strategy which was published in 2017. It has been jointly developed by Kent County Council and the NHS in conjunction with children and young people, parents and carers, Kent PACT (Kent Parents and Carers Together) and other key stakeholders.

In early 2019, OFSTED and CQC (Care Quality Commission) undertook their inspection of services and highlighted that too many children and young people with SEND in Kent do not get the support they need. With a fragmented system, opportunity to fulfil the needs of children and young people with SEND has been missed.

This strategy has been developed alongside the programme of improvement work delivering the Written Statement of Action that was developed as Kent's response to the inspection.

In November 2020, the draft SEND strategy was approved by the SEND Improvement Board to move to a public consultation which ran from the 3rd December 2020 to the 4th February 2021.

2. Consultation process

All consultation documents were made available via the Kent County Council (KCC) consultation portal and an online questionnaire collated comments. Hard copy responses and general comments outside the questionnaire were welcomed, along with an email address for any comments/ questionnaires and an address for hard copy responses. Alternative formats including hard copies were available on request, with BSL versions of the draft strategy, the questionnaire and the strategy summary made available on the consultation portal.

The consultation was promoted via a number of means including:

- Kent PACT (Parents And Carers Together) social media posts via Twitter and Facebook
- Kent County Council (KCC) consultation portal
- email to all users registered with KCC consultation portal, and KCC social media
- promotion through KCC's SEND newsletter and Residents' newsletter
- letter from the Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education to all schools accompanied by a letter for all schools to send to parents, and to all FE colleges
- promotion through the early years bulletin
- presentation at Early Years Provider Association and Early Years networking sessions
- Information pack provided to all SEND front line staff
- promotion through staff newsletters – both KCC and NHS staff
- childminders Facebook group

- letter to districts through the education network
- Included in Kent & Medway Clinical Commissioning Group GP update and community bulletin
- Kent and Medway CCG web page promotion.

During the consultation period, the draft SEND strategy was downloaded 1011 times.

3. Respondents

290 responses to the consultation were received, 284 via the online questionnaire the others as direct emails or letters. The breakdown is as follows:

Completing the questionnaire in what capacity	
A parent/ carer of a child or young person with SEND	47%
A person with SEND	2%
As a member of the public	12%
A KCC employee	11%
A NHS employee	3%
A representative of a local community group or resident's association	Less than 1%
On behalf of a parish/ town/ Borough/ District County Councillor	Less than 1%
On behalf of an educational establishment, such as a school or college or early years setting	18%
On behalf of a charity, voluntary or community sector organisation	1%
Other	5%

Percentages rounded up

As well as the respondents listed above, a KCC Members briefing also gathered comments and feedback that have been incorporated into this report as well as strategy feedback responses from schools (outside of the questionnaire).

4. Consultation responses

The following summarises the responses received to the consultation. Respondents were broadly supportive of the Strategy. There was a low number of responses calling for changes and/or a different approach for the Strategy, which have been considered and are addressed in the below sections.

The consultation broadly addressed the 3 key areas of the strategy which were:

- vision
- priorities
- outcomes

Each of these areas and the associated feedback are outlined below.

4.1 Vision

To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposed vision for SEND
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in Kent?	
Strongly agree	67%
Tend to agree	23%
Neither agree or disagree	3%
Tend to disagree	1%
Strongly disagree	5%
Don't know	1%

Percentages rounded up

Responses suggest that there is strong support for the current vision with 90% either agreeing or strongly agreeing.

There were 140 responses received in relation to the vision, which can be broadly broken down into the following key themes. Some comments related to individual circumstances so are not included in the table below.

Please tell us there if anything else we should consider for the vision.		
Theme	Number of comments aligned to theme	SEND strategy impact/ response
Working in partnership with parents and families. Listen more, provide more support, and make decisions together	21	Working in partnership with parents and families is fundamental to the strategy, with a co-production charter referenced as well as being the focus of Priority 1.
Education Settings being inclusive and having the right skills to support families, including transition support	20	Priority 4 focuses on the Inclusion agenda and is a critical workstream in the Written Statement of Action work. It will support the improvement in measures outlined in Outcome 5.
Provide the right resource to enable delivery of the vision, and consistent advice across professionals.	14	Priorities 1, 3 and 4 all list activity that relates to ensuring the relevant skills are available at the right time, as well as a next step in the strategy being the development of a Workforce plan.
Timeliness of activities including referrals, diagnosis and Education Health Care Plans.	11	The strategy outlines work completed to date, and this is further supported with investment in both Educational Psychology, SEND and Healthcare services in reducing waiting times, and ensuring assessments and plans are delivered within the statutory timeframes. Reducing waiting times and access to therapeutic services are activities outlined against priority 3.
Consistency of provision	8	The Kent Inclusion statement provides a vision for the proposed County Approach to

		Inclusive Education. The statement has been developed in partnership with schools and settings, and widely consulted with that group who support the work to create an education system that provides consistency in provision.
Earlier interventions providing support	6	Early identification and support is an essential part of the strategy, added to the underlying principles as well as being the focus of Priority 3.
Services (health, education and the local authority) working together	6	Services working together is critical to the strategy and is reflected by the strategy being jointly developed across health, education and the local authority, and services working together is in the vision. Joint commissioning sits at the heart of delivering across the priorities and the strategy is clear with links to the joint commissioning strategy as well as the joint outcomes framework.
Achieving full potential	5	Priority 2 has been reworded to ensure that achieving full potential is the focus of activities.
Access and ease - ability to find information	5	Both priority 1 and 2 address access to information, both through the local offer and access to skilled resource at the right time. This work continues to be a focus for the Written Statement of Action delivery plan with significant improvements in Local Offer content.
Acknowledge diversity, SEND is not only a disadvantage	2	The Inclusion agenda outlined above focuses on Inclusion and equity of access to an inclusive education for all students, not just those identified with SEND. Ensuring all children reach their full potential.
Facilities within the wider community	2	This is the focus of Priority 5, ensuring children and young people with SEND are able to participate in the wider community.

Some responses contain multiple comments

Impact on the SEND strategy

The vision is designed to be a short all-encompassing statement, which is widely supported by the respondents. The underpinning principles outlined to support the vision widely support the themes listed above. However, new principles have been added to the strategy to emphasise the importance of the above, including:

- adding a principle relating to multi agency services working together
- addition of ensuring provision is consistent across Kent
- addition of early identification and support as a priority. Whilst it is a priority within the strategy, it has also been added as a principle behind the vision.

These principles work across the strategy, and all plans relating to the implementation of the SEND strategy will have these principles at their core.

4.2 Priorities

To what extent do you agree or disagree that each of the priorities will help improve the outcomes for children and young people with SEND in Kent?						
	Strongly Agree	Tend to Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
Priority 1 – Improve the way we work with children and young people, parents and carers	73%	20%	2%	1%	3%	1%
Priority 2 – ensure children, young people and their families have positive experiences at each stage of their journey including a well-planned and smooth transition to adulthood	76%	16%	4%	1%	2%	1%
Priority 3 – Identify and assess the needs of children and young people earlier and more effectively	85%	9%	2%	1%	3%	0%
Priority 4 – Improve education, health and care outcomes for children and young people with SEND	82%	13%	2%	0%	3%	0%
Priority 5 – Ensure children and young people with SEND are included in their local community	70%	22%	3%	2%	3%	0%

Percentages rounded up

Responses suggest that there is strong support for the priorities with over 90% either agreeing or strongly agreeing across all 5.

There were 111 responses received in relation to the priorities, which can be broadly broken down into the following key themes. Some comments related to individual circumstances so are not included in the table below.

Please tell us if there is anything else we should consider for the priorities.		
Theme	Number of	SEND strategy impact/ response

	comments aligned to theme	
Education settings provision – becoming more inclusive with consistent provision across the county	20	Priority 4 has been updated to ensure that inclusive education is explicit, with a reference to the proposed County Approach to Inclusive Education which will be supported by a wide programme of support for schools.
Consider the views of parents in decision making and provision, and provision of parental support	15	Working in partnership with parents and families is fundamental to the strategy, with a co-production charter referenced as well as being the focus of Priority 1.
Early identification and support	11	Early identification and support is an essential part of the strategy, added to the underlying principles as well as being the focus of Priority 3.
Access to skilled staff and improving capacity.	8	Priorities 1, 3 and 4 all list activity that relates to ensuring the relevant skills are available at the right time, as well as a next step in the strategy being the development of a Workforce plan.
Barriers to accessing resources	7	Priority 3 focuses on activities ensuring that families have the right access to resources at the right time.
Timeliness – doing things in an appropriate timeframe and meeting statutory timeframes as a minimum	6	The strategy outlines work completed to date, and this is further supported with investment in both Educational Psychology, SEND and Healthcare services in reducing waiting times, and ensuring assessments and plans are delivered within the statutory timeframes. Reducing waiting times and access to therapeutic services are activities outlined against priority 3.

Some responses contain multiple comments

Impact on the SEND strategy

Priority 4 has been updated to ensure that inclusive education is explicit, with a reference to the proposed County Approach to Inclusive Education which will be supported by a wide programme of support for schools.

Priority 3 is Early identification and support, and this work continues to be part of the Improvement Plan, with integrated health checks at 2 being a cornerstone of implementation in this area. Comments within the consultation serve to reinforce this priority within the SEND strategy.

4.3 Outcomes

To what extent do you agree or disagree that considering these outcomes will help us know if the strategy is being successful in making things better?

	Strongly Agree	Tend to Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
My quality of life – I am happy and enjoy life	60%	25%	8%	2%	4%	1%
My voice – I am listened to and understood	64%	20%	7%	3%	5%	1%
My future – I have choice about my future	62%	22%	8%	3%	4%	1%
My health – I am as healthy as I can be	60%	26%	7%	3%	2%	2%
My learning – I am the best I can be at school, college or work	63%	21%	6%	5%	4%	1%
My safety – I feel safe at home and when out and about	67%	21%	6%	3%	2%	1%

Percentages rounded up

Responses suggest that there is strong support for the outcomes with over 84% either agreeing or strongly agreeing across all 5.

There were 91 responses received in relation to the outcomes, which can be broadly broken down into the following key themes. Some comments related to individual circumstances so are not included in the table below.

Please tell us if there is anything else we should consider for the outcomes.

Theme	Number of comments aligned to theme	SEND strategy impact/ response
Meaningful measurements	8	The joint commissioning governance structure is now live, with a detailed implementation plan being developed to ensure meaningful measurements are defined and then monitored against the defined outcomes
The ability of schools to support Children and Young people in achieving these outcomes	6	Priority 4 has been updated to ensure that inclusive education is explicit, with a reference to the proposed County Approach to Inclusive Education which will be supported by a wide programme of support for schools.
Transition – feeling safe at school	5	Outcome 5 refers to the importance of transitions, across all stages of education as well as in preparation for

		adulthood.
I know where to go for support	5	Outcome 1 refers to access to support to become more independent
I have purpose	5	The vision and the underlying principles support children and young people having purpose and achieving full potential.
How are these recorded for Children and Young people with limited speech or unable to articulate responses?	3	There are a number of tools that are used. We also have feedback from families and school staff and other professionals that know the children closely. The co-production with families, children and young people is also an essential element of the strategy.
My equality – I am treated as an equal to my peers	2	This has been added as a statement to Outcome 5

Some responses contain multiple comments

Impact on the SEND strategy

The joint commissioning approach outlines the outcomes framework which is also referenced in the SEND strategy. The joint commissioning governance structure is now live, with a detailed implementation plan being developed to ensure meaningful measurements are defined and then monitored against the defined outcomes. The detailed implementation plan is being co-produced with parents and young people. However, measures outlined are currently monitored and reviewed regularly, and form the basis for reporting against the actions in the Written Statement of Action.

All consultation feedback regarding additional outcomes has been fed back into the joint commissioning team for consideration for inclusion in the outcomes framework.

4.4 Other comments on the strategy

161 responses were received for the strategy as a whole, which can be broken down into the following broad themes. Some comments related to individual circumstances so are not included in the table below.

Do you have any other comments on Kent's Strategy for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities 2021 – 2024?		
Theme	Number of comments aligned to theme	SEND strategy impact/ response
Inclusion within the education system, and the role of schools and settings.	16	Priority 4 has been updated to ensure that inclusive education is explicit, with a reference to the proposed County Approach to Inclusive Education which will be supported by a wide programme of support for schools to enable support across need

		types in mainstream education settings.
Importance of the early years – the sector supporting and benefits of early diagnosis.	14	Early identification and support are an essential part of the strategy, added to the underlying principles as well as being the focus of Priority 3.
Waiting times for diagnosis	11	Priority 3 has a strong focus on waiting times across the health needs.
Appropriately trained staff	11	Priorities 1, 3 and 4 all list activity that relates to ensuring the relevant skills are available at the right time, as well as a next step in the strategy being the development of a Workforce plan.
Implementation of the strategy, and associated activities	10	The strategy builds upon the work currently underway to support the Written Statement of Action and a number of detailed implementation plans are under development, including joint commissioning and outcomes as well as County Approach to inclusive education.
Co-production with parents and families	9	Working closely with families is the focus of priority 1, and co-production has been added to the actions.
Access to information for parents and children and young people, particularly navigating through the Education Health Care Plan process and the pathways open to them	5	Development of the local offer supports this theme, as well as activities outlined in Priority 2 to ensure access to skilled resource throughout the process.
Consistency across the county – both in terms of provision and consistency in advice.	5	Priority 2 refers to the creation of a consistent SEND services across the county.
Children and young people achieving full potential	3	Priority 2 focuses on children and young people reaching their potential, and this has been amended to stress the potential and ambition for our children and young people with SEND.

Some responses contain multiple comments

The consultation has highlighted that across all areas of the strategy, the same themes are recurring, all of which are addressed within the strategy with plans to deliver against them.

The consultation has highlighted how important early support is in the strategy, and it has now been added explicitly to the principles across the strategy as well as being one of the 5 priorities.

Priority 2 focuses on children and young people reaching their potential, and this has been amended to stress the potential and ambition for our children and young people with SEND.

Inclusion within schools has been a theme throughout the consultation responses, and the strategy has been amended to reference the new County Approach to Inclusive Education that is being developed. Its aim is to redefine the approach, and support across the education system in Kent to ensure schools, settings and colleges have the skills, resources and support they require to support children and young people with SEND. As the champion of families, children, and young people our priorities are to ensure all children and young people are engaged with and included in the provision of inclusive high-quality education. We want to ensure 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.

In doing so, we strive to achieve a continuous improvement in standards, a significant narrowing of achievement gaps for vulnerable groups of learners and a wholly inclusive education system. The Inclusion statement is a document supporting the strategy, and this strategy will underpin the proposed approach to Inclusion.

Working closely with families is the focus of priority 1, and co-production has been added to the actions. Working in partnership with families, children and young people is essential to improving the experience, and the development of a co-production charter will allow families to hold services to account.

Whilst the feedback for the strategy was widely positive, feedback did reflect apprehension in the local area's ability to deliver, particularly in relation to resources and skills. Whilst the development of a workforce strategy is an action listed in priority 4, the development of an implementation plan across the strategy has been added as a next step.

The SEND strategy received many positive comments and a selection of these are below:

- "I am pleased with the vision of services working together. There definitely needs to be a culture of education and health working together using the team around the child approach"
- "...this covers main areas for KCC to strive towards, especially the part about working together with families..."
- "I feel that the five priorities are fairly comprehensive and have thought carefully about the child in the home and their community, as well as their journey through childhood into adulthood"
- "they are excellent priorities if they can be implemented"
- "the current plans are child focused but also reflect on the child as an individual person, the child within their family and the child in their wider community"
- "the strategy is comprehensive, and if it is successfully and equitable implemented across the county it will be a powerful document to drive SEND provision forward...."

- “I really like that being included within the local community has been included as a priority”
- “I feel that the 5 priorities are fairly comprehensive and have thought carefully about the child in the home and their community, as well as their journey through childhood into adulthood.”
- “I cannot see how anyone would disagree with these outcomes. they are only what anyone would want for themselves or their loved ones.”
- “The strategy is impressive and addresses the areas of weakness in the previous systems.”
- “This is heartening and shows a great deal of progress in stating and committing to involving parents and carers and children and young people themselves.”

4.10 Equality Impact Assessment

An equality impact assessment was undertaken on the strategy. The consultation asked respondents if they had any feedback on this analysis, which can be seen below.

65 comments were received for the equalities analysis, which can be broken down into the following broad themes. Some comments related to individual circumstances so are not included in the table below.

We welcome your views on our equality analysis and if you think there is anything we should consider relating to equality and diversity.	
Theme	Number of comment aligned to theme
Stressing the importance of equality and diversity	11
Consideration on how to support parents who themselves have additional needs	2
Communicating with families and children whose first language is not English	2
SEND itself is not a protected characteristic	2
Gender differentiation in terms of achievement as well as identification of SEND	3
Inclusiveness within schools promotes equalities and diversity	4
Educations settings with limited physical accessibility	3

Equality and diversity of respondents

The consultation also had a number of equality and diversity questions.

47% of those responding to the equality questions identified as being carers. This is higher than normal for strategy consultations. Of those identifying being a carer, over 91% either strongly agreed or tended to agree with the vision, over 90% either strongly agreed or tended to agree with the priorities (Priority 1 – 93%, Priority 2 –

90%, Priority 3 – 94%, Priority 4 – 96%, Priority 5 – 93%) and over 78% either strongly agreed or tended to agree with the outcomes (Outcome 1 – 80%, Outcome 2 – 78%, Outcome 3 – 78%, Outcome 4 – 78%, Outcome 5 – 80%, Outcome 6 – 83%). This indicates that views of carers were similar to those across all the respondents, with no areas varying in support.

14% of the responses identified that they considered themselves to be disabled (as set out in the Equality Act 2010), 46% of those with a long-standing illness or health condition and 46% with a learning disability and 21% with a mental health condition. There is no single quantifiable measure of the number of disabled people in Kent (or the UK), because identifying as disabled relies on an individual's self perception; but it is estimated that 17.6% of Kent (excluding Medway) residents are disabled people.

78% of respondents identified as White British with only 6% identifying themselves belonging to black, mixed or Asian ethnicity. This is in line with the profile of Kent residents, 6.3% of whom are classified as Black Minority Ethnic (BME). The respondents to the SEND Strategy reflect the profile of the County (as outlined in the Annual Equality and Diversity Report published on kent.gov.uk).

The next step has been added into the strategy to review the service Equalities Analysis and plan.

5. Outcome of consultation

All the consultation responses were considered by the SEND Improvement Board, and the strategy has been amended as outlined in the sections above. Key matters amended in the strategy are:

- ensuring the strategy emphasises ambition for our children and young people
- ensure the strategy refers to the implementation plans that will deliver the strategy over 3 years
- ensure the strategy has early identification and intervention as a priority

The strategy will now go through the decision-making process before it is formally adopted.