Inclusion Keeping in Touch

20th October 2026

8.00

Virtual via MS TEAMS

All information is correct at the time of sharing

Kent County Council
kent.gov.uk

Agenda

- Welcome
- Strategic Priorities / SEN reform
- Updates to CoS Operational Guidance
- Budget updates
- Overview and key messages; Inclusion conference, webinars and forums to date
- Close

Over the next 3 years the strategic priorities are...

- Embedding the CoS / PRG model in line with national reforms regarding Mainstream Inclusion
- Developing mainstream capability by considering our plan for Experts at Hand. Experts at Hand & Local Authority SEND Transformation Fund: funding for local authorities 2026 to 2027 - GOV.UK
- Embedding the Continuum of Need and Provision as a framework for Inclusion – National Inclusion Standards. Kent Continuum of Need and Provision - KELSI
- Supporting SENCos and Inclusion Leaders – Leading Inclusion Strategically
- Working with schools to understand proposed funding changes from 2028/2029 - Inclusive mainstream fund for schools: methodology 2026 to 2027 - GOV.UK
- Supporting schools to develop their inclusion strategy
- Embed, evaluate, improve
- Preparing the system for legislative change 2029-2030

Communities of Schools

Principles for community working:

- Commitment to meeting needs in the area and achieving best possible pupil outcomes
- Prioritising the greatest need (versus advocating for own school)
- Willingness to support and challenge (and be supported and challenged!)
- Recognition of the impact of contextual factors not just levels of pupil need
- Active participation even when you don't have immediate need for support
- Effective use of all available budgets (delegated, devolved and communities)
- Commitment to reducing reliance on additional resources wherever possible (so that these can be reallocated)
- Recognition of the need to respond to contingencies as they arise (and ensuring capacity available for this)
- Willingness to share good practice with and learn from other communities
- Commitment to equity and positive outcomes across the area and county as a whole.

Principles of Inclusion

The 7 principles of inclusion are:

- ambitious leadership and governance that embeds inclusion
- evidence-based support prioritising early intervention
- high quality adaptive teaching with curriculum designed for all learners
- enriching provision beyond the classroom that all children can access
- a safe and respectful culture fostering belonging, attendance, and participation in learning
- strong partnerships with families and wider services
- inclusive environments with continuous improvements to accessibility

CoS Operational Guidance

Intended Outcomes (Pg 11)

Through consistent implementation of this guidance, CoS are expected to contribute to:

- improved inclusion, participation, attainment and outcomes for children and young people with SEND
- greater equity of access to support and reduced variation in local practice and funding decisions
- improved experiences for local children, young people and families through clearer and more consistent decision-making
- more timely, effective and sustainable use of a proportion of HNF through shared responsibility and pooled resources
- stronger collaboration, mutual accountability and trust between schools, the local authority and partners

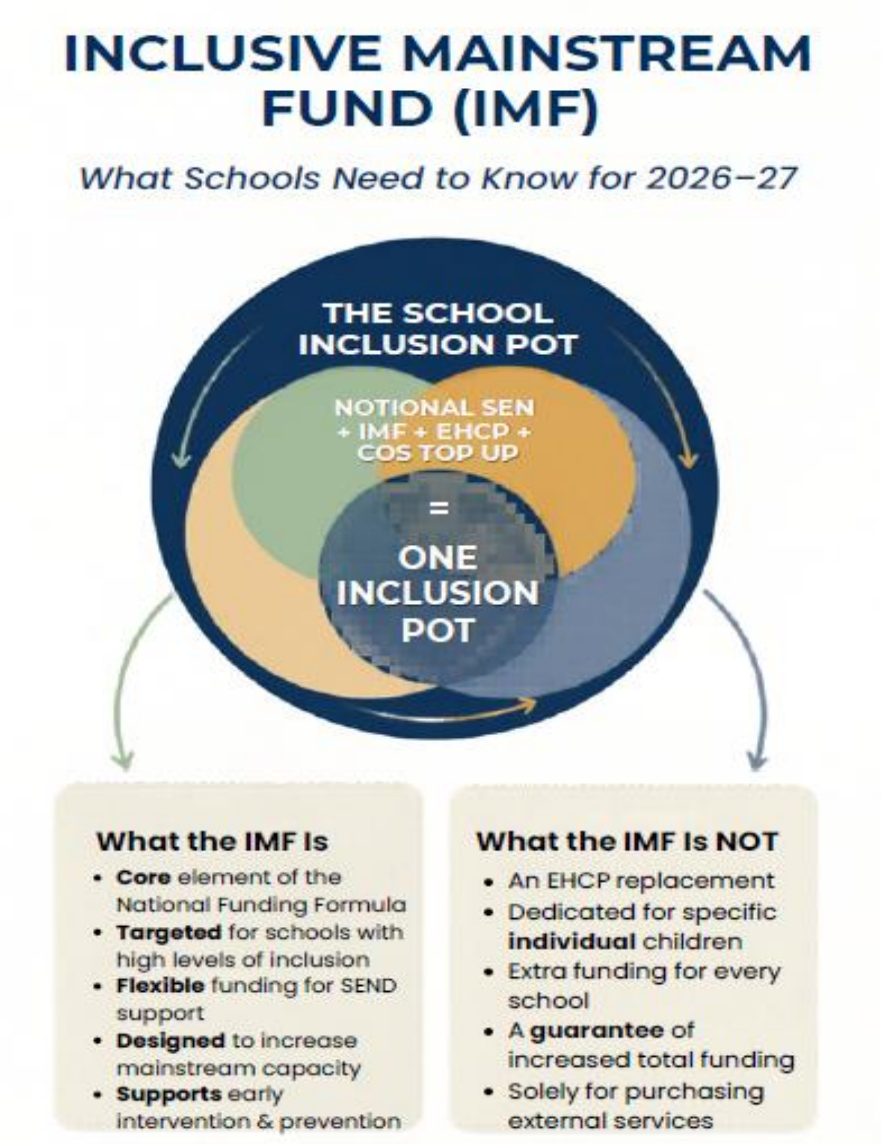
CoS Operational Guidance

Strategic, Policy and Legislative Context (Pg 12)

- Local and national reforms are working to 'tilt the system' towards planning for SEN provision according to your cohort rather than individual need

CoS Operational Guidance

Financial Context (Pg 21)







Kent schools must...(Pg 6/7)

Before making a CoS request, schools must:

✅ Use universal provision and quality-first teaching

✅ Use their Notional SEN Budget, Inclusive Mainstream Fund, and statutory funding appropriately, in line with the latest guidance

✅ Engage with the Professional Resource Group (PRG) and relevant Local Offer services where appropriate, as early intervention and implement as part of the Assess, Plan, Do, Review (APDR) cycle

✅ Define the problem to be solved and how solutions can be sought

✅ Consider sustainability and proportionality, including collective or shared solutions

Where funding is agreed, schools must:

✅ Use funding only for the **purpose approved**

✅ Implement provision as agreed

✅ Monitor and review impact

✅ Provide feedback or impact information when requested

✅ Notify the Chair and KCC immediately if circumstances change (e.g. EHCP issued, pupil moves)

CoS Operational Guidance

Standards, Equity and Escalation (Pg 42-45)

- The **standards** ensure that professional trust and local decision-making operate within a clear framework consistent with the expectations of the Ofsted / CQC Local Area SEND Inspection Framework/ SEN reforms plans and national policy documents.
- **Equity** is not about identical provision, but fair access to appropriate support based on need and context
- CoS **Escalation** process:
  - Stage 1. Referral to the Chairs Oversight Group – email clerk ESCALATION in subject line
  - Stage 2. Referral to the CoS Steering Group – email clerk ESCALATION in subject line
  - Stage 3. KCC complaints procedure
    - Escalation may be considered where there is evidence of:
      - persistent non-compliance with agreed CoS processes
      - repeated failure to provide required information, evidence or assurance
      - sustained inequity or inconsistency in local decision-making
      - ineffective use of funding resulting in limited demonstrable impact
      - breakdown in professional relationships that affects the effective operation of the community

CoS Operational Guidance (Pg 46)

Communication

Communication underpins transparency, trust and assurance

All participants MUST:

1. Communicate accurately, professionally and in a timely manner
2. Maintain clear written records of decisions and rationale
3. Protect confidentiality and personal data

Communications MUST NOT:

- Misrepresent collective decisions
- Include emotive, personal or inappropriate language
- Be shared outside agreed channels

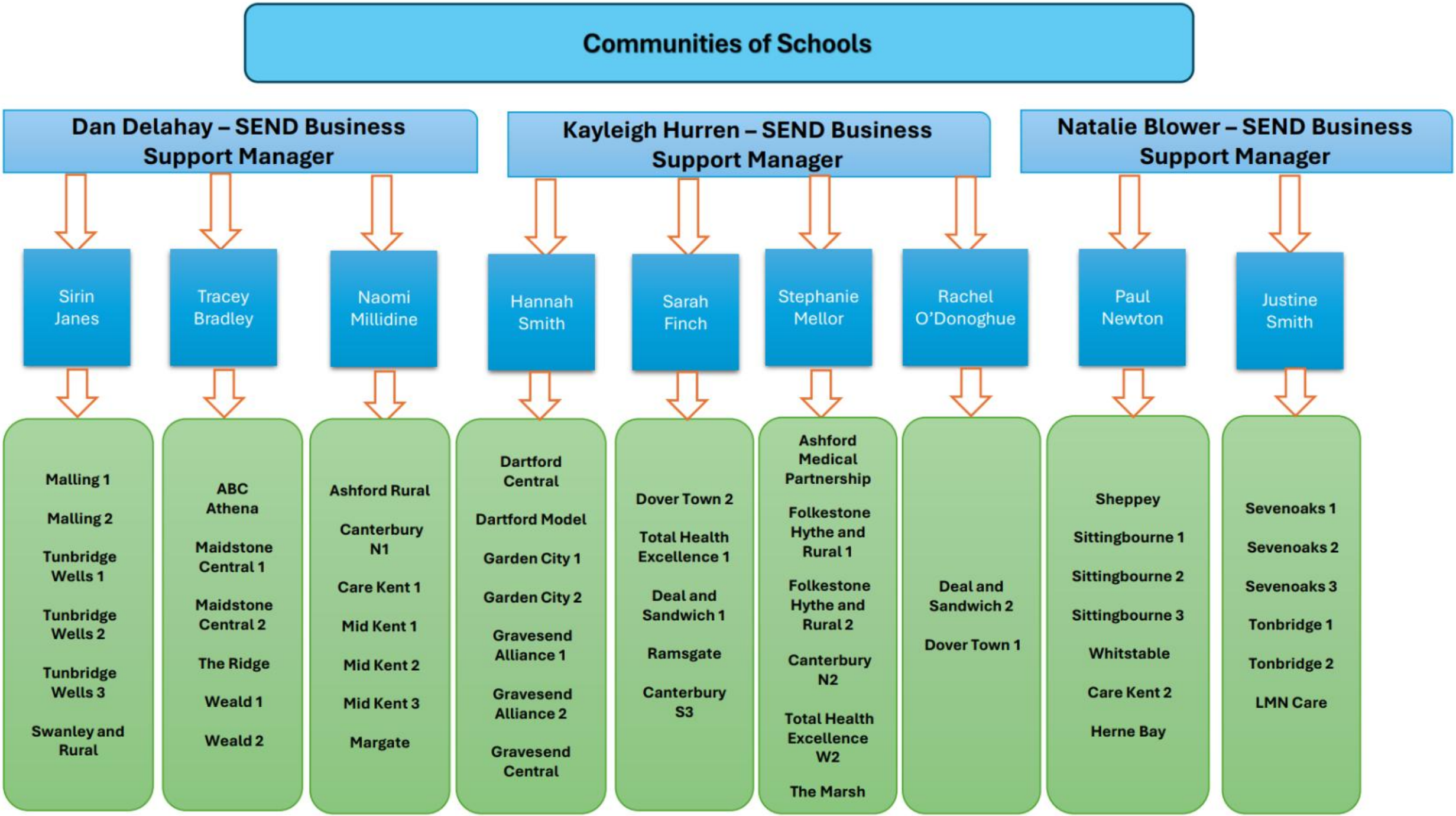
Written records must be suitable for **audit, moderation and inspection**

Formal KCC Communication channels:

Chairs meetings x4 per year
Direct communication with chairs
SEN forums x6 per year
School KIT meetings x6 per year
KELSI bulletin weekly
KELSI website

Assumption:

Schools engage with the appropriate channels and ensure they are acting within the most up to date guidance and information.


Communities of Schools
Dan Delahay – SEND Business Support Manager
Kayleigh Hurren – SEND Business Support Manager
Natalie Blower – SEND Business Support Manager
Sirin Janes
Tracey Bradley
Naomi Millidine
Hannah Smith
Sarah Finch
Stephanie Mellor
Rachel O'Donoghue
Paul Newton
Justine Smith
Malling 1
Malling 2
Tunbridge Wells 1
Tunbridge Wells 2
Tunbridge Wells 3
Swanley and Rural
ABC Athena
Maidstone Central 1
Maidstone Central 2
The Ridge
Weald 1
Weald 2
Ashford Rural
Canterbury N1
Care Kent 1
Mid Kent 1
Mid Kent 2
Mid Kent 3
Margate
Dartford Central
Dartford Model
Garden City 1
Garden City 2
Gravesend Alliance 1
Gravesend Alliance 2
Gravesend Central
Dover Town 2
Total Health Excellence 1
Deal and Sandwich 1
Ramsgate
Canterbury S3
Ashford Medical Partnership
Folkestone Hythe and Rural 1
Folkestone Hythe and Rural 2
Canterbury N2
Total Health Excellence W2
The Marsh
Deal and Sandwich 2
Dover Town 1
Sheppey
Sittingbourne 1
Sittingbourne 2
Sittingbourne 3
Whitstable
Care Kent 2
Herne Bay
Sevenoaks 1
Sevenoaks 2
Sevenoaks 3
Tonbridge 1
Tonbridge 2
LMN Care

Communities of Schools Steering Group

- **Purpose:** Support Kent's SEND transformation by embedding inclusive practice in mainstream schools through CoS
- **Steering Group Role:** Provide oversight, challenge and guidance to ensure CoS are implemented effectively and embedded as business as usual
- **Key Responsibilities:** Monitor impact, promote consistent decision-making, share best practice, identify risks, and drive continuous improvement
- **Membership:** Multi-disciplinary group including education leaders, SEND, finance, commissioning, communications and project staff
- **Governance:** Meets termly and reports into SEND and Education governance boards to support ongoing SEND reform and improvement
- First meeting this academic year will focus on moderation process undertaken in July 2026

CoS Steering Group - membership

- Siobhán Price – KCC Inclusion
- Karen Stone – KCC finance
- Rachel Baker – KCC project manager
- Sam Sheppard – KCC commissioning
- Chris Dale – Community Chair
- Tiffany Hillier – Community Chair
- Tommy Cullen – Trust CFOO
- Vacancy – Special School representative
- Vacancy – SENCO/Trust Inclusion lead (non chair)

If there is anyone who would like to discuss being on the steering group and influence the way forward, please email LocalityModel@kent.gov.uk

Capital Updates

- To provide some context, whilst processing the agreed payments during the Summer term, we have noticed a small number of requests for items that we believe meet the Council's definition of capital expenditure. We paused these payments whilst seeking additional advice and review of our policy. As a result, the Council will not be able to agree these payments, and affected schools have been contacted separately. This funding will be returned to the Community of School pot as part of the roll forward. Affected schools may wish to revise their application as a result.

Capital Updates (con'td)

- Listening to your feedback, we are updating the guidance to make it clearer for chairs, clerks and schools on requests that cannot be agreed. This guidance will be shared at the next steering group ahead of publication during term 2. In the meantime, we will continue to review any agreed applications and will hold those that we believe meet the Council's definition of capital, until the final guidance is agreed.

Capital Updates (cont'd)

- Any request(s) over £10,000 per school
- Does it create a significant new fixed asset? - land, building, equipment (something you would put on your asset register)
- Does it improve a fixed asset (not just maintaining it at existing value)? (either increasing it lifespan / value)
- Does the benefit /use last more than one year?
- Typical examples:
  - provision of new outdoor equipment or Enhanced outdoor area
  - Purchase of ICT equipment (depending on individual item value, could be when buying multiple items)
- The purchase of resources is still allowable (think resources rather than significant building work!)

Budget Updates

- All schools should have had their community budget updates
- All chairs have been sent updated budget statements
- Inclusion Mainstream Fund webinar – recorded on 8th October
- Steering group – feedback from chairs and schools, considering guidance on costings

Engagement with Schools in Kent

- Conference slides and recordings will be on Kelsi by the beginning of Term 2 – Countywide Inclusion Conferences
- Schedule of Webinars to support schools, including statutory information taking place over the academic year. Those already completed are on Kelsi as recording and with slides
- New to role SENCO face to face days 'Growing into the SENCO role'– the 2 dates we have run in term 1 have been a success. We are planning to run two more days, one in Term 2(November) and one in Term 3. Growing into the SENCO role - Registration – Fill in form
- Countywide SENCO Forums – Please register through the TEP links in the document
- Termly Inclusion Keeping in Touch meetings for Schools – registration through Kelsi
- Clerks will continue to support sharing any future information through CoS

Principle	Webinars Linked
Ambitious leadership and governance that embeds inclusion	What Every SENCo Needs to Know This Year Writing Your Inclusion Strategy Inclusion Funding Making Your Funding Work Ofsted, Inclusion and Demonstrating Impact Leading Inclusion - planning for the next academic year
Evidence-based support prioritising early intervention	Who can help? Integrating Experts
High-quality adaptive teaching with curriculum designed for all learners	Moving Beyond Individual Interventions
Enriching provision beyond the classroom that all children can access	Inclusion That Works: School Case Studies
A safe and respectful culture fostering belonging, attendance, and participation in learning	Inclusion That Works: School Case Studies
Strong partnerships with families and wider services	Who Can Help? Integrating Experts Stronger Partnerships with Families and Wider Services Consultation Process
Inclusive environments with continuous improvements to accessibility	Inclusion That Works: School Case Studies EHCPs: Getting the Basics Right

Kent Inclusion Conference

- Over 500 attendees
- Health, Professional services and school representatives in attendance
- Wider networking encouraged outside of Communities of Schools through table allocation







What went well:

- Speakers sharing practical adaptive teaching strategies
- Clear support for Inclusion Strategy development
- Inspirational keynote speakers
- Strong focus on universal provision

Key takeaways:

- Inclusion is everyone's responsibility
- Strengthen the universal offer
- Engage stakeholders in Inclusion Strategy development
- Practical inclusive classroom approaches to share with setting

Future topics suggested:

- Parent engagement and co-production
- Greater Community of Schools networking
- More implementation-focused examples and case studies

Growing into the SENCO Role – Face to Face Days



95% would recommend
Average recommendation score: **9.5/10**



95% rated sessions highly
Most session scores were **4 or 5 out of 5** across all elements.



Exceeded expectations
Over half of delegates stated the event was **"Beyond my expectations"**, with all others reporting it **met expectations**

Delegates left with greater confidence, clearer strategic direction and practical actions to strengthen inclusive practice across their schools

Themes

Strategic Leadership

Participants consistently highlighted:

- Becoming a more strategic SENCO
- Prioritisation and time management
- Moving beyond paperwork to leadership
- Developing clear action plans and next steps

Practical Tools & Systems

Delegates valued:

- EHCP process guidance
- SENCO survival toolkit
- Annual planning and organisation
- Understanding Kent SEND services

Professional Networks

Participants particularly appreciated:

- Meeting other SENCOs
- Sharing challenges and solutions
- Building connections with Kent services
- Having names, faces and contacts behind the support systems

Leading Inclusion Strategically Webinars

Overview of feedback from Webinars completed so far:



What every SENCO needs to know this year

- Increased confidence in strategic SEND leadership
- Greater understanding of funding and resourcing
- Clearer focus on whole-school improvement
- Schools reported increased confidence to lead inclusion strategically.



Writing your Inclusion Strategy

- Improved confidence in developing Inclusion Strategies
- Practical tools and clear structure for action
- Stronger focus on pupil voice and parent partnership
- Schools left with greater clarity and confidence to develop meaningful strategies.

Registration and completed webinar recordings and slides - Series 2 – Academic year 26/27 - KELSI

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How can these be used.....?

- Webinars are recorded – ask for them to be watched again (via clerk) and discussed at your CoS meetings. This will inform discussions
- Discuss with your SLT at school/trust level. How will this develop your provision
- Use to check your understanding – some content re statutory processes, just to refresh schools understanding of what the process is. A lot has changed
- If there are new or returning SENCOs in your community, signpost them to this content

Have a well deserved half term break.



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Contact us

- CoS operational queries: cosadmin@kent.gov.uk
- (New) EHCP funding queries: hnf@kent.gov.uk
- Locality Model strategic queries (including for CoS, PRG, governance, etc): localitymodel@kent.gov.uk
- School Advance and CoS Overview Statement queries: schoolfunding@kent.gov.uk