



To All Headteachers, Chairs of Governors and SENCO's

**Children, Young People and Education**

County Hall

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Date: 26<sup>th</sup> May 2021

Dear Colleagues

As we draw to the end of term and head into the final push before the summer break, we would like to take the opportunity to thank-you for all your support and hard work towards the transformation journey of the SEND system in Kent. These improvements have been driven by a shared professional commitment to improving the experiences and outcomes for children, young people, young adults and their families.

The **SEND strategy has been published** and the co-produced **Countywide Approach to Inclusive Education shared** with stakeholders for review and discussion. Despite the challenges currently facing schools, over 1033 school staff made time to attend the Mainstream Core Standards introduction training, representing a coverage of 357 schools.

We are in the final evaluation stages of the bids to deliver **a countywide approach to nurture** and **the system support for inclusive school leadership**, including training, peer to peer clusters and the development of Inclusion Leaders of Education. We hope to finalise agreements imminently so that these activities can start in the new academic year.

The first meeting of the transition task and finish group has met and is co-producing a **transition charter**. We are also working with Supported employment to provide support to schools in embedding whole school approaches to **supporting young people with SEND into employment**.

School Improvement have been supporting schools to ensure their **websites are SEND compliant**, including publishing the SEND strategy. The most recent sampling (60 schools) showed 88.3% schools are meeting this standard, up from 78.3% in October 2020 and only 50% in July 2020.

The **termly SENCO updates**, initiated in September, continue to provide valuable updates on key development and issues within SEND. These are increasingly popular with 391

SENCO's now regularly attending. We are also about to publish our first **SENCO newsletter**.

The Effective Kent Project has delivered the first round of **SEND learning behaviours training** and have recruited **6 EEF Evidence Leaders of Education**, who will form part of our wider ILE group. Kent schools are now fully funded for two teachers to participate in the nine module, **specialist evidence-based training** and can also access one day of **individualised wrap-around support** for implementation.

So far 47 schools have engaged with the training and support, with a further 26 schools lined up to join the next round of training. We are currently accepting new applications for this and three other Evidence-Based Training programmes due to start in September, including Improving Memory and Metacognition, Tackling Educational Disadvantage and Evidence Informed Curriculum Development. Applications close on 28<sup>th</sup> May (see appendix for contact details)

We have initiated a **High Needs funding review** which aims to align HNF with the wider SEND Strategy and offer. Developing a system that supports inclusive practice in mainstream schools and successful outcomes for children with SEND. It's scope is to consider a HNF system that has **greater flexibility for schools to meet needs, greater accountability, is transparent and accessible and allocated equitably**. The proposals will be out for full consultation October 2021, with a view to any changes being phased from April 2022.

We have increased the numbers of Provision Evaluation Officers (PEO's) and provided them with more support and training. As a result, you are reporting an increased confidence in their support and practice. In the most recent survey (91 respondents) you rated **the support from your PEO in leading to a positive change in practice** as 4.8/5, and the **support from your PEO increasing the confidence of yourself and that of colleagues** as 4.77/5

## **EHCP's and EP Assessments**

There has been **positive progress on the backlogs for both EP assessments and EHCP plans**. A focus on quality assurance has also seen the Kent Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) being implemented. Over the last year (March 2020 – March 2021), **EHCP plans QA'd as Good has grown from 20% to 75%**. The number of **open cases has decreased from 1862 to 1629 in the last six weeks**; this is despite an increase in the number of assessment requests

To meet the rising demand for Education Health and Care Plans Kent Educational Psychology Service (KEPS) has over the last year worked hard to significantly increase capacity. This is enabling greater numbers of Education, Health & Care Plan assessments to be completed and **the numbers completed within statutory timelines to increase**. Over the last 12 months, 2606 pieces of advice were submitted which is a **20% increase** over the same period the previous year and we are predicting similar growth in this next year.

Further to addressing the rise in statutory assessment requests, KEPS is continuing to **support early intervention within schools** through SLA work and its 'core preventative'

offer to ensure children and young people and their families within Kent get high quality, evidence-based interventions in a timely manner. This includes:

- **Expanding the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) training** and supervision network in Kent which enables school staff to run small group and one-to-one interventions with young people particularly around SEMH. A further 45 schools have been trained this year meaning that well more than 100 schools across Kent will now have a trained ELSA who will receive regular professional supervision from the EP Service. A similar expansion of the 'roll out' is planned next year.
- Continued support for the **Parent Consultation Line** which has thus far received in excess of 300 calls this year the majority of which have been around supporting SEMH issues within the home. This continued to be evaluated very highly by parents/carers.
- The establishment of a **Video Interaction Guidance (VIG)** core service using a strength-based video intervention model focussed on Early Years settings

## Supporting parents and families

The Local offer continues to be developed and has been renamed and rebranded as the **SEND Information Hub**. Parent satisfaction overall with the Local Offer has moved from 19% in 2019 to 60% in the Spring of 2021. The **SEND parent newsletters** continue to be published, with subscriptions doubling since February 2021. We have also **finalised the Co-production charter** which is aligned to the new Kent youth charter.

The **Preparation for Adulthood (PFA) transitions protocol** has been developed will be published this month. The National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi) have supported the programme by reviewing the Local Offer content in respect of PFA and a plan for further content has been developed. The Local Offer now has an enhanced section for young people.

Joint funding from both KCC and Health has been provided to **extend the IASK service** for the next 2 years, demonstrating our joint commitment to supporting families.

**Kent PACT (Parents and Carers Together)** continue their growth and independence journey with **Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) status achieved** in April 2021 and a significant growth in membership following the recruitment of key staff. **Quadrant ambassadors join the Kent PACT team** this month, taking the lead in area-led parent activities. Kent PACT continue to be part of the strategic team shaping the future of the SEND service.

## Health

The past three months has been particularly challenging for health services, with increasing referrals across the board since children returned to school. The pressure is being felt most significantly on mental health and eating disorder services, with unprecedented demand and increasing complexity and acuity of cases. As a system, Kent has responded extremely quickly to emerging pressures and strong relationships have played a key part in enabling quick decision making. There has been a strong focus on

children and young people at a strategic level and this has been evidenced through support **for additional investment across the system to strengthen services post covid**. Many services are returning to normal and are still delivering **a mixture of virtual and face to face appointments**. There has been strong engagement with system partners and the establishment of the **new Governance structure** and newly formed meetings has been a key strategic driver. There are **more joint posts and jointly funded services than have been seen previously** and it is anticipated that these will have a positive impact on outcomes for CYP in future.

## Looking forward

The following activity will be our focus over the summer term:

- Update County Approach to Inclusive Education following stakeholder feedback and publish.
- Publish SENCO newsletter
- Look at ways in which KAH and PACT work together to support the inclusion agenda, including the development of Parent engagement standards and surveys.
- High Needs Funding review work to outline next steps and proposals - 3 focus groups.
- County wide approach to nurture provider appointed, for September delivery.
- Inclusive Leadership provider appointed, for September delivery.
- Supported employment – enabling whole school approaches to supporting young people with SEND into employment finalised and agreed for September delivery.
- Directory for schools
- Agreement of core training offer
- SEND Information Hub – social media campaign launch to raise awareness.
- We are moving towards using the National QAF Framework for monitoring EHCP's.

If you are interested in finding out more about any of the activity or signing up, if you have not already done so, please see the links and contacts included in the appendix.

Lots of necessary planning and preparation has been able to take place over the past 18 months, however, we have been hampered by the pandemic in seeing the full impact of this work. As we come out of the pandemic and this work comes to fruition, we hope to be able to evidence more of the impact on outcomes for children and young people.

Thank-you again for your continued support. We wish you a restful half term break.

Yours sincerely



Christine McInnes  
**Director of Education**



Mark Walker  
**Director of SEND**

**Appendix:**

If you are interested in finding out more or taking part in any of the activity outlined in this letter please follow the links below:

**SENCO Updates** – [Claire.lidyard@theeducationpeople.org](mailto:Claire.lidyard@theeducationpeople.org)

**EEF SEND Learning Behaviours training** – [Michelle.Stanley@kent.gov.uk](mailto:Michelle.Stanley@kent.gov.uk)

Since Spring last year, the EEFective Kent Project has been working to support Kent schools through evidence-based interventions, training, and match-funding. Many of the Promising Projects (applications for these close on 7 June) offer strong interventions to support improved progress for all pupils. To find out more or participate in any of the offer visit: <https://www.kelsi.org.uk/eeffective-kent-project>

**Countywide Approach to Inclusive Education and related work** –  
[Celia.Buxton2@kent.gov.uk](mailto:Celia.Buxton2@kent.gov.uk)

<https://www.kelsi.org.uk/special-education-needs/inclusion>