



Letter to all Kent schools

Independent Support for Parents and Young People

As you know the Children's and Families Act 2014 and the 2014 Code of Practice which came into effect on 1st September marked not only the commencement of the replacement of Statements of Educational Need with more holistic Education, Health and Care plans, but also set out the rights of parents and young people to Independent Support to help them through the process. The Act also signalled a philosophical shift in the role of parents and young people in planning their future.

Recognising the enormity of the task ahead and to ensure there was adequate capacity to support parents and young people, additional time limited funding was made available from the Department of Education for which the community and voluntary sector could bid this summer. In Kent the Kent Disabled Children's Parent Driven Consortium (KDCPDC) –a consortium of 5 parent driven charities who already offer support, advice, guidance and leisure services to hundreds of families in Kent won the Independent Support contract.

The IS service is available for both a young person with SEN aged 16-25 and parent carers. The role of the Independent Supporter is to:-

- To work with the parent or young person throughout the EHC assessment and planning process;
 - either working with parents or young person while their statement of SEN is transferred to an EHC plan;
 - or working with the parents whose children have been assessed as requiring an EHC plan for the first time
 - and/or young people (and their parents) who are coming up to school leaving age and would have had a Learning Disability Assessment under the old system;
- Help parents and young people contribute their views and make choices or give preferences at key points in the process
- Make parents and young people aware of the Local offer and how to find it
- Provide information for parents and young people on Personal Budgets
- Signpost parents and young people to local information especially the Local Offer and the Information, Advice and Support Services (formerly the Parent Partnership Service), when the issue is outside the remit of the Independent Supporter.

All IS workers are required to complete mandatory training to ensure they have the skills and knowledge to appropriately support the families who will use the service.

KDCPDC recognise that many schools will be working hard to dovetail the new legislative requirements into their existing planning approach, which for many will already be person centred. We also recognise that for some families the changed philosophy to an outcome based and person

centred approach and their opportunity to participate more fully in that process might be challenging.

Our aim is to work in a joined up multiagency way to support those families who may not otherwise be able to fully and confidently engage in this process but also to ensure that as many families as possible are aware of our service and how to access it.

We recognise that working closely with schools who will continue to lead the process is crucial and we are keen to meet with as many teachers and Sencos to discuss how we can best work together to deliver positive outcomes for children and young people.

To meet this common aim we would be grateful if you would inform all parents of children in your school whose annual review will be a transfer review to transfer their child's existing statement to an EHC plan during this academic year of their statutory right to Independent Support and give them our county wide single point of access freephone contact details 03000 110 151 and email contact details info@ISkent.org . Parents can then contact us directly to receive more information via the helpline and can if they wish be linked to a locally based IS worker who can then work with them throughout the transfer process

Full details of the support we can offer parents and young people can be found via the M4S website <http://www.m4s.org.uk/#/independent-support-kent/4586825910>

Should you require more information please do not hesitate to contact us