

Provider Satisfaction Survey 2016

KCC Response to Provider Comments and Questions

1. Vision and direction of travel

There were no comments or questions on vision and direction of travel.

2. Information and communication

There were four comments/questions surrounding information and communication. The key points related to:

- *A preference for more communication and notification when processes and forms have changed, particularly when there are key changes on KELSI*
- *The difficulty in navigating KELSI*
- *The amount of content in the Briefing and Networking Sessions*
- *The lack of use of social media to communicate and inform.*

KCC Response

The Early Years and Childcare Bulletin is published six times a year, typically at the end of January, March, May, July, September and November. We do notify providers by email when the Bulletin has been posted. If individuals are not receiving this notification email it may be because it is going to the setting owner or because we have the wrong email address for the setting. Setting Managers can either check the [Bulletin page](#) at the end of each of the months mentioned above or email eycollaborations@kent.gov.uk and we can let them know where the notification email is going. We are also currently exploring other ways of getting important information out to you more quickly and efficiently.

There is no facility for us to automatically email settings any changes made to KELSI, although we will provide this feedback to the team who manage KELSI as a whole. We could add this information to the e-bulletin if providers would find this useful but the Early Years and Childcare Service generally informs the sector via the Bulletin and at Briefing and Networking Sessions where there have been important changes to forms and information on the website. We will consider the feedback on the difficulty in navigating through the Early Years and Childcare Service pages on KELSI and make any adjustments as appropriate and necessary.

We acknowledge that there have been times when the Briefing and Networking Sessions have been particularly laden with information. In line with your feedback we reduced the amount of 'pop-up' updates made at the October Sessions in order to combat this and we will continue to aim to balance keeping the sector informed with overloading providers with information.

3. Sufficiency and sustainability of places

There was one comment surrounding the sufficiency and sustainability of places. The provider felt unable to agree with the relevant statements on the survey as they had not had an 'Annual Conversation' or contact with the Childcare Sufficiency Officer.

KCC Response

Childcare Sufficiency Officers are not responsible for the Annual Conversation, rather they undertake visits around compliance and at the request of settings where they need support around sustainability, legal status and committee issues. Annual Conversations are offered and undertaken by the Improvement and Standards Team as detailed in section 4 below.

4. Continuous Improvement

There were four comments/questions surrounding continuous improvement. The key points related to:

- *The withdrawal of SIP visits*
- *The difficulty in funding Early Years Adviser visits*
- *The format of Annual Conversation visits.*

KCC Response

KCC is committed through the [Early Years and Childcare Strategy 2016 – 2019](#) to work in partnership with settings to support them in providing high quality early learning and care. The work undertaken by the Early Years and Childcare Service Improvement and Standards Team is set out in our Delivery Plan which is available on [KELSI](#). Centrally funded support is provided to Inadequate and Requires Improvement settings to enable them to make rapid improvement, as is our statutory duty. Our Delivery Plan also enables us to provide support to newly registered settings.

All other providers are offered an Annual Conversation, also centrally funded and which supports them in maintaining a Good or above Ofsted grade as demonstrated by the high proportion of Kent settings currently at Good or above. We use a standardised approach to these conversations to ensure that there is consistency across the county and that all aspects of the Ofsted grade descriptors are covered in the visit as well as a review of leadership and management processes.

5. Threads of Success

There were numerous comments/questions surrounding the two Threads of Success statements. The key points related to:

- *The good quality of the training and support received through Threads of Success*
- *The inaccessibility of training for many settings due to affordability*
- *The difficulty for settings being able to afford even statutory training*
- *The challenge of maintaining staff CPD with fewer resources*
- *Perceived issues around accessing information and courses on the website and through CPD Online*
- *The need for more of specific courses such as SEND and on working with babies*
- *Dissatisfaction with two training courses attended.*

KCC Response

We acknowledge the current financial constraints for providers, making it difficult for them to regularly afford training and to release staff and readily enable their CPD. Also faced with financial constraints the Council is unable to fund training opportunities to previous levels. Joining a collaboration, amongst many other benefits, can provide opportunities for practitioners to share practice and issues. Training can also be purchased more cost effectively by sharing in-house training within a collaboration or group of providers. We do offer evening and Saturday training which can assist with the issue of releasing staff during weekdays.

We have made a comparison between training provided by Threads of Success and that provided by other external organisations. Whilst some external courses are provided at lower costs, they are often shorter, therefore offering less depth than Threads of Success training. Not all external organisations offer the breadth of training or in-house training. Our comparison indicates that we are competitive within the market and scaling down the range of training provided would not result in a price reduction.

We take the quality of our training most seriously. All participants are given the opportunity to evaluate the course they have attended and we would encourage all providers to give constructive feedback or speak with the course tutor at the time if there are real concerns. Any evaluation of a less than good is followed up with a telephone call where possible. Evaluations for the two courses mentioned in the free text box comment, the Characteristics of Teaching and Learning and Slugs and Snails have all been at a good or above standard. There have been some evaluations for these two courses with below good rating for the venue and administration. Where training is organised by a collaboration, we ensure that the Leader receives a summary of the evaluations. Where training has been organised through CPD Online we provide them with feedback on the quality of the venue.

With regards to timings during a course, a 3 hour workshop would have a maximum 15 minute coffee break, if a break at all depending on the nature of the course. A full day would have a 15 minute coffee break in the morning, half hour for lunch and usually a working tea break in the afternoon. These breaks are essential for

delegates and the trainer to maintain wellbeing and offer an environment suitable for learning.

A wide range of courses is available through Threads of Success. We currently offer seven workshops focussed specifically on the under twos, three of which are also available to book via CPD Online with confirmed dates and venues. Historically, numbers on the working with babies courses are low.

The one day SENCO course which provides training for new SENCOs and as an update for those who have been in the role for a long time, is provided as a centrally funded course (free to attend). New SENCOs can also request a centrally funded visit from an Equality and Inclusion adviser at EYinclusion@kent.gov.uk.

Any significant changes to SEND legislation are shared at Briefing and Networking, at Early Years LIFT meetings and through the Early Years and Childcare Bulletin. The range of SEND training is listed on the Early Years and Childcare Equality and Inclusion SEND page on [KELSI](#) with the detail of each course available in Thread 14 of Threads of Success. There is also a separate page called Support for SENCOs in Early Years which lists and signposts practitioners to all the relevant information available.

We are currently reviewing the Threads of Success offer, including our pricing policy, to which effect we have invited providers to a series of Focus Groups in March.

6. Qualifications

There were two comments/questions surrounding qualifications. The key points related to:

- *The difficulty in recruiting qualified staff*
- *Acknowledgement of the training and qualification providers that are available to use.*

KCC response

We recognise the difficulty that many settings are having in recruiting sufficient quality staff around the county. The Department for Education consulted on the Level 3 Early Years Educator literacy and numeracy issue, the outcome of which is now available [here](#). The Government also released its [Workforce Strategy](#) early in March.

7. Vulnerable Children

There were three comments/questions surrounding vulnerable children. The key points related to:

- *The high quality of the support and advice received from the Early Years and Childcare Equality and Inclusion Team*

- *The impact on settings of the number of two year olds with severe and complex needs*
- *The paperwork around EYPP and the length of time taken to get funding for one to one support.*

KCC Response

If a child is accessing their FF2 entitlement then the setting can apply for SCARF funding through the same process that they requested augmented funding for three and four year olds. If a child has a severe and complex need they may be entitled to DLA and therefore will be able to claim their free entitlement.

All new claims for FF2 have a tick box on which allows the information to be shared once the child is three so this should reduce the necessity for additional paperwork.

8. Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)

There was one comment on SEND which related to the paperwork involved in SEN.

KCC Response

As comments around paperwork were also mentioned in relation to Early Years LIFT, our response the SEND comment is incorporated below.

9. Early Years Local Inclusion Forum Teams (EYLIFT)

There were 5 comments/questions surrounding EYLIFT. The key points related to:

- *The valuable support provided by the EYLIFT process*
- *The changes in requirements and accessibility of EYLIFT*
- *The difficulty of attending EYLIFT due to staffing issues*
- *The paperwork involved in EYLIFT*
- *The level of funding for children with SEND.*

KCC Response

The newly appointed Specialist Teaching and Learning Service SEND Strategic Lead and Early Years and Childcare Equality and Inclusion Manager have reviewed all the paperwork and criteria for additional funding so that the county processes are consistent and fair. The new funding formula will require further review of SCARF so that is in line with the Disability Access Fund and SEN Inclusion Fund so there will be further changes. Information is shared with settings at EYLIFT and SENCO forums as well as on the SEN KELSI pages. Specialist Teaching and Learning Services offer district training for practitioners to ensure everyone is fully up to date and all new paperwork and processes are shared in the centrally funded SENCO training.

Currently there is no statutory duty to provide additional funding for children with severe and complex needs but KCC feels it appropriate to do so. The amount given is a contribution towards costs. The paperwork needed when considering eligibility for SCARF requires only one application page and a costings form to be completed.

All other paperwork required is what should already be completed by settings as part of their support and differentiation for all children.

10. Collaborations

There were 5 comments surrounding collaborations. The key points related to:

- *The value of support and advice gained through collaborations*
- *The difficulty in joining a collaboration*
- *The lack of involvement of the local authority in a collaboration*
- *The lack of benefit in belonging to an individual collaboration.*

KCC Response

Kent County Council encourages Early Years and Childcare providers to work together in collaborations to drive further improvement and narrow achievement gaps. Currently 68% of settings have told us they are part of or are in the process of joining a collaboration. Collaborations are run by individual members from Early Years settings (not by Kent County Council) and each collaboration has its own Terms of Reference and an agreed leader who coordinates the work within the group. This way of working has led to settings accessing joint training opportunities, reducing costs and feedback from established collaborations suggests very positive outcomes.

For those trying to join a collaboration, we do try to respond as quickly as possible. We have checked our collaborations inbox and cannot identify any outstanding emails. If setting managers have not had a response please resend your original email or email us again at eycollaborations@kent.gov.uk.

It can be difficult for us to find a collaboration for settings to join in some districts, as the existing ones are already deemed to be full, although this is always and only at the behest of the individual collaboration and usually in line with its bespoke Terms of Reference. If we are to start a new collaboration we need to identify a potential Leader which can be challenging. If you feel you would be interested in leading a collaboration we would be very pleased to hear from you at the above email address. Please see Collaboration Leader Lisa Evans speaking [here](#).

General and more complex comments and questions

*There were a large number of comments and questions surrounding **30 Hours of Free Childcare**. The key points related to:*

- *Acknowledgement of the benefits of 30 hours for parents*
- *The need for more timely information for settings and the local authority*
- *Concern over the sustainability of settings.*

KCC Response

The implementation of the 30 Hours of Free Childcare programme is highly challenging nationally. The Department for Education had undertaken a national

consultation to identify views on some of the key elements of the operation and delivery of the 30 Hour extended Free Entitlement. KCC did make a response and hopes that as many Kent providers also did. This included how the entitlement would be delivered, and how it meets and is responsive to the needs of working parents.

The Government released its response to the initial consultation in November 2016 - 30 hour free childcare entitlement: delivery model Government consultation response. This provided some clarity, but release of the revised Statutory Guidance was delayed until March. In addition to the consultation on the delivery model, the DfE also consulted on the national funding formula. The Government's response to the national Early Years Funding Consultation was released in December 2016.

There has been no change to Kent's average funding base rate in 2017-18 to that proposed in the national consultation of £4.48 per hour. Please note this is the overall hourly rate and does not equate to what Kent providers will actually receive.

There has been no significant change to the proposals in the consultation. The factors used to determine the level of funding received by a local authority consist of three elements:

1. A universal base rate
2. An Additional Need factor, made up of three sub factors, Free School Meals, English as an Additional Language and Disability Living Allowance.
3. An Area Cost Adjustment (ACA) which has two drivers, staffing costs and premises costs.

KCC consulted with the sector on the local funding formula. The outcome of the consultation was communicated by the [Corporate Director, Education and Young Peoples Services](#) at the end of February.

Children who meet the Disability Assessment Fund criteria will receive £615 per annum and there is a requirement on the local authority to consult with providers on the operation of the SEN Inclusion Fund. Centrally retained expenditure limit is set at 7% for 2017-18 and 5% for 2018-19.

The vast majority of 3 and 4 year olds in Kent take their 15 hours entitlement. It is also anticipated some children taking up the 15+ hours may need to split this between two different providers (e.g. nursery or childminder). This will be established through initial provider and parent/carer surveys and further consultation with childminders.

We have created a monthly 30 Hours of Free Childcare Update that is uploaded on to [KELSI](#) (last Friday of the month) to help to keep providers informed. Twelve district seminars to help support providers and to look at ways to deliver 30 Hours in a sustainable way have also been running in March.