

Children's Commissioning attended the School SENCo forums in March 2025 to outline changes to the delivery of support from Specialist Teaching and Learning Service as they move into KCC and align the delivery of support to the Communities of Schools and Early Years models of support. SENCos were invited to send through questions. Responses are outlined in this FAQ document.

A number of questions were received. Where there are recurring themes and duplicate questions these have been grouped and a single response provided.

Communities of Schools:

1	How will schools access STLS support?	Schools will access STLS support through the link practitioner model. Further information on the questions in this section of the FAQs, and wider reading, can be found here and Locality Model FAQs can be found here . Early years settings will be able to access support via the Early Years Professional Resource Group.
2	How often will CoS meetings take place. Will they be advertised?	The Community of Schools will meet once a month. Taking into account school holidays, there will be approximately 10x over the course of the academic year.
3	What agencies will be part of communities of schools (Espec Eps) and who will attend the meetings	Communities of Schools will be attended by school SENCos. Agencies will not attend
4	Concern about not having additional support staff to help with complex cases	Children with EHCPs who are in receipt of HNF over a £6,000 threshold will still receive funding which will go directly to the school to support children with additional needs.
5	How will the role of STLS and the SEN Advisors complement each other?	The services will continue to work closely with each other at a local level, as is currently the case. This will include joined up working to support transition and phased transfer processes.
6	Who will monitor STLS / CoS	A CoS Dispute Resolution Policy will be in place and an Area

		Moderation Board will provide monitoring. Please see CoS FAQs here for further information.
7	How do we access the EP service	Through the Link Practitioner model
8	How do we access continuous support for complex children	Through the Link Practitioner model
9	How will SENCos be supported	Through the Communities of Schools
10	Comment that SENCos are very unsettled with changes and feel as though having STLS safety rug removed is the last straw	We understand that SEND support in Kent is changing quickly and that this change can be unsettling. The purpose of these changes is to provide more support for SENCos and schools which is easier to access. STLS is not being removed, it is moving in to KCC in order to provide a sustainable, equitable model of support.
11	How will the community be able to contribute to the performance management of the STLS member	The Area Moderation Board will oversee the contribution and impact of all professional services, including STLS, that support inclusion in mainstream.

Operational Details:

12	How will STLS be allocated / how do we access STLS	School age STLS will be accessed through the Link Practitioner model. Early Years STLS will be allocated through the Early Years Professional Resource Group.
13	When will we know who the Link Teacher is and how often will Link meeting take place	This information will be available once the service is in house. Details will be published on KELSI
14	How many ST Link Teachers will there be Will every school have access to a Link teacher	Every school will have access to a STLS Link Practitioner.
15	How often will I see a link teacher	Schools will be able to access a link teacher as often as is necessary. The frequency and purpose of requests will be closely monitored.
16	How will it be decided which Specialist Teacher is in which community and will they have more than one community? If the Link teacher is part time, will there be more than one Link teacher in a community	These operational details will be agreed as the service moves into KCC.
17	When will we find out who our Link teacher is	All details will be on KELSI.
18	Will it be the same link teacher	It is anticipated STLS Link Practitioners will be allocated to a

	each time, or will they rotate	community of schools and will stay with that community where possible.
19	How can I access a particular specialism	Through the Link Practitioner.
20	How many settings will STLS Link Practitioner support	<p>This is to be determined for school age STLS.</p> <p>For early years settings, STLS support will be allocated through the Early Years Professional Resource Group meetings.</p>
21	How is Link teacher time allocated so children get the support they need	This will be decided in the first instance between the link teacher and the school. The purpose and frequency of this support will be closely monitored.
22	When will we know what the new model will look like	Information about the Communities of Schools can be found here .
23	How will children be reallocated	Children who are currently open to STLS will continue to be open unless STLS support is no longer needed. KCC is committed to minimising disruption so cases will come over with the transfer to ensure continuity of support for those children as we transition over to the new model. Those cases will be reviewed periodically as part of good practice and will naturally close as support is either no longer needed or the piece of work has concluded.
24	Who will support HI/VI children	These children will continue to be supported by the Sensory STLS team who are a separate service, already in KCC and not within scope of these changes.
25	How will specialist teachers retain their specialisms after moving to Link model? Will	Specialist teachers will retain their specialisms after moving to the Link model and will support and advice their colleagues when and where necessary.

	there still be specialisms	
26	Will any children be allocated to a specialist teacher between now and Sept?	There will be no new allocations to STLS, however Specialist Teachers will be available for one-off visits and advice and will continue to support transition.
27	Will all cases be closed What will happen to current open cases	Children who are currently open to STLS will continue to be open unless STLS support is no longer needed. These cases will come over with the transfer and will ensure continuity of support for those children as we transition over to the new model. Those cases will be reviewed periodically as part of good practice and will naturally close as support is either no longer needed or the piece of work has concluded.
28	Will children open in T 6 continue to be open in T1 and with the same ST	Children who are currently open to STLS will continue to be open unless STLS support is no longer needed. These cases will come over with the transfer and will ensure continuity of support for those children as we transition over to the new model. Those cases will be reviewed periodically as part of good practice and will naturally close as support is either no longer needed or the piece of work has concluded.
29	Will STLS support continue to be flexible according to the schools need - eg - coffee mornings? Parent meeting? Class obs? class team support? modelling?	These operational details will be agreed as the service moves into KCC.
30	Will STLS attend annual reviews	These operational details will be agreed as the service moves into KCC.

31	Local Senco forums: Will these continue as they currently do. If not, who will administer them.	The Countywide SENCO forum will continue and the Communities of Schools will offer IAG to SENCOs.
32	Can you let us know exactly what STLS will and will not be providing	These operational details will be agreed as the service moves into KCC.
33	What will STLS support look like without case loads	These operational details will be agreed as the service moves into KCC.
34	Will STLS still be able to visit and observe	Yes.
35	What happens if a school needs more than one visit as needs change	Schools will be able to access support through their Link Practitioners
36	Where will STLS be based	STLS will be based on local KCC offices working flexibly to support schools.
37	What will happen to projects eg Nurture network that are currently run by STLS	Ongoing support for bespoke, district specific initiatives will be reviewed once the service has moved into KCC.
38	What happens if we need more support than is offered by on visit	Support will be tailored to the needs of the school and the children.

39	What happens if there is a mass exodus of specialist teachers as a result of this process and now that their jobs have changed so dramatically	We recognise that there is a risk of losing skilled and experienced Specialist Teachers through this process. We are working with the special schools who currently hold the Service Level Agreements for the STLS to provide as supportive and well-managed move as possible.
40	Will there still be a library of resources	STLS will bring their current resources with them as part of the transfer process.
41	Will we still be able to access Thrive and wellbeing practitioner	Access to district specific initiatives will be reviewed once the service has moved into KCC.
42	What happens if there is a mass exodus of specialist teachers as a result of this process and now that their jobs have changed so dramatically	We recognise that there is a risk of losing skilled and experienced Specialist Teachers through this process. We are working with the special schools who currently hold the Service Level Agreements for the STLS to provide as supportive and well-managed move as possible.

Training:

42	Will STLS still be delivering training	Yes
43	Where will training take place	At the school, a convenient venue or online.
44	How will schools be able to access bespoke training	Schools will be able to request bespoke training through their link SEN IA, their link EP or other appropriate practitioner.
45	Will STLS continue to deliver PINS and AET	Yes

LIFT / surgeries / clinics

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47	What will replace LIFT	Nothing, as LIFT is no longer required
48	Will CoS have any elements of the current LIFT?	Although the CoS is a new system, there will still be professional discussion amongst SENCos and a wide range of support from professionals available to schools.
49	Will communities need to set up their own versions of LIFT	No. LIFT will no longer be required.
50	How are Sencos to network without LIFT	Communities will provide best practice and networking
51	Will surgeries / drop ins / clinics continue and in what way	No. SEN IAs will offer surgeries

Transition:

52	Who will arrange transition meetings	The Transition Charter will still be applicable, and each district will have district plans for transition.
53	At our LIFT network meeting yesterday, a new model for secondary transition was presented with a form to be edited by secondaries to send to primary schools. This is a great idea but we are yet to receive the Microsoft form and the transition event will be 30th April, meaning incredibly limited time to prepare, send out and collate information for both primary and secondary colleagues and SENCos. When will this form be made available and will guidance for which pupils it is to be completed for be confirmed?	<p>Please contact Inclusion@kent.gov.uk.</p> <p>Unfortunately, we are unable to respond to this question based on the information provided. KCC does not require a form for transition so it is unclear what this is referring to.</p>
54	How will transition from nursery to school take place if there are two systems	<p>The Transition Charter will still be applicable, and each district will have district plans for transition.</p> <p>EY STLS will continue to support transition into Year R.</p>

Reception Year:

55	Who will support Reception age children	A range of professionals will support Reception age children as they currently do. These will include STLS, EPs and others.
56	Which pathway do we access for a child in Reception – EY or school system	For a child currently in Year R, support should be accessed through the Communities of Schools.
57	Who will support Reception age children	A range of professionals will support Reception age children as they currently do. These will include STLS, EPs and others.

Parents:

58	Will meetings with parents of children on current case list continue	These operational details will be agreed as the service moves into KCC.
59	Who will be informing parents that their child's support at school will be stopping/changing?	Communications regarding the changes to STLS will be shared through the Kent and Medway Family Network Newsletter and additional communications will be going out to schools through the Kelsi Newsletter and to early years settings through the Early Years Newsletter. However, there is no reason why a child's support would stop.
60	Will STLS still be available to attend meeting with parents	These operational details will be agreed as the service moves into KCC.
61	How will parents know about the changes	Information will go out through the Kent and Medway Family Network Newsletter to update parents on the changes to STLS

		support from September, and additional communications will be going out to schools through the Kelsi Newsletter and to early years settings through the Early Years Newsletter. It is expected that schools engage with parents to discuss their child's provision in the normal way.
62	Will parent courses and workshops continue	These will be accessed through local Family Hubs.
63	Parents have also really valued the involvement of STLS, how can we reassure parents when we need additional advice and support? What would KCC like schools to tell parents	SENCOs will have access to a range of professionals and so will have a wide range of support and advice. The STLS will still be part of this support system. Parents can also receive information, training and other support mechanisms through their Family Hubs

EHCP

64	EHCPs have been rejected based on 'no STLS involvement' despite previous involvement with other children with similar needs and previous strategies and training being used for a similar need. LIFT becomes a tickbox exercise in these situations as the same advise/direction to training is given- is this still going to be the same once we move to a link practitioner model?	Input from STLS will no longer be required as part of an EHCP application.
65	If STLS are closing cases, how will this impact EHCP applications	STLS are not closing cases unless the intervention is no longer needed or the piece of work is complete.
66	What do we now write on EHCP forms where the 'LIFT' section is	KCC teams that review EHCP requests to assess have been informed of the changes to the service and the removal of LIFT from these processes. In the interim, 'not applicable' is an acceptable response.
67	Will appendix 2 be edited to reflect that HNF and STLS advice will no longer form part of this evidence	All paperwork is being reviewed
68	How will the quality of input from	Input from STLS will no longer be required as part of an EHCP

	STLS be ensured in EHCP applications with what appears to be little contact with children?	application.
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Funding:

69	How will schools be funding STLS	<p>STLS for school aged children will be funded by being top sliced from the Communities of Schools budget. Every Community will be able to see how much they are contributing to the service.</p> <p>The STLS for children attending early years providers will be funded via a portion of the Early Years Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant that can be retained by Local Authorities for central services, including SEN support services</p>
70	When will we know what HNF we will receive	Please see CoS FAQs here for further information.
71	What % of the High needs funding will now be paying for STLS and how can it come from the clusters when the money needed for the clusters will be taken by the schools who already will be chomping at the bit to balance the holes in their budgets?	Please see CoS FAQs here for further information.
72	If a child moves school, will the	The new system is designed to move away from individual

	funding transfer with them	funding. A transition arrangement is in place for 2025 – 2026 and funding has already been allocated to schools.
73	Will we be expected to 'buy in' STLS support and evidence we have accessed this support in order to evidence EHCP	<p>Access to STLS is not a requirement of evidence for EHCP request to assess.</p> <p>Schools are funding the STLS through the Communities of School funding allocation from the High Needs Funding Block. They will not need to buy in STLS support. There may be some training which is chargeable, as is currently the case.</p>
74	Are current in-progress HNF applications redundant	No
75	Will new communities of schools be able to decide on continuation of HNF in terms 5 or 6 so we can sort out staffing for September?	Please see CoS FAQs here for further information.

Independent schools accessing communities of schools / STLS:

76	<p>Will independent schools be part of the CoS</p> <p>Are children transitioning from maintained Primary to Independent secondary included in CoS</p> <p>How can independent schools continue to access STLS</p>	<p>No</p> <p>Communities of Schools are for state funded schools only Access for independent schools is being looked at separately.</p>
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