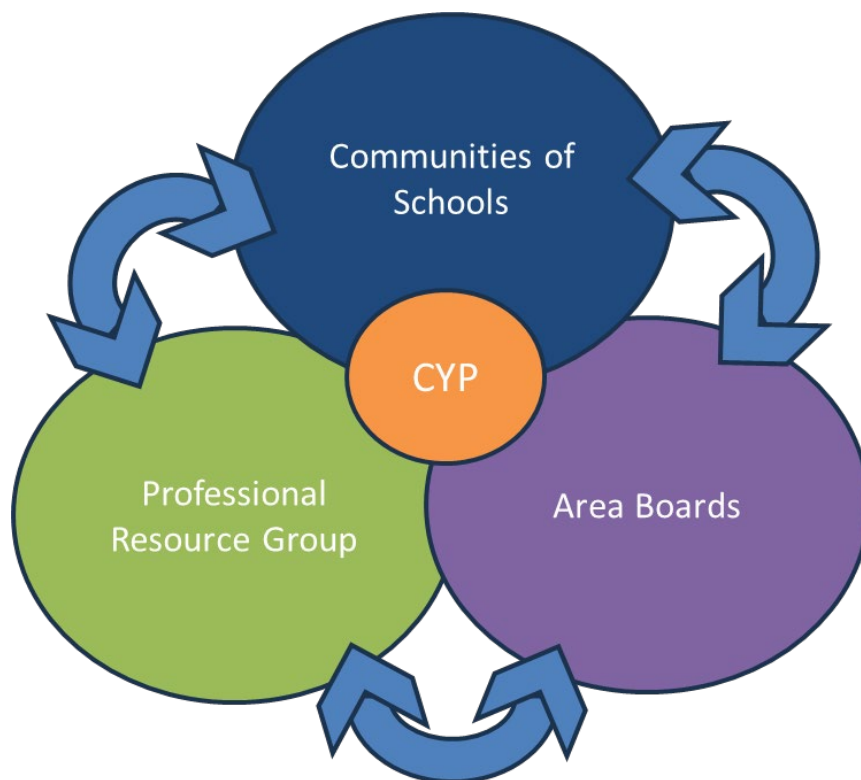


The Kent Locality Model

Communities of Schools

Operational Guidance



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This document should be read in conjunction with the Communities of Schools (CoS) Terms of Reference, which can be found on [Kelsi](#).

1. Kent's Locality Model

Kent's Locality Model (LM) is designed to enhance support for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) by fostering collaboration among key stakeholders such as schools, the local authority, NHS, and other SEND service providers. The LM includes three main components: Communities of Schools, the Professional Resources Group, and Area Boards.

Locality Model Components

1. Communities of Schools (CoS):

- CoS are groups of schools broadly aligned with NHS Primary Care Networks
- They include representation from both primary and secondary education phases
- CoS aim to deliver timely and appropriate interventions for children and young people with SEND, supported by the PRG and High Needs Funding (HNF) top-up
- Individual schools remain responsible to make appropriate full-time provision for all pupils, including those with SEND
- CoS aim to provide the right support, in the right place, at the right time¹

2. Professional Resources Group (PRG):

- The PRG is a conceptual group comprising various organisations, teams, and professionals with SEND expertise

3. Area Boards (AB):

- Four ABs are responsible for maintaining oversight and quality assurance for the LM

Locality Model Objectives

- Enhanced Collaboration: By focusing on local geographic areas, the LM encourages stronger relationships and knowledge sharing, leveraging local education and SEND expertise
- Equitable Access: The model aims to provide consistent and equitable access to specialised services and resources
- Continuous Improvement: Proximity within areas helps to identify service gaps and drive innovation

Legal and Funding Framework

Legal Obligations:

- The [Children and Families Act 2014](#) mandates mainstream education for most children and young people with SEND
- The [Equality Act 2010](#) requires schools to make reasonable adjustments for children and young people with disabilities
- The [SEND Code of Practice 2015](#) explains the duties of local authorities, health bodies, schools, and colleges to provide for those with SEND

Funding Structure:

¹ [SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan](#)

- The dedicated schools grant (DSG) is paid to local authorities for four funding blocks (Schools; Early Years, HNF and Central Schools Services)
- Mainstream schools receive core funding, including a basic per-pupil rate and a Notional SEN Budget (these are also known as Element One and Two and are paid from the schools' block of the DSG)
- Mainstream HNF top-up, is available for more costly special educational provisions (also known as Element Three, paid from the HNF block of the DSG)

Implementation in Kent

The Department for Education (DfE) [High Needs Funding Guidance 2025/26](#) states, "Local authorities must consult with the schools forum about their high needs funding arrangements [and] all of those providing education to children and young people from the area should be engaged [...] to ensure good quality provision can be planned, developed, and sustained in line with available resources".

High Needs Funding (HNF):

- HNF is allocated to schools for children and young people with SEND Support or an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) as agreed by CoS or via Specific Allocation Funding
- Schools can access HNF top-up for children and young people on SEND Support or with EHCPs' whose needs are lower level via CoS budgets
- Schools access HNF top-up for children and young people with EHCPs who have more severe and complex needs via Specific Allocation Funding

Local Authority Role:

- Kent County Council (KCC) manages the implementation of [national guidance](#) for SEND HNF in mainstream schools
- KCC consult with the Kent Schools' Funding Forum regarding HNF arrangements to ensure sustainable and high-quality provision

2. Communities of Schools

As of March 2025 there are 53 CoS in Kent, lists and maps can be found on [Kelsi](#). CoS aim to provide comprehensive support to children, young people, and their families by addressing various needs locally. HNF top-up is only allocated through the CoS processes (unless the child or young person receives specific allocation funding). Pooled HNF top-up through CoS allows for economies of scale, enabling access to a wider range of services with greater value and impact than individual schools working alone.

CoS improve stability, safety, and wellbeing for children, young people, and their families, enhancing school attendance, achievement, and long-term outcomes. This integrated approach effectively supports children and young people with SEND in their local areas.

- Each CoS has an independent chair
- All mainstream schools are part of a CoS
- Special schools and pupil referral units are geographically located in CoS but accessed as a resource from the PRG
- Schools must participate in CoS to achieve best outcomes
- To request HNF top-up use the online CoS Request for Resource form

- Request for Resource forms are discussed at CoS meetings
- Representatives from each school in the CoS should attend each meeting (even if not submitting a Request for Resource form)
- If a school submitting a Request for Resource form cannot attend, another school may represent them
- Approved Request for Resource forms are sent within 3 working days to the area's High Needs Funding Monitoring Officer
- Payments should be received within 30 working days of approval (subject to timing of the schools' advance)
- Quarterly summary reports must go to the AB

Exceptional Request for Resource:

Exceptional funding requests may occur outside regular meetings for:

- Pupils with high needs from another local authority
- Sudden changes in a child's condition
- Tribunal orders
- New admissions or pupils whose support arrangements are likely to be subject to imminent and/or regular changes. Those who require an allocation for much shorter periods, to support placements pending review

Schools should submit a Request for Resource form for interim decisions.

Monitoring and Accountability:

- CoS are accountable for their budget decisions
- CoS report quarterly into ABs, and must provide reports where specifically required by another governing body
- CoS are accountable to ABs, Schools Funding Forum and the Kent SEND Partnership Board
- ABs review CoS effectiveness
- ABs report into, and are accountable to, the Kent SEND Partnership Board and the Schools Funding Forum, whose reports are available on Kelsi

3. Role of Data and Information

CoS have access to the [District Dashboard](#), a dataset used by schools and academy trusts for self-evaluation and measuring impact. By reviewing data during CoS meetings, members can identify and address local needs effectively. The dashboards are under review, with new CoS information in development.

In Kent, schools can access HNF top-up to support children and young people without needing an EHCP, allowing for earlier intervention within a Graduated Response to SEND.

All schools must make reasonable adjustments for children and young people with disabilities, following the Equality Act 2010. The cost of special educational provision may be met from the school's notional SEN budget. Mainstream schools are expected to:

- Cover the cost of special educational provision for pupils on SEND Support
- Contribute towards the cost of provision for pupils with high needs, up to a national threshold (£6,000 per pupil annually)

CoS will receive financial information from KCC annually, including:

- SEN notional budgets
- Historic HNF allocations
- CoS budgets

Monthly budget updates for CoS will detail:

- total budget
- spend to date
- remaining budget

For more information on schools funding please see the [annual school budget information](#), and the KCC Notional Budget guidance on [Kelsi](#).

4. Role of Professional Resources Group

The PRG provides additional resources for supporting children with SEND, including services like the Kent Educational Psychology Service, Specialist Teaching and Learning Service, and others. Schools can contact these services without needing formal diagnoses or lengthy referral applications.

Please see [Kelsi](#) for more information on the PRG and its resources.

5. Role of Area Boards

Area Boards will monitor CoS impact, ensuring governance and accountability for outcomes and financial sustainability. They will report to the Kent SEND Partnership Board and Kent Schools' Funding Forum. ABs will begin operations in the 2025/26 academic year, using the Kent Children and Young People Outcomes Framework to monitor impact.



Please see [Kelsi](#) for more information on the ABs.

6. Review

This guidance supports CoS. It is reviewed annually to ensure effectiveness, with more frequent reviews in the first year as needed.