The Kent Locality Model
Communities of Schools

Terms of Reference

Contents

This document should be read in conjunction with the Communities of Schools (CoS) Operational Guidance, which can be found on Kelsi.

Communities of Schools

As of March 2025 there are 53 CoS in Kent, lists and maps can be found on Kelsi, a Kent map is included in Appendix One. CoS aim to provide comprehensive support to children, young people, and their families by addressing various needs locally. High Needs Funding (HNF) top-up is only allocated through the CoS processes (unless the child or young person receives specific allocation funding). CoS principles, agreed in April 2023 can be found in Appendix Two.

1. Objectives
- Improve outcomes for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND)
- Enhance SEND support and inclusive practices at a local level
- Optimise use of HNF top-up
- Foster collaboration between schools, local authority, health services, and SEND providers

2. Key Responsibilities
- Address local needs while aligning with wider SEND objectives
- Share best practices for SEND inclusion
- Review data to identify trends and issues
- Adapt approaches as populations and needs evolve
- Discuss Request for Resource forms, shown in Appendix Three
- Coordinate SEND resources and support
- Monitor and control CoS budget, remaining within allocation, see costings reference document in Appendix Four
- Maintain member engagement and provide peer-to-peer opportunities for professional development
- Ensure secure, efficient data-sharing, confidentiality, and data protection
- Commit to leadership and evaluation of strategies

3. Membership
- Independent chair
- Clerk
- Representatives from primary and secondary schools (must have delegated authority to make decisions on behalf of the school)
- Advisory participation from special schools and pupil referral units, by invitation
- Advisory participation from SEND experts, by invitation

Chairs are:
- Independent of their CoS (initial term 18 months)
- Reviewed towards end of their term, with rotation options considered
- Upskilled from within CoS to retain sustainability
- Responsible for completing and updating a Declaration of Interests form, shown in Appendix Five. KCC will manage any conflicts of interest

- Responsible for ensuring members are aware of, and will abide by, the CoS Code of Conduct, shown in Appendix Six, signing the declaration on behalf of their CoS

Chairs will:
- Review Request for Resource forms submitted (10 working days prior to meeting)
- Set agenda schedules to ensure all requests are heard (10-5 working days prior to meeting)
- Follow the agenda, template shown in Appendix Seven, and lead the meeting
- Actively listen and use clear communication
- Manage time effectively, ensuring meetings run smoothly and efficiently
- Provide equity of opportunity to members
- Show impartiality and equity, summarising points discussed when making decisions
- Positively resolve disagreements and seek majority consensus
- Seek input on progress for quarterly reporting to Area Boards (AB), template shown in Appendix Eight

Clerks will:
- Set meeting schedules (with the chair) and send invites
- Distribute agendas and papers (at least 5 working days prior to meetings)
- Monitor and raise non-attendance to the chair
- Take meeting minutes, note decisions, complete the CoS section of Request for Resource form
- Submit approved Request for Resource forms (within 3 working days of approval)
- Distribute minutes and decisions (within 5 working days of the meeting)
- Collate the quarterly report for the AB

Members will:
- Adhere to the Code of Conduct (Appendix Six)
- Prepare for meetings
- Actively engage, following a solutions-focused approach (guidance in Appendix Nine)
- Follow up on actions
- Input to the quarterly AB report

4. Request for Resource
- Resource allocations are for mainstream schools only
- Requests must use the CoS Request for Resource form
- CoS approved Request for Resource forms are sent within 3 working days to the relevant Area HNF Monitoring Officer

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. These will be:
- Approved, declined, or referred to KCC by the CoS chair
- If approved, the clerk will process the Request for Resource and inform the school and CoS members of the decision
- If declined, the clerk will contact school with the chair's rationale. If applicable they will invite the school to submit a standard Request for Resource to be discussed at the next scheduled CoS meeting
- If referred, the clerk will forward the Request for Resource form to KCC

These exceptional allocations should be made for a fixed period only. For funding to continue beyond this period, school would submit a standard Request for Resource as appropriate.

5. Quorum
- No minimum – all schools should send representation

6. Decision Making
- All members have voting rights

7. Frequency
- Monthly meetings (minimum of ten per year)

8. Meeting Activity
Pre-meeting
- Schedule meetings for the next academic year in Term 6
- Submit Request for Resource forms (template in Appendix Three) at least 10 working days before meetings
- Chair reviews Request for Resource forms and schedules agenda
- Clerk distributes agenda and papers at least 5 working days before meetings

During meetings
- Professionalism should be maintained, see CoS Code of Conduct (Appendix Six)
- Follow the agenda, guided by the chair (template in Appendix Seven)
- Ensure equal participation, guided by the chair
- Discuss Request for Resource forms
- Discussions should follow a solution-focussed approach, guided by the chair (Appendix Nine)
- Record disputes and decisions in minutes
- If a request is turned down, the school should arrange appropriate provision for the pupil using its own resources, with CoS members supporting the individual school with alternative solutions
- In case of a dispute the chair's decision is final, see CoS Dispute Resolution Policy in Appendix Ten

Post-meeting

- Distribute minutes and actions within 5 working days
- Report action progress before the next meeting
- Send approved Request for Resource forms to the Area HNF Officer within 3 working days of approval
- Payment should be received within 30 working days of approval (subject to timing of the schools' advance)

9. Reporting
- Minutes and actions reported to members within 5 working days of meeting
- Quarterly summary reporting to AB

10. Review
- Terms of Reference reviewed annually

Appendix One: Communities of Schools – Kent Map

KCC Communities of Schools (CoS) - KCC

Legend

· KCC Schools

☐ KCC Districts
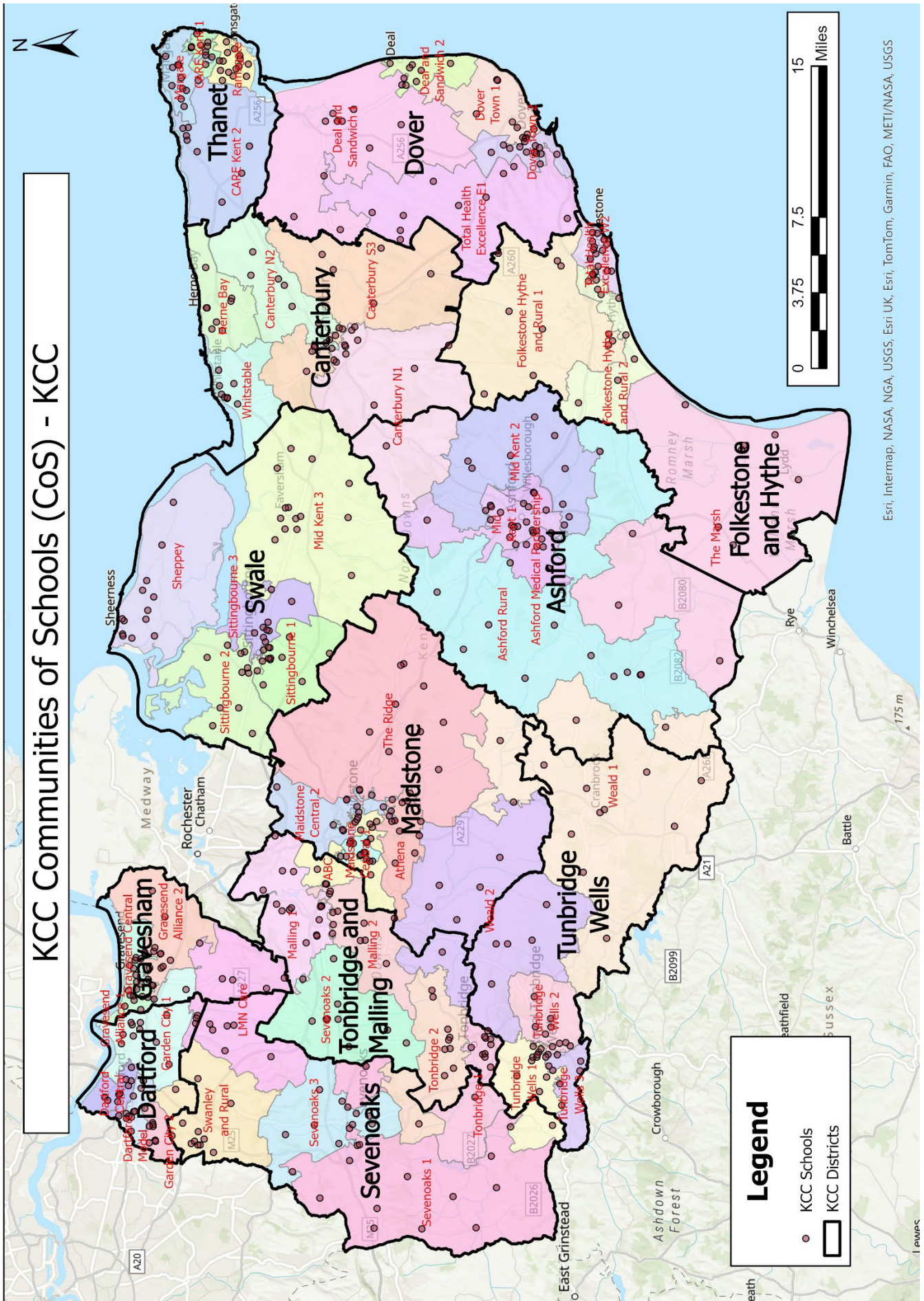
Appendix Two: Communities of Schools – Principles

- Commitment to meeting needs in the area and achieving best possible pupil outcomes

- Prioritising the greatest need (vs advocating for own school)

- Willingness to support and challenge (and be supported/challenged)

- Recognising impact of contextual factors not only levels of pupil need

- Active participation even when you don't have immediate need for support

- Effective use of all available budgets (delegated, devolved, communities)

- Commitment to reducing reliance on additional resources wherever possible (so that these can be reallocated)

- Recognition of the need to respond to contingencies as they arise (and ensuring capacity available for this)

- Willingness to share good practice with and learn from other communities

- Commitment to equity and positive outcomes across the area and county as a whole

Appendix Three: Communities of Schools - Request for Resource form

School Section:

Request ID	Auto generated
Date of request	Auto generated
Name of Community	Drop down list
Name of School / Lead School	Drop down list
School contact *(in case of queries)*	Free text
Multi Academy Trust / Federation *(If applicable)*	Drop down list with 'other' option
Solution required *(250 words max)*	Free text (Limited to 250 words max) Following the 4-step approach, what question does the school want answered? What evidence-based research has been considered to support this approach?
Expected outcomes *(200 words max)*	Free text (Limited to 200 words max) What are the expected outcomes? How will the school know the outcomes have been achieved? What measures will be used?
Support requested	Drop down list: Advice and guidance School to school support Financial contribution
Names of pupils supported & Date of Birth	
Number of pupils on SEN Support	
Number of pupils with an EHCP	
Number Looked After Child	
Which Key Stage	Drop down list
If requesting funding - How will the funding be used?	Free Text (Limited to 200 words max) What will the funding contribute towards? How has the funding request been calculated? Total funding request?
How have you already supported the pupils?	Free text (Limited to 200 words max) (You must demonstrate use of Notional budget, and other resources accessed)
e Signature	Free text

Please submit to the CoS clerk at least 10 working days before the scheduled CoS meeting

CoS Section:

Request response	Drop down list: Advice and guidance School to school support Financial contribution Referral for KCC Review
Give details of support agreed where applicable	Free text
Review Date	
Final amount approved	£
Date approved	
Decision made by	Consensus / Chair

Final amount approved	£

Please send to the Area High Needs Funding Officer within 3 working days of approval

Area	High Needs Funding Officer contact
North	rebecca.walsh@kent.gov.uk
East	maria.white@kent.gov.uk
South	alison.sandford@kent.gov.uk
West	nicola.hockney@kent.gov.uk

KCC Section:

Final amount	£
KCC Moderated	Yes / No
Moderated / Approved by	Drop down list
Request processed	Add date

KCC commitment to process within 30 days of receipt and include on the next scheduled school advance

Appendix Four: Communities of Schools – Costings Reference Document

Coming soon

Appendix Five: Communities of Schools – <u>Declaration of Interests</u>

* Please refer to the guidance notes overleaf before completing this form.

[Print name in full] chair of **[add community name]** CoS

I do not have any interests to declare

I wish the following interests to be registered: -

1 Business (employment, governor, another advisory role, Trust, links to a school in the community)

2 Personal (previously employed at, family attends, or partner is SENCo, bursar, head, teacher at, a school in the community, for example)

3 Any other interests I wish to declare

Signed _____ date _____

If there are no changes this form can be updated and signed again

Signed _____ updated _____

Signed _____ updated _____

Signed _____ updated _____

Version 1: April 2025

Communities of Schools – Declaration of interests

Guidance to Chairs ([Declaration of Interests Form](#)).

1. Introduction

1.1 Under the County Council's Financial Scheme, every governing body is required to establish and update a register of governors' business interests, this means that governors and headteachers must register and declare business interests that might relate to their duties.

1.2 The principle behind this arrangement is that neither governors, headteachers, or their spouses, partners, businesses, or employers, should benefit financially from the involvement of governors or headteachers in decisions taken by a governing body or one of its committees.

1.3 The register ensures that a system exists for governors to declare and register interests to ensure that decisions are always taken in the best interests of the school or the public funds that finance it.

To ensure that CoS conduct is regarded the same propriety, CoS chairs are asked to follow similar processes to school governing bodies.

2. What CoS Chairs should register and declare

2.1 As a general principle you should register and declare anything which a member of the public might reasonably think puts you at risk of being biased by putting private considerations above the public interest or seeking preferential treatment for yourself or people/bodies with whom you are connected. A form is attached for this purpose which you are asked to complete even if you have no business interests to declare.

2.2 You should register all interests and personal circumstances which could give rise to an interest in a request for resource or other matter coming before the CoS.

2.3 An interest is anything that might influence a CoS chair to consider some factor other than the interests of the CoS or an individual school within the community and can be divided into pecuniary and non-pecuniary.

2.4 Pecuniary interests are those where an item under discussion may have a financial benefit to the individual chair or their spouse or partner, family, or friends. An example could be the discussion of a request for resource for an individual school or the CoS, which might profit that chair (or their spouse, partner, family, or friends). Chairs must be able to fulfil their role as CoS lead but must not have a personal interest that is different from the CoS as a whole.

2.5 Non-pecuniary interest can be defined as any factor, which would cause an intelligent observer to think that the judgement of a CoS chair is biased. This might be a case of knowing someone who has a financial interest in the decision being made or being related to or knowing someone who will benefit more from the request for resource being granted.

Appendix Six: Communities of Schools - <u>Code of Conduct</u>

This code outlines the principles and expectations for professional conduct and ethical behaviour for all CoS members.

Principles of Conduct

By adhering to this code, members commit to:

Seven Nolan Principles of Public Life
1. **Selflessness** - act solely in the public interest
2. **Integrity** - avoid obligations that may influence work; declare interests
3. **Objectivity** – make decisions impartially and fairly
4. **Accountability** – be accountable to the public and open to scrutiny
5. **Openness** – act transparently, withholding information only for lawful reasons
6. **Honesty** - be truthful
7. **Leadership** – promote and support these principles, challenging poor behaviour

Member Commitment

As CoS members, we agree to:
- **Fulfil roles and responsibilities**: Treat everyone with respect, work collaboratively, and uphold CoS values
- **Conduct business with integrity**: Comply with laws, act candidly yet respectfully, and support collective decisions
- **Provide a safe environment**: Ensure a discrimination-free environment and uphold our responsibilities under The Equality Act
- **Engage actively**: Participate in CoS activities, attend meetings, and prepare for contributions
- **Develop relationships**: Collaborate with school leaders and stakeholders, respect authorities, and foster an inclusive environment
- **Maintain confidentiality**: Keep all confidential matters private and handle sensitive documents appropriately
- **Declare conflicts of interest**: Transparently declare any conflicts, leaving discussions if necessary

Enforcement and Review

- Breaches of this code may result in sanctions
- The Code of Conduct will be reviewed annually

By signing this declaration, you confirm that you have made your members aware of the code and have their agreement they will also abide by the CoS Code of Conduct.

Adopted by: [CoS] on [date]

Signed: [CoS chair]

Appendix Seven: Communities of Schools – Agenda Template

**Communities of Schools
Meeting Agenda**

<<insert community name>>

Date:
Time:
Venue:

Item No.	Agenda	Time
1	Welcome, Introductions and Register of Attendance	
2	Minutes and review of decisions and actions from previous meeting	
3	Outcomes Data – (access to dashboard)	
4	Report to & from KiT meetings (evaluation) [4x per year]	
5	Group Solution Discussions / Case Studies	
6	Finance Updates Review of balance sheet	

Post meeting actions:
- Clerk to forward approved Request for Resources forms to Area HNFO
- Clerk & Chair to prepare report for Area Board (once per quarter)

Appendix Eight: Communities of Schools – Area Board Report Template

Name of Community	
Number of Schools	
Number of Pupils – SEND Support	
Number of Pupils – EHCPs	
Community Budget – Total Allocation	
Community Budget – Used to date	
Community Budget – Amount remaining	

Kent Children and Young People's Outcome Framework

Outcomes	CoS Impact
My Independence – there is a clear pathway supporting me to be as independent as I can	
My Voice – I am listened to and understood	
My Future – I have a choice about my future	
My Health – I am as healthy as I can be	
My Learning - I am the best that I can be at school, college, or work	
My Safety – I feel safe at home and out and about	
My Community – I can do things I like in my local area	
My Quality of life – I am happy and enjoy life	

Exception reporting

Please detail anything you would like to highlight to the AB for this reporting period

CoS Requests

Please detail anything you would like to request of KCC for this reporting period

Appendix Nine: Communities of Schools – Solution-focused Approach

A solution-focused approach concentrates on helping move towards a future that is wanted, and to learn what can be done differently by using existing skills, strategies, and ideas to get there. They are characterised by:

- Being collaborative and goal-oriented
- Focusing on solutions rather than problems
- Emphasising strengths and resources

We work in a problem generating environment and can often talk at length about problems to understand and identify their cause, yet problem saturated talk does not lead to solutions.

A Four-step approach
- Question
- Description
- Clarification
- Solutions

Question
- Starting with a question focuses the conversation towards solutions
- Focus on where you want to go, not where you've come from
- The question must be about changes for the children, not process or provision

Description (approx. 3-5 minutes)
- Presenting school gives as much information as they feel they need to give
- No interruptions or questions

Clarification
- Each member may ask a clarification question, they can pass if they have none. Go round the group twice if needed, no out of turn interruptions
- It must be a question, not a comment, solution, or description of a similar situation

Solutions
- Solutions may have presented themselves in the clarification stage, these should be discussed
- Each member should have the opportunity to offer a solution, go round the table with the same process as the clarification stage

The CoS chair will summarise and confirm the conclusion with actions noted by the clerk.

Appendix Ten: Communities of Schools - Dispute Resolution Policy

Commitment to Dispute Resolution

Communities of Schools (CoS) members are dedicated to resolving disputes promptly and fairly. This policy sets out the conflict management strategies CoS will use to achieve positive collaboration.

Scope

This policy covers disputes:

- Between members
- Involving group or chair decisions

Policy Guidelines

The Local Authority encourages the chair and members to address issues early. Disputes can be resolved through informal discussions or a formal process if necessary. Detailed procedures are outlined in this policy.

Dispute resolution principles

- Respect for differing views
- Commitment to resolution
- Willingness to compromise
- Impartiality and respect
- Prompt action
- Freedom from repercussions

Procedure

1. Raise disputes during the CoS meetings for immediate discussion
2. If more information is needed, it should be provided within agreed timescales
3. If consensus isn't reached, the chair may:
   - Appoint an independent assessor
   - Seek mediation
   - Escalate to the Area Board
   - Dismiss the dispute
4. Decisions can be reviewed if new information arises, or errors are found
5. The chair's decision is final

Mediation

- Mediators are chosen by agreement or appointed by the chair
- Mediation must be confidential and allow all parties to present their case
- If unresolved, disputes may escalate to the Area Board

Roles and Responsibilities

- The chair ensures participants are aware of this policy, and manages disputes respectfully
- CoS participants must adhere to the dispute resolution principles

Review

Dispute Resolution Policy reviewed annually

Addendum: Resolving disagreements effectively

- **Embrace different perspectives** - recognise diverse interpretations and support agreements for varied reasons
- **Experiment and collaborate** - adopt a collaborative mindset, trying new approaches and influencing outcomes
- **See yourself as part of the solution** - focus on actionable steps rather than blame to facilitate quicker resolutions