

# **Kent's Strategy for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities 2025-2028**

**Draft document for consultation**

**Consultation runs from 24 September to 11 November 2024**

**[www.kent.gov.uk/sendstrategyconsultation](http://www.kent.gov.uk/sendstrategyconsultation)**



As part of Kent County Council's commitment to improving our services to children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), we have reviewed our SEND Strategy 2021-2024 and now present our new draft strategy 2025-2028 for your feedback.

We've developed the strategy by listening to families, carers, young people, schools and professionals, and now we need your feedback to ensure it truly meets people's needs.

Please read our draft strategy and tell us your views by completing the questionnaire at [www.kent.gov.uk/sendstrategyconsultation](http://www.kent.gov.uk/sendstrategyconsultation). The questionnaire can also be completed in paper form and sent to:

SEND Strategy Team, Kroner House, Eurogate Business Park, Ashford, Kent TN24 8UX.

We will also be engaging with young people directly to understand their views.

Easy read versions of the strategy and questionnaire are available on the website [www.kent.gov.uk/sendstrategyconsultation](http://www.kent.gov.uk/sendstrategyconsultation) or on request.

If you have any queries about the consultation, please contact:  
[send.strategy2528@kent.gov.uk](mailto:send.strategy2528@kent.gov.uk).

**The consultation is open from 24 September to 11 November 2024.**

All feedback will be reviewed and considered, and a consultation report will be produced. It is expected that the draft SEND Strategy for 2025-2028 will be discussed at the Children and Young People's Cabinet Committee in January 2025, following which, a decision will be made on the future of the strategy.

**Alternative formats:** If you require any of the consultation material in an alternative format or language, please email:

[alternativeformats@kent.gov.uk](mailto:alternativeformats@kent.gov.uk) or call: 03000 42 15 53 (text relay service number: 18001 03000 42 15 53). This number goes to an answering machine, which is monitored during office hours.

## **Welcome Message**

Welcome to the Kent SEND Strategy 2025-2028.

We believe every child and young person deserves the best education and care, and we are committed to making this a reality in Kent.

Our new strategy has been developed with input from many people, including health and social care professionals, educators, parents, carers, and the young people themselves. We have listened to your experiences and ideas, and they have shaped our plan.

We know that there are areas where we need to improve. Past challenges, including inspections and financial difficulties, have highlighted the need for better services. We are determined to address these issues and provide the support your children deserve.

Our vision is clear: to support children and young people to live healthy, safe lives where they feel seen and included. This strategy outlines our goals and the steps we will take to achieve them over the next three years. We aim to create an inclusive community where every child can thrive.

We are particularly excited about the new opportunities for children with SEND to access (where possible) education locally, alongside their peers. Our goal is to make all schools in Kent welcoming and supportive for all children with diverse needs. We welcome your continued partnership and support as we move forward. Thank you for being a part of this journey with us.

Warm regards,

Christine McInnes

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# 1. Introduction

All children and young people are entitled to a good quality education. This entitlement is supported through a variety of routes by the Local Authority and other stakeholders, KCC's approach is outlined in the forthcoming KCC Education Strategy. Some children and young people need additional support to access educational opportunities and this Kent SEND Strategy 2025-2028 outlines the approach of the local area in promoting an inclusive education system. The Strategy explains how we will deliver statutory requirements for those with additional and special educational needs and how we will measure our success. It builds on the previous SEND Strategy 2021-2024.

The Kent local area is on an improvement journey following the SEND inspection in 2019 and revisit in 2022. The Improvement Notice issued in March 2023 was removed by the Minister for Children and Families in August 2024 in response to the significant and sustained improvement that has been made. We are ambitious to create an outstanding SEND system and so the pace of change is continuing. External and internal scrutiny is welcomed as it has helped to refine priorities, as has our engagement with parents, carers and young people, which continues to strengthen.

This strategy reflects our vision of an inclusive, supportive, and ambitious education system for all. It has been created with input from partners in health, social care, and education, as well as from parents, carers, and the children and young people themselves.

We believe that with high aspirations, equitable access to educational opportunities, and the right support, many children and young people with SEND can achieve successful long-term outcomes. Our aim is to remove barriers to learning and participation in mainstream education, allowing children to learn and grow in their local communities, when this is the best option for the child and to ensure the best use of specialist school places for those with the most complex needs.

Our strategy is informed by laws and regulations, including the Equalities Act 2010, the Children and Families Act 2014 and the SEND Code of Practice 2014. These laws help ensure that we meet our responsibilities and provide the best support possible. We are committed to collaborating with parents, carers, and all our partners to create a brighter future for children and young people with SEND in Kent.

## Why This Strategy Matters

Our new Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEN) Strategy is designed to support all children and young people with SEND in Kent, ensuring they receive the best possible education, care, and opportunities to thrive.

## **Our Commitment**

We are committed to working closely with parents, carers, and professionals to create an inclusive and supportive environment for your children. This strategy outlines our plans for the next three years and how we aim to achieve our goals.

## **Our Aspirations**

Kent remains deeply committed to the aspirations of its children and young people with SEND. Building on our previous strategy, we continue to recognise that children and young people with SEND are not defined by their needs—they are unique individuals with their own strengths and potential. Their goal is to become independent, successful, and empowered to shape their own futures. As a community, we are bold and aspirational for every child, sparking curiosity and encouraging them to achieve all they can while striving towards their full potential. Children and young people thrive with the support of their families. Parents and carers, who play a vital role in guiding the care and support needed. We are committed to ensuring that our system is fair, accessible, and responsive, providing families with additional help when needed.

This strategy is built on the principles of inclusion, partnership, and participation. Every child has the right to access opportunities without discrimination. They deserve the right support in their local communities, surrounded by friends and family. Where appropriate they should be able to attend their local school and receive the appropriate support to access meaningful learning experiences. They also have the right to specialised and tailored support from professionals in their area, helping them to achieve their full potential.

# **2. Our Vision**

## **Our Vision Statement**

"Support children and young people to achieve; through living healthy, safe lives in which they feel seen and included."

## **What This Means**

Our vision is inspired by a deep understanding of the diverse needs and experiences of children and young people with SEND. We want to create an environment where every child feels supported, valued, and included.

## **How We Developed This Vision**

We consulted widely with stakeholders, including:

- Children and young people with SEND
- Parents and carers
- Educators and healthcare professionals

Through these consultations, we gained valuable insights into the challenges and aspirations of the SEND community. Our vision reflects a collective commitment to ensuring that children with SEND can thrive physically, emotionally, and socially.

### 3. Context

Kent is the largest non-metropolitan local authority in England, with a population of about 1.58 million people. Our county is diverse, with both wealthy and less affluent areas, which means we have a wide range of needs to address. Kent faces unique challenges due to its size and diverse population. Our strategy aims to ensure that all children with SEND, regardless of where they live, have access to high-quality education and support.

We have put new systems in place to improve our services, in particular better staff reporting, governance communication and consistency. Our goal is to enhance the experience and outcomes for children, young people, and their families.

In Kent 2024, there are approximately 269,791 school-aged children. Of these, 44,921 children have identified additional needs, and 14,143 have an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP). Approximately 35% of pupils with an EHCP in Kent attend a mainstream school compared with 48% nationally.

A great deal of work has taken place to improve statutory decision-making and services. Consequently, completion of EHCPs within the statutory 20-week deadline has continued to increase and is currently at 51.6% (August 2024) in comparison with the national average of 50.3% with clear evidence showing improvements in the content.

Kent continues to be an outlier in several national key performance indicators and over time we are expecting the impact of our quality assurance and strengthened decision making will bring Kent data closer to the national average.

Significant actual and projected overspends on the High Needs Funding Block resulted in Kent County Council entering a Safety Valve agreement with the DfE in 2022 which is bringing an additional £140 million into the Kent SEND system in return for KCC meeting its statutory financial duties over a period of five years. Following inspection, Kent was issued with an Improvement Notice in March 2023 which required an Accelerated Progress Plan comprising 116 projects to be put in place with a robust governance process. Reflecting the evidence of progress made and impact of the work, the Improvement Notice was removed in August 2024.

There are 592 schools in Kent, of which 24 are special schools. KCC has been working on developing a more sustainable school system for several years through

- Providing training and consultant support for mainstream schools to develop their SEND inclusive practice in line with national policy expectations through implementing the Countywide Approach to Inclusive Education and the SEN Core Standards
- Reviewing Specialist Resource Provision (SRPs - units in mainstream schools) and implementing a consistent Service Level Agreement providing clarity and increasing consistency across the county regarding what level of support can be expected when a child attends an SRP
- Developing a Quality Assurance Framework for Alternative Provision (AP) including Pupil Referral Units.

Now that KCC has developed a SEND sufficiency strategy, current work includes reviewing the special school offer to ensure it is appropriate to meet the needs of the most complex pupils, updating school designations and making better use of the expertise in special schools through embedding outreach work.

The SEND Code of Practice 2014 identifies 4 categories of special needs –

- Communication and interaction
- Cognition and learning
- Social, emotional and mental health
- Sensory and/or physical needs,

though Kent currently uses five designations for schools –

- Profound, severe, complex needs (PSCN)
- Social, emotional mental health (SEMH)
- Physical Disabilities and/or Complex Medical Needs
- Communication and interaction (C&I)
- Communication and interaction (C&I) and learning.

It is proposed that Kent Special Schools have one of three designations with the supporting admission guidance, these being:

**i. Complex Learning Needs – Profound, Complex, Severe Needs Admission guidance:** Learners have a range of needs including Profound, Multiple Learning Difficulties, Severe Learning Difficulties, all schools in Kent including special schools designated for children with Complex Learning Needs can expect to admit children with Autism, Communication Disorders and children who may have Social, Emotional Mental Health associated with their special educational needs.

**ii. Social, Emotional, Mental Health needs Admission guidance:** These pupils have social, emotional, and mental health difficulties with associated challenging behaviour, many have had adverse childhood experiences and/or have additional needs, including autistic spectrum condition, speech, language and communication difficulties, ADHD.

**iii. Neurodivergent with Learning Difficulties Admission guidance:** These pupils have complex special educational needs, they are neurodiverse and may have a diagnosis of autism, ADHD, or other conditions. Pupils have severe social communication difficulties, learning difficulties and may have social, emotional mental health needs associated with neurodiversity, including severe social anxiety.

A significant system change which is underway is the development of more localised working through communities (or groups) of schools with a greater level of decision-making and autonomy over allocation of resources by school leaders, a model which will be fully operational by September 2025. Decision making is supported by school data available through the District Dashboard and by the Continuum of SEND need and provision which is currently under development.

KCC is also consulting on an Accessibility Strategy which will assist in making more strategic decisions about capital investment in the education estate.



## 4. Legislative Context

Our strategy is guided by several important laws and regulations. These help ensure that we provide the best support for children and young people with SEND. Here are the key pieces of legislation that shape our work:

**1 SEND Code of Practice (0-25 years) 2015:** This is the main guide for how we should support children and young people with SEND from birth to 25 years old. It outlines our duties and best practices.

**2 Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014:** These regulations detail how we should identify, assess, and meet the needs of children with SEND.

**3 Equality Act 2010:** This law ensures that children with disabilities are not discriminated against and have the same opportunities as others.

**4 Children and Families Act 2014:** This act extends SEND support from birth to 25 years old, giving families more control and ensuring that children's needs are properly met.

**5 Education Acts (1996, 2002, 2006):** These acts set out our responsibilities in providing education for all children, including those with SEND.

**6 Children Acts (1989, 2004):** These laws focus on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children.

**7 Care Act 2014:** This act ensures that young people with SEND receive proper care and support as they transition to adulthood.

**8 Mental Health Act 2010:** This act ensures that the mental health needs of children and young people with SEND are addressed.

We also follow guidance from several important reports and frameworks:

- **SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan (2023):** This plan outlines reforms to improve SEND and alternative provision systems.

- **Countywide Approach to Inclusive Education (CATIE) 2023-28:** This strategy promotes inclusion in education across Kent.

## 5. Joint Commissioning – for inclusion in SEND Strategy

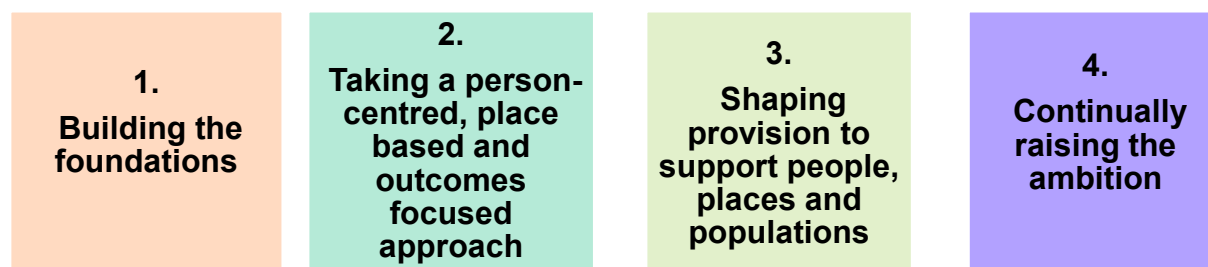
### What is joint commissioning?

Joint commissioning means that different services, like health, education, and the local council, work together to plan and provide the right support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). By working as a team, they can make sure that all the services your child needs are well-coordinated and focused on what's best for them. This helps make sure there are no gaps in support, so your child gets the care they need to thrive, and families feel more supported.

### Kent context

Joint Commissioning in Kent is far more cohesive than it has ever been, with an agreed Joint Activity and Priority Log together along with a Joint Delivery Plan. The Delivery Plan focuses on activity required to September 2025 with three significant service areas being transformed: the Neurodevelopmental Pathway, the Children and Young People Mental Health Service and Therapies (including Speech and Language, Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy)

Kent's approach to Joint Commissioning has been informed by the Integrated Commissioning for Better Outcomes Framework, jointly commissioned by the LGA and NHS Clinical Commissioners (NHSCC). This is built around four domains:



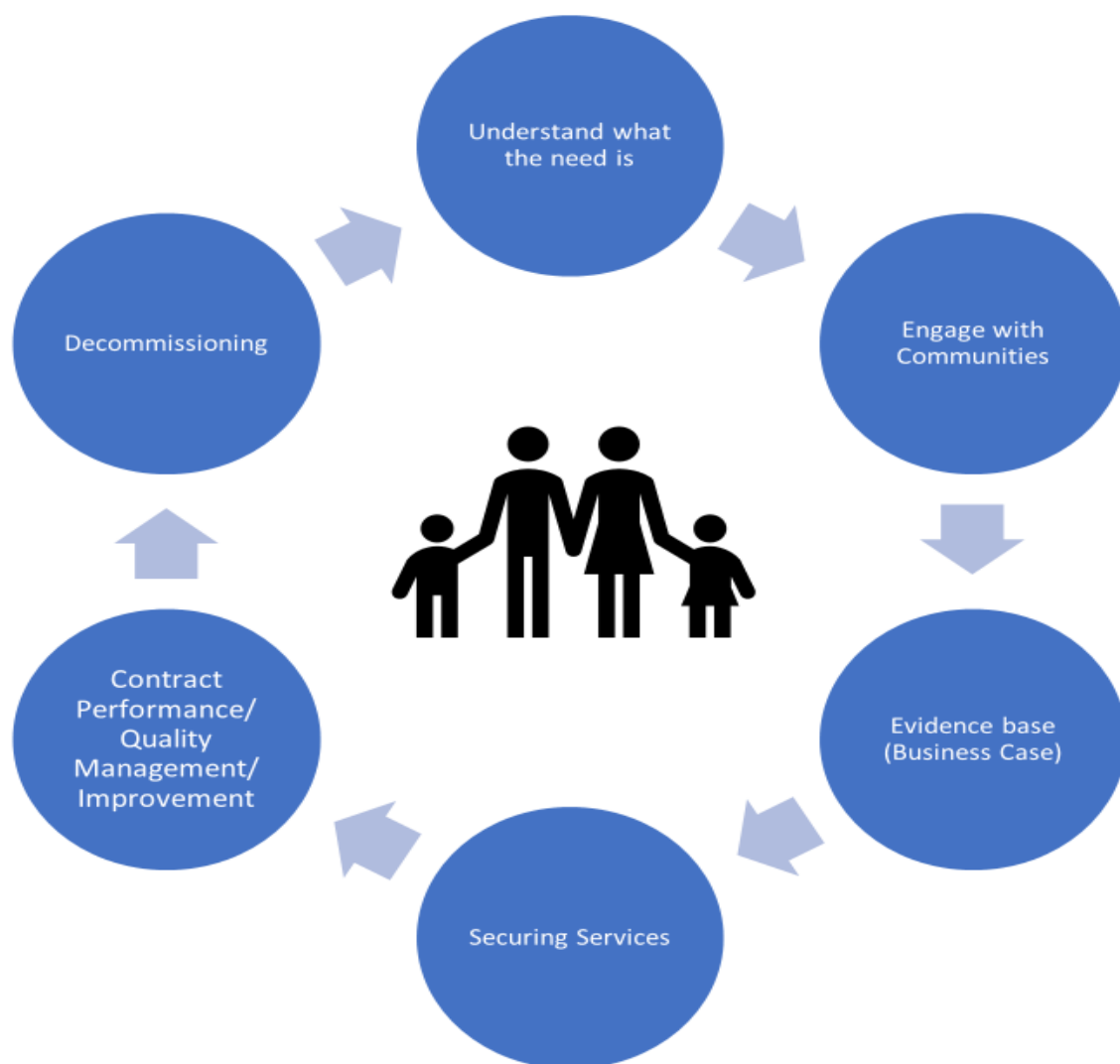
Underpinning the four domains are a set of jointly agreed and owned principles. It is essential that agencies follow these to facilitate better outcomes for children and young people:

- **Coproduction and engagement** – By involving parents, carers, children, and young people in the commissioning process we will be able to ensure that services truly work for those for which they are intended.
- **Innovation** – We must recognise one of the most pressing challenges facing the public sector, which is the pressure on available financial resources. Therefore, innovative ways of delivering services will be encouraged.
- **Joint understanding** – With multiple agencies working across the area for our children and young people, there is a need to jointly understand the local area. We will operate from a single shared understanding of the local area, through the Joint Strategic Needs Assessments to set our commissioning priorities.

- **Outcomes based** – The local area needs to be at the forefront of developing services that meet the needs of children, young people, and their families, through coordinated delivery across multiple providers. This needs to include the more intelligent use of data, to predict demand and improve services. Moreover, we must also be open-minded and not lose sight of the experiences that children, young people and their families have and use these to improve our services.
- **Capacity building** – Delivering change will be limited unless there is the capacity within the wider system to be able to do this. Therefore, we must support the market wherever possible to enhance our children and young people's outcomes, while promoting efficiency.
- **Joint ownership** – Joint ownership promotes joint decisions, allowing for more joining up of services. We do this while recognising we have different statutory responsibilities and that all these principles must be embedded into business-as-usual activities.

### **The Principles of Joint Commissioning:**

Below details the agreed position of Joint Commissioning across the Children's System in Kent and Medway. This expands on the traditional Commissioning Cycle of Analyse, Plan, Do, Review, recognising that children, young people, and their families are at the centre of all activity. Engaging and involving the views and experiences of children, young people and their families across the traditional commissioning cycle can be seen as follows:



**Analyse** – focus groups with children and young people through existing forums Kent County Council Youth council, Youth voice and/or with parents and carers using Kent PACT, Parent Carer Voice, or other parent/carer forums.

**Plan** – engage interested children, young people and/or parents and carers in developing the specification(s), using the Outcomes Framework and sense checking with the groups they are the right outcomes. Identify interested children, young people and/or parents and carers to include either directly in the evaluation of tenders or seek a question from them that can be asked of those providers tendering.

**Do** – children, young people and/or parents and carers or representative forums (including lived experience workers) to be included in provider presentations, scoring, and evaluating tender submissions.

**Review** – through formal and informal contract management using stakeholder and user feedback, reviewing the Complaints, Compliments and Comments logs, and seeking feedback from those using the service at attended sessions.

## Commissioning Enablers:

With Joint Commissioning for children and young people with SEND established across the Kent System, several key models and frameworks underpin all activity across the Commissioning Cycle including:

- The Lived Experience, Engagement and Employment Framework
- The ICS Digital Strategy
- The VCS Competency Framework
- The SEND Co-production Charter

Children and young people rightly have expectations of what we do as commissioners, therefore, there has been a co-produced charter of expectations. Commissioners will take these into account during their commissioning activities and be able to evidence where they are taking these considerations into account – moreover, there must be clear evidence of coproduction and engagement with those that would be affected by the service and/or provision.

1. Respect us and be kind
2. Include and accept us
3. Listen, understand, and act upon what we say
4. Be honest and trust each other
5. Support us to grow and learn from our experiences
6. Let us lead and make decisions

## When Joint Commissioning does not work

Where there are organisational competing priorities and resolution to local activity cannot be achieved, the Kent and Medway Children and Young People Programme Board will hear the positions of both organisations and seek resolution. Failure to do so will be escalated within each organisation.

## 6. What You Have Told Us

A better working relationship with Kent PACT has meant that considerable engagement with families has been possible to inform the SEND strategy to complement the work undertaken by the KCC Participation Service and Health participation workers with adults, young people and children. The feedback below is helping us to improve further.

### Parents and Carers:

- **Communication Issues:** It's often hard to find someone who can help you.
- **Inconsistent Messages:** Information from the SEND team is not always clear or consistent.

- **Trust Concerns:** While you believe in our good intentions, it's hard to fully trust the system.
- **Feedback Opportunities:** You want more chances to give feedback and engage with us.
- **Regular Updates:** You need more frequent communication to stay informed about updates and changes.

## Children and Young People:

- **Complex Documents:** Information is often too wordy and difficult to understand.
- **Desire for Engagement:** You want to be more involved in discussions and decisions.
- **Practical Examples:** You need more examples of how our work will benefit you.
- **Action Updates:** You appreciate "you said, we did" updates showing how your feedback leads to action.

We have used this feedback to shape our SEND Strategy, ensuring it addresses these concerns and meets your needs. Our aim is to improve communication, build trust, and create more opportunities for you to be involved in shaping the services that affect you and your children.

## 7. Progress Since the Last Strategy

Since the launch of our previous SEND Strategy (2021-2024), Here are some key areas where we can demonstrate progress:

### 1. Improve the way we work with parents, carers children and young people

- **Partnership with Parents and Carers:** We have strengthened our partnership with Kent PACT, improving collaboration and communication.
- **SEND Information Hub:** Launched a new online hub that has been well-received by families, providing easy access to information.
- **Youth Participation:** recruited a SEND youth participation officer to enhance engagement with young people.

### 2. Ensure families have positive experiences at each stage of their journey including a well-planned and smooth transition to adulthood

- **Transition Charter:** The Kent Transition Charter for SEND ensures smooth transitions for children with special needs as they move through education stages. It has improved annual reviews and phase transfers by promoting better planning, communication, and support for families.
- **Staff Training:** Focused on training our staff to better serve families and implement a positive service culture.
- **Future Planning Tool:** Developed a tool to forecast the needs of young people transitioning to adulthood, ensuring they have the right information and support.

### 3. Identify assess children and young people's needs earlier

- **Health Professional Training:** Over 90% of health professionals feel more confident in signposting to the Local Offer after receiving training.
- **Improved Pathways:** Co-designed new support pathways for Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) and Neurodiversity (ND) with families, leading to better access to local support.

### 4. Improve education, care and health outcomes for children and young people with SEND

- **Strong Partnerships:** Fostered strong partnerships with schools, healthcare providers, and social services to provide holistic support.
- **Early Intervention:** Invested in support services to address needs early, minimising barriers to learning and development.

### 5. Ensure children and young people with SEND are included in their local communities

- **Countywide Approach to Inclusive Education:** Kent's county-wide approach to inclusive education ensures all children can access quality education in mainstream settings through collaboration between schools and services.
- **Localities Model:** The localities model focuses on providing tailored, community-based support for children with SEND by utilising local partnerships and resources.
- **Inclusive Practices:** Worked closely with schools to promote inclusive practices, ensuring children with SEND can learn alongside their peers.
- **Family Hubs:** Implemented family hubs to provide more accessible information, advice, and guidance to parents.

## 8. Outcomes Framework

The **Kent Children and Young People's Outcomes Framework** is an essential part of our approach to supporting children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). This framework builds on our previous strategy and has been further developed with input from young people themselves. Here's how it came to be, why it's important, and what it means for your family.

The Outcomes Framework is rooted in our earlier SEND strategy, which focused on ensuring that children and young people with SEND received the support they needed to thrive. We realise the importance of having clear, measurable outcomes to track progress and make sure that our efforts were making a real difference. To make the framework even more effective, we worked closely with young people to understand what matters most to them. Their voices helped shape the framework, ensuring that it reflects their aspirations, needs, and experiences. The young people requested there be a new independent outcome added and that this should be at the top. This collaboration has allowed us to incorporate their insights into our new SEND Strategy, making it more relevant and impactful.



*‘These outcomes are embedded in our commissioning activity so we can monitor the impact of all services, not just those you receive from KCC or schools’.*

The framework helps us see if the services and support we’re providing are really helping children and young people with SEND. By setting clear goals, we can monitor whether we’re making a positive impact on their lives. It ensures that our efforts are aligned with the things that are most important to families—like your child’s health, education, and overall quality of life. The framework helps us prioritise the areas that will make the biggest difference. The framework plays a key role in shaping our new SEND Strategy. By building on the insights from the previous strategy and the feedback from young people, we’ve created a more focused and effective plan that’s designed to achieve these important outcomes.

## How the Outcomes Framework Connects with the New SEND Strategy

The new SEND Strategy is designed around the Outcomes Framework, ensuring that everything we do is focused on helping children and young people with SEND achieve these outcomes. By incorporating the framework into our strategy, we can better track our progress and make sure we’re providing the right support to meet the needs of children and families.



## 9. Ambitions

To ensure alignment between the SEND Strategy and the Outcomes Framework, we have created 5 ambitions;

### 1. Improving the Lived Experience of Children and Families

#### **Ambition**

Kent aims to empower children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) to actively participate in decisions about their education, support, and future. This ensures their voices shape the services they receive, making them contributors rather than just recipients.

#### **Why It's Important**

Involving children with SEND in decision-making fosters autonomy, ownership, and self-esteem. When services are aligned with their actual needs, they are more effective, leading to better outcomes and personal growth.

#### **How We'll Achieve It**

- **Develop Self-Advocacy Skills:** Implement programs to help children communicate their needs, understand their rights, and make informed choices.
- **Create Participation Opportunities:** Increase involvement in school councils, peer support groups, and other forums where their voices can be heard.
- **Foster Inclusion:** Promote inclusive practices in schools and communities, ensuring every child feels welcomed and supported.

#### **Impact**

- **Empowerment:** Children will gain the skills to advocate for themselves, resulting in more personalised support.
- **Community Inclusion:** Greater participation will lead to stronger community ties and improved well-being.
- **Educational Success:** Tailored learning experiences will boost engagement, attendance, and performance.

#### **How We'll Monitor Progress**

- **Increased Participation:** Measure the number of children engaging in decision-making forums.
- **Improved Satisfaction:** Track satisfaction levels of children and families with services.
- **Better Educational Outcomes:** Monitor improvements in engagement, attendance, and performance.

## Continuous Improvement

- Work with schools, communities, and families to create participation opportunities.
- Provide ongoing training for children and staff.
- Establish regular feedback to adjust and refine our approach.

## 2. Access to the Right Support at the Right Time in the Right Place

### Ambition

We aim to ensure children, young people, and families can access the support they need, when and where they need it. By enhancing partnerships between education, health, and social care, we will create a seamless, integrated support system for children and young people with SEND.

### Why It's Important

Timely, coordinated support is essential for the well-being and development of children with SEND. Delays or fragmented services can harm their education, health, and social outcomes. Streamlining services will reduce barriers for families and create a system responsive to each child's needs.

### How We'll Achieve It

- **Strengthen Partnerships:** Foster collaboration between education, health, and social care through regular meetings, joint training, and shared information systems.
- **Single Point of Access:** Create a central access point for families, simplifying the process of getting support.
- **Develop Integrated Care Pathways:** Establish clear, coordinated care plans to ensure seamless support across services.

### Impact

- **Better Health and Well-Being:** Timely access to services will improve both physical and mental health, allowing children to engage more fully in education and their community.
- **Enhanced Family Support:** A streamlined system will reduce the burden on families, helping them access the right services more easily and focus on their children's development.

### How We'll Monitor Progress

- **Reduced Waiting Times:** We will track and aim to reduce the time it takes for children to access services.
- **Improved Satisfaction:** Regularly measure family satisfaction with services, aiming for higher satisfaction through better access and coordination.

- **Better Health and Education Outcomes:** Monitor improvements in health, education, and community involvement as services become more integrated.

### Continuous Improvement

- Focus on a **family-centred approach**, involving families in service design and regularly seeking their feedback.
- Implement **continuous improvement** practices to refine processes based on feedback and evolving needs.

## 3. Achieving the Best Outcomes Through Inclusion and Participation

### Ambition

We aim to promote inclusive practices in mainstream schools, ensuring that children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) can access a broad and balanced curriculum. Our goal is to fully integrate children with SEND into education, enabling them to learn alongside their peers, participate in all aspects of school life, and receive the necessary support to succeed.

### Why It's Important

Inclusive education is key to ensuring all children have equal opportunities for success. When children with SEND are included in mainstream schools, they benefit from academic, social, and emotional growth. Inclusion fosters a sense of belonging, boosts self-esteem, and helps all students develop empathy and respect for diversity.

### How We'll Achieve It

- **Inclusive Teaching Practices:** Train teachers and staff in strategies such as differentiated instruction and adaptive learning tools to support all learners.
- **Whole-School Inclusion Policies:** Develop comprehensive inclusion policies to ensure children with SEND are fully integrated into every aspect of school life.
- **Enhanced Access to Support Services:** Provide schools with access to specialist support, such as educational psychologists and SEND inclusion advisors, to address individual needs.

### Impact

- **Improved Educational Achievement:** Inclusive practices will provide children with SEND the support needed to succeed academically, leading to better educational outcomes.
- **Greater Social Integration:** Inclusion promotes social interaction and relationship-building, fostering friendships and a sense of belonging for children with SEND.

- **Increased Self-Esteem and Confidence:** When children with SEND are included and supported, they gain confidence and are more willing to take on challenges, resulting in better long-term outcomes.

### How We'll Monitor Progress

- **Increased Inclusion Rates:** Track the number of children with SEND educated in mainstream settings and aim to increase these rates.
- **Improved Academic Performance:** Monitor academic progress in areas like literacy and numeracy, targeting improvements for children with SEND.
- **Enhanced Social Outcomes:** Measure improvements in social participation, peer relationships, self-esteem, and confidence.

### Continuous Improvement

- **Ongoing Training:** Provide continuous professional development to ensure teachers are equipped with practical strategies for inclusive education.
- **Collaboration with Schools:** Work with schools to develop and adjust inclusion policies to ensure they remain effective and sustainable.
- **Resource Allocation:** Ensure schools have access to necessary resources like assistive technologies and specialist staff to support inclusive practices.

## 4. Working Together with Children and Young People with SEND and Their Families

### Ambition

Our ambition is to enhance engagement with parents, carers, and families by providing clear, accessible information and meaningful opportunities for involvement in decision-making processes. Recognising that parents and carers are essential partners in the education and development of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), we aim to empower families to actively participate in shaping the services and support their children receive.

### Why It's Important

Effective family engagement is crucial for successful support systems for children with SEND. Parents and carers possess deep knowledge of their children's unique needs, and their insights ensure that support is personalised and effective. Strengthening these partnerships improves trust and ensures that services are more responsive, transparent, and aligned with the needs of families.

## How We'll Achieve It

- **Provide Accessible Information and Resources:** Develop clear guides and resources that explain services, support options, and decision-making processes in user-friendly formats, including workshops and multi-language materials.
- **Create Opportunities for Parental Involvement:** Establish parent forums, focus groups, and advisory panels to give families a platform to share experiences and contribute to decision-making.

## Impact

- **Enhanced Decision-Making:** Parents and carers who are well-informed can actively shape the support their children receive, leading to better, more tailored outcomes.
- **Stronger Family Support Networks:** Engaged families can build stronger connections with other families, schools, and service providers, reducing isolation and enhancing resilience.
- **Improved Trust and Collaboration:** Stronger engagement builds trust between families and service providers, leading to more effective, coordinated support for children.

## How We'll Monitor Progress

- **Increased Parental Involvement:** Track the number of parents participating in decision-making forums and aim to increase their participation.
- **Improved Family Satisfaction:** Monitor family satisfaction with information and support services, targeting higher satisfaction levels.
- **Stronger Community Networks:** Measure increased family participation in community activities and support services.

## Continuous Improvement

- **Clear Communication Channels:** Ensure open and consistent communication between families and service providers, allowing for easy access to information and support.
- **Family-Centred Approach:** Regularly consult with families to gather feedback and adjust services to meet their unique needs.
- **Ongoing Support and Training:** Provide continuous training for families and service providers on advocacy, communication, and navigating the SEND system.

## 5. Preparing for a Successful Future at the Earliest Opportunity

### Ambition

Our ambition is to build a continuous support system that begins in the early years and extends through post-16 education, ensuring that children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) are prepared for independence. By focusing on skills development, future education, employment, and independent living, we aim to create clear, effective pathways for young people to transition confidently into adulthood.

### Why It's Important

Preparation for adulthood must start early for children with SEND, with sustained support throughout their education. Early intervention is crucial for skill development and helps reduce gaps in services during critical transitions, such as from primary to secondary school or from education to employment. A seamless continuum of support helps young people with SEND build the confidence and abilities needed for independence, employment, and community involvement.

### How We'll Achieve It

- **Early Years Interventions:** Implement targeted programs that focus on developing key skills such as communication, self-care, and social interaction. These early interventions are tailored to meet the developmental needs of each child.
- **Transition Pathways:** Create structured pathways that guide children through each stage of education, ensuring smooth transitions from early years to post-16 education.
- **Strengthen Post-16 Support:** Enhance the guidance and support provided to young people as they approach adulthood, including vocational training, career advice, and life skills programs.

### Impact

- **Enhanced Readiness for Adulthood:** By preparing early, young people with SEND will be better equipped for the challenges of adulthood, leading to higher independence and better educational and employment outcomes.
- **Smooth Transitions:** Well-planned transition pathways reduce disruption, anxiety, and disengagement, helping young people remain on track for success.
- **Improved Long-Term Outcomes:** A clear, continuous pathway ensures that young people with SEND reach their potential, whether that be in education, employment, or independent living.

### How We'll Monitor Progress

- **Increased Early Intervention Participation:** Track the number of children accessing early years programs and aim to increase participation.

- **Improved Transition Success Rates:** Measure the success of transitions between key stages, aiming for smoother, more supported transitions.
- **Higher Post-16 Engagement:** Monitor engagement in post-16 education, training, and employment, with a focus on increasing participation.

### Continuous Improvement

- **Collaborative Planning:** Develop personalised plans for each child in collaboration with families, schools, and service providers to ensure individual needs are met.
- **Ongoing Monitoring and Adjustment:** Continuously review the effectiveness of interventions and transition pathways, making necessary adjustments based on feedback from families and service providers.
- **Resource Allocation:** Ensure that schools and service providers have the resources and training they need to deliver high-quality early interventions and transition support.

### How You Can Help

Your feedback is crucial to our success. By sharing your experiences and insights, you help us understand what is working and where we need to improve. Here is how you can get involved:

- **Surveys and Feedback Forms:** Participate in regular surveys to share your views.
- **Parent Support Groups:** Join support groups to connect with other parents and provide feedback.
- **Consultation Meetings:** Attend meetings to discuss your child's needs and our services.

## 10. Conclusion

Our commitment to ensuring that every child and young person with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in Kent receives the support they need to thrive is unwavering. This strategy outlines our vision for a more inclusive, supportive, and empowering environment for all children and young people with SEND and their families. The ambitions listed in our strategy are designed to ensure that your children receive the best possible, sustainable education and support, tailored to their individual needs. We are dedicated to collaborating closely with you to make this vision a reality. Your feedback, participation, and engagement are vital to the success of this strategy.

We acknowledge the challenges we have faced in the past and are committed to making continuous improvements. By working together, we can create a brighter future for all children and young people with SEND in Kent.

# 11. Key Documents

## 1. Countywide Approach to Inclusive Education:

This document is the strategy for promoting inclusive education. It focuses on ensuring that all students, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds, have equal access to high-quality education and are fully included in all aspects of school life. The approach emphasises removing barriers to learning and providing appropriate support so that every child can succeed.

## 2. Accessibility Strategy:

The Accessibility Strategy details the plans and measures in place to ensure that educational environments, materials, and activities are accessible to all students, including those with disabilities. It covers physical access to buildings, accessible communication methods, and the provision of appropriate resources and support to meet diverse needs within the school community.

## 3. Services to Schools:

This document lists and explains the various services that the local authority offers to schools. These services may include educational support, health services, training for staff, and other resources that help schools operate effectively and support their students. It serves as a guide for schools to understand and access the support available to them.

## 4. Section 19 Framework:

The Section 19 Framework provides guidelines for how the local authority fulfils its duty to ensure that children who cannot attend school, due to reasons such as illness or exclusion, still receive a suitable education. It outlines the processes and provisions in place to support these children, ensuring they continue to learn and progress even when not attending mainstream school.

## 5. Co-Production Charter:

The Co-Production Charter is a commitment to working collaboratively with parents, children, young people, and other stakeholders in designing and delivering educational services. It sets out the principles for shared decision-making, ensuring that the perspectives and needs of those who use the services are central to how they are developed and implemented.

## 6. Transition Charter:

The Kent Transition Charter for SEND is a commitment by local services to work together, ensuring smooth transitions for children and young people with special educational needs as they move between different stages of education or into adulthood.