

SEND Futures Plan Update

1. Introduction

- a. Under the terms of Kingston's "Safety Valve" Agreement, the Council is required to report to the Department for Education on performance against conditions in the agreement three times per year. The Council was judged by the Department for Education (DfE) to have made sufficient progress with the implementation of actions in the SEND Futures Plan to receive all payments for the most recent financial year. The DfE has changed the timings of some of the payments in the original agreement and some of the funding originally scheduled for 2023/24 was also paid in 2022/23. The Council is now about to submit its first Safety Valve report for financial year 2023/24 and is confident funds available under the agreement for the next payment will be received.
- b. At the end of April 2023, Kingston maintained a total of 1647 Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). This is an increase of 78 since the start of May when the total was 1569.
- c. The forecast total number of EHCPs in the five year financial model when the Safety Valve Agreement was originally finalised in March 2021 for the January 2023 census was 1640. The actual total number of EHCPs at the time of the January 2023 census was 1630 which is 10 EHCPs less than in the original five year financial model.
- d. A task and finish group comprised of headteachers, school senior leaders, SENCOs and local authority officers have continued to meet to discuss the next steps after the report commissioned to consider alternative mechanisms to fund SEND in mainstream schools. The report can be found here with an executive summary here. The group has met three times and will meet for a total of five times this year to look at alternatives, with the aim of making a recommendation for future arrangements before the end of the summer term.

2. Workstream 1: Co-production, engagement and participation

Impact and progress

a. Children and Young People (CYP)

- i. The new Participation Officer for Children and Young People with SEND has started work on engaging with children and young people to ensure their views are heard and reflected in ongoing improvements to our services. Amongst other things she will be conducting focus groups with children and young people with SEND in Kingston mainstream and special schools to collect their views and ideas.

b. Parents and Carers

- i. The number of registrations with [Kingston's SEND Register](#) stood at 1066 at the start of May, with an approximately 50:50 split between families with Education Health and Care plans (EHCPs) and those without. The register is an excellent vehicle for partners to communicate with families and to raise awareness of the support that is available locally for them and their children. The regular newsletters sent to those registered also highlights opportunities for families to have their views heard about improvements they would like to see and ways they can become involved in future service design. Families can sign up to [Kingston's SEND Register here](#).
- ii. This workstream has continued to work on planning and undertaking engagement with children, young people and parents and carers, in order to ensure their voices will feed into an updated version of the SEND Futures Plan. The feedback from consultations such as these will not only be used to feed into updating the SEND Futures Plan, but will also help to inform the Local Area's new self-evaluation framework.

- iii. As part of this engagement work, Kingston Parent Carer Forum are working with Achieving for Children to host seven in-person focus groups for parents and carers in Kingston. These focus groups will span the following topics: early years, primary school aged children, secondary school aged children, post-16, ethnic diversity, neurodiversity and complex needs. There is now a [page on the Local Offer](#) which gives more detailed information about the focus groups, and includes frequently asked questions and the registration form.

3. Workstream 2: Joint Commissioning

Impact and progress

a. SEND Placement Commissioning

- i. The SEND Commissioning Team has continued to make savings, having reduced the actual expenditure by £429,827 compared with the forecast for the current financial year, which accounts for 87.9% of their savings target for the 2022/23 financial year.
- ii. The team reduced the expenditure on placements for 2022/23 financial year by £167,831.14. These cash savings that are made mid-year are due to negotiations with placement providers for discounts, credit notes or a reduction in fees.
- iii. The team also successfully achieved reductions in forecast expenditure based on increases to placement costs that were mitigated against in the amount of 213,082.33. This was done through negotiating a step down in support or residential costs, early payment discounts or agreeing to a lower cost provider when a higher cost provider was in scope.
- iv. Mitigated savings on fee uplifts were also achieved for the financial year 2022/23 in the amount of £48,913.28. This was due to Achieving for Children negotiating lower fee increases when receiving requests from providers for fee uplifts.

b. Short Breaks Recommissioning

- i. Short Breaks activities ran throughout the Easter holidays, and Achieving for Children have received positive feedback from the agencies used for Short Breaks.

c. Special Educational Needs & Disabilities Information Advice & Support Service (SENDIASS) and Brokerage Service Recommissioning

- i. Polaris, the new provider of SENDIASS is in the process of ensuring their IT systems and information and guidance is up to date and readily available. Information about SENDIASS is available [here](#).

Areas of concern

- i. The saving target for Kingston was unfortunately not met in part due to the difficulty over the course of the year in driving down inflationary fee increase requests. In addition, there are fewer Kingston residents attending high cost placements than in Richmond, which means there are less providers with which to negotiate reduced costs, thus the impact of this is seen disproportionately in Kingston.

4. Workstream 3: Local provision

Impact and progress

a. Therapies

- i. A new spot commissioning process is now in place to ensure all young people requiring therapy are documented, and the cost of those packages are in place and awaiting procurement.
- ii. There have been further discussions over the prospect of purchasing therapy for cohorts of young people from local providers rather than at an individual, case by case basis.
- iii. A gap analysis of Speech and Language and Occupational Therapy is currently underway which will inform Kingston Place, and the Integrated Care Board in regards to the resources that will be required to deliver statutory provision.
- iv. Future milestones include revising the Therapies Oversight Group (TOG) terms of reference in addition to reviewing the pre and post-service which is being re-commissioned through Your Healthcare.
- v. Another key goal for the next three months will be to agree on an approach to how EHC needs assessment advice is given, to ensure all young people who require therapy assessments can access these from commissioned providers in the area.

b. Emotional wellbeing and mental health

- i. The next steps in the coming months will be to develop a local strategy for social, emotional and mental health difficulties and the provision needed. In addition, to consider the local provision available for young people who fall into the category of Emotionally Related School Avoidance (ERSA) and respond to increasing need.

c. Local Places

- i. The installation of the four demountable classrooms at 6Oaks, a Specialist Resource Provision at the Duke's Centre, is on course to happen in August.
- ii. The People Committee will meet on the 13th of June to consider the 14-19 vocational centre at St Philip's. Before then, detailed clarification of the likely cost of the centre needs to be provided and agreed.
- iii. Coombe Academy Trust is commissioning a feasibility for reconfiguration of the Specialist Resource Provision areas at Knollmead to address condition issues.
- iv. Some progress has been made with The Kingston Academy to provide additional space for young people with special educational needs, which will free up more space for pupils with SEND within the main building. No substantial progress has been made regarding the establishment of a Cullum Centre Specialist Resource Provision.
- v. The Spring School remains on schedule to open in September in the Norbiton Primary School building, subject to resolution of planning matters to do with drop-off/collection and parking more generally.

d. 16 to 25 Years

- i. The Transitions Board, co-chaired by the Director of Children's Services and the Associate Director for Adult Social Care, continues to lead and oversee improvements to Kingston's post-16 offer. The SEND Partnership Board is also scrutinising progress during a "deep dive" session into this area at its June meeting.
- ii. The Employment Forum, which is made up of voluntary sector groups, schools, local providers, and South London Partnership continues to look at the ways we can improve employment and education opportunities for young people within our local area.

- iii. Sub-groups have now been developed as part of the Employment Forum, each taking lead on key activities, such as looking at how we can start planning for young people at Key Stages 4. For example, one scheme being piloted is 'passports to work', which is about thinking critically about how we can deliver the curriculum to young people in alternative ways, which better caters to their needs and interests. This work on curriculum planning would also allow us to gather data which can be used to better understand the demand coming through the system, and what action we will need to take locally to react to this demand.
- iv. During the previous financial year, 2022/23, the Department for Education (DfE), gave the employment forum £10,000 to carry out their work. This has been used to fund staff to carry out the scoping and project planning. This funding has also gone towards developing and improving the Local Offer, in particular the Young People Zone, which is now more targeted around employment opportunities and available traineeships. In addition, this funding has gone towards staff support in setting up other employment schemes, such as through the Way to Work team.
- v. This financial year, the DfE is giving £20,000 in funding to Kingston borough, which will be used partly to fund an Employment Engagement Officer. This will also be used to fund activity within the Way to Work Team, and will continue to fund an element of business support for the Employment Forum.
- vi. A key outcome to come out of the Employment Forum is the successful creation of 8 supported internships in Kingston, 6 for young people from Kingston, and 2 for you people from Richmond, which will be starting in September. In addition, the Employment Forum has begun working with Ambitious About Autism in developing 24 new supported internship opportunities across Kingston and Richmond.
- vii. Work has also begun with Chessington World of Adventures on a new social value project, looking at developing employment opportunities for September 2024.
- viii. The Local Area is also working with South London Careers Partnership, as well as the Education Careers Enterprise Group, through setting up meetings across South London and looking at which larger employers we can target.
- ix. Within Kingston there are three Maximising Independence posts currently going through evaluation. A key focus of these roles will be targeting small businesses for employment/internship opportunities. Work within Maximising Independence has also focused on getting therapists into commissioning placement posts. Another example is getting Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) Teacher and Support Worker posts filled, in order to have them target young people at risk of missing education.
- x. There is also considerable joint work between the Virtual School & College and SEND colleagues on the agenda of improving employment pathways where there is a significant shared agenda with regard to the Care Leavers Covenant and supporting young people into employment and long term independence.

Areas of concern

- i. The expansion of specialist places and the need to ensure that there is capacity to provide therapy in each new provision.
- ii. The submission of private assessments as part of an EHC needs assessment for young people who have not been referred to local commissioned providers.
- iii. More training is needed for colleagues making mental health contributions to education health and care needs assessments, in particular given that this is an area of increasing need.

- iv. There is an increasing number of young people who fit into the category of ERSA, meaning there is a need to invest in better provision to meet this need, through using early intervention.
- v. The waiting times for ADHD and ASC assessments continue to be a concern and are proving difficult to reduce despite increased staffing.
- vi. Currently, there are no parent/carer representatives within the Employment Forum, however there are named parent/carers that are being directly updated on a regular basis. There is still work that needs to be done in terms of structure and governance of the Employment Forum. For example, the Forum is currently chaired only by a Local Authority representative, therefore there is a need to find a Co-Chair, ideally someone who can represent local businesses/industry.
 - i. There has been a lack of clarity over how much of the uncommitted Education Capital Funding remains.
 - ii. The DfE are yet to determine how and when they will procure a new contractor to finish the permanent accommodation for Spring School so there is a small risk that this project will not be completed by September 2024.

5. Workstream 4: Early intervention and transitions

Impact and progress

a. First 1,001 Days and Early Help

- i. A workshop for Early Years settings took place in May in response to increasing levels of need within this sector, in particular an increase in need for speech and language and health visitors at both private and voluntary sector nurseries. Two of the most significant issues raised were the increase amongst families in need for speech and language and health visitors at both private and voluntary sector nurseries. There is a need for a multi-agency response to ensure these issues are addressed at the source.
- ii. Supporting Families Consultants are now in-post and six schools have been identified to pilot their work. The aim of this work is to increase partners confidence in completing early help assessments and 'team around the child' plans.
- iii. Resilience Networks are seeing an increase in attendance from partners and of families being presented.
- iv. A wide range of parenting programs are now on offer and the [Parent Champion Network](#) funding has been extended and expanded, allowing an ongoing rolling program of training for practitioners and an increase in parent volunteers to deliver support to other parents.
- v. A longer term future project is the implementation of a Supporting Families module in our recording system to support better information sharing across the partnership and for the needs of families to be understood at the front door. The first phase of this project will be to ensure the IT project team is in place.
- vi. Another upcoming project will look at scoping for a Family Hubs model to support an integrated and multidisciplinary offer across the ages. This will be similar to children's centres but for children from 0 - 18 years and retaining activities for young people, as well as having an increased offer for family support in these centres.

b. Early Years onwards

- i. The Workstream 4 action plan has been updated with greater input from workstream members, leading to new areas of focus being identified. In addition, the meeting format has changed to enable a 'deep dive' focus on elements of the action plan in need of attention, in order to provide a better platform to support/challenge colleagues.
- ii. Good progress has been made with the Ordinarily Available provision, with the document now on the [Local Offer](#). Work is ongoing to raise awareness around this resource.
- iii. The School Improvement Team is increasingly focused on including SEND within their wider improvement work.
- iv. The new Alternative Provision and Attendance Strategy documents are currently being developed, and will be available at a universal level. The next stage will be to scope out the key strategy for both projects.

Areas of concern

- i. Lack of capacity across a number of services impacting opportunities for creative and robust service planning.
- ii. Early Help assessment, while covering the essentials, may still be too big an area for partners to cover. Working Together guidance focuses on information sharing and multi-agency working, therefore it is important that this is kept as a key focus, in order to ensure families get support from staff they already work with.
- iii. There are a high number of families referred to Early Help that were not aware of the referral. Given that Child in Need and Early Help are consent based services, consent has to be sought prior to the referral so the family are on board from the start about what they need.
- iv. Schools' ability to support parental resilience, particularly around attendance at school, continues to be a challenge.

6. Workstream 5: Assessment and planning

Impact and progress

- i. As a result of the feedback from the Secondary SENCO Collaborative, there is a draft multi-agency meeting template currently being developed subject to feedback from Workstream 5 members. The workstream is also working on developing better outcomes and guidance around the key stages of Preparing for Adulthood.
- ii. The all-age plan is being re-designed, explicitly linking Preparing for Adulthood headings with the remaining headings. This will likely be piloted in September 2023.
- iii. Workstream 5 members have agreed to complete regular quality assurance checks of annual reviews, which will increase the resilience of the annual review process.
- iv. Work has started on drafting guidance for advice givers to give them more clarity when writing their advice for EHCPs or annual reviews, ensuring that this links in with the development of holistic outcomes and the quality of provision.
- v. A more long term project for Workstream 5 will be on the digitisation of our forms, however further co-production/participation is required across the Partnership to further this work.

Areas of concern

- vi. The timeliness of annual reviews continues to be a concern, meaning that this is being monitored as a risk.

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