**Kingston Parent Consortium 10th May 2021, notes of online meeting**

**Attendees**

**Parent / carer representatives:**

Agnieszka Czerwińska (ACz), Bev Pass (Chair of PCF) (BP), Christine Flowers (CF), Karen Gale (KG)

Kelly Jones (KJ), Owen Hart (OH), Rosy Ahmed (RA)

**Staff:**

Alison Stewart, Designated Clinical Officer for SEND, Clinical Commissioning Group (AS)

Anna Chiva, Associate Director of SEND, Achieving for Children (AC)

Ashley Whittaker, Programme Director, Achieving for Children (AW)

Charis Penfold, Director of Education Services, Achieving for Children (CP)

Edwina Gregory, Senior Project and Policy Officer, AfC (EG)

Geraldine Burgess, Short Breaks Operations Manager, Achieving for Children (GB)

Ian Dodds, Director of Children’s Services, Kingston Council (ID)

Jodie Williams, Inclusion Development Officer, Integrated Service for Children with Disabilities, AfC (JW)

Karen Lowry, SEND Local Offer Website Manager, Achieving for Children (KL)

Sarah Herbert, Lead School Improvement Advisor for AfC (SH)

Terry Tottman, Commissioning Manager, AfC (TT)

1. Welcome / intros / apologies

2. LGA Peer Review, findings and actions

ID explained that a Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Review of SEND provision in Kingston was commissioned as a condition of the Council’s recent Safety Valve Funding agreement with the Depart for Education. Parents and carers were interviewed as part of this, including the PCF Chair. He talked through [this presentation](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1waE5o-Qg2y06fFH3A4CHqGMTKMcCopOb4nT-5HNL36Q/edit?usp=sharing) showing:

* headlines of the Safety Valve Agreement
* some conditions of the Safety Valve Agreement
* some positive findings of the review
* the recommendations arising from the review.

Full report expected in a few weeks time. Additional actions will go into the SEND Futures Plan. He asked anyone involved in the review if they would like to add anything.

- RA added the recommendation to reach out to Black Asian and Minority Ethnic Groups.

- BP reminded people that Ian Thomas (Kingston Council CEO) had said that we would start on these changes now and not wait for the report and ID confirmed that this to be the case.

- ID used the example of the Council providing funding, plus providing a Parental Engagement Officer to take the co-production work forward and move the Parent Champion initiative on. Other things might take longer to show impact eg Quality First Teaching.

- ACz asked if increasing accountability is a short or long term priority. ID confirmed it is a priority but seeing impact of changes may take longer.

- RA asked about the Parent Champions advert in AfC Facebook and ID confirmed this was about a scheme re. children involved with the youth justice system, and unhelpfully this scheme funded from the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime, has the same name as the SEND Parent Champion scheme overseen by Coram and which the new Parent Particpation Officer will lead on setting up.

3. [Short Breaks](https://kr.afcinfo.org.uk/pages/local-offer/information-and-advice/short-breaks)

TT updated on the ongoing consultation. Some commissioned current provision ends March 2022 and this consultation and recommissioning process has aim of improving service. Survey is still live and there are workshops running (2 remaining) with registration available via Local Offer. Or just email or call to submit views.

BP reports that PCF are doing some additional work to gather more views on needs based approach. NA continued to explain that designed own survey as some parents and carers are not accessing current provision and need their needs assessed. Some parents say needs are not severe enough to access. NA encouraging all parents to join the consultation. NA found the last workshop really well done and very interactive. Asked what AfC can do to get schools to send more out to more parents through flagging to SENCOs etc. AW confirmed that we do work hard with schools to make this happen but aware doesn’t always get sent out and this is one of the reasons we have relaunched the SEND Register to have more direct contact with families so they can definitely receive these kind of comms.

OH planning to join consultation workshop on 12th May. He feels short breaks provision is currently insufficient for the size of the cohort of children and young people with additional needs in Kingston, and is in his opinion less than in other areas for example Surrey. Used several examples of what he would like to see e.g. 5 hour sessions not 3 hours. Suggested looking at more joined up work with other providers and highlighted current practice whereby charges are different for families from different boroughs. Also would like to see changes made prior to April 2022. GB explained some of the reasons for current provision eg COVID regulations leading to a reduction in duration of session to allow more total children to attend given the need for lower density of / fewer children at each session and allow more sessions. Over the winter we’ve also been restricted by size of rooms as have not been able to use minibuses to take service users away for outdoor activities etc.

ACz asked:

- TT how the survey identifies the gap in provision as it is very focused on a small number of existing provisions? It does not seem to be about understanding the total need base or aimed at those not currently accessing the service. Stressed importance of assessing what the needs are before commissioning anything. TT responded with information about where in survey people are asked for information on this plus the workshop covers it too. Other data is also used eg Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. On finding a provider that can fill these gaps, TT explained how this is behind approach to use several different providers as we don’t think there is a single provider who can cover all needs. Have recently met with other local authorities on this also re potential providers.

- GB about the printed / pdf guide that used to exist which was a very helpful point of reference and would like to have this kind of document again.

- ID if anything happening re SENCOs not disseminating information to parents and about making sure good practice is being shared with other schools and making sure they do it too. ID responded that we do this regularly at eg SENCO forums and Headteacher forums and work with schools to encourage them as much as possible but not possible to direct them. ACZ asked if Schools Forum could do this and ID explained this is finance focused and SENCO Forum the right place for this. ACz asked about information being received by SH regarding family feedback and SH explained the various ways she receives this information.

NA asked how many people had filled in the surveys and TT shared that about 55 sofar.

NA asked how many families are accessing non assessed short breaks. GB shared a presentation to show this over recent years. More Kingston children access than Richmond children but total hours similar so Richmond children having longer hours. JW explained more about the data and how this is captured and because time recorded spans eg annual passes for venues which would add up to a lot more hours than eg series of judo or swimming classes

RA asked if short breaks provider operates over both borough how is fair share ensured and do the providers do outreach / how do they raise awareness as lots of people don’t know about this provision

TT explained how raising awareness is part of the consultation workshop and when invitation to tender goes out participants will need to explain how they will do this.

**4.** [**Update on SEND Register**](https://kr.afcinfo.org.uk/pages/local-offer/information-and-advice/social-care/special-educational-needs-and-disability-register)

EG gave a presentation on this recent relaunch, including the aims of increasing provision of information and feedback on services.

So far over 663 families registered in Kingston, evenly distributed across the borough. Need to drill down on the data more to understand main categories of need. 69% male. Age breakdown is also easily done.

AW highlighted positives such as significant non EHC plan cohort, age almost aligned with actual spread.

Next steps is the sub group of RA, BP, AW, KL etc to agree what to do now with this information. ACTION

ACz asked how people were notified about this. EG summarised eg mail shot and email shot (all on SEN Support and with EHC Plan) plus ongoing communications plan including GPs, schools, children’s centres etc

NA asked if on existing register would they be able to sign up to the new one? NA said she and some others had not received. Needs to be followed up. ACTION

ACz asked about the Disability Awareness Card and EG explained the new one is a durable credit card type card rather than the previous laminated piece of cardboard. Some businesses may accept it as proof of disability but this card does not have any particular benefits etc. Businesses are being informed about the card so they are aware.

**5. SEND Support**

CF asked about information about content of an SEN Support Plan and what happens if this is at odds with the curriculum of the school and the reasonable adjustments don’t happen. Response from AfC has been speak to school. But examples of eg text books being used that are not suitable. SH responded that in the first instance issues do need to be raised with the school. She referred to the developing Quality First Teaching guidance and how that might help in the future. SH offered to work with CF on working with the school and made some suggestions about how use of a primary school text could be supported. AW raised the importance of making sure “Ordinarily Available Provision” documentation is made accessible for parents. JR commented about how SENDIAS see considerable traffic on this topic and pointed to the power relationship between parents and schools and that it can be hard for parents to make their point heard. CF also pointed out that parents do not want to “fall out” with their schools.

**6. Website update**

BP highlighted the launch of the [Kingston PCF’s new website](https://kingstonpcf.co.uk/) and asked all to take look, share with their networks and give feedback on what people think.

KL described ongoing work with RA on Local Offer for example short breaks information.

KL highlighted the pending relaunch of the Local Offer and wider AfC Info website with e.g. SENCO Zone and how this is based we have been collecting over past years.

7. Any other issues across Education, Health and Social Care

Health

AS highlighted the ongoing work on improving the way that writing outcomes is done and asked for views on next steps following recent CDC workshops etc. QA process is showing real improvements in quality of advice going into EHC plans but still variability about how outcomes are written.

ACz said all need to have good understanding of SEND Code of Practice and there is a need for training for professionals in this.

ACTION is AS to take forward working group on this.

Education

CP reported that schools are largely back which is great news. Still lots of work to support those needing extra help. A small number of children are still at home and some abroad. Overall a good start to the summer term.

JR did highlight that considerable issues raised with them.

ACz asked about mechanisms for schools informing AfC / social services if schools have told children to stay at home because the schools cannot meet their needs. Also practical question about what happens if school says this? If school cannot meet need does school have to inform AfC? CP replied that there are very very small numbers and response depends on bespoke situation eg health colleagues may be brought in. If short term due to eg staff absence then no central action but if sustained would trigger emergency review if school cannot meet need in medium term.

BP emphasised that to the PCF it does seem unreasonable that a child is being denied education for this reason.

AC added that school should be reporting sustained issues relating to this and confirmed would pick up with the school in question, and also the registration of this absence.

AC updated on staffing in the SEN team. Three permanent staff off on long term sick, and problems with quality of agency staff. It has been difficult but things improving and people coming back to the office. Also recruiting two senior managers and grateful to CF for joining that interview panel. Also changes to Preparing for Adulthood Team to make staff more focused / expert in their area.

AC shared information about work on new online EHC plan portal and aim is to launch this in 2022. Professionals and families can monitor progress, enter information etc all online. Would like to have parents included in this as part of Workstream 5 work. ACz already involved and would be good to increase that involvement.

**Short breaks**

GB reported that Enhanceable has the contract to run the new overnight short breaks facility at Moor Lane and this will be opening up gradually from June.

**8. AOB**

CF asked where family can go for support if they believe school is not providing sufficient support given diagnosis. JR suggested they contact SENDIAS. AC reminded everyone that the SAS helpline is still open and Karen shared link.

AC appealed for parent comment to feedback back on pathways to employment, RA and NA already on 16 to 25 pathway.

BP requested that we review the current list of 18 joint working priorities to make sure this is still up to date. AW agreed that this should be done. ACTION

9. Next meeting on

15th June at 19.30.