



Countywide SENCO Forum Q&A Document

All questions below were asked either during the sessions on the 20th and the 21st March 2024, or within the post session evaluation.

- Can you send us the links that we can pass to colleagues to register for the upcoming MCS Training for Teachers:
 - o [Mainstream Core Standards Training for Teachers - Secondary - 25 June 2024 - Secondary School Teachers](#)
 - o [Mainstream Core Standards Training for Teachers - Primary - 2nd May 2024 - Primary School Teachers](#)

- Moving forward, might it not be an idea to have fewer items on this agenda so that there is an opportunity in the meeting for officers to answer the questions that are coming up in the chat?
 - o **Though we try to keep the agenda as succinct as possible, we also try to make sure that you all receive all of the information that you need moving forward. Having delivered close to a hundred training sessions over the last few years, where we have such a large audience, it is very difficult to be able to answer questions during sessions. Where people have made specific comments or asked specific questions about their own experiences I will pass on your names and school name to the relevant people within the SEN teams so that, where it is appropriate, they can respond to you directly.**

Support from your SEN IA following a decision not to issue an EHCP- (Teri Rutherford- SEND Support and Inclusion Manager, KCC)

- When will the process outlined in your first three slides begin?
 - o **The SEN IA support for decision not to issue an EHCP has started in March and now that all assessment officers have received training this will be the expected process from 1st April.**

- Why it is 'ideal' for a child not to have an EHCP?
 - o **We will address this question in a follow up forum. There are many reasons for this and to give a response in the form of Q&A does not give the question the gravity it needs.**



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- We have children arrive with us with very little information or continuity of provision due to the lack of detail tracking of them. We can meet their needs but we waste time putting the correct provision in place. With high mobility these children need the protection of a statutory document to ensure QA of their education. This does not mean we cannot meet their needs in the mainstream but does require clear understanding of needs and resources that must be in place for them to be successful in our setting.
 - **This will be addressed in a future forum.**

- I have recently had two EHCPs not issued, one (parental request). We got a reason why it did not go further and the other (which was a school request) we got no reason. All seems very dependant on who the case worker is.
 - **The SEN IA support for decision not to issue an EHCP has started in March and now that all assessment officers have received training this will be the expected process from 1st April.**

- It is still very difficult to get hold of SEND advisors or case officers
 - **The contact details of the SEN Inclusion Advisers have been shared. As the SEN IA are attending meetings in schools it may not be possible for them to answer a phone call. If you send an email they will endeavour to respond when they return from a visit.**
 - **We are introducing SEN IA Surgeries for SENCOs from after Easter/ Term 5 . These have already been trialled in Ashford and been very popular. These have been a successful route for SENCOs to answer queries about provision for children with SEND. What we are not able to provide is information about the progress of an EHC needs assessment, placement or outcome of an Annual Review. These questions should still be sent to the assessment officer assigned the EHCN assessment process, a casework officer if an EHCP has been issued. The SEND Enquiries Hub should be helpful for schools and parents queries.**
 - **SEN IA surgeries for SENCOs which will be held weekly on different days.**
 - **The SEN Inclusion Adviser will be emailing out all information about their surgeries including letting when the surgeries for your district will be starting and how you can book. There will be more information coming after Easter and during April and May is this is established.**

- One problem is when the decision to not issue has been made, some officers have been unprofessional with parents, giving false information. Such as that schools have not sent evidence when they have and that it is the school's fault.
 - **There are workshops planned for the summer and possibly the autumn to address this.**
 - **In the meantime, it would be most helpful if you can direct any concerns which have arisen to the Assessment Placement and Tribunal Manager**
georgette.williams@kent.gov.uk



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- As schools we do not always get sent the full details and are then relying on gathering information from the parents. Phone calls and emails often not responded to by the SEN team.
 - **The support from the SEN Inclusion Advisers following a decision not to issue an EHCPlan will address inconsistency. The SEN case work and assessment teams are asked to call parents and schools and there is time every week dedicated to this communication. We expect the difficulty with speaking directly to a member of the SEND service to improve.**

- We have parents requesting EHCPs who want a special school place – the issue isn't what we are doing as a school.
 - **We appreciate that some parents have been advised that the needs of there is best met in a special school. The SEN IA will work with you to support parents understanding of the criteria for a special school and the offer from mainstream schools.**

- Please can we have some advice about parents applying for an EHCP because there child is not in school – and we have very little evidence to support an application – and how to better support parents with this. This has also happened with parents who have decided to home educate and they have been taken off of our role.
 - **Parents can contact IASK for advice. If children are still on role a meeting can be convened and the SEN IA invited to join those conversations.**

- Will our SEND IA have enough time to attend all these meetings?
 - **The SEN IA will be providing support for provision planning for children when there has been a decision not to issue an EHCPlan following EHCneeds assessment.**
 - **We will be monitoring the numbers of no to assess and how the capacity of the SEN IA tea is able to manage those.**
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 - **SEN IA surgeries for SENCOs which will be held weekly on different days.**

- How do we contact our local SEN Inclusion Advisor?
 - **There is a slide within the March 2024 Countywide SENCO Forum presentation which lists the SENIAs and which area they cover along with the SENIA's email address.**



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- Do we contact the IA to set up this meeting or do they contact us when there's a no to issue?
 - **The SEN IA will contact you to request that you arrange a meeting and will be able to let you know their availability.**

- What can we do if there is a refusal to assess?
 - **There is advice shared with parents regarding the next steps. Schools can contact the SEN IA to discuss the SEND provision. The SEN IA will be monitoring the numbers of EHCNA declines and offer support where there are spikes in applications, significant numbers of parent requests.**

- Will our IA have enough capacity to do all of these meetings in a timely way?
 - **We are introducing SEN IA Surgeries for SENCOs from after Easter/ Term 5 . These have already been trialled in Ashford and been very popular. These have been a successful route for SENCOs to answer queries about provision for children with SEND. What we are not able to provide is information about the progress of an EHC needs assessment, placement or outcome of an Annual Review. These questions should still be sent to the assessment officer assigned the EHCN assessment process, a casework officer if an EHCPlan has been issued. The SEND Enquiries Hub should be helpful for schools and parents queries.**
 - **SEN IA surgeries for SENCOs which will be held weekly on different days.**
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- I have tried to book a date for transition support for a year 6 pupil with an EHCP but the SEN IA is not available.
 - **I have followed up this comment. The SEN IA was unable to make the meeting date provided and asked for alternative dates. These are being awaited.**



Tribunals- What does the process involve (Georgette Williams- EHC Tribunal, Assessment and Placement Manager and Jan Rawlings- Interim Tribunal Manager, KCC)

- I have been a witness before but had to rely upon the parent telling me the final outcome. Please could you ensure that all schools are sent details of the outcome.
 - o **The team are being reminded to send the decision outcome to witnesses.**
- Also, please would you provide an outline of what is expected for a Witness statement - often we have not received the full details as to the reasons for the Appeal
 - o **The tribunal team will send out the Notice of Appeal with a request for a witness statement.**
- Please could the Evidence request letters have the numbered points in the same order as a lot of the information is repeated for every evidence request.
 - o **We are reviewing our evidence request letters and will shortly be trialling a new version.**
- Schools are sent a decision letter that is less detailed than the parents letter and so do not know the basis of the decision not to proceed with statutory assessment. This is not helpful.
- The School letter does not include as much information as the parent letter. Why is this?
 - o **I will look into this and feedback in due course.**
- Parents have been told that KCC do not have time to hold mediation meetings. Why is this?
 - o **Mediations are currently managed by the area team, we are aware there have been difficulties managing the number of mediation requests. However, now teams have more capacity we hope this is becoming less of a problem.**
- I have a parent who would like to appeal section I - secondary placement . They do not read or write so I am trying to support them with this. Neither school or parent received a letter? School just received a link to the amended plan. Can't get hold of caseworker. Any advice appreciated.
 - o **Please support the parent to contact iAsk for support.**
- Tribunal dates are given over a year away from the parent decision to appeal, is this going to improve at all?
 - o **The appeal timeline is set by the Tribunal Service and court time is limited, they processed over 14,000 appeals in 2023 so it is unlikely that timescales will be reduced.**



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- Where do we stand as SENDCO's if we don't agree with the LA's decision i.e. we agree with parents appeal?
 - **All requests for statutory assessment are considered by an expert panel who follow the advice given by a barrister in interpreting the law, the decision and reasons are put in writing and shared with the parent. Where a request is not agreed schools should review the information submitted to support the parent and seek further guidance before making a new application. We advise that the evidence includes a detailed and costed provision map, attendance data, advice from STLS, High Needs Funding information, academic assessments and evidence of current progress.**

- Is it still 6 months after a decision to not proceed that we can apply again with additional evidence etc?
 - **If it is a refusal to issue we advise six months to allow a full period of plan do review, for refusal to assess we advise gathering further evidence and then reapply when there is sufficient new evidence to support the referral.**

- Are QTVIs separate to this due to their mandatory role?
 - **Any specialist teacher is part of the LA service to schools and families, they can be asked to provide information for a tribunal in their professional capacity.**

- Tribunal dates are given over a year away from the parent decision to appeal, is this going to improve at all?
 - **Tribunal dates are set by the courts, they managed 14 thousand appeals last year across England so there is a lot of pressure.**

- Is it still 6 months after a decision to not proceed that we can apply again with additional evidence etc?
 - **If it is a refusal to issue we advise six months to allow a full period of plan do review, for refusal to assess we advise gathering further evidence and then reapply.**

- I have a parent that has already started the appeal process around Section I. The child is being placed in a Secondary with an SRP but the parents would like a specialist school placement. The parent has said that she will not be sending her to the school with an SRP. What happens now?
 - **Work with the SRP to support transition and support mum to visit the SRP and be part of the planning. Parent needs to be aware that with the very limited number of special school places she must prepare for the possibility she will not get a special school and accept the SRP.**



- If a parent is appealing the named school can they change their parental preference or do they have to 'stick with' the school they initially said they wanted during the appeal?
 - o **The parent can change their preference and often do so during the course of an appeal.**

- I have had a parent ask me to change my appendix 2 because they are appealing. What is the guidance around this?
 - o **I would advise that the original App 2 is not changed and will already be in the system but you can do another App 2 noting what is new information.**

- Who can support parents with the appeal process? Are iAsk the right people? Anyone else?
 - o **Yes, iAsk are best to support parents with independent advice and this is a free service**

Parental Requests for an EHCNA and Feedback from the Draft Appendix 2 Template Consultation - Next Steps (Samantha Avison-Williams, KCC)

- Why can't we say "pls refer to Personalised Plan" where there is one?
 - o ***Thank you for your suggestion, work on the template in ongoing to ensure that, where possible, duplication is avoided.***

- Rather than people who have clear PLP, could it not be that these are submitted and then if these are not good enough, these applications are asked to complete the detail in section 7 so those who do have clear PLP do not have to do extra work due to those who do not have clear PLP?
 - o **Thank you for your suggestion, work on the template is ongoing to ensure that, where possible, duplication is avoided.**

- It is a huge duplication of work for us and when we get a new child with an EHCP we then also have to create the personalised plans, would/could these not form the appendix to the EHCP?
 - o **If Personalised Plans have been submitted by a prior setting as part of the assessment process, these should be found in the appendices that accompany the EHCP. If you have not received a copy of the appendices for a plan, please liaise with the parent/carer or the case officer.**



Localities Update (Siobhan Price- Education Officer, Mainstream Inclusion, KCC)

- Why do parents of EHCP children only get one school 'choice'?
 - o **That is the legislation. This is one example of an unintended consequence of an EHCP being a barrier for the child in the future.**
- Early intervention is more cost effective surely to reduce the need for specialist places at Secondary level?
 - o **Correct. But there is a drop in population coming so the priority for SRPs in primary is re designation rather than expansion.**
- What is the KCC view on Satellites? Do you need more?
 - o **At the moment there is not a plan to expand satellite provision.**
- If a child's plan says special but there is not a place and they are in mainstream, they have exceptional needs. We are also expected to be taking more and more complex children into mainstream - they are exceptional.
 - o **There are also children in special whose needs may not be exceptional and therefore should be in mainstream. This is why a threshold is important.**
- Is the evidence regarding EHCPs being a barrier from Kent data or national? Please can you point us to it when you share responses to the questions - really interested to learn more about this.
 - o **I will be sure to point to evidence when making future comments.**
- I have found that giving EHCP parents only one choice at secondary is pushing them towards only choosing special schools. They are so worried about secondary transition and support. If you gave them the same number of choices surely that is firstly equality and secondly if they didn't get their first choice of special but did get their second choice of mainstream then, from my experience, they'll be more likely to accept this rather than appeal.
 - o **This is an example of an EHCP potentially being a barrier. Once a child has an EHCP they are in a 'system' and therefore subject to the legal framework. One aspect of that legal framework is that the child only has one choice of secondary school, other children have five.**
- When will the dates for these consultations be available?
 - o **These will be made available as soon as possible.**



The Balanced System- Successes and Planned Rollout Across Kent (Hester McKay and Elizabeth Pole)

- When will this be rolled out to the rest of the county?
 - The KCHFT speech and language therapy service which cover Canterbury and Coastal, Thanet, Maidstone, Tonbridge and Malling, Tunbridge Wells, Sevenoaks, Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley will be offering a link therapist model of delivery from September 2023. Therapists will work collaboratively with schools, supporting the development of provision to meet Balanced System® outcomes across the 5 strands (Family Support; Enabling Environments; Workforce development; Identification; Intervention) and 3 levels (Universal, targeted and specialist).
 - If your school is in one of these areas we encourage you to attend a drop-in session for a demo of the Balanced System® tools which can be used to evaluate your current provision and identify areas for development:
 - Tues 7th May 2.00 – 3.00 pm [Click here to join the meeting](#)
 - Weds 22nd May 1.00 – 2.00pm [Click here to join the meeting](#)
 - Weds 5th June 9.30 – 10.30am [Click here to join the meeting](#)
- We have looked at the stars, moons and butts and completed the baseline evaluation but found some of the questions were not appropriate or difficult to give an answer to.
 - There is now a '?' symbol on the question about funding and resource allocation on the Baseline Evaluation which we hope makes this clearer (If you click on the '?', an explanation appears).
 - You are also welcome to attend a demo session (listed above) so that we can help with any queries. These are tools to support understanding of your schools SLCN provision at a strategic level (Baseline Evaluation) and operational level (Detailed Evaluation) which will lead you to prioritise areas to develop, so the outcome of using them is ultimately what matters.