

SEN, Disabled Children and Young People newsletter



Inside this newsletter

SEN Update

An insight into the SEND Tribunal Service new

CYPE data quality policy

SEND Strategy Consultation

Raising awareness of young people with Down's

Syndrome in employment

Complaints data for the last 6 months

Positive feedback

Issue:
December 2020

SEN update

The SEN Assessment and Placement Team are continuing to work extremely hard in often challenging circumstances; the requests for EHC needs assessments has increased significantly over the last three months (we received 407 in November alone!)

We usually agree to assess approximately 75% of all requests, so it's clear how busy the teams are currently. Communication with the team by phone and email has also increased, which is adding more demand.

The resilience and determination of the team is impressive; alongside managing the increased workload, the team are ensuring that we issue all EHC plans where we have received the information and advice we need within statutory timescales.

I hope that the team will find it reassuring to know that we are actively recruiting a team of at least 12 experienced interim SEN Officers to be spread across the areas and managed by the Area Managers. In addition we will be 'outsourcing' up to 150 EHC plans from our backlog; this will mean that the backlog should be cleared by the end of March 2021.



The increase in the capacity of the teams, combined with the increase in numbers within the EP Service (and therefore an increase in the number of reports we receive from the EP Service in time for us to meet our Statutory timescale) and the removal of the backlog will put us in a much stronger and more comfortable position by Spring next year. We are predicting that by May we will be issuing 60% of EHC plans with 20 weeks of the request for assessment. At that point the only way is up!

The SEND Provision Evaluation Officer (PEO) team has grown considerably over the last 12 months; we now have 18 PEOs for mainstream schools across the county (plus one PEO for Independent Special Schools and one for FE). The PEO team are also experiencing increased challenge; they have reported an increase in work relating to CYP's return to school since September, along with their 'usual' work load.

Louise Hickman Interim Head of SEND

Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal SENDT

Along with everyone else, the processes for our team have had to change with the advent of COVID-19. We are all now working from home and we miss the camaraderie and day to day life of being in the office.

SENDT made huge changes very quickly and from 23rd March we moved to full digital working.

All hearings moved to paper, telephone or video, initially for a three-week period (little did they know!).

The KCC SEND Tribunal team adapted quickly and we were able to take part in the video hearings via our laptops from our own homes, similarly KCC witnesses were still required to take part in the hearings and were able to participate remotely. All they needed was a stable telephone or internet connection.

We had a few teething troubles, sometimes we could only join the video hearing by telephone and for a while we were unable to activate our cameras, which meant that no one else in the hearing could see our representatives or some of our witnesses. Sometimes our laptops crashed (the dreaded blue screen) and when we re-joined the hearing the Judge would have to catch us up on evidence that we had missed.

The timetable for appeals did not change, so our team had to continue with our case preparation, and we continued to contact schools and other professionals for evidence and discussions about individual cases. Where possible, we continued with pre-hearing meetings but instead of undertaking these at the child's school, they were by telephone.

SENDT produced detailed guidance which meant that we were able to contact professionals on live cases with advice on the new arrangements, including joining instructions for the hearings. Attending a Tribunal hearing can feel stressful in normal circumstances and this change at such short notice added pressures for all involved. But that was then.....

Fast forward six months and we are now able to join video hearings fully and our cameras now activate on our laptops. Judges do allow for short adjournments during the hearing because participants may have small children or other caring responsibilities that interrupt the hearing.

The feedback about video hearing from parents has been positive. Presumably it is less daunting to attend a hearing from your own living room, rather than journey to London to The Royal Courts of Justice, and easier to deal with caring responsibilities for the hearing.

Since March the team has received 235 appeals and our first video hearing was held on 24th March.

The tribunal continues to hear appeals in the National Trial against social care and health issues as well as education and we appreciate the support we have had from health and social care colleagues with this. Julie Care and Rosemary Henn-Macrae continue as members of the DFE steering group for the Trial and would welcome any feedback for this group.

"We are pleased that the tribunal team is now fully staffed and benefits from experienced tribunal officers either 'home grown' or from other Local Authorities".

The SEND Tribunal Team

New CYPE data quality policy

Our new [CYPE Data Quality Policy](#) explains the importance of good data quality, what quality data looks like, and sets out a series of CYPE data standards that staff working at all levels across the CYPE directorate must adhere to.

Roles and responsibilities by type of job role are explained, to ensure there is consistency and clarity of approach across our services.

Please read the policy, and if you are a manager, ensure that this is launched and discussed with staff in your team meetings, as well as ensuring you have the appropriate processes in place in your service to deliver high quality data.

It is vital that we have high quality information in order to inform, evidence and support our work with children and families, to ensure high-quality decision making, and to drive continuous improvement.

REMEMBER: "If it's not on the system, it didn't happen".



SEND Strategy Consultation

We're keen to hear your views and opinions about our new special educational needs and disabilities strategy for children and young people in Kent.

The strategy sets out our ambitions to make sure that all children in Kent have equal access to support and education that meets their unique needs and that they and their families are supported to live their best life.

It also explains how we will shape our services for children and their families in a way that improves wellbeing, resilience and learning in our communities.

We have developed the strategy jointly with the NHS and in partnership with children and young people, parents and carers, Kent PACT and other key stakeholders.

Tell us what you think

You can tell us what you think about the strategy and share your views about it by [visiting the KCC website](#). The consultation is open from Wednesday 2nd December and will remain open until midnight, Thursday 4th February.

The strategy is an important part of the improvement work we are doing with the NHS, [following an inspection of services carried out by OFSTED and CQC](#) in 2019 which found that too many children and young people with SEND do not get the support they need in Kent.

If you need any further information, please contact sendstrategy@kent.gov.uk



Raising awareness of people with Down's Syndrome in employment: a case study

Case CH

C is a White British female aged 24 years. C has Down's Syndrome. C is hearing and visually impaired. C attended The Orpheus College and left in July 2018. C applied for a job there as a catering assistant and now works there 3 x days per week.

C studies PM Diploma RCSSD (Royal Central School of Speech & Drama in London) on Tuesdays 5pm-8pm and Fridays 10am-1pm. This course is run in partnership with learning disabled theatre company, Access All Areas.

C was involved in the below which was run by her sister, AC and this is her first film - [a documentary about people with Down's Syndrome in employment](#)

Watch the "[possABILITY documentary](#)":

C was also involved in a research course at St George's University in London last summer. The information gathered was written up and sent off to be published in the British Journal of Learning Disability. The usual process of peer review for academic articles was followed.

So now C is a published co-author.

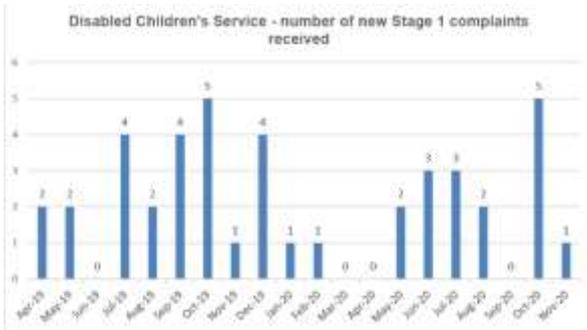


Focus on complaints

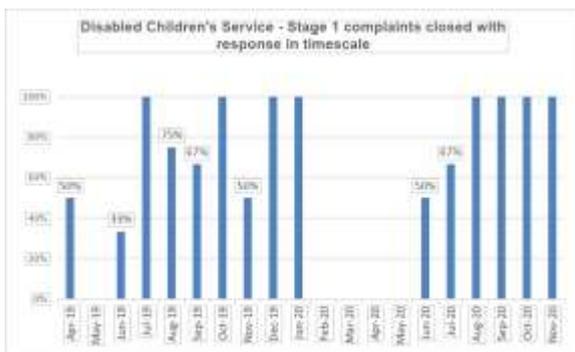
SEND complaints data - April 2019 - November 2020

Disabled Children's Service - countywide

Stage 1 complaints received



Stage 1 response performance



Complaints Outcomes Stage 1 – closed



Focus on complaints

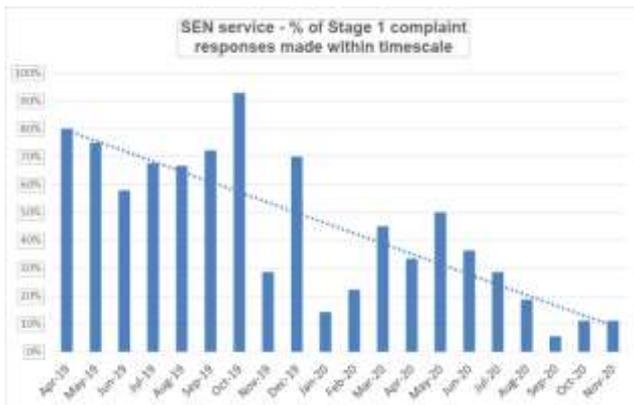
SEND Complaints data - April 2019 - November 2020

SEN Service - Countywide

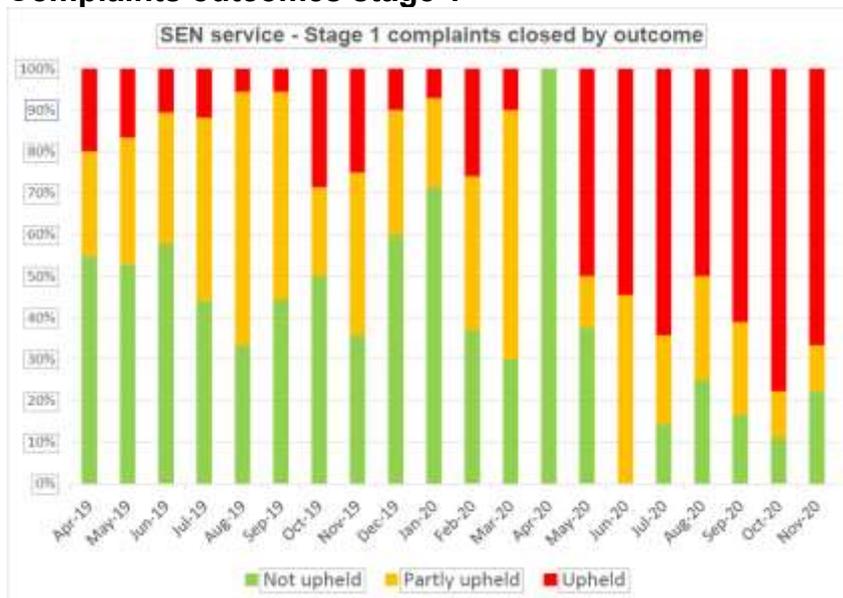
Stage 1 complaints received



Stage 1 response performance



Complaints outcomes stage 1





FEEDBACK FROM PARENTS

"I just wanted to take a moment to thank you all for listening to me, M's Mum, taking the points I was making on board, finding and implementing a solution. M is just about to complete his 1st term. He wears a full uniform, attends all lessons, completes all homework and even takes part in Rugby lessons!

Since year 1 of his school life, M attended a special school. Making the transition to a mainstream Grammar school was a massive move but one he wanted.. We used lockdown to aid his transition.

Having now sat a number of end of term exams, M is now being moved up to a higher Maths group and I'm sure other subjects will follow. So far we have results of B's and C's at GCSE levels. This all being after only 1 term of teaching!!

Transport has been a bit of an issue but this was resolved promptly, something I am very grateful for. I wanted to take a moment to thank you for listening and giving him this opportunity.

Thank you for all of the time you have spent and the work behind the scenes that has enabled M to get to where he is now."



"Thank you for your email. I have been meaning to send you a picture He had the best time!! I honestly could not believe it.

The girls said he was amazing and loved having the safari ride and a night time walk around the zoo.

Thanks so much for everything. We are so grateful to you for sorting this all out for him."



"Thank you for your tremendous effort to support us. You were always there whenever we need you. Your support means a lot to us.

We appreciate your work. Thank you for giving us all the equipment which we need for H. I cannot express by words how grateful I am.

Thank you very much. Parents."



"A is doing well, he has coped considering all the restrictions over Covid. We are very pleased with the placement.

It's nice to have staff that actually speak to you!

Just to say a big thanks to you all for your help and support in getting a good outcome for A. Parent"

