**Early Years Whole Model Implementation - Frequently Asked Questions**

**Benefits and Funding**

**What benefits have been identified for children, as a result of the changes that are being proposed?**

The proposed changes have been identified through a comprehensive and evidence based Early Years Review. This highlighted a number of existing barriers to children and families accessing timely support and in having children’s needs identified earlier. For example, lack of settings able to take children with special educational needs resulting in families travelling out of their home district to access support for their child, waiting times to access support and multiple transitions when accessing certain types of support. A public consultation saw broad overall agreement to the key recommendations from the review and the changes proposed.

Changes in the way certain teams will work mean that there will be a more proactive system with less bureaucracy, focused on earlier identification and provision of support. A more robust universal offer of support for all settings, as well as more support being delivered to children in their mainstream setting will promote increased inclusion of all children and increase the confidence of some early years providers in supporting children with special educational needs. We are currently focusing on establishing robust impact measurements to ensure we can monitor the services and evaluate the outcomes of the changes.

**Do you have an idea of funding that sits alongside your proposed model moving forward, compared with the current model?**

All changes proposed will remain within the current financial envelope. There has been no additional funding allocated to the proposed model. Instead there is a focus on reducing bureaucracy and freeing up capacity within services to be able to support more children.

**If there is no additional funding for the new ways of working, where does funding for additional resource come from?**

There is currently one service (SEN Support and Inclusion Practitioners) that will increase in size. This is because funding has been re-profiled within an existing budget.

Early years providers and childminders will still be able to access Special Educational Needs and Inclusion Funding, albeit through a revised and streamlined process.

DAF & EYPP will continue to be funded directly from the Government and both of these funding streams are increasing.

**Capacity**

**Is there enough capacity in teams to meet the demand for support?**

We recognise that capacity is a common concern and is a challenge within the Early Years landscape more generally. The revised model focuses on reducing or eliminating bureaucratic and time-consuming processes to build capacity within existing resources. This is why services are operating a in different way with no additional funding.

Our goal is to upskill Early Years settings (where necessary) and increase their confidence, enabling them to support more children with additional needs without the need for additional support. This will further build capacity in the system for those children that need more bespoke support and the settings supporting them.

**Case Management and Referrals**

**For children who are on current case lists due to start school next September 2026, will they remain open, or would they close to refer back to the PRG?**

Open cases will be reviewed by the PRG.

**Will Portage be able to make a PRG Referral for children who have tried, but are unable to attend a mainstream setting?**

Portage colleagues will be able to make requests for support to the EY PRG when a child is not yet in a setting.

**Will STLS be able to bring cases to the PRG?**

All new requests for support via the PRG will be submitted by the Early Years Quality Adviser following discussion with the setting. STLS will be able to bring open cases to the PRG for further discussion following a period of intervention, if it is appropriate to seek further support.

**Can early years providers make referrals to Portage directly?**

Portage referrals are generally not accepted if the child was settled in an early years setting and taking up their free entitlement, however consideration can be given to each case individually and determine what other support is available through the PRG.

**What if the Early Years Quality Adviser or Childminding Adviser doesn't agree with the early years provider’s decision that a child needs targeted or specialist support?**

The discussion with the adviser will be focused on the needs of the child and family, what they can do and what they may find challenging, and the impact of any support already in place, rather than a discussion about the level of support needed. The focus will be on identifying what the need is and the support that the setting might require to help meet that need. The conversation will not be specific to a type of service.

**Will referrals to Health services such as community paediatrician referrals or Speech and Language still be done directly?**

Referrals to health services and speech and language will remain unchanged and will not be through the EY PRG, however there will be representation from these services at the EY PRG to inform discussions.

**Changes to Processes and Documents**

**Will there be free training available regarding the changes?**

Yes. Information sharing workshops were held with early years providers in relation to the revised processes and systems on 12th, 25th and 27th March at no cost.

These sessions provided details on:

• The range of services available to offer early years support.

• Changes to paperwork for children requiring additional support.

• How the services can be accessed via the Professional Resource Group.

The sessions were recorded and the recording can be accessed through this [link](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.theeducationpeople.org%2Fproducts%2Fprofessional-development%2Fnew-model-of-support-for-early-years-providers-in-kent%2F&data=05%7C02%7CSuzanne.Tram-Medhat%40kent.gov.uk%7C9c321c8b40cc465bbe5208dd7386a82b%7C3253a20dc7354bfea8b73e6ab37f5f90%7C0%7C0%7C638793744431986900%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=H46TKWfjsCY7ummzC12bUszj4HJfEcS4r2abpTUJAyQ%3D&reserved=0).

There are also further workshops to cover how to complete the new Support Plan, use the new Small Steps of Progress Tracker, and complete the refreshed SENIF request form, which includes improved functionality, and streamlined evidence requirements.

The workshops will have the same content, therefore it is only necessary to attend one:

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| **Date** | **Link** |
| Thursday 24th April - 10am to 11am | [Microsoft Virtual Events Powered by Teams](https://events.teams.microsoft.com/event/fb09adf6-cbb3-4271-b214-69a8ead9c0a2@3253a20d-c735-4bfe-a8b7-3e6ab37f5f90) |
| Thursday 24th April – 2pm to 3pm | [Microsoft Virtual Events Powered by Teams](https://events.teams.microsoft.com/event/df037f7b-8818-4945-ad08-10b50336b4e9@3253a20d-c735-4bfe-a8b7-3e6ab37f5f90) |
| Friday 25th April – 12pm – 1pm | [Microsoft Virtual Events Powered by Teams](https://events.teams.microsoft.com/event/8bfc699a-0ca8-47ee-93c7-852cc211b918@3253a20d-c735-4bfe-a8b7-3e6ab37f5f90) |
| Monday 28th - 7pm – 8pm | [Microsoft Virtual Events Powered by Teams](https://events.teams.microsoft.com/event/e960c4f5-922b-4431-8fbc-93e34b851917@3253a20d-c735-4bfe-a8b7-3e6ab37f5f90) |
| Tuesday 10th June - 7pm – 8pm | [Microsoft Virtual Events Powered by Teams](https://events.teams.microsoft.com/event/ce3fda51-39ba-4d66-a127-19ac85c6a9fe@3253a20d-c735-4bfe-a8b7-3e6ab37f5f90) |
| Wednesday 11th June - 10am to11am | [Microsoft Virtual Events Powered by Teams](https://events.teams.microsoft.com/event/1fab2c1d-08e8-49eb-a97f-e5274909d6a7@3253a20d-c735-4bfe-a8b7-3e6ab37f5f90) |
| Monday 16th June - 3pm to 4pm | [Microsoft Virtual Events Powered by Teams](https://events.teams.microsoft.com/event/af69482d-4f3a-4e71-a439-f9b3e0bc4525@3253a20d-c735-4bfe-a8b7-3e6ab37f5f90) |
| Tuesday 17th June 1pm to 2pm | [Microsoft Virtual Events Powered by Teams](https://events.teams.microsoft.com/event/a03c9a2c-ae74-4be5-9e23-7b3225d0c9b6@3253a20d-c735-4bfe-a8b7-3e6ab37f5f90) |
|  |  |

**When will the new support plan forms be implemented instead of targeted plans and personalised plans?**

New support plans for new children will be implemented from Term 5 (April 2025).

**What if we have an existing child on a personalised plan and targeted plan?**

There is no requirement to move children onto the new Support Plan if they already have an existing plan in place. If providers choose to do so, then this is at their discretion.

**Will there be a cost for the small steps progress tracker?**

No, this will be available to all early years providers with no additional cost.

**Where can we access the small steps tracker?**

This will be shared at the workshops and accessible from Kelsi online from Term 5.

**Will the new tracker be electronic or paper based?**

The new tracker will be electronic based.

**Are all children to be tracked on the small steps of progress tracker or only children with additional needs?**

The tracker can be used to provide evidence and content for the Support Plan. Providers should begin to use the support plan and progress tracker at the point where they identify that a child may need additional support.

**Who will initiate EHCPs?**

This process will remain as it is currently, a parent or early years provider can initiate a statutory education and health care needs assessment.

**Will EHCP applications recognise the changes, especially regarding personalised plans and LIFT referrals?**

The current process for statutory assessments will remain the same, and the provision of evidence in relation to need will also remain. Colleagues within the relevant teams are aware of the changes being implemented and how these will be reflected in the evidence provided to them.

**Will the SENCo training reflect these changes?**

We will review the current content of the training to ensure that the content reflects the new processes.

**Can early years providers still choose whether or not they would like an Annual Conversation?**

Annual Conversations are no longer continuing. Early Years Quality Advisers and Childminding Advisers will offer a professional conversation and discuss the level of support the setting needs moving forward.

**Would early years providers need to get parental consent before seeking external support?**

We are currently exploring options on how parental consent is obtained and there will be further discussion on this at the upcoming workshops.

**Is the Ordinarily Available Provision replacing the Best Practice Guidance?** Yes, the Ordinarily Available Provision is replacing the Best Practice Guidance (BPG), but will build on that strong foundation. We recognise that the BPG is a well valued tool, however it was also due for a review and update, so the Ordinarily Available Provision has incorporated aspects of the BPG.

**Early Years Professional Resource Group (PRG)**

**Is the EY PRG replacing LIFT or is this different?**

EY LIFT will cease at the end of Term 5. The EY PRG is a multi-agency approach to deciding which service is best placed to support a child with additional needs at that time. Early Years Quality Advisers and Childminding Advisers will make a referral on the behalf of early years providers if there is a child who has been identified with needing additional support. Advisers will attend the meetings on the behalf of early years providers and update them on the outcome.

**Do Early Years providers attend the PRG?**

No. The Early Years Quality Adviser and Childminding Adviser will take the case for discussion at the PRG on the providers behalf. This approach is being implemented based on feedback provided through the review and consultation about challenges with attending LIFT to present cases for discussion.

**How many PRGs will there be?**

There will be 12 Early Years Professional Resource Groups, one per district.

**How often will the PRG meet?**

The PRG will meet termly (i.e. six times per year). However, there will be a process in place to access support between meetings if there are extenuating circumstances. Requests for support will still be through the Early Years Quality Adviser or Childminding Adviser

**Why are the meetings virtual?**

Whilst we recognise that some in-person meetings are extremely valuable and preferred by some people, we want to ensure consistent sign up and commitment to the meetings, and virtual allows for more flexibility.

**Will there also be a process in place if we have a case which has a sense of urgency that arises during this period of transition?**

Yes, there will be a process in place to address any cases which have a sense of urgency, or deemed high risk.

**Will PRGs be linked to Communities of Schools?**

Yes, there will be a strong link between the two groups. The Community of Schools relates to mainstream schools rather than Early Years settings. This is a new way of working to support inclusion in mainstream schools. Early years settings will not be part of the Communities of Schools although we will continue to explore how Early Years settings can engage with the Communities of Schools to support transition.

**LIFT and SENCO forums**

**Would there be plans for another forum available to settings when LIFT ends?**

From Term 5, each setting will have an allocated Early Years Quality Adviser or Childminding Adviser to contact for advice and guidance. Countywide SENCO Forums will also continue as will The Education People’s Briefing and Networking Sessions.

**As there will be no LIFT in term 5 and the PRG is not yet up and running, where do settings go to for support and guidance in term 5?**

Early Years Quality Advisers and Childminding Advisers will commence contact in term 5, so all early years providers will know who their allocated adviser is and how to contact them.

**Will there still be district SENCO forums?**

For school age SENCO forums, there has been a shift away from district based to countywide forums and there is an expectation that a similar shift will happen for Early Years. This shift allows the local authority to take a consistent approach in how communications is carried out to colleagues in relation to any changes and strategic issues.

**SEN Inclusion Funding (SENIF)**

**Will SENIF continue to be agreed on an individual basis, or will there be opportunities for SENIF to be agreed based on the whole setting, for those who have a high level of SEND?**

There will be the opportunity to request SENIF for a cohort of children, but not the whole setting.

**When can applications for SENIF be made?**

SENIF applications continue as they currently do. More information about this will be provided at the workshops.

**Who applies for SENIF?**

Early years providers continue to apply for SENIF, however the process should be less bureaucratic and time consuming.

**Specific Roles and Responsibilities**

**Is the Early Years Quality Adviser only for Private, Voluntary and Independent Settings?**

No, this universal support is available to all mainstream early years settings including maintained nurseries and nurseries co-located with mainstream schools. Childminders will continue to have the support of a Childminding Adviser.

**How often will Early Years Quality Advisers and Childminding Advisers visit early years providers?**

The frequency of contact will be determined by the discussion during the initial professional conversation..

**If early years providers had concerns about a child’s development, do they have to wait for the Early Years Quality Advisers or Childminding Advisers to make contact?**

No, early years providers can contact their allocated adviser directly for support.

**Will there be an increase in the number of SEN support and Inclusion Practitioners supporting settings?**

Yes. We have been able to build capacity within this team and recruit additional staff within the current financial envelope.

**Can the allocated Early Years Quality Adviser, Childminding Adviser or SEN support and Inclusion Practitioner be changed if the early years provider feel that they do not fit into their ethos?**

Any concerns about the support provided to settings should be escalated to the appropriate manager within that service.

**Specialist Teaching and Learning Service**

**Will there be a charge for Early Years settings to access STLS?**

No. STLS will continue to be free for settings to access where the Professional Resource Group determine that this is the most appropriate service to support settings in meeting the needs of the child. STLS will be funded by KCC through the Early Years grant we received from the Department for Education.

**Specialist Nursery Intervention**

**For those children who have a high level of need, are not accessing an early years setting and do not meet the current pathway 1 criteria will they be able to access SNI?**

Several services represented at the EY PRG will be able to support the child and family in securing an early years setting. Once referred any decision on the most appropriate support for the child will be decided by the EY PRG.

**Once children finish their intervention, would they be transferred to the STLS case load, as seen in current practice?**

No. There will not be any automatic transfer from one team or service to another. If the support for a child is coming to an end with one service, there will be a review of what progress the child has made with the support provided and the degree to which the setting feel confident in meeting that child’s needs. If the need for further support is identified, then the case will be taken back to the EY PRG for a decision on the next appropriate form of support.