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With Christmas just around the corner, it feels like the perfect time to share some uplifting news from across Kent's SEND community.

This edition is full of stories that show the difference we're making together – from a mum describing a new specialist facility as a “*dream come true*” for her daughter, to schools raising awareness for Developmental Language Disorder Day.

You can read the latest news about our investment in extra specialist school places, such as the £20 million expansion of specialist provisions in mainstream schools, and 244 new special school places. They will help create much-needed opportunities for children to thrive.

Plus, you'll meet Christiana, Kent PACT's new manager, who will help strengthen parent partnerships.

Wishing you and your family a joyful Christmas and a happy New Year.

Beverley Fordham

KCC Cabinet Member for Education and Skills



"Dream come true" as new learning facility opens at The Oaks Specialist College



A mum has described the opening of a new specialist learning facility that has already made a huge difference to her daughter's life as "a dream come true".

Named [The Point](#), the new building at The Oaks Specialist College serves learners aged 19 to 25 and includes four adaptable working spaces equipped with specialist features such as a riser kitchen, track and hoist, and accessible self-care facilities.

For Louise Channing, it means her 19 year old daughter Lilly now has a post-16 placement which can cater for her needs closer to home giving her more time to spend with family,

Louise said: "Before it would take Lilly two hours to travel to school, and two hours coming home. It was quite stressful so now for her to have a place five minutes down the road is a dream.

"There needs to be more colleges and more opportunities for these young people because the second chapter isn't as bleak as what I thought it would be."

[Visit our website to learn more about The Point](#)

Kent schools raise awareness for Developmental Language Disorder



Kent schools have pulled out all the stops to raise awareness of a hidden, but common condition affecting one in 14 children.

Developmental Language Disorder – known as DLD – often presents in childhood and means children have difficulty with language such as understanding instructions and putting words in the right order.

Schools across Kent celebrated DLD Awareness Day in October with the hope of teaching more people about the condition.

Hythe Bay Primary School celebrated with a range of activities such as arts and crafts, signed stories, a signing choir and fancy dress.

[Read more about how schools celebrated DLD Awareness Day](#)

Major step forward for new special schools in Kent



We have welcomed the Department for Education's (DfE) long-awaited announcement of funding which could be used to create two new special schools in Whitstable and Swanley, and an alternative provision school in Northfleet.

The announcement follows a direct letter sent by Beverley Fordham to the Education Secretary in September requesting 'urgent confirmation' of these projects.

News of the funding comes with a choice for us - either the DfE delivers all three schools as planned, or we take a cash alternative to invest in other solutions, such as expanding existing special schools. A decision will be made in the new year.

[Read more about this announcement](#)

School expansions planned to create 244 new SEND places in Kent



Plans to create an extra 244 special school places across two schools in Kent have been backed by our Children, Young People and Education (CYPE) Cabinet Committee.

The proposals would see new classrooms built at Parkwood Hall Co-operative Academy in Swanley, and at Broomhill Bank School - which has sites in Tunbridge Wells and Hextable - so both can permanently cater for more pupils with SEND.

The expansions are part of our commitment to improve SEND provision across Kent and will help to address the growing demand for specialist places in the North Kent area.

[Read more about our plans to expand special schools](#)

Getting children with SEND to school: The scale, the challenge, and the changes we're making



Every school day, thousands of children and young people with SEND across Kent rely on us for safe, reliable transport to and from school. It's an essential service – and one of the most complex and costly we deliver.

We arrange transport for 7,912 pupils, with around 6,500 using hired vehicles like taxis and minibuses. At Snowfields Special School in Cranbrook alone, 133 pupils rely on this service, many travelling from the Isle of Sheppey, which can mean journeys of over an hour.

Behind the scenes, there are three teams working hard to make these journeys work smoothly.

[Find out more about home-to-school transport and how it works](#)



£20 million investment to expand specialist resource provisions



A huge investment of £20 million is being spent on expanding specialist resource provisions (SRPs) in schools across Kent.

SRPs are dedicated spaces within mainstream schools for pupils with specific types of SEND. These pupils have Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and spend time in mainstream classes but require specialist support in these dedicated settings.

Under the plans, a total of 889 new SRP places will be created between 2026 to 2030. This will be done by upgrading existing facilities as well as creating new ones. Four new builds - mainly in secondary schools - are planned, alongside repurposing buildings in existing schools.

[Learn more about the how we are expanding SRPs](#)



Primary school application deadline

The deadline for primary school applications is Thursday 15 January 2026.

You can apply online via our website. Make sure to list up to three preferred schools to improve your chances of getting a place at a desired school.

If your child has SEND, you might find it helpful to ask potential schools some additional questions to understand how they deliver good, inclusive practice such as:



- What specialist support is available?
- Do they have experience of supporting other children with similar needs?
- Can you talk to a teacher or the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) about any questions you have?

[Visit our website to find potential questions to ask schools](#)



Phase transfer: What happens after you share your school preferences?



After you've told us your preferred school for your child's next stage of education, the process continues behind the scenes.

For thousands of young people across Kent, this involves detailed discussions between KCC SEND officers and schools to make sure every child's needs can be met.

These conversations cover specialist support, resources and transition arrangements, and often require consulting multiple settings.

This takes time, but it's essential to get the right provision in place.

By **15 February** (Phase Transfer National Offer Day), you'll receive a final EHCP naming the school or setting, giving families plenty of time to plan for September. Our aim is always to name a specific school in the final EHCP, but in a small number of cases we may need to name a setting type while further consultations continue. If this happens, we'll keep you updated throughout.

[Find out more about the next stages of phase transfer](#)

More SEND Roadshows planned for 2026

Over the past two years, our SEND Roadshows have brought direct support to families throughout the county.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank everybody who came along.

A lot of families did not know what to expect but the feedback received tells us that our roadshows are a place where they felt "welcomed, supported and heard".



We plan on making next year's roadshows our biggest yet, by ensuring the buildings we use are accessible, there is a space for little ones to play, and staff on hand to support.

We are already starting to plan next years dates, so please keep an eye out in the next newsletter for our roadshows in 2026. No matter where you are on your SEND journey, you can find the vital support you need.

[Find out more about our SEND Roadshows](#)

Introducing Christiana, Kent PACT's new manager



A new manager who hopes to be a voice for families has joined Kent PACT, a forum for parents and carers of children with SEND.

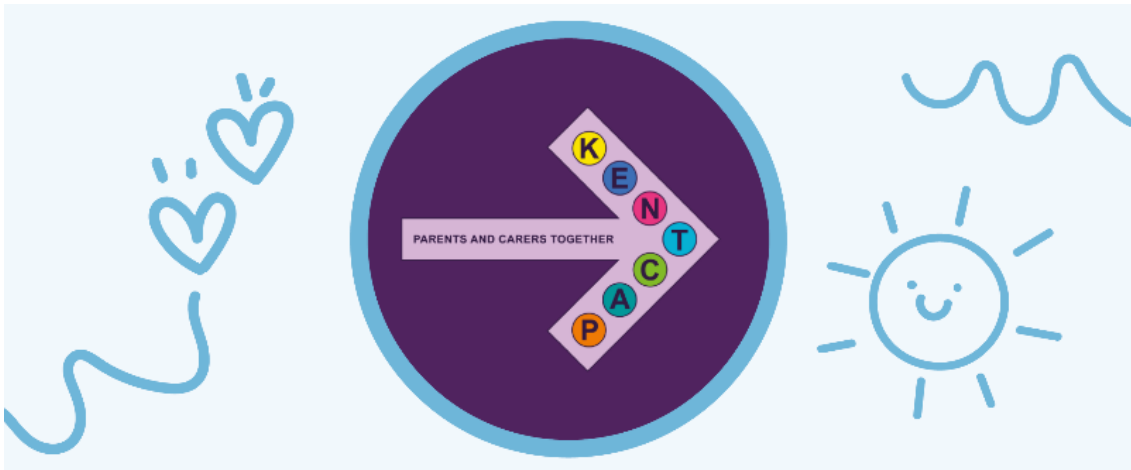
Christiana Parsons, a mum of two, has a background in teaching and has also had to navigate the world of SEND as a parent after her daughter was born with a rare condition.

She hopes to use her background and lived experience to signpost families to the right support to meet their needs.

[Find out more about Christiana and her role at Kent PACT](#)



A message from Kent PACT



As we head into the Christmas holidays, we want to thank everyone who has supported Kent PACT in our mission to improve SEND services across Kent this year.

PINS Project

Kent PACT is once again playing an active role in the national PINS project, aimed at improving support for children with SEND in mainstream schools.

This year, we're working with 18 primary schools across Sheppey and Sittingbourne to help set up Parent Carer Forums - safe spaces led by parents to encourage open conversations, share experiences, and strengthen relationships between families and schools. We have had such positive feedback already from parents sharing how the session made them feel, with comments like "understood" and being "able to share concerns with others and feel supported."

Parents were very open about their experiences, describing the sessions as "helpful, friendly, enjoyable and informative", with several saying it brought them a sense of "relief".

We're excited to work with these school communities and look forward to launching the forums soon.

We Need YOU!

Keep an eye out for our **upcoming SEND Survey** - it only takes a few minutes, and you'll be entered into a free gift card draw as a thank you!

Webinars

A massive thank you to everyone who attended our most recent webinar with 'Includes Us Too' local charity. It was so informative and helpful to many families, and we look forward to all the webinars to follow in the new year – which are great opportunities to learn more about available support for you and your family.

For more info, email: info@kentpact.org.uk

Healthy Parent Course

Our **Healthy Parent Course** is nearly finished and the feedback we have received so far has been fantastic! One parent even asked if we'd be running a second course because they've "really enjoyed it 😊 Inspired by Dr. Phil Hammond's *Staying Alive*, the course is based on the 'Five Ways to Wellbeing' and offers practical tools to support mental health, wellbeing, and connection with others.

Want early access to future courses? [Join Kent PACT for free](#)

Your voice and experience as parents and carers are essential in shaping the services our children and families depend on. Whether you've taken part in a focus group, shared a post, or joined a project - thank you for being part of the change.

If you're not a member yet, now is a great time to join. Members get **first access to courses, webinars, training, events**, and mostly it helps to amplify parent carer voices across Kent.

Wishing you a restful half term, and lots of quality family time this magical Christmas!

Facebook

[Join our main Facebook page](#). Once you become a member you will have access to our wide range of SEND specific closed Facebook groups. These groups offer a safe space for you to talk to other parents and carers who may be in a similar situation to your family.



Our staff are also on hand to offer support and advice tailored to your local area. These groups are friendly and welcoming and provide up-to-date information which you may find useful wherever you are on your journey.

Email

If you have anything that you would like to ask us, please email us and we will try our best to help.

Our email is info@kentpact.org.uk.



Consultations and surveys

Your views really do count so please take part in the following consultations and surveys we're currently running.

Tell us what you think about the SEND Newsletter!

We want to make sure this newsletter is a useful and informative resource for you. Is the information relevant to you? Is it easy to understand?

Please take a few minutes to fill out the SEND Newsletter survey and help us to keep improving.



[Take part in our SEND newsletter feedback survey](#)

Speech and language support for children not attending school

As part of Kent's [Balanced System](#)[®] transformation, we're improving access to speech, language and communication support for children and young people.

Families with young children can attend Talking Walk-ins at Family Hubs, and schools now have a link speech and language therapist for advice and support (Please note, we are still working to extend this offer within Swale).



We want to make sure families whose children **are not in school** can also easily access support, so we need to hear from parents, carers and young people.

You can

- [Share an idea on Let's Talk Kent](#) about what support would be helpful (or 'like' an idea already listed) until 22 December.

- Attend our online engagement session on Wednesday 21 January 2026, 12:30pm to 1:30pm to share your views. [Sign up to attend an online engagement session](#).

Please contact slcn@kent.gov.uk for any queries.



Swap, save and stay warm – free winter coat and Christmas jumper swaps at Kent Libraries

Help your community stay warm this winter, declutter and go green!

Selected Kent libraries are hosting winter clothing swaps so you can find something pre-loved to re-love this season.



How it works:

- Donate: Drop off clean, gently used coats, Christmas jumpers and winter accessories during library hours
- Collect: Just pop along, have a look and pick out warm, pre-loved items.

You do not need to donate an item to pick up an item from the swap. This event is free and open to all. Everyone welcome, no booking required.

[Browse our list of current swaps and freecycle events](#)

Enjoy Christmas as a family with these holiday tips

Christmas is a magical time, but it comes with lots of new sights, smells and sounds that some children might find overwhelming.

You might be wondering how best to handle the changes and challenges to make this festive period enjoyable for your children.



So we've pulled together advice from parents and charities to help you prepare for the holidays, navigate any challenges, and create a smooth transition back to school in the New Year.

Help is also available through the NHS Kent and Medway's neurodiversity support web pages. Accessible 24 hours a day, [the online hub provides information and links to local and national support services.](#)

The pages focus on learning disability, autism and ADHD and include information on new projects that are being trialled to offer support to neurodivergent children.

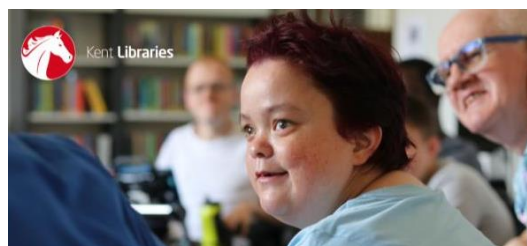
The aim is to help those with or without a diagnosis, making sure everyone can access appropriate support at the right time. Adults who are feeling overwhelmed by the school holidays or endless Christmas 'to do' lists can also find support [here](#).

[Read more of our Christmas tips here](#)

Local to Dartford? Join us at Disability Talk Time

Looking for a friendly, supportive space to connect with your local disability and SEND community?

Disability Talk Time is a free monthly meetup for people to come together to make new friends and connect with others in the Dartford area.



**Disability
Talk Time**

 **Dartford Library**
 Last Tuesday of
every month, 1 to 2pm

They take place on the last Tuesday of every month, from 1pm to 2pm at [Dartford Library](#)

Why come along?

- Safe and welcoming space
- Accessible venue
- Great opportunity to socialise and build community
- Free to attend, no booking required.

Who can come?

Everyone is welcome to come along - adults with disabilities, chronic health conditions, carers, parents, friends, and allies. Stay connected with your local community. Come along, have a chat, and be part of something meaningful.

[Find more information about Disability Talk Time](#)



SEND short breaks, holiday clubs, and activities

Connect!

For neurodivergent children and young people aged 9 to 18 years old.

Connect! offers fun, autism-friendly activities for children and young people who struggle to access groups without support. Led by their friendly Youth Programme Coordinators, Connect! enables those who attend to try new things and make new friends in a safe, comfortable environment.

Professionals or parents/carers can make a referral through the [online referral form](#).



Imago

Imago are running a number of Short Breaks Family Days in Ashford, Canterbury, Dover, Maidstone, Swale and Thanet.

They also provide holiday activities and weekend groups for young people aged 8 to 19 years old in Ashford district. If you're interested please refer your child through the [short breaks service](#).



SNAAP

If you have a child with SEND aged 0 to 25 years old and you live in the Canterbury district then SNAAP can provide information and support to you and your family. During school holidays they offer a range of activities which you can book.

Visit the website to find out more about [SNAAP's school holiday activities](#). Be aware that spaces are limited.



We are Beams

We Are Beams offer a range of support services to children with SEND and their families living in Dartford, Gravesham and Sevenoaks and the surrounding areas. These services include activities such as holiday clubs, play schemes, family fun events, parties, workshops and theatre trips.



Visit [We Are Beams website](#) to see what activities and short breaks are coming up.

Our SEND directory

Our directory is filled with hundreds of support groups, charities and activities for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities all across Kent.

Find your nearest accessible friendly club, sporting activities, events, parent groups and online education support.

[Visit our SEND directory.](#)

Useful websites in Kent

To search for upcoming events visit the following websites:

- [Kent Online](#)
 - [Visit Kent](#)
 - [My Kent Family](#)
 - [Kent Family Hubs](#)
 - [See Kent](#)
 - [Visit South East England](#)
-



Kent Therapeutic Support Service

Salus, offers emotional wellbeing support for children and young people aged four to 19, across Kent.

The service helps those experiencing mild to medium emotional well-being challenges, such as:

- Anxiety, low mood or stress
- Anger or behaviour difficulties
- Friendship or family issues
- School or exam pressures
- Low self-esteem, bullying, or emerging self-harm

Support is brief, flexible and tailored. It is available 1:1 or in groups, face-to-face, online or by phone.

To find out more about the service or to ask for support:

- [visit the Salus website](#)
- call 📞 01303 667 700
- email ✉️ tss@salusgroup.org.uk

The service is one of a range available to support children and young people to improve their emotional well-being and mental health. Information about other services and the support they can offer, can be found below.

- [Kent Resilience Hub website](#)
- [Our mental health support for children and young people page](#)

- [Mental Health and Wellbeing Hub website](#)

The Holiday Activities and Food Programme

The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme in Kent provides healthy food and exciting activities for children and young people during the school holidays.

Families of children aged 4 to 16 years, who are in receipt of benefits related to free school meals, can access FREE opportunities during holidays, including Christmas!



[Find HAF events near you.](#)

Dingleys' Promise Early Years Inclusion Programme

Choosing the right early years and childcare provider is one of the most important decisions you'll make for your child, especially if they have SEND.

Dingley's Promise Early Years Inclusion Programme ensures that early years and childcare providers are equipped to welcome and support every child, regardless of ability.

Here's why it matters for you and your child:

- **Confidence that your child will be included** - Children with SEND thrive in settings where inclusion is not just a policy but a practice. This programme trains staff to create environments where every child feels valued and can participate.
- **Early Support for better outcomes** - Early intervention is key to unlocking potential. Providers trained through this programme can identify needs early and work with families to provide the right support
- **Peace of mind for parents** - Knowing your early years provider understands inclusion gives you reassurance that your child will be safe, supported, and given equal opportunities

- **You can be part of the journey at no cost** - It's not just for providers - parents can also sign up for the Early Years Inclusion Programme training as it is currently fully funded in Kent through Comic Relief
- **Building a better future for all children** - Inclusion benefits everyone. It promotes empathy, understanding, and diversity.

If you're considering an early years and childcare place for your child, especially if they have SEND, ask whether the setting is part of Dingley's Promise Early Years Inclusion Programme.

[Read more about Dingley's Promise](#)



SEND Information Hub

The SEND information hub gives SEND children and young people and their families information about what support services are available in their area. Don't forget to visit our directory too!

If you have any feedback or queries around the SEND Information Hub website (Kent's Local Offer) or the directory, email us yourvoice2@kent.gov.uk.

[Visit the SEND information hub](#)

Mental health resources and support

Having good mental health is important, it impacts the way that we think, feel and act. KCC's website has a range of resources to help support young people to take care of their

mental health and wellbeing, including Young Carers, Young Minds, Kooth, and i-Thrive.

Why not also visit the [Kent Resilience Hub](#) for help supporting young people with the pressures of everyday life.



[Find mental health resources](#)



Kent Family Hub

Get the local support and services you need, with Kent Family Hub.

You might be a parent, carer, child, or young person. With Kent Family Hub, you can find advice, support and services to help throughout your family journey, from newborns to 19-year-olds, or up to 25-year olds with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

[Visit the Kent Family Hub](#)



Family Fund
Helping disabled children

Family Fund - helping disabled children

Family Fund deliver grants for families raising a disabled or seriously ill child or young people on a low income across the UK. To see if your family is eligible for a grant, they will need to assess your income and the impact of disability on your child. Grants are also dependent on available funding.

[Visit Family Fund website](#)



Information Advice and Support Kent (IASK)

The Information, Advice and Support Kent (IASK) service provides free, impartial, and confidential support to children, young people up to age 25, and their parents or carers regarding SEND.

IASK can help if you:

- are unsure about your child's school support
- need help talking to the school or going to meetings
- are looking at college options after age 16
- have an EHC plan and need help with reviews
- want to learn about decision-making after age 16

[Join our free online workshops](#)

 Call: 03000 41 3000 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm)

 Email: iask@kent.gov.uk

 Facebook: [Information, Advice and Support Kent – IASK](#)

[Visit the Information, Advice and Support Kent \(IASK\) website](#)



Kent Residents' Newsletter

Did you know that you can also keep up to date with the latest news happening across Kent County Council by subscribing to our residents' e-newsletter?

You'll receive:

- updates and news
- information and guidance about our activities and services
- advice and suggestions on where to get help and support.

[Subscribe to our Resident Newsletter](#)

Further information

[Read previous editions of the Kent SEND newsletter](#)

Get involved: If you'd like to be involved in the next edition, or have a topic you want us to discuss email yourvoice2@kent.gov.uk.