

Special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) information, advice and support consultation

Introduction

Our vision is for quality, accessible information, advice and support to be available to children and young people aged 0-25 with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and their families. This should be available when they need it so that they can live happy and fulfilling lives. Feedback from the last Ofsted SEND inspection and parents and carers has told us that it can be hard for families to find the information and advice they need.

Families have also told us:

- that they want to be able to help themselves wherever possible. We call this self-help
- that they want the same information and advice whether they find it themselves online or receive it from a professional (from any service). We refer to this as the *one truth*
- that being able to talk confidentially to someone with good SEND knowledge in terms of the law and local SEND policy and procedures, would help them to make sense of the information and advice they may have found themselves.

We are proposing a new and improved way to deliver information, advice and support to help achieve this shared vision. There will be no reduction to the amount of money we spend on providing SEND information and advice services. As the proposals are changes to our SEND Local Offer it is important that we ask for your feedback.

We want to hear your views on how the proposed new way to offer information, advice and support might affect you. We will collate anonymised feedback, and this, along with other evidence, will help inform a final decision on the proposed changes.

What is the SEND Local Offer?

Every Local Authority must have a SEND Local Offer which provides information for children and young people with SEND and their families, in a single place on a website. The Local Offer helps people understand what services and support they can expect

from a range of local providers including their statutory entitlements. [Hertfordshire's SEND Local Offer](#) website has recently been refreshed.

The reasons we are proposing changes are:

- Changes in legislation have impacted on the delivery of SEND information, advice and support:
 - [The Children and Families Act 2014](#) requires all Local Authorities in England to deliver more effective information and advice. There are also an increasing number of children and young people with SEND in Hertfordshire that need to be supported by Hertfordshire's Local Offer
 - The [SEND Code of Practice 0-25 years requires](#) social care, education and health services to work together to invest in impartial and confidential SEND information, advice and support to be delivered by a SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) in each Local Authority, which have to comply with National Minimum Standards
- Changes to Hertfordshire's Local Offer website have been well received by families:
 - parents and carers are now able to apply for the Short Breaks Local Offer online
 - parents and carers have told us that we need to build on these improvements by having a single telephone number and opportunities for face to face support, if their needs cannot be met by the Local Offer webpages alone
- Currently Hertfordshire is working to achieve better outcomes for families, through the Transforming SEND services programme. This includes simplifying families' experiences, making best use of our resources, facilitating self-help and the *one truth* approach.

What is the proposed new way to offer SEND information, advice and support?

KIDS Hubs were commissioned a few years before the widescale SEND reforms in 2014 to provide SEND information-based services. KIDS currently provide additional SEND related services in Hertfordshire that are not commissioned by the County Council, for example a specialist toy and equipment library. The council's contract with KIDS to provide KIDS Hubs, is due to come to an end on 31 October 2020, and cannot be extended any further.

As a result of these reforms in 2014, SENDIASS has broadened its statutory responsibility to encompass the provision of information, advice and support regarding health, social care and education. The new SEND information, advice and support offer, includes a proposal to use this funding from 1 November 2020, to strengthen the SENDIASS offer to deliver more telephone and face to face support across the county.

As well as building on current resources, this proposal aims to simplify how families' access SEND information, advice and support, by promoting one telephone number and one email address alongside the Local Offer website.

The proposal has been discussed and developed involving representatives from Herts Parent Carer Involvement (HPCI), Carers in Herts, and professionals within the County Council. Research into the current service and impact of any changes to this has been completed along with feedback from parents and carers, has been used to help develop this proposal.

Seeing familiar issues and processes through new eyes and producing solutions together with families is key to our ambition. It's been at the heart of our redesigned online Local Offer website focusing on finding digital solutions to life's offline challenges for SEND families. If the proposal is agreed, we want to ensure a strengthened SENDIASS offer, making better use of technology, social media and professional partnerships, to help children and young people aged 0-25 with SEND and their families, find the right information and advice. Opportunities being considered include:

1. a phonenumber open Monday-Friday between 9:30-3:30pm, except on bank holidays
2. bookable sessions to speak with an advisor over the phone or by video call (e.g. WhatsApp or Facetime)
3. workshops you can attend locally or watch online
4. general information, advice and support on social media (Facebook and Twitter)

How would proposed changes affect me, or the person I care for?

There will be no immediate change to services and you can continue to use these as normal during the consultation period. Our contract with KIDS is extended until 31 October 2020 to support a smooth transition for families, employees and professionals who current signpost to this service. Any decision that is made following the consultation will not affect the amount of support that families receive, and we are **not proposing to reduce the funding for SEND information, advice and support services.**

Our view is that these proposals, if implemented, will improve how children and young people with SEND and their families and carers are able to find and receive information, advice and support. Many Hertfordshire families receive information, advice and support from SENDIASS. Most people using the SENDIASS service have told us that they would recommend this service to others.

An Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA) which outlines impacts in more detail can be viewed online at www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/iasconsultation

What are the next steps?

Hertfordshire County Council wants to hear what children and young people with SEND and their families and carers think about the proposals.

The consultation is open from **23 March 2020 until midnight on 14 June 2020**. All feedback and suggestions provided will be considered and recommendations will be put to officers before a final decision is made.

How do I take part in the consultation?

You can complete the consultation questionnaire online:

www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/iasconsultation under the 'Open Consultations' section.

If you need the consultation in a different format (for example an easy read version, braille; printed copy), you can find these online

www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/iasconsultation or request via email csfcommissioning@hertfordshire.gov.uk or calling 01438 843936.

How do I get help responding to the consultation?

If you need help responding to the consultation, please email

csfcommissioning@hertfordshire.gov.uk or call 01438 843936.