

Welcome to your Medway Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) newsletter

This is the first of a regular newsletter providing you with information and news about what's new and being developed in the world of SEND and the Local Offer in Medway. We are keen to ensure that you are kept up to date on events and developments but that you can also have your say on issues of importance.

All the organisations across Medway involved in providing SEND services are committed to working better together to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families. The partner organisations include Medway Council, Medway Clinical Commissioning Group, Medway Parents and Carers Forum, local schools, young people and the Department for Education.

This is just one of a number of initiatives we are working on to keep you involved. We will be improving our Local Offer website and finding out how you'd like to be included in how we can best develop our SEND services across Medway.

Also if you'd like to provide us with news about what you've been doing then please get in touch by emailing sen@medway.gov.uk

Andrew Mackness

Chair Medway SEN Improvement Board.



Possible new school for Medway

Medway Council has submitted a bid to central government to be considered for funding for a new special free school. If successful, the special free school would provide additional places for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Medway Council recently carried out a review of school places available across the five towns up until 2022 to ensure there is sufficient supply of good quality school places across all types of schools – mainstream, resourced provisions and special schools.



Medway Council currently maintains 2,229 Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) - this is a 55 percent increase (778 pupils) since 2014. The council is committed to planning how to

help meet the anticipated demand for school places for children with SEND. A new special free school would help increase provision, as well as reduce the number of children who need to be placed out of area to help meet their educational needs. Medway Council expects to hear if their bid for a new special free school has been approved shortly, so watch this space.

Have your say on the proposed Medway SEND strategy

We will shortly be publishing the proposed strategy for the approach and development of SEND services in Medway. It will set out our jointly proposed priorities and vision for how we will support children with SEND and the facilities being provided across the Medway local area and how we will be working better together to realise that vision in response to the SEN inspection last year. We will let you know when it's published and look forward to hearing your views.

Sensory Services are growing

The Sensory Services at Medway Council is pleased to welcome our two new Advisory Teachers for Visual Impairment. We are now fully staffed with a team of seven who continue to support pupils, parents, families and educational settings in ensuring good communication, development and access to the curriculum for children and young people 0-25 years with permanent visual or hearing impairment.

If you need further information or advice please contact **Jane Elworthy**, Lead Professional for the Sensory Service on jane.elworthy@medway.gov.uk or **01634 334144**.

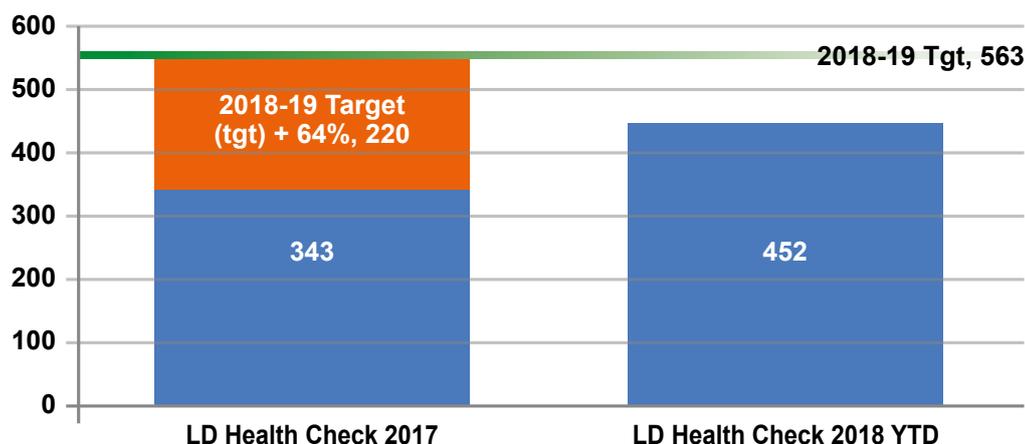
Learning Disability Health Checks

All young people who have a learning disability aged 14+ are entitled to an annual health check completed by their GP.

We have been working to ensure these are happening and have been making some progress.

Between April and December 2018 there were a total of 452 learning disability health checks completed. This was an increase of 109 health checks (30%) compared to the total number of checks completed in 2017-18 (see graph right). Some GP practices have also identified a training needs to enable them to carry out the checks.

Learning Disabilities Health Checks 2018-19 Year to Date (YTD)



Medway Parents and Carers Forum celebrates 10 years!

2019 sees the 10th Anniversary of Medway Parents and Carers Forum and they've come a long way.

In March 2009, a group of professionals and parents got together to discuss setting up an independent, parent-led group of parents and carers of children and young people with all types of disability and additional support needs. Funding was made available from the government at the time to set up and run these forums across the country, including Medway. The idea was that there should be more input from families to help shape services and be part of the commissioning of new ones. Soon the Medway Parents and Carers Forum (MPCF) was born.

At first it was quite challenging as parents and professionals had to get used to a new way of working together and some

meetings proved difficult, but eventually things settled down and a new period of collaboration began.

Ten years later, MPCF continues to grow and work with many groups, working closely with schools, parents and young people, attending various strategic groups and, they even have a seat on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Children and Young People, the first forum in the country to do that. The aim for the future is to co-produce all major policies.

Coffee and chat

Regular coffee mornings have this year been extended to include different days and areas across the four corners of Medway, including Cuxton, Stoke, Gillingham, Strood and Lordwood. There have been presentations on all types of subjects that relate to our families from various organisations including Medway Council, NELFT and MCH. Some upcoming topics include short breaks and young people's mental health.

A newsletter, produced twice a year, is circulated via schools and MPCF attends various community events to talk to parents and carers about the importance of their feedback and participation. They also have a Facebook page and website to ensure that everyone can have a say wherever they live in Medway and whatever their cultural backgrounds.

MPCF continue to challenge professionals on behalf of their members and are always on the lookout for volunteers to help out or attend meetings. They can organise training to develop volunteers skills too. If you are able to offer some help or just want to find out more please contact MPCF via e-mail medwaypcf@googlemail.com, telephone them on **07813 123984** or visit their website medwaypcf.org.uk





Local Offer website needs you

Our Local Offer website is designed to give you all the information you need on SEND services available in Medway. We are in the process of carrying out a full review and we'd like you to help shape the website and tell us what information you'd like to see on it. Please email localoffer@medway.gov.uk and share your views. In the meantime, a lot of helpful information can be found about Medway services [here](#). Once the new and improved site is up and running we will want your opinion - so watch out for details in the next issue of SEND News.

Young Persons Disability Group

Calling all young people aged 13-18 living in Medway who have a special educational need and/or disability!

We are looking for some more young people to attend a dynamic and active Young Persons Disability Group. This group is a great opportunity for young people to meet with staff from Medway Council other agencies such as health

and social care and assist in shaping services for young people across Medway. You can also voice your opinion and make new friends.

The group meets every six weeks at Gun Wharf. If you are interested in joining the group, please contact Emily Wood at researchandinfo@medway.gov.uk

Useful links

Medway Family Information Service

Medway SEND Information and Advice Support service (SENDIAS)

Medway Parents and Carers Forum

Department of Education SEND information



medway.gov.uk



Have your say

What would you like to see in our newsletter?

Got some news or event you'd like to share with the Medway SEND community?

Send your story to sen@medway.gov.uk or localoffer@medway.gov.uk