



Northumberland County Council

FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: 28th November 2019

Report of the Scrutiny Exclusions Task and Finish Group

Report of the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services - Cath McEvoy-Carr

Cabinet Member for Children's Services: Councillor Wayne Daley

Report prepared by: Dean Jackson, Service Director Education and Skills.

Purpose of Report.

To provide an update report, including potential costs, on the findings of the Exclusion Task and Finish Group.

This report, with costed recommendations, was requested by the Family and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee following the presentation of the original report on 3rd October 2019.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that Scrutiny:

1. Note the content of the report.
2. Note the recommendations in the body of the report;
3. Based upon the contents of the report, decide what the next steps need to be.

Link to Corporate Plan

This report entirely supports the Council's vision 'One Council that works for everyone' and the Council's values 'Residents first, excellence and quality, respect and keeping our communities safe and well.'

REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY EXCLUSIONS TASK & FINISH GROUP WITH RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Northumberland County Council has seen a rapid increase in the number of children and young people being either permanently or temporarily (fixed term) excluded from schools over the last five years. In the academic year 2017-18, this reached an all-time high of 115 permanent exclusions (PEX) and 4514 fixed-term exclusions (FTEEx)

Following the report on Exclusions that was taken to Scrutiny on 8th November 2018, it was agreed that: *'...a Task and Finish Group be created in order to try to address the rising level of exclusions within the County'*. The Task and Finish Group would be set up to investigate the issue further and to make recommendations to Scrutiny to try to improve the current situation. The Exclusions Task and Finish Group met five times between December 2018 and April 2019. It had a core membership of elected members, county council officers and teacher association representation. In addition, guest speakers were called to each meeting to enable group members to better understand the situation in both Northumberland and across the rest of the country.

The number of both PEX and FTEEx in Northumberland reduced in 2018-19 but are still unacceptably high and, as in 2018-19, are likely to place the local authority in the lowest quartile nationally for exclusions.

	Permanent Exclusions				Fixed Term Exclusions		
	Total	EHCP	SEN Support	Pupil population	Total	EHCP	SEN Support
2014/15	44	4	16	45,557	1599	143	355
2015/16	41	0	26	39,349	1270	221	704
2016/17	75	3	39	39,609	1967	133	767
2017/18	115	6	53	39,827	4514	291	1347
2018/19	83	4	23	40,439	3337	180	769

This report will detail:

- The current situation in Northumberland and a summary of the outcomes of the five meetings of the Task and Finish Group (T&FG) and the issues raised that need further consideration;
- Where appropriate, guidance and/or proposals from the Department for Education Timpson Review of School Exclusion (May 2019) and the DFE ISOS report on 'Alternative Provision Market Analysis (October 2018);
- An analysis of the current effectiveness of, and any potential improvements to:

1. Alternative Provision (AP)
 2. Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)
 3. Current Fair Access arrangements
 4. Early Help / Intervention
 5. Inclusion Support
 6. Financial Issues
 7. SEND Support
- The suggestions and comments made by headteachers both at the meetings and in written submissions to the Task and Finish Group;
 - The suggestions and comments made by invited speakers, including other local authorities, Northumberland Post-16 service, Active Northumberland and the Northumberland Association of Secondary Headteachers (NASH)
 - Make a number of recommendations that will be considered further by Scrutiny, headteachers and other stakeholders.

The Current Situation

Permanent and Fixed Term Exclusions reached their highest ever total in July 2018. Despite a significant reduction of 28% in PEx and 26% in FTEx by July 2019, there is an obvious need to rapidly improve the current situation and thereby further reduce both PEx and FTEx in each of the next three years. The ambition must be to match the best performing county councils in 2018, which included Cambridgeshire (1PEx), Hampshire (6 PEx) and Lincolnshire (14 PEx).

The issues and challenges that need to be resolved have become clear through the course of the five meetings:

- There are currently over 150 PEx pupils who have been in Alternative Education (AP) for significant periods of time and, given the current rates of reintegration in Northumberland, are unlikely to return to mainstream education. A number of these pupils are likely to have undiagnosed special educational needs that may be better met in specialist provision rather than alternative provision.
- There is a need to re-articulate the roles and responsibilities of schools and academies, the local authority and alternative provision providers. Confusion currently exists as to each partner's role in the exclusions process.
- There remains in the county a concern that some pupils are being 'off-rolled' in order to improve a school's examination or OFSTED outcomes.
- Alternative Provision in Northumberland is used predominantly *after* a pupil has been PEx and is rarely used for preventative reasons. Better strategies for the earlier identification of pupils at risk of exclusion are needed, with appropriate intervention, including AP, Early Help, Family Support and SEN support, put in place to maintain these pupils in mainstream education.

- The current national school accountability structure provides little incentive or scope for schools to offer curriculum options that keep vulnerable pupils engaged in mainstream education. Schools report that sourcing high-quality two-year courses for vulnerable Year 9+ pupils is difficult.
- AP needs to support those pupils at risk of exclusion (i.e inclusion) as well as those already excluded. Agreement is needed as to who takes responsibility for pupils in AP whilst recognising that the drivers of AP demand – increasing complexity of needs, diminishing preventative capacity, changes in the mainstream curriculum and the accountability framework - are genuine issues for schools.

DfE/ISOS (1): ‘Alternative Provision Market Analysis (October 2018)

In 2018, the DfE commissioned the ISOS Partnership to undertake research on how AP in local authorities is organised, the factors that impact upon demand, and what makes an effective “local AP system”. Their report describes the overarching factors of a well-functioning system that Northumberland should note when developing a new approach:

- In a well-functioning system, schools have individual responsibility for the outcomes of their pupils in AP and a collective responsibility for the use of the AP system and the wider inclusion system in which it works;
- The key role of the local authority is to provide oversight of all pupils not in mainstream education. It should offer advice, broker solutions and support the planning of reintegration;
- A lack of specialist Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) provision is likely to create additional demand for secondary AP (Northumberland has Atkinson House for secondary boys only);
- Establishing an inclusive education system requires a clear strategic plan to articulate the shared understanding, to inform decisions on appropriate support pathways and to ensure that the local inclusion support offer can respond swiftly and flexibly to local needs;
- Where funding for AP is devolved to schools, the research showed that greater use is made of preventative AP, permanent exclusions are significantly reduced and, although individual AP places cost more, schools have fewer pupils in AP.

DfE / ISOS (2) An Effective System of Alternative Provision to Reduce Exclusions (ISOS)

The ISOS report states that, within the two key components of (1) a clear and agreed strategic plan and (2) broader inclusion support provided by the local authority, the following components are necessary to create an effective system of Alternative Provision that will reduce exclusions:

- **Sufficient quantity** of AP with agreed rules for AP providers and equitable access for all schools and locations (Northumberland headteachers believe that there is, currently, insufficient, high quality AP across the county);
- **A Wide range** of AP that meets pupils' needs and provides appropriate support options;
- **Good quality** AP, with the local authority responsible for administering a robust quality assurance framework and building provider quality;
- **Financial realism** with a collective understanding of the available resources to inform choices;
- **Responsibility:** schools for their pupils; collectively for the administration and oversight of fair access; local authority for oversight and quality assurance and for providing high-quality SEND and Early Help support;
- **Strategic planning:** pro-actively and jointly foster and develop inclusion strategies to better meet pupils' needs;
- **Responsiveness:** AP providers are both connected and responsive to the local system
- **Outcomes:** a collectively agreed system of performance measures that are aligned to the agreed strategic priorities;
- **Funding:** used flexibly to incentivise inclusion and support the strategic priorities whilst always being aware of the impact on High Needs Block.

Recommendation 1: Establish a representative group of Headteachers and multi-agency, local authority/local area officers to develop the five-year, 2020-2024 Northumberland Strategic Inclusion Plan detailing the ambition, costs, funding streams and provision needed.

Recommendation 2: In any new approach agreed in Northumberland, the 'overarching factors needed for a well-functioning system' and the 'components of an effective system', as defined by ISOS, need to be incorporated and addressed.

ISSUES RAISED BY HEADTEACHERS AND SCHOOLS

Schools highlighted factors that they believe negatively contribute to the increasing number of exclusions. These include changes to youth services provision, a lack of access to, and waiting times for, pupil mental health support in the county, OFSTED inspection pressures and the lack of appropriate AP and a KS4 PRU.

Headteachers stated that a Northumberland Five Year Inclusion Plan was needed that was supported politically, detailed the council's priorities and provided additional funding over the life of the plan.

Secondary headteachers said that serious pupil behaviour issues are not being identified early enough or appropriate support sought prior to pupils starting secondary education. Issues need to be signposted at an earlier age, with funding currently used for AP being used for earlier intervention, including behaviour support and social care outreach to prevent future exclusion. Additional resource should be targeted at identifying and supporting pupils most at risk of exclusion, with more primary schools making earlier referrals to enable enough time to successfully resolve pupils' issues.

All the headteachers spoken to believe that there is a need to enhance specialist primary age SEMH provision and behaviour support. The lack of primary SEMH specialist provision is a major contributory factor to the current situation. Where SEMH support is provided, it is through an SLA that many schools cannot afford. In addition, there is too little 'outreach' support provided by special schools or alternative providers. Realistically costed support for schools is needed whilst recognising that schools need to contribute financially to this.

For those schools receiving previously excluded pupils from other schools, concern exists that too many of these exclusions cite '*persistent misbehaviour*' as the reason, often with no supporting Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). This makes interventions harder to instigate. Schools suggested that the timescales and onerous paperwork for an EHCP or CYPS (mental health) support is a contributory factor and results in vulnerable pupils being 'pushed' into inappropriate mainstream education and eventual exclusion. The processes for requesting support for vulnerable pupils need to be streamlined.

Concerns were raised by headteachers about the number of pupils being 'moved' around the county by secondary schools. Most schools believe that they take too many pupils from other schools and it was suggested that any revised Fair Access Protocol contains a 'cap' on the number of managed moves schools accept. Schools feel under pressure from the local authority to take mid-year FTEx pupils, with the local authority providing insufficient support for mid-year admissions. Where mid-year moves did take place, too often a pupil's 'risk factor' was not disclosed or discussed. There is a particularly high pressure on places in the southeast and central localities of Northumberland as a result of high pupil mobility.

Recommendation 3: The local authority should explore further the creation of specialist primary-age SEMH provision, initially in areas of high demand, following an evaluation of the pilot of an SEMH ARP at Seaton Sluice First School.

ALTERNATIVE PROVISION

The NCC Alternative Provision Framework is recognised as a strength of the process with any potential new providers having to go through a rigorous tendering and

procurement process. Nine providers are currently on the local authority AP Framework. The local authority will not commission AP outside of the framework unless it is agreed that it is necessary to meet an individual child's specific needs.

Schools should not undermine the agreed framework by finding and using additional AP. The local authority commissions a biannual quality assurance monitoring visit to all providers where they are monitored against the OFSTED framework and expected to produce their updated action plan.

A coherent strategic local plan and framework is needed that details what alternative provision and preventative inclusion support is required now and in the future. It should set out how pupils' needs will be met and the associated roles and responsibilities. It will detail the range of pathways available to enable pupils to move between AP and mainstream education and will promote reintegration. The plan will be collectively agreed and understood by all stakeholders and will be situated within the broader Northumberland education system of mainstream and specialist provision. The ultimate ambition would be to build mainstream education's preventative and supportive capacity sufficiently to eliminate the need for post-exclusion alternative provision.

The Timpson Report 2019 recommended that the DfE take appropriate steps to ensure the '*sufficient oversight and monitoring*' of schools' use of AP. In Northumberland, this recommendation could be incorporated into future practice. Schools would submit information on their use of off-site direction into AP to the local authority, including detail as to why it was commissioned, for how long for and how frequently the pupil attended. Ideally, this would also include a proposed date for the reintegration of a pupil into full-time mainstream education, especially if that was what the pupil wanted.

The local authority monitors all PEx pupils in AP but does not currently have oversight of those pupils placed directly by schools. Cambridgeshire said that they monitored all pupils in AP to ensure that schools did not commission places and then '*...leave the students there to languish*'.

Recommendation 4: Support existing high-quality AP providers to extend their offer to other localities and widen the Framework to new outstanding providers.

Recommendation 5: Develop an induction and CPD programme for the staff of AP providers on the Northumberland Framework.

Recommendation 6: Schools should support the local authority to maintain a register of all pupils in AP and to track and monitor their progress in order to facilitate a return to mainstream education.

PUPIL REFERRAL UNIT (PRU)

The Northumberland 'Short Stay' Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) currently provides for pupils in Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 (5-14 years). Individual places or blocks of places can be

commissioned by schools. The local authority has places for statutory sixth-day provision after a pupil has been PEx but, currently, does not have priority over any available places.

From September 2019, the Northumberland PRU is under new leadership with an Acting Headteacher in post and a revised Management Board constituted in line with statutory guidance.

The previous Management Board of the PRU set a twenty week maximum stay for a pupil at the PRU but this is not adhered to and, in the last two years, pupils have stayed for periods in excess of 52 weeks. Often, the PRU is used to house pupils until a place at a special school has been found.

The Northumberland PRU offers no outreach support to schools and there are low levels of pupil reintegration back into mainstream education. Evidence suggests that mainstream schools do not generally take any further responsibility for pupils once they are referred into the PRU and are reluctant to reintegrate students back from the PRU

At the present time, multi-agency assessment or intervention is only available for PRU pupils through the Service Level Agreements.

Recommendation 7: Begin consultation on aligning the Northumberland PRU more closely to a Northumberland special school in order to share expertise, training and resources.

Recommendation 8: A full review of the PRU's provision should be carried out to clarify:

- **The age range that it caters for, including provision for Key Stage 4 pupils**
- **The admissions policy**
- **Outreach support work**
- **Alternative models of provision, including AP Academies / Free Schools**

FAIR ACCESS PROTOCOL

DfE Departmental Advice 2012: *The purpose of a Fair Access Protocol is to ensure that - outside the normal admissions round - unplaced children, especially the most vulnerable, are found and offered a place quickly, so that the amount of time any child is out of school is kept to the minimum. This is why every local authority is required to have in place a Fair Access Protocol, developed in partnership with local schools.*

The current Northumberland Fair Access Protocol was implemented in September 2016 and was reviewed in January 2018. The Northumberland Fair Access Panel (FAP) implements the local Fair Access Protocol. The FAP meets monthly and is comprised of secondary headteachers, local authority officers and an independent chair.

The ISOS research defined the following as key components of an effective Fair Access Panel:

- **Transparency:** it can only succeed if it has robust evidence and clear documentation
- **Fairness:** all schools must take their fair share of pupils and participate equally
- **Have Authority:** have delegated powers to act swiftly and take decisions
- **Regularity:** meet every 2-4 weeks and more frequent when necessary
- **Area-Based:** schools must have collective responsibility for their locality
- **Trust:** members must be able to look each other in the eyes and offer peer support & challenge
- **No back doors:** the Fair Access Panel is the only decision making board for pupil placements
- **Child-centred:** FAP does what is right for the child
- **Financial implications:** all members understand the cost of failure
- **Removes Barriers:** directs the intensive support for schools during transition / reintegration
- **Broader support:** provides support beyond education – Early Help//CYPS/SEND
- **Avoids horse trading:** FAP always acts as an independent, impartial arbiter

In Northumberland, many of the referrals to the FAP are for pupils 'opting' to move to other schools because of poor attendance or behaviour issues at their current school.

Recommendation 9: Review the current Fair Access Protocol to ensure that, given the high level of exclusions, it is fit for purpose, by:

- **Meeting the needs of primary schools**
- **Includes admissions to the PRU**
- **Includes managed moves and the support provided within its scope**
- **Stating the need to share accurate information between schools**
- **Giving the Fair Access Panel oversight of all referrals to AP, the publication of the outcomes of their referrals including each school's referrals and success rates and the quality assurance of all placements.**

EARLY HELP / EARLY INTERVENTION

Early help, in its broadest sense, can help to prevent school exclusions if utilised fully by staff working in and with schools. It needs:

- the identification in the early years by health visitors/childcare staff of needs that may cause a child to struggle at school;
- the use of a wide range of early years services to support the parents and families of identified children;

- comprehensive use of the SEN graduated response within schools;
- support for schools to complete the Early Help Assessment if it is thought beneficial to have a Team Around the Family approach;
- schools to use the LSCB Early Help Workforce offer to access a wide range of free training to provide support to children and families;
- the use of specialist behaviour support services for advice and support for schools and families on what needs to be different for a child to succeed;
- utilisation of the Early Intervention Foundation website directory which details what is known to work to prevent school exclusion;
- utilisation of the multi-agency early help locality hubs to support a multi-agency response to any additional or unmet parental or sibling needs that cannot be addressed through a different educational approach;
- discussions with the Early Help Locality Manager, senior practitioner or early help coordinator to consider other support available for a family,
- schools to have a linked early help family worker to support their understanding of thresholds, the range of services available and communicating with parents;
- schools to access the half-termly locality network meetings;
- the involvement of the Youth Service regarding provision in the local area and the support they can offer for vulnerable children and young people

Recommendation 10: Develop a protocol to establish a multi-agency partnership that offers early help and support for schools through central services and AP outreach, that:

- **Includes Early Help, Family Support, Health Services, CYPS, SEND Support Services, Education Support Services and key partners and provides clear and affordable support for schools.**
- **Extends the Early Help drop-in facility to all schools in order to provide universal support and guidance**
- **Meets monthly to share intelligence, including PEx and FTEEx data.**

Recommendation 11: Develop a ‘standardised’ assessment for pupils at risk of PEx to identify need and promote consistency and equity of intervention.

INCLUSION SUPPORT WORKERS

The local authority currently employs 2.5 Inclusion Support Workers (ISW). Their current role is Day 6 support following a pupil’s PEx, which involves supporting the permanently excluded pupil into some form of Alternative Provision. There is a clear need to develop the post of ISW into a more preventative role in order to support managed moves, monitor AP placements, reintegrate PEx pupils back into mainstream education and to work more closely with pupils at risk of PEx.

Due to high number of PEx pupils in Northumberland, Inclusion Support Workers currently have limited capacity to work preventatively or to support reintegration. Despite that, there is good evidence to suggest that their involvement with pupils at risk of PEx during the academic year 2018-19 prevented a significant number of permanent exclusions and was instrumental in bringing about the 28% reduction in PEx.

Recommendation 12: The Schools Forum and all schools and academies should agree the de-delegation of the additional High Needs Block and Schools Block funding to the local authority to increase the number of Inclusion Support Workers (agreed at Schools' Forum 2-10-2019) and to extend the range of social care preventative outreach support.

Recommendation 13: Review the role of the Inclusion Support Workers to make the key function that of preventing PEx through early intervention and preventative support measures and includes the monitoring of all AP placements and the development of intervention and reintegration plans for PEx pupils.

BUDGET

Permanent Exclusions were funded from the High Needs Block at a cost of £1.367m in the financial year 2017-18 and between £1.711m in the financial year 2018-19. The average cost of Alternative Provision to the High Needs Block, including transport, is between £15k -£17k per pupil. The local authority currently claims back approximately £3k per PEx student from the excluding school.

Schools currently pay for preventative AP, a factor which it is believed has contributed to the rapid rise in the number of PEx pupils in Northumberland and the country. A perverse incentive exists to PEx a pupil and have that pupil's AP costs funded centrally by the High Needs Block rather than pay for preventative AP from the school's own budget.

Special Educational Needs

Pupils with Special Educational Needs are far more likely to be excluded from school than any other pupils. Nationally, in 2017-18, 78% of permanently excluded pupils had an identified special educational need. In Northumberland, the figures are lower but still significant: 51% of excluded pupils in 2017-18 had an identified special educational need and 32% in 2018-19.

In Northumberland, there has been a lack of consistency within schools in implementing the graduated response to pupils with special educational needs, leading to some vulnerable pupils not receiving the support they require at the time they need it.

SEND support provided by the local authority over the last two years has had to be purchased by schools via a Service Level Agreement, leading to schools commenting that SEND support has become a 'postcode lottery' that is dependent upon the ability to pay for it rather than on pupils' needs.

Furthermore, once a pupil has been permanently excluded and is off a school roll, little SEND support is currently offered to AP providers despite the ongoing need. This lack of a SEND assessment and an intervention plan for PEx pupils severely reduces the chances of successful reintegration back from AP into mainstream education.

SEND Support Services in Northumberland are currently a collection of single agencies rather than a multi-disciplinary cohesive single support service. To try to address this, the local authority has recently appointed to a new post of Head of Inclusive SEN Services which will have senior management responsibility over all the SEN services offered to schools.

Schools often buy some SEN services but not others as they try to predict the needs of their cohorts up to 15 months in advance. The Timpson Review suggests that local authorities should develop multi-disciplinary teams around schools.

Recommendation 14: The local authority should develop a funded universal, multi-agency preventative offer for vulnerable pupils and, especially, those at risk of PEx that is accessible to all schools and makes better use of data and intelligence in order to target resources more effectively.

LEARNING FROM OTHER LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND KEY PARTNERS

CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Cambridgeshire pioneered 100% devolved AP funding to schools, with schools reporting their spend to the LA annually. It does not have a PRU but, instead, has two AP Academies (APA), run by a multi-academy trust. £700k is de-delegated from the High Needs Block to fund the APAs. The two APAs have dual-registered Y9/Y10 pupils and single-registered Y11 pupils. Cambridgeshire had one (1) PEx pupil in 2018-19.

A central register is maintained of all pupils on 20%+ 'different' timetables and contains information on where they are, their hours of AP and any Children's Social Care or Youth Offending Service involvement.

Headteachers now take full ownership of and responsibility for AP and exclusions and hold each other to account. Headteachers designed the SLA which all the schools sign-up to. Any school that does not sign-up does not receive their delegated funding. The county has established both primary and secondary hotlines to support the parents of pupils at risk of exclusion.

A 'strong' Fair Access Panel meets weekly and contains representatives from the council, SEND, EP Service, Finance, and Transport. Managed Move pupils are dual registered for 15 weeks. The MM pupil will stay at the receiving school if performance and attendance improve. A pupil can only be subjected to one Managed Move, with the original school retaining the responsibility for AP.

Cambridgeshire funds an Education Inclusion Manager post and eight Inclusion Officer posts to provide consistent support and challenge to schools on the use of AP. In addition, they develop strategies to support pupils at risk of exclusion in mainstream and support schools to access appropriate local AP.

Recommendation 15: The local authority and the Schools Forum should carry out a SWOT analysis of devolving AP funding to schools. It should consider the potential impact on primary and smaller secondary schools, locality arrangements, the commissioning of preventative support and alternative provision and the ongoing financial commitment needed for existing PEx pupils.

NORTH TYNESIDE

Schools provide up to £5600 of de-delegated funding each to support a consistent approach across North Tyneside that promotes early intervention at the primary stage. THRIVE, a training programme that provides pupils with the skills and resources to develop emotional resilience and to overcome mental health issues, is embedded within schools, with online support apps available for secondary age pupils.

The borough has both a SEMH Unit and an Additionally Resourced Provision attached to a school for the most vulnerable primary age pupils, with an easy referral system for admission. It has a secondary PRU that supports reintegration and SEN assessment and support. If a pupil has additional needs, they transfer from the PRU to an appropriate special school.

Headteachers must follow the Fair Access Protocol, with a panel of five headteachers meeting weekly to decide whether excluded or referred pupils go to PALS (vocational provision) or the PRU. The referring headteacher must attend, along with social care. Parental consent must be sought prior to any referral.

LINCOLNSHIRE

Schools agreed to commission a Behaviour Outreach Support Service (BOSS) at up to £12k per school. The Lincolnshire Ladder of Behavioural Intervention was introduced in 2016 to reduce the escalating number of exclusions and to ensure that pupils with the greatest needs were targeted for specialist support. The Lincolnshire Ladder has three steps:

- Step 1 - £1k additional resource with support from the Pupil Reintegration Team
- Step 2 - referred through the Pupil Reintegration Team to BOSS
- Step 3 - 16-week intervention at PRU (KS3) or AP (KS4)- dual registered, QAd by referring school

HAMPSHIRE

Forum provides £2.4m for behaviour service in six locations. All AP is time limited, with Inclusion Partnerships across the county, led by headteachers, to coordinate managed moves and the successful reintegration of pupils back into mainstream education from AP. The Hampshire PRU offers outreach support.

BRISTOL

Bristol has a Virtual Head for AP with oversight of all at-risk pupils. The occupant has the high credibility with headteachers in order to be able to liaise with, support and challenge schools and work with key partners to provide a joined-up support offer.

NORTHUMBERLAND POST-16 LEARNING & SKILLS SERVICE

The Learning & Skills Service could increase its capacity to include pre-16 vocational training with enhanced pastoral support. It would shape programmes to provide challenge to PEx pupils through different interventions that provide a pathway to return to school or employment.

A 'Pre-16' budget would be needed to develop these pathways, but the service already works with a range of key, supportive partners e.g Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service.

ACTIVE NORTUMBERLAND (WRITTEN SUBMISSION)

Active is committed to supporting vulnerable young people via work experience in a range of areas including sport and leisure in local centres. Active has also overseen a successful pilot in relation to Looked After children who were on the point of exclusion which has had a positive impact on their education. It would be able to support both vocational and academic qualifications.

Recommendation 16: Develop good working relationships with key strategic partners to determine the viability and sustainability of the offers of support made.

NORTHUMBERLAND ASSOCIATION of SECONDARY HEADS - NASH (WRITTEN SUBMISSION)

NASH believes that the LA made the process more difficult for schools with the introduction of the clawback of an excluded pupil's funding, on a pro-rata calendar basis. This includes the individual pupil funding (AWPU), any Free School Meal funding and

any funding low attainment, Pupil Premium and IDACI if relevant. *(On average, across the year, the local authority claws back approx. £3k per child.)*

NASH suggests that a comprehensive strategic inclusion plan is compiled and implemented by the local authority and a corresponding 'engagement plan' is created that all schools, academies and multi-academy trusts sign up to. These agreements would clearly state that PEx is used only as the last resort and that the local authority agree a comprehensive programme of support for schools.

In addition, to pump prime any newly agreed strategy, NASH suggested that funding would be required from both schools and the local authority in order to create a 'start-up' financial pot.

CONCLUSION – A VISION FOR THE NEW NORTHUMBERLAND APPROACH

The Northumberland Approach to managing exclusions will need:

- A clear moral purpose and an agreed overarching strategy that makes it clear that exclusions are everyone's problem in Northumberland;
- Financial realism through a shared understanding of the High Needs Block;
- A robust core purpose, supported by agreed regulation and fair processes;
- Urgent and driving actions to create a coherent core offer of support that schools subscribe to;

Within the new system, Northumberland County Council will maintain the key oversight and operational role in creating and maintaining the framework in which school level responsibility operates. This will be critical to the effectiveness of the system that is designed. The local authority will:

- Oversee the day to day operation of AP and track those pupils at risk of PEx, in AP or not in full-time education;
- Draw together the key partners, including Early Help, Family Support, Children's Social Care, Health, CYPS and SEND to support pupils at risk of PEx;
- Broker both internal and external support and help to secure placements;
- Provide early support and advice when notified that a placement is at risk of breaking down;
- Support mainstream schools and AP providers to collaborate when planning pupil reintegration;
- Provide robust quality assurance of all local alternative provision

A challenge will be to tackle the both the prevailing financial motivation to exclude pupils rather than to pay for preventative AP and to reduce the impact on decisions about vulnerable pupils of high-stakes performance measures and inspection outcomes.

First, primary and middle schools need to maintain and develop their child-centred approach to education and, when issues arise, focus on turnaround provision and reintegration through a dynamic and flexible support offer. In addition, they need to comprehensively assess and honestly record the needs of the most vulnerable pupils and ensure that this information is shared with any receiving school at the earliest opportunity whenever the pupil changes school.

Reintegration of pupils is integral to any new approach. There will need to be:

- A clear expectation that reintegration is a key component of any AP placement;
- Close working with the both the pupil and the family to ensure that this expectation is known;
- Effective assessment and reintegration protocols that include the role of the FAP and Inclusion Panels;
- A clear and early pupil reintegration plan that is underpinned by support for both the pupil and the mainstream school;
- Ongoing monitoring of the reintegration process and, to a lesser degree, the period afterwards.

It is suggested that a small sub-group be created to:

- review the issues raised by the Task & Finish Group;
- develop an options paper, which will be considered by all stakeholders, as to which of the issues raised in this report are to be further explored with a view to potential implementation in any new approach;
- determine the potential level of financial resource/investment needed to make a strong start to the new approach and the source of this funding.

The new approach will:

- need to maintain a focus on early intervention, inclusion, prevention and reintegration to keep pupils in school;
- ensure that where AP is commissioned, schools maintain responsibility for their own pupils;
- reflect what headteachers have decided they want and the local authority's response to that;
- ensure that all stakeholders understand that inclusion encompasses attendance, elective home education, AP and SEN.
- be implemented by the local authority to ensure that high quality, appropriate provision is planned for.

Recommendation 17: Review the existing structures and the resources available within the local authority to support the outcomes of the 2020-2024 Northumberland Strategic Inclusion Plan when it is completed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION	POTENTIAL COST / RESOURCE
1: Establish a representative group of Headteachers and multi-agency, local authority/local area officers to develop the five-year, 2020-2024 Northumberland Strategic Inclusion Plan detailing the ambition, costs, funding streams and provision needed.	Venue / refreshment costs
2: In any new approach agreed in Northumberland, the 'overarching factors needed for a well-functioning system' and the 'components of an effective system', as defined by ISOS, need to be incorporated and addressed.	No cost
3: The local authority should explore further the creation of specialist primary-age SEMH provision, initially in areas of high demand, following an evaluation of the pilot of an SEMH ARP at Seaton Sluice First School.	High Needs Block Place Funding of £10k per child plus related Top-Up funding dependent upon need.
4: Support existing high-quality AP providers to extend their offer to other localities and widen the Framework to new outstanding providers.	Potential capital expenditure if supporting provider to extend / enhance current / new provision
5: Develop an induction and CPD programme for the staff of AP providers on the Northumberland Framework.	Developed in-house; Delivery and venue costs.
6: Schools should support the local authority to maintain a register of all pupils in AP and to track and monitor their progress in order to facilitate a return to mainstream education.	No cost
7: Begin consultation on aligning the Northumberland PRU more closely to a Northumberland special school in order to share expertise, training and resources.	No cost

<p>8: A full review of the PRU's provision should be carried out to clarify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The age range that it caters for, including provision for Key Stage 4 pupils • The admissions policy • Outreach support work • Alternative models of provision, including AP Academies / Free Schools 	<p>Officer and administration time – not quantifiable at this stage.</p>
<p>9: Review the current Fair Access Protocol to ensure that, given the high level of exclusions, it is fit for purpose, by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting the needs of primary schools • Includes admissions to the PRU • Includes managed moves and the support provided within its scope • Stating the need to share accurate information between schools • Giving the Fair Access Panel oversight of all referrals to AP, the publication of the outcomes of their referrals including each school's referrals and success rates and the quality assurance of all placements. 	<p>Officer and administration time – not quantifiable at this stage.</p>
<p>10: Develop a protocol to establish a multi-agency partnership that offers early help and support for schools through central services and AP outreach, that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes Early Help, Family Support, Health Services, CYPS, SEND Support Services, Education Support Services and key partners and provides clear and affordable support for schools. 	<p>Officer and administration time – not quantifiable at this stage.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extends the Early Help drop-in facility to all schools in order to provide universal support and guidance • Meets monthly to share intelligence, including PEx and FTEEx data. 	
<p>11. Develop a 'standardised' assessment for pupils at risk of PEx to identify need and promote consistency and equity of intervention.</p>	<p>In development - officer and administration time – not quantifiable at this stage.</p>
<p>12: The Schools Forum and all schools and academies should agree the de-delegation of the additional High Needs Block and Schools Block funding to the local authority to increase the number of Inclusion Support Workers (<i>agreed at Schools' Forum 2-10-2019</i>) and to extend the range of social care preventative outreach support.</p>	<p>Total cost of £101,000 to create three new posts including an ISW manager and an ISW SEN specialist – agreed at Schools Forum October 2019</p>
<p>13: Review the role of the Inclusion Support Workers to make the key function that of preventing PEx through early intervention and preventative support measures and includes the monitoring of all AP placements and the development of intervention and reintegration plans for PEx pupils.</p>	<p>Officer and administration time – not quantifiable at this stage.</p>
<p>14: The local authority should develop a funded universal, multi-agency preventative offer for vulnerable pupils and, especially, those at risk of PEx that is accessible to all schools and makes better use of data and intelligence in order to target resources more effectively.</p>	<p>Officer and administration time – not quantifiable at this stage.</p>
<p>15. The local authority and the Schools Forum should carry out a SWOT analysis of devolving AP funding to schools. It</p>	<p>Officer and administration time – not quantifiable at this stage.</p>

<p>should consider the potential impact on primary and smaller secondary schools, locality arrangements, the commissioning of preventative support and alternative provision and the ongoing financial commitment needed for existing PEx pupils.</p>	
<p>16: Develop good working relationships with key strategic partners to determine the viability and sustainability of the offers of support made.</p>	<p>Potential premises costs for Active Northumberland and Post-16 Learning and Skills provision.</p>
<p>17: Review the existing structures and the resources available within the local authority to support the outcomes of the 2020-2024 Northumberland Strategic Inclusion Plan when it is completed.</p>	<p>Officer and administration time – not quantifiable at this stage.</p>

Implications

Policy	This report is consistent with the Council's aims and values.
Finance and value for money	Any additional costs will be met through existing funding.
Legal	None
Procurement	None
Human Resources	See finance and value for money
Property	None
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes	An EIA would need to be undertaken should the recommendation to implement the Northumberland Strategic Inclusion Plan be approved
Risk Assessment	A full risk assessment would be undertaken should the recommendations be approved.
Crime & Disorder	This report has considered Section 17 (CDA) and the duty it imposes and there are no implications arising from it.
Customer Consideration	The conclusions and recommendations set out in this report are based upon the desire to improve the outcomes for vulnerable children and young people through improving support to them and schools.
Carbon reduction	It is not envisaged that the implementation of the recommendations proposed in this report would have a significant positive or negative impact on carbon reduction.
Health and Wellbeing	It is envisaged that the implementation of the recommendations in this report would directly improve the mental health of vulnerable children and young people.
Wards	All

Background papers

None

Report sign off

Authors must ensure that officers and members have agreed the content of the report:

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Monitoring Officer/Legal	Liam Henry
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