



Northumberland County Council

FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6TH OCTOBER 2022

The Northumberland Strategic Inclusion Plan 2022-2026

Report of the Joint Interim Director of Children's Services, Audrey Kingham

Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Councillor Guy Renner-Thompson

Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to present to FACS members and particularly those members involved in the Exclusion Task and Finish Group, the first Northumberland Strategic Inclusion Strategy which has been developed in response to the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- 1) The content of the report and detailed strategy be noted paying particular attention to the impact the work undertaken within Children's Services and Schools has had on the lives of Northumberland children.

Links to Corporate Plan

These proposals are most closely linked to the Council's priority for Learning (achieving and realising potential, but it is also strongly linked with the priority for Connecting (having access to the things you need).

Key Issues

1. A report on the findings and recommendations of the Exclusion Task and Finish Group was presented to FACS at the end of November 2019 and a further update on the actions taken was also reported to FACS in March 2021. It was at this meeting the FACS members supported:

The Development of a five year Inclusion Strategy for Northumberland. "A VISION FOR THE NEW NORTHUMBERLAND APPROACH"

The Strategy will have:

- A clear moral purpose that makes exclusions the responsibility of everyone in Northumberland;
 - Financial realism through a shared understanding of the High Needs Block funding;
 - 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 and drive down exclusions and encourage inclusive practice.
2. There is a huge amount of positive work going on in Northumberland to support the wellbeing and inclusion of children and young people. One of the main functions of “The Northumberland Strategic Inclusion” Strategy **APPENDIX 1** is to map the available approaches, services and resources across the County to ensure a robust overview of the offer, as well as the identification of any gaps that need to be addressed.
 3. The strategy document:
 - Describes the National context;
 - Describes the Northumberland context;
 - Describes the key strands of the strategy;
 - Identifies the actions to be taken to promote inclusion and prevent exclusion;
 - Describes the role of the Local Authority, schools, settings and partners in promoting inclusion and preventing exclusions.
 4. The development of this strategy has been co-produced by the multi-agency working groups, discussions with Headteachers, SENCOs, designated teachers, governors, alternative providers, discussions at the Education Strategy Board and the views of parents, carers, children and young people. The strategy draws heavily from examples of the strong leadership and good practice that already exists in many Northumberland early years’ settings, schools and Post 16 provisions where there is robust evidence of strong inclusive practice and a reduction in the use of exclusion.
 5. Progress on the implementation of the Inclusion Strategy will be reported to and monitored by the Education Strategy Board and will be kept under review and altered as necessary to incorporate newly published legislation and statutory guidance.
 6. The impact of COVID is now starting to show within Northumberland resulting in a rise in both permanent exclusions and fixed term exclusions/suspensions. A new trend is starting to emerge with a specific increase for pupils in years 7 and 8. We believe this is due to the time missed in years 5 and 6 in primary schools and the challenge with implementation of transitional arrangements to prepare these year groups for secondary school. A breakdown of exclusion by

school for the last 4 years can be found at APPENDIX 2

7. Exclusions in Northumberland

	Permanent Exclusions				Fixed Term Exclusions		
	Total	EHCP	SEN Support	Pupil population	Total	EHCP	SEN Support
2014/15	44	4	16	39,597	1599	143	355
2015/16	41	0	26	39,602	1270	221	704
2016/17	75	3	39	39,422	1967	133	767
2017/18	115	6	53	39,598	4514	291	1347
2018/19	83	4	23	39,684	3490	180	769
2019/20	50	0	12	39,795	1696	112	391
2020/21	44	0	11	40,070	2144	172	642
2021/22	94	1	56	40,059	4027	372	1100

In response to the rise in fixed and permanent exclusions, funding was secured in 2020 to expand the team with the addition of two extra Inclusion Officers. COMF funding was also used to appoint two Parent Support Partners in Nov 2021 to support children/families predominantly from First and Primary Schools. Intelligence has suggested that younger children have been more adversely affected by the pandemic as they have missed out on the intervention required to make them 'school ready'. Primary schools are reporting more concerns with children in Reception and Year 1.

Since Jan 2021 to date, the team of five Officers has worked with 249 children at risk of permanent exclusion. Only 29 of those pupils actually went on to be excluded meaning that 88% of those referred have remain in mainstream education.

In September 2021 a Lead Officer was assigned to oversee managed moves to ensure young people were given the best opportunity for success in a new setting. Previously only an average of 1 in 5 managed moves was successful but this year of the 29 completed moves 19 have been successful and 10 have been unsuccessful; the success rate has more than tripled from 20% to 65%.

8. Whilst it remains a challenge both nationally and locally to reduce PEX and improve the life chances of some of our most vulnerable children and young people, the Northumberland Strategic Inclusion Strategy provides a multi-agency approach to support children, young people, their families and schools to ensure every child and young person has access to the most suitable education setting to meet their needs and are supported in order that they achieve their potential.
9. In the recent consultation green paper on proposed SEND and AP reform, there is a clear drive to create a national vision for alternative provision and an expectation that every local area will develop a Local Inclusion Plan, it is

therefore seen that our Northumberland Strategic Inclusion Strategy will develop into The Northumberland Inclusion Plan.

Background

1. 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.
2. A report on the findings and recommendations of the exclusion task and finish group were presented to FACS at the end of November 2019. And a further report on progress on implementing the Inclusion action plan was also presented to FACS 4th March 2021.

IMPLICATIONS ARISING OUT OF THE REPORT

Policy	The procedures adopted by the council for permanently excluded pupils fulfil its statutory duty under the Education Act 1996 section 19(3A) and (3B).
Finance & value for money	
Legal	N/A
Procurement	N/A
Human Resources:	N/A
Property	N/A
Equalities (Impact Assessment Attached)	No
Risk Assessment	N/A
Crime & Disorder	This report has considered Section 17 (CDA) and the duty it imposes and there are no implications arising from it.
Customer Considerations:	The detail set out in this report are based upon a desire to act in the best educational interests of current and future children and young people in Northumberland.
Carbon Reduction	It is not envisaged that this proposal would have a significant positive or negative impact on carbon reduction.
Health and Wellbeing	
Wards	All

CONSULTATION

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Cllr Renner Thompson.

Report Sign Off

	Full name
Service Director Finance & Deputy S151 Officer	Jan Willis
Interim Monitoring Officer/Legal	Suki Binjal
Joint Interim Director of Children's Services	Audrey Kingham
Interim Chief Executive	Rick O'Farrell
Lead Member for Children's Services	Guy Renner-Thompson

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Appendices

Appendix one - The Northumberland Strategic Inclusions Strategy

Appendix Two - Exclusion data by School