



Northumberland County Council

CABINET

Date: 17 November 2022

SEND Capacity and Place Planning Strategy

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

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

Report Author: Sue Aviston Head of School Organisation and Resources

Purpose of Report

To advise Cabinet of the development of a 5 year SEND Capacity and Place Planning Strategy.

Recommendations

Cabinet are recommended to:

1. Approve the approach for growth within the strategy in order to increase capacity in line with predicted demand across Northumberland to meet the needs of children and young people as close to their home communities as possible.
2. Approve the annual update of the plan to ensure the information used to plan and grow capacity is reflective of the demand for specialist provision. The update will be reported to Family and Children Services Scrutiny Committee.

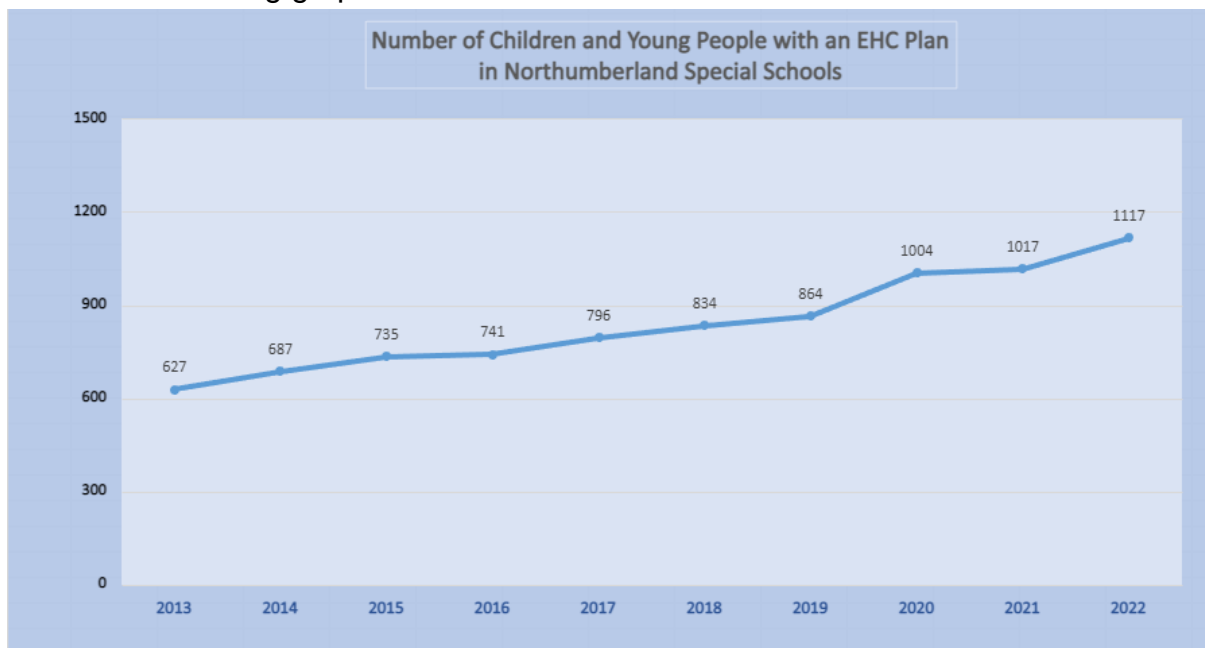
Link to Corporate Plan

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. In Northumberland, the number of children and young people who have been diagnosed as requiring an Education and Healthcare Plan has been increasing steadily, with significant additional capacity in the county's 9 special schools

being required year on year in each of the past 10 years, as demonstrated in the following graph.



2. This steady upward trend in demand for special school places equates to an average increase over this period to date of 7% each year (actual variation from year to year has been between 1% and 16%). Overall, there are 78% more children and young people with an EHCP in Northumberland in 2022 than there were in 2013. Contributing to this is the continuing increasing demand from parents for their children to be educated within special school provision both in and out of the county.
3. Northumberland has a very robust mainstream school place-planning methodology, which has ensured the accuracy of predicting the number of school places required across the county. However, there has never been the same approach when it comes to planning for specialist places. Like most local authorities across the country, Northumberland has simply been reacting to the increased demand for places.
4. Attached at Appendix one is the first SEND Capacity and place planning Strategy that sets out:
 - a. The need for additional specialist provision;
 - b. where increases of places and capital investment has already been achieved;
 - c. A 3 step approach to the development of SEND Capacity;
 - d. Impact on the local communities across Northumberland;
 - e. Ideas/models to increase specialist capacity;
 - f. Funding to support the implementation of the strategy.

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Conclusions

1. For the first time in Northumberland, a place planning methodology similar to that used to plan for mainstream school places has been utilised in order to predict the number of specialist places likely to be required over the next 5 years. This has enabled a strategy to be formulated for consultation and engagement at a local level that will enable this vulnerable group of children and young people to have their needs met as close to their home communities as possible.
2. The forecasts contained within this strategy do not include the potential impact of future interventions or strategies and will therefore be updated on an annual basis. This will ensure that information used to plan and grow capacity continues to reflect the demands for specialist provision in the light of the impact of interventions and strategies currently being implemented across Northumberland.
3. The forecasts of demand for specialist provision are provided on a school partnership basis. The data presented for each school partnership demonstrates there is a growing demand to increase specialist capacity across Northumberland with high level data suggesting that there could be a further 700 special school places required by 2026 if the current pattern of increased demand continues. Section 5 of the strategy sets out ideas on how to achieve additional capacity, as well as potential timescales and some very high-level costs. This detail is subject to detailed work within each of the school partnerships to ensure the affordability and sustainability of any plans for growth.
4. Whilst the strategy sets out a number of ideas on how additional specialist capacity could be achieved, Cabinet will be requested to make decisions on proposed capital investment for individual projects as these are brought forward, as well as statutory decisions in relation to school organisation regulations.

IMPLICATIONS ARISING OUT OF THE REPORT

Policy	The strategy is consistent with the Council's corporate priority that all residents should achieve and realise their potential.
Finance & value for money	The funding and financial implications of the strategy is set out in section 5 of the strategy. The projects and capital investment proposals will be subject to consultation Individual business cases and Cabinet approval.
Legal	<p>The Local Authority has a statutory duty to assess the local need for school places to ensure that every child can be provided with a suitable place in a state funded school in their area.</p> <p>The Children and Families Act 2014 places important statutory responsibilities on local authorities for supporting children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities</p>
Procurement	N/A
Human Resources:	N/A
Property	N/A
Equalities (Impact Assessment Attached)	No, but an EIA would be completed in relation to individual projects to increase capacity as they are brought forward for consultation.
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 is 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	The strategy aims to improve the educational experience and outcomes for the most vulnerable group of children and young people in the county by providing appropriate specialist provision as close to their homes communities as possible.

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 – SEND Capacity and Place Planning Strategy