



Agenda Item 7

Northumberland County Council

School Forum: 16 November 2022 Special Education Needs Update

1. Purpose of Briefing Note

To provide Schools Forum with impact assessment of the new model of delivery for NIES HINT Teams made possible by transfer of funds from DSG, operationalised in September 2020

2. Background

In September 2020, a new model of delivery was introduced and implemented across the teams within HINT; Autism Support, Emotional Wellbeing and Behaviour Support (EWB), Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD), and Speech, Language and Communication Support (SLCN). There had been growing concern that the provision of services to children and young people was inconsistent across the County, with access affected by schools' purchase of service level agreements (SLAs). OFSTED inspection of the local area in October 2018 had identified that there were inconsistencies in implementation of the graduated approach to meeting the needs of SEND learners across Northumberland schools, and that outcomes for those with SEND were not good enough. In addition, data indicated that identification of primary need amongst children and young people was discrepant when compared to national benchmarks, with higher than national use of the 'other' category. In the county wide consultation of 2017, parents/carers reported that access to support services was inconsistent, with some schools stating they were 'unable to afford' the support they needed.

In November 2019, Schools Forum agreed to the continued transfer of £1m from the DSG into the High Needs Block in order to support the delivery of the proposed new model which would introduce 'free on delivery' support. This model was introduced in September 2020 as a 2-year pilot. The transfer from the Schools Block to the HN Block has subsequently been reduced due to the increases in HN Block funding.

The proposal presented to Schools Forum in February 2020 highlighted the following objectives:

1. Opportunities to support school staff with strategies which will be of wider benefit than simply to individual pupils, and therefore help to build confidence and capacity.
2. Opportunities for discussions with schools about levels of need, and advice about timing and appropriateness of COSA requests (requesting EHC Needs Assessment).
3. Emphasis on the central tenet of the Code of Practice that parents/carers should be involved in planning provision for children and young people
4. Equitable access to specialist advice for all learners

In addition to providing access free on delivery, the new model created an opportunity for a single point of referral into the teams, streamlining the process for schools and allowing referrals to be reviewed and allocated to the correct team by the HINT Manager and Lead Practitioners, based on referral information. Inter team referrals have also been made possible where previously this

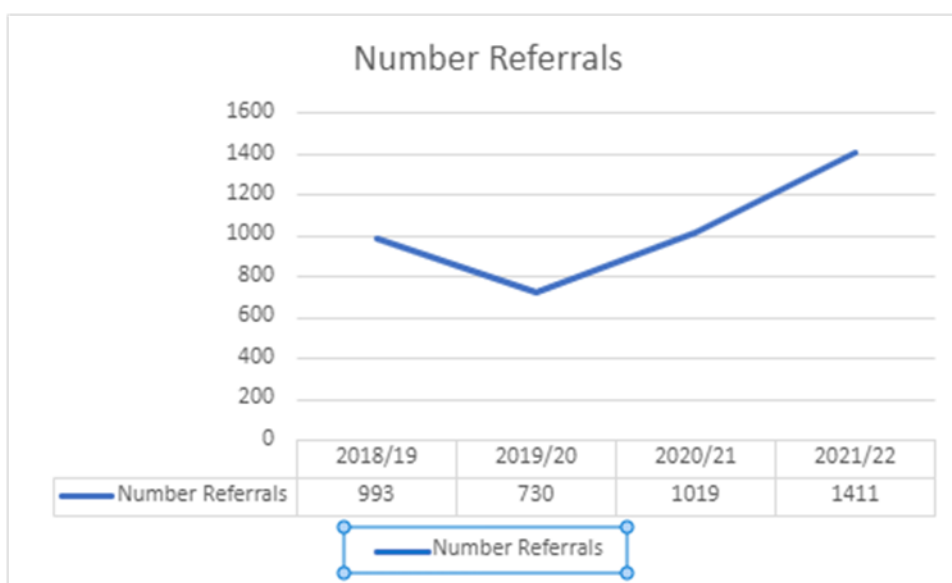
would have been dependent on school purchase of SLA time with the second and subsequent teams following referral.

3. Quantitative Data

Data provided below is a comparison over 4 years. 2018/19 was the last full academic year prior to the pandemic, and at that time the teams were operating the traded offer. The pandemic period brought a different set of challenges and opportunities, and the data for that period is also included. Ready and free access to the teams during this period was possible due to the new funding arrangements being in place.

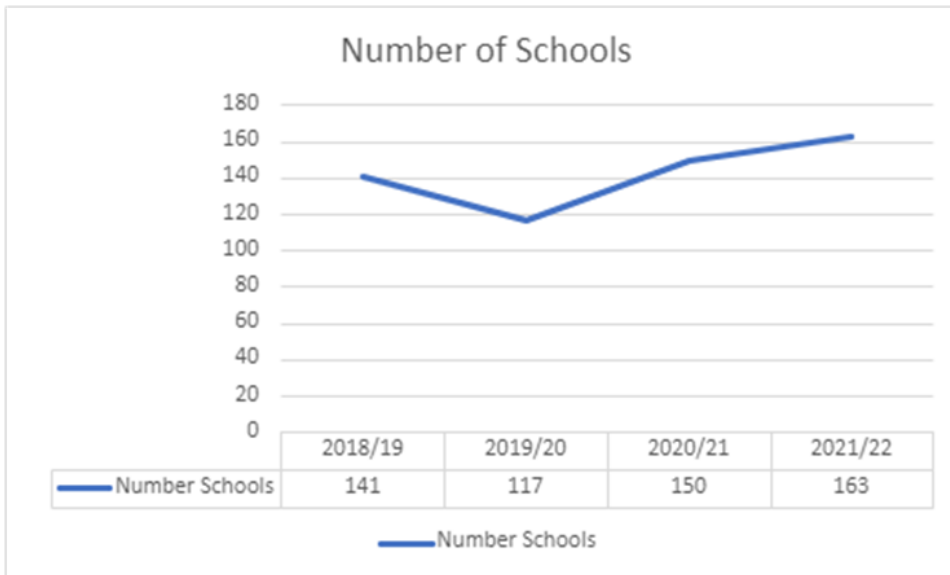
*Please note that all data for 21/22 has been extracted at the end of June 2022, there will have been further small increases before the end of the academic year.

(i) Number of referrals made by schools



The number of referrals received and responded to by HINT shows a 42% increase from 2018/19 to 2021/22, demonstrating that it has been possible to reach more children and young people with SEND in our schools, and that schools have been requesting more support for more children. Demand has been very high this year, reflecting high levels of need in schools post pandemic.

(ii) Number of schools making referrals

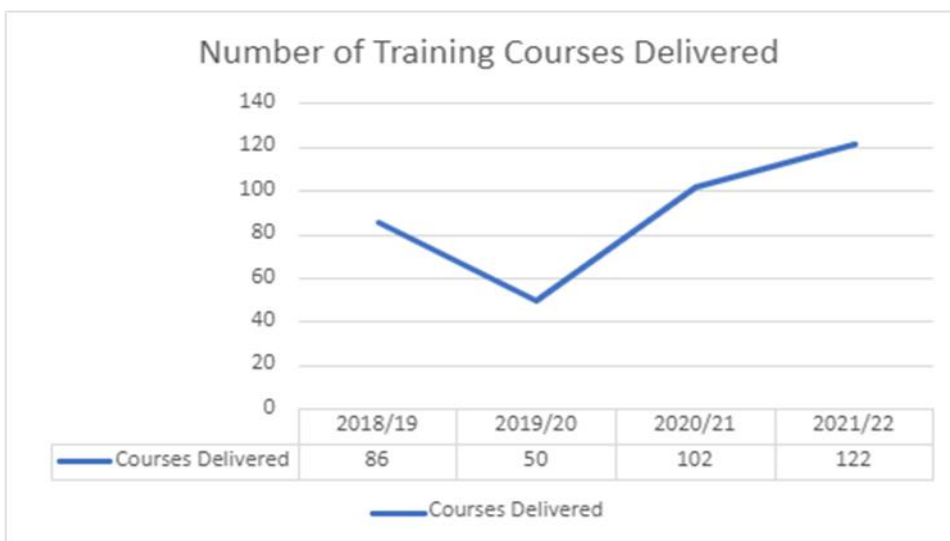


The number of schools who have utilised HINT has shown an increase of 16% when comparing 2018/19 with 2021/22. Of note is that the teams have worked into almost every school across the County during this academic year, a total of 163 out of 167.

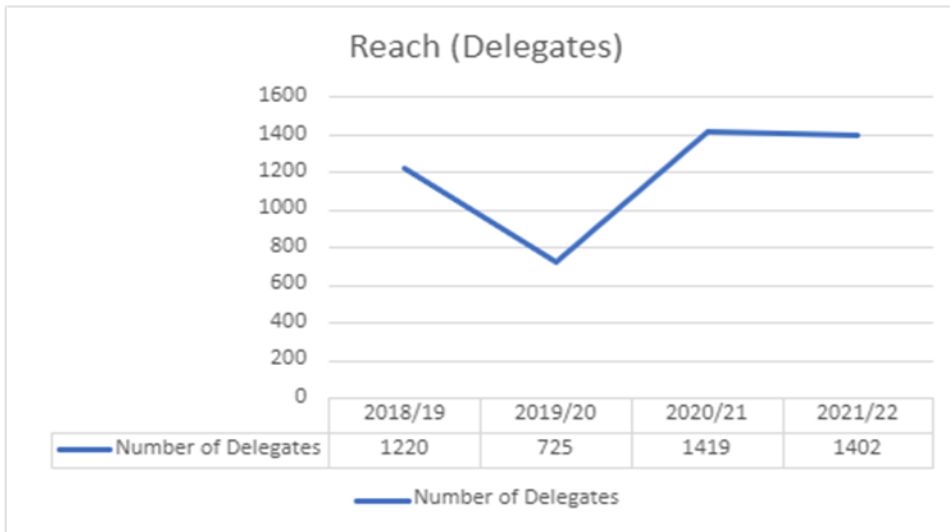
(iii) Workforce Development (Training Delivered into Schools)

Key to the local SEN improvement plan and improving outcomes for children and young people, as defined within the Northumberland SEND Strategy 21-24, is enhancing the confidence within schools and settings to meet need via a high-quality training offer. Training is a crucial aspect of the work of the support teams.

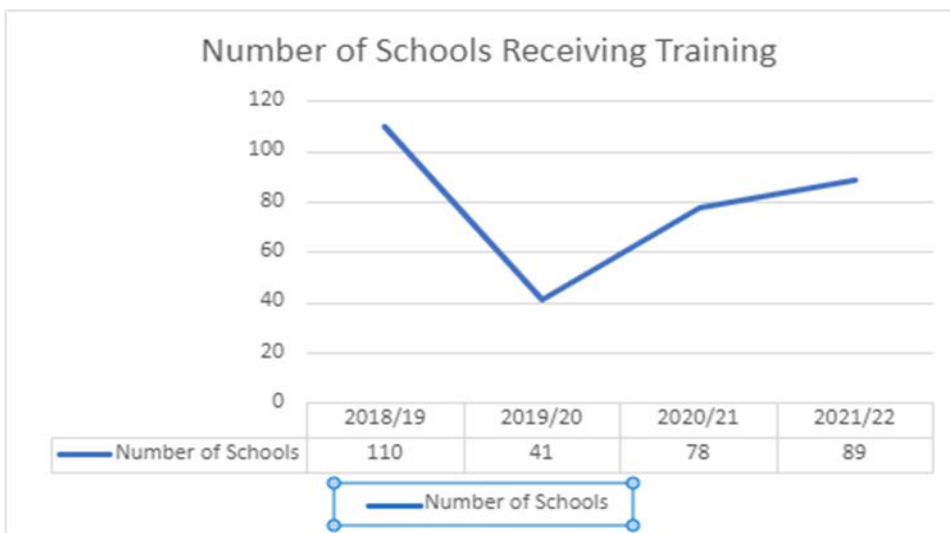
From 2018/19 to 2021/22 there has been a 42% increase in the number of training courses delivered into schools. The training offer is wide and varied, covering both training specifically around the needs of individual learners and importantly whole school approaches to identifying and supporting the different areas of need.



The data below shows an 15% increased reach in terms of delegates from 2018/19 to 2021/22.



Interestingly the number of schools receiving training was higher in 2018/19 than in 2021/22, indicating a 19% decrease. This is likely due in part to a slow return to certain courses which need to be delivered face to face, related to school health and safety practices. A robust virtual offer is in place, and the number of schools receiving training has been rising since the understandable low point in 2019/20. This will continue to be closely monitored as all restrictions have been lifted.

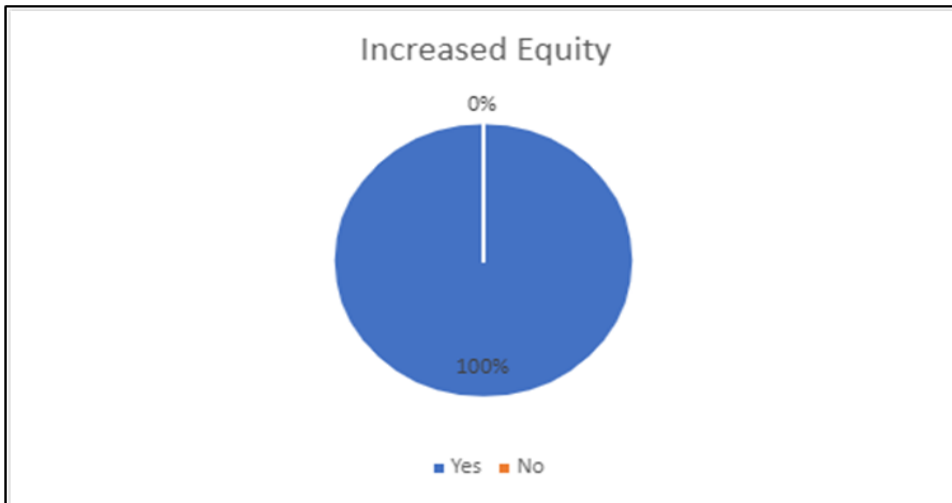


4. School and Staff Views

All work undertaken by the teams is evaluated by parents/carers, young people and schools for individual support work, and by schools/delegates for training. Annual HINT development plans reflect feedback and incorporate views in a coproductive way.

In addition, in May 2022, a survey seeking to understand the views of schools and staff was undertaken to provide insight into the impact of the new model of service delivery. It was completed by 72 respondents, 49 school SENCOs and 23 HINT staff. It posed a series of hypotheses:

- a. *HINT staff are now able to work with more children, in more schools, improving equity of access to specialist support across the County*



Summary of additional comments:

1. Schools and teams report that overall access has vastly improved and there has been greater flexibility in the offer
2. Schools report high levels of satisfaction with the input received
3. Schools have reported high value in resources available via padlets and virtual training
4. 13 of the 49 schools who responded (26%) made reference to longer waiting times in their responses, expressing concern about the capacity within the teams

Capacity within the Autism Team and Emotional Wellbeing and Behaviour Team has increased over the past year. Despite this, changes had to be made to the service offer for the second half of the summer term with a telephone consultation line providing immediate advice, quick tips for immediate implementation and signposting to resources in place of formally accepting new referrals. The teams were still responding to crisis situations.

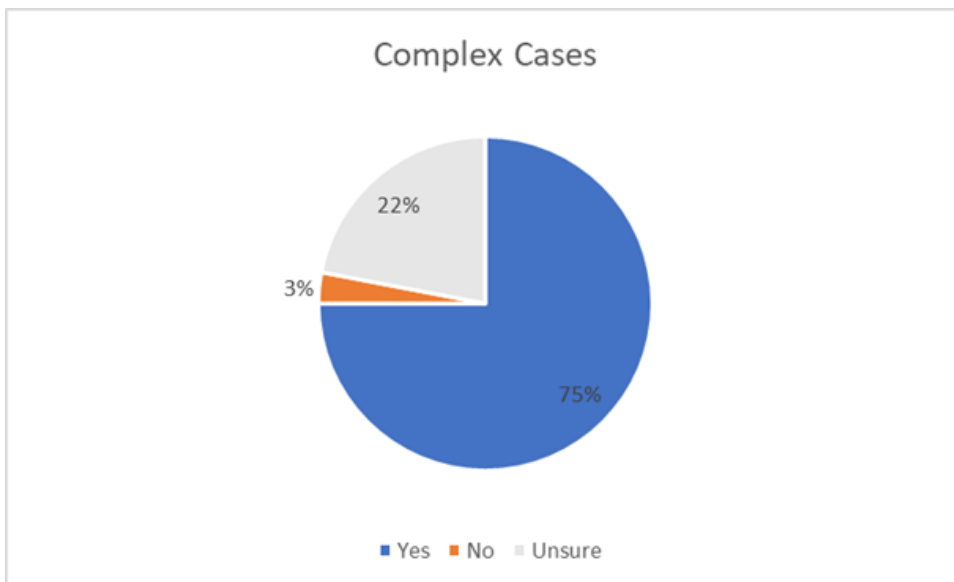
Full feedback from the survey is being considered by NIES Managers in relation to further actions required.

- b. HINT staff are now in a better position to support schools in their understanding, implementation and embedding of the graduated approach than before*



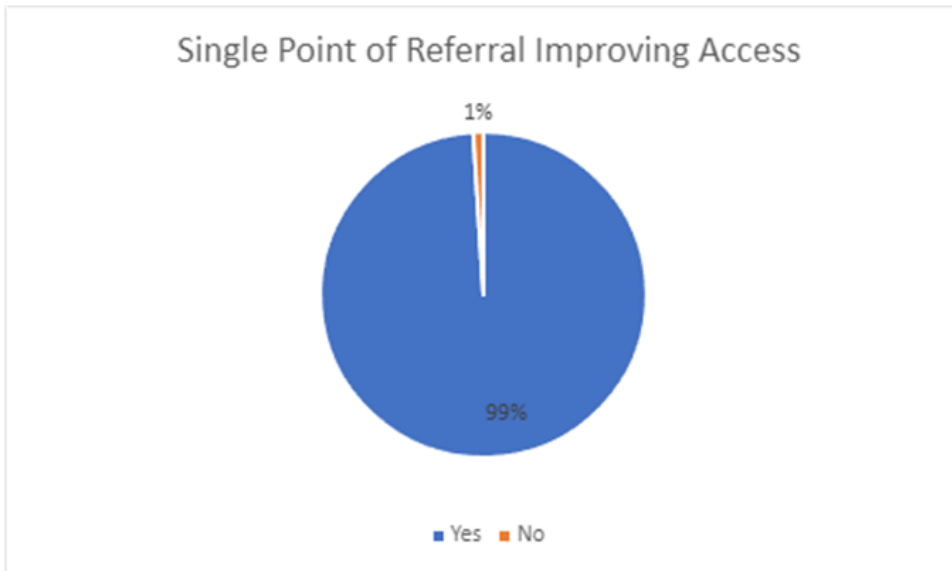
Summary of additional comments:

1. HINT staff reported that they are better placed to make decisions about the best course of action for a child/young person based on professional knowledge and understanding as opposed to the availability of time purchased by the school. They are also able to offer wide ranging training and whole school support
 2. This works optimally when schools are able to make TAs available to observe assessments and interventions so that carry over is possible
 3. Schools reported the benefit of having HINT staff to support levels of confidence of class teachers, working alongside staff to develop classroom practice, the construction of SEN Support Plans, reviewing the strategies already in place and providing recommendations for next steps
 4. 4 of the 49 (8%) schools who responded made reference to feeling the impact of waiting times and staff capacity in the response to this question
- c. *Complex cases can receive support from multiple HINT teams to ensure that support is provided by the most appropriate team(s) at any point in time*



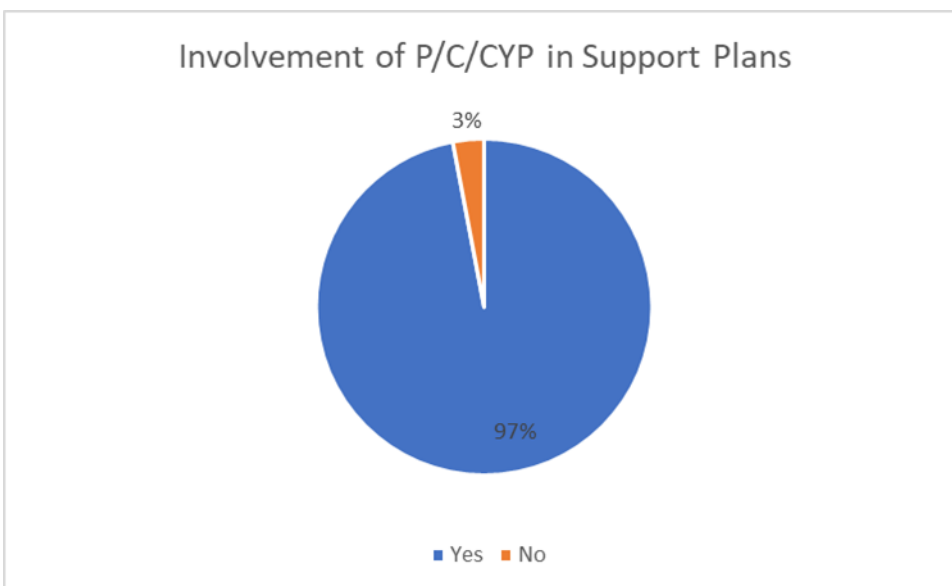
Summary of additional comments:

1. Unsure responses were all as a result of schools not having referred children and young people with complex needs
 2. HINT staff suggested ways to improve internal processes to support this aim
 3. Schools report, in the main, that they feel the benefit of internal referrals within HINT with examples given of where one referral has led to a range of specialists becoming involved, saving time for schools and increasing the advice and guidance provided in a collaborative way. They also note communication between teams being largely good. There were 2 contrary views from schools
 4. 3 out of 49 school responses to this question (6%) made reference to capacity and wait times being an issue
- d. *There is a single point of referral for HINT, which has improved pathways to support*



Summary of additional comments:

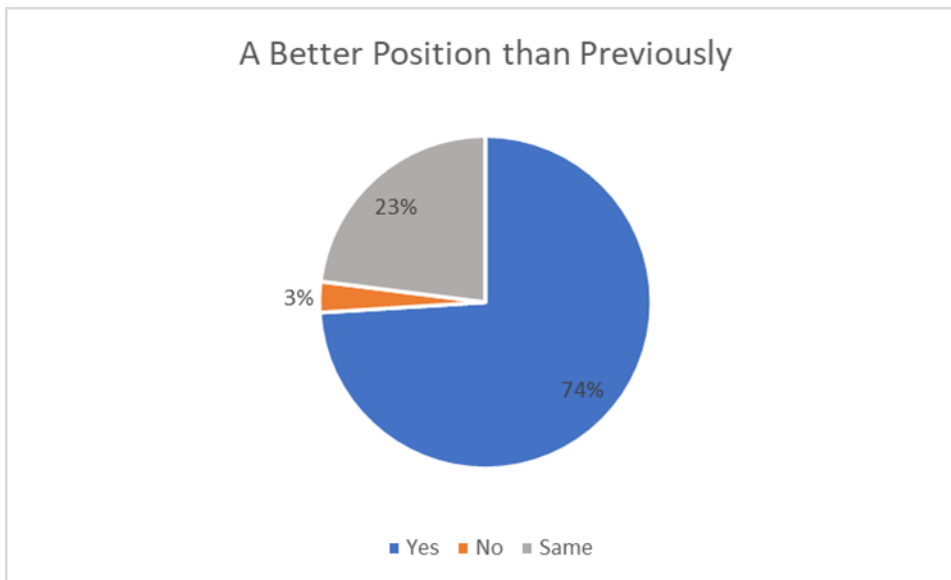
1. Schools reported that this has streamlined referrals from their perspective, saving time and ensuring pathways are smoother. They have found the referral form straightforward in comparison to others
- e. *NCC staff can promote an expectation that parents/carers and young people themselves are involved in work undertaken*



Summary of additional comments:

Schools and HINT staff reported that this is always the aim, and that the teams work effectively in schools to support it, engaging parents/carers and young people in support work

- f. *I am in a better position than previously to meet the individual needs of children and young people*



The negative responses (2) were based on practice being the same as before, and also one school reported the depth of work possible when the services were traded is now not possible due to capacity issues.

5. Conclusion

Schools and HINT Staff report unequivocally that access to the teams has improved since the paid SLA was removed, enabling support to more children and young people, and to training. This is confirmed by referral and activity data which demonstrates reach into almost every school across the County. Increased demand has been evident, and this has led to some delays in schools receiving support.

The objectives set in 2020 have been met, and the recommendation is that HINT should continue to work free at the point of delivery in the longer term. Practice will continually be reviewed in order to continue to maintain high standards of service in the face of increasing demand.

Northumberland has a unique offer in comparison to neighbouring local authorities, and schools continue to describe high impact of the teams. The Northumberland County Council SEND Strategy identifies support for mainstream schools as a key area, and the Education and Skills Priority 3 is ensuring 'inclusive schools as close to home as possible'. Access for all schools to the NIES teams and all the specialist staff therein is an important component in success.

Nicola Taylor
 Head of Inclusive Education Service and SEN Transformation
 August 2022