



Northumberland

County Council

FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

5TH JANUARY 2022

REVIEW OF SEND PROVISION IN NORTHUMBERLAND: SCOPING REPORT

Report of: Jackie Roll, Head of Electoral and Democratic Services

Purpose of report

In November 2022, Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee (FACS) recommend creating a task and finish group to examine the continued increase of children and young people requiring an Education and Healthcare Plan (EHCP). This scoping report will set out the terms of reference, membership and timeline of the proposed Family and Children's Services FACS Task and Finish Group.

Recommendation:

To consider and agree the following:

- **Consider the terms of reference/scope of the review**
- **Agree the membership of the review committee**
- **Agree a timetable for the review to be completed**
- **Agree that the findings of the review will be reported to Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Key issues

Scrutiny Committees should contribute to the development of Council policies and review existing policies, consider proposals for new policies and suggest new policies. As part of their role in policy development, the Committee has requested further investigation into the increase of EHCPs and the need for specialist provision in schools highlighted in the Special Educational Needs or Disability (SEND) Capacity and Planning Strategy.

The SEND Capacity and Place Planning Strategy is updated each year. This is to 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.

The data presented for each school partnership in the strategy 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.

The task and finish group will look ahead to the impacts future demand will have on residents and Council services. The group will consider three key areas to support the wider FACS Committee in their ability to contribute to policy development and make recommendations. The three areas the group will examine are:

Better Identification of needs and support

Data for the last 10 years shows an increasing trend in children and young people being identified as requiring an EHCP and needing specialist support within schools. The group will listen to evidence on the ways in which EHCPs are identified and how support is matched to a child's need.

The group will aim to understand what the reason for the predicted increase may be.

Health and Geographical Inequalities

The determinates of health inequalities are well documented, and many are aware that health and wellbeing is intrinsically linked to education. Children with learning disabilities are at increased risk of exposure to all the major categories of social determinates of poorer physical and mental health. Adolescence and early adulthood are crucial stages for young people in Northumberland and without acceptable educational support the impacts can be lifelong.

The group will explore how inequalities in health and geography can impact SEND learners with an EHCP.

How are needs met outside the County

The strategy highlights Northumberland's commitment to meeting the increasing demand within the County's own provision through innovative ideas and models to increase capacity. FACS understands the importance of being able to cater for all children and young people in Northumberland and supports the Council working with schools in doing this.

The Committee understands the value of learning from others and therefore the group will hear examples of best practice and lessons learnt by partners from outside Northumberland.

Background

Throughout 2022, FACS received several updates on SEND provision and need in Northumberland. In November 2022, FACS OSC received the first version of the SEND Capacity and Place Planning Strategy. The Strategy is a live document and will be updated annually to reflect changes in need and provision.

In Northumberland, the number of children and young people who have been diagnosed as requiring an EHCP 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. Recent data shows there are 78% more children and young people with an EHCP in Northumberland in 2022 than there were in 2013.

There has been a significant increase in the number of children and young people who have been identified with a primary special need of autism (ASD) and/or social emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs.

Terms of Reference

The review aims to examine the reasons behind the reported increase in children and young people who have been identified as needing an EHCP and what more can be done to support them and schools.

The review will include:

- Reviewing the reasons behind the increase in identification over the last 10 years and
- Examining the impact of health and geographical inequalities
- Exploring how the needs of children and young people can be better identified at the earliest opportunity
- Learn how the needs of children and young people are met by partners outside Northumberland.

The Group will be chaired by the Vice-Chair of FACS, Councillor Richard Dodd, and will consist of 3 other elected members and 1 Co-opted member of FACS.

Evidence Gathering

The group will seek to gather evidence from the following sources:

- Headteachers
- Teaching and support staff
- NCC Children’s Services
- Public Health
- Neighbouring Local Authorities
- Local Authorities with examples of best practice
- Department for Education
- Research reports and policy documents
- Other evidence drawn to the attention of the Group

Proposed Timetable for Review

It is proposed that the review will be completed as follows. The dates will be finalised as participants availability is confirmed:

Stage	Participants	Committee	Date
Agreement of ToR		FACS OSC	5 th January 2023
Session 1: Better Identification of needs	Headteachers Teaching and Support Staff	Review Committee	2 nd February 2023
Session 2: Geographical Inequalities	Public Health Team	Review Committee	2 nd March 2023
Session 3: How are needs met outside the County?	Written evidence from other authorities	Review Committee	6 th April 2023
Final Report		FACS OSC	4 th May 2023

Evidence Gathering Sessions

The number of evidence sessions may change. It is possible that evidence given during these sessions may need further follow up in other sessions or via other means such as written responses. The number of required evidence sessions will not be known until the 1st session has taken place.

Consideration of Findings

The findings will be considered in a written report presented to Family and Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on Thursday 4th May 2023.

Conclusion

The scope of the review is designed to ensure that a comprehensive investigation is undertaken to support the knowledge and understanding of the FACS Committee of SEND provision, demand, and future need in Northumberland.

Recommendation

To consider and agree the following:

- **Consider the terms of reference/scope of the review**
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- **Agree that the findings of the review will be reported to Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Background Papers

[SEND Capacity and Place Planning Strategy](#)
[Minutes of FACS OSC – 10 November 2022](#)
[Northumberland Inequalities Plan 2022 - 2032](#)

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