



Northumberland

County Council

FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

7TH SEPTEMBER 2023

SEND STRATEGY PROGRESS REPORT

Report of Audrey Kingham, Executive Director of Children, Young People & Education

Report of Councillor Guy Renner-Thompson, Lead Member for Inspiring Young People

1. Link to Key Priorities of the Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to Tackling inequalities priority within the corporate: plan 2023. In particular, the following actions:

1. Further develop and embed our integrated multi agency approach to working with whole families through the ongoing implementation of Family Hubs so our families will have access to a range of supports from the antenatal period through to children turning 18 (or 25 with SEND)
2. Work towards improving the quality and performance of early year's settings, schools and other educational providers, so that all children and young people no matter their circumstances or educational need have equitable access to education as close to their home communities as possible and achieve the best educational outcomes.

2. Purpose of report

This purpose of this report is to provide an update on progress against actions described within the Northumberland SEND Strategy 2021-2024.

3. **Recommendations**

It is recommended that the Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- 1) Note the contents of the report;
- 2) Support next steps to be taken

4. **Forward Plan**

This report is part of the FACS Work Programme 2023-24

5. **Background**

[Northumberland's SEND Strategy 2021 - 24](#) was launched in June 2021 following a period of consultation with families and practitioners across education, health and social care. The Strategy has four strategic priorities

1. *'Working Together'* focussing on developing Local Offer, participation and engagement and embedding co-production across the system
2. *'Delivering the right support at the right time'* focussing on joint commissioning arrangements and further developing multi-agency working.
3. *'Inclusive education and success for all learners'* focussing on embedding an inclusive ethos across settings, the graduated approach and promoting aspiration, ambition around educational achievement for children and young people with SEND
4. *'Effectively prepare children and young people for adulthood'* focussing on increasing the range of pathways into employment, providing guidance to young people about pathways and multi-agency working as young people move into adulthood.

The attached reviewed and updated SEND Strategy Action Plan details progress made against specific targets. The following is a summary of progress made and next steps.

Strategic Priority 1 : Working Together

Local Offer – A Local Offer gives children and young people with SEND, and their families, information about what support services are available in their local area. Every local authority is responsible for writing a Local Offer and making sure it is available for everyone to see. Over the last year, work has been ongoing both in terms of building the website and in gaining feedback to inform its development from parents, carers and practitioners. The website is expected to go live in the Autumn Term 2023.

Co-production – Our SEND Strategy stated that as a local area we would work to embed co-production as a way of working across the system. We have reviewed co-production at the SEND Board in January 2022 and January 2023. There are a number of best practice examples across the system eg

- Sensory processing
- Family Hubs

While acknowledging the positive progress we have made, it is important to note that more work is required within this area. As a system we are better at listening to the voice of children and young people when we deliver support than listening to the voice of children and young people to inform planning of services. Analysis of the current situation shows that

- Teams are at different stages of development with participation and engagement work
- Support is required to facilitate participation and engagement within teams, pathways and services
- Consideration for ways to embed listening and reporting of the voice of C&YP and their families as part of business as usual

Strategic Priority 2 : Delivering the right support at the right time

Early Help

During 2022/23, a pilot was held to review and then roll out a Team Around the School model which aimed to support schools to identify children they are worried about at the earliest stage and provide further support and advice about available help. Four schools were identified to be part of the pilot and hold 'Team Around the School' clinics. The clinics in 3 of the 4 identified schools are continuing with all schools reporting this has supported their pastoral offer. In addition, one special school still used the clinic set up prior to this pilot and one additional secondary school is now offered a clinic with the Early Help First Contact Team.

Between November 21 and July 2023 over 24 clinics have taken place, 126 students were discussed, of which 28% were recorded as having emotional health needs and or SEND. This has enabled children, young people and their families to be connected to the right support at the earliest opportunity.

A new team has been developed to support education providers to initiate Early Help Assessments and facilitate Team Around the Family meeting. This is a significant investment of 6 Education EHA workers. The aim was to reach 200 children with EHAs initiated by school in the 22/23 academic year. At the end of the summer term there have been 420 children with education initiated EHAs.

Sensory processing need service

ICB commissioned 3 posts – Band 7 OT, Band 6 OT, Band 3 Technical Instructor to deliver an online support hub, training and support and assessments for those with sensory processing difficulties that impact on daily living.

Aims of the pathway are to

- Increase knowledge, skills and confidence of parents / carers and education staff to support children to regulate their sensory behaviours.
- Enable parents / carers and education staff to employ proactive and supportive strategies to de-escalate challenging behaviours and reduce episodes of self-injurious behaviour and aggression.

- Promote an understanding and awareness of a child's sensory needs and supporting them to develop self-regulatory strategies, which is the foundation for children developing independence in life skills.

Staff are in post and a multi-agency steering group, which includes the Parent Carer Forum are overseeing the development of the online support hub, the referral pathway and process and launch of the pathway. This new pathway will be operational by the end of December 2023.

Graduated response for mental health

Following Covid, identification and meeting the needs of children and young people with social, emotional and behavioural needs has been a continual area of multi-agency focus, from supporting schools to develop a strong pastoral support offer to accessing specialist mental health support.

Referrals to all services have increased significantly putting pressure on services abilities to meet waiting times. A multi-agency 'graduated response for mental health' workstream has been established which brings partners together to produce a clear local offer of support across all the different services, teams and organisations that deliver mental health support. This has resulted in

- The publication of 'Northumberland Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Strategy 2023-26'
- A strategic steering group of senior leads from across all organisations and Northumberland Parent Carer Forum which oversees the delivery of the strategic action plan and has committed to jointly share data to enable a whole system response to understand and meet need
- An operational working group which coordinates the delivery of the action plan

As part of the work on the graduated response to meeting mental health need it has been identified that there is an over reliance on accessing support from NHS and Public Health providers and that support from the VCSE (Voluntary, community and social enterprise) sector is not as well understood or utilised. Following a review of the current graduated response, task and finish groups will be established to work with schools, parent/carers, children and young people and professionals to coproduce how each group would want this information presented and how they want to access it to ensure the offer is accessible and easy to understand.

Strategic Priority 3: Inclusive education and success for all learners

A significant amount of support work has happened over the previous two years to support the consistent implementation of the graduated response across schools in Northumberland. This has included

- Engagement with Whole Education SEND, with 70 schools engaged in a peer coaching and school SEND improvement project.
- Development of an 'in-house- approach to delivering the project into year 3, with over 140 schools and settings signed up. 'Evaluate my School' will be used to self-evaluate and plan actions against 7 key areas in relation to SEND. LA leaders can view evaluations and actions, analysing progress over time.

- SEND reviews which have followed the Whole School SEND format to date, with 9 having taken place 2022-23. From 2023-24 this has been developed to quality assure Evaluate My School input, further ensuring confidence in the evaluation of SEND practice across Northumberland.
- Lead SENCoS continue to support colleagues across settings in their partnerships through informal access and SENCo networks.
- Whole school training, SENCo conferences, support around individual learners and needs
- Analysis of applications for Education Health Care Needs Assessments
- Co-production of SEND support plans and EHC needs assessment request formats, ensuring a more consistent and high-quality approach across Northumberland.

From this we know that many schools have a good understanding of the graduated response, understand the importance of early identification and the need to put a co-produced SEN Support Plan in place that is robustly monitored. These schools use the support services available and act on the advice provided.

Assurance systems are in place to support the identification of schools and settings who require support around inclusion, including a tableau dashboard, training records (school attendance at NCC training), school SEND reviews, service engagement analysis, SEND placement panel, inclusion panel, Ofsted reports.

The introduction of SEND Advisors has supported increased understanding of the graduated response, what good looks like and the use of reasonable adjustments. The three SEND Advisors are seconded to the Local Authority on a part time basis from their permanent roles as SENCoS in Northumberland schools.

There are a number of Specialist Advisory Teaching Services which support schools and settings around whole school training and support for individual learners. Staff training has been delivered to an increasing number of school staff, based on school feedback and SENCo survey responses. A total number of 1677 staff were trained in the identification and meeting needs of learners with Autism, Emotional Wellbeing, Specific Learning Difficulties and Speech Language and Communication needs in the academic year 21-22.

From the number of requests for EHC needs assessment for neurodivergent learners we know that some mainstream schools experience difficulties providing an inclusive environment for these learners. Referral to the Autism Support Service for support for individual children or young people from schools and other settings increased by 80% between 2021-22 and 2022-23, whilst whole school requests for training and support increased by nearly 200% year on year. As a result, the service is currently under redesign for roll out September 2023, seeking to proactively engage colleagues in educational settings in effective training to promote inclusive, autism accepting practice as well as clear evidence-based approaches to supporting individual autistic difference.

NCC education and children's social care teams work together to coordinate support and challenge to schools and settings across a number of areas including attendance and exclusions and suspensions. Individual school data supports challenge and support being identified, including targeting reduction in suspension and permanent where the SEN Team

Strategic Priority 4: Effectively prepare children and young people for adulthood

Post 16 offer and pathways to employment

Historically, a proportion of young people have chosen Post 16 offers in out of County placements such as Newcastle College, Gateshead College and Tynemet College. This is partly due to geography and easier transport links, particularly so for those young people who live close to the North Tyneside, Newcastle and Gateshead borders. Over the last few years, a focus of work in this area has been to increase provision within Northumberland, creating opportunities to study closer to home with now 71% of Post 16 learners with EHCPs being educated within Northumberland.

During 2022-23 a pilot initiative was launched with three special schools to focus upon working toward work and career readiness, each school having developed an action plan based upon an NCC self-assessment framework. This has allowed NCC to better understand the curriculum that is preparing our young people for careers and how we can support our schools in doing so and will in time allow us to build a closer community of education providers working on this agenda.

In July 2023 the first Northumberland SEND Employment Forum took place in the council chamber at County Hall. A diverse range of attendees were present including Northumbria Water, NE Local Enterprise Partnership, Bernicia, Akzo Nobel, Quotient Sciences, Northumbria Health Care Trust and a wide range of SEND education providers and other stakeholders. A range of young people with SEND spoke about how they had overcome challenges to enter meaningful careers, their words were immensely powerful and the highlight of the event. One of the most reassuring aspects of this forum was the networking conversation that extended long beyond the event drawing to a close, the creation of these connections is what will make this an effective forum to drive change in our approach to work-based education and careers for our young people with SEND. A second forum is under development for October 2023 which will focus upon actions to create work base opportunities for young people, and this will then continue on a quarterly basis.

Creating opportunity to increase work experience placements within Northumbria Health Care Trust, on both a physical and virtual basis to boost inclusivity, is work in progress. NCC are partnering with Health Education England's Choices College work experience team to facilitate this.

NCC are working closer than ever with our post 16 SEND education providers on Supported Internship developments, priority actions are to better connect the EHC planning system, SEND careers team, our post 16 SEND providers, and their individual offers so that more young people understand this pathway and aspire to study on a supported internship. It is anticipated the number of Supported Internships in 2023-24 will be circa double that of 2022-23.

NCC are supporting and challenging our providers to do more in the county and support more of our young people to continue their study in Northumberland. Working more closely has seen a change in direction with more young people attending and studying at providers within Northumberland. This is directly attributable to the priorities set with Education and Skills and the work of the sector led group reviewing and planning provision and destinations in the county

Northumberland County Council has now had a contract with Globalbridge, the award-winning Ed -Tech opportunity platform provider, for two years and is extending this contract for another three years. The platform provides a way that young people can record, log and share their strengths to share with employers. The platform is now being offered to special schools and uptake is starting to be realised in some of our special schools.

Northumberland Skills continue to increase Post 16 places for young people with SEND, from 6 in 21/22, to 26 in 22/23 to 51 secured places for 23/24. A 3-step approach is being implemented

- Entry level 2: Building Resilience and a Self Confidence
- Entry Level 3: Sector specific introductions (Taster pathways)
- Level 1: Occupational Studies – Dedicated Sector Specific Programmes aligned to Post 16 FE (Construction, Engineering, Business Admin, Digital, Childcare)

Conclusion

This report details the work undertaken against key priority areas identified within Northumberland SEND Strategy 2021 - 2024. The strategy was written during Covid and reflects the challenges that were prevalent at the time.

In April this year, Ofsted and CQC published the new framework and handbook for [Area SEND inspections \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk). This has extended the remit of the SEND Inspection framework to include Alternative Provision. Work will begin in September 2023 to plan and undertake listening and engagement work, alongside a refresh of the SEND JSNA to set new strategic priorities which will include Alternative Provision to reflect the national change to guidance to local areas.

6. Decision options:

It is recommended that the Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- Note the contents of the report;
- Support next steps to be taken

7. Implications

Policy	Developments detailed within the report outline steps being made towards strategic objectives.
Finance and value for money: eg: What are the financial implications and how will this be funded.	Efficient systems and processes within SEND underpin the transparent and equitable allocation of SEND finances. Currently there is no need for additional funding.
Legal	The SEND Code of Practice places a number of statutory requirements on Local Authorities and CCGs. These are detailed within the Children and Families Act 2014 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulation 2014.
Procurement	NA
Human Resources	NA
Property	Capacity planning for the provision of specialist educational placements may involve capital development.
Equalities Act: is a full impact assessment required and attached?" Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	SEND promotes the inclusion of children and young people within their schools and communities.
Risk Assessment	There is a risk that services will not be effective or efficient if the governance and strategy is not robustly monitored.
Crime & Disorder	Youth offending and SEND populations overlap
Customer Consideration	The views of children, young people and their parents / carers are central to developments and improvements within SEND.
Carbon reduction	SEND school transport arrangements are linked.
Health and Wellbeing	Supporting the health and wellbeing of children and young people with SEND aged 0-25 is a core component of the SEND Code of Practice and associated legislation.
Wards	NA

8. Background papers

Links are embedded within the report.

9. Links to other key reports already published

[SEND Capacity Planning Strategy](#)

10. Author and Contact Details

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11. Final Sign Off by Statutory Officers

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Executive Director of Resources and Transformation (S151 Officer)	Jan Willis
Lead Member for Inspiring Young People	Guy Renner-Thompson
Executive Director for Children, Young People and Education	David Street, Director of Education, SEND & Skills on behalf of Audrey Kingham
Chief Executive	Dr Helen Paterson