



Local Area Inspection of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Northumberland



50% of the population live in 3% of the land area (South East Northumberland).

Population of 316,000 with just under 60,000 aged 17 or under.

18% of children and young people live in child poverty.

14.5% of primary aged pupils and 13.2% of secondary aged pupils are eligible for free school meals.

Population density of 63 residents per km² - lower than any other LA in the North East and the lowest top tier local authority in England.

98% of the population is White British.

Our Schools



- Northumberland has 123 first and primary schools, 42 middle and secondary schools, 9 maintained special schools and one pupil referral unit.
- There are three independent schools in Northumberland (including one independent special school) and one non-maintained special school. 19 schools are academies or free schools.
- All of the special schools are judged good or better by Ofsted.
- Northumberland's secure children's home, Kyloe House, was judged good by Ofsted in July 2016.
- 5 mainstream schools are judged to require special measures with one mainstream school judged to have serious weaknesses.

Headlines



- Northumberland has a marginally higher than average proportion of pupils in primary or secondary education with SEND (**16.8%** compared to 14.9%).
- The proportion of pupils in primary or secondary education with a statement or EHCP **is at the 2015 National Average of 2.9%**. There has been a slight downward trend since 2012. **1679** learners aged 0-25 have a statement or EHCP. This trend will change as the rate of request for new EHC Plans since 2015 is higher than the comparable rate of request for SEN Statements until 2014.
- **7707** learners are eligible for SEN support. The proportion of pupils eligible for SEN support **is above the 2015 national average (15.8%, compared to 12.1%)**.

Headlines



- The most prevalent areas of need identified in Northumberland are Speech, Language and Communication (SLCN), moderate learning difficulties (MLD) and social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH).
- The proportion of pupils with a hearing impairment is slightly above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with no specialist assessment or identified as “other” type of need is much lower than the national average. This is a positive indicator, reflecting that fewer pupils in Northumberland are identified as SEND without a specific assessment of their individual needs.
- the proportion of pupils with MLD attending specialist provision is lower than the national average, reflecting that pupils with MLD are more likely to remain in mainstream education.
- The number of children who have significant medical needs and/or disabilities from birth is increasing. This appears to be due, in part, to improvements in survival from increasing levels of prematurity.



- There is a higher than average proportion of pupils identified with needs for Speech/Language/Communication (SLCN) support in mainstream primary schools (+7.9%), with a lower proportion of pupils identified with specific learning difficulties (SpLD -5.8%).
- Within mainstream secondary schools, the proportion of those with specific learning difficulties is much lower than the national average (-12.7%).
- Some of this variation reflects a position where, because of the historical approach to specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia in Northumberland, some pupils have been identified as MLD or SLCN rather than SpLD. This is an issue which is now being addressed through our SEND specialist support services.

Strengths

Early Identification and Intervention

- % of children receiving health screening checks is high
- Integrated working between education settings and health visitors is well established and continually improving
- Early Years Inclusion Toolkit and support from Area SENCO/Early Years team valued by PVI settings
- Portage team highly regarded by families, instigating joint multi-disciplinary plans for children aged 0-5
- Sensory Impairment Team provide a much valued service to children and young people from birth
- Early intervention through multi-agency working is developing well with increasing numbers of early help assessments from a range of agencies, including good support from the school nursing service.

Strengths

Early Identification and Intervention

- The local authority invests significantly more than most local authorities in services to support schools with children and young people with emerging needs. There is a large infrastructure of SEND specialist support including Portage, Educational Psychology, Hearing/Visual Impairment, Autism and Behaviour Support, Literacy and Communication Support. Feedback from schools indicates services are valued.
- Children's Centres provide a range of support and early intervention for those with SEND— families report a positive experience and improving outcomes for their children.

Strengths

Support for Children and Young People with the Most Complex Needs

- Disabled Children's Team provides an excellent service to children with moderate/severe learning difficulties and physical disabilities and is highly regarded by schools and families. The recent SIF (April 2016) recognised this.
- The health offer through Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust is judged outstanding (CQC May 2016).
- Excellent arrangements to support transitions to adult services for children with complex needs (CQC May 2016).
- Health action plan and joint North of Tyne Hospital Passport for young adults with learning disabilities.
- Complex care pathway including crisis intervention work by the Learning Disability Community Nursing Team has significantly reduced admissions to inpatient services.

Strengths

Specialist Education Provision for Children and Young People with High Levels of Need

- Strong feedback from families to indicate their satisfaction with specialist provision for education in Northumberland.
- All specialist provisions within Northumberland are providing a good or better quality of education for children and young people.
- Special schools providing support to mainstream schools, formally through Teaching School (The Dales) but also through informal partnership arrangements.

Strengths

Support for SEND learners who are looked after and in Youth Justice

- Highly regarded service for the Education and Support of Looked After Children (ESLAC) with evidence of strongly improving outcomes for looked after children with special educational needs.
- Highly effective Youth Offending Team which carefully screens all young people entering custody for special educational needs and co-ordinates a multi-agency intervention plan. HM Inspectorate of Probation described their work as “exceptional” in June 2016.

Improvements and Successes

Engaging with families

- SEND Information, Advice and Support Service is valued by families.
- A track record of reaching negotiated solutions with families - numbers of cases requiring mediation or reaching tribunal are very low and well below national average.
- Strong evidence of consultation with families regarding the local offer.
- Good relationship with the network of parent/carer forums (In It Together).
- Increasing evidence of co-production with parents/carers and families – paper guide to local services (2016), survey for use with parents/carers in the EHC process.

Improvements and Successes

Engaging with families

- Parents/carers have a strategic voice in the development of provision with an equal role in the SEND Strategic Board. Parents and carers are providing input into a number of task and finish working groups focused on improving key aspects of SEND provision.
- County-wide survey (2016) of parents/carers to evaluate provision for SEND (2016), co-produced with *In It Together* which has resulted in a broader range of parental feedback to inform improvements.
- Established Parent/Carer/Professional Forum which allows parents to provided direct feedback to professionals.

Improvements and Successes

Joint working/commissioning

- DCS/Deputy Chief Executive has strategic oversight of adult services, children's services and public health.
- Partnership agreement between the local authority and Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (judged outstanding).
- Formal partnership for the delivery of services for health and social care has resulted in improved transition support between children's and adults' services.
- Integrated commissioning hub between children's social care, CCG and public health – led to developments such as jointly commissioned short breaks for children with life-limiting conditions and a joint commissioning post for mental health and wellbeing.
- Joint commissioning arrangements between the 12 North East local authorities and the CCGs for the placements of children and young people in non-maintained and independent specialist provision (NE12).
- Establishment of shared accountability and monitoring arrangements through the SEND strategic board which includes LA education and social care senior officers, CCG lead officers, headteacher representation from primary, secondary and specialist schools and parent/carer representation.

Improvements and Successes

Education, Health and Care assessments

- Significant improvement in the proportion of EHC assessments completed within statutory timescales (20 weeks). Performance for the past 6 months has been above the national average, however this remains a target area for 2016-17.
- Process of transferring from Statements to EHC plans is on track for completion by the deadline of March 2018.
- Completion of transfers within statutory timescales has improved significantly and is now at 90%.
- Improved process for application for EHC assessment/ high-needs top-up funding which ensures engagement with the child/young person and their family at an earlier stage and which focuses on the school's graduated response to needs.

Improvements and Successes

Improving outcomes

- A significant reduction in fixed term exclusions of SEN support pupils (from 5.8% in 2014 to 2.7% in 2016, well below the 2015 national average for similar pupils of 5.2%) and for learners with an EHCP (from 7.2% in 2014 to 3.3% in 2016 – below the national average for similar pupils of 6.4%).
- The proportion of learners with SEND subject to permanent exclusions is below the national average and, for learners with SEN support, was 0% in 2015-16.
- Improving trend of % of children reaching the expected level at the end of the Early Years (from 17% in 2013 to 34% in 2016) and now above the national average for similar pupils.
- Significantly improving trend of performance for pupils with SEN support in reaching the expected level in phonics at the end of Year 1 in 2016– an increase of 10% since 2015 and now 13% above the national average for similar pupils at 55%.

Improvements and Successes

Improving outcomes

- Achievement of pupils with a Statement/EHCP at the end of KS2 was in the top quartile compared to other local authorities in 2015, an improving trend of +12% over two years.
- The proportion of SEN support pupils reaching expected levels at the end of KS2 in 2015 was just above the national average for similar pupils, increasing by 14% over two years.
- Whilst outcomes are generally weaker at KS4 and are a key priority for improvement, the proportion of high needs EHCP learners achieving 5 A*-C grades including English and Maths at KS4 has doubled from 6% in 2014 to 12.5% in 2016 and is above the national average for similar pupils (based on 2015 national average).

Improvements and Successes

Improving outcomes

- **Performance at KS2 can not be compared to previous years, this is due to the significant changes to how pupils are assessed.**
- **Outcomes at SEN are now compared with that of National Average All Other, this has meant that the gap has widened, with achievement well below National Average**
- **Whilst outcomes are generally weaker at KS4 and are a key priority for improvement, the proportion of high needs EHCP learners achieving 5 A*-C grades including English and Maths at KS4 has increased from 7% in 2014 to 12.5% in 2016, however changes to performance measures has meant that pupils are performing considerably lower than National Average All Other**

Key Priorities

Improving provision for children and young people with social, emotional and mental health needs

- Some improvement to waiting lists for children and young people with strong performance in 2015-16 compared to national averages. Whilst it remains in line with minimum standards, the improvement has not been consistently sustained and senior officers are closely monitoring commissioning arrangements and working with NTW to address the position.
- Increasing the capacity of the Primary Mental Health Worker team to provide additional support to children and young people through schools and colleges.
- Joint working between health, social care and education colleagues to provide training for front line staff in schools.
- Transformation plan for Children's emotional wellbeing and mental health.
- Key focus of a SEND strategic board workstream.

Key Priorities

Improving assessments and provision for children with specific learning difficulties (dyslexia)

- Historical position of not using the term “dyslexia” has led to schools and families feeling the support for this specific learning difficulty needs to be improved.
- SEND strategic board workstream has brought together partners from regional charities, parent/carer forum, headteachers, Educational Psychology services and local authority officers.
- New approach to assessment of needs, pathway for support and clearly outlined programme of action on track for Autumn 2016.

Key Priorities

Engaging more comprehensively with children and young people to ensure that their views inform our local offer.

- Strong evidence of individual services collecting and acting on feedback, such as the Sensory Support Service and the School Nursing Service.
- Some system-wide surveys to capture views of children and young people, such as the Health and Behaviour Related Questionnaire commissioned through Public Health.
- We have identified the need to have a more comprehensive approach to capturing the views of children and young people with SEND and the SEND strategic board have commissioned a workstream group to explore and address this.

Key Priorities

Improving outcomes for children and young people at KS2 and 4 – particularly those with SEN support

- Whilst there is evidence of some improving trends for learners with the highest level of needs, the performance of pupils with SEN support is not good enough at KS2 or at KS4.
- Some learners are receiving education in mainstream schools and academies which are not providing a good standard of education.
- The local authority is increasing the support and challenge to schools in relation to the outcomes achieved by pupils with SEN support via the School Improvement Partner programme.
- Improved training/support offer for SENCOs
- Facilitating school to school support for SEND provision
- Targeted work with lowest performing schools.
- Intensive focus on persistent absence of pupils with SEN support.

Key Priorities

Improving post-16 outcomes and the proportion of adults with learning disabilities in employment

- The proportion of 19 year olds with a statement or EHC plan achieving a level 2 qualification has steadily increased and in 2015 was well above the national average for similar pupils. The % of learners attaining a level 3 qualification has improved and is broadly in line with the national average for similar pupils.
- However, the proportion of young people with SEN support achieving L2 and L3 qualifications by age 19 is too low and is not improving. This is a key issue for improvement.
- Our proportion of young people not in education, employment or training has improved from 80% to 86% but still needs to improve further to exceed the national average and give our learners the best chance of future success.
- The proportion of adults with learning disabilities in employment has been too low and whilst this has improved significantly from 2.7% in 2014-15 to 6.6% in 2015-16, we recognise there is still work to do to improve this to above the national average.
- We have reorganised Northumberland Adult Learning Service to provide an intensive focus on post-16 learners with learning difficulties or disabilities.
- We have established a Preparation for Adulthood working group to explore increased opportunities for joint working across education and social care services.

Key Priorities

Place planning for children and young people with SEND

- Our specialist provisions are at capacity and the geography of our County presents particular challenges.
- The local authority does not have the power to open new schools to meet need.
- The local authority recognises the role it plays in facilitating developments within the existing school estate and through supporting the establishment of free schools.
- The local authority has commissioned a range of work to support school partnerships to explore new opportunities to expand existing strong provision and to ensure that a robust analysis of the current school estate and projected future need is in place so that a clear strategy can be agreed for place planning from 2017-2020.