

Inclusive Northumberland An Area Wide Approach to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)



NORTHUMBERLAND
Northumberland County Council

NHS
Northumberland
Clinical Commissioning Group

Northumbria Healthcare **NHS**
NHS Foundation Trust



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1. Introduction

1. Northumberland has a strong record of inclusive education and continues to be committed to meeting the needs of the most vulnerable learners either in or as close to their home communities as possible. Over time the needs of children have inevitably changed and to ensure that we continue to be able to meet the needs of learners we need to continually review and develop our provision. Our ambition is to deliver the best education possible for all our children including those with SEND.
2. This document sets out priorities to enhance and improve our inclusion arrangements and will be delivered in conjunction with our partners. It builds on positive change in the education system in Northumberland over the last five years. That development takes place in the context of a new legislative framework for the delivery of education for children with special educational needs and a strong collaboration between all those concerned for the delivery of high quality education in Northumberland.
3. Developing new provision to meet current needs is at the core of the area wide strategy. It focuses on these as core activities, including building the capacity of all our schools and services to meet children's needs and ensuring that we work more effectively with our partners and families.
4. We will keep the inclusion strategy under review ensuring that in the future our approach to inclusion is dynamic and flexible, recognising that children change and their needs change.
5. To meet our ambition for children and young people we have set a challenging agenda for improvement through the priorities of the Education and Skills Service (2017-2020) and Northumberland's SEND Strategy 2017 for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities.
6. The provision available for children and young people has not always kept up with the changing environment and demands. In particular we need to ensure that the strategies we have in place appropriately address:
 - the changed profile of children being assessed as in need of additional support to meet their educational needs;
 - the governance arrangements across the schools of Northumberland which have changed over the past five years, with the development of academies and free schools;
 - the significant changes to the financial environment of schools and the County Council;
 - the changes introduced by The Children and Families Act (2014) which reformed the way support for children with special educational needs is provided.

2. Principles and Priorities

Vision for inclusion

7. Children, young people and their families should expect education, health and care professionals in Northumberland to deliver the best available provision to meet a child's needs. This will be actively supported by all other agencies interested in the wellbeing and achievement of children, particularly the voluntary and independent health and care agencies.
8. We recognise that children thrive most within their own family and local community where they have access to learning with peers in their nearest school. Where this is not possible provision to meet needs should be as close to the child's home community as possible to support family and social life.

Principles for inclusion

9. The following principles underpin our approach to inclusion:
 - all learners have an entitlement to full time education;
 - Northumberland's learning providers will meet the needs of children and young people as close to their home communities as possible;
 - early identification of need and intervention to meet this need is the most effective way of ensuring that children and young people achieve;
 - all children should experience equality in access to high quality learning that meets their needs and can address any requirements relating to social background, culture and ethnicity;
 - inclusion is a collaborative activity which requires the engagement of children, families and providers;
 - inclusive values develop and evidence respect for difference, tolerance and understanding;
 - all learners should be able to access learning which offers the appropriate challenge and support;
 - inclusive education should support children and young people to make progress towards fulfilling their potential and assist them in achieving their aspirations;
 - successful inclusion is a shared responsibility which requires the agreement of learners, families and providers (including health education and social care) who must engage with the underpinning policy and legislative framework.

Priorities for inclusion

10. The priorities for Inclusive Northumberland are shaped by the challenges and gaps in current provision. The key challenges are set out below:
 - the need to further develop specialism within mainstream schools to meet the needs of children with additional needs, including SEND;

- a lack of good quality alternative provision in all areas of the County for children and young people from ages 5 to 16 presenting with challenging behaviours;
- a lack of good quality long term alternative or vocational provision for pupils at Key Stage 4;
- a gap in health provision for children and young people who need support to address their social, emotional and mental health needs;
- challenges of rurality are not always addressed;
- in some cases children are still waiting too long for assessment of their needs.

11. In response to these challenges the following priorities will drive the implementation of Inclusive Northumberland (including priorities identified in the Northumberland SEND Strategy 2017):
- a. Develop alternative provision and associated specialist provision for children and young people with behavioural, social, emotional and mental health needs.
 - b. Establish structures which allow parents and carers a meaningful voice in service development.
 - c. Ensure that through early intervention the needs of children and young people can be identified and action taken to meet their needs as soon as possible.
 - d. Ensure that children and young people who are looked after receive the support they need to achieve their best.
 - e. Ensure that there are sufficient and appropriate progression opportunities, both academic and vocational, for vulnerable learners when they leave school.
 - f. Ensure that there is sufficient and appropriate provision for children and young people who are at risk of exclusion or who have been permanently excluded.
 - g. Examine the level and causes of persistent absenteeism among pupils who have SEND with a view to supporting schools to address this issue.

3. National Context and Statutory Framework

12. The main pieces of legislation which inform Inclusive Northumberland are set out below:

Vulnerable children: [Children and Social Work Act 2017](#)

School exclusion: [Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, statutory guidance 2012](#)

Admissions: [School Admissions Code, December 2014](#)

Attendance and absence: [Children missing education, September 2016.](#)

[School exclusion, February 2015](#)

Behaviour and discipline: [School behaviour and attendance: parental responsibility measures, January 2015](#)

Alternative provision: [Alternative provision, June 2016](#)

Ofsted: [inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers, and the LSCB, February 2017](#)

[School Inspection framework](#)

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities: [The Children and Families Act \(2014\)](#) confirmed the Virtual School Headteacher as a statutory role. The legislation also introduced a new [SEND Code of Practice](#) which came into force on 1st April 2015.

Equality and Diversity: [The Equality Act \(2010\)](#) introducing the Public Sector Equality Duty which applies to schools/academies and education settings.

4. Education Mechanisms across Northumberland to Promote Inclusion

13. In Northumberland communities are widely dispersed and often remote and this creates challenges when trying to meet the needs of all learners either in or close to their own communities.
14. The Education & Skills Service and our schools/academies are in agreement that there is a need to adjust and improve the provision for vulnerable learners with a focus on pupils aged 14 to 16. This inevitably impacts on outcomes for young people and the likelihood of engaging in education, employment and training at 16.
15. Some children have stubborn difficulties due to mental health issues, special educational needs or chaotic lifestyles that mainstream schools find it hard to solve. This is having a particularly disruptive impact on the learning of young pupils of primary age. According to our pupil census data (January 2017) more than 1300 learners have an identified social emotional and mental health difficulty (BESD) and up to 300 of these learners have statements/EHCPlans. Four secondary/High schools have behaviour rated less than good by Ofsted.
16. The arrangement of school partnerships in Northumberland enables schools to work together creatively to find more and different ways to meet the challenges posed by these learners. Having most often only one high school in the partnership and the rurality of the County means that schools face significant challenges particularly if multi-academy trusts are not present.
17. **Alternative providers:** The authority has 14 Alternative Providers on its procurement framework to meet the needs of children and young people from key stages 1-4 who have been permanently excluded from school. Those 14 providers are subject to rigorous quality assurance from the children's Commissioning Team and Education & Skills Service.
18. Each alternative provider receives an annual school improvement partner visit from an externally commissioned HMI. The Local Authority monitors the subsequent action plan to ensure that improvement is continuous and standards meet expectations, including those of the LSCB.
19. Schools across the County are provided with information about each provider so that they can make informed decisions when commissioning places for pupils on roll at their schools. Schools can choose to refer to the framework to meet the needs of pupils at risk of missing education, for example at risk of permanent exclusion.
20. An Alternative Provision Framework Network meets once every half term with the following aims:
 - to provide advice and guidance to support a robust quality assurance process;

- to provide an update and training service for alternative providers so that the requirements of the Local Authority are met eg statutory and mandatory training requirements, training records, involvement of agencies such as Careers Guidance, Education Welfare requirements and Safeguarding;
 - to develop and share good practice.
21. **Pupil Referral Unit:** Northumberland has one Pupil Referral Unit, recently rated Good by Ofsted, based in the south east of the County with 40 places for children of ages 7 to 14. It is a short term provision which aims to re-integrate pupils back into their mainstream or special school settings after the intervention or statutory assessment of special needs is complete. There is a nurture unit for the younger pupils. Schools and the local authority commission places at the PRU on a needs and availability basis.
 22. **Northumberland College:** Northumberland College is one of the 14 providers of alternative education on the local authority procurement framework and offers opportunities which meet the needs of learners who are disengaged through its Local Education Authority Project (LEAP). It has up to 50 learners who stay on the rolls of their schools and access vocationally oriented courses on a part-time basis. From September 2017 the college will offer full time enrolment for 14 to 16 year olds into its newly formed Career College. Two career routes have been created . The first combines engineering, construction, science, and technology as well as GCSE English and mathematics. The second route combines land-based learning, tourism and hospitality along with GCSE English and mathematics.
 23. **Elective home education:** Northumberland monitors pupils whose parents have elected to educate them at home through the Education Welfare team. A designated Education Welfare Officer is informed by schools and by parents in writing when a pupil is to be taken off roll. Home visits are made and the DfE guidelines for local authorities regarding Elective Home Education are followed. There has been a sharp and significant increase in the number of families choosing to educate at home, rising from 72 in 2014-15 to 203 in 2016-17. The same trend is being reported in our regional local authorities.
 24. **Secondary Behaviour and Attendance Collaborative:** There is a well-established secondary Behaviour and Attendance Collaborative in Northumberland which meets once every half term and which is attended by designated senior staff from all secondary and high schools in the County. The collaborative is a pivotal part of the Local Authority's promotion of inclusion.
 25. The agenda of each meeting is set by the participants and chaired by a Senior Education Welfare Officer. The aim of the collaborative is to share information, improve knowledge and share successful strategies which will improve school behaviour and raise attendance.
 26. **Pupil Placement Panel:** A collaboration on the fair access arrangements in Northumberland resulted in the introduction of a Pupil Placement Panel in September 2016 as part of a solution to the growing concerns about inclusion.

27. The agreed objectives of the Panel are to:
- ensure that no pupil is without a full time offer of education;
 - implement a multi-agency pupil placement protocol with schools and academies which is transparent, takes into account individual school circumstances and which incorporates statutory fair access arrangements for pupils at risk of permanent exclusion;
 - introduce a protocol which involves schools and academies as decision makers about pupil placement in partnership with relevant local authority services eg social care, EOTAS, SEND, Education Welfare;
 - differentiate the protocol to include primary and secondary arrangements to promote early and age appropriate interventions;
 - ensure that the protocol is to be used only for the minority of pupils where there are difficulties in securing a school place or appropriate provision, or where at risk of permanent exclusion;
 - learn from successful operational practice in neighbouring local authorities.
28. The decision making of the Panel is structured by a statutory framework* of regulations and duties which apply to schools and the local authority regarding school exclusion, admissions, attendance and absence, behaviour and discipline, alternative provision and Ofsted. Every pupil is entitled to a school place and, with few exceptions, should be on a school roll. Exceptions include those permanently excluded, electively home educated, new residents in transition from another local authority.
29. Since September 2016 and through the Pupil Placement Panel:
- of the 76 referrals to the Panel up to May 2017, 64 or 84% have been allocated to successful school placements (ie they are still attending or on roll at the school allocated by the Panel);
 - 14 permanently excluded pupils were successfully re-integrated into school placements;
 - 8 pupils who had been referred to the Panel were subsequently permanently excluded;
 - 15 pupils were re-referred to the Panel (or have been referred at least twice since September 2016), of which 11 were then placed successfully;
 - the 'time out of education' for the 76 referred pupils was:
 - < 1 month – 7 pupils
 - 1-3 months – 20 pupils
 - 3-6 months – 16 pupils
 - >6 month - 11 pupils
 - not out of education – 22 pupils
 - the de-commissioning of Locality Inclusion Support Teams during 2016 brought together a team of Inclusion Support Workers (ISW) to add capacity to EOTAS and create a wider Inclusion Team. ISWs were allocated to all cases where the Panel identified the need for support for transition and re-integration;

- the top 3 categories for referrals in 2016-17 were FAP 1 (pupils who have been permanently excluded), FAP 3 (pupils who have been out of education for more than one school term, including electively home educated) and FAP 11 (pupils at risk of permanent exclusion).
30. **Children missing from education:** a comprehensive mechanism is in place to identify and track children who are not receiving their entitlement to full time education, including those on part time timetables and attending alternative provision, and those who have been permanently excluded or who are electively home educated. Schools and services submit a monthly data return with pupil level detail to the Education Welfare team which is then analysed at a monthly multi-service Tracking Panel meeting to plan actions for individual cases.
 31. The mechanism meets Ofsted and statutory requirements for the local authority and is very effective. In 2016-17 21 students were reported from schools as 'children missing education'. All of these students were located within a 5 day time frame. The Education Welfare team manager now has responsibility for children missing from education and monitoring of elective home education. The team also participates fully in the LSCB's management of risk of vulnerable children (MARAC) and the Troubled Families initiative.
 32. **EOTAS tuition for pupils with health needs:** the Schools' Safeguarding and Wellbeing team delivers education other than at school (EOTAS) for pupils who are unable to attend school full time due to their health and medical needs. Provision is arranged for pupils with mental health needs and teenagers who are pregnant or mothers. Tuition is arranged from a large pool of centrally employed teachers.
 33. **Attendance:** Attendance is a strong indicator of engagement in learning and the latest attendance data tells us that at 4.6% the total absence rate across primary and secondary phases in Northumberland is improving and is consistently at or, in the case of secondary attendance, better than the North East and national average. The threshold for persistent absence was raised from 85% to 90% for 2015-16 and nationally there has therefore been a significant increase in the % of pupils meeting that threshold. Nevertheless, Northumberland's latest performance of 10.2% is still improving and better than North East and national averages.
 34. Pupil enrolments in Northumberland with a statement of special educational needs (SEN) and those with an education, health and care plan (EHCP) had a total (overall) absence rate of 7.16% compared to a national average of 7.7%. The percentage of pupil enrolments in Northumberland with a statement or an EHC plan that are persistent absentees is 19.78% compared to a national average of 22.6%, and this is more than three times higher than those with no identified SEND. Persistent absence in special schools is in line with the North-East average and almost 2% better than the national average. A Senior Education Welfare Officer has responsibility for working with our special schools to improve engagement and attendance.
 35. **Virtual School for Looked After Children:** the statutory role of the Virtual School Headteacher is fulfilled by the Head of Inclusion. Outcomes for Northumberland's

Looked After Children are already good and improving over time. A self-evaluation of the effectiveness of the Virtual School is available on the inclusion webpage of the Council's website: [Annual Report of the Virtual School Headteacher 2015-16](#).

36. **Safe to learn:** safeguarding standards in schools are monitored through the use of the mandatory Section 175 audit which the Schools' Safeguarding and Wellbeing team monitors as a partner of the LSCB. The audit is an on-line tool which identifies areas for development for each school regarding their safeguarding practice. Extensive support and guidance is also available to schools through a half termly bulletin – Safe to Learn and an **Education Reference sub-group** of the LSCB chaired by the Head of Inclusion. Advice and guidance is available on current priorities regarding vulnerable learners, including the implementation of Operation Encompass (domestic violence), child sexual exploitation and Prevent. The team is involved in the appropriate risk management processes involving individuals and groups of learners and works in an integrated way with children's social care and other partners of the LSCB.
37. **Service Level Agreement:** in 2017 an Inclusion Service Level Agreement was introduced for schools, academies and alternative providers who want to access services from the local authority which are non-statutory. The additional offer is detailed on the [Inclusion and the Virtual School](#) local authority webpage.

5. Delivering the Inclusion Strategy – Actions for 2017/18

37. Inclusive Northumberland will be delivered through multi-agency working and the lead agency will be the County Council. The County Council will lead on all areas requiring formal consultation and the provision of information and data relating to school places and funding.
38. In addition we will:
- a. develop and introduce, with schools/academies and the local authority data unit, an inclusion dashboard which is easily accessible and shows how schools compare across the County and partnerships. Schools will be encouraged to benchmark and challenge themselves and to discuss the issues this raises and set actions from any conclusions drawn. The data will include:
 - attendance
 - fixed term and permanent exclusions
 - referrals for top-up funding
 - referrals for assessment and for SEND support services
 - use of services such as alternative provision and the PRU
 - managed moves
 - Pupil Placement Panel;
 - b. include an inclusion support module in the induction training for new Headteachers, made accessible through the virtual platform Learning Together;
 - c. in partnership with schools and other providers, develop long term alternative provision for learners who are unable to engage in a Key Stage 4 curriculum in a mainstream school. The provision will include English and maths GCSE at the core of its curriculum;
 - d. promote the use of an Early Help Assessment for pupils who have more than one fixed term exclusion and align this support mechanism with the Information Passport;
 - e. promote Early Help hubs to enable early and co-ordinated intervention of multi-agency support to those at risk of exclusion;
 - f. review and improve exit and re-integration processes for pupils accessing short term alternative education and through the Alternative Provision Network ensure that reintegration into school plans are in place at the outset so that learners, schools and the providers themselves are clear about the purpose of the provision and know when it has been successful;
 - g. develop a thresholds type document for Northumberland covering early behaviour support to permanent exclusion;
 - h. take a lead role in the implementation and delivery of the Local Transformation Plan 2015-2020, a strategy to improve the emotional health and wellbeing of our children developed by Northumberland County Council and the NHS Clinical Commissioning Group;
 - i. work in partnerships with schools/academies and other education settings as problem solvers providing mutual challenge and support about provisions and outcomes for vulnerable learners;

- j. clarify through the Local Offer the services available from the local authority to promote inclusive practice, including social care and health: provide a directory of support for schools detailing what they provide, how they can help learners, how they can help schools develop their own provision, costs, access arrangements, criteria and expected response times, case examples, outcomes achieved;
- k. further develop web based resources, including referral processes, to improve service access and delivery;
- l. with local authority partners, develop case management systems to provide holistic services to children and families ensuring that protocols are in place for efficient and effective information sharing between partners involved in multi-disciplinary teams.

6. Indicators of Success and Outcomes

39. We know that Inclusive Northumberland is successful when outcomes for those pupils identified as the most vulnerable have improved. The under-lying indicators of that success are measurable:

Attendance will continue to improve, especially in our special schools; fixed term and permanent exclusions will reduce; fewer children will go missing from education and when they do for shorter periods of time; there will be a reduction in pupils attending alternative provision; there will be a reduction in referrals to the Pupil Placement Panel; there will be a reduction in the number of parents electing to home educate their children.

40. Therefore in Inclusive Northumberland we will see:

- All children and young people make good progress with their learning and achieve well.
- There is effective co-operation and collaboration between all those who needs and provide services which help to ensure that children and young people stay safe and healthy.
- There are effective partnerships between education, social care, health and the police.
- There is early intervention to support children with special needs.
- Children and young people make successful transitions through phases.
- Children and young people with special needs are educated in mainstream and special schools within the county where possible.
- There is fair access to high quality support and provision for all children, young people and their families across the County.

41. This inclusion strategy will be reviewed in December 2017 by the Director of Children's Services and other Senior Leaders across the area.

7. Appendices

42. Equality Statement: The Education and Skills Service has a responsibility to provide services to children and young people, families and carers across all of Northumberland. To achieve our aims, set out in the Children and Young People's Strategic Statement (2015-18) we work closely with partner agencies, other services, organisations and children and young people themselves. Our vision, articulated as 'our reason for being here', is captured in the SEND Strategy:

We are committed to giving all children the best start in life and to support them to reach their full potential. We want vulnerable children and young people to develop their independence and resilience, to become confident adults who live fulfilled and productive lives. To this end, we will work in partnership as professionals from a variety of organisations and with children, young people and their families to ensure that services and support arrangements for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities are of the highest quality and have the maximum impact.

We seek to advance equality of opportunity, eliminate discrimination and foster good relations between all of our diverse citizens, employees, children and young people. Our equalities and diversity strategy therefore complies with the public sector equality duty (Equality Act 2010) and supports what the CYPP aims to deliver:

- a journey to independence;
- bringing our communities together and tackling child poverty;
- developing ambition, enjoying life and doing as well as possible;
- being there to help and support when it will have most impact;
- promoting safeguarding.

The way in which we plan, deliver and review our services is informed by a thorough analysis of local need with particular regard to equality of access and the impact on potentially disadvantaged groups, and is informed by the Council's commitment to [equality and diversity](#).