



Northumberland
County Council



Northumberland Local Area Strategy

for Children, Young People and their
families with Special Educational Needs
and / or Disabilities

2021-2024



Northumberland
Clinical Commissioning Group

Foreword

This 2021-2024 Northumberland Strategy for Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) sets out our local partnership's vision for developing and improving the support provided for our children and young people with additional needs and their families. It details our aspirations and priorities for the county and the improvements to our provision that we plan to make in a time of unprecedented demand for specialist support.

Since this strategy was drafted, the COVID-19 pandemic has gripped the world necessitating lockdown with significant changes to how and where children learned and played, and far reaching changes to all aspects of daily life. As yet, it is difficult to fully understand the long term implications of these changes on society and on our children and young people, however there is an even greater need for a clear strategy on how to support children and young people with SEND and their families.

Refreshing this strategy in the light of the pandemic it is clear that the ambition and principles within it continue to apply in these uncertain times. It is the way that we will do things and move forward that might look and feel different in the initial stages of how we move into a recovery and restoration phase.

This Strategy also reflects the priorities outlined in our emerging Children and Young People's Plan. We want our children to have the best start in life and to have access to a good education that prepares them for their adult life. We want them to feel safe and supported and to stay healthy. Most importantly, this strategy will ensure that local services across education, health and social care work together to tackle any disadvantage or prejudice that negatively impacts upon our children and young people with additional needs.

We want to provide the best educational support possible and for parents and carers to be confident their children are making good progress. Our aim is to achieve good outcomes through high quality, inclusive practice in our schools.

For this Strategy to work, we need to recognise the role and responsibility that parents and carers have to influence and shape the experiences of their children and young people. By working together, particularly during these times, all of our children



and young people with additional needs will receive the support and encouragement they need in order to reach their full potential and live independent lives.

Cath McEvoy-Carr
Executive Director of Children and Adult Services
Northumberland County Council

Siobhan Brown
Chief Operating Officer
Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group

Contents

1.	Introduction and Context	4
2.	Who is our strategy for?	5
3.	Vision and principles	6
4.	The Northumberland Picture	7
5.	SEND in Northumberland: What the data tells us	8
6.	SEND in Northumberland: What you have told us	9
7.	SEND priorities for Northumberland	11
8.	Working with children, young people and their families	15
9.	How will we monitor progress?	17



Introduction and Context

In October 2018, the Northumberland local area underwent an Ofsted / CQC inspection of the arrangements for children and young people with SEND in the county. The report highlighted strengths in the provision across Northumberland and stated, 'Frontline staff in education, health and care services, and in schools, work hard and are making a valued difference to children and young people with SEND and their families'

There were, however, areas that needed to improve, and a Written Statement of Action was required as an outcome of the inspection. Northumberland County Council and Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) have responded to this requirement and the subsequent improvement plan was approved by Ofsted and NHS England in March 2019.

An improvement plan was developed that focussed on a Local Area approach to supporting children and young people with SEND by Northumberland County Council and Northumberland CCG, alongside leaders from education, health and social care to drive forward the identified developments. Our progress against this plan has been monitored by the Department for Education and NHS England where we have been able to demonstrate that progress has been consistently made on all our targets. You can see the progress that has been made in our SEND inspection section on the Local Offer.

In early 2020, the pandemic changed our world. The way we lived, spent time with friends and family, the way we worked and our children's education all changed.

This strategy sets out what we will do to develop and improve provision for children and young people with SEND in Northumberland. It is built upon.

- Data and information about children and young people with SEND living in Northumberland.
- Progress that we have made on our written statement of action following inspection.
- And most importantly, built upon the experiences of families and their children with SEND during the pandemic, and on what families told us would make a positive difference to their daily lives in the future.



Who is our strategy for?

This strategy is for children and young people with SEND aged 0-25 and their families and the schools, settings, organisations, services and practitioners who support them.

SEND encompasses children and young people who have a broad range of needs. For some, the focus of support will be mainly educational. Other children and young people and their families will need support from several services, and this may continue throughout their childhood and, for some,

into adulthood. A child or young person may have special educational needs or a disability or both. The SEND Code of Practice sets out the definition of SEND, linking it closely to the Equality Act (2010) and is for children and young people aged 0-25 years.

SEND is defined as:

A child or young person has SEND if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her. A child or young person has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she:

- Has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or
- Has a disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream Post 16 institutions.

(SEND Code of Practice 2015, DfE, DHSC)



For children age two or more, special educational provision is educational or training provision that is additional to, or different from, that made generally for other children or young people of the same age. For a child under two years old, special educational provision means educational provision of any kind.

Children and young people may have needs in one or more broad areas of need including:

- Communication and interaction including children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD).
- Cognition and learning.
- Social, emotional and mental health difficulties.
- Sensory and physical difficulties .

Most children and young people will have their needs met with support from their school or setting. This is called the SEN Support stage. The children and young people with the most significant needs will have a statutory Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) setting out the child's or young person's special educational needs and the provision they need to help them to overcome any barriers to learning (SEND Code of Practice January 2015).

Vision

3

Our vision for children and young people with SEND builds on plans from both Northumberland County Council and Northumberland CCG and is the same as our vision for all children and young people.



We want children and young people with SEND in Northumberland to have the best start in life, be safe, happy, healthy, confident, successful and be well prepared for adult life. For this to be achieved we will ensure that all children, young people and their families have the fullest range of support and opportunities available to them in order to improve their life chances and realise their aspirations.

Our Principles

- Placing the views of children, young people and their families at the heart of our services;
 - Working together to improve services and reduce inequalities.
 - Actions we take will lead to improved outcomes.
 - Identifying needs as early as possible;
 - Developing high quality inclusive provision with every child/young person having access to a good school that is as close to home as possible;
 - Effectively supporting children and young people to prepare for adulthood, including employment and independent living.
- We will know that we are making progress when:
- Children, young people and their families with SEND have confidence in the support they receive from education, health and social care staff;
 - Our schools can consistently support children and young people with SEND and children and young people make positive progress with their learning;
 - Education, health and social care teams work together to effectively coordinate support;
 - Young people and their families feel supported to make decisions about moving into adulthood and understand what opportunities, pathways and support are available.

The Northumberland Picture

4



In Northumberland 7,060 children and young people (0-25 year olds) have Special Educational Needs and/or a Disability SEND.

The proportion of Education Health Care Plans is rising and the numbers of learners receiving support at SEN Support is falling.

The number of Education Health Care Plans in Northumberland has increased from 1,458 in 2015 to 2,174 in 2020.

The percentage of Education Health Care Plans completed in 20 weeks in 2020 was 87.4% compared to a national average of 60.4%.

The most common areas of need identified in Education Health Care Plans are:

- Social, emotional and mental health needs.
- Speech, Language and Communication needs.
- Moderate learning difficulties.

Across 2020, our specialist teaching and educational psychology services have provided support and advice for children and young people with special educational needs in 96% of our schools.

The numbers of children and young people with SEND who are excluded from schools has continued to fall over the last three years.

SEND in Northumberland:

What the data tells us

5

On our Local Offer you can find Northumberland's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) in the 'Your Local Offer' section. The JSNA is a live document and analyses data around SEND and provides information on the needs of children and young people with SEND and their families. This information is used to inform planning and commissioning of support across education, health and social care.



The JSNA highlights the following areas where there is a need for all strategic partners to think about how to plan and deliver support in the future

- Communication with children, young people and their families about what support is available, what is happening and what could happen in the future.
- Inclusive education practice and attainment in mainstream schools, particularly at secondary.
- Understanding and meeting the needs of learners with ASD, particularly girls, specific learning difficulties (dyslexia) and moderate learning difficulties in schools and settings.
- Supporting children, young people and their families with social, emotional and mental health needs.
- Meeting the needs of those with speech, language and communication, sensory processing and complex medical needs in schools and settings.
- Pathways into Adulthood and how services wrap around young people to support them leaving education and moving into adulthood.
- Activities in the community during holidays and over weekends.

SEND in Northumberland:

What you have told us



We carried out a survey to understand the impact that the pandemic was having on children and young people with SEND and their families. The survey was co-produced with the Northumberland Parent Carer Forum and was live in July and August 2020. A total of 426 families responded, the largest response to any SEND survey carried out in Northumberland. Thank you to all those who completed this as this has provided a wealth of information to support our strategy.

The findings of the survey showed us

- Lockdown impacted negatively on the mental health and wellbeing of most parents and carers as well as that of their children with SEND. Families also reported having to decrease their spending in order to manage and some reported struggling financially.
- Home schooling was difficult for many families, particularly when combined with working from home. The nature of their child's needs, a lack of routine, the number of children and adults in the household and the support the family received from school impacted significantly on a family's ability to home school. Conversely a number of families felt their children thrived being able to learn at home and at their own pace.
- The majority of children in this report did not attend school during the period of the survey. A small number of children did not receive any schooling at home and their physical and mental health became worse. Parents reported their child missed family and friends and not being able to go outside. Conversely, some children thrived away from the pressures of school.
- For some families, school provided good support to families around their learning and support for their wellbeing. For others, parents reported a lack of communication and support, with work being sent home that their child found too difficult to do.
- Many children and young people with SEND continued to receive more or the same level of health and social care support as before lockdown, while others reported they received less or no support. A group of children and young people reported their assessments went ahead, while for the remainder it was delayed or cancelled.
- Two thirds of children and young people undergoing an education assessment to determine if they needed additional support reported the communication around the process was not enough.
- Families were worried and anxious about their children returning to school and concerned how their children would catch up on their learning, reintegrate back into school, manage social interactions, cope with transitions and stay safe from the coronavirus.
- Looking to the future, families wished for more staffing, training and funding for schools, increase support for mental health and plans for how their children will catch up on any missed learning. Families wanted improved communication with their schools, extra activities available for weekends and holidays and more advice and support if their child needed help at school.

Parents and carers told us they thought the following things would make things better

- Provide more training and support to develop inclusive mainstream practice.
- Listen to children, young people and their families.
- Identify children and young people who need support early.
- Increase support for mental health and anxiety in schools.
- Improve communication with parents and carers from all parts of the system.

- Provide more advice and support about SEND for parents and carers on what help, advice and support is available.
- Provide clearer pathways, support and information to prepare children and young people for adulthood.
- Support schools to deliver a curriculum which suits a wide range of learners.
- Provide extra activities for the holidays and the weekends that are available locally.

You can read more about the findings of the survey on our Local Offer in the 'Have your say' section.



SEND Priorities for Northumberland

Priority 1 : Working together

We will

1. Improve our Local Offer so that information is easier to find.
2. Co-produce a communication strategy so that parents, carers and partners are aware of services and support that is available and how we are making progress on all priority areas.
3. Regularly seek feedback and listen to children, young people and their families to understand what works and what needs to change.
4. Increase multi-agency working between education, health and social care services.

We will

1. Promote the early identification of children and young people with additional needs across the system, not only of identified areas we need to improve (eg dyslexia, girls and ASD) but across all areas of need and across all ages.
2. Work across education, health and social care to collectively support and make the best offer to children and young people and their families who have social, emotional and mental health needs.
3. Improve the way therapy services and support for children with sensory processing difficulties are delivered in Northumberland and co-produce actions which will make a difference.
4. Increase specialist educational provision in line with need and work to ensure that all children and young people can access educational provision as close to their community as possible.
5. Work to improve the access to activities in the community during holidays and over weekends.
6. Improve the quality of Education Health and Care Plans.
7. Make the best use of resources including digital technology so children and young people have a range of ways to access support, assessment and treatment.

Priority 2 : Delivering the right support at the right time

Priority 3 : Inclusive education and success for all learners

We will

1. Improve the leadership and delivery of support to SEND learners in mainstream schools through the promotion of effective self evaluation and a good training offer for staff at every level.
2. Improve the learning outcomes of SEND pupils, particularly at Key Stage 4.
3. Support, empower and challenge our settings and schools to effectively include learners with SEND.
4. Ensure the support and provision available to SEN Support learners and EHCP learners is equitable across the county.
5. Explore and co-produce solutions to ensure the voice of the child, young person and their family informs developments in schools and settings.



Priority 4 : Effectively prepare children and young people for adulthood

We will

1. Develop strong, clear pathways around transition both between settings and schools and from schools and colleges, health and social care into adulthood.
2. Increase the opportunities for SEND learners to gain employment, supported internships and volunteer.
3. Work with schools and Post 16 providers to develop programmes that focus on preparing young people for adulthood.
4. Embed a person centred approach with the young person at the centre when planning support.
5. Decrease the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training.
6. Work in a joined up way across all sectors and with those with lived experience so that the help and support available for young people and adults is better coordinated, communicated and accessible to those who require it.
7. Improve the choice and opportunities for young people and adults so they can live as independent life as possible. This includes young people and adults being able to do things that they want to at the right time for them, and, to be able to keep in touch and see people that are important to them.

The action plans for each priority area will be placed on the Local Offer so that you can see what actions we will take to deliver on our priorities.



Working with children, young people and their families

It is important to understand what **good** looks like and feel we will know this when children, young people and their families

- feel **supported and listened to**.
- feel **confident** in the support they are receiving.
- know **what will happen next** as they grow up and move into adulthood.
- **achieve** the best outcomes.

In order to do this we will embed **co-production** as a way of working across the system. Co-production means that services and practitioners work together with families to improve the support they receive. This can be around support that an individual receives from a practitioner or around the support that is provided to a large group of children and young people.



To be able to do this, it relies on ownership and accountability and leadership at all levels. This means that across all organisations.

- **Senior leaders** are responsible for ensuring that strategies, plans and policies are informed by listening to and learning from the voice of children, young people and their families, with children and young people as equal partners in the development of improvement plans
- **Service and team leads** are responsible for supporting their staff and the systems in which they work to listen to and learn from the voice of children, young people and their families. Service and team leads will understand what is working well and what needs to be different to make sure that families receive high quality support and will involve families as equal partners in designing and implementing any changes
- **Individual practitioners** are responsible for listening to children, young people and their families to know what is important to them, what is working well and what they want for the future. This is a cornerstone of providing high quality person centred support

In other words, **everyone** who works with children and young people with SEND will be involved in improving support for children and young people with SEND.



How will we monitor progress?

Across all of the work we plan to do, we want to understand how well we

- **improve experiences** of children, young people and their families.
- **improve outcomes** for our children, young people, families and communities.
- **work together** with families and other practitioners to support children and young people.

To help us understand this we will monitor our progress against the following outcomes.

What outcomes do we want to achieve?



How will we do this?

In order to know if we are improving outcomes, we need to understand the experiences of children, young people and their families and know how well we are delivering support. We also need to look at data about our services and the things that we do and compare ourselves to others.

We will do this by analysing information from 3 areas



Listening –

to children, young people and their families to understand how we are making a difference and what we might need to change.



Practice –

look at how well we deliver support and services to children, young people and families.



Data –

look at what activity we do and how it compares to others.



Information from these three areas will help us understand if we are improving outcomes and making a difference.

What will happen with the findings?

The findings of the framework will be shared across the system so that there is a wide understanding of the difference we are making. This will enable us to understand where we are making a difference and where we need to talk to children, young people and their families to think how we do things differently.

Contact Us

Northumberland County Council,
County Hall,
Morpeth
NE61 2EF

Website www.northumberland.gov.uk