

Welcome - Cath McEvoy-Carr, Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services and Siobhan Brown, Chief Operating Officer for the Northumberland CCG

Meeting the needs of children and young people who have special education needs and disabilities remains a high priority for us, both at local authority level and the Clinical Commissioning Group where we know we have some way to go before we get it right.

Following the inspection, we have been working hard to ensure that the identified areas of concern are being developed and improved upon. This is no mean feat as I am sure most of you know there is a lot to do. Some of the areas may not be immediately obvious in terms of where progress is made but there is an overarching plan which is serving to keep us focused on what we need to achieve. We know that we have to meet our statutory requirements which is not always easy within the current economic climate but the main driver is about providing better services in order to help achieve better outcomes for our children.

The focus of our SENCo conference this year was about getting it right from the start. This is something the professionals within Northumberland local area feel very strongly about as we want all of our children to get the best possible start in life. Our vision for the Children and Young People's Plan is that we want our children to receive the right support at the right time from the right service in order that they can get the best out of life-not just the best start.

We know that the sooner support is provided the better the predicted outcomes are for our children and young people. Independent reviews and research have long championed approaches that provide early help for children and their families whatever their needs.

Children with SEND should be supported at the most appropriate level for their needs at the earliest point when these become apparent. Early help supports this approach and enables coordinated early support for children with SEND and their families.

It is never too early. This bulletin contains information about a number of initiatives underway across Northumberland's Health, Education and Social Care teams which support the early identification of needs, along with early and appropriate intervention focussed on improving outcomes.

Early Years SEND provision in Northumberland, The Inspection and the Written Statement of Action - Sam Barron

Northumberland SEND Inspection, what happens now?

While as a Local Area, outcomes within Early Years are strong and remain above the national average, there is a continued need to improve how our services work together to ensure that:

- children have their needs identified as early as possible
- there are clear pathways of support available
- the right services are available at the right time.

This will mean that our children have the best possible start in life, one of the key priorities in Northumberland's Children and Young People's Plan.

This bulletin contains information about a number of initiatives underway across Northumberland's Health, Education and Social Care teams which support the early identification of needs, along with early and appropriate intervention focussed on improving outcomes.

Working Together - The Northumberland Portage Service

Our Portage Service currently works with 98 children in early years and their families across Northumberland, where the children have complex additional needs. They visit at home to provide advice and support, working on a model which has 3 elements; a strong family focus with structured teaching, play based activities broken down into small steps and the identification of the child's individual interests, strengths and emerging skills.

The Portage Team holds a termly multi-agency meeting with a range of colleagues from the NHS (Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language Therapy and Children's Respite Team) as well as our colleagues in Education (SEN Officer, Sensory Support, EY Inclusion Team). These meetings enable the teams to share and update relevant information about support and practice. A small subgroup is currently working on further developing the multi-agency plans for parents where many services are involved in supporting their child.

The Portage Service and the Speech and Language Therapy Team from Northumbria Healthcare have been working together along with the Community Paediatricians to develop the support offered to families of pre-school aged children following a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder and following an initial pilot group in April will be offering

the Early Bird Parent Programme from September 2019. This is an 11 week parent/carer programme which provides advice and guidance on understanding autism, building confidence to encourage interaction and communication and analysing and managing behaviour. This will be offered to families following diagnosis through invitation and will be provided in different settings across the year, it will be run by a Portage Home Visitor and a Speech and Language Therapist. More information about it can be found [here](#).

Working Together - Health Teams

Work is taking place across many of our Health teams to build on the effective practice of early identification which is delivered through Health Visitors and the two and a half year old developmental checks.

The Health Visiting Team are taking part in a pilot programme of work to improve speech, language and communication in the early years for disadvantaged children. This forms one of the key elements of the [Social Mobility Action Plan for Education](#) "Unlocking Talent, Fulfilling Potential" (December 2017). The programme offers training in our region from the Institute of Health Visiting for Health Visitors (HVs) covering information on the latest evidence on early language skills and needs of children, with guidance on understanding the signs of risk, and the things that might indicate slow progress which needs some further assessment. There is also an assessment tool for Health Visitors to use which helps to identify the next steps that should be taken if there is a language delay. The programme is being supported and co-ordinated by Public Health England at this time. 12 Northumberland health visitors have received the initial training which we hope will be rolled out further in time.

The Speech and Language Therapy Team from Northumbria Healthcare continue to offer Makaton signing support groups for Parents/Carers/Grandparents and educational/childcare setting staff in different localities across Northumberland. These are always very popular and offer an interactive way to learn and build confidence when using Makaton signing to support a child/young person's communication. Families and settings are added to group invite by the child/young person's Speech and Language Therapist and the groups are run in the evenings with topics selected by the group, these tend to include things like signing in songs and stories, food, going out and about and feelings. Currently the groups are run in Cramlington, Ashington and in the West at Hexham Priory School with a North group available through The Grove School and/or Barndale House School.

The Childrens Physical Disabilities Occupational Therapy Team has recently started to deliver workshops for parents/carers living in Northumberland on 'Understanding Sensory Processing'. The workshops are available for parents/carers who have children aged 0-18 years with sensory processing issues. They are run by a qualified Occupational Therapist and they have been really successful with positive feedback from parents and carers. For further information contact the Team on 01670 564 050

From September 2019 the *0-19 Integrated Public Health Team* is working to ensure that all Reception aged children will receive a pre school health questionnaire. This will provide further support within the system to identify those who may experience special educational needs as they move into school.

Working Together - Supporting schools and settings - The Early Years Team

The Northumberland Early Years team works extensively with settings and early years providers to ensure equality of opportunity and access for learners with SEND. They have a multitude of useful resources available which can be accessed via the Local Offer [here](#). They also run many courses and training opportunities for providers. In addition, in recent months there have been further pieces of work undertaken to support early identification and intervention:

Delivery of the NCFE Level 3 SENCo qualification training to 19 Northumberland Early Years SENCos. This qualification is new, based on Government recognition of the importance of a qualification for SENCos working in the private, independent and voluntary sectors. The course develops practitioner confidence and knowledge about effective SEND provision for the children in care and early years education settings to promote the inclusive practice of early identification and intervention. The first round of training has been offered free of charge due to national funding being available. 2 further courses are planned for next year but these will be chargeable. More details will be available in due course but in the meantime providers can express an interest by completing the Google form [here](#)

Gathering the Voice of the Child in Early Years: A 3&4 Year Old Consultation and Participation Campaign. This was undertaken in early June, gathering the voice of children going into Reception in September. The responses were good, with views received from 267 children across 26 settings. The campaign will be built upon next year, with views gathered from colleagues as to how best to gather the voice of all children.

Working Together - Early Help in Childrens Centres

Within our children's centres 'prevention and intervention pathway' provision, we have a number of opportunities for all families, including those with SEND. Early identification of developmental delay is often identified within our universal 'Learning together through play' drop-ins, and prevention groups such as 'Brilliant Babies', 'Tiny Talkers' and 'Great Expectations'.

For families with children who appear to have developmental delay, workers and families are able to access our 12 week, 2 hours per week, 'Parents Plus' provision, via completion of a 'Children's Centre Request for Service' form. 'Parents Plus' offers support to families around their child's development, via direct work with the child and also with

parents/carers. In order to identify developmental delay/needs, our Early Years Practitioners, who deliver the service, complete an Early Help Assessment (if one is not already in place). Early Years Practitioners provide the support to the children, while an Early Help Family Worker is available to help with the parents/families needs. Reviews are carried out at 6 and 12 weeks, alongside Team Around the Family meetings, to monitor progress and support needs. Based on the outcome of these, the families may be offered another 12 week block.

'Parents Plus' provision has enabled early identification of children with SEND, and has meant we have been able to put EHA/support plans in place before the start of any 2 year old early education provision. These plans are produced and shared with the family and all professionals working with the child. This has meant that the settings where 2 year olds go can be better prepared to meet the child's individual developmental and learning needs. In turn, this means that if needs are complex and likely to be long term, the request for an Education, Health and Care needs assessment can be made in a timely way.

To access this, or for further information, click [here](#) and look for the 'prevention and intervention pathway' or contact the Early Help Locality Managers:

Jess Barclay Lambert - West, Jean Hedley - South East, Vanessa Easton - North, Gill Dorey - Central

Upcoming Training

In coming months, the *Northumberland Early Years Team* are offering training in the following areas:

- Implementing a Graduated Approach in the Early Years
- Assessing and Supporting Children with SLCN
- Focusing on Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Early Help Assessments
- SEND/Inclusion Networks in 3 localities

For further information, please contact theresa.iley@northumberland.gov.uk

The *Portage Service* will be offering a workshop sharing the Portage Model with Early Years Practitioners, Parents and Professionals in the West locality. For more information contact lynne.mckillup@northumberland.gov.uk

Training Offered over recent months

The Early Years Team have provided the following opportunities over recent months:

- Northumberland Inclusion Toolkit Training
- Assessing and Supporting Children with SLCN
- Assessing and Supporting Children with Physical Needs
- Assessing and Supporting Children with Personal, Social or Behavioural Needs
- Early Help Assessments

The Portage Service has offered 2 workshops on the Portage Model in 2 other localities. Additionally they have offered 'Overcoming the Barriers' training which aims to develop knowledge and understanding of the needs of children with Social and Communication difficulties. The course looks at identifying and addressing some of the challenges early years settings can experience, exploring sensory difficulties and developing an understanding for the need to adapt and change (activities and environment) to enable practitioners to become confident in applying skills and strategies learned on the course into their workplace. This training will be repeated in the coming year.

Useful contacts:

Fiona.Tarn@northumberland.gov.uk, (ASD, Behaviour, Speech and Language Support Services)

Katinka.Bryan@northumberland.gov.uk (Psychological Services, English as an Additional Language, Literacy Support)

Isabel.Russell@northumberland.gov.uk (Sensory Support Service)

Lynne.McKillup@northumberland.gov.uk (Portage Service)

katie.watson@northumberland.gov.uk (Early Years Adviser)

We would like our communications to be as beneficial as possible. If you have any views about how we can do this better, or the sorts of things you would like updates on, please get in touch by emailing:

| | |
|--|--|
| Samantha.Barron@northumberland.gov.uk | Head of SEND Strategy, NCC and DCO, Northumberland CCG |
| Nicola.Taylor@northumberland.gov.uk | SEND Project Manager |
| Angela.Davies@northumberland.gov.uk | School Improvement Leader for SEND |
| Russell.Pickering@northumberland.gov.uk | Senior Manager (SEND) |