

**Northumberland
County Council**

January 2016

Education and Skills Service

Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND) Self-Evaluation Report 2015-16



Northumberland
Education



1.0 Introduction to the Review

- At the request of the Director for Education, a review has been undertaken of SEND provision across Northumberland, including identification of some of the inherent challenges and opportunities our current model of SEND provision presents. The review has been led by Alan Carrick, Commissioner for SEND and has included information from many sources including that provided by Jane Walker, Virtual Head teacher and EOTAS lead.
- This exercise followed the creation of the Education and Skills new senior leadership structure, a review of inclusion and the publication of an annual report. It is an ideal opportunity to look at our current SEND offer, (in light of the new SEND Code of Practice), and in preparation to meet the future demands for SEND places across the county - in the most meaningful and effective way.
- Working with headteachers, governors, SENCOs and other colleagues in Education, the review has captured a summary of the current model of provision, the pathways into and out of each area of provision and how effectively they are working, along with known constraints within which our model going forward must function.
- As part of this process the commissioner has identified areas where we might consider reshaping aspects of our provision, for the benefit of those accessing our services, and ensuring that we are making the best possible use of resources available.

2.0 Background To Current SEND Provision Model In Northumberland

- Northumberland has experienced a very substantial increase in the numbers of pupils with special educational needs over recent years. As a result, places in specialist provision have been growing year-on-year. For example special school places for children with autism have increased significantly since 2010; places for learners with formally diagnosed Mental Health Disorders have also seen an increase; Northumberland's Pupil Referral Unit has seen its roll grow significantly in the last five years, and growth in numbers of children attending alternative providers-
- As a result of this growing trend, the Local Authority, as part of the overarching School Organisation Strategy, is now considering how best to meet additional demand for specialist provision going forward. This will not only include looking at where we might need to create additional places, but also considering any areas where provision may no longer be fit for purpose, and reconfiguration may be the more appropriate option.
- As part of these considerations, it is appropriate to reflect upon the balance of our provision offered by specialist schools, and that provided by any specialist units within mainstream schools, how effective the pathways between these are, and how we can ensure high quality provision across services for the benefit of those who access them.
- Throughout this review, a set of key principles have been identified and applied, which will act as foundations for the future design of our local offer to our SEND pupil population.

These principles are:

- To enable individual children and young people to achieve optimum outcomes;
- To focus on early intervention and maximising the potential to return children and young people to mainstream provision;
- To ensure children and young people access the right provision quickly – and are set up with the resources to succeed;
- To reduce the number of children and young people having to access out of county placements.

3.0	Scope Of Review Work Undertaken
	<p>A series of key areas have been reviewed to facilitate and focus conversations about our current SEND provision.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Pathways & Progression Routes ➤ Panels, Policies & Processes ➤ Forecasting & Identification of Pressure Points ➤ Buildings & Capacity ➤ Size Of Special Schools and their specialisms ➤ Benchmarking With Other Authorities ➤ Quality Assurance Of Alternative Provision ➤ Focus On Outcomes ➤ Independent School Placements ➤ "Localness" Of Provision and SEND transport ➤ Connectivity With 16-25 Provision ➤ Potential Development of Additional Resource Centre Places in mainstream ➤ Special School Place Pressures & Options

4.0	Summary Of Key Findings
	<p>In the sections that follow, each of the focus areas is summarised:</p>

4.1	SEND Pathways & Progression Routes
	<p><u>Areas Of Interest Explored:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Where our children and young people come from; at which points and through which services they enter the system; how the pathways to and from mainstream to specialist provision function at present and how effective they are, any blockages and gaps in relation to progression from one type of provision to another, or in transitioning out of our SEND system/services altogether. <p><u>Key Challenges & Constraints:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The pathways out of and back into mainstream provision from specialist placements are not currently as effective or consistent as they might be. ▪ Limited numbers of specialist places available in the system for children with emerging needs potentially hinders their progress of children to help them to return to a mainstream setting as does limited places in the mainstream schools for them to return into. ▪ Growing pathway pressures / constraints identified included: for very young children with emotional, social and behavioural needs, funding constraints which apply to the creation of targeted packages / programmes for Post-16 young people with SEND; and also potential gaps in provision across the county, impacting upon how effectively the limited places in Special Schools can be allocated. ▪ Unlike other Local Authorities mainstream schools in Northumberland have traditionally not established ARCs (additional resource centres). <p><u>Opportunities For Development:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Holding joint conversations with Special Schools and mainstream schools to review the criteria applied when considering a referral to specialist school and a return to mainstream provision. ▪ These criteria could sit alongside the new Annual Report process to consider the degree of progression toward targets in EHC Plans, and what the next best steps might be for individuals to achieve their own potential. ▪ Further analysis shows significant gaps in provision at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 4 for children with emotional and behavioural needs and for children with profound and multiple difficulties.

4.2 Panel, Policies & Processes

Areas Of Interest Explored:

- Analysis focused on the processes and channels through which Special School, PRU and AP placements are currently considered and recommended; the roles and responsibilities within each decision making chain, and how additional funding requests are then assessed and subsequently allocated.
- Much of the work relating to the effectiveness of our current processes is being taken forward as part of the EHCP Programme already in place. Above and beyond that, conversations focused on barriers to the effectiveness of our processes, and suggestions of how they might be further improved.

Key Challenges & Constraints:

- The clarity of changes in processes, and the relationships between different levels of provision, were identified as one area which could be addressed.
- The challenges of engaging all key stakeholders in conversations relating to funding of packages of provision was a recurring theme in discussions, particularly in terms of capacity available within partner organisations to take part in joint planning discussions.
- The degree of influence that the Local Authority can have over partner agencies in Health and Care was also looked at.

Opportunities For Development:

- Materials and communication to improve the understanding of changes in SEND processes and channels have been developed, both for service users and also individual service providers but further work needs to be done to embed understanding
- An integral component of a successful joint commissioning strategy will be ensuring the right representation from delivery partners, which will be critical in making sure the resources available are most effectively targeted to the greatest levels of need.
- Further review of some of the existing decision pathways is necessary, to ensure all involved are making the best use of their expertise to enhance the effectiveness of provision, and the best use of available specialist places across the county.

4.3 SEND Forecasting & Identification Pressure Points

Areas Of Interest Explored:

- Analysis focused on the relative accessibility of data reflecting current SEND need, and trends over time, in order to project the direction of future demand. This proved to be the most complex and challenging area of activity explored as part of this exercise.

Key Challenges & Constraints:

- Given the breadth of needs and services across our SEND provision, this is matched by a complex and broad array of data and information sets relating to it. Data is captured and analysed by different services in different ways. The degree to which these data sets interact to shape our picture across the county is very limited and a key area for improvement.
- Some of the data that would help us with these judgements is not currently collated or regularly shared, and the analyses of SEND provision / needs as a whole are not therefore comprehensive.

Opportunities For Development:

- This data challenge will need to be addressed as a matter of urgency, and specific resources identified to take this work forward. Changing how we collect, share and interrogate sources of information is the foundation block for all other actions from this exercise.
- By analysis of our trends across all provision we can build a picture of potential future needs, that will be critical in ensuring the sufficiency and fitness for purpose of provision.
- New reports have been rapidly being created by the SEND Commissioner to review current SEND expenditure, and how our current model of service provision may be improved.
- The Local Authority will be seeking more joined up conversations and planning with key stakeholders, to ensure everyone has clarity about how our approach to delivering SEND support and services impacts upon the funds available to support individuals and also across the system as a whole.

4.4 Placements In Independent SEND Provision outside the county

Areas Of Interest Explored:

- Analysis was conducted relating to children who may require SEND support who were for some reason are being educated outside of our provision, (e.g. within the independent sector) most commonly outside Northumberland.

Key Challenges & Constraints:

- Migration into and out of Northumberland to independent providers is incredibly difficult to predict. Trends over time, as well as joined up conversations with key partners and neighbouring Local Authorities are the best means we have available to address this. We have introduced joint commissioning processes to aid this.
- Children who leave the county to the independent sector in the main have the most complex or extensive needs. They may also require residential settings. Generally children are placed over a longer term period and the costs involved are very high.

Opportunities For Development:

- Liaison and access to information from our key partners might help us here. For example, health data can help inform us of children with health diagnoses which may result in a need for SEND services in the future, as well as new births and registrations which may add to our numbers with SEND needs. Similarly, working with health colleagues, will help us not only to identify growing therapeutic needs, but also how we can jointly ensure that our offer is of sufficient quality and availability that will deter parents from seeking SEND provision outside of our system.

4.5 Buildings & Capacity

Areas Of Interest Explored:

- Information has been drawn together about current buildings and capacity across the county dedicated to SEND provision. The potential and desirability of expanding current capacity, and alternative / complementary delivery methods have been considered.

Key Challenges & Constraints:

- As our specialist SEND provision has been growing exponentially over recent years, so too have the costs of providing it. The desirability to continue in this vein has to be weighed up educationally as well as financially – especially as there is no dedicated capital funding directed to addressing the expansion of SEND places or the building of new specialist provision.
- As well as changes in size, some of our SEND provision has also seen changes in terms of admissions / review policies, and this has not been revisited for some time.
- Balancing the cost of extending existing facilities or building new capacity has got to be balanced against the costs of continuing to use out of county facilities and the high cost of transport.

Opportunities For Development:

- The changes in national policy regarding the establishment of academies and multi-academy trusts may be a catalyst to draw specialist schools and mainstream schools with specialist provision together to map out a more joined up offer to all children across Northumberland. However if this process is not managed well it may also have the potential to be destructive deny access to some children for the specialist support they need.
- Clear admissions criteria need to be developed for each special school, the PRU, alternative providers, independent schools and potential centres in mainstream schools to ensure that the size, nature and quality of our provision continues to match our growing needs across the city, and the resources available to provide for it.
- Using current information about the banding system for top-up funding, the criteria used to allocate it, and past patterns of allocation – it is possible to develop a broad model of effective provision that also does not put too much pressure on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). Inevitably capital resources would also have to be sourced as this cannot be funded via the DSG.
- It might be valuable to work with SEND colleagues and neighbouring Local Authorities to consider the services that could potentially be delivered on a regional basis.

4.6 Benchmarking

Areas Of Interest Explored:

- Making use of national sources of data, (for example DfE Financial Benchmarking Tables, and Statistical Releases based on statutory returns from all Local Authorities), has enabled us to access information about how Northumberland compares in terms of numbers and expenditure linked to SEND provision.

Highlights Of Analysis – EHC Processes & Pupil Placements:

- The new SEND Code of Practice defines a 20 week period for the new Education, Health and Care Plans to be requested, considered, and decisions and recommendations made on how the needs identified for individuals should be met. Northumberland got off to a slow start in the implementation of its new EHC processes, with few EHCs being completed within the timeframe, compared to 64.4% nationally, as well as in how efficiently we converted the old Statements of SEN, however progress has accelerated and we are now on target to convert all to EHCs by 2018.

Highlights Of Analysis – Financial Benchmarking:

- For 2015/16 the high needs spend the national average per capita is £302, and the North East average is £297.
- Northumberland has moderate level of Top-Up Funding to maintained schools compared to its 10 CIPFA statistical neighbours, and is 7th out of 12 regionally. However, Northumberland has the highest Top-Up Funding to non-maintained schools / independent providers compared to CIPFA statistical neighbours, and is highest in the region.
- Northumberland has the 5th highest spend on SEN Support of its statistical neighbours. However it is 3rd regionally.
- Northumberland has the £0 spend per capita on Hospital Education Services, (£0, compared to an average of £3 nationally), and is joint 8th regionally.
- Regionally Northumberland has the lowest spend on Therapies and Other Health Related Services and is joint 7th amongst our CIPFA statistical neighbours.
- £14 per capita is spent nationally on psychological services.
- For pre-16 SEND Transport, Northumberland is highest amongst its regional and CIPFA neighbours, For SEND transport for 16 and 18 year olds, Northumberland has the highest expenditure amongst statistical neighbours.

Opportunities For Development:

- The benchmarking information will enable us to look at how children's needs are considered, and decide if our decision making remains effective in allocating the resources available, and the relationship between the degree of need and the funding then applied.

4.7 Quality Of Provision & Pupil Outcomes

Areas Of Interest Explored:

- Quality assurance arrangements currently in place across our SEND provision were considered in depth; along with the roles and responsibilities currently in place to support this, and how these might be adapted and improved going forward.
- Alongside these discussions, consideration was given to how well the increased focus on outcomes within the new SEND Code Of Practice is being embedded, and again what more can be done, (within the limitations of influence, resources and capacity within which the Local Authority must operate).

Key Challenges & Constraints:

- Almost all of our specialist provision is of a very high standard being judged good or outstanding by Ofsted. However there is significant variance across our SEND provision in mainstream schools in terms of the breadth and quality of the services offered.
- The focus on outcomes for our SEND pupils, as well as the visibility of these outcomes for us to measure value for money and effectiveness of provision against, is variable especially within alternative provision and the independent sector.
- How we measure the success of SEND provision should be enhanced, considering educational attainment alone to measure the effectiveness of SEND provision is not necessarily helpful as we see an increase in the complexity and severity of needs.

Opportunities For Development:

- We have an opportunity to engage with our partners in raising standards as a whole, and to share skills and knowledge where models of delivery may change in the coming years to meet changing demand.
- As our processes and panels are going through transition, it is timely to review and realign roles, responsibilities and relationships to ensure they are the most effective in making robust decisions about how we allocate places, review effectiveness, and challenge areas that may require attention or improvement.
- With the strong relationship that exists between schools and the Local Authority, a joint effort can be achieved in raising standards and achieving the best possible services and therefore outcomes for SEND children and young people in our county. In turn, the role of Local Authority services in supporting, advising and guiding the focus on outcomes can be considered and realigned to match the increasing attention this will receive.
- We have begun to realign our Local Inclusion Support Teams (LISTs) to simpler and more coherent work-streams that will still allow multi-disciplinary working but will provide a more focussed and coherent response to all parts of the county.

4.8 “Localness” & Shape Of Future Provision Across The County

Areas Of Interest Explored:

- Consideration was given to the historical rationale for the shape of our current LIST model, and whether it remains sufficient and fit for purpose. This included discussions with all the separate teams, schools and parents. The reasons for this process was to ensure that we had a system in place that could most benefit children and young people and prevent any from not being supported in their locality; and how and where we might want to reconfigure provision to provide better coverage for pupils particularly in mainstream schools.

Key Challenges & Constraints:

- The rationale for establishing LIST provision in its current form in different parts of the county was based on historical analysis of need; sites available to accommodate this provision; and consideration of services that should be provided locally, countywide or on a regional basis. However, over recent years, demands and types of need have changed significantly and so, therefore, should our response to it in terms of the size and shape of provision available.
- Since the completion of the more detailed analysis investigating the prevalence of particular types of SEND across the county, and the distance travelled by pupils to access the specialist provision they require, it has become apparent that it would be very difficult to replicate a high quality service based in 4 geographic areas. The provision needs to become more flexible to meet demand.

Opportunities For Development:

- A number of suggestions were made during conversations about the future configuration of the LIST teams. It may be beneficial to increase the number of available places for children with particular types of SEND, but also to grow alternative support rather than continually growing specialist SEND places. This might include increased support roles / sharing of specialist expertise for particular types of need via LIST members. We are focussing on helping to retain children in the mainstream system where appropriate, and enabling specialist places to be allocated to the greatest, and growing needs.
- As well as considering where the localness of provision may no longer be fit for purpose, the potential to share some provision with our nearest Local Authority neighbours has also been under discussion, as well as the need to analyse where regional provision may now be more appropriate for different types of need.
- Where it is clear that additional places would be beneficial, the Local Authority will look to invite expressions of interest for the creation of new places in mainstream schools and the extension or reconfiguration of specialist schools.

4.9 Students aged 16-25

Areas Of Interest Explored:

- An analysis was conducted of: the changes in Post-16 provision over recent years, (including those resulting from the new SEND Code of Practice); the transition between Pre-16 provision and the work that Connexions do with children and young people; and the progression and transition from the support offered by Connexions into adulthood.

Key Challenges & Constraints:

- Until the past couple of years the pathways identified and available for young people with SEND transitioning from mainstream schools were fairly limited, and predominantly focused on staying on in full time education until the end of 6th Form and then moving on to college. More current thinking suggests that for some young people this is not the best approach in preparing them for a successful transition into adulthood, potential employment and independent living.
- Unfortunately the Post-16 funding arrangements remain relatively tied to the old approaches to Post-16 provision, and are fairly inflexible in enabling the targeting of resources to different packages and programmes of activities for young people.
- Collaborative relationships with key partners, (such as health, social care and employers), are therefore becoming increasingly critical in making best use of funding available, and in thinking creatively to achieve the best outcomes for individuals – hopefully minimising the numbers who require more extensive or expensive support in later years because they were not well enough prepared for the future.

Opportunities For Development:

- The SEND commissioner and his team aim to increase their work with new providers, offering different, more meaningful and creative opportunities for young people, to encourage young people and their families to engage with alternative and more bespoke programmes of activities in the local area.
- The team also will be looking to work more closely with other service providers to explore opportunities for mutually beneficial sharing of access to services / facilities.

4.10 SEND pressure on places

Areas Of Interest Explored:

- There are known specific pressure points in the system at present, which will need to be addressed in the short term. The SEND commissioner has also identified options we have for enhancing our mainstream SEND offer, and what additional support might be required to assist mainstream schools in achieving this.
- In addition a more coherent provision map and demarcation of the in-take of our current specialist provision may be necessary.
- An increase in the number of places for children with autistic spectrum disorders is required as is the number of places for pupils with profound and multiple difficulties.

Key Challenges & Constraints:

- The county, following national trends, has seen an increased prevalence of Autistic Spectrum Disorder, with capacity in most provision already or soon to be exceeded. In turn, prevalence of Emotional, Social and Behavioural Difficulties (ESBD, now called 'SEMH') has also increased, with capacity soon to be reached. This is across several sectors, including the PRU, Specialist provision and alternative providers.
- Increases in the numbers of SEND children entering schools is not reflected in increased capacity / support / input from partner services, this restricts the degree of support that can be offered in schools.
- Pathways and relationships between mainstream schools and their potential to offer additional resource centres are unclear. Links between completion and collaboration across special schools are not always as clear or as effective as they might be.

Opportunities For Development:

- Various options will be suggested and consulted upon to see how increased demand may be met in the future.

	<p><u>These might include:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Establishment of an Additional Resource Centre at one or more mainstream primary/first schools in each of the partnerships; ➤ Secondary schools creating their own specialist provision to meet specific local needs; ➤ Working with Academies/multi-academy trusts, academy sponsors, and the Regional Academy Commissioner to consider the most effective means to create shared local primary/secondary provisions for the increasing ASD, ESD/SEM and early years demand; ➤ Continuing the re-focussing of the LIST team to support learners to remain in their current school ➤ Establishment of additional PRU places ➤ Establishment of additional alternative provision places ➤ Establishment of additional capacity for pupils with profound and multiple difficulties. <p>Much additional consultation is required to inform our planning for future places. This must be considered alongside the urgent need for additional provision.</p>
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5.0	Status Of Review & Outputs
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An SEND Strategy Report has been drafted which expands upon the information presented above and explores in more detail the opportunities available to the Local Authority and its partners in ensuring the sufficiency and effectiveness of our SEND provision for the future. This is accompanied by a draft action plan, reflecting all the opportunities identified to date. ▪ These documents will be circulated, to all partners for comment. ▪ Partners have been requested to comment upon the draft report, identify areas for which they, or others, might be able to provide support, and then consider the draft action plan and how they might contribute to it.

6.0	Recommendations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A draft SEND action plan should be created making a number of proposals for consultation to ensure our SEND provision meets the needs of children and young people going forward, and offers best value and best outcomes for those who access the services / specialist places available across the county. ▪ The key work streams identified reflect the individual areas discussed as part of the review, and these are underpinned by an accurate analysis of past and current data, upon which our future estimates, plans and funding allocations are based. ▪ Therefore, it is recommended that as a matter of priority a consultation process should be initiated to review and agree proposals ▪ This will require appropriate representation from all partners who work with children and young people with SEND and include LIST teams, Children and Adult Services, Social Care, Health, Special School headteachers and governors, mainstream school and parental groups. It is proposed that a conference will be held later this term to launch this consultation. ▪

7.0	Next Steps
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A Conference later this term to discuss the proposals, share the strategy and action plan. ▪ Once the draft report and action plan and refined accordingly, it is proposed that this information be shared more widely. ▪ The timescales associated with this will be discussed by the Director of Education and Skills and the Director of Children's Services with elected members and planned into their agenda accordingly. ▪ Once options and opportunities have been discussed with elected members, a final action plan will be created, and a delivery project constructed to take forward the options consulted upon and agreed. This will include negotiations regarding resources and personnel from partners who will be integral in the successful delivery of the future SEND model for Northumberland.

