



Northumberland County Council

Agenda Item 6

School Forum : 18 November 2020

Special Education Needs Update

1. Purpose of Briefing Note

To provide a briefing in relation to Special Educational Needs in Northumberland, incorporating:

- A review of SEN numbers including the increase in those pupils with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and attending Special Schools;
- Developments of the new Free School and ARPs to develop additional capacity
- The balances held by maintained Special Schools as at March 2020;
- The commencement of the Northumberland Inclusive Education Service (NIES) with effect from September 2020; (SEND Support Services)

2. Recommendations

Schools Forum are recommended to:

- Note the report; and
- Anticipate further information to Schools Forum in relation to the setting of the High Needs Budget for 2021/22.

3. Background

Previous reports to Schools Forum have demonstrated the rising impact of SEN and the demand for associated services over the past few years. This trend is continuing as demonstrated by the latest figures below.

4. Current Position

While the overall numbers of students with SEN have not increased significantly since 2015, the numbers of pupils with Statements / Plans have increased, and there the demands for additional SEN funding.



EHCPs are rising, in 2015 there were 1458 plans, in Jan 2020 there were 2174, a rise of 716 (49%). Over the same period pupils recorded as SEN Support have fallen by 594 (10.8%) from 5,480 to 4,886.

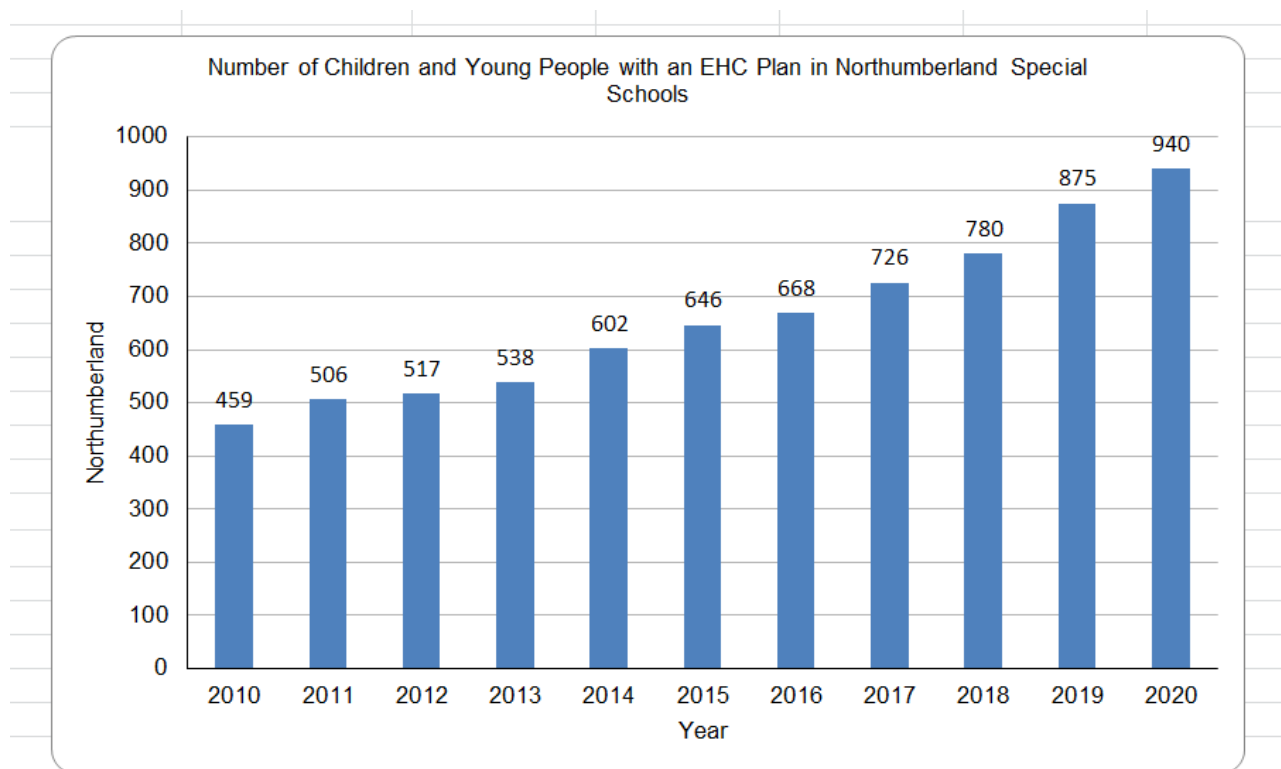
Northumberland is therefore under the national average for the total number of children and young people with SEND and the number of learners at SEN Support, but it is above the national average for the number children and young people with EHCPs, which tend to be more resource intensive.

TOTAL SEND as at January 2020

	<i>Northumberland</i>	<i>National Average</i>
<i>Number of pupils on roll in Northumberland maintained and academy schools</i>	45, 599	NA
<i>% of pupils with SEND</i>	14.9%	15.6%
<i>% of pupils receiving SEN Support</i>	11.4%	12.2%
<i>% of pupils with an EHCP</i>	3.5%	3.4%

(Source: LG SEND Report - Jan 2020)

There is an increasing shift towards special school placements being sought, as demonstrated by the figures over the last decade below:



% increase from previous year										
2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
10%	2%	4%	12%	7%	3%	9%	7%	12%	7%	9%

#Currently, as at November 2020, there are 1,002 children in Northumberland Special Schools and Special Academies, representing a % increase to this point the final figure will be confirmed in January 2021.

Compared to the national picture, Northumberland has a disproportionately high number of EHCP learners in special schools than in mainstream schools. This places significant strain on the High Needs Block, which continues to increase year on year and is not financially sustainable. The net result of this is that significant financial support is invested in specialist educational provision and is therefore unavailable to support mainstream schools to effectively include pupils of mainstream ability at both SEN Support and with EHCPs.

New Additional Resource Provision (ARPs)

In order to assist with the pressures on Special School numbers, and support SEN pupils in mainstream schools, additional Resource Provision (ARPs) are being piloted during 2020/21, at Seaton Sluice First School and Astley High. While originally intended to be operational from Sept 2020, the impact of covid has meant that we expect both the Seaton Sluice First School ARP and the Secondary School ARP at Astley to be able to admit pupils from February half term. We do not expect high numbers upon opening but will be building up the numbers during the remaining part of the school year. We have 8 places at the first school and 10 at the secondary ARP.

New Free School

We expect the new free school to be open by September 2022 in Blyth. The school is an 80 place school for Y7 to Y11 pupils with the primary need of SEMH or ASD. It is expected that the school will open with 40 pupils in 2022/23, 60 pupils in 2023/24 and 80 by 2024/25.

5. Financial Position Balances held by Special Schools

It is acknowledged that while top up rates have not been examined in a number of years, some schools have successfully balanced income and expenditure. This can be seen in the table below, which shows the year end balances held by maintained special schools. This information is published by the DfE on an annual basis but is not available at school level for special academies.

	Total Revenue Balances (before commitments)					Trend
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	
Cleaswell Hill School	£486,326	£446,005	£651,344	£277,101	£393,817	
Cramlington Hillcrest School	£9,975	£61,783	£173,686	£295,562	£264,245	
Bardale House School	£7,600	£(70,490)	£(170,378)	£(221,996)	£(250,313)	
The Grove Special School	£63,821	£33,648	£48,630	£95,504	£59,365	
Hexham Priory School	£68,739	£76,900	£63,771	£7,533	n/a	
The Dales School	£110,288	£104,716	£13,246	£111,150	£168,153	
Collingwood School & Media Arts College	£195,374	£129,719	£248,046	£253,560	£343,433	
Atkinson House School	£198,711	£171,059	£131,572	£225,019	£(129,989)	
Total	£1,140,834	£953,340	£1,159,917	£1,043,433	£848,711	

While this is not a uniform change across all schools, generally a greater % of balances is held by larger schools with opportunities for economies of scale. Special Schools are funded via a combination of place and Top Up funding, they do not currently receive a lump sum, as mainstream schools do.

6. Northumberland Inclusive Education Services (NIES)

To coincide with the commencement of the new offer from September 2020, Northumberland's SEND Support Services have been renamed Northumberland Inclusive Education Services (NIES), placing the emphasis on providing support to maintain learner placements in a mainstream school setting whenever this is possible and appropriate.

It should be remembered the removal of charges for these services should save Northumberland Schools over £400,000 in 2020/21 and represents a significant commitment from the High Needs Block.

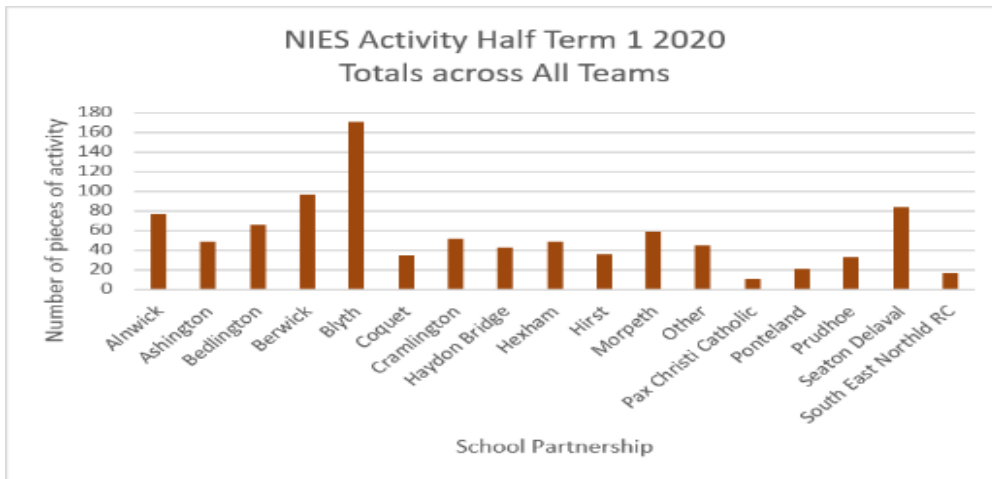
While clearly it is too soon to draw any conclusions from work since the beginning of September, initial analysis is provided below.

Summary Report on Service Activity September 7th – October 23rd, 2020

This report has been prepared as a snapshot of activity following the introduction of the new model of delivery in September, and the removal of the traded arrangements which applied to Autism, Emotional Wellbeing and Behaviour, Literacy and Speech, Language and Communication Support. Schools Forum can expect regular reports, with a fuller analysis of the impact at the end of the academic year. When combined with data received from schools via the census, and the data around EHC needs assessments and numbers of learners being successfully included in mainstream schools, the service activity will provide us with indicators of impact.

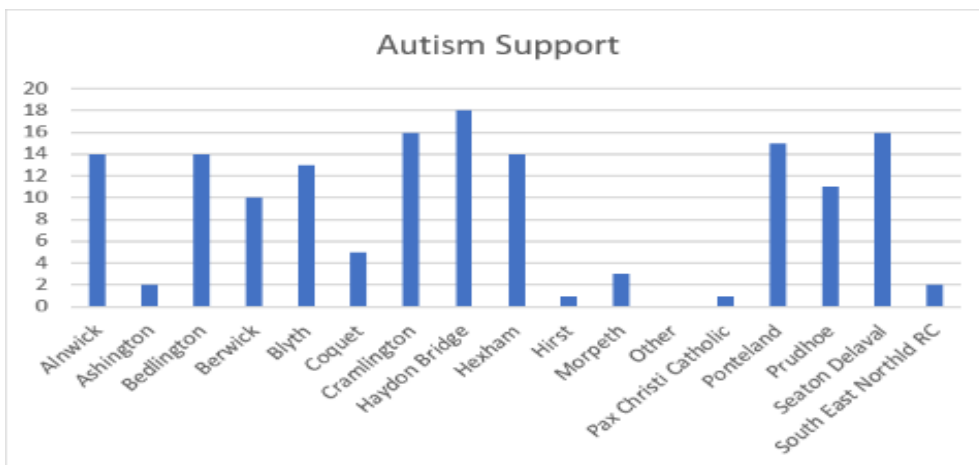
The service is returning to business as usual and from the start of term has been receiving referrals from schools in respect of learners with SEND. All staff have access to office buildings to support the delivery of 'in person' visits following a risk assessment of each individual referral. Staff are adhering to school protocols and to NCC (Northumberland County Council) Corporate guidelines. There is also a virtual offer.

Work has been carried out across all partnership areas, with highest activity to date recorded in Blyth:

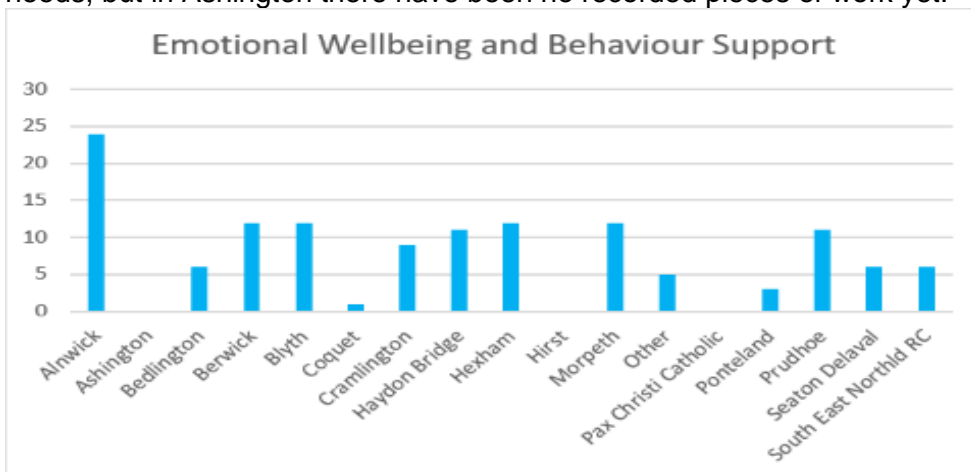


In terms of volume of activity, most pieces of work have been undertaken by Sensory Support (learners with sensory impairments have a statutory entitlement to support from specialist teachers). This is followed by, in order, Speech, Language and Communication, Autism Support, Emotional Wellbeing and Behaviour, and Literacy.

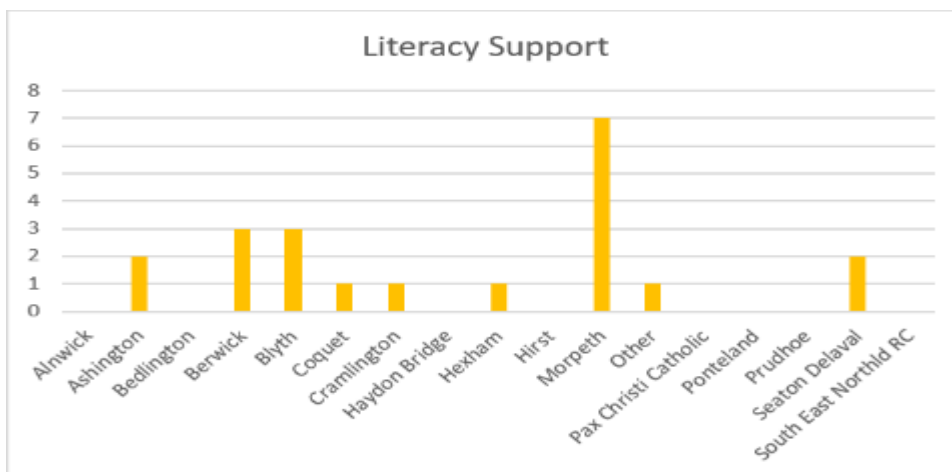
Patterns across the partnerships on a team-by-team basis shows some variation: Autism Support has lower levels of activity in Ashington schools than in any other area, despite the high pupil numbers.



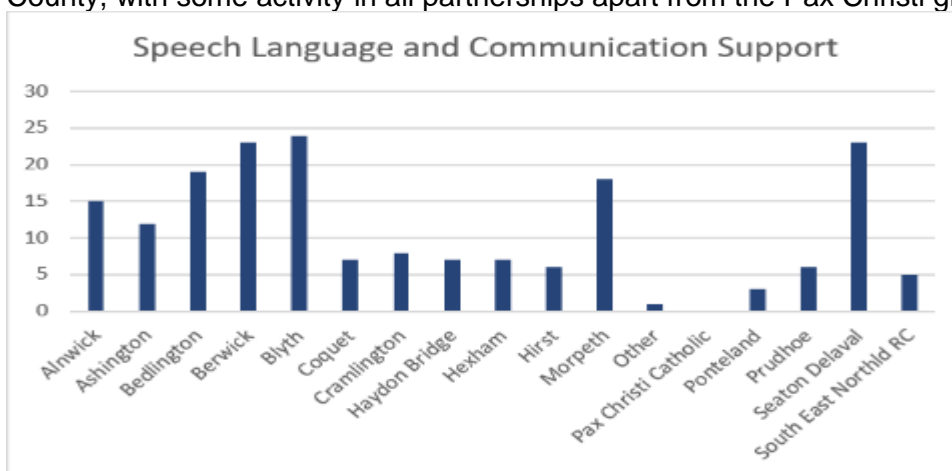
There is a more even spread of referral for learners with Emotional Wellbeing and Behaviour needs, but in Ashington there have been no recorded pieces of work yet.



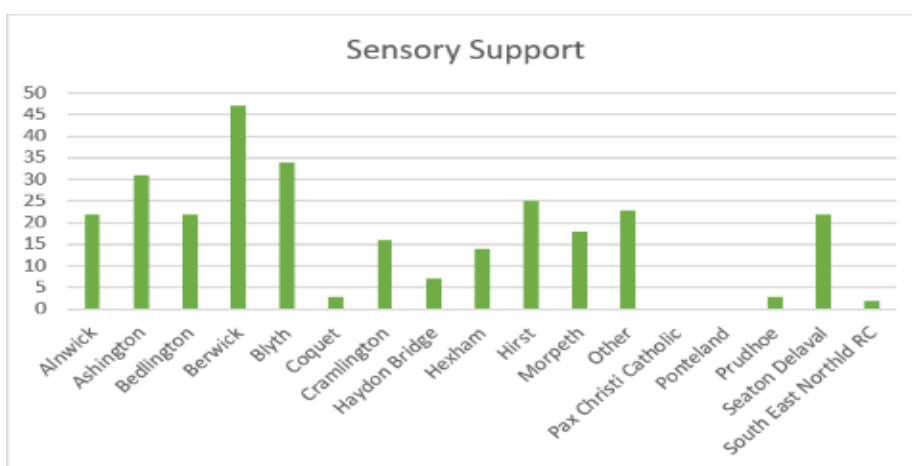
Literacy Support is a smaller team, and more work has been carried out in Morpeth than in other partnerships. Some of this work with individual learners had been started during the lockdown period:



For speech, language, and communication support we see that the work is spread across the County, with some activity in all partnerships apart from the Pax Christi group of schools:

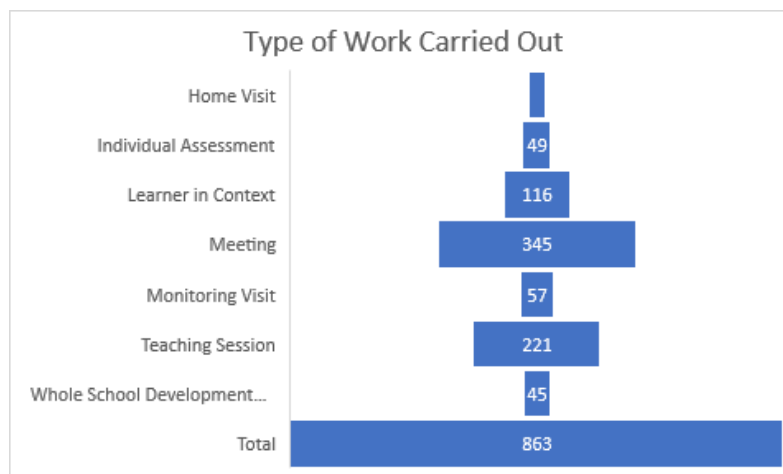


The spread of the work of Sensory Support is based on the location of learners with diagnosed impairments and is driven by referrals from Health professionals rather than schools.



During this period, the specialist teachers/assistants from the Autism, Emotional Wellbeing and Behaviour, Sensory, and Speech Language and Communication Support Teams have undertaken a total of 863 pieces of work within the following categories:

- Home visits e.g., to work with parents, to work with preschool children
- Individual Assessments e.g., initial specialist assessments, follow up assessments
- Learner in Context visits for newly referred learners
- Meetings e.g., planning, Annual Review of EHCPs (Education Health and Care Plan), Early Help and other meetings held under social care frameworks
- Monitoring Visits e.g., for pupils already known to services
- Teaching Sessions e.g., for sensory impaired youngsters predominantly
- Whole School Development e.g., training



7. Summary and Conclusions

This report provides an update into various aspects of SEN within Northumberland in order to provide Schools Forum with an up to date picture of the demands and challenges faced. It is intended to invite the Additional Needs Educational Committee to consider the current mechanisms for the distribution of SEN funding to mainstream and special schools including the effectiveness and use of STAR funding.

Further information will be provided to Schools Forum, ahead of the setting of the 2021/22 High Needs Budget in Feb 2021, with the Additional Educational Needs Committee undertaking work in this area, drawing on other sources of information as available.

If anyone is interested in the assisting with the work of the AEN Committee please contact Bruce Parvin via bruce.parvin@northumberland.gov.uk

12 November 2020