

Wellbeing and Community Health

Agenda Item : 10

## SCHOOLS FORUM

27 September 2017

### SEN Update

#### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update Schools Forum regarding SEN pressures and the potential financial implications arising.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Schools Forum members are requested to consider the report prior to the meeting and table any questions, preferably in advance or at the meeting. The position will be further examined by the Additional Needs Committee.

#### 3. BACKGROUND

It is a fact that approximately 3% of the school age population will have complex Special Educational Needs (SEN), as reflected in both local and national pupil numbers having EHC Plans. This accounts for approximately 1400 school age children in Northumberland. This does not include a wider group of children who do not have EHC plans, but are identified and recorded as needing additional SEN support. Taken together, this accounts for approximately 16% of the school age population.

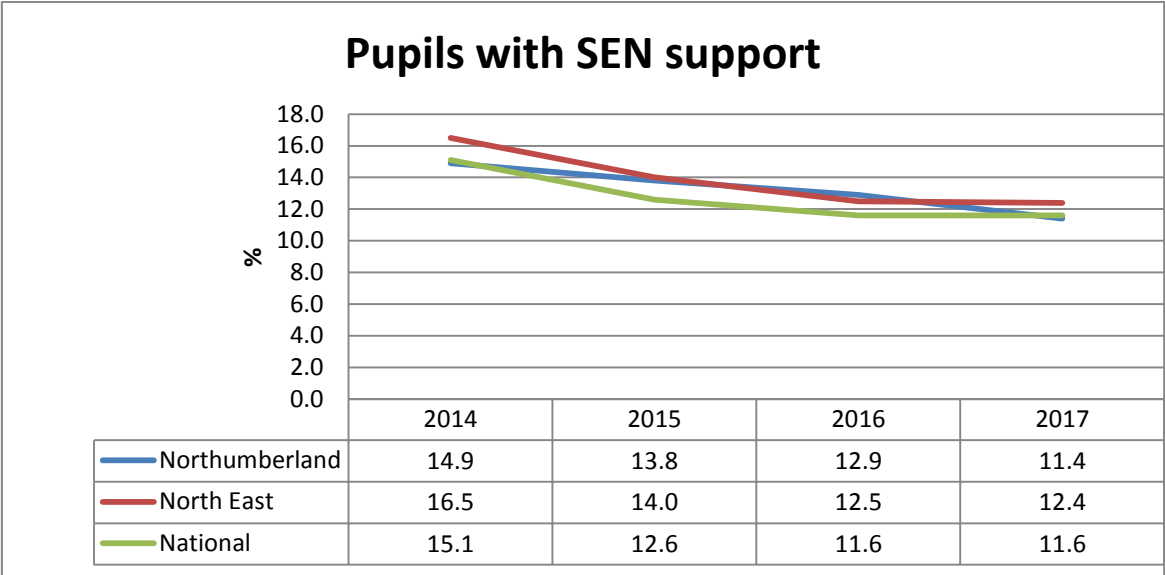
Overall prevalence of SEN, as recorded in School Census information and collected nationally shows the Northumberland % of pupils with Education Health and Care (EHC) Plan compared to regional and national comparators. The figures below cover the transition period where Education Health and Care Plans were introduced, replacing SEN Statements.

% of School Pupil with SEN Statement or EHC Plans			
	Northumberland	North East	National
2014	3.0	2.9	2.8
2015	2.9	2.9	2.8
2016	2.7	2.9	2.8
2017	2.9	3.0	2.8

The transition from SEN Statements to EHC Plans is due to be completed by March 2018.

In 2014/15 the previous “School Action” and “School Action Plus” were replaced by a new category SEN Support, including all pupils with SEN who do not have SEN Statements or EHC Plans. Despite the fact the categories “School Action” and School Action Plus ” have been removed it should be remembered that schools still have responsibilities to demonstrate how they have supported SEN Support pupils within their schools.

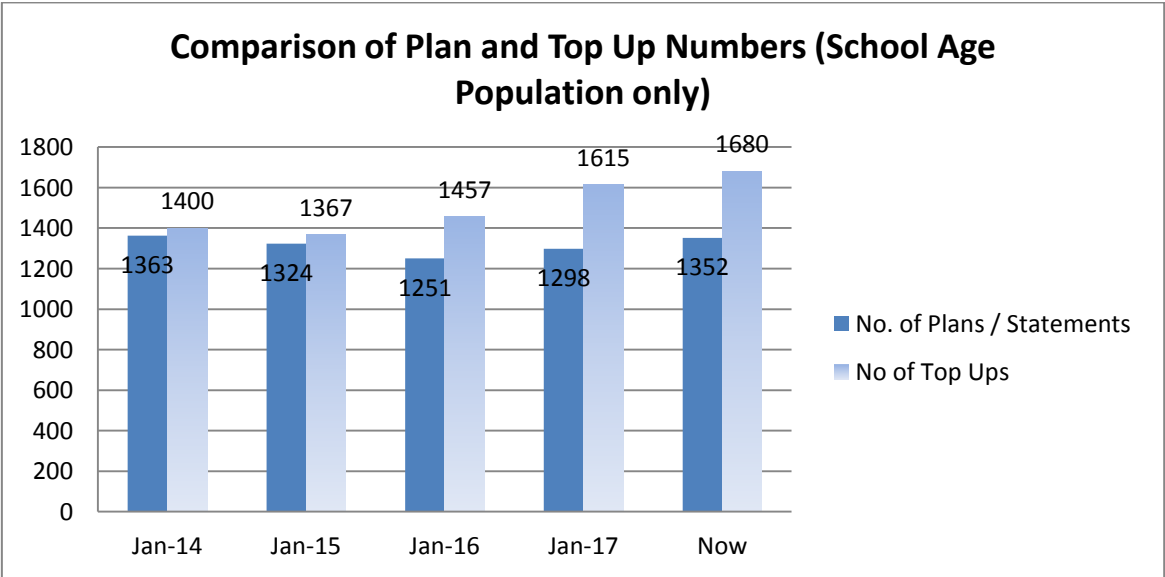
While national and local numbers on Plans have shown limited fluctuation over the period, there has been a fall across the board in relation to pupils on SEN Support without plans or statements. This may in part be attributable to the SEND reforms.



**4. CURRENT POSITION**

**Top Up Numbers**

Within this context, Northumberland has seen a disproportionate rise in the number of pupils receiving Top Up support compared with the overall Plan numbers.



This represents a 313 (22.9%) increase in the number of pupils being supported by Top Up. If the average assessment outcome is assumed as Band 4 (i.e. a midpoint in the scale, costing £6,000 per annum), these 313 extra cases would result in additional annual cost pressures of £1.878m.

### **Out of County (Independent Sector) Placements**

The 2017/18 DSG Monitoring Report highlighted a £561,320 overspend in this area. There has been an increase in the number of independent sector placements funded in this way, which has been another major factor in the pressures faced by the High Needs block. Since April 2015 the number of placements funded has increased by 50 (53%), from 94 to 144.

This position has been exacerbated by the fact that Northumberland's 8 maintained special schools have seen number rise by 32% between 2013 and 2017 as shown in the table below :

<b>Special School</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>
Atkinson House	62	53	56	59	66
Barndale House	36	38	40	37	39
Cleaswell Hill	126	149	155	163	173
Collingwood School	105	129	145	137	137
Cramlington Hillcrest	46	56	58	62	74
Hexham Priory	61	65	77	78	89
The Dales School	68	73	76	76	89
The Grove School	36	39	42	43	45
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>540</b>	<b>602</b>	<b>649</b>	<b>655</b>	<b>712</b>

There is therefore no capacity to accommodate additional pupils.

Given that Northumberland's 8 maintained special schools are all either good or outstanding, the Council is keen to reverse the trend of increasing out of borough placements by increasing the capacity to provide quality SEN education within the county, and enable pupils to be educated within their communities.

Work is being undertaken to address this, such as the development of the Dales School capacity at an alternative site, and an extension at Hexham Priory, but these will not be available for 12 months.

Placements that are outside of the county also involve additional expenditure in terms of Home to School Transport. Northumberland spends over £4 million per year on SEN transport (£1.147 million via DSG, due to historic commitments), both within and outside the county but what this does not take into account are the long travel times and the impact has on our pupils.

In addition, the 2014/15 national Ofsted Annual Report highlighted that in areas of Northumberland, pupils may need to travel long distances to access specialist provision (page 62, para 102).

As at July 2017, we were supporting 1095 pupils and students to attend 57 different establishments on a daily basis. The average annual cost per pupil is almost £4000 each, a figure broadly equivalent to the amount of funding per pupil to operate a school in a mainstream setting.

## **CONCLUSION**

Given the pressures outlined above and in light of the new proposals in relation to the High Needs Block, it is evident that doing nothing is not an option in this area. It is recommended that the Additional Needs Committee carry out further work in this area in order to consider how this can be addressed for Northumberland.