Special Educational Needs & Disabilities

Northumberland Local Area Partnership SEND Strategic Plan 2025-2028

Approved by SEND Board
September 2025

Best start in life

Preparation for adulthood

Realising aspirations

Northumberland Parent Carer Forum
A Voice For All

NHS
North East and North Cumbria

Northumberland County Council

www.northumberlandsend.co.uk

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Welcome

Our joint vision, ambition and commitment is:

We want our 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 must 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.

This document summarises the aims, aspirations and priorities for the Northumberland Local Area SEND Partnership.

The Local Area SEND Partnership brings together Education, Health, and Social Care services, working alongside the Northumberland Parent Carer Forum and other strategic partners and groups. This plan has been informed by a range of contributions, including the Parent SEND Survey 2024, the Local Area Partnership Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (March 2025), the Local Area Partnership Self Evaluation (April 2025), and consultation with young people. It builds on the foundations of the previous strategy.

The previous Local Area Partnership SEND strategy concluded in 2024 and the impact of the work from that approach can be seen here with the April 2025 infographic where the impact of the strategy work can be seen. Headlines from the Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) Infographic: August 2025 The infographic is published annually with a short narrative accompanying the visual, this has some clear messages showing the impact of the work to date and where we can add further emphasis for greater impact in our next phase of work.

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Key statistics

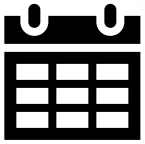
A few key statistics from the Northumberland JSNA are highlighted below:

Children with a Good Level of Development (GLD) at reception = 6.6% for EHCP compared to 3.8% nationally and 32% for SEN Support compared to 24% nationally (2023/24 fig)

Northumberland is the 5th highest in the country for numbers of EHCPs (7% compared to 5.3% nationally)

Autism remains the most identified primary need among pupils with an EHCP in Northumberland, accounting for 28% This is slightly below both the regional average (33%) and the national average (32%). Social, Emotional and Mental

Health (SEMH) needs are the second most prevalent at 27%, which is higher than the regional (22%) and national (21%) averages. (from July publication)



95.3% of our Children with and EHCP receive a timely two and half year check. Individual domains range from 85.8%-93.5% better than NA. 82.5% of children are above the threshold in all categories

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Inclusion

Inclusion has been and will continue to be the cornerstone of our approach in Northumberland. The Northumberland Inclusive Education Services support children, young people and their families as well as schools and services to develop their practice supporting our children in their settings.

We are committed to continuing to build and expand a safe, happy, healthy and successful future for all our children, none more so than those with a disability or learning need. Our Education and Skills Priorities identify the commitment and approach that we have set out to ensure that all of our children are able to access education that is timely specifically caters to their need and is, ideally, much closer to home than ever before.

We are clear that timely identification and well planned support is essential if we are to work together with partners to secure the best outcomes for Northumberland's children and young people with SEND. Our approach to partnership working across care and health and education is strong.

There are existing innovative practices such as the NEWST team, the Family Hub SEND champion work the integrated health and wellbeing approach, the school place planning and early years work, this combined partnership work alongside our valued Parents and Carer Forum and network is underpinning the ongoing 'How we do things in Northumberland' partnership development work.

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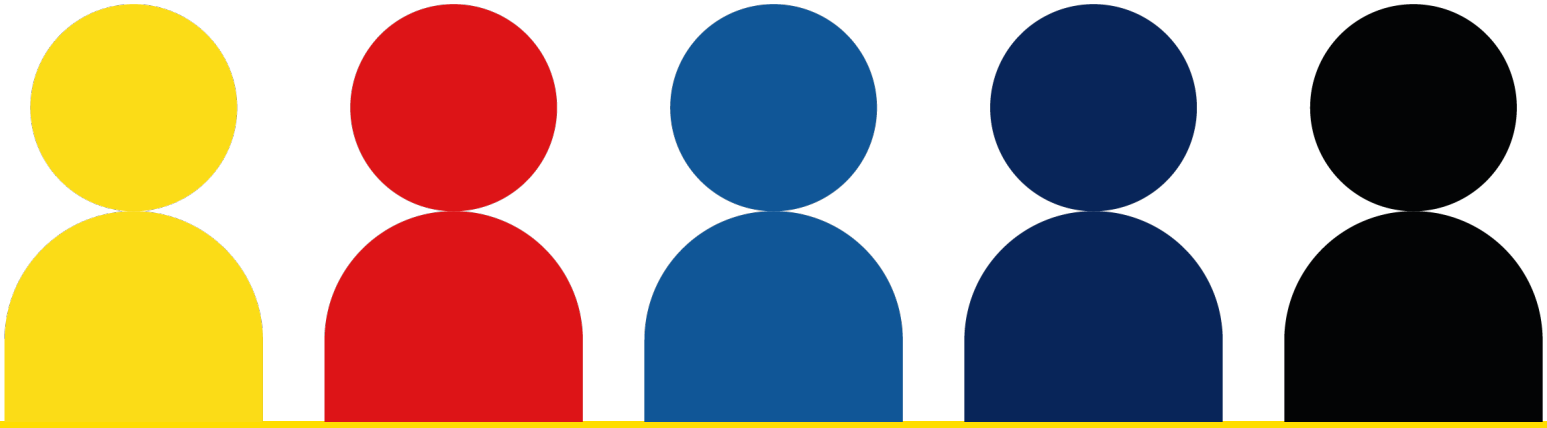
Feedback

A representative body of young people have told us:

- They value the positive relationships they have with the professionals around them
- They felt supported within their school environment
- They want greater understanding of and involvement in decision making around their plans and for their meetings to happen in a way they can join in
- They want more youth clubs and activities in their local areas accessible to all
- Schools have given them a clear understanding of preparation for adulthood, and they want to know more

Parents and carers have told us:

- The new SEND strategy is a concise jargon free document that is clear in its intent
- They have good relationships with schools, they feel supported and kept up to date
- Our communications with processes could be better, there are often too many professionals in our life and it can be confusing
- That more of them now receive an ECHP sooner than they previously had and feel the plan is suitable
- They feel EHCP is helping a fuller potential to be met
- Their young person is flourishing at Post 16 Skills, such a difference is being made



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Real impact

Individual parents and carers have told us the following about their child's physical and mental health:

> We have a better understanding of the physical health impact her diagnosis can have.

> Early help workers have really supported us to understand the process.

> Social work was lovely, patient and answered all my questions.

> The EHCP is helping the young person reach their full potential.

> My child is struggling with severe anxiety, I asked for help, due to his diagnosis and being on an 18mth waiting list for meds, no one will see him. This to me is unacceptable.

> We have a great relationship with the school, they keep us up to date with everything that is happening...I feel the right support is in place, but it did feel like we waited a long time for it.

> Actually listening to the problems that are happening and not passing it off due to something else like ASD. There may be an overlap, but listening to the parent, the problem and pain rather than leaving the child to suffer.

> Uniform accommodations and withdrawal from PE lessons for decompression have been very welcome this year (Year 10), but we are still struggling wih burnout and anxiety.

> Being more timely – not waiting 18 months to access anything, or waiting to access for 18 months and being told they are Autistic and a teenager. My child cannot understand if they are a normal teenager, why aren't all other teenagers like them or why aren' t they like them.

> Being heard, my child feels that although he can voice his needs, they are ignored.

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Co-production

In Northumberland, we recognise that children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are our experts in how the services they use impact their lives and experiences.

The voice of our young people, voices of our parents and carers and many workshops around the county as well as more formal consultations, the development of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and our widely gathered SEND survey content are all examples of our co production The wide consultation and co production work to inform this strategy and future plans is valued and represents a wide voice and view across Northumberland.

The outcome of this co-production and consultation process are the strategic priorities for the partnership is detailed on the following pages.

Explore our actions and how success will be measured on the following pages.

1 Strategic Priority 1: Strong leadership & clear systems for SEND

What we're working on:

- Clear leadership and accountability: We're reviewing how SEND decisions are made and who is responsible, so that everyone works with high expectations and a focus on improvement
- Quality checks and reviews: We'll regularly review services, look at data, and listen to feedback to make sure things are working well—and make changes when needed
- Support for staff: We're helping SEND staff feel supported and well-trained, so they can do their best for children and families

When we get this right:

- Families, carers and children will recognise and trust how the SEND system works and feel confident in the decisions being made
- Everyone working in SEND will use a shared Quality of Practice Framework, and a new Inclusion Framework will be developed together with families and children and young people
- Schools and services will follow a whole-system approach to SEND support, with training and development for all staff

How we will measure ourselves:

Expected outcomes/ metrics
(examples as workshop co-production will shape this work)

- The SEND leadership and governance will be reviewed to make sure it's ambitious and effective
- Actions will be clear and measurable, with consistent reporting so families can see progress
- A shared SEND commitment will be developed across the system
- The Quality of Practice Framework will be used by everyone, and an Inclusion Charter will be co-created with families

2 Strategic Priority 2: Putting children, young people and families first

What we're working on:

- **Listening better:** We want to hear more from children, young people and families—and make sure we act on what they tell us
- **Clearer advice and support:** We're improving how we share information, including through the Local Offer, so families know where to go and what help is available
- **More activities and friendships:** We're creating more chances for children and young people to join in with fun, inclusive activities—whether in the community or through specialist support

What success will look like:
(examples as workshop co-productionwill shape this work)

- Families and young people help shape a **Participation Strategy** that truly reflects their voices
- Children, young people and families are **represented at every decision-making level**
- The **Local Offer website** is easy to use, regularly updated, and valued by families
- Services are **mapped and co-located** – meaning families can find and access support in one place, like Family Hubs or health centres
- Services across Northumberland are **joined up and place-based**, making it easier for families to get the help they need
- There's a **shared calendar of activities** designed with families and young people, offering something for everyone

How we will measure ourselves:
Expected outcomes/metrics (examples as workshop co-productionwill shape this work)

- Voice is recognised at every level
- Any information published by the Local Area Partnership will only be signed off by the SEND Board if there is strong evidence of co-production
- We will monitor activity on the Local Offer to understand what is working
- We will monitor and increase the number of C&YP accessing activities within their communities

3 Strategic Priority 3: Getting the right help at the right time

What we're working on:

- **Better use of resources**: We're improving how services work together so families get the most effective support
- **EHCPs on time**: We're reducing how long it takes to get an EHCP and ensure that all Annual Reviews are timely
- **Improving waiting times** for children and young people who are undergoing a Autism and / or ADHD assessment
- **Supporting mental health**: we will coordinate across all services who support mental health to make sure it is clear as to where to go for support and when
- **Supporting parents and carers** : we will work with parents and carers to identify how we can offer support to them
- **Planning for the future**: We're making sure that support for growing up and becoming independent (Preparation for Adulthood) is built into every part of the SEND system
- **Smooth transitions**: Whether it's starting school, moving to a new setting, or preparing for adulthood, we want every change to be well-supported and personalised
- **Transition Passport** will be co-produced to support children and families through every stage of life. It will reduce the need to repeat information and be updated regularly, especially during EHCP reviews
- **Preparation for Adulthood model** will be developed with young people, including mentoring, work experience, and job opportunities

When we get this right:

- Everyone involved in SEND support knows their role and works together confidently
- Families and schools have **simple, clear referral routes**, and decisions are made faster. Parents feel confident in the EHCP process
- There's a **consistent way to describe children's needs**, so everyone is on the same page
- Preparation for Adulthood is tailored to each child's needs, with support from employers and mentors to help young people explore their ambitions
- Every transition – from birth to adulthood – is a **positive experience**, with less stress and better planning

How we will measure ourselves:

Expected outcomes/metrics (examples as workshop co-productionwill shape this work)

- We will reduce the time that children and young people wait for an Autism or ADHD diagnosis
- We will continue to monitor the timeliness and quality of EHCPs
- We will monitor the take up and use of the Transition Passport
- We will increase the number of young people who gain employment
- We will decrease the number of young people who are Not in Education Employment or Training

4 Strategic Priority 4:
Making sure Children & Young People with SEND have their needs met as close to home as possible

What we're working on:

- **Support close to home:** We're helping schools and settings provide excellent inclusive support locally, so children can have their needs met at their nearest school
- **Specialist knowledge and resources:** We're building up expertise in all schools and settings to help improve attendance, reduce exclusions, and make sure children don't feel pushed out of education through
    - Reviewing and updating Ordinarily Available Provision
    - Providing clear co-produced guidance on reasonable adjustments, particularly for children and young people who are neurodivergent
    - Working with SENCos to provide specialist support and advice

When we get this right:

- Children and young people with SEND will feel included and they belong and are part of their local school community
- Families and children help shape a Participation Strategy that reflects how the local area SEND partnership will work together with parents, carers and children and young people
- The Local Offer website is useful, easy to access, and regularly updated
- Services are joined up and easy to find, especially in places like Family Hubs and health centres
- Schools and settings will focus on evidence-based and strengths-based practices to guide improvements

How we will measure ourselves:
Expected outcomes/metrics (examples as workshop co-productionwill shape this work)

Families, children and young people will tell us

- Children with SEND are attending their local schools and getting the support they need
- Inclusion is a strength across all schools—and families tell us they feel it.
- Children will tell us they feel welcome, included, and able to learn and enjoy school
- Families will understand and value different education pathways, including home education and other flexible options

Measures

- Attendance will go up, and exclusions will go down
- Training delivered to schools and settings
- More children and young people will be educated in schools close to their home

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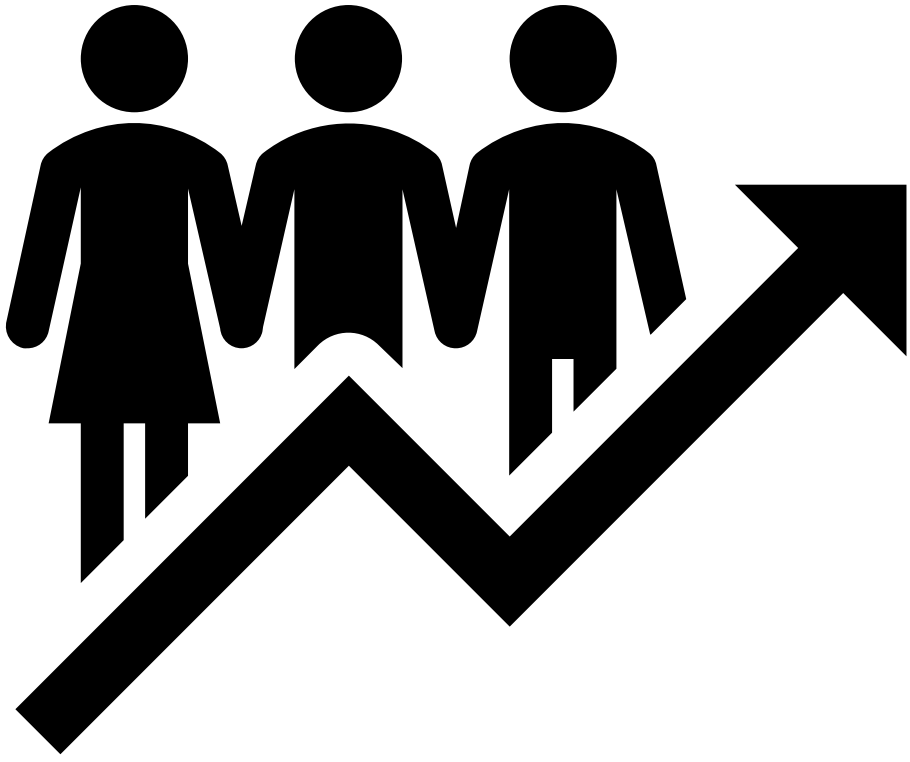
Further developing action plans

Each of the key partners will lead one of the areas of focus and they will formulate plans linked to the expected key outcome metrics below.

The SEND Partnership Board will agree the plans need to develop further detailed action plans with specific timelines to achieve the priorities above.

The SEND Strategic Partnership Board will have an overview and the work of each of these four priority areas with a refreshed strategic governance structure and approach.



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Appendix I

This is an extract from the SEND/AP Ofsted framework as a reminder for all partners who are accountable within our SEND strategy of how the all Local Area Partners work together to plan, evaluate and develop our SEND systems. It is however not a driver for our strategy as we are clear in Northumberland we work in the way that we do to ensure our children, young people, families and carers have the fullest range of support and opportunities available to them in order to improve their life chances and realise their aspirations (extract from our vision and ambition)

The Partnership will ensure:

- leaders are ambitious for children and young people with SEND
- leaders actively engage and work with children, young people and families
- leaders have an accurate, shared understanding of the needs of children and young people in their local area
- leaders commission services and provision to meet the needs and aspirations of children and young people, including commissioning arrangements for children and young people in alternative provision
- leaders evaluate services and make improvements
- leaders create an environment in which effective practice and multi-agency working can flourish

The Partnership will deliver positive impact from the Local Area SEND arrangements on experiences and outcomes to ensure:

- children and young people's needs are identified accurately and assessed in a timely and effective way
- children, young people and their families participate in decision-making about their individual plans and support
- children and young people receive the right help at the right time
- children and young people are well prepared for their next steps, and achieve strong outcomes
- children and young people are valued, visible and included in their communities

It is envisaged that implementation of this strategy will ensure the local area partnership's SEND arrangements lead to positive experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND. Children and young people will typically be achieving strong outcomes, and children and young people's experiences of their education, health and care are typically positive, and the local area partnership has identified areas for improvement and is taking effective action to address them.