

Welcome - Cath McEvoy-Carr, Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services and Vanessa Bainbridge, Accountable Officer for the Northumberland CCG

Ensuring that all children and young people in Northumberland get the best out of life is a key priority for Children's Services and meeting the needs of children with additional or special education needs and disabilities is a significant part of this. We did not need the SEND inspection to tell us that we were not yet effective at providing the right services and resources and although the messages were still hard to hear, it has provided us with a launchpad to accelerate the improvement plans. Along with Vanessa Bainbridge and Sam Barron, we have been visiting local areas to provide feedback from the inspection and listen to parents experiences of the services we provide. This has been very humbling and we are determined to use those experiences to improve our understanding of what works and what needs to change. These bulletins will provide regular updates of the progress we are making and hopefully how those changes are making a difference.

Introduction - Dean Jackson, Director of Education

The 2017-18 Annual Education and Skills Report clearly states that improving the county's SEN offer to parents and pupils is our key priority for the next three years. The report says:
Meeting the needs of all young people with special educational needs is the absolute priority for the county but with government funding for special educational needs remaining static in Northumberland for the last three years, this has presented real difficulties. To resolve this, we need to support our mainstream schools and academies to develop more effective inclusive strategies that will enable them to better identify, assess and meet the needs of all their pupils who have special needs to ensure that they fulfil their potential. Most importantly, we need to work with our schools to remove the barriers that get in the way of children and young people with additional needs being fully included in all areas of mainstream school life.

It is no secret that we face a number of challenges. Northumberland has a higher than average number of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) that have a statutory Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). In addition, a significantly higher than average number of those EHCPs state that the pupil requires specialist, rather than mainstream, school provision. Our High Needs budget has been overspent for a number of years, mainly because of the cost of transporting children and young people to appropriate provision in our huge county and the extremely high fees of some independent providers.

Despite these challenges, we are determined to improve on what we currently provide. The council has invested highly in new provision at Hexham Priory School and at Ashdale in Ashington and we are waiting to hear from the Department for Education on the outcome of our Wave 13 Free School bid for a new specialist ASD / SEMH provision in Blyth. We will revisit our offer to schools to develop Additionally Resourced Provision on their sites and we will pursue this vigorously in order to meet the demand from a number of our schools. We will look at all of our systems and procedures to ensure that we are operating at the highest level of efficiency whilst being mindful of the pressure that many of our SEND services are currently working under. Most importantly, we will listen to parents more often and more carefully to ensure that we reflect the aspirations that they have for their children.

Our ultimate ambition is that Northumberland becomes known as a national centre of excellence for our work in SEND and that we keep parents and their children at the heart of everything we do. We have a long way to go but, as the inspection in October 2018 noted, we have made rapid progress in the last 18 months. If we all work together - council officers, parents, children and young people, schools and providers - and trust each other to all do our best to meet each others needs, then that progress can only accelerate and we will be well on the way to achieving the sort of SEND service that we all aspire to.

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

Northumberland SEND Inspection, what happens now?

Following the SEND Inspection in October 2018, Northumberland County Council and Northumberland CCG were required to produce a Written Statement of Action that explains how the following areas of development will be addressed:

- weaknesses in the local area's arrangements for jointly planning, commissioning and providing the services children and young people with SEND and their families need
- the graduated response to identifying, assessing and meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND is not embedded in mainstream primary and secondary schools
- the poor outcomes achieved by children and young people with SEND and weaknesses in successfully preparing them for their adult lives

Work on the development of the Action Plan is well underway to meet the deadline of submission to Ofsted by 13th March 2019. Once the Action Plan has been reviewed and approved by the inspection team you will be able to view it on the Local Offer. Northumberland will then be visited every three months by Department for Education and NHS England to monitor progress on the action plan.

Working Together - a Transition Pathway for Post 16 learners with SEND

As part of the work improving outcomes for our learners with special needs and disabilities, and particularly thinking about the sometimes challenging and worrying time of transition to adult services, we were delighted to recently welcome Barry Jones of the National Development Team for Inclusion who ran a series of workshops for colleagues across Education, Health and Social Care, along with representatives of parent/carers. These workshops were attended by over 120 people who came together to look in some depth at EHCPs for post 16 learners and consider whether the Plans supported good transitions into adulthood. Barry will be providing assistance over coming weeks to help us create a strong action plan which includes information gathered through the workshops along with information we have already gathered from parent/carer workshops and young people's workshops, to help us create a strong action plan, leading to a clear Transition Pathway which will improve understanding of what happens post 16, and help learners and their families to make informed decisions about the future.

Working Together - Moving forward with Mental Health Support for our Children and Young People

In recent months, representatives of all relevant services from Health, Social Care and Education have been working together on Northumberland's Emotional Health and Wellbeing Strategic Local Transformation Plan (LTP), striving to make it easier for children and young people to get high quality mental health care when they need it. Working groups have been looking at setting up and developing the role of a mental health lead in every school, at developing mental health support teams around schools, at considering new ways for children and young people to get to the right mental health support at the right time, and at presenting a helpful resource for schools and families to understand the options available to them at any point in time. An essential part of the work is helping young people to develop resilience to allow them to be emotionally healthy; preventing the need for additional interventions at a later point.

Northumberland has recently been awarded the status of a 'Trailblazer' site for the establishment of mental health support teams around schools. The government has awarded funding to 25 areas nationally; these areas will be expected to trial new ways of working which can be rolled out further in due course. Initially this will provide extra resources into the partnerships of Blyth and Hexham to enhance what is already available and set out a model of support around schools, but the learning will be applied across the whole of Northumberland in due course.

Working Together - In It Together Update - Elizabeth Johnston (Chair)

In It Together is the forum for parents and carers (PCF) of Children and Young People (CYP) with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) who live in Northumberland. Our members have CYP with a wide range of SEND and health conditions within the age range 0-25 years. We consult with, and gather views from our members; parents, carers, grandparents, kinship carers, adoptive parents, individuals and groups on services for CYP and their families. Information gathered is shared with our strategic partners in Education, Health and Social Care and helps in co-production of services to meet local need. Our aim is to continue working towards a better future for CYP and families of those with SEND in Northumberland.

To this end we hold meetings in the 3 localities, Berwick (North), Morpeth (South East Central) and Hexham (West) four times a year to capture views from as many as possible whilst providing an opportunity for themed discussions and information via Locality based Steering Group IIT representatives. For those unable to attend in person we are always happy to be contacted by email or telephone.

This year, we are holding 2 identical conferences in Alnwick (19.3.19) and Hexham (20.3.19) in order to reach as many families as possible. The theme is "Getting it right-preparing for adulthood from the earliest years". Preparation for Adulthood (PfA) was highlighted by our members, strategic partners and Ofsted as an area of high importance. We have invited Barry Jones from the National Development Team for inclusion (NDTi) to facilitate the conference. He has over 20 years' experience of leadership and operational experience in the public sector in both Childrens' and Adults' Services including within SEND. He works with PfA at National Level.

We are members of the National Network of Parent Carer Forums (NNPCF), the Department for Education (DfE) recognized forum for parents and carers. The NNPCF is a network of 150 PCFs in England, divided into 9 regions. Each region has representation on the National Steering Group and the current Chair of IIT is Co-Chair of the North East region. Within our steering group we have trained and experienced representatives who attend and contribute to strategic groups within the Local Authority. Currently we are working with the Local Authority on things such as:

- Development of the Written Statement of Action Plan following the SEND inspection
- Transforming Care - developing ways of supporting the wellbeing and emotional health of young people
- Multi Agency EHCP Audits
- The Transition Pathway

Our vision is to work towards the best provision, opportunities, outcomes and future for CYP with SEND and their families in Northumberland with "nothing about me without me" central to what we seek to achieve. We want to reach out to as many families as possible so please contact us via email: info@in-it-together.org.uk or telephone 07729 192909

Working Together - The voice of the young person - Vicki Graham, SENDIASS

The Northumberland SEND Information Advice and Support Service provides information, advice and support for children and young people with SEND (special educational needs or disabilities) and their parents. As part of my role as Information Advice and Support officer for the service, I have been working with groups of children and young people, aged 11 to 16, in a range of schools around the county. We have been looking at the different ways they like to be supported in class and around school, the things which are going well for them and things that they feel could be done differently. They have all been really enthusiastic and very willing to share their views and experience. They are happy for the information I have gathered to be shared with the SEND Project Manager and included in a training event for school SENCOs this year. Our service is currently setting up focus groups around the county to allow children and young people with SEND to have their views heard on a regular basis about things that are important to them.

Upcoming Training

All training, unless otherwise stated, can be accessed at no cost and via the Northumberland Training Directory [here](#):

- New SENCos group
- Secondary/High School SENCo group
- Presenting Evidence for COSA/Annual Review Clinics
- Sensory Support Service - 'Insight into Sensory Impairment' Conference. Cost £25 per delegate, contact sensorysupport@northumberland.gov.uk for further information

Training delivered over recent months

- NQTs and Initial Teachers in Training, raising awareness and understanding of identifying and meeting the needs of SEN in the classroom
- Categories of Need (SENCos), a workshop to discuss the definitions of different areas of special educational need as defined by the Code of Practice. Schools are required to identify a primary need for learners they are supporting, and this is often not as straightforward as it seems
- SEND Governor/SENCo Workshops - 'SEND is Everyone's Business'
- SEND Support Services provide training on a whole school and individual learner basis on request. Contact the team managers for further information:

Fiona.Tarn@northumberland.gov.uk, (ASD and Behaviour Support Services),
Judith.Dodds@northumberland.gov.uk, (Communication Service),
Katinka.Bryan@northumberland.gov.uk (Psychological Services),
Lynne.McKillup@northumberland.gov.uk, (Portage Service).

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)