

## In It Together family consultation events

**A series of SEND Local Offer development meetings countywide with Alan Carrick, SEND Commissioner, Northumberland County Council.  
November and December 2015**

The following information sets out issues raised by families at the different events and the local authority responses.

### The Dales, Blyth – 26/11/2015

<b>Comments re Local Offer</b>	<b>Response and / or action to be taken by the Local Authority</b>
Could the local authority publish a SEND events calendar on its website?	Yes The current SEND Local Offer website is being updated for April 2016. We will include a box on the Local Offer homepage which links to a calendar for the forthcoming 12 months. A pilot model of the calendar may be available earlier for parents groups to evaluate first.
Families need guidance on the changing national and local two-year-old offer.	Agreed An information sheet is being prepared to share with parents' groups and on the Local Offer website. This will be available in February-March 2016.
Can all the information families need be accessed in three website clicks?	Not at present. Agreed The current SEND Local Offer website is being updated for April 2016. The website structure is being simplified so people can find almost all information within two clicks of arriving at the Local Offer homepage.
Families need "start from scratch information" where things are explained clearly, before they look for more details.	Agreed New summary documents have been written for family editing groups to evaluate. The groups will check all the SEND starting points families need are clear and helpful. This will be completed in stages in Spring 2016
Not enough information from services – foster	This issue has been raised with our Social Care services. We are agreeing a method to check that any foster carer who

carers not given SEND information.	takes on a child with SEND will also get SEND guidance information. We appreciate that some placements are made at short notice, so prompt and helpful information is vital.
Used to be an Additional Services directory for families – alphabetical services, etc. and the packs that families used to get with SEND information. Can we have those again?	Yes A printed 2016 directory is being prepared for Spring 2016, alongside individual information packs for families. These will all be available on the Local Offer website too in Spring 2016.
Published SEND information to families needs to have positive language about SEND not negative/crisis language.	Agreed We will ask family editing groups to check published information to ensure it is positive in tone and intention.
Children leaving the support of Health Visitors at age four does not have clear link to Health after this.	This issue has been raised with Health colleagues. The family GP will be the main link to other Health services, but some children with very specific health needs will have an Individual Healthcare Plan (IHP) to make clear who will support them. We will publish a guide to Health support for different age groups and publish Spring 2016.
Sometimes families have information given, but don't have a 'case worker' to help them navigate/make sense of it.	Agreed There are a number of services that can help with this, including the Parent Partnership and Independent Support agencies. This information is already available, but needs to be promoted many times so 'new' families looking for advice for the first time will be made aware. We will publish a link in our website and booklet for families and ask all schools, colleges, nurseries and SEND services to promote this.
Can funding be explained, including money from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grants</li> <li>• Charities</li> <li>• Government</li> </ul> What about family access to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equipment/resources</li> <li>• Swap shop for equipment and clothing?</li> </ul>	Agreed An information sheet is being prepared to share with parents' groups and on the Local Offer website. This will be available in February-March 2016.
Will Northumberland	This is being considered as a development for September

<p>have specialist nurseries for pre-school SEND children with high needs?</p>	<p>2017, because the government is changing the standard entitlement to 30 hours per week in nursery. The government will also be changing the funding for this large area of work. Local authorities will find out the details on this from the government sometime in 2016. At that stage we will be able to create a plan, once the funding and legal requirements are clearer.</p>
<p>Some schools – starting with the Head Teacher – don’t embrace SEND properly</p>	<p>Each school or academy is responsible for its own SEND policy and ethos. We would recommend families who are concerned about a school’s ethos raise this with the SENCO and Headteacher. If they are unable to address your concern you may wish to contact the Chair of the Governing Body.</p>
<p>How ready and trained for different kinds of SEND are staff in mainstream schools? There is a lack of trained specialised staff in mainstream.</p>	<p>Each school must publish a SEND Information Report, which sets out their readiness for supporting the different kinds of SEND. It will include what training and staffing is in place. We will raise these questions in our Spring and Summer meetings with schools and check that they have a clear offer and training plan on their websites. Schools can also call upon support from specialist SEND staff employed by the local authority.</p>
<p>There is a lack of provision outside of school – providers don’t always have the right offer/expertise.  And  What about social activities for children? Inclusive and supportive.</p>	<p>There is certainly a difference in the availability of out of school activities in Northumberland, depending upon a person’s needs and where they live. The local authority does not usually have funding for or ownership of this type of work, but we will include this in our SEND Strategy for Northumberland as an area for development. A Strategy will be published Spring 2016.</p>
<p>Different experience for families when a disabled children’s social worker is involved rather than a general social worker.</p>	<p>This issue has been raised with our Social Care services. We will offer standardised SEND training and guidance to Social Care staff. Spring 2016</p>
<p>What about setting up parents’ groups to offer support to school SEND staff – best practice shared?</p>	<p>We will raise these questions in our Spring and Summer meetings with schools and check that they have a clear offer and training plan on their websites. It is a positive idea for each school to consider, and would provide good evidence of parent-school partnership working.</p>
<p>What about really good SENCOs spreading best practice?</p>	<p>We will raise this with each local partnership of schools. It is a good idea but would depend upon each school’s willingness and capacity to share their expertise. Spring 2016</p>

What is Northumberland doing about child/young person to adult transition? Some teenagers go to adult placements with lots of older people.	The local authority (education and Social Care) with the local NHS services are reviewing and updating our offer for people with SEND making the transition to adulthood from 18 years of age. The new national SEND Code of Practice requires us to work in new ways and to look at people's needs to 25 years of age. New information for learners and families will be published Spring 2016.
Some families of disabled children need to move to a bigger property – but the 'system' encourages smaller properties instead – long battle. What can be done?	The new national SEND Code of Practice requires us to work in new ways and to look at people's needs to 25 years of age. Please see comments in the box above. We will recommend that the transition to adulthood strategy also includes information and support regarding housing issues and independent living. New information for learners and families will be published Spring 2016.

### Ashington – 26/11/2016

Comments re Local Offer	Response and / or action to be taken by the Local Authority
You should offer separate information about the different therapy services.	Agreed New summary documents have been written for family editing groups to evaluate. This will be completed in stages in Spring 2016
Mental Health and behaviour support should link across with each other.	Agreed. The new national SEND Code of Practice, which tells us all what kinds of need we should support, has changed the description of this type of need. It used to be called 'Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD)'. It is now called 'Social Emotional and Mental Health needs (SEMH)'. Information about what support is available usually starts with schools. Each school must publish a SEND Information Report, which sets out their readiness for supporting the different kinds of SEND. We will raise these questions in our Spring and Summer meetings with schools and check that they have a clear offer on their websites. Schools can also call upon support from specialist SEND staff employed by the local authority or NHS services. In Spring 2016 we will publish an updated SEMH guidance document for families.
SEND in other contexts needs to be taken in account too – e.g. behaviour in the taxi, at	This isn't something which is legally required, but is certainly an important part of a young persons need and support. The local authority policy for SEND travel Support will be updated Spring 2016 and we will look to explain in more detail

<p>home with parents. The wording about this should be realistic.</p>	<p>how SEND is managed during journeys. How young people behave at home is something that can be included in learner's individual plans, although it may not always be something a school or college can support with during the education day. This something each family should take up with their school or college and ask for advice.</p>
<p>SEMH (Social, Emotional, Mental Health) is all in one SEND area now but really needs to be separated out into different kinds of need.</p>	<p>Agreed. The new national SEND Code of Practice, which tells us all what kinds of need we should support, has changed the description of this type of need. It used to be called 'Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD)'. It is now called 'Social Emotional and Mental Health needs (SEMH)'. Information about what support is available usually starts with schools. Each school must publish a SEND Information Report, which sets out their readiness for supporting the different kinds of SEND. In Spring 2016 we will publish an updated SEMH guidance document for families and make it clear which pathways to support apply to different kinds of SEMH needs.</p>
<p>Psychological support for SEMH is needed</p>	<p>Agreed Some learners do need this kind of support. Referrals via your GP is the most common place to start. In Spring 2016 we will publish an updated SEMH guidance document for families and make it clear which pathways to support apply to different kinds of SEMH needs.</p>
<p>Speech and language therapy pre-school is ad hoc – not substantial and consistent. There are not close home to school links once school age.</p>	<p>We are sorry you have had a negative experience. We know that other families and children have had a positive experience. We have raised this with our local Speech and Language services and will use this comment to inform the update of the Local Offer. Spring 2016.</p>
<p>Families lose a lot of close contact from support services once children become school age: lose Health Visitor, Portage and joined up approach.</p>	<p>We are sorry you have had a negative experience. We know that other families and children have had a positive experience. We will update our offer for pre-school children and their families, to make clear how services, schools and others should provide a successful transition into school-age education. Spring 2016</p>
<p>Sometimes hard to get SEND training into First Schools. Nursery was very successful.</p>	<p>Each school must publish a SEND Information Report, which sets out their readiness for supporting the different kinds of SEND. We will raise these questions in our Spring and Summer meetings with schools and check that they have a clear offer on their websites. Schools can also call upon support from specialist SEND staff</p>

	employed by the local authority or NHS services at any time..
Activities for people with different needs; e.g. Physical Difficulties – may need to go all the way to Percy Hedley in Newcastle– nothing in Northumberland.	<p>There is certainly a difference in the availability of out of school activities in Northumberland, depending upon a person’s needs and where they live.</p> <p>The local authority does not usually have funding for or ownership of this type of work, but we will include this in our SEND Strategy for Northumberland as an area for development.</p> <p>A Strategy will be published Spring 2016.</p>
Parents need to understand links between High Needs funding, EHC Planning and choice of special school.	<p>Agreed</p> <p>These are complex legal processes and are not governed by the same areas of law.</p> <p>We will update our guidance for families: <i>Understanding Education Funding; EHC Plans; and Choosing a School.</i></p> <p>We will make sure the links between these issues are clearer in our information</p> <p>Spring 2016</p>
Schools move from First / Middle / High to Primary / Secondary could have impact on SEND choices families have to make.	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>Thank you for raising this issue. It will certainly apply to one area of the county in the coming months.</p> <p>We will offer support to the schools involved in this change, to develop information for families whose children have SEND and may need to change school or make school choices in 2016 and 2017.</p> <p>Spring 2016</p>
Do schools need to apply for High Needs funding before EHC needs assessment?	<p>No, but it is a good idea worth consideration in each case. High Needs funding can provide additional resource for a learner very quickly e.g. around 2-3 weeks.</p> <p>The EHC plan process takes 20 weeks.</p> <p>Not every learner who needs High Needs funding will also need an EHC Plan, so each case will be considered on its own merits.</p> <p>We will add this issue to our information for families in <i>Understanding Education Funding</i> and in <i>EHC Plans</i>.</p> <p>Spring 2016</p>
Make clear to families, will all SEN Statements become EHC Plans?	<p>Yes to most, but not all, cases.</p> <p>All SEN Statements will be converted to EHC plans during 2014-2018. It is a legal requirement.</p> <p>We will provide schools with an update for families / learners on when their Statement is due for transfer.</p> <p>There are some circumstances when an SEN Statement will not be transferred into an EHC Plan These include: the learner’s needs have changed; the learner is leaving education and training; the learner is entering Higher Education or adult prison.</p> <p>This means we expect about 95% of current SEN Statements will become EHC Plans.</p>

	Please see the Transition Plan on the Local Offer webpage for more information.
Will change of school tiers trigger EHC transfer review?	Thank you for raising this issue. It may in some cases, if the named school and support will change because the local school system is changing. It will not affect all learners. The local authority SEND Team are checking which learners may be affected and will contact the schools to check if there are any new requests to deal with. Spring 2016
What about collating all the schools Local Offers?	Agreed To collate all the documents and information from every school would lead to a huge document hundreds of pages long. However, parents at the consultation event suggested another positive solution instead: a single document with web links direct to every school SEN Information Report. This will reduce internet search times. We will publish this in February 2016.
Produce a document which provides the links to all schools SEN Information Reports	Please see above.
Please can we have SEN school support into all mainstream schools?	Some local partnerships of mainstream schools do have close working relationships with their local SEND specialist school too. Unfortunately, there are fewer specialist schools than partnerships, so it is not possible at this time to offer that sort of relationship in all areas of the county.
See Chatterbox on website of mental health trust. Would this be useful for Northumberland?	
Need more family support in Northumberland.	This issue is being raised for advice from our Social Care services. Please may we ask your patience until later in February 2016 when we can provide a more detailed response.
Lack of out of hours crisis support for families	This issue is being raised for advice from our Social Care services who can provide a more detailed response.

**Berwick 2/12/15**

Comments re Local Offer	Response and / or action to be taken by the Local Authority
Choose best information from other Local Authorities Local Offers, but must be easy to use	<p>Agreed</p> <p>We will invite families to review other Local Offers with us and identify features of information we should adopt in Northumberland.</p> <p>Spring 2016</p>
Can we have key contacts book, etc – names and phone, etc	<p>Agreed</p> <p>Our parent partnership lead officer is preparing one for printed publication as soon as possible in Spring 2016.</p>
Could we have a message board? Have other Local Authorities solved this?	<p>This is an interesting idea. It comes with risks and capacity issues. In the discussions of this idea with other parent’s groups there was a mixture of positive and negative opinions. Some agreed this is a helpful modern way to communicate, others feared it would be misused by those with negative intent.</p> <p>We will invite families to review other Local Offers with us and identify whether there is an example of good and safe practice we should consider in Northumberland.</p> <p>Spring 2016</p>
Quick feedback button plus comments box	<p>Agreed</p> <p>We are updating the technical aspects of the Local Offer website and will look to put this in place, Spring 2016.</p>
<p>Explain difference between Health and Education provision</p> <p>Definition of LD – ‘difficulty’ vs ‘disability’</p>	<p>It is true that the national regulations for Health and for education use similar words for learning problems, but with slightly different definitions.</p> <p>For education we find our definition in the SEND Code of Practice page 15. It says:  <i>A child of compulsory school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or</i></li> <li>• <i>has a disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions</i></li> </ul>

	<p>The NHS describe it in this way:</p> <p><i>A learning disability affects the way a person learns new things in any area of life, not just at school. Find out how a learning disability can affect someone, and where you can find support.</i></p> <p><i>A learning disability affects the way a person understands information and how they communicate. Around 1.5m people in the UK have one. This means they can have difficulty:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>understanding new or complex information</i></li> <li>• <i>learning new skills</i></li> <li>• <i>coping independently</i></li> </ul> <p><a href="http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Childrenwithalearningdisability/Pages/Whatislearningdisability.aspx">http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Childrenwithalearningdisability/Pages/Whatislearningdisability.aspx</a></p> <p>In summary, the education model is only applied to what happens when someone is in education. The Health model applies to all areas of life.</p>
<p>Should schools have link to Northumberland and Local Offer website on their websites?</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>The link can be on the webpage or in their SEN Information Report document.</p>
<p>What about successful ASD learners – where they are fine at school, but meltdowns, ‘let loose’ at home? What support can be given?</p>	<p>Yes, this is a difficult situation affecting a number of families every year. We will raise this within a new Autism strategy group and seek advice for you. Spring 2016</p>
<p>What about children moving into Scottish education system and other ‘cross border’</p>	<p>The SEND Code of Practice governs all aspects of our work in England. It doesn’t apply to Scotland, but we would still seek to follow the legal requirements as much as possible if the learners still lives in England. There are many learners who cross the border in both directions. Good partnership working is our experience so far.</p>

situations?	
New SENCO hasn't been trained – need a training programme? Raise profile across whole school.	In September 2009 it became law for every new SENCO in a mainstream school to gain the Master's-level National Award for Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator within 3 years of taking up the post. It is the school responsibility to see this is in place. SENCOs with experience from previous work do not have to do this. We will remind all schools of the legislation. Spring 2016
Disability absence not being understood.	It sounds like you are reminding us that for some children full attendance at school is not always possible. This could be because they suffer from a physical or mental health condition, for example.  If there is good evidence that absence is justified, then schools will be happy to record this in their attendance registers. It should not be problem for the family or the school.  Unfortunately, if the school is not given good evidence that an absence is justified they have to treat it as an unauthorised absence.
Need to note the impact of various appointments on the school day/travel	Agreed.  Families who need SEND provision for their child will be asked to attend a range of appointments other families do not. They could be reviews of a plan, assessments by health or education specialists or meetings to deal with problems the young person is experiencing.  We will remind schools and colleagues in care and health that they should consult with families before arranging appointments, where possible.

### Seahouses 2/12/2015

Comments re Local Offer	Response and / or action to be taken by the Local Authority
What about lower level SEND – not clear yet?	Learners with lower level of need are supported in mainstream schools. Their support is set out in each school's SEN Information Report. If that is not clear at a particular school, please make the school or local authority aware and we will be happy to assist where appropriate.
EHC Plans– how is home to school communication typically handled?  Please could you supply a good example of home to school	Unfortunately, there is not a standard model of best-practice for communication between schools and families. We would always expect schools to have an inclusive, open approach which respects the individuality of each child.

communication; best practice.	
Can you explain what a SENCO is and does? What is their role?	A SENCO is the named person in each school who manages every level of work for children in school who have a Special Educational Need or Disability. They have to ensure support and plans are in place. Their guidebook is a combination of the SEND Code of Practice 2014 and the schools own SEN Information Report. Every mainstream school has a SENCO. Colleges, nurseries, specialist school and other types of education may have a SENCO or a lead person for SEND.
New SEND – give information straight away about parent’s group support?	Agreed We will add this to our standard information Spring 2016

### Hexham 9/12/2015

<b>Comments re Local Offer</b>	<b>Response and / or action to be taken by the Local Authority</b>
FAQs – can they be put into smaller groups/themes and linked to special areas; e.g. social care	Agreed  As we gather more comments we will organise them into different themes such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different age groups</li> <li>• Different kinds of needs e.g. hearing of physical</li> <li>• Different services e.g. health or care</li> <li>• Other themes as they arise e.g. travel, funding, employment</li> </ul> We will begin this in April 2016
Web page – less is more	Agreed  The Local Offer webpages will be updated and simplified in March-April 2016.
Accessibility page – how do people want to read/see the information and website?	The Local offer website will have accessibility features added to it, but we are open to any new technological developments or examples of best practice you can share.  Please send any new ideas to the comments link on the Local Offer homepage.
Where is the provision for high ability/high needs ASD?	Northumberland doesn’t have specialist centres for higher ability ASD learners.  At present those learners attend mainstream schools

	<p>and receive extra support if needed.</p> <p>The local authority is working to work local school partnerships to develop new local provisions. This may or may not lead to new ASD provisions depending upon the schools shared view on local needs, how many learners need a similar provision and the facilities or funding available.</p> <p>Please contact your child’s head teacher to confirm your view that this type of development is needed.</p>
<p>Why only one year of entitlement to education after school ends?</p>	<p>The national statutory school-age entitlement ends at 16 years of age, in Year 11 at school.</p> <p>In 2013-2015 a new law came into effect, called Raising of the Participation Age. This means all young people aged 16-18 years have an entitlement to education, training or employment.</p> <p>Some schools and colleges do offer education after 18 years. Learners older than 18 who have SEND but do not need local authority funding for their studies can study for as many years as they want.</p> <p>However, if a 19 years+ SEND learner does need local authority funding to complete their studies the rules are different. It is against the law for the local authority to spend the education budget on post-18 learners unless they are completing a course started when they were 16-18 years old, or if they have an agreed EHC Plan and a course to complete. One extra year is usually needed in these cases.</p>
<p>Local Offer – definition not clear</p>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>This will be corrected on the website and added to any publicity materials</p> <p>We will explain that the SEND Local Offer is a place where people can find out about what is available for those aged 0-25 years and they have a special education need or disability. It includes information about education plus many other things needed in life from birth to young adulthood.</p>