

TITLE OF REPORT: Progress Update on delivery of SEND Strategy *(to include progress against all 4 priorities; SEND tribunal data; pathways into EET for those with SEND)*

Purpose of the Report

This report aims to share information with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the **progress made towards the 4 priority areas of the SEND Strategy, share data in relation to Tribunals and information in relation to pathways into Education, Employment and Training for young people in Gateshead with special educational needs.**

Background

The catalyst for the development of the Gateshead SEND Improvement Plan was the development of the Gateshead SEND Strategy 2023-2026 which was co-produced with all partners in January 2023. It sets out the vision and priorities for SEND over the next 3 years, with the aim of improving outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their families. The SEND Strategy is ambitious about improving outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities and the whole system approach to achieve the step change needed. This requires educational settings, health commissioners and providers, Gateshead Council's social care and education services working together with children and their families to meet needs, within the context of national funding that has not kept pace with demand. The SEND improvement programme is designed to deliver improved outcomes for children and young people with SEND. This report outlines what the SEND information programme of work has achieved so far and the proposed focus for 2023-2026 to embed and accelerate change as well as responding to the recent inspection findings.

The SEND Strategy and Improvement Programme is aligned with Gateshead's THRIVE agenda which seeks to realise the Council's ambition that everyone benefits from education, skills and employment opportunities that help them to succeed in life. The SEND Partnership Strategy 2023 - 26 emphasises the better long-term outcomes for children and young people when they are educated closer to home, with the right support so that children and young people who have SEND can live, learn and grow up locally to achieve their potential. The SEND strategy sits alongside the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, which in turn is informed by the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA).

The Strategy and improvement plan formed the basis of the local area's self-assessment which was completed in preparation for the inspection which took place in May 2023. Since the inspection, the improvement plan has been revised and amended to reflect the recommendations from the inspection and the plan forms the basis of an extensive programme of transformation work over the next three years.

Since the pandemic, Gateshead has seen a significant rise in the overall number of children and young people identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. This is particularly the case for children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), or requests for assessment for an EHCP. This has placed all SEND teams in the Council under significant pressure. This rise in demand, alongside financial pressures, has also placed challenges upon the wider workforce connected to those with Special Educational Needs, including those in the health, care and school sectors. The pandemic has particularly impacted on the number of children and young people who are identified as having autism, and those with social, emotional and mental needs.

Current Context

- **39,784 children (0-17) live in Gateshead and 17,081 young adults (18-25)**
- **18.7% of children & young people have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (5730)**
- **14.1% pupils have SEND support (4308)**
- **4.6% have an EHCP (1422)**

Source

SEND Data - Special educational needs in England - 2023/24 Academic year (<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england>)

Population Data – Mid-Year Population Estimates, England and Wales, June 2023 (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/estimatesofthepopulationforenglandandwales>)

The Gateshead SEND Strategy

A wide range of partners have been involved in the development of the SEND strategy. Consultation, engagement, and co-production has been undertaken with children, families, young people, schools, other education partners, health colleagues and social care colleagues.

Our vision in Gateshead is for all children and young people with SEND to thrive, have appropriate provision, feel positive about their next steps and believe in themselves. We put families at the heart of everything we do.

Our strategic approach is to 'Make Gateshead a place where everyone thrives'.

For children and young people with Special Educational needs this means our four priorities are:

1. To have a transparent approach to identify children and young people's needs which is understood by parents, carers and professionals, so that the right support is in place at the right time.
2. To actively engage with children and young people and their parents and carers, so that their vision of 'Our choice, our voice' is heard and supported during strategic planning.
3. For health, social care, and education services to work together to commission the best support for children and young people's needs, and to keep all children and young people safe.

4. To ensure that children and young people are well prepared, supported and feel positive about taking their next steps.

Progress Update on the four main priorities of the SEND Strategy

- 1. To have a transparent approach to identify children and young people's needs which is understood by parents, carers and professionals, so that the right support is in place at the right time.***

The Gateshead SEND Thresholds

A SEND Consultant has been commissioned to lead on the review of the current Gateshead graduated approach to the identification of special educational needs and to work with all partners to coproduce the Gateshead SEND Thresholds. All areas of Education Schools and Inclusion, Health and Social care and the PCF and Young People have reviewed a template and have adapted it to their service offer and to Gateshead ways of working. We have had 3 seconded SENCo's from Gateshead schools who have supported the pilot schools across the autumn and spring term with implementing the document. This has been very important to ensure that the documents refined so it works for our young people. The Pilot schools and officers from education, health and social care have had training sessions throughout September and October 2023 and they have contributed their first-hand experience of the thresholds into the launch event and document. A local photographer was commissioned to support with the graphics for the document and a SENCo has been allocated to ensure that the PCF are given regular updates on progress made towards the document. In January 2024 a launch event was arranged and took place over 3 sessions. Following this event, a training schedule was published and has been available to all stakeholders until the end of August. The training schedule ensures all partners have a shared understanding of the four main areas of special educational needs and what this means specifically to them, their role in relation to the Thresholds. In February 2024, the Gateshead SEND Thresholds was published for settings, providers and stakeholders to begin over the rest of the school year to familiarise themselves with the document. In June and July 2024 moderation sessions took place to ensure all schools were using the thresholds in a consistent way. From September 2024, all educational settings will be expected to use the Gateshead SEND Thresholds and all referrals to services, panels and needs assessments/EHCP will be in line with the document. Following a review of the implementation to date, a secondment of a PVI practitioner has been commissioned to support further training and implementation of the Thresholds into our early years' settings.

SEND Panel Arrangements

A review of all panel arrangements has been completed across education schools and inclusion by a SEND Consultant who has reviewed our systems in line with regional and national policies, agenda and best practice. We have refined our panels to enhance the opportunities for conversations at the earliest possible stage, to be solution focused and to strengthen our expertise of the workforce in our educational settings.

Proactive Planning Tool

During the local area SEND inspection families told us that they felt like they had to navigate a very complicated system to get the support their child with complex special educational

needs in time for starting school. To respond to this feedback, colleagues within the Education, Schools and Inclusion and the Data Team are working together to develop a database system which will support with the strategic planning of children born into Gateshead with complex needs. This system will track children and young people as they are born or move into area and will support in placement and service need planning at every key transition. This will respond to a creating a strategy for children 0-5, to the development of the ARMs strategy and to trajectory of required special school places. The first prototype of this database has been made and feedback has been collated from Managers within Education, health and social care and our specialist settings. The next stage will be for this to be shared with senior managers in the council for further development.

Additional Resourced Mainstream Settings (ARMS)

Additional Resourced Mainstream Settings are based in our mainstream schools to support young people in primary and secondary school who require additional resources on top of the 'normal offer' from a mainstream school to ensure they can access the mainstream curriculum with their peers. Depending on the area of special educational needs, this can be an additional classroom where the child will integrate with their class but have the additional space available or it can be an enhanced school offer without an additional class.

The ARMs were identified during the local area inspection as a strength however the above work in relation to the trajectory of children being born into Gateshead, attending our primary ARMs will inform place planning for the secondary phase. A review of all ARMs setting has been undertaken, led by our newly appointed School Improvement Partner for SEND. We have two secondary provisions who are in discussions with us in relation to extending the secondary ARMs offer.

Special School Designations

During the local area inspection, families shared that they did not feel that children had the same opportunities in terms of curriculum and experiences accessed during their time in school if they attended a special school as if they attended an ARMs or mainstream school. To respond to this, the Strategic Lead for SEND and Inclusion has worked with Special School leaders to review their school designations. This is the area of special educational needs that the school specialises in. Special School Leaders have been working with their School Improvement Partner and a SEND Consultant to complete analysis of their school populations and how these have changed over the last 5 years. This is important to support with the development of the culture in Gateshead of when a child should access special school and is very important that this information feeds into the Gateshead SEND Thresholds.

SEND Quality Assurance & Monitoring Team

To ensure the right support is in the right place at the right time, the Quality Assurance and Monitoring strand of the SEND Team has been strengthened. We have recruited to the full-time lead post and have added capacity with an additional Quality Assurance and Monitoring Officer. This team will be seated separately to the SEND Casework Team so as not to confuse their role with that of the caseworkers who complete statutory duties. This team are going to be central to the monitoring of the Gateshead SEND Thresholds in schools as they complete the monitoring visits of SEND in our educational settings. They will also be the point of contact for any family, professional who have concerns in relation to the provision

for SEND C&YP in Gateshead. It is imperative that we strengthen the SEND Support monitoring process to ensure that we are identifying need early and supporting in a child's current school to ensure there is no escalation of need. As part of the implementation of the SEND Thresholds, we are trialling a SEND Support panel to support schools in meeting the needs of learners at this stage to prevent escalation to EHC needs assessment.

0-5 Service

As identified during the local area inspection, families felt like they had to 'fight' a system to get their child who was under 5 the right provision even when they had been born with significant needs. In response to this, we have reviewed the current resource and team structures and have restructured all early years teams under one 0-5 Service. This newly revised service will commence in September and will mean that families and providers have one point of contact for support for children aged 0-5. It will also mean that all 0-5 Early years SEND Teams are managed more consistently which will support transitions from one service to the next.

- 2. To actively engage with children and young people and their parents and carers, so that their vision of 'Our choice, our voice' is heard and supported during strategic planning.***

The young people's voice and contributions were identified as a strength through the SEND Local Area Inspection. The work completed in relation to the Participation Strategy was also identified as strength. This improvement work had been completed via the SEND Strategy, prior to the inspection. Following the inspection, the core aim of priority area was identified in the two areas for improvement in relation to the communication with families experiencing the needs assessment process and also how the SEND Casework Team communicate with partners who contribute to these plans.

SEND Team Review

To respond to the above points, post inspection, a complete service review has been completed of the SEND Team. Capacity has been added to ensure a more relational approach can be provided by the team. Due to the promotion of one of the managers in the team, a newly appointed SEND Team Manager commenced post in January. They have been working since their appointment, under the lead of the SEND Service Manager to enable cultural change within the SEND Casework Team. All SEND Caseworkers have signed up to the NASEN caseworker training which will support this cultural change.

SEND Team Communication

A communication strategy has been developed and is currently being trialled in the team to ensure a consistent approach from each Caseworker. A CPD day has taken place, with newly appointed staff to launch the new communication strategy and team vision. In addition to this, the team has been restructured into two sections. One with responsibility for the statutory assessment processes and one for the quality assurance and monitoring of SEND Support. This aspect of the team has had one post added to the structure to ensure all partners have one point of contact if they have a query in relation to a child/young person with SEND. They will then triage it to the correct service or will work with the school to support the development of the provision at send support to meet needs.

Since the appointment of the new SEND Team Manager and Quality Assurance and Monitoring Team Manager a full review of all aspects of communication has been completed. Any communication which is sent externally to families and schools has been reviewed to ensure a more relational approach. The schools have also been allocated a lead caseworker for their school as a point of contact to support communication.

New EHCP Format

The Quality Assurance and Monitoring lead has reviewed existing EHCP paperwork and has revised with all partners the format to which we use to write our EHCP in Gateshead. We have chosen to use the 'test' National EHCP format which is being trialled as part of the DfE SEND & AP Change Programme. This format has had positive feedback, being much more person centred. It continues to be reviewed.

The SEND Service Manager, Designated Clinical Officer and Designated Social Care Officer are working in collaboration, with the guidance of the SEND Consultant in relation to the implementation of the SEND Thresholds to review and redevelop the processes and procedures in relation to collecting the views of all professionals involved with a child to inform the needs assessment.

3. For health, social care, and education services to work together to commission the best support for children and young people's needs, and to keep all children and young people safe.

A significant amount of work has gone into reducing the waiting times for children across children's therapies since the local area SEND inspection. The teams have reviewed ways of working and scoped out opportunities to provide group sessions to support reducing the waiting times for assessment where appropriate. Children's OT, Physio, Nursing, Bladder and Bowel & CSLT have updated the team webpages with useful information and resources to support while Children are awaiting to be assessed. Children's Speech and Language team have successfully recruited into vacancies with start dates over the Summer/Autumn period, which will support the reduction in waiting times.

The services aim to reduce all waiting time to under 18 weeks, the increase in demand and vacancies has made it difficult to achieve in all therapy areas. The team have completed capacity and demand modelling, with some recent discussions with commissioners regarding the possibility for extra staffing resource to support the demand within Children's Speech and language and Childrens OT. The services remain committed to driving these wait times down and working alongside partners to ensure children with SEND in Gateshead receive an appropriate, timely service.

Webpage links below will direct to Childrens Services:

[Children's Services - Gateshead Health](#)

[Children's Community Nursing Team - Gateshead Health](#)

[Children's Occupational Therapy - Gateshead Health](#)

[Physiotherapy - Gateshead Health](#)

[Children's Speech and Language Therapy - Gateshead Health](#)

[Bladder and Bowel for Children - Gateshead Health](#)

Monthly monitoring and discussion with Commissioners takes place along with the production of detailed waiting time data which the SEND inspectors had identified as a gap. The service remains committed to driving these wait times down and working alongside partners to ensure children with SEND in Gateshead receive an appropriate, timely service.

Alternative Provision Review

A Gateshead Alternative Provision Strategy has been developed and is being shared with schools for consultation. This is supported through funding from the DfE SEND/AP Change Programme for 2 years and we are working to make this a sustainable strategy moving forward. This strategy encompasses a tiered system of support and early identification as a key driver. The panel review outcome has also been embedded into this to allow for Multi-Disciplinary Teams to meet and discuss needs and therefore appropriate pathways. This also includes a costed 'Home and Hospital' provision for schools and a strategy to reduce permanent exclusions (especially for CYP with unmet SEMH needs).

Gateshead Universal Offer to Families of C&YP with SEND

There has been a review of Gateshead councils current universal offer of leisure and social activities for children and young people aged 0-25 years with SEND. The review focused on the principles of the council's Thrive agenda and how to most effectively target the council's resources to those children and families who are most in need of support whilst continuing to promote the benefits of accessing leisure and recreational activities and is linked to our strategic approach to make Gateshead a place where everyone thrives.

Several areas were highlighted as concerns, issues and barriers to achieving the vision we have for children and young people with SEND to thrive, have appropriate provision, feel positive about their next steps and believe in themselves.

This included:

- *Families Don't know what is available within Gateshead,*
- *Not all community providers offering activities for children and young people with SEND.*
- *Children and young people with a range of needs.*
- *Community Facilities* – Parents shared that service facilities don't always consider the varying needs of children and young people
- *Travel* – Children, young people and parent/carers have shared that public transport links are a barrier to accessing activities and would like resources to be shared across the borough.
- *Better facilities in neighbouring LA's.*
- *Better offer for target support-* Families have shared frustration of the lack of universal services and feel that there are more services provided to children/YP who have children services involvement.

The recommendation of the review includes:

- 1) The development of a Short Breaks Sufficiency Strategy and Action Plan: To transform universal services to increase inclusion, access and opportunities for children and young people with a range of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in community activities. Developing and commission a graduated and flexible response for those children and young people with SEND who are unable to access the existing community activities. Offering a variety of support that will enable independence and can provide a transparent approach to identify children's needs so that the right support is in place at the right time. The strategy will include the continued work with families to develop a Short Break offer to meet children and family's needs as a graduated support response.

- 2) Development of SEND directory of social and leisure activities which will link to the family information service, Our Gateshead and the Local offer. It is hoped that this continued work will attract providers to be included in the directory and will also be a useful source of information for children services, education and health services to share with families and avoid families having to navigate several websites before finding information. This is due to launch by September 2024.

4. To ensure that children and young people are well prepared, supported and feel positive about taking their next steps.

Preparation for Adulthood

The implementation of the Gateshead SEND Thresholds will ensure that preparation for adulthood starts at the earliest possible stage in a child's life. This will ensure that all children with special educational needs are planning for each transition for the following areas employability & education, Independence, Community Participation and Health. All referral forms, support plans proformas and needs assessments will evidence the preparation for adulthood outcomes from September 2024.

Living Arrangements for Disabled Young People

The council has established a comprehensive transformation project across directorates and with NHS partners to review and develop housing pathways, services and accommodation pipelines to support people with complex needs. Alongside strategic development work, the project includes a priority focus on urgent complex cases of people requiring accommodation. The project is overseen by a Board comprising senior leaders in the system.

The IASCS directorate has committed to designing and establishing a new supported living service for disabled young people transitioning to adulthood with complex needs. The service will accommodate up to 4 people aged 17 to 21, providing enablement support on a transitional basis for approximately two years. The service is likely to be delivered and managed in-house by the IASCS Enablement and Independence Service.

Commissioning will also be reviewing the market for onward supported living services for disabled people with SEND and complex needs to enable appropriate move-on from the proposed new transitional service.

Gateshead Local Area Transitions Offer – Next Steps

To support the information available to families in relation to all aspects of transitions and next steps, we have commissioned a SEND consultant who will coordinate a collaboration of all stakeholders to produce a document to advise of next steps. Her work will include a complete review of all aspects of our current processes for transition in the local area for SEND young people.

Health Transitions

Ready Steady Go work is being completed between health colleagues and Paediatricians at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital to look at widening the age range from 12/13 and what young people would need for a smoother transition. A template has also been devised to identify any health needs which may cause issue for a smooth transition and work is being carried out to embed this process within schools, so they are aware of support available. Future work is to be progressed for the 0-4 years cohort and the transition between nursery and school.

Tribunal Data

The table below presents the number of mediation certificates and meetings which have taken place per year since 2019. Mediation is a free way for parents and carers to resolve disputes related to educational, health, and social care issues. It is an informal process where an independent mediator helps parties discuss problems and find resolutions.

If families are unhappy with a decision made by Gateshead Council, they have the right to lodge an appeal. It is important to note that this must be lodged within two months of the decision letter enclosing the final EHCP, or one month from the date of obtaining a mediation certificate, whichever is the later. Families can appeal decisions including:

- Refusal to carry out an EHCP Needs Assessment
- Refusal to issue an EHCP following a Needs Assessment
- Refusal to secure a Re-Assessment of EHCP Needs
- Refusal to amend an EHCP following a Re-Assessment of EHCP Needs
- Refusal to amend an EHCP following an Annual Review
- Disagreement with a Cease to Maintain
- Disagreement with Section B
- Disagreement with Section F
- Disagreement with Section I

To appeal the decisions made above, families have access to the free and impartial support of SENDIAS. They can support with the completion of tribunal applications, attending mediations, giving impartial advice and the submission of evidence.

Year	All Mediation Certificates	All Mediation Meeting	Appealed to Tribunal	Went to Hearing	Ruling in LA's favour
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2019	50	2	34	4	1
2020	36	12	26	4	1 plus one was upheld in part
2021	62	15	40	0	N/A
2022	62	11	51	9	4
2023	98	3	117	37	2
2024	69	7	75	1 thus far	0

Pathways into Education, Employment and Training for those young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

Gateshead offers an Interactive digital pathways tool for the local offer to support with informing young people and their families of the opportunities available to them. Through the work of the SEND Youth forum the Learning and Skills students put together an easy read leaflet about transition to adulthood.

Post 16 Strategy

Opportunities are undertaken to provide young people and parents to learn about options and help prepare them to make informed choices and raise aspirations for their adult life. One example of this was a SEND Futures event, which was held in June 2024. Over 150 parents, carers and young people attended the event. The event included 52 market stalls representing statutory and non-statutory services and included representation from the voluntary and community sector.

Gateshead Council's proposed Post-16 Strategy drives education improvements and increases opportunities for young people with SEND. The targeted strategic and operational groups will deliver against the three purposes:

1. increasing participation in lifelong learning, creating an ambitious culture and reducing barriers to participation
2. creating better opportunities for employment and volunteering through collaborative working with partners
3. providing local and regional insight into educational needs and trends and making improvements in the offer and outcomes

The proposed Strategy will focus on provision and outcomes for SEND young people and adults, through better careers guidance, a co-ordinated preparation for employment programme, a co-ordinated transition process between educational providers and a community education offer for young people unable or not yet ready for work.

Peer reviews have been undertaken of post-16 providers in the area to ensure that preparation for adulthood is embedded within the curriculum and increased consistency across the area. There is a co-ordinated approach to SEND post-16 education through collaborative working with

Supported Employment

In 2022, the National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi) Internships Work Programme launched a new approach to supporting young people with SEND into supported employment. This was in recognition that whilst most people with special educational needs want to work, only 5% are in work.

As part of this work, Gateshead Council, with Learning and Skills as the lead service, have:

- Redesigned and launched a Supported Internship programme for up to 12 young people a year (with SEND) to access a meaningful work placement. In 2023/2024 (the first year of launch) 6 young people participated with 1 already in work. In 2023/2024, 10 young people have signed up to the scheme with Gateshead Council acting as host employer for the placement offer.
- Launched a Supported Employment Forum with local employers, schools and post-16 providers. This will be a regular meeting that will help solve some of the complex issues facing young people with learning disabilities when trying to enter work. It will also strengthen the work placement offer across the borough.
- Improved the collection of data, ensuring there is a collaborative approach and plans to widen the data collection to provide us with more information about destinations of young people with SEND at post 19.

Available Data in relation to Post 16

For the year end 2022-2023 the total cohort for Gateshead 16-18 was 3936. Of this cohort 4.5 % were NEET or not known, compared to a regional average of 5.2%. Of the 211, 16–18-year-olds with special educational needs, 0.6% were NEET.

Rate of those aged 16+ with an EHCP who are not in education, employment or training in the Northeast is 13.3%, Gateshead rate is 6.3% significantly lower than the regional average.

Gateshead Supported Access to Employment Service (GATES)

GATES is a supported employment service based in Adult Social Care. The service is aware of a significant employment gap, with employers expecting more of their employees, and residents with learning disabilities being even further away from the labour market. Newly launched post-Covid, and in a 1-year transition, it provides two services to residents:

1. Supporting Gateshead 14–19-year-olds with an Education Health Care Plan to access useful work placement opportunities that will help them understand the world of work
2. Support Gateshead residents aged 18 and over into volunteering and paid work who meet at least 2 elements of the Care Act.

Working collaboratively with Council services, schools, and with local employers, this provides a co-ordinated approach to transition from year 10 to post-16 with robust vocational profiling into paid work. It is a 'free at the point of entry' service that offers continued support for the life of the employment. Whilst there are no targets for engagement and numbers into jobs in the transition year, these will be introduced once the new service has become established.

