
Meeting: Children, Education and Skills Sub Committee

Date: 18 November 2021

Title: SEND Update – COVID recovery, current picture, and funding to schools.

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Service: Children, Young People and Learning

Wards affected: All

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To provide members of the sub-committee with an overview of

- the support for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in the Covid-19 pandemic since the last report in November 2020;
- funding to schools for support for children with SEND; and
- To give an update on data on SEND support, children’s attendance and exclusion data

2. Context: Our SEND population

2.1 The local authority tracks the levels of young people accessing SEND support through our schools, as well as those who are supported with an Education, Health and Care Plan.

2.2 The overall number of children and young people who have the support of an EHCP continues to rise and North Tyneside remains an outlier in terms of the proportion of our population who have a plan (figure 1).

2.3 We have also noticed that the number of requests for assessment have not slowed down during the last 12 months (figure 2). This suggests that we will continue to be an outlier when compared to national figures (national data tracks January to December and is not published until around spring). This high rate of children and young people with identified additional needs puts pressure on our service and those of our partners.

Figure 1: The number of Education, Health and Care plans maintained by North Tyneside Council.

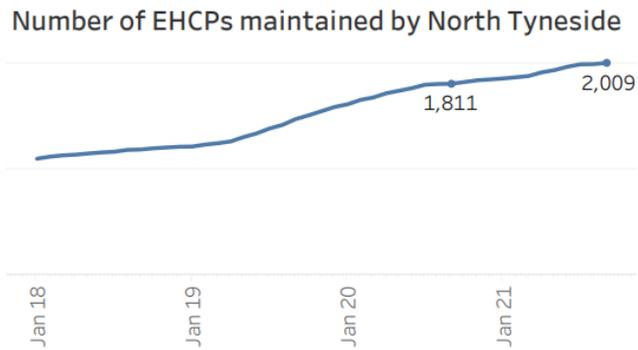
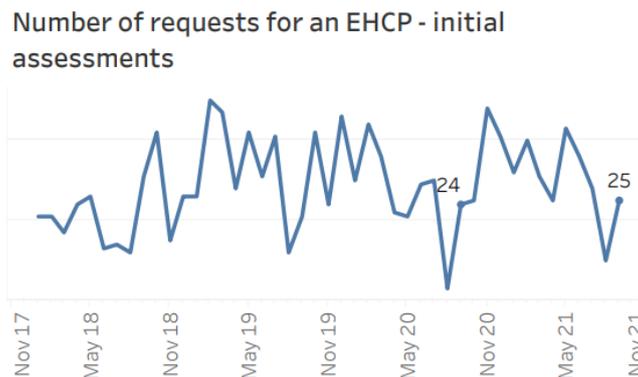
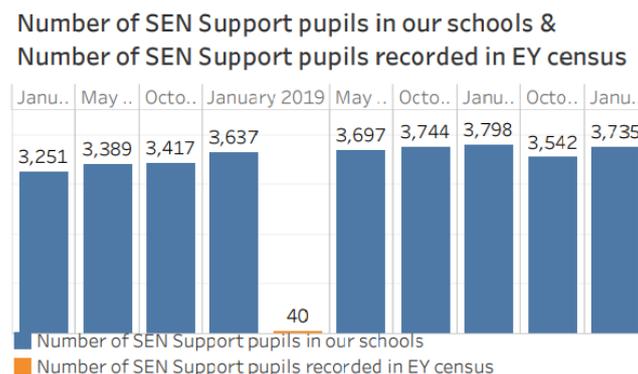


Figure 2: The number of new requests for assessments, month on month.



2.4 The proportions of our young people at a SEND support level are now more in keeping with what is seen to be typical and has generally stayed around this level since 2019 (figure 3). This follows a period where the proportion of children and young people at this level was below what would be seen to be typical. There was a decrease in October 2021, which, it is suggested, is linked to various school closures and ongoing assessment and identification processes not being progressed.

Figure 3: The number of children and young people recorded as SEND Supported by school overtime.



3. Overview of the support available for children and young people with Special Needs and Disability since the last report in November 2020

3.1 Access to education

3.1.1 Education in the academic year 2020/2021 has rapidly evolved to meet the dynamically changing needs of our children and young people. Local authority officers from a range of departments continued to support schools navigate the

plethora of legislation and guidance documentation presented by government. This has been the same for all identified groups of children and young people. An additional set of guidance and expectations were made for children and young people with EHCPs or those who were deemed to be vulnerable - the key difference being that full attendance was encouraged earlier. Whilst this additional guidance for children and young people with EHCPs was available, these groups were no less influenced by outbreaks of Covid-19 and periods of isolation.

- 3.1.2 The academic year 2020/2021 was beset by further disruption to pupils' education, because of Covid-19. High rates of outbreak within schools and repeated periods of enforced isolation led to an extended period of closure in the spring term 2021. It required schools to move to online learning swiftly. Whilst schools had developed better access and content, it is recognised that generally children and young people with additional needs were challenged by this way of working. However, some were able to access this way of working very successfully. Early indications are that the outbreaks and infection rates had no more or less impact on the group of young people with additional needs.
- 3.1.3 Continuing high levels of infection during the summer term, particularly within the 10 – 24 age range, led to further disruption for pupils. By the time schools began summer holidays, more than half were deemed in outbreak. Whilst there is no evidence that those children and young people who have additional needs were unduly impacted when compared to their peers, the full extent of the impact of two interrupted academic years of education on this group is yet to be realised.
- 3.1.4 Return to school in September has seen continued outbreaks, albeit not at the rate we saw in the summer term. It is recognised that, whilst not as high profile in the media, there are still a number of schools and settings managing outbreak and cases. The changes to legislation and the expectation that children and young people missing education is a 'last resort' has supported generally stronger attendance we are aware that infection has impacted, locally and nationally, in the 10-24 age range. Given the current higher levels of infections, schools in North Tyneside have been offered additional guidance from Public Health colleagues to support them in putting further mitigations in place. One example of this is the advice to return to the use of face coverings from November.
- 3.1.5 Despite the challenges that Covid-19 has brought, local authority officers continue to work with our schools to support recovery and to tackle the priorities outlined within the Ambition for Education Strategy and the SEND Inclusion Strategy to improve outcomes for all our pupils and specifically those with additional needs.
- 3.1.6 The collection of robust data during the pandemic has been made more difficult due the different expectations on different schools and settings. Whilst we are able to offer general reflections on the levels of attendance and exclusions, these have been collated from data sets that were often incomplete over the various lockdowns.

3.2 Children and Young People with Disabilities

- 3.2.1 The social work teams continued to provide support and assessments throughout the pandemic and continued to visit if deemed essential. Visits have now returned to pre-pandemic frequency.
- 3.2.2 Short breaks for children and young people with disabilities have continued throughout the pandemic, though we offered reduced numbers of places at the height

of the pandemic, dependent on risk assessments on clinical vulnerability. Provision is now back to pre-pandemic levels.

- 3.2.3 There is currently a waiting list for the overnight short breaks service within North Tyneside. We also know that there are opportunities to strengthen outreach, play scheme, and home care provision for children with disabilities. Work is ongoing between social care and commissioning teams to source provision to meet need.

3.3 Access to other services including those provided by health partners

- 3.3.1 The authority works in partnership with health partners to understand access that children and young people with additional needs have to health services. We track access and share this cross service so that we are more able to understand and mitigate pressures.
- 3.3.2 Health colleagues' key performance indicators are based on average waiting times to first appointments. Whilst the wait for first appointments have generally been maintained, albeit with some appointments being managed in a different way (for example, via technology rather than face to face), there are some aspects of the services that are experiencing issues beyond the first appointment.
- 3.3.3 The charts below (figures 4-7) show waiting times for some of the key services linked to mental health and wellbeing and diagnosis pathways. Whilst the charts do show some variation, they suggest the waiting times to first appointments have been maintained within the last 12 months. Our families and young people tell us about limited access to some professionals during various stages of the pandemic, as some health staff were moved into frontline duties or direction received by medical personnel prevented the usual provision from being available.

Figure 4: average wait to first appointment (orange) to the access team and the number of referrals (blue) overtime.

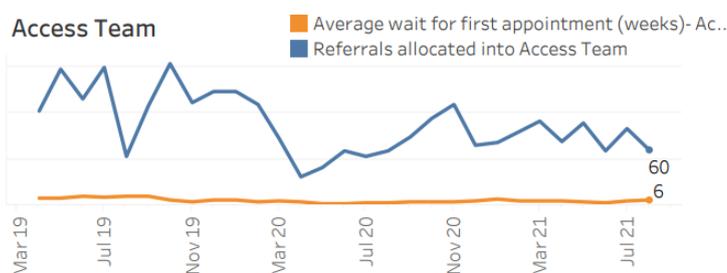


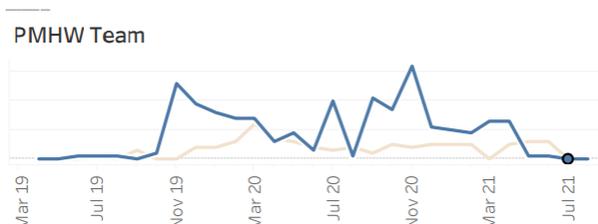
Figure 5: average wait to first appointment (orange) to the neurodevelopmental team and the number of referrals (blue) overtime.



Figure 6: average wait to first appointment (orange) to the specialist ADHD team and the number of referrals (blue) overtime.



Figure 7: average wait to first appointment (orange) to the primary mental health and wellbeing team and the number of referrals (blue) overtime.



4. Funding

4.1 Funding to support children and young people who have additional needs is made available through the 'High Needs Block'. There continues to be significant pressure on the available funds to meet need. The high needs funding block provides local authorities with resources for place funding and top-up funding for institutions who are supporting children and young people with SEND. This includes children and young people accessing education provision in and out of borough; the commissioned services that offer support to institutions and those that children, young people and their families.

4.2 Funding received by mainstream schools and academies is divided into three elements:

- Element 1 Funding - the Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU) – this money pays for the basic costs for every child in the school, regardless of any additional need. Every October a school has to fill in an annual census and each child will get the age weighted pupil allowance funding, which is normally spent by schools on staffing and premises costs.
- Element 2 funding - each child with a SEN Support Plan can be allocated by the school up to £6,000 per child to support meeting their additional educational need. How that money is allocated is a decision for each individual school. For each child in the school with an EHCP the LA recognises that £6,000 as a contribution towards the cost of the EHCP. This money is known as the 'Notional SEN budget'. The notional SEND budget is made up of the following funding already allocated to the school:
 - 5% of the age-weighted pupil unit
 - Free school meals funding
 - Income deprivation affecting children index funding
 - The looked after children funding
 - Funding for low prior attainment.
- Element 3 funding - the High Needs Block – sometimes called the "top up funding". This is the money paid by the local authority, in addition to the element 1 and element 2 funding to 'top up' the support within the school to meet the funding needed for individual pupils with an EHCP. Depending on the school and the child's individual needs this may range from a few hundred pounds to several

thousand pounds. This can add up to much greater amounts if the child needs a specialist or residential placement. Academies receive the same funding but from the Education and Skills Funding Agency rather than the Local Authority.

4.3 To illustrate this complexity with a practical example:

Child A's EHCP states that he will have 25 hours a week of 1:1 TA support from a teaching assistant.

The EHCP identifies that Child A will be placed at a mainstream secondary school.

Thus:

25 hours of 1:1 TA support (including all employer-related costs)

Total: £26,000

Funding would break down in this way:

- Element 1 funding £5,000
- Element 2 funding £6,000
- Element 3 from the LA paid through the High Needs budget £15,000

4.4 There are challenges for schools from this nationally agreed model. For example, where they have high numbers of children and young people with EHCPs and they have to find the first £6,000 of provision for all those who may have additional needs.

4.5 What does this mean for our schools?

- An example, a mainstream primary school with 200 pupils may have a notional SEND budget of £52,000. If they have 5 pupils with EHCPs then £30,000 of that notional budget is already assigned before any further spending can be distributed.
- This leaves £22,000 within the notional budget to provide support for the any of the remaining children who have or may have additional needs. The expectation is that any other children would be able to access provision up to £6,000 each. The average national rate for SEND support in primary school is just above 12% so that would equate to 24 pupils in our example school. This would result in an average of only £916 per identified pupil per year in additional spend. Any additional spending would put place additional pressure on other areas of the school budget. For example, a new child undergoing a needs assessment and being granted an ECHP would require the first £6,000 to be funded from the school. Reducing further the school's ability to meet the other needs of the children in the school.
- In a similar mainstream primary with 200 pupils and a similar demographic they may have a notional SEND budget of £48,000. If they have only 1 pupil with an EHCPs then £6,000 of that notional budget is already assigned leaving £42,000 to provide for the other additional provision that is needed. This would result in an average of £1,750 per identified pupil per year in additional spend.

4.6 Within North Tyneside we have schools that are impacted both positively and negatively by this national approach to funding. Where this is creating specific issues for schools and settings officers work with leaders to find pragmatic solutions however, there is no

flexibility built into the nationally agreed model. This is also limited by the available funding which, as noted, is facing significant pressure.

5. Update on SEND Support, attendance and exclusion

5.1 In general, attendance in the autumn term 2020/2021 showed improvement at 2.88%, which was a positive picture for half terms 1 & 2, and better than 4.93% absence in 19/20 over the same period. This also compares well to North East absence for the same period of 3.57% and with national at 3.68%. For young people with additional needs the trends and patterns follow the general picture.

5.2 The absence rate for children and young people at a SEND Support level is slightly higher than for those without identified need but lower for those with an EHCP.

5.3 Local authority officers from the school support team alongside early help practitioners had prepared well to work with school colleagues and tackle absenteeism, following the disrupted summer term of 2019/2020 academic year. Systems were established so schools could refer families causing concern. All referrals were triaged, and wider support provided for a better return to school. This included all children and young people and where additional needs were identified the relevant teams were made aware. Unfortunately, despite best efforts the spring term was spent almost completely in lockdown, which makes it difficult for data comparisons. We do know that between a third and half of all pupils continued to attend school during this period under the category of vulnerable, including those with EHCPs, or key worker pupils. This was much higher than rates seen during first lock down.

5.4 The summer term became increasingly difficult as the impact of increasing COVID infections and contact tracing affected schools. Such was the extent of the problem that 48 North Tyneside schools were classified in outbreak as the term ended. There are no good national comparisons yet to determine what the impact of repeated school closure has been on North Tyneside schools and their pupils including those with additional needs. Whilst the first part of the autumn term has been more settled, we are beginning to see infection rates rise again in our schools.

5.5 We await to see what the long-term impact will be on pupils' attendance in school because of the pandemic. We know that there was an increase in the proportion of pupils electively home education rising from 90 in 2019/2020 to 112 in 2020/2021 a 23% increase. Within this group we have seen a slight reduction in the number of children and young people with Education Health and Care plans from 14 to 12. This is a group we monitor closely. We have also noted that 15 of the current group of electively home educated children and young people were previously seen having some level of additional needs (see figure 9).

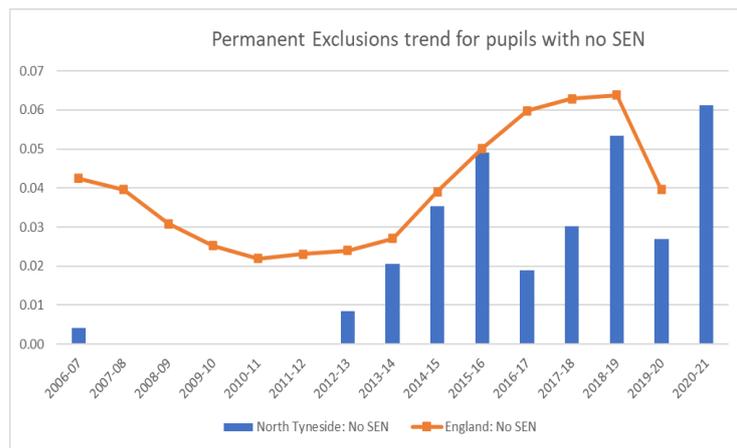
Figure 9: shows the number of children and young people with EHCPs who are being electively home educated overtime.



5.6 As reported above attendance in the last 12 months has ben impacted by Covid-19, school closures, and the impact of government guidelines. Also as noted above, the rates for absences are fairly consistent between groups but with SEND support being slighter hihger than non-SEND and EHCP being slightly lower.

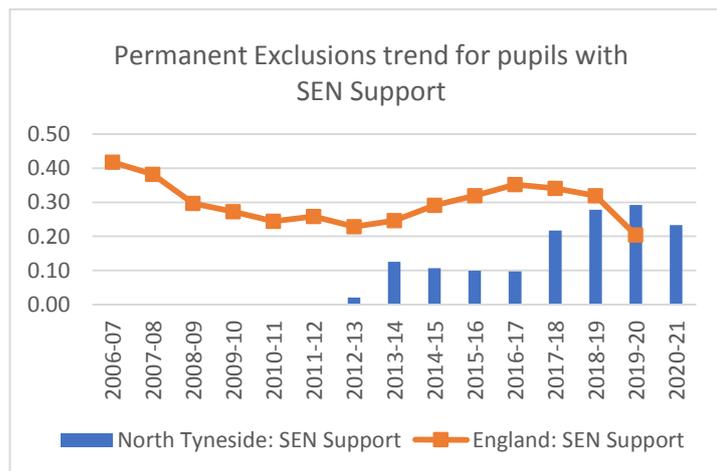
5.7 Within North Tyneside our numbers and rates of permanent exclusions are generally low, and this is reflected in the cohorts of children and young people with SEND. The general trend for exclusions has been rising overtime but is still below the national average. The 'keeping children in school' agenda has been a cornerstone of the partnership work between the local authority and schools for several years. Figure 10 (below) shows the general trend for pupils with no identified additional needs.

Figure 10: the general trend for permanent exclusions for pupils with no identified additional needs



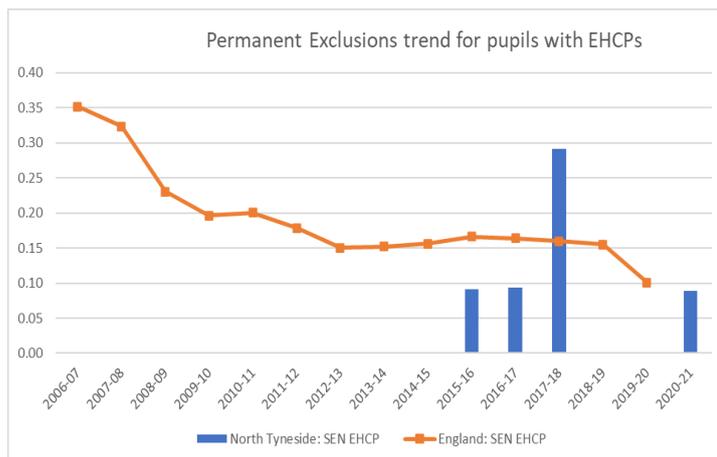
5.8 For children and young people who are identified as needing SEND support the picture reflects the national trend, albeit within a different time scale with North Tyneside's numbers 'lagging behind' what is seen nationally. This is shown in figure 11 (below). It is also notable that in 2019/20 the North Tyneside rate when above the national trend. This is being monitored closely and when more comparative data is available, we will understand the impact of actions undertaken by schools.

Figure 11: permanent exclusion trend for pupils at SEND support level.



5.9 Permanent exclusions for children and young people with EHCPs are rare nationally and locally. Low numbers can suggest a wider issue. Whilst, where possible, we would seek to prevent a permanent exclusion, there are times when this is unavoidable. Whilst there would appear to be a recent peak in 2020/21, this reflects 2 young people. Figure 12 (below) shows this trend over time.

Figure 11: permanent exclusion trend for pupils at EHCP level.



5.10 Suspensions (until recently these have been referred to as ‘fixed term exclusions’) are, over time, low compared to national figures. Whilst the rates have seen a general upward trend the figures in North Tyneside, we did not see the same ‘dramatic’ drop in 2019/20 that was seen nationally. We continue to monitor this carefully with our schools and there is ongoing work to support and challenge in this aspect of our work including developing a more consistent offer across the different age ranges to keep our children and young people in their local schools. Figures 12, 13 and 14 (below) show the suspensions trends for children and young people with no identified SEND, those at SEND support and those with an EHCP.

Figure 12: the general trend for suspension for pupils with no identified additional needs

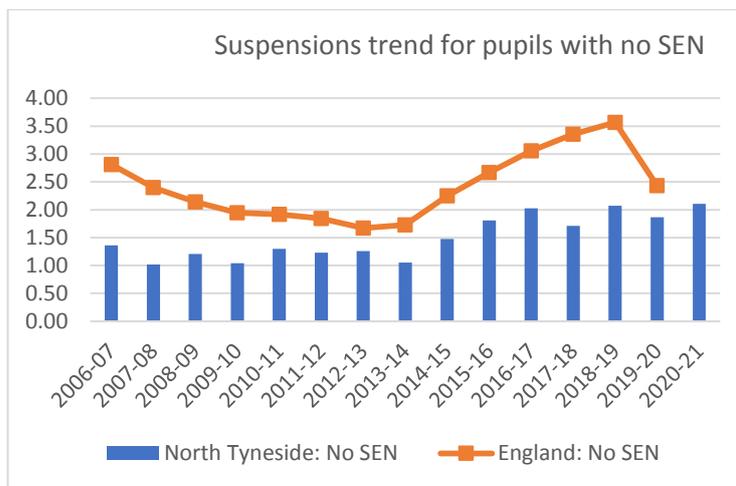


Figure 13: the general trend for suspension for pupils identified as SEND support

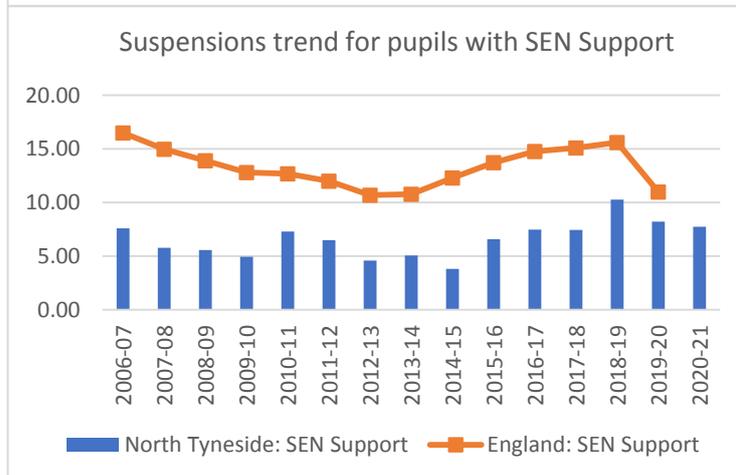


Figure 14: the general trend for suspension for pupils with an education, health and care plan

