







Durham Local Area SEND Partnership Action Plan

15 October 2024



How our partnership will help us further improve SEND support in County Durham



AFI1 The local area partnership should intensify its work to further improve EHC plan quality and assessment timeliness. It should ensure that EHC plans consistently and accurately reflect the needs of children and young people. It should ensure all partner agencies contribute comprehensively with high-quality information, and that all plans detail children and young people's voice and needs, aspirations, and next steps effectively.

AFI Lead: Paul Shadforth

AFI Workstream membership: DCO, DSCO, Lisa S, SC rep, ICB rep, Ed Psych, SEND Casework Managers, Schools reps (including Special Schools)

The work of AFI1 will follow 4 main themes:

- The development of a set of needs assessment practice standards for Education Health and Care contributors.
- A workforce development programme that supports the development of skills and knowledge that underpin practice standards.
- The development of **practice tools and guidance** that support effective practice in needs assessment.
- A quality assurance framework that identifies good practice and areas for development at practitioner, service and sector levels informing a cycle of continual improvement.

Quality
Assurance

Practice
Standards

Workforce
Development

Assessment
Toolkit

1.1 The development of a **set of needs assessment practice standards f**or Education Health and Care contributors.

	Tasks	Task Lead	Start	Finish	Additional Resource Names	Evidence of Outcomes
1.1.1	Identify and share good examples of EHCPs and the constituent advice that form it across the Local Area Partnership (LAP). Develop and implement a Local Area Partnership survey measuring self-reported confidence in advice writing.	Strategic Manager SEND and Inclusion	November 2024	July 2025	SEND Casework Managers DSCO DCO Quality Improvement Manager	EHCPs rated through multi agency audits as good or better: Year 1 (25/26) 80%. Year 2 (26/27) 90%.
1.1.2	Ensure that there is consistent revisiting advice for young people in year 5 (to prepare for year 6 / 7 transition) and in year 9 to prepare for Key stage 4 to 5 transition.	SEND and Inclusion Service Managers	September 2025	September 2027	SENCO Network Durham Association of Primary Heads Durham Association of Secondary Heads	EHCPs which are reviewed in transition years are rated through multi agency audits as good or better: Year 1 (25/26) 70%. Year 2 (26/27) 80%. Year 3 (27/28) 90%.

Impact Overview: Across education, health, and care, ensuring assessments and plans are joined up and of a consistently high quality so that children's needs are well understood and met.

See page 2: 'How our partnership will help support improvements in SEND in County Durham – ACTION 1.'

1.2 A workforce development programme that supports the development of skills and knowledge that underpin practice standards.

	Tasks	Task Lead	Start	Finish	Additional Resource Names	Evidence of Outcomes
1.2.1	Refresh existing LAP workforce training and development programmes focussing on known shared areas for improvement.	Development and Learning Manager / Workforce and Development	January 2025	January 2026	SEND Advisory Officers, Senior EP, DSCO, DCO	Training and Development Programmes measure Impact on confidence in practice. Self-rated as good or better by participants (follow up to all who fall below).
1.2.2	Invitations and attendances to training programmes to be multi agency at all possible opportunities.	As above	January 2025	January 2026	SEND Advisory Officers, Senior EP, DSCO, DCO	As above

Impact Overview: We are offering more resources for those working in education, health, and care to make sure our work is joined up for children, young people and families and our workforce is upskilled to help families as much as possible.

See page 2: 'How our partnership will help support improvements in SEND in County Durham - ACTION 1.'

1.3 The development of **practice tools and guidance** that support effective practice in needs assessment.

	Tasks	Task Lead	Start	Finish	Additional Resource Names	Evidence of Outcomes
1.3.1	Develop and implement guidance for practitioners that have expectations across health and care. This will include arrangements for multi-agency assessment and planning that involve guiding practitioners to liaise with schools about the status of SEND assessments and plans. This should inform new assessments and align with existing multi agency meeting arrangements.	Quality Improvement Manager	November 2024	September 2026	SEND Advisory Officers, Senior EP, DSCO, DCO	All advice(s) to be assured as good or better by providing agency. All plans to be assured as good or better.
1.3.2	Developing and using practice guidance across all advice givers and reviewers which prompts input into key areas of improvement (child/young person's voice).	Quality Improvement Manager	April 2025	September 2026	SEND Casework Managers, SEND Advisory Officers, Senior EP, DSCO, DCO	Annual feedback to be sought from across the Local Area Partnership on practice guidance and resource base content. Feedback to measure practice confidence and areas to develop more guidance and resource.
1.3.3	Develop a resource base of universal assessment and engagement good practice guidance to support shared areas for improvement. Sources: County Durham children and young people Practice Toolkit (including voice of the child), Strengthening Families, Council for Disabled Children and NASEN.	Quality Improvement Manager	November 2024	April 2025	SEND Advisory Officers, Senior EP, DSCO, DCO	As above.

Impact Overview: Children and young people's plans are informed by good quality advice(s). Standards of practice are in place and working well to make this happen consistently.

See page 2: 'How our partnership will help support improvements in SEND in County Durham – ACTION 1.'

1.4 A **refreshed quality assurance framework** that better identifies good practice and areas for development to support further multi agency practice improvement.

	Tasks	Task Lead	Start	Finish	Additional Resource Names	Evidence of Outcomes
1.4.1	Refresh the quality assurance framework across LAP based on shared improvement goals (including capturing YP voice) providing recording and feedback tools.	Quality Improvement Manager	November 2024	September 2025		All multi agency audits to ensure that Child voice shapes in all good or better rated advice(s) and EHCPs.
1.4.2	Extend the quality assurance framework - monitor and report on:	Quality Improvement Manager	November 2024	September 2025		Report on % of advice(s) provided in statutory time frame per agency. Establish improvement actions where advice is consistently provided late.
1.4.3	Agency specific learning from multi-agency audits to be presented by the multi-agency audit chairperson to the specific agency and then the specific agency to provide a formal response in reply for presentation at LAP.	Strategic Manager SEND and Inclusion	April 2025	September 2027		As above.
1.4.4	Continue to implement, report, and review the Local Authority EHCP timeliness recovery programme.	Strategic Manager SEND and Inclusion	October 2024	September 2025		Timeliness to in line with the national average by Jan 2026.

Impact Overview: Children and young people's voices inform good quality advice(s). EHCP timeliness is in line with national averages.

See page 2: 'How our partnership will help support improvements in SEND in County Durham – ACTION 1.'

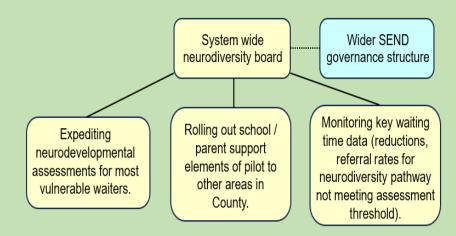
AFI2 The local area partnership should continue to strengthen its work to further reduce the delays to access CAMHS and neurodevelopmental pathways across the age range of children and young people.

AFI Lead: Jen Illingworth

AFI Workstream membership: Neurodiversity System Board

The work of this AFI will follow four main themes:

- Implementing system wide neurodiversity board with aligned wider governance structures across the Local Area Partnership (LAP).
- Rolling out the school / parent support elements
 of the mental health support pilot to other areas of
 the County.
- Monitoring key waiting time data (CAMHS and Neurodiversity) for reductions and in referral rates for neurodiversity pathway who do not meet assessment threshold.
- Expediting neurodevelopmental assessments for most vulnerable waiters.



2.1 Strengthening system wide oversight and governance arrangements across the LAP.

	Tasks	Task Lead	Start	Finish	Additional	Evidence of Outcomes
					Resource Names	
2.1.1	Implement a new system wide Neurodiversity Board with aligned wider governance structures.	Director CYP Integrated Services	August 2024	October 2024	Commissio ning and Developme nt Support Officer	New system wide governance structure in place and effective.

Impact Overview: Governance systems ensure that the partnership is providing help to children, young people, and families in a joined-up way as quickly as possible.

See page 2: 'How our partnership will help support improvements in SEND in County Durham - ACTION 2.'

2.2 Rolling out the school / parent support elements of the mental health support pilot to other areas of the County.

	Tasks	Task Lead	Start	Finish	Additional Resource Names	Evidence of Outcomes
2.2.1	Roll out the school/parent elements of the MH Support pilot from Consett to other parts of the County by area of highest referrals.	Director CYP Integrated Services SEND and	August 2024	March 2026	Communicat ion and Interaction Team Manager	The neurodiversity in school aspects of the Consett pilot are in place across the County.
		Inclusion Strategic Manager			DCC/ Service Manager TEWV	Teacher/parent/CYP feedback on this.

Impact Overview: Children, young people, and families can access timely help and support in a joined-up way support and resources are consistently targeted to the children and young people and families that need it most.

See page 2: 'How our partnership will help support improvements in SEND in County Durham - ACTIONS 2 and 4.'

2.3 Monitoring key waiting time data (CAMHS and Neurodiversity) for reductions and also in referral rates for CYP on to neurodiversity pathway who do not meet assessment threshold.

	Tasks	Task Lead	Start	Finish	Additional Resource Names	Evidence of Outcomes
2.3.1	Monitor data from neurodevelopmental pathway:	Director Operations CAMHS / LD General Manager Paediatrics CDDFT	October 2024	Ongoing	Service Manager TEWV/ Service Manager CDDFT	Reduction in % referral rates for those CYP who do not meet the initial assessment threshold. Reduction of waiting times (measured in weeks) of CYP waiting for diagnostic assessments. Parent/carer/CYP feedback on this.
2.3.2	Monitor data for generic CAMHS waiting times in TEWV compared to national averages: • referral rates, • initial assessment undertaken, • waiting times.	Director Operations CAMHS / LD	October 2024	Ongoing	Service Manager TEWV	Waiting times demonstrated to be in line with national averages.

Impact Overview: We will provide help quickly and in a joined-up way based on children and young people's needs. We will do this by monitoring waiting times for CAMHS and Neurodiversity, reducing referral rates for those on neurodiversity pathway who do not meet assessment thresholds.

See page 2: 'How our partnership will help support improvements in SEND in County Durham - ACTION 2.'

2.4 Expediting neurodevelopmental assessments for most vulnerable waiters.

	Tasks	Task Lead	Start	Finish	Additional Resource Names	Evidence of Outcomes
2.4.	Agree and roll out a process for expediting neurodevelopmental assessments for most vulnerable waiters.	Director Operations CAMHS / LD Practice Lead CYPS	July 2024	December 2024	Available within existing resource.	Agreed process in place with partners and vulnerable CYP have assessment process expedited.

Impact Overview: Assessing need as quickly as possible, particularly for those children and young people who are most vulnerable.

See page 2: 'How our partnership will help support improvements in SEND in County Durham – ACTIONS 2 and 4.'

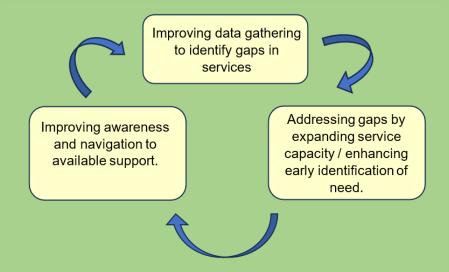
AFI3 The local area partnership should ensure that children and young people and their families can access easily identifiable needs-led services. Informed practitioners should direct families to services that provide support, guidance, and intervention at the earliest opportunity.

AFI Lead: Peter Mulholland/Bernie Toomey

AFI Workstream membership: Gail Earl, Paul Shadforth (or manager), Alison Ayres, Joanne Willey, Vicky Ferguson, Joanne Underwood, Anne-Marie Ollivere, David Wall, Judith Bowman, Jen Illingworth, CAMHS Jamie Bell/James Graham/Gillian Leckenby, Andrea Bell, Amy Black, Gayle Sumby, Caley Banks

The work of AFI3 will follow three key themes:

- **Improving data gathering** to better identify gaps in current services across the Partnership Mapping the Gaps.
- Addressing known gaps by expanding service capacity and enhancing early identification of needs.
- **Improving awareness** of **and navigation** to available support.



3.1 Mapping gaps.

	Tasks	Task Lead	Start	Finish	Additional Resource Names	Evidence of Outcomes
3.	.1 Map the gaps in our current offer through gathering data from parents, young people, education settings, and service providers. Use this data to set an agenda for integrative and collaborative commissioning of support and services.	CYPS Strategic Manager, Strategy and Assurance Public health representative and ICB reps	When governance structure has been reviewed	Spring / summer 2025	Stakeholder representatives from group that conducts annual review of gaps.	Strategic plans include important information from yearly checks and explain how the system works and where to focus resources.

Impact Overview: Make sure everyone in the partnership knows what support may be missing or need strengthened and how to fix it using the governance group. Experiences of parents, young people, and key partner voices directly shape the partnership's priorities.

See page 2: 'How our partnership will help support improvements in SEND in County Durham - ACTIONS 3 and 4.'

3.2 Addressing gaps.

	Tasks	Task Lead	Start	Finish	Additional Resource Names	Evidence of Outcomes
3.2.1	Strengthen identification of early years SLC needs, sharing of key information between agencies, and links to appropriate intervention.	Communication / Interaction team leader Transformation Manager HDDFT Team Leader Cognition and Learning	November 2024	December 2026	Growing Little Voices Durham Strategy Group	 i. % of 2 years olds have completed the ELIM or WellComm screening. Information Sharing Agreements resulting in this information being shared appropriately between agencies and settings. ii. Proportion of early years settings who have received WellComm training/ and using this.
3.2.2	Strengthen earlier identification and understanding of MLD, SLCN, SEMH and Neurodivergent Needs through: Core training and screening tools developed and made available to all education settings through the workforce development offer.	Team Leader Cognition and Learning	November 2024	Summer 2025	DBV 1 Oversight Group	Confidence of school- based staff who complete training and tools workshops to identify MLD, SLCN, SEMH and neurodivergent needs earlier, and address needs through the graduated approach; evidenced in assured SEND support plan.

	Tasks	Task Lead	Start	Finish	Additional Resource Names	Evidence of Outcomes
3.2.3	Make sure all of our systems work in a similar way for helping children with SEND and that all schools have fair access to the support they need.	SEND and Inclusions Strategic Managers	November 2024	Summer 2025	DBV 2 Oversight Group; SIRB and related commissioning groups	Proportion of schools engaged with an identified core offer of needs-led support and advice available from Specialist SEND & Inclusion Support. Baselined and target to increase over time.
3.2.4	Inclusion Partnership resource allocation to work towards emphasis on earlier needs-led support that enables inclusion; and clarity on when AP is most appropriate. Ensure we have the right partners within the multiagency arrangement.	Inclusion Co- ordinator SEND and Inclusion Support team Leader. Area Principal Educational Psychologist.	November 2024	December 2026	Supporting Inclusion in Durham Steering Group SIRB	Reduction in % of CYP experiencing suspension or exclusion who have not accessed appropriate assessment; and who do not have a well-developed support plan aligned to need. Parent/carer feedback and confidence in mainstream school increases through the graduated and personcentred planning process.
3.2.5	Review and strengthen the enhanced transition protocols and associated support offer for secondary schools.	Lead Provision and Pastoral Support Area Principal Educational Psychologist SEND Team Manager	November 2024	December 2025	DBV 3 Oversight Group until summer 2025) Transitions Planning and Oversight Group	Reduction in number of CYP moving placement, EHE or EOTAS in Y7 and Y8.

	Tasks	Task Lead	Start	Finish	Additional Resource Names	Evidence of Outcomes
3.2.6	Identify schools that could make better use of the current support offer and help them understand how they could use the support better.	Early help Strategic Manager Public Health Representative	November 2024	Summer 2026	TAS Planning and Oversight Group	 i. Schools able to better understand and use wider support available. ii. Improved attendance and reduced suspension and exclusion of vulnerable pupils in target schools.

Impact Overview: We will make it easier for people to find and get help and support quickly. We will also offer more resources for those working in education, health, and care to make this happen with inclusion of children and young people at the heart. Parents and carers are fully involved in support planning, understanding, and feeling confident in the arrangements in place. Professionals recognise targeted areas of need early and address them effectively.

See page 2: 'How our partnership will help support improvements in SEND in County Durham - ACTION 3.'

3.3 Awareness raising and navigation to support.

	Tasks	Task Lead	Start	Finish	Additional Resource Names	Evidence of Outcomes
3.3.1	Review family hub SEND Offer and extend to all family hub settings.	Family Hub Development Manager Area principal educational psychologist Practice Lead, CYPS	September 2024	December 2025	Best Start in Life Group	Number of Family Hubs offering SEND drop-ins with key services; and parent/carer feedback on this.
3.3.2	Services to develop workforce development plans with a focus on understanding what other services do.	SEND quality Manager, Strategic Manger Early Help SEND and Inclusion Strategic Manager Development and Learning Manager	September 2024	April 2025	Waiting Well Planning and Oversight Group	Number of services implementing workforce development plans to equip professionals to navigate families and young people to support.
3.3.3	Services to introduce navigation discussions to ensure families and young people are connected into the support they need.	SEND Quality Manager SEND and Inclusion Strategic Manager	September 2024	December 2025	Waiting Well Planning and Oversight Group	Proportion of Services routinely conducting Navigation discussions; and Parent/Carer feedback on this.

	Tasks	Task Lead	Start	Finish	Additional Resource Names	Evidence of Outcomes
3.3.4	School's portal and local offer content and format to be refreshed through coproduction process with parents/carers and schools.	SEND and Inclusion Strategic Manager Area Principal Education Psychologist	September 2024	Summer 2025	Better SEND Communication Planning Group	% Parents/Carers and SENCos reporting that they can find relevant information on services and support available feedback data.
3.3.5	SEND Champions across the partnership will help the local offer co-ordinator to maintain and update key information.	Designated Social Care Officer Making Changes Together Representative DCO for SEND	Summer 2025	Ongoing	Better SEND Communication Planning Group	Information held on Portal and Local Offer site is relevant and up to date- bi-annual QA process.

Impact Overview: We will make it easier for people to find and get help and support quickly. Professionals are more confident in understanding the wider support offer available to families and are guiding parents/carers to these resources appropriately.

See page 2: 'How our partnership will help support improvements in SEND in County Durham – ACTION 3.'

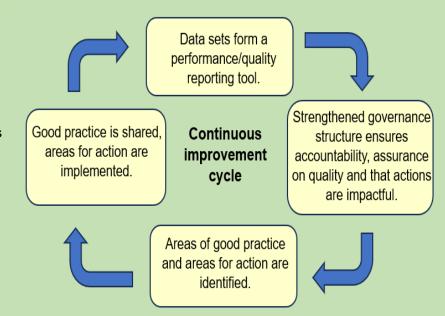
AFI4 The local area partnership should further strengthen the monitoring and impact of strategic plans and policies to ensure that support and resources are consistently targeted to the children and young people and families that need it most.

AFI Lead: Alison Ayres & Clare Nicholls

AFI Workstream membership: Bernie Toomey (CSC), Chris Horn (Education), Rachel Osbaldeston (PH), Chair DAPH, Angela Vear, Steven Wilson.

The work of Afi4 will follow 3 main themes:

- Bringing together data sets into a single performance/quality reporting tool across the partnership.
- Review and strengthen governance structures with clear terms of reference to ensure robust accountability, drive the implementation / delivery of the LAP action plan forward and ensure wider improvement work (including quality assurance) is impactful.
- Build a continuous improvement feedback cycle where regular communication informs an ongoing practice of course correction to help foster and sustain a high-performance culture.



4.1 Bringing together data sets into a single performance/quality reporting tool across the partnership.

	Tasks	Task Lead(s)	Start	Finish	Additional Resource Names	Evidence of Outcomes
4.1.1	Bringing together data sets (quantitative data held in Liquidlogic / Synergy and qualitative data from the new survey and data from the quality audit process) into a performance / quality reporting framework.	Strategic Manager Strategy and Assurance SEND and Inclusion Strategic Manager Commissioning delivery manager Practice Lead CYPS	November 2024	April 2024	Strategic Manager Education, Leadership Advisor Public Health DAPH, DASH representative Data systems team leader MCT & IIC Performance lead	Building on how the LAP monitor our partnership progress and ensuring that we target support to those who need it most. Monitoring and evaluation against practice standards, ensuring quality assurance framework is impactful.
4.1.2	Leveraging the council's new Business Intelligence platform to support this work through a range new technologies, analytical tools and dashboard reporting to provide greater insight for the partnership (including views of partners, children, young people, and families).	As above	Spring 2025	Summer 2024	As above	As above.
4.1.3	Roll out dashboards for use by various governance groups, performance clinic and others.	As above	As soon as available	As above	As above	As above.

Impact Overview: We will build on how we monitor our partnership progress and ensure that we target support to those who need it most. This will involve bringing together data sets into a single performance / quality reporting tool and use of analytical tools to provide greater insight for the partnership.

See page 2: 'How our partnership will help support improvements in SEND in County Durham - ACTION 4.'

4.2 Review and strengthen governance structures with clear terms of reference to ensure robust accountability, drive the implementation / delivery of the LAP action plan forward and ensure wider improvement work (including quality assurance) is impactful.

	Tasks	Task Lead	Start	Finish	Additional Resource Names	Evidence of Outcomes
4.2.1	Develop underpinning value principles across the layers of Governance i.e. transparent, open, peer challenge.	Strategic Manager Strategy and Assurance SEND and Inclusion Strategic Manager	November 2024	January 2025	Wider AFI group	Robust accountability, drive the implementation / delivery of the LAP action plan forward and ensure wider improvement work (including quality assurance) is impactful.
4.2.2	Review existing Governance structures and interfaces to consider a future structure that focuses on robust accountability, will drive forward the implementation and delivery of the LAP action plan, ensure wider improvement work (including quality assurance) is impactful and ensure focus on targeting resource to those who need it the most.	As above	November 2024	February 2025	Wider AFI group	As above.
4.2.3	Develop terms of reference for each governance layer / workstreams incorporating agreed terms and processes for accountability.	As above	Autumn 2024	February 2025	As above	As above.
4.2.4	Implement new governance structure and test how this is working with regular reviews.	As above	Spring 2025	First review autumn 2025	As above	As above.

Impact Overview: We will build on how we monitor our partnership progress and ensure that we target support to those who need it most. The partnership's reviewed and revised governance arrangements will help us to do this.

See page 2: 'How our partnership will help support improvements in SEND in County Durham – ACTION 4.'

4.3 Build a continuous improvement feedback cycle where regular communication informs an ongoing practice of course correction to help foster and sustain a high-performance culture.

	Tasks	Task Lead	Start	Finish	Additional Resource Names	Evidence of Outcomes
4.3.1	Strengthen and formalise key feedback processes (including wider communication strategy) that would best inform wider partnership, governance layers ensuring child and family voice at the heart.	Strategic Manager Strategy and Assurance, SEND and Inclusion Strategic Manager.	Spring 2025	Summer 2025	Wider AFI group	Regular communication informs ongoing practice of course correction as art of high-performance culture and this, in turn informs improved practice.
4.3.2	Test feedback loop processes to ensure they inform ongoing consideration of good practice / support course correction practice.	As above	Spring 2025	Autumn 2025	As above	As above.
4.2.2	Roll out feedback loop processes	A above	Spring / Summer 2025	Ongoing	As above	As above.
4.3.4	Review feedback loop processes to ensure continuous improvement. Refine as appropriate.	As above	Autumn 2025	Ongoing	As above	As above.
4.3.4	Use learning and feedback to develop revised SEND and AP strategy as part of wider local inclusion strategy.	Manager Strategy and Assurance, SEND and Inclusion Manager, Practice lead CYPS.	Spring / summer 2025	January 2026	Wider AFI group	Revised strategy reflects how support / resources are consistently targeted to the children and young people and families that need it most. Plans and strategies are joined up across the partnership.

Impact Overview: We will build on how we monitor our partnership progress and ensure that we target support to those who need it most. Ensuring the voice of children, young people and families is at the heart of feedback processes and the continuous improvement cycle.

See page 2: 'How our partnership will help support improvements in SEND in County Durham - ACTION 4.'