**Joint Commissioning Strategy for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) 2023 to 2028**

**Our approach to joint commissioning in Newcastle upon Tyne**



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**1. Introduction**

* 1. **Context and Vision**

The Joint Commissioning Strategy for Children and Young People with SEND sets out how we will jointly commission services in Newcastle upon Tyne, working together with children and young people and their families to ensure those services provide the best outcomes.

Our SEND strategy for 2023-2028 describes our ambition to work together to create an inclusive city to ensure children and young people with SEND get the right support at the right time so that they go on to live their best lives *(*[Getting It Right Together](https://www.newcastlesupportdirectory.org.uk/sites/default/files/Local%20Offer/SEND%20Strategy/Newcastle%20Local%20Area%20SEND%20Strategy%202023-2028%20Final.pdf))

The SEND strategy for 2023-2028 identifies two key priorities;

* Making sure children and young people get the right support at the right time
* Making sure we are getting it right together.

No single organisation can do this alone. Significant work has been undertaken to ensure effective joint commissioning arrangements are in place to ensure that our ambitions are being met. This strategy aims to further bring together statutory and voluntary partners across the education, health and social care sector in a whole system approach.

The purpose of the Joint Commissioning Strategy is to outline our key priorities for the next 3 years, how they will be achieved, and how we will ensure continued improvements. We will do this by reflecting on practice, benchmarking, and peer review, in partnership with children and their families.

* 1. **Principles**

We have adopted a relational and restorative practice approach throughout all of children’s services, which sets out how all staff are expected to work with children and families and partner organisations. See the following link for further information: [How we work with families – Relational and Restorative Practice.](https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/services/care-and-support/children/getting-help-children-and-families/how-we-work-families)

Underpinning this document are the following four principles co-produced as part of our SEND Strategy:

**Understand** – with partners we seek to develop a single shared understanding of the local area to set commissioning priorities, sharing data and agreeing on measures based on this shared understanding.

**Communication** – we will involve parents, carers, children and young people in the commissioning process. By doing this we ensure that services truly reflect the needs of those using them

**Kind and compassionate** – we will design and commission services to enhance outcomes for children and young people with SEND, supporting them to reach their potential with a supportive approach to their wants and needs.

**Open and honest** – we will promote joint decision making, and joining up of services, whilst recognising statutory responsibilities. We will be transparent about our commissioning intentions and processes, and honest about resources available across partners.

**Legislative Context**

The strategy is being implemented against a backdrop of significant government reforms to education, health and social care for children and young people with SEND and their families and/or carers:

* Children and Families Act, 2014
* Care Act, 2014
* SEND Code of Practice 0-25, 2014
* Equality Act, 2010.

The overall purpose of these reforms is to join up support across health, education, and social care from birth to 25 years, with the aims of ensuring early intervention, putting children and families at the centre of decision-making, and ultimately facilitating better outcomes for children and young people. Local partners have the flexibility to decide how systems will work in their area, and to make arrangements which are most effective to meet the needs of the children and young people they support, with a duty to ensure there is no gap in care and support.

In addition to education, health and social care reforms, key reforms of public sector procurement legislation are also underway. The Provider Selection Regime (PSR), a set of rules for procuring health care services, came into force on 1 January 2024. The Procurement Bill, which will replace the current Public Contracts Regulation (PCR) is expected to be implemented in Autumn 2024.

It is anticipated that these procurement reforms will give opportunities for increased flexibility and creativity in the design, commissioning, and procurement of services, as well as greater co-production with stakeholders, including Children and Young People and their parents/carers and families.

**2. Joint Commissioning**

**2.1 What is joint commissioning?**

In this Strategy, joint commissioning refers to the work that Newcastle City Council and North East North Cumbria ICB do to design and buy services together, using shared resources and to meet shared objectives.

**Commissioning**

Not all services and opportunities that the Council and the ICB would like to make available for children and young people with SEND can be directly delivered by ourselves. We often need to buy in the services of others to deliver on our behalf.

Design, Commissioning and Procurement describes the process that we go through in:

* listening to residents, colleagues and partners about what is needed
* advising how best to put delivery arrangements together and
* buying high quality arrangements from external providers.



**Joint Commissioning** is important to achieve positive outcomes and ambitions for children and young people with SEND in Newcastle. This approach to planning and delivering services ensures it is done in a holistic way, and shares responsibilities for services and their outcomes.

We will look to collaborate at all stages of the joint commissioning process, from the assessment of needs to the planning and procurement of services and monitoring of service delivery for our children and young people with SEND in Newcastle.

In practice, this means that the Council and the NENC ICB will look wherever feasible to:

* share our market intelligence and service user feedback
* conduct our engagement and consultation together
* review the services that we commission separately and consider whether and how these could be brought together
* commit to combining resources where appropriate in order to secure the best effective services for Newcastle children and young people with SEND
* agree between us which organisation should take the lead on a particular procurement
* ensure evaluation panels contain representatives from both the Council and NENC ICB where appropriate
* share contract performance and management information
* take a joint role in quality monitoring of jointly commissioned arrangements
* share responsibility and accountability for the impact of the services we put in place

As part of our joint commissioning approach we are committed to involving children and young people, and their families in all stages of the commissioning process. This includes:

* making sure we have an ongoing dialogue with children, young people and their families about what’s important to them, the challenges they face and what works well. Examples of how we will do this include the Parent Carer Forum, the Start for Life Parent Carer Panel, and our Youth Participation Groups. This ongoing conversation helps inform our future commissioning plans.
* a commitment to co-production, working with children, young people and their families in the design of our service offers.
* involving children, young people and their families in tender evaluations where appropriate.
* a role for users of our services in the monitoring of contracted delivery.

We recognise that one of the most pressing challenges facing the public

sector is pressure on available resources, which requires all partners to work in more innovative ways to deliver core services. We want to support the market wherever possible to build further capacity and create opportunities for innovation.

We want our joint commissioning to be outcomes based, using data to predict demand, improve services, and measure success.

**2.2 Current Position: Data**

Our 2023 SEF highlights the following data:

* From 2017 to July 2023 the number of children and young people with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) increased by 102% from 1,292 to 2,611.
* The number of children and young people in specialist places increased from 821 in 2020 to 981 in 2023 – an increase of 19%.
* The number of pupils with autism has doubled from 604 (1.5% of all pupils) to 1,224 (2.9%) over the last five years. Forecasts suggest further growth.
* Pupils with Speech, Language and Communication Needs and Social, Emotional and Mental Health have seen increases of over 30% in the last 5 years.
* There has been significant increase in referrals into the neurodevelopmental pathway from 834 in 2019/20 to 1,771 in 2022/23 (increase of 112%). Of those waiting for assessment, 75% have been waiting over 18 weeks.
* There are waiting lists for occupational therapy, speech and language therapy and mental health services.

It is clear that the system faces increased need for services. Our plan to meet this need is included in Section 3.

**2.3 Current Position: Voice of Children and Young People with SEND**

The Happiness Survey 2021/22 (<https://youtu.be/uIRjnk92-vA>) has confirmed that the key themes identified by children and young people with SEND as most important to them were:

* Having good friendships
* Things to do
* Knowing where to go to get help and information when you need it
* Places to chill out
* Less noise
* More calm and kindness.

We will ensure that these themes are reflected in our approaches throughout the design, commissioning, and procurement cycle:

1. We will present the voice of children and young people with SEND in market engagement, as a key element of the services we are looking to buy
2. We will embed these key themes in our service specifications; and
3. We will monitor outcomes as part of our contract monitoring and quality assurance processes, to ensure that services are having a positive impact in the areas that children and young people have told us are most important.

**2.4 Current Position: Learning from Previous Inspections**

In 2021, inspectors highlighted the following as the areas our Newcastle’s Joint Commissioning for those with Special Educational Need and Disabilities should focus on:

1. Children’s Therapies (Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language Therapy and Children and Young Peoples Services)
* Wait list initiatives for OT, SaLT and CYPS.
1. Short breaks
* Review of current provision and development of a universal and targeted offer, including holiday activities
1. Increasing capacity in mainstream and specialist schools.

These areas of focus are priorities for partners in Newcastle and will form a key part of our Joint Commissioning Delivery Plan for 2024/25.

1. **Delivering the vision - 2024/25**

The Joint Commissioning Annual Delivery Plan sets out our commissioning priorities, what we intend to do and by when, to ensure that the needs of children and young people with SEND in Newcastle is met. This is based on the priorities in our [SEND Strategy 2023/2028](https://www.newcastlesupportdirectory.org.uk/sites/default/files/Local%20Offer/SEND%20Strategy/Newcastle%20Local%20Area%20SEND%20Strategy%202023-2028%20Final.pdf).

**3.1 Joint Commissioning Delivery Plan**

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| **Area of focus** | **Commissioning priorities** | **Steps to be taken** | **Partners** | **Outcomes** | **Target and Timescales** | **Measures** |
| **SEND Strategy priority 1.9:** **A new co-produced therapy offer for speech and language, physio and occupational therapy will be agreed and implemented. This will be used to develop the wider workforce****Reimagining of Child Therapies** | We want to jointly commission high quality provision which:* meets current and future need
* utilises research-based therapy
* ensures that physical as well as emotional needs are met
* maximises achievement and life chances

We want to identify and jointly commission a delivery model that best meets need and eliminates unnecessary delays. Ensure that C/YP are given interim support where appropriate.  | Review of all therapies:* Pathways to be reviewed by delivery groups
* Delays identified
* Capacity focused on reducing waiting times.
* Jointly recommission services to better meet need based on the findings of the delivery groups and as agreed by steering groups.
* Additional capacity sourced, where appropriate, to triage lists and reduce wait times.
 | Newcastle City CouncilIntegrated Care Board (ICB)Therapy ServicesPrivate sector therapy services | Waiting lists with Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language Therapy and mental health services are reduced.  | Project design and targets are still in development. Please see project brief for more information. Delivery groups to be established (achieved)Review of pathways by delivery groups by Autumn 2024.NCC to Commission Private company to deliver Paediatric OT Adaption services by 31/01/2024. | Waiting times reduceHappiness Survey reports C/YP know where to go to get help and information.  |
| **SEND Strategy Priority 1.9:** **A new short break offer will be commissioned for those eligible****Community Short Breaks Offer**  | Children and Young People can access high quality short breaks.Strengthen awareness of inclusive mainstream opportunities across the city. | Co-produce short breaks offer.Seek to strengthen inclusive provision through HAF and Newcastle Youth Fund.Test inclusivity and quality of provision through Youth Panel. | Newcastle City Council Integrated Care Board (ICB)Short Breaks Providers |  | Revised Short Breaks offer by 1 April 2025HAF / Newcastle Youth Fund  | Happiness survey reports C/YP have things to do and places to chill.  |
| **SEND Strategy Priority 1.2:** **Strengthening investment across all educational settings to further develop a joint universal offer of support from education, health and care.** **Improving capacity in mainstream and specialist schools** | Supporting mainstream schools to access high quality Alternative Provision with a view to re-engaging C/YP with their mainstream school | Establish a high quality Alternative Provision Framework.Use of the framework is monitored and reviewed.Placement outcomes monitored and reviewed. | Newcastle City CouncilAlternative Provision ProvidersSchools | Improved outcomes for Children and Young People.Where appropriate, increased numbers of children/young people able to remain in mainstream school  | Establish an Alternative Provision Framework*by March 2024.*Schools consistently use the Alternative Provision Framework to commission services by end of 2024. | Reduction in exclusionsHappiness survey reports C/YP feel happier in educational settings.  |
| Working with the Independent Specialist School Sector to increase capacity  | Create a procurement solution which leads to high quality, easy to access placements in independent special schools to meet the needs of Newcastle children and young people.Engage with the provider market and set out the priorities of Newcastle.Support interested parties to open new provision/expand current offer.  | Newcastle City CouncilSpecialist Independent SchoolsIntegrated Care Board (ICB) | C/YP are able to access appropriate specialist provision which meets their assessed need.  | New framework solution to begin in April 2024, and usage will be reviewed.Additional capacity is created in the areas of Autism and Social, Emotional and Mental Health. *Sept 2028.*Work with providers to explore options for future commissioning arrangements from 2026 in order to increase capacity within the city. | Happiness survey reports C/YP feel happier in educational settings.  |
| **Meeting Clinical Needs in Specialist Schools** | We want to identify and jointly commission a delivery model that provides a comprehensive range of services to ensure the safe and effective management of medications for children within the Compass Trust Specialist Schools. | Pilot - Compass Trust specialist schools receive support from an onsite pharmacist/pharmacy technician to provide medicines optimisation.Development of a joint governance structure including* Model of supervision and training
* supervision document with contract and process
* escalation process

Scope out potential for a new operational role across The Compass Trust. | The Compass Trust, Local Authority, Newcastle Upon Tyne Hospitals and North East and North Cumbria ICB  | C/YP are able to access appropriate specialist provision which meets their assessed need.Ensuring children and the workforce are safe, confident and effective | Model to be implemented September 2024 | Feedback from school and health teams. |

**3.2 Governance**

Strong governance is an important way that we ensure delivery against this strategy.

The work within this strategy is overseen and challenged by the Local Area SEND Joint Intelligence and Commissioning Group.

The group is accountable to the Local Area SEND Executive Board.

The SEND Executive is accountable to the Health and Wellbeing Board via the Newcastle Children and Young People Strategic Partnership.

**3.3 Performance reporting**

It is important that the impact of joint commissioning arrangements on the lives of children and young people with SEND is measured. Key metrics are developed, and monitored, as part of any jointly commissioning service. Regularly reviewing the performance of outcomes and services determines effectiveness.

We continuously track and review data that measure the outcomes for children and young people with SEND through the SEND Outcomes Framework data dashboard. Indicators across education, health and social care are monitored, informing medium and long-term planning and supporting the commissioning of services. This is held at the Joint Intelligence and Commissioning workstream, and it is used to inform leaders and the wider partnership.

The views of children and young people form part of the performance reporting via SEND Voice Network.

**3.4 Dispute resolution**

As with all partnership working, it is recognised that there are times when organisations will not be able to agree on the best way forward. In cases such as this there must be mechanisms through which to handle the resolution of disputes. This section is not intended to be prescriptive, but merely to agree the adoption of the relevant principles resolve our disagreements.

* Recognition that organisations operate in different contexts with different statutory duties. It is imperative that organisations understand and respect these differences.
* Any issues must be communicated at an early stage.
* Issues should be handled at the most appropriate level, escalation should only occur as a last resort.
* If a resolution cannot be made via the preceding steps, an issue will be escalated to the **Local Area SEND Executive Board**. If a final decision is required, the accountable officers are the Director of Nursing (ICB) and the Director for Children and Families (NCC) who will decide on the resolution.

**4. Other key documents**

Please follow the link for a list of SEND related policies and strategies

[SEND related policies and strategies (newcastlesupportdirectory.org.uk)](https://www.newcastlesupportdirectory.org.uk/send-related-policies-and-strategies).

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