

County Durham SEND Overview

September 20th 2024



Introduction

- The Local Area SEND Inspection which took place between June 10th and June 28th 2024 - methods, areas of focus, outcome and next steps;
- Update on Education Health and Care needs assessment demand and the timeliness of issuing plans;
- Practice Spotlight – Early Years Speech Language and Communication and Peer Review;
- Future Focus;



Durham Area SEND Inspection

10th – 28th June 2024

Brief Overview

The inspection team is led by one of His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) from Ofsted, and includes Children's Services Inspectors from the CQC, and education and social care inspectors from Ofsted.

The purpose of an Area SEND Inspection is to:

- provide an independent, external evaluation of the effectiveness of the local area partnership's arrangements for children and young people with SEND
- where appropriate, recommend what the local area partnership should do to improve the arrangements
- Documentation and Data collation and scrutiny (often referred to as Annex A)
- Multi Agency Audits, key documentation collation and tracking meetings for 6 selected children and young people – the tracking meetings firstly take place with the child, young person themselves and/or their families, then a separate meeting takes place with the key professionals involved with the child.
- Sampling/Topic-Based Meetings
- Sampling 'Visits' to relevant Teams and Services – in the Durham Area SEND Inspection these mostly took place as meetings as opposed to visits to the relevant workplaces.

Timeline of Activity

Week 1 (Offsite)

- Collation and sharing of Annex A documentation and data by the Partnership
- Inspectors scrutinise the Annex A information, select the 6 CYP for tracking and identify possible initial KLOEs
- Multi-agency audit activity and collation and QA of key documentation for the 6 selected CYP

Week 2 (Offsite)

- Virtual meetings with the 6 selected children and young people and/ or their parents/carers
- Some initial Sampling/Topic-Based virtual meetings

Week 3 (Onsite)

- In person tracking meetings with key professionals involved in the care/support/decision-making for the 6 selected CYP
- In person Sampling/Topic-Based meetings with the relevant service leads, managers and practitioners
- Sampling 'Visits' meetings with key teams/services
- Daily KIT meetings with the Core Team and the Lead Inspectors

Sampling/Topic-Based Meetings and Visits in Durham's Inspection

The inspectors had meetings with a range of relevant service leads, manager and practitioners across education health and care on key topics selected by them. These included:

- Durham Context and Local Area Partnership's Self Evaluation
- Durham's Parent Carer Forum
- SENDIASS
- CYP including at The Croft around Anxious About School Work and the eXtreme group
- Strategy and Commissioning
- EHCPs – Quality and Decision-Making
- Local Education Partnership Chairs, Virtual School and Alternative Provision
- Children's attendance, those missing or not attending, electively home educated and those on alternative packages of support
- Children with complex needs including those with a social worker, care leavers and those on the Dynamic Support Register
- Visits and discussions with family hubs, health teams, GPs, early years, primary, secondary, college and specialist school provision

During the Inspection, the inspectors met with:

- Over 30 children and young people, 10 parents/carers
- Over 110 DCC councillors, leaders, managers and officers (this includes staff in integrated commissioning)
- Around 95 NHS leaders, managers and practitioners (including ICB and staff from 5 NHS Foundation Trusts)
- Around 55 Heads, SENCOs and staff from schools, nurseries and colleges across Durham
- Other partners including MCT, HumanKind and Investing in Children
- Inspectors published a survey for practitioners, parents and carers, children and young people which we widely promoted. They received almost 1,500 responses in total which helped to shape the inspection findings.

Possible Outcomes

Following a full inspection, inspectors will report on the effectiveness of the local area partnership's arrangements for children and young people with SEND. The report will include:

- the inspection outcome
- what it is like to be a child or young person with SEND in the local area
- what the local area partnership is doing well and what needs to be improved
- recommendations for improvements that the local area partnership should act on
- whether any areas for priority action have been identified and which area partners are responsible for addressing them
- the likely type and timing of the next inspection activity

The three possible outcomes are:

The local area partnership's SEND arrangements typically lead to **positive experiences and outcomes** for children and young people with SEND. The local area partnership is taking action where improvements are needed.

The local area partnership's arrangements lead to **inconsistent experiences and outcomes** for children and young people with SEND. The local area partnership must work jointly to make improvements.

There are widespread and/or systemic failings leading to **significant concerns about the experiences and outcomes** of children and young people with SEND, which the local area partnership must address urgently.

The Strengths Which the Inspection Team Recognised

- Collaborative leadership is strong across education, health and social care. Local Area Partnership (LAP) leaders prioritise SEND
- Children and young people feel valued, visible and included in their communities. They feel listened to by adults.
- Children and young people build transferable skills so that they can participate in wider activities
- There is improvement in the length of time taken to complete new assessments the result of the LAP recovery plan
- Most children and young people have their needs identified and met early (however there is an opportunity to do more for some young people who are permanently excluded)
- Young people with SEND have good attendance and this is improving further
- Persistent absence from school is reducing preparing young people well in education, training and employment
- Parents and carers state that their voice is mostly heard well and some have seen improvements to support and services as a result of this

Durham's Area Inspection Report Outcome

The local area partnership's arrangements lead to inconsistent experiences and outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The local area partnership must work jointly to make improvements.

We also received 4 areas for improvement:

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

Next Steps

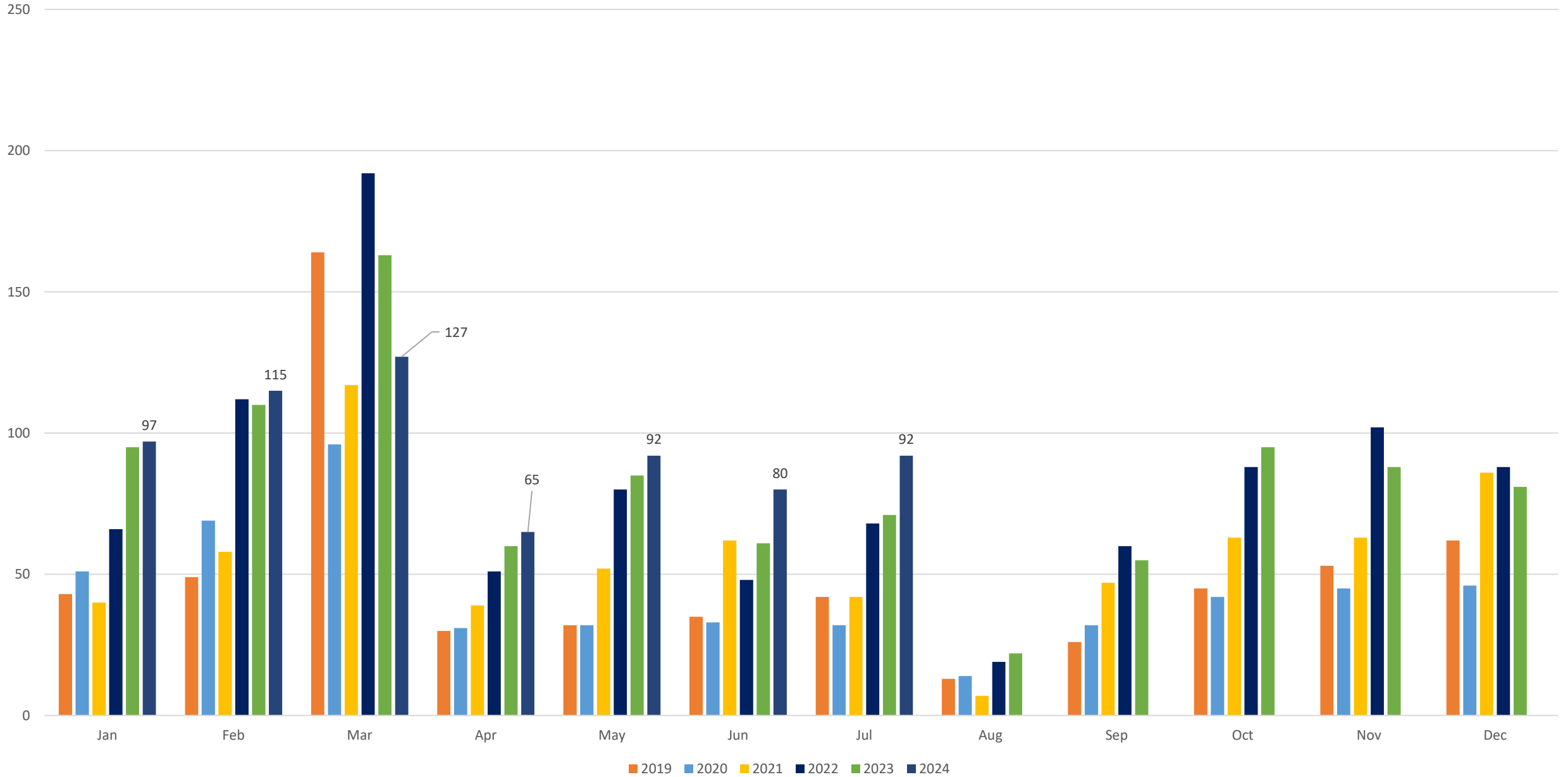
- We recognise the inspection findings and have done so previously in our work as a partnership through our self evaluation exercises. This gave the inspection team confidence when looking at our transformation work the inspection recognised the improvements being made and recommended a continuation of the work.
- Ofsted ask all local area partnerships to update and publish their strategic plans after a full inspection. The plan should include the actions it is taking, or will take, in response to the recommendations made in the inspection report. Local area partnerships may update existing plans or choose to produce new plans.
- We are currently working the required multi agency partnership plan and will submit this to Ofsted in October 2024.
- The SEND and AP Partnership will engage with all partners and stakeholder when deciding what actions we will take in response to the inspection report and will then update our strategic plan addressing the inspection recommendations .
- The Strategic Plans will be published in a way which ensures that it is accessible to children and young people with SEND, and their parents and carers.
- The next full area SEND inspection will be within approximately three years.

Education Health and Care Plans – Demand and Timeliness

Demand Headlines

- We have receive 668 requests in the year-to-date.
- This is higher than at this stage in 2023 (645) putting us on track for our highest yearly figure for requests and significantly higher than in 2019 (395).
- Most recently there have been 237 requests for Quarter 1 (April to June) have been higher than any year on record. This is an increase of 144% from 2019 (97 requests) and 15% (206 requests) from 2023

Requests for EHCP Assessment Received



Timeliness Headlines

- As we progress through historic EHC needs assessment and at the same time focus on improved performance we are issuing almost double the number of plans.
- From January to July we issued 644 at the same point in 2023 we had issued 339. Reflecting back to 2019 we had issued 156 plans at the same point in the year – showing the ongoing much higher demand than previously.
- Whilst we are issuing such a very high number of plans we are also beginning to recover performance on 20 week timeliness including through prioritising cases.
- In the latter part of 2023 members will recall we were not able to issue plans within 20 weeks, during 2024 our performance is steadily improving month on month and in July 2024 we issued 18% of plans within 20 weeks. We anticipate this to continue to increase in coming months.

Practice Spotlight

Early Years Speech and Language Strategy 0-4 years

'Little Voices Growing in County Durham'

Local Government Association Peer Support Challenge

Background

There is strong evidence to show that many children are not at an expected level of language development when they start school (approx. 50%). About 10% of those children will have long term severe or moderate speech and language needs, however research indicates that the remaining 40% of those children are more likely to be delayed with their language and that this may be linked to areas of deprivation

(‘Best Start in Speech, Language and Communication’, 2020, Public Health and DfE; ‘Unlocking Talent, Fulfilling Potential’, 2017, DfE).

- ✓ The Family Hub programme has created an opportunity to focus on early years speech and language through the funded Home Learning Environment and Early Years Speech and Language elements of the programme, which have a remit to support children to develop their speech and language skills for the purpose of school readiness.
- In response to the needs of our children and the family hub programme, a strategy group was convened in September 2023 with representation from Local Area partners including NHS (midwifery, health visitors, speech and language therapy) and DCC (Early Help, SEND and Inclusion, Education Durham Early Years Team). This work is governed by the Best Start Partnership.

The Development of a Strategy

The strategy group have been using the 'Best Start in Speech, Language and Communication: Guidance to support local commissioners and service leads' (Public Health England and DfE, 2020) to support the process of developing the strategy and a robust integrated pathway

A comprehensive self evaluation has been carried out and 5 areas of focus agreed:

- ✓ Developing a shared partnership vision
- ✓ Targeting provision 'right time, right place'
- ✓ A universal, targeted and specialist support integrated pathway
- ✓ Early identification of need
- ✓ Leadership awareness

Local Government Association Peer Challenge

The LGA Peer Challenge helps local authorities to improve their systems for supporting the development of good speech, language and communication skills, and how we work together as a wider partnership to meet the speech, language and communication needs (SLCNs) of our children.

The support offered by the Peer Challenge will be tailored to suit Durham's strategy development.

The strategy group hope it can:

- Confirm that our self-evaluation has identified the right focus areas
- Raise awareness of the importance of early years speech and language across services and leadership
- Consider how we can work together within a complex context (for example we have 3 separate NHS trusts providing the health support)
- Help us better understand the impact of current support on children and their families
- Advise on the development of our integrated pathway and strategy

Longer term, the Peer Challenge will help us to develop a more robust strategy and support pathway to support our youngest children to thrive and achieve at school and throughout their lives.

LGA visit 17th – 20th September 2024

The LGA visit is designed to be supportive of the work that is being carried out and is not an inspection. They will be involved with a number of activities over the 4 days that they are in Durham. This will include:

- Meeting with strategic and corporate leaders
- Meeting with providers and practitioners
- Talking to families
- Visits to early years settings and family hubs
- Providing a presentation at the end of the week highlighting the strengths in Durham and advising on next steps for an action plan

The LGA will publish a report which will celebrate good practice in Durham.

Timeline

17th – 20th September
LGA peer challenge visit

Oct 2024
Develop action plan

December 2024
Draft strategy and pathway completed

Jan – March 2025
Governance and ratification of strategy at Health
and Wellbeing Board

Future Focus for SEND Work in Coming Months

- Respond to Ofsted and CQC SEND Inspection Report – Development of a Local Area Action Plan addressing the 4 priority areas
- Strategic focus on tackling development gaps in early language through implementation of Speech Language Communication pathways
- Intensify efforts to continue to manage demand for statutory assessment whilst improving timeliness and quality of EHCPs
- Strengthen partnership to reduce the time taken for young people on the neurodevelopment pathway
- Supporting children and young people with SEND and their families to access services that will best meet needs
- To increase the amount of Specialist Education opportunities both in Mainstream and Special Schools
- Despite our progress and engagement with DBV programme concerns about escalating overspends in coming years (local and national)
- Work with Hartlepool, Stockton and Gateshead as part of ‘Regional SEND change partnership’ and feed into DfE national developments
- Publish a new County Durham SEND Strategy (2025-2028) including a clear shared vision and partnership action plan