

Newcastle SEND Accelerated Progress Plan (APP) Review meeting 20 March 2024



March 2024

Contents

Introduction	3
Summary	3
Performance scorecard	4
Progress against the key areas	5
EHC timeliness	5
Exclusions and Suspensions	12
Risk register and mitigation plans reviewed February 2024	15
Systems in place for collecting and analysing the impact of actions	17
Local accountability and governance structure	19
Training, support and impact	20
Appendix 1: Changes to EPS Service Delivery to Respond to Statutory Demands ..	21
Appendix 2: Exclusions and suspensions data	24

Introduction

The [Accelerated Progress Plan](#) (APP) was produced following our SEND inspection revisit in May 2021, it was approved by the DfE and NHS England on 20 August 2021. DfE and NHS England returned to assess our progress in implementing the plan in February 2022, October 2022 and April 2023. Following our meeting in April 2023 DfE asked us to **remain focused on improving our EHCP timeliness and to show an improvement with exclusion and suspension data, so that all are in line with national averages.**

DfE are returning to review progress on 20 March 2024 and have also asked that we provide the documentary evidence we are using to plan, track and evaluate the impact of our actions, including:

- [A dashboard of performance measures showing whether targets and milestones are being met in a timely manner; any slippage; evidence of impact and whether the local area is on track to meet the next set of milestones.](#)
- [The APP, with a brief progress update against your area of weakness.](#)
- [An updated risk register and mitigation plans.](#)
- [Evidence of systems being in place for collecting and analysing the impact of actions.](#)
- [Any local evidence that you already hold \(e.g., through consultations and surveys\) that key partners, including children and young people families and schools are playing an active role in developing the APP and in improving services.](#)
- [Clear information about your local accountability and governance structure.](#)
- [A brief update on any training that has been brokered for you by your SEND and NHSE Advisers since our previous meeting in April 2023, or that you have bought in from elsewhere, and your assessment of its effectiveness.](#)
- [Any additional information: Appendix 1 – Changes to EPS Service Deliver to Respond to Statutory demands](#)

This report is structured in line with the information requested by DfE as set out above.

Summary

EHC timeliness: We are not yet meeting the 20-week target for the production of EHC plans and overall performance is below the average timescale for all English authorities. We have invested heavily in resources so that timeliness will improve, but we are still feeling the impact of the high numbers of requests received in 2021. We can evidence that families are supported whilst waiting and although some families would like to see communications improved, there are families who report a positive experience.

Exclusions and suspensions: In line with the current regional and national trends, Newcastle has seen a significant rise in suspensions and exclusions over 2021/22, which continued into the autumn term 2022/23. It is encouraging to note that we are in line with, or below the average for the North East Region and there are some cohorts where we are below the last reported national levels as set out below:

- Permanent exclusions for children with SEND in primary schools has reduced between 2020/21 and 2021/2022 and is below national levels.
- In secondary schools the level of permanent exclusions for those with EHCPs in 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 is below the national average.
- In primary school suspensions for those with SEND is reducing and is below the national levels.

We continue to build a robust multi-agency support system where schools can access training, specialist support and funding and have many examples of cases where our work has reduced the need for exclusions and suspensions.

Performance scorecard

Academic year		2018-19 baseline			2019-20			2020-21			2021-22			2022-23 (Aut. term)			RAG on 2022-23 Aut. term)	
KPI	All phases	Newc.	NE	National	Newc.	NE	National	Newc.	NE	National	Newc.	NE	National	Newc.	NE	National		
APP1a % Pupils who were permanently excluded from Newcastle schools is at least in line with the national average.	SEND	0.39	0.40	0.29	0.31	0.27	0.18	0.14	0.21	0.13	0.34	0.34	0.22	0.10	0.16	0.11	Green	
	EHCP	0.08	0.09	0.15	0.00	0.06	0.10	0.06	0.03	0.08	0.12	0.08	0.13	0.00	0.05	0.07		
	SEN Support	0.46	0.48	0.32	0.40	0.32	0.20	0.16	0.27	0.15	0.41	0.41	0.25	0.13	0.19	0.12		Yellow
	Primary																	
	SEND	0.18	0.08	0.13	0.00	0.07	0.09	0.06	0.03	0.05	0.03	0.05	0.09	0.00	0.04	0.05		Green
	EHCP	0.00	0.04	0.18	0.00	0.06	0.13	0.24	0.06	0.08	0.00	0.05	0.13	0.00	0.00	0.07		
	SEN Support	0.20	0.08	0.12	0.00	0.07	0.09	0.03	0.03	0.04	0.03	0.05	0.08	0.00	0.05	0.05		Green
	Secondary																	
	SEND	0.80	1.09	0.60	0.92	0.69	0.36	0.29	0.57	0.29	0.82	0.87	0.46	0.26	0.38	0.22		Yellow
	EHCP	0.00	0.30	0.33	0.00	0.24	0.19	0.00	0.07	0.17	0.00	0.16	0.27	0.00	0.24	0.14		Green
SEN Support	0.86	1.19	0.65	1.03	0.75	0.39	0.33	0.64	0.31	0.94	0.98	0.50	0.30	0.40	0.23	Red		
APP1B	All phases																	
% Pupils who were excluded from Newcastle schools for a fixed term is at least in line with the national average.	SEND	13.9	18.8	15.7	11.0	14.3	11.2	15.9	16.9	12.1	21.4	23.1	18.4	9.5	10.2	8.1	Red	
	EHCP	15.1	14.1	16.1	12.9	12.1	11.7	16.0	14.8	13.0	18.6	18.6	17.6	8.3	7.9	7.8		
	SEN Support	13.6	20.0	15.6	10.4	14.9	11.0	15.9	17.5	11.9	22.3	24.5	18.6	9.9	10.9	8.2		
	Primary																	
	SEND	7.9	4.7	7.6	5.7	3.9	5.5	5.8	4.0	5.3	4.9	5.1	7.4	2.0	2.1	3.2		Green
	EHCP	17.1	6.8	13.6	12.0	7.3	10.0	15.7	8.9	11.0	7.1	9.8	13.8	1.7	3.4	5.8		
	SEN Support	7.1	4.6	6.9	5.0	3.6	4.8	4.4	3.4	4.4	4.6	4.6	6.3	2.1	1.9	2.7		Green
	Secondary																	
	SEND	23.7	46.7	30.1	19.5	34.2	21.1	32.5	40.0	23.5	46.0	54.6	36.5	20.0	23.2	15.6		Red
	EHCP	30.9	42.9	30.9	23.8	34.2	22.7	36.3	44.3	27.2	41.5	51.5	38.0	18.7	20.0	16.4		
SEN Support	23.2	47.3	29.9	19.0	34.2	20.8	32.0	39.3	22.8	46.7	55.1	36.2	20.2	23.7	15.4	Red		
Calendar year																		
KPI	2019		2020 (baseline)			2021			2022						RAG on 2022			
	Newc.	NE	National	Newc.	NE	National	Newc.	NE	National	Newc.	NE	National						
APP4 % EHCP assessments completed within 20 weeks improves to that of national averages.	Rate of EHC plans excluding exceptions	49.7	67.3	58.7	53.6	67.5	55.6	14.9	63.9	57.9	12.9	55.6	47.7				Red	

Note: When we reported in April 2023 we compared our performance to published data from Autumn term 2021/22. The table above has been updated with the latest national data for the Autumn term 2022/23.

Progress against the key areas

EHC timeliness

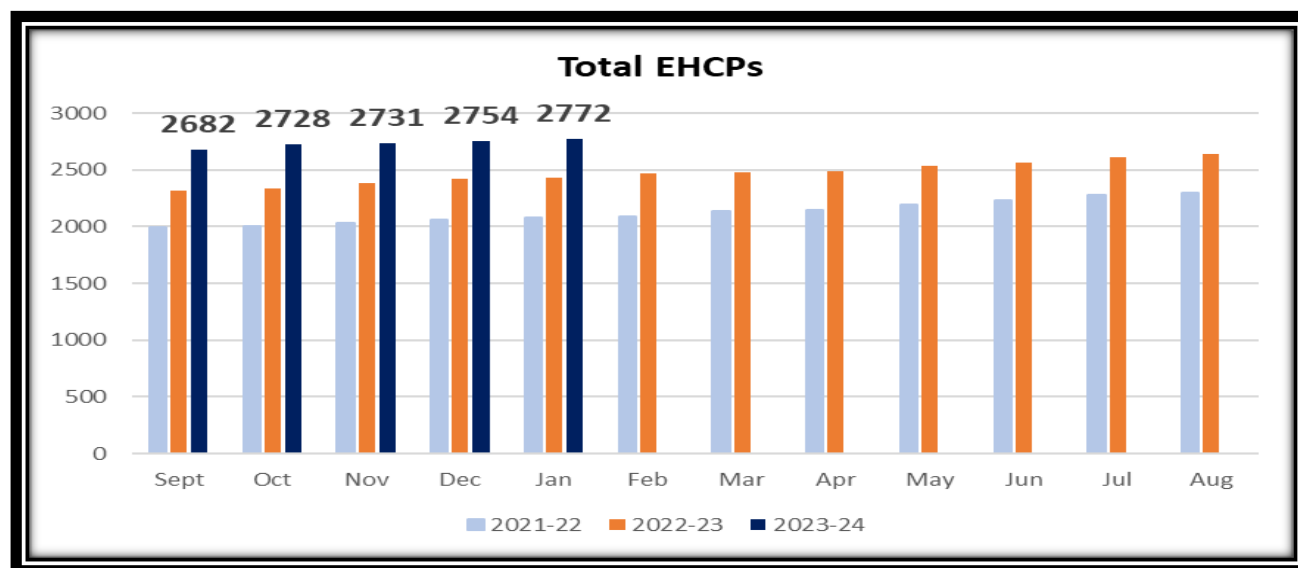
We are not yet meeting the 20-week target for the production of EHC plans and overall performance is below the average timescale for all English authorities.

As shown in the table below the population age 0-25 years has increased more in Newcastle than other local authorities in the North East region and England which has contributed to a higher number of EHCP requests.

Area	2011	2021	% Difference from 2011 to 2021
Newcastle	107374	111504	3.8
North Tyneside	58140	57185	-1.6
County Durham	156279	151395	-3.1
South Tyneside	44769	41392	-7.5
Northumberland	88146	81276	-7.8
Gateshead	60185	55151	-8.4
Sunderland	85686	77829	-9.2
England	17,037,078	17,153,473	0.7

Source: ONS Census

In January 2024, there were 2,772 children and young people in Newcastle with an EHCP representing a 14% increase over the number of plans in January 2023. The growth from January 2023 to January 2024 as well as the longer-term growth is above national, North East and Statistical Neighbour averages (Source SEN2 2022).



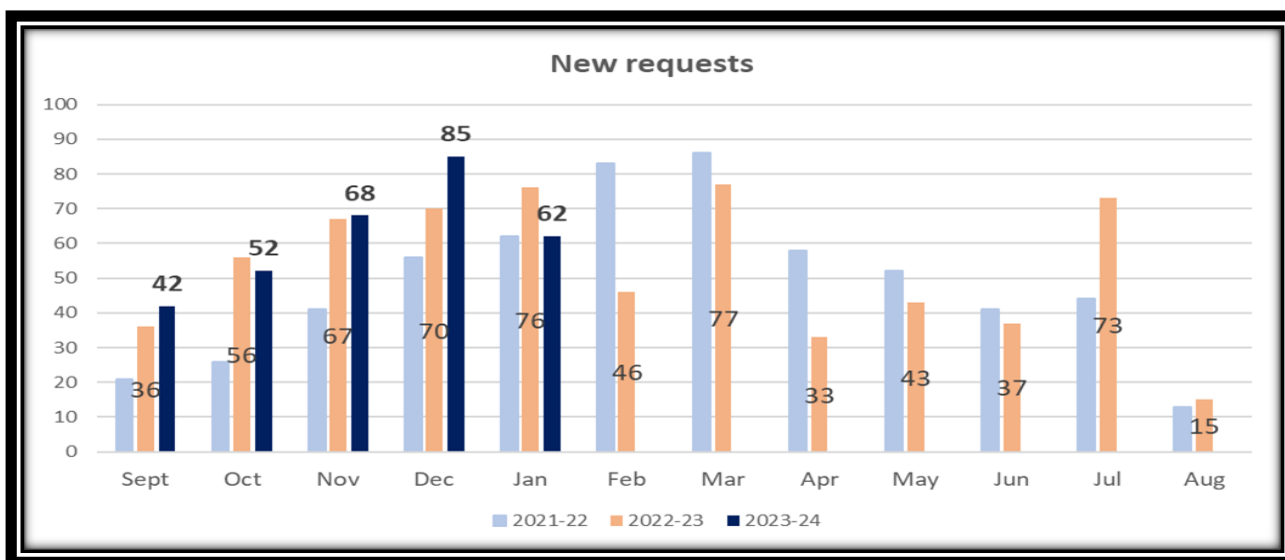
Source: SEN2 2022

As reported previously we received 658 requests for EHC assessment which represented a 47% increase above those received in 2021. This is much higher than the national level

of 23% over the same period (SEN2 2022) and this was the third highest in the North East local authorities. The increased demand placed significant pressure on an already challenged system.

We continue to receive a high number of EHC assessment requests, although there are early signs that trends are stabilising. From September 2023 to January 2024, we received over 300 requests for assessments, a similar number to the equivalent period in 2022-23 but still significantly more than the 200 received over the same period in 2021-22. In December 2023, we received 85 new requests. This is the highest number of assessment requests received in a single month since March 2022 and we are currently auditing these requests to better understand the dramatic increase.

Number of new assessment requests each month September 2021 - January 2024



The impact of the high number of requests received in 2022 has led to pressure on all parts of the education, health and care system leading to continued backlogs in production of advice and waiting times for EHC assessments and plans.

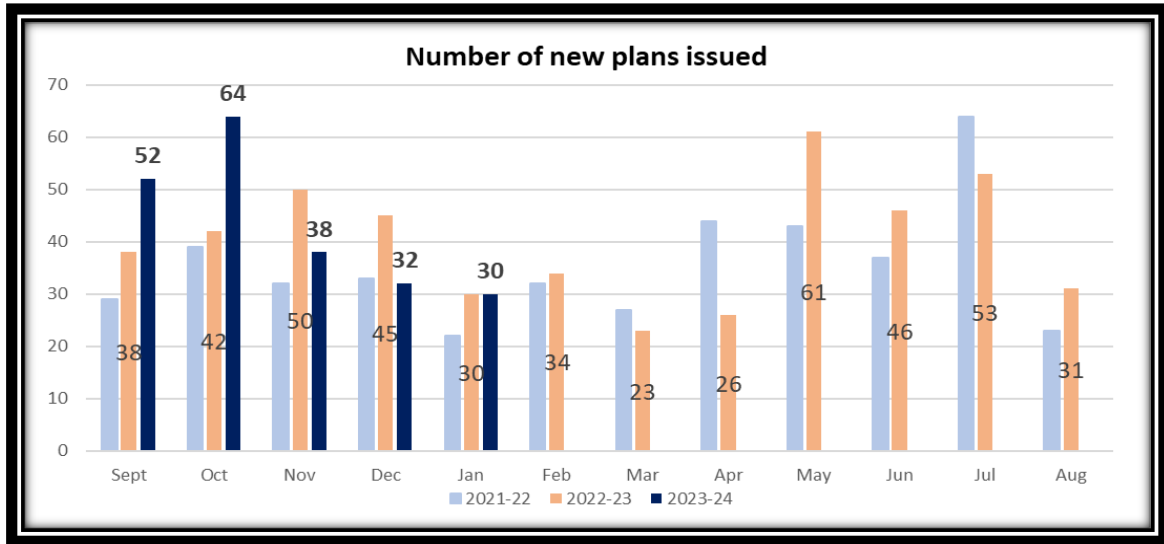
We have invested in the EHC statutory assessment process to help us recover from the high number of requests. Work to improve since our last APP meeting in April 2023 is set out below:

- We have secured additional finance to commission an independent Educational Psychology (EP) service, Skylakes, to address the backlog of EP assessments. We anticipated that this investment would enable us to clear the backlog by the autumn term (2023). The original agreement was to provide 100 completed EP assessments and advice reports to be completed within 6 weeks of the date of allocation. Unfortunately, due to staffing issues within the commissioned service we have only been able to allocate 77 cases to the service (up to 13 February 2024) and 54 have been returned. The EP provider has not consistently been able to return advices to us within the agreed 6 weeks. Up to the end of January 2024, only 71% of advices returned had been completed within the 6-week timescale. The manager of the EP service and our lead commissioner meets regularly with Skylakes to review performance and capacity. However, 94.74% of the advices meets the required quality standard. The quality control review identified the need for 2 amendments were required, both considered minor and did not impact on the timescale.

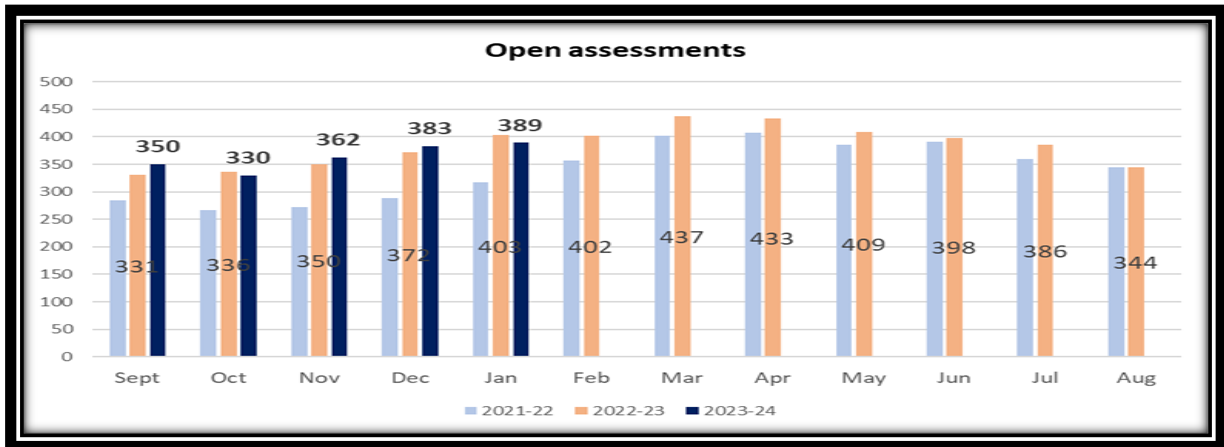
- We have developed a data model to help us understand when the backlog will be cleared. The model considers the number of current overdue EP advices together with an estimate of the number of new requests we predict we will receive in the next few months (based on the number we received last year) and how many of these will be overdue by the end of April. It then considers the combined number of advices completed by Skylakes and the EP service. It suggests the backlog could be between 20 and 40 by the end of April. We continue to monitor this closely as this position could be affected if the number of new monthly requests is higher than last year's figures or advices have not been completed in expected timescales.
- There are some early signs of improvement in the reduction of the average number of days taken to complete EP advice. Initial data taken from our SEND portal identifies a decrease from 114 days in September 2023 to 49 days in January 2024.
- A Family Support Worker has been appointed to work with the Designated Social Care Officer (DSCO) in the SEND service to support with completing timely high quality social care advices. This dedicated support is having a significant impact improving the quality of advices and reducing the backlog.
- We have recruited two SEND Placement Planning Officers to help plan, manage, and coordinate all educational placement consultations, chase up late consultation responses and support short-and longer-term capacity planning. We have seen a positive impact from these posts. Consultations are monitored and schools challenged to ensure that their responses are in line with the SEND code of practice timescales, which has helped with meeting the deadline for finalising age phase transfer EHC plans. Additionally, our systems are updated immediately delivering more accurate and current data which is shared across the service for use in current and longer-term planning and forecasting.
- We have invested significantly in our graduated response: guidance, specialist support, training and individual pupil support funding for schools and settings to support pupils in mainstream settings and therefore reduce the need for EHC assessment requests. Schools and settings can assess support via the [SEND Advice and Support Allocation Panel](#).
- We are planning to trial a multi-agency meeting as part of the EHC process at draft stage to see if it speeds up the EHC outcome process.

We rigorously review our data and performance at every stage of the EHC process to see if improvements can be made, as set out below:

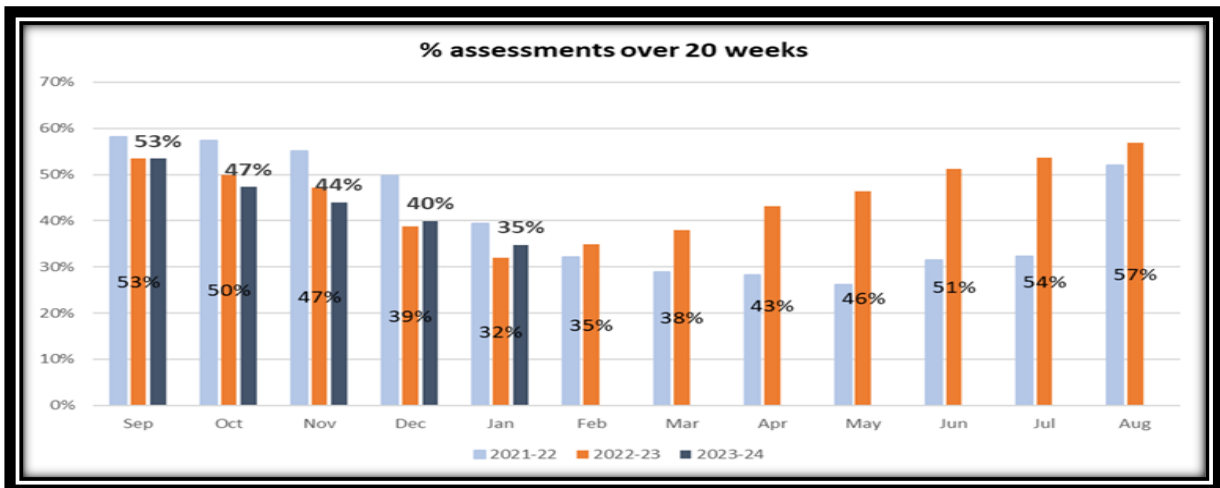
- From September 2023 to January 2024, 216 EHC plans were issued, a higher number than over the same period in 2022-23. In September and October, we issued more plans than the number of new requests received. We saw a slight downturn in this performance from November onwards as received more requests than the number of plans we have issued. This has added to the back log.



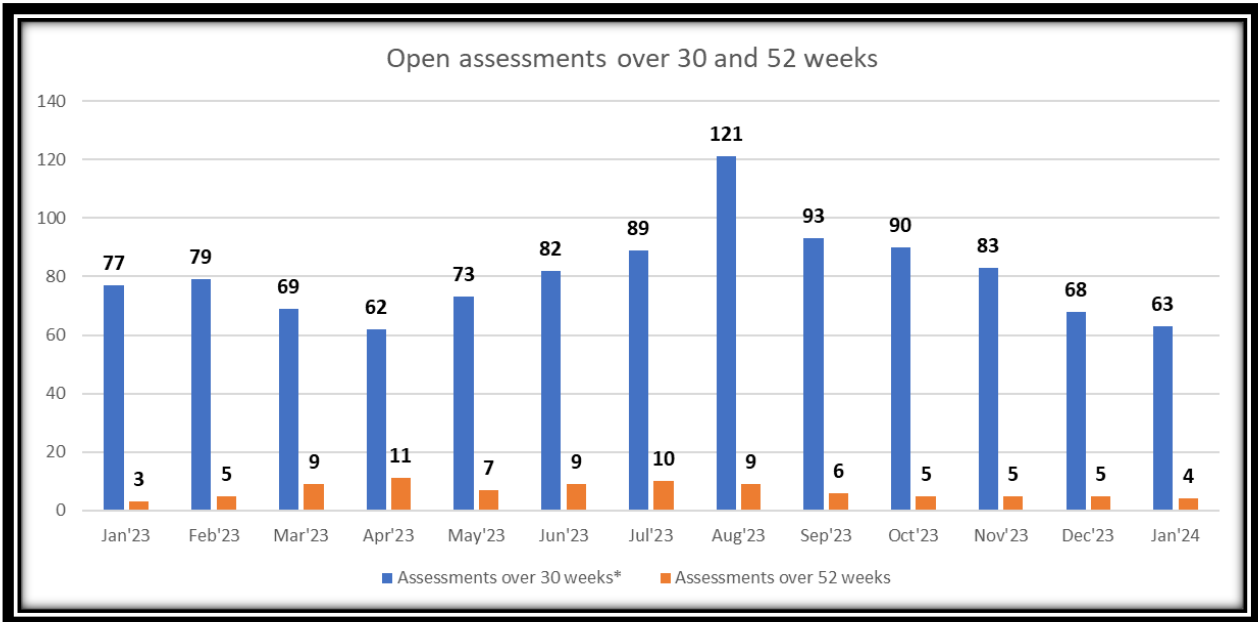
- We had a peak of 437 open assessments in March 2023. Numbers have been below this since but there has been a slow rise since the start of the 2023-24 academic year with 389 open assessments in January 2024.



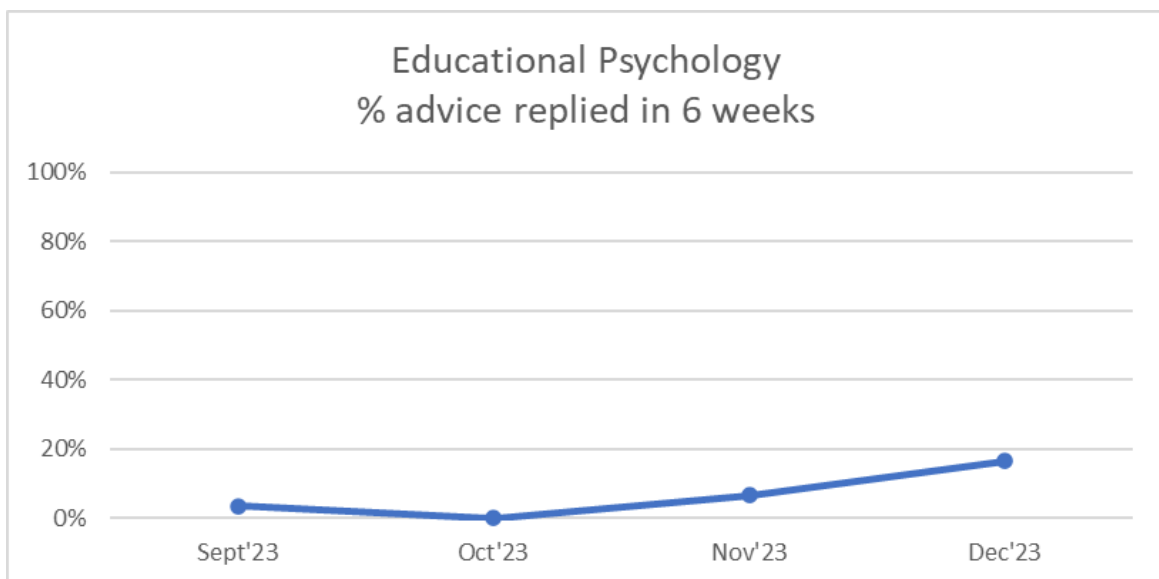
- Notable the number and proportion of these open assessments over the statutory 20 weeks are reducing. In September 2023, just over half (53%) of assessment were over 20 weeks. There has been consistent monthly improvement, reducing to 35% in January 2024.

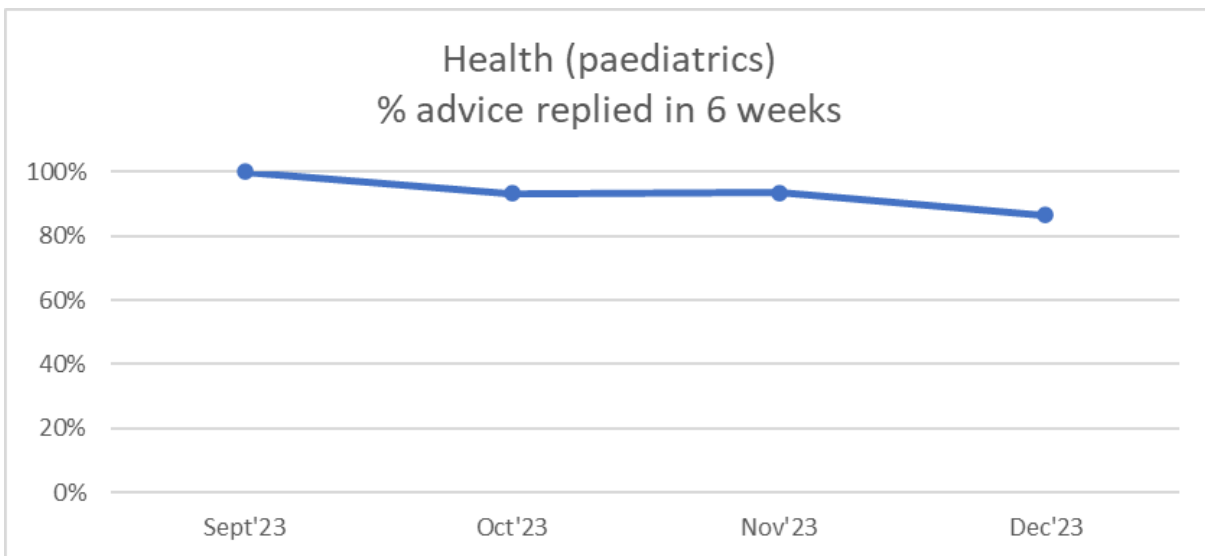


- The chart below illustrates that each month since August 2023, we are making progress on reducing the number of open assessments that are over 30 weeks, Almost 60% of those over 30 weeks in January 2024 were at the draft plan stage.
- Our investigations into this suggest that this is due to the lack of specialist placements and time being spent with the caseworkers and the families to negotiate packages of support. This is to be more fully audited.



- At the end of January 2024, the average number of weeks taken to issue an EHCP was 37 weeks. This is an improvement from 41 weeks in September 2023. This includes
 - 3 weeks – between the referral date and the start of the advice gathering stage
 - 20 weeks - for the advice gathering stage
 - 6 weeks - between end of advice gathering stage and draft plan date
 - 8 weeks – between draft plan date and EHCP issue date.
- All services are impacted by the high level of requests and the timeliness of advices is shown below:





- As our rates of converting EHC assessments into plans are significantly higher than regional and national averages, we audited a sample of plans to test out the decision-making process with EHCP panel members and the DfE (July 2023). The audit found that in nine out of ten cases the decision to issue a plan was the correct decision. For the remaining case (for a post-16 student), there was insufficient evidence to support the decision to issue an EHC plan. At the time we had two EHCP panels, one for pre-16 years and one for post-16, this reaffirmed our decision to support consistent and robust decision making by establishing one EHCP panel.
- The number of plans that we 'cease' is below other areas and has been an area of focus for us. In 2023 calendar year, we ceased 134 EHC plans.

Reason plan ceased	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total 2023
Adult Education - Lifeskills				5	5
EHCP not needed-Remain in Education				1	1

Employed <15 hours per week	1	5		4	10
Higher Education			3	2	5
Met Without Statement (SEN2)	2			6	8
Not in Education -Positive activity			3	3	6
Not in Education-Support by Social Care		4	1	15	20
Not in Education Support by Health		1		4	5
Not in Education - NEET	14	33	5	21	73
Traineeship - EHCP not required			1		1
Grand Total	17	43	13	61	134

Support whilst waiting

For those waiting for EHCPs we have ensured support or funding is provided via [SEND Advice and Support Allocation Panel](#), regardless of whether a plan has been finalised. Where appropriate, Individual Pupil Support (IPS) funding is provided to support children who are waiting for their EHCP to be finalised, and funding is made available from 20-weeks, regardless of whether a plan has been finalised.

We have audited the number of EHC assessment requests from January to July 2023 and compared back to how many children and young people had received support from SEND services over the previous 12 months. Over this period, we received 244 EHC assessment requests and of these 84% had received support from SEND Services. For the remaining 16% (26 cases) which were spread over a number of schools/settings, who felt that they did not require additional funding to meet needs.

Focus on practice - Impact: EHC process feedback from parents/carers

Each term we select a sample of parents/carers who have recently been going through the EHC process and ask whether they felt supported and were happy with the outcome. Whilst a number of parents /carers felt we could improve how we communicate about the SEND process and keep in touch with them, there are examples of parents/carers who had a positive experience: Some quotes are set out below

Did you feel supported during this time? Who was there supporting you?

- The Family Support Worker and the Caseworker have all been really supportive during the process. There was always someone there to turn to
- I was supported by the school.
- School always ensured that even without the plan she was being supported as if she had one
- Nursery very good at supporting, explaining the process and were on hand to help.
- Nursery was excellent in communicating, providing updates and reassurances.

Are you happy with the process, the plan and the outcome/placement?

- I am happy that he has his EHCP, but the process is not great, and timescales and communication are an issue which I am aware of.

- I am happy with the placement as I picked it myself.
- I am happy with all of these things.
- Happy with the outcome overall.
- Parents are happy with the school.

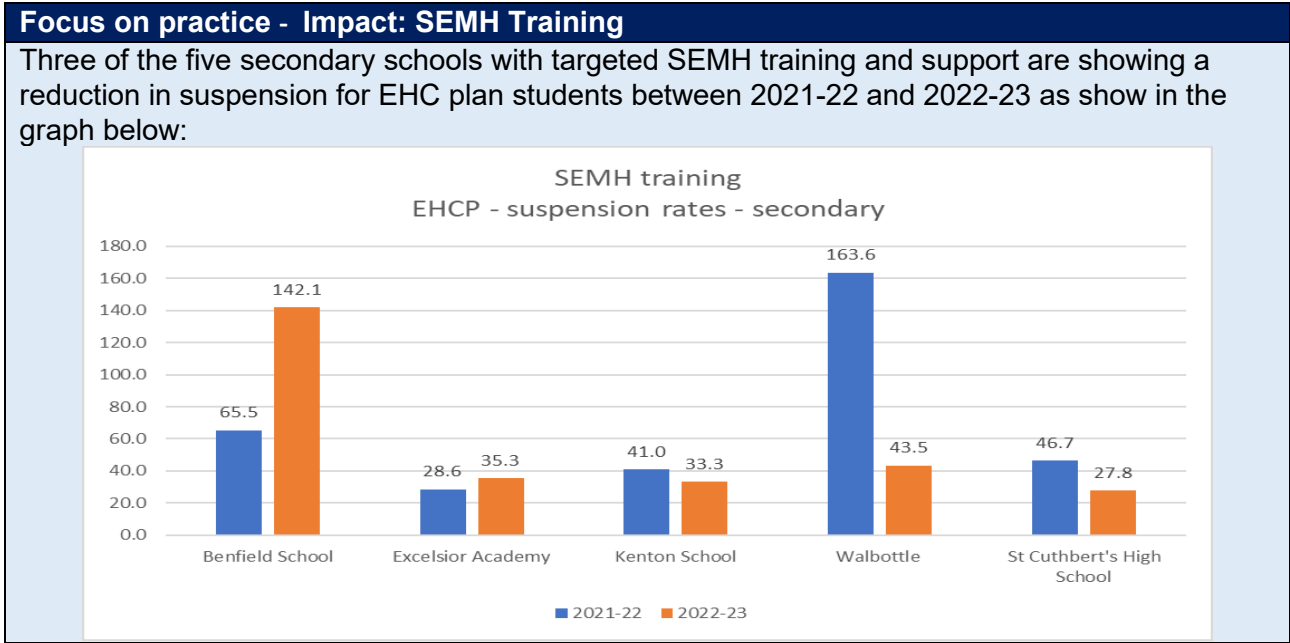
Exclusions and Suspensions

In line with the current regional and national trends, Newcastle has seen a significant rise in suspensions and exclusions over the year to 2021/22, which continued into the autumn term 2022/23. We have many examples of where our work has reduced the need for exclusions and suspensions. We are in line with, or below the average for the North East Region and there are some cohorts where we are below the last reported national levels as set out below:

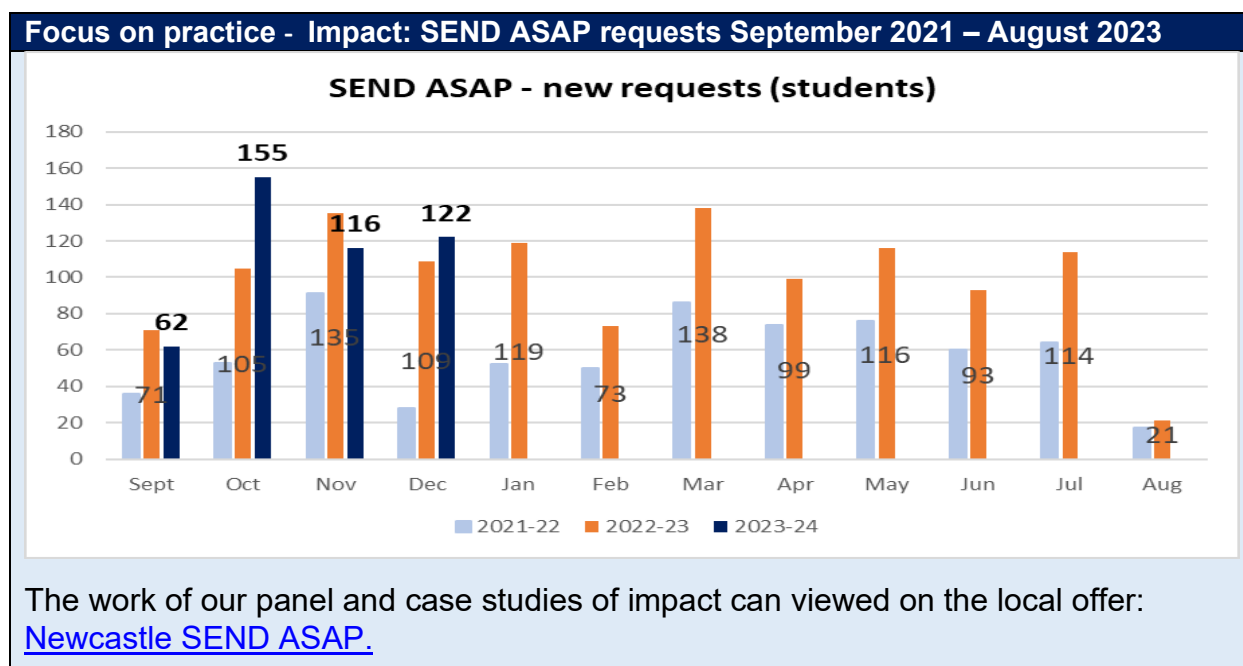
- Permanent exclusions for children with SEND in primary schools has reduced between 2020/21 and 2021/2022 and is below national levels.
- In secondary schools the level of permanent exclusions for those with EHCPs in 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 is below the national average.
- In primary school suspensions for those with SEND is reducing and is below the national levels.

Our approach to reducing the numbers of permanent exclusions and suspensions is to continue to build a robust multi-agency support system where schools can access training, specialist support and funding. Since our APP review meeting in April 2023, we have expanded this offer of support to schools/settings:

- The ‘universally available guidance’ has been relaunched and ‘descriptors of need’ are being used across schools and settings and this is resulting in more robust SEN support plans.
- Bespoke SEMH training and Autism Education Trust training is highly valued by schools and settings and is starting to make an impact to suspension and exclusion rates in the schools that have embraced the training.



- In September 2023 a new SEMH outreach service for the primary sector started to take referrals with very positive feedback from head teachers.
- Schools are making good use of the Locality Improvement Panels (LIP) and Teams around the school (TAS) support. Every secondary school now has a multi-agency team around the school (TAS), which includes representatives from SEND, Health, Attendance, Inclusion and Early Help. TAS and LIP provide targeted support around common themes and bespoke support for individual students.
- Demand for support from the SEND Advice, Support Allocation Panel (ASAP) continues to increase:



- There has also been a significant rise in demand for education psychology training and support for whole school systems, rather than requests based around individuals, a more effective use of limited resources.
- Capital funds have been deployed to support schools to create more accessible spaces for pupils with SEND.

Despite this investment and systemic approach, we are concerned that too many children and young people with SEND in Newcastle are excluded or suspended from school. All of Newcastle's secondary schools are now academies and six of the largest schools are rated as 'requires improvement' by Ofsted and are being supported by the DfE. Construction delays at two of our secondaries has put immense pressure on the remaining secondary sector resulting in oversized year groups in Years 8 and 9. These are the years with the most disrupted education and where most of the suspensions occur.

Of the seven secondary schools serving the population with the highest levels of disadvantage and highest levels of SEMH need, five are rated as 'requires improvement'. Three of these have had more than one headteacher in the past year. This makes it difficult to secure impact from school support / advice. Where there is stability in schools, and they embrace the training and support available there is evidence of improvement, and we have many examples of good practice across schools and settings. Whilst the overall rates of suspension and exclusion for those with SEND are above national

average, it is encouraging that our levels of exclusions and suspensions remain below or equal to the average levels of other authorities in the North East Region.

Risk register and mitigation plans reviewed February 2024.

Date	Risk	Severity/Impact	Mitigation	Risk assessment following mitigation
04/02/2022	That schools and settings do not engage with initiatives such, the SEN support plan, and descriptors of need and the graduated response.	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong head teacher partnerships. • Effective SENCO networks. • Support of SEND Sub-Group. • Regular communications with schools. • Evidence suggests that schools/settings are engaging with Local Authority initiatives. 	Low
04/02/2022	Lack of effective parent/carer forum. This could result in limited engagement of CYP and PC will mean we are unable to identify	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support from Contact and support of worker from Skills for People has helped create an effective PCF with representatives from across all areas of SEND. Membership is growing. • Work with PCF to co-produce 'how we work and act' • PCF producing newsletters. • PCF involved in all areas of SEND work. • PCF/SEND managers development day February 2024. 	Low
04/02/2022	Change of SEND leadership in Local Authority and ICB.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong Governance arrangements and delivery plans are in place to ensure continuity and continued focus on driving the SEND agenda forward. • Impact of the ICB restructure on SEND services to be considered once published. 	Medium
04/02/2022	Resources diverted and school closures due to further lockdown and COVID.	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong head teacher partnerships. • Effective SENCO networks. • Support of SEND Sub-Group. • Regular communications with schools/social care/ health providers. 	Low as all national restrictions lifted.
04/02/2022	Unable to secure finance to maintain robust graduated response and deliver improvements (due to continuous growth in statutory assessments). Pressure on the High needs budget.	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure organisational committees and SEND and Inclusion Board are regularly briefed on case for change. • Advise on changes in need and any anticipated investment gap at the earliest opportunity. • Impower review. 	High
04/02/2022	Capacity within teams to deliver change. This is either due to	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEND service review and investment in additional capacity and training. 	Medium

	growth in statutory pressure or reduction in capacity due to budget reductions.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business cases approved for additional capacity e.g., DSCO an additional Senior Practitioner and 3 caseworkers to carry out annual reviews. Placement Planning Officers and Family Support Worker. Investment in private EPC company to provide capacity. 	
04/02/2022	Quality of EHCPs do not improve resulting in increased complaints and tribunals.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular audits to check quality of plans and advice and plans. Continued rolling programme of training to advice givers and plan writers. SEND Legal Training February 2024. 	Low
04/02/2022	EHCP numbers continue to increase at a higher rate than other areas and as a result we are unable to comply with the national timescales.	High	<p>Rising EHC numbers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investment to strengthen graduated response to reduce the need for EHC requests. Caseload review. Strong Performance focus. <p>Steps to improve timeliness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monthly PI indicators – Timescales are reviewed, and deep dive into reasons why plans are late or expected to be late. SEND Managers performance clinic each month. Leaner and smoother internal process including speed up of allocation of cases. Improved systems to increase the number of advices that are received on time. Employed 3 additional caseworkers – whose focus on annual reviews has led to us to be able to free up some staff capacity to undertake assessments. Continued input from NHS Exec lead who receive monthly performance statistics. Service Improvement officers employed to support the EHC process Placement planning officers to lead and speed up consultation process. Investment in private EP company to speed up EP advice. Careers advice function for those with EHC plans transferred to careers team will free up more time for statutory assessments. Trialling a multi-agency meeting as part of the EHC process at draft stage to see if it improvement timeliness. 	Medium

Systems in place for collecting and analysing the impact of actions.

In Newcastle we have developed a range of tools to support our understanding of our children and young people with SEND. This includes the SEND outcomes framework /data dashboard across education, health and social care which assists with medium and long-term monitoring and planning.

Data for children accessing alternative provision is also in development alongside the alternative provision framework. This will provide us with greater oversight. Continued analysis of this data will contribute to the quality assurance of alternative provision to ensure children and young people improve their outcomes.

Our system for collecting and analysing the impact of actions is set out below:

Getting it right together, Quality Assurance Framework: Sets out how we audit SEND advices and EHCs, learn from data, compliments, complaints and how we listen and act on feedback received from families.

SEND Managers Monthly Performance Clinic: We have established and continue to develop a monthly SEND outcomes framework /data dashboard. This informs our understanding of SEND service performance, enables identification of gaps in our understanding and provides in-depth analysis of key areas.

SEND Joint Intelligence and Commissioning workstream: Newcastle's local area SEND governance arrangements have been reviewed and it has been agreed that the SEND outcomes framework /data dashboard is owned by the SEND and Inclusion Executive Board with operational responsibility held by the SEND intelligence and commissioning workstream, which meets bi-monthly. Going forwards this workstream will consider the framework and report 'exceptional' issues up to the SEND and Inclusion Executive Board.

SEND outcomes framework /data dashboard: This provides us with qualitative and quantitative data to assess how children and young people are progressing against the agreed outcomes. It will include the 'health-related behaviour questionnaire' results which will capture the views of secondary aged students with SEND. A task and finish group was established to design the questions that we will ask at all stages of the EHCP and SEN support process and capture the responses from children and young people. We collect this information at annual reviews. In addition, the SEND outcomes will be included within relevant education, health and care commissioned service specifications with appropriate mechanisms for measuring progress.

Evidence that key partners, including children and young people, families and schools play an active role in improving services.

We have a systemic focus on '[Getting it Right Together](#)' (engagement, participation, and co-production) which has driven our improvement journey and allows us to focus on what is important to children, young people, and families. Examples of this include:

- Co-produced the [SEND Strategy](#) for 2023-2028. The views of our families are central to everything we do. We have jointly defined the outcomes we want to achieve for all our children and young people, and these form the basis of our ambitious strategy.
- As part of the work to review our local area SEND Strategy, we have co-produced four principles showing how we work and act with each other across Newcastle.



- Our co-produced SEND outcomes framework is based on the five overarching aspirational outcomes for all children and young people, providing a holistic view of where they are in their lives. This is held at the Joint Intelligence and Commissioning workstream, and it is used to inform the wider partnership. At annual reviews children are asked how the progress they are making towards the strategic outcomes.
- Co-produced [Getting it Right Together QA Framework](#) resulting in improving quality of work.
- Co-produced [SEND Local Offer](#) website and a new EHC template.
- Co-produced Early Years SEND Hub (The Tree House) in partnership with NuTH. Parent/Carers designed service offer. [Tree House Opening Day](#).
- Joint commissioning of a dedicated SEND Voice Lead and Voice trainees: [SEND Voice Team | Newcastle Support Directory](#).
- Children and young people with SEND are involved in recruitment of SEND officers.
- Development of SEND Voice Network in schools and settings.
- Parent Carer newsletters.

Local accountability and governance structure

Our [SEND Strategy](#) for 2023-2028 shows our clear commitment to city wide inclusion in Newcastle led strategically by the SEND and Inclusion Executive Board, and the Promise Board. In the strategy we have agreed two priorities:

1. Making sure children and young people get the right support at the right time. This means that children and young people will have an equitable approach to having their needs identified and met as early as possible. We are committed to creating inclusive and accessible environments that support our children and young people at every stage and that this approach is well understood by families and professionals.
2. Making sure we are getting it right together. This means that we are committed to having a strong partnership where families are placed at the heart of everything we do and together we develop high quality, inclusive and accessible services.

We are continuing to make systematic progress in Newcastle and are building a solid understanding of relational and person-centred approach built on a core understanding of listening to our families and demonstrating our commitment to ensure that we work to get it right together.

The **SEND and Inclusion Executive Board** is our local area partnership and is jointly chaired by the local authority and the ICB. Members include the parent/carers forum, and organisations across education, health and social care. The Board has agreed its ambition for children and young people with SEND as set out below:

'Our ambition for all children and young people with SEND is that they get the right support at the right time so that they go on to live their best lives.'

The work of the SEND and Inclusion Executive Board is overseen by the Children's Partnership, which in turn is accountable to the Health and Wellbeing Board.

The **Newcastle Promise Board** is a citywide partnership of Headteachers that have come together to shape our approach to sector-led improvement. The promise for Newcastle Children and Young People:

'A city where we all share responsibility for providing the best educational opportunities for all our children and young people.'

[The Newcastle Promise Board - SEND sub group](#) SEND sub group reports to the Promise Board and the Chair is a Member of the SEND and Inclusion Executive Board and the Promise Board. One aim of the group is to promote the principles of inclusion within all Newcastle schools.

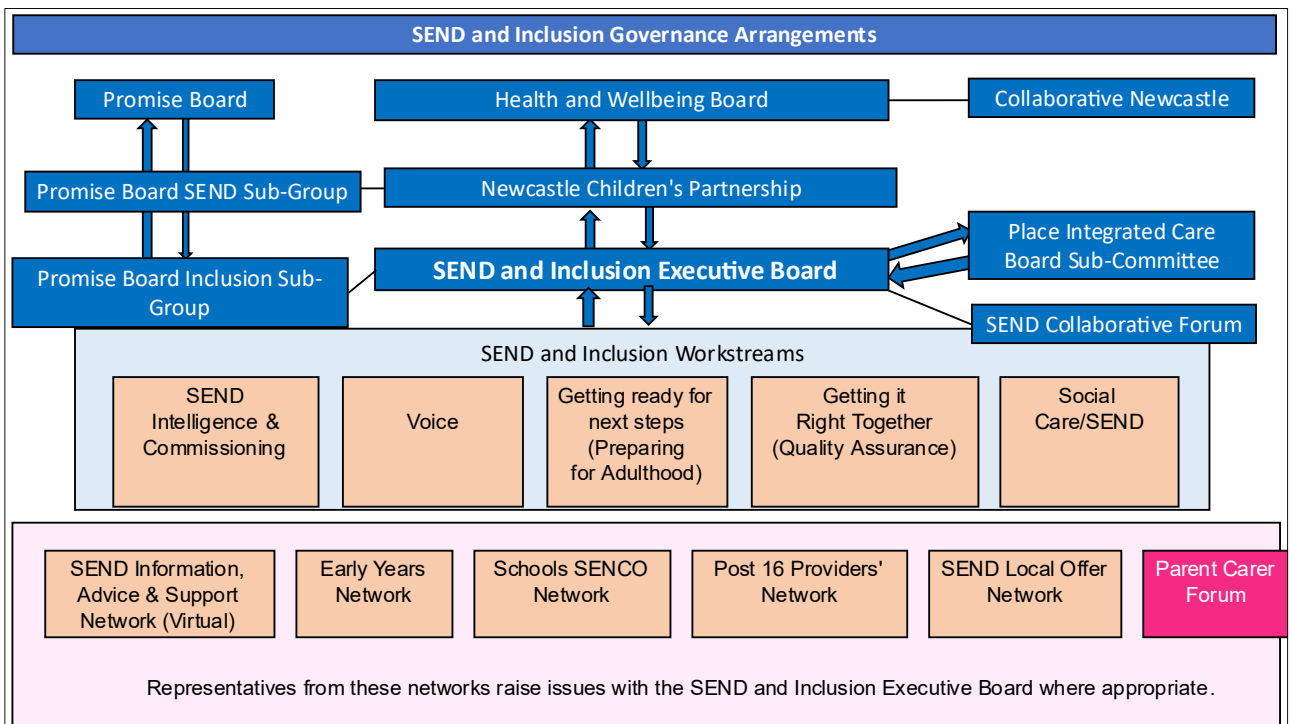
The **SEND Inclusion Group** sits underneath the Promise Board [Newcastle Promise Board - Inclusion sub group | Services to Schools](#). The inclusion group will champion a vision for inclusive education in Newcastle within the wider context of the Local Authority's strategic priorities by:

- Supporting and challenging each other so no school or child is left behind.
- Promoting successes, innovation and evidenced practice to benefit all schools.
- Promote the principles of inclusion within all Newcastle schools.

- Work together with colleagues in health and social care to empower schools to build networks and work together to meet the needs of children and their communities.
- Building capacity in the system for school improvement, embracing and generating opportunities for school-to-school support.
- Promote sector-led collaboration between all schools in Newcastle for the benefit of the children and young people of the city.
- Champion a vision for inclusive education in Newcastle by promoting the use of Newcastle's Inclusion Quality Framework (IQF).
- Membership includes representatives from all school groups and representatives from education, health and social care.

The Chair of the SEND inclusion-group is also a Member of the SEND and Inclusion Executive Board and the Promise Board.

Governance arrangements in Newcastle and how SEND and Inclusion fits in is shown below:



Training, support and impact

A summary of training provided since April 2023 is set out below:

DfE SEND Adviser: Review of EHC panel decision making. Confirmed that decision making was robust.

NDTI: Workshops commissioned to support 'Getting it Right Together' strategy January/March 2024. Developed an action plan.

SEND Legal Training: February 2024. Over 140 SEND professionals from across education health and social care attended the training. People that attended the session felt they had a better understanding of SEND law. Separate sessions for Headteachers scheduled in summer term 2024.

Impower review: To support the partnership to reflect on strengths and identify opportunities to further improve outcomes for children and young people with special education needs and disabilities.

Appendix 1: Changes to EPS Service Delivery to Respond to Statutory Demands

2021 – 22 Academic Year:

- Prioritised statutory work mid-year, resulting in the need to refund schools for undelivered traded work.

2022 – 23 Academic Year:

- Prioritised statutory work mid-year, resulting in the need to refund schools for undelivered traded work.
- Explored the option of agency EPs. Only able to make arrangements with one agency EP who completed 3 advices (each of which needed amending). Council commissioning processes including around IR35 proved to be an issue in contracting further agency workers.
- Employed a casual contact EP to undertake statutory assessment. She became unwell and was unable to take on any work
- EPS review of advice template led to creation of new template which has enabled EPs to write shorter advices which are still compliant with the CoP and professional standards.
- Contract agreed with Skylakes to undertake 23 statutory assessments, as a pilot study before a potential larger contract. 22 completed within the summer term.

2023 – 24 Academic year:

- Decision taken to not provide a traded service to schools to enable statutory work to be prioritised.
- Continued work within the EPS to encourage efficient advice writing.
- Contract agreed with Skylakes to undertake 120 statutory EP advices. The original plan was for all these advices to be with Skylakes before the end of December 23 which meant all should have been completed by mid-February 24. However, for reasons related to Skylake's limited capacity this timescale has slipped

considerably and the current plan means that the last 14 advices will not be sent to Skylakes until the beginning to middle of March with the aim of a final completion date for this work at the end of April. Please see table below which shows how this slippage has occurred over the past 6 months.

- In addition to the difficulties that Skylakes have had with overall capacity to take on advices, they have not consistently been able to return advices to us within the agreed 6 weeks.
- The limited capacity combined with delays in returning advices means that as of 13.2.24 only 77 advices have been sent to Skylakes and only 54 have been returned.
- Planned pilot focused on introducing a meeting into the EHCP process.

	Original timetable	Timetable agreed on 13.11.23	Timetable agreed on 5.12.25	Timetable agreed on 15.1.24	Timetable agreed on 5.2.24
Number to be taken in September	11	7 (actual)	7 (actual)	7 (actual)	7 (actual)
Number to be taken in October	25	10 (actual)	10 (actual)	10 (actual)	10 (actual)
Number to be taken in November	35	25	15 (actual)	15 (actual)	15 (actual)
Number to be taken in December	29	40	18	18 (actual)	18 (actual)
Number to be taken in January		18	35	25	14 (actual)
Number to be taken in February			15	25	22 (13 sent up to 13.2.24)
Number to be taken in March					14

Appendix 2: Exclusions and suspensions data

Summary of Newcastle's permanent exclusion data compared to the latest national data and local data for 2021-22 and 2022-23:

Permanent exclusions

Overall, permanent exclusion rates for Newcastle pupils with SEND (EHCP and SEN Support combined) reduced from 0.39% in 2018-19 to 0.14% in 2020-21, however as with the regional and national averages, the rate increased to 0.34% in 2021-22. See below for published annual trends for EHCP and SEN Support pupils.

The latest published data for the Autumn term 2022-23, suggests permanent exclusions were just **below national levels** (0.10% compared with 0.11%) for pupils with SEND.

At this point, Newcastle exclusion rates were,

- **Below national levels** for EHCP pupils in primary and secondary schools
- **Below national levels** for SEN Support students in primary schools.
- **Above national levels** for SEN Support in secondary schools. See performance scorecard.

Figure 1: Newcastle permanent exclusion rates for pupils with EHCPs and SEN Support in Primary schools compared to the North East and England average 2018-19 to 2021-22

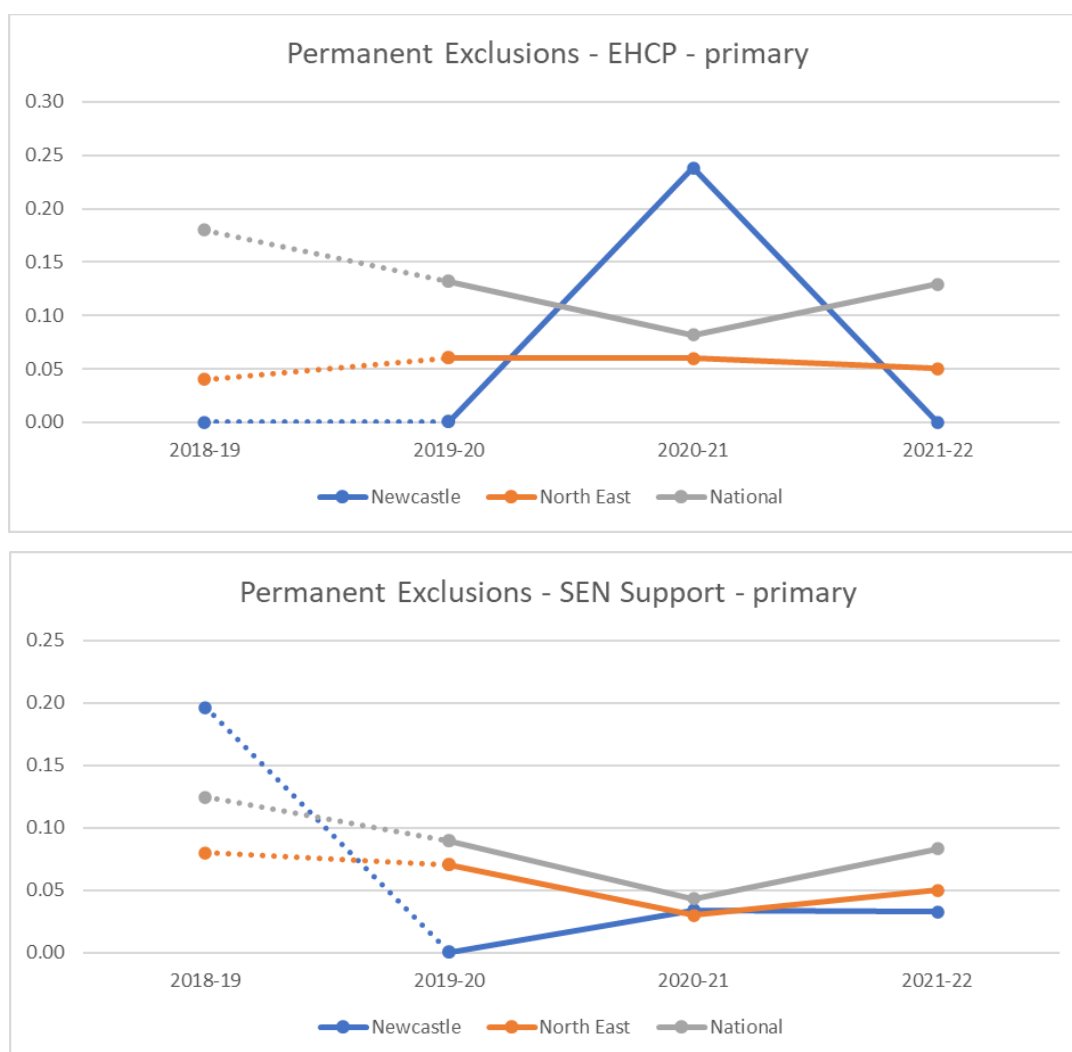
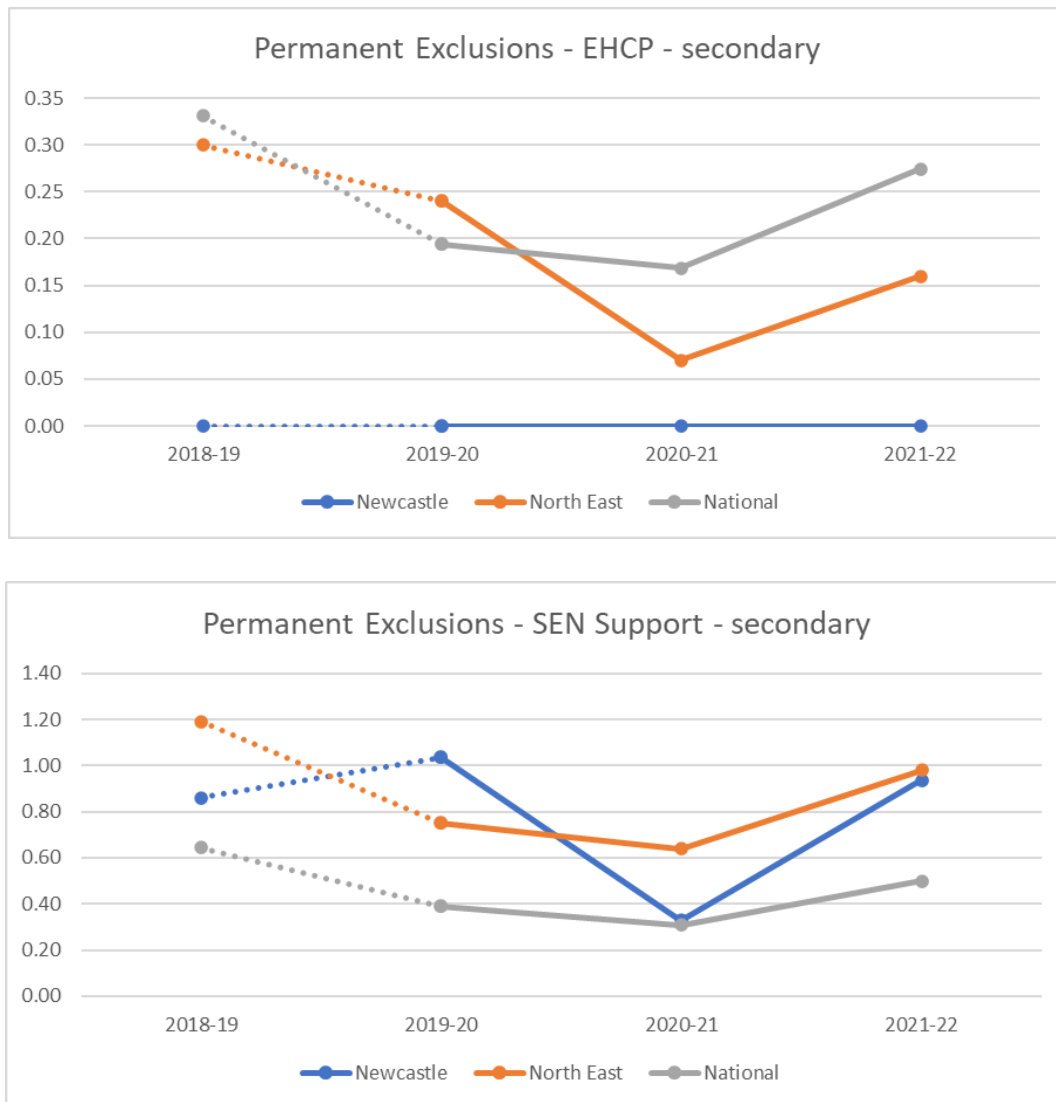


Figure 2: Newcastle permanent exclusion rates for pupils with EHCP and SEN Support in Secondary schools compared to the North East and England average 2018-19 to 2021-22



Suspensions

Overall suspension rates for Newcastle pupils with SEND (EHCP and SEN Support combined) were 21.4% in 2021-22, above the national average (18.4%) but below the regional average (23.1%). However, suspensions rates were below national and North East averages in primary schools for both EHCP and SEN Support pupils.

The latest published data for the Autumn term 2022-23, shows suspension rates were **above national levels** (9.5% compared with 8.1%) and below the regional average (10.2%) for pupils with SEND.

At this point, Newcastle suspension rates were,

- **Below national levels** for EHCP and SEN Support pupils in primary schools
- **Above national levels** for EHCP and SEN Support pupils in secondary schools.

See performance scorecard.

Figure 3: Newcastle suspension rates for primary aged pupils with EHCP compared to the North East and England average 2018-19 to 2021-22

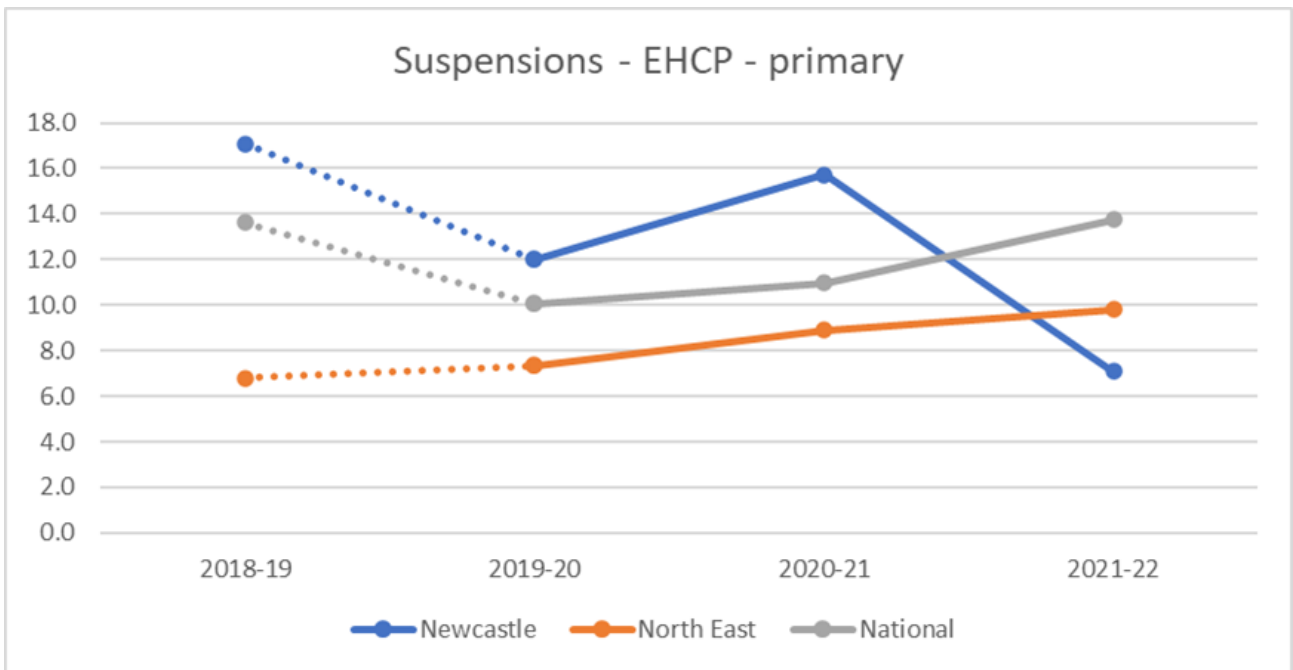
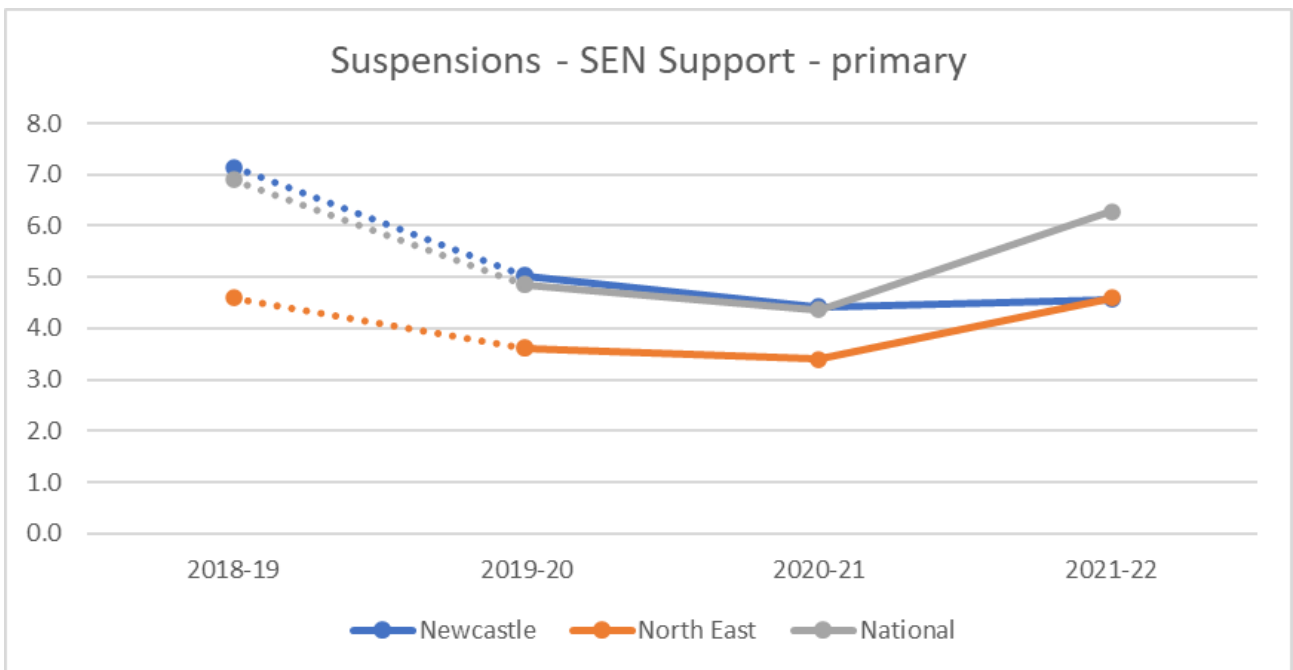


Figure 4: Newcastle suspension rates for primary aged pupils with SEN Support compared to the North East and England average 2018-19 to 2021-22



For secondary aged pupils, suspension rates are above the national levels for EHCP and SEN Support, however both are lower than the North East averages.

Figure 5: Newcastle suspension rates for secondary aged pupils with EHCPs compared to the North East and England average 2018-19 to 2021-22

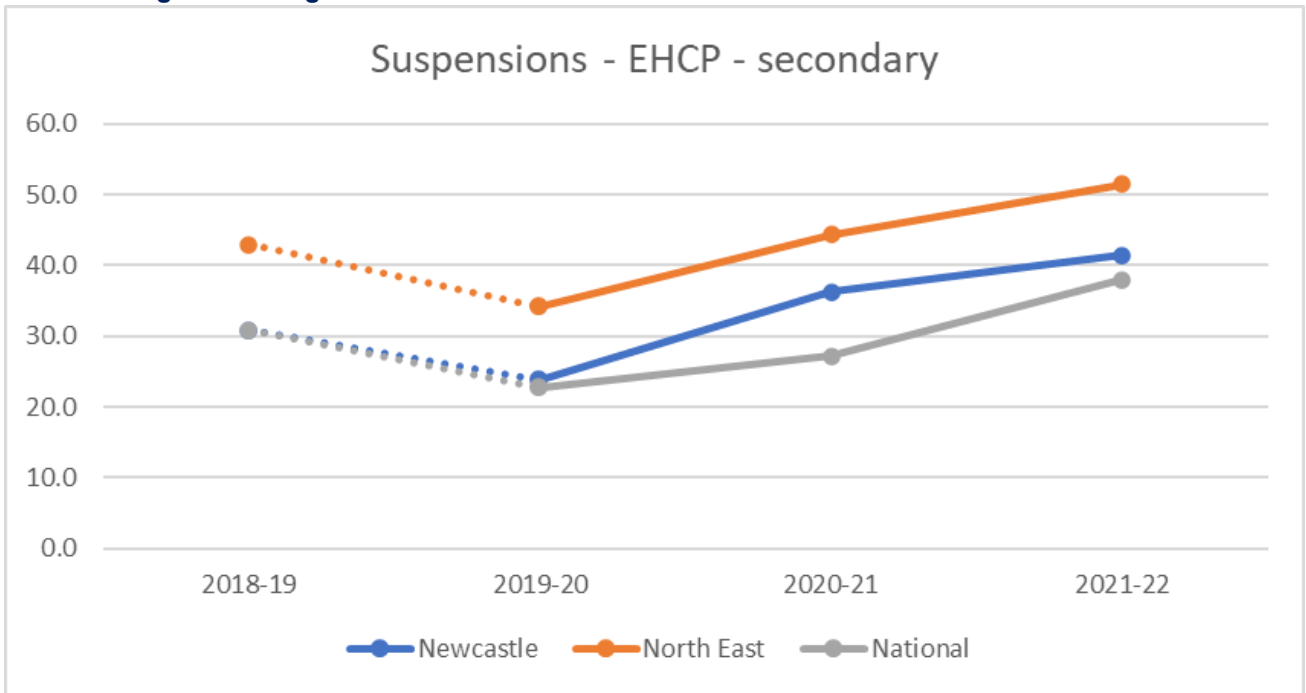


Figure 6: Newcastle suspension rates for secondary aged pupils with SEN Support compared to the North East and England average 2018-19 to 2021-22

