

Newcastle Local Area Getting It Right Together SEND Quality Assurance Framework Annual Report 2022-23



October 2023

Page 1 of 16

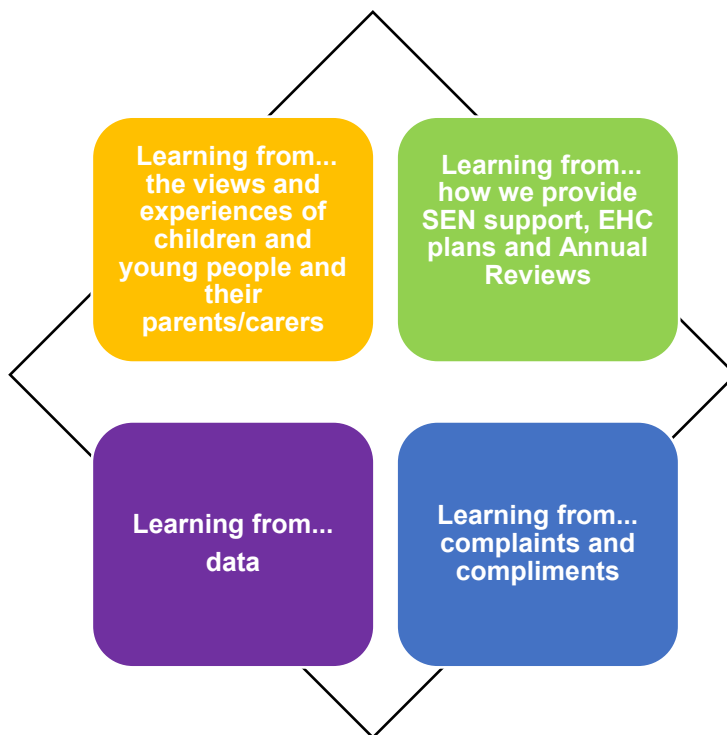
Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Learning from the views and experiences of children and young people and their parents and carers.....	3
3. Learning from looking at data	6
4. Learning from looking at SEN support	6
5. Learning from looking at Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans and annual reviews.....	9
6. Learning from complaints and compliments.....	11
Appendix 1:	13
Appendix 2: Results for EHC audits using Invision July 2023	15
Appendix 3: Next steps.....	16

1. Introduction

This is our second annual report showing the work that has been carried out in 2022/2023 against the intentions set out in our [Getting it Right Together Quality Assurance Framework](#), as shown in Figure 1:

Figure 1: An overview of the Getting it Right Together Framework



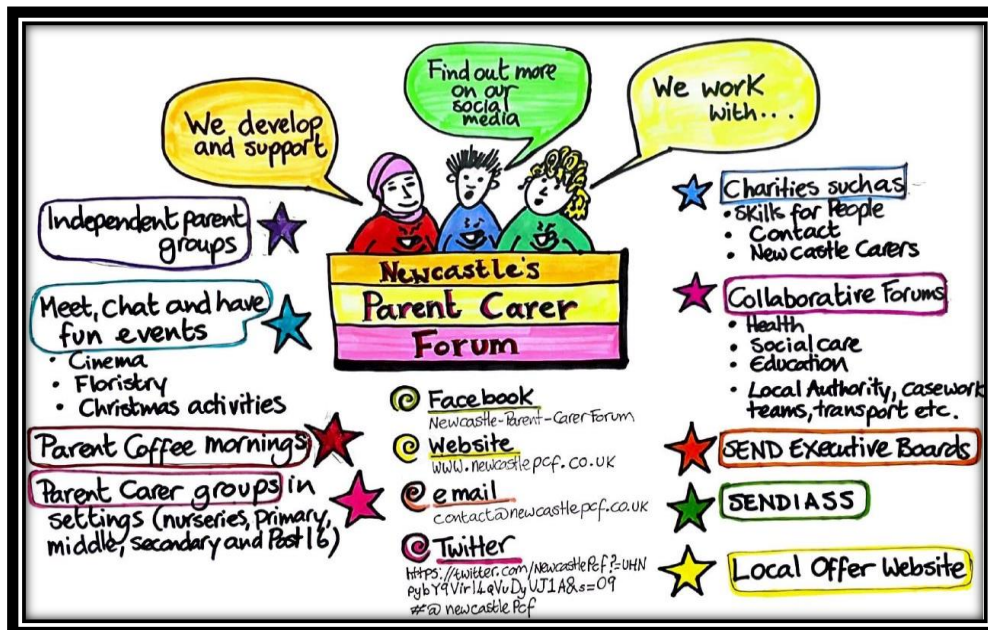
2. Learning from the views and experiences of children and young people and their parents and carers

What we've done:

Parents/Carers

We are committed to working in partnership with parents and carers to improve outcomes and experiences of our children and young people with SEND. We are very grateful to the parents/carers who contribute their time and share their experiences with us. The contribution from families is critical to how we improve what we do, and how we do it.

We have commissioned support from Contact to help improve how we work together with our parent/carer forum, and we have also commissioned support from Skills for People to help build capacity in our parent/carer forum. The graphic below shows how we work together with the parent/carer forum:



The relationships across the system are growing stronger. We have worked hard to improve communications and develop trust. In July 2023, we held a workshop with SEND officers and the parent/carer forum to agree the core principles of how we act and work together. The agreed principles are set out in the graphic below:



Membership of the parent/carer forum is growing, and we have with clear communication routes with evidence of appropriate support and challenge. Our parent/carer forum are involved in, or aware of everything that we are doing, and parents/carers have continued to be part of the SEND Workstreams. Together, we have:

- Co-produced the new [SEND Strategy](#).
- Worked on new easy read letters to go out as part of the Education, Health and Care (EHC) assessment and planning process.

- Addressed comments made on the annual review toolkit: [DRAFT CONSULTATION: EHC Annual Review Toolkit](#).
- Updated the 'graduated response' document and made it easier for parents/carers to understand: [The Graduated Response Explained](#).
- A parent/carer and a SEND Caseworker have produced a film to promote the SEND portal and demonstrate to parents/carers how to use it: www.youtube.com
- Development of a transitions guide to support preparing for adulthood (currently being developed).

Parents/carers continue to be involved in the redesign of therapy services. They are involved in the EHC plan audits and are part of the interview panel for SEND appointments.

From August 2023, the Parent/Carer Forum has committed to producing a series of newsletters focusing on the issues that concern parents/carers. The first one focuses on Autism and the second on a variety of issues:

[Newcastle Parent Carer Forum Summer 2023 Newsletter](#).

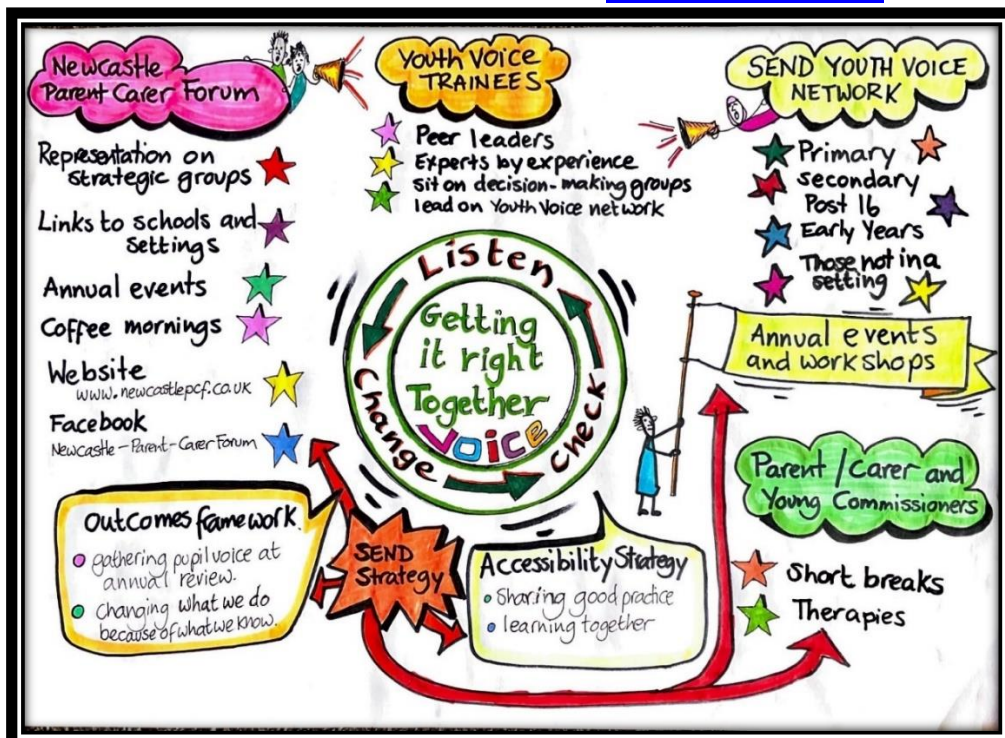
[Newcastle Parent Carer Forum Autumn Newsletter | Newcastle Support Directory](#)

We have issued 11 licenses to parents/carers so they can try out the [Rix Wiki](#) websites to improve how we get children and young people's voice.

We are also leading by example by using Rix Wikis as public information wikis. We are developing Wikis for our Accessibility Strategy and for a teen health portal. These sites will be available in November 2023.

Children and young people's voice

Newcastle Council and the North-East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB) have jointly funded the SEND Voice team since 2019. The SEND Voice Lead chairs the Voice workstream which is charged with delivering the SEND Voice plan. The team currently includes two voice trainees and one volunteer. You can see examples of the work of the team over the last year in the exhibit below and on the Local Offer: [SEND Voice Team](#).



We reported last year about the results of the **happiness survey**. From this work, we are establishing **'Your Voice Matters'**, a SEND Voice network in Newcastle schools. We have sessions arranged with the Ouseburn Trust, Walker Riverside academy and Newcastle College. For further details, please see: [Happiness Survey Action Plan 2023](#)

There has also been a lot of work done to support the **Holiday Activity Fund (HAF)** to have an inclusive approach and this work will add to the development of our short breaks offer. Learn more about the work of HAF on this short celebration event video: [HAF Awards 2023. - YouTube](#)

3. Learning from looking at data

Our **SEND Data Dashboard and Outcomes framework** considers the experience of children and young people, key performance indicators (absence, exclusions, waiting times) and the biennial Health-Related Behaviour Questionnaire. Taken together, this intelligence contributes to our Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and will help us to target our resources to meet need.

An important part of the Outcomes framework is to find out how children and young people feel about the progress they are making in relation to the outcomes. We have been 'piloting' collecting children and young people's views about the specific outcomes as part of their annual reviews. We received 10 responses to the pilot from a variety of schools and their full response is shown in [Appendix 1](#). Feedback was largely positive but there are a few comments which needed to be fed back to the school to take action.

We have co-produced a guidance document, video and a survey for SENCOs to track progress in delivery of outcomes at SEND and EHCP reviews. These are published on the Local Offer. Please use this link [SEND related policies and strategies \(newcastlesupportdirectory.org.uk\)](#) and click on the Newcastle SEND Outcomes Framework section.

These outcomes questions are now embedded into the new annual review toolkit, and it is hoped we will receive feedback for each review from January 2024.

4. Learning from looking at SEN support

What we've done

We continue to offer a wide range of **training** to schools and have increased the number of **specialist teachers** to support schools. **Individual pupil support funding** is also available to support specialist teachers support individual pupil support to support pupils on SEND support in mainstream schools. The support available is accessed via the SEND Advice, Support and Allocation Panel (ASAP), published on our Local Offer: [SEND ASAP](#). The webpage also includes a number of case studies demonstrating the impact of the support provided.

Locality Inclusion Panels and teams around the school continue to support children and young people at risk of permanent exclusion, as well as students without a school place.

Following the publication of the [Descriptors of Need](#), we set up a half day training event which provided an opportunity for colleagues across education, health and care services

and schools to work in collaboration on the documents and has led to increased familiarity with the 'Descriptors', as well as promoting the use of a common language across Education, Health and Social Care and a consistent understanding about the range of needs of children and young people in our city. Embedding the Descriptors of need throughout schools and settings is a key priority in our SEND Strategy.

The school effectiveness team has worked with SENCOs and updated the mainstream guidance, now known as **Universally Available Provision**, and is rolling out the **Inclusion Quality Framework**. They are available on the Local Offer at the top of the list in Tips and Guides. [School Effectiveness SEN \(newcastlesupportdirectory.org.uk\)](http://newcastlesupportdirectory.org.uk). They have circulated a poster showing the top 5 quick wins as shown below:

5 Quick Wins from the Universally Available Provision

Communication and Interaction: Speech and Language

1. Pre-teaching vocabulary
2. 'Chunk' instructions to ensure understanding
3. Visuals
4. Model and extend expressive language to provide consistently good grammatical models
5. Develop independent strategies for recognising when they don't understand and what to do to seek help

Communication and Interaction: Autism

1. Communicate with clarity
2. Routine, predictability, and consistency
3. Structured work activities
4. Visuals
5. Support with understanding and managing anxiety

Cognition and Learning

1. Repetition, overlearning and consolidation
2. Concrete materials, manipulatives and scaffolds
3. Multi-sensory input and activities
4. Offer learners choices of how to engage with the task
5. Pre-teach key vocabulary

Social, Emotional and Mental Health

1. Opportunities for outdoor play and learning eg. Forest School
2. Greeting on arrival
3. Know something about each child/young person's interests and strengths
4. Allow time and space to rest and breathe (for students and staff)
5. Understand the impact of trauma on individuals and the positive impact of supportive relationships

Visual Impairment

1. Say name to attract attention
2. Ensure they are wearing clean spectacles (all lessons)
3. Ensure optimal seating position to access all teaching points
4. Quality, not quantity of work produced
5. Give time to process what they are seeing

Deafness

1. Check that the hearing technology is being worn as required
2. Ensure optimal seating position
3. Provide a quiet environment
4. Check child/young person has understood what has been said
5. Give time to process and understand new language and learning

Positive Relationships are Key



The numbers of children and young people with SEMH needs continues to grow and in response we have reviewed the **SEMH ARPs** and decided that they were not conducive to achieving the best outcomes for our children and young people. We undertook a year-long consultation with all stakeholders involved and we decided to close the ARPs and invest in a new model which is based on the best practice across the country. We have appointed an **SEMH Outreach Team** which started in September 2023.

Accessibility strategy

We have worked with all partners to identify what 'accessibility' means to us all and we have produced a new Accessibility Strategy.

As this is a live document, we will be publishing the Accessibility Strategy in the form of a 'Rix wiki' website and are currently consulting on the content. The link to the wiki is:

<https://www.rixwiki.org/8973/vDFSAr0ibGE5A0q97mmOErl0YbYAx3x/> . Until this is published, you will need a password to access the site which is: HsP8k2ORka.

5. Learning from looking at Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans and annual reviews

What we've done

We continue to audit a sample of 10 recently agreed EHC plans each term, and we also ring the parents/carers to get their direct experience of the EHC process. The letter which accompanies the final EHC plan includes a QR code to collect feedback about the process from families.

We have invested in 'Invision', an electronic audit tool which is nationally recognised as good practice in facilitating quality improvements in EHC plans. It uses different assessment criteria than used in our previous audit tool and therefore it is not possible to compare the results of this audit to three previous audits in 2022/23.

Invision focuses on the EHC plan, and our social care and health teams have continued to audit advice submitted as part of the EHC process using their agreed audit tools.

The Invision tool requires auditors to consider whether each section of the EHC plan is outstanding, good, requires improvement or is inadequate.

A multi-agency team audited 9 EHC plans in July 2023 using Invision. The full results of the audit are included in this report at [Appendix 2](#). Invision sets a high standard to achieve gradings of good or above. This will be used as a baseline to assess our improvement in quality over 2023/2024.

From the audit, a number of actions were agreed:

- To get information from Invision which outlines what 'Good' looks like and to be put in touch with local authorities that are consistently achieving good or outstanding plans.
- To develop a standard statement that can be used for all sections of plan to make it clear where an assessment has or has not been carried out.
- Ensure that advice providers are aware of what is meant by a long-term outcomes.
- All caseworkers and advice writers to be involved in the audit on a rota basis as it is excellent training.

We have extended our audit programme to include themed, multi-agency audits using an audit tool from Hartlepool. We focused on:

- Children educated other than at school, NEETs, youth justice and children on part-time timetables. Two sessions were held in March and May 2023.
- Children in care educated outside of Newcastle, May 2023

There were some urgent issues identified which were addressed.

We are finding that it takes about 45 minutes to an hour for a team to complete the audits and therefore, given the time available, only a small sample was covered.

Direct feedback from families about their experience of the EHC process

Parents/ carers have the opportunity to complete a survey at the end of the statutory EHC process however, the response rate is low. To ensure we get feedback we call a sample of families (aiming for 10 but sometimes people do not want to comment, or we are unable to contact them) who have recently been through the EHC process to find out what they thought and what we could do to improve. We report findings back and plans to improve to the 'Getting it right together' workstream.

The survey is deliberately set up to encourage open discussion and therefore it is difficult to provide overall conclusions about the families' experiences. The results are mixed, some people are happy with the plans, despite long waits for the assessment to be completed, whilst the need to get better at communicating with families and providing better information about the process remains a key theme. In response, we have improved the information available on the Local offer about the EHC process: [Requesting a new Education, Health and Care Plan](#). This is also a key priority (2.5) in our SEND strategy published in September 2023: [SEND Strategy 2023-2028](#).

The feedback on individual plans is passed back to the SEND Support, Assessment and Review team to review and to action where appropriate and is included in the annual review file to feed into the next annual review.

Action following audit

Following each audit, feedback (including any feedback from telephone calls) is placed on the child's annual review file, on our case management system, to be addressed at the next annual review. Unless there are cases where it is felt that plans need urgent attention, any feedback is given to the relevant senior practitioners to take immediate action.

Audits with the DfE to test EHC panel decision making

Our data benchmarking exercise tells us that we have a higher proportion of EHC assessments being agreed than our regional neighbours. This, in turn, results in a higher proportion of EHC Plans being issued. To investigate, we selected 10 random cases which had resulted in an EHC Plan being issued with our DfE SEND advisor. The aim was to seek assurance about the quality of decision making of the EHC panel.

The review was run in the same way we run as EHC Panel and was chaired by the Head of SEND Service. An overview of each case was given, all statutory assessment documents shared, and a multi-agency discussion held.

The consensus was, that based on the information and advice provided, all decisions made by the multi-agency EHC Panel were appropriate. However, three risks were identified which were subsequently investigated and resolved.

To summarise, panel members were confident with the decision making in respect of issuing EHCPs.

Changes to the EHC decision making panels

It is good practice to establish 'panels' of professionals from schools, settings, education, health and social care services who consider requests for Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan assessments, whether to issue an EHC plan and the monitoring and review of EHC plans. Having a range of officers from different services ensures a joint collaborative approach to support the Local Authority in making transparent and equitable, well-informed decisions.

We set up a task and finish group to look at how we make decisions throughout the EHC process and to see if any changes could be made that would help with the high volume of requests for assessment that are currently being made.

We now have weekly panels covering the 0-25 age range, one that looks at new assessments and another which looks at agreeing plans and annual reviews.

The Terms of reference for the panels are published on the local offer: [EHC Panels Terms of Reference](#).

SEND Portal

Parent/carers have worked with a film maker to produce an explanatory film: www.youtube.com demonstrating how to use the online portal. This came from our parent/carers who said that we needed to have better ways of explaining complicated systems.

All EHC requests from professionals are now being submitted via the SEND portal. We have a number of parents and carers that are using the portal and are encouraging all new requests from parents/carers to come in via the portal. The intention is that use of the portal will speed up the EHC process.

6. Learning from complaints and compliments

What we've done

Complaints

For 2022/23 academic year we received 26 complaints of which 18 were upheld or partially upheld. Of these, 13 complaints related to delays in EHCP timescales and process. The remaining complaints were about issues in securing appropriate education provision and school transport.

To put this in context we received 626 requests for assessment in 2022/23 and the proportion of upheld complaints is relatively low at 2.9%.

In response to complaints:

- We continue to focus on improving EHC timeliness and in addition to the steps taken last year in June 2023 we commissioned an external educational psychology (EP) company to provide additional capacity.
- We continue to source additional specialist provision to reduce delays in finding appropriate places for children and young people. Last year we put in a bid for an additional special school for children and young people with autism. We were unsuccessful in this bid, but the DfE did say that it was 'approvable'. We are now looking at alternative funding sources so we can build this much needed school.

Compliments

We do get good feedback and compliments. These are shared and celebrated across the service.

Tribunals

We have had six tribunals over 2022/23 the reasons for the tribunal and the outcomes are set out below:

Reasons	Outcome
Not naming education in Section I	Still in progress.
Type of school/setting named	The decision went against the LA.
Refusal to arrange an EHC assessment	Still in progress.
Refusal to arrange an EHC assessment	Still in progress.
Refusal to issue	LA concede EHC plan issued.
Refusal to issue	LA concede EHC plan issued.

Appendix 1: Analysis of pilot of children and young people views against the questions in the outcomes framework

Please note, this feedback is from just 10 respondents over 2022/23.

Be safe and happy

I feel safe at school	100% true for me
I feel safe at home.	100% true for me
I feel safe where I live.	100% true for me
I have been bullied at or near school in the last 12 months.	90% true for me
I know what to do if bullying happens.	100% true for me

Comments made for this section:

I have no experience with bullying.
My best friend was a girl and people were bullying me saying I was in love with them. But I wasn't, she was just a good friend.
It is better than my old school. They support me a lot more and they now know how to help me with what I need. I felt comfortable talking to the teachers not just the pastoral team but I feel like I can talk to any of the teachers.
I tell someone if someone is mean to me.
I was bullied in my previous school.
No experiences of bullying.
Positive vibes and friendly. Everyone looks after each other.
I feel safe and happy in school. School is my happy place.
Bullying was experienced in previous school.

Be happy

I am happy and involved in activities at school.	90% true for me
I have a good friend at school.	100% true for me
I have someone to play/ hangout with where I live.	70% true for me

Comments made for the be happy section:

My friend from my old school lives 5-minutes-drive away from my house and I go there and play with them and sometimes go on a dog walk.
I have lots of friends.
She has a good network of friends. She is very sociable and integrates well.
I often play with children from school when I'm at home. I also have other friends who live nearby.
I play with others at the park.
In school I have lots of friends and a close friend outside of school.
Friends don't live close to school.

Know who they can talk to and how to keep healthy

I know who to talk to in school if things get difficult for me.	100% true for me
There is a safe calm space to go to when I need it.	80% true - 20% not sure
I like myself as a person.	100% true for me
I know someone who likes me.	100% true for me
When I am unwell, I know who to ask for help.	100% true for me
I know how to keep fit and healthy.	100% true for me

Comments made for this section:

If I am stressed, I can go to the learning hub or take 5 minutes outside to calm down.
When I had stomach pain, I told my teacher.
I am aware I can approach a range of different people in school for help and support.
I know my family and friends at school like me. There are lot of teachers I can talk to in school if I feel upset. I know to see a teacher or first aider if I am unwell in school.
I have a friend.
I exercise and eat healthy food.
I eat all the right types of food to keep me healthy.
I keep healthy with swimming.

Ready for next steps

I know what I am good at.	90% true for me and 10% not sure
I know what I would like to be when I leave school.	50% true for me
I have been able to talk about my ideas for my future.	80% true for me
I have the right support to help me get the skills I need to be independent and have a good life.	90% true for me
I can travel to school by myself or with a friend.	60% true for me

Comments made for this section:

I take the metro to school every day.
I can travel but my mum brings me in the car. I'm getting ready for high school next year so I'm learning how to take the bus.
I know what I want to study but I am unsure what I want to be when I am older.
When I leave school, I want to help children with mental health issues.
I am good at swimming and football.
I get a taxi to school to the ARP.
I travel to school with my Nudge teacher but when I go to high school, I will have a friend to travel with.
I am looking at my different choices for after 6th form.

Being heard in decisions about my life

I feel my views have been listened to and are included in my Plans.	80% true for me
I am asked about my ideas in a way that works best for me.	100% true for me
Things have got better for me over the last year.	80% true for me and 20% not sure

No comments made for this section

Appendix 2: Results for EHC audits using Invision July 2023

This was the first audit when we used Invision, which has a high threshold to achieve good and outstanding gradings. Nine EHC plans that were issued in spring/summer term 2023 were audited.

		Outstand- ing	Good	Requires Improve- ment	Inade- quate	N/A
A	The views, interests and aspirations of the child and their parents, or the young person	11.1%	67.7%	22.2%		
B	The child or young person's special educational needs (SEN)	11.1%	55.6%	22.2%	11.1%	
C	The child or young person's health needs which relate to SEN	11.1%		33.3%	55.6%	
D	The child or young person's social care needs which relate to their SEN	11.1%		44.4%	44.4%	
E	The outcomes sought for the child or the young person		33.3%	55.6%	11.1%	
F	The special educational provision required by the child or the young person		22.2%	66.7%	11.1%	
G	Any health provision reasonably required by the learning difficulties or disabilities which result in the child or young person having SEN		11.1%	11.1%	77.8%	
H1	Any social care provision which must be made for a child or young person under 18 resulting from Section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 (CSDPA)				88.9%	11.1%
H2	Any other social care provision reasonably required by the learning difficulties or disabilities which result in the child or young person having SEN				88.9%	11.1%
I	Placement		88.9%	11.1%		
J	Personal Budget (including arrangements for direct payments)		33.3%	55.6%		11.1%
K	Advice and Information		44.4%	55.6%		

Appendix 3: Next steps

Learning from the views and experiences of children and young people and their parents and carers

- SEND Strategy 2.2: Continue to develop innovative approaches to gathering feedback from all parents, carers, children and young people.
- SEND Strategy 2.3: How we work, and act are embedded throughout all parts of the SEND system.
- SEND Strategy 2.6: Join up offer of support for children and young people who have SEND with the early help offer including SEND Networks in schools and the locality family hubs.
- To include the outcomes within relevant education, health and care commissioned service specifications with appropriate mechanisms for measuring progress.
- Work with the parent/carer forum to develop and deliver programme for a SEND Celebration Event.

Learning from looking at SEND support

- SEND Strategy 1.4: Descriptors of need will be used in all schools and settings to ensure early and appropriate identification of needs.
- SEND Strategy 1.7: Further investment to provide support and improve confidence in the SEN Support process. This will include improving the quality and implementation of SEN Support plans.
- SEND Strategy 2.4: Develop an Accessibility Strategy to ensure all children and young people with SEND can access schools and settings and feel welcome wherever they go.

Learning from looking at education, health and care (EHC) plans and annual reviews

- SEND Strategy priority 2.5: Continue to improve how we communicate with all children and young people with SEND and their parents and carers and gain their feedback at reviews.
- A new Family Support Officer starting in October 2023 will report to the Designated Social Care Officer with a role to improve social care input into the EHC process.
- A social care workstream chaired by the DSCO will be established to have oversight of social care interface with SEND.
- Launch and train schools in the annual review toolkit to improve the annual review process and ensure we get more responses to the outcomes framework questions. This is a priority 2.8 in our [SEND Strategy 2023-2028](#).

Learning from complaints and compliments

- We will continue to monitor complaints and put improvements in place where issues are uncovered.