

Areas for improvement

1 - Leaders should continue to strengthen their governance arrangements to deliver and monitor the implementation and effectiveness of their SEND strategy across the partnership. This includes ensuring that:

1. The partnership continues to strengthen and further improve the quality of data it uses to accurately identify where there are gaps in provision and commission appropriate services to effectively address those gaps;
2. The partnership strengthens the information that is currently available to all partners and uses this effectively in order to hold each other accountable for the effective commissioning and delivery of services to improve outcomes for children and young people;
3. The planned increase in special school places for post-16 students proceeds to timeframe to alleviate capacity issues in special school provision.

| 1 | | Task | Lead | Other resources | Start | Finish | Evidence of Outcomes |
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| 1.1 | a | Data Dash Board – full review and refresh | Christine Shields Assistant Director Commissioning, Performance and Transformation(DBC) Jo Heaney (NENC ICB) | Head of Transformation and Performance (DBC) | | April 2025 | A revised and operational data dashboard is updated and published on a termly basis. Shared understanding of performance data across Darlington Local Area Partnership. |
| | b | Quality assurance of data dashboard in place | Christine Shields Assistant Director Commissioning, Performance and Transformation(DBC) Jo Heaney (NENC ICB) | Head of Transformation and Performance (DBC) | April 2025 | April 2026 | A clear mechanism for quality assuring and agreement of termly published Data Dashboard in place. Any changes to the data dashboard are agreed via Darlington's Local Area Partnership Group and Board. |

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| | c | Power BI dashboard in place | Christine Shields Assistant Director Commissioning, Performance and Transformation(DBC) Jo Heaney (NENC ICB) | Head of Transformation and Performance (DBC) | | April 2026 | Power BI dashboard in place |
| | d | Refreshed and operational SEND JSNA | Lorraine Hughes Director of Public Health (DBC) | Public Health Team Head of Transformation and Performance(DBC) Performance and Analysis (NENC ICB) | April 2025 | April 2026 | Darlington JSNA clearly identifies and provides regularly updated information regarding the SEND Community in Darlington |
| 1.2 | a | Data dash board and intelligence being used by assurance group, implementation group and joint commissioning | Tony Murphy Assistant Director Education and Inclusion (DBC) /Jo Heaney (NENC ICB) | SEND Local Area Partnership Board, SEND Local Area Partnership Group | | May 2025 | Use of a data dashboard is clear within the assurance group, implementation group and joint commissioning |
| | b | Publish an easy read data dash board on Local offer | Tony Murphy Assistant Director Education and Inclusion (DBC) /Jo Heaney (NENC ICB) | SEND Local Area Partnership Board, SEND Local Area Partnership Group | | April 2026 | Easy read data dashboard available and updated on a routine basis. |

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| 1.3 | a | Create a new sixth form centre for Beaumont Hill Academy in the former Houghton Children's Centre. This in turn would free up 30 secondary SEND places, following refurbishment of the vacant space, in the main school. | Tony Murphy Assistant Director Education and Inclusion (DBC) | Education Village Academy Trust (EVAT) Head of Skills and Employability (DBC) | May 2025 | Sept 2025 | Additional physical capacity for Beaumont Hill Academy and the opening of a stand-alone 6 th form centre for the school. |
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Impact overview

With a full partnership data dashboard in place and being used in conjunction with other intelligence sources we will see a better informed partnership and leadership able to monitor and demonstrate activity clearly across the partnership. This will in turn support a clearer proactive commissioning process leading to better sufficiency and development of future service.

Children, young people and their families will have a clear picture of activity at a local level.

All partners will be able to access information to support better local understanding and the ability to effectively challenge the partnerships delivery.

Strong Challenge / Strong Support

Additional specialist 6th form capacity

2 - Leaders in health should continue to take action to reduce waiting times across some health services, including neuro-developmental pathways as well as therapies that include occupational therapy and speech and language therapy. In the intervening waiting period, the partnership should continue to mitigate the impact for children and young people.

| 2 | | Task | Lead | Other resources | Start | Finish | Evidence of Outcomes |
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| 2.1 | a | <p>Occupational Therapy</p> <p>Review capacity and demand for Occupational Therapy.</p> | Jo Heaney (NENC ICB) | Sandra Sleeman | May 2025 | April 2026 | <p>Clear waiting well offer in place for all Children and Young People awaiting assessment/intervention.</p> <p>Service demand and capacity aligned to deliver services within the national 18 weeks waiting standard</p> |
| 2.2 | a | <p>Neurodevelopmental Pathway</p> <p>Increase workforce capacity and increase the number of assessments for Autism and or ADHD as set out in the Darlington Neurodevelopmental Improvement Plan (October 2024)</p> | Lynne Massam NENC ICB | Iain Marley | March 2025 | April 2026 | <p>Increased numbers of providers completing specialist assessments</p> <p>Reduction in numbers of children waiting 2+ years for assessments</p> |
| | b. | Remain focussed on the child's voice, through the development of a task and finish group and ensuring young people are involved in decision making. | Iain Marley NENC ICB | Young People's Involvement & Opp Worker (DBC) | March 2025 | April 2026 | <p>Youth Group established</p> <p>Youth voice incorporated into referral pathway and assessment process.</p> |
| | c. | Embed the graduated response through the development of a workforce development and training plan. | Lynne Massam NENC ICB | <p>SEND and Inclusion Advisory Lead (DBC)</p> <p>Workforce Development Manager (DBC)</p> | March 2025 | April 2026 | Earlier identification of needs and support offered with or without a diagnosis |

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| 2.3 | a | <p>Speech and Language Therapy</p> <p>Continue with the trajectory of reducing the average waits for assessments to within 126 days (18 weeks) national ambition.</p> | Lynne Massam NENC ICB | | | | <p>Reduction in waiting times.</p> <p>CYP receive therapeutic support earlier.</p> |
| | b. | Mobilisation of the new Tees Valley Speech and Language Therapies Service | Jo Heaney NENC ICB | Lynne Massam NENC ICB | April 2025 | March 2026 | All elements of the new service specification embedded. |
| | c. | Exploration/Agreement of jointly commissioned opportunities as part of the Tees Valley wide specification through education support earlier identification and right support at the right time. | Lynne Massam NENC ICB | Lead Commissioning and Contracts Manager – Children (DBC) | September 2026 | September 2027 | Speech and language needs met through education with consultative support in place and pathways to specialist therapies. |

Impact overview

There is access to advice/support for children, young people and their families that are waiting for an assessment and or interventions associated with OT/Speech language communication and Autism/ADHD (neurodiverse needs). Targeted work undertaken to improve access to the outlined services and reduce waiting times to be in line with national waiting time standards.

3 - Leaders should continue to strengthen the systems and processes to further improve the quality of children and young people’s EHC plans, including updates to EHC plans following annual reviews, to ensure that EHC plans reflect the most up-to-date information from education, health and social care.

| 3 | Task | Lead | Other resources | Start | Finish | Evidence of Outcomes |
|-----|--|---|--|---|-------------------------|---|
| 3.1 | EHC plans will be based on a single information system | Tony Murphy Assistant Director Education and Inclusion (DBC) | Head of SEND and Inclusion (DBC), Designated Clinical Officer (ICB), Head of Practice and Quality (Principal Social Worker) (DBC) | Jan 2025 | | All new EHC plans are fully recorded on the Early Help Module of Liquid Logic. There is a clear plan of how older plans are being managed within the single system. Reviewing EHC plans is supported in the use of the single system. |
| 3.2 | Partners and families will be able to directly update information via portals for new assessments. This will facilitate effective compliance with statutory obligations of all partners. | Tony Murphy Assistant Director Education and Inclusion (DBC) | SB, Head of SEND and Inclusion (DBC), Designated Clinical Officer (ICB), Head of Practice and Quality (Principal Social Worker) (DBC), SEND and Inclusion Advisory Lead (DBC) | Testing of portal started February 2025 | September 2025 | All EHC plan applications and advice use the portal system to update EHC records. |
| 3.3 | Termly multi agency deep dives of EHC plans to monitor timely participation and quality of information from all parties | Tony Murphy Assistant Director Education and Inclusion (DBC) | Head of SEND and Inclusion (DBC), Designated Clinical Officer (ICB), Head of Practice and Quality (Principal | Spring 2025 | Ongoing on termly basis | Termly deep dive events are taking place. Reports are submitted to Darlington SEND LA Partnership Group and Board, at following meeting. |

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| | | | | Social Worker) (DBC), SEND and Inclusion Advisory Lead (DBC) | | | Clear development activity happening as a result of deep dives. |
| 3.4 | | Review process of annual review to ensure full compliance by all stakeholders in statutory obligations, identify barriers and mitigate against them | Tony Murphy Assistant Director Education and Inclusion (DBC) | Head of SEND and Inclusion (DBC), Designated Clinical Officer (ICB), Head of Practice and Quality (Principal Social Worker) (DBC), SEND and Inclusion Advisory Lead (DBC) | April 2025 | July 2025 | Quality multi agency input into EHC plans will be evidenced in termly Deep Dive exercise |

Impact overview

Continue to improve quality of EHC plans, by ensuring that they are fully representative of children & young people's education, health & care needs and the provision required to help them achieve positive outcomes in line with their aspirations. The partnership will ensure that EHC plans are comprehensive and incorporate relevant health and care provision in addition to education.

4 - Leaders should continue to strengthen the systems and processes to support children and young people to access support and assessment for a learning disability. The partnership should ensure that these children and young people receive suitable support across education, health and social care that meets their needs well.

| 4 | | Task | Lead | Other resources | Start | Finish | Evidence of Outcomes |
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| 4.1 | | Business case to be approved at board for clinical psychology time to support diagnosis of a Learning Disability | Mark Porter (ICB DCO) | None Required | April 2025 | May 2025 | This aims to increase capacity within the system to ensure that learning disabilities are diagnosed at the earliest opportunity to enable access to specialist services when required and Annual Health checks. |
| 4.2 | a b | Identify how we support Educational Psychology to play a wider role in the early identification of learning disabilities Create a clear process through which information of potential learning disabilities gained through Educational Psychology working practices is gathered and shared in line with the LD-ID Framework (Learning Disability Identification Framework) | Mark Porter (ICB DCO) | DPIA Information Sharing agreements | September 2025 | April 2026 | Improved early identification of Learning Disabilities, and to reduce transitions between services for the children and young people. |
| 4.4 | | Implementation of a Process to complete LD Diagnosis. | Mark Porter (ICB DCO) | None Required | April 2026 | April 2027 | To Improve identification and diagnosis of learning disabilities. Improved access to specialist support services when required, LD AHC's, DSR and CeTR |

Impact overview

The Learning Disability pathway/process aims to improve the multiagency identification of Learning Disabilities. This is intended to improve access to specialist services where required and Annual Health Checks.

Glossary of Acronyms used

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| DBC | Darlington Borough Council |
| NENC ICB | North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board |
| SEND | Special Educational Needs and Disabilities |
| Power BI | An information and data management system |
| JSNA | Joint Strategic Needs Analysis |
| EVAT | Education Village Academy Trust |
| ADHD | Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder |
| CYP | Children and Young People |
| OT | Occupational Therapy |
| EHC plans | Education, Health and Care plans |
| SOP | Standard Operating Practice |
| DCO | Designated Clinical Officer |
| DPIA | Data Protection Impact Assessment |
| LD | Learning Disability or Disabilities |
| ID | Identification |
| LD AHC | Learning Disability Annual Health Check |
| DSR | Dynamic Support Register |
| CeTR | Care Education and Treatment Reviews |