

**Needs Assessment  
of  
Special Educational Needs  
in  
Gateshead**

**Extended executive summary  
with recommendations**

May 2013

indigo

## **Introduction**

Gateshead commissioned an external needs assessment of special educational needs in the Authority in order to develop a replicable process for undertaking an annual needs assessment. The intention was to produce a series of recommendations to influence future commissioning plans for early support and intervention, the future capacity and nature of special schools and the number of planned places.

The work was undertaken during March and April 2013.

The core of the work related to a comprehensive needs assessment drawing on data available locally and nationally. In addition a number of individual interviews and focus groups were arranged to provide qualitative information to complement the quantitative data.

**The views expressed in the report are those of the consultant.**

**The report should not be considered to represent the views or policies of Gateshead Council.**

## **Needs assessment**

The needs assessment aims to bring together data from a range of sources to ensure that decision making is informed by a comprehensive data set.

The core of the needs assessment was a series of profiles of data relating to children and young people in categories of special educational need. Data was drawn from a range of databases held within Gateshead and from data available from the Department of Education (DfE) and the Child and Maternal Health Intelligence Network (ChiMat). Comparative financial data was purchased from Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA).

The data was looked at longitudinally, to see how changes developed over time. Comparative data was also used, to see how the profile of need compared with other Local Authorities. The comparative profile used statistical neighbours as well as national and regional averages. A statistical neighbour is an Authority that has been independently determined to be similar on a range of relevant characteristics.

The comparative data was looked at over a five year period from 2008 to 2012. Although the data is dated 2012 it refers to the previous year. Gateshead's own data, collected in January 2013, was also used.

The main source of comparative data related to children who have been determined to have categories of special educational need. It was recognised that the categories of need do not provide a detailed description of the child and that different Authorities use different eligibility criteria and so comparisons are indicative rather than precise.

The needs assessment considered data on children and young people at both School Action Plus (SA+) and for those who have a statement of special educational need. The categorisation of need at SA+ is determined by the school. The categorisation of need of pupils who have a statement of special educational need is determined following a multi-disciplinary assessment.

The age at which children are identified was considered, as was any difference in profile of special educational need at Primary and Secondary schooling. The analysis also considered if there were any differences relating to gender or ethnicity.

Much of the national comparative data identifies children by their primary need. Gateshead's own data sets reflects the secondary and other significant needs that a child may have and so enabled a more detailed understanding.

A geographical mapping exercise was also carried to complement the data. This enabled the identification of clusters of need in different localities.

The key findings in respect of special educational need were that Gateshead has a lower proportion of children identified with special educational needs

compared with national, regional and statistical neighbours. This does not imply that needs are not being identified and met, it just reflects differences in practice.

There is no sustained overall trend of growth in the numbers of pupils with special educational needs. This reflects the national trend of a drop in the number of children identified as requiring additional support. Some evidence suggests this is a reflection of better intervention by schools.

There are four categories of need where there is a growth trend:

- Autistic spectrum disorder
- Speech, language and communication needs
- Behaviour (Primary schools only)
- Visual impairment.

In the first three of these the profile of growth mirrors the national profile. Gateshead is no different from other Authorities. The apparent growth in children and young people with visual impairment reflects local changes in recording.

There are two areas where Gateshead's profile of need is at or above the comparator groups. These are children and young people with autistic spectrum disorders, and children and young people with hearing impairment. Nationally there has been a sustained profile of growth in the number of children and young people who have needs along the autistic spectrum.

Gateshead already has a robust process of special educational needs assessment backed up by the required policies and good partnership work. The recommendations of the review reflect changes in commissioning nationally with a move to evidence based, outcome focused commissioning. They also reflect changes being brought about by new legislation and early learning from SEN Pathfinders, of which Gateshead is one.

The overall recommendations were that practice in Gateshead would be strengthened if:

1. All the data, currently held in a variety of locations and formats, was brought together into a single comprehensive database that was regulated through a quality assured process.
2. Outcome data was collected and analysed to enable the evaluation of the effectiveness of provision and to celebrate the success achieved by children and young people with special educational needs.
3. Communication was strengthened between areas of the Directorate and between the Directorate and schools. It is essential that there is a shared understanding as to how different services contribute to ensuring best outcomes for children and young people with special

educational needs. It is also important that there is an agreed understanding of roles and responsibilities.

4. There is a clearly agreed and understood process that will ensure that all the relevant data concerning children identified by Health Services pre-school goes to all the right people.

### **Needs assessment model**

A six strand needs assessment model was proposed. It provides an adaptable template to bring together service users' views and aspirations, national comparative data, internally held data, partner held data, staff knowledge and perception and research and nationally reported evidence to inform commissioning.

### **Outcome measures**

The use of outcome measures, which give an opportunity to test 'What difference did the provision make?', is an emphasis of the report. Gateshead collects a lot of outcome data and uses it to evaluate arrangements for individual children. It can also be used strategically.

There are a range of different outcome measures that can be developed, such as:

- Satisfaction scales (how parents, young people and schools rate the support they are given)
- Attainment data (National Curriculum pupil performance data)
- Achievement data (progress in areas other than learning)
- Destination data (where the young person goes next)
- Normative data (evidence from standardised tests).

It would also be helpful to develop, in partnership with parents, young people, schools and others, measures relating to the long term aspirational outcomes such as 'independence', 'social communication' and 'physical development and mobility'.

### **Provision for pupils with special educational need**

The majority of pupils who have special educational need are supported in mainstream schools. The School Funding Reforms also mean that the resources to meet the majority of their needs will be delegated directly to the schools. It is therefore crucial that provision made in mainstream schools is developed and supported to meet the varied needs of individuals and secure the best possible outcomes.

Children in Gateshead who have special educational needs also have provision made for them in Additionally Resourced Mainstream Schools (ARMS), special schools and out of authority placements in independent schools.

Gateshead had already started to review its arrangements concerning the development of ARMS provision. The review confirmed that, as already identified, the need for a clear understanding of the role and resourcing of ARMS embedded in a formal contractual arrangement would strengthen accountability and ensure clarity for schools and families. The needs assessment suggested that different types of need might be supported through different arrangements for ARMS.

Gateshead has a very good range of special schools. All of the schools are rated good or outstanding by Ofsted.

Most Authorities have to supplement the provision that is available within the authority by specialist placements outside the authority. It is the responsibility of the Authority to ensure that appropriate provision is made for the child or young person and if it cannot be made within Authority then an external placement is required.

The key recommendations concerning provision are that this could be strengthened if:

1. There was a stronger focus on planning along a continuum of provision for a type of need rather than focusing on the placement
2. Consideration was given to how the expertise in special schools could be used to support good practice elsewhere
3. Enhanced access to therapies and specialist support might enable the needs of more children to be met within the Authority
4. The profile of provision for pupils with moderate learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders could be reconsidered by the Local Authority in partnership with schools in light of the evidence
5. Outcome measures were agreed, systematically collected and analysed so that the effectiveness of provision can be measured.

### **Early years**

This was an area where the evidence suggested the LA might want to strengthen its practice. The number of children under five receiving additional support is comparatively low and the outcomes for children in the early years with special needs are also below the national average.

It is recommended that better co-ordination of the support arrangements might help improve outcomes for children.

### **High Needs Funding**

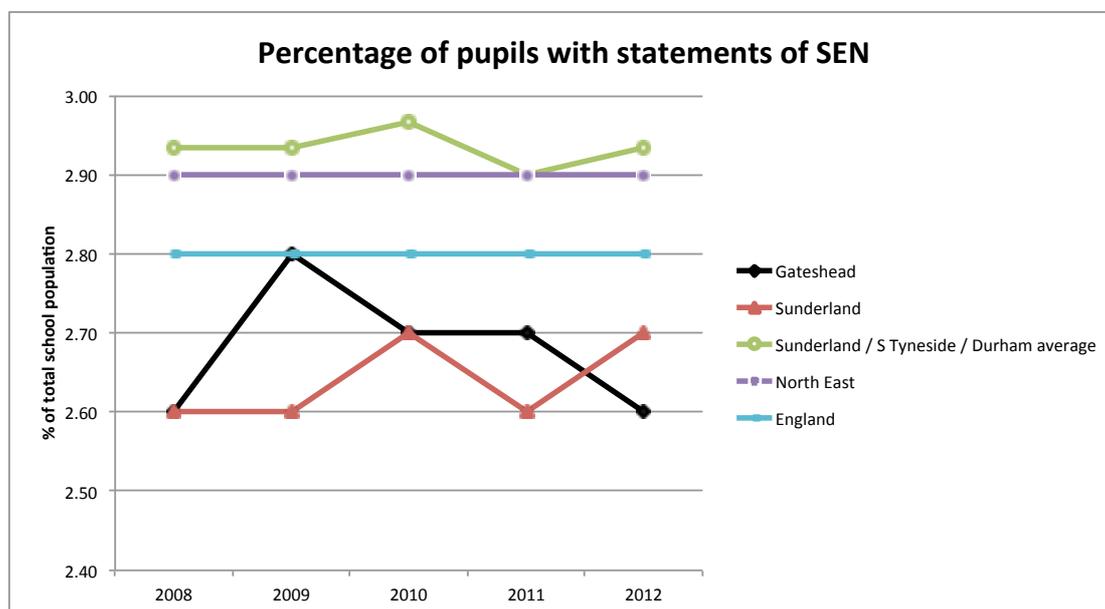
Under the School Funding Reforms, the pattern of special educational needs funding has changed. The majority of resources are delegated directly to schools and the Local Authority retains responsibility for the resource to meet the needs of children with High Needs.

Different accounting practices make the comparison of funding between Authorities difficult, but one area where Gateshead appears to provide more resources than most authorities is speech therapy.

The recommendations concerning resources were that:

1. In order to ensure that financial data is helpfully used to inform decision making it is recommended that models of cost attribution are based on actuals rather than proxy indicators.
2. In order to have a full understanding of the cost involved in addressing each area of need it is recommended that all costs associated with an area of need are coded in a way that can be brought together a single financial out-turn.
3. In order that a value for money evaluation can be made by the commissioner it is recommended that outcome and destination data is used to see what provision / which placements achieve the best outcomes at what price.
4. In order to ensure that risk is minimised any identified areas of risk should be reviewed by the financial team and the SEN commissioner. If it is agreed they are a potential area of risk, then a monitoring and review strategy should be agreed.
5. In order to ensure resources are effectively targeted the banded funding framework needs to be reviewed and consideration given to 'narrower' bands, or adopting a 'nearest' band model.

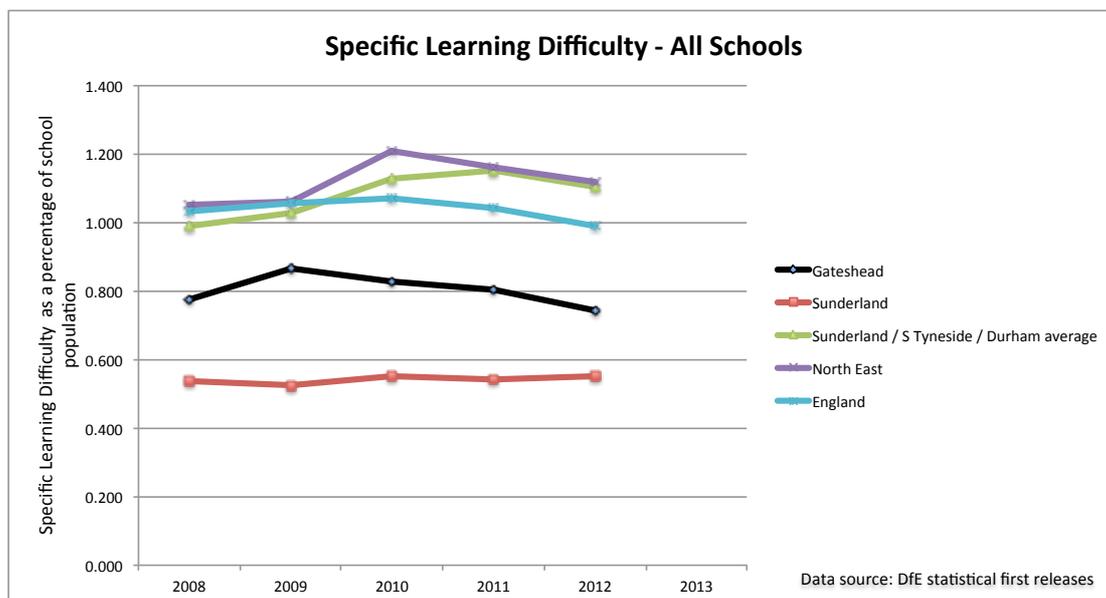
## A4 i Needs assessment summary sheet



### Key findings

- Gateshead has a lower proportion of children identified with special educational needs compared with national, regional and statistical neighbours.
- Up until January 2012 there was no sustained trend of growth in the numbers of pupils with special educational needs.
- There are four categories of need where there is a growth trend:
  - Autistic spectrum disorder
  - Speech, language and communication needs
  - Visual impairment
  - Behaviour (Primary schools only).
- There are two areas where Gateshead's profile of need is at or above the comparator groups:
  - Autistic spectrum disorder
  - Hearing impairment.

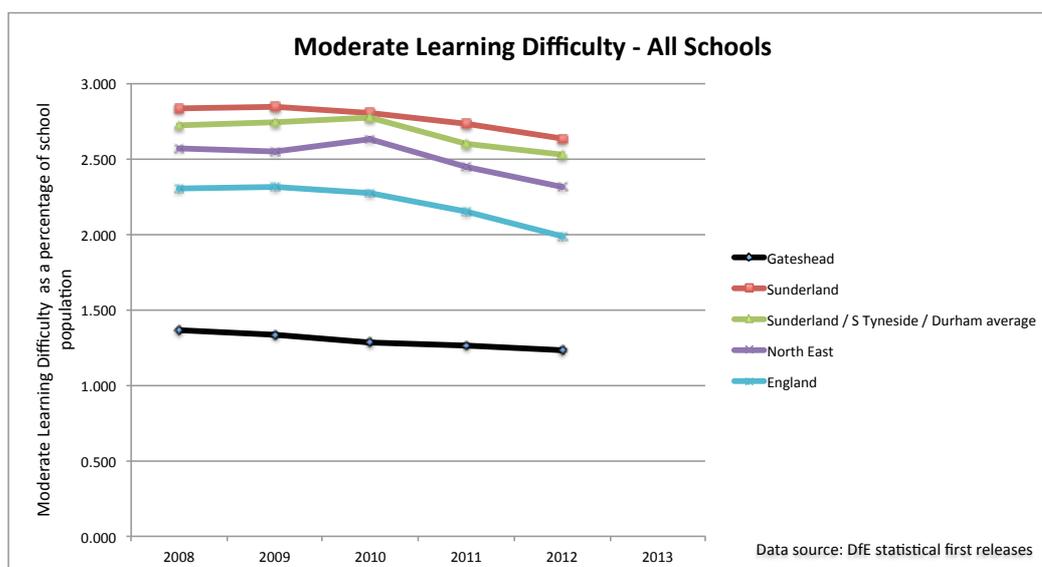
## Needs assessment: specific learning difficulties (SpLD) summary sheet



### Key findings

- The evidence indicates that nationally and locally there is a downward trend in the number of children and young people identified as needing support for specific learning difficulties (SpLD).
- National data evidence suggests that some pupils with specific learning difficulties will make sufficient progress so that they will no longer require additional intervention and support. If Gateshead had clear exit criteria to complement their eligibility criteria it would facilitate the withdrawal and redistribution of resources when they were no longer required.
- The majority of pupils with specific learning needs have their needs met within mainstream schools. The profile of resourcing suggests that these will be met from within schools' delegated budgets under the School Funding Reform arrangements.
- SpLD is an area where there are strong parental expectations, informed by groups such as the British Dyslexia Association (BDA), which have led to well informed challenges of LA provision.

## Needs assessment: moderate learning difficulties (MLD) summary sheet



### Key findings

- Nationally and locally there is a slight downward trend in the number of pupils identified as having MLD.
- Moderate learning difficulties represent a stage on a universal continuum of learning rather than a distinct category.
- The skills required to meet the needs of pupils with moderate learning difficulties are not different from those required to teach other children.
- A significant variable in provision and placement is the secondary needs that a pupil may have. 52 of the 112 pupils with MLD who had a secondary need had speech, language and communication needs as that need and 33 had physical difficulties.
- The profile of pupils with moderate learning difficulties does not appear to vary according to their placement.
- The cost of supporting pupils with MLD varies according to their placement. **The variation in resourcing the same need in different settings is a potential risk.**
- Geographical mapping shows that the distribution of pupils with moderate learning difficulties is not even. There are distinct clusters of need.

## **Needs assessment: severe learning difficulties (SLD) summary sheet**

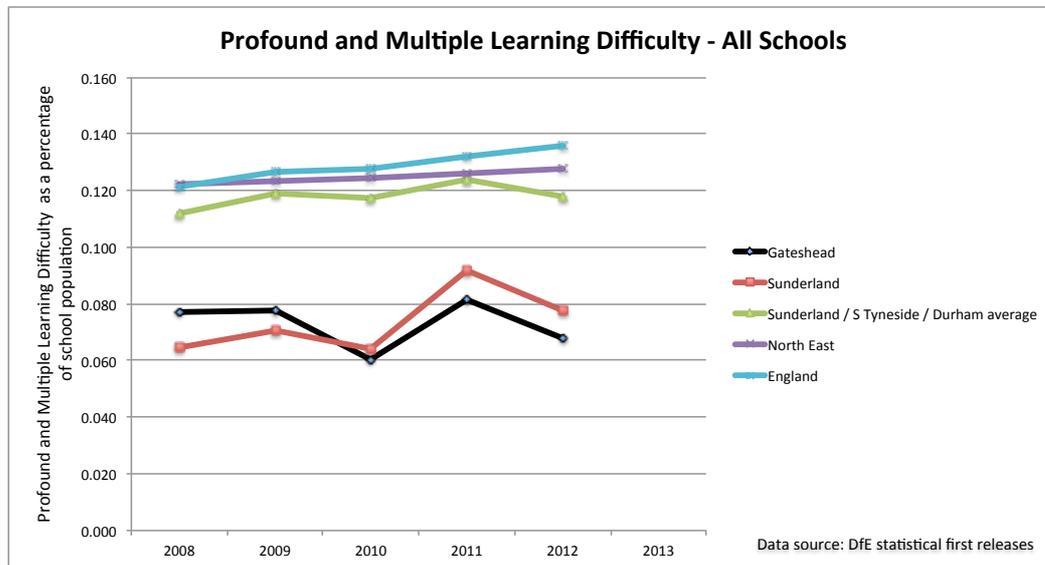
The table below shows the number of Gateshead pupils with SLD by school placement over the past 5 years.

|                  | <b>2008</b> | <b>2009</b> | <b>2010</b> | <b>2011</b> | <b>2012</b> |
|------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>Primary</b>   | 7           | 9           | 9           | 8           | 7           |
| <b>Secondary</b> | 7           | 6           | x           | 4           | x           |
| <b>Special</b>   | 76          | 80          | 85          | 90          | 83          |
| <b>% Special</b> | 84.4%       | 84.2%       | 89.5%       | 88.8%       | 91.2%       |

### **Key findings**

- The number of children and young people who have severe learning difficulties is shown to be stable over time both nationally and locally.
- The majority of pupils with SLD are placed in special schools. This is true nationally as well as locally.
- It is unusual for a pupil with SLD in Gateshead to get a statement before reception year.
- The majority of pupils identified as having SLD are male.
- Children with SLD are likely to require an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan, under the proposed new legislative requirements.
- Children with severe learning difficulties can make progress in their learning and it is important to identify and celebrate their success.

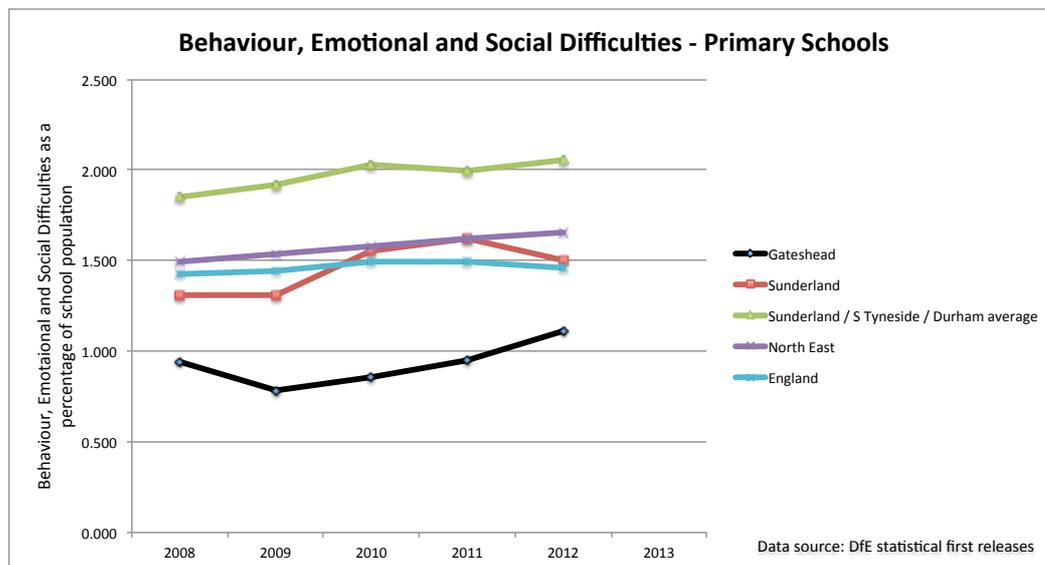
## Needs assessment: profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) summary sheet



### Key findings

- The incidence rate for children and young people having profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) is low. There are likely to be about two pupils per year with PMLD in Gateshead.
- Pupils with PMLD are likely to need special school provision. They will require a high level of support.
- Nationally there is a slight upward trend of growth in the population of children with PMLD. This is associated with growth in the population of particular ethnic minority groups. The demographic profile of Gateshead's population does not suggest that it will be a factor in the Authority.
- All children with PMLD are likely to require an Education, Health and Care Plan.

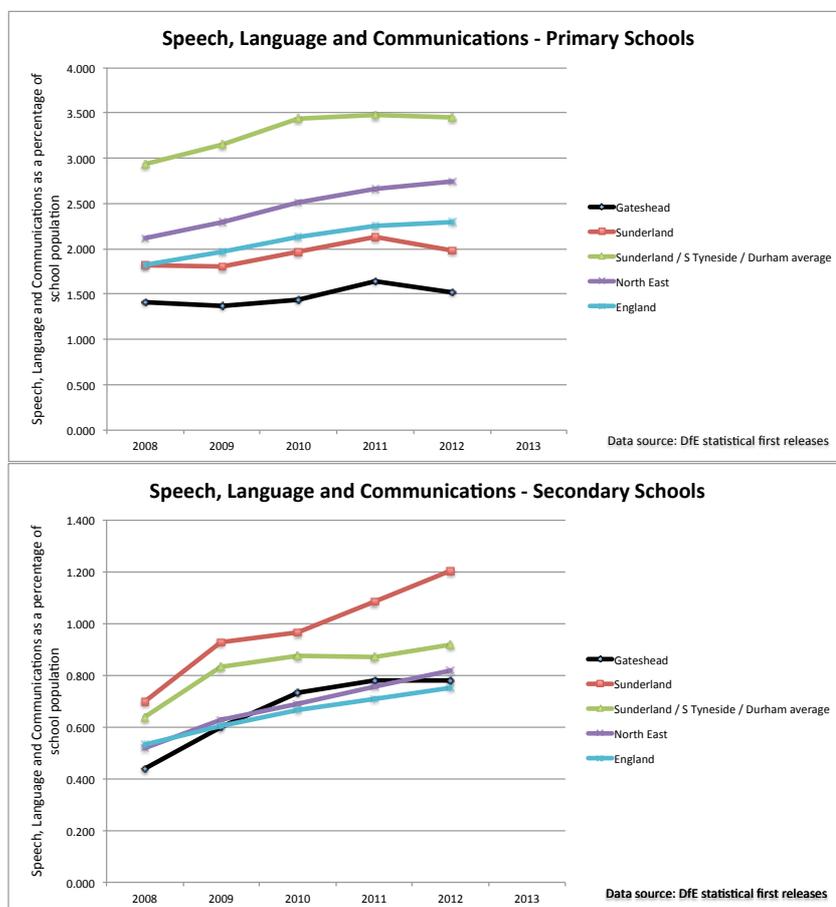
## **Needs assessment: Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD) summary sheet**



### **Key findings**

- There is a slight upward growth trend in Gateshead and nationally in respect of the number of Primary age children who have a statement for BESD.
- There are more children with BESD needs (424 in 2012) than there are for any other type of need.
- The majority of children and young people with BESD are likely to be supported in mainstream schools in Gateshead and nationally.
- There are more children and young people with BESD needs placed in independent schools than for any other category of need.
- Some children with BESD are likely to have additional needs. They are most likely to have learning difficulties and speech language and communication needs.

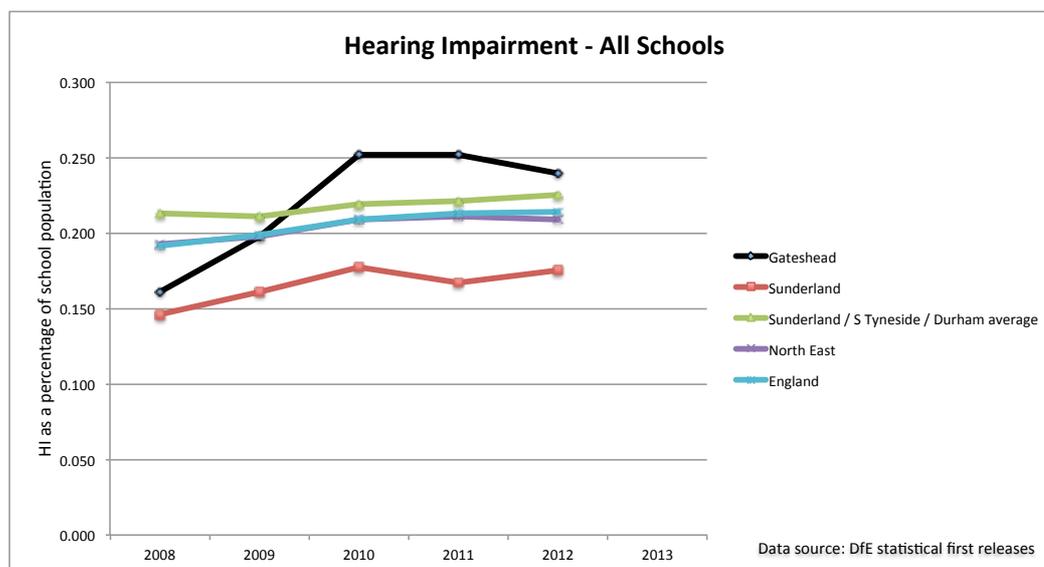
## Needs assessment: speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) summary sheet



### Key findings

- Overall SLCN is the second highest area of primary SEN.
- The number of children and young people identified as having speech, language and communication needs in Gateshead is below the average for the comparator groups.
- Nationally and locally there has been a steady growth of pupils identified as requiring support for SLCN.
- The profile of identified SLCN in Secondary schools closely mirrors the national and regional ones.
- In the Primary phase of education it is consistently the highest area of need and represents in excess of 25% of all SEN at this phase.

## Needs assessment: hearing impairment (HI) summary sheet

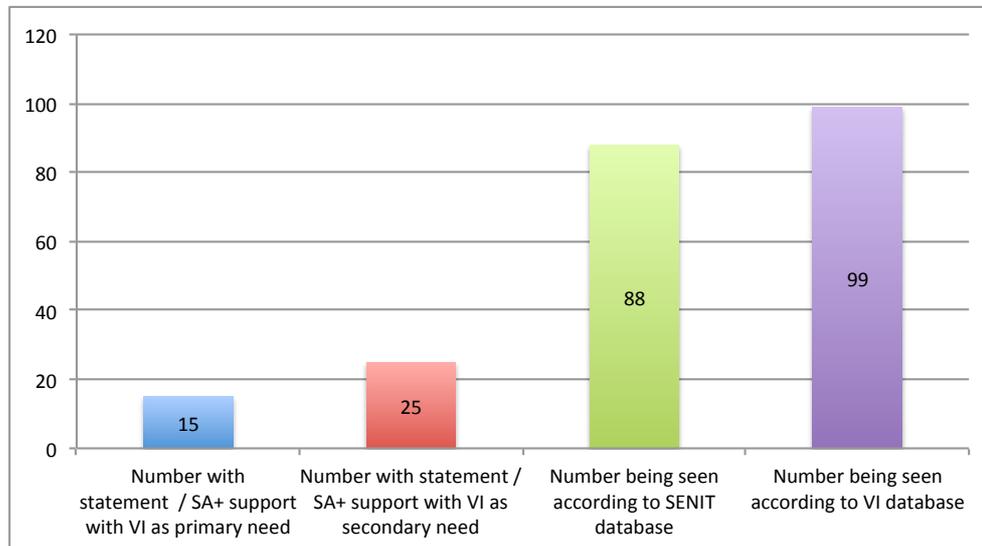


### Key findings

- The lack of a single comprehensive data set inhibits the strategic commissioning for this group of children.
- The overall number of children with hearing impairment identified as a special educational need in Gateshead is above the levels in all the comparative data sets.
- The growth in numbers over the last three years for pupils with statements has apparently levelled off.
- The number of out of authority placements for this group of children is high.
- The eligibility criteria do not have an educational impact measure nor clearly defined exit criteria.

## Needs assessment: visual impairment (VI) summary sheet

### Number of children and young people with VI in Gateshead (2013)



### Key findings

- The lack of a single comprehensive database encapsulating all of the children and young people who have visual impairment inhibits the strategic planning for their needs.
- Blindness and partial sightedness are disabilities that are recognised under equalities legislation.
- The early identification and notification of children who are blind or visually impaired is crucial for meeting their needs and of significant value for strategic commissioning. The systematic recording and sharing of this evidence needs to be strengthened.
- Visual impairment is a low incidence, variable cost need. Appropriate provision has ensured that the needs of most pupils are met within the Authority.
- There is a statutory requirement for a Local Authority to involve a Qualified Teacher of the Visually Impaired who holds a mandatory qualification. There are also specific training and qualifications required for staff who teach braille.
- All blind and some partially sighted children will need to be considered for Education, Health and Care Plans.

## **Needs assessment: multi-sensory impairment (MSI) summary sheet**

Deaf-blindness is a low incidence disability. Figures for prevalence suggest a rate of 3 out of 100,000 live births. The DfE figures for children with MSI in January 2012 shows the following profile:

|                   | <b>Primary</b> | <b>Secondary</b> | <b>Special</b> |
|-------------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|
| <b>National</b>   | 540 (0.2)      | 210 (0.1)        | 215 (0.2)      |
| <b>North East</b> | 20 (0.1)       | 15 (0.1)         | 5 (0.1)        |
| <b>Gateshead</b>  | 0              | *                | *              |

### **Key findings**

Whilst there are currently no children with these needs in Gateshead, the following factors need to be borne in mind for future cases.

1. Need for a clear route of early identification and referral from Health Service colleagues.
2. Continued availability of skilled expertise in the education of deaf and blind children to contribute to an assessment.
3. Recognition of the need for family support from an early age.
4. Recognition of the possibility of an external out of authority placement as the child grows older and it becomes harder to address educational needs.

## **Needs assessment: physical disability (PD) summary sheet**

The Equality Act says that a pupil has a disability if they have a physical impairment which has a long term and substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. It covers disabled children whether they have a statement or not. The purpose of the reasonable adjustment is to avoid substantial disadvantage.

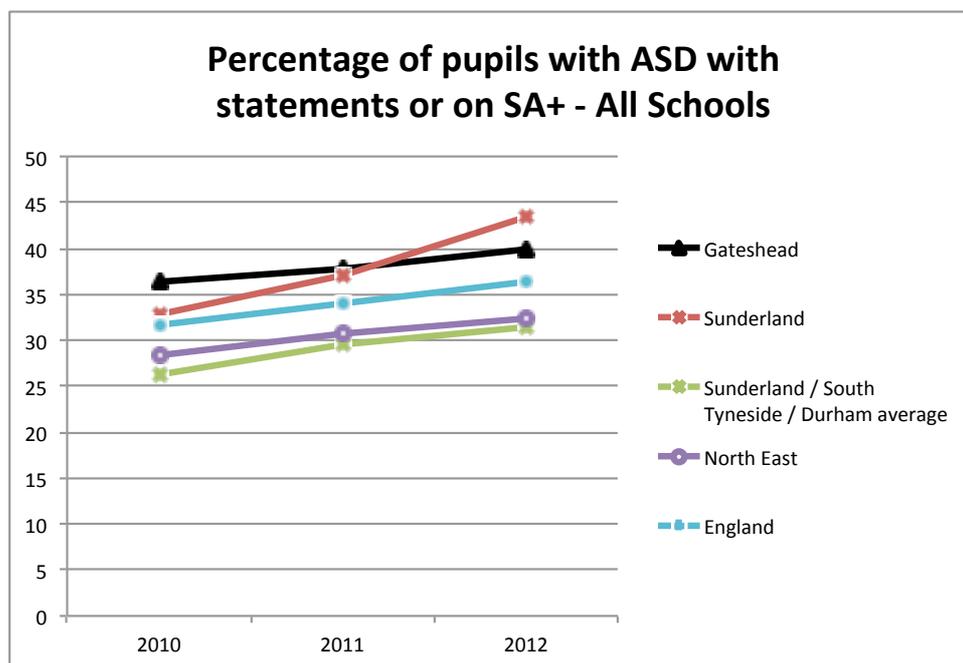
The following are some of the factors which are likely to be taken into account when considering what adjustments it is reasonable for a school to have to make:

- The extent to which support will be provided to the disabled pupil under Part 4 of the Education Act 1996 (the SEN framework)
- The resources of the school and the availability of financial or other assistance
- The financial and other costs of making the adjustment
- The extent to which taking any particular step would be effective in overcoming the substantial disadvantage suffered by a disabled pupil
- The practicability of the adjustment
- The effect of the disability on the individual
- Health and safety requirements
- The need to maintain academic, musical, sporting and other standards
- The interests of other pupils and prospective pupils.

### **Key findings**

- There is a small, but stable, number of pupils who have physical disabilities that affect their learning.
- The number of PD pupils supported in Primary schools appears to be declining, whilst the number supported in Secondary schools appears to be growing.
- Overall, the numbers identified are below the national and regional average.
- The individual nature of physical difficulties and the different underlying cause and prognosis make it difficult to generalise for this group of children and young people.
- There is a steady growth trend in the number of pupils with PD supported by SENIT.
- A single comprehensive financial spreadsheet, embracing the whole range of resources utilised to support this group of learners, would help provide a true understanding of the full cost of intervention.

## Needs assessment: autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) summary sheet



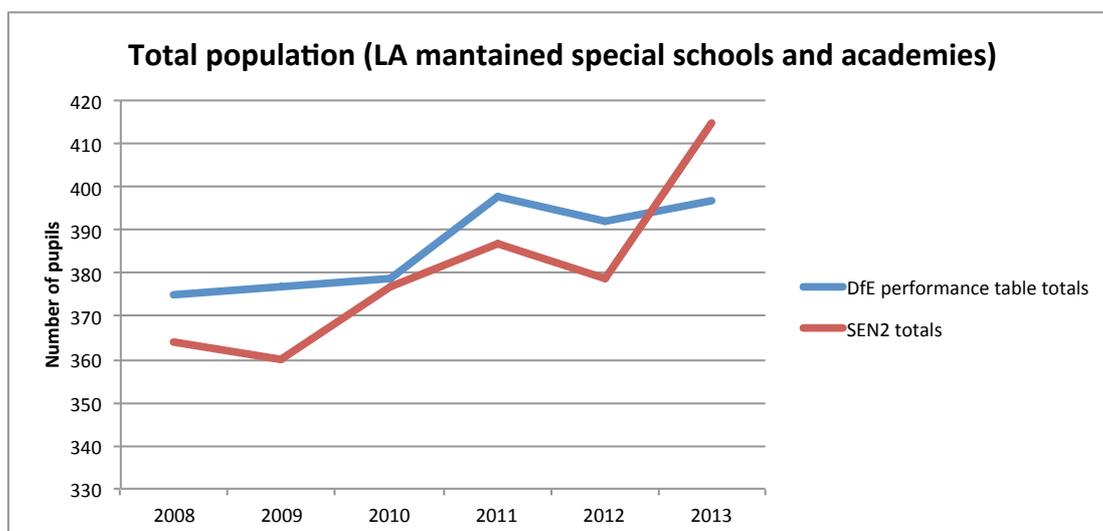
### Key findings

- Autism is an area of need that is growing locally, regionally and nationally.
- More children appear to be considered as having special educational needs on the autistic spectrum in Gateshead than regionally or nationally.
- Unless appropriate action is taken it is likely that there will continue to be a growth of demand in this area.
- The present process of medical diagnosis was reported to be subject to significant delays, and concerns were raised if it matches the best practice model of the NICE standard 128.
- There is a lack of a co-ordinated and cohesive continuum of provision to meet the needs of pupils with ASD.
- The use of a single category of need, ASD, does not assist in understanding the range of needs and making appropriate provision.
- The lack of outcome data inhibits the evaluation of effective provision.

## B1 Summary sheet: SEN provision

- In considering SEN provision it is important to remember that it is the provision that is crucial, not the placement. The placement is the location/school/setting that the child attends . Provision is the learning support and expertise offered in the placement. The same provision can be delivered in different placements.
- It is more strategic to review the continuum of provision for each type of need (such as ASD) than it is to review ARMS or special school placements. Provision for example, for a deaf child can be made by a teacher of the deaf or by the facilities available in an ARMS.
- Appropriate provision may be available in more than one placement. Gateshead has a pattern of placement that embraces:
  - Special schools
  - Planned provision (ARMS)
  - Out of authority schools
  - Mainstream schools and academies.
- It is not always apparent that a clear link between needs and provision determines placement.
- The use of outcome measures is crucial in understanding what type of provision is most effective. It will help both in the strategic commissioning of provision and also to help inform parental choice.
- A significant variable in provision is the availability of skilled expertise in the appropriate areas of need. Sometimes the staff in a particular setting have an appropriate range of expertise in other cases the expertise rests with specialist support available to the setting.
- There is not a clear link between the growth in areas of need and demand for provision. This is demonstrated by the vacancies in ARMS provision.

## **B2 ii Summary sheet: special schools**

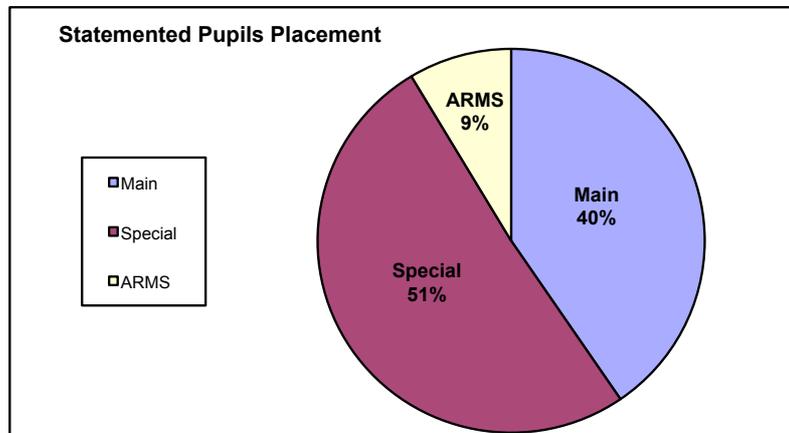


### **Key findings**

- Special schools in Gateshead have a very positive profile of Ofsted judgements.
- Overall the number of pupils placed in special schools has consistently grown over the last five years.
- Some special schools express the view that they could better meet the needs of more pupils if they had better access to therapy provision.

## B3 ii Summary sheet: planned places

### Placement of statemented pupils 2012



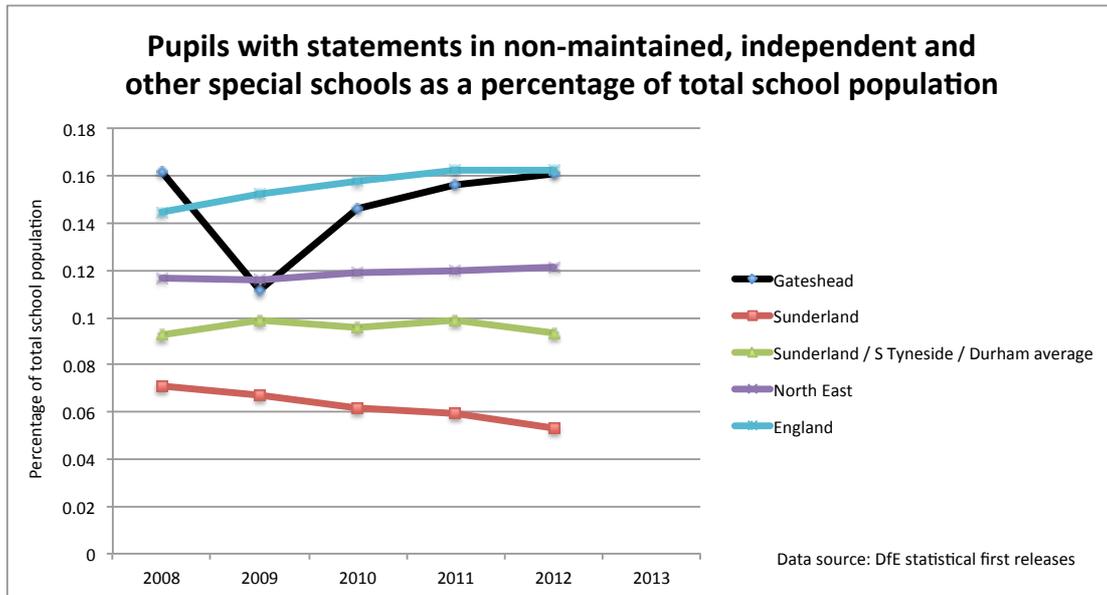
### Key findings

- The lack of clarity of purpose for the ARMS is significant:
  - Are they for pupils with a statement or others?
  - Are they for one specific type of need or any need?
  - Are they short term placements supporting reintegration, or a permanent place?
- There are ARMS for four of the highest areas of need:
  - Autistic spectrum disorder
  - Behavioural, emotional and social difficulties
  - Speech, language and communication needs
  - Moderate learning difficulties.
- Yet there are 35 vacancies, representing 31.8% of the capacity in ARMS catering for the four highest areas of need.
- The overall level of vacancies, 48 out of 166 places, representing 28.8% of capacity, cost the Local Authority £480,000 in non-targeted expenditure.
- No evidence is collected, nor was found during the study, that a placement in the ARMS for the biggest areas of needs leads to demonstrated progress towards outcomes.
- Most of the ARMS cannot be considered as providing specialist support as they do not employ staff with specialist qualifications and their access to specialisms is limited.
- The dedication, enthusiasm and commitment of many of the staff in the ARMS, including their host leadership team, is a valuable asset.

## **B5 ii Summary sheet: behaviour support services**

- Behaviour support is made in a number of settings by a number of different providers.
- The services provided by the Gateshead Behaviour Support Service embrace home and hospital tuition, pupil referral and school support which is offered as a traded service.
- Behaviour support is also provided through statements, special school placements, out of authority placements and educational psychologists.
- All elements of behaviour support need to be effectively co-ordinated through a clear continuum of provision and support that is understood by all partners and schools.
- An appropriate range of outcome measures should be collaboratively developed to enable the effectiveness of support provided to be evaluated. The same outcome measures should be used across all services and settings.

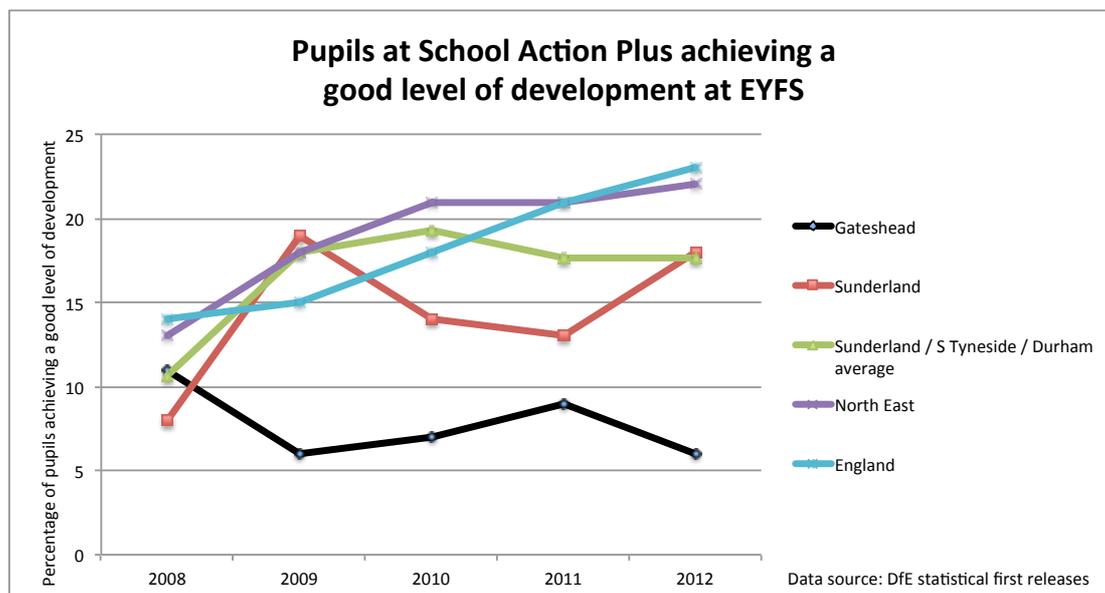
## B6 ii Independent special schools summary sheet



### Key findings

- The number of out of authority placements in Gateshead is rising and is at or above the level of other authorities.
- Gateshead currently spends in the region of £1,500,000 on out of authority placements.
- There are a number of drivers that indicate there could be increased pressure to seek residential placements
  - i. the increase in demand for specialised provision to meet the needs of pupils with ASD
  - ii. the extension of the remit of responsibility for young people up to 25
  - iii. the emphasis in the new Code of practice of a requirement to meet the needs of children and young people who have been involved in offending
  - iv. the explicit right for parents to name an independent school as their preferred choice in the new code of practice.
- The most frequent needs featured in out of authority placements are behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- Autism is the second highest type of need that has required an out of authority placement. It is also the area of highest growth.
- Anecdotal evidence, from three different sources in focus groups and interviews, suggest that lack of therapy provision within the Authority led to a number of placements.

## C2 Summary sheet



### Key findings

- Gateshead identifies significantly fewer children with special educational needs under five than the national average.
- Gateshead children with SEN are less likely to do well in the Early Years Foundation Stage assessment than pupils in other authorities.
- There are significant differences between the SEN and SENIT databases in respect of:
  - The number of children with SEN under five
  - The primary needs of those children.
- The lack of a single database that accurately records the number of pupils under five with SEN inhibits a full understanding of the range and pattern of need in this area.
- Medical services have an important role to play in the early identification and notification of young children with SEN. This information is of use both operationally and strategically but is not always communicated effectively.

## **D1 Summative recommendations**

1. In order to ensure that financial data is helpfully used to inform decision making it is recommended that models of cost attribution are based on actuals rather than proxy indicators.
2. In order to have a full understanding of the cost involved in addressing each area of need it is recommended that all costs associated with an area of need are coded in a way that can be brought together a single financial out-turn.
3. In order that a value for money evaluation can be made by the commissioner it is recommended that outcome and destination data is used to see what provision / which placements achieve the best outcomes at what price.
4. In order to ensure that risk is minimised any identified areas of risk should be reviewed by the financial team and the SEN commissioner. If it is agreed they are a potential area of risk, then a monitoring and review strategy should be agreed.
5. In order to ensure resources are effectively targeted the banded funding framework needs to be reviewed and consideration given to 'narrower' bands, or adopting a 'nearest' band model.

## **Recommendations**

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**The report should not be considered to represent the views or policies of Gateshead Council.**

### **Recommendations: specific learning difficulties**

1. In order to ensure that effective provision is made, systematic records and analysis of outcomes for pupils with specific learning difficulties should be kept and used.
2. In order to ensure resources for special educational needs are appropriately targeted and recycled, exit criteria should be developed and implemented to remove support and encourage independent learning in pupils who are functioning at an appropriate level.

### **Recommendations: moderate learning difficulties**

1. In order to address the anomaly of different resourcing for children with apparently the same need; consideration needs to be given to agreeing a single funding model in partnership with schools. It is suggested that all MLD pupils could be educated in mainstream.
2. In order to ensure consistency in the placement of pupils (If a range of alternate provision is maintained); consideration needs to be given to understanding what profile of need is best met in which type of provision.
3. In order to ensure informed decision making determines the profile of resourcing and placement an urgent exercise should be considered to look at attainment levels and outcome destinations for children and young people with MLD.

### **Recommendation: severe learning difficulties**

1. In order to evaluate the effectiveness of provision made for children with SLD, the LA should work with the special schools to agree a profile of outcome measures and destination reports.

### **Recommendation: profound and multiple learning difficulties**

1. Individual outcome measures are developed for children with profound and/or multiple learning difficulties.

### **Recommendations: behaviour, emotional and social difficulties**

1. In order to ensure that a comprehensive commissioning strategy is achieved for pupils with BESD is developed, a full resourcing profile drawing together all the financial strands, should be compiled to enable any strategic reallocation to be comprehensive.
2. In order that the effectiveness of behaviour support can be appreciated and evaluated, all those involved in this area (Behaviour Support Services, special schools, educational psychologists, SEN service) should work together to develop and agree an appropriate range of outcome measures that can be collected systematically, analysed and reported on.
3. In order to ensure consistency is maintained across the full continuum of behaviour support, consideration should be given to the Behaviour Support Service having a more overt role in linking with special schools and SEN behavioural decisions including out of authority placements.
4. In order to ensure value for money, a cost benefit analysis, including financial services and appropriate professionals, needs to be carried out to evaluate if increasing special school provision within the authority would reduce the dependency on out of authority placements and, in effect, be cost neutral.

### **Recommendation: speech, language and communication needs**

1. In order that the effectiveness of any support and intervention for pupils with SLCN can be measured, the LA and specialist services should work together to agree an appropriate range of outcome measures. These should include quantitative standardised data relating to language development and attainment, and qualitative data relating to satisfaction of service delivery.

### **Recommendations: hearing impairment**

1. In order to ensure that a comprehensive data set is available for an informed needs analysis, steps must be taken to bring together all the information into a single location.
2. In order to ensure that intervention is targeted only on those children whose needs require it, a review of the current eligibility criteria,

reflecting on the impact of HI on educational progress and exit criteria should be undertaken.

3. In order to ensure that the interventions made are effective, the systematic recording and reporting of outcome measures must progress.
4. In order to ensure that the needs of more pupils are effectively met within the Authority, a 'lessons learned' review of all out of authority placements should be undertaken and a clear placement policy developed and implemented.

### **Recommendations: visual impairment**

1. In order to enable effective commissioning, a single, comprehensive database embracing data from the Health Service, SENIT, and SEN teams needs to be established.
2. In order to ensure that the LA can maximise the use of information concerning the early identification and notification of children who are blind and visually impaired, arrangements need to be established with Health Services concerning appropriate notification. Notification processes between the CWD team, SENIT and the SEN team also need to be secure.
3. In order to evaluate the effectiveness of services, inform parental choice and inform commissioning, arrangements need to be made to systematically record outcomes. Outcome information should include educational attainment outcomes, SEN outcomes and post school destinations.
4. In order to ensure that the VI service is meeting the requirements of the LA, a formal service level agreement setting out standards and expectations, including reporting arrangements, needs to be established.
5. In order to facilitate a common approach to special education through closer working within the authority, a pattern of regular (at least annual) meetings, to a predetermined agenda and with planned outcomes, should be arranged between SEN commissioners and the VI service.
6. In order to ensure that the appropriate skills are available within the authority to meet the needs of blind and partially sighted children, a clear policy should be established and resourced to enable the acquisition of mandatory qualifications in the teaching of pupils with visual impairment and the teaching of braille.
7. In order to ensure that the Visual Impairment team only addresses needs considered a priority by the authority, an indication of their

educational progress should be integrated into the eligibility criteria for all children who are not registered blind or partially sighted. Once the threshold of educational progress has been agreed and the caseload reviewed against it, a decision can be made as to the appropriate size of the team.

### **Recommendations: physical disability**

1. In order to ensure that there is a full understanding of the cost of supporting pupils with physical difficulties a single spreadsheet embracing the total spectrum of cost should be created.
2. In order to understand the apparent growth of pupils being identified with PD and supported by SENIT, an independent analysis of the caseload should be undertaken to see:
  - i. What are the causes of the PD?
  - ii. What is the impact of these difficulties on learning?
  - iii. Is the impact sufficiently severe to require intervention?
  - iv. What impact does the involvement of the specialist service achieve?

### **Recommendations: autistic spectrum disorders**

1. In order to address the challenge of delayed diagnosis:
  - a. Explore in partnership with Health commissioners what are the reasons for delay, and if the best practice multi disciplinary assessment model is being used.  
And/or
  - b. as clinical diagnosis does not in itself inform educational provision remove the lack of diagnosis as an inhibitor for placements.
2. In order to ensure that the planned profile of provision matches need and better information is available for strategic commissioning, the LA should consider working with appropriate specialists and professionals, in reworking the eligibility criteria to subdivide the category (in a similar way to the BESD category).
3. In order to address the apparent 'over identification' of children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders it is recommended that the eligibility criteria are reviewed, with the appropriate engagement of partners and professionals. In particular consideration needs to be given to the hierarchy of choice of primary need. Guidance should be developed for schools to help ensure they allocate children appropriately to this category when recording needs.

4. In order to address the risk for growth of demand for placements and resources for young people aged 16-25, priority needs to be given to working out an appropriate strategy for this group in partnership with adult services.
5. In order to ensure that the needs of this group of children are appropriately and consistently met, a continuum of provision needs to be consolidated. Placements along this continuum of provision need to be made consistently.
6. In order to ensure that the needs of pupils with ASD are met, appropriate outcome measures need to be developed and progress to achieving these monitored, analysed and reported.

### **Overarching recommendation: SEN provision**

1. In order to ensure the appropriate provision profile is available to meet the needs of pupils with ASD, BESD and MLD, a strategic review of the continuum of provision and the best mix should be undertaken in partnership with special schools, ARMS, mainstream schools, specialist services and parents.

### **Recommendations concerning special schools**

1. In order that the LA, parents and others can understand and appreciate the successes that pupils in special schools achieve, an agreed profile of outcome measures and post school destination should be prepared, systematically recorded and appropriately reported.
2. In order that a full continuum of provision for pupils with special educational needs is supported and maintained, the LA should consider utilising the knowledge and skills in special schools to provide support for mainstream schools. This is particularly important where there is not the equivalent expertise available from SENIT.
3. In order to minimise the risks of increased demand for special school places occurring, as a consequence of changes in the legislative and funding frameworks, the LA should develop and initiate a communication strategy that would ensure headteachers, SENCOs, SEN governors and parents knew what resources were available to them and what would be the reasonable expectations.
4. In order to maximise the potential of the Comparison and Analysis of Special Pupil Attainment (CASPA) profile data that the special schools utilise, the LA should explore with them how this could be developed, shared and used strategically.

5. In order to ensure that special schools are providing an appropriate provision for the most vulnerable children, consideration should be given to how best special schools could be developed as a targeted resource for pupils with ASD.
6. In order to ensure that the needs of more children can be effectively met within Authority maintained provision, the LA should review, in partnership with Health Service commissioners and special schools, the arrangements for access to appropriate therapies.
7. In order to address anomalies identified in respect of pupils with MLD, the LA should consider as part of a strategic review of the continuum of provision for these children and young people the role special schools should play in providing provision.

### **Recommendations concerning planned places**

1. In order to ensure that provision is driven by need rather than input the future of Additionally Resourced Mainstream School (ARMS) should be considered in the context of a continuum of provision relating to each area of need.
2. In order that any development progress, there needs to be clarity as to:
  - Whether they are specialist or generic provision
  - Whether the pupils are on the roll or not
  - Whether they only take pupils with specific needs or accommodate a range of needs.
3. In order that a strategic future of ARMS is progressed, the whole learning community, not just ARMS heads, needs to be actively engaged in the debate about their future.
4. In order that there is a shared and understood clarity of purpose, all ARMS provision should:
  - i. be formally commissioned setting out the requirements and expectations of the Local Authority, the resources and responsibilities of the Local Authority and those of the Governing Body
  - ii. a press and publicity campaign utilising the council website, electronic communication and paper documentation should set out clearly and plainly the purpose of ARMS, the route of access to them and the resource they provide.
5. In order to provide stability of provision all ARMS should have a fixed term contract with a set review date. (This would probably require the School Forum endorsement as it would be committing resources for the future financial years).

6. In order to ensure that the ARMS do provide specialist support, a resourced programme of training and development should be designed following a Training Needs Analysis, and enhanced access to specialist teachers and educational psychologists should be built into the model.
7. In order to ensure that the ARMS are effective, an outcomes based model of evaluation should be initiated at the start of the new phase of their development.

## **Recommendations concerning centrally commissioned services**

### **SENIT**

1. In order to meet the needs of children with special educational needs the LA needs to retain a core of specialist staff who can provide expertise to support schools and parents.
2. In order to make the most effective use of resources, specialist teams should be seen as part of an integrated and co-ordinated continuum of provision working to support each area of need.
3. In order that the service operates strategically and fulfils the requirements of the Local Authority; there should be a written commissioning contract which specifies what outcomes are expected in each area of need. This will be more effective if it is developed together.
4. In order to ensure that best practice in commission is followed; the Quality Standards set by the DCSF (2008) should be used to inform the commissioning of SENIT.
5. In order to ensure that the intervention is effective, the LA needs to work with the specialist services to develop an appropriate range of outcome measures that are collected systematically and reported on regularly.
6. In order to ensure that as many children and young people as possible are educated within their community; amongst the outcome measures will be expectations relating to out of authority placements.
7. In order to ensure that support is focussed for the optimal time; exit criteria for all needs should be developed reflecting a reduction and cessation of support when appropriate educational outcomes are achieved.
8. In order to include perception measure in the evaluation of effective services; SENIT should further develop, consistently implement, analyse and report on service user satisfaction measures.

9. In order to ensure the services coordinate effectively with others providing support to the same groups of children; a pattern of coordinating meetings needs to be agreed and implemented.
10. In order to ensure that the SENIT teams retain the necessary level of training and expertise to deliver effective interventions, a staff training and development strategy should be developed, implemented and resourced.
11. In order to ensure schools continue to understand and value the contribution the services make, agreement should be sought with the schools forum to present an annual report focused on the outcomes the services achieve.

### **Hearing impairment**

12. In order to address a possible over identification of children and young people with hearing impairment:
  - i. eligibility criteria should be revised to focus on better educational and language outcomes
  - ii. clear exit criteria, stating when intervention should cease or be reduced should be developed
  - iii. the caseload should be rigorously reviewed, and independently monitored, against the strengthened criteria and if appropriate the establishment reduced
  - iv. the LA should undertake a benchmarking exercise with its three nearest statistical neighbours to ascertain the size and range of their HI services.
13. In order to ensure that a seamless, coordinated service for Hearing Impairment is delivered within the Authority; consideration should be given to further integrating the ARMS provision at High Spenningswood with SENIT.
14. In order to ensure that the effectiveness of the service can be evaluated: outcome based evaluation criteria needs to be developed.
15. In order to ensure that children and young people with Hearing Impairment have their needs met within the Authority where appropriate; a support strategy that provides for exceptional intervention should be developed with SENS.

## **Visual impairment**

16. In order to ensure that the VI services are effective, an appropriate range of outcome measures, including educational attainment, should be developed, systematically collected, and reported.
17. In order to ensure that the VI services are focused on children with the greatest need, the eligibility and exit criteria should be amended to embrace educational progression data and demonstrate a clear process of systematically tailing off intervention when appropriate.

## **Portage / early intervention**

18. In order to ensure that support for very young children is effectively co-ordinated all the relevant services, working with Early Years settings and other providers, should together develop a strategy for intervention and for the co-ordination of services.
19. In order to ensure that intervention is effective, the same group should agree on an appropriate range of outcome measures for early intervention.

## **Autistic spectrum disorder**

20. In order to ensure that an effective service is provided by children and young people with ASD; the Local Authority should:
  - i. consider establishing a coordinated framework of support for ASD children embracing SENIT staff, EPS, ARMS and special schools
  - ii. ensure that specialist staff delivering services to ASD are supported by appropriate training to acquire qualifications to support their expertise.

## **Speech, language and communication**

21. In order to ensure services for children are effective, they should be delivered within a clear strategic framework setting out a continuum of provision and the co-ordination of services.
22. In order to ensure that the effectiveness for children and young people with SLCN is evaluated consistently, an agreed set of outcome measures, including both standardised academic and language measures and qualitative measures, should be developed, systematically collected, and reported.

## **Physical difficulties**

23. In order to ensure a coordinated service supporting children and young people with Physical Difficulties consideration should be given to a closer integration of the SENIT functions with the ARMS facility and the Cedars School. It would be appropriate to consider the assessment, outreach and support functions being delivered on behalf of the Local Authority by the ARMS or special school.

## **Recommendations regarding Behaviour Support Services**

1. In order that the effectiveness of behaviour support can be appreciated and evaluated, all those involved in this area (Behaviour Support Services, special schools, educational psychologists, SEN service) should work together to develop and agree an appropriate range of outcome measures that can be collected systematically, analysed and reported on.
2. In order to ensure consistency is maintained across the full continuum of behaviour support, consideration should be given to the Behaviour Support Service having a more overt role in linking with special schools and SEN behavioural decisions including out of authority placements.
3. In order to ensure the quality of alternative provision is at an appropriate level, the developmental work within the Authority on Quality Standards should be completed and implemented.

## **Recommendations regarding other areas of provision**

### **Independent special schools**

1. In order to have a better understanding of why special school placements come about the LA should undertake an exercise in 'reverse engineering' the case files of the children currently placed to identify the factors that led to the placement and how they could be avoided.
2. If the reverse engineering review confirms the perception that some placements have come about because of a lack of available therapies the Commissioner should review the arrangements for commissioning these services. This would not necessarily require the commissioning of additional therapy time it might be that the existing services that are currently commissioned would be redirected to fulfill a required role or it might be that joint commissioning dialogue with Health Service commissioners could lead to a reconfiguration as to how they provide services.

3. In order to progress to a shared strategy on the use of independent schools; the commissioners should convene groups of relevant specialist teachers, educational psychologists and special school staff to consider what action can be taken to work together to ensure that the needs of more children are met within the Authority.
4. In order to reduce the need for an external placement, by ensuring that appropriate provision is available within the Authority the Authority should consider the pattern of provision that is available for children with autism or BESD.
5. In order to enable the LA to make appropriate provision to reduce the need for out of authority placements a system of early identification should be introduced. Specialist teachers, educational psychologists and others should be required to notify the SEN commissioning team if the possibility of a residential placement is being considered so that they can consider commissioning additional provision if required.
6. In order to limit the placement of children out of authority with hearing and vision needs the commissioning of these services should contain the specific requirement to minimize the number of places and to report on the profile of placements on an annual basis.
7. In order to ensure that the needs of children are being met an extended review of out of county placements should take place prior to each transition point. If the evidence suggests that the pupil is not making satisfactory progress towards achieving the stated outcomes then consideration for a change of placement should take place.
8. In order to ensure that the effectiveness of independent school placements are monitored they should be required to produce outcome data on pupils, including national curriculum performance and rates of progress. The destiny of such pupils post 16 should be monitored and reported on as an indicator of effective outcomes.
9. In order to strengthen the Authorities position when faced with a request for an out of authority placement (and to help inform parental choice) the LA should build up a profile of the successful delivery of outcomes in its own schools. Outcome measures should include National Curriculum performance, success in meeting outcome criteria identified in statements/EHC Plans and post school destinations, including NEET.
10. In order to strengthen the authorities position if facing a request to extend an out of authority placement beyond 16 or 18 the statement/EHC Plan should have clear outcome specifications for the pupil. This would enable the Authority to legitimately challenge any new outcomes that were added to extend provision.

11. In order to draw upon best practice liaise with your nearest statistical neighbor (Sunderland) to see how they have sustained a consistent downward trend in their use of such placements.

### **Jewish schools**

12. A memorandum of understanding should be drawn up between the Local Authority and the Jewish Community setting out a shared understanding as to respective responsibilities.

### **Educational Psychologists**

13. In order to address the anomaly of funding of educational psychologist service, the commissioner should either:
  - i. transfer the resources to the 'other educational and community block'or
  - ii. develop in discussion with the service what outcomes SENS want from the EPS for the equivalent of 2 FTE staff.

### **Speech and Language Therapists**

14. In order to ensure that therapeutic specialists are used appropriately and appropriately resourced, a joint commissioning strategy should be developed with Health Service colleagues that specifies:
  - i. the level of therapeutic services
  - ii. the resourcing of therapeutic services
  - iii. the priority activities of therapeutic services
  - iv. the agreed outcomes that will be reported on.

### **Recommendations: commissioning Early Years support provision**

1. In order to ensure that there is a co-ordinated and comprehensive strategy for the identification and support of special educational needs, all the practitioners engaged in this area of work need to meet together to develop:
  - A shared understanding of the complementary roles they each can play and how each service can best contribute to meeting the needs of young children.
  - A model for a single database which will capture all children from early concern and can be used by all services delivering to children under five; including children's centres, Health Services, PVI's, SENIT, SENCOs and Educational Psychologists.

- Agreement as to how progress of this group can best be measured and the effectiveness of intervention be reflected in outcome measures. (Given the risk of false positives and false negatives in early diagnosis, the accuracy of early referrals and diagnosis should also be monitored and reported on.)
- An integrated pathway of early support for children and families and a communication strategy for sharing this.

### **Recommendations: commissioning of other High Needs Block areas**

1. In order to ensure that financial data is helpfully used to inform decision making it is recommended that models of cost attribution are based on actuals rather than proxy indicators.
2. In order to have a full understanding of the cost involved in addressing each area of need it is recommended that all costs associated with an area of need are coded in a way that can be brought together a single financial out-turn.
3. In order that a value for money evaluation can be made by the commissioner it is recommended that outcome and destination data is used to see what provision / which placements achieve the best outcomes at what price.
4. In order to ensure that risk is minimised any identified areas of risk should be reviewed by the financial team and the SEN commissioner. If it is agreed they are a potential area of risk, then a monitoring and review strategy should be agreed.
5. In order to ensure resources are effectively targeted the banded funding framework needs to be reviewed and consideration given to 'narrower' bands, or adopting a 'nearest' band model.

### **Recommendations: special education equipment**

1. In order to ensure proper cost attribution and accountability it would be helpful if costs could be directly associated to the area of need (e.g. VI or PMLD) and the service managers informed.
2. In order to ensure effective use of resources a working group should explore the viability of establishing a database and equipment store that would allow resources to be recycled and resources reduced.
3. In order to ensure costs fall appropriately on the Local Authority budget a joint commissioning protocol should be established with Health Services which indicates agreement on which service has responsibility

for which area and establishes a protocol to address the issue of one service (e.g. physiotherapist from health) expecting expenditure from the other.

### **Recommendations: parents and special educational needs**

1. In order to ensure that working with parents enhances the commissioning process the Local Authority should undertake a brief strategic review of this, in partnership with parents.
2. In order to ensure that they are fit for purpose, any commissioning arrangements for Parent Partnerships and Parent Carer forums will need to be reviewed to ensure that there are clear expectations, reporting arrangements and outcome measures.
3. In order to meet the requirements set out in the new Draft Code, the Local Authority will have to arrange for an independent disagreement resolution service that meets the standards set out in section 7.3 of the Code, and ensure that independent mediation and advice is available for parents to the standards set out in section 7.4 of the new code.
4. In order to comply with new legislative requirements all literature produced to support parents, including web pages, will have to be appropriately revised.
5. If the strategic review confirms that there is an issue relating to the sensitivity of staff working with parents then the Local Authority should consider the need for staff training and development.
6. The Local Authority could help develop a person specification for the chair of the Parent Cover forum which could be the time a person can serve as chair. The Local Authority could also help develop a shared strategy that would empower the forum to be able to engage with more parents.

### **Recommendation: ethnicity and special needs**

1. In order to ensure that pupils for ethnic backgrounds are not underestimated or over estimated it is recommended that there is a field on the SEN database for ethnicity.