

# SEND

Westmorland and Furness  
SEND Partnership

## SEND Partnership Learning from Practice Bulletin June 2025



## Welcome to the first Westmorland and Furness Council – SEND Partnership Learning from Practice Bulletin.

SEND Practice Week was held 28 April to 2 May 2025 and aimed to evaluate and seek assurance of the quality and impact of the SEND system in supporting improved outcomes for children, young people and positive lived experiences for them and their families in Westmorland and Furness.

This bulletin is a response to the SEND Practice Week with the purpose of supporting the Local Area SEND Partnership in sharing and developing positive practice across the council and our partners.

For SEND leaders, commissioners, service managers and practitioners, the purpose of the bulletin is to share some key learning points from practice as identified through the quality assurance, audits and observations undertaken during practice week. In addition, the bulletin includes links to relevant resources and research to support learning provided locally and nationally.

The April SEND Practice Week focus on learning was Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs and Trauma Informed Practice, which is the focus for this edition.

## SEND Practice Week – What did we find?

Our EHCP multi-agency quality assurance tell us that:

The overall quality of EHCPs is higher for newly issued plans than for longer-standing EHCPs which have been amended following annual reviews, which demonstrates the positive impact of ongoing training over the last 18 months, e.g. more clearly stated needs in B, and specificity in F was seen.

### Child and Young Person Voice

While it was good to see that section A was overall more fully populated in this round of EHCP quality assurance, child and young person voice continues to be an area for improvement. In some cases, views and aspirations had been provided by families or professionals, rather than representing first-person authentic voice and quality of outcomes was thus negatively impacted.

### Needs and Provision

SEMH needs and outcomes in some cases could have been more positively framed to take account of underlying special educational needs, such as Autism, ADHD, trauma and communication needs.

Most QA respondents felt that special educational needs were clearly detailed in section B, however closer scrutiny and discussion uncovered some areas for development: strengths should describe skills, knowledge and competences, not interests; needs must clearly describe difficulties, rather than describing what help is needed, (e.g., X 'needs' support to ... is ill-defined provision); impact of SEN on learning and engagement in the classroom lacked sufficient detail; and in some cases attainment information and working levels were not stated clearly, hence key stage outcomes were ill-defined.

Quality of sections C (health needs) and D (care needs) varied and quality was lower where advice had not been requested and/or received. This was mirrored in health and care provision sections (G; H1/2). Health needs in some cases stated diagnoses or referral pathways rather than outlining needs relating to diagnoses and their impact on learning and engagement. Missing written advice for children with social care involvement led to EHCP inaccuracies. Reasons underlying gaps included missing sections in annual review meeting documentation. Tightened advice processes are essential.

## Outcomes and 'Golden Thread'

Capture of authentic child voice is essential for outcomes to be truly person-centred, hence Golden Thread was lacking where child voice was reported by others. Outcomes also varied in the extent to which they were SMART and preparation for adulthood outcomes were another development area.

### Overall

To summarise, improved capture of authentic child and young person voice (including aspirations), clear articulation of positively framed needs, improved person-centred SMART outcomes, and PfA from the earliest years to enable effective transitions, are key focus areas which will enable strengthened 'Golden Thread' in EHCsPs.

#### **Our SEND multi-agency audits tell us that:**

The purpose of the multi-agency audit is to provide a more detailed analysis of the outcomes of children and young people with SEND and the lived experiences of them and their families, fostering reflective practice and shared learning across education, health, and care over the past two years.

When considering the overall judgement in respect of the children's/young people's experience of services and how they have contributed to positive outcomes, two children/young people were judged to have had positive experiences, two inconsistent experiences, while significant concerns/significant weaknesses was the overall judgement for one child/young person.

Areas of strength included some effective transition planning in which the young person's and family's voice, wishes and long term aims was central to decisions. One child was noted to be making good progress to outcomes with effective graduated response assessments and support in place while awaiting multi-agency assessment. Another family reported that effective partnership work including a timely referral to speech and language therapy service led to an autism diagnosis.

Areas for improvement included the need for timely referrals to service professionals. Annual review timeliness misconceptions were noted by others. Communication gaps were a concern, with emails not having been returned and voice messages ignored leaving some feeling unsupported. Local Offer community clubs and SEND provision offers were also reportedly inconsistent, especially for those whose needs were complex (requiring specialist therapeutic provision). This left some parents feeling their child's needs were not fully supported. Transition from children's to adult's health service was also cited as an area of concern.

#### **What needs to happen?**

- Strengthening of annual review paperwork with information for families about what to expect and how to get support.
- Improved timely communication.
- Additional support/training to be given to professionals to ensure statutory duties are met.
- To effectively support the young person through transition, ensuring child and young person voice is at the centre of decision making.
- Additional support/training to be given to ensure professionals fulfil duties consistently.
- Ongoing work to develop the TSBA and Local Offer opportunities.

## **Our EHCP Annual Review meeting practice observations are telling us:**

In the eight annual review meetings observed, professionalism was demonstrated by EHC coordinators and SEND managers who offered guidance regarding statutory duties within annual review meetings. In some cases, where meetings were late, plans made ensured adherence to decision timescales. Suggestions were made respectfully where proposed amendments to EHCPs lacked compliance, and expectations were mostly well managed regarding next steps and decisions. More work is needed however to ensure all professionals fully understand and adhere to duties.

While most SENCOs had spent significant time preparing detailed information to complete annual review pre-meeting documentation, some areas could have been strengthened:

- Authentic child / young person voice was mostly not captured in updates to section A. Parent/ carer voice was evidenced, but in the third person rather than first person voice. In some cases, children attended reviews and positive relationships enabled them to share views verbally. More advance work with trusted adults could have strengthened views. Child / young person voice was weaker for non-verbal children and those with more complex SEMH needs.
- Little information was provided regarding whether special educational needs, and health and care needs remained appropriate or required amendment. It was unclear clear if gaps were due to no professional involvement, or no information having been requested/ received.
- With the exception of SENCO reports, few written report updates were evidenced from involved education, health and care professionals to inform the annual review.
- A lack of preparing for adulthood information was provided to inform effective transitions.
- Some of the information included was not relevant and could have been summarised (e.g., detailed subject reports were more appropriate for parents' evenings than for EHCP reviews).

Documentation gaps were mostly explained by needed updates to the current annual review meeting documentation templates to include sections for explicit capture of all required information, gaps in advice processes, and lack of capacity by health and care professionals to attend meetings.

SENCOs and headteachers chaired the meetings with confidence and both their professionalism and the highly inclusive partnership working between schools and families evidenced were key strengths. In feedback afterwards, some SENCOs felt that a prototype agenda would be useful as they acknowledged that approaches varied. In most meetings, progress towards outcomes was considered prior to outlining updates to parent/ carer and child / young person voice, special educational needs and changes to professional involvement which meant context was missing. This was seen less in meetings where the chair used a proposed amended EHCP to capture updates, as they followed the EHCP sections from A-K. Some SENCOs who provided a proposed amended EHCP later discussed ways where information can be streamlined, and some asked for documentation exemplars.

Evidence of creative graduated response approaches was observed, informed by SENCOs own resources and education advice (e.g., from EPs), with some good examples of bespoke provision in place to meet complex SEMH needs. However, gaps in specialist therapeutic provision was noted for one child known to CAMHS due to lack of availability of therapy. Such issues have been followed up with the aim to ensure the right support is put in place. Social Care updates were also sought.



Professionals agreed that new annual review meeting documentation templates, with guidance, completed exemplars and an agenda would enable everyone to fulfil responsibilities appropriately. New child/ young person voice templates with guidance, exemplars and resource links are also required, to also be designed for applicability to the new EHCP template. SENCOs have volunteered to be involved in task and finish groups to re-design templates for their education phase specialisms alongside other stakeholders, with templates for EYFS, primary, secondary and post-16 phases.

**Feedback from children, young people and their families tells us that:**

Strength of parent and carer relationships was noted with SEND partnership professionals, including with education setting leaders, EHC coordinators, Speech and Language Therapy Service, EPs and SENDIASS. Some creative and bespoke provision arrangements were evidenced within schools/ colleges, with strong relational approaches appreciated, and a strong sense of belonging.

While school communication was a relative strength, some parents services were not sufficiently joined up. Communication regarding EHCP processes, what to expect, who does what and timescales was mentioned as inconsistent, and one parent reported a poor staff change handover.

Where parents and carers indicated concerns about barriers to progress towards outcomes, and poor lived experiences due to lack of provision in place, for this group of children and young people with SEMH primary needs, this was mainly linked to lack of specialist mental health therapies for children and young people with significant SEMH needs. Other areas of concern included lack of enhanced transition planning, waits for neurodevelopmental pathway diagnoses, lack of support while waiting, poor transition to adult health services, and some negative impacts of SEMH needs within the home.

## SEMH – Research and Resource Links

An overview of Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Practice Masterclasses

### MASTERCLASS 1 - Embedding the 'All About Me' 1-page profile

Video link to recorded session:

As part of the SEND Practice Week, a masterclass was delivered in respect of 'Embedding the Westmorland and Furness All About Me 1-page profile'. The session explores how professionals working across settings and services can use this co-produced tool to consistently offer the right support for children and young people with wide-ranging needs and can be accessed through the following link:

[SEND Practice Week Masterclass: 'Embedding the Westmorland and Furness All About Me 1-page profile' - YouTube](#)

**'All About Me' masterclass resources can be found here:**

[All about Me resources here](#) (Please note if your organisation has a VPN firewall you may need to disable this in order to access the Google Doc files).

### Wellbeing resources

David Smith, Assistant Headteacher and SENCo at Newbridge House Pupil Referral Unit in Barrow has shared a link to their wellbeing resources. As their website states, "Wellbeing matters – it is defined as the state of being comfortable, healthy, or happy"

[Well Being - South Cumbria Pupil Referral Unit](#)

### Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Padlet – A Schools Guide

Westmorland and Furness Council have developed a Padlet to support schools in accessing resources and training focused on emotional wellbeing, mental health, and resilience in children and young people. It includes links to local and national support services for school staff, as well as services to meet the needs of children and young people

[Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health - A Schools Guide](#)

### Cumbria Service Providers Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Padlet

A further Padlet has been created to provide valuable support for services working with children and young people across Westmorland and Furness. It follows mapping work to pull together a range of resources, training opportunities, and links to additional services that promote emotional wellbeing, resilience, and mental health in children and young people

[Cumbria Service Providers EWMH Padlet](#)

## **Child Mental Health – NSPCC Learning links**

“Mental health is as important to a child’s safety and wellbeing as their physical health. It can impact on all aspects of their life, including their physical wellbeing, relationships and educational attainment”. The NSPCC has produced a website to support children with mental health problems .

### **[Child mental health: recognising and responding to issues | NSPCC Learning](#)**

## **MASTERCLASS 2 - Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA)**

### **Video link to recorded session:**

Most children want to succeed in school but, for some who struggle, their difficulties have a strong emotional component, often linked to high levels of anxiety.

EBSA (emotionally based school avoidance) is the term widely used to help identify these children. This session aims to draw attention to the wider home/school/community issues that impact on these individuals, with evidence based ways to support children and young people with EBSA.

A training session on EBSA was delivered in Practice Week outlining EBSA research, exploring some reasons for its rise and sharing approaches for professionals to assess and support children, young people and their families:

### **[SEND Practice Week Workshop, 30 April 2025 ‘Understanding Emotionally based school avoidance EBSA’](#)**

### **EBSA workshop resources can be found here:**

**[Emotional Based School Avoidance \(EBSA\)](#)** workshop resources (Please note if your organisation has a VPN firewall you may need to disable this in order to access the Google Doc files).

### **[Understanding the parental experience of emotional barriers to school attendance: a systematic literature review](#)**

This systematic literature review provides an overview of the research relating to the experiences of parents when their child has encountered emotional barriers to school attendance **[Full article: Understanding the parental experience of emotional barriers to school attendance: a systematic literature review](#)**

### **[An analysis of UK local authority \(LA\) emotionally based school avoidance \(EBSA\) guidance](#)**

School attendance difficulties including emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA) are an ongoing concern. Over recent years, local authorities (LAs) have provided guidance for school staff and other professionals in addressing EBSA

### **[Full article: An analysis of UK local authority \(LA\) emotionally based school avoidance \(EBSA\) guidance](#)**



## **Exploring the Implementation of Relational Practice in a Primary School to Support School Attendance**

This newly published doctoral research by Westmorland and Furness Trainee Educational Psychologist George Alaimo and Catherine Kelly explores how relational practice can be used in a primary school to support attendance. The study challenges prescriptive models of social and emotional learning, calling instead for flexible, context-sensitive implementation tailored to staff experience and school systems.

<https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/education/articles/10.3389/feduc.2025.1602057>

### **Barriers to Education**

This Padlet is a resource for supporting attendance which relates to the WARMTH approach. It's co-developed with a group of autistic young people called Spectrum Gaming. They've also created a website documenting the work with lots of useful webinars

### **Barriers to Education**

## **MASTERCLASS 3 - Trauma Informed Practice**

**Video link to recorded session:**

A masterclass on 'Enabling Trauma Informed Practice' was delivered during SEND Practice Week. Beginning with an introduction to understanding trauma and adverse childhood experiences, the session additionally demonstrates how AMBIT tools can be used by professionals. This can be accessed through the following link:

[\*\*SEND Practice Week Masterclass, 1 May 2025: 'Enabling Trauma Informed Practice'\*\*](#)

## **Trauma Informed Practice masterclass resources can be found here:**

Trauma Informed practice resources (Please note if your organisation has a VPN firewall you may need to disable this in order to access the Google Doc files).

The Westmorland and Furness Emotional Health and Wellbeing Team have developed a Padlet with links to local and national information for supporting children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing including information about AMBIT (Adaptive Mentalization Based Integrated Treatment). which can support children and young people to engage, including when deemed to be at 'acute risk'.

### **[The Emotional Health and Wellbeing Team](#)**

## **National Resources to support SEMH needs**

### **UK Trauma Council**

The UK Trauma Council (UKTC) creates evidence-based resources to improve professionals and carers' understanding of the nature and impact of trauma: [UK Trauma Council](#)

### **Anna Freud**

Stating that their vision "is a world where all children and young people can achieve their full potential" Anna Freud provides resources for parents, carers and professionals to help them support a child or young person experiencing poor mental health or wellbeing: [Mental Health And Wellbeing | Anna Freud](#)

## **Authentic Voice of the Child and Young Person**

### **'Pull-up-a-Chair' creative ideas for capture of child and young person voice**

Sarah Martin Denham is Associate Professor of Care and Education, Vice-Chancellor Teaching Fellow and Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy at the University of Sunderland. Sarah's 'Pull Up a Chair' project, is one of the ACE network's projects which engaged 130 children aged 5-16 years to share views, including children who had been excluded and experienced adverse life events can be accessed at the following link. This includes videos and ideas to enable belonging and capture authentic child voice in creative ways (tailor made for EYFS, school and post-16 education phases) which link to Westmorland and Furness priority to capture child and young person voice in the first person. [Adverse Childhood Experiences | The University of Sunderland](#)

Other resources for creative capture of child and young person voice to inform person centred outcomes can be found in masterclass videos and links.

## National Research in Practice

### Single Digital View of the Child: Podcast

Research in Practice provides evidence-informed resources and tools to support evidence-based practice, helping organisations and individuals to access, understand and apply evidence in their work with children, young people, and families. The following podcast explores Somerset County Council's journey to develop a single digital view of the child and how they are supporting others to do the same [Single digital view of the child | Research in Practice](#)

### Enabling decision-making by children and young people with speech, language and communication needs

This four-part practice guide supports practitioners working in all settings to make sure that the voices of children and young people with speech, language, and communication needs (SLCN) are heard within assessment and review processes. It contains guidance, tips, and practice pointers for anyone seeking to actively involve a child or young person with SLCN in making decisions about their lives [Enabling decision-making by children and young people with speech, language and communication needs - Four part: Practice Guide \(2024\) | Research in Practice](#)

## New SEND Research

Some additional resources in respect of general support for children and young people with special educational needs can be found at the following links:

From Research and Practice,

- Communicating with children and young people with speech, language and communication needs and/or developmental delay: Frontline Briefing is aimed at professionals who work directly with children and young people who have those identified needs: [Communicating with children and young people with speech, language and communication needs and/or developmental delay: Frontline Briefing \(2016\) | Research in Practice](#)
- Child-centred communication in child protection: Practice Guide (2025) is a practice guide and accompanying video, which aims to support practitioners to develop their communication skills with children. It is aimed primarily at social workers in a child protection context, but it is also of relevance to any frontline practitioner who needs to talk to children about difficult issues: [Child-centred communication in child protection: Practice Guide \(2025\) | Research in Practice](#)
- Understanding autism - a neurodiversity approach to supporting children and young people is a series of short films that explore the importance of building a positive and constructive understanding of autism so that our work with autistic children, young people and their families is collaborative, meets their individual needs and promotes their self-acceptance: [Understanding autism - a neurodiversity approach to supporting children and young people: Video learning resources | Research in Practice](#)

## Additional SEND Resources

There are additionally resources available on the Council for Disabled Children's website where there are a range of tools to support learning for organisations and practitioners ([All resources](#)) which include:

- **Preparing for Adulthood**, provides a wide range of useful guides, toolkits and case studies to support young people with SEND achieve paid employment, independent living and housing options, good health, friendships, relationships and community inclusion as they move into adulthood: [Preparing For Adulthood](#)
- **SEND and EHC Learning Packages**. The Council for Disabled Children has developed a suite of online training for CDC members, affiliated organisations and services, and parent carers. The courses have been developed to improve knowledge, understanding and practical skills and support in range of key areas that impact children and young people, particularly those who are disabled or with special educational needs: [eLearning](#)

Thank you to everyone involved in planning, practice audits, quality assurance and masterclasses during SEND Practice Week. We hope you find this information helpful and look forward to welcoming increased participation in our Autumn SEND Practice Week. If you have anything you would like to suggest for future inclusion, please email: [SENDpracticeweek.WAF@cumbria.gov.uk](mailto:SENDpracticeweek.WAF@cumbria.gov.uk)

