

Summer 2025 PCF newsletter



Welcome to the Summer edition of the Parent Carer Forum Newsletter

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SEND Support Hub - Activities Showcase

On the 16th of June at The Haven in Kenton the SEND Voice and SEND Systems and High Needs Review Teams hosted the first-ever SEND Support Hub – Activities Showcase, bringing together families and local activity providers for an evening of fun, information, and community connection.

The event offered families a chance to explore a wide range of activities available for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

The atmosphere was warm and welcoming, with a strong sense of collaboration among all involved



Attendees enjoyed taster sessions in art, dance, and sports, alongside refreshments and information stalls from Local activity providers to chat with families, answer questions, and share details about their services.

Feedback from families was overwhelmingly positive. One parent said, “We found out about so many events we didn’t know existed, so it’s been super useful.” Another added, “Really friendly staff, provided useful information, the children enjoyed the activities.” A young person summed it up simply: “It was amazing!”



A total of 22 families registered, with 11 families and 19 children attending—an excellent turnout for a first-time event. The showcase not only provided valuable insights for parents but also allowed providers to network and learn more about each other’s offerings.

With such a successful debut, the next event is the 8th of August - 11am - 2pm at the Civic Centre.

Newcastle City Council

SEND Support Hub 2025 Summer Event

8th August 2025
11am to 2pm
Banqueting Hall, Newcastle Civic Centre, NE1 5QH

Come along to our FREE event. Find out about activities and services available to children and young people with additional needs and/or disabilities. Chat with providers to find out what they can offer. Plus there will be fun activity taster sessions for children and young people.

Arrive anytime. No need to book!

Scan the QR code to register your interest

localoffer@newcastle.gov.uk

Meet the SEND Systems and High Needs Review Team

To implement the recommendations made by iMPOWER, Newcastle City Council has established a dedicated project team. Ashleigh, Sam, Laura, and Tom are working together to design, implement, and embed system-wide improvements across SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) services.

This is a unique opportunity to take a step back and really understand what's working well—and what could be improved.



What will the team be doing?



They'll be focusing on several key areas:

- Creating easy-to-use tools so children, young people, families, and professionals can quickly get the answers they need.
- Working with Schools Forum to support in the development of a robust dedicated school grant (DSG) management plan
- Reviewing and documenting decision-making processes around statutory assessments.
- Peer review with neighbouring authorities to benchmark current processes.
- Supporting improvements to transition pathways to ensure the right support is in place at the right time.
- Designing, testing, and launching digitised Descriptors of Need.
- Redesigning Newcastle's Local Offer to make it more accessible and useful for families and professionals.
- Ensure that SEND services are sustainability and future proofed.

The team is keen to hear from families and will be reaching out for your feedback throughout the project. They understand your time is valuable, so they'll keep questions short and to the point.



You can get in touch with the team by emailing
LocalOffer@newcastle.gov.uk



For now—watch this space!



Elective Home Education (EHE)



Who has responsibility for the child's education?

Whilst electing to home educate (EHE), parents have the legal responsibility for ensuring that their child is properly educated. Education must: be age-appropriate, enable the child to make progress according to their particular level of ability, and should take account of any specific aptitudes.

Returning to school

If a parent decides they no longer wish to home educate and want their child to return to a school setting, they will need to follow the normal school admissions process. Parents will be required to submit an application to the school admissions team. There is no guarantee that a place will be available at the child's previous school.



Providing a suitable education

If the local authority believes a parent is unable to provide a suitable education for their child, despite receiving support and guidance from the EHE team, they may consider directing a child back into a school setting via the Fair Access Panel.

What are Fair Access Protocols ?

The purpose of Fair Access Protocols is to ensure that - outside the normal admissions round - unplaced children, especially the most vulnerable, are found and offered a place quickly, so that the amount of time any child is out of school is kept to the minimum. This includes children who are electively home educated who are not receiving a suitable education. EHE Children are directed back to the school they last attended.

What if a child has an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) ?

If a child has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), the EHE team will invite a SEND Caseworker from the SEND SAR (Support, Assessment and Review) team to attend the Annual Review meeting. The caseworker will process any proposed amendments to the EHCP, and will take requests for a change of placement, i.e. returning to an educational setting, to the Inclusion Panel for agreement and for recommendation of an appropriate setting.

The caseworker will consult with schools for a placement, in line with their usual processes. Once a placement in a school has been secured, the EHCP will be finalised naming the school for the usual transition process back into school to be able to begin.



Education other than at school (EOTAS) information

My name is Emma Hayward, and I am the SEND Caseworker within Newcastle's SEND SAR team that oversees pupils that are Electively Home Educated (EHE) or access an Educated Other Than At School (EOTAS) education package.

To support this role, I work closely with colleagues from health and social care along with education. I hope that we continue to build our working relationships to ensure the best outcome for your child/young person and welcome constructive feedback from parents.



My role includes, but is not limited to:

- Facilitating at annual reviews
- Collecting auditing data
- Supporting the development of clearer guidance for professionals and parents around EOTAS
- Supporting reintegration back into a school setting by ensuring robust transition plans are in place.

For Newcastle LA's most up to date EOTAS policy, please visit: [SEND related policies and strategies](#)

Mark's retirement

After nearly four decades of service in education, Mark Patton, our Assistant Director for Education, will be retiring at the end of August 2025.

Mark began his career as a teacher and went on to hold advisory and leadership roles across several local authorities in the North East. Over the past six years, he has led the education team here in Newcastle, supporting schools, children, and families with dedication and care.

Throughout his time with us, Mark has been a passionate advocate for inclusive education and improving outcomes for all learners. His leadership has helped shape a strong and collaborative education service, and his presence will be greatly missed.

Reflecting on his time in the role, Mark shared his appreciation for colleagues across the city who work tirelessly to prioritise the education of Newcastle's children and young people.

The recruitment process for Mark's successor is already underway, with final interviews scheduled for 31 July.



Information from the Integrated Care Board (ICB) on 'Right to Choose'

Wait times for assessment and diagnosis are lengthy for both autism and ADHD. In England, families have the 'Right to Choose' who provides their child's (ren's) health care. This includes autism and ADHD assessments. Some people prefer the 'Right to Choose' as they may wait a shorter time to be assessed, or the provider's location may be more convenient than other alternatives.

To go through the Right to Choose pathway, the child's registered GP needs to agree to make a referral to the provider of the family's choice. The service requested by families must be providing NHS services in England.

Autism

Under 5s will be referred to the Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) service at The Newcastle Upon Tyne Hospitals NHS FT for assessment and diagnosis.

Over 5s will be referred to (Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear) CNTW for assessment and diagnosis, via the Single Point of Access (SPA) for triage and onward referral to the Getting Help and Getting More Help services.

Autism sits within the Neurodevelopmental Assessment Pathway within the Children and Young People Service (CYPS), which is part of the Getting More Help service.

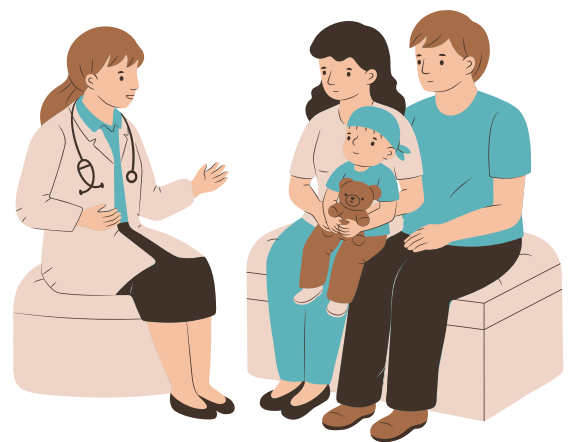
CNTW Neurodevelopmental Assessment Pathway

The neurodevelopmental team in CYPS is split into two pathways; a specialist assessment team that assesses for Autism and ADHD, and a specialist ADHD medication clinic which offers post-diagnosis medication support when this is clinically indicated.

CNTW provides post-diagnosis support in the form of an initial psychoeducation session for Autism/ADHD, and the ADHD medication clinic. All other post-diagnosis care is signposted to the community and shared with families at feedback and in the post-diagnosis information pack.

ADHD

For ADHD assessments, all children and young people will be referred for assessment and diagnosis via the SPA for triage and onward referral to the Neurodevelopmental Assessment Pathway within CYPS.





Private assessments

There is the option to seek a private or independent assessment. A referral from a GP or other NHS health care professional is not required to request a private or independent assessment.

Many practices providing independent assessments are commercial, but not-for-profit assessment services are available in some areas.

Private diagnosis is usually funded by the family and is not usually available through the NHS. In a small number of cases, the NHS may cover the costs of a private or independent diagnosis as an Individual Funding Request.

People choose this route because waiting times are usually much shorter; however, some people may experience difficulties with having their non-NHS diagnosis accepted by local authority and NHS health services.

Before deciding to go ahead with a non-NHS diagnosis, families should check whether this will be accepted in their local area.

ADHD assessments

With regards to ADHD, a private assessment does not automatically entitle a child/young person to access NHS resources. This includes medication.

In Newcastle, some GP practices are no longer accepting new Shared Care Agreements for ADHD medication due to increased demand and limited resources.

This means that if a patient needs to begin ADHD medication, or if they are currently with a private provider without an existing shared care agreement, they may need to continue getting prescriptions from the specialist or private provider. However, existing shared care agreements will generally continue.



Tips for supporting your young person to transition to a new school:



TOP
TIPS



Talk through the changes in a gradual way

Make time to talk at time that the young person is comfortable, without any distractions

Listen to any concerns they have - Share any concerns with their current school/teacher and ask these to be passed on to their new school/teacher

Let them feel all the emotions – they might be excited one moment and then worried the next, they might be angry at having to change school or teacher and then delighted at the thought of being able to make new friends

Talk through solutions and strategies that might help with transition - this [pupil-resource.pdf](#) guide has lots of helpful info and prompts for students.

If they are going to be experiencing big changes like needing to travel independently, plan the route together and maybe do a trial run
-Remember that the things we can think are ‘little worries’ can be much bigger for a young person

Identify their support network – this might be friends or trusted adults.
Use social stories to support with their concerns – talk through each stage of a new process like having to independently travel or having to complete more homework

If they are moving to a whole new school and they are worried about the building or classrooms/lunch halls – ask their new school for photographs if possible. These can be looked at during the summer break to try and ease some of their worries

This resource is really well set out: [top-ten-tips-for-parents.pdf](#)

Ambitious about Autism ideas for accessing support during school and college holidays



Local offer and research

Every council must publish a local offer. This will tell you what support is available for children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities, and their families. It should include information about Education, Health and Care (EHC) provisions, together with any holiday or other programmes available in the area.

Try also searching for 'activities for SEND children and families' or 'activities for SEND young people and families'. Each local authority should have information specifically on accessible activities.

Short breaks

Short breaks are opportunities for parents and carers to have a break from their caring responsibilities.

Local authorities are required to provide short break services and make it clear how families can access them. Some short break schemes may be described as 'universal', which means they are available to all children, and you don't need an assessment to access them. If there is an eligibility criteria for short breaks these must be fair.

You can speak to your local authority to find out about what short breaks are on offer in your area.

Children and young people who receive free school meals
Children and young people aged five to 16 who are eligible for free school meals, and their families, will be able to access free activities during the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays.

The scheme known as the '**Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme**' operates in all local authorities. To find more information on the scheme, please see the link below:

[Best Ever - Holiday Activities and Food \(HAF\) Programme](#)

SEND summer provision

There may be drop in or pay per session activities at local day centres, look to see what is in your area. You can also check out local attractions, local community centres and local 'what's on calendars'.





Children and young people with care needs

Where children and young people have care packages – either an adult care plan or child in need plan – it is reasonable to ask for an increase in support to cover the school holidays.

We would advise speaking to your social worker (if you have one) or to make a call to social services to ask about your child or young person attending a day centre during the school/college holidays or having increased carer hours and/or respite. This helps avoid the struggle of finding activities every holiday.

The best scenario would be to plan this in advance and have a holiday care package agreed on an annual basis and put into the care plan. Plans are reviewed at least annually and more frequently for children. You can ask at the review, or earlier, for the plan to be amended to include holiday care hours or respite provision in your plan. The support can be delivered through direct payments, through local authority carers or at day services.

Respite programmes

Respite care may be generally available to carers to give them a break from their caring responsibilities. Respite can be requested for the school/college holiday so it is worth asking your local authority if you can access a holiday respite service either for your son or daughter.

An assessment would need to take place to access funding, which will be undertaken by your local authority. You can also search for a respite provision in your local area to see what is available. Respite can be for a period of hours through to overnight stays.

If you are given a respite budget there may be holiday programmes that you can access from respite providers such as [Mencap](#), [Br3akfree](#) or [DALO](#).

Services in your area

Look for other services in your local area such as youth clubs, befriending or mentoring services and parent and carers support groups as they may offer holiday activities or be a source of useful information. [Newcastle local offer](#) Autism Central is a programme that offers free information and support to families of autistic people across England. [Find out more about the support available to you.](#)



Decider Skills

Tuesdays from 29th July 10-12

@ Byker Sands Family Centre

And runs for 6 weeks

For children aged primary school age and above to attend with their parent/carer.

A fantastic new course to support young people and their parents to give them coping strategies to deal with life's stresses.

For more information on this please visit [The Decider Skills](#) | [The Decider](#)



Sleep Workshop

Friday 29th August 10-12

@ Byker Sands Family Centre



Loads of helpful tips and advice for your child to get a better night's sleep

Our Sleep Workshops (Children age 1 to 19)

If sleep is a difficult issue in your house, you might find our workshop helpful.

Sleep issues can include;

- Difficulties getting to sleep at night
- Difficulties following a routine at night
- Waking throughout the night
- Not able to self-settle
- Medical conditions impacting sleep
- Challenging behaviours
-

All sessions are for parents and carers of children who live in Newcastle.

There is no creche available over the summer holidays and children are not able to attend (apart from the Decider Skills session)

Get in touch with our family partner team 0191 275 9636 If you have any additional requirements or additional needs, let us know and we can make it easy for you to access our group. You can also speak to your health visitor or school nurse on 0191 282 3319 who can offer one to one support where needed.



The Toby Henderson Trust

Newcastle and Gateshead CYPS are working in collaboration with The Toby Henderson Trust to provide support to families who are waiting for a neurodevelopmental assessment. If your child who is waiting the assessment is aged 5- 11 years, then this support is for you! To access any of the support please below for more details.

 The Toby Henderson Trust

Parent Support Groups in Newcastle and Gateshead

Do you live in Newcastle/ Gateshead and have a child aged 5-11 years waiting for a neurodevelopmental assessment with Children and Young People's Service (CYPS)? Come join our support groups!

Our upcoming groups are...

Metrocentre Community Hub

Tuesday 29th July 10am-11.30am
Tuesday 26th August 10am-11.30am
Wednesday 24th September 10am-11.30am
Tuesday 21st October 10am-11.30am
Wednesday 26th November 10am-11.30am
Wednesday 17th December 10am-11.30am
Upper Green Mall, Metrocentre, Gateshead, NE11 9YG

Gosforth Civic Theatre

Tuesday 5th August 1.30pm-3pm
Tuesday 2nd September 1.30pm-3pm
Tuesday 7th October 1.30pm-3pm
Tuesday 4th November 1.30pm-3pm
Tuesday 2nd December 1.30pm-3pm
Regent Farm Road, Gosforth, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE3 3HD

We would love to see you at any of our groups. If you'd like to join us, please ask questions or book on by emailing: reception@ttht.co.uk. Please include your name, your child's RIO number, your child's age and your postcode.



 The Toby Henderson Trust

Webinars for Newcastle and Gateshead Parents

Are you based in Newcastle or Gateshead and have a child aged 5-11 who is waiting for a neurodevelopmental assessment with Children and Young People's Service (CYPS)? Join our FREE webinars, offering a variety of topics designed to support you throughout the pre-diagnostic journey.

Our upcoming webinars...

All free and hosted on Zoom!

Managing Sleep Issues

Monday 7th July 9.30am-11.30am

Managing Educational Transitions

Thursday 17th July 9.30am-11am

Food Worries

Wednesday 23rd July 9.30am-11.30am

Strategies for Children who Struggle with Change

Monday 4th August 9.30am-11am

Parenting When You're Neurodivergent

Thursday 14th August 10am-11.30am

Managing Child to Parent Violence

Monday 8th September 9.30am-11.30am

Managing Meltdowns

Tuesday 23rd September 9.30am-11.30am

Pathological Demand Avoidance

Monday 6th October 9.30am-11.30am

Understanding Neurodiversity

Friday 24th October 9.30am-11am

Emotional Wellbeing for Parents/ Carers

Thursday 6th November 9.30am-11am

If you'd like to sign up to any webinars, please email us at: reception@ttht.co.uk. Please include your name, your child's RIO number (this is the medical number assigned to the young person waiting for an assessment-you will find this on your letter from CYPS), your child's age and your postcode.



Sound bites: Access online at any time with your phone / laptop / PC – please email for log on details

Topics include:

What's available for families waiting for a neurodevelopmental assessment in Newcastle.

- . How to prepare for your assessment whilst you are waiting
- Taking care of parental wellbeing whilst waiting assessment
- . What is available for sibling support?
- Who else can offer support whilst you are waiting.
- Telling your child, they are going for an assessment.
- . What questions to ask when you go for your assessment



To book on to any of the webinars or gain more information or ask any questions about our offers for; soundbites, groups, webinars, please email: reception@TTHT.co.uk

SEND Support Hub 2025 Summer Event



8th August 2025

11am to 2pm

Banqueting Hall, Newcastle Civic
Centre, NE1 8QH



Come along to our FREE event. Find out about activities and services available to children and young people with additional needs and/or disabilities. Chat with providers to find out what they can offer. Plus there will be fun activity taster sessions for children and young people.

Arrive anytime. No need to book!



Scan the QR code to register your
interest

localoffer@newcastle.gov.uk

PERSONAL TRAVEL BUDGET



FOR CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE WITH
SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

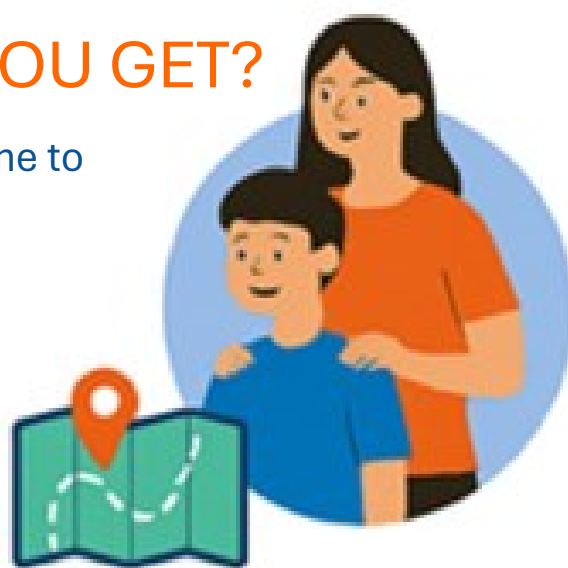
FLEXIBLE. SIMPLE. TAILORED TO YOU.

We've improved our PERSONAL TRAVEL BUDGET (PTB) offer, giving families more freedom to arrange to and from school or college in the way that works best for them.

HOW MUCH COULD YOU GET?

Your PTB is based on the distance from home to school (return journey, two trips per day):

Distance	Annual PTB
Up to 5 miles	£2,000
5-10 miles	£3,000
10-15 miles	£4,000
Over 15 miles	£5,000
Over 20 miles	50p per mile



Your child must:
✓ Have good attendance



WHAT CAN YOU SPEND IT ON?

- ✓ Driving, Cycling, Walking, Bus fares
- ✓ Bus passes for you and your child
- ✓ Car-sharing or taxi-sharing
- ✓ Paying someone to accompany your child



WHO CAN APPLY?

Anyone who is currently accessing the SEND Transport Service or to find out if you are eligible you can find more information by scanning the QR code, or by visiting www.newcastle.gov.uk



 **0191 277 4646**

We'll help you decide if a PTB is right for you.

Newcastle
City Council 