

SEND & Inclusion Workforce Development

Children's Scrutiny Panel – 27th October 2025



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Workforce Development – Background and context

Workforce development has been a long-term focus of the improvement work for SEND & Inclusion and formed the basis of the original Middlesbrough SEND & Disability Strategy when it was first introduced in 2018. Workforce development activities cover all aspects of SEND & Inclusion across education, health and care services along with schools and settings.

The workforce development strategic group worked to identify priorities for local area workforce development, and this was supported by engagement work with schools

A workforce development offer was introduced shortly after which includes induction learning, core learning and developmental learning for the following groups:

- Internal Council Staff
- External staff in schools and settings
- Parents and carers

There is also a strong quality assurance process for SEND & Inclusion in Middlesbrough which has driven the learning cycle in terms of workforce development. This includes all aspects of quality assurance learning from peer reviews, reviews of education health and care plans and quality assurance activity that takes place around case audits and learning visits to providers.



Workforce Development – Delivering Better Value

- In 2023, to acknowledge the growing pressures outlined above, Middlesbrough Council received a £1.045m grant from the Department for Education for the roll out of the Delivering Better Value [DBV] programme.
- Workforce development was highlighted as an opportunity area as part of this work, meaning that a focus on training and development to improve workforce skills and knowledge would have a positive impact on outcomes for children and the sustainability of finances in the longer term
- Identified actions as part of the delivery of this were:
 - Developing a local area graduated response
 - Training, mentoring and networking opportunities for school SENCoS
 - Conferences and learning activities/ events across the local area
 - Employing a Family Liaison Officer to support parent partnerships
 - Development of SENCo handbook
 - Transitions



Workforce Development – Achievements

Training, mentoring and networking opportunities for school SENCos

A five-day SENDCo development programme was delivered between March and July 2024. National and local experts were invited to Middlesbrough to focus on upskilling staff on:

- The SEND graduated response
- SEND leadership
- Multi-agency working
- Transitions
- SEMH

Each of the five sessions were consistently attended by over 60 members of staff



Workforce Development – Achievements

Training, mentoring and networking opportunities for school SENCos

Membership and a supported development programme for schools to participate in the Whole Education SEND School Improvement Programme for 24 schools in total.

Our delivery partner Tees Valley Education facilitate the local SEND Network along with mentoring, training and development opportunities for SENCos and other key staff across Middlesbrough.

Peer reviews and networks undertaken to share skills and knowledge across networks of schools (including post 16 providers).



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Workforce Development – Achievements

Ordinarily Available Inclusive Provision In Middlesbrough

Inclusive resources to be made available for children and young people in mainstream educational settings in Middlesbrough

Information for parents/carers and practitioners



Developing a Local Area Graduated Response

Middlesbrough's Ordinarily Available Inclusive Provision document is based upon Quality First Teaching and was recently published. It provides clarity about, support, resources and strategies available within the local area for children and young people at SEND Support.

Led by seconded SENDCos in collaboration with service providers from Education, Health and Social Care the Middlesbrough SEND Ranges document is due to launch on 21st October 2025.

The Ranges aims to provide a clarity in relation to identifying the level of need and support CYP requires and will ensure greater consistency of approach across all settings in Middlesbrough. This will be achieved through continued practice sharing, networking and training across schools.

[Ordinarily Available Inclusive Provision | Middlesbrough](#)

Workforce Development –Achievements

Development of a SEND Learning Hub

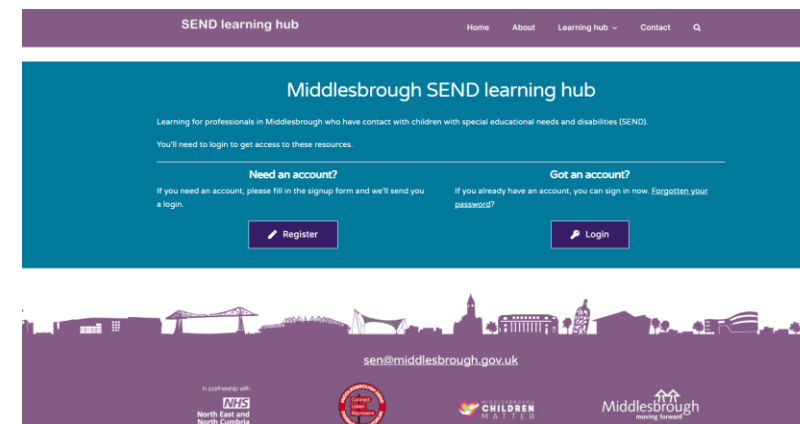
The development of an online portal for practitioners and families to access bitesize learning at their own pace.

[Learning hub](#) | [SEND Hub](#)

SEND & Inclusion conferences

The delivery of annual local area conferences highlighting SEND topics of local importance and inviting specialists and lived experience speakers to share their skills and knowledge.

Staff from the LA and supporting schools have delivered at local, regional and national conferences.



Workforce Development – Local Area Priorities

Alongside the Delivering Better Value programme there are a series of other key priority areas where significant activity has been undertaken:

Early Years

During 2024-25 a scoping activity with EY providers and multiagency colleagues was completed to determine EY training needs and identify training already available.

Restructure of the original Cleveland Unit nursery to introduce an assessment approach with opportunities for outreach and training with the specialist team. Specialist staff delivered 87 hours of outreach in September.

Introduction of a refreshed portage offer for families of children with complex needs – a parent led approach.

Supported via the DfE to work with Dingley's Promise to offer up to 100 free funded training places for early years staff, and participate in a series of action learning sets

Linked Early Years offer with family hubs and the Education Alliance Board to ensure opportunities for family learning and support are integrated into the offer



Outreach and Inclusion

Following feedback from schools in 2021 an Outreach and Inclusion service was developed within the local authority to support with early assessment, identification and preventative approaches to support children with SEND and those at risk of exclusion. Training, outreach services and advice and guidance are all offered as part of this offer.



This model works closely with the Designated Clinical Officer and Designated Social Care Offer who provide training, support and guidance on their health and care specialisms. Training is also offered from specialist services and therapy services (e.g. Speech and Language, Occupational Therapy, Epilepsy)

School based learning

Schools invest in supporting their own staff to complete relevant training for SEND. Some examples of this include:

- Team Teach
- Relationship based and restorative approaches
- Attention Autism Training

Many schools are also engaged in sharing their skills and knowledge across the partnership through outreach, training sessions and workshops (examples include Green Lane and Beverley Park).

PROCLAIM Partnership

This is focussed on providing training and support to schools to support them to become trauma informed and attachment aware in their approach. There are 23 PROCLAIM schools in Middlesbrough.

The local authority Inclusion and Specialist Support Service is also part of this programme with a trauma informed and attachment aware workforce.

Preparation for Adulthood

Delivered targeted PfA-focused outcomes and person-centred planning training across the local area.

Collaborated with Supported Internship providers to implement the Supported Internship Quality Assurance Framework, encouraging self-assessment and reflection to support continuous improvement.

Facilitated supported internship and further education providers to participate in specialist training around job coaching and systematic instruction to support employment outcomes.





Development Opportunities for LA SEND & Inclusion staff:

Staff from the LA have been supported to complete:

- Legal training with IPSEA
- SEN Case Officer Qualifications
- Attend National Development Team for Inclusion Leadership Development Programmes
- Apprenticeship opportunities
- Webinars, conferences and learning activities to bring knowledge back into the local area (as participants and speakers)

The Future Workforce

There has been partnership work completed with Teesside University and Middlesbrough College to consider how specialisms from the Local Area can be integrated into teacher training or training for the children's workforce. This has involved developing programme content and guest speaking on learning programmes.

Workforce Development – IMPACT on practice and staff development

“The impact has been positive. Really good professional development.”

“It has made clear what we know and what we don't and has informed the priorities.”

“There is a real benefit of time to talk and share good practice in a safe space.”

“The training has brought SEN more to the forefront within school and improved target setting.”

“It has been useful learning as part of a team, drawing from expertise, raising profile of SEND in school and children's outcomes.”

“Allows you time as professional to really consider what matters, what needs changing, having that strategic view.”



Workforce Development IMPACT

Children have their needs assessed in a timely way – 98% completion for 20-week process vs 45.9% national

The number of children in mainstream and specialist provision is now more in line with national levels

The local area graduated response is stronger - there has been a 16.6% decrease in the rate of referrals in Middlesbrough in 2024 compared to the previous year.

Primary school and special school suspensions are below national and regional averages

Less days lost to suspensions locally

Focus on relationships, resolution and legal compliance - Tribunal rates remain below national averages

Growing numbers of young people are gaining skills for employment – consistent numbers of young people participating in supported internships

Number of children in 'Out of Area' Placements is lower than national levels – supported by developing specialisms locally and an improved graduated response

The number of children permanently excluded reduced this year for the third year in a row

Workforce Development – Next Steps

Announcements are anticipated in Autumn 2025 with regard to national SEND Reforms. These will influence our approach to workforce development.

There is a new SEND & Inclusion Strategy due to be published in January 2026, which will incorporate the new reforms. The strategy will run from 2026-2030 and workforce development continues to be a priority.

Key areas for development 2026-30

- Build networks for good practice sharing, learning and collaboration across all stakeholders
- Bring together specialist and mainstream providers to share knowledge and build resilience
- Focus on educating the whole local area partnership 0-25; including working with local settings, parents and young people to identify priorities for training activities in line with the local area needs
- Invite national experts and sector specialists to Middlesbrough to inspire change, support inclusive capacity and share knowledge
- Coproduce a programme of training and learning for families with families
- Continue to develop Early Years and Post 16 workforce development

