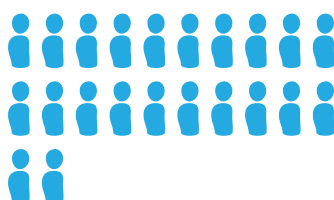


ROOTS & WINGS **S.E.N.D.** REVIEW 2016  
\_PREPARING FOR ADULthood

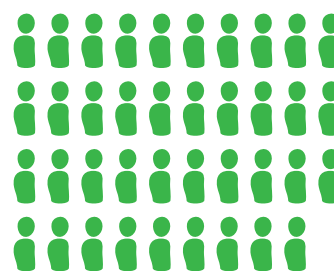
**43** YOUNG PEOPLE\*



**22** PARENTS/CARERS\*



**39** PROFESSIONALS\*



\* Face-to-face consultation through workshops or semi-structured interviews



INDEPENDENT  
LIVING

EHC  
PLANS

VENUES

DIET

PARENT  
GROUPS

KEY  
WORKERS

YOUNG  
PEOPLE  
GROUPS

THE  
LOCAL  
OFFER

INDEPENDENT  
TRAVEL

SHORT  
BREAKS

PERSONAL  
BUDGETS

COMMISSIONING

SCHOOLS  
&  
COLLEGES



Roots and Wings is a non-profit,  
multidisciplinary **consultancy**  
specialising in **user-led service design**.

[www.rootsandwings.design](http://www.rootsandwings.design)  
[contact@rootsandwings.design](mailto:contact@rootsandwings.design)

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# PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

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After consulting with the Preparing for Adulthood workstream group it was agreed that the following recommendations should be prioritised:

- *Set up a working group to look at how EHC plans and the processes that surround them could be improved.*

[See: EHC Plans p.12]

- *Expand the use and scope of Personal Budgets*

[See: Commissioning p.16, Personal Budgets p.20, Schools and Colleges p.44]

- *Short Breaks budgets should be issued as a direct payment.*

[See: Commissioning p.16, Short Breaks p.18]

- *A young people's group should be tasked with keeping the Local Offer up-to-date.*

[See The Local Offer p.26, Venues p.28, Young Peoples Groups p.34]

- *Every young person with SEND should have a named Key Worker.*

[See: Key Workers p.14]

- *Invest in, build and promote Parent/Carer networks.*

[See: Independent living p.24, Parent Groups p.32]

# INTRODUCTION



This report looks at how young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) can be better supported when preparing for adulthood, and how the recent SEND reforms can be used as a catalyst for improving the lives of young people with SEND.

Our investigation will focus specifically on the areas of *Independent Living and Friends, Relationships and Community Integration*, but will also touch on *Employment and Good Health*.

The report contains recommendations which may not be surprising to those with experience in the field. These recommendations chime with a broad consensus of opinions encountered amongst the parents, professionals and commissioners involved in this project, although it is worth noting that all of the following recommendations originated directly from our conversations with young people with SEND.

One reason why some of the recommendations contained in this report haven't already been implemented is the availability of (or rather unavailability of) resources. This report has been created against a backdrop of unprecedented cuts to the budgets of local authorities, hampering vital services by limiting them in their ability to innovate and support young people and their families, and denying this already marginalized population the quality of service and quality of life that they deserve.

Against this brutal economic backdrop, however, we discovered a hidden landscape inhabited by brilliantly defiant and inspirational young people, truly caring and compassionate professionals, and parents whose resilience was nothing short of astonishing. In other words, we found a great deal to be hopeful about.

Although the costings and emergent responsibilities of these recommendations lie beyond the scope of this particular report, they will be addressed in the next stage of the service re-design process. It is also worth mentioning that some of the following recommendations are already evident in parts of Newcastle, although this report calls for them to be deployed uniformly and made accessible to every young person across the city.



## DEFINITIONS & ABBREVIATIONS

---

For the purposes of this report we will make use of the following definitions and abbreviations:

**Young people with SEND** – This term will be used broadly and refers to all young people with additional needs between the ages of 12 and 25.

**ARC** – Additionally Resourced Centre

**CPD** – Continuous Professional Development

**EHC Plan** – Education, Health and Care Plan

**BME** - Black or Minority Ethnic

# PROCESS



Figure 1

Roots and Wings is a creative consultancy specialising in user-focused service design. For this investigation we worked closely with young people with SEND, their parents and carers, and relevant professionals in order to assess the services accessed by the young people, including what currently works and what doesn't, and going forward how services can better meet their needs.

Our service design process worked in three distinct stages, as detailed below:

## STAGE 1 – SERVICE DISCOVERY

The Service Discovery stage was divided into three strands and undertaken by separate teams working concurrently but in isolation from one another in order to prevent any bias forming.

**Strand A:** We ran sessions with a number of different groups of young people in order to ensure we gathered comments and opinions from across the spectrum of special educational needs and disabilities. Through these sessions we engaged young people with SEND in assessing the services they come into contact with and identifying any potential gaps. To understand these young people's experiences we aimed to create a space for the young people to voice their genuine needs and desires.\* We also sought out young adults with SEND who have already navigated the transition from young person to adult services, and asked them to assess the support they received from the services retrospectively.

**Strand B:** We conducted interviews with professionals and key stakeholders, service providers (i.e. teachers, support staff, social workers etc.) We also presented this issue at the regional RSA event where we spoke to professionals from across the region.

**Strand C:** We engaged parents and carers in conversations about their experiences, thoughts and feelings regarding existing services through one-to-one interviews, small focus groups, a structured workshop and at the Parent Carer Forum. We also spoke to parents who were waiting for SEND groups to start or finish, or attending parent/carers groups running concurrently with SEND groups.

*\*Through our experience of running creative workshops and user-led service design sessions, we have found that undertaking fun activities with young people and building a rapport, then going on to engage them in further activities in which individuals can be approached alone or in small friendship groups and engaged in casual and unstructured conversation is the best way to elicit the most honest and open responses, whilst individuals are partly concentrating on the creative task or activity at hand.*



On completion of these three strands our teams came together to combine and analyse our findings. At this stage we 'plotted' young people's views and suggestions onto our map of service provisions, which allowed us to look for areas of commonality and highlight any gaps or blockages and draw up preliminary recommendations.

## STAGE 2: SERVICE SUGGESTION

The Service Suggestion stage involved taking our preliminary recommendations to a number of young people and professionals in order to gather as much feedback as possible. We then used this feedback to further inform and refine our recommendations, creating the iterative loop which is a crucial aspect of our process. At this stage we also conducted a review of relevant literature, looking at reports and findings from organisations across the sector, and exploring documented examples of good practice from across the country.

## STAGE 3 – SERVICE RECOMMENDATIONS

At this stage we compiled our final findings and recommendations, forming the main part of this report, and focusing particularly on the areas of Independent Living and Inclusion in Society. The recommendations that follow are based directly on what we've learned through consultations with the young people themselves, albeit tempered by what we've learned from service providers and professionals, and further shaped by the iterative nature of the suggestion and feedback process. As such we firmly believe that all of our recommendations are based on what is realistic and achievable, and within the remit and control of the partners of this service re-design process.

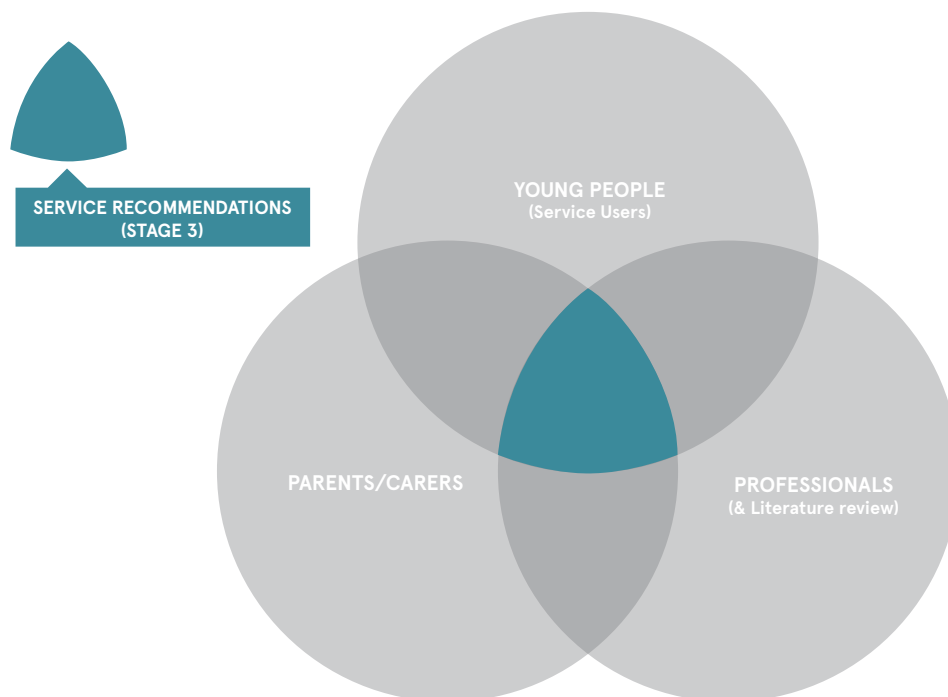


Figure 2: How input from interested parties converges to form our service recommendations





Young people with SEND want the same things as any young person; a fulfilling job or role in society, a boyfriend/girlfriend, and a healthy active social life. They want to be seen for who they are rather than their disability.



Young people with SEND have fewer opportunities than those without, and are not currently provided with the opportunities they need to reach their full potential.



Often even with the best of intentions on the part of parents/carers and service providers, young people with SEND are segregated from mainstream society. This is most apparent in special schools and day centres.



Once a young person is employed, inclusion in society and independent living arrangements often follow. Having a job provides a young person with a sense of purpose and allows them to contribute to society. Most jobs will involve meeting new people within a community of interest and provide a commonality with co-workers. On achieving a measure of financial independence as well as increased confidence, many young people will naturally begin to explore independent living options.



The ability to travel independently hugely increases the opportunities available to a young person with SEND.



The most marked improvements in young people's lives were seen to occur when passionate individuals (of whom we met many), whether parents, professionals or friends, use their own initiative to tackle problems creatively, proactively enabling a young person to fulfil their ambitions based on their abilities, preferences and gifts.



EHC  
PLANS

The introduction of EHC plans is widely considered a positive step by parents and professionals. Services are slowly but surely responding to EHC plans by providing more individualised solutions.

## RECOMMENDATION:

Set up a working group to look at how EHC plans and the processes that surround them could be improved. The group should consider the following points:

- Young people with SEND should have as much input in the creation of their EHC plan as possible.
- SEN Case Workers should always meet the young person in question prior to writing their EHC plan. It's very important that this process is humanised as well as individualised.
- The Newcastle EHC plan process is still fairly short-termist, focusing on solving issues instead of long-term goals and the steps needed to get there. EHC plans should be more focused on specific goals: long-term, medium-term, short-term, actions and responsibilities.
- Questions should mirror Preparing for Adulthood themes: Independent Living (for example, exploring specific housing options), Employment, Health, and Inclusion in Society.
- The EHC plan should identify a named Key Worker who can support that young person as they take the steps necessary to achieve their goals.
- Identify who the young person's Key Worker is and who is responsible for ensuring each element of the plan is realised.
- Given its importance and the regularity with which this issue arose over the course of our research, Independent Travel should be specifically addressed in each EHC plan.
- EHC plans should be prepared digitally and stored in a database. Data on each individual is gathered through multi-agency working over a 20 week period and, if done well, precisely describe an individual's needs. Collectively these plans describe the services which are required.
- EHC plans could be designed to be more visually engaging for young people.
- If EHC plans are to be modified it's important that existing data is easily transferable from old plan to new.
- Option for an 'EHC lite' – A document for young people with SEND who don't meet the EHC threshold, to encourage them to think about preparing for adulthood and develop a plan.



KEY  
WORKERS

## RECOMMENDATION:

Every young person with SEND should have a named Key Worker.

- The role of the Key Worker is crucial as a trusted helper, advocate, mentor, broker, and community mapper. Some young people have a personal assistant, social worker, mentor or support worker to take on this role, however, for other young people it is currently unclear who takes on this role. Every young person with SEND needs someone that they can turn to who can help them 'connect the dots'. In order to work towards a new multiagency system whereby young people with SEND and their families have a greater degree of choice and control, families will need someone impartial to help them navigate this new and changing landscape.

## RECOMMENDATION:

Families and Key Workers should be offered training in 'Community Mapping' (see below).



## COMMUNITY MAPPING

'Community Mapping' involves sitting down with a young person and sketching out a rough map of their neighbourhood – the emphasis here is on rough, no drawing skills required. Local opportunities for community engagement and participation are identified, including formal settings (e.g. community centres, libraries etc.), informal settings (e.g. parks, cafes, shops etc.), and 'third places' (e.g. bus stops or transport links). This process could also be used to identify where friends live and the possibility of local opportunities for friendship activities and socialising.

Distinct from activities and groups, young people should have the opportunity to meet friends in informal settings (e.g. go for a pizza, coffee, sleepover etc.) Where practicable this should provide time alone with peers, away from support staff, carers and parents. For this to be possible it's important that young people, parents, and carers familiarise themselves with suitable venues/locations and their staff, in order to build confidence and trust. These opportunities can also be identified through Community Mapping.



COMMISSIONING





In many cases young people with SEND are still expected to fit into services, rather than those services adopting a person-centred approach.



With the introduction of the EHC plan there is still some movement towards innovative solutions, although changing from a 'service mentality' takes time. Some people are still asking, 'Which service is most appropriate for this young person?' rather than building support around a young person's individual needs, abilities and gifts.



Timely investment in getting a young person with SEND a job can be the difference between full state dependency and that young person becoming a valued and included member of society that contributes both economically and socially to their community.



Services are commissioned based on what's been commissioned previously. Once segregated institutions (i.e. special schools, disability-specific services, day care) are established the scale of the sunk cost leads to a cycle of investing in segregation. This encourages non-inclusive practices and creates a network of segregated services (i.e. transport, short breaks, activities, respite care). It also sends signals to the wider population that the needs of the young people concerned are best served by segregated services.

#### RECOMMENDATION:

Think 'inclusion' when making commissioning decisions. All commissioning decisions should be considered in terms how they contribute to a more inclusive society.

#### RECOMMENDATION:

Tenders and contracts should focus on outcomes rather than processes. An approach that is more open and less prescriptive would unlock innovation within the third sector.

#### RECOMMENDATION:

Use '25 years old or stability' as the cut-off point for services.

- Age limits create arbitrary cut-off points and 'cliff edges', causing a great deal of anxiety in young people, parents, carers and professionals. Age is a very crude way to delineate services for the population in question, and is used in different arenas as a proxy for denoting various attributes, such as responsibility, capability/ability, or size. In health it can be used as a proxy for vulnerability, brain development or cognitive ability, although age doesn't work as a measure of the above attributes for a lot of young people with SEND. Some services for this group go up to 25 years old, but this still creates an arbitrary cut-off point, whereas '25 or stability' is the delineation applied in other parts of the country. Services should provide a greater degree of flexibility in the timing of the transfer from service to service, and should be complemented by developmentally appropriate support.



SHORT  
BREAKS

The current short breaks offer is very limited, with only a small percentage of eligible parents utilising the offer.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Short breaks budgets should be issued as a direct payment.

- By placing young people and their parents in control, the above recommendation would allow for increasingly bespoke and creative solutions to short breaks as supposed to a 'one size fits all'. Families would need to account for how any money would be spent. Handing over this purchasing power to families would need to be accompanied by a greater degree of information and advice on existing options. This offers an example of a move away from 'service provision' towards a more person-centred approach. Short breaks should be used as an opportunity to develop independent living and social skills. Families should be encouraged to take short breaks together, sharing costs and care responsibilities whilst building friendships and support networks.



PERSONAL  
BUDGETS

### RECOMMENDATION:

Expand the use and scope of personal budgets.

The inclusion of education, health, and social care budgets within personal budgets should be tentatively explored in order to give young people with SEND and their families increased control over which services they access. Personal budgets should not be used as a mechanism for offloading responsibility onto young people with SEND and their families.

The expansion of personal budgets to include specialised resources (i.e. teachers trained in inclusive learning, knowledgeable support staff, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, physiotherapy) would lead to support not being tied to institutions, giving the young person more options and aiding the transition to adulthood (see *Schools*, page 37).

Personal budgets are only effective where there is real choice as well as accessible information on the choices that exist. The marketplace for service providers (e.g. schools, social clubs, housing) should be made more transparent. This could be achieved by facilitating provider events and making information about service providers readily accessible online.



INDEPENDENT  
LIVING

- » Young people are leaving school and residential settings without independent living skills and without adequate knowledge of (or access to knowledge of) appropriate housing options.
- » Living with parents is often a default arrangement rather than an active choice.
- » Some parents feel that they are failing their child by placing them in a full-time residential setting.
- » There are examples of good practice of providing independent living options, but support is not uniform and is often only accessible if high need thresholds are met.
- » Personal budgets play a role in giving young people with SEND control over their living arrangements, but only in cases where adequate information and appropriate options are available.
- » In many cases independent living skills are not being transferred from school to home. By also providing parents with tips and techniques for teaching independent living skills, these skills could be more readily reinforced in the home environment.
- » More age appropriate respite opportunities are needed for young adults with SEND.
- » There is a need to think more creatively about how to deliver sheltered accommodation options that provide a stepping stone towards independent living. Furthermore, many young people and their parents weren't aware of 'middle ground' options between living at home and living alone.
- » There was some confusion amongst parents and young people about the term 'independent living', with some parents/carers immediately ruling this out, as they thought it meant a young person would be living alone unsupported.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Information about independent living options should be added to the Local Offer, and an easy-to-read guide to independent living options should be developed.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Promote services that teach independent living skills within an individual's own home.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Parents and carers should be encouraged to provide respite opportunities where possible. These opportunities should then be actively promoted and facilitated through parent/carer networks.

Some parents and carers were very willing to look after additional young people for a short period of time in return for a reciprocal arrangement. This unlocks resources which already exist (i.e. modified accommodation and skilled parents/carers) as well as encouraging friendships and support networks. This type of peer-to-peer arrangement was considered by parents/carers to be more flexible, trusted, and bespoke to the needs of the young person than formal respite options.





## DISABILITY RIGHTS UK: THE 12 PILLARS OF INDEPENDENT LIVING

- » Appropriate and accessible Information
- » An adequate income
- » Appropriate and accessible health and social care provisions
- » A fully-accessible transport system
- » Full access to the environment
- » Adequate provision of technical aids and equipment
- » Availability of accessible and adapted housing
- » Adequate provision of personal assistance
- » Availability of inclusive education and training
- » Equal opportunities for employment
- » Availability of independent advocacy and self-advocacy
- » Availability of peer counselling



THE  
LOCAL  
OFFER



The young people that we spoke to didn't know where to go to access information on independent living options or what social activities and opportunities were available to them. None of the young people we spoke to had heard of the 'Local Offer'.



The vast majority of the young people we spoke to wanted to get jobs and live with their friends, although they didn't have a clear progression plan for how they might achieve this or an understanding of the steps necessary to achieve this goal.



## 'PASS IT ON YOUNG PEOPLE'

### RECOMMENDATION:

A young people's group should be tasked with keeping the 'Local Offer' relevant and up-to-date with news and reviews.

- This group would be supported to get out into the city, discover new things together, and pass on their knowledge and experience to their peers via the Local Offer website, Facebook and Youtube. This would also serve to raise the profile of the local offer. The local offer group could award 'Local Offer' status to appropriate venues, groups and activities.

As previously mentioned none of the young people that we spoke to had heard of the local offer. This fact highlights how important it is that once a suitable local offer website has been developed it is adequately promoted. As part of this, the local offer group could be tasked with promoting the website to their peers.

\*A Local Offer gives children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities and their families information about what support services the local authority think will be available in their local area.

[www.newcastlesupportdirectory.org.uk](http://www.newcastlesupportdirectory.org.uk)



## RECOMMENDATION:

Training should be widely available to make venues 'SEND friendly'.

- There are a whole host of small things that venues can do to dramatically improve their appeal and accessibility to young people with SEND. This could involve open days, opportunities to meet the staff, the creation of safe quiet spaces, and giving staff the confidence to meaningfully engage with young people with SEND. The young people themselves could help to deliver this training.

## EXAMPLE:

*At the BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, a project is being developed in which a group of young people with SEND will be trained to assess the accessibility of different venues.*

*A long term aim is to support the group beyond the project so they can be employed to conduct assessments at venues across the region and beyond, and work with other young people with SEND to enable them to do the same.*



PARENT  
GROUPS



The most important figures in the lives of young people with SEND are their parents and carers. The best support available to parents and carers is talking to and learning from other parents and carers. Happy, included, and confident parents and carers are much more likely to have happy, included, and confident young people.



A lot of the parents we spoke to said they were struggling and that they felt alone. They also said they felt they were fighting the system with limited access to advice and information, and that they couldn't make long-term plans for the young people in their lives or themselves. The additional complexities involved in looking after a young person with SEND puts extra pressure on relationships. Many of the parents we spoke to were single parents. Most were not in full-time employment because of their caring responsibilities and so were financially vulnerable and often socially isolated themselves.



Risk-averse approaches on the part of services and parents can limit a young person with SEND's opportunities to learn and grow. Parents were understandably protective but in many cases acknowledged that being exposed to a certain degree of risk (for example, a new activity or setting, the opportunity to travel independently or make new friends) was essential for the personal growth of their child, the key being that this risk is appropriately managed.

## RECOMMENDATION:

Invest in, build, and promote Parent/Carer networks.

- Parents and carers are best positioned to support their young people and each other. The power of parents and carers should be embraced and their passion properly channelled. There should be a transparent mechanism through which their ideas are considered and where appropriate actioned.

*"It's so much easier with a friend"*

## THROUGH THESE PARENT/CARER NETWORKS...



The parents and carers of young children with disabilities should be encouraged to attend classes/groups providing support as early as possible. The earlier these support networks are established, the less isolated parents and young people are. These classes/groups also provide a good opportunity for sharing advice, such as how to play with a child with SEND, how to encourage communication and development, and how to set boundaries.



Buddying schemes should be promoted. This is where parents, carers and young people attend activities or venues together.



Peer-to-peer respite opportunities should be encouraged and celebrated. For instance, one family looking after another family's young person with SEND for a period of time in return for a reciprocal arrangement.



Specific support and training should be offered to parents and carers to help them 'let go' of their young person as they become an adult. Some parents said they felt that letting others support their child (for example, in supported accommodation) somehow meant they had failed as a parent.



Parents should be offered advice and support when choosing a school, and should be encouraged to look at the long-term implications of their choice in terms of inclusion and future employment opportunities.



High aspirations for employment, independent living and inclusion in society should be promoted.



There should be a wider use of role models with SEND and success stories should be widely celebrated and shared.



Max Cards should continue to be promoted. A Max Card enables looked-after children, children with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) and their parent/carers to access over 1000 attractions at a reduced rate.

[www.mymaxcard.co.uk](http://www.mymaxcard.co.uk)







YOUNG  
PEOPLE  
GROUPS

## RECOMMENDATION:

Invest in developing leadership skills amongst young people with SEND.

- Young people with SEND are the single most important group in leading the drive towards inclusion, and as such they should be taught their rights and given a voice. Inclusion is achieved by young people with SEND having the opportunity to shape their communities and the services that they access.

## ▶▶ YOUNG PEOPLE GROUPS SHOULD...



Enable young people with SEND to take positions of power such as Youth Parliament, Youth Council and Young Commissioners.



Have regular engagement with the ongoing service design process, feeding into the iterative loop which is key to ensuring that services reflect the needs of young people with SEND.



Be focused on raising aspirations, with role models invited to talk to groups and success stories shared widely.



Explore the possibility of opening up their groups to peers without disabilities.

## RECOMMENDATION:

Set up a weekly soft play group for young people with profound disabilities and their parents, carers and siblings.

- There is a small but significant group of families who have tried and tested 'inclusive' groups and have been asked to leave due to the young person's needs being beyond the group's ability to accommodate them. Making groups inclusive should be the primary focus, but until that point there should be adequate provisions made for young people with profound disabilities and their parents/carers and siblings.



INDEPENDENT  
TRAVEL

Not being able to travel independently hinders a young person's independence across many aspects of their life, limiting their opportunities for social interaction and reducing the possibility of employment. It also leads to young people not being seen in and known to the local community, and makes them less prepared for any degree of independence.

There are a number of factors that might prevent a young person from developing their ability to travel independently, such as:



the assumption that public transport staff may lack the confidence and competence to deal with people with additional needs,



a lack of opportunities to practice independent travel in a safe and controlled way, such as with a mentor,



parents being unwilling to let their children on public transport because of the risks involved.

#### RECOMMENDATION:

Technology such as the MyTrav App should be embraced in order to mitigate some of the risks associated with independent travel. MyTrav App is an app that assists young people with SEND to travel independently. Features include: the ability for the parent/carer to track the young person and the ability for the young person to easily contact their parent/carer.

#### RECOMMENDATION:

Where possible travel budgets should be spent on teaching a young person how to travel independently, rather than just taxiing them from one place to another.

#### RECOMMENDATION:

SEND awareness training should be made available to bus drivers and other public transport staff.

A large red circle is centered on the page. Inside the circle, the words "SCHOOLS", "&", and "COLLEGES" are written in a white, hand-drawn, cursive font. The background of the entire page is a light gray color with a repeating pattern of white chevrons pointing to the right.

SCHOOLS  
&  
COLLEGES

Often, even with the best of intentions on the part of parents/carers and service providers, young people with SEND are segregated from mainstream society. This is most apparent in special schools where there is a lack of contact between young people with disabilities and their non-disabled peers.

When young people with SEND leave education they find themselves with significantly less support and very few options. Their daily routine, support networks, extra-curricular activities, friends, relationships, community, health needs, employment opportunities, and in some cases, living arrangements are all tied to their educational environment.

As it currently stands mainstream schools are not well-resourced enough to accommodate young people with SEND. Research by *The Key* suggests that:

*"82% of mainstream schools in England do not have sufficient funding and budget to adequately provide for pupils with SEND."\**

#### RECOMMENDATION:

Specialised resources (e.g. teachers trained in inclusive learning, knowledgeable support staff, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, physiotherapists) should be assigned directly to individual young people rather than institutions in order that support becomes mobile and available in alternative settings.

- Young people go to special schools because that is where the support they need is located. If this support wasn't attached to a specific location but instead was attached to a young person, this would give that young person more options and independence. It would also aid a young person's transition to adulthood if their healthcare arrangements and access to specialist provisions didn't end when they left education.

\* [[www.thekeysupport.com/about/media-press/children-send-let-down-system-failings-warn-schools](http://www.thekeysupport.com/about/media-press/children-send-let-down-system-failings-warn-schools)]

## RECOMMENDATION:

Raise aspirations for young people with SEND through appropriate use of case studies, role models visiting schools, and teacher training.

- Paid employment should be considered a realistic ambition for many more young people with SEND. Being in employment offers a powerful driver for inclusion by providing colleagues, access to social networks, financial independence, decreased reliance on state support and improved self-esteem. Over 70% of disabled people would like paid work, but only 7% are actually in employment.
- Improve the knowledge of staff and pupils in schools with regards to what services exist in Newcastle and what is possible beyond education. High aspirations should be instilled regarding employment, independent living, and inclusion in society.
- Begin teaching and talking to young people with SEND about independent living skills and participation in society as early as is practical to do so. This applies to both home and school settings.

## RECOMMENDATION:

Encourage split timetabling between schools.

- Some of the young people we spoke to split their time between mainstream education and special schools. In some cases staff and support staff transitioned with them. With reciprocal arrangements this provided an opportunity for both sets of staff to learn new skills.



## EXAMPLE:

*In the course of our research we have encountered some excellent examples of schools and teachers working together to build support around a young person. For example, one young person with SEND started in full-time education in a mainstream school in their local neighbourhood, moving to one day a week in a special school as their physical needs grew and cognitively they fell behind their peers. This young person now attends mainstream education one day a week for some classes including Art and has friends in both schools including, importantly, friends near their house from the local mainstream school.*

*Once this door has been opened, figuratively speaking, more schools can be pushed to include young people with SEND in mainstream classes. This needs to be accompanied by appropriate support, and stands as further justification for why specialised resources should be attached to the young person rather than the institution.*

*It also means that young people with SEND and their families don't need to make the 'all or nothing' choice between mainstream school (with or without ARC) and special school.*

### RECOMMENDATION:

Where appropriate all pupils should be encouraged to start in mainstream provision and supported to stay there for as long as possible.

- This would begin to erode the reality of some young people with SEND and their non-disabled peers being on 'parallel tracks' from birth. To encourage segregation from an early age implicitly condones non-inclusive practices, creates a network of segregated services (transport, short breaks, activities, respite care) and sends signals to the wider population that those individuals with SEND should be segregated from mainstream society.
- Every child with SEND who chooses to go to a mainstream school improves the situation for the next young person with SEND following behind them, by encouraging mainstream schools to foster a climate of understanding, develop necessary skills and procedures, and adapt resources appropriately.

### RECOMMENDATION:

Encourage split timetabling between educational institutions and alternative provisions.

- Alternative provisions such as vocational opportunities, volunteering, education in the community, supported internships, and apprenticeships may be more appropriate than full-time education options for young people with SEND. This could also ease the transition into adulthood by offering routine and avenues for inclusion beyond the end of formal education.

### RECOMMENDATION:

Vocational alternatives to schooling should be available in cases where a school setting is seen to be counter-productive.





## MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS (INCLUDING THOSE WITH ARCS)

*The challenge here is how can mainstream schools become more inclusive?*

### RECOMMENDATION:

Open up appropriate classes to local young people that attend special schools.

### RECOMMENDATION:

Invest in training for afterschool clubs and holiday play schemes to make them accessible to all young people in their locality.

### RECOMMENDATION:

SEND training should form part of the core content for initial teacher training and should be a focus for CPD, ensuring that teachers are trained to have an understanding of the needs of pupils with SEND.

## SPECIAL SCHOOLS

As a minority, young people with SEND are more geographically dispersed than their mainstream school counterparts, and as such special schools require a larger catchment area. However, this can often mean special school attendees have less friends who live near them and, when combined with a lack of independent travel skills, can result in young people with SEND being socially isolated.

### RECOMMENDATION:

There should be a strong focus on preparing young people with SEND for adulthood with specific classes, particularly in the areas of: Independent Travel, Budgeting, Staying Safe Online, Nutrition, and Personal Hygiene. Our research suggests that this would be worthwhile even if it was to the detriment of more traditionally academic subjects.

- There should be more communication between school and home regarding any specific skills being learned. This could include the use of videos to demonstrate progression of skills. Independent living skills need to be transferable to non-school settings.
- Provide training and resources to improve the knowledge of staff in special schools about what external support services exist and how to raise aspirations for employment, independent living, independent travel and inclusion in society.
- There should be a wider use of role models with SEND visiting schools.
- Special schools should take a proactive approach to finding out what happens to their pupils once they have left school. A key performance indicator for schools should be the employment rates of its pupils.
- Open up special schools for mainstream use of the facilities to encourage interaction between young people with SEND and their non-disabled peers.
- A buddy system could be used to encourage children from the same part of the city to become friends.



DIET



Many young people with SEND exert a high level of control over what they eat and are considered 'fussy eaters'. This can result in limited, non-balanced diets.



As a result of their condition young people with SEND often take drugs that affect their metabolism.



Mobility issues and long-term health difficulties can often make regular exercise harder to achieve.

The above factors can lead to higher rates of obesity and other diet-related health concerns. This can lead to long-term health conditions which further increase social isolation.

Buying sweets and junk food is often cited as a reason not to give young people with SEND pocket money. This can be another factor which limits their independence and inhibits the development of budgeting skills.

Diet was also cited by parents and carers as a key reason why their child would not be able to live independently.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

A targeted initiative to improve young people with SEND's diet, nutrition and activity levels.



# SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- Set up a working group to look at how EHC plans and the processes that surround them could be improved.

- Every young person with SEND should have a named Key Worker.
- Families and Key Workers should be offered training in 'Community Mapping'.

- Think 'inclusion' when making commissioning decisions. All commissioning decisions should be considered in terms how they contribute to a more inclusive society.
- Tenders and contracts should focus on outcomes rather than processes. An approach that is more open and less prescriptive would unlock innovation within the third sector.
- Use '25 years old or stability' as the cut-off point for services.

- Expand the use and scope of personal budgets.

- Short breaks budgets should be issued as a direct payment.

- Information about independent living options should be added to the Local Offer, and an easy-to-read guide to independent living options should be developed.
- Promote services that teach independent living skills within an individual's own home.
- Parents and carers should be encouraged to provide respite opportunities where possible. These opportunities should then be actively promoted and facilitated through parent/carer networks.

- A young people's group should be tasked with keeping the 'Local Offer' relevant and up-to-date with news and reviews.

- Training should be widely available to make venues 'SEND friendly'.

- Invest in, build, and promote Parent/Carer networks.



- Invest in developing leadership skills amongst young people with SEND.
- Set up a weekly soft play group for young people with profound disabilities and their parents, carers and siblings.

- Technology such as the MyTrav App should be embraced in order to mitigate some of the risks associated with independent travel.
- Where possible travel budgets should be spent on teaching a young person how to travel independently, rather than just taxiing them from one place to another.
- SEND awareness training should be made available to bus drivers and other public transport staff.

- Specialised resources (e.g. teachers trained in inclusive learning, knowledgeable support staff, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, physiotherapists) should be assigned directly to individual young people rather than institutions in order that support becomes mobile and available in alternative settings.
- Raise aspirations for young people with SEND through appropriate use of case studies, role models visiting schools, and teacher training.
- Encourage split timetabling between schools.
- Where appropriate all pupils should be encouraged to start in mainstream provision and supported to stay there for as long as possible.
- Encourage split timetabling between educational institutions and alternative provisions.
- Vocational alternatives to schooling should be available in cases where a school setting is seen to be counter-productive.
- Open up appropriate classes to local young people that attend special schools.
- Invest in training for afterschool clubs and holiday play schemes to make them accessible to all young people in their locality.
- SEND training should form part of the core content for initial teacher training and should be a focus for CPD, ensuring that teachers are trained to have an understanding of the needs of pupils with SEND.
- There should be a strong focus on preparing young people with SEND for adulthood with specific classes, particularly in the areas of: Independent Travel, Budgeting, Staying Safe Online, Nutrition, and Personal Hygiene. Our research suggests that this would be worthwhile even if it was to the detriment of more traditionally academic subjects.

- A targeted initiative to improve young people with SEND's diet, nutrition and activity levels.







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