

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
8 JANUARY 2024**

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**YOUNG PEOPLE SEND ENGAGEMENT**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide the Scrutiny Committee with an overview of how Council services engage with young people regarding the issues relating to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

**Summary**

2. The Council undertakes various activities to ensure that young people with SEND are able to co-produce plans affecting them and contribute to wider strategic work.

**Recommendation**

3. It is recommended that the Scrutiny Committee notes the actions outlined and progress made to date.

**Tony Murphy**  
**Assistant Director of Education and Inclusion**

**Background Papers**

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

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S17 Crime and Disorder	N/A
Health and Wellbeing	Supports improved outcomes for children and young people
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	No implications arising from this report
Diversity	No implications arising from this report
Wards Affected	All wards are affected
Groups Affected	Young people 0-25 with Special Educational Needs
Budget and Policy Framework	Dedicated School Block
Key Decision	No
Urgent Decision	No
Council Plan	Supports SEND priorities in the Council Plan
Efficiency	Supports efficient use of resources and service improvement
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	Impacts on Looked After Children or Care Leavers with Special Education Needs

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

4. It is important that children and young people with SEND have the chance to contribute and have their say about their own lives, such as being part of the review of their education, health and care plan, and their adult care and support plan.
5. The right of a child or young person to be heard is included in the UN Convention of Rights Article 12 – a right to an opinion and for it to be listened to and taken seriously.
6. The Children’s Act 2004 emphasises the importance of speaking to the child or young person as part of any assessment.
7. The importance of speaking to children and young people and their families and gathering their views has been consistently highlighted in lessons learned from serious case reviews.
8. The principles that the Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) Code of Practice works to ensure that SEND provision has regard to the views, wishes and feelings of the child or young person and their parent/carers, the importance of the child or young person participating as fully as possible in decisions, and the need to support the child or young person and their parent/carers to help them achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes.
9. Many young people with SEND are supported by an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP). The SEND service in Darlington is responsible for the assessment and finalisation of EHCPs. Young People’s voice is central to their individual EHCP, and the service ensures that preparation for adulthood aspirations is captured in each EHCP. A deep dive audit process is undertaken on a termly basis to ensure that plans remain relevant and up to date. A quality assurance review is undertaken on all plans from year 9 of a young person’s life to ensure that aspirations are captured at future transition points.

10. Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information, Advice and Support (SENDIAS) services provide free, impartial advice on matters relating to SEND. SENDIAS services can support children, young people and their families on a range of issues including school exclusions; EHCP Assessments; supporting conversations with a school or local authority; representation at SEND tribunals.
11. Darlington has a dedicated SENDIAS Young Person's Officer in place working directly with young people to ensure their views are captured as part of the ECHP assessment process.
12. 21.2% of Looked After Children in Darlington have an EHCP. Darlo Care Crew are Darlington Children in Care Council, a group of young people in care who come together regularly, to look at issues that affect children in the care of Darlington Borough Council.
13. Darlington's Children and Young People's Plan outlines how we the Council focusses the collective effort of Darlington's partner organisations to make a difference to the lives of our children and young people. Young people with SEND are contributing to the review of the plan by way of focus groups and other engagement activities.
14. The local area SEND strategy is also currently being reviewed. Young People's voices will be a key element of the revised strategy and the Council is working with Darlington Association on Disability Young Leaders Group as part of the development of the new strategy.