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## Strengthening provision through collaboration between specialist and mainstream

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## Strengthening provision through collaboration between specialist and mainstream

### Regional Networks

## Introduction

In the Northern region, the Whole School SEND (WSS) regional team set up the Community Join Up Group with a focus on Preparing for Adulthood (PFA). The central theme of the initiative was to explore what mainstream educational settings could learn from specialist schools and provisions, specifically in terms of holistic outcomes and implementing semi-formal provisions.

The case study was developed in response to challenges reported by Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs), Local Authorities (LAs), and Senior Leaders, who struggled with the increasingly complex needs of students in mainstream settings.

## Implementation

The initiative involved a range of educational professionals, including representatives from:

- Three MATs:
  - a MAT of 30 primary schools
  - a MAT of 35 schools, including primary, secondary and FE
  - a MAT of 12 schools, including primary and special school
- Local Authority SEND leaders
- Special school leaders and mainstream SENDCOs

Over the course of the academic year, three meetings were conducted under the leadership of a WSS Regional Lead. These sessions were well attended and featured guest speakers who delivered presentations and provided valuable resources on best practices. A particular emphasis was placed on disseminating insights gained from Sunderland's semi-formal curriculum provision pilot, fostering the exchange of knowledge and effective approaches within the academic community.

## Outcomes and Impact

Best practices from special schools were shared with mainstream settings, with a particular focus on measuring student outcomes. This exchange aimed to enhance inclusive education by integrating effective strategies from specialised provisions.

Target and outcome documents were also distributed to mainstream SENDCOs, providing clear guidance on setting and assessing educational goals for students with diverse needs.

Additionally, one of the local authorities (LA) presented its semi-formal curriculum pilot, which later became a reference model for mainstream schools, offering a flexible framework to better support learners with additional needs.

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## Impact

A detailed case study of the local authority pilot was presented to a Senior Policy Advisor at the Department for Education (DfE), specialising in SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) and Alternative Provision (AP). This presentation sparked further discussions on how mainstream provisions can better support complex learners, highlighting the potential for broader implementation of such approaches.

As a direct outcome of this network, mainstream SENDCOs now have access to a comprehensive, structured model for introducing and adapting semi-formal provisions within their own schools. This model provides clear guidance on how to implement effective strategies tailored to the needs of complex learners.

Additionally, SENDCOs now benefit from access to evaluated outcomes and proven methodologies, significantly increasing their confidence in their ability to support these learners with more complex needs in a more informed and effective manner within a mainstream setting.

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## Next Steps

- Three mainstream primary schools from one of the trusts have committed to Year 2 of the semi-formal curriculum programme in the area.
- These schools will establish their own in-house provisions, using specialist guidance.
- Mainstream MAT leaders and SENDCOs now have access to a set of toolkits and outcome documents aligned with PfA areas. This will further support them in effective provision for learners with complex needs within a mainstream setting.
- Schools are in the process of adapting their approaches based on the shared toolkits and strategies.



More inclusive ethos/culture in the setting



Earlier and more accurate identification of SEN

## Outcomes and Impact (continued)

The school has produced its OAP document and a Teacher Handbook outlining expectations. Routine monitoring activities, including learning walks, observations, and data drops, now incorporate a clear SEND focus and allow leaders to track provision effectively. Systems for tracking pupil progress have been reviewed, and the SEND register has also undergone a thorough review. Hence there is now more accurate identification of SEND, and the ability to track progress and identify provision that is effective.

## Next Steps

The next steps involve incorporating the following initiatives into the revised summer term School Development Plan (SDP) as well as the new SDP for the next academic year:

1. Implement the Study Bugs monitoring system to track the attendance of learners with SEND, enabling the SENCo to take timely action as needed.
2. Develop alternative methods for learners to record their learning, integrating these practices into the daily curriculum to promote independent use.
3. Enhance the assessment and monitoring of learners with SEND to ensure robust and accurate identification of targets and next steps for learning that align with the needs of the school population.
4. Embed the revised school monitoring systems to ensure they are securely integrated into the daily operations of the school, including pupil progress data drops, learning walks, planning monitoring, and performance management.
5. Further develop adaptive teaching skills, with a specific emphasis on Foundation subjects.
6. Review personalised plans to ensure they are fit for purpose and effectively support learner needs.

## Key Learning

Using the peer mentoring system has been highly beneficial in improving SEND due to three key factors:

- Improved Understanding of SEND Data: The presentation on the SEND data “Nutshell” document significantly improved the Headteacher’s comprehension of strategic SEND leadership, facilitating deeper insights into SEND issues and fostering the creation of a school-focused version of the document.
- Collaborative Development and Accountability: The joint effort in creating the Ordinarily Available Provision (OAP) document has increased teachers’ awareness of their responsibilities in supporting all learners, promoting shared understanding and accountability across the school.
- Structured Monitoring and Improvement Initiatives: The school has identified key areas for improvement, including the verification of the SEND register, systematic monitoring of attendance for learners with SEND, and the enhancement of assessment processes. Next steps involve implementing specific initiatives in the School Development Plan to further support SEND provision and learner outcomes.



More inclusive ethos/culture in the setting



Earlier and more accurate identification of SEN