

South Tyneside SENDIASS: Extending support around school exclusions in South Tyneside

Context

The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) in South Tyneside provides free, impartial and confidential information, advice and support on SEND matters relating to health education and social care.

The service offers a range of interventions relating to school exclusions to parents/carers and young people. The Service Advice Line is available each weekday to answer queries, and to provide signposting to further support where required. Additional support is provided by the service in challenging decisions to exclude; such as preparing representations for Governor Review meetings, and in attending these meetings. Support is also offered to look at preventative and support measures for children and young people, to avoid permanent exclusions.

The issue faced

Following the implementation of a new data system in April 2024, the service has been better able to record and identify key themes within the interventions it delivers. One area identified as a topic of increasing discussion is school exclusions. There was a 121% increase in referrals to the service relating to school exclusions in the 2023-24 academic year, compared to the previous year.

With the above in mind, the service sought to improve awareness of the support available for families in South Tyneside in the 2024-25 academic year, and extend this; by increasing opportunities for discussions around school exclusions, providing opportunities that allow for earlier interventions to be delivered to families and forging improved links with other local organisations and services within the area to gain a better insight of the wider support available.

The process

In addition to continuous promotion of the service offer in relation to school exclusion, three key elements were developed in the 2024-25 academic year.

School Exclusions Support Hub

The service launched a 'School Exclusions Support Hub' in the Autumn term with sessions taking place termly at our local Family Hubs.

The sessions are intended to provide an opportunity for parents/carers to access peer support, with members of the service providing additional information and guidance where required, such as providing an overview of local services available or arranging for further support to be delivered as quickly as possible.



Parent of young person G:

The parent attended one of the School Exclusions Support Hub meetings; with concerns that her child would be permanently excluded. The parent wanted to explore a different school provision within the area and was given guidance around identifying suitable mainstream provisions and managed moves.

Once a move to a new placement had taken place, further support was offered to the parent/carer in meeting with the school SENCo to look at additional support available; a robust and graduated plan of reintegration was put in place with support from the SENDIAS Service.

This was reviewed every two weeks to look at any adjustments required. G has a keen interest in animals, so it was agreed he would have access to the school's therapy dog, which really helped him feel calmer while in the building. The longer-term plan now is that G is more regulated when at school through the support adaptations made and is prepared for the transition to a new year group in September. Young person G has reported overall that they are happier in their new placement.

Improved Resources

Improvements were made to service resources, available to view and download via the service website (www.southtynesidesendiass.co.uk) these include a Factsheet covering School Exclusions and updates to the My Views document¹ for children and young people, which can be used to help ensure the voices of children and young people are included as part of the process in challenging decisions to exclude, at Governor Review Panels or Independent Review Panels.

Support is also available to children and young people in completing the form and putting their views forward as part of those Panel meetings by our Children & Young People IAS Officer within the service.

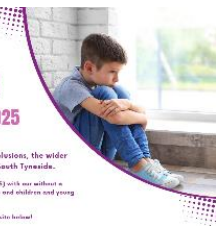
A webinar covering Exclusions & Part-Time Timetables is also being developed to complement the service Training Offer; which provides in-person workshops on SEND topics. In-line with this offer, the webinar will be free to access for parents/carers, and professionals in South Tyneside.

¹ My Views: School Exclusions: <https://www.southtynesidesendiass.co.uk/#exclusions>

School Exclusions Week

The service delivered School Exclusions Week from Monday 12th May – Friday 16th May 2025. The week consisted of several events, many of which were delivered in partnerships with local services and organisations. Events aimed to raise awareness of school exclusions, the wider impact on families and support available.

Events included opportunities for families and professionals to 'drop-in' to different locations to access information. A workshop covering 'Exclusions & Part-Time Timetables' was delivered, attended by parents/carers and professionals, as well as Tea Clinic with Big Local Jarrow and Choice Wellbeing Service; which looked at parent/carer wellbeing.



SCHOOL EXCLUSIONS WEEK
12TH-16TH MAY 2025

A week of events raising awareness of school exclusions, the wider impact on families and the support available in South Tyneside.

Events are open to parents/carers of children with SEND (0-19) with no without a diagnosis, professionals supporting families in South Tyneside and children and young people.

Further information about the week can be found on our website below!

MONDAY 12TH MAY	TUESDAY 13TH MAY	WEDNESDAY 14TH MAY	THURSDAY 15TH MAY	FRIDAY 16TH MAY
g School Exclusions Support Hub An opportunity for parents/carers to access ongoing and one-off support, as well as information about SEND issues. Location: Riverside Family Hub Time: 10.00 AM - 5.00 PM	Project 2999 Blanket Display An opportunity to view the Project 2999 Blanket and learn more about the impact of school exclusions. Location: The Active Hub, 12, The Green, South Shields, NE33 4JF Time: 10.00 AM - 5.00 PM	SEND Support Session An opportunity for professionals to discuss the impact of school exclusions and how to support children and young people. Location: Riverside Family Hub Time: 10.00 AM - 1.00 PM	Exclusions & Part-Time Timetables Workshop A workshop for parents/carers and professionals to discuss the impact of school exclusions and how to support children and young people. Location: Riverside Family Hub Time: 10.00 AM - 5.00 PM	SEND Support Session An opportunity for professionals to discuss the impact of school exclusions and how to support children and young people. Location: Riverside Family Hub Time: 10.00 AM - 1.00 PM

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SUPPORTED BY: 

The service also hosted the #Project2999 Blanket² as part of the week. The Blanket was created to visually reflect the number of children and young people that were suspended or permanently excluded from school each school day in England in the 2021-22 academic year and is made using 2,999 individual crocheted squares.

Displays of the Blanket were held across the Borough; families and professionals were encouraged to 'leave a message for education leaders' in South Tyneside; these messages reflected individual circumstances, bringing to light children as young as five and six experiencing school exclusions, as well as wider factors and how schools should change:

"It is so important that the Council receives sufficient funding to reverse the impact school exclusions are having on our young people."

"Stop punishing children for the little things (such as correct uniform) and concentrate on the bigger issues."

"Change to uniforms to something less regimented; tracksuit, trainers, etc."

Some of the messages also provided feedback about the Project 2999 Blanket:

"I was aware of the blanket, but seeing it in person was emotional, as it represents my child."

"Seeing the visual representation really puts it into perspective. It made me quite emotional"

"I found the blanket absolutely amazing. The work involved was immense, but at the same time it told a very sad story."

² Project 2999 Blanket: 'Excluded children at the heart of giant patchwork blanket' -

<https://www.sunderland.ac.uk/more/news/story/excluded-children-at-the-heart-of-giant-patchwork-blanket-2395>

The Blanket also made a visit to West Boldon Primary School and was used for a Key Stage 2 assembly, made up of pupils from the mainstream and resource base of the school.



FIGURE 1: COUNCILLOR FAY CUNNINGHAM,
MAYOR OF SOUTH TYNESIDE (24-25)



FIGURE 2: CHILDREN VIEWING THE PROJECT 2999
BLANKET AS PART OF KEY STAGE 2 ASSEMBLY



FIGURE 3: REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE TOBY HENDESON
TRUST AT THE AUTISM HUB AND SOUTH TYNESIDE PARENT
CARER FORUM, AND OUR SERVICE WITH THE MAYOR &
MAYORESS OF SOUTH TYNESIDE.

The displays were made possible thanks to Dr Sarah Martin-Denham, a researcher from the University of Sunderland, who created the blanket along with the #PullUpAChair³ group; as well as a children and young people impacted by school exclusion.

Information was also shared around the opportunity to contribute to the new Project 4,191 Blanket to reflect suspensions and exclusions in the 2022-23 academic year, which will include 4191 individual 5cm x 5cm crocheted squares, which will launch at the Inclusive Education Conference at the University of Sunderland in July.

Information posts were also shared across the service social media platforms providing further information and guidance around school exclusions, and we encouraged the use of #SchoolExclusionsWeek.

The outcome

There is wider awareness of school exclusions and the sources of advice and support, including a greater understanding of the role of the service and how it can help, as well as wider support services in the local area.

During School Exclusions Week, more than 200 conversations took place about school exclusions and the support available to parents/carers, young people and professionals across South Tyneside.

'I feel the week helped to show that parents/carers aren't alone in what their children and young people are going through.'

Feedback from a parent who attended one of the Project 2999 Blanket displays

³ PullUpAChair: Adverse Childhood Experiences Network - <https://www.sunderland.ac.uk/more/research/thematic-research-areas/interdisciplinary-research-networks/ace/>

The service has been able to establish relationships with local community organisations through their involvement in the week and develop a greater understanding of their offers, including limitations of their support.

Reflections on the outcome

It is hoped following the positive feedback of School Exclusions Week that this will become an annual event within South Tyneside.

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