Cumberland SEND & AP Partnership

The Cumberland SEND & AP Partnership is made up of several organisations responsible for delivering SEND Services and provision in Cumberland. This includes:

- Cumberland Council (across children's services, including Education, SEND and Inclusion, as well as children's and adults social care)
- North East and North Cumbria ICB (responsible for commissioning health services for most of Cumberland)
- Lancashire and South Cumbria ICB (responsible for commissioning health services for the Millom area and South Cumbria)
- SENDAC, the statutory parent/ carer forum for Cumberland
- Our schools and education providers in Cumberland, including Alternative Provisions
- Our SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS)

The Partnership works to ensure that all these organisations work together to deliver effective and efficient services for families in Cumberland. We were formed in January 2024, following the Local Government Re-organisation Process in Cumbria, which saw Cumbria County Council be replaced by the two new unitary authorities, Cumberland Council and Westmorland and Furness Council.

Part of our work includes preparing for Ofsted and CQC Local Area SEND Inspections. These inspections assess how well our partnership works, and how effective SEND services and provision is in the local area. Our last inspection took place in June 2025, during which we were rated the middle outcome for our services and provision (inconsistent outcomes for children and young people with SEND). Schools can be part of this inspection as part of our tracking children and young people's journeys.

SEND Alliance Cumbria (SENDAC)

SENDAC is not a support group in the traditional sense— although we fully recognise the importance of peer support, and we're always happy to signpost families to trusted local groups, charities, and services that can offer the help they need. Instead, SENDAC is an independent, parent carer led organisation known as a Parent Carer Forum. We are run by, and for, parent carers of children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) across the Cumberland local authority areas.

Our primary role is to be the collective voice of SEND families. We do this by reaching out, listening, and gathering views, experiences, and feedback from families across Cumberland. Whether things are going well or have been difficult, your voice matters. We use what you tell us to build a broad picture of how local services are working for children and young people with SEND from education and health to social care and beyond.

What makes Parent Carer Forums like SENDAC different is that we work strategically and independently. We are not part of the local authority or the NHS, but we work with them, as equal statutory partners, to make sure that parent carers have a genuine voice at the table where decisions are made. This means we are able to bring your lived experiences directly to local leaders and service commissioners, helping to inform, shape, and influence the services your families need. We take part in a wide range of workstreams, strategic boards, and improvement programmes across Cumberland, covering everything from the development of new services and local area SEND inspections to transitions, short breaks, and educational health and care plans (EHCPs). Our mission is to create positive change by working together with families and professionals. By doing so, we aim to ensure that every child or young person with SEND has the opportunity to thrive, and that families feel listened to, understood, and supported.

Cumberland SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS)

SENDIASS offer free, confidential and impartial advice, guidance and support to children and young people with SEND and their families. They are part of Cumberland Council but operate at an 'arms length' from all other services to ensure the advice and guidance they offer is impartial.

Their aim is to empower parents/carers and young people to feel confident with:

- Self-advocacy - expressing their views and wishes on their child's/their own needs.
- Their rights under SEND Law and Legislation.

The 'about us' page on SENDIASS website provides more information on whether SENDIASS will be able to support a family's individual circumstances. Their website offers lots of clear information and advice related to SEND. Some examples of what SENDIASS can support with include:

- Assist parents/ carers to understand policies and procedures
- Share information from legislation and statutory guidance with parents/ carers so they feel clearer on specific processes that are bound by legal duties
- Empower parents/ carers to feel confident to express their views and wishes
- Help parents/ carers to understand and exercise their rights and advise them of their options so they can make an informed decision
- Provide templates and examples for letters, emails, and paperwork, as well as resources in various formats to support parents/ carers enquiry (e.g. YouTube videos and information sheets)

