



COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT FOR SEND  
FAMILIES FROM EDUCATION PROVISION IN  
ESSEX DURING COVID-19

Essex Family Forum  
Published (Edited) Report  
June 2020

# Contents

Introduction.....	3
Published (Edited) Report .....	3
Methodology .....	3
Participants.....	4
Consent.....	4
Social Worker .....	5
Type of Support .....	6
Risk Assessments .....	6
Families with Social Workers.....	7
Risk Assessments – Essex Family Forum View.....	8
School Place.....	9
Results for respondents who indicated they have an EHC Plan.....	10
Social Worker .....	11
Requested a school place but was declined.....	11
School Place – Essex Family Forum View .....	12
Has your situation changed? .....	12
Has your situation changed? – Essex Family Forum View.....	12
Welfare Contact.....	13
Welfare Contact – Essex Family Forum View .....	13
Differentiated schoolwork.....	14
Differentiated schoolwork – Essex Family Forum View .....	14
School Support .....	15
School Support – Essex Family Forum View .....	15
Improvement in Communication .....	16
Improvement in Communication – Essex Family Forum View.....	17
Coping overall? .....	17
Coping overall? – Essex Family Forum Views .....	18
Overall Experience with School .....	18
Provision Type: All Responses .....	18
Overall Experience with School – Essex Family Forum Views .....	19
Additional comments .....	20
Additional comments – Essex Family Forum Views .....	20
April 2020 Survey.....	20
Essex Family Forums’ final thoughts and suggested recommendations.....	21

Final Thoughts .....	21
Suggested Recommendations .....	22
Appendix A – School Names .....	23
Provision Type: Mainstream.....	23
Provision Type: Special School .....	25
Provision Type: Early Years Setting .....	26
Provision Type: Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) .....	26
Provision Type: Other .....	26

## Introduction

Essex Family Forum is the Parent Carer Forum for Essex and it is our responsibility to represent our families.

COVID-19 presents many challenges, especially to the families of children with SEND, The Government has reacted to this pandemic by producing the key Guidance such as:

1. Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance for local authorities on children's social care (published 3rd April 2020)
2. Coronavirus (COVID-19): SEND Risk Assessment guidance (published 19th April 2020)
3. Supporting vulnerable children and young people during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak (Published 22nd March 2020)

The Coronavirus Act 2020 was also passed. The Act granted the government emergency powers to handle the COVID-19 pandemic, which included easements to section 42 of Children and Families Act 2014. This meant the Local authorities' duty to secure special educational and health care provision was amended from an absolute duty to only having to make "reasonable endeavours".

We have been working with Essex County Council in relation to their interpretation and objectives to implement reasonable endeavours within Essex. This Survey was conducted prior to Essex County Council issuing guidance to the schools to conduct reasonable endeavours conversations with all families who have an EHC Plan. Our understanding is that by 12th June 2020 all families should have been contacted and have an agreed date for their conversation.

Therefore, this survey does not cover reasonable endeavours. Families will be invited to complete a further survey issued jointly by Essex County Council and Essex Family Forum, which will enable families to share their experience, should they wish to do so.

The purpose of this survey is to better understand the communication and support families have received from schools during COVID-19, considering the guidance regarding welfare calls, and Risk Assessments.

## Published (Edited) Report

A full version of this report, which contained parents and carers views and experiences was provided to the National Network of Parent Carer Forums, the Local Authority and shared with partners within health and social care, as consented to by participants, for the purpose of improving SEND provision within Essex and the UK.

The published version of this report is edited. Essex Family Forum have taken the decision not to make public the full report as we want to respect the privacy of those families who shared their stories and personal journeys with us which we included within the report to reflect the true experiences of the families we represent.

It should be noted that no personal data was collected by our survey and where any such information was provided it was omitted from our report.

## Methodology

The survey was conducted on Facebook only, as we do not hold the names and addresses, contact details of all registered SEND families within Essex.

We shared 9 posts regarding the survey on our Facebook page throughout 22<sup>nd</sup> May to 31<sup>st</sup> May 2020. Posts were published at different times of the day to reach a maximum number of people.

In total our reach was 10,376 people. We accept that this will include some duplication with some people seeing multiple posts.

Our posts were shared 104 times

Our posts attracted 768 engagements (reactions, comments, shares and post clicks) on our posts.

Essex Family Forum also sent details of the survey to the families who responded via e-mail or via Facebook messenger to our “Call for Evidence” Facebook post and to the families that had contacted us during the current pandemic on our designated e-mail address Corona@essexfamilyforum.org

## Participants

The survey reports 259 participants clicked to participate in survey.

It should be noted that 9 participants who completed the survey, did so more than once. This is due to Parents and Carers with two or more children with SEND and as such were invited to complete one survey per child. Therefore for the purposes of this survey they are counted as separate participants.

12 of the 259 participants reported to have started the survey, exited the survey before responding to the first question of consent. Therefore it is fair to say that only 247 participants actually started the survey.

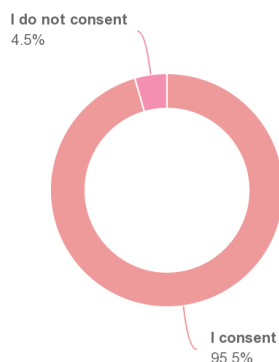
Of those 247 participants, data shows that 176 completed the entire survey. Due to participants exiting at various points throughout the survey, the results provided throughout the survey are based on the number of “**completed**” responses for each question, which will be indicated.

## Consent

Out of 247 responses to the question of consent, only 236 consented to their data being used and shared with relevant organisations for the purpose of improving SEND provision within Essex and the UK.

The data from the 11 participants who did consent will not be included in the published results or shared with our partners. Essex Family Forum however have duly noted the detailed feedback that they have provided.

By providing consent, you are agreeing that personal information about you will be collected anonymously, stored securely, and will not identify anyone personally. The anonymised data will be used and shared with relevant organisations for the purpose of improving SEND provision within Essex and the UK.

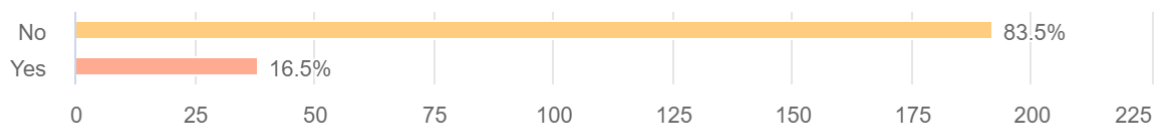


(247 Responses)

## Social Worker

Families with a social worker are considered to be vulnerable based on guidance issued throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, thus Essex Family Forum felt it appropriate to understand and highlight their experiences throughout the report. Out of a total of 239 responses, 38 participants indicated that they had a social worker.

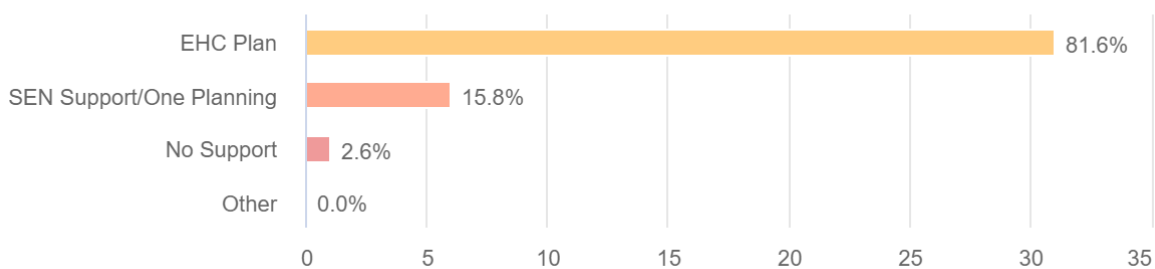
### Does your family have a social worker?



(38 Responses)

For those families with social workers, we have highlighted what type of support they are in receipt of:

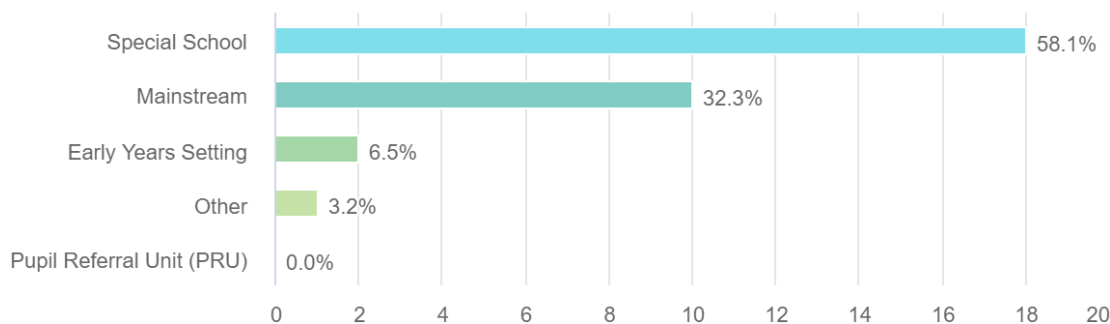
### What type of support plan does your child have?



(38 Responses)

For those families with social workers, we have also highlighted what type of education provision they attend:

### What type of provision does your child attend?



(31 responses)

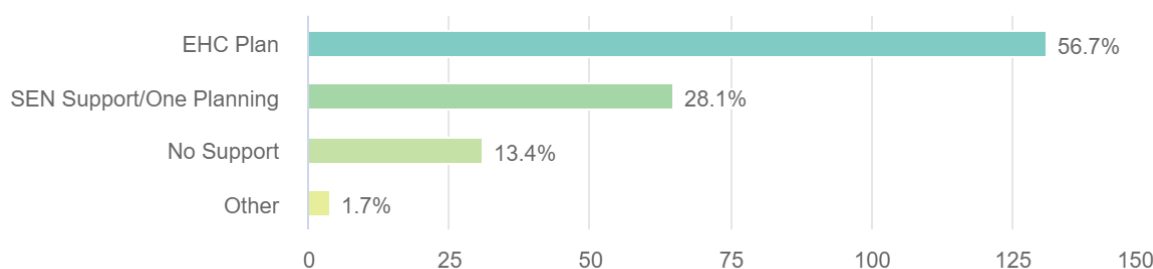
We will explore the results of families with a Social Worker further throughout the report

## Type of Support

Children with an EHC Plan are also considered to be vulnerable and are subject to specific guidance. However, we understand that many families with SEND do not have an EHC Plan. Essex Family Forum wants to represent the voice of all families with SEND. As such our findings will be provided on children with and without an EHC Plan.

Within Essex there are currently 9661 EHC Plans (as advised by the LA on 02/06/2020) and 22,570 children on SEN support (as confirmed by Jan 2019 school census data, 2020 not yet released)

### What type of support plan does your child have?



(240 Responses)

131 responses confirmed their child had an EHC Plan. Given the number of EHC Plans and the number of families on SEN Support, we would have expected more respondents from those families who are on SEN Support, as opposed to EHC Plans.

## Risk Assessments

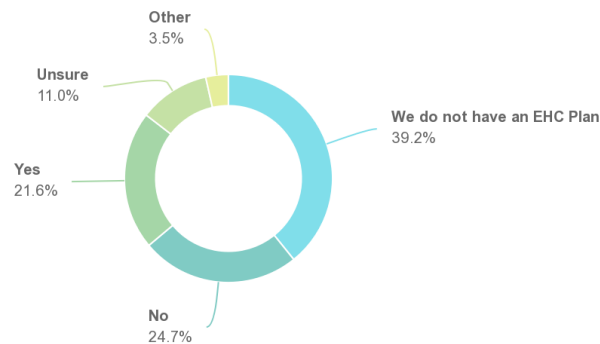
Following the partial closure of education settings from 20th March 2020, the government asked local authorities to consider the needs of all children and young people with an EHC plan and to carry out a Risk Assessment.

Local authorities were asked to work with educational settings and parents or carers to determine whether children and young people would be able to have their needs met at home and be safer there than attending an educational setting.

Coronavirus (COVID-19): SEND Risk Assessment guidance was published on 19th April 2020

We therefore asked parents if a Risk Assessment had taken place.

For children with an EHC Plan, a risk assessment should have taken place to determine whether “children and young people are able to have their needs met at home and be safer there than attending an educational setting”. Have you had such a discussion? (If you do not have an EHC Plan, please check the box “We do not have an EHC Plan”)



(227 Responses)

39.2% respondents did not have an EHC Plan and as such we would not expect them to have had a Risk Assessment conducted.

21.6% which equates to 49 responses said they did receive a Risk Assessment.

24.7% which equates to 56 responses said they did not have a Risk Assessment.

11% which equates to 25 responses were unsure if one had taken place

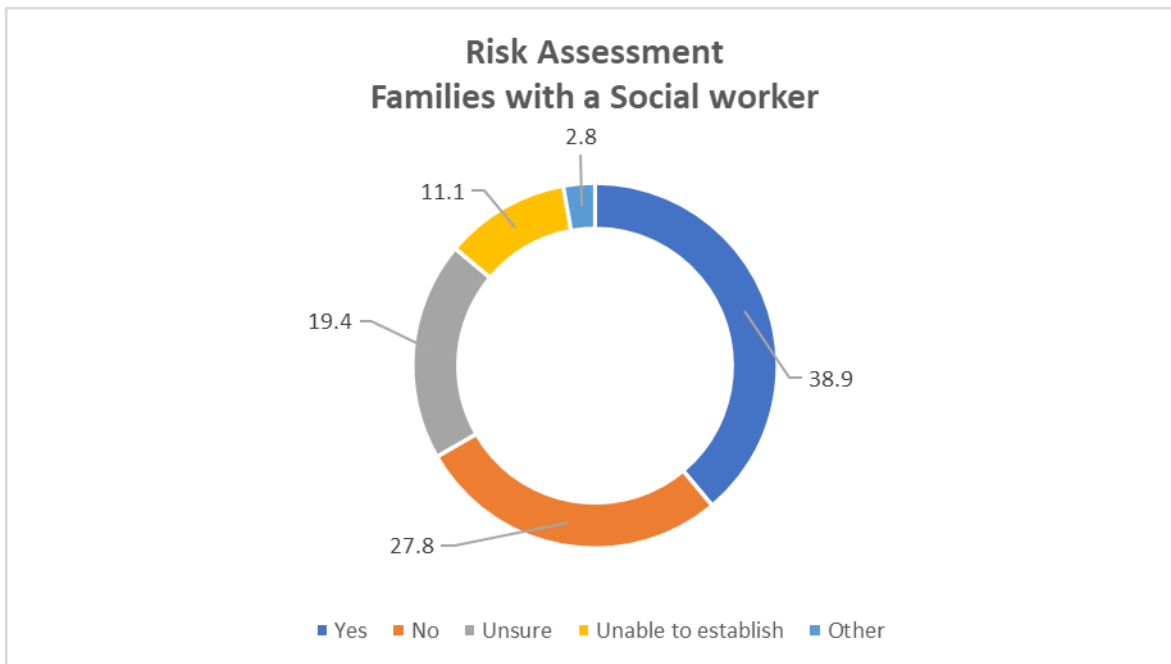
3.5% other reported as follows:

- We had an email to say that the SENCo had done a Risk Assessment.
- Yes, but was not involved or asked to comment
- We were told that she should stay at home in line with government guidance.
- We withdrew from school the week before lockdown as family member is classified vulnerable
- having discussion after half term

### Families with Social Workers

Risk Assessments should also be carried out with families who have an appointed social worker, even if an EHC plan is not in place. Below show the results of those families who indicate they had a social worker.





(36 responses)

2.8 % ‘Other’ equates to 1 response. When asked if they had had a Risk Assessment, they stated “only after complaint to Department for Education”

It is unclear if the 11.1% (4 respondents) had a Risk Assessment conducted, this is because of the way the question was worded, which unfortunately affected the results when crossed reference with those who reported to have a social worker.

### Risk Assessments – Essex Family Forum View

38.9% of families have reported that they have had a risk assessment, which evidences that many schools are following the appropriate guidance and communicating the process effectively with families, which we feel is positive.

Essex Family Forum have seen the Risk Assessment templates that Essex County Council have provided to schools and believe that they provide the appropriate amount of information needed for an effective assessment to take place. It should be noted that schools are not obliged to use these templates.

Our data shows that out of the 131 participants who indicated at the beginning of the survey that they had an EHC Plan (thus meeting the needs for a Risk Assessment), 81 of those participants either did not have a Risk Assessment or were unsure if one had taken place. In addition, more than half of the participants that reported they had a Social Worker either did not have a Risk Assessment or the families were unsure if one had taken place.

Our data also shows that some families have reported that a Risk Assessment was done without their input.

Whilst we have no evidence to suggest that Risk Assessments have been conducted purely from the schools’ perspective, it remains a concern to Essex Family Forum that such a relatively high proportion of families are unable to confirm they have been included in the school’s decision.

One of our Family Champions reported to us, outside of this report, of their own and other families

disappointment with regard to unnecessary barriers being put in place by their children’s school (Lexden Springs), which we raised directly with Essex County Council.

Within the data collated from our survey, concerns over their Risk Assessments were mentioned:

*“No contact from school ...I feel they've not met their duty of care not even offered a Risk Assessment at the start of this situation for my child” (Lexden Springs)*

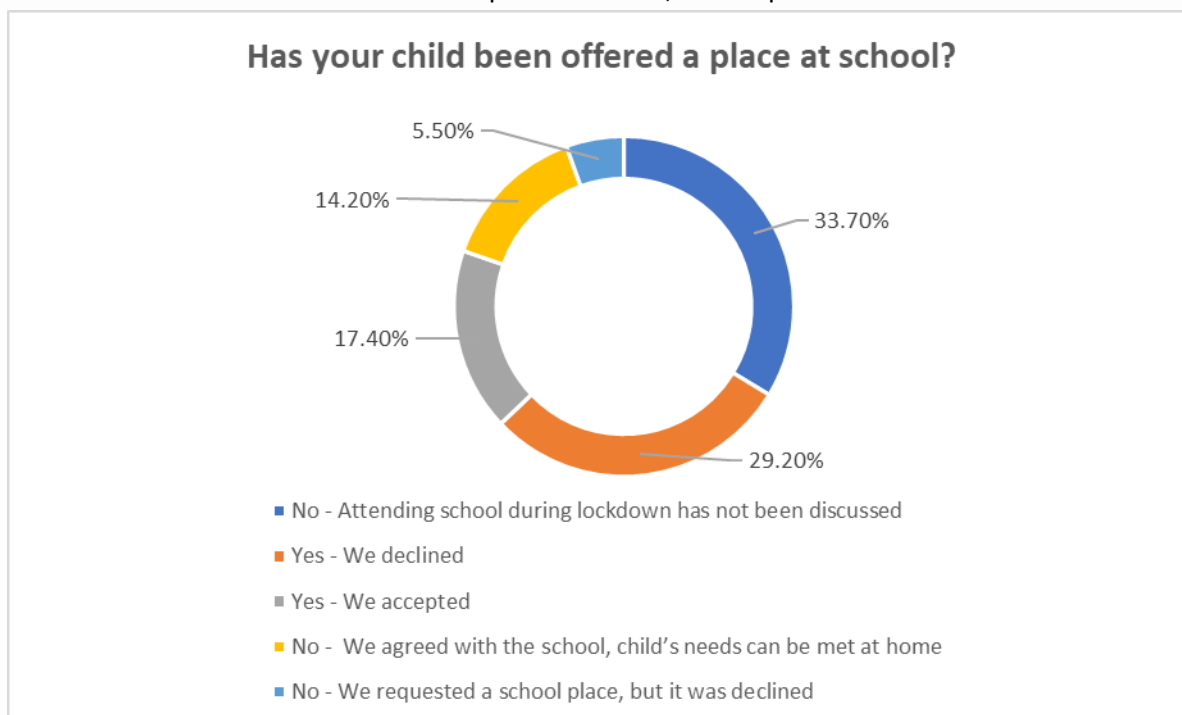
We believe that there continues to be either miscommunication between families and schools about whether they consider the discussions they have had constitute a Risk Assessment, or that schools are failing to conduct the Risk Assessment taking into account the child and parent views and circumstances in line with DfE guidance.

The National Network of Parent Carer Forum report<sup>1</sup> similar concerns regarding Risk Assessments nationally:

1. The Risk Assessment prioritises the needs of the school, not the needs of the child, young person or their family.
2. Risk Assessments are not discussed with parents and carers
3. Decision making is not transparent
4. Schools are creating unnecessary barriers for children with complex needs returning to school
5. Better clarity on the information needed for a Risk Assessment.

## School Place

When asked if their child had been offered a place at school, 219 responses were made.

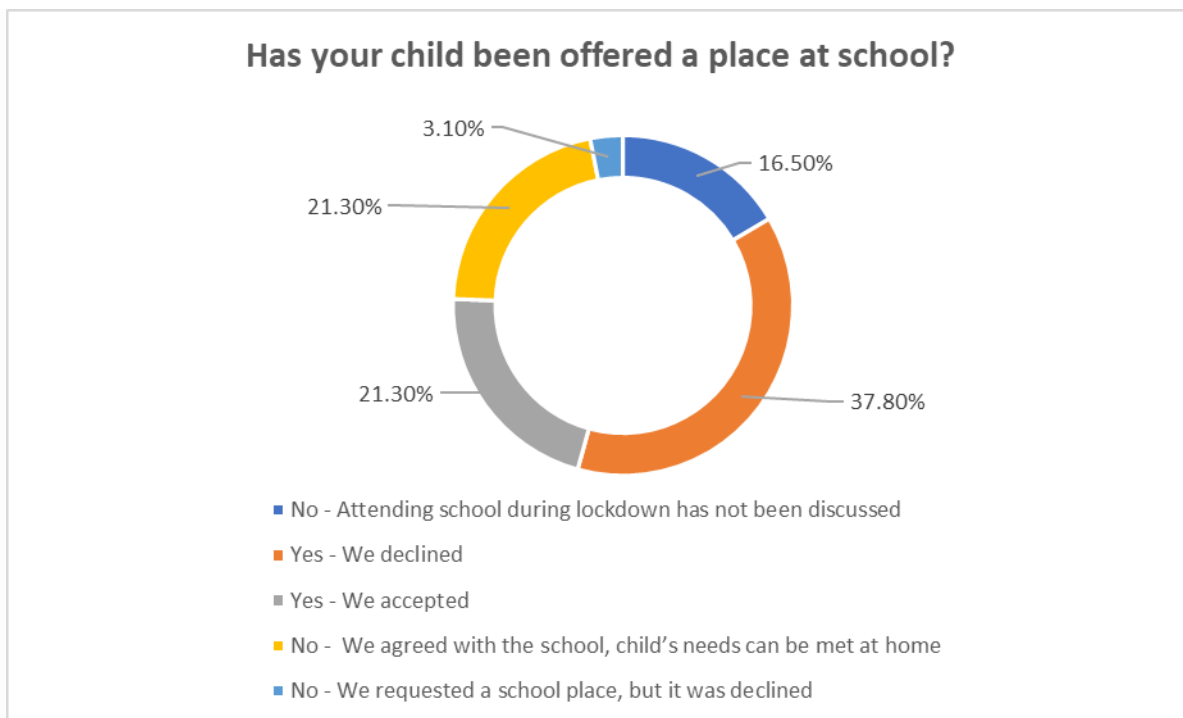


(219 Responses)

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.nnpf.org.uk/working-list-of-nnpf-thoughts-on-school-re-opening/?fbclid=IwAR2r2vMbiBO-d4LgRwNnrVIPvAU1R90qf47840078CbMBzgAhy7z4c TTW>

Whilst 74 respondents state that attending school has not been discussed, it should be noted that only children with an EHC Plan or with a Social Worker may have been entitled to a school placement.

### Results for respondents who indicated they have an EHC Plan

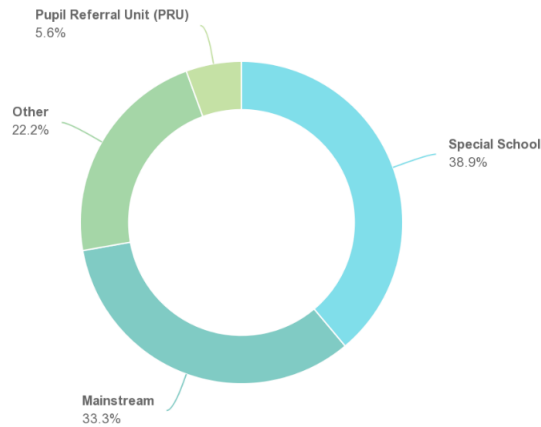


(127 Responses)

Children who have an EHC Plan should have had a Risk Assessment which determines if a child or young person is safer at home or would be safer in an education setting. Therefore, we would expect **all** families to have had this conversation with their education provider.

The figures show that 80% of respondents report that they have had a conversation surrounding school attendance. However, 16.5% (21 respondents) have reported that they have not had an appropriate conversation in line with the Risk Assessment guidance. The breakdown of the type of provision attended by these 21 Participants.

What type of provision does your child attend?



(21 Responses)

Respondents report that these are the schools, which their child attends, and have failed to have the appropriate conversations:

*Kelvedon St Mary's, Mildmay Junior School, BEP academy, Graham James primary school, Treloar's, Sweyne Park, Kingswood Hoe School, Glenwood, Harlow Fields, Lexden Springs (two separate entries), Honywood, St Christopher's, Rivenhall Coe primary school, Edith Borthwick and Monkwick junior school.*

### Social Worker

It should be noted that 2 of these families, who reported that they have had no discussion regarding school attendance have both a social worker and an EHC Plan. 1 family also reports that they are a key worker.

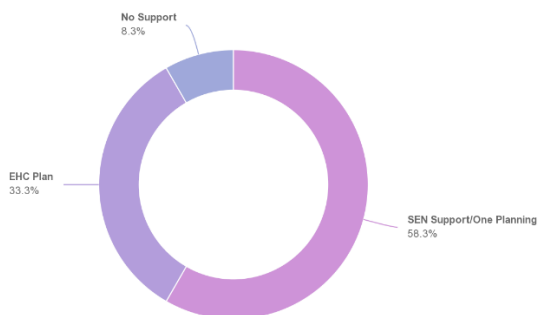
Both participants report a "negative" overall experience.

The full report featured a sample of the experiences from both the aforementioned participants which have been removed for the purposed of this published version

### Requested a school place but was declined

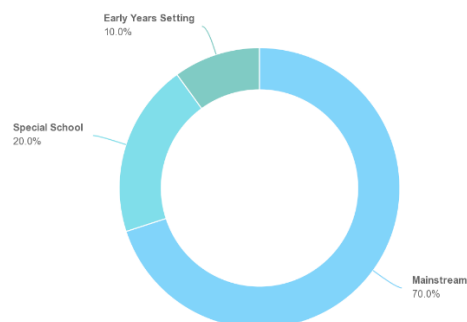
12 respondents report they requested a school place, but their request was declined. None of these respondents reported they had an allocated social worker.

What type of support plan does your child have?



(12 responses)

What type of provision does your child attend?



(10 responses)

We understand that due to government guidelines not every child is entitled to be offered a school placement, in particular those children in receipt of SEN support in mainstream provision.

The full report featured a sample of the participants experiences that were shared with us. They have been removed for the purposed of this published version

### School Place – Essex Family Forum View

For many families with of children with SEND, the need or entitlement to attend school during the current pandemic did not meet with current guidance criteria, so it is reasonable for a substantial number of participants to have not had that conversation.

We also appreciate that it was not feasible for specialist provision to open to all their pupils (who will all have EHC Plans). We feel here lies the importance of the Risk Assessments, to ensure the children who are deemed “most” vulnerable would have been offered a school place.

We do find it concerning that out of the 15 schools mentioned as having had no discussion about attendance, 11 are either special schools or have a specialist provision attached. Given these children would be considered vulnerable pupils (i.e. with an EHCP and/or a social worker) is especially a matter of concern and this draws us again to reference the NNPCF’s concerns surrounding Risk Assessments.

That said, it is positive some families were offered, what we would assume, to be a welcome space at school, and for conversations to have taken place surrounding the child’s needs, with families where it is reported it was mutually agreed their child’s needs could be met at home.

### Has your situation changed?

We asked, “since the start of Lockdown, has your situation changed, for example: working patterns, child & family well-being and what impact is this having on family life?”

The full report featured a sample of the participants experience’s that they shared with us. They have been removed for the purposed of this published version, however some generic examples of changes were:

- ❖ Moved to a new house
- ❖ Mental wellbeing affecting whole family.
- ❖ Parents separating
- ❖ Easier, due to the demands and stress of school no longer impacting on the child or young person
- ❖ Difficulties in home-schooling due to working from home
- ❖ Work patterns affected which impacts on routine for child or young person, increasing meltdowns
- ❖ Increase in challenging behaviours
- ❖ Single parents report loss of support and therefore have no break
- ❖ Children are happier at home and do not want to go back to school.

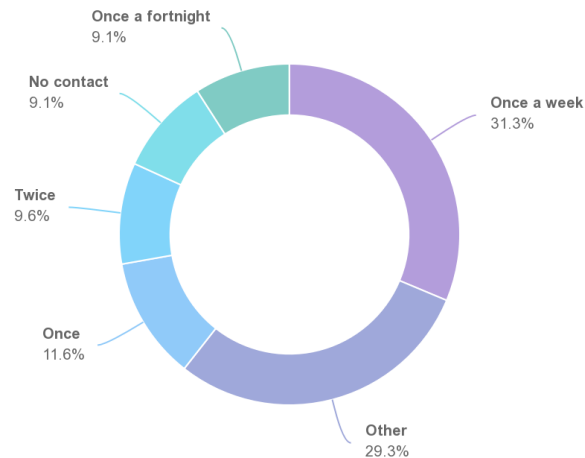
### Has your situation changed? – Essex Family Forum View

For many families, the situation has changed during lockdown and the normal support has been lost. For many families it is not just appointed respite care, but the facility for their child to attend specialist clubs (for example, Short Breaks providers) and most importantly for many the loss of support of families and friends. Families that were coping prior to this pandemic, may find themselves in a more vulnerable position, struggling now to cope. Therefore, it is so important that schools are in regular contact with ALL send families and that they continue to review their Risk Assessment conversations.

## Welfare Contact

We asked participants, since the start of lockdown, how often has the school contacted you to check on the wellbeing of your child and the rest of the family

Since the start of lockdown, how often has the school contacted you to check on the wellbeing of your child and the rest of the family



(198 Responses)

29.3% (58 Responses) indicated “Other as a response” a random sample of responses are shown below.

The full report featured a sample of the participants’ experiences that were shared with us. They have been removed for the purposed of this published version, however some generic examples were

### Positive Comments provided under Other

1. Contact with the SENCO and SEND team daily/ weekly as needed
2. Once a week on zoom
3. Via online learning platform
4. Daily contact to child
5. Via Tapestry
6. Small group zoom lessons
7. Every day by text or call

### Negative Comments provide under Other

1. No contact
2. I have had to update the school.
3. School have not checked on the children’s wellbeing
4. Daily Contact – which is too much
5. Contact only after complaint
6. School has not maintained contact as agreed
7. Very little communication

### Welfare Contact – Essex Family Forum View

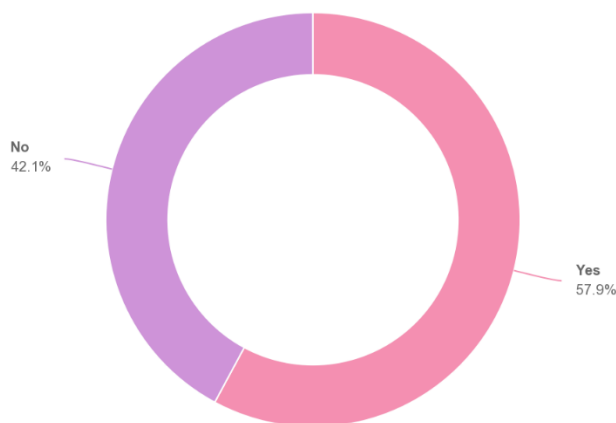
Nearly one third of schools are checking in weekly and clearly there is even more frequent contact with some schools, which is well received, by families and by us at Essex Family Forum.

However, 30% of participants report that they have had barely any contact with the school in nearly 12 weeks. In addition, some participants report that some schools have not kept to the frequency of contact that was agreed with families was necessary (presumably) during the Risk Assessment.

## Differentiated schoolwork

We asked participants, if suitable work which meets their child's needs is being provided.

Is your school providing suitable work, which meets your child's needs?

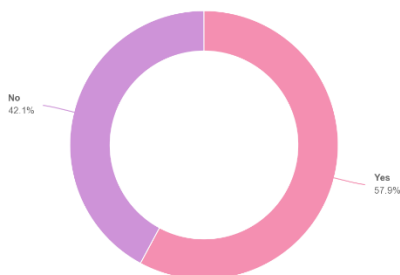


(197 Responses)

We split this further down between the two main education provisions, mainstream and special school

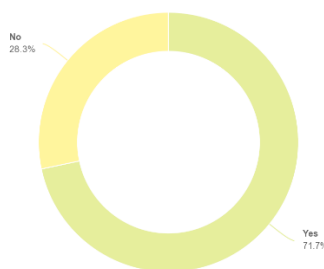
### Mainstream (117 Responses)

Is your school providing suitable work, which meets your child's needs?



### Special Schools (53 Responses)

Is your school providing suitable work, which meets your child's needs?



## Differentiated schoolwork – Essex Family Forum View

It would appear from the respondents that special schools have slightly better adapted to supplying more suitable work than mainstream provision.

However, 83 responses state that suitable work has not been provided for their child which is a concern.

Often children with SEND are educationally behind their same age peers, and therefore any break in education will impact on their educational development substantially. The majority of SEND children are already missing nearly 11 weeks (not allowing for school holidays) of education. Without the entitlement to a school place, children on SEN Support will potentially miss many more. We therefore feel it is crucial that families are given the correct support to educate their children appropriately within the home environment.

## School Support

We wanted to understand what families needed from schools to feel supported at this time, to which 171 responses were given

The full report featured a sample of the participants experiences that were shared with us. They have been removed for the purposes of this published version, however some generic examples were

- The amount of work to complete is too much
- Bitesize pieces of work would have been beneficial
- More videos from teachers to emulate a real lesson. T
- More feedback rather than children having to mark their own work.
- Clear instructions on work loads
- Could have been more creative at maintaining contact for instance using Zoom
- Differentiated learning plans
- Helping child with change
- Speech and Language support
- Differentiated work, not generic tasks
- Less contact – it is too stressful
- Happy with the support provided
- Received a detailed e-mail of where she is in certain subjects and what to focus on.
- Weekly check-ups for emotional support.
- Provide IT equipment
- The school have been amazing with support
- Social services have not been supportive
- Sound like they care
- Zoom lessons with teachers.
- Schools to ask what they can do to help rather than be proactive
- Stop being made to feel guilty about needing to have support
- Stop being made to feel guilty about requesting a school place

## School Support – Essex Family Forum View

Many of the comments seem to focus around 2 key issues:

- Differentiated work and the presentation and explanation of the work supplied
- Communication. Both the type of communication and the amount of communication. We note many parents have asked for a greater use of technology, such as Zoom to engage with children.

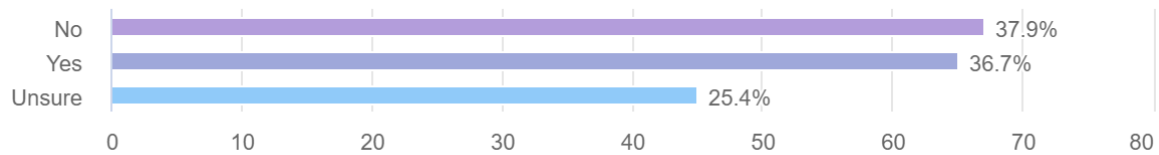
It is also clear from the differing comments on the same settings, that children and their families need different types of support, not a one-size fits all approach (even in specialist provision), all of which should have been covered in a well-executed Risk Assessment.



The NNPCF reports<sup>2</sup> that there should be a greater focus on supporting families whilst they are at home, highlighting that children without a social worker or on SEN Support get little support.

## Improvement in Communication

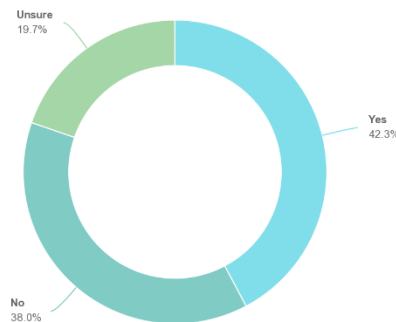
Do you feel that there has been an improvement in communication and support from your school in the last few weeks?



(177 Responses)

The below Chart shows the responses from the participants who provided details information in our “call for Evidence” or participated in our first survey

Do you feel that there has been an improvement in communication and support from your school in the last few weeks?



(71 Responses)

### Schools mentioned as improved based upon the 71 responses:

*Kingswood Hoe School (Twice), Glenwood (Twice), Columbus School And College, Market Field (Twice), Doucecroft, Edith Borthwick (Three times) School, Mayflower Primary School, Harwich, Lawford Primary School, Trinity Road, Holland Haven Primary School, Great Tey Primary, St Christopher’s School, How bridge Infant School, The Deane’s, Greenside, Hilltop Junior School Wickford, Beauchamps High School, Grove House, Brentwood, Great Totham Primary School, The Endeavour, And Clarity Independent School*

### Schools mentioned as showing no improvement bases upon the 71 responses

*Iceni Academy (Twice), BEP Academy, Columbus, Westlands CP School, Lexden Springs (Twice), The Mayflower Primary School, Great Totham Primary, Hedingham Secondary School, Monkwick Junior School, Prettygate Junior Schools (Twice) Glenwood, Lawford Cofe, St John Fisher Catholic Primary School,*

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.nnpf.org.uk/working-list-of-nnpf-thoughts-on-school-re-opening/?fbclid=IwAR2r2vMbiBO-d4LgRwNnrVIPvAU1R90qf47840078CbMBzgAhy7z4c\\_TTw](http://www.nnpf.org.uk/working-list-of-nnpf-thoughts-on-school-re-opening/?fbclid=IwAR2r2vMbiBO-d4LgRwNnrVIPvAU1R90qf47840078CbMBzgAhy7z4c_TTw)

*Canewdon, Bromfords, Thriftwood School, Honywood, St Christopher's, St Joseph's Catholic Primary And South Woodham Ferrers*

### **Schools mentioned where respondents were unsure bases upon the 71 responses**

(we could assume this to be they felt it has stayed the same)

Meadgate Primary School, Hilltop Infants, Columbus School and College, Oakfield Primary School, Great Totham Primary, The St Christopher School, Cedar Hall and Thriftwood

It should be noted that respondents were given the option of naming the school which some of the 71 parents exercised

### **Improvement in Communication – Essex Family Forum View**

It is positive that 42% of respondents to our first survey felt that there has been an increase in communication. Several schools are mentioned as both having improved communication and there being no improvement, and one school manages to score in all three categories – it could be inferred that this anomaly is down to the different approaches of individual teachers and the different needs of families.

Examples provide throughout this report highlight families' different needs in relation to the frequency of communication. One participant is frustrated at daily contact, where other participants have praised it. As we highlighted within 'Welfare Contact', suitable communications should have been agreed with families during Risk Assessments to ensure it meets their individual needs.

### **Coping overall?**

We asked families to let us know how they, their child, and the rest of their family were coping overall. We understand the additional demands having a child/children with SEND can place on a family and the implications of dealing with them under the "lockdown" period, where access to family, friends, carers, respite as well as education has been restricted.

We received 179 responses. The full report featured a sample of the participants experiences that were shared with us. They have been removed for the purposed of this published version, however some generic examples were

- ❖ Very well
- ❖ my child has adapted well
- ❖ Exhausted but that is to be expected.
- ❖ Difficult for sibling as at home all day with child with SEND
- ❖ Must cope, no choice, no support
- ❖ Effected Childs Sleeping and Eating habits
- ❖ Ok
- ❖ Anxiety has increased
- ❖ Child has no other children or adults to interact with
- ❖ Child thrives on routine and structure and this situation has affected this
- ❖ Impact on parent/carer mental health
- ❖ surviving,
- ❖ we are lucky to have a garden
- ❖ I feel the school abandoned us
- ❖ Childs mental health is suffering

- ❖ Good
- ❖ Missing family and friends,
- ❖ Okay, have good days and bad days
- ❖ Coping ok, although my child is anxious about the change in his routine, etc
- ❖ some days can be extremely hard as child requires 24-hour care
- ❖ I think the children will really struggle to return to school
- ❖ I feel overwhelmed
- ❖ Parents arguing more
- ❖ We have adjusted well.
- ❖ OK. My child has stopped self-harming and is happy not at school.
- ❖ *I worry about the transition back to school*

### Coping overall? – Essex Family Forum Views

We recognise that this current pandemic will impact on many family’s wellbeing and mental health not just those families who have children with additional educational needs or complex health needs.

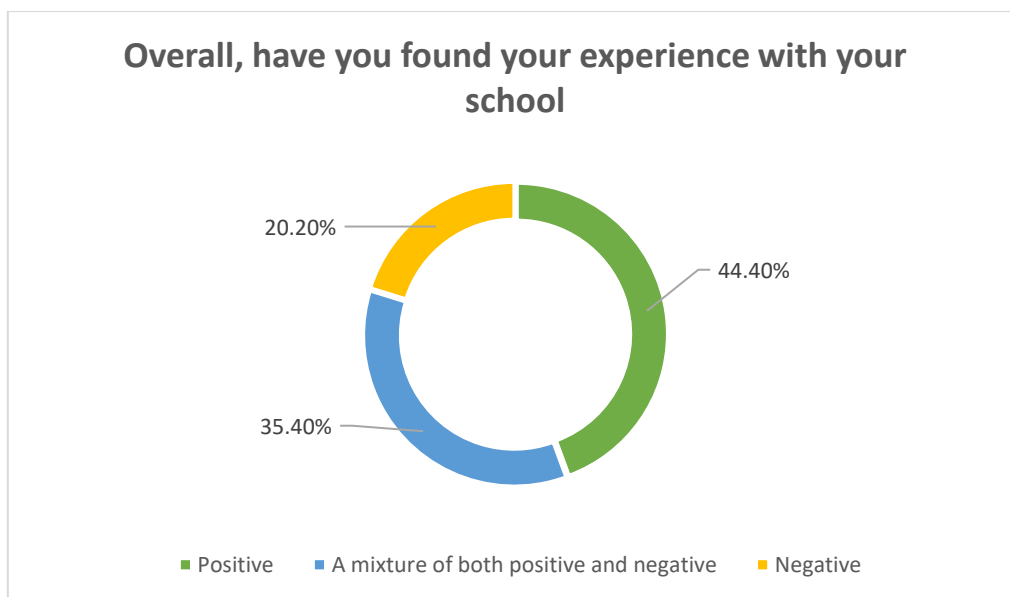
The comments received show that although families are managing, it is far from easy and the current situation has added significant stresses and strains on the home environment – typically the “safe” environment for a child with SEND. Anxiety levels are rising about the return to school and the impact that will have on children’s mental health.

The support provided by schools undoubtedly helps many families and therefore it is key that schools understand what type of support families need at this time. It is also extremely important that schools, and relevant partners are working towards supporting children with increased mental health issues over the coming months in the home environment and in particular on their return to school. We know “transition” often present difficulties and behavioural issues for many children with SEND and many children will not only be returning to school, but to new classrooms, with new class mates and new teachers, and in some cases to new schools.

### Overall Experience with School

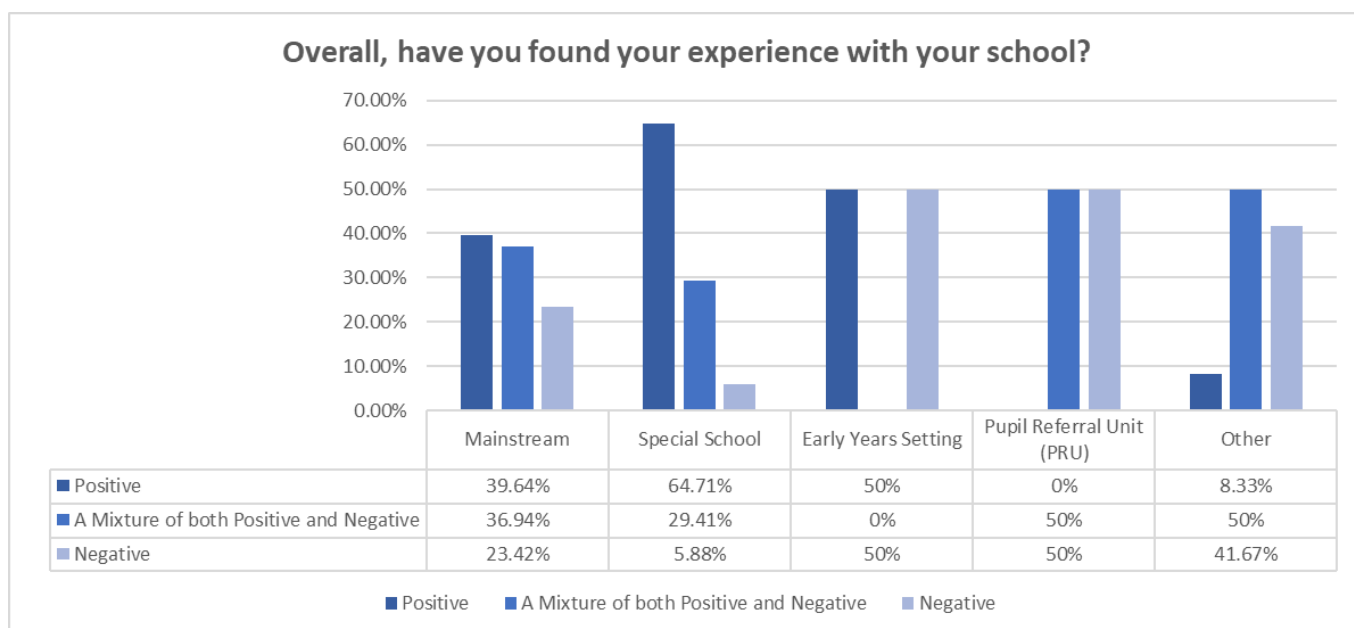
We wanted to have a clear picture of our family’s overall experience with their school during COVID-19.

Provision Type: All Responses



(178 Responses - Figures are actual responses not %)

We split this further down between the types of Education Provision



A breakdown of the school names for each type of provision categories by response can be found in Appendix A.

#### Overall Experience with School – Essex Family Forum Views

It was our hope that many more families reported a positive experience and we are pleased that overall, 44% participants reported a positive experience with a further 35.4% participants reporting a mixed viewpoint.

When we consider the type of provision, it is encouraging that families’ experiences with specialist provision have been overwhelmingly positive and that less than 24% of mainstream families report a solely negative

experience. However, it is extremely concerning that no positive experiences were indicated for Pupil Referral Units, even though the respondents represent a very low percentage overall.

We firmly believe that agreeing a level of communication that meets the individual family's needs along with providing the appropriate support will no doubt improve families overall experience even further.

## Additional comments

It is very important to us, as a Parent Carer Forum, that a parent and/or carer has the opportunity to tell their story and most importantly feel heard. We therefore gave parents the opportunity to provide any additional comments allowing them to express their views fully. We received 96 in depth comments.

The full report featured a sample of the participants experiences that were shared with us. They have been removed for the purposed of this published version, however some generic examples were

- The SEN provision and One Planning at the school is poor
- Lack of understanding of SEND
- School failing child
- It's not hard to improve from zero effort
- We have had so little support
- School left us to fend for ourselves.
- Children on SEND support plan have been left behind
- School have been brilliant with school food vouchers and communication
- No personal communication from school
- No access for key workers
- Nobody has called to check on us on a regular basis
- Feel social care need to be playing a bigger role in supporting families at this time.
- School has been supportive, honest and realistic.
- Good communication
- Great SENCO
- Transport has been great
- I have also been contacted by ECC special schools

## Additional comments – Essex Family Forum Views

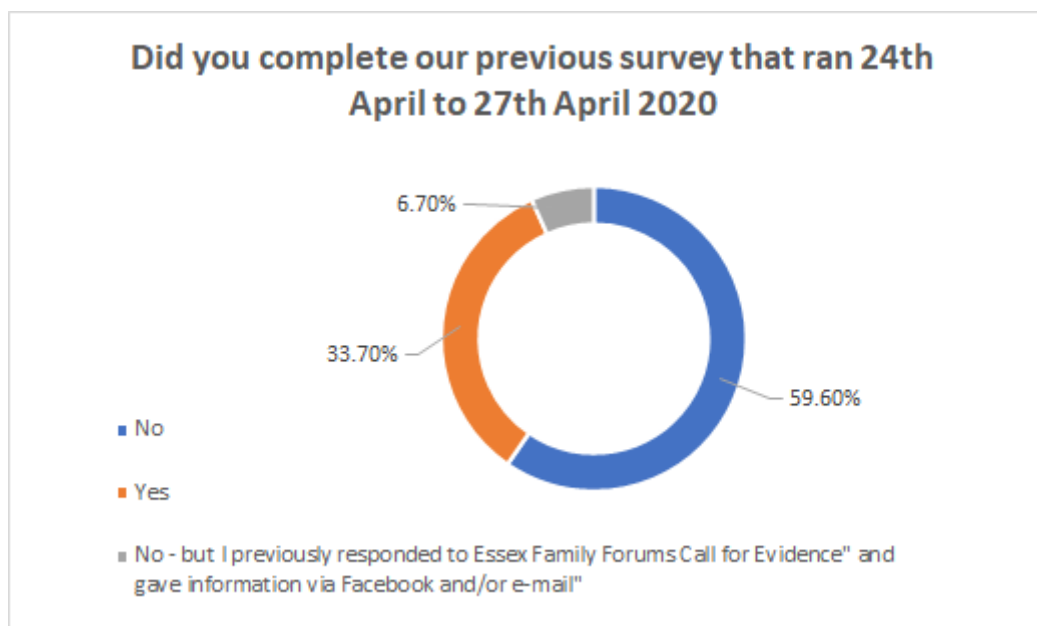
The additional comments very much reflect the overall themes arising from the rest of the survey.

## April 2020 Survey

We previously conducted a similar survey which ran 24<sup>th</sup> April – 27<sup>th</sup> April 2020, Communication and Support from Schools During COVID-19.

Link to published findings <https://essexfamilyforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Communication-and-Support-from-Schools-During-COVID-Report-Families-copy.pdf>

We therefore asked the participants of this survey, if they had participated or have contacted us detailing their experience through our “call for evidence” social media request.



(178 Responses)

This confirms that 81% of the 89 participants that consented in our original survey also completed our follow-up survey. This also shows we have extended our reach and are representing more families. Whilst only 178 participants completed the survey, many of our responses represent a larger viewpoint as 247 initially contributed

## Essex Family Forums' final thoughts and suggested recommendations

### Final Thoughts

- Families are still having very mixed experiences when it comes to communication and support from their child(ren)'s school. Whilst this varies from school to school, it is apparent from answers given that the experience can vary from teacher to teacher within a school. There is a clear need to establish the reasons behind why this is happening.
- Given that more than half of those whose children have EHC Plans reported that their child's school has either not carried out a Risk Assessment or are unsure whether a Risk Assessment has been carried out, it would appear that schools are still failing to communicate effectively with families.
- Additionally, 21% of respondents whose child has an EHCP said school attendance had not been discussed or that they had requested a school place and been declined by the school.
- Whilst 57% of respondent's overall report that their work being sent home is suitable for their child's needs, that still leaves nearly 43% of children with work that is not suitably differentiated. There is no obvious reason why work that would be differentiated by teachers within a classroom environment cannot continue to be in the current situation. Children with SEND are already at a significant disadvantage academically and for their schoolwork to be impacted in this way during COVID-19 is not acceptable.
- With 30% of those completing the survey indicating that they had little or no contact with the school to check on the well-being of the child and family, this has left both children and their families bereft of their main source of support at a time of unprecedented stress and uncertainty in their lives. Every family's circumstances are different and ever-changing and that is why individual Risk Assessments and regular welfare calls are vital.

## Suggested Recommendations

We respectfully ask that;

- ECC feed the information provided within this report to the Quadrant Managers so the School Inclusion Partners & Educational Psychologists can use this feedback to support the work they do with the schools' Senior Leadership Teams
- ECC send a copy of our report to all Headteachers of every school in Essex and all out of area schools with Essex SEND pupils so they can understand fully the positive, mixed and negative feedback provided by our families
- Checks are made to ensure all families with an appointed social worker and/or EHC Plan has had a Risk Assessment carried out in conjunction with the school, social worker (where applicable), and, most importantly, with the family's input.
- Whilst we accept that this could form part of the Reasonable Endeavour's conversations, it should be made clear to the families during those conversations.
- Essex County Council can clarify how they have been monitoring whether schools have delivered the commitment they have made to families in the Risk Assessments.
- Essex County Council acknowledge the receipt of survey with a statement which we can share with the participants of the survey and SEND Families in Essex.

We should like to add that it has been very positive and encouraging to read of such great practice and support that many schools are providing as reported by the participants of this survey. We firmly believe that as schools work with their quadrants managers and their "clusters" sharing good practice that this will no doubt improve practice further and indeed schools will then meet the needs of many more families in Essex.

## Appendix A – School Names

Here is a list of school names, broken down by provision based on how participants reported their overall experience

### Provision Type: Mainstream

School Name	Response	Count
Beauchamps	A mixture of both positive and negative	1
Beaulieu Park	A mixture of both positive and negative	1
Bromfords	A mixture of both positive and negative	1
Buttsbury Junior school	A mixture of both positive and negative	1
Canewdon Primary school	A mixture of both positive and negative	2
Great Totham primary school	A mixture of both positive and negative	2
Hedingham Secondary School	A mixture of both positive and negative	1
Hilltop Infants	A mixture of both positive and negative	1
Hilltop Junior School Wickford	A mixture of both positive and negative	1
Holland Haven Primary School	A mixture of both positive and negative	1
Howbridge Infant school.	A mixture of both positive and negative	1
Iceni Academy	A mixture of both positive and negative	2
Katherine Semar - Saffron Walden	A mixture of both positive and negative	1
Lawford Primary School	A mixture of both positive and negative	1
Mayflower Primary School, Harwich	A mixture of both positive and negative	1
Not Provided	A mixture of both positive and negative	12
Notley High School	A mixture of both positive and negative	1
Our Lady Immaculate	A mixture of both positive and negative	1
Prettygate Junior school	A mixture of both positive and negative	1
Rivenhall Coe primary school	A mixture of both positive and negative	1
Sir Martin Frobisher Academy	A mixture of both positive and negative	1
Southminster primary	A mixture of both positive and negative	1
St teresa's	A mixture of both positive and negative	1
ST Thomas of Canterbury Junior	A mixture of both positive and negative	1
Warley Primary	A mixture of both positive and negative	1
Wickford Primary	A mixture of both positive and negative	1
William Martin	A mixture of both positive and negative	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>41</b>
Buttsbury Infant School	Negative	1
Great Bradford's Junior School	Negative	1
Great Totham Primary	Negative	3
Kelvedon St Mary's Primary academy	Negative	2
Lawford CofE	Negative	1
Lubbins Academy	Negative	1
Lyons Hall school	Negative	1
Manningtree High School	Negative	1



Monkwick junior school	Negative	1
Not Provided	Negative	7
Oakfield Primary School.	Negative	1
St Helena	Negative	1
St John Fisher Catholic Primary School	Negative	1
The Downs Primary School and Nursery	Negative	1
The Mayflower Primary School	Negative	1
Westlands CP School	Negative	1
William Martin School, Harlow Essex	Negative	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>26</b>
Beauchamps High school	Positive	1
Becket Keys	Positive	2
Billericay	Positive	1
Cressing Primary school	Positive	1
Debden Park High school	Positive	1
Graham James primary school	Positive	1
Great Tey Primary	Positive	1
Greensward Academy	Positive	1
Hilltop Junior	Positive	3
Holland Haven Primary School	Positive	1
Hylands School	Positive	1
Kirby Primary academy	Positive	1
Meadgate Primary School	Positive	1
Mersea Island	Positive	1
Mildmay Junior School	Positive	1
Mountnessing C of E primary school	Positive	1
Not Provided	Positive	4
Passmores Academy	Positive	1
Prettygate Juniors Colchester Essex	Positive	2
Rickstones academy	Positive	1
Rivenhall	Positive	1
St Benedicts Catholic College	Positive	1
St Joseph's Catholic Primary, South Woodham Ferrers	Positive	1
St Thomas of Canterbury COE Junior School	Positive	1
Stanway Fiveways	Positive	1
Sweyne Park	Positive	1
The Alderton Primary School	Positive	1
The Appleton School	Positive	1
The Bromfords school	Positive	1

The Colne Community School and College.	Positive	1
The Deane's	Positive	1
The Ongar Academy	Positive	2
Trinity Road	Positive	1
White Court School	Positive	1
Wickford Primary School	Positive	1
William Martin infant school	Positive	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>44</b>

### Provision Type: Special School

Castledon College	A mixture of both positive and negative	1
Cedar Hall	A mixture of both positive and negative	2
Columbus	A mixture of both positive and negative	2
Edith Borthwick School	A mixture of both positive and negative	1
Glenwood	A mixture of both positive and negative	1
Greenside	A mixture of both positive and negative	1
Lexden Springs	A mixture of both positive and negative	2
Market Field School	A mixture of both positive and negative	1
Not Provided	A mixture of both positive and negative	3
Thriftwood School	A mixture of both positive and negative	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>15</b>
Glenwood	Negative	1
Lexden springs	Negative	1
St Christophers	Negative	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>3</b>
Castledon Sixth Form College	Positive	1
Cedar Hall	Positive	1
Clarity Independent School	Positive	1
Columbus School and college	Positive	2
Doucecroft	Positive	1
Edith Borthwick	Positive	2
Exceptional Ideas	Positive	1
Glenwood	Positive	2
Grove House school	Positive	2
Harlow Fields	Positive	1
Kingswood hoe special school	Positive	2
Lexden Springs	Positive	2
Market Field School	Positive	5
Marketfield college	Positive	1
Not Provided	Positive	1
Pioneer school	Positive	1
Shorefields	Positive	1
Southview	Positive	1
St Christophers School	Positive	2

The Edith Borthwick school	Positive	1
The Endeavour	Positive	1
Thriftwood	Positive	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>33</b>

Provision Type: Early Years Setting

Not Provided	Negative	1
OAKLANDS	Positive	1

Provision Type: Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)

Not Provided	A mixture of both positive and negative	1
BEP Academy	Negative	1

Provision Type: Other

Other - Type defined by Participant	School Name	Response	Count
Other	Not Provided	A mixture of both positive and negative	1
Other	Gateway Academy	A mixture of both positive and negative	1
ASD hub at mainstream	Honywood	A mixture of both positive and negative	1
Other	Not Provided	A mixture of both positive and negative	1
Mainstream with Autism unit	Not Provided	A mixture of both positive and negative	1
Other	Not Provided	A mixture of both positive and negative	1
<b>Total</b>			<b>6</b>
Private	Gosfield School	Negative	1
Asd unit within mainstream	Kelvedon St Mary's	Negative	1
Alternative provision within a mainstream school	Manors House provision at Templars Academy, Witham	Negative	1
None	No educational provision - LA forgot all about my son.	Negative	1
Out of county specialist school.	Treloar's.	Negative	1
<b>Total</b>			<b>5</b>
Mainstream with a special school	West Horndon primary school	Positive	1
<b>Total</b>			<b>1</b>