



Essex Local Area SEND Inspection Revisit

Essex Family Forum Impact Statement

4th May 2022

OFSTED/CQC SEND Inspection Areas of Weakness



Potential Over-Identification of Moderate Learning Difficulties

The reasons for, and accuracy of, the high proportions of children and young people identified with moderate learning difficulties are yet to be resolved. Potential over-identification could mask underlying difficulties in communication and language, and social, emotional and mental health development.

Quality of Education, Health and Care Plans

Too many EHC plans do not include the information needed to secure high quality outcomes for children and young people.

- The EHC plans do not consistently secure the right professional advice to meet children's and young people's needs, and do not have specific details of the provision that will be put in place.
- Strategic oversight is not effective in making sure that EHC plans are fit for purpose.

Joint Commissioning

The joint commissioning arrangements between the local authority and the CCGs do not work well enough to provide children and young people with the services that they need:

- Too much variation between the CCGs leads to inequality, inconsistency and unacceptably long waiting times for services.
- Joint commissioning is not sufficiently informed by what is already known about the gaps in services for health and education across the 0-25 age range, across the whole local area.

Measuring Impact for SEND Families in Essex

In October 2020 we undertook our first [Family Impact Survey](#) to provide some baseline data on parent/carer experience in Essex based on the Areas of Weakness identified in the [OFSTED/CQC Local Area SEND Inspection](#) of 2019. The parental views we gathered in our 2020 survey were also to further contribute to and inform this improvement work.

During the COVID-19 pandemic we were unable to engage with parent/carers in person and had to be creative in ways that they could continue provide feedback on SEND services. We developed our [Virtual Graffiti Wall](#) which parent/carers can access via our website. We produce termly reports which are shared with the SEND Partnership Board and Joint Commissioning Group, and then cascaded into the various workstreams and teams throughout Essex.

Our second Family Impact Survey was conducted in February 2022. It is intended to measure the current levels of parental satisfaction with local services for SEND Families **and** to compare with the data collected within the 2020 survey. We want to find out what has improved for families and where the impact of any improvement work has yet to be felt.

Measuring Impact for SEND Families in Essex

Between November 2021 and February 2022, we held Planning for Reinspection workshops with our Family Champions and a number of parent support groups in Essex. *(Please see our Reach Document for full details).*

We felt that it was important not only to understand the views of our parents and carers, but also the organisations that support them. These organisations work hard supporting families daily so are able to offer a clear picture of what families' current experience is.

This may mean the numbers where reported look small, but the number of families they represent is vast.

We used the measurement outcomes from the Written Statement of Action to shape our discussions to ascertain whether families are feeling any impact from the improvement work that has been undertaken in the Local Area since October 2019.

Measuring Impact for SEND Families in Essex



Support Organisations



Essex Family Forum
Family Champions

, Dream the Change

The Maze Group

SNAP Charity

MyOTAS

(Formerly

Takiwantanga Supports Service)

PACT for Autism

Autism Anglia

Upwards with Downs

Essex Carers Network

Families in Focus

Child First Trust

Quality of Education, Health and Care Plans Workstreams

EHC Needs Assessment Guidance

SEND Scheme of Delegation /
EHCP Decision Making Panels

Medical Needs Guidance

Evidence Writers

QA Process / QA Framework

Ordinarily Available

Annual Reviews and Ceasing of
Plans

Communication / Engagement with
Groups and Families

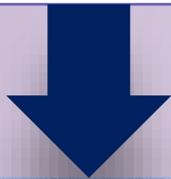
Measuring Impact for SEND Families in Essex

Quality of Education, Health and Care Plans

Questions we asked our Family Champions and Support Groups

Question 1

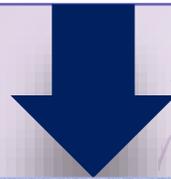
Is the decision making process clear for parent/carers and children and young people?



100% of participants said
NO

Question 2

Is there consistency in the decision making process for EHCPs?



Scale of 1 to 10
Average score was 1

Question 3

Families say they feel well supported and informed during the process?



Scale of 1 to 10
Average Score was 1

Measuring Impact for SEND Families in Essex

Quality of Education, Health and Care Plans

Questions we asked our Family Champions and Support Groups

Question 4

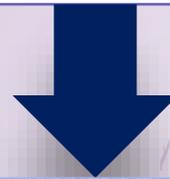
Parents and Carers feel the EHCP accurately reflects the health and social care needs of their child?



Scale of 1 to 5
Average Score: 1.2

Question 5

Parent Carers are confident their child/young person receives the health and social care provision outlined in their EHCP?



Scale of 1 to 5
Average Score: 1.1

Question 6

There is improvement in how provision is described in EHCP plans (detailed, specified and quantified) and outcomes are SMART?



Scale of 1 to 5
Average Score: 1.3

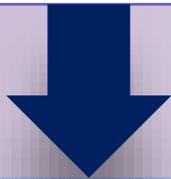
Measuring Impact for SEND Families in Essex

Quality of Education, Health and Care Plans

Questions we asked our Family Champions and Support Groups

Question 7

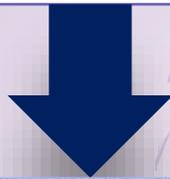
Families have confidence in the transition planning to their next phase of education or training?



Scale of 1 to 5
Average Score: 1.7

Question 8

Families with children/young people in Year 9 and above are confident that the outcomes and provision in the plan are preparing them well for adulthood?



Scale of 1 to 5
Average Score: 1

Question 9

Families report that Annual Review paperwork was completed within timescales?



Some of the Time

Measuring Impact for SEND Families in Essex

Quality of Education, Health and Care Plans

**Questions we asked our Family Champions
and Support Groups**

Question 10

Are children/young people and their
parent carers proactively included in
the decision to cease their EHC
Plan?



NO

Measuring Impact for SEND Families in Essex

Quality of Education, Health and Care Plans

EHCP Process:

- Training for all involved
- Clear guidance
- Panels to follow legal guidelines
- Transparency
- Better Communication
- Clear feedback on decisions

Annual reviews:

- Dependent on how schools manage them – better training is needed
- Update plans to reflect changes needed
- Complete within statutory timescales
- Improve process to reconsider bandings (transparency)

What improvements Family Champions and Support Groups suggested

Quality of Plans:

- Training for all involved
- Real and effective joint working/commissioning
- Realistic targets that schools can achieve
- More defined standards
- Open conversations
- Best practice
- Better use of SMART
- Fully reflect the views of the child/young person and parent/carers
- Do not cut and paste
- Update plans to reflect current needs
- Continuity of plan when transferring to new school

Quality of Education, Health and Care Plans

Working Together

Essex Family Forum have represented the parent/carer voice as a member of the Quality of Plans Working Group, which has overseen the work being undertaken in the sub-groups relating to this workstream. There have been discussions and, for the most part, agreement around the level of involvement that has been required from us in the various sub-groups.

New Working Practices

We are involved in the Quality Assurance process and our parent representatives (currently our Family Champion Leads) participate in the monthly Quadrant QA Panel. However, there is some inconsistency in how the panels are conducted across the county (e.g. not all quadrants allow prior access to supporting documentation). We are also members of the termly Countywide QA Panels and participate fully. In our opinion, the QA panels are proving to be invaluable as a continuing review of how well the “system” is working within Essex, and they have already resulted in a more proactive approach to addressing improving the quality of the supporting evidence.

We are not members of the EHCP decision-making panels, and cannot comment on how well they are operating or what changes are being made due to the discussions being made there.

We feel that capacity, both in the short-term and the long-term, within all the various teams (within Education, Health and Social Care) is having a considerable impact on how well the improvement work can be embedded effectively.

Quality of Education, Health and Care Plans

Impact for Families

At the moment, there appears to be little impact for the majority of the improvement work resonating with families. In our recent 2022 Family Impact Survey, the responses to the EHC Process Survey and the Planning for Reinspection workshops, parents are still reporting they feel uninformed and unsupported during the process, nor do they do always understand the decisions made or who makes them. The quality of the plan writing is still considered to be a significant area of improvement in view of the comments by parent/carers in our Survey.

There are some new initiatives that have been established by the ECC SEND Navigators have made a real positive impact with families and parent support groups.

Parent Group Drop-in sessions

The parent support groups that attend regularly have shared how useful they find these sessions.

SEND Roadshows

EFF have been fully involved in planning and hosting these Roadshow sessions for parent/carers with the SEND Navigators.

The Bridge Newsletter

A monthly newsletter with updates and useful information on the world of SEND in Essex for families. EFF are one of the contributors to the content.

Joint Commissioning

ASD ADHD Subgroup



We asked on a sliding scale of 1-10 how they felt Children Young People and their families' experiences reflected the following outcome measures:

Families will experience a positive referral into community paediatrics. The referral process is clear and accessible for both CYP, Families and professionals. CYP and their families are referred by the appropriate professional when the need is identified.

1.6

Families will have a clear understanding of their journey through the clinical aspect of the pathway from the point of referral. Families will understand the timescales for appointments, the information gathering process and the process of assessments if required, are clearly explained.

1.0

Families will be provided with the right support at the right time that meets their needs, through effective signposting to appropriate early intervention, family support and post diagnostic support.

0.7

Parents, carers children and young people will feel listened to and will feel that their views and wishes were considered and informed decisions

1.0

0

Did not experience

10

Did experience

Weighted Average Scores

Joint Commissioning

ASD ADHD Subgroup



We asked if family champions and the organisations that supported families felt that CYP and families have experienced a positive impact as a result of the changes/work taken place since the last inspection?

Yes - Improved	0
No Difference	9
No - Got Worse	6
No Comment	1

Thematic review of feedback provided within these sessions suggests

➤ Outcome 1 – Referral Process

Referral process is inconstant, with some reporting clearer access, and others reporting parents are still experiencing difficulties

➤ Outcome 2 – Understanding of their Journey

Diagnosis process is too long
timeframes and process is unclear

➤ Outcome 3 – Support

Inconsistent/gaps in support offer across the county
Education support is inadequate and inconsistent
Signposting is inconsistent depending on professionals and area

➤ Outcome 4 – Feeling Heard and Valued

Some parents do feel listened to

Work done at LA does not translate into children's experiences in schools and there is still little/no accountability where there is inadequate SEND provision. There are still illegal exclusions

This is probably one of the more positive areas. We do hear that parents / carers do feel more part of the process and listened to.

"Some parents are still confused by the timeframes (although they do know it's a long timeframe). Parents also seem unsure of what support is available for them whilst they are going through the diagnosis process."

Joint Commissioning

ASD ADHD Subgroup



Working Together

We feel that each CCG has engaged with Essex Family Forum at different levels and with different levels of understanding. We are pleased that following our ASD ADHD Review report in November 2021, (a copy of which has been uploaded as evidence), we are working on defining a shared understanding of co-production with the CCG in South Essex, and this is helping as we move forward with the transformation of the Lighthouse development centre. We also acknowledge a more proactive approach has been embraced in Mid and West Essex. We continue to enjoy a co-productive relationship in NEE, and recently co-hosted 2 information workshops with families in NEE to explain the new NEE ND offer of early support.

Waiting Times and Parental Experience

We are pleased to see that waiting times have been a focus and increased capacity and new assessments put in place to aid diagnosis. However, as well as the organisations feedback, parental feedback through our **Neurodevelopmental (ND) Survey**, and our numerous **Graffiti Wall reports** (all of which have been uploaded into evidence) suggest that parents are yet to feel the impact of changes and investment made.

Parents and carers and support organisations are still reporting a "postcode" lottery in relation to access to support, with offers differing across the complex landscape of Essex. This is further hindered by the reports from many parents that diagnosis continues to be a barrier for the right support at the right time within education settings. We are pleased that Phase 3 Milestones plan to address the findings of the NDD and business cases within MSE are set to address these continued concerns.

Overall consideration

Overall, whilst there has been significant work in some area's we remain concerned that sufficient progress has not been made across the complete Essex footprint to ensure that SEND families will be currently experiencing a positive impact.

Lack of communication between services, GP and school. The management of the pathway is down to the parents to control. Extremely long process with the main support provided is guidance where to obtain information regarding ASD, as referral to websites and other institutions.

Was 31 weeks from referral to diagnosis during Covid. Was not given a formal assessment as ADHD and diagnosis made following questionnaires and observations Explained about help in school and have me a handout to read and hand to the school with useful strategies.

Ados was not scored due to covid restrictions. This made the assessment results very unclear. Paediatrician did not look at evidence provided from school or at home or take them into account. Paediatrician based results Purley from ADOS assessment. Was looking for stereotypical traits of Autism and not taking into account that girls can present differently. Also did not look into ADHD as suggested from first school visit. Now waiting on qb test. Complaint made to PALS and under different Paediatrician.

Joint Commissioning

ASD ADHD Subgroup



NEURODIVERSITY PACK "SUPPORTING YOUR NEURODIVERSE CHILD" [Resources for Families - Essex Family Forum](#)

The Essex Family Forum approached the Joint Commissioning Group to work with two local groups, SEND The Right Message and MyOTAS, to develop a neurodevelopmental resource for families across Essex. This was launched as a digital copy at the end of 2021 at which point the JCG agreed 3000 copies printed resources for families in Essex of which over 2000 have already been distributed.

There has been some great feedback from families so far:

I want everyone I know to read this so they can understand my son better'

You are going to make the journey that you went through so much easier for other parents

This is answering questions that I didn't even know I needed to ask'

I have been a SEND parent for 12 years, have hundreds of books on neurodiversity and have never seen anything of the depth and quality of this depth and quality

The impact has been decreased isolation felt by families up to the time of diagnosis, improved access to information resulting in increased confidence, empowerment and ability to engage with SEND professionals. Parents can be more self-reliant and feel more confidence in their ability to ensure that their Children and young People with SEND can get the best possible support.

This joint working helped aid conversations between professionals where there were different understandings between Health, Education and Social Care.

Joint Commissioning

Therapies Subgroup



We asked on a sliding scale of 1-10 how they felt Children Young People and their families' experiences reflected the following outcome measures:

Children and Young People & their Parents and Carers are supported with appropriate information and skills to enable them to be proactive in making choices and supporting speech, language and communication skills.

1

Environments in which children and young people spend time for learning and leisure are communication friendly have appropriate adaptations and enhancements to support universal level OT and Physio Needs.

1

Workforce. Using specialist knowledge and expertise to build skills in the wider workforce in order to ensure speech, language and communication, and OT and Physio skills are appropriately supported across universal, targeted and specialist tiers

0.7

Early Identification is efficient and accessible. Systems enable early identification of therapy needs, including training of others to identify and provide pre-referral advice within community settings.

0.9

Intervention is appropriate and timely, which may include direct or indirect work with individuals and groups of individuals delivered in the most functionally appropriate context relative to specific need.

0.6

0

Did not experience

10

Did experience

Weighted Average Scores

Joint Commissioning

Therapies Subgroup



We asked if family champions and the organisations that supported families felt that CYP and families have experienced a positive impact as a result of the changes/work taken place since the last inspection?

<i>Yes - Improved</i>	0
<i>No Difference</i>	5
<i>No - Got Worse</i>	10
<i>No Comment</i>	1

Thematic review of feedback provided within these sessions suggests

➤ **Outcome 1 –Appropriate Information**

Parents need appropriate and specific information

Parents want information to support CYP at home alongside therapist at school

➤ **Outcome 2 – Environment**

Early Years and Primary schools are communication friendly

Mainstream schools are not sensors friendly

➤ **Outcome 3 – Workforce**

Lack of therapists/staff shortages

Lack of workforce impacts on waiting times/reports/awarded provision

No commissioned Sensory OTs

➤ **Outcome 4 – Early Identification**

Lack of understanding of sensory needs

Referrals hard to obtain

➤ **Outcome 5 – Intervention**

Waiting to long

Difficult to access support

We keep hearing about the balance system but not always seeing action around this, It is not enough to keep referring to a process without evidencing progress. Words need actions!

Parents having to jump through hoops before a referral is even put in to NHS therapies - e.g. completing online workshops/videos

Therapies are hard to access and there is a narrow age range/criteria for some services. Sensory Integration Therapy is not even commissioned. Most families I support pay privately for therapies as a result.

Joint Commissioning

Therapies Subgroup



Working Together

We feel we have been an equal partner in the steering group that is overseeing the implementation of the Balanced System.

A link to our Graffiti Wall is embedded into the Better Communication website and the feedback has been used along with feedback provided the engagement sessions we facilitated for parents and carers with Better Communications as part of the improvement process.

Waiting Times and Parental Experience

We remain concerned that waiting times are still too long and parents report that provision awarded under EHC Plans is not being delivered, which is evidenced by our Annual Survey feedback and Graffiti Wall, with therapists being a key theme for feedback (all of which have been uploaded as evidence). Access to provision remains fragmented, inequitable and inconsistent across the Essex foot-print. This is also a view shared by the many organisations that support families across Essex.

We also acknowledge and understand the growing demand for a greater understanding and the need for specific provision targeted to enable families (and schools) to understand and meet their child's sensory needs. There is no current plans to extend provision to meet this demand, which we feel will impact on the way that families and services that support families will continue to view therapy provision within Essex.

Overall consideration

We accept and understand the complexities of commissioning such a complex provision, which has also been impacted by a shortage of workforce. We also acknowledge that we are working towards implementation in September 2022, however, families remain frustrated and many feel that that provision has worsened since the Inspection. We remain concerned that workforce issues will impact on the ability to meet the demand that the services face, even within a new streamlined way of working.

Schools and settings need to be able to appropriately identify CYP needs and offer early interventions, thus reducing the need for more targeted provision and advice from qualified therapist, we remain concerned that this will take time to embed into practice and remain concerned how effective it will be across all settings, potentially meaning some families will still experience an inequitable offer of support for early intervention.

My son has regular speech and language support written into his EHCP and is not receiving it. I have not been told why or when it will re start. He is suffering and Essex CC are not meeting their legal obligations

Waiting for over 3 years for SLT because the therapist has been on maternity leave. No direct therapy has been received and child is suffering on the verge of having to leave mainstream school. ASD diagnoses

My son has been allocated direct OT session on a termly basis, written in his EHCP from last year we are still waiting for them to start

Joint Commissioning

Equipment Subgroup



We asked on a sliding scale of 1-10 how they felt Children Young People and their families' experiences reflected the following outcome measures:



We asked if family champions and the organisations that supported families felt that CYP and families have experienced a positive impact as a result of the changes/work taken place since the last inspection?

Yes - Improved	0
No Difference	6
No - Got Worse	2
No Comment	3

Most families I support have accessed local charitable funding to get the equipment that they need because it is not available for them

Joint Commissioning

Equipment Subgroup



Working Together

We feel we have been an equal partner in the steering group that is overseeing the implementation of the equipment services.

We completed an Equipment Survey in July 2021 (uploaded as evidence). Out of this, the subgroup produced a “you said, we did” document to address the issues raised.

Waiting Times and Parental Experience

Families are having to wait a long time for the equipment, and a large part of this is due to access to Therapists and getting the equipment set up correctly. For this reason, it will be incorporated into the Therapies subgroup work.

Families do not have help in navigating the system. This includes information on Carers Assessments, Local Offer and who to ask at various stages of the process. As a result, the subgroup has produced an Equipment Guidance Document.

Overall consideration

The Guidance document is only just complete so the families will not yet have felt the impact. The therapies work is ongoing so again the families will not yet have felt the impact.

More efficient service from assessment to delivery of equipment

Info booklets for parents so we know who to contact and who to complain to

It is hard to get assessment and appointments with the appropriate teams. It takes a long time to get the correct equipment and longer to then wait to get it set up. We have had equipment for 2 years on the school premises which has never been set up in that time and now my child has outgrown the equipment so now needs a new assessment and new equipment.

Better communication with relevant departments and more information available about the help that is out there for those that may be struggling

Joint Commissioning

Local Offer Subgroup



We asked on a sliding scale of 1-10 how they felt Children Young People and their families' experiences reflected the following outcome measures:

Families will know of the Local Offer and regularly return to the Local Offer as a helpful support.

1

Families will easily navigate the Local Offer and find the information they are looking for quickly

1.1

Families will specifically find services and support in their chosen locality

1.1

Families will have trust in the Local Offer to provide comprehensive and up-to-date information

0.6

0

Did not experience

10

Did experience

Weighted Average Scores

Joint Commissioning

Local Offer Subgroup



We asked if family champions and the organisations that supported families felt that CYP and families have experienced a positive impact as a result of the changes/work taken place since the last inspection?

Yes - Improved	0
No Difference	11
No - Got Worse	4
No Comment	0

Thematic review of feedback provided within these sessions suggests

➤ **Outcome 1 – Will know and return to the Local Offer (LO)**

Many families do not know it exists

Schools and Professionals do not signpost families to the LO

➤ **Outcome 2 – Navigation**

Its hard to navigate

Not user friendly

➤ **Outcome 3 – Find Services and Support by area**

Difficult to find information by area

Information is missing

➤ **Outcome 4 – Trust and up to date information**

Parents have lost confidence

Links are invalid

Information is out of date

"I think it will take a bit of time for parents to gain confidence in it, but for new parents they will only know the new LO."

Families approach support groups asking for navigation of services - placing a burden on voluntary sector which should be delivered by the local offer

Families and professionals do not know what the Local Offer means, even after we share it they do not seem to find it user friendly. People contact us and we have to cherry pick the information for them after checking its current and correct

Joint Commissioning

Local Offer Subgroup



Working Together

We feel we have been involved in the development of the local offer and there has been good engagement with other organisations and the wider public. We welcome the on-going planned work with ourselves and parents as the improvement work continues.

Parental Experience

Many families still do not know the local offer exists. This is in part due to the number of professionals who also do not know of its existence or their reluctance to use and recommend due to the current difficulties of navigation and incorrect or missing information. This is demonstrated in the ND Survey, where only 19.9% of parents said they were signposted to the Local Offer, compared to 45.4% who were signposted to Local Charities and support groups.

Overall consideration

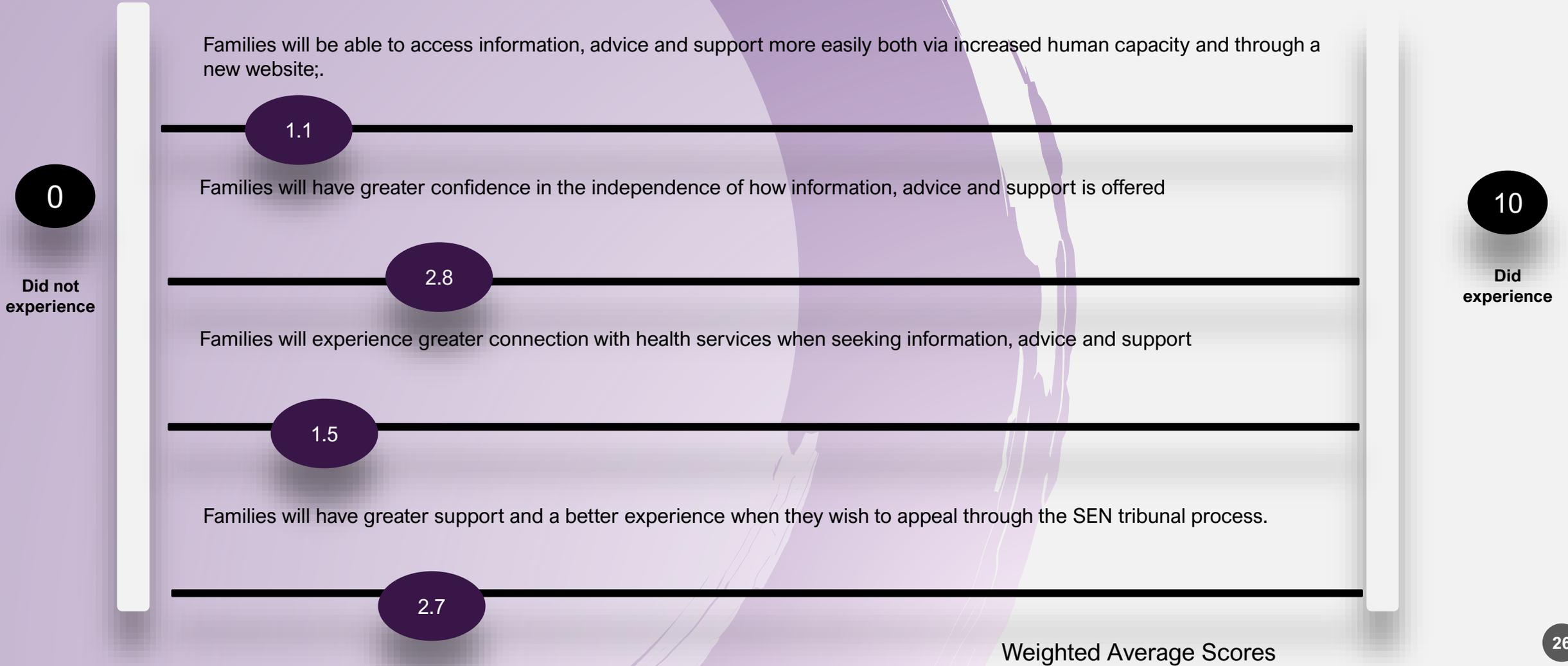
The local offer is still being developed and as such families will not have experienced any impact. We also remain concerned that Local Offer is not jointly commissioned with Health. We think that it will take time for families and professionals to have increased confidence in the new Local Offer, once launched in September 2022.

Joint Commissioning

SENDIASS Subgroup



We asked on a sliding scale of 1-10 how they felt Children Young People and their families' experiences reflected the following outcome measures:



Weighted Average Scores

Joint Commissioning

SENDIASS Subgroup



We asked if family champions and the organisations that supported families felt that CYP and families have experienced a positive impact as a result of the changes/work taken place since the last inspection?

Yes - Improved	0
No Difference	8
No - Got Worse	7
No Comment	0

Thematic review of feedback provided within these sessions suggests

➤ **Outcome 1 – Access and information**

Current service can't meet demand and refer families on
Schools and Professionals do not signpost families to the LO
Parents experience delays/long waiting list for help
Service for the most part are well regarded

➤ **Outcome 2 – Independence**

Parents views of SENDIASS independence is inconstant

➤ **Outcome 3 – Health Services**

Viewed as education support

➤ **Outcome 4 – SEN Tribunal Process**

Good Feedback from parents that are supported by them

lots of positive feedback of their impartiality/ working arms length from the LA. Feel that they put the families needs first. Particularly at tribunal level.

sendiass are amazing..... when you can access the service. However no caseworker in South means that our charity are overwhelmed with EHCP queries - need central funding to help fill this gap

we get a lot of referrals from SENDIASS as they can't meet the need / demand for their services and so they pass some families on to us, The definitely need a new website. They have a vacancy in the South at the moment and have said it will take 6 months to have a worker in the South, which leaves a huge gap

Potential Over-Identification of Moderate Learning Difficulties

This is the workstream where we, Essex Family Forum, have had the least involvement.

We believed it would be difficult for us to measure impact, as we do not have access to the individual school census entries and we are aware that parent/carers are unlikely to be informed of the school census category for their child.

We have met with the Head of SEND Strategy & Innovation and the Lead for this workstream to discuss how to engage with the families of those children and young people whose needs were potentially incorrectly identified.

We are aware that it is believed that Speech and Language, Communication Needs were being under-identified in the majority of cases.

However, our recent [Family Impact Survey](#) indicates that parent/carer opinion of their child/young persons primary need is likely to be very different to their school census entry.