



Essex Family Forum

Family Impact Survey 2022

Full Report

Introduction

In October 2020 the primary aim of our first [Family Impact Survey](#) was 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 [Local Area's Written Statement of Action](#) outlines the improvement work intended to address these Areas of Weakness. The parent and carer views we gathered in our 2020 survey were also to further contribute to and inform this improvement work.

Our second Family Impact Survey was conducted in February 2022. It is intended to measure the current levels of parent and carer 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.

The local area is expected to receive a revisit from Inspectors in the summer term to review the progress made since the original Inspection. It is important to us that we will be able to accurately reflect the current position for SEND families in Essex.



Introduction (continued)

We considered the timing of this survey carefully. We are a volunteer organisation with a small number of paid, part-time staff. Everyone who volunteers and works for Essex Family Forum is also SEND parent or carer themselves. We know from surveys we have previously undertaken, including our Graffiti Wall reports, how long it can take to collate the information we receive. Therefore, we allowed ourselves March and April to fully analyse the responses we received.

The SEND Partnership Board has recently provided an update for families on the progress of the improvement work that reflects on the findings of our initial 2020 Family Impact Survey. This can be found on our [website](#).



Methodology

- Survey period: 1st February 2022 to 4th March 2022
- The survey was conducted via Survey Monkey and designed with both qualitative and quantitative questions. Throughout this report, we have included samples of the verbatim comments received from families. We have removed any personal or potentially identifying information from those comments such as individual names, settings and service providers.
- The names of settings and service providers will be available, upon request by ECC or the CCGs, but will only be provided in terms of the 'theme' within which they were mentioned. They will not be attributed to any specific comment.
- The survey was promoted via Essex Family Forum social media, our Family Champion Network, connected support groups and through MailChimp to our members. We also circulated to our various contacts at Essex County Council and the Clinical Commissioning Groups for onward circulation via their communication channels.

Methodology (continued)

- There was an increase in the number of Essex Family Forum members who reported their child/young person's setting shared the survey link within their school communication channels when they had **personally** shared the details with the setting in the first instance.
- We collected data via two separate links; one that was circulated via the Mailchimp communication to our members and one that was shared more widely via the channels mentioned previously.

Survey Details

There are a number of sections where we repeated the same questions as our 2020 Survey in order that we could accurately compare the data. However, we have added new sections that reflect more fully the scope of the Written Statement of Action, as well as areas of concern that were highlighted by our original survey findings and those identified via our Family Champion network, our Graffiti Wall, the SEND Roadshows and our conversations with the many support groups in Essex.

For certain sections, such as the Education, Health and Care Plan Needs Assessment and Statutory Processes questions, we were able to filter the data to only include those participants who have experienced the process since November 2020. This ensures that we are capturing what is happening currently and not reporting on historical experience.



Survey Details (continued)

New Sections added for 2022:

- Therapy Services
- Assessments, Waiting Times, Pre and Post-Diagnostic Support for Neurodevelopment Conditions
- Home to School SEND Transport
- Home Education

Number of Participants

There were 520 participants who started our survey.

108 participants responded via the survey link sent to our members, and 412 responses were received via the survey link shared more widely.

3 participants did not consent for their anonymized responses to be used and shared. These participants were not directed to the survey itself, but a separate page which explained how data would be anonymized in more detail. They were invited to contact our "yourvoice" email with feedback if they still did not wish to participate.

Therefore, there were **517** valid entries.



Number of Participants (continued)

Participants were directed to sections of the survey via “skip logic” based responses they gave. They were also able to skip certain questions if they did not wish to provide a response. Therefore, participants only completed sections that were relevant to them and did not need to answer every question within the survey. The responses shown are based on the numbers that answered that particular question.

We received 638 valid entries to our 2020 survey, and acknowledge that there was a reduction in entries for the 2022 survey. We know that families have been asked to participate in a number of surveys in recent months and we hear families report feeling a level of “survey fatigue”. This may be one explanation as to why the numbers are lower.

We also believe that parent/carers may have been more encouraged to complete the survey if the update on improvement work had been available to us before we opened our survey.



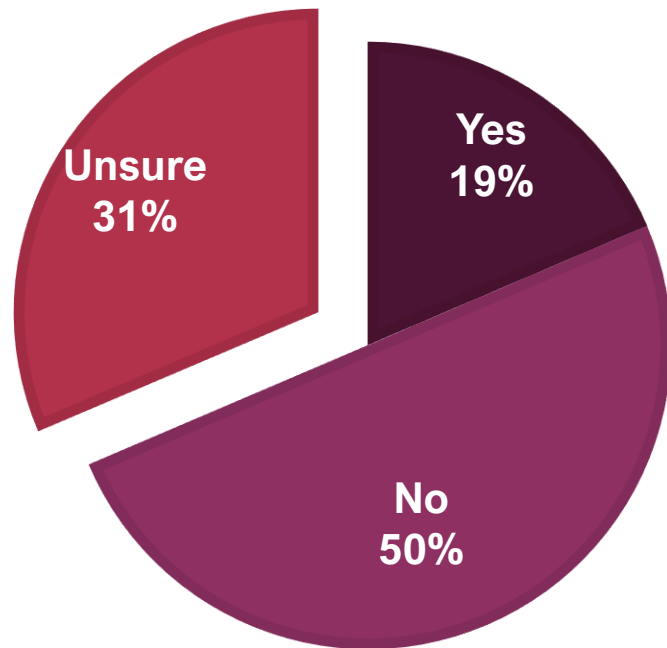
Disclaimer

The information and comments presented in this report and appendices are the views of the survey respondents and in no way, express or implied, should be construed to represent the views of Essex Family Forum CIC. Essex Family Forum's purpose is established under the legal requirements of the Children and Families Act 2014. We therefore have a duty to faithfully relay the views and experiences of parents and carers of children and young people with SEND aged 0 – 25 years with regard to the services they use. Essex Family Forum aims to work co-productively with services to improve the users' experiences and to recognise good practices. Essex Family Forum accepts no legal liability for the personal accounts, views, or opinions that survey respondents shared.



General Information

Parent/carers who completed our first Family Impact Survey



One of the first questions asked was whether the participant had completed our 2020 survey. We were surprised at the high percentage who indicated they were unsure. We do not know the reason but anticipate that it may be due to the number of surveys that parent/carers are asked to complete. We will move the question towards the end of future surveys.

84%
of participants
asked to keep
in touch with, or
are already
members of,
Essex Family
Forum

General Information

96%

of Participants were
parents

The number of participants who were parents remained at a similar level to 2020. There was no discernable change in the gender split.

67%

of responses were for a
Male Child

Age of Child:

46% Primary School

32% Secondary School

In 2020 nearly 57% of responses were in relation to primary age children and 24% in relation to secondary school.

Pre-School, Post 16 and Post 19 levels remained within a 2% window.

Ethnicity

94% White British

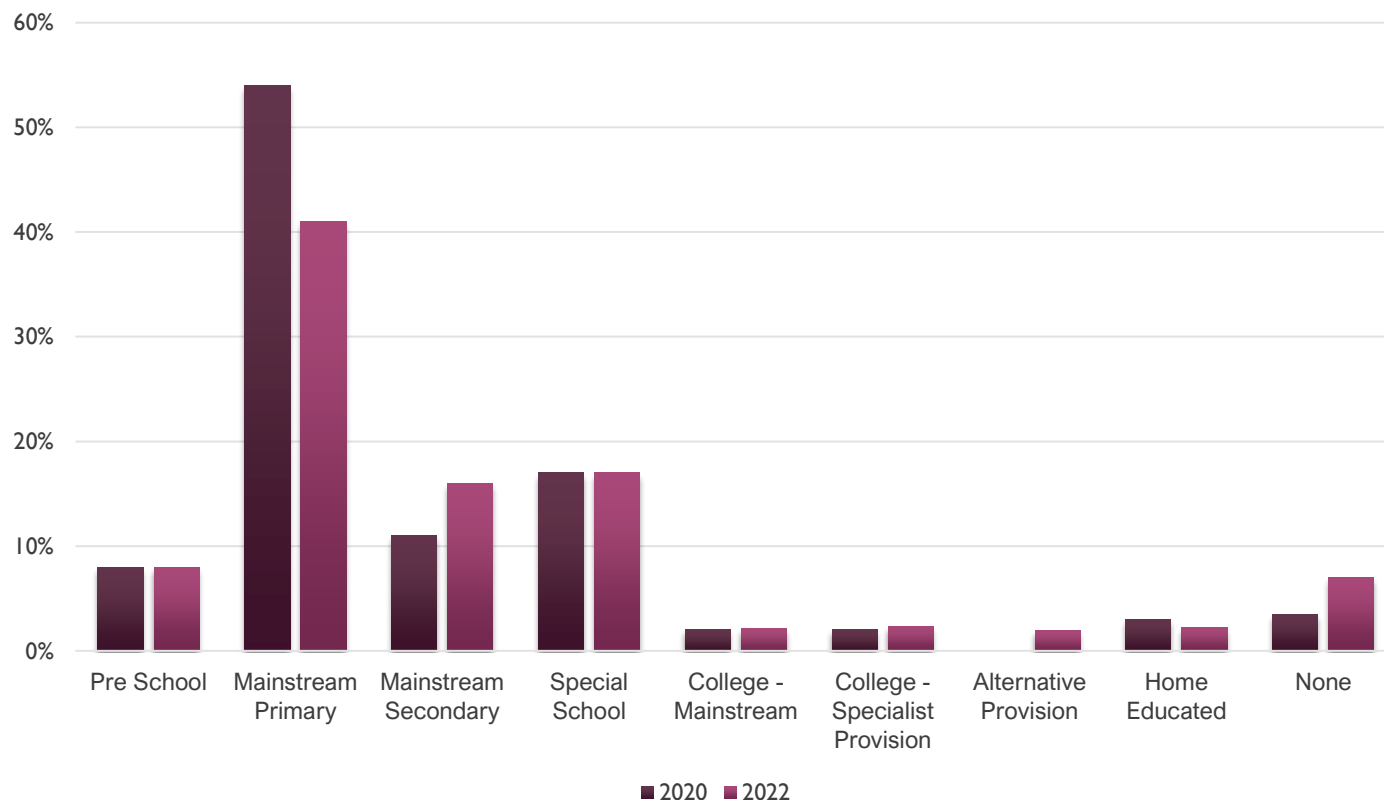
This is an increase from 89% in 2020,
which was more reflective of the
general population in Essex

Responses by Area

Area	West Essex	Mid Essex	South Essex	North East Essex
Estimated % of overall population*	20%	26%	31%	23%
Local Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Harlow Council - Epping District Council - Uttlesford District Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chelmsford City Council - Maldon District Council - Braintree District Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Basildon Borough Council - Brentwood Borough Council - Rochford District Council - Castlepoint Borough Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Colchester Borough Council - Tendring District Council
Percentage of respondents to our survey per area	15%	30%	40%	15%
% difference with 2020 survey	(-5%)	(=)	(+7%)	(-3%)

Education Settings

Educational Settings



This question was slightly changed from 2020, as we included additional setting options, including:

Alternative Provision – which is shown on the graph.

Other settings where total was under 1% were:

- Specialist hub - Primary
- Specialist hub – Secondary
- Virtual School

1 young person is at University
1 young person is in employment

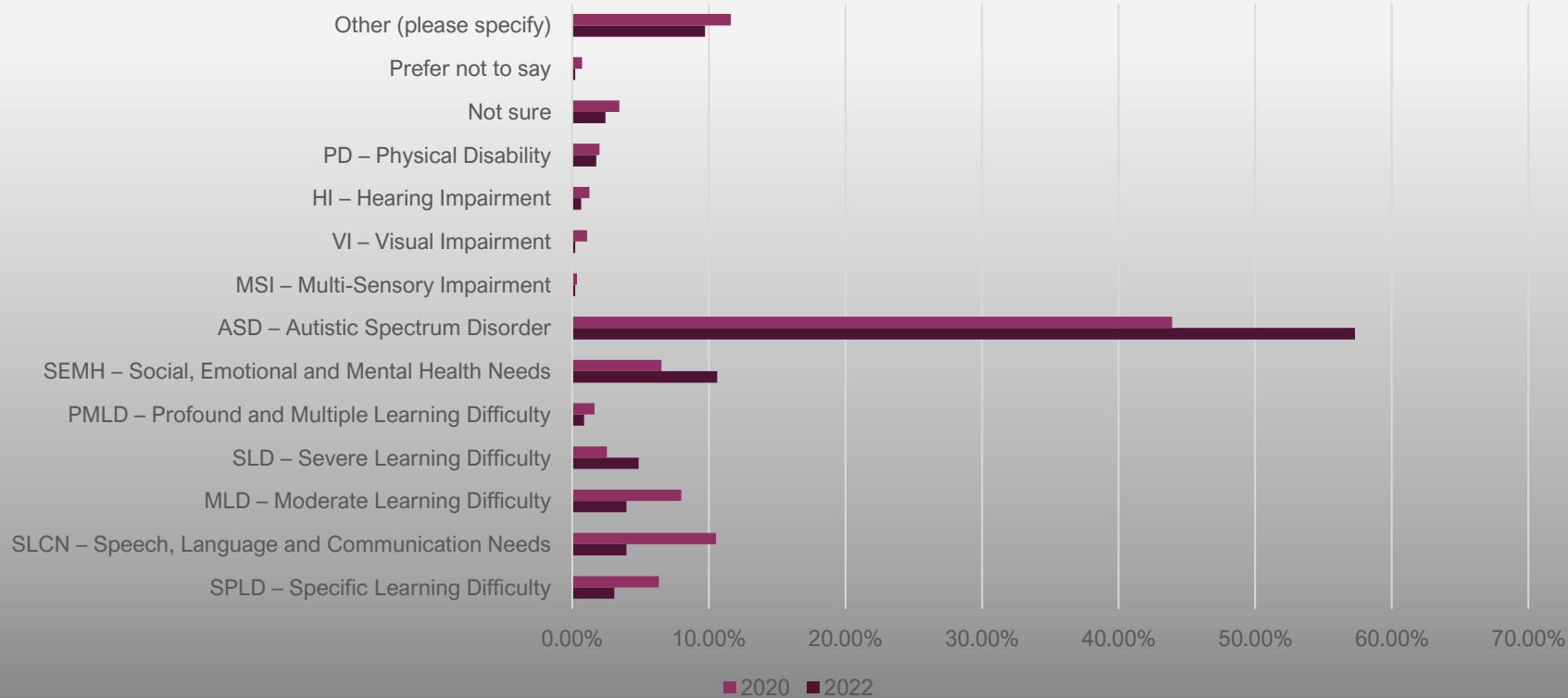


Education Settings

- The percentage of participants whose child/young person was not in school, employment or training has doubled.
- The biggest proportion of those are either on-roll at a mainstream or special school but not able to attend, waiting a placement or there is no suitable placement.
- The next biggest proportion are not in any education, employment or training.
- Whilst these are small percentages overall, it is still concerning that the numbers are increasing.

Identification of Needs

What would you describe as your child/young person's primary area of need?



These categories are those available for selection by settings on the Annual School Census. One of the Areas of Weakness was the potential over-identification of Moderate Learning Difficulties.

73% of participants to this question, state that they unaware of the school census entry for their child/young person. Therefore, these responses reflect the parent/carer's opinion of their child/young person's need and not those of the setting they attend.



Identification of Needs (continued)

The majority of those selecting 'Other' have stated their child/young persons primary needs are a combination of several needs. The second highest response indicated ADHD as the primary need

In some areas of need, there were significant changes between the data for 2020 and 2022.

- The number of participants reporting their child/young person's primary need as an Autistic Spectrum Condition has increased by 30%.
- Those who have identified SEMH as their child/young person's primary need has increased by 63%.
- There is a **38%** reduction in those that say their child/young person's primary need is Moderate Learning Difficulties.
- However, there is also the **same reduction** in those that stated Speech and Language Communication Needs was their child/young person's primary need.

Identification of Needs (continued)

Who raises the initial concerns and who families talk to

- 80% of Parent/Carers raised the initial concerns regarding their child/young person's development/progress
- Pre-Schools, Health Visitors, Class Teachers as well as Family & Friends were the other main sources where concerns were raised.
- In 35% of cases, parent/carers spoke to their Health Visitor first. This would suggest families are noticing potential differences in their child's development at an early stage.

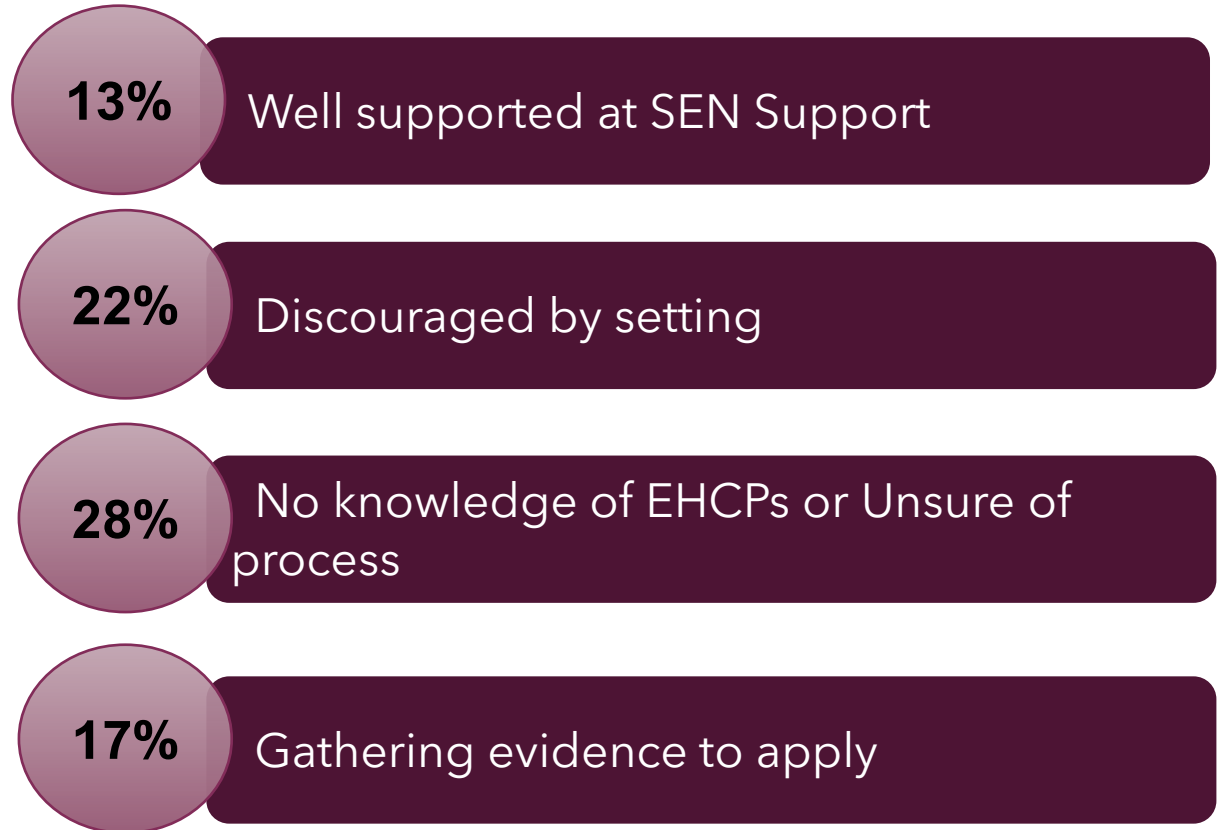
Statutory Processes

– Education, Health and Care Plan(EHCP) Needs Assessments

Needs Assessments requested

- 66% of Respondents to this section have made a Needs Assessment request for their child
- 63% as a mutual decision with setting & professionals

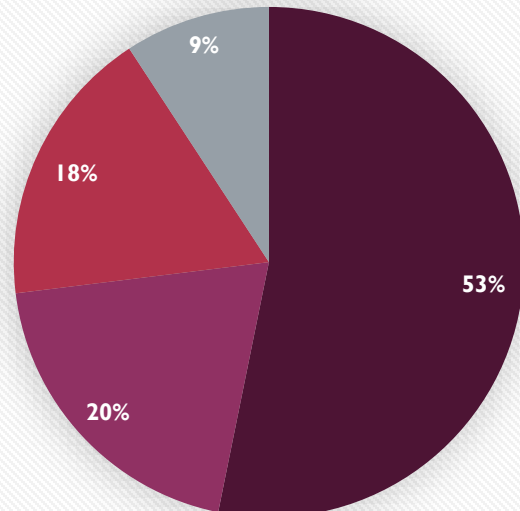
Reasons Needs Assessments not requested



Statutory Processes

– EHCP Needs Assessments (continued)

Was the request for an EHCP Needs Assessment granted? (If this was after appeal, please tick no)



■ Yes - prior to November 2020 ■ Yes - after November 2020 ■ No
■ Currently awaiting decision ■ Other (please specify)

The remaining questions and comments on Statutory Processes within this report contain the data from the participants who requested a Needs Assessment after November 2020 only. This is so we are capturing the current experience of families, for the reasons outlined earlier in this report.

Statutory Process

– EHCP Needs Assessments (continued)

The two main reasons for a refusal to assess remained the same:

- Child/young persons needs can be met at SEN Support/One Planning
- Insufficient evidence/reports were received.

The same proportion (38%) of parent/carers reported being offered a Way Forward meeting as in our 2020 Family Impact Survey. Some parents refused the offer as they didn't believe it would be useful.

96%

of Needs Assessments resulted in a
EHC Plan

72%

offered outcomes meeting

Statutory Process

– EHCP Needs Assessments (comments)

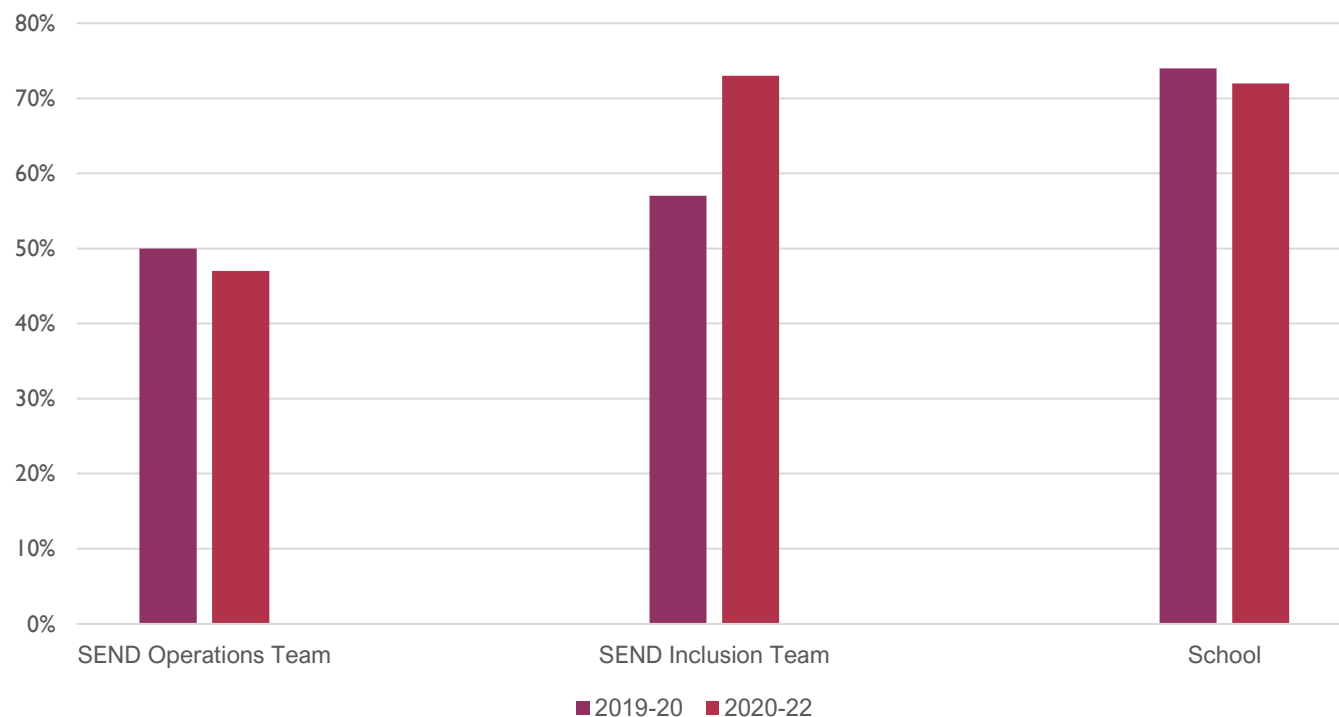
Spent a lot of time reviewing plan but think it would be good to discuss how this put into practice and reviewed

The draft needs assessment report wrote about things that were not about my child (specifically the wrong medical conditions and the wrong hospitals - stated xxxxx hospital not xxxxx. It was written 3 times by an outsourced company and it still was not fit for purpose

Outcomes meeting was great, informative and I got my say

Statutory Process – Support Received

How supported did you feel throughout the process?



Although parent/carers are not particularly feeling any less supported, there is a considerable increase in those finding the overall process less than positive.

Overall experience was rated as OK or Poor by **76%** of parents
(2020 = 59%)

Statutory Process

– Support Received (continued)

The comments received from families are probably the best indicator of which parts of the process they find the most challenging and where improvements need be made. There were no real positive comments and we accept that those with a poorer experience are more likely to comment.

However, it is clear that parents and carers do not understand the process and do not feel they are kept informed during it so they don't feel supported.

The themes coming through from the comments echo those made in our 2020 survey :

- Desire for better communication when delays incurred, explanations for decisions, parents want to feel they are listened to
- Supporting parents through the process, providing better explanations about what happens during the process and why.
- ECC Process and Policy not following legislation and guidance
- Timescales not being adhered to; losing documents.
- Schools not supporting applications



"Navigating the treacle of bureaucracy"

178 Comments received
40 comments – post 2020

I've had to do everything myself - with no experience/guidance. Very time consuming and painful, given is my son I'm having to write about

Being a quicker process

Like SEND Ops are working with you rather than against you

Plan was all approved but now feel like I have no support and no idea whether plan is being achieved.

Involvement/engagement from ANYONE. there's a complete attitude of 'you're so lucky to get this'

Not enough support with process. Very complicated to navigate.

Better communication and understanding. Certain things need to be clearer for parents

Statutory Process – Appeals & Tribunals

We only asked about Appeals and Tribunals for two specific circumstances – Refusal to Assess and Refusal to Issue a Plan.

52%

of participants did not appeal the Local Authority's decision (when relevant)

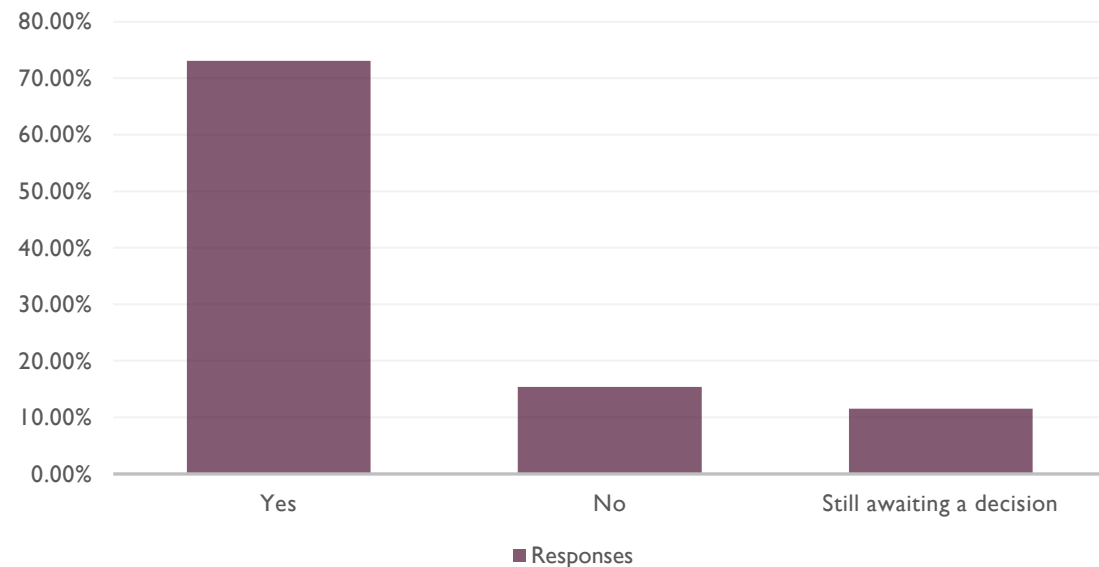
41%

appealed a Refusal to Assess

7%

appealed- Refusal to Issue a Plan

Was your appeal successful?



Statutory Process – Appeals & Tribunals (continued)

There has been no change in the percentage of successful appeals, and the themes were similar to 2020:

- LA conceding prior to the hearing (often within days of Tribunal date)
- Schools not meeting needs at SEN Support / Reapplying (sometimes more than once)
- Child not in school (waiting placement or unable to attend)

We only had two respondents to the Tribunals section, one case was conceded prior to the hearing and the one case that went to Tribunal was found in favour of Essex County Council. Two tribunal cases are a very low number so it is doubtful that any conclusions can be drawn from this. It would be nice to think that better conversations are being had at an earlier point.

Didn't appeal but reappplied when had more evidence.

I have found Essex council to be difficult and obstructive to deal with. Even when my xxxx caught covid they refused to allow us extra time to complete the assessments.

We went to mediation and we got ehcp.

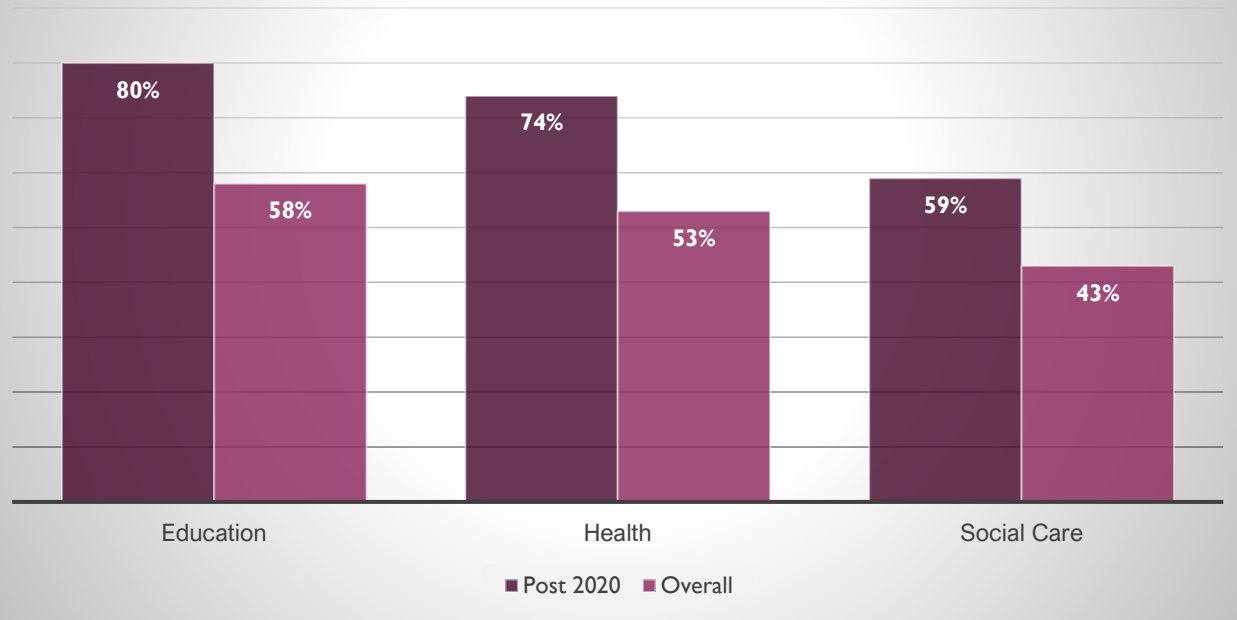
Appealed and was going to tribunal and LA conceded due to him CLEARLY needing it (10 and unable to read)

It felt like a lot was done behind closed doors.

The reason for initial refusal was unlawful. Hence my decision to refuse mediation and go straight to tribunal. The LA conceded. It added a layer of unnecessary delay and stress.

Education Health and Care Plans - Needs

How well does the EHC Plan accurately reflect your child/young person's Education, Health and Social Care needs?



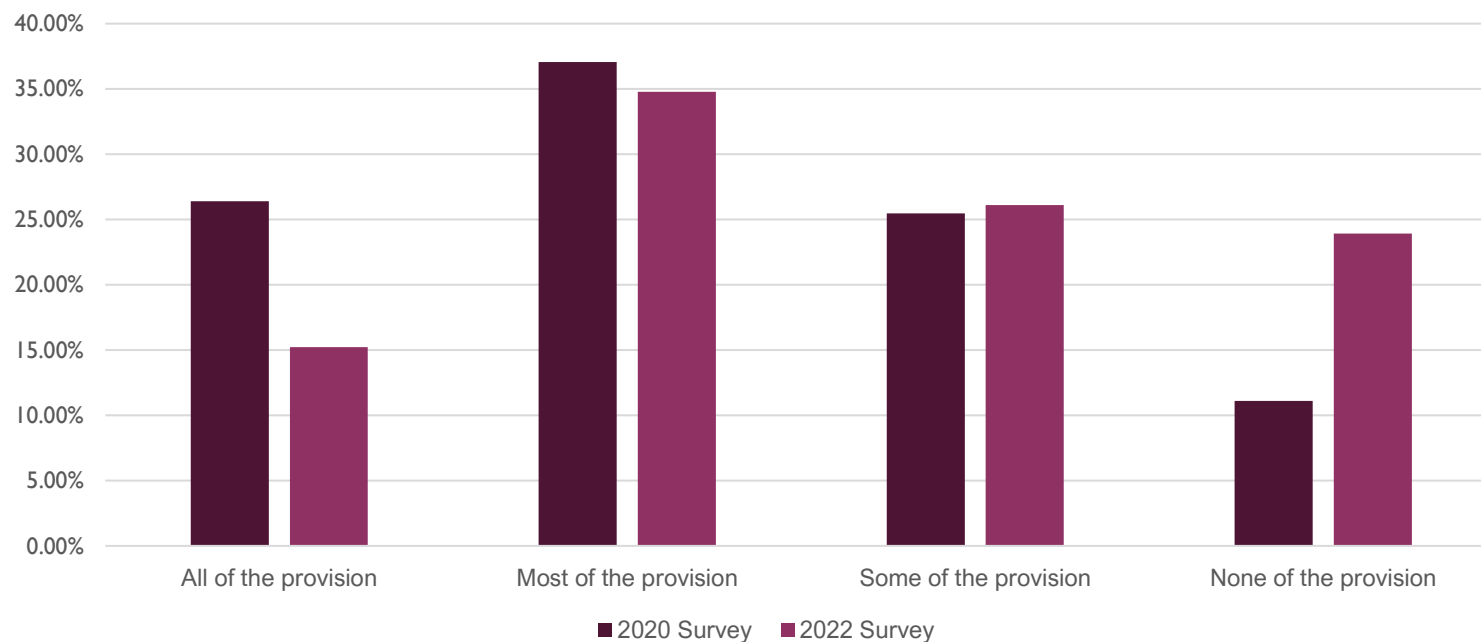
There is marked difference in how confident parent/carers feel about the accurate reflection of their child/young person's needs if you compare those who have recently received their plan and those where an EHC plan has been in place longer.

On the one hand, it could be concluded that the quality of plans have improved. However, this conclusion could not be reached based on the comments received about EHC Plans as whole. Unfortunately, we have to conclude that there are two main assumptions that can be drawn from this data.

- Parents who have been “in the system” longer have a better understanding of how their child's needs should be described.
- Plans are not being updated to reflect the current needs of the child/young person.

Education Health and Care Plans - Provision

Does your child/young person receive all the provision, support and adjustments outlined in the plan (Sections F, G H1 and H2 – where applicable)?



There has been significant decrease in those that say that their child/young person receives all their provision and a corresponding rise where none of the provision is being delivered.

There was very little difference in the data for these two categories if we looked only at responses relating to Post 2020 plans (1-2% difference).

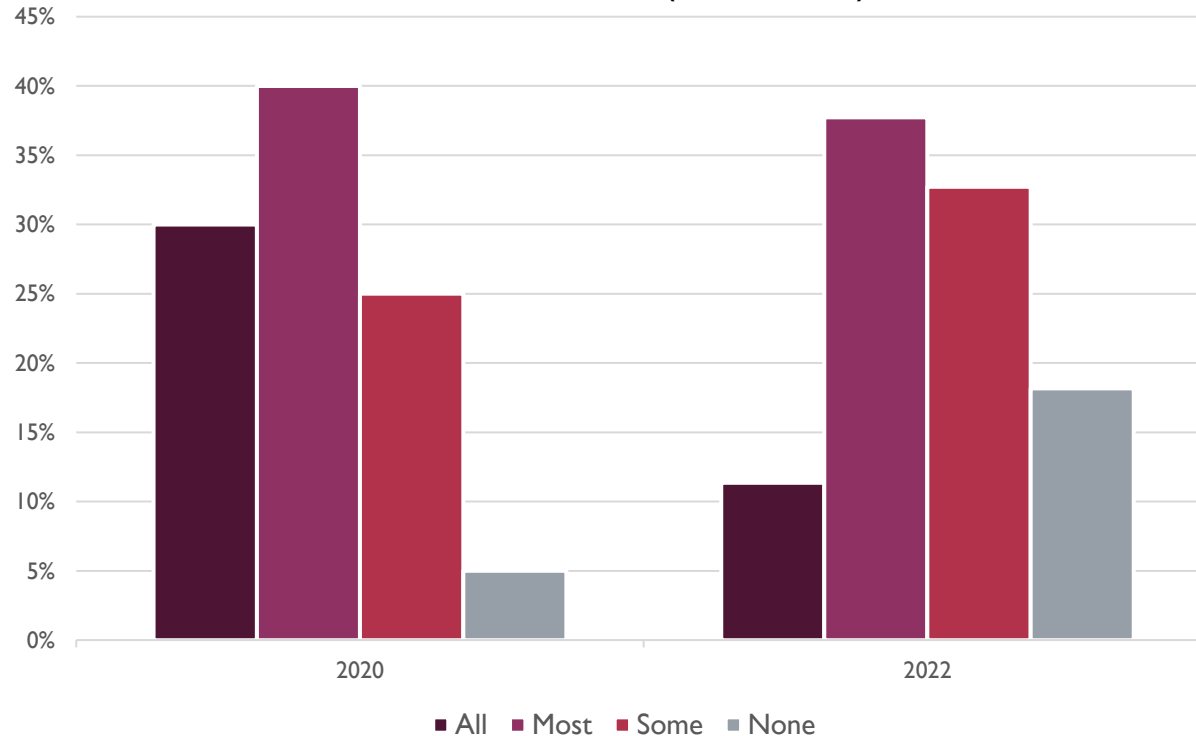
The main themes derived from the comments were that schools are not implementing provision, therapists not being available, quality of the plan and level of funding allocated. This last point was more prevalent in Post 2020 plans.

Perhaps, unsurprisingly, most of the comments relating to provision not being delivered were from those families whose EHC Plan was issued before 2020.



Education Health and Care Plans - Outcomes

Are the outcomes in your child/young person's plan clear, measurable and achievable (Section E)?

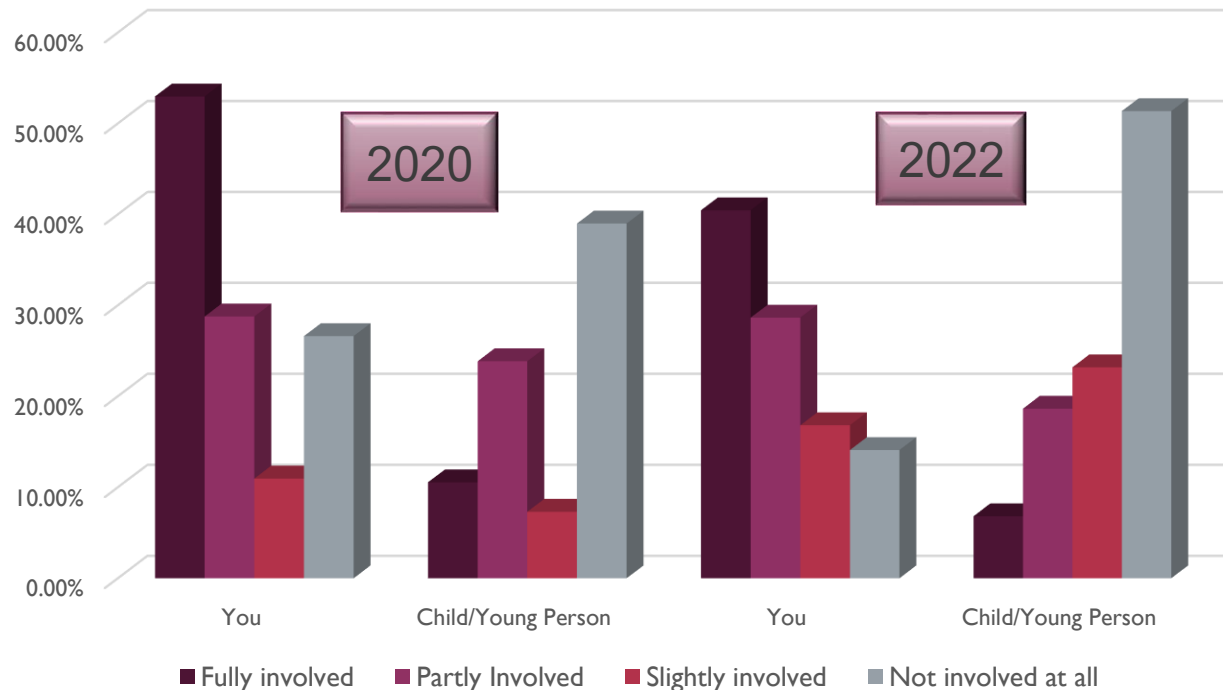


If we looked at the data for newly issued (since 2020) plans only – the figures were either the same or similar to the overall 2022 responses in respect of those that selected All or Most. The figures for the 'None' category halved to 9%.

However, the comments made by parents with newly issued plans were largely concerned with poorly written outcomes.

Education Health and Care Plans - Outcomes (continued)

Do you feel you or your child/young person were involved in planning your outcomes?



There does appear to be a downward shift in how involved parent/carers feel in setting outcomes. Participants also indicate that they feel their children and young people are less involved in planning their own outcomes.

The themes arising from the comments related to:

- Making more effort to obtain child/young person's views
- Parent/carers do not always feel that their views are reflected accurately.
- Parent/carers do not understand the process or how to decide on outcomes.
- Training for school and ECC staff in how to write SMART outcomes

Education Health and Care Plans

There was one particular response where some of their comments really seemed to capture the fundamental requirements of an Education, Health and Care Plan!

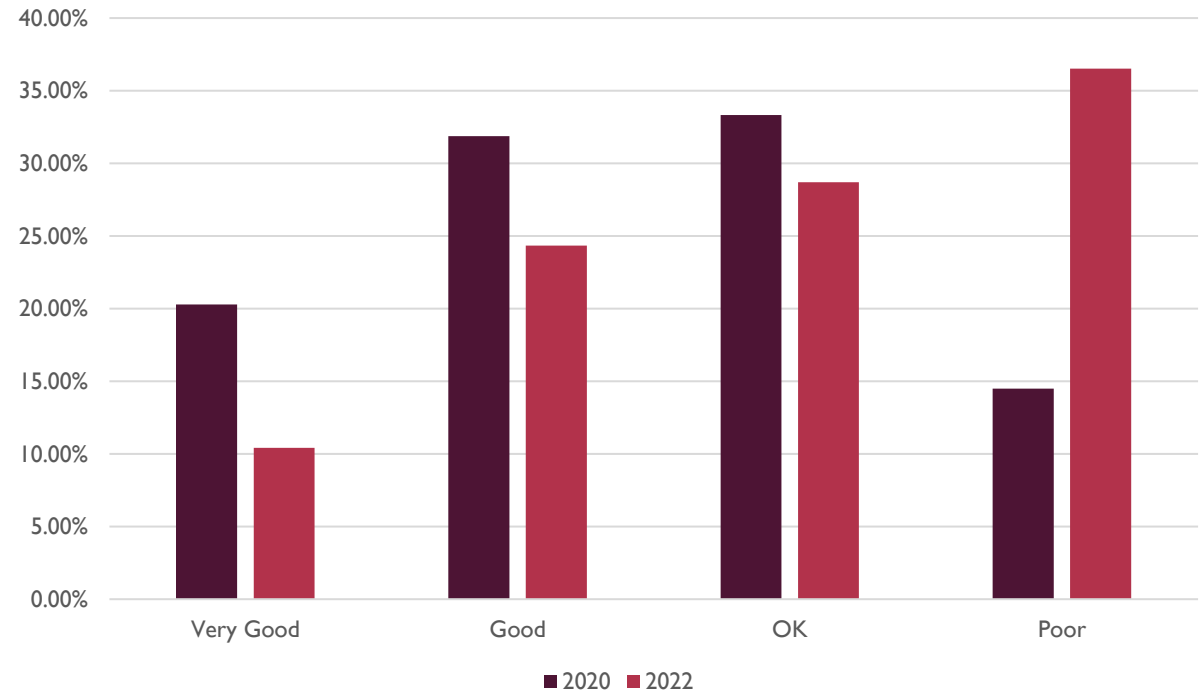
Include all aspects. Recognise that EHCPs are all different, like the child they represent. Stop copy and pasting.To ignore it or not include for fear of cost, is denying the child opportunity and is not inclusive. The EHCP should be the 'go to' of how to care for that child. Parents, GPs, schools, LA, should all follow the plan and it should encompass all aspects. **There needs to be a culture shift and fast!!**

Annual Reviews

There were a significant number of comments relating to excessive delays in issuing amended/updated Plans and the percentage of participants who said the Local Authority did not advise them of their decision within 4 weeks of the Annual Review meeting increased from 50% to 65%.

This could, therefore, be a contributing factor to the 22% increase in the number of participants who state their experience of the Annual Review was Poor.

What was your overall experience of the annual review?



Annual Reviews (continued)

The main themes that came through the comments we received were:

- Excessive delays to or non-issuance of revisions/amendments even in transition years.
- Parents views ignored/not represented in Annual Review paperwork
- Lack of contribution from any other services other than school
- Schools having their own procedures – not in line with lawful responsibilities

The most concerning comments we received were in relation to Post 16 transition – parent/carers citing 7-14 month delays in issuing draft plan resulting in young people starting a new placement without an up-to-date plan



School was great. Still waiting for LA to respond to questions raised 6 months after paperwork was submitted.

Scrap it and start again

My concerns were completely left off the annual review paperwork. I would really have like somebody from the local authority to oversee the meeting. My daughters feelings and views weren't taken into consideration at all.

xxxxx school do not release professionals reports in advance: new policy

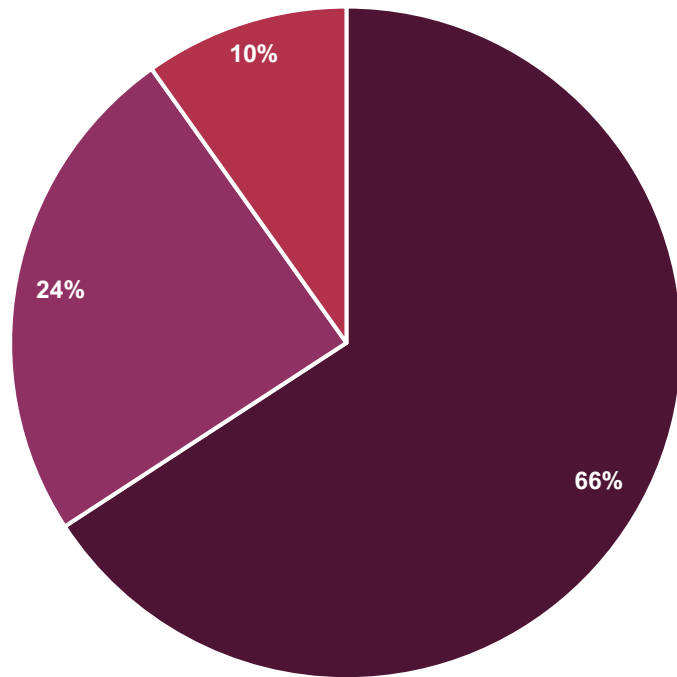
The local authority haven't acknowledged any annual review since 2018

Having an annual review would be a start.

Parents need notice to go through the document. Legally we should also have 3 one plan meetings a year so that the EHCP review isn't a shock but this rarely happens.

SEN Support/One Planning

Does your child/young person have a One Plan?



■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't Know

The number of participants who indicated they were unaware of whether their child has a One Plan has reduced by 11% - this directly corresponds to the increase in those without a One Plan.

SEN Support/One Planning

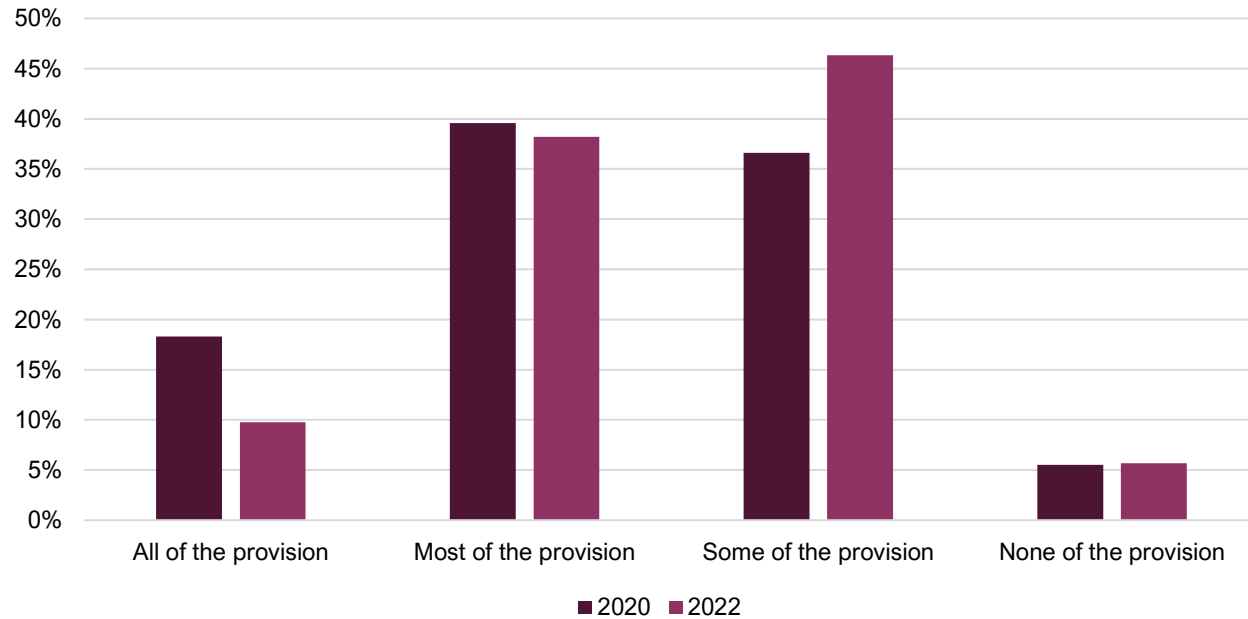
Question	Response	%diff. 2020/202 2
One Plan accurately reflects child/young person's needs	55%	=
Understand well/very well the provision, support and adjustments described in the plan	72%	-4%
All or most outcomes are clear, measurable and achievable	49%	-12%
I/We were involved/fully involved in planning the outcomes	55%	-12%
My child/young person was only slightly involved or not involved at all in planning their outcomes	77%	+7%
My child/young person's plan is reviewed termly	59%	+2%
No advice/contribution is sought or I do not know whether advice contribution is sought from health care professionals involved	68%	+9%

Children & Young People with EHC Plans.

63% of those whose child/young person have an EHCP indicated they also have One Plan for shorter-term targets, but a quarter do not know how frequently it is reviewed.

24% are unsure whether their child/young person has a One Plan.

Does your child receive all the provision, support and adjustments outlined in their plan?



138 individual comments were received to this section.

There were only 9 completely positive comments, with a further 3 that were mainly positive, but also included some negative aspects regarding the overall support that the child or family is receiving.

20 comments related to no One Plan being currently in place that parent/carers are aware of.

There were 13 comments that highlighted that parent/carers are unclear of the Graduated Approach/One Planning process.

The remainder of the comments overwhelmingly highlighted parent/carer concerns that One Plans were not being followed and their child/young person was not receiving the correct support in their setting.



It is accurately put together, with realistic objectives. The support from the class teacher and SENCO has been excellent.

.....teacher said 'I forgot it was on there to be honest. I'll chase it up and do it now'. Parts of the one plan aren't being stuck to and we're not getting any feedback about my sons progression in school.

Was good at primary, met termly..... once at secondary he was noted as a K student but I've never had a SEN meeting nor has any paperwork been shared

Sen at school are brilliant just need a ehcp

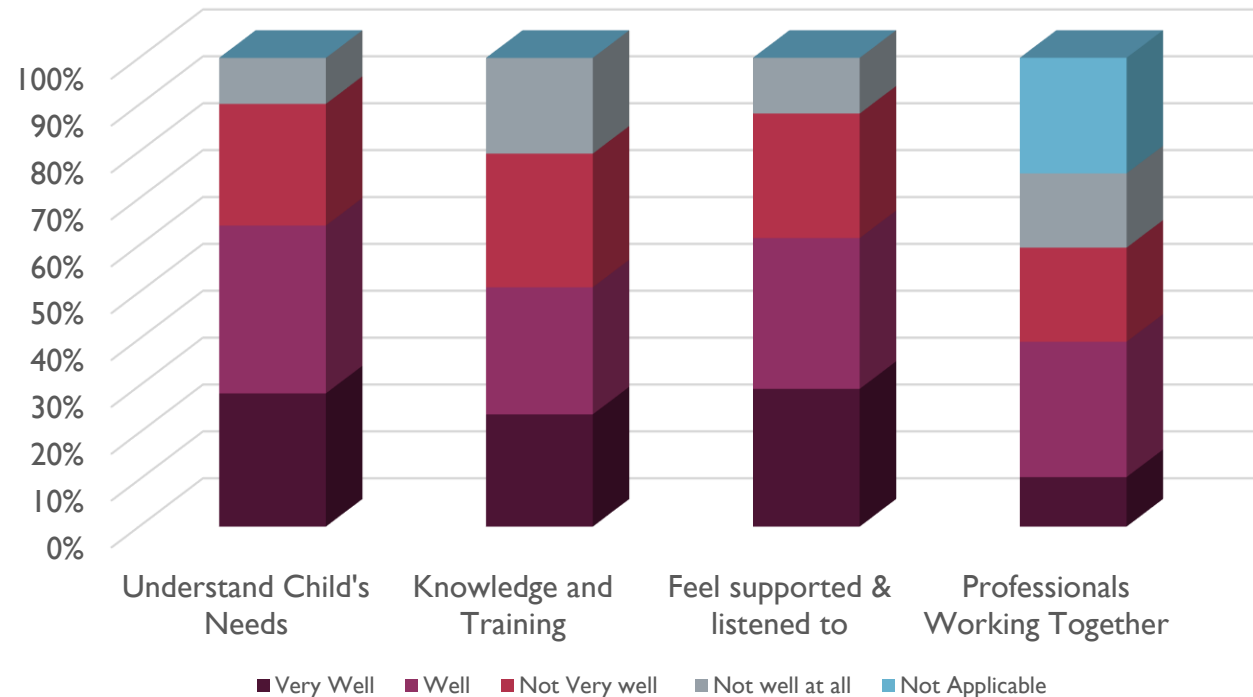
We have been told they are doing a one plan but have not seen it.

most professionals invited do not participate in one plans and dont offer apologies...

School said that she had a 'one plan' but I never heard anything g about it after that.

Communication and Support with Educational Settings

The section was open to all respondents:



Fewer parent/carers selected the “Very Well” option across all categories (5-9% reduction).

117 Comments to this section, and the three main themes remain:

- Poor communication between settings and external therapists/services
- Training needs of staff
- Lack of communication between families and settings

Listen to parents ,
value parents. Train
teachers.

I cannot fault either the primary
or secondary schools in their
understanding and support.

I only know what is
happening with
regard to my child
if I ask

Transition arrangements
from specialist provision
to mainstream has been
non-existent.

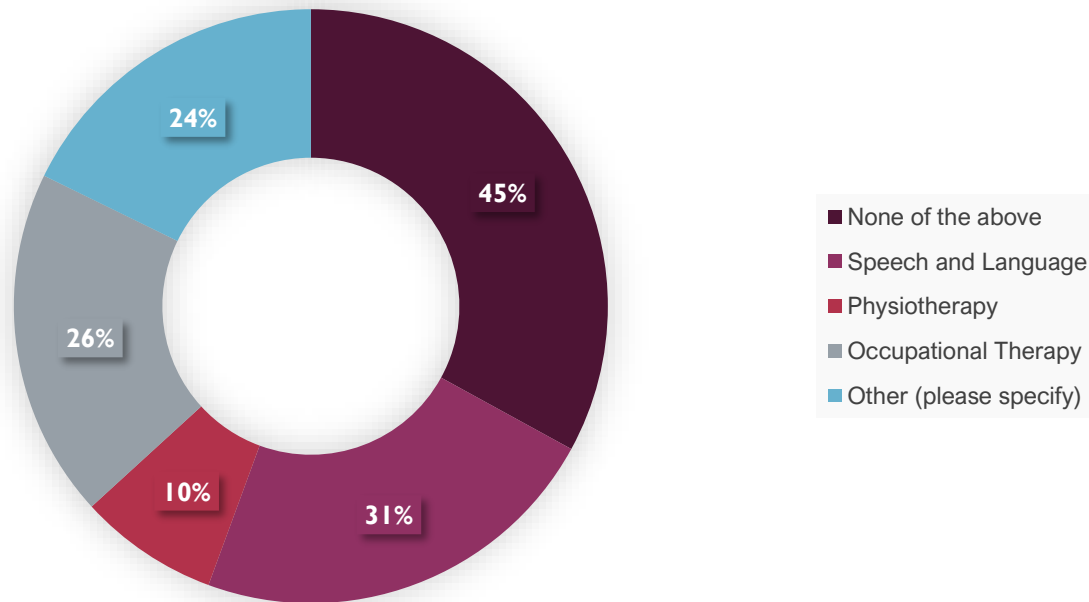
It's unclear when therapy has
occurred as it's often not
communicated by the
therapy team or school staff

We have a good
relationship.... Now. It's
taken a lot of work and
ups and downs to get
here

School do not follow
recommendations made by
professionals working with child.
Teachers have no training and very
little understanding of send.

Therapy Services

Which therapy Service is your child/young person support by?



This is a new section to our survey this year and consequently there is no previous data to compare responses with.

The largest proportion of 'Other' comments relate to children and young people accessing mental health services.

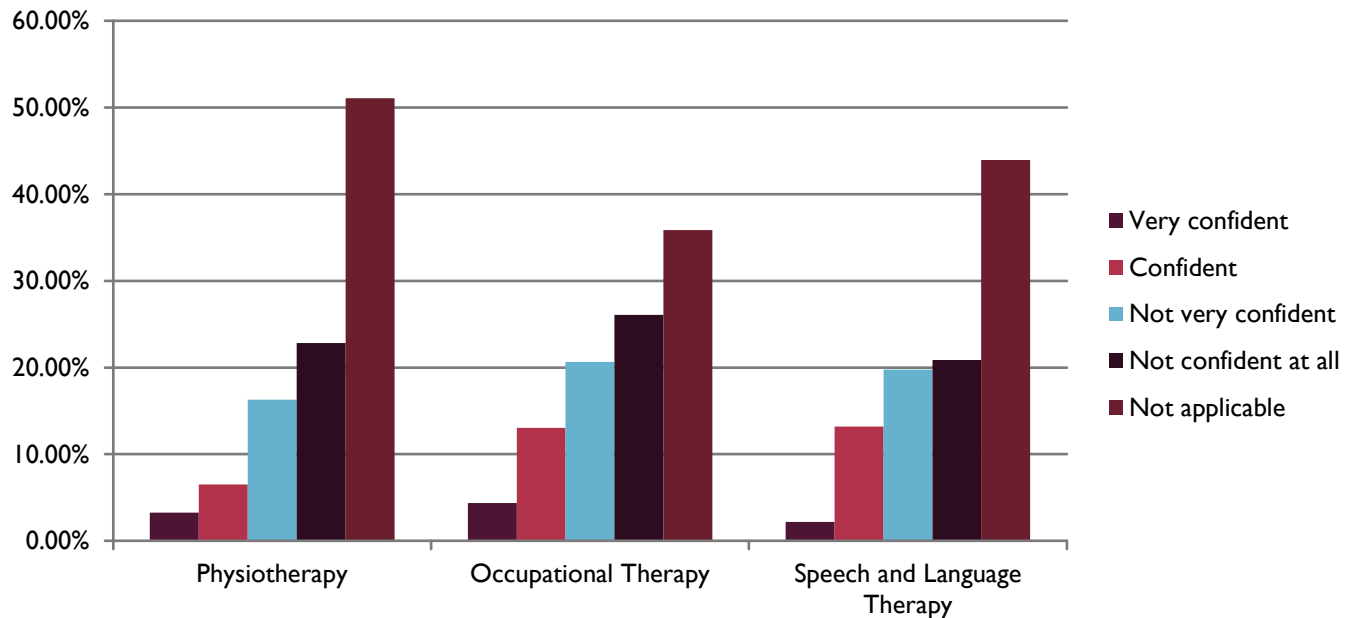
A number of families report using private therapy services.

30% of respondents not currently receiving therapy services are on a waiting list.

Half of those not on a waiting list, have previously received support from a therapy service but have been discharged.

Therapy Services (continued)

How confident are you that you receive the right information to support and make informed choices about your child/young person's therapy needs ?



218 Comments received

There were clear themes in the majority of the comments:

- Being discharged from a service without families feeling that they had received the support their child/young person needed;
- Families are not confident the therapy service is providing the support that child/young person needs
- Poor communication between the therapy service and families
- Long waiting lists

Speech and language doesn't work with kids of 11. I didn't know there was a physiotherapy service.

Have no idea who the salt is or OT.....My son has been at hos school 3 years never met either of them or know there name s

Since his been diagnosed now feel that help is more at hand and that I am being believed that my son needs help understanding our world as well as us learning to understand his world

We have had support from SALT and educational psychologists. They have always been very helpful.....

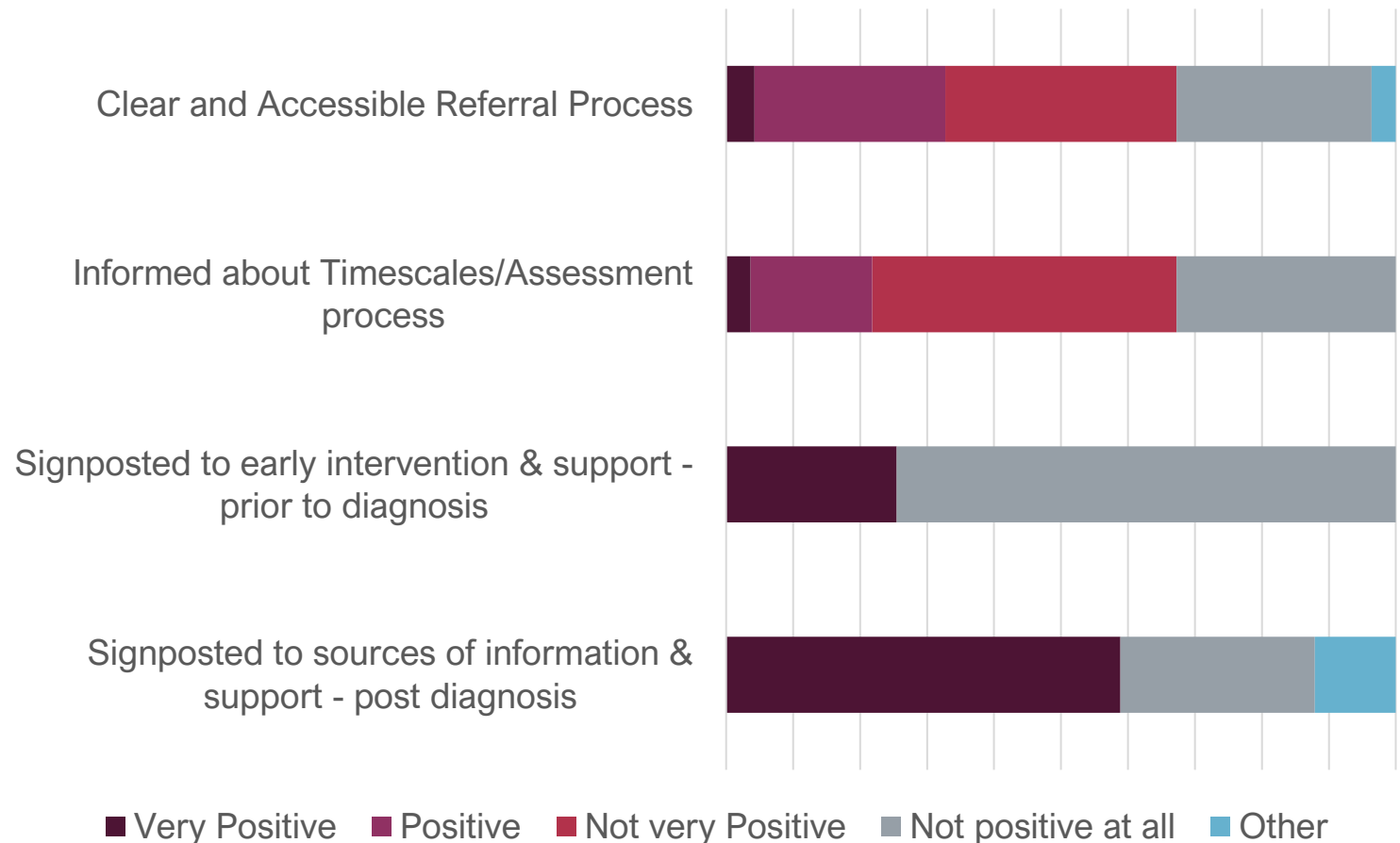
..... Just I feel afraid and sad and lost that there is no help for my children.

Waiting Times, Assessments and Pre and Post-Diagnostic Support for Neurodevelopmental Conditions

- 168 participants whose child/young person was referred after October 2019
- 72% received a diagnosis of one or more Neurodevelopmental conditions.

Some families mentioned seeking private assessment, slow process and referrals made by professionals (not themselves).

Some families reported basic information such as leaflets being provided as post-diagnosis support.



113 Comments were received and the main themes were around waiting times for assessments, lack of information and support both pre and post-diagnosis.

There were some positive comments around the diagnosis process and individual practitioners involved, but only one participant reported receiving any significant support.

To be told we shall watch and wait is hard when you don't have the support to know what and how to deal with no sleep and poor behaviour

The handing out of leaflets seem to satisfy professionals that they've 'done something'.

supported post diagnosis, by nursery nurse xxxxx she is amazing so helpful and knowledgeable

Xxxx = name removed

The waiting time was as expected; the ADHD Nurse Specialist was excellent, very understanding and informative.

What I need is a conversation, support and practical ideas and strategies, not a list of websites

We have been waiting for 2.5 years for a diagnosis to then find out we need to wait longer

Home Education

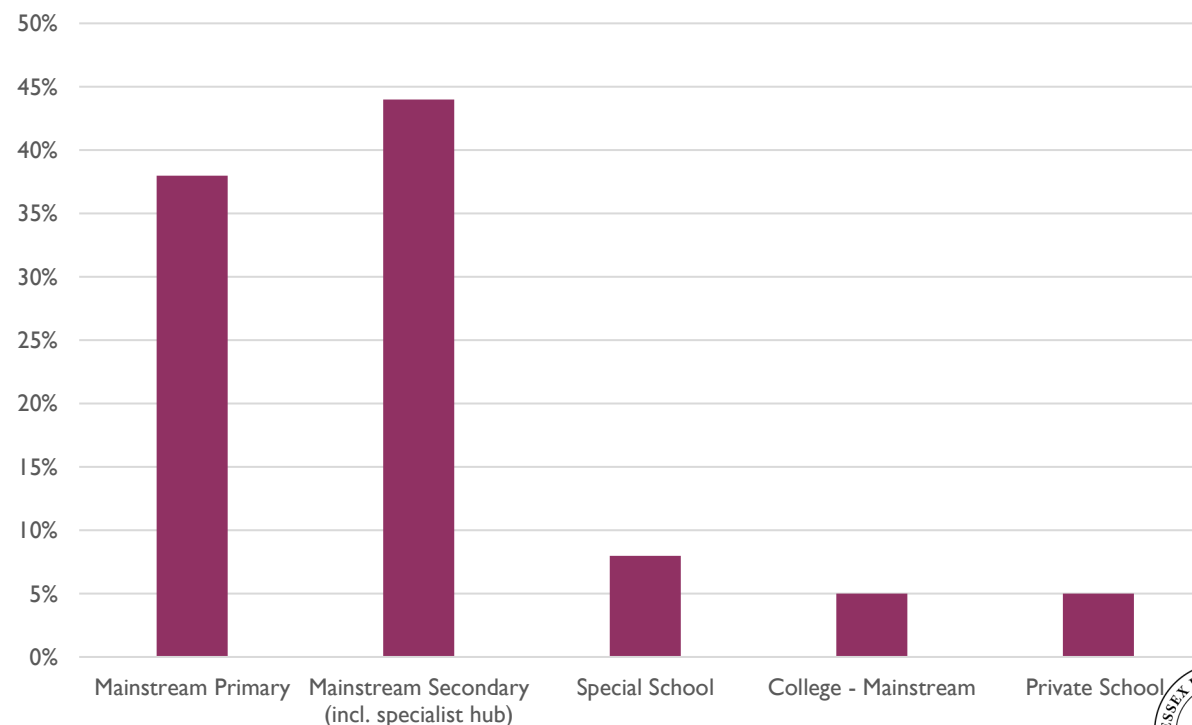
In 2021 we undertook some case studies of families who have made the decision to educate their child/young person at home. We used the experiences of these families to create the questions in this new section to our Family Impact Survey.

43 respondents stated that their child is educated at home, or they are considering home education; only 2 stated they choose to do so as a lifestyle choice.

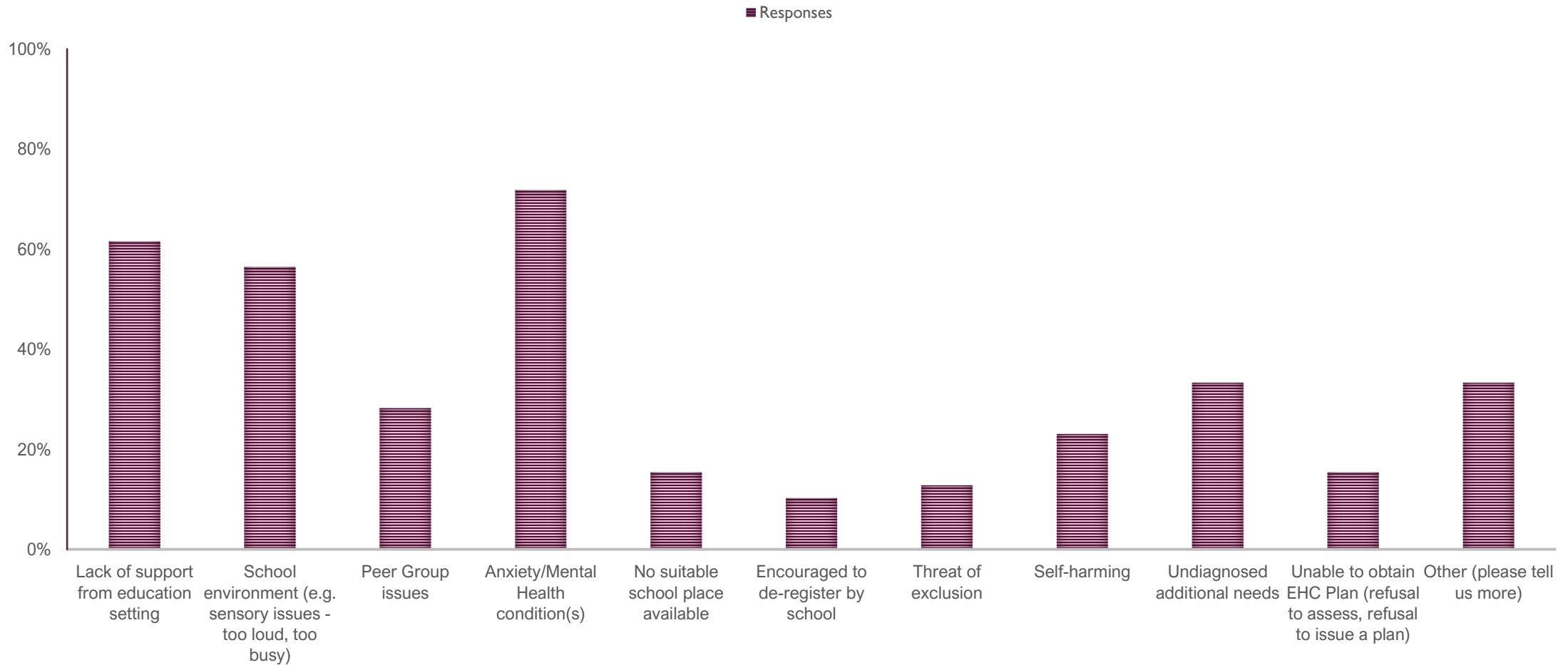
The current situation for these families is:

- Child/Young Person not able to attend due Mental Health needs and/or anxiety
- Child/Young Person not able to attend (reason not specified)
- Child/Young Person attending Alternative Provision
- No Suitable Placement
- Part-time timetable
- Breakdown of school placement

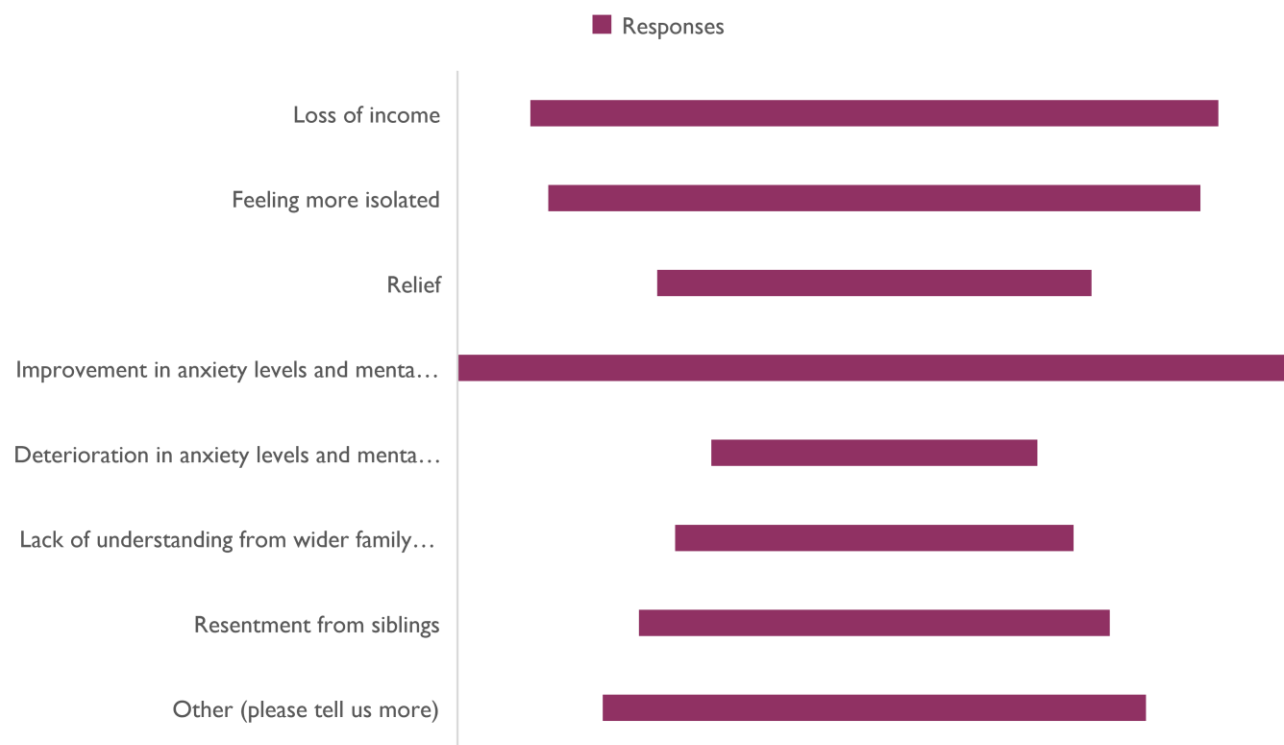
Type of setting attended at the time of decision



Please tell us more about the reasons for your decision. (Please tick all that apply to your child/young person)



What has been the impact on family life? (Please select all that apply)

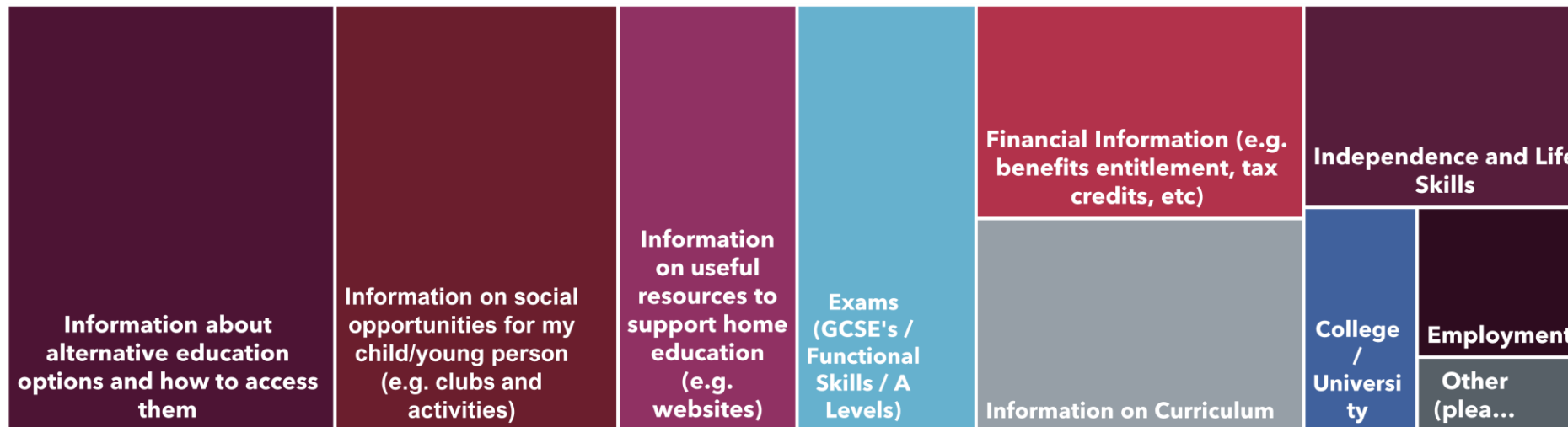


85% of families state they have received no advice or support from statutory services

- The themes arising in the 'Other' category are:
- Deterioration in the mental and/or physical health of parent/carers
- lack of respite
- continuous pressure
- disruption to working life

What advice and support would you find helpful?

- Information about alternative education options and how to access them
- Information on useful resources to support home education (e.g. websites)
- Financial Information (e.g. benefits entitlement, tax credits, etc)
- Information on Curriculum
- Exams (GCSE's / Functional Skills / A Levels)
- College / University
- Employment
- Independence and Life Skills
- Information on social opportunities for my child/young person (e.g. clubs and activities)
- Other (please specify)



NB: Size of section reflects no. of responses

I needed more support when the things were happening to my child but there was no way to escalate

I should not have to be home educating, but felt I had no choice for my child's mental health. The system that should support them is broken.

Home education is the best decision I've ever made for my children.....
...The system has failed my children terribly and and I have picked up the pieces.

I do not wish to home educate my child. I spend most of my time trying to find the right school and work the process to this end

We are in no man's land, he is not in school and no-one seems able to help

Home to School SEND Transport

Quote from 2020 Family Impact Survey

Home to School SEND Transport is an integral part of the school day for those children and young people who use it.

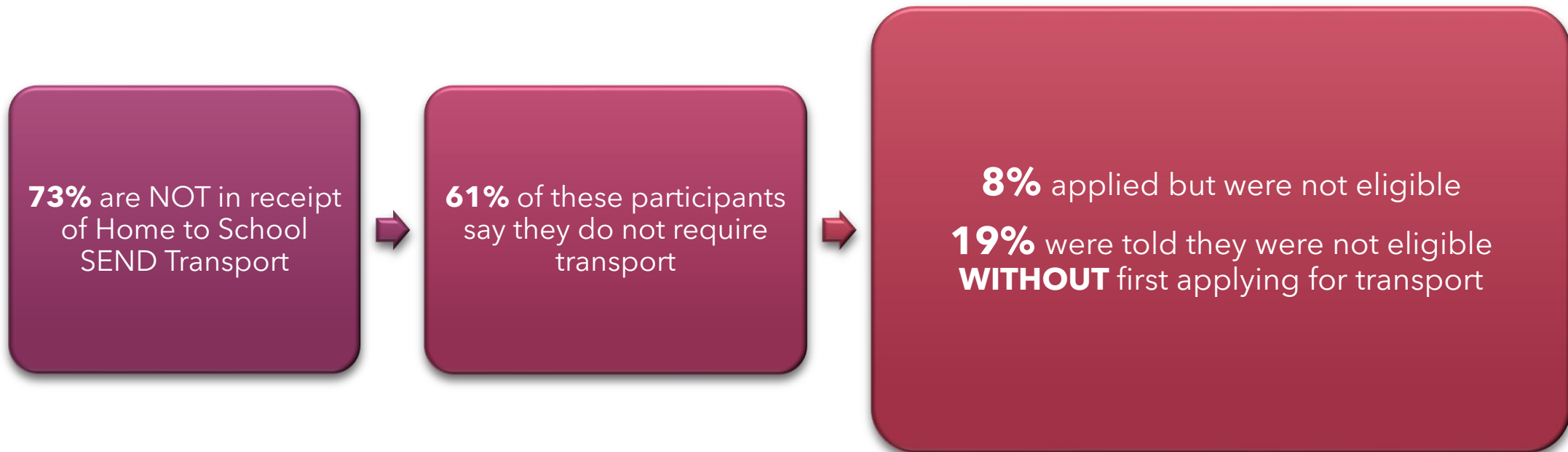
Many factors can affect whether children, young people, and their families, have a positive experience.

It is such a “hot topic” for our families, we added this new section to our survey.

“The school is amazing but the transport for SEN is not joined up with the provision and does not reflect the needs of the child. There is no collaboration or joint working with the parent and it’s like getting a 5 star hotel that meets your needs but you have got to get there by donkey and really rough it.”

Home to School SEND Transport (continued)

This section was open to participants whose child/young person has an Education Health and Care Plan.



Reasons given to parent/carers for not being eligible for transport

Not the nearest suitable school

Live within walking distance

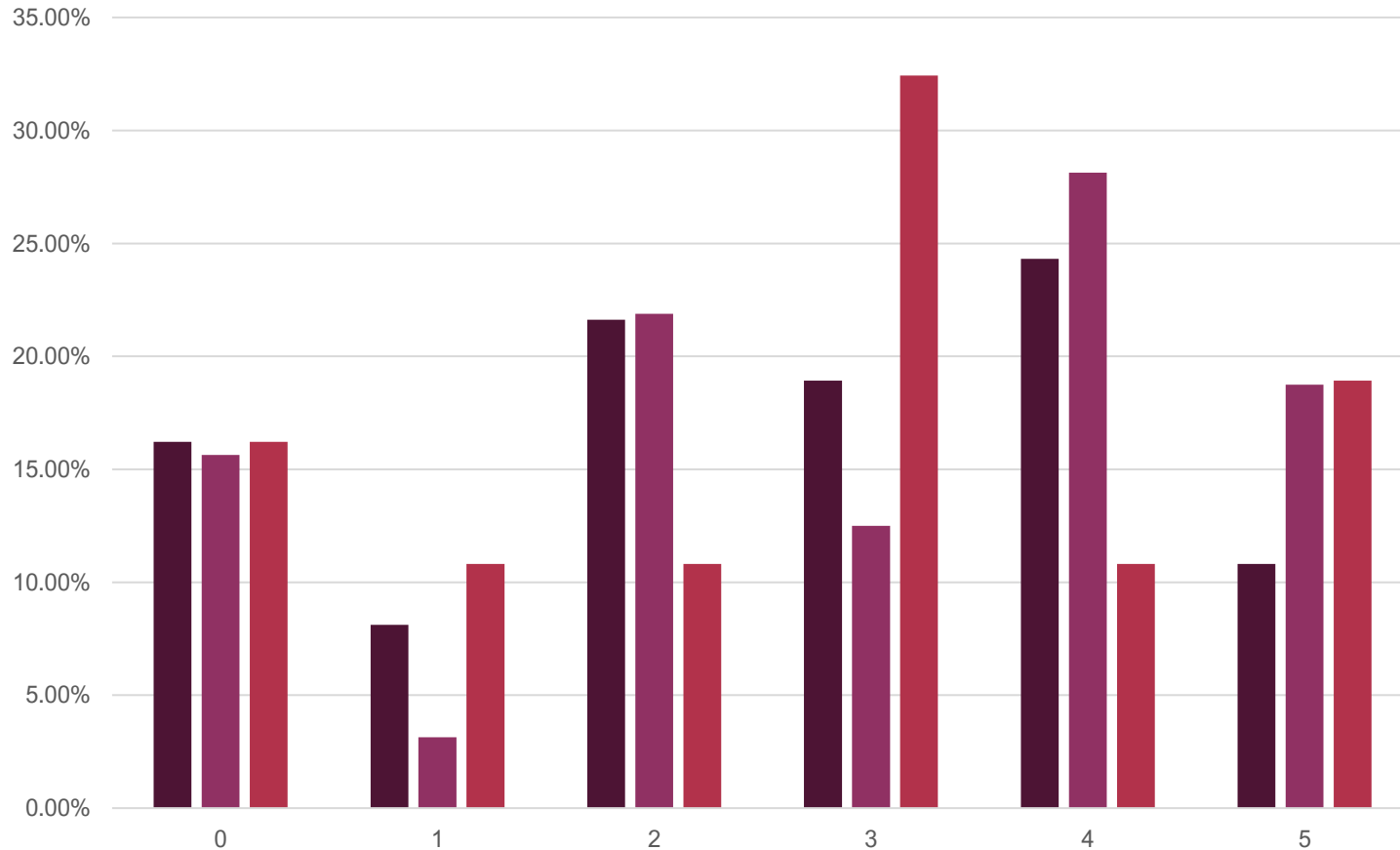
Child is 16

In temporary accommodation

Age of child changes eligibility

Those families who were told they were not eligible because their child is not attending the nearest suitable school are all attending mainstream schools (both primary and secondary), otherwise the range of settings attended were spread across mainstream and special schools, colleges and alternative provisions. Some parent/carers reported being asked to sign a disclaimer so their choice of school can be named.

Confidence and Satisfaction in SEND Home to School Transport provision



0 = not confident/not satisfied at all
5 = extremely confident/extremely satisfied

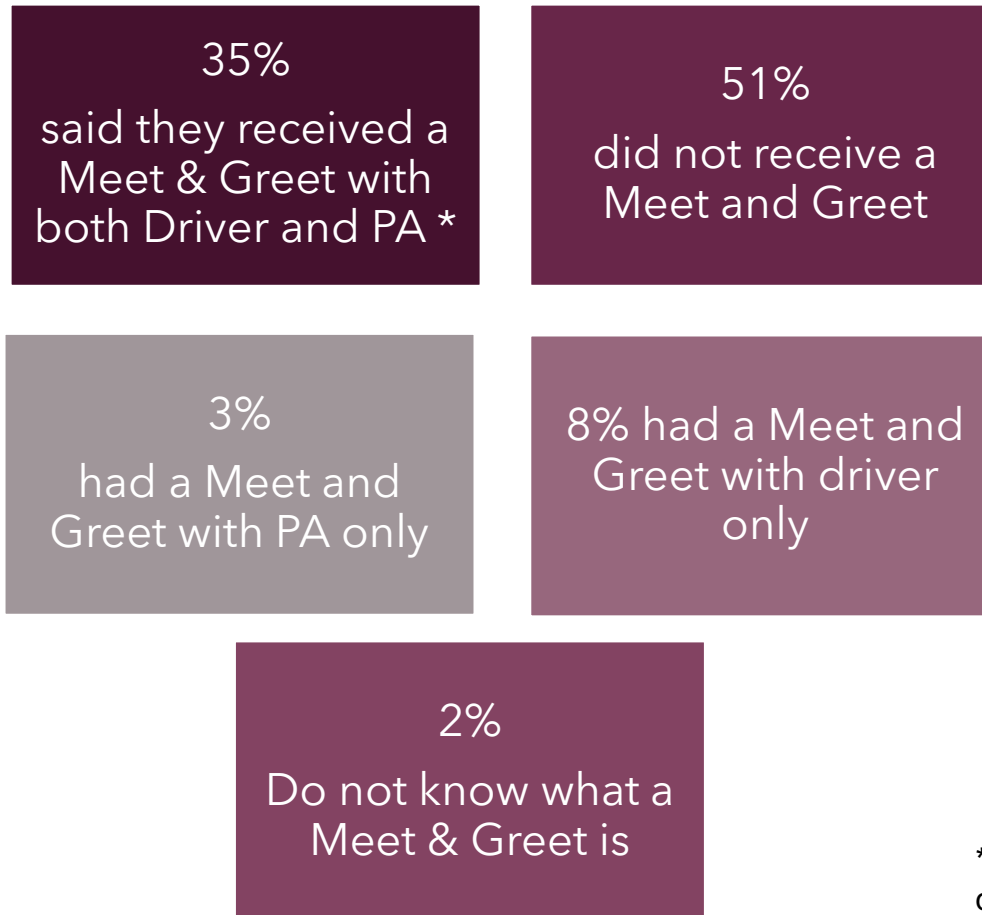
How confident are you that your child/young person's driver has received adequate disability awareness training?

How confident are you that your child/young person's passenger assistant has received adequate disability awareness training?

How satisfied are you with the communication you receive from your child/young person's transport provider?

Meeting your child/young person's Driver and Passenger Assistant

There is a contractual obligation for transport providers to offer a 'Meet and Greet' with Drivers and Passenger Assistants (PA) prior to transport commencing.



*includes where there is only a driver



Haven't got a positive word to say about school transport

We have been lucky, the driver and PA are very understanding

.....the transport took 8 weeks to set up. He started in October but taxi wasn't until Dec. Very hard to sort out getting him to and from school, while juggling my other children going to school.

Change in transport provider in Sept (due to a change in school) was a shambles. Zero communication from either previous provider or ECC about my son's needs.caused great distress to my son and had a huge knock on effect to his start at a new school.

Changes are made suddenly without any care about the impact this has on my child,

Had to give up work to transport my child as suitable taxi couldn't be arranged

Sources of Information and Support - SENDIASS

61% aware of SENDIASS service



54% have used the Helpline

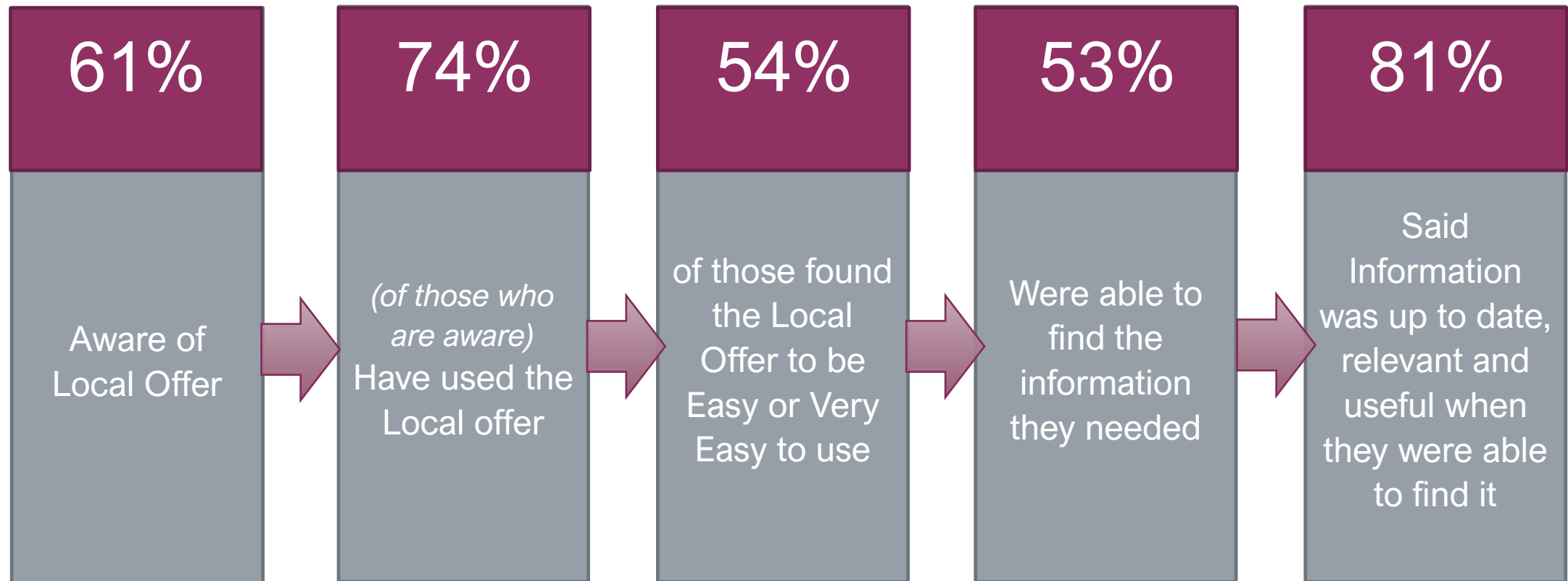


63% found it very easy or easy to contact SENDIASS via the Helpline



65% found the information provided to be useful/very useful

Other sources of Information and Support – Local Offer



Other sources of Information and Support

Family

Online Social
Media Support
Groups

Child/Young
Person's
Education
Setting

Friends

Charities

Parent Support
Groups

Shortbreaks
Provider

Social Care

Essex Child &
Family Wellbeing
service

Conclusion and Next Steps

As the Parent Carer Forum, Essex Family Forum has been involved in bringing the parent/carer voice and experience to many of the workstreams that have been established to undertake the improvement work to address the Areas of Weakness identified in the OFSTED CQC Local Area SEND Inspection of 2019.

We want to acknowledge that there has been considerable time and resource dedicated to these activities by some very passionate and committed practitioners and leaders within the Local Area's education, health and social care teams.

Despite this dedication and commitment to improve SEND services for Essex families, our survey findings tell us that the rate of progress has been too slow and we have to conclude:

Families are not yet feeling any positive impact from the WSOA Improvement work

Experience for families has not improved since 2020 - in some areas surveyed it has worsened



Conclusion and Next Steps (continued)

As with our first Family Impact Survey in 2020 there are some very clear, over-riding themes from the responses we have received to our 2022 Survey.

Communication:

The quality of communication across the entire SEND system appears, once again, to be at the heart of leaving parent/carers feeling uninformed and unsupported by those whose role it is to support and inform them.

- One Planning – parent/carers still unaware if their child has a One Plan or when it is reviewed or who is asked to contribute
- EHC Needs Assessments – parent/carers reporting a lack of knowledge on how to apply (including being discouraged by settings)
- Statutory Processes (including Annual Reviews) – parent/carers receiving little explanation of the process or the roles of those involved, expected timescales not being met and not being informed of progress
- Appeals and Tribunals - inconsistent offer of Way Forward meetings to discuss next steps following refusal to assess or placement disputes

I do not know what is happening with my child

Conclusion and Next Steps (continued)

- **Waiting times, assessments pre and post diagnostic support for Neurodevelopment Conditions**
Parent/carers are left disappointed and frustrated at the level of pre and post diagnostic support they are offered, as there appears to be little communication as to what they can expect to receive at any point along the 'pathway'.
- **Therapies** – there is a lack of confidence expressed by families in the support received by their child/young person and in the timing of the discharge from their service. A number of families expressed a clear wish to have a better understanding of the strategies used by therapists (and often shared with settings, but not families themselves).
- **Quality of EHC Plans** – plans that do not accurately reflect the needs of children and young people and poorly written outcomes are two examples of where there is a need for improved communication.
- **Transport** – parent/carers informed **prior to applying** that they are not eligible for Home to School SEND Transport

Conclusion and Next Steps (continued)

Provision

- Parent/carers of newly issued plans (post 2020) report being drawn into conversations about levels of funding impacting on ability to deliver provision outlined.
- Significant increase in number of families reporting the support outlined in their One Plan or EHCP provision is not being received by their child/young person. This relates to both settings and therapists.

Mental Health

- A number of the comments in the Therapies section related to accessing mental health services. Parent/carers reported that children/young people are discharged as they are considered to be difficult to engage. There appears to be a lack of onward referral and/or signposting for families.

Conclusion and Next Steps (continued)

Identification of Need – The majority of parent/carers have no knowledge of the school census entry for their child/young person. Our survey shows a stark difference between parent/carer opinions of primary need and the school census entries* completed by settings. ([*Department for Education School Census 2020/21 data](#))

Not attending education, employment or training and Home Education:

The increasing number of children/young people not in education, employment or training is of particular concern. Many families do not feel that they “electively” home educate rather that it is an “enforced” decision they have to make for the well-being of their child/young person. One clear message is that families receive very little information about what the alternative options to formal education are available to their child or young person. What information there is, is limited and difficult to find.

My child has been damaged by what happened at school and I have no idea if it will ever be repaired

Conclusion and Next Steps (continued)

The Positives:

Schools and Settings:

- Some parent/carers report having good relationships with their child/young person's education setting and the teaching and support staff within the setting.
- High percentages of families report that they feel supported by their child/young person's education setting and that their child's needs are understood.

Assessments for Neurodevelopmental Conditions

- Individual practitioners were praised for being understanding and knowledgeable.
- In some cases, waiting times were reported by parents to be as expected.
- Most parent/carers were signposted post-diagnosis to sources of information and support relevant to the diagnosed condition (*although they indicated they would have liked a greater level of support from the referring service*)

Conclusion and Next Steps (continued)

Therapies

- Individual therapists were praised for their support
- Certain named services were reported to be very effective when in receipt of their support

SENDIASS

- More than half of all respondents are aware of the SENDIASS service
- The majority of those that have used their helpline found the information provided to be useful or very useful

Local Offer

- More than half of all respondents were aware of the Local Offer
- Where parent/carers were able to find the information they needed, a very high percentage said the information was relevant, useful and up to date.

Conclusion and Next Steps (continued)

Next Steps: As outlined in the [Local Area's update](#) to our 2020 Family Impact Survey, there are many projects and workstreams, which are developing new ways of working that will, hopefully, start making a difference to some of the issues being experienced by families in Essex.

Most of what families' need is easily accessible information; such as Parent Friendly Guides to EHCP Panels, One Planning (the Graduated response) & SEN Support and Neurodevelopment Pathways, along with easier access to training and workshops for families to explain statutory processes and for understanding and supporting the needs of the child/young person.

There also needs to be wider recognition of the importance and benefits of working co-productively with children, young people and their families and a clear, defined understanding of what co-production looks like.

For and on behalf of Essex Family Forum

