

Essex Family Forum

Family Impact Survey 2024



Statutory Processes Section

Education, Health and Care Plans

(including Needs Assessment Requests, Annual Reviews and Appeals and Tribunals)

Date of Report: May 2024

Survey conducted:

1st February 2024 - 17th March 2024

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Introduction

This is our fourth Annual Family Impact Survey. We have expanded the scope of the survey each year by adding additional questions to existing sections and adding new sections. We have based these on the most consistent themes from the feedback we have received from families in all the forms we receive it. (e.g. our Family Champion network, virtual Graffiti Wall, Local Offer Roadshows, coffee mornings).

The aim of our survey is to detail parent/carer experiences in trying to secure the right support at the right time for their children/young people at the time they need it. We are then able to compare the current situation with what families' have told us in our previous surveys. We are then able to identify where there has been any improvement in those experiences and where families are still finding it challenging to obtain the right support for their child/young person.

The results of our previous surveys can be found on our [website](#). It has been challenging to obtain a timely response on the findings from our previous surveys from the relevant teams and services across education, health and social care. We have, therefore, decided to separate the findings from this year's survey into specific reports for each section of the survey as follows:

- Education, Health and Care Plans - Statutory Processes including Needs Assessments, Annual Reviews and Appeals and Tribunals
- Neurodevelopment Conditions Assessments - Referrals, Waiting Times, Pre and Post Diagnostic Support and Information
- SEN Support, One Planning, Communication and Support with Education Settings
- Home to School SEND Transport
- Home Education, Unable to Attend and Education Other than at School (EOTAS)
- Therapies
- Mental Health Support
- Social Care and Shortbreaks Clubs & Activities
- Preparing for Adulthood
- Sources of Information and Support

This report concentrates on the Statutory Processes surrounding Education Health and Care Plans, and includes the Needs Assessment Process, Annual Reviews and Appeals and Tribunals. We are also including the general information we collect, such as ethnicity, gender and area in which participants live. This report also contains information on the needs of children and young people.

Methodology

- Survey period: 1st February 2024 to 17th March 2024
- 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 Essex County Council (ECC) or the Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) but will only be provided in terms of the 'theme' within which they were mentioned. They will not be attributed to any specific comment - in line with the collection of data policy as outlined in the previous bullet point.
- The survey was promoted via Essex Family Forum social media, our Family Champion Network, connected support groups and through Email Octopus to our members. We also circulated to our various contacts at Essex County Council and the Integrated Care Boards for onward circulation via their communication channels. We used separate links this year so we can identify where the survey received the greatest engagement. We are delighted that those sent via our membership and Family Champion Network counted for over half of all the responses, with social media counting for one third of the overall responses. 87 parent/carers received their link via their child/young person's education setting.

Number of Participants

There were **1240** valid entries for the survey this year, as all participants who started our survey gave consent for their anonymized responses to be used and shared.

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 of participants that answered that particular question.

The number of families completing our survey is increasing each year. In 2020 we received 638 valid entries, 517 in 2022 and 923 in 2023.

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

The number of participants who are parents has remained fairly static. A number of participants who selected 'Other' stated their parental status (Mother or Father).

Based on our previous surveys in 2020, 2022 and 2023, there is no significant difference in the gender of children/young people, or in the age ranges of children/young people. The percentage difference between 2023 and 2024 is shown in brackets

Our survey respondents were predominantly white British. This is at a higher proportion than the general population of Essex according to the latest census figures (2021).

Parent
95% (-1%)*

Male child
62% (-2%)

Ethnicity

White British - **90%**
(2021 Census Data = 86%)

Age of Child / Young Person

Early Years - 10% (=)

Primary - 45% (-3%)

Secondary - 34% (+1%)

Post 16 - 7% (+1%)

Post 19 - 4% (+1%)

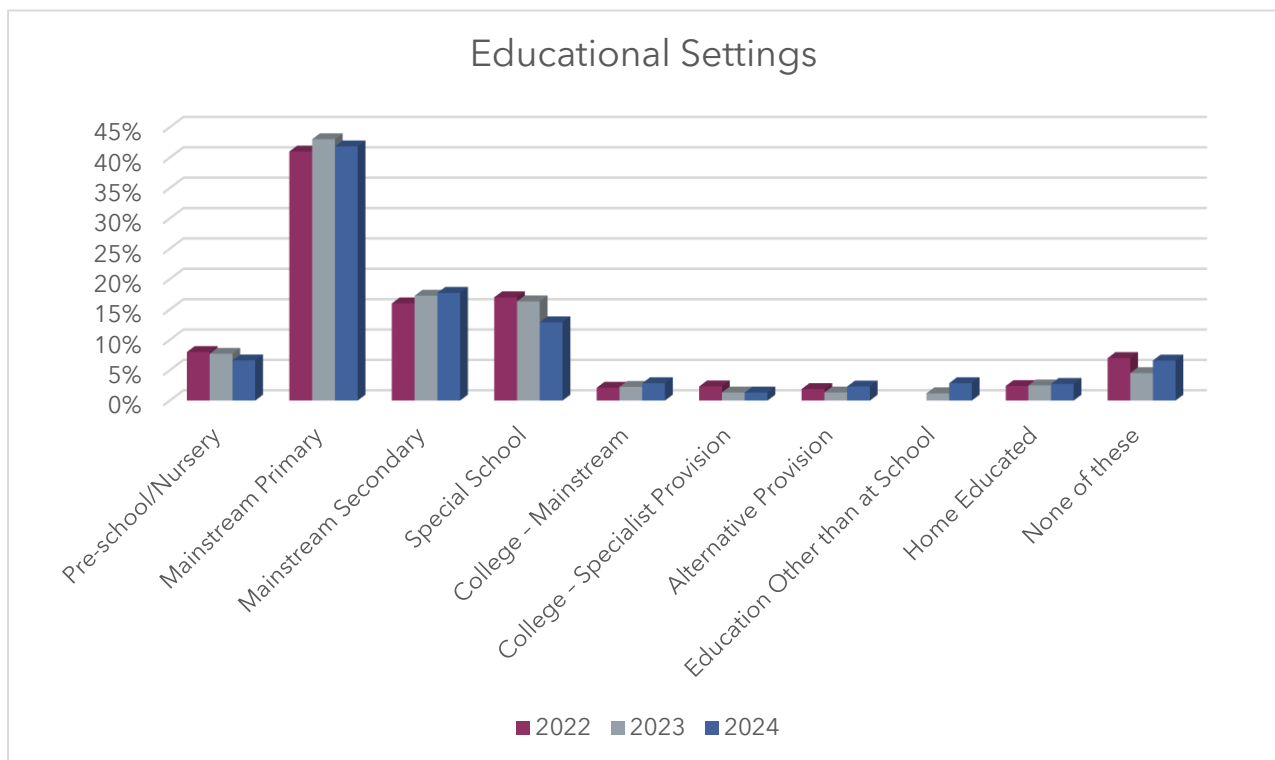
Responses by Area

We ask our survey respondents to indicate which area of Essex they live in, as Essex is divided, administratively, into four quadrant areas. We can also identify the local NHS Integrated Care Board that will be responsible for providing health services. By asking this question we can compare how reflective of the population, by area, our survey participants are. We are also able to filter our data to highlight the experiences of SEND families in each of the areas and compare the similarities and differences.

Area	West Essex	Mid Essex	South Essex	North East Essex
% of overall population*	21%	27%	29%	23%
Local Council	Harlow, Epping, Uttlesford	Chelmsford, Maldon, Braintree	Basildon, Brentwood, Castle Point and Rochford	Colchester, Tendring
% of survey respondents per area	20%	28%	27%	28%
% difference with 2023 survey	(+5%)	(-4%)	(-5%)	(+8%)

[*Office for National Statistics - Census 2021](#)

Education Settings



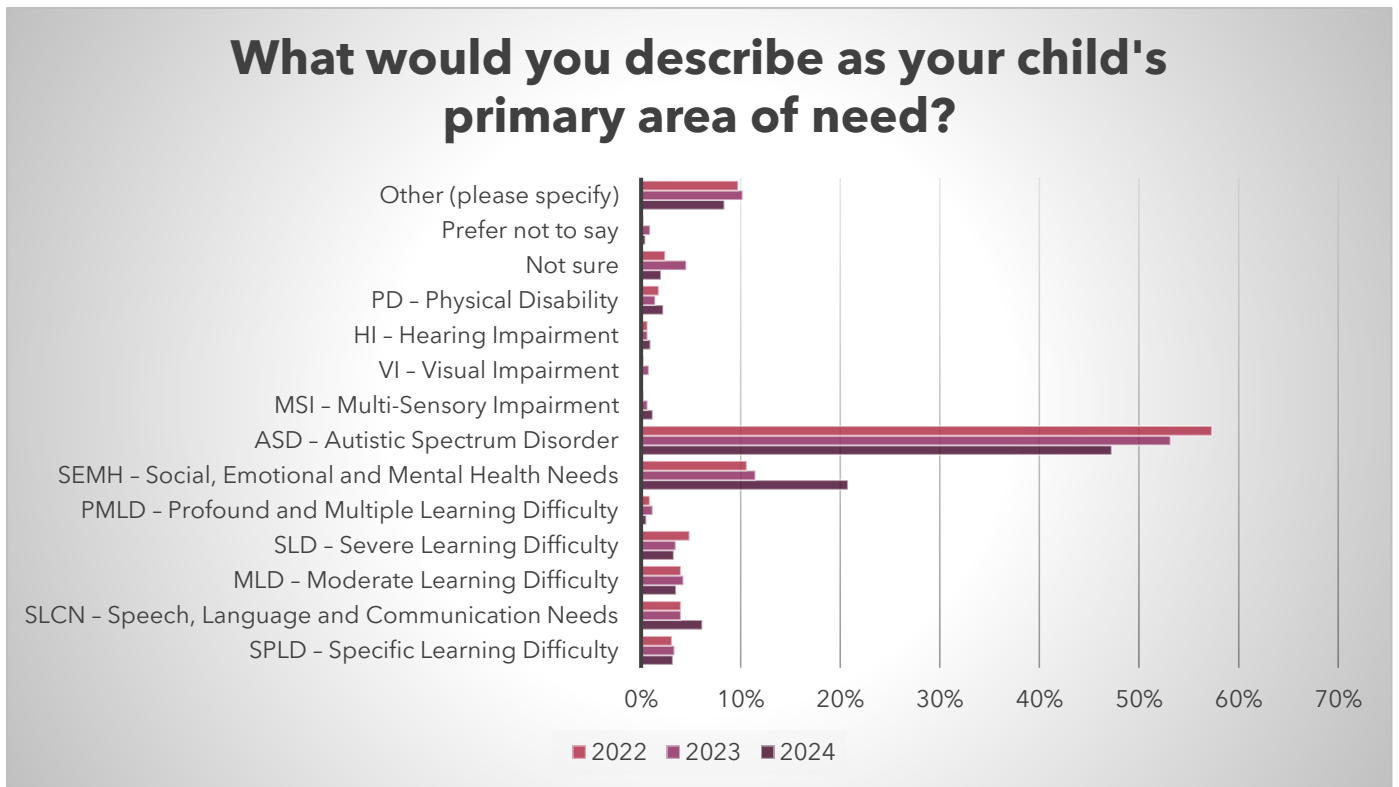
- Education Other than At School - 2023 was the first year it was included so there is no corresponding data for 2022.
- The option for Home Education was split further into 2 categories:
 - ◆ Home Education as a lifestyle choice
 - ◆ Home Education through no other option*

**The proportion of parent/carers who home educate through no other option is 4 times higher than those that do so as a lifestyle choice.*

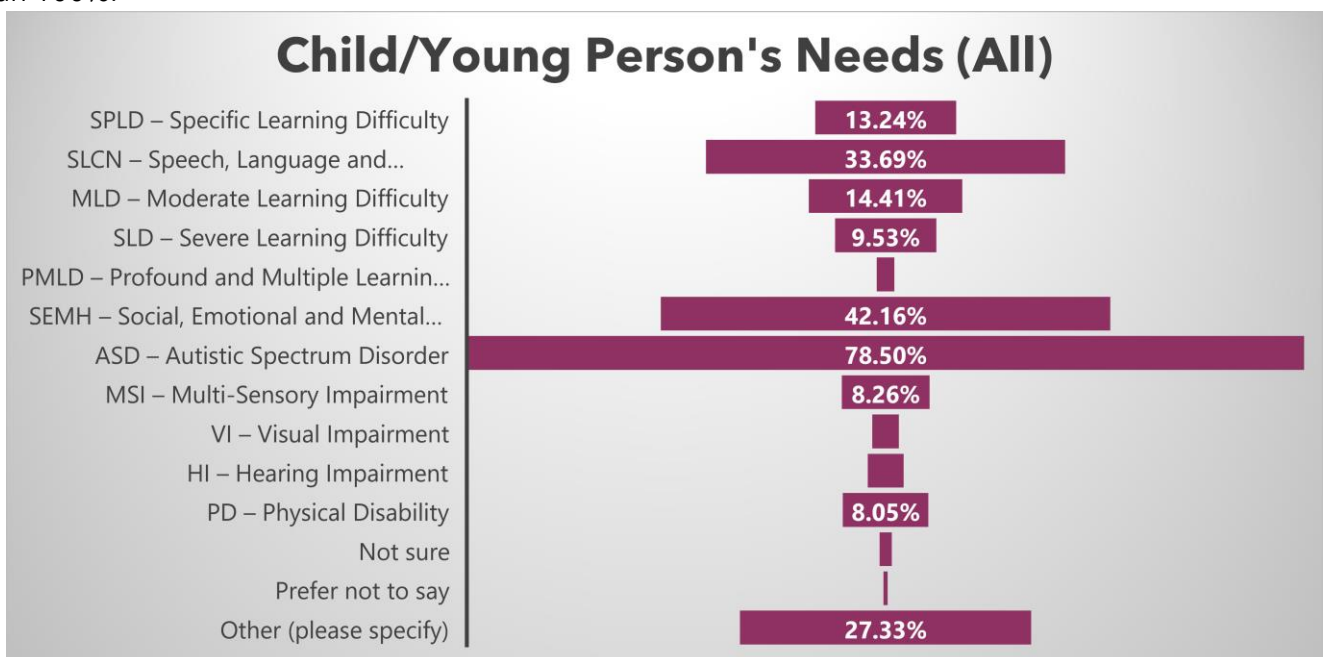
- Settings where the total was under 1% were:
 - ◆ Specialist hub - Primary
 - ◆ Specialist hub - Secondary
 - ◆ Virtual School
 - ◆ University (4 people stated their young person is studying at university)
 - ◆ Apprenticeship/Internship/Work based training
- This year, none of the respondents said their young people were in employment.
- The percentage of participants whose child/young person was not in school, employment or training slightly increased, but they have remained fairly static over the last three years.
 - ◆ As in previous years, the biggest proportion of those are compulsory age children, either on roll at a mainstream school or special school but not able to attend, awaiting a placement, or there is no suitable placement.
 - ◆ The next biggest proportion are still young people unable to access Post 16 or Post 19 provision, training or employment.

Identification of Needs

In each of our previous surveys, many parent/carers have indicated that their child/young person's need are too complex and interlinked to pinpoint which is their primary need. Historically, we have asked this question to ensure there is correlation between parent/carer views and that of the education settings, using the options available in the school census returns.



This year we added an additional question so that parent/carers had the opportunity to provide details of **all** their child/young person's needs. (Therefore, the overall percentages will total more than 100%.)



Identification of Needs (continued)

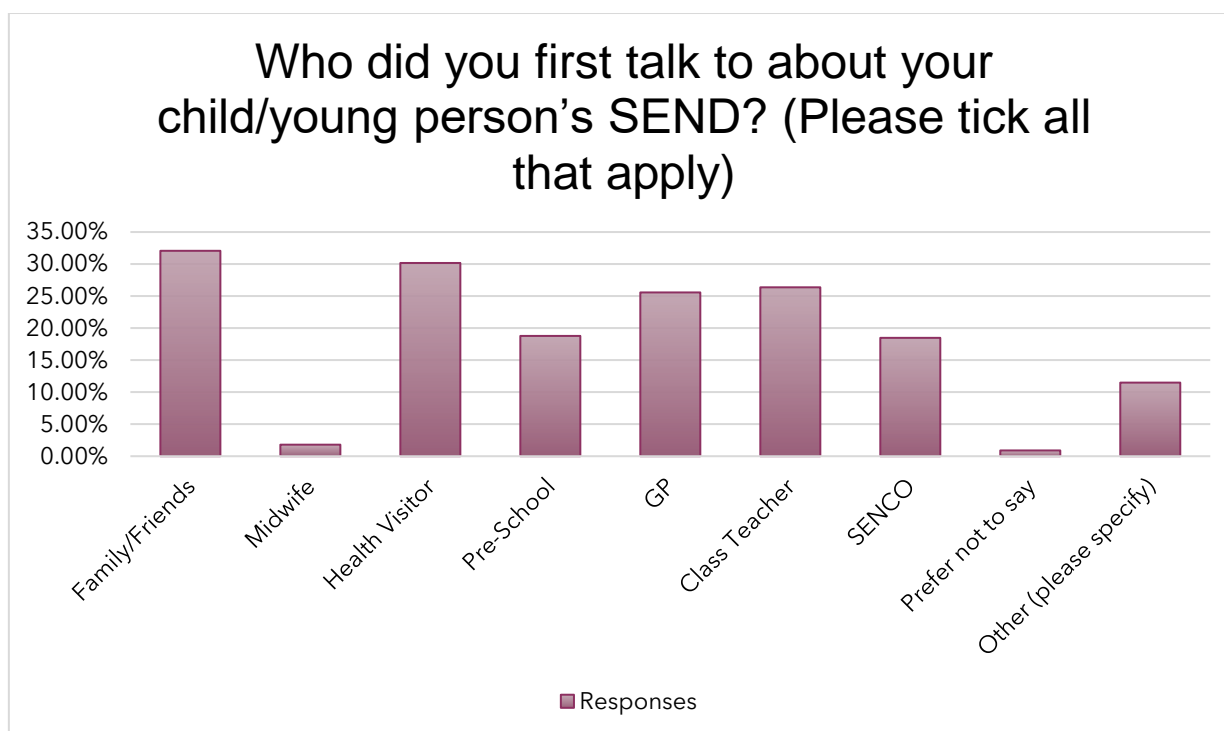
When describing all the needs of their child/young person the percentages categories increased significantly, compared to just the primary need selected. Where parent/carers selected other, the vast majority listed ADHD, either on it's own or with other needs described. This accounted for 16% of the overall total. The second most common need listed in the 'Other' category was sensory processing difficulties - again on it's own or with other needs. Some parent/carers listed needs such dyslexia and dyspraxia within the 'Other' category. It is our understanding that these would fall under the Specific Learning Dfficulty category when completing the school census.

62% of parents are unaware of the school census entry for their child/young person.

Who raises the initial concerns and who families talk to:

As in previous years, parent/carers are raising the initial concerns about their child's development/progress in the vast majority of cases (85%). Pre-Schools, Health visitors, Class Teachers as well as Family and Friends most commonly also raise initial concerns.

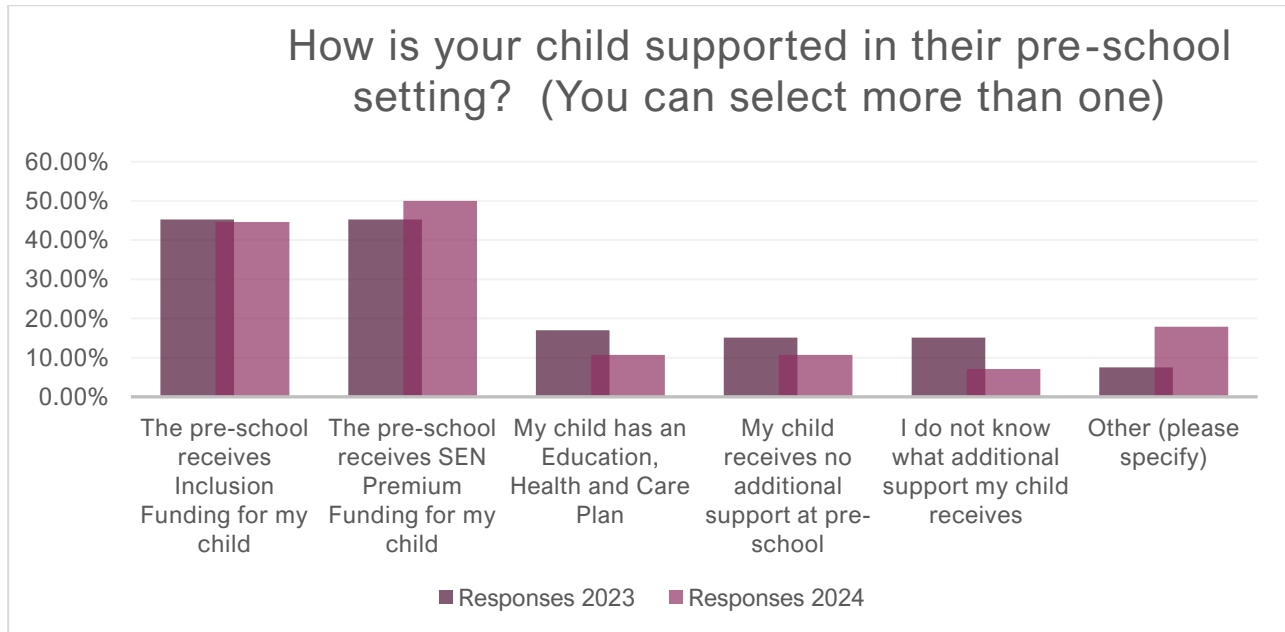
There is little change from previous years when it comes to who parent/carers first approach with their concern, (respondents could select more than one choice):



There were a wide range of practitioners specified under the 'Other' option, the largest being speech and language therapists (including private therapists), paediatricians and school staff (such as Headteachers and Pastoral Support).

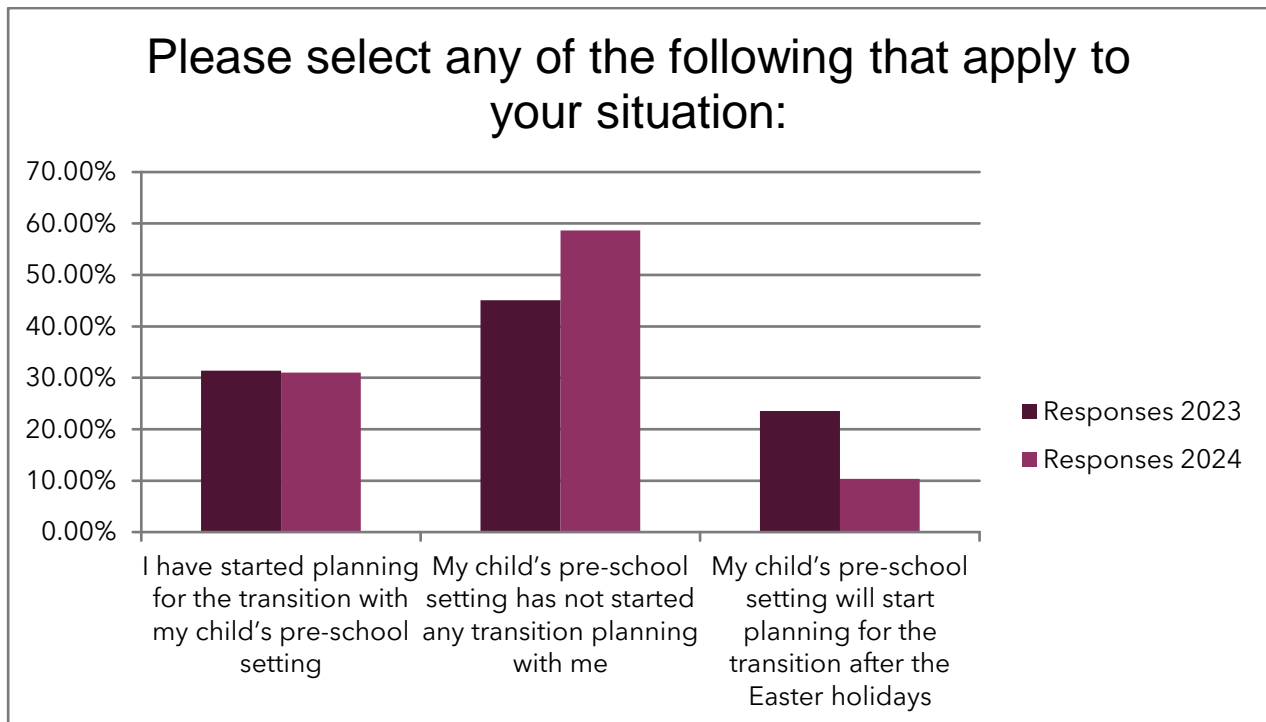
Pre-School Age Children

The questions for this section were introduced in 2023 and focused on themes from the feedback we had received previously. The questions were applicable to a small proportion of the overall total of respondents (10% for 2023 and just 5% for 2024).



67% of respondents state their child will be starting school in September 2024 (68% in 2024).

There was some disparity in the discussions with settings on transition planning reported by parent/carers in 2023 and 2024.



Statutory Processes – Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) Needs Assessments

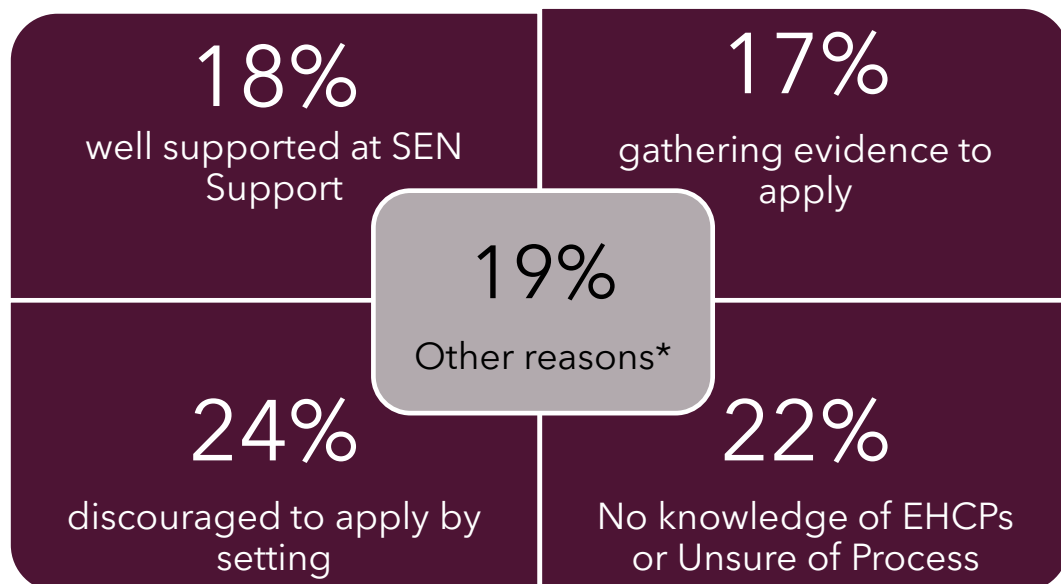
The first few questions in this section were open to all respondents, so the responses might not be related to recent experiences.

Participants requesting a Needs Assessment

65% have made a Needs Assessment request

Reasons Needs Assessments not requested

These were at similar levels to previous years.



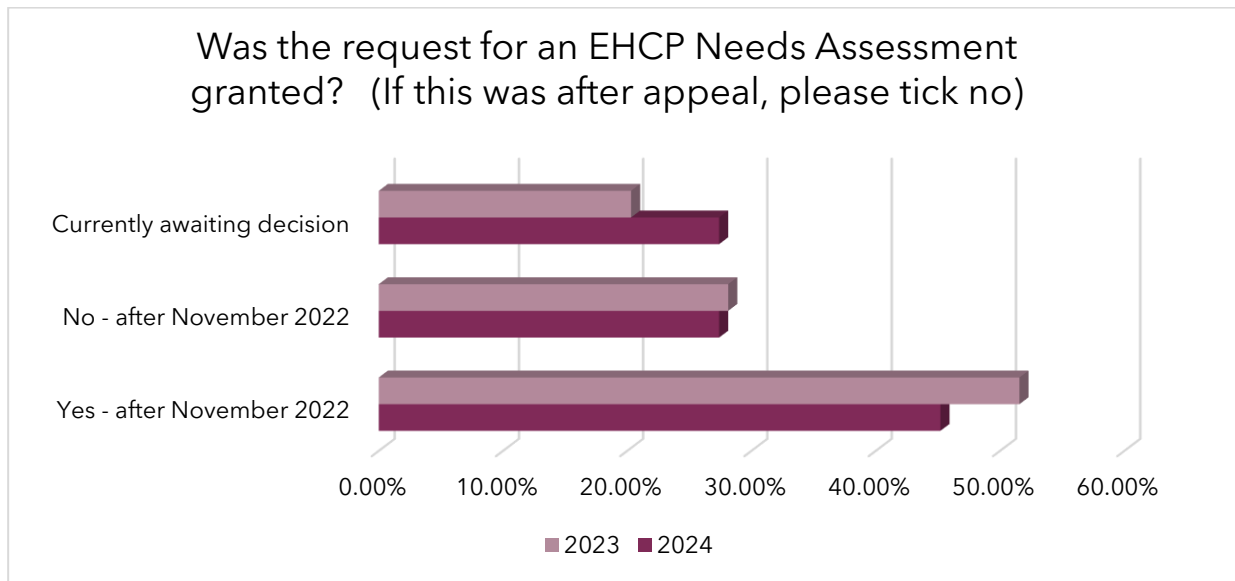
*We had 60 comments given for 'other reasons'. These were a mixture of the message being given by settings to not apply for various reasons, including not having a formal diagnosis or that they didn't believe child/young person would "qualify". The fact that these same parent/carers do not feel their child is well supported with One Planning/SEN Support - it could be assumed that, at the very least, there is a lack of communication between the family and the setting about how best to support the child/young person in their setting. Some parent/carers have stated they lack to energy to make a parental application or are unaware of where to start.

Statutory Processes – Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) Needs Assessments (continued)

We were able to filter responses from this point to only include the experiences of families who made EHCP Needs Assessment Requests from November 2022. As in the previous two surveys, this ensures we only report on the current experiences.

63% did so as a mutual decision with education setting

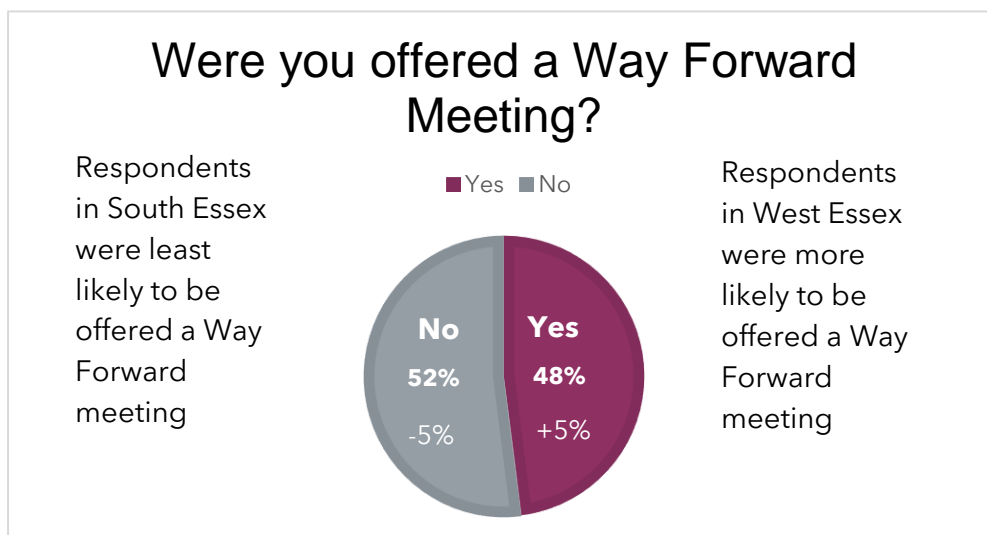
This is the first Needs Assessment request for **80%**



Refusal to Assess

The two main reasons for Refusal to Assess remains to be:

- Needs can be met at SEN Support/One Planning
- Insufficient evidence/reports received.



There is a slight improvement in Way Forward meetings being offered. However, some respondents said they did not take up the offer a meeting and preferred to go straight to the appeal process.

Delays to Assessments

The number of those stating they are still awaiting a decision has increased by 7%.

In light of the current situation with regard to a shortage in the availability of Educational Psychologists (EP) and delays to the completion of EHCP Needs Assessments, we asked some additional questions on virtual EP assessments and the length of the delay being experienced.

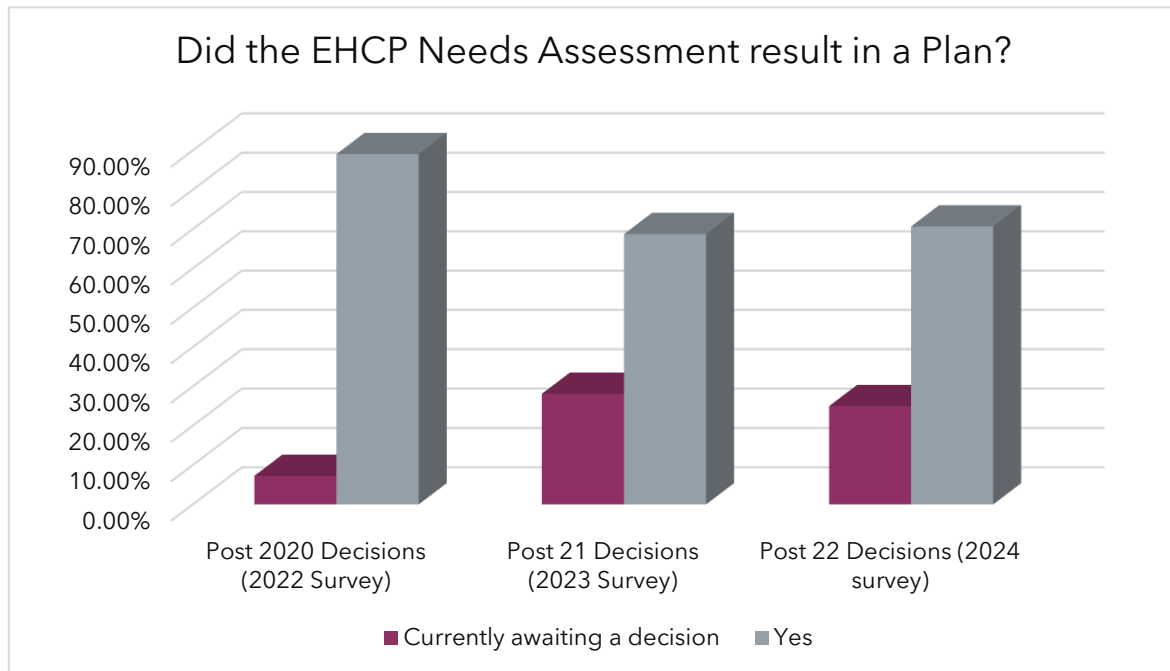
- 59% of respondents said they were offered an in-person EP assessment.
- 22% of respondents accepted an offer of a virtual assessment
- 19% of respondents declined the offer of a virtual assessment

The reasons given for declining a virtual assessment were:

- Child/young person would not be able to engage with online assessment
- Concern about the quality of the assessment
- Concern about the confidentiality of the assessment

When a virtual EP assessment was undertaken 52% of respondents said this took place within 14 weeks of the decision to assess. But this does mean that 48% of virtual assessments took longer.

Statutory Process - Decision to issue an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP)

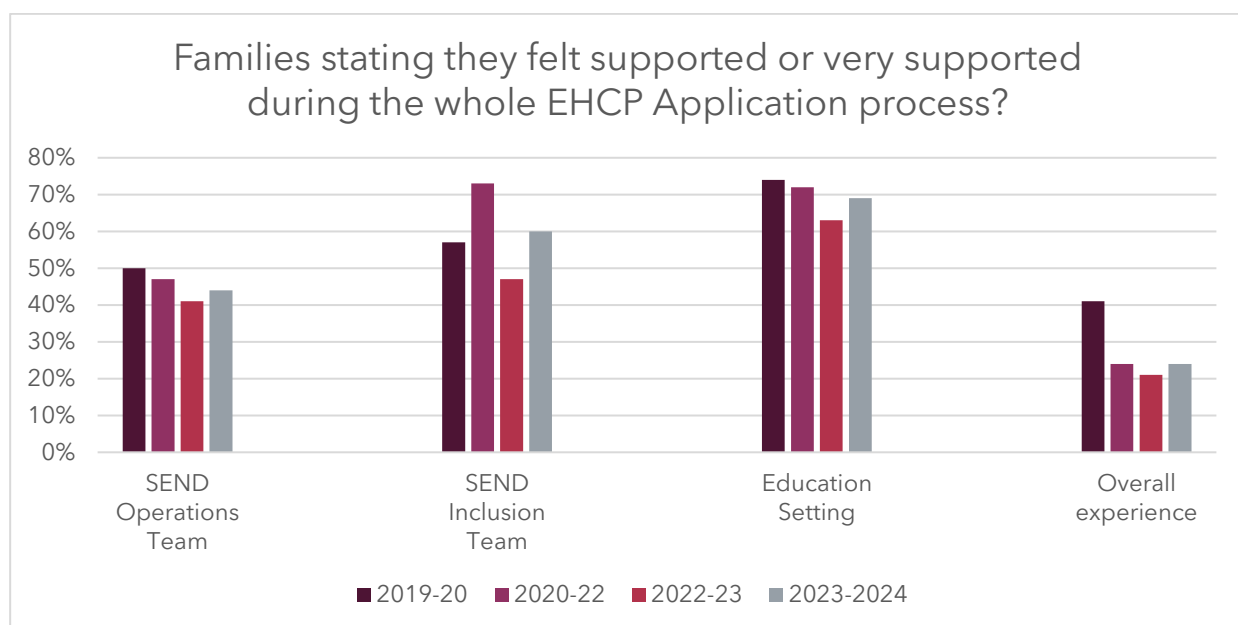


The likelihood of being offered an Outcomes meeting has increased, with 67% of families say they were offered a meeting, with an additional 4% saying they were offered one but declined. We received 52 comments regarding Outcomes meetings. The main themes were as follows (some comments covered more than one theme):

- the meeting was a useful opportunity to understand the process for decision making and discuss next steps;
- purpose of the meeting was confusing as it occurred before a decision to issue an EHC plan had been made;
- parent/carers did not feel prepared with the right knowledge to participate fully (unsure what to expect or what they could challenge)
- some parent/carers said they felt pressured into agreeing to the information presented to them without fully understanding it
- a number of parent/carers felt it would have been more beneficial to have received a draft of the report/plan before the meeting took place so they had time to review and make amendments beforehand.

Statutory EHCP Process - Families' experience of support received

In each of the previous surveys parent/carers have indicated that regardless of how well they have been supported during the EHCP process, their overall experience of the process is poor. This year has been no exception, with those who say their overall experience of the process was very good or good remains low at 24%. The only area where there is any notable change in how supported families feel during the process is by the Inclusion Team. This is, perhaps, surprising given the well-documented delays in assessments by Education Psychologists.

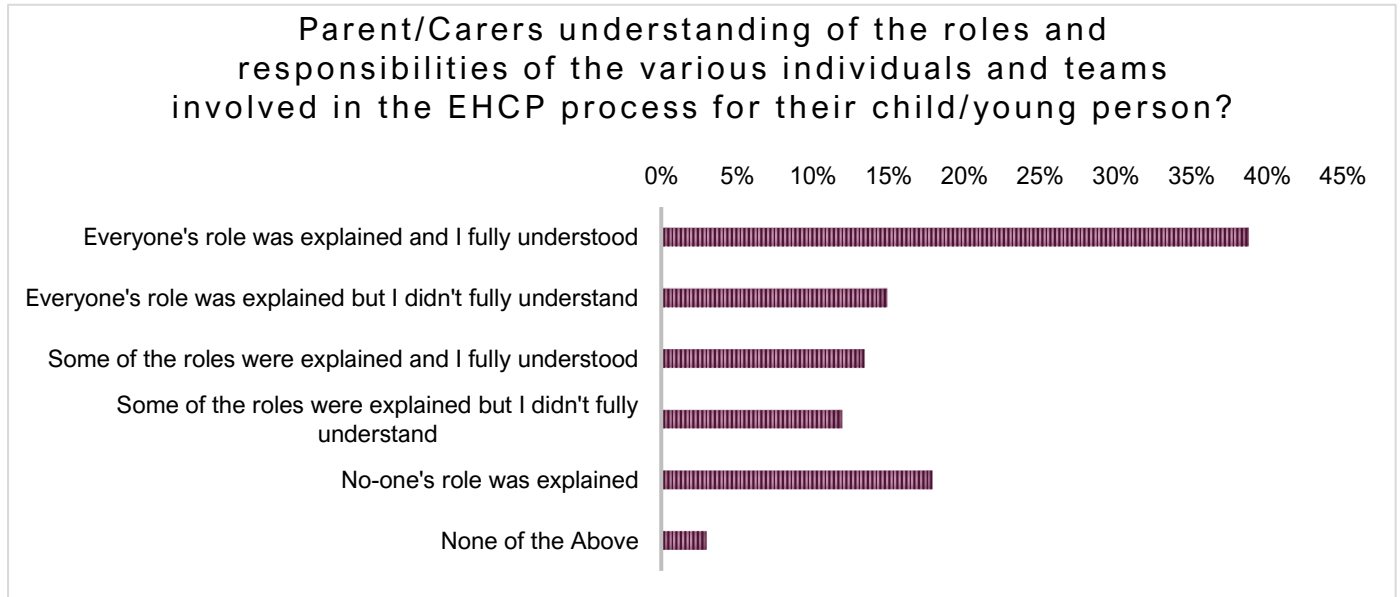


One of the most common themes of feedback we've received through all previous surveys and graffiti wall reports is about the quality of the communication with parent/carers during the EHCP process. This may count towards the low overall experience score, but we felt that more detailed questioning in the Annual Survey was needed to understand more specifically what could improve families' experience and confidence in the process.

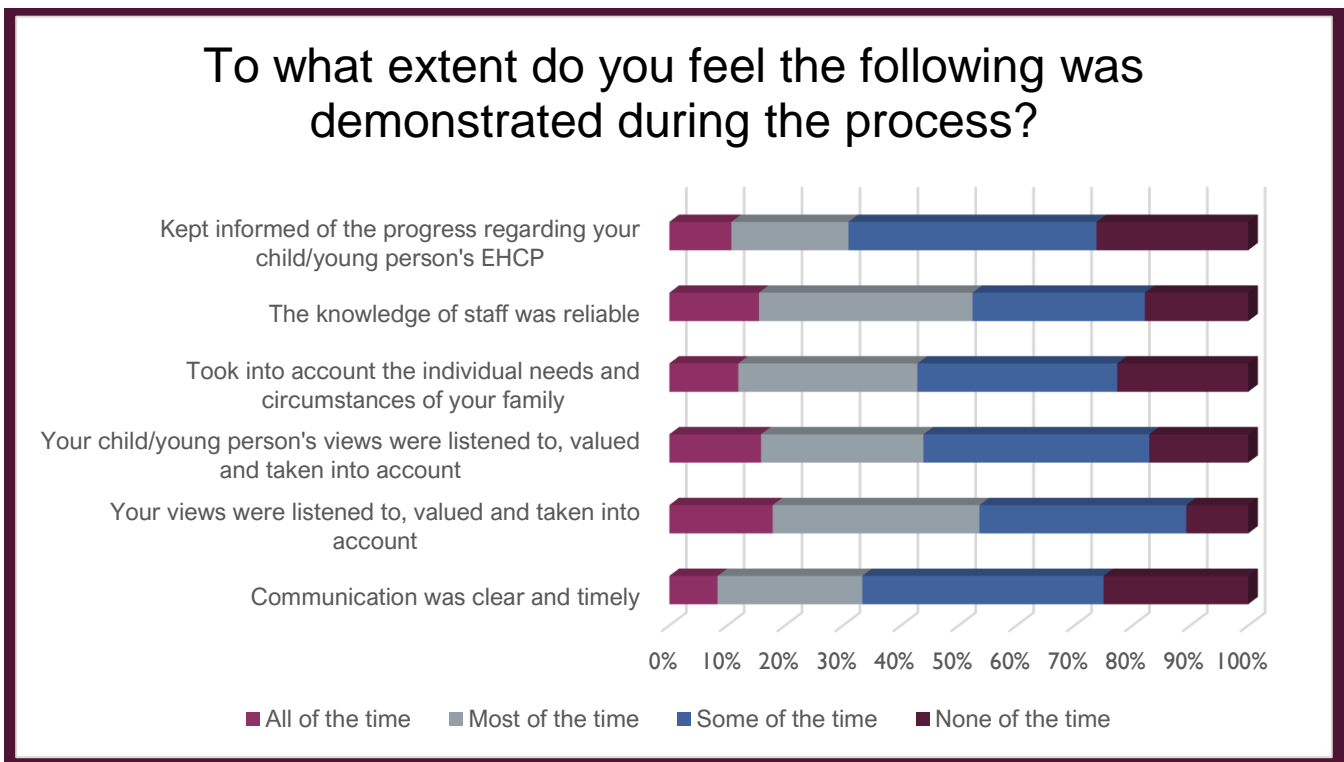
In 2021 we co-produced a specific EHCP process survey for parent/carers to complete once their child/young person's EHCP is issued. Some of the questions have already been included in our previous Annual Surveys but we have added the remaining questions this year, which are quite specific to communication during the EHCP process, which remains one of the most consistent themes of feedback we receive.

Statutory EHCP Process - Families' experiences (continued)

The responses we've received indicate that the majority of parent/carers do not understand who is involved in the EHCP process and why.



68% say they were not kept informed of the progress regarding the child/young person's EHCP and a similar proportion report that overall communication was not clear or timely. More than half (54%) of respondents said they felt that their views were listened to, valued and taken into account all or most of the time, but that reduced to 44% for children and young people themselves. Approximately 43% said that the individual needs and circumstances of the family were taken into account most or all of the time - 11% said these were not considered at all. 52% felt that the knowledge of ECC staff was reliable all or most of the time.



Statutory EHCP Process - Families' experiences (continued)

We received 116 comments in relation to the EHCP application process since November 2022. The majority of individual comments contained more than one theme.

- 69 of those mentioned the delays to assessment and the impact that that is having on the support their child/young person is receiving and on their family circumstances.
- 47 comments specifically mentioned poor communication with SEND Operations teams; the majority of those were in relation to a lack of update on progress and difficulty in contacting the team. There were additionally some comments relating to errors in paperwork, incorrect information being given to families and difficulty in obtaining the correct information.
- There were a range of themes related to settings; a number of which were around their level of knowledge, with settings believing a diagnosis is necessary before an EHCP application is made or that a significant cognitive delay must be demonstrated (rather than high levels of social and emotional needs, for example). However, there were also comments that highlighted how much parent/carers valued the support given by their child/young person's setting.
- Some families did not feel they did not have the right information to understand the process or how they could contribute.

On the following page, we have selected a handful of comments, which we feel clearly highlight the themes that were repeated over and over again.

Statutory Process - Families' experience (comments)

Waiting for EP assessment

Poor communication & no updates unless I email

Not following legal requirements & not being proactive in attempting to resolve

10 months just to get the EP report back then to be full of mistakes from the very first sentence. A second EP report was done now an EHCP is being drafted.

Better communication during the waiting time. More support during the waiting time - son was not in school and we had very little in terms of AP. We have had to reduce working hours and the financial impact and impact on mental health on the whole family has been

I was ¹⁰⁰ supported by the school throughout the process..what I didn't know they helped me..I can never say just how grateful I am

Explain what happens after what is the point in an echp what help is available

You feel like you're asking for the moon when all you want is your child to be seen, heard & recognised.

Communication, honesty, transparency. My sons case worker was lovely but clearly under huge pressure. Calls and emails were often not answered. Getting honest information was difficult and my questions were answered with we will cross that bridge when we come to it. The LA and parents should be working together as a team to create the best possible outcomes. Getting honest answers felt like trying to get blood from a stone. Staff at the LA often seemed reluctant or nervous to give information, this created a feeling of mistrust. It took 32 weeks and hours of phone calls and emails and chasing and leaving messages. The worry was exhausting and it took time away that I should have been able to spend with my son. When we found out he had a school place i couldn't stop crying, I sobbed with relief, he had a place at a school he needed. It should not be this stressful or difficult.

Statutory EHCP Process – Naming a Setting

For the first time we have asked parent/carers specific questions about their experience of naming a setting as this is a frequent theme of feedback we received. Choosing the right setting is one of most important decisions for ensuring your child/young person receives the support and provision they need. It is one the main reasons parent/carers cite for appealing their child/young person's EHC Plan.

We asked parent/carers whether their child/young persons EHCP named their choice of setting:



We received just 18 comments relating to this section. They were exclusively from parent/carers where the parental choice had not been named in the EHC Plan or no suitable placement has been found. Although the number of comments are limited, there are clear themes:

- Mainstream schools have been named – where those same schools have already stated they are unable to meet the needs of the child/young person, or the child/young person has been unable to attend the setting named for some significant time.
- There is no suitable placement for the child/young person – with a range of specialist settings saying they cannot meet the needs of the child/young person, or they have no available spaces
- Parent/carers are very unclear as to what the next step in the process is going to be

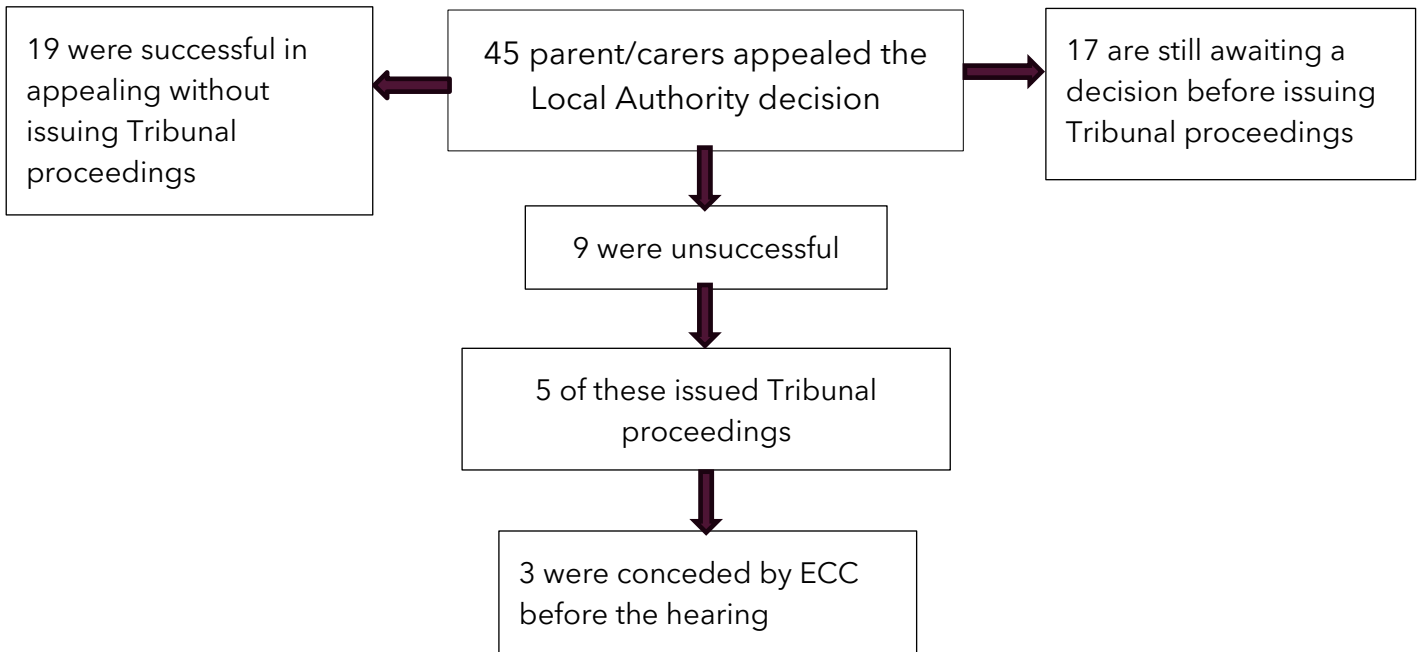
Two comments stood out as they stated that the current mainstream primary school (which their child is unable to attend and cannot meet need) had been named for their Year 6 child.

Statutory Process - Appeals and Tribunals

We only received very limited data on Appeals and Tribunals. The majority of families do not need to pursue this route and some families, perhaps, do not feel equipped to do so. However, we do feel that there is a significant amount that can be learnt about the EHCP and Annual Review Processes from those that do appeal the LA's decisions and end up at Tribunal hearings.

Refusal to Assess and Refusal to Issue an EHCP *

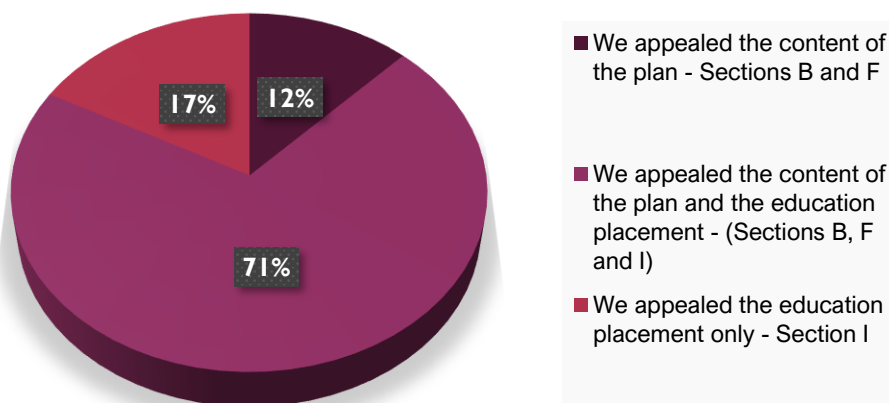
**Only Applies to Needs Assessment Requests made post-November 2022*



Appealing the contents of an EHC Plan - Sections B, F and I

42 people said they had appealed the contents of their child/young person's EHC Plan in the preceding 12 months. The vast majority appealed Sections B - Education Needs, F - Education Provision and I - Education Placement.

Which sections did you appeal?

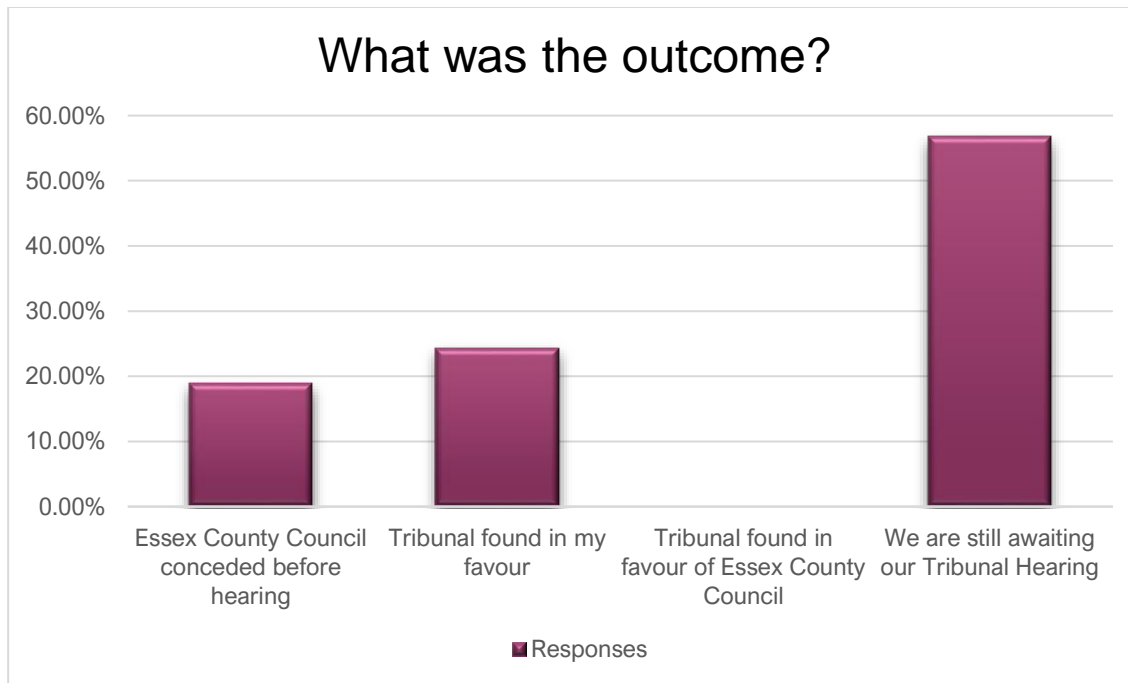


Three respondents indicated that they also appealed Sections D and H and one said they were appealing a Personal Budget.

49% were supported by an advocacy service

Statutory Process – Appeals and Tribunals (continued)

When we asked about the outcome of the appeal, more than half of respondents are still awaiting their Tribunal hearing. This appears to reflect the current delays in the tribunal system.



There were 33 comments relating to Refusal to Assess or Refusal to Issue appeals, and 23 for Appealing the Content of an EHCP. It is abundantly clear that families find being in this situation extremely stressful. The themes from the comments are:

- Needs are not being met in their setting
- There is no suitable placement
- Child/Young person is currently unable to attend their setting due to lack of appropriate support
- Child/Young person is currently unable to attend their setting due to provision in their EHCP not being delivered
- Delays in issuing a new or updated EHCP preventing families' Right of Appeal
- Relevant or correct Information not being submitted to the Tribunal by the Local Authority.

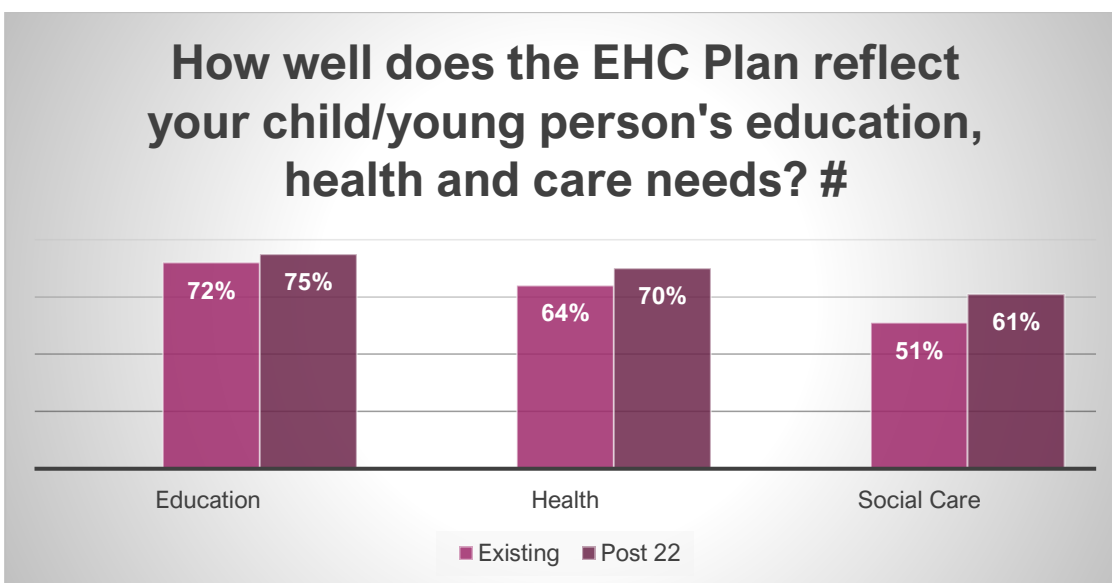
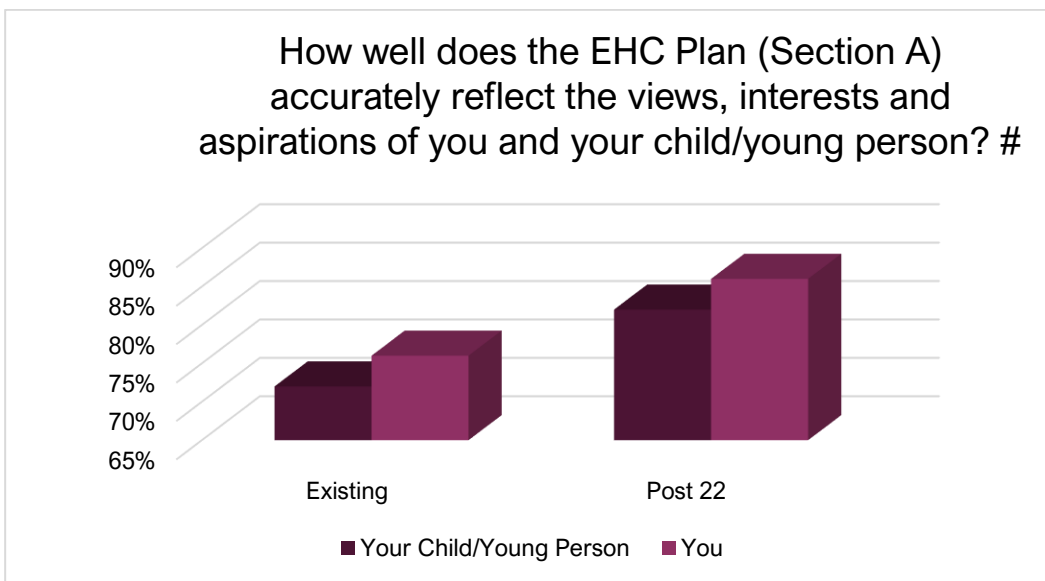
The one overriding theme throughout all the comments was the stressful impact the appeals/tribunal process has on the child/young person and the wider family.

Several comments referred to the deterioration in the mental health of the parent/carer or the child/young person. The most poignant comment was in relation to a young person whose Needs Assessment request was originally refused, which meant that they did not get the appropriate support in their educational setting, and they are now an in-patient in a mental health facility (referred to as a Tier 4 bed). Obviously, this is an extreme example but clearly demonstrates that the EHCP process is part of a wider picture of where a number of teams and services were not providing the right support at the right time for this young person.

Education, Health and Care Plans - Contents of New and Existing Plans

We asked the same questions regarding the contents of EHC Plans for children/young people from those with new plans and those with existing plans. This year we are presenting the data as a direct comparison. For existing plans, these questions were asked as part of the Annual Review section of the survey.

For both existing and new plans, a generally high percentage of parent/carers do feel that the EHC Plans accurately or very accurately reflect their child/young person's views, interests and aspirations as well as their own for their child/young person. However, there is a 10% reduction in confidence for those with existing plans.

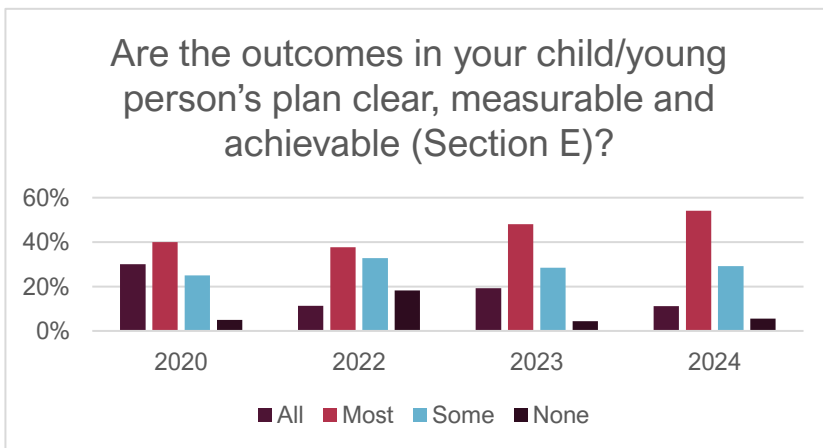


Rated Accurate or Very Accurate

Education, Health and Care Plans

- Contents of New and Existing Plans (continued)

Children and young people are still not felt to be particularly involved in planning their own outcomes, whether that is for new plans or existing. Parent/Carers, overall, feel involved in planning the outcomes for their child/young person - those with existing plans report a higher level of involvement (+11%). This may signify increasing confidence that the longer a child/young person has a plan, the more experience and knowledge a parent/carer gains.

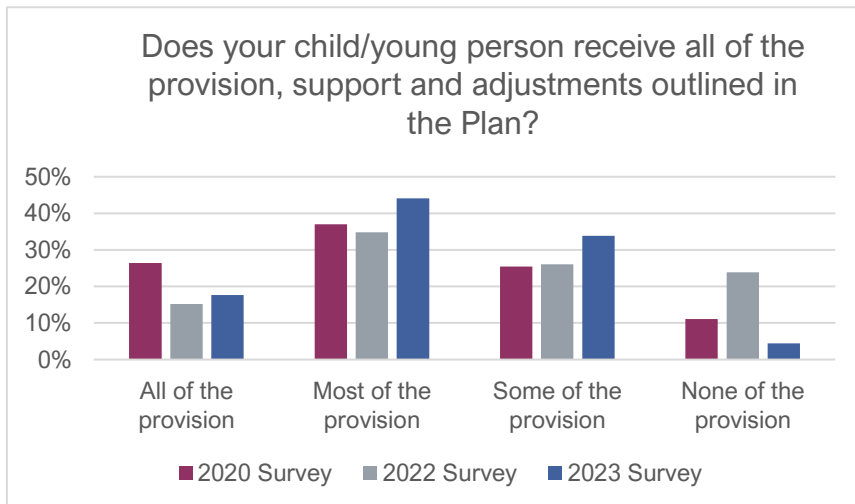


There is a rise in those who feel that most of the outcomes in their child/young person's plan are clear, measurable and achievable, but there is a corresponding decline in those that feel **all** the outcomes are.

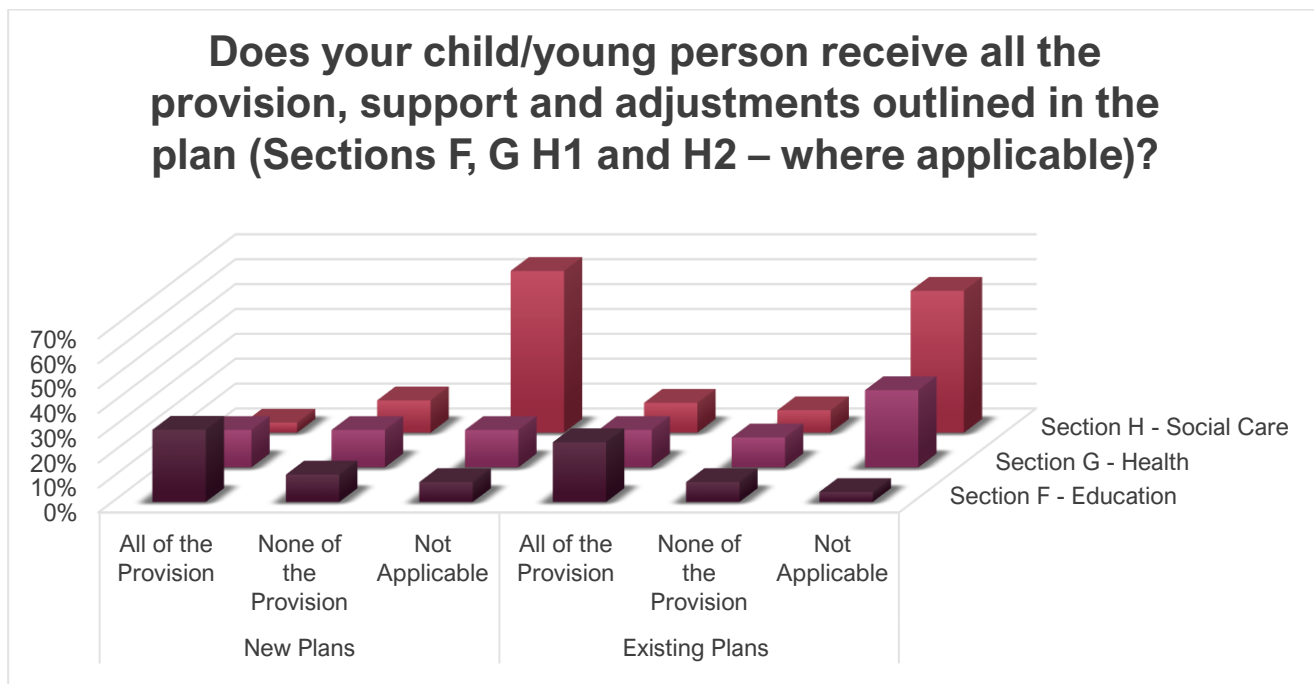
Education, Health and Care Plans

– Delivery of Provision

One of the recurrent concerns reported by parent/carers has been the delivery of the provision in their child/young person's EHC Plan. In previous years we only asked about the plan in its entirety - as per graphic.



This year, the question was broken down into each of the provision sections of the plan so we can understand which type of provision is most likely to be delivered in the view parent/carers.



There are slight differences between the views of parent/carers of children and young people with new and existing EHC Plan. The most significant difference is whether health provision is applicable. 15% of those with new plans believe it is not applicable for their child, but that rises to 31% of those with existing plans.

It is concerning that there is still a high proportion of parent/carers reporting that their child/young person is not receiving all of their education provision (70% of those with new EHC Plans and 75% of existing EHC Plans). Surprisingly, there were some parent/carers who consider that education provision is not applicable to their child/young person.

Education Health and Care Plans (continued)

We asked families what they feel could be better about the content of their child/young person's EHC Plan or delivery of the provision within the plan.

We received 42 comments on Education, Health and Care Plans issued after November 2022.

The majority of comments were relating to the delivery of provision, with parent/cares reporting they receive little communication about how provision is implemented or, in a significant number of cases, that settings are unable to deliver the provision in the plan. There were a few comments regarding plans being significantly rewritten at draft stage by parent/carer.

If your child is not known to social care, they deem there are no social care needs or provision required. Even if you ask for help. We have been told we don't meet the criteria!

Health colleagues think a diagnosis is all you need....no practical support is offered.

I don't really understand or know what are other support available to help my child.

No speech and language therapy available at college, so this is privately funded by ourselves.

Even with EHCP, school refused to have my son full-time stating received funds not adequate. I feel this is very unfair for my son not provided education he deserves.

....This is something I feel I need more detail and communication about, to know that school are following the plan and to know how my child is benefiting from this

If he were in a setting that could meet his needs to be able to carry out said provisions

Statutory Process - Annual Reviews

89%

The number of families who were invited to their child/young person's Annual Review at least 2 weeks prior to the meeting.

(+23%)

10% of families report the Annual Review has not taken place

38%

received notification of LA's decision within 6 weeks of Annual Review (+13%)

24% were still waiting for the LA's decision (-10%)

6% of Annual Reviews had taken place within the last 6 weeks

31%

Waited longer than 6 weeks for LA's decision

(+3%)

59% of Annual Review decisions did not require any amendments to be made.

75% of parent/carers agreed with the LA decision

Amended Plans:

54% of families report receiving the amended plan within 12 weeks of the Annual Review meeting, an increase of 10%.

5% of respondents were within 12 weeks of the Annual Review

The remaining **41%** still report waiting from 16 weeks to 14 months for an amended plan.

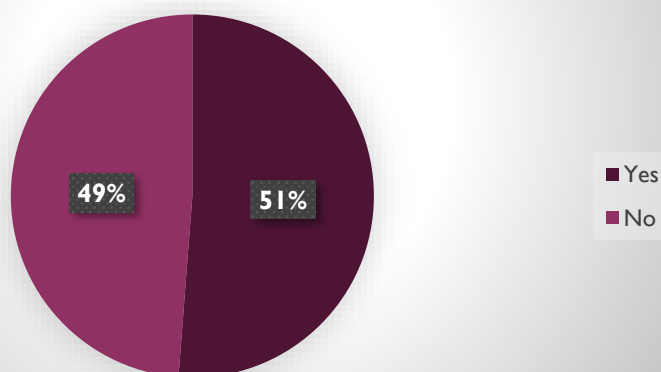
Annual Reviews – Statutory Process (continued)

Where parent/carers did not agree with the Local Authority's decision we asked which sections of their child/young person's plan they considered needed amending. There is a clear correlation between Needs and Provision, which suggests that parent/carers often feel that plans no longer reflect their child/young person's current needs and therefore the provision needs to be changed to meet those needs.

Views and Aspirations - Section A	36.59%
Needs - Sections B, C and/or D	73.17%
Outcomes - Section E	40.24%
Provision - Sections F, G and H1 and H2	75.61%
Education Placement - Section I	50.00%

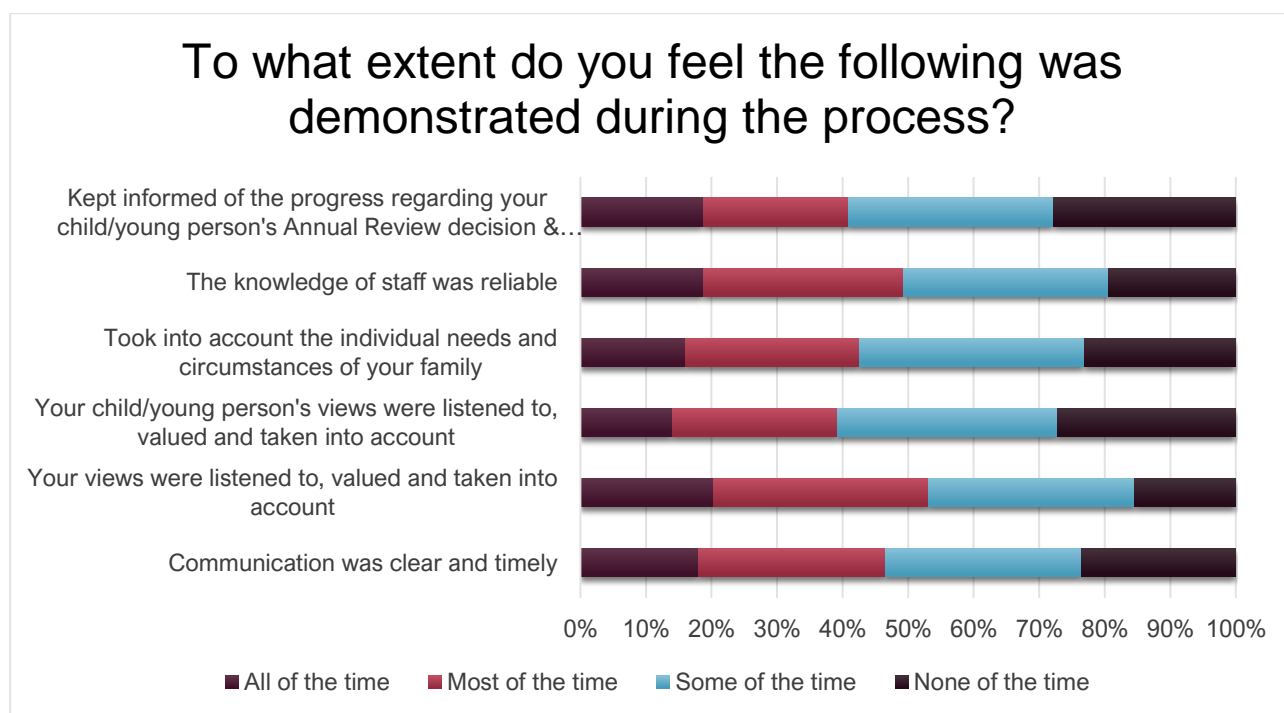
Annual Reviews – Families' Experience

Do you feel all that all appropriate professionals attend/contribute to the review?



Those who feel all relevant professionals contribute to the review has increased by 11%.

Annual Reviews - Families' Experience (continued)



There were 128 comments received for this section. Many of the comments contained more than one theme. More than half of the comments related to these two main themes:

- delays in receiving notification of Local Authority's decision and/or amended plan
- poor communication with the Local Authority (including after LGO complaints have been upheld)

The remaining themes were in relation to provision not being delivered by the education setting, relevant professionals not being involved and the need for more support for parent/carers to understand and contribute to the process.

We received 16 comments relating to Annual Reviews not taking place at the correct time.

We are outlining some of the comments received that we feel best reflect the overall themes on the following page.

Statutory Process - Annual Reviews - Families' Experience - Comments

I don't really understand the point of it. My daughter ehcp was given in 2021 when she was 3. It's never been changed or added too. It's doesn't reflect who she is and what level of support etc she needs now. When asked the local authority they said this is correct it doesn't get changed every year, which I know is a lie! What the point in the plan if it doesn't reflect the child and their needs? Mind boggling.

Each school does them slightly different, it would be nice/easier to have them ALL use the same format. As at my son's old mainstream school the paper work for the ehcp was centimetres thick where as now at is new alternative provision is much more condensed and precise.

They lost my son's EHCP. We fought for a year to get this reinstated with no one in the LA taking responsibility. We eventually got it sent to us and the college but it was based on his original EHCP when he was 10. The college organised a review with us in September. We've heard nothing from the LA since

The LA took 3 weeks to confirm the review changes, but they took 6 months to issue the updated EHCP

AR 1 - 14 months - we had to go to LGSCO to get them to issue final plan.
AR 2 - still waiting after 4 months

No changes were needed. My child is 5 and everything is catered for

I haven't had one for over two years as the la haven't called one and my daughter has EOTAS

Only one AR held in 3 years. AR meeting was March 2023 - nothing sent out in advance and paperwork states "not enough time to review" for the majority of what is meant to take place. They took no notice of the amendments I requested and amended completely differently to what was agreed in AR meeting. They took nearly a year to issue amended.

Statutory Processes – Conclusion and Next Steps

We cannot offer any conclusion on the findings of our survey without first acknowledging the public debate and questioning in recent Essex County Council meetings with regard to the Education, Health and Care Plan process. The points raised in those public meetings were the same points that we, at Essex Family Forum, have raised repeatedly in our conversations in strategic meetings, and supported with evidence of parental feedback we receive through our Family Champion network and termly Graffiti Walls reports. It has also been a consistent theme throughout our Annual Family Impact Surveys since 2020.

Our report following last year's survey, specifically highlighted the Local Authority's consistent breach of their statutory duty to meet certain timescales throughout the EHCP and Annual Review process in light of the **"marked increased in the delays to statutory timescales for all aspects of the EHC Plan process from needs assessments to annual reviews."** Unsurprisingly, this has led to the predicted increased complaints and escalations to the Local Government Ombudsman.

The detrimental impact on children/young people and their families of the delays in securing the right advice and support are well detailed within the comments we received. To further compound this with the significantly poor levels of communication reported by parents and carers throughout the process adds to their feelings of frustration and helplessness. It is, therefore, inevitable that an element of distrust builds between families and the 'system' that is seen to be failing their children and young people.

Our 2023 report acknowledged that for this situation to be improved, ECC's SEND teams needed to have sufficient capacity to meet the increasing demands on their service. It is extremely disappointing for the situation to have worsened in the last 12 months as the progress of actions being taken to address these consistently reported issues have been far too slow to be implemented.

Next Steps

We are aware that there are steps being undertaken to address some of the issues contributing to the delays in the EHC Needs Assessment process.

However, we do not feel that this will be sufficient to address some of the fundamental concerns raised by parents/carers in our survey, which we believe need to be explored in greater detail. We would like a focus group to be convened as a matter of urgency which would also include parent/carer representatives and representation from parent support and advocacy groups in Essex.