

Essex Family Forum

Family Impact Survey 2024

Report on
**SEND Support, One Planning, Communication
and Support in Education Settings**

And

**Home Education, Unable to Attend and
Education Other than At School (EOTAS)**



Date of Report: June 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 Education, Unable to Attend and Education Other than at School (EOTAS)
- Home to School SEND Transport
- Therapies
- Mental Health Support
- Social Care and Shortbreaks Clubs & Activities
- Preparing for Adulthood
- Sources of Information and Support

This report focusses on SEND Support, One Planning, Communication and Support in Education Settings and Home Education, Unable to Attend and Education Other than At School (EOTAS).

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.

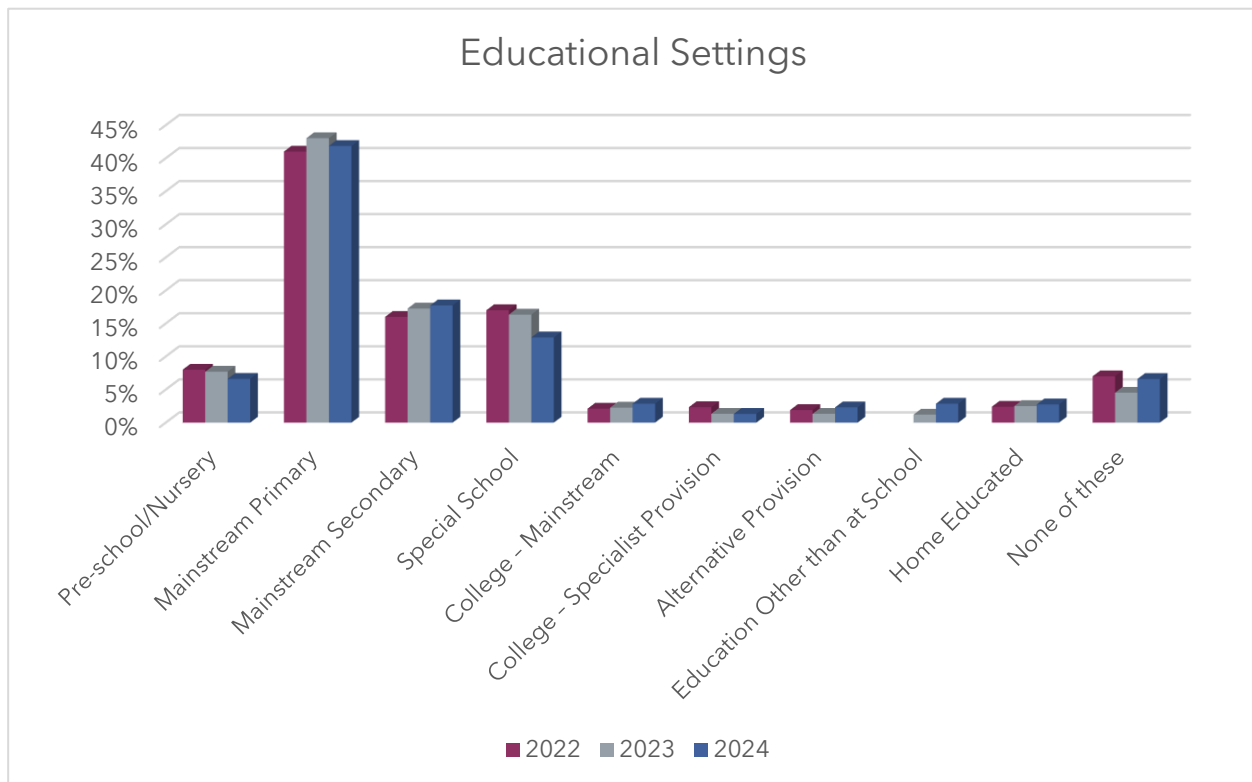
Participants were directed to sections of the survey via "skip logic" based on responses they gave. They were also able to skip certain questions if they did not wish to provide a response. Therefore, participants only completed sections that were relevant to them and did not need to answer every question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

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.*

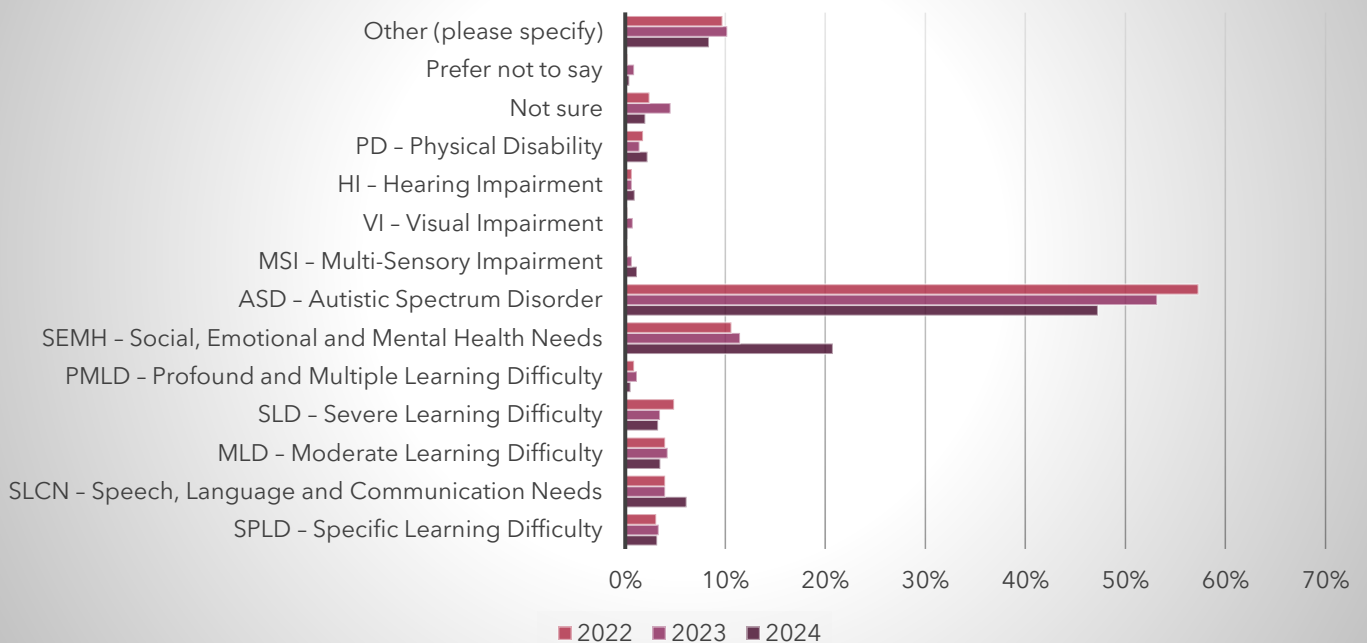
- Settings where the total was under 1% were:
 - ◆ Specialist hub - Primary
 - ◆ Specialist hub - Secondary
 - ◆ Virtual School
 - ◆ University (4 people stated their young person is studying at university)
 - ◆ Apprenticeship/Internship/Work based training
- This year, none of the respondents said their 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 pretty 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, waiting 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

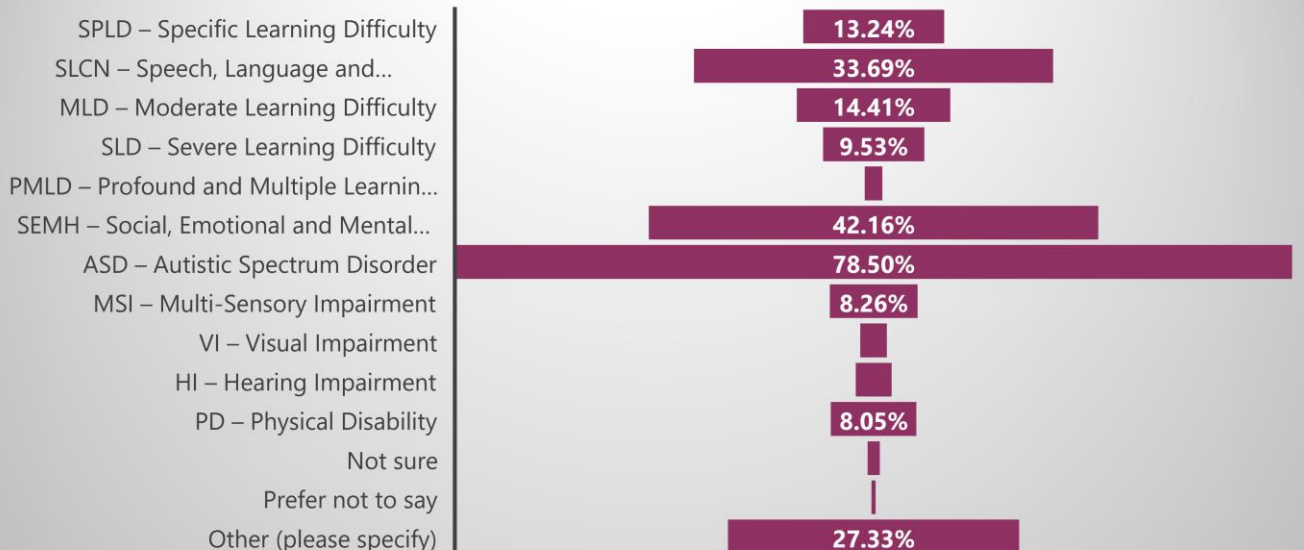
In each of our previous surveys, many parent/carers have indicated that their child/young person's needs are too complex and interlinked to pinpoint which is their primary need. Historically, we have asked this question to ensure there is correlation between parent/carer views and that of the education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

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



Child/Young Person's Needs (All)



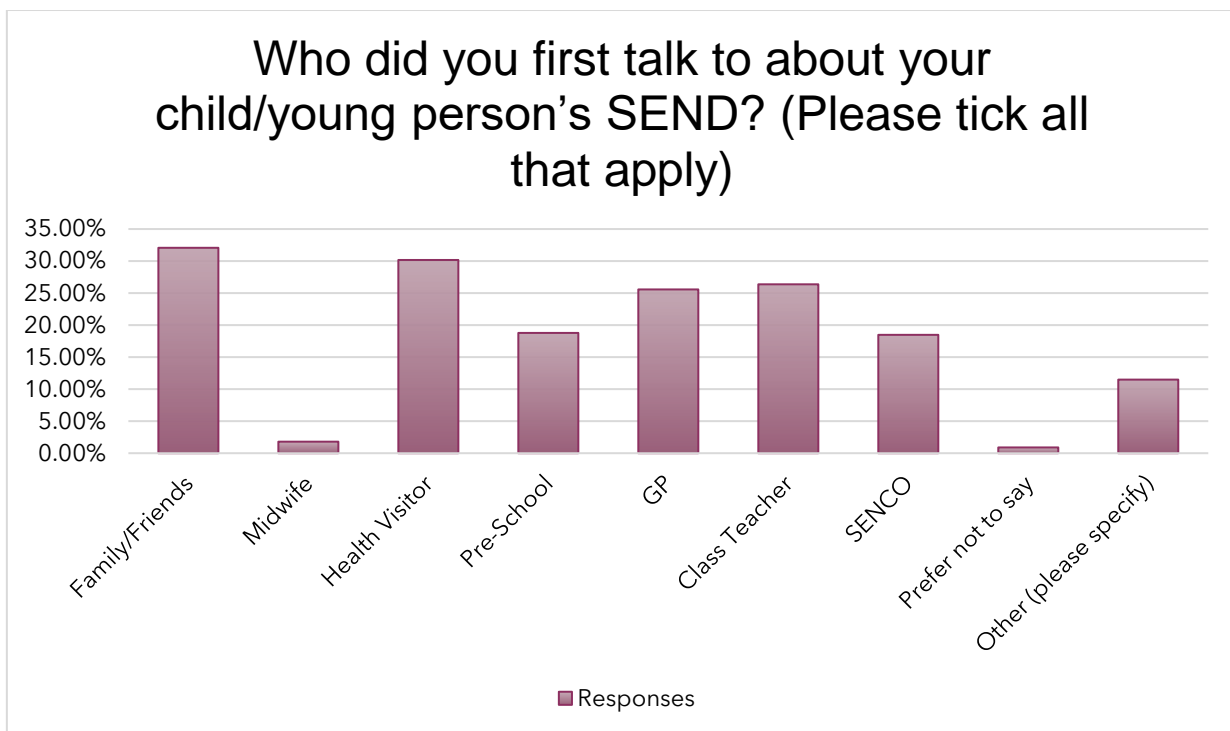
When describing all the needs of their child/young person the percentages categories increased significantly, compared to just the primary need selected. Where parent/carers selected other, the vast majority listed ADHD, either on it's own or with other needs described. This accounted for 16% of the 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.

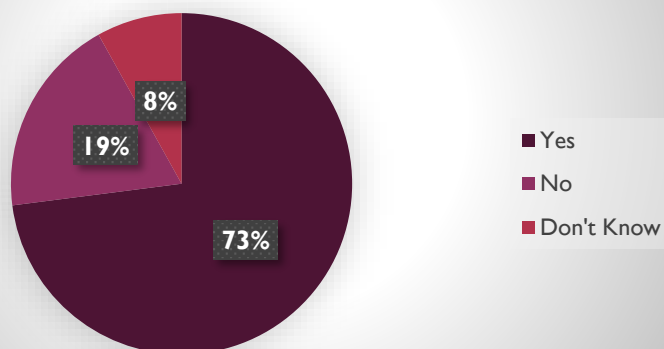
There is little change from previous years when it comes to who parent/carers first approach with their concern, (respondents could select more than one choice):



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).

SEN Support / One Planning

Does your Child/Young Person have a One Plan?



Children and Young People with EHC Plans

58% (-5%)

also have a One Plan of those

30%

are only reviewed annually

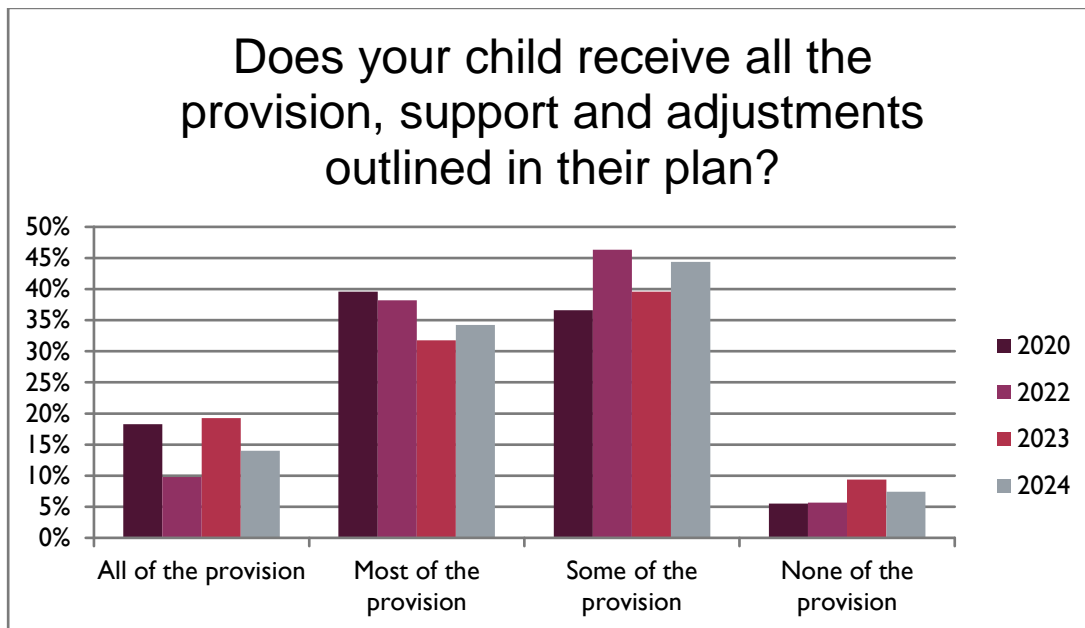
17% (-7%)

are unsure whether their child/young person also has a One Plan

2023- 62% had a one Plan / 29% did not / 9% unsure. For the first time since 2020 the number of children/young people with SEND without One Plans is below 20%. The percentage of parent/carers who are unsure whether their child/young person is supported through a One Plan is continuing to decrease - in 2020 this figure was 21%.

Question	Response	Difference (%) 2023
One Plan accurately reflects child/young person's needs	64%	+2%
Understand well/very well the provision, support and adjustments described in the plan	75%	+2%
All or most outcomes are clear, measurable and achievable	53%	No change
I/We were involved/fully involved in planning the outcomes	62%	+5%
My child/young person was involved/full involved in planning their outcomes	27%	-5%
My child/young person's plan is reviewed termly	67%	+9%
No advice/contribution is sought, or I do not know whether advice contribution is sought from health care professionals involved	68%	-6%

SEN Support/One Planning - continued



There were 42 positive comments and some of these gave examples of best practice being adopted by the individual schools/teachers.

343
Comments
(+58%)

Main themes arising from Comments

Settings not working co-productively with parent/carers

Child/Young Person's Needs not being met or acknowledged by Settings

Poor One Planning practice, Plans not being followed or the agreed provision being put in place

Lack of knowledge/training by setting staff

Lack of information and support for families

Lack of capacity and resources within setting

Disconnect between the Senco and class teachers. More follow up and better explanation of the process would good.

I don't think the school are even using the One Plan to refer to regularly in order to know whether the measures are effective. Not overly sure the measures are being communicated between staff

Very very basic offer of adjustments and only available if the right teacher is there and the timing is ok and there's support staff available, otherwise there's nothing. Took 2 years of asking to get it and child's mental health has declined so far she's been out of school for 6 weeks

More time given to go through the process rather than being tagged on to parents evening and even then only having 10 mins. I think they need to have a better understanding on how things are at home especially when children are "fine" at school but have meltdowns as soon as then get home which is a direct result of them feeling like they have to be "fine" at school so the build up is just to much to cope with. If they had more time to discuss this and think about what can be done at school to help the child not get to that stage I believe that would make a big difference.

Being told not to include too much stuff otherwise it won't be ready.
Being told there is a word limit.

Nursery takes the responsibility with health visitor checking in occasionally. Would like to see the pediatrics staff involved more

My son's school and the SENCO is fully involved and tries their very best to meet childs needs. As parents, we are always included during One plan meetings and we all come to agreement for the final output.

The meetings are proactive, staff listen to concerns and take this on board. Perhaps could be useful to have them termly to review targets.

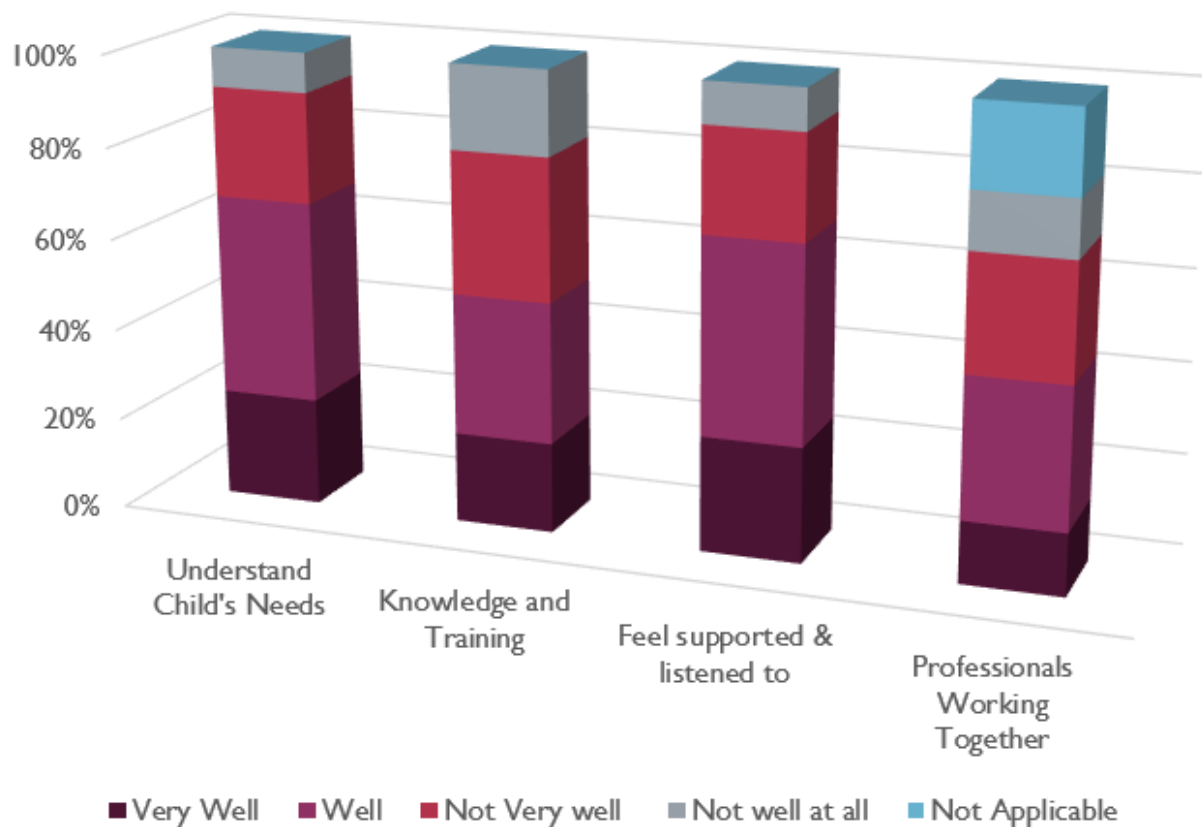
My sons nursery was really good about it and we held regular meetings. We set achievable goals together and work on helping him as much as we can

Communication and Support with Educational Settings

There was very little difference in the figures between the current survey and 2023. The majority of parents and carers feel their child/young person's setting has a good understanding of their child's needs and they feel supported and listened to. However, for a third of families this is not the case.

Approximately half of the parents and carers responding are confident in the knowledge and training of the staff in their child/young person's setting but that does mean the opposite for the remaining half.

For just under one fifth of children and young people there were no other professionals involved with their child or young person who has special educational needs.



Communication and Support with Educational Settings (continued)

We received 288 comments regarding communication and support with education settings.

The four themes that occurred most frequently were, in order:

- Lack of communication with and poor working together between settings and parents and carers
- Training needs of setting staff
- Professionals and settings not working well together and/or communicating well
- Inconsistent support

There were also a number of comments relating to:

- Settings not implementing professionals' recommendations
- Lack of staff / funding to deliver provision
- Poor communication between staff **within** the settings themselves

What "professionals"?
Honestly, are any left or providing any assistance any more? Everything is delegated to the educational setting.

It would help if the teachers properly acknowledged my child's needs. They just focus on academic achievement. They have no idea how much my own mental health has deteriorated since I've been having to fight to get every tiny bit of support from the school that I can.

Enforcing regular review meetings to update One Plans so that schools and parents and other professionals can work together. You shouldn't have to get charities like families in focus or have to set up TAF meetings just so that you feel listened to.

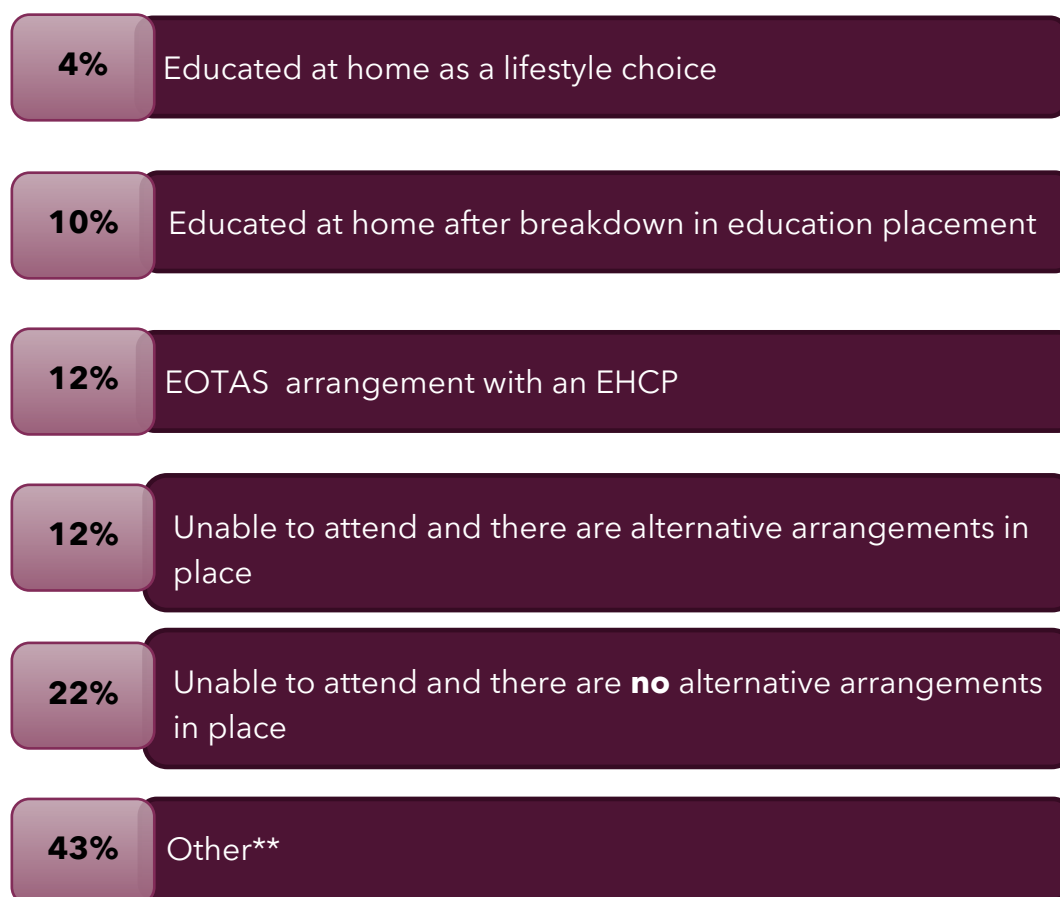
I am always having to communicate things from one to another and am stuck in the middle

Educational setting has been wonderful. They could do with more support from the professional services.

Very little, our school is amazing as is their SENCO and we are able to communicate well and improve things on a regular basis for my child.

Home Educated , Unable to Attend and Education Other than At School (EOTAS)

79% of respondents to this section indicated that their child/young person is in education, training or employment, the remaining 265 respondents answered as follows:



The themes of the comments in Other**:

- Attending part time
 - a number of those have no provision or work set for the time not in school;
 - several comments regarding not able to access classroom
- Unable to attend regularly / Setting unable to meet needs
- No placement
- EOTAS has been agreed, but taking a long time to implement or is still not meeting needs
- Attending school leading to declining mental health

Providing Medical Evidence

For those families who are asked to provide medical evidence of their child/young person's absence, half experienced difficulty in obtaining written evidence from health professionals or having evidence accepted.

Home Education, Unable to Attend and Education Other than At School (EOTAS) - continued

We were able to filter responses to further demonstrate the needs of children/young people who are not in education, training or employment and the support they receive.

Needs of children/young people and support received:

82%

children/young people are autistic

9% of respondents said there had no referral for an assessment of a neurodivergent condition.

5% of those referred for assessment since 2021 received no diagnosis.

17% of those referred since 2021 are still waiting for an assessment

62%

have been referred to Children and Adolescents Mental Health Service

Only 12% of respondents to this section reported their child/young person has no mental health needs.

30%

have Speech & Language Communication Needs

60% of those are in receipt of speech and language therapy support, but it does also mean that 40% are not.

14% are supported by Physiotherapy services

11% are in receipt of Occupational Therapy support

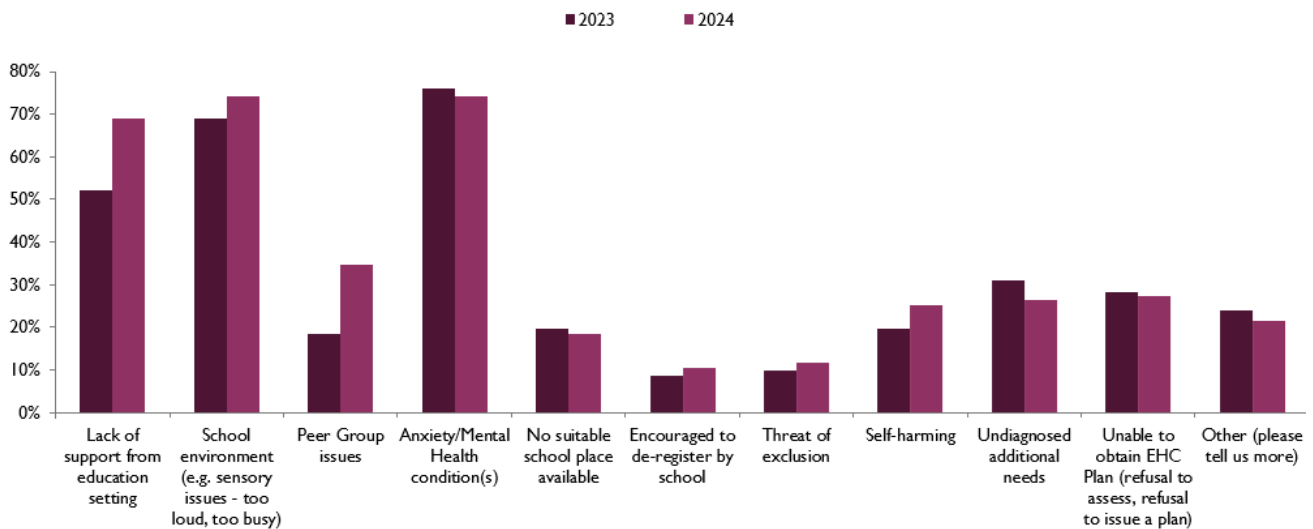
38%

have an Education, Health and Care Plan

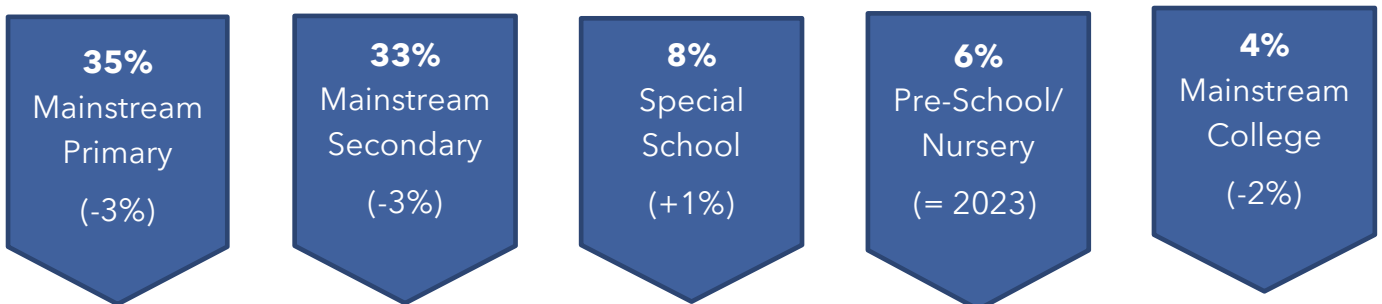
Home Education, Unable to Attend and Education Other than At School (EOTAS) - continued

We asked families the factors that had contributed to their current situation; participants were able to select more than one category. The biggest rises were in parent/carers stating lack of support from the education setting (a 17% increase) and also a 17% increase in participants stating peer group issues being a contributing factor. The themes in the 'Other' comments are mainly concerned with lack of knowledge and training of staff in the education setting and mental health needs not being met.

Factors that contributed to your current situation



Types of setting children/young people last attended:



The remaining settings were listed as Alternative Provisions, Specialist Hubs within mainstream secondary and Special Provision. There were two families whose children were attending independent schools.

60% are still on roll at their education setting

69% have received no support from statutory services

Home Education, Unable to Attend and Education Other than At School (EOTAS) - continued

Families told us they received support from the following Essex County Council teams:

Education:

- SEND Operations (13%)
- Engagement Facilitator (3%)
- Team around the Family Support Officer (1%)
- Inclusion Partner (5%)
- Education Access (7%)
- Attendance Specialist (1%)

Social Care:

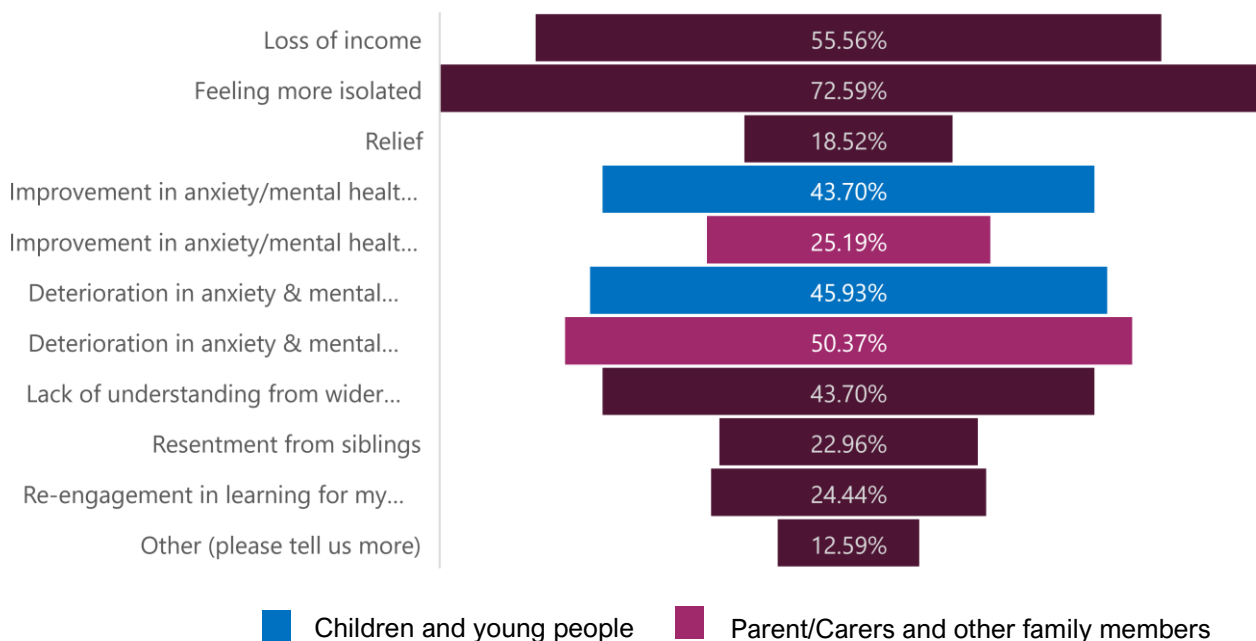
- 10 families are supported by the Children with Disabilities Team
- 8 families have a social worker
- 7 families are support by Family Solutions
- 1 family is in receipt of overnight respite
- 1 family is supported by Early Help
- 1 family receives Direct Payments

19 families are registered with Shortbreaks Clubs and Activities.

Impact on Family Life

There was a slight increase this year in the improvement in child/young person and carers mental health of around 5%. A new category this year was re-engagement in learning by the child/young person and 24% felt this had been the case.

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



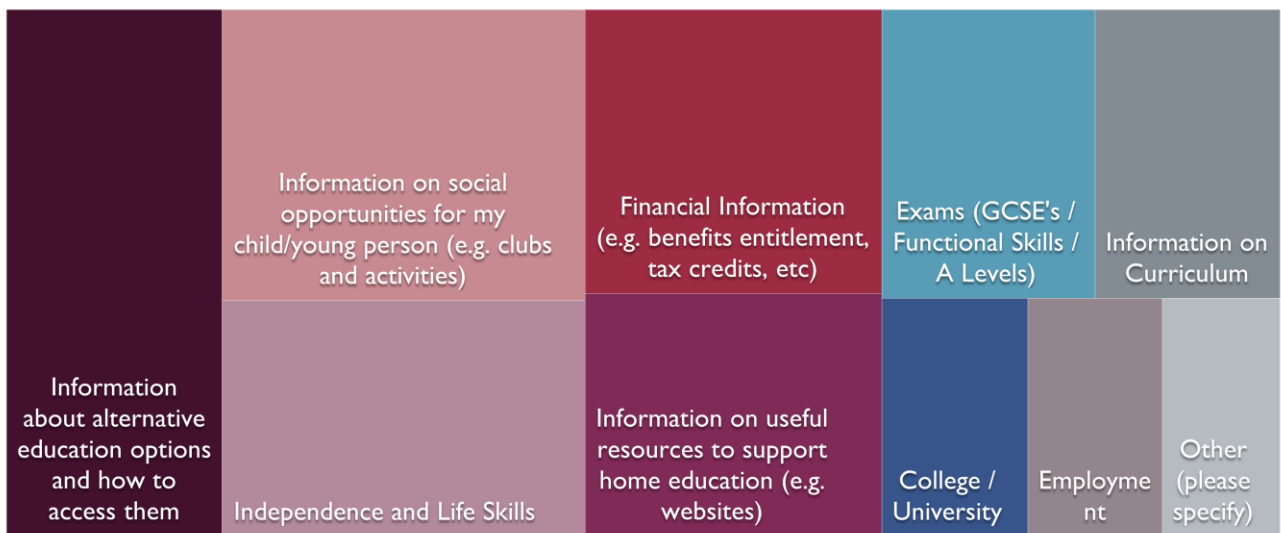
Home Education, Unable to Attend and Education Other than At School (EOTAS) - continued

94% of families have no assistance with travel costs to ensure their child/young person can attend an education provision they are attending.

57% of families state there is no arrangement to review their child/young person's progress.

78% of families state they receive no information or advice about home education from statutory services once their child is no longer attending school.

What advice and support would you find helpful? (Please tick all that apply)



NB: Size of section reflects proportion of overall responses

Home Education, Unable to Attend and Education Other than At School (EOTAS) - continued

ECC have made our lives hell over the past 3 years. I have often thought of ending my life so my son could have private education from my life insurance. I feel I can no longer fight and my son is still not in education and has not been for 8 months. ECC has ruined our families life. My sons mental health continues to deteriorate and he is falling further behind his peers. He no longer has a friendship group. Why is this OK?

EOTAS is a much needed solution for so many families but so difficult to obtain

A tailored and wonderful learning experience now - such a positive change

We have had to navigate the EOTAS process with little or no support. Once we are in the EOTAS process it has been extremely helpful and the team we work with are wonderful. Therefore recommend there is more information and support easily available to parents who are looking to embark on this process. No parent chooses this route - we want our children to thrive and be happy in a school setting. When the school setting is damaging your child's mental health to extremes such as thoughts of suicide / self-harm then alternative educational options should be readily available. It should not be this difficult to ensure your child is getting an education in a setting that is conducive to their special needs.

Due to lack of support in first mainstream setting and the refusal to assess for an EHCP plan this placement failed, leading us to a second placement which in turn failed and all school settings were therefore too traumatic for my son to even attempt. Waiting to see how a child gets on before supporting them is setting them up to fail!

Deterioration of my physical health (I am a disabled single parent with no respite and my son needs constant support and does not sleep at night)

Its sole destroying. You cant describe how guilty you feel as parent and the impact on family life as well as the impact on your CYP. I feel utterly let down by the "system". She has lost years of education she will never get back.

My daughter and I feel both isolated and lonely since she stopped going to school and I left work to care for her

LA agreed school unable to meet need and suggested to take off roll

This whole process has been shambolic. When a child with additional needs cannot attend a school setting there needs to be a better procedure in place. We have been left waiting term to term for AP funding. We had some minimal AP funding which was working well for 6 months but had to stop as the safeguarding checks were not made at the start. We are begging weekly for more funding than the 3 hours we currently have. We have had to drastically reduce our working hours and also fund the cost of provisions ourselves. At the centre of it all is a child that has regressed as no suitable solution is in place.

Left completely isolated. No chance to progress or have an education. No suitable options for education settings discussed, no attempt to follow section f in 6 years. No annual review for over 2 years. Ehcp not amended for 4 years.

How to obtain funding and what funding is available is a minefield. Engagement facilitator signed us off as attendance was declining. Inclusion partner involvement was slow and funding hard to obtain. What provision is available and the quality of these provisions and how they aim to support also not clear. We sourced and funded a lot ourselves which when you have reduced work significantly and privately funded diagnoses is extremely difficult

The time away from school has allowed my daughter to recover from autistic burnout without the threats of fines, being taken to court or any other threats the school like to make.

Fantastic tutor on zoom gave him back his confidence in himself and his abilities. Enabled him to leave house and get a part time job after A levels

Conclusion and Next Steps

We feel there is an inextricable link between understanding how parent/carers report their children and young people are supported in their education setting to understanding the contributing factors to children being unable to attend their setting and/or the decision made to home educate children/young people or request Education Other than At School.

SEN Support, One Planning and Communication & Support with Education Settings

The main themes on the things that need to be improved for providing SEN Support effectively for children/young people has remained consistent with previous years. Although more parent/carers are reporting that the support their child needs is outlined in a One Plan, the percentage reporting their child/young person is receiving all the provision in the plan remains very low. It is clear that the reasons for this are likely to be varied, with parent/carers reporting that there is a lack of capacity and resource within settings to deliver the provision, a lack of communication and co-productive working with families and other professionals, and concerns over the knowledge and training of staff to meet the needs of children/young people. We believe that it also linked to the fact that, in the majority of cases, parent/carers are not confident that professional advice is sought or provided to effectively review their child/young person's progress. Indeed for 20% of children/young people there are no other professionals involved in supporting their special educational needs - in these circumstances, it is difficult to see how settings are able to obtain the most appropriate advice and guidance in order to provide the right support at the right time for those children/young people.

Home Education / Unable to Attend / Education Other than at School (EOTAS)

The respondents to this section accounted for 21% of our total responses this year, which was an increase of 6% from 2023.

This year, we have made sure we have also provided more information on the needs of these children/young people and other services they are supported by rather than purely focusing on the situation regarding the setting where they are educated.

They are predominantly autistic children/young people with mental health support needs. Parent/carers have shared with us the many contributing factors to their children being unable to attend their education setting on a full-time basis, and/or for their decision to home educate their child or request an EOTAS arrangement. From this, one could assume that these are also contributing factors to the mental health support needs of these children and young people. However, removing their child from a formal education setting does not lead to an immediate improvement in anxiety levels or mental

health needs in many cases. This would, therefore, suggest that, by this point, the mental health needs of these children and young people have become significantly deep rooted and will continue to require considerable support to be provided to meet those needs.

There still appears to be very little involvement from the many local authority teams that exist to support children, young people, their families and education settings. Therefore, it is likely that interventions and support that could be put in place is not happening at an early enough stage. Not being aware of any alternative support being available or how to find it inevitably leads to some families feeling they have no choice but to 'electively' home educate children. Families feel there is very little about having to make that decision that is 'elective' or that they are making a fully informed decision.

Next Steps

We are aware that there are some positive initiatives coming into effect in the new academic year 2024/24 that will work towards some of the next steps we are suggesting. These initiatives are mainly in the form of new national Department for Education guidance and the start of pilot schemes in Essex focusing on providing additional support, information and training for education settings.

The purpose of our survey is to report the lived experiences of parent/carers and demonstrate the impact those experiences have on them, their children, young people and their wider family. Our suggested Next Steps focus on what needs to change to improve those experiences and outcomes.

- A clear pathway of support and advice available for parent/carers and young people when the right support at the right time is not being provided in their child/young person's education setting or by the teams and services that should be providing advice and support in relation to the disabilities and/or special educational needs of children and young people.
- Clear and accessible information on the support options available when children/young people are starting to experience anxiety around attending their education setting.
- Monitoring school attendance needs to include exploring how children and young people's special educational needs are being met in their education setting before any punitive measures are applied.