

Norfolk Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Survey 2023

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What parents/carers told us

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Introduction

Parents/carers were involved in the design of the questions which were reviewed, added to, and developed from our 2022 survey. This year questions were included about special educational needs (SEN) Support in places of learning.

The survey was promoted to parents/carers through a variety of methods including:

- Places of learning
- Newsletters
- Email
- Events
- Social media

NB In this report, percentages (%) have been rounded up if 0.5 or over and rounded down if 0.4 or under. It is important to note that it was possible to tick multiple options for some questions and therefore % will not always add up to 100%. Quotes have been amended to clarify terminology and ensure anonymity.

Participation

523 parents/carers responded in 2023, a decrease from 759 in 2022 – a drop of 31%.

Out of the 523, 124 parents/carers had completed the survey last year (24%).

Highest responses came from the following postcodes:

24 from NR14 (Hethel, Mulbarton, Framlingham Earl, Brooke, Hethersett etc.)

21 from NR18 (Wymondham, Wicklewood, Spooner Row etc.)

20 from NR5 (New Costessey, Bowthorpe, North Earlham, West Earlham, Earlham Rise etc)

20 from PE30 (King's Lynn, North Wootton, South Wootton etc.)

19 from NR12 (Stalham, Hoveton, Coltishall, Wroxham and surrounding villages etc.)

18 from PE33 (West Winch, Marham, Watlington, Stoke Ferry, Oxborough etc.)

The **age of child**:

Most parents/carers who completed the survey had a child aged between 7-15 years old.

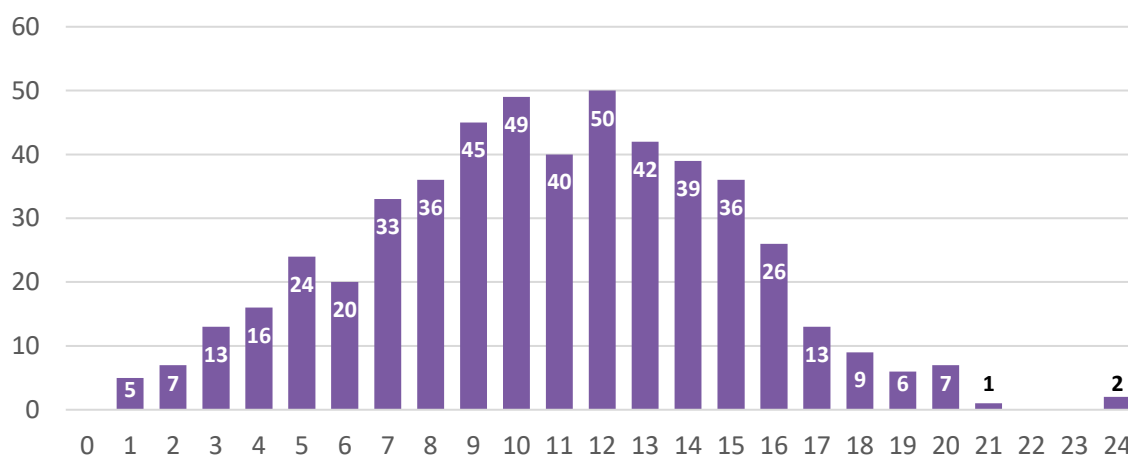


Figure 1. The age of the child or young person with SEND you are thinking about as you fill in this survey.

Needs of child

Parents/carers could tick as many options as appropriate for the child they were thinking about.



Figure 2. Please tell us the nature of the special educational needs and/or disability of the child you are thinking about.

There was also the option for parents/carers to share their child's diagnosis if applicable.

- 50% said their child had a diagnosis of autistic spectrum condition (ASC)
- 25% said their child had complex needs and listed a range of diagnosed needs
- 10% said their child was waiting for a diagnosis

Educational status of child

The most common places of learning were:

- Mainstream primary school (34%)
- Mainstream secondary school (22%)
- State special school (11%)
- Independent special/complex school (8%)
- Early years setting eg nursery or pre-school (5%)
- Mainstream college (3%)
- Attends infant school (3%)
- Not receiving any education at the current time (3%)
- Attends a mainstream all-through school (2%)

4% described their child's educational status as **other**. This group of parents/carers often said their child is on roll but not attending because:

- needs are not being met
- they are on a part-time timetable

Education, Health and Care Plans

- 59% said their child has an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan
- 41% said their child had not got an EHC Plan

Age of EHC Plan

- 70% more than 1 year old
- 30% less than 1 year old

When EHC Plan was last amended

- 70% within the last 3 years
- 26% not yet - it is a new EHC Plan
- 4% more than 5 years ago

Has the provision in EHC Plan made a positive difference

- 51% said yes
- 28% said no
- 21% said I don't know

When the EHC Plan had made a positive difference

When an EHC Plan is making a positive difference, it is because:

- Everyone is clear about my child's needs (63%).
- My child is making good progress (57%)
- My child has the support described in their plan (56%)
- My child is happier in their learning (49%)
- Their needs are now being met (47%)

15% commented 'other' and mentioned:

- the negative impact of waiting for an EHC Plan because it had led to a bigger attainment gap
- not feeling able to say because they were unsure, or it was too early to know.

When the EHC Plan had not made a positive difference

When an EHC Plan is not making a positive difference, it is because:

- Their needs are not all being met (65%)
- My child does not receive the support described in their plan (50%)
- Not all needs have provision to address them (47%)
- My child is not making good progress (43%)
- My child is not happier in their learning (41%)

32% commented 'other' and mentioned:

- Lack of staff expertise (24%)
- Not working together (22%)
- Waiting for final EHC Plan (19%)
- Poor quality of EHC Plan (16%)
- Too early to tell (16%)
- Effective SEN Support in place (5%)



Have you found it easy to contact the SEND service using the EHCP county contact telephone number?

- 36% of parents/carers did not know about the EHCP telephone helpline
- 30% had not tried it
- 18% found it easy to use
- 16% did not find it easy to use



When discussing your child's EHC Plan with professionals did you feel your views and wishes were listened to and considered?

- 48% felt listened to
- 37% felt sometimes listened to
- 15% felt not listened to

Is there anything else you would like to tell us about EHC Plans?

Over 45% of parents/carers mentioned issues with the service received from the EHCP team – these were often linked to a lack of communication.

“I have expressed my concerns with professionals over the phone and via email around his EHCP and transition into high school. I found my views were listened to and my questions answered eventually”.

“Easy to contact the EHCP team, but difficult to get in touch with the named co-ordinator”.

Other parents/carers do not feel involved in the EHCP process and are frustrated that the whole process takes so long and is a challenge.

Provision was mentioned 40% of the time by parents/carers; a lack of appropriate provision, child being in the wrong provision, provision not meeting needs or a fight to get the right provision.

“My child is not currently receiving the education they are entitled to, but there is no information about how I report this, or who I report this to. It is not the school's fault as they clearly can't meet needs, but there is no clear route on how we access support for next steps given this is the case. Or how we might access any educational provision for them in the meantime”.

20% of comments were linked to having to challenge and navigate the system to get the right provision and support for their child.

62% of parents/carers said their child's SEN needs had not been identified.

SEN Support

Does your child receive support with their special educational needs (SEN)?

- 60% said yes
- 32% said no
- 8% did not know

Do you and your child's place of learning meet to talk about your child's needs?

- 60% said yes
- 36% said no
- 4% did not know

When talking about your child's SEN do you feel your views and wishes are listened to and considered?

- 50% said yes
- 42% said no
- 8% did not know

Does your child have a SEN Support Plan/Individual Education Plan (IEP)?

- 54% said yes
- 32% said no
- 14% did not know

Is your child's SEN Support Plan/Individual Educational Plan (IEP) co-produced?

- 30% did not know
- 25% said no
- 23% said the question does not apply
- 22% said yes

How often is your child's SEN Support Plan/Individual Educational Plan (IEP) reviewed?

- 32% said the question does not apply
- 30% said it isn't
- 28% said termly
- 10% said yearly

Are you happy with how often your child's place of learning meets with you and your child to talk about their needs?

- 57% said no
- 33% said yes
- 10% did not know

Is your child in a place of learning that encourages and enables your child to make progress through a SEN Support plan?

- 45% said no
- 34% said yes
- 21% did not know

In preparation for your child's move from one place of learning to another, are you included in discussions and planning for this?

- 32% said no
- 28% said the question did not apply
- 27% said yes
- 13% did not know

Does your child's place of learning make reasonable adjustments to include your child?

- 48% said yes
- 32% said no
- 20% did not know

Is there anything else you wish to tell us about your child's SEN Support?

Comments made by parents/carers suggests there is good SEN Support being provided by places of learning.

"The school my child attends has been outstanding. Since they were identified as having special needs, and before the support was there for them, and us the family. Every agency involved has put in the maximum amount of effort and I cannot thank them enough, my child has come on in leaps and bounds, due to the efforts of all involved".

However, there were also comments from unhappy parents/carers who talked about having to fight for SEN Support.

"Always had to fight for support the school doesn't seem to be very helpful when it comes to SEND children it feels as if they would prefer no SEND children at the school".

When there is dissatisfaction with SEN Support, communication with parents/carers was often lacking and/or teachers being unaware of SEN and/or not implementing what is set out in the SEN Support Plan and making appropriate reasonable adjustments.

There were also concerns about transition.

"Once they move to college parents are far less informed and involved than when they are at school. It is right that decisions pass more to the young person, and they are expected to be more independent as they move towards adulthood, but it can be tricky for parents to know what support is in place and how best to support their young person".

Communication and working together

Everybody who completed the survey said they had **access to the internet**.

How do you currently receive information about the SEND services in Norfolk?

The top six were:

- 44% websites
- 43% social media
- 41% place of learning
- 23% Family Voice Norfolk
- 23% SEND Bulletin
- 14% Friends and/or family

Most parents/carers receive information online. Places of learning are also a key source of information.

Half of those who ticked 'other' said they do not receive information or know about any services that provide information.

Do you use any of the following to access SEND information, advice or help?

The top four were:

- 36% said Facebook/Facebook groups
- 32% said SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) website
- 30% said Just One Norfolk website
- 25% said SEND Local Offer website

22% said they did not use any of the digital products listed. Other sources of information mentioned were TikTok and books.

Is information about services easy to understand?

- 45% said sometimes
- 34% said yes
- 21% said no

In the last 12 months do you feel better informed about the services and support available to you and your child?

- 55% said no
- 28% said yes
- 17% did not know

Have you been given the chance to feedback to any services in the last 12 months?

- 74% said no
- 26% said yes

How do you like to give feedback?

- 73% said survey
- 55% said email/text

- 21% said in person
- 16% said phone
- 12% said post
- 1% said 'other'

Do you believe your feedback has been listened to and used to make changes?

- 57% did not know
- 32% said no
- 11% said yes

Preparation for adult life

Is your child aged 14 or above?

- 73% said no
- 27% said yes

If the parents/carers had a child aged 14 or above, they were asked about preparation for adult life.

143 parents/carers completed the following questions.

Is your child in some form of education, training, or employment?

- 91% said yes
- 9% said no

The 9% of parents/carers whose child was not any education, training, or employment, were asked **is your child receiving support to get back into education, training or employment.**

- 62% said no
- 38% said yes

What would help your child get back into education, training or employment?

Parents/carers said the things that would be most likely to help their child get back into education, training or employment were:

- Information
- Mentoring
- Careers guidance
- Taster sessions

Was your young person helped to think about and plan for their future in year 9?

52% said that their young person had been helped to think about their future education.

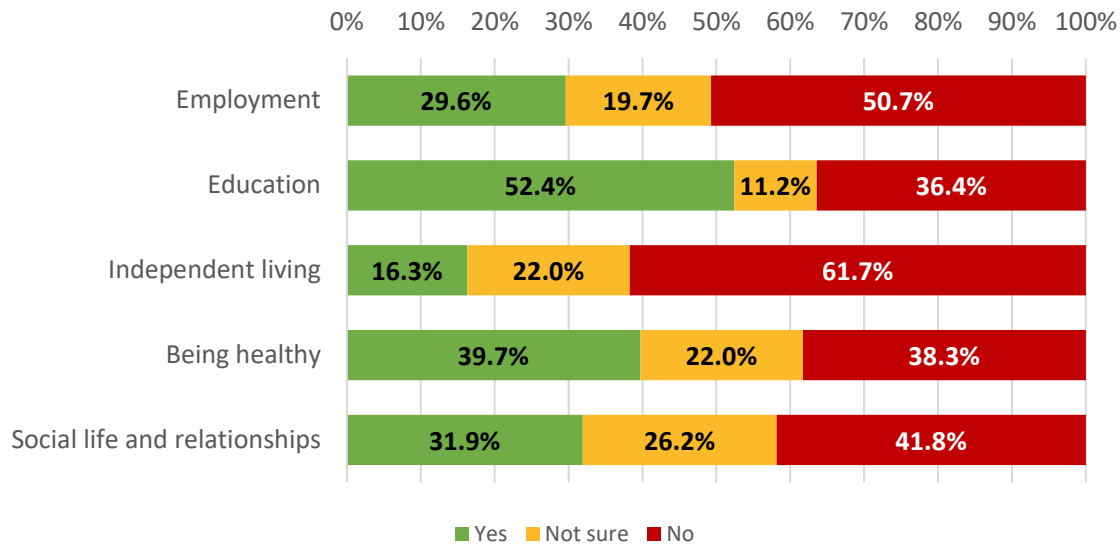


Figure 3. Was your young person helped to think about and plan for their future in year 9?

Do you or your young person know how to get ready for their next steps?

53% said they or their young person knows how to get ready for next steps in being healthy.

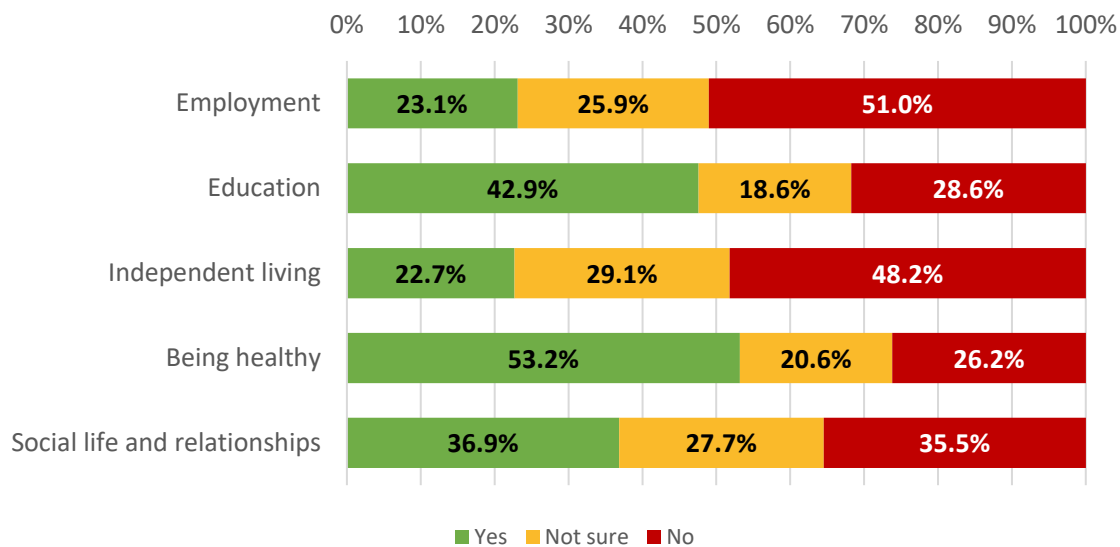


Figure 4. Do you or your young person know how to get ready for their next steps?

Overall, how far do you agree with the following statements?

"I'm happy with how well social care or early help services have supported me and my child/young person."

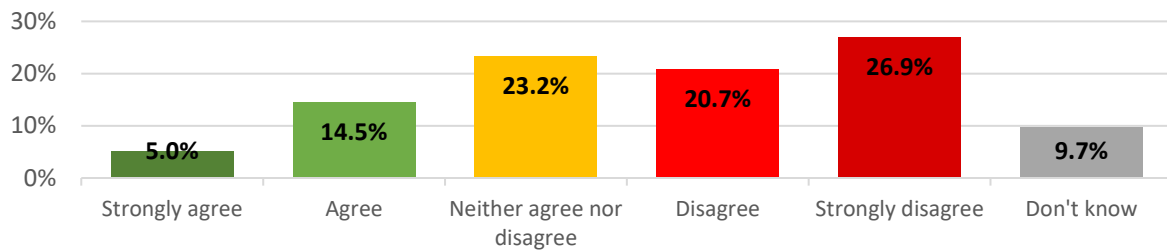


Figure 5. I'm happy with how well social care or early help services have supported me and my child/young person.

20% of parents/carers said they were happy with how well social care or early help services had supported them and their child.

10% did not know.

"I'm happy with how well health professionals have supported me and my child/young person".

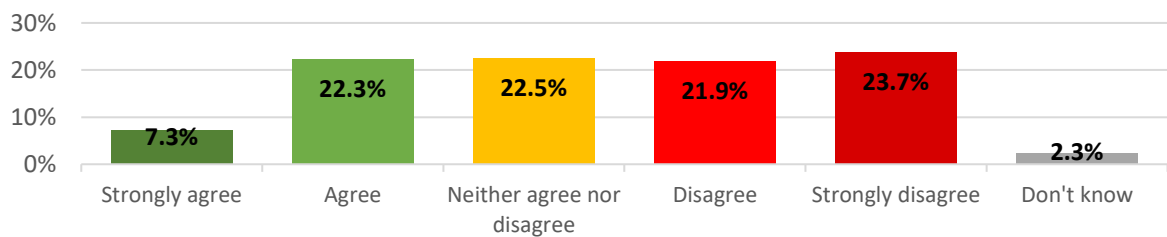


Figure 6. "I'm happy with how well health professionals have supported me and my child/young person."

30% of parents/carers said they were happy with how well health professionals have supported them and their child.

2% did not know.

"I'm happy with how well educational professionals have supported me and my child/young person".

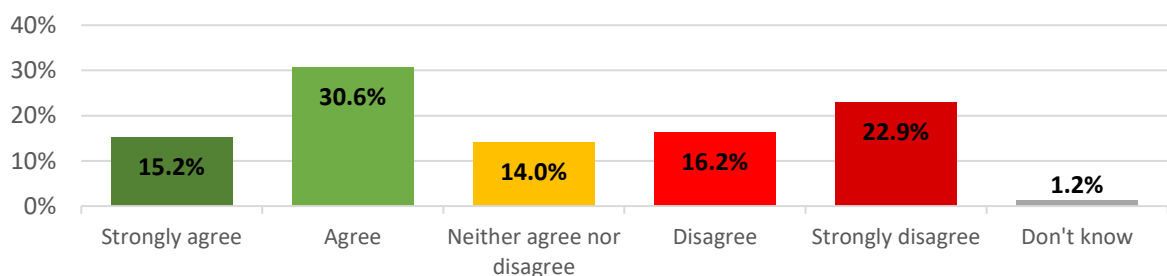


Figure 7. "I'm happy with how well educational professionals have supported me and my child/young person".

46% of parents/carers said they were happy with how well educational professionals have supported them and their child.

"I'm happy with how people work together to meet my child/young person's needs".

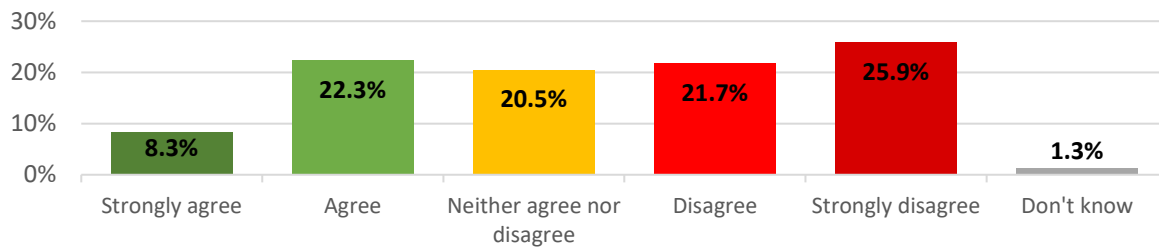


Figure 8. "I'm happy with how people work together to meet my child/young person's needs".

31% of parents/carers said they are happy with how people work together to meet their child's needs.

"I'm happy with the level of communication I receive from people supporting me".

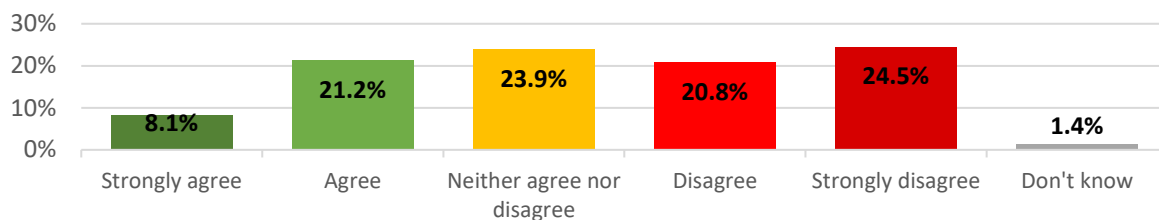


Figure 9. "I'm happy with the level of communication I receive from people supporting me".

29% of parents/carers said they were happy with the level of communication they receive from people supporting them.

Other comments made in relation to the statements above.

"The support I get from Portage is amazing".

"I am so grateful to SEND co-ordinator at my child's school. Without them, we wouldn't be where we are today".

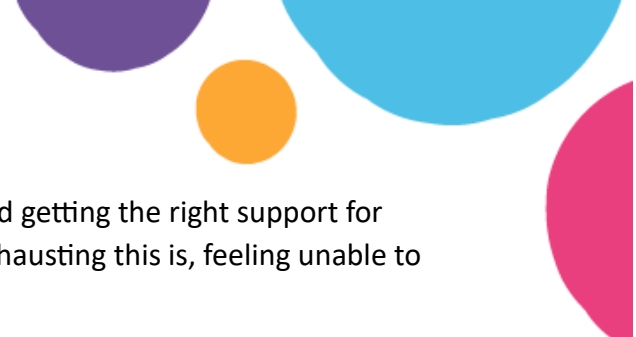
"Along our journey through there have always been a few teachers/teaching assistants who have been amazing individuals showing an understanding and keenness to learn new perspectives to help our children".

"Short Breaks service is good with the use of the pre-paid card – we appreciate this".

Just over 40% of parent/carers shared comments about a lack of communication and services working together.

"Being kept updated even if a quick email or text informing what's going on etc rather than not hearing anything at all".

"Still issues with multi agencies working together/communicating".



Just over a fifth mentioned struggles and frustration around getting the right support for their child and/or family. Some parents/carers said how exhausting this is, feeling unable to carry on but needing to for their child's sake.

“I am honestly exhausted by the whole system. You have to get upset or consistently shout to get help and support”.

“Our experience was that services were not joined up and it was hard to understand the right routes for referral - who to contact and how to access the right support. We were bounced around from one service to another for a long time. Families need a joined-up approach from services to help them navigate the system and get the right support”.

There was a theme that although things had been challenging for families, for some this had improved when the right support was put in place for their child.

“If I was completing this form 6 months ago, the scores would have been strongly disagreeing but after a short stay in the hospital, after things had gotten to breaking point, we started to get some extra support from early help etc”.

Just over a quarter of all respondents talked about extremely long waiting times and comments were frequently about a lack of communication to those waiting.

“We have been unable to receive any support for our child from health or social care despite assessments indicating a high level of need. They are currently on a waiting list for a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) assessment. We understand there is a 14 month wait for assessment and then a further 18 months wait for treatment after that”.

“Neurodevelopment Service (NDS) provide no updates, yet it's around a 4-year wait. When it's so long it would be helpful for them to periodically keep families posted about when we can expect more contact”.

There were also comments about having to pay for private diagnosis and care.

“I have had to borrow money to access services privately - as the help to support and get my worries reconsidered and recognised were dismissed by state services or the waiting times were too long!”.


Concerns were raised by parents about issues relating to when their child moves onto further education.

“More support is needed between school and college and then college and employment”.

“On leaving school there is a huge shortfall of services for students aged 16-18. Our young person is too young to do voluntary work but too old for other services. We ended up paying for them to attend a youth group”.

Some mentioned that they have found it difficult to get early help, not knowing how to ask and get family support.

“Our experience was services are not joined up and it's hard to understand the right routes for referral - who to contact and how to access the right support. We were bounced one



service to another for a long time. Families need a joined-up approach from services to help them navigate the system and get the right support”.

Some parents/carers recognised that resources are limited and just not working for children and young people with SEND.

“I feel there is a very big hole that SEN children fall into and that there are not enough resources for these children”.

“My child is completely non-verbal and does not get enough support despite the efforts I make to speak to Just One Norfolk seems to be hugely underfunded in this area as even Portage don't see us as regularly as they would in other counties and won't see us if my child does more than 11 hrs a week at nursery, which again, isn't an issue in other counties”.

What is the most important thing that you want to see developed or improved for your child in the next 12 months?

Education and learning were mentioned by over half of the respondents.

Provision and choice were a theme that related to education and learning, health, social care, community services and things to do.

Education and learning themes

- Training for professionals
- Support for all CYP with SEND needs
- Sufficient funding for staff in school
- Curriculum can be limited for CYP with SEND

“Social skills and their education which has been amazing now they are in the right school, but this took us a long time also the autism diagnosis took a long time too”.

“Better training for educational professionals and adequate classroom support for children with SEN”.

Activities and choice themes

- More after school clubs and youth groups
- Wider range of activities for CYP with SEND in their local area
- Wider range of options for work experience

“More sessions, activities and settings to take young children with SEND to in the local area. Eg A play session, music and movement session etc”.

“More availability for out of school classes, fitness sessions, sports”.

“Social inclusion activities for those with moderate autism and social difficulties as usual clubs etc can be challenging to fit into and services for more severely disabled are too complex needs led”.



“More opportunities for young people to conduct small amounts of work experience in the community and attend youth groups”.

Communication themes

- Improving access to information, support, and advice
- Improving communication between services
- Ensure communication across counties
- Regular updates to parent/carers
- Improve communication with the EHCP team

“Communication between services, having one point of contact for health and social issues, as well as education. Sometimes you are passed from service to service, and no one knows the answer to the questions”.

“Access to information, support, advice, services, everything needs to be made easier”.

Accessibility and inclusion themes

- Inclusive environments where individual needs are understood and supported
- Flexible and accessible education system for all CYP with SEND
- Increased awareness and acceptance of differences
- Health and education to work together in an inclusive way
- Training in places of learning on how to support CYP with SEND

“I want to get my child back in education which everyone is working together to try to achieve. Increased awareness and acceptance of differences. Flexibility in the education that is provided to enable my child to access an education that needs their needs”.

“Specific training and understanding in the school environment for all teachers to support children who learn differently”.

Health themes

- Better support for children and young people with mental health
- Long waiting times
- Training to upskill staff
- Greater inclusion for children and young people with disabilities
- More service capacity so parents/carers do not have to pay for private services

“Better mental health support. Improved mental health”.

“The support for mental health for girls with autism needs more capacity. We are between services at the moment and feel we are waiting for a crisis”.

Wait time themes

- Waiting and assessment times are too long and this puts families under pressure
- Neurodevelopment waiting times are extremely long and can be up to and over 4 years

- Families would go private but they cannot afford the payment
- Increased teacher training and understanding across scales
- Moved around services

“Waiting times for assessment and services to be reduced, have already been waiting 4+ years for autism assessments, also 7+ months for a separate referral for mental health support (anxiety resulting in some school refusal)”.

“The delays in services that a neurodivergent child and their family needs is putting pressure and irreversible damage on young people and their families”.

Preparing for adult life (PfAL) themes

- Preparing CYP with SEND for the future
- Support for transition
- Increase job opportunities for CYP with learning difficulties
- Support for those not in education, employment, or training

“Help with year 11 and college applications”.

“More effort should be put into helping those who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET) who never had a EHC Plan. Many of your employment systems are not suited to young people with SEND, who with the right help could get meaningful work”.

Social care themes

- Consistency of service
- Transition from children's services to adult services
- Working together for the best outcome for CYP with SEND
- Waiting times
- Inclusion of all parent/carers and valuing their knowledge and contribution

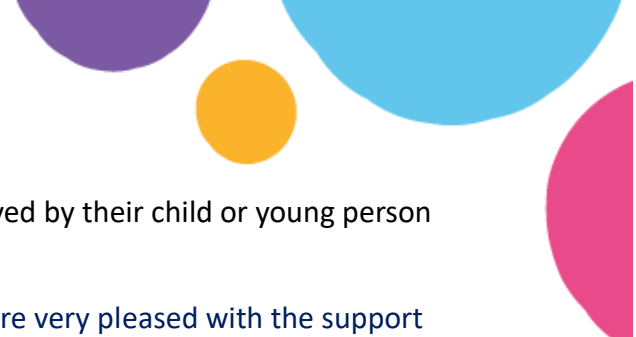
“The gap between leaving children’s services and moving to adult services”.

“The help we received from family support was great and we were given places/services to contact etc, but it’s the wait time for the services that becomes a battle”.

Summary

A reoccurring theme throughout the survey was many parents/carers feel they are in a constant battle to get support for their children and young people with SEND.

- Communication and working together needs to improve across all sectors and services. This is about parents/carers being involved, kept informed, and being asked for their views about services and support.
- Neurodevelopment Service waiting times were mentioned multiple times as being unacceptable.
- Staff knowledge, skills and understanding was often a concern, and it was highlighted that professionals needs more training in meeting the needs of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).



There was satisfaction with the support and services received by their child or young person from some parents/carers.

“I don't think there is anything that can be improved. We are very pleased with the support we are given.”

“That our child continues to be happy and progressing and happy in who they are.”

“I have moved to Norfolk in the last year having previously lived in West Yorkshire. I am extremely impressed with the level of support and efficiency provided within Norfolk. We are used to extremely long waiting lists and timescales.”

“We are very pleased with the EHC Plan and how it is written - just need to make sure it is followed by school now.”

156 people said they would like to be actively involved in helping the Norfolk local area to improve SEND services and will be contacted this autumn.