



Parent Carer Forum
Cheshire West & Chester

Survey

2024

Results Summary

Survey

2024

Survey Results Summary Contents

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Parent Carer Forum
Cheshire West & Chester

Introduction

over
670
active members

social media
annual reach

over **31,000** hits

Who are we? The Cheshire West and Chester Parent Carer Forum (CWaC PCF) represents families of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). We are a member of the National Network of Parent Carer Forums (NNPCF) and are funded by the Department for Education. **We are a parent led organisation that has grown year on year. Our role is to listen to the voices of parent carers with children with SEND in Cheshire West and Chester and share those views with our professional partners in the Local Authority, Social Care and Integrated Care Board (ICB) to improve the services and experience of families. We aim to bring parent carers and professionals together to create a culture of participation and co-production**

How we amplify parents' voices in CW&C

Although this report is a summary from our latest 2024 survey it is important to remember that our parents' voices are being heard on a regular basis. The survey is an opportunity to capture statistical analysis and data, but it is not the only form of capturing the lived experience of our parent carers. We do this thoroughly and on a regular basis. You can see a detailed breakdown of how we capture the voices of our parents in Appendix One.

Purpose of this report

The purpose of this report is to amplify the voices of our parent carers who have children with SEND, and to communicate their experiences, concerns and challenges related to SEND provisions in CWAC. It is an opportunity to compare and contrast key themes from the last survey and to see how parents perceive the level of services, support, and communication for their children. The report will be shared with all those who completed it and our members and will be distributed as widely as possible to parent carers in CW&C. We will share the results with professionals in Local Authority, ICB, Social Care and Third Sector and other key stakeholders in the borough to provide an overview of the key themes and issues identified with survey. We will offer recommendations for improving co-production and collaboration between everyone involved in SEND to improve outcomes for families with children and young people with SEND. Survey available to view on www.pcfcheshirewest.org/survey24

Summary

The main themes that were raised in our 2022 survey have not been addressed. There is a persistent issue around communication which is one that has been the main priority since our first survey in 2016. It has been clear when we have read the parents stories and quotes that there is a growing sense of frustration since 2022. As a PCF the data shows a decline in the co-production, and indeed there has been little support shown for the communication and distribution of this survey with our professional partners. Parents tell us there is an increase in waiting times in all aspects of SEN services, this is from initial request to diagnosis right the way through to EHCP process. Parents consistently report that they are fighting to get their children's needs recognised and met, as well as battling the system to be heard. Families tell us that this is having a growing impact on their mental health and a negative effect on outcomes for their children, highlighting an urgent need for improved services and support.

It is clear from the results that there are some examples of good practice across the borough in schools and via health professionals, however, this is not consistent. Many parents report that the voluntary sector has been a constant support.

Process of Survey

This year we used the structure of our 2022 survey which was prepared with a market researcher, this ensured we could draw some comparisons from previous results. We then asked our professional partners in the Local Authority, ICB and Third sector if they would like any additional questions added. We also asked parents at the November 2023 Forum for their feedback on the survey questions before it was published and the parent volunteers in the management group. This resulted in questions around preparation for Adulthood, Transport, complaints process and short breaks being included.

We followed the same process as 2022 for distributing the survey. Electronic surveys were distributed via social media, PCF website, Live well website. The survey was also distributed via the schools' network. Although we did seek support from Education, Health and Social care to distribute to their networks, this was not forthcoming, which is disappointing as there are 3000+ families on the SEND database we could have reached. However, our Third sector partners were supportive and helped promote the survey. **This resulted in 369 completed questionnaires.** A fall from the 540 completed in 2022, we believe the number is lower as it was not as widely distributed, and parents had issues relating to COVID that they wanted to voice.

Structure of report

1. National backdrop
2. Demographics
3. Overall Themes
4. Comparison with 2022
5. New question analysis
6. Support
7. Co-production and culture
8. Conclusion
9. Recommendations

1.0 National backdrop

It is important to recognise that there have been a lot of significant organisational changes since the last survey was conducted in 2022. In July 2022 ICBs were legally established, replacing clinical commissioning groups (or CCGs), taking on the NHS planning functions previously held by CCGs (as well as absorbing some planning roles from NHS England). We also saw major changes taking place within CWaC Local Authority structure. The resources that both restructures have taken we believe has impacted on the amount of co-production that has taken place in the borough.

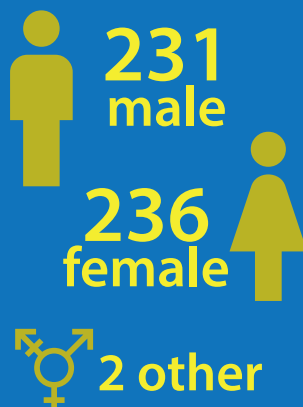
In addition, nationally the number of pupils receiving support from an EHCP has increased by 9% since 2022. This demonstrates a continued upsurge over the past few years. The requests for EHCP has also increased Nationally by 23%. All of these national demands have had an impact on resources both nationally and within CWaC. (Gov.uk)

2.0 Demographics

of the children and young people with SEND from our survey results

369 Responses

369 people took the time to complete our survey. Although this number is reduced from 2022 survey, it still provides us with enough data to be able to draw strong conclusions.



7% aged 0-4 yrs

49% aged 5-11 yrs

37% aged 12-16 yrs

8% aged 17-25 yrs

51%

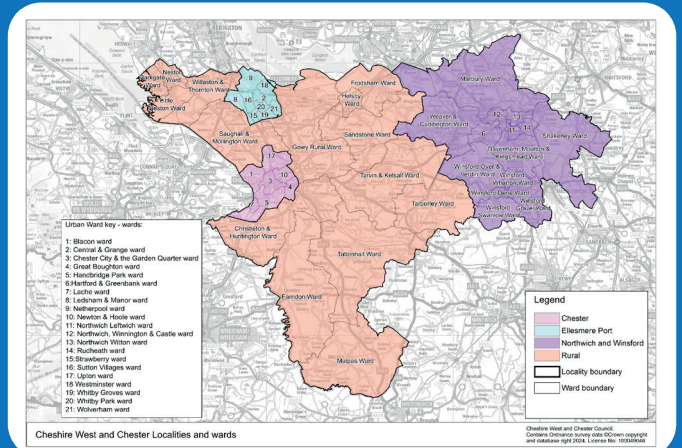
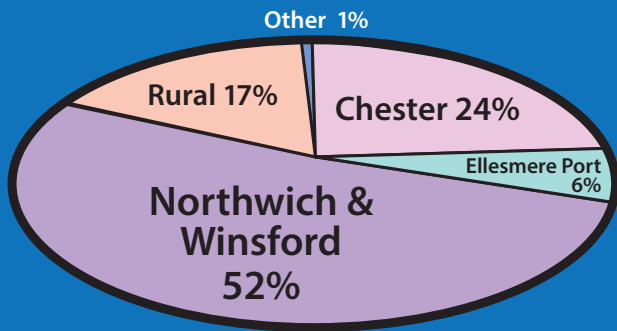
came from Mainstream Settings

The breakdown of setting is also encouraging. We have a broad range from Mainstream Primary/ Mainstream Secondary accounting for over 51% of the respondents.

2.1 Demographics

of the children and young people with SEND from our survey results

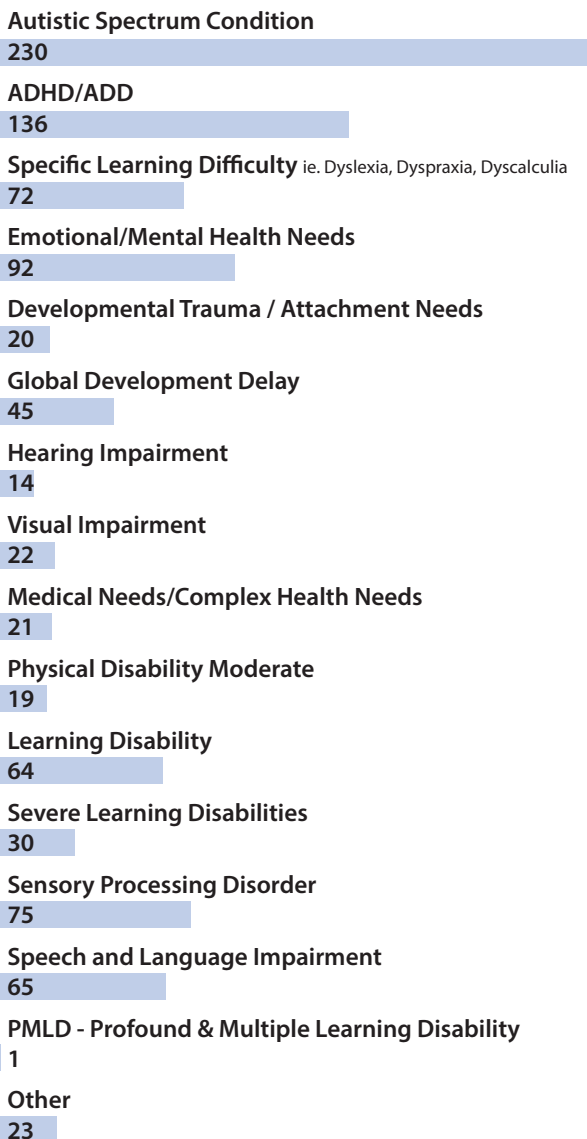
Q1. Postcode



The postcode split reflects our area populations and the locations of CWaC Special Schools.

Q5. What type of needs has your child been assessed as having? Or are in the process of being assessed for.

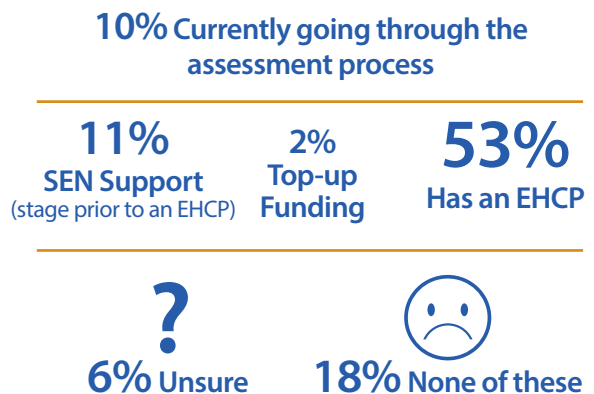
Tick as many as apply.



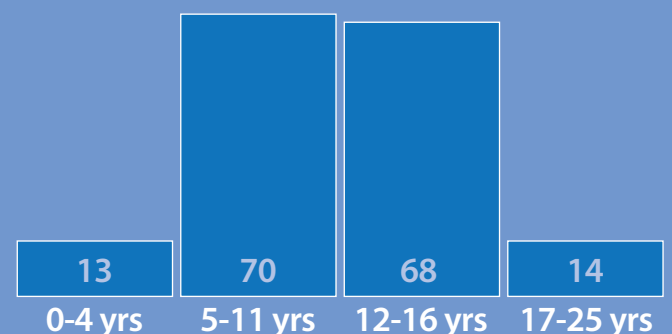
Every single category of the school census was represented with the largest proportion having an ASD/ADHD diagnosis. We also captured those without a diagnosis and those on the assessment pathway.



Q6. Which of the following apply to your child/young person?



Has an EHCP (Education, Health Care Plan) - age split



2.2 Demographics

Q4: Which type of educational setting does your child/young person attend?


Tick as many as apply.

132
Mainstream
Primary

84
CWaC
Special
School

58 Mainstream
High School

- 18 Nursery/Pre-School
- 15 Independent Special School
- 12 Resource Unit within mainstream school

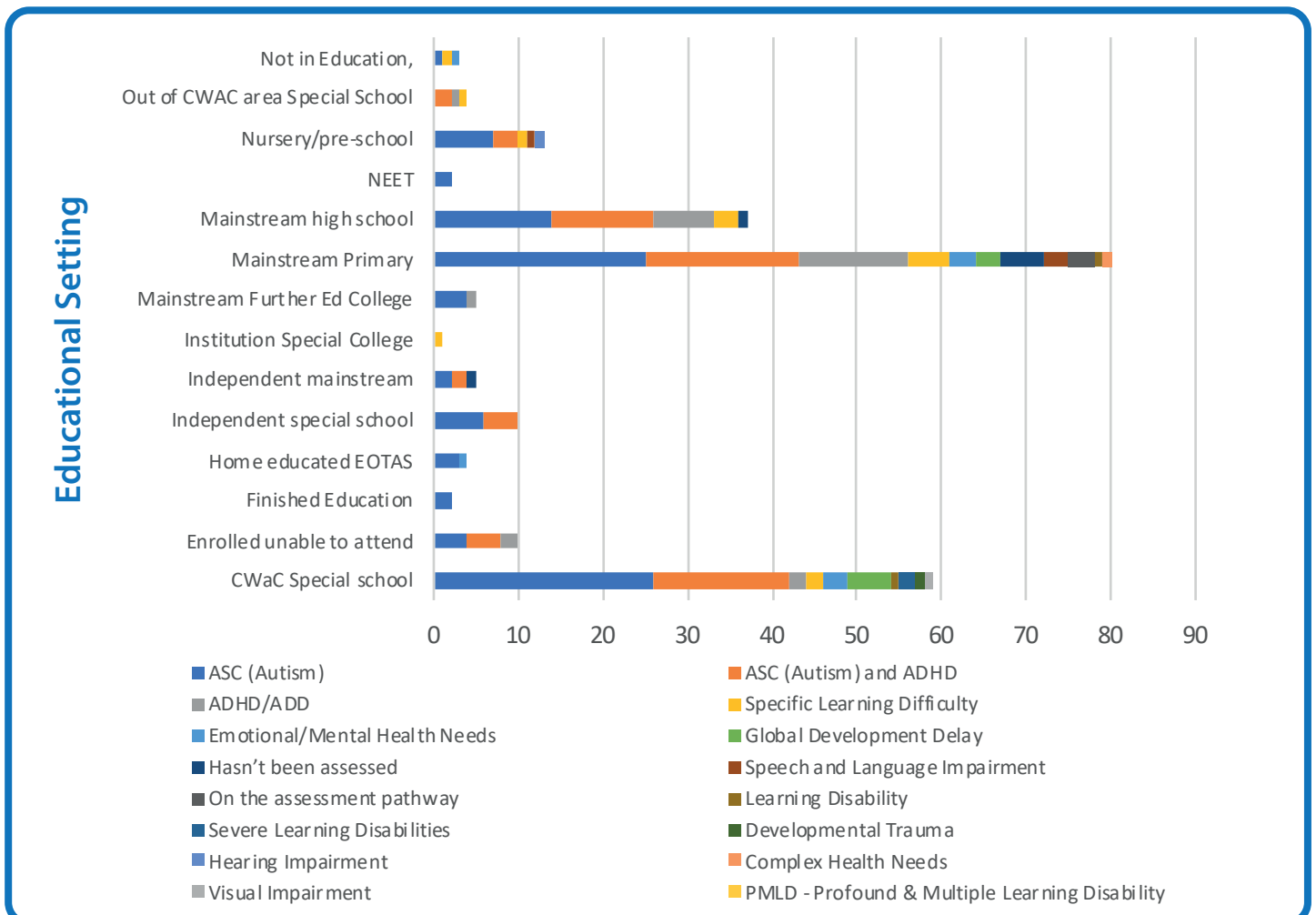


- 13 Enrolled at a Setting but Unable to Attend
- 9 Out of School/Not Receiving an Education/ Not in Education
- 2 Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET)
- 2 Out of CWAC Mainstream School

- 8 Mainstream Further Education College/Post 16
- 8 Finished Education
- 8 Other
- 6 Home educated EOTAS (Education other than at school)
- 6 Independent/private mainstream school
- 5 Out of CWAC area Special School
- 5 Institution Special College/Post 16 institution
- 1 Supported Internships

Q5: What type of needs has your child been assessed as having? Or are in the process of being assessed for. (Tick as many as apply.)

...compared against Educational Setting they currently attend.



3.0 Themes

Challenges with Communication

One of the most prominent themes is the challenges faced by parents and caregivers in accessing support services and communicating with relevant agencies and professionals. Delays, lack of responsiveness, and difficulties in navigating the system are common issues highlighted in the feedback. This has been the recurrent theme since our first survey in 2016. These issues appear to have gone unaddressed and cause the most distress to parent and carers.

Many respondents express frustration with breakdowns in communication between various services and agencies involved in supporting children with SEN. This includes schools missing deadlines, delays in responses from SEN teams, and ineffective communication channels from health.

"Only contact SEN team if I am chasing a EHCP update. Updates always take a lot longer than they should do and am treated with irritation when chasing up its progress"

"Our knowledge as parents was correct - we were just not listened to"

"No one calls back or responds to emails"

Concerns about Transition and Future Planning

Parents express significant anxiety and uncertainty about their children's transition to adulthood and the lack of adequate support and opportunities available. There are concerns about education, employment, and independent living for children with special educational needs (SEN) as they reach adulthood.

"Uncertainty around post 16 education and lack of mental health support reduces child's ability to advocate for themselves in the workplace etc. levels of anxiety are high which may prevent reaching full potential"

"Very worried about the future"

"As things stand, I am extremely worried about my child's future."

Issues with The Education Health and Care Plan(EHCP) Process

The Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) process often frustrates many parents due to various concerns, including delays in assessments, schools' reluctance to request an EHCP needs assessment, refusals from the SEN Team to conduct assessments, unnecessary stress from mediations and tribunals, challenges in understanding requirements and accessing support, and insufficient communication and support from SEN teams and schools. There is a clear need for improvement in these areas.

"Endless forms taking up precious time in a system lacking support for parents. Adding stress to already stressed parents."

"My daughter ended up in mental health crisis and missed school for 2 years."

"School were not supportive because the SEND team said he is not 2 years behind his peers."

Positive Experiences and Support Networks

Despite the challenges, there are instances of positive experiences with specific professionals, services, and support networks. Parents value the support provided by schools, therapists, community organisations, and Parent Carer Forum.

"Outstanding support from health services even though the waiting times, appointments can be months in advance."

"Speech and Language Therapy has been fantastic."

"The school SEND support is excellent."

3.1 Themes

Access to Services:

Eligibility Issues

Concerns were raised about the eligibility criteria for accessing support services, with some feeling that their children were never considered eligible for assistance. This includes the unclear eligibility criteria for Children and Adolescents Mental Health Services, EHCP needs assessment, social care assessments and referrals to community paediatrics for ASD/ADHD

"My child is not disabled enough"

"Once my child received a diagnosis she was discharged from all medical professionals and now everything is put down to her having ASC"

"Community Paediatrics - refusal to accept a referral from a GP delayed my child being accepted on the pathway"

Long Wait Times

Referrals for support services were described as requiring specific circumstances, leading to long wait times and repeated form-filling, causing frustration and delays in receiving assistance. Parents report a lack of support while waiting and there is still a culture where some professional say that support is not available until you have a diagnosis.

"We are on waiting lists that are years long. We have given up waiting on support."

"The waiting list for autism diagnosis is far too long"

"Sought private diagnosis due to being told wait time was years"

Lack of Access to Services

Many respondents reported difficulties in accessing services such as breakfast/after-school clubs, respite services, and continued support from school SEN support staff, indicating gaps in provision.

"Sensory OT. SALT, Wheelchair services nothing for complex needs (not medical)"

Many parents express frustration and desperation due to long waiting times for assessments, limited access to specialised services, and a lack of support from public agencies. As a result, some families resort to seeking private assessments and therapies, often at considerable financial expense. This reliance on private resources underscores the systemic shortcomings in the provision of public support for SEND children, leaving families to navigate complex and often inaccessible pathways to obtain the help their children require. The need for private resources reflects a broader failure of the public system to adequately allocate resources and prioritise the well-being of SEND children, exacerbating the challenges faced by families already grappling with emotional and financial strains.

"We are currently exploring private diagnostic options."

"After years of what I can only term school neglect we paid privately for assessment for our son."

"Our only help has been an independent therapist."

Emotional Toll on families

Many individuals describe feeling overwhelmed, frustrated, and let down by the lack of adequate support for their children's needs, leading to significant emotional strain. Many recount instances where their children's needs were neglected or misunderstood, leading to trauma and mental health challenges. Some parents feel overwhelmed by the lengthy and bureaucratic process of obtaining diagnoses and accessing appropriate support services.

"I feel very lonely as a single parent almost cut off from society."

"I feel on my own with this."

"This has led to my child's needs not being acknowledged and met and he has experienced trauma in school that has impacted on his emotional and mental health."

Others express concerns about the lack of coordination between different agencies and the insufficient support provided by schools and health professionals. Despite the immense challenges they face, these parents remain resilient, seeking out independent therapists and advocating for their children's rights. Overall, the comments underscore the urgent need for improved communication, collaboration, and support within the system to better serve families and address the emotional toll they endure.

4.0 Comparisons with 2022

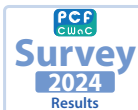


The timing of our last survey in 2022 coincided with the Local Authority and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) being inspected.

What Ofsted said 2022

Ofsted reports: Parents' and carers' experiences of communication with the SEND service is variable. Some parents told inspectors that this is strong; new systems, including an online 'EHCP Hub' that parents can use to track the progress of their EHC needs assessment, improve the transparency of the process. Other parents said that they do not receive replies to simple queries without complaining. This means that issues escalate and cause some parents to lack trust in the system

What is being said in 2024



There has been little improvement demonstrated since 2022 in all forms of communication.

"As a parent I feel its a constant battle every step of the way"

"We find even communicating with the SEN team a long drawn out painful experience. No clear pathways to anything No clear guides on what is offered and how I can access"

Overall, the feedback from our 2024 survey highlights a range of experiences with the EHCP hub, with some users finding it helpful and easy to use, while others encounter significant challenges and limitations. There is consistent feedback that it is not mobile friendly.

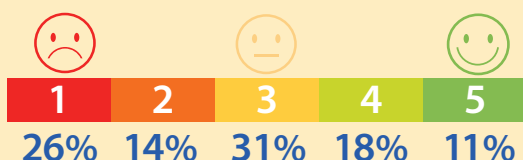
"The system is clear and easy to use."

"Ridiculous system, difficult to use it is not very accessible on a mobile device"

Q26: Respondents are aware of 'The HUB'



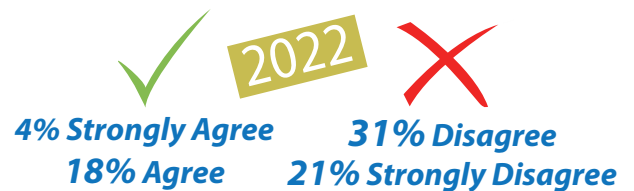
Q27: Star rating from users of 'The HUB'



Q16: I find it easy to get the relevant information about services

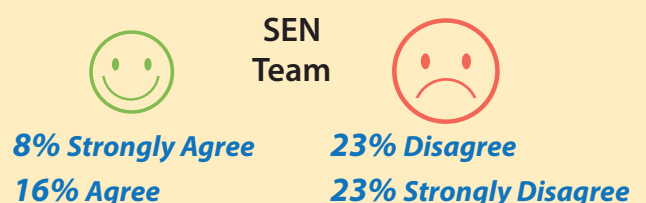
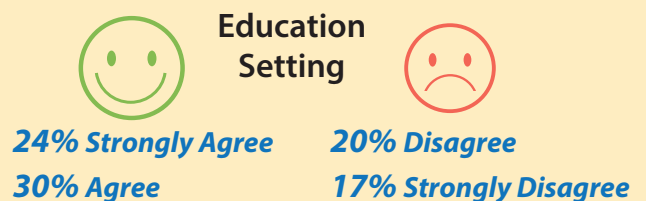


compared to our 2022 survey results:



2024

Q18: I am satisfied with Communication about my Child/ Young Person from....



4.1 Comparisons with 2022

What Ofsted said 2022

Ofsted Reports: Many parents say that the quality and ease of communication with the area's SEND team are variable. It is difficult for parents and carers and schools to get in touch. This means that some concerns escalate when they do not need to.

Overall we have seen a further decline in the communication with SEND services since 2022. Parental frustration has increased significantly, and this is leading to a complete breakdown in trust between families and SEND services. Parents are reporting their need to hit crisis before they are getting support. Others have reported the need to raise formal complaints as their issues haven't been addressed. There have been a number of parents that have felt so strongly about the lack of communication that they have mounted a protest outside the council offices.

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61556899907916>

Here are a few quotes from parents about their lived experience.

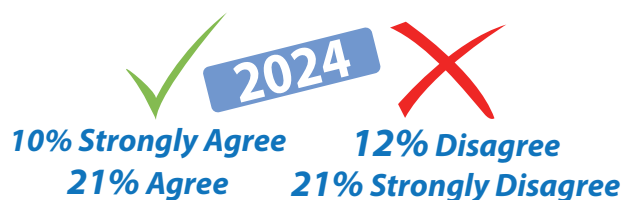
"My child has had to go into a mental health crisis and become a child out of education before anyone would put in provisions. Now her new mainstream school struggle to meet her needs. She missed 2 years of school and is struggling with significant mental health challenges."

"SEN team do not know my child."

"Health teams are very slow to engage generally."

"I had to go to a dispute resolution meeting to discuss the transition from my daughter's old school to her new one, involving a significant amount of preparation. Long story short, the issue was communication about why the decision was made and the inability to visit the proposed school. This had a significant impact on me."

Q24: My experience of the EHCP: Needs assessment was positive



Good practice examples

Similar to 2022 there are examples of good practice in schools where parents feel like their children's needs are being met.

"School is a really supportive and inclusive and I'm very lucky that the mainstream school is collaborative"

"I have so far had a very positive experience of the Annual Review process in my son's mainstream primary school. It was always well attended by professionals involved (physio, OT, SALT, class teacher, 1:1, SEN team) and I have always felt involved and listened to. It was entirely co-produced and I felt that everyone involved was extremely supportive and understanding"

"The plan writers have done a great job in capturing my sons needs and making sense of the information from multiple professionals."

"My school have been fantastic in supporting my child and in making reasonable adjustments. The Autism Team and SPOTTs have also been fantastic. Unfortunately the wait to see a community paediatrician is far too long - we have currently been on the waiting list for 9 months"

"The new primary school have a trained learning mentor and Senco who have worked closely with us to remove the barriers to education and implement appropriate support to enable child to attend school."

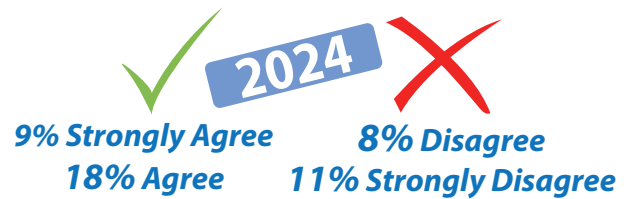
4.2 Comparisons with 2022

What Ofsted said 2022

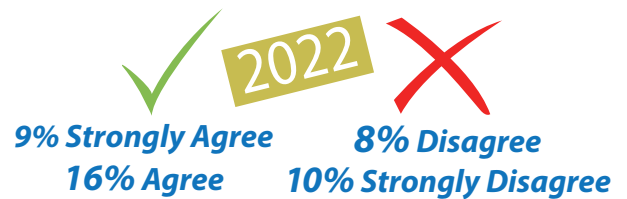
Ofsted Reports: The amendments to EHC plans made at the time of annual reviews are significantly delayed. This means that many updated EHC plans are not useful. Some parents described the annual review process as 'a waste of time'. For some children and young people, this impacts negatively on their transition from one setting to another.

"7 months late, a lot of work went into it for it not to be look at properly. Constantly calling SEN Team for communication. Had to put in a complaint just to get a call back. Parent views not considered"

Q25: My experience of the EHCP: Annual review process was positive...



compared to our 2022 survey results:



LiveWell

What Ofsted said 2022

Ofsted Reports: Not enough parents and carers know about the local offer website, 'Live Well'. Just under half of the respondents to Ofsted's survey had never used the local offer or had not heard about it. Those that do know about it report that it is difficult to navigate and does not easily provide the information that they need. This limits parents' ability to support their child or young person and to see what services are available to help.

There has been a significant amount of work that has been co-produced on the LiveWell website. At the time of publishing this report the new changes had only just been published. Although there is more work to do to ensure that this continues to be developed to ensure that parents are signposted correctly. One exceptional piece of co-produced work was the introduction of the Early Years Pathway that has been launched since our last survey in 2022. One parent reports:

"Livewell getting better but still hard to use"

Q19: Navigating on LiveWell....



Respondents who hadn't heard of 'LiveWell'



5.0 New Questions

We added additional questions following feedback from parents/voluntary sector partners and some professionals. They included:

Transition to Adulthood process • Short Breaks • Transport • Complaints procedure

Transition to Adulthood A summary of the parents' views

In the last 2 years the Local Authority have stopped running their annual transition to adulthood event. It is clear from the data we have collected that parents and carers are anxious about the process and would benefit from this event being re-established.

Lack of Education Opportunities:

Parents express concerns about their children not receiving adequate education and support to prepare them for adulthood. This lack of education opportunities is seen as hindering their children's ability to plan for their future. Parents are uncertain about the employment opportunities available for their children with SEN. They express worries about the lack of information on employment support and opportunities, as well as the overall outlook for SEN children in adulthood.

Anxiety about the Future:

Many parents express anxiety and worry about their children's future, particularly regarding their ability to transition to adulthood successfully. The lack of support services and the uncertainty about post-school options contribute to this anxiety.

Limited Transition Support:

Parents highlight the lack of support and resources available to help their children transition from education to employment and adult care. They feel that their children with SEN are often neglected and face significant barriers in accessing meaningful employment opportunities.

Need for Improved Services:

There is a call for improved services and support systems to assist children with SEN in transitioning to adulthood. Parents emphasise the importance of investing in early intervention and support to help children develop skills for independent living and employment.

"... I truly feel SEN children are written off by CWAC. It is a false economy as support will continue to be needed in adulthood, let's put the funding in now and help these children live independent lives and contribute to the economy through skills learnt in childhood"

"Adulthood is a minefield. I don't know where to turn for advice on benefits, bank accounts, trusts. He is totally cared for by parents and ill prepared or supported for independence from us in any form"

"Employment is one of my main concerns."

Q15: I feel confident that my child's needs will be met when transitioning to adulthood?



5.1 New Questions

Short Breaks

The parents highlight several challenges faced by families in accessing suitable support services and activities. Here are some key points:

Unsuitable Activities:

Families report that mainstream activities are not suitable for their children, particularly those who are sensory-sensitive or have a barrier to accessing activities that are on offer in mainstream settings.

The noise and environment may be overwhelming or the activities may not cater for their specific needs. Furthermore, parents and carers say they are unsuitable activities and short breaks for their children with complex medical and physical needs.

“Wrap around care - meaningful activities to meet need of those severe learning difficulties targeted too much at more independent”

Lack of Local Support Services:

There’s a significant lack of local services that can support children with SEND in accessing clubs and activities. Families struggle to find appropriate options for their children to participate in outside of school. This isolation can impact their social development and overall well-being

Financial Constraints:

Families receiving direct payments find it challenging to access short breaks or after-school activities, as the funding provided may not cover the costs. This leads to disparities in access to services between children with SEN and those without. Families express frustration with the process of accessing support, including applying for direct payments and navigating complex systems with little guidance or support from social workers.

“Zero out of school activities in the area for SEN children. 2023 we were offered one day out for our child. It was a positive experience for my child. There is a complete lack of support from CWAC for SEN children in the area.”

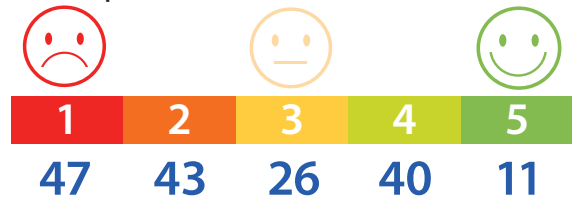
“Difficulty finding PA’s to help him access the community. He couldn’t do this himself.”

“Lack of respite services”

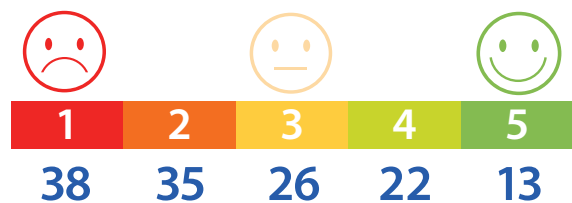
The number of parents unable to access services, (Eligibility Criteria, etc.) are reflected in the high scores for unmet need below. Q12 comments show these barriers. The respondents who do access the services are more positive.

Q12: My child’s needs are met by:

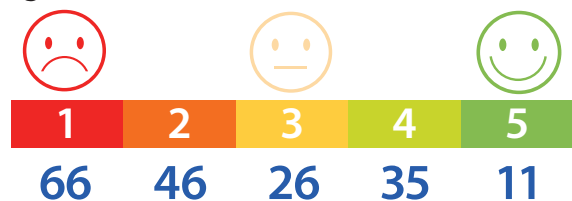
Short Breaks e.g. Community Connections / Endorphins etc



Direct Payments



Mainstream Activities with Support e.g. Guides / Scouts etc



“Funding for short breaks desperately needs to be increased in line with the inflation as a lot of families are not able to pay for the clubs and activities anymore that their SEN children so desperately need. The gap between the offer for neurotypical children and SEN children is getting bigger and bigger because of the low funding compared to the increased prices.”

5.1 New Questions

Transport

There have been mixed experiences from this survey. While some individuals report positive experiences with specific drivers or companies, others highlight persistent issues and express dissatisfaction with the overall service.

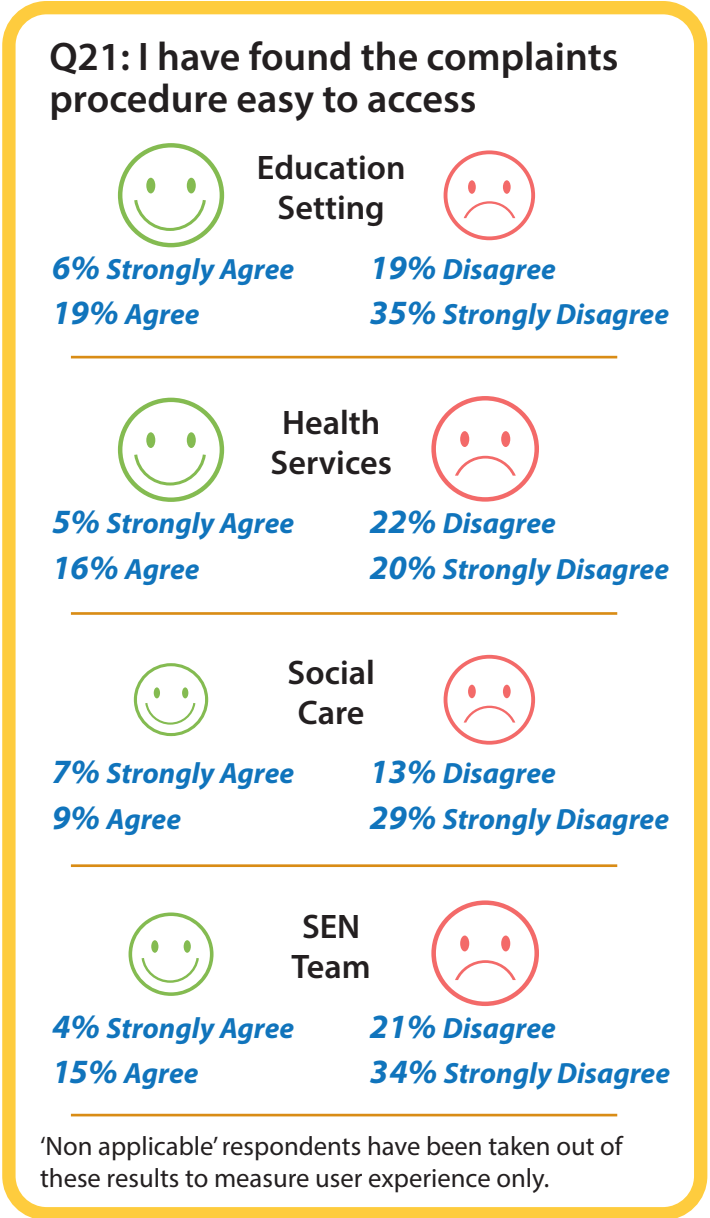


“Drivers and personal assistants provide great service, but administration lacks support.”

“Frequent changes in service providers cause anxiety for my child.”

Complaints Procedure

Some parents have attempted to make complaints regarding various issues, including delays in receiving support, discrimination, and failure to comply with SEND law. However, they express dissatisfaction with the complaints process, finding it hard to find out how to complain in Education, SEN Team, and Health. They cite it is time sensitive and mentally exhausting due to lack of responsiveness, delays, and insufficient outcomes.

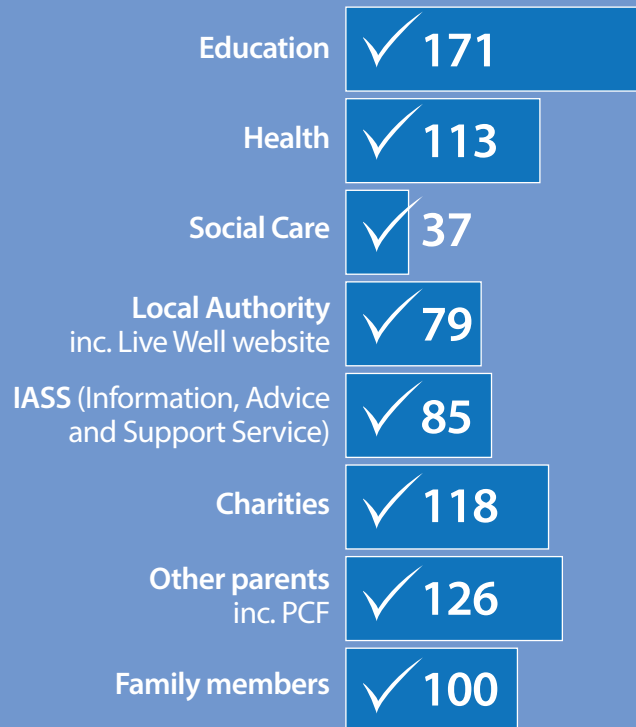


“Preparation to go to an Education Tribunal (or Disagreement resolution meeting) is exhausting and requires a significant amount of research and preparation. Generally, parents with special need children have a lot to cope with and the additional pressure is very unhelpful.”

“By the time we pulled our daughter from her first primary school we were all so exhausted that we haven’t felt able to engage in complaining yet. We are all still recovering.”

6.0 Support

Q17: I would go to the following for support and advice (tick as appropriate)



*"The **school** has been instrumental in helping, working together for positive outcomes."*

*"**CAMHS** has been good, with positive experiences for our daughter."*

*"The **mainstream private school** was proactive in making a referral for diagnosis."*

*"The **Children Disability Team**, especially CT, is fabulous."*

*"**SALT**— amazing from start to finish they have been the biggest support and help for my child."*

*"**Young Minds** and the **Occupational Therapist** were amazing."*

*"The **Autism Team** and **ChAPS** have provided invaluable support and access to helpful resources."*

*"**Community Connections** is an amazing service, providing support and activities"*

*"The **Occupational Therapist** and **Physiotherapist** at the school have been exceptional, providing comprehensive support and guidance."*

*"The **Early Years Specialist Teaching Service** has been instrumental in providing tailored support for our child's development."*

*"The **IASS** service has been a reliable source of support and information throughout the process."*

*"The **Endorphins** program has been a source of joy and enrichment for our child, offering meaningful activities and experiences."*

*"The **Parent Carers Trust** has been an invaluable resource, offering support and understanding to families in need."*

*"**Tiny steps Cheshire buddies** and **Cheshire Young carers** are all fab"*

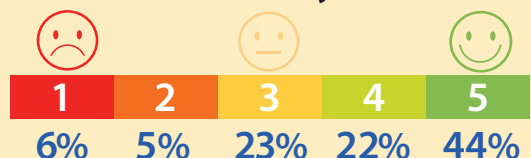
*"**Resource provision in his school** has been excellent also"*

Parent Carer Forum Feedback

Q31: Number of Respondents that have heard of the PCF



Q32: How satisfied are you with the PCF?



7.0 Co-Production and Culture

It continues to be our aim to bring parents and professionals together to create a culture of participation and co-production across Education, Health, Social Care and the voluntary sector.

However, the most significant change that the PCF have noticed since the 2022 survey is the reduction in co-production across all aspects of SEND. There has been little or no collaboration in key pieces of SEN work. As a recognised body, we were very disappointed not to be included in the production of the Inclusion Matters Policy. We have seen slow progress in the workstreams that we have been involved in since our last survey, others have ceased altogether. However, we are pleased that parents are being part of the new Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) project from the very beginning.

There is a strong sense among many of the parents that we meet, and those who have completed the survey, of a culture in the Locality amongst those working in SEND that makes parents feel like they are being unreasonable or demanding when requesting services which their children are entitled to.

This culture has developed over a number of years and has led to a situation where many parents feel unheard and let down. For many it seems that complaints, appeals and tribunals are the only way to get the help that their child or young person needs.

We all recognise the pressure that the National SEND system is under, however a cultural change is within the power of the Local Authority and Integrated Care Board.

8.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings from the 2024 survey conducted by the Cheshire West and Chester Parent Carer Forum shed light on the ongoing challenges faced by families of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities within the locality.

Despite efforts to amplify parent voices and facilitate co-production, the survey reveals persistent issues with communication breakdowns, lengthy waiting times for assessments and support services, and a lack of coordination between agencies. The emotional toll on parents is palpable, with many feeling overwhelmed, frustrated, and isolated in their struggle to advocate for their children's needs.

While some examples of good practice

exist, there is a clear need for improved collaboration, transparency, and empathy within the system to better support SEND families.

Moving forward, recommendations for establishing a new co-production charter, enhancing staff training, and fostering a culture of empathy and respect offer a roadmap for positive change. By prioritising the voices and needs of SEND families, stakeholders can work together to create a more inclusive and supportive environment so that all children with SEND can achieve the best possible outcomes. The PCF endeavour to provide a platform where parents' voices can be heard and parents can work in equal partnership with the professionals that provide services for their children.



We have commitment from senior officers and council members that they will work with the PCF to deliver these recommendations. These recommendations will be integrated into the SEND Action Plan*, to be discussed and monitored in the CWaC SEND Strategy Group**

Recommendations

1. Develop a new Co-production Charter:

- Establish a Co-production Charter between the PCF and professionals, where the PCF have representations at the top table for all decision-making regarding current and future SEND services
- Outline service level agreements and accountability measures
- Ensure commitment to hearing parents' voices in decision-making
- Agree upon terms of reference for the steering group
- Co-produce, implement, and frequently review the Co-production strategy

2. Culture change commitment

- Establish a commitment to a culture change where parents and children are prioritised in decision-making
- Promote a culture where staff demonstrate empathy and respect towards parents and children
- Provide staff training on effective co-production practices
- Ensure professionals have the right knowledge and expertise to inform, advise and support families

3. Communication

- Form a task and finish group to review all SEN team communication channels.
- Collaborate with the PCF to identify areas for improvement
- Implement strategies to enhance transparency in service delivery
- Establish collaborative communication channels with PCF and all sectors
- Commit to sharing PCF communication among established networks/databases

4 Key Pieces of work

- Set up a workstream in collaboration with PCF and ICB to address issues surrounding the "waiting well" process
- Re-establish the "Preparation for Adulthood" event for parents, carers and young people

* SEND Action Plan: SEND and Inclusion Improvement Programme that underpins the SEND and Inclusion Strategy

** CWaC SEND Strategy Group: A subgroup of the Children's Trust. The SEND Strategy is based on evidence from past performance, needs assessments, and shaped through consultations. The priorities going forward have been agreed with all partners. The SEND Strategy sets a clear direction for the next 5 years 2020-2025.



How do we amplify parents' voices in CWaC

It is important for the reader to understand that this survey is not stand alone. The PCF are constantly seeking the views, opinions and lived experiences of parent carers in SEND. Here is a summary of how we achieve this.



Forums

We use our funding to host three in person forums every year and invite professionals, along with the Third sector, to present so that parents are aware of the support that is available to them. Running alongside this we also host monthly online Forums that cover topics from estate management to short breaks. These are all recorded and can be viewed on our website. www.pcfcheshirewest.org



Focus Groups

When we hear of collective issues that parents face, we pull together a focus group to ensure that we share any issues with professionals to help make changes to the services being delivered and ensure that parents' voices are being heard. Since the last survey was conducted we have hosted a Complex Care focus group, Transport and Wrap around care.



Coffee Events

Over the last 18 months we have partnered with two charities, SPACE in Chester and Down Syndrome Cheshire in Northwich who host coffee events for parents. This has given our parents an opportunity to regularly meet up and for us to understand some of the issues and concerns they are facing.



School Reps

We have over 25 school reps across the county. Their role is to raise the awareness of the PCF as well as feeding back on the concerns of families at their schools. We have a school representative at each of the Special Schools in the borough.



Third Sector Meeting

We host a termly Third Sector meeting for charities who support families with SEND in the borough. This allows us to understand different aspects to the challenges that our families are facing and helps us to present an informed opinion when meeting with professionals in the borough.



Bi- annual surveys

We have run biannual surveys dating back to 2016. The purpose of these surveys is to capture and compare our families' lived experiences year on year. To compare if we have seen improvements in key areas such as communication and waiting times. It allows us to provide statistical data that the professionals can use to inform funding decisions.



Social Media

We are active on social media and have over 1,000 active followers. Our average yearly reach is in excess of 31,000.



Survey

2024

Results & Further Analysis

are available on our website.

<https://www.pcfcheshirewest.org/survey24>

You can keep up to date with all the PCF work by subscribing to our newsletters or accessing our website

www.pcfcheshirewest.org

Please feel free to get in contact if there is more information that you require.