

Following engagement as part of a review period to September 2023 (Appendix 1 p1 – 7)

Work to assess and review the current state of SEND and Inclusion services involved significant external engagement, which was summarised as part of the Scrutiny Working Group update in September 2023.

15 Organisations consulted with as part of **advocacy focus group**

 Headteachers consulted through meetings and roundtables working with **Families of Schools and the AIP**, and feedback analysed as part of EHCP assessment

290 Analysis of all **complaints** made over past 12 months

9 Interviews carried out with **parents, carers, and SENCOs** to hear first hand experiences of process

Since this update, further engagement has taken place to obtain the views of stakeholders across Leeds. This has already proved to be vital in using these views to address issues across SEND and Inclusion services.

~850 **Parent and carer responses to survey to assess current family experience**, summarised in this document

20 Complaints analysed in detail and mapped to assess **journey and issues from family's perspective**

5 Working groups with **headteachers and SENCOs** held around funding

 Post-16 cohort **focus group** held at West SILC

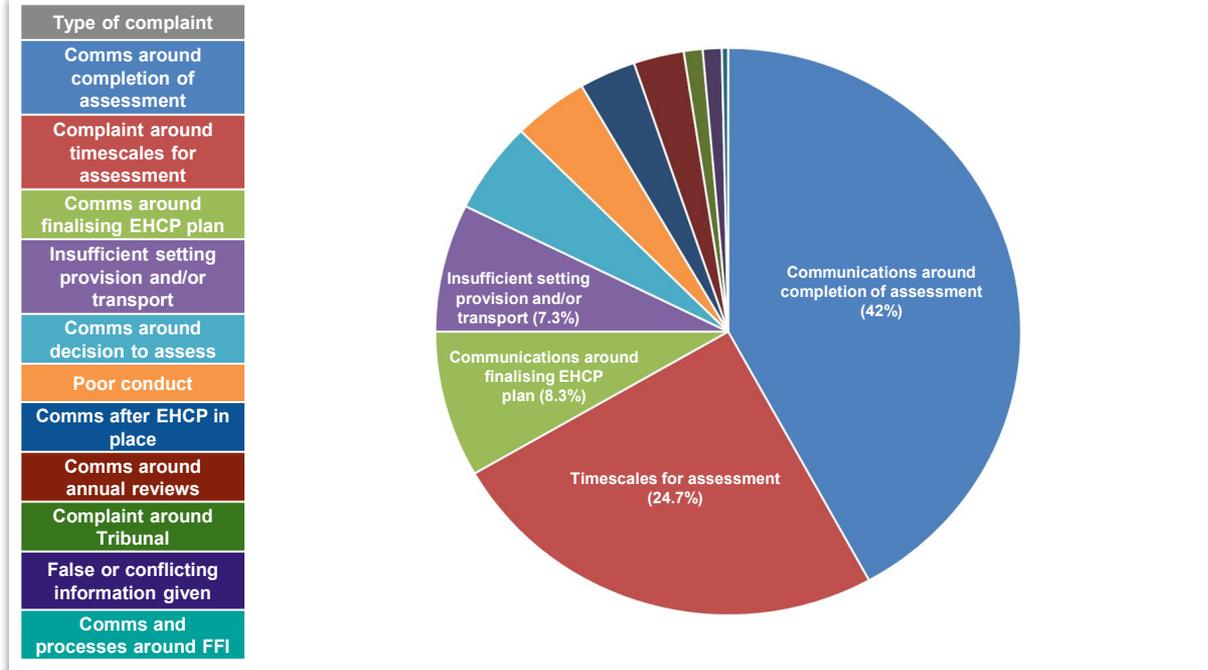
The analysis of complaints assessed themes and outcomes over the past year

When complaints were analysed by type, a range of reasons as to why frustrations are growing among EHCP applicants can be seen, with most complaints focused around communications. This helped the service to understand the impact of poor performance, whilst providing insight into the root cause of performance issues.

Complaints data overview

72% of the 290 complaints were upheld or partially upheld	Nearly 50% of complaints have had no direct contact made
Only 6% of complaints have been fully resolved	Over 50% of complaints cite "lack of communication" as a problem but only 16 are categorised as such

What does this mean in practice?



Headteacher and Schools feedback

Schools and headteachers have provided feedback that can be used to deepen the insight from complaints, how communications are managed and relationships with schools are maintained. Key themes from these meetings with schools are as follows.



Better communications



There is a need to consider how communications between LA and associated services (including schools) can be improved



Improved transparency around timelines



Many children without review or EHCPs within the statutory time frames are not being communicated with. This issue was raised at every meeting



Setting types



Challenges around specialist schools not being able to accommodate children due to capacity



Schools are the “front door” for everything



Schools are the primary port of call for parents and carers regarding any frustrations they face

Findings from engagement with children and young people at the West SILC Power House - October 2023

In order to hear firsthand the experiences of children and young people in obtaining and being involved in their EHCPs, a focus group was held at the West SILC Power House to hear from a post-16 cohort of children and young people.

Children and young people showed some awareness of what is in their EHCP

- When asked about their involvement, the group displayed some knowledge of what an EHCP is, why it is important to them, and the link to the support provided by the Power House
- The group also knew that their voice should be at the heart of an EHCP and annual reviews

“ I’d like to be more involved in my EHCP ”

The Power House is keen to improve the way that childrens’ input shapes support and focuses on outcomes

- There is appetite at the Power House for a review that more involves the children and young people in assessing how their support is contributing towards achievement of outcomes
- This may mean young people presenting back how their support has helped and where needs have changed, or focusing attention on outcomes

“ The EHCP meetings are too long and I’d like to be more involved ”

It is important that this involvement is tailored to the child,

- This involvement in reviews of support can often be limited to filling out a form around family, what the young person likes, and achievements, combined with attendance at lengthy review sessions without feeling able to input
- This means the review process risks not feeding in the voice of the child in a genuine way which considers their views and influences the support provided

“ I came here because I was told to ”

individual settings support input into reviews

- The role of settings in driving children's input in annual reviews may vary in the way children and young people are involved in shaping their support.
- The change to the way the service operates also provides the chance to focus the relationships with settings around the voice of the child, and ensuring settings have what they need to focus support and provision around childrens’ needs and wants, especially when considering transition to adulthood

“ I want to travel independently by 19 but I don’t know what that means for this year ”

Parent and carer feedback

Interviews and a focus group were undertaken with parents and carers who had gone through the EHCP journey, as well as advocate groups for parent and carers. The engagement undertaken in person as part of this work is set out on the following slides, and enabled us to:

Hear voices and experiences firsthand and centre findings in quotes and themes

Understand the EHCP process end-to-end alongside parents and carers in order to hear experiences relevant to each stage of the process.

Obtain feedback from advocacy groups who represent a wide array of parents and carers across Leeds

Obtain feedback as to how we can productively engage going forward

As part of the focus group held, a recommendation was made to undertake surveys which obtains views from parents and carers, children and young people. This was shared in December 2023.

Parent and carer feedback focused around decision-making as well as communication

Speaking to parents and carers made it clear that significantly more engagement is required, but this initial engagement helped us to substantiate thinking around service issues.

The EHCP assessment is too focused on process, rather than the child's voice



This means that parents, carers and SENCOs feel they must 'play the game' in order to have an application granted, or use the process to obtain an alternative outcome, as opposed to always relying on the Council to engage and prioritise requests in a way which captures the child's voice and needs and use this to guide how need is met.

In a number of cases communication has broken down between parents and carers and the service



Parents and carers communicating with the Council have found that communication can become adversarial 'by default', with a perceived lack of support for parents, and strained relationships between the Council, schools, and parents and carers.

The process is not future-proofed



Parents and carers applying for an EHCP on the basis of a known future need struggle to progress this assessment due to the focus on how the child is progressing in their current setting.

Signposting and messaging around EHCPs and beginning an application can be unclear

Parents reported being informed that an EHCP is not required until a transition in order to access the right specialist provision, and feeling lost around how to get into the process and make an application.

There is a lack of comms, ownership or monitoring

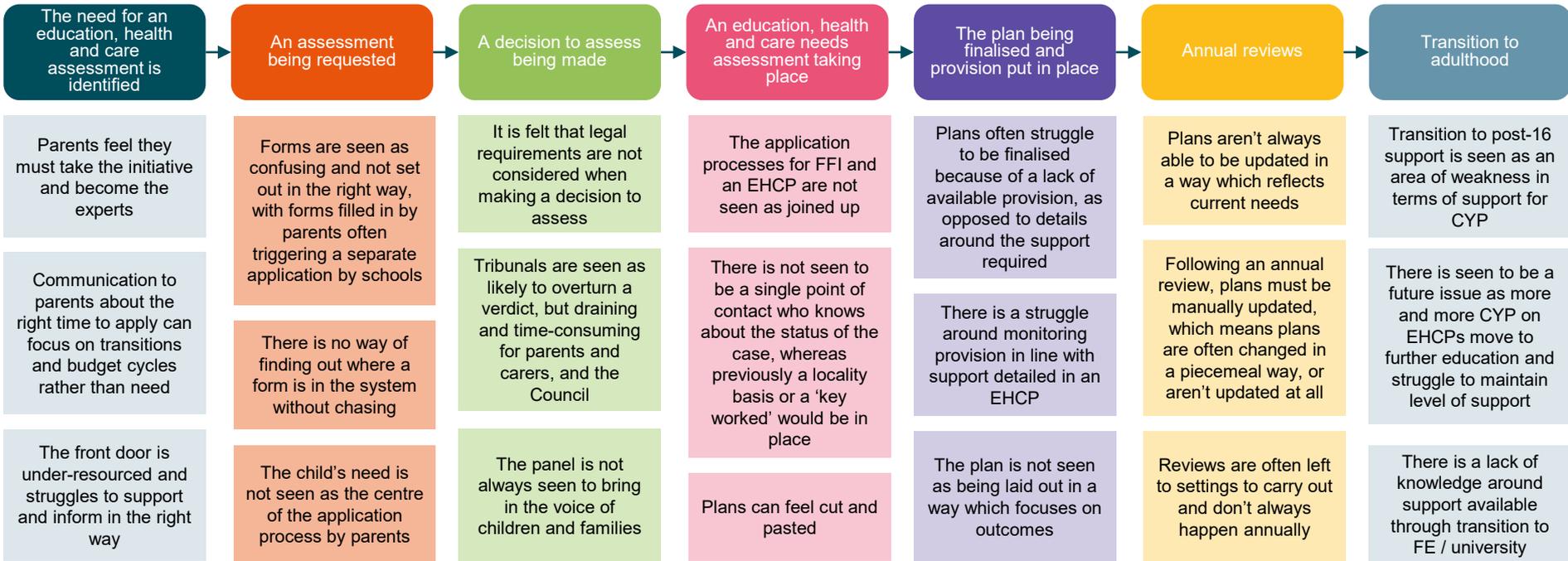
Parents have difficulties sometimes in being able to contact the Council to get an update on their case, and struggle to get a sense of ownership around their child's case. This extends to the process of annual reviews or performance monitoring, where monitoring of the provision of support detailed in the EHCP is not always felt to be sufficient.

The EHCP process presents "barriers" for parents and carers trying to apply

The application process has made some parents and carers feel like they have to fight for their child to be supported, as opposed to the Council working with them to meet their child's need.

The parent and carer advocacy focus group highlighted issues across the process

The focus group held with parents and carers drew out themes across the EHCP journey for children and families.



786 parents and carers and 85 CYP completed a survey about their experience, as part of an ongoing process of engagement to shape our service (Appendix 1 p 8 – 20)

In December 2023, a survey was circulated to parents and carers across Leeds in order to obtain feedback from all parents and carers who wished to provide views around their experiences with SEND and Inclusion services. In order to maximise the amount of feedback, the survey was subsequently sent to over **6,000** parents and carers with a request to provide feedback. Whilst this survey will close at the end of February, interim results taken on **8th February** have been analysed and are detailed on the following slides.

Feedback suggests that SEND support is viewed as predominantly being focussed on funding and plans, when other support may be available.

“His special needs not being supported in the right way is causing disruption to the education delivery.”

“Any request for help is always met by the question ‘Does he have an EHCP?’”

The assessment process as part of an EHC needs assessment was seen as lengthy and drawn out, with a view that there was a lack of guidance around applying and the process to be followed

“It was a very long drawn out process that took far too long.”

“ The process is very stressful.”

Communication and delays in obtaining support can potentially create a negative impact on child development and education

“Seeing the progress in my child in such a short space of time now with the right setting makes me even angrier at the system that it took so long!”

“The Council never communicated between themselves or with me.”

There is variation in individual settings and support available

“Part-time never increased to full time due to a lack of appropriate support in school and failure to implement the EHCP”

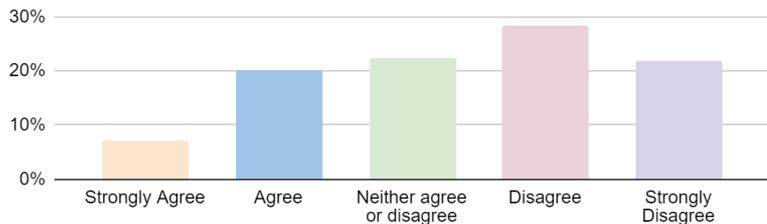
The way provision and support is monitored and risks around children missing out on education are flagged was highlighted as an area for potential improvement

“The EHCP system is not fit for purpose in Leeds as it does not obtain timely outcomes or manage to adjust and engage the right people at the right time to make changes.”

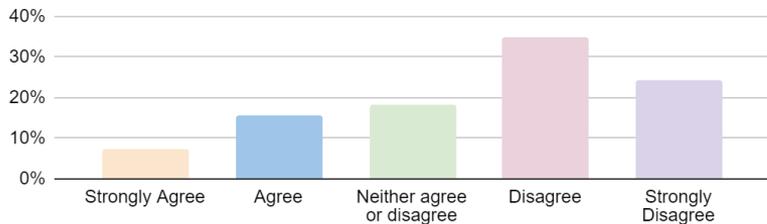
“My child has needed a specific specialist setting for the last 3 years as stated in EHCP reviews yet still hasn't been allocated a suitable setting.”

Parents and carers reported difficulties in understanding support available for children and young people with SEND

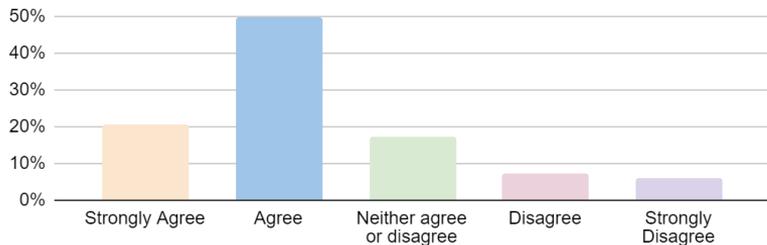
I understand the support available for my child across across education, health and care



I know where to access support for my child outside of the education, health and care formal processes and funding



I understand what my child's support is aiming to achieve



Feedback from parents and carers

50% of parents and carers reported a lack of understanding around support available for their child or young person, whilst a higher proportion (59%) reported not knowing where to access this support, outside of formal support. However, there was positive feedback around the understanding of what a child's support aims to achieve. Feedback focused around the visibility of support offers and a greater problem around accessing this support, or ensuring this support is in place.

"I understand what support should be in place but it isn't in place"

"If I need support I am able to look for it, although accessing it is a different issue"

"The support is not advertised enough. I often find out about support after a group or meeting has taken place. Education and healthcare do not communicate with each other"

Feedback around input into decisions made about children and young people focused around a lack of personalisation of this support

Feedback from parents and carers

“The Council is funding-led rather than needs-led”

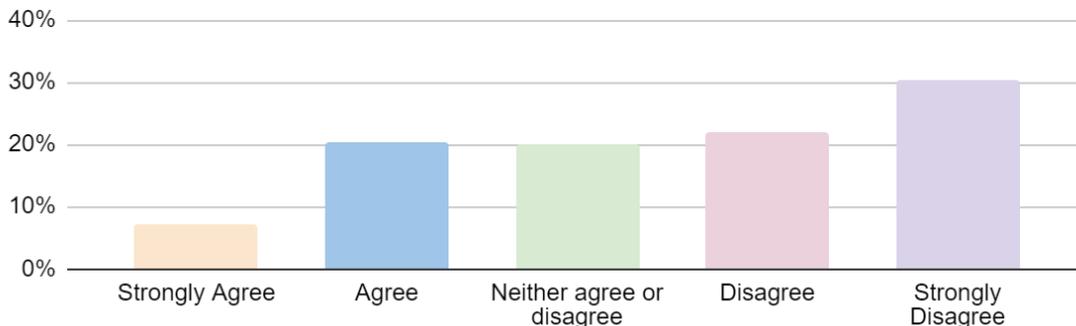
“It very much depends on who you are assigned and which area it is that you are dealing with”

“I have been kept updated throughout”

“The decision was made to refuse progression to an EHC needs assessment without a single person setting eyes on my child”

When parents and carers were asked about the way their views are listened to and taken into account as part of a plan, 28% responded that their views feel listened to. Feedback focused on the ways EHCPs are worded in comparison to parent or carer input, and sense that there was inconsistency in outcomes when working with the Council to progress a needs assessment.

When decisions are made about support for my child I feel that I have a voice, that my views are listened to and they are taken into account



Parents and carers provided a wide range of feedback around sharing their child's views and aspirations, with much positive feedback focusing on the role of the setting

Feedback from parents and carers

"It's filled in every time but then ignored for the rest of plan. Pupil views and feedback not included in the right section."

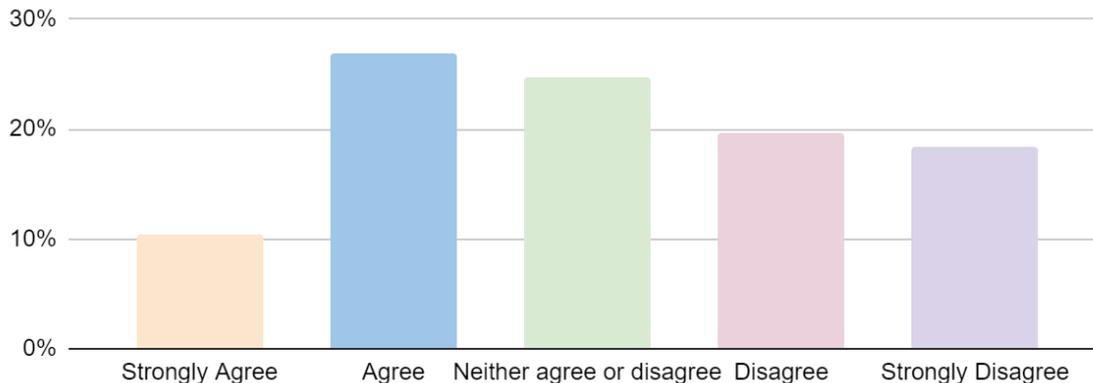
"My son finds it hard to say what he wants"

"My child tells me what she needs and I make sure the school listens"

Parents and carers provided mixed feedback around the way their child's voice is listened to when planning support as part of an EHCP. Some feedback focused on the difficulty of achieving this, or the difficulty of having the child's voice fed into the plan itself to ensure the right support is provided.

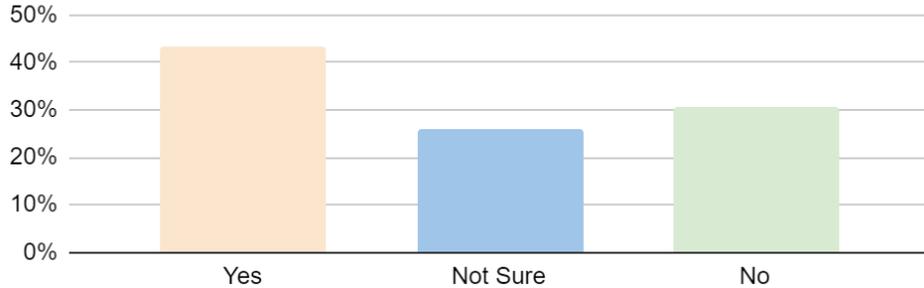
However, there was positive feedback around the way parents work with schools and SENCOs to ensure their child's voice is listened to and factored in as part of the support provided.

My child has a voice to share their views and aspirations, and is listened to in the decisions about the support they receive and in their plan

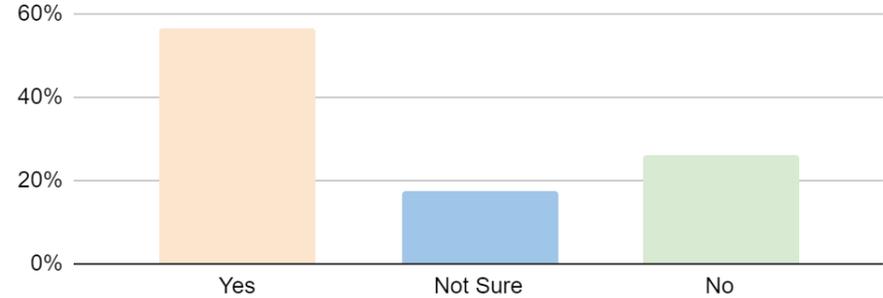


Children and young people in these settings also provided more positive feedback around the way they are encouraged to share their wants and needs

Are you asked about your feelings and what would help you to do well and learn?



Have you been able to share your hopes and dreams for the future?



Feedback from children and young people

Children and young people responded positively around the inclusion of their voice, with 43% agreeing that they are asked about their feelings and voice, and 57% asked about their hopes for the future.

Positive feedback focused on the way this has built excitement for the future and the way time is often scheduled in, although some felt that wants and needs have not been listened to.

"My mum and dad asked me about my wants and needs when filling out some forms before."

"I have and I can't wait. I'm excited for my future!"

"I have been asked this before, but no one has got it right. Things change too much, it's busy and I don't feel safe"

"My teachers are interested in me and what my interests are. They want to do what they can to help me achieve"

"I've had scheduled meetings with parents, SENCO and my teacher, with ad hoc discussions for support"

Children and young people also provided positive feedback around the way settings ensure they are aware of an EHCP and its importance

“Students know they have one, but not really sure what it's for”

“It was to help me learn, and provide me with support”

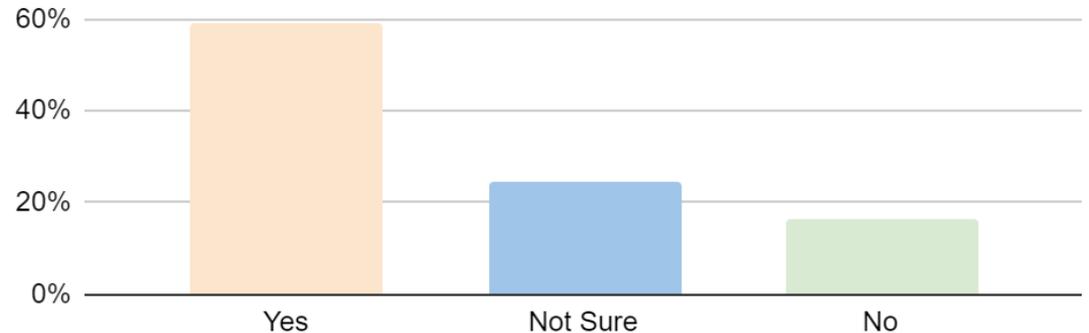
“I've had EHCP meetings, which basically act as my academic New Year's resolutions!”

“I had to do a lot of research independently around the forms and processes, and I used SENDIASS services for help too.”

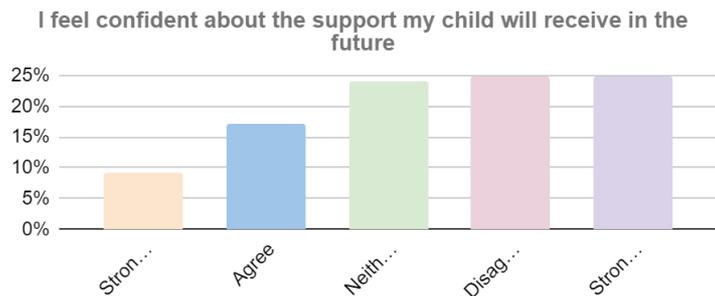
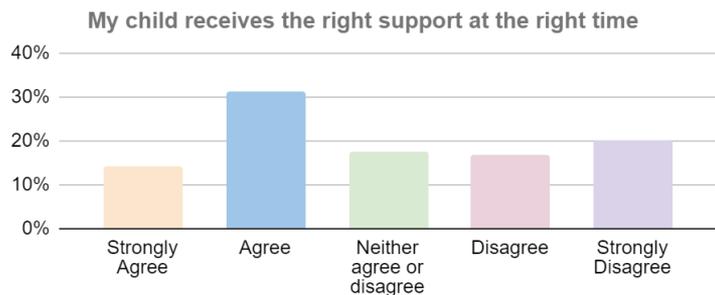
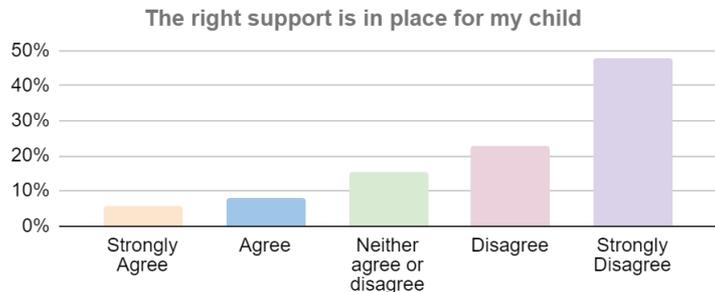
Feedback from children and young people

High proportions of children and young people reported being asked about what an EHCP means and involved. For some children and young people, this meant knowing the definition, whilst some showed awareness of what this means on an ongoing basis as part of a regular review of provision. Some children and young people reported knowing they have one, but not what it means in practice.

When you got an EHCP were you spoken to about what having an EHCP means and involves?



Parents and carers highlighted the difficulty in obtaining the right support, with waiting times highlighted



Feedback from parents and carers

A high proportion of parents and carers disagreed that the right support is currently in place for their child (71%), and displayed low confidence around the support their child would receive in the future. More positive feedback was provided around the child receiving the right support at the right time.

Feedback focused around a delay in support being provided due to waiting times or a lack of assessment.

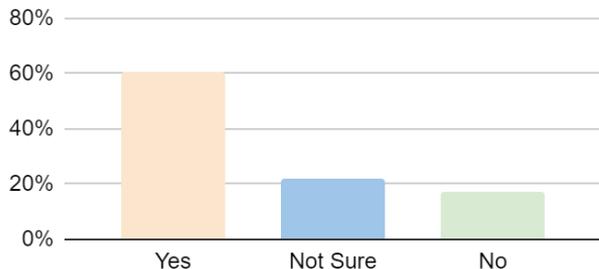
“Currently the right support is in place, but we are worried about his transition to Secondary School.”

“The college are supporting him but haven’t had the in-depth info about his needs. This is long, long overdue”

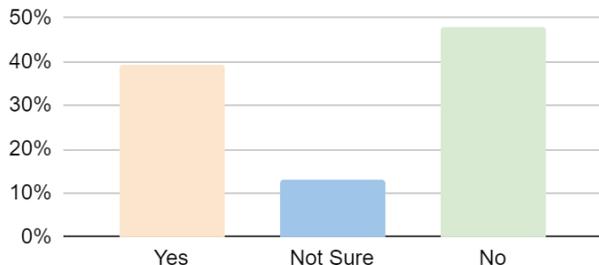
“Waiting times are ridiculous. Parents having to jump through hoops to get the correct support needed.”

Children and young people highlighted support provided by both settings and school support teams, in addition to the effort required to obtain this

Do you receive support from school to help you do well?



Have you been asked about your health and care support, to help you do well in your learning?



Feedback from children and young people

Children and young people responded positively to questions around support from school. A higher proportion of children reporting no health and care involvement may be due to the limited amount of cases where this is relevant.

Positive feedback focused on the relationships with teachers and the noticeable support provided by school support teams from the Council, whilst others noticed that there have been many meetings and forms filled in without support being provided.

"I filled in the form for the EHCP but nothing has been done"

"My teachers are amazing and help me to understand my lessons. They have helped me to develop and succeed"

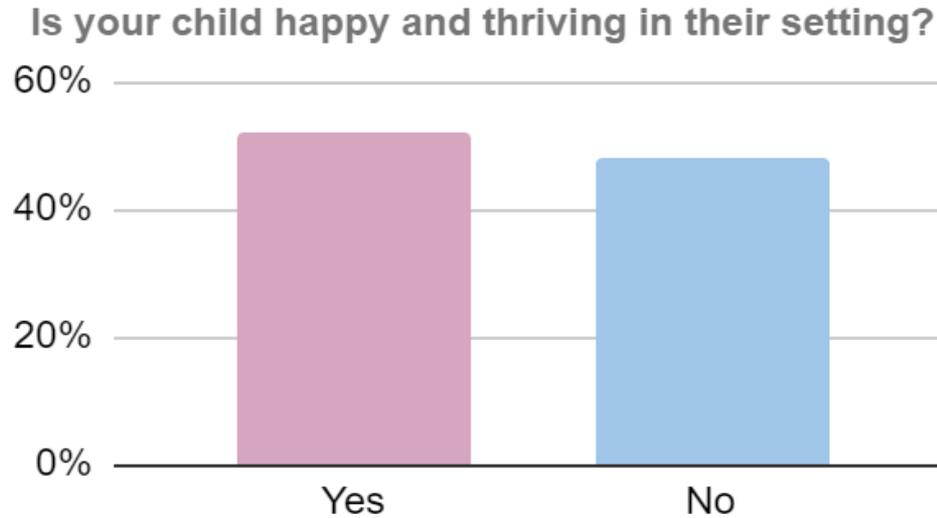
"I have meetings with the Health & Wellbeing team to help with emotions and reactions, and I meet with the Visual Impairment Team every two weeks."

"My mum and dad have been trying to get me support for a very long time. I know they have a lot of meetings with school to try get it sorted."

Feedback around existing settings highlighted the importance of an EHCP, but also the delay in development caused through delays in obtaining support

Feedback from parents and carers

When asked about how happy children and young people are in their current setting, 59% of parents indicated that they are. Feedback focused around the ways obtaining an EHCP can often act as a turning point in the quality of support for a child or young person, but that the process for obtaining an EHCP can be a significant barrier, and any significant delay to a child's education can permanently affect their progress.



"His special needs are not being supported in the right way, which is causing disruption to the delivery of his education"

"I wouldn't say they are thriving - but they are now both getting an education and their mental health is good. Having an EHCP should mean at least some form of equity in terms of education, but it doesn't."

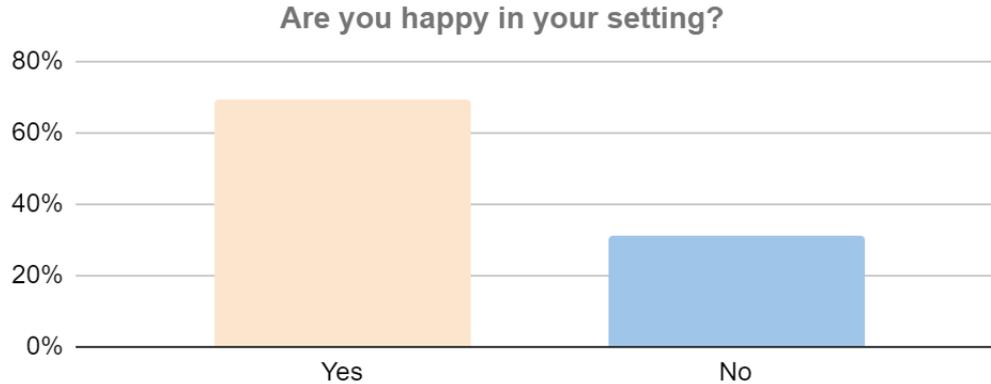
"The lack of joined up assessment and service provision means that they are years behind their peers, and no closer to getting into the special school setting where they are on the list"

"My child is now happy to attend school. Before having an EHCP she was stuck in a school who didn't know how to meet her needs. She was often left upset and deregulated."

Children and young people provided positive feedback around existing settings, in particular support provided by schools

Feedback from children and young people

A higher proportion of children and young people (69%) reported being happy in their current setting. Children and young people talked about the way they are able to work with their teachers to ensure their needs are met and they thrive in their setting, and the importance of asking for support. Some indicated discomfort with their current setting due to size or disruption.



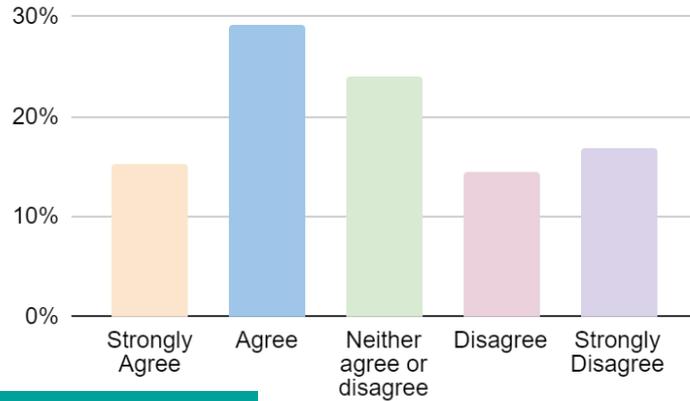
“The teachers in my school help me study and improve my skills, while also taking my wellbeing into importance.”

“I am too distracted by everything. It’s a big school with a lot happening.”

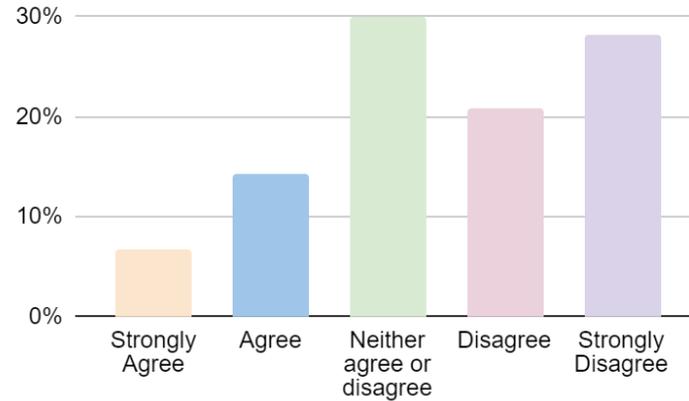
“Most people with my issues need help, but will never ask for help as they think it’s normal, and don’t realise they would benefit.”

Feedback around preparing for next steps was positive, but highlighted the importance of making up for a delay in receiving support

The support my child receives has enabled them to be as independent as possible



The support received from different agencies is joined up



Feedback from parents and carers

Families provided positive feedback around the way support received enabled children and young people to be as independent as possible, with 44% agreeing or strongly agreeing. However, the breadth of this support across both health and social care was seen to be limited, with only 21% agreeing that this feels joined up. Feedback focused around the effectiveness of services providing independent travel training.

"It's allowed him into a specialist setting but we are still struggling in regards to health issues and lack of support"

"He still has a long way to go as he only had an EHCP issued in Year 6. It is crucial that he has the support he gets from an EHCP now more than ever to help him with this."

"The independent travel service provided by the authority was excellent in enabling our daughter to gain independence."

Children and young people reported being involved in reviews of this provision ahead of key transition stages

"I was asked my thoughts on where I'd like to live, and what I'd like to do."

"I sit in the room and get spoken about in an unflattering way"

"I've told them I want be able to communicate in a safe and positive way, and to remain a happy content boy without struggling"

"My future depends on what is available after college"

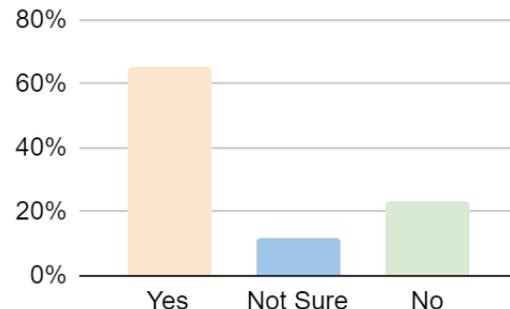
"I am hoping to be independent in the future"

Feedback from children and young people

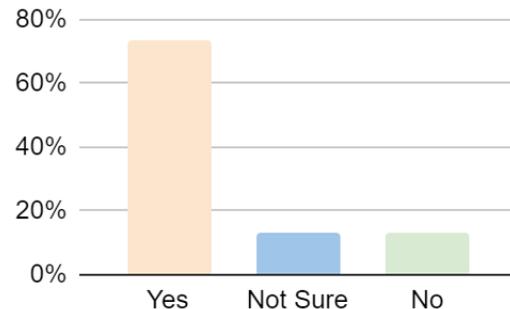
High proportions of children and young people reported being involved in a review of their EHCP, and being able to talk about their wants for the future as part of this.

Positive feedback played back some of these wants and needs and the way their voice is included, although some children and young people reported not feeling empowered or valued as part of this review.

Have you been involved in a review of your EHCP?

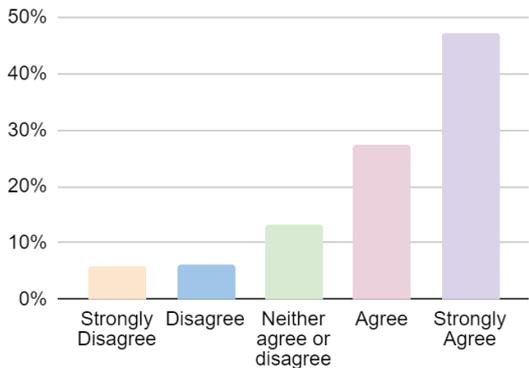


Have you shared your hopes and dreams for the future in your EH...

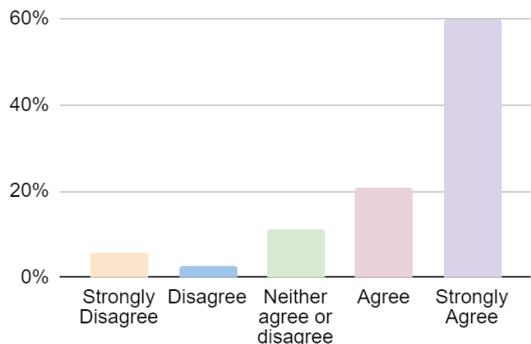


The role EHCPs and FFI play in a child's journey was evident in responses to all questions

I feel an Education, Health and Care Plan is the only way to get the support my child needs



I feel an Education, Health and Care Plan and Funding for Inclusion are the only way to get the support my child needs



Feedback from parents and carers

A high proportion of parents and carers reported feeling as if an EHCP or FFI is the only way to obtain support, with a higher proportion of FFI recipients agreeing with this statement. This indicates that FFI and EHCP are seen as a goal to achieve in and as of themselves.

Some feedback focused on the need to avoid any sense of EHCPs being a 'golden ticket' and emphasised the need for EHCPs to be seen as a legal document which enables the right support to be provided.

"This is a legal document and it is essential that he still has this, so I am secure in the knowledge that the schools and services are meeting this by law. This means meeting my child's needs for as long as he needs it."

"An EHCP is just the start. Ensure it's actually adhered to and maintained is a whole different game!"

"We don't think that EHCPs are a "Golden Ticket" as some want to believe. We are just trying to get an education for our child, which is what they are legally and morally entitled to, and which parents of children without SEND don't have to fight for."

"Any request for help is always met by the question 'Does he have an EHCP?'"