



Solihull Parent Carer Voice C.I.C



**REPORT ON THE PARENTAL  
VIEWS OF THE SERVICES  
PROVIDED BY SMBC TO  
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE  
WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL  
NEEDS AND/OR DISABILITIES.**

August 2023





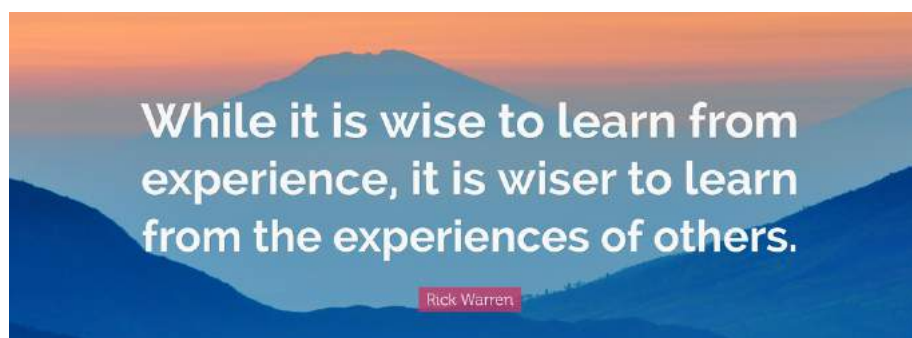
## SUMMARY

This report has been prepared to provide a snapshot of parental views regarding their families experiences of the services for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities across Solihull.

The information in this report is based on the responses to the Solihull Parent Carer Voice C.I.C Summer SEND Survey.

The report evidences the experiences and views of families in particular regarding:

- experiences within schools.
- EHCP's and their reflection of the child/young person.
- experiences of the annual review/assessment process.
- experiences of social care services for children, young people and young adults with disabilities.





## KEY FINDINGS

- There continues to be inconsistency across services and schools.
- Parental confidence in schools ability to meet academic needs is relatively high, however their confidence in schools ability to meet emotional needs and SEND needs is weak.
- Having an EHCP does not mean that parent carers feel confident the provisions will be put in place.
- The Introduction of the Person Centred Planning meeting during the EHCP assessment process is seen to be a positive experience.
- Too many families are having to access private assessments/therapy.
- Too many families rate their experiences with social care as poor.
- Increasingly parent carers are reporting that the Local Offer is improving.



## BACKGROUND

Solihull Parent Carer Voice C.I.C is an independent, not for profit organisation led by parent carers. The forum has been running since May 2020. Our members are families of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (aged 0-25) who live in, or access services in, Solihull.

The forum is recognised as the strategic partner for parent carer participation in Solihull by the Department for Education, and is a signatory of the Partnership Agreement, with SMBC, Birmingham and Solihull ICB, Solar, Birmingham Children's Hospital, University Hospitals Birmingham and Our Voices Heard.

Solihull Parent Carer Voice has heard a lot from parent carers about their experiences of the SEND System in Solihull. This report focuses on experiences currently and over the last year.



# METHODOLOGY

The information in this report is based upon the SPCV Summer SEND Survey.

The survey was open from June 16th to August 31st 2023 to capture a snapshot of current views and experiences of parent carers, and was shared via our social media channels and with our formal membership via email.

There were 202 responses to the survey, with responses from each ward within Solihull.

Of the respondents:

50% EHCP

46% SEN Support

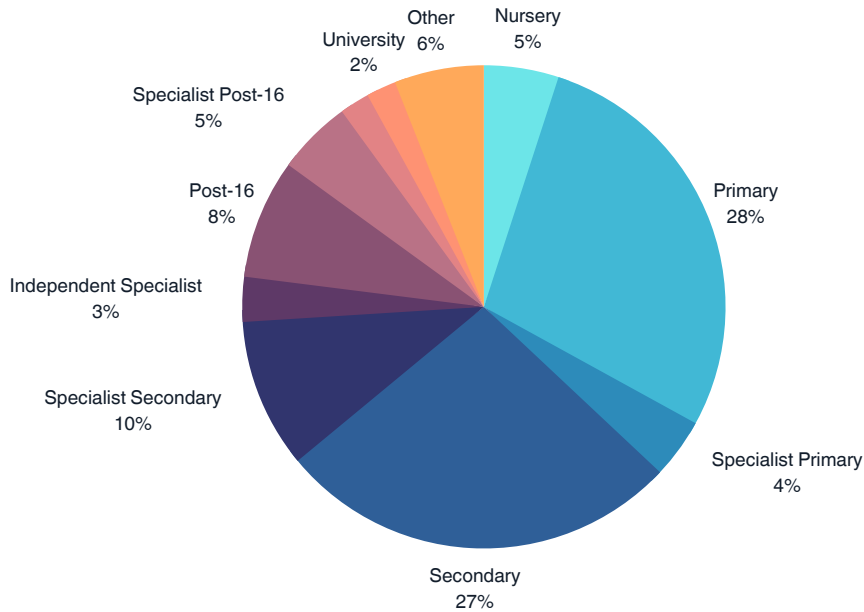
4% Unsure if on the SEN Register.

In writing our conclusion we are also basing this on what we know is happening within Solihull, from strategic meetings and from further meetings with parent carers.

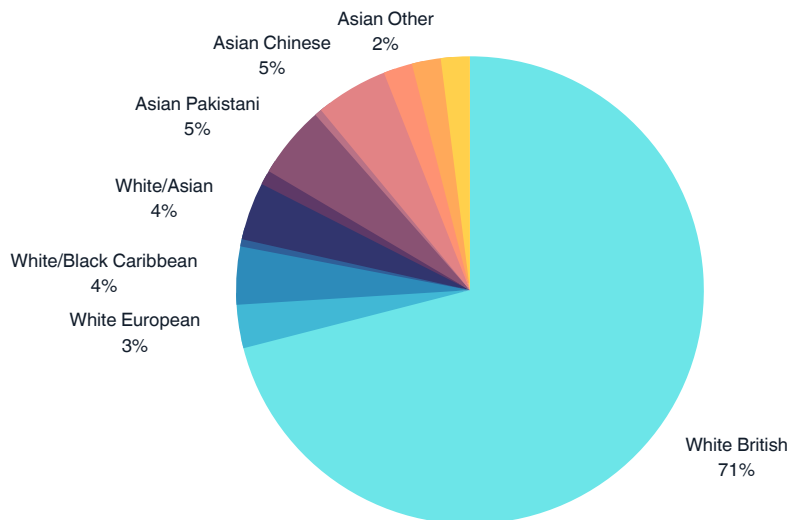


# DEMOGRAPHICS

## PROVISION TYPE



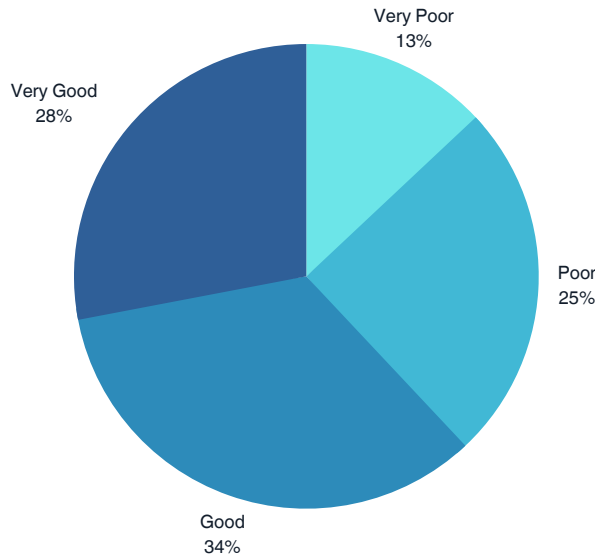
## ETHNICITY





# FINDINGS

Question: How inclusive do you feel your child/young person’s setting is?



We can break this down further to type of provision:

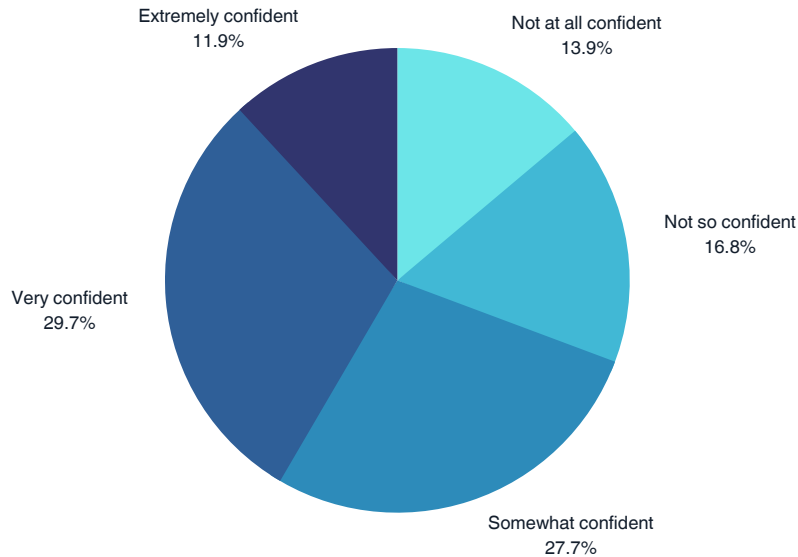
Type of provision	Good/Very Good	Poor/Very Poor
Nursery	90%	10%
Primary	60%	40%
Specialist Primary	100%	0%
Secondary	42%	58%
Specialist Secondary	80%	20%
Independent Specialist	83%	17%
Post-16	65%	35%
Specialist Post-16	80%	20%
University	50%	50%

When looking specifically at SEND inclusion, it is encouraging that in most types of provision the majority of parent carers feel that the setting is good or very good, particular provision types of note are nursery settings and specialist settings. However it is concerning that 58% of parent carers do not feel that secondary schools are inclusive of SEND and 40% for primary.



# FINDINGS

Question: How confident are you in schools' ability to meet academic needs?



We can break this down further to type of provision:

Type of provision	Somewhat/Very/Extremely Confident	Not so/Not at all Confident
Nursery	90%	10%
Primary	68%	32%
Specialist Primary	88%	12%
Secondary	76%	21%
Specialist Secondary	65%	35%
Independent Specialist	83%	17%
Post-16	59%	41%
Specialist Post-16	80%	20%
University	50%	50%

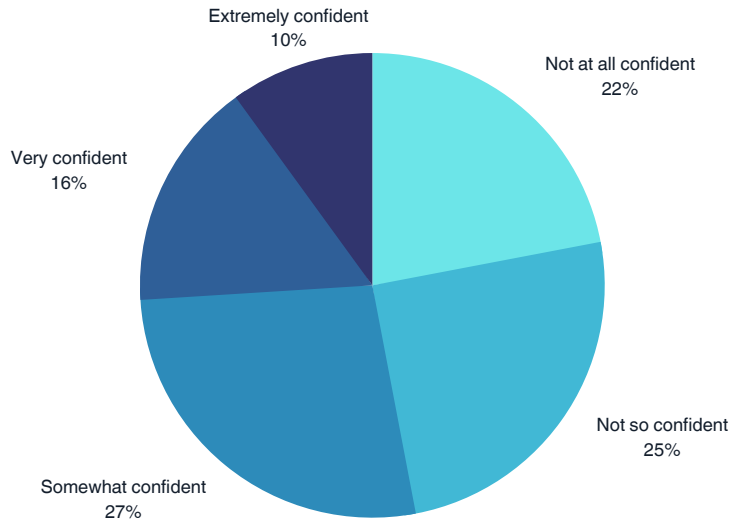
When looking at confidence in academics, it is encouraging that there is confidence in our mainstream provisions and particularly in our nursery and secondary provisions. There is greater confidence in academic needs being met in specialist primary schools however than in mainstream, and confidence in academic needs being met in Specialist Secondary Schools is weak.





# FINDINGS

Question: How confident are you in schools' ability to meet emotional wellbeing?



We can break this down further to type of provision:

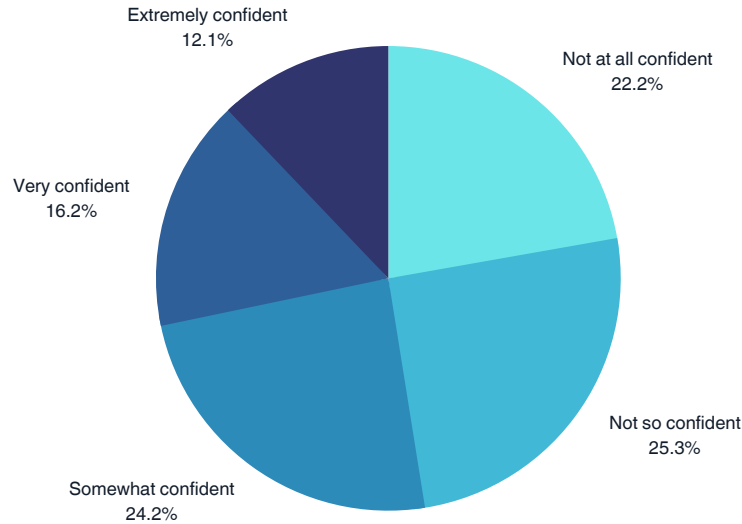
Type of provision	Somewhat/Very/Extremely Confident	Not so/Not at all Confident
Nursery	100%	0%
Primary	49%	51%
Specialist Primary	100%	0%
Secondary	36%	64%
Specialist Secondary	55%	45%
Independent Specialist	83%	17%
Post-16	59%	41%
Specialist Post-16	80%	20%
University	75%	25%

When looking at confidence in settings meeting children and young people's emotional needs, it is clear that in some types of settings there is much work to be done, particularly when looking at our mainstream primary and secondary provisions and our specialist secondary provisions.



# FINDINGS

Question: How confident are you in schools' ability to meet SEND Needs?



We can break this down further to type of provision:

Type of provision	Somewhat/Very/Extremely Confident	Not so/Not at all Confident
Nursery	90%	10%
Primary	46%	54%
Specialist Primary	87%	13%
Secondary	39%	61%
Specialist Secondary	70%	30%
Independent Specialist	83%	17%
Post-16	53%	47%
Specialist Post-16	90%	10%
University	50%	50%

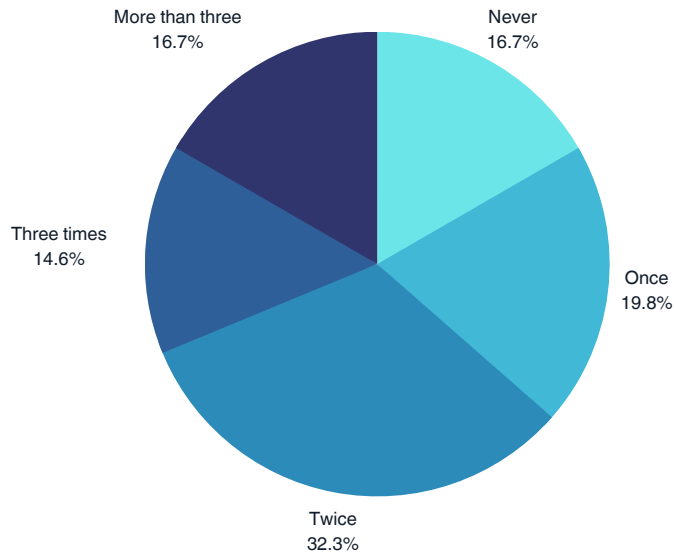
When looking at confidence in settings meeting children and young people's special educational needs, it is worrying that there is a real lack of confidence in needs being met by mainstream settings in Solihull, with the exception of Nursery provisions.



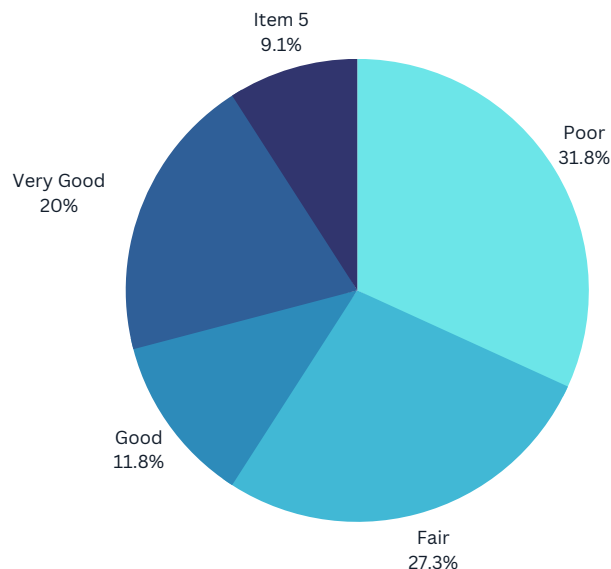
# FINDINGS

Question: How often do you meet with the setting to discuss SEND needs and progress?

(N.B- the SEND Code of Practice specifies this should happen at least 3 times a year)



Question: How would you rate communication with the provision?

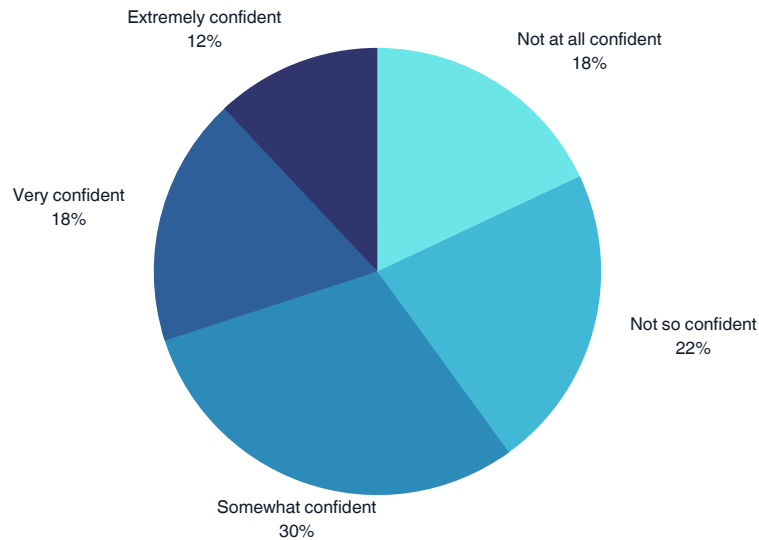


When looking at the communication and meetings parent carers have with schools, there is work to be done, however there are some very positive comments from parent carers around communication with some schools.



# FINDINGS

Question: How confident are you that the provision follows section F of the EHCP. N.B. This is the section that details what support MUST be provided for the child/young person and is legally binding.



We can break this down further to type of provision:

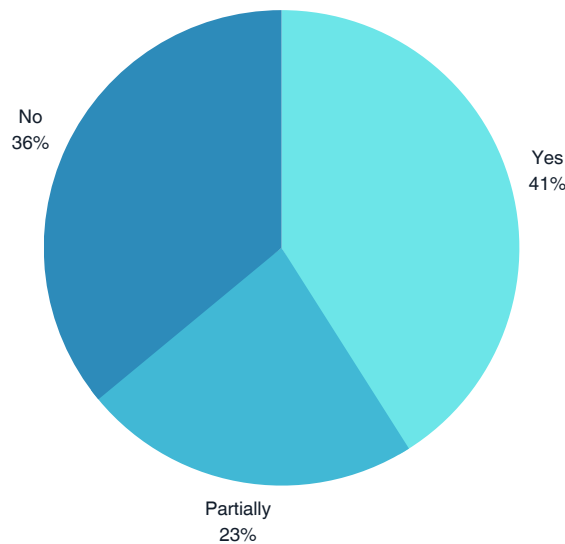
Type of provision	Somewhat/Very/Extremely Confident	Not so/Not at all Confident
Nursery	100%	0%
Primary	41%	59%
Specialist Primary	87%	13%
Secondary	55%	45%
Specialist Secondary	55%	45%
Independent Specialist	83%	17%
Post-16	67%	33%
Specialist Post-16	80%	20%

An EHCP is a legal document, the ultimate duty for providing the support in Section F, falls on SMBC. As we can see from the data, there is a real lack of confidence that Section F is being provided, with the confidence in primary, secondary and specialist secondary provisions being of particular concern.



# FINDINGS

Question: If your child/young person has an EHCP and you had an annual review in this last year, did your school follow the Code of Practice regarding these?



## Legal Context: The SEND Code of Practice 2015 specifies:

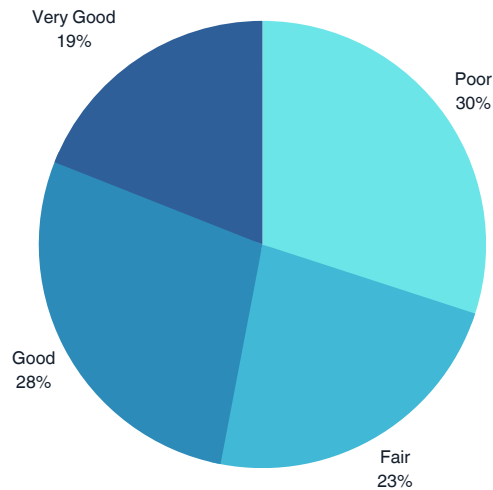
9.176 The following requirements apply to reviews where a child or young person attends a school or other institution: • The child's parents or young person, a representative of the school or other institution attended, a local authority SEN officer, a health service representative and a local authority social care representative must be invited and given at least two weeks' notice of the date of the meeting. Other individuals relevant to the review should also be invited, including youth offending teams and job coaches where relevant • The school (or, for children and young people attending another institution, the local authority) must seek advice and information about the child or young person prior to the meeting from all parties invited, and send any advice and information gathered to all those invited at least two weeks before the meeting • The meeting must focus on the child or young person's progress towards achieving the outcomes specified in the EHC plan, and on what changes might need to be made to the support that is provided to help them achieve 197 those outcomes, or whether changes are needed to the outcomes themselves. Children, parents and young people should be supported to engage fully in the review meeting • The school (or, for children and young people attending another institution, the local authority) must prepare and send a report of the meeting to everyone invited within two weeks of the meeting. The report must set out recommendations on any amendments required to the EHC plan, and should refer to any difference between the school or other institution's recommendations and those of others attending the meeting.

Annual reviews not being carried out in line with the SEND Code of Practice, means that they, are less likely to be of good quality, there is a reduced likelihood that professionals would be able to attend or submit information ahead of the annual review meeting, meaning that the information then sent to the EHCP service to decide whether or not to amend an EHC (and if so what to amend) is less likely to be robust. This means there is more likelihood that the decision whether or not to amend, and the content of the plan will be appealed at SENDIST Tribunal, and leaves the process more open to challenge through the LGSCO.

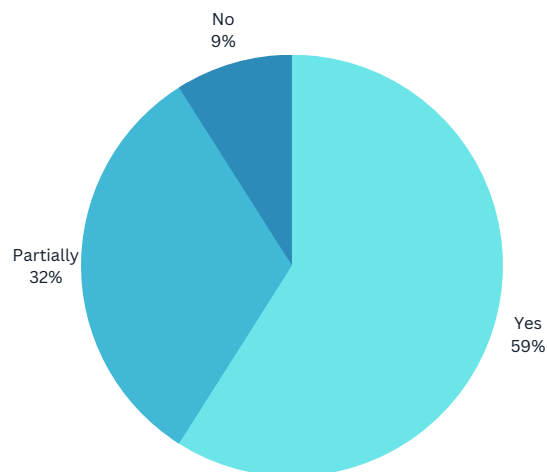


# FINDINGS

Question: If your child/young person had an EHC assessment in the last year, how would you rate your experience of the person centred planning meeting?



Question: If your child/young person has an EHCP, do you think it accurately reflects them?

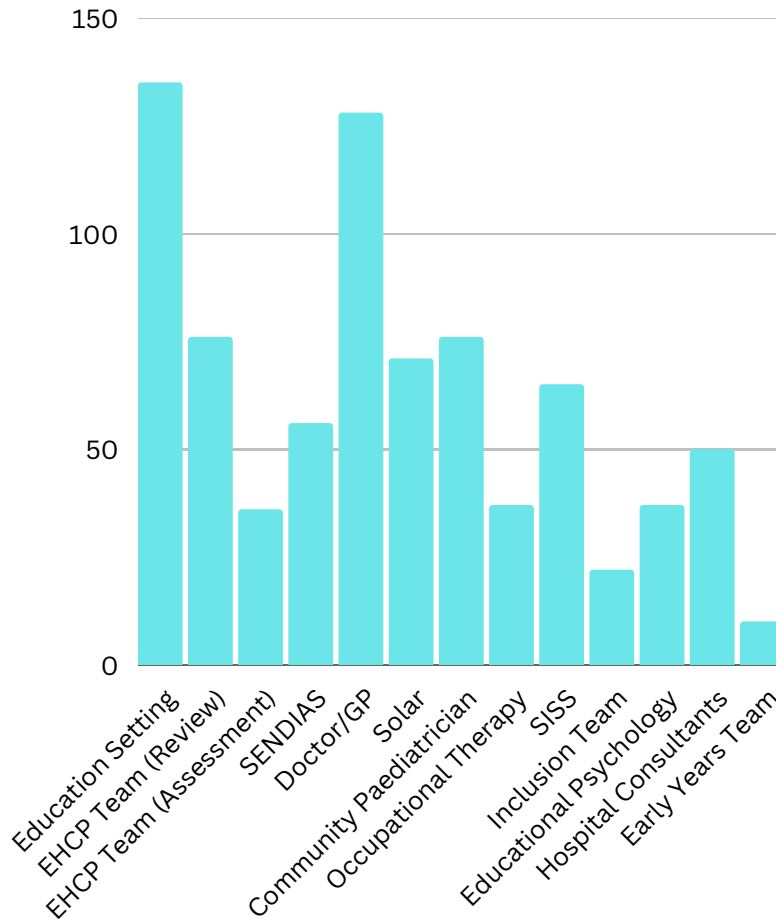


The responses from parent carers suggest that the introduction of the Person Centred planning meeting has been a positive one, and that the work undertaken within the EHCP Service is leading to EHCP's that better reflect the child/young person and their needs.

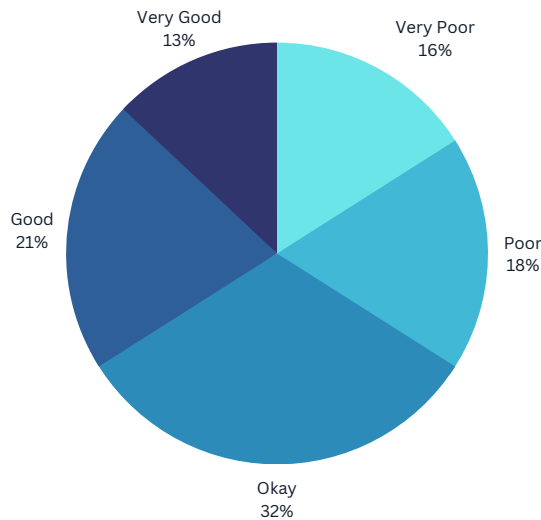


# FINDINGS

Question: What services have you/your child had contact with in the last year?



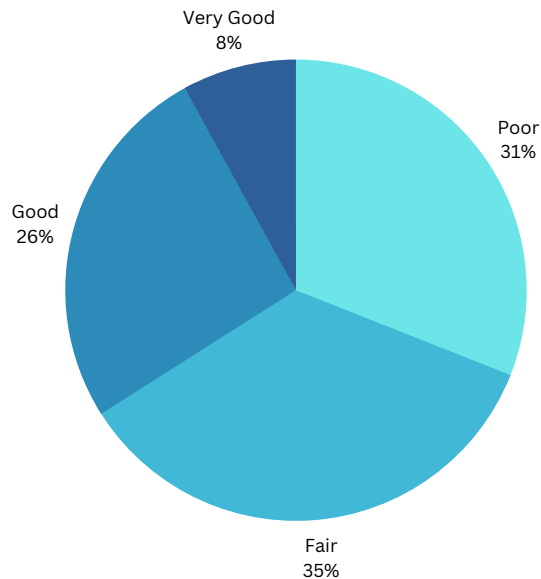
Question: How would you rate your experience of SEND Services in the last year?





# FINDINGS

Question: If you have had contact with Solihull Sendias in the last year, how would you rate the experience?



The majority of comments regarding Sendias, say that the service is good, but that it is lacking in capacity and therefore now focuses on mediation and tribunal work, whereas they used to be able to support with SEN support, and helping families and schools put reasonable adjustments in place.

Some of the comments from parent carers include:

“More IAS Capacity”

“SENDIAS gave some useful advice but couldn't actually attend any meetings and help us with the school because they didn't have the time. They said they really only do mediations and tribunals. Its a shame as I remember when they used to help with SEND support children and helped with issues with schools. “

“They are so busy its tricky to get the support,,,”

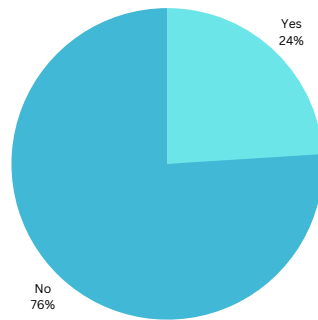
“Sendias don't have the capacity to help.”



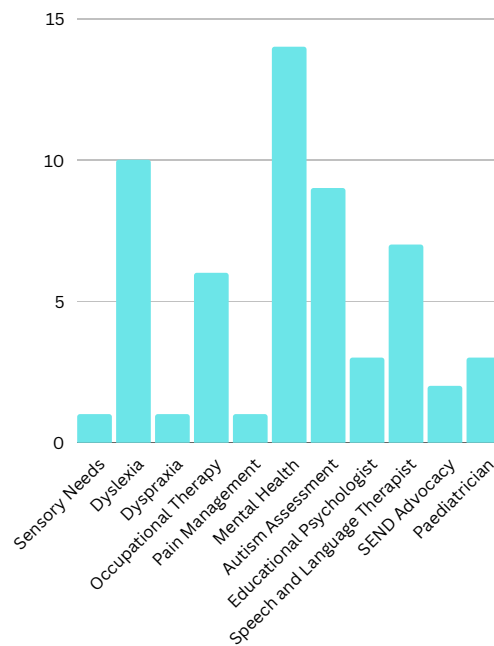


# FINDINGS

Question: In the last 12 months have you accessed any private services for assessments/diagnosis/therapy/support?



Question: If you have accessed private services- what did you access them for?



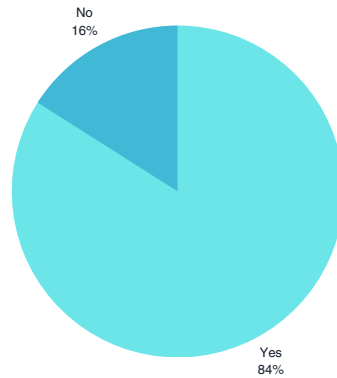
When accessed why they accessed private services, responses

- waiting lists too long
- gathering evidence of needs
- told had to pay privately for assessment as not available through LA/health (particularly common for dyslexia assessments)
- unable to get mental health support because of child's age (under 5)
- NHS offer is not sufficient (SALT, OT, Mental Health)

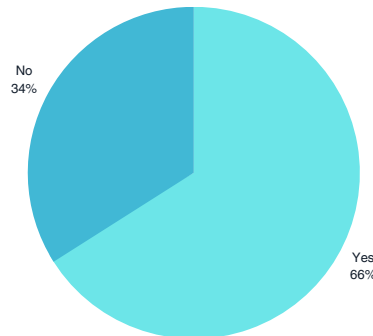


# FINDINGS

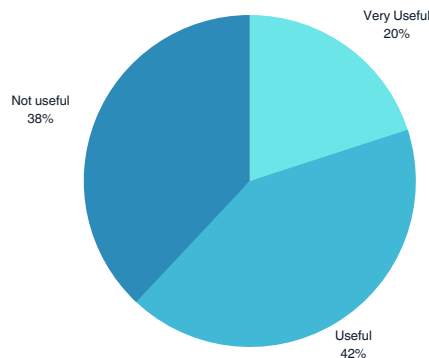
Question: Are you aware of the Solihull SEND Local Offer website?



Question: Have you visited the Solihull SEND Local Offer in the last year?



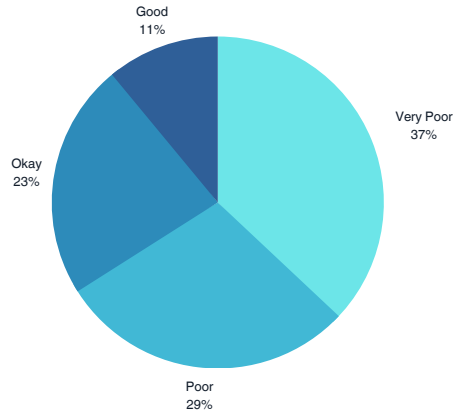
Question: How useful has the Solihull SEND Local Offer website been to you?



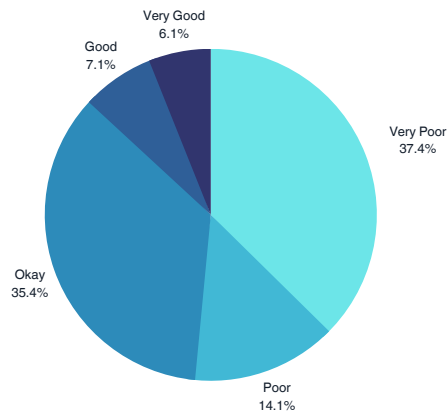


# FINDINGS

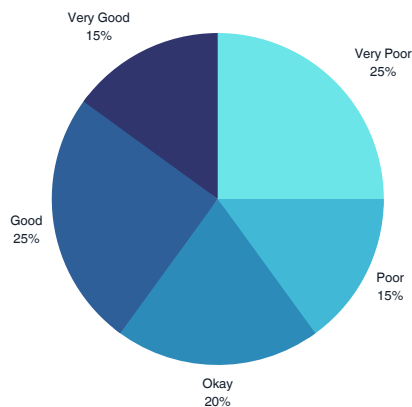
Question: If you have had involvement with the children's disability team how would you rate your experience?



Question: If you have had involvement with the children's social care how would you rate your experience?



Question: If your young person (18-25) has had contact with adult social care how would you rate your experience?





# COMMENTS

## SEND Local Offer Website:

Comments generally supported the view that the local offer is improving, however there is still a feeling that the website can be clunky, that families would like to see more information on it- particularly around pathways for assessments or support, and what schools and services should be offering. There is also a general view that families would like to see more information that is accessible to young people to help build their independence rather than them having to ask their parents.

“Clunky, some of it is business focused nor parent or SEND young person focused.”

“It’s much better than it used to be. Please ask the LA to keep going with the improvements.”

“Useful and informative.”

“It’s been really useful and getting loads better. I would like to see more information about what schools should do to help children. I would also like to see information that teenagers especially can understand.”

“There are improvements that are needed to make it more streamlined so that it’s easier to find what you are looking for. Also health and education is very separate would be good to have them linked. Needs more visuals and less boring.”

“It’s getting better, still not great but I can see changes have happened, still a bit wordy and some wrong/old information on it.”

“Would be good to see some videos and pictures and for search options to be easier instead of hundreds of things coming up....”

## The Legal Context

### The SEND Code of Practice 2015

4.1 Local authorities must publish a Local Offer, setting out in one place information about provision they expect to be available across education, health and social care for children and young people in their area who have SEN or are disabled, including those who do not have Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans. In setting out what they ‘expect to be available’, local authorities should include provision which they believe will actually be available.



## MAIN THEMES

- There continues to be inconsistency across services and schools, and parental confidence in schools ability to meet emotional wellbeing and SEND needs is poor. Parents also note a feeling that schools do not identify needs early enough or put support in early enough.
- Having an EHCP does not mean that parent carers feel confident the provisions will be put in place.
- The Introduction of the Person Centred Planning meeting during the EHCP assessment process is seen to be a positive experience.
- Too many families are having to access private assessments/therapy, particularly for dyslexia, mental health and autism.
- Too many families rate their experiences with social care as poor and tell us it is too hard to access support and decisions are not consistent.
- Parent carers are reporting that the Local Offer is improving and want to see continued improvements.
- Parent carers overwhelmingly report positive experiences in early years, both with Nurseries and with the Early Years Team.
- Parent carers are looking for a more joined up approach.



# CONCLUSION

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We welcome the changes that have been made in some areas, for instance it is clear that families appreciate the addition of person-centred planning meetings in the EHC assessment process, and that the work to improve the quality of EHC plans is also being felt.

It is also clear that the work being put into the Local Offer is beginning to make a difference.

It is also clear that there are areas where there needs to be continued improvements and there are areas where improvements are not yet being felt by children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities and their families.

For children and young people with SEND in Solihull to achieve their best possible outcomes, and to receive the right support and the right time, there needs to be a system wide approach with families, schools, the local authority, health and the voluntary sector working together as a whole community.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue work to improve the local offer, including visual pathways, increased information and information accessible to young people.
- Communication needs to be clearer, even if it is a message to say we have received your email/message and will get back to you by.. Also look at ways to improve communication styles- conversations need to start from a position of what can be done to support a child/young person and their family.
- Continue the work to improve the quality of EHCP's as well as timeliness of annual reviews.
- Work to secure pathways where all areas work together- seamless and joined up.
- Work to improve the consistency of support across all schools and services.
- Work to support the reduction of waiting lists, and increase the support whilst waiting.
- Look at criteria for support/respite and the transparency of access criteria.



# APPENDIX

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The following comments are some of those collected from parent carers in Solihull as part of the survey. These have not been altered with the exception of removing names of children, schools, or voluntary organisations.

On what makes it hard to get help for children and young people:

**Schools:**

“Lack of inclusive schools”

“SENDCos don't have enough time or wear too many hats in school to do anything in a reasonable time-scale (ours is brilliant at what she does, but only gets 1 day a week to do it)”

“Schools don't follow EHCP's”

“The waiting game, school being almost reluctant to support with ASD assessments or OT referral, even though the strategies are being used and when waiting times are so long why are they waiting?”

“Schools don't have enough staff to support children.”

“Not enough support in school due to huge demand.”

“Not enough understanding of specific needs and what will help my child.”

“Lack of early identification of needs or early intervention to support needs.”

“The phrase ‘but she is fine in school’ needs to be banned.”

“Schools not putting into place reasonable adjustments.”

“Special schools don't stretch children so they don't achieve any where near as much as they could. Mainstream schools aren't supportive enough for SEND.”

**Education:**

“Lack of careers advice. Lack of information for parents on post-16 options.”

“Lack of legal knowledge”

“Not enough places in specialist schools”

“The lack of communication between services means support isn't consistent, everything is a fight to get the right support and parents are not directed and supported enough to navigate education for their young children. In turn the whole experience becomes negative because parents and carers mental health suffers as it's like a full time job in itself trying to secure support, attend groups and meetings, loaded with schools, and teachers. The list is endless but if there was one service who could oversee this that had the families best interest at heart without wanting to avoid paperwork or let the child suffer so much before help is readily available I feel parents and families whole experience would be less traumatic.”

“LA not holding schools to account.”



### Social Care:

“0-5 support for respite or short breaks is very slim.”

“Barriers to getting help/support from children’s services. Threshold for the disability team is very high.”

“Children’s Disability Team seem to understand health needs but not SEND needs.”

“Not enough information, early enough about moving to adult services.”

“I don’t understand the information about paying for services when my son turns 18. Its too complicated and isn’t written for parents let alone young people with SEND to understand.”

### Wider:

“Waiting lists are far too long. No support for children/families whilst on waiting lists.”

“Our GP often doesn’t know where to send a child for assessment/help.”

“Everything takes so long and thresholds are too high.”

“Many services are overwhelmed and hard to get help when you need it particularly Solar”

“Everything is so disconnected and doesn't link up. I've you get diagnosis that's it, no one reaches out or makes contact. You have to be so proactive and it takes so much time to seek out what support might be available but even then its not always first how to access. It's exhausting and feels like fire fighting for our children.”

“Too much red tape and bureaucracy. Poor communication between agencies. Poor communication with parents.“

“Not enough professionals explain things to our kids, they just rely on parents to do it, which often teenagers don’t want. How can our kids be independent if the professionals don’t help them to be.“

“Child mental health, its very hard to get help. Appointments take too long and in that time crisis points have already started.“

“Waiting lists, lack of trust in parents, lack of professionals, paperwork nightmare.“

“Children’s needs blamed either on parenting or behaviour.“

“All the misinformation that is around. Its hard to know who to believe about what.“

“No one gives you any help or advice on how to access support for the parent or how to access more information for SEN people“

“Misunderstandings of what services/schools should do when. Misunderstanding of what the law/code of practice actually say“





### Suggestions about how SEND services in Solihull can be improved?

“Listen to parents and act on what they tell you.”

“More help and options at Post-16“

“Work to identify needs early and put support in rather than waiting till children fail.“

“Put greater emphasis on mental health, particularly in secondary schools.”

“Professionals working together rather than battling support between teams/agencies.”

“Help everyone realise that when we work together things happen and our children get the help and support they need. There is no need to 'fight'”

“Make sure everyone knows the right procedures and the law.

Help families to know what can be done and where they can get help from, as well as what they can ask schools for.”

“Improve consistency.”

“Reduce waiting lists.”

“Help parents to access referrals for assessments and support when schools don't want to help.”

“Make it easier to get assessments where they are needed- families shouldn't have to pay for private assessments when schools don't want to pay to get CLD team in etc.”

“More training for schools on identifying needs early. More info on what schools should be doing and when- so that schools know and families know.”

“Easier access to children's disability team and better training for them on children who have SEN disabilities rather than health disabilities. Oh and training in how to communicate without parent blaming.”

“Remind people that behaviour is communication.”

“Help SENDIAS be able to support children earlier in schools rather than just doing mediation and tribunal.”

“Reduce waiting lists.”

“Focus on early identification of needs and putting in early support and strategies.”

“More accountability for schools.”

“More support for mental health early on- proactive support.”

“I don't know what its like for older children but I would suggest copying how the Early Years team works across all ages.”

“My child's school have been really helpful and gone above and beyond.”

“This year my son's annual review was challenging, school wanted to take out lots of support but the EHC team wouldn't let them as they didn't have evidence it wasn't needed. They have been amazing and its the best EHC we have ever had.”

“I would like to see an auto-response so that when I email people (EHC team) I know they have received the email and when I will get a reply.”



“Services need to link up and flow through from early education into adulthood. Responses need to be quicker to avoid stress. Communication needs to be clear with timescales. It's the not knowing if anything is being actioned that causes the most stress.”

“Help parents know what they can ask schools to do. Try to make schools put in place more support for children early on so they don't struggle so much.”

“Fine for my son as it stands. Hoping that post-16 support is good as have had excellent experience with X School Senco team “

“Quicker replies, even if just to say email/messaged received and we will get back to you shortly. More step by step communication so you know things are being done so you don't have to chase all the time.”

“Give more support to volunteer organisations that have to do the work the la should. XX and the new XX have been amazing.”

“More info on the local offer.

Help parents to have the right info, we often rely on other parents to tell us things so when there is false information around, its hard.”

“The work the Early Years Team Area SENCOs do with the nursery to support my child is amazing.”

“Make sure there is support for the whole family.”

“Mainstream schools need to be more accountable. They need to acknowledge SEND earlier and support children earlier rather than waiting for them to 'fail'”

“Improve people's understandings of the law and the code of practice, including schools and parents understanding.”

“Improve transparency about waiting times.”



Solihull Parent Carer Voice C.I.C



# THANK YOU

## CONTACT US

 [solihullpcv@outlook.com](mailto:solihullpcv@outlook.com)

 [www.spcv.org.uk](http://www.spcv.org.uk)



**Solihull Parent  
Carer Voice**