



Annual Report

Prepared By :

Somerset Parent
Carer Forum CIC

2024-2025

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Our Vision

Our vision is to strengthen the voice of parent carers in Somerset, ensuring their experiences and perspectives shape the development of education, health, and social care services.

We aim to create a community where parent carers feel heard, valued, and empowered to influence decisions that affect their families. At the same time, we provide practical information, guidance, and peer support so that parent carers have the knowledge and confidence to advocate effectively for their children with additional needs and disabilities.

By combining representation, capacity building, and direct support, we help create lasting change for families across Somerset



Our Mission

1

To give Parent Carers in Somerset of children and young people aged 0-25 with additional needs and disabilities an independent platform to share their views.

2

Raise awareness and share information on the issues and rights of children and young people with additional needs and disabilities and their families.

3

To support parent carers with information and guidance to help their families achieve positive outcomes.

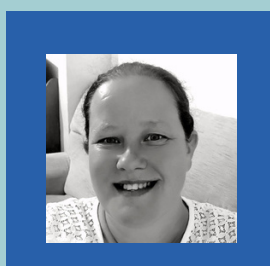
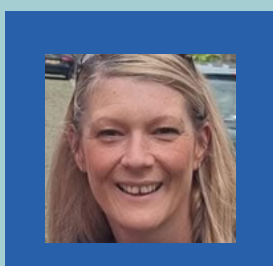
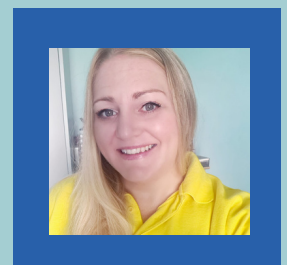
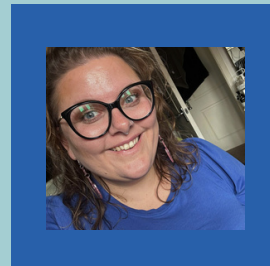
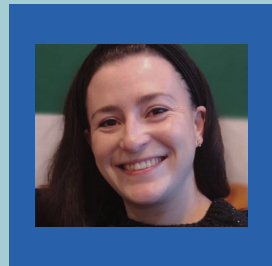
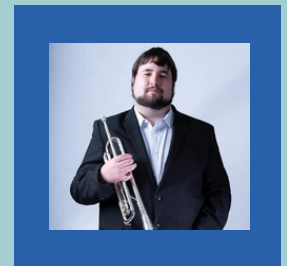
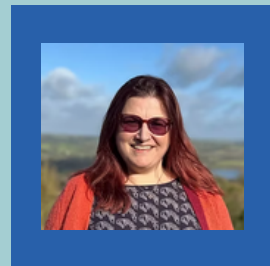
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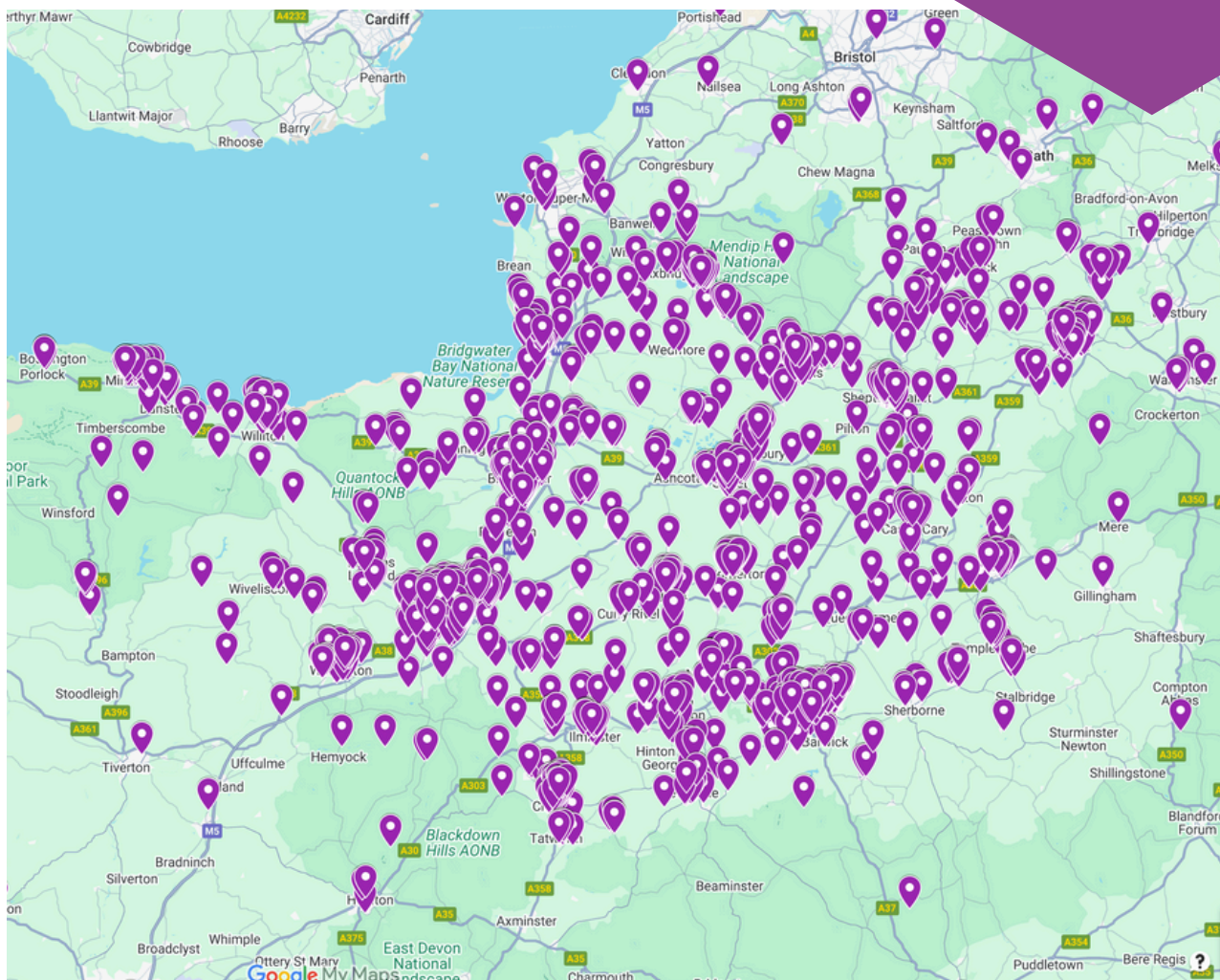
To work in partnership to shape services that improve the experiences and opportunities of children and young people with additional needs or disabilities, by placing families at the heart of decisions.

Our Team

Our team is made up of dedicated Parent Carers who bring lived experience, passion, and commitment to representing the voices of families of children and young people with additional needs and disabilities.

Together, we work in partnership with services, share information, and advocate for positive change to improve outcomes for families across Somerset





Reaching Parent Carers

As of 31 March 2025, the forum had 4,636 Parent Carers on its mailing list, representing a 24% increase compared with the previous year.

In addition, the forum engaged with 805 practitioner and organisational contacts.

Our reach extends across the whole of Somerset, with a small number of Parent Carers from neighbouring areas who are eligible under DfE guidelines, as their children access support from Somerset services.

Collecting experiences across a range of circumstances and needs



Children

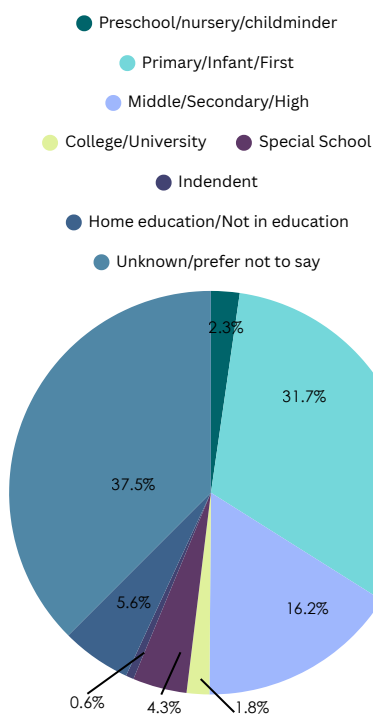
2973*

Different conditions

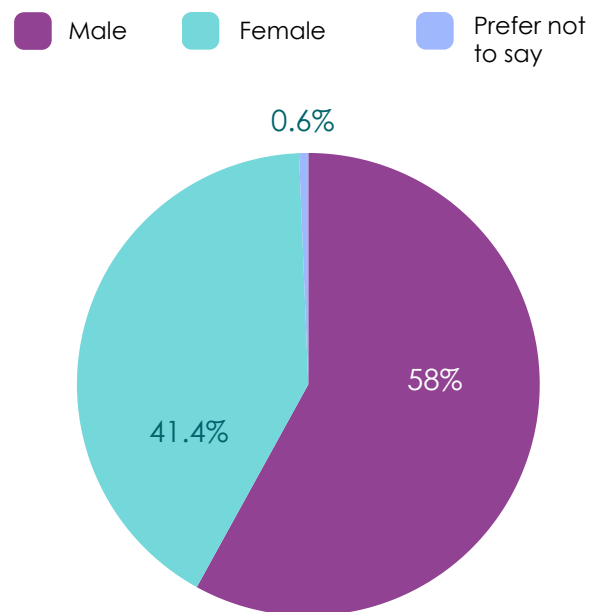
75*

This does not include those awaiting a diagnosis or SWAN

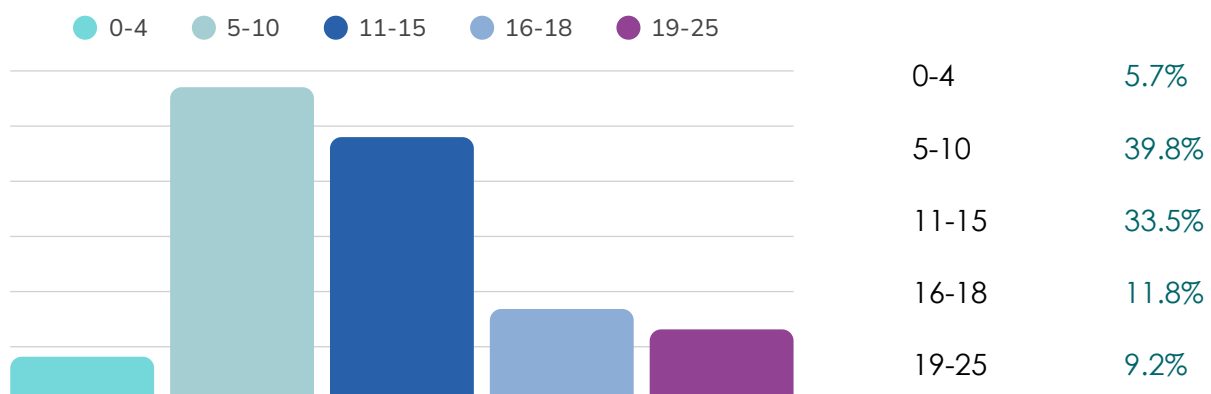
Education setting



Gender



Ages



*Parents are not required to provide information on children to be added to the mailing list so this represent the data we hold. Type of setting was at the point of giving the information.

2024 TO 2025 ENGAGEMENT

Listening events

We ran 14 online listening events attended by 119 parents and three 'Let's Talk SEND and Inclusion' events with 252 parents. Topics covered included transport, exclusions, neurodevelopmental assessments, Autism and ADHD workshops, fairer funding, inclusive language, and health involvement in EHCPs.



Chill and Chat groups

Over the year, the forum held 156 Chill and Chat coffee sessions, totalling 218 hours, with 475 Parent Carers attending. Key topics raised included education provision, Autism/ADHD pathways and support, EHCPs, the need for support, and anxiety.



Talking to parent carers

The forum has dedicated 869 hours—the equivalent of 116 working days—engaging directly with Parent Carers through phone, email, and social media to hear about their experiences."



Parent Carer feedback

We gathered over 5,300 views through surveys, polls, and individual feedback, helping us to understand what is and isn't working for families in Somerset.



Representing parent voice

This year, the forum attended 364 meetings, totalling 610 hours, along with regional conferences, as well as the national NNPCF and Contact annual conference. We also took part in local events including a transition day, a SEND session at a local school, and various interview panels.

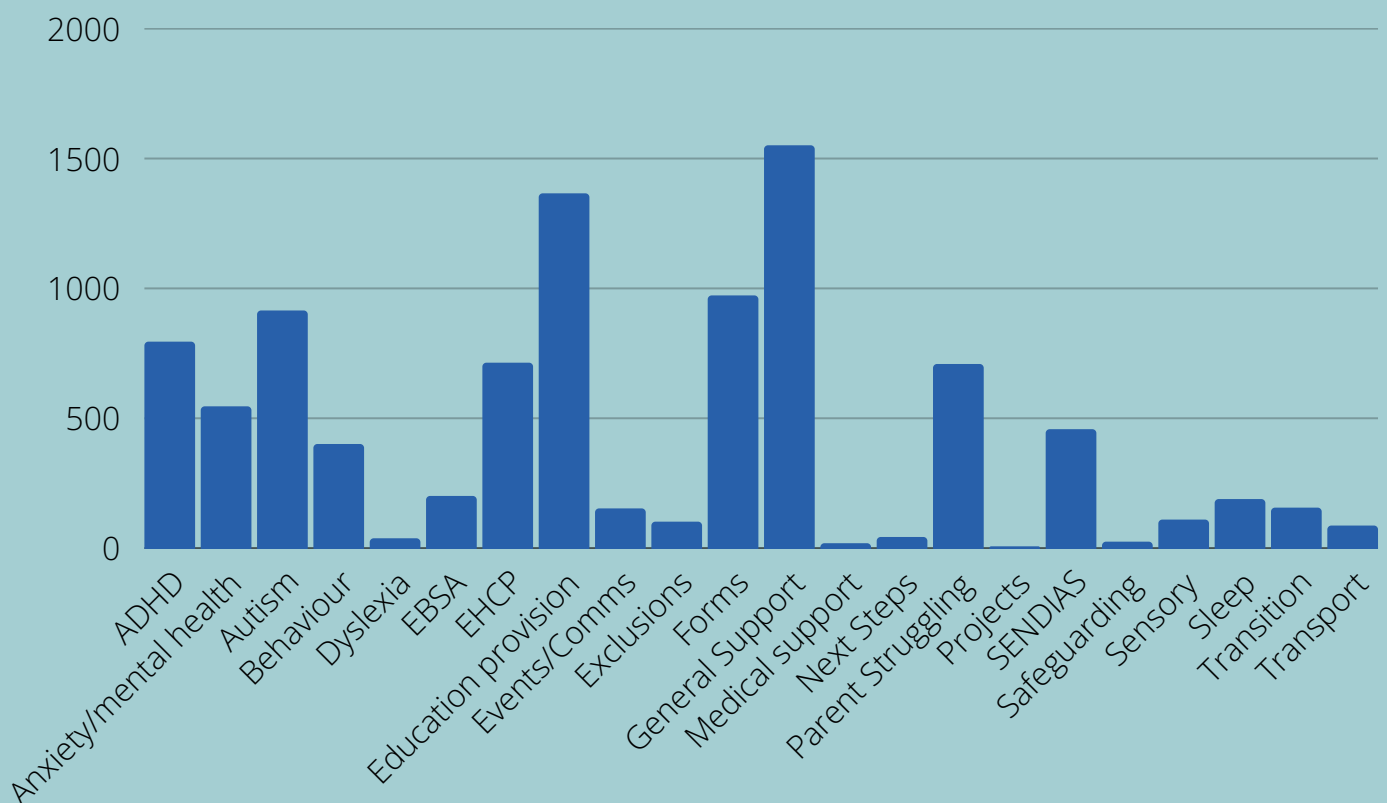


A Year in Review - hot topics

Over the past year we spent a total of 4940 hours (over 205 days) in conversations with parent carers through emails, calls, visits, groups, and family events.

We record the themes of these conversations to understand what matters most to our community, shape our future offer, and highlight the key issues on parents' minds.

Capturing this information helps us plan social media posts and highlight key areas of interest to our community.



We never share individual or collective information if it could identify families. Over the year, we have worked with families to collect case studies that demonstrate the impact of services.

ONLINE PERFORMANCE REPORT

Total post views

823,000



Reach

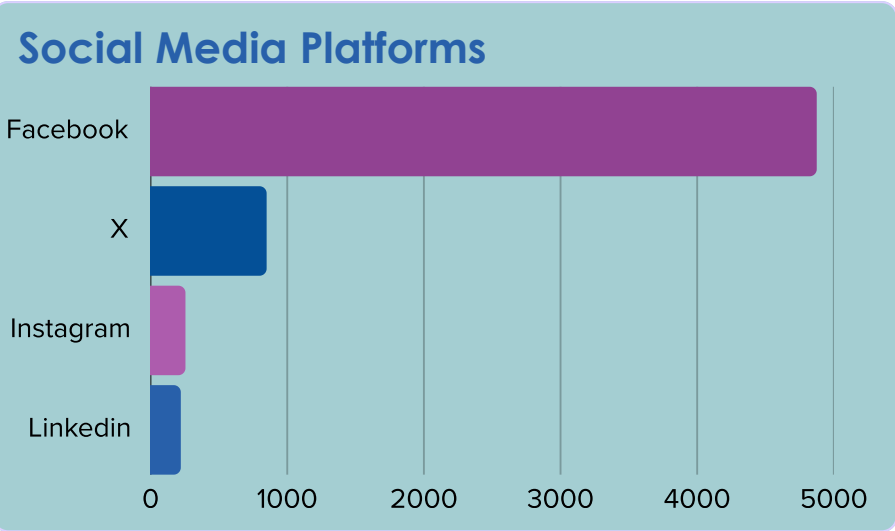
134,000



Total page visits

49,100





Website

Views

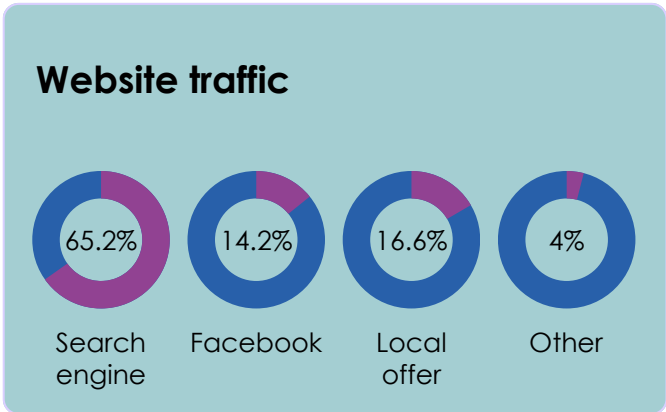
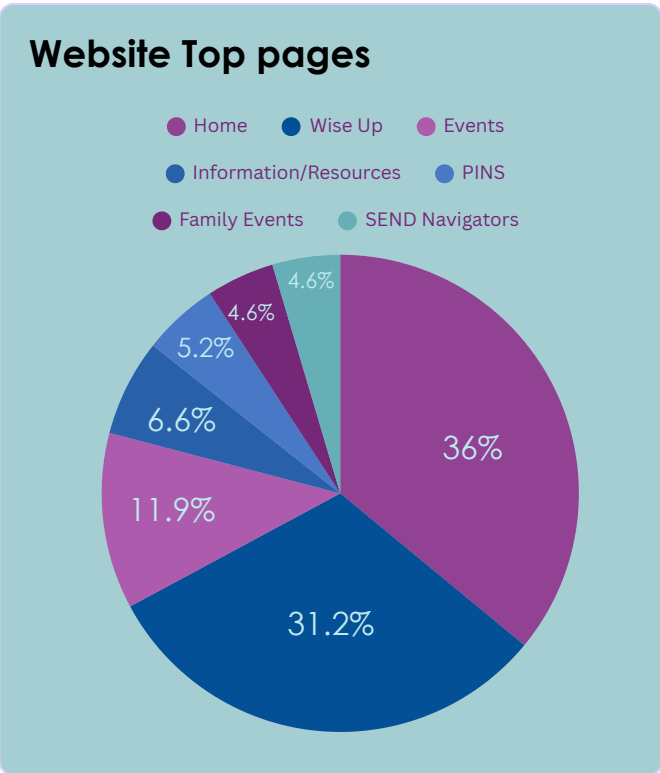
51,100

↑ 20%

Visitors

18,900

↑ 24%



Facebook Audience Gender Insight

7%

Male

93%

Female

The forum led a multi-agency project with NHS Somerset, Healthwatch, Somerset Council, and Spark Somerset to understand how people access mental health support following the decommissioning of Somerset's Big Tent.

The report confirmed persistent barriers to finding reliable information and will inform the development of the local offer of support. The report we developed shared the findings which reinforced what young people, parents and professionals have previously shared: that there are persistent barriers to finding reliable and accessible information about mental health services.

The report will be used to help support the development of the local offer of support.



Support for children and young people to understand their feelings and mental health in Somerset

2024

Influence of parent carer voice

Our listening events and Let's Talk SEND and Inclusion Days (three per year) provide a platform for parents to influence local decision-making.

These events have helped Somerset Council and ICB shape services, address barriers to inclusive education, and inform initiatives such as fairer funding, the creation of 16 new SEN units, and a hard-to-place team for children without suitable school placements.

Conversations with families has supported our strategic discussions, for example highlighting concerns around reduced timetables, leading to revised local protocols and guidance.

Family feedback continues to shape our Wise Up Workshops, chill-and-chat groups (now 13 monthly, including online and a new dad's group), and other activities.



Stronger together

The forum runs an online peer to peer support group which has just under 1.4k members. This enables parents in the local area to share information and experiences.

This runs alongside our Chill and Chat groups which provide a space for parent carers to meet and reduces isolation.

Our support group forums bring together local groups to provide peer-to-peer support and capture a wide range of family views, including from condition-specific groups. Groups are able to engage with local service providers and the Local Offer coordinator.

“This group has helped me loads as a parent they have made me see there is light at the end of the tunnel for my son. They always give me advice when I am feeling down and makes me feel on top again with their support, just a massive thank you.”

This year we have supported parent carers to share their stories with journalists, helping to highlight key issues affecting families.

We have also taken part in several radio and TV interviews to raise awareness of the challenges families face and to showcase services and initiatives that can provide support.

We continue to share parent carers' views at a national level through the NNPCF and Contact. While some decisions are made locally, we recognise that many changes require action from central government.

“Thank you, honestly, I've never felt so seen and heard with no judgment until today. It's been really helpful.”



Feedback from our community

"SPCF have always been there for me and know they are always at the end of the phone/email for any help needed"

"Since having support from Somerset Parent Carer Forum I feel less alone and seen and heard."

"This course was brilliant! So helpful and the organisers were great."

"I have attend the PINS sessions at our school with have been a very valuable service."

"Lovely supportive people running the workshop, friendly, patient. Good amount of information. Asking question, taking about people's personal experiences. Very helpful."

"I just wanted to say we had a really lovely time this afternoon - thank you so much for having us and organising it."

"Having a navigator do a home visit really helped me ALOT, i don't drive and cannot use public transport so i am rather trapped."

I never would have even thought to apply without you and it's because of your time and knowledge that this was a successful application.
Thank you from the bottom of our hearts, it makes all the stress that little bit easier."

"I love the fact that I get calls to see how it's all going and if I need any further help with anything."

Find out more in our
annual National
Lottery report

FAMILY DAYS

“Great day, great
use of resources
and funds. Thank
you!! Kids loved it”

Butlins

We teamed up with Butlins Minehead to offer families an exciting after-school session with swimming, arcade games, and fairground fun. Families also enjoyed exploring the new sensory area, which proved a popular highlight of the visit.



82
Attended



60
Attended

Slip n Slide

Over the year, the forum held 156 Chill and Chat coffee sessions, totalling 218 hours, with 475 Parent Carers attending. Key topics raised included education provision, Autism/ADHD pathways and support, EHCPs, the need for support, and anxiety..

Ranger Days

Our families joined the team at Ham Hill for a ranger day, learning new skills while enjoying time exploring the local countryside.

28
Attended



53
Attended

Farm days

We were delighted to team up with Magdalen Farm to run away days for families. They enjoyed time in nature, feeding the animals, and sharing a home-cooked meal together — experiences with significant benefits for children with additional needs.

Joint Funday with CIAT

In July we hosted a joint Fun Day with the Community Inclusion and Activity Team at Somerset Council. Families explored information stands for parent carers and enjoyed a wide range of activities, from crafts and sports to music, games, and even animal encounters.



255
Attended

Youth Club

We run a monthly youth club where children enjoy games, crafts, and social time together. Popular activities include giant Jenga, table tennis, table football, and the Nintendo Switch, alongside a different craft each session to take home. There's always plenty to keep everyone busy.

**“ It's great, I love it
this place is my
second home”**



Our youth club provide a safe and supportive space where children can build friendships, develop social skills, and gain confidence. Activities such as games, crafts, and sports encourage teamwork, creativity, and problem-solving. They also offer opportunities to try new experiences, promote healthy lifestyles, and give children a sense of belonging within their community.

9

Sessions

14

Hours

66

Attended

The Partnerships for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) project uses a model for supporting good outcomes in mainstream schools for Neurodiverse students and strength parent carer and school partnerships.

The project focused on strengthening knowledge, skills and improving environments to better meet the needs of neurodiverse children.

Each school in the programme:

- completed the nationally agreed self-assessment
- received 37.5 hours support
- had parent carer sessions led by Somerset Parent Carer Forum CIC

Workshops for schools on the following have been delivered:

- Support for pupil voice
- Good Autism Practice 2 online and 2 face to face
- Autism and Anxiety
- Creating, implementing and monitoring Neuro-affirmative support plans
- Managing behaviour that challenges
- Graduated response to Neurodiversity
- Sensory environment audit and action plan
- Communication audit and action plan
- Celebrating Neurodiversity
- Leadership for Neurodivergent pupils
- Transitions
- Making use of visuals
- Making sense of neurodiversity

Parent and school joint workshops

- Sleep challenges for autistic young people
- Autism and eating difficulties
- Introduction to dyslexia
- Demand avoidance

Partnerships for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools

Review

The final review sessions have focused on next steps and impact. Schools are building on existing practice — leaders report seeing staff make reasonable adjustments, such as chunking work and improving understanding of sensory needs.

The sensory and communication work, along with implementation materials, has been highly valued. Parents are beginning to notice positive changes for their children.

Greatest impact has occurred through 1-1 guided conversations, enabling schools to reflect on their context in relation to training (e.g., behaviour and data work). This has helped training to become embedded in practice.

The PCF's relationships with schools have strengthened, increasing awareness of the forum's role. The parent carer session have increase knowledge of local support available to parent carers through signposting by parent reps.

“School have improved greatly.”

Case Study school

Over the course of year parent carers reported a notable improvement in their experience and perceptions of the school community and its support for their children.

The most significant positive change was in understanding the support provided for children with additional needs, which increased by 1.9 points. Communication about children's development and education also saw a strong improvement (+1.6), suggesting enhanced engagement from the school.

Parents felt more included in the wider school community (+1.3), and their views were increasingly heard and valued (+1.1). Confidence in resolving concerns rose slightly (+0.5), and perceptions of inclusion in extra-curricular activities improved modestly (+0.7).

Overall, these results reflect a positive trend in school-parent collaboration and inclusivity.

“The school are amazing about my son’s needs and about building a relationship with him, making him feel safe and helping him achieve what he has, and the support they give my son & us as parents”

A. Do you, as a parent carer, feel included in the wider school community?

B. Do you feel your child is included in the wider school community?

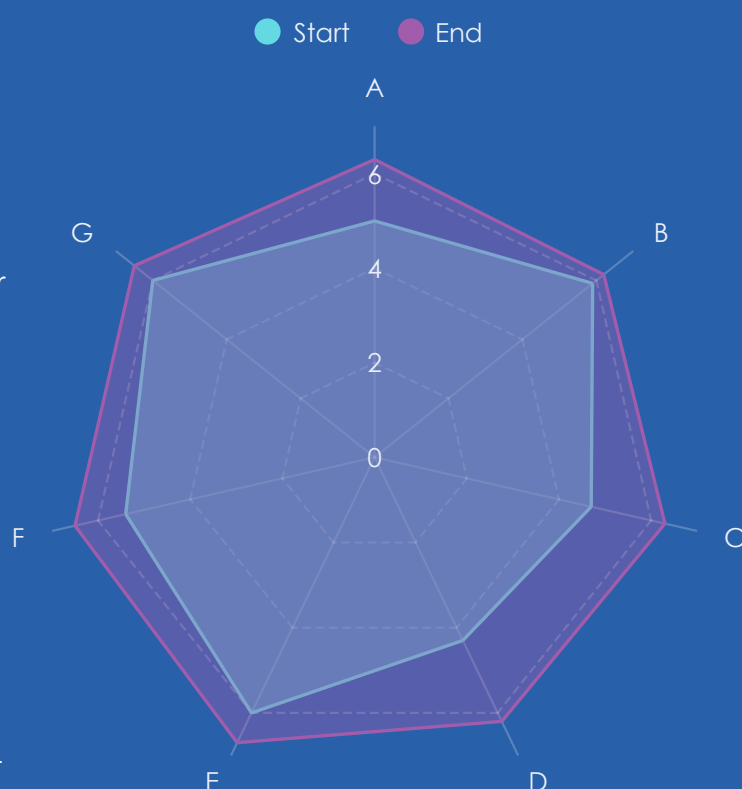
C. How well does the school communicate with you about your child's development and education?

D. Do you know what support is provided for your child to meet their additional needs in school?

E. Do you feel that the school supports/makes reasonable adjustments to extra-curricular activities and enrichment? e.g. trips, special events, visitors into school?

F. Do you feel your views are heard and valued when communicating with the school about your child?

G. If you have a concern or complaint about support for your child, how confident do you feel about raising your concern with the school and that your concern will be resolved?





Empowering Parent Carers

79
sessions

651
Attendees

Being a parent carer of a child or young person with additional needs can bring unique joys, but also situations that are challenging and sometimes overwhelming to navigate.

To help support parent carers on this journey, we've created a series of workshops shaped by the topics they have told us matter most. These sessions are designed to provide practical information, emotional support, and empowering education.

At the heart of this project is a simple but powerful idea: Workshops for Information, Support and Education delivered by people who truly understand.

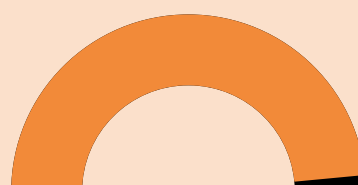
We hope these workshops help you feel more confident, connected, and equipped to advocate for your child and your family.

"I've done lots of training. It never feels enough though. This has helped me to feel back on track. It's nice to feel like I'm not alone in this and there are people out there that believe me."

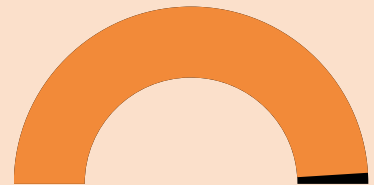
"Very relatable and easy to understand information. Great to read and hear others were experiencing the same"



"Lovely supportive people running the workshop, friendly, patient. Good amount of information. Asking question, taking about people's personal experiences. Very helpful."



97% rated very
good/good



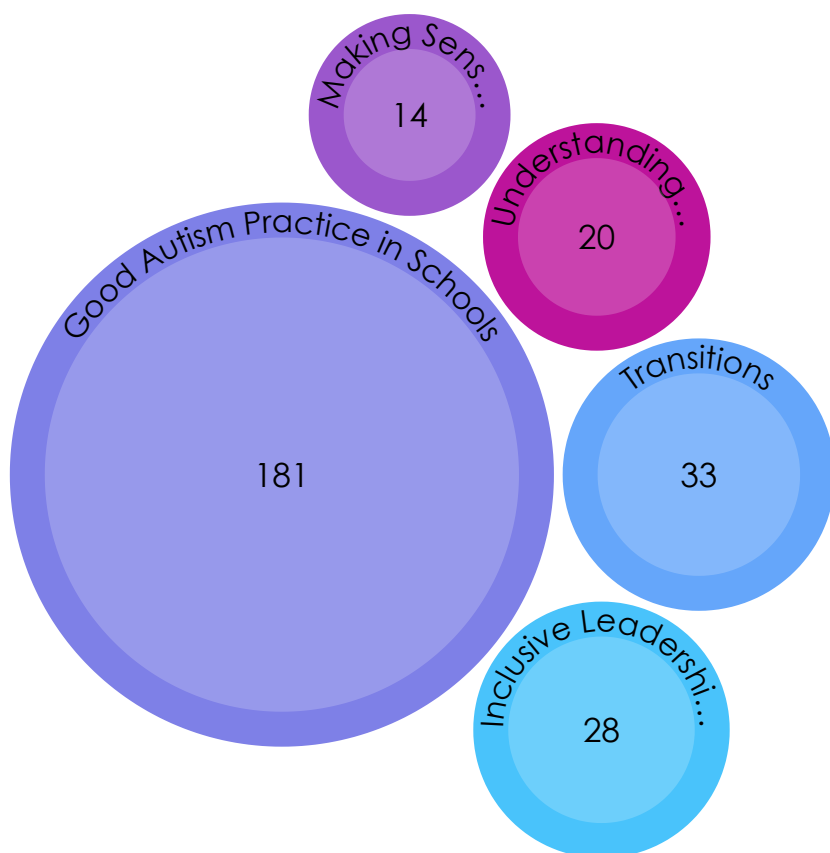
98% would
recommend

AET is a not-for-profit organisation, led by the National Autistic Society. As of September 2024 Somerset Parent Carer Forum CIC have become the training partner for Somerset.

The training programme and education resources are coproduced with autistic individuals, practitioners, parents/carers, and our network of Training Partners, education professionals, experts, and specialists. All the materials bring to life the latest research in autism and the current, lived experiences of autistic children and young people in education.

Modules

- Good Autism Practice in Schools
- Inclusive Leadership to Support Neurodivergent Students in Schools
- Transitions
- Making Sense of Neurodivergence in Schools
- Understanding Autism and Anxiety in Schools



Feedback

“Useful tips on class room environment”

“Lots of examples given at every stage so it was easy to think of our own students and how it is similar”

“There were lots of suggested strategies that can be used and taken back to easily share in school. There were personal experiences and real life examples used”

“The information provided has opened my eyes to new ways of approaching my interactions with neurodivergent pupils, and given me greater awareness of how their learning may be different to others around them”

Averages for quality questions out of 5

4.6

Averages for impact questions out of 5

4.4

Finance

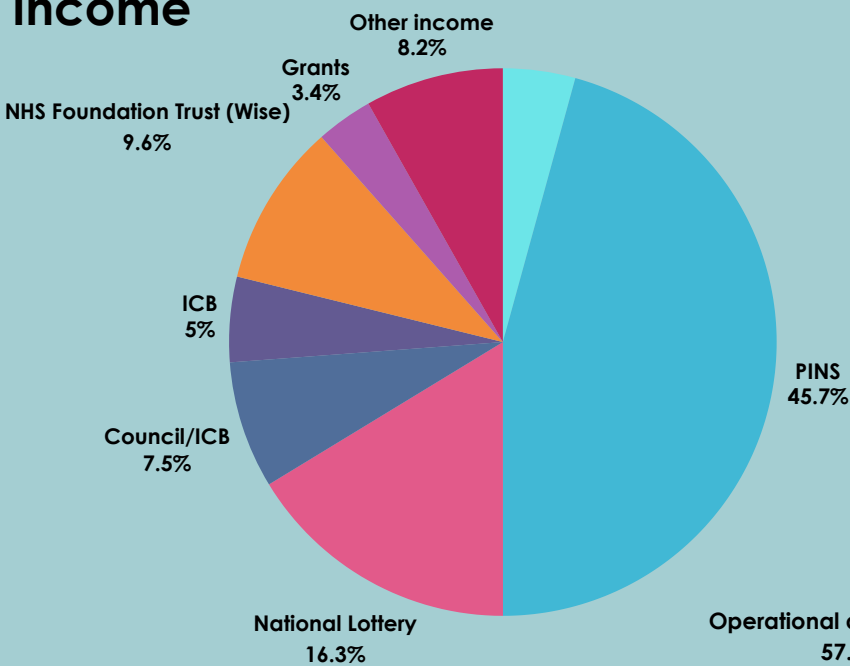


Somerset Parent Carer Forum CIC operates under the regulations for Community Interest Companies.

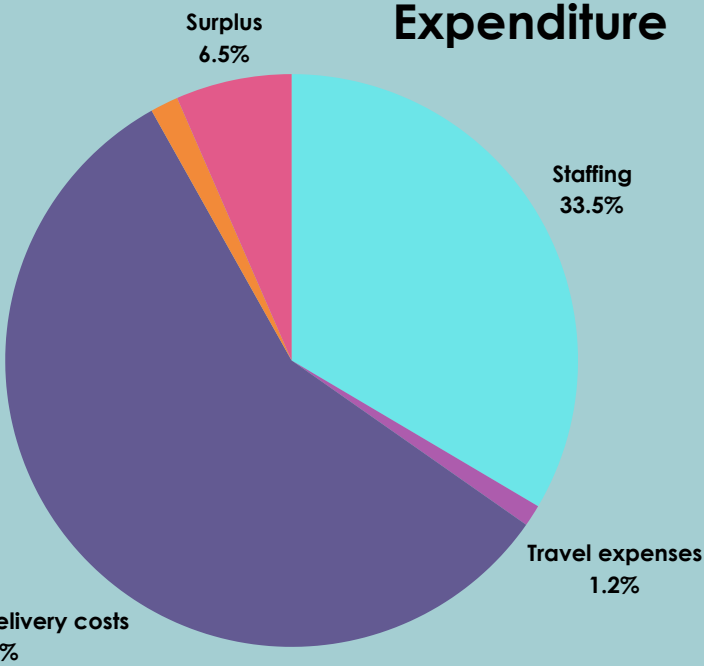
As a not-for-profit organisation, all our work is dedicated to benefiting the SEND community in Somerset.

A full breakdown of the forum's financial returns is available on the Companies House website.

Income



Expenditure



Forum Development

This year we focused on strengthening and developing our forum. Three long-time steering group members moved on, and we welcomed 10 new parent carers to the team. We refreshed the steering group structure and recruited new representatives to ensure decision-making is shared more widely.

We have implemented an updated volunteer processes and policies to encourage greater involvement.

We also strengthened our operational capacity by recruiting a parent with finance expertise, improving financial planning via Xero, and building reserves to cover redundancies and 3 months operating costs.

Our new parent carer representatives, all completing induction or shadowing periods.

Staff and volunteers completed Ihasco training to maintain compliance in areas such as safeguarding and GDPR. These measures have increased confidence, extended our reach, and generated exciting opportunities for parents to become more involved in the forum.

What Next?

Our team away day provided space to reflect, plan, and identify opportunities for coproduction and key issues raised by families.

Next year we will use this to help shape our priorities and workplan.



Get involved

We're always looking for more parent carers to join us and help make sure families' voices are heard. Every bit of time and support makes a real difference, whether it's helping out with a one-off task or getting involved more regularly.

There are lots of ways to take part, from chatting with other parents about the forum, to helping out at events, or joining meetings to share the experiences and views of local families.

We'll give you the support and training you need to feel confident in your role. We also understand that life as a parent carer can be unpredictable, and that's okay! You can get involved in a way that works for you, and if things change, we'll always be here to support you or help you take a step back if needed.



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