SEND area Ofsted and CQC inspection

November 2026

Somerset Parent Carer Forum C.I.C

2025 to 2026

Key statistics

Somerset Parent Carer Forum C.I.C

1.9M views

Page Visits 47.5K

- Increased interactions
- Space for sharing good quality information
- Parents and practitioners engaged

7.6K Social media Followers

- 381 chill and chat coffee session
- 646 parent carers attended WISE up Workshops
- Increased number of parent carers calling in and emails

Members 5556

New members 920

20% ↑

Nov 2026 5991 members

27.4K visitors

74.9k views

- Platform to share training and events
- Website redesign enables direct booking for events and self-referral

↑ 45%

Views collected 7.3K

Meetings/workshops 708 hours

- Increased involvement from families.
- Parent representation across education, health and social care
- Training delivered on lived experience.

The diverse experiences of our SEND Community

Parent Carers: 5,780 [redacted]

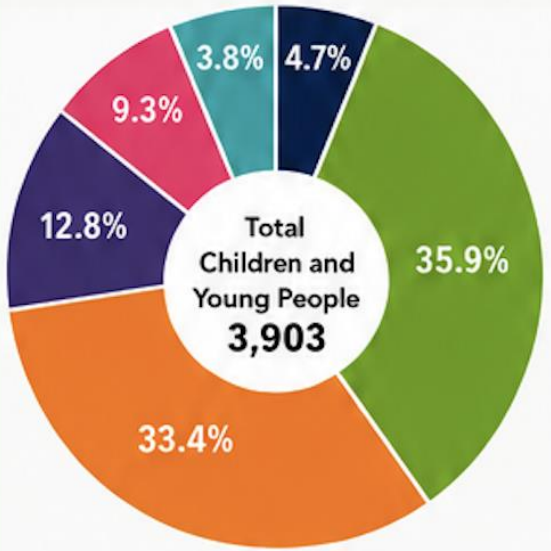
1. SETTING

Educational setting at the time the information was provided

Setting Type	Children and Young People	% of Total
Preschool / Childminder	209	5.4%
Primary / First School	1,310	33.6%
Middle / Secondary / High	650	16.7%
College / Uni	75	1.9%
Special School	163	4.2%
INMS	25	0.6%
Out of Education	72	1.8%
Home Educated	128	3.3%
Other	43	1.1%
Unknown / Not Provided	1,228	31.4%
TOTAL	3,903	100%

2. AGE

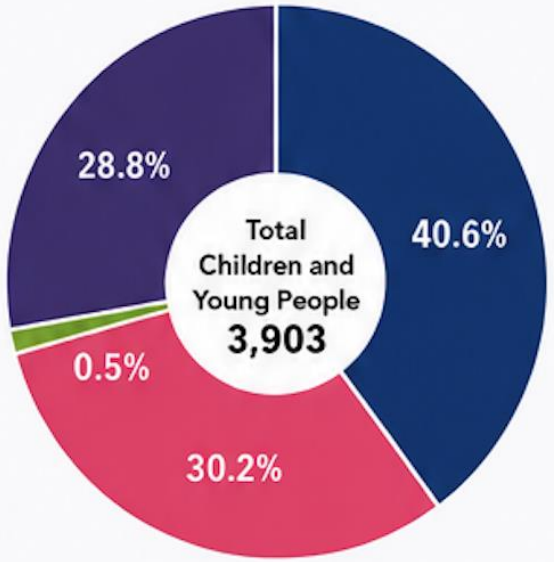
Age distribution of children and young people



Age	Children and Young People	% of Total
0–4	182	4.7%
5–10	1,402	35.9%
11–15	1,305	33.4%
16–18	501	12.8%
19–25	363	9.3%
Unknown	150	3.8%
TOTAL	3,903	100%

3. GENDER

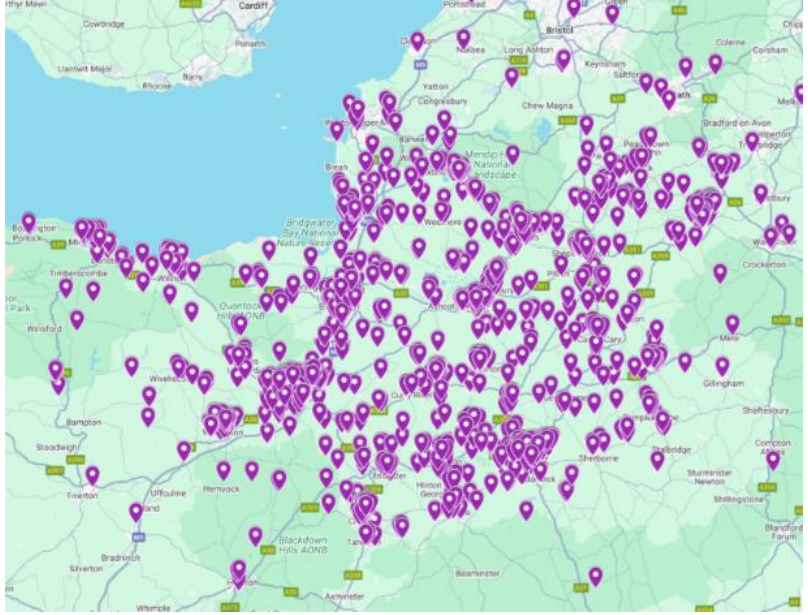
Gender identity of children and young people



Gender	Children and Young People	% of Total
Male	1,583	40.6%
Female	1,179	30.2%
Non Binary	19	0.5%
Prefer not to say / Unknown	1,122	28.8%
TOTAL	3,903	100%

- Parents and carers are not required to provide information about their child or young person when joining the mailing list. This infographic therefore represents the information currently held.
- The mailing list currently includes 5,780 parent carers.
- Information is available for 3,903 children and young people.
- Educational setting reflects the setting recorded at the time the information was provided.
- Families may report more than one area of need for a child or young person; therefore, percentages in the Area of Need section total more than 100%

The following information provides a snapshot of our community.



HOW MANY AREAS OF SEND DO CHILDREN HAVE NEEDS IN?

These percentages show how many of the four areas of SEND each child has at least one recorded condition in.
Children may have needs in more than one area.

THE FOUR AREAS OF SEND

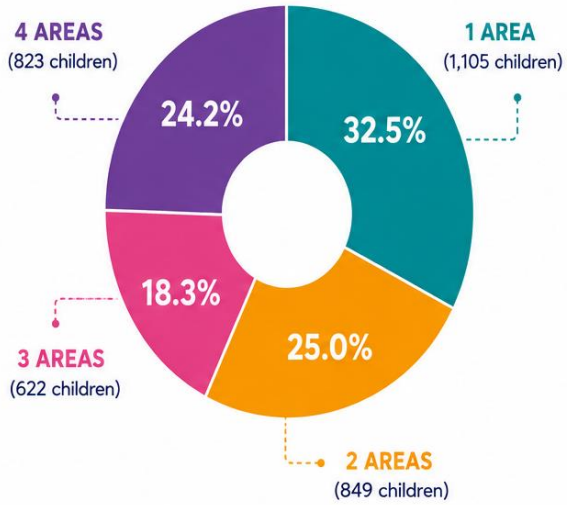
COMMUNICATION & INTERACTION
Includes conditions relating to speech, language, social communication and autism spectrum conditions.

COGNITION & LEARNING
Includes conditions relating to learning difficulties, specific learning difficulties and developmental delay.

SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL & MENTAL HEALTH
Includes conditions relating to emotional wellbeing, mental health and social, emotional or behavioural difficulties.

SENSORY &/OR PHYSICAL
Includes conditions relating to sensory impairments, physical disabilities and medical conditions.

NUMBER OF AREAS OF SEND NEED
(Out of 4 areas)



KEY INSIGHT
Over two thirds (67.5%) of children have needs in **2 or more areas** of SEND. (2,294 children)

Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.
Children may have needs in more than one area.

Source: Internal SEND Conditions Data

SEND CONDITIONS ACROSS THE FOUR AREAS OF SEND

Based on 3,399 children with at least one recorded condition

These percentages show the proportion of children who have at least one recorded condition that falls within each area of SEND. Children may appear in more than one area, **so percentages do not add up to 100%.**

COMMUNICATION & INTERACTION
61.5%
of children
(2,091 children)
Includes conditions relating to speech, language, social communication and autism spectrum conditions.

COGNITION & LEARNING
53.0%
of children
(1,803 children)
Includes conditions relating to learning difficulties, specific learning difficulties and developmental delay.

SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL & MENTAL HEALTH
30.8%
of children
(1,047 children)
Includes conditions relating to emotional wellbeing, mental health and social, emotional or behavioural difficulties.

SENSORY &/OR PHYSICAL
28.2%
of children
(959 children)
Includes conditions relating to sensory impairments, physical disabilities and medical conditions.

Children may have needs in more than one area of SEND.
Percentages do not add up to 100%.

Source: Internal SEND Conditions Data

Boards and Workstreams Somerset Parent Carer Forum have been involved in during the last 12 months

- Somerset's SEND Reform's Co-production and Communications Steering Group
- SEND reform plan development
- Experts at Hand
- Annual Health Check programme Board
- Best Start In Life
- Bus service user improvement group
- Carers Strategic Partnership Board
- Cizitens Hub
- Collaborative Leaders Meeting
- Collaborative Supported Employment Forum
- Contract Meeting
- CWD Short Breaks Steering group
- CYP Mental Health Network
- Digital Futures Project Group
- Digital People Champions
- Direct Payments and Personal Budgets
- Early Years SEND Network
- Early Years Partnership Board
- EHCP Digital Assistant
- EHCP Standards Group
- Equality Partnership Board
- EYFS Curriculum Network (SENSE)
- Frome and Shepton neighbourhood Team meeting
- Healthy Weight for Wellbeing Management Group
- Just Act Natural project
- Lead Member Monthly meeting
- Somerset VCFSE Leaders Group
- LeDer Governance group
- Local Offer weekly group
- LD and PFA transformation Coproduction Group
- Multi Agency Audit Group
- Multi-agency group focused on medical support for children and young people within Somerset education settings meeting
- Neuro-Affirmative Forum
- Personalised Care and Support Planning
- PHSE
- PINS
- Practice Quality Board
- RPN NEIGHBOURHOOD HEALTH AND WELLBEING FORMUM
- Schools Forum
- SEND Inspection Readiness
- SEND Strategic Partnership Board
- SENDIAS Advisory Board
- SENSE P4A
- Sleep Pathway
- Somerset Careers Hub Steering Group
- SPCF, SENDIAS, ICB, CYPNP and LA
- SPCF and SC Engagement meeting
- School Transport Board
- Transitions to Adult Services
- Working Together Board
- Disability Network Meeting

Somerset Parent Carer Forum C.I.C

From lived experience to service improvement

How Somerset Parent Carer Forum gathers, represents and amplifies parent-carer voice

Different experiences. A stronger Somerset.

We are an independent, parent-led forum. We listen to the lived experiences of families with children and young people (0–25) with additional needs and/or disabilities, and make sure their views influence SEND services across Somerset.

1 GATHER EXPERIENCES

We hear from families

- Surveys and consultations
- Focus groups
- Events and workshops (e.g. WISE Up, Chill and Chat)
- Website, newsletter and social media
- SEND Navigators and Finding Your Way groups
- Peer support networks
- Parent representatives

2 IDENTIFY THEMES

We understand experiences

- Analyse feedback and identify recurring themes and trends
- Gather evidence of what is working well
- Highlight barriers and unmet need
- Consider the experiences of different groups and communities
- Use both quantitative (surveys) and qualitative (stories and feedback) data

3 REPRESENT FAMILIES

We amplify parent-carer voice

- Share evidence with Somerset Council, NHS Somerset and education partners
- Contribute to strategic boards and working groups
- Provide consultation responses
- Take part in co-production and service design
- Ensure diverse voices, including under-represented groups, are heard

4 INFLUENCE DECISION MAKING

We work in partnership

- Use evidence to influence decision making
- Work with partners to develop solutions
- Help shape policies, strategies and service developments
- Champion the implementation of the SEND Code of Practice
- Keep the focus on what matters to families

5 SUPPORT SERVICE IMPROVEMENT

We help to create positive change

- Support co-produced improvements to services
- Influence better communication and information
- Contribute to new and improved resources (e.g. lending library, information guides)
- Help improve access, pathways and support
- Celebrate what is working well

6 FEEDBACK TO FAMILIES

We close the loop

- Share outcomes and updates through our website, newsletter and social media
- Report back on what we have heard and the difference it has made
- Keep families informed about ongoing work
- Continue to seek feedback to ensure we are making a difference

We work with: Somerset Council | NHS Somerset | Education providers | Health services | Strategic boards and working groups

The Somerset Parent Carer Forum provides an independent parent-carer voice, ensuring that lived experience informs decision-making, co-production and improvement across Somerset's SEND partnership.

A stronger Somerset for all our children and young people

www.somersetparentcarerforum.org.uk

Parent led for a brighter tomorrow

Top Themes from Parent Conversations – Last 6 Months

Key issues and what families are telling us

Education

Concerns over inconsistent practice and inclusion. Certain Multi academy trusts have been highlighted as a concern by families especially changes in practice when they take over a school which decreases reasonable adjustments.

Key takeaway:
Families want consistent, inclusive practice across all schools.

Mental Health Support

Parental conversation often focus on access and not meeting thresholds either too high for Young Somerset or not high enough for CAMHS.

Key takeaway:
Families need clearer guidance on access and thresholds.

EHCP

Delays in processes and lack of communication have been consistent themes especially over the summer period where there were delays. Parents want to know wait times and in response this is now on the local offer.

Key takeaway:
Families want timely updates, clear communication and published wait times.

Autism and ADHD Pathway

This is often linked to our work with the pathway and the waiting well approach. Parents want to know wait times and in response this is now on the local offer.

Key takeaway:
Families need clear information on wait times and pathway next steps.

EBSA

We have seen an increase and parent share the impact on the family including concerns about legal action when children do not attend.

Key takeaway:
Families need more support around EBSA and practical solutions.

General Parental Support

This is often linked to parent carers own wellbeing, financial impact of being unable to work due to child's need and not sure where to go for help.

Key takeaway:
Families need holistic support – for their wellbeing, finances and signposting.

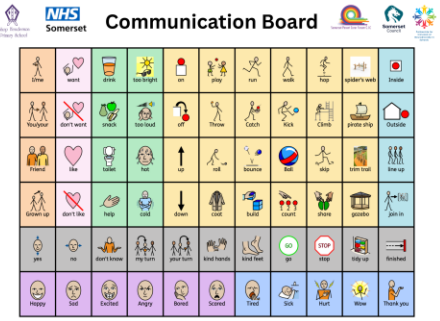
Surveys = 438 plus evaluations Events =1088 Conversations/emails/calls = 4261

Co-production: Together from the Start



- Somerset Parent Carer Forum has worked collaboratively with the special schools and settings within sen.se to develop *Together from the Start*, a guide to support families whose children are beginning their Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) journey within specialist settings.
- This work demonstrates the value of co-production in bringing together the lived experience of parent carers and the professional knowledge of education practitioners to develop resources that respond to the needs and experiences of families. Recognising that starting school is a significant milestone, particularly for families of children with SEND, the guide aims to make the transition process more accessible, consistent and reassuring.
- Parent carer contributions have helped shape a resource that addresses the practical questions and concerns families may experience during this period. It includes information about starting school, transition planning, communication, key processes and terminology, alongside opportunities for families to share important information about their child, their needs and what matters most to them.
- Importantly, the guide provides a shared framework to support communication and strengthen relationships between home and school from the outset. It recognises parents and carers as experts in their children and supports practitioners to build an understanding of each child's individual circumstances, strengths and needs.
- From a parent carer perspective, this is a positive example of partnership working translating into a tangible resource for families. It demonstrates how listening to lived experience can inform the development of practical support, rather than co-production being limited to consultation or gathering feedback.
- The collaboration reflects a shared commitment to ensuring children feel understood, welcomed and supported from the beginning of their educational journey. It also provides an opportunity to strengthen the relationship between families and specialist settings at an important stage of transition.

Inclusion Bases



- The Inclusion Bases programme was developed through partnership working and co-production between the PCF, Council and ICB. Through the *Let's Talk SEND and Inclusion* events, parent carers shared their experiences of children struggling to have their needs met in mainstream classrooms, while special school was not always felt to be the right option. These conversations helped identify the gap in provision and shape the development of the Inclusion Bases.
- The PCF has been actively involved in shaping the design of the bases, ensuring parent carer lived experience influences the environments and approach. Design principles have been aligned with the Autism Education Trust (AET) principles, which were themselves co-produced nationally with Parent Carer Forums and are also embedded within our PINS work.
- From the outset, parent carers and partners have shared a clear ambition that the bases should promote a whole-school inclusive culture, rather than become separate spaces where children are isolated from their peers. This has helped shape the vision for how children will access the wider school community and feel included.
- Co-production continues beyond the initial design. The PCF is an active member of the programme steering group, contributing to ongoing development and oversight. The Forum has also helped design the school training and induction programme and delivers a session on working in partnership with parent carers, ensuring the importance of family voice and lived experience is understood by school staff.
- This year, we are building on this partnership through **Together from the Start**, working directly with parent carers to review and adapt the guide for the Inclusion Bases. This ensures families continue to influence how the bases develop and operate in practice, rather than their involvement ending once the initial design is complete.

A neurodiversity pathway shaped by lived experience



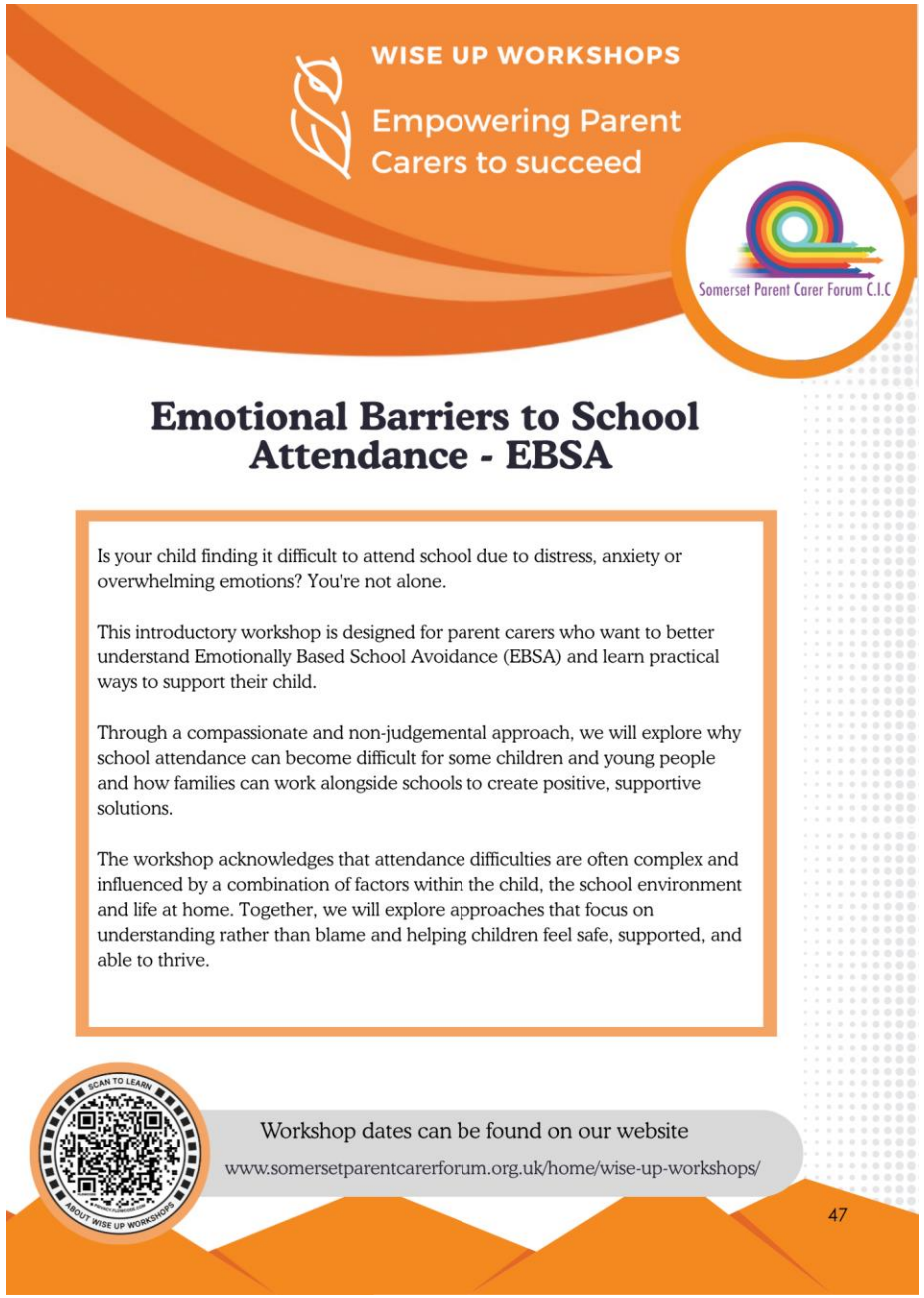
- Following the previous inspection, a new pathway was co-designed with children and young people, parent carers and practitioners.
- Feedback from families highlighted that the previous post-diagnostic letter confirmed a diagnosis but offered little insight into how the child presented or practical strategies to support them.
- As a direct result, families now receive a detailed, personalised report written directly to the child. It explains their individual strengths and needs, how they experience the world and strategies to support them.
- This helps children understand themselves, recognise their strengths and be more actively involved in conversations about their needs.

Influencing practice locally and nationally

- Over the last 18 months, we have worked with the Children and Young People's Neurodiversity Partnership to co-produce a series of position statements covering demand avoidance, private assessments and Right to Choose.
- The shared principles developed through this work helped shape the successful Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) programme.
- Our partnership's co-produced approach has gained national recognition, with partners invited to present at national conferences and share learning with others.

Co-producing support for Emotionally Based School Avoidance

- We are proud of our close partnership with Dawn from the Educational Psychology (EP) Service, working together to co-produce and co-deliver a workshop as part of our Wise up Workshops focused on understanding and supporting the emotional barriers children and young people experience in accessing school.
- Now in its third year, the workshop continues to evolve through an ongoing cycle of feedback, reflection and improvement. Parent carer experiences and insights are central to this process, ensuring that the content remains relevant and responsive to the challenges families face.
- In response to feedback from parent carers this year, we have gone a step further and developed a new workshop specifically focused on more complex and entrenched EBSA. This demonstrates how parent carer voice is not only informing existing provision but actively identifying gaps and shaping new support.



A Tale of Two Experiences: The Reality for SEND Families in Somerset

- The experiences of families across Somerset paint a picture of an inconsistent SEND system. While some children benefit from dedicated professionals, supportive schools and effective provision, this is far from the experience of every family.
- Too many parents describe having to fight for assessments, EHCPs and appropriate support. Delays, poor communication and a lack of joined-up working leave families feeling exhausted, ignored and responsible for navigating a system that should be supporting them.
- For some children, help only comes after significant damage has been done to their education, mental health and wellbeing. Families report school breakdown, exclusion, unmet needs and prolonged periods without suitable provision.
- Although there are examples of excellent practice and genuine improvements, these are not consistently experienced. Access to good support and provision can depend on postcode, individual professionals or a parent's ability to advocate and escalate concerns.
- The fundamental issue is that good practice exists, but it is not the lived experience of all families. Somerset must move beyond positive examples and demonstrate that every child receives the right support, at the right time, with families genuinely listened to and involved.

Over the next few slides we will share parent carers views on Somerset Services

Children and young people's needs are identified accurately and assessed in a timely and effective way

- Although some parents are reporting a slowly improving picture, other parents are yet to feel the impact of work being done.
- Waiting times for Education Health and Care needs assessments has increased. However, some parents are reporting some improvements in the quality of plans.
- Some parents described assessments being refused or delayed despite professionals agreeing that they were appropriate. Inconsistent practice has led to families reporting they were forced to make formal complaints or threaten legal action.
- Although the decision to proceed with an assessment for Autism and ADHD is taken within a good timeframe the assessment often is much later with parents reporting waiting for over 3 years.
- Parent carers report variations in educations settings ability to identify accurately with masking and dyslexia being 2 areas highlighted as challenges.

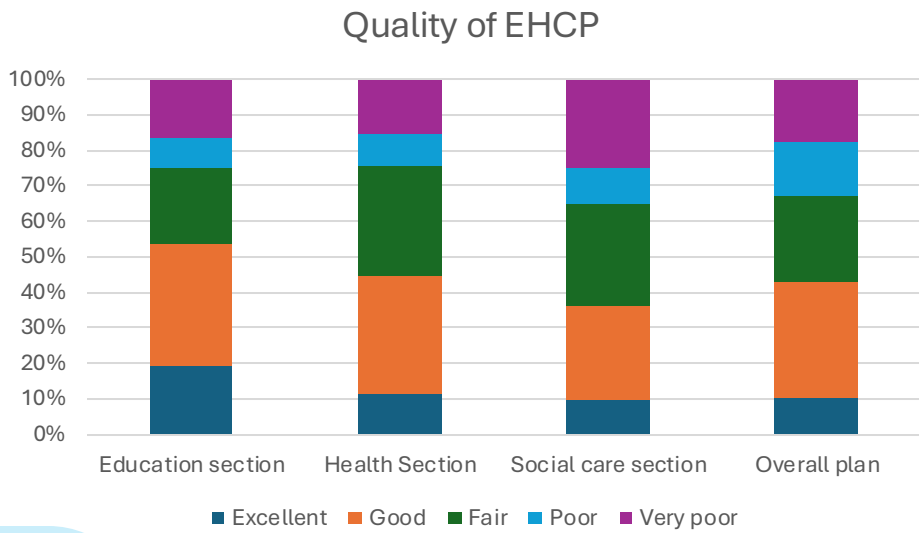
"My daughter has been supported with her diversity since reception class and now ending year 3. The school have always been pro-active and positive about the reasonable adjustments needed for her to reach her potential in class. This approach has been widespread throughout all her years. For this reason, I believe the overall culture towards diversity at the school is positive and inclusive. I'm incredibly proud and grateful for the support the school offers my daughter & offered my elder daughter during her time there too." – PINS survey

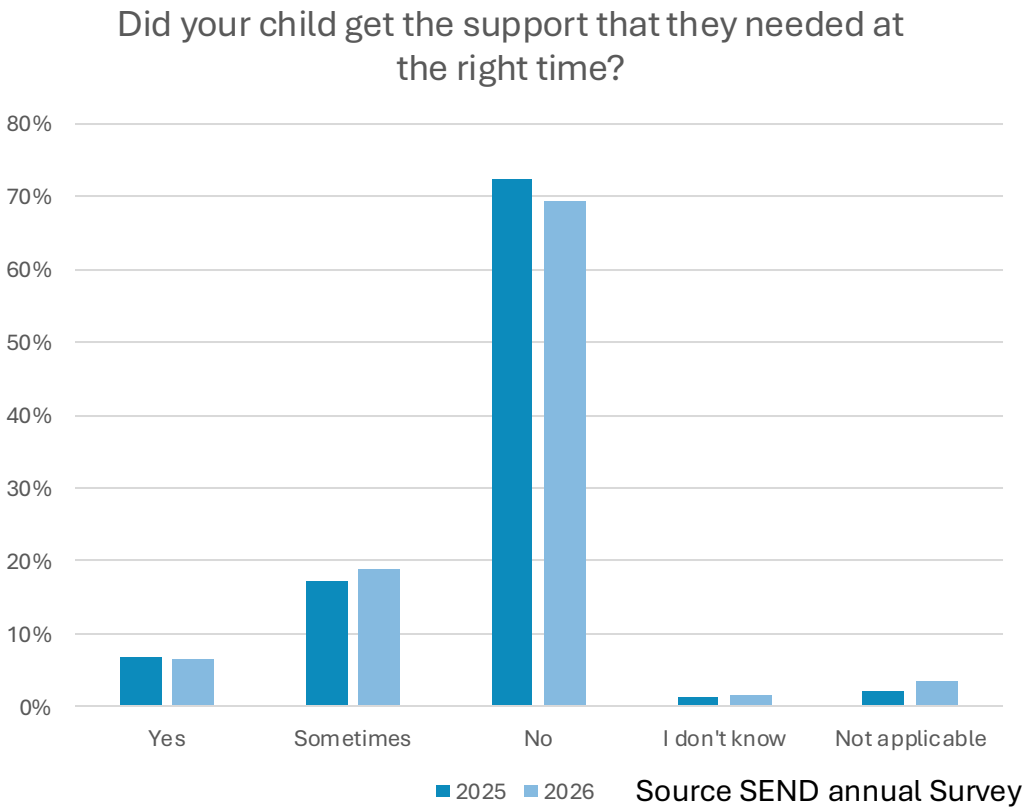
"This resulted in me having to give up my well-paid corporate career to care for and advocate for my son. Most importantly, however, the impact on my son's education and wellbeing will be felt for the rest of his life ." – Parent Carer emailed views

Children and young people's needs are identified accurately and assessed in a timely and effective way

"He's just started year one. And at the moment, to be honest, he's had a very overwhelming amount of support from obviously like doctors, education. He's already got his ECHP assessment very quickly. He got his diagnosis very quickly." – Parent engagement session

"This year has been a cumulation of years of hard work to get the needed support and has been fantastic, had you asked me 2 years or even 1 year ago it would have been a very different story." – SEND Survey. 2026





Source SEND annual Survey

"My child is on the waiting list for asd and the senco has not been helpful as my child masks well. The school are not proactive and only step in when safeguarding issues arrive. They offer things like ELSA but it doesn't happen. They believe if my child is behaving well there is no issue, despite my child's meltdowns as soon as they leave school. I have no confidence in their neurodivergent help" – PINS survey

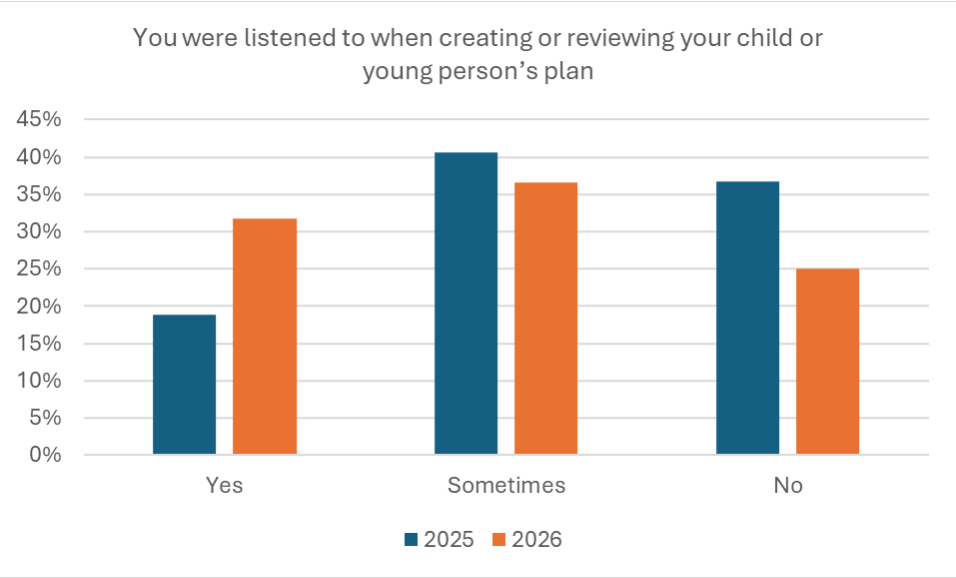
"The LA is well overdue on its statutory EHCP assessment deadline, we've been waiting over 2 years for a neurodiversity assessment with the NHS, our Right to Choose provider had it's funding pulled just as we got to the top of the list meaning we have another year to wait there, and paediatrician refused to see him for sleep support because he hasn't got a diagnosis. We feel very much alone and unsupported by the local authority and health - we have been left to get our son through his mental health crisis alone" – SEND Survey 2026

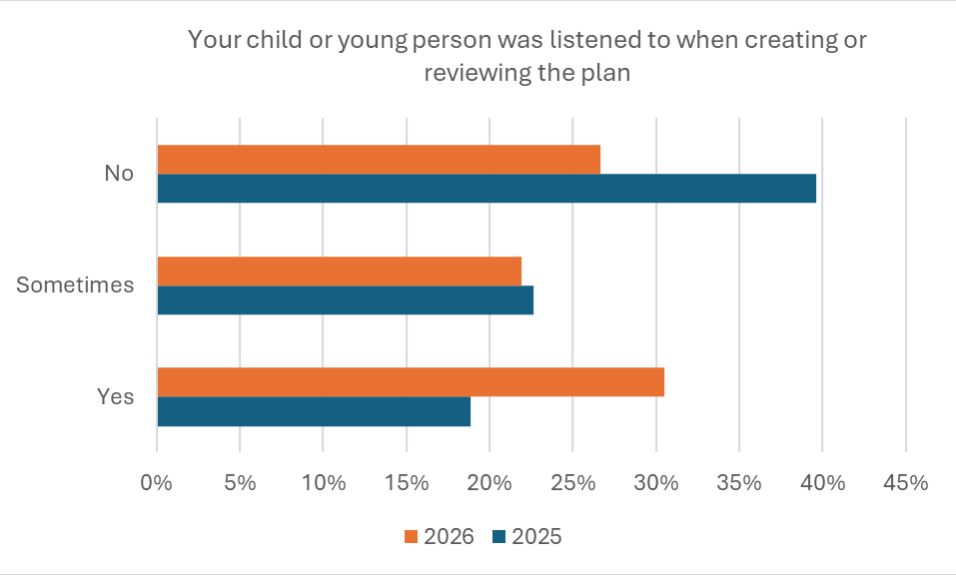
Children, young people and their families participate in decision-making about their individual plans and support

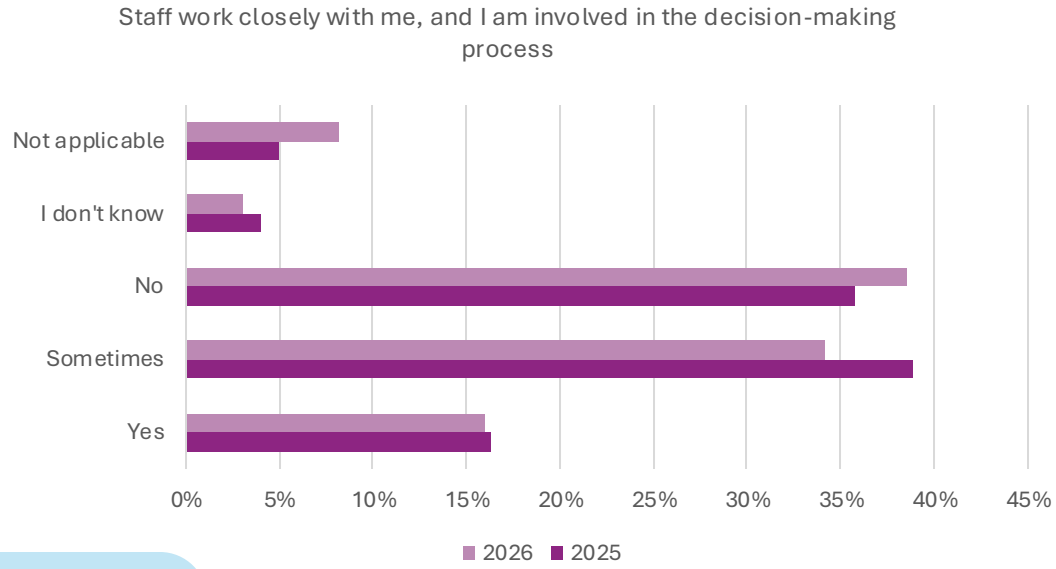
- Families reported mixed experiences. Some feel dismissed, ignored or blamed, while others feel listened to and well supported. This suggests that practice is inconsistent and often depends on individual practitioners.
- Some families felt that their views only received attention when they escalated concerns through formal complaints, mediation or tribunals. This leads to significant delays.
- Parents report feeling they were treated as a problem rather than listened to as experts on their children, with poor communication often leaving emails and questions unanswered or their concerns unaddressed. This is particularly linked to EHCP and annual review processes.
- There is inconsistent practice within schools with parents reporting both positive and negative experiences connected to being involved. Financial constraints were often seen as a barrier used by schools.
- SENDIAS are seen by many parents as a good source of support in helping navigate services and ensuring they have a voice in plans for their children.
- Parents reported inconsistent experiences with support for attendance issues and suspensions. We heard examples of excellent outcomes for some children while others experienced delays.

"I believe my daughter's school does the best they can to support my child, often with insufficient funding and not enough support from the LA. I believe staff are restricted by limitations in being able to do their job due to constant pressures on budget and management constraints"
Parent Carer Engagement session

Children, young people and their families participate in decision-making about their individual plans and support







"SENDIASS has been useful in I forming us of how to move forward and offering to support us in this."– SEND survey

"Our initial contact with them (SENDIAS) in 2025 didn't feel supportive but contact in 2026 was much better." – SEND Survey

"Child was going to be excluded- the exclusion team helped me and linked me with Sendias and parent forum and a local group of volunteers" – SEND survey

"My child still isn't getting the support they need and we as a family aren't being listened to. People are making decisions for us rather than hearing our views". – SEND Survey

Children and young people receive the right help at the right time

- Families reported inconsistent delivery of support in their child's plan, with funding decisions sometimes interrupting services and having a significant impact on children and families.
- Delays in EHC need assessments and annual reviews has meant some children are unable to access appropriate specialist placements or support, even where professional evidence indicated that mainstream education was unsuitable.
- Some parents spoke very positively about particular schools, nursery settings, SENCOs, teaching assistants and therapy teams who went above and beyond to support their children.
- Some families who are going through the system, recently have reported a more positive experience while other families reported being passed between services, with nobody taking responsibility for coordinating support.
- The impact of new processes for section 19 are not consistently being felt by families.Parents reported experiencing school breakdown, mental health deterioration or extended periods out of education before appropriate support was provided causing parents to feel broken due to the increased stress on the whole family.
- Waiting well approaches for the neurodevelopmental pathway are valued by parent carers including the CYPNP phone line and the wise workshops.

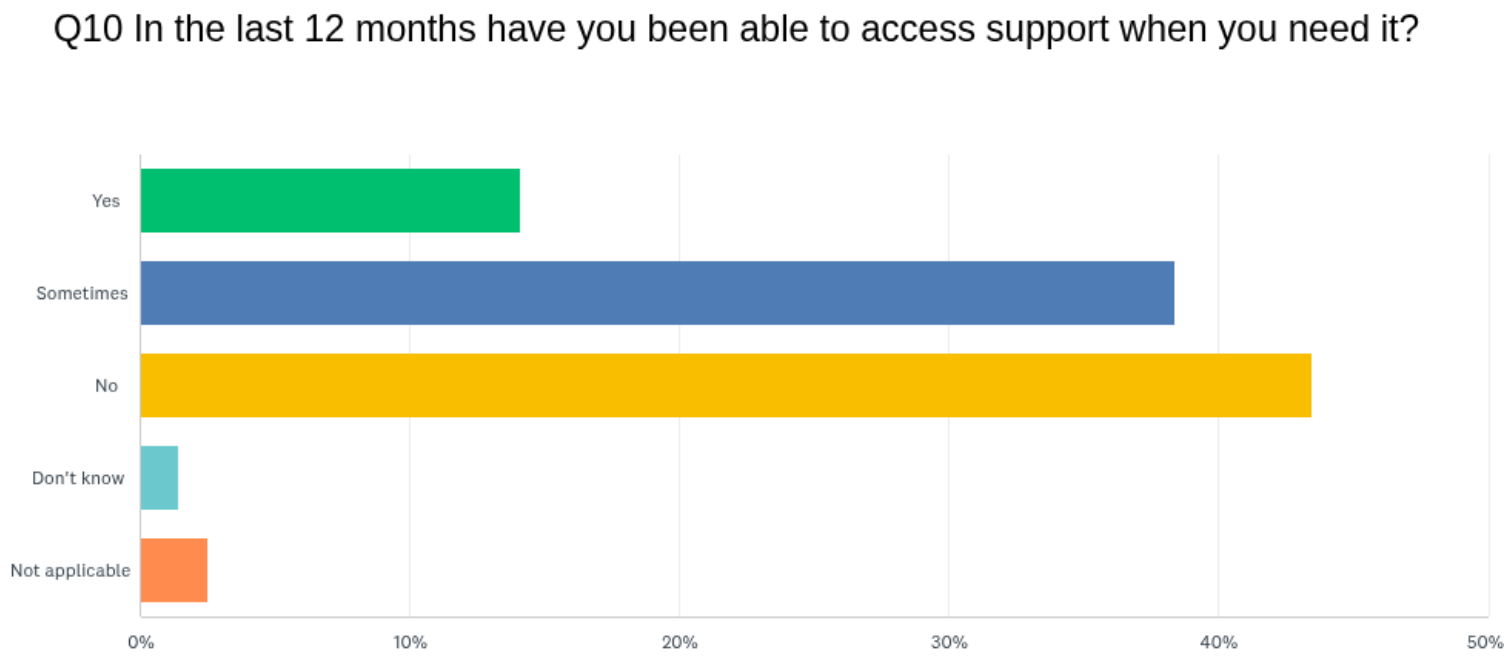
Children and young people receive the right help at the right time

"Our GP has been helpful and supportive, we have been referred to right to choose last year (still waiting to hear from them). GP has referred my daughter to dietician and paediatrics."- SEND Survey

"The carer was really happy with the school and said that they are giving her, and her nephew so much support and adapting things to make sure that her nephew feels able to cope as he has suffered trauma and has attachment difficulties. The child is being assessed for ADHD. The PFSA even checks in with the carer during holidays to see how everything is going." - Parent feedback PINS

"The bigger issue is that children should not have to fail before their needs are recognised, nor should successful outcomes achieved with support be used as justification for withdrawing that support." - Parent Carer email feedback

"Our GP was sympathetic but gave limited help. They didn't even signpost the Somerset NHS Neurodiversity Pathway, we found out about that by accident so have only just got on the waiting list for support (we moved to the area already with a diagnosis)" – SEND survey



Children and young people are well prepared for their next steps, and achieve strong outcomes

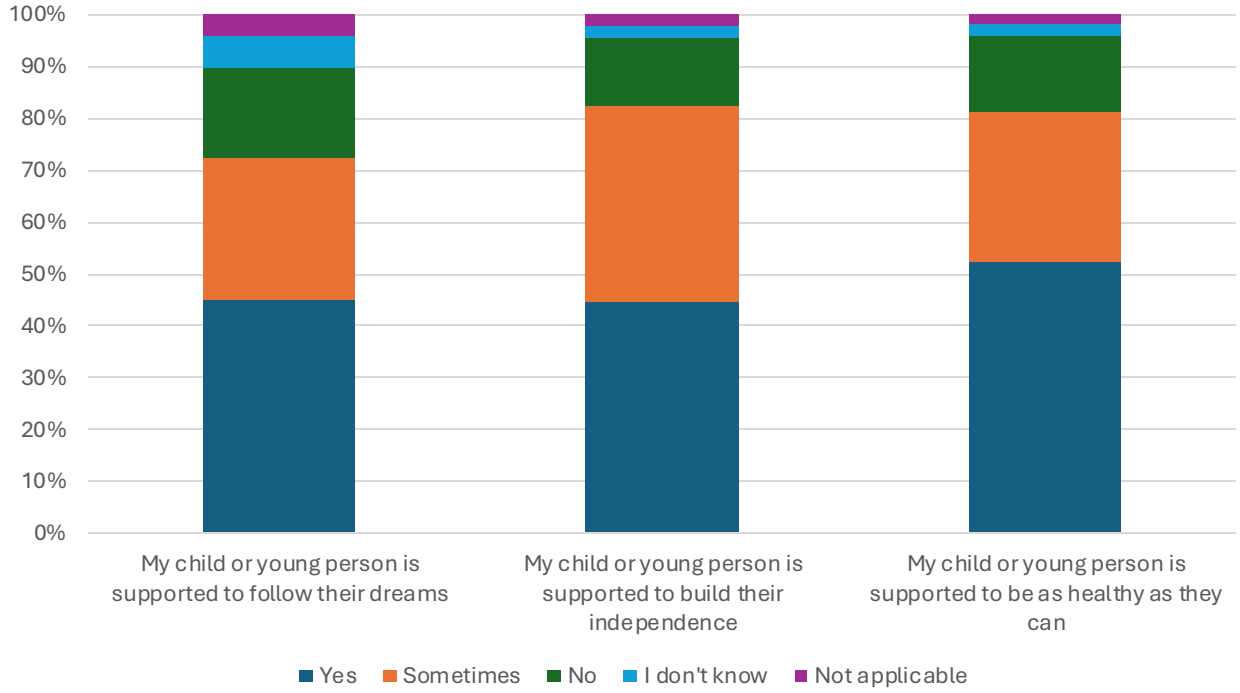
"I met with an advisor who helped me with my child's DLA application/renewal. They helped me immensely." – Feedback on SEND Navigator service

- Significant delays in finalising EHCPs and annual reviews this summer affected decisions about college placements and post-16 education. One family described having to delay college entry by a year.
- Parents described feeling frightened about the future because they did not know what provision, care or support would be available as their children approached adulthood.
- Following feedback from families changes to the autism and ADHD assessment process mean children now receive a detailed report to help them understand their needs.
- Some families raised concerns about what happens after the supported employment programme ends. The PCF and programme leads have met with parents to address these concerns and help ensure young adults continue to benefit from the programme.
- Some families have reported that they value the school entry planning meetings as these have helped children to move from nursery to reception smoothly.
- Inconsistent provision can lead young people to experience deterioration in their mental health, confidence and aspirations following prolonged difficulties in education . Differences in opinions between parents and schools is seen as a blocker to accessing support by some families.

Children and young people are well prepared for their next steps, and achieve strong outcomes

"It subsequently emerged that the school had removed our child's 1:1 support (the second TA in the class) after approximately three weeks, without informing or consulting us." – Parent email feedback

"My teen has finished Year 11. There were so many signs over the years that they were more than simply anxious. Much more training is required in neurodiversity especially how it presents in girls. Once we received a diagnosis they were in burnout. This could and should have been seen by the many professionals and teaching staff involved in their care age 1 - 16. They could have prevented the catastrophic mental health problem we now face as a family. There are no support services for ND children. The LA took 62 weeks to deliver an EHCP. They stalled at every opportunity to provide low demand provision which CAMHS recommended." – SEND Survey



"They made me aware of support that I could access when my daughter was sectioned & gave advice about DLA, EHCP & gave employment support "– PCF Feedback

Children and young people are valued, visible and included in their communities

- While some schools are valued as being inclusive, our SEND annual survey showed a decrease in parental confidence that their child was included in their education setting this has drop by 17% since SEND revisit.
- Parents report both positive and negative experiences with education settings. Negative experiences are often linked to EBSNA, lack of willingness to make reasonable adjustment and lack of knowledge of certain conditions/needs.
- The Community Inclusion and Activity Team is highly valued by families, but some feel the current provision is not board enough in age range and does not meet the level of demand.
- The family funday we jointly run with the CIAT team have been expanded to 2 (east and West) in response to increase demand with nearly 600 people attending this year.
- Where inclusive activities and short breaks are unavailable, parents and carers are left providing constant care, often with little opportunity for respite. 70% of our snap survey respondents (161) reported never getting a meaningful break from their caring responsabilities.
- The VCFSE activities are supportive in allowing families to access activities but we are seeing more organisations having waiting lists or having to close due to funding.

Children and young people are valued, visible and included in their communities

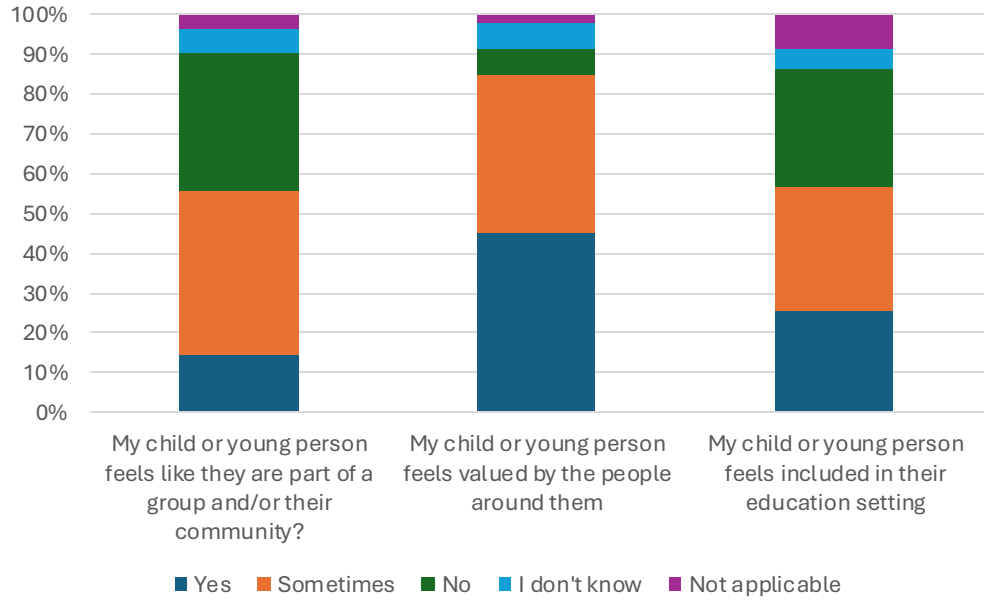
“My young person's needs were so catastrophically unmet that they were often being chased by multiple adults around the school grounds while they begged to be left alone because they were frightened. They hid and wept and when that didn't work they began to harm themself to make their point” – SEND Survey

"Thank you for organising again it was a wonderful weekend where it was nice families could just be as there are including the ups and downs" - SPCF and Magdalen Farm event

“St Jospeh and Theresa school have been amazing in helping the child start their school after enormous trauma and change and have helped him feel loved and safe at school. They are continually given more and more to do at every PEP without any additional resource.” – PINS survey

“The children's inclusion and activity team have always been incredibly helpful and polite. We have always appreciated their help.”- SEND Survey

“The only school holiday activity we were accessing (as did not require parent/carer to attend as well) has been withdrawn at short notice. I am not aware of any other service of this kind available in the east/middle side of the county.” – Short Breaks Survey 2026

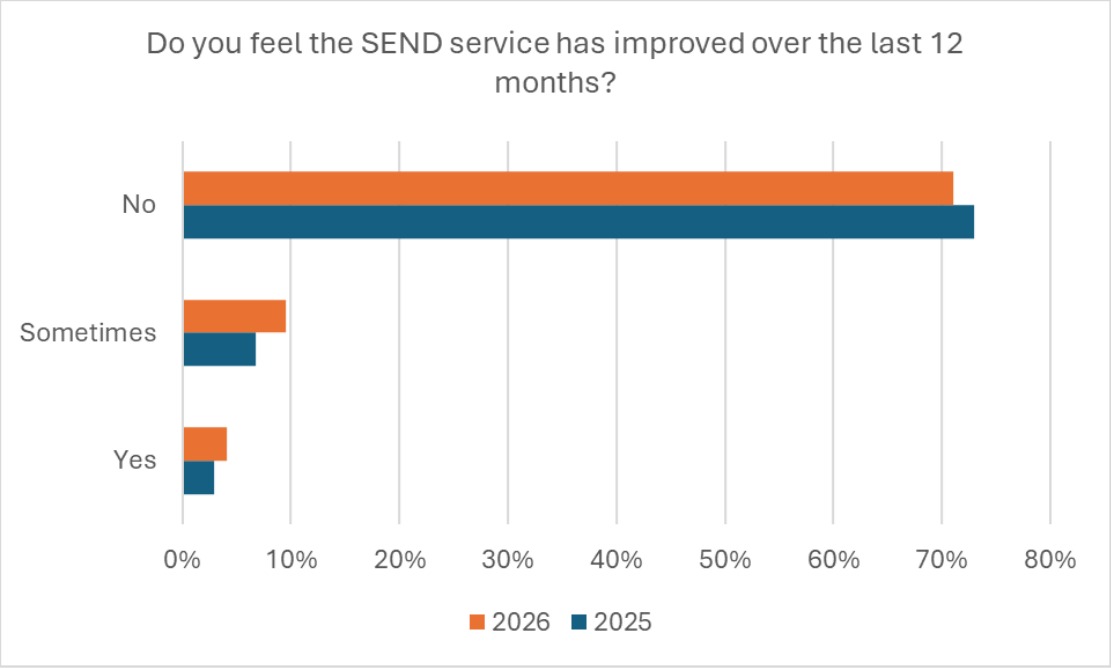


Leaders are ambitious for children and young people with SEND

- Parents worry that services can become focused on managing immediate needs and difficulties, rather than preparing children for adulthood and supporting their longer-term aspirations.
- Leaders recognise the long-term impact of delayed intervention and inadequate support on children's development, confidence, independence and future opportunities but funding constraints and capacity impact on delivery.
- Families can find it hard to link strategic ambitions into meaningful provision, early intervention and improved outcomes for children and young people. A greater emphasis is needing on closing the loop for parents
- Parent carers report inconsistent practice among education settings with some education leaders not fulfilling their duties to work with the local authority e.g. not sharing the inspection survey or not delivering provision within an EHCP

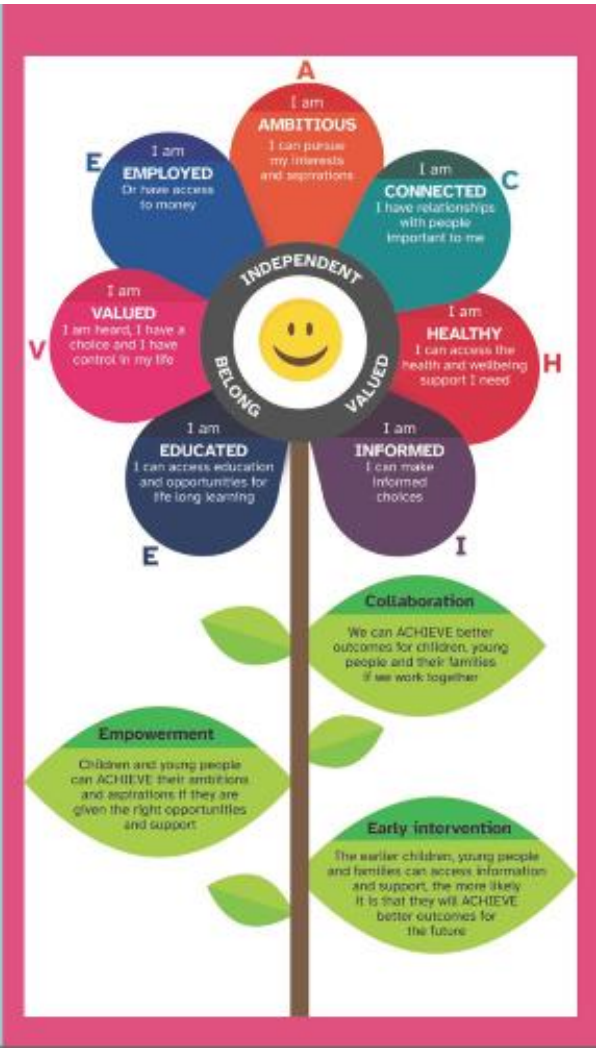
Leaders are ambitious for children and young people with SEND

"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." – Parent feedback PINS



2025 v 2026 variations in Yes or Sometimes responses

-3%	My child or young person has people in their life that they trust and feel safe with?
4%	My child or young person feels like they are part of a group and/or their community?
10.6%	My child or young person gets to do activities that they enjoy or find interesting?
6.7%	My child or young person is supported to follow their dreams
2.5%	My child or young person feels valued by the people around them
-1%	My child or young person feels included in their education setting
1.8%	My child or young person is supported to build their independence
-2.8%	My child or young person is supported to be as healthy as they can



Leaders actively engage and work with children and young people with SEND and their families

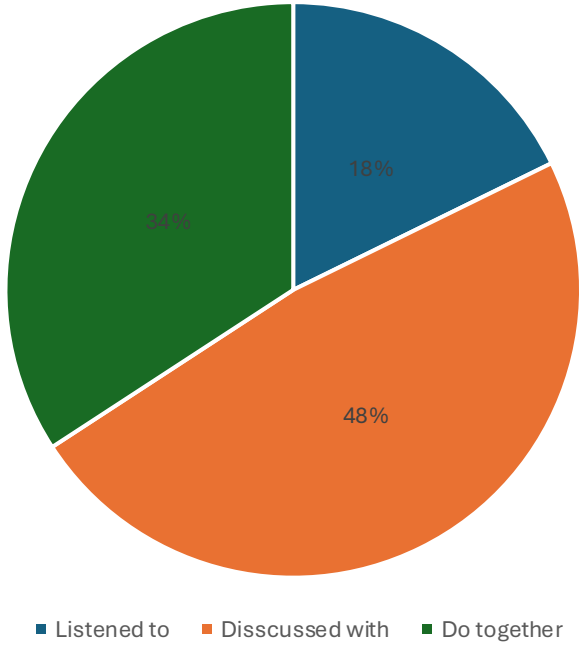
- Parent carers do not feel consistently heard by senior leaders: Families described repeated attempts to raise concerns without receiving meaningful responses and having to escalate concerns to elected members, MP or through the complaints system
- The parent carer forum in engaged through various work streams and shared the experiences of families including to leaders via the SEND Partnership Board. We have included some examples of how parent views have shaped policy and provision at the start of the slide pack
- Leaders at an operational level engage with parent carers through Listening Events and Let Talk SEND and Inclusion events.
- The Unstoppables participation group for SEND children and young adults feed directly into the SEND Partnership Board.
- The partnership has created a collaboration framework to clarify the different types of engagement with families but parent carers need stronger feedback mechanism in place to understand the impact from sharing their experiences

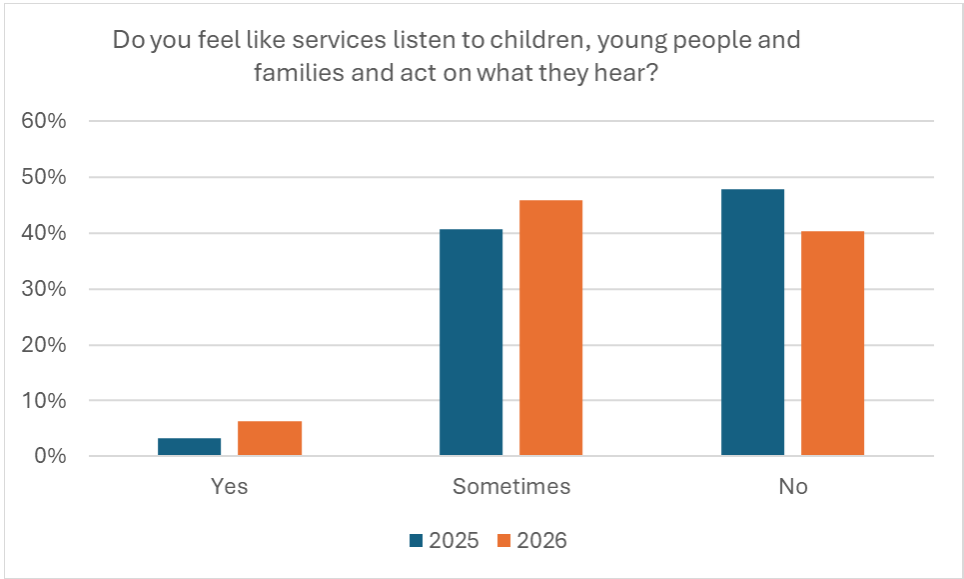
"The Parent Carer Forum is a really positive thing in Somerset. They have listened to parents and changed things." – Parent carer engagement session

Leaders actively engage and work with children and young people with SEND and their families



Involvement rating of parent carers at strategic meetings





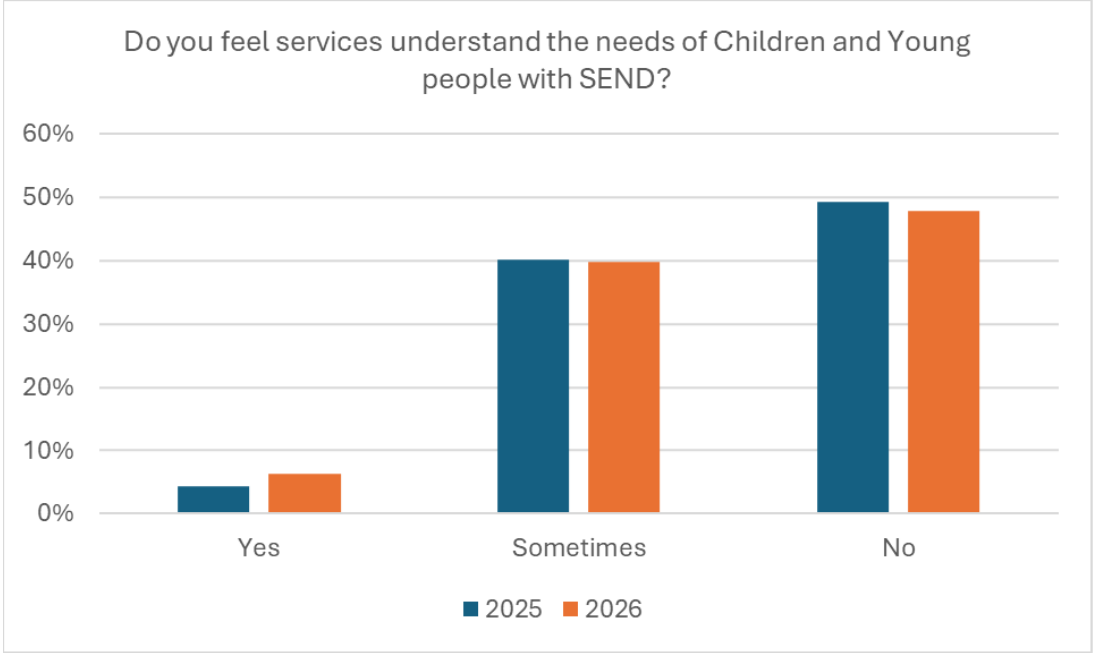
Leaders have an accurate, shared understanding of the needs of children and young people with SEND in their local area

- Parents experiences are inconsistent with some reporting that due to staff changes there have been missing assessments, incomplete records and inaccurate information about their children's needs.
- A key theme from our engagement work with parents has highlighted that some education settings struggle to identify children's needs when they mask/present differently at home. The CYPNP team has provided training to help address this.
- The SEND survey this year has show a small improvement in parental feedback
- Parents felt that the pressures on families, including caring responsibilities, financial impact and parental wellbeing, were not always recognised and the delays in carers assessment means that an inconsistent picture of needs exists

Leaders have an accurate, shared understanding of the needs of children and young people with SEND in their local area

"He (senior lead)admitted that the teams don't work together. They're working in silos." – Parent Carer Engagement session

"Great school . TA and teachers are amazing caring and understanding and very supportive" – Parent feedback PINS



"Leaders spend all their time focusing on the process rather than the child." – Parent Carer Engagement session

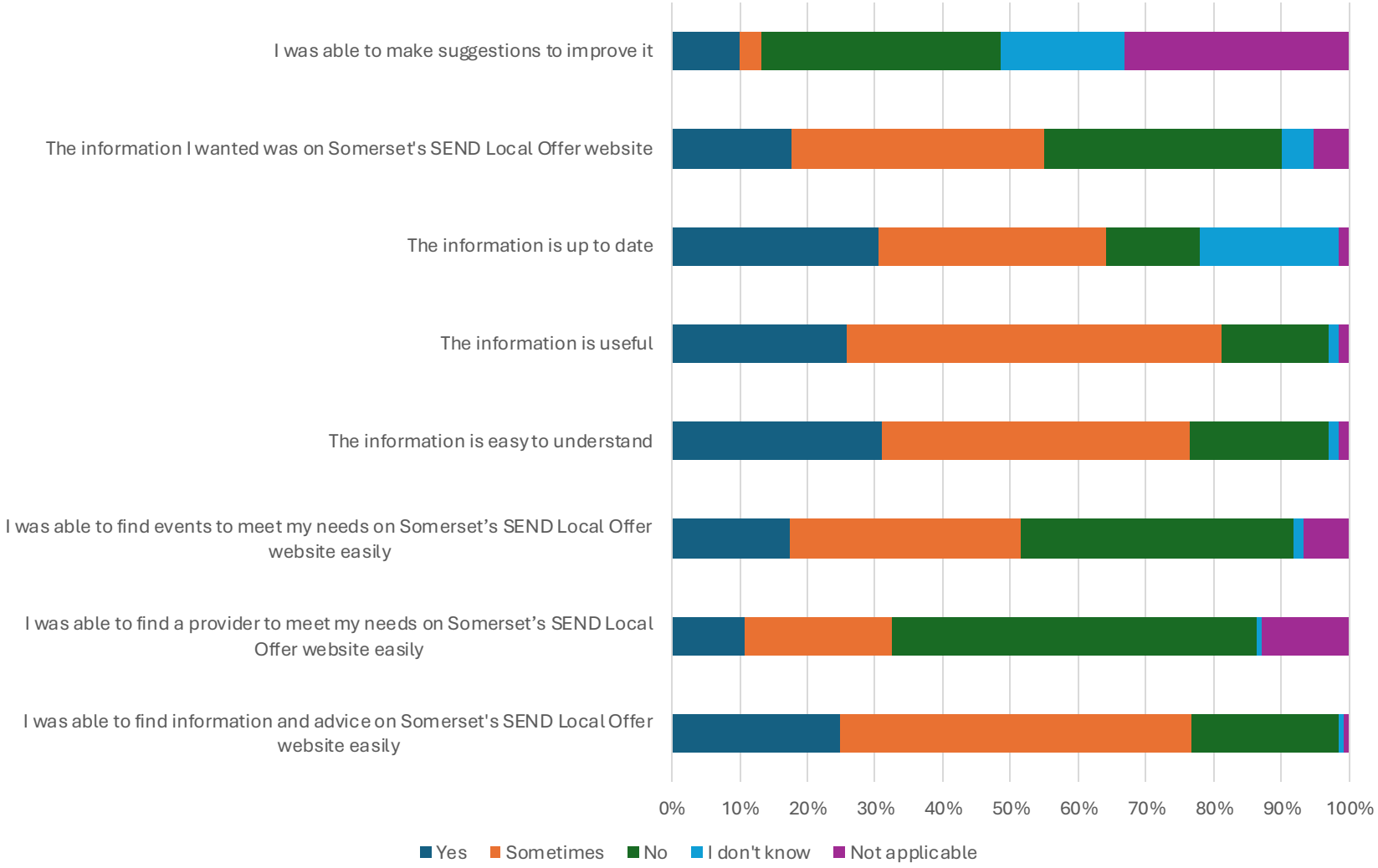
"I've won every complaint that has been finalised in my favour." –Parent Engagement

Leaders commission services and provision to meet the needs and aspirations of children and young people with SEND

- Families experience a variation of services across Somerset with some feeling geography impacts on what is available for example west Somerset area.
- While there is generally positive feedback for Young Somerset and CAMHS provision, parents report that their child can fall through the gap. Children are deemed as too complex for one service but not meeting the CAMHS threshold.
- Leaders in health identified the challenges in the autism and adhd pathway and have commissioned waiting well support via Wise workshops and CYPNP phone line which parents value.
- The CIAT/SPCF funday was increase from 1 to 2 sessions this year due to parental feedback asking for more provision. The grant funding panel has had some additional funding but this needs to be increased further to match the demand and geographical reach in Somerset
- With both the council and ICB having funding challenges parent carers can sometimes feel that funding plays a significant part in what is available rather than based on needs.

"Short breaks provide some good activities. But feel the role of staff on trips seems to be not to enable development of child by building independence or encouragement of peer friendships. I currently get support in the form of Somerset Supporter and direct payment worker. Both staff providing this provision support my child well. However, it would be more effective if my child had greater access to mixing with peers in a safe and inclusive environment. Greater opportunities to develop real friendships, build on independence and generally preparing my child for adulthood." – Short breaks survey

Leaders commission services and provision to meet the needs and aspirations of children and young people with SEND



"Our daughter is on the neurodiverse pathway and any time I have contacted them, they have been supportive polite and helpful despite not being able to give timescales." – Parent Carer Feedback

"Short breaks within their carers home has been amazing for us all. He loves going. Following a recent emergency with my health we were unable to access emergency respite though."
- Short breaks Survey 2026

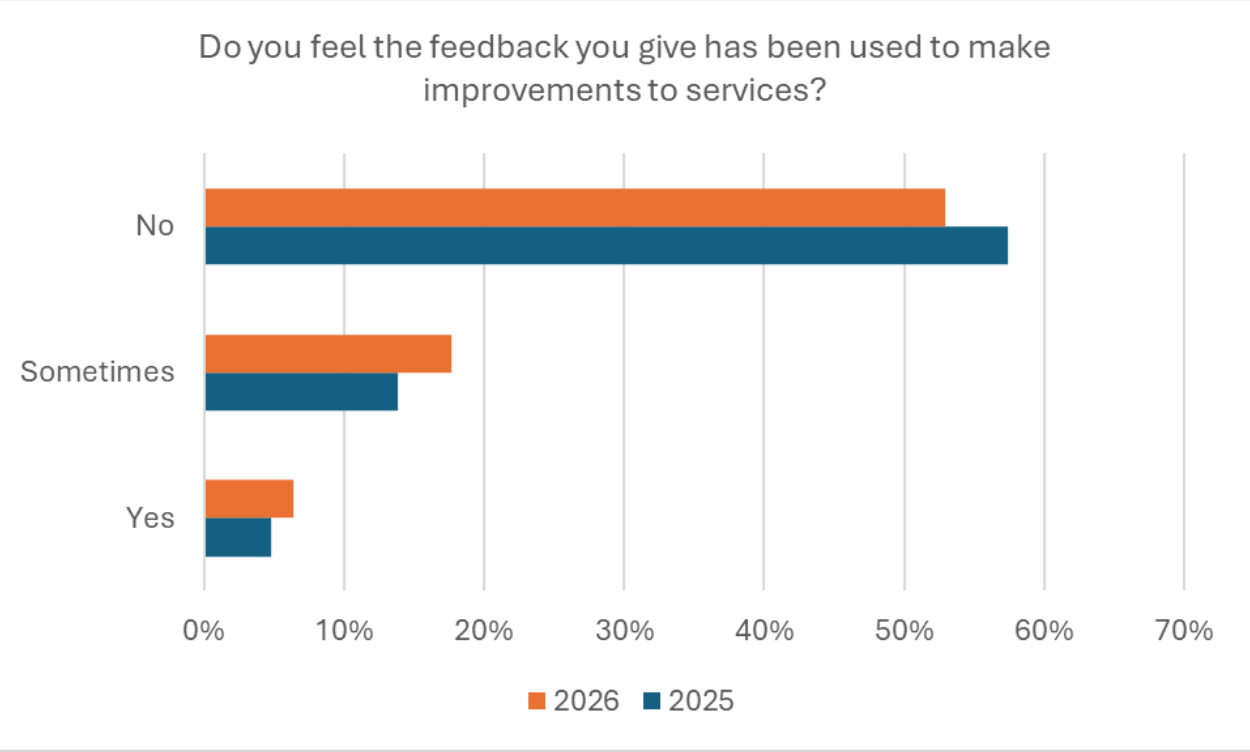
Leaders evaluate services and make improvements

- The SEND survey indicates that parent carers are starting to see some improvement in this area but this is inconsistent.
- Families described experiencing the same difficulties over many years, particularly around EHCPs, annual reviews, communication and access to provision. Parents are not confident or clear on the plans to improve this.
- Some parents at our engagement sessions and events feel there is a disconnect between policy and reality with Information on the local offer website did not always reflect the actual experiences of families or the provision available.
- Some individual schools, settings and professionals were praised for their commitment, flexibility and willingness to work with families.
- Following a review of EHCP's it was identified that the social care element of plans was weak. To address this parent carers, receive a call from the CWD team and families have reported this as beneficial as it has provided them with useful information about what is available.

Leaders evaluate services and make improvements

"School have improved greatly. " – Feedback from PINS

"We keep raising the same concerns, but nothing seems to change. How many times do families have to tell services before something is done?" – Parent carer engagement session



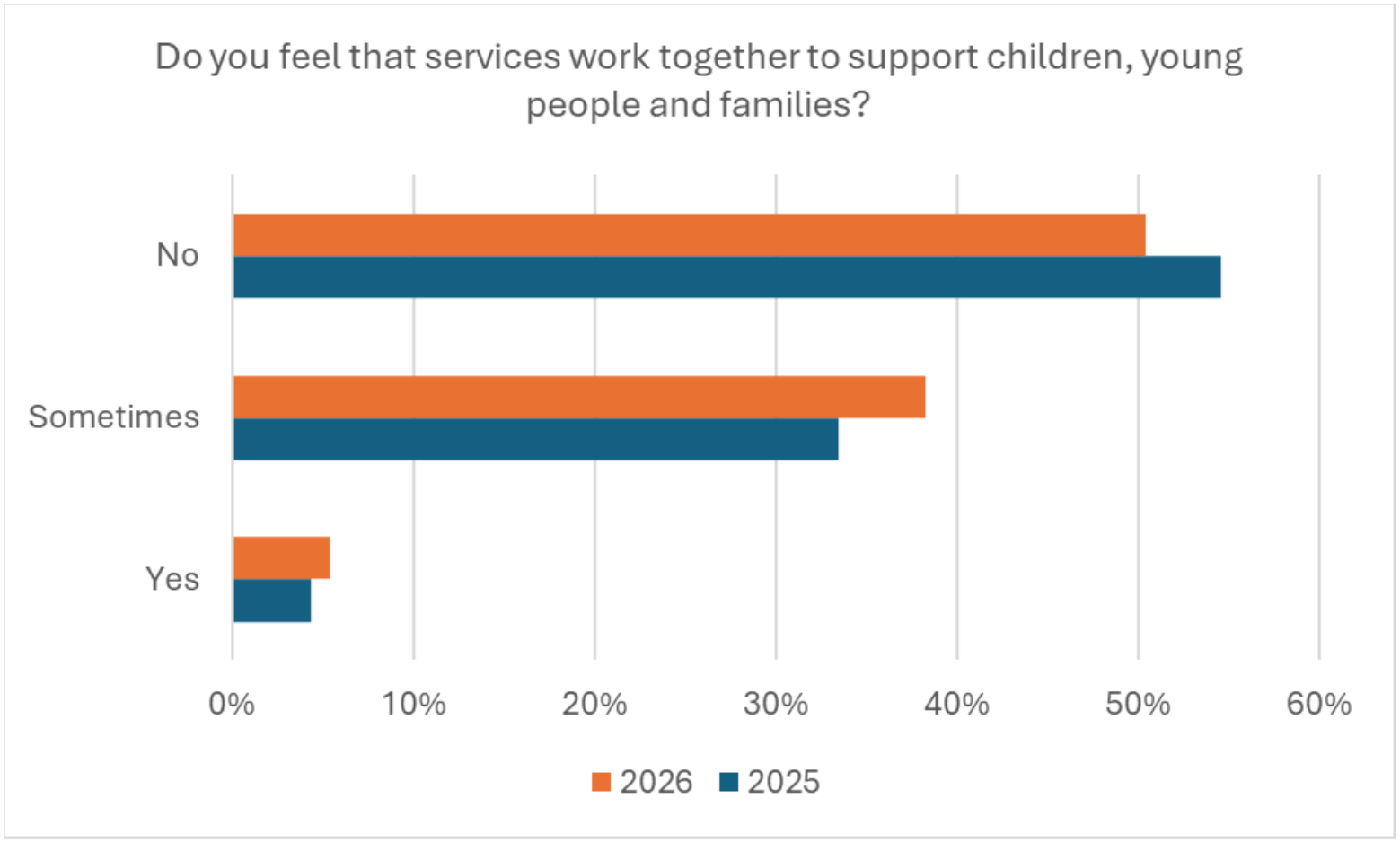
"When I was contacted by the Children with Disabilities team, which was off the back of us applying for our EHCP, it opened so many doors for us and signposted us to so many services that we were not previously aware of and I will be eternally grateful! The passes for local attractions have made days out as a family possible for us, as we could not afford it otherwise. The MAX card is also a life changing thing for us, as with their advice on applying for DLA, as we had previously turned down due to our son's age. We also found out about The Mendip Club through them. That one phone call changed everything for us!" – SEND survey

Leaders create an environment for effective practice and multi-agency working to flourish

- Parents recognise that individual practitioners are often trying their best but are constrained by limited resources and organisational barriers.
- Families report inconstancy in the coordination of education, health and social care themselves, with unclear accountability between services.
- Parents report that inconsistent or poor communication can result in being passed between children's services, adult services, health and education, with nobody taking ownership of the situation.
- When teams work together the impact for families is really positive especially linked to wellbeing and mental health.
- Turn-over of staff in teams particularly the statutory SEND team leads to challenges with multi-agency working due to lack of clarity about who is involved.

Education, health and social care do not work together. Senior officers acknowledged to us some years ago that teams worked in silos. In our experience that has not changed. Our sons' therapy has been funded through the Complex Needs Panel at a higher level than their EHC plans specify for three years, but the plans have not been updated to match. – Email feedback from parent carer

Leaders create an environment for effective practice and multi-agency working to flourish



I've had a great amount of help from the council, the school, the health care system, social care. - Parent engagement session

"We've had support from social services... the Council... health... charities... everybody's come together to support us." – Parent Carer engagement session

"I was directed between adult services and children's services, with no one taking responsibility for the initial assessment. – Parent carer engagement session