

FIFTH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY (SEND) IMPLEMENTATION SURVEY FOR PARENT CARER FORUMS

JUNE 2015



In May / June 2015, a fifth survey was undertaken with local authorities and parent carer forums reviewing their thoughts about challenges and successes in implementing the SEND reforms

The following are initial results from the parent carer forum survey based on an England wide response. The full responses to the survey including the regional breakdown will be completed and published over the next four weeks.

94 parent carer forums responded to the survey. This is a smaller response than the previous survey when we had 110 responses. This constitutes a 62% response rate.

Initial responses:

67% of forums think Parent carer forums are very or extremely well engaged.

67% of forums don't know how their local authority is using their preparing for employment grant. 28% knew it was being used in a range of different ways and 5% said it wasn't being used as it was intended.

51% of forums thought the joint commissioning arrangements either hadn't started or were in early stages.

Only 22% of forums thought that their local authority's offer for personal budgets for those with Education Health and Care (EHC) plans were well or fully developed.

73% of forums thought their local authority had mediation arrangements either fully or to some extent in place.

69% did not know if their local authority had arrangements in place for those between 10 - 18 with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in custody.

54% think their local authority are measuring the impact of the SEN reforms. 46% either thought they weren't or didn't know.

40% thought that there was limited progress towards Education Health and Care (EHC) reviews being person centred.

52% were either not at all or not very confident that the LA would meet the 20 week timescale for producing EHC plans. Gathering information and local authority capacity were the two highest attributing factors to this.

44% said yes the local authority had changed the transition plan since September whilst 35% didn't know.

Only 14% of forums were confident or extremely confident that their local authority would transfer all planned LDA's and statements by the 31st August 2015. This went up to 20% being confident all transfers would be achieved by August 2018.

Only 1% thought the feedback about the quality of the transfer review was good. 51% said it was good/ mixed.

48% of forums knew there was a named Designated Medical Officer (DMO) in post.

55% said their Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) have appointed a commissioner for children and 68% said they had a contact at the CCG they could raise issues with.

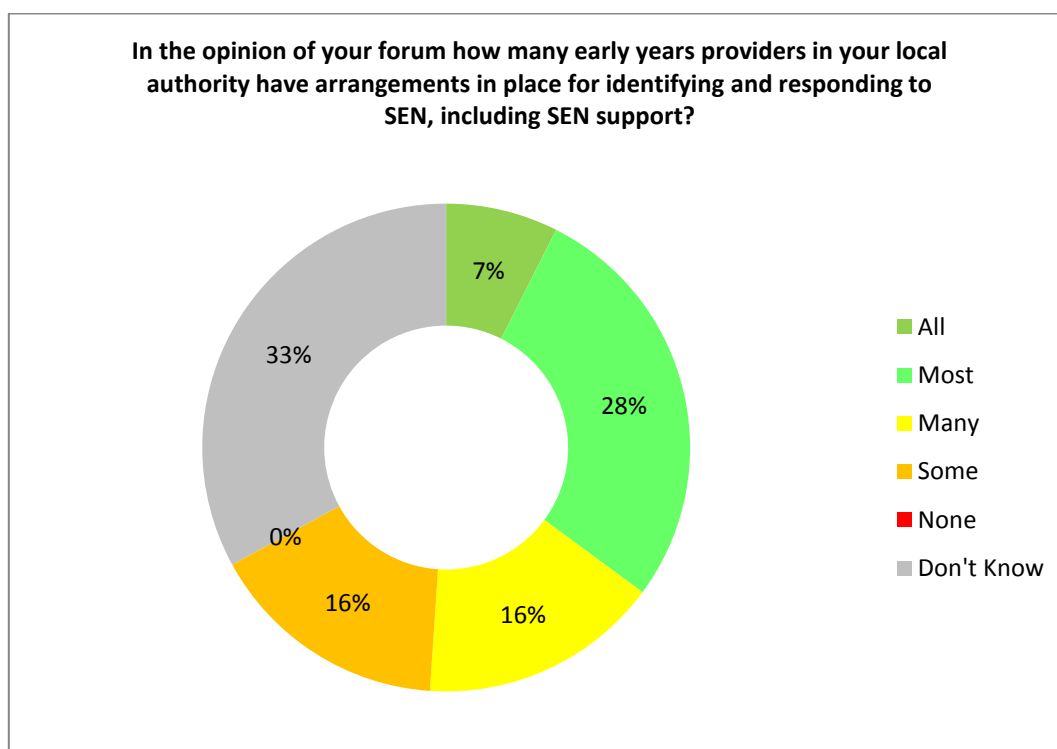
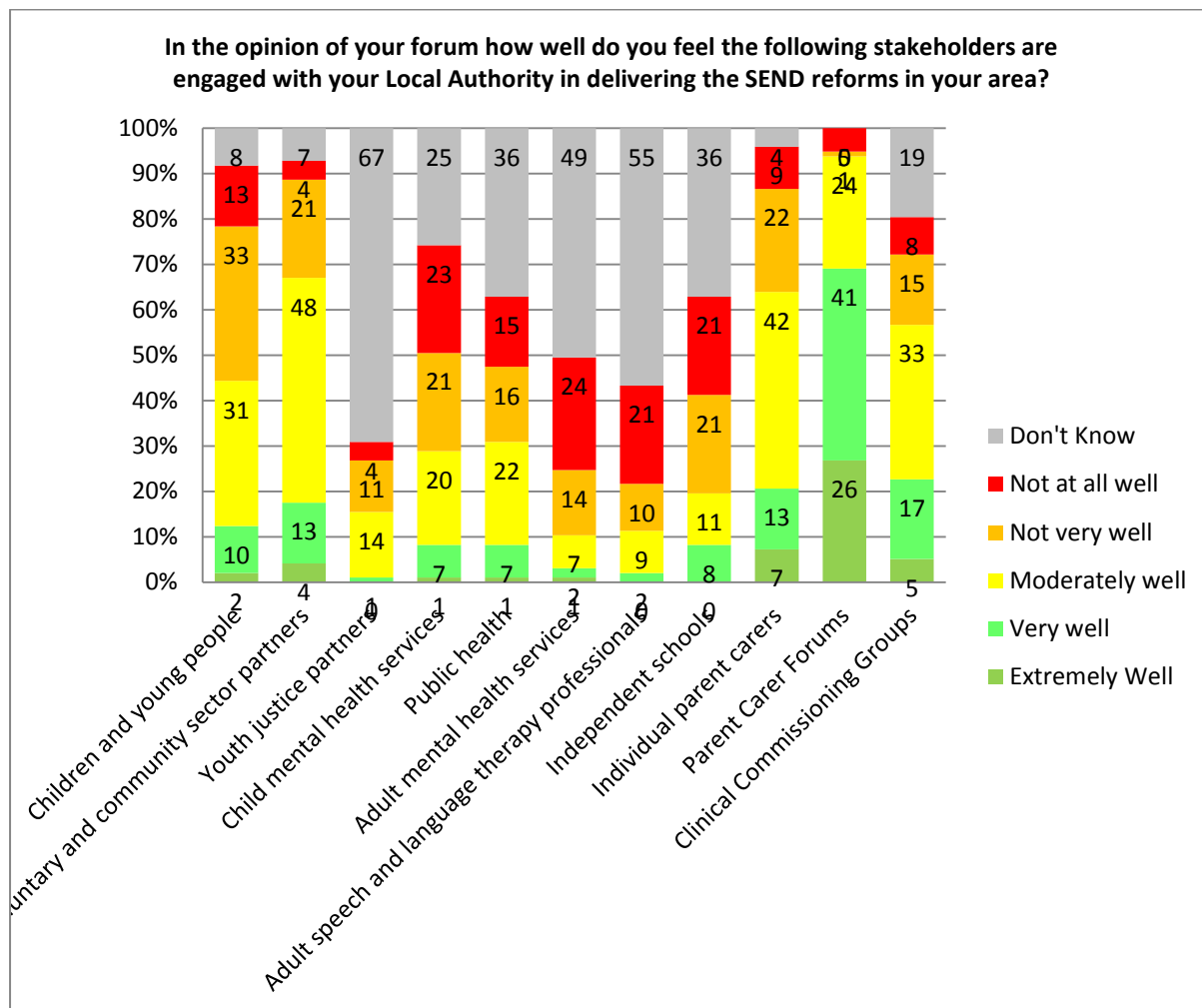
67% of forums reported that their local authority was intending to make changes to their short break provision either in 2015/16 or planned for 2016/17.

65% said their Information Advice and Support Service (IASS) service was either fully developed or well developed.

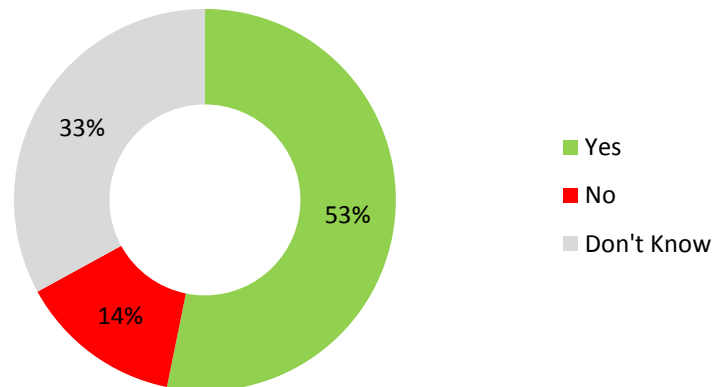
67% reported being involved in developing the Independent Support service in their area.

90% said yes they thought Independent Support services were still going to be needed after March 2016.

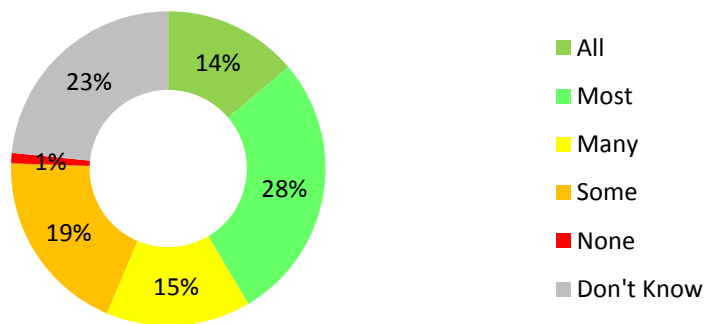
68% reported that working with Independent Support and IASS services had been a positive experience.



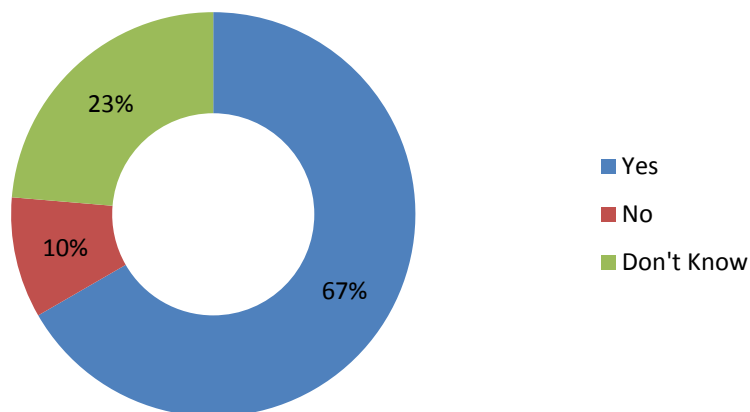
In the opinion of your forum does your Local Authority have an Area SENCO available to provide advice and guidance to early years providers and help make the links to facilitate appropriate early provision for children with SEN?



In the opinion of your forum what proportion of schools in your local authority area have published their School SEN Information Report?



Is your local authority making any changes to your short breaks provision either in 2015/16 or planned for 2016/17?





Our aim is to have everything co produced and after years of trying to achieve this we find our biggest challenges come from changes in staff, we feel it is like starting from the beginning again despite agreements in place. It is sheer determination, hard work & commitment from forums to the reforms that make it work for us

Structural changes have impacted significantly and the forum have lost key professionals who used to advocate for parental voice and the role of forum support that the LA had in place remains vacant and there is no current action being taken to fill this position. Some professionals are open and willing to engage with families, however this is deteriorating at a strategic level as time passes.

Our involvement with the LA and other partners is very sporadic. In the last six months we have experienced some hostility in working with the forum with a couple of officers. Forum members felt intimidated and unable to voice their views. The restructuring of SENDIAS has been done without consultation, when we have raised concerns at meetings it has been dismissed.

Thank you again for the SEN survey which our forum find to be a useful tool for engagement and participation - especially as we are required to work in partnership with our local authority to complete the survey.

Cuts to Local Authority budgets are impacting on the willingness and the ability to work in partnership with parents. This is having a direct impact of the Local Offer and delivery of some services in our area e.g. SEN Transport. This is undermining parental confidence in the Forum and LA and potentially puts the engagement of children, young people and families at risk. It has also come to the Forum's attention that certain DfE statutory guidance and information needs to be reviewed as a matter of urgency as it is no longer in line with current legislation i.e. Statutory guidance for Travel Assistance and the requirements of the Children & Family Act and Care Act and statutory school age. Greater clarification is required on the rules that should be applied for the 19-25 year cohort who are in receipt of an EHC Plan in terms of both eligibility and means testing for services for which they are needs assessed.

We as a forum are concerned that the level of co-production has been impacted on when the capacity of the LA is being reduced through austerity measures and reduction in staffing levels and also the lack of funding in being able deliver the capacity required to deliver the changes on the reforms. We feel that the burdens funds the LA receives to assist in the reforms programme should continue beyond this current funding period and ensure that some of the good practices that are starting to emerge continue in their development. We feel in the necessary funding and resources don't continue to be available that the reforms will have the potential to become process driven and not outcomes focused as the Code of Practice is designed to.

LAs seem to think that because they are now implementing the Reforms, the project has come to an end, and so in part, has co-production. There are parts of the project team who are completely and fully engaged and committed to the new ways of thinking, however, they are not responsible for the operational day to day workings of writing and delivering the Plans. The team that is, whilst certainly making every effort to try to listen to parents on an individual level, are so bogged down trying to meet their deadlines, that in our view, they are missing the key part of the reforms around strategic partnership working....not just with parents but also their colleagues in other areas of the authority and health. And in terms of reviewing the processes to see how they have worked so far, this team's only commitment is to review the forms....not the process or look at how families and young people have been engaged, what their experiences have been so far. However on a positive note, directionally, our sense is that for those parents who have converted (not sure about new assessments) parents have felt more involved overall which can only be a good thing

Our area underwent a substantial restructure recently, which has had a significant impact on the implementation of the reforms. Expertise, knowledge, and the cultural change that had become the norm during the pathfinder era, was lost. This restructure left a number of crucial posts vacant, and problems recruiting resulted in a very real lack of capacity. There has been an increase in the number of requests for referrals, but there hasn't been time to rebuild the knowledge and expertise that was lost, and this has been further impacted by budget cuts. There is less money to undertake more work with less expertise

Progress is being made slowly mainly because professionals are trapped in financial quandaries, inappropriate time frames and personal fears of jobs reorganisations, Effort and motivation is sapped and restriction reduce the power and natural abilities people have to create a good system. people are being defensive and as I am new to this post would ideally be looking to describe very positive and beneficial outcomes because of the new legislation over the next three years. The current atmosphere is quite restrictive and oppressive to all concerned and very little time left to engage the children and young people who are at the most important centre of the plan.

Timescales have been too tight for all organisations. Expectations of staff has been challenging. System and cultural change takes time. Change at a time of austerity can be particularly difficult. Parents need ongoing support throughout the process. Needs to be an increased focus on the voice of children and young people and an acknowledgement that this takes time and expertise.

The DfE should not underestimate the impact on the schools as partners in implementing these reforms. There has been considerable concern from SENCo's who themselves are learning and are often placed between the Local Authority and families. The deadlines from the DfE, and the schedule the Local Authority has imposed upon itself is ambitious. As a parent forum we are very pleased to be working closely with the Local Authority and feel that we are well placed to work in partnership to support schools and SENCo's.

This survey is the first where the time allowed has given the PCF and LA an opportunity to view and share each other's responses to the survey and has given us both a good opportunity to see where any differences, real or perceived lie and take steps to address them. Although it appears from the discussion we had on our respective surveys that we are both of a very similar understanding throughout.

Parents feel very strongly that LAs need to have more authority to challenge schools and academies in relation to SEND and for there to be a responsible senior officer within the LA whose role this is. There needs to be more scope for parents to give feedback on their young person's SEN Support, Support via a Statement, an EHC Plan or a LDA and it's effectiveness. A gateway through Ofsted where collated feedback per Education Provider would be very helpful BUT not along the lines of the existing "Parents Voice" section which does not allow for any detailed information to be given. This would also be useful data for parents when choosing schools

There is still much to do. Cuts in funding is the biggest enemy to successful implementation. Additional funding for the reforms will need to continue throughout the next 3 years during the transition period.

We are cautiously optimistic with the appointment of the new SEND Commissioner and an increase in the staffing levels within the SEN team that our area will move forward but there is still a lot of work to do.