

Topic of Importance – Education

Through regular contact with parent carers a number of key themes are cropping up, mostly in relation to access to educational provision and support. Parent carers have a right to education for their children and young people as defined under The Education Act 1996 which clearly states that each child, of a compulsory school age, are entitled to a full-time education in particular Section 19 states that *‘Each local education authority shall make arrangements for the provision of suitable full-time or part-time education at school or otherwise than at school for those children of compulsory school age who, by reason of illness, exclusion from school or otherwise, may not for any period receive suitable education unless such arrangements are made for them.’*

This Topic of Importance (ToI) will focus on access to educational provision for SEND children from the perspective of their parent carers.

What are parents telling us?

Parent carers have been raising concerns about their children’s education. The most common issues are:

1. The experience of parents that their children are being put on part-time tables against the wishes of the parents and they are often being told that this is the only way their children can attend school. They report being given papers to sign without telling them what they are signing or making them believe that it is in the best interest of their child.
2. The belief that educational settings do not want them (parent carers) to know about their rights, e.g. right for their child to access full-time education.
3. The concern that parent carers are being blamed for their children’s behaviour, even when the behaviour difficulties are directly linked to their SEND and unmet needs (by the school).
4. The belief that SEND children are not welcome in individual settings and that cost may be a barrier.

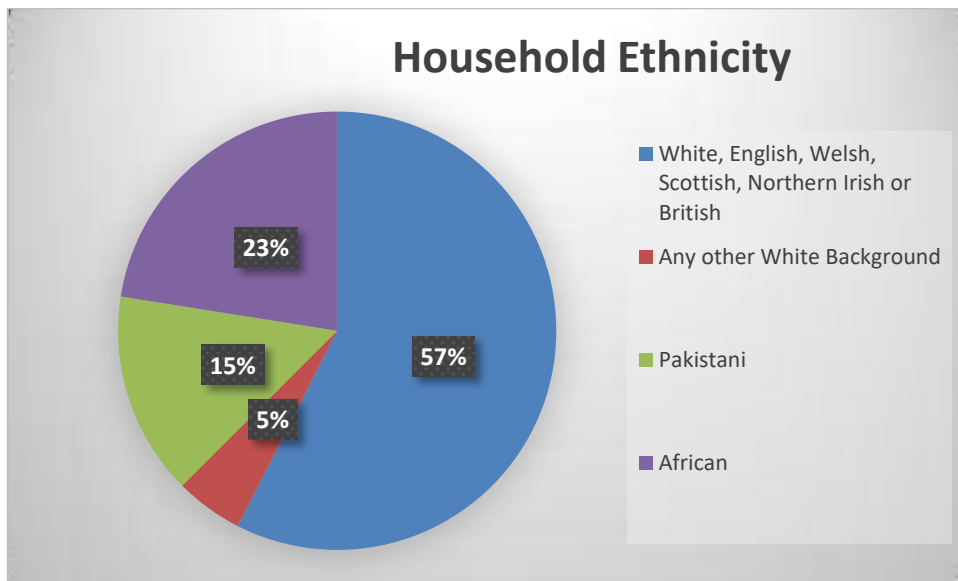
Where we get our evidence from

1. Contact with parent carers via social media.
2. Feedback gathered during our events and activities.
3. Email/phone requests from parent carers for signposting and advice.
4. School’s events and coffee mornings.
5. External events.
6. Parent/carer hub sessions.

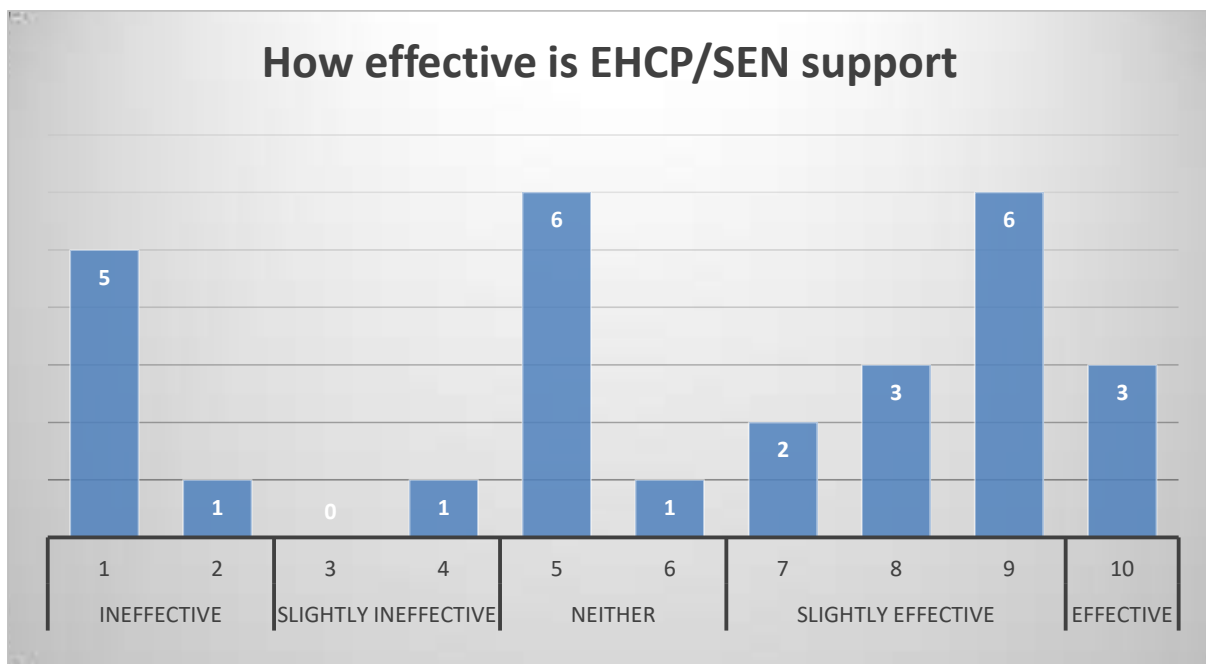
How have FVP responded

On 24th July 2023 we published a survey entitled ‘School Attendance & Experience’ to establish if the themes were felt by other parents too. The full results can be seen in a report via our website <https://familyvoice.org/surveyreports/> For a brief analysis see below:

40 parent carers from a range of back grounds completed the survey; of those who completed approx. 57% self-describe as White British and the other 43% self-describe as from other ethnic back grounds.



We have asked parent carers about how effective EHCP/SEN support at their child’s educational facility is:



Parent carers also told us that:

‘She has progressed enormously cannot thank the school enough’

‘My child would not have achieved what she has without the support, she would have faded into the background and not be on target for GCSE’s, or her issues would have escalated - anxiety, misunderstandings through miscommunications - without the support she would have

struggled more than she does now. It's not been easy the past 10 years is a constant revisit of all things, parents need to be involved at every stage had I not pushed as a parent we would not have the support in place for success.'

'Really depends on the teacher approach not enough information how to get help from school'

'Little to no support, no educational outcome.'

As you can see from the quotes and table above, parent carers have mixed feelings on how effective the EHCp/SEN support at their child's educational facility is. Although it is wonderful to hear that some parent carers find the support effective, it is concerning that some of them find it ineffective and have doubts about whether EHCp is being considered by the school and there is lack of reasonable adjustments that should be in place.

What parent carers told us when asked 'Do you have anything positive, neutral or negative to feedback in your experience working with the Local Authority as part of the EHC process if applicable?'

- *'Local authorities have been really helpful an the ehcp is great if followed'*
- *'It was not up to standard some years ago but it has improved tremendously'*
- *'There's no personal touch with local authority, it's just a case number and process procedure requirements. However where a Teacher of the Deaf is involved this is where the process becomes more engaged, more personal, quick feedback.'*
- *'Negative. Process seemed rushed. Yes it's just another form and paperwork for the council, but this is also a child that needs additional help. If she's working between 12-18 months developmentally, then she needs to be treated as such. Would anyone else send their 1 year old to school and expect them to fit in with other 5 year old and do the same things.'*
- *'We had to end up going to mediation to get support was stressful and cost my daughter years education not done day at school yet the ehcp review also took long time to complete get back and communication was not very good.but have other support social worker key worker and little miracles going to start school end September'*
- *'The part they played was fair even if the answer wasn't what I wanted.'*
- *'They don't seem to be able to help a bulk of familys till its too late. They first said no to her ehc saying school should be able to manage. But I appealed this and before meeting suddenly its approved so there is clearly a fault somewhere with helping kids and schools'*
- *'All good, but not to good at communication once finalised.'*

Once again, there are some very positive reviews and parent carers feel that the Local Authority is very helpful, however there are some concerns about the lack of communication and personalisation.

This is what the respondents have told us when asked to share their experiences:

- *'Everything is positive at the moment although sometimes it can be challenging with kids behaviour'*
- *'positive environment good education and support child to achieve their best'*
- *'Listen very well to my concerns but just did not have the time to allow me to go into depth to explain child's needs'*
- *'Child started to school avoid on odd days in late yr8 early Yr 9 then covid hit. Did no work online as couldn't engage with online learning. Went back to school and school avoidance increased dramatically. A child who previously was in top set and excelled couldn't do the work. By end Yr 10 had pulled from 1 GCSE. Yr 11 not in lessons but in Bridge. Put in for lower papers of GCSEs sat no mocks. Horrific meltdowns (self harm, lots of suicide talk) at start of GCSEs and after a fight with school I pulled her from 2 more GCSE subjects as she did not know content. Sat Eng, Math, 3 x sciences got grade 5s in all subjects even in English where she missed a paper. By end of GCSEs in a room alone without ticking clock, and with spinning chair, extra time. Had to fight for all this. Went in during school summer hols to sit a higher paper for bio and chem to prove she could do them at A Level. Now doing 3 a levels at schools 6th form. Attends lessons but struggles with other parts of the school day so usually comes home. Exams still major problem. Last kocks screwed up as room she was in had people shouting out side it'*
- *School lied about how far behind they are academically tried to get me to send them to mainstream school had to fight for 10years to get help and support for the didn't listen to me when I told the my child had special needs*
- *Poor bad communication between the school and myself*
- *Positive now. Encountered bullying, discrimination from teaching staff, uneducated in hearing loss, Teacher of Deaf supported, as well as in school SEN department and all things are now positive following several years of ironing issues out.*
- *Very positive - a refreshing change from what was experienced at primary school.*
- *No support for my child even though the school recognised the needs, lots of false promises and passed from one person to the next and each time having to start over again, which has led to my child not being in school at all for months at a time. Lack of communication between staff to ensure child's needs are met, things put in place but again no communication between teachers so they failed. My child's mental health has been extremely affected by all of this aswel as the other struggles of his additional needs*
- *Negative.. No 1:1 (Ehcp says she needs one), lack of time in class with peers, lack of communication with me about the school day, if my child does something they don't like - they phsically pick her up and move her! been left with so many marks and bruises - been told these are 'justified' as she needed to be moved out the situation 'for everyone's safety'. If a negative situation occurs in the classroom, it's mentioned to be by a CHILD in the class along with their parent, rather than the school staff letting me know.*
- *"I hate it, always feel like it's my fault. Some teacher seems to understandable but daughter still can't seem to be able to be in school for a full day. shows time where he struggles too but currently unsure weather copying sister behavior or shows signs he has additional needs but some of the teacher don't seem to assess him as an individual just a naughty kid.*

- *Her previous mainstream school have been supportive to find new school and could always call they did do home visits and supportive with home school work*
- *"Our 13yr old didn't get proper settling in period when transferring to secondary school because of Covid*
- *School have supported us and know our children can never return. Alternative provision in place for September.*

Experiences are very mixed with common concerns and themes being:

1. Communication which is often poor
2. It takes too long to get support
3. Where things do go well this is linked to good communication and parent carers being included and listened to

Where FVP have shared this talking point

1. FVP Website
2. FVP Social Media Channels
3. FVP E-News
4. Peterborough City Council Decision Makers

Next Steps and Areas for Consideration

1. To empower parent carers to know their rights by using the SEND Information Hub (Local Offer).
2. To continue working with settings and the Local Authority via the SENCO conferences, SENCO networks and training which gives us the opportunity to raise issues on behalf of SEND households.
3. To encourage take up of the schools offer which builds positive relationships.

Timescales

1. For PCC to respond within one month of issue of this ToI
2. For this ToI to be published on the Local Offer within one month of issue date