Rutland Parent Carer Voice SEND Reform Research Study

Introduction

This report summarises findings from an online survey carried out in September 2026 of Rutland parents and carers about the UK Government's proposed SEND reforms set out in the White Paper 'Every Child Achieving and Thriving'. The aim was to capture local perspectives on understanding, confidence, concerns and priorities as these major changes take shape.

The reforms introduce key shifts including a statutory digital Individual Support Plan (ISP) replacing EHCPs for many children; a new three-tiered support model (Targeted, Targeted Plus, Specialist); "Experts at Hand" for quicker access to specialist advice; mandatory SEND training for all teachers; and new SEND Inclusion Bases in mainstream secondary schools. Transition arrangements will also change, with reassessment against updated thresholds coming into effect from 2029.

About the respondents

29 parents and carers took part in the study. The majority of respondents were parent carers of secondary school age children (45%) followed by 24% who had children in primary school. 17% had children in one or more stage settings and 14% have children in Post 16 education.

The study provides us with views from parents with children and young people with SEND both with and without an EHCP. Nearly 70% of the respondents have children who currently have an EHCP with a further 3% currently undergoing assessment for an EHCP. 28% currently receive SEND support in school without having an EHCP.

Key Findings

Awareness of the proposed SEND reforms

Respondents were asked if they were aware of the "Every Child Achieving and Thriving" white paper. The vast majority (86%) had at least some knowledge of the proposed SEND reforms with 1 in 4 claiming to have read the proposals in detail and thought they were very familiar with the proposals. One third of respondents said they had heard about the reforms via the media or their school with a further third saying they had heard about the reforms but were unaware of the specific details of the White Paper. 4 people (14%) said that this was the first time they had heard about the SEND reforms.

Awareness and Clarity of Explanation

While most respondents had some familiarity with the proposals, understanding varied. Many felt the new digital ISP and three-tiered support system had not yet been clearly explained. Of all the

core proposals, the concepts parents felt they understood best were those related to early identification of need and universal teacher training; details around how thresholds would work and how statutory protections would apply were the areas least well understood.

Confidence in Partnership and Co-Production

The White Paper places strong emphasis on stronger home-school partnerships and parents working alongside schools to co-produce ISPs. Parents welcome this principle, but confidence is mixed that schools will genuinely include their voices in practice. Some expressed optimism; others noted that past experience of engagement had been variable and hoped this new statutory duty would deliver real, consistent change.

Resources, Capacity and Delivery

A clear majority do not believe schools currently have the staffing, resources or funding to deliver the higher inclusion expectations set out in the reforms. This is a deep and widespread concern:

- 48% fear funding will not reach the frontline classroom level
- 45% worry delivery will be inconsistent across different mainstream schools
- 31% are concerned about continued delays to access therapists and specialists despite the "Experts at Hand" commitment

Transitions and Statutory Protection are the Greatest Concerns for Parent/Carers

The single most cited concern, shared by nearly two-thirds of respondents (66%), is the potential loss of, or harder access to, statutory protections currently provided through EHCPs.

Transition from primary to secondary school is another key worry: Many are concerned about the 2029 requirement for reassessment against new thresholds at transition, and whether their child will keep the support they need.

Confidence is low that primary and secondary schools will smoothly share digital ISPs or collaborate effectively

While the planned SEND Inclusion Bases in secondaries are seen as a positive idea, less than half believe they will make mainstream secondary a realistic option for their own child

Hopes for Positive Change

Parents do see potential benefits in the SEND Reforms. There is broad agreement that earlier identification of need and universal SEND training for all teachers would improve day-to-day support in classrooms. Overall, views on long-term impact are balanced: some expect real improvement over 3–5 years; others feel outcomes could worsen if protections are weakened or resourcing is insufficient.

Priorities for Implementation

When asked what single change or protection should be prioritised, recurring themes in open responses included:

- Retaining strong, reliable statutory legal rights and protections
- Ensuring consistent, transparent funding that reaches schools and children directly
- Clear, consistent communication so parents fully understand changes and their rights
- Guaranteeing timely access to specialist professionals and therapy
- Meaningful, consistent partnership with parents in planning and review processes

Conclusion

This survey paints a thoughtful, balanced picture: Rutland parents and carers welcome the ambition of the reforms particularly earlier help, better teacher skills, closer partnership and more inclusive schools. But there is also real and widespread anxiety about how these good intentions will translate into practice.

The dominant message is: trust in the new system depends on protections, funding and consistency. Parents want to see statutory safeguards maintained or strengthened, not weakened; they want funding visible in classrooms; they want clear, consistent information; and they want schools equipped and supported to deliver on new expectations.

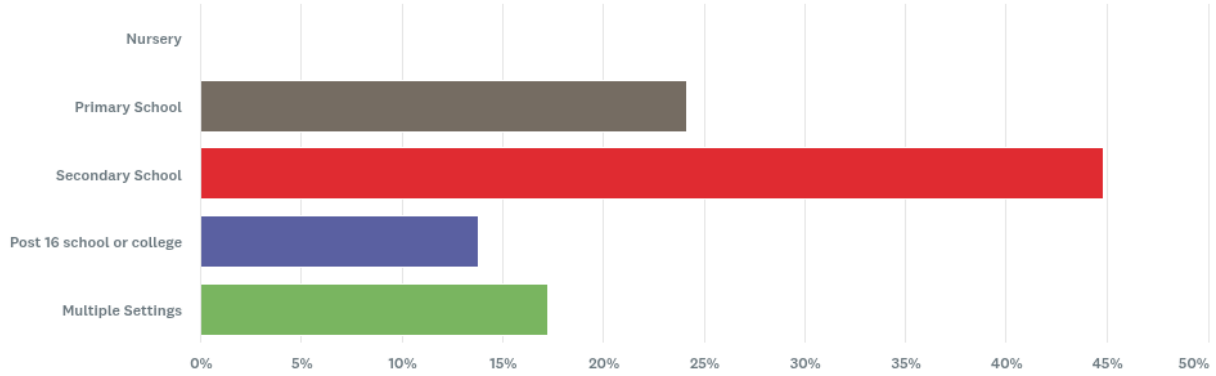
There is also a clear desire to work in partnership as these reforms roll out. Listening to parents now and acting on these concerns early will help ensure Rutland’s children truly achieve and thrive.

Appendix

Individual question response

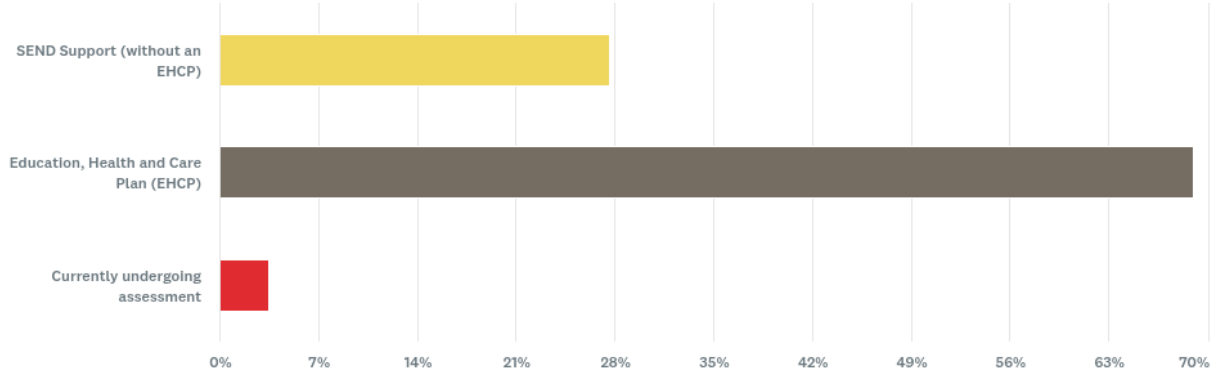
Q1 29 responses

What is the current school stage of your SEND child/children:



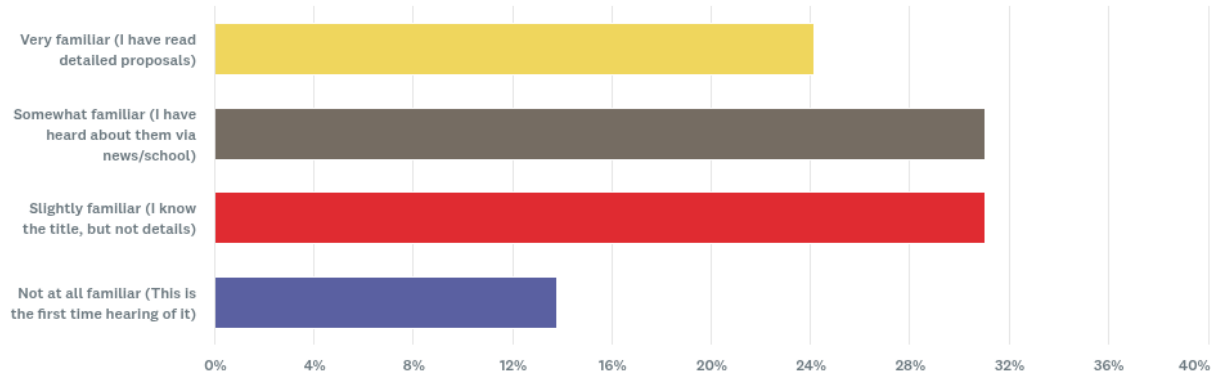
Q2 29 responses

CURRENT LEVEL OF SUPPORT:



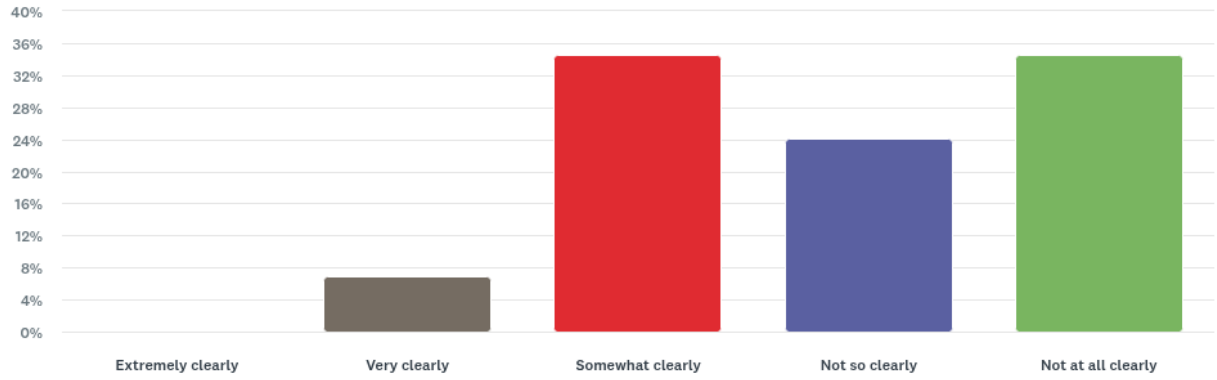
Q3 29 responses

How familiar are you with the government's proposed SEND reforms outlined in the "Every Child Achieving and Thriving" paper?



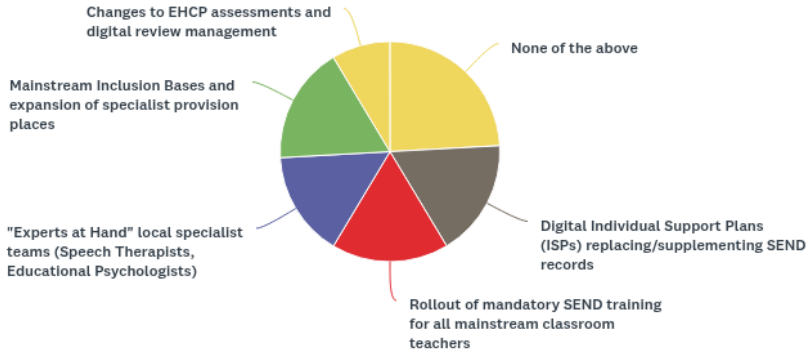
Q4 29 responses

The proposal introduces a statutory digital "Individual Support Plan" (ISP) and a 3-tiered model of support (Targeted, Targeted Plus, Specialist). How clearly have these changes been explained?



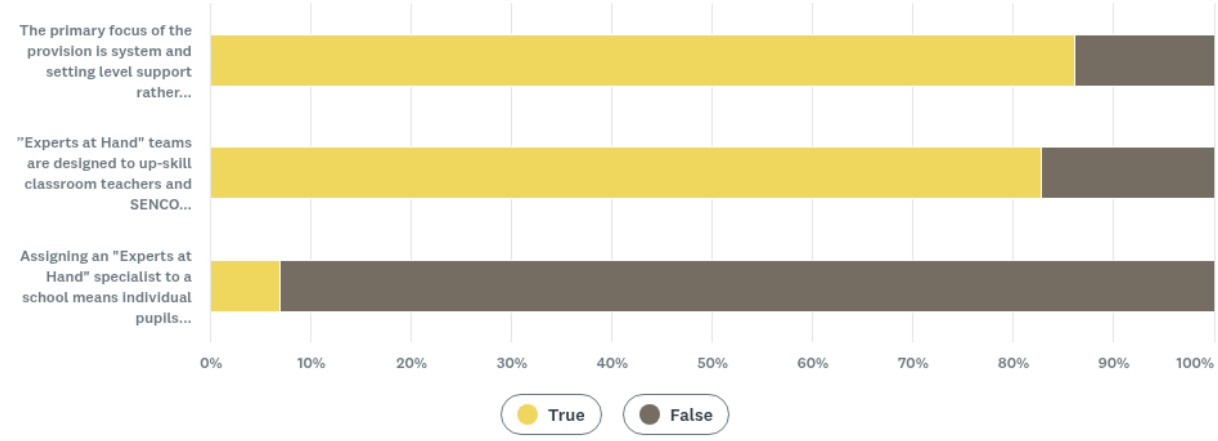
Q5 29 responses

Which of the following core proposals do you feel you understand well? (Select all that apply)



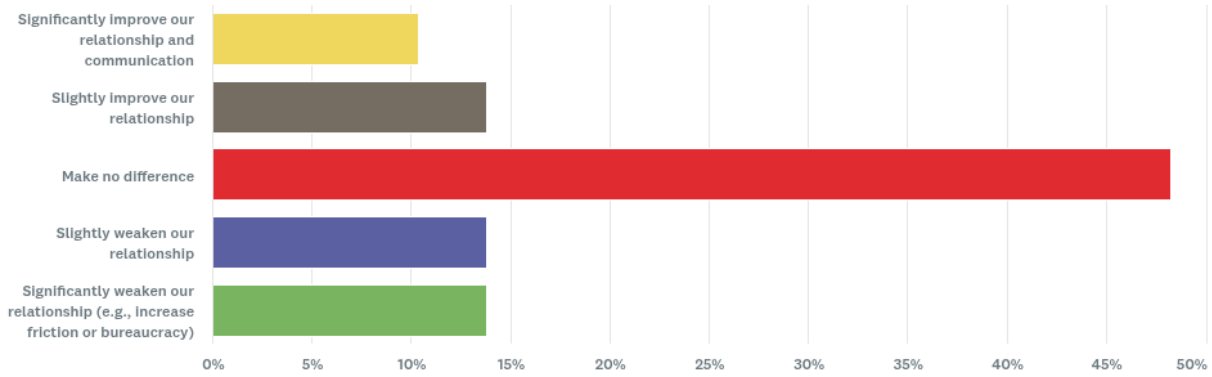
Q6 29 responses

Based on your understanding of the "Experts at Hand" provision being proposed in the White Paper, please mark each of the following statements as True or False:



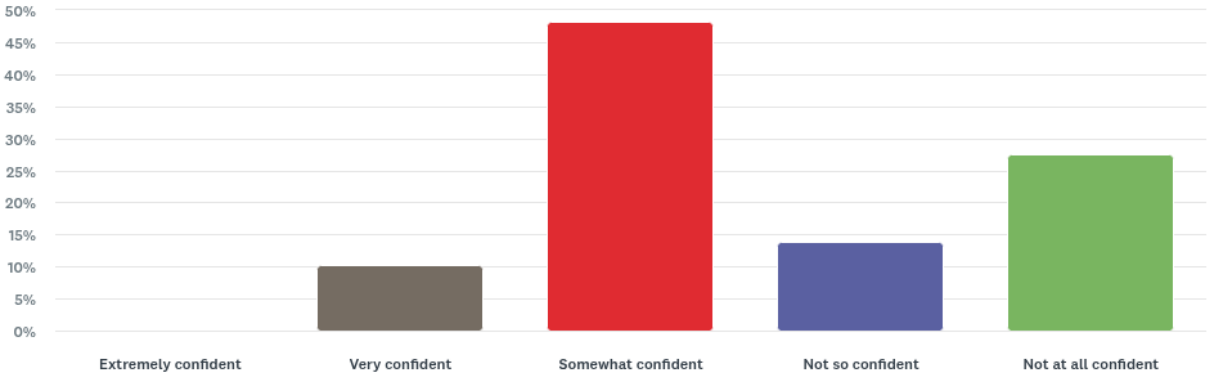
Q7 29 responses

The white paper aims to establish stronger home-to-school partnerships. How do you believe this will affect your working relationship with your child's school?



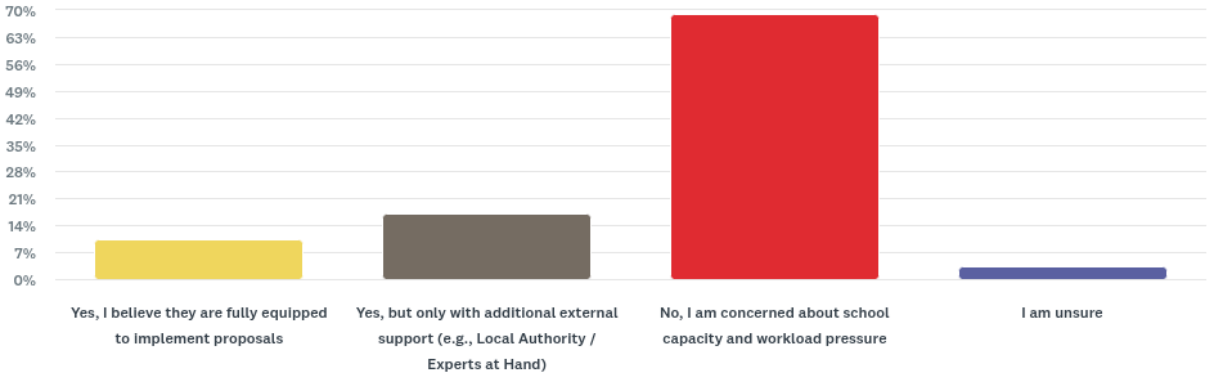
Q8 29 responses

Under the proposed model, schools will co-produce digital Individual Support Plans (ISPs) directly with parents. How confident are you that your child's school will meaningfully include your voice in these plans?



Q9 29 responses

Do you believe your child's school currently has the staff capacity, resources, and funding required to deliver the proposed inclusion expectations effectively?



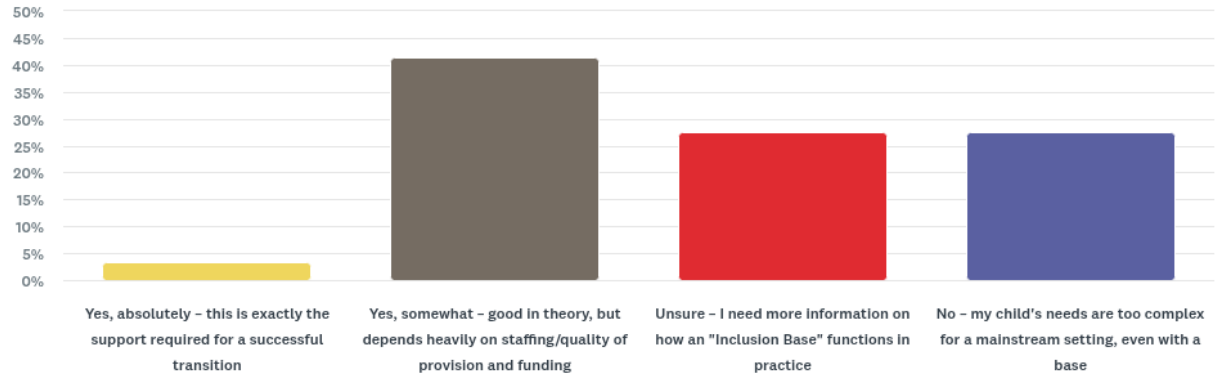
Q10 29 responses

From 2029, children with EHCPs face reassessment against new thresholds at transition. How concerned are you about your child maintaining statutory support when moving to secondary school?



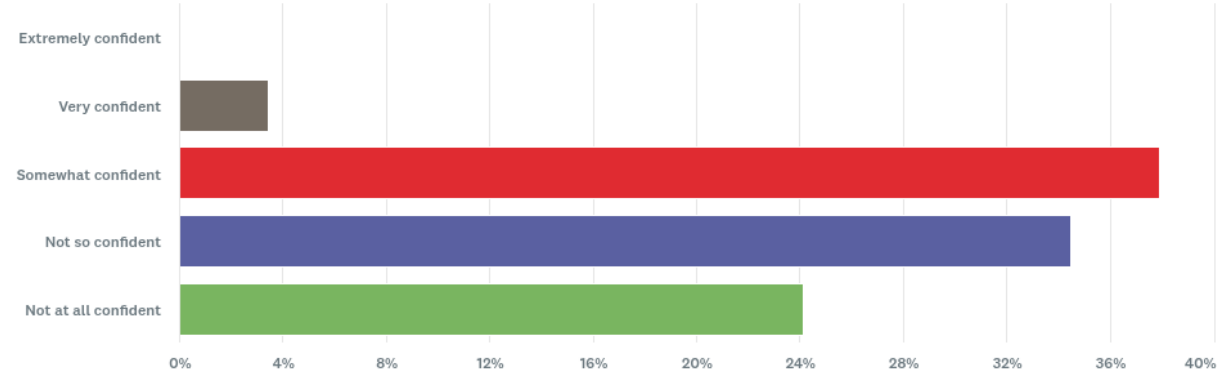
Q11 29 responses

Secondary schools will be expected to establish dedicated SEND Inclusion Bases. Do you believe these spaces will make mainstream secondary transition a viable option for your child?



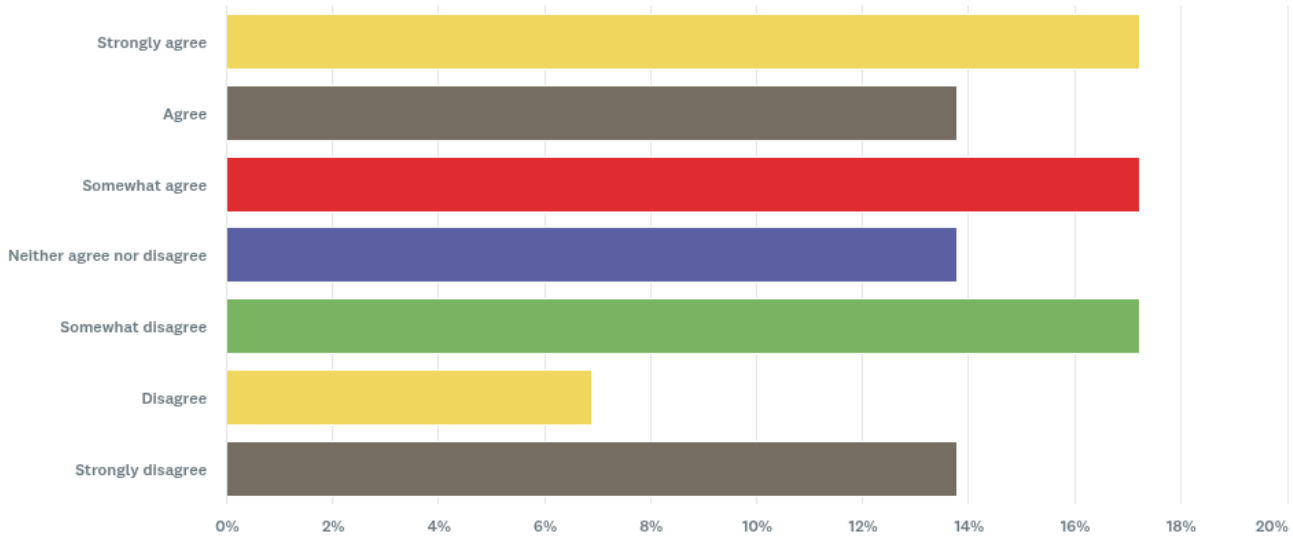
Q12 29 responses

Digital ISPs are designed to transfer seamlessly between schools. How confident are you that primary and secondary schools will effectively collaborate and share these plans?



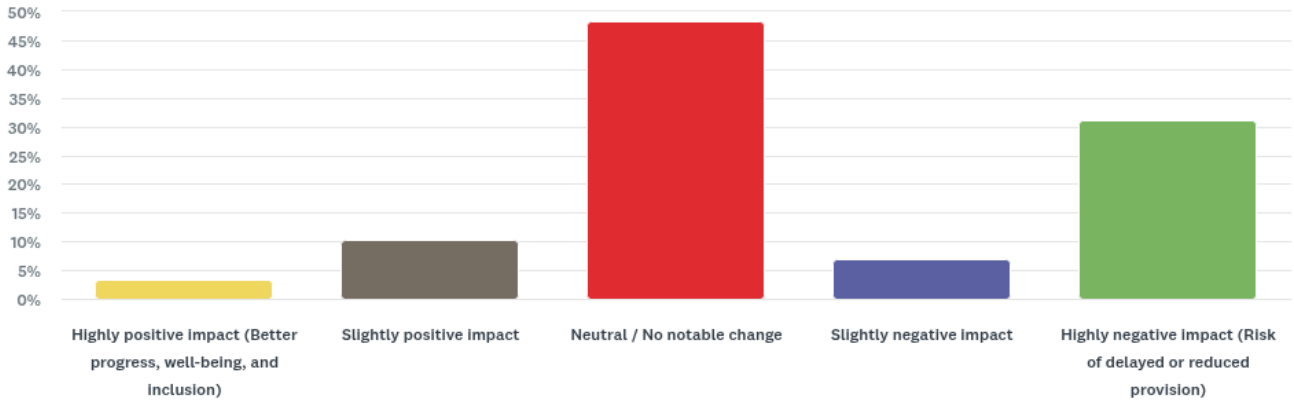
Q13 29 responses

How much do you agree that early identification of need and mandatory universal SEND training for teachers will lead to better day-to-day classroom support for my child:



Q14 29 responses

Overall, how do you believe the proposed changes will impact your child's educational and emotional outcomes over the next 3–5 years?



Q15 29 responses

What is your main area of concern regarding implementation of the SEND Reforms? (Select up to two)

