

North Northamptonshire Parent Carer Voices (NPCV)

Survey of Special Educational Needs (SEND)
Services: Analysis Report

August 2025

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Introduction

North Northamptonshire Parent Carer Voices (NPCV) support families of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) across North Northamptonshire. The team is led by parent/carers themselves, who work in partnership with families, services and local organisations to improve and support the outcomes and experiences for families. Their overall aim is to influence meaningful and lasting change across Education, Health and Social Care for children and young people with SEND in North Northamptonshire.

NPCV have produced a survey to gather a wide range of views from parents within the Local Authority regarding many aspects of support for children and young people with SEND. This is the first iteration of the survey and will be updated annually.

This report provides data analysis and visualisation of these survey responses and will be used as a baseline from which to measure progress in terms of the delivery of SEND services across the Local Authority.

The report has been broken down into the following sections:

- The Characteristics of Children and Young People With SEND Need Across North Northamptonshire
- SEND Service Experience across North Northamptonshire
- Early Intervention
- Home Education
- Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)

The Characteristics of Children and Young People With SEND Need Across North Northamptonshire

This section provides a summary of the characteristics of the children with SEND need across North Northamptonshire including their primary needs, educational setting and educational support.

What Type of Need(s) Has Your Child/Young Person Been Diagnosed as Having?¹

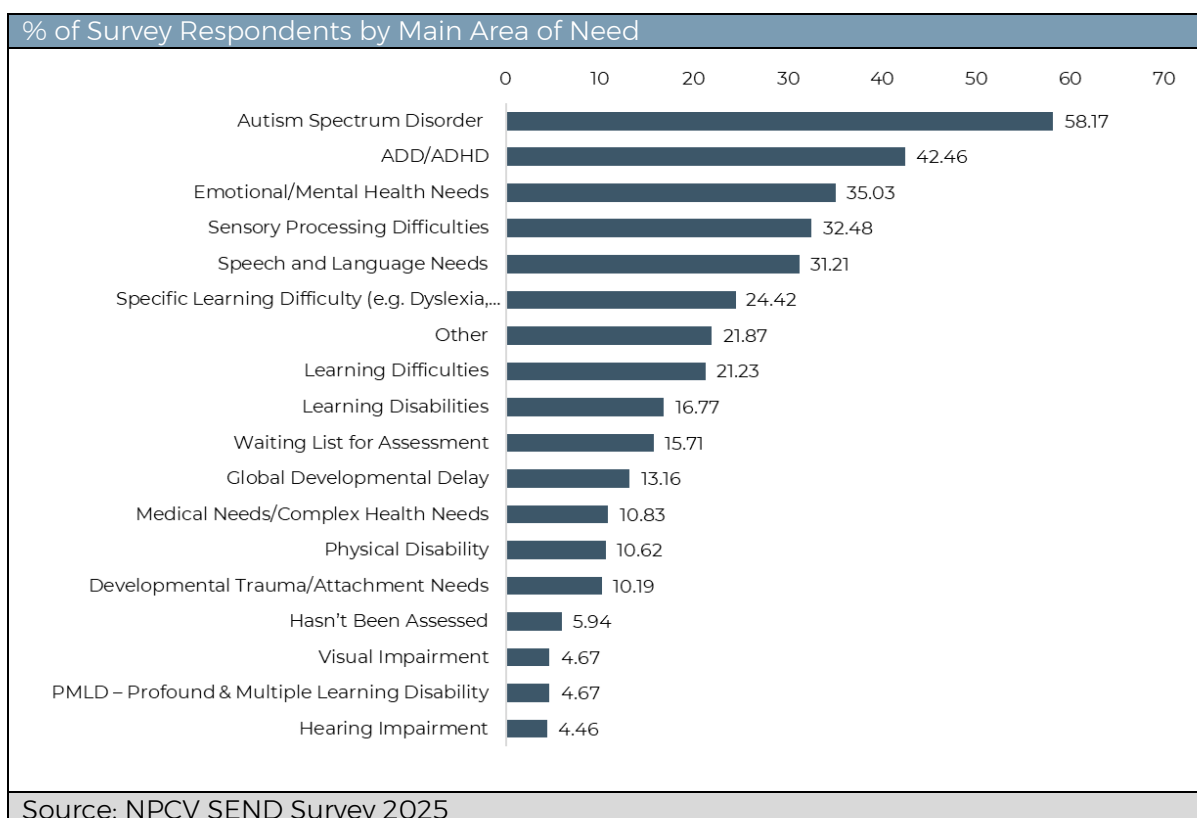
The three most prominent areas of SEND recorded by parent carers were Autism Spectrum Disorder (58.17%), Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (42.46%) and Emotional/Mental Health Needs (35.03%).

Need	Number of Survey Respondents	% of Survey Respondents
Autism Spectrum Disorder	274	58.17
ADD/ADHD	200	42.46
Emotional/Mental Health Needs	165	35.03
Sensory Processing Difficulties	153	32.48
Speech and Language Needs	147	31.21
Specific Learning Difficulty (e.g. Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia)	115	24.42
Other ²	103	21.87
Learning Difficulties	100	21.23
Learning Disabilities	79	16.77
Waiting List for Assessment ³	74	15.71
Global Developmental Delay	62	13.16
Medical Needs/Complex Health Needs	51	10.83
Physical Disability	50	10.62
Developmental Trauma/Attachment Needs	48	10.19
Hasn't Been Assessed	28	5.94
Visual Impairment	22	4.67
PMLD - Profound & Multiple Learning Disability	22	4.67
Hearing Impairment	21	4.46

¹ Please note, some children were recorded in more than one area of need/difficulty. This analysis represents the data as a proportion of the total number of respondents to the question (471), rather than the total number of responses to the question (1,714).

² The 'Other' category includes the following areas of need: Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder (FASD), Microdeletion syndrome, Avoidant/Restrictive Food Intake Disorder (ARFID), Tourette's, Selective mutism, Oppositional defiant disorder, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), Angelman syndrome, Prader Willi Syndrome, Cerebral Palsy and Hypermobility.

³ The majority of respondents who chose this specified a waiting list for Autism and/or ADD/ADHD.



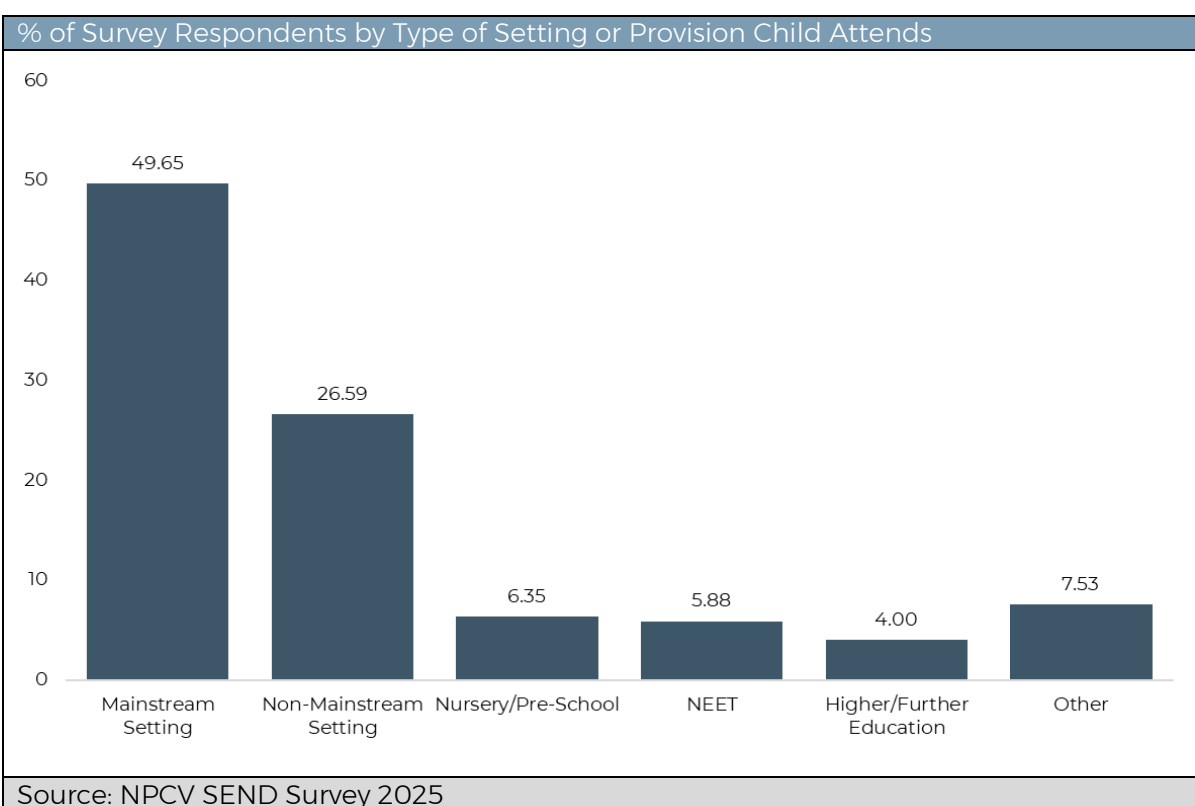
Which Type of Educational Setting Does Your Child/Young Person Attend?

The majority of respondents reported that their child or young person attends a mainstream primary school (29.18%) or mainstream secondary school (14.12%) in North Northamptonshire.

Type of Setting	Number of Survey Respondents	% of Survey Respondents
Mainstream Primary (North Northants)	124	29.18
Other ⁴	75	17.65
Mainstream Secondary (North Northants)	60	14.12
Secondary Special School (North Northants)	33	7.76
Primary Special School (North Northants)	30	7.06
Nursery/Pre-School	27	6.35
EOTAS (Education Otherwise Than at School)	18	4.24
Electively Home Educated	10	2.35

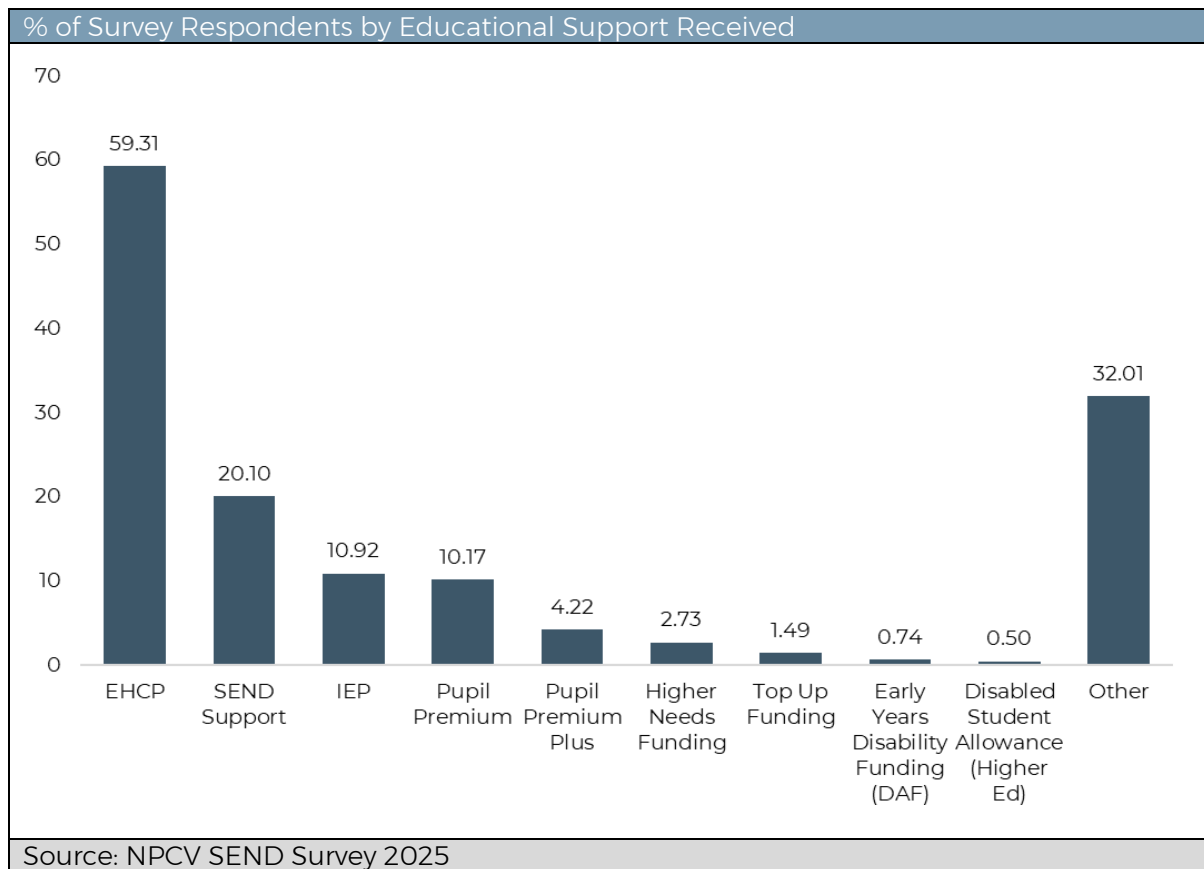
⁴ Here the 'Other' category includes settings which had fewer than 5 respondents, including Home Educated – Non Elective, Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET), Supported Internships, Without a School Place and Apprenticeship, as well as other more common settings that are outside of North Northamptonshire including Primary and Secondary Special School, Independent Secondary School, Independent/Private Secondary Mainstream School, Mainstream Further Education College/Post 16 and Special College, Post 16 Institution. This category also includes respondents who did not choose any of the listed setting options, instead citing settings such as University, Day Centre and Childminder.

Out of School/Not Receiving an Education/Not in Education	8	1.88
Finished Education	7	1.65
Mainstream Primary School (Outside North Northants)	6	1.41
Mainstream Further Education College/Post 16 (North Northants)	6	1.41
Special College/Post 16 Institution (North Northants)	6	1.41
Independent Primary Special School (Outside North Northants)	5	1.18
Mainstream Secondary School (Outside of North Northants)	5	1.18
Enrolled at a Setting but Unable to Attend	5	1.18



As shown in the chart above, nearly half of all children are in a mainstream setting (including mainstream primary and secondary schools and their resource units – regardless of whether or not these are in North Northamptonshire; 49.65%). Just over one quarter (26.59%) of respondents reported that their child/young person attends a non-mainstream setting (including special schools, alternative provision, home education and EOTAS), whilst 6.35% attend Nursery/Pre-School, 5.88% are Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) and 4.00% are in Higher/Further Education. Here the ‘Other’ category represents only respondents who did not choose any of the listed setting options (7.53%).

What Educational Support Does Your Child Receive?⁵



The majority of survey respondents reported that their child receives support through an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP; 59.31%), whilst 20.10% receive SEND support, 10.92% receive support through an Individualised Education Plan (IEP) and 10.17% receive Pupil Premium.

A lower proportion of respondents reported support through Pupil Premium Plus (4.22%), Higher Needs Funding (2.73%), Top Up Funding (1.49%), Early Years Disability Funding (DAF; 0.74%) and Disabled Student Allowance (0.50%).

A large proportion of respondents reported 'Other' support (32.01%), including those receiving no support, those currently going through the assessment process for an EHCP, as well as those who are Unsure of the support their child receives. Some respondents specified alternative support such as a Pupil Passport, Care package, Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and Adoption Support Allowance.

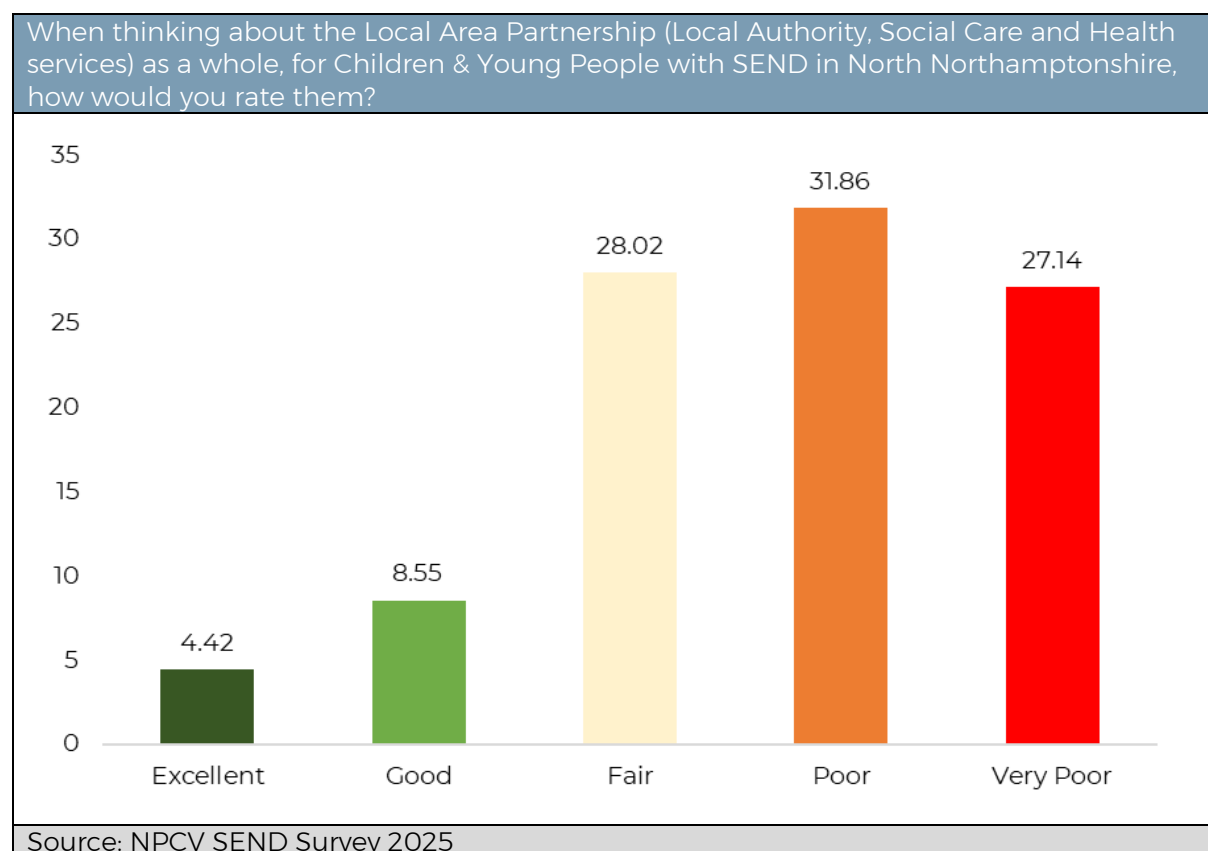
⁵ Please note, some children were recorded in more than one area of educational support. This analysis represents the data as a proportion of the total number of respondents to the question (403), rather than the total number of responses to the question (573).

SEND Service Experience across North Northamptonshire

Overall Experience of the Local Area Partnership

This section explores the differences in experience of the Local Area Partnership (Local Authority, Social Care and Health services) for different communities across North Northamptonshire.

As shown in the chart below, over half of respondents rated these services negatively (either 'Poor' or 'Very Poor'; 59.00%), compared to only 12.97% who rated them 'Good' or 'Excellent'. 28.02% of respondents rated the services as 'Fair'.



Experience by Demographic

The table below breaks these responses down by condition, age, education support, educational setting and location⁶. *Responses have been inversely coded, so that 1 = Very Poor and 5 = Excellent, so a higher average rating reflects a more positive attitude.*

Parent carers whose children have *PMLD – Profound & Multiple Learning Disability* rated the Local Area Partnership as a whole most positively, with an average rating of 1.9 out of 5, followed by those with a *Visual Impairment* (1.8). On the other hand, services were rated most negatively by parent carers whose children had *Developmental Trauma/Attachment*

⁶ Note, responses are shown for those categories with five or more respondents.

Needs (an average rating of 1.0), followed by *ADD/ADHD*, *Specific Learning Difficulties*, *Emotional/Mental Health Needs*, *Hearing Impairments* and *Sensory Processing Difficulties* (1.1).

When thinking about the Local Area Partnership (Local Authority, Social Care and Health services) as a whole, for Children & Young People with SEND in North Northamptonshire, how would you rate them? Responses by condition, education support, educational setting and location.	
Category	Average rating
Condition	
Autism Spectrum Disorder	1.3
ADD/ADHD	1.1
Specific Learning Difficulty (e.g. Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia)	1.1
Emotional/Mental Health Needs	1.1
Developmental Trauma/Attachment Needs	1.0
Global Developmental Delay	1.6
Hearing impairment	1.1
Visual Impairment	1.8
Medical Needs/Complex Health Needs	1.5
Physical disability	1.4
Learning Difficulties	1.5
Learning Disabilities	1.5
Sensory Processing Difficulties	1.1
Speech and Language Needs	1.4
PMLD – Profound & Multiple Learning Disability	1.9
Age	
0-4	1.2
5-11	1.4
12-16	1.3
17-19	1.4
20-25	1.1
Education Support	
EHCP	1.3
Currently in Assessment Process for EHCP	1.4
Individualised Education Plan (IEP)	1.1
Pupil Premium	1.5
Pupil Premium Plus	1.8
Higher Needs Funding	1.4
SEND Support	1.4
Educational Setting	
Mainstream Setting	1.4
Non-Mainstream Setting	1.5
Nursery/Pre-School	1.3
NEET	1.0

Higher/Further Education	1.4
Location	
NN3 (West Northampton: Billing & Moulton)	1.3
NN6 (Northern Rural Villages & Market Towns)	1.1
NN8 (Wellingborough & Surrounding Suburbs)	1.2
NN9 (Wellingborough Outer Towns & Villages)	1.1
NN10 (Rushden & Higham Ferrers)	1.3
NN14 (Kettering & Surrounding Villages)	1.4
NN15 (South Kettering & Burton Latimer)	1.3
NN16 (Kettering Town Centre & North Suburbs)	2.0
NN17 (Corby & Northeastern Villages)	1.6
NN18 (Corby's Rural Outskirts)	1.5
NN29 (Wellingborough's Southern Villages)	1.1
Overall average	1.4

Parent/carers of those aged *5-11* and *17-19* gave the highest ratings of all age groups (1.4), whereas satisfaction dipped sharply for the *20-25* age group (1.1), suggesting concerns around post-school/college SEND provision.

Families receiving *Pupil Premium* or *Pupil Premium Plus* reported the most positive attitudes to the Local Area partnership overall, with average ratings of 1.5 and 1.8 out of 5. Furthermore, parents of children in *Non-Mainstream Settings* gave the most positive ratings (1.5).

On the other hand, those with Individualised Education Plans (IEPs) gave the lowest average rating (1.1), pointing to potential dissatisfaction with how IEPs are working in practice. Additionally, parent/carers of children *Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)* had by far the most negative attitude to the Local Area Partnership (an average rating of 1.0 out of 5).

Finally, those located in *NN16 (covering Kettering Town Centre & North Suburbs)* rated the services most positively (2.0), whilst those in *NN6 (Northern Rural Villages & Market Towns)*, *NN9 (Wellingborough Outer Towns & Villages)* and *NN29 (Wellingborough's Southern Villages)* gave the lowest average ratings of the services (1.1).

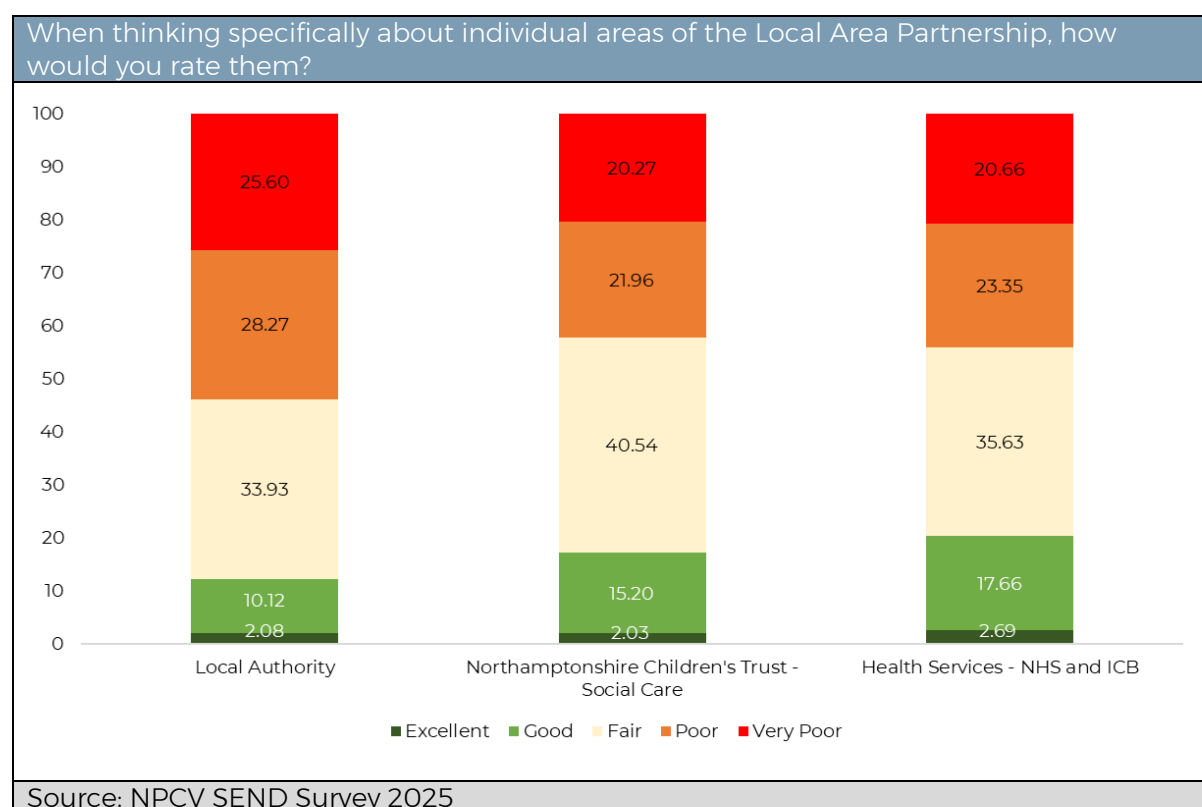
Further Comments on Overall Experience

The qualitative responses reveal **strong frustration with the SEND system in North Northamptonshire**, with recurring themes around poor communication, long waiting times, and services that feel fragmented or under-resourced. Many parents describe being “passed from pillar to post” and struggling to get timely assessments or appropriate placements: *“He’s seen an OT about his DCD but we’ve been told it’s a SIX year wait to see a paediatrician.”* Families repeatedly highlight how siloed the different agencies are: *“Teams are working separately. In our experience, no multidisciplinary team.”* Several parents also say they have lost trust in the system entirely: *“Our experience has been so awful that we don’t seek out support because we no longer trust that these services have our child’s best interests at heart.”*

Another strong theme is the **burden placed on families to fight for support**. Many parents describe constantly chasing emails or phone calls, and having to escalate to complaints or even private provision: *"Always having to chase them, they don't respond to emails. Awful."* and *"We have had to pay privately for every assessment including mental health as my child is in such a state."* Several link this directly to resourcing problems, describing services as "not fit for purpose," "failing the most vulnerable," and "drastically understaffed and underfunded." While most feedback is negative, there are isolated positives where individual staff or voluntary groups provided meaningful support: *"Our SSS lady is wonderful"* and *"Maplefields outreach support is exceptional."* This suggests that while dedicated individuals can make a difference, families perceive the system overall as inconsistent, under-resourced, and adversarial, rather than collaborative.

Areas Within the Local Area Partnership

Families expressed high levels of dissatisfaction across all parts of the Local Area Partnership. The Local Authority was rated most negatively, with over half of respondents scoring it 'Poor' or 'Very Poor' (53.87%). Social Care and Health Services were viewed slightly more positively, but still around 40-45% of responses were negative, with many rating them only as 'Fair' (35-40%) rather than 'Good' or 'Excellent' (17-20%).



The qualitative feedback alongside the chart highlights deep frustration with all parts of the local area partnership, but especially with the Local Authority and Health Services. Long waiting lists are the most repeated theme, with parents describing them as "ridiculous" and "unacceptable," sometimes stretching over four years: *"Waiting on the list for over 4 years for ASD assessment, I think is unacceptable."* Many families also felt abandoned during these waits, with "no communication, no suggestion of [how long they] have to wait," leaving children without the support they need.

Local Authority Services

This section explores the differences in experience of Local Authority services in particular.

As shown in the chart below, views of Local Authority SEND services vary significantly among respondents, with some services receiving relatively positive ratings while others are dominated by negative experiences.

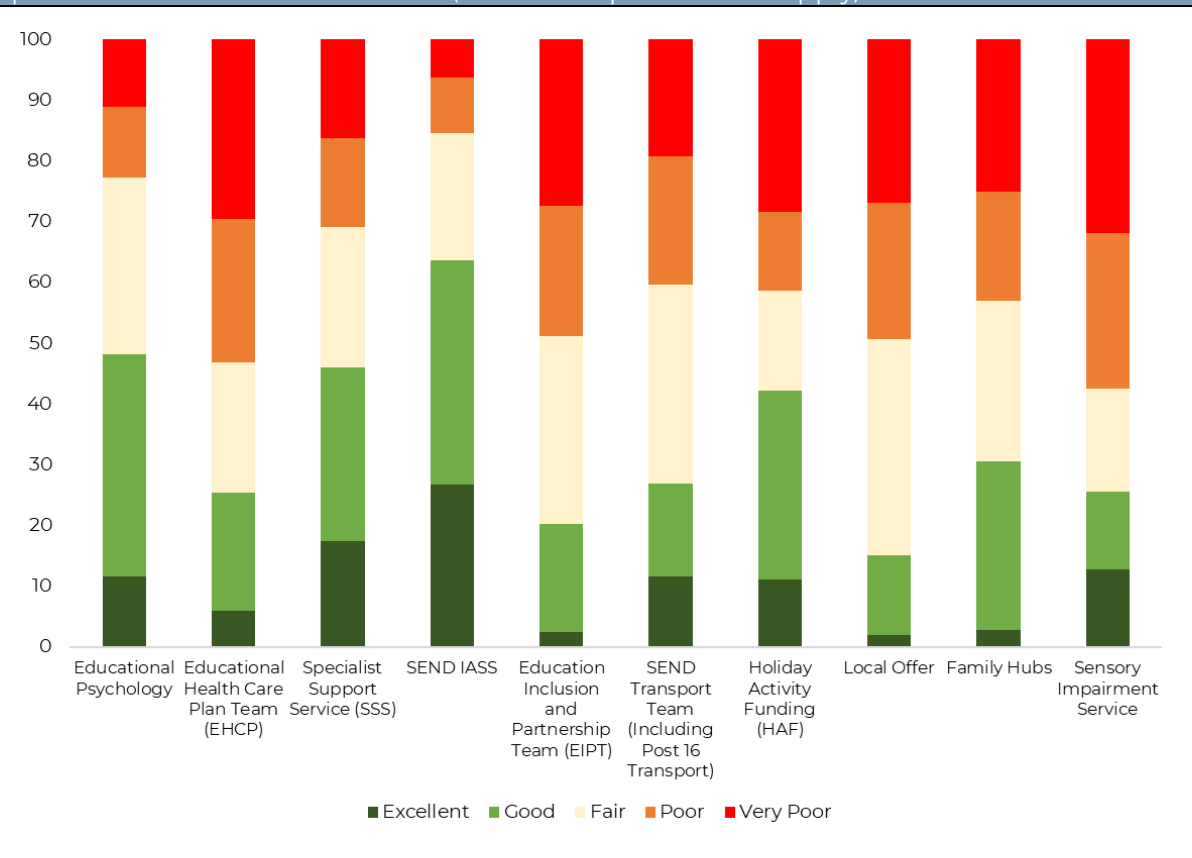
SEND IASS (Information, Advice and Support Service) stands out with the most positive ratings: over 63% rated it 'Good' or 'Excellent', and only 15.34% rated it 'Poor' or 'Very Poor'. This is also reflected in the qualitative feedback for this service, such as:

- *"I would not have survived the past 4 years if it wasn't for the support from SENDIASS. A million thank you's for a very over-subscribed, under-funded but very valuable service."*
- *"IASS are brilliant at answering questions very quickly and are so helpful."*
- *"Excellent communication team. Practical and factual information for parents. Caring, understanding support for parents."*

Educational Psychology is also viewed relatively well, with nearly half of respondents (48.14%) rating it positively, and fewer than 23% rating it negatively. The Specialist Support Service (SSS) and Holiday Activity Funding (HAF) also perform moderately, with around a third of families giving positive scores. These results suggest that where services provide direct, practical, or specialist support to families, perceptions are more favourable. Qualitative feedback for these services include:

- *"School Educational Psychologist at primary was hugely helpful, both at school and during EHCP process."*
- *"The SSS were excellent when we used them. They came to the house and whilst my son would not come and chat, the very knowledgeable lady was fab at supporting me and giving me ideas and helping me to contact people."*
- *"Excellent HAF activities for across county. Need more teenage activities. Teenagers don't want to leave the house and find socialising hard with their additional needs. Tennis, cricket, bounce, music. Afternoon swimming times not 9.30 for teenagers."*

We use/have used the following Local Authority Services in North Northants for my young person with SEND and rate them (Please complete all that apply)



Source: NPCV SEND Survey 2025

In contrast, services more closely tied to statutory processes and coordination receive the most negative feedback. The Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP) Team is rated particularly poorly, with over half of respondents rating this as 'Poor' or 'Very Poor' (53.17%), and comments including:

- *"I dread having to deal with them. They do anything and everything to be unsupportive and make life as hard as possible."*
- *"I have 3 children with EHCPs. All 3 had to be fought to get in place. The plan does not cover all their needs correctly and the wording on their support is flaky at best."*
- *"Deadlines were not adhered to. Staff do not seem to know what they're doing... no consistency."*

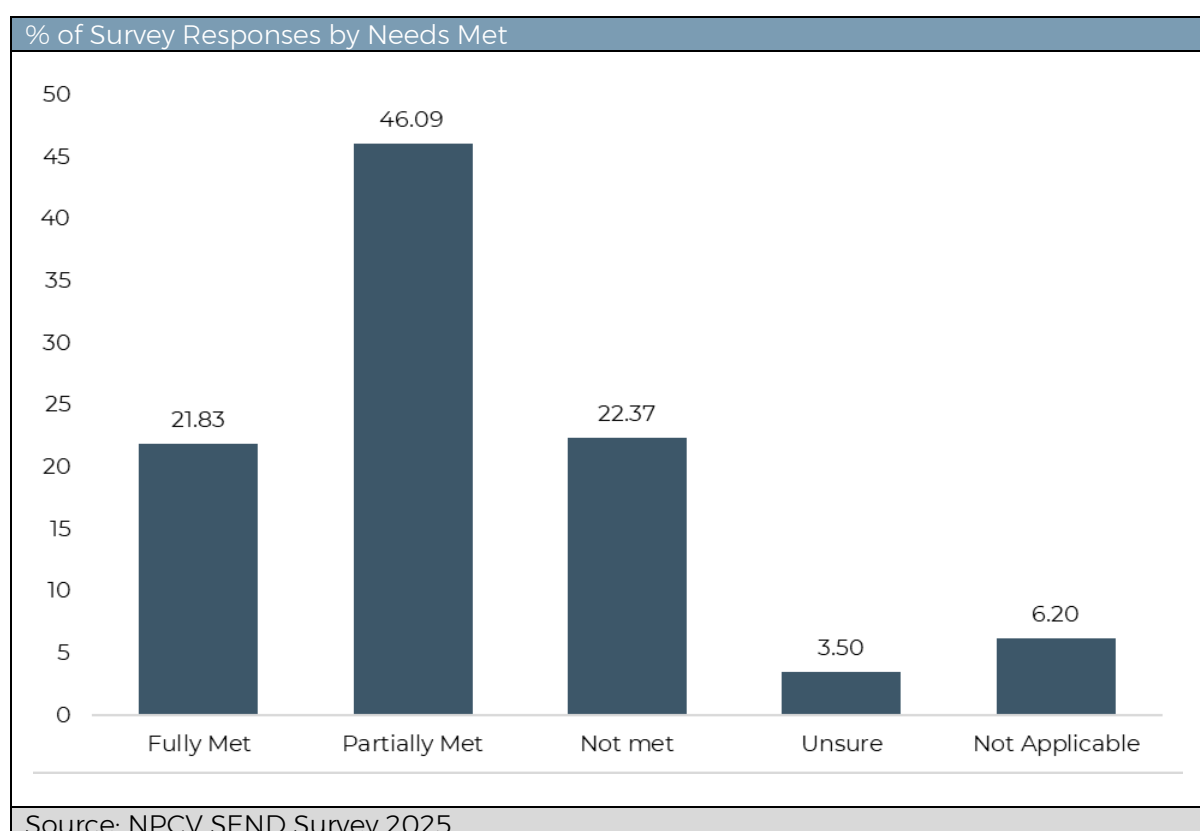
Similarly, the Education Inclusion and Partnership Team (EIPT) and the SEND Transport Team show high proportions of negative ratings (around 49% and 40% respectively). The Local Offer and Family Hubs also attract high negative ratings (over half of respondents rated them 'Fair', 'Poor', or 'Very Poor'), suggesting limited visibility or effectiveness in practice.

The Sensory Impairment Service shows a particularly concerning split, with almost one-third rating it 'Very Poor' (31.91% - the highest of all services), indicating major issues for families needing this specialist provision. The majority of comments point to a lack of awareness of this service - most parents said they had *never heard of or never been offered* it, even when their child had diagnosed sensory needs. For those who did access it, support from Teachers of the Deaf in particular was described as *excellent* and *very supportive*.

How Well Do You Feel Your Child/Young Persons Needs Are Met Within Their Educational Setting, Home Education or EOTAS Package?

The chart below again points to a mixed picture of SEND provision. Focusing on Educational Settings, Home Education or Education Other Than at School (EOTAS), around one-fifth of families feel their child is well supported (21.83%) and almost the same proportion feel their child's needs are not met at all (22.37%). The largest share of respondents (46.09%) fall in the middle ground, experiencing partial support but with significant gaps.

This highlights a system struggling to consistently deliver appropriate and comprehensive provision. For many families, support may exist in theory but is fragmented or insufficient in practice, leaving children without the full help they need to thrive.



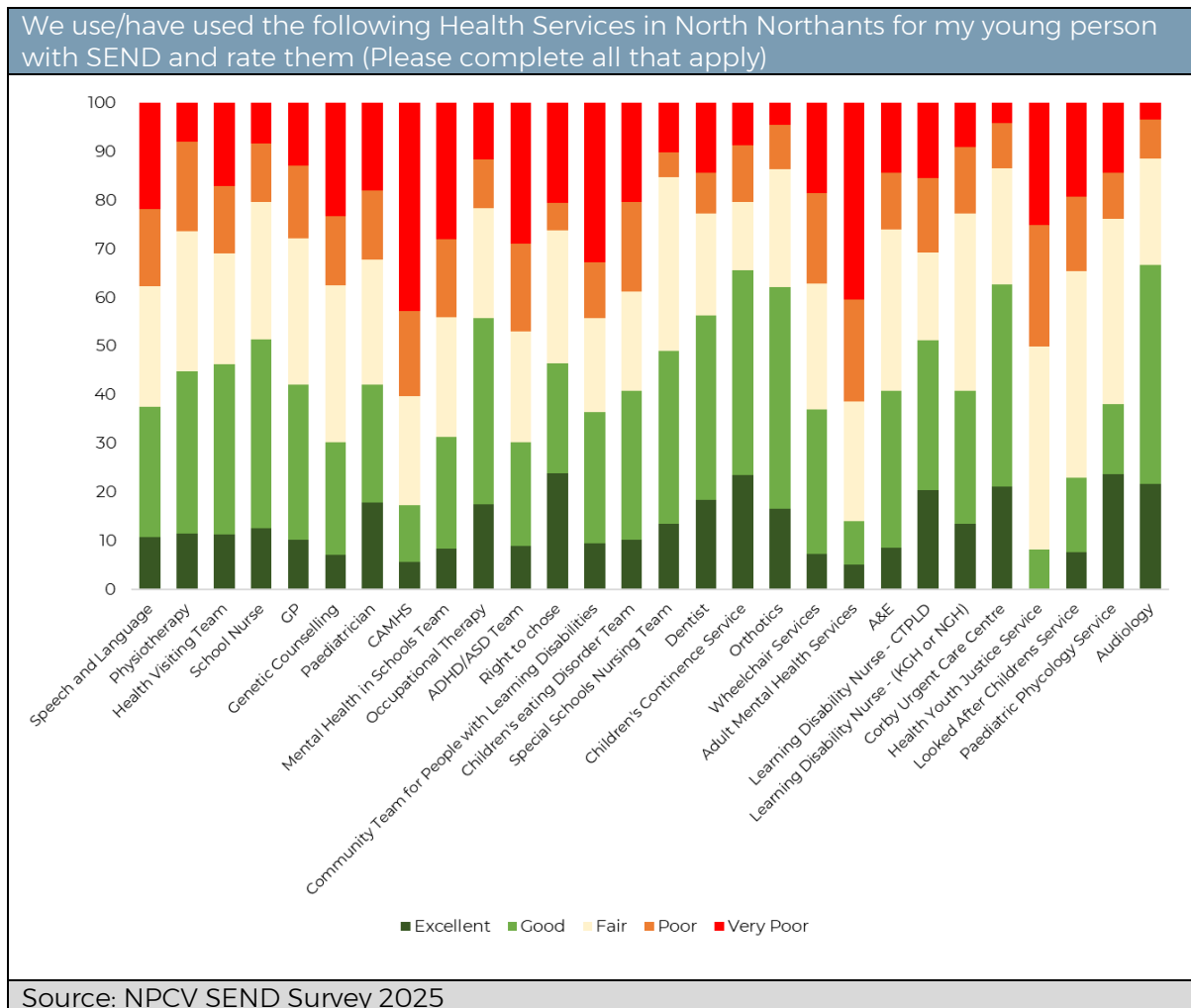
Health Services

This section explores the differences in experience of Health Services in particular.

As shown in the chart below, Audiology stands out as the highest-rated service, with two-thirds (66.67%) of parents giving 'Good' or 'Excellent' ratings, followed closely by the Children's Continence Service (65.60%), Corby Urgent Care Centre (62.69%) and Orthotics (62.12%). Associated comments for these services included:

- [Audiology]
 - *"Lovely & consistent members of staff, regular monitoring."*
 - *"Have adapted to our daughter's needs, which makes the visit less stressful."*
- [Children's Continence Service]

- *"While we had a long wait to access this service, they have been excellent at supporting our son and us with his continence needs. Our son would not be as far along with his needs without their patience and input."*
- [Corby Urgent Care Centre]
 - *"Easier to get seen there than at the GP."*
 - *"Thank goodness for this service, had to use as no GP appointments."*
 - *"Good knowledge of Autism and made her feel calm in order to treat her."*



In contrast, services linked to mental health and complex needs received some of the most negative ratings - particularly Adult Mental Health Services and CAMHS, where 61.40% and 60.14% of parents rated these either 'Poor' or 'Very Poor', respectively. Comments include:

- [Adult Mental Health Services]
 - *"Rubbish service, have never done anything to help me. Waste of time."*
 - *"They don't have therapists available for trauma and ASD patients... I waited 30+ years and my son is always at the 'top of the list' and 3 years later still is!";*
 - *"Little knowledge of ASD in women."*
- [CAMHS]
 - *"3 years and an email to an MP to get an initial assessment."*
 - *"Child is suicidal and still on an endless waitlist for support that never seems to come."*
 - *"Extended waiting times... I am waiting over a year on and he has received no care. My child's mental health needs have deteriorated dramatically."*

- *"Terribly overwhelmed by workload. Too stretched to be useful."*

Social Care Services

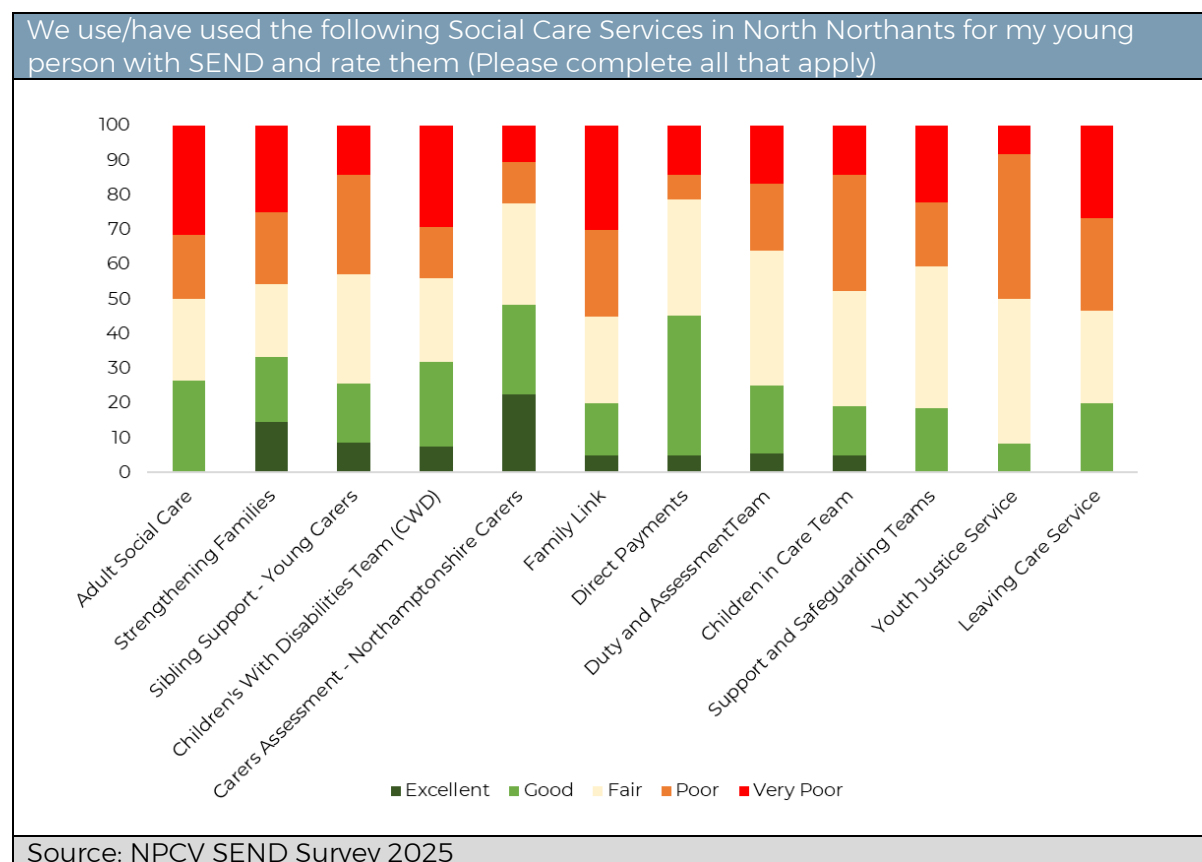
This section explores the differences in experience of Social Care Services in particular.

The chart below reveals a broadly critical view of Social Care Services for young people with SEND in North Northamptonshire. Carers Assessment – Northamptonshire Carers stands out most positively, with the highest proportion of 'Excellent' ratings (22.35%) and nearly half of responses (48.23%) rating the service either 'Good' or 'Excellent'. Associated comments for this service include:

- *Any time we have asked for an assessment or support we have been seen by them."*
- *"Very good, really felt listened to"*
- *"Assessment carried out in a timely manner."*

This is followed closely by Direct Payments, where 45.24% of respondents rated this service positively. However, interestingly, comments for this service portrayed a frustrated user experience, undermined by poor administration, lack of transparency, long delays and a lack of accessible information and support:

- *"I eventually received the payment 3 months after it had been approved, meaning my son missed out on 3 provisions over 3 months. Disgusting and illegal."*
- *"Needs more information/training on managing them."*
- *"Takes a LONG time to respond to anything!"*



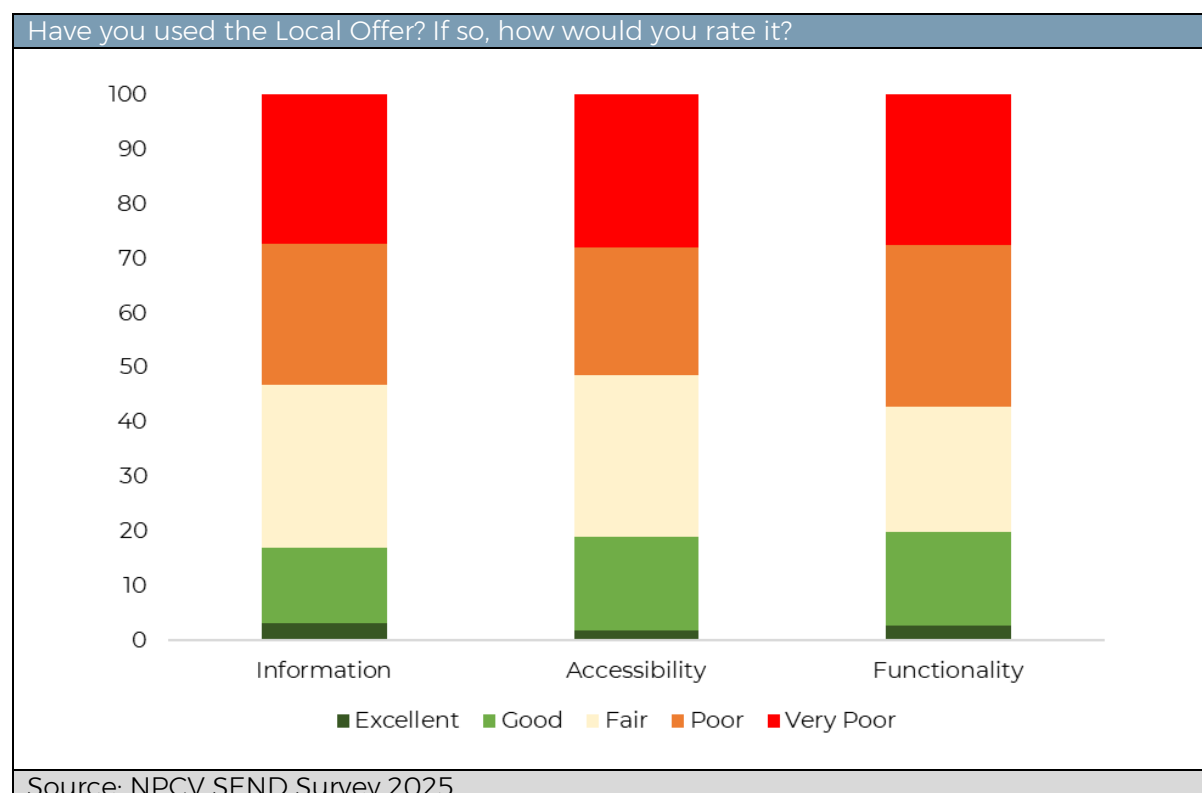
In contrast, Family Link had the highest proportion of negative ratings (55.00% rated this service 'Poor' or 'Very Poor'), with the highest 'Very Poor' rating of all Social Care Services (30.00%). However, the majority of respondents expressed a complete lack of awareness of the Family Link service, using phrases like *"Never heard of this," "Unfamiliar with this," and "Who?"* This highlights a significant communication and visibility gap regarding the service and its availability to families.

Adult Social Care (50.00%), Youth Justice Service (50.00%) and Leaving Care Service (53.33%) also received a high proportion of negative ratings. Associated comments include:

- [Adult Social Care]
 - *"Sympathetic but no help offered except a few irrelevant email addresses and websites."*
 - *"We're struggling to get them to see the level of support she needs as she 'goes to uni' - not the work it takes to support at home and get her there."*
 - *"Refused to make adjustments or accommodations and brought the police to force a selectively mute (diagnosed) vulnerable person to speak, which went to ombudsman."*
- [Youth Justice Service]
 - *"There is no justice for the young in North Northamptonshire, only a system that abuses and neglects."*

Local Offer

The chart below shows how users rated their experiences with the Local Offer across three dimensions: Information, Accessibility, and Functionality. *Only 295 out of 471 respondents answered this question, and only 124 of these (42.03%) chose an option other than 'N/A'. Those who answered 'N/A' have been excluded from this analysis.*



Negative feedback dominates across all three areas, but Functionality is the most poorly rated, with 57.14% of users rating this aspect of the Local Offer as 'Poor' or 'Very Poor'. Both Information and Accessibility received similar levels of criticism, with a majority of responses also falling into the negative categories (53.23% and 51.35%, respectively). Positive feedback ('Good' or 'Excellent') was limited across the board, with all three categories showing only a small proportion of users expressing satisfaction. This suggests significant issues with the Local Offer's usefulness, usability, and clarity.

There were a few key themes which emerged from respondents' comments relating to the Local Offer:

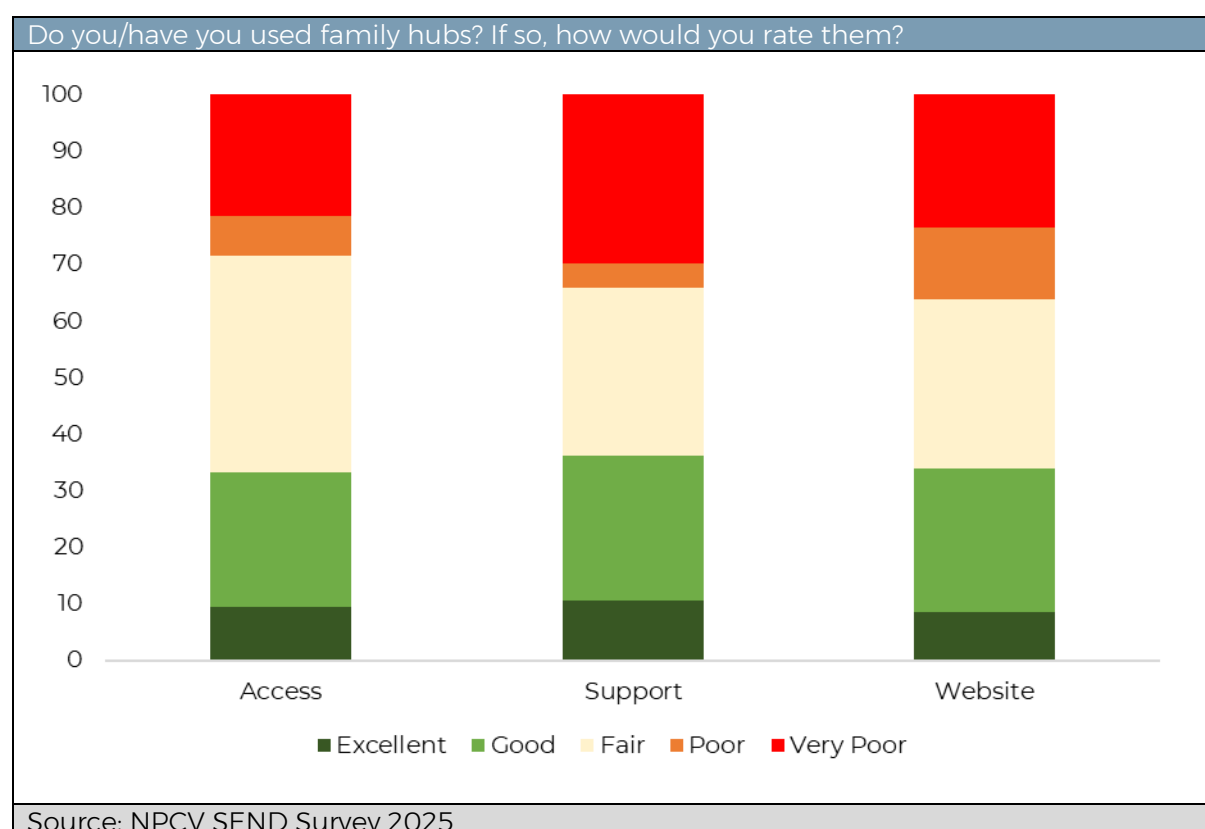
Theme	Description
Lack of Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many respondents had never heard of the Local Offer or were unclear on what it is meant to provide Comments such as <i>"Don't know what this is?"</i>, <i>"No idea what that is"</i>, and <i>"Unfamiliar with this"</i> appeared repeatedly, indicating a major communication gap
Navigation and Usability Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A significant number of respondents described the website as difficult to navigate, poorly structured, or functionally broken Onboarding received specific criticism, with some unable to get past it at all, calling it a <i>"nightmare"</i>
Lack of Relevant and Updated Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many respondents felt the Local Offer lacked meaningful or up-to-date information Several noted it: <i>"Looks good but has no relevant info"</i>, <i>"Doesn't offer any SEN support really"</i> Specialist content (e.g., for SEND, SEMH, or alternative provision) was often reported as missing, outdated, or unhelpful, with one user stating: <i>"Other counties' Local Offers are more helpful."</i>
Not Fit for Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There was an overarching sentiment that the Local Offer is not meeting the needs of families Strong statements like <i>"complete failure all round"</i>, <i>"bloody useless"</i>, and <i>"not fit for service"</i> illustrate the frustration
Gaps in SEND Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some families indicated that the Local Offer fails to cater for complex or high-needs children: <i>"Nothing suitable for my disabled child to access"</i> and <i>"Local Offer not fit for purpose for SEMH children"</i>

Family Hubs

The chart below shows how users rated their experiences with Family Hubs across three dimensions: Access, Support and Website. *Only 289 out of 471 respondents answered this question, and only 47 of these (16.26%) chose an option other than 'N/A'. Those who answered 'N/A' have been excluded from this analysis.*

Respondents were most positive about the Support provided, with 36.17% rating it as either 'Good' or 'Excellent'. However, this was nearly balanced by 34.04% rating Support as 'Poor' (4.26%) or 'Very Poor' (29.79% - the highest of all responses), highlighting a divided perception. Access was slightly less well-received, with 33.33% of responses positive, however this aspect of the service had the lowest proportion of negative ratings with

28.57%. The Website was the most poorly rated aspect overall: although 34.04% gave a positive rating, 36.17% rated it negatively. Overall, the data indicates that while some families benefit from Family Hubs, there are ongoing concerns around usability, communication, and consistency in the quality of support.



There were a few key themes which emerged from respondents' comments relating to Family Hubs:

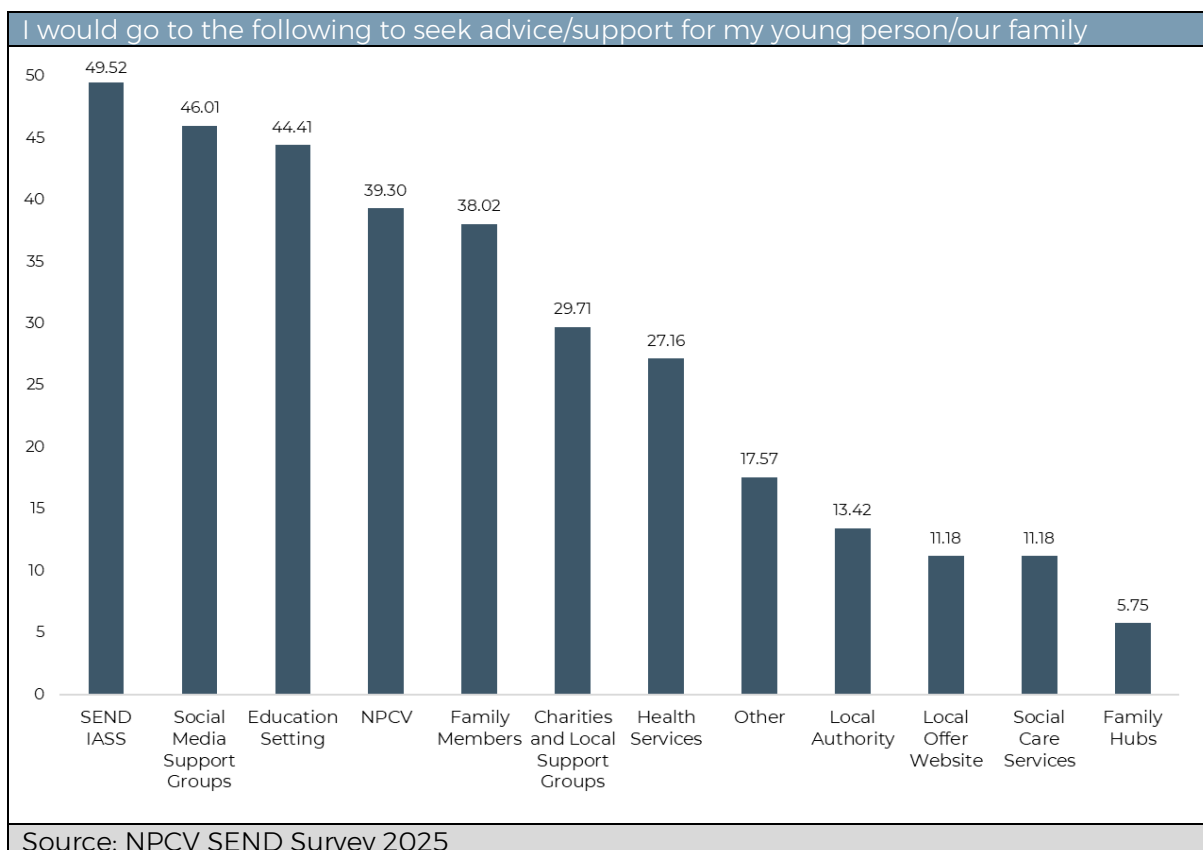
Theme	Description
Lack of Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The most prominent theme was a widespread lack of awareness Many respondents stated <i>"Never heard of it", "What is one?", or "No idea what these are"</i> Several were unaware they existed or hadn't been provided any information: <i>"Never heard of family hub and never been given information about it."</i>
Inaccessibility and Lack of Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access issues were commonly raised: <i>"Not accessible for teenagers", "Can't access"</i> Some parents reported nothing suitable for SEND: <i>"Nothing age appropriate or SEN related", "All mainstream so useless for us!"</i>
Lack of Support or Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Even among those who were aware of the service, there was frustration at a lack of relevant or helpful support: <i>"Support has been none existent", "There wasn't any support"</i> A few comments noted feelings of isolation and being left to cope alone: <i>"I feel that I am just left to manage and get on with it."</i>

Digital Barriers and Website Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A small number of comments related to digital access and usability: <i>"I don't have a computer"</i> and <i>"Doesn't work"</i> suggest barriers to digital engagement Others noted reliance on other sources: <i>"If I needed to know about anything I would use websites..."</i>
Isolated Positive Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Despite the overall negative comments, a handful of positive experiences were mentioned: <i>"Excellent support. Lots of sign posting."</i> Named centres such as Pen Green and Exeter Sure Start were praised

Service Recommendation

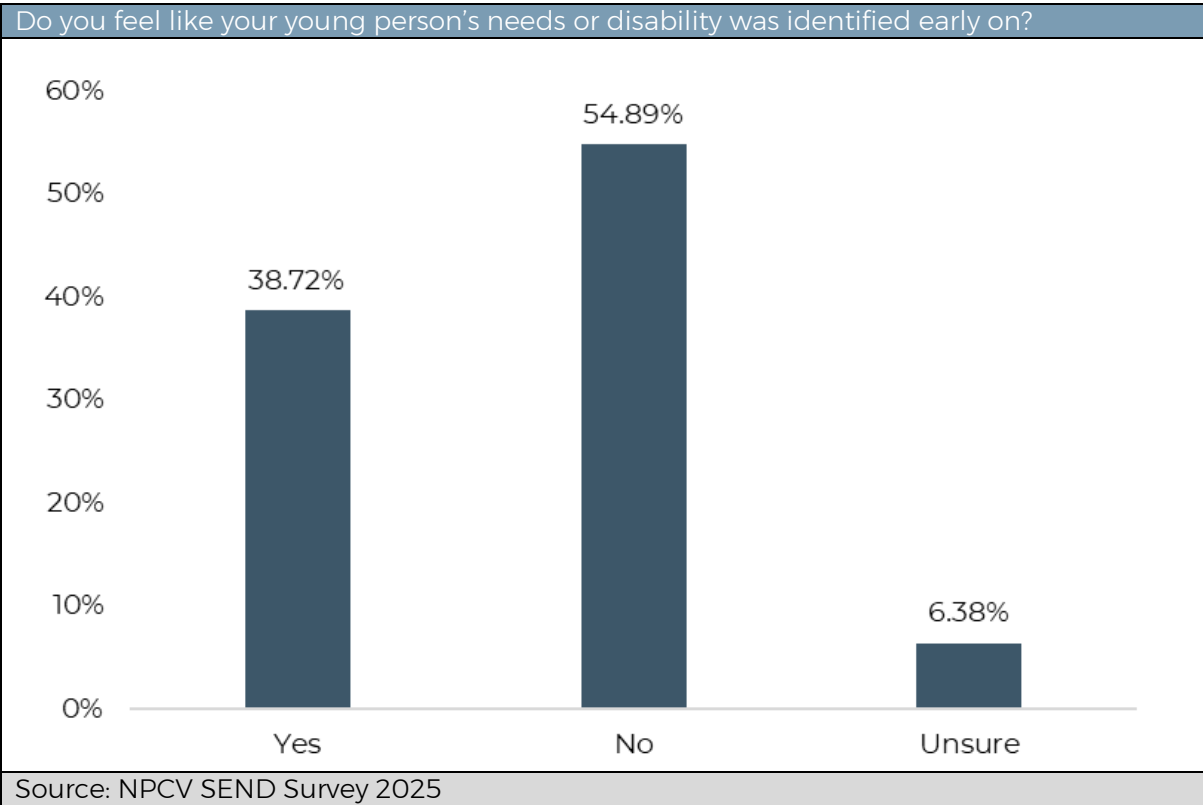
The chart below shows the percentage of respondents who indicated where they would go to seek advice or support for their young person or family. *Respondents were able to choose more than one option, so the percentages reflect the proportion of all who responded to the question (313), rather than the total number of responses (1,043).*

The most commonly cited source was SEND IASS (49.52%), followed closely by Social Media Support Groups (46.01%) and Education Settings (44.41%), highlighting a preference for informal or familiar channels. Other widely used sources included North Northamptonshire Parent Carer Voices (NPCV; 39.30%), Family Members (38.02%) and Charities or Local Support Groups (29.71%). In contrast, formal services such as the Local Authority (13.42%), Local Offer Website (11.18%) and Social Care Services (11.18%) were selected far less frequently, while Family Hubs were the least selected (5.75%). This suggests that families often look to trusted community networks and peer-based resources ahead of official services for SEND-related support.



Early Intervention

The chart below shows the proportion of respondents by whether they think their child/young person's needs or disability was identified early on. The majority of respondents answered "No" (54.89%) whilst just 38.72% of respondents answered "Yes", suggesting a significant proportion did not receive early recognition or intervention. A smaller group, 6.38%, were unsure. This data suggests that early identification remains a major challenge for many families navigating SEND support.



What Worked Well With Your Experience With Early Intervention?

The table below builds upon parent carer views of their child's need/disability being identified early by drawing on the key themes from Question 7: "We are keen to hear what worked well and your experience with early intervention/support".

Theme	Description
Positive Intervention and Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Many respondents highlighted successful early recognition and intervention - often credited to nurseries and health visitors. This timely support enabled access to diagnoses, services, and appropriate educational placements - <i>"Amazing nursery staff who stepped in and referred us to the right people."</i>Some noted the benefit of early EHCPs or diagnosis in smoothing transitions and accessing tailored support: <i>"Diagnosis was made early, which allowed support and funding to be implemented in school quickly."</i>

Parent Advocacy as the Driving Force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A significant number of parents indicated that progress was only made because they pushed - sometimes against professionals' reluctance or dismissal: <i>"What worked well was me pushing and forcing educational settings/NHS agencies/local authority to stick to their own guidelines."</i> Some also credited their own professional knowledge for navigating the system: <i>"My knowledge and understanding of SEND helped me better advocate for my child... I knew the correct terminology to use in paperwork."</i>
Barriers: Delays, Dismissal & Systemic Failures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numerous parents described long delays, dismissive professionals, or inadequate support, even when needs were clear: <i>"Had to fight every single step of the way—it was painful and unnecessary."</i> COVID-19 was also cited as a major setback: <i>"Early intervention seemed to be going smoothly until COVID-19... stopped all appointments."</i>
Private Diagnosis as a Workaround	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A recurring theme was families opting for private assessments due to NHS delays: <i>"We got private diagnosis as ignored by NHS."; "Using Right to Choose and not waiting on the lengthy NHS list."</i>
Transition and Ongoing Support Gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Even when early support was good, many felt it dropped off over time or lacked continuity: <i>"Early intervention was good... but no current progress to enable us to have more sessions."</i>

Many families described positive experiences with early identification of their child's needs, often crediting proactive nurseries, health visitors, and community paediatricians for timely referrals and support. However, a significant number had to push relentlessly for recognition and intervention, with delays, dismissal by professionals, and reliance on private diagnoses emerging as common barriers. Even when early support was in place, many felt it diminished over time or lacked coordination, particularly from local authorities and post-COVID services.

What Could Have Improved Your Experience With Early Intervention?

The table below draws on the key themes from Question 8: "In your opinion why do you feel your young persons needs were not identified early on? What could have improved your experience?".

Theme	Description
Dismissal of Parental Concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many parents felt their worries were ignored, downplayed, or attributed to parenting faults, especially in early years: <i>"No-one was willing to listen to me... it was assumed and documented that I was an 'anxious' parent... I was looking to gain attention and benefits."; "Concerns I raised in school were ignored... If I had been listened [to] things could have been different I feel."</i>
Excessive Waiting Times and Delays	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A dominant theme was the long waits for referrals, assessments, or EHCPs - often spanning several years: <i>"The wait for an assessment for my son was very long"</i>

	<i>(3-3.5 years).”; “Took 5 years to get a diagnosis - this was far too long.”</i>
Systemic Barriers and Bureaucratic Failures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents described being passed between services, having paperwork lost, and a lack of coordination: <i>“Paperwork was not processed and followed up, but was filed away and not allocated to be assessed.”</i>
School Dismissiveness and Lack of Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many felt schools were reluctant or unqualified to recognise needs - especially for “well-behaved,” masking children or girls: <i>“SENCO at school not trained enough in high functioning autism. Tried to fob me off.”; “School didn’t listen to our concerns, just thought he was naughty.”</i>
Masking, Particularly Among Girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A significant number of comments described how children - especially girls - hid their difficulties in school, masking traits that were obvious at home: <i>“My daughter masked in all education settings so our parental concerns were not listened to.”; “Because she is bright and hadn’t fallen behind... support didn’t come until much later.”</i>
Missed or Misdiagnosed Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerns were frequently misattributed to behaviour, anxiety, or poor parenting rather than neurodiversity: <i>“She was misdiagnosed as having severe anxiety... her neurodiversity was only recognised and assessed later on.”; “The school said he just needed a ‘firm hand.’ He had ADHD.”</i>
Poor EHCP Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many described the EHCP process as frustrating, slow, or entirely dependent on the parent initiating it: <i>“It took a year to get Northamptonshire County Council to complete his EHCP.”; “EHCP process was horrific. Traumatizing really.”</i>

Many parents reported that their concerns were repeatedly dismissed or minimised by professionals, especially in early years settings, schools, and by health visitors. A lack of training and awareness - particularly around autism, ADHD, dyslexia, and how these present differently in girls and children who mask - was a frequent concern. Parents often felt they had to “fight” for recognition, referrals, and diagnoses, leading many to seek private assessments due to excessive waiting times. Even when signs were evident, poor coordination between services, limited school support, and systemic delays frequently resulted in late diagnoses and inadequate intervention.

The word cloud below shows commonly used words within these responses, offering further insight into the sentiment of the respondents.

[illegible]

Source: NPCV SEND Survey 2025

Home Education

Please note: only 13 out of 471 respondents (2.76%) answered the questions relating to Home Education.

Out of the 11 respondents who answered Question 9: "Is your child/young person still on a school roll?", 7 (63.64%) responded "No", whilst 4 (36.36%) responded "Yes".

The table below draws on the key themes from Question 10: “Please share your circumstances that led to Home Education.” 13 respondents answered this question.

Theme	Description
Undiagnosed or Unsupported Neurodiversity Leading to School Avoidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Several families reported that their child's neurodivergent needs - such as autism or anxiety - were not identified or adequately supported in school, leading to severe emotional distress and school avoidance: <i>"Gaslighted by school... Would not provide an EHCP or reasonable adjustments because he was 'fine at school'... My child coming home every day, exhausted, angry and violent from masking and burn out."</i>
Schools Unable or Unwilling to Meet Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mainstream and even some special schools were reported as ill-equipped, unsupportive, or dismissive of the child's needs, particularly in relation to EHCPs, medical conditions, or SEND-specific provisions: <i>"Secondary school lovely but just not equipped to deal with issues. Specialist provision required but this is like gold dust."</i>
Bullying and Safeguarding Concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A few families described experiences of bullying, sometimes even by staff, which either went unaddressed or contributed to decisions to remove the

	child from school: <i>"Regressed massively as he was bullied and smacked by a member of staff at his first special needs school."</i>
Elective Home Education as a Last Resort or Planned Alternative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some families chose to home educate due to proactive preference, but many were forced into it as a last resort due to trauma, lack of support, or unmet needs in the school system: <i>"After 6 months of no education from his secondary school we decided to home educate as the stress was getting too much for the whole family."</i>
Failures in Council Placement or Transport Decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some parents reported that the council placed their children in unsuitable schools far from home or failed to consider their individual transport and support needs: <i>"The council put him in a school nearly an hour away... my son cannot travel with people he does not know due to severe anxiety."</i>

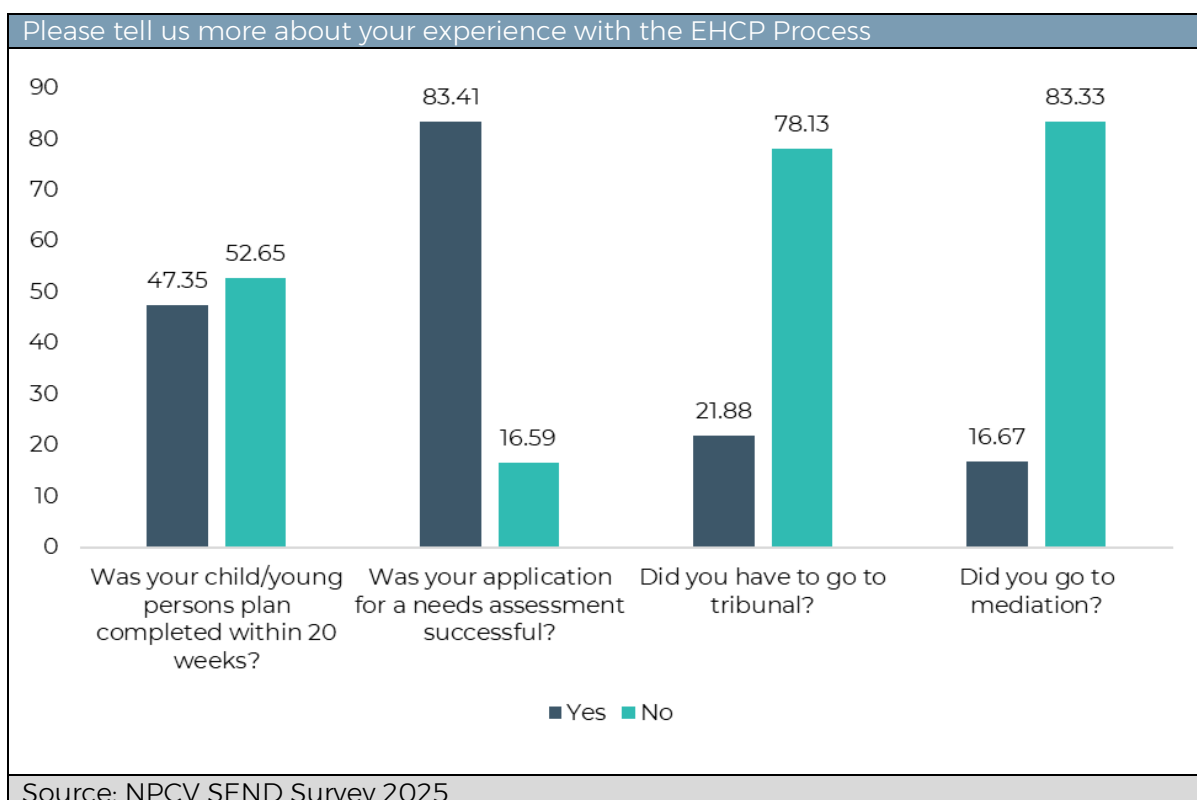
Many families described choosing or being forced into home education due to schools failing to meet their children's needs - whether because of undiagnosed neurodiversity, lack of specialist support, severe anxiety, bullying, or inadequate local authority processes. Common themes included poor handling of EHCPs, dismissive attitudes from schools, safeguarding concerns, and lack of alternative provision, often leaving parents feeling unsupported and out of options.

Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)

Overall EHCP Process

As shown in *Section 1: The Characteristics of Children and Young People With SEND Need Across North Northamptonshire*, 59.31% of respondents to Question 12: "Which of the following apply to your child/ young person?" specified that their child/young person had an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). *231 out of these 239 parent/carers (96.65%) answered the following question: "Please tell us more about your experience with the EHCP Process."*

Just under half of respondents (47.35%) reported that their child's plan was completed within the statutory 20-week timeframe, while slightly more (52.65%) said it was not. Despite this, a large majority (83.41%) were successful in their initial application for a needs assessment. However, a substantial portion still faced disputes: around one in five (21.88%) had to go to tribunal, and 16.67% attended mediation. These findings suggest that while assessments are often granted, delays and disputes are common, pointing to a process that is frequently difficult to navigate and not always timely.



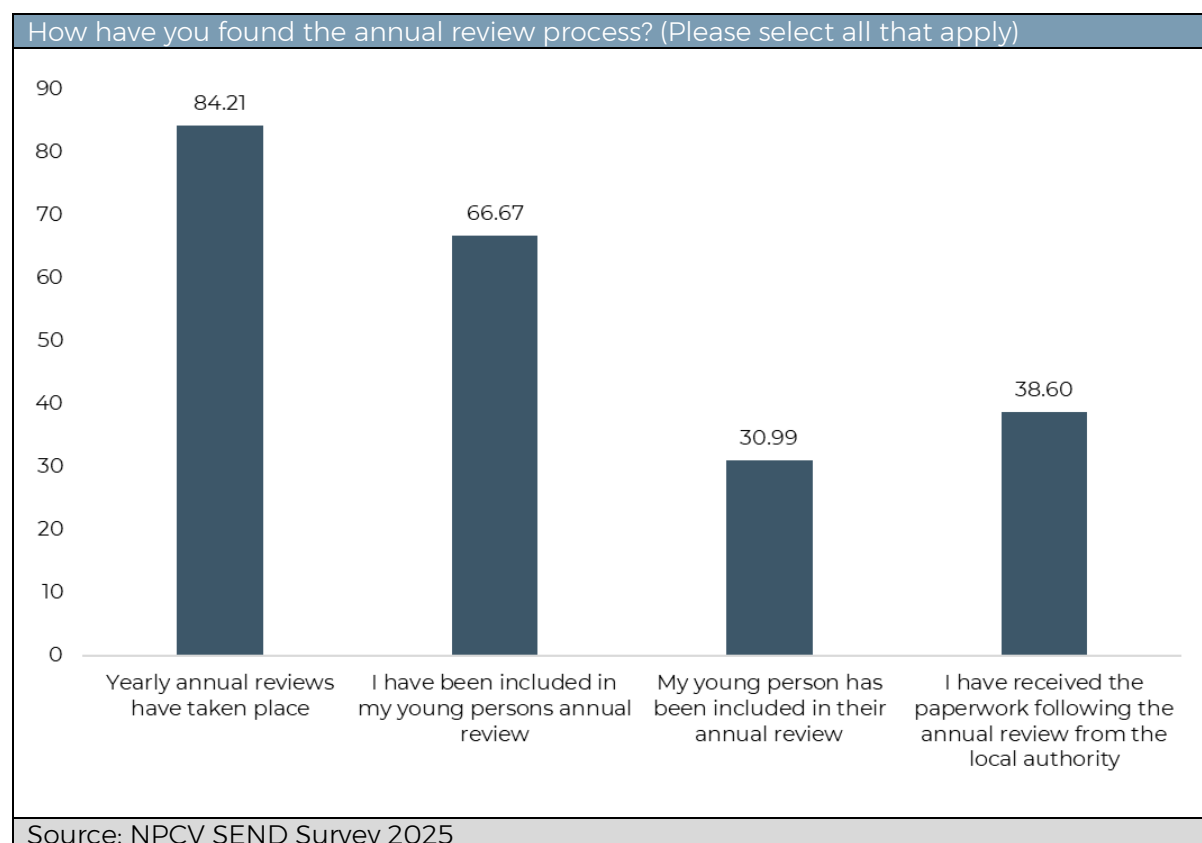
Many families described the EHCP process as overwhelmingly **stressful, protracted, and lacking in transparency or accountability**. Delays far beyond the statutory 20 weeks were common, with one parent stating: *"It was painfully long, took 3 years to find a school... I was doing the EHC team's job."* A recurring theme was the **need to escalate through mediation, tribunal, or political channels** just to be heard: *"We had to go to tribunal... they fought and fought... I had to get my MP involved,"* and *"LA conceded before tribunal date... but only after 13 months of fighting."* Parents also noted that the **quality of the EHCPs was often poor**, describing them as *"unspecific and outdated,"* or *"rushed, generic, and didn't reflect our child's needs."*

A **lack of communication and continuity** from the local authority featured heavily, with many reporting being passed between multiple caseworkers and ignored entirely: *"Far too many case workers... emails were ignored,"* and *"No communication. Several complaints. Incorrect placement. Waiting for tribunal."* However, a few respondents had more positive experiences - particularly where schools took the lead or when families were better informed: *"Looking back, I really appreciate my experience. Once the process was started it moved so fast,"* and *"It was the skill of the SENCO team... that made the application successful."* Overall, though, the majority of accounts painted a picture of a system that is **burdensome, inconsistent, and traumatising**, leaving many to conclude with statements like: *"Traumatic doesn't even cover it. The worst experience of my life."*

Annual Review Process

171 out of 239 (71.55%) parent/carers who stated that their child/young person had an EHCP answered Question 14: *"How have you found the annual review process? (Please select all that apply)"*.

While a large majority (84.21%) reported that yearly annual reviews had taken place, involvement of parents and young people was less consistent. Two-thirds (66.67%) said they had been included in their young person's review, but only 30.99% said their young person had been included themselves. Furthermore, only 38.60% reported receiving paperwork from the local authority following the review, highlighting gaps in follow-up and documentation.



Many respondents reported significant issues with the annual review process, with experiences ranging from delays and lack of communication to procedural failures. A common concern was **timeliness**: numerous comments highlight that reviews were not conducted on time or took months to be finalised - *"Annual reviews are not carried out on time... It took the LA more than two years to update the EHCP following an AR"*. Even when reviews were held, finalised paperwork was often delayed or never received: *"Had an annual review in November 2024 - still not received a finalised outcome or paperwork"*.

Lack of local authority engagement was another recurring issue. Many parents said they had never had a caseworker attend, and often didn't know who their caseworker was. One wrote: *"No representation from the LA at any reviews. I don't even know who my case worker is..."* Others expressed frustration that the LA failed to action updates or respond to requests, with comments like *"North Northants have failed to do this every single year"* and *"Emails go unanswered and most plans with updates are returned incorrect"*.

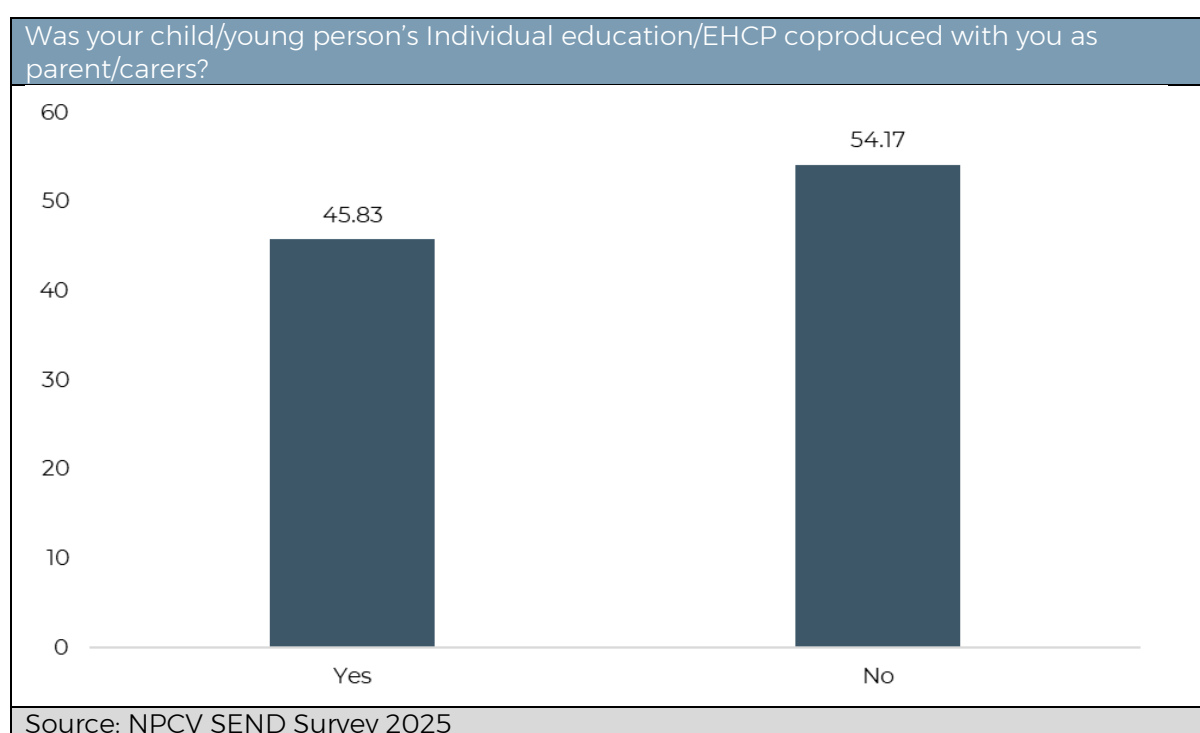
Parents also felt that **young people were excluded**, and some described the reviews as superficial, rushed, or merely procedural. One respondent described it as *"a very rushed job before the start of the school day and hurried out the door"*, while another called it *"a paper exercise... not positive"*.

Despite this, a minority did report **positive school-led experiences** where reviews were collaborative and timely, often crediting individual SENCOs: “*School SEND team process for review is excellent... meeting arranged with me, child, SENCo and EHCP coordinator*”. However, such examples were exceptions rather than the norm.

Coproduction

Only 24 out of 239 (10.04%) parent/carers who stated that their child/young person had an EHCP answered Question 15: “Was your child/young person’s Individual education/EHCP coproduced with you as parent/carers?”.

A slight majority of respondents (54.17%) reported that their child's plan was not co-produced with them, while 45.83% said it was. This suggests that while some parents and carers feel included in the planning process, more than half do not feel they have been meaningfully involved - highlighting a significant gap in collaboration and coproduction, which is a core principle of effective SEND support.



Conclusion

This first annual survey provides a comprehensive baseline of parent carer experiences with SEND services in North Northamptonshire, revealing both areas of strength and notable systemic challenges. While families value the dedication of certain specialist services - such as SEND IASS, Educational Psychology, and some health provisions - overall satisfaction with the Local Area Partnership remains low. Common concerns include long waiting times for assessment and support, lack of communication between agencies and inconsistent quality across statutory processes such as EHCP assessments, annual reviews and early intervention. Feedback indicates that these issues contribute to mistrust, high stress levels, and in some cases, families feeling compelled to seek private assessments or withdraw children from school altogether.

The findings highlight a clear need for better coordination between Education, Health, and Social Care, improved accessibility and awareness of services such as the Local Offer and Family Hubs, and a stronger focus on early identification and meaningful coproduction with families. Addressing these gaps will require targeted investment in resourcing, workforce training, and streamlined processes that reduce delays and increase transparency. This baseline provides a crucial reference point for measuring progress in the coming years, ensuring that future improvements are evidence-based and responsive to the real experiences of the SEND community in North Northamptonshire.