OxPCF Parent Carer Survey
Summer 2025 Report

Purpose:

To analyse the current strengths and needs of the LAP's SEND services, as perceived by families with children and young people aged 0-25 with SEND. Questions were designed based on the Department of Education's Priority Action Plan, which covered 5 key areas for improvement.

Methodology:

An online survey hosted by Mentimeter was launched on Friday 11th July and closed on Friday 19th September. It was promoted to parent carers across social media channels, via mailing list, a Whatsapp community group, and in the SEND Connect newsletter (via email and website). It was shared more widely by Forum members, community interest groups, several schools and at least one MP.

A total of 1055 responses were counted, of which 954 were meaningful enough to include (respondent continued past the demographics questions).

There were 6 questions asking for further comment, and most respondents (70%) completed at least one of these. There was no comment limit per respondent, and across the entire survey there were a total of 4695 comments and a total word count of 96,091.

Due to the large volume of data involved, scoring was averaged and comments were analysed for word frequency, and keyword searches were then performed on both the most frequently used terms (e.g. "EHCP", "school", "CAMHS", "support") and topics of scoring questions, followed by coding these comment groups for different metrics (e.g. issues around EHCPs), and finally LLM analysis of larger samples for validation of conclusions drawn (e.g. coherence/divisiveness of opinion in suggestions for Parent Carer engagement). A small selection of direct quotes have been included in each section of the report.

Graphs, unless labelled otherwise, plot the number of votes for each answer option in a single question to indicate the spread of responses. Where a scored question has been repeated (e.g for each of Education, Health, or Social Care) the bars are colour coded for ease of comparison.

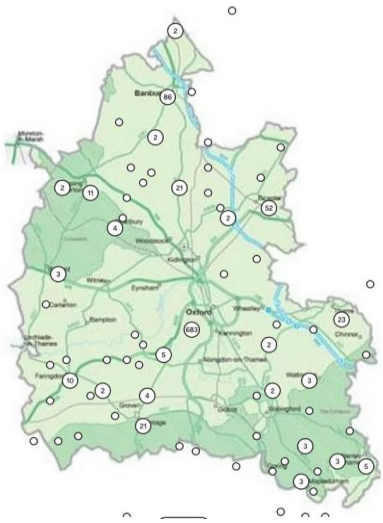
When analysing the survey behaviour, respondents were balanced in the types of questions they chose to answer. Of note, respondents who contributed positive comments largely wrote comments throughout the survey (mean = 5 comments).

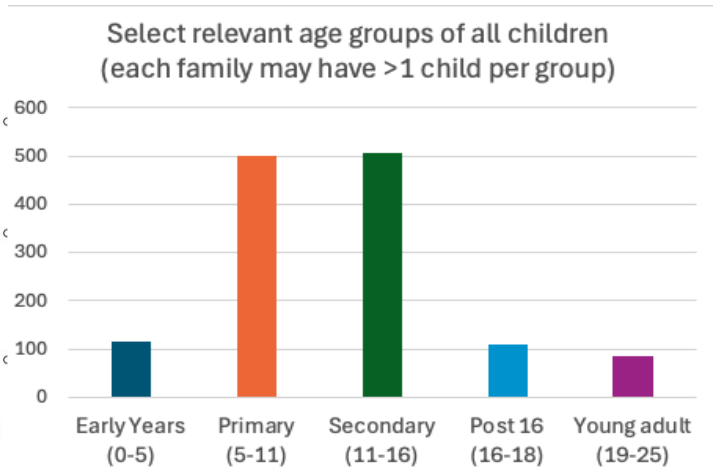
Those who contributed no positive comments wrote very little elsewhere, too (mean = 1.5 comments), indicating that these respondents were generally finding positive reflections despite reporting their difficulties and making suggestions for improvement.

References are made to questions in the survey throughout the report by slide number (Appendix 1 – list of questions).
Responses to questions not directly related to the PAP are listed separately (Appendix 2).
The full survey response from Mentimeter (without comments, for brevity) is available if required in a separate Powerpoint document. This data has not been cleaned so response numbers may vary from this report.

Demographics:

Parents self-reported demographics. A map of responses shows broad uptake across the county and ages of children varied from the early years age group to 19-25, with most responses from parents with at least one primary or secondary aged child.
87% of survey respondents indicated that they had experience of the SEND system in Oxfordshire prior to the Ofsted inspection in 2023.[8]

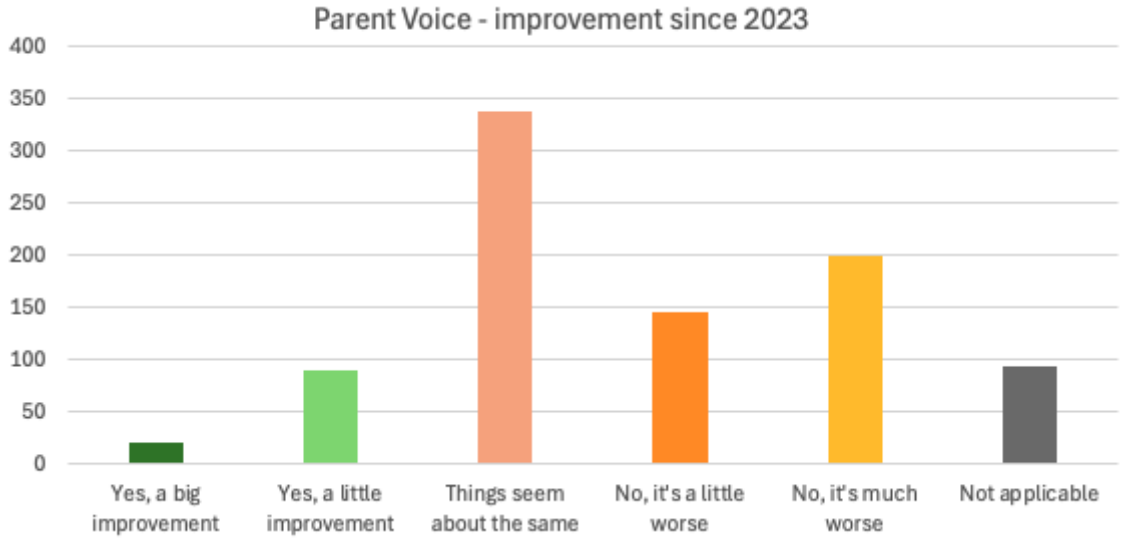




Priority Theme 1: Parent Carer Voice (PAP 1)

Many parents (43%) felt their views are included in decisions about their child's support, services, or education to about the same extent as in 2023, although 14% reported an improvement since then. 43% reported things were worse.[9]

Many comments referred to the adversarial nature of navigating SEND provision and statutory processes. Even those who were satisfied with their child's provision acknowledged the difficulty of obtaining it.



"OCC are so adversarial. The child's interests are not of concern to them at all. They don't listen to school, professionals, parents or children."

"We have the education, time and resources to fight but others don't. Unfair system."

"I now have excellent provision and a great relationship with the SEND team for my older child who has EOTAS but that was after a terrible tribunal process - I know my experience is not typical."

When asked if they had opportunities to help shape or improve services, or provide feedback to the LAP as a parent carer, 45% of respondents were at least aware of how they could do this (although only 25% had done so).[11]

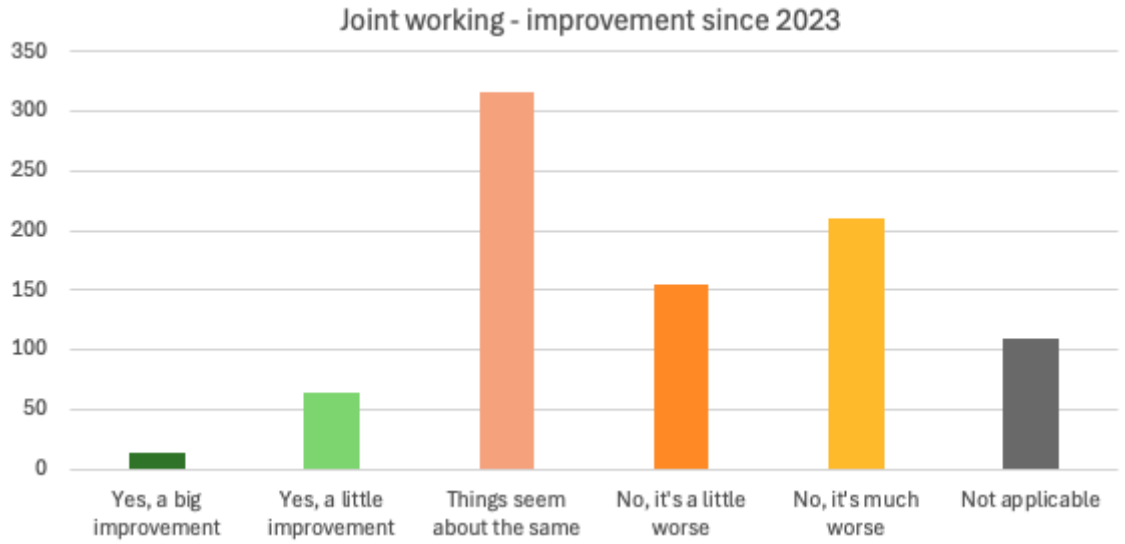
Most of those who had provided feedback to the LAP (including through OxPCF's feedback form) or to an individual service did not have a response or notice a change (67%).[12]

Parents were asked for anything that would help them to feel more involved in shaping SEND services in Oxfordshire. There were 334 comments, some of which simply replied that they didn't feel they had the energy to engage more widely as they were coping with their own circumstances. There were many constructive suggestions by those who would like to be more involved. They focused on simple outcomes such as hearing a response to their feedback, and local, focused and periodic engagement sessions online and in person. The overall theme was a desire to be actively listened to, and have their views sought out.[31]

"The use of "you said, we did" so the impact of our input can be better measured and shared."
"Parents need more directly accessible help: helpline, someone coming into the school."
"Co-production and reaching out proactively to families, most of whom have no idea how to get involved or share their views."
"Being able to give regular feedback - like this and feel like you are listened to."
"To be listened to! To be listened to! To be listened to!"

Priority Theme 2: Joint Working (PAP 2)

When asked about noticeable improvements in joint working and communication between services in the last couple of years, the largest group of respondents said they felt things were about the same (42%). The rest of the responses skewed to worse - by either a little (20%) or a lot (28%).[10]



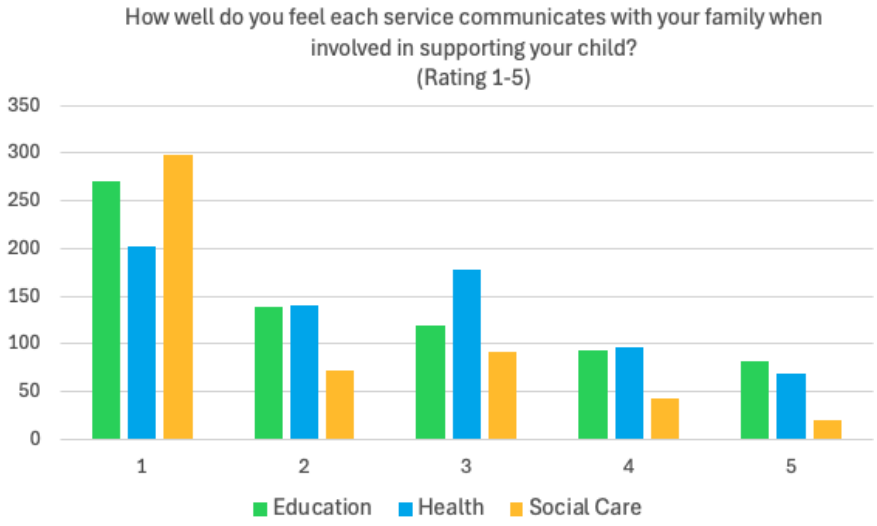
Average ratings on a scale 1-5 were given by respondents for each service in how well it communicates with their family:[21]

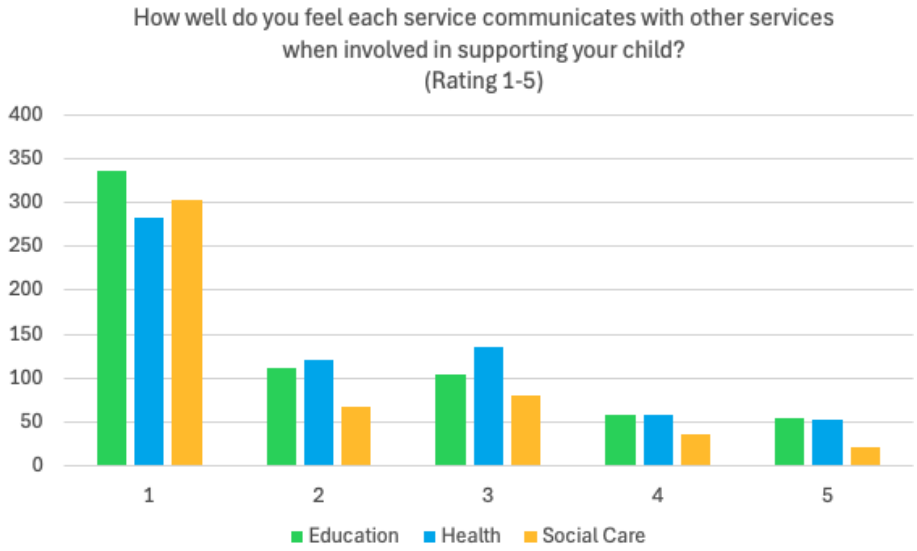
- Education: 2.4
- Health: 2.5
- Social care: 1.9

And with other services:[22]

- Education: 2.1
- Health: 2.5
- Social care: 1.8

The average score on all questions was below the middle option of 3, mostly driven by a large proportion of respondents giving the lowest possible score of 1. The rest were more evenly spread across scores 2-5. Although almost 50% of families feel they have the worst possible experience on these metrics, the other 50% have a variable experience, including extremely good (7.5%).





Respondents were asked specifically for any positive recent experiences related to their child's education, health or social care, and 367 people chose to do so, out of 452 responses to this question.[24]

Highlights:

- 52 comments mentioned specific healthcare staff, LA officers, providers, teachers and schools by name
- Most of the positive comments related to support in schools for children, particularly where school had taken a flexible or inclusive approach to their needs
- 93 comments directly evidenced joint working across services and between parents and services, mostly commenting on timely referrals between services, and competence of named SEN Officers.
- Several comments mentioned attentive interactions with school staff and SEN Officers while specifically acknowledging the limited resources these staff are often working with.
- CAMHS as a service was praised for responsiveness and effectiveness of interventions

"Having just transitioned to secondary school, the admin and communication between his old & new school was very good. New school had a special event for new SEND families to outline their supports."

"New school has been amazingly supportive as have all associated disciplines (SALT, health visitor, OCC teaching) in helping the transition."

"The continuity of the school's approach and communication between us is outstanding."

"CAMHS have been brilliant. Great, fast, communication and good understanding of needs and accommodations to allow them to interact with CAMHS."

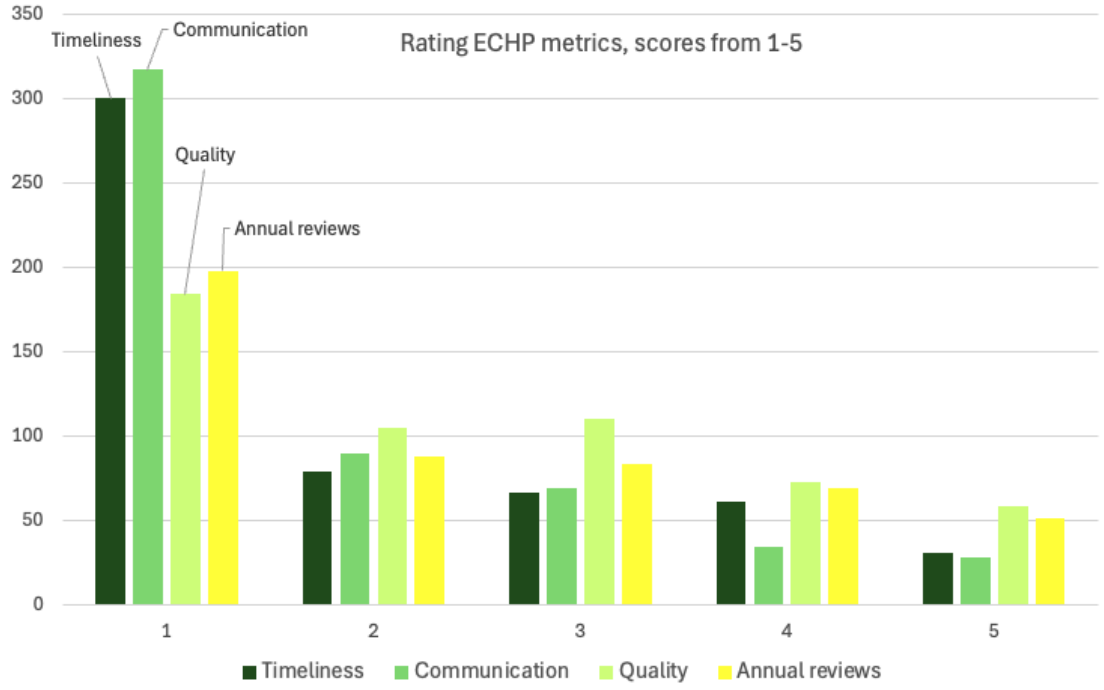
Priority Theme 3: EHCP Quality and Timeliness

Respondents with a child who has an EHCP, or who had applied for one, were asked how strongly they agree with a series of statements:

- *Decisions around EHCNAs and EHCPs seem to happen on time.*
- *It is easy to get updates on progress or changes to an ECHNA/EHCP.*
- *The EHCP is of good quality and accurately describes my child's needs.*
- *Annual reviews happen when they should and are managed well.*

While there was a fairly even spread of responses across the range 1-5 to "EHCP quality and accuracy" and "annual review processes", resulting in average scores of

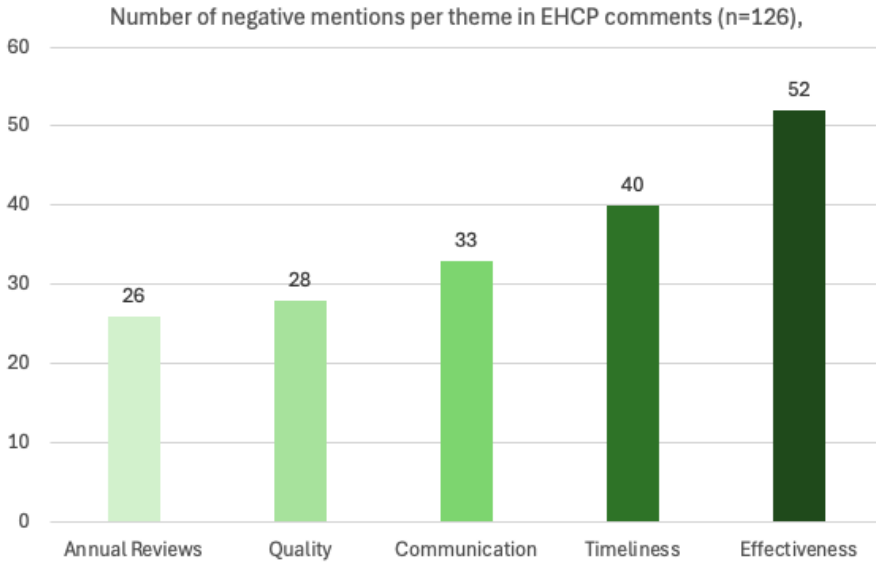
2.5 and 2.4, responses to “timeliness” and “communication” for the EHCP process skewed further to the negative end of the scale (average 1.9) with a large clump of “1” scores on each.[26]



They were then asked how well their child’s needs were being met by each service (where relevant) on a scale 1-5:[27]

- Education: 2.5
- Health: 2.3
- Social care: 2.0

A total 127 respondents mentioned “EHCP” when asked for details of their top areas of concern, although some of these comments were describing their child’s SEN status. 91 comments were coded for mentions of EHCP metrics, and the most common issue was that the EHCP does not lead to effective provision that meets the child’s needs, followed by timeliness of EHCP processes.



Effectiveness:

- *"I've been told by the school that although my son has an EHCP it's unrealistic to expect the school to follow that due to lack of funding, not enough money to support him 1-1 although it's in the EHCP."*
- *"There remains little to no accountability for settings disregarding EHCPs."*
- *"My son (year 10) hasn't set foot in [school] since Oct 2023 despite having an EHCP."*
- *"Looking for special school but none in Oxfordshire at primary level that list ASD as primary need. Only resource bases but son too high needs."*
- *"NHS OT and SALT waiting lists are over 2 years long, and SEN Officers are not accepting private reports into EHCPs, so early help and support are not being offered."*
- *"Despite a comprehensive EHCP and full time funding my child's school consistently fails to adhere to the EHCP. Even on provision that is not costed, but adjustments/allowances."*

Timeliness:

- *"EHCP statutory deadlines are not upheld."*
- *"From EHCNA to EHCP = 38 weeks."*
- *"Each step is severely delayed causing children to miss years of education. Email responses take weeks, referrals to other departments takes weeks."*

Communication:

- *"The communication surrounding EHCP applications, tribunals etc has been appalling and non-existent."*
- *"... Communication is very unreliable."*
- *"The lack of communication from the EHCP team is disappointing."*

Quality:

- *"Provision is [currently being] put into EHCPs that reflects what can be offered by the service, not based on need."*

- *"I have a child with Down Syndrome; the speech and language support he is receiving is minimal in his EHCP and inadequate to support his development needs."*
- *"Parents are having to use the tribunal process to get their children's needs met, instead of the EHCP process meeting their needs appropriately"*

Annual Reviews:

- *"My son has been out of school for a year now and meetings for EHCP review keeps getting delayed."*
- *"EHCP reviews never attended by local authority representatives."*
- *"EHCPs are taking too long to be issued following annual reviews. Often they are returned with 'no changes needed' despite obvious updates or during transition years."*

Priority Theme 4: Commissioning and Early Help (PAP 4)

Respondents were asked specifically about their experience accessing the Oxfordshire Local Offer website to find information or support.
A large majority (72%) of respondents were aware of the Local Offer website. Of those aware of it: [28]

- 14% had used it and found it helpful.
- 56% had used it but could not find the information they needed.
- 30% had not used it.

When asked how confident they were in accessing information and support for their child's needs, respondents gave the following average scores from 1-5: [19]

- Education: 2.52
- Health: 2.78
- Social care: 2.09

As in previously scored questions, the proportion of respondents giving the lowest score (1, "not at all confident") was disproportionate.

- Education: 32% chose "1"
- Health: 24% chose "1"
- Social care: 47% chose "1"

Few comments across the survey mentioned "information" as a suggestion, or as a difficulty. As described in previous sections the comment focus was on specific services (expansion or implementation), suggesting that families are generally aware of what exists and what does not. A possible interpretation of this discrepancy is that parents are responding that they feel largely unable to access information and support – not because they don't know where to look, but because the type of support they are looking for is unavailable.

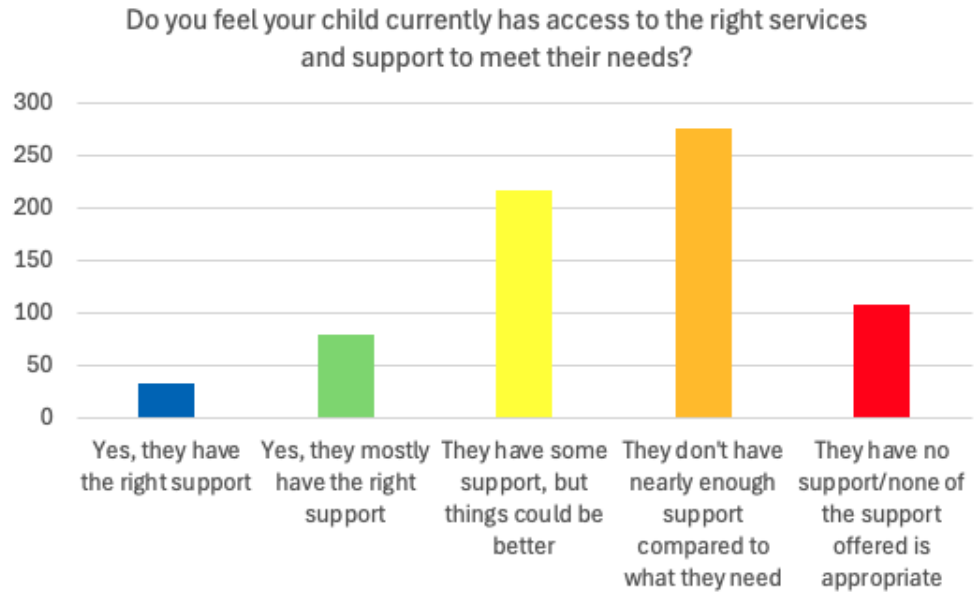
The following examples are around social care, where almost half of respondents indicated they felt unable to access information and/or support:

- *"Cutting of KIDS club after school provision is a real loss, there is no effective provision now."*
- *"Refusal of CIN support for disabled children with mental health only conditions under CWD social care. The supports and funding is being sidelined for physical conditions only."*
- *"Our family could use the support of social services but I have no idea how to access support that would be relevant to our situation."*
- *"Holiday clubs for children were taken away two years ago for children with medical needs. Respite centre has reduced their opening hours."*
- *"Access to social care support - this feels incredibly hard to navigate."*

Comments around health focused on CAMHS pathways:

- *"I'm extremely concerned about the waiting time for assessment for neurodivergence, my son's been waiting over three years now and I've no idea when he will be seen."*
- *"Extremely long waiting times to see and have a diagnosis from CAMHS. We waited 4 years."*
- *"Mental health support really is poor. My daughter was referred to CAMHS but then they just sent us some links instead of seeing her in person because I am dealing with her; we both needed support."*

When asked whether their child currently has access to the right services and support to meet their needs, only 16% of parents felt this was mostly or completely the case. A further 31% acknowledge their child has at least some support. 54% feel their child has nowhere near enough support compared to what they need.[22]



Despite comments in this section, and previous ones, around access to services, generally respondents were very positive about commissioned services once involved with them.

Education:

- *"Vision impairment services have been regular and helpful."*
- *"Elective Home Ed team has been fantastic at supporting with trying to get back into education."*
- *"Being able to access one great provider [...] has been amazing in helping [my child] socially and emotionally."*
- *"My son is finally able to access education through alternative provision [these providers] have transformed the education and mental well-being of my sons."*

Health:

- *"Getting More Help (CAMHS) has improved its services and consistency in appointments and staffing. They have shown the best multidisciplinary working I have seen anywhere in Oxfordshire."*
- *"CAMHS - waiting times were horrendous but once we got to the top of the list the treatment care and support were transformative."*

Social Care:

- *"Social care have arranged 2 days a week for my young person at Wallingford Community Support Hub. This has been excellent."*
- *"Social services are AMAZING for my son. The support for me is wonderful and I am not alone. It's like having a friend to talk to. My son is [on a CIN plan] and we have a family support worker."*

Priority Theme 5: Leadership, Strategy and Training (PAP 5)

Most respondents (59%) were **not** aware of work being done by local leaders and professionals to improve services for families and young people with SEND. Only a ¼ of those aware of SEND improvement work knew any details about recent changes or upcoming plans.[7]

Half of the responses from families with experience of the SEND system in Oxfordshire stated they felt the system had got worse since October 2023 (50%). Most of the others felt things were about the same as before (41%). Only 10% felt things had improved.[8]

- *"Obtaining then maintaining the correct support for your child remains as relentless and challenging as it was in 2023. Families were in crisis, and they still are."*

Families of young people accessing specialist provision, and enhanced pathways, were often impressed by the provision:

- *"Moving to a specialist provision was the best thing for my child. He has gone from 20-25% attendance to almost 100%."*
- *"My child in appropriate specialist provision is being supported effectively and his educational skills are improving."*

- *"Our experience has changed markedly since our son moved to a specialist setting."*
- *"Enhanced pathway class set up by the school has been excellent."*

Although the survey did not ask for type of education setting, several respondents praised the adaptability of specific mainstream schools:

- *"Her mainstream school is amazing [...] and their staff are fantastic, supportive and willing to try anything to help my daughter progress."*
- *"His school [...] have been wonderful. Very supportive and understandable. They are very flexible to his and our needs. They often say yes to EHCP kids when other schools chose not to."*

Parents were asked for any suggestions for how services could be improved.[30] The key word in these responses was "more" - more of services that exist already, but do not go far enough.

- *"Please offer more funding and services to help the families who are living with the most severely disabled and vulnerable children. We need respite. Wrap around childcare, more support from school [...] More holiday club activities. More special schools. More funding for more staff to employ for special needs clubs. More respite services offered / available."*
- *"More SEN schools and enhanced pathways."*
- *"More support for mainstream holiday clubs after school clubs so children with disabilities can be included."*
- *"Schools need more access to specialists - OT, Ed Psych, SALT. need to have much less wait time."*
- *"More OT and SaLT specialists. More educational psychologists. More alternative provision options."*
- *"The Local Offer needs far more detail and options."*
- *"More funding and support for schools who are trying to meet need and failing."*
- *"Create more specialist placements in mainstream schools by more resource centres attached to schools."*
- *"More investment in holiday clubs for send, since Barnados lost contract it's been very hard"*

Conclusions:

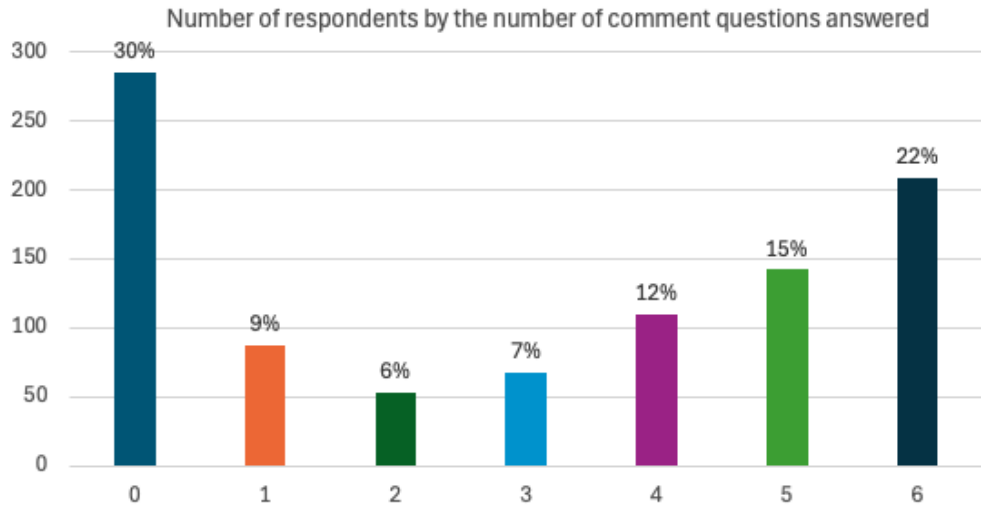
Although the scores given by respondents largely indicated a sense of lack of progress two years on; the positive experiences they report, and the suggestions made for further SEND improvement, mainly focused on expanding access to provision that already exists and works well.

A theme of comments around improvement and feedback from parents was that they don't feel listened to by decision makers and they don't know how to effectively contribute. The wide distribution and response to this survey by families, and the collective time taken to reflect on their experience and express what they would like further change to look like, is a testament to how strongly they feel about this opportunity.

While there appears to be a split between families whose experiences are largely negative, and those who express some (if not total) satisfaction with each area of questioning, a significant group of respondents were able to contribute positive recent experiences when specifically asked for this.

Main limitations of the data:

1. The number of children with SEND (on SEN register + EHCPs) in Oxfordshire is around 20,000. We do not have the data for how many individual families this represents, as we can assume that several families will have >1 child with recognised SEND. Taking the most conservative example of 10,000 families (all with two children with SEND), this would still only represent a 9.5% sample of the population.
2. Although geographically the sample covers the whole county, we did not ask for type of educational setting – so cannot comment on whether these results are skewed in any way to a certain setting cohort (or, indeed, a lack of setting).
3. Access to the survey was limited to those we could reach via existing comms channels, who had time and ability to complete it in one sitting due to the survey settings of one-time access.
4. Questions with predetermined selections gave broad options, and there is evidence from the comment themes that these should be separated in future surveys. For example, “access to/quality of [service]” should be under two separate options.
5. Caution is needed interpreting overall “votes” for issues that would only affect a certain group of children (e.g. Early Years places) where these demographic groups were already underrepresented in the survey. 116 respondents have a child in EY. 61 responses indicated that EY spaces were an issue. In the education section, this is the least voted for issue (5.7%), but 25% of current Early Years parents selected it.
6. There were 9 responses from outside the survey area. It’s unclear from survey data which these were, whether they were unintentional map clicks, whether the respondents had links to Oxfordshire services, or were unrelated.
7. 30% of survey respondents added no comments to their scores. Interpretation of comment themes linked to scoring may not fully represent the views of those who chose not to comment, or who commented selectively.



Appendix 1: List of survey questions by slide number

4. *Stick the pin on where you live! (No need to be exact — just a general idea is helpful).*

5. *Please tell us the age group of each child or young person in your family (select all that apply):*

7. *Are you aware of work that local leaders and professionals are doing to improve services for families of children and young people with SEND?*

8. *Do you feel that the SEND system in Oxfordshire has improved since the Ofsted inspection in October 2023?*

9. *Have you noticed any improvement in how* ***your views are included*** *in decisions about your child's support, services, or education?*

10. *Have you noticed improvements in how education, health, and social care services* ***work together*** *to meet your child's needs?*

11. *Have you had opportunities to help shape or improve services, or provide feedback as a parent carer?*

12. *If you have given feedback as a parent carer, do you feel this has been acted upon?*

14. *Areas of concern: Education*

15. *Areas of concern: Health*

16. *Areas of concern: Social Care*

17. *Please add any comments about the areas you selected, or tell us about any other concerns not listed:*

19. *Are you confident/able to* ***access information and support*** *for your child's needs in the following areas? (1 = not confident, 5 = very confident)*

20. *How well do you feel each service* ***communicates with your family*** *when involved in supporting your child?*

21. *How well do you feel each service* ***communicates with other services*** *when involved in supporting your child?*

22. *Do you feel your child currently has access to the right services and support to meet their needs?*

23. *What support, if any, do you feel is missing for your child?*

24. *Please share any* ***recent positive experiences*** *related to your child or young person's education, health, or social care:*

25. *Please share any* ***recent difficulties*** *you have faced related to your child or young person's education, health, or social care:*

26. *If your child has an EHCP, or you have applied for one, how strongly do you agree with the following statements?*

27. *If your child has an EHCP, how well do you feel their needs are being met by each service (where relevant)?*

28. *Have you used the Oxfordshire Local Offer website to find information or support? If so, how was your experience?*

30. *Do you have any suggestions for how services could be improved?*

31. *Is there anything that would help you, as a parent carer, to feel more involved in shaping SEND services in Oxfordshire?*

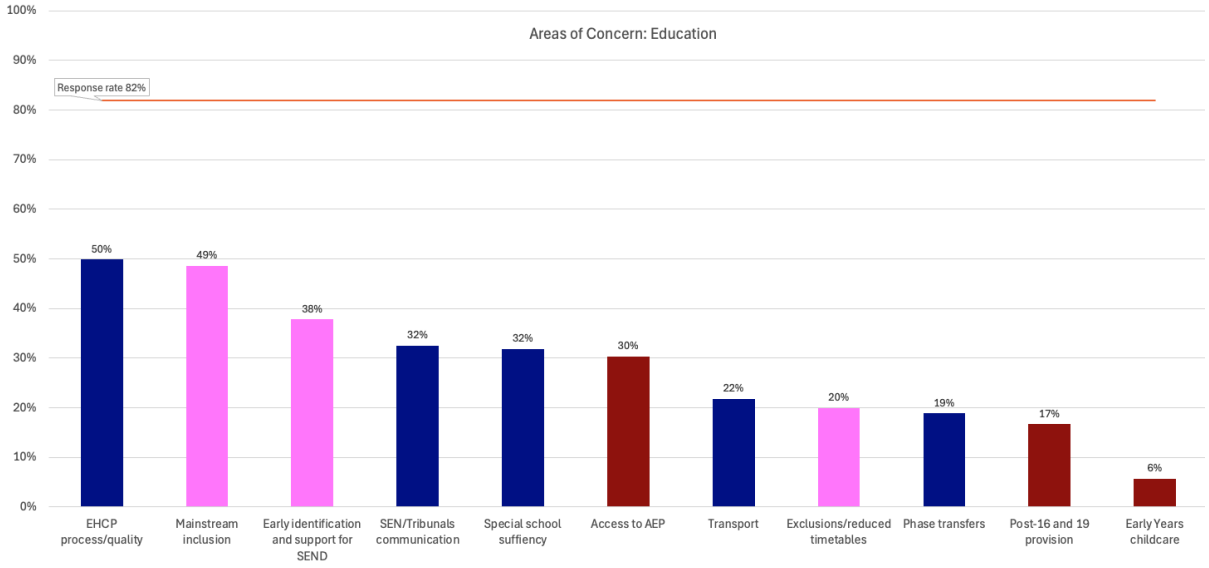
Appendix 2: Questions for context, not directly related to PAP

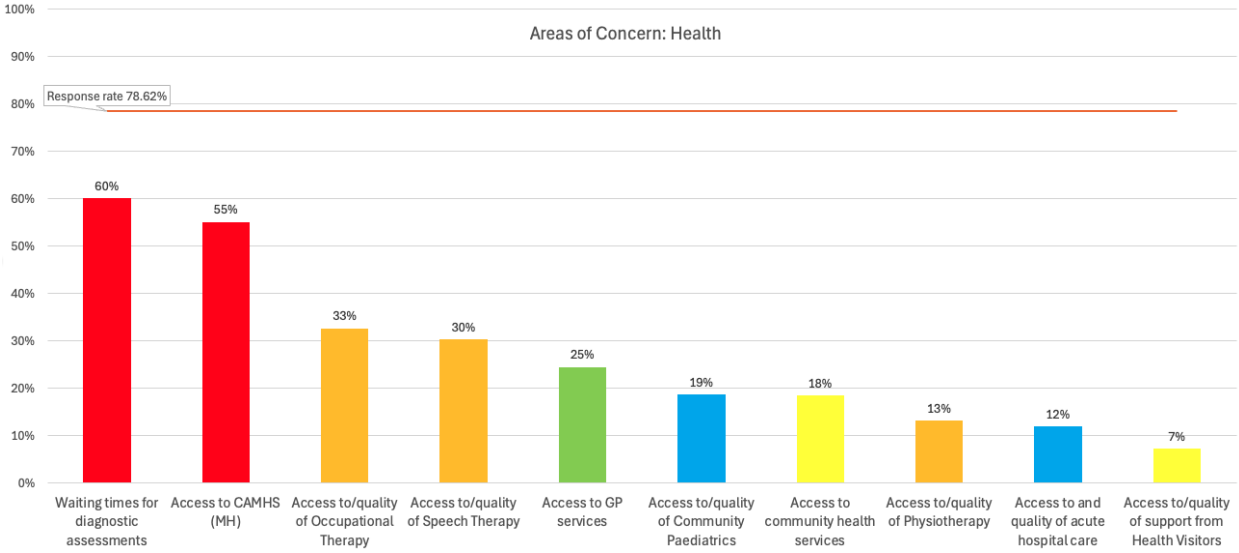
Top areas of concern:

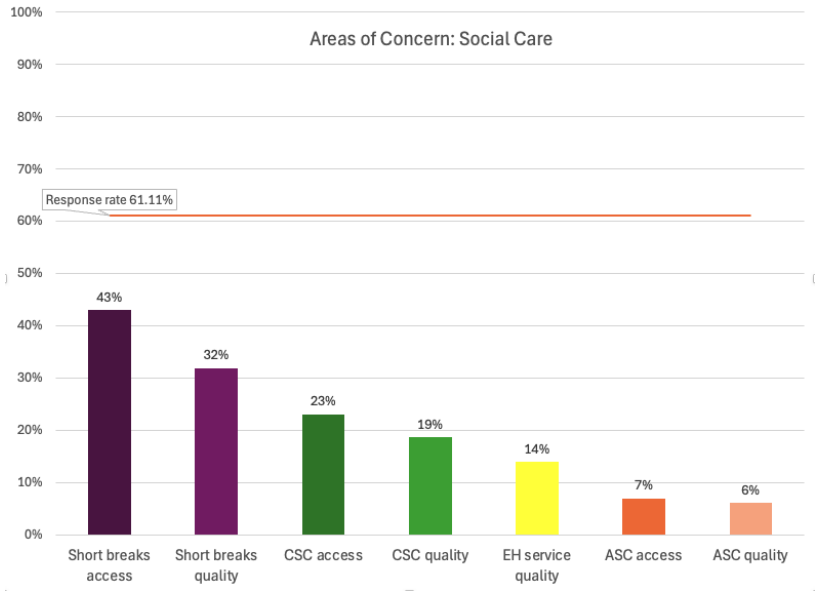
In order to understand scoring decisions throughout the survey, respondents were asked early on to select any particular areas of concern from a predefined list of common feedback themes and existing commissioned services. Rankings are given by % of overall survey respondents selecting each option.

Education	**782 responses**
Health	**750 responses**
Social Care	**583 responses**

1	**Waiting times for diagnostic assessments**	**60%**
2	**Access to CAMHS mental health support**	**55%**
3	**EHCPs (applying, quality, timescales)**	**50%**
4	**Inclusion in mainstream (eg lack of support, inappropriate placements)**	**49%**
5	**Access to out-of-school activities/childcare for children with SEND**	**43%**
6	**Schools proactive in identifying and supporting SEND**	**38%**
7	**Access to/quality of Occupational Therapy**	**33%**
8	**Communication from SEN and tribunals teams at OCC**	**32%**
9	**Quality of out-of-school activities/childcare for children with SEND**	**32%**
10	**Difficulty finding a special school place**	**32%**
11	**Availability of alternative education provision**	**30%**
12	**Access to/quality of Speech Therapy**	**30%**
13	**Access to GP services**	**25%**
14	**Access to support from children's social care**	**23%**
15	**Home-to-school transport**	**22%**
16	**School exclusions (including reduced timetables/isolation)**	**20%**
17	**Phase transfers (e.g. from primary to secondary)**	**19%**
18	**Access to/quality of Community Paediatrics**	**19%**
19	**Quality of support from children's social care**	**19%**
20	**Access to community health (opticians, dentists)**	**18%**
21	**Post-16 and 19 provision**	**17%**
22	**Quality of support from Early Help (non-statutory social care)**	**14%**
23	**Access to/quality of Physiotherapy**	**13%**
24	**Access to and quality of hospital care (A&E, children's hospital wards)**	**12%**
25	**Access to/quality of support from Health Visitors (aged 0-5)**	**7%**
26	**Access to support from adult social care (18-25)**	**7%**
27	**Quality of support from adult social care (18-25)**	**6%**
28	**Early Years childcare and nursery spaces for complex needs**	**6%**


Areas of Concern: Education
Response rate 82%
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
50%
49%
38%
32%
32%
30%
22%
20%
19%
17%
6%
EHCP process/quality
Mainstream inclusion
Early identification and support for SEND
SEN/Tribunals communication
Special school suffiency
Access to AEP
Transport
Exclusions/reduced timetables
Phase transfers
Post-16 and 19 provision
Early Years childcare


Areas of Concern: Health
Response rate 78.62%
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
60%
55%
33%
30%
25%
19%
18%
13%
12%
7%
Waiting times for diagnostic assessments
Access to CAMHS (MH)
Access to/quality of Occupational Therapy
Access to/quality of Speech Therapy
Access to GP services
Access to/quality of Community Paediatrics
Access to community health services
Access to/quality of Physiotherapy
Access to and quality of acute hospital care
Access to/quality of support from Health Visitors


Areas of Concern: Social Care
Response rate 61.11%
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
43%
32%
23%
19%
14%
7%
6%
Short breaks access
Short breaks quality
CSC access
CSC quality
EH service quality
ASC access
ASC quality