



SEND Inspection

Parent Carer View
September 2026

Family Voice Surrey Journey last 18 months



2025/26
Membership



3,292

9% growth over the year



Views collected

1,711

47% growth over last year



Social media

• Followers

6,913



April to July 2026



Membership

Membership has continued to grow strongly between April and July, increasing by **14.5%** to **3,770 members**, compared with **3,292 members** at 31 March 2026, representing a **9% increase** in the previous financial year.



Facebook

The Family Voice Surrey Facebook page has also continued to expand, with an additional **119 followers** since 1 April.



Events



Transport webinar

22 attendees



Personal Budgets webinar

14 attendees



ENCNA (2 events)

5 attendees at each



White Paper Engagement event

7 attendees plus
104 online submissions



New SEND Communication Arrangements

9 Attendees



SEND annual survey

130 complete



Alternative Provision
(Rob Price)

72 attendees



Active Surrey Family Fun Day

160 adults and **133** children attended



Occupational Therapy webinar

83 attendees



Nutrition Workshop for
SEND Families

34 attendees



Family Voice Surrey

Together for better futures

Your voice matters

Family Voice Surrey gather feedback from parent carers in a variety of ways

The feedback we are sharing today is based on what we have heard from these wide range of engagement opportunities – some of the engagement events we have run recently based on parent carer feedback include...

We listen
We share
We make a difference



Neurodiversity & Sleep



Nutrition for Neurodivergent children



EBSNA Family Event at Elysian Farm



SEND Reform Consultation and EOTAS Consultation



Alternative Provision Engagement



Participation drop in sessions



EBSNA WhatsApp Group



Coffee Morning



FASD Group meet ups and WhatsApp Group



Legal sessions with a SEND Solicitor on EHCP's, appeals, home to school transport, alternative provision and EOTAS



Family Voice Surrey complete parent sessions within School Autism Friendly Reviews



Family Voice Surrey ran the parent carer elements on the PINS program



Surveys and Polls on key topics and themes



Email correspondence with individual parent carers



Running the Local Offer Showcases with the Local offer team



Attending Short Breaks Consultation sessions



EHCNA Engagement sessions



SEND Advice Surrey Drop in



Social Care Surgeries trial



Ordinarily Available Engagement sessions



Parent Carer rights engagement session



Family Fun Day with Active Surrey



Social Care transition to adulthood information and Q&A session

Thank you to all our parent carers for sharing your views, experiences and ideas. Your feedback helps shape better support, services and opportunities for our children and young people in Surrey.

Family Voice Surrey

Top themes we are hearing from parent carers currently



Communication, decision making and accountability underpin every one of the highlighted themes below:

New communication
process with EHCP
Coordination Officers
(ECO)

Panels (MATD)

EBSNA

Alternative Provision

EOTAS

Post 16

Working well...

L-SPA

- Parent carers have reported that the L-SPA team are always very helpful and empathetic and say that it is always welcome being able to speak to someone and useful knowing calls are logged as an escalation route.

Yes to Assess Meetings

- Following some parent carer engagement and co-production meetings, a Yes to Assess meeting is now offered to all families in this situation and in the meeting they can learn more about the process and ask questions.

Having a good and supportive individuals

- Parent carers highlighted individuals in their journey that have made a huge difference and concluded that when you have a good case officer or SENCO it can make the world of difference.

Local Offer Showcases

- Parent carers value an opportunity to connect and find out what services are available in their local community.

Short Breaks Schemes

- If you are lucky enough to be registered with a short breaks scheme (e.g. White Lodge, Linkable, YMCA) parent carers and children and young people really value the play and leisure schemes, however most of the providers have very long waiting lists which makes it impossible for new parent carers and children and young people to access.



What one thing would you change on your EBSNA journey...

[illegible]

What one thing would of made
a difference on your EBSNA
Journey?

NOT BEING
OFFERED
THE
THERAPIES

To know you were here!
And that "school" isn't the
only option.

if things were
packaged nicely it's
easier on and we are still
blending in.

Let's do more for kinship carers
please

forcing Attendance
doesn't make anxiety
go away for parents
or children

We ARE SO GRATEFUL for events like this!

Don't delay in
finding out
what the
problem
underlying
school refusal is.

Better understanding
+ knowledge.

Animals are an important part
of our healing

Don't delay help action
until they are EBSNA.

Better
Understanding
from
everyone.

Listen to
lived experience

Access to Alternative
provision WHEN it is
needed - not fighting over
who is responsible

Don't expect us
to "home educate"
because school can't meet
need

Respond to emails

Believe us and
don't judge us

GUIDANCE
ON NEXT STEPS

Just because
the child isn't
'naughty' doesn't
mean they're
fine!! Masking
is a thing!!

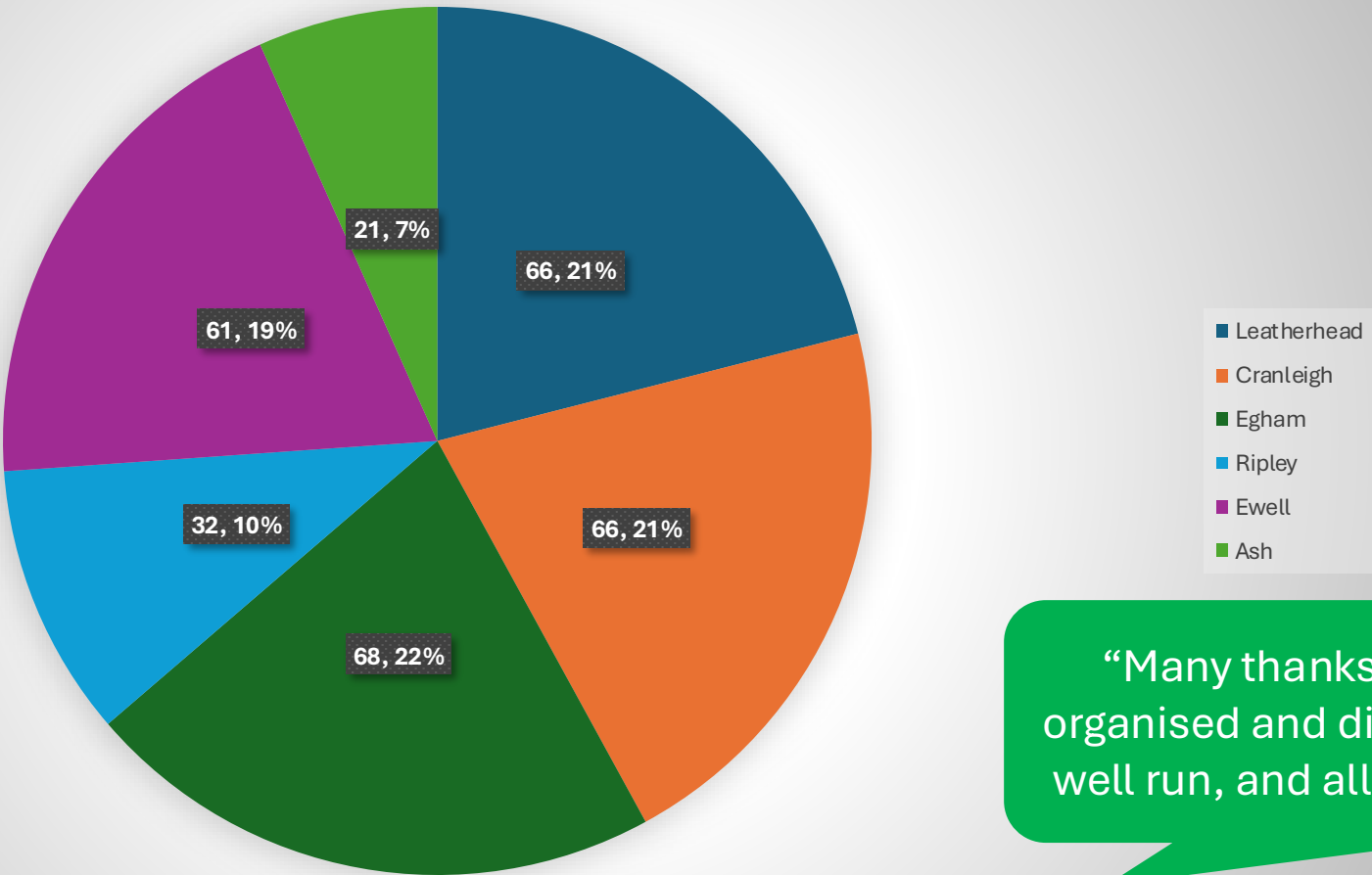
Listen to parents
concerns before
child starts
school - not "try & see"

90-wing
on the side
of class more
often.

THANK YOU &
(MONTY IS THE CUTEST!)

So much
info - not sure
what's the
next step?

Showcase events



“Many thanks indeed to all those that both organised and displayed at the event. It was very well run, and all the stands were super helpful.”

“Helpful and informative. A worthwhile event to attend”

Option	Responses (not including Ash onwards)		
	I found the showcase helpful	The services present were helpful to me, my child or my work	Further showcases should be held in Surrey
Strongly agree	70%	63%	80%
Agree	24%	30%	20%
Neither agree or disagree	6%	7%	

The logo for Family Voice Surrey features the text "family voice surrey" in a sans-serif font. "family" and "voice" are in purple, while "surrey" is in green. Below the text are four simple line drawings of diverse people's faces.

Children and young people's needs are identified accurately and assessed in a timely and effective way



Parents feel early identification is inconsistent within education, including concerns that schools do not always recognise masking behaviours in neurodivergent children.

Severe delays in accessing the diagnostic pathway results in needs not being identified or met for a significant length of time. The delay with offering ADHD medication has a huge knock on effect to both children and young people and their family.

Parents report a severe lack of knowledge and support for children with FASD it is particularly prevalent for adopted parents.

Some parents described needs being identified but appropriate support taking years to materialise.

Professional reports and recommendations are not being taken into account when planning appropriate support for children and young people particularly where needs are unable to be met in a mainstream environment or requiring alternative provision.

Delays in decision-making including processes exceeding stated timescales. Both schools and parents report that panel decisions are not always communicated in a timely way.

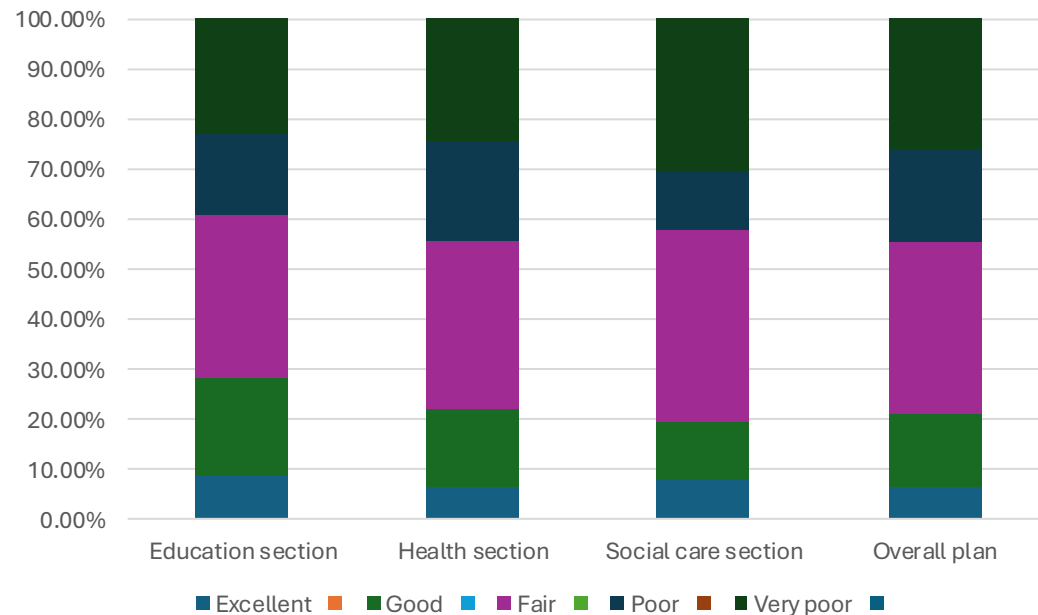
There was a strong view that earlier intervention would prevent children experiencing regression and would reduce longer-term costs.

Children and young people's needs are identified accurately and assessed in a timely and effective way

“My son has been identified by a wonderful teacher with inattentive adhd. This has now been diagnosed. She took many adaptations to support my son, and his confidence and development has shown major improvement” – PC PINS Survey

“It took the school a little while to appreciate Edward's additional needs, but now that he is well know to the team and has a diagnosis there is a lot of valuable support. They are always trying, which I truly appreciate” – PC PINS Survey

Quality of EHCP



What would have helped?
- “proper identification from a SEN point of view and plans made to be reviewed regularly and communicated with parents” – PC EBSNA survey

“I’m beyond sad and exhausted and defeated by Surreys SEND department. I had a breakdown last year as a result and had to take five months off work. It has been absolutely horrific - like being trapped in a domestically abusive relationship from which we cannot escape” -PC SEND Survey 2026

Children, young people and their families participate in decision-making about their individual plans and support



At our engagement events parents report limited involvement and poor communication about key decisions affecting their children.

Families described being removed from email communication, not informed about panel meetings, and having to chase decisions and documentation constantly.

Frequently, multi-agency meetings took place without families being told they were happening and what decisions had been made about their child's future.

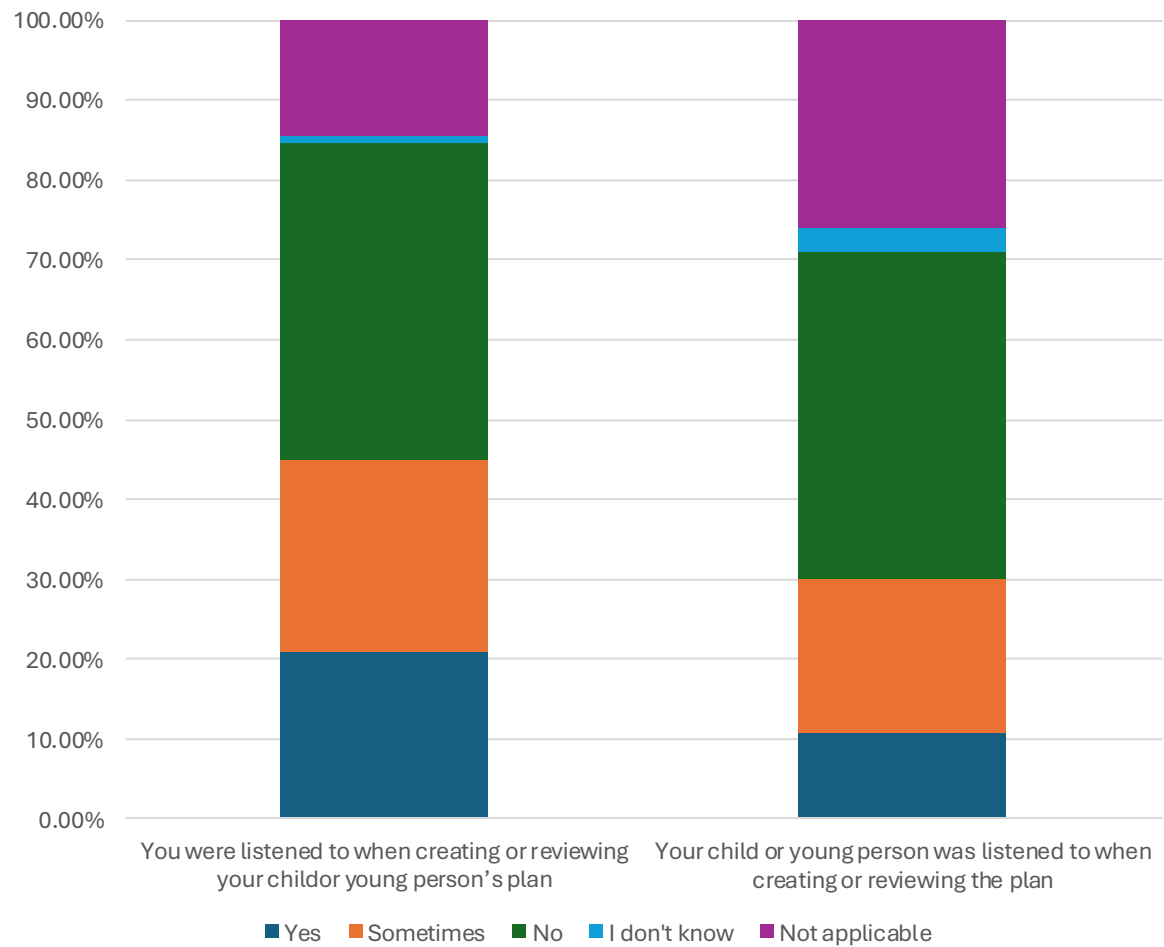
Parents do not feel that their families' aspirations are listened to or form part of the decision-making process.

Young people at post 16 are not consistently involved in planning next steps and asked what their aspirations are. Decisions are made without their involvement, and this can have a huge impact on their independence and future.

Parents described a lack of transparency around panel and placement decisions, including case officers themselves reportedly not understanding why submissions had been rejected. They also reported that decision paperwork is rarely completed or shared in line with the processes

Parents told us they feel that it is a constant fight to receive basic information about their child or young person and they are made to feel like a nuisance or put on a communication ban.

Children, young people and their families participate in decision-making about their individual plans and support



“Surrey County Council dismissed my requests for my son to be assessed by additional professionals beyond the educational psychologist, despite his known involvement with services and the complexity of his needs. As a result, I commissioned independent private assessments from occupational therapy and speech and language therapy to properly evidence his needs. However, these independent reports were completely excluded from the EHCP.” – PC SEND Survey 2026

“Feel previously the communication wasn’t great about what was happening in the class and that unit not included in mainstream as much or often But feel like this year that has changed” – PC PINS Survey

Children and young people receive the right help at the right time



Parents constantly report unnecessary delays affecting EHCPs, annual reviews, alternative provision, specialist placements, funding and mental health support.

Families described children waiting for appropriate placements despite decisions already having been made but not communicated resulting in unnecessary delays.

Children going through a Key Stage Transfer often struggle to be placed in a suitable placement based on the evidence provided and the parental preference. Parent carers describe KST as stressful and a battle with very little communication or support.

There were reports of children's needs escalating or children regressing while waiting long periods for appropriate provision.

EOTAS and alternative provision were recurring areas of concern, including delays, difficulties in securing provision or inappropriate provision.

Parents reported severe difficulties accessing the right mental health support, especially in a crisis and time of need.

Overall, families described a system where the right support can eventually be secured, but only after lengthy advocacy and escalation.

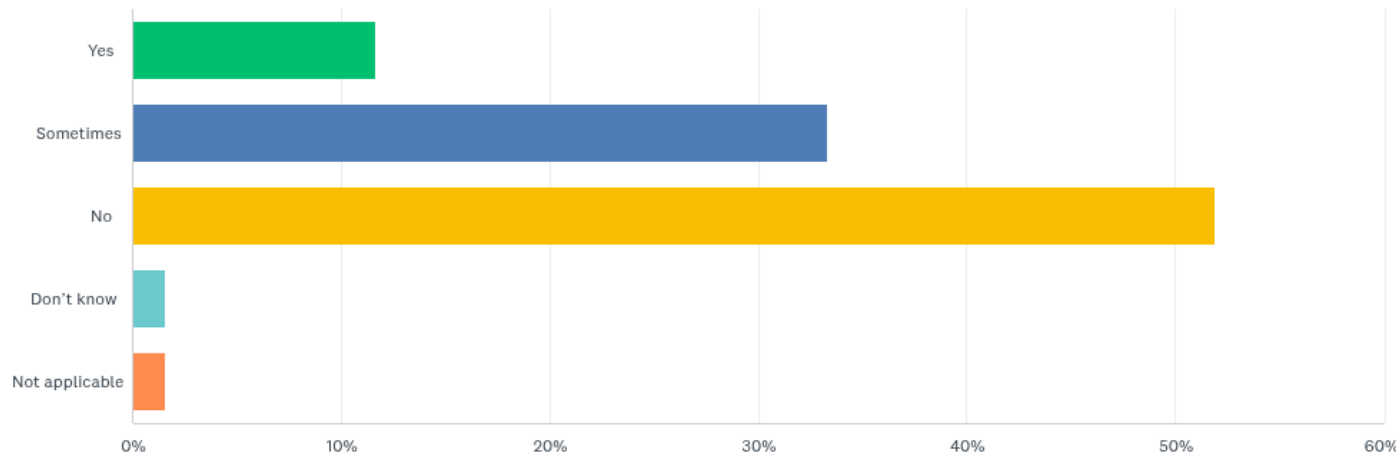
Children and young people receive the right help at the right time



“Early Years teacher was aware of issue and put many things in place to help. Haven't received same support from Y1 and feel I am overlooked and ignored as daughters behaviour isn't naughty. But they don't see her behaviour at home, leading up to school, and after school.” – PC EBSNA survey

“Unanswered emails and delays” – SEND Survey 2026

Q10 In the last 12 months, have you been able to access support when you needed it?



“St Josephs have been absolutely incredible. They have gone above and beyond for her to be included and have everything in place to ensure she is safe and can access everything like all the other children can...despite not having an EHCP in place as Surrey council have taken a year to do nothing other than drag their feet” – PC PINS Survey

Children and young people are well prepared for their next steps, and achieve strong outcomes



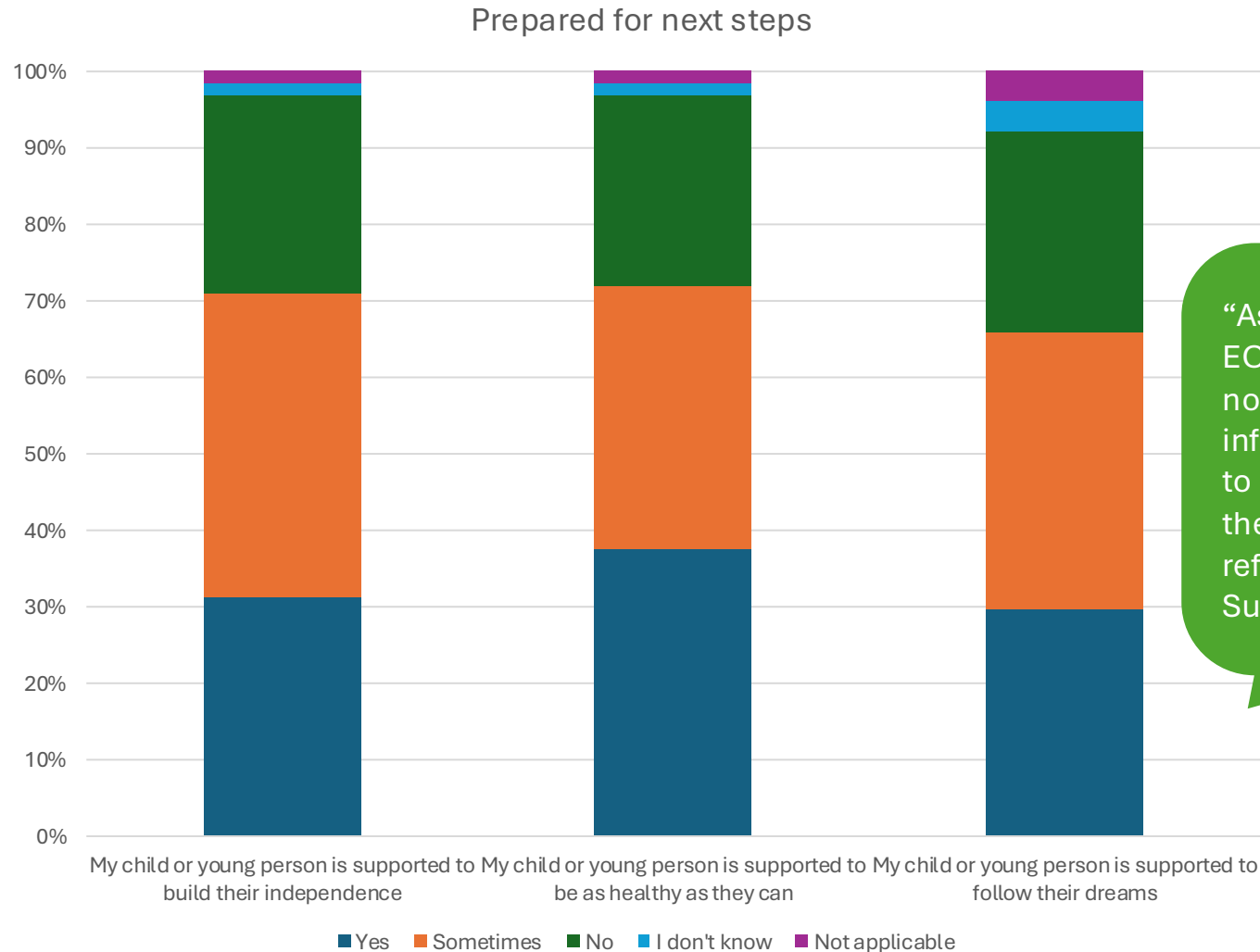
While many parents report that their child EBSNA needs are not supported by a plan, those that do have a plan have stated their child was involved (survey just opened)

Parents reported long periods without appropriate education or support, including a child described as being out of education since March 2025.

Reports of EOTAS and AP being agreed at panel, but the financial agreement not completed which meant children were unable to receive any provision until this had been resolved.

The transition to adulthood both in education and social care does not happen consistently in line with the timescales and processes in place making it difficult for young people to achieve their outcomes and aspirations in a timely manner. In some cases, this leaves young people without the right support.

Children and young people are well prepared for their next steps, and achieve strong outcomes



“My daughter is only in year 3 but knowing that it will get harder as she moves up through the year’s academically and socially so I do worry as any school has limitations on how they can support that” -
PC PINS Survey

“As my YP is on an EOTIS package, they get no access to career information. I have tried to add this service onto their EHCP, but LA have refused” – PC SEND Survey 2026

“My daughter suffered really bad with anxiety and was avoiding school or being extremely late, the school have made so many adjustments and built up my daughter's confidence, and she now feels safe at school and absolutely loves it. I couldn't praise the school enough for their support with my daughter”
PC PINS Survey

There are concerns that children can become effectively invisible within the system, particularly when they are out of school or receiving EOTAS/alternative provision.

Children being out of education for lengthy periods raises concerns about their peer relationships and wider community participation and mental health.

Parents report a lack of local respite, short breaks, and holiday schemes for children and young people with additional needs and disabilities particularly those with complex needs.

Child's voice is not taken into account or even asked for.

44% parent carers reported their child was not involved in the creation or review of their EHCP

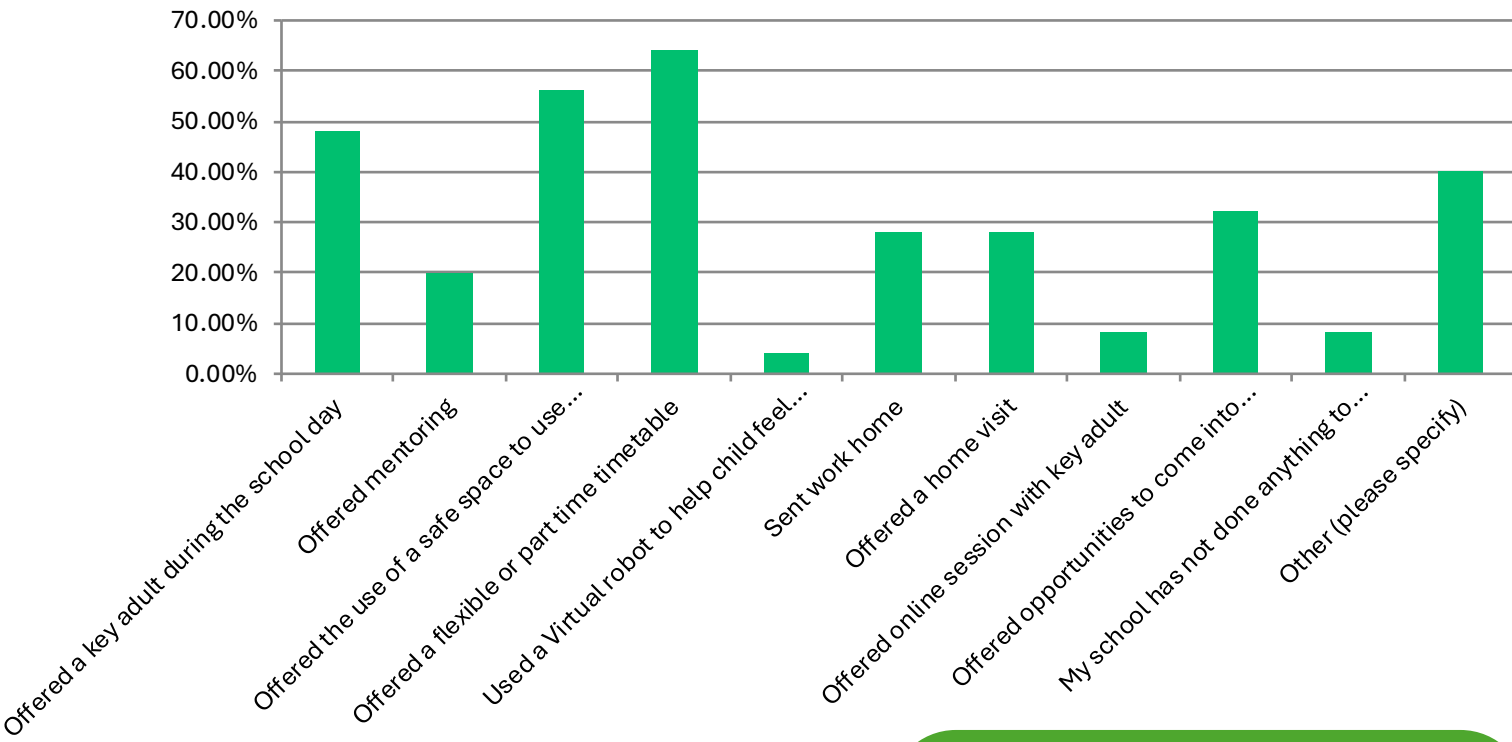
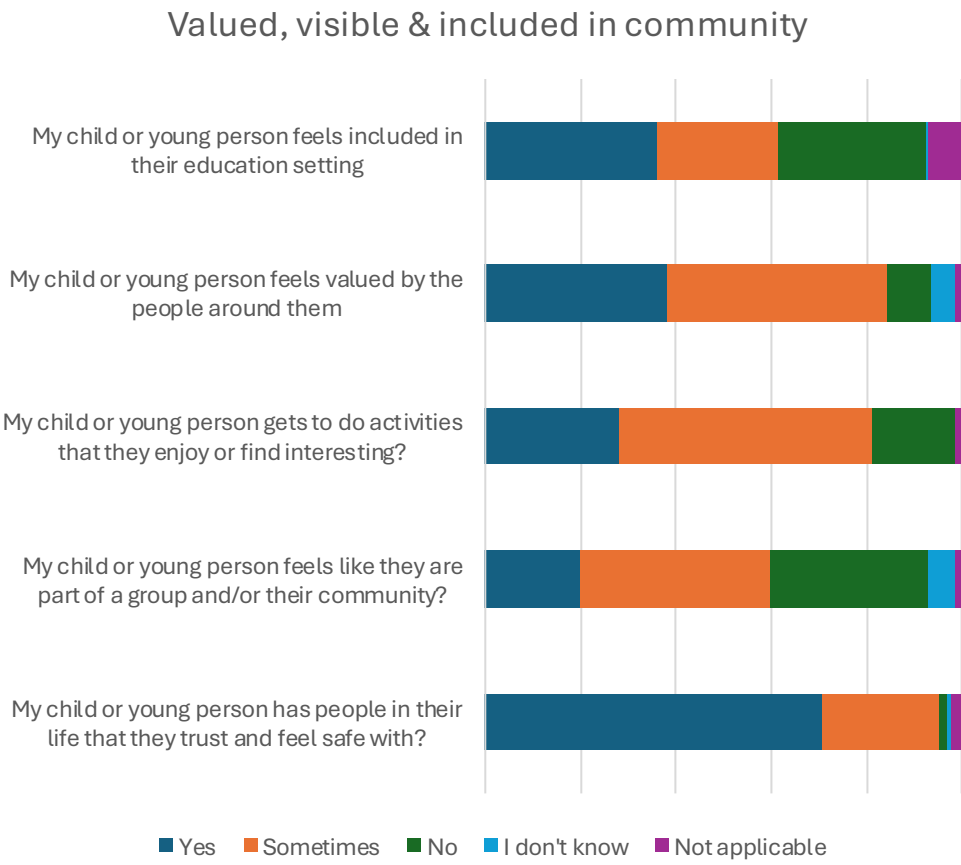
Lack of training for professionals on additional needs to support inclusion and belonging at school and in the wider community.

Children and young people are valued, visible and included in their communities

Children and young people are valued, visible and included in their communities



What has the school done to help your child or young person with feeling connected and included when their attendance has reduced?



“CW dies not listen, does not support but fights against me and my YP.” PC SEND Survey 2026

“Both my son and I have said that his 'learning partner' is inept and causes stress. We want her replaced. The school have refused to act for two years. My son's mental well-being is suffering” – PC SEND Survey 2026

Leaders are ambitious for children and young people with SEND



Parents stated that leadership decisions are not translating into improved experiences and outcomes for children or families.

Repeated reviews, inspections and improvement processes have not resulted in sufficient change in children's lived experiences.

Parent carers recognised that there are committed individuals and good professionals, including teachers and case officers, but felt that organisational barriers and lack of timely decision making prevent them from delivering consistently effective support.

Parents called for better leadership, accountability and systemic change rather than relying on individual staff members to resolve problems.

When presented with statistical data and lived experience the leaders choose to defend rather than explore the root cause and resolve. An example of this was the September 25 AND Board where a FVS parent carer survey of 130 respondents was described as statistically invalid and non representative, but 6 lived experience appreciative enquires done by Surrey CC was validated.

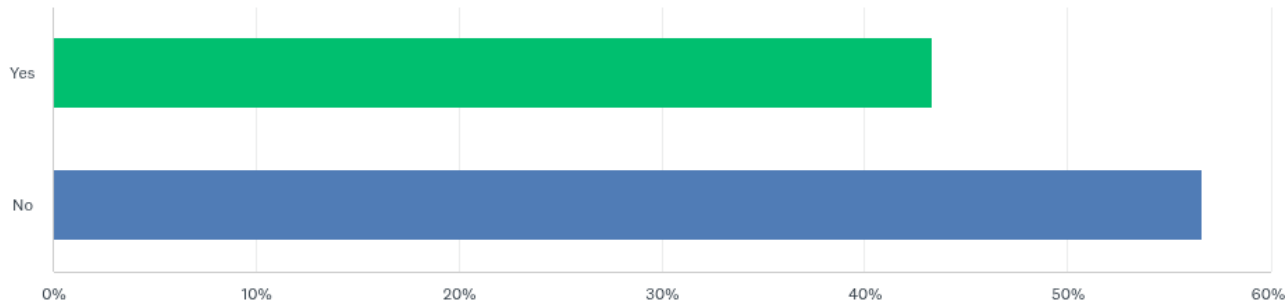
Leaders are ambitious for children and young people with SEND



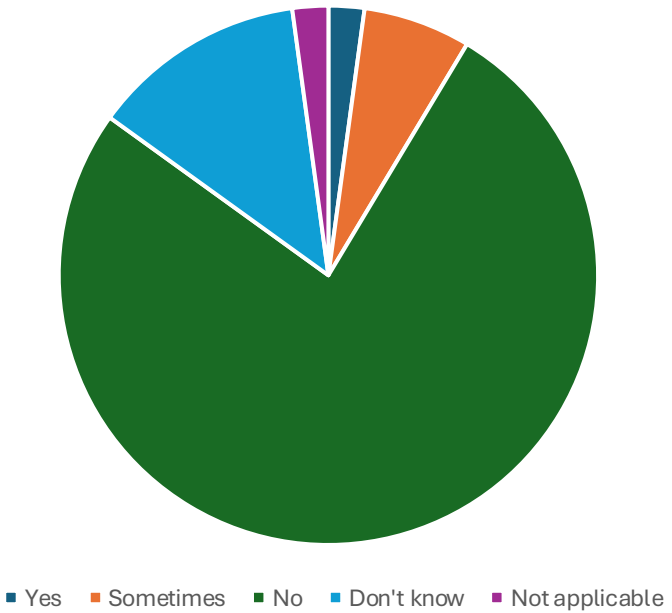
“I just want a basic education for my son so he can get a job in the future” – PC Engagement session

“Seems to be worse. Senior managers seem to set a culture of just not replying at all” –PC SEND Survey

Q36 Were amendments made to your child or young person’s plan following their annual review?



SEND Services has improved over the last 12 months?



Leaders actively engage and work with children, young people and families



Meaningful engagement with families is seen as a major concern. Examples of engagement are often linked to when something has not worked e.g. changes to ECO process

In the SEND survey parent carers expressed no confidence in leaders listening to children's young people and families and acting on what they hear. Families are not seeing a direct link between their feedback and changes to services.

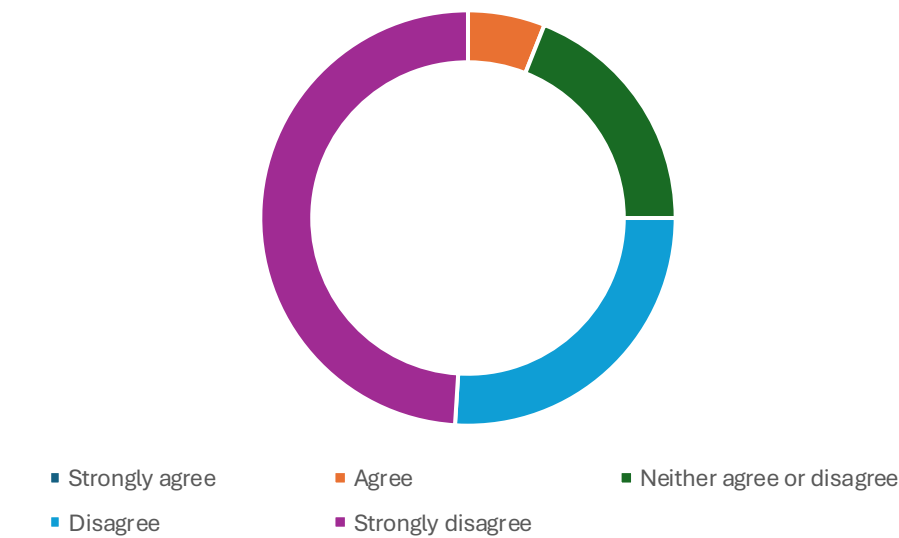
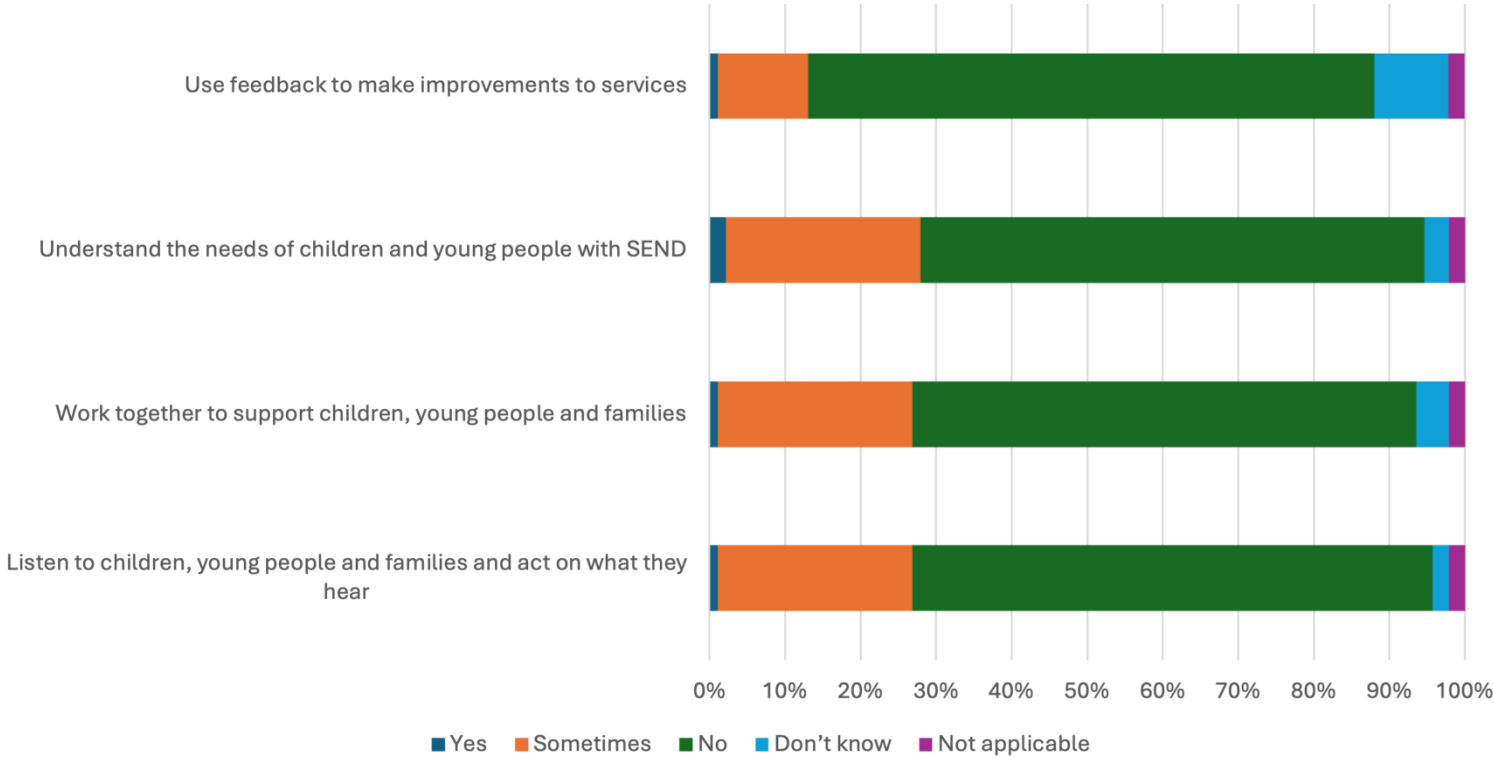
Leaders are meant to review the processes to check they are working effectively. Parents do not feel this is happening effectively and parents do not see consequence associated with this.

Parents described a system where they often struggle to get any form of communion or basic questions answered.

Families reported feeling unheard, and unsupported particularly in critical times such as key stage transfer, and placement breakdowns.

Leaders actively engage and work with children, young people and families

I feel heard by policy making organisations and service providers



“Based on our experience over the last 12 months, we do not feel that SEND services in Surrey County Council are functioning in a way that meets the needs of children and families. We do not feel that children, young people, and families are listened to in any meaningful or effective way, or that concerns are acted on appropriately.” - PC SEND Survey 2026



Leaders have an accurate, shared understanding of the needs of children and young people in their local area



Parents questioned the accuracy and reliability of council evidence and data as it does not reflect their current lived experience.

There is a strong feeling from parent carers and Family Voice Surrey that the scale of the issues within the SEND system is greater than currently recognised and acknowledged by leaders.

Parent carers attending sessions and completing surveys have highlighted that many families are struggling to engage for a range of reasons including overwhelm, time dealing with systems that are hard to navigate and a lack of feeling anything will change.

Concerns about incorrect recording of children's addresses/locations and difficulties tracking children also point to problems with the accuracy of information held by services and raise safeguarding concerns.

Parents felt that individual cases and recurring themes are not always taken seriously and the root causes are not being looked into and addressed so improvements are not implemented or sustained.

Leaders have an accurate, shared understanding of the needs of children and young people in their local area



“We do not feel that there is adequate understanding of the complexity of SEND needs, particularly where a child’s difficulties are not immediately visible in an educational setting, despite clear evidence of significant need. The impact on our family has been extremely severe. I have had to take time away from work in order to advocate for my child and manage the demands of the process.” – PC SEND Survey 2026

“I’ve not has a single phone call to check my child in alive in 12 months” – PC Engagement event

“It feels like services are struggling to exist/function. They are oversubscribed and under resourced and what is primarily being sought and consulted on are efficiencies. Work together to support children, young people and families – Sometimes It seems to be mostly one service pushing responsibility for provision delivery/ funding to another where possible.” - PC SEND Survey 2026

Leaders commission services and provision to meet the needs and aspirations of children and young people, including commissioning arrangements for children and young people in alternative provision



We hear from parents on a regular basis who report extreme challenges with getting alternative provision under Section 19 in place when a child is unable to attend school. There are regular disputes between schools and the LA over who should fund it during which the child receives no provision.

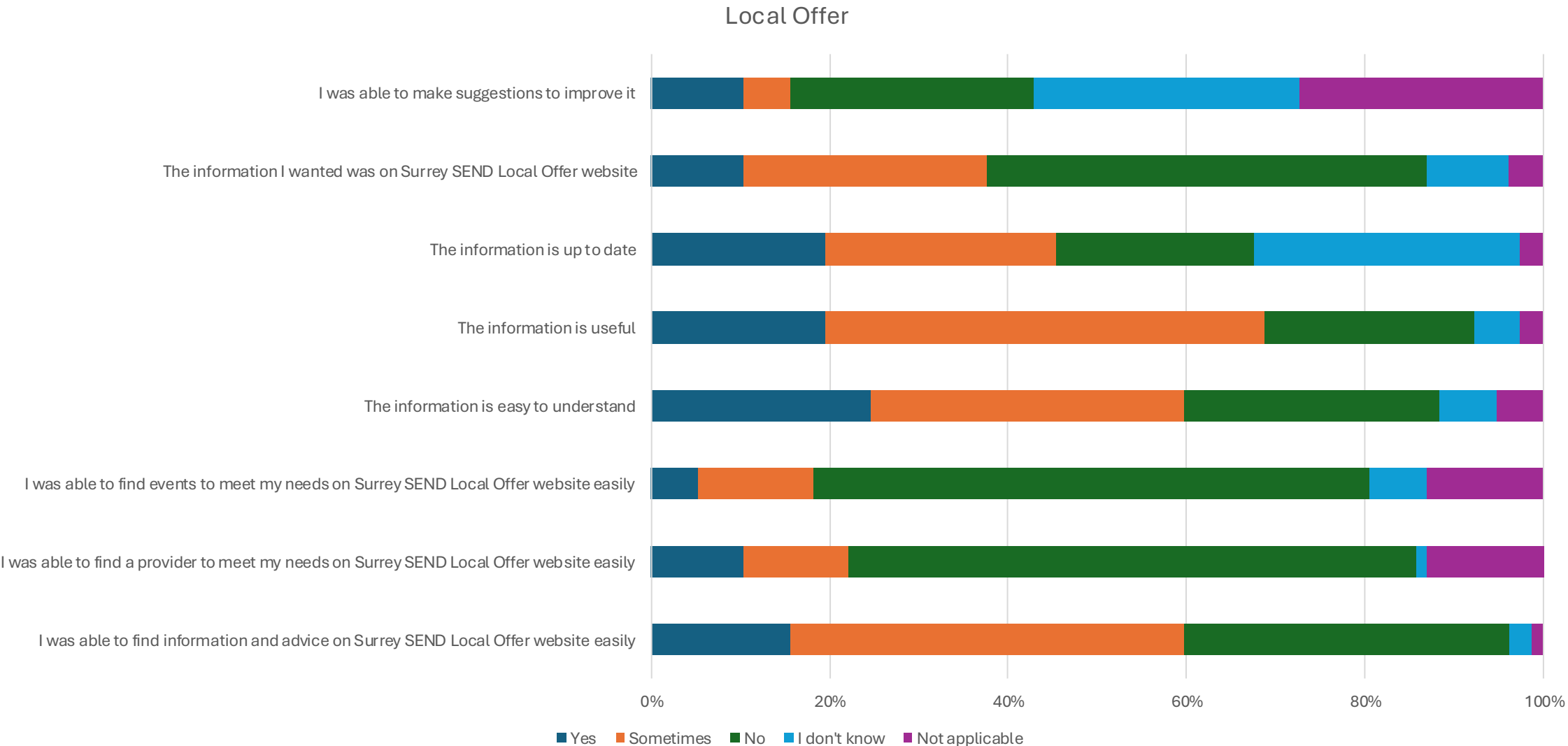
Many children and young people are on long term alternative provision packages where they should be on EOTAS but the LA often has a inconsistent understanding of EOTAS and how to offer a suitable package.

Extreme challenges over delays in funding has occurred this year – many families who had provision agreed at MATD then found out late in July the financial agreement had not been completed which left many children with no provision for September and caused a lot of unnecessary stress and uncertainty for families.

A step forward this year was when the DPS list was made available to parent carers after many concerns raised over the lack of transparency there was. However, there are many concerns over the DPS list being too narrow and providers often unsuitable for the varying needs of children which leads to inappropriate provision that is often inaccessible.

There is a recurring theme between the disconnect of what children need and what Surrey is willing to consider. Funding and capacity are seen as continued barriers.

Leaders commission services and provision to meet the needs and aspirations of children and young people, including commissioning arrangements for children and young people in alternative provision



Leaders evaluate services and make improvements

Although there is a lot of work being undertaken, parent carers report that they are not seeing or feeling any improvements on communication or positive impact to their journey.

When new systems are put in place the review element to understand if it is having true impact on the ground is not being executed effectively.

Parent carers value engagement events and sessions with decision makers and honest and transparent feedback and information.

Leaders don't consistently co-produce or communicate new systems or processes with parent carers despite stating that they should be part of the decision-making process. An example of this is the recent changes to the ECO communication process not communicated at all to parent carers, leaving many feeling confused and disappointed.

Leaders do not take on board learning from case reviews. Parent carers have expressed concerns that learning from the Sara Sharif case has not been applied with multiple parents reporting documents for their children going to the wrong address as records have not been updated following repeated information on changes.

Parents described complaints processes as ineffective, including complaints being rejected or downgraded. Parents discussed receiving compensation but the actual underlying issues from complaints not being resolved.

Parents felt they have to use escalation routes can be lengthy, expensive and exhausting, with families sometimes needing external bodies, solicitors, mediation, tribunals or judicial review to pursue support.

Leaders evaluate services and make improvements

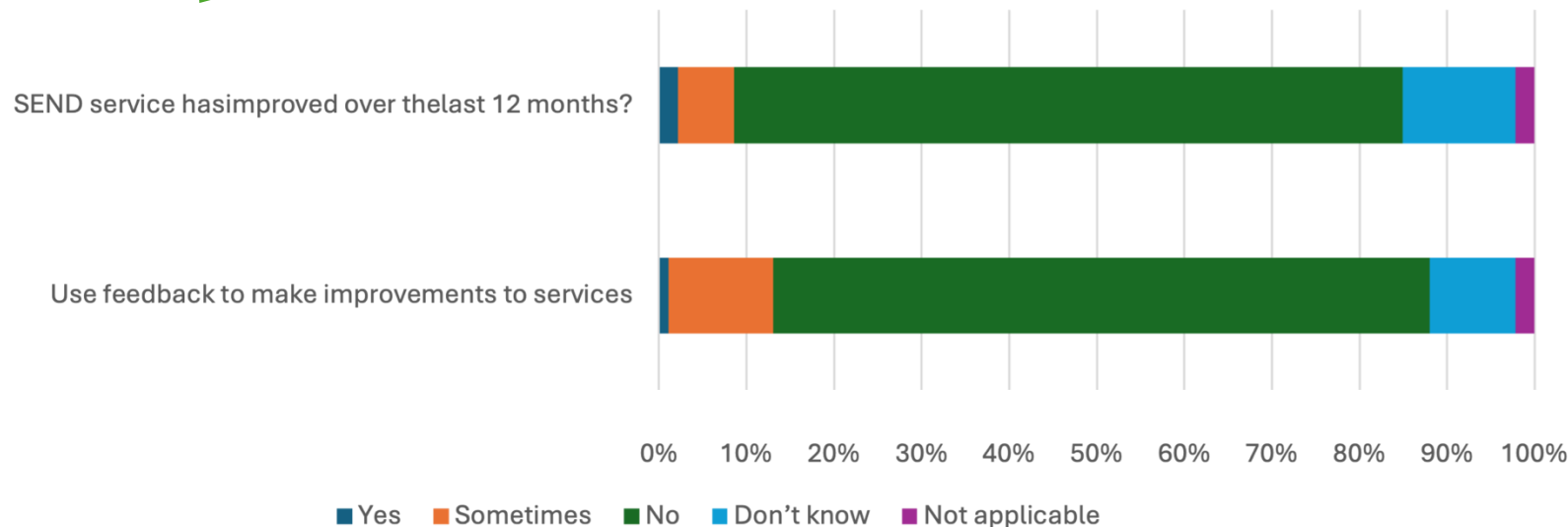


“We have no confidence that SEND services have improved over the last 12 months. Our experience has been of sustained difficulty, escalation rather than resolution, and a lack of appropriate support at critical times.” – PC SEND Survey 2026

“I don’t know what to do next, I’ve escalated it to the highest level and am still hitting a brick wall” – PC Engagement session

“Capacity is always the issue” – PC SEND Survey 2026

“I had different experiences with each child in school, but I can see improvement and hope the school will continue on this path” – PC PINS Survey



Leaders create an environment in which effective practice and multi-agency working can flourish



The evidence suggests that effective individual practice exists but is constrained by organisational systems and processes.

Participants repeatedly distinguished between good, committed professionals and wider systemic barriers.

Multi-agency working does not always appear to result in joined-up communication with families; for example, meetings may take place without parents being informed of the resulting decisions.

Different services appear to have communication and information-sharing difficulties, contributing to delays and uncertainty.

Complex processes and multiple layers of communication can make it difficult for professionals to act quickly and for families to know who is responsible for what.

Parents' experiences suggest that the system needs to create greater space for professional judgement, collaboration, direct communication and accountability, rather than relying on families to navigate organisational barriers themselves.

Leaders create an environment in which effective practice and multi-agency working can flourish



“Seems to be worse. Senior managers seem to set a culture of just not replying at all.” Parent carer - SEND survey 2026

“Our dedicated SENCO is evaluating whether she is staying in her job on a termly basis” - PC Engagement session

“Capacity is always the issue” - Parent carer - SEND survey 2026

“Surrey don't listen to young people or parents. They don't want to help, just to save money.” – PC SEND Survey 2026

“We’ve had 4 case officers in the last 3 months” – PC Engagement session

The comments in the SEND Survey made it evident that any good practice such as by individuals, schools or L-SPA is overshadowed by negative experiences. For examples areas in the survey which were more positive reflected comments about over areas of the system which were ineffective