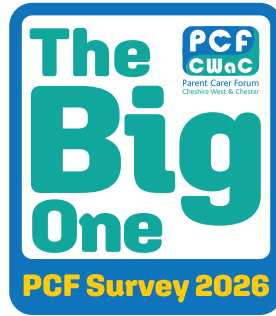


**PCF Cheshire West & Chester  
Parent Carer SEND Survey  
Results Summary**



## Survey Results Summary

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# Opening Statement

**As Chair of the Parent Carer Forum, I am incredibly proud of the number of families who have contributed to this year's survey. Your willingness to share your experiences, insights, and time is invaluable, and I would like to extend my sincere thanks to everyone who took part.**

Since our last survey was published in 2024, there have been several significant local and national developments. Locally, the Local Authority and Integrated Care Board have undergone inspection by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission, and Cheshire West and Chester has taken important steps towards becoming a more SEND-inclusive borough. Nationally, a General Election has led to a new government and the announcement of the Schools White Paper on SEND reform. This report outlines how your voices have contributed to these developments, and how the findings from the 2024 survey have been used in our ongoing work with councillors, Members of Parliament, the Local Authority, and the Integrated Care Board to influence meaningful change.

This report also enables comparison across our

2022, 2024, and 2026 surveys. It highlights areas where concerns remain persistent and require continued focus and investment, as well as areas where improvements have been made and where families are experiencing effective support.

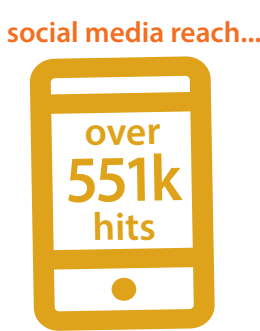
As a reminder, the Parent Carer Forum is a parent-led organisation. We are independent and do not work for either the Integrated Care Board (ICB) or the Local Authority. All of our members are parents or carers of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), and we are part of the National Network of Parent Carer Forums. Our role is to work in partnership with the Local Authority and the ICB to ensure that the voices and lived experiences of families are heard, valued, and reflected in decision-making. We are committed to influencing change at every opportunity, with the aim of making the SEND system easier to navigate for families and improving outcomes for children and young people.

Later in this report, we outline where we have helped to shape improvements and where further progress is still needed.

**by Julie Duff, PCF CWaC Chair**

## PCF engagement in the last 12 months

The Cheshire West and Chester Parent Carer Forum (CWaC PCF) represents families of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). We are a member of the National Network of Parent Carer Forums (NNPCF) and are funded by the Department for Education.



# Process of Survey

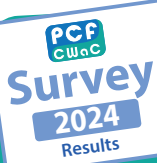
This year, we saw a record number of responses, with over 700 parents and carers taking part. This achievement reflects strong partnership working with the Integrated Care Board, Local Authority, and third sector organisations, all of whom supported the promotion of the survey across their networks. This was further strengthened by a wide-reaching social media campaign, with parents sharing the survey within their own communities. As a result, we have gathered a rich and representative body of feedback from across Cheshire West and Chester, providing a robust foundation to inform and influence future change.

The structure of the report remains consistent with previous cycles, allowing for meaningful year-on-year comparison. However, this year we have introduced additional questions focusing on inclusion and capturing the child's voice. These additions were designed to better understand how effectively

Cheshire West and Chester is progressing as a SEND-inclusive borough, and whether families feel that their children's views are being heard and valued.

The survey design enables detailed analysis, allowing us to explore specific areas of concern and generate insights that can inform Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for both the Integrated Care Board and the Local Authority. This ensures that your feedback directly contributes to accountability measures and service improvement.

Every single comment submitted was carefully read by our Parent Carer Forum representatives. It was important to us to fully understand and reflect the experiences and emotions shared. To support a balanced and objective analysis, we also made use of AI tools to help identify themes and ensure consistency in our approach.



## Looking Back at 2024 survey responses and how this has impacted actions and changes.

Following the 2024 survey, a number of key recommendations were identified to drive improvement across the SEND system. Since then, there has been clear progress in several areas, supported by strengthened partnership working and an increased focus on accountability.....

- **PCF represents parents' views at the SEND Partnership Board Meetings along with Senior leaders in Local Authority, Council and Integrated Care Board.**
- **PCF 2024 Survey results are written into the Accountability process of the New SEND Partnership Strategic Plan.**
- **PCF is represented at every Delivery Group meeting held across the borough. Parent's voices are also captured through a comprehensive programme of events every year.**

- **Extensive recruitment in key departments across the borough. PCF have been involved in the recruitment process, asking questions about empathy and lived experience.**
- **PCF are working in partnership with LA/ICB on better channels of communication.**
- **The Partnership now produce a monthly SEND newsletter that identifies key information.**
- **The Partnership has a Delivery Group that is focused on key channels of communication and how this can be improved.**
- **The Council now share all PCF communications, including Survey, Forum details and webinars.**
- **In February 2026 PCF co-hosted a hugely successful 'Preparation for Adulthood' event with the Local Authority with over 120 people attending.**

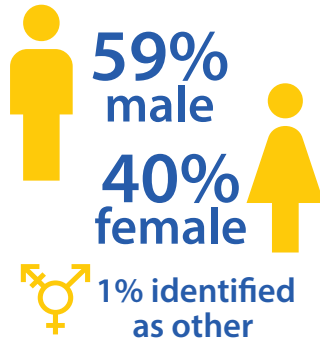
The progress from recommendations in our 2024 Survey Report can be found in more detail in Appendix 1 on page 21

# 2026 Survey results – Demographics

## of the children and young people with SEND from our survey results

**702**  
**Responses**

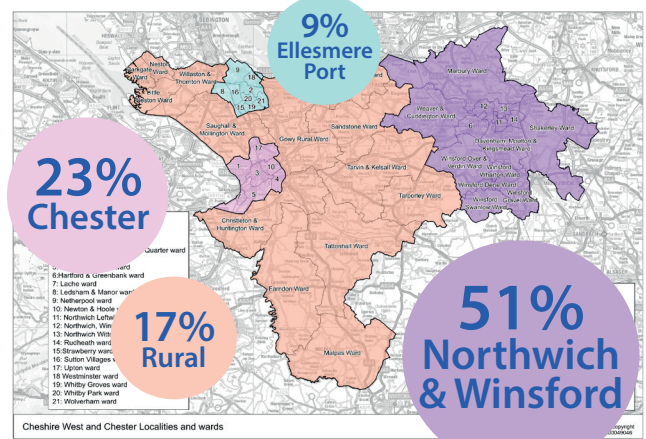
Compared with 369 people in 2024. 389 respondents didn't skip any questions. This is a 33% increase of respondees to complete the entire survey.



### Age Groups:



### Location:



## Type of educational setting attended

**32** Nursery/Pre-School

**217** Mainstream Primary School

**239** Mainstream High School

**4** Independent/Private mainstream school

**22** Mainstream Further Education College/Post 16

**23** Resource Provision within Mainstream School

**76** CWaC Special School

**9** Independent Special School

**8** Institution Special College/Post 16 Institution

### Out of CWaC Area

**9** Specialist School  
**2** Mainstream School

**11** Alternative Provision

**12** Elective Home Educated

**6** EOTAS (Education other than at school)

**1** Supported Internships

**5** Finished Education

**13** Other



**23** Enrolled at a Setting but **Unable to Attend**

**11** **Out of School/Not Receiving an Education/Not in Education**

**9** **Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET)**

# 2026 Survey results – Demographics

## of the children and young people with SEND from our survey results

### Type of needs your child/young person has been assessed as having or is in the process of being assessed for...

Tick as many as apply.

Autism.....	426
ADHD/ADD .....	332
Specific Learning Difficulty..... <small>ie. Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia</small>	171
Social Emotional Mental Health Needs .....	193
Developmental Trauma / Attachment Needs.....	43
Global Development Delay .....	64
Hearing Impairment .....	17
Visual Impairment .....	29
Medical Needs/Complex Health Needs.....	44
Physical Disability Moderate .....	28
Learning Disability .....	77
Severe Learning Disabilities .....	37
Sensory Processing Disorder.....	101
Speech and Language Impairment.....	111
PMLD - Profound & Multiple Learning Disability .....	11
Down Syndrome .....	9

Aside from the marked increase in response. The only marked difference to this chart from last survey is the increase of 23% of dual Autism/ADHD diagnosis.

**207**  
Autism 

**111**  
ADHD 

**225** respondents ticked both boxes

Autism 

ADHD 

On the Assessment Pathway .....	77
Hasn't been Assessed .....	64
Other .....	64

### Type of support in Education...

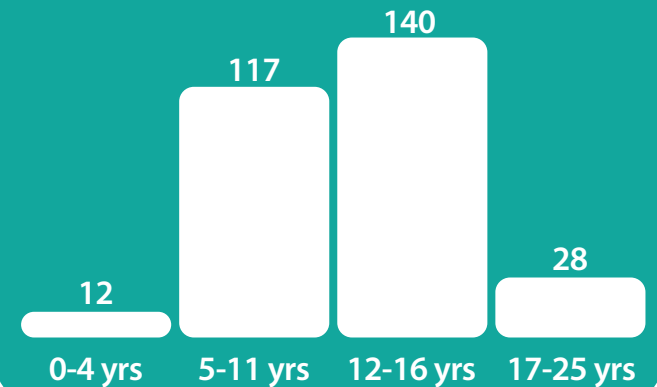
**7%** Currently going through the assessment process

**24%** SEN Support (stage prior to an EHCP)      **2%** Top-up Funding      **42%** Has an EHCP

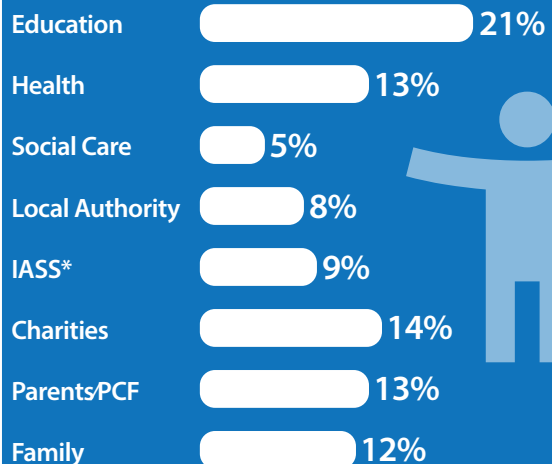
**?**  
**6%** Unsure

  
**18%** None of these

### Has an EHCP (Education, Health Care Plan) - age split



### I would go to the following for support and advice:



\*IASS - Information, Advice and Support Service

## 2026 Survey results

**We felt it was important to break down the feedback by service area to better understand families' experiences.**

Education Feedback

Social Care Feedback

Health Feedback

System Failures

Inclusion in Cheshire West and Chester

Our findings closely reflect themes identified in the recent Ofsted inspection, which reported that **services in Cheshire West and Chester “lead to inconsistent experiences and outcomes for children and young people with Special Educational Needs.”**

This inconsistency is clearly reflected in the voices of families. Many describe education settings as a safe and supportive environment where their children are understood and valued. Others, however, report feeling unheard, with their children's needs not fully recognised or met.

### Education Feedback

Some parents spoke very positively about the support provided by individual schools and staff. In particular, SENDCos were frequently recognised for their commitment, expertise, and advocacy on behalf of children and families. Transitions to high school, when well-supported by both the SEN Team and school SENDCos, were described as reassuring and successful. Annual reviews were also valued when they were thorough, collaborative, and focused on the child's needs.

Virtual schools and colleges were highlighted for their inclusive approach, actively involving both parents and children in setting meaningful targets and outcomes. Overall, examples of strong practice included schools taking a proactive approach offering tailored interventions and encouraging children to play an active role in shaping their own goals.

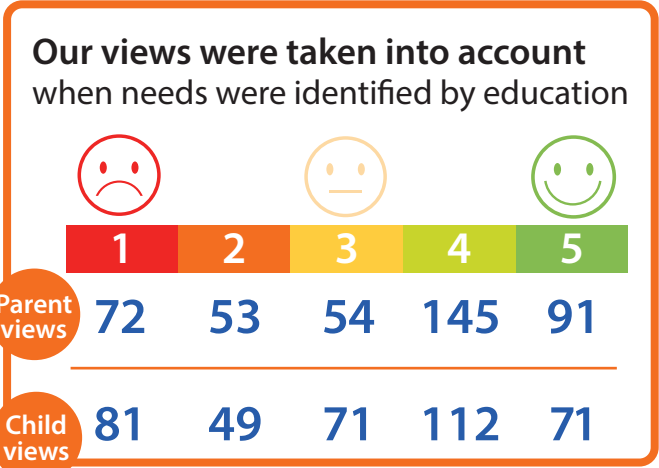
**“The experience and confidence of the SENDCo at my son's primary school supported me as a parent and my son's dad in having a positive experience.”**

**“We keep trying to cope on our own. We have tried some of the services listed and it's not been very helpful because we get passed around. SENCO at school has been the best source of info and support for us”**

**“Transition to high school with the help of the SEN Team and school SENCO was very positive, with the change in support/funding agreed and the enhanced transition, the experience we dreaded was a positive one!”**

# Education Feedback

However, alongside these positive experiences, many parents reported significant challenges. Schools were often criticised for not providing adequate support, failing to implement recommended strategies, or dismissing children’s needs. A lack of suitable education settings particularly smaller, inclusive high schools for academically able children with SEND was a recurring concern.



### My child’s needs were identified by Education

**57% Positive    30% Negative**

---

### Education understand my child’s needs

**47% Positive    34% Negative**

Survey results in full detail..  
see Appendix 2 on page 22

### My child’s needs are met by Education

**42% Positive    41% Negative**

---

### I am involved in setting targets for my child’s Education

**49% Positive    31% Negative**

Parents described instances where agreed plans or interventions were not followed through, resulting in unmet needs and growing frustration. Some felt their concerns were not taken seriously, especially where children masked their difficulties or were achieving academically. A lack of training and understanding among some school staff, particularly around neurodivergence was also highlighted.

As a result, many families described the need to continually advocate or “fight” for appropriate support, with some schools perceived as reluctant to apply for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) or make reasonable adjustments.

## My experience of the EHCP Needs Assessment:



# Social Care Feedback

## Key Themes

Parents' experiences of social care were largely characterised by difficulty accessing support and inconsistency in provision.

- **Access and Eligibility:** Many families reported high thresholds for support, with some being told they did not meet criteria despite clear and significant needs.
- **Lack of Proactivity:** Social care was often described as reactive, becoming involved only at crisis points or after persistent advocacy from parents.
- **Communication and Listening:** A common concern was that parents and children did not feel heard, with reports of limited follow-up and engagement.
- **Inconsistent Support:** While some families had positive experiences with individual social workers, the overall system was described as under-resourced, fragmented, and inconsistent.
- **Respite and Short Breaks:** Access to respite remains a significant concern. While some families described short breaks as a vital support, others reported services as unreliable, insufficient, or unsuitable for children with more complex needs.

**"Social care and respite and support socially is just not available or accessible to me. It is not something that has ever been offered even when my own well-being and my own health is suffering due to my caring responsibilities."**

**"We gave up totally with social services after three years of incompetence."**

**"Social care aren't meeting the requirements."**

**"We have no input from social care and so far it seems like they are only prepared to take any action at the very last minute unless I press for it, or when they absolutely have to."**

**I find it easy to access services from Social Care**



**39% Negative**



**10% Positive**

**My child/young person's needs are regularly monitored and assessed by Social Care**



**20% Negative**



**12% Positive**

**My child/young person's needs are met by Social Care**



**18% Negative**



**13% Positive**

**I am involved in setting targets and outcomes for my child/young person**



**14% Negative**



**16% Positive**

## Social Care Feedback

Regarding Communication about my Child/Young Person from Social Care



13% Positive



42% Negative

My child/young person's needs are met by:  
**short breaks**



31% Positive



49% Negative

**"We battled and jumped through so many hoops but finally found an excellent social worker... However the lack of interaction between agencies is still infuriating."**

**"Short breaks is a lifeline, the money he receives is used for horse riding and a drama group. We'd be lost without this funding."**

**"We are crying out for respite services for SEND services for children with complex needs who attend specialist settings and still require one-to-one support."**

## Direct Payments

Feedback on direct payments presents a mixed picture, highlighting both their potential to transform lives and the significant barriers families face in accessing and sustaining them. Many parents report limited understanding of the system or difficulties securing support, with some refused despite clear need. For those who do receive direct payments, the administrative burden particularly around recruiting and managing personal assistants (PAs) can be overwhelming, compounded by an ongoing shortage of suitable PAs. While a small number of families describe direct payments as enabling greater independence, access to activities, and vital respite, others experience the process as inflexible and challenging, with annual reviews often described as a "fight."

My child's needs are met by  
**Direct Payments**



26% Positive



51% Negative

**"It's a fight with his direct payments every single year even though nothing changes,"**

**"Direct payments review this time was exceptionally good. Really looked at my daughter's needs and aspirations."**

**"We have been waiting for his assessment for a very long time without support,"**

**"Receive Direct Payments but cannot find a PA. The stress and rejection for my child when they leave makes them think it's them."**

Delays and workforce shortages further impact families. These experiences underline the urgent need for a more accessible, flexible, and sustainable direct payments system.

# Health Feedback

Our findings in relation to health services closely mirror those identified in the recent **Ofsted inspection, which noted that “waiting time is too long, this is particularly the case for mental health services, neurodevelopmental assessments and where community paediatricians have identified possible complex needs.”**

Families consistently reported significant challenges in accessing health services. The most prominent issue was long waiting times for assessments, therapies, and specialist support including ADHD and autism assessments, Children & Young People’s Mental Health Services (Previously CAMHS), occupational therapy (OT), and speech and language therapy (SALT). Waiting periods were often described as lasting months or even years.

**“ARFID\* support desperately needed...CAMHS did not reply to me - service is obviously overstretched ”**

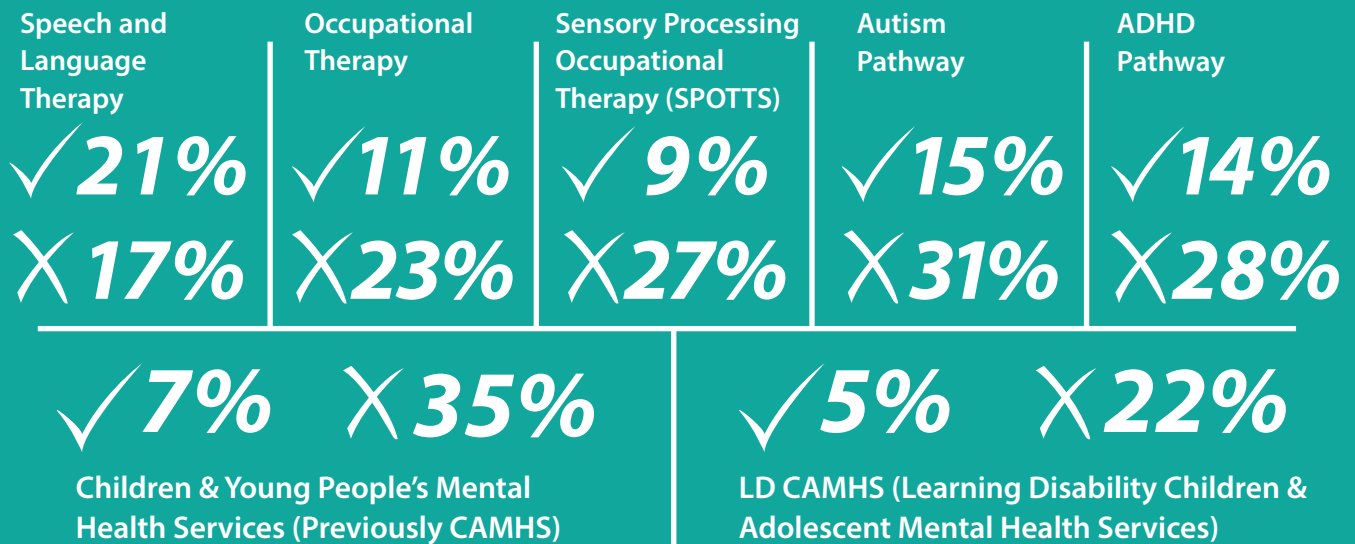
\*Avoidant, Restrictive Food Intake Disorder (ARFID)

I find it easy to access Health Services for my child/young person



**“When I have sought support I’m just told there is little point referring to camhs as waiting lists are so long they only see the most severe cases”**

## My child/young person’s needs are being met by:



**“I feel after diagnosis you are discharged and left to it, if you need paediatrics support again you go back on a waiting list. The system is broken for this. My daughter may need ADHD medication within this next year, and I’ll have to re-apply with the school to see someone and the waiting is 12 months plus. Also, I feel there should be check-ups every 2-3 years.”**



Survey results in full detail.. see Appendix 2 on page 22

**“...Despite having a very complex need child in a specialist I’ve never had any contact or information.”**

## Health Feedback

Many parents felt that the system relied heavily on their persistence, requiring them to continually chase referrals, appointments, and follow-ups. This raised concerns that families who are less able to advocate for themselves may be at risk of being overlooked.

# 39%

*of respondents*

would go to Health Services for support and advice

I feel confident that my child/young person's needs will be met when preparing for or transitioning to adulthood



17%  
Positive



46%  
Negative

There were also concerns about a lack of ongoing support following diagnosis. Families frequently described being discharged from services without clear next steps or practical support, and then facing further delays if re-referral was needed. Barriers to access were also highlighted, with reports of referrals being rejected, delayed, or subject to strict eligibility criteria, sometimes resulting in families being passed between services without clear direction.

**“My son has not been seen by anyone since his diagnosis”**

**“Services are very disjointed and heavily rely upon parents joining them up”**

**“My child had had no support since her autism diagnosis in 2024”**

PCF  
CWA  
Survey  
2024  
Results

Looking Back at 2024 survey responses and how this has impacted actions and changes.

**A new pathway and profiling tool, ‘Knowing ME’ has been co-produced with parents and is currently being rolled out across the Partnership.**

The “Knowing ME!” Neurodiversity Profiling Tool currently being developed across Cheshire and Merseyside.

This work focuses on creating a more neuro-inclusive way to understand children and young

**KNOWING ME**  
NEURO - INCLUSIVE PROFILING TOOL

A Guide for Parents and Carers



Cheshire and Merseyside  
Health and Care Partnership

beyond  
Children and Young People's  
Transformation Program

people — recognising strengths, needs and lived experiences. The aim is to support earlier conversations and enable more personalised, strengths-based support.

# System Failures



Families are often telling us that the system is broken. We wanted to reflect what this statement means to families in Cheshire West and Chester and offer some summaries and recommendations.

## 1. Lack of Listening

Many parents report that their views are not listened to unless they relentlessly challenge or complain. The system is described as reactive, only responding to crisis or persistent parent-led advocacy.

**“This whole system is a false economy as only listening to parents when they challenge and complain takes up resource from everyone involved.”**

**“It took me two years for my worries about my child to be listened to properly. This isn’t good enough.”**

**“You block every single avenue. Everywhere we’ve tried to turn we’ve been rejected or ignored or passed from dept/ dept or just told to wait for years.”**

## 2. Delays, Waiting Lists, and Gatekeeping

Long waiting times for assessments, support, and services are a major issue. Parents describe being passed between departments, rejected referrals, and delays that cause harm.

## 3. Poor Communication and Lack of Joined-Up Services

Services are described as fragmented, with poor communication between education, health, and social care. Parents often have to act as coordinators.

**“The services are not connected. I never even knew there was an SEN team to contact. School are rubbish and don’t sign post to anything, I have to sign post them most of the time.”**

### How I feel regarding Communication about my Child/Young Person from:

#### Education



46%  
Positive



36%  
Negative

#### SEN Team



22%  
Positive



48%  
Negative

#### Social Care



13%  
Positive



42%  
Negative

#### Health



39%  
Positive



32%  
Negative

## System Failures

### 4. Inconsistent and Inadequate Support

Support is often described as inconsistent, under-resourced, and not tailored to individual needs. Some schools and professionals are praised, but most experiences are negative.

**"Plans are not followed, interventions are not delivered, what teachers say they are going to do is not done, empathy and understanding is not there which has broken the trust of myself and my daughter towards the school."**

What are the gaps and barriers for your child accessing services?

Top 15 Keywords from gaps & barriers feedback in size order...

waiting lack  
time support  
access being  
services  
parents school  
help needs assessment  
provision child communication

### 5. Barriers to Complaints and Accountability

Complaints procedures are described as difficult to access, unclear, and rarely lead to meaningful change. Parents feel complaints are ignored, skirted around, or handled internally with no independent oversight.

**"You are complaining to the people who the complaint is about. They investigate themselves; how is this fair or justified? Whichever way you want to look at it, the system is not there to support you as a parent or to support the child. Legal timescales are never met, you don't get a sorry, they continue to break the law, they have no one to answer to, complaints process is not independent and nothing changes."**



Survey results in full detail..

see Appendix 2 on page 22

I have found the complaints procedure easy to access:

Education



31% Positive



51% Negative

Social Care



27% Positive



47% Negative

Health



31% Positive



40% Negative

## System Failures

### 6. EHCP Process and Funding Issues

The EHCP (Education, Health and Care Plan) process is described as complex, overwhelming, and often falling outside of the statutory guidelines. Parents report delays, vague plans, lack of accountability, and a need to fight for every step.

**“The EHCP process is complex and overwhelming, and families often need significant experience or support to navigate it. Securing an EHCP for a child with SEND in a mainstream school is particularly difficult. Education settings do not meet all the needs set out in an EHCP. Even though they are bound by law.”**

### My experience of the EHCP Annual review process



**“EHCP not updated as per notes and changes made.”**

**“Annual reviews were a waste of time and just a pen pushing exercise.”**

### 7. Impact on Families and Children

System failures lead to trauma, stress, and burnout for families. Children are left without support, excluded, or forced to fit into a system that does not accommodate their needs.

**“My daughter is really struggling. She is failing school due to lack of support. She struggles in our home due to the delays in a OT assessment. She isn’t prepared for adulthood at all.”**

Parents overwhelmingly report system failures across education, health, and social care. These include lack of listening, delays, poor communication, inconsistent support, barriers to complaints, and a broken EHCP process. The impact is significant stress, trauma, and unmet needs for children and families. Addressing these failures requires joined-up, proactive, and accountable services that listen to families and act on their needs.



Survey results in full detail.. see Appendix 2 on page 22

**EHCPs, Annual Reviews and more feedback...** see Appendix 2 on page 22

# Inclusion in Cheshire West and Chester

In May 2024 Cheshire West and Chester Council passed a motion to become a SEND inclusive borough. We asked our families what good inclusion looks like to them, here is what they said.

**Parents define good inclusion as a holistic, person-centred approach where children and families are listened to, respected, and supported to participate fully in all aspects of life. This requires accessible environments, tailored support, acceptance, and proactive, well-trained staff. True inclusion is not just about being present, but about belonging, thriving, and being valued for who you are.**

**“My child should be able to partake in activities that any other child can do. Those activities should be accessible.”**

In light of Cheshire West and Chester becoming a SEND inclusive borough since we ran our last survey in 2024. We felt it was important to ask families what good inclusion looked and felt like to you.

**“Staff should be trained in neurodiversity and SEND, show empathy, and be proactive in making adjustments. Consistent, positive, and accountable staff are valued”**

**“Trained staff, small groups, low social demand.”**

**New Question for 2026**

**Does your child/young person feel included in their:**

**Education**



**50% Positive**



**36% Negative**

**Community**



**48% Positive**



**35% Negative**

**“Good inclusion looks like my child being understood as an individual, with their needs anticipated and supported without stigma. It feels calm, respectful, and collaborative. For our family, inclusion means being listened to, kept informed, and working together so my child can feel safe, confident, and able to thrive.”**

## Good inclusion for families involves the following key elements:

### 1. Understanding and Support:

Environments where staff and leaders demonstrate empathy, understanding, and make necessary adjustments for children with special educational needs (SEN) or neurodiverse conditions. For example, responsive swimming teachers and supportive indoor climbing teams were highlighted as positive experiences.

### 2. Specialised Activities:

SEN-specific activities and tailored provisions, such as alternative education settings, specialist swimming lessons, and disability-positive youth groups, are appreciated for their ability to meet the unique needs of children.

### 3. Community Engagement:

Families value inclusive community activities such as church groups, volunteering opportunities, and charity-supported programs that foster a sense of belonging and provide positive experiences.

### 4. Accessible and Affordable Options:

Financial support, such as community connections and grants for funding specialist lessons, is crucial for enabling participation in activities. Families also appreciate affordable and accessible extracurricular options.

**“Supportive, inclusive, positive and accountable.”**

**“A system where our daughter is understood for her individual needs. Where she is fully supported in areas of need quickly before reaching crisis point.”**

### 5. Smaller, Calmer Settings:

Smaller group sizes and quieter environments are preferred, especially for teenagers and children who struggle with sensory overload or social anxiety.

### 6. Proactive Inclusion Efforts:

Schools and organisations that actively involve children in activities, provide opportunities for socialisation, and ensure they are not left out due to their needs are seen as inclusive.

### 7. Collaboration with Families:

Families value when schools and community groups work closely with them to understand and support their child's needs, ensuring they feel included and supported.

### 8. Consistency Across Settings:

Inclusion is most effective when it is consistent across education, community, and other areas of life, allowing children to feel supported and valued in all aspects of their lives.

## Child's voice

Feedback from parents highlights a consistent concern that children's voices are not always meaningfully included in the identification of their needs, particularly for those who are non-verbal or experience communication challenges. Many families described the significant role they play as advocates for their children, yet felt their insights were not always fully recognised or valued by professionals. Communication barriers linked to age, anxiety, or conditions such as autism, ADHD, and learning disabilities further compound this issue, making it harder for children to express their needs and for those needs to be accurately understood. Alongside this, parents reported highly inconsistent experiences across education, health, and social care services, with some professionals providing strong, child-centred support, while others were perceived as dismissive or overly focused on processes rather than individual needs.

Parents emphasised the importance of strengthening professional training, improving communication and collaboration across services and developing more inclusive approaches that actively capture and reflect the child's voice. There is a clear call for earlier intervention, better recognition of hidden needs such as masking, and systems that are more accessible, responsive, and built on trust ensuring that children and families feel heard, understood, and supported at every stage. It is clear that when it works and there is joined up communication where both parents and children felt heard the outcomes are far better.

Here are examples that highlight collaboration between parents, children/young people and professionals.

### 1. Positive School Engagement:

**"Current setting asks our son for input all the time. He is able to have open and honest conversations about what he is struggling with, and they encourage self-advocacy."**

**"TAF personnel and pastoral care personnel at the school have been fantastic. My concerns are not about individuals. The issues are with the system. Everyone is pushing in the same direction."**

### 2. Health and Education Professionals Listening to Children:

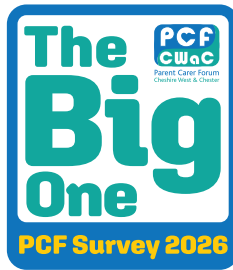
**"Both healthcare and educational professionals have listened to our child. They are very able to communicate in the right conditions, which have been helpful in this instance."**

### 3. Incorporating Child's Views in EHCP:

**"Once identified and assessed for EHCP, my child's views were incorporated."**

### 4. Hospitals Listening to Children:

**"Hospitals listen to my child during appointments."**



## Survey Conclusion

**In conclusion, this report highlights the critical challenges and systemic failures faced by families navigating the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) system in Cheshire West and Chester. While there are examples of good practice and progress in areas such as co-production, culture change, and communication, the survey results reveal persistent issues, including delays, inconsistent support, poor communication, and barriers to accessing services. These challenges have left many families feeling frustrated, unheard, and unsupported, with significant impacts on their well-being and their children's development.**

**The declaration of Cheshire West and Chester as a SEND-inclusive borough is a positive step forward, but true inclusion requires meaningful action, accountability, and sustained commitment to change. Families have clearly articulated what good inclusion looks like: a system that listens, respects, and supports children and families, enabling them to thrive in all aspects of life. Strengthening professional training, improving communication, and fostering collaboration across services are essential to achieving this vision.**



## Next Steps



### Drive Meaningful Change

The findings of this survey will serve as a cornerstone for driving meaningful change within Cheshire West and Chester's SEND system. These results will be integrated into the Key Performance Indicators of the Cheshire West and Chester SEND Partnership Strategy and Action Plan, ensuring that the voices of families directly shape future priorities and improvements.



### Actively Engage

With significant national reforms on the horizon, we will actively engage with Members of Parliament, councillors, and other decision-makers to ensure that the needs and experiences of Cheshire West families are represented at every level. Our focus will remain on fostering a culture of co-production, accountability, and transparency, while advocating for early intervention, accessible services, and a joined-up approach across education, health, and social care.



### Amplify Voices

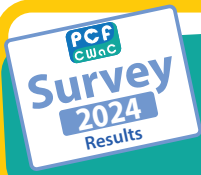
The Parent Carer Forum remains dedicated to amplifying the voices of families and working collaboratively with the Local Authority, Integrated Care Board, education settings, and other stakeholders to drive meaningful improvements. This report serves as a foundation for reflection, learning, and action, and its findings will inform the Cheshire West and Chester SEND Partnership Strategy and Action Plan. Together, we can build a system that is truly inclusive, proactive, and responsive to the needs of children and families, ensuring that every child has the opportunity to reach their full potential.



### Continue to Challenge

This report is not the end of the journey but a call to action. Together, we will continue to challenge systemic barriers, champion the voices of families, and work towards building a truly inclusive borough where every child and family feels supported, valued, and empowered to thrive.

## You Said - We Did.... Recommendations from our 2024 Survey



Looking Back at 2024 survey responses and how this has impacted actions and changes.

### 1. Develop a new Co-Production Charter

This includes Ensuring PCF are represented at top table & commitment to hearing parents voices for decision making regarding current and future SEND services, outlining Service Level Agreements & Accountability Measures

**PCF represents parents' views at the SEND Partnership Board Meetings along with Senior leaders in Local Authority, Council and Integrated Care Board.**

**PCF 2024 Survey results are written into the Accountability process of the New SEND Partnership Strategic Plan**

**PCF is represented at every Delivery Group meeting held across the borough. Parents voices are also captured through a comprehensive programme of events every year. See our website for more details.**

**PCF Membership and Terms of reference was reviewed in September 2024**

### 2. Culture Change Commitment

Establishing a commitment to culture change where parents and children are prioritized in decision making. A culture where staff demonstrate empathy and respect towards parents and children. Provide staff training on co-production & ensure professionals have the right knowledge and expertise to inform, advise and support families.

**The Partnership have co-produced The Pledge, this is a set of rules that all parties have adhered, this is currently in the process of being rolled out to all areas of the partnership. Extensive recruitment has also taken place in key departments across the borough. PCF have been involved in the recruitment process, asking questions about empathy and lived experience. Culture change is beginning, not completed.**

### 3. Communication

A Task & Finish Group to review all SEND team communication channels. Identifying areas for improvement & implement strategies to enhance transparency in service delivery. Establish collaborative communication channels with PCF and all sectors, sharing PCF Communications among established networks

#### Task & Finish Group - In progress

**PCF are working in partnership with LA/ICB on better channels of communication.**

**The Partnership now produce SEND newsletters that identify key information about waiting times, compliance rates and team updates. You can find copies on the Live Well website.**

**The Partnership has a Delivery Group that is focused on key channels of communication and how this can be improved.**

**The Council now share all PCF communications, this included the PCF Survey, Forum details and webinars.**

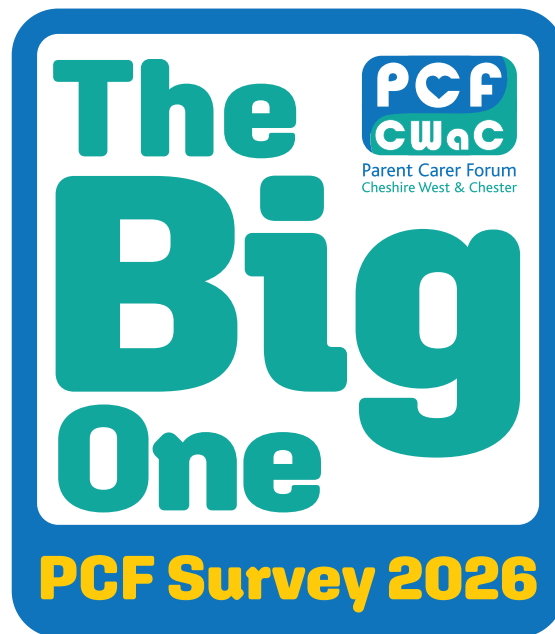
**Communication continues you be the biggest issue that parents face. It is the most consistent issues that has been repeatedly been raised across all of our surveys and reflected in the 2025 Ofsted report; *"Leaders across the partnership should improve communication to professionals, parents and carers and children and you people, especially in the local offer, so that available services, their strategies, actions and impact are better understood."***

### 4. Key Pieces of work

Set up workstream in collaboration with PCF & ICB to address issues surrounding "waiting well" process. Re establish the Preparation for Adulthood event for parents, carers & young people.

**A new pathway and profiling tool, 'Knowing ME' has been co-produced with parents and is currently being rolled out across the Partnership. This should improve the "waiting well" process.**

**In February 2026 PCF co-hosted a Preparation for Adulthood event with the Local Authority. The event was hugely successful with over 120 people attending. The plan is to continue to run these events every year.**



### Survey Data & Further Analysis

is available on our website.

<https://www.pcfcheshirewest.org/survey26>

You can keep up to date with all the PCF work by subscribing to our newsletters, following us on Facebook where we publish our blogs and share news

<https://www.facebook.com/pcfchwac>

or visit our website

[www.pcfcheshirewest.org](http://www.pcfcheshirewest.org)

Please feel free to get in contact if there is more information that you require.