

# HPCI Parent Carer Survey 2023

## Headline findings



# HPCI SEND Survey - Background

- In 2023, Herts Parent Carer Involvement ran its second annual survey for all families with a child or young person aged 0-25 with SEND in Hertfordshire. The survey closed in October 2023.
- Families were asked about their experiences during the 22/23 academic year, to gauge how well local services identify need, help meet that need, and support the improvement of outcomes for children with SEND.
- The questions are in line with the Ofsted / CQC Inspection framework to help inform future inspection and monitoring, and to help track year-on-year changes.
- 931 responses were received from across Hertfordshire, covering all age groups, a range of needs, and a variety of education settings.
- We are truly grateful to all those families who took the time to complete the survey – the scale of responses and the detail provided make it clear how important this topic is to parent carers in Hertfordshire.

# HPCI SEND Survey – Understanding the data

- The following slides set out the key findings from the survey.
- It is important to note that respondents only see questions that are relevant to them and the services they receive (based on the answers they give) – the survey automatically skips sections that are not relevant. For example, if the family says their child does not have an EHCP, the survey will skip to the next section. So, when looking at the percentages, it is important to also note the number of responses.
- While these slides set out the headlines, if you want to look at the responses to individual questions, these can be found by clicking [here](#).
- If you have any queries about the data or feedback to inform our next annual survey, please do email [contact@hertsparentcarers.org.uk](mailto:contact@hertsparentcarers.org.uk)

# What did we learn? – findings on one page

- There are clear levels of dissatisfaction with many services and concerns about the outcomes that are delivered for children and young people.
- In most cases, parent carers' views and experiences of SEND services in Hertfordshire have not improved in the last year.
- EHC Coordinators and/or EHCP administration continue to be the area of most concern for families, followed by Children and Young People's Mental Health services and the Educational Psychology service.
- Overall, the themes and feedback were consistent with those shared in the 2022 survey :
  - Concern about waiting times – for both assessment / diagnosis and also support / treatment.
  - Poor communications from services, and between services.
  - Inconsistency in meeting need.
- Many families continue to struggle to find information and support.

# Overall levels of satisfaction

- This was a new question added to the survey for 2023, which will give us a headline figure to track over coming years.
- Respondents were asked to rate their overall satisfaction with SEND services in Hertfordshire: **this averaged as a satisfaction rate of 3/10.**
- There were some small variations, for example, generally the older the child or young person, the lower the level of satisfaction.
- There were also some small geographical differences – parents in [DSPLs](#) 1 and 4 were on average around one point more satisfied than those in DSPLs 6 and 7.
- Looking at Educational setting – those with a child in a Herts special school scored an average of 3.5, those in mainstream with an EHCP scored an average of 3, and mainstream with SEN support scored an average of 4. Those whose child was excluded, or home educated (but not by choice) had a score of 1.

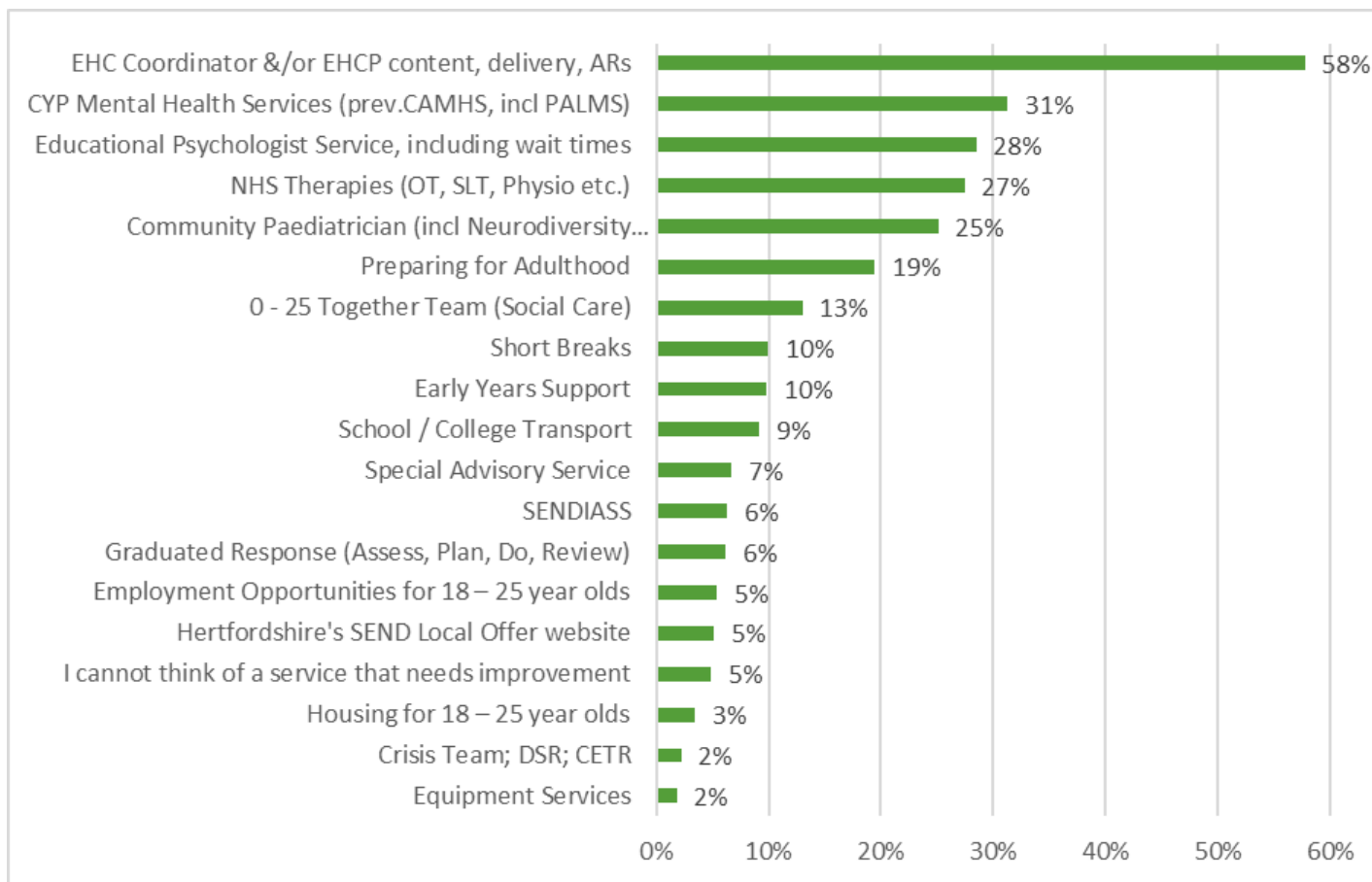
# Services most in need of improvement

In order to gauge how services are performing, respondents were asked to identify the top three service areas they believed to be in most need of improvement. 776 responses were received and the top five service areas identified were:

1. EHC Coordinator (previously SEN Officer) and / or EHCP content, delivery and annual reviews
2. CYP Mental Health Services (previously CAMHS). This includes PALMS
3. Educational Psychologist Service, including wait times
4. NHS Therapies (Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language Therapy etc.)
5. Community Paediatrician (including Neurodiversity assessment / diagnosis)

# Services in need of improvement – a fuller picture

Families were asked “Which three of the following Services do you feel need the most improvement or are you most worried about?”



# Rating services

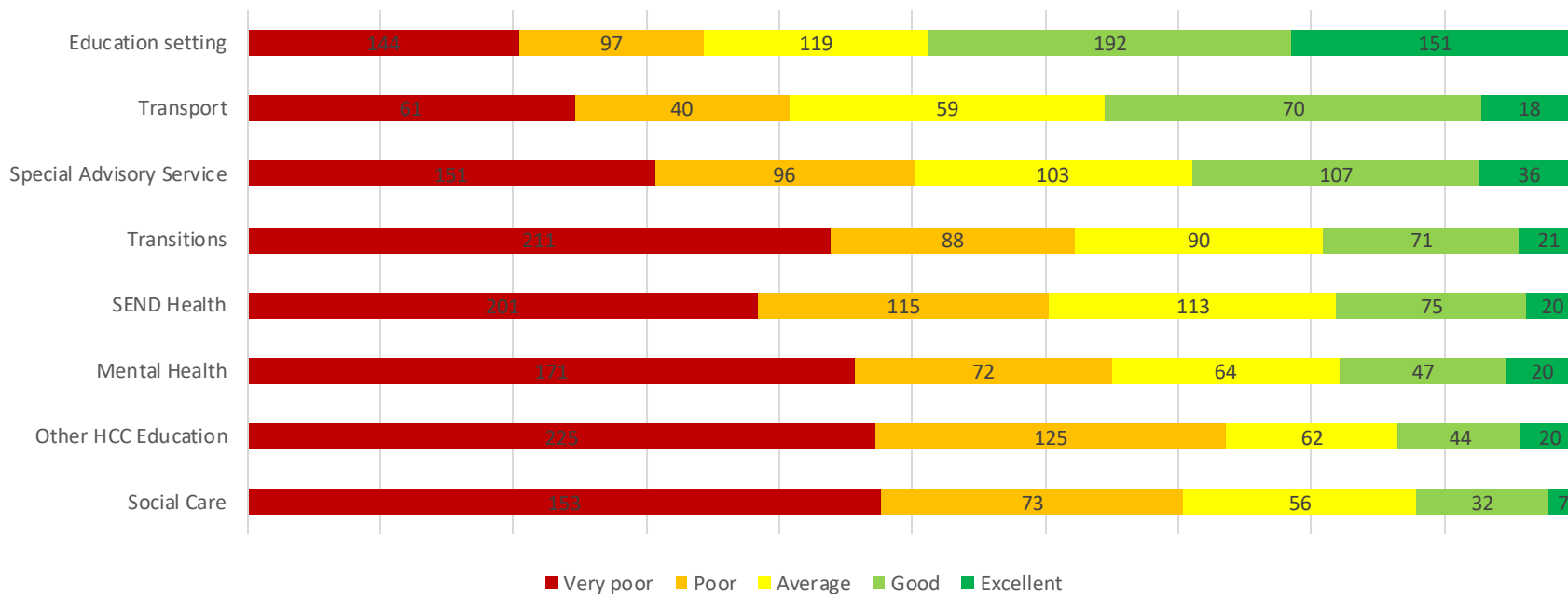
Families were asked to rate a range of Hertfordshire SEND services.

- **Staff in education settings** were scored highest, with 49% of responses providing “good” or “excellent” ratings (2%↑ from last year)
- **Herts school/college SEND transport service** – 35% rated “good” or “excellent” (3% ↓)
- **Special advisory service** - 29% rated “good” or “excellent” (1% ↓)
- **Managing transitions (e.g. to new education/health setting or a change in support)** - 19% rated “good” or “excellent” (1% ↓)
- **Herts SEND health services (e.g. therapies, special school nurses)** - 18% rated “good” or “excellent” (4% ↓)
- **Herts NHS Mental health practitioners** - 18% rated “good” or “excellent” (2% ↓)
- **Other HCC education support services** - 13% rated “good” or “excellent” (3% ↓)
- **Social Care 0-25** - 12% rated “good” or “excellent” (the same)



# Rating services – the data at a glance

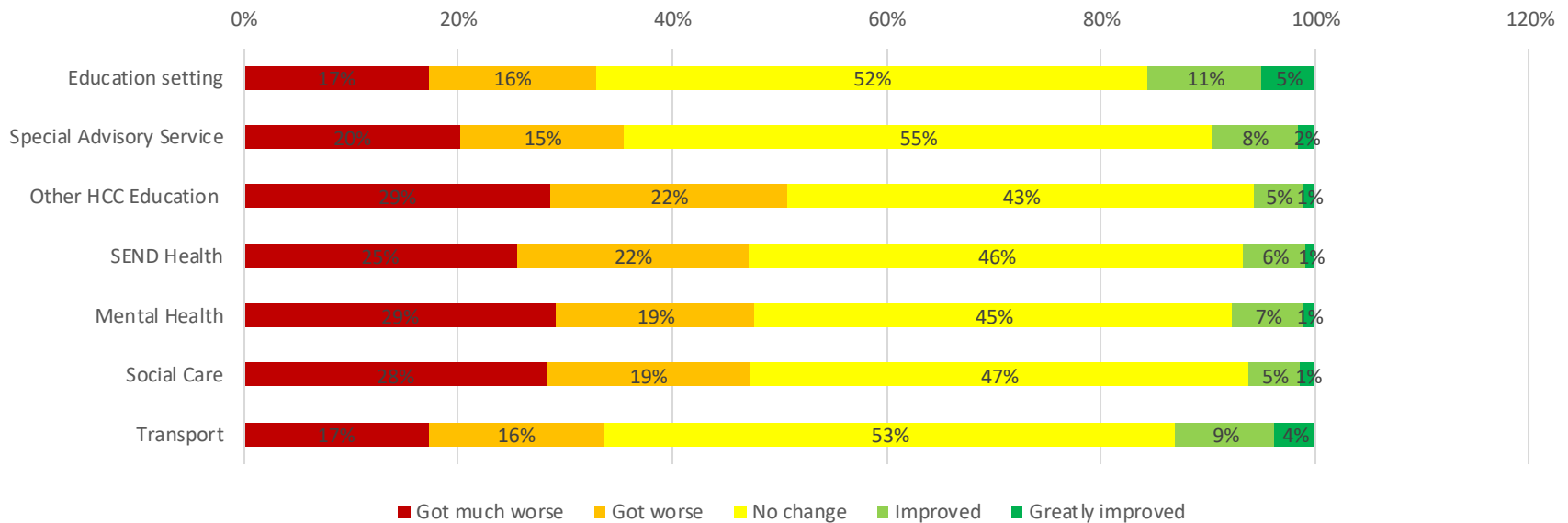
Families were asked to rate a range of Hertfordshire SEND services\*.



\* Between 767 and 773 responses were received for this section's questions, although many reported that the question was not applicable (these responses have been removed in the analysis above). After removing N/A, 703 responses were received rating staff in education settings. The social care rating is based on 321 responses. The Other HCC Education rating is based on 476 responses.

# Service levels – moving in the right direction?

- Respondents were asked if they were aware of any change in service levels over the last academic year. Across all questions, 'no change' received the biggest proportion of responses.
- Education and transport had the most 'improved'/'greatly improved' responses, but were still less than 20% in each case
- Other HCC Education support (51%) was the service with the most marked change for the worse (although mental health, health and social care were close behind).



# Working together needs more work

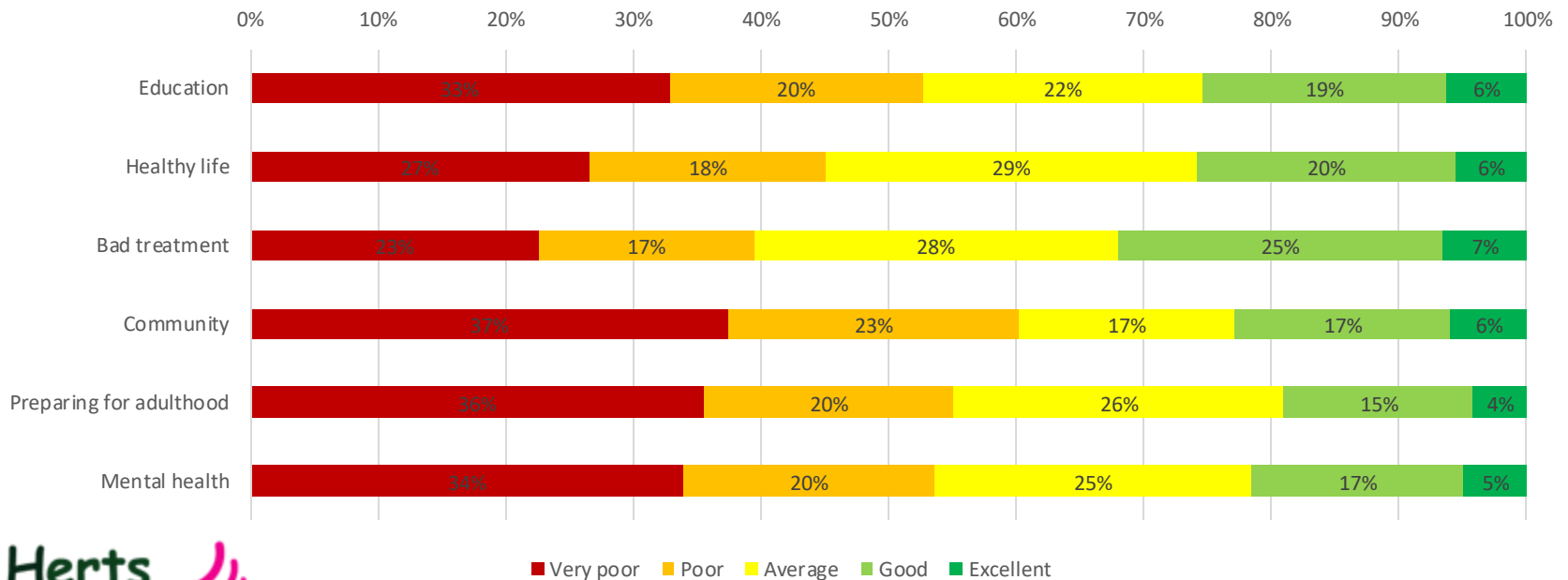
- Respondents were asked about how well they think different Hertfordshire SEND support services work together (i.e. Schools, Hertfordshire County Council, Health Services)
- Nearly two thirds (64%) of respondents rated this as 'Poor' or Very poor' (708 responses). This is an increase in concern from last year when the figure was 59%.

“They talk but there is no action - responsibility for actions seem to get passed around.”

“School find it impossible to get a response from Herts county council and when they do the information often is unhelpful [and] contrary to what I have been told as a parent. I don't think the nhs and county council talk.”

# What does this mean for outcomes?

- Families were asked how good Hertfordshire SEND support services have been at helping their child reach their full potential across a range of issues.
- 32% thought that services were good or excellent at protecting children and young people from bad treatment (e.g. bullying).
- However, more than 50 % of respondents rated educational progress, community participation, preparing for adulthood and good mental health, as 'poor' or 'very poor'.



# Support in Education Settings generally positive, when accessible

- More than half (54%) of respondents regarded schools as good/excellent at **identifying** a child or young person's SEN need(s), which is an increase from last year.
- Over half of respondents (53%) rated staff as good/excellent at **understanding** the SEN need(s).
- Just under half (48%) believed that staff were good/excellent at **meeting needs**.
- The survey asked families with children aged 5-18 if their child was able to access their school or setting for all the hours they should attend – nearly 20% said that they were not (out of 560 responses)
- Many reasons given related to anxiety, emotionally based school non-attendance, and the setting being unable to meet needs.

“Ideally he needs more support, but they aren't able to provide it”

# Education, Health and Care Plans

380 respondents said their child had a current EHCP in place.

## Meeting needs?

- More than half of respondents said that their child received support whilst waiting for assessment of needs, which is a marked improvement on last year.
- Once a plan had been issued 45% said their provision was being fully or mostly met (and 14% in full), although just over a quarter said less than half of the plan's provisions had been delivered (and 10% not at all).

## Meeting Deadlines?

- A third of respondents reported annual reviews not being carried out within statutory deadlines (very similar to last year).
- Where amendments to the Plan were needed, 75% reported the deadline for a final version was missed. Well over half of those people then waited over six months for the final version (47 of the 225 respondents to this question waited over a year).
- Comments suggest it's often the next annual review that prompts the previous year's EHCP to be issued. There were also multiple comments about updates only being issued after complaints or as part of a more formal process.

# EHC Co-ordinators (previously SEN Officers)

- Communication with EHCCOs is rated poorly, with 57% (of 280 respondents who received communication) saying it is poor or very poor.
- The same percentage (57%) also had concerns about the usefulness of replies from the team (244 responses).
- The survey asked about the HCC process of escalating issues where families haven't received a response, and how well this is being followed – at each stage of escalation, most respondents said the response deadlines were missed.

“They change so frequently it is never the same person from one [Annual Review] to the next. It can take months to find out the new named contact, and months again to get a response”

# Health services

The time spent waiting for assessment, treatment and services continues to be a significant area of concern for families, as it was last year.

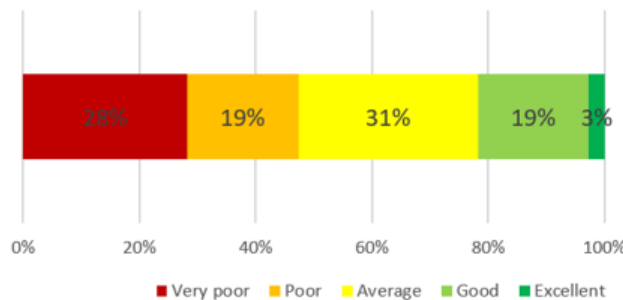
- Of the families who received an assessment or diagnosis within the 22/23 academic year, more than three quarters had been waiting for over a year.
- Comments from families mentioned the pressure to “go private” and waiting times of 3 or 4 years in some cases.
- Of those who started treatment during 2022/23, 60% had waited over a year.
- Only 30% (of 196 respondents) said that they received guidance, support or signposting while waiting for treatment or therapy.
- Two thirds of 352 respondents reported that health services were average, good or excellent at meeting their child’s medical needs.
- 40% said that services were poor or very poor at giving clear advice to others (e.g. school staff or EHCCos) to support their child’s needs.
- 58% of those whose child has an EHCP or was being assessed for one, said that they did not receive clear reports from Health to inform the plan.



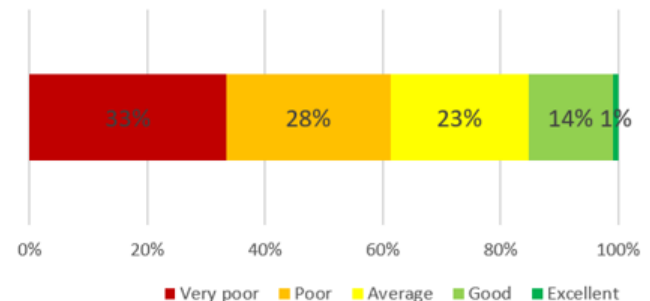
# Social Care (0-25 Together service)

- The 0-25 Together service received one of the poorest ratings from families, with 70% rating the service as “very poor” or “poor” (321 responses).
- Waiting times: Dependent on answers to previous questions, people were asked about the **total time** spent on a waiting list for a social care needs assessment or about the **time spent waiting so far**. These questions were answered by a small number of people (32 + 29), but in each instance around a third reported waiting over a year.
- Meeting need: There are concerns about meeting the needs of the child (nearly 50% rate this “poor” or “very poor”) and meeting the needs of the wider family (60% rate as “poor” or “very poor”).

How good were the 0 – 25 Together service at meeting your child’s needs during the last school year?



How good were the 0 – 25 Together service at meeting the needs of your whole family during the last school year?



# Understanding needs

- Parent carers generally felt they have a good understanding of their child's needs, with 86% of respondents stating their understanding is good or excellent (928 responses).
- There were interesting findings in terms of where families highlighted that they considered their child to have an undiagnosed need or condition.
- 199 (42%) families reported that their child has undiagnosed ADHD.
- Other undiagnosed conditions highlighted include (in order of frequency):
  - Anxiety
  - Emotional / mental health conditions
  - Sensory Processing disorder
  - Specific learning Difficulty (dyslexia etc)
  - Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA)
  - Eating Disorder
  - Trauma
  - Foetal alcohol syndrome

# Understanding where to find support

- Only 15% of responders found it “very easy” or “easy” to find information about how to get help (although this is a 4% increase on last year).
- However, 57% reported that it was “difficult” or “very difficult” (663 responses).
- 72% of respondents said that they had heard of the Local Offer, which is an increase of 20% from last year.
- Of those who had used the Local Offer website (373 responses), 72% said that they were able to find what they were looking for, although only 20% said that they felt more able to support their child after using the website.

# Listening to views

Comments on the survey make it clear that families want to be heard. And the Ofsted/CQC inspection report commented on issues around capturing the voice and experiences of children and young people with SEND in Hertfordshire.

- **Education settings:** 80% of 361 respondents said that staff were good or excellent at listening to their views, and 75% said they were good or excellent at listening to the views of their child (where the child was old enough, willing and able).
- **Social Care:** 33% of 89 respondents said that social care staff were good or excellent at listening to their views, and 39% said that they were good or excellent at listening to the views of their child.

# Quick wins?

Families were asked if they had suggestions for quick wins to help drive improvement, however it was clear from the comments that while families had suggestions for improvement, these cannot be delivered quickly. As with last year, the majority of suggestions related to **staffing** (especially training) and improved **communications** and more **support** for families to navigate the system.

“Communication-just answer the email or call. Offer the information I need without me having to involve a lawyer”.

“A better understanding of what is available. Don't assume parents know what all the acronyms and departments are. Help when a parent has no idea what help they need and before they are at crisis point.”

Listen to parents and carers and work with them, they know their children best

# Views on HPCI

- 54% (370 people) had not heard of HPCI.
- Of the 318 who had heard of the forum, 55% found our communication of our priorities Good or Very Good
- 72 % felt the information they received from HPCI was the same or better than last year.

# Using our survey findings

- We have already been using the 2023 data to inform our ongoing discussions with SEND services across Hertfordshire.
- Last year's annual survey clearly highlighted families' concerns about EHCPs and we have been told that this information was used to secure the additional £5m annual funding that was agreed last July (now increased to £7m) to grow the number of frontline HCC SEND staff by 80 officers.
- The 2022 survey information was also used extensively as part of the Ofsted / CQC inspection, and we will use the 2023 data to inform future monitoring.
- We will also draw on the feedback about HPCI itself, to help us understand how we can best represent Hertfordshire parent/carers of children and young people with SEND.

To find out more about HPCI and free membership, please [visit our website](#).

For any queries, please email [contact@hertsparentcarers.org.uk](mailto:contact@hertsparentcarers.org.uk)

