



**Integrated
Care System**
Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin

Shropshire SEND Accelerated Progress Plan Parent Carer Survey Report

October 2024

About the survey

“We want all Shropshire children and young people with SEND to be healthy, happy and safe, and able to achieve their potential to lead a fulfilling life.

We want them to have, and to expect, the same opportunities in life as other children and young people.

We want them to thrive and live their best life.”

- In September 2024, the Shropshire SEND Area Partnership launched a survey to understand the experiences of Parent Carers who have neurodiverse children and young people (CYP), Parent Carers of children & young people with Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) and Parent Carers of children & young people with an Education, Health Care Plan (EHCP) or going through the Education Health Care (EHC) assessment process.
- The intention of the survey was to gather people’s experiences to measure the impact of the actions being taken as part of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Accelerated Progress Plan, against the baseline survey in October 2023
- There were 150 responses to the survey, which ran during September 2024. The survey asked about Parent Carers recent experiences.
- 105 responders were from Parent Carers of children & young people who required support related to neurodiversity, including Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).
- 15 responders were from Parent Carers of children & young people who required support related to Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN).
- 93 responders were from Parent Carers of children & young people with an EHCP or were undergoing an EHC needs assessment.
- As part of the survey Parent Carers were invited to add comments about their experience over the past 6 months. We received 183 written responses to this question in all sections, with a wide variety of comments. All responses have been analysed and shared with relevant teams. They have been categorized into themes.



Section 1
**Neurodiverse Children
and Young People**

Responses relating to Neurodiverse Children and Young People (CYP)

Of **105** responders we heard that a high number of Parent Carers and their children & young people had received support from:

- Education setting, school or nursery (64) 61%
- MPFT BeeU Service (50) 47.6%
- Autism West Midlands (40) 42.9%

Fewer responders had received support from:

- Educational Psychology (27)
- Early Help (21)
- SEND IASS (15)
- PACC Parent Carer Forum (15)
- SCHAT – Child Development Centre (15)
- BEAM (14)
- Social Care (13)
- Short Breaks (13)
- Woodlands (10)
- SCHAT – Health Visitors or School Nursing (9)
- Local Offer (8)

Responders were less aware of whether their children & young people had received support from:

- SCHAT – Health Visitors or School Nursing (9)
- Local Offer (8)
- SCHAT – Therapies (6)
- Early Bird Team (4)
- Empathy (2)
- Rising to the challenge (2)
- Preparation for Adulthood Navigators (1)
- Kooth (1)
- None of the responders were aware of whether their children & young people had received support from the Neurodiversity Practitioners, a new team which came into post in January 2024.

Responses relating to Neurodiverse Children and Young People (CYP)

Agree Disagree



Question: I think that I have a good understanding of the support available for my child or young person
Strongly agree/Agree 29%



Question: My child or young person has been able to access the support available to them
Strongly agree/Agree 16%



Question: My child or young person received the support that they needed
Strongly agree/Agree 12%



Question: Over the past 6 months, whilst my child or young person was waiting for a diagnostic appointment for ASD or ADHD, the support we received has helped
Strongly agree/Agree 14%



Ensure clarity about the support available

You said

- Around half the respondents indicated that they did not have good understanding of the support available. Many Parent Carers commented about the current long waits for assessments and a lack of support while they waited, with some stating that they had not been told about the support organisations highlighted in the survey. Lack of support for mental health needs and those with ND and Learning disabilities was highlighted.

We did

- Communication of the support offer is available on the Healthier Together Website and signposted from the Local Offer's [Support for neurodivergent children and young people 5-18 years](#)
- The 18-25 support page has been codeveloped with Parent Carers and with contributions and feedback from young people.
- The BeeU service are recruiting 2 assistant psychologists who offer support to families whilst a child is waiting for an ND assessment. We hope that these posts will be filled by May 2025 and to continue with the waiting list support when these posts are filled.
- Support is available via the Community and Family Hubs with all age autism advice sessions being piloted. SEND Early Help drop-ins have also taken place.
- Signposting to the Healthier Together website is shared via multiple forums, including SEND Newsletters to Parent Carers, Head Teacher briefing updates, SENCO feedback and NDP reports.

Next steps

- Continue to advertise the support offer available on the Healthier Together website to ensure Parent Carers are aware of this resource.
- Development of standard signposting and referral letters to ensure Parent Carers receive full and correct support information at point of referral and at conclusion of assessment.
- Work is continuing on the mapping of the universal offer for SEND (inclusive practice)

Ensure good quality support for early years and educational settings

You said

- Feedback indicates that the support offer from school is variable. Some Parent Carers commenting on teachers and teaching assistants lacking knowledge and schools not providing support whilst others praised the support provided by their child's school.
- None of the Parent Carers who completed this survey were aware of the work of the Neurodiversity Practitioner team employed by Shropshire Local Authority.

We did

- The three Neurodiversity practitioners are supporting 49 schools in Shropshire as part of a pilot project and will continue until at least summer 2025.
- The Partnership of Inclusion for Neurodiversity (PINS) programme is working across a 20 primary schools to provide further support for neurodivergent children and young people in schools.
- A training plan is in development to meet the needs of children and young people with ADHD in schools.
- The launch of the Shropshire Ordinarily Available Provision document (SOAP) and toolkit is designed to support Education settings in determining the SEN of children and young people and support available and to clearly define what schools might be expected to provide for children and young people with SEND. We have recruited Education Quality Improvement Advisers to work with the full range of settings to support quality improvements.

Next steps

- Continue to evaluate the outcomes of the Neurodiversity Practitioner pilot project and the PINS project and develop a plan to continue this work beyond its initial stages.
- Improve the communication between Parent Carers and schools, to ensure Parent Carers are aware of support being provided in school.

Ensure good quality support for Parent Carers

You said

- Respondents indicated that popular sources of support were Autism West Midlands and PACC. A smaller number mentioned Empathy and Oswestry SEN Group as good sources of support.

We did

- PINS includes support from Parent Carers, by Parent Carers, at the heart of the programme. Shropshire PACC is working with the pilot schools to set up a Parent Carer forum in each school.
- The Neurodiversity Practitioners (NDP) are working with Parent Carers, both within individual support for children and within school priorities, to enhance Parent Carer voice

Next steps

- The 5-18 ND assessment service specification has been amended to ensure that providers work closely with Parent Carer groups and voluntary sector organisations. Standard signposting and referral letters are being developed to ensure Parent Carers receive full and correct support information.

Ensure referrers know how to make good referrals which are accepted

You said

- Most respondents commented about the long waiting times, with a few commenting on difficulties being accepted. One response said that referral form for assessment too long and puts Parent Carers/professionals off.

We did

- BeeU have recently updated their referral process, including new referral forms which can be found in the 'getting more help' section of the [BeeU website](#)
- The Child Development Centre website has been redesigned to provide clear information about the service they do and do not offer.

Next steps

- Working with Parent Carers, the CDC team are close to completing requested flow diagrams for each of the ASD and Complex Medical and Developmental Needs pathways. These will be published before the end of the year including linking across to the Healthier Together maps for ND and SLCN and the Local Offers.

Avoid children & young people going into crisis whilst waiting for diagnosis by implementing robust approaches to manage risk

You said

- There were many comments about a lack of support for children and young people with ND who have mental health needs and for those with Learning Disabilities alongside their ND.

We did

- Within PINS some schools are being supported to understand and build empathy of how neurodiverse children can experience the world and emotions and what appropriate, needs-led support could look like.
- Supporting emotional resilience has also been included within the November Future in Mind training delivered to Shropshire schools.
- The BeeU Intensive Support Team have received funding to provide an extended offer for young people with autism and high levels of risk, such as an increased risk of admission to mental health hospital
- School Nurses support children and young people with ND including supporting Parent Carers to manage behaviour, dealing with puberty and changes and risk-taking behaviours.

Next steps

- Communicate the wider support offer from school nursing, social prescribing and the extended BeeU Autism and Learning Disability offer to Parent Carers, professionals and schools.

Ensure capacity of the diagnostic service meets the demands of the population

You said

- Waiting times for assessment are too long with children and young people needing to be at crisis to get any help. Some Parent Carers reported having to pursue a private diagnosis with subsequent problems accessing support after diagnosis and obtaining medication for ADHD

We did

- In April additional funding was given to ASD and ADHD diagnostic services across the age range. The expected reduction of waiting times for ND diagnostic assessments has, however, been impacted by recruitment delays and a large increase in referrals. This picture is being seen nationally as well as locally.
- In July the ICB agreed additional funding for the 0-5 ASD assessment pathway. The team have recruited 2 additional Specialist Nursery Nurses and are in the process of recruiting a further Speech and Language Therapy and ASD AHP/Nurse Lead to support the Paediatricians with assessment and diagnosis. The CDC team have completed 200 assessments since April, which is close to 100% more than the same period in 2023 through a waiting list initiative with the support of the wider Speech and Language Therapy and Paediatric teams.
- The additional capacity will not reduce the numbers of children currently waiting for an ASD assessment but does seek to balance current demand and capacity. This means that waiting times and numbers for the 0-5 age group should stabilise at the current levels.

Next steps

- The CDC team are seeking to procure some additional ASD assessment capacity from acknowledged private expert teams to meet their agreed target of assessments this year. This will be an option for Parent Carers to consider.

Section 2

Children and young people
with Speech, Language
and Communication Needs

Responses relating to children & young people with Speech, Language and Communication Needs

Of 39 responders we heard that a higher number of Parent Carers and their children & young people had received support from

- Educational Setting, school or Nursery (**30**)
- ShropComm NHS Trust Speech & Language Therapy (**20**)

Significantly fewer responders were aware of the following support for speech, language & communication needs;

- Education Psychology
- SENDIASS
- Shropshire Community NHS Trust Speech and Language Therapy Advice Line
- PACC
- Early Help
- Support from health visitor or school nurse
- Speech & Language Therapy training
- SSLIC Team
- Local Offer

None of the responders indicated they were aware of the following support

- Early Talk
- Talk Boost
- Shropshire's School Readiness Leaflet
- SCHAT Speech & Language Therapy Facebook page
- Stoke Speaks Out
- Speech Language UK Parent Carer Guide

Responses relating to Children and young people with Speech, Language and Communication Needs

Agree Disagree



Question: I think that I have a good understanding of the support available for my child or young person

Strongly agree/Agree 47%



Question: My child or young person has been able to access the support available to them

Strongly agree/Agree 40%



Question: My child or young person received the support that they needed

Strongly agree/Agree 40%



Question: Over the past 6 months, whilst my child or young person was waiting to see a speech and language therapist, the support we received has helped

Strongly agree/Agree 20%



Ensure clarity about the support available

You said

- Many Parent Carers did not know about all the support available such as the Speech & Language Therapy advice line which doesn't require a referral. However, those who had accessed the advice line praised its helpfulness.
- Many Parent Carers commented that they felt unsupported and had not received information about support offers. There was some positive feedback about individual therapist including "Therapist has done amazingly well with supporting my child couldn't ask for anything better".
- For children with complex needs or who are nonverbal, Parent Carers expressed concern about limited support available.

We did

- Mapping of the full SLCN support offer has been completed and is available on the Healthier Together Website and signposted from the Local Offers [Support for Speech, Language and Communication Needs \(SLCN\)](#)
- The service provides waiting time information in letters to Parent Carers and maintains a [current waiting time tool](#) on their website. Information is available on the Advice Line offer and signposting to the Speech and Language Therapy service's website and Facebook page.
- The ELSEC (Early Language Support for Every Child) project is working with Parent Carers in the targeted schools to share how they can be involved with supporting their child. A short 6 session training programme for Parent Carers about Speech, Language and Communication Needs and how to help has been developed and will be piloted this winter.

Next steps

- Communication of the support offer available on the Healthier Together website to Parent Carers, professionals and schools.
- Local Speech, Language and Communication practitioners and Parent Carer representatives are planning to meet this winter to share the resources that have been developed across the system to identify ways to support Parent Carers' access to these.
- There are plans to combine additional therapy appointments for children open to Speech and Language and the CDC ASD assessment pathways for children with complex communication and interaction needs.

You said

- Some Parent Carers commented that they were not included in the conversations between Speech and Language Therapy and school and too often plans were passed to teaching assistants who are not specialists. One Parent Carer commented that they were discharged from the service because school did not cooperate. Another commented that their child attended a Hub which was not supported by Speech and Language Therapy. However, one Parent Carer with a child with selective mutism commented that both the Speech and Language Therapy and school “have been amazing at supporting my daughter”.

We did

- The ELSEC (Early Language Support for Every Child) project commenced in September 2024 and provides additional support to targeted schools to meet the needs of children with speech, language and communication difficulties. ELSEC provides support for early years settings and schools to deliver TalkBoost
- Health Visitors have accessed Speech and Language UK training. The speech and language therapy team have recorded all their training videos so that these are now available for education practitioners, as well as Parent Carers and to join at times most convenient to them, and to re-watch as needed. A further training video about supporting resilience for children with SLCN has been developed.
- The Speech and Language Therapy team has piloted an outreach service for children with long term complex needs who are attending mainstream settings who might previously have been offered a place in specialist schools. The project has been evaluated with excellent feedback. As soon as the Speech and Language Therapy team is at full capacity this service will be extended to all areas of STW. For the moment it is continuing in Central Shropshire and North Telford.
- The Advice Line has been asked to support more than 300 Parent Carers or education practitioners from April to September. Our sense is that it is being well used.
- The stammering team has procured some visuals to support their work with children who stammer. The visuals are being shared with the Speech and Language Therapy team to consider which ones would be supportive for children with other SLC needs.

Next steps

- Education Quality Advisers are being trained to be able to deliver TalkBoost training to schools to provide wider opportunities to upskills their staff. Speech and Language Therapy colleagues have been invited to join a Hub Network meeting in January to discuss any SLCN training and support needs for children in our SEND hubs.

Ensure the capacity of the Speech & Language Therapy service meets the demands of the population

You said

- Over half of the feedback comments mentioned the long waits for the service with many stating they had been offered no support while waiting, poor communication and a feeling of being forgotten about. Some comments mentioned barriers to access and having to chase appointments.

We did

- A waiting list initiative took place over the summer which gave appointments to 271 children, initially helped to reduce the number of children waiting. It had a significant impact for children waiting the longest, but due to the referral rate it has not been able to be sustained and the numbers waiting have risen again.
- All referrers, families and carers receive an acknowledgement of the referral being accepted and at 25 weeks to confirm we know they are still waiting which includes links to access the website resources and the Advice line for support whilst they are waiting. We are talking with team about whether it would be possible to send a further letter at another specified time such as 52 weeks.
- The website has a predicted waiting time function from referral, a [current waiting time tool](#)
- All schools and early years settings are developing and publishing their locally available provision (now inclusive mainstream practice) for children with SLCN to provide early identification of need and evidence based early support. All education settings are able to access the video training on the Speech and Language Therapy website and via a call to the Advice Line. All the training is developed by the team with local settings in mind.

Next steps

- Changes to procedures have been put forward to improve communication including increased use of Therapist out of office function to alert the admin team immediately of the possible wait for them to respond to Parent Carers.

Section 3

Children and young people with an EHCP or going through the EHCP process

Responses relating to Children and young people with an EHCP or going through the EHCP process

Question: When the Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA) or annual review was requested, my CYP's wishes and aspirations for the future were recorded and captured in the application.
Yes/Mostly 62%

Question: Professionals accurately reflected my CYP's needs in their reports
Yes/Mostly 60%

Question: I felt listened to and included by the professionals involved in their CYP's assessment/review
Yes/Mostly 54%

Question: During the EHCNA/review process, I felt my CYP was included and well supported at their educational setting
Yes/Mostly 54%

Agree Disagree



Responses relating to Children and young people with an EHCP or going through the EHCP process

Question: My CYP's wishes and aspirations for the future were reflected in the plan
Strongly agree/Agree 50%

Question: I felt that the plan accurately described my child
Strongly agree/Agree 58%

Question: I felt that the EHCP meets my CYP's special educational needs
Strongly agree/Agree 42%

Question: The plan was delivered on time, within the expected timeframe.
Strongly agree/Agree 31%

Question: My CYP has received an annual review in the last 12 months
Yes 84%

Agree Disagree



Ensure that the SEN Team communicates with Parent Carers at every stage in the process

You said

- Ten responders felt that there was a lack of communication from the SEN Team. This meant they did not feel informed about the progress of their application. This was especially a concern when timescales were not going to be met. Three also mentioned concerns with high turnover of staff

We did

- The EHCP Team at the LA have introduced a communication policy where Parent Carers will be contacted at each stage of the process to keep them informed of progress and any delays.
- We continue to expand the use of an online portal for schools to streamline the communication between schools and the LA. Most primary schools have been added to the portal in the last 6 months.
- We are working to introduce an online digital platform that will make processes much more transparent for all people involved in the process, including Parent Carers and young people.
- There is now a policy to move away from a reliance of temporary and agency staff.

Next steps

- Ensure full implementation of the communication policy.
- Complete the implementation of the schools' portal.
- Continue to look at the range of online systems available and procure where necessary.

Ensure that everything possible is done to keep to statutory timescales

You said

- Timeliness continues to be an issue for amended EHCPs and for a smaller number of new EHCPs. 20 Parent Carers raised this as an issue.
- There are sustained high levels of needs and complexity within the population. We have seen a consistent increase in the number of requests for assessment, from 271 in 2021 to 902 in 2023 and the number of requests continues to be high. There is a backlog of plans already in the system, affecting the ability of the SEN Team to improve timeliness.

We did

- An Annual Review Recovery Programme has been implemented
- Internal processes are being examined and automated processes introduced where appropriate.
- Staffing has been reviewed and changes made to numbers and team structure, to support new processes and ensure quality during these changes.
- The number of very late new plans (30-40 weeks late) has been significantly reduced from 99 in January 2024 to 6 in October 2024.

Next steps

- Digitisation of the EHCP processes to improve automation and communication for processes, allowing staff to concentrate on completing quality EHCPs on time.
- A review of annual review processes will continue to impact on timeliness of amended plans.

Ensure that EHCPs meet our child's needs

You said

- A number of Parent Carers reported inadequate support, with complaints about the lack of specialist provision, insufficient training for school staff, and the need for more tailored support for children with complex needs

We did

- All EHCPs now go through a rigorous QA process. As a result, there has been a marked improvement in the % of initial and amended plans that are rated good or better.
- There has been a rollout of a considerable training package across education, health and social care with multiagency oversight to ensure that the advice feeding into EHCPs is of sufficiently high quality. Advice is now sought from education separately from the application process. This has already improved the quality of education advice.
- Social care and medical questionnaires are now routinely in use to ensure consistent input to EHCPs.

Next steps

- Continued application of the Quality Assurance Framework will maintain the quality of new and amended EHCPs
- Multiagency workforce training will continue to be embedded as 'business as usual'.

| EHCPs rated good or better | Feb 24 | May 24 | Aug 24 |
|----------------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| % Draft EHCPs | 59% | 86% | 94% |
| % Amended EHCPs | 77% | 98% | 91% |

Ensure that settings meet the needs of children and young people as specified on their EHCP

You said

- Five Parent Carers indicated that educational settings were not meeting the needs of their child or young person following their EHCP, and a further two suggested that schools were not listening to Parent Carers.

We did

- The launch of the Shropshire Ordinarily Available Provision document (SOAP) and toolkit is designed to support Education settings in determining the SEN of children and young people and support available and to clearly define what schools might be expected to provide for children and young people with SEND. We have recruited Education Quality Improvement Advisers to work with the full range of settings to support quality improvements.
- There is ongoing training within Education, Health and Social Care regarding writing good advice, and ongoing training and support for SEN Case Officers to ensure that EHCP outcomes are clear and measurable.

Next steps

- We continue to encourage all schools and settings to strengthen their graduated response to children and young people with SEND including support for mental health and emotional well-being. This will include evaluating the strength and consistency of provision currently available in mainstream education settings.

Ensure that annual reviews happen when they should and that EHCPs remain up to date

You said

- A number of Parent Carers reported that annual reviews were not being processed by the EHCP Team when they should and that amendments were late. A few also commented that outcomes on their child or young person's EHCP were not updated and were out of date.

We did

- Our duty, as the EHCP Team in Shropshire Council, is to review every plan at least every 12 months (6 months for early years). We acknowledge that there has been slippage in meeting this duty. We are looking to address this through implementation of an Annual Review Recovery Plan.
- Three new staff have been recruited. The EHCP Team are currently carrying out a review of annual review processes to ensure they are as efficient as possible and are appropriately prioritised to be completed within the statutory 12 months. We are working to improve our recording and monitoring systems. We are also creating a suite of co-produced new annual review guidance for key phase transition and preparation for adulthood.
- We have implemented a robust data monitoring system to ensure that annual review performance is clearly visible at Partnership Board level, to ensure that challenge and support is in place.
- We have improved our communication to keep Parent Carers and children and young people aware of the challenges facing the team and the steps that are being taken to address issues around timeliness of annual reviews and amendment of EHCPs

Next steps

- We recognise that the recovery plan is in its early stages and hope to keep everyone informed of our progress.

Further information

Further information about steps taken to address Shropshire's SEND Accelerated Progress Plan can be found here:
[app-6-month-review-november-2023.pdf \(shropshire.gov.uk\)](#)