

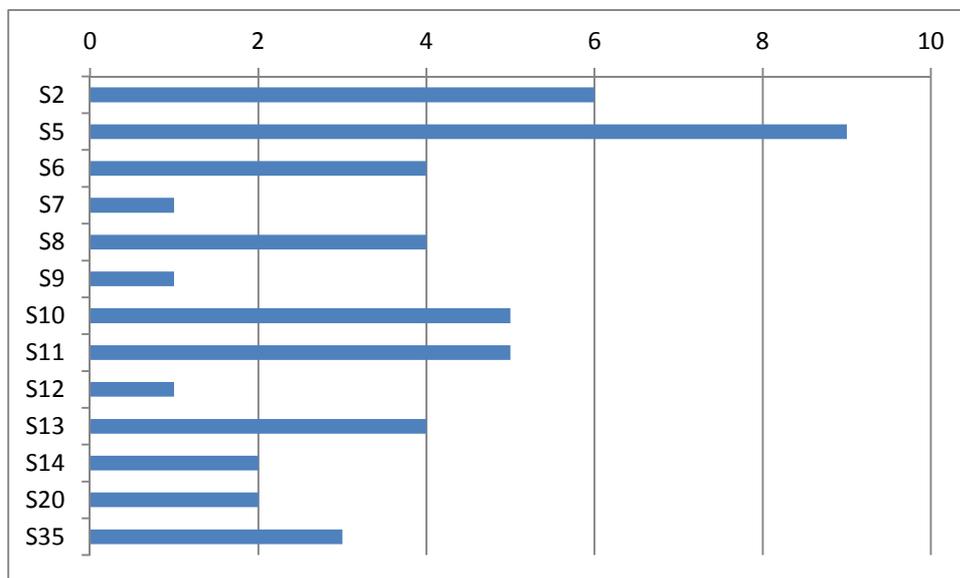
Members' survey 2014

1. Participants

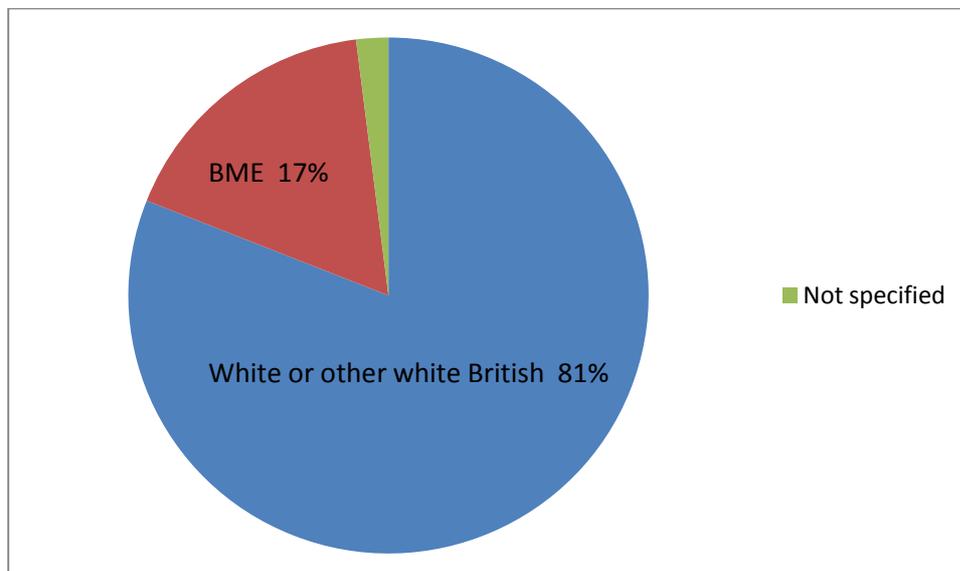
At the end of September 2014, Sheffield Parent Carer Forum had 904 full members (families) and 138 associate members (professionals and practitioners). The questionnaire was circulated to the full members (post or email) with the Autumn Newsletter. We received 48 responses; 34 of these were paper responses and 14 were online responses.

2. Postcodes and Ethnicity

For the first time we asked members to tell us about where lived (first part of their postcode) and their ethnic background. Most responses came from members living in S5 and S2.

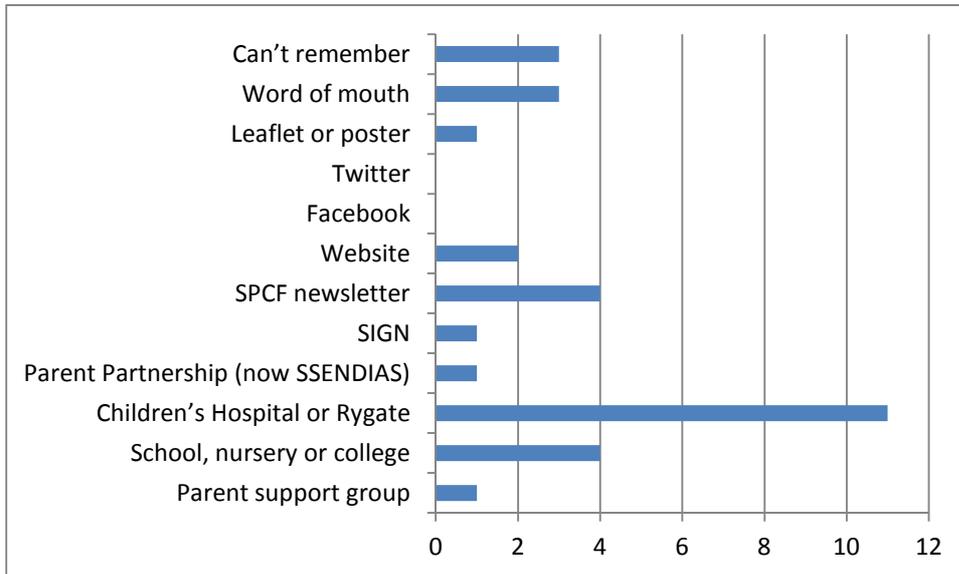


The ethnic background of respondents reflected the membership as a whole with 81% being white or other white British and 17% from BME communities (2% did not specify).



3. Where did you hear about us?

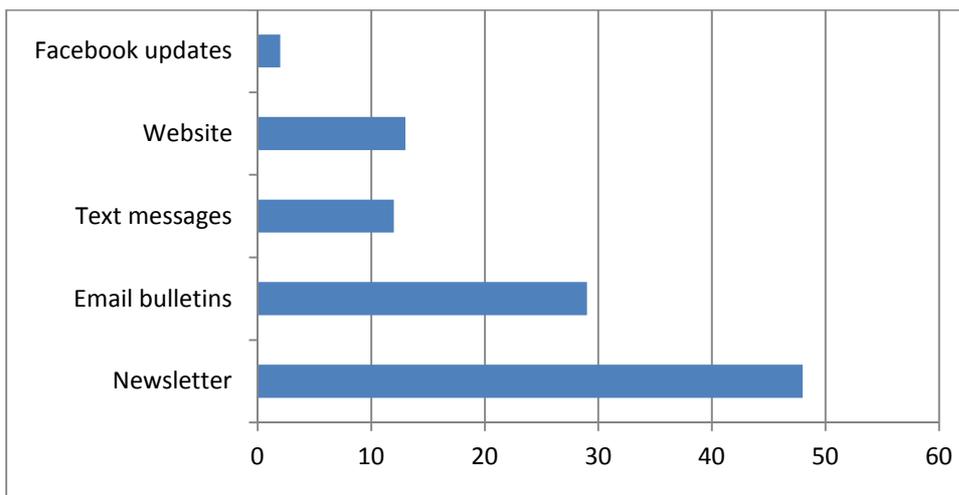
Most respondents had heard about the Forum from the Children’s Hospital or Ryegate.



Communications

4. Do you read our communications?

The newsletter is still the most popular medium of communication, and was read by 100% of respondents. Email bulletins were received and read by 29 respondents (60%).



“Just supplying the booklets for us to read, put down and pick back up again. At the time the information might not be needed but give two or three months down the line you need it, pick the booklet up again. That's what is important to me.”

5. How useful or interesting are the topics?

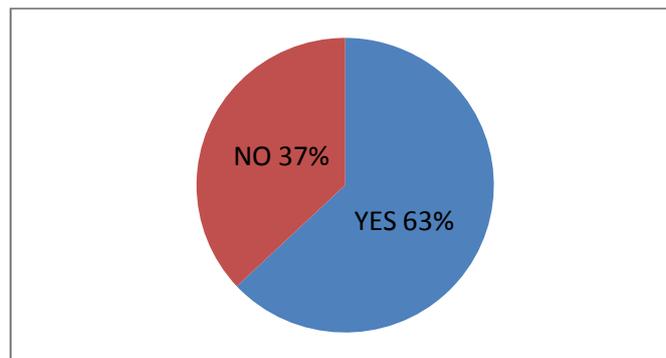
There was very little difference in the preferences expressed for the different topics listed.

Upcoming events, personal stories, information about local services, your rights and grants and benefits received the highest scores.

When asked “What else would you like to read about?” respondents mentioned support groups, clubs and activities for children and families, information about health services and how schools can support parents. Parents also suggested a second hand equipment for sale section and somewhere to nominate professionals who have helped.

Events

6. Have you been to our fun days, conferences, coffee mornings, training/information workshops or other events?

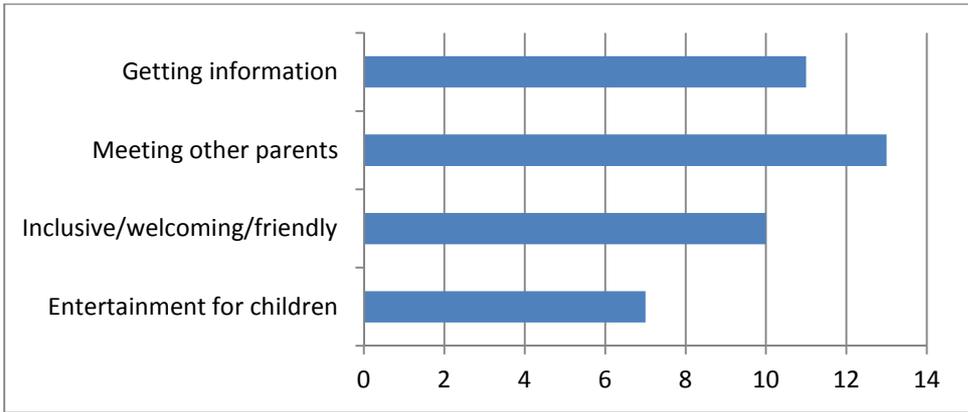


7. What are the best things about our events?

Meeting other parents in a similar situation topped the list closely followed by getting information. Many parents also commented on how inclusive and welcoming they found our events:

“Possibility to spend time with other families and not feel different”

“Everyone understands and you feel united”



Other respondents commented on the useful training, accessibility of events, meeting decision makers, friendly staff and of course the food!

8. What would you have changed about our events?

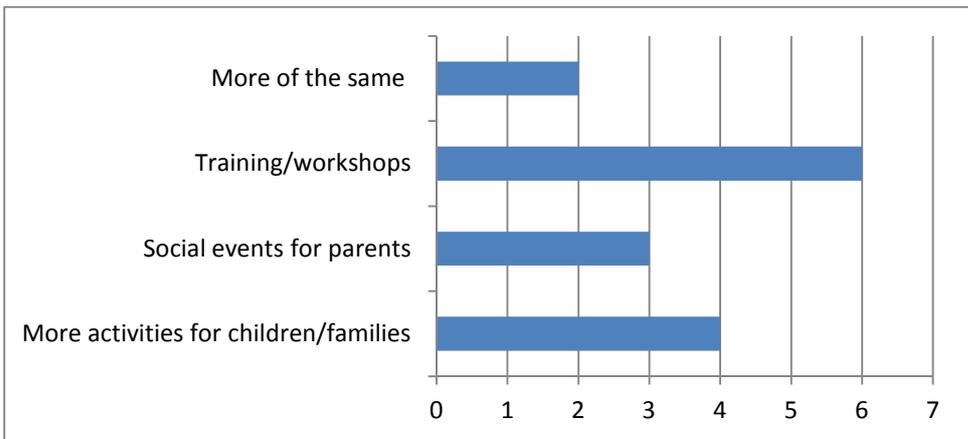
- 5 respondents said they wouldn't have changed anything.
- 3 people mentioned the venue for meetings being too small, too big or too uncomfortable.
- Better publicity and earlier notice of events, especially for the Fun Day in the summer.
- Other suggestions included: more time in meetings to ask questions, more events (particularly for teenagers to socialise) and better weather.

9. What would you like to see next time?

Most parents said that they wanted training/workshop and mentioned issues such as challenging behaviour, communication for non-verbal children, childcare and first aid.

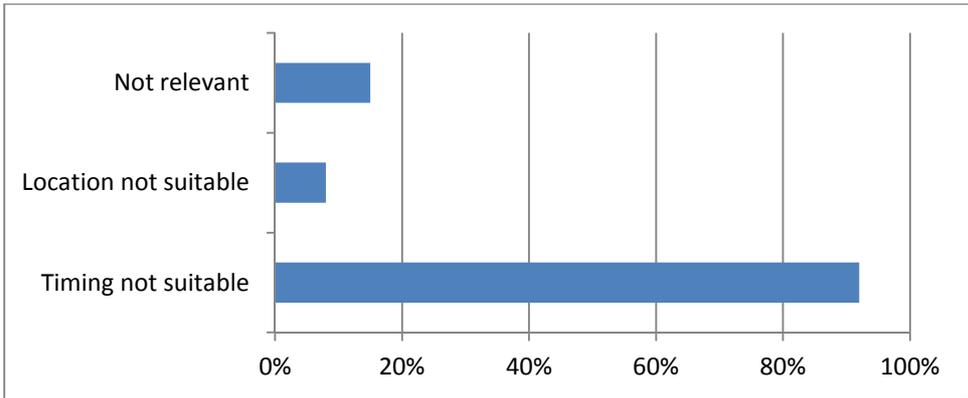
As always, parents want more activities for their children/families.

More social events and things for parents to do were also mentioned



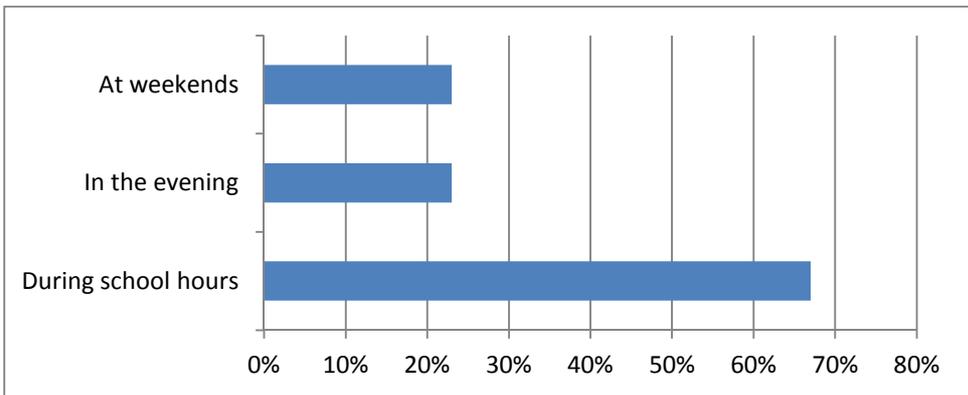
10. If you haven't been to any of our events, could you tell us why?

This question was answered by only 13 respondents but it is clear that the timings of our meeting make it difficult for some parents to attend.



11. When would you prefer to come to sessions?

Meeting times during school hours are still the most popular with parents (29), with an even split between evenings and weekend (preferred by 10 parents each).



Participation and representation

12. We asked members who have been actively involved in parent participation, e.g. by attending focus groups or meetings with the local authority, to say why and what benefit they got from the experience:

There were 18 responses to this question.

- Parents said that being involved in parent participation gave them opportunities to influence decisions and make a difference for all children
- Attending meetings had helped to improve their knowledge and understanding of the system and their rights
- Other benefits mentioned were being part of something bigger with more influence, learning from other people’s experiences, peer support and improved confidence

“Know my son's rights - how to get his needs acknowledged, have my say, know I am not the only one with these problems...”

“I have been very fortunate in being part of the Parent Carer Forum and feel it is important to support the excellent work it does. The forum carries a lot more weight than the opinions of individuals who are just a 'lone voice'. Being the parent of a child with a severe disability can make you feel very lonely and isolated at times. At the Parent Carer Forum office and meetings there is always someone who really understands what you are going through.”

“I have learned about the ‘mechanics’ of the way in which the council operates. It has helped me to gain confidence resolve for what I think should be entitlements.”

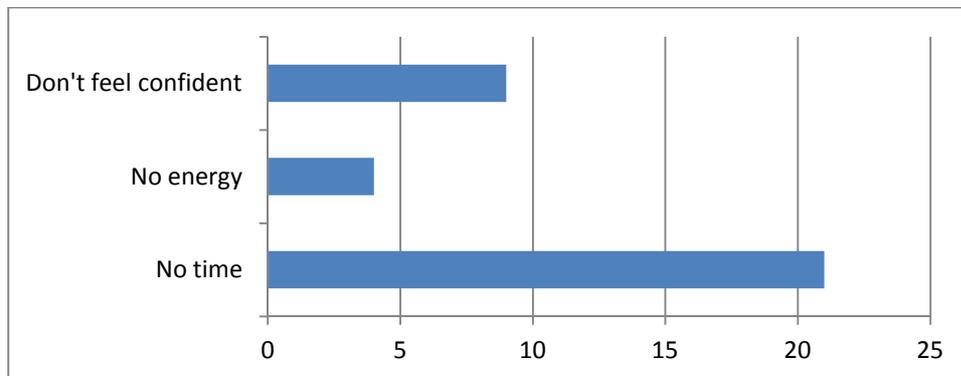
“Enjoying meeting and exchanging experiences with other parents.”

13. If you haven't got further involved, could you tell us why?

21 respondents cited a lack of time, 9 parents said they didn't feel confident, 4 said they had no energy, No one felt it was pointless.

Comments explained lack of involvement due to caring responsibilities or work commitments.

“Feeling too stressed by the extra challenges of being a carer. Always have the intention to become more involved”



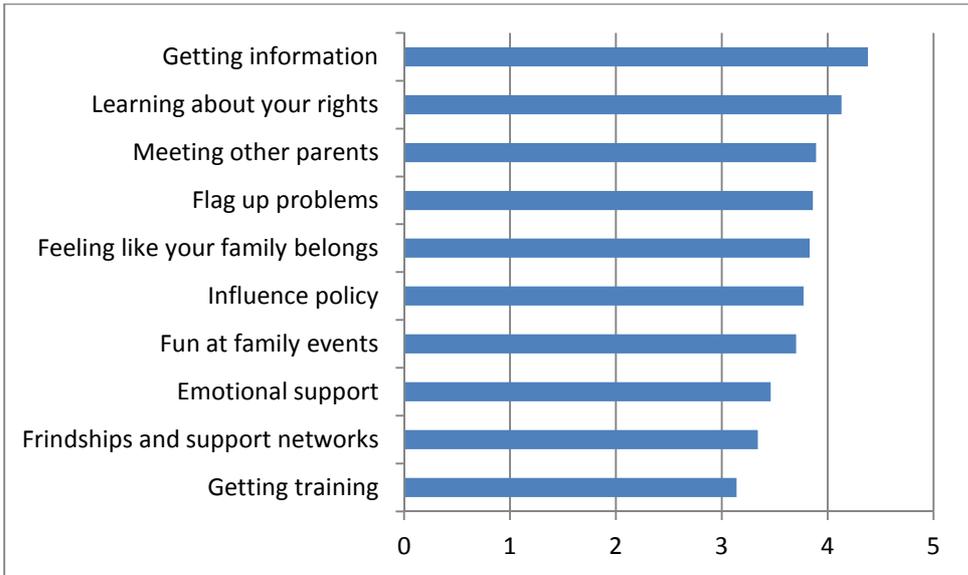
14. How confident are you that the Sheffield Parent Carer Forum can accurately represent parents' views?

There were 47 responses to this question and 45 (96%) were either “Very confident” or “Confident” that the Forum could accurately represent parents’ views.

Service evaluation and impact

15. What has been the best thing that we have done for you?

As in previous surveys, “Getting information about services” and “Learning about your family’s rights” topped the list.

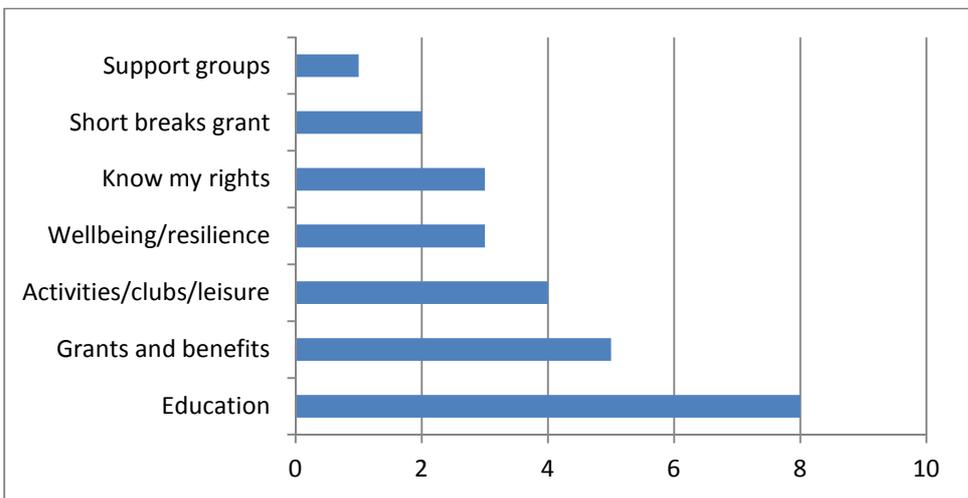


“Feels good to know that in Sheffield we have the Forum looking out for us. So even if I am flat out busy and exhausted by life, I know that you are looking out for us, scanning the horizons and telling us what we need to know before it's too late e.g. school transition good practice, changes to DLA etc.”

16. Have you used any of the information we have given you to change things for your child?

68% said “Yes”, 32% said “No”.

There were 24 free text responses to this question which mentioned:



“I have accessed activities, been more aware of what is happening and took time to read personal stories that help you know you are not alone”.

17. Have you passed our information on to anyone else?

Of those who answers this question 76% had passed information on and 34% hadn't.

Most respondents had passed information to friends and relatives, and other parents at school or support groups. The information passed on was about education, short breaks grants, events, benefits, support group and access to advice.

18. If you had to choose, what ONE issue would you feel the Parent Carer Forum should concentrate on this year?

There were 32 responses to this question.

- 8 parents mentioned concerns about the SEN reforms (EHC plans and the Local Offer)
- 6 were concerned about transition for older children (post 16 education and moving to adult services)
- 4 parents highlighted issues around **education** in general

Other issues mentioned included:

- Mental health
- Social activities
- Short breaks grant
- Benefits
- Transport
- Cuts to services
- Family and emotional support
- S<

19. Do you have any comments/complaints/suggestions about how we can work with you?

There were lots of positive comments, e.g.:

“Thank you very much for everything.”

“I think you are an excellent service and your newsletters most helpful and I enjoy reading.”

There was only one criticism:

“Wondering if too heavily dominated by autism? Would be good to see opinions from parents with children with other disabilities”

What we will do:

- Continue to grow our membership across the city, particularly BME communities, through our outreach programme and events so that the Forum continues to be a representative organisation.
- Continue to publish a hardcopy newsletter twice a year subject to continued sponsorship. The newsletter is currently funded by Irwin Mitchell Solicitors for which we are very grateful.

- Continue to gather and research information about issues, events, grants and organisations and pass this information onto our members through the newsletter, our website, email bulletins and social media.
- Continue to organise inclusive meetings and events that provide opportunities for peer support, training, information gathering and time to ask questions.
- If funding allows we will continue to organise family events and activities such as the Family Fun Day in the summer and the Christmas film.
- Continue to offer our members the chance to become further involved with the Forum's work to influence strategic decision making in Sheffield and improve the services on offer to our children and young people.
- Continue to provide information about changes to national policies and legislation and explain how they will affect our members and their families.
- Continue to inform parents about the implementation of the SEND reforms in Sheffield through our workshops and conference.
- Continue to work with Sheffield City Council and the NHS in Sheffield to improve the transition from children's to adult services.