

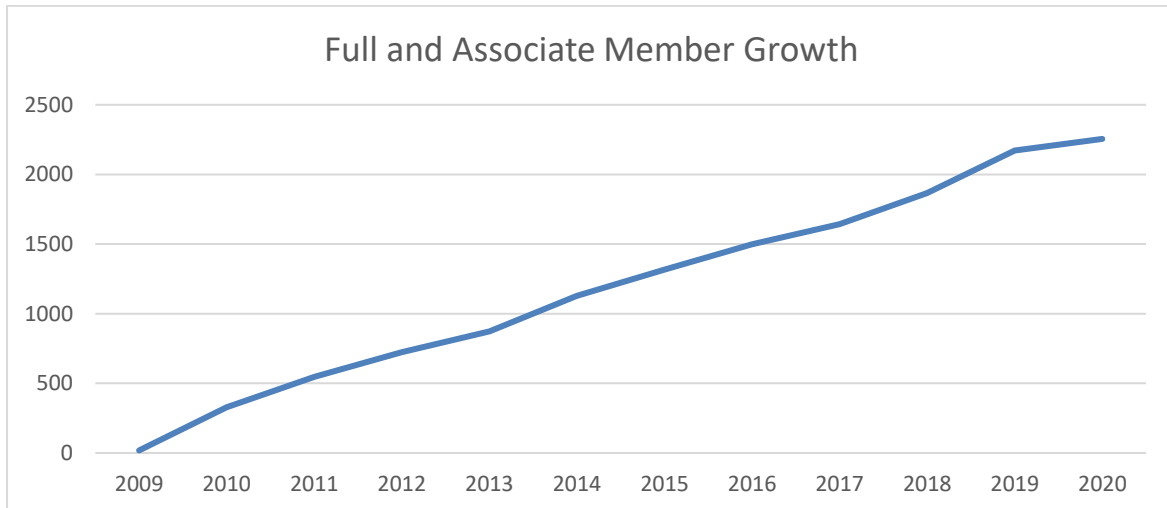


CONNECT INFORM EMPOWER

Membership Survey 2020

Sheffield Parent Carer Forum (SPCF) currently has 1,998 full members (families) and 257 associate members (professional and practitioners).

The membership survey was conducted online and was advertised to members via email, the newsletter and SMS. A prize draw for a £50 shopping voucher was offered as an incentive. There were 125 responses.

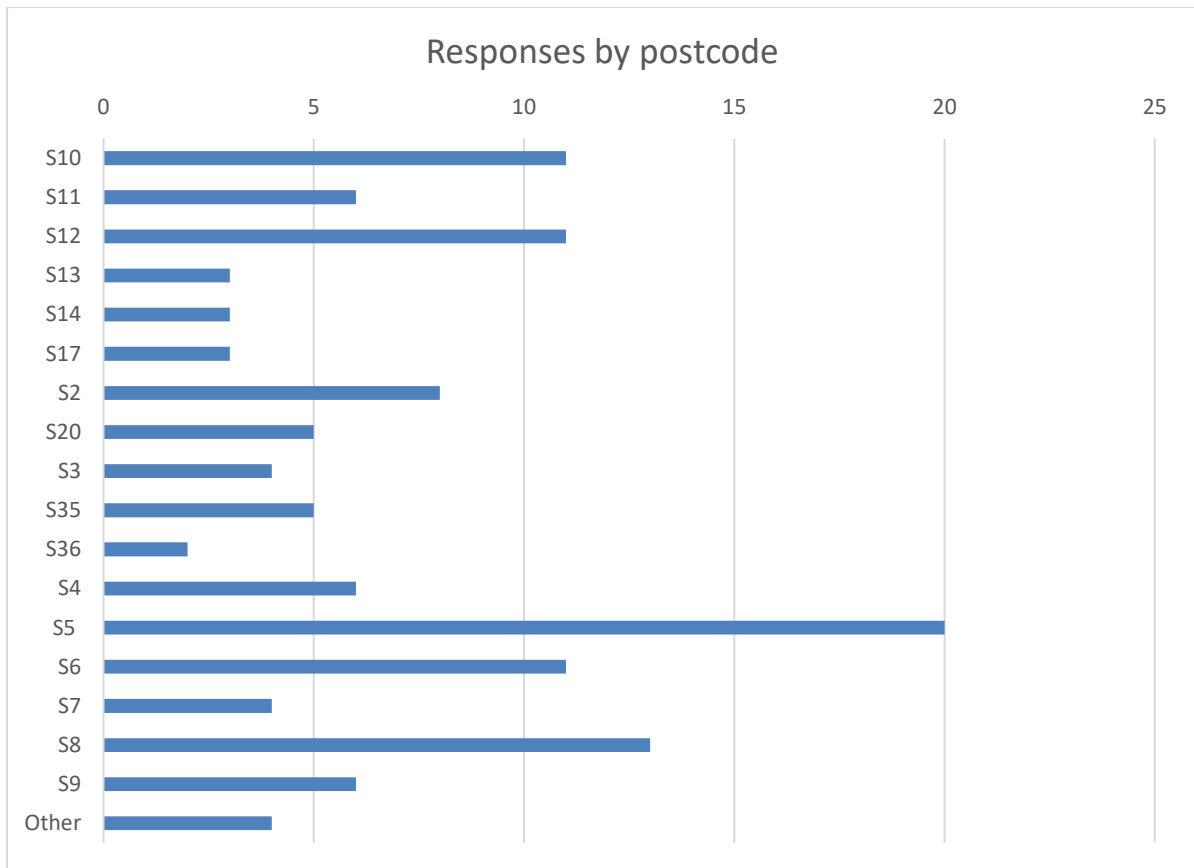


Breakdown of respondents

Over half (56%) of respondents had been a member of SPCF for between one and five years and over a third (39%) for more than five years.

The ethnicity of respondents was 73% White British and 23% from other ethnic backgrounds (mainly Pakistani), with 3.4 % preferring not to say.

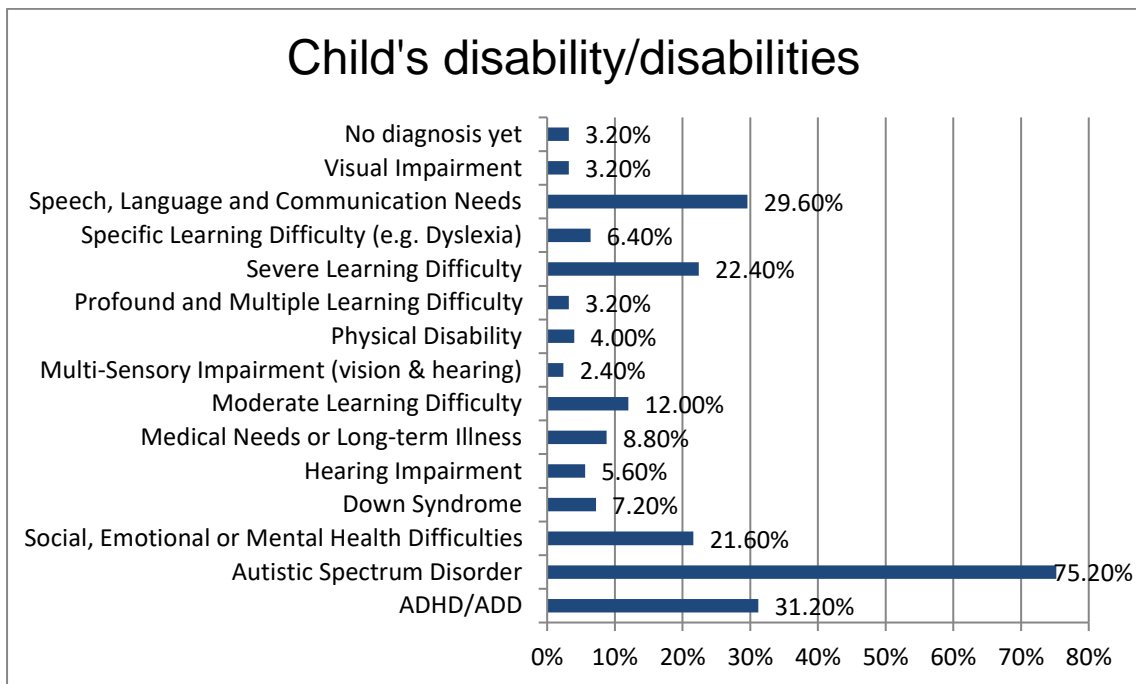
There was a good geographical spread of responses, with the largest numbers from S5, S6, S8, S10 and S12.



Child's disability, age and education

We asked parents to tell us about ALL of their child's disabilities, not just the main one. Therefore, percentages do not sum to 100.

The fact that three quarters of respondents had a child with ASD may indicate that these families face more challenges and have a poorer experience of services.



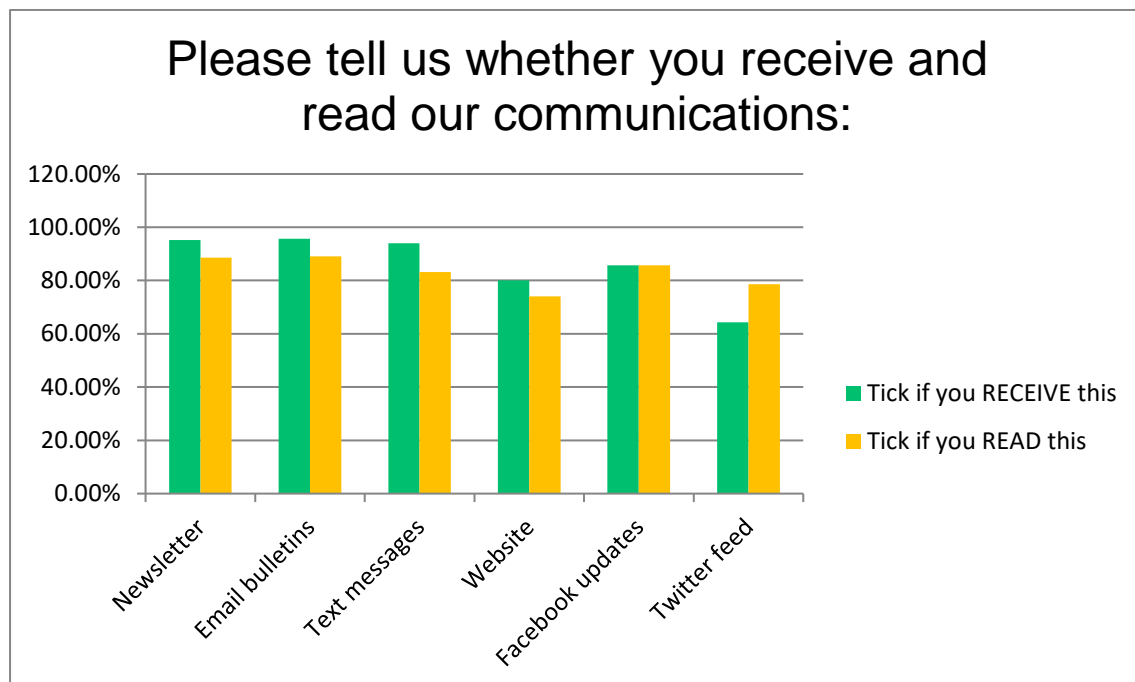
Most respondents (40%) had children aged 5-10 years or 11-15 years (35%).

46% of the children were educated in mainstream settings, 43% in specialist settings, 2% in Integrated Resources and 1% at home. 8% of respondents chose “Other”.

Communication

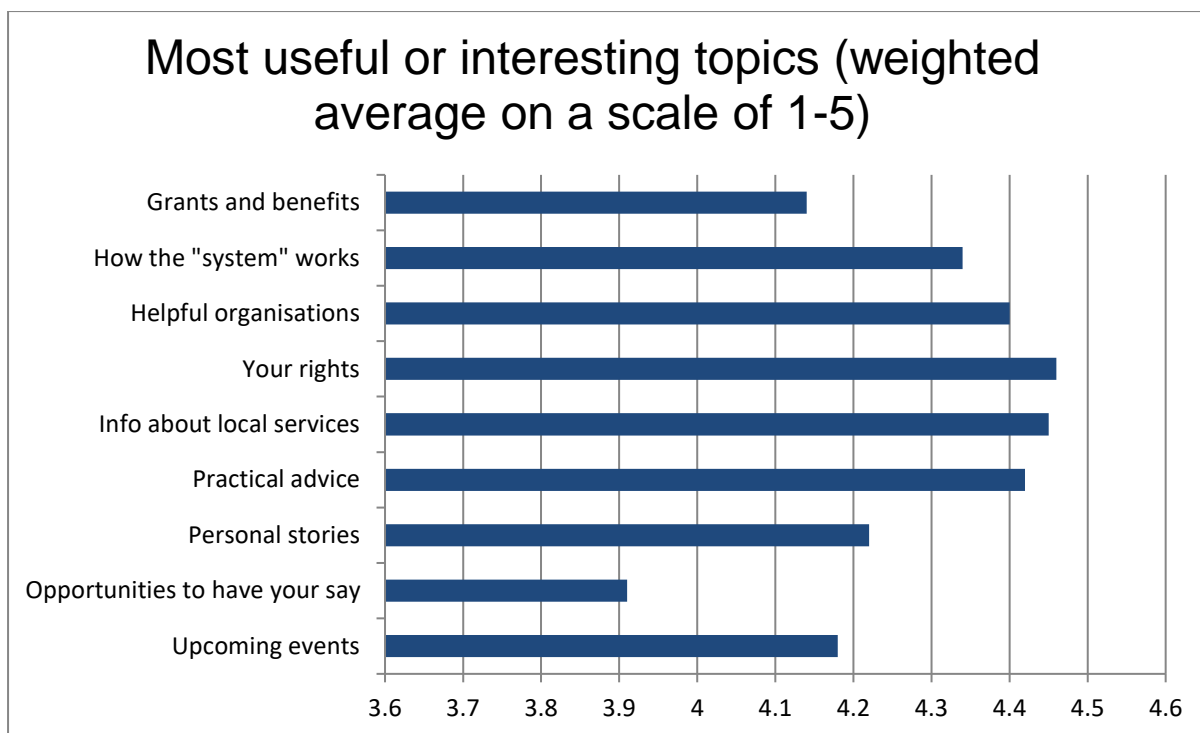
Most respondents had heard about SPCF from a parent support group (23%) or the Sheffield Children’s Hospital/Ryegate (21%). School/nursery/college accounted for 18% and word of mouth for 15%.

The newsletter, email bulletins and text messages were all received by over 90% of respondents. Facebook continues to be a useful way to gather feedback from parents.



Most recipients stated that they read our communications. Those who did not said this was because they were too long (2 respondents), too difficult to understand (1 recipient) or because they had no time (2 recipients).

Our members find information about their rights, local services and practical advice to be the most useful. As in the previous survey, personal stories and information about opportunities to have their say were less popular. Information about upcoming events was rated lower than in the previous survey, but this may reflect the impact of the pandemic, which meant that most of our events had to be cancelled.



We asked parents what else they would like to read about and got 33 responses. Eight respondents said that they had nothing to add as our communications covered everything they needed:

"I personally think everything is covered as best possible"

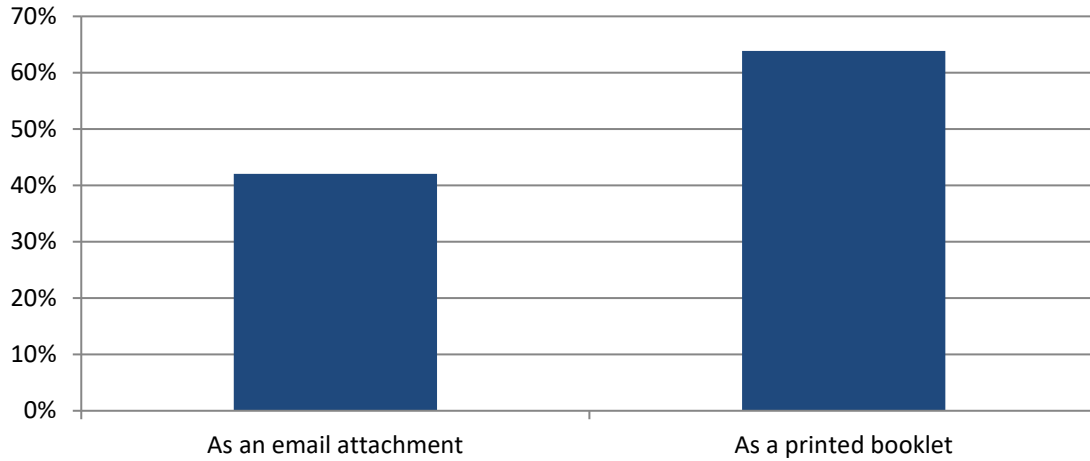
The following topics were suggested by two or three respondents each:

- Dealing with uncooperative schools and who can help with this
- Accessible leisure opportunities and holidays
- Courses for parent carers
- Grants, discounts and freebies for disabled children
- Post-19 education and services
- Practical advice and strategies, particularly in relation to behaviour
- Events

Suggestions from individual parents included information about campaigns, support websites, wills, what training schools have had, and personal stories.

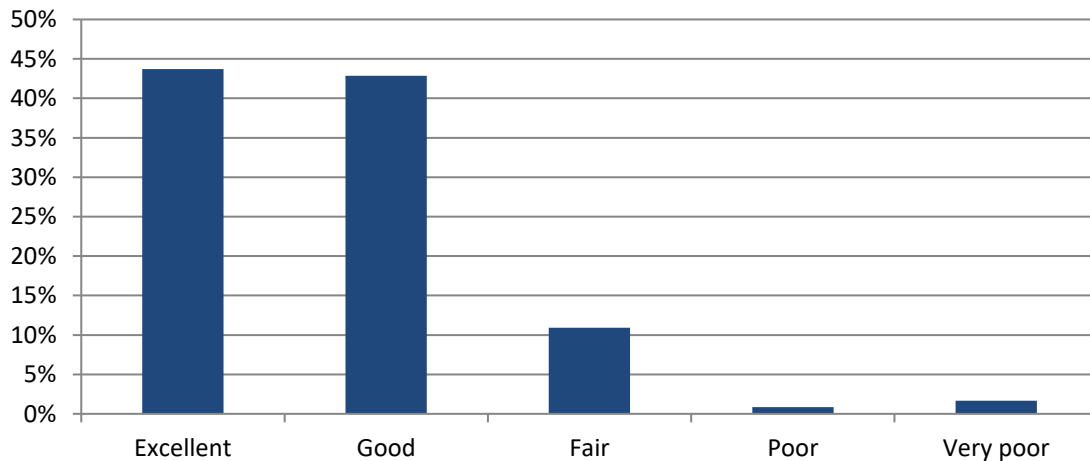
We asked our members whether they preferred to receive the newsletter via email or as a hardcopy. 64% said that they preferred a printed booklet, and 42% said they preferred to receive it by email. (The percentages do not sum to 100 as several respondents ticked both options.) This is similar to our 2018 survey.

Do you prefer to receive our newsletter as an email attachment or as a printed booklet?



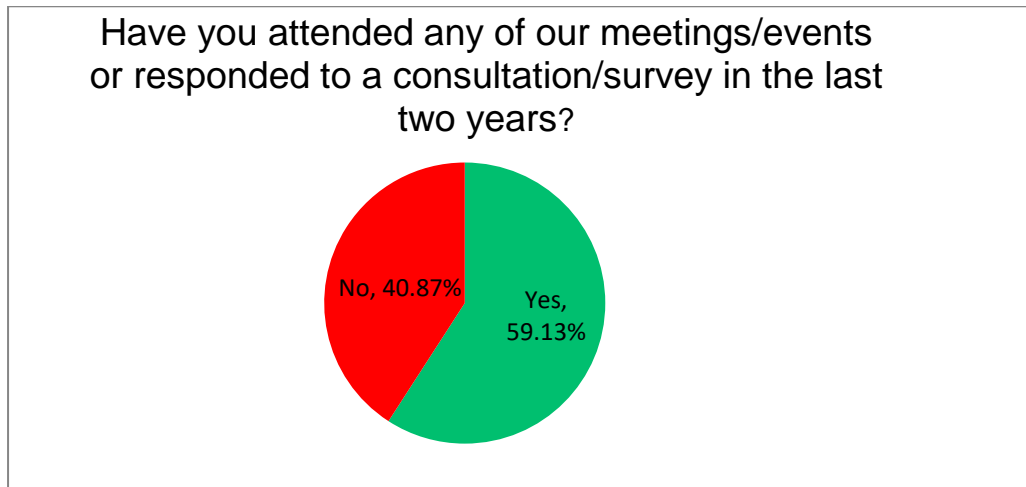
This year, we also included a question about information we provided during the coronavirus pandemic. 87% rated our information “good” or “excellent”:

How would you rate the information we have been providing during the coronavirus outbreak?



Engagement

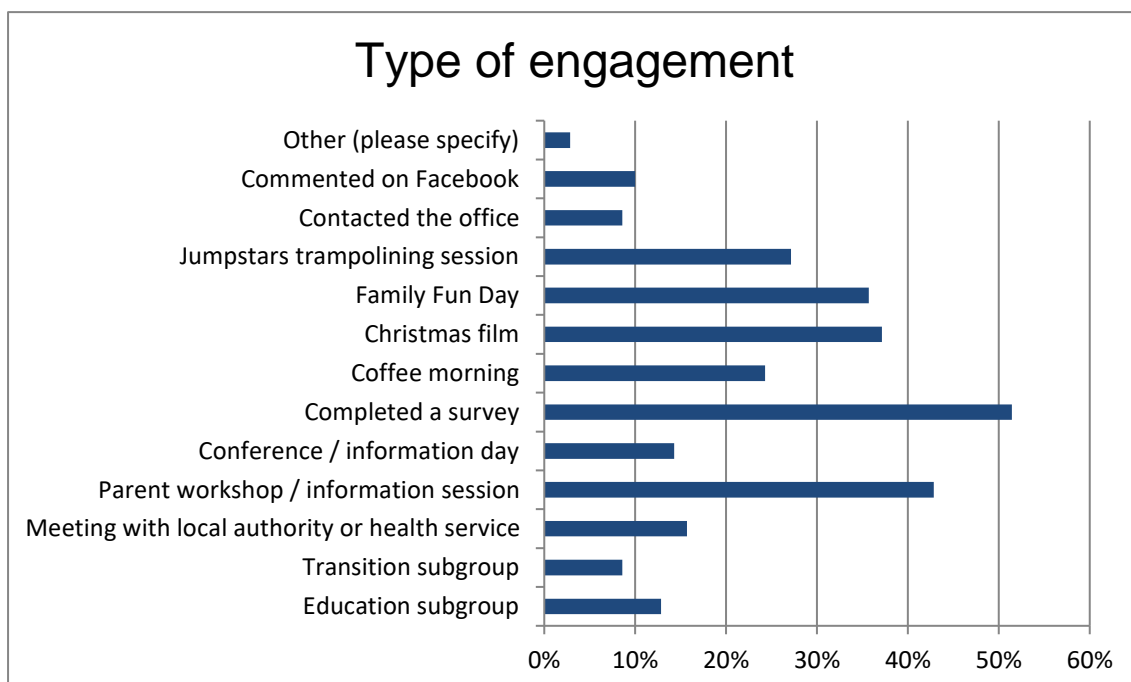
We asked our members if they had attended any of our meetings/events or responded to a consultation/survey.



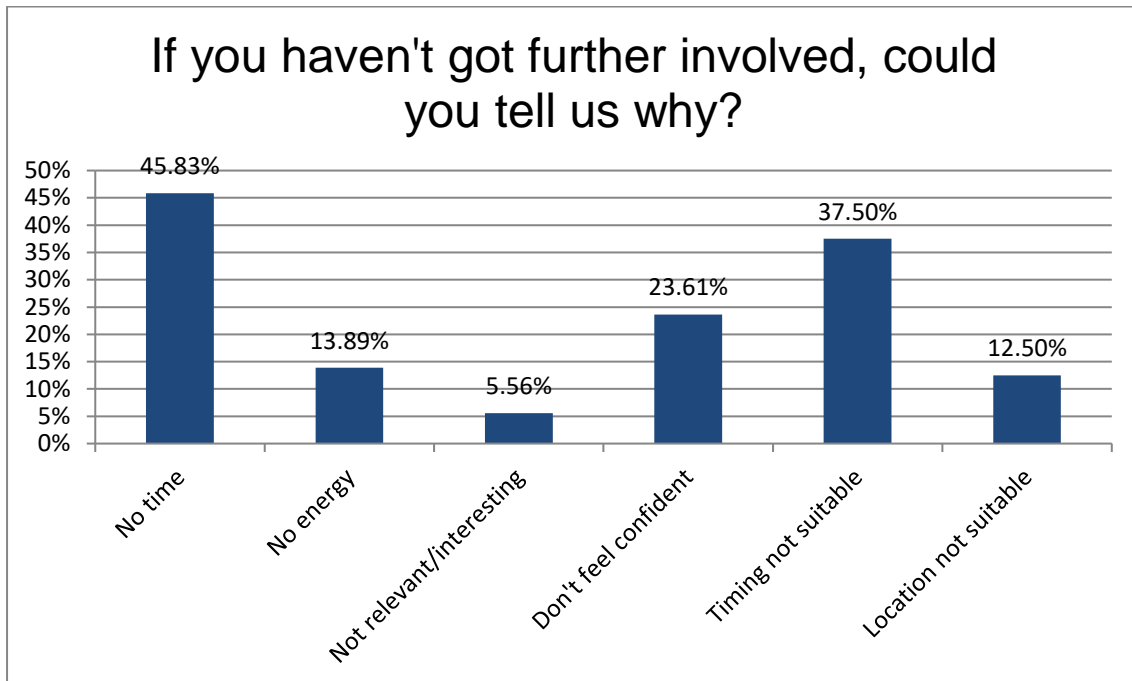
Engagement was down from our previous survey, when there was a 30/70 split. This may reflect the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

Looking at parent carer attendance at our training sessions, events and outreach visits in 2019 and 2020, 29% of attendees were non White British and 27% lived in the most deprived postcode areas of Sheffield (S2, S3, S4 and S5). There was a good mix of long-standing members and those who had joined more recently: 39% had joined in 2010-2015, 39% became members in 2016-2018, and 24% had joined in 2019/20.

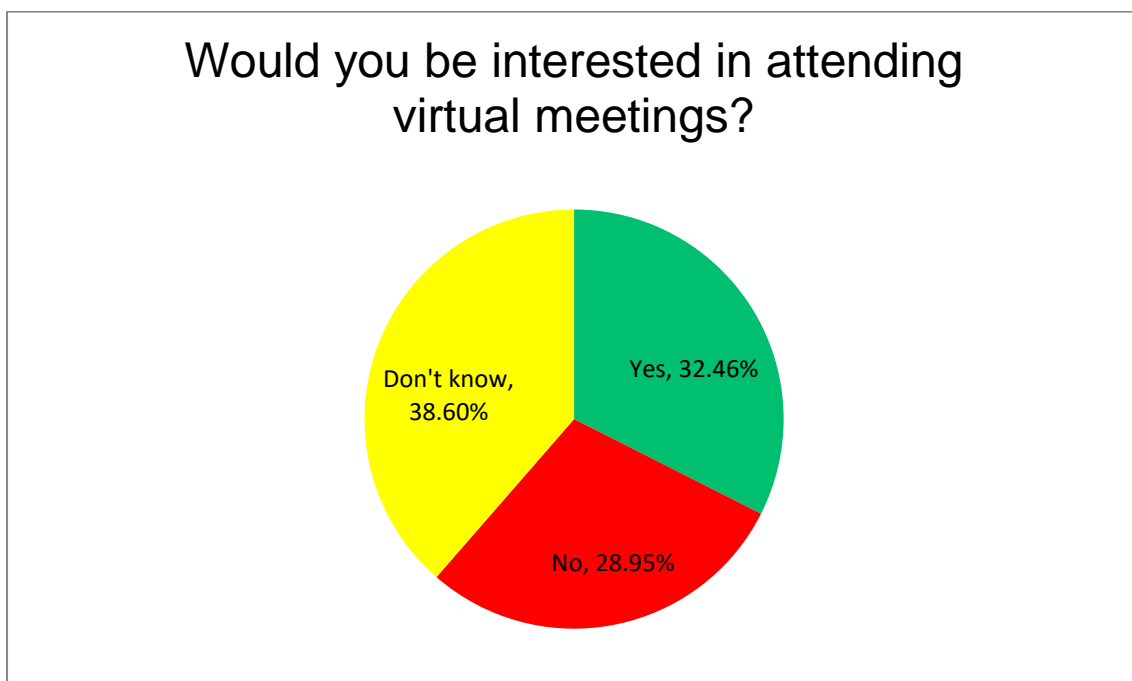
Of the survey respondents who had engaged with SPCF, most had completed a survey or attended a parent workshop/information session, the Family Fun Day or the Christmas film:



We asked members who hadn't got more involved with SPCF to tell us why. 33 people responded. The main reasons given were that the timing of the meetings/events was not suitable or that the parents did not have time to take part.

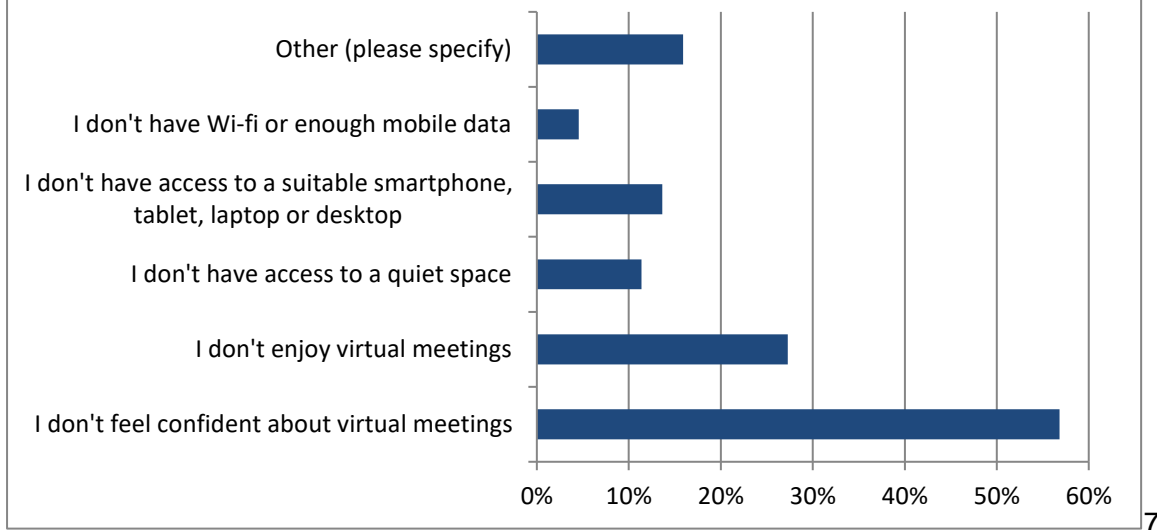


We asked respondents if they would be interested in attending virtual meetings. Responses roughly split into thirds:



The main reason for a reluctance to take part in virtual meetings appears to be a lack of confidence.

If you answered "No" to the previous question, please tell us why:



Reasons listed under “other” included: lack of time; depends on content of meetings; child is not severely affected enough.

It is important to remember that the survey was only done by online questionnaire, so members without access to IT would not have replied.

Confidence in SPCF

We asked our members how confident they were that SPCF could accurately represent parents’ views. 98% of respondents said that they were confident or very confident. This is a slight improvement on the previous survey.

	Number of responses	Percentage	
Very confident	59	51%	98%
Confident	54	47%	
Not confident	2	2%	2%
Not at all confident	0	0%	

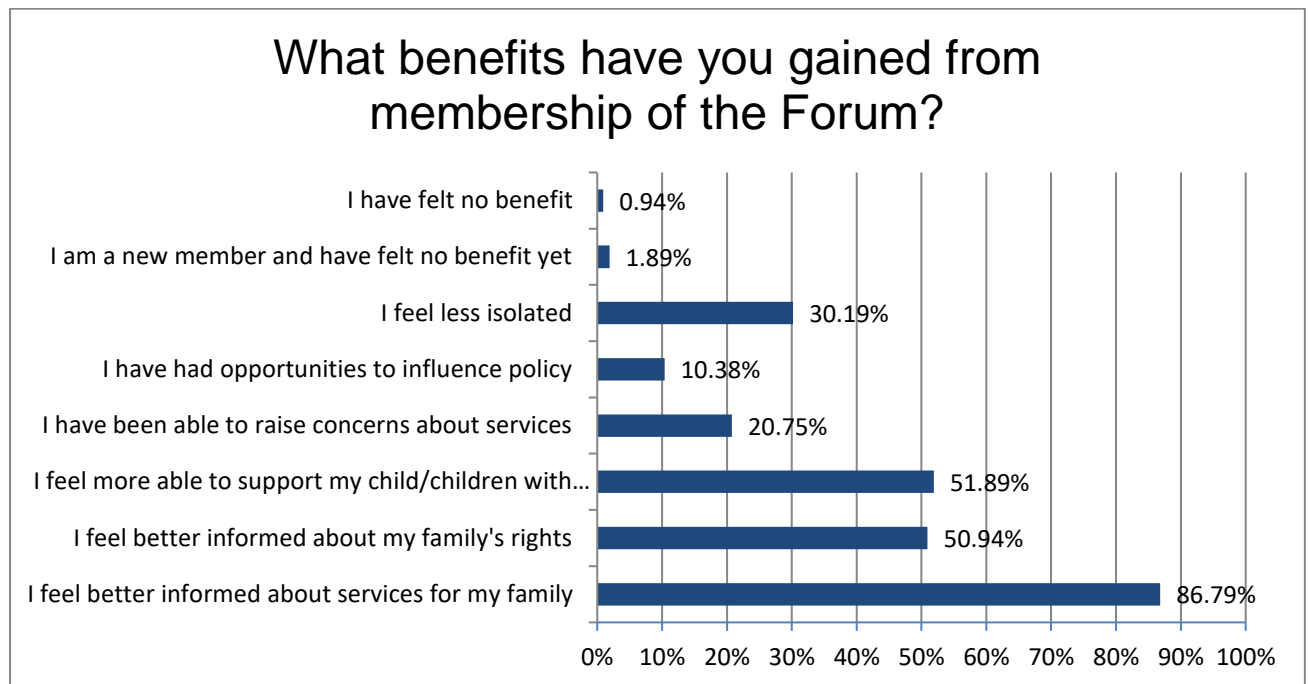
Two respondents said that they were not confident, and five answered the follow-up question asking about the reason for their lack of confidence and what we could do to improve.

However, not all of these responses related to the question. The only relevant responses were:

- Lack of diversity in socio economic and local demographic terms
- Too much focus on younger children
- Need more support for meetings (e.g. meeting with organisers beforehand) and more time on Zoom sessions

Benefits of SPCF membership

We asked respondents what benefits they had gained from being members of SPCF:



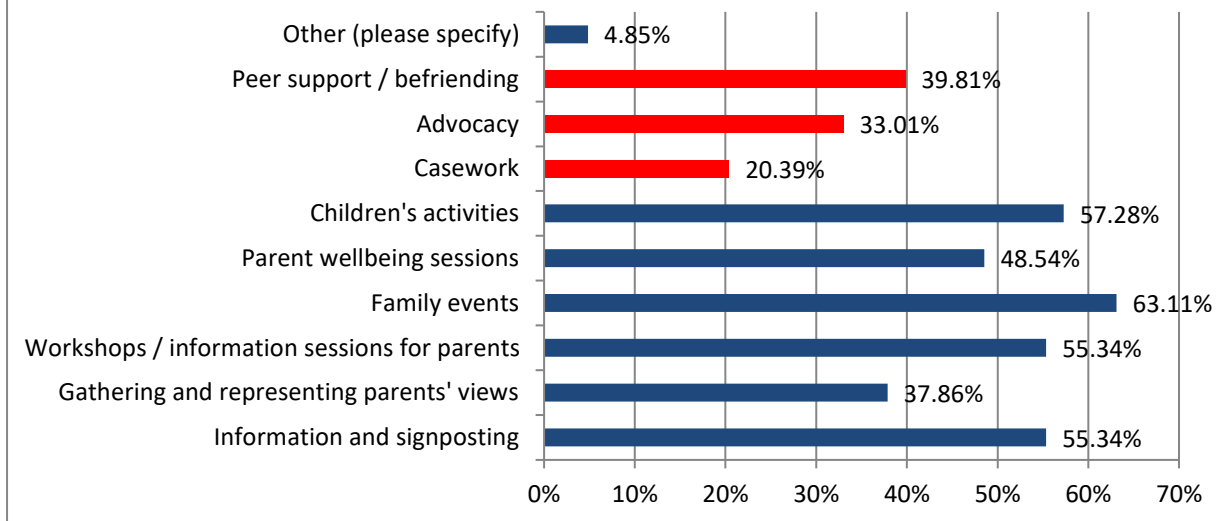
The things that SPCF does that members appreciate most are providing information about services (87%), telling them about their rights (51%), and enabling them to support their children better (52%). The percentage of parents who said they felt less isolated was lower than in the previous survey (30% vs. 46%); this may reflect the fact that, due to the pandemic, we had to cancel all our family events and physical meetings.

What our members want us to do for them

This year, we included a new question asking parents to tell us what they want SPCF to do for them. Activities that we do not currently offer are marked in red in the graph.

The fact that only 38% of respondents said that they wanted us to gather and represent parents' views may reflect the fact that this strategic work is less visible to parents than the other items in this list, and is geared to benefit the collective rather than the individual. It can also take a long time for parent carer involvement to lead to tangible improvements.

What do you want us to do for you? Please tick all that apply.



Comments under "Other" included:

- More involvement for older children and siblings
- More parent workshops
- Support with DLA applications
- Wellbeing and mental health support

Using information provided by SPCF

We asked if members had used any of the information we had given them to change things for their child/children. 51% said yes and 49% said no (compared to 69% vs. 31% in the previous survey). We asked those who said "Yes" to provide more information. The most common answers were:

Information about EHC plans

"Helped me get an EHC plan for my child"

Help with education, e.g. school placement, MyPlan

"I found out about My Plan and that needs to be reviewed 3 times in a year, and what I can expect from SENCO at school. I feel confident to ask for help and I know from where to get that help."

Felt better after reading other parents' stories

"After reading someone's personal story, it convinced me that special school is not too bad after all. I had been fighting and fighting to keep my child in mainstream which wasn't working and I felt like a major failure."

"Parent stories have helped to cope with emotions."

Accessed grants or benefits

"Applied to the family fund for a grant to make my garden secure for my son"

Found a support group

"I contacted a group through you"

Accessed short breaks

"Used snips/been to events and made friends"

Used information to improve child's sleep

"Helped with sleep from info given at an event."

Attended events

"The family fun day was really useful for my kids, they been asking no more fun day this year"

Gained a better understanding of child's disability and how to help them

"Some of the personal stories have helped me alter the house for the better to reduce stress and melt downs"

Several respondents said that getting information from us had made them feel more confident about asking for support.

Some parents said they wouldn't have known about support and services without our information:

"I got a short break grant I didn't even know these existed until I saw the info you shared"

52% of respondents had passed information received from us on to other people. This percentage is lower than in 2018 (71%). This may reflect the lack of opportunity to meet other parents due to the pandemic.

Issues that parents want SPCF to address

We asked parents to choose one issue that SPCF should concentrate on in the next year. This was a free text question (parents could write what they wanted).

The responses clearly reflected the impact of the pandemic. The most common issues were:

- Covid recovery
- Better mental health support for children and parents
- Improving support in education, e.g. making up for disruption caused by Covid, help with school refusal, school funding, sufficiency of specialist placements
- Activities for children and families, making up for a lack of things to do during lockdown
- Reducing isolation, which has increased due to Covid
- Transition to adulthood and post-16 education

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

Only 25 people answered this question. There were no complaints, and lots of very positive comments, such as:

“SPCF always seems to be very much in touch with people on the ground and what are the issues for us that need to be explored/pursued”

“Great support network, friendly and open”

“Excellent organisation and staff, thank you”

A few respondents made suggestions:

- More information about transition to adulthood and support for older young people
- Information about groups that disabled children and siblings can access together
- Make the Facebook Chat group more active
- More Zoom workshops, talks and coffee mornings
- Start a SEN toddler group

How we will use the information from this survey

We will continue to provide the activities that our members say they want: family events, children’s activities, information and signposting, and workshops, information sessions and wellbeing activities for parents.

It looks likely that we will have to continue with virtual meetings for a while longer. Since many parents said that a lack of confidence prevented them from joining such meetings, we will offer training in the use of the Zoom app.

We will also trial virtual meetings in the evenings to provide an alternative for working parents who find meetings during the day difficult to attend.

Many respondents said that their children had missed our family fun day and trampolining sessions during the pandemic. We will restart our JumpStars sessions, the family fun day and our inclusive film screenings as soon as government guidance allows.

There was clear evidence that the isolation of parent carers has increased during the pandemic. Once social distancing measures are lifted, we will re-start our coffee mornings and outreach visits, and use our Health Lottery funding to offer additional opportunities for parents to meet up.

Through our membership of strategic and operational groups, we will highlight the issues that our members have told us are most important to them, in particular Covid recovery. We will endeavour to scrutinise how education catch-up funding is spent, and gather and represent feedback from parents in relation to this. We will work with partners to improve mental health support for children and parents, support in education, and transition to adulthood.