



CONNECT INFORM EMPOWER

Membership Survey 2022

Sheffield Parent Carer Forum (SPCF) currently has 2,166 full members (families) and 296 associate members (professional and practitioners).

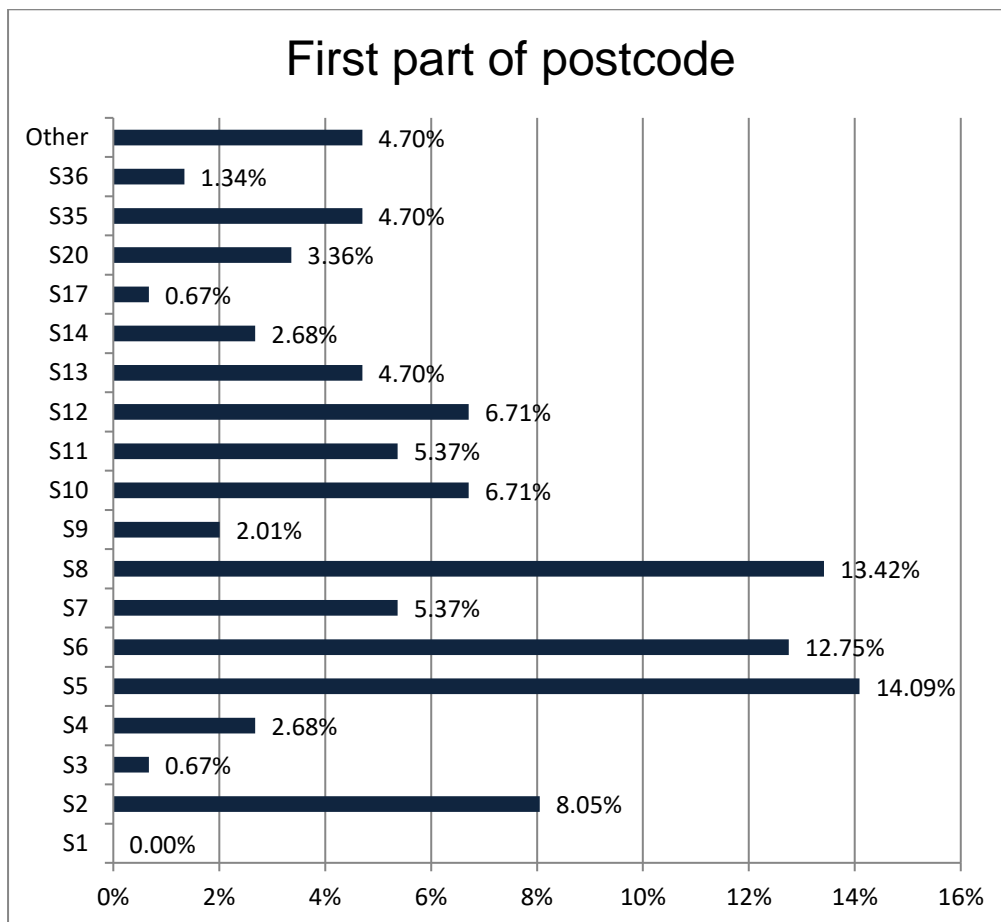
The membership survey was conducted online between 28 February and 14 March 2022, and was advertised to members via email and text message. A prize draw for a £50 shopping voucher was offered as an incentive. There were 150 responses.

Breakdown of respondents

Half of all respondents had been a member of SPCF for between one and five years, and over a third (38%) for more than five years.

The ethnicity of respondents was 79% White British and 21% from other ethnic backgrounds (mainly Pakistani).

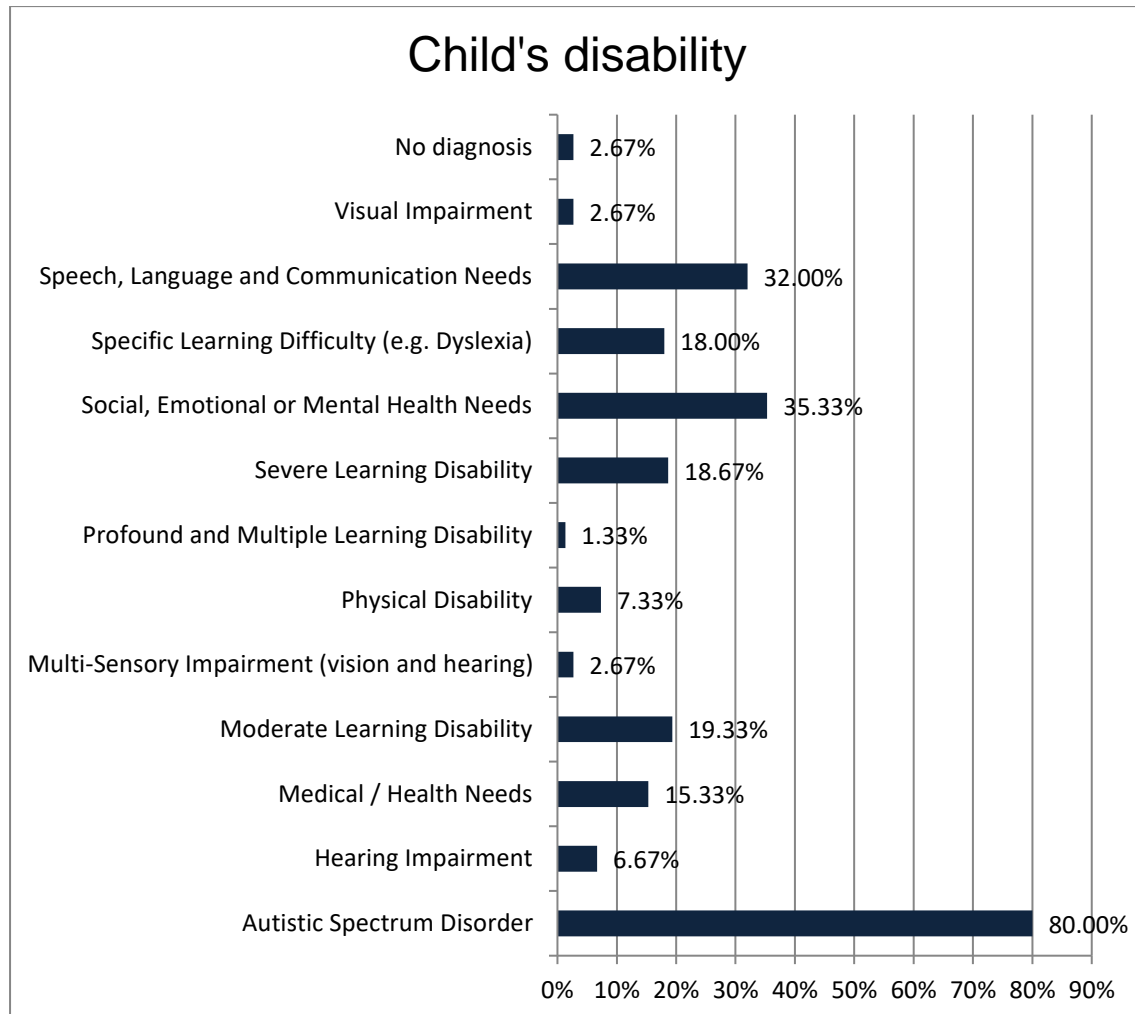
There was a good geographical spread of responses, with the largest numbers from S5, S8, S6 and S2.



Child's disability, age and education setting

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 80% of respondents had a child with ASD may indicate that these families face more challenges and have a poorer experience of services.



Most respondents (66%) had children aged 5-15 years.

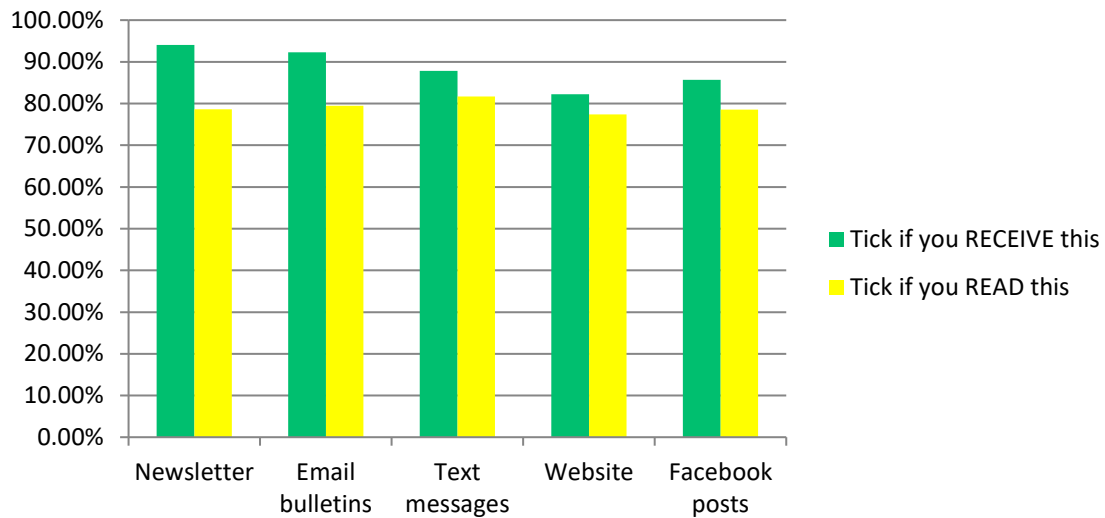
49% of the children were educated in mainstream settings, 36% in specialist settings, 5% in Integrated Resources and 2% at home. 8% of respondents chose "Other".

Communication

Most respondents had heard about SPCF from a parent support group (27%) or word of mouth (17%). The Sheffield Children's Hospital/Ryegate accounted for 14% and school/nursery/college for 13%.

A large number of respondents said they received our newsletter (94%), email bulletins (92%) and text messages (87%). Facebook continues to be a useful way to gather feedback from parents, with 86% reporting that they saw our posts.

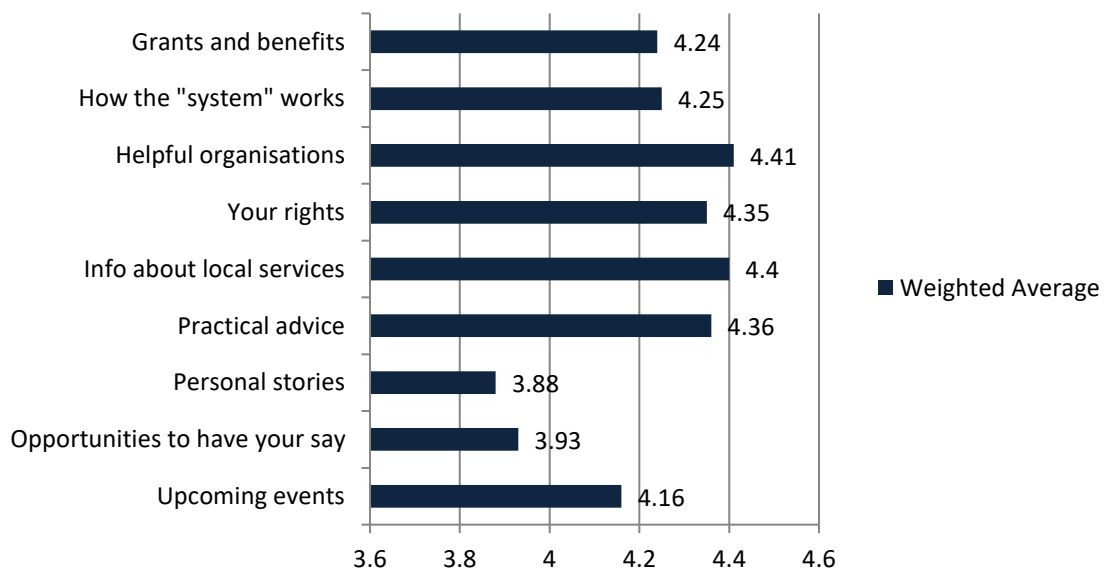
Please tell us whether you receive and read our communications:



Most recipients stated that they read our communications. Those who did not said this was because they had no time (7 respondents), because they were not relevant or interesting (3 respondents) or too difficult to understand (1 respondent). Nobody said they were too long.

Our members find information about helpful organisations and local services, practical advice and their rights to be the most useful. As in previous surveys, personal stories and information about opportunities to have their say were less popular.

On a scale of 1-5, please tell us how useful or interesting you find the following topics:



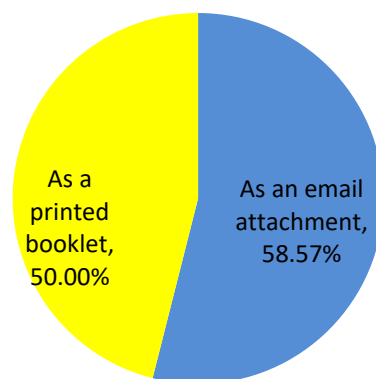
We asked parents what else they would like to read about and got 40 responses. The following topics were suggested by at least five respondents each:

- Local support groups
- Transition to post-16 / adulthood
- Accessible activities and social opportunities
- Help with specific issues, e.g. anxiety, behaviour, school refusal

Suggestions from individual parents included information about national developments, good/poor practice, views of children with additional needs, courses for parents, holidays, help with housing, local services, where to get practical help, issues specific to working parents, involvement of SPCF in improving services, short breaks and respite, work opportunities for young people, primary-to-secondary transition, and understanding specific conditions.

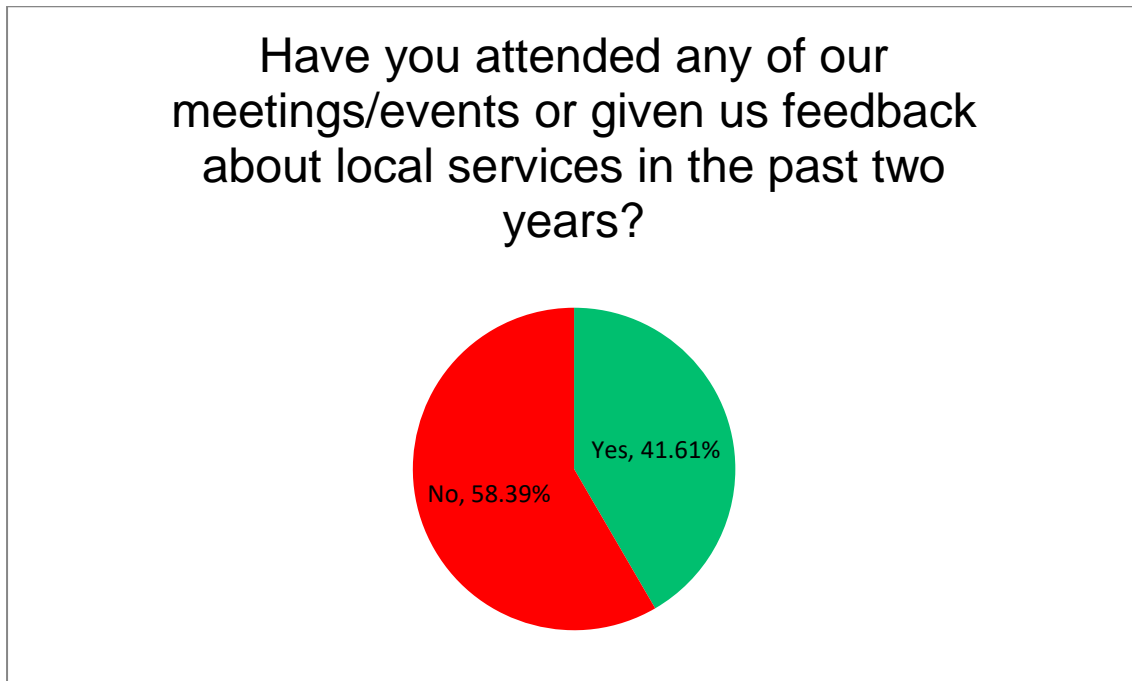
We asked our members whether they preferred to receive the newsletter via email or as a hardcopy. 50% said that they preferred a printed booklet, and 59% said they preferred to receive it by email. (The percentages do not sum to 100 as several respondents ticked both options.) Compared to previous surveys, this shows a shift in preference from printed to electronic delivery.

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



Engagement

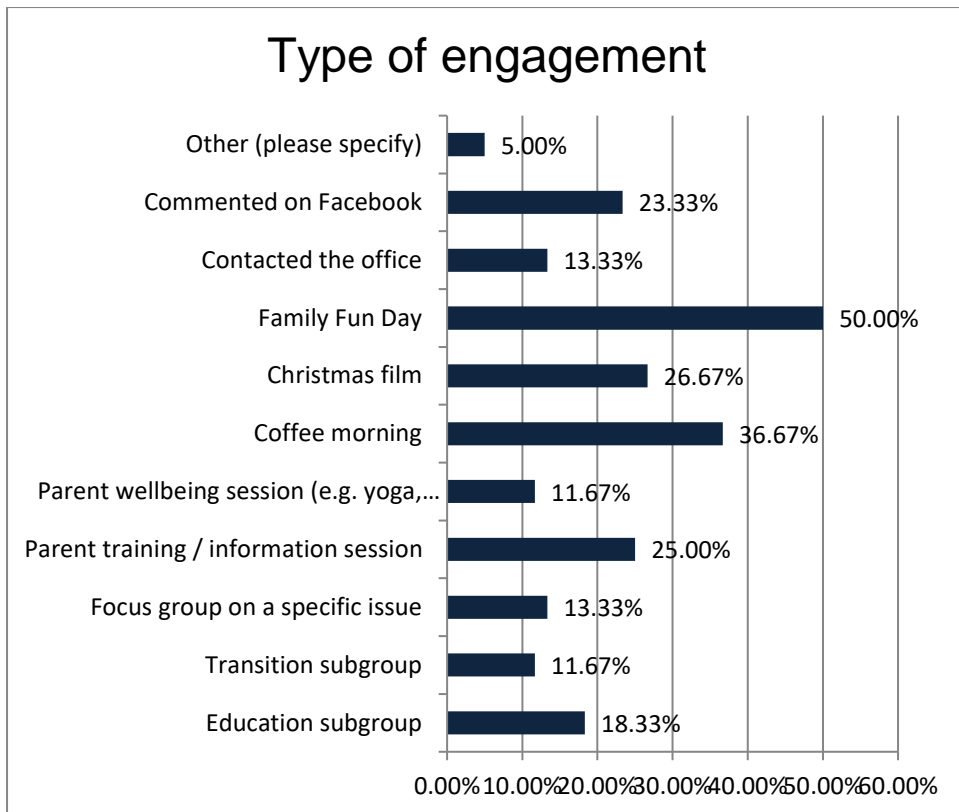
We asked our members if they had attended any of our meetings/events or given us feedback about local services in the past two years.



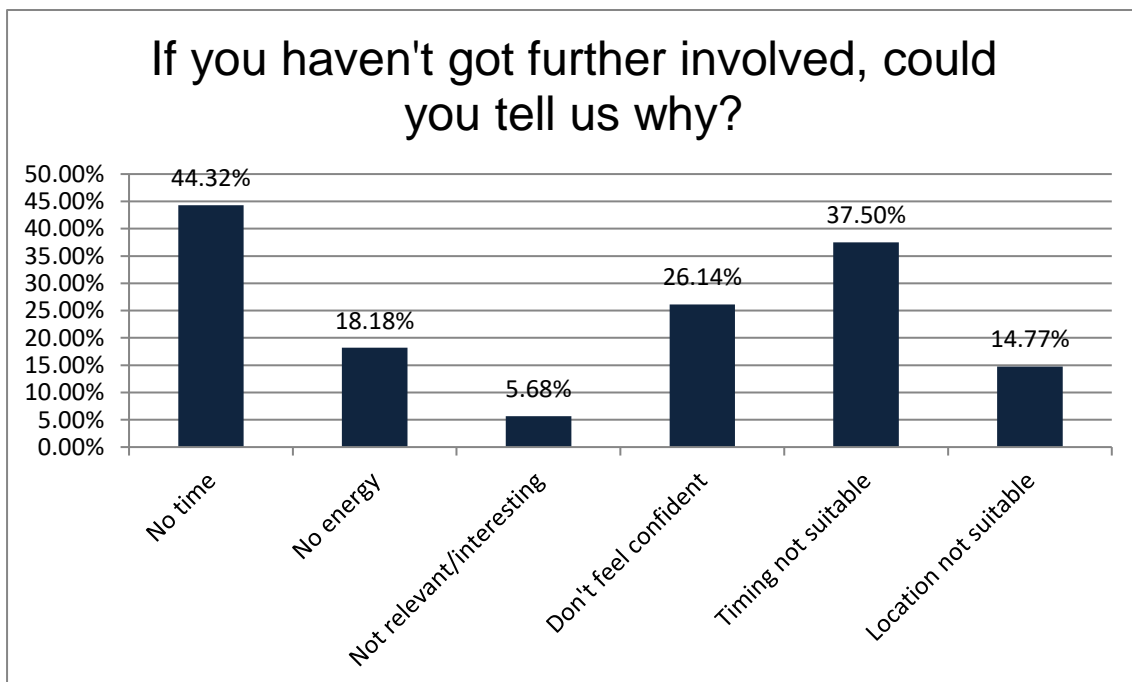
Engagement was lower than in previous surveys. This may reflect the ongoing impact of the pandemic.

Looking at parent carer attendance at our training sessions, events and outreach visits between February 2020 and February 2022, 23% of attendees were non White British and 22% 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: 22% had joined in 2010-2014, 55% in 2015-2019, and 23% in 2020-2022.

Of the survey respondents who had engaged with SPCF, most had attended the family fun day, a coffee morning or the Christmas film:



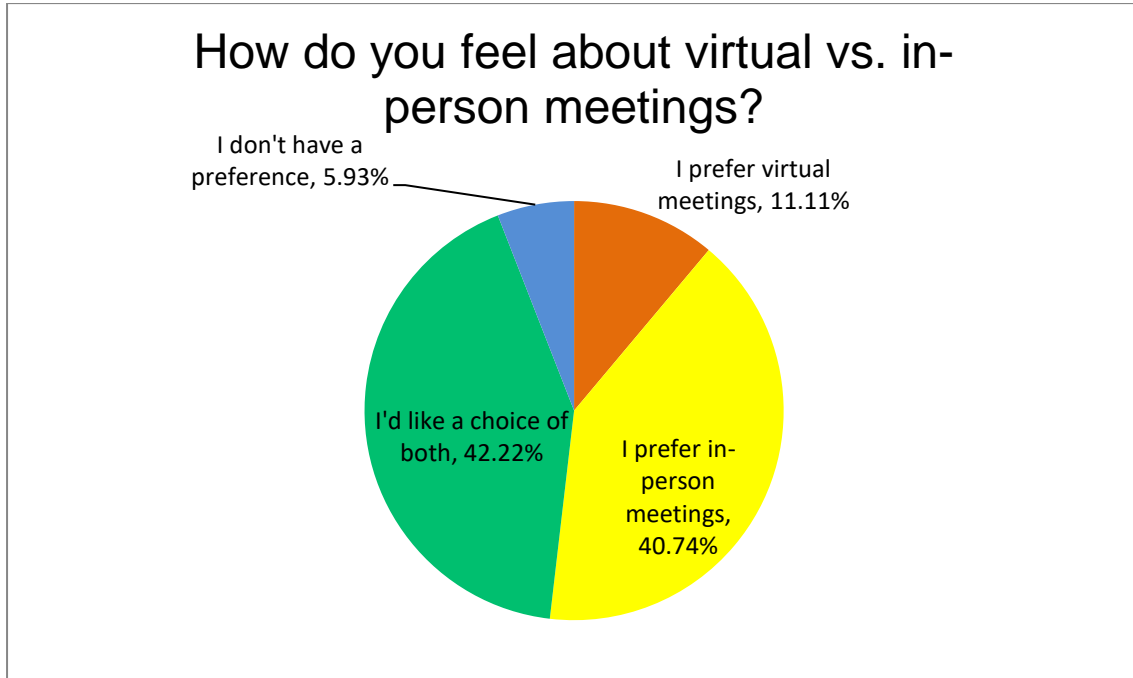
We asked members who hadn't got more involved with SPCF to tell us why. 88 people responded. The main reasons given were that the timing of the meetings/events was not suitable or that the parents did not have time to take part.



In the free-text comments, several parents said that work and family commitments left them no free time to attend events. Several parents said they were disabled themselves and found

it hard to get to places and/or cope with crowds and noise. Several respondents said they didn't attend because of Covid.

We asked respondents how they felt about virtual versus in-person meetings. Responses indicate that there is value in continuing to offer virtual meetings alongside in-person events now that restrictions have been lifted:



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. 95% of respondents said that they were confident or very confident. This is a small deterioration (-3%) compared to the previous survey.

	Number of responses	Percentage	
Very confident	57	42%	95%
Confident	72	53%	
Not confident	7	5%	5%
Not at all confident	0	0%	

Eight respondents answered the follow-up question asking about the reason for their lack of confidence and what we could do to improve.

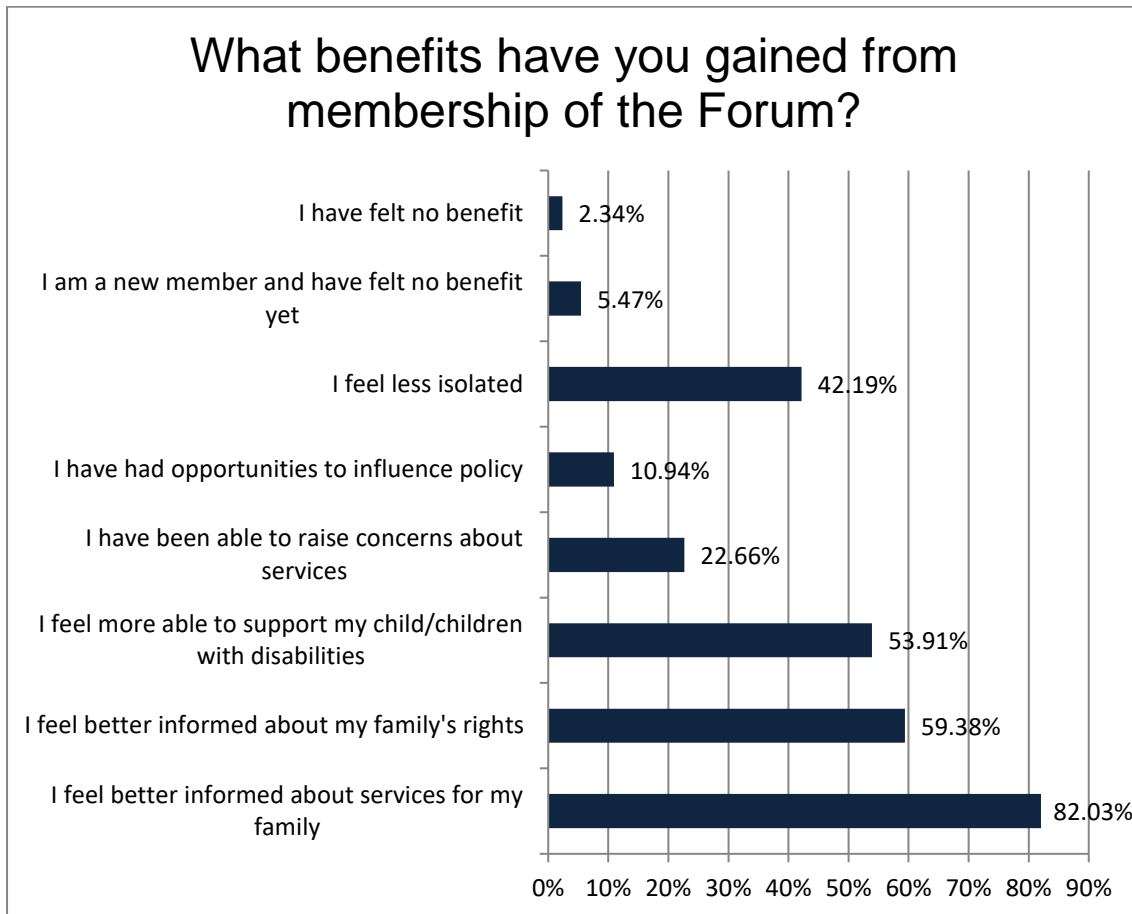
However, not all of these responses related to the question. The only relevant responses were:

- More representation of post-18

- Confident but feel messages have to be toned down because the truth could really hurt
- CAMHS and government organisations don't pay attention to anyone, so getting things to change never works

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 (82%), telling them about their rights (59%), and enabling them to support their children better (54%). The percentage of parents who said they felt less isolated was higher than in the previous survey (42% vs. 30%); this may reflect the fact that we are now able to return to running family events and physical meetings.

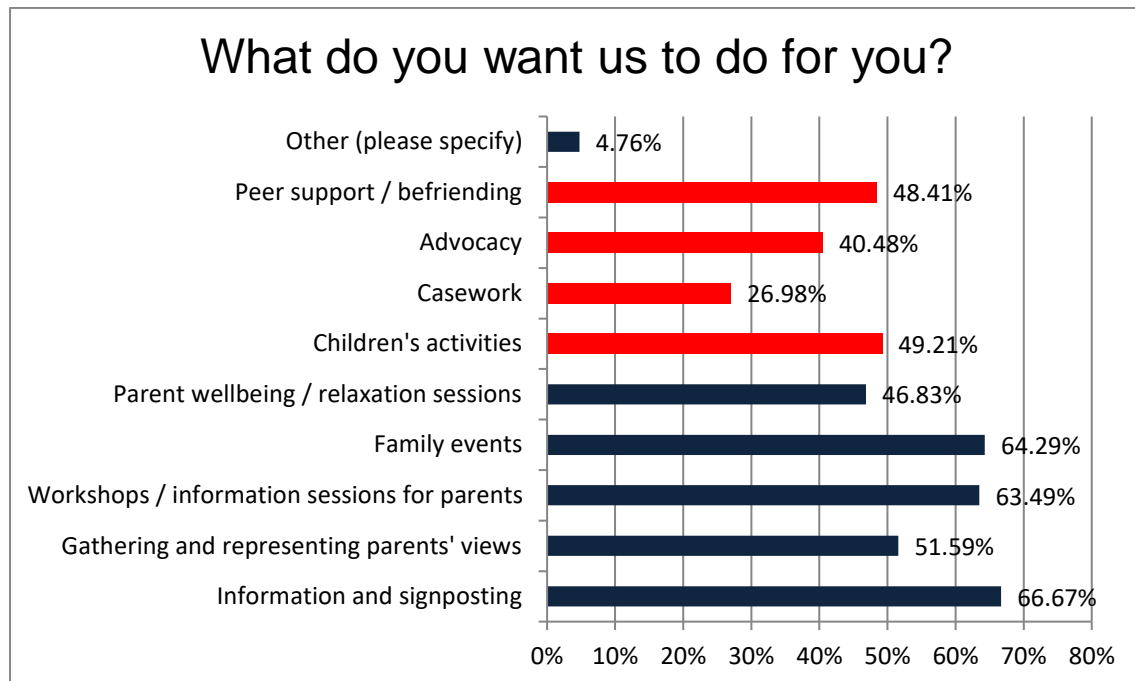
What our members want us to do for them

We asked 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.

There was an increase in the number of parents who said they wanted us to gather and represent parents' views, compared to the previous survey (52% vs. 38% in 2020). This may reflect our involvement in the recent re-visit by Ofsted and the CQC.

There was also an increase in the number of parents who wanted us to provide peer support/befriending, casework and advocacy – all activities that we currently don't have funding for.

The demand for children's activities and workshops/information sessions for parents was slightly lower than in the previous survey, whereas the demand for information/signposting was higher.



Comments under “Other” included:

- Help with finding PAs / Personal Budgets
- Support for siblings
- Pathways / support for post-16 / employment
- Support from social care
- Making contact with parents whose children at the next stage of education to learn from them

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. Half of respondents said yes, the other half said no. We asked those who said yes to provide more information. The most common answers were:

- **Finding activities for their child to attend**

“I have been able to access activity groups that I was previously unaware of - this has provided more opportunities for my child to do interesting things that they enjoy”

- **Information about EHC plans**

“Successfully appealed a decision on EHC plan and am much more confident about how the system works.”

- **Learning how to escalate concerns**

“When respite care got stopped, advice from SPCF helped us to know who to contact to raise our concerns”

- **Information about grants, e.g. Short Break Grant**

“I didn’t know I could claim short break grant until I read on your booklet.”

- **Finding out about useful services**

“Found out about Zoom sessions with Sendias.”

There were some lovely general comments, such as:

“SPCF have been a valuable guide along this pathway! A helping hand and really good advice on lots of matters. Even learning really useful advice from reading stories from other parents. It was learning about the 'short breaks grant' through SPCF that we were able to take our Son with ASD on a holiday where he felt at ease and was able to enjoy. The Council are not so good at communicating support available.”

60% of respondents had passed information received from us on to other people. This percentage is higher than in 2020 (52%), but 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 three most common issues were:

1. **Transition to post-16/18 education and into adulthood.** Several respondents highlighted a lack of education and social care provision for young people with complex needs
2. **Support in education**
3. **Better mental health support for children and parents.** Some respondents specifically mentioned issues with CAMHS

At least three respondents each mentioned the following topics: activities for children, information about rights, entitlements and pathways to support, holding Sheffield City Council to account, financial support, help for home-educating families, waiting times for diagnosis, issues with EHC plans, peer support for parents, and Covid recovery.

Comments included:

“Helping parents to know what they and their child are entitled to and how to successfully get it. Being able to guide parents through processes such as applying for DLA, EHCPs, home adaptation grants, and helping them to see through the mist of jargon and technical terms that make them feel they aren't eligible when they actually are!”

“Holding the LA to account for improving aspects that the Ofsted inspection of SEND provision highlight. Making the LA SEND Action Plan focus on priorities that matter and measures that are directly relevant. Starting at what we want our children with SEND’s lives

to look like at 25, work backwards to map how we deliver that for the different severities of SEND that we know we have/likely to have. How support our children with aspiration? Put in place a variety of provision that is aspirational about our kids' futures”

“Help people negotiate the 'system'. Its complex, keeps changing and half the time those who are responsible for assessing and providing support are also struggling to understand things, so the odds are really stacked against you.”

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

78 people answered this question. There were no complaints, but lots of positive comments, such as:

“Only to say that you do a tremendous job. Please be assured that whilst, given all the conflicting priorities parent/carers have, we don't often have time to say thank you, all the work you do is very much appreciated. “

“The staff & volunteers are always special and go out of their way to make each person special”

“Please keep doing what you do! Just more of it please.”

A few respondents made suggestions:

- More focus on the transition to adulthood, working with adult social care representatives
- Challenging the lack of five-day provision for young people at college
- Having a strategic plan for SPCF, setting goals for the next five years
- Investigating poor provision and feeding information back to the CCG and local authority
- Working with the council to fight for services/funding
- Providing an advocacy service

How we will use the information from this survey

Newsletter

In response to topics suggested by parents, we will:

- include more frequent and more prominent links to the information about local support groups and leisure activities that we already have on our website
- work with professionals to provide more advice on specific issues
- ensure we include more articles about the transition to post-16 education / adulthood

Events and meetings

The main barrier to attending our events was having no time, or the timing of events not being suitable. There was also a clear case for continuing to offer virtual options. We plan to offer both virtual and in-person meetings going forward, and we are exploring the use of

hybrid options. To accommodate working parents, we recently trialled evening meetings again. However, as in previous years, these continue to be poorly attended.

We will continue to offer the events that are popular with our members, particularly our family events, parent wellbeing/relaxation sessions, and workshops and information sessions. We currently have funding for these events from Gripple and the People's Health Trust. We will start submitting bids for future events well before this funding runs out.

Survey responses showed a high level of demand for peer support, befriending and advocacy. We will be able to address some of this through the new peer support service we are currently in the process of setting up.

Priorities

Parents highlighted transition, support in education and mental health support for children and parents as the top issues they wanted us to focus on.

Transition is already a focus for Sheffield City Council and Sheffield CCG, as this was one of the areas of weakness identified during the 2019 SEND inspection. In February 2022, Sheffield was judged to have made insufficient progress in relation to transition, and was ordered to produce an action plan. We will be involved in monitoring progress against this action plan, and we will continue to gather parents' views to check whether the actions that are being implemented are resulting in improvements on the ground. We will also run an information day around transition in the autumn of 2022.

We will continue to have a focus on **support in education**, through our Education subgroup and our membership of various strategic groups, such as the Inclusion Taskforce. In addition, our involvement in the Autism in Schools project is enabling us to gather parents' views about the support provided for students with additional needs (not just autism) in mainstream secondary schools, and to feed this into the development of staff training. We have also been working with the local authority to develop an online questionnaire which will allow parents to give feedback on SEND provision at individual schools, nurseries and colleges. This feedback will be used alongside other data to target school improvement activities at settings that need this.

We will continue to push for improvements to **mental health support**, and we are working hard to bring CAMHS to the table. We have asked the Council and the CCG to carry out a mapping exercise in order to produce an overview of mental health services and access pathways, and this has been agreed. Once completed, we will share this with our members.