



Children & Young People's Strategic Partnership

Parental Participation Project

STAGE 3 - Case Studies 2020/2021



Developed by



ParentingNI

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Executive Summary

Through the development of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) Parental Participation Project over the past number of years a need was identified to evidence; where parents access family support, the barriers and challenges parents face when accessing family support, how parents can best be supported to reduce these barriers and how to improve parents' access to family support. There was also a need identified from Outcomes Groups that key findings and recommendations were specific to their areas.

To enable the project to gather this information the process was split into three stages:

- **Stage One** gather general information from 656 parents regarding their access to support and the barriers they face. (completed in 2020)
- **Stage Two** gather more specific information which would be used by the CYPSP to help inform service design and provision. 742 parents participated; these were different parents than those that had participated in stage one, as they had completed an anonymised online survey. (completed in 2020)
- **Stage Three** utilise the data already collected in Stage 1 and 2 and further enrich this data with detailed case studies from parents to demonstrate the story behind the statistics. A total of 26 parents and 5 practitioners participated in the stage 3; focused study.

Recap of Key Findings from Stage One and Two. Study suggested a need for:

- More availability and accessibility to mental health support for children and young people and their parents
- Increased awareness of the Early Intervention Family Support available for parents
- Training and advice for practitioners on more effective communication with parents in language they understand i.e.no acronyms.
- Further exploration on the best way forward to review written communication methods between services and parents in relation to Early Intervention Family Support Services
- CYPSP to re-assess the gaps in services as suggested by parents.
- CYPSP website 'Parents Page' to include more advice for parents that they can use at home, possibly focusing on the following areas suggested by parents, e.g., children's emotional health, child behaviour, parental mental health.

- Parental Participation Project to target the activity locations as suggested by parents, i.e., youth clubs, sporting venues, to promote support services and share information on the Family Support Hubs and Family Support NI website directly to parents.

For Stage 3; case studies sought feedback from parents on what would support them moving forward, to help inform future service provision. An input from practitioners working directly with families was included to add an additional dimension to the information being gathered directly from parents. A total of 26 parents and 5 practitioners participated in this stage 3; focused study. The views received from parents and practitioners were considerable and there were many clear themes identified. The key feedback (by Outcomes Group area) includes:

Northern area feedback from parents suggests the need for a central hub/single point of contact, more support for parents and funding for mental health **(for more information see appendix 1)**.

Belfast area feedback from parents suggests the need for more effective collaborative working, mental health support, support for children with additional needs and a single point of *contact* **(for more information see appendix 2)**

Southern area feedback from parents suggests the need for more effective information sharing, more support for parents and a single point of contact **(appendix 3)**

South Eastern area feedback from parents suggests the need for more emotional/mental health support, more opportunities for young people more collaborative working and information on how to access support **(appendix 4)**

Western area feedback from parents suggests the need for more practical support for parents going through separation, immediate Early Intervention support, self-help strategies, inclusive support services and a central hub **(appendix 5)**

The CYPSP Parental Participation Project acknowledges the valuable contribution parents have made to this research and wishes to thank them for taking the time to contribute and provide valuable input.

Background

The CYPSP recognise the importance of engaging effectively with and involving parents, therefore, commissioned Parenting NI to deliver a Parental Participation Project. One element of this work is to carry out direct engagement with parents to ensure that parents have a voice in planning support and services in their local area.

Definition of Parents

Before it can be effectively established why it is important to encourage parental participation, it is important to outline what is meant by “parents” and “participation”.

The Council of Europe, (2006, European Committee for Social Cohesion), recommendation 19 states that the term “parent” refers to persons with parental authority or responsibility. “The term parent not only refers to biological parents but also those who are involved in caring for and raising children”. In UK Law, the Education Act 1996 defines a Parent as “any person who is not a parent of [a child] but who has parental responsibility for [a child], or who has care of [a child]”. This outlines that a “parent” does not necessarily have to be the biological mother or father of a child but can be anyone with parental responsibility. For the purposes of this report the term “parent” refers to anyone who plays a significant role in the upbringing of a child (i.e., mother, father, foster carer, adoptive parents, step-parents, grandparents, legal guardians and kinship carers).

Parental Participation Model

The aim of involving parents is to empower them to be involved in the decision-making process across all levels, with a focus on improving the quality of life for children and their families. Parents are their children’s primary carers, their first educators and first source of knowledge. Participation with parents is fundamental to creating an effective relationship between parents and organisations seeking to improve engagement. Parental participation requires the engagement of all parents. Collaboration should be pro-active rather than reactive, sensitive to the circumstances of all families, recognise the contributions parents can make, and aim to empower parents.

To fully understand and effectively embed parental participation in practices, the project used the David Wilcox which sets out a theoretical framework. According to Wilcox's framework, the most important element in the process is the individual or group who controls the decision-making process. His model assumes that organisations/planners decide to initiate a practice of involving others in their decision-making process, rather than taking a grassroots approach where citizens attempt to affect an organisation without being invited; therefore, the organisation decides how the process will occur and the level of control it will give to its participants.

Wilcox's participation process involves five stages; information, consultation, deciding together, acting together, and supporting independent action and takes into account that participation practices occur over time. Throughout the parental participation exercises, Parenting NI ensured an environment was provided that brought parents together in a way that allowed them to share their views and identify issues both of individual and common concern through informal, stimulating discussion, which adhered to a facilitation guide and ensured the fidelity of the research. Throughout the engagements with the parents the importance of their participation and the value of their contributions was highlighted.



Engagement is about motivating and empowering families to recognise their own needs, strengths, and resources and to take an active role in changing things for the better.

Stage 3 Introduction

The CYPSP Outcomes Groups and the Locality Planning Groups members provided valuable input to enrich the data and information gathered from Stage 1 and Stage 2; this helped inform stage 3 of the project. This stage involved the need to share experiences and challenges that families face and how the CYPSP, through their action planning, can help to support families across Northern Ireland to reduce these challenges. The CYPSP Parental Participation Project engaged directly with parents to hear about their experiences, listened to their challenges and documented how these parents felt these challenges could be supported.

Methodology

Stage 3 of The Parental participation engagement was completed over a 4-month period from November 2020 to February 2021 using a one-to-one interview method. Contact was made with Statutory, Voluntary and Community organisations and schools including SEN schools across the region to recruit parents and practitioners to take part in these interviews. The interviews were carried out through zoom and phone calls with 26 parents and 5 practitioners. These are documented in the Case Studies within this report. (see appendix A for Parents case studies and Appendix B for practitioner case studies)

The focus of interviews was to seek feedback from parents on the following questions:

- 1. What have your experiences been during COVID-19 Lockdowns Eg any concerns about your children/family, finances, mental health etc?**
- 2. What support are you currently receiving? Did you use online support, what was it?**
- 3. What support would benefit you now and your family and in future. (Are there any services / support missing in your area?)**

The focus of the interviews with practitioners was to obtain feedback on the following:

- 1. What challenges are you or your organisation facing?**

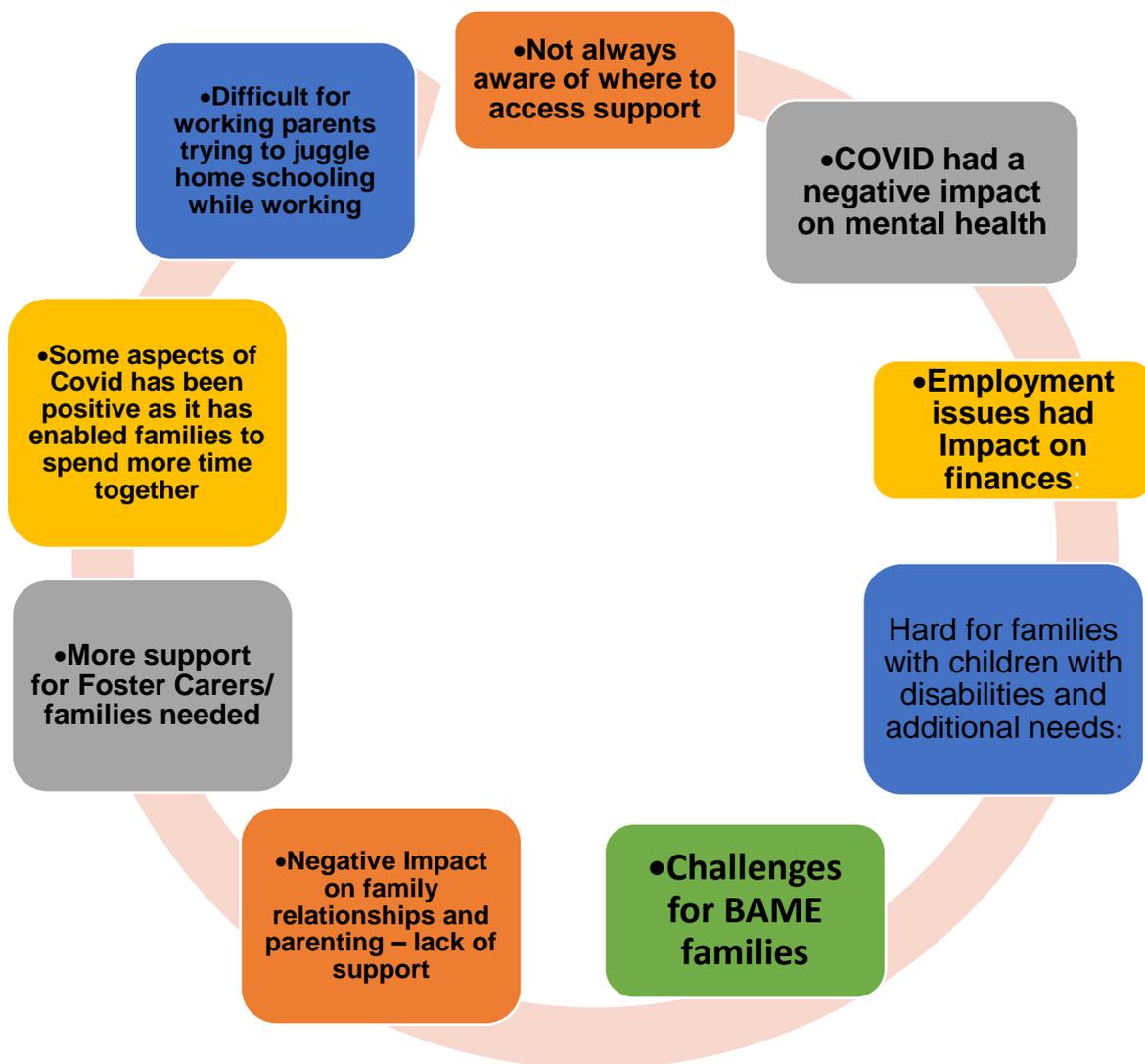
2. What challenges are the families you are working with facing?
3. What challenges have you been able to overcome? And how?
4. What challenges are you still facing?
5. What support do you feel would help you/your organisation and the families you work with?

Stage 3 Findings Summary

Parent's feedback:

1. Experiences during Covid; - difficulties, concerns about children/family, finances, mental health etc?

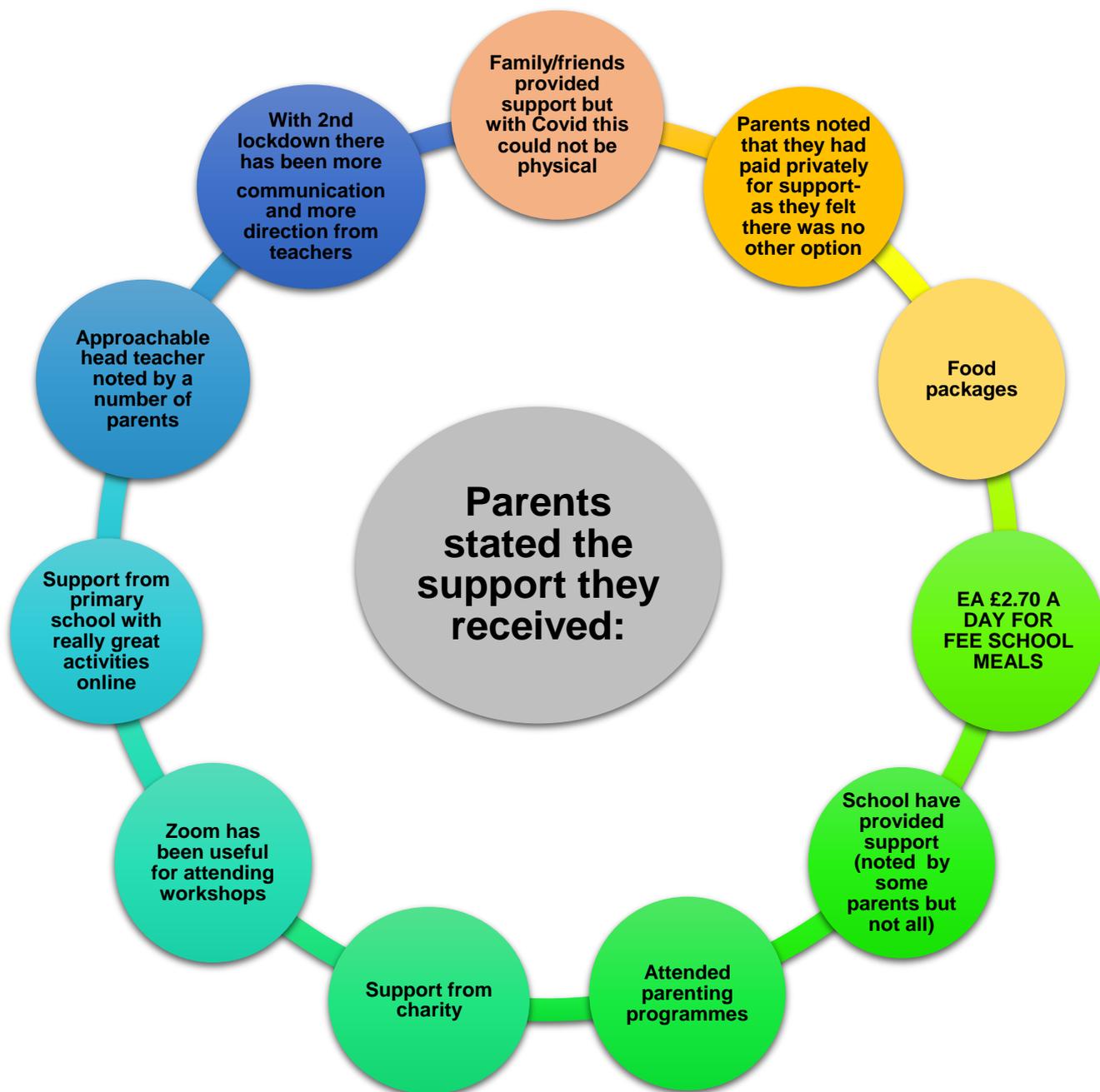
Parents shared mixed experiences, difficulties, and concerns. Parents reported:



2. What support are you currently receiving and if you accessed online support, what was it?

Most parents commented that they were not receiving support, as they had not felt the requirement to do so, however when they were met with the complexities, issues and anxieties that COVID brought they didn't know where to turn to for support. Many commented on the lack of information on what was available in their local area.

Parents stated the support they received included:



3. What support would benefit you now and your family and in future. (Are there any services / support missing in your area?)

Parents shared many suggestions that would help them and their family in the future.: These have been grouped into five categories,

- 1.Disability
- 2.Mental Health
- 3.Education
- 4.Poverty.
- 5.Other (BAME, Medical, signposting/ information

Support for children with Disability and their families

There were 10 direct comments from parents specific to supporting children with a disability and their families. They stated there needs to be more help for parents with children with a disability and additional need. Parents suggested support such as having more information on places/groups/support where parents can take children with additional needs e.g.

- Summer schemes for children with additional needs,
- Courses for siblings who have a brother or sister with special needs,
- Youth club or small group for those with Autism,
- Befriender service.
- Parents said they would benefit from a list of childcare providers who are SEN approved.
- Parents noted that children do not want to be highlighted as having a disability, so services need to recognise this.

Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing support for children and parents

There were 22 direct comments from parents specific to Mental health and emotional wellbeing support for children and parents. These included

- Parents stated that there needs to be more support to fund mental health and that services need to last longer than 6 weeks; and that this support should not be taken away when it is just starting to have a positive impact.
- Parents suggested having more services available for foster carers, parents of teenagers, support groups for parents and counselling for parents and children regionally. This would also include support in schools and support for working parents.
- Another suggestion included having Sure Start available in all areas including lactation and breast feeding support and emotional wellbeing resources for parents to help their children.
- Parents said that there is a need for specialist services to help those children whose parents are struggling with their own mental health.
- Parents commented that people are focused on food parcels but the deeper seeded issues are not being addressed and services need to be inclusive of all needs,

Education Support (including. managing anxiety/stress/ disruptive routines and boundaries)

There were 20 direct comments from parents relating to education. In the main parents were talking about their frustrations regarding contact with schools during Covid, which tended to be very hit and miss.

- Many parents reflected on the importance of the parent school relationship and particularly the role of the headteacher.
- Numerous parents mentioned their exasperation that there appears to be little link between school/education and health and that there could be more joined up working. Organisations could provide schools with information on services so that this can be given to parents.
- Other areas that parents discussed included the need for schools to be more open, improved relationships with parents including more reports and information provided at parent teacher meetings and better opportunities for parents to have a voice.

Poverty (financial issues/food/fuel/digital poverty/increase dependency on food banks)

There were 7 direct comments from parents specific to poverty and financial issues.

- Parents discussed the struggles of home schooling and having access to technology for schoolwork. They did not know who they could contact to access discretionary support or budgeting loans to help make ends meet.
- Some parents suggested workshops on such information would have been helpful and that it should not be a postcode lottery to access services, and all support should be regional.
- Parents said that financial support for families is essential at times like this (post Covid lockdown) and that they were able to get some reprieve when kids received school dinners.
- Parents suggested a food voucher or money for food would have been beneficial to the family as it would have given them the opportunity to provide meals to their families that met their cultural needs. Though, parents did state they were appreciative of food banks they do feel services need to be mindful of other cultures when providing food parcels and providing good healthy parcels to families at a time of need.

Signposting/Information

There were a significant number (16 direct comments) from parents specific to signposting and information sharing.

- Parents stated that there needs to be more information on what local services are available and easier access to services.
- Parents suggested that professionals should not use abbreviations, they need to say what it actually is and not assume parents know what they are talking about.
- Many parents discussed the need for a central hub for people to go to and find out information, announcements and what is going on in the area e.g., website. They said this needs to be a 360 package offering better communication, signposting operating regionally, mapping all agencies like a family tree.
- Parents suggested putting together a task force to look at potential risks, e.g., health risk, physical and mental health, addressing issues such as schooling, isolation and loneliness.
- A further suggestion was the need for speech and language therapists, cognitive social skills coming together in a partnership to offer remote assistance to parents/ children through zoom or another platform.

Other areas of need – (BAME, Medical)

BAME:

There were 5 direct comments from parents specific to BAME. They commented that some parents from other cultures are very proud and would not seek help and more needs to be done to reduce the stigma.

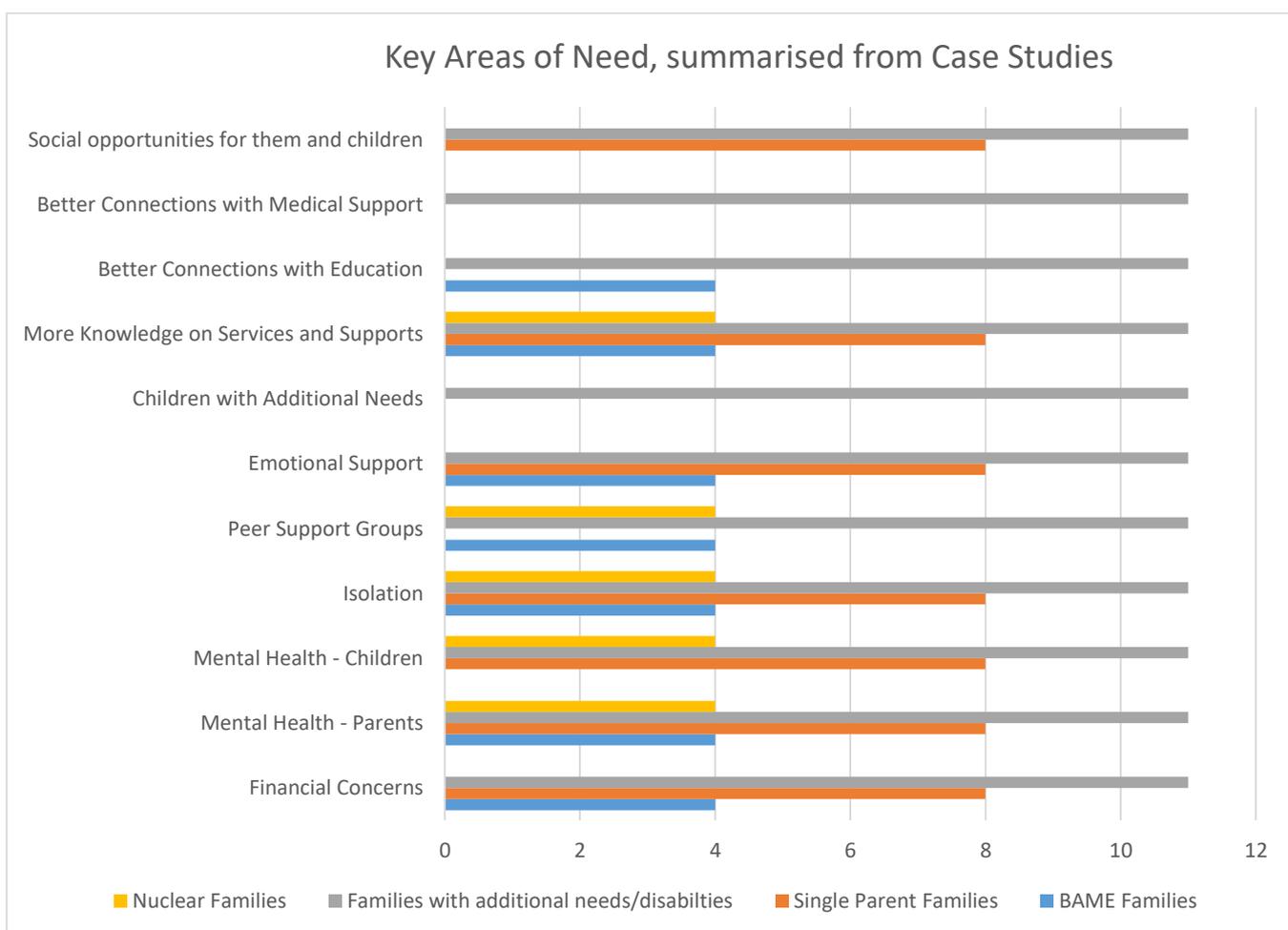
- Parents suggested this could be done through more awareness and engagement with different ethnicities from a policy and legislation perspective and also services need to give parents alternatives, which would meet their cultural and social needs.
- Other areas discussed were the need for more support for women who are single parents who have migrated and for the Government to enable them to work if they have the required skills.

Medical:

There were 3 direct comments from parents specific to medical needs. Parents said they should be able to see a GP for their children and should not have to wait disproportionate amounts of time for medical test results. Parents also stated that a new referral should not need to be made when your child is already accessing services and have been previously seen by medical team e.g., physio referral

Conclusion and Recommendations

Parents have demonstrated through all three stages of the consultation process that they not only want better access to the support they and their children need, but that they also want those providing this support to fully understand their challenges and barriers. In summary, an overview of the key issues that are reflected across the 26 case studies demonstrated in the graph below, show a wide and diverse range of family need which will require a broad and cross sector approach to fully address.



The recommendations, per Outcomes areas identified within the following sections (Appendix 1- Appendix 5) will work towards addressing these challenges and barriers. The Parental Participation Project will provide the CYPSP with the necessary support to begin to implement the recommendations highlighted through collaboration with all key stakeholders

Regional Recommendations

A number of clear recommendations across all 5 Outcomes areas are to provide parents with more information and easier access routes into services/ supports they require. Additionally, ongoing upskilling of all practitioners who engage with parents and families would ensure they have a solid understanding of the challenges and barriers face (See Appendix 1 – 5 to note specific recommendations to Outcomes Areas)

The next stage will be to engage with the CYPSP Structure to include Partnership, Outcomes Groups and Locality Planning Groups to obtain their input into the implementation of these recommendations.

- Outcomes Groups to take account of views of parents and recommendations into their action planning process
- Parenting NI to present to Outcomes Groups/LPGs
- Parenting NI to close feedback loop to parents following the presentations to OGs, to include signposting.

Appendix 1

Northern Outcomes Group Area

Ref: Appendix A Case studies 1,2,5,6,7,9,10,11,12,17 and 26

Parents noted it would be helpful for teachers to be provided with the opportunity to be skilled in a number of prevalent areas and have updated training, i.e. Trauma and attachment, hidden disability with foster children etc. A number of parents suggested that there needs to be more collaborative working with Education including special needs schools and service providers to ensure effective information sharing to parents. It was suggested that some schools could be more open and transparent e.g., share information on what training they have had and schools could use parent/teacher meetings to share information on local support services.

Numerous parents expressed the need for all practitioners within special needs schools to work collaboratively to provide Early intervention to help children who need one to one in school. Parents expressed the need of having a single point of contact, e.g., Educational psychologist, parent representative to support parents after assessment.

Other parents noted the need for SureStart to be made available for all families in the Northern area. Also, parents reflected that it was important to provide support to families when needed and have shorter waiting lists including access to Disability social workers. Parents suggested having a more updated robust referral system to speed up the process and to avoid repeat referrals between services, i.e., triage system, more support from ASD team, checking with family on what support they need, respite for parents, accessible database for parents to track progress, support for single parents to help with managing multiple health issues for each child. Also, the need for the Education Authority to check in on families regarding their needs, i.e., travel to school.

A small number of parents suggested more support, compassion, consideration and communication would be helpful for foster carers.

Recommendations made by parents:

- Easier access to services at a centralised hub and a single point of contact for each service e.g.info on appropriate car seats; information on where to access financial support.

- Summer-schemes for children with
 - additional needs
 - support for their siblings
 - befriender service
 - transition service from 18+ years

- Support groups/training for parents, for example,
 - Mindfulness,
 - Incredible Years,
 - Refresher on Autism,
 - play therapy,
 - OT teaching parents techniques to use, re Autism, ASD, ABA,
 - support with sourcing physical aids, i.e., weighed blankets, high release through sand,
 - CBT strategies,
 - Complimentary therapies,
 - Proactive stress management, Kids yoga,
 - Joint parent support services.

- Invest equally in youth groups across localities to help with anti-social behaviour and more services for teenagers.

- Practitioners to always use parent friendly language, Avoid abbreviations and jargon.

- More funding for mental health is vital.

Appendix 2

Feedback and recommendations from Parents living in the Belfast Outcomes Group Area

Ref: Appendix A Case studies 3,4,15,16,19, 21 and 23

A number of parents raised issues relating to difficulties they have experience in relation to their migration to NI.

A number of issues were raised which were directly connected to the Covid 19 pandemic and Home-schooling in particular. These issues should be alleviated now that schools have reopened. However, one issue raised consistently from parents was the worry that their child had now 'fallen behind' in their work and would struggle to 'catch up'. There were mixed experiences noted from parents regarding their relationship with their child's school during lockdown. Numerous parents noted that they have felt isolated throughout this period.

Other issues raised included the need for follow up emotional support after hospital stay, particularly in a situation such as after miscarriage.

A parent with experience of the court process, discussed how this had resulted in them feeling isolated, and unsure how to access support. This parent specifically suggested the potential of having a buddy system or peer support in place to support vulnerable parents and families going through this experience.

Parents shared their struggles trying to 'make ends meet', worrying about their jobs and needing support from foodbanks.

Recommendations made by parents:

- More awareness and engagement with families from different ethnicities; Recognising issues affecting parents from other cultures.
- Organisations offering parents support, being inclusive of other cultures to avoid parents feeling isolated and/ or alienated. Services need to give parents alternatives and provide information, which would meet their cultural and social needs

- Foodbanks providing food for other cultures.
- More support for migrant parents specifically including more support for migrant women who are single parents.
- More support for children with additional needs.
- Support for children whose parents are struggling with their own mental health, learning difficulties etc.
- More collaborative working between service providers, e.g., counselling, social services/ GP/Police should be aware of local services and provide information on support available.
- Upskill practitioners on current issues facing parents and families.
- Advice and self-referral service – Collective effort from agencies giving advice on a range of services such as housing advice, benefits and other help and assistance to meet the needs of parents; A single point of contact would be helpful.
- Linking parents with a peer support worker or buddy system.
- Support groups on issues such as miscarriage.
- Book bank providing a good choice of books for children for toddlers to teenagers to share with others..

Appendix 3

Southern Outcomes group

Ref: Appendix A Case studies 24 and 25

It is important to note that only a small number of parents participated in case studies from the Southern Outcomes Area, therefore this may not be a fully representative sample of parents and families across the whole area.

The 2 participating Parents expressed the importance of educational resources being available at home to help learning e.g., phonics, technology (iPad) and schools to provide virtual “how to” sessions. (However, these concerns are notably specific to Covid – 19 lockdowns and should be alleviated once schools re open and home-schooling ends).

Other issues were noted including reference to the challenge of going through the family court system and a perceived lack of support for parents going through the SEN statementing process.

Recommendations made by parents:

- More parental support e.g., peer conversations, coffee mornings, someone to check in “how are you?”, virtual support (bingo, emotional support).
- More online sessions for children, including afterschool clubs, sibling sessions, mindfulness, building resilience, mental health support for whole family but mainly children.
- More information on family support, Health Visitor or GP sharing information on services and a single point of contact within the Trust would be helpful.
- More effective methods of sharing information to parents/practitioners.
- More support for working parents.

Appendix 4

South- Eastern Area Outcomes group

Ref: Appendix A Case studies 13, 14 and 18,

Childcare is an issue for parents who took part in the study from the South Eastern Area.

Participating parents noted they need more information on childcare providers who are SEN qualified. They also expressed the need for extended programmes like breakfast club, after schools clubs and summer provision for children with SEN.

A number of Parents stated the importance of face to face sessions for young people who have SEN to improve their learning and development. These sessions are also vital in providing respite for parents.

Parents noted concerned about their child's educational needs e.g., sensory support needs, assessment needs through Education Psychologist, falling behind in Education due to Covid. Parents feel the curriculum needs adjusted to provide support for children due to lost learning.

Parents shared that they feel under pressure and suggested schools should be providing emotional wellbeing resources for their children. They suggested more input from school to home regarding what is going to happen and alternative sources of learning for home schooling. It is noted some parents have said they received support from their school. (It is notable however that this concern is specific to home schooling during Covid and should be alleviated once children have now returned to school).

Recommendations made by parents:

- More emotional and mental health support through parent support groups. E.g., Autism NI and support for young people e.g., fun family activities, cooking tasks, life skills.
- Support for loneliness and isolation
- More information on support available for single parents e.g., financial

- Providing social opportunities and being inclusive – bringing young people together e.g., youth groups/clubs.
- More collaborative working between service providers.
- More available access to counselling for young people e.g., offering alternatives to CBT.
- Research and funding for alternative therapies to help people deal with trauma. EMDR (Eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing).
- Information on how to access family support for parents.

Appendix 5

Western Trust Outcomes group

Ref: Appendix A Case studies 8, 20 and 22

The participating Parents from the Western Outcomes group area commented that there needs to be more collaborative working between schools/services and Dept of Education to get information out to parents e.g., links to support services and information on parenting workshops.

The parents, of primary school children felt that there is a lack of support for children who do not meet the SEN threshold and have additional needs e.g., dyslexia. Some parents felt that teacher training is needed in these areas so that SEN can be identified sooner. Parents said they are struggling to get their children to engage in online sessions and expressed how children need contact with their social group through fun sessions as opposed to extra work and pressure – It is notable however that this concern is specific to home schooling during Covid and should be alleviated once children have returned to school.

Parents going through the court system said they worry about the long term impact on children as they feel it is not child or family centred.

Recommendations made by parents:

- Providing teenage workshops for parents relating to teen issues e.g., body image, eating disorders.
- More practical support for parents going through separation including how to talk to your child.
- Central Hub providing information on all support services e.g., eating disorders, family support, emotional wellbeing.

- Information sharing of relevant referral agents and more collaborative working.
- Support services to be inclusive of all parents and reflect this in advertising e.g., Dads, foster Carers, kinship Carers, grandparents, separated parents
- More self-help strategies/tools for emotional and practical support e.g., what to do, and how to cope.
- Providing immediate Early Intervention to ensure family's needs are met as early as possible.
- Providing Parenting information pre-birth including parental responsibility and legal obligation as a parent

The following appendix contains 26 parents case studies which provide more detail about the issues that the parents are experiencing and the impact these are having on their daily lives. The parents have also shared their views on what changes could be considered and also when a more collaborative approach would have provided them with more support.

Appendix A

PARENT CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY 1

Mum married with a Son aged 4, daughter aged 2 who have Severe learning difficulties, Autism, query ADHD, Global developmental delay, Macrocephaly (larger head).

Experience

As a family we have found it has impacted on our financial and mental health. Our son doesn't understand why he couldn't go to school but he has severe learning difficulties, Autism, query ADHD, and global developmental delay and macrocephaly. In addition, my daughter is waiting on an assessment as she has suspected ASD and learning difficulties. This lack of assessment may impact her ability to get a place in a special school, which is causing concern.

Mum has found that it is extremely difficult to get her child assessed and when she is talking to professionals they tend to use language which heightens her anxiety levels, as the professional assumes she knows what they mean. To help support her children mum has made her garden into a park, to enable her children to get outside and play. With her husband being furloughed Mum stated that they applied to get discretionary support but as it was based on last year's income, which was also low, they were not entitled.

What support have you received?

None. I have been trying to get a disability social worker for so long now but they are not reopening the case. A charity paid for a private O.T as nobody would help. You are just told, no at every corner.

The Social worker told mum that her son would have to wait until he is 5 as at that age he can get respite. Mum has friends who will give her respite but he needs a disability social worker, which she has been unable to get. Mum was desperate to get help and asked for a specialist buggy but was told no buggy could be provided until the Behaviour Team exhausts all avenues. With having 2 children with additional needs mum has said she has had to stop working which has added to the financial strain on the family and increased mum's anxiety levels. Mum said she gets help from friends and family but she needs more from the professionals. Mum explained her son's school have been very good, ringing

once a week during term time. Also, a charity has paid for an OT and safe space bed for her son which have been extremely helpful, and he loves it, as it makes him feel secure.

What would help?

- Ensure professionals do not use abbreviations, they need to say what it is they mean and do not assume parents know what they are talking about.
- Having more places where parents can take children with additional needs to have fun
- Easier access to services
- Discretionary support and budgeting loans don't take into consideration 2 children with additional needs into account

CASE STUDY 2

Mum with son aged 12 and 2 daughters aged 11 and 8 years with her daughter diagnosed having dyslexia and son has ASD and MLD.

Experience

Mum is a teacher and her husband is a pharmacist working on the frontline. Mum also cares for her parents who were vulnerable and shielding. Mums shared that the children found it hard as they need a routine and with the many changes establishing and maintaining a routine this has been impossible. Lockdown was beneficial in some ways as mum would never have known how severe her daughter's dyslexia was and the time has enabled her to hone in on supporting her son. At school there are loads of distractions and he can go for sensory walks if he needs to but having this time with him has been so important. "Lockdown give us time as a family for a breather. My daughter was showing signs of stress and anxiety due to doing the transfer test but I feel the pressure is off now due to it not taking place. Some of the vital services my son needs didn't happen, e.g., Physio which he needs as he has no control over his body, low muscle tone, etc. My son was very young (3.5 years) when he got diagnosed and got a statement in nursery year which has enabled him to get the support he needs. As a mum I have spent years understanding my children's needs and with so many professionals involved in his care it can be difficult for him. In addition, my husband struggles with his mental health".

What support have you received?

Through Covid-19, starting my day with Joe Wicks has been great. You have to look at the funny side and my kids now say it "Mummy's kitchen table classroom" today. Otherwise, it would have been horrendous. I have received no help or support through the past year which has been a challenge with home schooling 3 children, with one having severe additional needs.

What would help?

Mum shared the help she would need are:

- When your child is under medical teams, not to have to wait a year for results.
- Summer schemes for children with additional needs
- Youth clubs which start earlier
- One to one swimming lesson for children with additional needs

- Play therapy
- Courses for siblings who have a brother or sister with special needs.
- Professionals taken out of Moderate learning school and put in severe learning school.
- If a child has a stage 5 statement, there should be school Psychologist, Physiotherapist, play therapist and speech and language therapist all in the moderate learning school.
- Not having to make new referrals for Physio when already been seen
- Support for travel to school is needed.
- More workshops for parents including information on direct payments
- Having reports on my son's progress
- Having a central hub for people to go to and find out info, announcements and what is going on in the area.

CASE STUDY 3

Single mum with daughter aged 14 from the BAME community

Experience

As a self-employed single parent, I have had challenges managing my income due to Covid. However, as a member of the BAME community I have had to understand how Covid is impacting on my community and if my family have any underlying medical conditions which may be affected by Covid, which has led me to explore my families DNA as well as seeking advice from my GP, as a Black person and single parent, where there increased risks for example. As a single parent I am more aware of the risk for my daughter if I am ill or worse. Covid has meant I have had to have difficult conversations with my daughter about what would happen if I am no longer around.

It has been difficult isolating myself and my daughter from our family, friends and school so to reduce the risk of getting sick. Thinking about the logistics about how my child will progress and keeping her updated with school has been difficult however we keep trying new things which has worked for me. One of the biggest challenges is understanding Universal Credit and the effects of this.

What support have you received?

I have friends who are professionals and counsellors, which has been so helpful as I have been having frequent conversations with them. We don't have counsellors in my origin, but talking to my friends, who are counsellors has really helped me and my daughter.

What would help?

- Being born in Zimbabwe and growing up in U.S, I am a proactive person. Some parents from other cultures are very proud and would not seek help, so providing Zoom support alone would not work. Need to look at other ways to engage parents
- More awareness and engagement with different ethnicities from policy and legislation perspective.
- Parents migrated here are losing their children to the system due to differences in culture. More education and support for these parents on what the rules and regulations are
- More engagement with parents and give parents alternatives, which meet their cultural and social needs

- Live conversations with parents and families on Facebook so to reduce stigma
- More support for women who are single parents who have migrated.
- We need to be talking to all parents and be inclusive of all needs.

CASE STUDY 4

Asylum seeker single mum with 2 children aged 14 and 18 years, who has mental ill health herself.

Experience

As an asylum seeker, I am living on £5 a day, which I have been doing for 2 years. I feel my family are not accepted here in Northern Ireland. In my home country I wasn't allowed to do many things and I lost my brother in Nigeria which has traumatised me and I have to take anti-depressants. Before Covid we went to places for lunch and dinner, now we rely on food packages we receive from a local charity once every two weeks. When our children were in school they were getting meals, which was a relief to me. I try to go for walks to help with my mental health but with so many restrictions, it has been really hard. We couldn't get a laptop for my children to home school and with the library not being open and restrictions not allowing us to go to a friend's house, my children have really struggled. We had to use the mobile phone to do their schoolwork. It took months but recently we did get a computer which was so helpful. My children find it difficult trying to do schoolwork at home.

What support have you received?

Food Packages

Education Authority £2.70 per day for meal paid fortnightly

What would help?

- Access to a computer or laptop to help the family, to access schoolwork
- Support with the children's education, this would really help as my daughter is very active too.
- Support for my son to keep him active, he would have participated in sport in school.
- Appeal to the government to allow us to work, our mental health will improve. We can work for our money we feel that we are wasting away.

We are on the appeal stage since May 2019 and now with Covid everything is closed.

CASE STUDY 5

Separated mum who has struggled with her mental health and experienced domestic violence. She has 5 children aged 24, 15, 11, 9 and 6. Three children have additional needs, 9 and 6 year olds have a genetic disorder which has led to sight loss, 6 year old has PICA and Autism, and 11 year old has mild sclerosis which impacts on his mobility

Experience

Mum shared that with her families challenging needs she struggles at times. She has said her 15 year old daughter is now suspended and she is struggling with her mental health, without the help of CAMHS. She said she missed one appointment and was struck off and the only reason her daughter missed the appointment was that mum was sick. The daughter has now been getting support from a teacher at her school if she feels overwhelmed. Mum is having difficulties getting her 11 year old son the help he needs, he is currently on stage 2 SEN but he needs to be on stage 4 before the school Psychologist can help but he needs the help now as his behaviour is extreme, even violent. He needs brain calming time so he has the space rather than lashing out. "There is not enough information to guide me as a mum. I have done the Incredible Years Programme and received support after that but it doesn't have info where I can go if a child is displaying x, y and z traits". Mum is currently going through a divorce and her children are safe now but the impact that domestic violence has had on herself and her children has been significant.

What support have you received?

Social Worker set up minimal respite for her daughter but after 6 months this has been taken away from her. This devastated her daughter as she had just started to build up trust with the worker, then it was taken away. Barnardo's provided a 6 week support and gave the children a laptop to help with home schooling which has really helped.

What would help?

- Services for families need to be longer than 6 weeks
- More support to fund mental health support for parents and young people
- More support for parents to enable them to take a break when they are parenting children with health, behavioural or other complex issues

CASE STUDY 6

Mum, married with 2 foster children, 1 birth son, 1 birth daughter, 3 stepsons. Adopted son aged 15 has Autism and learning difficulties.

Experience

As a foster carer for 15 years, I have had 130 placements and I also take in mummy's and babies. I adopted my son at 6.5 months who is now 15 and I have had my teenage foster daughter for 5 years, who due to trauma didn't speak when she first came to live with me, but now she is doing extremely well, studying for her A Levels and aiming to go to University. Mum shared that in her experience some schools do not understand children with disabilities and additional needs, especially foster and adoptive children but when a principal has an understanding this makes a big difference in the lives of the child and parent. These children can display bad behaviour when they are not coping. It got so bad in school that my son tried to take his life last year as he was not getting any help. Expelling children is not the solution, schools need to understand the reasons behind the actions and make referrals for support. I get frustrated as I can't get other people to see what I see. When a professional request a report from the school, the school will give a glowing report so it doesn't look like they can't control the behaviour. The child goes to secondary school and then mixes with the wrong crowd which causes more issues for the child. Over lockdown my son refused to do schoolwork, he wouldn't open the windows encase the virus came in, his anxiety was very high which flared up his Eczema, due to stress, wouldn't come down for dinner either. The messages out there are causing our children trauma and professionals are not seeing that. For my daughter lockdown was a positive experience as she had the time she needed and her school was brilliant, consistently communicating with her and I could speak to the teacher if she was getting stressed or needed help. Such a difference this has made

What support have you received?

A previous principal was brilliant, they suggested getting my child a dog, which I did and this really helped to calm him down. We just cope ourselves with no help. I have attended some private workshops and did research online

What would help?

- Schools having strong leadership, and this starts with the Principal
- Teaching staff need upskilled to support children with additional needs
- Schools understanding how they can refer families to get support
- Classroom assistants need training to support children with additional needs
- Foster children need more support
- A youth club or small group for those with Autism
- A Befriender for children with additional needs
- Children do not want to be highlighted as having a disability so services need to recognise that
- More support needed from the Trust for Foster Carers as in the last 13 months I have had no support, no compassion, no consideration, no communication and no minutes from LACS, which has impacted on my 2 children
- When support is given don't take it away when it is just starting to have a positive impact
- All schools need to realise that children in care have hidden disabilities; they need to have teachers who are skilled and as part of training, should be training in trauma and attachment. They will then know what to look out for and how to handle it and so not label the child. Parents see it and label it and they carry it throughout their lives

Best bit of advice I ever received to my support children with additional needs which I received from a facilitator who delivered a parenting programme several years ago:

Encourage your child with whatever their interests are

CASE STUDY 7

Married mum with 3 children, daughter aged 8 years with ADHD and on level 4 educational pathway for statement of educational needs, son aged 10 years, daughter aged 3 years.

Experience

There have been good and bad days during Covid but there has been no support. My 8-year-old had been given medication in March '20 which has increased, she has been self-harming and has struggled during Covid, helpfully a change in medication has helped. Due to financial pressures mum got a new job which has helped, Mum and dad are sharing the responsibility by splitting the working from home. Having the children back at school and the youngest daughter with the childminder has been helpful for working from home and having structure and routine to the day.

What support have you received?

We have received no professional Support. We live rurally and there is no support available in the area, we would have to travel to receive support. We had to pay for private play therapy which has been brilliant for my 8-year-old Daughter, she is so calm when she leaves play therapy. School, family and Childminder have provided some support.

What would help?

- Parent support group would be beneficial and would be low cost to set up
- Education Board not good – need to rethink and re look at process as this is not working
- If educational psychologists/behaviour support could work between 3 schools in area not lots of schools. Parents would know who the point of contact is.
- Waiting lists and process is too long and so many people to talk to, GP, Paediatricians, ringing secretary constantly. It would be useful if the secretary could send out a leaflet once the assessment is done with a single point of contact, this could be a parent representative who has been through the process or information on parent support group in the area.
- Database that parents can access with pin code so they can check process.
- OT to come in and teach parents techniques to use
- ABA training, Mum has researched this training which is currently in use in America

but not recognised here, Mum feels there needs to be more understanding of this training. Parents need more options.

- Help with where to source weighed blankets or help with techniques to use at home such as high release through sand, calming music and shown how to do it.

CASE STUDY 8

Married mum with 4 children, 16 year old daughter, 14 year old daughter with dyslexia, 12 year old son and 2 year old son.

Experience

Over the last year the reduction in working hours has really affected our finances. However, we have seen many positives, it has given us more time as a family, our mental health has improved as we were always too busy, so having more time to reflect has helped. Not having to run around taking the kids to swimming clubs, football, etc has been great, as we have now more time as a family and it has saved us a lot of money. One area of concern was having to take my child to the hospital rather than going to the GP, which was closed. I should not have had to take my child to the hospital, they could have been dealt with by the GP. I was there for 12 hours which caused a lot of anxiety. My 14 year old is suffering from an eating disorder and I am struggling to find out information during this lockdown. More information would help.

What support have you received?

Some financial support through tax credits and I have a great supportive family. I attended workshops over the past couple of months on teens and body image which was really helpful. More of this is needed

What would help?

- Workshops for parents of teenagers to get support
- There is no signposting, this would help
- Having a place to find out information on local support services
- Schools to share more information on parenting workshops
- Being able to see a GP for my children
- Not being made to feel like I am an overprotective mother by professionals

CASE STUDY 9

Married mum with 2 children, aged 6 and 4. The two children have Autism, severe learning difficulties, mobility issues as joints too flexible and are non-verbal with sensory issues

Experience

“It can be very stressful with the intensity of my son’s blow outs”. It has been difficult with the change in routine as everything closed down overnight with no preparation time. Son regressed due to lack of school, started self-harming due to frustration and am receiving support for this. Daughter doesn’t sleep great either. It was an emotional rollercoaster; she would become very angry and frustrated. Due to the extreme behaviour, early in lockdown mum phoned the local police station who gave me permission to take my children out in the car to settle them. The kids need to get the frustration out and need the calm time. I bought a trampoline, arts and crafts and things to do outside. Son spent all the time on trampoline so he could bounce and it really helped him. We got a dog to help calm the children which my daughter loves and has really helped however my son doesn’t. I felt that the break from school has helped from all the negativity from last November, especially as my daughter was having nightmares about monsters and death.

What support have you received?

The school have contacted to offer my daughter a place in school, however with different class structures, this wouldn’t work.

What would help?

- Surestart to be made available in all areas so everyone has a place to go to
- E.A checking on families, I have good support, friends with others but many don’t
- Encourage relationships with other children’s parents, sharing thoughts, having a support network.
- ASD service should be checking in with what is needed.
- We applied to Family fund for monetary items. However, we find it hard to get advice on car seats.
- It would be great to have a website that acted as a hub. It could support supply information for different age ranges, supply resources specific to that age, showed laws relating to age-appropriate car seats, certified centres on car seats. Also, any

organisation that supported families with children with all additional needs could be invited to add in information on what services and add in the resources they offer.

- The current system is not meeting the wider spread of needs. These needs must be addressed. The system has to grow with the population, it has outgrown.

CASE STUDY 10

Married mum with a disability who experiences mental ill health, with 3 children, 5 year old and 18 year old Asperger's and demand avoidance and 15 year old.

Experience

Due to her children's complex needs mum has expressed concern that her child's classroom assistant doesn't have the training to support her child, even though they are trying their best. The transition of schools in P7 was horrific and as he was separated from his friends, this greatly impacted on his behaviour. During the first few years at grammar school, the school struggled to provide support, however it has great improved recently. The school has improved but they still need more support from health. Issues and challenges worse during COVID as he can't get out.

What support have you received?

GP referred son to family support hub however mum said she was unimpressed as she thought there would have been more support. Son did however receive counselling support. Mum said she rang everyone, Social Services, ASD services etc and they said there is no safeguarding and he is well looked after so closed the case. Mum feels there has been no support during COVID, the CAMHS team were redeployed, no classroom assistant at home, son didn't want to go to school. As both parents are key workers and this has been a very difficult time.

What would help?

- Assessments should be through the Trust so you don't have to pay privately.
- Needs to be a 360 package for parents and young people
- 18+ services are really poor – still need support at this age.
- Should be a helpline for signposting, triage service with one phone number and one website.
- Respite
- Parent support giving practical strategies
- Better communication with all services involved
- Support line workers knowing who to signpost to.
- Therapies / mindfulness / relaxation techniques

CASE STUDY 11

Mum married with 2 children aged 7 and 9 years. School assessing numeracy and literacy for 9-year-old, He is showing signs of dyslexia but has not been assessed.

Experience

Mum shared that they have had no difficulties or concerns as COVID started, just issues in regard to safety due to COVID. As the months have gone by sibling arguments have become more intense. Now worried about sons education due so much missed school and home schooling. School has not contacted during COVID, more support from them would have been useful. Mum made an intentional decision to come off parenting Whats App groups that she had joined as they were distracting and raised stress because of what others were saying or doing, especially around home schooling, wanting to concentrate on family and time management. Mum had to purchase resources herself to help support her son. (Hornets literacy programme – structured reading programmes for anyone with dyslexia). Mum informed school of this resource and the school were happy to include it in the IEP. Going to work provided a routine and getting out of the house was good for a level of normality.

What support have you received?

Mum feels she has to initiate a lot of the discussions and support for her son. She received support from other parents, her family and work colleagues.

Paid for weekly tutoring for eldest son because he had a specific need

Parenting programmes helped

Support Line helped

What would help?

- Continuously feel schools need to keep on top of training.
- Schools could be more open and transparent
- More details needed at parent/teacher meetings
- More openness to listen to home schooling community
- More focus on play
- Organisations to provide schools with information on services so this can be given to parents.
- SureStart should be regional.
- More investment in Family support
- Lactation support/breast feeding support groups
- Have regional services, not postcode lottery.
- General counselling for parents and children across the board regionally and available in all schools.
- Something on well-being at parent/ teacher chat/meeting, offer resources or signposting
- Lack of services for teenagers

CASE STUDY 12

Single mum with daughter aged 13 years who struggles with her mental health

Experience

Mum explained that her daughter has been struggling with issues from aged 9 with self-harming and suicidal thoughts. She was referred to CAMHS by GP for support. Dad is involved in his daughters life but struggles with his mental health. Mum said she feels her daughter is feeling displaced in herself and has gender identity issues as she has told her mum she is trans. Mum feels the group she is friends with are “almost cult like” and have a huge influence on her and gave her acceptance. Covid has made things worse, feel socially isolated. It has 100% made isolation become a multi-dimensional reality. Daughter is in a social echo chamber; everything has become exaggerated. “Continually worry as a Mother about my relationship with my Daughter”.

What support have you received?

Grandparent lives close by and has been a good support. Daughter stays with Granny now which has been helpful. Relationship between Mum and Daughter has improved.

Mum has spoken to friends for support. CAHMS are currently supporting daughter, face to face sessions have been important. Daughter attends Counselling. Parenting NI have been a lifeline. It was lifeline that said to phone Parenting NI. Mum reached out to organisations herself. Programme facilitator helped. Too much red tape and going round in circles whilst child is in distress. Access to services is difficult due to having to travel for support. No service at all over Christmas

What would help?

- More knowledge and information on services and what options are available
- Practitioners to know about services available
- A more joined up approach
- Map all agencies like a family tree

CASE STUDY 13

Married mum with a son aged 8 with ASD & ADHD

Experience

Mum said she took a career break in 2020 to have more of a focus on “my personal and career development”. I came out of full-time employment (from the public sector on an unpaid career break) in January 2020 and unfortunately any plans I had did not go ahead. I home schooled my child solely whilst my husband worked long hours as a key worker. I took on additional caring responsibilities when my father took a stroke in March 2020 which put my family under huge stress and pressure. We were lucky to not have any financial pressures as the career break was planned and saved for. My son has additional needs and these were exasperated and intensified due to the complete change in routine and school closure. As a parent I felt completely isolated. We had no family support before Covid and this was so difficult when school was no longer a form of respite for us. Any therapies we had in place stopped (ASD Youth Group, ASD Horse Therapy). We juggled caring for my father in and out of hospital between all the needs of the house and our son. But we did survive (barely some days). Since the lockdown, this time around (26th Dec onwards) we have been able to get a placement for our son in school as I am now back to work part time and my husband is now sharing caring / home schooling responsibilities. We feel we were more informed this time around, better equipped to see what difficulties we would face during lockdown and we planned around our personal and family needs better. Last time we fire fought everything from grocery shopping to work to caring for our child and my father. This time we know how difficult that was and reached out to school for a place and to our employers for reduced contracts and furlough for my husband.

What support have you received?

I miss being able to connect, on a face to face basis with our parental support systems – Autism NI Support Group for example. We meet on zoom but this is just not the same. Zoom is hard to engage with when you have nobody to look after your child

What would help?

- Our son’s therapy is the main thing missing from our lives at the minute. This is all due to covid – he needs to attend face to face sessions for his development and learning. We need these areas to be up and running so we have some respite

- Childcare is an issue for us. School is operating on a reduced schedule since September 2020
- A list of childcare providers in our area who look at SEN specifically, have tried to source but organisation hasn't got back to us
- Summer provision is also a concern for us or if furlough for my husband is revoked in line with gov advice

CASE STUDY 14

Married mum with 2 children aged 4 and 7 years.

Experience

Juggling work and home-schooling has been very difficult. Now got a secure job and was offered flexi work which has been brilliant. When school finished it was difficult, however my work was responsive and supportive; they reduced my hours to 70%, this helped me to have afternoons off to help with the kids. There were no resources sent home from my children's school so it left me to pull these together. First lockdown was great, loads of playtime and financially was secure and not as much pressure to do schoolwork. Due to Covid we had to stop listening to news as this built-up anxiety in our family. Good weather and having time with the kids on first lockdown was a bonus. Harder with winter lockdown, heavy workload and meeting tasks with google classroom at 9am. This is hard when working from home to be available to sit with them. Resources have been given out. My child's emotional adjustment to home-schooling was a struggle. He struggled seeing mummy as a teacher and me as a frustrated parent. I worry about social and emotional development of my 4-year-old son.

What support have you received?

This time, the support of childminders, my parents and husband's parents has been great. Didn't have childminders in first lockdown. Family and work have been very supportive.

What would help?

- Lack of community support
- I worry when my son goes back to school, what is the school expecting
- There needs to be something put in place so that assessments can take place.
- Send parents emotional wellbeing resources for their children. This is just as important as academic work.
- Parents voice in education. Children have no voice and there are no structures to facilitate this. They need parents to act as their voice..
- The mental health of young people is a huge concern. Emotional health of young people in having fun, family time, cooking tasks, more about life. Too much focus on academia.
- Connecting with other members of the family

- There should be input from school to home to let parents know what is going to happen.
- Zoom calls; help with connecting with peers etc. Kids are struggling.
- Priority should be given to education re vaccination. People are impacted, i.e.

CASE STUDY 15

Mum and partner with triplets aged 5 years

Experience

Mum stated she felt guilty trying to work and give the children experiences. First lockdown kids were in nursery now they are in P1 and mum is feeling if she doesn't do the work with the kids, they will fall behind. They will feel disadvantaged educationally. I don't want them thinking they can't go to the park due to the coronavirus. I worry about their understanding of it all. We didn't mix with anyone, so we didn't need to reinforce the cleaning of hands. But this changed when they went to school, I don't want them to grow up and have this in their minds. Positives are freedom to do what we wanted when we wanted, e.g., nice days, we all just went to the beach. I now don't take for granted the time I get with the kids.

What support have you received?

I have received support from outside my arena, as I work for a charity, as a professional. I look for my support elsewhere not through my work, HERENI, LGBT support group since kids were 6 weeks old.

What would help?

Being able to get out more in the fresh air

CASE STUDY 16

Single dad with 5 children aged 9 years with the other 4 now young adults

Experience

Dad explained crisis schooling is problematic, trying to manage work and having time to focus on schooling. My child is different and for me he is ok doing this, but his mum finds it is harder as he pushes boundaries more with her. I have my son on average about 3 days a week. With my son in P6 I know this is a crucial year for him. He is not ready for p7 and is not ready to study exams. He is a very social child, as he has older siblings and has been used to being around adults. Family have underlying health issues and we have lost several members during Covid. My mum is struggling. My big challenge is he is coming to the end of my contract, finding additional work is a worry for me. I have spent more money than what I would have done. I have been spending more to try and compensate for not going out. E.g., buying things I didn't need, food going to waste etc. Being out of routine is not good. Usually, I budget for the week and you know what your spending is. But with Covid, this goes out the window and it is also more heightened now as coming out of my work contract and I worry about how I will cope.

What support have you received?

Counselling after the death of my son. He died in December 2019. Then the pandemic hit and he was buried. It was not long after he was buried, that I received counselling. My son had been seeing a counsellor in school, due to his mum's illness. However, this has stopped now due to schools closing. He is very open and easy to talk to. I would speak to him to ensure he is ok.

What would help?

- Children with additional needs having support with emergency schooling.
- Having specialists to help kids whose parents are struggling with their own mental health, learning difficulties etc.
- Speech and language therapists, cognitive social skills coming together in a partnership to offer remote assistance to parents/ children through zoom or another platform.
- People are focused on food parcels, but the deeper seeded issues are not being addressed and loads are struggling more with schoolwork.

- Financial support for families is essential at times like this. Parents got some reprieve when kids going to school through school dinners.
- Families need to know they have enough meals for their children and not thinking of stretching things out. They need good meals, rather than giving them extra money that they can spend on takeaways. Providing good healthy parcels to families.
- Put together a task force to look at potential risks, e.g., health risk, physical and mental health, a service to provide for kids and parents for schooling, isolation, loneliness. It comes down to community organisations to tackle these issues. Grassroots organisations tackling these issues get no reward from the government. More collective effort needed to put strategies in place to put pressure on government and statutory agencies for greater assistance.
- Advice service –parents including many single parents are stuck in hostels and flats waiting for accommodation, who can't let kids out to play, housing advice, benefits. Agencies coming together and putting together a team where a parent can refer themselves into a service, i.e., benefits, housing and any help and assistance they need.
- Other agencies need to look at what is needed now and using a service offering counselling within our own community and bring together more people.

CASE STUDY 17

Single mum with Ehlers Danlos Syndrome Functional who has 3 children, 2 older that don't live at home and one child aged 15years old

Experience

Mum shared as a single self-employed mum she had been in an abusive relationship with her ex-husband, who has no contact with her children. Her mum had breast cancer and her daughter had been in a bad accident and now needs to use a wheelchair. The trauma of the accident has really affected her daughter. She feels so much pressure as she has had to continue to work with being self-employed and fear she would lose her house. Her daughter missed a lot of school after the accident and due to attending rehab and had to be home schooled. Mum has struggled as there have been no disability adaptations for her daughter. She said she felt there is a lack of support and lack of knowledge from professionals of what support is available. Her daughter got bullied at school, but the school didn't listen and in the end her daughter got suspended. Mum is having a hard time at the minute as her daughter now does not want to stay at school as she wonders what the point is, as she was the one who got suspended and it is on her record. Covid has led to a change in her daughter's behaviour, she was caught drinking, smoking and dresses inappropriately. Daughter now has a boyfriend who is not a good influence and mum feels the daughter is influenced by her peer group and their relationship is slipping away. With Covid restrictions it has kept her daughter away from her boyfriend which has improved her behaviour and Mum and Daughter relationship.

What support have you received?

- Friends have provided great support.
- Mum attended Parenting Your Teen programme and Walking on Eggshells which has really helped.
- Mum contacted Education Psychology and got daughter statemented and classroom system put in place, which has also helped
- Mum fought for school transport for Daughter and applied and fought for Blue Badge
- Children law centre and Action for Children helped Mum to get her daughter access to school transport and disabled badge

- Zoom has been useful for attending workshops, it has become another option to receive support.
- School not proactive during first lockdown but more pro-active now.

What would help?

- Lack of technology for home schooling – more technology
- Lack of clarity and information for parents – more direct support for parents – programmes like Walking on Eggshells, Parenting Your Teen
- Lack of mental health support for children – more immediate support needed
- During Covid school VP got in contact a few times but nothing very helpful – better relationships between schools and parents
- Needs to be someone on hand to signpost parents to services/information

CASE STUDY 18

Separated mum with a disability who has 2 children aged 10 and 14 years. The 14 year old daughter is partially deaf.

Experience

Mum shared that Covid has had a big impact on her family. Her daughter's treatment which included surgery has been put on hold and now she is afraid she is going to lose her hearing completely which has led to very high anxiety levels. Mum tried to go private but was told she had to go to the NHS. Mum said it has taken 10 years for professionals to listen to her, as her daughter was saying she couldn't hear "but no one cared". We are managing one day at a time; it is very difficult. As a mum I felt like a failure, my child was suffering for so long and it has really affected her self-esteem. She was an outgoing vibrant young girl and then for the past 2 years she has been bullied which has really changed her. She struggles with conversations as she does not pick up on many things that are being said in conversation. Her friends have to repeat what they say and they get annoyed which then gets to her. She misses out on conversations and is afraid of losing hearing out of her good ear as she always tries to turn her head to use it. It's been so sad to watch and she is worried about having an operation during Covid, she has been told that she may not get the operation but may have to wear a hearing aid.

Her son has been struggling since she separated from her husband 2 years ago, and received counselling for this through the school, however this support has now been taken away. With Covid he misses his friends, he struggles with lack of interaction, he talks excessively with minute details and if you don't listen, he has a meltdown. "I have noticed he has starting to line things up. know he is trying to find some control as he needs to be in control as his head is in complete turmoil. Due to my background, I am putting measures in place, which is helping a little, i.e., sand tray and using some methods the counsellor would have used. My daughter is struggling online, as the volume is reduced and so cannot hear everything that is being said by her teacher".

What support have you received?

- No support has been received, everything stopped due to Covid
- School counselling stopped

What would help?

- Social opportunities – bringing young people together, better access to counselling.

- Improve quality of counsellors our young people deserve better
- Research for alternative therapies is not being offered to young people. e.g. EMDR (Eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing). NHS only acknowledges CBT and other therapies are not recognised. World Health Organisation endorses EMDR for PTSD, but our own government is not recognising it.

CASE STUDY 19

Mum with a partner from the BAME community has one child aged 6 years. Mum stated she experiences mental health issues

Experience

Mum left Zimbabwe 9 years ago and as her mother is 75 years, she worries about her as she is living in Zimbabwe and what if she is unable to go over to be with her. First lockdown in April was very hard as she was pregnant and travelling to Coleraine University on the train which took 2hrs. She is in her 2nd year studying Biomedical Science. This has been a very anxious time as she was worried about my daughter going to school and getting Covid. Mum has no support network with no family here some friends. Mum had a miscarriage three days before hers 12 week scan which led to her struggling with her emotions. There was no support from anyone, the nurse gave me a book when I left the hospital but there was nothing else. Due to Covid her daughter is afraid to cough, as she thinks other people will look at her and think she has Covid. Bedtimes have been a struggle with change in routine. Her daughter finds it hard not seeing her friends and wants me to play with her and I am trying to juggle my University work. My community is very inclusive, culturally more accepting.

What support have you received?

Support from the primary school was great with really great activities for children online We received food parcels every Friday and also vouchers from April to September. I can talk to the school head teacher as they are very supportive. With 2nd lockdown there has been more communication and more direction from the teachers

What would help?

- A parent group where women can discuss issues like miscarriages offer each other emotional support compare experiences of going through miscarriage, emotions, communication and helping our other children to understand what is going on.
- Would have been nice to speak to someone from the hospital to offer support
- A centre that would have lots of different activities mum and child groups, events where we learn about each other cultures, food nights etc.

CASE STUDY 20

Married mum with health issues with 2 children, a girl aged 12 years and a boy aged 9 years.

Experience

Mum shared that she has a lung condition which has meant she is extremely vulnerable. She worries about her health with Covid as her husband has to go out to work. She hasn't family support as her husband's siblings are over 70 years. Mum works in a High school but feels the safety measures are not good. Before Covid mum had never had to discuss her health issues before and never had to take time off work but she feels that she has to explain to everyone why she is off work to justify this as she feels unsafe. Mum has now been able to work from home but dad is now struggling feeling low motivation now that he is working from home. Last lockdown was easy to manage, though school not as involved compared to now. Home schooling is hard, feeling exhausted, mental exhaustion. Trying to juggle everything. Mum said son is liking home schooling and doesn't miss his friends, which is so not like him, so mum is worried the impact not having contact with his friends is having and is concerned about him going back to school. Daughter was bullied in primary school, but it was not dealt with properly in school but now has new friends from year 8 that she keeps in touch with on Whats App, she also keeps in touch with friends from primary school. Covid was a blessing at the beginning as her daughter did not have to go to school and was away from the Bully. Covid did however affect her daughter horrendously as she missed school and didn't get to finish P7 and she missed out on a school trip. The transition to grammar school has been difficult for her daughter which has led to her behaviour escalating which is out of character and is impacting on her learning. Her daughter admitted to having suicidal thoughts, which mum was able to get support for her through the school very quickly. Now the relationship with her daughter is slowly improving as mum and daughter talk more.

What support have you received?

- School have provided great support.
- CAHMS but got discharged from this service as not needed
- CAHMS suggested Parenting Your Teen programme. Both parents attend together.
- Referred for support by Dry Arches

What would help?

Hopeful restrictions will ease and children can get back to doing what they enjoy

- Children need outdoors and contact with their social group, need fun sessions now during Covid, not more work and pressure.
- Zoom has been great as it has allowed us to access Parenting NI Parenting Your Teen programme as if it wasn't on zoom we might not have been able to attend due to no childcare
- More information on services and how to access the information on what support is available for families.
- Parents not aware of Family Support Hubs, need to be better advertised.
- Parents not aware of Family Support NI website
- Help for parents to use technology to support their children home schooling

CASE STUDY 21

Single mum from the BAME community who struggles with her mental health, has 3 children aged 14, 8 and one year

Experience

Mum said she moved to Belfast from Nigeria as an asylum seeker 3 years ago. She did struggle a lot but she has received counselling and attended therapies since being here. Struggled financially – foodbanks provided food that the children do not really like, soups, etc. It would be great if they could bring the foods they like and will eat. Lockdown has been very difficult for mum and especially for the children as the children love reading can't afford to buy books, and with the library closed no access to free books. This is hard especially for the older son who is 14. Not being able to work is a struggle. When mum lived in Nigeria and she worked so she could get food and everything herself. Now that she is separated its hard. Two sons have to share the tablet to do their homework-have not been offered another tablet to borrow by the school.

What support have you received?

- Food banks – every two weeks since March. They were closed for a short while but now they are back open. I would use them once a fortnight.
- Trinity college – provided gifts at Christmas for the children was a great help
- St Vincent de Paul – Tesco vouchers

What would help?

- Books for children so they have a good choice from toddlers to teenagers
- Money fortnightly even £50 to buy the things that I want, the food I can choose myself.
- Social group for my teenage son
- Government to allow us to work as I have skills so I can work.

CASE STUDY 22

Single dad with 2 children aged 13 and 15 years.

Experience

Dad shared: I am currently going through the court system for contact with my children, which has been delayed due to Covid. This delay is having a significant impact on my relationship with my children. The process has been delayed for 6 months now and during this time I have not been offered any support or guidance. The lack of communication and having no timescale has been difficult. I don't know where to look for support. This delay has had a big impact on my mental health, at no point has anyone asked me "how are you". I feel isolated and powerless. I have spoken to a mental health professional at my GP surgery due to court deciding anger management support was needed. The health professional said there was no anger management needed, they said I was suffering grief due to situation. I worry about the long term impact on children as the system is not child centric or family centric

What support have you received?

- The Dads project within Parenting NI, has been brilliant support, other dads giving advice or sharing their story has been helpful.
- Men's Action Network provided support
- School has been helpful sending out useful information and resources for parents and pupils.
- Social media has helped
- Zoom sessions for parents/ Dads has really helped. Getting to speak with other Dads who know what you are going through has helped. Can't replace human contact though.
- Families need fathers
- Counselling helped give strategies on how to cope emotionally and mentally

What would help?

- There are so many providers and services but not one central place to find these

- Dad wasn't aware of Family support NI website or family support hubs
- Have services in a "shop window" leading with Strategic bodies, Trusts, larger charities and other support services, all collaboratively working together. All part of an eco-system of family support.
- Family is a very broad term, needs to come under that one umbrella
- Feel support is aimed mainly at women/mums
- Capacity issue for agencies dealing with separated parents
- Lack of information, need better advertisement or awareness of services
- Need more practical support
- Need someone to ask "how are you"
- Advertises to promote both Men and Women equally
- Would like more tool on how to speak to children
- Needs to be more parenting information pre-birth, parental responsibility, legal obligation as a parent
- More collaborative working with schools/ Dept of Education to get information out to parents, all schools receiving the same information e.g., links to support services

CASE STUDY 23

Single dad who struggles with his emotional wellbeing, with child aged 4 years with ADHD and Dyslexia Functional

Experience

Dad shared: We lived in England but my ex partners relocated to Northern Ireland so to ensure I was there for my children I moved here to. I have found getting support difficult. I have felt I'm on my own. With Covid I have lost face to face contact and with the Contact Centres closed I have had no supervised contact. Not having to attend court in person has really helped financially. Emotionally I feel unsupported and neglected. I really don't know where to go to for support. A positive with Covid has been that it has slowed everything down which has helped me settle into living in Northern Ireland.

What support have you received?

- Parenting NI and Parentline have helped me as I don't have a support network as my immediate family live in Australia.
- Social media has been really helpful with really good content shared
- Practical tips from other parents or facilitators has helped
- As son is involved with Social Services, they have been amazing and very helpful. Putting the child's interest first
- Zoom has been helpful but miss face to face

What would help?

- After care is needed, after assessment and report needs to be more done.
- Need to be more understanding about parent alienation and its impact on the child
- All parents need to work together with services
- Didn't know of CYPSP or family support NI website
- Have tools and strategies to help
- Central link to services
- Linking parents with a peer support worker or buddy system

CASE STUDY 24

Married mum with 3 children aged 10, 7 and 5 years. 5 year old has rare genetic condition, sight loss, hearing loss and progressive illness

Experience

Mum shared: Covid has impacted family harder, we have struggled with all the care needs for our child with therapies stopped, no contact from social services, Carers assessment was completed over the phone, but am still waiting on the findings of this assessment. This has caused grief not support. In school my child had 2 care workers in school but with Covid this feel apart. To support my child, I had to take 7 months unpaid leave because I had no choice. My employer wouldn't pay furlough so I have to go to a tribunal to get furlough pay for this time. This has had a significant financial impact. I have asked for help with sensory toys or something to help replicate what my son received in school, but I got nothing. Working parents can't avail of any support, very few services will support a working family, which is totally unfair and we are getting a raw deal. During this time, I lost a baby, my husband's father died and the family are all shielding a home. My employer has been unsupportive through all this. I am it really hard and I recognise I need support to have some time to myself to grieve. I have accessed private health care through work with the first few sessions funded but I am now mum paying for this myself. School has been very poor with support. Covid has added family pressure, feeling isolated and need to get out. Miss life, going to work and getting out of the house. We get no respite now.

What support have you received?

- Angel Eyes have been a great support
- Children's Hospice have provided great support for whole family, phone calls, sessions for other siblings, yoga, mindfulness. Hospice deliver packages e.g., smores kits, art and crafts and family attend via zoom
- Carers Trust have organised exercise classes which has helped Mum
- RNIB organised musical therapy

What would help?

- Someone to phone you to ask how we are and if you need help
- Peer conversations via zoom

- Support for kids, had to buy Ipad
- Resources for children to replicate school environment for children
- Financial support for families for resources, technology for home schooling, working parents don't get the same help
- More online sessions for children
- Need more information on family support
- Get the information out there for parents
- Feel there is less support for working parents, all parents need support

CASE STUDY 25

Separated dad with 2 children aged 1 and 4 years.

Experience

Dad shared: Prior to Covid I was having overnight contact with my son but since Covid I haven't had any contact as their mum fears this will cause Covid to spread. I now only get phone contact once a week. I am trying to regain contact but have to go through the court, which with Covid has been delayed. I am concerned as my child is going for ASD assessment, has speech and language appointments, and this lack of communication between me and my ex-wife is not helping. I have tried to speak to professionals but don't know who to talk to, all the information goes to Mum. I have been able to work from home, which has been good as Covid has not caused any financial impact and I can manage mental health well. I fully understand why my ex-partner is cautious as she lives with her mum who is shielding but to stop all contact is hard. I have a good relationship with the health visitor, paediatrician, speech and language and Social services. I can't attend appointments as it would be too many people due to Covid. Covid has caused fractures in contact. Workplace have not been supportive at all. Feel frustrated that there has been no support. I struggle with the uncertainty of it all, not knowing when contact is going to happen with no set timeline of how long this will continue.

What support have you received?

- Parenting NI dads group has been a great support, it has been consistent and happens weekly. It helps to take you out of your head for a moment and you get to listen and speak to other Dads
- Counselling services through workplace, only offer a few sessions but it is very useful
- Family and friends
- Self-help support
- Parenting NI have a really good social presence online

What would help?

- Having a court advisor attached to your case to help or advise
- A peer mentor that you can speak to or volunteer for court support

CASE STUDY 26

Married mum with one child aged 6 years who has Autism and Congenital Heart Disease

Experience

Mum shared: My biggest concern is having my husband on furlough and worrying whether he will get back to work and will still have a job. Through Covid our sons 12 week appointments have went ahead and nothing has been cancelled or delayed, which has been really important. The first lockdown was less pressure as it is a special school and they do all of the work in school and they don't get homework's. The school gave us a resource file with all activities to do with my son, calming down packs, tack packs all during lockdown which was great help. I worry about having to go back to England for more operations during Covid, either a heart procedure or heart surgery. My son finds it hard not meeting up with people. He finds it hard to understand that we can't do visits by car; he finds it hard not going to shops and attending social activities. My son misses hugging people, with teachers saying not to hug, he finds it hard. He misses touch so much as he is very tactile. I miss our parent get together (parents from the school) on a Tuesday. Tried zoom but it doesn't work, peer support. Need to have physical meet ups

What support have you received?

- Paid respite through the Trust, 4 hrs a week this keeps us sane
- Heating allowance by DLA
- Family fund – emergency grants – money back from insurance because we were not using respite carer
- Received support through social media from Children's Heartbeat Trust and Autism NI
- Carers hub as it has contact information for every organisation
- In the past I have received two sets of counselling as I suffered with anxiety, and depression. I received this through Children's Heartbeat Trust through Inspire. They were great and I could extend the sessions if I wanted to.
- Incredible years was life changing

What would help?

- Attend appointments face to face using Perspex, so someone can see my child
- Need refresher training on Autism
- Incredible Years next stage as my child is now 6
- Getting support with the Trust is harder as they are under so much pressure
- More training for parents, mindfulness and well –being is vital for parents

Appendix B

PRACTITIONER CASE STUDIES

Practitioner Case Study 1

Role: Health Link worker for Chinese Welfare association

1. What challenges are you or your organisation facing? – Getting the message out to the whole community

The community are reading the health messages we are putting out but those not connected to the programme are not getting the messages. We are not engaging with all the community, no health leads with the Lithuanian community. We need to extend our health leads.

2. What challenges are the families you are working with facing? – How do we measure how well people are coping.

From our Covid Survey that we did over 9 months ago, 64% said they felt safe and well, but we are concerned about the other 36%. Some said they did feel they were at risk. I know the people we are engaging with; it's measuring how people are coping, we just don't know. We also asked teenagers to express how they felt their parents are coping, they said they were coping well. Resilience is better than we thought. We sent out 55,000 health messages, and we engage with 2000 people on social media

3. What challenges have you been able to overcome? And how? – Changes the way we delivered services, which have been successful

Services have moved online, providing parent advice, teen advice, various programmes to support mental health and wellbeing, as well as trauma and resilience. We have delivered yoga online, Digi skills, continued our Diabetes action group, walking groups (following guidance, with adaptations made to the centre) to ensure we are looking at the needs of the community. There has been an opportunity to train more people, connected loads of people to training courses, 46 courses over 9 months.

4. What challenges are you still facing? – Ensuring accurate consistent messaging

Continuous changes in health messages and concerns about disseminating the information to the families who need it. What can we say to parents now that gives them reassurance?

5. What support do you feel would help you/your organisation and the families you work with?

- There are no tips given out at the right time.
- Activities that are fun and safe to do in the house
- The health leads are all volunteers and have been putting on activities constantly more support for them through training.
- Extending links with the other community groups would be great, to share resources
- Education for parents is important, guiding parents to support their child, bringing it round to grassroots, i.e., alternatives to physical punishment, as many cultures have certain rules for boys and different rules for girls. Supporting them to bring up the family, respect cultural differences and guiding them to do what we aim to achieve, cultural traditions, e.g., many make their food from scratch. Look at what is culturally accepted for their role, typical mum and dad role.
- More support for hidden and culturally domestic abuse
- Resources – ethnic minority communities need more support for parent whose husband is working away and mum is parenting as a single parent's, even though she is married
- Newsletter or programme on culture with real stories from parents who are managing well or who have experience to share

Practitioner Case Study 2

Role: Principal from a Nursery School

1. What challenges are you or your organisation facing? – **Compliance with Covid regulations both financially and operationally & time pressure on school staff**

- Older siblings getting Covid
- Managing the bubbles as the school is an old building, lack of space and health & safety issue maintaining social distancing while complying with fire regulations, i.e., fire doors not electronic and cannot be wedged open
- Hard to get parents to comply with social distancing and one-way system
- People don't like to be told what to do, i.e., not to run across the car park
- Sent a text, spoke to them and they continue to park on double yellow lines. Traffic wardens are there.
- Cleaning is a challenge and I am asthmatic, can't be in the room with cleaning products. £15 a week on cleaning materials masks sanitisers, foggers £1000, automatic hand sanitisers.
- We have to reduce sessions to 2 hrs from 2.5 hrs.
- Lack of staff to meet to regulations
- Track and trace is a nightmare
- E.A is putting on a lot of pressure on head teacher and principles, they are constantly seeking stats, which has significantly increased my working hours, having to work weekends, evenings and over holiday periods. There is pressure all the time! Education minister is not helping as it is affecting morale. We can't get a sub teacher as can't cross the bubbles.
- I am terrified with my underlying health conditions.
- Board of governors are anxious re risk assessments. Fire authority came out and said there has to be flexibility; everyone is extra vigilant, cleaning etc.

2. What challenges are the families you are working with facing? – **Supporting parents**

- Parents miss the one to one chat in the morning and after school
- Worry about vulnerable parents being isolated.
- Keeping parents up to date, which we do through sending parents updates, also included videoing the Nativity play so all parents and their families could watch

3. What challenges have you been able to overcome? And how? – Trying to keep a normal environment

- Children have been amazing and settled really well.
- Learnt that children settled more quickly without parents
- The children loved watching themselves on IPad, didn't get anxious
- Changed curriculum as doing more outdoor activities
- A lot of management and learning on our feet and we give the children the best normality we can.
- One activity that we can't do is water play. This is because we can't change clothes. But we are still doing pouring lentils and have sand play.
- Improved communication with parents

4. What challenges are you still facing? – Fire Doors

- Support with the fire doors - Fire doors cannot be locked and we have to padlock external gates, leads to a lot of pressure so kids don't get out, deliveries come and unlock the gate. Extra pressure because of the doors and any child can hit the bar anytime.

5. What support do you feel would help for you/your organisation and the families you work with?

- More staff to support us and the families.
- Extra pair of hands would allow us to speak to parents with English as additional language
- Support for parents and staff. We have 20 children for 3 teachers; almost 1/5 has speech and language issues, 17 are non-English speaking. Speech and language issues with the children attending gets worse every year. Also, behaviour problems are a big issue too. We had an issue whereby Speech and language therapist discharged a child, due to his immaturity. However, I re-referred and another speech and language therapist was really thankful to me for re-referring.
- I need to have time to do what I am trained to do.
- Need improvements to the SEN with more support for the parent

Practitioner Case Study 3

Role: Project Co-ordinator ~ Offering support to families who have a child with a disability

1. What challenges are you or your organisation facing? – Engaging on a face to face with families

- Not having a proper drop in centre to meet young people and families
- Harder not having face to face meetings
- We can't get out to promote the project through youth clubs, schools workshops due to Covid.

2. What challenges are the families you are working with facing? - Young people unable to communicate using technology & parents not aware of what financial support is available

- Parents not having the one to one contact, not being able to communicate properly.
- Young people who have disability and communication issues not feeling they can communicate through zoom.
- Parents don't know they have to have a social worker to get direct payments.
- Parents not using their (direct payments) respite due to Covid,
- Currently working with 15 parents, only 50% are receiving direct payments! Not enough people know the details of direct payments.
- Children not being able to attend and do face to face.
- Young people's understanding of what is going on with Covid. A young person asking the same questions over and over again about how long left of lockdown.

3. What challenges have you been able to overcome? And how? – Engaging with parents / carers

- Set up 2 zoom calls a week, coffee morning once a week led by the parents/carers who attend.
- Zoom mindfulness classes
- Planning virtual yoga classes
- Zoom Fitness classes
- Drop in centre, with living area and kitchen etc. with area for families to come into, drop into for advice, counselling etc.

- Recruiting volunteers for Buddy system
- Set up centre of independent living
- Employers for childcare will do zoom calls for 10 parents at each session and follow up sessions.

4. What challenges are you still facing? – Sharing information

- Need to get information on what support we offer out to parent/carer, siblings etc., into relevant organisations, schools etc.
- Finding out what organisations provide which services

5. What support do you feel would help you/your organisation and the families you work with?

- Getting our voice heard
- Applied for membership on family support hubs
- Linking in with as many organisations as possible.
- Finding out who can help me out, who do I need to go to and see and which organisation is best.
- School type environment for 19+ with special needs for a couple of days a week.

Practitioner Case Study 4

Role: Clubs Officer

1. What challenges are you or your organisation facing? – Communicating & supporting the families

- Support groups having to stop immediately
- Not having face to face contact with families has been difficult.
- Communicating with families
- Missing those families who come into hospital for their scans, appointments due to Covid guidelines

2. What challenges are the families you are working with facing? – Supporting families

- Families don't want to go online and they want to meet people in person.
- Carried out a survey with our families and parents stated financial worries was a big concern, people are dependent on foodbanks.
- Anxiety – worrying they or the kids are going to get Covid and pass it onto grandparent.
- Being at home with preschool children
- First 6 months – for multiples staying in and having to be extra careful

3. What challenges have you been able to overcome? And how? – Use technology

- Zoom calls, Facebook, Messenger, craft packs for toddlers with 14 or 15 activities around themes, Autumn, Christmas, Easter themed activities
- Set up private messenger with kids doing the activities and all the parents seeing each other. This helps with motivation too.
- My employer has allowed us to do flexitime, I can work some evenings too which helps
- We have told parents they could meet up themselves within the Covid restrictions and many have been doing this.

4. What challenges are you still facing? – Face to face meet up

- Trying to meet family needs, restricted as we can't have our meet ups.

5. What support do you feel would help for you/your organisation and the families you work with? – Reduced waiting times for services

- There needs to be so many more mental health services with no waiting lists.
- Parents need the support very quickly. It states there is support but there so many struggling with anxiety and people say there is support but then there are waiting lists. It is also hard to get onto waiting lists.

Practitioner Case Study 5

Role: Owner of private pre school

1. What challenges are you or your organisation facing? – Financial challenges

- No clear guidance for employers
- No clarity and losing income due to this. Closed pre-school for 6 weeks as thought it had to close. Suffered loss of income during this time
- Not a sole user or a micro business so can't get grant – fell through the net for everything
- Struggled with staff self-isolating

2. What challenges are the families you are working with facing? – More support for parents

- Good to see parents getting to spend time with their children.
- Can see struggles with NHS workers who are parents with children at pre-school.
- Parents struggling due to wanting to protect their children but they can't home school as they are key workers
- Some schools are refusing to take children during Covid
- Support for parents not great, lack of support for parents

3. What challenges have you been able to overcome? And how? – More clarity of information

- Have been able to open and provide support to children of key workers
- Had to seek clarity myself as no one tells you or gives you guidance
- Need information in advance so can prepare for opening or closing, need time to be able to inform parents
- Parents have been very understanding and supportive, being open and honest with parents as to what was happening

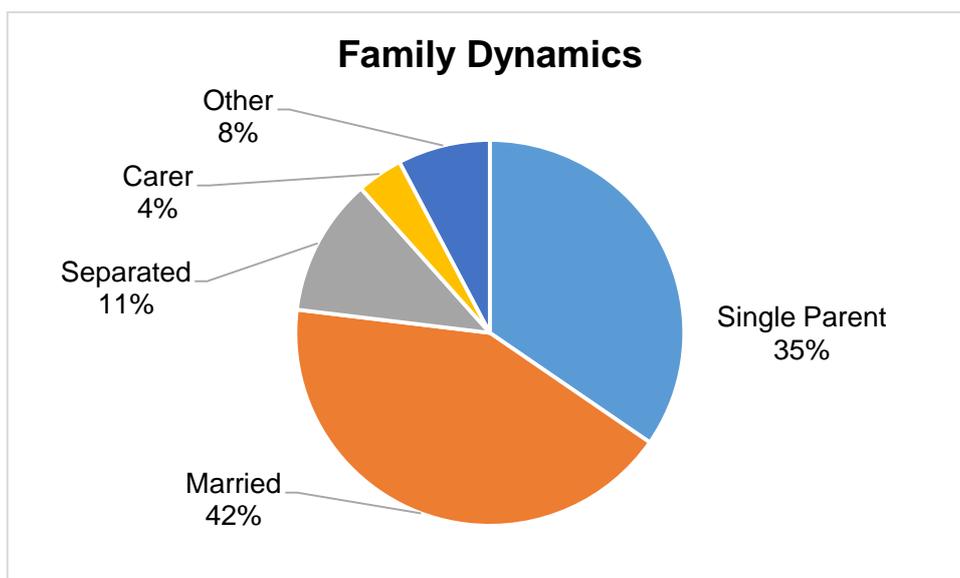
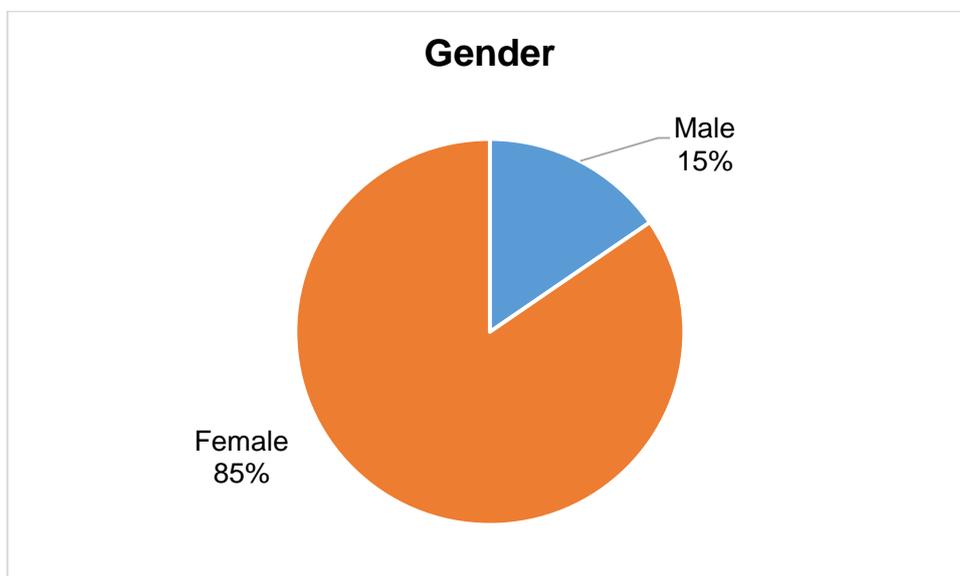
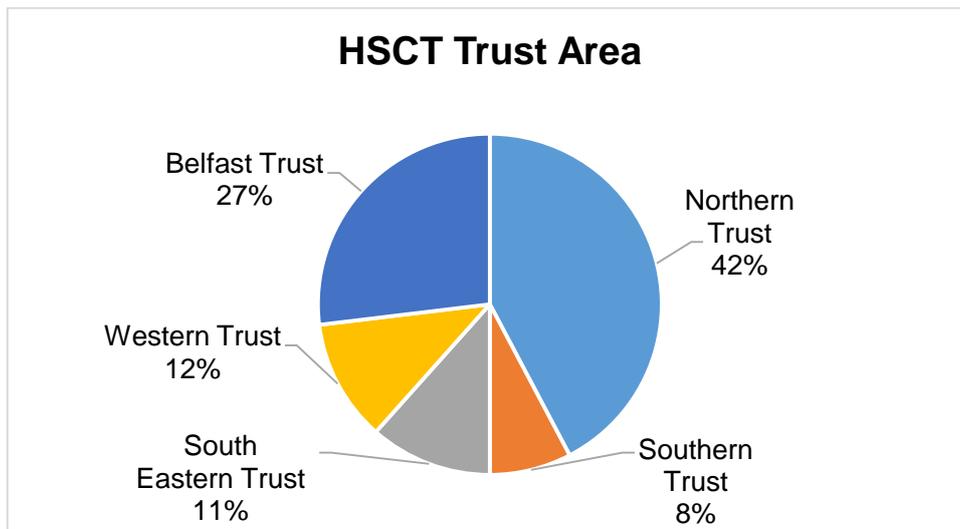
4. What challenges are you still facing?

- Staff self-isolating
- No clear guidance – it's shocking

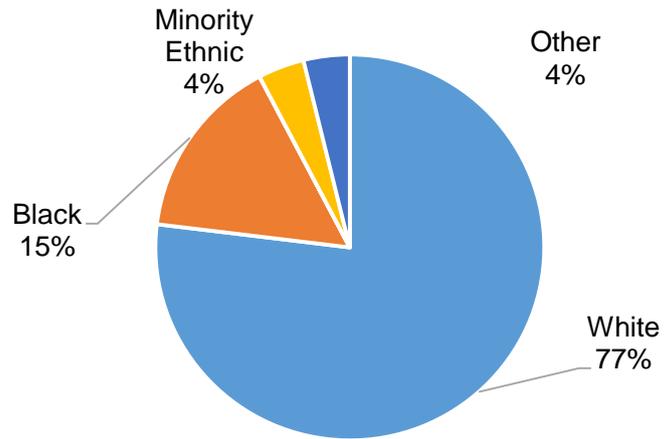
5.What support do you feel would help for you/your organisation and the families you work with?

- Someone on hand to signpost you to information or support
- More information for Parents
- More guidance and clarity

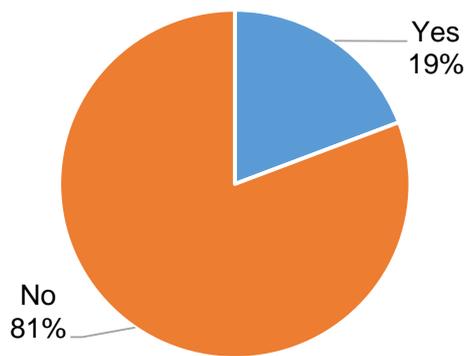
DEMOGRAPHICS (Based on 26 Parents and 5 Practitioners)



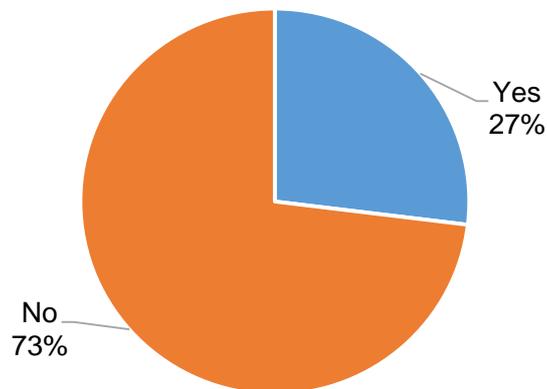
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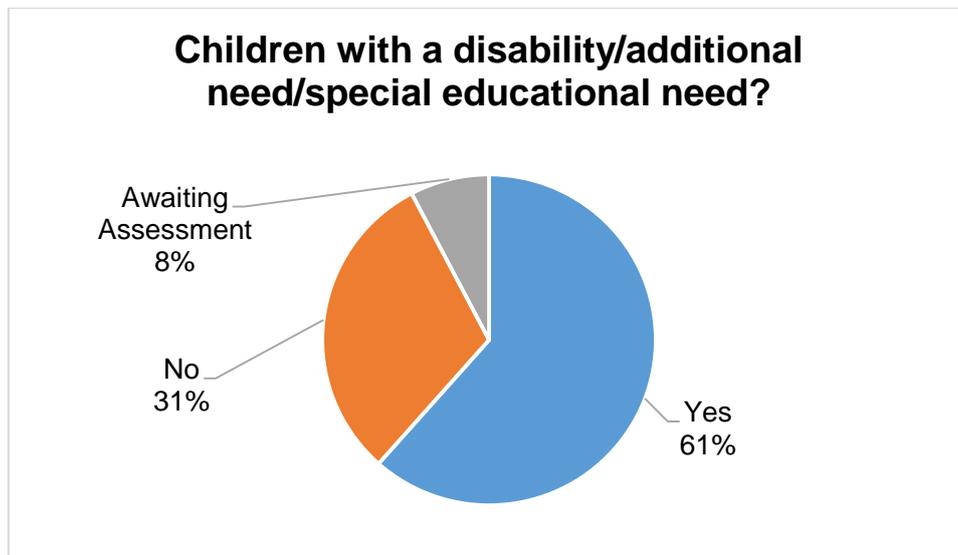


Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

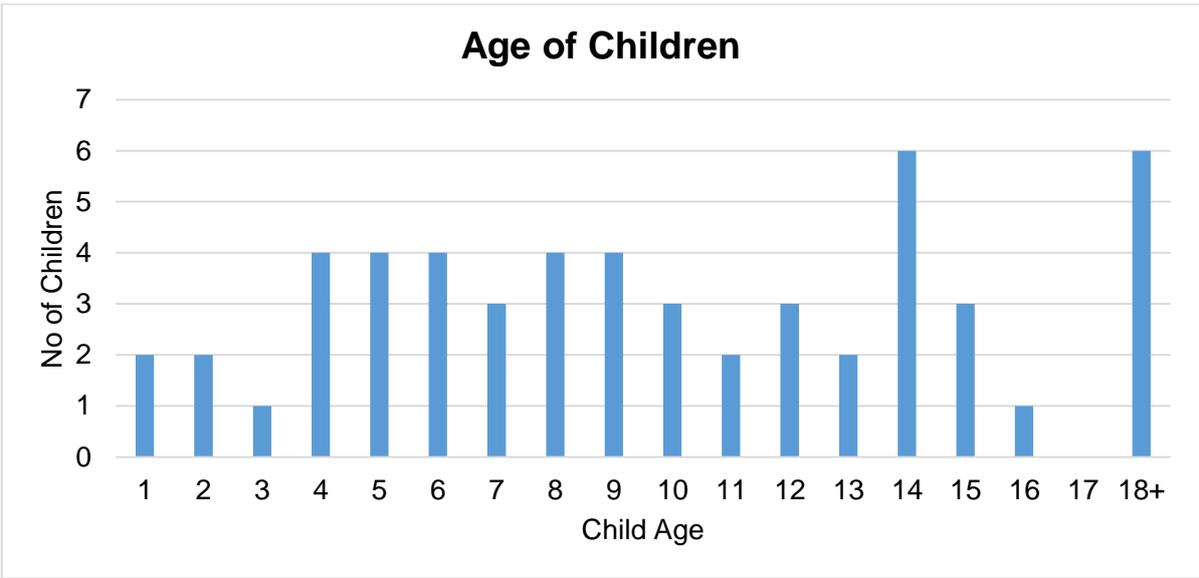


Do you experience mental ill health?





- ADHD, Global developmental delay
- Macrocephaly (larger head)
- Severe learning difficulties
- Daughter has dyslexia not been diagnosed
- Autism
- PICA
- ARFID – food avoidance syndrome
- Genetic eye disorder
- Mild sclerosis, all children are unsteady on their feet.
- Learning difficulties
- Dyslexia
- Mobility issues as joints too flexible
- Non – verbal
- Sensory issues
- Suspicions that son may have Dyscalculia difficulty with maths.
- Partially deaf
- Congenital Heart disease
- ADHD diagnosis and on level 4 education pathway for SEN
- Severe Asperger's and demand avoidance
- School assessing numeracy and literacy as son showing signs of dyslexia
- ASD and ADHD
- CRPS
- Youngest has rare genetic condition, sight loss, hearing loss progressive illness



About CYPSP

The Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) brings together a range of agencies, including voluntary and community sector organisations, that aim to improve the lives of children and young people in Northern Ireland. CYPSP emphasises a rights-based approach to its work ensuring that the planning of services uphold children's rights and encouraging children, young people and their parents to participate in the process.

The CYPSP works at four different levels and membership consists of the leadership of all the key agencies:

- Partnership
- 5 Outcomes Groups
- 8 Regional Subgroups
- 26 Locality Planning Groups
- 29 Hubs

The CYPSP has four core themes: communicating with government, early intervention, resource optimisation and the integration of planning which all contribute to the following factors contributing to well-being:



About Parenting NI

Initially established in 1979 as Parents Advice Centre, Parenting NI has been supporting parents across Northern Ireland for over 40 years. During this time, the organisation has acquired a reputation for providing high quality services to meet the needs of parents, their families and practitioners. Parenting NI believes that effective parenting is the cornerstone of strong families and that parents should be supported to provide children and young people with a positive upbringing. Parenting NI provides a range of services regionally to support parents in their parenting role. The organisation has proactively sought to identify emerging needs of parents by developing and expanding services to meet those needs.

Vision

Our vision of the future is one where parenting is highly valued.

Values

- **Professional** – We will work together as a team to apply principles of excellence, compassion, communication, and accountability, and by working together with other professionals aim to achieve optimal support for all parents.
- **Accessible** – We will strive to deliver responsive and accessible parenting support and services across the region.
- **Respectful** – We will show consideration for one another and recognise and respect each other's differences.
- **Equality** – We will ensure all parents have an equal right to access our support and services.
- **Needs Led** – Every parent has the right to a voice. We will listen to what parents need and develop services to meet those needs.
- **Trustworthy** – We will be open and honest in everything we do.

Parenting NI supports parents in their parenting role through the following services:

- Family Support Services
- Parenting Programmes & Workshops
- Parental Participation
- Employee Wellbeing Service
- Practitioner Training



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