



Parent Carer Survey Summary

In October/November 2020, Herts Parent Carer Involvement (HPCI) surveyed parent carers of children and young people with SEND in Hertfordshire, to gather information about their family's experiences during lockdown and since the return to education (for most children and young people) in September. The survey was open from 16 October to 8 November and we received 192 responses from parent carers across the county.

HPCI would like to thank all the families who responded to this survey. It helped us to identify the key issues to feedback to Hertfordshire County Council and the other statutory services in the area.

Key Messages

- **Accessing sufficient IT** during lockdown was an issue for many families – 34% of respondents¹ said that they didn't have enough or that their children had to share.
- 43% of respondents said that they were **"dissatisfied" or "very dissatisfied" with the support** that they received from their education setting during lockdown.
- While 30% of parent carers told us that their child's **mental health** improved during lockdown, 46% reported that it was "worse" (30%) or "much worse" (16%) than usual.
- And when it came to the mental health of siblings and **family wellbeing** more generally, more than half of respondents reported a negative effect.
- Half of families reported that their child or young person was more worried than usual about the return to education. And more than 40% said that they had had no support at all from the setting with respect to the **transition** back to education.
- However, the vast majority of families reported that their child or young person has returned to education. Only 15 families said that this was not the case – in the main due to school refusal / anxiety (although a lack of suitable placement also came up).
- Since the return to schooling in September, nearly one fifth of respondents reported that their child has had to spend time at home due to Covid-19 related **self-isolation or bubble closure**. And more than a third of those children were not able to continue learning from home, either due to child refusal, a lack of work set, or no differentiated learning provided.
- **Therapies** – of those respondents whose child normally receives therapies (92 children), 53% said that these had not restarted. In many cases, this was due to therapists not being allowed into school. Where therapies have resumed virtually, some parents said that they were ineffective as their child struggled to engage.
- For those children and young people with an **Education, Care and Health Plan (EHCP)**, 54% said that they were receiving the same level of provision or higher than pre-lockdown. But the other 46% reported receiving a lower level of the provision set out in their EHCP. 48% of respondents with a Plan also reported that the EHCP processes had not continued to be followed.
- Of those children and young people who have regular **medical appointments**, 43% said that these had not continued since March.

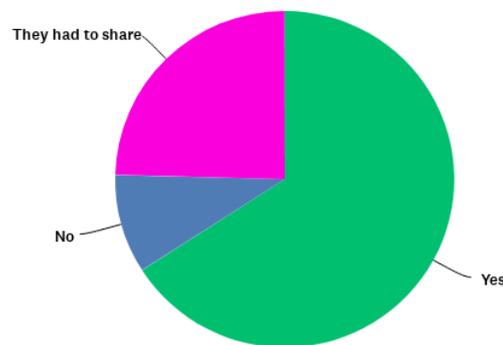
¹ In this summary, when a percentage of respondents is given, this relates to the percentage of people who responded to that specific question, rather than the percentage of survey respondents overall.

What the survey told us – in words and pictures

Accessing IT

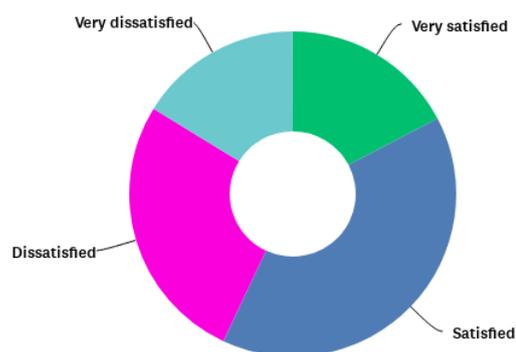
Accessing IT for home learning was a problem for many families. The chart below shows that more than a third of families either did not have sufficient IT, or that their children had to share. For families whose children are eligible for free school meals, that percentage rose to 57% of families having issues.

Q6 During lockdown, did your family have enough technology such as laptops, tablets, printer, internet access, data so that all your children could be educated at home?



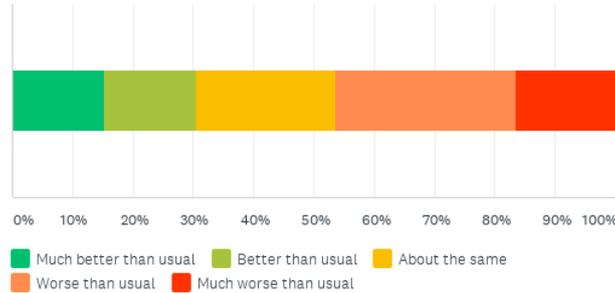
Support during lockdown

Q7 During lockdown, how satisfied were you with the support provided by your child's school/setting?



Mental health and wellbeing during lockdown

Q9 How was your child's mental health during lockdown?



Q10 If you saw a difference in your child's mental health then please let us know why you think this happened

structure Less pressure school work uncertainty need became lockdown activities
 see due Less attending lack routine structure going anxious
 anxiety Missed friends school Missed home finds
 routine peer stress quiet change son day expected work usual
 Lack routine lack social interaction pressure contact

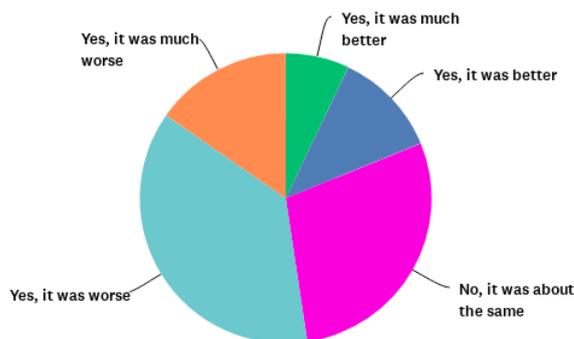


“The lack of routine, social interaction and support was a huge problem for us.”
 “He’s normally such a happy boy but it changed drastically in lockdown.”

“The reduction in anxiety was apparent... Lockdown brought out a fun, inquisitive child we haven't seen for a long time.”



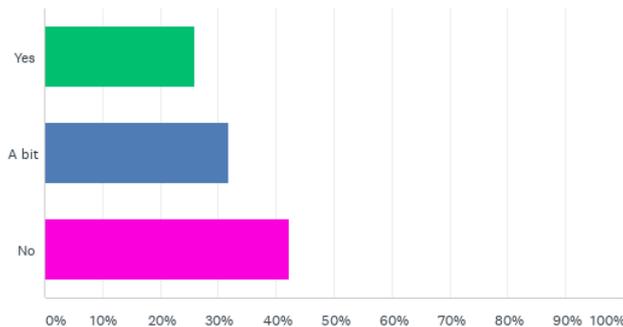
Q11 Did lockdown affect the mental health or wellbeing of any siblings without SEND or your family wellbeing more generally?



Return to education in September

Although half of families reported that their child was more worried than usual about the return to school, the vast majority of children did return to their education setting. Only 15 families said that this was not the case – in the main due to school refusal / anxiety (although a lack of suitable placement also came up). Just 26% of families said that they received support with the transition.

Q14 Did your child's education setting offer any support with the transition back to education?



We asked families to share their transition experiences and any good practice they encountered:



“A reduced timetable or more understanding of how difficult it was to return would have been helpful.”

“A print out with pics of his new teacher and the new classroom would have been great.”

“Opportunities for relaxed transition into school at the start of the day, visual timetable, social story about new class and teacher, opportunity to come into school the day before the new term started to see new classroom and where he'd be sitting.”

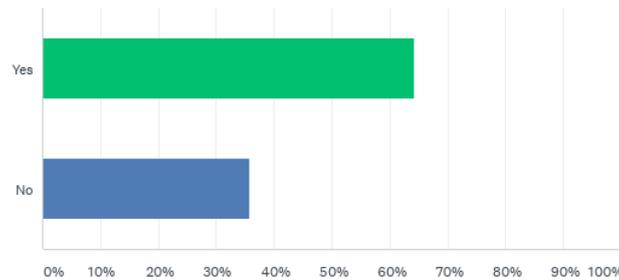
“The school have been incredibly supportive - allowing us to suggest a plan that we though would work for our daughter. She has had a very staggered start - increasing by an hour a week and lots of opportunities to relax and re-regulate with her 1:1 support worker. It has been a huge success!”



Home Learning when self-isolating / when bubbles are closed due to Covid-19

Of those children who had returned to education in September, nearly 20% had been sent home for a period due to Covid-19. We asked those families about what had been offered and delivered in terms of support for home learning.

Q21 If your child has been sent home for Covid related reasons, have they been able to continue learning from home?



“The school did not send any homework initially until I complained to the school office.”

“Home learning is really hard. My child has autism and is not used to learning at home.”

“The advice of the school was to use Oak Academy which was not differentiated and the modules we were asked to follow did not coincide with what was being taught in school, so it caused a level of stress.”

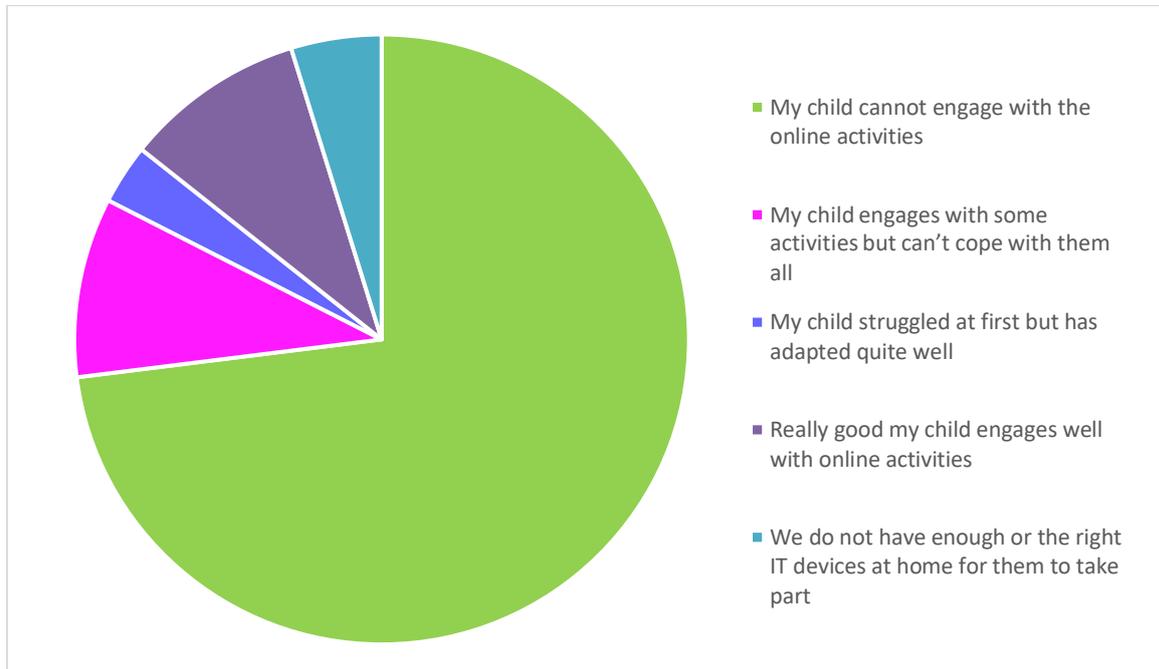
“Excellent system set up.”

“Full time table being followed via Teams.”



Access to Short Breaks provision

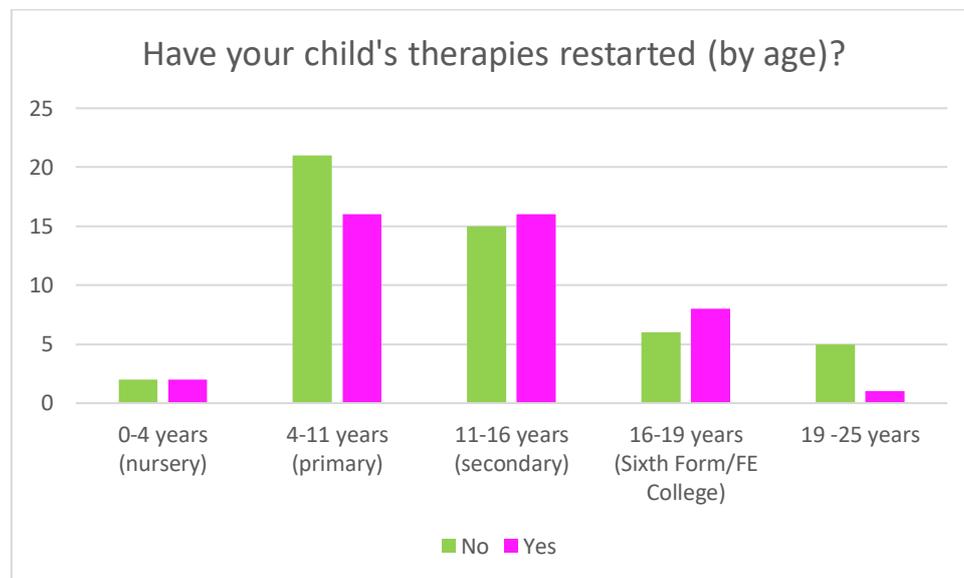
We asked families how they have experienced accessing Short Break provision, when it has been offered online.



Therapies

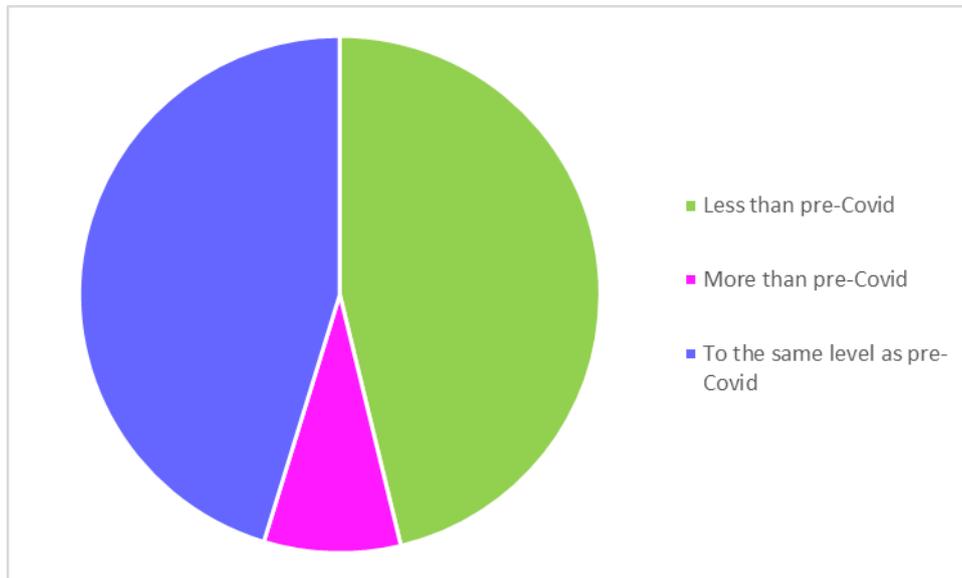
Of those respondents whose child normally receives therapies (92 children), 53% said that these had not restarted. In many cases, this was due to therapists not being allowed into school. Where therapies have resumed virtually, some parents said that they were ineffective as their child struggled to engage.

Looking at the data by age group, 57% of children in the primary age group were yet to have their therapies restart and only 1 of the 6 respondents with a young person aged between 19 and 25 had had their therapies restarted.

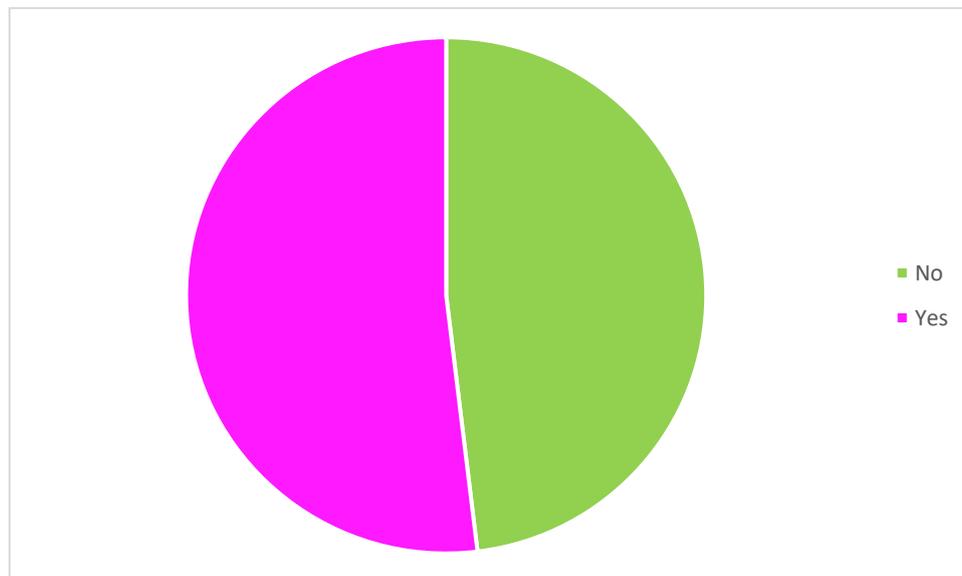


Education, Health and Care Plans

If your child has an EHCP, has the provision set out within this been provided since returning to education?



Have the EHCP processes continued to be followed for your child (e.g. Reviews undertaken, drafts received on time etc.)?



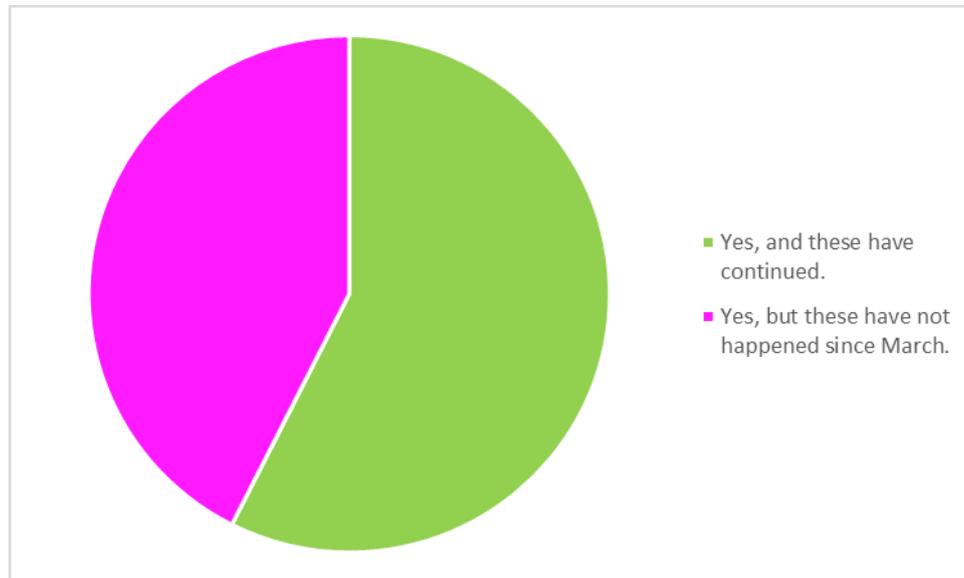
“Extremely overdue!”

“Complete lack of response from SEN team months of chasing, emails, phone calls and no response”

“No speech and language therapy or any attempts to contact us during lockdown. EHCP had to be done virtually, very difficult for me at home to complete and read it as no respite or time to do this.”

Medical Appointments

Does your child normally have regular medical appointments / check ups (e.g. to review medication)?



“We were already well overdue a check-up with paediatrician regarding adhd meds in March, haven't heard from anyone at all since.”

“All hospital reviews/medical appointments ceased along with therapy input. Great Ormand Street offers video calls to try and assess our son, but this was tricky as it was a physical examination!”

“Was all put on hold but restarted now.”

“We have had regular contact with our Community Paediatrician over the phone and video call. We have also had telephone consultations with consultants from her specialist hospitals. All have been extremely helpful and supportive”

