



Ask, Listen, Act - working together to inform the provision of Special Educational Need and Disability (SEND) support for children after the COVID-19 pandemic.

# The Ask, Listen, Act Study: The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Children with SEND's Education, Health & Social Care

## Evidence Briefing 1: Children with SEND, parent/carers and professionals' perceptions of impact, Quantitative survey data.

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### Summary for Parents of Children with SEND

We asked children with SEND, their parents and carers, and professionals about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children with special educational needs and disabilities.

55 children with SEND, 893 parent/carers, 163 health and social care professionals, 100 education professionals and 44 local authority professionals completed the online survey. Respondents were distributed across the UK, children had a broad range of SEND, and a range of multi-disciplinary health and social care and educational professionals took part. This is a summary of the quantitative survey data, the open text responses from the surveys will be shared in a separate evidence report.

#### Perceptions of Children with SEND

When sharing their views of the pandemic and lockdowns, children with SEND shared mixed views:

 35% (n=17) of children chose this emoji.

 23% (n=11) of children chose this emoji.

 13% (n=6) of children chose this emoji.

Children with SEND were asked what they felt about coming out of lockdown, things opening up, and everyone being back in school:

 28% (n=12) of children chose this emoji.

 23% (n=10) of children chose this emoji.

 19% (n=8) of children chose this emoji.

Children with SEND were asked what they felt about the year ahead:



36% (n=14) of children chose this emoji.



28% (n=11) of children chose this emoji.



23% (n=9) chose this emoji.

## **Parents and professionals' reports of the impact of the COVID on children with SEND**

### **Changes in the law for Children with Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans**

In May 2020, children with EHC plans had their educational, health and social care rights downgraded by the Government. Staff working in Local Authorities felt the largest impact of the change in law was on their ability to offer education services/provision (59% reported an impact), followed by health (49%), social care (36%), and play and recreation (33%). Out of 483 parents whose child had an EHC Plan, 27% (n=129) reported that over the pandemic their child's education, health and social care needs were 'not met at all' in accordance with their EHC Plan, 41% (n=196) reported their child's needs were 'somewhat met', 21% (n=103) reported that their child's needs were 'mostly met', and 6% (n=31) reported that their child's needs were 'completely met'.

### **Decreased Access to Education and Learning**

Most parents (89%; n=655) said that their child was not able to access face-to-face education throughout the pandemic, and almost half of parents (46%, n=261) said that remote learning was not at all effective in meeting their child's needs. This resulted in 69% (n=509) of parents reporting that the national lockdowns had either an 'extremely' or 'somewhat' negative impact on their child's education and learning.

Many (40%; n=38) education professionals said that they were not able to provide the alternative/specialist resources needed for children with SEND.

58% of education professionals (n=58) said that they felt that pupils with SEND had been more negatively affected by the pandemic than pupils without SEND.

### **Decreased Access to Health and Social Care Services**

During the first lockdown, parents said that their child with SEND had decreased access to physiotherapy, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, mental health support from CAMHS, respite and short breaks, and support groups than they had done before the pandemic (Table 1).

Table 1: The proportion of parents/carers who told us that their child was accessing health and social care before the COVID-19 pandemic and during the first national lockdown

	Pre COVID-19	First lockdown
<b>Physiotherapy</b>	41%	1%
<b>Occupational therapy</b>	35%	2%
<b>Mental health support from CAMHS</b>	24%	5%
<b>Respite and short breaks</b>	29%	3%
<b>Support groups</b>	30%	2%

During the first lockdown (March 2020-July 2020), just over three-quarters of health and social care professionals (77%; n=125) said that the quality of their service provision was 'much worse' or 'slightly worse' than before the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Worsening Mental Health and Weaker Friendships**

Parents said that because of the lockdowns their child's social skills (71%; n=198), mental health (65%; n=179) and ability to interact with others, play (86%; n=441) and make and sustain friendships (69%; n=407) had got worse.

The majority of the parents (67%; n=582) who responded to the survey said that their own mental health had 'got worse' over the pandemic.

### **Increased Safeguarding Concerns**

62% (n=62) of education professionals said that there had been an increased number of safeguarding concerns for children with SEND over the pandemic.

### **Increased Need for Support for children with SEND**

Almost three-quarters (72%; n=117) of health and social care professionals said that there had been 'many' or 'slightly' more requests for support, resources and provision from their service.

The majority of education professionals told us there had been an increased number of requests for SEND support/assessments (77%; n=77).

The pandemic has impacted on requests and completions of EHC Plans for children with SEND. 65% (n=22) of Local Authority staff said there had been an increase in requests to their Local Authority for EHC Plan assessments since March 2020, and two-fifths (40%; n=14) said that fewer EHC Plan assessments were completed in the statutory timeframe since March 2020, in comparison to the previous year.

If you would like to find out more about the project please visit the project webpage.

<https://www.ljmu.ac.uk/research/centres-and-institutes/research-centre-in-brain-and-behaviour/expertise/forensic-and-social-research/suicide-and-self-harm-research/looking-back-to-move-forward>

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