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# Research to establish a baseline of the special educational needs system in Wales

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## Research to establish a baseline of the SEN system in Wales

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Views expressed in this report are those of the researchers and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

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## Table of contents

Glossary.....	2
1. Introduction .....	3
2. Method .....	7
3. SEN baseline survey findings.....	19
4. LA case study findings .....	81
5. Synthesis and discussion of findings.....	101
6. Conclusions and implications for practice .....	117
Bibliography .....	123
Annex A: LA case studies .....	124
Annex B. SEN baseline survey analysis .....	125
Annex C. Analysis of LA data request responses .....	126
Annex D. SEN baseline survey questionnaire .....	127
Annex E. SEN LA case study topic guides .....	128
Annex F. LA data request form .....	129

## Glossary

<b>Acronym/key word</b>	<b>Definition</b>
ADHD	Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
ALN	Additional learning needs
ALP	Additional learning provision
ALNCo	Additional learning needs co-ordinator
AMBDA	Associate Member of the British Dyslexia Association
BESD	Behavioural, emotional and social difficulties
BPVS	British Picture Vocabulary Scale
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
DECLO	Designated Education Clinical Lead Officer
ELSA	Emotional literacy support assistant
EOTAS	Education otherwise than at school
EP	Education Psychologist
EWO	Education Welfare Officer
FEI	Further education institution
HLTA	Higher-level teaching assistant
IBP	Individual behaviour plan
IDP	Individual development plan
IEP	Individual education plan
ICP	Individual communication plan
ILS course	Independent living skills course
ISC	Independent specialist college
LA	Local authority
LAC	Looked after children
LHB	Local health board
LDD	Learning difficulties and/or disabilities
LSA	Learning support assistant
OT	Occupational therapy/therapist
PCP	Person-centred practice
PEP	Personal education plan
PRU	Pupil referral unit
SEN	Special educational needs
SENCo	Special educational needs co-ordinator
SEP	Special educational provision
SLT	Speech and language therapy/therapist
SMART	Specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, timely
SMT	Senior management team
SNAP Cymru	SNAP Cymru is a charity offering information, advice and support to families and practitioners regarding SEN
TA	Teaching assistant
WEST	Wales Essential Skills Test

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Arad Research and University of South Wales were commissioned by the Welsh Government to carry out research to establish a baseline of the current special educational needs (SEN) system in Wales prior to the implementation of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 (the Act). This final report outlines the study method and presents the findings from the research.

### **Background to the study**

- 1.2 The Act was passed by the National Assembly for Wales on 12 December 2017 and received Royal Assent on 24 January 2018. The Act makes provision for a new statutory framework for supporting children and young people with additional learning needs (ALN). This replaces existing legislation surrounding special educational needs (SEN) and the assessment of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) in post - 16 education and training. The Act also continues the existence of the Special Educational Needs Tribunal for Wales, which provides for children, their parents and young people to appeal against decisions made by the local authority (LA) in relation to their or their child's ALN, but renames it the Education Tribunal for Wales.<sup>1</sup>
- 1.3 The Act has three overarching objectives and creates:
- a) a unified legislative framework to support all children of compulsory school age or below with ALN, and young people with ALN in school or further education (FE);
  - b) an integrated, collaborative process of assessment, planning and monitoring which facilitates early, timely and effective interventions; and
  - c) a fair and transparent system for providing information and advice, and for resolving concerns and appeals.

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<sup>1</sup> The Act's explanatory memorandum (Welsh Government, 2018a) notes that 'The new name reflects not only the Tribunal's role in determining appeals in relation to ALN but also the role currently undertaken by the SENTW in determining disability discrimination claims relating to schools, a function that the Tribunal will continue to undertake.' (Welsh Government, 2018a)

1.4 Eleven core aims have been established that seek to achieve the overarching objectives:

- a unified plan - the Act creates a single statutory plan (the individual development plan (IDP)) to replace the existing variety of statutory and non-statutory SEN and LDD plans for learners with ALN in schools and FE;<sup>2</sup>
- the introduction of the term Additional Learning Needs;<sup>3</sup>
- a 0 to 25 age range;
- increased participation of children and young people;
- high aspirations and improved outcomes;
- a simpler and less adversarial system;
- increased collaboration;
- a new duty on health boards to appoint a Designated Education Clinical Lead Officer (DECLO);
- avoiding disagreements and earlier disagreement resolution;
- clear and consistent rights of appeal;
- a mandatory Code;
- a bilingual system.

1.5 The new system is expected to be implemented between September 2020 and July 2023. For the time being, LAs and those who work with children and young people with SEN, must ensure they continue to comply with the duties placed upon them by relevant legislation, including the Education Act 1996 and the Learning and Skills Act 2000, and must continue to have regard to the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice for Wales (Welsh Government, 2004).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The mandatory IDP requirements, which will be set out in the new ALN Code for Wales, have not yet been published. This may vary from the IDP that was developed and piloted as part of a Welsh Government action research study (See Section 1.7 of the main report). During the fieldwork for this study, some organisations referred to the IDP template that was used in this piloting phase during the research (e.g. LAs delivering delivered training relating to IDPs to school practitioners). In addition, other organisations referred to using IDPs but may have been using the term interchangeably with Individual Education Plans (IEPs).

<sup>3</sup> Some organisations have started using the term ALN, while others continue to use the term SEN. In this report, the term SEN is used to reflect the current system although some references to organisations using the ALN terminology are made where appropriate.

<sup>4</sup> See [Special educational needs: code of practice](#) (Accessed 19<sup>th</sup> June 2018)

## **Purpose of the study**

- 1.6 The purpose of this study is to establish a baseline of the current SEN system ahead of the implementation of the Act. The findings will be used to inform a future evaluation of the impact of the Act.
- 1.7 This research took place during a transitional phase in relation to the SEN system in Wales. It is important to acknowledge that this creates some challenges in terms of establishing a baseline of the SEN system which existed prior to the introduction of recent changes that have been influenced by the ALN transformation programme. For example, the availability of the Draft ALN Code (National Assembly for Wales, 2017) as part of the documentation provided by the Welsh Government to Assembly Members to aid their scrutiny of the Bill may have influenced practice in schools, LAs or other organisations.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, some LAs, schools and other organisations were involved in action research projects between 2009 and 2012 that sought to develop and trial new systems and approaches to help shape future policy and legislation (e.g. developing and piloting IDPs). Findings from this action research have been published and are, therefore, available to organisations who could potentially learn from and adapt their practices, regardless of their involvement in the pilots.<sup>6</sup> In addition, Welsh Government has provided grant funding to LAs (in 2015-16 and 2016-17) to promote person-centred practice (PCP) in relation to SEN, including the development and delivery of PCP training courses. This could be seen as having had an influence on practice across Wales and this should be borne in mind when interpreting the findings (this is further discussed in section 5).

## **Aim and objectives of the study**

- 1.8 The Welsh Government specification for the study stated that the aim for the project was 'to design and conduct a baseline assessment of the current SEN/LDD/ALN system with key LA, health, school and FEI personnel who are responsible for providing and delivering support, practices and processes for SEN/LDD/ALN in our education system in Wales. This should be done via a mix of quantitative and

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<sup>5</sup> See [Draft Additional Learning Needs Code](#) (Accessed 12<sup>th</sup> October 2018)

<sup>6</sup> A series of reports based on the [programme of action research to inform evaluation of the ALN Pilot](#). (accessed August 17<sup>th</sup> 2018)

qualitative methods supplemented with appropriately identified monitoring data where possible.’ (Welsh Government, 2017a).

- 1.9 The study objectives were to conduct a national baseline assessment, in the form of a survey, and in-depth case study work in four geographical areas; one LA from each of the four education consortia regions. These are referred to in this report as the SEN baseline survey (the survey) and the LA case studies (case studies). In addition to the survey and case studies, an additional data gathering exercise (data requests) was undertaken to collect data from LAs. Further detail on the survey, case studies and data requests are included in section 2 of this report.

## **Report structure**

- 1.10 This report presents the findings from the survey and the case studies. The remainder of the report includes the following:
- Section 2 of this report outlines the method.
  - Section 3 presents the SEN baseline survey findings.
  - Section 4 includes the LA case study findings.
  - Section 5 includes a synthesis and discussion of findings.
  - Section 6 presents the study’s conclusions and implications for practice.
- 1.11 The four LA case studies are presented individually in Annex A, with survey results (including data tables) included in Annex B and results from the LA data requests in Annex C. The survey questionnaire and case study topic guides are included in Annexes D and E respectively. The LA data request proforma is included in Annex F.

## 2. Method

2.1 This section describes the method used for this study. It presents a description of the survey, the case study fieldwork and the process of requesting data from LAs.

### SEN baseline survey

- 2.2 An e-survey was undertaken to gather professionals' views and experiences of the current system for children and young people with SEN and LDD. The survey included questions on the current SEN/LDD system as a whole and on specific aspects of the system, including assessment, planning, transition, avoiding and resolving disagreements and partnership working. The survey questionnaire is included in Annex D of this report.
- 2.3 The survey was aimed at school SENCOs/ALNCOs (although other school practitioners also provided responses), LA education and social services staff, local health board (LHB) staff, further education institutions (FEIs) and independent specialist colleges (ISCs). Contact details for LA, LHB, FEI and ISC staff were provided by Welsh Government.<sup>7</sup> School contact details were sourced using the Welsh Government schools contact list and this was supplemented with web searches for schools' email addresses.
- 2.4 Survey participants were invited to take part in the survey on a voluntary basis. A privacy notice was developed in consultation with, and was approved by the Welsh Government, ensuring compliance with data protection legislation. The privacy notice is included with the questionnaire in Annex D of this report.
- 2.5 The survey was open between January 31<sup>st</sup> and March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018 – a period of four and a half weeks. The survey was directly distributed (via e-mail) to 1,904 individuals or institutions (e.g. schools, pupil referral units). Non-respondents were sent up to three emails reminding them to complete the survey during this period. In addition, telephone calls were made to schools where emails were found to be invalid to request their correct email address.

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<sup>7</sup> Contact details for staff in 12 out of the 22 LA education departments and 19 out of the 22 social services departments as well as all FEI principals and staff in all ISCs and LHBs were provided by the Welsh Government. In the other LAs, the research team invited the directors of social services and education to distribute the survey to colleagues in roles relating to the SEN system.

- 2.6 Targeted phone calls were made to secondary schools who had not responded to request the email address of the SENCo or (if this was not available) to ask administrative staff to pass the survey on to the SENCo. Awareness of the survey was also raised through a Welsh Government education newsletter and a Welsh Government ALN distribution list.
- 2.7 In total, 726 survey responses were deemed to be 'in-scope' for the purposes of the survey analysis.<sup>8</sup> These included 525 respondents who completed the questionnaire (reached the end of the survey) and 201 respondents who provided partial responses (completing at least one of the survey questions beyond the profile questions).

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<sup>8</sup> Respondents considered to be out of scope were those who clicked 'other' when asked who they worked for (and were excluded from the survey as they did not fall within the scope of the study), respondents who started the survey more than once (their most complete response was included in the analysis) and respondents who did not answer any questions beyond the profile questions (and therefore did not provide sufficient data to be analysed).

2.9 Table 1 below provides a breakdown of the number of responses by sector. More detailed profile data on respondents from schools by sector and medium of education is provided in Annex B.

**Table 1. Number of responses by sector of respondent**

<b>Do you work for a:</b>	<b>Complete responses</b>	<b>Total responses (partial + complete responses)</b>	<b>Number of contacts invited</b>
School, pupil referral unit or EOTAS provider* <i>Of which:</i>	330	470	1546
<i>Mainstream primary, middle and secondary schools</i>	306	428	1482
<i>Special schools</i>	15	24	40
<i>Pupil referral unit</i>	6	8	24
<i>Education other than at school (EOTAS) provider</i>	0	2	**
<i>Other</i>	3	8	-
Further education institution	27	30	13
Early years provider	1	4	**
LA education department	72	98	105
LA social services department	26	29	120
Local health board	62	88	113
Independent specialist college	7	7	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>525</b>	<b>726</b>	<b>1904</b>

\*School totals includes 47 responses from 21 schools where more than one practitioner completed the survey.

Other includes independent schools and CAHMS in education unit.

\*\*Not a specific target group for the survey.

2.10 Defining a survey population is necessary for calculating the response rate for the survey. However, there are challenges in identifying the survey population and response rate for this survey. The main challenge is that the total number of respondents the invitation to complete the survey reached is not known. To address this, it is possible to make some assumptions to define the survey population. This can then enable us to estimate response rates among some categories of respondent.

- 2.11 For some respondent groups (LA and LHB staff), the distribution method involved directly inviting individuals to complete the survey. For these groups, it is possible to calculate the response rate among those directly invited to participate in the survey. However, it is also known that additional responses were received from LA and LHB staff who were not sent the survey link directly.
- 2.12 At institutional level, the total number of schools, PRUs, ISCs and FEIs is known and all were directly sent the invitation to the survey. It is therefore possible to report a response rate at institutional level for these. This requires identifying institutions where more than one person completed the survey (this has been done for Table 2 below). Based on this, we are able to report that responses were received from 28% of schools, 33% of PRUs, 92% of FEIs, and 67% of ISCs. However, it is not possible to know what percentage of staff within these institutions received the survey and therefore we cannot report on a survey response rate for practitioners in these settings.

**Table 2: Survey population, number of respondents and response rates by sector**

<b>Sector</b>	<b>Number of respondents directly invited to complete survey</b>	<b>Number of respondents directly invited completing the survey</b>	<b>Response rate from those directly invited</b>	<b>Additional respondents*</b>	<b>Number of respondents directly invited + additional responses</b>	<b>Total number of respondents**</b>	<b>Response rate based on respondents directly invited + additional responses</b>
Schools**	1522	431***	28%	3	1525	434***	28%
Pupil referral units	24	8	33%	0	24	8	33%
EOTAS providers	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	2	2	N/A
Further education institutions	13	12****	92%	0	13	12****	92%
Early years provider	N/A	N/A	N/A	4	4	4	N/A
LA education department staff	105	24	23%	74	179	98	55%
LA social services department staff	120	15	13%	14	134	29	22%
Local health board staff	113	25	22%	63	176	88	53%
Independent specialist colleges	7	4	57%	2*****	9	6*****	67%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1904</b>	<b>519</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>2066</b>	<b>681</b>	<b>33%</b>

\*Respondents who were not invited directly by the research team to take part in the survey. \*\*Includes all in-scope responses (partial and complete). \*\*\*Excludes 26 responses from schools where more than one practitioner completed the survey. A total of 47 responses were received from 21 schools where more than one practitioner completed the survey.

\*\*\*\*Excludes 18 responses from FEIs where more than one practitioner completed the survey. \*\*\*\*\*Excludes one response from an ISC where two respondents completed the survey.

- 2.13 Based on the challenges in identifying the survey population, it is not possible to state with confidence the degree to which the findings are generalisable to the population. Therefore, in analysing the results below, and particularly in comparing findings across sectors, it should be noted that the results cannot be considered representative of all professionals working in these sectors and should be interpreted as a convenience sample of respondents.
- 2.14 In analysing differences between respondent sub-groups from different types of schools (primary and secondary; Welsh and English-medium), we have referred to differences of more than 10 percentage points between sub-groups as being 'notably' higher or lower. In addition, where there were differences of fewer than 10 percentage points, we have noted that there were no 'notable differences' between sub-groups. It is important to note that identifying notable differences does not mean they are statistically significant, and this should be considered when reviewing the findings.
- 2.15 For some questions, significant numbers of respondents selected the 'don't know' option when responding. This was particularly the case for LHBs and special schools when responding to questions around non-statutory processes (which they may not always be involved in) and for FEIs and English-medium schools when responding to questions relating to the Welsh language. In order to try and ensure that responses to individual questions were comparable between sectors, we have reported the results for some questions both including and excluding 'don't know' responses. This should be borne in mind when reviewing findings and particularly if comparing the results with a follow-up survey that uses the same response scale. The survey questionnaire also included a 'not applicable' option for some questions. Respondents who ticked 'not applicable' have been removed from the analysis for each individual question. This is not considered to affect the reporting of the findings in this report but would need to be considered in the design and analysis of any follow-up surveys in order to be able to compare findings over time. For example, ensuring that the same categories are used or that any differences are clearly outlined when comparing results.
- 2.16 The analysis of processes relating to learners with statutory plans (statements of SEN) includes the responses of mainstream and special school practitioners as well as respondents from LAs and LHBs (individuals working in FEIs/ISCs are not usually involved in processes relating to statements and were, therefore, not asked

about them).<sup>9</sup> The analysis of processes related to learners with non-statutory plans (learners at early years action/action plus, school action/plus or with FEI-based plans) also includes the responses of mainstream and special school practitioners as well as respondents from FEIs and LHBs (respondents from LAs were not asked about processes relating to school action and school action plus).

## **LA case studies**

- 2.17 In-depth qualitative research was undertaken in four LAs, one from each of the regional education consortia. These case studies were based on interviews with practitioners working in schools, PRUs, FEIs, LAs and LHBs. The purpose of this phase of the research was to draw together a detailed picture of the existing SEN system in various organisations, geographic areas and contexts.
- 2.18 The research specification noted that ten LAs had taken part in piloting work relating to the Act and should be excluded from the case study work since they had already introduced some of the reforms being introduced through the Bill. This ruled out a number of LAs from consideration as case study areas.
- 2.19 From among the remaining, four LAs were selected. These were selected to include a spread of characteristics in terms of the percentage of pupils with SEN, percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals (eFSM), size, geography, deprivation and the percentage of Welsh speakers. An overview of the characteristics of the four LAs is provided below (these have been kept broad to ensure they are not identifiable).

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<sup>9</sup> Annexe B includes details on the roles of survey respondents within each organisation.

**Table 3. Summary of case study LA characteristics**

<p><b>LA1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percentage of pupils with SEN higher than average for Wales' LAs;</li> <li>• Percentage of pupils eFSM higher than average for Wales' LAs;</li> <li>• Population below average for Wales' LAs;</li> <li>• Percentage of Welsh speakers below average for Wales' LAs</li> <li>• Higher levels of deprivation than average for Wales' LAs.</li> </ul>	<p><b>LA2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percentage of pupils with SEN similar to the average for Wales' LAs;</li> <li>• Percentage of pupils eFSM similar to the average for Wales' LAs;</li> <li>• Population below average for Wales' LAs;</li> <li>• Percentage of Welsh speakers higher than average for Wales' LAs;</li> <li>• Lower levels of deprivation than average for Wales' LAs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>LA3</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percentage of pupils with SEN lower than the average for Wales' LAs;</li> <li>• Percentage of pupils eFSM lower than the average for Wales' LAs;</li> <li>• Population below average for Wales' LAs;</li> <li>• Percentage of Welsh speakers lower than average for Wales' LAs;</li> <li>• Lower levels of deprivation than average for Wales' LAs.</li> </ul>	<p><b>LA4</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percentage of pupils with SEN higher than the average for Wales' LAs;</li> <li>• Percentage of pupils eFSM similar to the average for Wales' LAs;</li> <li>• Population above average for Wales' LAs;</li> <li>• Percentage of Welsh speakers lower than average for Wales' LAs;</li> <li>• Levels of deprivation similar to the average for Wales' LAs.</li> </ul>

Sources (All accessed 12th June 2018):

Data on pupils with SEN and eFSM by LA from Welsh Government, 2017b: [Schools' census results](#)

Population estimates by LA from ONS, 2017: [Population estimates by local authority and year](#)

Data on Welsh speaking ability by LA from ONS, 2011: [Welsh speakers by local authority and broader age groups, 2001 and 2011 census](#)

Deprivation data from Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2014: [Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation \(full Index update with ranks\): 2014](#)

- 2.20 Overall, fieldwork was conducted in eight mainstream schools, four special schools and four PRUs. In each LA, visits to one primary, one secondary and one special school as well as one PRU were conducted. Face-to-face interviews or group discussions were conducted in each setting and the fieldwork included senior managers, SENCos and teachers. Interviews were also conducted with staff in four FEIs – one covering each LA. These were conducted through a mixture of face-to-face and telephone interviews with ALN managers/coordinators or learner support services managers.
- 2.21 Interviews with 18 LA staff were undertaken – 12 in LA education and 6 social services departments. In each LA, 4-6 staff were interviewed including 2-4 LA education staff and 1-2 social services staff. These were undertaken through a mixture of face-to-face and telephone interviews. The roles of LA education staff varied by area but included: chief education officer, head of SEN, head of achievement, statementing officers, education psychologist and inclusion manager. The roles of social services interviewees varied by area but included: manager for children looked after by the LA, service manager for disability, manager for those aged under 25, children with disabilities manager.
- 2.22 Interviews with a total of 19 LHB staff were undertaken including 3-7 in each area. These were undertaken through a mixture of face-to-face and telephone interviews. LHB interviewee roles varied by area but included staff in the following teams: community paediatrics, psychology services, child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), paediatric speech and language therapy (SLT), nursing, Flying Start health visiting service, occupational therapy.
- 2.23 Case study topic guides used to conduct fieldwork in each LA are included in Annex E of this report.
- 2.24 Notes from each interview or group discussion were prepared by the interviewer. Interviews were not transcribed verbatim, but some quotes were written up at the time and are reported in full to highlight respondents' views about specific aspects of the SEN system. A sample of interview notes were reviewed by members of the research team to develop a series of codes for analysis – these were largely based on the topic guide themes. Interview notes were then reviewed and coded (i.e.

sentences and paragraphs within each set of notes were labelled with 'codes' summarising what was said e.g. assessment - strength) to enable commonly reported themes to be drawn out during the analysis. Qualitative data analysis software was used to aid the process and ensure the data were easily retrievable. This has enabled us to summarise the data and draw out the key themes that emerged from the fieldwork.

## **LA data requests**

- 2.25 A data request pro forma was designed to collect data that from LAs on:
- their use of IDPs;<sup>10</sup>
  - numbers of statutory assessments requested and undertaken;
  - staff time spent on various processes relating to the current SEN system;
  - numbers of disagreements, appeals and tribunals relating to SEN.
- 2.26 A copy of the data request proforma is included in Annex F of this report.

## **Limitations of the method**

- 2.27 In analysing the findings presented in this report, it is important to bear some of the limitations of the method. As discussed in section 1.8, the timing of the research during a transitional period for the SEN system in Wales limits the extent to which we can be sure the findings represent a 'true' baseline for the system. However, there are also other limitations related to the survey, case studies and data requests (or more than one of these elements) which are explored below.
- 2.28 For the survey, there are limitations related to challenges in identifying the survey population and the reliability of the data (discussed in sections 2.8-2.11), small sub-sample sizes in some sectors (particularly ISCs, FEIs, special schools and LA social services respondents) and the number of respondents responding 'don't know' or 'not applicable' to some questions (see section 2.12). The number of respondents to survey questions (including sub-samples from each sector reported) are included in

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<sup>10</sup> The mandatory IDP requirements, which will be set out in the new ALN Code for Wales, have not yet been published. This may vary from the IDP that was developed and piloted as part of a Welsh Government action research study (See Section 1.7 of the main report).

data tables throughout the report and percentage data is reported both including and excluding 'don't know' responses where appropriate.

- 2.29 For both the survey and case studies, limitations are related to the self-reported nature of the data, differences in interpretation of the questions asked (e.g. different interpretations of the term effectiveness) and understanding of terminology used (e.g. differences between IDPs and IEPs). Issues with self-reported data include the exaggeration or under reporting of issues, maybe influenced by the timing of data collection, how respondents were feeling at the time or failure to recall pertinent information. The findings are therefore often based on subjective self-reported views of practitioners rather than more systematic, objective and validated measures. However, it should be noted that in some cases, data from the data requests or other sources has been used to validate findings.
- 2.30 For some of the questions in the survey, case studies and data requests (e.g. time spent on assessment processes), a further limitation was a reliance on practitioner estimates. For these types of questions, some respondents were unable to provide responses while others provided data ranges or breakdowns of how they had estimated the figures. Where these findings are reported, we have included appropriate caveats including the number of responses and approach taken to analysis as well as the need to treat some findings as being indicative of rather than precise measurements of current systems.
- 2.31 For the case studies, it is important to bear in mind that the qualitative nature of the fieldwork means that not all interviewees may have commented on all of the issues discussed in the report. This means that, if most interviewees noted that they felt an aspect of the system was effective, it does not necessarily imply that some felt this aspect of the system was not effective. This should be borne in mind when interpreting the case study findings.

### 3. SEN baseline survey findings

- 3.1 Key findings from the survey are presented in this section. More detailed analysis of all survey questions by sector (schools, FEIs, ISCs, LA education and social services departments and LHBs) is included in Annex B.

#### Views on the assessment processes

- 3.2 This section presents analysis of survey respondents views on various elements of the assessment processes for learners with statements and for learners with non-statutory plans. The analysis of survey questions relating to statutory assessment processes focuses on responses from schools, LAs and LHBs. The analysis of survey questions for **assessment processes for learners with non-statutory plans** focuses on the responses of schools, FEIs and LHBs (respondents from LAs are not as heavily involved in assessment processes for learners with non-statutory plans and were therefore not asked about this).

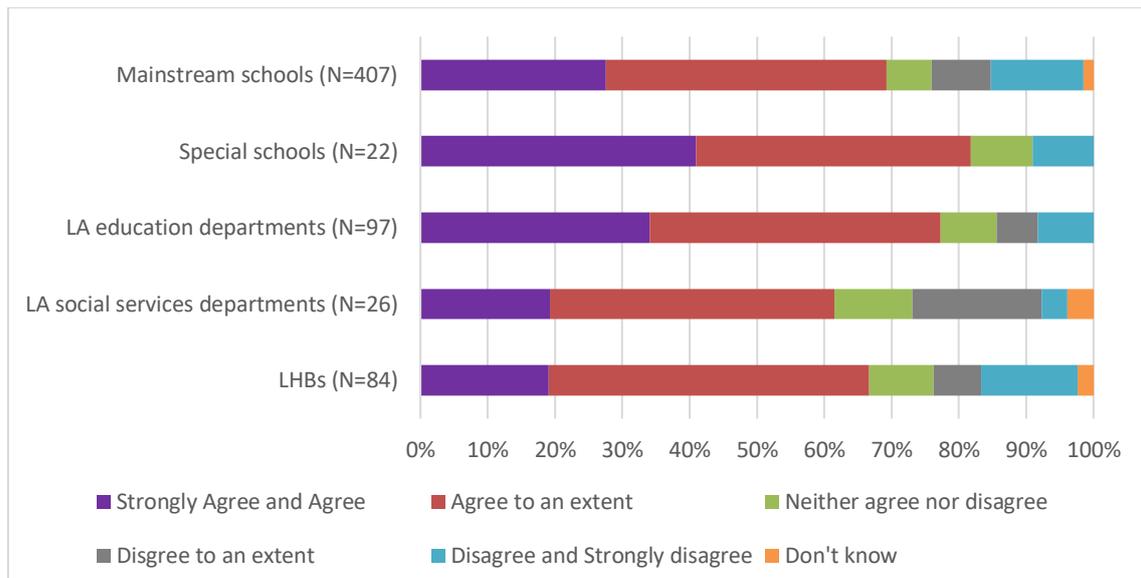
#### *Effectiveness of assessment processes*

- 3.3 When asked about the effectiveness of **statutory assessment processes**, the largest proportion of respondents across all sectors (between 41% and 47%) agreed to an extent that statutory assessment processes are effective. The second largest proportion of respondents across all sectors (between 19% and 34%) strongly agreed or agreed that statutory assessment processes are effective.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> A notably higher proportion of primary and middle schools strongly agreed or agreed (29%) compared with secondary schools (19%) that statutory assessment processes are effective. There were no notable differences between English and Welsh medium mainstream school responses.

**Figure 1. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that statutory assessment processes are effective**

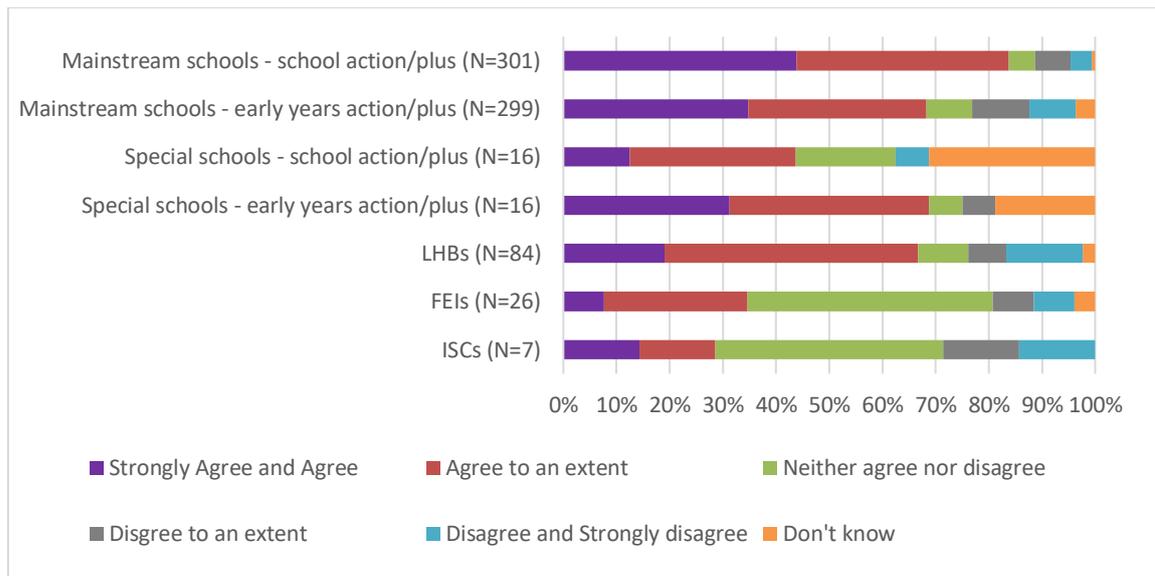


3.4 Respondents from mainstream schools were the sector where the largest proportion of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that the **assessment processes for learners with non-statutory plans** (those supported through school action/plus in schools and FEI-based plans in the case of FE respondents) are effective. For learners supported through school action/plus,<sup>12</sup> 43% strongly agreed or agreed, while for learners supported through early years action/plus<sup>13</sup> 34% strongly agreed or agreed. Aside from special schools (where most respondents also agreed assessment processes were effective when those selecting ‘don’t know’ were excluded), respondents from FEIs and ISCs were the only ones in which fewer than half of respondents agreed that assessment processes were effective. The largest proportion of FEI and ISC respondents (46% and 42% respectively) neither agreed nor disagreed that assessment processes for learners with FEI-based plans are effective.

<sup>12</sup> A notably higher proportion of primary and middle schools strongly agreed or agreed (44%) compared with secondary schools (32%) that school action/plus assessment processes are effective. There were no notable differences between English and Welsh medium mainstream school responses.

<sup>13</sup> There were no notable differences between English and Welsh medium mainstream school responses.

**Figure 2. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that assessment processes for learners with non-statutory plans are effective**

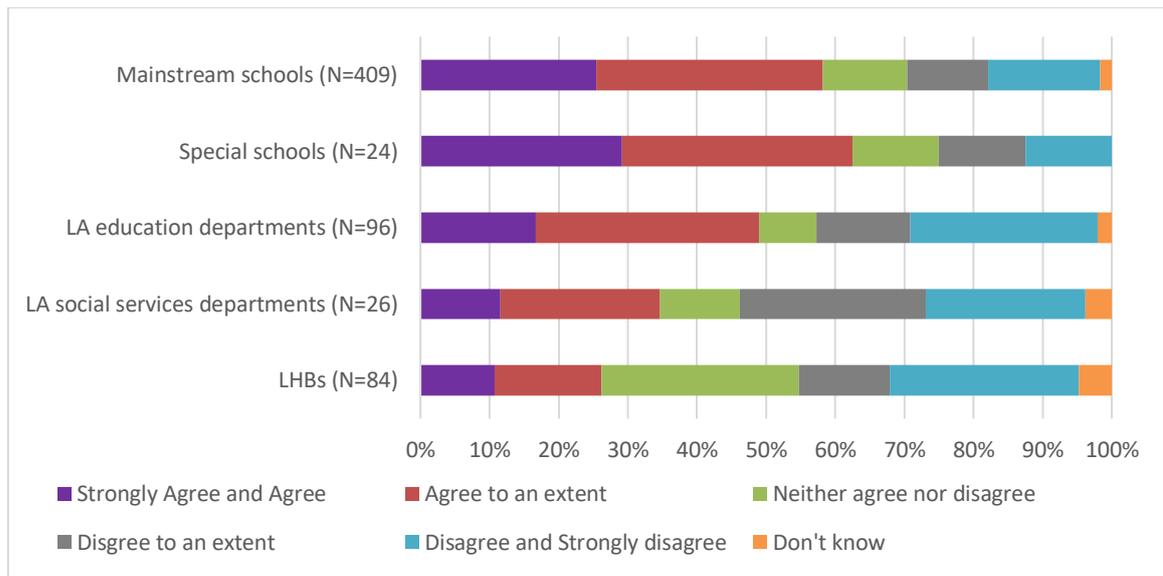


*Effectiveness of learner participation throughout assessment processes*

3.5 When asked about the effectiveness of learner participation throughout **statutory assessment processes**, the largest proportion of respondents across mainstream schools (32%)<sup>14</sup>, special schools (33%) and LA education departments (32%) agreed to an extent that learner participation is effective throughout statutory assessment processes. Fewer respondents from LA social services departments and LHBs strongly agreed or agreed, with the largest proportion of respondents from LA social services departments (26%) disagreeing that learner participation is effective and the largest proportion of LHB respondents neither agreeing nor disagreeing (29%). Furthermore, 27% of respondents from LA education departments and LHBs disagreed or strongly disagreed that learner participation is effective.

<sup>14</sup> There were no notable differences between primary and middle schools and secondary school responses, or between English and Welsh medium mainstream school responses.

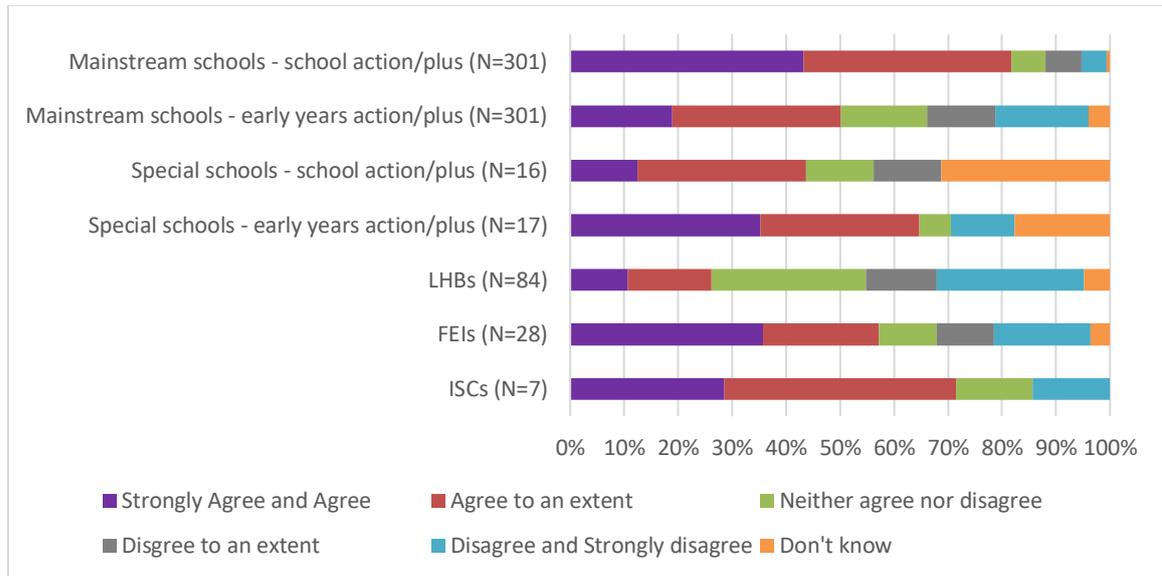
**Figure 3. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that learner participation is effective throughout statutory assessment processes**



3.6 Respondents in schools, LHBs and FEIs were asked about learner participation throughout **assessment processes for learners with non-statutory plans** (FEI respondents were asked whether PCP is used effectively throughout assessment processes for FEI-based plans). The highest proportion of mainstream school respondents (43%) strongly agreed or agreed that learner participation is effective throughout assessment processes for learners supported through school action/plus<sup>15</sup>. The largest proportion of FEIs strongly agreed or agreed that PCP is used effectively. Conversely, lower proportions of LHB respondents strongly agreed or agreed (11%), with the largest proportion neither agreeing nor disagreeing (29%) and over a quarter (27%) either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that learner participation is effective.

<sup>15</sup> There were no notable differences between primary and middle schools and secondary school responses, or between English and Welsh medium mainstream school responses.

**Figure 4. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that learner participation is effective throughout assessment processes for learners with non-statutory plans**

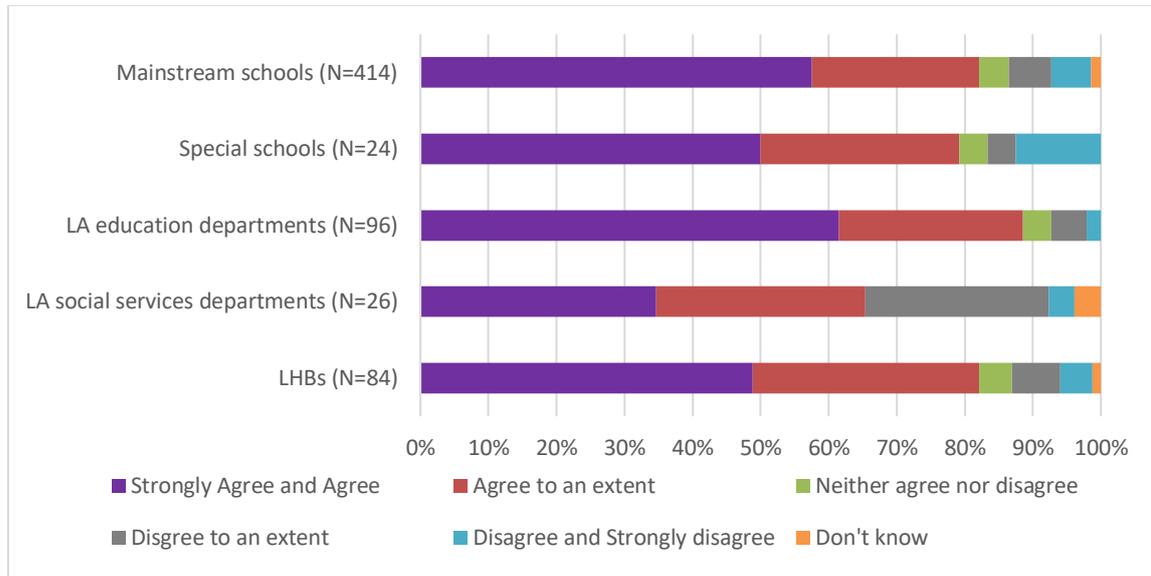


### *Involvement of appropriate people throughout assessment processes*

3.7 When asked about the involvement of appropriate people in **statutory assessment processes**, the largest proportion of respondents across all sectors (between 34% and 61%) strongly agreed or agreed that people appropriate to the needs of the child or young person are involved in statutory assessment processes<sup>16</sup>. However, just over a quarter (26%) of respondents from LA social services departments disagreed to an extent that the appropriate people are involved.

<sup>16</sup> There were no notable differences between primary and middle schools and secondary school responses, or between English and Welsh medium mainstream school responses.

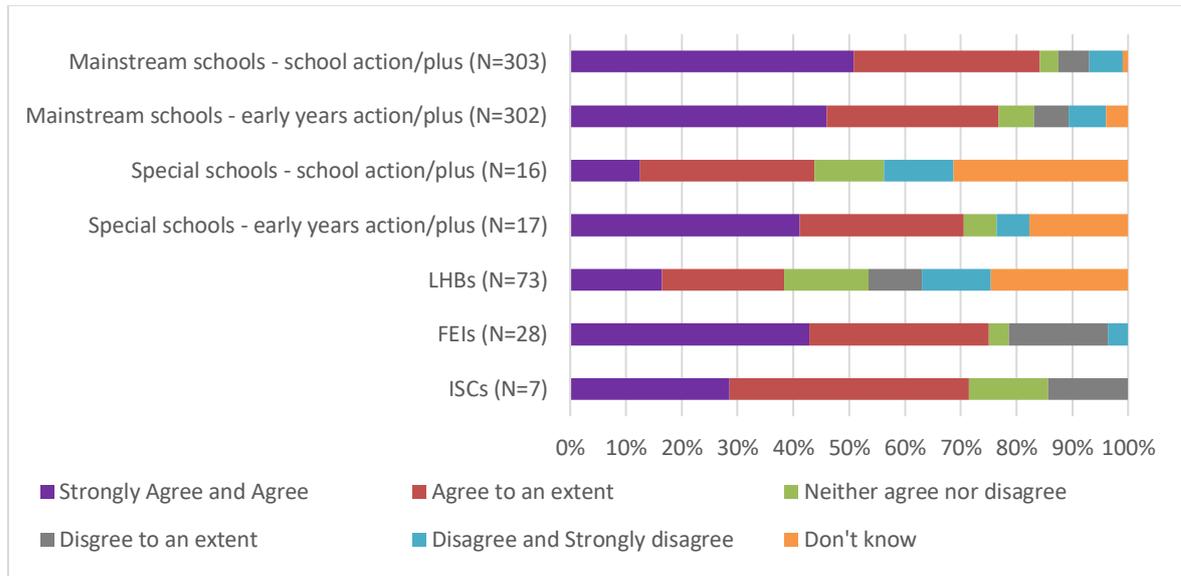
**Figure 5. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that people appropriate to the needs of the child or young person are involved in statutory assessment processes**



3.8 When asked about the involvement of appropriate people in **assessment processes for learners with non-statutory plans**, for most sectors (apart of special schools in relation to school action/plus and LHBs and ISCs), the largest proportion of respondents (between 41% and 50%) strongly agreed or agreed that people appropriate to the needs of the child or young person are involved in non-statutory assessment processes<sup>17</sup>. However, a considerable proportion of respondents from special schools (31% in relation to school action/plus) and LHBs (24%) reported that they did not know if the appropriate people are involved in assessment processes for learners with non-statutory plans.

<sup>17</sup> A notably higher proportion of primary and middle schools strongly agreed or agreed (50%) compared with secondary schools (36%) that the appropriate people are involved in school action/plus assessment processes. There were no notable differences between English and Welsh medium mainstream school responses.

**Figure 6. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that people appropriate to the needs of the child or young person are involved in statutory assessment processes for learners with non-statutory plans**

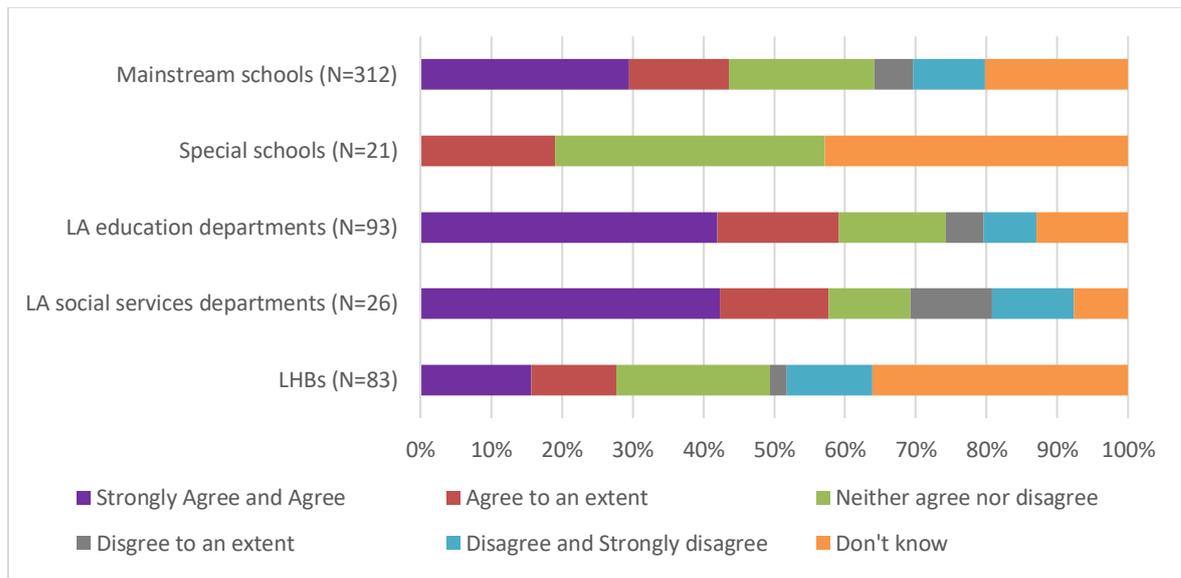


### Welsh language

3.9 When asked about the Welsh language in relation to **statutory assessment processes**, respondents from LAs were most likely to agree or strongly agree these arrangements were effective. The highest proportion of LA education departments (41%) and LA social services departments (42%) strongly agreed or agreed that there are effective arrangements in place to enable statutory assessment through the medium of Welsh where requested. Although the largest proportion of respondents from mainstream schools (29%) strongly agreed or agreed these arrangements were effective, a considerable proportion of respondents (20%)<sup>18</sup>, said they did not know if these arrangements were effective. This was also the case in special schools (42% selecting ‘don’t know’) and LHBs (36% selecting ‘don’t know’).

<sup>18</sup> There were no notable differences between primary and middle schools and secondary school responses. However, a notably higher proportion of Welsh-medium mainstream schools strongly agreed or agreed (35%) compared with English-medium mainstream schools (22%) that statutory assessment processes are available through the medium of Welsh where requested.

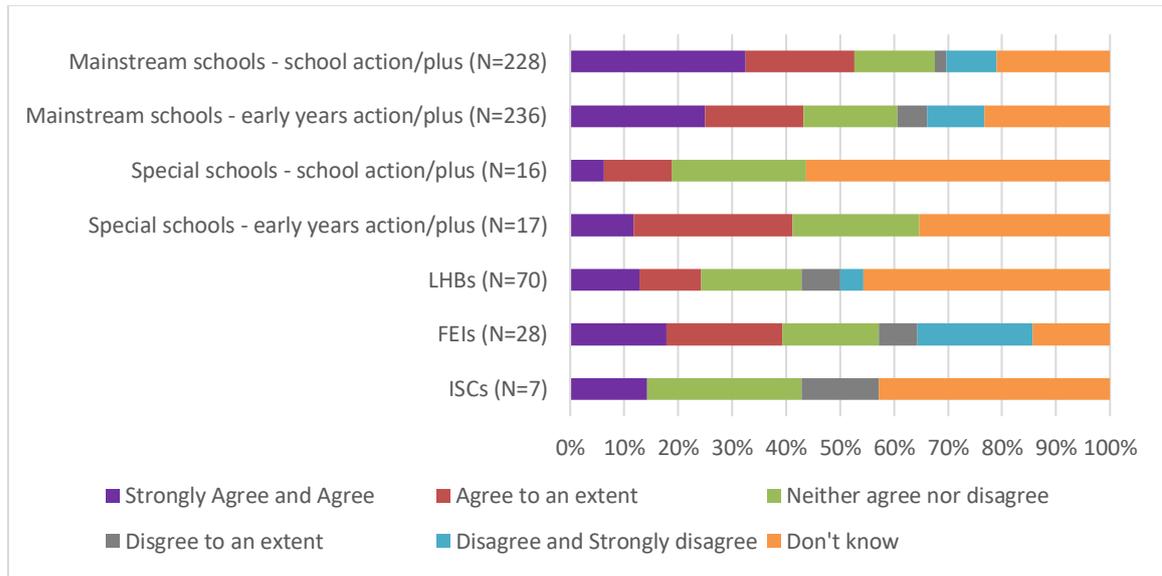
**Figure 7. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that there are effective arrangements in place to enable statutory assessment through the medium of Welsh where requested**



3.10 When asked about the Welsh language in relation to assessment processes for **learners with non-statutory plans**, a mixture of views were held by respondents between the different sectors. Respondents from mainstream schools were the group where the largest proportion of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that there are effective arrangements in place to enable assessment for learners with non-statutory plans through the medium of Welsh where requested (32% in relation to assessment processes for learners supported through school action/plus<sup>19</sup> and 25% for learners supported through early years action/plus). However, a large proportion of respondents across all sectors, apart from FEIs, said they did not know whether effective arrangements were in place to enable assessment for learners with non-statutory plans through the medium of Welsh where requested (between 35% and 56%).

<sup>19</sup> There were no notable differences between primary and middle schools and secondary school responses. However, a notably higher proportion of Welsh-medium mainstream schools strongly agreed or agreed that assessment processes are available through the medium of Welsh where requested (40% for school action/plus and 31% for early years action/plus) compared with English-medium mainstream schools (21% for school action/plus and 17% for early years action/plus).

**Figure 8. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that there are effective arrangements in place to enable assessment through the medium of Welsh for learners with non-statutory plans where requested**

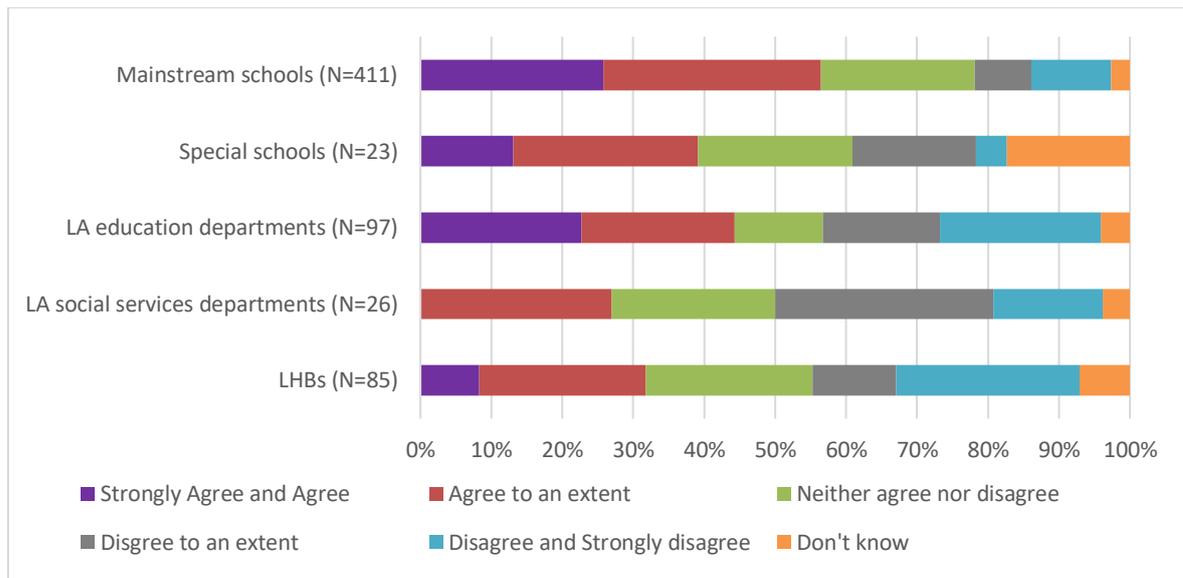


### *Avoiding disagreements*

3.11 When asked the extent to which current **statutory assessment processes** help avoid disagreements, the largest proportion of respondents across mainstream schools (30%)<sup>20</sup>, special schools (26%) and LA social services departments (26%), agreed to an extent that current assessment processes do help avoid disagreement. Respondents from LA education departments held more mixed views, with 22% strongly agreeing or agreeing, and a further 22% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing, that current statutory assessment processes do help avoid disagreement. Furthermore, a considerable proportion of LHB respondents (25%) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

<sup>20</sup> There were no notable differences between primary and middle schools and secondary school responses, or between English and Welsh medium mainstream school responses.

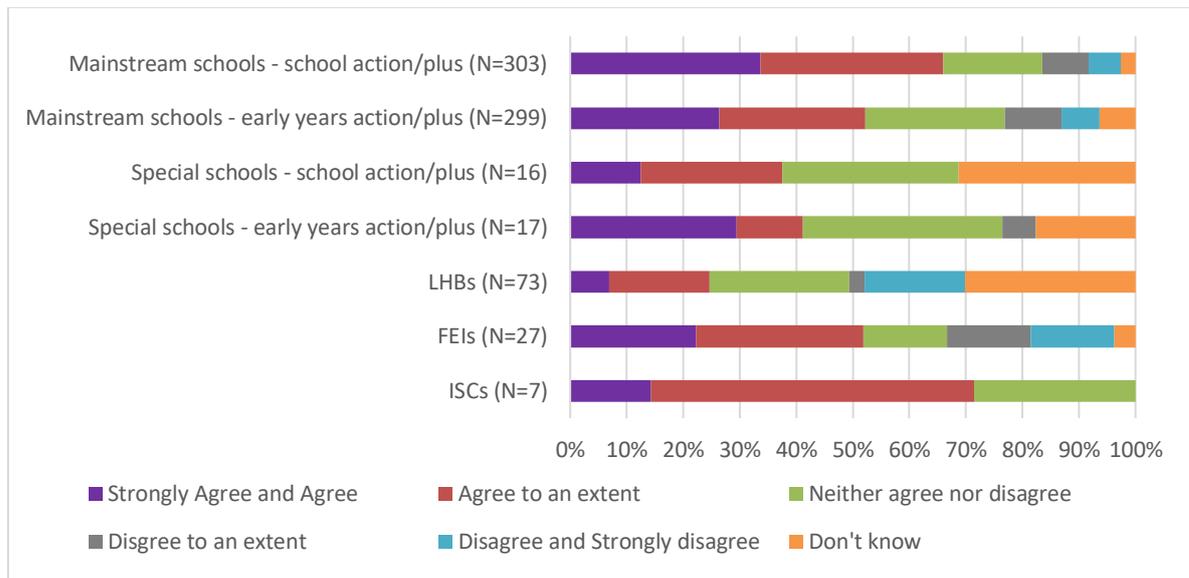
**Figure 9. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that current statutory assessment processes help avoid disagreements**



3.12 When asked the extent to which current assessment processes **for learners with non-statutory plans** help avoid disagreements, mainstream schools were most likely to strongly agree or agree with this. The highest proportion of respondents from mainstream schools strongly agreed or agreed that current assessment processes for learners with non-statutory plans help avoid disagreements (33% in relation to assessment processes for learners supported through school action/plus<sup>21</sup> and 26% for learners supported through early years action/plus). Most ISCs also agreed, with the largest proportion of respondents (57%) agreeing to an extent and none disagreeing that the assessment processes help avoid disagreement. However, a considerable proportion of respondents from special schools (31% in relation to assessment processes for learners supported through school action/plus) and LHBs (30%) said they did not know whether current assessment process for learners with non-statutory plans help avoid disagreement.

<sup>21</sup> There were no notable differences between primary and middle schools and secondary school responses, or between English and Welsh medium mainstream school responses.

**Figure 10. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that current assessment processes for learners with non-statutory plans help avoid disagreements**

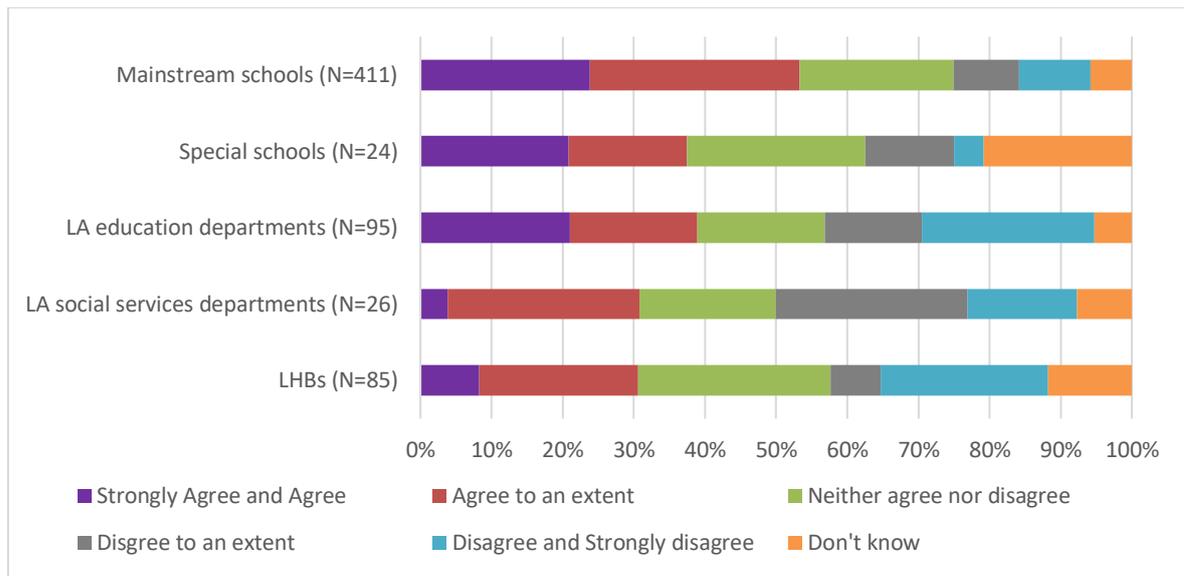


### *Disagreement resolution*

3.13 When asked whether current **statutory assessment processes** support early disagreement resolution, a mixture of views were expressed by respondents between the different sectors. Mainstream schools were the respondent group most likely to agree, with the largest proportion of respondents agreeing to an extent (29%), and the second largest proportion strongly agreeing or agreeing (23%) that current statutory assessment processes support early disagreement resolution<sup>22</sup>. Fewer respondents from LA education departments, LA social services departments and LHBs agreed, with a considerable proportion disagreeing or strongly disagreeing (24%, 15% and 23% respectively) or disagreeing to an extent (13%, 26% and 7% respectively) that current statutory assessment processes support early disagreement resolution.

<sup>22</sup> There were no notable differences between primary and middle schools and secondary school responses, or between English and Welsh medium mainstream school responses.

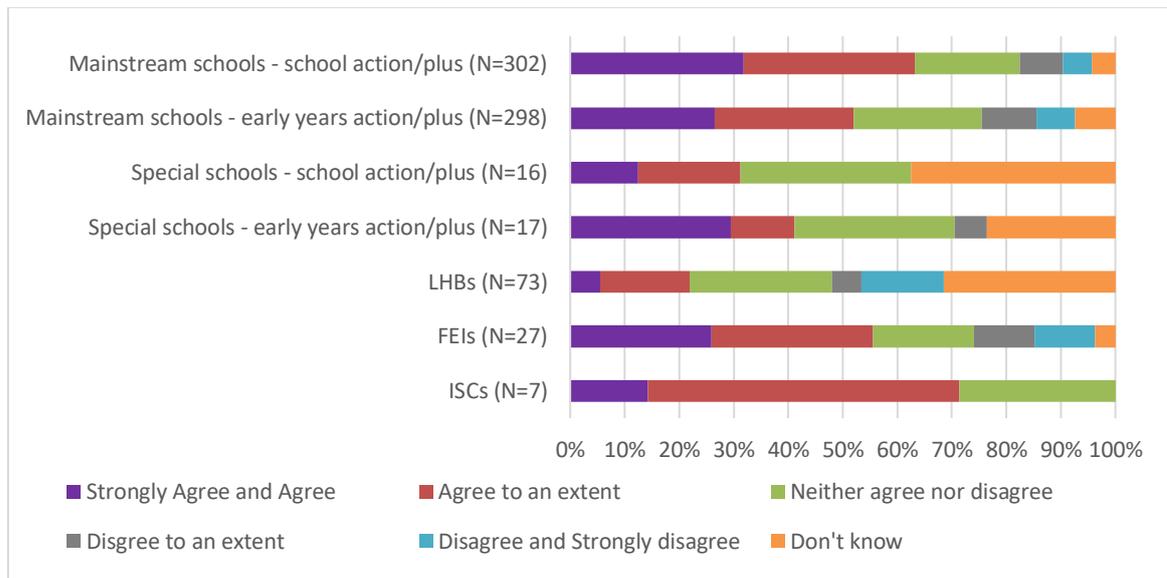
**Figure 11. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that current statutory assessment processes support early disagreement resolution**



3.14 When asked whether the current assessment processes **for learners with non-statutory plans** support early disagreement resolution, mainstream schools reported were the group most likely to agree. The highest proportion of respondents from mainstream schools strongly agreed or agreed that current assessment processes for learners with non-statutory plans support early disagreement resolution (31% in relation to assessment processes for learners supported through school action/plus<sup>23</sup> and 26% for learners supported through early years action/plus). The largest proportion of respondents from ISCs (57%) agreed to an extent that the assessment processes support disagreement resolution (with none disagreeing). However, a considerable proportion of respondents from special schools (37% in relation to assessment processes for learners supported through school action/plus and 23% in relation to assessment processes for learners supported through early years action/plus) and LHBs (31%) said they did not know whether current assessment process for learners with non-statutory plans support disagreement resolution.

<sup>23</sup> There were no notable differences between primary and middle schools and secondary school responses, or between English and Welsh medium mainstream school responses.

**Figure 12. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that current assessment processes for learners with non-statutory plans support early disagreement resolution**



### Views on Special Educational Provision (SEP)

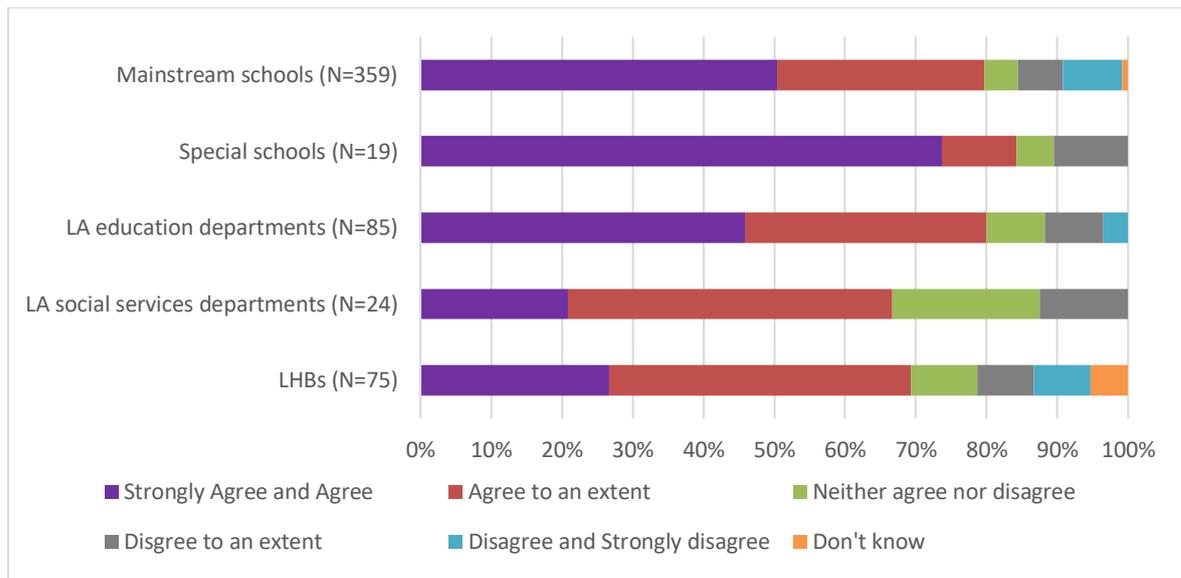
3.15 This section presents analysis of survey respondents views on various elements of SEP for learners with statements and for learners with non-statutory plans. The analysis of survey questions relating to SEP for learners with statements focuses on responses from schools, LAs and LHBs. The analysis of survey questions for SEP for learners with non-statutory plans focuses on the responses of schools, FEIs and LHBs (respondents from LAs are not as heavily involved in SEP for learners with non-statutory plans and were therefore not asked about this).

#### *Effectiveness of SEP*

3.16 When asked about the effectiveness of **SEP for learners with statutory plans**, the largest proportion of respondents across special schools (73%), mainstream schools (50%)<sup>24</sup> and LA education departments (45%) strongly agreed or agreed that SEP for learners with statutory plans is effective. The largest proportion of respondents from LA social services departments and LHBs agreed to an extent (45% and 42% respectively) that SEP for learners with statutory plans is effective.

<sup>24</sup> There were no notable differences between primary and middle schools and secondary school responses, or between English and Welsh medium mainstream school responses.

**Figure 13. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that SEP for learners with statutory plans is effective**

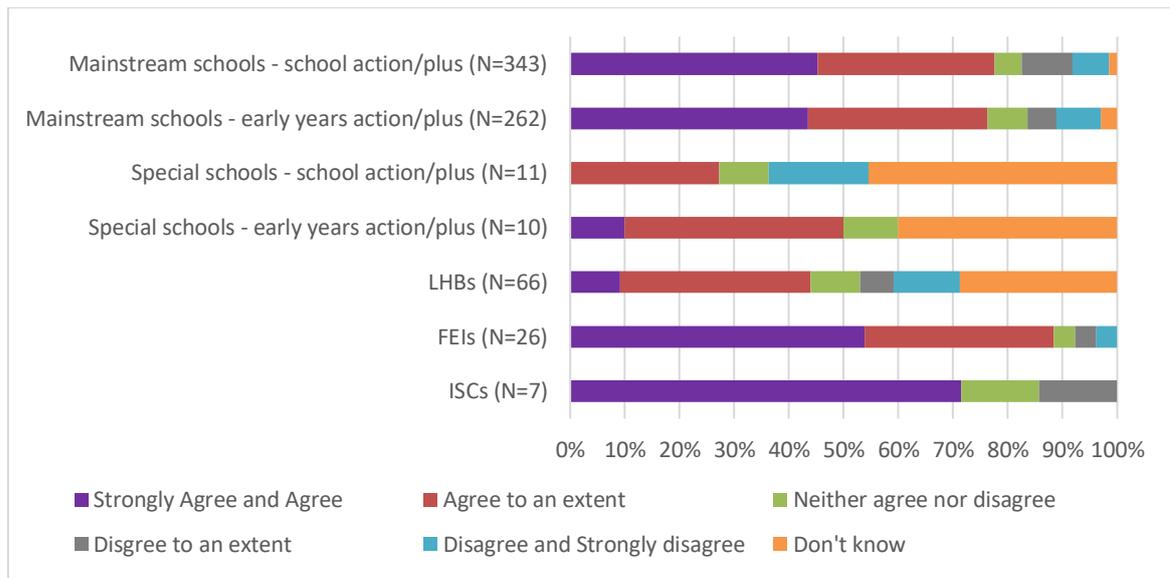


3.17 When asked about the effectiveness of **SEP for learners with non-statutory plans**, the largest proportion of respondents from ISCs (71%), FEIs (53%), and mainstream schools (45% in relation to SEP for learners supported through school action/plus<sup>25</sup> and 43% in relation to SEP for learners supported through early years action/plus<sup>26</sup>) strongly agreed or agreed that SEP for learners with non-statutory plans is effective. However, a considerable proportion of respondents from special schools (40%) and LHBs (28%) said they did not know whether SEP for learners with non-statutory plans is effective.

<sup>25</sup> A notably higher proportion of primary and middle schools strongly agreed or agreed (47%) compared with secondary schools (36%) that SEP for learners with non-statutory plans is effective. There were no notable differences between English and Welsh medium mainstream school responses.

<sup>26</sup> A notably higher proportion of Welsh-medium mainstream schools strongly agreed or agreed (50%) compared with English-medium mainstream schools (38%) that assessment processes for learners supported through early years action/plus are effective.

**Figure 14. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that SEP for learners with non-statutory plans is effective**

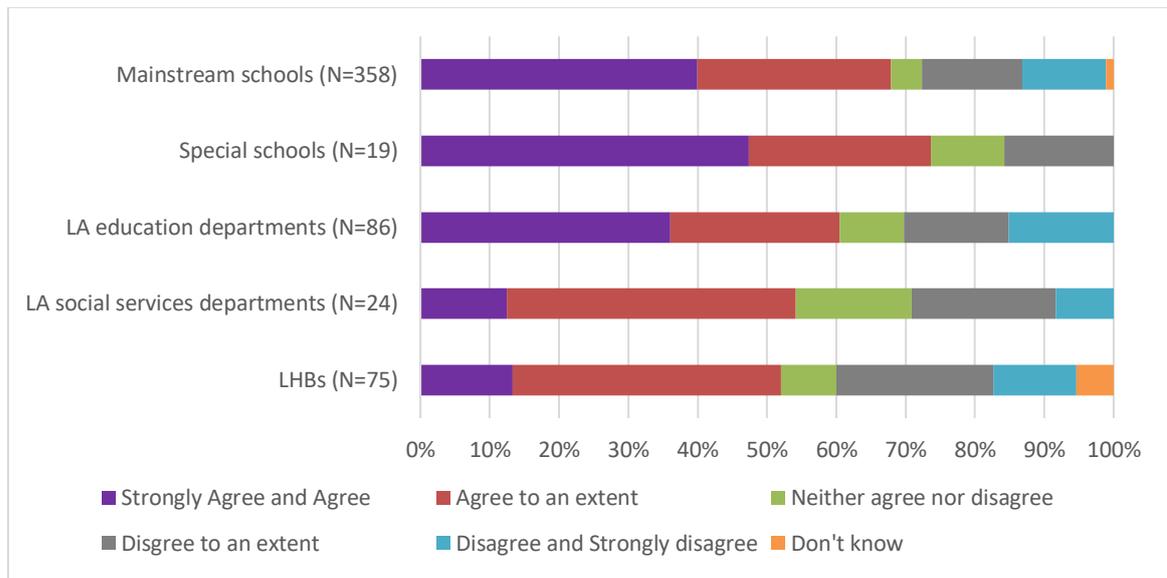


### *Timeliness of SEP*

3.18 When asked about timeliness of **SEP for learners with statutory plans**, the largest proportion of respondents from mainstream schools (39%)<sup>27</sup>, special schools (47%) and LA education departments (36%) strongly agreed or agreed that SEP for learners with statutory plans is delivered in a timely way to meet the needs of the learner. The largest proportion of respondents from LA social services (41%) and LHBs (38%) agreed to an extent, and the second largest proportion disagreed to an extent (20% and 22% respectively), that SEP is delivered in a timely way.

<sup>27</sup> There were no notable differences between primary and middle schools and secondary school responses, or between English and Welsh medium mainstream school responses.

**Figure 15. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that SEP for learners with statutory plans is delivered in a timely way to meet the needs of the learner**

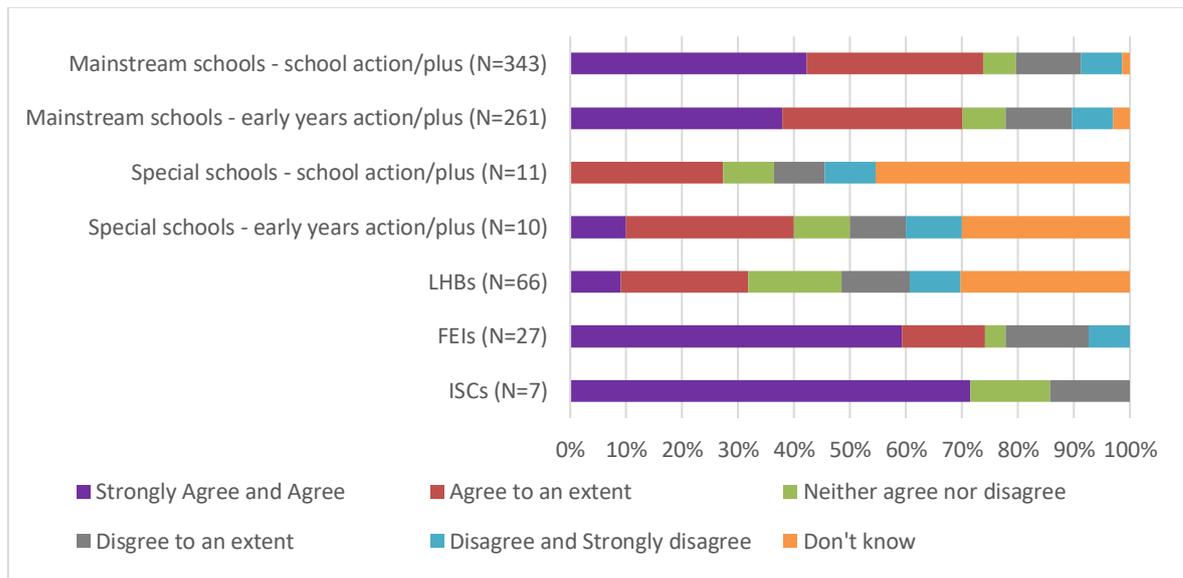


3.19 When asked about timeliness of **SEP for learners with non-statutory plans**, the largest proportion of respondents from ISCs (71%), FEIs (59%), and mainstream schools (42% in relation to SEP for learners supported through school action/plus<sup>28</sup> and 37% in relation to SEP for learners supported through early years action/plus<sup>29</sup>) strongly agreed or agreed that SEP for learners with non-statutory plans is delivered in a timely way. However, a considerable proportion of respondents from special schools (45%) and LHBs (30%) said they did not know whether SEP for learners with non-statutory plans is delivered in a timely way.

<sup>28</sup> There were no notable differences between primary and middle schools and secondary school responses. A notably higher proportion of English-medium mainstream schools strongly agreed or agreed (41%) compared with Welsh-medium mainstream schools (26%) that SEP is delivered in a timely way.

<sup>29</sup> There were no notable differences between English and Welsh medium mainstream school responses.

**Figure 16. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that SEP for learners with non-statutory plans is delivered in a timely way to meet the needs of the learner**

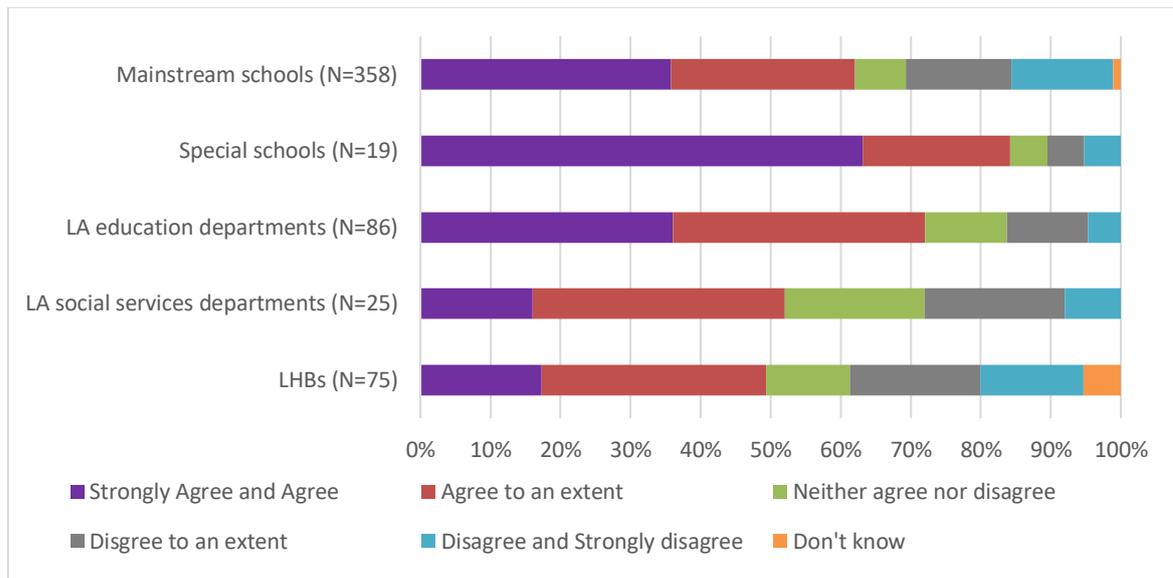


### Setting delivery of SEP

3.20 When asked whether **SEP for learners with statutory plans** is delivered in the most appropriate setting for the learner, respondents from special schools were most likely to agree. The largest proportion of respondents from special schools (63%) and mainstream schools (35%)<sup>30</sup> strongly agreed or agreed that SEP for learners with statutory plans is delivered in the most appropriate setting for the learner. Respondents from LA social services departments and LHBs reported more mixed views, with about one third (36% and 32% respectively) agreeing to an extent and about one fifth (20% and 18% respectively) disagreeing to an extent that SEP for learners with statutory plans is delivered in the most appropriate setting for the learner.

<sup>30</sup> There were no notable differences between primary and middle schools and secondary school responses. However, a notably higher proportion of Welsh-medium mainstream schools strongly agreed or agreed (41%) compared with English-medium mainstream schools (31%) that SEP is delivered in the most appropriate setting.

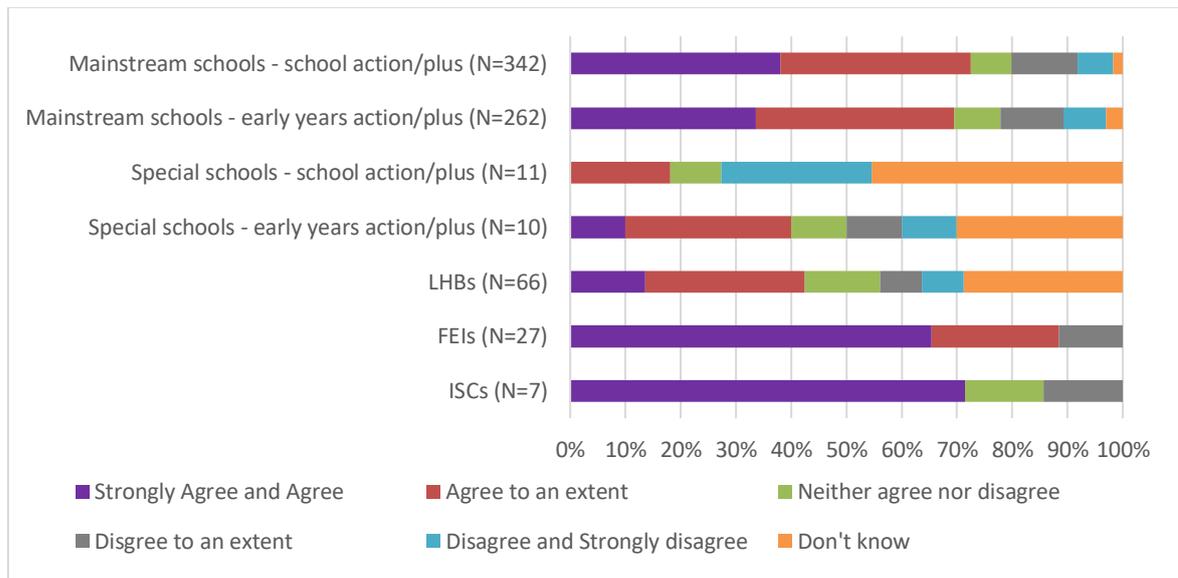
**Figure 17. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that SEP for learners with statutory plans is delivered in the most appropriate setting for the learner**



3.21 When asked whether **SEP for learners with non-statutory plans** is delivered in the most appropriate setting for the learner, respondents from ISCs and FEIs were most likely to strongly agree or agree. The largest proportion of respondents from ISCs (71%), FEIs (62%), and mainstream schools (38% in relation to SEP for learners supported through school action/plus<sup>31</sup>) strongly agreed or agreed that SEP for learners with non-statutory plans is delivered in the most appropriate setting for the learner. However, a considerable proportion of respondents from special schools (45%) and LHBs (28%) said they did not know whether SEP for learners with non-statutory plans is delivered in the most appropriate setting.

<sup>31</sup> A notably higher proportion of primary and middle schools strongly agreed or agreed (40%) compared with secondary schools (29%) that SEP for learners with non-statutory plans is delivered in the most appropriate setting. A notably higher proportion of English-medium mainstream schools strongly agreed or agreed (35%) compared with Welsh-medium mainstream schools (21%) that SEP is in the most appropriate setting.

**Figure 18. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that SEP for learners with non-statutory plans is delivered in the most appropriate setting for the learner**

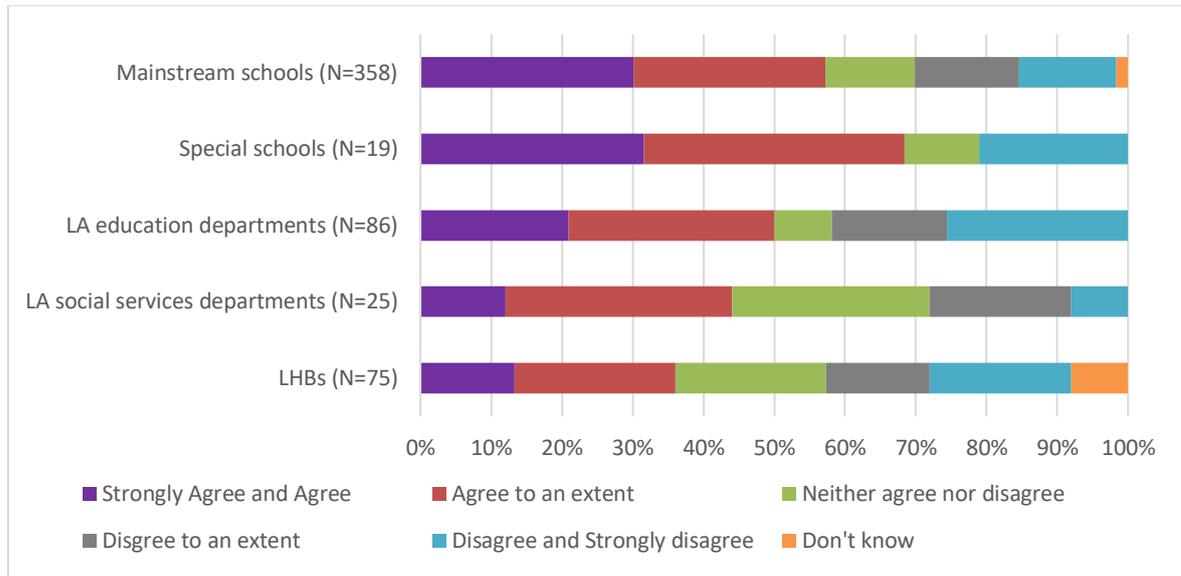


### *Flexibility of SEP*

3.22 When asked about the flexibility of **SEP for learners with statutory plans**, a mixture of views were expressed by respondents between and within the different sectors. For example, a considerable proportion of respondents across all sectors agreed to an extent that the current system enables a flexible approach to the delivery of SEP<sup>32</sup>; However, the second largest proportion of respondents from special schools (21%), LA education departments (25%) and LHBs (20%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that the current system enables a flexible approach.

<sup>32</sup> There were no notable differences between primary and middle schools and secondary school responses, or between English and Welsh medium mainstream school responses.

**Figure 19. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that the current system enables a flexible approach to the delivery of SEP for learners with statutory plans**

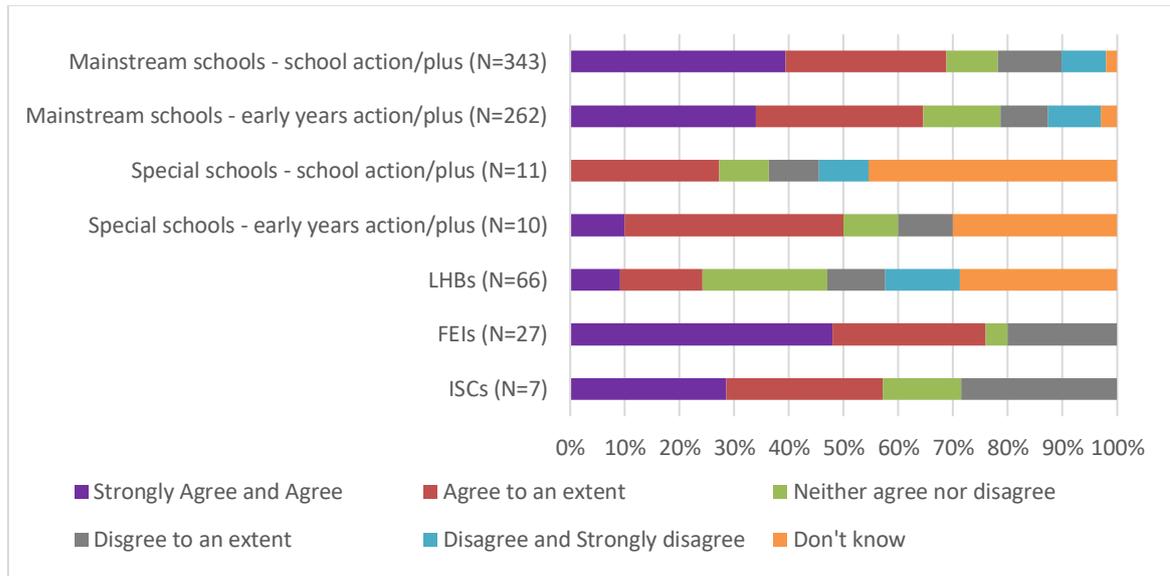


3.23 When asked about the flexibility of **SEP for learners with non-statutory plans**, once again, a mixture of views were expressed by respondents between and within the different sectors. The largest proportion of respondents from FEIs (44%) and mainstream schools (39% in relation to SEP for learners supported through school action/plus<sup>33</sup> and 33% in relation to SEP for learners supported through early years action/plus<sup>34</sup>) strongly agreed or agreed that the current system enables a flexible approach to the delivery of SEP for learners with non-statutory plans. However, 18% of FEI respondents also disagreed to some extent. A considerable proportion of respondents from special schools (45%) and LHBs (28%) said they did not know if the current system enables a flexible approach to the delivery of SEP for learners with non-statutory plans.

<sup>33</sup> There were no notable differences between primary and middle schools and secondary school responses. A notably higher proportion of English-medium mainstream schools strongly agreed or agreed (39%) compared with Welsh-medium mainstream schools (21%) that the current system enables a flexible approach to the delivery of SEP.

<sup>34</sup> There were no notable differences between English and Welsh medium mainstream school responses.

**Figure 20. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that the current system enables a flexible approach to the delivery of SEP for learners with non-statutory plans**

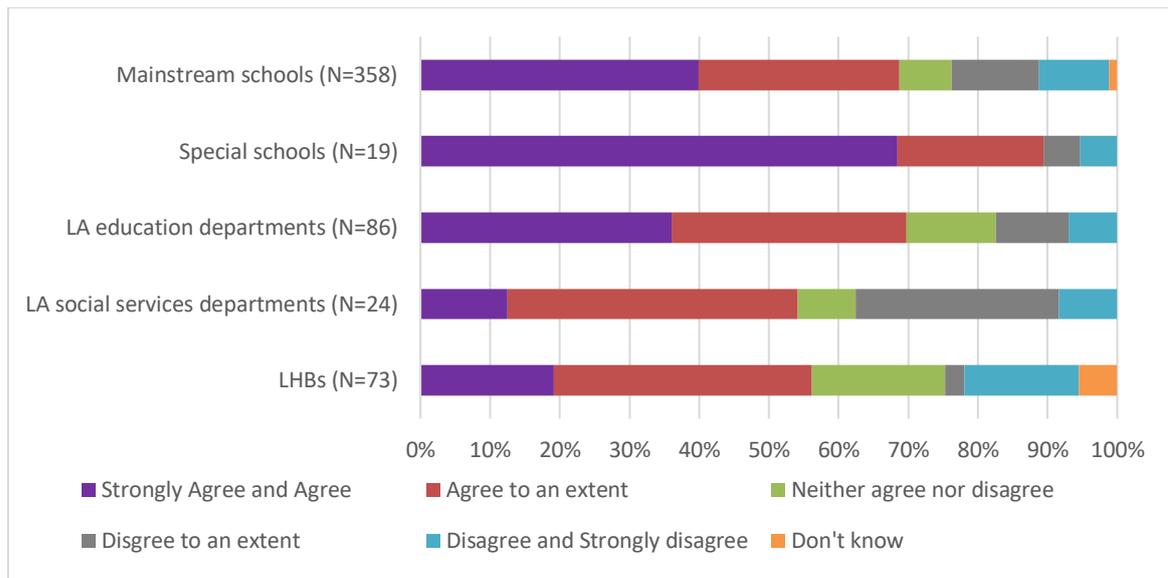


### *SEP enabling learners to achieve their full potential*

3.24 When asked whether SEP enables **learners with statutory plans** to achieve their full potential, the largest proportion of respondents across mainstream schools (39%)<sup>35</sup> special schools (68%) and LA education departments (36%) strongly agreed or agreed that SEP enables learners to achieve their full potential. The second largest proportion of respondents across these sectors (28%, 21% and 33% respectively), and the largest proportion of respondents from LA social services departments (41%) and LHBs (36%) agreed to an extent that SEP enables learners to achieve their full potential.

<sup>35</sup> There were no notable differences between primary and middle schools and secondary school responses, or between English and Welsh medium mainstream school responses.

**Figure 21. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that SEP enables learners with statutory plans to achieve their full potential**

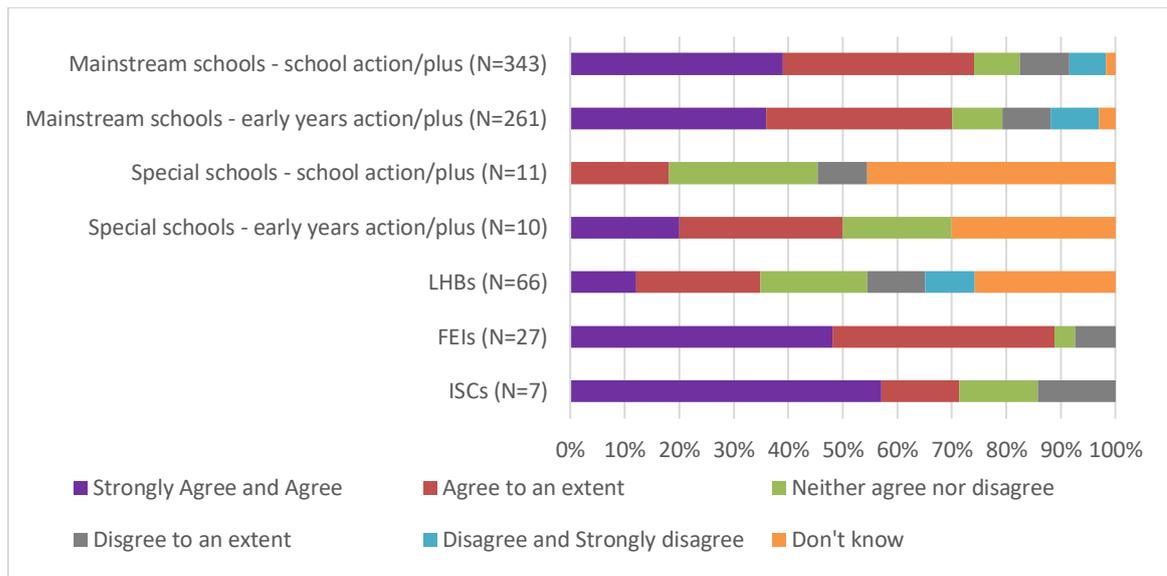


3.25 When asked whether SEP enables **learners with non-statutory plans** to achieve their full potential, respondents from ISCs, FEIs and mainstream schools were most likely to strongly agree or agree. The largest proportion of respondents from ISCs (57%), FEIs (48%), and mainstream schools (39% in relation to SEP for learners supported through school action/plus<sup>36</sup> and 36% in relation to SEP for learners supported through early years action/plus<sup>37</sup>) strongly agreed or agreed that SEP enables learners with non-statutory plans to achieve their full potential. However, a considerable proportion of respondents from special schools (45%) and LHBs (25%) said they did not know whether SEP enables learners with non-statutory plans to achieve their full potential.

<sup>36</sup> There were no notable differences between primary and middle schools and secondary school responses. A notably higher proportion of English-medium mainstream schools strongly agreed or agreed (39%) compared with Welsh-medium mainstream schools (25%) that SEP enables learners supported through school action/plus to achieve their full potential.

<sup>37</sup> There were no notable differences between English and Welsh medium mainstream school responses.

**Figure 22. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that SEP enables learners with non-statutory plans to achieve their full potential**

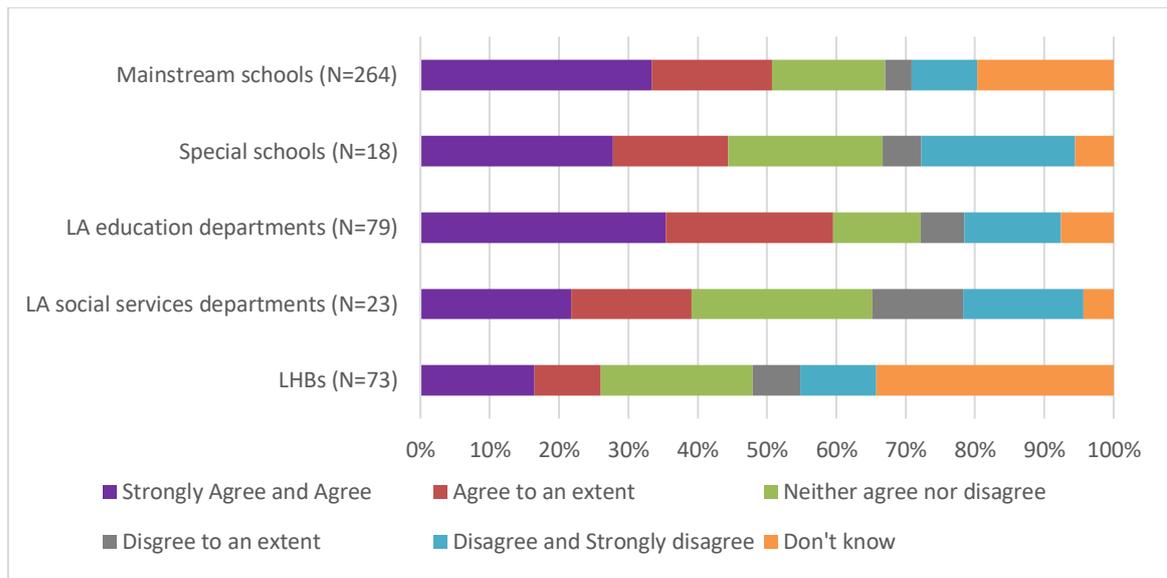


### Welsh-medium SEP

3.26 When asked about Welsh-medium SEP for **learners with statutory plans**, a mixture of views were expressed by respondents between and within the different sectors. The largest proportion of respondents across mainstream schools (33%)<sup>38</sup>, special schools (27%) and LA education departments (35%) strongly agreed or agreed that SEP through the medium of Welsh is available where requested for learners with statutory plans. However, a further 22% of special school respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that SEP through the medium of Welsh is available where requested. Furthermore, a considerable proportion of respondents from mainstream school (19%) and LHBs (34%) said they did not know whether SEP through the medium of Welsh is available where requested.

<sup>38</sup> There were no notable differences between primary and middle schools and secondary school responses. However, a notably higher proportion of Welsh-medium mainstream schools strongly agreed or agreed (45%) compared with English-medium mainstream schools (19%) that Welsh medium SEP is available where requested.

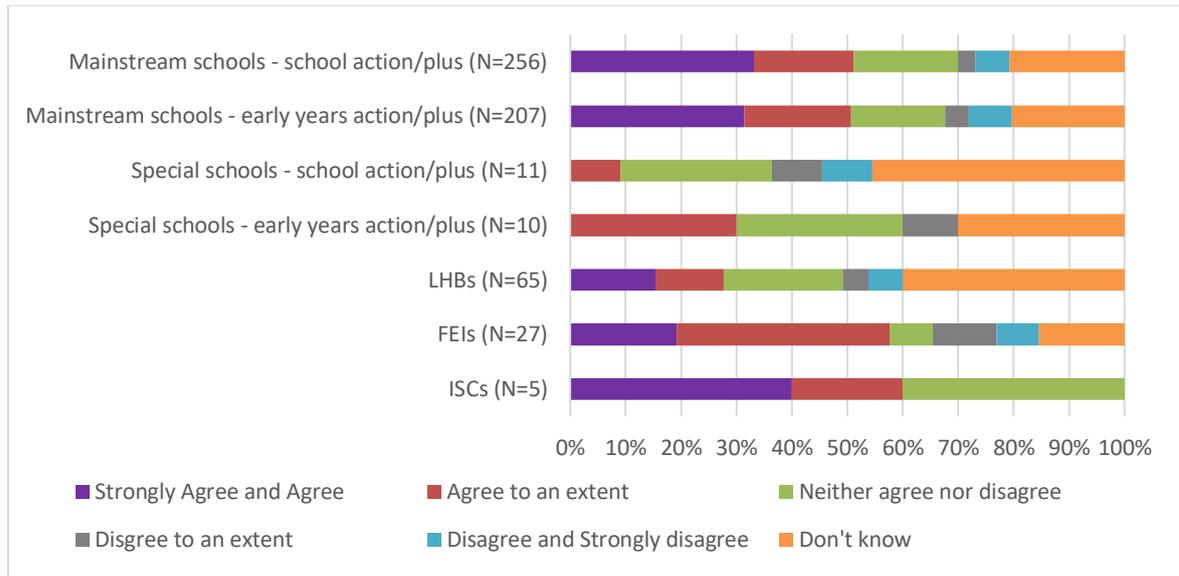
**Figure 23. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that SEP through the medium of Welsh is available where requested for learners with statutory plans**



3.27 When asked about Welsh-medium SEP for **learners with non-statutory plans**, respondents from ISCs, FEIs and mainstream schools were most likely to agree it was available where requested. The largest proportion of respondents from ISCs (40%) and mainstream schools (33% in relation to SEP for learners supported through school action/plus<sup>39</sup> and 31% in relation to SEP for learners supported through early years action/plus) strongly agreed or agreed that SEP through the medium of Welsh is available where requested for learners with statutory plans. It should, however, be noted that a considerable proportion of respondents from mainstream schools (20%), special schools (45%), and LHBs (40%) said they did not know whether SEP through the medium of Welsh is available where requested.

<sup>39</sup> A notably higher proportion of primary and middle schools strongly agreed or agreed (35%) compared with secondary schools (23%) that SEP through the medium of Welsh is available where requested. A notably higher proportion of Welsh-medium mainstream schools strongly agreed or agreed that Welsh medium SEP is available where requested (35% for school action/plus and 41% for early years action/plus) compared with English-medium mainstream schools (20% for school action/plus and 18% for early years action/plus).

**Figure 24. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that SEP through the medium of Welsh is available where requested for learners with non-statutory plans**

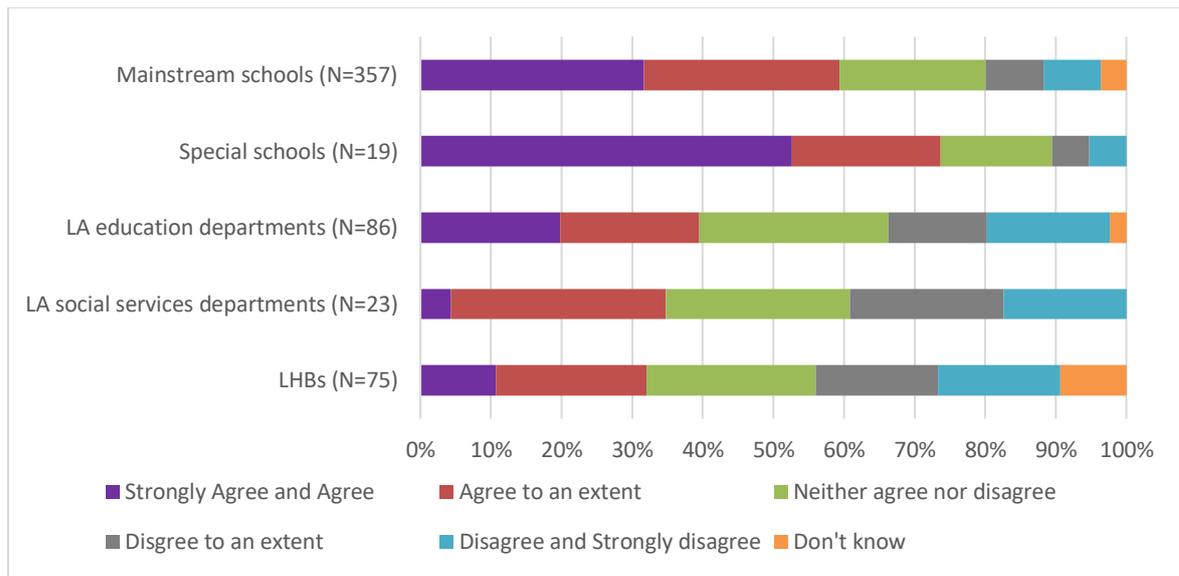


### *Avoiding disagreements*

3.28 When asked whether the way SEP is delivered **to learners with statutory plans** helps avoid disagreements, special school respondents were most likely to agree or strongly agree. The largest proportion of respondents from special schools (52%) and mainstream schools (31%)<sup>40</sup> strongly agreed or agreed that the way SEP is delivered to learners with statutory plans helps avoid disagreements. Respondents from LA social services departments and LHBs were less likely to agree. Although the highest proportion of respondents agreed to an extent (30% of LA social services departments and 21% of LHBs), a considerable proportion (21% of LA social services departments and 17% of LHBs) also disagreed to an extent that SEP for learners with statutory plans is delivered in a way that helps avoid disagreements.

<sup>40</sup> There were no notable differences between primary and middle schools and secondary school responses, or between English and Welsh medium mainstream school responses.

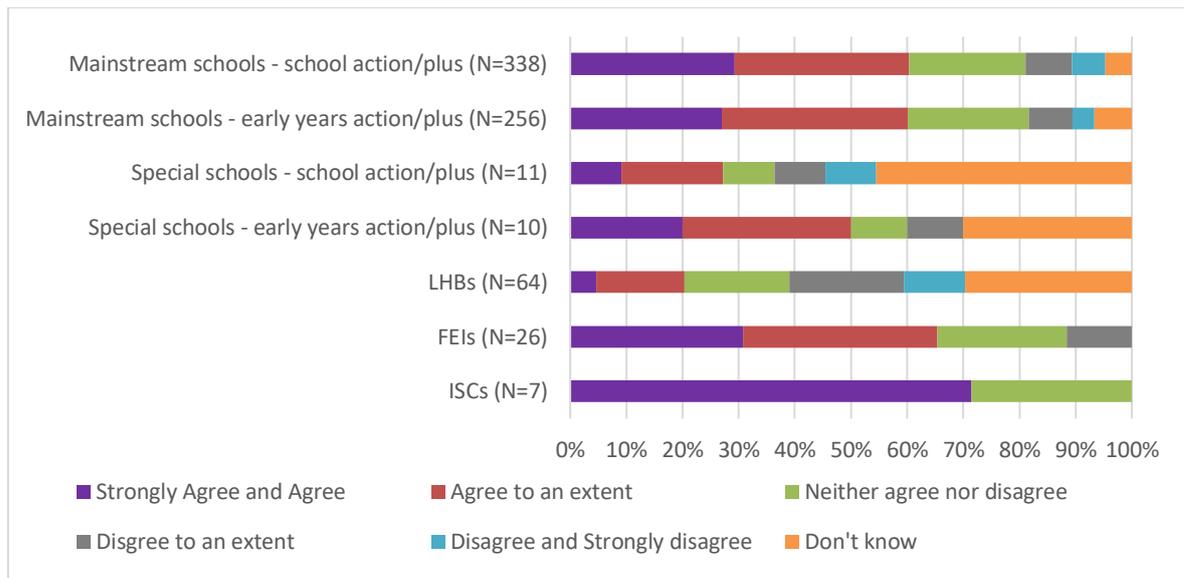
**Figure 25. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that the way SEP for learners with statutory plans is delivered helps avoid disagreements**



3.29 When asked whether the way SEP is delivered **to learners with non-statutory plans** helps avoid disagreements, respondents from ISCs (71%, 5 out of 7) were most likely to strongly agree or agree, with respondents in mainstream schools, most likely to agree to an extent<sup>41</sup>. Respondents in LHBs (29%) and special schools (45%) most frequently noted that they did not know whether SEP for learners with non-statutory plans is delivered in a way that helps avoid disagreements, while 20% of LHB respondents disagreed to an extent and a further 10% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

<sup>41</sup> There were no notable differences between primary and middle schools and secondary school responses. There were no notable differences between English and Welsh medium mainstream school responses in relation to SEP for learners supported through early years action/plus or school action/plus.

**Figure 26. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that the way SEP for learners with non-statutory plans is delivered helps avoid disagreements**

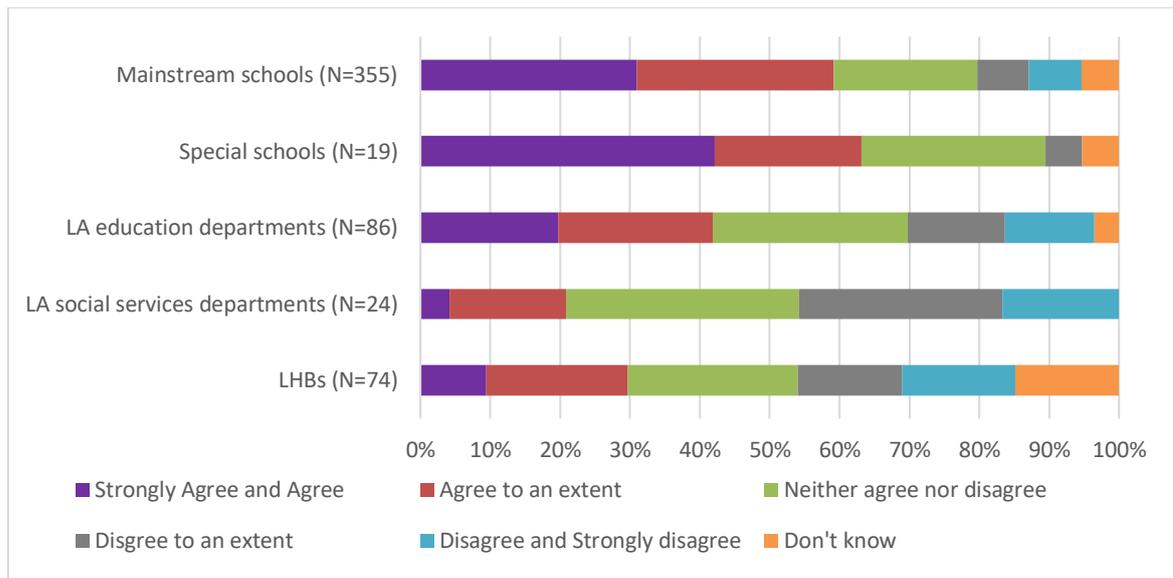


### *Disagreement resolution*

3.30 When asked whether the way SEP is delivered **to learners with statutory plans** supports early disagreement resolution, special school and mainstream school respondents were most likely to strongly agree or agree. The largest proportion of respondents from special schools (42%) and mainstream schools (30%)<sup>42</sup> strongly agreed or agreed that the way SEP is delivered to learners with statutory plans supports disagreement resolution. Whereas the largest proportion of respondents from LA education departments (27%), LA social services departments (33%) and LHBs (24%) neither agreed nor disagreed. Furthermore, a considerable proportion of LA social services department staff disagreed to an extent (29%) or disagreed or strongly disagreed (16%) that the way SEP is delivered to learners with statutory plans supports disagreement resolution.

<sup>42</sup> There were no notable differences between primary and middle schools and secondary school responses, or between English and Welsh medium mainstream school responses.

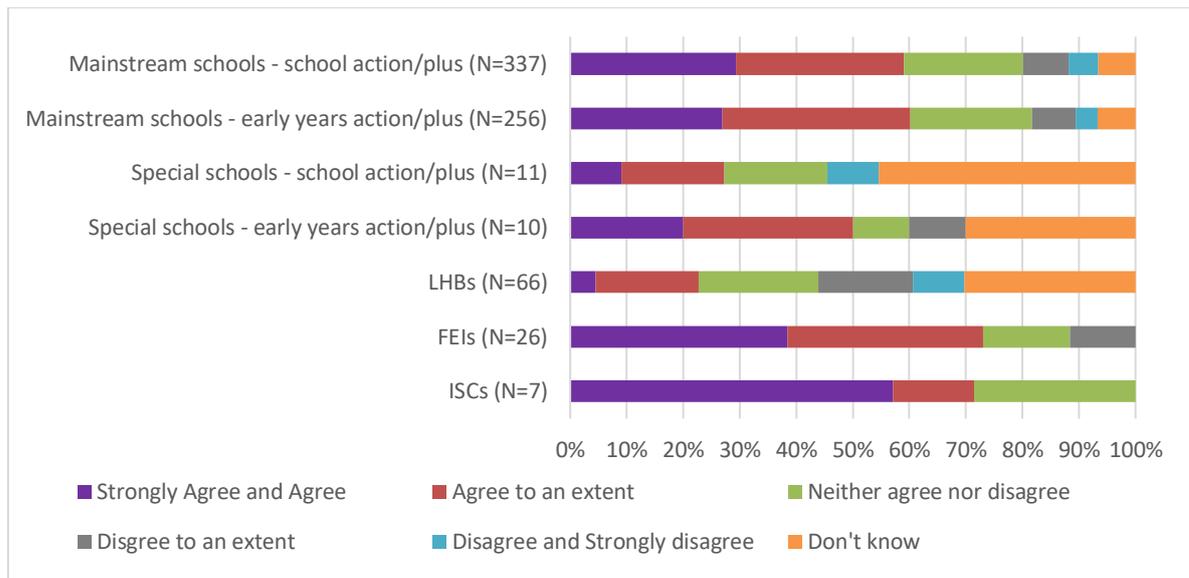
**Figure 27. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that the way SEP for learners with statutory plan is delivered supports early disagreement resolution**



3.31 When asked whether the way SEP is delivered **to learners with non-statutory plans** supports early disagreement resolution, a mixture of views were expressed by respondents between and within the different sectors. The largest proportion of respondents from ISCs (57%) and FEIs (38) strongly agreed or agreed, and the largest proportion of mainstream school respondents agreed to an extent (29% in relation to SEP for learners supported through school action/plus<sup>43</sup> and 33% in relation to SEP for learners supported through early years action/plus) that SEP for learners with non-statutory plans is delivered in a way that supports early disagreement resolution. A considerable proportion of respondents from special schools (45%) and LHBs (30%) said they did not know whether the way SEP is delivered to learners with non-statutory plans supports early disagreement resolution.

<sup>43</sup> There were no notable differences between primary and middle schools and secondary school responses. There were no notable differences between English and Welsh medium mainstream school responses in relation to SEP for learners supported through early years action/plus or school action/plus.

**Figure 28. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that the way SEP for learners with non-statutory plan is delivered supports early disagreement resolution**



## Review processes

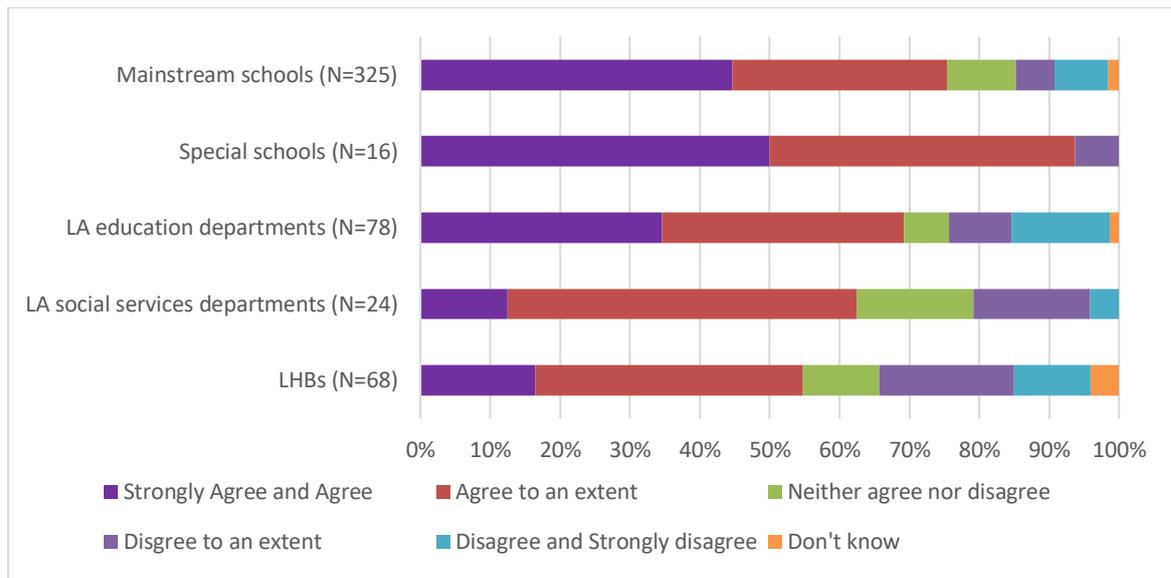
3.32 This section presents analysis of survey respondents views on various elements of the review processes for learners with statements and for learners with non-statutory plans. The analysis of survey questions relating to statutory review processes focuses on responses from schools, LAs and LHBs. The analysis of survey questions for review processes for learners with non-statutory plans focuses on the responses of school, FEIs and LHBs (respondents from LAs are not as heavily involved in review processes for learners with non-statutory plans and were therefore not asked about this).

### *Effectiveness of review processes*

3.33 When asked about the effectiveness of **statutory review processes**, the largest proportion of respondents from special schools (50%) and mainstream schools (44%)<sup>44</sup> strongly agreed or agreed, and the second largest proportion agreed to an extent (43% and 30% respectively) that current statutory review arrangements are effective. Although the highest proportion of respondents from LA social services departments (50%) and LHBs (41%) agreed to an extent, a considerable proportion (16% and 20% respectively) also disagreed to an extent that current statutory review arrangements are effective.

<sup>44</sup> There were no notable differences between primary and middle schools and secondary school responses, or between English and Welsh medium mainstream school responses.

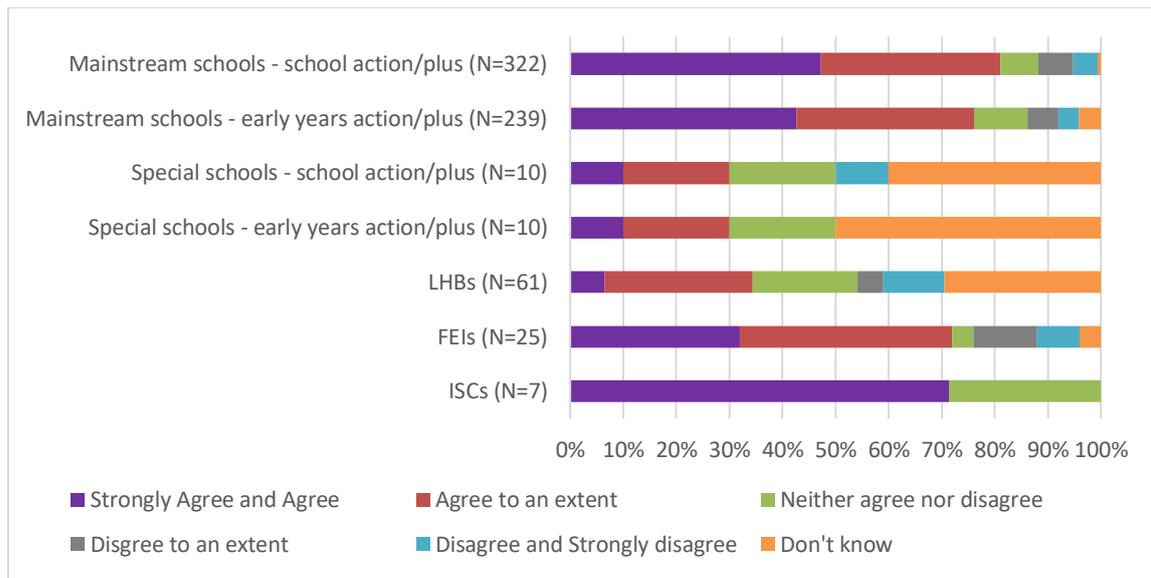
**Figure 29. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that current statutory review arrangements are effective**



3.34 When asked about the effectiveness of **review processes for learners with non-statutory plans**, respondents from ISCs, FEIs and mainstream schools. The largest proportion of respondents from ISCs (71%, or 5 out of 7 respondents) and mainstream schools (47% in relation to reviews of plans for learners supported through school action/plus<sup>45</sup> and 42% in relation to reviews of plans for learners supported through early years action/plus) strongly agreed or agreed that review arrangements are effective. The largest proportion of respondents from FEIs (40%) agreed to an extent that review arrangements are effective. It should, however, be noted that a considerable proportion of respondents from special schools (40%), and LHBs (29%) said they did not know whether review processes for learners with non-statutory plans are effective.

<sup>45</sup> A notably higher proportion of primary and middle schools strongly agreed or agreed (51%) compared with secondary schools (31%) that review processes for learners supported through school action/plus are effective. A notably higher proportion of Welsh-medium mainstream schools strongly agreed or agreed compared with English-medium mainstream schools (43%) that review processes for learners supported through school action/plus are effective.

**Figure 30. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that current review arrangements for learners with non-statutory plans are effective**

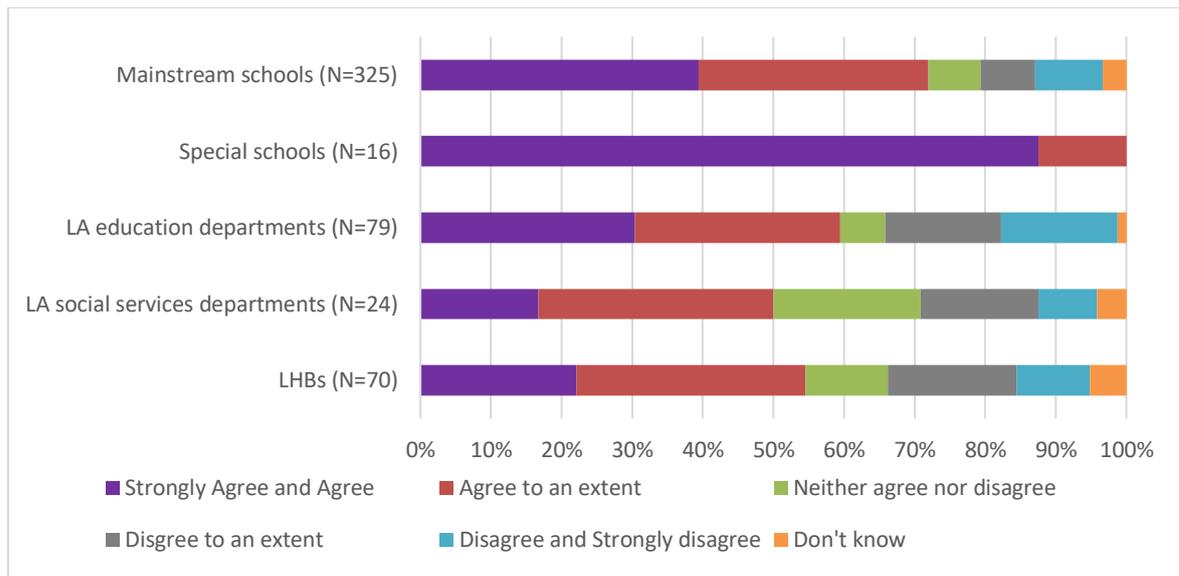


### *Use of person-centred planning*

3.35 When asked whether current **statutory review arrangements** use person-centred planning (PCP) effectively, special school respondents were the group most likely to agree that this was the case. The largest proportion of respondents from special schools (87%), mainstream schools (39%)<sup>46</sup> and LA education departments (30%) strongly agreed or agreed that review arrangements use PCP effectively. The largest proportion of respondents from LA social services departments (33%) and LHBs (35%) agreed to an extent that review arrangements use PCP effectively.

<sup>46</sup> There were no notable differences between primary and middle schools and secondary school responses, or between English and Welsh medium mainstream school responses.

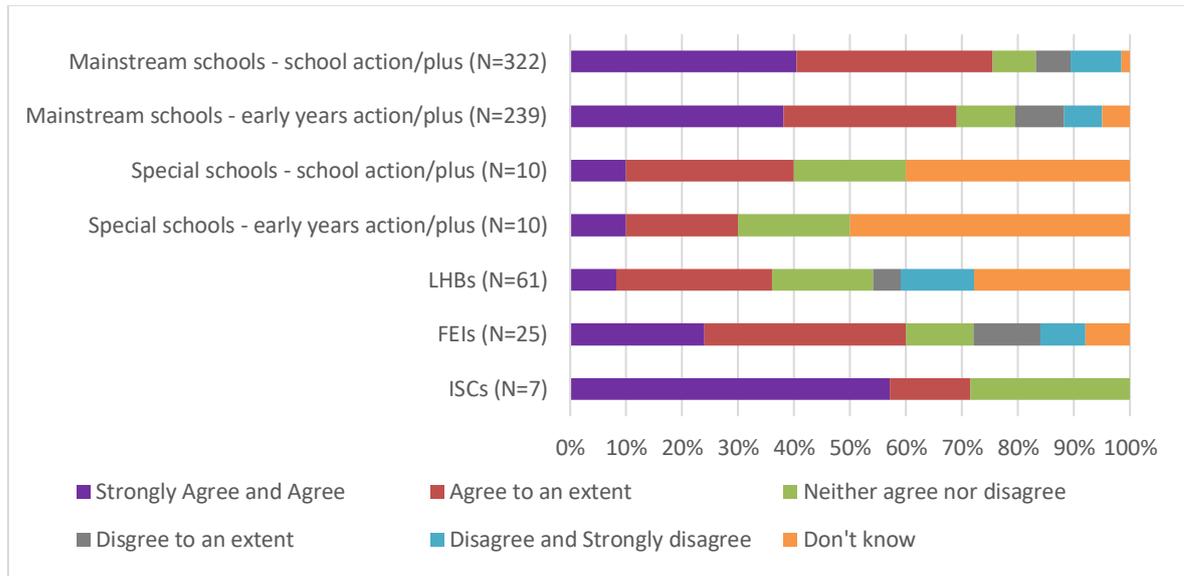
**Figure 31. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that current statutory review arrangements use person-centred planning effectively**



3.36 When asked about the effectiveness of the use of PCP in review processes for **learners with non-statutory plans**, respondents from ISCs and mainstream schools were most likely to agree. The largest proportion of respondents from ISCs (57%) and mainstream schools (40% in relation to SEP for learners supported through school action/plus<sup>47</sup> and 38% in relation to SEP for learners supported through early years action/plus) strongly agreed or agreed that review arrangements for learners with non-statutory plans use PCP effectively. The largest proportion of respondents from special schools (30%), FEIs (36%) and LHBs (27%) agreed to some extent review arrangements for learners with non-statutory plans use PCP effectively. It should, however, be noted that a considerable proportion of respondents from special schools (40%), and LHBs (27%) said they did not know whether review processes for learners with non-statutory plans use PCP effectively.

<sup>47</sup> A notably higher proportion of primary and middle schools strongly agreed or agreed (42%) compared with secondary schools (31%) that review processes use PCP effectively. A notably higher proportion of Welsh-medium mainstream schools strongly agreed or agreed that review processes use PCP effectively (50% or school action/plus and 44% for early years action/plus) compared with English-medium mainstream schools (33% for school action/plus and 33% for early years action/plus).

**Figure 32. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that current review arrangements for learners with non-statutory plans use person-centred planning effectively**

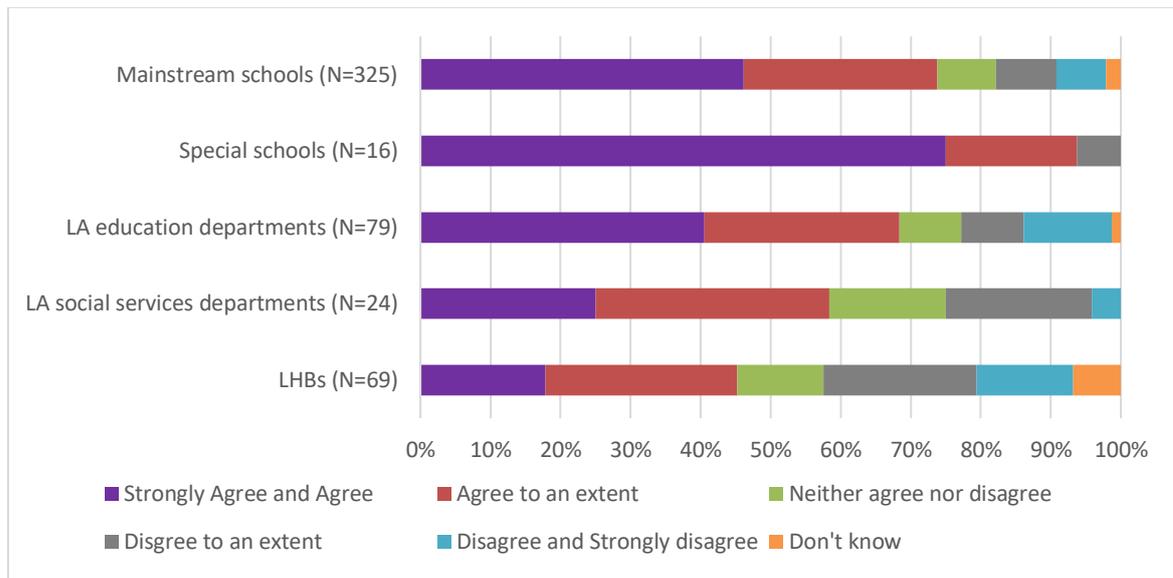


### *Timelines of review arrangements*

3.37 When asked about timeliness of **statutory review arrangements**, the largest proportion of respondents from special schools (75%), mainstream schools (46%)<sup>48</sup>, LA education departments (40%) and LA social services departments (25%) strongly agreed or agreed that statutory review arrangements are undertaken in a timely way to meet the needs of the learner. However, a consider proportion of respondents from LA social service departments (20%) disagreed to an extent that statutory review arrangements are undertaken in a timely way.

<sup>48</sup> There were no notable differences between primary and middle schools and secondary school responses, or between English and Welsh medium mainstream school responses.

**Figure 33. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that current statutory review arrangements are undertaken in a timely way to meet the needs of the learner**

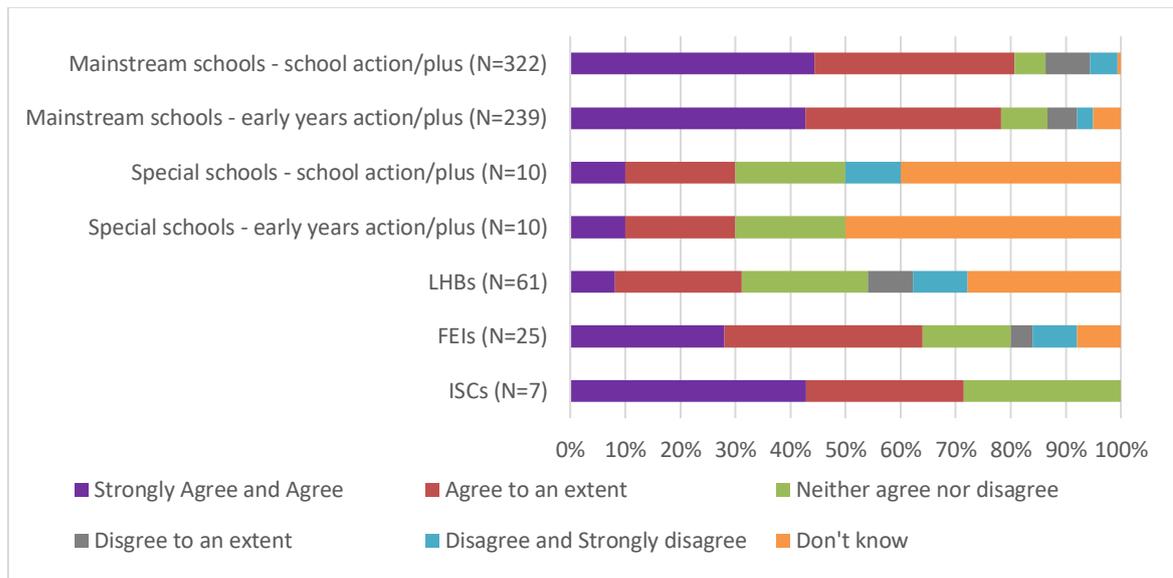


3.38 When asked about the timeliness of review processes for **learners with non-statutory plans**, a mixture of views were expressed by respondents between and within the different sectors. The largest proportion of respondents from ISCs (42%) and mainstream schools (44% in relation to SEP for learners supported through school action/plus<sup>49</sup> and 42% in relation to SEP for learners supported through early years action/plus<sup>50</sup>) strongly agreed or agreed that review arrangements for learners with non-statutory plans are undertaken in a timely way to meet the needs of the learner. The largest proportion of respondents from FEIs (36%), LHBs (22%) and special schools (20%) agreed to an extent that review arrangements are undertaken in a timely way. It should be noted, however, that a considerable proportion of respondents from special schools (40%), and LHBs (27%) said they did not know whether review processes for learners with non-statutory plans are undertaken in a timely way.

<sup>49</sup> A notably higher proportion of primary and middle schools strongly agreed or agreed (47%) compared with secondary schools (34%) that review processes are undertaken in a timely way. There were no notable differences between English and Welsh medium mainstream school responses.

<sup>50</sup> There were no notable differences between English and Welsh medium mainstream school responses.

**Figure 34. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that current review arrangements for learners with non-statutory plans are undertaken in a timely way to meet the needs of the learner**

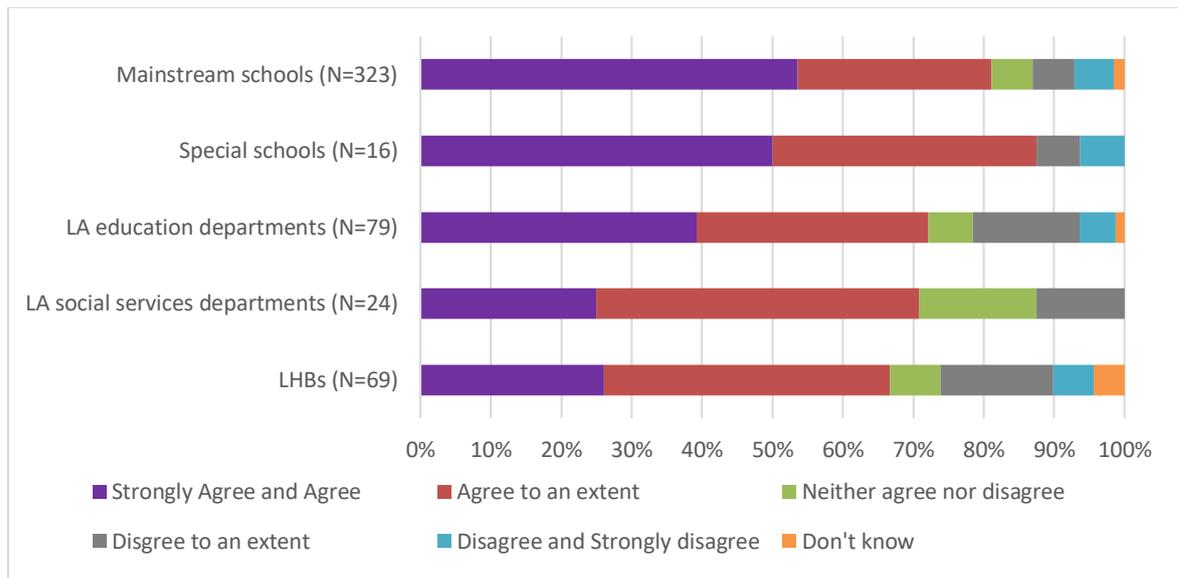


*Involvement of appropriate people throughout review processes*

3.39 When asked about the involvement of appropriate people in statutory review processes, respondents from mainstream schools, special schools and LA education departments were most likely to agree or strongly agree. The largest proportion of respondents from mainstream schools (53%)<sup>51</sup>, special schools (50%) and LA education departments (39%) strongly agreed or agreed that people appropriate to the need of the child or young person are involved in statutory review processes, with the second largest proportion agreeing to an extent (27%, 37% and 32% respectively).

<sup>51</sup> There were no notable differences between primary and middle schools and secondary school responses, or between English and Welsh medium mainstream school responses.

**Figure 35. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that people appropriate to the needs of the child or young person are involved in statutory reviews**

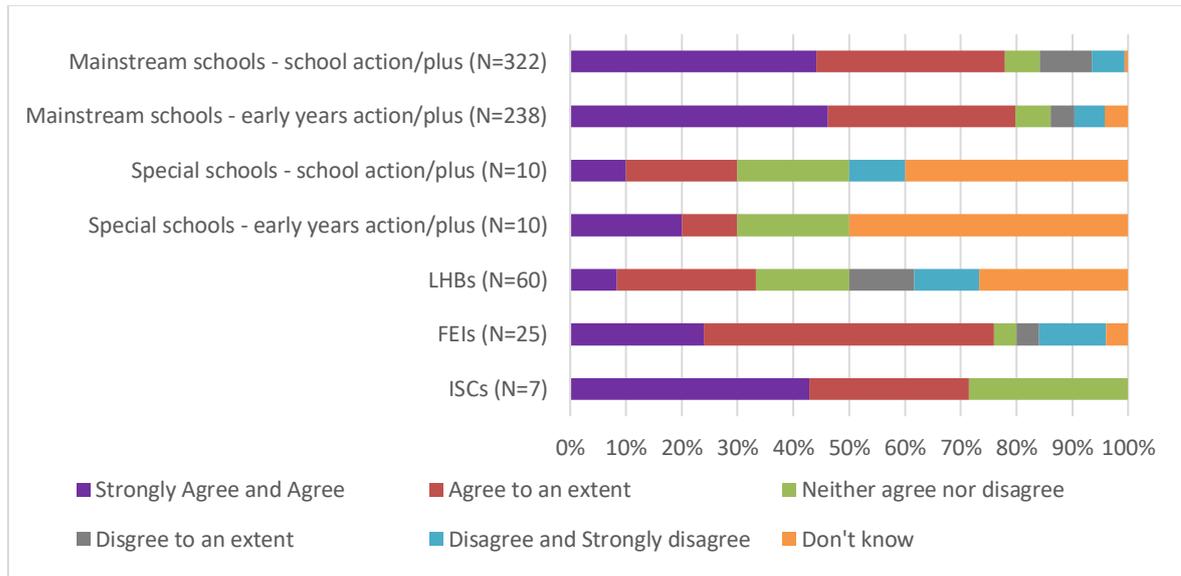


3.40 When asked whether appropriate people are involved in review processes **for learners with non-statutory plans**, a mixture of views were expressed by respondents between and within the different sectors. The largest proportion of respondents from ISCs (42%) and mainstream schools (44% in relation to review processes for learners supported through school action/plus<sup>52</sup> and 46% in relation to review processes for learners supported through early years action/plus<sup>53</sup>) strongly agreed or agreed that the appropriate people are involved in review arrangements for learners with non-statutory plans. The largest proportion of respondents from FEIs (52%), LHBs (25%) and special schools (20%) agreed to an extent that review arrangements are undertaken in a timely way. It should be noted, however, that a considerable proportion of respondents from special schools (40%), and LHBs (26%) said they did not know whether the appropriate people are involved in review processes for learners with non-statutory plans.

<sup>52</sup> A notably higher proportion of primary and middle schools strongly agreed or agreed (47%) compared with secondary schools (31%) that appropriate people are involved in review processes. There were no notable differences between English and Welsh medium mainstream school responses.

<sup>53</sup> There were no notable differences between English and Welsh medium mainstream school responses.

**Figure 36. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that people appropriate to the needs of the child or young person are involved in reviews for learners with non-statutory plans**

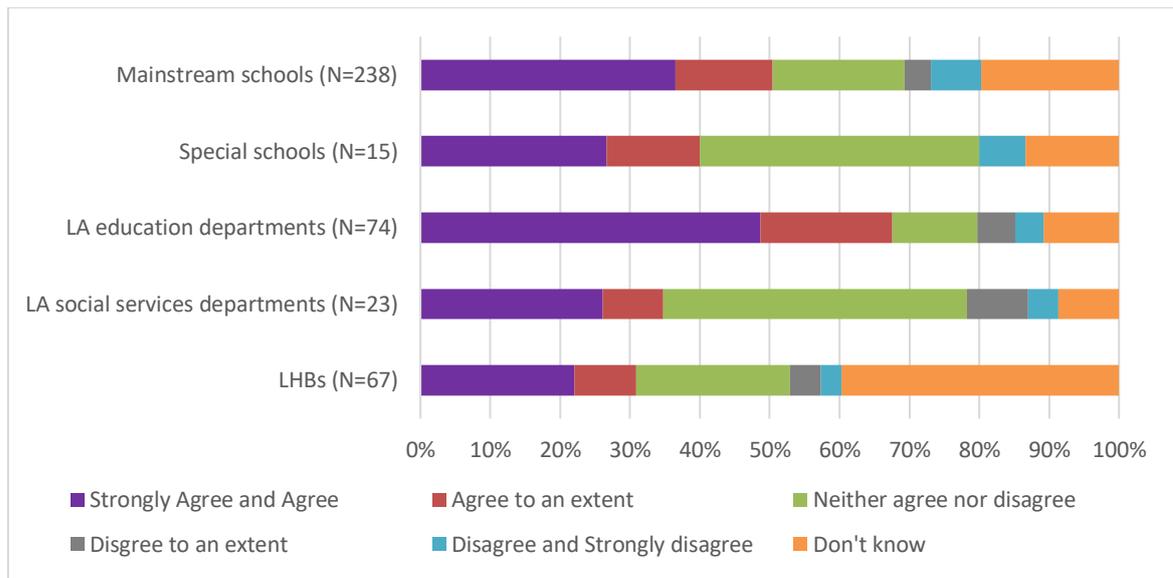


### Welsh-medium reviews

3.41 When asked about Welsh-medium **statutory reviews**, the highest proportion of respondents from LA education departments (48%), mainstream schools (36%)<sup>54</sup> and special schools (26%) strongly agreed that statutory reviews are available through the medium of Welsh where requested. The largest proportion of LA social services departments (43%) neither agreed nor disagreed that statutory reviews are available through the medium of Welsh. A considerable proportion of LHB respondents (40%) said they did not know.

<sup>54</sup> There were no notable differences between primary and middle schools and secondary school responses.

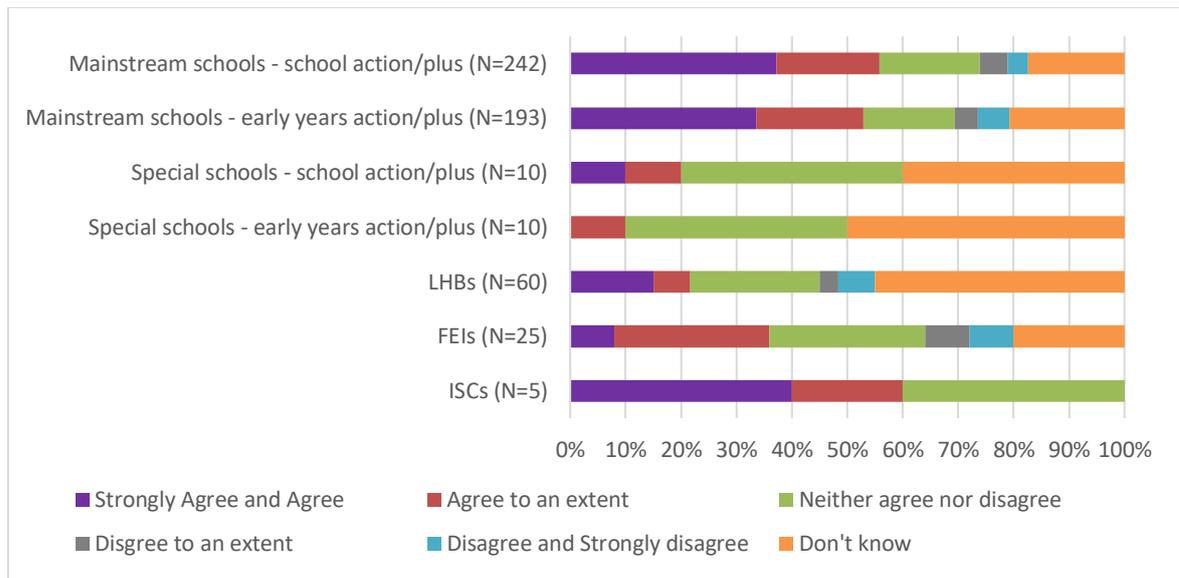
**Figure 37. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that statutory reviews are available through the medium of Welsh where requested**



3.42 When asked about Welsh-medium review processes **for learners with non-statutory plans**, a mixture of views were held by respondents between the different sectors. The largest proportion of respondents from ISCs (40%) and mainstream schools (37% in relation to review processes for learners supported through school action/plus<sup>55</sup> and 33% for learners supported through early years action/plus) strongly agreed or agreed that reviews for learners with non-statutory plans are available through the medium of Welsh where requested. However, a considerable proportion of respondents across all sectors, apart from ISCs, said they did not know whether reviews for learners with non-statutory plans are available through the medium of Welsh where requested (between 20% and 50%).

<sup>55</sup> A notably higher proportion of primary and middle schools strongly agreed or agreed (39%) compared with secondary schools (28%) that Welsh medium reviews are available where requested. A notably higher proportion of Welsh-medium mainstream schools strongly agreed or agreed that Welsh medium reviews available where requested (50% for school action/plus and 43% for early years action/plus) compared with English-medium mainstream schools (22% for school action/plus and 21% for early years action/plus).

**Figure 38. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that reviews for learners with non-statutory plans are available through the medium of Welsh where requested**

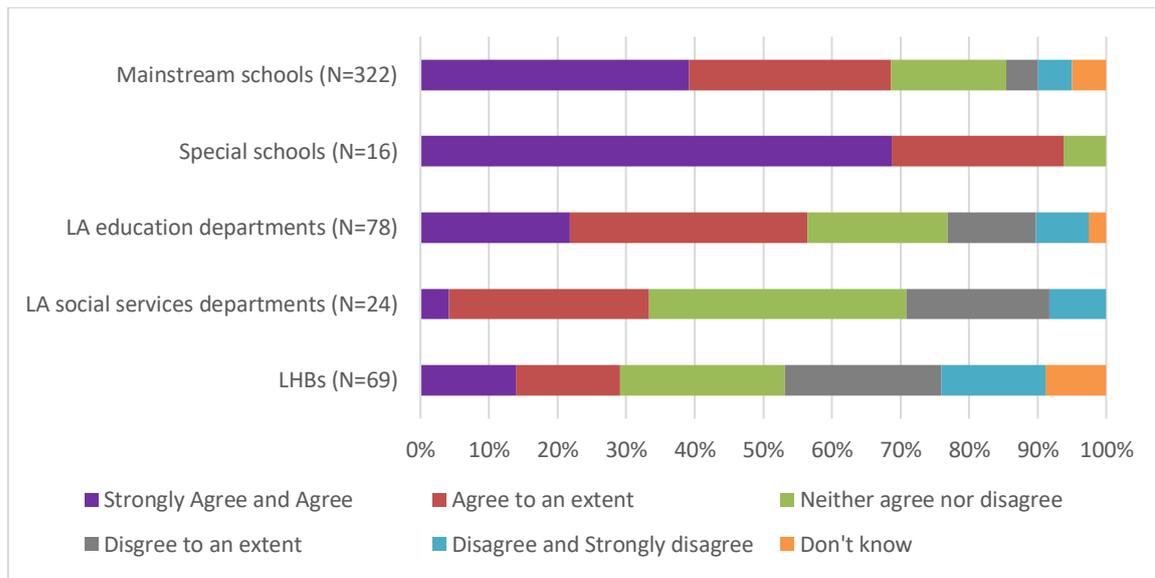


### *Avoiding disagreements*

3.43 When asked the extent to which current **statutory review arrangements** help avoid disagreements, the largest proportion of respondents across mainstream schools (39%)<sup>56</sup> and special schools (68%) strongly agreed or agreed that current review arrangements do help avoid disagreements, with the second largest proportion agreeing to an extent (19% and 25% respectively). Respondents from LAs held more mixed views. 34% of respondents from LA education departments and 29% from LA social services departments agreed to an extent. However, a further 12% of LA education departments staff and 20% of LA social services departments staff disagreed to an extent that current statutory review arrangements help avoid disagreements.

<sup>56</sup> There were no notable differences between primary and middle schools and secondary school responses, or between English and Welsh medium mainstream school responses.

**Figure 39. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that current statutory review arrangements help avoid disagreements**

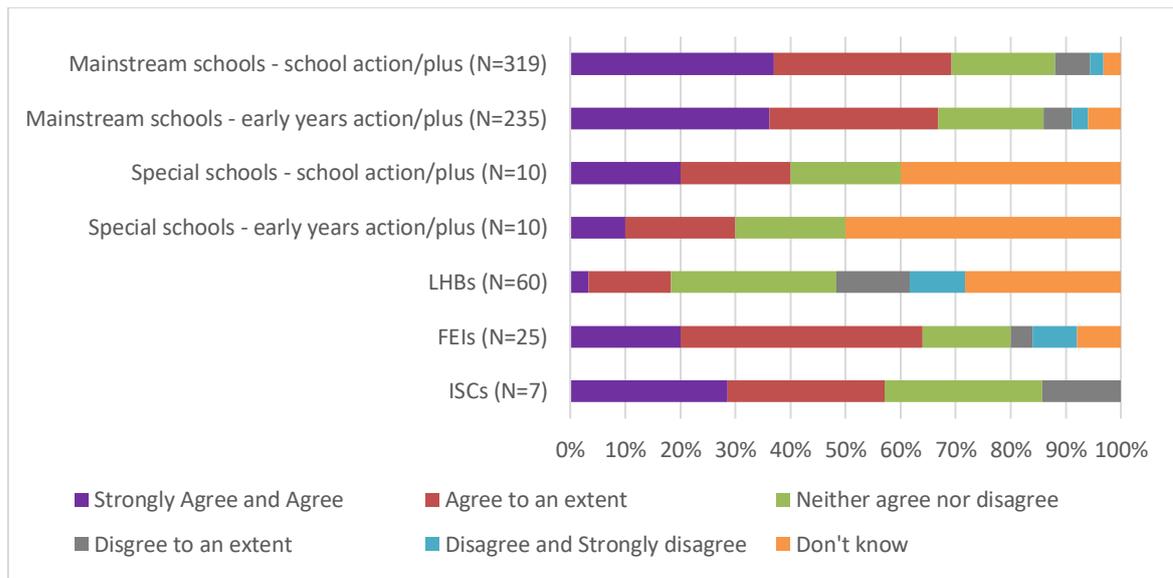


3.44 When asked the extent to which current review arrangements **for learners with non-statutory plans** help avoid disagreements, the highest proportion of respondents from mainstream schools strongly agreed or agreed that current review arrangements for learners with non-statutory plans help avoid disagreements (36% in relation to both assessment processes for learners supported through school action/plus<sup>57</sup> and for learners supported through early years action/plus<sup>58</sup>). The largest group of FEI respondents (44%) agreed to an extent that current review arrangements for learners with non-statutory plans help avoid disagreements, with 20% strongly agreeing or agreeing. However, a considerable proportion of respondents from special schools (40%% in relation to review processes for learners supported through school action/plus and 50% for learners supported through early years action/plus) and LHBs (28%) said they did not know whether current review arrangements for learners with non-statutory plans help avoid disagreement.

<sup>57</sup> There were no notable differences between primary and middle schools and secondary school responses, or between English and Welsh medium mainstream school responses.

<sup>58</sup> There were no notable differences between English and Welsh medium mainstream school responses.

**Figure 40. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that current review arrangements for learners with non-statutory plans help avoid disagreements**

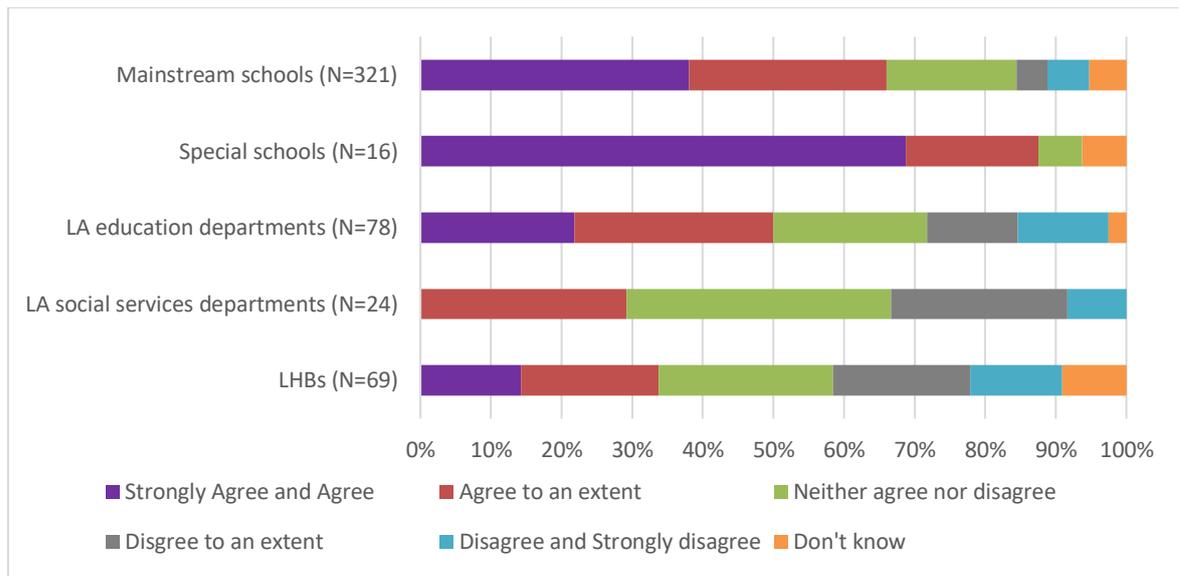


### *Disagreement resolution*

3.45 When asked whether current **statutory review arrangements** support early disagreement resolution, a mixture of views were expressed by respondents between the different sectors<sup>59</sup>. Special schools were most likely to agree, with the largest proportion of respondents strongly agreeing or agreeing (68%), and the second largest proportion agreeing to an extent (18%) that current statutory reviews arrangements support early disagreement resolution. LA education departments, LA social services departments and LHBs were less likely to agree, with a considerable proportion disagreeing or strongly disagreeing (12%, 8% and 14% respectively) or disagreeing to an extent (12%, 25% and 21% respectively) that current statutory review arrangements support early disagreement resolution.

<sup>59</sup> There were no notable differences between primary and middle schools and secondary school responses, or between English and Welsh medium mainstream school responses.

**Figure 41. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that current statutory review arrangements support early disagreement resolution**

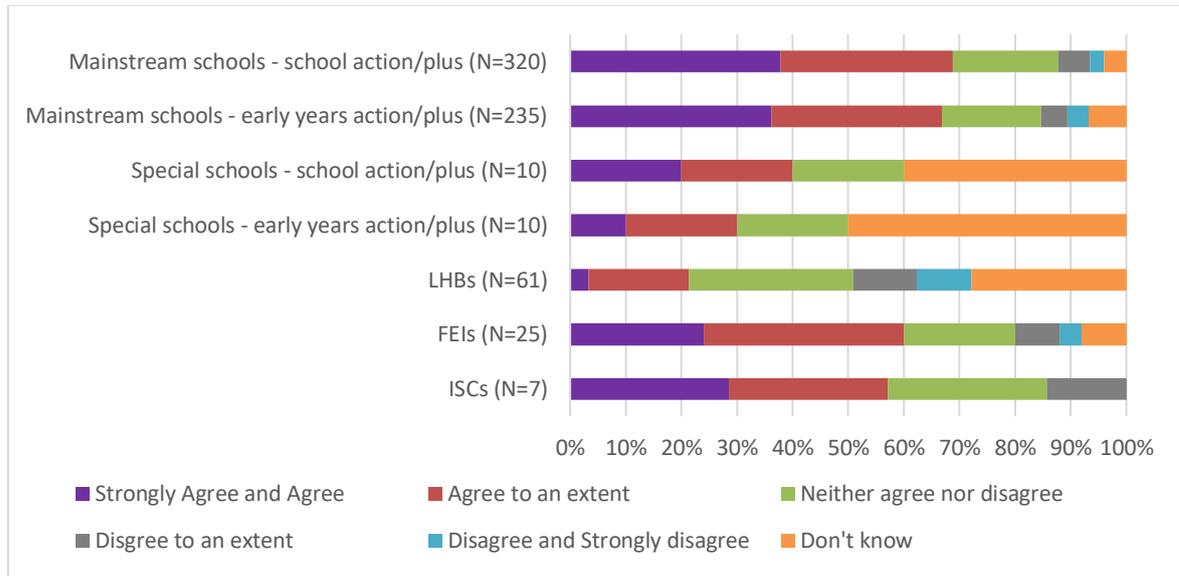


3.46 When asked whether review arrangements **for learners with non-statutory plans** support early disagreement resolution, mainstream schools were most likely to strongly agree or agree. The highest proportion of respondents from mainstream schools strongly agreed or agreed that current review arrangements for learners with non-statutory plans support early disagreement resolution (37% in relation to review arrangements for learners supported through school action/plus<sup>60</sup> and 36% for learners supported through early years action/plus<sup>61</sup>); A further 30% of mainstream school respondents agreed to an extent. Among respondents from LHBs, the largest proportion of respondents (29%) neither agreed nor disagreed, with 11% disagreeing to an extent and a further 9% strongly disagreeing or disagreeing. However, 27% of LHBs said they did not know whether review arrangements for learners with non-statutory plans support early disagreement resolution.

<sup>60</sup> A notably higher proportion of primary and middle schools strongly agreed or agreed (40%) compared with secondary schools (27%) that review processes for learners support through school action/plus support early disagreement resolution. There were no notable differences between English and Welsh medium mainstream school responses.

<sup>61</sup> There were no notable differences between English and Welsh medium mainstream school responses.

**Figure 42. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that current review arrangements for learners with non-statutory plans support early disagreement resolution**



## Working with others

3.47 Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with various elements of working with others in relation to learners with statutory plans (statements of SEN) and learners with non-statutory plans (for learners at school action/plus in schools and those with FEI-based plans in colleges). In general, a higher proportion of schools noted there was clarity of partners' roles compared with the proportion of schools that noted information sharing between partners is effective (both in relation to learners with statutory and non-statutory plans).

3.48 Below, the key survey findings are presented in relation to clarity of responsibilities and information sharing.

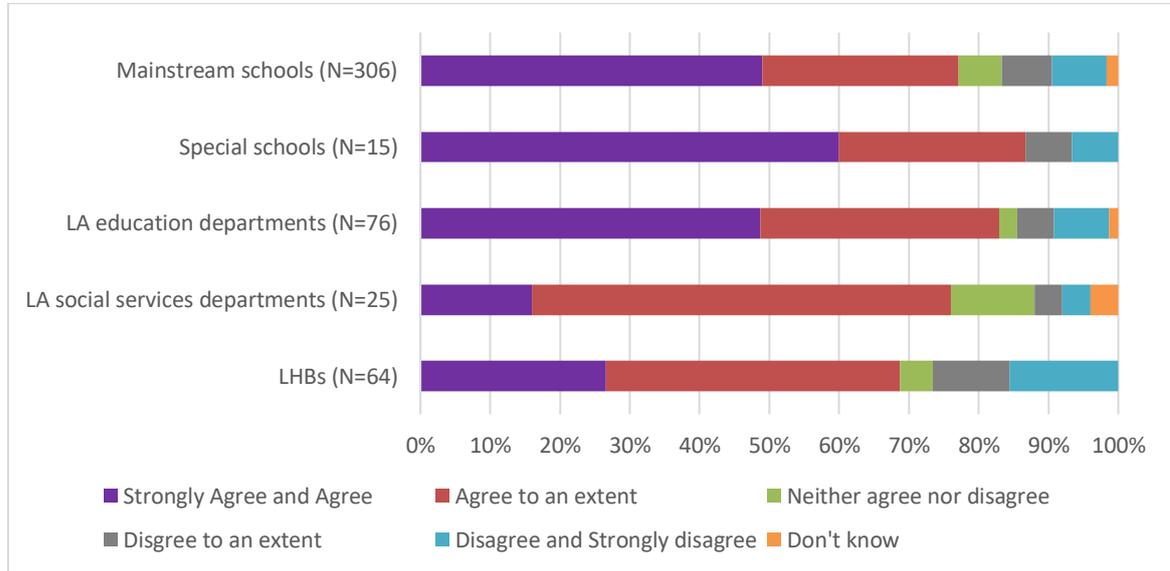
### Clarity of responsibilities

3.49 When asked in relation to **learners with statutory plans**, the largest proportion of respondents from special schools (60%), mainstream schools (49%)<sup>62</sup> and LA education departments (48%) strongly agreed or agreed that the current system for learners with statutory plans ensures clarity about who is responsible for delivering various elements of provision. Fewer LHB respondents strongly agreed or agreed,

<sup>62</sup> There were no notable differences between primary and middle schools and secondary school responses, or between English and Welsh medium mainstream school responses.

with the largest proportion (42%) agreeing to an extent and a further 10% disagreeing to an extent and a further 15% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

**Figure 43. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that the current system for learners with statements ensures clarity about who is responsible for delivering various elements of provision**



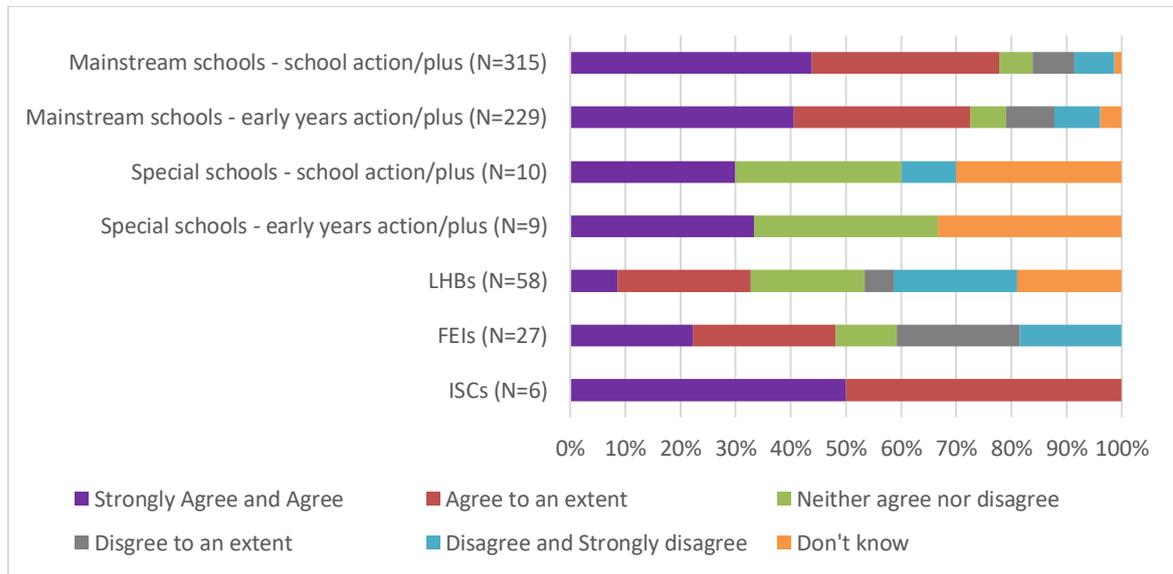
3.50 When asked whether the current system for learners with non-statutory plans ensures clarity about who is responsible for delivering various elements of provision, a mixture of views were expressed by respondents between and within the different sectors. The largest proportion of mainstream school respondents (43% in relation to review arrangements for learners supported through school action/plus<sup>63</sup> and 40% for learners supported through early years action/plus) strongly agreed or agreed, and the second largest proportion (33% in relation to the current system for learners supported through school action/plus and 31% for learners supported through early years action/plus<sup>64</sup>) agreed to an extent that there is clarity of responsibilities. LHB and FEI respondents expressed mixed views: for LHBs, the largest proportion of respondents (24%) agreed to an extent, as well as a considerable proportion (22%) strongly disagreeing or disagreeing; for FEIs, the largest proportion of respondents (25%) agreed to an extent, as well as a

<sup>63</sup> A notably higher proportion of primary and middle schools strongly agreed or agreed (46%) compared with secondary schools (34%) that there is clarity of responsibilities.

<sup>64</sup> A notably higher proportion of Welsh-medium mainstream schools agreed to an extent (37%) compared with English-medium mainstream schools (28%) that there is clarity of responsibilities within the current system for learners supported through early years action/plus.

considerable proportion disagreeing to an extent (22%) or strongly disagreeing or disagreeing (18%) that there is clarity of responsibilities.

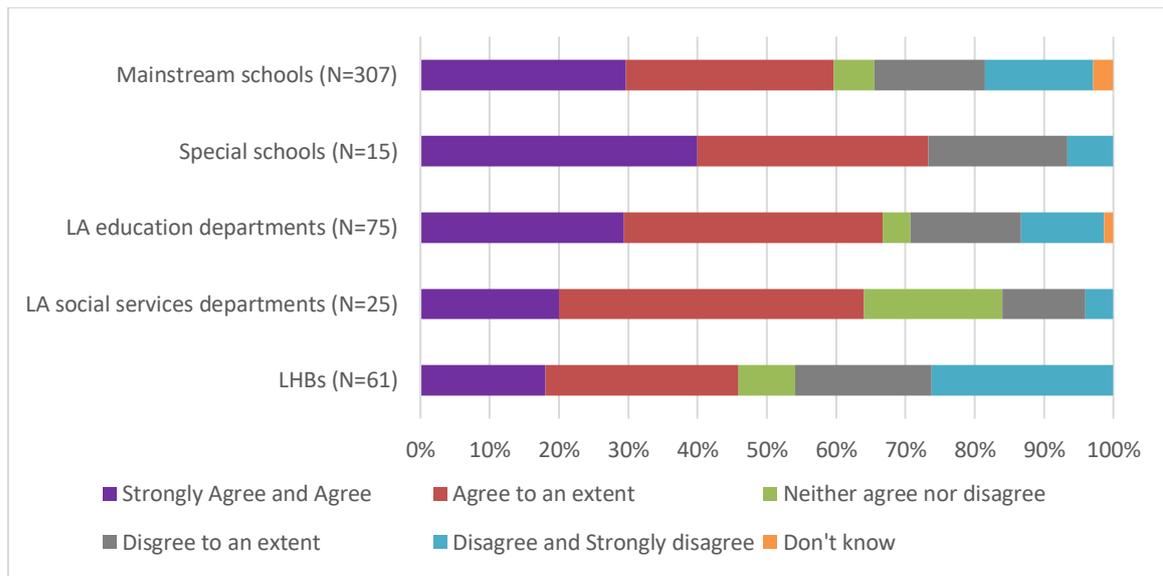
**Figure 44. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that the current system for learners with non-statutory plans ensures clarity about who is responsible for delivering various elements of provision**



### Information sharing

3.51 When asked to what extent they agreed that they receive the information they need from other organisations on **learners with statutory plans**, the largest proportion of respondents from special schools (40%) strongly agreed or agreed. LHB respondents were less likely to agree, with the largest proportion of respondents agreeing to an extent (27%) and a considerable proportion disagreeing or strongly disagreeing (26%) or disagreeing to an extent (19%) that they receive the information they need from other organisations on learners with statutory plans.

**Figure 45. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that they receive the information they need from other organisations on learners with statements**

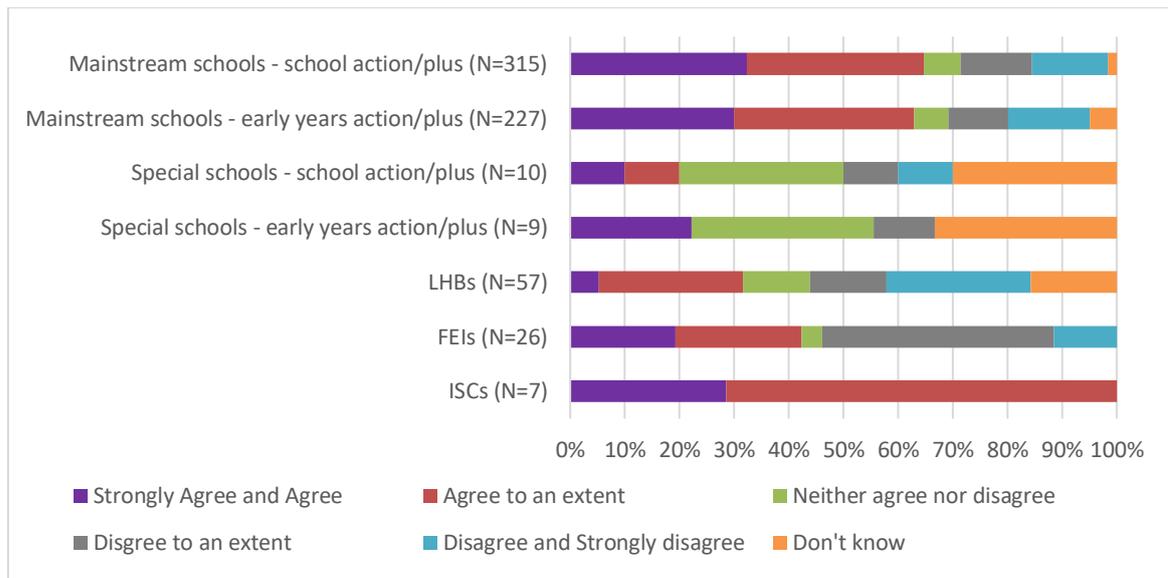


3.52 When asked to what extent they agreed that they receive the information they need from other organisations on **learners with non-statutory plans**, a mixture of views were expressed by respondents between and within the different sectors. Around a third of mainstream school respondents strongly agreed or agreed (32% in relation to review arrangements for learners supported through school action/plus<sup>65</sup> and 29% for learners supported through early years action/plus) or agreed to an extent (32% in relation to the current system for learners supported through school action/plus and 33% for learners supported through early years action/plus<sup>66</sup>) that they receive the information they need from other organisations. LHB and FEI respondents expressed mixed views: for LHBs, a considerable proportion of respondents agreed to an extent (26%) and strongly disagreed or disagreed (22%); for FEIs, the largest proportion of respondents disagreed to an extent (42%) and a considerable proportion agreed to an extent (23%) that they receive the information they need from other organisations on learners with non-statutory plans.

<sup>65</sup> A notably higher proportion of primary and middle schools strongly agreed or agreed (35%) compared with secondary schools (21%) that the required information is received.

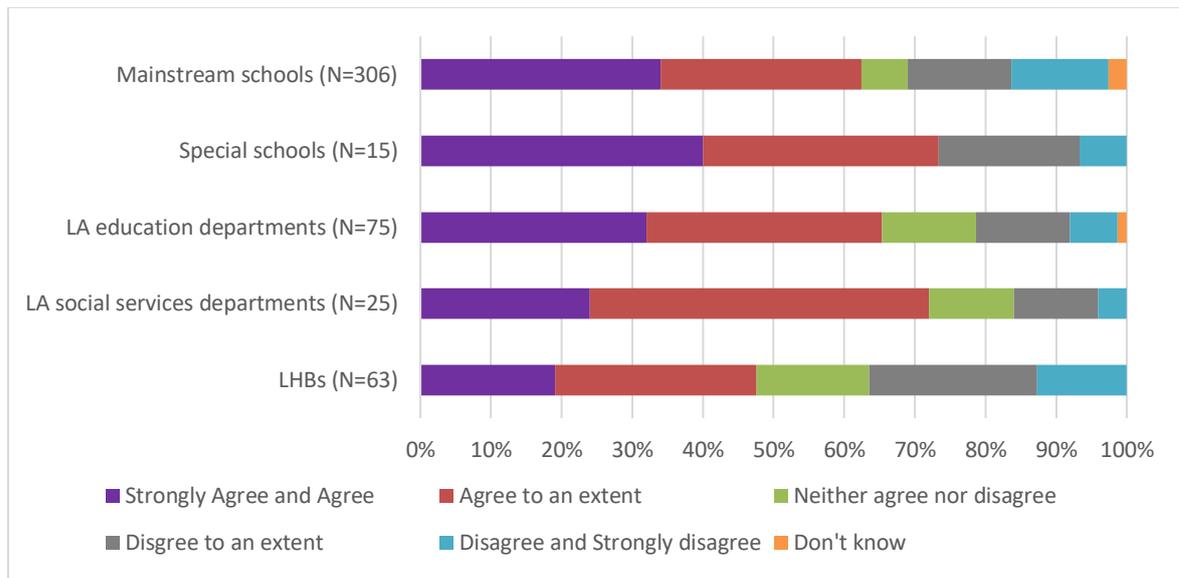
<sup>66</sup> A notably higher proportion of Welsh-medium mainstream schools agreed to an extent (39%) compared with English-medium mainstream schools (28%) that they receive the information they need for learners supported through early years action/plus.

**Figure 46. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that they receive the information they need from other organisations on learners with non-statutory plans**



3.53 When asked to what extent they agreed that they receive the information they need from other organisations on **learners with statutory plans when it is needed**, respondents from special schools were most likely to strongly agree or agree. The largest proportion of special school respondents (40%) strongly agreed or agreed, and the second largest proportion (33%) agreed to an extent that they receive the information they need when it is needed. LHB respondents were less likely to agree, with the largest proportion of respondents agreeing to an extent (28%) and a considerable proportion disagreeing or strongly disagreeing (12%) or disagreeing to an extent (23%) that they receive the information they need from other organisations on learners with statutory plans when it is needed.

**Figure 47. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that they receive the information they need from other organisations on learners with statements when it is needed**

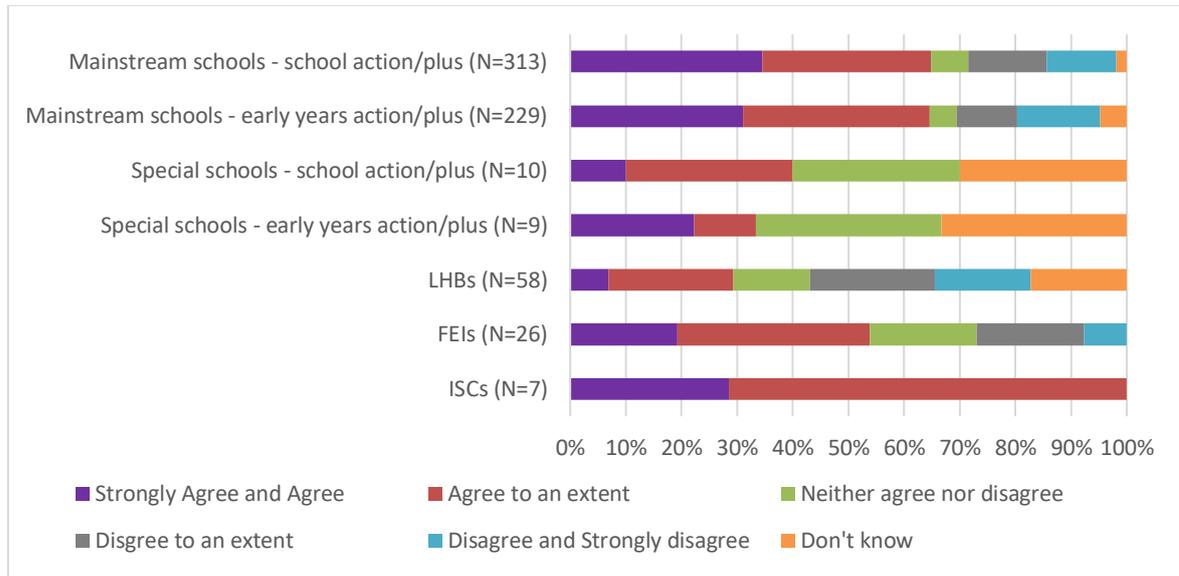


3.54 When asked to what extent they agreed that they receive the information they need from other organisations on **learners with non-statutory plans when it is needed**, a mixture of views were expressed by respondents between and within the different sectors. Around a third of mainstream school respondents strongly agreed or agreed (34% in relation to review arrangements for learners supported through school action/plus<sup>67</sup> and 31% for learners supported through early years action/plus) or agreed to an extent (30% in relation to the current system for learners supported through school action/plus and 33% for learners supported through early years action/plus<sup>68</sup>) that they receive the information they need from other organisations when it is needed. LHB and FEI respondents expressed mixed views: for LHBs, a considerable proportion of respondents agreed to an extent (22%) and strongly disagreed or disagreed (17%) or disagreed to an extent (22%); for FEIs, the largest proportion of respondents agreed to an extent (34%) and a considerable proportion disagreed to an extent (19%) that they receive the information they need from other organisations on learners with non-statutory plans when it is needed.

<sup>67</sup> A notably higher proportion of primary and middle schools strongly agreed or agreed (38%) compared with secondary schools (21%) that the required information is received when needed

<sup>68</sup> A notably higher proportion of Welsh-medium mainstream schools agreed to an extent (42%) compared with English-medium mainstream schools (27%) that they receive the information they need for learners supported through early years action/plus.

**Figure 48. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that they receive the information they need from other organisations on learners with non-statutory plans when it is needed**



### *Effectiveness of working relationships*

3.55 Survey respondents were asked to what extent they agreed that effective working relationships had been developed with a range of partner organisations. The following paragraphs outline respondents' views on whether effective working relationships have been developed with the following:

- Schools
- Further education institutions
- Health services
- LA education departments
- LA social services departments
- Parents and carers
- Early years or pre-school providers
- Careers Wales

3.56 Over 76% of respondents within all sectors were of the opinion that effective working relationships have been developed with **schools**. LA education departments was the sector with the highest proportion of respondents that noted effective relationships have been developed with schools, with 77% strongly

agreeing or agreeing and a further 22% agreeing to an extent. Mainstream schools and special schools was the sector with the second highest proportion of respondents that noted the development of effective relationships with schools, with 68% mainstream schools<sup>69</sup> and 76% of special schools strongly agreeing or agreeing that effective relationships with schools have been developed. However, 15% of special school respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed with this. FEIs and LHBs were the sectors with the smallest proportion of respondents that noted effective relationships have been developed with schools. 50% of FEIs and LHBs strongly agreed or agreed and 26% of FEIs and 32% of LHBs agreed to an extent that effective relationships with schools have been developed.

- 3.57 A mixture of views were expressed by respondents across all sectors in relation to whether effective working relationships have been developed with **FEIs**. Special schools was the sector with the highest proportion of respondents that noted effective relationships have been developed with FEIs, with 41% strongly agreeing or agreeing and a further 50% agreeing to an extent. FEIs was the sector with the second highest proportion of respondents that noted the development of effective relationships with FEIs, with 56% strongly agreeing or agreeing and a further 16% agreeing to an extent. LHBs was the sector with the highest proportion of respondents that disagreed that effective working relationships have been developed with FEIs, with 25% strongly disagreeing or disagreeing and a further 7% disagreeing to an extent.
- 3.58 A mixture of views were expressed by respondents across all sectors in relation to whether effective working relationships have been developed with **health services**. LHBs was the sector with the highest proportion of respondents that noted effective relationships have been developed with health services, with 68% strongly agreeing or agreeing and a further 24% agreeing to an extent. Special schools was the sector with the second highest proportion of respondents that noted the development of effective relationships with health services, with 46% strongly agreeing or agreeing and a further 38% agreeing to an extent. FEIs was the sector with the highest proportion of respondents that disagreed that effective working relationships have

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<sup>69</sup> There were no notable differences between primary and middle schools and secondary school responses, or between English and Welsh medium mainstream school responses.

been developed with health services, with 25% strongly disagreeing or disagreeing and a further 18% disagreeing to an extent.

- 3.59 Over 71% of respondents within nearly all sectors, apart from FEIs (57%), were of the opinion that effective working relationships have been developed with **LA education departments**. LA education departments was the sector with the highest proportion of respondents that noted effective relationships have been developed with other LA education departments, with 81% strongly agreeing and a further 14% agreeing to an extent. Special schools was the sector with the second highest proportion of respondents that noted the development of effective relationships with LA education departments, with 64% strongly agreeing or agreeing and a further 28% agreeing to an extent that effective relationships with LA education departments have been developed. FEIs was the sector with the smallest proportion of respondents that noted effective relationships have been developed with LA education departments, with 30% strongly agreed or agreed and 26% agreeing to an extent. Furthermore, 15% of FEIs strongly disagreed or disagreed and a further 7% disagreed to an extent that effective relationships with LA education departments have been developed.
- 3.60 A mixture of views were expressed by respondents across all sectors in relation to whether effective working relationships have been developed with **LA social services departments**. Special schools was the sector with the highest proportion of respondents that noted effective relationships have been developed with LA social services departments, with 42% strongly agreeing or agreeing and a further 50% agreeing to an extent. LA social services departments was the sector with the second highest proportion of respondents that noted the development of effective relationships with other LA social services departments, with 62% strongly agreeing or agreeing and a further 25% agreeing to an extent. FEIs and LHBs were the sectors with the highest proportion of respondents that disagreed that effective working relationships have been developed with LA social services departments; 14% of FEIs and LHBs disagreed to an extent and a further 14% of FEIs and 15% of LHBs strongly disagreed or disagreed.
- 3.61 A high proportion of respondents (between 77% and 100%) within all sectors were of the opinion that effective working relationships have been developed with **parents and carers**. 100% of respondents from special schools and ISCs strongly

agreed or agreed that effective relationships with parents and carers have been developed. LA education departments was the sector with the second highest proportion of respondents that noted the development of effective relationships with parents and carers, with 74% strongly agreeing or agreeing and a further 24% agreeing to an extent that effective relationships with parents and carers have been developed. FEIs was the sector with the smallest proportion of respondents that noted effective relationships have been developed with parents and carers, with 55% strongly agreed or agreed and 22% agreeing to an extent that effective relationships have been developed with parents and carers.

3.62 A mixture of views were expressed by respondents across all sectors in relation to whether effective working relationships have been developed with **Careers Wales**. Mainstream schools was the sector with the highest proportion of respondents that noted effective relationships have been developed with Careers Wales, with 70% strongly agreeing or agreeing and a further 21% agreeing to an extent. FEIs was the sector with the second highest proportion of respondents that noted the development of effective relationships with Careers Wales, with 59% strongly agreeing or agreeing and a further 18% agreeing to an extent. LHBs were the sectors with the smallest proportion of respondents that noted effective relationships have been developed with Careers Wales. 16% of LHBs strongly agreed or agreed, 22% agreed to an extent, 16% neither agreed nor disagreed, 8% disagreed to an extent, 15% strongly disagreed or disagreed and the remaining 20% said they did not know if effective relationships had been developed with Careers Wales.

### **Transition for learners with statements**

3.63 Respondents were asked about transition for learners with statements. Most respondents in mainstream schools, special schools, LAs and LHBs agreed there are effective transition processes for learners with statements transitioning into, within and out of their service or setting<sup>70</sup>. Respondents in each sector were more likely to agree that there were effective transition processes in place **within** their

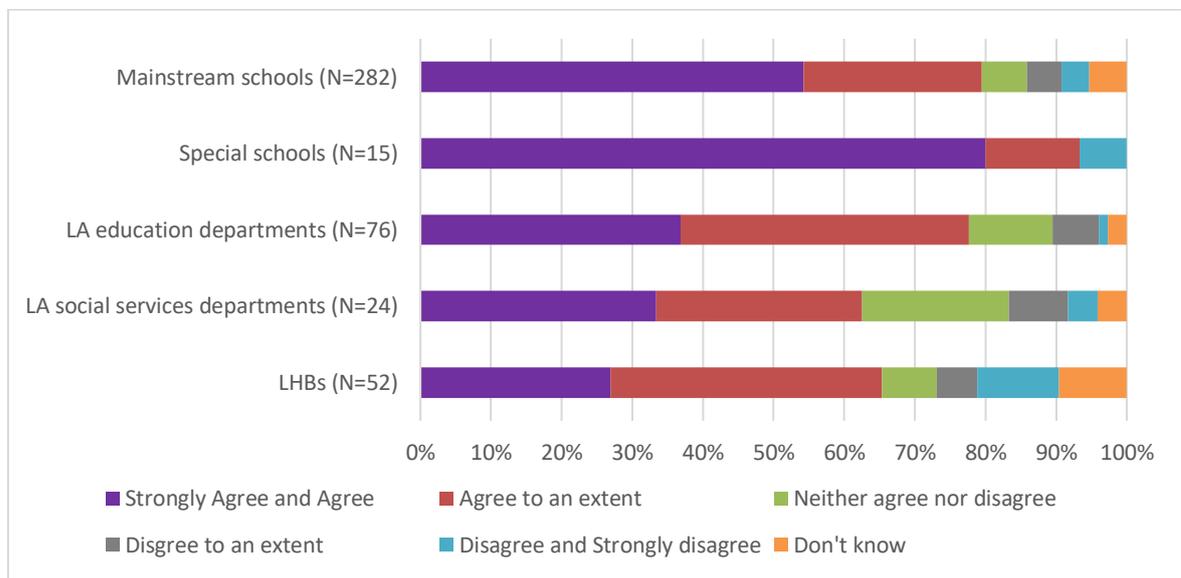
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<sup>70</sup> A notably higher proportion of secondary schools strongly agreed or agreed that transition into, within and out of their setting/service (63%, 80% and 60% respectively) compared with primary and middle schools (51%, 68% and 50% respectively). There were no notable differences between English and Welsh medium mainstream school responses.

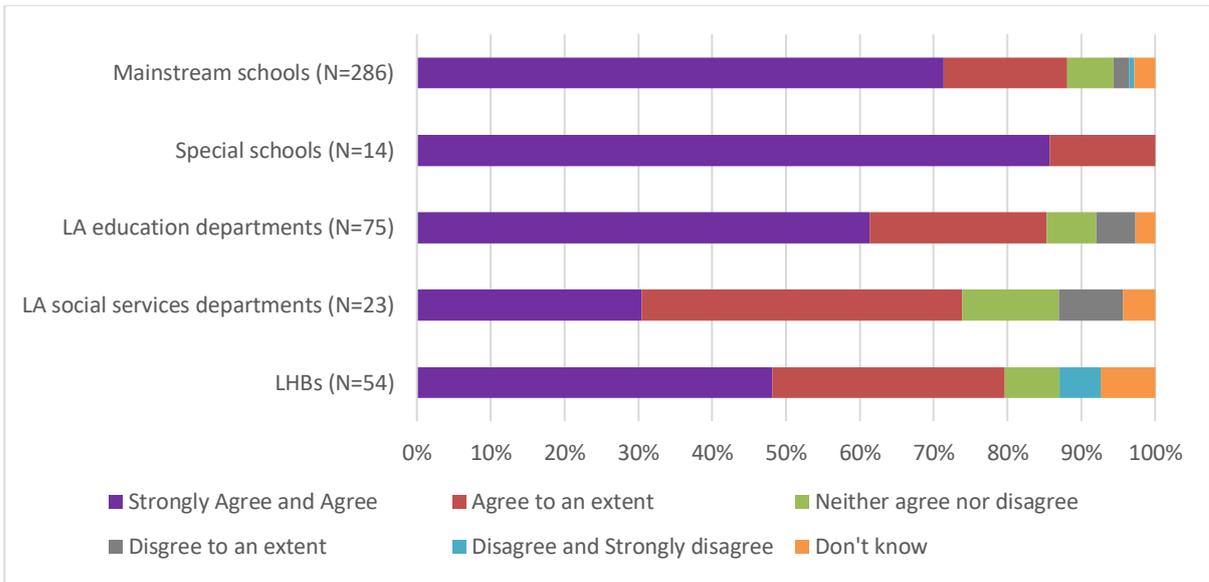
setting/service compared to processes for transition **into** and **out of** their service/setting. A higher proportion of mainstream school respondents, for example, noted that there were effective processes in place for transition within their setting compared with into and out of their setting.

3.64 A higher percentage of respondents from mainstream school and special schools than respondents from LAs and LHBs strongly agreed or agreed that the current system for learners with statements enables effective transition into, within and out of their settings.

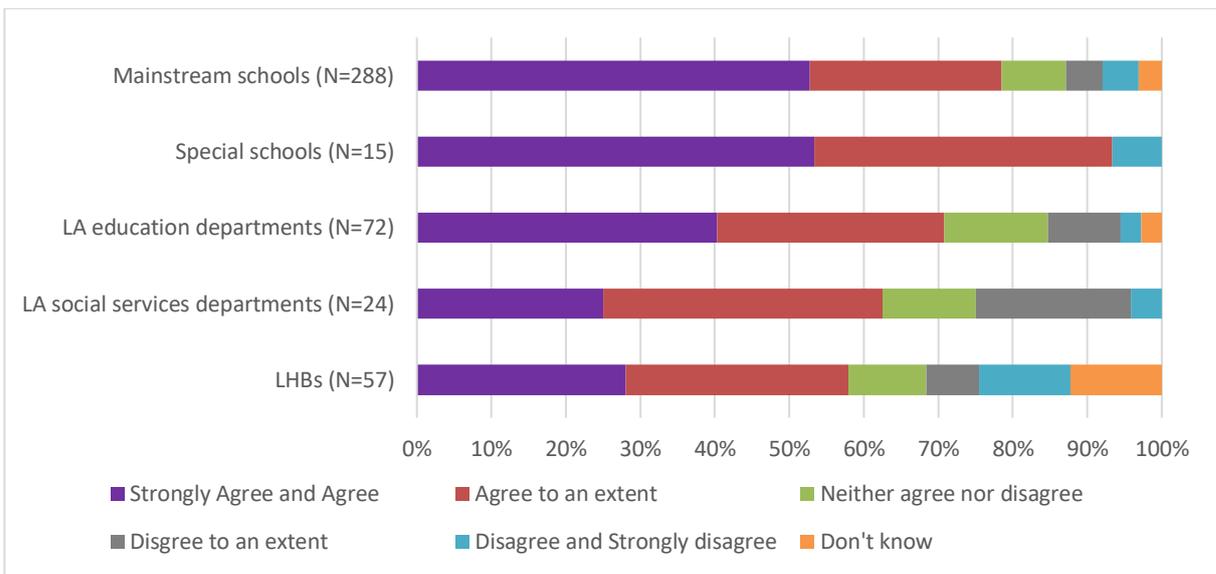
**Figure 49. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that the current system for learners with statements enables effective transition into our setting/service**



**Figure 50. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that the current system for learners with statements enables effective transition within our setting/service**



**Figure 51. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that the current system for learners with statements enables effective transition out of our setting/service**



### Transition for learners with non-statutory plans

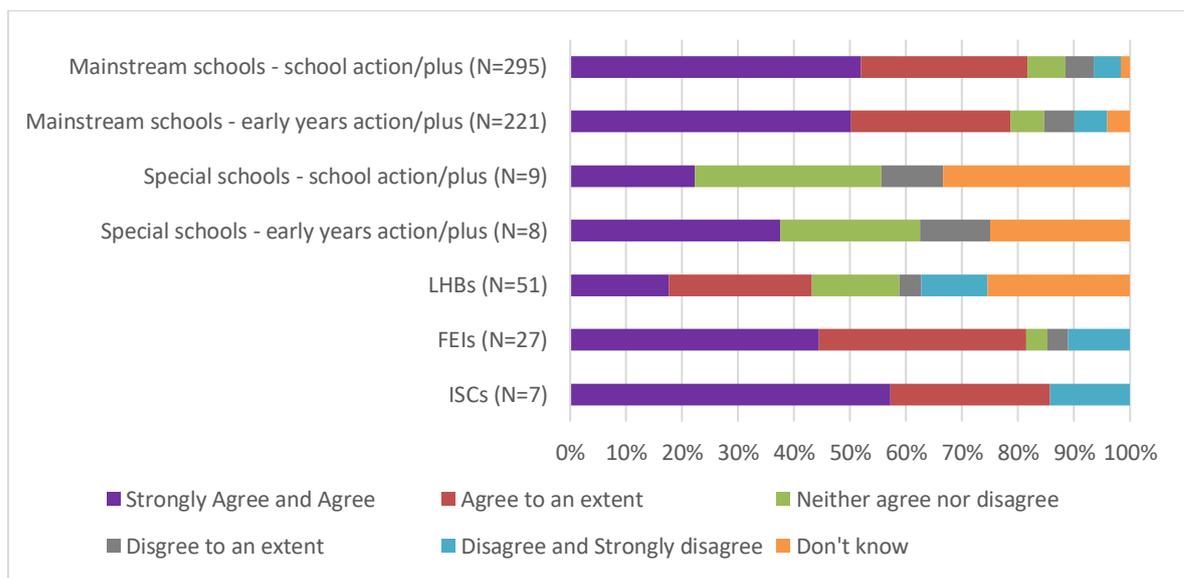
3.65 When asked about transition for learners with non-statutory plans (school action/plus in schools and FEI-based plans in colleges), most respondents from mainstream schools<sup>71</sup>, FEIs and ISCs agreed there are effective transition processes for learners with non-statutory plans transitioning into, within and out of

<sup>71</sup> There were no notable differences between primary and middle schools and secondary school responses, or between English and Welsh medium mainstream school responses.

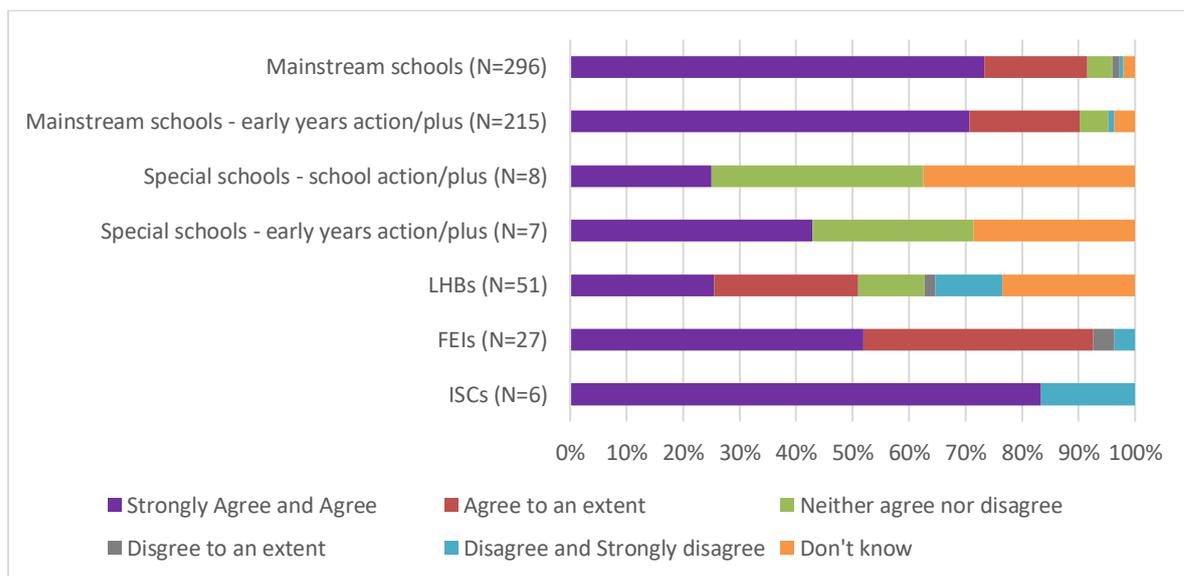
their service or setting. Fewer than half the special school and LHB respondents agreed, at least to an extent, that there were effective transition processes for learners with statements into and out of their setting or service, although a significant number noted 'don't know'.

3.66 Respondents in all sectors were more likely to agree that there were effective transition processes in place **within** their setting/service compared to processes for transition **into** and **out of** their service/setting.

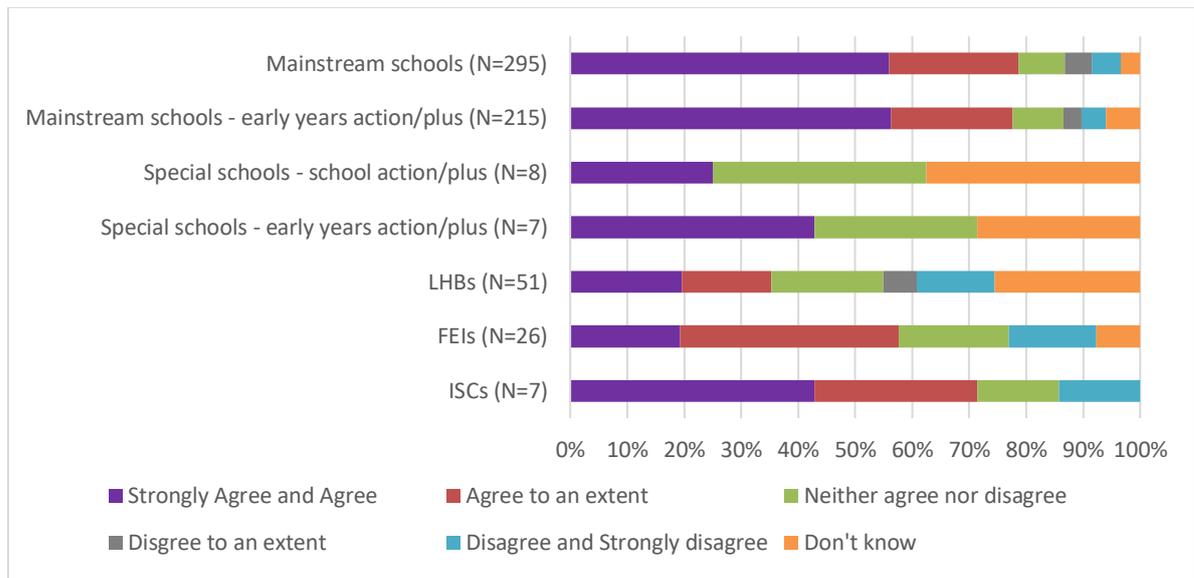
**Figure 52. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that the current system for learners with non-statutory plans enables effective transition into our setting/service**



**Figure 53. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that the current system for learners with non-statutory plans enables effective transition within our setting/service**



**Figure 54. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that the current system for learners with non-statutory plans enables effective transition out of our setting/service**



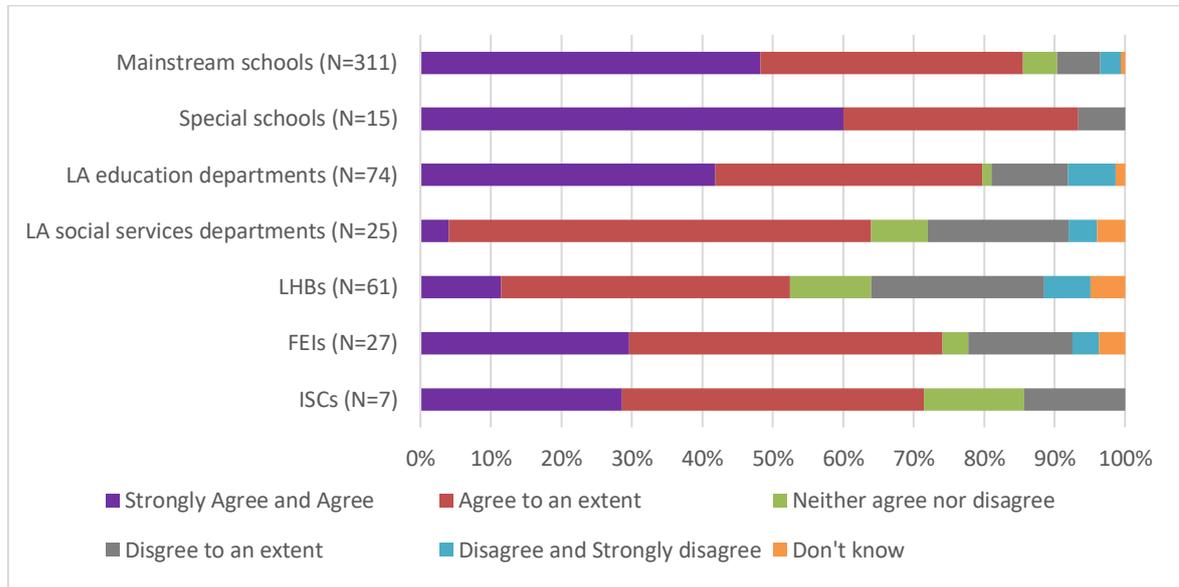
### Involvement of children and young people with statutory and non-statutory plans

3.67 Respondents were asked whether children and young people are supported to understand the decisions that affect them and whether they are supported to participate fully in these decisions. Overall, a larger proportion of respondents from across the sectors noted that children and young people are supported to understand decisions, compared with the proportion of respondents that noted children and young people are supported to participate fully in decisions. For example, 85% of mainstream schools and 93% of special schools agreed that children and young people are supported to understand decisions, compared with 81% of mainstream schools and 86% of special schools who agreed that children and young people are supported to fully participate in decisions. Mainstream<sup>72</sup> and special schools were the sectors with the highest proportion of respondents who agreed that children and young people are supported to understand and participate fully in decisions that affect them. The sector with the smallest proportion of respondents that agreed that children and young people are supported to

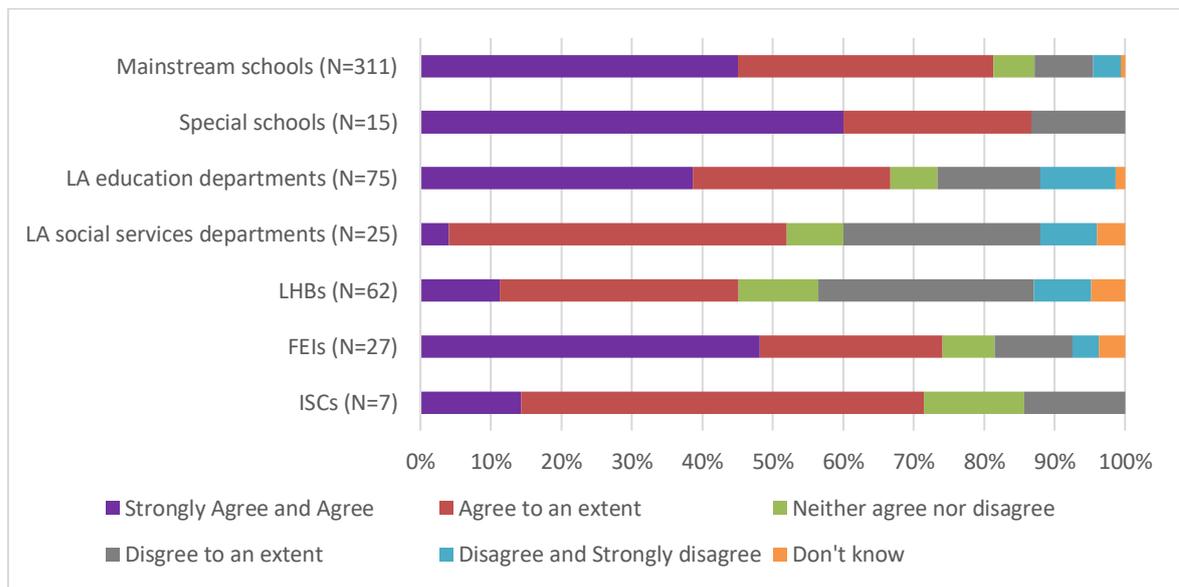
<sup>72</sup> A notably higher proportion of secondary schools strongly agreed or agreed that young people are supported to understand decisions (62%) and participate in decisions (63%) compared with primary and middle schools (43% and 39% respectively). A notably higher proportion of Welsh-medium mainstream schools strongly agreed or agreed that young people are supported to understand decisions (53%) and participate in decisions (50%) compared with English-medium mainstream schools (44% and 41% respectively).

understand and participate fully in decisions was LHBs, with 52% and 45% (respectively) agreeing and 31% and 38% (respectively) disagreeing.

**Figure 55. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that children and young people are supported to understand the decisions that affect them**



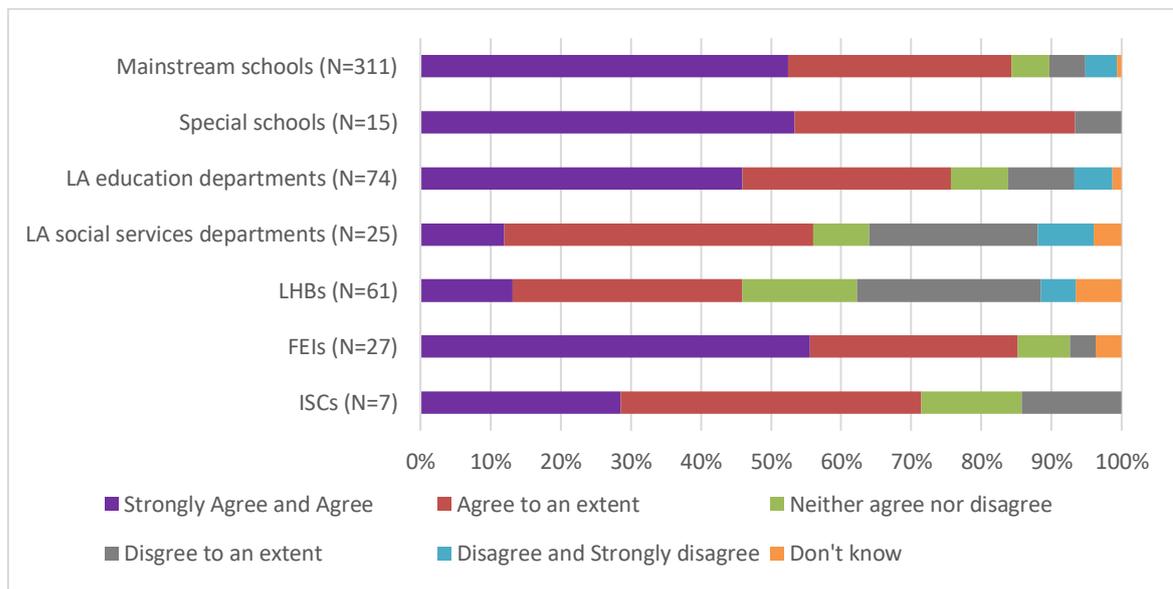
**Figure 56. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that children and young people are supported to participate fully in the decisions that affect them**



3.68 Respondents were asked whether **children and young people are offered the opportunity to raise concerns and to have their questions answered**. Overall, respondents from across the sectors noted similar views for these two questions.

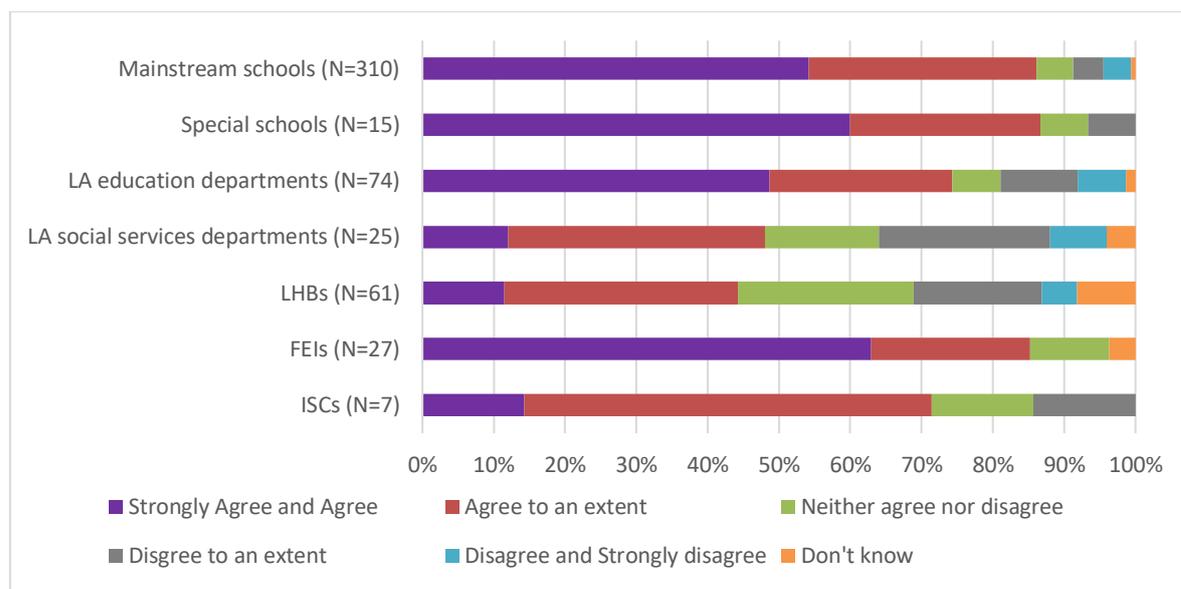
Mainstream schools<sup>73</sup> and special schools were the sectors with the largest proportion of respondents who noted that children and young people are offered the opportunity to raise concerns (84% and 93% agreed respectively) and to have their questions answered (86% of respondents from both sectors agreed). The sector with the smallest proportion of respondents that agreed that children and young people are offered the opportunity to raise concerns and have their questions answered was LHBs, with 45% and 44% (respectively) agreeing and 31% and 22% (respectively) disagreeing.

**Figure 57. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that children and young people are offered opportunities to raise concerns**



<sup>73</sup> A notably higher proportion of secondary schools strongly agreed or agreed that young people are offered the opportunity to raise concerns (70%) and have their questions answered (75%) compared with primary and middle schools (46% and 47% respectively). A notably higher proportion of Welsh-medium mainstream schools strongly agreed or agreed that young people are offered the opportunity to raise concerns (62%) compared with English-medium mainstream schools (46%). There were no notable differences between English and Welsh medium mainstream school responses in relation to whether children and young people are offered the opportunity to have their questions answered.

**Figure 58. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that children and young people are offered opportunities to have their questions answered**



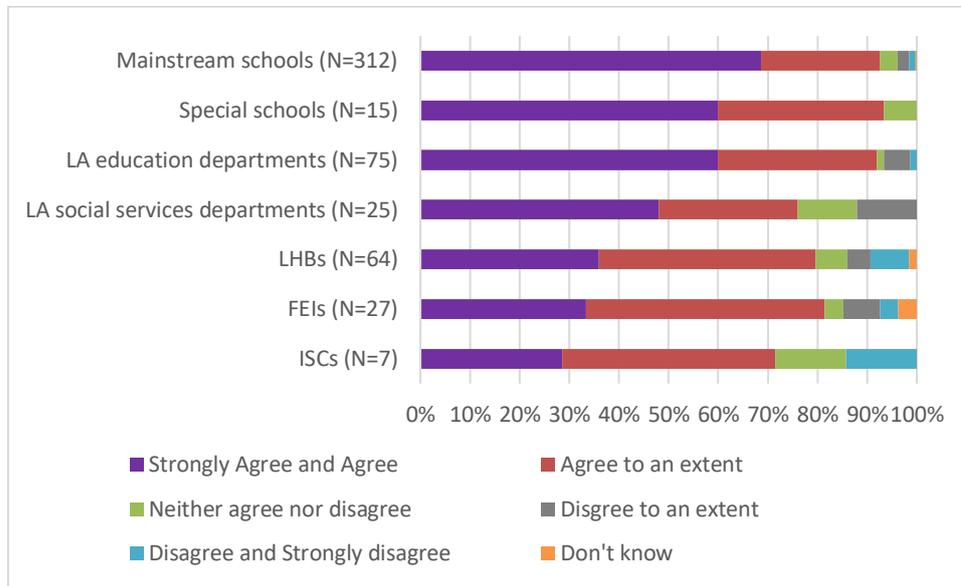
### **Involvement of parents and carers in relation to the current system for learners with statutory and non-statutory plans**

3.69 Respondents were asked whether **parents and carers are supported to understand the decisions that affect their children and whether they are supported to participate fully in these decisions**. Overall, respondents from across the sectors noted similar views for these two questions, with a large proportion of respondents from all sectors (between 71% and 93%) agreeing that parents and carers are supported to understand and participate fully in decisions that affect their children. Mainstream schools<sup>74</sup>, special schools and LA education departments were the sectors with the largest proportion of respondents who noted that parents and carers are supported to understand decisions (92%, 93% and 92% agreed respectively) and to fully participate in decisions (91%, 93% and 89% agreed respectively). The sectors with the smallest proportion of respondents that agreed that parents and carers are supported to understand and participate fully in decisions were ISCs and LA social services departments. 71% of ISCs and 76% of LA social services departments agreed with these two questions. Furthermore, a small proportion of ISCs (14% for both questions) and LA social service

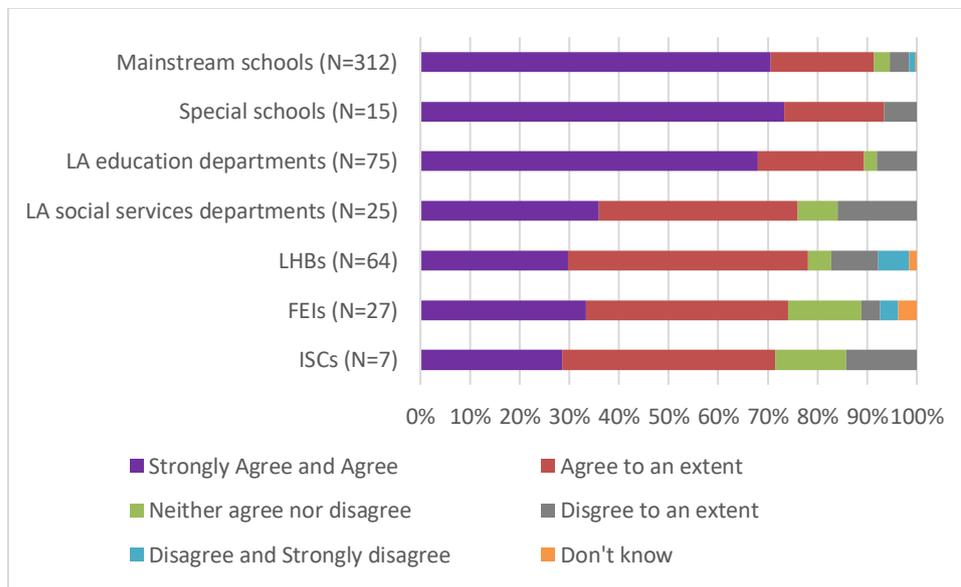
<sup>74</sup> There were no notable differences between primary and middle schools and secondary school responses, or between English and Welsh medium mainstream school responses.

departments (12% and 16% respectively) disagreed that parents and carers are supported to understand decisions and participate fully in decisions that affect their children.

**Figure 59. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that parents and carers are supported to understand the decisions that affect their children**



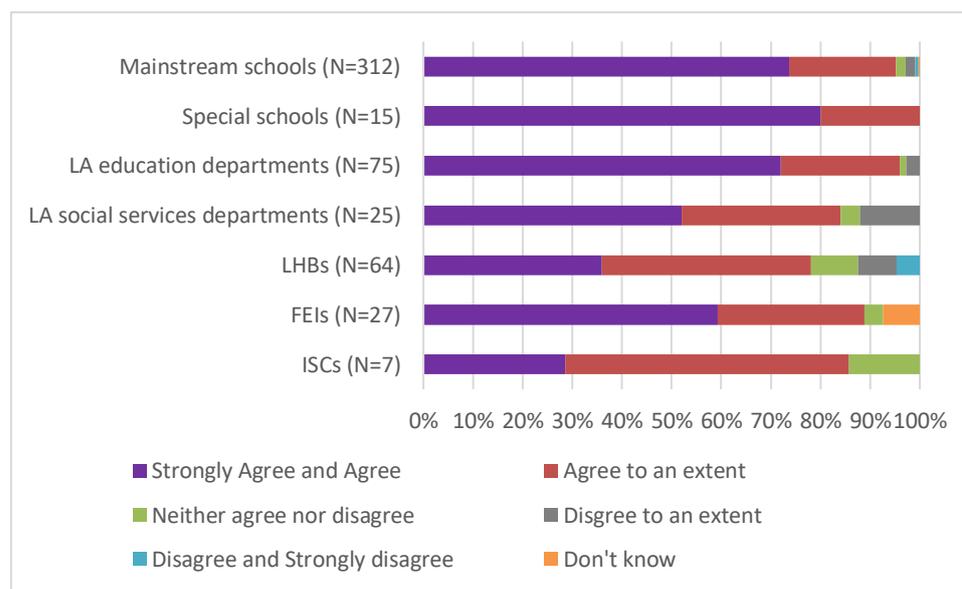
**Figure 60. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that parents and carers are supported to participate fully in the decisions that affect their children**



3.70 Respondents were asked whether **parents and carers are offered opportunities to raise concerns and to have their questions answered**. Overall, respondents from across the sectors noted similar views for these two questions, with a large proportion of respondents from all sectors (between 76% and 100%) agreeing that

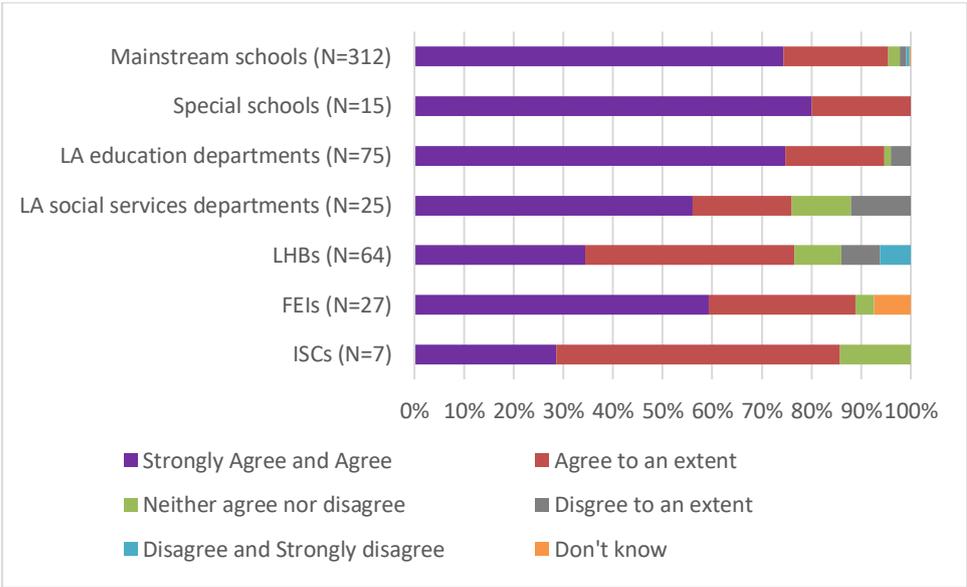
parents and carers are offered opportunities to raise concerns and to have their questions answered. Mainstream schools<sup>75</sup>, special schools and LA education departments were the sectors with the largest proportion of respondents who noted that parents and carers are offered opportunities to raise concerns (95%, 100% and 96% agreed respectively) and to have their questions answered (95%, 100% and 94% agreed respectively). The sectors with the smallest proportion of respondents that agreed that parents and carers are offered opportunities to raise concerns and to have their questions answered were LA social services departments and LHBs. In relation to whether parents are offered opportunities to raise concerns, 84% of LA social service departments and 78% of LHBs agreed and 12% of respondents from both these sectors disagreed. In relation to whether parents are offered opportunities to have their questions answered, 76% of respondents from both these sectors agreed and 12% of LA social services departments and 14% of LHBs disagreed.

**Figure 61. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that parents and carers are offered opportunities to raise concerns**



<sup>75</sup> There were no notable differences between primary and middle schools and secondary school responses, or between English and Welsh medium mainstream school responses.

**Figure 62. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that parents and carers are offered opportunities to have their questions answered**



## **4. LA case study findings**

- 4.1 This section provides a synthesis of key findings from the LA case studies. The four individual LA case studies are presented in Annex A, with overall findings presented below.
- 4.2 Findings relating to the roles and responsibilities of individuals and organisations are presented first, followed by interviewees' views on processes in relation to SEP including identification and assessment, planning, involving parents/carers and learners, review, and disagreement resolution. Findings relating to how organisations work with others, transition processes and the Welsh language are presented towards the end of the section.

### **Roles and responsibilities**

- 4.3 Interviewees considered their roles and responsibilities in relation to SEN to be clear under current arrangements. Most also noted they understood the roles of organisations they worked with. Interviewees were clear on the role of schools, LAs and other partners in identifying initial concern, undertaking different types of assessments, planning and delivering SEP and resolving disagreements.
- 4.4 Interviewees were able to describe structures that were in place at different levels (school, cluster, LA, regional, multi-agency) which helped provide clarity on roles and responsibilities. These included: regular internal school staff meetings relating to SEN, school cluster SENCo meetings, regular meetings between schools and LA staff, LA assessment panels, and other multi-agency meetings (e.g. between social services and education or between LAs and LHBs).
- 4.5 Some interviewees reported a lack of clarity in relation to who is responsible for funding SEP related to out-of-county placements. This tended to be raised in the context of looked after children in cases where a sudden change in a foster placement results in a child moving to another LA. Some interviewees felt there was a lack of clarity between LHBs and other partners about who should be responsible for delivering and funding SEP.

## **Identification and assessment of learners who are supported through school action/plus and learners with FEI-based plans**

- 4.6 Processes for identification were considered to be effective within English-medium education settings. Processes were considered to be fairly effective in Welsh-medium settings, although some issues were highlighted in terms of the availability of screening and assessment tools. Similar processes of identification were reported to be in place across settings, namely, the identification of a possible SEN for a learner followed by information gathering, monitoring, focused assessments carried out internally or by an external agency, and consultation with learners and their parents and carers if appropriate. In school settings, the identification of individual learning needs was described as a collective responsibility and something that any member of staff could raise as a concern, for example, a class teacher, teaching assistant (TA), head of year, learning coach or member of the pastoral support team. Interviewees also reported that parents and carers could also raise a concern.
- 4.7 The findings suggest the effectiveness of early identification varies across LAs. In some LAs, early identification of need for pre-school age children was considered effective and was supported by close liaison between professionals in schools, early years settings, therapy services and community health services. Co-location of services was considered an important factor that supported early identification. In other LAs it was reported that children are being identified 'too late' and early identification was seen as an area for service improvement.
- 4.8 Schools described their internal processes for assessing learners' needs and making decisions on school action and school action plus. Schools described their internal structures for making decisions and a variety of tools used for undertaking assessment. Interviewees in Welsh-medium schools commented that there was a lack of up-to-date, age-appropriate assessment tools for use through the medium of Welsh (particularly for older learners). This was contrasted with the availability of English-language tools.
- 4.9 In all four case studies, interviewees in schools and LAs reported there has been an increase in the incidence of learners presenting with autism and social communication-related difficulty.

- 4.10 Schools tended to draw on the advice and support of LA staff, for example, education psychologists (EPs), in making decisions on school action plus learners, although limitations in the allocated time for the EP was considered a barrier for some schools.
- 4.11 In some cases, schools reported drawing on LA funded support for learners at school action plus. In two LAs, 'school action plus resource agreements' or 'school action plus contracts' were used with some learners. These were used to outline additional support the LA will provide for some learners at school action plus.
- 4.12 Interviewees reported that parents often expect SEP to be put in place immediately once initial concern has been raised. However, interviewees also highlighted that it was important to allow enough time for undertaking initial observations and ensure that differentiated learning is provided and monitored before undertaking assessments.
- 4.13 FEI interviewees reported that unless a learner had a statement of SEN, they were often only notified about learners with SEN/LDD at enrolment. A range of assessment practices were operating in FEIs for entrants, including learner self-assessment forms during enrolment, literacy and numeracy assessments and referrals by course tutors to FEI learner support teams. FEI interviewees reported that staff held a range of qualifications in relation to SEN/LDD, including qualifications in carrying out cognitive ability tests and assessment for examination arrangements.

#### **Planning for SEP for learners who are supported through school action/plus and learners with FEI-based plans**

- 4.14 Schools across the four LAs continue to use IEPs in line with the existing Special Educational Needs Code of Practice for Wales (Welsh Government, 2004), although all settings and services expressed an awareness that there would be a change to IDPs with the implementation of the new ALN legislation. One LA was planning to introduce IDPs with all Year 2 and Year 6 learners with SEN, with the

IEP included within the IDP template.<sup>76</sup> Schools reported that all learners at school action, school action plus and with statements had IEPs.

- 4.15 Schools expressed confidence in using the IEP as a system and felt that this format enabled them to effectively prioritise individual learning needs and provide a clear focus for educational support without being overly time consuming for teachers and support workers.
- 4.16 Some interviewees felt the IEP system was not suitable for all learners with SEN, and that three or four targets were insufficient to cover the needs of some learners, particularly those with complex needs. Some interviewees believed that the identification of discrete learning targets did not adequately represent the holistic nature of learner development, that is, development that occurs across cognitive, physical, social and emotional domains.
- 4.17 Settings also described other types of plans used in addition to IEPs. These include individual behaviour plans, play plans, healthcare plans, transition plans and pastoral support plans for learners at risk of exclusion. Other systems were cited by some interviewees as being important in terms of planning, for example, the use of 'pupil passports' with learners with autism which set out important environmental conditions for teachers to consider.
- 4.18 In FEIs, individual learning plans were used with all learners and this system is also used for planning for learners with additional needs. It was reported that plans were generally available online to all staff involved with a learner and included information that is regularly kept up-to-date.
- 4.19 Interviewees noted that planning processes in all settings have become more person-centred in recent years, with learners and their parents and carers described as having more involvement in the process of planning once a learning need is identified. One-page profiles were the PCP tool most frequently used by interviewees in school settings and were often used in conjunction with an IEP.
- 4.20 LAs have had active involvement in the promotion of PCP. A working party had been set up in one LA to develop PCP training for schools and related resources.

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<sup>76</sup> The mandatory IDP requirements, which will be set out in the new ALN Code for Wales, have not yet been published. This may vary from the IDP that was developed and piloted as part of a Welsh Government action research study (See Section 1.7).

Two LAs noted that all school SENCOs had participated in PCP training and this was confirmed during school visits undertaken.

### **Involvement of children, young people, parents and carers in decision making relating to school action/plus SEP and for learners with FEI-based plans**

- 4.21 Most interviewees believed that processes for involving learners and parents/carers in decision making relating to SEP delivered through school action/plus were effective. All educational settings expressed a strong commitment to consulting with learners, their parents, carers and other stakeholders. Some settings said they had been consulting with children, young people and parents and carers for some time in line with the existing Special Educational Needs Code of Practice for Wales (Welsh Government, 2004) and saw the prioritisation of listening in a PCP-based approach as a validation of existing practices.
- 4.22 Most settings considered the formation of strong relationships with learners as an important way of enabling their participation in decision making processes. For many schools, gaining learners' views was seen as integral to the practice of teaching and learning and a key aspect of formative assessment. It was reported that learners were regularly consulted about target setting, often as part of ongoing classroom planning and reviewing arrangements.
- 4.23 Interviewees in educational settings felt that the ability to express personal views and participate in decision making was something that needed to be developed in learners. Support strategies described by interviewees included preparing learners beforehand for meetings, using self-evaluation tools, and allowing learners to participate in meetings about them from an early age so that they have a chance to develop their skills. Interviewees believed that PCP tools provide useful support for this and are good at focusing in a constructive way on what is working for a learner and what is important to them.
- 4.24 Interviewees in educational settings emphasised the importance of having regular formal and informal conversations with parents and carers of learners with SEN. Interviewees in schools and FEIs noted that most parents' attendance at meetings was good although, in some settings, interviewees highlighted that getting some parents/carers involved in decision making could be challenging (e.g. if they did not attend parents evenings). A variety of communication platforms were regularly used

in addition to face-to-face meetings. These included home-school communication books, parent evenings, phone calls and email communication.

- 4.25 Interviewees from FEIs questioned the age appropriateness of regular contact with parents and carers for most of their learners, viewing it as an important part of the decision-making process for some learners, particularly those with complex needs, but as inappropriate for learners with less complex needs.
- 4.26 Interviewees in health said they worked in a person-centred way and sought to put children and families at the heart of decisions about SEP. This was described by health interviewees as an established way of working within LHBs and something that was a key part of current health policy and guidance. Some interviewees, however, felt that despite this agenda of participation, the day to day operation of the service meant that they had less contact with some children, particularly once they have moved out of the pre-school phase.
- 4.27 Most health interviewees described processes they had established to provide access to information, guidance and support for learners and parents/carers. These included helplines that learners and parents/carers (as well as practitioners) could access by phone or email and guidance provided online (e.g. videos and documents on a Facebook group). Some health interviewees described regular drop-in sessions or workshops they delivered in schools which enabled learners and parents/carers to access face-to-face support.

### **SEP for learners who are supported through school action/plus and learners with FEI-based plans**

- 4.28 Overall, educational settings felt that they offered SEP for learners with SEN that is effective in terms of improving learner outcomes. Interviewees provided evidence of effectiveness in the form of attainment scores, low absence rates, minimal exclusions as well as learner and parent satisfaction, improved learner well-being and confidence, and improved motivation and ability to engage in learning.
- 4.29 Interviewees described a variety of types of SEP being delivered within their settings. These included: small group work and in-class support, withdrawal sessions, catch up work and the delivery of programmes of intervention that target

discrete skills (e.g. literacy and numeracy, speech and language, emotional literacy, social interaction skills).

- 4.30 Most mainstream settings that participated in the research were operating 'special classes', 'bases' or 'hubs' for SEN learners. Interviewees considered these to be of benefit to some learners with SEN because of the small size of the group, the quality of the teaching and learning environment, and the flexibility and adaptability of support that is available. Many interviewees commented that strong relationships and the ongoing discussion of pedagogy (the method and practice of teaching as an academic subject or theoretical concept), with learners were practices that underpinned effective SEP. Some felt that this type of practice was more possible in learning environments with fewer learners.
- 4.31 Some interviewees expressed their belief that more emphasis should be placed on articulating SEN as the responsibility of all teachers and lecturers. It was felt by some that the delivery of SEP in special classes reduced learner access to the full breadth of the curriculum and was unable to adapt to learner development and changing needs.
- 4.32 Interviewees described the processes they felt supported by the delivery of effective SEP. Interviewees most commonly cited clear leadership, quality teaching, practitioners' knowledge of learners, strong relationships with parents and carers, careful monitoring of learner progress and regular evaluation of SEP as key factors influencing effectiveness.
- 4.33 Although most interviewees felt that SEP delivered through school action/plus arrangements and for learners with FEI-based plans was effective, most also believed there was a lack of capacity and availability of SEP, related to funding pressures. This was considered to be a significant challenge to the delivery of SEP that would enable learners to reach their full potential. Most interviewees in education, health and social care noted that services were 'stretched' and unable to offer timely support to some learners in schools, with children's health services and CAMHS described as facing particularly difficult capacity issues.
- 4.34 Though interviewees reported that working relationships were generally good across services, capacity issues within health services were seen by some as particularly disadvantageous for children and young people who do not have a clearly diagnosed condition. However, some interviewees questioned whether

external agencies (e.g. LA-provided services, health) should be as focused on providing direct input to learners, or whether there should be more emphasis on health and social care professionals training and building the capacity of schools and colleges to more fully understand learning needs and use strategies that are based on the best available evidence.

- 4.35 Most interviewees believed that learner achievement and the effectiveness of SEP needed to be considered in different ways for different learners, for example, depending on their age and individual circumstances. For learners in schools, interviewees tended to associate effectiveness of SEP with access to a differentiated or alternative curriculum and progress in relation to this. In FEIs, the effectiveness of SEP was seen in terms of the learner's own goals which may focus on the gaining of qualification or becoming employable, but also on improved well-being, self-esteem and self-confidence.

#### **Reviews for learners who are supported through school action/plus and learners with FEI-based plans**

- 4.36 Most interviewees in educational settings felt that reviews for learners who receive SEP through school action/plus and learners with FEI-based plans were effective. Interviewees in schools reported that they reviewed IEPs regularly (usually termly although some schools noted that this took place twice termly), with updates made if any changes/actions were required. In addition, schools described more regular, informal discussions between SEN staff (e.g. weekly meetings of SENCOs, SEN teachers and TAs) and with all staff in schools (e.g. SENCOs leading items in staff meetings).
- 4.37 Schools and LA staff had positive views on the use of PCP in reviews. They felt it strengthened the voice of learners and parents, created greater 'ownership' among learners and improved focused planning and objective-setting within schools. The use of PCP practices was considered more time-consuming for practitioners but was seen by them as more worthwhile in the long term. However, some interviewees in schools were concerned about their ability to undertake PCP reviews for all learners with SEN. School interviewees referred to a need to train more staff to be able to undertake PCP reviews noting that this would be essential to enable them to use PCP to review all learners' SEN plans.

4.38 Few interviewees outside education settings had views on review processes for learners who receive SEP through school action/plus and learners with FEI-based plans. Most LA staff who commented on IEP review processes felt these are effective while noting they attend very few reviews. One LA reported conducting annual reviews of plans for SEP delivered through school action plus arrangements as well as statements and felt that this process is effective.

### **Resolving disagreements relating to school action/plus SEP and for learners with FEI-based plans**

4.39 Interviews across the four LAs suggested there were a minimal number of disagreements in relation to SEP in schools. Interviewees from educational settings emphasised the importance of developing open and honest relationships with parents and carers and of operating an open-door policy that invites communication with families. Interviewees agreed that acting quickly when an issue is raised, arranging face-to-face meetings and listening respectfully to parents and carers concerns were important practices that ensured the early resolution of conflict.

4.40 For some interviewees, engaging with parents and carers was an important aspect of SEP that they felt supported the progress of learners. A range of communication platforms were used by schools and colleges and some settings used set structures for conversations with parents and carers.

4.41 In FEIs, interviewees reported that resolving disagreements could be time-consuming and was often focused on resolving issues in relation to learner progression and the nature of support provided for learners. Discussions between practitioners and families were considered by FEIs as being the most important form of conflict resolution.

### **Statutory assessment for special educational needs**

4.42 Overall, interviewees in schools and LAs considered statutory assessment processes to be effective, with appropriate individuals who understood the needs of the learner involved. Interviewees acknowledged that the process could appear to take a long time from families' perspectives, but that assessments were carried out

according to the time scale prescribed by the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice for Wales (Welsh Government, 2004) in most cases.

- 4.43 Interviewees in LAs tended to refer to capacity issues when discussing the timeliness of assessment processes. Interviewees referred to the challenges in meeting milestones and completing reports on time. Some referred to delays in getting evidence from external partners (e.g. reports from LHB staff), sometimes related to parents missing appointments.
- 4.44 Health interviewees noted that they were usually able to respond to requests for input to statutory assessments in a timely way although a number of factors restricted their ability to do so. These included: delays in receiving requests (e.g. some noted there were sometimes delays if requests were not sent directly to therapists but went via a community paediatrician), whether they had previously/recently seen the learner (and therefore whether they needed to arrange another consultation), and limited capacity which was often related to waiting times targets and/or a shortage of staff.
- 4.45 Interviewees in LAs and some special schools noted that the type of evidence provided by schools for consideration by assessment panels varied. One LA noted they provided a pack of resources including guidance for schools on making referrals and one LHB noted they provided pre-referral training to schools to help improve practice. Some interviewees suggested that more precise guidance could be provided by LAs to schools on the evidence they should provide for statutory assessments (e.g. which screening or assessment tools they should use).
- 4.46 In some LHBs, a single point for the sending of referrals was being used and regular multi-disciplinary team meetings were used to discuss the most appropriate service for each referral. This approach was considered to be a more efficient way of dealing with referrals and identifying key agencies for individual cases.
- 4.47 In two LAs, interviewees reported there had been a notable increase in requests for statements. This was supported by data provided by these LAs which showed a higher percentage increase than the Wales-wide increase of 15% between 2014/15 and 2016/17 (see Section 5.11-5.25 for analysis of the data provided by LAs). Some interviewees in LAs were of the view that the current statutory responsibilities tend to create an incentive for schools to refer learners for assessment as a way of securing SEP. In some cases, LA staff felt this can lead to inappropriate referrals for

statutory assessment. Some interviewees believed that schools and parents/carers awareness of the forthcoming reforms related to the ALN transformation programme were a factor that had contributed to this increase. It was felt that obtaining a statement was seen as a way of ensuring SEP is secure, unlike SEP delivered for learners supported through school action/plus which was viewed as more easily ceased.

- 4.48 Interviewees in schools considered that the amount of evidence they were required to submit to assessment panels was fairly onerous. However, they also acknowledged the importance of providing comprehensive information about learners.
- 4.49 Some interviewees in schools perceived that there could be some reluctance among LAs to undertake assessment of learners during the Foundation Phase. Some interviewees in schools perceived that LAs sometimes prefer to wait until Key Stage 2 before undertaking assessments.
- 4.50 Most interviewees consider the content of statements to be too broad. Respondents noted that objectives in statements are often worded in broad terms that do not support the development of focused and short-term targets. IEPs were viewed by respondents as more helpful as working documents for this reason, with more reference to these in the process of planning and monitoring learner progress.
- 4.51 Specialised educational settings noted the importance of continuing to assess for underlying areas of difficulty for learners once the statutory assessment process is complete. Dyslexia-related difficulty, motor difficulty and social communication difficulty were seen as present for many learners identified with Behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD).

### **Statutory SEP**

- 4.52 Overall, interviewees across the case study areas felt that SEP was effective but that there were gaps in SEP, mainly related to capacity issues. Maintaining the right balance of SEP was reported to be a challenge for LAs. LAs reported shifts in terms of demand for types of SEP, with more SEP needed currently in some regions that is suitable for young children, for children and young people with BESD, particularly for girls with BESD in one region, and for children and young people with autism.

Two LAs reported they were in the process of reviewing and developing their statutory SEP and stated that part of the purpose of changes were to offer support that is more local and inclusive.

- 4.53 Some LAs noted that the small size of their authority was a challenge in terms of SEP. These authorities had arrangements in place with neighbouring authorities for the provision of some services. Interviewees in some LAs reported that the number of out of county placements was considerable and the absence of suitable SEP was felt to be responsible in part for high exclusion rates in some settings.
- 4.54 Funding for SEN had been delegated to schools in some regions with greater autonomy given to settings to make decisions about how they arrange SEP. Centrally funded SEP in the form of a specialist base or teaching facility that was managed by the mainstream school was operating in a number of settings. These catered for the needs of learners with statements, but also those without statements in some instances, and were reported to help broaden out what is available in terms of SEP. Some of these facilities were operating outreach SEP for learners in other settings.
- 4.55 All interviewees reported that looked after children were prioritised in terms of need at placement panels, during school-based discussions and for access to children's health and social services.
- 4.56 Many interviewees in education settings referred to the use of specialised SEP that was described as a personalised approach to the delivery of teaching and involved setting achievable and realistic 'small steps' learning targets. Interviewees noted that on-going formative assessment and frequent feedback to learners were important processes within this approach. Some interviewees felt that this way of working was not compatible with generalised learning objectives that are often provided in statements of SEN. Some interviewees highlighted a range of practices that were used to prioritise and break down the objectives within statements to smaller, more achievable steps.
- 4.57 Interviewees reported that alternative systems of planning were being used and that a range of plans were used for many learners who have a statement. PCP was being used pervasively in some settings, particularly those that offered more specialised SEP. PCP arrangements in some settings included evaluating learning contexts in terms of what is working and not working for learners, trying to

understand learners' perspectives within learning experiences and promoting the values of PCP in all school activity. Some interviewees commented that a shift towards PCP practices involved a change in culture and a recognition of the validity of different perspectives within the classroom. It was noted that the action planning element of PCP aids precision in the development of targets and appropriate support strategies.

- 4.58 Specialist settings across all four case study areas provided a wide range of curricular activities in addition to the national curriculum. Interviewees in these types of settings considered enhanced practical activities that are non-literacy based as an important part of SEP, given the needs of the learners they serve.
- 4.59 Most interviewees reported that access to support from children's health and social services was generally easier for learners with a statement, although it was also considered an area of challenge in many settings. Children's health services were described by most interviewees as particularly difficult to access for provision, with CAMHS cited as the most difficult in this respect.
- 4.60 Interviewees in schools felt that there was variation in terms of effectiveness of SEP delivered by external agencies (e.g. LA-provided services, health), with more regular input (e.g. weekly) seen as more valuable than termly input. Some interviewees from across services, expressed the view that the role of health professionals is not aligned with school-based learning, that is, learning as it takes place in classrooms, and should not be as focused on providing input to individual learners, but rather on providing teachers and schools with appropriate skills to deliver SEP.
- 4.61 SENCOs in some settings reported that they devoted a large proportion of their allocated time to liaising with health and social service professionals and saw this as underpinning their effectiveness in accessing SEP from services for learners with SEN.
- 4.62 Schools and FEIs reported they were forming new partnerships with community, voluntary and third sector organisations as a way of developing SEP outside of children's services. It was reported that some of these organisations were also experiencing capacity issues in the face of increasing demand. Developing in-house expertise and knowledge through the funding of training for staff is something that

was mentioned by most settings, particularly those that are offering more specialised SEP.

### **Review of statutory SEP**

- 4.63 Statutory review processes were considered to be fairly effective by most interviewees. It was felt by some interviewees that PCP structures used in meetings had strengthened the quality of information submitted as part of reviews.
- 4.64 For children who are looked after by the LA and who have a statement, interviewees reported that annual review meetings and PEP meetings were generally held separately. Several reasons for this exist including: reviews for children who are looked after were reported to be held more frequently, different professionals were required for reviews, it was felt to be inappropriate for educational professionals to have access to some details about families lives that may be discussed as part of a PEP meeting. However, it was reported that review meetings for children who are looked after were sometimes held within educational settings.
- 4.65 Interviewees reported that PCP was increasingly being used as part of statutory review processes and that they felt this strengthened review processes in terms of increasing learner and parental 'buy in' and ensuring different perspectives were fully taken into account. Most interviewees felt that PCP increased effectiveness in terms of it being an inclusive, empowering and transparent process but also emphasised that review processes took significantly more time to undertake than current review arrangements and would not be possible to do this for all learners with SEN. Some interviewees felt strongly that training more staff to undertake PCP reviews and embedding review processes throughout the school year would be essential if PCP was to be used as part of all SEN reviews.

### **Involvement of children, young people, parents and carers in decision making about statutory SEP and resolving disagreements**

- 4.66 Across all four case study areas, most interviewees felt that processes for involving learners and parents/carers in decision making about statutory assessment and SEP were fairly effective, but that there were also areas which could improve.

Interviewees referred to a variety of formal and informal approaches for involving learners and parents/carers. Many of these were similar to processes used for learners supported through school action and school action plus (e.g. home-school communication books, parent evenings, phone calls and email communication). However, interviewees in educational settings reported that the involvement of learners and parents/carers was more regular, frequent and formal where statutory assessment and SEP was under consideration. For example, most interviewees had started using PCP processes for some learners to increase involvement in decision making. However, this was not usually done systematically for all learners but was being trialled with some groups. Most schools noted that they sought to engage parents/carers at an early stage when arranging planning or review meetings in order to make it as convenient as possible for them to attend.

- 4.67 LA and health interviewees were more directly involved in engaging learners and parents/carers in decision making about statutory assessment and SEP. LAs for example, referred to providing parents/carers with contact details for advocacy groups in line with statutory requirements and some mentioned the LA employed home-school liaison officers to engage with parents/carers. Most health interviewees mentioned that placing the child at the heart of the decision-making process was an important part of their service.
- 4.68 Interviewees in educational settings described various tools used to facilitate the involvement of learners and parents/carers in decisions relating to statutory assessment and SEP. These included: PCP, 'what is working' and 'what is not working' review sheets, parent questionnaires, the Pupil Attitudes to Self and School (PASS) survey, the 'Achievement for All' model.
- 4.69 Most interviewees reported that it could be challenging to involve parents and carers in decision making processes and that this often depended on parents' understanding of processes, parents' own abilities (e.g. literacy levels) and experiences (e.g. possible adverse experiences of education) as well as their willingness to engage and participate. Interviewees in most educational settings and LAs referred to cases where parents required significant support and encouragement to engage, with many noting that they sought to empower parents/carers by referring them to parent advocacy groups. Some interviewees

noted that relying on written information could be a barrier to engagement for parents/carers who themselves had difficulty with reading.

- 4.70 Disagreement resolution processes were generally considered by interviewees to be robust and effective. Some interviewees reported that relatively few disagreements reached tribunal. However, some LA staff commented that they spend a good deal of time on tribunal cases, though the amount of time varied greatly on a case by case basis. In two LAs, a significant increase in tribunal cases was reported to have occurred in recent years and one LA interviewee noted that this took up 'a huge amount of time'.
- 4.71 Some interviewees (mainly health professionals) felt they were sometimes not involved in discussing the concerns of parents/carers at an early enough stage. As a consequence, these interviewees occasionally felt they were acting as mediators between education professionals and parents/carers. Health interviewees noted that managing differing and conflicting views of child and parent is an area of challenge. Managing conflict between the views of learners and parents/carers was also seen as a challenge by interviewees in educational settings and LAs. Some interviewees described processes they had established to empower learners to make decisions. In one school, for example, the SENCo noted they met with learners several times independently ahead of a review to gather their views.

### **Working with others**

- 4.72 Most interviewees believed that effective working relationships were in place between mainstream and special schools, PRUs and LA education departments. Interviewees tended to attribute this to formalised multi-agency working processes – for example regular meetings between LA staff and schools, SENCo cluster meetings and multi-agency panel meetings.
- 4.73 Although most interviewees felt there were good working relationships between education and health and social services professionals, most also referred to barriers that reduced the effectiveness of multi-agency working. These included: long waiting times for accessing health professionals, capacity issues in health and social services (particularly in CAMHS), different information management systems used by education and health. Some LA social services interviewees reported there

were occasional differences in their interpretation of learners' needs and that of LHB staff.

- 4.74 LAs tended to report that there were effective working relationships between education and social services, but schools were less likely to report there were effective working practices with social services. Some schools reported that it could be difficult to get social services staff to attend meetings, for example. Health interviewees reported challenges in coordinating SEP across different health services.
- 4.75 Interviewees described a variety of joint working practices they felt were effective between education and health. These included regular clinics or workshops delivered by LHB staff in education settings, LHB staff delivering pre-referral training to teachers and LA and LHB staff developing joint protocols for learner well-being.
- 4.76 Some interviewees, in both health and education, felt that a weakness of the current system was a focus on health professionals delivering interventions, rather than taking a more strategic role. Some felt that health professionals should be more focused on helping build capacity in education professionals through strategic engagement as well as training and planning CPD for education staff.
- 4.77 Interviewees in FEIs referred to a wide-range of external partners with whom they had developed effective working relationships. However, some tended to describe these partnerships as being with key individuals rather than more systematic formal processes such as forum meetings. Interviewees in FEIs also described variations in LA information sharing processes, noting that some LAs shared information on learners with SEN in a systematic way (e.g. annual downloads of SEN data for learners) while, in other LAs, FEIs had to request details for learners from schools, which was described as being more time consuming.
- 4.78 In the post-16 sector, some interviewees referred to 'grey areas' (e.g. support for mental health of learners with ALN) where there were sometimes disagreements between FEIs and health and social care agencies about who should be responsible for delivering and funding support. Some interviewees felt that there were fewer established forums between FE and health for discussing and coming to agreement on these issues. This meant that resolving issues sometimes depended on relationships between key individuals and ad hoc discussions.

4.79 All interviewees referred to transition points as key phases where multi-agency working was most effective (see transition section below).

## **Transition**

- 4.80 Transition processes were generally considered to be effective by interviewees. However, interviewees across all four case study areas reported that the effectiveness of transition processes varied at different stages and between different services. In general, transition arrangements were considered to be more effective and systematic between primary and secondary schools than in the early years and post-16 sectors (although examples of effective practice were described in these sectors as well).
- 4.81 Interviewees reported variations in the effectiveness of transitions from early years to the Foundation Phase. In some LAs, transitions at this stage were reported to be very effective, supported by good working relationships and referral processes between health visitors (both generic and Flying Start), community paediatricians, health specialists (e.g. SLTs), early years settings, LA portage services<sup>77</sup> and LA officers. One LA had an early years multi-agency moderation panel which was considered very effective in facilitating transition (as well as early identification and referral). In other LAs, however, interviewees described transition processes in the early years as areas for development, noting that there were fewer systematic processes for ensuring effective transition.
- 4.82 A variety of practices were considered to facilitate effective transition in different sectors. These included: LA multi-agency transition panels, enhanced pre-transition learner visits to settings, close liaison between professionals across settings, clear systems for information exchange, meetings with parents/carers and the use of taster days and sessions. Some special schools and FEI interviewees felt that co-planning and co-delivery of sessions or courses with mainstream schools were effective in preparing some learners for transition (e.g. Year 9 and 10 learners considered likely to transition to FE) as well as improving cross-sector working.

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<sup>77</sup> Portage is a home-visiting educational service for pre-school children with SEN and their families.

## Welsh language

- 4.83 All interviewees reported that their services asked learners and parents/carers about their preferred language of communication and noted they were able to provide written services through the medium of Welsh. However, in each case study area, most interviewees reported that services were not always able to provide face-to-face or telephone services in Welsh. Some LAs had mapped the supply and demand of services through the medium of Welsh in an effort to identify gaps.
- 4.84 Although all interviewees noted that their services sought to offer all services bilingually, most acknowledged that some services were not always available in Welsh. The main barriers to the availability of services in Welsh were capacity and skills shortages. There were general shortages of staff and recruitment challenges in some sectors and roles which were more acutely felt in Welsh-medium settings.
- 4.85 Welsh-medium and bilingual schools noted they could carry out school-based assessments bilingually but interviewees working through the medium of Welsh in all settings and sectors reported there were a shortage of assessment tools that were Welsh-language specific. Several interviewees reported that Welsh-language tools that were available were often outdated compared with the range of tools available through the medium of English.
- 4.86 Some LAs reported they were able to carry out statutory assessments in Welsh, but others reported that there was no demand for Welsh-medium assessment. This tended to reflect the linguistic profile of the case study area (i.e. higher demand in areas where more people spoke Welsh and vice versa) as well as the availability of Welsh-medium education in those areas.
- 4.87 Availability of SEP and review processes through the medium of Welsh varied according to sector and setting. Welsh-medium school-based provision and review was reported to be widely available in Welsh-medium and bilingual settings. However, schools, FEIs and LAs reported a general shortage of TAs which led to challenges in recruitment for educational settings.
- 4.88 Schools, LAs and LHBs reported there were often capacity issues in terms of specialist staff who could offer services in Welsh. In at least one of the case study areas, a lack or shortage of Welsh-language capacity was mentioned in the following services: speech and language therapy, educational psychology,

occupational therapy, child and adolescent mental health service, community nursing. It was reported that this limited the capacity of LAs and LHBs to offer all services through the medium of Welsh. Recruitment and retention of staff with Welsh language skills were again highlighted as a challenge. Low demand for some Welsh-medium SEP was also reported by LA and LHB interviewees who indicated that this could lead to a lack of critical mass for some services (e.g. Welsh-medium SLT classes). It should be noted that the Act requires LAs to keep ALP under review, including the sufficiency of ALP in Welsh. The Act also notes that Welsh Ministers must arrange reviews of the sufficiency of ALP in Welsh every five years and for reports on the outcome of the reviews to be produced and published. Furthermore, the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 establishes a legal framework to impose a duty on some organisations – including LAs, FEIs and LHBs - to comply with standards of conduct on the Welsh Language.<sup>78</sup>

4.89 Demand and supply of Welsh-medium FE SEP varied significantly across the case study areas depending on the linguistic profile of the area. In one area, interviewees noted they were able to offer Welsh-medium SEP to learners where this was their preferred language. In another area, the FEI and schools reported that FEIs were able to offer Welsh-language staff during transition and some Welsh-medium SEP. However, in two areas the FEI reported low demand for Welsh-medium SEP and limited capacity to support learners through the medium of Welsh.

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<sup>78</sup> Regulations setting out the Welsh language standards that apply to LAs and FEIs are available on the [Welsh Language Commissioner's website](#). See: (Accessed 15th October 2018). Draft regulations including [Welsh Language standards for the health sector](#) were laid in February 2018. (Accessed 15th October 2018).

## 5. Synthesis and discussion of findings

- 5.1 This section includes a synthesis of the findings from the survey and case studies along with analysis of the LA data requests. Some general comments on the research approach and overarching themes which emerged during the study are also presented below.

### Some comments on the research approach

- 5.2 The research engaged with a complex topic in a comprehensive way that included a wide range of views from professionals working in education, health and social services, in FEIs, early years, PRU and EOTAS provision, and in independent specialist colleges. The research involved gathering professional views about current arrangements in relation to SEN/LDD and therefore concerned engaging people in reflection on their own practices, but also on the practices of others with whom they work or other aspects of the SEN system.
- 5.3 It is notable that the research did not seek to include the views of learners themselves and their parents and carers. The voice of learners and their families has been captured by other research (e.g. the Children, Young People and Education Committee's surveys of children, young people and families undertaken as part of their inquiry into the general principles of the Bill in 2017) and it was felt to be important that the focus of this research was on professional views and experiences in relation to SEN/LDD, as they are implementing the reforms set out in the Act.<sup>79</sup> However, findings need to be read with an awareness that this is the professional and practitioner view of SEN/LDD and not the learner, parent or carer view.

### The research captures a transitional phase in relation to the SEN system in Wales

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<sup>79</sup> The results of the survey for young people is available here: [Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal \(Wales\) Bill: summary of survey responses from children & young people](#) (Accessed 20<sup>th</sup> August 2018).

[Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal \(Wales\) Bill: summary of survey responses from parents & carers](#) (Accessed 20<sup>th</sup> August 2018).

Information on the involvement of parents/carers and children in the development of the draft Bill is mentioned in the [ALN Transformation Programme Frequently Asked Questions](#)

- 5.4 Though the objective of the research was to establish a baseline of the SEN system in Wales, it is apparent from the findings that modification of processes and practices, for example in relation to planning and review for learners with SEN, had already begun at the time of the collection of data. Although respondents were aware that the Act is not yet a statutory requirement, many reported that changes to systems had been made in preparation for its implementation. Respondents reported recent changes to systems, notably the system of planning and review which now involves the use of PCP-based processes. In many educational settings, these were seen as a means of implementing the provision in the Act relating to the views, feelings and wishes of children, young people and parents/carers. Education services have delivered training in PCP widely, using WG funding for this purpose, and schools reported consistently on the use of these processes in their practice.
- 5.5 Connected to this, the involvement of learners and their parents and carers is another area of reported change, with more in-depth consultation being carried out with these groups in recent years in relation to SEP planning and review, particularly for learners with statements.
- 5.6 In some cases, terminology associated with the forthcoming ALN transformation is being used by schools and LAs, though it is less clear this signifies a real change in practice. This was most clearly the case for the use of the term IDP, which was used by many respondents. However, findings suggest the term was used as a substitute term for IEP in some cases and did not refer in any instance to the operation of the new system of IDPs proposed in the Act.<sup>80</sup> The new IDPs will have statutory rights including the right to appeal, although the full mandatory requirements are not yet published. ALNCo was another term that is being widely used, but again this was simply a substitution for the term SENCo and did not refer to change in terms of role and responsibilities.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> The mandatory IDP requirements, which will be set out in the new ALN Code for Wales, have not yet been published. This may vary from the IDP that was developed and piloted as part of a Welsh Government action research study (See Section 1.7).

<sup>81</sup> The Special Educational Needs Code of Practice for Wales (Welsh Government, 2004) notes that SENCos should have responsibility for: overseeing the day-to-day operation of the school's SEN policy; coordinating provision for pupils with SEN; liaising with and advising fellow teachers; managing the SEN team of teachers and learning support assistants; overseeing the records on all pupils with SEN; liaising with parents of pupils with SEN; contributing to the in-service training of staff; liaising with external agencies.

- 5.7 Schools are continuing to operate according to the guidance set out in the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice for Wales (Welsh Government, 2004) and this defines much of what was described by respondents in terms of the SEN system and their processes and practices.

### **Data collected from LAs**

- 5.8 Data was collected from LAs on the number of requests for statutory assessments and number of assessments undertaken. Analysis of the data request forms collected from LAs showed an increase in the total number of requests for statutory assessments in each year from 2,342 in 2014/15 to 2,689 in 2016/17 (See **Error! Reference source not found.**). The data showed that the number of statutory assessments taking place across Wales also increased between 2014/15 and 2016/17 although the number fell between 2015/16 and 2016/17. Furthermore, the percentage of requests that led to a statutory assessment was slightly lower in 2016/17 than it was in 2014/15 (See **Error! Reference source not found.**).
- 5.9 Data was also collected from LAs (**Error! Reference source not found.**) on the numbers of disagreements relating to statutory processes (436) over the last 12 months and other aspects of SEN processes (221) as well as the numbers of appeals relating to SEN (123) and the number of these reaching the tribunal phase (39). Fewer LAs were able to provide data on disagreements relating to other aspects of SEN processes, and comments from LAs suggested that this type of data is not routinely collected by them. This means that establishing an accurate baseline picture of this aspect of the current system is challenging, and this will need to be considered when conducting any follow-up research.

### **Time taken on different activities relating to SEN**

- 5.10 Data was also collected on the time taken to undertake various activities relating to SEN. In terms of time spent on assessment processes, analysis of the LA data requests (see **Error! Reference source not found.**) indicated that LAs estimated that they spent an average of around 22 hours on each statutory assessment, 6 hours 35 minutes preparing a statement (once a statutory assessment has determined that a learner needs one) and 5 hours and 42 minutes on a typical

annual review of a statement of SEN. Responses to the data request also showed that LAs on average estimated that LA staff spent 34 hours a week dealing with disagreements relating to SEN and 26 hours per week dealing with appeals relating to SEN. However, it should be noted that fewer LAs were able to provide estimates relating to the time spent dealing with disagreements (14 LAs) and appeals (12 LAs) compared with assessment processes (20).

- 5.11 Responses from mainstream schools showed that SENCOs estimated they spent around 8 hours on average contributing to the last statutory assessment they had been involved in, while it was 3.4 hours for those in special schools (See **Error! Reference source not found.**).<sup>82</sup> For their most recent statutory review, SENCOs in mainstream schools statements estimated spending around 5 hours preparing for and contributing to it while those in special schools estimated 2.4 hours.<sup>83</sup>
- 5.12 When asked to estimate the timeliness of SEP being put in place for the last statutory assessment they were involved in, SENCOs in mainstream schools estimated on average that 19-22 weeks passed between the initial identification of a complex need (a need requiring a statement) and the start of SEP.<sup>84</sup> Respondents from special schools estimated 26.4 weeks on average for the same question (See **Error! Reference source not found.**).

### Effectiveness of the SEN system in Wales

- 5.13 There was general agreement, particularly by those working within the education sector, that current processes and practices within the SEN system are effective. It was felt that some areas of support need addressing and some variation in quality exists. However, most participants from schools and colleges agreed that assessment and review processes and the delivery of SEP for learners who are supported through school action/plus and learners with FEI-based plans are effective, and that the situation for learners with a statement is similarly effective. Relatively few practitioners disagreed that various aspects of the current system were effective.

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<sup>82</sup> The figure for SENCOs in primary and middle schools was 8.4 hours and 7.9 in secondary schools.

<sup>83</sup> The figure for SENCOs in primary and middle schools was 5.2 hours and 4.5 in secondary schools.

<sup>84</sup> The figure for SENCOs in primary and middle schools was 22.3 weeks and 19.2 in secondary schools.

- 5.14 Most respondents to the survey and case study interviewees were of the view that assessment for school action/plus and for learners with statements are effective.<sup>85</sup> There was general agreement that these processes involve appropriate people, including learners, and help to avoid and resolve disagreements. Case study interviewees described statutory assessment as being robust, fair and comprehensive and most considered that the right people are involved.
- 5.15 Most school and college respondents agreed that review processes for learners who receive SEP through school action/plus, statements and FEI-based plans are effective (See Figures 29 and 30). The largest proportions of respondents in mainstream and special schools strongly agreed or agreed that this was the case for statutory review processes while the highest proportions of LA social services and LHB respondents agreed to an extent. For reviews of non-statutory plans, the largest proportion of respondents in mainstream schools and ISCs strongly agreed or agreed that processes were effective, while respondents in FEIs were more likely to agree to an extent this was the case. This was reflected in case study interviews, with school and FEI interviewees considering their review processes to be effective.
- 5.16 A similar story of effectiveness was provided in relation to the delivery of SEP. Survey findings show most participants to the study were of the view that statutory SEP is effective (See Figure 13). The largest proportion of respondents across special schools (73%), mainstream schools (50%) and LA education departments (45%) strongly agreed or agreed that SEP for learners with statutory plans is effective. In terms of specific aspects of SEP for learners who receive SEP through school action/plus and those with FEI-based plans (See Figure 14), the largest proportion of respondents from ISCs (71%), FEIs (53%), and mainstream schools (45% in relation to SEP for learners supported through school action/plus and 43% in relation to SEP for learners supported through early years action/plus ) strongly agreed or agreed that SEP for learners with non-statutory plans is effective. These findings were mirrored in schools and FEI case study interviews, with interviewees

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<sup>85</sup> Between 41% and 47% of respondents in different sectors agreed to an extent that statutory assessment processes are effective and between 19% and 34% strongly agreed or agreed this was the case (See Figure 1). Similarly, 43% of mainstream school respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the assessment processes for learners receiving support through school action/plus are effective (see Figure 2), with a further 40% agreeing to an extent. Aside from special schools (where most respondents also agreed assessment processes were effective when those selecting 'don't know' were excluded), respondents from FEIs and ISCs were the only ones in which fewer than half of respondents agreed that assessment processes were effective.

reporting that their processes for delivering SEP through school action/plus and FEI-based plans are effective in terms of targeted support, one-to-one and group work, specialist resource bases and special classes.

- 5.17 Working relationships across services were generally highlighted as a further area of effective practice, although there were variations in how strongly respondents felt effective relationships had been developed with different groups or organisations. Survey responses showed most respondents within all sectors strongly agreed or agreed that effective working relationships have been developed with schools, LA education departments and parents/carers. Respondents were more likely to agree to an extent that effective working relationships had been developed with FEIs, health services and LA social services departments and Careers Wales. Case study responses reinforce the survey findings and interviewees were also more likely to consider that working relationships were effective within their own sector than with other sectors.
- 5.18 Finally, most respondents considered transition processes to be effective for learners who receive SEP through school action/plus and statements. Higher proportions of respondents from schools than respondents from FEIs, LAs, LHBs agreed transition processes were effective. Respondents in each sector were more likely to agree there are effective transition processes in place within their setting/service compared to processes for transition into and out of their service/setting. Case study findings suggest transitions from primary to secondary schools are well developed and generally effective, although most interviewees in schools and LAs noted the effectiveness of transitions varies according to individual schools and SENCos. The effectiveness of transition from early years settings to schools varied by case study area, with some areas reporting they have established better links than others between early years providers, health visitors and schools. Transitions to FE were reported to be fairly good although FEI interviewees highlighted challenges in identifying SEN/LDD and noted there are variations in practices across LAs in terms of preparing for transition (e.g. how much information about learners is shared with them).
- 5.19 Against this backdrop of overall effectiveness of the SEN system in Wales, a number of areas were consistently reported as areas of challenge. One notable area of challenge related to the specified time-scale between identification of need

for statutory assessment and the assessment process being completed, which was seen as too long for many learners and was not currently meeting parental expectations. Respondents consistently pointed out that access to many health services is currently severely limited in most areas and the time taken for referrals can be overly long. The quality of SEP practice was thought by some to be a further area of challenge, with good practice reported in some settings, services and regions, but criticism of practices, systems and services also evident. Statements were seen as too broad and unclear in their objectives, not updated appropriately in many cases and insufficiently responsive to a learner's changing needs.

- 5.20 It is notable that FEIs/ISCs and LHBs also reported noted challenges in their interactions with LAs and schools, with fewer than half of respondents from FEIs/ISCs and LHBs agreed that effective working relationships are in place, and colleges noting difficulties with identification of SEN/LDD for learners who did not have a statement in school.
- 5.21 It will be apparent that the new Act seeks to address many of these areas of challenge, most specifically through the new arrangement of IDPs that introduces one system for all learners with ALN and requires plans to be maintained up to the age of 25 years. However, the research reported here highlights the fact that there was not complete agreement about the effectiveness of the SEN system as it currently exists, and this is also discussed below.
- 5.22 In addition to the above, a number of strengths and challenges were identified in relation to the delivery of SEP through the medium of Welsh as well as organisations' capacity to provide support in Welsh.

### *Welsh language*

- 5.23 Most schools and LA education departments agree that assessment arrangements are available through the medium of Welsh for learners supported through school action/plus and those with statements. Perhaps unsurprisingly, respondents from Welsh-medium mainstream schools were notably more likely than those from English-medium mainstream schools to agree that assessment processes are available through the medium of Welsh where requested. However, interviews with practitioners working in Welsh-medium settings showed that they felt there to be a

lack of contemporary, age-appropriate Welsh-language SEN screening and assessment tools suggesting this is an area where improvement is required. Furthermore, significant proportions of survey respondents from LHBs and LA social services departments selected 'don't know' or 'neither agree nor disagree' when answering questions in relation to Welsh-medium assessment, possibly reflecting limited involvement or awareness of the issue.

- 5.24 In terms of general views on assessment processes, respondents from Welsh-medium mainstream schools were notably more likely than respondents from English-medium schools to agree that assessment processes for learners supported through early years action/plus are effective.
- 5.25 Survey respondents were more likely to agree than disagree that SEP is available through the medium of Welsh for learners with statements and those supported through school action/plus. Respondents from Welsh-medium mainstream schools were notably more likely than English-medium mainstream schools to agree that Welsh medium SEP is available where requested for learners with statements and those supported through school action/plus and early years action/plus. This is likely to reflect their greater levels of familiarity with the Welsh-medium SEP and support that is available generally (including for SEN). However, a notable proportion of respondents in special schools disagreed that Welsh medium SEP is available for learners with statements. This may be related to the case study findings, which indicated that that support was not always available through the medium of Welsh, mainly due to capacity issues in certain roles, particularly specialist staff. This suggests that further consideration of the Welsh language skills of practitioners working in the SEN system is needed, with potential implications for recruitment and training.<sup>86</sup> As with assessment, notable proportions of respondents selected 'don't know' in response to questions on Welsh-medium SEP, indicating their limited involvement in this aspect of the system. This may also reflect a lack of knowledge among practitioners about the Welsh language skills that exist in their workforce and the support that can be provided in Welsh if it is requested.
- 5.26 In terms of general views on SEP, respondents from Welsh-medium mainstream schools were notably more likely to agree that that SEP is delivered in the most

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<sup>86</sup> Welsh Government recently published information on workforce skills in [Local authority special educational needs specialist services workforce data: an analysis](#) (Accessed 3rd October 2018)

appropriate setting. However, respondents from English-medium mainstream schools were notably more likely to agree that: SEP is delivered in a timely way; SEP is delivered in the most appropriate setting; that the current system enables a flexible approach to the delivery of SEP; and that SEP enables learners supported through school action/plus to achieve their full potential.

- 5.27 Survey respondents were more likely to agree than disagree that review processes were available through the medium of Welsh for learners supported through school action/plus or those with statements. However, similarly to questions on assessment and SEP, a high proportion of respondents in some sectors selected 'don't know' or 'neither agree nor disagree'. Similarly to assessment and SEP, respondents from Welsh-medium mainstream schools were notably more likely than those from English-medium mainstream schools to agree that Welsh-medium reviews are available where requested. Case study findings suggested that reviews were conducted through the medium of Welsh where this was requested, although interviewees also noted that the ability to provide input in Welsh depended on the linguistic skills of staff.
- 5.28 In terms of general views on review processes, respondents from Welsh-medium mainstream schools were notably more likely than those from English-medium mainstream schools to agree that: review processes for learners supported through school action/plus are effective; review processes use PCP effectively for learners supported through school action/plus and early years action/plus.
- 5.29 In terms of working with others, Welsh-medium mainstream schools were notably more likely than English-medium mainstream schools to agree that there is clarity of responsibilities within the current system for learners supported through early years action/plus. They were also notably more likely to agree that they receive the information they need for learners supported through early years action/plus.
- 5.30 Welsh-medium mainstream schools were notably more likely than English-medium mainstream schools to agree that: young people are supported to understand decisions and participate in decisions that affect them; and that young people are offered the opportunity to raise concerns. Case study interviewees in Welsh-medium schools also had positive views on clarity of responsibilities, although these were not notably different to the views of interviewees in English-medium schools.

- 5.31 The differences highlighted above between findings from practitioners in Welsh and English-medium settings may merit further investigation in any follow-up research with learners, parents/carers and practitioners.

### **Divergent views on effectiveness of the SEN system in Wales**

- 5.32 The research indicates that divergent views on the effectiveness of SEN systems exist, particularly for those who are outside of the education service. The clearest evidence of the existence of divergent views on effectiveness of the SEN system can be seen in the survey responses from professionals working in LHBs. These rated effectiveness of a range of processes and practices consistently lower than professionals working in education. For example, a minority of respondents from LHBs agreed that review processes for learners who receive SEP through school action/plus are effective in terms of learner participation and avoiding disagreements. Some LHB case study interviewees noted they do not have the capacity to contribute to assessment for this group of learners, but some noted they are often not involved at an early enough stage. Only 9% LHB survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed SEP for learners supported through school action/plus was effective (13% if those selecting 'don't know' were excluded), again pointing to lack of capacity in terms of SEP, particularly health provision, but also to challenge in terms of timeliness, flexibility, enabling learners to achieve their potential, and the resolution of disagreements.
- 5.33 Participants from LHBs tended to have less confidence in statutory SEP and review practices compared to those from other sectors. A minority of LHB respondents agreed that statutory SEP is effective in terms of flexibility, availability through the medium of Welsh and the extent to which it helps avoid and resolve disagreements. Compared with schools, a lower percentage of respondents from LAs and LHBs agreed with a range of statements in relation to various aspects of statutory reviews, including the use of PCP, timeliness and the extent to which review arrangements help avoid and resolve disagreements. Health interviewees felt they should be more involved in LA provision panels and need to be included more in information sharing, particularly following reviews of SEP.
- 5.34 LHB case study interviews suggested capacity issues were the main factor influencing the views of health professionals on SEP delivered through school

action plus and statements, with lack of capacity in health services, particularly in CAMHS, seen as a real challenge in terms of assessment, review and delivery of SEP. However, case study evidence indicates that health professionals were also critical of practices within the education system. Teacher knowledge and understanding of SEN was raised as an area of challenge by some LHB respondents, particularly for learners supported through school action plus. Secondary schools were highlighted as especially challenged in this respect, with the focus on subject specialism seen as a barrier to teachers having a good understanding of child development and the different ways in which people learn.

- 5.35 These differences in views about SEN/LDD processes and practices may be partly attributable to the fact that terms used in the research seemed to have had slightly different meanings for professionals working in different areas. For example, when asked about the involvement of children and young people in decision making, many health respondents described their own practice as child-centred because they meet with children and young people, often in clinic appointments or in the home setting, and set treatment goals with them.
- 5.36 A similar issue appears to exist for the term 'disagreement' in relation to SEN. Findings appear to be contradictory in this area, with some survey and case study respondents, for example, some LA officers and LHB professionals, noting that the SEN system is not helpful in avoiding or resolving disagreements. This contrasts with a consistent message from schools and colleges that they have few disagreements in relation to SEN. Perhaps this difference of view reflects different interpretations of the term based on different contexts. A head teacher's perspective on disagreements related to SEN is set against the background of a larger school population of learners who do not have SEN and may be seen as something that can be resolved quickly through easily arranged meetings with key people. This is what most respondents in schools and colleges reported and contrasts with an LA officer's experience of disagreement, especially one who has responsibility for disagreement resolution and sees this as a significant and difficult aspect of their role, or an LHB professional who is consulted only once a disagreement has escalated. A further case in point is the term 'review' which seems to mean both a straightforward review of an IEP for learners supported through school action/plus, but also a much more complex process of review involving a range of plans and

personnel for a large number of learners, for example, all the learners in a special school.

- 5.37 Divergent views on the effectiveness of the SEN system and different understandings of key issues and terminology has implications for joint working across services. Joint working is something that is prioritised in the programme of ALN transformation and findings from this research suggest more work needs to be done to explore and address tensions that exist currently at the boundaries of different professional practices. This could be as a way of facilitating more in-depth understanding about professions by professionals outside of a service and developing joint working practices in support of learners with SEN/LDD.

### **Different conceptualisations of good practice for SEN**

- 5.38 In a similar vein, it is apparent from the research that different conceptualisations exist about what constitutes good practice in relation to SEN/LDD. From information gathered through the case studies, clear differences emerge in terms of what professionals believed are the important features of practice for learners with SEN/LDD. For example, a number of respondents expressed their belief that small groups and more specialised settings are important, including in mainstream settings. Smaller groups were seen by some as a way of ensuring SEP is properly tailored to the needs of the individual learner and suitably flexible to their changing needs on a day to day basis. Associated with this view was the idea that establishing supportive learning relationships is key to best practice in SEN/LDD, with strong relationships seen as a way of reinforcing positive identities for learners and developing learning confidence. Specialised settings' interpretations of good practice were related to greater understanding of SEP and more acceptance of difference and diversity in learners. Smaller groups were seen as more manageable spaces for learners who find the experience of a mainstream classroom overwhelming, and more conducive to the development of strong relationships.
- 5.39 By contrast, other respondents described SEN practice as primarily concerned with fairness and equality of opportunity for learners. Responses associated with this view emphasised the importance of providing learners with SEN/LDD access to a broad and balanced curriculum, high quality teaching and the same opportunities as all learners. The effective operation of multi-level processes within schools were

seen as supporting good practice, including at the level of leadership and coordination of SEN, as well as at the classroom level within pedagogical interactions.

- 5.40 Still other conceptualisations of good practice in relation to SEN emphasised the importance of precision in identifying learner needs as a way of ensuring a suitable form of intervention is provided. This view seems aligned with the idea of discrete programmes of support for specific needs rather than a more holistic and relational approach to the needs of learners. Finally, the importance of working with parents and providing support for families and learning beyond the school was a further idea expressed by some about what constitutes good practice.
- 5.41 Evidence suggests that professionals across services associated effective delivery of SEP with the current system of statements, seeing this as more likely to ensure needs were appropriately met by a range of professionals. This view of good practice seems aligned with the idea that specialist knowledge is important in the area of SEN, though, again, views appear to differ on this point. Some respondents, mostly in mainstream schools, highlighted direct input from external professionals, most notably from health, as an essential factor for learner progress. It was mentioned in case study interviews that weekly input from health professionals, such as a speech and language therapist, was vital in terms of SEP delivered through school action plus and statements. Other respondents, including professionals from health and education, were critical of this type of direct approach to SEN and saw the role of external professionals more as one of support for the capacity of teachers to deliver SEP, for example, through the delivery of training and support for teacher planning. This view seemed aligned with the idea that SEP should not be seen in terms of discrete interventions and a medicalised approach to learning, but should involve adjustment of ordinary processes of teaching and learning and change in the culture of schools. The input of external professionals was seen as an advisory one according to this view, with some health professionals making this point in case study interviews along with professionals working in education.

## **Articulation of SEN as the responsibility of all teachers**

- 5.42 The existence of different ideas about good practice for SEN/LDD, particularly ideas that conceptualise SEP as dependent on specialist knowledge and practice, raises questions about SEN/LDD being the responsibility of all teachers. Current policy on SEN/LDD, guidance within the ALN transformation programme and documents relating to the new curriculum for Wales all promote inclusive practice and an expectation that SEN/ALN is something that concerns all practitioners working with learners in an educational setting. By contrast, in recruiting participants for this research, the team was often directed towards 'people who know', with the impression that SEN/LDD is fundamentally the business of some professionals more than others. A large number of specialist teaching facilities and special classes were operating within the school settings recruited for the case study interviews. Some of these provided specialised SEP for learners who met certain criteria, some were generic bases for learners with a range of needs and some were operating as a 'bottom set' within each year group of a school. These were seen as places where SEN practice mainly takes place, with few settings nominating teachers within mainstream classes as suitable interview candidates.
- 5.43 Related to this, the organisation and practices found in the special school within a region was held up by many mainstream professionals as an example of excellent practice. This was despite the fact that all the special schools involved in the case study interviews were operating a range of alternative curricula and some specialised practices that would be hard to implement within mainstream settings. Similarly, professionals within mainstream schools cited numerous ways in which they have developed practices within their setting and built the capacity of their staff to support SEN (e.g. by funding training), but many saw this more as a necessary step in the face of reduced input from external professionals, mainly from health services, rather than a managed move towards more inclusive and equitable practice.
- 5.44 Taken together, this aspect of research findings points to a continuing adherence by some professionals across services to what is sometimes termed a medical model of education for learners with SEN/LDD. The medical model views support for learning as the remediation of deficit skills that requires specialist knowledge rather than accommodation of difference and diversity and adjustment of what is ordinarily

available within classrooms. As one interview respondent noted, more perhaps needs to be done at this point in time to articulate SEN as the responsibility of all teachers and other educational practitioners. This aspect of the findings has implications for SEN/LDD practice as envisaged within ALN transformation and the implementation of the new Act and is discussed more fully in Section 6 of this report.

### **Directions for future research**

- 5.45 Findings point to a number of gaps in evidence in relation to some key issues that have been raised by the research. First amongst these is the existence of tensions at the boundaries of different professional practices. Resolving tensions will be important to the success of the ALN transformation programme and investigation of what underpins those that exist between practices in different service areas could be explored through methods such as focus groups. Information gathered from such research would support the development of training for professionals since it would highlight how different professional practices are viewed and what understandings operate in relation to key areas of SEN.
- 5.46 Further research might also usefully look at the issue of good practice for SEN, particularly in the area of mainstream education in Wales. This research has highlighted that different conceptualisations exist about what constitutes good practice, but more research is needed to identify which of these operate in schools and classrooms that most successfully support the development of learners with SEN/LDD. OECD (2014) evaluation of schools in Wales indicates that particular educational issues exist in Welsh classrooms, including the diversity of learners and greater need for differentiated teaching strategies. Research carried out in classrooms where practice in relation to SEN/LDD is recognised as excellent, for example, using observation and interviews with teachers and other practitioners, would help to clarify pedagogical actions that support good practice for this group of learners and support the development of teacher training.
- 5.47 There are also opportunities to undertake further research into the needs of the Welsh-medium education sector, for example understanding the supply and demand for Welsh language skills in roles relating to SEN as well as gathering the views of learners and parents/carers on the availability of SEP and support through

the medium of Welsh. The Act requires LAs to keep ALP under review, including the sufficiency of ALP in Welsh. The Act also notes that Welsh Ministers must arrange reviews of the sufficiency of ALP in Welsh every five years and for reports on the outcome of the reviews to be produced and published.

## **6. Conclusions and implications for practice**

This section outlines the study's conclusion and presents what the findings may suggest in terms of the potential implications for practice during the implementation of the Act.

### **Assessment**

- 6.1 The findings suggest that participants consider the statutory assessment process to be robust and fair, with the right people involved. However, participants in Welsh-medium settings felt there to be a lack of contemporary, age-appropriate Welsh-language SEN screening and assessment tools suggesting this is an area where improvement is required. However, practitioners also perceive there to be a conflict between the pressure to conduct assessments and put SEP in place quickly (both for school-based and statutory assessments) and the need to take a graduated response that enables progress to be monitored and decisions to be made based on sufficient evidence. The findings suggest that organisations are facing challenges in meeting parental expectations of how quickly assessment can be undertaken and support be put in place for their child once concerns have been raised. This underlines the importance of effective engagement with learners and parents/carers throughout assessment processes, including providing clarity to learners and parents/carers on the time it is expected that specific tasks will take.
- 6.2 Findings suggest that the type of evidence provided by schools for statutory assessment varies and that there is a lack of consistency in practice across LAs, with some providing more guidance to schools than others. This suggests there may be a need for LAs to provide more prescriptive guidance or training for schools on evidence gathering to inform decisions about whether learners have ALN under the new system.

### **SEP**

- 6.3 The findings from the research suggest that participants believe SEP is effective for learners supported through statements and non-statutory plans. Case study interviewees felt that the effectiveness of SEP was evidenced by attendance,

attainment scores, exclusion rates, parent satisfaction and learner well-being and confidence. However, while the findings suggest that the quality of SEP for learners supported through school action/plus is considered to be good, practitioners seem to perceive that there is less capacity available within external agencies (e.g. LA-provided services, health) to deliver support for these learners.

- 6.4 There were mixed views about the use of specialised groups in mainstream schools. Some interviewees were critical of their use, noting they reduce access to a broad curriculum and were not always taught at appropriate level while others believed that this ensured quality in terms of teaching and learning. This may have implications in terms of the development of policy and practice relating to inclusive education.
- 6.5 Findings suggest that there are mixed views on whether the input of specialist staff (e.g. LHB staff) should be more focused on direct delivery of interventions or more focused on providing guidance and training to non-specialist staff. There appears to be some tensions between a desire for more direct health practitioner involvement (especially from some school practitioners) and a view that LHB staff will have to adopt a more strategic role. The findings also suggest there are mixed views on the quality assurance processes in health for SEP. These issues may have implications when the role of the DECLO is introduced through the Act and how the responsibilities of different organisations are made clear under the new system.
- 6.6 The findings indicate that plans need to be sufficiently flexible to meet the broad range of needs of many learners and also be responsive to the changing needs of the developing child. For example, case study interviewees considered that 3-4 targets within IEPs are insufficient for learners who have more than one or two areas of need. However, while the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice for Wales (Welsh Government, 2004) notes that IEPs 'should be crisply written and may focus on three or four individual targets', it does not place a limit on the number of targets that can be included.

## **Review**

- 6.7 The findings suggest participants consider review processes to be generally effective. However, the findings also indicate that practitioners consider the review of statements to be repetitious and many feel this may be an area where the Act can positively influence practice.
- 6.8 Practitioners in LHBs felt they were not always informed early enough about review processes and that they did not always have capacity to participate in review meetings. There may be a need to consider what implications this may have for the development of multi-agency partnership arrangements under the new system.

## **Involvement of learners and parents/carers**

- 6.9 Findings suggest that practitioners consider planning processes to have become more person-centred in recent years although many participants highlighted that this could increase the time taken up by planning processes (e.g. in facilitating more structured conversations with parents/carers).
- 6.10 However, findings also suggest that while schools seek the involvement of parents in reviews of plans for learners supported through school action/plus, parental engagement remains fairly limited for those with non-statutory plans.
- 6.11 Findings suggest that learners, in particular, value being involved in planning and review processes and that this improves learner 'investment' in their education. However, there may be a need to explore ways of supporting learners and their families to engage in discussions about their learning.

## **Working with others**

- 6.12 The findings indicate there are opportunities to improve communication and information sharing between health practitioners and other sectors, as well as within health services. For example, LHB staff reported they do not always receive invitations – either from schools or paediatricians – to planning and review meetings as well as feedback and reports. The findings also suggest that some LHB staff feel they are not notified early enough about issues. There may be a need to consider

what implications this may have for the development of multi-agency partnership arrangements under the new system.

## **Transition**

- 6.13 Views on the effectiveness of transition from early year providers to schools varied considerably across the case study areas. This may suggest that more guidance is required on transition from the pre-school, childcare and nursery providers to schools.
- 6.14 Some interviewees in FEIs noted that they were only notified of learner needs in advance of enrolment if they had a statement, and that they sometimes only found out about the needs of learners who had been supported through school action or school action plus if they disclosed these needs during enrolment (or afterwards if learners do not disclose needs). Some FEIs indicated that information about learners' SEN was passed to them systematically by some LAs but not others. This suggests that there are opportunities for promoting more consistent practices in information sharing between LAs and FEIs.
- 6.15 Findings also suggest that FEIs and schools consider the role of Careers Wales to be important in supporting post-16 transition. Some participants described Careers Wales as an important mediator in transition for learners going into further education.

## **Welsh language**

- 6.16 Practitioners in Welsh-medium settings consistently mentioned a lack of contemporary, age-appropriate Welsh-language assessment tools. This suggests a need for Welsh Government to consider how this need could be met in future (e.g. through commissioning screening and assessment resources in the medium of Welsh).
- 6.17 The findings suggest that there is a lack of capacity to deliver SEP through the medium of Welsh in some areas. The Welsh Government has recently published

information on workforce skills (Welsh Government, 2018b)<sup>87</sup>. The findings from this research suggest there may be a need to consider the implications for Welsh language training and the recruitment of practitioners with Welsh language skills in the sector.

- 6.18 LAs also suggested there was a low level of demand for Welsh-medium SEP and support in some areas. The Act requires LAs to keep ALP under review, including the sufficiency of ALP in Welsh. The Act also notes that Welsh Ministers must arrange reviews of the sufficiency of ALP in Welsh every five years and for reports on the outcome of the reviews to be produced and published. LAs suggested they assessed the demand for Welsh-medium SEP, but Welsh Government may wish to consider how systematically this is done as part of reviewing LAs' Welsh in education strategic plans as well as specifically in relation to the above duties in the Act.

### **General implications for the implementation of the Act**

- 6.19 Findings show that schools and other organisations are preparing for implementing changes related to the Act. Many participants described the forthcoming changes as cultural, including promoting the importance of gaining different perspectives on learning (e.g. via PCP). However, the findings also suggest that schools consider some of these changes to be potentially onerous and that there are concerns among practitioners about the time implications of some aspects of the reforms.
- 6.20 The findings suggest that some schools believe they are already using IDPs even though there is not yet a national template. While there is evidence that some have started using IDP templates that have been piloted by LAs alongside current arrangements for SEN, some schools appear to be using the terminology IDP and IEP interchangeably and may not have a clear understanding of the forthcoming changes to plans. This may have implications for how Welsh Government communicates the development and introduction of IDP to the education sector.

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<sup>87</sup> Welsh Government recently published information on workforce skills in [Local authority special educational needs specialist services workforce data: an analysis](#) (Welsh Government, 2018b). (Accessed 3rd October 2018)

- 6.21 The explanatory memorandum (Welsh Government, 2018a) notes that ‘for most children with ALN who are looked after, the Act will require their IDP to be incorporated into the personal education plans (PEPs) made for these learners as part of their care and support plans (CSP).’ Findings from the case studies showed that some school interviewees were unclear whether review processes for PEPs and IDPs would remain separate or be merged in future. This may suggest that further clarity is required through the ALN Code and the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 Part 6 Code of Practice (Looked After and Accommodated Children) (Welsh Government, 2018c) in terms of ensuring organisations understand changes to processes.<sup>88</sup>
- 6.22 The findings suggest that a perceived lack of capacity in LHBs is considered to limit the extent to which health professionals are able to be involved in processes relating to SEN. This may have implications for how the role of health professionals in the new system is communicated to LHBs and other partners.
- 6.23 Findings suggest that some parents/carers and practitioners have mistaken beliefs that obtaining a statement of SEN ahead of the implementation of the Act will enable learners to ‘secure’ support they would otherwise not be able to obtain. This suggests that Welsh Government may wish to consider disseminating clear messages that explain this aspect of the reforms.

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<sup>88</sup> Welsh Government, 2018c. [Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014 Part 6 Code of Practice \(Looked After and Accommodated Children\). Version 2 – April 2018](#). (Accessed 8th November, 2018)

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## **Annex A: LA case studies**

See separate document.

## **Annex B. SEN baseline survey analysis**

See separate document.

## **Annex C. Analysis of LA data request responses**

See separate document.

**Annex D. SEN baseline survey questionnaire**

See separate document.

## **Annex E. SEN LA case study topic guides**

See separate document.

**Annex F. LA data request form**

See separate document.