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Evaluation of the additional learning needs (ALN) system: survey of parents and carers

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Evaluation of the additional learning needs (ALN) system: survey of parents and carers

Authors: Hefin Thomas, Brett Duggan, Sioned Lewis, Jennifer Lane, Sam McAlister-Wilson, Anest Williams (Arad Research)

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For further information please contact:

Schools Research Branch

Social Research and Information Division

Knowledge and Analytical Services

Welsh Government

Cathays Park

Cardiff

CF10 3NQ

Email: SchoolsResearch@gov.wales

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ALN

Additional Learning Needs

ALNCo(s)

Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinator(s)

ALP

Additional Learning Provision

EHE

Elective Home Education

EHC plan

Education, health and care (EHC) plan

EOTAS

Education Other Than At School

FEI

Further Education Institution

IDP

Individual Development Plan

IEP

Individual Education Plans

LSP

Learning and Skills Plan

PCP

Person-centred planning

PLASC

Pupil Level Annual School Census

PRU

Pupil Referral Unit

SEN

Special Educational Needs

1. Introduction and background

Evaluation of the additional learning needs (ALN) system

The ALN system supports children and young people aged 0 to 25 in Wales with additional learning needs. Welsh Government commissioned Arad Research to conduct a four-year formative evaluation of the implementation of the ALN system. Two reports have been published to date as part of the evaluation:

- Evaluation of the Additional Learning Needs system: scoping report (2023): presents findings from the first phase of the evaluation and the priorities for the remaining phases
- Evaluation of the ALN system: survey of practitioners and professionals (2025): a survey of practitioners and professionals in schools, pupil referral units (PRUs), further education institutions (FEIs), independent specialist post-16 institutions (ISPIs), local authorities and local health boards

About this report

This report presents findings from a survey of parents and carers about their experiences of the ALN system. The survey was open from March to April 2025.

To focus on parents' views, analysis of open-text questions that asked parents for additional information about their child are included in Annex A at the end of this report. This includes analysis of open-text questions relating to:

- how parents described their child's learning needs
- the type(s) of support provided to meet their child's needs
- the types of settings children had moved between, as reported by parents whose child had moved from one setting to another
- who provided their child's ALP

Respondents who answered that their child did not require extra support to learn were not presented with the main survey questions. However, these respondents were invited to comment on the ALN system and their child. Analysis of these open text comments can also be found in Annex A at the end of this report.

An accompanying technical report, which includes a comprehensive suite of tables setting out all quantitative survey findings, is also available.

Note on terminology

- For brevity, the term "parents" is used in this report to describe respondents with parental responsibility (i.e. both parents and carers).
- The term "children" is used to refer to those children about whom respondents (parents) completed the survey.

- The term “responses” rather than “respondents” is used when reporting the findings in charts and accompanying text. This is because some respondents answered on behalf of more than one child.

2. Methodology

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed by Arad Research with input from Welsh Government officials and stakeholders. The structure of the questionnaire was based on the theory of change (ToC) included in the evaluation scoping report (2023).

The survey included a mix of open-text and closed questions. The questions were cognitively tested with a small sample of parents and carers prior to survey launch.

Some survey questions were not shown to all respondents. For example, only parents who said their child had an Individual Development Plan (IDP) were asked questions relating to these plans. Parents of children who were electively home educated (EHE) were also asked different versions of some questions

Further information on the survey methodology is available in the accompanying technical report.

Survey distribution

A link to the survey was distributed via email to ALN co-ordinators (ALNCos) and schools who had agreed to distribute the survey to parents when responding to the survey of practitioners and professionals in 2024.

The survey was also publicised in:

- the Welsh Government’s Dysg newsletter
- the ALN bulletin
- education-focused social media channels
- stakeholder networks

Sample

The survey was designed to capture a broad range of parental experience both for children who require extra support to learn with an Individual Development Plan (IDP) and those without. There were 2062 responses to the survey profile questions (including responses from 101 parents who chose to answer for an additional child). Respondents were only asked the main survey questions if their child:

- was of compulsory school age (or above) and/or attending a maintained school setting
- and required extra support to learn (or probably needed this)

70% of responses (1441 out of 2049) said their child required extra support to learn. A further 9% said they were not sure but thought they probably did. These parents were asked the main survey questions. 19% of responses said their child did not require extra support to learn and a further 2% said they were not sure but thought they probably did not. These parents were not asked the main survey questions but were invited to comment on the ALN system and their child. The total number of responses to the main survey questions was therefore 1621 (including 93 responses from a parent answering for an additional child).

Charts and data in this report

Percentages shown reflect the proportion of responses to each question (which may include multiple responses from parents who answered for more than one child). The total number of responses is indicated for each question. This may vary because:

- not all parents responded to all questions
- some questions were presented only to specific sub-groups of respondents

Where questions were presented only to specific sub-groups of respondents, this is noted.

Limitations and notes on interpretation

Whilst the survey was promoted and distributed widely, the survey sample cannot be considered representative of the general population. Thus, caution should be exercised in seeking to generalise the findings beyond the study sample.

Written comments provided in response to the open-text survey questions often presented more critical or negative views. At times, analysis of this qualitative data may appear to be inconsistent with the quantitative data set out in charts and figures. However, it is important to note that only a proportion of respondents chose to provide written comments. Furthermore, respondents who provided more negative responses to the closed survey questions (for example, selecting ‘strongly disagree’ or ‘disagree’) were more likely to provide written comments than those who had responded positively to the closed survey questions.

Respondents who provided written responses to the open-text survey questions raised a wide range of themes. The sections of this report that summarise these written responses present the most frequently raised themes first. There are very few questions where a single theme was raised by a majority of respondents. It should be noted, therefore, that each of the themes summarised in corresponding sections was raised by a minority, or indeed by a relatively small minority, of respondents unless otherwise stated

Descriptors used for reporting on percentages of respondents

In presenting data based on quantitative analysis of the closed survey questions, the following descriptors have been used in this report:

- vast majority (more than 85%)
- a majority (70 to 84%)
- over half (55 to 69%)
- around half (46 to 54%)
- less than half (30 to 45%)
- a minority (15 to 29%)
- a small minority (below 15%)

3. Findings

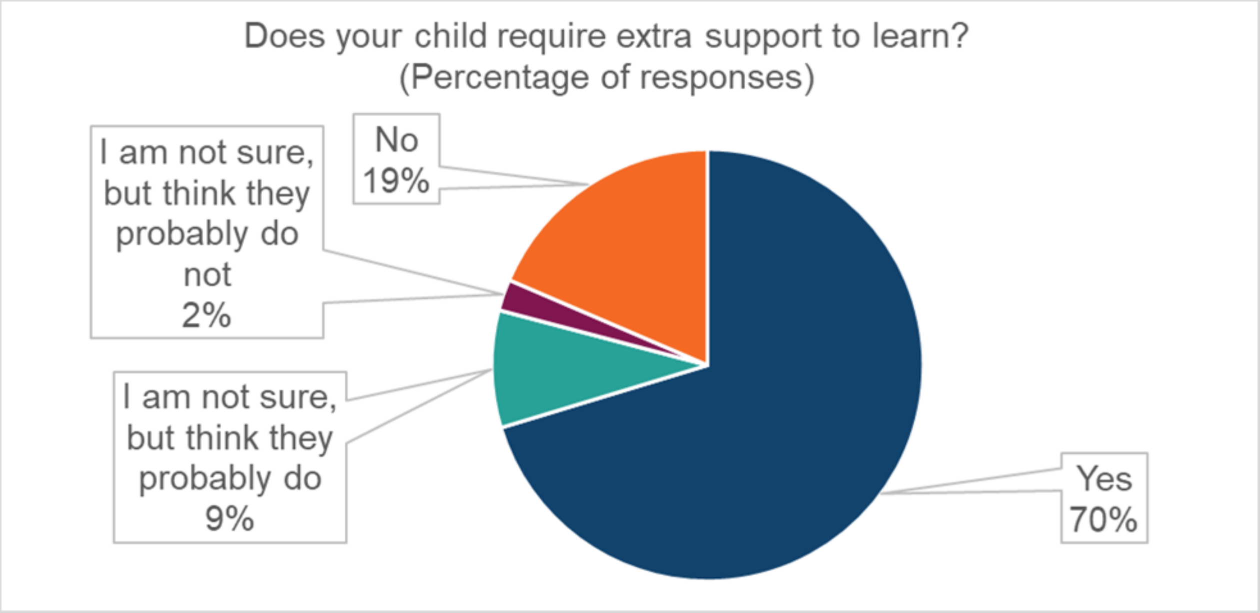
Extra support to learn

We asked parents the following question:

Does your child require extra support to learn? For example, your child might:

- find it harder to learn than other children of the same age
- have a disability that means that they can't use, or find it difficult to use, facilities for learning in the local nursery, school or college

Figure 1. Whether parents thought their child required extra support to learn



N = 2049

Figure 1 shows that 70% of responses (1441 out of 2049) said their child required extra support to learn. A further 9% said they were not sure but thought they probably did. These parents were asked the main survey questions about their views on the ALN system.

19% of responses said their child did not require extra support to learn and a further 2% said they were not sure but thought they probably did not. These parents were not asked the main survey questions but were invited to comment on the ALN system and their child. Only a relatively small number of responses (53) were received. Analysis of these open-text comments can be found in Annex A.

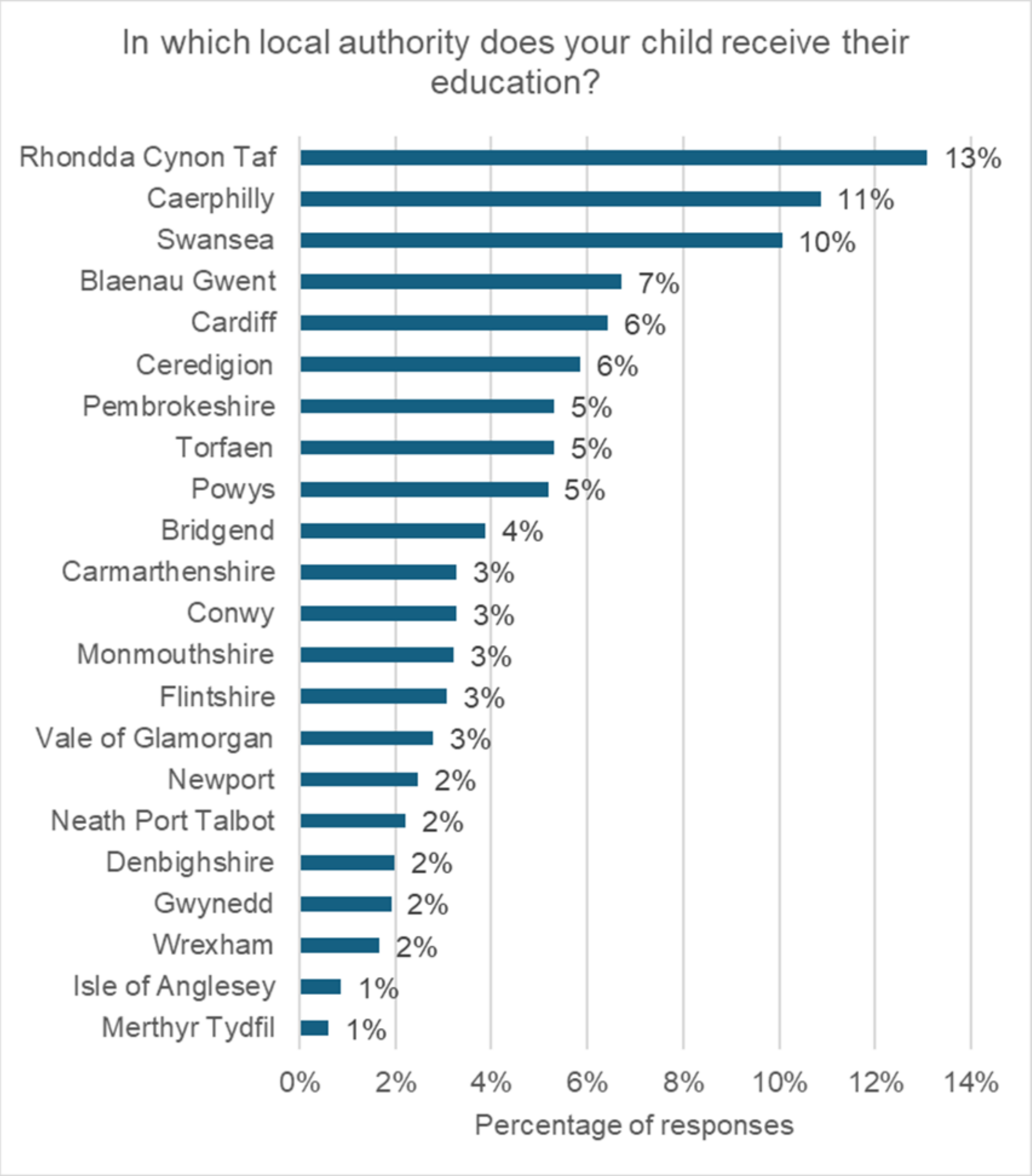
Profile of responses to main survey questions

This section outlines the profile of the 1621 responses to the main survey questions.

Local authority

We asked parents to select the Local authority in which their child received their education

Figure 2. Local authority in which children received their education



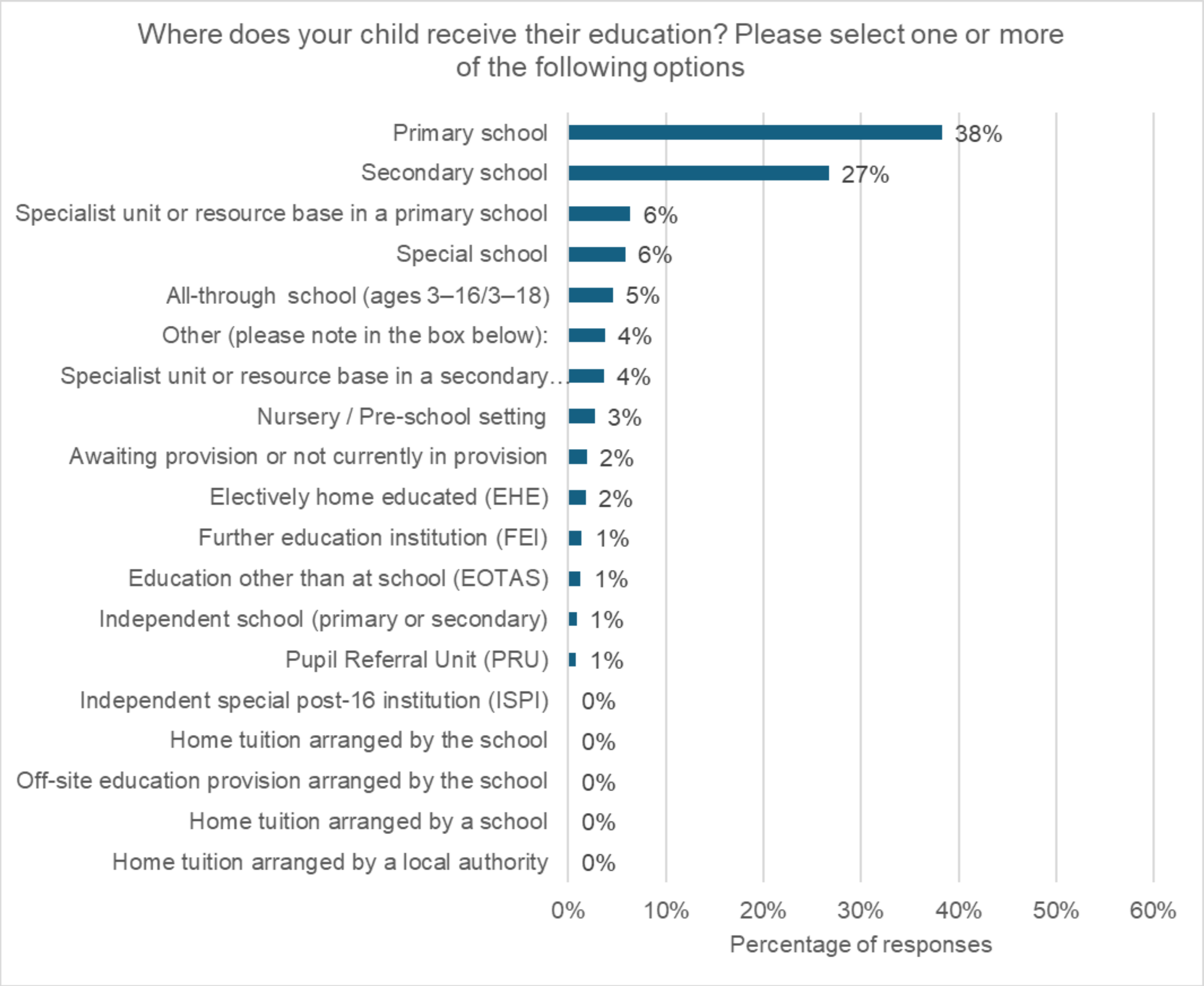
N = 1621 (includes more than one response for those who answered for an additional child).

Figure 2 shows that the largest proportion of children (13%) received their education in Rhondda Cynon Taf. The smallest proportion of children (1%) received their education in Merthyr Tydfil. All local authorities were represented.

Education setting

We asked parents where their child received their education.

Figure 3. Where children received their education



N = 1604. Note: parents may have ticked more than one answer option, and so responses may not total 100%.

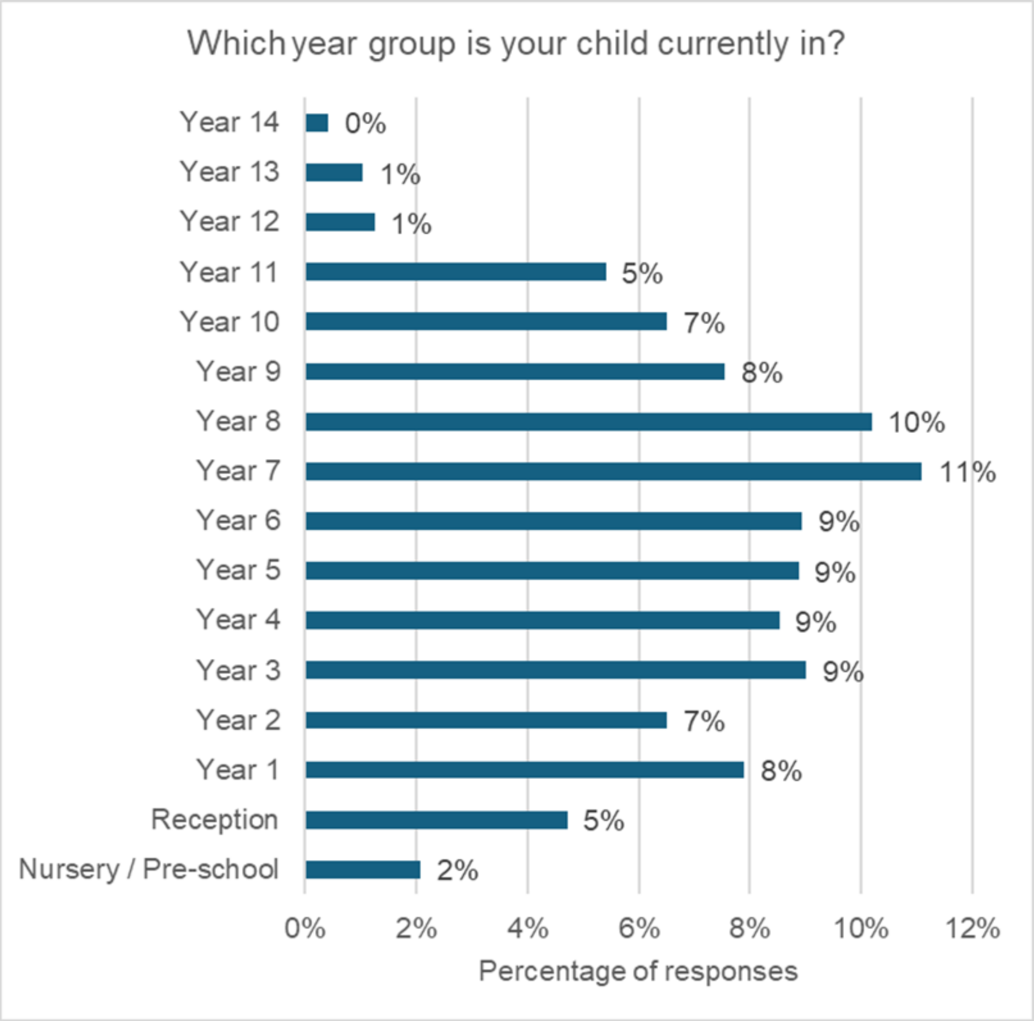
Figure 3 shows that the largest proportion of children (38%) about whom the respondents replied received their education in a primary school. A further 27% received their education in a secondary school. Only 1% of children received their education in each of the following settings:

- further education institution
- independent school
- pupil referral unit
- education other than at school

Year group

We asked parents which year group their child was currently in.

Figure 4. Year group of children



N = 1443

Figure 4 shows that more than half (57%) of children were in one of the primary year groups (i.e. Nursery / Pre-school – Year 6). A further 43% were in one of the secondary or post-compulsory education year groups (i.e. Years 7 to 14).

Previous support plans

From 2022 to 2025, children with special educational needs (SEN) were moved in stages from the SEN system to the ALN system. Under the ALN system, an IDP replaced existing support plans such as: Statements of SEN, Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for learners on School Action/School Action Plus and Learning and Skills Plans (LSPs) for post-16 learners.

We asked parents whether their child had received one of the previous SEN plans or an Education, health and care (EHC) plan from a school in England.

Table 1. Previous support plans received by children of respondents

Question: Has your child received any of the following support plans?	Yes, had this before	Yes, has this now	No	I don't know
SEN: Statement of Special Educational Need (SEN)	16%	10%	61%	13%
SEN: Individual Education Plan (IEP)	22%	28%	42%	9%
SEN: Learning and Skills Plan (LSP)	4%	5%	66%	25%
Education, health and care (EHC) plan — in schools in England	3%	2%	84%	11%

N=1333 to 1518

- 26% of responses said their child currently (or previously) had a SEN: Statement of Special Educational Needs
- 50% of responses said their child currently (or previously) had a SEN: Individual Education Plan (IEP)
- 9% of responses said their child currently (or previously) had a SEN: Learning and Skills Plan (LSP),
- 5% of responses said their child currently (or previously) had an Education, health and care (EHC) plan

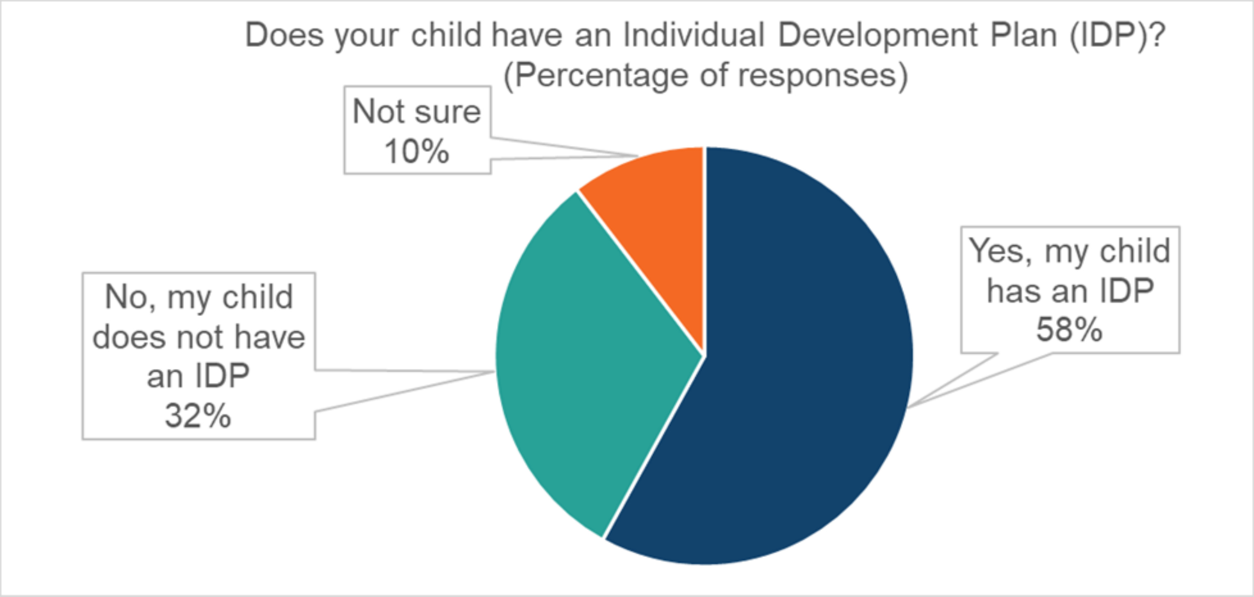
Individual Development Plans (IDP)

From 2022 to 2025, children with special educational needs (SEN) were moved in stages from the SEN system to the ALN system. Under the ALN system, an IDP replaced previous support plans such as: Statements of SEN, Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for learners on School Action/School Action Plus and Learning and Skills Plans (LSPs) for post-16 learners.

Whether child had an IDP

We asked parents whether their child had an IDP.

Figure 5. Whether parents' children had an Individual Development Plan (IDP).



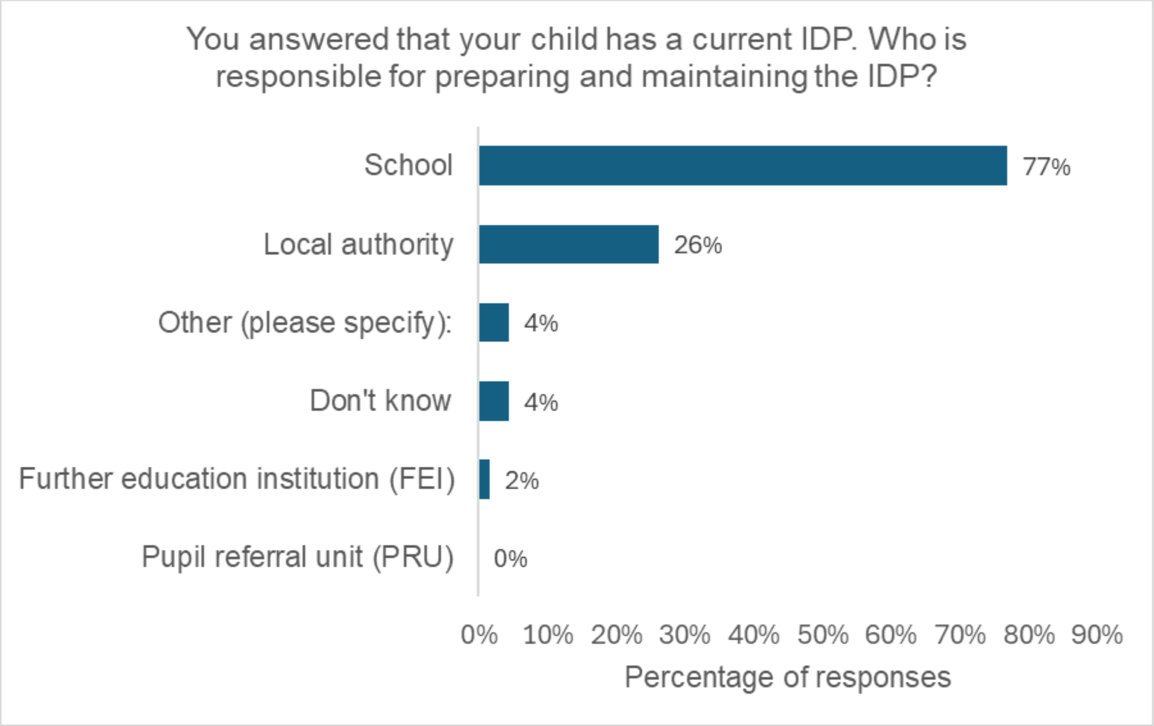
N = 1621

Figure 5 shows that 58% of responses said their child had an IDP, a further 32% said they did not and the remaining 10% were not sure.

Who maintains the IDP

We also asked parents, who said their child had an IDP, who was responsible for preparing and maintaining their child's IDP.

Figure 6. Who was responsible for preparing and maintaining child's IDP



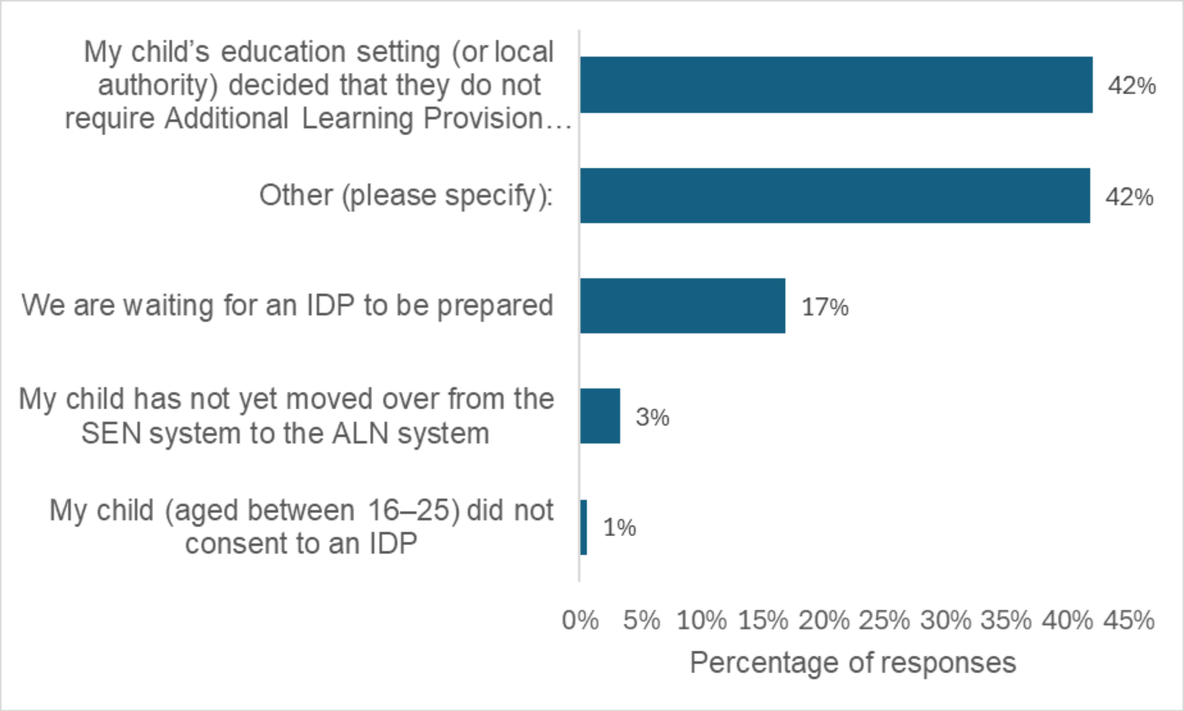
N = 937. Note: parents may have ticked more than one answer option, and so responses may not total 100%.

Figure 6 shows that of those responses who said their child had an IDP (therefore not including parents who said their child did not have an IDP or were not sure), the largest proportion, 77%, said the school was responsible for preparing and maintaining their child's IDP.

No IDP

Parents who said their child did not have an IDP were asked to select from a list of options the reason(s) why their child did not have an IDP.

Figure 7. Reasons why child does not have an IDP



N=480. Note: parents may have ticked more than one answer option, and so responses may not total 100%.

Figure 7 shows that parents were most likely to say that their child did not have an IDP because their child's education setting (or LA) decided that they do not require ALP. A similar percentage selected 'other' in response to this question.

No IDP – open-text comments in response to Other (please specify)

Parents who selected the response option 'other (please specify)' had the option to specify why their child did not have an IDP via an open-text comment box. 178 respondents chose to do so. These were frequently one-line responses that did not specify reasons in detail. A summary of the most frequently raised themes is provided below:

IDP linked to diagnosis or assessment

Parents frequently commented that their child had not yet been diagnosed, indicating their perception or suggesting their perception that a diagnosis was required in order for their child to have a plan. These parents noted that they were awaiting assessments, often expressing frustration at the process.

Awaiting IDP

Other parents explained that they had requested an IDP or had gone through processes and were waiting for a decision from the school or the local authority. In some cases, parents noted that they were at an early stage in the process, having had an initial meeting with the school or were awaiting further information. In other cases, parents explained that they had appealed decisions not to provide an IDP and were awaiting the outcomes of appeals.

IDP refused

There were comments from some parents explaining that they had requested an IDP but that they had been told that their child did not require a plan. Some of these parents explained that they had been told that their child's needs did not require ALP and that their needs could be met through universal provision.

No discussion about an IDP

In some cases, parents noted that they had not been involved in discussions about an IDP, or that the question of an IDP had never been mentioned by the school.

No IDP – open-text comments in response to *If you wish, please provide additional information*

All respondents to the closed question on the reasons why their child did not have an IDP also had the option to provide additional information via an open-text comment box; 180 respondents chose to do so. A summary of the responses provided is outlined below:

IDP not required

A number of parents highlighted how they had requested an IDP for their child but that their child's school determined an IDP was not needed. Some parents reported that their child's school had turned down their requests for an IDP, noting a variety of reasons which included:

- the school determining that the child did not have ALN
- the school accepting that the child had ALN but deciding that their needs could be met through 'universal provision' rather than ALP
- the child not being sufficiently 'behind' academically to warrant ALP
- the child not having a diagnosed health condition (see section below)

In some instances, parents disagreed with their child's school's decision to not provide an IDP and spoke of asking for an IDP on multiple occasions because of ongoing concerns that their child's needs were not being met. A number of parents noted that schools used One Page Profiles (OPP) when IDPs were not provided, expressing their dissatisfaction with this.

A small number of parents reported they had removed their child from school (for example, moving to another school or being home-schooled) because they felt their child's needs were not being met as a result of not having an IDP in place.

Support without an IDP

Some parents of learners without an IDP also reflected on the support provided by schools to their children, expressing mixed views in their responses regarding this. In some cases, parents reported that their child was not provided with additional support at school, citing that their educational needs were expected to be met under 'universal provision'. However, these parents felt this was insufficient and was negatively affecting their child's educational progress and outcomes.

Other parents spoke of being satisfied with the support which their child was receiving through universal provision, noting that they felt the support was sufficient and was benefitting their child. Some of these parents spoke of good communication with their child's school and being able to discuss ongoing needs when necessary.

IDP linked to diagnosis or assessment

Echoing comments noted above, it was a common view amongst parents who provided additional comments that having a diagnosed health condition was necessary for their child to be provided with an IDP. A number of parents noted they were awaiting health assessments and that this was the reason their child had not yet been given an IDP.

Some parents did note that their child had a diagnosed health condition but that this did not appear to affect the school's decision on whether an IDP was also needed, with parents reflecting that the needs of their child were instead being met under 'universal provision'. However, a number of parents of children with a diagnosed health condition who did not have an IDP also expressed a lack of clarity regarding why this was the case, given their child was diagnosed.

Parent voice

Some parents described being an advocate for their child and expressed frustration that their voices were not being heard by education providers. These parents spoke of struggles they had experienced in order to engage schools in discussions regarding their child's needs and reported lengthy delays in communication and a lack of clarity over the process for identifying ALN and securing support.

Views on the support provided (by one school/setting)

We asked parents who said their child received their education in one school / educational setting to what extent they agreed or disagreed that the support provided was meeting their child's needs.

Figure 8. Extent to which the support provided by one school/setting was meeting child's needs (broken down by whether child had an IDP or not)

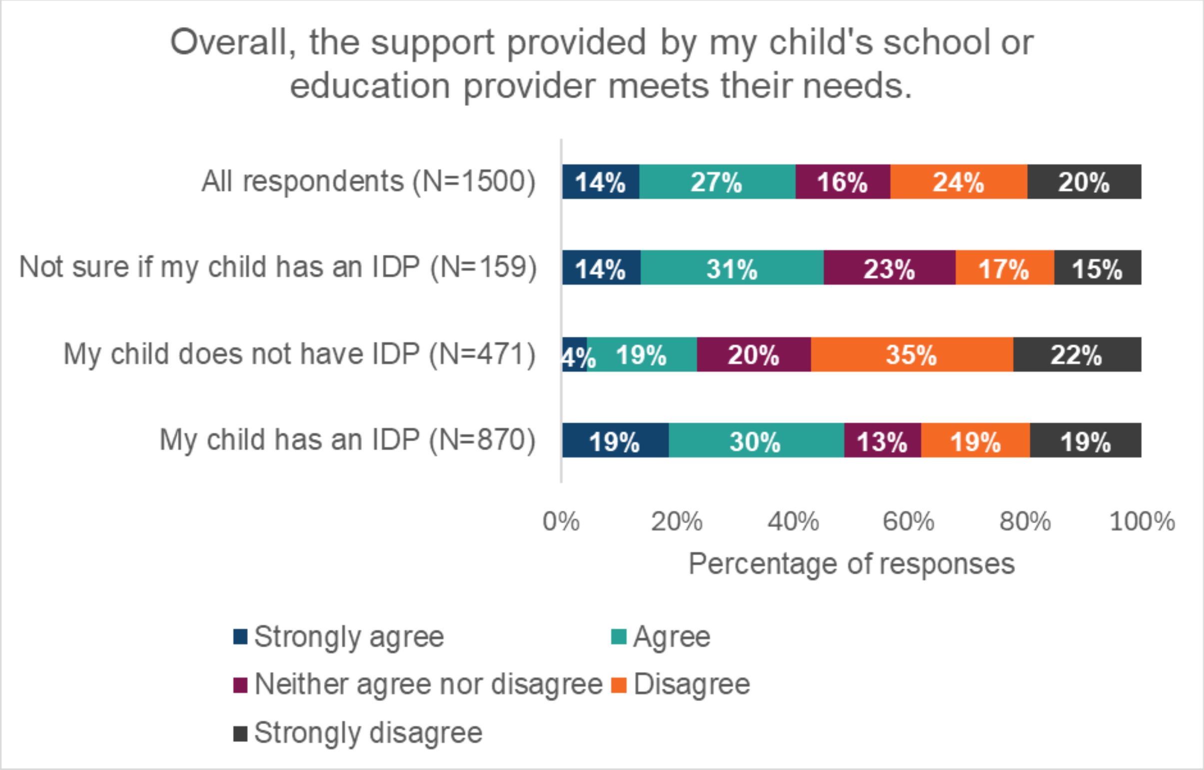


Figure 8 shows that:

- less than half (41%) said that they “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the support provided by their child’s school or education provider was meeting their needs; a similar number (44%) “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” with this
- parents who said their child had an IDP were more likely to agree that the support provided was meeting their child’s needs (19% “strongly agreed” and a further 30% “agreed”) compared with those who said their child does not have an IDP (4% “strongly agreed” and a further 19% “agreed”)
- over half of responses (57%), where the child was said not to have an IDP, either “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” that the support provided was meeting their child’s needs

Views on the support provided (by one school/setting) – open-text comments

Parents were invited to provide additional information, if they wished, in relation to this question, via an open-text comment box. This section presents the themes raised most frequently across the 705 responses received. A wide range of themes were raised in response to this question, and no single theme was raised by a majority of respondents. It should be noted, therefore, that each of the themes summarised below was raised by a minority or a small minority of the 705 responses to this question.

Those who had disagreed or strongly disagreed that the support provided was meeting their child's needs were more likely to have provided a written response than who had agreed or strongly agreed with this. This is reflected in the themes set out below.

Lack of provision, capacity and resources

Parents frequently reported that there was a lack of provision, capacity (e.g. workforce) and/or resources (e.g. funding) to enable their child’s needs to be met. These parents referred to a variety of examples related to these issues such as:

- an insufficient number of learning support workers
- class sizes being too large for their child
- a lack of funding for additional support or provision, for example, speech and language therapy

Unsuitable or insufficient provision and support

A number of parents reported that the support or provision their child was receiving was not suitable or was insufficient to meet their child’s needs. Examples included some parents who:

- felt that their child’s mainstream education environment wasn’t suitable for them, and felt they needed alternative provision
- had been told their child did not have ALN and were unsatisfied with this decision and the provision their child was receiving
- reported that the ALP described in their child’s IDP was not being delivered
- reported that there was an insufficient level of support for their child (e.g. one-to-one support)
- noted that classroom materials were unsuitable for their child, for example, digital resources

Concerns relating to their child’s school or local authority

Some parents raised concerns relating to their child’s school and/or their local authority. Examples included concerns about:

- a lack of awareness and/or understanding about ALN and a need for more training on specific types of ALN
- inconsistency in levels of awareness and understanding of ALN and of individual learners' ALN needs within schools, for example, some teachers being less aware of a child's ALN than others
- a lack of communication from their child's school or local authority
- reviews of IDPs not taking place in a timely way
- having to work hard to advocate for their child and feeling they were not always listened to
- their child's needs not being met, including concerns about their wellbeing
- their child's school not being inclusive enough
- limited support for learners in secondary schools compared with the support provided in primary schools, with parents describing challenges including reduced provision or support and inconsistent staff understanding across larger schools

Parents who disagreed that the support provided by their child's school or education provider met their needs mentioned points relating to this theme more frequently than those who agreed.

Positive views on ALNCos and other school staff

Some parents reported positive experiences of their engagement with their child's ALNCo and other staff at their school. These parents had positive views on a range of provision and support that had been put in place in their child's school, providing examples such as small group provision, nurture groups and support provided in a learning resource base or specialist teaching facility. A number of parents felt that the ALNCo and other staff at their child's school were working effectively, sometimes with a lack of resources and capacity available to them, to meet their child's needs. These parents praised the efforts of ALNCos and other staff at their child's school in:

- recognising their child's ALN
- supporting their child to cope with the learning environment at school
- supporting them as parents to understand their child's needs
- providing or overseeing one-to-one support
- making reasonable adjustments to provision

Parents who agreed that their child's needs were being met in their education mentioned points relating to this theme more frequently than those who disagreed.

Identification of ALN

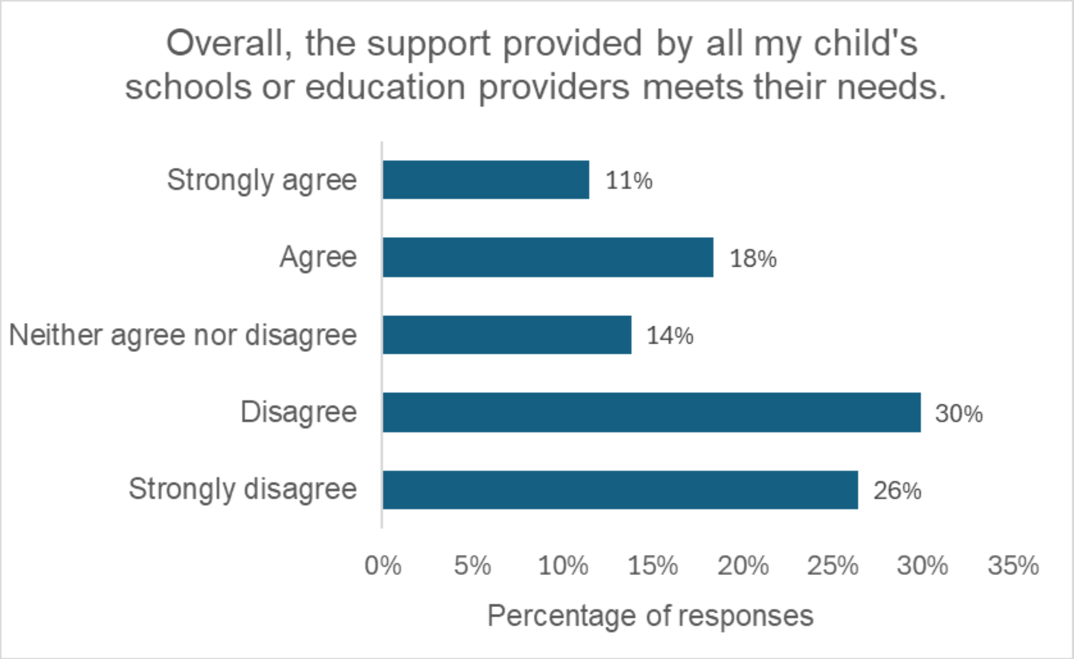
Some parents raised concerns about the process of identifying their child’s ALN. This included parents who:

- disagreed with decisions by their child’s school and/or local authority that their child did not have ALN
- felt that the process of identifying their child’s needs had taken (or was taking) too long

Views on the support provided (across multiple settings)

We asked parents who said their child received their education in more than one school / educational setting (including parents of children with and without IDPs) to what extent they agreed or disagreed that the support provided by all their child's education providers was meeting their needs.

Figure 9. Extent to which the support provided by all settings meets their child's needs



N=87

Figure 9 shows that:

- of the 87 responses that said their child received their education in more than one school / educational setting, 49 out of 87 responses (56%) "disagreed" or "strongly disagreed" that the support provided by all their child's schools or education providers was meeting their needs.
- a smaller number of responses (26 out of 87, 30%) "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with this statement.

Views on the support provided (across multiple settings) – open-text comments

Parents were invited to provide additional information, if they wished, in relation to this question, via an open-text comment box. There were a limited number of responses (18) to this question.

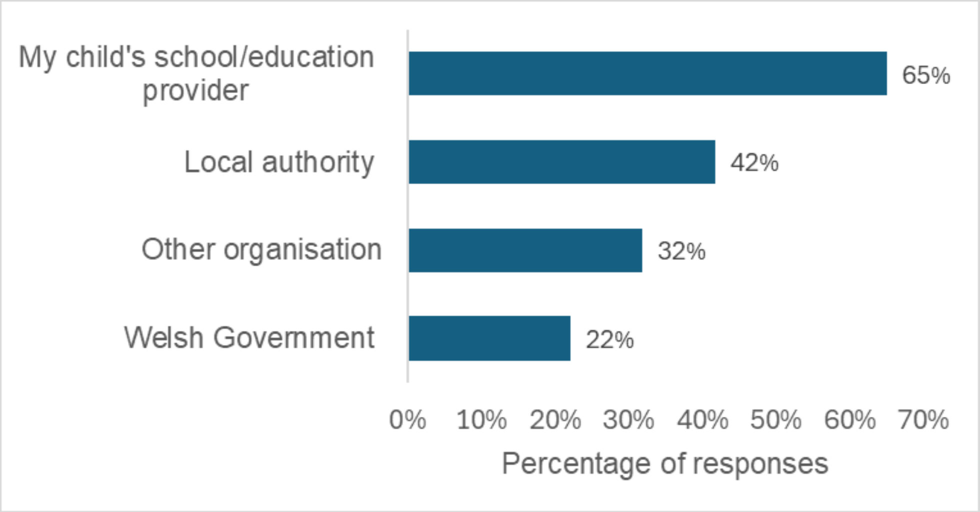
Those who provided a written response were more likely to have disagreed that the support provided by their child's schools or education providers met their needs. These parents referred to their child’s educational provision being insufficient and/or the school environment being inappropriate to meet their needs. A small number of parents reported that they had supplemented their education with private provision (e.g. tutors).

Information and guidance

Sources of information and guidance

We asked parents about where they had accessed information and guidance in relation to the ALN system.

Figure 10. Sources of information and guidance accessed regarding ALN and the ALN system



N=1448. Note: parents may have ticked more than one answer option, and so responses may not total 100%.

Figure 10 shows that parents were most likely to say that they had accessed information and guidance in relation to ALN and the ALN system from their child’s school/education provider.

Other sources of information and guidance - open-text comments

Parents who selected “Other organisation” were asked to specify the source. There were 444 open-text responses to this question.

The sources parents most commonly reported accessing information and guidance from are detailed below:

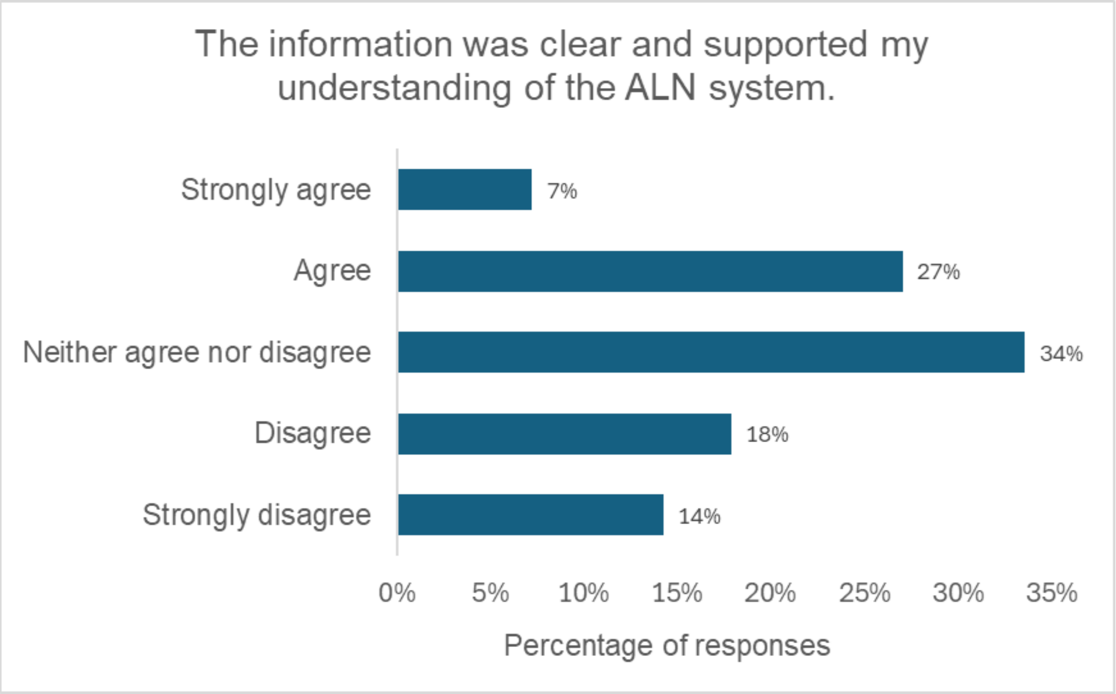
- support and advocacy services or organisations, including charities, such as Snap Cymru, National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS), Barnardo’s, National Autistic Society (NAS), Stand, InclusAbility, Sunshine Support, National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS)
- family support services, including Resilient Families Service, Family Pathways, Team around the family and adoption support services

- health professionals, including GPs, speech and language practitioners, neurodevelopment team, children's occupational therapy team, Health visitor, Paediatrician, Psychotherapist, Clinical psychologist
- online through Google searches, accessing websites such as Welsh Government and social media platforms e.g. Facebook
- parent peer support, including parent forums, support groups and friends with children with ALN
- professional knowledge from parent’s work or formal education/training e.g. Masters’ degree in ALN related subject

Clarity of information

We also asked parents to what extent they agreed or disagreed that the information they had accessed was clear and supported their understanding of the ALN system.

Figure 11. Extent to which the information was clear and supported their understanding of the ALN system



N=1531

Figure 11 shows that:

- 34% of responses “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that information was clear and supported their understanding of the ALN system
- 32% “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” that information was clear and supported their understanding of the ALN system
- 34% selected “neither agree nor disagree”

Clarity of information – open-text comments

Parents who disagreed that the information they had accessed was clear and supported their understanding of the ALN system were asked to provide further details in relation to their response. There were 433 responses to this question. This section presents the themes raised most frequently by respondents. A wide range of themes was raised in response to this question, and no single theme was raised by a majority of respondents. It should be noted, therefore, that each of the themes summarised below was raised by a minority, or a small minority, of the 433 responses to this question.

Lack of information or support

A number of parents referred to a lack of information or support provided to them to enable them to understand the ALN system. These parents reported that:

- they had received little or no information about the ALN system
- information they had received had been limited and was not detailed enough to support their understanding of the ALN system
- a lack of information had resulted in these parents feeling like they did not understand elements of the ALN system, including:
    - processes
    - timescales
    - support available
    - statutory duties and/or responsibilities of education providers, local authorities and LHBs

Unclear information

Some parents commented that information that they had accessed or received (e.g. the ALN Code, information provided by their education provider or local authority) lacked clarity. These parents felt that a lack of clear information contributed to a lack of understanding of the ALN system noting that information:

- was not user friendly or was over-complicated, for example including jargon or acronyms, or was not concise enough
- was too generic, open to interpretation and not specific enough to be useful

Access to information

Some parents reported they were not able to access sufficient information to support their understanding of the ALN system. These parents mentioned:

- not knowing where to get information from, including who to ask and what sources of information might be available to them
- a lack of signposting to information by education providers, local authorities and others involved in the implementation of the ALN system
- that they were reliant on other organisations for support (e.g. Snap Cymru, Dyslexia Society) or on parent peer-support via word of mouth or parent forums
- a lack of readily available information had led parents to undertake their own independent research to support their understanding of the ALN system

Contradictory or misleading information

Some parents felt that information they had accessed or received contained contradictory or misleading information or advice that hindered their understanding of the ALN system. These parents referred to various sources which they felt contained contradictory or misleading information (citing the ALN Code, information from schools or local authorities). These parents’ comments tended to relate to situations where parents felt their child had ALN, but they had not received an IDP with parents reporting that they had accessed information that:

- they felt contradicted other information they had accessed
- they subsequently found to be misleading or incorrect
- did not align with the practices of local authorities and education providers

Poor communication

Some parents felt they had received poor communication from education providers, local authorities and other services (e.g. health practitioners) in relation to processes, timescales and support available which had hindered their understanding of the ALN system. These parents reported:

- receiving limited or no contact from their child's school relating to their child's ALN; this had led some parents to feel uninformed about systems and processes to support their child
- receiving an insufficient response to requests for information from education providers and local authorities; this included receiving no response or a response that lacked detail or clarity
- delays in receiving information

Complexity of the ALN system

Some parents considered that the ALN system was over-complicated and difficult to understand. These parents felt the ALN system could be confusing, referring to perceived inconsistencies in information received from different sources (e.g. providers) which created challenges in learning about the ALN system and its processes.

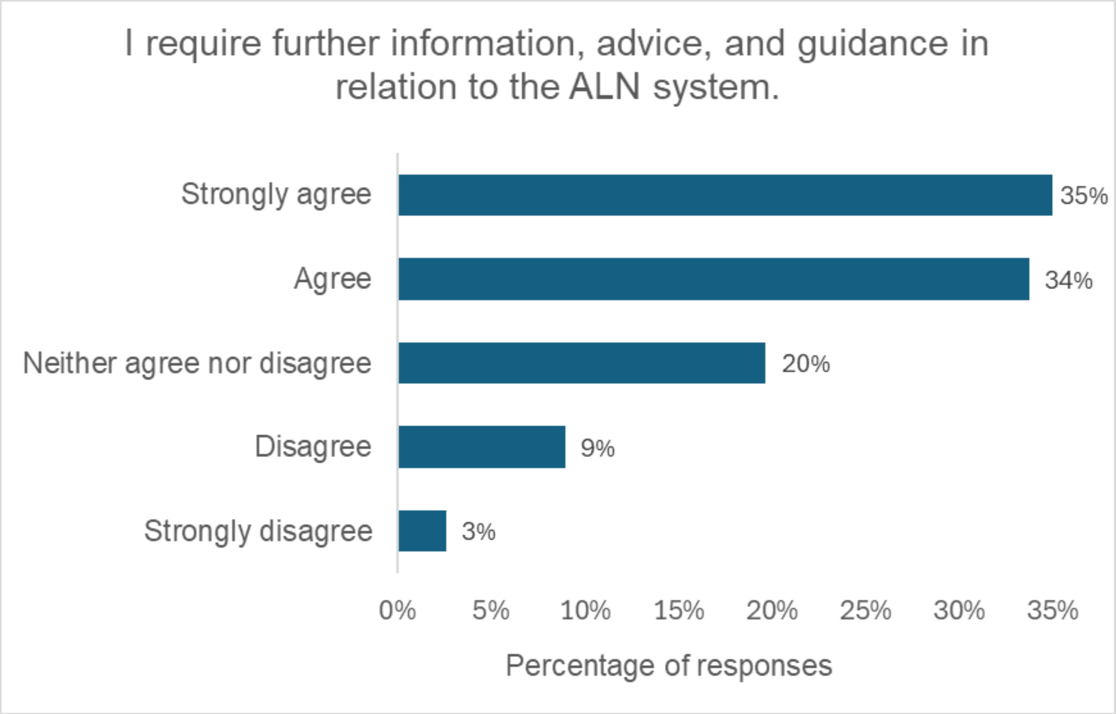
General issues with the ALN system

Some parents referred to general concerns about the ALN system, which were not directly linked to the information available. These issues tended to relate to these parents feeling their child's needs were not met, which had led to a negative impact on their child's wellbeing or their educational progress.

Further support requirements

We asked parents to what extent they agreed or disagreed that they required further information, advice and guidance in relation to the ALN system

Figure 12. Extent to which parents require further information/advice/guidance

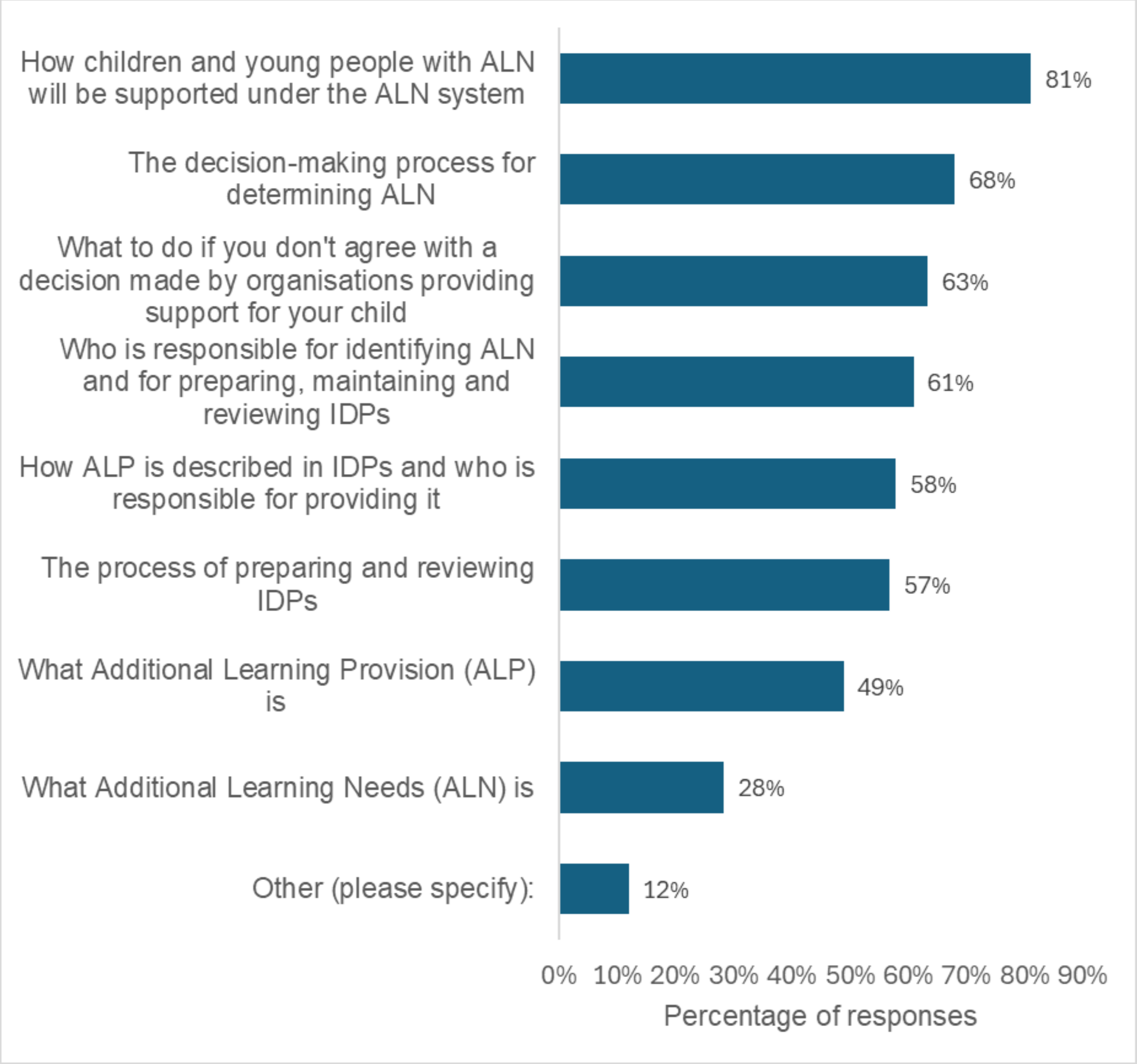


N=1606

Figure 12 shows that over half of responses (69%) either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they required further information, advice, and guidance in relation to the ALN system”.

Parents who said they required further information/advice/guidance in relation to the ALN system were asked a further question about the type of information/advice/guidance they needed.

Figure 13. Further information/advice/guidance required



N = 1088. Note: parents may have ticked more than one answer option, and so responses may not total 100%.

Figure 13 shows that responses to this question indicated that parents felt they needed more information about a range of topics. Responses were most likely to say that they required further information/advice/guidance in relation to how children and young people with ALN will be supported under the ALN system.

Further support requirements – open-text comments

Parents who selected ‘Other (please specify)’ in response to this question were asked to specify what further information/advice/guidance they required. There were 127 responses to this question. This section presents the themes raised most frequently by respondents.

Information about processes

A number of parents felt that they were in need of further information, advice and guidance about both general and specific aspects of the ALN system. These parents tended to report being unclear about core elements of the system, such as legal timescales and dispute resolution processes, as well as more nuanced aspects, such as how IDPs intersect with other educational or health plans in place for a child.

A range of areas for further information, advice and guidance were highlighted as being needed by these parents and these included:

- good practice examples of IDPs and ALP
- legal duties of schools and LAs under the Act
- how ALN and ALP is defined and identified in different educational settings
- post-16 provision including transitions and support
- the criteria and process for securing EOTAS provision
- the criteria and process for securing a place in a special school / specialist FEI

Effectiveness of IDP

Some parents reported that they were unclear about how IDPs were reviewed on an ongoing basis to assess whether ALP was appropriate and effective. These parents commented on how they did not understand whose role it was to assess whether the ALP provided was effective and was leading to better outcomes for their child. Some of these parents also questioned the effectiveness of processes to escalate any concerns they had, particularly in situations where there were disagreements about whether their child’s IDP was meeting their needs. Parents who felt their child’s IDP ought to be amended because, in their opinion, it was not meeting needs highlighted that they were not clear on how changes could be made to IDPs outside of the annual review.

Accessibility of information

Some parents noted that they found aspects of the system complicated to understand, including the language used by professionals and also within official documentation, including in IDPs. Some of these parents noted that those already familiar with the ALN system, through professional roles for example, were better placed than other parents to understand the complexities of the system and the language used, noting concerns about inequity amongst parents in engaging with, and understanding, the system.

Some parents reported seeking support from other parents of children with ALN rather than from practitioners. This was noted by parents as being due to schools not providing information about the ALN system, or due to practitioners using complicated terminology and abbreviations in their communications or in documents (such as the IDP). A small number of parents felt that a central point for information about the ALN system would be useful and noted that accessible formats, such as easy-read versions of documents, were needed to ensure that parents could better access information that would assist them.

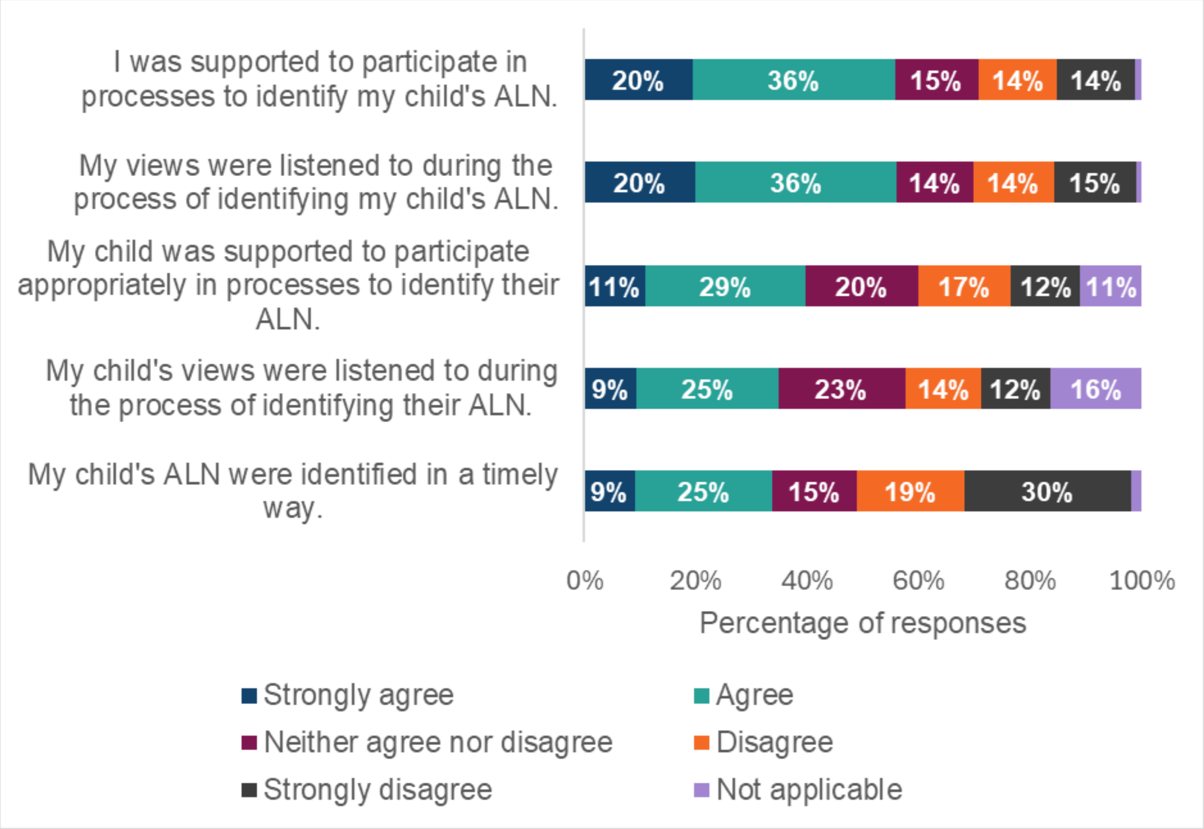
Support services

Some parents referred to a need for better information on the support available and how to access support services. In some instances, parents referred to not knowing where to turn for support when the provision that has been put in place does not meet their child’s needs. In other cases, respondents referred to the need for access to independent advocacy support in situations where disagreements and disputes arise.

Identification of ALN

We asked parents who said their child had an IDP to what extent they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements relating to the identification of their child’s ALN.

Figure 14. Parents responses to statements relating to the identification of ALN



N=935 to 938

Figure 14 shows that:

- over half of responses (56%) “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they were supported to participate in processes to identify their child's ALN, also over half said they were listened to during the process
- parents reflected less positively on the timeliness of the identification of their child’s ALN; around half of responses (49%) “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” that their child's ALN were identified in a timely way

Views on the identification of ALN (statements relating to parents’ participation) – open-text comments

Parents were invited to provide additional information relating to the first two statements in Figure 14, namely:

- I was supported to participate in processes to identify my child's ALN
- my views were listened to during the process of identifying my child's ALN

This section presents the themes raised most frequently across the 313 responses received. Parents who had disagreed with these statements were notably more likely to have provided written comments than those who had agreed. This is reflected in the themes set out below.

Parents not feeling listened to

A number of parents reported that they did not feel their views were listened to during the process of identifying their child’s ALN. These parents reported that their views were not always taken seriously or given enough weight by schools and local authorities, with some parents expressing a view that they felt their views were ignored or downplayed. In some cases, parents provided examples of their views not being taken seriously until they had put their concerns in writing, raised a disagreement or had evidence from another professional who agreed with their view as a parent (e.g. local authority, health, or a private organisation they had commissioned to carry out screening or an assessment). These concerns were raised by these parents in relation to disagreements over whether or not their child had ALN and in relation to their involvement in the PCP process. Some parents felt this had contributed to identification and planning processes feeling adversarial from their perspective.

Delays in assessing needs and decision-making

Some parents referred to delays in the process of getting their child’s needs assessed and in determining whether or not their child had ALN. In some cases, parents felt that their child’s school and/or their local authority had been reluctant or unwilling to refer their child to be assessed, noting that this had subsequently delayed the process of preparing an IDP and putting suitable provision in place. Other parents felt that their child’s school had not been proactive in identifying their needs and that parents often had to instigate discussions about identification and assessment of needs.

Concerns about schools' and local authorities' approaches to identifying ALN

Some parents raised general concerns about the schools' and local authorities' approaches to identifying their child's ALN. These included concerns about how responsive their child's school had been in identifying ALN as well as concerns about schools and/or local authorities not taking their views as a parent seriously. Lack of awareness and understanding of ALN among practitioners was also reported by some respondents, with these parents referring to examples of specific needs or behaviours that they felt practitioners did not understand (e.g. high-functioning learners 'masking' ADHD). A small number of parents reported their child had to move schools or be home educated because of the impact of this on their wellbeing. Other parents raised similar concerns about local authorities, noting that their approach could be adversarial.

Good support and communication

Some parents referred to examples of their child being well supported by their school, early years provider and/or their local authority. This included examples of schools, early years providers and other professionals:

- identifying potential needs and notifying parents of this
- being responsive when concerns were raised by parents
- supporting parents and their child to understand their child's needs and the process for identifying ALN
- communicating effectively during the process of identifying ALN

Inconsistency

Some parents referred to inconsistencies in approaches to identification, planning and provision in different schools their child had attended. These included parents who felt their child's primary school had been more effective than their secondary school, and vice versa. A small number of parents whose children had moved to a special school or who were now receiving support in a learning resource base also reported inconsistency in the level of understanding of and support for their child's needs.

Inconsistency in the approaches taken by staff within the same school was also reported, with these parents reporting that some teachers and/or their ALNCo were more prepared to listen to their concerns than others and that they had received different messages from different staff.

Other issues

Some parents reported a range of other issues, for example:

- that their child was receiving provision or support that was inappropriate or insufficient
- that there was a lack of capacity, provision and/or resources
- a lack of clarity, or consistency in information and advice they had received, with some parents reporting that they had been given incorrect information about their child's needs, the PCP process and/or provision

Identification of ALN (statements relating to child’s participation in processes and timeliness) – open-text responses

Parents were also given an opportunity to provide additional comments in relation to the following three statements:

- my child was supported to participate appropriately in processes to identify their ALN
- my child's views were listened to during the process of identifying their ALN
- my child's ALN were identified in a timely way

This section presents the themes raised most frequently across the 305 responses received. Most written comments related to the third statement listed above, focusing on whether ALN was identified in a timely way.

Parents who disagreed with the statements above were more likely to have provided written comments than those who agreed. This is reflected in the themes set out below.

Delays in identifying their child’s ALN

A number of parents referred to delays in identifying their child’s ALN, expressing frustration at the waiting times involved. These parents referred to having to wait for assessments relating to children with ASD or ADHD; in some cases, parents reported that the process of getting a diagnosis for their child took several years, noting the struggles they had faced in trying to access specialists. Some parents attributed the delays to a failure by practitioners in schools and settings to identify or indeed to recognise the need for additional support.

Impact of delays on children’s development and well-being of families

Some parents emphasised the negative impact of delays in identifying ALN on children’s development and progress in school. Among these, parents of younger children noted that children were not reaching developmental milestones or were making slow progress in their learning. Other parents reported that delays in identification or failure to identify ALN altogether were having damaging effects on children’s mental health and well-being, contributing to emotional problems. In some cases, parents described the impact of delays on the wider well-being of the families.

Struggles experienced by parents during the process of identifying ALN

Some parents commented on the ‘fight’ or ‘struggle’ they had experienced in order to ensure that their child’s ALN were identified. These parents reported that they had to apply pressure on schools, local authorities and health partners to get their child’s needs identified. In some instances, parents questioned whether their child’s ALN would have been identified had it not been for their persistence, proactiveness or determination. Some of these parents reported that they had only been able to navigate the system and secure appropriate support for their child because of their knowledge of processes and organisations.

External support accessed by parents

Some respondents reported that they had accessed external help to support them during the process of seeking to get their child’s ALN identified. Among these parents, this commonly involved paying for a private assessment, with examples provided of parents paying for ASD, ADHD and dyslexia assessments. Some parents reported that they were paying to access therapy and support services from external agencies.

Positive views on the identification process

In some cases, parents reported positive views on the process of identifying their child’s ALN. These respondents frequently referred to the valuable support provided by experienced ALNCos, childcare practitioners and/or local authority officers. These parents also often recognised that they were ‘fortunate’ that their child’s needs were identified early.

Frustration associated with feeling their child’s views were not listened to

With reference to the second statement, in some cases, parents expressed frustration that their child’s views were not listened to during the process of identifying their ALN. These parents reported that their children were viewed as having ‘behaviour issues’ or as being ‘troublesome’ and their views were not taken seriously. Some parents felt that their child’s views were disregarded or that their child was not given an opportunity to offer their views.

Opportunities to participate in processes

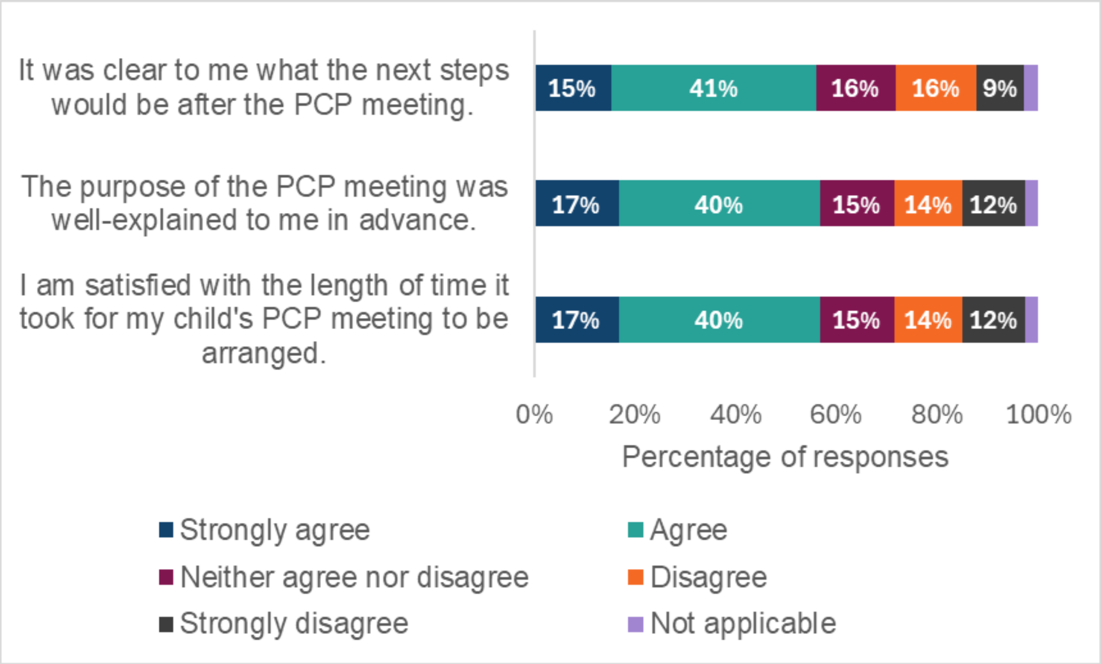
With reference to the first statement, some parents reported that their child was not given sufficient opportunity to participate in processes or discussions to identify their ALN. In some cases, parents reported that their child was not involved in meetings to discuss their ALN. In other instances, communication problems or other factors meant that it was not possible for children to participate.

A small number of parents noted that their child had been involved during the process and that their views were embedded and reflected in their IDP.

Person-centred planning (PCP) meeting

We asked parents, whose child had an IDP, to what extent they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements relating to the meetings that were held to prepare their child's IDP. These meetings may have been called a PCP meeting or an IDP meeting.

Figure 15. Parents responses to statements relating to the Person-centred Planning meeting



N=937 to 938

Figure 15 shows that over half of responses either "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that:

- it was clear to them what the next steps would be after the PCP meeting
- that the purpose of the PCP meeting was well-explained to them in advance
- that they were satisfied with the length of time it took for their child's PCP meeting to be arranged

Open-text comments – PCP meetings

Parents were invited to provide additional information about their experience of the PCP meeting. This section presents the themes raised most frequently across the 192 responses to this question. Those who provided a response were more likely to have disagreed:

- that they were satisfied with the length of time it took for their child's PCP meeting to be arranged
- that the next steps after the PCP meeting were clear

Parents who provided additional information indicated a mix of positive and negative views, relating to the statement “The purpose of the PCP meeting was well-explained to me in advance.”

The PCP process

A number of parents reflected that the PCP meeting was not always conducted in ways consistent with a person-centred practice approach. These parents reported that the PCP meeting had been difficult because they did not feel they had been listened to in the meeting and that targets identified during meetings could be unclear, leading to a lack of practical and effective support for their child. It was also reported that, when clear targets were outlined during these meetings, they were not always delivered in practice due to resourcing and funding constraints on educational providers.

Some parents highlighted disagreements with teachers and ALNCos during PCP meetings over identified ALN and ALP, with reports of parents making amendments to draft IDPs to better reflect what they felt was more suitable. Some parents expressed dissatisfaction post-PCP meeting as well, noting a lack of contact and follow-up which led to them feeling that practitioners were not fully engaged in the process.

Other parents reported positive experiences of PCP meetings, highlighting well-prepared practitioners and meetings in which they felt listened to. These parents noted how the PCP process enabled them to be informed about their child’s needs and the support which was being planned for them. These parents further highlighted that the collaborative aspect of PCP meetings, with multi-sector engagement pre or during meetings, was welcomed and that they considered it to be beneficial for ensuring that effective support was in place for their child.

Communication with parents

Some parents expressed dissatisfaction with the level of communication they received from education providers or the local authority regarding the PCP process. This included basic information about the meetings as well as the associated timescales post-meeting. These parents noted how they were ill-informed about what to expect in advance of the meeting, and how they had also received poor levels of communication after the PCP meeting had been held.

Some parents felt that they needed to seek out information themselves, such as via other parents of children with ALN, to be informed for their own child’s PCP meeting. Others reported attending the PCP meeting not realising what it was, or with little to no understanding of what the meeting was for. This included them being unaware of what the next steps would be in the PCP process, such as the timescales associated with the production of the IDP.

Conversely, in some instances, parents expressed more positive views relating to the communication they received regarding the PCP process. These parents reported receiving clear information about the PCP process, being informed of next steps and receiving written documentation following the meeting in a timely way.

PCP delays

Some parents reported they had experienced delays in the PCP process which were sometimes significant in length and beyond the permitted timescales. Reported delays were varied in nature, and included the following:

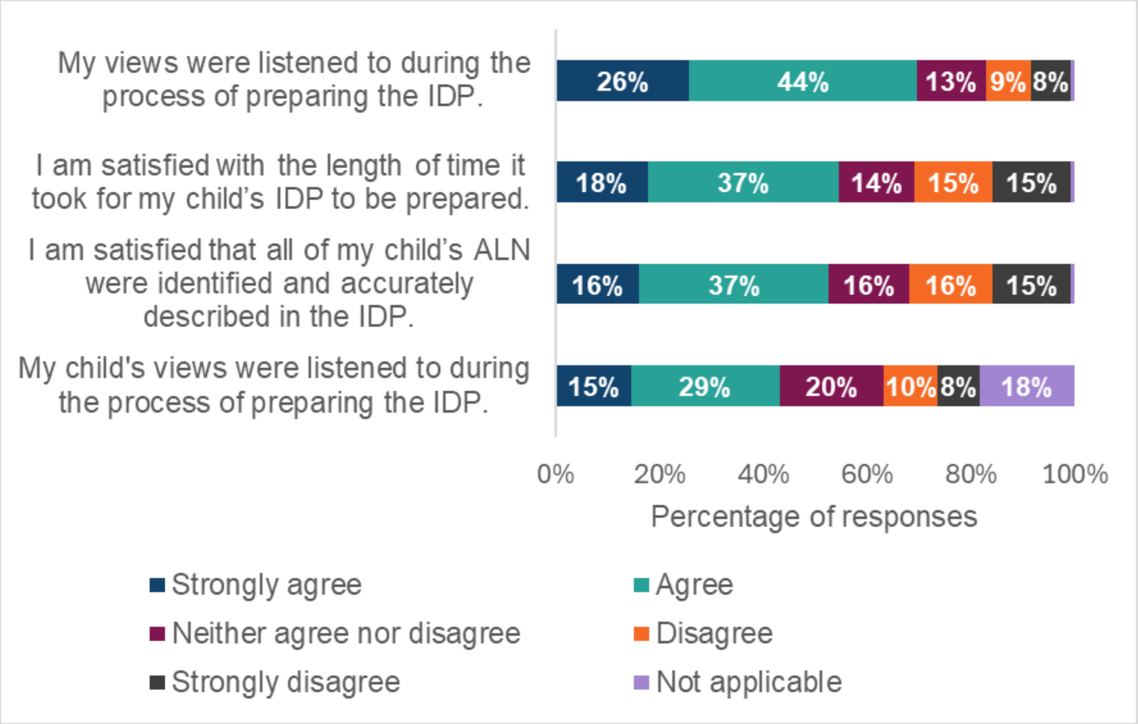
- length of time it took for their child’s PCP meeting to be arranged
- delays in holding timely review meetings
- draft IDPs being delayed after PCP meetings, which then affected drafting and sign-off as well as ALP

Delays in the PCP process were also reported by some parents as having had an impact on transition processes (between educational settings, particularly from primary to secondary school, as well as transition from mainstream settings to EOTAS). These parents highlighted how the impact of delays in the PCP process could cause an issue with ensuring the correct support is in place following transition.

Preparation of IDP

We asked parents whose child had an IDP, to what extent they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements relating to the process of preparing the IDP.

Figure 16. Parents responses to statements relating to the process of preparing the IDP



N=937 to 938

Figure 16 shows that:

- a majority of responses (70%) "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that their views were listened to during the process of preparing the IDP
- over half of parents (55%) also "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that they were satisfied with the length of time it took for their child's IDP to be prepared
- around half (53%) "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that they were satisfied all their child's ALN were identified and accurately described in the IDP
- parents reflected less positively on the extent to which their child's views were listened to during the process of preparing the IDP; less than half of responses (44%) "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with this statement. However, it is worth noting that 18% of responses selected "not applicable" for this statement. The proportion that "disagreed" or "strongly disagreed" with this statement was also small (18%)

IDP Process – open-text comments

Parents were invited to provide additional information about their child's IDP process, following the statements set out in Figure 16. This section presents the themes raised most frequently across the 222 responses received. More written comments were received from parents who had disagreed with the statements above than from parents who had agreed. This is reflected in the themes set out below.

IDP quality and ALP support

A number of parents reported being concerned about the quality of their child's IDP. These parents reported that their child's IDPs lacked sufficient detail and that ALP objectives were not always clearly set out or were inappropriate. Among these responses, it was also noted how targets within the IDPs were sometimes unrealistic or were not person-centred and that the ALP was not always delivered in full, or that it was inadequate to meet the needs of their child.

Some parents reflected that although their child had an IDP in place, they did not feel that the support was helping them. Points raised by these parents included that practitioners were not always aware of the content of IDPs and the ALP required to support some children, leading to needs not always being met.

Some parents noted that they had inputted into the development of the IDP document rather than accepting the initial IDP produced by the education provider. Reported input from parents included supporting the identification of ALN and suggesting ALP themselves or consulting with external agencies to identify support. These parents did not feel it was their responsibility to contribute to such an extent, but that this was necessary to produce a good quality IDP.

Other parents were more positive about their child's IDP. These parents reported that the IDP was suitable as it accurately reflected their child's ALN and needs, and the support provided was appropriate. They also highlighted their child had received good support from staff, noting how they felt their views as parents were listened to. Good relationships with staff who were accommodating and willing to review IDPs and make amendments as necessary were also valued by parents.

IDP delays

Other parents noted delays in the process and reported that it took a long time to receive an IDP. The most common types of delay reported were PCP meetings taking significant periods of time to arrange, delays in the production of draft IDPs, delays in amendments to draft IDPs, and parents not being provided with a copy of the final IDP in a timely manner. Some parents reported that they had varying experiences in different settings, noting that it had taken a long time to receive the IDP document in one setting (such as primary) compared to another (such as secondary). These parents were not always clear as to why they had experienced delays, but some reasons provided included: funding and staffing constraints, disagreement over the content of IDPs leading to delays with sign-off, lengthy waits for PCP or review meetings, and parents requesting an initial IDP meeting but having to wait for this to be arranged.

IDP processes

Some parents reported being dissatisfied with IDP processes and planning. A common reflection was that meetings were too hurried, with insufficient time to adequately discuss needs, identify and agree appropriate support. Some parents reported being given an IDP without a PCP meeting or any consultation having taken place and others felt their views were not being listened to during PCP meetings.

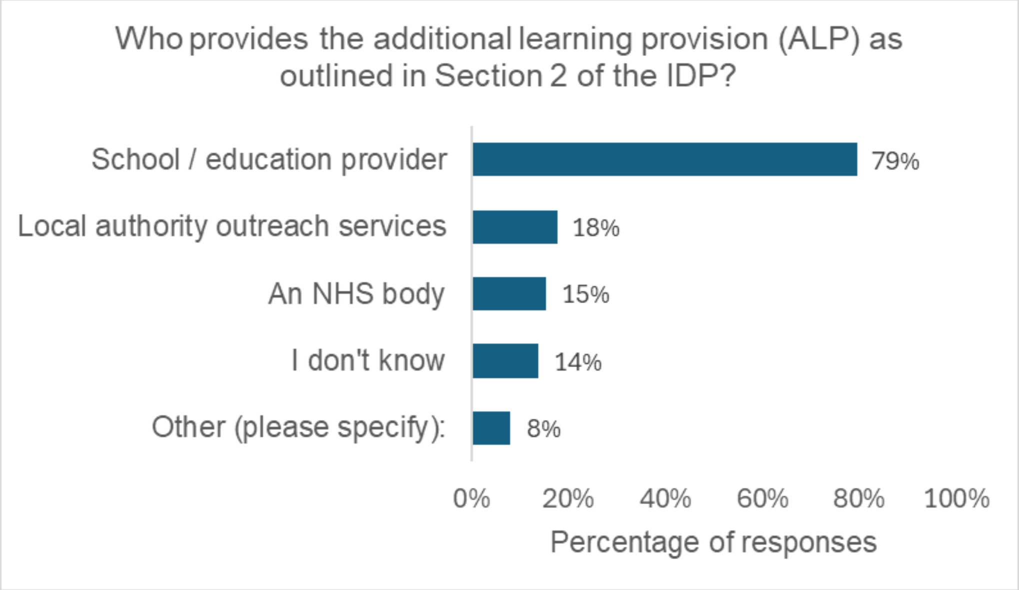
In some cases, parents reported having contributed significantly to IDP processes from their own resources (such as time or money) because of disagreements with the education provider over their child's needs or ongoing support. Other parents noted they had engaged in dispute resolution processes in order to secure an IDP that was more appropriate and suitable.

Additional Learning Provision (ALP)

We asked parents whose child had an IDP, and who said their child was not Electively Home Educated (EHE), who provides the ALP outlined in their child's IDP.

Providers of ALP

Figure 17. Who provided the additional learning provision outlined in their child's IDP



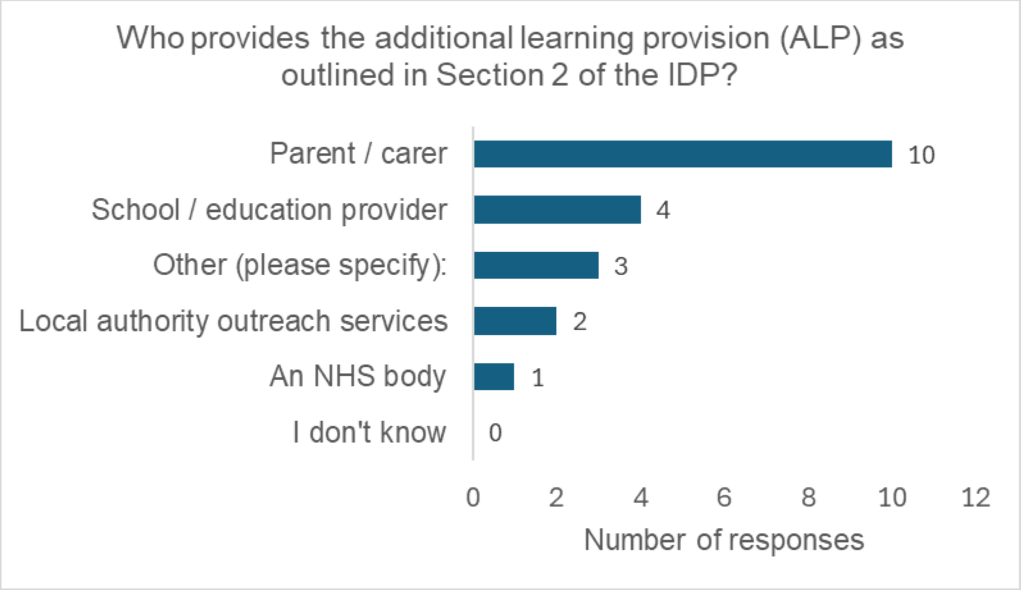
N=925. Note: parents may have ticked more than one answer option, and so responses may not total 100%. This chart does not include responses from parents who stated that their child was electively home educated.

Figure 17 shows that parents were most likely to state that a school/education provider provides the ALP as outlined in Section 2 of their child's IDP.

Providers of ALP – EHE

We also asked parents who said their child had an IDP and was EHE who provides the ALP as outlined in Section 2 of the IDP.

Figure 18. Who provided the additional learning provision outlined in their child's IDP



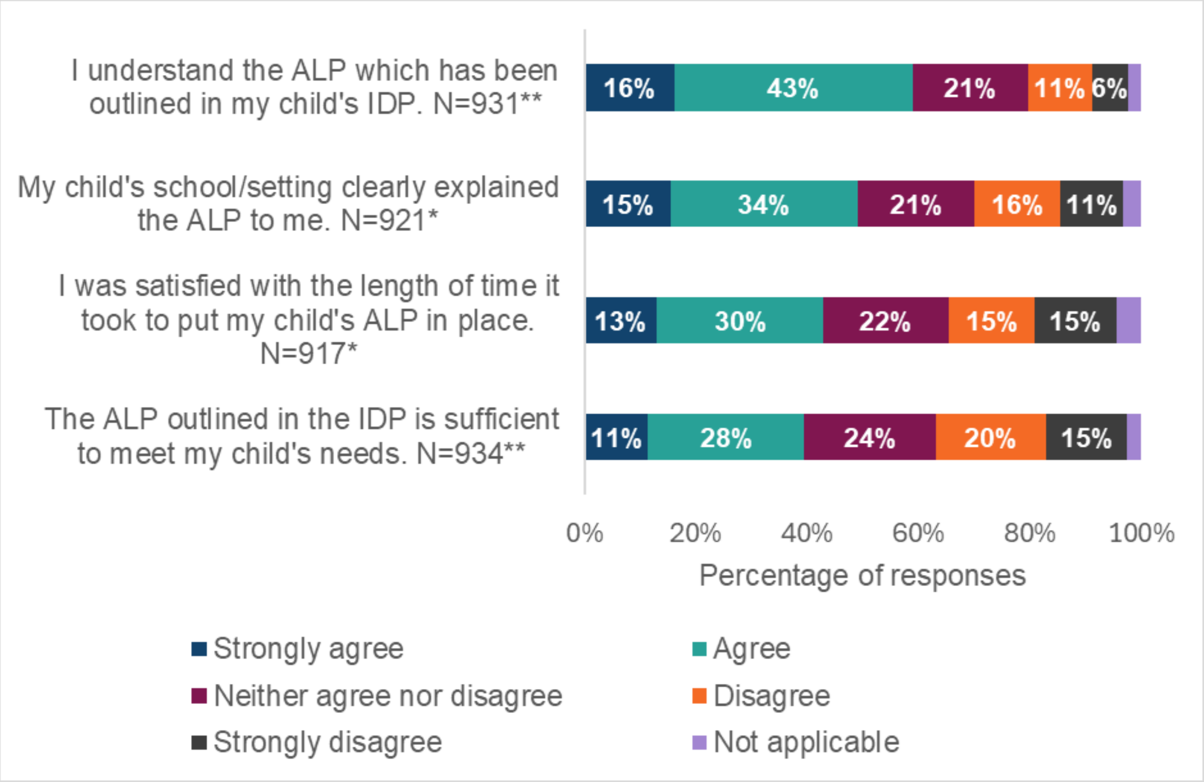
N=16. Note: parents may have ticked more than one answer option.

Figure 18 shows that parents who said their child was EHE, were most likely to state that a parent/carer provides the ALP (10 out of the 16 responses to this question selected this option)

Views on the ALP provided

We asked parents whose child had an IDP to what extent they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements relating to the ALP provided to their child.

Figure 19. Parents responses to statements relating to the ALP provided to their child



Note: *These statements were not asked of parents whose child was EHE.
**These statements were asked of parents whose child was EHE.

Figure 19 shows that over half (59%) of parents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they understood the ALP which had been outlined in their child’s IDP.

Less than half of parents “agreed” or “strongly agreed”:

- that they were satisfied with the length of time it took to put their child’s ALP in place (43%)
- that the ALP outlined in the IDP was sufficient to meet their child’s needs (39%)

We also asked parents who said their child had an IDP and was EHE to what extent they agreed or disagreed that the local authority clearly explained their child’s ALP to them. Of the 16 responses to this question:

- a minority (3 out of 16) “agreed”
- over half (9 out of 16, 57%) “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed”
- the remaining minority of responses (3 out of 16) “neither agreed nor disagreed”

Views on ALP provided – open-text responses

A total of 270 parents provided comments to elaborate on their reasons for disagreeing that the ALP outlined in their child’s IDP was sufficient to meet their child’s needs. This section presents the themes raised most frequently by respondents.

ALP addressed some but not all of their child’s needs

Some parents provided further comments to note that the ALP set out in their child’s plan did not cover all of their needs. A wide range of points were raised by these parents, which included the perception that:

- the ALP provided was too generic and not sufficiently tailored to individual needs
- the ALP was focused on particular health-related conditions and did not address wider conditions that affect learning (e.g. ASD, ADHD)
- IDP outcomes were too narrowly focused, resulting in insufficient ALP being provided
- there were limited provision/strategies to support language and communication needs
- provision was limited as a consequence of inadequate or incomplete identification of ALN
- sensory needs were not being met through ALP
- limited provision (including insufficient one-to-one support) was due to insufficient funding or staffing shortages in schools/settings

Concerns expressed about the quality of the ALP provided

Some parents also noted that the quality of the ALP provided was poor or that the ALP provided was inconsistent with the IDP. In some cases, parents questioned the effectiveness of provision, suggesting that the ALP delivered was too broad and was not linked to specific learning outcomes. Other parents expressed the view that the ALP was not person-centred or that the IDP did not specify the nature of the support, who would be delivering it and how often it would take place.

Other respondents noted that the ALP delivered by their child’s school did not reflect the provisions set out in their IDP. This included one-to-one support being provided inconsistently. Provision was described by some parents as being inappropriate, while others noted that staff at their child’s school/setting were not always aware of the IDP and the adaptations required to support learning. Linked to this, some parents argued for greater classroom support on specific tasks, notably to support reading and writing and literacy development.

Level of support / ALP limited by resources

In a smaller number of cases, parents suggested that one of the main reasons that ALP was not sufficient was related to there not being enough staff or resources in place. Among these responses, parents expressed concern that the one-to-one support needed was not provided to their child and felt that this was due to schools not having the resources they need to fulfil the requirements in IDPs. Some observed that the level or support that had been available previously had reduced, resulting in needs not being met.

Other issues raised

A number of other points were raised less frequently by parents, including:

- some parents feeling that the ALP being provided to their child had not been fully explained to them: some noted that communication between the school and parents was poor and that they did not have information about the support being provided to their child
- in some cases, parents noted that the fact that their child was continuing to struggle in terms of making progress in their learning and/or falling further behind their peers demonstrated that the ALP was not sufficient
- some parents noted that the IDP needed to be updated to reflect changes in their child's needs
- other parents explained that their child was no longer attending school or was only attending for a limited amount of time, with this often attributed to emotional problems linked to their needs not being met
- some parents noted that they were trying to provide additional support at home to support their child's education or were paying for additional support or provision
- other parents answered the question by expressing general dissatisfaction with timescales/delays involved in receiving an IDP and by noting that they did not feel they or their child had been supported as they should have

ALP – Welsh language needs

We asked parents whose child had an IDP whether they felt their child's ALP should be provided in Welsh. Of the 932 responses to this question:

- 6% of responses said they wanted ALP in Welsh, 34% had no preference and the remaining 60% said they did not feel their child's ALP should be provided in Welsh.
- Of those who said they wanted their child's ALP in Welsh:
    - over half (56%, 33 out of 59) said their child was receiving ALP fully in Welsh.
    - a minority (25%, 15 out of 59) said their child was receiving ALP partly in Welsh.
    - the remaining 19% (11 out of 59) said their child was not receiving ALP in Welsh.

ALP Welsh language needs – open-text comments

Parents were invited to provide additional information if they wished to do so and 5 written responses were received. Respondents mentioned that their children were attending Welsh-medium provision but that there was a lack of specialist provision through the medium of Welsh.

ALP – other language needs

We also asked parents whose child had an IDP whether they felt their child’s ALP should be provided in a language other than English or Welsh.

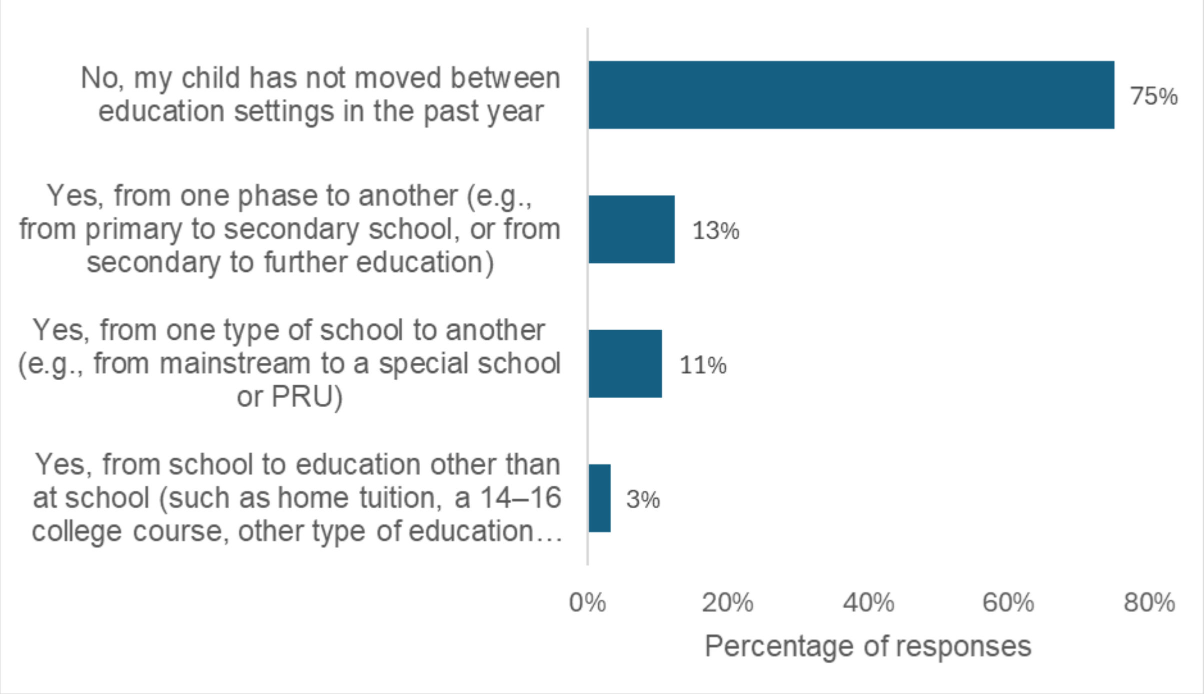
Of the 926 responses to this question, a small minority (4%) said that they felt their child’s ALP needed to be provided in a language other than English or Welsh.

Following this closed question asking parents if they felt that their child’s ALP needed to be provided in a language other than English or Welsh, parents were invited to provide additional information if they wished. There were 28 responses to this question, however of these only four had answered “yes” to the closed question. Two responses noted needs relating to Makaton and British Sign Language (BSL), whilst the other two responses were wider observations not related to other languages. The remaining 24 respondents had answered “no” to the closed question. Their comments largely focused on issues relating to Welsh-medium ALP, the previous question in the survey.

Transition between education settings

We asked parents whose child had an IDP whether their child had moved from one education setting to another in the past year.

Figure 20. Whether child had moved from one education setting to another in the past year



N=895. Note: parents may have ticked more than one answer option and so may not total 100%.

Figure 20 shows that a majority of responses (75%) said their child had not moved between education settings in the past year.

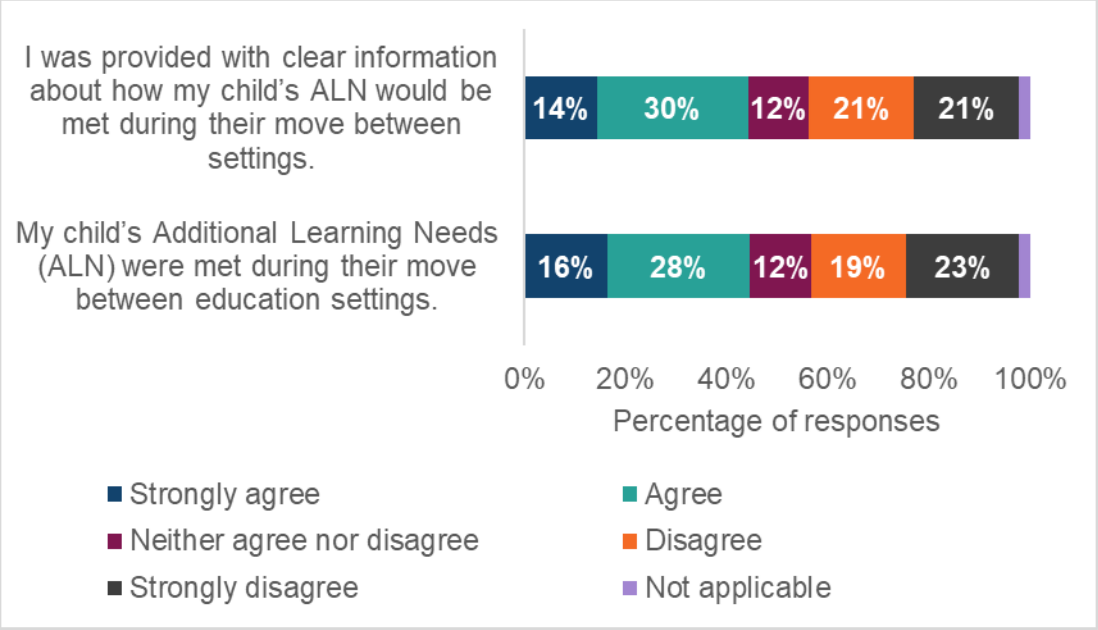
Of the minority of responses (27%) that said their child had moved between education settings in the past year:

- 13% had moved from one phase to another
- 11% had moved from one type of school to another
- 3% had moved from school to education other than at school

Experiences of the transition process

We asked parents who said their child had moved from one education setting to another in the past year about their experiences of the transition process.

Figure 21. Parents responses to questions about the transition process



N=231

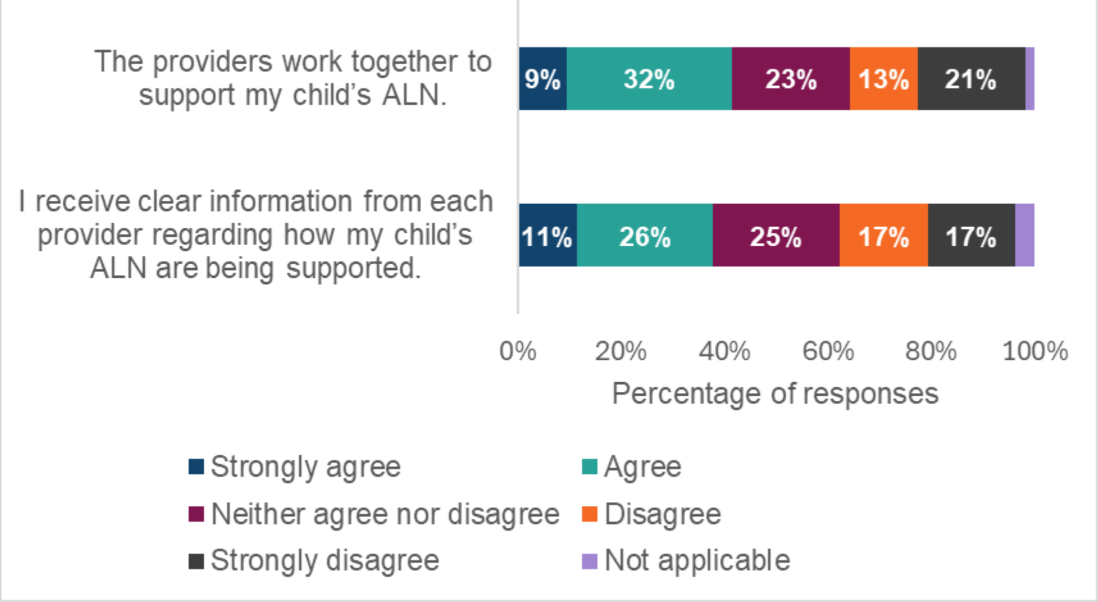
Figure 21 shows that less than half of responses (44%) “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they were provided with clear information about how their child’s ALN would be met during their move between settings. A further 42% of responses “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” with this statement.

Less than half of responses (44%) “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that their child’s ALN were met during their move between education settings. A further 42% “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” with this statement.

Management of ALN across multiple settings

We asked parents who said their child received their education in more than one setting to what extent they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements relating to management of ALN across multiple settings.

Figure 22. Parents responses to statements relating to management of ALN across multiple settings



N=53

Figure 22 shows that less than half of responses (22 out of 53, 41%) "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that the providers worked together to support their child's ALN, whilst 18 out of 53 (34%) "disagreed" or "strongly disagreed" with this statement.

Less than half of responses (20 out of 53, 37%) "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that they received clear information from each provider regarding how their child's ALN were being supported. 18 out of 53 responses (34%) "disagreed" or "strongly disagreed" with this statement.

Management of ALN across multiple settings – open-text comments

Parents were invited to provide additional information to support their response to the two closed statements outlined in figure 19. This section presents the themes raised most frequently across the 23 responses received. It is important to note that the findings set out in this section are based on a limited number of responses.

Support received from individual providers

Parents commented on the support they/their child had received from individual providers. Among these respondents, some parents provided:

- positive comments relating to the support received from providers. These comments tended to relate to alternative education providers, such as *‘ASC centre’* and *‘dyslexia school’*. Parents referred to the support from these providers as *‘amazing’* and *‘fantastic’*
- negative comments relating to the support received from providers. These comments tended to relate to mainstream school settings, with parents perceiving a lack of support from these providers or that their child’s needs were not met

Providers not working together

Some parents referred to examples of where their child’s education providers were not working well together to support their child. Examples tended to refer to a perception that schools have not been engaging with or contacting the child’s alternative education provider.

Poor communication from providers

Some parents reported that they had received poor communication from their child’s education provider(s), describing communication as *‘terrible’* and having received *‘very little update of any value’*.

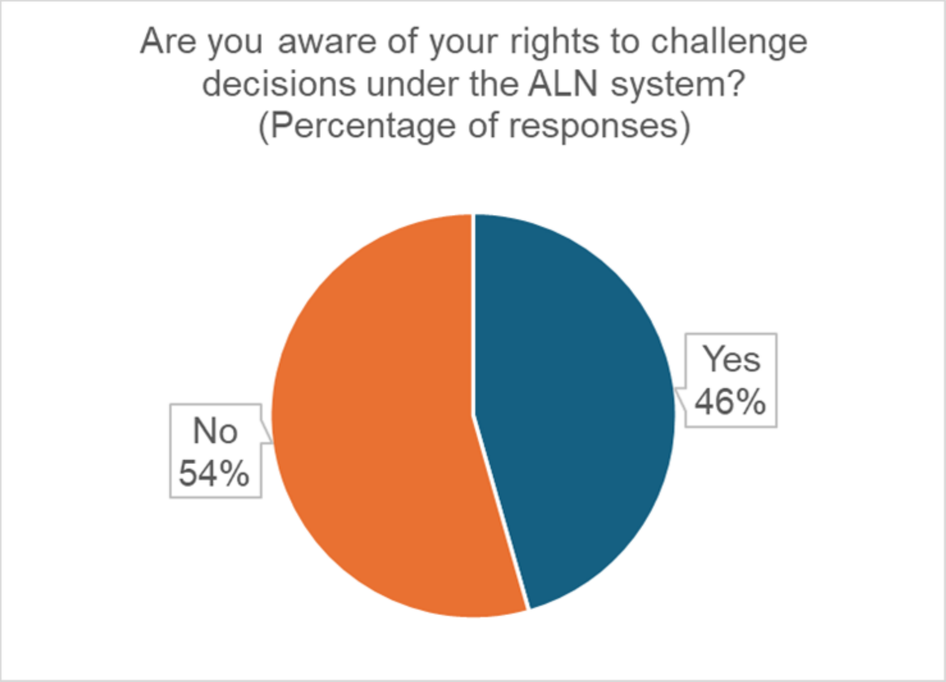
System wide issues

Some parents expressed their views on the education system as a whole, making reference to how it is not inclusive for children with ALN.

Awareness of rights to challenge decisions

We asked parents if they were aware of their rights to challenge decisions under the ALN system:

Figure 23. Parents' awareness of their rights to challenge decisions under the ALN system

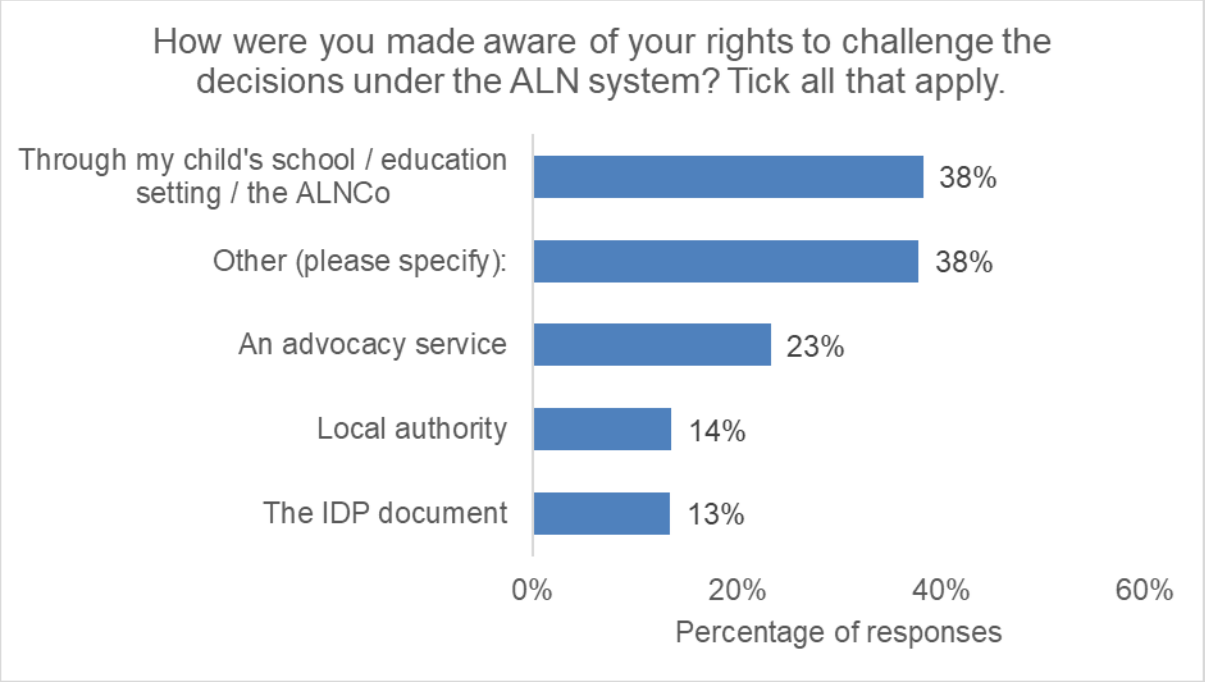


N=1610

Figure 23 shows that 54% of responses (out of 1610) said they were not aware of their rights to challenge decisions under the ALN system, compared with 46% who said they were aware.

We asked parents who said they were aware of their rights to challenge decisions under the ALN system how they were made aware of these rights:

Figure 24. How parents were made aware of their rights to challenge the decisions under the ALN system



N=730. Note: parents may have ticked more than one answer option, and so responses may not total 100%.

Figure 24 shows that responses were most likely to say that they were made aware through their child's school/education setting/the ALNCo (38%) or via other means (38%).

Awareness – open-text comments

Parents who selected the response option 'other (please specify)' had the option to specify how they were made aware of their rights to challenge decisions under the ALN system via an open-text comment box. 130 respondents chose to do so. This section presents the themes raised most frequently by respondents.

Prior knowledge

A number of parents noted that they had been made aware of their rights to challenge decisions through knowledge that they had acquired previously, for example:

- at their workplace or within their professional role
- from an education or training programme
- from friends and family

- due to previous experience with challenging a separate decision

A small number of parents also noted that they had been made aware through their own unspecified personal research.

Dedicated services

Some parents noted they had used the services and support offered by various organisations, for example:

- SNAP Cymru
- Barnardo’s
- Stronger Together for Additional Needs and Disabilities (STAND)
- National Deaf Children’s Society
- local authority family support service

Professional workers

Some parents noted that they had been made aware through contact with various professionals familiar with the ALN system, for example:

- school and PRU staff
- social workers
- legal solicitors

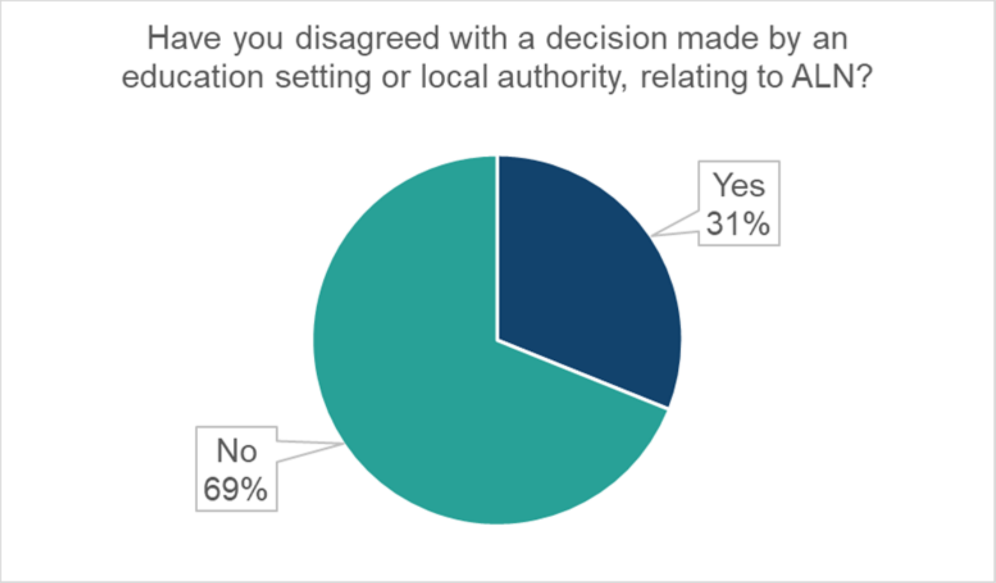
Official resources

Some parents noted they had been made aware through official Welsh Government resources or documentation, such as the ALN Code itself and the Education Tribunal for Wales website.

Challenging decisions

We asked parents if they had disagreed with a decision made by an education setting or local authority, relating to ALN.

Figure 25. Whether parents had disagreed with a decision made by an education setting or local authority relating to ALN



N=1621

Figure 25 shows that of the 1621 responses to this question:

- less than half (31%) said they had disagreed with a decision made by an education setting or local authority, relating to ALN. The remaining 69% said they had not

Disagreements – open-text comments

Parents who had disagreed with a decision made by an education setting or local authority, relating to ALN, were asked to provide further details in relation to the disagreement. There were 396 responses to this question. This section presents the themes raised most frequently by respondents.

Disagreements in relation to decisions about receiving an IDP or carrying out assessments

A number of parents reported that they had disagreed with a decision not to provide an IDP for their child or not to refer their child for an assessment by the local authority. Some of these parents commented in general terms about disagreements and some also provided specific examples including:

- disagreements in relation to their child not being referred to specialists for assessment, for example by an education psychologist

- schools or local authorities not accepting assessments undertaken by private organisations commissioned by parents

Parents also commented on the delays to the process of being assessed which they felt had been exacerbated by the disagreement process.

Disagreements in relation to provision

Some parents reported that they had disagreed with decisions in relation to the provision of support for their child. This included parents who commented in general terms that mainstream provision was not appropriate for their child and parents who had specific concerns about the sufficiency or appropriateness of their child’s ALP. Some parents provided examples of disagreements in relation to:

- the availability of ALP in Welsh for their child
- local authority decisions about the provision of suitable transport to their child’s education setting
- local authority decisions not to maintain their child’s IDP

Disagreements in relation to an education setting placement

Some parents reported that they had disagreed with decisions relating to the allocation of a place for their child in an education setting. In some cases, parents had identified a particular school or type of provision (for example, EOTAS provision or a specialist setting) they believed would best meet their child’s needs but were told there were no spaces available. In other cases, the local authority named a setting in the child’s IDP that parents felt was unsuitable.

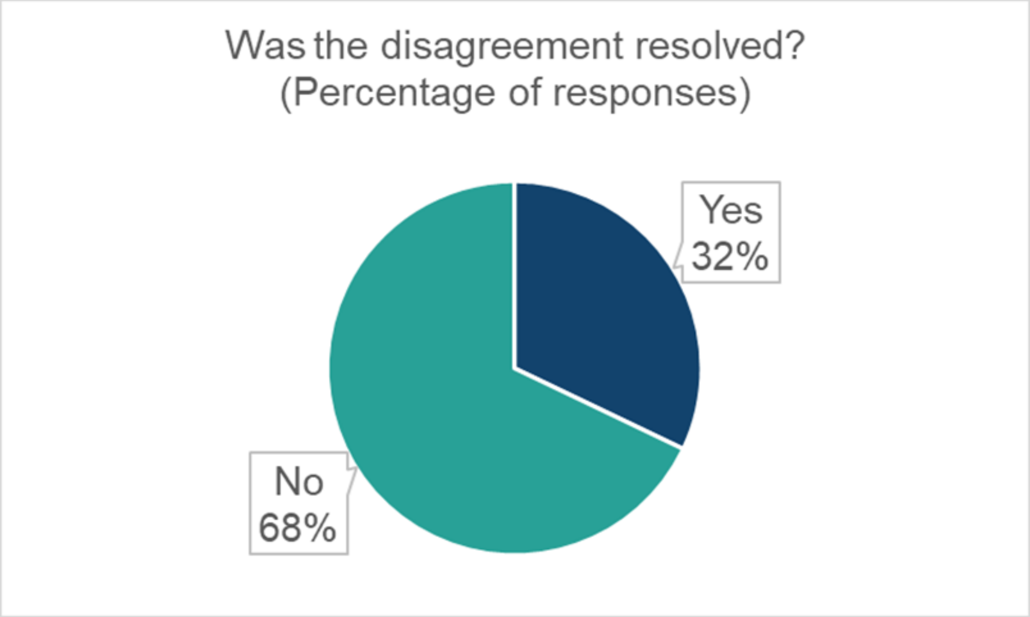
The process of disagreeing with a decision

Some parents expressed negative views on their experiences of the process itself of disagreeing with a decision made by an education setting or local authority. These parents explained that they had encountered delays in receiving responses from education settings and local authorities and that they felt dissatisfied and frustrated with the process in general. Some parents had concerns about the quality of communication and felt there was a lack of clarity about what their next steps were. Other parents felt that their concerns for their child were dismissed or downplayed by education settings and local authorities.

Disagreement resolution

We asked parents who said they had disagreed with a decision if the disagreement was resolved.

Figure 26. Whether the disagreement was resolved



N=489

Figure 26 shows that of the 489 responses to this question:

- less than half (32%) said the disagreement was resolved. The remaining 68% said the disagreement was not resolved

Disagreement resolution – open-text comments

Parents who had disagreed with a decision also had an opportunity to provide additional information about the resolution, if they wished to do so. There were 194 responses which provided additional information.

This section presents the themes raised most frequently by respondents. A wide range of themes were raised in response to this question, and no single theme was raised by a majority of respondents. It should be noted, therefore, that each of the themes summarised below was raised by a minority or a small minority of the 194 respondents to this question.

Further information on resolved disagreements

Parents who reported that the disagreement had been resolved explained that the necessary support had been provided for their child, for example:

- having the appropriate resources made available

- receiving an IDP
- receiving an assessment or diagnosis
- securing a place at an appropriate educational setting

Some of these parents reported that their disagreement had been resolved due to the high level of effort they had put in, for example completing multiple applications or threatening further action.

In some cases, parents reported that they had received support from professionals (e.g. social workers, teachers, therapists) and that this had facilitated their success in resolving the disagreement.

Other parents reported that their Tribunal appeal had been successful, or that the disagreement had been resolved by the school or the local authority and had therefore avoided the need to go ahead with a Tribunal appeal.

Further information on unresolved disagreements

Parents who reported that the disagreement was not yet resolved noted that they faced certain barriers towards resolving the dispute, for example:

- feeling as though their concerns were not being listened to
- feeling as though they were ‘fighting’ the system
- lack of or delays in communication and support from schools or local authorities
- lacking information on how to pursue a Tribunal appeal
- lacking a formal diagnosis upon which to base the provision of support

Some of these parents reported that certain elements of their disagreement had been resolved, but that the disagreement was ongoing due to not being fully resolved. These parents explained that agreements had been made verbally but that these had yet to be enacted or delivered upon.

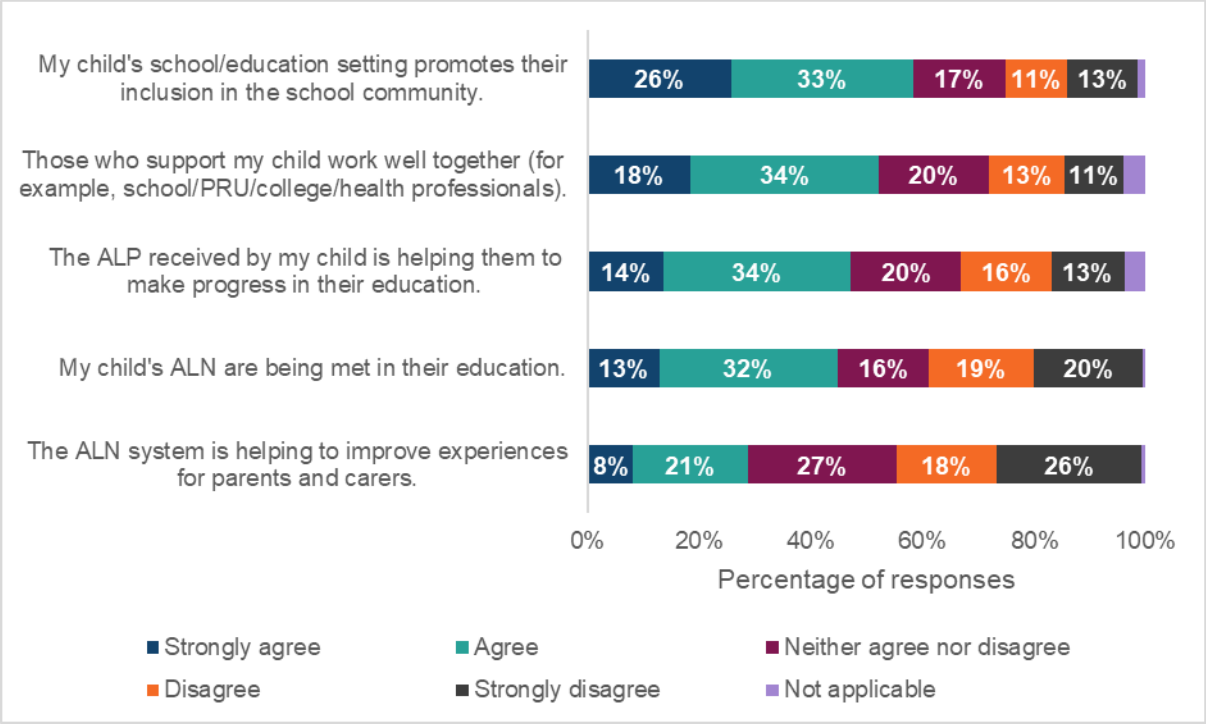
In some cases, parents reported that they had given up on trying to resolve the disagreement. These parents noted that they had instead decided to pursue other avenues of support on their own terms, for example private diagnoses or assessments, choosing to self-fund a private placement for their child, or removing their child from school.

Other parents reported that their disagreement had gone to a Tribunal, but that the appeal had ultimately been unsuccessful.

Satisfaction with ALN system, including ALP (parents of learners with an IDP)

We asked parents whose child had an IDP to what extent they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements relating to satisfaction with aspects of the ALN system , including ALP.

Figure 27. Responses from parents whose child has IDP to statements relating to satisfaction with the ALN system



N=916 to 922

Figure 27 shows that over half (59%) “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that their child’s school/education setting promoted their inclusion in the school community.

Around half (52%) “agreed” or “strongly agreed”:

- that those who support their child worked well together (52%)
- that the ALP received by their child was helping them make progress in their education (48%)

Less than half (45%) “agreed” or “strongly agreed” their child’s ALN were being met in their education

A minority (29%) “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the ALN system was helping to improve experiences for parents and carers. Whereas, 44% “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” with this statement.

Satisfaction with ALP (parents of learners with an IDP) – open-text comments

After the closed questions relating to their satisfaction with ALP, parents whose child had an IDP were asked if they wished to provide any further comments in relation to these statements. This section presents the themes raised most frequently across the 196 responses received.

Those who provided a response to the open-text question were more likely to think that their child's education setting promoted their inclusion in the school environment and less likely to think that the ALN system was helping to improve experiences of parents, or that those who supported their child worked well together. Parents who provided a response to the open-text question expressed mixed views in response to the closed questions on the statements "The ALP received by my child is helping them to make progress in their education" and "My child's ALN are being met in their education. This is reflected in the themes set out below.

Support for children and their families

A number of parents commented on the support their child and their family had received from education providers, health professionals and local authorities. These parents reported:

- a range of views regarding the support from schools; these parents tended to report receiving poor, inadequate or no support from their child's school, whilst others, albeit fewer parents, reported receiving sufficient support from the school:
    - views expressed included that the support or ALP that schools provided for their child did not promote inclusion in the school community. Other parents referred to their child receiving support outside of the mainstream classroom environment (e.g. one to one in a separate classroom), or their child being excluded from school due to their behaviour, which parents attributed to their ALN
    - in some cases, parents commented on poor communication from education providers regarding processes, provision and their child's progress; these parents expressed frustration as they felt they were not being listened to
    - some parents answered positively and felt they had received a good level of communication
- that there was generally positive support from health professionals, but respondents noted that there tended to be long waiting times for diagnosis
- that the support provided by local authorities was lacking or did not ensure their child's ALN were being met
- inconsistencies in delivery of support across regions and between schools, noting a lack of equity in implementation of the system

Funding and capacity

Some parents commented on a perceived lack of funding and resources to sufficiently implement the ALN system and ensure all learners with ALN received the required support. Among these respondents, some raised the issues of lack of capacity within education providers, referring to a lack of staff within providers.

How well providers work together

Other parents felt providers did not work well together. They referred to poor communication and information sharing between providers, noting that this needed to improve. In some cases, parents also reported feeling like they were the ones who facilitated contact between providers.

A ‘battle’ for parents

A number of parents referred to feeling they faced a *‘battle’* or *‘fight’* to ensure their child’s needs were recognised and that their child received the support they felt they required. As a consequence, some parents reported experiencing stress and feeling demoralised.

Perception that the ALN system is complex and confusing

Responses indicated a perception among some parents that the ALN system was complex and confusing and/or the Act was ambiguous and open to interpretation.

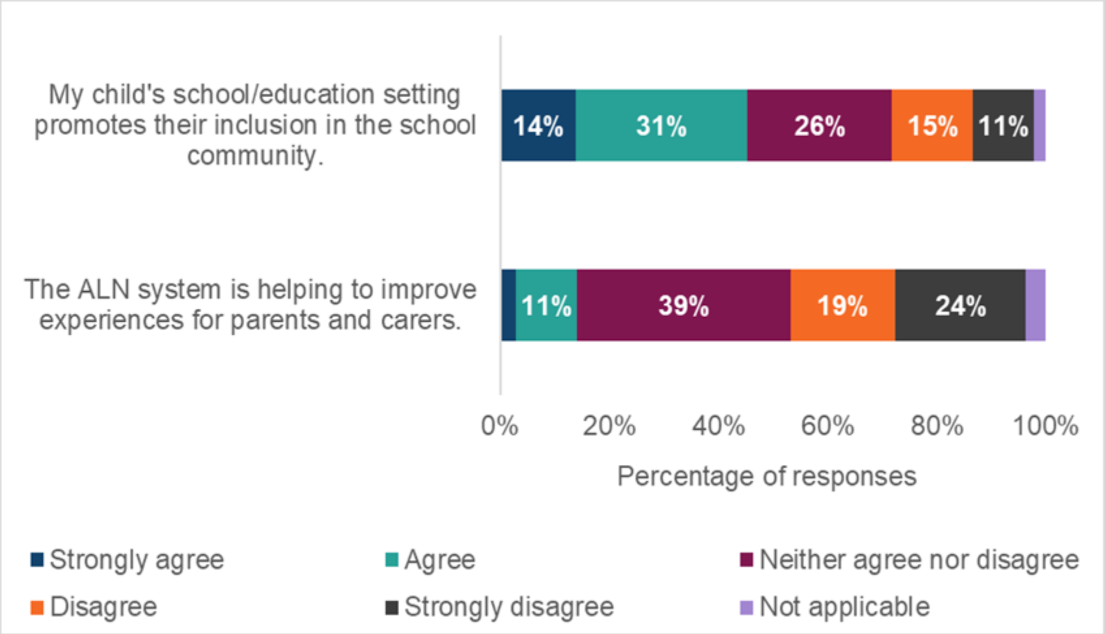
Staff expertise and skills

Other parents felt that education providers did not always have staff with the relevant expertise and skills to support their child. These parents thought more training was required to ensure staff were better equipped and upskilled to support children and their families.

Satisfaction with the ALN system (no IDP)

We asked parents whose child did not have an IDP to what extent they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements relating to satisfaction with the ALN system.

Figure 28. Responses from parents whose child did not have an IDP to statements relating to satisfaction with the ALN system



N=656 to 657

Figure 28 shows that less than half (45%) “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that their child’s school/education setting promoted their inclusion in the school community. A further 26% “neither agreed nor disagreed” with this statement.

A small minority (14%) “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the ALN system was helping to improve experiences for parents and carers. Less than half (43%) “strongly disagreed” or “disagreed”, and a further 39% “neither agreed nor disagreed” with this statement.

Satisfaction with the ALN system (parents of learners without an IDP) – open-text comments

After the closed questions relating to their satisfaction with the ALN system parents whose child did not have an IDP were asked if they wished to provide any further comments in relation to these statements. This section presents the themes raised most frequently across the 159 responses received.

Those who provided a response to the open-text question had expressed mixed views in response to the following statement: “My child's school/education setting promotes their inclusion in the school community” and were less likely to think that the ALN system was helping to improve experiences for parents and carers. This is reflected in the themes set out below.

The open-text question presented beneath the questions on the ALN system (and ALP for those with IDPs) was the same for parents of children with and without IDPs. However, parents of children without IDPs had been presented with 5 closed question questions statements compared with 2 statements presented to parents of children without an IDP. The themes raised by parents whose child did not have an IDP were similar to those raised by parents whose child did have an IDP), and these are presented below.

Dissatisfaction with the support provided to children and their families

Echoing comments by parents of learners with an IDP, those whose children did not have an IDP also presented views indicating that they had received poor or inadequate support. In some cases, parents of learners without an IDP referred to examples where their child had been excluded from school due to their behaviour, however they felt their child should be receiving support from the school rather than being excluded. Among these respondents some noted their dissatisfaction with the support provided by local authorities, expressing concern that their children’s needs were not being met.

Broader concerns expressed relating to the ALN system

A number of parents expressed concerns about the ALN system, with some noting that it was not ‘fit-for-purpose’ or did not deliver the support needed by their child. Examples provided included:

- cases where children had SEN statements in place prior to the ALN reforms but now did not have an IDP, resulting in them receiving less support that previously
- some parents feeling that the ALN Code/guidance or other information they had received relating to the ALN system did not align with practices by LAs and education providers; these were frequently accompanied by comments noting that they felt their

child had ALN, but that these were not recognised and consequently they did not have an IDP

- in some cases, the child’s education provider had explained that the support their child needed was offered by the provider as universal provision. However, parents believed that providers were stating that their child was being supported through universal provision in order to avoid writing an IDP for their child
- a perception among some parents that the ALN system was complex and difficult to navigate

Funding and capacity

Parents of children without an IDP also frequently noted a perception that there was insufficient funding and resource to provide appropriate support to their child. These parents made reference to feeling that education providers did not have adequate staff capacity to provide support that met their child’s needs.

Challenges reported by parents in accessing support

Some parents of children without an IDP used similar language to parents of children with IDPs, describing the ‘struggles’ and ‘battles’ they had experienced in seeking to have their needs recognised and supported. They referred to the frustration and stress this had caused.

Staff expertise and skills

Echoing the views of parents of children with IDPs, some parents of children without IDPs felt that schools and education providers did not always have staff with the relevant expertise and skills to support them and their child and that more professional learning was required to address this.

Electively Home Educated (EHE) children

We asked parents who said their child was EHE (including parents of children with and without IDPs) whether their child had been deregistered from school within the last 12 months:

- over half of responses to this question (19 out of 33, 58%) said their child had been deregistered from school within the last 12 months

we also asked parents who said their child was EHE whether their decision to begin home educating their child was influenced by any concern that the schooling offered by the local authority would not meet their child's learning needs. The vast majority (28 out of 33, 85%) of responses to this question answered “yes”. The remaining 5 (out of 33) said “no”.

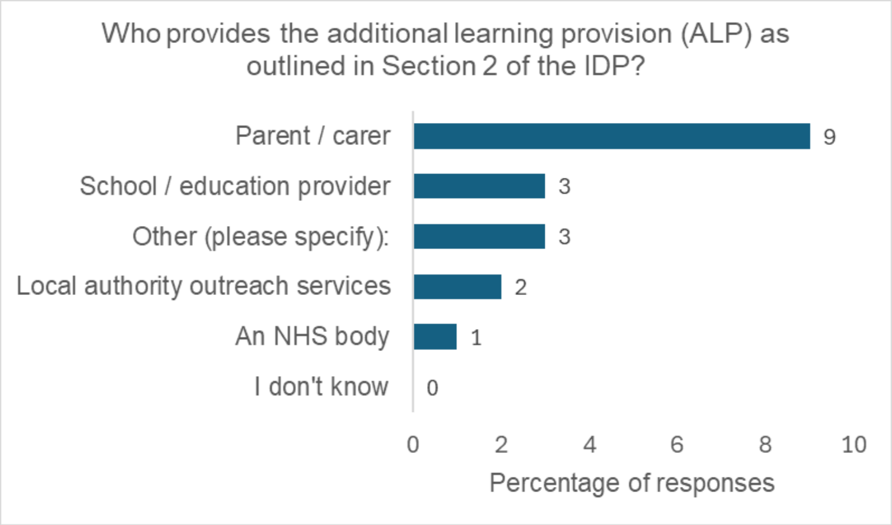
Of the 28 responses that said their decision to begin home educating their child was influenced by any concern that the schooling offered by the local authority would not meet their child's learning needs:

- around half (14 out of 28, 50%) said they would prefer for their child to return to school if appropriate support and provision was in place
- a minority (5 out of 28, 18%) said they would not prefer for their child to return to school
- the remaining 9 (out of 28, 32%) said they were not sure

Additional Learning Provision (ALP) – EHE

We asked parents who said their child had an IDP and was EHE who provides the ALP as outlined in Section 2 of the IDP.

Figure 29. Who provided the additional learning provision outlined in their child’s IDP



N=14. Note: parents may have ticked more than one answer option

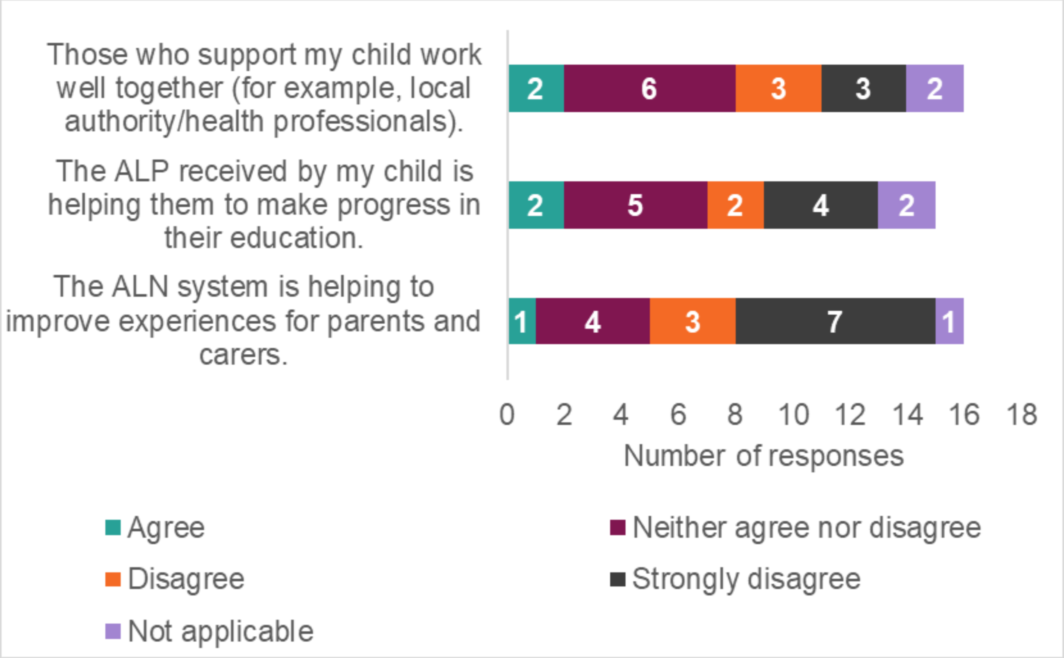
Figure 29 shows that of the 14 responses that specified who provides the ALP as outlined in Section 2 of the IDP, 9 (64%) said that a parent/carer provided the ALP.

We also asked parents who said their child had an IDP and was EHE to what extent they agreed or disagreed that the local authority clearly explained their child’s ALP to them. Among the 16 parents who answered this question, a minority (3 out of 16, 38%) “agreed”, Over half (9 out of 16, 57%) “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” and the remaining 3 parents (3 out of 16, 19%) “neither agreed nor disagreed”

Satisfaction with the ALN system (EHE)

We asked parents who said their child had an IDP and was EHE to what extent they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements relating to satisfaction with the ALN system.

Figure 30. Responses from parents whose child had an IDP and were EHE to statements relating to satisfaction with the ALN system



N=15 to 16. No parents selected “strongly agree” in response to this question

Figure 30 shows that a small minority (2 out of 16, 13%) agreed that those who support their child worked well together. Less than half (6 out of 16, 38%) “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” with this statement. Similarly, 6 responses (out of 16, 38%) “neither agreed nor disagreed”.

A small minority (2 out of 16, 13%) agreed that the ALP received by their child was helping them to make progress in their education. Less than half (6 out of 16, 38%) “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed”.

A small minority (1 out of 16, 6%) “agreed” that the ALN system was helping to improve experiences for parents and carers. More than half (10 out of 16, 63%) “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” with this statement.

Parents were invited to provide additional information to their response to these statements, and 6 responses were received. It is important to note, therefore, that the findings set out in this section are based on a limited number of responses. Those who chose to provide additional comments were more likely to disagree with the 3 statements or to indicate that they neither agreed nor disagreed. Points raised included reference to receiving no “help or support”, a perception that the ALN system is complicated, reduced trust in the education system, a lack of guidance from their local authority and poor implementation of the ALN code by the school.

We asked parents who said their child did not have an IDP and was EHE to what extent they agreed or disagreed statement “The ALN system is helping to improve experiences for parents and carers.” 11 (out of 17 who answered, 65%) “strongly disagreed” and 2 parents

(12%) “disagreed” that the ALN system is helping to improve experiences for parents and carers. 2 parents “neither agreed or disagreed” and 1 agreed.

Parents were asked to provide further comments in relation to this statement, and 5 responses were received. It is important to note, therefore, that the findings set out in this section are based on a limited number of responses. Those who chose to provide additional comments were more likely to disagree that the ALN system is helping to improve experiences for parents and carers. Points raised included references to:

- poor experiences of the ALN system and the education system overall
- a perception of too much emphasis being placed on attendance and the completion of paperwork and not enough on supporting children
- choosing Elective Home Education because of a perception that the ALN system was not fit for purpose

General views on the ALN system

What is working well

Parents were asked to comment on what they felt was working well under the ALN system. There were 885 responses to this question.

This section presents the themes raised most frequently by respondents. A wide range of themes were raised in response to this question, and no single theme was raised by a majority of respondents. It should be noted, therefore, that each of the themes summarised below was raised by a minority or a small minority of the 885 respondents to this question.

A number of parents answered this question by reporting that nothing, or very little, was working well under the ALN system. Parents who expanded on this raised concerns about issues including a lack of capacity (e.g. staff), resources (e.g. funding) and suitable provision and support for their child. Some parents felt there was inconsistency in the support available in different schools and raised concerns that the support available in secondary schools was not as good as that in primary schools.

The remainder of this section outlines the other frequently raised themes relating to what parents felt to be working well

IDPs, planning and review processes

Some parents reported that processes relating to IDPs, particularly PCP meetings, and planning were working well. These parents valued the opportunity to discuss their child's needs in PCP and review meetings and noted that targets in IDPs were clear and helpful for them. Some parents also commented on the clear timeframes for creating and reviewing IDPs.

Engagement with ALNCos and other school staff

Some parents had positive views on their engagement with ALNCo and other staff at their child's school. This included parents who reported that:

- there was increasing awareness of ALN among staff in their child's school
- their child's school was becoming a more inclusive learning environment, referring to adjustments made to provision ordinarily provided by schools (often referred to as 'universal' provision)
- that the provision, support and planning processes were becoming more child-centred
- that parents were more involved in processes

Support provided for their child

Some parents expressed positive views about the support that their child was receiving. These parents commented in general terms and also provided specific examples of the type of support they were referring to including:

- their child getting more time to complete examinations
- their child learning in smaller classes
- their child being in a learning resource base or a special school
- one-to-one support from dedicated staff (e.g. Learning Support Workers)
- equipment provided to support their learning (e.g. laptop)

Communication and information

Some parents commented on good communication and useful information they had received from their child's school and/or their local authority. This included comments on the frequency of communication during the planning process, communication about their child's needs and progress against targets. Some parents mentioned that the ALN system was easier to 'navigate' and referred to the guidance they had received which they felt was clear. These parents provided examples of sources of advice they had found helpful such as the ALN Code, websites, charities and an ALN helpline.

Identification of ALN

Some parents reported that identification processes had improved, specifically mentioning early identification of needs for children of pre-compulsory school age. Parents felt it was beneficial that their child did not necessarily require a diagnosis for a specific condition to have an IDP.

Other points

Other points raised by parents included:

- generally positive views about the ALN system and how their child was making progress in various aspects of their education
- a view that the ALN system was good in principle but there was not enough capacity or funding to implement it effectively in practice or that it assumed parents had a certain level of knowledge and understanding
- positive views on accountability and the rights of children and parents, including rights to challenge and appeal decisions
- positive views on the extension of the system to age 25
- positive views on collaboration between schools, local authorities and health bodies

What is working less well

Parents were asked to comment on what they felt was working less well, and to suggest any improvements to the ALN system. There were 1010 responses to this question.

This section presents the themes raised most frequently by respondents. A wide range of issues were reported in response to this question, and no single theme was raised by a majority of respondents. It should be noted, therefore, that each of the themes summarised below was raised by a minority or a small minority of the 1010 respondents to this question.

Capacity, resources and provision

Some parents referred to a lack of capacity (e.g. staff), resources (e.g. funding) and suitable provision (e.g. smaller groups, alternative provision, specific classroom materials) in education providers, local authorities and/or health bodies. These parents mentioned:

- a lack of staff capacity, referring to the high workload of their ALNCo and reported that there had been reductions in the number of learning support workers available in their child’s school
- that the ALN system would be improved if more alternatives to mainstream school provision were available, but that there was a lack of funding for education other than at school (EOTAS) provision
- concerns about the amount of funding available in general for ALN provision as well as about funding mechanisms and decision-making processes
- concerns about specific support or provision they believed was lacking, including:
    - a lack of support for parents (e.g. independent advocacy services, support to understand the process of creating an IDP and PCP meetings)
    - a lack of support and suitable ALP for post-16 learners
    - a lack of Welsh-medium classroom materials for learners

Communication with parents

Some parents commented on the need for education providers, local authorities and health bodies to improve communication with them. This included:

- parents who felt that they had not received enough information about the ALN system and therefore lacked awareness and understanding of processes. These parents felt the ALN system could be improved by providing them with more information
- parents who felt that the communication they received from their child’s education provider about ALN processes and/or their child’s progress was insufficient and required improvement
- parents who felt that the information they had received was unclear or included language that wasn’t accessible enough. These parents felt that information about the ALN system should be clearer

Practitioner skills and professional learning

Some parents felt there was a lack of expertise about ALN among the education workforce, and/or that the ALN system could be improved by providing more training on ALN for practitioners. These parents perceived there to be a need for more focus on ALN in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) as well as ongoing professional development relating to recognising and supporting children with specific types of ALN.

Meeting learners' needs

Some parents reported that their child's needs were not being met in their education. This included parents who felt that:

- their child required a more individualised approach, and that their child's education provider was unable to provide this
- mainstream schools needed to be more inclusive to meet their children's needs
- their child's wellbeing was being affected because their needs weren't being met

Timeliness of processes

Some parents considered that processes in the ALN system took too long, particularly identification processes and decisions to determine ALN. These parents referred to examples including:

- long waiting times for accessing services from health bodies
- seeking advice from private healthcare providers to try and speed up processes
- that ALN system processes were too complex, specifically mentioning referrals, IDP and tribunal processes, and that this affected the timeliness of processes

Parents being listened to

Some parents expressed frustrations that their views were not sufficiently listened to by education providers, local authorities and/or health bodies. Among these, parents reported that they had had to be persistent in advocating on behalf of their children, describing processes that they felt were adversarial and time-consuming. Some parents noted that these were barriers to their child receiving the provision or support that they felt was needed. Some parents commented on the support available to parents, noting the importance of access to independent advice and advocacy.

Challenges in implementing the ALN system

Some parents perceived that education providers were unable to effectively implement aspects of the ALN system. This included:

- concerns about the quality of IDPs, with parents noting that they weren't specific or tailored enough to their child, with ALP not defined clearly (e.g. number of hours attached to identified support)
- inconsistencies in approaches to writing IDPs; parents felt there should be better quality assurance processes or a more standardised approach
- comments that their child's IDP was not being implemented, for example that their child's education providers were unable to deliver ALP as it was described in the IDP, or that IDP review dates not being adhered to
- parents who felt that practitioners were not concerned enough about their child's needs to adhere to the content of the IDP

Definitions of ALN and ALP

Some parents commented on issues and challenges relating to definitions of ALN and ALP. For example, some of these parents commented on disagreements they had with their child’s education provider or local authority about whether or not their child had ALN, and whether their child needed ALP. These comments were frequently raised alongside some parents’ concerns that their child’s needs were not being met, with some feeling that the “universal” provision their child was receiving from their education provider was not sufficient.

Other issues

Other points raised by parents included:

- general dissatisfaction with most or all aspects of the ALN system
- a contrasting view that there was nothing in the ALN system that needed improving
- issues with poor collaboration between education providers, local authorities and health bodies
- school environments not being suitable for their child, with parents providing examples such as classrooms, buildings and equipment not being appropriate.
- a small number of parents also raised concerns about the structure of the school day or timetable, and school transport challenges with transitions, such as primary to secondary schools and post-16 transitions, as well as processes within the ALN system, such as transferring from Statements to IDPs.

4. Summary of Findings

The summary below is based on the findings presented in Chapter 3 of this report. In interpreting this summary, the limitations of the methodology (see Chapter 2) should be taken into account.

Individual Development Plans (IDP)

Over half of responses said their child had an IDP. Parents who answered that their child did not have an IDP, were most likely to say that this was because their child’s education setting or local authority decided that they did not require ALP.

In open-text comments, some parents noted that their child’s educational needs were expected to be met under ‘universal provision’ and, notably, expressed mixed views about whether such provision was sufficient. It was also a common view among parents who provided additional comments that having a diagnosis was necessary for their child to be provided with an IDP.

Views on the support provided

There were mixed views among parents about whether the support provided by their child’s school or education provider was meeting their needs. Those whose children had an IDP were more likely to feel that the support was sufficient compared to parents of children without an IDP.

The issues raised most frequently in open-text responses related to a lack of capacity or resource to meet need; unsuitable or insufficient provision; concerns relating to schools and local authorities e.g. a lack of awareness about ALN; positive experiences of engagement with their child’s ALNCo and other school staff; and concerns about the process of identifying their child’s ALN.

Information and guidance

There were mixed views on the clarity of the information parents had accessed in relation to the ALN system: the proportion of responses that agreed that information was clear was similar to the proportion that disagreed with this or expressed a neutral view. Those who disagreed noted in open-text comments that there was often a lack of clear information and support; or that there was insufficient, contradictory or misleading information.

Over half of responses expressed a need for more information, advice, and guidance in relation to the ALN system.

Identification of ALN

Over half of responses felt supported to participate in processes to identify their child’s ALN and listened to during the process. Less positively, around half of responses disagreed that their child’s ALN were identified in a timely way.

While some parents expressed positive views on the identification process in open-text comments, others referenced the struggles they had experienced to ensure their child's ALN were identified. Frequently raised themes relating to identification processes included parents not feeling listened to; delays in assessments, decision-making and identification of ALN, impacts of delays on children's development and the well-being of children and families; concerns about schools' and local authorities' approaches to identifying ALN, inconsistent approaches to identification, planning and provision, and a lack of opportunities for child participation.

Person-centred planning (PCP) meeting

Over half of responses from parents whose child had an IDP reflected positively on aspects of the PCP meeting process, agreeing that the purpose of the meeting was clearly explained in advance, that next steps after the meeting were clear, and that they were satisfied with the timeframe for arranging the meeting.

However, in open-text comments, some parents reported challenges associated with the PCP process, noting that meetings were not always conducted in ways consistent with a person-centred practice approach. Others expressed dissatisfaction with the level of communication they received from education providers or the local authority regarding the PCP process. Finally, some parents also reported experiencing delays in the PCP process.

Preparation of IDPs

A majority of responses from parents whose child had an IDP agreed that their views were taken into account during the preparation of their child's IDP. However, a lower proportion felt that their child's views were considered during the process. Over half of responses were satisfied with the length of time it took for their child's IDP to be prepared, whilst around half were satisfied all their child's ALN were identified and accurately described in the IDP

In open-text comments, a number of parents reported concerns about the quality of their child's IDP, IDP delays, and dissatisfaction with IDP processes and planning.

Additional Learning Provision (ALP)

Over half of responses from parents whose child had an IDP agreed that they understood the ALP outlined in their child's IDP. However, less than half expressed satisfaction with how long it took to implement the ALP. Similarly, less than half of respondents felt that the ALP outlined in the IDP was sufficient to meet their child's needs.

When asked to elaborate on their reasons for disagreeing that the ALP outlined in their child's IDP met their needs, the most frequently raised themes were that the ALP addressed some, but not all of their child's needs; that the quality of the ALP was poor; or that the ALP was inconsistent with their child's IDP.

Only a small minority of responses felt their child's ALP should be provided in Welsh. Among these, over half said their child was receiving ALP fully in Welsh.

Transition between education settings

Less than half of responses from parents whose child had experienced a move between education settings in the past year agreed that they were provided with clear information about how their child’s ALN would be met during the transition, and that their child’s ALN were met during their move between education settings.

Challenging decisions

Around half of responses were aware of their rights to challenge decisions under the ALN system.

Less than half of responses said they had disagreed with a decision made by an education setting or local authority relating to ALN. Those who had been involved in a disagreement provided further information, with the most frequent examples including disagreements about decisions not to provide an IDP for their child; disagreements relating to the provision of support for their child; and disagreements about the allocation of a place for their child in an education setting.

Among parents who said they had disagreed with a decision made by an education setting or local authority relating to ALN, over half said the disagreement was resolved.

Satisfaction with the ALN system, including ALP (parents of learners with an IDP)

Over half of responses from parents whose child had an IDP agreed that their child’s school/education setting promoted their inclusion in the school community. Around half agreed that those who support their child worked well together, and that the ALP received by their child was helping them make progress in their education. However, less than half agreed that their child’s ALN were being met in their education, and only a minority agreed that the ALN system was helping to improve experiences for parents and carers.

In open-text comments, the most frequent themes raised included mixed views on support from schools, with some reporting poor or no support, whilst others, albeit fewer parents, reported receiving sufficient support; a perceived lack of funding and resources to implement the ALN system effectively; concerns about joint-working and information-sharing between providers; a feeling that parents had faced a ‘battle’ to ensure their child’s needs were recognised and that their child received the support they felt they required. In other cases, parents commented on the complexity of the ALN system, and felt that education providers did not always have staff with the relevant expertise and skills to support their child.

Satisfaction with the ALN system (parents of learners without an IDP)

Among parents of learners without an IDP, fewer than half felt that their child’s school or educational setting promoted their inclusion in the school community. Furthermore, only a small minority believed the ALN system was improving experiences for parents and carers, with the highest proportion of respondents disagreeing with this statement.

Open-text comments reflected themes similar to those raised by parents whose child did have an IDP.

General views on what is working well

Parents were asked to comment on what they felt was working well under the ALN system. A number of parents answered this question by reporting that nothing, or very little, was working well under the ALN system, and expressing concerns about issues including a lack of capacity (e.g. staff), resources (e.g. funding) and suitable provision and support for their child.

Other frequently raised themes relating to what parents felt to be working well included positive experiences of IDP processes and PCP meetings, positive views on engagement with ALNCos, school staff, and the support their child was receiving. Some parents also commented on good communication and useful information from schools and local authorities. Additionally, in a smaller number of cases, parents reported that identification processes had improved, specifically for children of pre-compulsory school age.

General views on what is working less well

Parents were also asked to comment on what they felt was working less well under the ALN system and to suggest any improvements. The most frequently raised themes included:

- concerns about a lack of capacity resources and suitable provision in education providers, local authorities and/or health bodies
- the need for education providers, local authorities and health bodies to improve communication with parents
- a lack of expertise about ALN among the education workforce and need for more professional learning for practitioners
- children’s needs not being met
- processes (especially identification and decisions to determine ALN) taking too long
- frustration that their views were not sufficiently listened to
- challenges in implementing the ALN system, including quality and consistency of IDPs.
- issues with definitions of ALN and ALP

Annex A: additional analysis – open-text comments

This annex presents:

- analysis of open text comments provided by parents who answered that their child did not require extra support to learn
- analysis of open-text comments provided by parents of children aged 3-4 not attending a maintained nursery school
- analysis of those open-text questions which asked parents for additional information about their child

Child does not require extra support to learn – open-text comments

As the survey focused on the experiences of parents and carers of children who have ALN, respondents who answered that their child did not require extra support to learn were not presented with the main survey questions. However, these respondents were invited to comment on the ALN system and their child, via an open-text comment box. Only a relatively small number of respondents (53) chose to do so. It is important to note, therefore, that the findings set out in this section are based on a limited number of responses. This section presents the themes raised most frequently by respondents.

A number of parents expressed the view that insufficient funding and resources resulted in there being not enough support in place. In some instances, parents noted that their child did not have ALN, instead they were commenting based on their experiences as practitioners or professionals who came into contact with the ALN system. These parents felt that:

- the system was under-funded, resulting in children being unable to access specialist provision
- that, in the early years in particular, a lack of teachers/staff meant that children who did not have ALN but who required differentiated support linked to reading, phonics and the development of social skills were not receiving appropriate provision
- there was an over-reliance on teaching assistants and not enough one-to-one support available with teachers

Other parents noted that ALN were not being identified sufficiently early, which was having a detrimental effect on learners. Some of these parents explained that they were on waiting lists for their children to be assessed for ASD or ADHD. Others felt that more could be done to screen for, and identify, ‘hidden’ ALN, including those linked to neuro divergence or neuro-developmental disabilities.

Some parents referred to their children's needs not being met, including needs related to medical conditions or needs that are masked by children. Some of these parents felt that ALN were not being identified or were being seen solely as behaviour-related issues, without addressing the underlying causes of poor behaviour. These parents felt that they were not being listened to and emphasised the struggle involved in trying to have their children's conditions recognised.

Some parents referred to a range of ways in which their children's learning was being affected as a consequence of their not receiving what they felt was appropriate support. This most frequently included speech delay, spelling and reading, and emotional issues impacting on their learning. There was a sense among some parents that a cohort of learners was 'falling between the gap' or were forgotten: these were reported to be learners who did not have IDPs but who do require specific differentiated support to enable them to access learning in ways that support them

Child aged 3-4 not attending a maintained nursery school – open-text comments

The survey focused on the experiences of parents and carers of children of compulsory school age (or above) and/or those attending a maintained school setting. Parents of 3-4-year-olds who said their child was not attending a maintained nursery school offering part-time early education for 3–4-year-olds were not presented with the main survey questions. However, these respondents were invited to comment on the ALN system and their child, via an open-text comment box. Only a small number of respondents (5) chose to do so. The most frequently raised theme among these responses was reports of a lack of suitable provision and/or a lack of suitably trained staff to meet their child's needs.

Learning needs

Parents and carers were asked how they would describe their child's learning needs and to briefly note any specific learning difficulties or disabilities their child may have. This was an open-text question, providing respondents with the opportunity to set out information on their child's needs in their own words.

Responses were analysed and coded drawing on the 'type of need' categories used in the PLASC to guide the process. The types of need reported most frequently are summarised below.

Following the approach taken to reporting ALN needs on StatsWales, the data analysis was based on the number of times each ALN was reported e.g. if 'Dyslexia' and 'Dyspraxia' were reported by a parent for their child, this was coded twice, once for each type of need. Therefore, the number of 'reports' of ALN across the sample was greater than the number of children represented in the survey data, as many parents reported multiple needs.

In total, 1,621 parents and carers answered this question. Of these:

- 941 respondents noted in a later survey question that their child ‘has an IDP’
- 511 noted that their child ‘does not have an IDP’
- and 169 respondents were ‘not sure’ whether their child had an IDP.

The data on type of ALN reported by respondents is summarised below. It is important to note that the responses reflect the types of need reported by parents/carers which may or may not be consistent with the ALN set out in IDPs or documented elsewhere.

The most frequently described ALN across the sample were as follows:

- Autism or Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) was the type of ALN reported most frequently by survey respondents; a little over half of all respondents made reference to autism, in many cases alongside other types of need.

- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) was the second most frequently reported type of learning need, mentioned by just under a third of all respondents.

- Around one in five respondents described learning needs linked to behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.

- Speech, language and communication difficulties were reported by around one in eight respondents. A similar proportion of respondents (around one in eight) reported that their children had dyslexia.

- One in ten respondents described their child’s learning needs as being linked to either profound and multiple learning difficulties or severe learning difficulties.

- Smaller proportions of respondents referred to physical and medical difficulties, dyspraxia, hearing or visual impairments, and dyscalculia.

The type of support provided – open-text comments

Parents were asked to comment on the type of support provided to meet their child’s needs. While the question asked about the nature of the support provided, responses revealed a wide range of views on the appropriateness and sufficiency of support. In total, 1554 respondents answered this question, including those whose children had IDPs and those who did not. This section presents the themes raised most frequently by respondents.

Parents referred to specific types of support – often using the term ‘interventions’ – that were focused on supporting particular aspects of learning, or involved targeted activities or differentiated pedagogies. This typically included:

- support relating to particular skills or areas of the curriculum (e.g. additional help with reading, writing, numeracy), often involving supplementary sessions outside regular classes through individualised provision or strategies

- targeted therapy-based support for learning (speech and language therapy; sensory circuits; Lego therapy; support from educational psychologists, occupational therapists or other specialist support)

A number of parents underlined the importance of the one-to-one support that was available for their child. The amount of one-to-one time provided to learners was reported to vary considerably, depending on the needs of the individual, on provision set out in IDPs and, in some instances, on the resources available in schools and settings. For learners with the highest levels of need, full-time or extensive one-to-one support was often reported to be available to help children with physical and practical tasks during the school day, including accessibility around the school and personal care. Others noted one-to-one support for focused aspects of learning (literacy or numeracy) or for a limited number of hours per day/week.

A substantial number of responses referred to the extra help and support provided by teaching or classroom assistants. In many cases, these responses provided relatively little detail about the specific support offered by teaching assistants. Where information about the support provided was included in responses it covered areas such as helping to scribe in class; supporting work tasks to help understand tasks and access the curriculum; supporting learners to take part in life skills provision; supervision and monitoring behaviour; identifying when children require time-out sessions and overseeing transfer to quiet spaces. Responses noted the importance of flexible support provided by teaching assistants in prompting learners to ensure they are engaged in classes, supervising and assisting learners in class, and providing reassurance.

A substantial number of parents responded to this question by noting that their child had an IDP, with some indicating that the support provided reflected provision set out in their plan however without offering details about the support. A minority of those who noted that their child had an IDP expressed the view that the ALP provided did not fully meet their child’s needs or reflect the requirements set out in the plan. These respondents attributed this to a lack of staff or funding/budget pressures on schools.

Some parents noted that their children were supported by being given time away from their regular classroom or lessons. This included having access to a quiet space, or a designated ‘ALN room’, ‘base’ or ‘time-out area’. Respondents referred to their children being able to take brain breaks, sensory breaks or movement breaks. These were planned as part of their ALP or accessed when required. Related to this, many parents referred to the support their children received as part of nurture classes or groups.

Respondents noted that their children were following a reduced or tailored timetable to suit their needs. This was considered supportive in helping to ensure that the curriculum and learning experiences were provided in ways that met their needs. Reduced timetables or adapted curricula at times included the disapplication of some subjects to concentrate on core skills or areas of learning. Other examples of adaptations to teaching and learning to support children with ALN provided by respondents were learners being given additional time to complete tasks or during tests and exams.

Some parents referred to the emotional and well-being support provided to children in school. This was frequently delivered as part of the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) programme, a school-based intervention designed to support the emotional well-being of children and young people, particularly emotionally vulnerable learners. A number of these respondents referred to regular ELSA sessions and some noting that daily well-being check-ins were in place for their children.

Respondents noted that their children were taught in smaller groups and classes in order to ensure that they received appropriate levels of attention and support. In some cases, learners were taught in smaller groups for numeracy and literacy provision.

Respondents provided examples of the equipment or materials used by learners to enhance their learning experience and improve access to the curriculum. This included laptops/Chromebooks; ear defenders; fidget toys; wobble cushions; large print and accessible handout; and other assistive devices and technology.

A substantial proportion of respondents used the question to indicate that their child received no support or very little support to meet their needs. Some noted that support had been discontinued or reduced; other parents explained that they had been involved in disputes with schools about access to support and felt that their children were being ‘let down’ by schools and other partners across the ALN system.

Other respondents expressed the view that the support being provided to their child was limited and was not adequately meeting their needs. Respondents suggested a number of factors that contributed to needs not being met, including: schools not having the knowledge or expertise to be able to provide the required support; lack of access to specialist services or therapists; and a lack of funding within the system to employ the additional support staff required.

In contrast, a smaller proportion of respondents answered this question by noting that their child received good quality support that met their needs appropriately. This included learners in mainstream school and in specialist provision; these respondents paid tribute to the support and dedication of staff who understand and manage children’s learning needs in different contexts.

Transition between settings – open-text comments

Parents whose child moved from one education setting to another in the past year were invited to specify the types of settings their child had moved between. There were 151 responses to this question.

The most frequently reported settings parents’ children moved between are detailed below:

- From one phase to another – nursery to primary, primary to secondary and secondary to further education. For the two former setting moves, in some cases, parents reported that their child moved between phases from a mainstream setting to a specialist setting. For the later setting move, in some cases parents reported that

their child moved from specialist provision in a school to a mainstream further education setting.
- Between settings within the same phase – mainstream to mainstream (tended to be due to relocation), including from Welsh medium to English medium; mainstream to mainstream with specialist provision; mainstream to specialist provision; specialist provision to specialist provision
- School to EOTAS
- EOTAS to specialist provision
- From school to electively home educated.
- From electively home educated to secondary school
- From electively home educated to further education
- From one class to another within the same setting

Who provided ALP – open-text comments

Many of the respondents answered ‘No’ or ‘None’ and only a small number of respondents (43 in total) provided examples or named organisations/types of role. The answers provided were:

- Speech and language therapists
- Practitioners in school/setting
- Occupational therapists
- Educational psychologists
- Specialist health professionals
- CAMHS
- Local authority
- External third parties (including third sector organisations; private providers)