

PARENT CARER PARTICIPATION 2020 – 2021

REPRESENTING PARENT CARER VOICES IN LOCKDOWN





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Delivery partner of



ABOUT CONTACT, THE CHARITY FOR FAMILIES WITH DISABLED CHILDREN

One million children in the UK have a disability – and there’s a desperate lack of services and support for them and their families. Parent carers face a huge range of challenges, from financial strain to securing the right education for their child. Many feel isolated, stressed and anxious every day.

We’re here to make life better for all families with disabled children:

- We support families with the best possible guidance and information.
- We bring families together in local groups and online, to support each other by sharing experiences and advice.
- We help families to campaign, volunteer, fundraise and shape local services to improve life for themselves and others.

FAMILIES AFFECTED BY THE PANDEMIC

Despite the gradual easing of Covid-19 restrictions, we know that families with disabled children continue to be disproportionately affected by the fallout of the crisis and support networks are fractured and help may suddenly have been cut off, some of which is still not back to pre-pandemic levels.

HOW WE HELPED

Over the last year we helped 196,000 parents with advice, information, and support and campaigned to get early access to the Covid vaccine for parent carers. We ran hundreds of online workshops, webinars, and drop-ins attended by just under 5,000 parent carers and practitioners. We developed

new services to help families like our new Listening Ear phone service, which aims to help with the anxiety and emotional strain felt by many parents during the pandemic, and we were able to offer emergency support packages to those most in need at the height of the pandemic, including 1,305 Fledglings vouchers, boxes, and other in-kind support such as tablets and supermarket vouchers.

SUPPORTING PARENT CARER FORUMS

A key part of Contact’s work is supporting and developing the 151 local parent carer forums across England. Forums work with local authorities, health and other local partners to influence, design and develop the best possible services for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Contact has been the Department for Education’s (DfE) delivery partner, supporting and developing Parent Carer Forums since 2008. We help forums to set up and operate, as well as administering each forum’s annual £15,000 DfE grant.

This annual report uses grant monitoring data to highlight the difference that Parent Carer Forums made to the lives of children and young people with SEND and their families in 2020/21.

For more detailed information and resources to support Parent Carer Forums, visit our website: [contact.org.uk/pcp](https://www.contact.org.uk/pcp)

A WORD OF THANKS



What a year! I'm not sure what else to say other than to commiserate with and congratulate forums in equal measure for being resilient and for getting through it. As if forum members' lives were not challenging enough, the pandemic and its ongoing effects have impacted on every aspect of daily life, our families, and not to mention on service provision. I speak from the heart when I say that we have all been affected by Covid in different ways, many have suffered, and some of us have lost loved ones and friends. It makes us reflect, and realise what is important, and what isn't. For our children and young people, it has been especially hard. Thank you for keeping them on Government's radar, and for ensuring that those small changes that could be made to the national Covid response, happened, and made a difference despite the immense challenges that you were facing personally. Many of you also had a huge impact locally, working with providers, signposting families to support, and capturing experiences to feedback. You've all done an amazing job. We must also not forget those forums for whom the pandemic was too much, who were casualties of its disruption – a big thank you to all those forum members for their valuable contributions. Here's hoping for a smoother ride next year.

Carolyn Deveney, Head of Parent Carer Participation, Contact

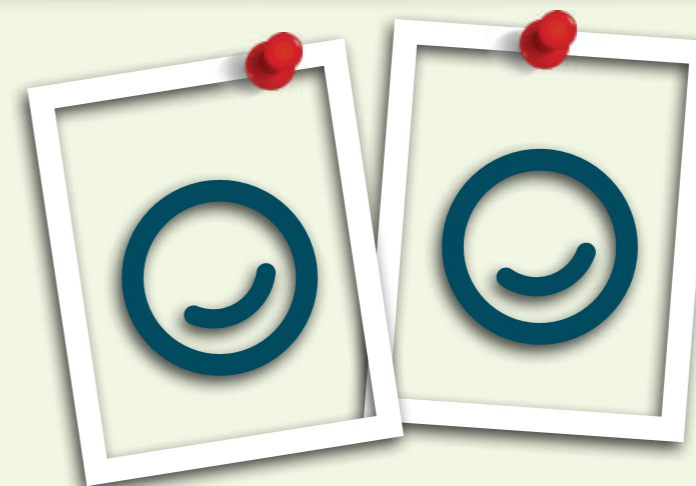
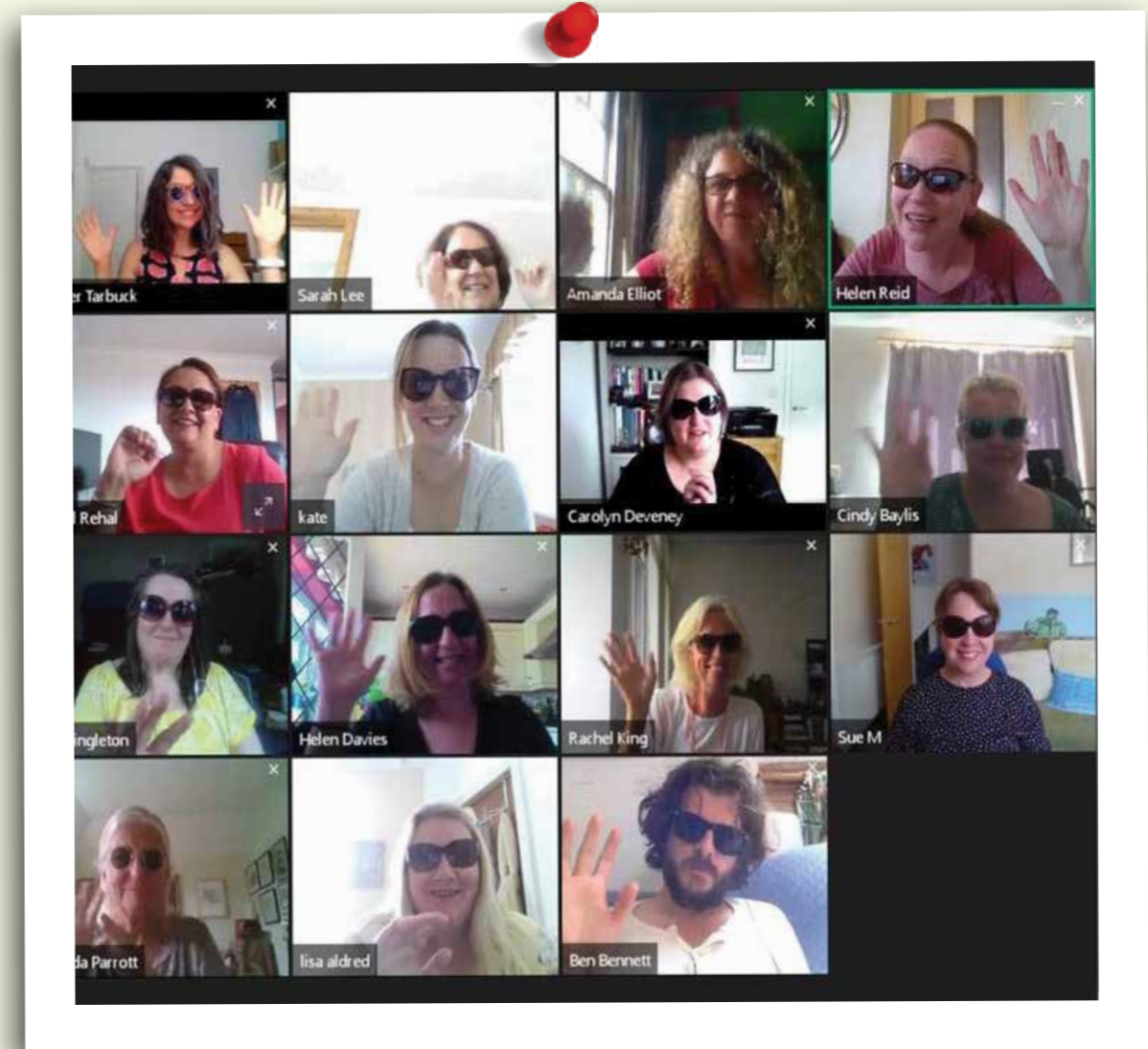


This will be the 13th year I have either been part of a forum or part of reviewing and reflecting on their achievements and challenges, and I am still humbled by the passion and persistence parent carer forums have when faced with barriers and challenges. But 2020-21 threw everyone challenges that no-one could have imagined, and whilst I am in awe of what you have achieved locally, regionally, and nationally in this exceptional year, I am most in awe of what each of you will have achieved personally. I'm sure many of you have been overwhelmed

and exhausted on a daily basis, juggling home schooling, caring, self-isolations and lockdowns – so to continue to champion the needs of others when your own needs are not being met takes exceptional fortitude, determination, and drive. Thank you to everyone who has been involved in a parent carer forum this year, any contribution you have made, however small, has been appreciated and will have made a difference. Without you saying what is happening, what matters, and what needs to change, the voice of parent carers cannot be amplified and used to influence the cultural change we strive for.

Gail Walshe, Director of Participation and Regional Development, Contact

THE PARTICIPATION TEAM DURING LOCKDOWN



Cheering up our team meeting during lockdown last summer with dark sunglasses

THE IMPACT OF PARENT CARER FORUMS (PCFS)

Last year, the focus was heavily on SEND local area inspections, their outcomes, and on the eagerly awaited SEND Review. This year, progress in many areas has been hampered by the pandemic. Those local areas already struggling were impacted even more severely by restrictions to services. Despite this, local forums and regional networks, backed strategically by the NNPCF, highlighted how the pandemic and governmental and local decisions affected families. They worked hard to ensure that evidence influenced changes that made a difference and eased significant pressures to make life more manageable.

THE DIFFERENCE THE FORUMS MAKE

The full Ofsted/CQC SEND inspections were halted at the end of March, and after some time, virtual interim visits resumed. PCFs and the NNPCF helped influence this process and shaped the survey that went out to parents instead of the webinar that had previously been conducted. Contact and the NNPCF worked with Ofsted/CQC and other stakeholders to redesign the new inspection process. They used parent carer forum feedback on the inconsistency of families' involvement in the inspection process to ensure that families, including children and young people, would be central to inspections once they resumed. Nineteen forums reported an interim visit by Ofsted and CQC during 2020-21. As preparation and meetings involved in the inspection process were online, forums found the additional workload more manageable and were still able to be an integral part of the inspection process virtually.

THIS YEAR

The forums have

99,811

parent and carer members

101,746

shared their vital knowledge and views of services

1,290

were on forums' steering groups or committees

234,876

parent carers reached online

1,447

strategically represented families to service providers and partner organisations

HOW FORUMS COPE DURING THE PANDEMIC

Work by PCFs on local Covid response, evidence and case studies collated by Contact, and evidence from the impact of national policy on families of children and young people with SEND that was fed into top level discussions by the NNPCF was instrumental to the decision to increase forums' annual funding to £17,500. This was in recognition of forums' impact, against all the odds.

MOVING ONLINE TO SUPPORT PARENTS

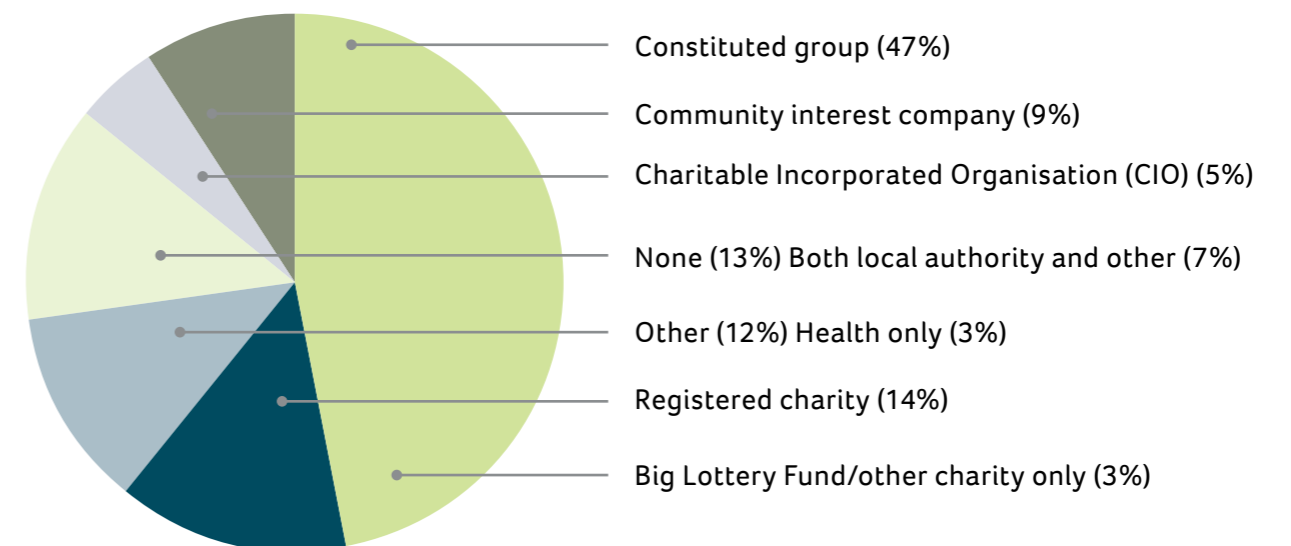
Inevitably, some forums' work was severely hampered by lockdowns and many parent carers had very little capacity for forum work due to having children and young people at home, and home schooling. Then there were those with clinically extremely vulnerable children who were shielding for the most part of a year. Amazingly, despite having

huge capacity issues many forums not only managed to keep afloat, but also quickly transitioned to virtual meetings and events to help to keep families connected and to reduce isolation, as well as signposting to local Covid support, working with local partners to ensure that families were kept informed, and that their needs were considered. Many worked with other local organisations or utilised additional funding to send out care packages to families to help to promote the forum and to gain new members. Others managed to increase their membership by reaching out to communities that did not previously attend face to face events. The virtual nature of the last year enabled many parent carers who had not been engaged with their local forum, to have a voice.

Strategic meetings with partners also switched online and proved to be a better

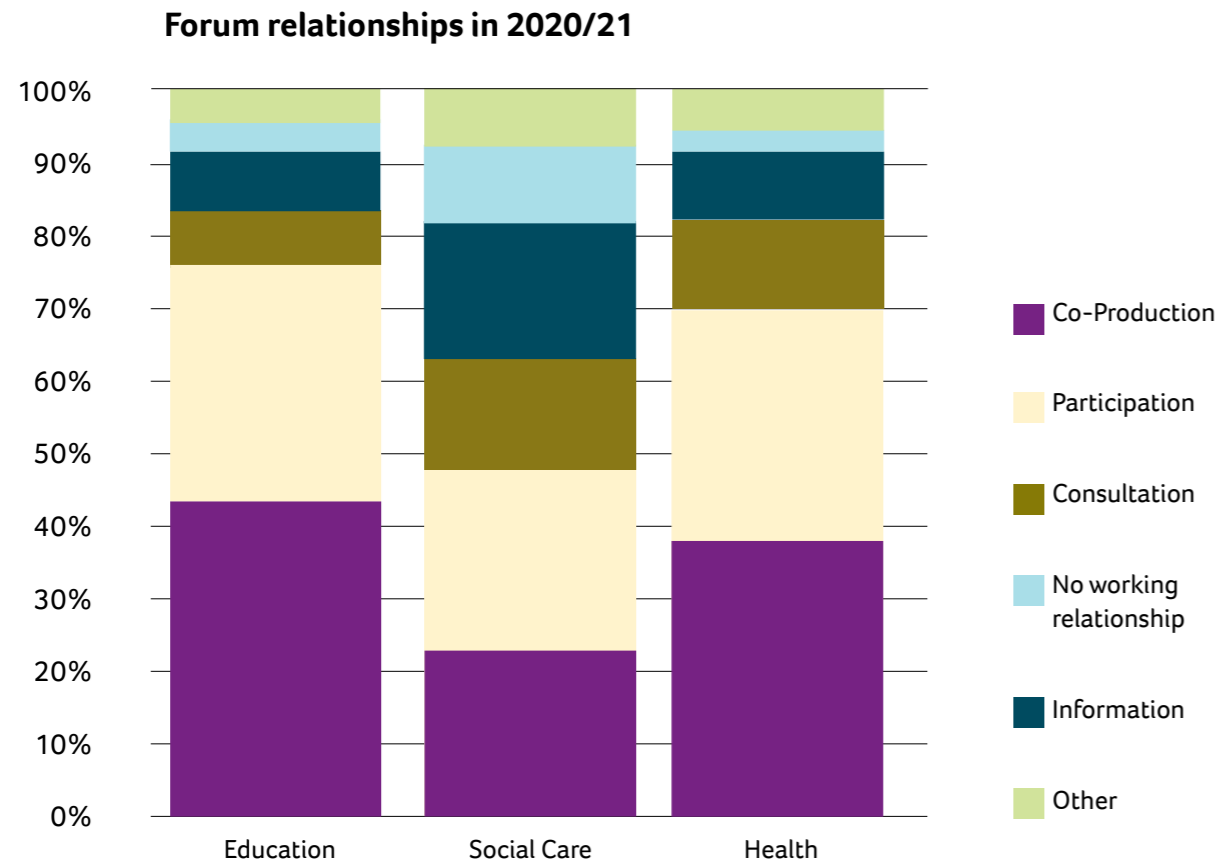
FORUM MAKE UP

Whilst the majority for forums are constituted groups, there has been an increase in forums becoming Community Interest Companies.



STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT OF PARENT CARER FORUMS

INFLUENCING REGIONALLY AND NATIONALLY



Throughout 2020-21, the National Network of Parent Carer Forums (NNPCF) worked tirelessly to ensure that the combined voices of forums were heard, and that national policymakers and Government adapted their approaches to the pandemic response and considered families' experiences and the impact of their decisions on the ground.

local areas, regions and nationally resulting in better services and improved outcomes for children, young people with SEND, and their families.

INFLUENCING HEALTH POLICY

Taking into account forums' feedback, and working with the NNPCF, Contact's Strategic Health Lead was able to influence various policies including:

Consideration was also given to post-Covid health priorities. The NNPCF inputted into the National disability Strategy and SEND National Trials. As well as supporting regional forums, our Strategic Health Lead was able to support individual forums' engagement with local health partners and support parent carers' early access to the Covid vaccine.

AN EXCEPTIONAL YEAR

During 2020-21 the NNPCF steering group members and National Representatives, who are all members of local Forums, contributed 1,502 days of their time influencing regionally and nationally on behalf of their members. This was over 250% above their annual combined target. This was an exceptional year which demonstrated the significant additional demands placed on the NNPCF's time.

- **learning disability and autism annual health checks**
- **flu jabs**
- **autism key working**
- **remote learning**
- **back to school guidance**
- **admissions avoidance, and**
- **childhood vaccinations**

NATIONAL NETWORK OF PARENT CARER FORUMS

The National Network of Parent Carer Forums (NNPCF) is the national umbrella organisation that all parent carer forums in England are members of. Working in partnership with the Department for Education, the Department of Health, NHS England, Contact and partner organisations, the NNPCF keeps local parent carer forums updated to ensure that they are aware of national developments, consultations, and opportunities to shape legislation. The NNPCF strives for the best policies across

WORKING IN CO-PRODUCTION

Forums reported an upturn in co-production during 2020-21.

Education

69 forums said that they co-produced with education partners during the year (43%), a slight increase on 2019-20 where 66 forums were co-producing with education. A further 52 forums felt that they were participating with their education partners.

Social care

37 (24.5% of) forums were co-producing with social care, up from 30 last year and a further 40 forums were participating with social care partners.

Health

60 (39.7% of) forums were co-producing, and 53 participating with health partners during 2020-21.

Very few forums had no working relationships with local partners, but more forums are not working with social care than with education or health. Forums continued to play an active role in local, regional and national co-production throughout the year by signposting parent carers to valuable sources of support and influencing local decision-makers' implementation of Covid restrictions and ensuring that local provision took families' needs into account.

EXAMPLE OF FORUMS' WORK DURING COVID



TELFORD & WREKIN

Parents Opening Doors Charity (PODS) in Telford & Wrekin, who host the parent carer forum, felt it was important opportunity to gather the experiences of parent carers during the Covid-19 pandemic. They carried out two surveys of families' experiences during the pandemic, in Summer 2020, and Spring 2021.

Detailed reports were produced and shared with SEND boards across both local authority and CCG Partners. Examples of the impact of these reports has been the introduction of support sessions for families with concerns about their children's behaviour, emotional support, and wider factors in home life. These have been developed with PODS and the Educational Psychology Service, and sessions are hosted on a monthly basis (daytime and evening to meet wider parent carer needs). The report has also led to wider discussions taking place around our Early Years families. The full report is available at: www.podstelford.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/COVID-Survey-Report-July-2021-1.pdf

Other work completed during the pandemic was the VOICES project – working with the forum, health, social care, education, communities and young people, Telford developed a 'Working Together (Co-Production) Charter' that is close to being signed off. This follows the recognised Genuine Partnerships model and embeds the four cornerstones of co-production: Welcome and Care, Value and Include, Communicate, Work in Partnership, to build Trust, which will be embedded across the local area in coming months.

The forum also provided a service of wellbeing calls to all members, facilitated a Siblings online event, and produced 'out and about' cards to support families in the community. Their wider charity offer included wellbeing packs, sensory packs, a cookbook, helpline, emotional support offer, online activities, and support groups.

SUNDERLAND

Sunderland PCF decided to send wellbeing packs out to parent carers on their database. Many organisations were sending stuff for children, but the forum decided that this was just for the parents. The packs were part funded by a local authority Covid grant. The forum designed a postcard to go into the packs filled with goodies and the forum posted on their social media that they were about to send surprises out. This served to increase the forum's membership by a third, and for the parents that received them, boosted their wellbeing, and gave them a little bit more fuel to keep going. The comments we received in return were amazing, boosting our mental wellbeing too!



DARLINGTON PCF

Darlington worked with their local council to ensure that new local social, emotional, and mental health provision for children and young people with SEND was made available in local settings, meaning that families did not have to travel out of borough and continued to work throughout Covid to ensure that the SEMH provisions were on track to open for pupils.

The forum also became innovative with engagement offering weekly virtual coffee and catch ups and by offering online workshops in partnership with CAMHS which were informed by what parents were telling them. The forum continued their strategic work, and focused on parental mental health and resilience, working with CAMHS to send out activity packs to children and anxiety resources to all parent carers. The forum was nominated by parents as part of their 'happy heads campaign' and was invited to speak on BBC Tees about the forum and work they're doing as well as directing parent carers to other regional forums.

STOCKTON

2020/2021 was a fantastic year for Stockton PCF – the forum diversified the way they worked due to Covid and as a result are more virtual and accessible than ever. They expanded their reach, and the team has grown from 4 to 12. The forum is seeing increased engagement/participation from parent carers which is in turn influencing co-production. The forum has interacted with everyone on their database and have done this through doorstep drops and postal packs.

Through the voice of parent/carers the forum managed to build strong connections and relationships across all areas. Families are seeing the importance of the work that a PCF offers and the importance of being involved. The forum is seeing increased financial investment into SEND families in Stockton as a result of the co-production work that is underway. Co-production is a huge focus within Stockton PCF, and they are looking forward to the launch of the new co-production charter which is coming soon.



REACHING SELDOM-HEARD GROUPS

Ensuring that forums reach out into their communities and engage with families from all groups is key to forums' success.

Forums represent the voice of all families who have children and young people with SEND and to do this well, they need to reach as many families as possible.

Past research found that although forums are often keen to reach out and learn who they have not yet managed to engage, they are fearful that they will not do so with the appropriate cultural sensitivity and do not wish to cause any offence. Half of forums request information to help them to learn if they are reaching families from all areas of their local community, and the majority of forums feel that they are inclusive and encourage parent carers from diverse and seldom heard groups to join their forum.

DIVERSITY TOOLKIT

We have been working on a toolkit to enable forums to reach out to diverse groups confidently and eloquently. During 2020-21 the development of the toolkit stalled as understandably, forums did not have the capacity to test it with us.

Working in partnership to promote diversity

Conscious of how badly the toolkit is needed, late in the year we partnered with Diversity Trust to add to the toolkit and make it an interactive, thought provoking, 'live' document. We plan to launch it formally alongside some learning at the 2021-22 joint annual conference. Diversity Trust also produced a template Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion policy which we are adapting for forums to use, and we plan

to launch this next year alongside some online learning.

COLLECTING DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Since GDPR, many forums have not collected as much demographic information from their members due to the challenges of holding and processing personal data.

Half of forums now collect data that will enable them to assess which communities they are reaching successfully.

Promoting confidential data collection

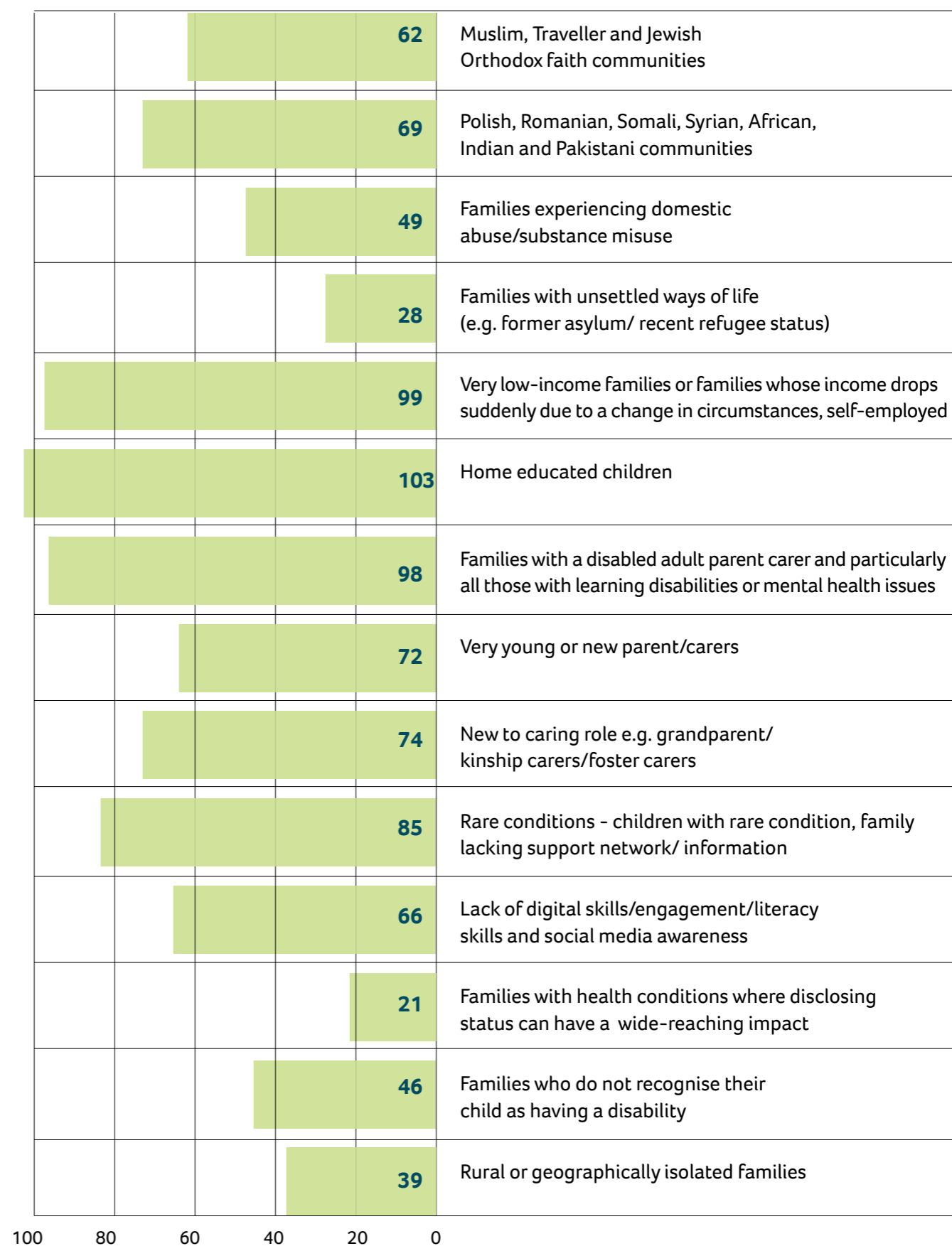
However, forums can collect this demographic data anonymously so that it is not tied to individuals, and by recording this information, may be able to identify gaps and to seek help from local partners to reach and engage those communities which they are currently missing.

By using our toolkit, we hope that all forums will gain in confidence and will take a proactive approach to diversity and inclusion by creating forums that are accessible and welcoming to all families.

A winning formula

Currently, over 91% of forums report that they encourage parent carers from seldom-heard groups to join the forum, and more than 89% encourage these members to become parent representatives.

Which of these groups has your forum successfully managed to engage with in 2020/21?



FORUM SUCCESS STORIES 2020/21



BRIGHTON & HOVE

The Parent Carer Forum (PaCC) in Brighton & Hove worked in partnership with its Partners, small charities and community groups that support SEND families in the city to deliver a range of online and face to face training, support, and fun activities to engage families, some who were already PaCC members, and many who weren't. The ideas were co-produced with parents and partner organisations.

Identifying the issue

The forum looked at local data and feedback coming from families and realised that parents and carers and their SEND children have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic due to loss, bereavement, and lack of access to education and wanted to reach out and provide support to these families. The online activities and safe spaces were also promoted amongst Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic families to make sure support

is provided to everyone, and everyone's needs are heard.

Offering a diverse package of support

Opportunities included group days out, online mentoring, family support and engagement sessions as well as Makaton for families, social communication Zoom chat sessions, arts and crafts and puppet making sessions. There was also a pilot OT project, sibling support sessions, pilot outdoor pursuits sessions and a parent carers online wellbeing space to share concerns and experiences. At all sessions parents were given information about the forum and membership information. The sessions took place over three months across Brighton and Hove and online.

A fantastic result!

More than 500 families attended activities and events and membership increased with 70 new parent carers becoming members. Some feedback received during the activities will shape the work the forum is going to do in the next few months, specifically to increase representation within PaCC of less heard families and more diversity within the Forum Steering Group.

Parent Carers Council Brighton & Hove

SWINDON

The forum continues to encourage transparency and one of the examples of this working well was when the forum took a presentation for professionals who sit on the SEND panel and adapted it for parents to read to increase their understanding of the panel process. The forum received positive feedback from parents about this, and it is now on the Local Offer website for anyone to view.

Expanding our reach to seldom-heard parents

The forum worked hard throughout the pandemic to reach those that are considered 'seldom heard' including purchasing 500 Helpful Guides for Disabled Children and distributing them to schools in more disadvantaged areas including areas with a higher percentage of minority ethnic families. Along with the books, the forum promoted their telephone helpline, to make families aware of how to reach the forum if they don't have access to the internet.

The forum now has a Participation and Engagement Co-ordinator who engages with seldom heard groups, strengthening outreach

to seldom heard groups and encouraging parents to participate more. Work has included attending monthly voluntary sector meetings to make new contacts and booking a table at Swindon and Wiltshire Pride, which will increase the forum's visibility within the LGBTQ+ community.

Helping parents in lockdown

Working closely with the local authority to get important information about Covid out to families in the early stages of the pandemic, the forum put together 300 SEND Information Packs to enable them to reach out to even more parents during lockdown, and supporting families to get delivery slots for food when they were scarce were also big achievements for the forum this year.

Swindon SEND Families Voice



CONTACT: SUPPORTING PARENT CARER FORUMS TO CHANGE LIVES

Contact is here to support forums with their day-to-day running, and empower them to increase their impact.

SUPPORT AND GRANTS TO FORUMS

As 2020-21 was a year like no other, Contact, like many charities, had to adapt and diversify. We kept families up to date with regular key information on all things Covid from schooling, shielding, to vaccinations, and supported individual parent carers via our Listening Ear appointments.

Helping forums thrive during the pandemic

For the first time Contact had an assistance programme in place via Counselling in Companies to support key forum members' wellbeing.

We negotiated the carry forward of DfE grant underspend from 2019-20 for all forums without it impacting on their 2020-21 grant so that they did not lose out on funding through cancellations in March 2020 – all of which happened due to the pandemic.

Reducing isolation

Contact ensured that there was flexibility of use of the grant, in order to keep parent carers in local areas connected, reduce isolation, and reduce the negative impact on parent carers' mental health. We also highlighted forums' valuable work to parents. Like the NNPCF, Contact represented families and ran surveys such as 'Life in Lockdown' through the Disabled Children's Partnership, a coalition of more than 90 charities, led by Contact, who campaigned to ensure that the impact of the pandemic was brought to the attention of decision-makers.

Adapting to new ways of working

Forums adapted very quickly to online delivery, connecting forums virtually. Contact exceeded our annual delivery target for forum support by 72.6%, supporting more forums due to reduced travel time. Associates were also able to support forums virtually and to restart several forums via online outreach.

Our joint conference with the NNPCF which ran in two parts during November – December 2020 and in March 2021, was a huge success and being virtual, enabled a much greater reach and attendance. And recording sessions enabled parent carers to watch at their convenience. Of course we all missed the face-to-face event which forums, the NNPCF, and our team value so much. We delivered 16 sessions during part 1, and a further 4 sessions during part 2 of the conference, with a total of 1,991 registrations and 1,423 live attendances and participants across both parts.

How forums responded

97.4% of forums said they were 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with the support provided by their parent carer participation adviser. Similarly, 99.4% of forums were happy with how Contact dealt with their enquiries about the grants process. 99.4% of forums were also happy with the communications from Contact, including our quarterly joint bulletin with the NNPCF.

PARTICIPANTS COMMENTS ON THE CONFERENCE INCLUDED:

"Thanks – I think it might well be helpful to continue this format in the future – it removes the cost and time involved with face-to-face conferences although the networking opps are obviously lost."
Parent carer

"Thank you, very informative and I appreciate the work everyone at Contact, NNPCF and forums do."
Parent carer

"Very well organised in the circumstances, thank you."
Parent carer

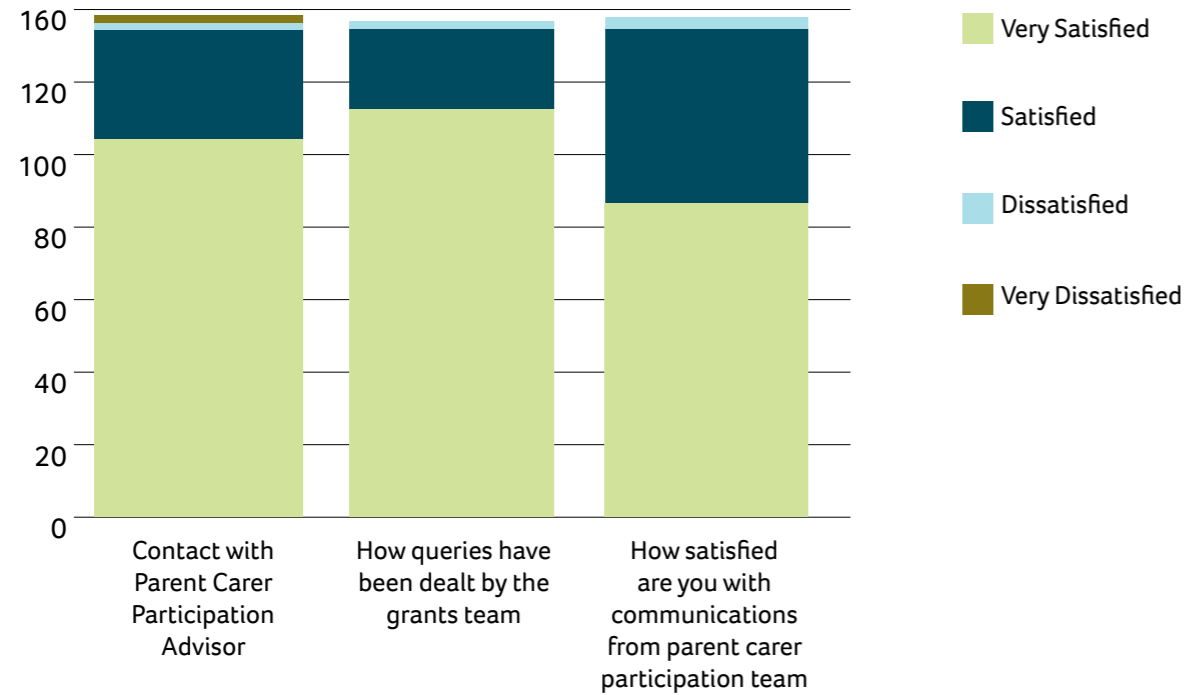
"I really enjoyed the event and I thought it was brilliant being able to attend, in previous years there has only been up to 2 members attending, this was accessible to all, the lack of travelling time meant you could attend more meetings, all positive."
Parent carer

"Thank you for great topic and information - good to hear about the work going on and the challenges still to be faced."
Parent carer

"Very interesting, virtual means that more can be invited and more speakers."
Parent carer

"It was very well organised, thank you for all the hard work put in."
Parent carer

WHAT FORUMS THOUGHT OF CONTACT'S SUPPORT IN 2020/21



PRAISE FOR CONTACT'S SUPPORT THIS YEAR

"The Contact advisor has been extremely supportive of the forum and has been available when needed and easy to contact. "
Parent carer

"Great support as always. Our advisor is always there when we need her and gives really thoughtful and helpful support and advice."
Parent carer

"We are very satisfied with the support received especially during our hard times. We found the services very approachable and friendly."
Parent carer

"Contact have been very supportive to the forum and agreed to a Contact Associate helping the forum."
Parent carer

ONLINE LEARNING AND TRAINING

Contact provides learning and development opportunities to all forums, equipping members with the skills they need to make a difference. In 2020-21 all sessions were virtual. We ran a total of 13 live online learning sessions reaching a total of 523 parent carers for live attendance, and a total number of 1,846 views. We also ran modular training courses on being a parent representative, leading your forum, and DARE Resilience workshops in co-production with partners and parent carers from forums.

Feedback on our training and online learning sessions was very positive and some comments from parent carer attendees are captured.

We have also worked to make all future online learning or conferences more accessible, following feedback this year.

"Very professional presentation and lots of varied topics & material. The pace was right for me. Thanks!"

"Really useful and interesting. Including videos was a good idea and it was fab to see so many forums sharing what they are using in terms of technology."

"Very useful, made me feel I wasn't alone in the process, even though I know I'm not. Other people's questions very relevant to our own situations."

"Brilliant as always - I think they are a very valuable learning tool and being able to watch slides at a later date with wider team members helps to refresh some of the learning."

"Thank you for taking the time to put this on most valuable."

"Much more accessible online, especially when I am a parent carer and have my daughter at home."

"Easy access, very informative and could view all the slides :)"

WOULD PARENT CARERS RECOMMEND CONTACT'S WEBINARS TO OTHERS?

Yes
100%

FUNDING THE FORUMS

The work of PCFs and the NNPCF throughout the pandemic helped raise the profile and impact of their work enabling Contact to evidence the case for an increase in funding, with forums receiving £17,500 DfE funding per year from 2021-22

Forums' work during the pandemic and the highlighting of local and national challenges in relation to Covid restrictions and the impact on children and young people with SEND enabled the NNPCF to represent forums' views strategically with DfE, NHS England, Department of Health and Social Care, and Ministers, to ensure that children and young people with SEND were on the agenda, that impending changes to the SEND inspection process had families at their heart, and that families' views continued to be considered during the delayed SEND Review process.

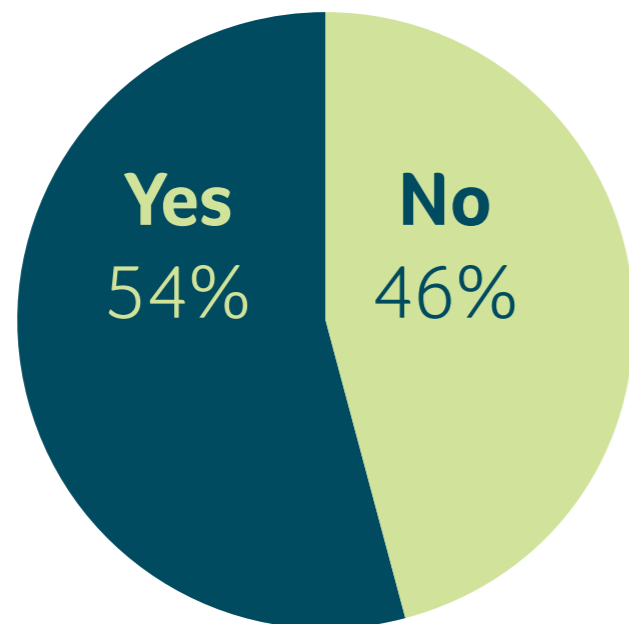
Funding challenges

86 of the 151 Forums in 2020-21 received funding from other sources totalling £2,027,097, an increase on last year. However, the average amount of additional funding per forum during 2020-21 was £23,571, a decrease on last year's figure of £26,074.

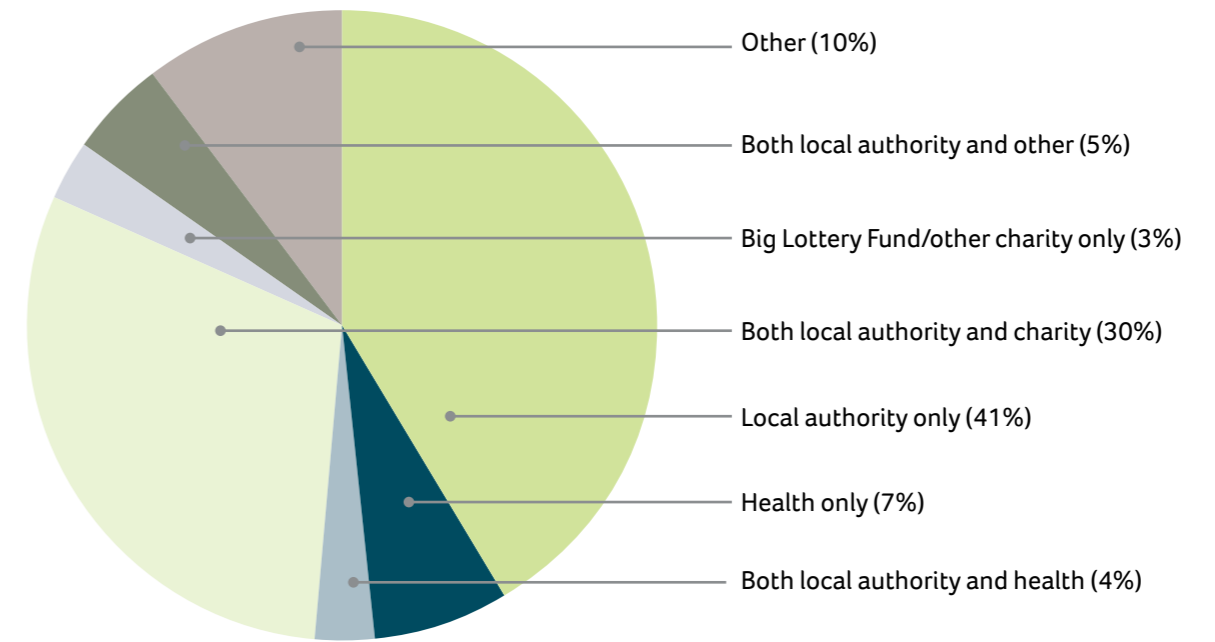
There was a slight increase from 48%, to 54%, of forums attracting other funding during 2020-21, with 86 forums receiving funding in addition to the DfE participation grant.

Stories about the impact of forums' work are vital to the continued funding of forums as they evidence the difference that forums make.

DID THE FORUM RECEIVE FUNDING TO SUPPORT PARENT CARER PARTICIPATION IN 2020/21 (OTHER THAN THE DfE GRANT)?



SOURCES OF ADDITIONAL FUNDING



DIVERSE FUNDING STREAMS WORKING TO SUPPORT FORUMS

More forums received funding from local authorities and charities during 2020-21 and this may be explained by the Pears DCMS grant which many forums applied for to keep them going through Covid, for work that was not directly supporting the development of parent carer participation.

Additionally, 38 forums were able to apply for discretionary grants from 2019-20 underspend. This was lower than in previous years due to the carried forward underspend. Some forums were able to access business grants as a result of attending an online learning session from Community Matters, one of our support partners.

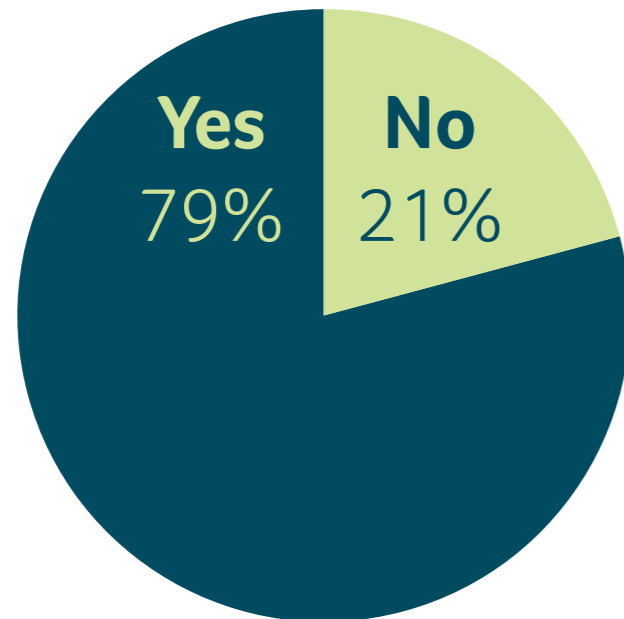
At Contact we were delighted to secure the generous support of The Pears Foundation and Department for Culture, Media and Sport. This partnership with us delivered £600,000 funding for Parent Carer Forums and parent support groups to support efforts to help families through the pandemic. We are grateful to the Pears Foundation for their support.

ENSURING SECURE PARENT CARER FORUM INFRASTRUCTURES

More parent carer forums employed people to help them to run the forum during 2020-21. Contact negotiated an increase in the amount of the grant that could be used on salaries from 50% to 75% to assist forums in continuing to operate whilst many parent carers were home schooling.

Paid administrative and development staff who were able to continue working whilst many parent carers were at home with children and young people or shielding enabled many forums to continue who would have struggled to remain operational otherwise. 79% of forums paid workers, about half were employed, and half self-employed.

DOES THE FORUM PAY ANYONE TO RUN OR DEVELOP THE FORUM?



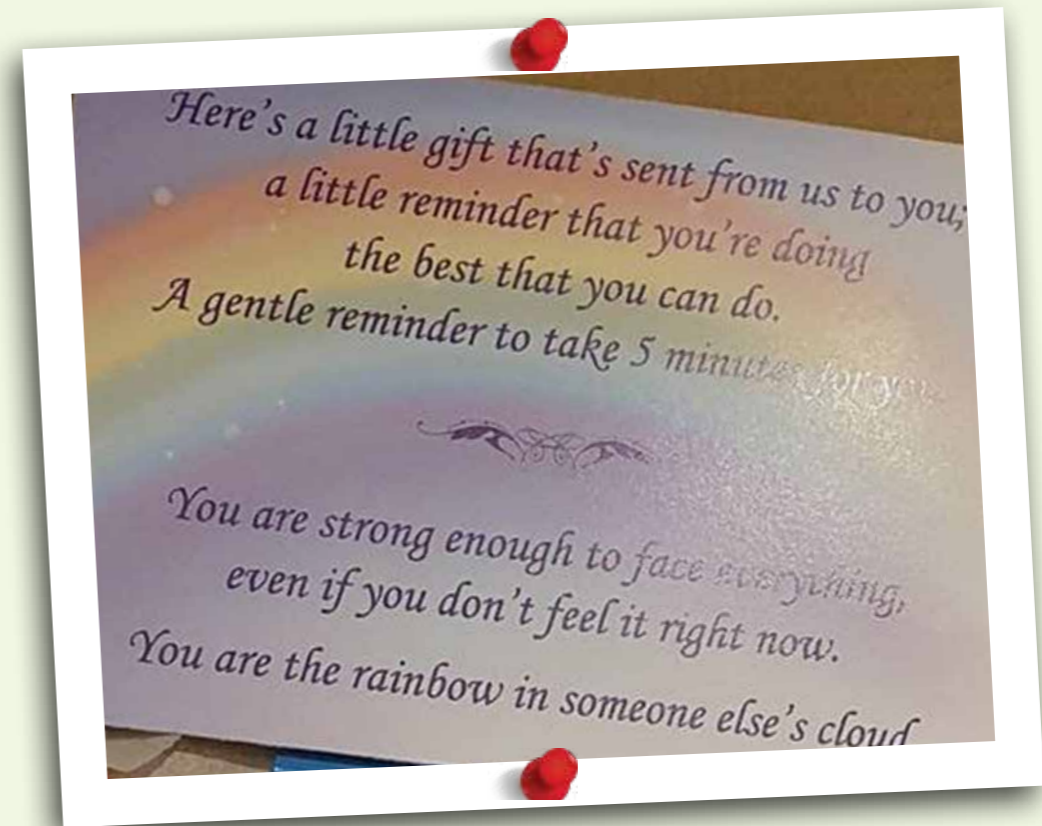
LOOKING FORWARD

THROUGH COVID AND BEYOND

The pandemic is far from over, but, as a country, we have adapted and made the most of the extremely challenging circumstances. Parent carer forums have proven their worth throughout, helping to keep parent carers connected, involved, and engaged, reducing isolation, and ensured that local service providers kept SEND on their agendas, despite coming under fire from various

angles. We are not out of the woods yet, and there are hard times ahead, but parent carer forums are sure to continue to feed in valuable views and experiences of their members so that whatever comes next, the needs of children and young people with SEND are considered by decision-makers.

Wellbeing postcard from Sunderland Parent Carer Forum







We are Contact,
the charity for
families with
disabled children.


We support
families, bring
families together
and help families
take action
for others.




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