

# PARENT CARER PARTICIPATION 2022 / 2023

STANDING FIRM AFTER ANOTHER CHALLENGING YEAR



contact

*For families  
with disabled children*



# We are 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 all families with children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND):

- *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.*

## OUR IMPACT IN 2022/23

In 2022/23, we helped 291,000 parents with our information, advice and support. The parent advisers on our helpline responded to 10,455 enquiries alone. Our website had 1M+ visitors, and 88% of families reported increased confidence after receiving our advice and support. We inspired 17,558 parent carers to advocate through campaigning and our private Facebook group – a safe space and online community network for parent carers – now has over 18,000 members.

## PARENT CARER FORUMS IN THE WIDER CONTEXT

Contact leads a consortium delivering a three-year Department for Education (DfE)-funded Participation and Family Support programme. The contract covers parent carer participation, led by Contact working

with the National Network of Parent Carer Forums (NNPCF), the umbrella group for parent carer forums. Children and young people’s participation is delivered by KIDS and the Council for Disabled Children and the national Information and Advice offer is provided by Contact’s helpline and website. Support to local SENDIASS services is offered by the Council for Disabled Children.

## SUPPORTING PARENT CARER FORMS

Contact has supported the development of parent carer forums (PCFs) and administered their annual DfE parent carer participation grant over the last 15 years.

During 2022/2023 Contact’s parent carer participation team and Associates provided 5,934 hours of support to the 127,921 parent carers who are members of up to 152 parent carer forums working strategically in local areas across England.

## A CHALLENGING YEAR

Finding the capacity to cope with increased demands, crisis meetings, manage ever rising costs, and weather strong challenge from campaign groups dissatisfied with local services has tested many forums’ resilience to the limit. Despite these challenges, PCFs have persevered with many finding new ways of working to reach more parent carers, grow their membership, reduce isolation and strengthen the voice of families of children and young people with SEND in their communities.

For information on Contact’s support offer for Parent Carer Forums, visit the participation pages of our website: [www.contact.org.uk](http://www.contact.org.uk)

## CONTENTS

Our year in numbers	5
The current landscape	6
Local area SEND inspections	7
Forum statistics 2022/2023	8
Strategic engagement of Parent Carer Forums locally	10
Being truly representative of the local population	12
Reaching underrepresented communities in Peterborough	14
Diversity Data 2022/2023	16
Forum success stories	18
Contact’s support for Parent Carer Forums	22
Funding and impact of Forums’ work	28
A new period of reform	31

Delivery partner of



# A word of thanks



The SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan has given rise to several new programmes tasked with improving SEND systems and outcomes for children and young people. While it remains to be seen what the impact of these new initiatives will be without corresponding legislative changes, what is beyond doubt is the need now more than ever for the sector to pull together and focus on co-producing sustainable and lasting change.

Forums have continued to navigate these changes whilst struggling against huge inflationary increases and cost of living rises that have impacted on their ability to function. Despite this, membership has grown to 127,921 and the forum network continues to have impact whilst encountering challenge from different directions.

Thank you to all forums and their members for your hard work, dedication, and determination to make a difference for all families of children and young people with SEND. The following report demonstrates how the work you are doing has an impact.

**Carolyn Deveney, Head of Parent Carer Participation, Contact**



The commitment and passion of parent carers who step up to be part of their parent carer forum is what shines out of this report, and I am in awe of their persistence to keep speaking up on behalf of others when the challenges families of disabled children are facing continue to grow. It takes very special people to put themselves forward and continue to be the voice of reason when there is conflict, confusion and dissatisfaction in the statutory systems and services on offer. To all those that give their precious time and energy to attend meetings, gather views, collate feedback, listen to the stories of others with the care and compassion they need, you do an amazing thing and I know it is often not recognised so thank you for all you do.

This report shares the strength and quality of parent carer forums activity and what they can achieve when true co-production happens. Parent carers are the ones experiencing the reality of how systems and reduced funding are impacting real people so it is vital their voices continue to be heard to ensure scarce resources are spent in ways that will genuinely make a difference.

**Gail Walshe, Director of Participation and Regional Development, Contact**

# Our year in numbers



The forums have

**127,921**

parent and carer members  
an unprecedented increase of 17,370

**1,236**

parent carers were  
directly involved in  
running the forum  
or in organising parent  
participation work



**151,526**

parent carers shared  
their vital knowledge  
and views of services  
via drop-in sessions, surveys,  
consultations and more,  
providing crucial views to  
help forums influence local  
decision-makers- an increase  
of 45,889 since last year



**1,770**

parent carers represented families strategically  
in local meetings with service providers and partners

Forums online reach increased significantly, to

**327,697**

an increase of 11,251  
demonstrating the increased virtual reach  
of Parent Carer Forums since the pandemic



# The current landscape

## THE SEND REVIEW

Following the Green Paper consultation, the SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan was published towards the end of the financial year. The Plan is intended to target change in the areas of the existing legislation that are in the most need of improvement, but without current legislative change to back these up, its potential to achieve the improvement needed remains uncertain.

## Additional support

However, there has been recognition that local areas need additional support and shoring up, and with programmes such as Delivering Better Value and Safety Valve to support the areas with the largest Designated Schools Grant deficits up and running, there is some investment into trying to improve the experiences of families at a local level.

Further programmes including Rise (Research & improvement in SEND excellence), a three-year programme tailored to local areas' needs led by the Council for Disabled Children including the National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi), the University of Warwick and Isos Partnership and supported by sector led improvement partners. What Works in SEND will also offer targeted and bespoke support to areas, and NDTi, DFN Project SEARCH and British Association for Supported Employment's Internships Work will enable 4,500 young people to access supported internships by 2025.

## NEW INSPECTION FRAMEWORK

The new multidisciplinary Area SEND Inspection Framework and Handbook is imminent. It offers a continuous inspection cycle focusing on improving experiences and outcomes, and on preparation for future reform with heightened attention on Alternative Provision, co-production, listening to families, improving Education Health and Care Plans, and more visible accountability with published strategic, accessible SEND plans being required to be produced 30 days post-inspection.

## Including the views of parents and young people

A meeting with the local PCF is an integral part of the inspection process along with tracking meetings with young people to ascertain what it is like being a young person with SEND living in the area. Inspection reports will highlight what is going well, what requires improvement, and whose responsibility it is to implement necessary changes. Judgements will consider if an area has systemic failings, inconsistencies of experiences or outcomes, or if the area's arrangements typically lead to positive experiences or outcomes for children and young people with SEND. The frequency of further inspection visits will depend on the outcome.

Everyone agrees that the system needs improvement, what is not clear is if this is enough to raise standards in a stretched system that needs an overhaul, or a sticking plaster over the cracks that were widened by the pandemic.

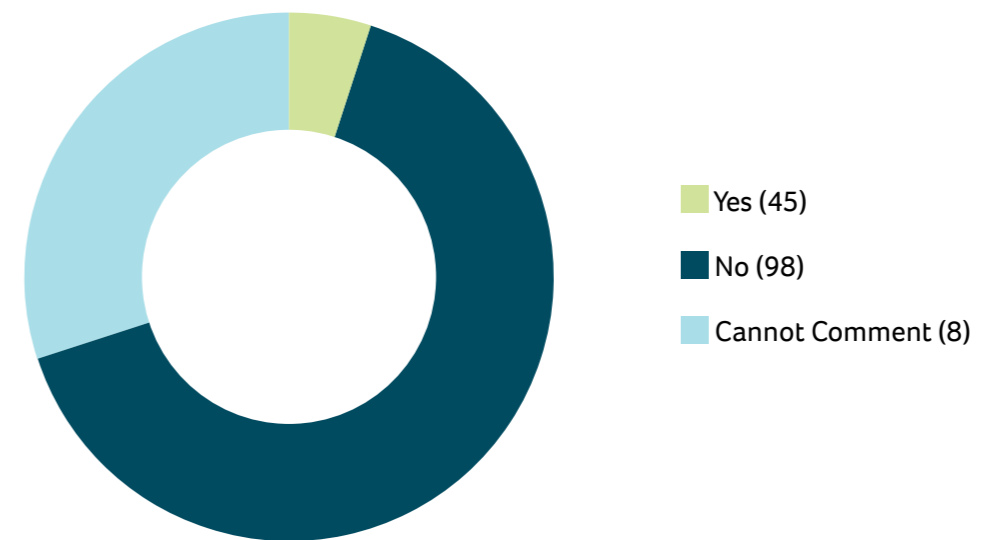
# Local area SEND inspections

The last of the full local area SEND inspections under the old framework were carried out by Ofsted and CQC along with revisits for areas with a written statement of action.

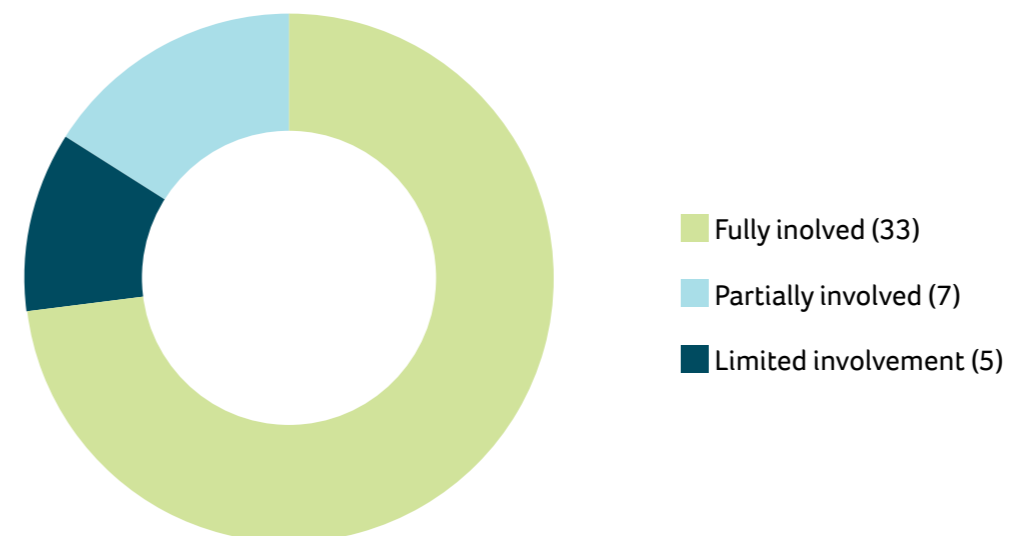
Parent carers continued to be involved in the process via parental surveys and by meeting the inspection teams, and young people had a more prominent role.

Preparations for the new inspection framework starting in 2023-24 continued. Of the 45 local areas that forums reported being inspected, 73% of forums say that they were fully involved in the inspection process. The remainder of the forums were involved in some way.

Areas going through a local area SEND inspection during 2022/2023



How involved forums were in the inspection or revisit process



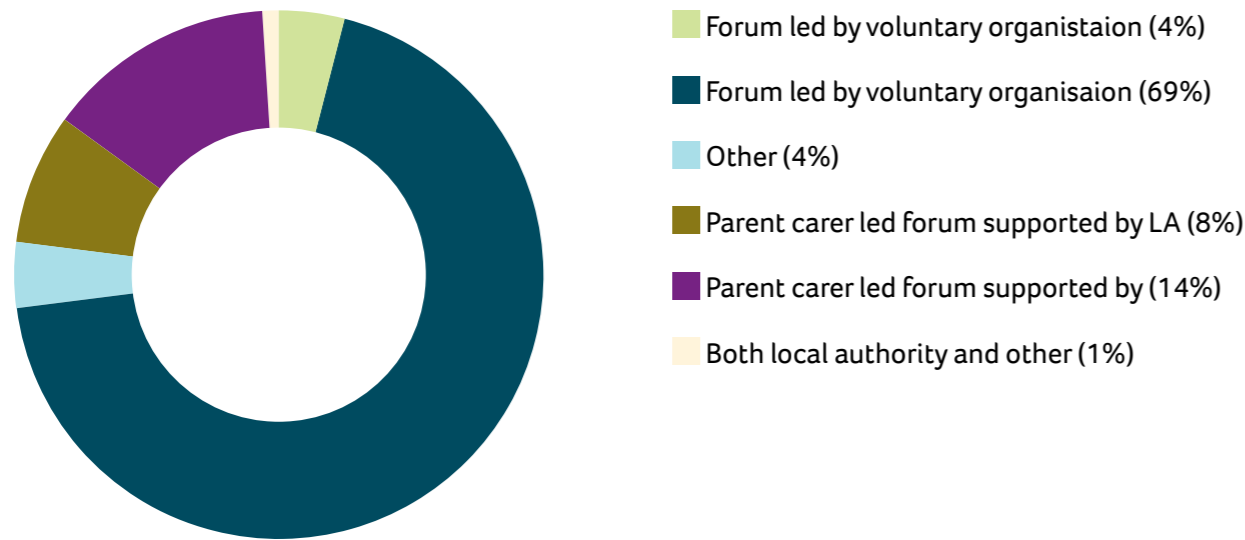
# Forum statistics 2022/2023

## FORUM STRUCTURES 2022/2023

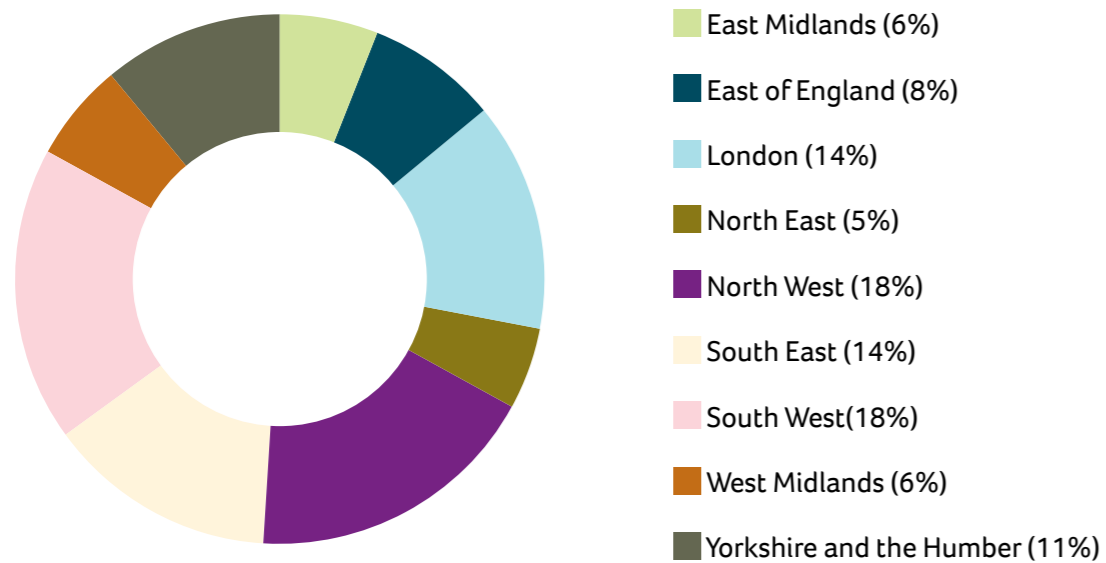
Forum structures have largely stayed the same as during 2022/2023, though there is an increase in the number of unincorporated associations as there were many new forums

during the year who may not have decided on a longer-term structure yet. There was a slight increase in the number of forums becoming Community Interest Companies

Forum structures



Total regional membership



## FORUM STATUS 2022/2023

Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)	8
Community Interest Company (CIC)	22
Constituted group	72
None	11
Other	11
Registered Charity	17
Unincorporated Association	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>151</b>



# Strategic engagement of Parent Carer Forums locally

Forums have continued to strive to co-produce with local strategic SEND partners to ensure that the experiences of families are at the forefront when decisions are made. This was particularly important as thinly stretched services attempted to recover from the pandemic, and to improve the struggling SEND system and on the back of the long-awaited SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan.

## EDUCATION PARTNERS

Relationships with local education partners remained static, with 46.3% of forums saying that they co-produced with education partners during the year; a further 33.5% of forums felt that they were participating with their education partners and 9.4% reported that they were consulted.

## SOCIAL CARE PARTNERS

There was a drop in co-production with social care of 3% to 20%, whilst 28% were participating and 10% were informed. The number of forums reporting no working relationship with social care increased by 5.5%, which is concerning.

## HEALTH PARTNERS

There was just over a 5% decrease in the forums co-producing with health partners and 33% are participating and 18% are consulted.

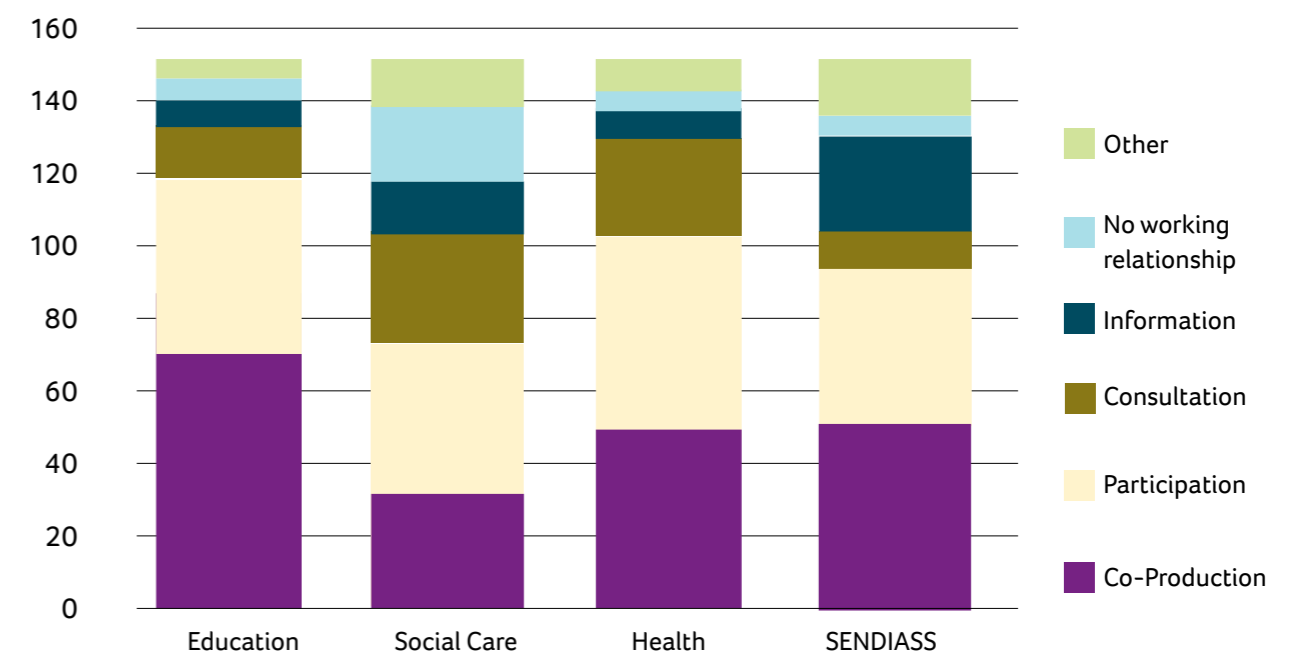
## SENDIASS PARTNERS

For the first time, we have information on how forums engage with their local SENDIASSs with just over a third of forums (34%) saying that they work in co-production with SENDIASSs and a further 28% participating. Only 3% of forums don't have a working relationship with SENDIASSs. 89% of forums said that they had apposite relationship with their local SENDIASSs, but only 22% have a formal working agreement.

Many forums are aware of and are working alongside local children and young people's participation groups and challenge if children and young people are not involved in task groups or decision-making boards.



How forums described their relationships with local partners in 2022/2023



# Being truly representative of the local population

As the funder of parent carer forums, the Department for Education is keen to ensure that forums reach as many parents in their local areas as possible so that they truly represent the views of all families.

Each year forums are asked to report on who they are reaching, and who they have not yet engaged. This helps the DfE to know how forums are including underrepresented groups and helps forums to focus on what they might need to do to increase their outreach, and to whom.

## DATA COLLECTION

A criticism often levelled at parent carer forums is that they are not truly representative. In most cases, the forum does everything that it can to reach out to grow and diversify its membership and we have seen some creative methods used by forums to engage with different communities in their areas. However, forums have limited resources, and most do not have access to sophisticated databases or funding for membership officers, though many collect membership data that demonstrates which communities they are reaching, where there are gaps, or communities that they have yet to reach and need to concentrate their efforts on. Others choose not to collect the data, but by collecting this data even anonymously can offer evidence of their representativeness and reach which will support the case for continued funding for parent carer forums.

51.3% of forums collect diversity data from their membership, and 48.7% do not which is similar to last year's picture. We continue to encourage forums to collect this data so that they know which communities they are reaching, and those where there is further work to be done to engage.

## DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION TOOLKIT

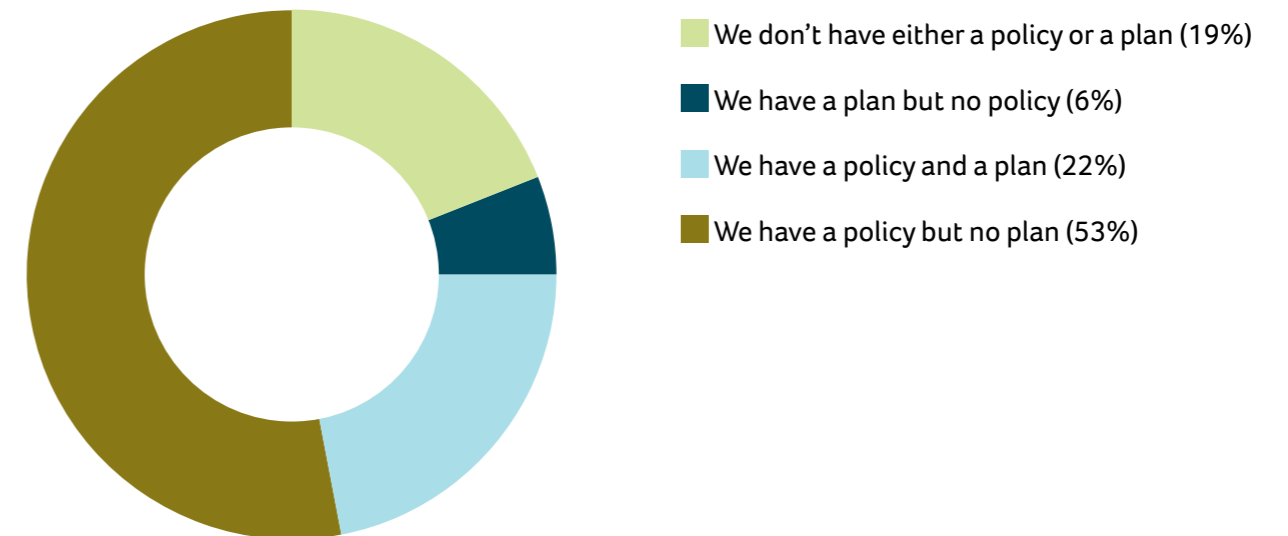
Contact produced a Diversity and Inclusion toolkit to support forums in reaching out confidently and produced a summary version for forums starting out to support them to put on inclusive and welcoming events. The toolkit will be updated periodically with new information and we're always keen to hear from forums who have successfully engaged underrepresented communities and strengthened their membership as a result of using it.

53% of PCFs have an equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) policy in place with 6% having a plan and 18% of forums have both; but 19% of PCFs have neither an EDI policy, nor plan. Which shows a slight increase in the number of forums with a policy and plan in place from last year.

## EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION WORKSHOPS

During 2022/2023, Contact offered a series of EDI peer-led workshops to all forums, each session being led by participants and therefore unique. There is a series of template EDI policies for forums to use and adapt and further EDI peer led workshops along with peer sessions on utilising the toolkit, sharing good practice, successes, and challenges, as well as support to develop EDI policies will be offered next year.

Does your forum have an Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion policy and plan in place?



# Reaching underrepresented communities in Peterborough

## FAMILY VOICE PETERBOROUGH

Family Voice Peterborough (FVP) runs as a charity. Their offices include a community centre, which links FVP to the community. Often people who use the service become volunteers, including those from underrepresented communities.

Peterborough is a diverse, multicultural area, and the forum has always had a focus on including underrepresented communities. National Lottery funding has allowed them to focus on extending their outreach work.

## REACHING FAMILIES ON SOCIAL MEDIA

FVP advertises open events on social media that are well attended, including a central SEND Parent carers coffee morning, and a community café where guest speakers talk about useful things for the community, for example, NHS Vaccines or Finance advice. FVP found that they often get more engagement from underrepresented communities by not being SEND specific, as people can engage without feeling 'singled out.'

## COMMUNITY CONNECTORS

Community connectors built up through FVP's outreach help to publicise, via word of mouth, targeted events for underrepresented groups by passing on invitations to their contact groups. This included eight online sessions during and post Covid, family activities, and parent-only activities. FVP reps support parent carers to complete surveys at the events which tells them how things are working (good and bad) and what their

families want and need; this is reflected back in the events that they provide, for example, wellbeing for parents is a current priority and they have run a wellbeing event for Muslim women.

## FUNDING A COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WORKER

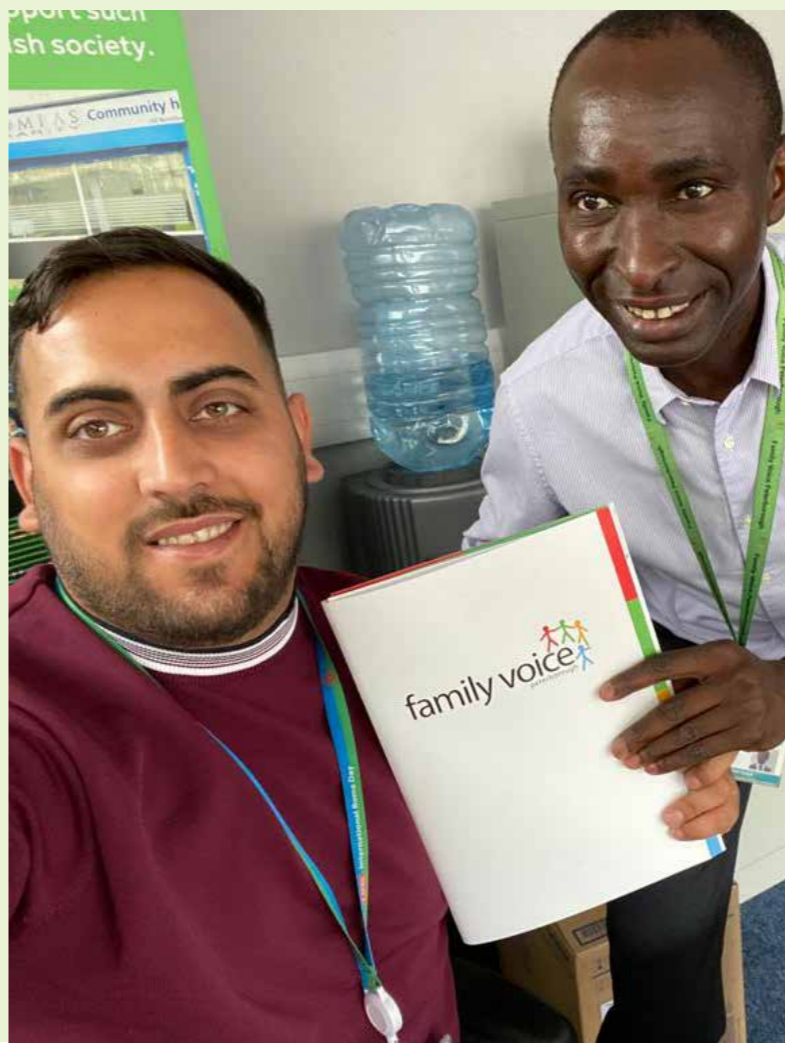
FVP attend coffee mornings, visit schools, and other local groups. Their lottery grant funds a Community Development Worker from the Gambian community. The worker visits community centres, food banks, places of worship, libraries, doctors/dentist surgeries holding stands or leaving flyers and PCF information, which is having a positive impact. Doctor's surgeries and libraries have been particularly successful for engaging with diverse communities.

## THE IMPACT

Diversity of FVP's membership has grown. 30% of their membership identify as other than 'white British' and they serve a range of communities. Members of underrepresented communities come to events they would not have attended before, for example, a Coronation BBQ. By being visible, listening to their communities, putting on relevant events, and offering a welcoming environment FVP has created a space for members of all communities to feel included.



Hooray! Parent carers and children on a coach trip to the sea organised by FVP



FVP Parent Carer Representatives, CEO and NHS 11-19 Transition Team

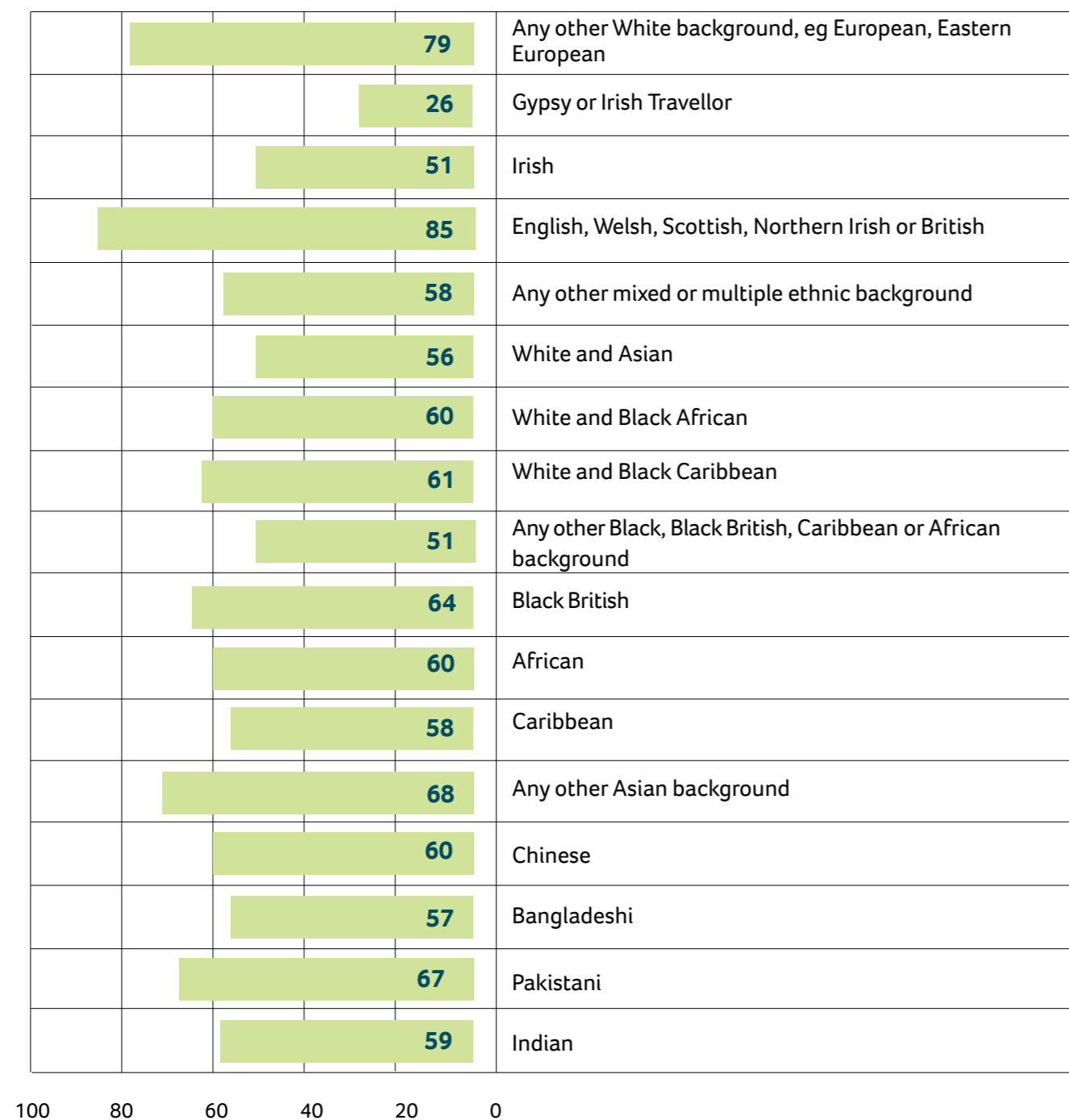
Ousman Gaye, Community Development Worker



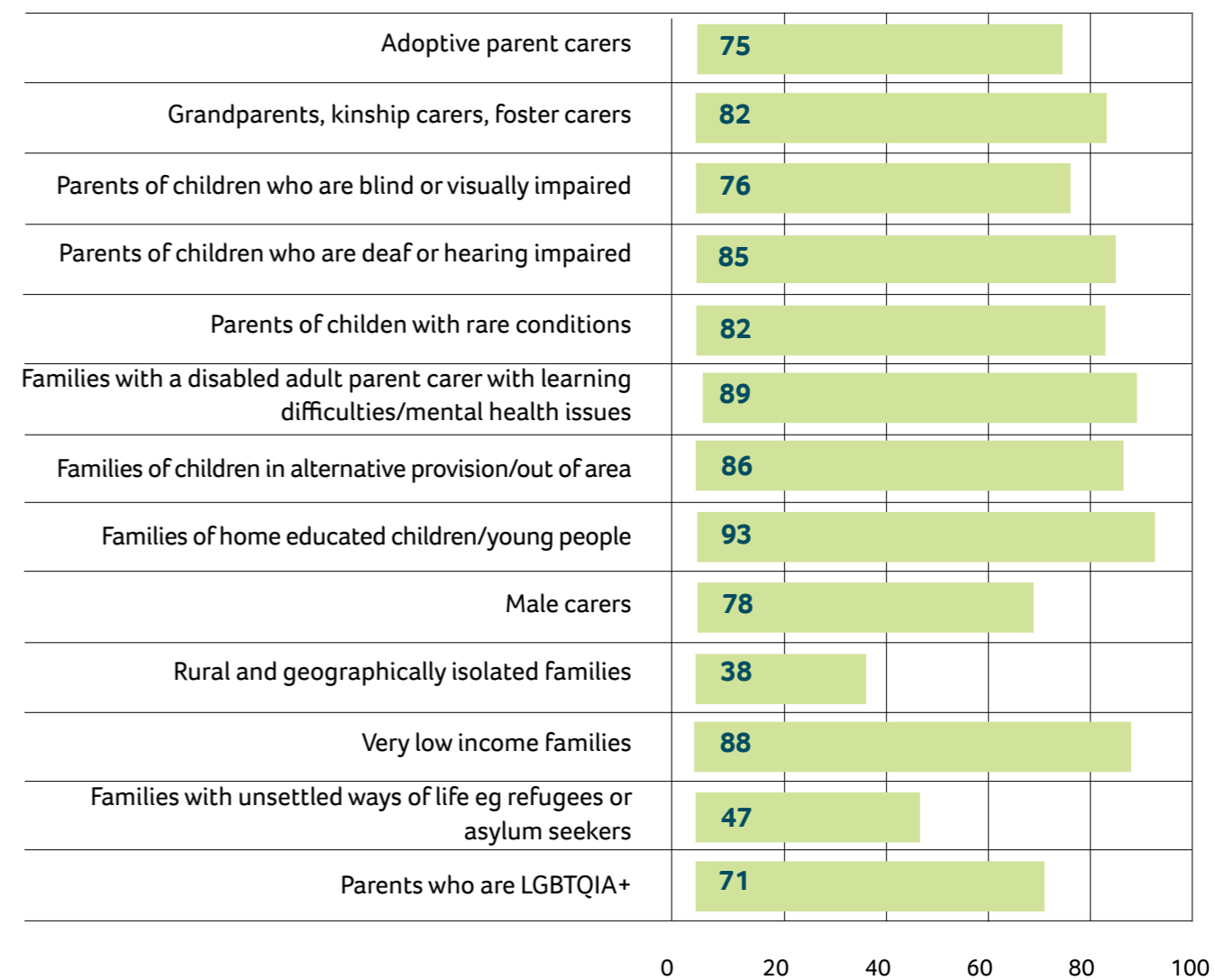
# Diversity data 2022/2023

Of the parent carer forums that collect diversity data, the graphs below show how many are reaching different ethnic groups and other underrepresented communities:

Percentage of forums that record diversity data engaging with the following groups



Number of forums engaging with under-represented communities



# Forum success stories



## DONCASTER PARENTS VOICE

### Making a difference in Doncaster

Doncaster Parents Voice (DPV) has been working with the LA SEND strategic lead to bring about change in nurseries, schools, and colleges in Doncaster to how they support and nurture children and young people who have special educational needs and or disabilities (SEND). This is balanced against a target-driven culture which can be harmful to children and young people with SEND. This work involves a massive culture change in local educational settings which will take time to embed.

### Seeking parents' views

Families have a wealth of knowledge and experience of what works well and what doesn't for children and young people with SEND. Together with the LA, DPV created the Making a Difference Group to enable parents to talk freely about their child/young person's experiences in education with the SEND strategic lead and to come up with joint solutions and co-produce the development of new policies and practices.

Top priorities parents identified:

- *all schools need trained SENCOS who know how to support children, young people, and parents*
- *all staff working in schools require training on the unique and varying needs each child or young person may have*
- *there shouldn't be a postcode lottery as to whether your child receives good support or not*
- *more accountability is needed around how services and support are delivered.*

### Outcomes of consultation

DPV and the SEND strategic lead then worked together to identify gaps and look at how to improve outcomes, and the educational journey and experiences of children and young people with SEND and their parents. This resulted in:

- *all schools to sign up to the Charter to ensure equitable SEND provision across schools*
- *a tool kit for SENCOS so all SENCOS will have the same up-to-date information and guidance*
- *free training programme is being developed for all SENCOS by the LA*
- *a training package being developed by the LA to address lack of training around SEND needs and support for staff in all schools*
- *funding for SEND provision in educational settings to have emphasis on identified need rather than diagnosis or the need for an EHCP*
- *more accountability about how SEND funds are being spent (new LA posts to monitor how schools spend funds for individual SEN support).*



## SOUTH GLOS PARENT CARERS

### Understanding and recognising emotionally based school avoidance

Feedback received by South Glos Parent Carers (SGPC), the local parent carer forum, indicated that emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA) was a real issue for families, especially since the pandemic, with many children and young people still struggling with transition back into school and parents saying that they felt blamed for this. SGPC approached the local authority with their concerns, which were backed up by local and national attendance data.

### Developing a toolkit for schools

A working group was set up to address the issue of EBSA, led by Principal Educational Psychologist Dr Helen Cox. SGPC worked with health, social care, and education practitioners to develop an EBSA Toolkit for schools. The toolkit provides the resources to help schools with earlier intervention and develop strategies and confidence to support children and young people who have difficulty attending school due to their mental health or anxiety.

The Toolkit was reviewed by SGPC and focus groups before being finalised to ensure that it was child and young person-centred and met families' needs. All schools then received training on how to use the Toolkit, how to work with parents, and the link between EBSA and neurodiversity. This will be undertaken annually with any new staff.

### Outcome for schools

Schools now have a better understanding of EBSA, of the early interventions, flexible strategies that can help, and the reasonable adjustments that can be made. A triage approach is now in place for all children with attendance challenges. Education Welfare Officers have regular meetings with schools where best support options will be decided for referred children, including a family link or keyworker to support families for up to six months around attendance.

### Outcome for families

As a result of SGPC coordinating and representing their views, families were heard, reassured, and no longer felt blamed for their child's attendance difficulties. They are working in partnership with schools to support their child's education. There is greater awareness all round of the issues that affect attendance.



## Forum success stories cont...



### **FACT BUCKS**

#### **Early intervention**

In 2022, FACT Bucks advocated for the involvement of voluntary sector groups in the provision of services where statutory providers were struggling to meet need. From this, current offers were mapped to highlight where LA funds could be most effectively used to create new early intervention contracts.

#### **A successful pilot**

Autism Early Support (AES) were contracted to deliver a pilot conducting neurodiversity assessments for children and young people aged 5 – 18. The pilot supported 248 families, with 96% of parents saying they would recommend the programme and that the programme had broadened their knowledge. One parent said, “The programme was incredibly helpful and gave us confidence to deal better with our children’s difficulties” and another said “I feel better equipped to help my child and to ask school for a way to support my child.”

This resulted in a pre-diagnostic support pathway and single provider being commissioned to conduct neurodiversity assessments for children and young people aged 5 – 18 which improved consistency for families.

#### **Support portal for parents**

AES has further developed a Support Portal offering parents information, webinars, and access to professional and peer support for a fee. FACT Bucks is working with the DCO to persuade the council to fund membership of the portal for parents on the neurodiversity waiting list rather than invest more time in the Local Offer toolkit for neurodiversity.

#### **Developing a Co-Production Charter**

FACT Bucks has also worked with partners to develop a Co-Production Charter and pledge which has resulted in a commitment to compulsory training for all children’s services staff on co-production, as well as increased training on understanding lived experience for frontline staff.

The forum and partners also hold an annual event to showcase positive examples of co-production. Feedback from the event indicated that 80 of 100 attendees found it useful, and 65 felt empowered to work co-productively in future. Content was thought to be inspiring, confidence building, and resulted in commitments to co-production.



# Contact's support for parent carer forums

## DELIVERING SUPPORT AND GRANTS TO FORUMS

During 2022-23, 97% of forums reported that they were 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with the support provided by their parent carer participation advisor. 99% of forums were 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with how Contact dealt with their enquiries about the grants process. 98% of forums were happy with the communications from Contact, including our quarterly joint bulletin with the NNPCF.

Each year we take the feedback from the grants form and use this to make any required improvements to the forms or our processes. Due to the continuing contract, in 2023/2024 the grant will be available during March for the first time, to be paid at the beginning of April, to minimise any funding gap and impact on forums with set overheads and staffing.

*"Our advisor always shares information from Contact via email or at our monthly meetings. She is always at the end of email or phone and comes back to us very quickly. She is in contact with our regional representative as well. Takes the time to remind us and supports us through things."*

*"Our Parent Participation Advisor is ALWAYS on hand when needed; she is always extremely helpful and supportive of our efforts. Our advisor regularly and proactively sends us information to make sure as a forum we don't miss useful information and opportunities."*

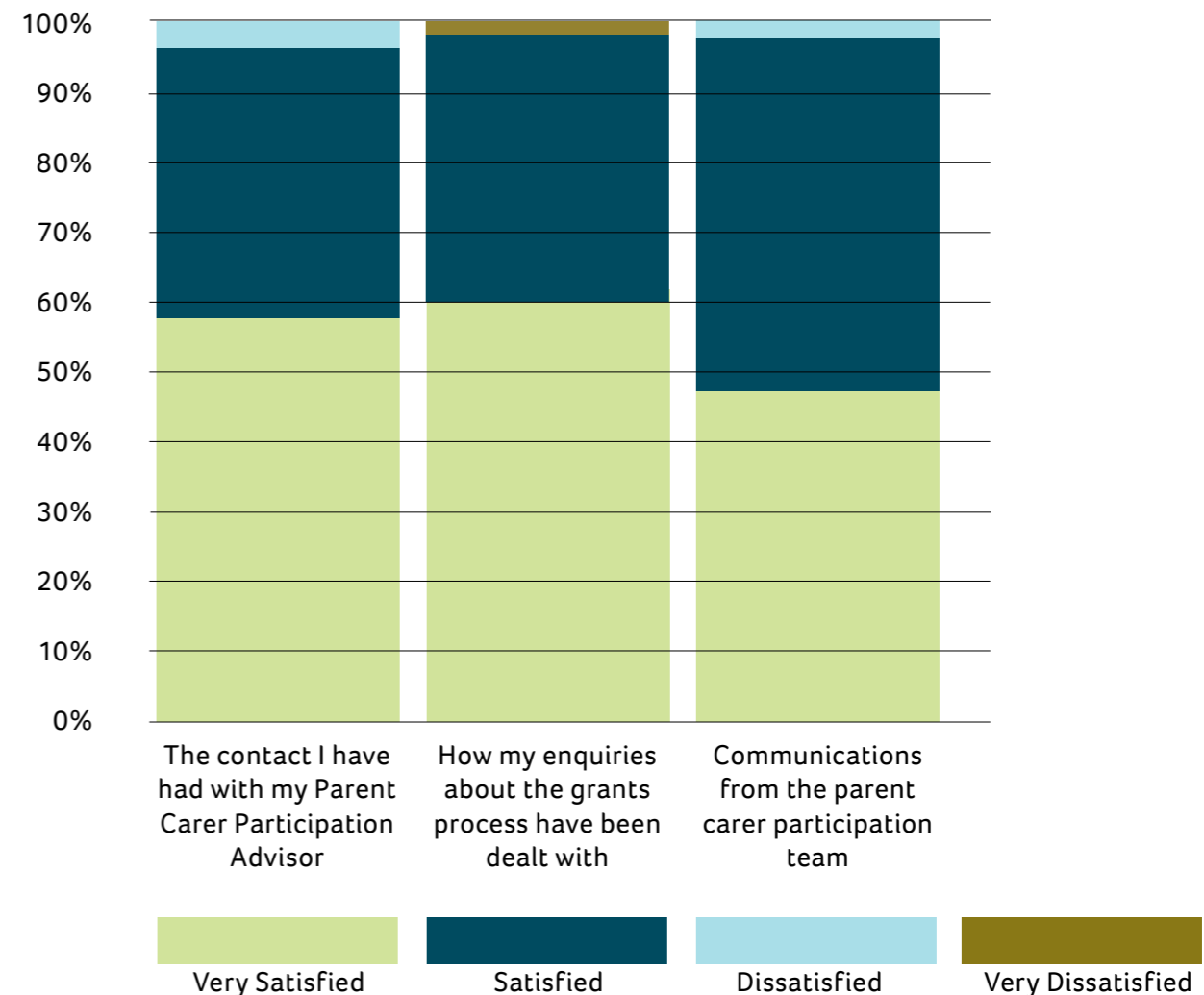
*"As always, we receive an excellent service from Contact, and we cannot praise them enough for all they do for us. The grants team go over and above to help as well as our advisor is just wonderful, we could not want for better support."*

*"The grant team are amazing and so supportive. We rarely have to contact them as being well established but...has been helpful in clarifying our thinking when looking at new ways of working and finding ways to make our life easier with managing the grant."*

*"Really happy with communication or support and information provided and in addition when needed on request. It is good to know a support network surrounds the forum."*

*"Very helpful in response to queries. Training on applications was easy to understand. Finance training was good. Helpful and supportive."*

What forums thought of Contact's support in 2022/2023



## 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 2022/2023 we ran a total of 15 live online learning sessions, some in partnership with the NNPCF, on:

- **Grants Session for 2022-23**
- **DfE: The SEND LA support programme**
- **NNPCF response to the SEND Green Paper**
- **SEND health services - What are NHSE/I doing Nationally and Regionally to respond?**
- **Find out what parent carers have told us about the SEND Green Paper and coproduce the NNPCF consultation response**
- **Time to Talk Programme**
- **Remuneration and Employing parents for PCFs**
- **Fundraising tips and guidance**
- **What can SEND families and PCFs expect from ICBs**
- **Setting up and running Payroll**
- **Support from Contact and the NNPCF**
- **Dynamic support registers and Care, Education and Treatment Reviews**
- **Let's Get Digitally Inclusive!**
- **Grants online learning session for 2023-24**

We reached a total of 699 parent carers who joined for live attendance, and a had a further 1,511 online views via our PCF YouTube channel. We ran training courses on Being a Parent Representative, Communicating with Compassion, Suzy Lamplugh Trust Cybersecurity training and Leading your Forum with 69 parent carer forum members attending the live courses.

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

*"Love the training, extraordinary facilitators. Very knowledgeable, passionate about the subject, also experienced parents at the same time. Thank you very much for your wisdom and clarity in delivering this training, very happy to be part of this group."*

*"The hosts were so wonderful - friendly, engaging, caring, enthusiastic, knowledgeable. Thank you. I will come to future events."*

*"It's been lovely to get to know some of the other forum leads."*

*"Well-organised and very informative. Thank you all for the effort."*

*"Thank you for a great session today. It was really easy to join, and the pace was perfect - I was able to take notes as I went along and the signposting to additional information was really helpful."*

*"Fantastic session - really clear and easy to follow techniques and strategies - thank you!"*

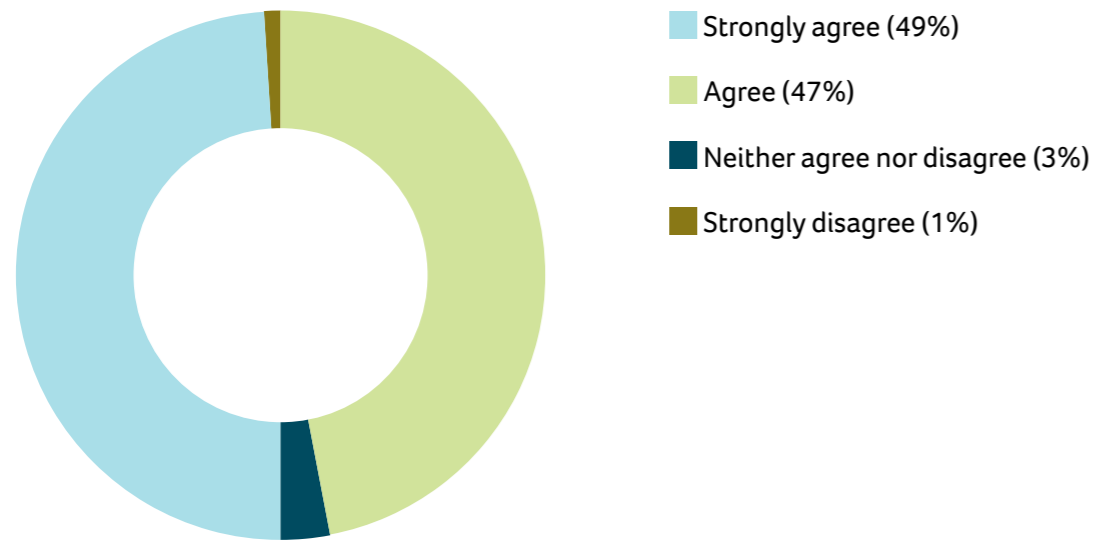
*"I'm dyslexic so I find some of this tricky, my learning style was well catered for (I didn't inform as I forgot) yet the slides, speed, explanation, and the recording so I can rewatch are all making this accessible for me."*

*"Everyone was lovely, I was made to feel welcome, and my confidence grew as each week passed, lovely to build up relationships with other parents/ carers/trainers and forums."*

*"It had some great take away points that I have already started to integrate into practice."*

*"All very straight forward in the registering and joining process. Pace of webinar was good and content informative."*

### I would recommend contact online learning sessions to others



### JOINT CONFERENCE

The annual joint conference from Contact and the NNPCF was held in two parts during 2022/2023. The theme was *Reconnection, Resilience and Renewal* following the last two years of being fully virtual.

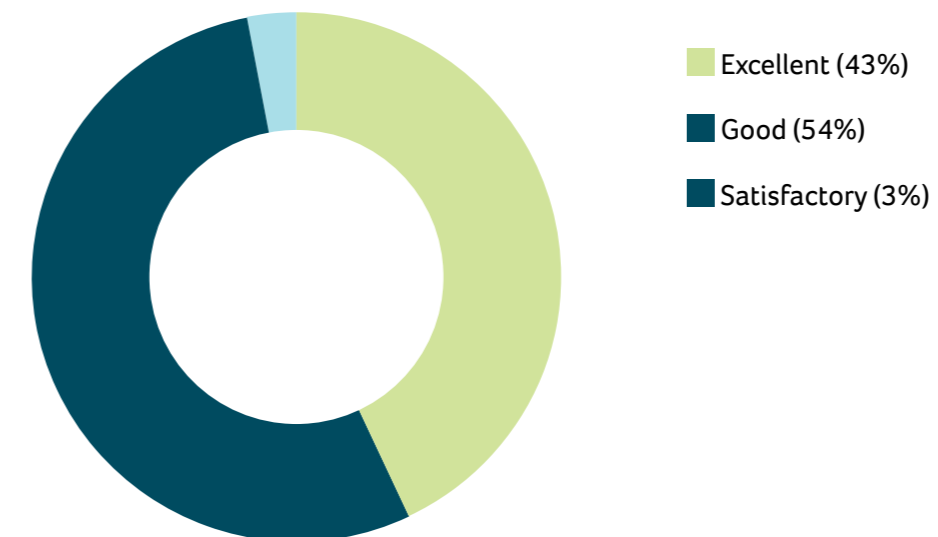
We held a virtual conference week at the end of January/early February, with online sessions on key topics for PCFs. We met for the face-to-face conference for the first time since 2019 in Bristol at the end of February. This included an address from the Minister for Children, Families and Wellbeing, Claire Coutinho, and sessions on:

- *What next for SEND*
- *Shaping a strategy during a crisis*
- *an update on the Area SEND framework*
- *the Q&A panel with colleagues from DfE, Ofsted, Council for Disabled Children and NHS England*
- *and a co-production session on National Standards in SEND.*

285 parent carers attended the virtual conference live, with a further 202 viewings of the recordings. 170 forum members attended the face-to-face conference and a further 73 joined the live stream, with 253 viewers watching the recordings later.

100% of virtual attendees to the Bristol conference said that they would attend online again if they were unable to attend in person. We produced a highlights film of the conference which has since been viewed 225 times.

### Face to face conference feedback on content



# Funding and impact of forums' work

Stories about the impact of forums' work are vital to the continued funding of forums as they evidence the difference that forums make, especially during challenging times when services are further stretched and there is concern that SEND services are not meeting families' needs.

Contact welcomes case studies and examples highlighting where a forum's involvement has led to a positive outcome that can be shared with the Department, national and local delivery partners, and forum peers across the country to inspire and motivate other forums and local areas to work in co-production.

## ADDITIONAL FUNDING

There was a 7% increase in the number of forums receiving additional funding during the 2022/2023 grant year.

During 2022/2023, 62% of forums received additional funding, from a variety of sources. The most prevalent additional funder being the local authority.

Did the forum receive additional funding?



## PRIORITY GRANT FUNDING

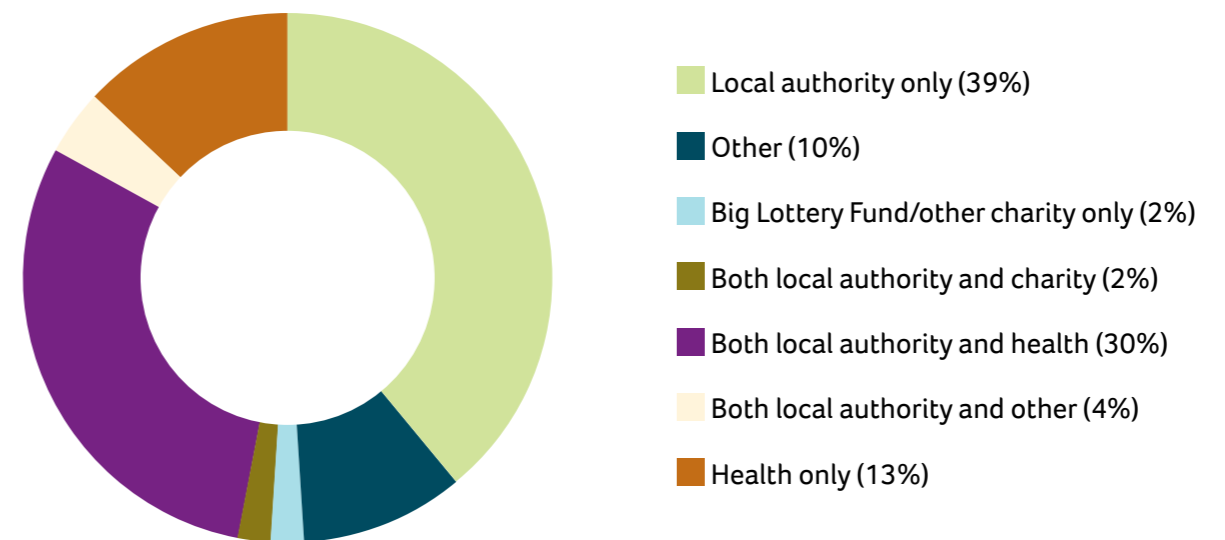
During 2022/2023 sixty priority grant applications were received from forums and regions to enable them to carry out additional priority work. We approved a total of £285,059.66, an average of £4,751 per forum or region that applied. Some of the priority applications were used to fund regional coordination and administration so that the regional networks could operate, network, share experiences, good practice, and input into national work.

## LOCAL AUTHORITY FUNDING

There was an overall increase in local authority funding in 2022/2023, as the sole non-DfE funder and for forums who are also funded via other sources as well as the local authority. There was a decrease in health funding. There was also a slight increase to the overall amount of additional funding received by each forum, which was up by approximately £1,000 on average to £27,087. The number of forums paying workers to support their work and development remained the same in 2022/2023, at 81%.

Many forums receive additional funding to top-up their DfE funding, to fund staff, to run specific projects, or support service level agreements. Whilst forums' core purpose is co-production with service providers, many have had to diversify to secure their future sustainability. Contact and the NNPCF continue to support the case for further central funding increases.

Where the additional funding came from



Does the Parent Carer Forum pay anyone to run or develop the forum?



## A new period of reform

We know that the SEND system is not working as effectively as it should be. Following the pandemic, we have seen the cost-of-living soar and resources become increasingly stretched. And with an impending general election in the not-too-distant future, a new era of reform unfolds.

The impact of the support programmes for local areas like Safety Valve and Delivering Better Value in SEND - alongside other future measures set up to support and challenge struggling local authorities - will become evident in the next financial year. As these initiatives are rolled out there will be

increasing demand on PCFs to contribute and to co-produce with their local partners in the face of limited resources and capacity, and increased running costs, bills, and wages.

We know that things won't be easy but Contact and the NNPCF are committed to championing parent carer forums at Government level showcasing their remarkable achievements and impact despite the challenging landscape and realities of running a forum. Together we will navigate the evolving reality and advocate for positive change.

*Remembering our much-loved colleague Julie Singleton  
4 October 1964 – 19 April 2023*







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the charity for  
families with  
disabled children.

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



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