**Understanding the impact of COVID-19 on children, young people and their families with SEND in Northumberland**

**September 2020**

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SUMMARY Survey findings

 

**Introduction**

We carried out a survey between 6th July and the 14th August to find out about the impact of COVID-19 on children, young people and their families with SEND in Northumberland. 426 families replied, which is the largest response there has been for a survey about SEND in Northumberland.

The findings of this survey will be used to help us plan what needs to happen next. This is a summary of the findings; however, you can see a full detailed report on Northumberland Local Offer HERE.

**What the survey found**

Lockdown impacted negatively on the mental health and wellbeing of most parents and carers as well as that of their children with SEND. Families also reported having to decrease their spending in order to manage and some reported struggling financially.

*“Worried about paying the rent, cutting down on food, managing to afford uniform for September. Getting a job for husband.”*

Home schooling was difficult for many families, particularly when combined with working from home. The nature of their child’s needs, a lack of routine, the number of children and adults in the household and the support the family received from school impacted significantly on a family’s ability to home school.

*“trying to care for my children’s educational needs and well-being whilst simultaneously trying to fulfil my commitments at work has left me feeling overwhelmed and defeated.”* 

 *“the constant meltdowns as his routine is all wrong.”*

The majority of children in this report did not attend school during the period of the survey. A small number of children did not receive any schooling at home and their physical and mental health became worse. Parents reported their child missed family and friends and not being able to go outside. Conversely, some children thrived away from the pressures of school.

*“He has struggled doing his schoolwork due to lack of concentration and he needs someone to prompt him but both parents key workers.”*

*“No pressure to socialise and be someone they are not. Eldest has been so happy not to go to school and has found working at home much easier than in a classroom.”*

For some families, school provided good support to families around their learning and support for their wellbeing. For others, parents reported a lack of communication and support work being sent home that their child found difficult to do.

*“My child’s teachers were amazing always in contact with us either by email or phone. Passing on resources, challenges and message for his classmates.”*

*“I do feel like we were just left to get on with it, no home-schooling help was really provided from school and I had to make up all my own resources and attempt what I could.”*

Many children and young people with SEND continued to receive more or the same level of health and social care support as before lockdown, while others reported they received less or no support. A group of children and young people reported their assessments went ahead, while for the remainder it was delayed or cancelled. Two thirds of children and young people undergoing an education assessment to determine if they needed additional support reported the communication was not enough.

Families remain worried and anxious about their children returning to school and how they will catch up on their learning, reintegrate back into school, manage social interactions, cope with transitions and stay safe from the coronavirus.

*****“I think my son will struggle following the new rules and likely to find the changes at school overwhelming and distressing”*

*“I am also worried he will be behind and that there will not be the resources needed for him to catch up.”*

Looking to the future, families wished for more staffing, training and funding for schools, increase support for mental health and plans for how their children will catch up on any missed learning. Families wanted improved communication with their schools, extra activities available for weekends and holidays and more advice and support if their child needed help at school.

**What happens now?**

We are looking at the findings and working with services across education, health and social care and the Northumberland Parent Carer Forum to produce a plan detailing what actions we will take. This plan will be posted on the Local Offer and shared with Northumberland Parent Carer Forum in October 2020.

We would like to thank all the parents and carers who contributed to this survey.