

# NNPCF London Region

**1704 responses in total across 23 Boroughs**  
however, their comments/report have been added.

note: A further two boroughs are not included in the graphs

# Survey background

During January pan London cluster meetings, we decided that there would be value in conducting a survey on the experiences of SEND families during the third lockdown.

This was because the third lockdown differed from the previous two.

In March 2020 the lockdown was sudden with little time for any individual or organisation to prepare. Initially schools were closed to all and even when schools were opened up to SEND pupils, this was largely as a care offer rather than educational

We also saw legal easements applied as it was unreasonable to expect schools & therapies to provide a full offer towards EHCP delivery. All too often SEND pupils were prevented from being in school because of application of overzealous risk assessments

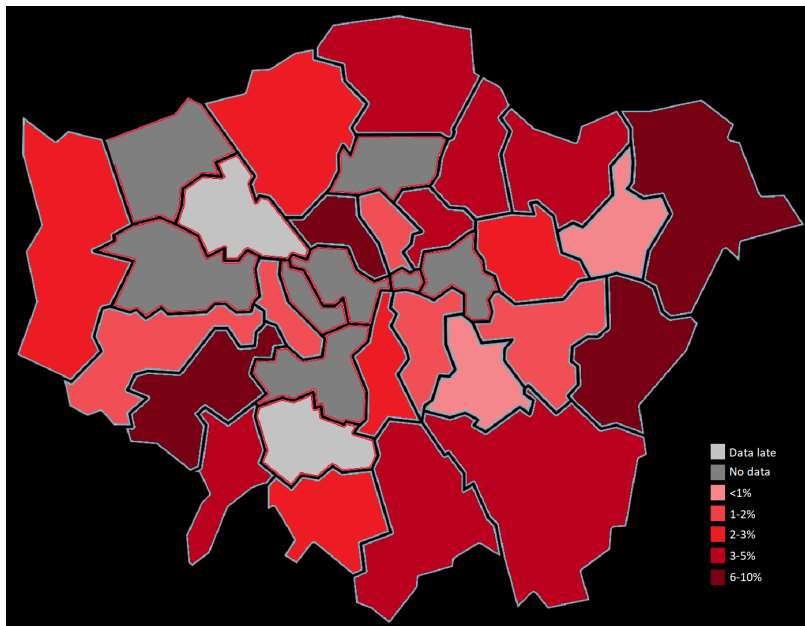
For the third lockdown the Government were clear that schools would be open for all those with an EHCP and that there would not be easements.

Even where families stayed at home (shielding, self-isolating or choosing to stay home), there was instruction to schools to ensure online provision was made.

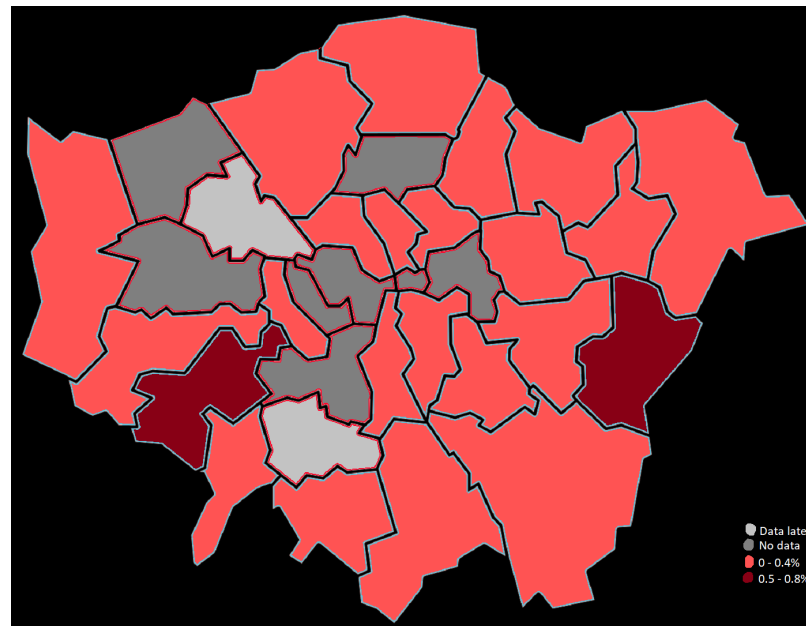
# Notes on data

- Surveys were carried out across 23 London Boroughs, from 18<sup>th</sup> January to 5<sup>th</sup> February, with over 1700 families responding. We chose to have a focused snapshot and felt it was important that the surveys were conducted within the same time frame. This was because guidance tends to rapidly change or develop.
- The Boroughs participating were: Barking and Dagenham, Barnet, Bexley, Bromley, Camden, Croydon, Enfield, Greenwich, Hackney, Hammersmith and Fulham, Havering, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Islington, Kingston-upon-Thames, Lambeth, Lewisham, Newham, Redbridge, Richmond, Southwark, Sutton and Waltham Forest. A separate report was produced by Merton who had already carried out a similar survey (appendix C).
- Each forum conducted the survey within their own area. This allows them to have focused conversations with their LA & CCG partners.
- The forums all asked the same questions, however, a few forums added questions for their own area use. These were then collated into one London wide survey. Unfortunately this has led to a few difficulties in comparing data

## EHCP



## SEN Support

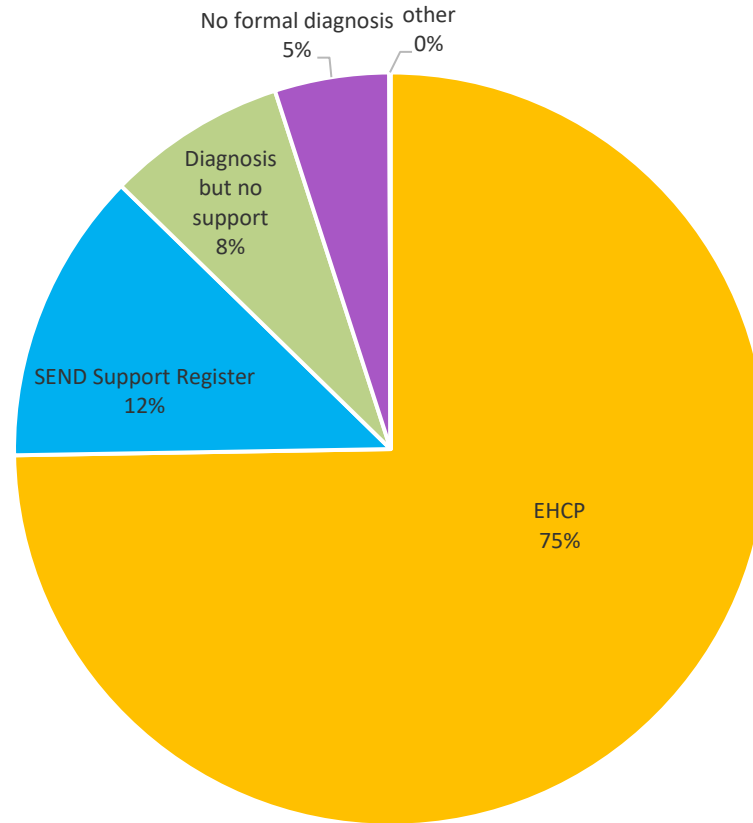


This shows percentage responses against numbers of SEN & EHCP. Figures by area taken from Government data for academic year 2019/20 published 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2020

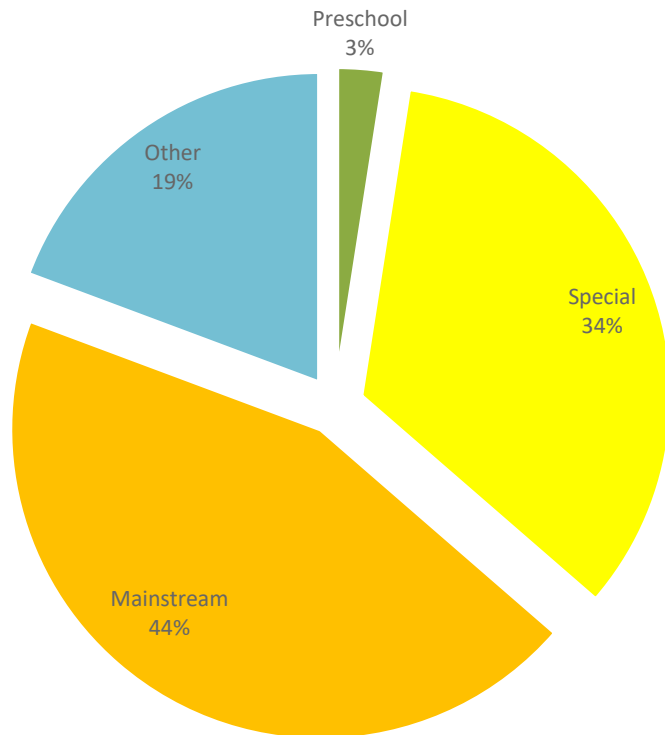
# Summary of 1700 families' experiences of Lockdown 3

- Children with SEND have not all been offered school places even when the families wanted and needed them
- Some schools have closed entirely during the period, and some special schools have only allowed the children of key workers and/or some of the most vulnerable children to attend.
- A high proportion of children had significant difficulties in engaging with remote learning with 92% needing parental supervision all or most of the time
- There is still a significant variation in the quality of provision, and 87% of parents did not feel that provision met their children's needs
- A high number of children who normally have regular therapies are unable to access these, particularly speech and language and OT despite the NHS stating they would try to ensure community teams continue to support our children
- Lack of short breaks/respite care is taking a severe toll on parents. Only 7% reported accessing short breaks as normal and many parents not having heard of the service.

# Q1: What type of support does your child or young person (CYP) with SEND usually receive?



## Q2: What type of education placement does your child/young person with SEND usually attend?

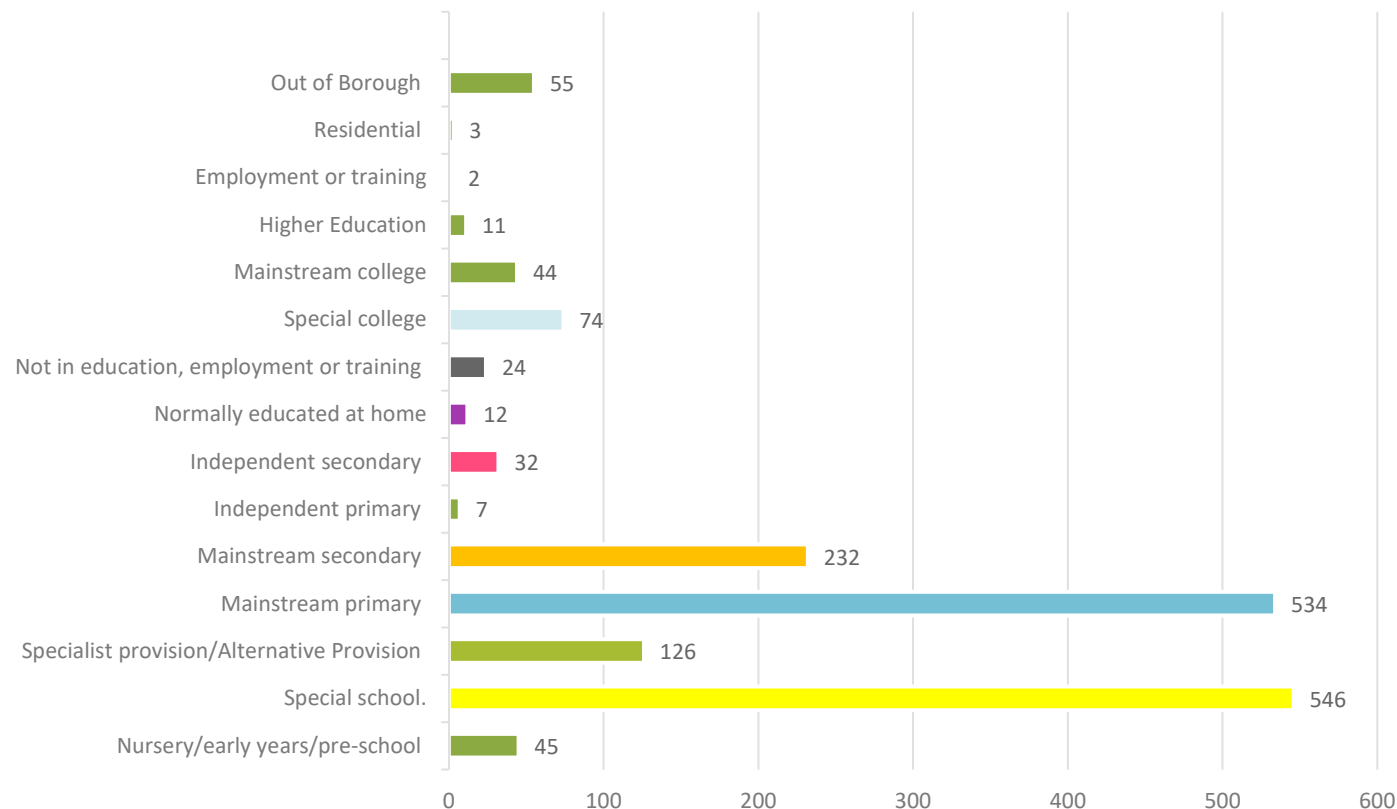


Special school includes special primary, secondary and college

Mainstream includes mainstream primary, secondary and college

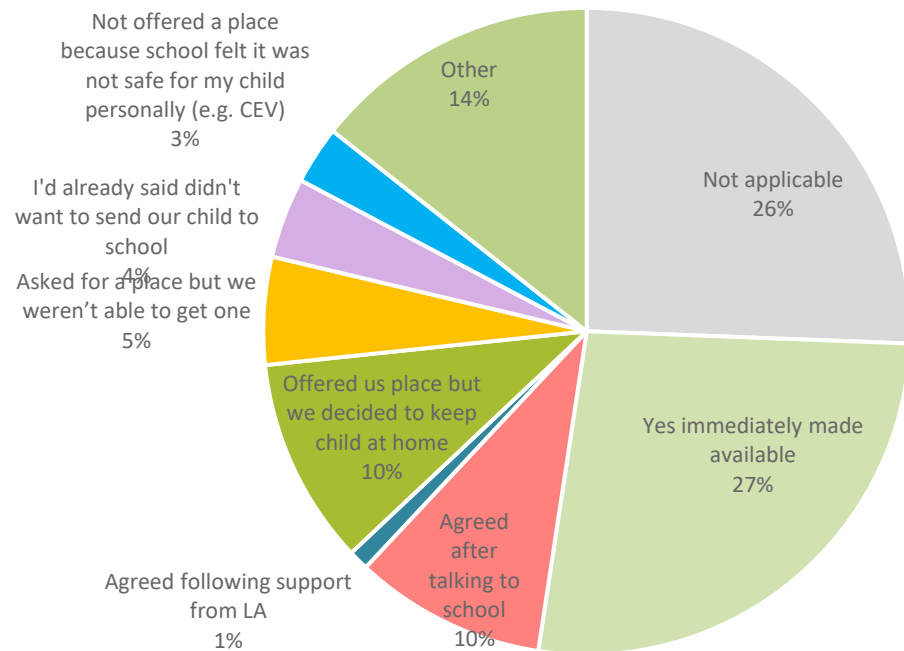
‘Other’ includes higher education, out of borough, normally educated at home, not in education, employment or training, independent schools etc – see next slide for breakdown

## Q2: What type of education placement does your child/young person with SEND usually attend? (detailed breakdown)





### Q3: Has your child/ young person been offered a place at their nursery/pre-school/school/college during the 2021 lockdown?



There is an anomaly in the responses to this question and we believe it has been misunderstood by some – as it would be not applicable for only a small proportion (around 3-4%). Based on comments and other discussions, it seems that many of those who have been led to believe that school place is not available to their child have answered not applicable.

## Q10 - Comments

*Many comments were received showing the huge pressures that families are under. The selected examples are typical of the overall picture*

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*We are concerned that even neuro typical children will have a hard time catching up after this last year, but our son for example at the age of almost 11, is still working at year one level, so this pause in his education is more than just the sum of its parts. His entire schooling life is going to be fundamental to his ability to cope in life after school and we feel children affected by this should be offered another year at the end of their education (Enfield)*

*It's been a hard and challenging time for us as a family. Child behaviour has been difficult to manage. (Barking & Dagenham)*

*This is already the 3rd lockdown we are going through - since March last year it feels like a constant lockdown. My son was in school just 8 days in summer and in the autumn he got sick on and off because he's not used to being away the whole day and he was also often upset in school because he got reattach to me in an unhealthy emotional way. November it was lockdown and December they only gave us a few days (Barnet)*

*As a single parent home with an only child with ASD home schooling is incredibly tough and taking its toll on home life and mental health of us both. The complete stop of social interaction for my child is devastating (Bexley)*

## Comments continued

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*It has really affected my son's mental health he is in a really dark place. He has spoken of ending his life as he feels so much pressure .The school have not really understood my son and just how bad he is feeling. Due to him feeling so depressed he cannot learn his mind has shut down.... I think schools need more training in mental health and how to support their student mentally and not just educationally (Havering)*

*Without the respite of school he could well have had to go into care, which would be a tragedy for us as a family. (Camden)*

*Lockdown is a real earthquake for families with SEND children.... We find ourselves struggling more and more each day to keep them on track. (Camden)*

*All the lockdowns have been very stressful and exhausting on us as a family. We have found it very difficult to manage learning or working from home as my son needs constant supervision and cannot be left on his own. This causes even pressure which on a heightened situation. It's mentally, physically and emotionally exhausting. (Redbridge)*

*This has been the hardest time of our life! Personally, I'm either working or with my son. I can't even go for a short walk as my son hardly leaves the house. It took three hours to get him for a walk on Sunday and it was only the snow that actually got him out 😞 (Waltham Forest)*

## Observations

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We can see from the previous slides that life has been tougher than usual for families and yet, even when faced with the extra pressures there were many who opted to keep their child home.

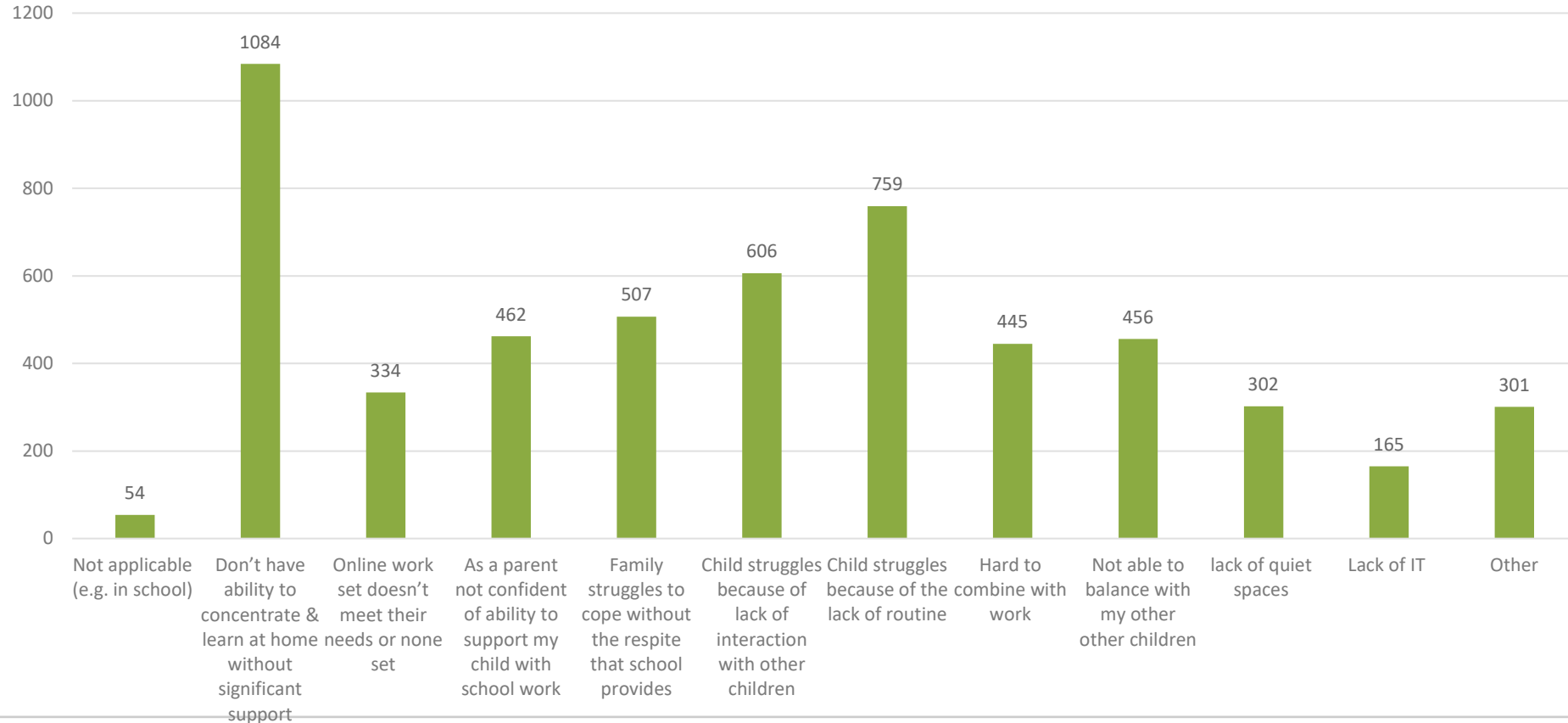
In most instances this was due to safety concerns for their child, other family members, or both.

We are aware there were a small, but not insignificant number, where the child's school work improved through being at home.

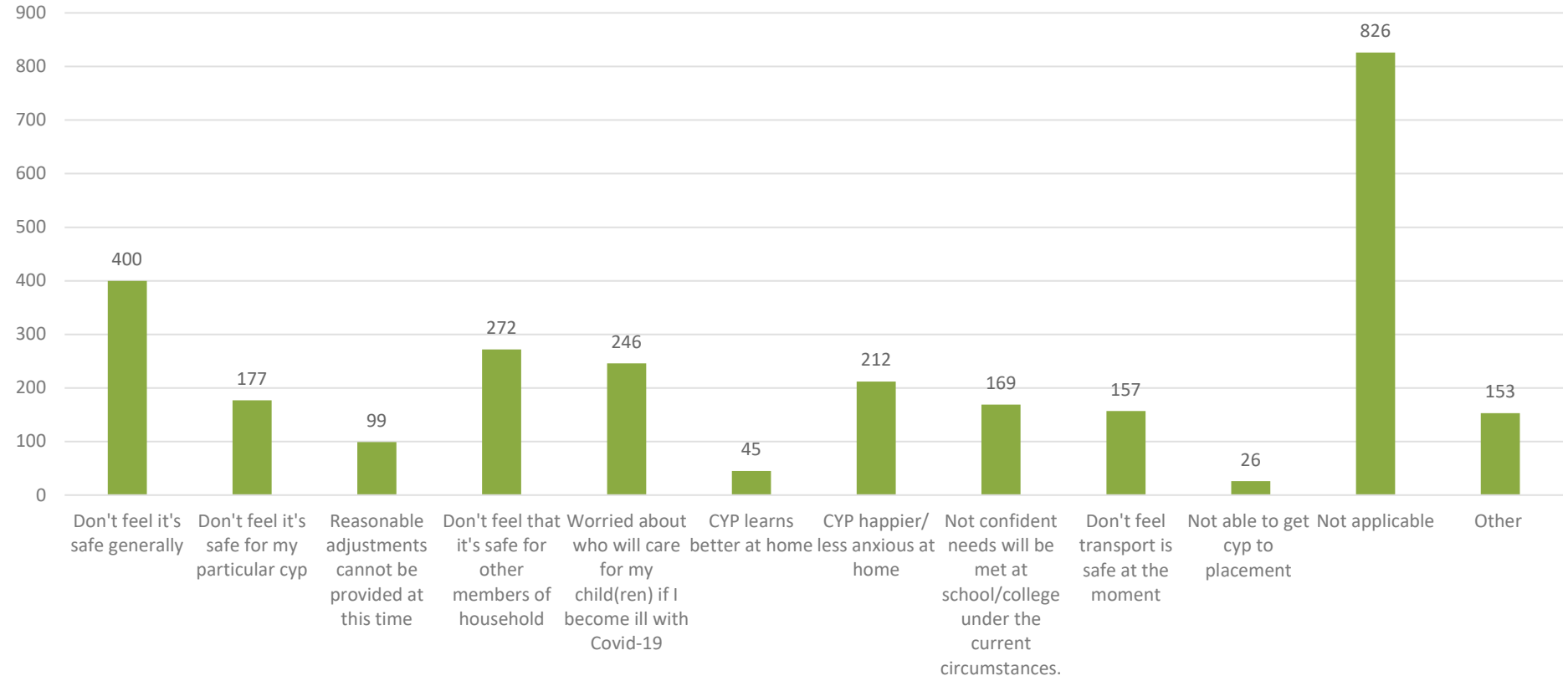
Increased anxiety for both the child & carer is evident. The lack of accessible respite during lockdown has compounded this situation.

## Appendix A and detailed breakdown by question

#### Q4: What are your concerns about your child learning from home rather than in their usual school/college/early years setting? (tick all that apply)



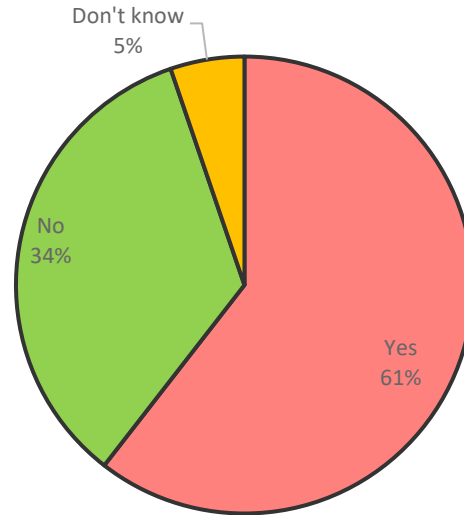
**Q5: If you do not want your child or young person to attend on-site nursery, school or college right now, please let us know why. Tick as many options as apply to you.**



## Q6: Do the needs of your child(ren) with SEND affect the ability of their brothers and sisters to learn at home?

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Children with siblings only



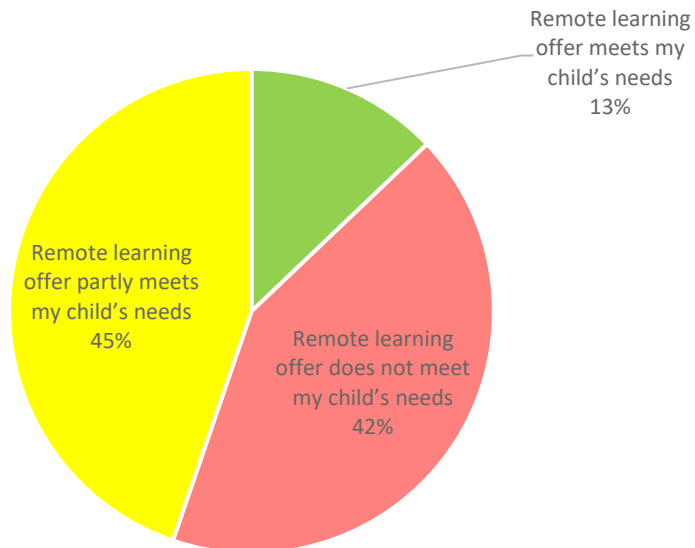
'Yes' includes 6% who didn't want them to attend school



# Overall quality of Remote Learning provision

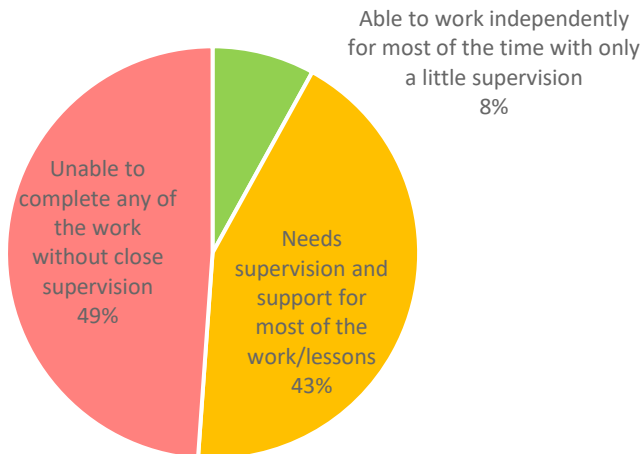
Of those parents who responded, only 13% agreed that the remote learning offer fully met their child's needs.

Does the remote learning offer meet my child's needs?

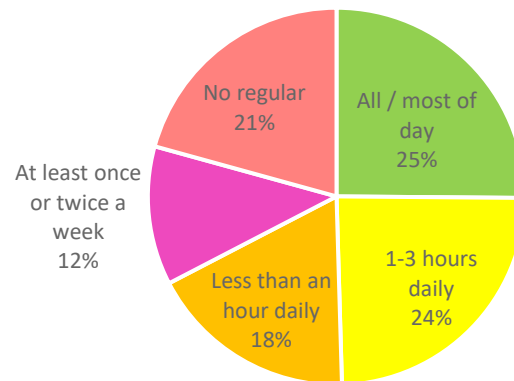


# Quality of remote learning offer

Level of Supervision needed

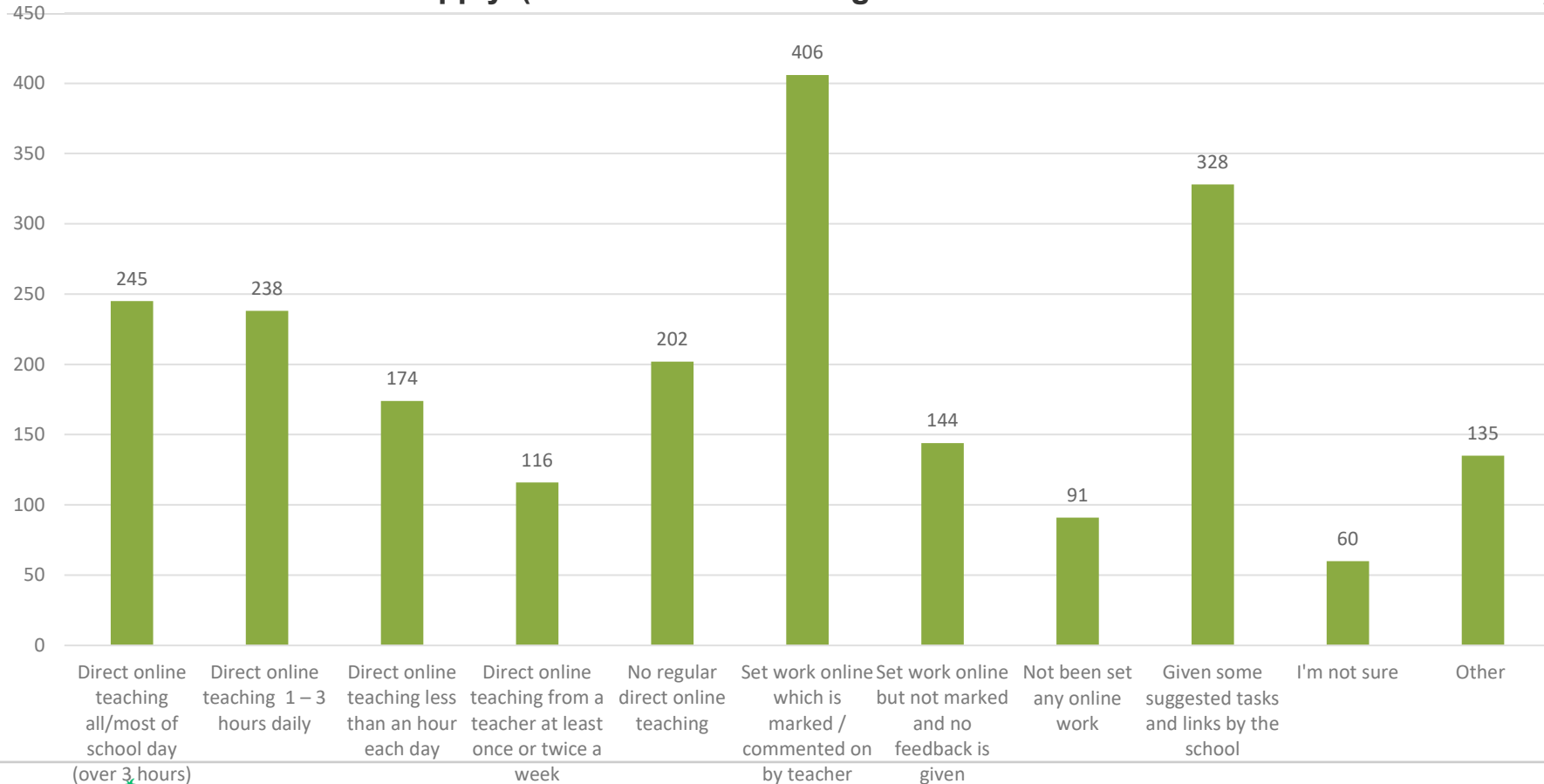


Direct online teaching

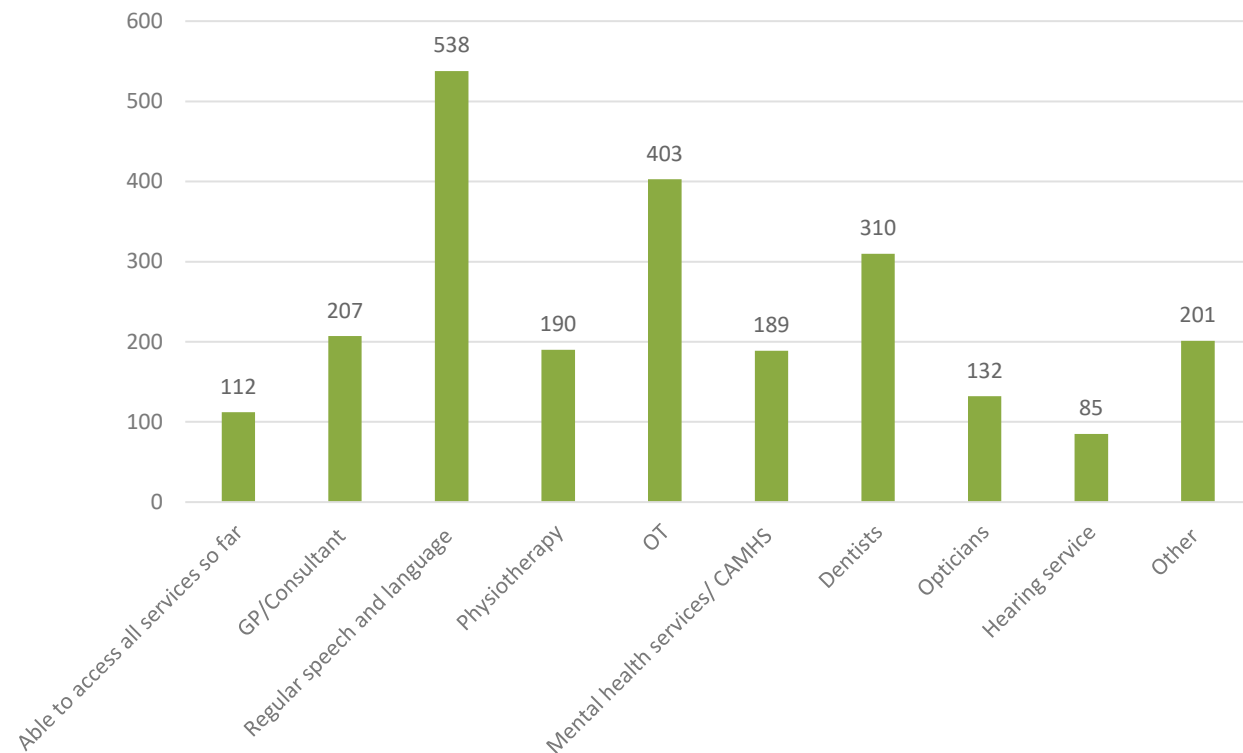


In all both charts percentages are as a proportion of those who answered that section of the question.

**Q7: What home learning has been provided for your child and do you think that this has met their needs? Please tick all that apply. (Direct online teaching means that the teacher is visible on-screen).**



## Q8: If your child usually accesses Health Therapies, which services are they currently not getting? Please tick all that apply.

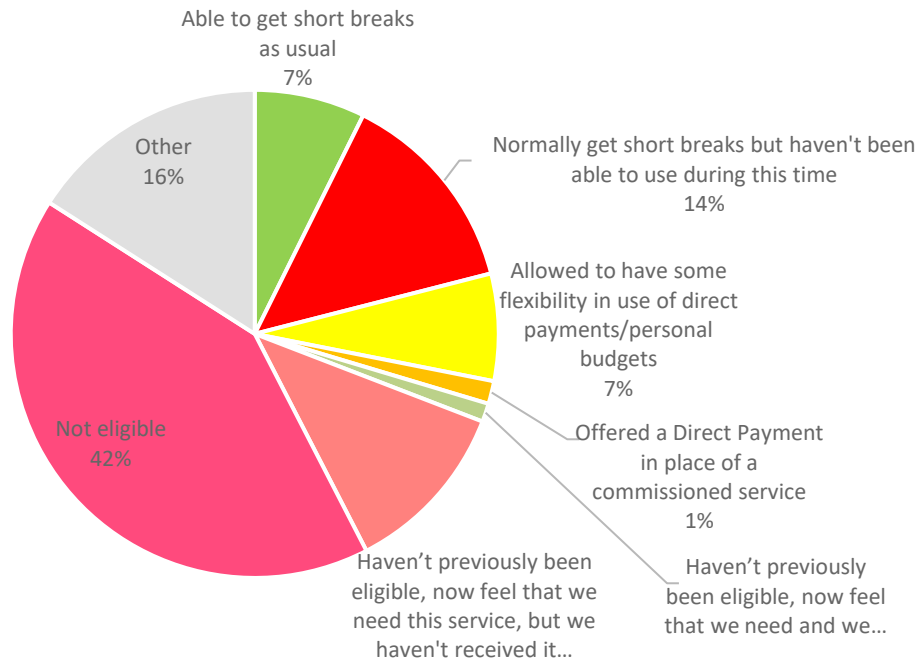


Other includes for example:  
Podiatry, Chiropodist,  
Ophthalmology  
Play therapy, Paediatric ENT,  
Wheelchair service,  
Swimming, dancing, art  
therapy.

Also includes some which are  
comments giving more detail  
on the main options or  
explaining about limitations  
of online provision

**Q9: We want to know the impact of lockdown on short breaks (respite care). Have you still been able to access the Short breaks which are normally entitled to during the last year (since the first lockdown began)?**

‘Other’ is mainly composed of additional comments. These included parents who didn’t know what was meant by short breaks/respite care, and/or weren’t sure if they were eligible or how to apply, as well as some explaining how desperately they needed the service.



Multiple comments demonstrated that not all parents know about respite care / short breaks and have no idea whether or not they would qualify. Several parents commented on strains imposed by lack of any respite, and the impact on their own mental health. Many have had little or no respite throughout the pandemic. Of the 42% a high proportion (at least 17%) have an EHCP and we would expect a much higher proportion to be eligible.

## Next Steps

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Individual forums should be sharing their information with their relevant Local Areas to help inform strategic discussions.

We'll be sharing with the NNPCF, regional & national partners including the DfE

Our children, young people and families, who are some of the most vulnerable, continue to be the most disadvantaged

It seems that some lessons were learnt from Lockdown 1 and there was some improvement in access to remote learning in Lockdown 3. However, there is still a long way to go with this for our families and this remains relevant as some children will still be shielding and there will inevitably be periods when bubbles close and some children have to self-isolate.

But our families have continued to be left behind ...

## Next steps cont.

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Given the experiences of families during this third lockdown, it is clear we need to have some learnings and “So what’s?”

As strategic partners we all need to work creatively to look at how we can work together to support families going forwards.

There are a number of barriers such as families lack of knowledge/access to respite.

Careful consideration on any lost learning and how to continue to support/educate those who may need to be at home (CEV, self isolating etc).

Finally, there has been some positives during lockdown which we need to capture and consider how these can be an ongoing part of the offer. These include online annual reviews and for some, online lessons.

**Appendix B – key comments from each Borough (in alphabetical order)**



# Barnet

- Having my daughter home so many hours is an extreme strain on the family. I feel the support has been non existent. She has since started talking to herself out of lonesomeness and lack of contact with the outside world. I wish there was help out there to guide and support us parents. I feel in desperate need of respite.
- It's just very hard and distressing for the whole family with such limited support
- My child's mental health has changed significantly. She is very angry and depressed
- We are funding care at home during the time when my daughter had to isolate multiple times – this has cost us thousands of pounds
- My son has to go to school because he's regressed with his sensory processing disorder, with being able and coping with other people and children around and also I am mentally very exhausted and overwhelmed
- The most important thing you have done is to keep special schools open.
- The online workshops are a great help, more please
- Looking after a Sen young adult is not easy at best of times. Having the young adult at home, a husband with no work, in a small space and no routine had a huge impact on every member of the family. No one at Barnet to answer calls or to follow up any queries.
- I have not one second to myself. As I am typing this my 2 boys are fighting and chasing each other aggressively around me. I'm exhausted. My husband is very stressed, working in this noisy, chaotic environment with our SEND child shouting, swearing throughout the day, and interrupted sleep each night.

## Remote learning

- Several comments made about lack of differentiation of remote learning and parents having to adapt work themselves e.g. Remote learning is not differentiated at all and completely irrelevant. I have to set up my own home learning to meet his needs.
- They are doing some zoom sessions but my child doesn't understand why they are on Zoom and not in the classroom so gets very distressed by them.
- My son can not learn from a teacher and other children on a video call. He becomes anxious ... runs away or tries to shut the laptop.
- My daughter is in exam year 11 and is working very hard to pass. At home she is happy to use the assistive technology she needs which she refuses to use at school. She is doing a lot of extra independent work which I'm emailing the teachers. However the teachers say this work cannot be used as evidence in their teacher assessments because it is being done at home and not in school
- She is having full specialist provision every weekday at school and we are extremely grateful as this input is vital for her and gives us desperately needed respite to allow the other children to engage more with their remote learning

# Barnet continued

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## Therapies

- Several comments received about online sessions being much less effective.
- Hospital appointments all done over the phone My child has not been checked over by a doctor all the way through even though she has had various infections with a low immune. I feel that I have to diagnose her problems and request over the phone what medical assistance my child needs
- We were waiting for his assessments and in order to get them done it took us 4 years for the OT and 3 for S&L which .. both happened in 20 minutes of observation where an assessment should be observing the child for one hour, and to get this done I had to go through so much rejection ... the stress and frustration we went through is beyond words.
- Swimming, dancing are both vital for his physical, mental and emotional health. He hasn't accessed these since February 2020.

## Short breaks

- Several comments made about not being aware of short breaks or not knowing if eligible.
- Difficult to access the normal services due to closures, would be great to have more flexibility.
- We are entitled to 15 days which we use for the Oops play scheme based at school but only managed to get 7 days. I queried with short breaks about the remaining funding but was told nothing can be done and that funding is essentially lost!
- Overnight care should be made available please (not necessarily during lockdown but it is vital for parents' mental health to have at least one or two nights away without a disabled child each year)
- Camp KEF has provided incredible respite and we are very grateful. We did miss the in person respite there the last week of December as we had to isolate but instead they sent packages which was greatly appreciated

# Bexley

## General comments

- Carers being forgotten in the midst of this pandemic crisis.
- We were told that transport and costs would stop DESPITE government saying SEND children should be given priority to attend school. Bexley should not have sent a general email discouraging children to attend school by removing the travel grant....attending school should have been encouraged not discouraged. The school provision my child has is superb and meets all her needs. Could not do lockdown without it.
- There has been a complete lack of support in relation to my child's needs. At the start of both lockdowns, I have tried to communicate with the school, and to try to have the correct support put in place for my child, but it seems that they don't listen.
- The support offered by CWDS, school and health services has improved in the current lockdown compared to the first wave
- I feel let down this year by the whole system we have been offered no support at all the school have said we have a laptop so she doesn't need to be in school. It's hard to explain to both children why one goes to school and why the other doesn't. I feel both kids need the routine and social interaction school brings.
- Stress as a parent to juggle home schooling, working and supporting a child with needs. Not being able to give other children the attention they need. A lot of guilt and fatigue
- As a single parent home with an only child with ASD home schooling is incredibly tough and taking its toll on home life and mental health of us both. The complete stop of social interaction for my child is devastating. The school is trying its best and her teacher is fabulous but this doesn't make up the missing intervention lessons and activities.
- I feel completely unsupported by the school. No one has checked in on him throughout. I raised a concern about his mental state and it took 4 days for the school to respond. As a parent I feel that everything falls to me to do. Teach, support, counsel and work full time and be a mother to my other child. Because my child is high functioning I feel that he is forgotten
- Several comments were made regarding housing issues and about the impact of loss of activities like swimming or horse-riding which are critical for some children.

## Remote learning

- They are not receiving any form of education at all
- The school have been brilliant with suggesting activities etc but we don't have the resources and also because he's at home he isn't in the right place/routine to pay interest in what I am doing with him. His attention will only last 10 seconds maximum and he doesn't interact with screens.
- My daughter struggles to use a laptop where you have text on a screen that moves, teachers voice or typed narrative that moves up and down screen, a chat box, and then is meant to use a pen and paper at the same time. She is unable to process all this - school are aware but say there is nothing they can or should do.

## Short breaks

- High volume of comments from parents who did not know what the service was, whether they might be eligible or how to apply. For example This is something we desperately need but I don't know how to apply for it
- Others say not eligible because child doesn't attend school or isn't non-verbal.

# Brent

## Impact on social skills, behaviour and mental health

What's impacting our family during lockdown is the lack of social contact (playground in the park, soft play) that allowed my son to develop his social skills. He has autism but he's very social and he really needs to be in contact of other children to better understand how the relationships work and how to interact properly with others.

Social interaction, playing with friends is what my child misses the most. The covid lockdown has affected us as we can see the change in his behaviour and mannerisms. My son is struggling with anger outbursts, frustration, behaviour issues and overall becoming more disrespectful to parents. His attention span and focus in even following simple two step instructions has suffered massively. I understand these as the negative outcomes of staying away from school and not being able to meet friends and family or not being able to go on holidays and missing grandparents. Although we stay connected via calls and internet, but it's still not the same.

The fact that we are confined to our flat has impacted on my son's mental health. His sleep pattern has completely changed and I feel all the hard work to get him where he was before lockdown begun has been lost. He feels anxious and started to show signs of anger, lashing out for little things. I didn't have this problem before.. Also, he cries easily now.

## Remote learning

We are experiencing a lot of stress. Everyone in the house is working online every day. I wish that the remote learning was less like school and finished earlier allowing for activities like walks/ cooking/ reading/ Lego etc. By 3pm everyone is tired and patience is frail (Out of Borough Specialist provision)

I have a new job and so this lockdown is harder trying to work while looking after my son. I often have to try to catch up with work at night or not teach my son so I can work. He is already (less than 3 weeks in) angry (frequently screaming and having outbursts), aggressive, upset, frustrated and tired all the time from sleep disturbances since lockdown started. I am not asking for a full time placement at school but would appreciate any help they could offer. Any contact with school even remotely. That includes emotional support as well as learning.

I think schools could focus more on mental health and well being and not just stress about school assignments and worksheets. They have one session a week to talk about feelings for the children but I feel they need to do more. Parents should be offered free government funded courses on how they can focus on good mental health and wellbeing of both children and adults. There should be online workshops for children to understand the changes around them and in them to make sense of the current situation , this is the need of the hour.

My child this lockdown 3 has a EHCP . Which means mostly she has been in school . I also did home learning with her lock down 1 &2 this was incredibly stressful for her and me she is ASD and dyslexic I do not know how to teach a child with these difficulties . Could there be some service advice or email centre to help with this or resources that could be accessed for parents.

Online learning. Is draining and exhausting. Especially at the fact that I have other mainstream children that needs my help and attention with school work. It's not easy when I also have have SEN children that constantly needs supervision.

# Brent continued

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## Short breaks / respite care

Several parents said that they were unaware of this service and/or didn't know how to access or whether they would be eligible.

## Support and Therapies

Parents commented on lack of services and therapies e.g. My son has not received speech therapy and occupational therapy, Services that normally offer support have not reached out regularly. CAMHS waiting list is months long.

## Other comments

I am truly grateful that my daughter still attends school in this lockdown 2021 as it's my only form of respite care I receive. It has helped immensely for both myself and my daughters mental well-being. (Special school place agreed after discussion with school. Not eligible for short breaks).

In the first lockdown, I feel my daughter's fitness suffered the most. In this one I am determined to keep her fit if I can. If anything we need more fitness spaces or outdoor spaces which are not crowded, to take SEN children to. The local parks are insanely crowded when we try to go out.

# Camden

- College board discriminatorily banned people(students and staff) exempt from wearing masks from attending which messed up our hopes, getting back into some routine and for my son to study on site, he has expressed categorical refusal to online learning since the first lockdown... My son hasn't had any work done in weeks, I am desperate for him to go back to college and reconnect with human beings.
- My husband and I are required to be 24/7 carers to our PMLD son who needs help with everything he does. We are both required for every hoist and nappy change. If one of us got even moderately ill with Covid we would really struggle to cope. We should be getting the vaccine.
- There is a clear lack of training from staff at schools in how to use online forum lesson delivery consistently. Homework could be more specific. ... Differentiated learning is not happening in a lot of subjects and that our son has to compromise or is lost without the visual. It is socially isolating as most kids have their cameras off and even some of the teachers!!
- It has been fantastic to be able to use the direct payments more flexibly to buy some toys to help support my child at home. The school is working hard to provide virtual learning but this doesn't make up for the fact that my child needs full time 1:1 support and so I cannot do any of the other household chores if I am supporting my child so she does end up stuck in front of the TV much more than I would like. It is also exhausting if I have been up a lot in the night looking after her to then try and also focus on teaching her during the day. There is no break for either of us which has caused a lot of extra stress and anxiety. The GP has been an amazing support regularly ringing to check if anything is needed.
- Son's OCD and anxiety hugely increased due to fewer activities and staff bubbles and therefore is more distressed and challenging. School has been phenomenal with their help. This lockdown we are able to visit him regularly due to him being vulnerable ... We are grateful for all the support we receive.
- We are worried about getting Covid as two people are needed to look after our son. This means it's been constant lockdown ... since March. School were not aware enough of our need when they closed for a term, and we felt guilty when we chose to send him in. **Without the respite of school he could well have had to go into care, which would be a tragedy for us as a family.** The varying levels of disability needs to be borne in mind. Too often profoundly disabled children like ours are treated the same as children with medium or severe special needs.
- **Lockdown is a real earthquake for families with SEND children.... We find ourselves struggling more and more each day to keep them on track.**
- Every school should have access to a school based counsellor for online or in person sessions at this time, and it should be available in all special schools at all times (pandemic and normal). Children with an EHCP should have priority access to counselling. This is because CAMHS support is hard to get and takes a long time. Sometimes a child or family just need occasional sessions with a counsellor, not necessarily 1-2yrs of continuous sessions, which then embargoes any more allowance for counselling for a long time thereafter.
- My daughter now does not want to go back to school ever. This is worrying as she used to love school.
- The myriad changes in staff and class make up in the past year have caused our son much distress at home. The school did not test the staff pre « back to school » and when one of his teachers tested positive, all the kids had to then test for 7 consecutive days; that was cruel on our son and us and extremely difficult to do. Schools should test teachers first.
- My child Speech & Language significantly deteriorated over the past year and the learning materials were not suited to his needs (they were either too difficult or too easy). Support was inconsistent, discontinuous and left to chance.
- Without the ability for my son to attend school I really do not know how I would have coped through these national lockdowns. The school (woodlands) has been incredibly supportive and helpful. The teachers amazing and I thank everyone for there involvement.
- Additionally there were several comments about the impact of inadequate housing, and about the problems of insufficient IT to access remote learning.

# Croydon

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- Asked for help made to feel like it is you with the problem. Covid now become the excuse for poor practice and not meeting statutory deadlines almost like a get out of jail free card for them. The only people this affects is the child and their families who are fighting for their children against a system supposed to support us, instead creates more stress, anxiety and increases the pressures on families both emotionally and financially as many families have resorted to paying for support that should be available to them.
- We have been totally exhausted looking after our son.
- How the government expect parents to work and parent several children with additional needs at home without having a nervous breakdown is beyond me!
- All out of school activities which were previously essential for socialisation as well as other kinds of therapy (e.g. swimming, horse riding, trampoline) have now been suspended for almost a year. Impact is immense.

## **Mental health issues**

- No mental health support ... despite requests, self harm has increased, child's mental health deteriorating, been to A&E no follow up support.

## **Schools**

- School (supported by Croydon LA) says they do not have to even try to give any EHCP provision remotely..... Totally abandoned.
- Home learning is being provided but do not feel her needs are being met and we feel pressure to complete learning that has been set. She is not eligible to attend school as she doesn't have an EHCP but this is severely affecting her learning and that of her 2 younger siblings that are in reception.
- Some special schools are not even offering disabled kids a space
- The sad news are that we need to look for alternatives for our kids for something that LA is paying to schools to do !!!!

## **LA – several comments about lack of support and even bullying**

- The lack of communication from Croydon LA being made worse by the pandemic. We are told that essential services are still running, however often receiving automated messages and no one is returning calls. Also lack of communication from social worker (they are either non existent, and if allocated, they know nothing about my child or their needs and the agenda is to 'close a file' deal with an immediate issue and move on. There is no continuity in social care, and you cannot make provisions or support for people with special needs if the the social worker has either never met them (typical of lockdown) or will never see the same social worker again to establish continuity in care for the long term.

## **Short breaks**

- Some families not aware of this service or whether they are eligible.

# Enfield

- We are concerned that even neuro typical children will have a hard time catching up after this last year, but our son for example at the age of almost 11, is still working at year one level, so this pause in his education is more than just the sum of its parts. His entire schooling life is going to be fundamental to his ability to cope in life after school and we feel children affected by this should be offered another year at the end of their education

## **Behaviour, Isolation, Anxiety and mental health**

- My child is becoming violent and has outbursts as a result have decided she be put in school twice a week ... I feel she will benefit from it and I will benefit from the respite!
- Our main concerns are his anxiety levels which have increased significantly and his constant worrying about everything.
- Our son has not left the house since lock down and will not go for a walk outside or over the park as he is anxious that he will catch Covid 19 and die. The strain of trying to persuade a child to get "fresh air" and convince him that he will not die as well as the last supervision for home learning is having an Intolerable effect on all the family.
- My daughter doesn't do well with change and it has made a massive impact on her mental state not seeing her family and she is not coping well
- Missing his friends and playing with them massively which is having a big negative impact on his mental health
- The lockdowns have impacted my sons mental health so badly, that he has regressed and on the list to go to a special school, as he can no longer cope in mainstream.
- My child needs emotional and social development support and it does not matter what support is delivered at home, without the social interaction with his peers his development in this area will not exist.
- Multiple deaths in the family and as a single parent and trying to care, bury and do schoolwork I cannot. When my child does not go on her zoom snack break the school rings me which makes me feel like I'm having a breakdown
- The added mental health pressure on everyone right now means I am not in a strong position mentally to support my child myself adequately because I am struggling with my own mental health. I feel constantly guilty that I am failing them as a parent and unsupported by the school.
- The toll of home teaching is wearing me down .. My health is suffering from it all.

## **Remote learning**

- Variable quality of remote learning. 96% felt provision did not meet or partially met their needs (compared to overall 87%) Some schools only open to key workers children and/or those with most significant needs.
- 'He will not attempt online work for me and gets really stressed and has meltdowns
- I am deeply concerned about the impact on my sons development and wellbeing not being able to access schooling.

**Other factors** Several parents mentioned impacts of poor housing, over-crowding, lack of outside space and financial issues.



# Greenwich

The mental strain for us both was horrendous initially. My daughter now has weekly CAMHS sessions and both this and her being back at school have helped our home life settle as much as it can. Both the school and CAMHS have been very supportive, although I had to fight to get heard!

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It seems and feels like those that are not yet of school age get forgotten for support in the send world 0-2/3 even when child has round the clock complex health/sensory needs

**Families comments suggest that they feel neglected by the Local Authority, but have found schools to be very supportive.**

- Council have not reached out to us to ask what we need. That's not to say they would not try to help if we asked. Maybe needed to advertise a special support service or phone line. However school (CPA) have been fantastic. The FSW and her form teacher have been there for us in every way as a family
- School has been an absolute lifeline for us at this time. Our son is in the process of obtaining an EHPC & there is not much support available until this is granted, school have been incredibly supportive despite this.
- No welfare calls from any services at all apart from once a week from the school
- Direct payments would not allow us to buy item/s to support my child instead. Only one welfare call from disability team

**Mental health issues and lack of routine**

- Lack of routine, son has regressed immense
- Made my son lose most confidence now says he's stupid and ugly body dysmenorrhoea as well.
- So stressed

**Other issues**

- We are impacted by a severe lack of living space, which makes life stressful. We have a 2 bedroom house with 7 people with varying needs, including a 95 year old and a uni student.
- Limited outdoor activities means less use of energy for an Hyperactive child thus sleep problems.
- Missing access to local support groups
- My child has returned to school on the 18th Jan as we thought the covid rate was too high however he became unsettled at home and loves his school. The only problem is we have to walk to his special school or it would be 2 buses which we are avoiding. This makes him very tired and there is no help in the interim re transport to school.
- When my son is away from school for long periods. He becomes really unsettled when he returns.

# Hackney

## Schools and remote learning

There was a strong theme (compared to some other Boroughs) about lack of support and differentiated work from schools:

- My daughter finds school very difficult so in many ways enjoys being at home. But none of the work set is accessible for her so she is effectively excluded from the school community. I've had no support at all from the SENCO or teacher. They told me they did not have the capacity to provide any school work for her at the moment
- The school have totally ignored my specific requests for learning from home to accommodate/make adjustments for my child's needs. I.e. Type work and email work in as opposed to writing in work books and taking a picture ..... My son has dysgraphia, typing should be the most simple of adjustments made for him, instead he spends hours and hours writing in books and is now 3 days behind with his work. This failure by the school to make reasonable adjustments is discriminatory and impacts on mine and My child's faith in the school and their rules and procedures as a one size fits all . Extremely disappointed (Mainstream Secondary)
- I have mentioned to our school recently that zoom learning would be more beneficial for my child . I was told they do not have that facility, I was asked if I wanted my child to come into school, I declined this offer due to pandemic being out of control, no other support is being offered (Mainstream primary)
- There is absolutely NO contact between my son and his year 13 cohort. He doesn't have any peers to go to or talk to. He has autism This lack of friends and peer support should be treated as a human rights issue. Every young person should be supported to have friends. My son doesn't seem to have any. School attendance masked this somewhat. Online school has exposed the disability oppression massively.
- My child has not been able to access any online school work despite being very bright as they find it very hard to work via just a screen and at home. They need a lot of support, encouragement and cajoling to do anything at all. Mostly it has led to a complete shutdown and very high anxiety.
- Schools are not listening as to what works best at home and are rigidly following their own policies and procedures at the detriment of their send students (Mainstream secondary)

## Concerns about ability to return to school after absence:

- My child was struggling as from March 2020 she has only been in school about 6 weeks ... now again she has not been in school since the beginning of December 2020 I can not mention school without her having a meltdown, she will need a lot of time and support to go back to school
- Obviously we want our daughter to be receiving an education but she has been unable to leave the house for nearly a year (indeed barely leaves her room) and we are concerned that she may not ever be able to cope in a mainstream setting. She is bright, artistic and articulate, but there doesn't seem to be a setting that is appropriate for girls like her in the borough - and we know many families in similar situations with high functioning girls who are isolated and unable to access education. And of course this situation has only been made worse by the pandemic. We did try a reduced timetable in Feb 2020, and an 8.40-11am day in September 2020 but neither successful.
- Our biggest concern is getting our child to access formal education which they have now not received for 6 months. Our worst case scenario is that mainstream secondary is going to prove just to be overwhelming a setting for a child with 'high functioning' ASD.

# Hackney continued

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## Mental health

Child's anxiety has increased 100% Child refuses to leave the house anymore. Child refuses to do any school work Child meltdowns 3 x a day everyday After Pandemic, My son had problems with sleeping and daily routines. It's impacted on his mental health and well being because he refused to go out. The restrictions on life on tier 4 and lockdown have accumulative built up and my son is now lashing out and very disruptive and emotional

**Therapy** – strong theme of lack of access to therapies which was already an issue pre-pandemic because of lack of capacity. Parents felt that the pandemic was providing an excuse for removal of therapies.

Parents reported that their children could not engage online 'like many autistic children she will not engage with video or phone appointments' .

The school has limited or totally removed therapy and that is taking advantage from the situation. Therapy is crucial for the children and they should be offered direct hands on therapy regardless if the children are or aren't in school. Removing therapy because of lockdown is only lazy nothing less than...

Children should access all the therapy they are entitled to and schools should be accountable ... there isn't capacity in Hackney SEN provision to ensure that schools are delivering and therefore the schools are not held accountable for hundreds of hours of missed therapy.

## Other

Several families commented on impact of financial issues and inadequate housing e.g. Lack of money has had a huge impact on us. We have been given support from the council and small charities.

Short breaks has changed and amount paid decreased so much making it very difficult to provide the young person with the relevant services

# Hammersmith & Fulham

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## Schools and Remote learning

- Online learning is limited for children who require physical stimulus to help them learn. Looking at a screen or online interactions with teachers are not rewarding or motivating over a mid to long term time frame
- It's the structure and routine of the school environment that she needs, rather than direct support with the academic content
- My son's Inclusive Unit staff are actively and repeatedly discouraging the young people in his class from attending the onsite provision that they are legally obliged to offer ... . It is extremely distressing when I have heard these vulnerable children complain to those staff during the online group classes of their individual struggles.....
- I am very happy with what my daughter's school is doing for ALL the children at the school, ... All the staff there are making tremendous effort to ensure that no child gets left behind this time; e.g. they insist on and follow-up daily attendance and set work; they regularly communicate with parents; they run surveys to assess the health & wellbeing of the children; they still require high quality work to be produced and if it's not there are consequences to drive improvement etc.... It is the polar opposite of what is happening in my older son's dreadful excuse of a 'specialist institution' and it's painful to see! Observing first hand the benefits of the Academy's excellent teaching & pastoral efforts since the very first week of Jan 21 makes the Inclusive Unit's neglectful behaviour all the worse because it clearly demonstrates there ARE good models of how to do education properly during lockdown. There can be no excuses for dreadfully poor execution of the teaching of SEND children during this time because some places ARE doing it really well and that's simply a fact.... For this to be happening to our most vulnerable and already-disadvantaged members of society, it's an absolute disgrace
- My son has not been offered support when he is at home with me and is not given differentiated work although he has an EHCP with 25 hours of additional 1to1 support

**Therapies** - while our child is in school, all services are available. During periods of home-learning, there has only been handouts from S&LT services to complete with parents, no direct sessions. Same with Physio and OT.

**Short breaks** – not all parents aware of this or whether they are eligible. Others have not been able to access at all 'as we were shielding and activities have been cancelled I have not had any respite since March 2020' and 'We are eligible and have applied and confirmed but have not received any support. Others have had nothing in this lockdown 'We had play-scheme in the first lockdown but not been able to access other activities in this lockdown'.

**Several** comments about the impact of having more than one child with SEN, parents with disabilities, and inadequate housing.

- We have two children with special needs... one severe and the other higher functioning with S&L difficulties. We are currently paying for our higher functioning child to attend weekly boarding- it would be impossible to have both kids home. Yet the council are refusing to part fund!! No one has ever considered the impact that has on SEN families!!
- 2 children with EHCP IN single parent household. Single parent has disabilities and medical needs and taking strong prescription medicine for chronic pain. No accommodations made for this despite school and local authority being aware of difficulties
- We live in a small flat. Only one table. Cannot put both children learning in the same room. Both children have EHCP and require help

# Havering

It has really affected my son's mental health he is in a really dark place. He has spoken of ending his life as he feels so much pressure is put on him to carry on with his Education when he is visible disturbed with these current circumstances. The school have not really understood my son and just how bad he is feeling. Due to him feeling so depressed he cannot learn his mind has shut down.... I think schools need more training in mental health and how to support their student mentally and not just educationally.

I am at the stage that his behaviour is of greater worry than Covid and its been a balancing act of what will cause the greater danger to life, it has got that serious. Going to a Day provision has now become the priority for both our sakes as now I am at stage I cannot cope with him much longer.

Behaviour has deteriorated so much.. that they haven't recovered yet even though we had to call Council for emergency help as my son endangered his life

It is a very hard juggling act for every parent. I want to meet the needs of all children but feel stretched and stressed as we are all missing human contact, routine, school, family. Also the stress of catching COVID 19 and the effects on the family. I am worried about job security.

School:

- Parents reported that at least one school was closed to majority of students or only open to keyworkers and were not made aware that SEND Children could have a place. e.g. 'school wanted as few students as possible to attend. Now I need to go back to work, school require proof of both parents being keyworkers'. Parents were worried about the impact of home-learning on behaviours and learning:
- Lockdown is having a significant, detrimental effect on my child's learning in terms of the specialist support he used to get at school. We have zero support at the moment either from the school or the council.
- They do not associate home with schoolwork and exhibit violent and challenging behaviours when the two settings are merged
- Without interaction and guidance he is struggling and feeling frustrated, and is already on the verge of complete disengagement. This is on a background of having a really successful first term after the transition from primary to secondary, receiving the.. outstanding achievement award
- Live lessons are provided but my child cannot cope with them, it leads to meltdowns.
- I think that schools not being open for SEN children is having a significant impact on all the family. The children need a structured routine, they don't understand that their normal routine is not possible. The only respite we have is while our son is at school and we are working. At home 24/7 with a SEN child has been incredibly challenging.

Other comments included lack of respite care and the impact of that, inability to work due to caring full time, lack of response from Social Care and Direct payment team, and concerns about the transition back to 'normal'

# Hillingdon

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Several comments showing some schools closed to all but keyworkers and those with social worker involvement.

We were called by the Head of Year .... explained that they would not be taught in-person at school. They would be logged into a PC doing the work 'remotely', the same as if they were WFH. They would have to wear a mask for the entirety of the day and all the windows would be open.

My son does not associate home with school work and struggles to learn outside of a school environment

My child access all his therapy through school physio, speech and language occupational therapy to name a few and he is unable to access this unless he is at school it has had a major impact on his physical needs

Short breaks – several families were unaware of this service.

Lack of information or links on Hillingdon Council Website to support families with SEND children during this pandemic and even without the pandemic, if they are not already receiving services. The local offer on Hillingdon website is inadequate, nothing specific to support families during this pandemic. There are great one off phone consultation services from EP etc. This is not easily found if parents do not know where to look for it.

My daughter refuses to go to school even more now than before all the lockdowns. She has had several absences this year. She has huge anxieties and is reluctant to leave the house in the first place. Hence, the lockdowns have given her a reason why not to leave the house, which meant I could not leave the house either.

I feel this lack of schooling has been detrimental to my child's mental health and confidence

During this lockdown we wanted to stay at home and learn ....school have agreed to study from home first, then under order of local authority told me to bring my child to school. I was told if I was to keep my child at home I was risking of being reported to social services! There was also mentioning of possibility of removing the extra financial support my child receives at school. As if it is not stressful enough to deal with COVID situation itself, I am being threatened with all sorts of actions and pressured to make decisions against what I believe is best for my kid at the moment. No local authority official asked how we feel about going back to school during this lockdown, just ordered to come... It really does your head in. All I want is peace.

# Hounslow

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My son is having much less time with the formal education (although my son's teacher has been absolutely brilliant), I worry about his lack of social interaction with other children. Also his lack of exercise and getting outside. I am working part time at a school and his father is working from home. Do very difficult to get him the time outside that he needs. We are having to resort to lots of screen time, which is worrying.

When my daughter is off she misses out greatly on the physical aspects of learning at school and we do not have suitable equipment at home as she is unable to do anything for herself. So it puts more physical strain on us at home

His school have been amazing supportive and offered him full time education

He is finding it very hard to engage and much of the work is beyond his ability

My son feels bored, anxious and generally stressed for staying for a long time at home. He wants things to return to the way they were so that he can go to college and go out with some friends ...

Yes, my sons mental health has really been impacted and feel there's no one to support for it . Usually have a social worker but can not get hold of them since March last year and is having a impact on the whole family.

Mental health. No support what so ever. No treatment for depression I can't receive

# Islington

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The lack of routine and structure is incredibly difficult for my autistic daughter. She has a lot of anxiety and really struggles with the lack of plans/activities. The Christmas period was very difficult and pressured at home, and her brother suffered as her anxiety/PDA rather took over the whole family!

There simply isn't enough help or support from families with more than one disabled child.

It has been an absolute struggle, my son and the other children have missed nearly a whole year of school and I am so very tired, mentally everybody is anxious tired and exhausted. I love my son but have not really had a break from him

As a parent of a child with ASD, I feel that there aren't enough support groups set up in borough. The care gives mental health, and wellbeing could be considered more in general not just in a lockdown. It can be very isolating!

All physical activities stopped. Respite provided by school & daytime activities is non-existent. I am caring 100% of the time with no respite. My child's independence & social interaction with peers has been non-existent in Lockdown. We relied on extracurricular activities to make up for what the school is unable to offer

It has been gradually getting worse at home and isolated. My health has deteriorated and there's no respite from it.

Lack of communication from senior leadership at school means we are in the dark about what they are doing or planning. Feels like life for my son is on hold.



# Lambeth

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I cannot emphasise enough the utter abandonment of children in this pandemic. It seems like people are hiding and using the pandemic as an excuse to not provide the duty of care to our children that they are owed. Our children are going backwards. The long term outcomes will be catastrophic. Please, if you read this, step up and fight for the right for all children to have the care and support they need.

My son has developed anxiety and fear about Covid (regular nightmares) and is resistant to leaving the house meaning neither of us is getting as much physical exercise as we need.

My daughter needs care all the time. It's very challenging to do anything else or look after my other child Properly. It's affecting all of us

Severe mental health issues and anxiety in both children

My child is turning 18 during this lockdown. This is a difficult transition at the best of times and has been made much more stressful by the lack of contact with services, access to known supports and routines and poor communication. Some of this is exacerbated by lockdown, but a lot could have been avoided by adequate and timely transition planning. I was truly shocked that my child, who had a crisis and was hospitalised during the last lockdown, was still discharged at the start of this one. The strain it puts on our whole family is immense, but actually quite easily avoidable by delaying the discharge for a couple of months.

Several parents were unaware of short breaks provision, others were not receiving any support.

Really, really disappointed in the lack of support given. Impossible to get any support. I feel our children have been abandoned by all child services. It is not true to day that children cannot be seen face to face safely- if teachers can do it why can't other services? ... . Why is it that no one will go into school/ home to see my child? .... We are destroying the life chances of our children.

# Redbridge

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All the lockdowns have been very stressful and exhausting on us as a family. We have found it very difficult to manage learning or working from home as my son needs constant supervision and cannot be left on his own. This causes even pressure which on a heightened situation. It's mentally, physically and emotionally exhausting.

Children are going hyper and aggressive day by day. Social life and outdoor activities are zero. This situation is effecting everyone

The whole think has had a huge impact on the whole family well being. There has been no support from Social Services, school or SENCO. We are left in limbo n do deal with it as if nothing matters to the LA how families with children with severe end of the spectrum and with extreme behavioural issues dealing with it. How much pressure and mental torture it has had on siblings who are learning from home.

My son struggles to learn via using TEAMS. The lessons are paced for the quickest students and move too quickly for him.

My young persons behaviour. Destruction of the home and property and belongings.

My child is academically able to complete the work, but his ongoing mental health needs mean that he needs support because of severe anxiety.

The therapies in Redbridge has always been awful. 4 speech therapy appointments in 3 years for my non verbal child. The lack of support cannot be blamed on covid as it's always been terrible.

Has been referred multiple time and not received camhs -- also needs ot but never given as well!

Short breaks – several unaware of this service and don't know if they might be eligible.

I usually pay for services myself but these have all been shut during the lockdown. This has had a major impact on my and my family's mental health. Don't understand why we can not use our DP to buy devices to support our SEN children. Why DP is so rigid on how we spend it to support our child and their wellbeing.

# Southwark

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Mine is a very long story of mistreatment and draconian measures towards my young persons! My anguish has yet to be told! .... We have had a lot of difficulties getting rehoused! 17 years and still waiting with two disabled young people!

Too much to write down. Having to care for a person who is Autistic during this Pandemic is an impossible task. There are some people who have said they are not coping and want Out...

Several comments regarding Anxiety, Mental Health, Lack of exercise, reduced motivation. Carer's mental health, wellbeing and support.

Therapies: The services are shielding in Southwark due to Covid and have not yet learned to readjust to operating during Covid Pandemic

Short breaks – several comments showing parents were unaware. One parent believed short breaks were not available in the Borough.

My child swims to regulate her anxiety and this is impossible while pools are closed. It is v hard to replicate this type of exercise at the moment. This impacts on my child hugely. Could there be access to pools for those with disabilities? It is a real need rather than a preference for swimming exercise.

# Waltham Forest

This has been the hardest time of our life! Personally, I'm either working or with my son. I can't even go for a short walk as my son hardly leaves the house. It took three hours to get him for a walk on Sunday and it was only the snow that actually got him out 😞

I feel that our son had missed so much education this year. It has been practically impossible to balance two full time jobs at home with his SEN requirements, on top of concerns for his health should he contract covid. I fear greatly what impact this will have or has already had on his future.

We had no services prior to Covid except EHCP. We now don't have that, and child/family are in crisis.

Some schools have been closed to most students or only open to key workers' children. Parents reported having to fight to get a place.

We asked about a place and were told the teacher wouldn't be in school and it would be difficult to attend. They said he would be better at home but if we were desperate, he could go in. So overall we felt strongly discouraged even though we would have rather he attended.

Child should have gone to Uni but it's proved too complex under Covid, so child is now NEET

I have been forced to request furlough from work to look after my son's needs which puts me at risk of redundancy

The workload is huge and in a normal school day it takes a whole team of professional adults to get the kids through the day of lessons- I'm an exhausted single mother trying to hold down a job not working from home - my child is experiencing a mental crisis and I am alone

My child has been too depressed to participate in online learning, it is a struggle to get him out of bed

There are some PDFs that the teacher sends through that are suitable for his level so I can use those, but usually I need to make up activities for him. I've been told to see if there are resources I could use on Twinkl. My son is not willing to engage in a video call with his teacher but she checks in with me briefly twice a week so the teaching is 100% down to me and I work full-time.

Short breaks – parents not all aware of service or whether eligible.

We have been aware we qualify for short breaks, but the process is really difficult, the options are baffling, and I haven't had time

## Appendix C: Merton report

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**Merton undertook a separate survey which asked similar questions. The following slides show a summary report from this.**

**Report for NNPCF from Kids First Parent Forum, London Borough of Merton: The forum is run by Merton Mencap.**

We ran a survey during January for parents and carers of children and young people. These are the summary results so far.

### **Number of responses**

We received 37 responses.

16 of these were relating to children between ages 14 and 22 and another 10 were about children ages 11 – 13. Only 10 were from parents of children at primary school and only 1 from a parent of a child under 5.

Parents of teenagers and young adults are clearly finding lockdown hardest.

# Merton report continued



Type of placement	Number
Independent Special school or college	8
Special School	9
Mainstream with an EHCP	7
Resource base in mainstream school or college	3
Mainstream on SEN Support	2
Mainstream on SEN Support and under assessment for an EHCP	2
Further Education College	2
Residential School or College	1
Nursery or Early Years Setting	1
Adult Education	1
NEET	1
Voluntary Sector Leisure Day Service or Short Break	2
Personal Assistant Service (PA) Short Break	2
Other	1

## Merton report cntd: Impact of Covid on access to learning and short breaks

Access to learning	Number
Virtual learning offered but too difficult as easily distracted or lack of routine	8
In school enough some of the time	7
Part time for a small number of hours, or on and off in school	7
School not available in this lockdown	6
Online is offered and is working OK	4
Child are allowed to attend school but refuse as not the same as normal	2
School not available, child under assessment for an EHCP	2
Out of education and receiving no support	1
Short breaks offered face to face (parent describes this as a 'breath of fresh air')	1

## Merton Report continued: Comments

**Most children have limited access** to school or do online learning only. Of these, many have difficulties due to their child's SEN (either they find it hard to build a routine at home or their children are too distracted).

One school was open in the last lockdown but is closed this time. 6 schools are closed completely including an independent special school.

PLEASE NOTE: Merton's maintained special schools are all open (3 schools), but one has been closed for 2 weeks following a series of Covid outbreaks. Mainstream schools appear to be more mixed, but most of the special units are offering access part of the time.

Merton Short Breaks are running as normal which has been a real benefit to one parent.

Who has provided the most useful support during the Covid lockdown	Number
School	15
No-one	14
Voluntary sector	8
CAMHS	7
Therapists	6
Social worker	4
GP	2
FSM vouchers	2
Family	1



## Merton Report - Comments continued

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We are pleased that many schools have been supporting well, although we have heard from a couple of parents told us that their school has not rung even once to check how their child is doing, even though they have an EHCP. So, a mixed response.

We are pleased that CAMHS, therapists and social care have also been supporting parents.

**14 parents (37%) feel that no one has really helped them during the Covid period.** Of course, part of our current study aims at providing support if we possibly can. Public Health are offering some funding to Merton Mencap for new support work with families.

### Parenting demands

Only 1 parent said demands on their time are the same as pre-Covid. All others say demands are significantly increased, as we would expect.

Most say demands on them have increased because children are at home and need schooling. 1 also said that cooking and cleaning takes more time and 2 mentioned juggling the needs of siblings. 2 of the parents have more than one SEN child.

3 parents said they are extremely stressed or anxious, 1 said they are burning out from the strains of home-schooling, and another said they are feeling on the edge of collapse.

5 parents said their child or young person is stressed or anxious and is developing more challenging behaviours (one is becoming violent towards his parents) or they are withdrawn or isolated. 3 feel that their child's mental health has suffered, and they may not be able to return to education easily when things go back to normal.

1 parent commented that their child has worse sleep since school closed.

**Only 1 parent says that her child's therapy has stopped**, and she says this is having an impact on the child's learning and behaviour.

## Merton Report - Comments continued

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About a third of all respondents state that their child **is less independent since the start of the pandemic**. 2 have lost independent travel skills having only been trained recently.

Many children are not being allowed to use public transport because, even with their parent present, they are unable to social distance. One is too scared to go on public transport, even with their parent.

*We have noticed that the inclusion of Downs Syndrome in the Government's CEV shielding group has resulted in children and adults with Downs Syndrome being refused access to education and/or parents not taking their child outdoors even for exercise. We feel that this could be damaging for this care group. We note the concerns expressed by National Mencap in Dec 2020 about the need for a balance between health and wellbeing.*

### Focus group - 30/01/2021

2 parents attended a focus group along with parents of learning-disabled adults.

One of these parents was concerned that his son might bring Covid back to the family if he attends his special school. Dad is medically vulnerable. Dad has noticed that schools are unable to keep children apart or to make sure they follow the safety rules all of the time.

The other parent has a young person with autism who remains withdrawn in his room and is extremely fearful of Covid. His college placement broke down before Covid.