

Supported by



Department  
for Education



**POET**<sup>™</sup>  
Personal Outcomes Evaluation Tool



## **Measuring the outcomes of EHC plans and personal budgets**

Summer 2014

**in**  **Control**<sup>®</sup>

LANCASTER  
UNIVERSITY





---

Using POET to measure the impact of education, health and care plans and personal budgets for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities

---

# Contents

---

Acknowledgements	4
Introduction	5
The need for POET	6
Purpose of POET	8
What's working and what's not?	
Summary of findings	9
Main findings: Parents/carers	10
Free text responses: Parents/carers	22
Main findings: Practitioners	28
Free text responses: Practitioners	32
Design and development of POET	38
The survey	41
Next steps and further information	42



# Acknowledgements

The work described in this report would not have been possible without the help, assistance and guidance of many people across the country too numerous to mention personally.

Thanks in particular go to the parents, carers and practitioners from the six local authorities who helped design the tool and who volunteered to test the first iteration of POET: Cambridgeshire, East Sussex, Essex, Lincolnshire, Middlesbrough and West Sussex.

In addition, we thank Nottinghamshire and Gloucestershire councils for kindly distributing and testing the tool.

Thanks also go to the children and young people involved with Equality, Participation, Influence, Change (EPIC), the Lincolnshire Shadow Transition Board and the Mayday Trust who have given their views to help develop the tool.

# Introduction

---

POET is a personal outcomes evaluation tool that has been developed over a number of years by In Control and the Centre for Disability Research at Lancaster University. It was initially developed for use in adult social care, and then in health.

The Department for Education funded In Control through the National Prospectus Grants Programme 2013-15 to develop a further version of POET able to measure the process and impact of education health and care (EHC) plans and personal budgets for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

This report details our work to date and presents findings from the limited initial testing of the first iteration of the tool. These findings are being shared in order to demonstrate the potential capacity of such a tool to become a user-friendly evaluation mechanism for local authorities and families to use to understand the impact of introducing EHC plans and personal budgets.

Of the six local authorities that volunteered to take part in this initial testing, two were Pathfinders for the SEND reforms and were

therefore able to share the tool with practitioners and parent/carers with direct experience of the process of obtaining an EHC plan and in some cases a personal budget.

All but one of the other participating areas had experience of making personal budgets available to families of disabled children. For this initial survey therefore, respondents were asked to comment on their experience of either EHC plans (and in some cases personal budgets), or just personal budgets.

The results from the initial testing have to be qualified given the relatively small number of returns. The findings from this initial report however demonstrate that POET is able to provide clear evidence from parents/carers and practitioners about what is working well as well as areas which require further attention. The results will therefore be particularly

pertinent for local authorities and their partners as they work on the systemic changes required by the Children and Families Act.

In the period between now and the end of this calendar year we will be testing the tool in at least 16 local authority areas in order to improve the integrity of data collected while also maintaining our commitment to low transaction costs. All local authorities will be introducing EHC plans over this period and our work will therefore be focused on developing the tool to ensure that it is able to provide high quality, rigorous evidence for local authorities and families about the EHC planning process and personal budgets to support self-review and action planning.

Following this further testing, a refined tool will be available from spring 2015 for use nationally.

## The need for POET

---

In September 2014, the Children and Families Act will become law. The Act introduces the most wide-ranging policy and practice reforms for children with SEND and their families for more than 30 years.

The reforms are intended to address a number of limitations in the current system, which is perceived by many as failing to address the needs and wishes of children and young people with SEND and their families.

The existing system has been criticised for being too segmented, with education, health and social care practitioners sometimes struggling to work together to form positive working relationships with each other and with children and young people with SEND and their families. Critics also argue that reform is necessary as current approaches can be confrontational and lack ambition particularly as young people move into adulthood. There is also widespread concern that the life outcomes for children and young people with SEND are consistently worse than for their peers.

In response to these criticisms the reforms introduce a new more joined-up statutory assessment and planning process and a single EHC plan. This integrated assessment process and single plan will replace the current statutory assessment and statement process. For the first time, children and young people up to the age of 25 will be able to request a statutory assessment and EHC plan whilst they are in further education and training. In addition, young people and families with an EHC plan will have the right to ask for a personal budget, allowing them to direct the support detailed in their plan.

**“EHC plans and personal budgets will mean a significant shift in the way services are organised.”**



**We need to understand the impact of EHC plans and personal budgets to ensure good outcomes**

The introduction of EHC plans and personal budgets represents a significant shift in the way services available to children and young people with SEND and their families are organised.

The policy intention is to ensure a more personalised experience, to better coordinate responses across service areas and to create the conditions where all those involved can collaborate as active partners in the design and delivery of the support provided to children, young people and their families. It is hoped that the introduction of EHC plans and personal budgets will lead to better outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

By actively involving children, young people and their families in the design of their support arrangements it is hoped that the support detailed in

EHC plans will be more in tune with the needs and wishes of each person, improving both quality and efficiency.

As services implement this new way of working there is a need to clearly understand the impact of EHC plans and personal budgets and what's working and what's not in their implementation to ensure good outcomes for children, young people and their families.

## Purpose of POET

---

POET will be able to provide a national data set which captures the process experience of obtaining an EHC plan and/or personal budget as reported by children, young people, their families and those working with them.

By consistently measuring both process conditions and outcomes, POET will produce a data set that will identify the critical process conditions that local authorities and their key partners need to establish if they are to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of EHC plans and desired outcomes.

POET provides the opportunity for local and national reports. It therefore supports local areas to benchmark and review their own performance, to benefit from a shared understanding of the critical conditions for successful implementation of EHC plans and personal budgets and to inform action planning.

Detailed information on the design and development of POET can be found on page 38 in this report.



**At least 80% of parents/  
carers** said that things  
had worked well all or  
most of the time



# What's working and what's not?

## Summary of findings

---

This report presents the data gathered in this short period of testing POET to measure the impact of EHC plans and personal budgets for children and young people with SEND. Testing has been limited so far, so the data can only provide an initial and emerging picture. It is nevertheless helpful for those seeking to implement EHC plans and personal budgets for the first time, as it demonstrates the potential of the tool to capture key process measures and their relationship to good outcomes.

In total 133 people completed the POET surveys. Sixty-one of these were practitioners working to implement EHC plans or personal budgets, and 72 were parents/carers who have had experience of them.

A broad range of people responded to the survey, parents/carers of children and young people with different needs and of different ages from 44 different schools. A range of practitioners also took part in the survey although health workers appear to be under represented in the first survey group.

Both parents/carers and practitioners were broadly positive about the process of EHC plans or personal budgets with parents/carers being more positive than practitioners. In

seven of the nine areas we asked about at least 80% of parents/carers said that things had worked well all or most of the time. In four of the seven work areas we asked practitioners about at least 75% were positive.

Parents/carers were positive about the impact of EHC plans or personal budgets on the lives of their children. In five of the nine areas we asked about at least 80% of respondents said that things were better or a lot better.

Parents/carers were positive about the impact of EHC plans or personal budgets on their own lives. In four of the six areas we asked about at least 80% of respondents said things had got better or a lot better.

Both parents/carers and practitioners were clear about the areas that needed to improve. Both groups identified working in partnership and keeping the process simple.

Parents/carers used personal budgets in variety of ways, half of those who described how they used their budgets said it was to access community facilities and to employ individual support.

The majority (70%) of parents felt EHC plans or personal budgets met their child's needs.

## Main findings: Parents/carers

---

This section presents the responses to each question in the survey. It looks at the reported process experience and outcomes as described by parents/carers who took part in the survey, including an analysis of their free text responses. The second part of this section presents the views and experiences of practitioners including an analysis of their free text responses.

### Who responded to the POET survey?

Seventy-two parents completed the survey from 44 schools in six local authority areas. The age of children was evenly spread: The average age was 11 and ranged from 3 to 18-years-old.



## Why did children and young people need additional support?

The Department for Education 2014 Code of Practice uses five categories to describe the needs of children and young people with SEND. Parents/carers reported their children and young people as having a wide range of needs against these categories, with most parents reporting that the needs of their child/young person were in more than one category.

Figure 1: The needs of children with EHC plans or personal budgets

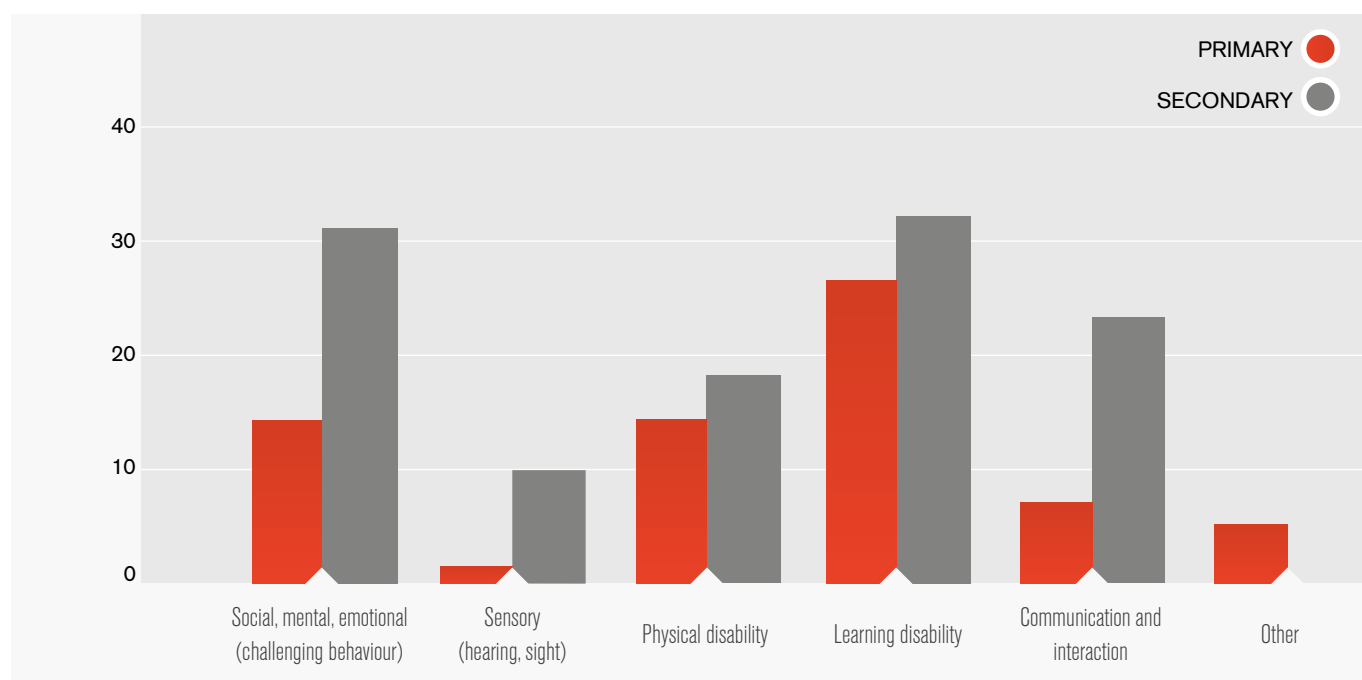
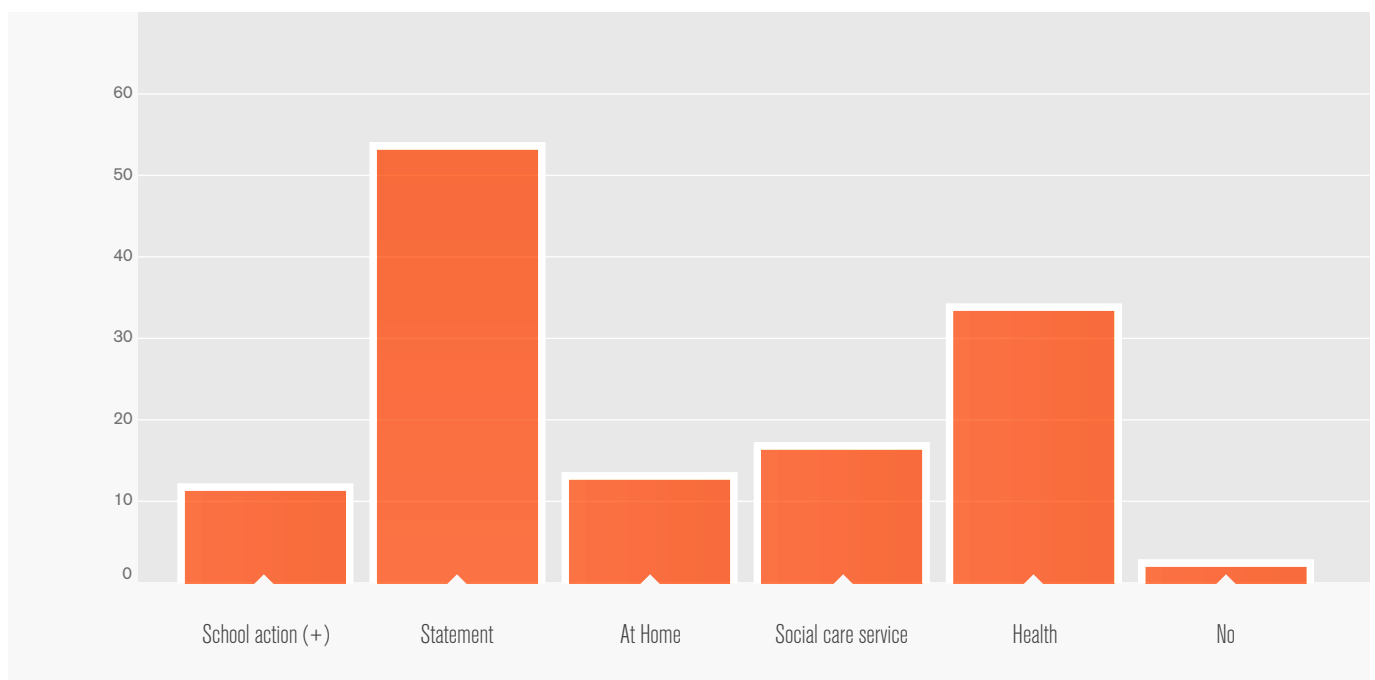


Figure 2: Additional individual support before having an EHC plan/personal budget



## Did children and young people have individual support before?

Most children and young people had previously had some kind of individual support. Nearly three quarters (53) had statements of special educational needs. Almost half the children/young people (34) had health care needs. Only two children/young people were reported as having no previous support. Forty-two respondents said their child/young person had a named keyworker.

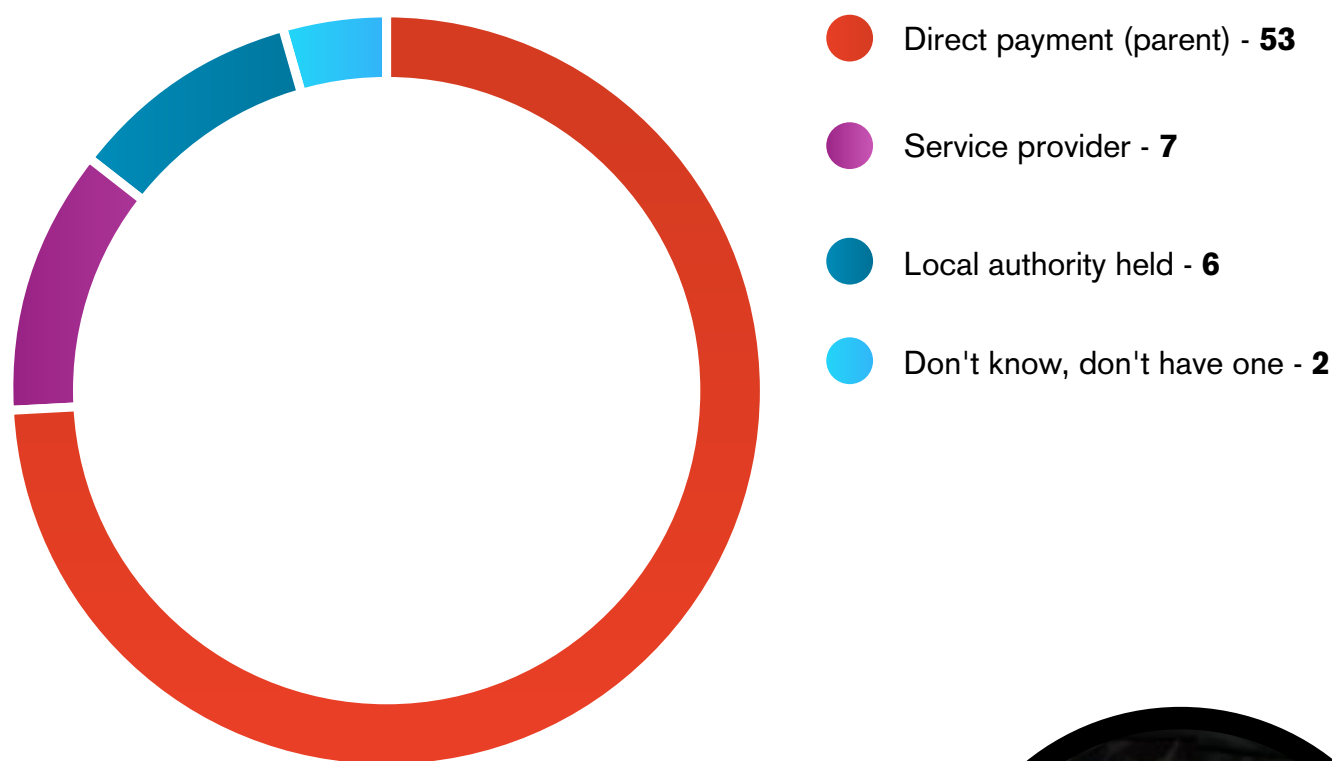
## How long had respondents had EHC plans and/or personal budgets?

The length of time the personal budget had been in place varied considerably, ranging from one month to 10 years. The average time was just under two years (22 months). The length of time the EHC plans had been in place ranged from one month to two years.

## How was the personal budget held?

The overwhelming majority of respondents (69) said they have a personal budget for the support their child/young person needs. Nearly three quarters (53) said they held this money themselves, receiving the money as a direct payment.

Figure 3: How personal budgets were held



## How much money was allocated in personal budgets?

Forty-five respondents said how much money was in their personal budget, either as a weekly sum (26) or as a one-off payment (19). The highest weekly sum was £755, the lowest £13.50, with an average weekly budget of £148. The highest one-off payment was £8,929, the lowest £144, with an average one-off payment of £2,789. Twenty respondents did not provide a figure.



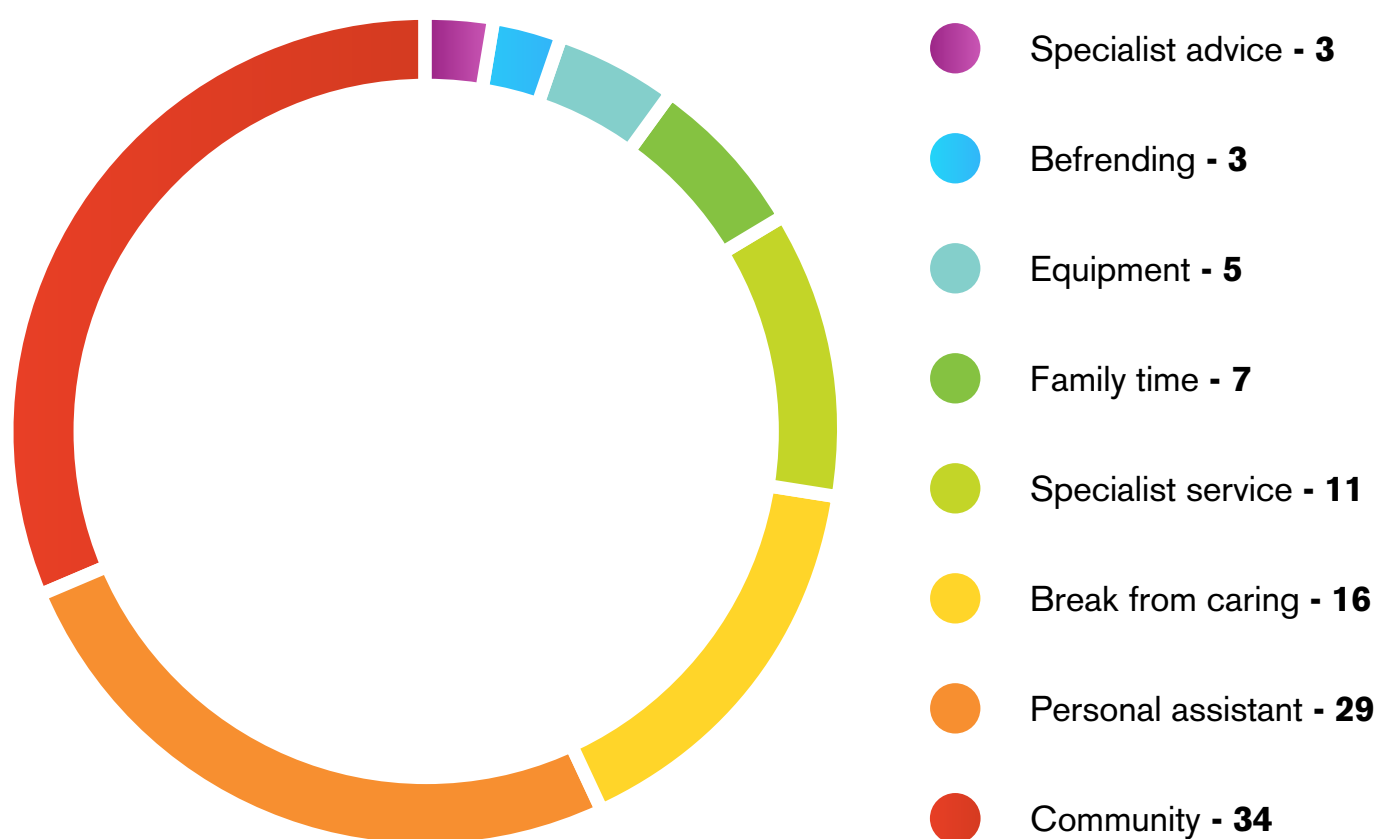


## How was the money in personal budgets used?

Most respondents (59) described how they had used the money allocated in their personal budget. People used the money in a variety of ways, and most people said they spent the money on more than one thing. This was described in a free text response that was reviewed and a number of themes identified. The number of people using their budget in each way identified from the themes was then counted (see Figure 4 overleaf).

<b>Specialist advice</b>	Including support groups, counselling and therapy
<b>Befriending</b>	Befriending services or funding support from a 'buddy'
<b>Equipment</b>	Specialist sensory communication or clothing, aids and adaptations
<b>Family time</b>	Outings and holidays
<b>Specialist service</b>	Accessing groups or services targeted at children or young people with disabilities
<b>Break from caring</b>	Non-specialist short break services including sitting support at home
<b>Personal assistant</b>	One-to-one support from a paid carer
<b>Community</b>	Accessing services, sports leisure facilities, clubs and youth groups

Figure 4: How personal budgets were used

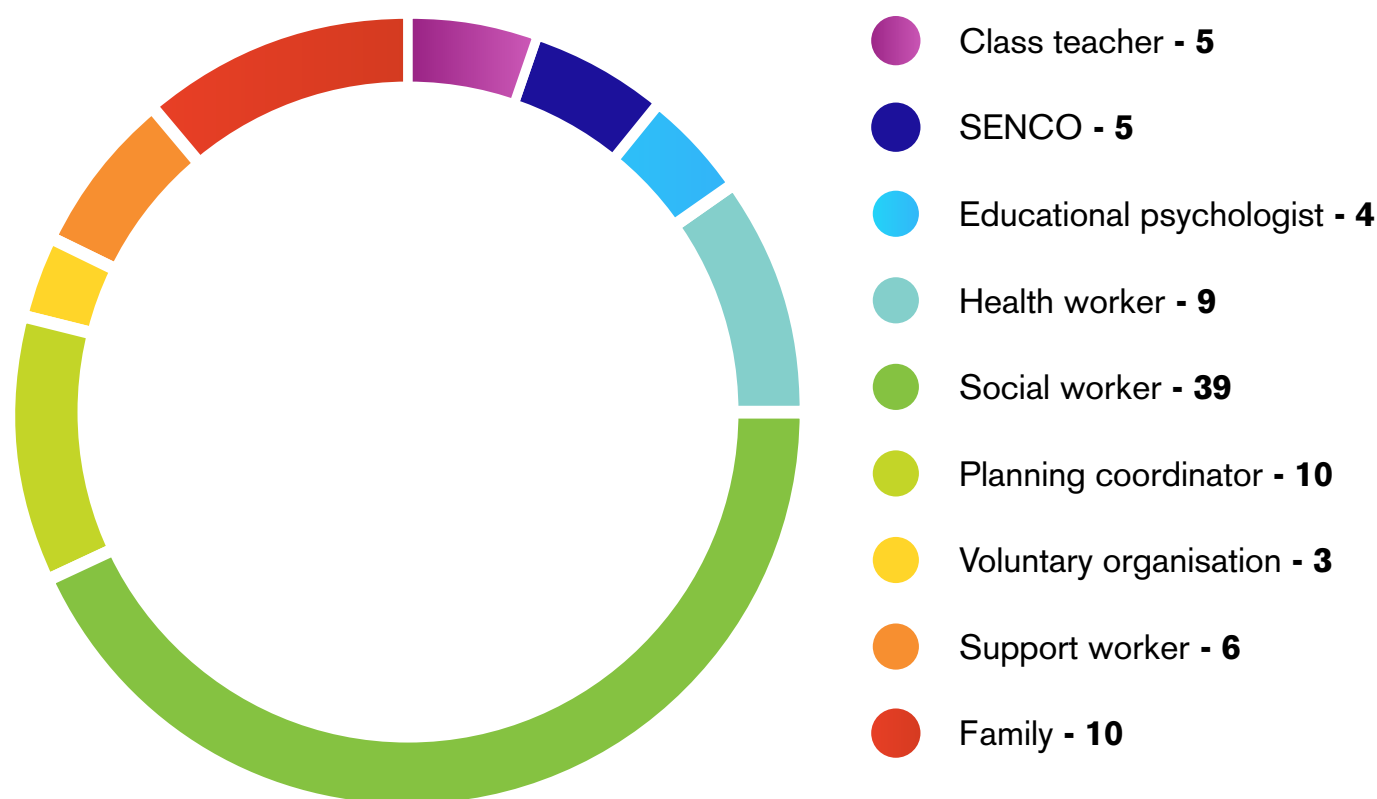


## Who was involved in planning?

Most people (57) said someone helped them plan their support. Eighteen people said that more than one practitioner had helped them plan. A range of different practitioners were reported to be involved in planning, the most common being a social worker (39).

Most people had help to plan their support.

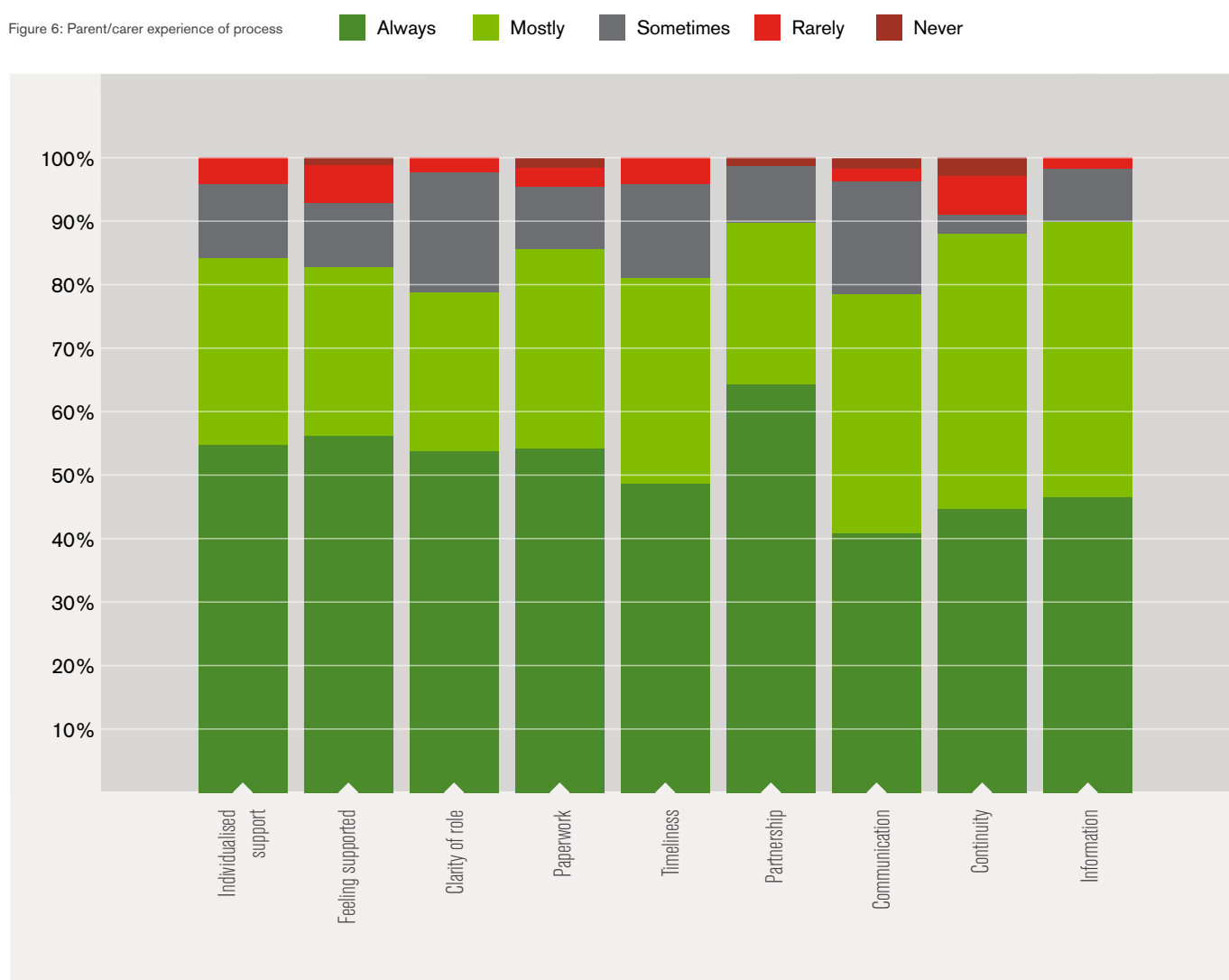
Figure 5: Who was involved in planning



## How did parents/carers experience the process?

In seven of the nine areas we asked about 80% of respondents said that things had worked well all or most of the time. In the other two areas (clarity of role and timeliness), 78% of respondents said that things had worked well all or most of the time. Less than 10% of people reported that things had never worked well or rarely worked well in any of the areas we asked about. In two areas (continuity and feeling supported) more than 5% of people said things had never or rarely worked well.

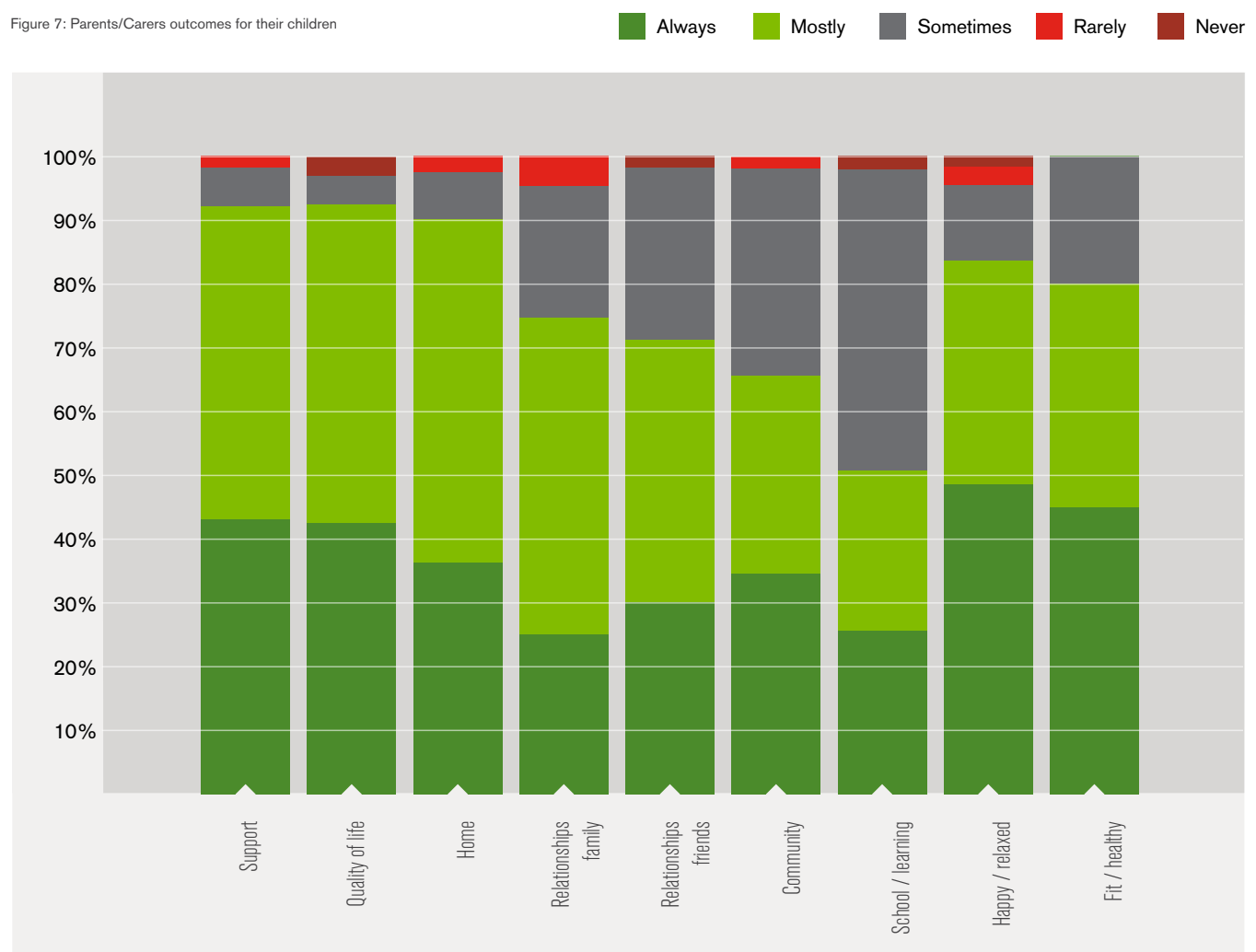
Figure 6: Parent/carer experience of process



## What outcomes did parents/carers report for their children?

In five of the nine areas we asked about (support, quality of life, home, happy and relaxed, fit and healthy) at least 80% of respondents said that the EHC plan or personal budget had made things better or a lot better. In three areas (relationships with family, relationships with friends and community) two thirds of respondents said things had got better or a lot better. In one area (taking part in school or learning) only half of respondents said things had got better or a lot better. Less than 5% of respondents said that things had got worse or a lot worse in any of the areas we asked about. In two areas (taking part in school and learning and community) at least a third of respondents said the EHC plan or personal budget had made no difference.

Figure 7: Parents/Carers outcomes for their children



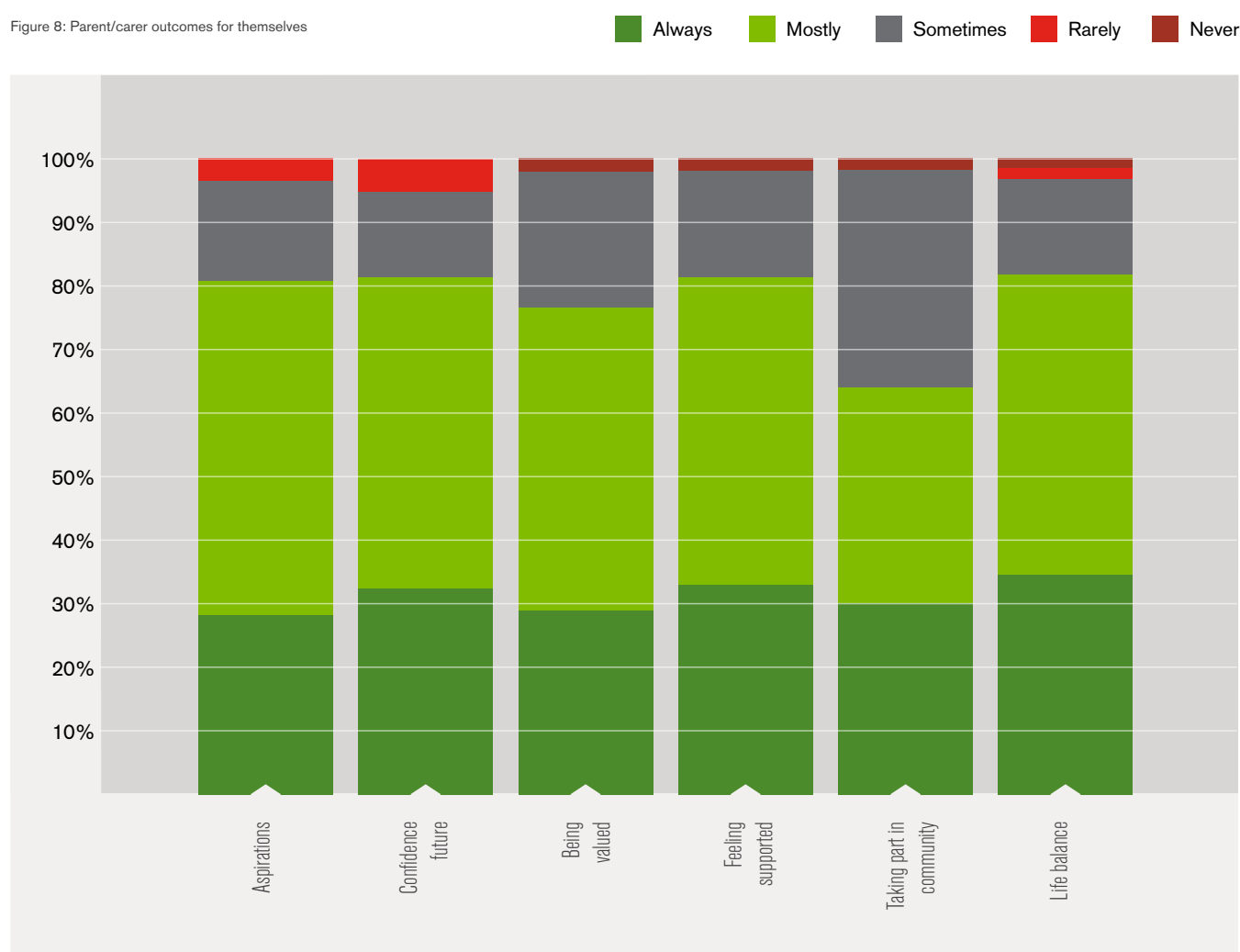


In five of the nine areas we asked about at least 80% said the EHC plan or personal budget made things better or a lot better.

## What outcomes did parents/carers report for themselves?

In four of the six areas we asked about (life balance, feeling supported, confidence in future, and aspirations) at least 80% of respondents said things had got better or a lot better. Around two thirds of respondents said things had got better or a lot better in the other two areas we asked about, being valued (77) and taking part in community (64). Less than 5% of respondents said that things had got worse or a lot worse in any of the areas we asked about.

Figure 8: Parent/carer outcomes for themselves



## Do parents/carers feel the EHC plan and or personal budget meets their child/young person's needs both now and in the future?

Parents/carers were asked if they thought the EHC plan or personal budget met their child/young person's needs now and whether this would be the case in the future. More than two thirds (70%) felt their child/young person's needs were currently being met, while 7% felt they were not being met. Looking ahead more than half (55%) of parents who responded said their child/young person's needs would be met in the future, and more than a third (38%) were unsure.

Figure 9: Does the EHC plan personal budget meet the needs of your child/young person





**More than two thirds (70%) felt their child/young person's needs were currently being met**

## Free text responses

---

Respondents were asked if they wished to make any further comments about their experience of the EHC plan and/or personal budget. In order to ensure the views expressed provided a broad account, and to provide useful feedback on areas for improvement to participating local authorities, people were asked three focused questions:

1. Thinking about your experience of the EHC plan/personal budgets: What worked well for you as a parent/carer?
2. Thinking about your experience of the EHC plan/personal budgets: What did not work well for you as a parent/carer?
3. Would you make any specific changes to the way EHC plan/personal budgets work in your area?

These open questions offered families and practitioners an opportunity to raise issues that were not covered elsewhere in the questionnaire and to make specific recommendations for change.

The length of responses varied with most being just a few sentences. The answers were reviewed and a number of themes emerged. Comments were then categorised by theme and the number of responses in each theme counted.

Themes were not mutually exclusive and some comments were counted in more than one theme. Some of the themes were talked about in response to both the negative and positive question and identified as areas for change.



## 1. What did not work well for you as a parent/carer?

Fewer people (49) responded to this question and of these responses more than half (28) said explicitly that 'nothing' had not worked well. Negative feedback was provided by 21 people. Nearly all comments covered the EHC plan/personal budget process, rather than impact on life. Several themes in addition to those above were identified from responses to this question.

<b>Paperwork</b>	Excessive, confusing or overly complex forms.
<b>Service level</b>	Insufficient funding or level of service, including lack of support to plan and manage budgets. Concern about resource allocation (RAS).
<b>Getting support</b>	Difficulty recruiting the right support staff, or accessing a service.
<b>Timeliness</b>	Slow decision-making and lengthy process.
<b>Continuity</b>	Consistency of people and policy relating to the EHC plan and personal budget.
<b>Simplicity</b>	Complex process, lack of clarity or transparency.
<b>Managing</b>	Difficulty or demands of managing the budget and support arrangements.



<b>Quality of life</b>	The positive impact of better support on the life of the child/young person and their family.
<b>Flexibility</b>	Having support available that was adaptable and could change quickly and conveniently, according to changing needs or wishes.
<b>Future</b>	The opportunity to work towards longer-term goals and seeing progress towards those goals.
<b>Inclusion</b>	The child/young person and their family being less isolated, being able to take part more in social interactions and make more use of local facilities.
<b>Simplicity</b>	The ease with which the EHC plan/personal budget had been put in place.
<b>Respite</b>	The support available providing a break from demanding caring responsibilities.
<b>Siblings</b>	The positive impact on other children in the family of the EHC plan/personal budget.
<b>Trust</b>	The confidence that could be placed in others involved in the EHC plan/personal budget process.

## 2. What worked well for you as a parent/carers?

A total of 62 parents/carers made comments about positive experiences. People commented on their experience of the process and the impact the support had on them, their children and the family as a whole.

<b>Practitioner support</b>	The support, help and guidance that was, or was not available from a range of practitioners through the EHC plan/personal budget process.
<b>Communication</b>	Having views and experiences acknowledged, feeling listened to and valued by others.
<b>Partnership</b>	All those involved in the process working together towards a shared outcome.
<b>Stress</b>	The alleviation of worries or anxiety.
<b>Support</b>	Having support in place that reflected the individual needs, circumstances and preferences of the child/young person and their family.
<b>Control</b>	Leading and directing the development of a support plan and the subsequent support arrangements.
<b>Entitlement</b>	Not having to plead for support.
<b>Choice</b>	Having choices and a range of options available throughout the process.

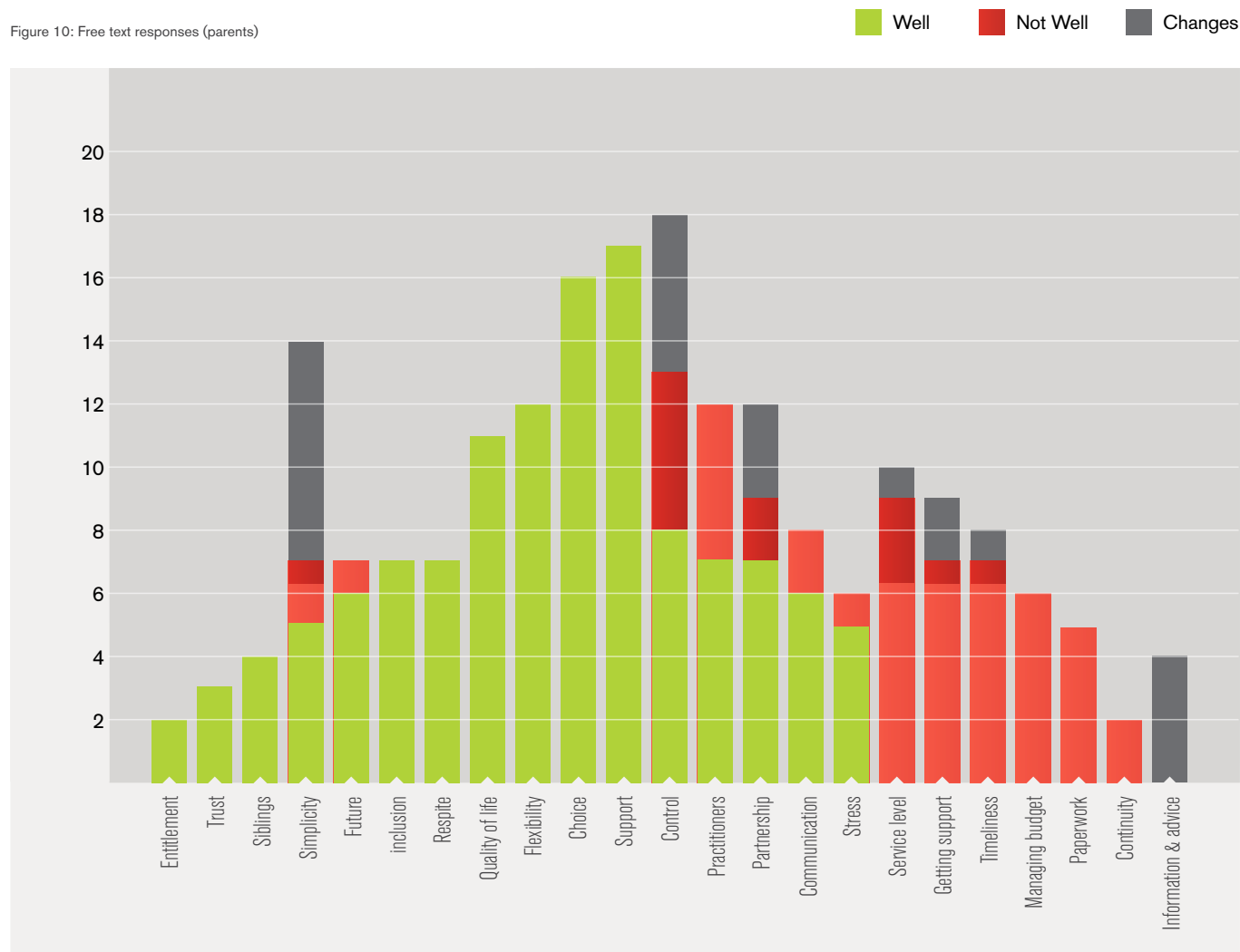


**People  
commented on  
their experience  
of process and the  
impact of support  
on them and their  
whole family**

### 3. Would you make any specific changes to the way EHC plans work in your area?

Of the three free text questions this received the fewest responses with 47 replies. Of these, 16 people explicitly said they would not make any changes and 30 suggested an area for change. Nearly all the changes suggested concerned the themes already identified with just one new area suggested for change identified.

Information	Increased information and advice to parents
-------------	---



# Main findings: Practitioners

---

## Who responded to the POET survey?

Sixty-two practitioners completed the survey from five local authority areas. A range of practitioners took part from education and social services, and one health practitioner also completed the survey. Most of the practitioners (41) who responded were involved mainly in the assessment and development of plans. Others were either involved mainly in management (nine) or providing direct support to children/young people (11).

Practitioners were asked how many children/young people they had supported to get an EHC plan or personal budget. Twelve respondents said that nearly all the children/young people they worked with had an EHC plan or personal budget while 32 said less than half did and 10 said that none of the children/young people yet had an EHC plan or personal budget.

## Practitioners' experience of process

Practitioners were asked to say whether they felt EHC plans or personal budgets had helped them and their colleagues from other agencies. In four of the seven work areas we asked about (partnership with parents (92%), individualised response (81%), being child centred (75%) and understanding the needs of the child/young person (81%)) at least three quarters of practitioners said EHC plans/personal budgets had helped always or mostly. In the other three areas we asked about (partnership with colleagues (65%) timely response (52%) information and advice (67%)) more than half the practitioners said EHC plans/personal budgets had helped always or mostly.

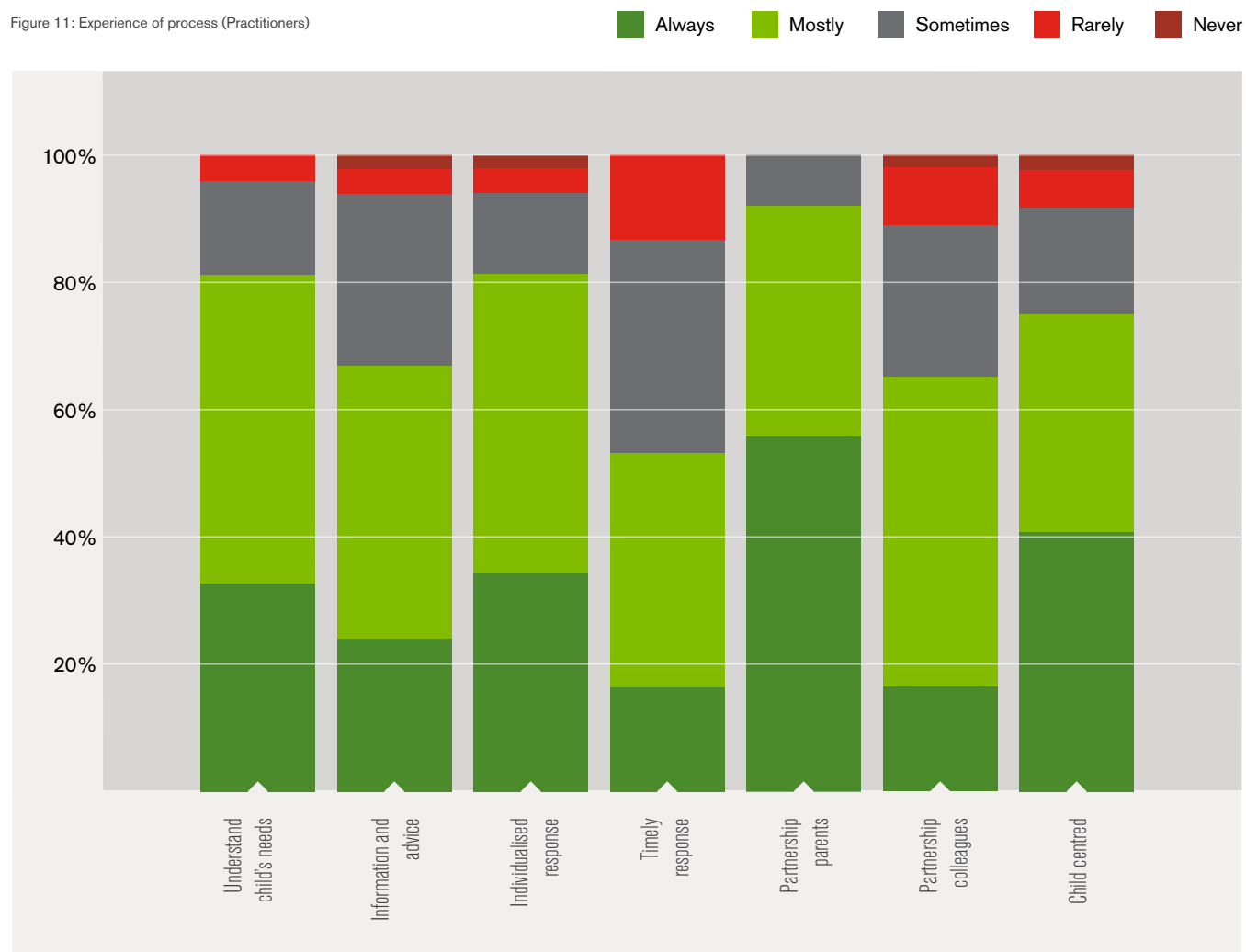
In five of the seven areas we asked about less than 10% of practitioners said EHC plans/personal budgets rarely or never helped. Two areas of process were reported as rarely working well or never by more than 10% of practitioners; providing a timely response (12%) and working in partnership (10%).

**In four of the seven work areas we asked about at least three quarters of practitioners said EHC plans/personal budgets had helped always or mostly**





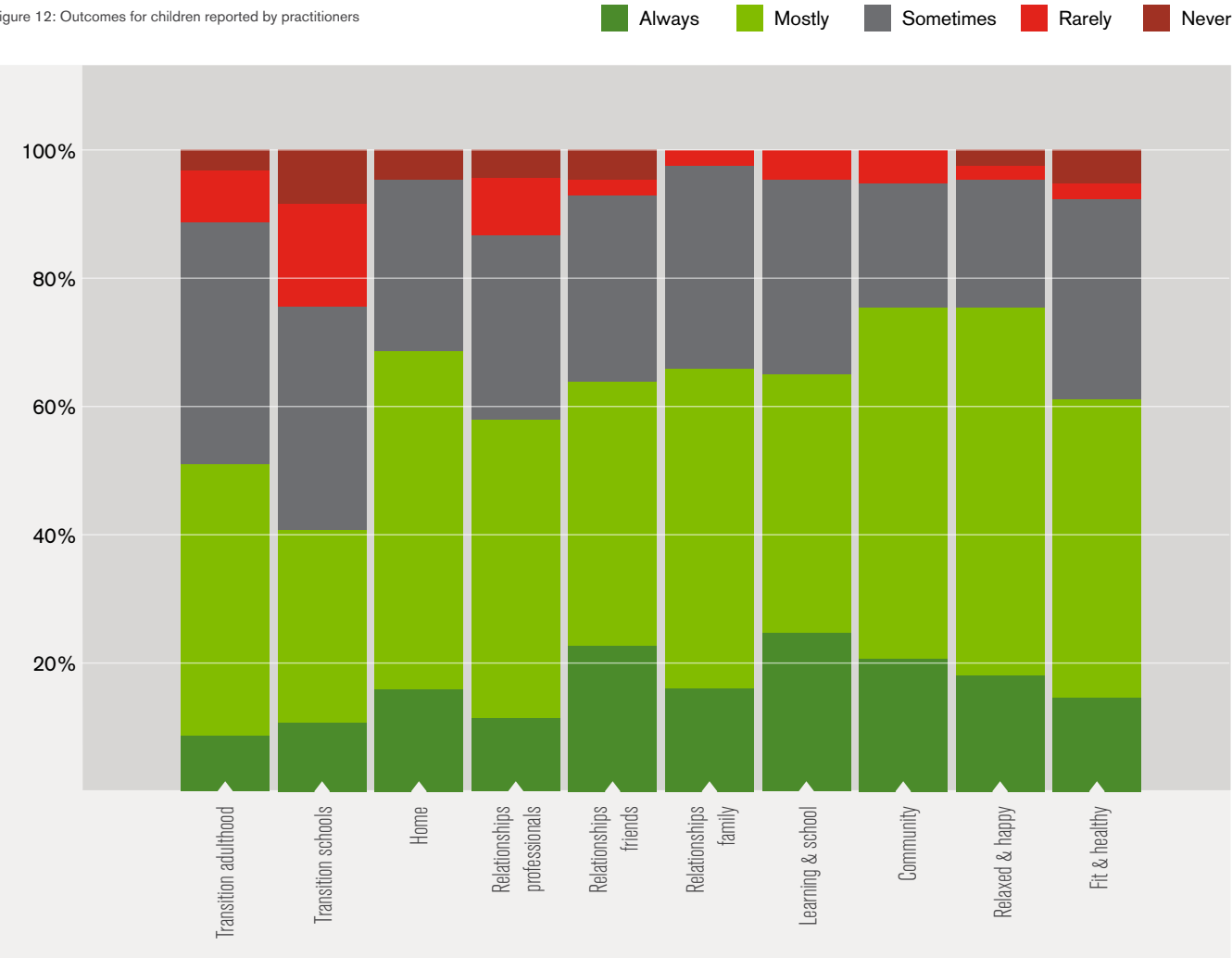
Figure 11: Experience of process (Practitioners)




## Practitioner reported outcomes

Practitioners were asked whether they thought EHC plans or personal budgets had helped children in 10 areas of life. In two of the 10 life areas we asked about (being relaxed and happy and taking part in community), at least three quarters (75%) of practitioners said EHC plans or personal budgets had helped always or mostly. In all the other areas except transition between schools (41%) at least half the respondents said EHC plans or personal budgets had helped always or mostly.

In seven of the 10 areas we asked about less than 10% of respondents said EHC plans or personal budgets had helped rarely or never. More than 10% of practitioners said EHC plans/personal budgets had helped rarely or never in three of the 10 areas that we asked about; relationship with practitioners (13%), transition into adulthood (11%) and transition between schools (24%).





**In two of the  
areas 75% said  
EHC plans or  
personal budgets  
had helped  
always or mostly**

## Free text responses

---

Respondents were asked if they wished to make any further comments about their experience of EHC plans and personal budgets. As with parents/carers, in order to ensure the views expressed provided a broad account, and to provide useful feedback on areas for improvement to participating local authorities, practitioners were asked three focused questions:

1. Thinking about your experience of EHC plans/personal budgets, what worked well?

These open questions offered practitioners an opportunity to raise issues that were not covered elsewhere in the questionnaire and to make specific recommendations for change.

2. Thinking about your experience of EHC plans/personal budgets what didn't work well?

The length of responses varied, most were just a few sentences. The answers were reviewed and a number of themes emerged. Comments were then categorised by theme and the number of responses in each theme counted.

3. Would you make any specific changes to the way EHC plans/personal budgets work in your area?

Themes were not mutually exclusive and some comments were counted in more than one theme. Some of the themes were talked about in response to both the negative and positive question and identified as areas for change.

## 1. Thinking about your experience of EHC plans or personal budgets what worked well?

A total of 52 practitioners made comments about things working well. People commented on their experience of the process and the impact this had on their working life. From the review of practitioners' comments about things that worked well the following themes emerged:

<b>Planning</b>	Improved, better coordinated and inclusive approaches to designing support arrangements to meet needs of the child/young person and their family.
<b>Family-centred</b>	Seeing the needs of the child/young person in the context of their family, recognising the needs of the family as well as those of the child/young person.
<b>Assessment</b>	Better understanding and responding to the unique needs of each individual child/young person. Placing the child/young person at the heart of the process.
<b>Support</b>	The process led to better more personalised support arrangements being in place.
<b>Partnership with colleagues</b>	Improved multi agency working, better communication and decision-making across a range of practitioners.
<b>Partnership with parents</b>	Improved working relationships with parents/carers. More involvement and stronger voice for parents/carers. Greater transparency with parents/carers around key decisions.
<b>Flexibility</b>	The ability to increase choice for families, allow them greater control. New and innovative support options being put in place.

## 2. Thinking about your experience of EHC plans or personal budgets what didn't work well?

A total of 54 practitioners made comments about things not working well. People commented on their experience of the process and the impact this had on their working life. From the review of practitioners' comments about things that did not work well, four themes were repeated (partnership with parents/carers and colleagues, assessment, and support). In addition five new themes emerged:

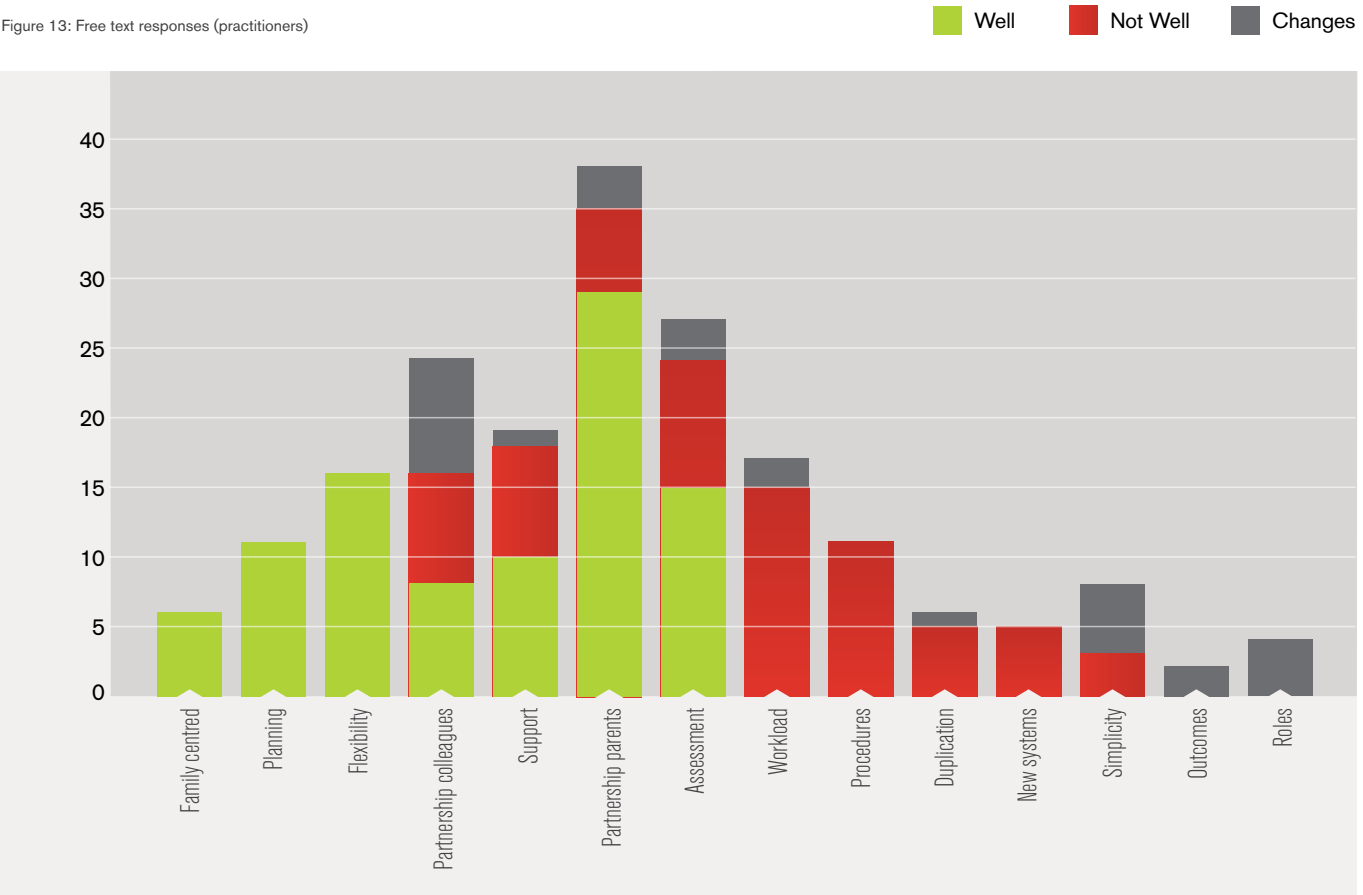
<b>Procedures</b>	Confusion and a lack of clarity around new process, uncertainty by practitioners and parents/carers about how aspects of the process should work.
<b>New systems</b>	Difficulty caused by the introduction of a new way of working, administration support and IT systems being geared to a different way of working. Difficulty resulting from operating both the existing and the new process simultaneously.
<b>Duplication</b>	Parents/carers and practitioners having to repeat aspects of the process for different disciplines or organisations.
<b>Workload</b>	A marked increase in the time needed to work with any one child/young person and family, both in relation to the intensity of work and the overall work from start to finish.
<b>Simplicity</b>	Process and procedure being overly bureaucratic.
<b>Assessment</b>	Difficulty caused by more transparent assessment and allocation decisions, ensuring objective eligibility and allocation decisions.
<b>Support</b>	Difficulty in ensuring support needed was put in place, and with recruitment.  Dissatisfaction from families with the level of support or restrictions on flexibility.
<b>Partnership with colleagues</b>	Difficulty securing timely response from colleagues, and communicating and securing commitment to new process from colleagues not directly involved.
<b>Partnership with parents</b>	Difficulty resulting from transparent decision-making around eligibility, and the amount or use of resources

### 3. Would you make any specific changes to the way EHC plans and/or personal budgets work in your area?

Practitioners made comments about a need to change in the four areas that featured in both positive and negative responses (partnership with parents/carers and colleagues, assessment, and support) and in some of the areas where things had not worked well (workload complexity and duplication). Two additional areas were seen as areas for future change:

Outcomes	Increased focus on outcomes.
Roles	Change roles of practitioners to offer more focused support to parents/carers going through the process.

Figure 13: Free text responses (practitioners)







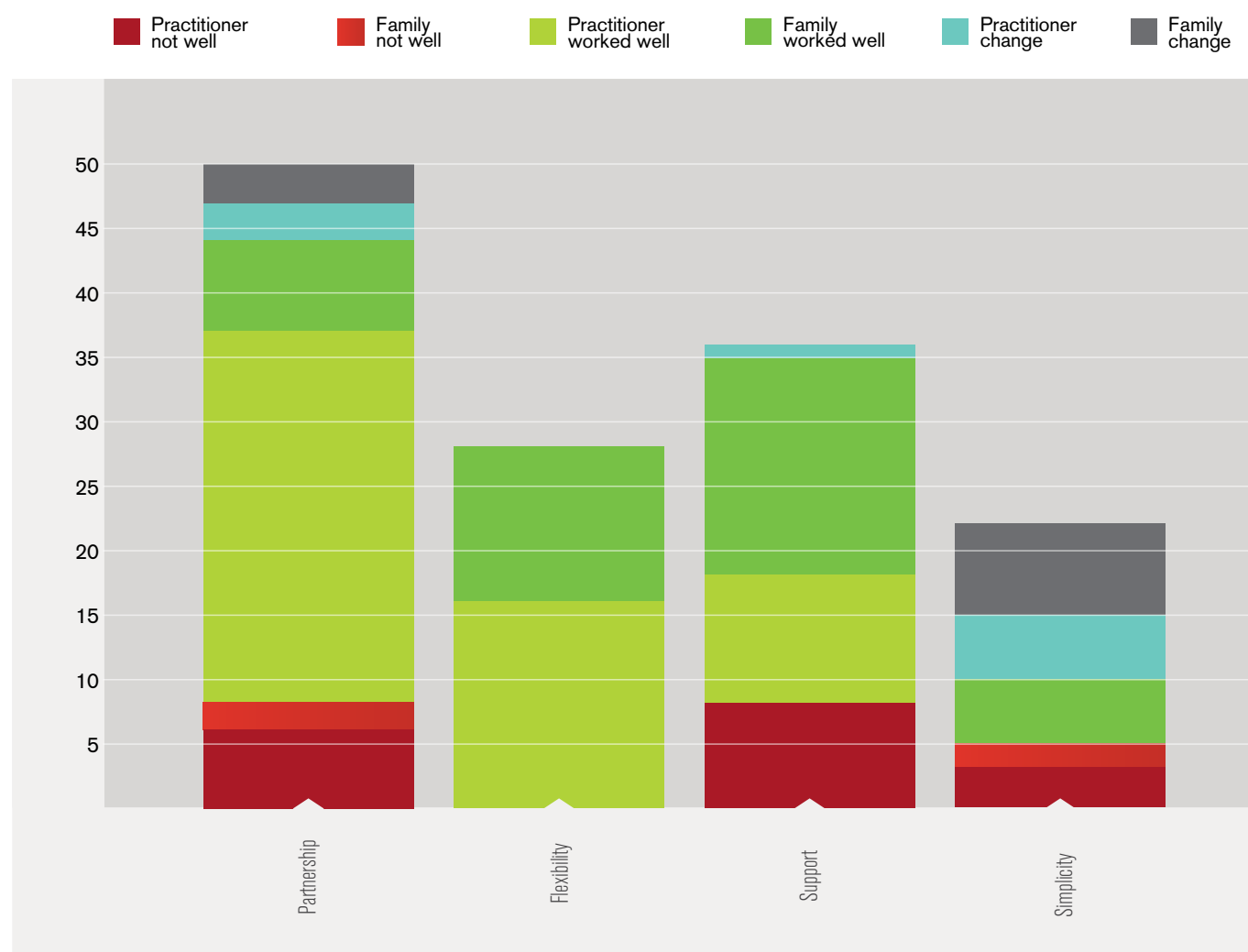
**Two areas  
identified as  
needing to change  
were simplicity  
and partnership  
working**



## Areas identified as important by both families and practitioners

Looking at both the free text comments from practitioners and from parents/carers four areas of common interest were identified (partnership working, flexibility, personalised support, simplicity). Flexibility had no negative comments from either group and was not seen as an area for change. The two areas identified by both groups as needing to change were simplicity and partnership working.

Figure 14: Free text responses: areas seen as significant by both practitioners and families.



# Design and development of POET

---

POET has been co-produced by a range of stakeholders. The design phase involved:

- Working actively with young people with SEND and their families so that the domains developed would be based on their own views and experiences
- Working with practitioners committed to increasing their accountability to local young people and families
- Producing an initial tool for testing that would be refined in the light of user experience, re-tested and refined further
- The explicit commitment to use the tool to help local areas benchmark themselves against others in order to inform and improve practice and associated outcomes

POET captures both process experience and outcomes for those involved in EHC plans and personal budgets.

The design process considered both aspects. Firstly how the EHC process should feel for people involved and then what impact the plan should have for children/young people and their families. These two aspects have been considered from the perspective of three different groups: children and young people, their families and those working in the system.

Young people, parents/carers and practitioners have helped to co-produce the tool through attending workshops held in the six local authority areas as well as by responding to the online questionnaires.

In the workshops people were asked to consider and describe:

- A good relationship with the person you are helping, or who is helping you
- How the assessment and planning process should feel
- The things good support should lead to for you or the person you are helping

These exercises produced a wealth of views and experiences from people across the country. Looking at the responses it was possible to identify common themes that described good relationships (how the process should feel) and good outcomes (what the process should lead to) for each group. These relationship characteristics and outcomes were described and defined and then used to form the question set included in POET.

---

## The following themes emerged from parents/carers about what would count as good relationships/process experiences:

- Clear information - Ensuring everyone can take part in support planning
- Continuity - Unnecessary changes are kept to a minimum, planning can be long term
- Communication - Everyone knows what they need to do
- Partnership - Decisions taken openly in the best interest of the child/young person, 'my' views included
- Timeliness - Decisions and actions are taken when they need to be
- Paperwork - Records are clear and open to the people who need them
- Clarity of role - The roles of everyone involved are clear
- Feeling supported – Parents/carers feel supported and respected as a parent/carer

- Individual support - Planning leads to the right support for the child/young person involved

The following themes emerged from parents/ carers about what would count as good outcomes of support:

### **For the child/ young person:**

- Being as fit and healthy as they can be
- Being relaxed and happy
- Taking part in school and learning
- Being a part of their local community
- Enjoying relationships with friends
- Enjoying relationships with family
- Life at home
- Quality of life
- Getting the support that is right for them

### **For the parent/carer:**

- Life balance - Feeling able to meet both the parental role and other life roles
- Taking part in the local community - Through local clubs or leisure facilities etc
- Feeling supported - Feeling supported in the parental role
- Being valued as a parent - The role as a parent/carer is acknowledged and respected
- Looking forwards positively - Being confident about the support arrangements for their child/ young person as they grow up
- Aspirations - Feeling encouraged to expect the best for their child/ young person in their life.

---

The following themes emerged from practitioners about what would count as good relationships/process experiences:

### **Process:**

- Put children/young people at the centre of planning
- Work in partnership with each other
- Work in partnership with parents/carers
- Provide a timely response to the needs of children/young people
- Provide individually tailored support to children/ young people
- Provide clear information and advice to parents carers
- Understand the needs of children/ young people in the context of their home, family and school/college

### **Outcomes for children and young people:**

- Be as fit and healthy as they can be
- Be relaxed and happy
- Be part of their local community
- Take part in school and learning
- Enjoy relationships with friends
- Enjoy relationships with family
- Benefit from relationships with practitioners
- Enjoy life at home
- Have a positive transition from school to school
- Have a positive transition towards adulthood

These process and outcome areas were used to form the basis of questions in POET for parents/carers and for practitioners.

For parents/carers and practitioners, respondents are asked to rate their experience of process and outcome on a frequency scale: Always; Mostly; Sometimes; Rarely; Never.

For the outcome areas respondents are asked to rate their experience of the EHC plan or personal budget using an impact scale: Made things a lot worse; Made things worse; Not made any difference; Made things better; Made things a lot better.

Having identified the important process and outcome areas a number of additional questions were added to help understand for whom, where and why EHC plans might lead to good outcomes, and to ensure all the issues raised by people contributing to the design were included in POET.

Finally, POET includes an opportunity for respondents to make comments about their experience of EHC and personal budgets.

## The survey

---

The POET surveys were designed for people to evaluate their experiences of the EHC planning process and personal budgets. They are therefore service evaluation rather than research, according to guidance from the National Research Ethics Service, and as such do not require Research Ethics Committee approval.

EHC plans come into force in September 2014 after pilots in 31 local authority areas. Not all areas participating in this first design phase were Pathfinders so some did not have experience of EHC planning, although almost all had some experience of making personal budgets available to families of disabled children. Given this, two slightly different versions of POET were used by sites, one for areas with experience of EHC plans and personal budgets, and one version for areas with experience of personal budgets only.

All the questions in the survey were the same, except that respondents were asked to comment on their experience of either EHC planning or personal budgets. People responding to the EHC version were asked to indicate if they also had a personal budget. Surveys were made available in two formats: online and a paper format.

# Next steps and further information

---

## Next steps

Benchmarking information is being shared with parents/carers and practitioners in participating local authorities where possible and they are being encouraged to use this initial evidence to develop action plans to support the introduction of EHC plans and personal budgets.

In this second phase of the project, we will be working with at least 16 local authorities to further refine the tool and to ensure the reliability and validity of data. A further report will be published in spring 2015 with an update on the development of POET and with the national survey results. The individual local authorities will also be supplied with benchmarking evidence to support action planning.

## Publishing information

### Measuring the outcomes of EHC plans and personal budgets

First published July 2014

Free to download from  
[www.in-control.org.uk](http://www.in-control.org.uk)

Published by In Control Partnerships

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.

To view a copy of this license, visit  
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>.

For further publication information, please contact: [communications@in-control.org.uk](mailto:communications@in-control.org.uk)

## Further information

If you would like to know more about POET and its use across children's services, adult social care, health and with provider organisations, please visit [www.in-control.org.uk/poet](http://www.in-control.org.uk/poet) or contact [poet@in-control.org.uk](mailto:poet@in-control.org.uk)



