

MARCH 2025

Bristol City Council Childcare Project

Parent Carer Feedback



INTRODUCTION



Bristol Parent Carers (BPC) held two listening events, one online and one in person, to hear from families who have accessed childcare in Bristol for their children with special educational needs and disabilities (aged 0-18 years). The events were run by BPC and staff from Bristol City Council's childcare project.

Additionally, parent carers answered three key questions about their experiences of childcare in Bristol, including how accessible and inclusive they found it, when booking onto our other sessions. This broad participation helped to ensure that we gathered a wide range of responses to feedback to BCC.

EXPLORING THE JOURNEY

Throughout the in person and online events, parent carers were encouraged to reflect on their journey, from initially choosing a childcare setting, to how well that setting met their child's needs, to their suggestions for improving childcare for children with SEND.

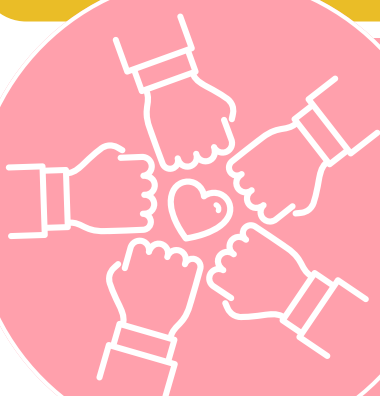
We invited parent carers to share their insights candidly, focusing on nine key questions. These included exploring whether parent carers felt childcare staff were suitably trained, skilled and knowledgeable, and whether parent carers or the setting had tried to secure any additional funding to provide support.



SHAPING THE FUTURE TOGETHER

We value the insights shared by parent carers during the listening events and the views expressed by those families booking into our events.

By amplifying their voices, we aim to inform, influence and help shape proposals to improve childcare in Bristol so it is accessible and inclusive, as well as being tailored to the needs of children and their families, before a wider consultation in April 2025.



How were the events planned and advertised?



The events were advertised six weeks in advance on the Bristol Parent Carers (BPC) Eventbrite page, which received 1,146 views.

They were shared with schools (so they could forward the details to their community), and other community organisations working in the special educational needs and disabilities field. £10 high street vouchers were offered to thank families for sharing their views.

BPC also promoted the events twice via direct mail and social media. 1,762 parent carers opened our direct mail and 908 viewed our posts on Facebook. When booking their place families answered 3 key questions. BPC also created a survey with all 9 questions for those parent carers who couldn't attend the events to give feedback.

What did parent carers at the listening events tell us?



"My child's pre-school were open to learning more and wanted to listen to us"



**"I cannot find
a setting to
meet my child's
needs. It's
disheartening"**



"The after school club say they don't have enough staff for my child"



"There needs to be greater confidence to have the difficult conversations"



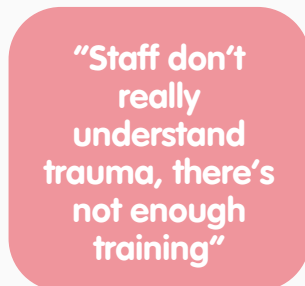
"Cost is a major issue. It's quite expensive, especially with multiple children"



"One setting's communication was really good, but they don't always have time"



"It's difficult to find a club that is not focused on sport. My child doesn't like sport"



"Staff don't really understand trauma, there's not enough training"



"There are no specialist settings to provide wraparound and holiday provision"



"The breakfast club want to help, but don't know what to do"



“There needs to be more flexibility and more 1:1s available”



"My child needs a relationship, to feel trust and confidence"

What is the right support?

We asked parent carers, including those who booked onto the listening events, those who were able to attend and those who completed our survey, "How would you improve childcare for children with SEND in Bristol?". Here are the key themes they highlighted:

Staff Training and Knowledge

Parent carers talked about the need for more specialised training for childcare staff on neurodiversity and associated needs, such as speech and language and communication (for example Makaton and PECs). Parents also feel that staff need to be better equipped to understand sensory processing, emotional regulation and behaviours such as meltdowns. This would ensure more consistent, effective support for children with SEND.

Inclusive and Flexible Provision

Parent carers stressed the importance of accessible and inclusive settings that could cater to a range of SEND needs. This includes ensuring that varied activities are on offer, such as chess and craft activities, rather than predominantly sports-based programmes. There is also a need for more flexible wraparound and holiday provision, working around full time working hours, while being adequately staffed to meet the diverse needs of SEND children.

Communication and Transparency

Effective communication between parents and childcare providers is essential. Parent carers need transparency regarding their child's progress, challenges and what adjustments can be made. Parents also highlighted the importance of honest feedback, rather than overly positive reports that fail to address the real difficulties their child is facing.

Sufficient Funding and Resources

Getting the right funding for children with SEND is a major barrier. Parent carers and settings often face difficulties securing adequate 1:1 support or maintaining consistency in staffing. There is a need for more knowledge regarding funding mechanisms, to ensure that those children and families who need additional support can access it.

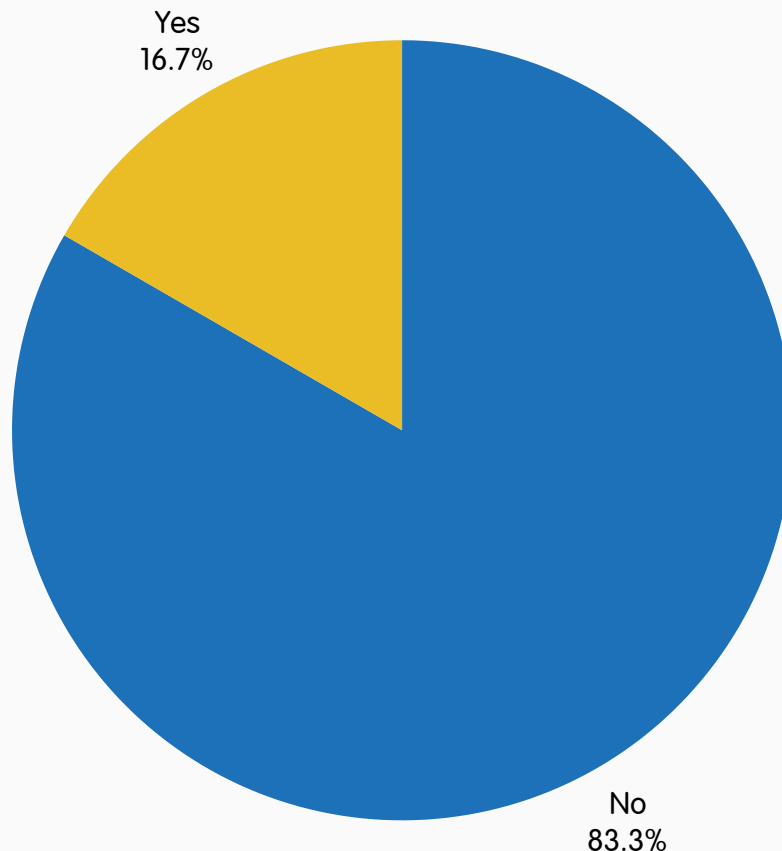
More Specialised Settings and Support Options

There is a lack of specialised settings for children with SEND and more complex needs. Parent carers need more childcare, which is specialised in meeting the needs of those children with SEND, which work on a practical level around parent's work commitments.



Knowing about available funding

One of the questions we asked parent carers when booking onto the listening events (18 responses) was, "Do you know about the Access to Childcare Fund?" This is what families told us:



"The SENDCO is good but there's a lack of understanding about funding at the setting. It's taken 2 years to get Band 4 funding – it could have been applied for sooner."

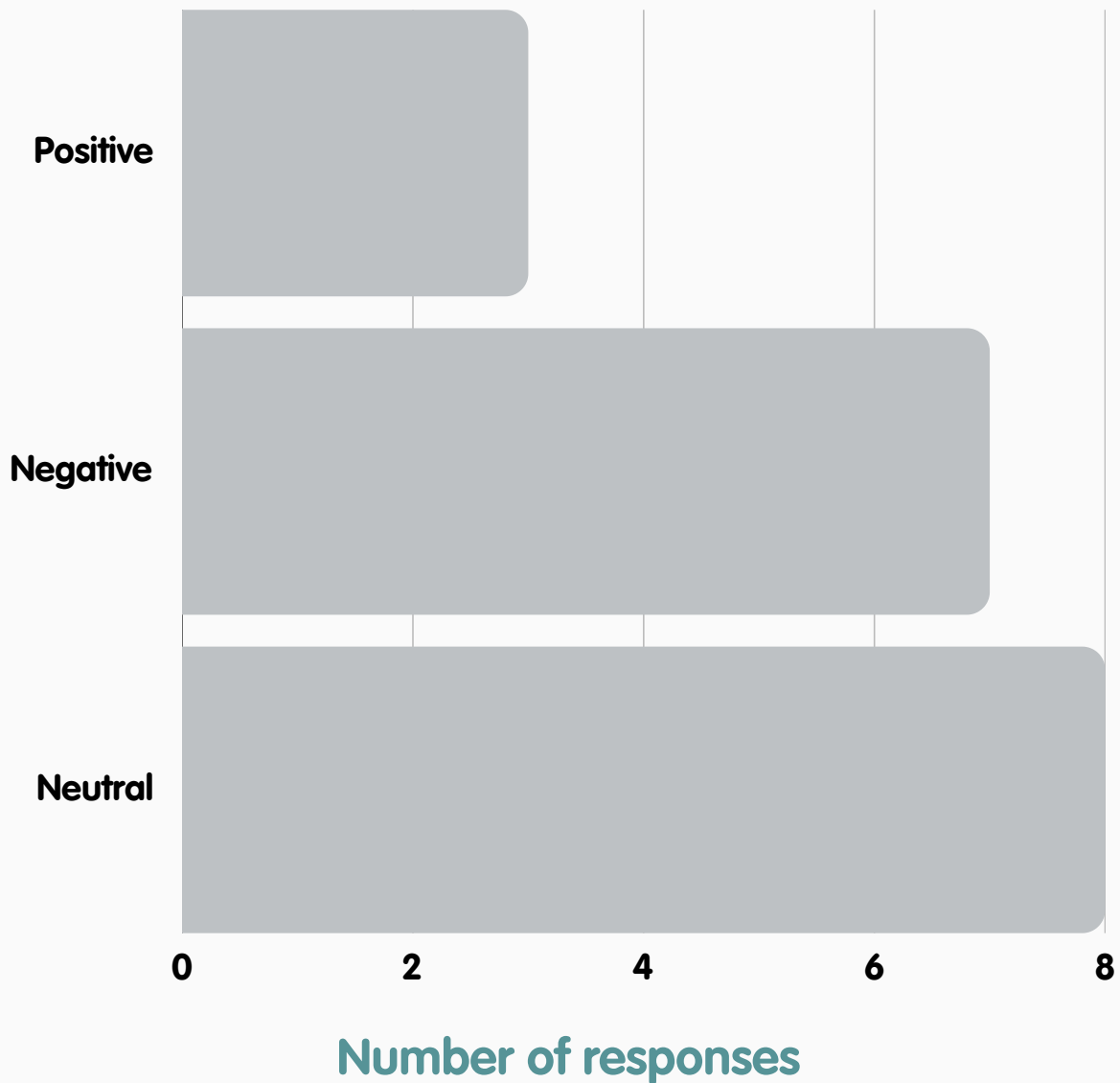
"It's good the funding is there but it doesn't help someone working full time. My child would have had a 1:1 two days a week, but no one 3 days a week."



Childcare experiences in Bristol

We asked parent carers who booked onto the listening events (18 responses) what their experience of childcare in Bristol had been.

Here are their views:

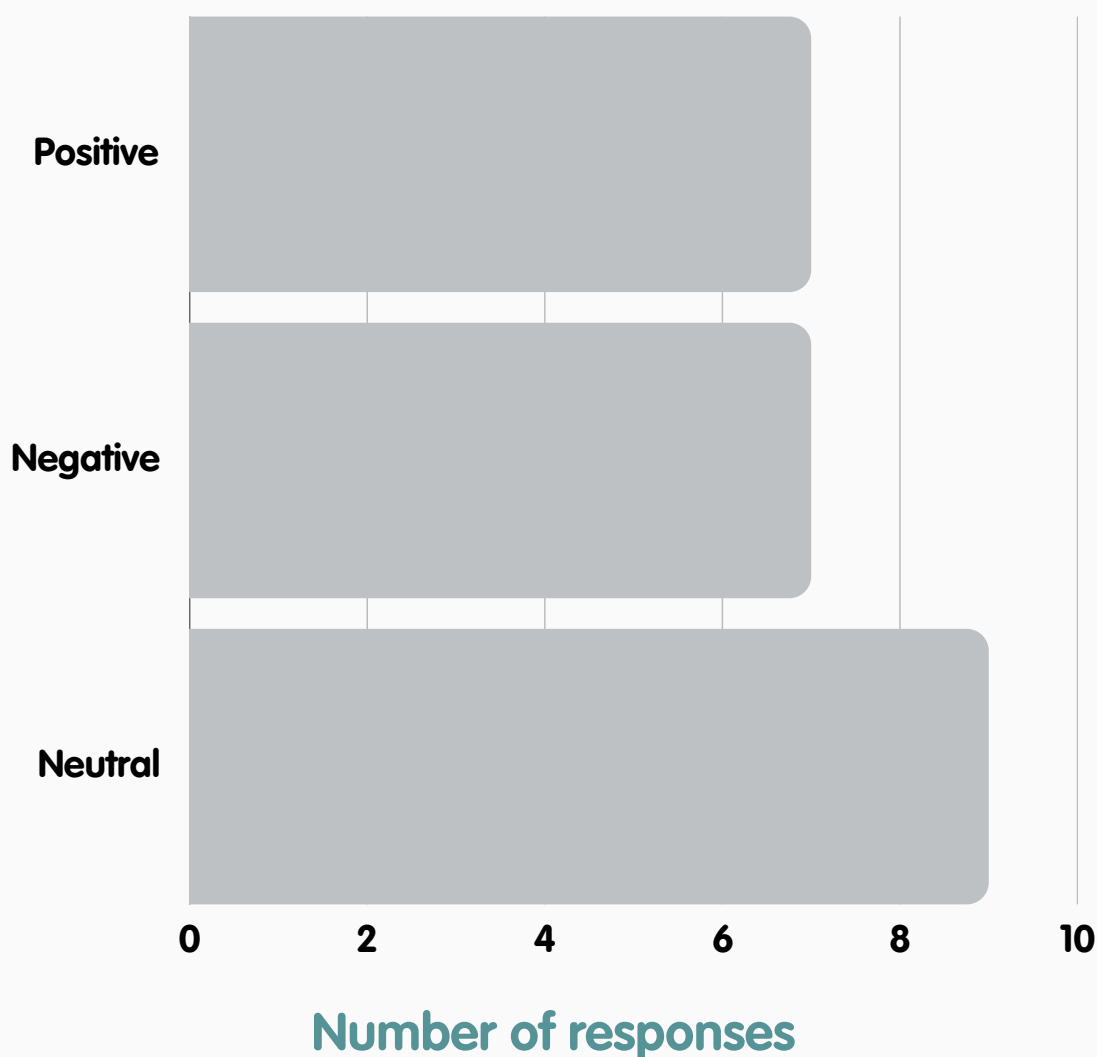


"Ok, however some areas don't understand children's individual needs and abilities."



Accessibility and Inclusivity

We asked parent carers who booked onto the listening events and those who completed our survey (23 responses) how accessible and inclusive they found childcare settings. Here are their views:



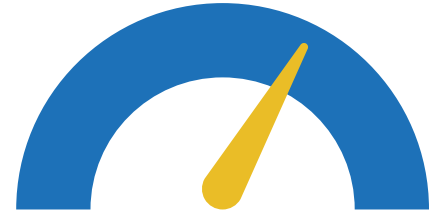
"They do not feel that they need to adapt to support children, and children need to fit in to their system, not the other way round."

Audience Metrics

1,146

Parent carers viewed our Eventbrite booking pages for our online and in person listening events.

65% of parent carers who booked onto our listening events or filled out our survey were from seldom-heard groups.

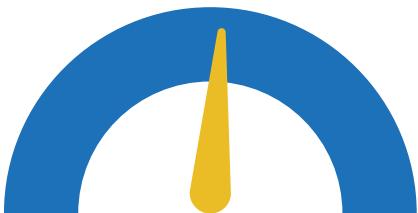


1,762

Parent carers opened our direct mail for our online and in person listening events.

Parent carers viewed our posts on the Childcare project on Facebook.

908



52% of parent carers who shared their views were from global majority groups.

Parent carers reported that their children had diverse needs, with 6 different types identified.

Among these, 57% reported a need of autism, ADHD, or both. Additionally, 9% had a learning disability and 4% reported global developmental delay. 4% were unsure of their child's needs.

Specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, dyscalculia or dysgraphia, were reported by 9% of parents, and 4% reported a physical disability. Additionally, 13% reported other needs.

What will happen as a result

of the listening events and how will parent carer participation shape next steps?



Active Involvement

By attending the event and listening to a wide variety of parent carer experiences, project co-leaders' understanding of the difficulties faced by families was greatly enhanced.



Family centred approach

After listening to parent carer experiences, project leaders understood the importance of ensuring childcare options meet the needs of families, children and young people.



Doing with, not to or for parent carers

Bristol Parent Carers have a rep that sits on the project group for this project; we will relay the perspectives of parent carers to the project group. This ensures that as the project develops, parent carers' views will be heard and understood.



Looking at the problem

Hearing the experiences of parent carers first-hand gave the project group leaders a much broader view of the issues faced by families, which helps ensure that all perspectives are considered.



Transformation that works

By engaging parent carers, children and young people in the project and working with BPC, the changes are poised to make a significant impact in ensuring the right support.

What happens next?



Bristol City Council will compile all of the feedback from parent carers to provide a broad overview of experiences gathered through the project from all stakeholders.



The project group will examine all of the feedback and consider what the service will look like and what childcare support it will provide.



This will go out to public consultation, where you can see what is proposed, and give your thoughts on it. The consultation is due to be launched in April and can be found here after 7th April - [Ask Bristol Consultation and Engagement Hub](#).



The project group will then review this feedback, make any changes to the service, and see which organisation is best placed to deliver this service.



Bristol City Council are hoping to launch the new Childcare Development and Sustainability Service on 1st January 2026.



To stay up to date, sign up to the BPC newsletter: <https://bit.ly/3UGAyCG>

