



Parent
Carer
Community
Shropshire

Mad, Sad, Glad

2026

Introduction

The Mad, Sad and Glad Survey 2026 provides a powerful picture of the experiences of Shropshire families caring for children and young people with SEND. Responses show enormous love, pride and commitment to children and young people, alongside significant frustration, exhaustion and concern about the systems and services families rely upon.

A dominant message throughout the “Mad” responses is that families feel they have to continually fight for support. Parent carers described difficulties accessing appropriate education, social care, health services, specialist support, respite and inclusive activities.

EHCP processes were a particular source of frustration, with concerns about delays, communication, plans not being updated or implemented, staff changes and a perceived lack of accountability. Families also described being passed between services and having to repeatedly chase professionals or explain their child’s needs.

These experiences are having a substantial impact on parent carer wellbeing and family life. Families spoke about exhaustion, financial pressures, difficulties maintaining employment, limited opportunities for breaks and the impact caring responsibilities can have on siblings and relationships. Several responses suggest that support can feel reactive rather than preventative, with families feeling they have to reach crisis point before meaningful help becomes available.

The “Sad” responses particularly highlight the emotional impact of seeing children and young people struggle, become isolated or miss opportunities. Families described concerns about mental health, independence, friendships and inclusion, alongside sadness that children are sometimes misunderstood or that their needs are not adequately recognised and supported. There is also considerable anxiety about the future, particularly what will happen as children move into adulthood and who will support them when their parents are no longer able to do so.

The “Glad” responses provide an important counterbalance. Families overwhelmingly expressed love and pride in their children, celebrating their personalities, strengths, resilience, achievements and progress. Many described how their children had changed their outlook on life and how much joy they brought to their families.

Families also identified the significant difference that the right support can make. Positive experiences included supportive schools and specialist settings, inclusive activities, friendships with other SEND families and professionals who genuinely understand and work alongside families. Responses demonstrate that when appropriate education and support are in place, children can thrive and parents can spend less time fighting systems and more time enjoying their child's development and family life.

When asked what would improve the experience of being a Shropshire SEND family, responses point to several interconnected priorities: greater accountability and legal compliance; clearer and more consistent communication; earlier support; improved EHCP processes; reduced assessment and CAMHS waiting times; better coordinated education, health and social care services; increased respite and family support; and clearer pathways into adulthood. Families also want to be listened to and meaningfully involved in decisions about their children.

Access to inclusive activities and opportunities is another strong theme. Families want more holiday, weekend and evening provision; opportunities for teenagers and young adults; activities suitable for different levels and types of need; provision that does not always require a parent carer to remain present; and a better geographical spread across Shropshire, particularly in the north and south of the county.

Overall, the survey suggests that families are not asking for a single solution. Their experiences span education, health, social care, community provision and preparation for adulthood. What connects these experiences is a desire for a SEND system that is easier to navigate, communicates clearly, intervenes earlier, works collaboratively across services and recognises parent carers as knowledgeable partners.

The clearest message from the survey is the contrast between how families talk about their children and how they talk about the systems around them. Children and young people are overwhelmingly described with love, pride and optimism. Much of the anger and sadness instead relates to barriers, delays, lack of support, limited opportunities and the effort required to secure help. The findings therefore provide a clear opportunity for partners across Shropshire to focus not only on individual services, but on reducing the cumulative burden placed on SEND families and ensuring children, young people and their families can feel supported, included and able to thrive.

All Data in this report is direct quotes of the feedback families have provided.



What makes you MAD, SAD and GLAD about life as a parent or family carer of a child or young person with SEND?

The MAD responses highlight the frustration and exhaustion many families experience when trying to get the right support for their child or young person. Families described having to repeatedly fight for help, navigate complicated processes, chase communication and deal with delays across education, health and social care. There were also concerns about limited activities, respite and specialist provision, as well as families not always feeling listened to or valued as partners.

Access to Support & Provision

- Zero help with clubs or holiday providers.
- The fact my child is too disabled for a lot of things but not disabled enough for the support they need!
- Lack of support in all areas. Constant fighting for support. Fighting for services. Fighting for inclusion.
- Not being able to access specialised support for the unique needs of child. Assessed, diagnosed and left. No support in school despite repeated requests and no funding.
- Lack of help
- Lack of support
- No support in the Oswestry area. No activities apart from football! I and others have been saying this for years and no one listens!
- Lack of provision for high functioning ASD with low social skills. Particularly outside of working hours. I feel like provisions are everywhere for children whose parents don't work.
- The lack of support from specialist, having to fight for basic support for Sen child.
- That there is limited activities in school holidays for young people who don't require as much support as others
- Lack of accessible places for our daughter to visit.
- The daily battles with professionals for support for my children.
- No help & no support.
- No activities in our area
- That there are no clubs for them to socialise
- There is no help and no one to help in crisis; where do we go?
- Lack of support available and how you have to fight everything
- Not enough help and support for families during holidays.
- You have to fight for things that you are entitled to but didn't even know you or your young adult were entitled to them in the first place.
- That you have to continually search for the support which is available to your child, you normally stumble across it rather than be provided it. Currently with the SEND white paper looming, the possibility of having to revalidate/argue/fight for the individual provision required for my son. The prospect of having to find the best box he would fit in rather than the actual tailored provision he needs.

- They are not able to access employment easily without one to one help
- Not enough support as a single parent
- The lack of support
- That you get zero support from any of the services that are meant to help your children.
- Lack of help
- Fighting for the support you need, taking months to secure a suitable school causing extreme anxiety
- Having to fight for support
- Everything is a battle to get the right support. My 18 year old is still waiting for her assessment for Autism/ADHD. It's going to be another 2 and a half years, which means she will have finished her education without a formal diagnosis and full support
- Mental health have refused support due to everything with his mental health being due to undiagnosed ND

EHCPs, Education & SEND Processes

- The lack of empathy and understanding "professionals" have about SEND and life experience
- What makes me mad is having to fight continually for the support, services and opportunities that my child is entitled to. Families are often passed between education, health and social care, with each service saying that another is responsible. We repeatedly have to explain our child's needs, chase referrals, meet thresholds and prove that support is necessary—often while already exhausted from providing care. It is frustrating that help is frequently offered only when a situation reaches crisis point, rather than early enough to prevent that crisis. Long waiting lists, poor communication and complicated processes place an enormous burden on families. Being the parent or carer of a child with additional needs is not what makes me mad; it is the unnecessary barriers, inequality and constant battle to ensure they are understood, included and given the same opportunities as everyone else.
- That I wasn't told his social worker had left and he no longer had one, despite being in the middle of trying to sort out social support and respite
- Fighting the local authority tooth and nail for what my child needs, instead of resting.
- School
- Fights with local authority (and in the past school) to basically have services, help etc which should come automatically. Lack of funding for departments such as speech and language.
- The lack of understanding and support from the council and EHCP team
- School / college definitely didn't cater for his needs
- The ridiculous paperwork, scrutiny, time and expense I am going to have to experience this year with application to the deputy court of protection.
- Schools are not set up for children like mine. I could write a book, we have been in a living hell for ten years and now things are extremely difficult
- Shropshire Council - they've had the largest increase of children in care in the country.
- The EHCPs are not updated. They're not fit for purpose, and they don't specify what needs children have or how they can be met. It's become really clear there is a chasm where process should be
- We need to travel to school for around 40min.

- The ongoing fight for education
- No/ very little help or guidance. Being told to send him to Mainstream Hub and now being told that he needs specialist. Not being able to properly check out specialist schools until we go through different / long processes. Not enough specialist schools locally. The council pulling the funding from school that was going to improve the Hub and disabled toilets.
- I'm mad I had to log a stage 2 complaint to raise how my sons ehcp was dealt with and the failings of Shropshire SEN team
- I'm mad that the head teacher is particularly biased against children with SEN and only wants a hub for funding.
- How systems are not as transparent as they should be. We were called into school when my child was in reception to discuss their thoughts about putting my child forward for BEEU assessment. They advised that they would arrange this. Two years later (throughout which we were led to believe we were in the queue for an assessment) my child was struggling immensely and her relationship with learning and feeling safe was breaking down. We then find out from a new head of school that the application had not been made. We then paid for a private assessment out of desperation, and this moved things on including recommendations from an educational psychologist. The school then said they would apply for an EHCP to find this. A year later we find out this has still not been done. I find out I can write one myself. It gets approved in August. The school don't sign the paperwork their end until January. I ask the school if I can have some kind of timetable how the ehcp money is being used and which of the recommendations are being actioned. I am told they will send me something and they are applying for a dyslexia test. That was 9 months ago. I still have no information and no update on the dyslexia testing. I feel powerless to gain information about my child's wellbeing and support without upsetting the school and who we rely on to give her the support she needs. We now only have two years left at primary and so much damage has been done and time wasted. The EHCP department advise that they only make recommendations to how the money should be spent so have no details. It's bizarre that no information is available or system tracking where this money is going and how my child is being helped with the additional support. Why is there not a parent organisation collecting the data on this and making it available to parents.
- That the LA and school is breaking the law and not meeting my child's needs in the timeframe the law states.
- We placed two of our children with Lifehouse school we looked around the school prior and explained that our children are non-verbal with severe learning disabilities we were assured that they were welcomed we fought to get our children into this school thinking great they are there until aged 19 now school is saying they might not be able to meet their needs as they get older, we have their review in October. Call me cynical but they received a lot of money from Shropshire council and now as they get older, we may have to find another setting that makes me MAD
- Having to spend so much time chasing the LEA for issues relating to the EHCP and provision of support in section F. There is no accountability. We've raised official complaints, had our local MP involved and nothing ever improves. Our son has had numerous case officers and every time they allocate a new case officer it's because they're "restructuring to improve their service" - we've heard this excuse every year since 2018. We spend so much time scrutinising the paperwork and chasing the LEA - that time should be devoted to our child not their incompetence.

- The long and unfulfilling process getting help into a specialist education
- That the education system just doesn't work for them. That as a parent we have to fight for our child all the time.

Waiting Times & Delays

- Long wait for a diagnosis
- The lack of clarity or clear systems in place for help which means accessing services initially took around 2 years and delayed getting us onto the ridiculous 2 year waiting list for assessment.
- The long waits
- Waiting over 3 years for a diagnosis and still waiting

Communication, Transparency & Accountability

- Shropshire council repeatedly breaching timeliness and they are NEVER held accountable
- Initially, never being told information to benefit our young person. Always finding out from other parents!
- Lack of accountability or communication from the SEND team. Still waiting for draft EHCP that was due early Nov 2025 and now preparing for another annual review but without finalised plan. They ignore phone calls and emails When I try and contact them. All I know (after chasing) is it's with the 'recovery team'
- Being passed from person to person.
- Communication

Being Heard & Valued as Parent Carers

- Having to 'fight' for EVERYTHING. Not being trusted to know what my child needs. Having to justify every little thing and having to chase everyone
- Not being listened to as their parent.
- People not understanding
- I have to do extra chasing, constant follow ups and research
- Exhaustion and frustration at having to fight for educational provision for next stage which we have spent considerable time researching and identifying and visiting (and discounting others in the process), but the LA thinks otherwise
- Not being listened to in school for my sons needs as he is not disruptive
- Lack of compassion from other parents at school

Impact on Family Life & Parent Carer Wellbeing

- Having to always run our life around what he can access or not find too overwhelming. Wasting money if we have to leave because he does.
- Having to fight for your child all the time is exhausting.
- When you're at your limit and then you have to deal with challenging behaviour that you never envisaged.
- Not being able to financially support my family
- That life is sometimes so difficult and others don't understand

- No support for parent carers who are exhausted
- The screaming, shouting, swearing, meltdowns when he doesn't get his own way
- Being unable to enjoy days out due to crowds & noise which dysregulates my children
- When you're at your limit and then you have to deal with challenging behaviour that you never envisaged.
- No places /hobbies to take part in or holiday care centres without a parent. No means of looking after an incontinent child anywhere without the parent.

Other feedback

Other

- The massive dilution of Autism. This has led to an absence of understanding and shock when people find out my teen is still in nappies, cannot write his own name, can't bathe or dress himself. This is not how the world sees Autism any more
- Facing an uncertain future with financial help from the government. Also post 25 support.
- The negative comments about school by some parents, when they're doing good job!
- My son is misunderstood
- No coordination of services



What makes you SAD about being the Parent/ Family Carer of a child or young person with a disability or additional need?

The SAD responses show the emotional impact that these experiences can have on children, young people and their families. Parent carers spoke about watching their children struggle, experience isolation, miss opportunities or have their needs misunderstood. Families also shared the impact on their own wellbeing, relationships, employment and family life, alongside worries about friendships, independence and what the future may hold.

Impact on Children & Young People's Wellbeing

- Watching my child be completely failed by the LA
- Watching my child suffer and reaching out for support for them and not receiving it
- Not being able to afford to give her her best life.
- Seeing my child struggle daily
- That she can't be more independent and grow up like her siblings
- That my child will never lead an independent life
- Watching them struggle through certain situations in life & sometimes being unable to help or find answers
- Exhaustion and burnout and their needs not being met or identified
- The impact of send on my youngest daughter's mental health
- They don't get to live life fully without difficulties. My daughter misses out on so much.
- Seeing my daughter requiring so much support. Not yet reading and writing.
- The fact that they deserve so much more
- Not being given the chance
- Sad that at the centre of this is a child whose needs aren't being met and is regressing over time
- Child not getting help he needs
- That my child is suffering
- Struggling with a son who has high anxiety and hardly sleeps
- His mental health is really struggling and limited
- Her daily struggle with life
- The lack of support has made her more isolated

Friendships, Inclusion & Belonging

- Lack of friendships formed
- He has no friends therefore no invites he's so lonely
- No friends,
- Socialising restrictions.
- Friendship

Impact on Parent Carers & Family Life

- The amount of admin we have to do on their behalf. It's exhausting and living their worst day to justify support kills me!
- How his twin has had her life dominated by his needs instead of her own
- I'm not just mum. I have different job titles and just want to enjoy motherhood.
- Having to know so much about things that parents of 'normal kids' don't even have to consider. For example, childcare so we can work, life after school, our long-term life and how that has been impacted in terms of life goals and dreams.
- Not being able to enjoy family activities because autism isn't a recognised disability as much as they say they it is let's face it ... it's not.
- I am expected to care for her despite my own health needs
- Lack of a break and support
- Very difficult to work as a SEND parent due to no holiday care
- Lack of family enthusiasm to help out with respite
- No time for myself, no job due to the care needs of one of my children
- No workshop in weekends for SEN families and therefore working weekdays feels like punishment for working hard for my family and therefore parenting feels lonely world.
- I feel sad because I don't spend enough time either my other children and my husband as I feel I need to put all my time into her to give her the best experience
- That we will not be there to support them their whole life.
- I can't meet all my child's needs, can't always manage their emotional outbursts
- Having to fight for everything
- They are kind of left to get on with it and constantly have to fight for support
- The helplessness in situations like the above and the further drain on time and resources. It's not efficient.

Access to Support & Opportunities

- Zero social events for him to attend as a SEN betweenener.
- Lack of community provision...no fully accessible soft play, poor provision in playback for disabled children, lack of Changing places
- That the system takes so long and it feels like you can't do more to help them
- The cancelling of beeu appointments when needed
- Nothing to help them
- Lack of support and help for my child and us as a family
- The CAMHS waiting list. Child 2 has been on it since Nov 24 and I've been told we'll be lucky if she's seen this year
- Having to fight for basic things he needs. We needed melatonin this summer for our holidays and just couldn't get any. I was sent around in circles.
- Lack of support available
- The difference between Telford autism hub and nothing in Shrewsbury. Post diagnosis support is non existent
- Fighting so hard for respite and support and missing out due to Shropshire being such a huge county

Understanding, Acceptance & Being Heard

- Some teachers in the past not recognising the things that would help my son flourish and not believing in him.
- A lack of understanding from those around us family, friends, school everywhere new he goes. He has to mask to fit the expectations of others which tires him out
- Always having to fight for support/understanding
- Seeing how many parents feel their child's school doesn't/can't meet their needs
- What makes me sad is seeing my child face barriers, exclusion or misunderstanding because others do not always recognise or accommodate their needs. It is painful to watch them struggle with things that could be made easier with the right understanding and support. I also worry about their future—whether they will be accepted, safe, included and able to live a fulfilling life as independently as possible. Having to focus constantly on what they cannot do in order to secure support can be heartbreaking, particularly when we see their strengths, personality and potential so clearly. It is not my child or their additional needs that make me sad; it is the way the world sometimes fails to understand, value and include them
- Lack of understanding from other people. Limited support and opportunities to rest myself.
- People's views of disability at times and lack of understanding/empathy.
- Some people's attitudes towards them
- That my daughter is misunderstood by many but mostly by teachers. That she didn't achieve the GCSEs that she could of/wanted to and that she was punished for behaviour as if she was naughty rather than has additional needs

Fear & Uncertainty About the Future

- The future, that if I am not there, who is going to be on my child's side - so that he doesn't just become a name/number as part of someone's job and boxes ticked to satisfy criteria.
- The constant national messages around SEND reforms and uncertainty about what might change.
- I worry about what will happen to him as an adult. Will there be supported work opportunities? Will he have any independence? Who will love him and care for him when we are gone?

Other feedback

- That there are options and even legislation, but it is not implemented
- Being told he his needs have to be assessed again. Despite nothing changing from the previous assessment. Unnecessary duplication
- Being lied to by the LA and School.
- Just how adversarial seeking support for young people is. Also, to be frank, the PaCC. It really does come across as a clique for parents of neurodivergent children and the needs of kids with other disabilities aren't treated with the same recognition.



GLAD

What makes you GLAD about being the Parent/ Family Carer of a child or young person with a disability or additional need?

The GLAD responses show the love, pride and joy families have in their children and young people. Families celebrated their children's personalities, strengths, resilience, achievements and progress. They also highlighted the positive difference that the right support, understanding, inclusive opportunities and supportive professionals can make, enabling children and young people to thrive and families to enjoy life together.

Love, Pride & Celebrating Our Children

- I love my family
- The beauty of life with them in it! I wouldn't change a thing about them!
- The joy my child brings. The lessons he teaches us and how he inspires others
- The intense love I have for my child
- He's a great young chap with some nice friends.
- I'm pleased I'm here for him and through him I have learnt so much it has led to a career change for me and I've just applied to become a SENCO.
- My child is unique and stubborn meaning he won't be swayed by peers.
- My children are fabulous!
- I know she's happy and we as a family understand she sees the world a different way to us and it's beautiful
- My daughter herself.
- Watching them grow up to be amazing humans even through their struggles
- She is my lovely girl
- That she has no behaviour issues and is a happy girl
- That he is happy
- What makes me glad is seeing my child's unique personality, strengths and way of experiencing the world. They have taught me to appreciate progress in all its forms and to celebrate achievements that others might take for granted. Their determination, honesty and resilience make me incredibly proud. Being their parent has helped me become more patient, understanding and accepting of difference. It has also introduced me to supportive families and professionals who genuinely care and want children and young people to thrive. Most of all, I am glad to know and love my child for exactly who they are and to share in their achievements, joy and growth.
- Watching her grow into a loving young lady & build her confidence in a lot of situations, & make so many friends as her social life slowly began to grow
- When he's having and enjoying life
- They are so loving and kind
- Everything! He's my child so I wouldn't change him for the world
- My children are very happy, loving and caring.
- My child is happy and brilliant.

- Having beautiful children that despite it all have bags of empathy and love
- My incredible children
- They are special and we feel we were given this child to look after and cherish
- Little joys in life being with them and there is some help available
- He's teaching me, it's ok to be different and it's fun
- My daughter is wonderful
- How my children have grown with the support they've received, despite some challenges and set backs. Super proud of them and what they've achieved.
- How amazing he is
- He is amazing.
- I'm glad he's mine
- To know that he is better than any of these people give him credit for.
- My child
- Being a mother to an amazing person
- The way my son deals with things
- The love and hugs they give you
- Our son is extremely loving and affectionate. He still watches pre school cartoons such as Paw Patrol and Peppa Pig so we get to enjoy childhood years for longer with him. He doesn't use a mobile phone so we don't have to worry about cyber bullying. He brings a lot of joy to us. We are very lucky to have a specialist school near to us. He really enjoys his school placement.
- She still smiles and gets on with life as best as she can despite her disabilities and additional needs. She makes me proud every day.
- Her incredible focus on her chosen subject - digital art. And her strongly independent character.
- That my daughter is so creative, strong willed, resilient and sees the world in such a unique way
- My daughter is wonderful and resilient

Progress, Achievement & Thriving

- I have learned so much that I didn't know
- They make me realise how hard somethings are and I love them so much and helps me be a parent and understand others

The Right Education & Support

- A great school she attends
- PaCC and the wonderful activities you arrange so that we can see friends and have fun in the holidays.
- I can be their advocate and push for what they deserve
- Kids - the online coffee calls. Her strengths from the autism. Finally got her into Bettws Lifehouse at Kingsland Grange where our daughter should get more support and help.
- Transport provision is superb for school. Severndale is amazing
- The help and support in their specialist settings and how they are thriving.

- That when you do find the right school and the right people who work with you, the load is lifted. That when the council are willing to invest in the child, the system is able to work and you see amazing results and it allows me as a parent to move my focus away from battling for my child and actually enjoy my child's development.
- That we were successful in tribunal and got the school place that could meet need
- Glad that he has a mother who will fight for him endlessly
- Brilliant school he is now settled,
- School support has been amazing

Friendships, Community & Connection

- The wonderful families I have met along the way
- That he has good family support and a wonderful school
- The friends we have made through school
- Having a child with a disability has made all my other children the people they are today, so many attributes impossible to mention them all.
- The wonderful community of understanding, kind, parent carers and associated service providers. We help each other cope, support each other and it allows us/our children to socialise in a safe, judgment free, kind environment
- Our eyes have been opened to a whole new world and we have met some amazing parents carers, medical staff, teachers and support workers on the journey

Inclusive Activities & Opportunities

- The support of agencies and families we have met. Healthy lives, action for children. Appreciating the little wins and seeing our young person having opportunities and loving them. Seeing the joy in her enjoyment and the joy she brings others.
- PaCC has been amazing offering rocking horse media in the holidays has been amazing for him
- The all in scheme - the paddleboarding for families is great. There is nothing else glad as when your kids are treated badly by the system set up to serve them, you are also miserable as the parent. An adult wouldn't suffer like this.

Supportive Professionals & Services

Other feedback

- I'd be glad if schools were funded and adequately trained to deal with children
- Relax environment for them
- Is this awful- for child 1 nothing; he's relentless
- Nothing
- Nothing at the moment.

3 THINGS TO IMPROVE THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING A SHROPSHIRE SEND FAMILY

Thinking about the services you and your child or young person use, what are 3 things they could do to improve your experience of being a Shropshire SEND family?

Accountability, Governance & Legal Compliance

- Shropshire Council to take accountability
- EHCP team following legislation
- LA following/learning the law and to stop hiding behind discriminatory policies
- Transparency from schools
- Adhering to EHCP legal timeframes
- Reducing staff turnover in SEN teams
- Clear referral pathways and eligibility criteria
- Merging Shropshire Council with Telford & Wrekin levels of provision
- Mandatory training for Shropshire Council to understand the lives of those that pay for their jobs!
- Improve communication and accountability across education, health and social care. Families need one clear point of contact, regular updates and professionals who work together rather than passing responsibility between services.
- The biggest improvement would be the LEA SEN team adhering to the legal timeframes for EHCPs. Reducing the amount of staff changes would also help - as things stand case officers are not familiar with our child or his needs he's just a name on a case file. This is the biggest source of stress for us as a family on top of our child's needs.
- Follow the law for EHCP assessments so that children with SEND get an Ed Psych assessment

Communication, Information & Parent Engagement

- Clearer advice and information
- Better communication from SEND team, social workers, CAMHS
- Regular updates, check in calls/emails
- One clear point of contact
- Listen to families and involve them meaningfully in decisions. Parents and carers know their children well, and their concerns should be taken seriously. Plans should be genuinely child-centred, followed through in practice and regularly reviewed to ensure that the agreed support is actually being provided
- Not criticising parenting skills
- Information on how to get a PA
- One clear phone line that anyone can use for advice. This should be advertised at schools and in doctors waiting rooms.
- Professionals explaining processes and expectations
- Not diluting information in reports
- More visibility of options into adulthood
- More information about social workers and financial issues
- Local GPs understanding SEND families
- More information and processes and expectations explained - don't assume a parent knows what should be happening

Funding, Resources & Staffing

- More funding (general and SEN-specific)
- More staffed clubs
- Increased funding for SEN support in schools
- Better funding for schools
- Funding full services rather than partial
- More wonderful people / more availability

Activities, Holiday Clubs & Social Opportunities

- More holiday clubs for children with complex needs and more staffed clubs
- Wider opportunities closer to home for all of the family
- More respite and short breaks
- More inclusive after school and holiday activities
- Activities that suit children's interests
- Allocation slots to book activities so more families can access activities before they are fully booked.
- Provide more weekend and evening activities to allow for better social interaction
- More teenage appropriate activities
- Differentiated social activities for different SEND profiles
- More physical activities (climbing, jumping etc.)
- More choices of events on multiple days
- More activities to be available in North Shropshire
- Activities that don't require parent/carer presence
- Autism hub in Shrewsbury like they have in Telford
- More access to inclusive after school and holiday activities for physically disabled kids

Education, School Support & EHCP Improvements

- Improved EHCP process and timeliness – school have been brilliant, but the council have not stuck to the timeframes for years.
- Educational psychology assessments provided
- Help parents to home educate or help with the right setting when a child is refusing school due to medical grounds
- Remove mainstream hubs and provide specialist settings with qualified staff paid correctly
- Get the EHCP to be measurable, get it delivered on time with no delays. All related meetings to review are held on time every time.
- Better school support for children who attend mainstream but still struggle
- More specialist settings instead of mainstream hubs
- Qualified staff paid appropriately
- Support with transitions to college
- Offer education until 18
- Better training for teachers on ND, autistic girls and selective mutism
- Reduce paperwork and hoops for specialist school access
- Keep doing what's working in education
- I just wish the EHCP Team would listen and respond to emails. I know they are overwhelmed. But so are the parents and children.
- Transparency from the schools is my only but very important need for improvement

Health, CAMHS & Therapy Services

- Improve CAMHS full stop
- Updates during long CAMHS waits, particularly for waits over a year
- Mental health support also available for parents
- Not refusing CAMHS support due to the young person having ASD/ADHD assessment needs
- More specialised health services to be available
- Improved wheelchair services
- Accessible hydrotherapy pools
- Better speech and language services available with less waiting times
- Quicker mental health support outside school
- More intervention rather than just analysis. When professionals come to observe my child, they observe and advise what interventions are required - but those who have to implement the intervention are NOT professionals in that field, so the intervention becomes misinterpreted and therefore not successful
- Lack of support for younger children via CAMHS.
- CAMHS, you wouldn't refuse support for an adult with mental health on the grounds they need an ASD/ADHD assessment. Needs addressing.

Accessibility, Facilities & Equipment

- Accessible parks, indoor play, resources for all SEND children
- Hoisting and changing facilities as standard
- Accessible hydrotherapy pools
- Improved wheelchair services, they do not meet needs, eg not the right seating, no rain cover or cosy toes.
- More accessible day centre settings with less travelling time

Transport & Location Issues

- Transport for day centres and respite
- Long daily travel times for families
- Locations of settings too far away
- Transport for daily activities
- Commission services in the north and south of the county

Transitions to Adulthood

- Better visibility of adulthood options
- Improved support systems as children move into adulthood
- More services for older children
- Support with transition to colleges
- Clearer pathways into adult social care

Family Support, Respite & Social Care

- More respite
- More adult social care and respite options, including transport as parents are spending hours each day transporting to day centres.
- Support for young adults who want privacy about their disability
- Less admin-heavy systems into adulthood
- Support for violent meltdowns
- Include the siblings, they suffer as much as everyone does
- Time off from caring
- Earlier support should be provided without families having to reach crisis point or repeatedly prove that their child needs help
- Joined-up services
- Better professional support
- More holiday provision that doesn't require parent/carer to be present - even if a child only gets allocated one whole week in the 6 weeks of summer hols - that would be an incredibly helpful resource and break
- Better and quicker communication from the social workers so that things like Pas can be organised more quickly.
- More short break plans
- Stop criticising parents about parenting skills, we are just trying to cope.

Diagnosis, Assessment & Waiting Times

- Reduce waiting times for assessments
- Quicker SEND assessments
- Clearer processes for referrals
- More contact during long waits
- Better training in neurodiversity
- Diagnosis and support improvements
- Provide support earlier, without families having to reach crisis point or repeatedly prove that their child needs help. Referral pathways, eligibility criteria and expected timescales should be clear, accessible and consistent.

Community, Peer Support & Family Networks

- More opportunities for families to meet up
- Support for anxious parents
- Social interaction opportunities for children
- Differentiated groups for different SEND profiles

Other feedback

- Everything

SUMMARY

Overall, the Mad, Sad and Glad feedback paints a mixed picture of life for SEND families.

Families clearly expressed pride, love and joy in their children and young people, celebrating their strengths, achievements and progress. Positive experiences were often linked to having the right support, understanding professionals, inclusive opportunities and services that recognised individual needs.

However, these positive experiences sit alongside significant frustration and emotional pressure. Families described difficulties accessing appropriate support, long waits, poor or inconsistent communication, complicated processes and having to repeatedly advocate for their child. Concerns about education, health, social care, respite, activities and specialist provision contributed to families feeling exhausted and uncertain about the future.

The feedback highlights that how services work with families matters as much as the support itself. Being listened to, communicated with clearly, involved in decisions and treated as an equal partner can make a significant difference to families' experiences. Across the Mad, Sad and Glad responses, there is a strong message about the importance of timely, joined up and person-centred support that enables children and young people with SEND, and their families, to feel included, supported and able to thrive.

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO IMPROVE THE SEND EXPERIENCE IN SHROPSHIRE?

Each year PaCC has contact with a wide range of Parent and Family Carers and discusses varied aspects of their experience of the Shropshire SEND System. Many of the themes articulated in this report are reflected in PaCC's other work; for example, our Navigator Service reports, the work we have done exploring the experience of SEND families of Social Care support and our 'Exploring Support for Parent and Family Carers from the Shropshire SEND Community' report. It is clear that there are systemic issues in the Shropshire SEND System that are being raised repeatedly and need to be addressed to improve the experience of SEND families and therefore the outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

PaCC recognises that a lot of work is being done under the banner of the SEND Reforms that will help address some of these issues, however there are issues that are outside of the remit of the SEND Reform but still need to be addressed. PaCC would like to see a comprehensive, system wide improvement plan coproduced. This plan should recognise the concerns raised by families and provide clear actions in response to these.

The Shropshire SEND Community are clear about what needs to happen. They're asking for a system that is easier to navigate, communicates clearly, provides support earlier and works with them as partners.

PaCC sends our thanks to all the Parent and Family Carers who have shared their experiences captured in this report