



Brighton and Hove Dads' Group Survey May 2026

On this report we have collated the feedback received from an online survey that looked into dads' parent carer experience and views of services available in Brighton and Hove.

A dad parent carer is a father who dedicates some or most of his time to caring for a child or young adult with additional needs and/or disabilities. This may include emotional support, attend appointments or school meetings, and supporting the child or young adult's wellbeing and development. A dad parent carer does not need to live with their child to have a caring role.

The idea of conducting a survey originated by a chat that took place during one of the Dads' Group monthly meetings; the Dads' Group Brighton and Hove are a group of dads' parent carers who meet every last Thursday of the month in a pub in Hove <https://www.facebook.com/groups/dadsgroupbrighton/> .

At one of the meetings, a dad reported that he always felt excluded by the services, and, as an example, he used a situation that happened to him few days earlier, when attending a meeting for his SEND child, he was asked '*where is the mum?*' The discussion then involved other dads; some of them had a similar experience, whilst others felt more included by the services. So, that's how the idea of having a survey was born.

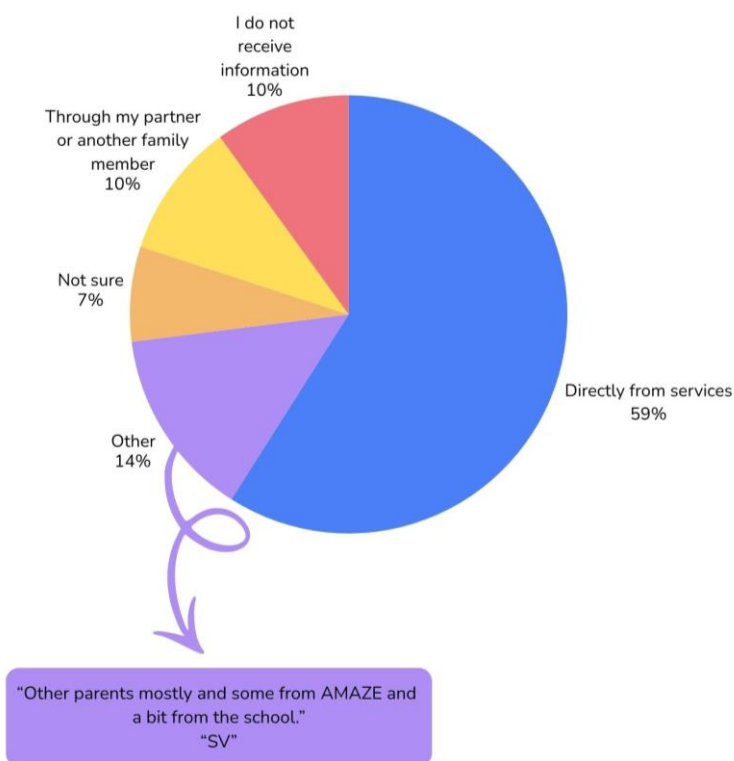
We wanted to find out how male carers of children 0 to 25, feel and how they see and experience the services provided in Brighton and Hove. The information, ideas and suggestions from this report will be shared with services with the aim to improve support for male carers and their families in Brighton and Hove.

The survey was put together by the Dads Group and by Brighton and Hove Parent Carers' Council (PaCC) <https://paccbrighton.org.uk/>. The survey also benefited from inputs by Amaze <https://amazesussex.org.uk/> , and the two other Sussex parent carer forums, West Sussex Parent Carer Forum <https://www.wspcf.org.uk/> , and East Sussex Parent Carer Forum <https://www.espcf.org.uk/> .

Thank you to the 29 dads' parent carer who completed the survey. We are aware that the survey mainly reached dads who are already engaged through the Dad's Group. We realise that there is still work to do to reach male carers more broadly, particularly in ensuring they receive information directly, and in making services feel more accessible and welcoming. At times, it can still feel unusual for a male carer to be present or actively involved in services, and that's something we should continue to work on together.

We also recognize that many of the challenges highlighted by this survey are not unique to dads, but they are experienced across other carer groups as well. Changes and improvements need to happen across the board.

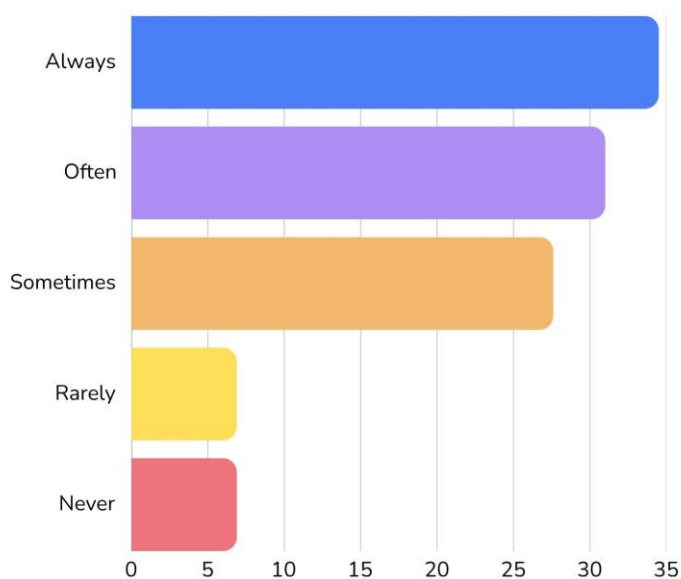
Q 1: How do you receive information from services about your child or young adult?



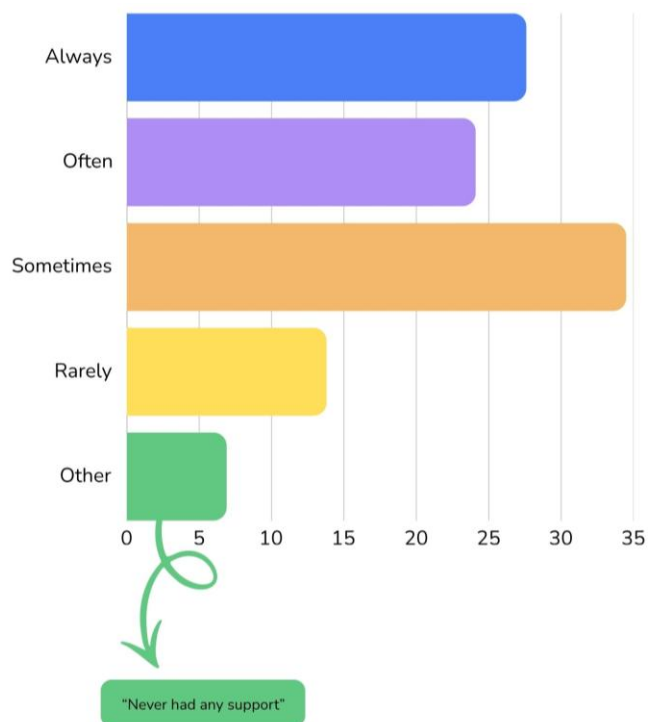
‘Both directly from services and via family member’

‘Sometimes directly. Someone from my children’s mum and sadly I don’t get any info through’

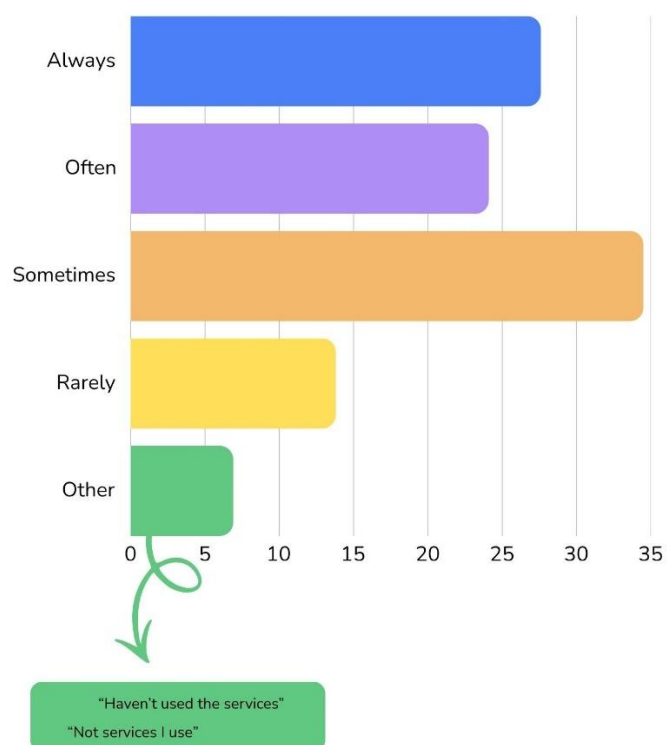
Q 2: Do you feel included in communication from education services (school, college, SEN support, reviews)?

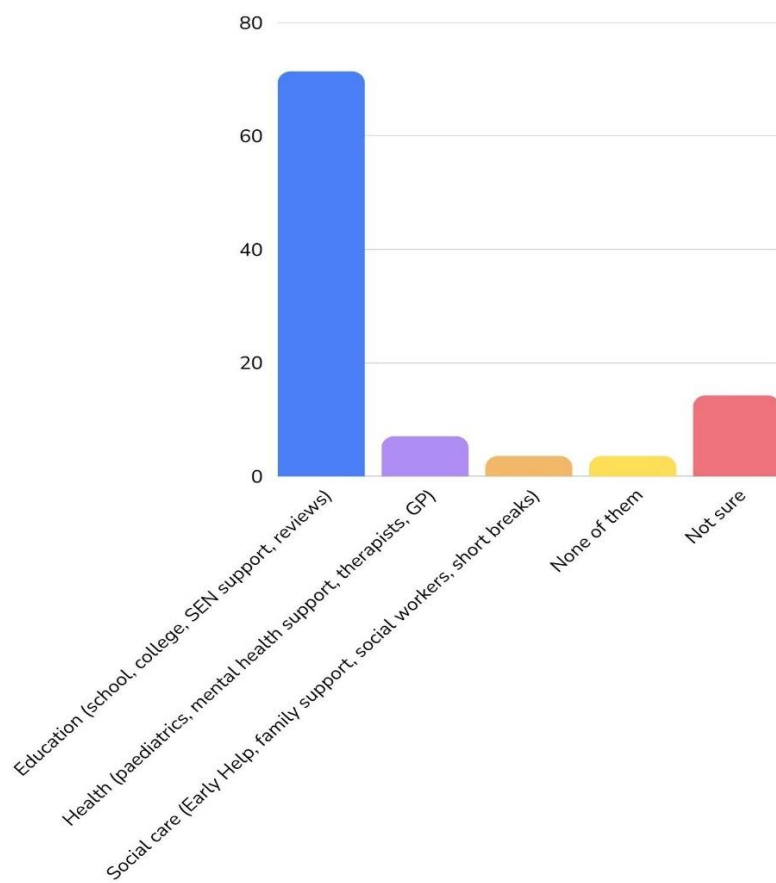
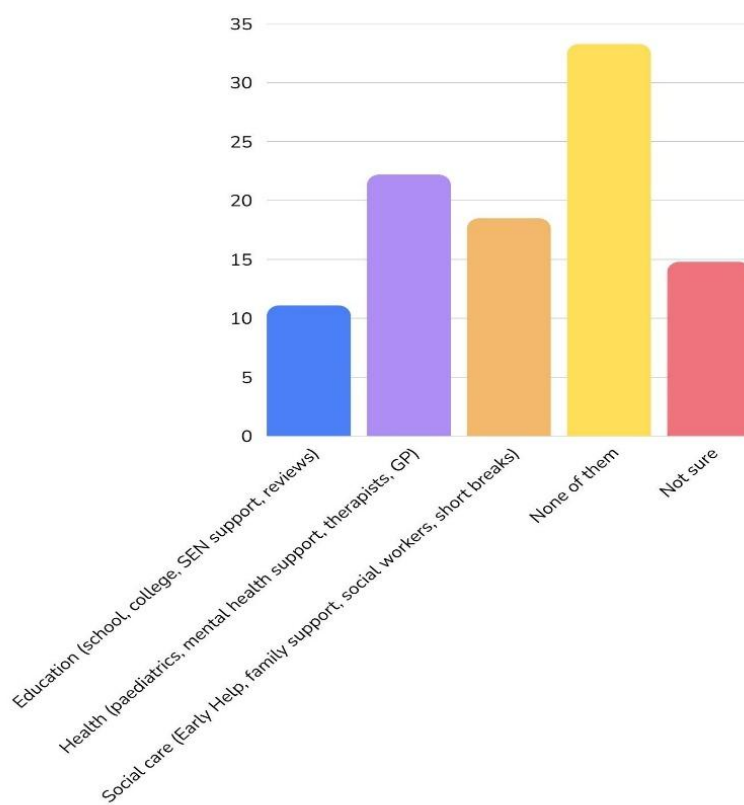


Q 3: Do you feel included in communication from health services (paediatrics, mental health support, therapists, GP)?

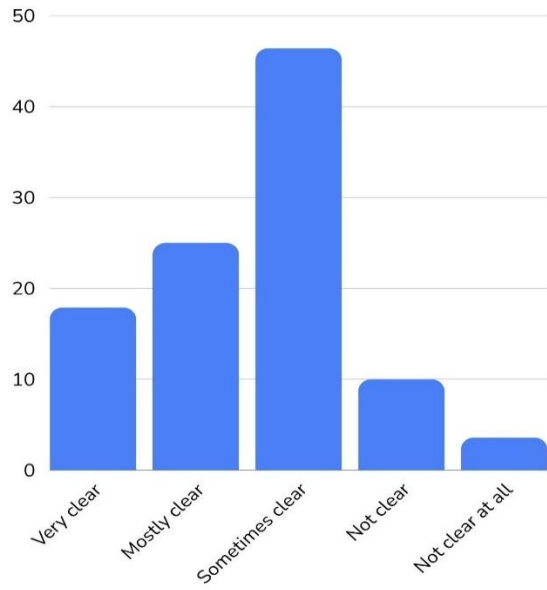


Q 4: Do you feel included in communication from social care services (Early Help, family support, social workers, short breaks)?

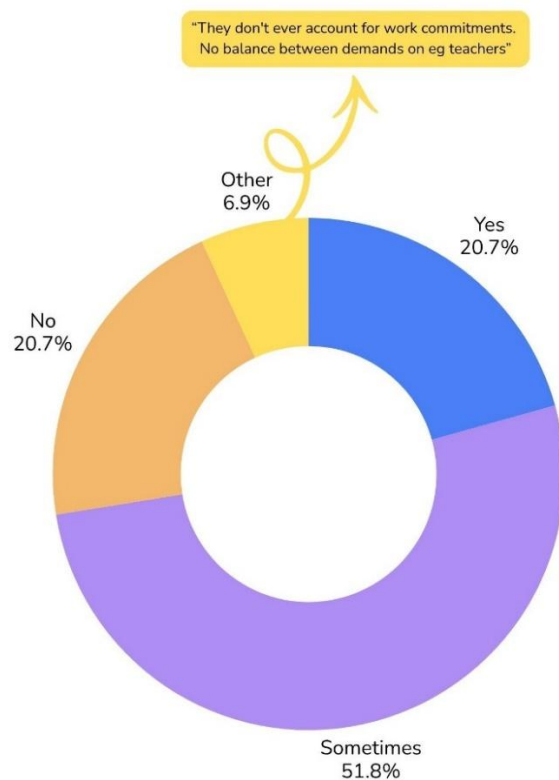


Q 5: Which service do you feel most included by?**Q 6: Which service do you feel least included by?**

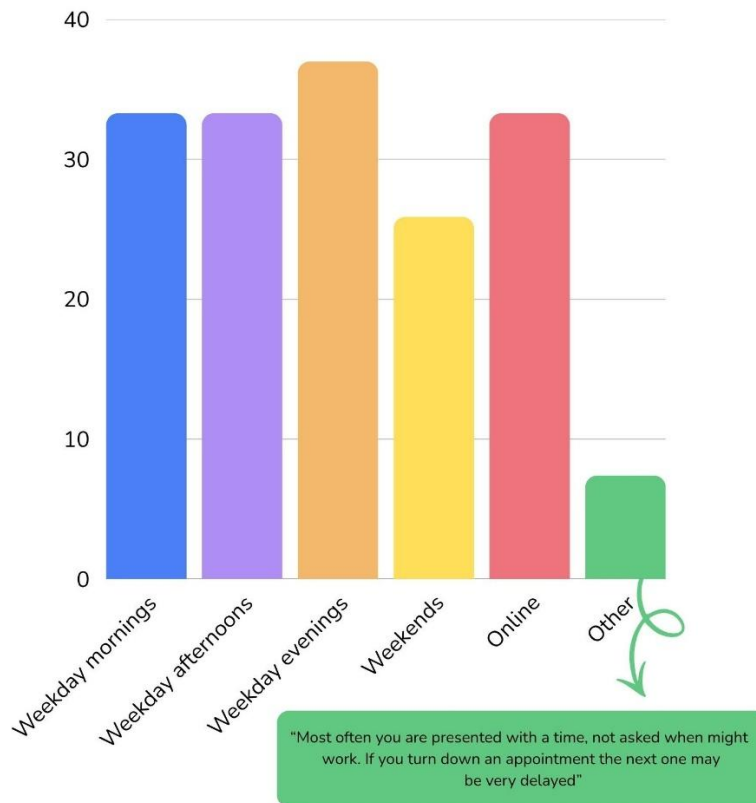
Q 7: How clear is the information you receive about your child or young person's support?



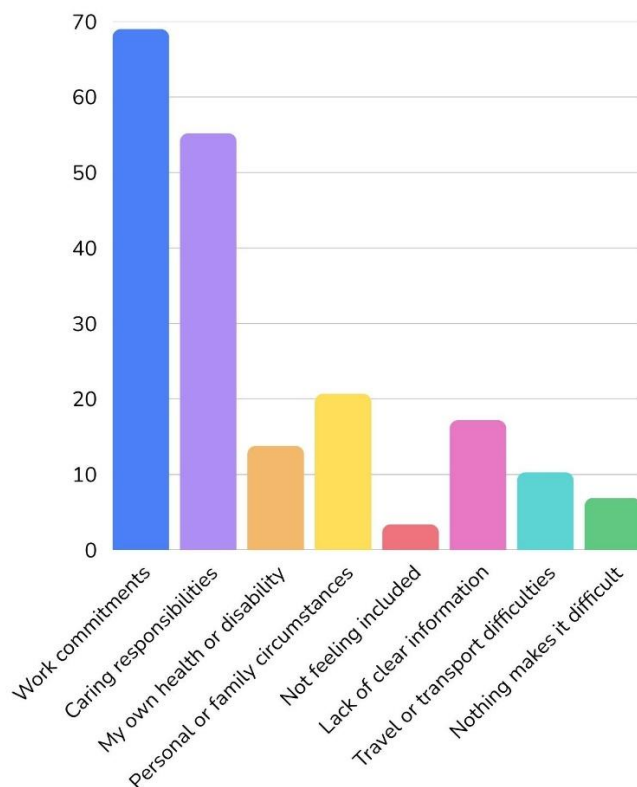
Q 8: Do the times for meetings or appointments with services (education, health or social care) usually work for you?



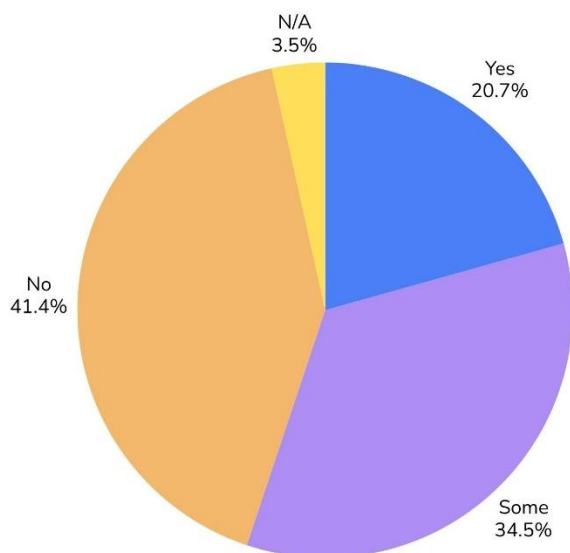
Q 9: What meeting or appointment time with services (education, health and social care) would work best for you? Choose all that apply



Q 10: What makes it harder for you to attend meetings or be involved? Choose all that apply

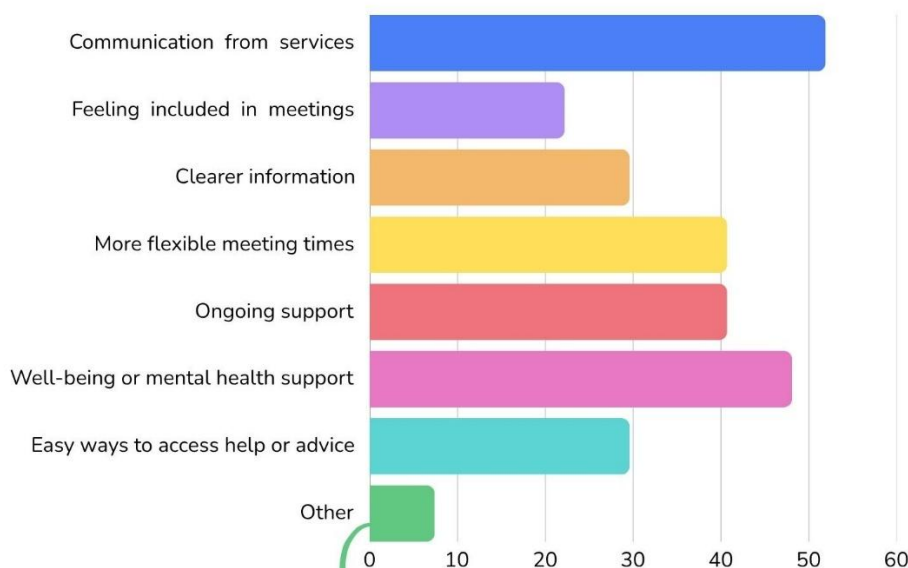


Q 11: When you first learned about your child or young person’s additional needs or diagnosis, did you feel you had enough support?



‘Support for children with ASD was patchy ~15 years ago from the local authority. NHS services were generally well connected, up to the point of diagnosis.’

Q 12: Which areas do you think need the most improvement for dads and male carers? Please choose the top 3 most important to you



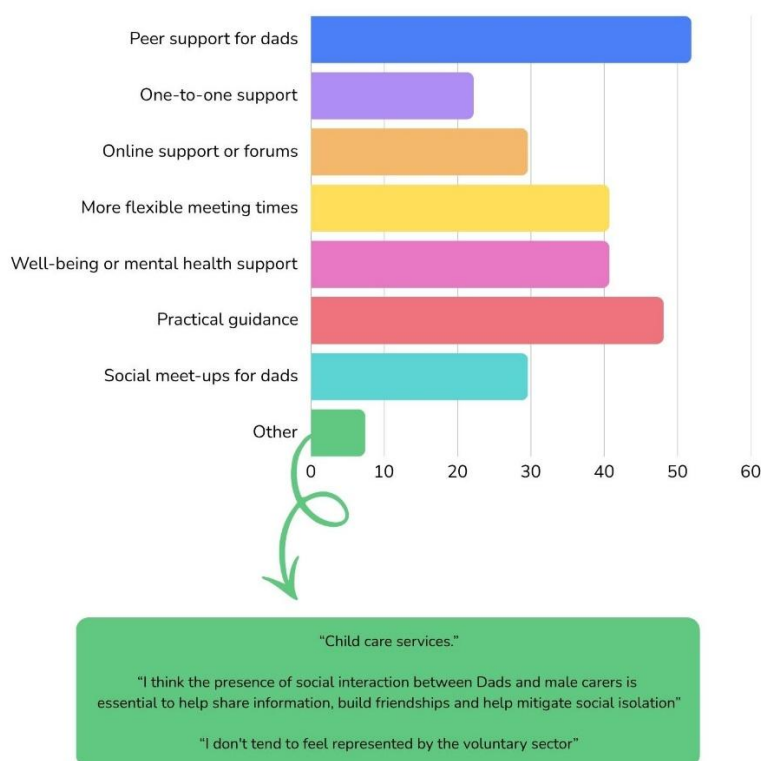
“I think generally the coordination of education/medical services are challenging to coordinate.”

“The biggest challenge is being able to manage the big picture and understand what services are available and which is best for your young person.”

“Single dads like me are very much left out in the overall scheme of things.”

We are keen on underlining two areas from Q 12 that are important to dads. One is the need to **improve the way services communicate with dads**. The other area is the high percentage of respondents who highlighted a **better well-being or mental health support** to be made available for dads. Anecdotal data from the Dads Group has constantly brought up this as an ongoing issue throughout the past few years.

Q 13: What types of support, as a dad parent carer, would you find most helpful now? Choose all that apply



'Statutory services have communicated with me and I don't have an issue with that. My problems are: none of the interventions are fully effective for my child (there is a gap in the evidence base); I don't tend to feel represented by the voluntary sector who in my perception have a specific lens which fears change and attempts to preserve the status quo (the status quo is not working in my opinion).'

It is important to notice here that over 50% of respondents see **peer support for dads** as one of the most helpful forms of support.

Q 14: Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience as a dad of a child/young person with SEND, and the impact this has on your parent carer's role? This survey is anonymous, please do not include any names or personal data.

'It's tough knowing what's available when or if you don't moan about things '

'It can be tiring looking after my daughter as she seldom plays just by herself (not interested in TV programs). I took early retirement to become her main carer. I have a few health issues and because she needs support, I am usually very tired and relieved when my partner returns from her demanding job. My daughter's constant repetition of key phrases is certainly wearing. "Daddy's broken" I don't want to be first or last" This applies to leaving the house getting to school, eating, playing a game. It can feel endless.'

'Default for all services is still the mum. Similar discrimination noticed with schools for neurotypical children. So, it is not unique but much more impactful with a neurodivergent child '

'I'm a single dad, which I know is not the norm. Especially in the holidays there isn't enough help for activities for kids with SEN. I had up my career to care for my daughter as she requires that level of support. In the holidays it's very hard. Overall, the help is great and we manage. But I would really like it if there were more available slots during the holidays for playgroups for my daughter as she needs it and I could really do with the respite in order to look after her properly.'

'The challenges we faced relate mostly to the lack of effective interventions for our child's needs rather than me being a dad, rather than a mum. Our son has a spiky profile; is violent at home, is mostly suitable for mainstream school but his learning is progressing at a snail's pace despite the school doing their own best to meet his needs, including attending a SEND unit half the week. I have a lot of sympathy with dad's who cannot attend meetings during working hours as I did have this situation when I first became a dad but fortunately can usually find a way to attend now. '

'I'd like to see more alternative provisions for SEND children and their families.'

'It's a very tough and long journey. I don't feel alone because of existing networks and wanting to develop my knowledge to be a better dad. It's been really hard on my mental health for a while though, and finding the appropriate support (especially free) can be challenging. Once you know this world a bit better it is a very caring and welcoming community, however.'

'Getting support remains a real battle. I am never sure whether I am doing enough myself, doing the right thing etc. health service communication is particularly terrible e.g. being in complete limbo about waiting lists '

'Thank you for everything you do to help my son.'

'The lack of information means you feel lost. It takes a huge effort to obtain the information even though it is available. There should be better and clearer information to look up. The local offer is just a list and really doesn't help you understand the realistic options for your child. The school websites all have a SEN policy which looks copied - it is impossible to tell which schools may be appropriate. So, it is necessary to visit them - and within 5 minutes you are told exactly what you need to know. Why isn't that same information on the websites or local offer? It therefore takes many phone calls and visits to obtain information that could easily have been on a website. There must be 100s of people who do the same thing, and it takes loads of effort from the schools, but it is all unnecessary.'

'The struggle is always going to be there- but it's how we navigate our way that will determine the severity of that struggle. Parent Coaching, with a specific focus on dealing with a SEND child, would be helpful. Is this service available? If so, can it be signposted?'

'I appreciate the efforts of PaCC to help Dads/male carers and to improve their profile and confidence in dealing with such complexities.'