

EA Plan of Arrangements for Special Educational Provision

Stakeholder Consultation Report
July 2023

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1.0 Executive Summary

Information gathered from the stakeholder workshops that were conducted and the online questionnaire provided positive feedback. In general, stakeholders expressed their views that the new website is a great improvement to the website that is currently available. Therefore, current adjustments that the EA have made to SEN resources have had an overall positive reception.

Whilst positive, there were some key recommendations provided by a range of stakeholders for further improvements to be made to the website, PDF version and Easy Read document. The recommendations contained within this report reflect on the information provided from workshops and responses to an online questionnaire for each resource, have been broken down into key areas:

- Layout and design
- Accessibility and navigation
- Language and terminology
- Clear, useful and sufficient information.

These recommendations have been clearly signposted in section 2 of this report.

The website home page received many positive comments for its layout and colour. There was also strong approval for the consistent tile format at the next level down. There were many comments, however, about the lack of consistency once the user had navigated down below the second set of tiles. Some said that at this level the information resembled the previous website and was too wordy. Under some sections the text was said to be too complicated whilst in others there insufficient detail – a lack of named contacts and further information.

Many expressed that the accessibility and navigation around the website could be improved. These comments were largely made in the context of the site being open to such a wide range of users, parents, teachers, SENCOs and other professionals. Professional and school-based stakeholders were generally comfortable with navigating their way to information and resources, but most thought that parents would find site

navigation daunting. Whilst the tile format was generally welcomed, the site is set out by service, which is not necessarily the easiest to navigate if you do not know which service fits with a child's issues. Whilst most parents thought that setting out the service offerings was logical, many suggested that it isn't clear how a child with specific needs fits into the services. It should be the other way around, they suggested; how do the services meet the needs of the child not how does a child fit into the service offering. Some suggested that there should be a set of questions on the homepage asking whether the user was a parent or a teacher with different options and content being available depending on the answer. Others noted that children often have comorbidities and suggested that there should be a facility to enter a combination of the child's issues, for example ADHD with reading difficulties, and a response that would lead the user to the appropriate services.

Most participants thought that the SEND offering was covered very comprehensively, but there were many who thought that there was too much information on the website to wade through, especially for parents.

The use of jargon and acronyms was widely commented upon. A jargon buster was suggested, perhaps as a pop-up tool-tip if the user hovered over, or tapped on, a word. There are also inconsistencies in some terminology, for example, both SENCO and LSC are used to describe the same role.

The PDF version of the website received largely positive comments for its style and the use of breakout boxes for key points and tips. The PDF did, however, attract comments similar to those made on the main site, for its silo layout and some of its content. The recurring view was that the main website could benefit from some of the layout and style of the PDF, or the PDF could be used for parents with the website being reserved for schools and professionals.

The Easy Read document received mixed reviews. Some liked the layout and the graphics, but others commented that it was patronising in places and gave an overly optimistic view of service availability. Pupils were keen for the inclusion of more information in the Easy Read, seeking to understand more about the needs of

people with SEN and the help available with learning. They were also keen to have more information about how one child might have SEN and another not, and what the services do in practice to help young people.

The process of carrying out workshops and a questionnaire to review new EA SEN resources has revealed some areas that are worth reflecting on for the EA. Findings from this process has revealed the EA's perceived lack of transparency and clarity on timeframes for accessing services. SENCOs and School Leaders voiced strong concerns over the ambitious tone of the resources. In reality, the ability to deliver services is hampered by finite resources, waiting lists and an overwhelmed Educational Psychology Service. The impression given by the website, PDF and Easy Read, is therefore overoptimistic and invitational. It was expressed that the EA need to be more transparent about timeframes and criteria for accessing services.

Many of the recommendations provided are practical and could be actioned in a short period of time. The recommendations within the report should act as a guide and provide constructive improvements for the development of the new website, PDF and Easy Read resources for the EA Plan of Arrangement for Special Educational Provision.

2.0 Recommendations

Upon reflection of the findings from the workshops conducted with key stakeholders and responses to the online questionnaire some recommendations can be drawn. The following section outlines suggested recommendations for improvements to the new website, PDF version and Easy Read. The recommendations for each resource are grouped together under related headings. We have suggested short and longer term recommendations.

2.1 Website

2.1.1 Layout and design

Short Term

- **Text Emphasis:** Put key information about each service in bold to make this stand out and easier to read
- **Homepage tiles:** Create a designated tile on the landing page for information on Severe Learning Difficulties, a tile for Statutory Assessment and Review Service, a tile for Training and Support and a tile for contact information, to make this information more accessible.

Longer Term

- **Graphics:** Change graphics to include a diversity of age, gender, race, ethnicity and disability.
- **Text heavy:** Large chunks of text could be cut down to make information less overwhelming – replace some text with a variety of diagrams, flowcharts and videos. Alternatively, split text up into further subsections to make it more accessible.
- **Homepage:** Rethink the approach to welcoming a user. Adjust the homepage to be broken down into pathways for different users e.g. Parent, Young Person, Professional. There should be routing for each of these groups to relevant sections of the website. Information should be separated into the relevant categories for these user groups.
- **Look and feel:** Adopt a similar style as the PDF for the website

2.1.2 Accessibility and navigation

Short Term

- **Links:** Check and ensure all links are functioning.
- **Text-to-speech:** To improve accessibility, include a text to speech function or audible description of information on the website.

Longer Term

- **'Quick Start' guide:** include a 'quick start' guide on the home page that asks questions e.g. 'what do you need to find', which will lead to a flowchart of relevant information to make the site easier to navigate
- **Multi-language:** Include a multi-language or translation functionality
- **Multimedia:** To make information more accessible, include more voice overs or animation to summarise the main details of each page.

2.1.3 Language and terminology

Short Term

- **Simplify language:** Change complex, technical language into simpler language, with the least able user in mind to make information accessible for all. Remove or limit the use of acronyms and jargon.
- **Shorthand and abbreviations:** Limit shorthand and abbreviations from text on the website to reduce confusion
- **Consistency in terminology:** Ensure terminology is consistent across all text, for example SENCO is used interchangeably with LSC. There is a potential for users to be confused by references to existing and revised legislation. It should be made clear that the 1998 Code is the operative code.
- **Glossary:** Ensure all key terms are included.

Longer Term

- **Tool-tips:** Where difficult terms are used, a pop-up tool-tip should come up upon hover/tap with a more detailed explanation to ensure it can be understood.

2.1.4 Clear, useful and sufficient information

Short Term

- **Accuracy of information:** Ensure all text is thoroughly proofread to ensure accuracy of information. The Equality Screening document requires updating.
- **External Links:** Populate the links sections further. Include links to relevant HSC support, as well as third parties.
- **Criteria:** Clearer information on the criteria to receive support should be provided and any inaccuracies corrected..
- **Transparency of timelines/ timescales:** Realistic timelines should be included in information throughout the website to adjust expectations of services, as resources are in high demand and are therefore limited.
- **Point of contact:** Clearly state the first point of contact for accessing services – the invitational nature of the current information on the website suggests in places that accessing services is an open process. Highlight and emphasise where the initial point of contact should be.
- **Irish-medium:** Reference to Irish-medium should be made throughout the website as well as links to IME resources.
- **Contacts:** Provide specific contact details, including names, direct phone and email addresses, providing a person to seek advice from for each service. It should be stated that schools are a first point of contact for help and advice.
- **Complaints:** A route for complaints could be provided on the website
- **Training:** Provide more information on training and support for staff.

Longer Term

- **Presentation of information:** The amount of information in text format should be reduced so that it is not overwhelming or difficult to understand. Include a wider variety of ways to present the information such as flowcharts, infographics to present the information in a systematic manner where possible. For example a flowchart to clearly demonstrate and map out the SAR process would be useful.

- **Live chat function:** Provide an online chat service, connected to the SEN help-desk, allowing users to contact and have their queries answered quickly and efficiently.
- **Further information:** More information should be provided on the provision of support for those with ADHD, mental health issues and co-existing neurodivergent conditions, as these are not specifically covered.

2.2 PDF Version

2.2.1 Layout and design

Short Term

- **Diversity:** Include a diversity of age, gender, race, ethnicity and disability.
- **Colours:** Change white text on a teal background as some found this difficult to read.
- **Length:** The PDF document could be shortened and information cut down to make it easier to navigate.

Longer Term

- **Presentation of information:** The amount of information in text format should be reduced so that it is not overwhelming or difficult to understand. Include a wider variety of ways to present the information such as flowcharts, infographics to present the information in a systematic manner where possible.
- **Booklets:** The PDF could be separated into different documents to make information easier to navigate i.e. there could be one main document with general information and then several specific booklets/documents created detailing information for each service

2.2.2 Accessibility and navigation

Short Term

- **Assistive technology:** Ensure the PDF works correctly with screen reading software and assistive technology

Longer Term

- **Alternate formats:** PDF should be made available in different format to accommodate users with different accessibility needs, including: large print, dyslexia friendly colours, and Braille.
- **Translated versions:** Translated versions of the PDF should be made available, particularly for Newcomer families

2.2.3 Language and terminology

Short Term

- **Simplify language:** Change complex, technical language into simpler language, with the least able reader in mind to make information accessible for all. Remove or limit the use of acronyms and jargon.
- **Shorthand and abbreviations:** Limit shorthand and abbreviations from text on the website to reduce confusion
- **Consistency in terminology:** Ensure terminology is consistent across all text, for example SENCO is used interchangeably with LSC.
- **Glossary:** Ensure all key terms are included.

2.2.4 Clear, useful and sufficient information

Short term

- **Accuracy of information:** Ensure all text is thoroughly proofread to ensure accuracy of information.
- **Criteria:** Clearer information on the criteria to receive support should be provided
- **Transparency of timelines/ timescales:** Realistic timelines should be included in information throughout the website to adjust expectations of services, as resources are in high demand and are therefore limited.

2.3 Easy Read

2.3.1 Layout and design

Short Term

- **Graphics:** Avoid images that present negative stereotypical views of SEN, such as the boy excluding himself from the group activity.
- **Diversity:** Include a diversity of age, gender, race, ethnicity and disability.

2.3.2 Language and terminology

Short Term

- **Audience:** Establish a clear audience for the Easy Read resource to clarify its purpose. Rewrite where necessary.

2.3.3 Clear, useful and sufficient information

Short Term

- **Accuracy of information:** Ensure all text is thoroughly proofread to ensure accuracy of information.
- **Criteria:** Clearer information on the criteria to receive support should be provided
- **Transparency of timelines/ timescales:** Realistic timelines should be included in information throughout the website to adjust expectations of services, as resources are in high demand and are therefore limited.
- **More information:** Further information could be included in the Easy Read resource, as well as the inclusion of relevant links and references to further resources

3.0 Consultation Background

The following report outlines feedback on the newly developed website, PDF version and Easy Read of EA SEN resources. Executive agreement to the final policy on a revised SEN Framework and approval to proceed to prepare the required implementing legislation was given in July 2012. The Executive agreed to a move from five to three stages of SEN support, aimed at removing or reducing the barriers to learning faced by children with SEN. The Department of Education lays out a three-fold plan for the implementation of a new SEN Framework. The three key elements are:

1. Primary Legislation - Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 (the 2016 Act)
2. Secondary Legislation - New SEN Regulations (Draft)
3. Guidance - a new statutory Code of Practice (Draft)

The SEND Act was the first building block in the new SEN Framework laid out by the Education Authority and it received Royal Assent in March 2016. The Act places new duties on Boards of Governors, the Education Authority (EA) and health and social services authorities, and provides new rights for parents and children over compulsory school age. The new draft SEN Regulations will provide a strengthened legislative base for delivering a more responsive and effective SEN Framework. The Department consulted on the new SEN Regulations from 30 September 2020 to 2 March 2021. The Regulations have been updated to reflect consultation responses. The Regulations cannot commence their legislative journey until the NI Assembly is re-established.

The new draft Code of Practice translates the new draft SEN Regulations into clear and practical guidance for those involved in identifying and assessing children who have, or may have SEN and for those who provide special educational provision for children with SEN. The guidance is for grant aided schools and special schools, the Education Authority, health and social care authorities and others on carrying out their statutory duties with regard to children who have, or may have, special educational

needs. It will support them in ensuring the right SEN provision is given to help each child fulfil their potential. The new Code of Practice requires the new Regulations to be made before it can become operational. The Code's full application by all schools aims to ensure that schools apply a clear and consistent approach to identifying, assessing and providing for, children with SEN. The contents of the new Code of Practice was consulted from 30 September 2020 to 2 March 2021. Within the Draft Code of Practice, the EA is required to meet certain criteria. The following sections of the Code of Practice outline how information on SEN resources, services and training should be easily accessible, clear to understand and concise, age appropriate, relevant and satisfactory. The relevant sections detailing this within the Code of Practice are outlined below:

- Section 2.17 states that the EA should provide information on SEN resources, advisory services, support services, and staff training for schools.
- Section 2.18 requires the EA to provide clear information on SEN services and how to access them.
- Section 11.5 requires information provided by the EA to be child-friendly and age-appropriate.
- Section 11.7 requires information provided by the EA to be clear and concise.
- Section 11.11 states that information provided by the EA should be easy to find for children, young people, and parents.
- Section 11.12 requires the EA to provide contact details for those seeking advice and information.
- Section 11.17 requires the information provided by the EA to be accessible and relevant to all users.

One of the ways in which the EA provide clear, accessible information is through the EA Website. Within the initial 'discovery' stage of the Education Authority's Plan of Arrangements for Special Educational Needs Provision, research was conducted to understand the needs and experiences of key service users and stakeholders. This research was conducted in Autumn 2021 via Workshops (16) and a public questionnaire (1500+ respondents). Concerns were raised around the difficulties

faced accessing and understanding information available. In general, it was felt that more could be done for accessibility. The website was criticised for not being user-friendly, for being too corporate and for being too difficult to access. Some of the feedback received from stakeholders and how to improve future communications was to provide information on how to access the services to support children and young people; improved accessibility of information including easy-to-read documents and improved website functionality to make it user-friendly, easy to navigate and comprehensive source of information. Following this feedback, the EA began work on replacing existing online SEN information with a dedicated microsite. This site would be developed to address the previous shortcomings and to fulfil the legislative requirement to consult and publish the Plan of Arrangements on an annual basis. A draft version of the website, together with a PDF version and a sample "Easy Read" document were completed in advance of a targeted consultation process that ran from 31 March to 26 May 2023.

Research was conducted by *Social Market Research* to consider the content of the website and how closely the improved website aligns to the EA draft Code of Practice. The following report details the feedback from relevant users to the improved website, PDF version and Easy-Read version. The research team conducted workshops for relevant groups and an online questionnaire. This report details the findings from the following workshops with focus groups:

- DE Directors (2 groups)
- SENCOs (2 groups)
- School leaders (2 groups)
- SEND group (2 groups)
- Parents (3 groups)
- Primary school children (3 groups)
- Secondary school children (3 groups)

In addition, it covers an on-line survey of which there were 117 responses across a wide range of people groups. The report considers all of the responses received and is written as a reflection of the range of perspectives that respondents provided. The following report provides a summary of the findings and does not list all individual comments received.

4.0 Methodology

Methodology

Social Market Research, working with Design Ethos on behalf of the EA established a dedicated webpage to serve as the central information hub for the targeted consultation initiative, featuring links to relevant materials including a link to the web test site, a PDF copy of the plan of arrangements, a sample easy-read guide, and a link to an online questionnaire.

The targeted consultation was launched on 31st March 2023 and ran for a period of 8 weeks, ending on the 26th May 2023. The EA will communicate the launch to key groups, in both English and Irish, including those listed in legislation, as well as Section 75 groups, and provide a direct link to the consultation information on their website.

To ensure comprehensive engagement, a series of workshops were conducted with key groups such as the Department of Education, schools, parents, children and young people, SENCO/school leaders, and the SEN Programme reference group.

Following the consultation period, this report details the feedback and recommendations. These recommendations will then be shared with key stakeholders and subsequently incorporated into the final EA Plan of Arrangements. In addition, Equality Screening was undertaken to ensure that the initiative was inclusive and equitable for all participants, with the screening document being made available on request.

Scope

Section 75 groups received a link by email and an invitation to complete the consultation. The agreed EA central database, including over 300 recipients, provided contact details. EA staff and selected Health Trust staff received a similar invitation to participate. Most of the consultees chose to give a response by completing the online survey. However, separate, written responses were received from the following:

- Children’s Law Centre
- Information Commissioner’s Office
- Mid Ulster District Council
- NI Human Rights Commission.

Workshop group	Recommended format	Recommended participant numbers	Sessions needed	Time of day
DE	Online discussion	10	1	Daytime
SEND Transformation Programme Reference Group	Online discussion	16	2	Daytime
SENCO	Online discussion	30 to 36	3	Daytime
School Leaders	Online discussion	30 to 36	3	Daytime
Parents	Online discussion	30 to 36	3	Evening
Young people (To include children over compulsory school age)	At school discussion	60	6	Daytime

To provide consistency, the EA provided details of participants in the Discovery work completed in 2021. SMR invited these users to participate in the consultation to gain insight into progress made and to “close the loop” on their involvement in the project.

Workshops

The workshop phase of the targeted consultation focused on six stakeholder groups with connections to Special Educational Needs in Northern Ireland.

To give all participants an opportunity to share their views in an online setting, numbers for each online session were capped at 12 respondents. The workshop section of the consultation programme involved approximately 200 respondents in 18 discussion groups. Children’s perspectives were central to this initiative. In addition to the insights gathered from dedicated sessions with young people, children and young people were encouraged to complete the online questionnaire, to ensure their voices were heard and valued.

Participants

The EA invited participants to organise each session for dates that also matched to SMR’s availability. To ensure GDPR compliance, the sessions were NOT recorded. SMR provided a scribe who took detailed notes of the respondents’ views. All feedback has been anonymised.

The EA forwarded the creative assets to agreed participants in advance of the discussions to allow them time to interact and understand them. The EA reminded agreed participants of the sessions, and supplied the required hyperlinks for their preferred video-conferencing software. The EA provided administrator rights to SMR for all online sessions. The EA advised SMR of the number of participants for each group, any late-notice drop outs and participant names to allow each session to progress appropriately.

The EA carried out a data impact assessment in relation to the organisation and running of events, and also reviewed any information received during the sessions or through online questionnaires to ensure correct handling of personal data and data protection compliance.

Preparation and discussion scripts

To ensure greater consistency and alignment when reviewing responses, one set of general questions was developed that was used across all sessions with minimal changes. The choice of language and phrasing in the discussion script may have varied depending on the characteristics of the target audience, as it is important to tailor the way questions are posed to individuals of varying demographics. For instance, questions about legislation were not appropriate for children, and therefore were adapted to ensure understanding and engagement from all participants.

Hosting and facilitation

12 of the 18 groups were carried out online and the remaining 6 were in-person.

SMR briefed and supplied an experienced facilitator for each online session group. The facilitator role was to:

- Admit, greet and welcome all participants who are on the agreed list provided by EA. Those in addition to the agreed list will not be admitted for personal security reasons.
- Outline the purpose of the session and state ground rules for participation.
- Request that all participants briefly introduce themselves to break the ice.
- Take detailed notes and respond to any questions.
- Progress through the discussion script, keeping to time and on point.
- Encourage all participants to share their comments.
- Conclude the session and provide contact details for any follow up.

In-person sessions were required for children and young people. The participants represented controlled and maintained schools in urban and rural settings and across affluence levels.

6 sessions were organised, located at schools as follows:

- Rural: 1 controlled and 1 maintained
- Urban: 1 controlled and 1 maintained
- Socio-economic status: 1 from area scoring high on Index of Multiple Deprivation, 1 from area scoring low on Index of Multiple Deprivation

SMR briefed and supplied a trained and experienced facilitator to apply the discussion script, and a scribe who took notes of comments. Each school had to supply an appropriate observer for safeguarding purposes.

Session write-up, collation and analysis

Immediately following each session, comments and emerging points were written up by the facilitator as a record of proceedings, noting any personal observations.

The session reports were collated by SMR’s Research team to identify common themes and other important points. The collated reports were analysed and a consultation report was developed detailing findings.

Dissemination of findings

SMR shared the report with the EA. The report will be made available to relevant consultees upon request.

Recommended Timeline

Week commencing	Activity	Responsibility
6th March	EA Liaison with SMR to agree consultation dates	EA & SMR
13th March	Participant details to SMR	EA & SMR
20th March	EA follow up direct communication with each network issuing invitations with dates Compilation of discussion scripts	EA & SMR SMR
27th March	EA confirming schools plan prior to Easter break Creative assets to EA for dissemination Sign-off discussion scripts	EA & SMR Design Ethos EA & Design Ethos
3rd April	DE group Online	SMR
10th April	SENCO groups 1, 2, & 3 Online	SMR
17th April	Children & Young People Groups 1 & 2, School Group 1	SMR
24th April	Children & Young People Groups 3 & 4, School Group 2	SMR
1st May	Children & Young People Groups 5 & 6, School Group 3	SMR
8th May	SEND Ref Groups 1 & 2, Parent Group 1 Online	SMR
15th May	Parent Groups 2 & 3 Online	SMR
22nd May	Data Collation	SMR
29th May	Data analysis	SMR
5th June	Draft report	SMR
12th June	Report to EA & Design Ethos	SMR
19th June	Report presentations	SMR

Workshop timetable

The following timetable indicates the date, group type and facilitators at each of the workshops that took place:

Sector	Dates	Total Participants
DE Directors	25th April, 2nd May	8
SENCOs	16th, 17th, 18th May	16
SEND Group	26th April, 11th May	4
School Leaders	16th, 17th, 18th May	15
Parents	23rd, 24th, 25th May	18
Children	4th May (3 groups) 19th May (1 group) 22nd May (2 groups)	37

On-line Questionnaire:

To account for those who wanted to contribute to the process of providing feedback but were not able to attend the workshops, an on-line questionnaire was created to give opportunity to provide feedback in an alternative format. This allowed for all those who wanted to have their voice heard a chance to input. The development and subsequent publication of the online questionnaire gave key groups an opportunity to contribute to the process. The questionnaire covered the main points raised during the workshops. The on-line questionnaire consisted of a mixture of quantitative and qualitative questions to ensure that feedback was comprehensive. There were detailed results and feedback provided from the questionnaire. The on-line survey received 117 responses across a wide range of people groups. This provided insight into the views of the overall accessibility, clarity and usefulness of information provided within the website, PDF version and Easy Read version. The findings from this feedback will inform recommendations for future further adjustments/ improvements.

Limitations

The timeline created some limitations on the participation in workshops and the online questionnaire. A number of schools finished for Easter holidays on 31st March and returned on 17th April. The GCSE exam timetable commenced on the 12th May. These events had an influence on the availability of some potential participants. During the online sessions of the workshops, to give participants the opportunity to share their views, numbers for each online session were capped at 12 respondents. This created limitations on the responses received, as potentially there were stakeholders that wished to contribute in a workshop that were not given opportunity to. However, the online questionnaire was designed to overcome this limitation, giving those who wished to contribute a voice.

5.0 Workshop Findings

This section examines the findings from the discovery workshops. It assesses the feedback provided through the workshops, highlighting recommendations suggested by key stakeholders. In the workshops several questions were posed to gain constructive feedback on the new website, PDF version and Easy Read. Questions were largely focused on gaining insights from stakeholders on the website, with smaller discussions on their reflections on the Easy Read and PDF. The feedback was insightful and instructive. In the workshops, qualitative findings were obtained and these findings are laid out in sections 5.1 – 5.6.

5.1 DE Directors Workshops

The following section summarises the feedback received and suggestions raised for further improvements from the DE Directors workshops. A full break down of the responses is available in Appendix 1.

5.1.1 Website

Layout and design

- Responses to the overall layout and design of the landing page were positive. Stakeholders from the DE commented that the landing page looked good and the same format used throughout provided good consistency when navigating the website.
- Amount of text: There was comment that the initial appeal of the website is hindered by the large amount of text used. It was felt that this text may be useful for professionals but for others, such as parents, the amount of text could be overwhelming. Therefore, text could be simplified or possibly cut down or split up further into more subsections.
- FAQ's: Some commented that the position of the FAQ's at the bottom of the landing page should be adjusted. It was felt that whilst the FAQ's cover important issues, they need to be much more visible. The EA's required provision of Advice, Information and Communication are not clear on the landing page but are buried within the FAQ's. To make the advice, information of communication clearer, it was suggested that FAQ's

would be more helpfully located as a tile on the landing page.

- Links: With regards to links included on the landing page, it was suggested that a DE link should be included as well as links to all external services.

Accessibility and navigation

- In the workshop it was discussed how easy it is to navigate the website to find the information that is needed. The landing page was found to be user friendly, looking welcoming and easily navigable.
- To further improve accessibility and navigation, it was suggested that the landing page should be broken down into headings/ pathways for different users e.g. 'parents' 'professionals' 'young person'. Then there could be routing for each of those groups, containing the relevant information or broken down further into a flow chart format of information.
- Alternatively, some suggested that a set of key questions at the top of the landing page could be included e.g. "Are you a teacher?" "Are you a parent?" "What kind of help are you looking for?" Answers to these questions could then lead the user to a specific set of information. This will make it easier to navigate the website, as some noted that it could be frustrating to navigate as 'one size does not fit all' i.e. parents and professionals may not be searching for the same information.

Language and terminology

- There was positive feedback on the inclusion of a glossary as it was viewed to be helpful. Whilst helpful, some felt that the glossary uses technical descriptions of information.
- The use of jargon and acronyms was widely commented upon.
- DE raised concerns over the terminology used being inaccessible for parents and young people. For example, a school will know the term Statutory Assessment. A parent might refer to this as "statementing". A parent entering "statementing" in the search box will get no results. Whilst this may not be the correct term, it is an example of common parlance, and it may frustrate parents that the site does not interact with the language that they may be using.

- It was suggested that the language could be simplified, with the language aimed at the least knowledgeable to make information more accessible.

Clear, useful and sufficient information

- Generally, DE felt that the information was useful and easy to understand for schools.
- Information on advice and support: The DE suggested that more could be done with information about the advice and support available. telephone numbers were commented on being generic, needing to be more specific on who to contact if further help is needed. It was suggested that a chatbox or chatline could be run to combat this issue to solve problems quickly and efficiently.
- Links: Some suggested that more access to information, resources and other links to supported could be included. A wider variety of links could be included on the website. Some commented that there is an imbalance of links included. For example, the only link included in the Autism section is the Middletown Centre for Autism, whilst a variety of links are included in support for Downs Syndrome. Other links should be included to provide more extensive information and support. The inclusion of links to health supports was also suggested.
- Training: Some suggested a tile to be included for Training and Support on the landing page to make this more clearly accessible. It was felt that more information should be included on staff training and a list of training or links of training should be included, as this is hard to navigate and possibly buried within the website.
- Statutory Assessment and Review Service and Statementing: DE communicated that the process for a request needs to be more visible. Concerning referrals', it was felt that there should be a clear statement that parents cannot access this process directly and it must be done through schools.
- Autism Support: In general, representatives from the DE raised concerns over the description of the 'Autism' section on the landing page as 'Support for children and young

people who have a diagnosis ASD with a co-occurring Special Educational Need'. Some expressed that the autism service is should not be aimed only at those who have a diagnosis, stating that educational health is also important. A suggestion made was to include a precursor statement on the landing page that you do not need a diagnosis to access services or support, as it was felt that services and support should be available to all.

5.1.2 Easy read

- The Easy Read document received largely positive feedback. Representatives from the DE expressed that the language used is good, it is very well laid out and clear.
- Graphics were described as colourful and good. It was expressed that DE viewed the document as attractive and a resource will appeal particularly to parents and young people.
- It was suggested that the boy looking out the circle should be adjusted, as this may lead to stereotypical assumptions that this is an autistic child. This could be avoided by adjusting the graphic to include the boy in the circle. It was also suggested that the document be examined by the MCA to provide their views and feedback of the document.

5.1.3 Plan PDF

- Positive feedback was given on the website PDF and it was suggested that the style of the PDF could be used for the website.
- Participants felt that the PDF it was a very good idea to promote accessibility. In particular, some commented that the 'top tips' sections were particularly helpful.

5.1.4 Summary

The feedback provided by DE Directors who attended the workshop provides helpful insight and suggestions for further improvements to the website landing page, Easy Read document and website PDF version. In general, the overall design of the documents and clarity of information was praised. Representatives from DE felt suggested that a better format for the website would be to break down the information into groups (e.g. parent, teacher, young person), which could be clicked into and the relevant information and language used would be within these. Accessibility for a wide range of groups was critiqued. It was felt that whilst the site would be effective for professionals and teachers, the language and terminology are not suited for groups such as parents and young people. To combat this the language could be adjusted. The glossary was commented upon as being helpful in this way.

5.2 Send Group Workshops

The following section summarises the feedback received and suggestions raised for further improvements from the SEND group workshops. A full break down of the responses is available in Appendix 1.

5.2.1 Website

Layout and design

- It was commented that compared to the old site, this new website is very user friendly and well laid out. Inclusion of the FAQs was praised as it was thought that these address the most pressing concerns and queries.
- Inclusive images: Some participants felt that the graphics do not reflect the population in Northern Ireland, and more diverse images should be included.

Accessibility and navigation

- Representatives found that it is easy to navigate the site and find the information that is being looked for.
- It was suggested that a flowchart way of navigating the website would be helpful by breaking information into categories (e.g. parent, teacher, young person etc). This would mean users would be able to easily and quickly access the relevant information they need. It was felt this would be a helpful way to separate out information for parents, professional and children, with its own style.
- There were numerous suggestions of the general inclusion of more graphics and flowcharts to replace some of the text, making the text less dense and more accessible.

Language and terminology

- A few parents gave their perspective that the language is accessible, however others felt that the language used would not be easily understood for every user of the site, especially young people.
- Comment was made on the reliance on shorthand, abbreviations and acronyms which are unhelpful for those who do not have the knowledge to understand these. It was suggested that acronyms should be avoided or when necessary, a full title could come up when you hover over the acronym.

- Whilst it was commented that the inclusion of a glossary is helpful, some key terms are not included e.g. SEND.

Clear, useful and sufficient Information

- Concerns were raised around the level of detail. For example, under Exceptional Teaching it does not state clearly how to access this service and the criteria given was thought to be vague. Some felt that accuracy is an issue. An example used was that under Literacy Support. Participants noted that the website tells the parent that they cannot refer their child themselves, it has to be through school or EPS. However, it does not give any 'useful' information to the parent as to the criteria or whether their child's situation might fit.
- Autism support: Inclusion of a wider range of resources was suggested as it was noted that there is no signposting to Irish Medium resources and support networks.
- Statutory Assessment and Review Service and Statementing: The information page for parent request for statutory assessment was perceived to be good. However, participants felt that this information was not clearly accessible, feeling buried within the site. It was suggested that this needs to be more prominent and providing a flowchart of the process would also be helpful.
- Information on advice and support: Again, it was felt that contact numbers should be more specific, with less generic contacts. Perhaps names and email addresses for specific areas should be provided.
- Training: Generally, participants communicated that there should be more information given about training and support for staff.

5.2.2 Easy Read

- The Easy Read document was praised for being clear and accessible.
- Some felt that the name 'Easy Read' is patronising, suggesting an alternative name 'A Quick Guide'. However 'Easy Read' is an established terminology.
- Dissatisfaction at the diversity in the graphics was expressed, with too many boys and not enough girls and a lack

of age range. Again, the graphic of children sitting with the teacher including a boy turned away and excluded was thought to promote a stereotypical view of autism.

5.2.3 Plan PDF

- In general, findings suggested that the PDF is a useful document
- Participants expressed that a 228 page document was too long to be practical to use.
- To shorten the document, it was suggested that more graphics and flowcharts could be utilised to summarise information.

5.2.4 Summary

Overall, the SEND group provided positive feedback on the user-friendly nature of the resources. Again, it was suggested that to improve overall accessibility and navigation of the website the home page should be broken down into categories (teacher, parent, young person etc), so that the relevant information can be found more easily. A further improvement suggested would be to cut down on the use of abbreviations and acronyms used in each resource, as young people in particular may struggle to comprehend these.

5.3 School leader's Workshops

The following section summarises the feedback received and suggestions raised for further improvements in the School Leaders workshops. A full break down of the responses is available in Appendix 1.

5.3.1 Website

Layout and design

- The use of graphics and clarity of the new landing page was complimented by school leaders. The layout was commented on being clear and easy to access. It was felt that the site was largely inclusive and it is much better than the website available at present.

Accessibility and navigation

- School leaders felt that the home page is very clear and easy to navigate but once you delve deeper into the site it becomes harder to find information.
- Similar to feedback from other workshops, some school leaders suggested that flowcharts would be a more accessible way of laying out the information.
- Some suggested that there should be a designated tile on the landing page for information on Severe Learning Difficulties and a designated tile for Training and Support, to make this information more accessible.

Language and terminology

- Advice was given on the accessibility of the language used throughout the website. Some school leaders felt that the language was too formal and therefore whilst it is suitable for professionals it makes the information less accessible for parents and young people. School leaders felt that the language needs to be adjusted to be aimed at the least able user.
- A suggestion was made to include voice overs or short animations under each section that summarise the main details as it was felt that this would be particularly useful for young people and parents. A further recommendation was to put key information about each service

in bold to make this stand out and easier to read.

- Inconsistency in the use of terms SENCO and LSC was noted

Clear, useful and sufficient information

- Autism support: It was felt that there was inaccuracy around the description used under the Autism section, as that the site over-promises by implying that supports are available for those without a diagnosis, which there are not.
- Clarity of information: School leaders thought that there was a lack of clarity of information on the site as information explicitly for schools is mixed in with information for parents and carers. This makes information overwhelming and at times difficult to understand. Furthermore, some viewed the website to be overly text heavy, potentially making it off-putting to all users. It was felt that there was too much complex information for parents that could be overwhelming. Again, to combat this, arranging the site in a way that information is split into sections or flowcharts (i.e. for teachers, parents/ carers, young people) would mean that the relevant information could be accessed and understood more easily.
- Information on advice and support: Overall, school leaders felt that contact information is not specific enough and is very generic. Some felt that there should be a contact person given under each section tile, expressing the need for a named person to speak to for help and support when it is needed. Concern was raised over the invitational nature of advice and support to families as it seems to suggest that all of the support offered can be directly accessed with the site saying at a number of points "contact us". However, school leaders noted that the school should be the first point of contact when seeking information and it was felt that this should be clarified on the site.
- Statutory Assessment and Review Service and Statementing: Some felt that information on Statutory Assessment should be a tile section itself, as it appears to be buried in the site. When accessed, school leaders thought that the information is clear and useful. However, some felt that the website has

an ambitious perspective on the process of assessment, as places and resources are limited. It was suggested that within this information it needs to be explained that there is a limited number of places in order to manage the expectations of parents and carers. Again, the invitational nature suggests that parents can seek assessment themselves, but school leaders clarified that the school should be the first point of contact in this process and therefore this should be made explicit on the website. Therefore, school leaders suggested that where it says "Online Request for Statutory Assessment" it should say that parents should contact the school first.

- Referrals to literacy support: School leaders observed a lack of information on what the service actually provides. Moreover, school leaders suggested that the criteria to receive support should be clarified.
- Exceptional teaching: School leaders observe that it does not state the number of hours that are available or the criteria given for exceptional teaching. It was felt that this information would be particularly useful for teachers when they are communicating with parents/ carers.

5.3.2 Easy Read

- School leaders found the Easy Read document to be overall easily understood. The document was described as attractive and well laid out.
- There were views expressed on how the referral process is described. It was felt that the referral process and getting support or a statement is made to seem like a quick process whereas the reality is it can be a long process, it was felt that perhaps this needs to be clarified in the document to be cautious of over-promising.
- It was again expressed that there needs to be more diversity of ethnicity in the graphics used.

5.3.3 Plan PDF

- School leaders had positive views of the website PDF, complimenting the very good flowcharts and graphics.
- Some felt that the website itself would benefit from a similar style as the PDF, commenting that the website would be

much better if it was set out in the same manner as the PDF version.

- A slight adjustment in the language was recommended – taking out “you know your child better than anyone” as it was felt that parents may not know their child in a classroom situation.

5.3.4 Summary

School leaders expressed positive views on the graphics and clarity of the new website. The accessibility and inclusivity of the site was complimented and it was felt to be a good improvement to the website that is currently available. A key suggestion arising from the workshop with school leaders was to include more specific contacts for advice and support. Moreover, concern was raised over the fact that schools are not described as the first port of contact for help and advice and leaders felt that this should be clarified on the website. Overall, it was felt that the website has an aspirational tone which needs to be toned down as the reality is that whilst services and support are available, they are very limited in practice and cannot always be delivered.

5.4 SENCO Workshops

The following section summarises the feedback received and suggestions raised for further improvements from SENCO workshops. A full break down of the responses is available in Appendix 1.

5.4.1 Website

Layout and design

- SENCOs gave positive feedback on the layout and design of the landing page, describing it as useful and user-friendly.
- Some commented that the website is a great improvement to the current website available.
- Some expressed that the website was overall too text heavy.

Accessibility and navigation

- SENCOs expressed positive feedback to the inclusion of a video under the Literacy Support section as this made the information more quickly accessible, suggesting the inclusion of more videos throughout the website

Language and terminology

- Again, the issue of an overly invitational tone of the website was critiqued as SENCOs observed that there is not enough expectation setting, with no statements of criteria or mention of the current low availability of resources. Therefore, some felt the information is misleading as access to the service is not transparent.

Clear, useful and sufficient information

- Links: SENCOs requested that a wider range of links should be included throughout the website e.g. under Autism links there is only one link for MCA.
- Similar to views expressed by school leaders, SENCOs felt that the website appears to offer more support than is realistically available, therefore the website sets up too much expectation, for parents in particular. Similarly, SENCOs felt that timelines included in information throughout the website were not realistic as assessment and support

may take a long period of time. They felt the finite resources and time that schools have needs to be made clear to parents/ carers. A suggestion would be to state that schools must prioritise between children as resources are limited.

- Referral process: SENCOs drew attention to the phrase “you cannot currently refer your child” under Educational Psychology section, believing this may suggest to parents that they will eventually be able to refer their child directly, leading to people trying to access the service directly. As suggested in other workshops, SENCOs also suggested that it should simply state that parents/ carers should contact the school directly for a referral.
- Autism support information: SENCOs noted that the first line under the Autism section is incorrect as the service cannot be accessed without a diagnosis. This therefore needs to be altered.
- Compartmentalisation of services: SENCOs felt that the information about services are compartmentalised which is less helpful for young people with multiple SEN or issues. It was therefore expressed that the resource is not quite adequate for helping professionals or parents/carers facing this kind of situation.
- Literacy support: Again, the lack of information on what the service provides was highlighted, as SENCOs noted that it does not say what sort of support and how much support is available. SENCOs noted that there should be indication given of how long it will take for the support to be given as the reality is that it may take a year or two therefore again this may lead to over expectation by parents.
- Statutory Assessment and Review Service and Statementing: SENCOs felt that there needed to be clear information on the process of the process and expectations of referral and statutory assessment. They suggested a flowchart for SARS to demonstrate the process.

5.4.2 Easy read

- The Easy Read received positive feedback in the overall appearance of the document including the colours and layout.

- SENCOs felt that the document was not overloaded with information and therefore would be particularly useful to young people and perhaps parents as it is easier to access information from.
- Some viewed that some of the language used may be patronising

5.4.3 Plan PDF

- SENCOs praised the website PDF as a good idea to promote accessibility as it could be printed out if needed.
- The graphics were viewed to be much better than those on the website and the overall PDF was thought to be more user friendly than the website. Again, as suggested by participants in other workshops, it was suggested that the flowcharts used in the PDF should be adopted in the website.
- Some commented on finding the ‘Top Tips’ section and FAQs particularly useful and user friendly.
- Observations for improvement were to cut down on the repetition of information and to include more information about criteria for access to services.
- SENCOs also suggested that a braille version of the PDF document would be helpful and make the resource accessible to a wider audience.

5.4.4 Summary

Generally, SENCOs felt that the website was a great improvement to the current website available. The overall design and accessibility of the PDF version and Easy Read were praised. It was suggested that flowcharts included in the PDF should be used in the website to improve accessibility. Other helpful suggestions were made to further improve these resources, which are outlined in detail above.

A key point raised by SENCOs in the workshop was that the resources raise too high expectations of services available, particularly those of parents. In reality, access to the services are quite limited due to high demand. Therefore, SENCOs felt that the resources are too invitational, positive and aspirational about the access to services and the reality of the quantum of services needs to be clearly stated so that parents/ cares do not have unrealistic expectations.

5.5 Parent's Workshops

The following section summarises the feedback received and suggestions raised for further improvements from parents workshops. A full break down of the responses is available in Appendix 1

5.5.1 Website

Layout and design

- Generally, the layout and design of the landing page were found to be accessible and attractive.
- Parents felt that the tiles created a clear layout, allowing users to go directly to the service they need.
- Parents expressed dissatisfaction with the representation of diversity in the graphics used, noting there to only be one person of colour and adult roles are mostly female.
- The site was found to be text heavy with parents finding large chunks of text to be off-putting. To combat this, parents suggested the inclusion of more videos or sound.

Accessibility and navigation

- Parents found the site accessible in finding the information that they want.
- Again, it was suggested that a flowchart format under each tile on the landing page would further improve accessibility.
- Another parent suggested the inclusion of a "quick start" guide on the landing page that asks questions e.g. 'what do information do you need to find', which will lead to a flowchart of relevant information.
- Some parents felt that if their children had multiple needs the site is not easy to navigate to access the information or advice needed. The compartmentalisation of services was critiqued by parents whose children fell outside of a specific service e.g. Tourette's, anxiety or ADHD. It was suggested that it should be asked what their child needs first before giving information on the services available.

Language and terminology

- Generally, parents found the use of too complex language and acronyms to be unhelpful and overwhelming, especially

for those who are new to the information. If acronyms are used, it was suggested that pop-ups of the full term that explains these when the mouse hovers over them should be included. The complex language was also viewed as a barrier for those who are dyslexic.

- Inconsistency in the use of the titles SENCOs and LSCs were found confusing, and it was suggested that one title should be used across the literature to avoid confusion.
- Findings suggested that parents found the glossary helpful but it should be more easily accessed, suggesting it should have a place on a tile on the landing page.

Clear, useful and sufficient information

- Generally, parents felt that information was clear and informative
- Attention was drawn to the need for more information on named contacts (phone numbers and email addresses) for assistance
- Autism advisory service: In general, parents found the information to be helpful, particularly the videos. Again, as in other workshops, the need for more links and resources under the Autism section was highlighted.
- Complaints: Some parents felt that a route for complaints should be provided on the website.
- Statutory Assessment and Review Service and Statementing: Information was found to be very helpful. Some felt that there needed to be further information on the process of statementing e.g. what a statement is and what it will do for their child.

5.5.2 Easy Read

- Some parents complimented the graphics used whilst other parents felt there should be a greater diversity in the graphics used in age, ethnicity and disability.
- The term 'difficult words' used in the document was perceived by some as patronising and the information as too 'dumbed down'.
- Parents felt that if the audience and purpose of this document was made explicit, the document perhaps would appear less patronising.

5.5.3 Plan PDF

- The PDF received very positive feedback in the parent's workshop, with many expressing the preference of the PDF over the website. Generally, parents found the PDF very user friendly.
- Attention was again drawn to the lack of diversity in the graphics.

5.5.4 Summary

The feedback provided by parents who attended the workshop provided positive feedback and helpful suggestions for improvements to the website, Easy Read and website PDF. In general, the layout of the resources was found to be clear and accessible and information detailed was praised as informative. The PDF document received positive feedback from parents and it was preferred over the website and Easy Read. In relation to the Easy Read, parents expressed confusion over the audience and purpose of this document, finding it patronising. Parents thought that if the purpose of the document was clarified it may help with this perception. Attention was drawn to a greater need for diversity in the graphics used throughout the resources to promote inclusivity and representation. Similar to feedback from other workshops, the use of large passages of text was felt to be overwhelming and it was suggested that flowcharts, videos or sound could be used as an alternative to break up the large amount of text.

5.6 Children's Focus Groups

In the focus groups conducted, twenty-seven out of thirty-six of the young people knew, or had known, a child or young person with special educational needs. In each focus group, at least half, and typically the majority, knew or had known, a child or young person with special educational needs. The following section provides insight into the feedback of young people in to the Easy Read document, detailing what young people liked/ found helpful and what they did not like/ not find helpful. Questions and responses can be viewed in Appendix 1. Focus groups compiled of pupils from those of primary school and secondary school age.

5.6.1 Primary School

Easy Read – What is liked/ helpful

- **Layout and design:** Young people partaking in the workshop expressed their enjoyment of the pictures and vibrant colours that are used in the Easy Read. Participants praised the layout of the table of contents, finding this helpful in knowing what information is available. The use of bullet points in the Easy Read was preferred over paragraphs of text. Young people also enjoyed the use of bold type that highlighted important information.
- **Graphics:** Young people enjoyed the use of cartoon-like characters and the consistency of the graphics. Young people felt that the use of smiling characters portrayed a friendly, welcoming feel to the document.
- **Information:** Young people found the information easy to read and understand, finding it very informative.
- **Language:** Participants felt that kind, relatable language was used throughout the document and enjoyed the way that people with SEN are described as normal

Easy Read – What is not liked/ not helpful

- **Graphics:** Some young people expressed that they would like more realistic images included, rather than cartoons suggesting the use of pictures. Young people felt that they could not understand what the characters in the pictures were doing or what they were trying to communicate. They therefore felt that the images were too vague and they should provide more of a story that can be followed along.
- **Information:** Some young people expressed a desire for more information to be included as they did not feel that it was detailed enough. They also wanted inclusion of some links so that they could look up more information.

5.6.2 Secondary School

Easy Read – What is liked/ helpful

- **Layout and design:** Young people found that the use of pictures and words made it easy to understand. Participants expressed positive views on the use of big font and bold type making information easier to read.
- **Information:** Young people felt that lots of helpful information is included in the Easy Read and it successfully highlights important information. Young people found the document easy to read and felt that information was explained helpfully in simple terms.

Easy Read – What is not liked/ not helpful

- **Information:** Young people expressed a desire for more information to be included in the document. Specifically, some young people wanted the document to clarify where to get the support and to explain specifically what ASD is.
- **Layout and design:** Young people suggested the use of more bold text and underlining to highlight important information.
- **Access:** Young people suggested that a digital version of the Easy Read should be made accessible, with relevant links to further information embedded in it.

5.6.2 Summary

In general, young people from primary and secondary schools found the Easy Read document accessible, informative and easy to understand. Generally, the use of graphics was enjoyed and found to be a helpful way of communicating the information alongside the use of bullet points. Young people from both primary and secondary schools felt that more information could be included in the Easy Read document, including links to where more information could be researched.

6.0 Questionnaire Findings

The online questionnaire was compiled of a mixture of quantitative and qualitative questions to gain feedback on the overall layout, accessibility, clarity and usefulness of the new website and PDF version. The questionnaire asked participants a range of questions to gain feedback from a range of stakeholders about the website and PDF version. A full breakdown of questions and responses can be seen in Appendix 1.

The online questionnaire was made accessible and there were 117 responses with an average of 34 mins 50 secs to complete. The breakdown of the respondents is outlined in Figure A.

Respondent breakdown.

● Parent	15
● Parent of a child with SEN	24
● Teacher (primary)	27
● Teacher (post-primary)	6
● School Principal (primary)	9
● School Principal (post-primary)	1
● Teacher of SEN	22
● Pupil or student	0
● Education management (e.g. De...)	8
● Allied Health Professional	5
● Education Professional (non-tea...)	5
● SENCO	61
● SEN Charity	2
● Parent Advocacy Group	2
● SEND Legal Representative	2
● Other	5

Respondent location breakdown.

● Antrim and Newtownabbey Bor...	6
● Ards and North Down	14
● Armagh City, Banbridge and Cra...	15
● Belfast	18
● Causeway Coast and Glens	7
● Derry and Strabane	13
● Fermanagh and Omagh	9
● Lisburn and Castlereagh	10
● Mid and East Antrim	5
● Mid Ulster	10
● Newry, Mourne and Down	8

Figure A - Respondent Breakdown

6.1 Website

6.1.1 Layout and Design

The majority of respondents gave positive feedback to the overall impression of the website. When asked what single word or phrase they would use to describe their initial impression of the website, respondents described it as user friendly, engaging, clear, inviting and attractive.

Out of the 117 participants only 6 had negative responses to their initial impressions of the website, stating it to be confusing, daunting and containing an overload of information (see Appendix 1)

Figure B - Describe the website in one word or phrase



6.1.2 Accessibility and navigation

The overall navigation of the website was praised with the majority of participants finding it accessible and easy to navigate to find the relevant resources (See Figures C and D)

Moreover, 88 of 117 respondents felt that there was clear signposting and straightforward routes for schools to make requests for advice and support from the EA (see Figure E).

Figure C - Did you find the website easy to use and navigate?

● Yes	110
● No	5
● Don't know	2

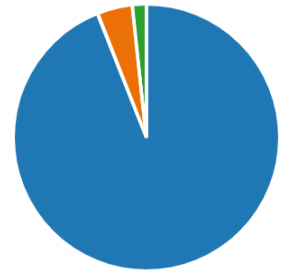


Figure D - Do you think the website is accessible to all users including those with accessibility needs?

● Yes	66
● No	12
● Don't know	39

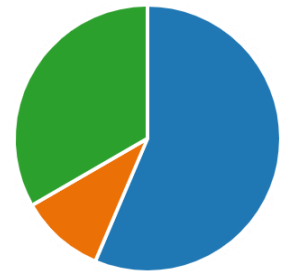
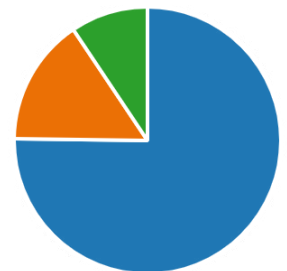


Figure E - The website explains how schools can access EA SEND Services to support a child or young person with SEN who attends their setting. Is there clear signposting and a straightforward route for schools to make requests for advice and support from the EA?

● Yes	88
● No	18
● Not applicable	11



The following suggestions were made for how the website could be made more accessible and easier to navigate:

- To improve accessibility, the inclusion of a text to speech function or audible description for the website was suggested
- Access to an online chat box service was suggested to help those who require additional support when navigating the site
- Generally, respondents felt that the language used throughout the website is complex. Therefore, it was suggested that simpler language should be used and abbreviations eliminated to make information more user friendly and accessible
- To make navigating the website easier, respondents suggested sorting information into sections (parents/ schools/ professionals)
- Respondents suggested the inclusion of flow charts of information to provide a more user-friendly information as well as videos
- Respondents suggested that for easier access to contact information, there should be a specific tile on the landing page dedicated to this or a one-page directory provided
- Some respondents had issues accessing resources from the links provided, namely under Sensory Support Services Vision Impairment, no resources were found available via the link provided. Therefore, links should be checked to ensure they are functioning
- Some respondents felt that signposting for resources needs to be made more explicit, particularly information on training. In general, information on training courses was easily found by participants as evidenced by the feedback, however 27 respondents could not easily find the information. It was therefore suggested a designated section or tab on the website landing page should be created for training resources.

6.1.4 Clear, easy to understand and sufficient information

SEND Support Services

The majority of respondents thought that the website provides clear information on SEND support services, including who can access the services and how to access them.

Furthermore, the majority of participants (102 – see Figure G) felt that information on SEND support services was easy to understand.

Figure F - Does the website provides clear information on the services available for those with special educational needs.

● Yes	106
● No	9
● Don't know	2

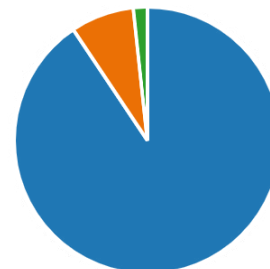


Figure G - Please say if the information on SEND support services is easy to understand.

● Yes	102
● No	10
● Don't know	5



The following suggestions for how information on the SEND support services and resources could be improved were made:

- Referral process: Respondents desired greater clarification on the referral process. In particular, respondents requested that information on criteria for a referral and support levels should be included. Respondents suggested a flowchart format for providing clearer information on the referral process.
- Timelines/ timescales: It was felt that time scales provided to access services need to be realistic and transparent with waiting times. One SENCO commented that some services are not equipped to fulfil the role that they claim to on the website, as the demand for services creates a delay in accessing support. Therefore, it was felt that the website raises expectations to a realistically unachievable level. The inclusion of timelines in a flowchart format was suggested to set realistic expectations.

- Contacts for help and advice: Respondents suggested the inclusion of names, direct numbers and email addresses for each service.
- Relevant information for all users: The questionnaire responses provided largely positive feedback on the relevance of information provided and it was found to be very useful. Some respondents referred to the lack of reference to Irish Medium and no recognition of the use of Irish as a recognised language of the instruction in the education system. Therefore, it was felt that the website is not inclusive of Irish-Medium pupils, parents and practitioners.
- More information and resources were requested on the provision of services for those with ADHD, mental health issues and co-existing neurodivergent condition, as these are not specifically covered.

6.1.5 EA Plan of Arrangements

The majority of users (85%) expressed satisfaction with the clarity of information, finding it easy to understand (Figure I). In responses, some commented that the text was overly lengthy and text heavy, making it hard to understand. Some expressed confusion about the term ‘Plan of Arrangements’ suggesting that it was not user friendly.

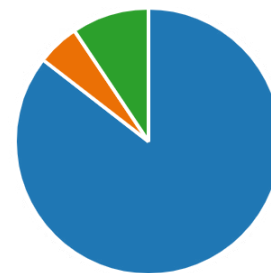
Respondents felt that the information on the EA Plan of Arrangements is sufficient but it does not reflect what is being experienced on the ground, with time frustrations and a lack of flexibility in accessing support for individuals. It was suggested that information on time frames and waiting times for accessing support should be clarified by the plan of arrangements. Furthermore, concern was raised over the practicalities of implementing the plan due to ongoing budget cuts.

6.1.6 Summary

Upon analysing the quantitative and qualitative data from the online questionnaire it is evident that the website received both positive feedback and suggested improvements. Generally, when comparing the new website to the current website available, 105 of 117 respondents thought that the new website provided more accessible information about EA SEND support services. Overall, the website was found to be easier to navigate and find the relevant information. However, some felt that the website contained too much text and is therefore overwhelming. To combat this, content could be reduced and flowcharts used as an alternative. Other suggestions for improvements are outlined above.

Figure H - Is the information on the EA Plan of Arrangements clear and easy to understand?

● Yes	100
● No	6
● Don't know	11



6.2 PDF Version

6.2.1 Layout and design

When asked about the style of the PDF document, responses were generally positive (see Figure I).

Positive feedback included:

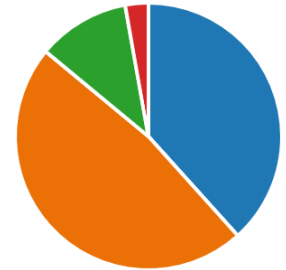
- Respondents felt that the document was clear and easy to understand
- Praise was given to the layout and use of bright colours
- The PDF was felt to be informative with clear, concise and transparent information
- The PDF was commented as being easy to navigate

Suggestions for improvement included:

- Shortening the document or creating smaller booklets as some felt it contained too much information
- To improve accessibility, participants suggested that the PDF should be made available in larger print formats with different colour backgrounds for dyslexic users

Figure I - What do you think about the design style of the EA Plan PDF?

Excellent	41
Good	51
Fair	12
Poor	3
Very poor	0



6.2.2 Accessibility and navigation

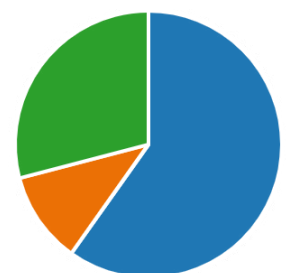
In general, the PDF document was found to be accessible with 70 out of 117 respondents advocating the accessibility of the PDF.

Suggestions for improvement included:

- Respondents suggested that a Braille version of the PDF should be made available as well as translated versions for Newcomer families
- An immersive reader option for the PDF was suggested
- It was felt that the size of the document was off-putting and cutting down information would create a more accessible document

Figure J - Do you think the information in the EA Plan PDF is accessible, including for those who may have accessibility needs?

Yes	70
No	13
Don't know	34



6.2.3 Clear, easy to understand and sufficient information

SEND support services

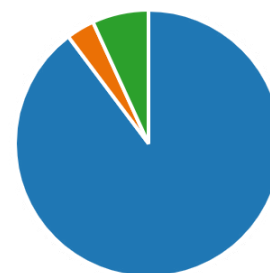
The majority of respondents felt that the EA Plan PDF was a helpful way of making information about services easier to access and presented information in a clear and concise way.

Suggestions for improvement included:

- Shortening the document as some found there was too much information that is overwhelming to navigate
- It was suggested that the PDF could be further broken down into one main document with general information and several separate booklets created for each service.
- Some felt that the document was too text-heavy and that mode diagrams should be used where possible.
- Time scales: Respondents drew attention to the lack of informed time lines included when providing information on referrals and waiting lists to access services. The timescales noted in reality, some felt, are not adhered to by EA services
- Criteria for accessing support services should be clearly stated and an explanation of which type of support is to be provided and why.
- Respondents felt that the standardised score criteria should be listed

Figure K - Please say if the information on SEND support services is easy to understand.

● Yes	105
● No	4
● Don't know	8



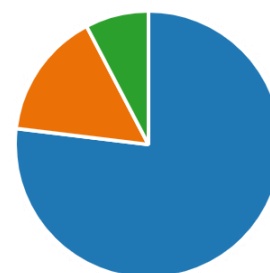
Generally, respondents felt that the information on SEND support services was sufficient in the PDF.

Some suggestions were made to further improve sufficiency of information contained in the PDF:

- Attention was drawn to the lack of transparency in the specific criteria used to access various types of support and services. It was felt that this is important information for stakeholders – in particular for Educational Psychologists and SENCOs – to understand and therefore should be included in the PDF.
- Respondents thought that the different referral procedures should be clearly outlined and an indication of timeframes given.

Figure L - Please say if the information on SEND support services is sufficient to meet your needs.

● Yes	90
● No	18
● Don't know	9



6.2.4 Usefulness of the PDF version

Figure M - Is the EA Plan PDF helpful to you?

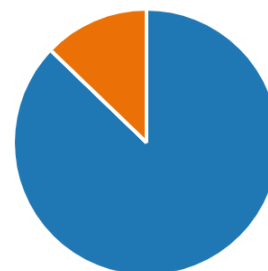
Usefulness of PDF version

The majority of participants found the PDF to be helpful (102 out of 117).

Feedback for the utility of the document included:

- The helpfulness of having all of the relevant information on services and advice in one document.
- Useful as a supplementary resource for SENCOs to use when meeting with parents.
- Respondents felt that the information was clear, concise and accessible
- The document was commented on improving accessibility of information as those without internet connection could access the PDF version of the website as an alternative, making it very user friendly
- The inclusion of contacts and details of services was praised

● Yes	102
● No	15



6.2.5 Summary

Overall, from the data collected by the online questionnaire, the PDF version received positive feedback, as a clear and effective document which is designed well.

Suggestions for how the PDF could be improved are detailed above. Some key suggestions were to shorten the document and to provide clearer information on criteria for accessing support services and transparency of associated timeframes.

EA Plan of Arrangements for Special Educational Provision

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