

**Findings from the 2010 Annual Family
Support Survey:
Parents of a Child with Additional
Needs/Disabilities**

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Findings from the Family Support Questionnaire 2010 in relation to Parents who have a child with additional needs/disabilities

1.0 Introduction

The Annual Family Support Survey was carried out starting in October 2010 with the Parents on the Plaza Event. 716 questionnaires were collated and analysed by Parent Partnership using SPSS¹. 159 (22.2%) questionnaires were completed by parents who indicated that they had a child with an additional need/disability whilst 539 (75.2%) were completed by parents who indicated that this was not the case. 18 (3.6%) parents did not respond to this question.

Just over 2 in 5 (43.8%) questionnaires from parents who had a child with additional needs/disabilities were obtained via groups and events organised by Parent Support Advisers, whilst 1 in 3 (33.5%) were collated through various Parent Partnership parents groups and events and approximately 1 in 4 were completed at the Parents on the Plaza event.

The majority (97.9%) of questionnaires from parents who had a child with additional needs/disabilities were completed by respondents from Plymouth with coverage from 38 of the 43 neighbourhoods in Plymouth. 2.1% were completed by respondents from outside Plymouth.

The neighbourhoods were aligned to the appropriate localities so that the following table could be produced, outlining the percentage of questionnaires received from respondents in each locality who had a child with additional needs/disabilities:

| Locality (n=155) | % |
|------------------------|------|
| South West | 27.7 |
| North West | 27.0 |
| Central and North East | 14.8 |
| Plymstock | 12.9 |
| South East | 9.6 |
| Plympton | 7.7 |

Around half (54.7%) the parents who had a child with additional needs/disabilities indicated that they live in the South West and North West localities, whilst 45.3% lived in the other 4 localities (Central and North East, Plymstock, South East and Plympton).

¹ Plymouth Parent Partnership analysed the questionnaire using SPSS (originally Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), a computer program that can be used to analyse data

2.0 Demography

The majority of respondents (86.8%) who had a child with additional needs/disabilities were female, while 13.2% were male.

Around 1 in 5 (20.1%) were aged 20-29 and 2 in 5 (40.3%) were aged 30-39. 1 in 3 (33.0%) were aged 40-49, 4.2% were aged 50-59, and 2.1% were aged 60 or over.

The majority were White British (97.9%), whilst 1.4% were Asian or Asian British and 0.7% were Black or Black British.

3.0 Families Profile

1.4% of the respondents who had a child with additional needs/disabilities indicated that they did not have any children living with them, whilst around 1 in 4 (22.9%) had one child living with them and around 2 in 5 (38.9%) had 2 children. 1 in 4 (22.2%) respondents had 3 children living with them and around 1 in 6 (16.0%) had 4 or more children living with them.

More respondents who had a child with additional needs/disabilities indicated that they had children in the 5 -11 age group (82.0%) than in the under 5 group (42.7%), 12 -15 group (40.0%) or 16+ group (20.6%). Around 1 in 3 (32.4%) indicated that they were a single parent whilst 2 in 3 (67.8%) said they were not.

More respondents who had a child with additional needs/disabilities indicated that their employment status was part time (23.9%) than full time (19.7%). Around half (46.2%) indicated that they were full time parents/carers, whilst around 5.6% said they were not in paid work or education/training, and 2.1% were in full time education/training. 2.1% said they were retired.

4.0 Where and who do you go to for support

| Where/ Who go to for Support | Have a child with additional needs/disabilities | Don't have a child with additional needs/disabilities |
|------------------------------|---|---|
| GP Surgery | 69.9 | 69.6 |
| PSA | 56.2 | 37.4 |
| Teaching Staff | 55.5 | 41.7 |
| School Support staff | 39.3 | 14.5 |
| Plymouth Parent Partnership | 28.8 | 13.7 |
| Social Worker | 24.5 | 7.2 |
| Com/Voluntary Organisation | 22.6 | 9.4 |
| Children's Centre/Nursery | 21.3 | 21.9 |
| Health Visitor | 19.4 | 16.7 |
| Community Police | 13.2 | 10.8 |
| Midwife | 3.7 | 5.7 |

4.1 GP Surgery

Around 2 in 3 respondents with children with additional needs/disabilities (69.9%) would go the GP Surgery when they need support as would a similar proportion of those respondents who do not have a child with additional needs/disabilities (69.6%).

4.2 PSA

More respondents who had a child with additional needs/disabilities indicated that they go to a PSA when they need support (56.2%) than those who do not (37.4%).

4.3 Teaching staff

More respondents who had a child with additional needs/disabilities indicated that they go to teaching staff when they need support (55.5%) than those who do not (41.7%).

4.4 School Support staff

More than twice as many respondents who had a child with additional needs/disabilities (39.3%) than those who do not (14.5%) indicated that they go to school support staff when they need support.

4.5 Plymouth Parent Partnership

More than twice as many respondents who had a child with additional needs/disabilities (28.8%) than those who do not (13.7%) indicated that they go to Plymouth Parent Partnership when they need support.

4.6 Social Worker

More than three times as many respondents who had a child with additional needs/disabilities (24.5%) than those who do not (7.2%) indicated that they go to a Social Worker when they need support.

4.7 Community/Voluntary Organisation

More than twice as many respondents who had a child with additional needs/disabilities (22.6%) than those who do not (9.4%) indicated that they go to a Community/Voluntary Organisation when they need support.

4.8 Children's Centre/Nursery

Around 1 in 5 respondents with children with additional needs/disabilities (21.3%) would go to a Children's Centre/Nursery when they need support as would a similar proportion of those respondents who do not have a child with additional needs/disabilities (21.9%).

4.9 Health Visitor

Around 1 in 5 respondents with children with additional needs/disabilities (19.4%) would go to a Health Visitor when they need support, as would around 1 in 6 (16.7%) of those respondents who do not have a child with additional needs/disabilities.

4.10 Community Police

Around 1 in 10 respondents with children with additional needs/disabilities (13.2%) would go the GP Surgery when they need support as would a similar proportion of those respondents who do not have a child with additional needs/disabilities (10.8%).

4.11 Midwife

Around 1 in 20 respondents with children with additional needs/disabilities (3.7%) would go a Midwife when they need support, as would a similar proportion of those respondents who do not have a child with additional needs/disabilities (5.4%).

5.0 What parents want more information/support about

| Want more information/support about: | Have a child with additional needs/disabilities | Don't have a child with additional needs/disabilities |
|---|---|---|
| Understanding/managing children's behaviour | 69.1 | 44.3 |
| Managing money/benefits/debt | 60.3 | 46.9 |
| Good approaches to parenting | 45.9 | 33.4 |
| Children's learning and development | 42.7 | 35.1 |
| Understanding teenagers | 34.2 | 26.6 |
| Teaching children right from wrong | 31.4 | 18.6 |
| Cyber safety/bullying | 24.0 | 25.2 |
| Childcare | 17.8 | 20.4 |
| Step family issues | 12.5 | 10.0 |
| Armed forces family issues | 8.8 | 7.6 |

5.1 Understanding/managing children's behaviour

Around 2 in 3 (69.1%) respondents with children with additional needs/disabilities wanted more information/support on 'understanding and managing children's behaviour', whilst this was the case for around 2 in 5 (44.3%) of those who do not have such children.

5.2 Managing money/benefits/debt

Around 3 in 5 (60.3%) respondents with children with additional needs/disabilities wanted more information/support on 'managing money etc.', whilst this was the case for 46.9% of those respondents who are not in this position.

5.3 Good approaches to parenting

45.9% of respondents with children with additional needs/disabilities wanted more information/support on 'good approaches to parenting' whilst this was the case for around 1 in 3 (33.4%) of those who do not.

5.4 Children's learning and development

Around 2 in 5 (42.7%) respondents with children with additional needs/disabilities wanted more information/support on 'children's learning and development', whilst this was the case for around 1 in 3 (35.1%) of those who do not have such children.

5.5 Understanding teenagers

Around 1 in 3 (34.2%) respondents who had children with additional needs/disabilities wanted more information/support on 'understanding teenagers', whilst this was the case for around 1 in 4 (26.6%) of those who do not.

5.6 Teaching children right from wrong

Around 1 in 3 (31.4%) respondents who had children with additional needs/disabilities wanted more information/support on 'teaching children right from wrong', whilst this was the case for around 1 in 6 (18.6%) of those who do not.

5.7 Cyber safety/bullying

Around 1 in 4 (24.0%) respondents with children with additional needs/disabilities wanted more information/support on 'cyber safety/bullying' as did a similar proportion of those respondents who do not have a child with additional needs/disabilities (25.2%).

5.8 Childcare

Around 1 in 6 (17.8%) respondents with children with additional needs/disabilities wanted more information/support on 'childcare', whilst this was the case for around 1 in 5 (20.4%) of those who do not.

5.9 Step family issues

Around 1 in 10 (12.5%) respondents with children with additional needs/disabilities wanted more information/support on 'step family issues', as did a similar proportion of those respondents who do not have a child with additional needs/disabilities (10.0%).

5.10 Armed forces family issues

Around 1 in 10 respondents with children with additional needs/disabilities (8.8%) wanted more information/support on 'armed forces family issues', as did a similar proportion of those respondents who do not have a child with additional needs/disabilities (7.6%).

6.0 Where Family Support should be available

| Where Family Support should be available | Have a child with additional needs/disabilities | Don't have a child with additional needs/disabilities |
|--|---|---|
| School | 85.5 | 84.3 |
| GP Surgery | 69.8 | 66.1 |
| Plymouth Parent Partnership | 45.9 | 31.9 |
| Children Centre | 35.6 | 37.5 |
| Nursery | 33.3 | 36.1 |
| Library | 26.7 | 28.9 |
| Community Centre | 26.0 | 33.6 |
| At Home | 25.1 | 22.6 |
| Supermarket | 8.9 | 9.1 |

6.1 School

Around 4 in 5 (85.5%) respondents with children with additional needs/disabilities considered that 'Family Support' should be available from School as did a similar proportion of those respondents who do not have a child with additional needs/disabilities (84.3%).

6.2 GP Surgery

Around 2 in 3 (69.8%) respondents with children with additional needs/disabilities considered that 'Family Support' should be available from a GP Surgery as did a similar proportion of those respondents who do not have a child with additional needs/disabilities (66.1%).

6.3 Plymouth Parent Partnership

45.9% respondents with children with additional needs/disabilities considered that 'Family Support' should be available from Plymouth Parent Partnership, whilst this was the case for around 1 in 3 (31.9%) of those who do not.

6.4 Children Centre

35.6% of respondents with children with additional needs/disabilities considered that 'Family Support' should be available from a Children Centre as did a similar percentage of those respondents who do not have a child with additional needs/disabilities (37.5%).

6.5 Nursery

Around 1 in 3 (33.3%) respondents with children with additional needs/disabilities considered that 'Family Support' should be available from a Nursery as did a

similar proportion of those respondents who do not have a child with additional needs/disabilities (36.1%).

6.6 Library

Around 1 in 4 (26.7%) respondents with children with additional needs/disabilities considered that 'Family Support' should be available from a Library, as did a similar proportion of those who do not (28.9%)

6.7 Community Centre

Around 1 in 4 (26.0%) respondents who had children with additional needs/disabilities considered that 'Family Support' should be available from a Community Centre, whilst this was the case for 1 in 3 of those respondents who do not.

6.8 At Home

Around 1 in 4 (25.1%) respondents with children with additional needs/disabilities considered that 'Family Support' should be available 'At Home', as did a similar proportion of those respondents who do not have a child with additional needs/disabilities (22.6%).

6.9 Supermarket

Around 1 in 10 (8.9%), respondents with children with additional needs/disabilities considered that 'Family Support' should be available from a Supermarket, as did a similar proportion of those who do not have a child with additional needs/disabilities (9.1%).

7.0 Preferred method of help/support

| Where Family Support should be available | Have a child with additional needs/disabilities | Don't have a child with additional needs/disabilities |
|--|---|---|
| Individually | 61.0 | 62.0 |
| In a group | 36.1 | 27.1 |
| Don't mind | 28.0 | 24.9 |
| Telephone help line | 21.3 | 24.1 |
| Electronically (Website) | 19.4 | 25.4 |
| DVDs/TV | 6.8 | 8.7 |

Around 3 in 5 (61.0%) respondents with children with additional needs/disabilities would prefer help or support to be available to them individually as would a similar proportion of those respondents who do not have a child with additional needs/disabilities (62.0%). Just over 1 in 3 (36.1%) respondents with children

with additional needs/disabilities would prefer help or support to be available to them through attendance at a group, whilst this was the case for around 1 in 4 (27.1%) of those who do not.

Around 1 in 5 (21.3%) parents with children with additional needs/disabilities would prefer help or support through a telephone helpline or electronically as would around 1 in 4 who do not have children with additional needs/disabilities. Around 1 in 20 (6.8%) respondents with children with additional needs/disabilities would like it to be available via DVDs/TV, as would around 1 in 10 (8.7%) of those who do not. Around 1 in 4 respondents with children with additional needs/disabilities living with them indicated that they didn't mind how help/support was made available as did a similar proportion of those who did not have children with additional needs/disabilities living with them.

8.0 Preferred days/times for help to be available

| When Family Support should be available | Have a child with additional needs/disabilities | Don't have a child with additional needs/disabilities |
|---|---|---|
| 24/7 | 41.1 | 34.1 |
| During School time | 34.5 | 23.9 |
| Weekdays | 32.9 | 31.9 |
| Evenings | 22.3 | 20.0 |
| School holidays | 22.3 | 12.7 |
| Before and after school | 18.8 | 18.9 |
| Weekends | 16.3 | 16.9 |

Around 2 in 5 (41.1%) respondents with children with additional needs/disabilities considered that 'Family Support' should be available '24/7', whilst this was the case for around 1 in 3 (34.1%) of those who do not have a child with additional needs/disabilities. The availability of 'Family Support' 'during school time' was favoured by around 1 in 3 (34.5%) of those with children with additional needs/disabilities and 1 in 4 (23.9%) for whom this was not the case. In the region of 1 in 3 respondents with children with additional needs/disabilities considered that 'Family Support' should be available on weekdays (32.9%) as did a similar proportion of those who do not have children with additional needs/disabilities (31.9%).

Approximately 1 in 5 (22.3%) respondents with children with additional needs/disabilities indicated a preference for the provision of 'Family Support' in the 'evenings' as did a similar proportion of those respondents who do not have such children (20.0%). Just over 1 in 5 (22.3%) respondents with children with additional needs/disabilities thought 'Family Support' should be available during the school holidays, whilst this was the case for around 1 in 10 (12.7%) parents who do not have children with additional needs/disabilities.

Around 1 in 5 respondents with children with additional needs/disabilities indicated a preference for the provision of 'Family Support' 'before and after school' (18.8%) as did a similar proportion of those respondents who do not have such children (18.9%). Weekend provision of 'Family Support' was favoured by around 1 in 6 of those respondents with children with additional needs/disabilities (16.3%) and by a similar proportion of those who do not (16.9%).

9.0 Likely sources of information about local services

| Information Source | Have a child with additional needs/disabilities living with them | Don't have a child with additional needs/disabilities living with them |
|--------------------|--|--|
| Word of mouth | 73.5 | 62.1 |
| Leaflets | 64.7 | 63.2 |
| Websites | 52.2 | 58.6 |
| Meetings | 33.9 | 19.6 |
| Posters | 25.7 | 31.7 |
| Phone calls | 19.2 | 10.9 |

Around 3 in 4 (73.5%) respondents with children with additional needs/disabilities reported that they would obtain information via word of mouth e.g. family, friend, GP, teacher etc, whilst this was the case for approximately 3 in 5 (62.1%) of those who do not have children with additional needs/disabilities. Approximately 2 in 3 (64.7%) respondents with children with additional needs/disabilities would use leaflets to get information about local services as would a similar number of those who do not have such children (63.2%).

Just over half (52.2%) the respondents with children who have additional needs/disabilities would use websites to acquire information about local services, whilst this was the case for almost 3 in 5 (58.6%) of those who do have such children. Meetings would be used by around 1 in 3 (33.9%) parents of children with additional needs/disabilities to obtain information about local services and by around 1 in 5 (19.6%) of those without such children.

Approximately 1 in 4 (25.7%) respondents with children who have additional needs/disabilities would obtain information about local services through posters, as would just under 1 in 3 of those without such children. Phone calls would be used by almost 1 in 5 (19.2%) parents of children with additional needs/disabilities to obtain information about local services, whilst this was the case for only around 1 in 10 (10.9%) of those who do not have such children.

10.0 The involvement of extended families/friends in looking after children

| The involvement of extended families/friends in looking after children | Have a child with additional needs/disabilities | Don't have a child with additional needs/disabilities |
|--|---|---|
| Grandparents | 56.4 | 62.9 |
| Friends | 33.6 | 32.2 |
| Aunts/Uncles | 24.5 | 22.9 |
| Older children | 17.8 | 9.1 |

56.4% of respondents with children who have additional needs/disabilities indicated that grandparents looked after their children, whilst this was the case for around 3 in 5 of those who do have children with additional needs/disabilities. Around 1 in 3 (33.6%) of those with children who have additional needs/disabilities and a similar proportion of those who do not (32.2%) stated that friends looked after their children. Approximately 1 in 4 respondents with children who have additional needs/disabilities (24.5%) and a comparable number of those who do not (22.9%) reported that aunts/uncles looked after their children. Almost twice as many respondents with children who have additional needs/disabilities (17.8%) than those who do not (9.1%) stated that their older children looked after their younger siblings.

11.0 The use of formal childcare provision

| The involvement of extended families/friends in looking after children | Have a child with additional needs/disabilities | Don't have a child with additional needs/disabilities |
|--|---|---|
| Private Nursery | 12.5 | 19.3 |
| Childminders (0-4) | 12.5 | 9.8 |
| Childminders (5-11) | 6.0 | 6.3 |
| School/Maintained Nursery | 45.3 | 34.3 |
| Pre School | 14.2 | 23.6 |
| Out of School provision (5-11) | 27.7 | 21.8 |
| Organised Activities (5-11) | 25.3 | 27.1 |

11.1 Private Nursery

Around 1 in 10 respondents with children with additional needs/disabilities (12.5%) indicated that their child/ren attended a 'Private Nursery', whilst this was the case for around 1 in 5 (19.3%) of those respondents who were not in this position.

11.2 Childminders (those with children aged 0-4)

Around 1 in 10 respondents with children with additional needs/disabilities (12.5%) indicated that their child/ren attended a 'Childminder' as did a similar

proportion of those respondents who do not have a child with additional needs/disabilities (9.8%).

11.3 Childminders (those with children aged 5-11)

Around 1 in 20 respondents with children with additional needs/disabilities (6.0%) indicated that their child/ren attended a 'Childminder' as did a similar proportion of those respondents who were not in this position (6.3%).

11.4 School/Maintained Nursery

45.3% of respondents with children with additional needs/disabilities indicated that their child/ren attended a 'School/Maintained Nursery' whilst this was the case for around 1 in 3 (34.3%) of those respondents who do not have a child with additional needs/disabilities.

11.5 Pre School

Around 1 in 6 respondents with children with additional needs/disabilities (14.2%) indicated that their child/ren attended a 'Pre-school' whilst this was the case for around 1 in 4 of those respondents who were not in this position (23.6%).

11.6 Out of School provision (those with children aged 5-11)

Around 1 in 4 respondents with children with additional needs/disabilities living with them (27.7%) indicated that their child/ren attended 'Out of School provision', whilst this was the case for around 1 in 5 those respondents who do not have a child with additional needs/disabilities living with them (21.8%).

11.7 Organised Activities for older children (those with children aged 5-11)

Around 1 in 4 respondents with children with additional needs/disabilities (25.3%) indicated that their child/ren attended 'Organised Activities for older children', as did a similar proportion of those respondents who were not in this position (27.1%).

11.8 Non Users of Formal Childcare

Around 1 in 20 (6.9%) of the respondents who had children with additional/special needs stated that they did not use formal childcare provision because 'it didn't meet their child/ren's additional/special needs'.

12.0 Do fathers experience problems in accessing services?

| Do fathers experience problems in accessing services | Have a child with additional needs/disabilities | Don't have a child with additional needs/disabilities |
|--|---|---|
| Yes | 41.4 | 25.8 |
| No | 58.6 | 74.2 |

Around 2 in 5 (41.4%) respondents who had a child with additional needs/disabilities did consider that there were services that fathers, in particular, experience problems in accessing, whilst this was the case for around 1 in 4 (25.8%) of those who do not have a child with additional needs/disabilities living with them.

Various additional comments were made by respondents who had a child with additional needs/disabilities who considered that fathers in particular do experience problems in accessing services. These have been grouped under the 4 key themes arising. An illustrative² selection of comments is listed under each identified theme:

12.1 Hours Available

"Parental training during working hours."

"Schools. Stuff for parents mainly during day."

"As Fathers tend to work longer hours services are not available to them as they are generally 9 - 5 weekdays."

"Husband in Navy so difficult when away to access anything - many websites out of date for example."

12.2 Early Years provision

"Toddler groups and parenting groups."

"Changing facilities, feeding – more encouraged in nurseries."

² Throughout this document the researchers have sought to achieve a balanced selection of comments from respondents to illustrate the range of views expressed. All comments are typed exactly as received with no change to spelling, grammar, punctuation etc.

12.3 Men's reluctance to ask for help and support

"Fathers leave it to mothers."

"They don't know what's around so don't know what to ask."

12.4 Services targeted at mums

"Most things as most things are aimed at mothers."

"Most groups always seem to be worded, 'come & meet other mums etc'."

"Most group meetings are mainly made up of women, which I would imagine is intimidating."

"Although support services are not always gender specified they do always seem to aim/encourage females. This can I guess put male parents off from going. More advertisements for supporting males should be put in place."

13.0 Other comments made by respondents

12 respondents who had a child with additional needs/ disabilities took the opportunity to make additional comments. These have been grouped under the four key themes arising.

13.1 Praise: Parent Support Advisers

"The PSA at [...] is amazing without her my relationship with the School would be very poor and the help and support she has provided to myself and my son who has Asd has been invaluable."

13.2 Praise: Parent Partnership

"I recently contacted Parent Partnership with an issue re: my son who has a disability. They were able to help and support me to resolve the issue satisfactorily."

"Having just met a member of Parent Partnership for advice - it's helpful having someone for support and guidance."

13.3 Concerns

"Parents need to have a priority in the city services are needed to help the welfare of children."

"Very little support for 16+ in Plymouth."

"Need Booklets locally about what is available"

13.4 Supporting Parents with children who have additional/special needs

"It would be nice for my son with cerebral palsy to be able to go to outside activities with a carer or even go to the park but there is nothing there for him."

"When trying to get information and support to get a diagnosis for our child's Aspergers syndrome and support available, it is obvious that there are not enough Educational Psychologists or Advisory Teachers for Communication Disorders in the Communications Interaction Team to support all the needs of children across Plymouth. They are all stretched to max with their case loads and need more support to do their jobs better. They have been very supportive when I pursue them but get the impression that there is never the time to really focus on children that are lower on the spectrum as our child is. I also know that other children who's parents I have met with a greater need for support are slipping through the net at a crucial time in their emotional and social development."

"Groups / clubs for ASD children are badly needed in Plymouth."

"More help is needed for families with children and parents with disabilities. At present the system is too difficult to ask for help and when you ask for help it is often refused."

"There's nothing for parents and other children of children with special needs - to support us. It would be good to have e.g. 1 x month - special activity / trip for sibling of SEN child so they can have a break when SEN child has respite activity."

"Children with disabilities if not specific not much available."

3.0 Next Steps

There are a number of practical steps that might address the eight key areas that emerge from this survey:

13.1 Where and who do parents go to for support

Parents who have a child with additional needs/disabilities go to a variety of agencies for support as do those who do not have such children. The pattern of usage by parents in general of agencies and specific professionals is likely to be influenced primarily by the age of their child/ren and by their knowledge and experience of using them previously.

However, it is evident from the survey findings that there are some marked differences in usage of particular sources of support by parents with children who have additional needs/disabilities and those who do not. Around three times as many respondents with a child with additional needs/disabilities than those who do not stated that they go to a Social Worker or to School Support staff when they need support. Twice as many of those who are in this position than those who are not indicated that they go to Plymouth Parent Partnership and Community/Voluntary organisations when they need support. Almost half as many again of those with a child with additional needs/disabilities than those who do not have such children go to a PSA for support. Given the popularity of Plymouth Parent Partnership, Community/Voluntary organisations and PSAs as sources of support for parents with children who have additional/special needs, urgent consideration should be given to the ramifications for parents and other agencies in Plymouth should funding for the above be reduced or in the worse case scenario withdrawn entirely.

13.2 What parents want more information/support about

Whilst it is clear that parents, irrespective of whether they have a child with additional/special needs or not, want more information on a wide range of issues, there are nevertheless differences between the two groups. The percentage of parents in the former group wanting more information on 'understanding children's behaviour', 'managing money/benefits/debt', 'good approaches to parenting', children's learning and development', and 'teaching children right from wrong' was significantly higher than the latter group. It is of concern that more than 3 in 5 of respondents with a child with additional needs/disabilities stated that they needed more information on 'understanding and managing children's behaviour' and 'managing money/benefits/debt, as this was the case for less than half those respondents who did not have children with additional/special needs. An audit of Agencies providing such information should be undertaken so that parents wanting this information can be signposted effectively.

13.3 Where Family Support should be available

More parents in both the group who have a child with additional needs/disabilities and in the group who do not indicated that 'Family Support' should be available from a School followed by a GP Surgery. However, one key difference between the two groups was the higher percentage of parents in the former group (45.9%) who would go to Plymouth Parent Partnership than in the latter group (31.9%).

Whilst schools provide Family Support in many different ways, the majority nevertheless have a PSA whose role had been pivotal in enabling schools to support their respective parents. Given that the continuation of the PSA role is unclear, Schools will need to consider how they will enable Family Support to be made available after March 2011. In addition, the role undertaken by Plymouth Parent Partnership in the provision of 'Family Support' will need to be reviewed in light of these imminent changes. Given that many parents indicated that they would like Family Support to be available at a GP Surgery, thought should be given to exploring whether this is feasible.

13.4 The type of help/support parents would like

It is clear that parents who have a child with additional needs/disabilities do not differ from those parents who are not in this position in that they would prefer help to be available to them individually rather than to receive it as a member of a group. There also appears to be an increase in the numbers of parents across the board who would like help to be available electronically. Services delivering help/support should consider how their delivery can best reflect the preferences outlined above.

13.5 When parents would like help to be available

The evidence makes clear that there is not 'a one size fits all' answer to the question of when parents, irrespective of whether or not they have a child with additional needs/disabilities, would like help to be available. However, the survey findings reveal that more parents with a child with additional needs/disabilities (41.1%) than those not in this situation (34.1%) would like help to be available '24/7'. The survey findings also showed that almost twice as many respondents with a child with additional needs/disabilities as those who don't would like help to be available in the school holidays. Services delivering help/support should consider a flexible approach to delivery, given that much of the help currently available is restricted to weekdays making access difficult for many working parents. Consideration should be given to making help available in the evenings, before and after school, at the weekend and during the school holidays.

13.6 Likely sources of information about local services

It is clear that more parents of children with additional needs/disabilities are likely to obtain information about local services by word of mouth e.g. family, friend, GP, teacher followed by leaflets, whilst parents who did not have a child with an additional need/disability slightly favoured leaflets over word of mouth for obtaining such information. There was very little difference in the percentage of parents across both groups who would use websites to obtain information about local services. However, it is interesting to note that more parents of children with additional/special needs favoured meetings and phone calls as sources of information than did parents who were not in this position. Services providing information should give consideration to the above information seeking behaviour and ensure that their information can be accessed accordingly.

13.7 The involvement of older siblings in looking after children

Almost twice as many respondents with children who have additional needs/disabilities (17.8%) as those who do not (9.1%) have older children who are involved in looking after their younger siblings. Services working with 'Young Carers' should note this finding.

13.8 Fathers accessing services

Around 2 in 5 (41.4%) parents of children with additional/special needs considered that fathers in particular experience problems in accessing services, whilst this was the case for around 1 in 4 (25.8%) parents who do not. Whilst it is only a minority of parents in both the above groups who believe that fathers in particular experience problems in accessing services, providers should nevertheless be mindful of their opening times and the language used in publications to avoid marginalising fathers.