Families asked to complete a government survey on Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans this summer

A survey of families with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) covering each local area in England is being undertaken for the Department for Education this summer. We are asking parents, carers and young people about their views and experiences of gaining a plan and how the plan is affecting their lives.

Why is it important that parents, carers and young people take part?

This is the only government survey of EHC experiences and this is a chance for families to express their views. The results will help the government and local authorities learn from parents’ experiences and make improvements to the system in the future. Ensuring children and young people with SEND and their families have a positive experience of the system is a central aim of SEND policy and we hope that this survey will give us a representative picture of whether we’re achieving this. The results will be anonymous and will show which parts of the EHC process are working well or need more support and how this picture varies across the country.

The survey has been developed with an independent, expert advisory group including parent/carer forum representatives and is being carried out by IFF Research and Derby University.

What happens next?

Most families who started an EHC plan in 2015 will receive a letter during July to September 2016 inviting them to take part in the survey via an accessible web, postal or phone questionnaire. The results will be published in the New Year.

FAQs

*Can the survey affect a family’s EHC plan or the support they receive and will anyone know they have completed the survey?*

No. The survey is anonymous and confidential. It cannot affect an EHC plan in anyway. Family’s responses will be combined and used to provide national and local results. The data from completed surveys will be securely retained, used only for the survey and then destroyed.
Why will this survey only involve families who have EHC plans and not those who have been refused an assessment or plan?

This survey is aimed at better understanding experiences of getting a plan and how effective they are considered to be. DfE have commissioned separate research on dispute resolution that will include an assessment of services in place for families who have applied for but not received an EHC assessments or plan.

How have families been selected to participate in the survey?

Statutory information provided by early years settings, schools and post 16 providers have been used to sample all families with EHCP records in the data for 2015 – this represents a census approach.

Will participating families represent groups with different types of SEND and different backgrounds?

The census approach will ensure that the survey results are representative. The pilot survey results showed good representation across key characteristics. We will ensure that any underrepresented groups are proportionately weighted during the national analysis so the results are representative.

Why are families who have received a plan in 2016 not being included?

DfE databases require time to update so that they are robust and this has resulted in families with plans between January and December 2015 being sampled for this study. This will also allow for plans to have been in place for at least 6 months meaning families will have had some time to reflect on their experience and to see some initial effects from the EHCP being in place.

Will children and young people with varying physical and cognitive ability be able to provide their views?

The survey requests that young people complete it themselves or with the support of another person (such as a parent or carer). There are sections in the survey specifically asking for the views of the person the plan is about. The questionnaires are accessible as possible and offered via web, postal and telephone versions.

Will local authorities be provided with their area’s results?

Yes. We hope the results will help support local authorities. The proportion of completed surveys will vary naturally in each area but we expect to be able to provide robust local level results for most LAs. Areas with low volumes of EHC plans may only receive indicative results given small numbers of completed surveys.

For more information please email SEND.RESEARCH@education.gsi.gov.uk