Autism Survey Report - Easy Read

What did we do?

Somerset County Council is planning how to support children and young people with autism in Somerset. We want to know what children, young people and their parents think about the support they get now. And what will help in the future.

We wrote letters to parents, handed out flyers at activities for autistic children and young people, linked from websites, facebook and tweeted to ask people to answer the survey.

91 children and young people told us what they thought. 143 parents and carers told us what they thought. 64 schools told us what they thought.

What did children and young people tell us?

Most children and young people with autism say they get help at school, and have someone to talk to.

Most children and young people are happy at school. They like spending time with friends. There are also some subjects and lessons that they really enjoy.

Things that make children and young people sad at school include bullying, and people not understanding their autism. They want more time to play and be with friends, and people to help them play.

Loud noises and bright lights can upset autistic children and young people and make them behave differently. They want people to understand why. They don’t want to be punished for this.

Most older young people know what they want to do when they leave school at the end of year 11. They like to know what courses they can do where. They also want someone to help them prepare and visit the new places that they might go to.

What did parents tell us?

Few parents say their child doesn’t get the help they need at school. Parents whose children go to special school are happier with the help their child gets. Sometimes children have to move school to get better help. Parents want teachers to understand why their autistic child behaves differently.

Parents think their autistic children get good help to learn and to be safe. They don’t think they get enough help with stress and anxiety. They aren’t helped enough to make friends and take part in activities out of school time.

Services most used are Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENOEs) at school, Children with Autism Outreach Team (CAOT) and Integrated
Therapy Services. Parents don’t always know about what services they can use and would like staff to tell them.

Parents attend courses to help them learn how to help their child with autism. The most useful courses were Cygnet and Early Bird (provided by CAOT) and local parent support groups. Parents want more training on helping to cope with anxiety and behaviour. They also want to refresh their training as their child with autism grows up. Training is easiest in the evening, so parents don’t have to take time off work. Parents don’t know what courses they can go on, and want to be able to easily find out.

Parents want teachers to understand how autism makes their child different. They want the school to make small changes to help their child. When staff are good and support is right they see school as a very good place. Sometimes they think this is most likely to be in special school than in mainstream school.

Parents want their children to have a chance to take part in groups outside of school. They want more things to do. They want help to teach their children how to have fun and learn new things, how to travel around and meet friends, and how to look after themselves.

Parents like to be talked to and listened to when their child moves school. Some staff are very helpful and parents like this. Parents don’t like the time it takes to write and share what was talked about.

What did schools tell us?

Schools say they find it easier to keep children and young people with autism safe, and help plan for moving school. Schools find it harder to deal with stress and anxiety, and support children with autism to feel good about themselves.

Schools say the Autism and Communication Service is good. They like the staff coming in to school to help the child. They don’t like the amount of paper work and it is hard to speak to the Service on the phone. They would like help to be able to share resources and ideas between schools. Schools also would like more training.

What will we do?

The things people told us will be looked at with other information and numbers across the county. This will help us to learn more about the needs of children and young people with autism. This will help us write the priorities in the Somerset Autism Strategy, which is the list of things we will do together to help.