

AT-Autism

20-22 WENLOCK ROAD:
LONDON N17 7 GU

Middletown Centre for Autism

Independent evaluation

Final Summary Report

February 2021

Richard Mills and David Moore

Middletown Centre for Autism

Summary report

Results of independent evaluation conducted by AT-Autism

2020 evaluation.

Introduction

- The Middletown Centre for Autism has been operational since 2007. It was established by the Department of Education and Skills, Ireland, and The Department of Education of Northern Ireland to support the promotion of excellence throughout Northern Ireland and Ireland in the education of children and young people with Autism Spectrum Disorders. It has approached this through its vision enhancing the lives of children and young people with autism and their families, through the delivery of specialist education services, and the mission of supporting the promotion of excellence throughout Northern Ireland and Ireland in the education of children and young people with autism. The values of the Centre are stated as Respect, Integrity, Equity and Openness.
- Since 2007, the Centre has developed an increasingly broad and innovative range of initiatives and activities, related to its vision and mission.
- AT-Autism was invited to conduct this evaluation as an independent agency with no competing or conflicting interests.
- This evaluation was commissioned to examine perceptions of how the work of the Centre had fulfilled and was fulfilling its vision and mission and to provide a means of establishing a future strategy, that could identify the need for changes and a mechanism for judging progress. We are unaware of any comparable organisation having conducted a similar exercise.
- This work was commissioned by the Centre in 2019, to be conducted in 2020.
- Despite significant disruption to the process through COVID-19, the fieldwork for the project was completed during 2020.

The evaluation

- Preparatory work was undertaken in 2019 with a visit to the Centre by the researcher and discussion with the Centre operational team and Senior management. A methodology for evaluation was designed following that visit, that would involve the development of a modified Delphi approach.
- The Delphi process was established to examine the questions posed by the SMT and these were refined during 5 rounds of deliberation throughout 2020, including reference to and revision by the SMT, acting as expert reference group. The Delphi also involved other specific stakeholders including professionals, families, and representatives of autistic young people and adults. This culminated in a confidential survey and subsequent analysis late in 2020. A total of 85 questions were generated across all groups. These were all completed and analysed.
- The survey ran from 25 November until 18 December 2020. A small number of responses (12) were received after the cut-off date and after the production of the one-page summary report. These have now been included.
- Evaluation of data began on 2 January 2021.
- Responses were equally split between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. There was a predominance of professionals in the respondent group.
- The total number of responses received was 278 (Confidence Level 95%, Margin of Error 5%). These were extremely detailed and thorough, providing rich quantitative and qualitative data on the programmes and how these are experienced by users.

- Open text comments received have been summarised using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2013). A sample of verbatim comments is included for illustration. Full comments are available in the full report.
- No significant difference was observed in the response pattern between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and between parent/carer users and professionals.
- There was a low engagement of autistic individuals This may be explained by the nature of the evaluation being restricted to children but requires further consideration.
- We commend the management of the Centre for commissioning this work and recognise the motivation to assess the current state to develop an effective future strategy for the Centre and a baseline for the assessment of progress.
- We are most grateful for the support throughout of the MCA team, in particular Sheila Cross.

Terminology

- We have adopted the Centre's use of terminology around autism. There is currently debate about the use of person first language (see Kenny et al 2015*) with the autistic community in the UK now preferring condition first language. This is a topic for further discussion separate from this evaluation.

Discussion

- We are confident that the results provide an accurate and up-to-date assessment of the work of the Centre. The confidential nature of the evaluation and Delphi methodology, i.e., asking the right questions in the right way, couple with an unusually thoughtful, thorough, and detailed level of response, supports a high degree of confidence in the results.
- The Centre can be proud of its achievements and the high levels of satisfaction achieved across the extensive range of its services. The low level of expressed dissatisfaction and high level of satisfaction are consistent across all areas of activity. This is strengthened through the open comments sections, which have been explored and reported through thematic analysis.
- It would be tempting to regard such favourable results as evidence that the Centre is achieving its mission and vision. Whilst mostly true, this would be to ignore the ever-present need for continuous improvement in an ever-changing field. Perspectives on autism are constantly evolving and we have seen the detrimental effect of fixed or inflexible thinking on the development of innovation and new ways of thinking and working. In autism, today's thinking and cutting-edge good practice, can so easily become unacceptable or anachronistic tomorrow.
- High-quality services depend on an openness to new ideas against a backdrop of rigorous debate and the development of an evidence base that can be shared to inform and drive policy. It also demands the active involvement and participation of autistic people as colleagues and drivers for quality and change. The Centre is well placed to embrace this and there is emerging evidence from this evaluation that the training delivered by the Centre is influential in the development of such thinking and both practice and policy.
- In this evaluation the small number of unfavourable responses, and the gaps in response from respondent groups, or issues of wider general concern to autistic community, provide additional opportunities to reflect on potential areas of improvement and change. They should not be ignored.

Conclusions

- The Centre is to be commended on commissioning this independent and impartial review of its activities.
- The thoroughness and quality of responses, largely from professionals from across the island of Ireland provided a consistent story about their experience, which was overwhelmingly reported as positive. This was shared by the smaller number of family respondents.

- We hope the content of this report provides the Centre with the means of reviewing current activities and will help to inform any strategy for the next phase of the Centre's work. We hope it will help the Centre to consider, identify and reach out to those areas not currently represented in its work or to develop new initiatives where these are indicated.
- We hope the Centre will also carefully examine areas of low response or where there would appear under-developed potential. This appears to be particularly so in higher and further education and perhaps in the vocational area. In this, the engagement of the adult autistic community would also help to inform future strategy.
- The original remit of the Centre was for work with children and young people and in this it has developed a deserved reputation for excellence and innovation. This review confirms the importance of inclusive policies and practices throughout and beyond childhood for autistic individuals with highly varied needs, and to use its knowledge to identify gaps, inform and drive policy change, and develop and embed good practice.
- We hope this review shines a light on some of those areas and provides a context for a discussion. We believe the Centre is uniquely placed to shape national policies on autism practice and training across the island of Ireland that will serve the needs of all autistic people and their families.
- Given the excellent platform now in place, should the Centre consider an extension of its activities? This to include autistic adults as part of broader approach to autism policies and practice across the island of Ireland, and perhaps to further broaden its remit to include what is increasingly referred to as neurodiversity?

RM/DM/ATA

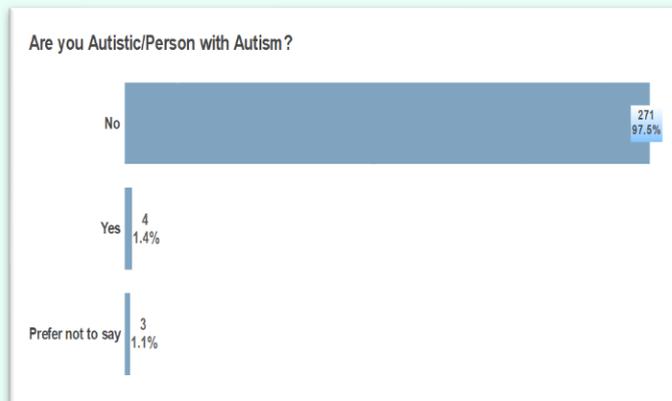
February 2021

*Kenny,L., Hattersley,C.,Molins,B., Buckley,C., Povey,C., & Pellicano,E. (2016).Which terms should be used to describe autism? Perspectives from the UK autism community. *Autism*,20 (4), 442-462

Presentation of Results

The confidential evaluation survey ran from 25 November until 18 December 2020. There were 85 questions across all groups.

1. Respondent identity



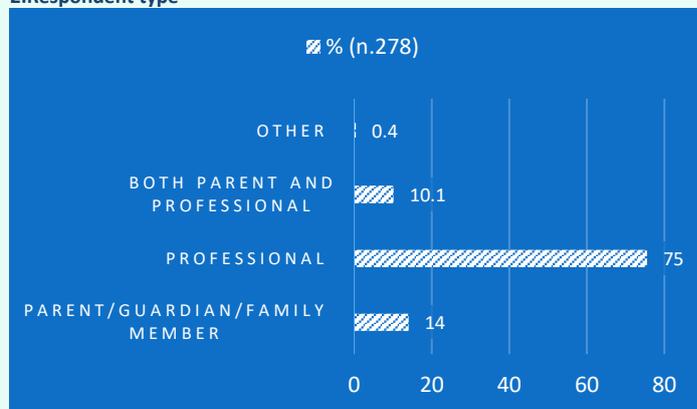
There were 278 respondents (Confidence Level 95% -Margin of Error 5%.)

The majority of respondents (271, 97.5%) are not Autistic/A Person with Autism.

Most respondents were professionals.

There was a low level of engagement of autistic individuals. The reason for this might be related to the Centre's work primarily being with children and young people although it would be worth considering how this could be explained.

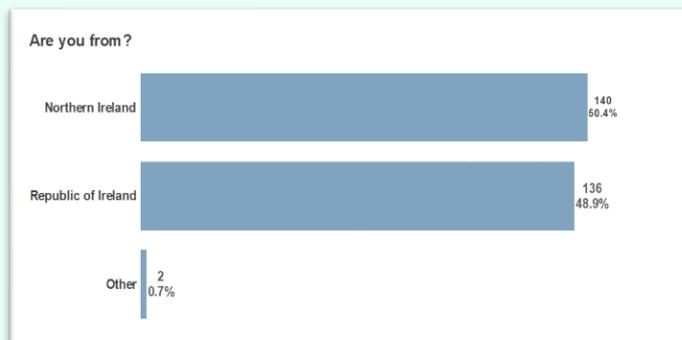
2. Respondent type



Most respondents were professionals and a smaller number both a parent of an autistic family member and a professional. There was no significant difference in the response between the groups.

As with autistic engagement, the Centre is invited to think about how it wishes to approach the level of engagement with parents /carers

3. Respondent location



There is an almost even split between respondents from Northern Ireland, (140, (50.4%) and the Republic of Ireland (136 (48.9%) 'Other' respondents (2): Polish living in the rep of Ireland: UK

Northern Ireland respondents

Antrim (35%), Down (20%). The remainder at 14% except for Fermanagh at 3%.

No county recorded zero.

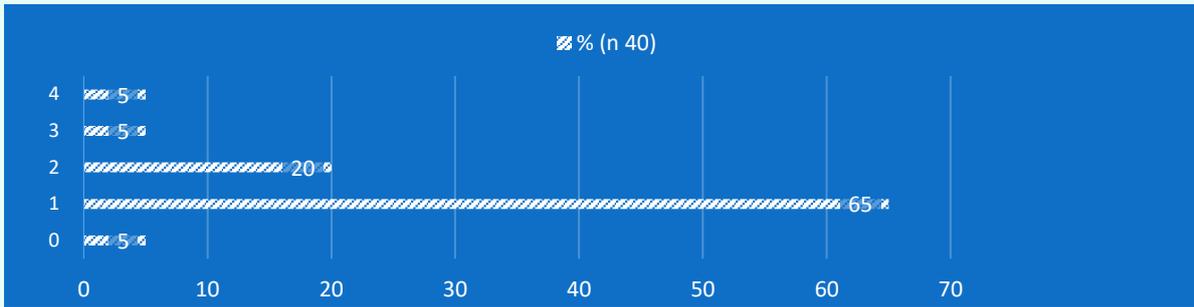
Republic of Ireland respondents

Dublin (26%) and Cork (14%) Remainder evenly spread.

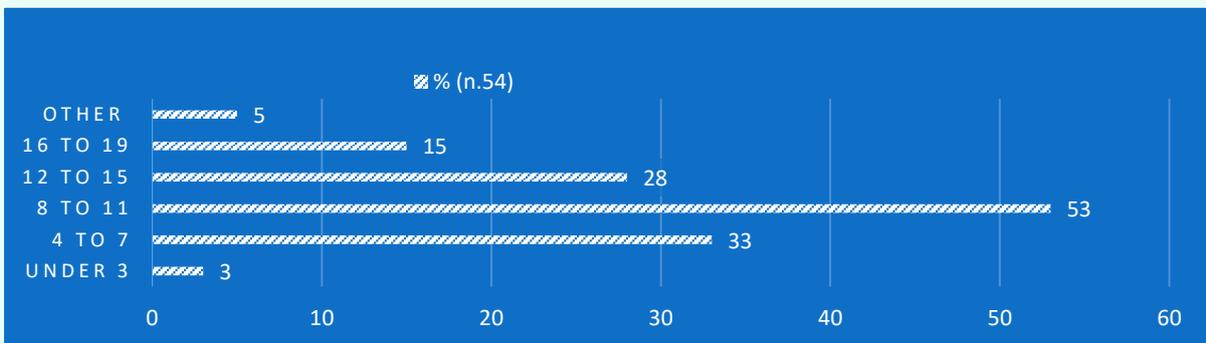
Only Longford and Westmeath registered zero.

Where respondents are a Parent/Guardian/Carer or family member of a child/children with autism OR Autistic/Person with Autism.

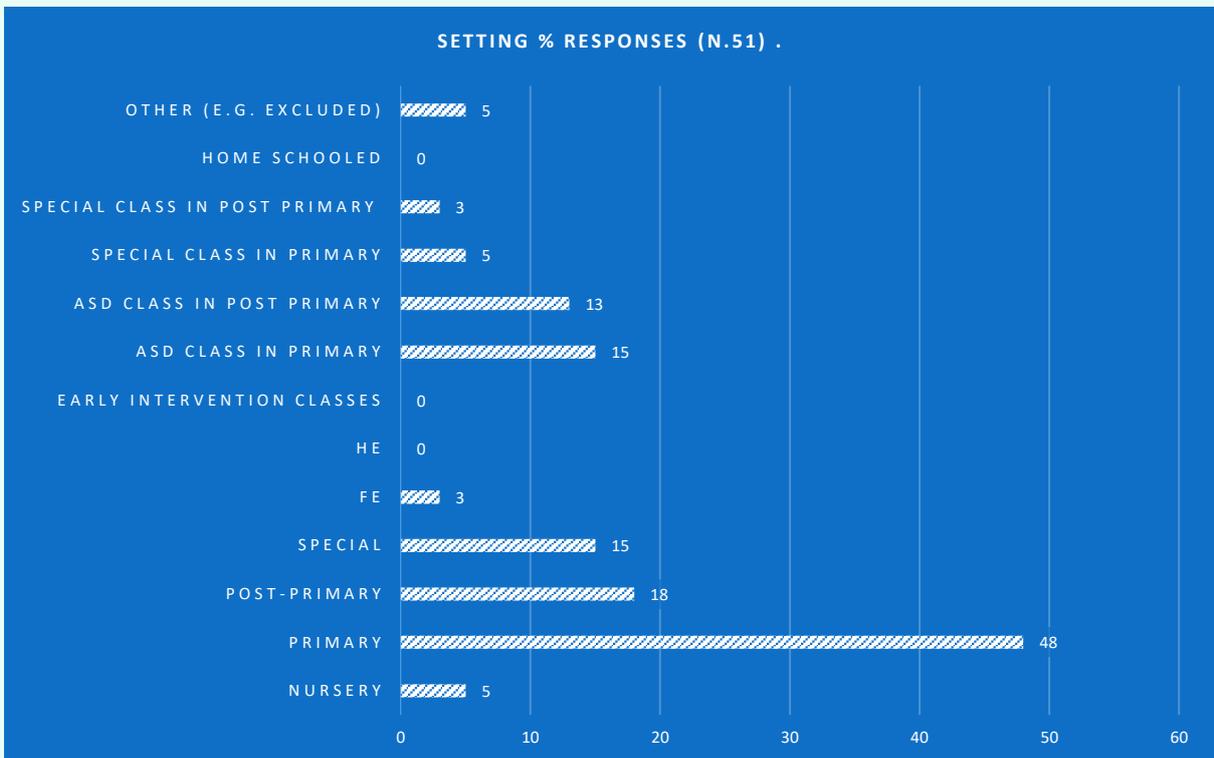
4. How many children and/or young people with autism are in your household?



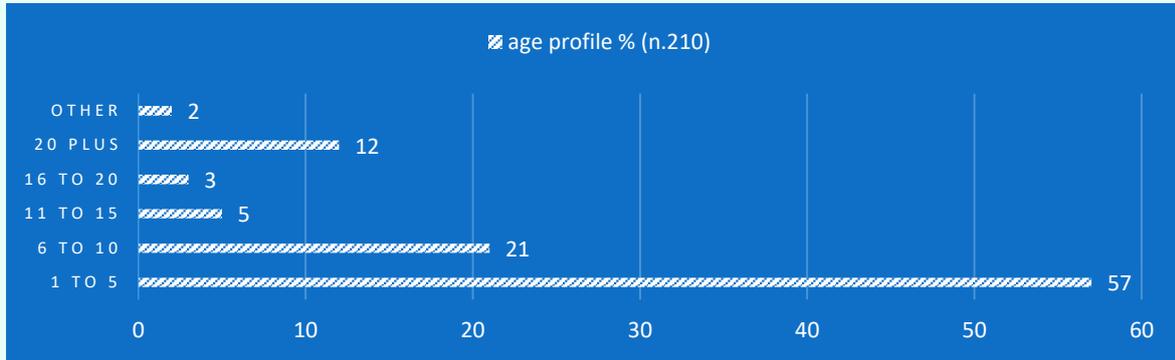
5. What age/s are the children and/or young people with autism in your household? (multi responses possible, % is of 40 respondents to above).



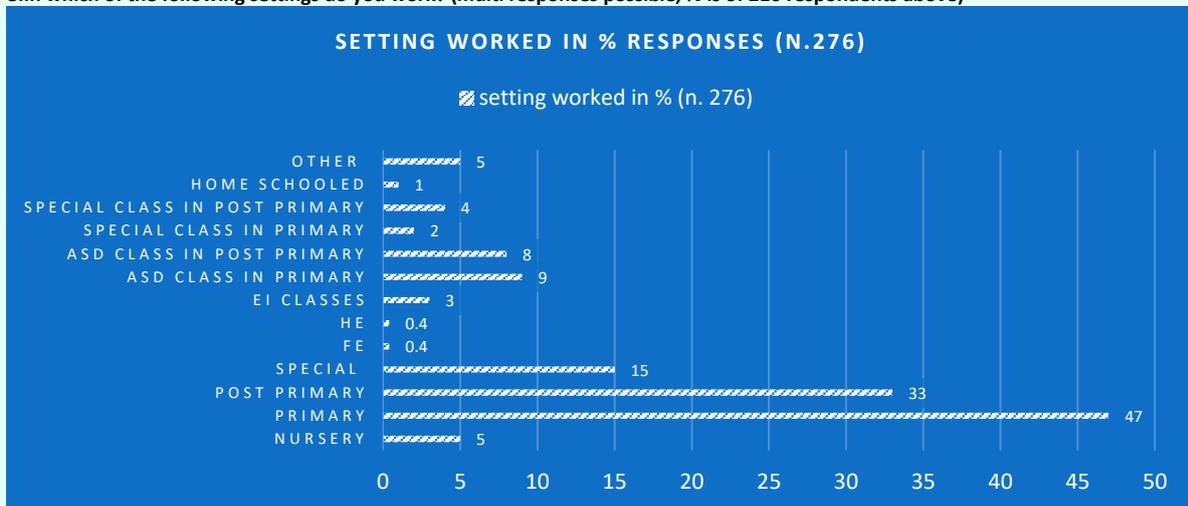
6. Which of the following educational setting/s do you or your child/and or young person attend? (multi responses possible, % is of 40 respondents above).



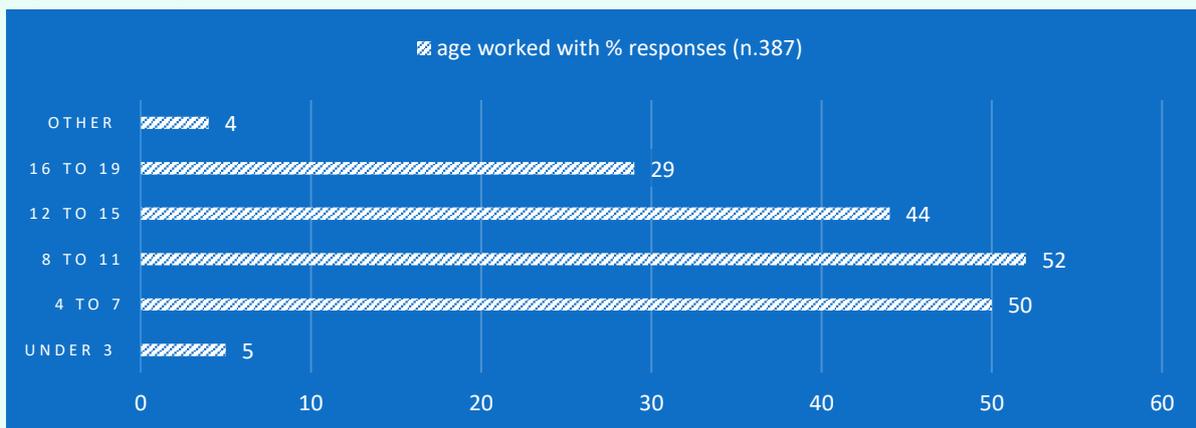
**7. Where respondents are a Professional working with a child/children with autism.
In a typical working day how many children and/or young people with autism do you work with?**



8. In which of the following settings do you work? (multi responses possible, % is of 210 respondents above)



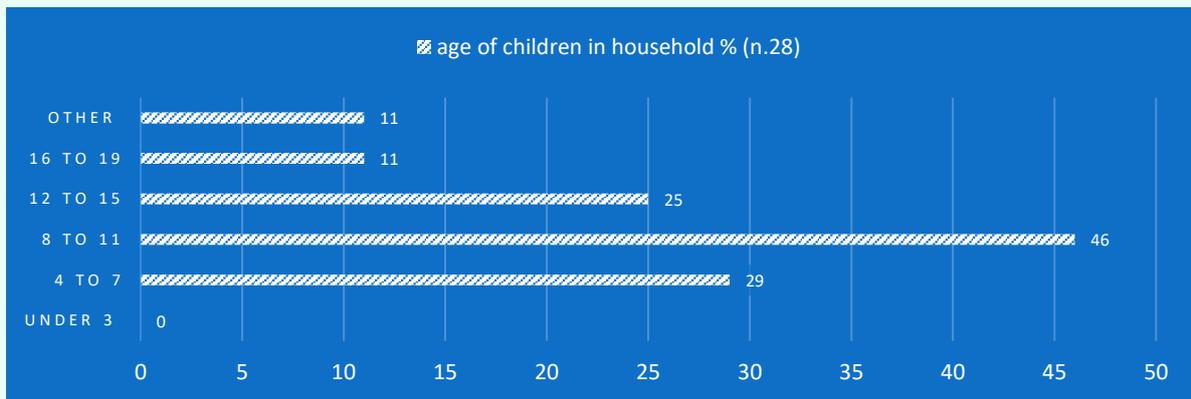
9. What age/s are the children and/or young people with autism that you work with? (multiple responses possible, % is of 210 respondents above).



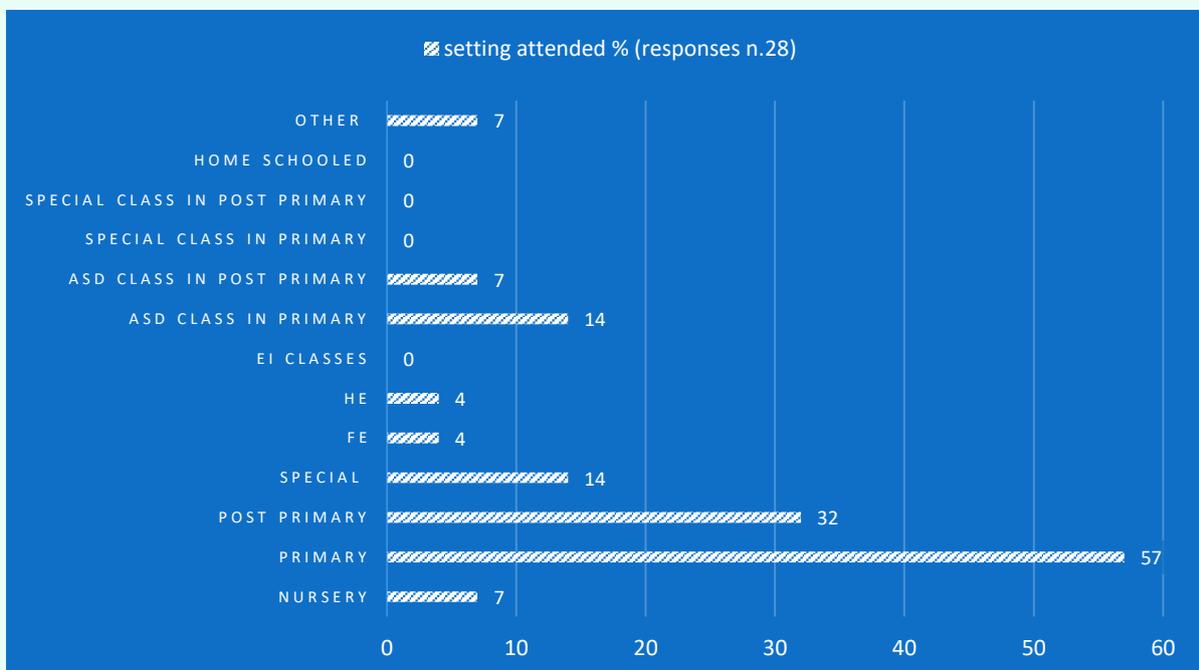
10. Where the respondent is both a Parent/Guardian/Carer/Family Member living with a child/children with autism AND a Professional working with a child/children with autism. How many children and/or young people with autism are in your household?

Number of children	No. Respondents
1	19 (68%)
2	9 (32%)

11. What age/s are the children and/or young people with autism in your household? (multi responses possible, % is of 28 respondents above).



12. Which of the following educational setting/s does your child/and or young person attend? (multi responses possible, % is of 28 respondents above).

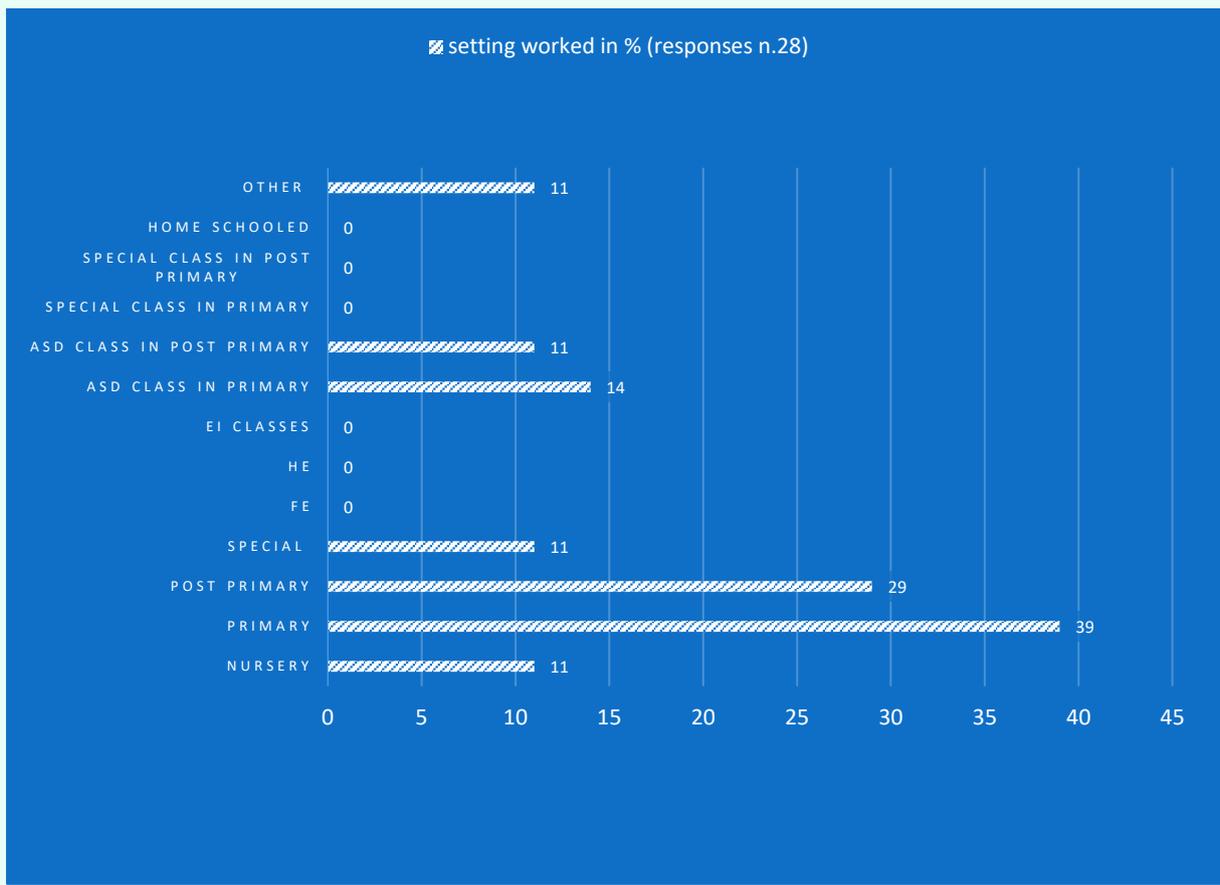


13. In a typical working day how many children and/or young people with autism do you work with?

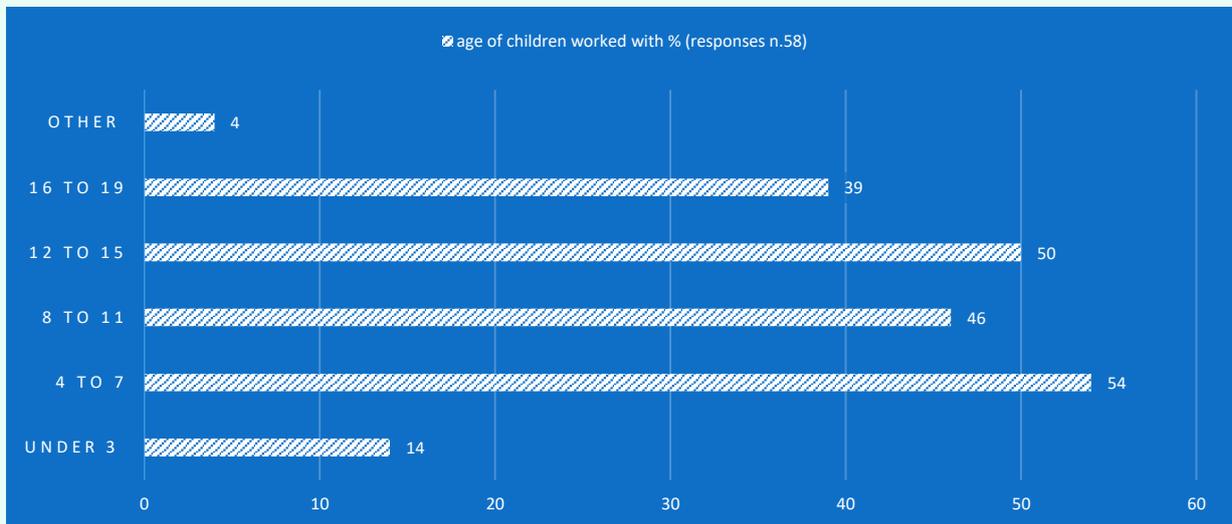
Number	Respondents
1-5	15 (54%)
6-10	7 (25%)
11-15	2 (7%)
16-20	1 (4%)
20+	2 (7%)
Other	1 (4%)

Total respondents 28

14. In which of the following settings do you work? (multi responses possible, % is of 28 respondents above).



15. What age/s are the children and/or young people with autism that you work with? (multiple responses possible, % is of 28 respondents above).



Services Accessed:

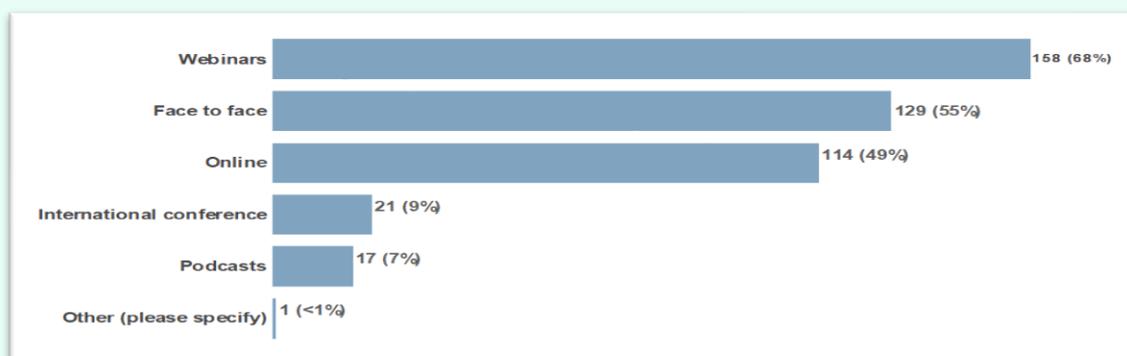
16. Which of the services provided by Middletown Centre for Autism (MCA) have you used?

Service	Yes	No
Have you accessed the training service? (e.g. face to face training, online training, webinars, podcasts).	234 (84%)	44 (16%)
Have you accessed the learning support and assessment service? (e.g. individual referral, whole school referral).	56 (20%)	222 (80%)
Have you accessed the online research and development service? (e.g. online resources, research bulletins, research projects, research panels).	164 (59%)	114 (41%)
Have you accessed the advice and guidance service? (e.g. mail or telephone correspondence).	64 (23%)	214 (77%)
Have you accessed the social media services? (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram).	156 (56%)	122 (44%)
Other (specified below).	9 (3%)	269 (97%)

'Other' services specified:

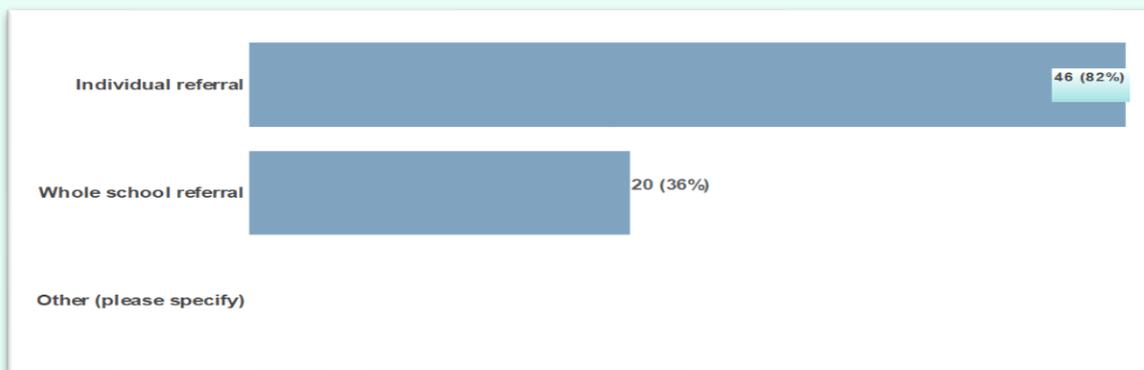
- Individual referral and speaker at 2017 conference
- Facebook (x2)
- Online
- Specific School staff training events
- Website
- I spoke with facilitators after courses – pre Covid-19
- Other staff have referred to Middletown as a great bank of help and training
- Email, website, in person

17. Which training services did you access? (% based on 234 at table 1 above).

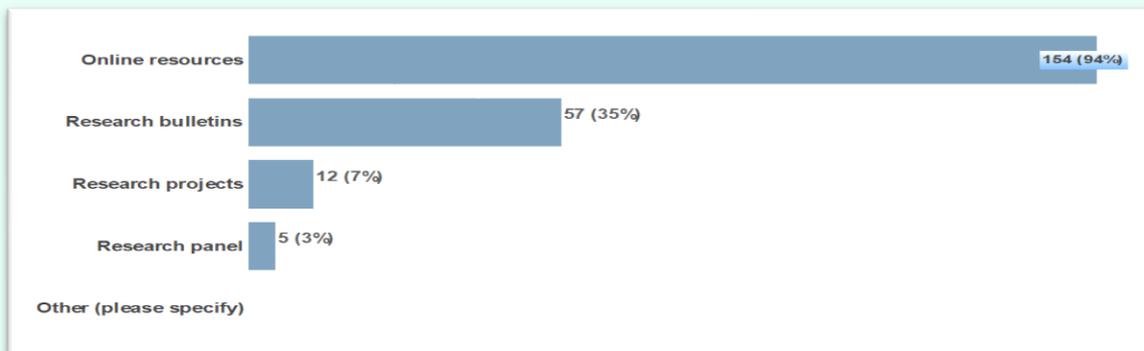


Other: In-school service

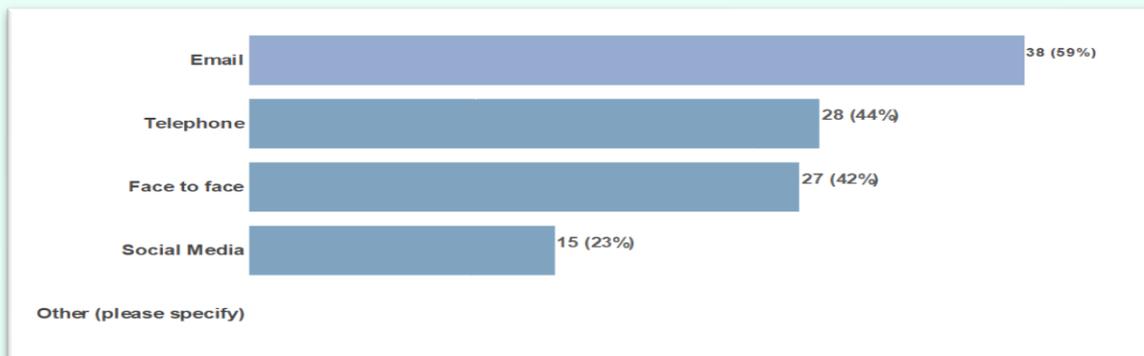
18. Which learning support and assessment services did you access? (% based on 56 at table 1 above).



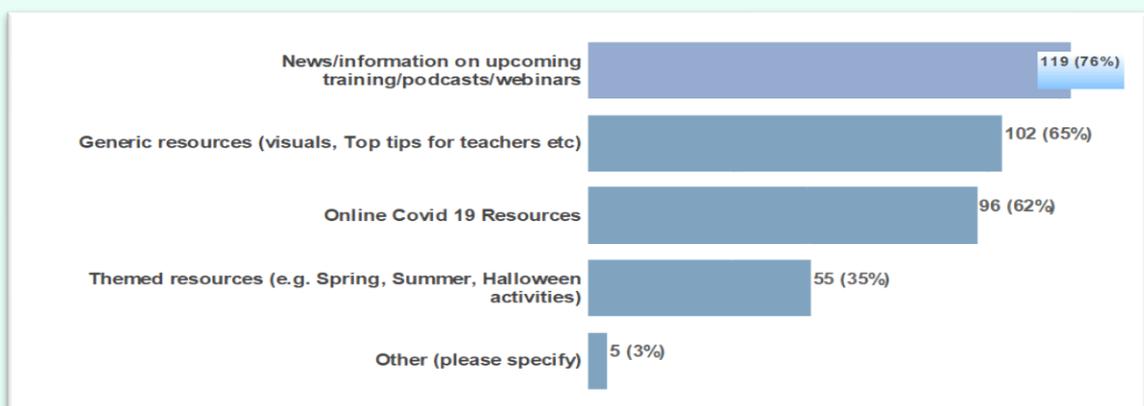
19. Which research and development services did you access? (% based on 164 at table 1 above).



20. Which advice and guidance services did you access? (% based on 64 at table 1 above).



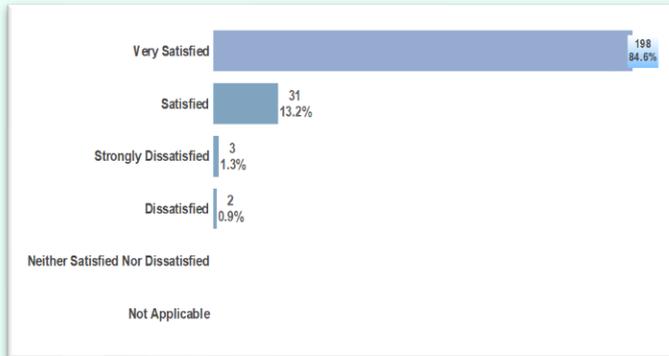
21. Which social media services did you access? (% based on 156 at table 1 above).



Service Satisfaction

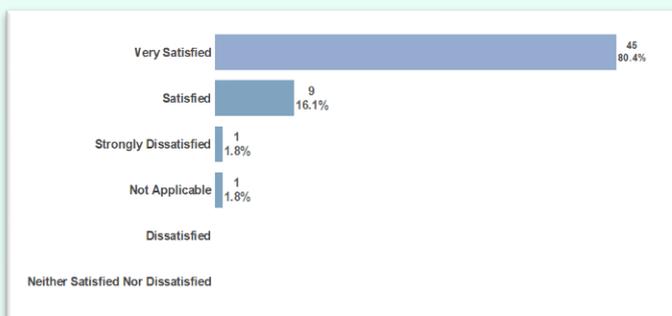
How satisfied were you with the services provided by MCA?

22.Training (e.g., face to face training, online training, webinars, podcasts, conferences).



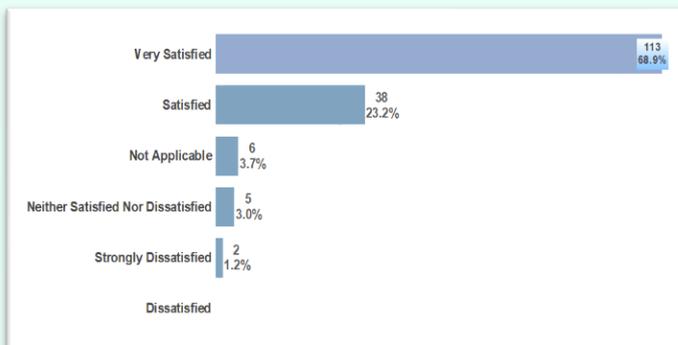
198 (84.6%) said they were Very Satisfied, 31 (13.2%) Satisfied. 3 (1.3%) reported Strongly Dissatisfied and 2 (0.9%) Dissatisfied.

23.Learning Support and Assessment Service (e.g., individual referral, whole school referral).



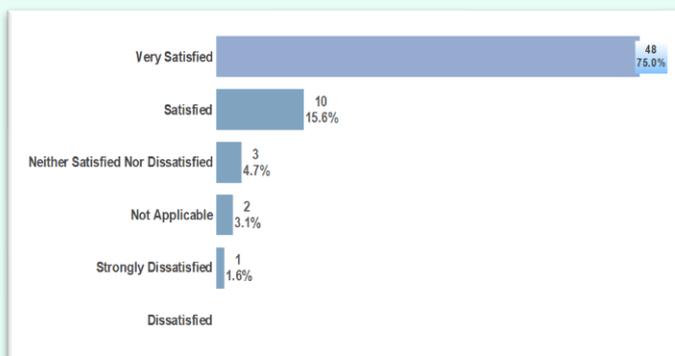
45 (80.4%) said they were Very Satisfied, 9 (16.1%) Satisfied. No one reported they were Dissatisfied or Strongly Dissatisfied

24.Research and Development (e.g., online resources, research bulletins, research projects, research panel).



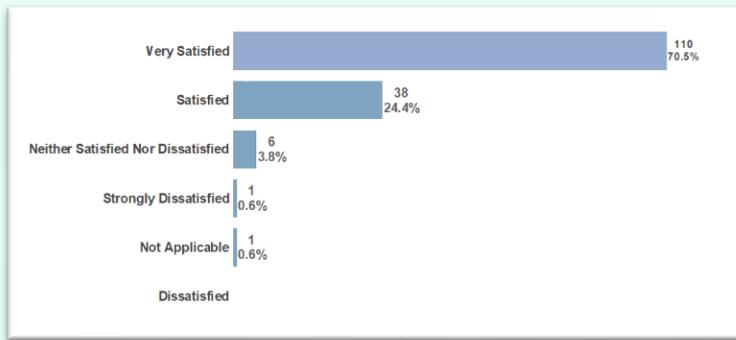
113 (68.9%) said they were Very Satisfied, 38 (23.2%) Satisfied. Two (1.2%) reported they were Strongly Dissatisfied

25.Advice and Guidance Service (e.g. email or telephone correspondence).



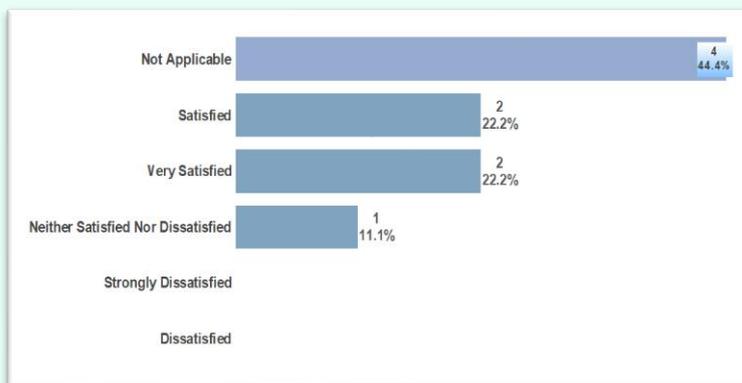
48 (75%) said they were very satisfied, 10 (15.6%) satisfied, one person (1.6%) said they were strongly dissatisfied.

26.Social media (e.g. Covid 19 resources, news/information, themed resources, generic resources) on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram.



110 (76.5%) said they were very satisfied, 38 (24.4%) satisfied, one person (0.6%) said they were strongly dissatisfied.

27.Satisfied with other

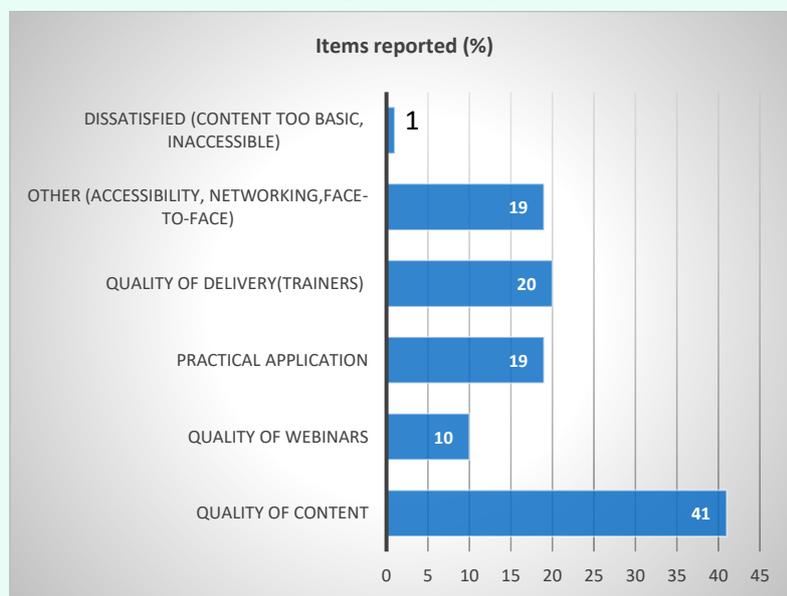


Other (i.e., N/A x3: Facebook: Internet: Website; facilitators questions, one on one. Awareness: National Conference.)

Thematic analysis.

Thinking about the service/s you have accessed from the Centre please tell us why you were satisfied or dissatisfied?

28.Training (e.g., face- to -face training, online training, webinars, podcasts, conferences).

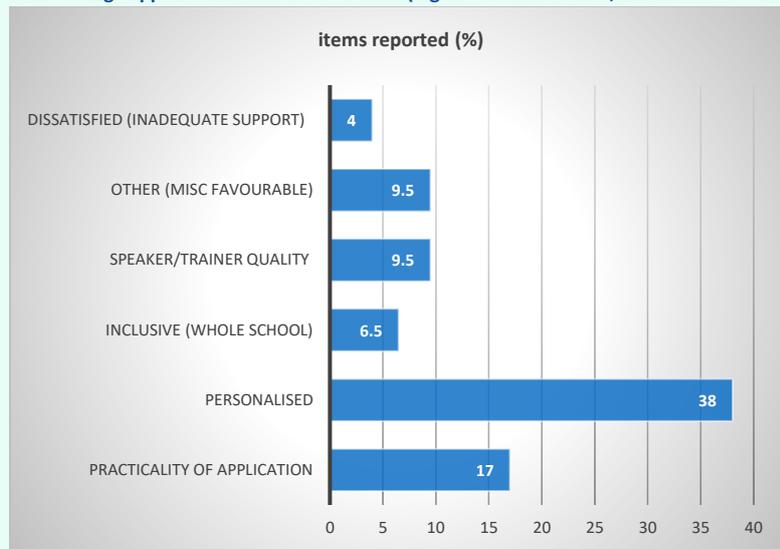


Respondents 133. Items reported 186.

"It gave me a greater understanding of my students. It helped put strategies in place for students with anxiety".
"High standard, very knowledgeable. Nice pace. Great slides. Practical information that I could bring forward"
"Relevant topics"
"Wide range of webinars from experts in the field."
"excellent trainers"
"Sessions were extremely practical lots of advice and explanation of behaviours that puzzle us sometimes".
"Our learning support team found it just about the best training they had ever received, for its relevance, the delivery style, the approachability of the trainers".
"5 -week classroom asst course was v difficult to access. Wasted a lot of time trying to find info or to obtain assistance from Middletown. Many colleagues had the same experience with this course. Content of course was v basic....."

Thinking about the service/s you have accessed from the Centre please tell us why you were satisfied or dissatisfied. Thematic analysis.

29. Learning support and assessment service (e.g. individual referral, whole school referral).



Respondents 40. Items reported 59.

"The individual support for a specific pupil was paramount in developing relationships with the young person and their family".

"As well as working hands-on with the child and supporting the family and staff, the wider support for the school was excellent too".

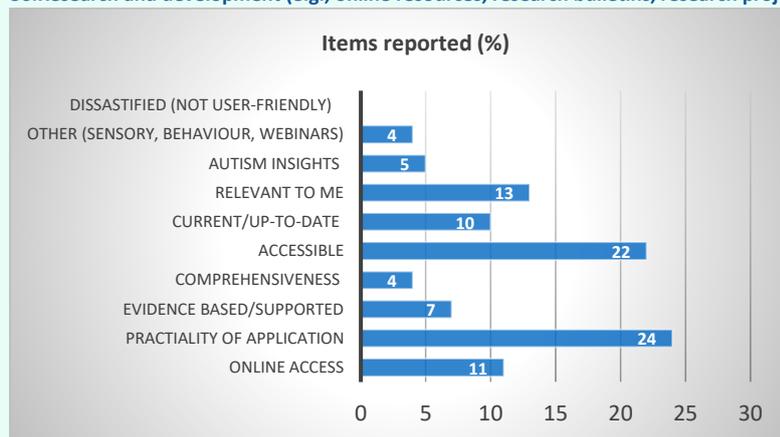
"Staff are upskilled and are better equipped with the knowledge, skills and expertise to teach children and young people".

"I found these more concentrated on taking the child out for support, I would've liked to have had more input in the support sessions".

"The individual referral system combines the work of school and home and can impress upon both the need for better and more comprehensive communication. The whole school referral provides excellent opportunities to meet the training needs of all staff".

Thinking about the service/s you have accessed from the Centre please tell us why you were satisfied or dissatisfied? Thematic analysis.

30. Research and development (e.g., online resources, research bulletins, research projects, research panel).



Respondents 96. Items reported 83.

"I love that Middletown back up their training and techniques with evidence-based research it's not just ideas these are practical life changing skills that can be taught".

"The online resources are brilliant".

"great to access support materials and evidence-based research to help our pupils".

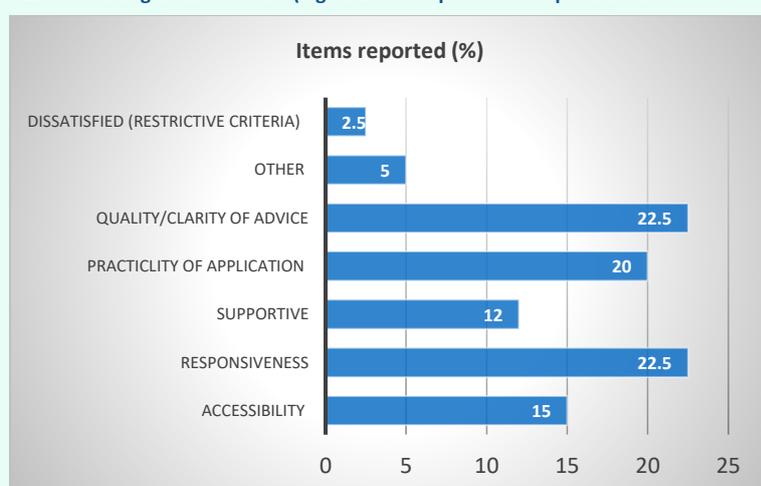
"Strongly agree, very helpful resources to easy access & practical resources to be available in supporting the learning of ways to adapt to various situations. Excellent".

"Lots of information readily available".

"So useful and saves teachers time making resources"

Thinking about the service/s you have accessed from the Centre please tell us why you were satisfied or dissatisfied? Thematic analysis.

31. Advice and guidance service (e.g. mail or telephone correspondence).



Respondents 38. Items reported 40.

"You got back to me very fast and give great advice".

"Very approachable and helpful"

"It's great to have this forum for quick advice and to signpost to the best resources etc".

"Advice and support readily available at any time".

"The support was great and helped provide solutions and a way forward when we were struggling as a school to meet the needs of the pupil".

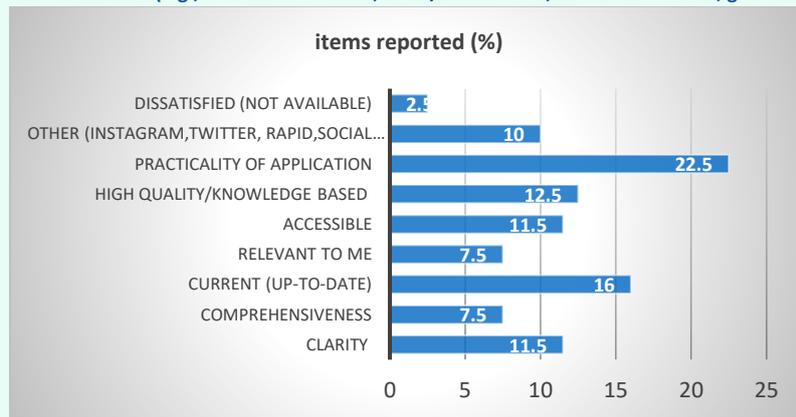
"Phoned and was promised return call but didn't happen".

"clear and practical".

"I don't engage as much as I used to but I often direct others to the resources and dip in at times as know it is a reliable & dependable source".

Thinking about the service/s you have accessed from the Centre please tell us why you were satisfied or dissatisfied? Thematic analysis.

32.Social media (e.g., Covid-19 resources, news/information, themed resources, generic resources) Facebook, Twitter, Instagram).



Respondents 97. Items reported 80.

"Facebook page is fantastic and very clear there has been a lot of hard work gone into it. Always posting information in a timely manner and relevant to what is going on in the world".

"Very easy to access".

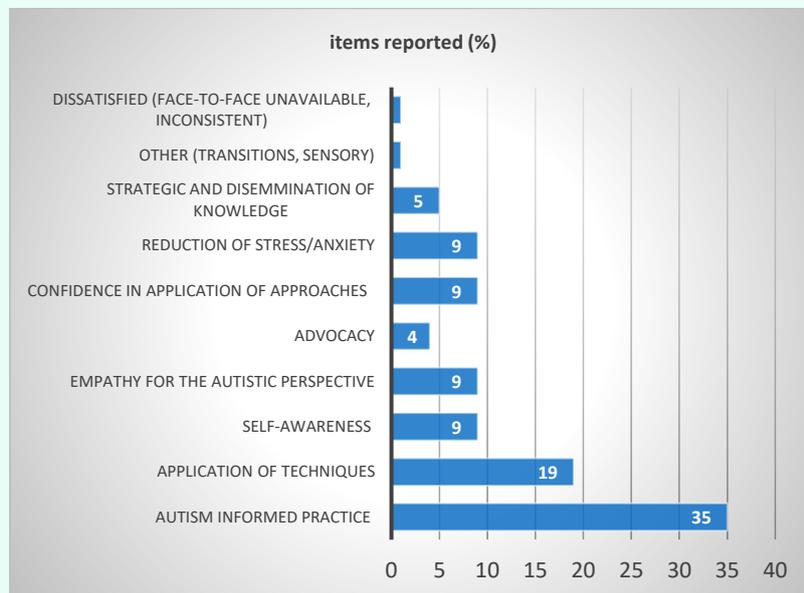
"Throughout Lockdown I found the social media page very helpful with regards to information and resources".

"I love all the tips and what's happening".

"Good for keeping up to date, especially the online webinars since March."

Training -assessing quality and impact.

33.Please provide an example/s of how the knowledge you gained from your MCA training has impacted your attitudes and/or autism practices within the home and/or school. Thematic analysis. Open question.



Respondents 109. Items reported 208.

"Visual aids now used at home which makes day to day life easier".

"I'm much more informed re anxiety, use of visuals, use of slowing down my sentences and trying not to make demands, understanding sensory issues more too."

"I use it in my work as a school governor".

"Makes you more aware, which is really important."

"Knowledge of importance of calm areas and calm boxes in school."

"I have really modified my responses to certain situations that have arisen and by modifying my own responses I have developed much more positive relationships with both my students and my child."

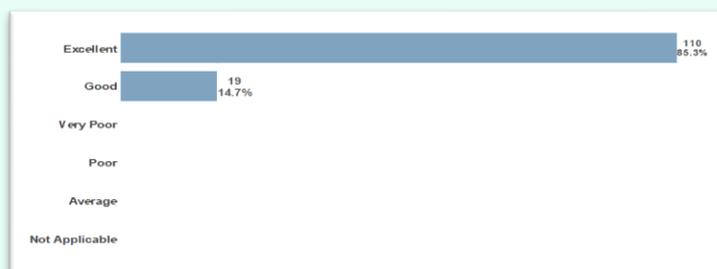
"We have very bad support from our current school as they do not have enough knowledge. So training has empowered us to take much more control, especially recently around the area of anxiety."

Training – assessing the quality of the service and its impact.

Respondents were asked to think of the various aspects of training they received from the Centre and take some time to read each of the statements/questions presented before choosing their response.

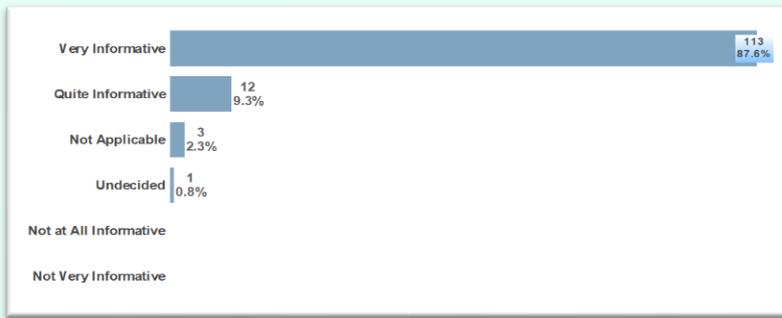
Face to face training. From the above analysis, 129 respondents said that they had received face-to-face training, responding to the individual follow up questions as shown:

34.How would you rate the quality of face-to-face training you have accessed?



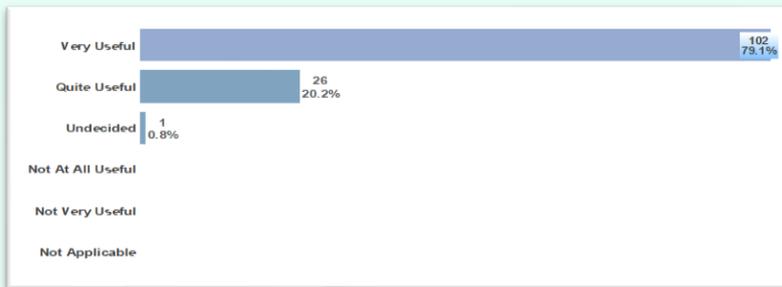
110 (85.3%) of respondents found the Centres face to face training 'Excellent' and 19 (14.7%), 'Good'.

35. How informative did you find the Centre's face-to-face training?



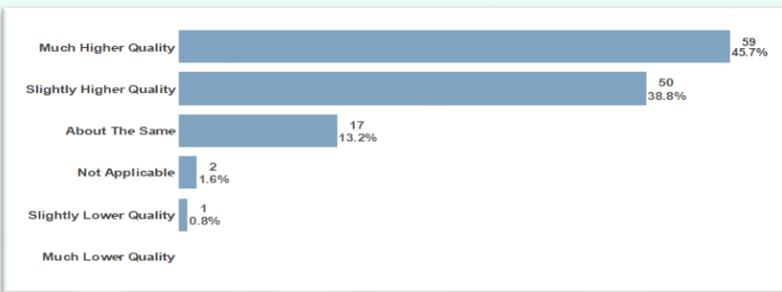
113 (88%) of respondents found the Centres face to face training 'Very Informative' and 12 (9%), 'Quite Informative'.

36. How useful have you found the face-to-face training you received in increasing your knowledge and expertise when working with/caring for autistic children and young people?



102 (79%) responded that the training received was 'Very Useful' and a further 26 (20%) responded that it was 'Quite Useful'.

37. How does the quality of MCA face-to-face training compare to training you have accessed through other service providers?

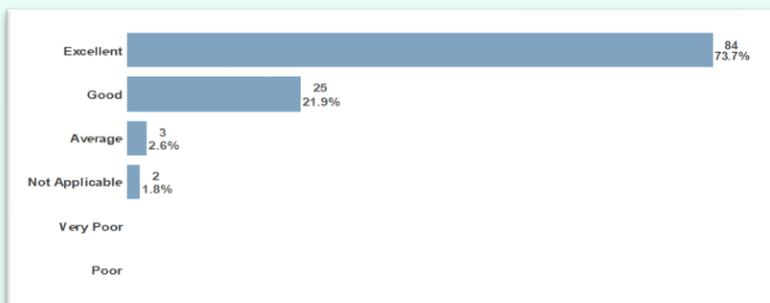


59 (46%) respondents felt that MCA training is of a 'Much Higher Quality' and 50 (39%) felt it is of a 'Slightly Higher Quality'. 17 (13%) felt it is 'About the Same'.

Online training

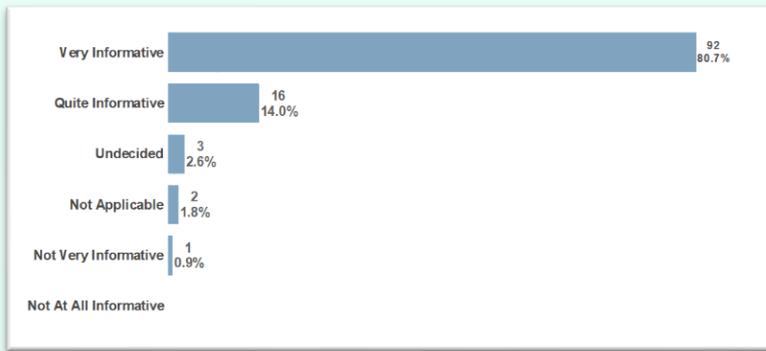
From the above analysis, 114 respondents said that they had received online training, responding to the individual follow up questions as shown:

38. How would you rate the quality of online training you have accessed?



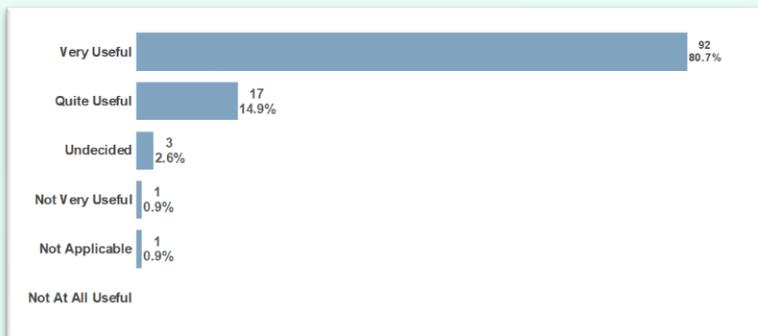
84 (74%) respondents feel the quality of online training is 'Excellent' with a further 25 (22%) feeling it is 'Good'.

39. How informative did you find the Centre’s online training?



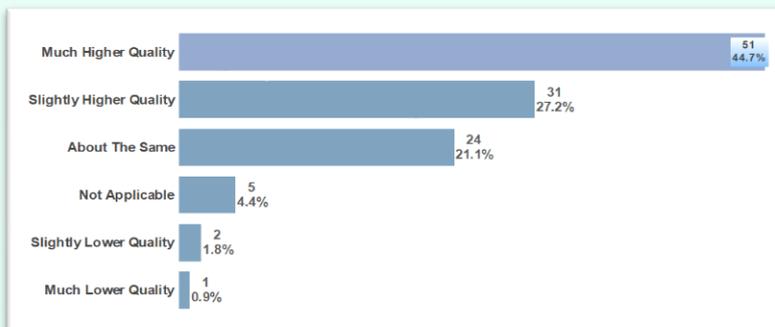
92 (81%) respondents found online training ‘Very Informative’ and a further 16 (14%) ‘Quite Informative’.

40. How useful have you found the online training you received in increasing your knowledge and expertise when working with/caring for autistic children and young people?



92 (81%) respondents found the online training ‘Very Useful’ with a further 17 (15%) finding it ‘Quite Useful’.

41. How does the quality of MCA online training compare to training you have accessed through other service providers?

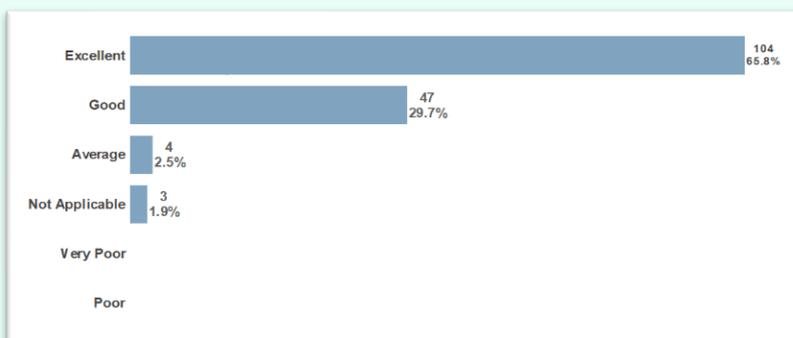


51 (45%) respondents felt that in comparison to other service providers the online training is of a ‘Much Higher Quality’, with 31 (27%) responding it is of a ‘Slightly Higher Quality’ and 24 (21%) responding it is ‘About the Same’.

Webinar Training

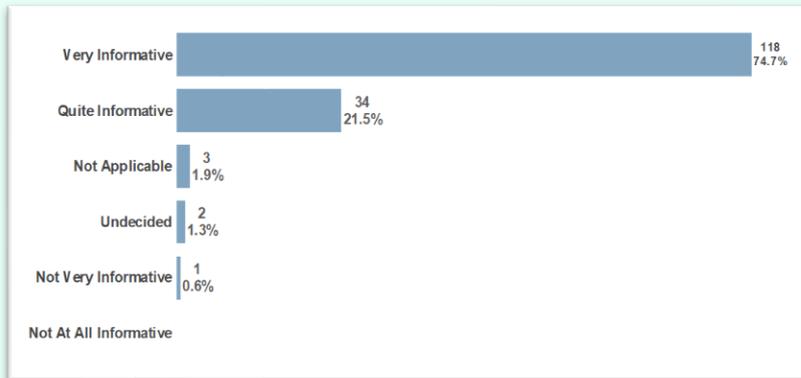
From the above analysis, 158 respondents said that they had received webinar training, responding to the individual follow up questions as shown:

42. How would you rate the quality of webinar training you have accessed?



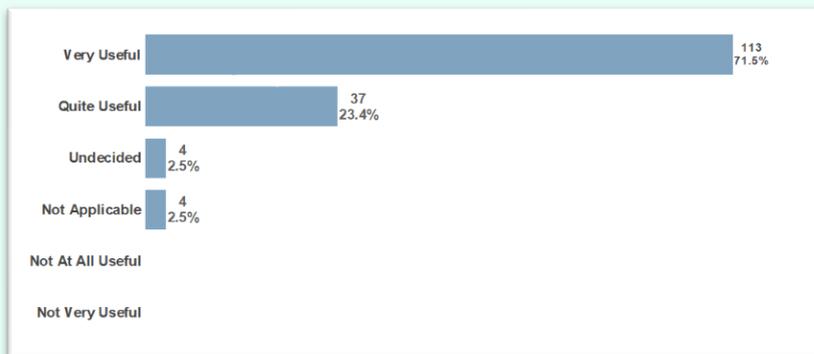
104 (66%) respondents rate the quality of webinar training as ‘Excellent’ with a further 47 (30%) rating it as ‘Good’.

43. How informative did you find the Centre’s webinar training?



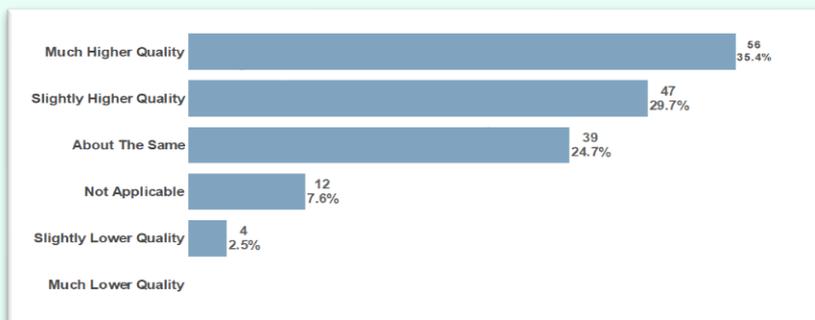
118 (75%) found the Centre’s webinar training ‘Very Informative’, with a further 34 (22%) finding it ‘Quite Informative’.

44. How useful have you found the webinar training you received in increasing your knowledge and expertise when working with/caring for autistic children and young people?



113 (72%) respondents found the webinar training ‘Very Useful’ with a further 37 (23%) finding it ‘Quite Useful’.

45. How does the quality of MCA webinar training compare to training you have accessed through other service providers?

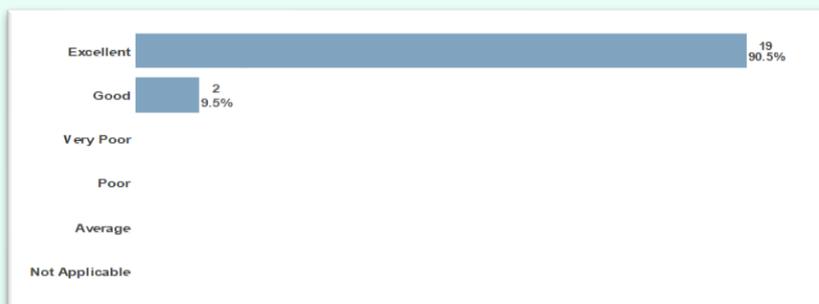


56 (35%) respondents felt that in comparison to other service providers the webinar training is of a ‘Much Higher Quality’, with 47 (30%) responding it is of a ‘Slightly Higher Quality’ and 39 (25%) responding it is ‘About the Same’.

International Conference Training

From the above analysis, 21 respondents said that they had received international conference training, responding to the individual follow up questions as shown:

46. How would you rate the quality of international conference training you have accessed?



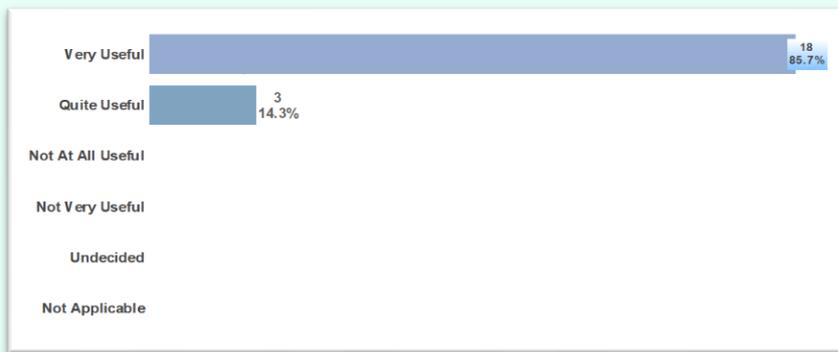
19 (90%) respondents rate the quality of international conference training as ‘Excellent’ with a further 2 (10%) rating it as ‘Good’.

47. How informative did you find the Centre’s international conference training?



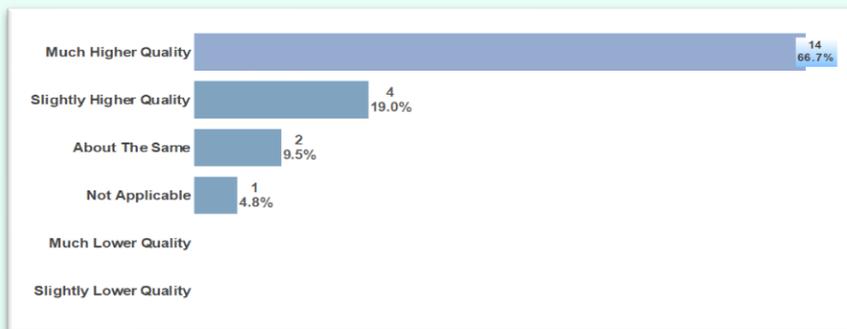
20 (95%) found the Centre’s international conference training ‘Very Informative’, with 1 (5%) finding it ‘Quite Informative’.

48. How useful have you found the international conference training you received in increasing your knowledge and expertise when working with/caring for autistic children and young people?



18 (86%) respondents found the international conference training ‘Very Useful’ with a further 3 (14%) finding it ‘Quite Useful’.

49. How does the quality of MCA international conference training compare to training you have accessed through other service providers?

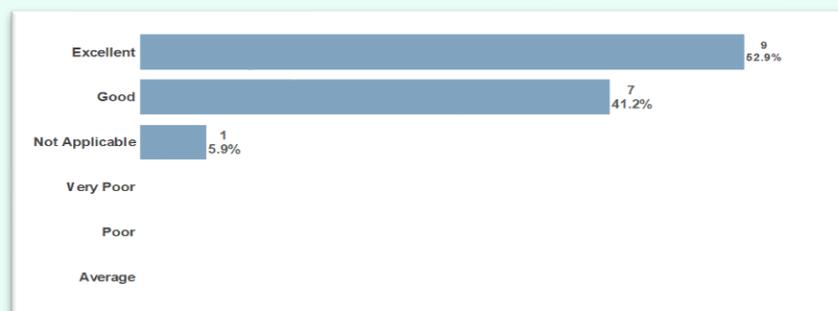


14 (67%) respondents felt that in comparison to other service providers the international conference training is of a ‘Much Higher Quality’, with 4 (19%) responding it is of a ‘Slightly Higher Quality’ and 2 (10%) responding it is ‘About the Same’.

Podcast Training

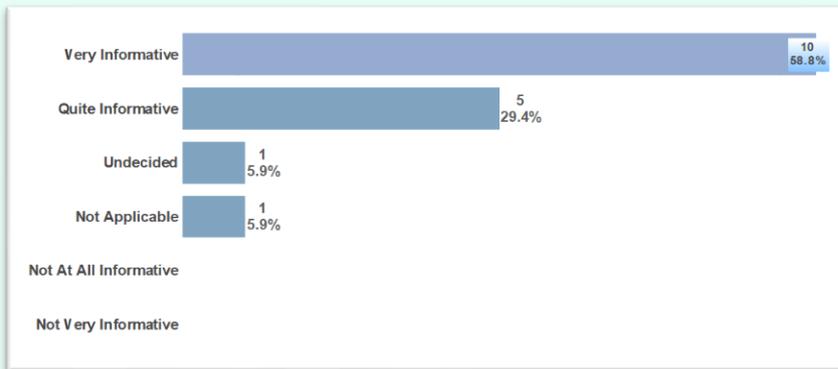
From the above analysis, 17 respondents said that they had received podcast training, responding to the individual follow up questions as shown:

50. How would you rate the quality of podcast training you have accessed?



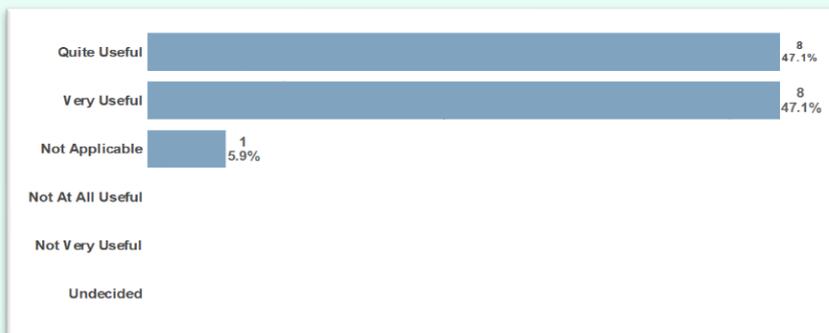
9 (53%) respondents rate the quality of podcast training as ‘Excellent’ with a further 7 (41%) rating it as ‘Good’.

51. How informative did you find the Centre's podcast training?



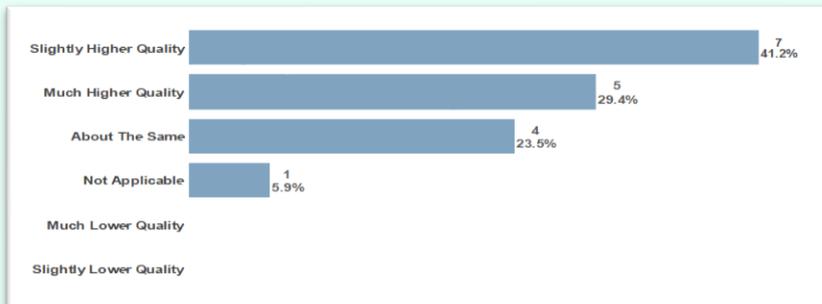
10 (59%) found the Centre's podcast training 'Very Informative', with 5 (29%) finding it 'Quite Informative'.

52. How useful have you found the podcast training you received in increasing your knowledge and expertise when working with/caring for autistic children and young people?



8 (47%) respondents found the podcast training 'Very Useful' with a further 8 (47%) finding it 'Quite Useful'.

53. How does the quality of MCA podcast training compare to training you have accessed through other service providers?



5 (29%) respondents felt that in comparison to other service providers the podcast training is of a 'Much Higher Quality', with 7 (41%) responding it is of a 'Slightly Higher Quality' and 4 (24%) responding it is 'About the Same'.

Training Service. Assessing the Impact of the Training Service.

54.234 Respondents stated above (table 1) that they had accessed the training service. Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with a series of statements.

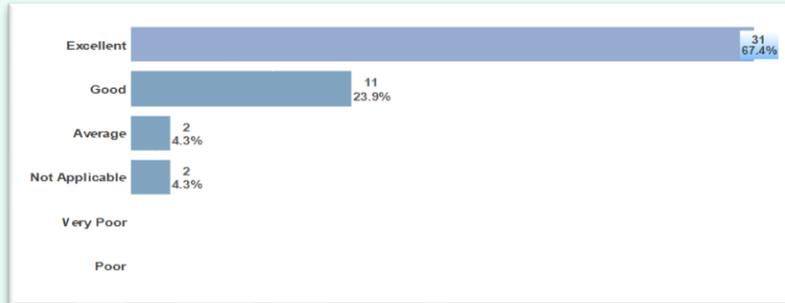
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	NA
I have developed new skills as a result of attending MCA training.	1 (<1%)	1 (<1%)	18 (8%)	112 (48%)	102 (44%)	0 (0%)
I have gained new knowledge as a result of attending MCA training.	1 (<1%)	0 (0%)	8 (3%)	95 (41%)	130 (56%)	0 (0%)
As a result of attending MCA training I have shared my learning with family and/or colleagues (i.e. building capacity across home and/or school).	1 (<1%)	3 (1%)	14 (6%)	108 (46%)	106 (45%)	2 (1%)
As a result of attending MCA training I feel more empowered and confident to offer support.	1 (<1%)	1 (<1%)	19 (8%)	102 (44%)	111 (47%)	0 (0%)
As a result of attending MCA training I have seen an overall improvement in the wellbeing of those I live or work with.	1 (<1%)	2 (1%)	50 (21%)	109 (47%)	69 (29%)	3 (1%)
As a result of attending MCA training I have seen a growth in independent life skills/academic work of those I live or work with.	1 (<1%)	1 (<1%)	57 (24%)	113 (8%)	57 (24%)	5 (2%)

Learning Support and Assessment – assessing the quality of the service and its impact.

Respondents were asked to think of the various aspects of Learning Support and Assessment they accessed from the Centre and take some time to read each of the statements/questions presented before completing their response.

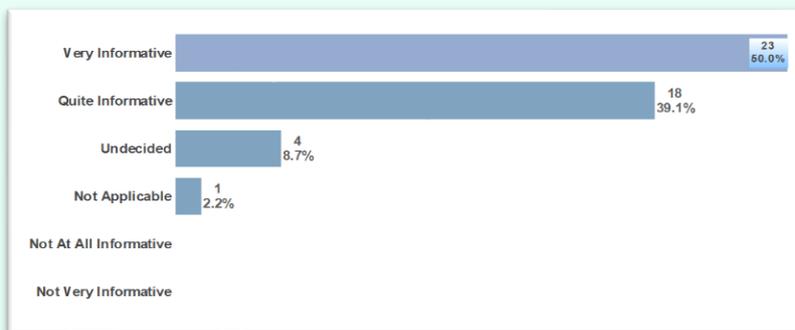
Individual Referral. From the above analysis, 46 respondents said that they had accessed an individual referral, responding to the individual follow up questions as shown:

55. How would you rate the quality of the LS&A (individual referral) you have accessed?



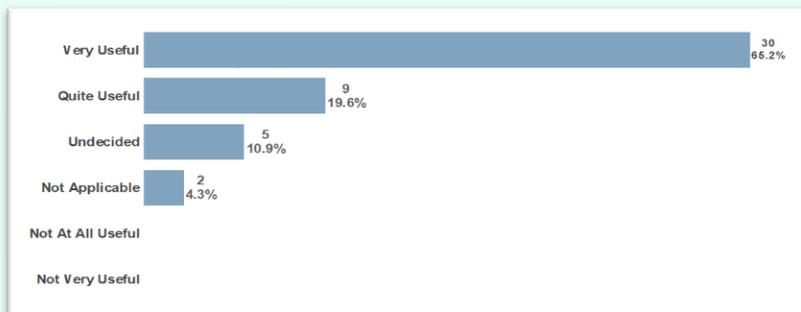
31 (67%) rated the individual referral service they accessed as 'Excellent' with a further 11 (24%) rating it as 'Good'.

56. How informative did you find the Centre's LS&A (individual referral) service?



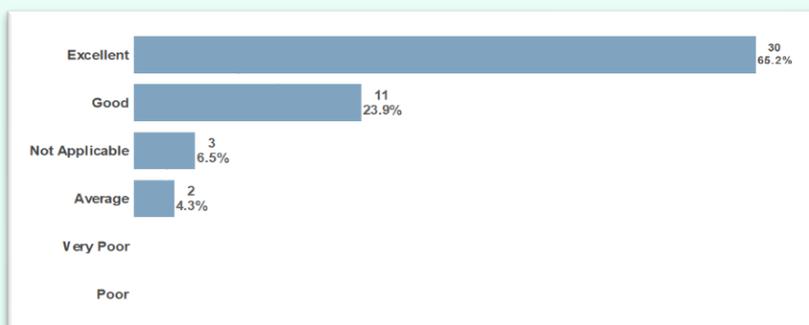
23 (50%) found the Centre's LS&A (individual referral) service 'Very Informative', with 18 (39%) finding it 'Quite Informative'.

57. How useful have you found the Centre's LS&A (individual referral) service in supporting you across home and/or school environments?



30 (65%) respondents found the LS&A (individual referral) service 'Very Useful' with a further 9 (20%) finding it 'Quite Useful'.

58. How would you rate the advice and guidance (individual referral) you received from the LS&A staff at the Centre?

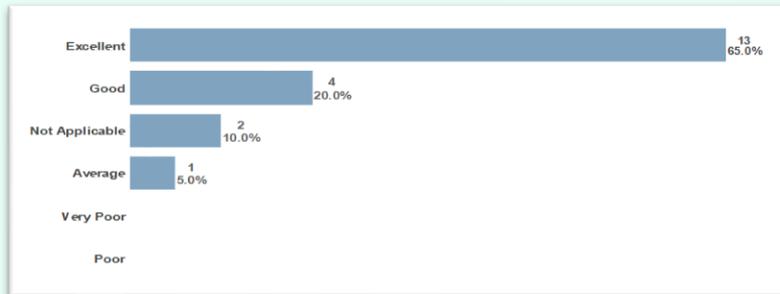


30 (65%) respondents rate the advice and guidance (individual referral) given as 'Excellent', with a further 11 (24%) rating it as 'Good'.

Whole School Referral

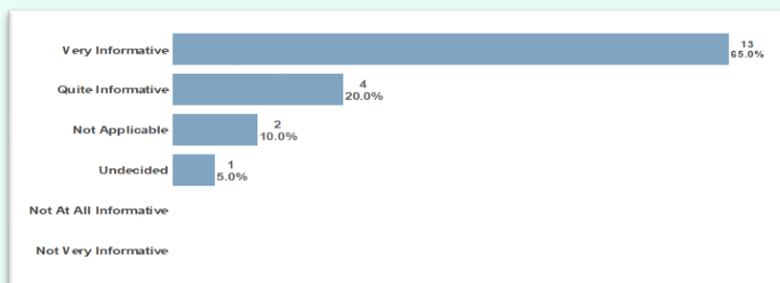
From the above analysis, 20 respondents said that they had accessed a whole school referral, responding to the individual follow up questions as shown:

59. How would you rate the quality of the LS&A (whole school referral) you have accessed?



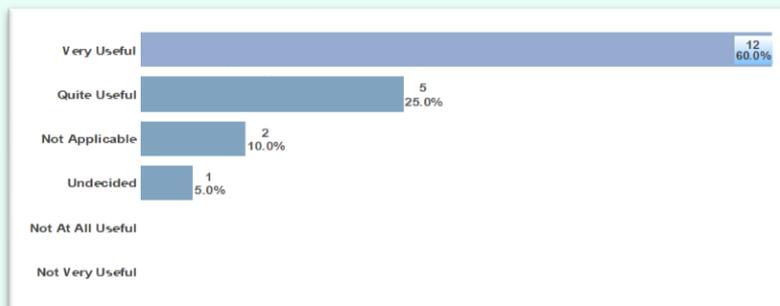
13 (65%) rated the whole school referral service they accessed as 'Excellent' with a further 4 (20%) rating it as 'Good'.

60. How informative did you find the Centre's LS&A (whole school referral) service?



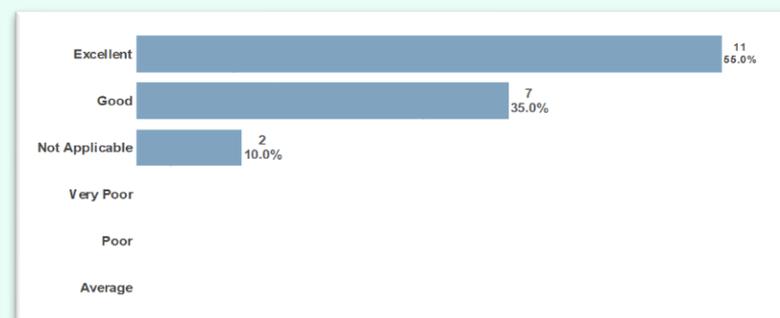
13 (65%) found the Centre's LS&A (whole school referral) service 'Very Informative', with 4 (20%) finding it 'Quite Informative'.

61. How useful have you found the Centre's LS&A (whole school referral) service in supporting you across home and/or school environments?



12 (60%) respondents found the LS&A (whole school referral) service 'Very Useful' with a further 5 (25%) finding it 'Quite Useful'.

62. How would you rate the advice and guidance (whole school referral) you received from the LS&A staff at the Centre?



11 (55%) respondents rate the advice and guidance (whole school referral) given as 'Excellent', with a further 7 (35%) rating it as 'Good'.

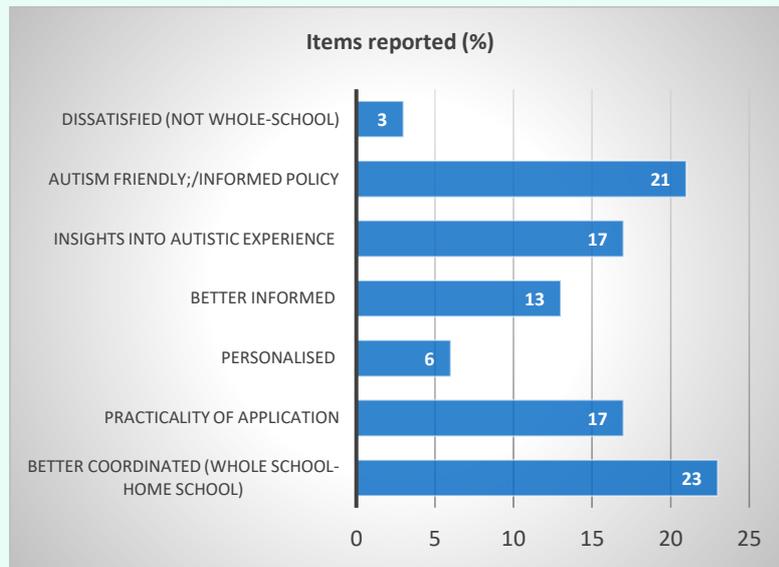
Assessing the Impact of the Learning Support and Assessment service (LS&A).

63. 56 Respondents stated above (table 1) that they had accessed the Learning Support and Assessment service. Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with a series of statements. **Before responding to the questions in relation to wellbeing and quality of life respondents were asked to consider their response in the context of wellbeing** (e.g. the nature of emotions/contentment) and **quality of life** (e.g. physical health, education, safety, environment, employment opportunities etc.).

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	NA
I have developed new skills as a result of accessing the LS&A service	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	5 (9%)	23 (41%)	23 (41%)	4 (7%)
I have gained new knowledge as a result of accessing the LS&A service	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	4 (7%)	22 (39%)	26 (46%)	3 (5%)
As a result of accessing LS&A services I have shared my learning with friends, family and/or colleagues (e.g. building capacity across home and/or school).	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	4 (7%)	20 (36%)	26 (46%)	5 (9%)
As a result of accessing LS&A services I feel more empowered and confident to support my needs or the needs of those I live or work with	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	4 (7%)	24 (43%)	24 (43%)	3 (5%)
As a result of accessing LS&A services I have seen an improvement in my wellbeing and quality of life or the wellbeing and quality of life of those I live or work with.	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	10 (18%)	24 (43%)	17 (30%)	4 (7%)
As a result of accessing LS&A services the children and young people I live and work with are more independent (e.g. life skills/academic work)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	8 (14%)	22 (39%)	22 (39%)	3 (5%)
As a result of accessing LS&A services participation in family/social life has improved .	0 (0%)	2 (4%)	15 (27%)	15 (27%)	15 (27%)	9 (16%)
As a result of accessing LS&A services my family's quality of life has improved	0 (0%)	3 (5%)	12 (21%)	15 (27%)	11 (20%)	15 (27%)
As a result of accessing LS&A services the wellbeing of other students within the class has improved.	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	10 (18%)	21 (38%)	17 (30%)	7 (13%)
As a result of accessing LS&A services there has been a beneficial impact on home/school relationships.	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	7 (13%)	24 (43%)	18 (32%)	6 (11%)

Thematic analysis.

64. Please provide an example/s of how the support you received from the MCA Learning Support and Assessment service has impacted your understanding of autism or autism practice within the home and/or school. Open question.



Respondents 15. Items reported 30.

“Whole school training was provided to his primary school & they continue to keep up the great advice given to them for my younger son.”

“I have developed more strategies for supporting autistic learners, particularly the use of visuals.”

“Support services were able to marry together the practices from home and school in a very all-encompassing and comprehensive manner”.

“The service provided was second to none..... The weekly meetings were invaluable as we got to share what was working and what we were having difficulty with. It demonstrated the importance of communication across all settings and using a consistent approach”.

“As all my colleagues didn't sign up. I feel that it would have a bigger impact if it was whole school training”.

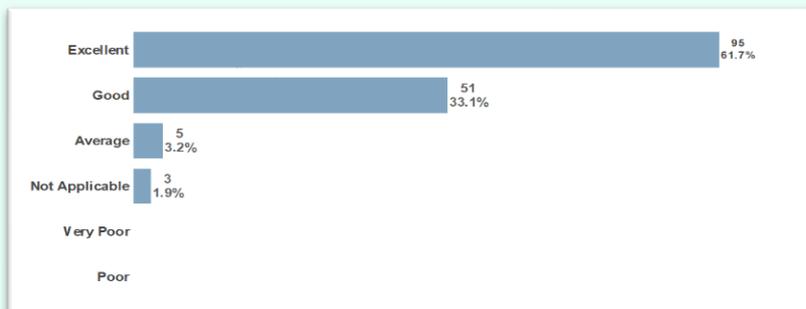
Research and Development Services – assessing the quality of service and its impact.

Respondents were asked to think of the various aspects of the Centre’s Research and Development services and take some time to read each of the statements/questions presented before completing their response.

Online Resources

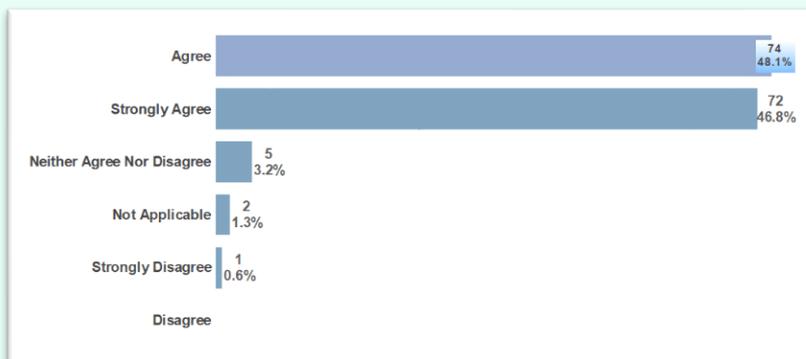
154 respondents said that they had accessed online resources. Thinking about the Centre’s online resources respondents were asked how they would rate the following statements.

65. The quality of the online resources (e.g. Teenage resource, Sensory Processing resource, Life skills resources etc) is?



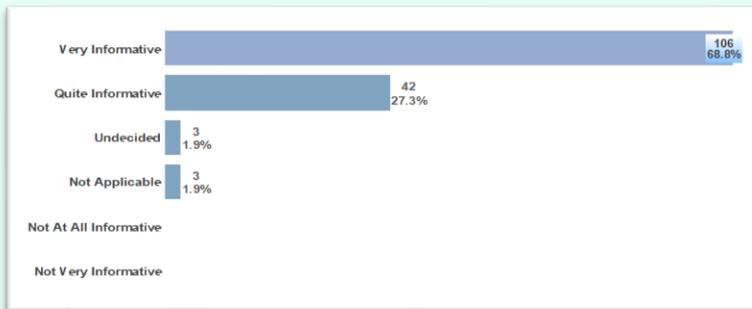
95 (62%) respondents rated the quality of online resources as ‘Excellent’ with a further 51 (33%) rating them ‘Good’.

66. I have gained new knowledge through the online resources.



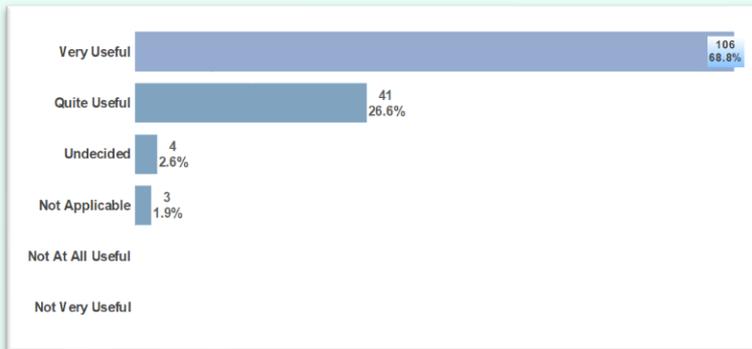
72 (47%) respondents ‘Strongly Agree’ with this statement, whilst a further 74 (48%) ‘Agree’.

67.How informative did you find the online resources?



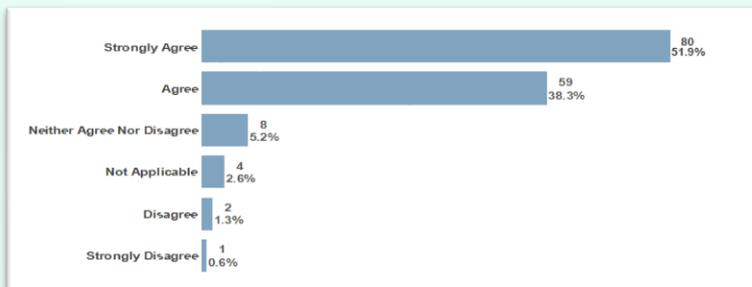
106 (69%) respondents found the online resources 'Very Informative' with 42 (27%) finding them 'Quite Informative'.

68.How useful have you found the Centre's online resources?



106 (69%) respondents found the Centre's online resources 'Very Useful', with 41 (27%) finding them 'Quite Useful'.

69.I have recommended or shared the online resources with colleagues, friends, family, my child's school/college (building capacity across home/school environments).

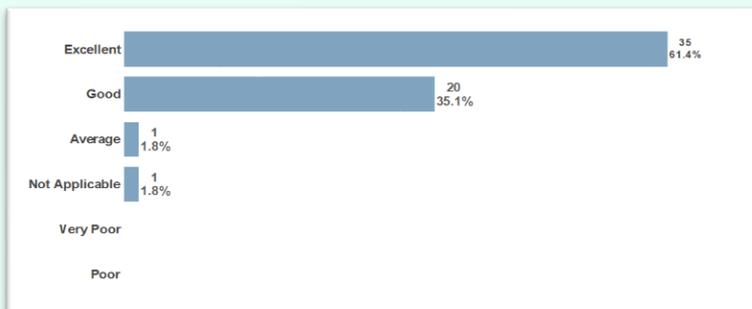


80 (52%) respondents 'Strongly Agree' with this statement, whilst 59 (38%) 'Agree'.

Online Research Bulletins

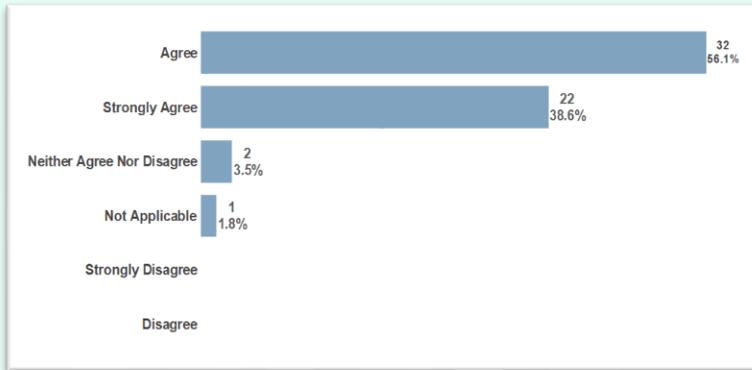
From the above analysis, 57 respondents said that they had accessed online research bulletins. Thinking about the Centre's online research bulletins respondents were asked how they would rate the following statements.

70.The quality of the online research bulletins is..?



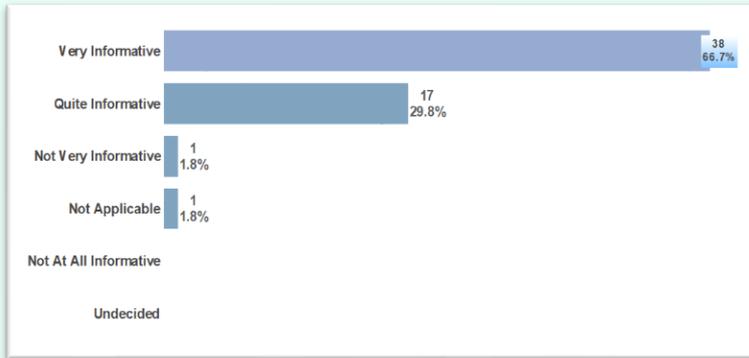
35 (61%) respondents rated the quality of online research bulletins as 'Excellent' with a further 20 (35%) rating them 'Good'.

71. I have gained new knowledge through the online research bulletins.



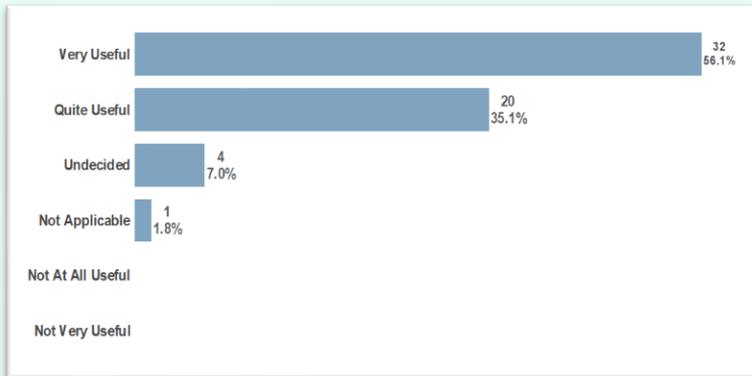
22 (39%) respondents 'Strongly Agree' with this statement, whilst a further 32 (56%) 'Agree'.

72. How informative did you find the online research bulletins?



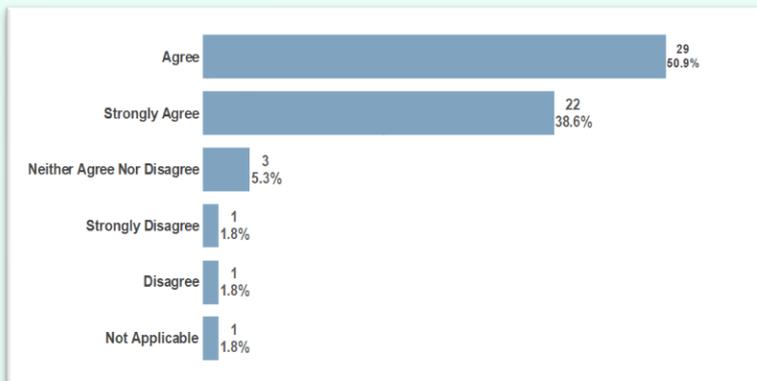
38 (67%) respondents found the online resources 'Very Informative' with 17 (30%) finding them 'Quite Informative'.

73. How useful have you found the Centre's online research bulletins?



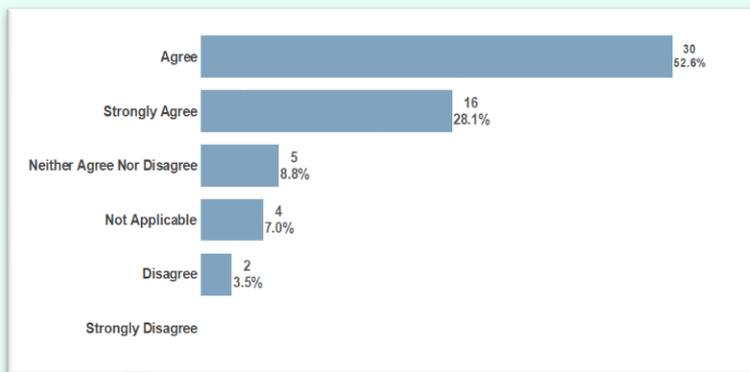
32 (56%) respondents found the Centre's online resources 'Very Useful', with 20 (35%) finding them 'Quite Useful'.

74. The online research bulletins are easy to read



22 (39%) respondents 'Strongly Agree' with this statement whilst a further 29 (51%) 'Agree'.

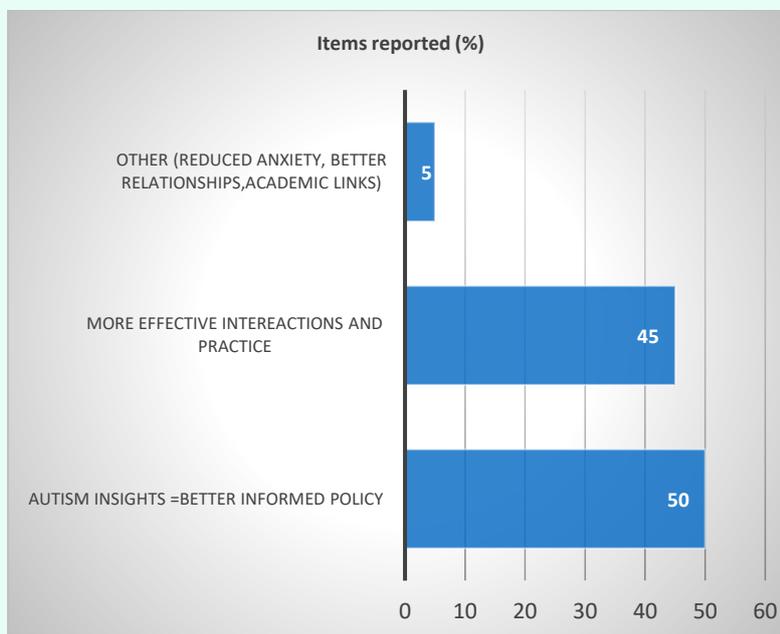
75. I have recommended or shared the online research bulletins with colleagues, friends, family, my child's school/college (building capacity across home/school environments).



16 (28%) respondents 'Strongly Agree' with this statement, whilst 30 (53%) 'Agree'.

Thematic analysis.

76. Please provide an example/s of how the Research and Development service research resources has impacted your understanding of autism or autism practice within the home and/or school. Open question.



Respondents 39. Items reported 56.

"It's always interesting to get new perspectives on autism to give a greater insight into the neuro diverse community".

"Our approach to how we react as parents to some of our son's behaviours have been changed for the better by reading and understanding the research and resources".

"It has helped me help other family members to understand my children, for them to see and learn about Autism and its impacts".

"I am a school governor and have used these resources to impact on the schools that I work with".

"Very helpful strategies on how to approach tasks given positive results within the primary schools years".

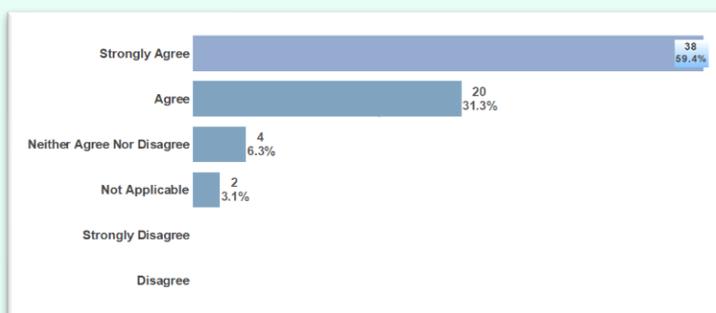
"The sensory processing resources have been amazing in helping me work with my pupils and the ideas provided have really increased regulation and all round happier pupils".

Advice and Guidance services – assessing the quality of the service and its impact.

Respondents were asked to think of the various aspects of the Centre's Advice and Guidance services and take some time to read each of the statements/questions presented before rating their response.

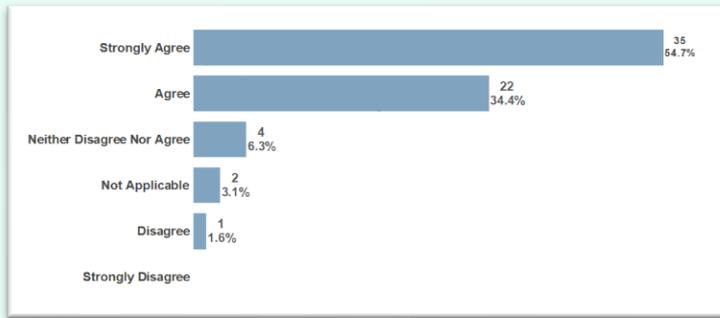
From the above analysis (table 1), 64 respondents said that they had accessed the Centre's Advice and Guidance services. Individual questions were asked as follows:

77. The advice and guidance service provided (through email and phone) by MCA staff is valuable.



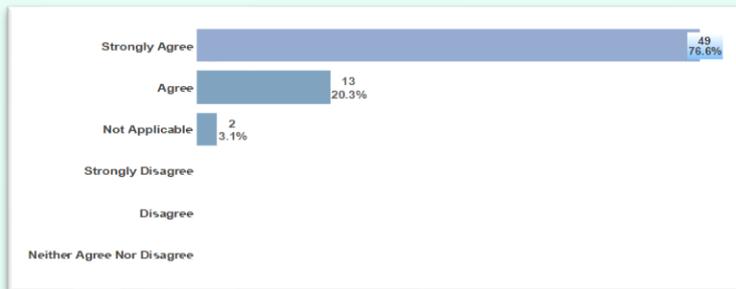
38 (59%) respondents 'Strongly Agree' and 20 (31%) 'Agree' with this statement.

78.I have gained new knowledge through accessing the advice and guidance service



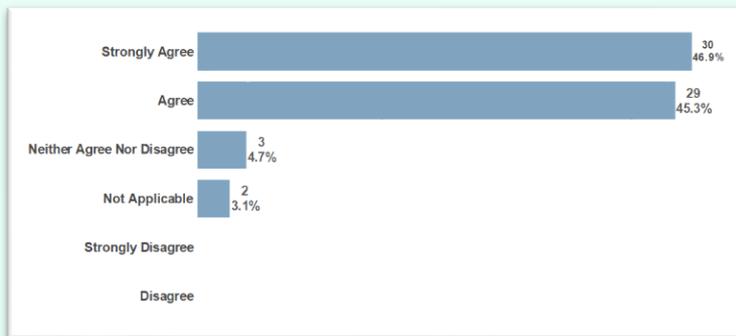
35 (55%) respondents 'Strongly Agree' and 22 (34%) 'Agree' with this statement.

79.The MCA staff was very knowledgeable.



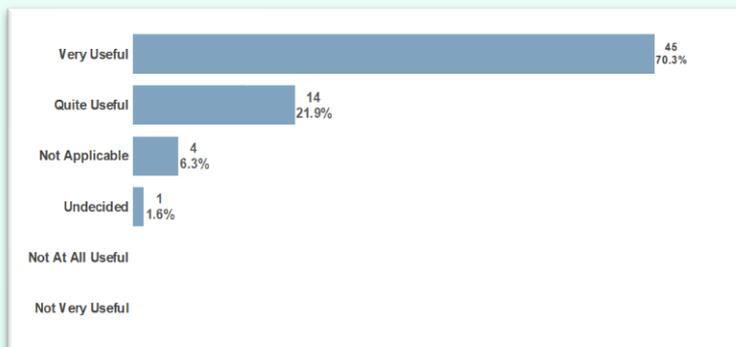
49 (77%) respondents 'Strongly Agree' and a further 13 (20%) 'Agree' with this statement.

80.I felt more empowered and confident to support my needs or the needs of my child or the children and young people with autism that I live or work with..



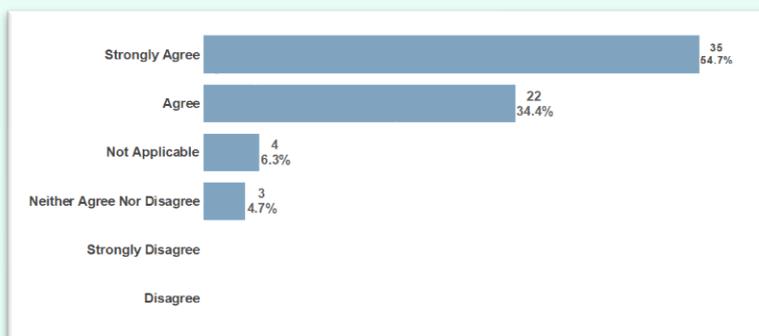
30 (47%) respondents 'Strongly Agree' and a further 29 (45%) 'Agree' with this statement.

81.How useful did you find the advice you were given through the advice and guidance service?



45 (70%) respondents found the advice and guidance given 'Very Useful' and a further 14 (22%) found it 'Quite Useful'.

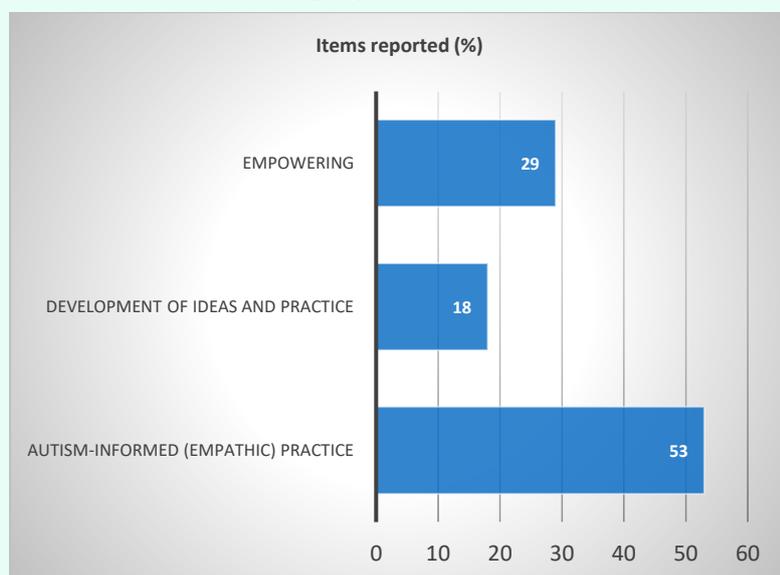
82. I have recommended or shared the knowledge and advice I gained through the advice and guidance service with colleagues, friends, family, my child's school/college (building capacity across home/school environments).



35 (55%) respondents 'Strongly Agree' with this statement, whilst 22 (34%) 'Agree'.

Thematic analysis.

83. Please provide an example/s of how the advice and guidance service has impacted your understanding of autism or autism practice within the home and/or school. Open question.



Respondents 15. Items reported 17.

"Middletown talked through a problem with me, before I couldn't think, and they gave me options. They gave me the power to deal with it instead of ignoring the problem".

".....the need to provide movement breaks during the school day".

"I understand more about our pupils' needs and how our school can meet those needs. I am better able to support my teachers, SNA staff and Bus Escorts".

"Have always found everyone to be very knowledgeable but unfortunately there isn't sufficient service delivery for parents in Southern Ireland. Would love to have had access to more assistance in the gap of no services in Southern Ireland. Also think the centre could really provide a more active role in Education of schools etc in Southern Ireland".

"This training along with our own nurturing ethos has given the pupils a positive experience".

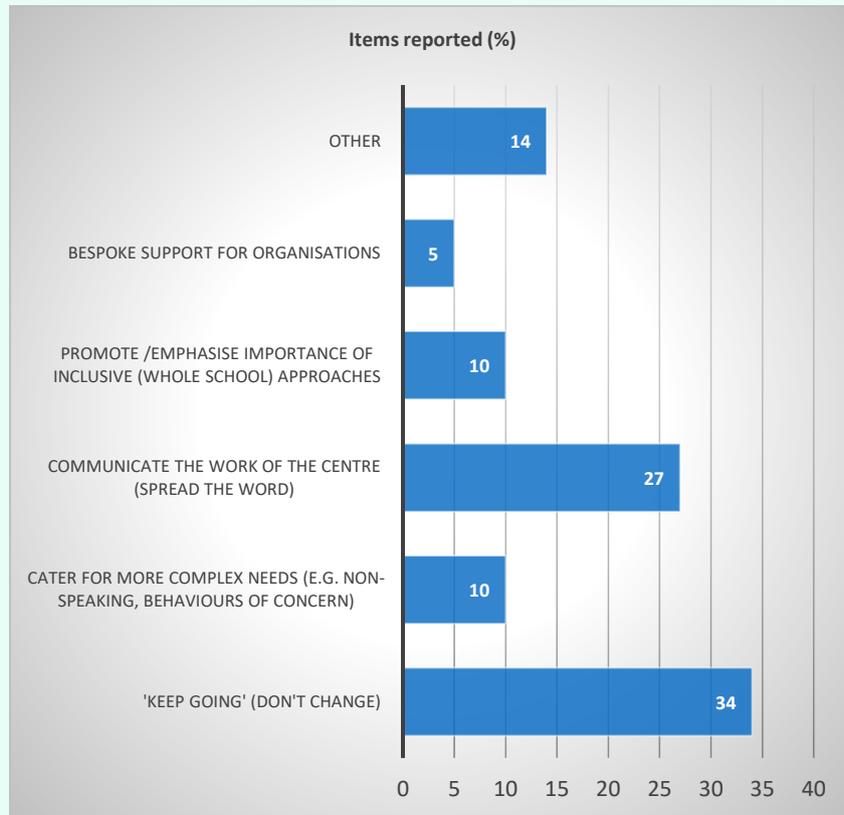
General questions about the Centre's services.

84. Respondents were asked to take some time reading the statements below before answering. (Based on all 278 respondents).

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	NA
MCA offers innovative services (e.g., online resources, online training, research bulletins, webinars, podcasts).	2 (1%)	1 (<1%)	26 (9%)	116 (42%)	132 (47%)	1 (<1%)
The Centre's social media platforms help keep me informed about the services the Centre provides	0 (0%)	4 (1%)	50 (18%)	92 (33%)	112 (40%)	20 (7%)
MCA is effective and timely in its delivery of services.	3 (1%)	2 (1%)	30 (11%)	121 (44%)	117 (42%)	5 (2%)
I would recommend MCA services to others.	2 (1%)	1 (0%)	13 (5%)	68 (24%)	189 (68%)	5 (2%)

Thematic analysis.

85. If you have any ideas how MCA services can further support the community of autistic learners, their families and educators please provide them. Open question.



Responses 56. Items reported 59.

"Keep doing the great job you're doing".

"I think that you should make training and resources accessible to anyone who is interested and this you will capture a greater range of professionals".

"...I'd love sustained school support - on site with everyone at the table SNA teacher, parents, principal, and SET - ongoing training".

"More access to in school advice, overview in schools or visits to access quality of service in the Republic of Ireland would be great, when Covid restrictions are lifted".

"You could work with cluster groups of schools to increase the overall impact of the whole-school work".

"Lobby to Government on behalf of the Autism community for change, highlight the lack of services within all our communities. Represent people with Autism at the Government table".

"I think when a child is diagnosed with ASD, Parents/ Guardians should receive information on MCA. Any organizations involved with ASD should also receive information about MCA and this should be passed on to Parents etc."

"Accessing courses is much more complicated than it should be....."

Other (inc. Lobbying, online courses, 'training+', research participation, clinical support to back up training, older and very young children, work with 'clusters' of schools, opportunities for sharing practice/networking)

.....ENDS.....