FAMILYKIND

Simply SEND Impact Report

June 2026

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Purpose of this Report

This report presents the findings from the Simply SEND pilot, delivered as part of FamilyKind's wider SEND Outreach Programme. Simply SEND provides one-to-one support for parents and carers navigating additional needs, SEND systems, school processes, referrals and wider concerns relating to their child's development, wellbeing or educational experience.

The purpose of this report is to evaluate the early impact of the pilot by bringing together formal feedback responses, testimonial evidence, post-support parent reflections and emerging thematic analysis. The report aims to explore not only whether parents found the support helpful, but what specifically families valued, what appeared to change as a result of support, and what the pilot suggests about the wider need for accessible, relational and practical SEND support within the community.

The report also seeks to identify recurring barriers experienced by families navigating SEND systems, including confusion around pathways, emotional overwhelm, difficulties accessing support and challenges engaging with professionals and services. In doing so, it aims to contribute towards a broader understanding of the role early, community-based intervention may play in supporting families before difficulties escalate further.

The findings within this report will be used to:

- evaluate the effectiveness of the pilot model
- inform future development of the SEND Outreach Programme
- support funding and partnership discussions
- identify emerging areas of unmet need
- and strengthen FamilyKind's evidence base regarding the experiences of families navigating SEND systems.

Executive Summary

Simply SEND was developed in response to increasing evidence that many parents and carers experience significant difficulties understanding SEND systems, navigating referral pathways and accessing timely, accessible and emotionally safe support.

The pilot findings suggest that families value support that is not only informative, but relational, personalised and grounded in genuine listening. Parents consistently described feeling overwhelmed, isolated or unsure how to move forward prior to accessing support. Several reflected on previous experiences of feeling dismissed, "fobbed off" or uncertain whether concerns would be taken seriously.

Across the pilot, parents repeatedly identified the relational nature of the support as central to its impact. Feedback frequently referenced feeling listened to, reassured, validated and emotionally safer following support. Families also described increased confidence understanding systems, preparing for meetings, requesting referrals and advocating for their child's needs.

The pilot generated consistently strong feedback across all evaluated areas. Parents described the support as calm, reassuring, accessible and personal. Several highlighted that complex

SEND systems and processes felt more manageable after support, particularly where they had previously experienced confusion or overwhelm.

Importantly, the evidence gathered suggests that Simply SEND is doing more than providing information or signposting. The pilot indicates emerging evidence of:

- increased parental confidence
- improved understanding of SEND systems and pathways
- reduced feelings of isolation and overwhelm
- improved advocacy capacity
- increased confidence engaging with professionals
- and greater clarity around next steps and available support.

One parent described successfully advocating for referral to a neurodevelopmental pathway following support, whilst also feeling more confident challenging assumptions around home and school presentation. Another reflected that the support received through Simply SEND felt "more productive and helpful than the last few months with the school."

A particularly strong theme throughout the pilot was the emotional burden families were carrying prior to support. Parents frequently described feeling exhausted, unheard or unsure who was responsible for helping their child. Several responses highlighted the emotional impact of navigating fragmented systems and repeatedly needing to advocate for recognition of concerns.

Overall, the findings suggest that Simply SEND provides a valuable early intervention model for families navigating additional needs and SEND-related concerns. The pilot demonstrates strong emerging evidence that accessible, relational and practical support can positively influence both parental confidence and families' ability to navigate complex systems more effectively.

The evidence gathered through the pilot supports further development and expansion of the service as part of FamilyKind's wider SEND Outreach Programme.

About the SEND Outreach Programme

The Simply SEND pilot formed part of FamilyKind's wider SEND Outreach Programme, which was developed in response to increasing concerns regarding the accessibility of support for families navigating additional needs and SEND-related systems.

The programme was designed around the recognition that many families experience significant emotional, practical and systemic barriers when attempting to access support for their child. Parents frequently describe feeling overwhelmed by processes, uncertain about referral pathways, unsure whether concerns are "serious enough", and isolated whilst attempting to advocate for their child's needs.

The SEND Outreach Programme was therefore developed to provide earlier, more accessible and more relational support for families before concerns escalated further.
The programme consists of three connected strands:

Unfiltered Parent Circle
Unfiltered Parent Circle provides informal community-based spaces for parents and carers to connect, share experiences and access peer support in a non-judgemental environment. Alongside reducing isolation, these sessions also support ongoing community listening and needs identification by providing insight into the lived experiences of families navigating SEND systems and additional needs.

Themes emerging through the Parent Circle significantly informed the development and focus of Simply SEND.

Simply SEND
Simply SEND provides targeted one-to-one support for parents and carers requiring more personalised guidance, reassurance and practical support.

The service supports families navigating:

- emerging concerns regarding additional needs
- school processes and meetings
- SEND systems and terminology
- referral pathways and neurodevelopment processes
- emotional overwhelm and uncertainty around next steps.

The pilot aimed to explore whether relational and practical support of this nature could positively influence parental confidence, understanding and ability to navigate systems more effectively.

Future Outreach Development
The wider SEND Outreach Programme also intends to develop outreach work with schools and community settings in future phases of delivery.

The longer-term aim of this work is to:

- strengthen early identification and early intervention
- improve communication between families and settings
- increase understanding of SEND and neurodivergence
- reduce escalation and crisis points
- and improve accessibility of support across the wider community.

The programme adopts a preventative and relational approach, recognising that many families require accessible guidance, emotional reassurance and practical navigation support long before statutory intervention thresholds are reached.

<u>About Simply SEND</u>
Simply SEND is a targeted 1:1 SEND support offer developed as part of FamilyKind's wider SEND Outreach Programme. The service was created in response to increasing evidence that many parents and carers experience significant difficulties navigating SEND systems, understanding referral pathways and accessing support that feels both accessible and emotionally safe.

The pilot was designed to provide families with a supportive and non-judgemental space where they could discuss concerns relating to their child's development, wellbeing, education and possible additional needs. Alongside practical guidance, the service also aimed to reduce feelings of overwhelm, confusion and isolation by helping parents feel more informed, reassured and confident about next steps.

Simply SEND was designed and delivered by a qualified SENDCo and teacher with over 11 years' experience working within education and SEND systems, including extensive experience supporting children, families and professionals across a range of additional needs and neurodevelopmental presentations. This professional background informed the development of the service, particularly the focus on accessible communication, relational practice, practical systems-navigation support and early intervention.

The service was intentionally designed to bridge the gap between professional knowledge and parent understanding, helping families feel more confident navigating often complex and overwhelming processes.

Support offered through Simply SEND included:

- discussing emerging concerns regarding additional needs
- understanding SEND systems and terminology
- support preparing for meetings with schools and professionals
- guidance around referrals and neurodevelopment pathways
- advocacy-style support and confidence building
- emotional reassurance and validation
- practical interpretation of reports, assessments and documentation
- helping parents understand school processes, thresholds and next steps.

The service intentionally adopted a relational and personalised approach. Rather than focusing solely on signposting or information giving, Simply SEND aimed to create emotionally safe and accessible support experiences that recognised the wider emotional impact SEND systems can have on families.

A significant number of parents accessing support described previous experiences of:

- feeling dismissed or "fobbed off"
- uncertainty around whether concerns would be taken seriously
- confusion around responsibilities between services
- difficulties understanding processes and thresholds
- emotional exhaustion associated with constant advocacy
- feeling overwhelmed by systems and professional language.

Several parents also described feeling isolated prior to support, particularly where their child's needs presented differently across settings or where concerns were not yet fully recognised within school environments.

The pilot therefore sought to explore:

- whether parents valued this type of support
- what aspects of the support felt most impactful

- whether support improved parental confidence and understanding
- whether families felt more emotionally supported and reassured
- and whether relational SEND support could positively influence families' ability to navigate systems more effectively.

Throughout delivery, Simply SEND prioritised:

- relational trust
- emotional safety
- accessibility
- practical guidance
- validation of lived experience
- collaborative problem-solving
- and clear, understandable communication.

The service formed part of FamilyKind's wider commitment to earlier, community-based and preventative support for families navigating additional needs and SEND-related concerns.

Pilot Evaluation Methodology

The Simply SEND pilot evaluation explored the early impact of relational 1:1 SEND support for parents and carers navigating additional needs and SEND systems. The evaluation aimed to understand not only whether parents found the support helpful, but what specifically families valued, what appeared to change following support and what emerging outcomes could be identified.

The findings within this report draw upon formal post-support feedback questionnaires, testimonial evidence, follow-up parent communication and reflective observations gathered throughout delivery. This included written feedback, emails, messages and voice notes shared by parents following support sessions.

The pilot included formal feedback responses alongside wider informal follow-up communication from families accessing support during the pilot period. Feedback explored areas including parents' understanding of SEND systems and next steps, confidence navigating support, experiences engaging with professionals and whether support made a positive difference for families.

Alongside scaled responses, parents were encouraged to provide open-ended reflections regarding their experiences. These responses were reviewed to identify recurring themes relating to emotional reassurance, confidence and advocacy, relational support, overwhelm and isolation, and understanding of SEND systems and processes.

Direct quotations have been included throughout the report to preserve authenticity of parent voice and ensure lived experience remains central to the findings.

As an early pilot evaluation, findings should be understood as emerging rather than definitive. However, the consistency of themes identified across both formal feedback and wider parent reflections suggests strong alignment regarding the value of accessible, relational and practical SEND support.

Participant Overview

The Simply SEND pilot supported families navigating a wide range of SEND-related concerns, including suspected neurodevelopmental differences, emotional wellbeing difficulties, school-based concerns, communication needs and challenges accessing appropriate support pathways.

Families accessing the pilot were at varying stages within their SEND journey. Some parents were beginning to explore emerging concerns regarding their child's development or behaviour, whilst others were already engaged in more complex processes involving schools, referrals, assessments or tribunal preparation.

Several parents described feeling uncertain about what support was available, unsure who held responsibility for helping their child or overwhelmed by the complexity of systems and processes. A number of families also reflected on previous experiences of feeling dismissed or not fully listened to when attempting to raise concerns with professionals.

The pilot included parents navigating:

- neurodevelopment pathway referrals
- communication and interaction concerns
- anxiety and emotional regulation difficulties
- school-based challenges and unmet need
- EHCP-related processes and meetings
- barriers accessing appropriate support
- and differences between home and school presentation.

A recurring theme across participant responses was the emotional impact SEND navigation was having on families prior to support. Parents frequently described feeling exhausted, isolated, overwhelmed or unsure how to move forward.

Several parents also highlighted the difficulties associated with advocating for children whose needs were not always immediately visible within educational settings. Concerns regarding masking, threshold-based responses and differing presentation across environments emerged repeatedly throughout feedback and follow-up communication.

Despite differences in presenting needs and circumstances, there was strong consistency across responses regarding what parents valued most from the support. Families repeatedly referenced:

- feeling listened to and understood
- clear and accessible explanations
- emotional reassurance
- practical next steps
- and increased confidence navigating systems and engaging with professionals.

The pilot therefore provided valuable insight not only into the range of needs families were navigating, but also into the types of support parents found most meaningful and impactful.

Headline Findings

The pilot generated consistently strong feedback across all evaluated areas, with parents repeatedly describing the support as welcoming, reassuring, accessible and genuinely supportive. Across both formal feedback responses and wider follow-up communication, families consistently referenced feeling more informed, more confident and less overwhelmed following support.

All respondents reported that sessions felt welcoming and emotionally safe. Parents frequently described feeling listened to, understood and reassured during sessions, often contrasting this with previous experiences of feeling dismissed, rushed or unsure whether concerns would be taken seriously.

Feedback also suggested that Simply SEND positively influenced parents' understanding of SEND systems, referral pathways and next steps. Several parents described previously feeling confused by processes or overwhelmed by professional language prior to accessing support. Following intervention, parents repeatedly referenced feeling clearer about what support was available and more confident navigating systems and engaging with professionals.

A particularly strong finding throughout the pilot was the importance of relational support. Parents consistently highlighted the value of:

- feeling genuinely listened to
- being able to speak openly without judgement
- having concerns validated
- and receiving support that felt personal rather than procedural.

One parent reflected:
"It felt personal."

Another stated:
"We finally felt listened to."

Parents also repeatedly described the support as helping them feel less isolated and more emotionally reassured during difficult periods navigating their child's needs and wider systems.

Several responses identified increased parental confidence as a significant outcome following support. Parents described feeling more confident:

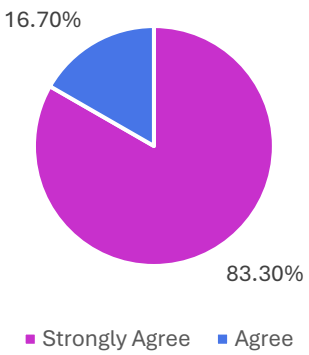
- preparing for meetings
- communicating concerns
- understanding processes
- requesting support
- and advocating for their child's needs.

One parent reflected:
"We finally felt we had a strong case."

Another described the support as:
"More productive and helpful than the last few months with the school."

Increased Confidence Following Support

Parent responses relating to increased confidence navigating SEND systems, understanding available support and advocating more effectively for their child following Simply SEND intervention. Responses reflected growing confidence communicating with professionals, preparing for meetings, requesting referrals, challenging decisions where appropriate and understanding next steps within often complex and overwhelming processes.



The pilot also generated evidence of practical systems-navigation impact. Parents described support helping them understand referral pathways, prepare for professional meetings and navigate complex SEND-related processes in ways that felt more manageable and accessible.

A particularly significant theme throughout feedback was the extent to which parents valued support that combined professional knowledge with emotional understanding. Families repeatedly referenced the calm, reassuring and relational nature of sessions alongside the practical guidance provided.

One parent reflected:
"Heather's calm, reassuring manner and her genuine care for SEND children made us feel safe straight away."

Another described the support as:
"She made manoeuvring through them accessible for us."

Overall, the pilot findings suggest that Simply SEND provided meaningful support for families navigating additional needs and SEND systems, particularly in relation to emotional reassurance, understanding of systems, parental confidence and advocacy capacity.

Quantitative Findings

The pilot generated consistently positive responses across all evaluated areas, with particularly strong outcomes relating to emotional safety, feeling listened to, parental confidence and understanding of SEND systems and next steps.

Evaluation Area	Positive Responses
Sessions felt welcoming and supportive	100%
Felt listened to and understood	100%
Felt safe sharing concerns	100%
Improved understanding of support and processes	100%
Support made a positive difference	100%
Increased confidence moving forward	Majority strongly agreed

The findings suggest that Simply SEND successfully created emotionally safe and supportive environments for families navigating often complex and overwhelming circumstances.

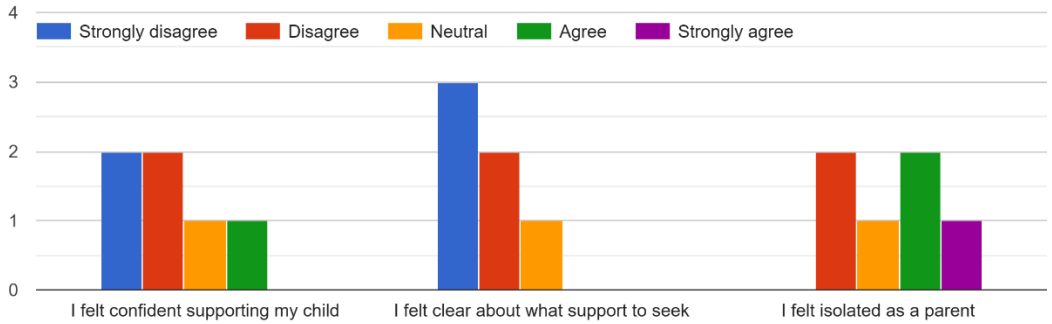
Parent Experience of Sessions

To better understand the impact of Simply SEND, parents were asked to reflect on their experiences both before and after receiving support. The findings demonstrate a clear shift in parental confidence, understanding and emotional reassurance following intervention.

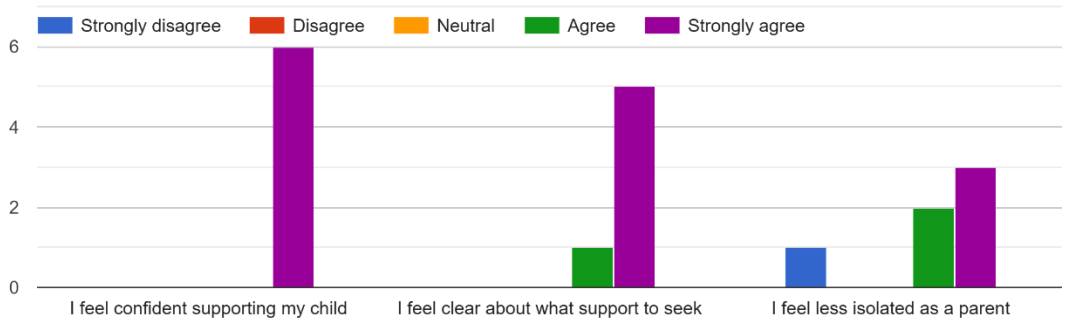
Before accessing Simply SEND, several parents described feeling uncertain about how to support their child, unclear about what support was available and emotionally isolated whilst navigating concerns and systems. Responses suggested that many families were attempting to manage complex situations without feeling fully informed, reassured or supported.

Following support, responses demonstrated significant positive movement across all evaluated areas. Parents reported feeling more confident supporting their child, clearer about available support and less isolated navigating concerns and processes.

Thinking about your experience before Simply SEND, please rate the statements below.



Thinking about your experience after Simply SEND, please rate the statements below.



The comparison between pre- and post-support responses suggests that Simply SEND positively influenced both parents' emotional experiences and their confidence navigating systems and next steps.

A particularly notable shift was seen in parents' confidence understanding what support to seek for their child. Prior to intervention, several parents reported uncertainty and confusion regarding pathways, referrals and available support. Following support, all respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they felt clearer about next steps and available support options. Parents also reported increased confidence supporting their child following intervention. Feedback suggests that support helped families feel more informed, reassured and better equipped to advocate for their child's needs.

In addition, post-support responses indicated a reduction in feelings of isolation. Several parents reflected that simply having space to speak openly with somebody who understood both SEND systems and the emotional realities of parenting a child with additional needs had a significant positive impact.

One parent reflected:
"We finally felt listened to."

Another described the support as:
"It felt personal."

The findings suggest that the relational nature of the intervention, alongside practical guidance and accessible communication, contributed significantly to the positive changes reported by families following support.

Feeling Listened To and Understood

Feedback relating to feeling listened to and understood was one of the strongest and most consistent findings across the pilot evaluation. All respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they felt listened to throughout support sessions, with the majority selecting "strongly agree".

The strength and consistency of responses in this area suggests that relational trust and emotional safety formed a significant part of the intervention's impact. Parents repeatedly described previous experiences of feeling dismissed, rushed, uncertain whether concerns would be taken seriously or unsure where they could openly discuss worries regarding their child.

In contrast, post-support responses consistently reflected feelings of reassurance, validation and emotional safety. Several parents specifically referenced the importance of having space to openly discuss concerns with somebody who not only understood SEND systems professionally, but who also understood the wider emotional impact navigating those systems can have on families.

One parent reflected:
"Heather really listened to us and didn't rush us or make us feel silly for worrying."

Another stated:
"We felt like she genuinely cared about our children and about us as parents."

A recurring theme across qualitative responses was the difference parents experienced between Simply SEND and previous interactions with wider systems and services. Several parents contrasted feeling listened to within sessions against prior experiences of feeling "fobbed off", dismissed or repeatedly redirected between professionals and services.

This theme was particularly evident within follow-up parent reflections, where families described feeling more confident raising concerns, communicating with professionals and advocating for their child following support.

One parent described entering a meeting with school feeling significantly more prepared and confident following intervention, stating:

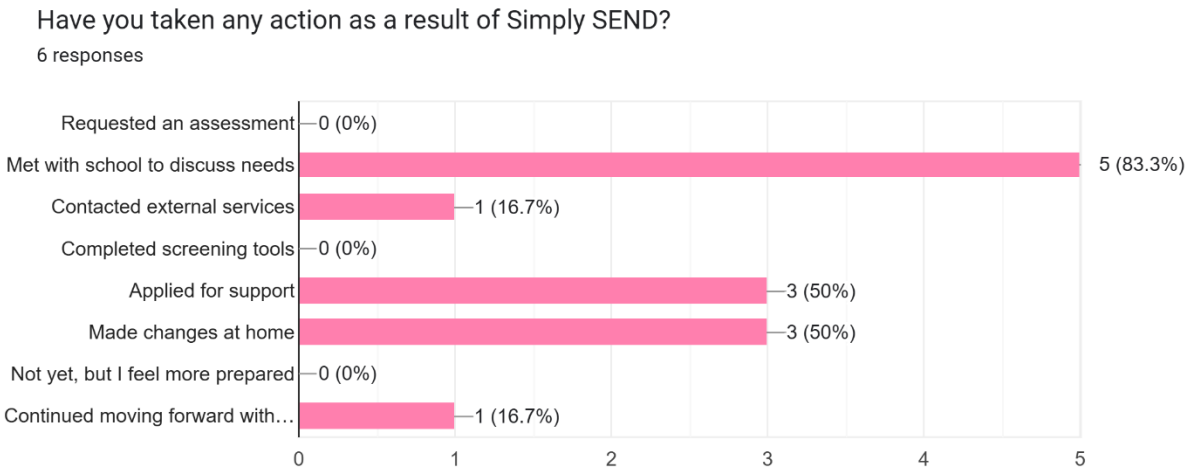
One parent described entering a meeting with school feeling significantly more prepared and confident following intervention, stating:
"Just because she's managing well at school does not mean that we don't have issues at home."

The parent later reflected:
"Someone needs to take responsibility for her."

These reflections suggest that feeling listened to was not simply associated with emotional reassurance, but also appeared to contribute towards increased parental confidence, stronger advocacy and greater willingness to challenge assumptions and persist within systems.

The findings indicate that relational support was not secondary to the intervention but instead appears to have formed a central mechanism through which families felt more empowered, informed and emotionally supported navigating SEND-related concerns.

Increased Confidence Following Support
Responses demonstrated strong improvements in parental confidence following support. Parents reported increased confidence navigating SEND systems, understanding available support and advocating more effectively for their child following intervention.



Feedback particularly referenced increased confidence:

- communicating with professionals
- preparing for meetings
- understanding referrals and pathways
- requesting support
- and articulating concerns more clearly.

One parent reflected:
"We finally felt we had a strong case."

Another described feeling:
"More confident supporting my child."

A particularly significant finding was the extent to which support appeared to influence parents' confidence challenging assumptions and navigating difficult professional conversations.

Overall Positive Impact

The pilot generated overwhelmingly positive feedback, with 100% of respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing that Simply SEND had made a positive difference for their family. The majority of respondents selected "strongly agree", suggesting that the support was not only valued, but perceived as having a meaningful impact on both their understanding of SEND systems and their ability to navigate them effectively.

Parents consistently described the support as practical, accessible and emotionally supportive. Feedback indicated that the intervention helped families move from a position of uncertainty and overwhelm towards greater confidence, clarity and reassurance. Several parents reflected that prior to accessing support they had felt unsure where to turn, confused by processes or exhausted by the need to continually advocate for their child.

A recurring theme throughout responses was that Simply SEND helped make complex systems feel more manageable. Parents frequently referenced gaining a clearer understanding of referral pathways, school processes, professional roles and available support options. This appeared to reduce anxiety and increase confidence when engaging with professionals and making decisions regarding their child's needs.

> **"From the very first meeting, Heather gave us her full attention. She really listened to everything we were saying without interrupting or dismissing our concerns. We never felt rushed. She acknowledged how anxious and overwhelmed we were and validated those feelings, which meant a great deal during such a stressful time."**

> **"The support given was really helpful. I have had concerns about my daughter for a couple of years and the conversation I had made me feel like I was being listened to at last. The report provided was really in depth and provided information that was easy to understand."**

> Heather was lovely, listened to every concern I had

> From the first conversation, we just felt heard. Heather really listened to us and didn't rush us or make us feel silly for worrying. It felt like she genuinely cared about our children and about us as parents.

> It felt like the first time someone has truly listened to our concerns and validated them.

Beyond practical outcomes, feedback suggests that Simply SEND also had a significant emotional impact. Several parents described feeling less isolated following support, with many reflecting that having a dedicated space to discuss concerns with somebody who understood SEND systems reduced feelings of overwhelm and uncertainty.

This was particularly evident within follow-up communication from parents who continued to engage with schools and services after their sessions. One parent described attending a meeting with school feeling significantly more prepared and confident, successfully advocating for referral to a neurodevelopmental pathway and challenging assumptions around their child's presentation.

The parent reflected: "I'm sick of being fobbed off." Before going on to explain how they felt more able to challenge decisions and communicate concerns following support.

The consistency of positive responses across both formal feedback and follow-up communication suggests that the impact of Simply SEND extends beyond satisfaction with the service itself. The evidence indicates that support contributed towards increased parental confidence, improved understanding of systems, stronger advocacy skills and greater emotional reassurance during what is often a highly stressful period for families.

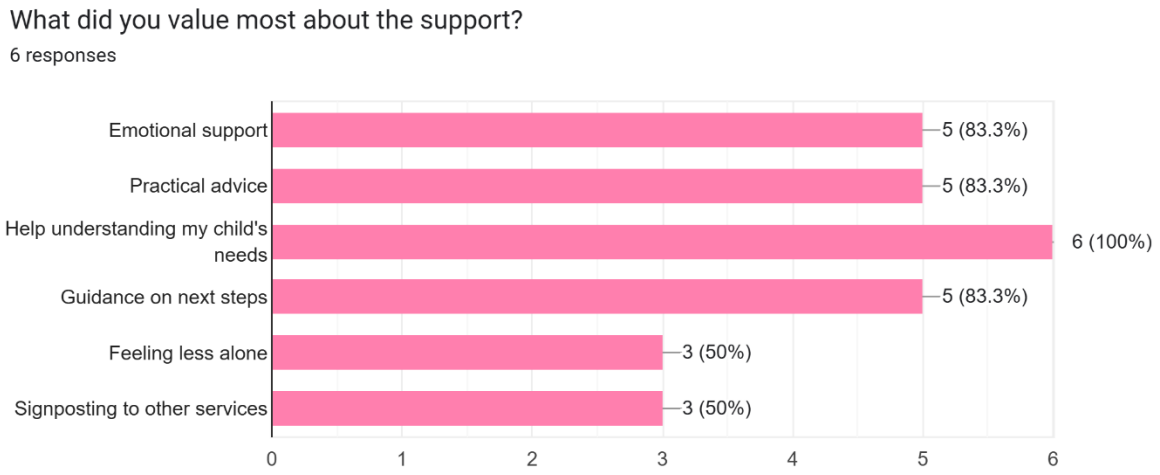
Taken together, these findings suggest that relatively low-level, early intervention support can have a significant impact on families' ability to navigate SEND systems effectively. The pilot demonstrates strong emerging evidence that accessible, relational and practical support can help families feel better equipped, better informed and more confident moving forward.

What Parents Valued Most

Analysis of parent feedback identified several recurring themes regarding what families valued most about the support they received through Simply SEND. Whilst practical guidance and SEND knowledge were consistently referenced, the findings suggest that the most valued aspects of the service extended beyond information sharing alone.

A particularly strong theme throughout the pilot was the value parents placed on receiving support from somebody who combined professional expertise with genuine understanding and compassion. Parents repeatedly described the importance of being able to discuss concerns

openly with somebody who understood SEND systems, whilst also recognising the emotional impact navigating those systems can have on families.



Several parents reflected that the support felt different from previous experiences they had encountered elsewhere. Rather than receiving generic advice or being signposted elsewhere, families described receiving personalised guidance that was relevant to their specific circumstances and concerns.

One parent reflected:
“This was not generic advice.”

Another stated:
“She made manoeuvring through them accessible for us.”

A second key theme related to accessibility. Parents frequently described SEND systems, referral pathways and educational processes as complex, overwhelming and difficult to navigate. Feedback suggests that families particularly valued support that translated professional language, clarified processes and helped them understand realistic next steps.

Many parents also highlighted the importance of emotional reassurance. Several described accessing support during periods of significant stress, uncertainty or frustration. In these instances, the opportunity to speak openly, have concerns validated and feel genuinely listened to appeared to be just as important as the practical guidance provided.

The findings suggest that parents valued support that was both relational and practical. Rather than viewing emotional reassurance and professional expertise as separate elements, feedback indicates that it was the combination of these factors that made the support particularly impactful.

Across the pilot, parents consistently valued:

- feeling listened to and understood
- receiving personalised rather than generic advice
- clear explanations of complex systems and processes
- practical guidance and realistic next steps
- emotional reassurance during periods of uncertainty

- support navigating meetings, referrals and professional conversations
- increased confidence advocating for their child.

Taken together, the findings suggest that families are not simply seeking information. They are seeking trusted support that helps them understand systems, make informed decisions and feel more confident navigating what can often be a complex and emotionally demanding journey.

Emerging Outcomes

Whilst the pilot was relatively small in scale, the consistency of responses across both formal feedback and wider parent reflections suggests several clear emerging outcomes associated with the Simply SEND model.

Across the pilot, parents consistently reported increased confidence navigating SEND systems and processes. Families described feeling clearer about available support, more confident engaging with professionals and better equipped to advocate for their child's needs.

Feedback also suggests that Simply SEND contributed towards improved understanding of referral pathways, educational processes and the wider SEND landscape. Several parents reflected that support helped make complex systems feel more accessible and manageable, reducing uncertainty and helping them identify appropriate next steps.

A further outcome identified throughout the pilot was increased parental advocacy capacity. Parents described feeling more confident attending meetings, challenging decisions where appropriate and articulating concerns regarding their child's needs. This was particularly evident within follow-up communication, where families described applying knowledge and strategies discussed during support sessions to real-life interactions with schools and services. The findings also indicate a significant emotional impact. Parents frequently referenced feeling reassured, validated and less isolated following support. For many families, the opportunity to discuss concerns openly with somebody who understood both SEND systems and the realities of parenting a child with additional needs appeared to reduce feelings of overwhelm and uncertainty.

Taken together, the pilot suggests that Simply SEND may contribute towards:

- increased parental confidence
- improved understanding of SEND systems and processes
- stronger parental advocacy and engagement with professionals
- reduced feelings of isolation and overwhelm
- improved confidence making decisions regarding support
- greater clarity around next steps and available pathways
- increased capacity to navigate complex systems effectively.

Although further evaluation is required as delivery expands, the consistency of positive responses across all evaluated areas provides strong early evidence supporting the value of accessible, relational and practical SEND support for families navigating additional needs and SEND-related systems.

Impact Beyond Satisfaction

Whilst levels of parent satisfaction were exceptionally high throughout the pilot, the findings suggest that the impact of Simply SEND extended beyond positive perceptions of the service itself.

Evidence gathered through feedback, testimonials and post-support communication indicates that support influenced parents' confidence, advocacy skills and ability to engage more effectively with professionals and systems. Several parents described applying knowledge and strategies discussed during sessions within meetings, referral processes and conversations with schools and services.

A recurring theme throughout the pilot was increased parental confidence advocating for their child. Parents reported feeling better equipped to articulate concerns, challenge assumptions and navigate complex processes that had previously felt overwhelming or inaccessible.

One parent described attending a meeting with their child's school following support and successfully advocating for referral to a neurodevelopmental pathway. Despite initially being informed that concerns were not evident within school, the parent felt confident challenging this position and communicating the significant difficulties being experienced at home.

> The parent reflected:
> "Just because she's managing well at school does not mean that we don't have issues at home."

Several parents also reported increased understanding of SEND systems and available support pathways, helping them make more informed decisions and identify appropriate next steps for their child.

Importantly, the findings suggest that Simply SEND may contribute to earlier intervention by increasing parents' confidence raising concerns and seeking support before difficulties escalate further.

Taken together, the evidence indicates that the impact of the pilot was not limited to emotional reassurance or satisfaction with the service. Instead, Simply SEND appears to have increased parents' capacity to navigate systems, advocate effectively and engage with professionals in ways that may improve outcomes for children and families.

Case Study Reflection: Increased Confidence, Advocacy and System Navigation

One of the strongest indicators of impact emerging from the pilot was the extent to which support appeared to influence parents' confidence engaging with schools and wider SEND systems.

Following support through Simply SEND, one parent provided a detailed reflection regarding a meeting with their child's school SENCo. Prior to the meeting, the parent had experienced ongoing frustration attempting to access support and secure recognition of concerns relating to their child's presentation outside of school.

The parent described feeling repeatedly redirected between education and health services, with responsibility for support appearing unclear.

Following support, the parent attended a meeting with school and successfully:

- requested referral to a neurodevelopmental pathway
- articulated concerns regarding anxiety, meltdowns and home presentation
- challenged assumptions based solely on school presentation
- advocated for earlier intervention rather than waiting for difficulties to escalate
- secured agreement for pathway referral and ongoing monitoring.

A particularly significant aspect of this case was the parent's increased confidence discussing masking and differing presentation across settings.

The parent reflected:
"Just because she's managing well at school does not mean that we don't have issues at home."

The parent also described growing frustration regarding responsibility being passed between services, stating:
"Someone needs to take responsibility for her."

Whilst challenges remained, the parent reported feeling significantly better equipped to communicate concerns, challenge assumptions and advocate for their child following support. This case study illustrates how relatively early, low-level intervention can help families develop the confidence, understanding and advocacy skills required to navigate increasingly complex systems.

Rather than simply providing information, the support appeared to increase the parent's capacity to engage effectively with professionals and secure appropriate next steps for their child.

Strategic Relevance

The findings from the Simply SEND pilot align closely with both local concerns identified through FamilyKind's parent listening activity and wider national challenges within the SEND system.

Across FamilyKind's parent listening questionnaires, families consistently reported uncertainty around available support, confusion regarding referral pathways, difficulties accessing timely intervention and feelings of isolation whilst navigating their child's needs. Many parents described spending significant amounts of time attempting to understand complex systems and determine who was responsible for providing support.

These findings mirror concerns identified nationally. The SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan highlights the complexity of the current system, inconsistency of support and increasing levels of parental frustration when attempting to access appropriate provision. Families frequently report needing to repeatedly explain concerns, navigate multiple agencies and advocate persistently in order to secure support for their child.

A particularly strong theme emerging from both the pilot and wider listening activity relates to parental advocacy fatigue. Parents frequently described feeling responsible for coordinating information between services, chasing referrals, interpreting professional advice and challenging decisions. Several parents used phrases such as "fobbed off", "dismissed" and "passed from service to service" when describing their experiences.

The pilot also highlighted challenges relating to children whose needs present differently across settings. Parents frequently described concerns regarding masking, differing home and school presentations and difficulties securing recognition of needs where children appeared to be coping within educational environments. These experiences are increasingly recognised within wider SEND research and are frequently reported by families navigating neurodevelopmental pathways.

Importantly, many families accessing Simply SEND had not yet reached statutory thresholds for support. Despite this, parents were often experiencing significant uncertainty, stress and difficulty navigating available systems. This suggests an ongoing gap between the point at which families first identify concerns and the point at which meaningful support becomes available.

The findings therefore support the need for accessible early intervention and community-based support offers that sit between universal services and statutory provision. Simply SEND appears to help bridge this gap by providing trusted guidance, practical support and emotional reassurance at a stage where many families would otherwise be left to navigate systems independently.

The pilot further suggests that relatively low-cost, preventative interventions can help build parental confidence, improve understanding of systems and increase families' ability to engage effectively with schools, health services and wider support networks. As pressures across education, health and SEND services continue to increase, community-based support models such as Simply SEND may play an important role in reducing escalation and supporting families earlier in their journey.

Strategic Recommendations and Future Development

The findings from the pilot provide strong early evidence supporting the continued development of Simply SEND as part of FamilyKind's wider SEND Outreach Programme.

Based on the evidence gathered, several recommendations emerge.

Continue and Expand Delivery

Feedback suggests strong demand for accessible 1:1 SEND support delivered within community settings. Future delivery should seek to increase capacity and reach more families experiencing uncertainty, isolation or difficulties navigating SEND systems.

Strengthen Early Intervention Pathways

Many parents accessed support before formal identification processes had begun. Future delivery should continue focusing on early intervention and supporting families at the earliest possible stage of concern.

Develop Stronger Community Referral Routes
Opportunities exist to strengthen referral pathways from:

- schools
- early years settings
- community organisations
- family support services
- health professionals.

This would help ensure families access support earlier and more consistently.

Expand Community-Based SEND Support
The pilot suggests that practical SEND guidance combined with emotional reassurance provides significant value for families. Future development should continue prioritising relational, community-based approaches rather than solely information-led interventions.

Continue Building the Evidence Base
As delivery expands, ongoing evaluation should continue gathering:

- quantitative outcome data
- qualitative feedback
- case studies
- longitudinal follow-up evidence.

This will strengthen understanding of both immediate and longer-term impact.

Conclusion

The Simply SEND pilot has provided strong early evidence regarding the value of accessible, relational and practical SEND support for families navigating additional needs and SEND-related systems.

Across the pilot, parents consistently described feeling more informed, more confident and better equipped to navigate support following intervention. Families reported increased understanding of systems and processes, improved confidence engaging with professionals and reduced feelings of isolation and overwhelm.

Perhaps most significantly, the findings suggest that the impact of Simply SEND extends beyond information sharing alone. Parents repeatedly identified the importance of feeling listened to, understood and supported by somebody who combined professional expertise with genuine compassion and understanding.

The pilot demonstrates that relatively low-level intervention can produce meaningful outcomes for families, particularly in relation to confidence, advocacy, understanding and emotional wellbeing.

Whilst further evaluation is required as delivery expands, the consistency of positive feedback across all areas suggests strong potential for the continued development of Simply SEND as part of FamilyKind's wider SEND Outreach Programme.

The findings indicate that families do not simply need information. They need trusted support that helps them understand complex systems, advocate effectively for their children and feel less alone whilst doing so. Simply SEND appears to provide exactly that.