**Parent Carers' Information Needs Survey 2021 – Executive Summary**

Parent carers are **using Amaze as a source of information** and advice on SEND issues (82% of the respondents to our survey had used Amaze for information) AND they **value our information highly**. 56% said they would go to our website for SEND info (scoring more highly than both Google and friends/support groups at 51% and 54% respectively) and 25% would go to our helpline.

Most parent carers surveyed (76%) like to get their SEND information by **reading it online** with around 50% also choosing to get info from another person or read stuff in print.

Parent carers most popular way to get information from Amaze was **via our website** (78%), followed by our (**helpline** 61%) and **newsletter** (46%). Despite our concerns, it appears that the vast majority of our newsletter subscribers are receiving the newsletter (92%) to their inbox and all those who responded said they read it either sometimes or always.

Most parent carers are also **using social media regularly** (93%), with Facebook being far and away the most preferred channel of those users generally (96%) and the most used of Amaze’s social media channels (95%). Instagram and Youtube are the only other channels with significant usage generally (44% and 34% respectively) though usage of these Amaze channels is much less.

Parent carers told us that they had most needed SEND information during the **assessment/diagnosis** process and whilst trying to get the right **support at school or college**. However, their needs for information were fairly evenly spread across the whole parenting journey.

Parents carers told us that they need **more information about Amaze's services**, about **SEN support in school and college** and about **inclusive leisure** groups. Information about **transition** to adulthood was also popular and **respite** care was mentioned by several parents.

**The challenges**

1. Though our online and direct information is valued, parent carers sometimes **struggle to hear about us.**

*“Couldn’t find Amaze online – was surprised when they realised a Brighton organisation around SEND did so much”*

*“husband did lots research but never heard anything regarding amaze as nothing in nurseries, health visitor and parent toddler groups”*

2. And when they do find us, they are **not always sure we are for them.**

*"Thought maybe you were just for kids with physical disabilities or things like Down Syndrome. Then on the Sunflower flyer it said “you don’t need a diagnosis or an EHCP”*

3. Even when they know about us, they are **not aware of all the things that we can do to help.**

62% of respondents who had heard of us but weren’t using our services said they weren’t sure what we could help with.

*I feel it's a wonderful wealth of information but feel they should advertise more about services they can provide*

*“I didn’t know much about Amaze, the groups it runs, coffee mornings and staff informing families when I started looking for information about my child’s needs. It took a while to find out more about what Amaze does.”*

4. Survey respondents (fairly evenly split between Brighton & Hove and East Sussex) told us that they would appreciate **more East Sussex specific content and services**

*Better access for people who live in East Sussex as I was initially under Brighton and Hove moving over to East Sussex has been difficult for accessing services*

*To be less focused on Brighton and Hove and include more information from the rest of East Sussex.*

5. Some parent carers continue to struggle with digital information and **some prefer to get their advice in person or in print.**

*Being able to speak to someone when I ring the helpline*

*Nothing, but I do prefer a printed copy of it as I digest the information more easily.*

*A quicker turn around time on phone calls. Not a criticism though.*

*More helpline workers*

*“I would prefer to talk to a person as I no longer have capacity for anything else – too overwhelming.”*

6. **Video is not as popular with parent carers** as we might have supposed

Only 34% of respondents watch videos as a way of getting SEND information and videos were ranked fourth out of five ways to get information about SEND. When asked to tell us about what could improve Amaze information, no respondents mentioned video

*‘Lots of charities make quite boring videos that aren’t much use.’*

*‘not if they’re boring. I’d rather read than watch something boring’*

*'ones that come from lived experience preferred, eg US girl with ADHD who interviews lots of people.’*

**7.** 63% of parents who follow us on Facebook **only see Amaze Facebook posts occasionally, rarely or never**

Though lots of parent carers follow us onFacebook, only 37% of those subscribers see our posts regularly. 51% see our posts occasionally, and 12% rarely or never.

8. Parent carers identified areas of information/support that that they need that Amaze doesn’t currently provide.

These include **inclusive leisure and play** opportunities, support for **siblings** and **respite** care and info for parents of children with **complex mental health needs**

*There's no information on care education and treatment reviews - what they are, who they are for etc., I researched it myself and read the information published on NHS England. I do feel there is a gap. I don't know anyone who has gone through this, and felt sure Amaze didn't (nothing published) so I didn't get in touch based on that*

**Recommended actions**

1. **Get the word out better!**

* Co-ordinated mailouts to schools, nurseries and other EY providers, health, specialists, etc with printable/shareable resources
* Posters for key SEND spaces where new parents might visit –must capture the offer
* Invest in SEO/some limited FB digital marketing (TRAINING)
* Use online groups (ours and associated) more to bypass Facebook Page algorithm

1. **Be clearer about what we do and who we can help**

* Amend our website, social presence and literature to make it clearer who we can help
* Simplify the offer so parent carers and the professionals who work with them can easily understand all the things we do

1. **Website is key**

* The popularity of the website as an info source does warrant investment both in terms of staff and capital.
* Plan a secondary engagement task specifically about developing the website
* Fundraise for capital to redesign/build

1. **Facebook first**

* Facebook should continue to be our priority in terms of social media comms
* Spend more time on building up Instagram and Youtube audience, less on Twitter
* Deep freeze TikTok for parent carers
* Consider investing in digital marketing training
* Use Facebook and WhatsApp groups more to get key info out

1. **Fill in some content gaps or present and promote better**

* Revisit our Fun things to do content – listing inclusive leisure and play ops pan Sussex
* More East Sussex content –as much information about ES as about BH
* More content on SEN support in school and college (or make it more easy to find)
* More on transition (or make it more easy to find)
* More about and for siblings
* More about complex mental health issues?

1. **Video quality not quantity**

* Consider format and function videos for parent carers before committing resources to production
* Investigate making videos by parent carers sharing their experience of an issue rather than SENDIASS presenters