

SCHOOLS SERVICE

Support to Schools During the COVID-19 Pandemic

September 2020

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INTRODUCTION

A survey asking headteachers for their feedback about the support that Schools Service provided schools during the COVID-19 pandemic was issued to all headteachers between 14 and 21 September 2020. The survey was anonymous to encourage candid responses.

The survey provided headteachers with the opportunity to comment on the following key areas, and Schools Service the opportunity to gather both quantitative and qualitative data regarding the service it provides to schools, children and young people, and their families:

- The establishment and provision of emergency childcare
- Continuity of Learning and Blended Learning
- ‘Check In, Catch Up and Prepare’
- The re-opening of schools
- Overall effectiveness of support
- Areas for improvement

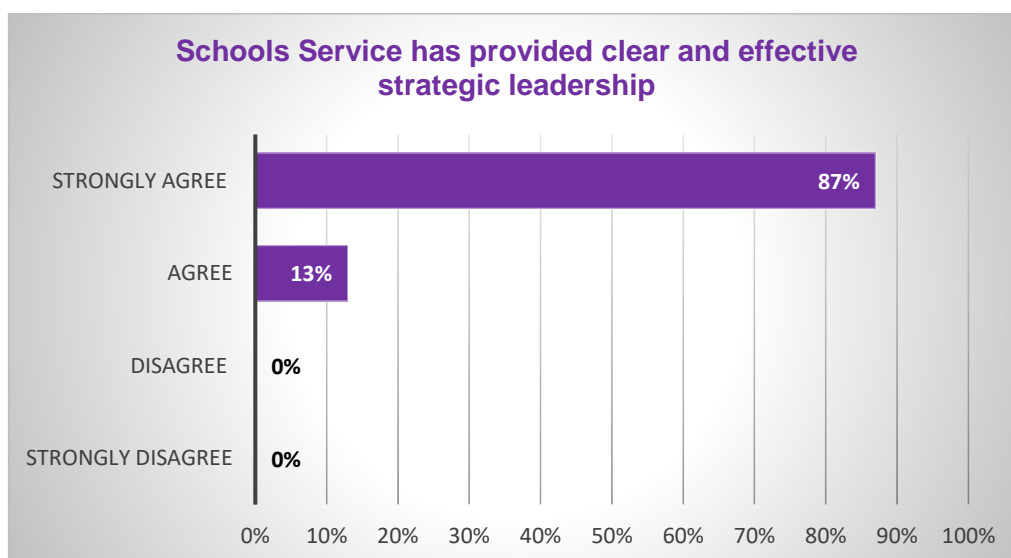
46 responses were received out of a possible 85, which equates to a 54% response rate.

FINDINGS

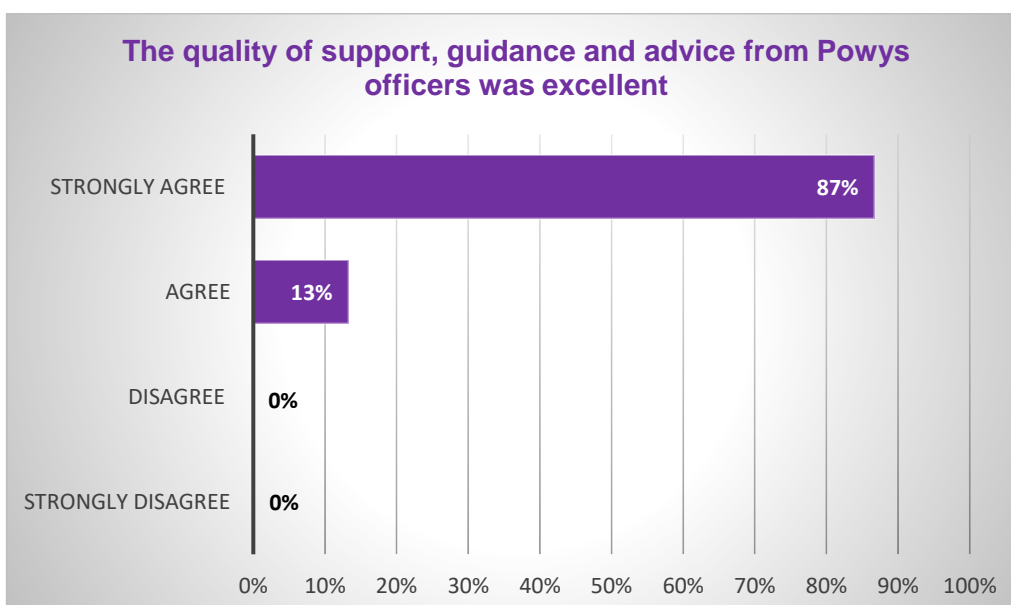
The Establishment and Provision of Emergency Childcare

When considering support in respect of the establishment and provision of emergency childcare, headteachers were asked to rate aspects / areas of support:

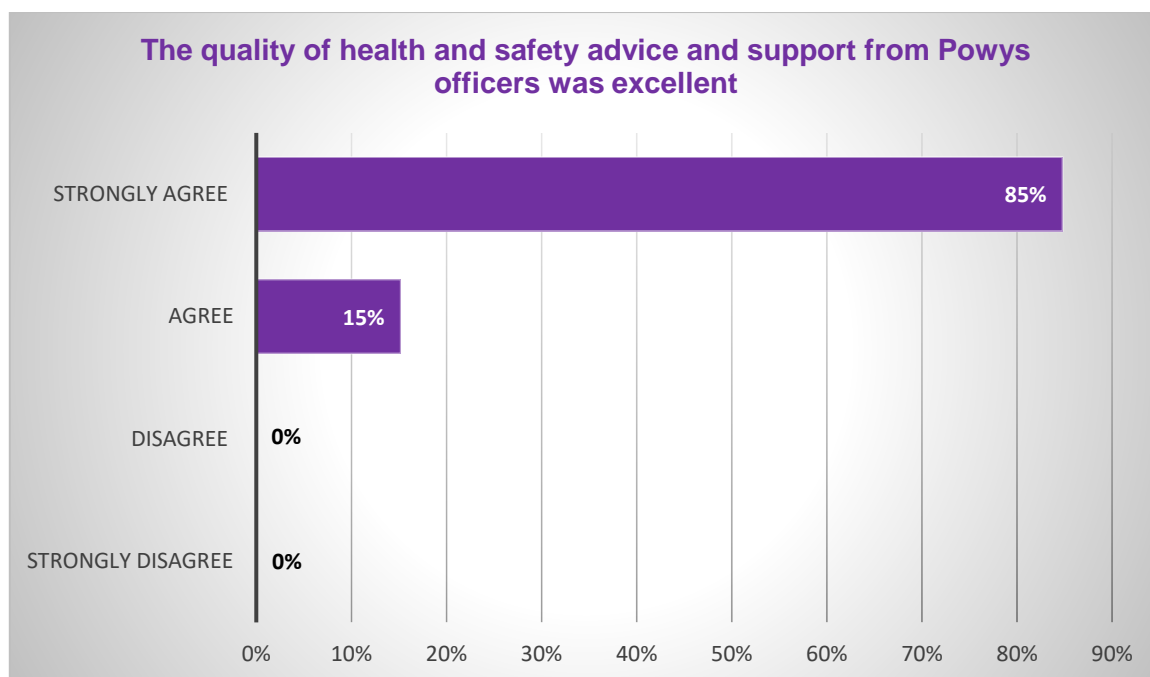
1a. 100% of respondents agreed that Schools Service provided clear and effective strategic leadership when supporting schools to establish and provide emergency childcare, with **87%** strongly agreeing.



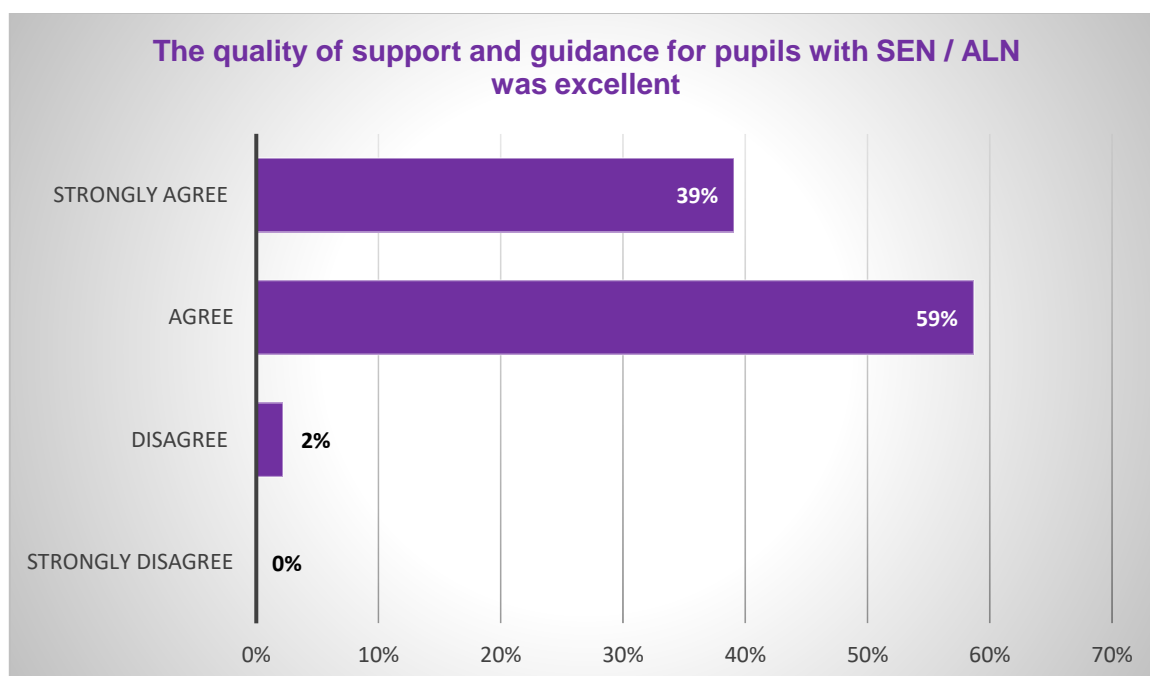
1b. 100% of respondents agreed that the quality of support, guidance and advice from Powys officer was excellent when supporting schools to establish and provide emergency childcare, with **87%** strongly agreeing.



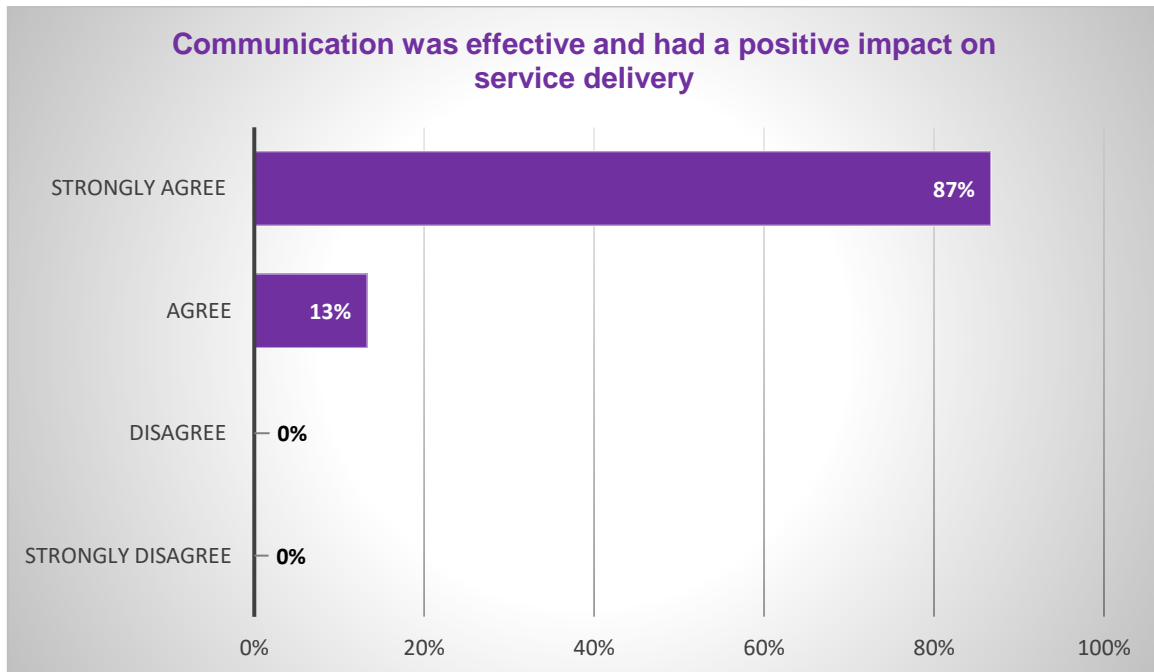
1c. 100% of respondents agreed that the quality of health and safety advice and support from Powys officer was excellent when supporting schools to establish and provide emergency childcare, with **85%** strongly agreeing.



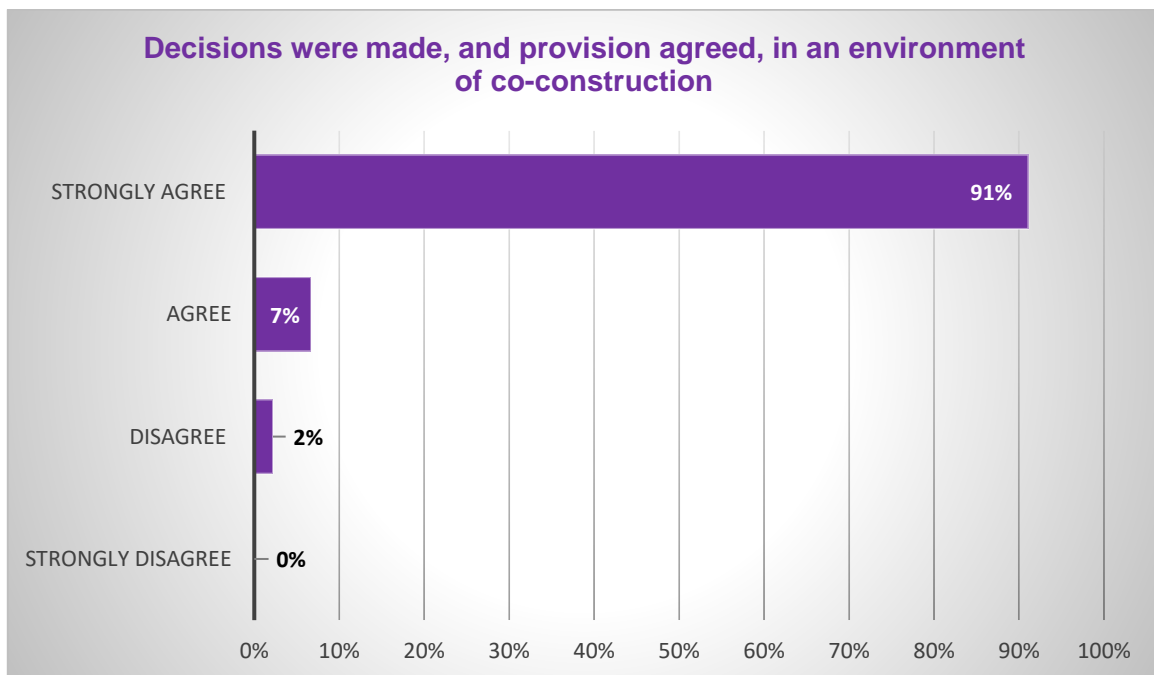
1d. 98% of respondents agreed that the quality of support and guidance for pupils with SEN / ALN was excellent when supporting schools to establish and provide emergency childcare, with **39%** strongly agreeing.



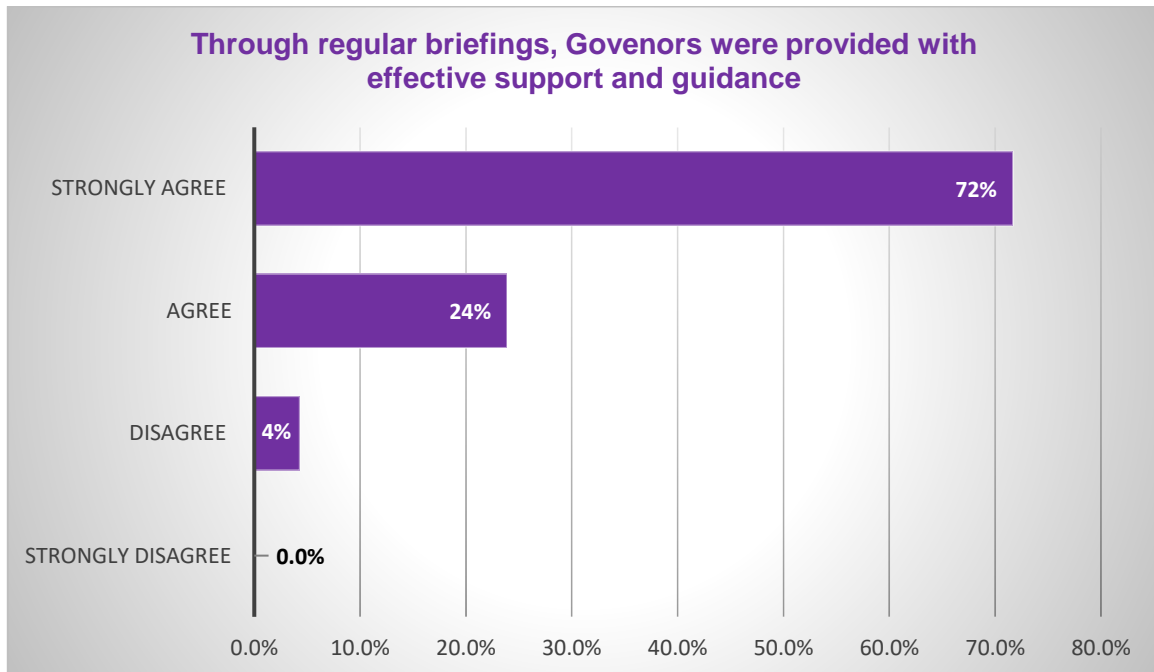
1e. 100% of respondents agreed that communication was effective and had a positive impact on service delivery when supporting schools to establish and provide emergency childcare, with **87%** strongly agreeing.



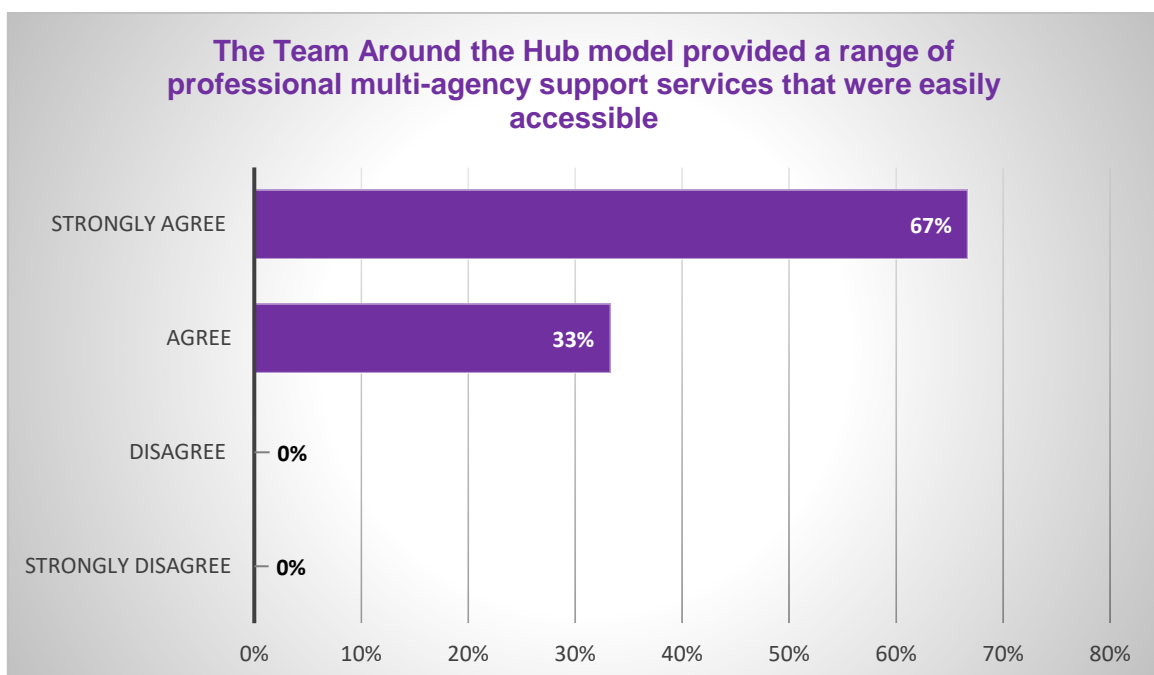
1f. 98% of respondents agreed that decisions were made, and provision agreed, in an environment of co-construction, when supporting schools to establish and provide emergency childcare, with **91%** strongly agreeing.



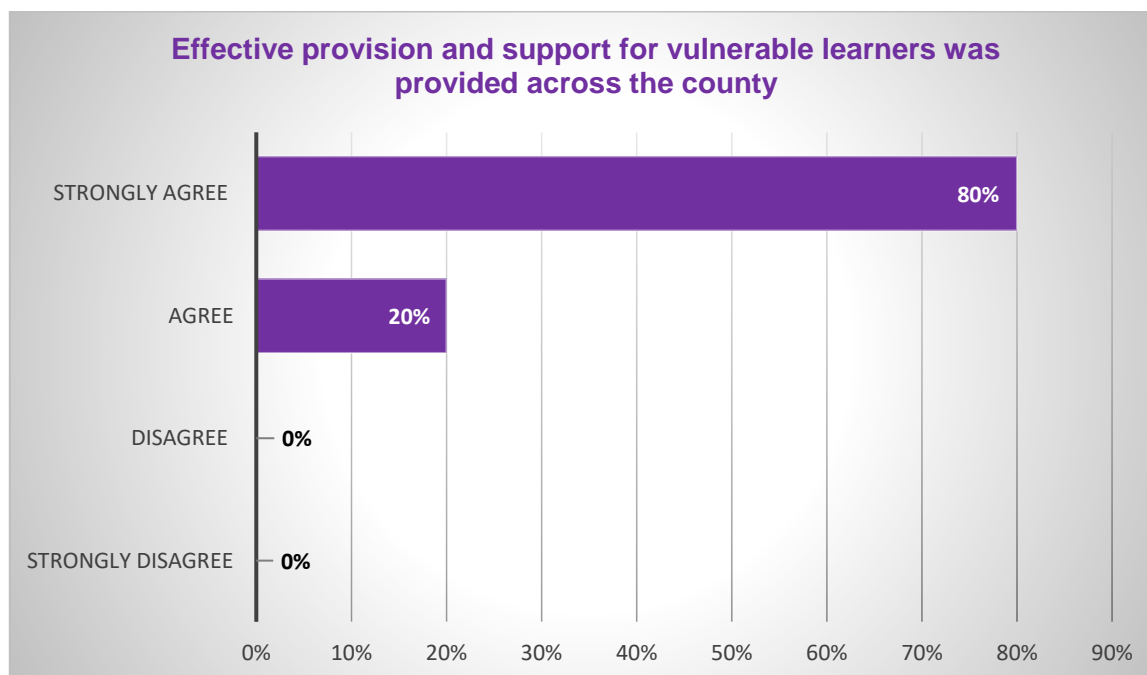
1g. 96% of respondents agreed that through regular briefings, Governors were provided with effective support and guidance, when schools were being supported to establish and provide emergency childcare, with **72%** strongly agreeing.



1h. 100% of respondents agreed that the Team Around the Hub model provided a range of professional multi-agency support services that were easily accessible, when schools were being supported to establish and provide emergency childcare, with **67%** strongly agreeing.



1i. 100% of respondents agreed that there was effective provision and support for vulnerable learners was provided across the county when schools were being supported to establish and provide emergency childcare, with **80%** strongly agreeing.



2. Headteachers provided the following additional comments about Schools Service support in respect of the establishment and provision of emergency childcare:

- The support from schools service from the outset, including the setting up of childcare hubs to partial reopening of school to full reopening could not have been better. As a senior leader I have felt supported and listened to and as a result have been able to support my staff and pupils. The officers have worked tirelessly throughout, and our wellbeing was considered during the summer break. We have worked as a team and as a result achieved a safe, nurturing and successful place during these unprecedented times.
- The LA were extremely proactive in setting up the emergency childcare hubs as quickly as possible. Communication to schools and parents was clear throughout and all pupils who needed provision were catered for during lockdown. LA officers supported the hubs effectively through meeting regularly with Headteachers and through attending the hubs themselves.
- The Emergency Hubs were set up efficiently and effectively in very little time - a massive successful achievement.
- Powys should be admired for offering Emergency Childcare provision, as they were one of the only counties to provide this, which included staff having to set up the hubs with very short notice and staff working during weekends, bank holidays and holidays.
- In a very short space of time, the support from our local authority was instrumental in allowing us to set up local hubs - with a combined focus on staff and pupil well-being, ensuring that all were able to access the hub safely. The risk assessment and support from various working task teams was and effective in giving us all the

confidence that we could deliver the expectations and provision for all who accessed.

- The service was extremely good at working with clusters to form efficient hubs very quickly. The various services (cleaning, HR, catering, procurement, transport, safeguarding etc) worked well together as a team and responded promptly and constructively to our requests for assistance. They were able to support our cluster to develop the hub rotation and provision that would work for our parents and would be workable in practice for the staff. The implementation of the online booking system was essential and, despite a few initial glitches in the system, worked extremely well in the circumstances; where there were difficulties these were addressed at speed. I was concerned that there would be a lack of support for running of the hub at the weekend/bank holidays, but these fears were unfounded. When I needed support it was available, always. The system of notification of closure of hubs where appropriate at the weekend worked efficiently and provided the duty heads with confidence that they were acting appropriately and provided reassurance that County were aware of the situation. When we had to make a decision to split our hub and open a second hub site in our cluster, we were able to do so effectively and with only 4 days preparation time (including a bank holiday), due to the team effort from the various arms of the service. Our cluster heads were not pressured into doing this, but we were able to take advice and make this decision for ourselves, with the best interests of the children and families at heart. Throughout this period of establishing and developing the provision, Lynette Lovell's no nonsense attitude to potential barriers from outside the service is greatly appreciated. I believe she has done an absolutely outstanding job in leading us through this very, very difficult time.
- Any query or issue 'on the ground' was dealt with quickly and effectively by school service. The feeling of support and 'togetherness' throughout has strengthened our service as a whole - we will never lose this now.
- Support was swift and excellent, and the hubs were established very quickly. Unlike other counties, ours were open for 7 days a week. Excellent support throughout.
- As the headteacher of a school that was re-purposed into an emergency childcare hub, I can without hesitation, say that the support I received from Schools Service was truly exceptional. The transition from a school to a childcare hub was managed efficiently and effectively and this would not have been possible without the support of the Schools Service. All relevant paperwork was produced and shared by the authority, all roles and responsibilities were made clear. Weekly meetings were established between all relevant officers and hub leads. These were invaluable. I felt completely confident in establishing an emergency childcare hub due to the support I received from the Schools Service. I feel extremely proud that my school was able to offer this service to local families and the community and without the support of the Schools Service, this simply would not have been possible.
- Under intense pressure, Schools Services rapidly established an effective and efficient system, with no precedence or protocol to follow. My only criticism might be that more joined-up and collaborative thinking could've been applied at an

earlier stage when considering options related to setting up pre-school emergency childcare.

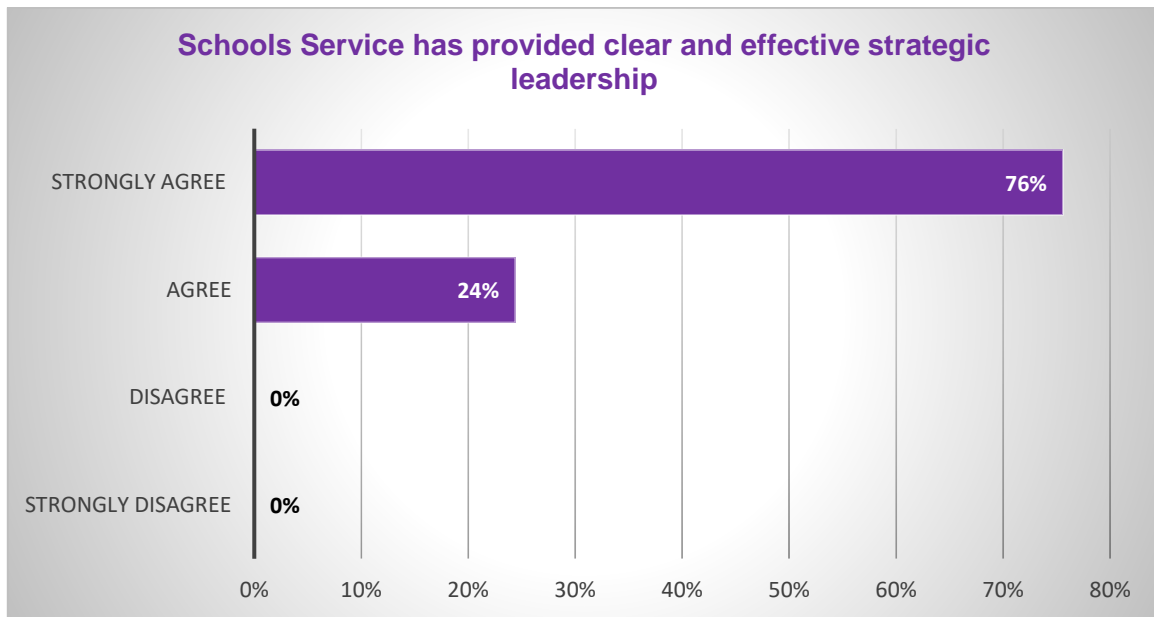
- Special collaboration between local schools- has ensured high quality communication and co-operation. Staff have enjoyed working together with children and staff from different schools. It was pleasing to hear that the county's officers had volunteered in the Hwb - everyone understood the challenging situation.
- From the dark days, the collective working of the Cluster and pooling of resources was a shining light. It has helped collaborative working across all areas of provision.
- Schools service organised the emergency childcare efficiently and effectively.
- THE LA were highly effective in their organisation of the emergency childcare.
- The officers were prompt in responses and supportive to all queries allowing the implementation of emergency hubs to be quick and effective. The hub model allowed staff to work together and a great area team was strengthened by this collaboration and mutual support.
- There were some differences between school and early years so information did not always filter through.
- The quality of service and support has been exceptional. I would like to thank everyone for what they have done and what they are continuing to do.
- Excellent clear communication. Daily meetings when needed during the first few weeks were really helpful. The Cluster Heads meetings were very informative as was the Curriculum Recovery meetings led by Michael Gedrim as heads were given the opportunity to raise any concerns / issues and the meetings welcomed various discussions.
- Timely information, arrangements worked well over lockdown.
- Emergency childcare hubs were run very effectively, and the organisation was excellent.
- Felt completely supported in what has been and continues to be a difficult time.
- The regular meetings via Team provided an important communication tool which was used most effectively to keep SMT up to date with events as they happened.
- Excellent communication which included being a listening ear as well as being pro-active and solution focussed.
- Powys School Service team have been exemplary. Throughout they have communicated, listened, been proactive and worked with school leaders. Despite woolly guidance from WG, they have plotted a course which has supported the wellbeing of pupils and staff as much as possible. At all times officers have been available - including weekends. Lynette Lovell has led the team superbly and her professionalism, empathy and understanding has been outstanding, always putting children and staff first.
- Our hub leader was excellent. She had a building to manage which is due to be demolished in 2021; a large number of vulnerable pupils and coordinating the hub.

The timetabling lead was also excellent too. They were pivotal in the success of the hub.

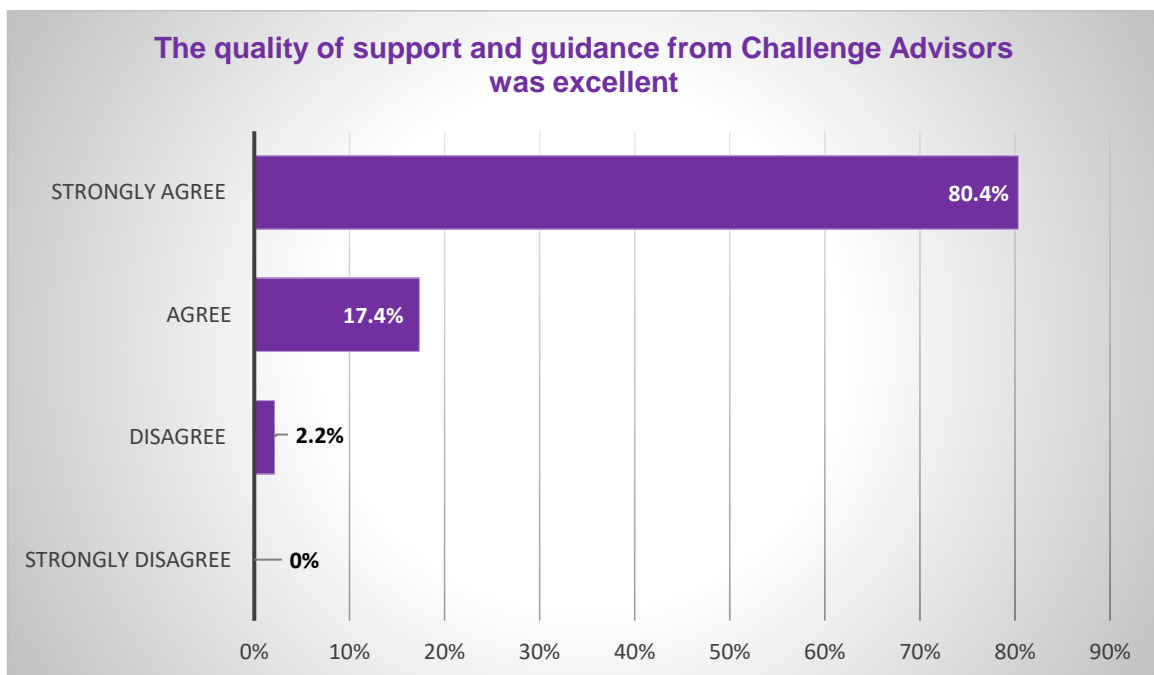
- The response from education officers was prompt, informed and reassuring. I felt confident that I would receive effective guidance and support.
- Many governors are not able to access Teams meetings.

Continuity of Learning and Blended Learning

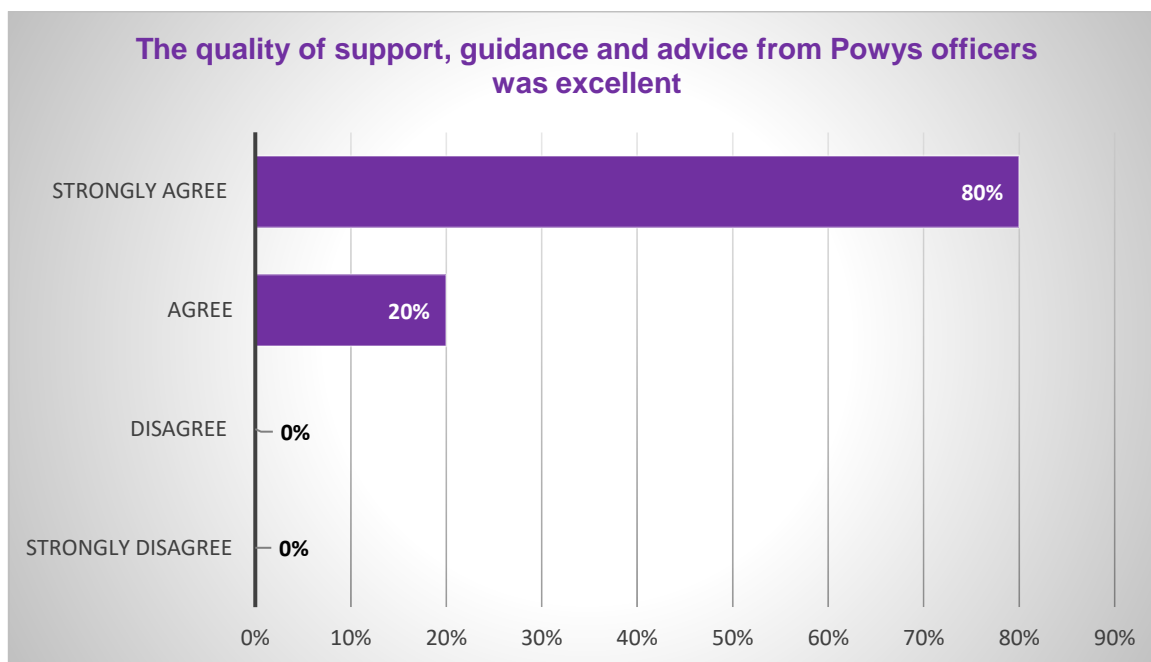
3a. 100% of respondents agreed that Schools Service provided clear and effective leadership in respect of Continuity of Learning and Blended Learning, with **76%** strongly agreeing.



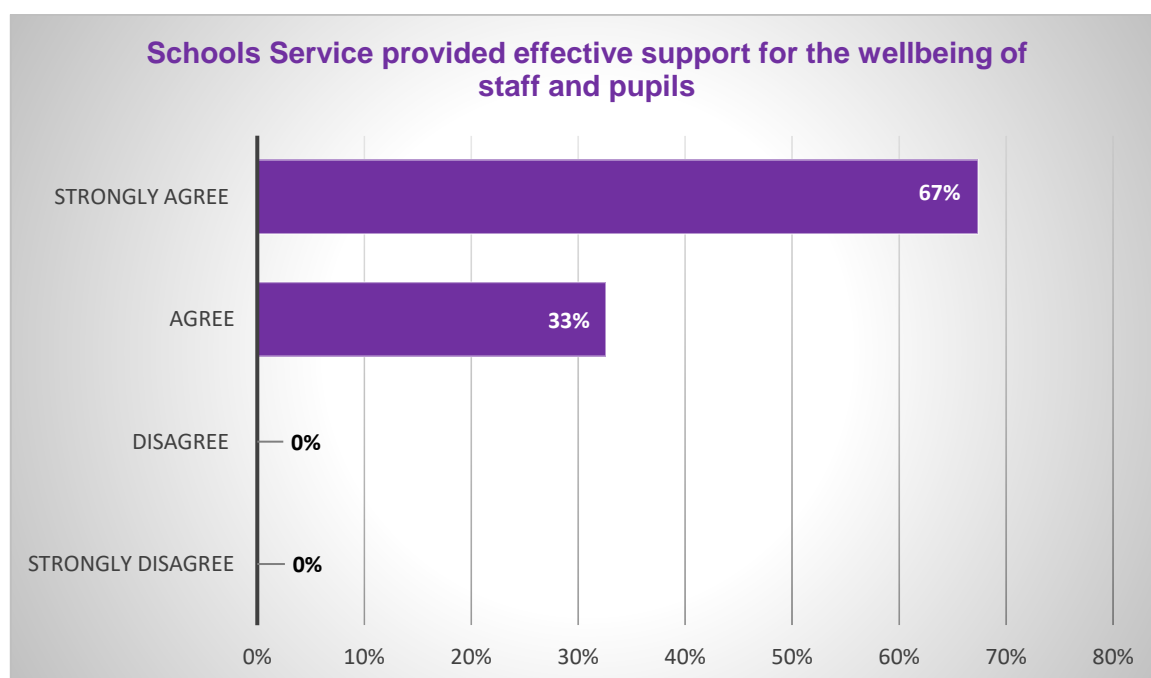
3b. 97.8% of respondents agreed that the quality of support, guidance and advice from Challenge Advisors was excellent, in respect of Continuity of Learning and Blended Learning, with **80.4%** strongly agreeing.



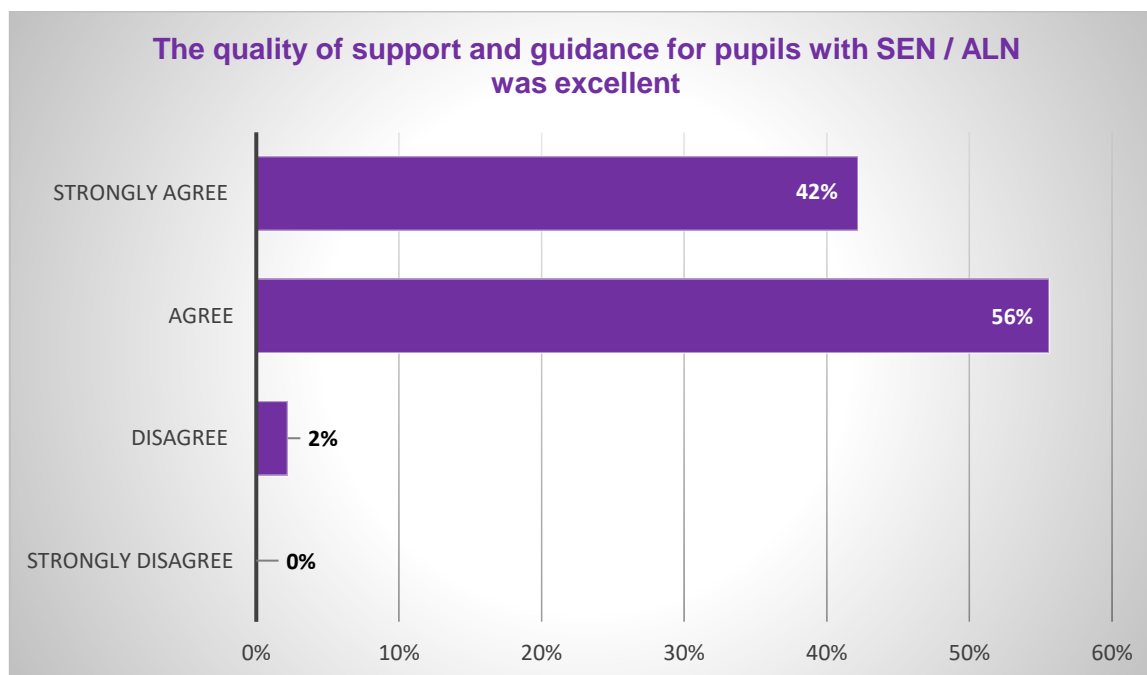
3c. 100% of respondents agreed that the quality of support, guidance and advice from Powys officers was excellent, in respect of Continuity of Learning and Blended Learning, with **80%** strongly agreeing.



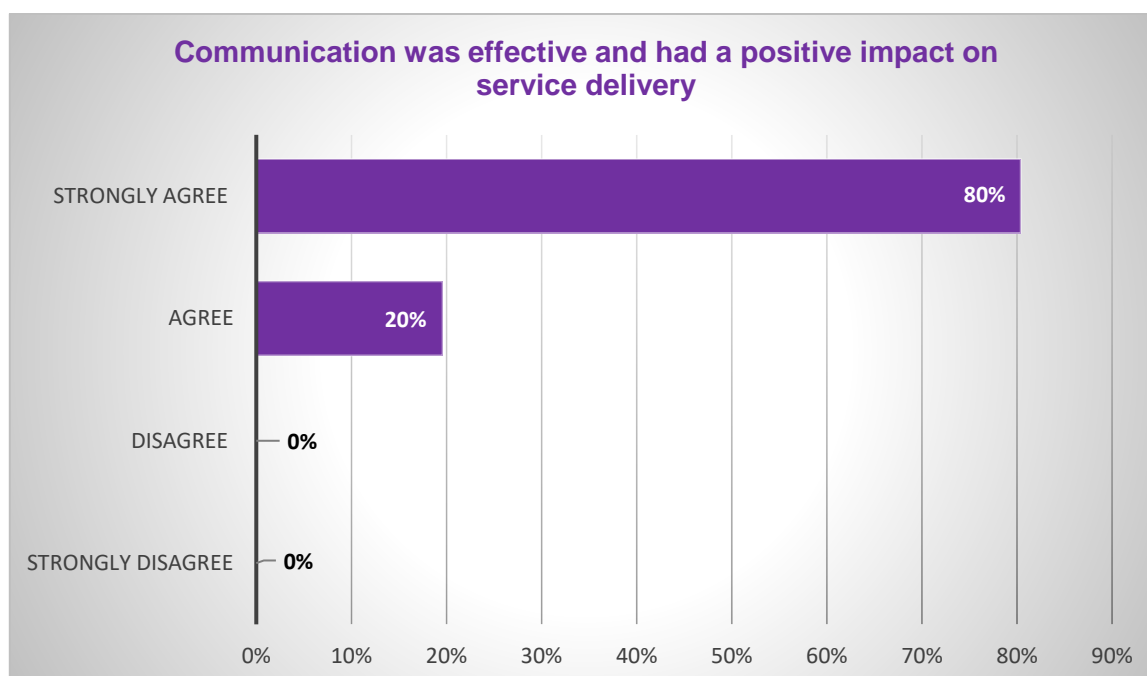
3d. 100% of respondents agreed that Schools Service provided effective support for the wellbeing of staff and pupils, in respect of Continuity of Learning and Blended Learning, with **67%** strongly agreeing.



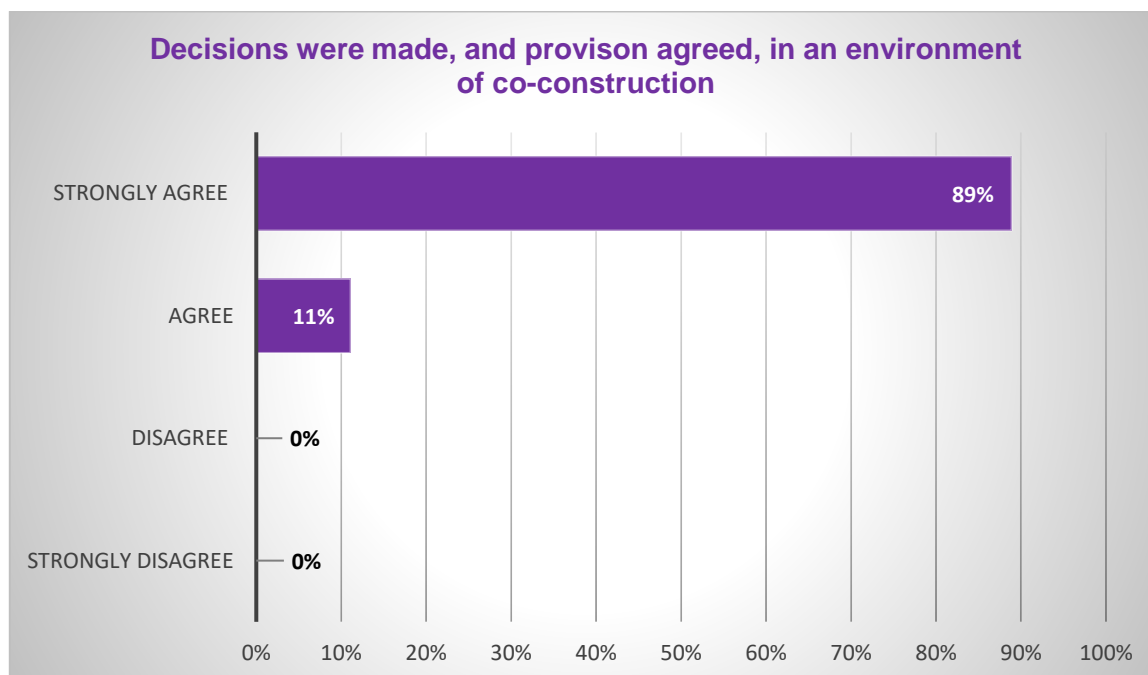
3e. 98% of respondents agreed that the quality of support and guidance for pupils with SEN / ALN was excellent in respect of Continuity of Learning and Blended Learning, with **42%** strongly agreeing.



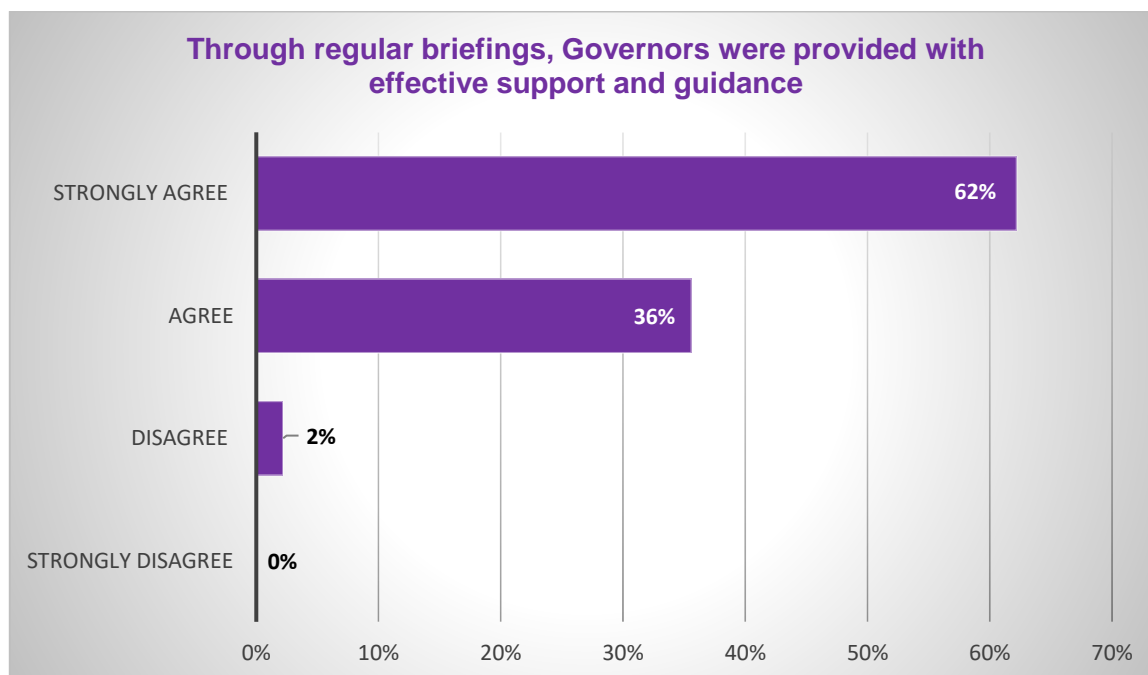
3f. 100% of respondents agreed that communication was effective and had a positive, with **80%** strongly agreeing.



3g. When considering Continuity of Learning and Blended Learning, **100%** of respondents agreed that decisions were made, and provision agreed, in an environment of co-construction, with **89%** strongly agreeing.

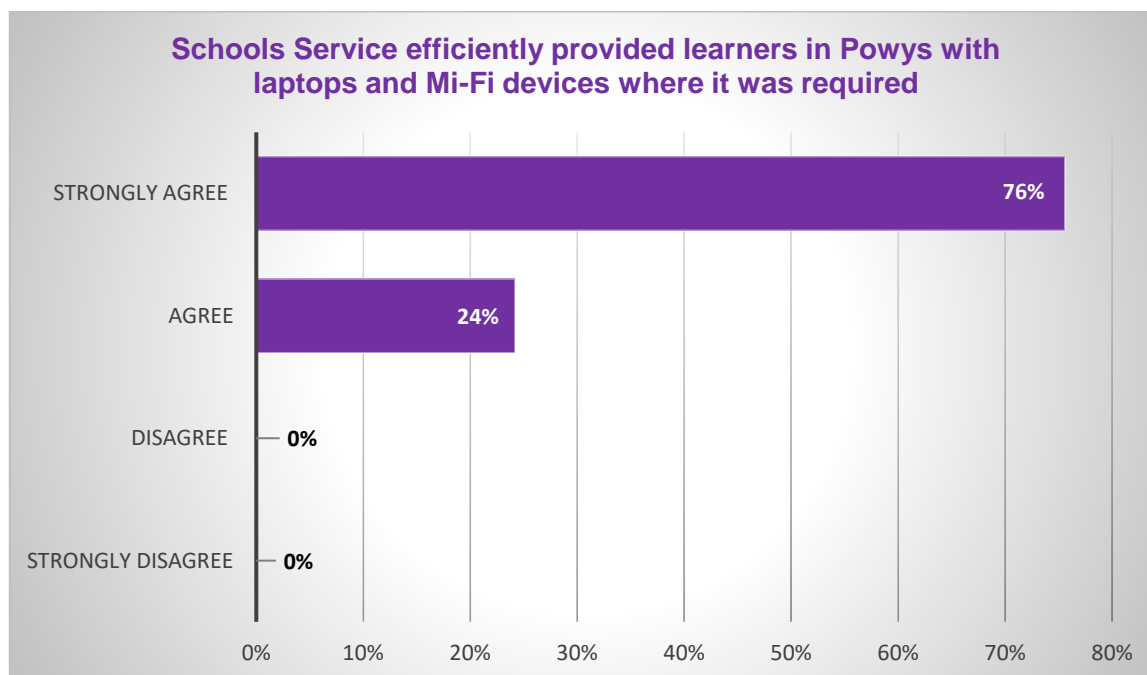


3h. When considering Continuity of Learning and Blended Learning, **98%** of respondents agreed that through regular briefings, Governors were provided with effective support and guidance, with **62%** strongly agreeing.



* 56 responses out of 56

3i. When considering Continuity of Learning and Blended Learning, **100%** of respondents agreed that Schools Service efficiently provided learners in Powys with laptops and Mi-Fi devices where it was required, with **76%** strongly agreeing.



** 56 responses out of 56*

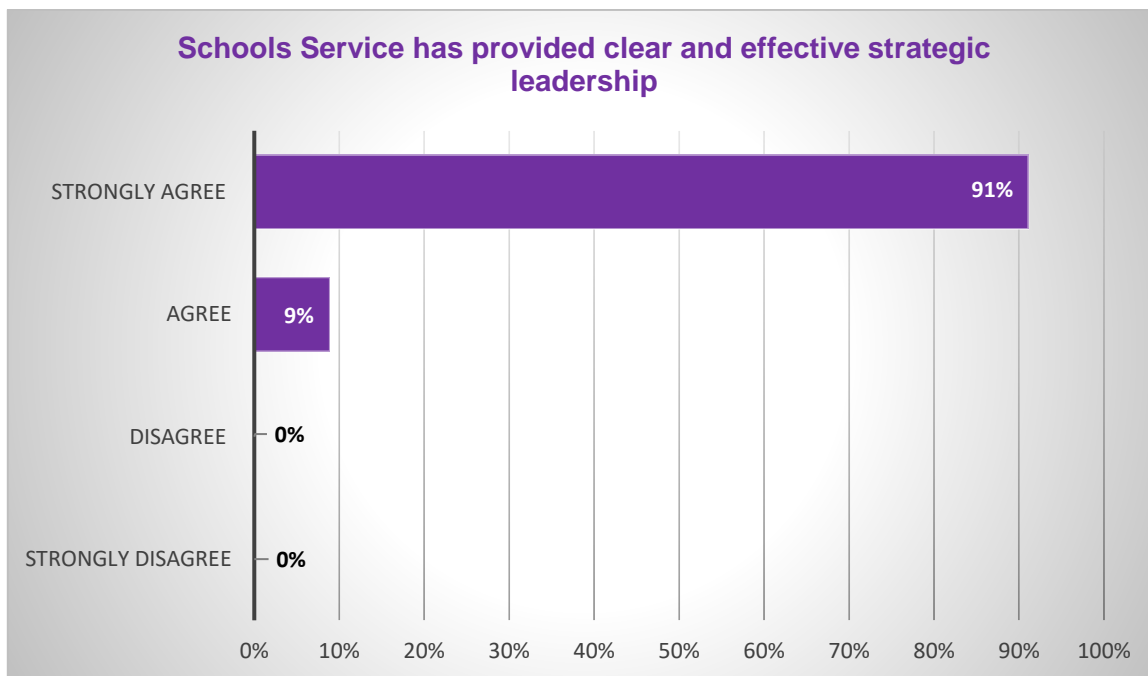
4. Headteachers provided the following additional comments about Schools Service support in respect of the Continuity of Learning and Blended Learning:

- A working party of school staff and LA officers was quickly established, and they provided support and guidance to schools in the delivery of education both remotely and in the childcare hubs. Headteachers were kept up to date through regular meetings and through email communications with practical ideas.
- Schools were provided with resources, support, guidance, digital devices, exemplar models etc.
- The Challenge Advisors have worked tirelessly to support schools and hubs throughout the pandemic. They have worked during the Summer assisting leaders and teachers with resources and ideas for the reopening of schools.
- Support with example blended learning packs, feeding schools with the provision and maximising capacity to learn from home. For our substantial number of disadvantaged learners, sufficient resources were sent out (around 35 laptops) to ensure a continuity of learning from home.
- The series of PowerPoints and supporting documentation has been extremely useful and enabled me to share relevant information with the appropriate staff, parents etc. The strategic management of devices and Mi-fi provision enabled all of my learners (and in some case staff who lived in an area without sufficient internet connectivity) to access blended learning. The service were able to signpost me to schools with appropriate expertise to address some staff training issues, and facilitated extremely good school to school working, for which I am extremely grateful.

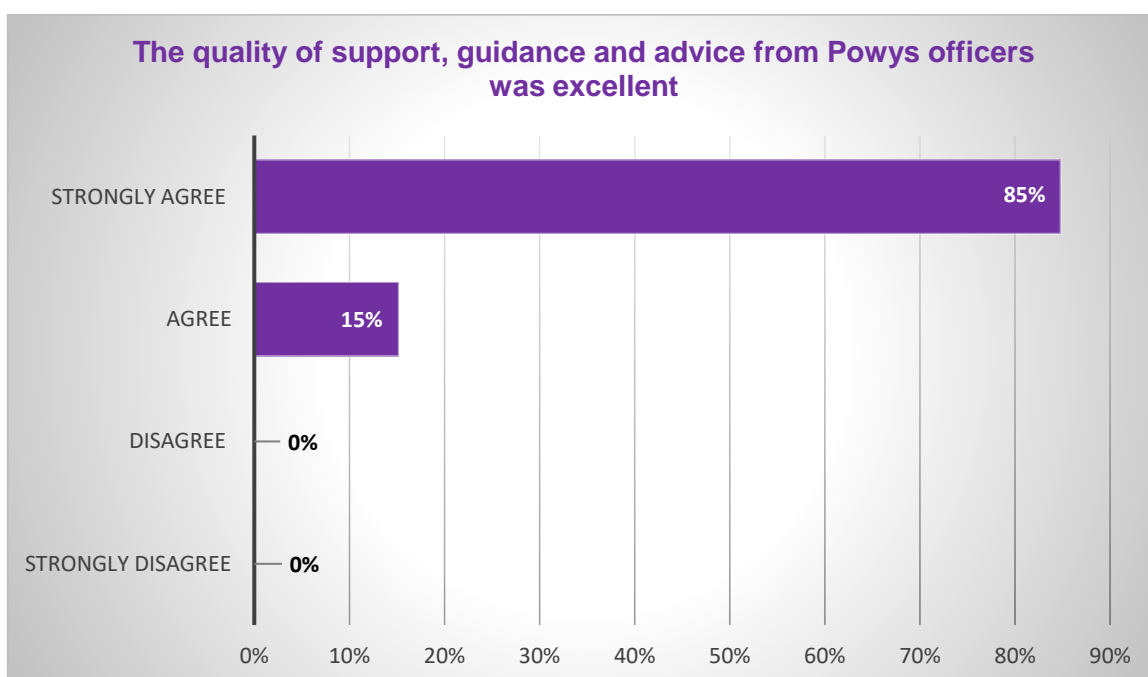
- Support has been strong.
- The working party provided excellent resources and support for schools and ideas were fed back regularly. We were one of the few counties who provided IT for parents so many more of our pupils had access to on line learning. Regular meetings with ChAds also gave the opportunity to share good practice.
- The communication between schools and the local authority has been clear, frequent and purposeful. Developments, training and resources in respect of the Continuity of Learning and Blended Learning have been super. Again, regular updates and meetings have been arranged and any queries quickly responded to. The speed and efficiency in which laptops and Mi-Fi devices were provided for families was fantastic! Communication between Schools Service and schools was excellent. Everyone was clear on what was needed, they rolled up their sleeves and got on with the job in hand. It was less than 10 days, between the parents offered devices, them being re-configured and ultimately handed over. Parents (and school staff) were so grateful for this. It was invaluable to many children accessing home-school learning and was managed exceptionally well by the Schools Service.
- Clear lines of communication.
- Challenge advisors has continued to be extremely supportive in all aspects of Blended Learning as has ALL the officers within the County. There has been a huge sense of partnership and support from all who work across school services.
- Response was slow centrally on live teaching.
- Many ideas were shared with schools that aided us in continuing to deliver a curriculum despite lockdown. We lent ICT resources(laptops) out to another cluster, these all came back in their original standard.
- The provision of devices including dongles was essential in ensuring that all of our pupils were able to access, Hwb, blended learning including lessons on Teams. This increased pupil engagement to 100%.
- Excellent co construction between officers and heads, keeping a reality check and providing useful documents and support at all stages.
- ICT/Wi-Fi access is vital for staff, governors and pupils. If we have pupils at home and at school ICT hardware will be a challenge. Learning through ICT is crucial in the present climate. It sounds like WG/PCC have got this in hand and I thank you for this, but we need this action to be swift as the second wave is imminent.
- SLTs were given autonomy to use the approaches that best suited their school communities. Powys provided regular advice bulletins, applicable across a range of distance/blended learning programmes.

‘Check In, Catch Up and Prepare’

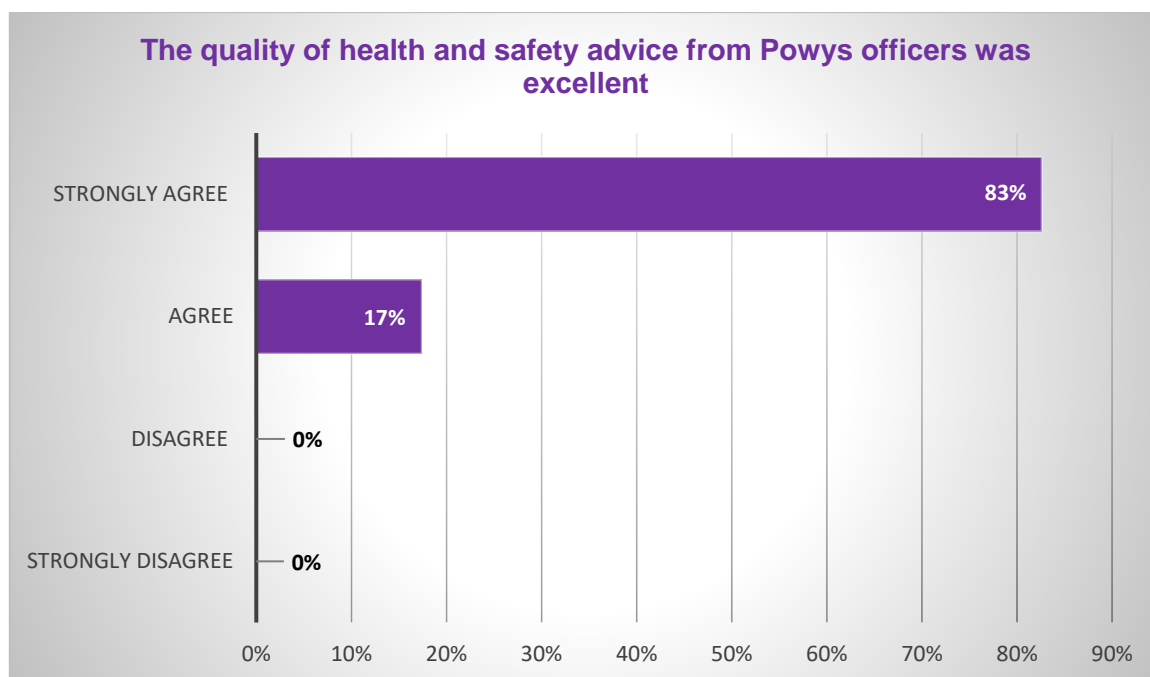
5a. When considering ‘Check In, Catch Up and Prepare’, **100%** of respondents agreed that Schools Service provided clear and effective strategic leadership, with **91%** strongly agreeing.



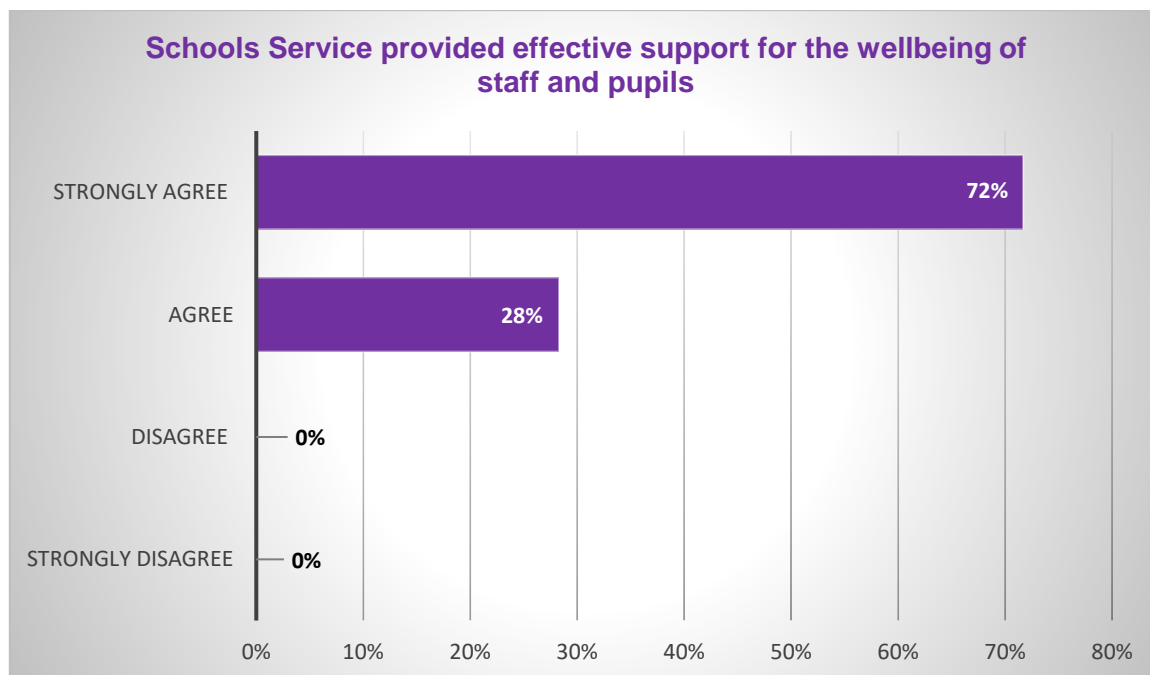
5b. When considering ‘Check In, Catch Up and Prepare’, **100%** of respondents agreed that the quality of support, guidance and advice from Powys officers was excellent, with **85%** strongly agreeing.



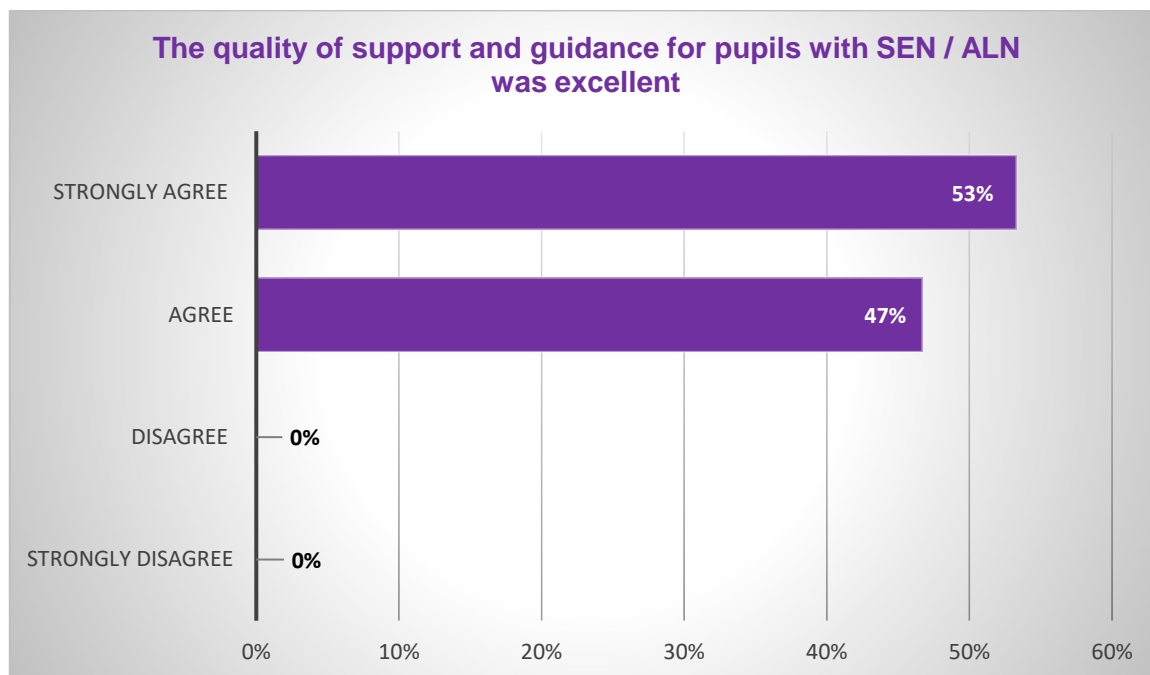
5c. When considering 'Check In, Catch Up and Prepare', **100%** of respondents agreed that the quality of health and safety advice from Powys officers was excellent, with **82%** strongly agreeing.



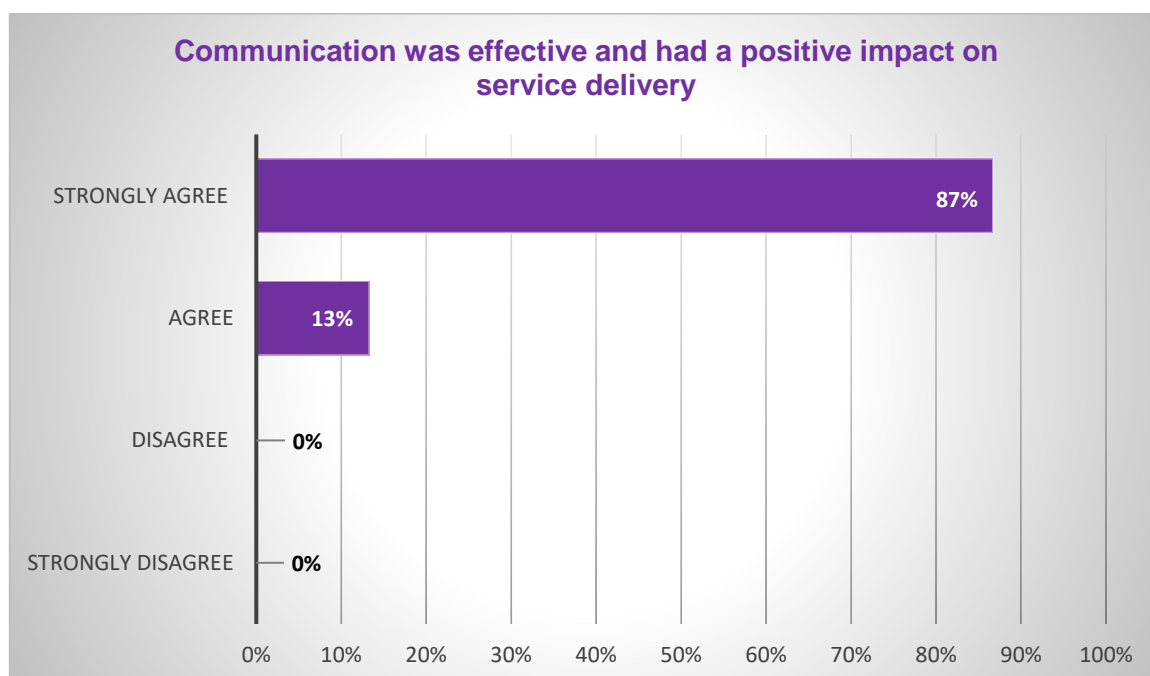
5d. When considering 'Check In, Catch Up and Prepare', **100%** of respondents agreed that Schools Service provided effective support for the wellbeing of staff and pupils, with **72%** strongly agreeing.



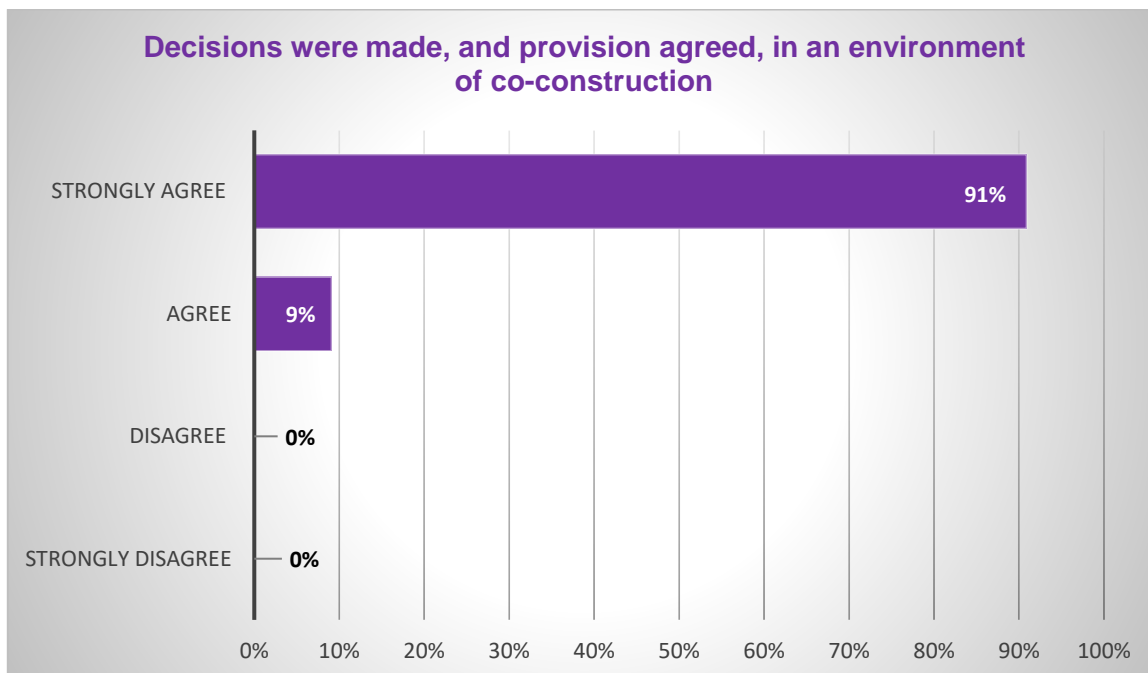
5e. When considering 'Check In, Catch Up and Prepare', **100%** of respondents agreed that the quality of support and guidance for pupils with SEN / ALN was excellent, with **53%** strongly agreeing.



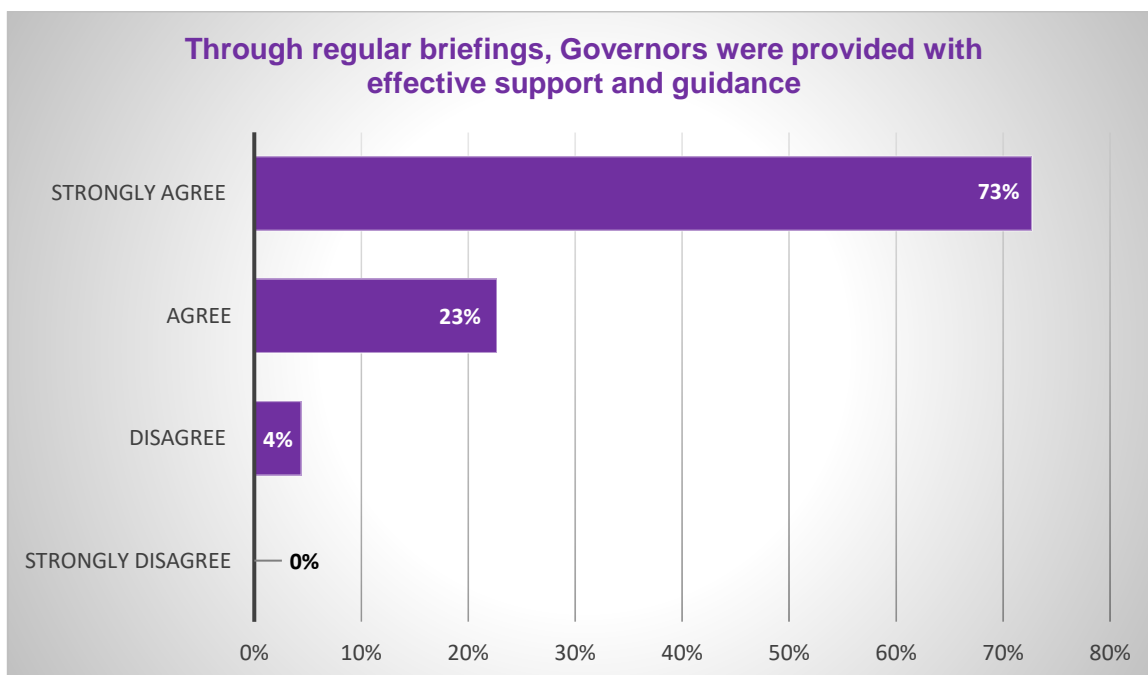
5f. When considering 'Check In, Catch Up and Prepare', **100%** of respondents agreed that communication was effective and had a positive impact on service delivery, with **87%** strongly agreeing.



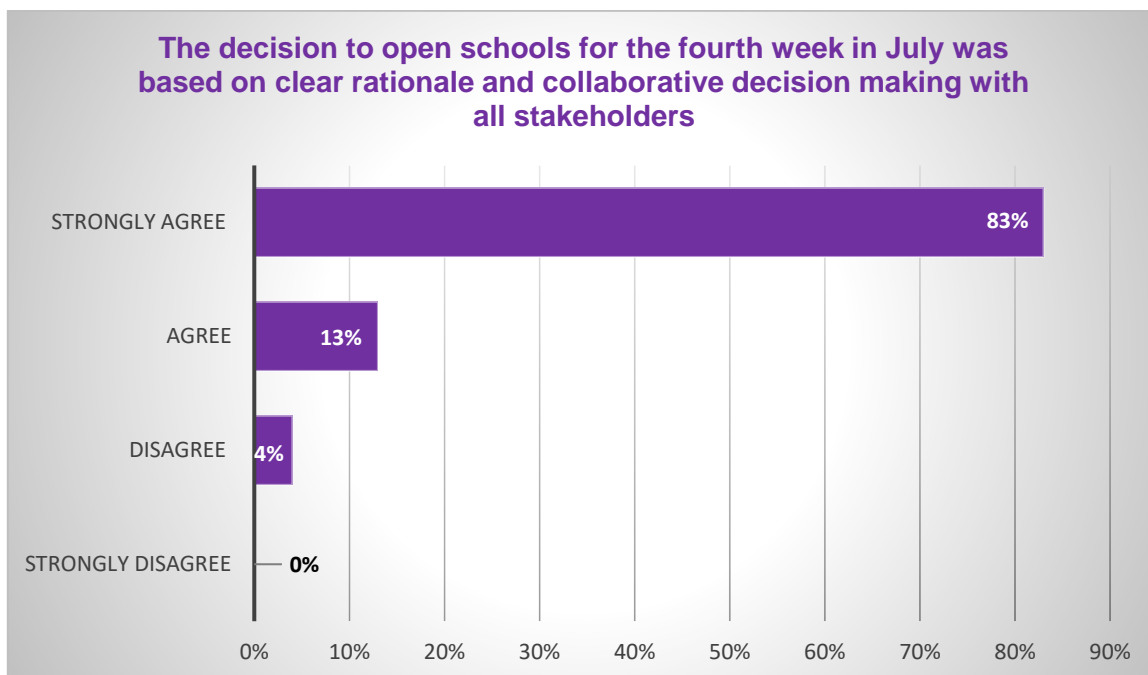
5e. When considering 'Check In, Catch Up and Prepare', **100%** of respondents agreed that decisions were made, and provision agreed, in an environment of co-construction, with **91%** strongly agreeing.



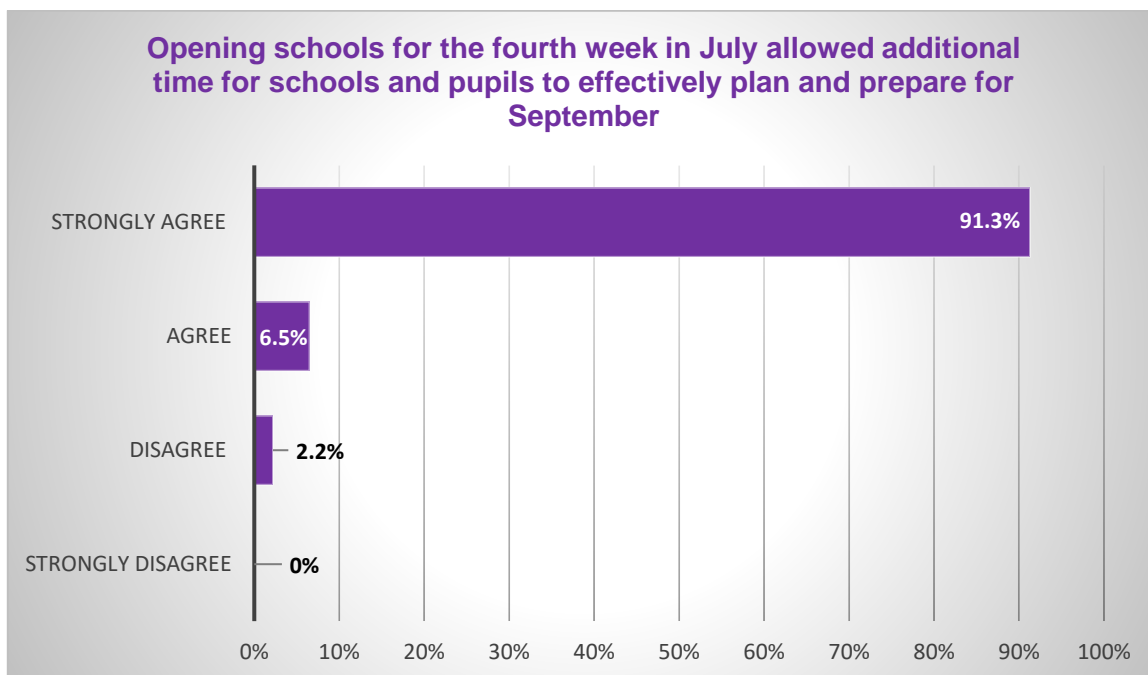
5f. When considering 'Check In, Catch Up and Prepare', **96%** of respondents agreed that through regular briefings, Governors were provided with effective support and guidance, with **73%** strongly agreeing.



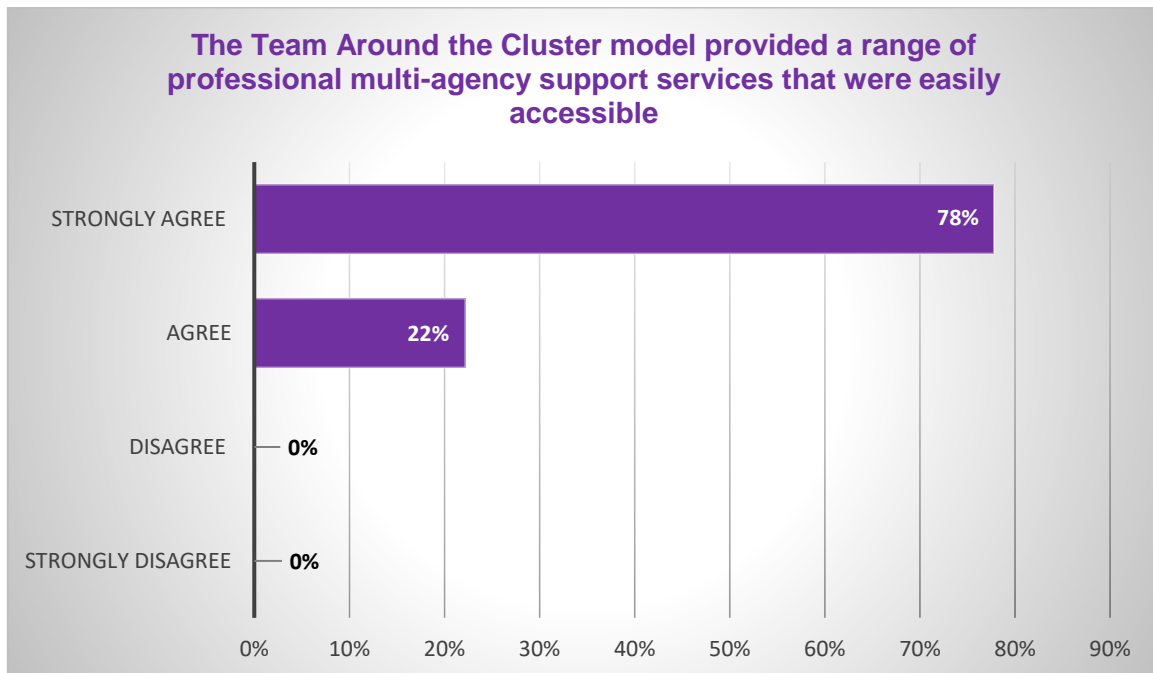
5g. When considering 'Check In, Catch Up and Prepare', **95%** of respondents agreed that the decision to open schools for the fourth week in July was based on clear rational and collaborative decision making with all stakeholders, with **83%** strongly agreeing.



5h. When considering 'Check In, Catch Up and Prepare', **98%** of respondents agreed that opening schools for the fourth week in July allowed additional time for schools and pupils to effectively plan and prepare for September, with **91.3%** strongly agreeing.



5i. When considering 'Check In, Catch Up and Prepare', **100%** of respondents agreed that the Team Around the Cluster model provided a range of professional multi-agency support services that were easily accessible, with **78%** strongly agreeing.



6. Headteachers provided the following additional comments about Schools Service support in respect of 'Check In, Catch Up and Prepare':

- The additional week was required to allow the children additional time to settle.
- All Headteachers met very regularly with Lynette Lovell and her team during the build up to reopening. The setting up of separate work streams, with an officer responsible for each was effective and they communicated directly with schools. The LA worked collaboratively with schools to set up robust risk assessments.
- We were given clear guidance every step of the way and clarity especially for consideration of the risk assessment. We were consulted and driven by the whole team ethos.
- The Education Recovery Group worked together to ensure that every cluster was provided with the most up to date guidance on this. All cluster leads fed back to their headteachers with all the latest information and any questions or suggestions were also taken on board. A great collaboration across all sectors of the service.
- Through each part of lockdown, the support we have had as a school and personally as a head has been a major factor in how we have been able to successfully integrate children back into our school. With some challenges to overcome, the leadership given by Lynette and collective guidance by her team has been truly remarkable and has made our roles far more manageable.
- The service responded very supportively to help me prepare my school for the CICUP sessions. The provision of the proforma risk assessment focussed my mind and ensured I was addressing issues that I would not otherwise have thought of. It saved a very considerable amount of time and anguish on my part, ensuring I was

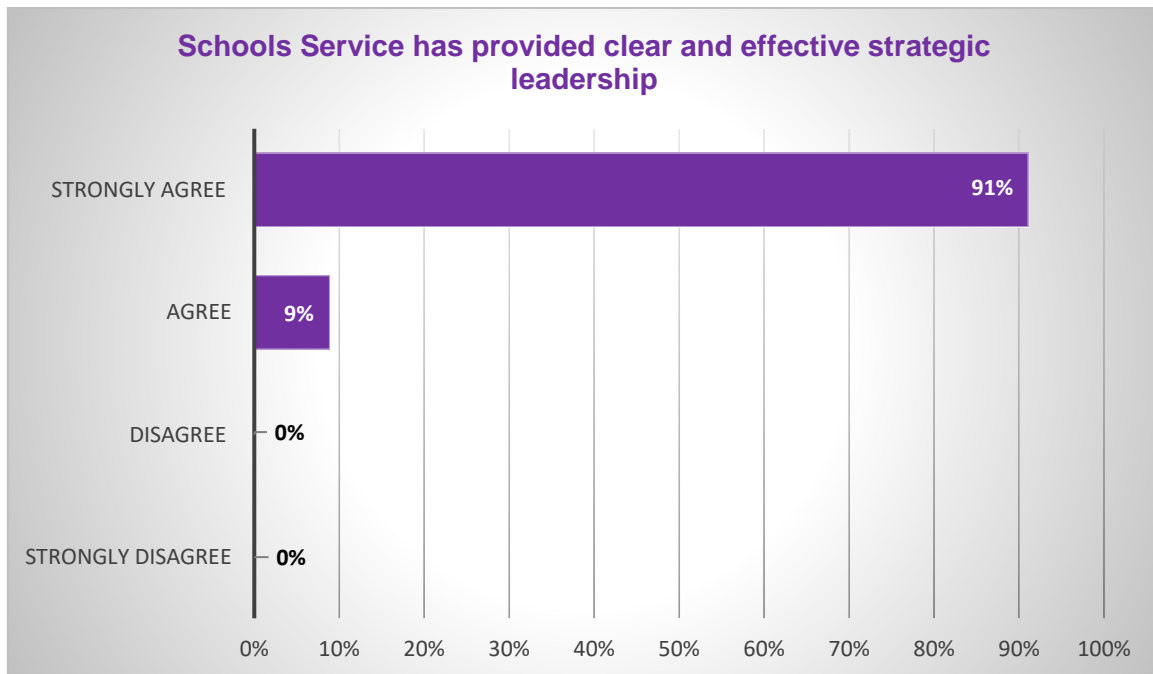
accessing the most up to date information in a timely and straightforward manner and as such my own wellbeing was supported. The fact that officers sought the opinion of headteachers regarding the decision to open for the fourth week is just an example of how our opinions and on the ground knowledge was taken into account. It underlined the depth of the mutual respect and professionalism of the heads and officers across the county.

- School service worked together WITH heads which produced as seamless a transition as possible into the preparation sessions. Communication has been excellent, and long may it continue.
- Excellent collaborative working and so proud that Powys took the decision to open for the 4 weeks. The benefit was for us all in preparing for September.
- The shared discussion and decision-making surrounding the Check In, Catch Up sessions was intense, rigorous, and detailed. Speaking to colleagues, we are all so thankful for the level of consultation between the Interim Chief Education Officer, relevant local authority officers and head teachers. We were consulted every step of the way and the decision to support the Welsh Government ambition to open for 4 weeks was discussed in an open forum. Everyone's opinions and points of view were listened to and taken into account and the ultimate decision to open for 4 weeks was supported fully by all. I think this is a textbook example of the collaboration that has taken place between the Schools Service and headteachers over the past 6 months. I would also argue, that even if a different decision had been made, I would have absolute faith in the School Service team that the final decision had been made for the right reasons. Throughout this period of uncertainty, what has shone through is everyone's determination that the needs of the all children across the authority must always come first.
- Clear and well discussed provision. Officers listened to what was happening at school level and adjusted/ supported.
- We trialled face to face lessons during the back to school weeks with 2 staff providing 5 lessons per day. It was successful enabling us to reach all learners.
- This time was planned for in a mutual manner with the central aim of essentially allowing children to access the school environment and staff the critical time to plan for a full time return to school in September. Decisions were made collaboratively and support and guidance from the School Service was exemplary.
- Information was provided regularly and with a lot of detail.
- Weekly meetings with Lynette and the team have been invaluable and Heads have been given the opportunity to express opinion on the way forward. We were all consulted on staying open for the 4th week from the very beginning and this gave all schools and especially staff to start preparing for September.
- In the face of such challenges, the service could not be better. As a Head, I feel that I am supported. That is very valuable.
- As a headteacher I felt both supported in my role but also encouraged and involved in discussions. The support given by the local authority has been amazing!
- Excellent collaboration.
- The fourth week was valuable and gave children and staff time to adjust to the return to school and the changes within school. Powys showed flexibility which

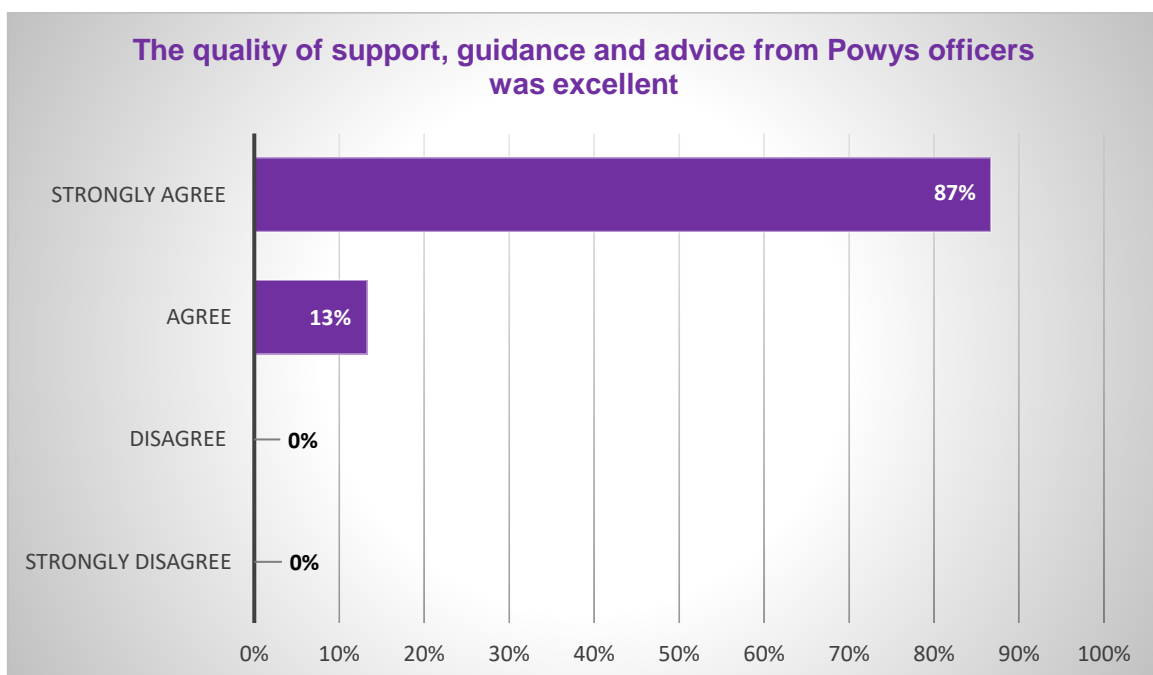
allowed schools to plan time for supporting shielding families as well as those returning to school.

The Re-opening of Schools

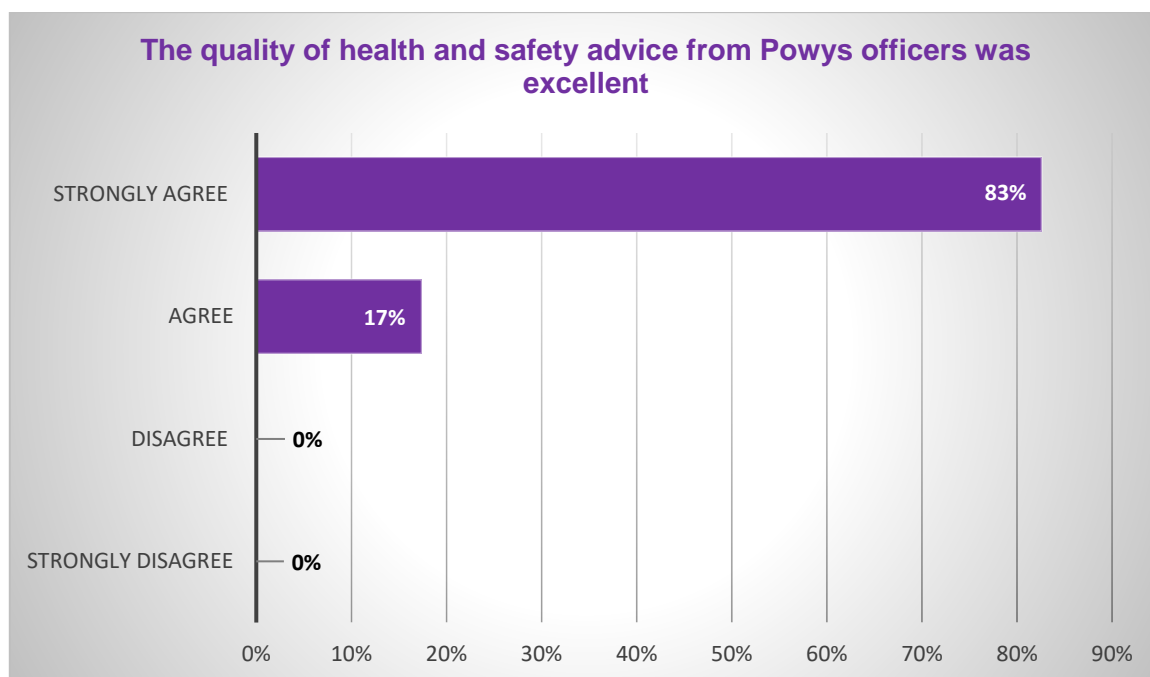
7a. When considering the re-opening of schools, **100%** of respondents agreed that Schools Service provided clear and effective strategic leadership, with **91%** strongly agreeing.



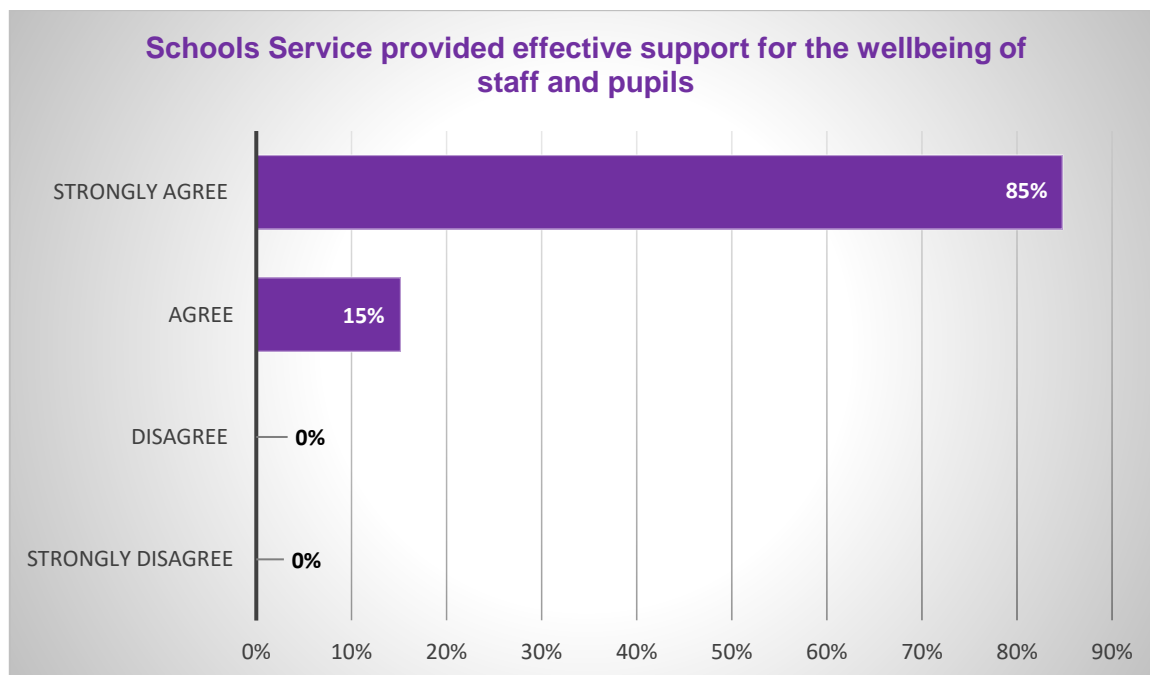
7b. When considering the re-opening of schools, **100%** of respondents agreed that the quality of support, guidance and advice from Powys officers was excellent, with **87%** strongly agreeing.



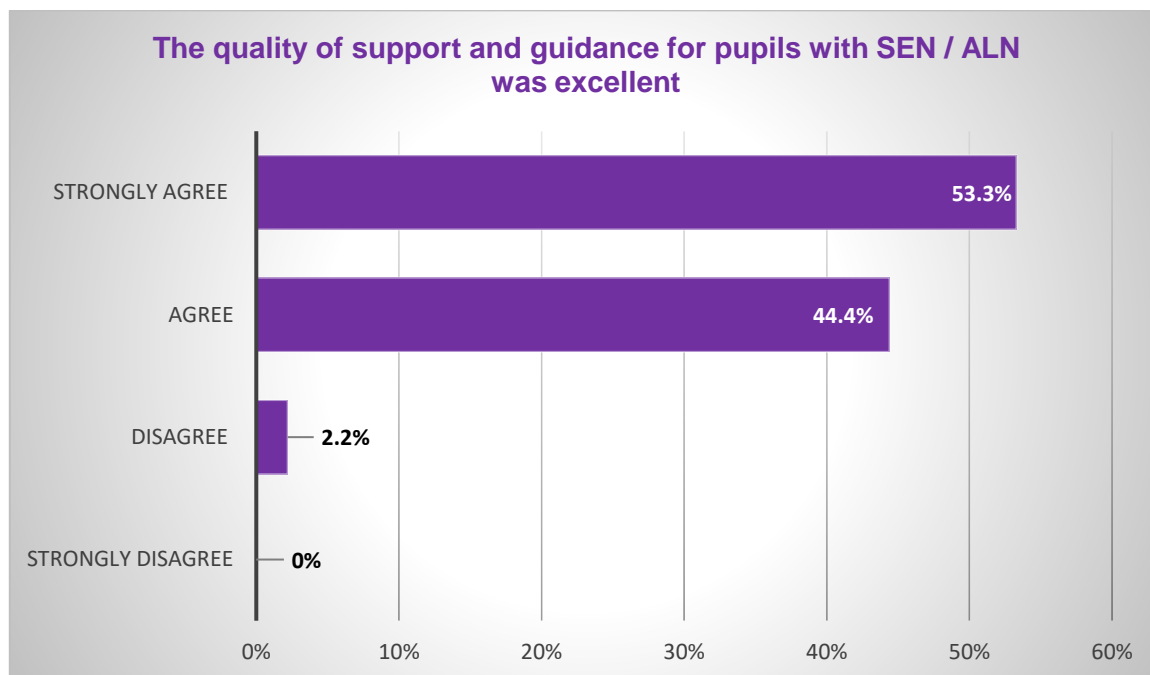
7c. When considering the re-opening of schools, **100%** of respondents agreed that the quality of health and safety advice from Powys officers was excellent, with **83%** strongly agreeing.



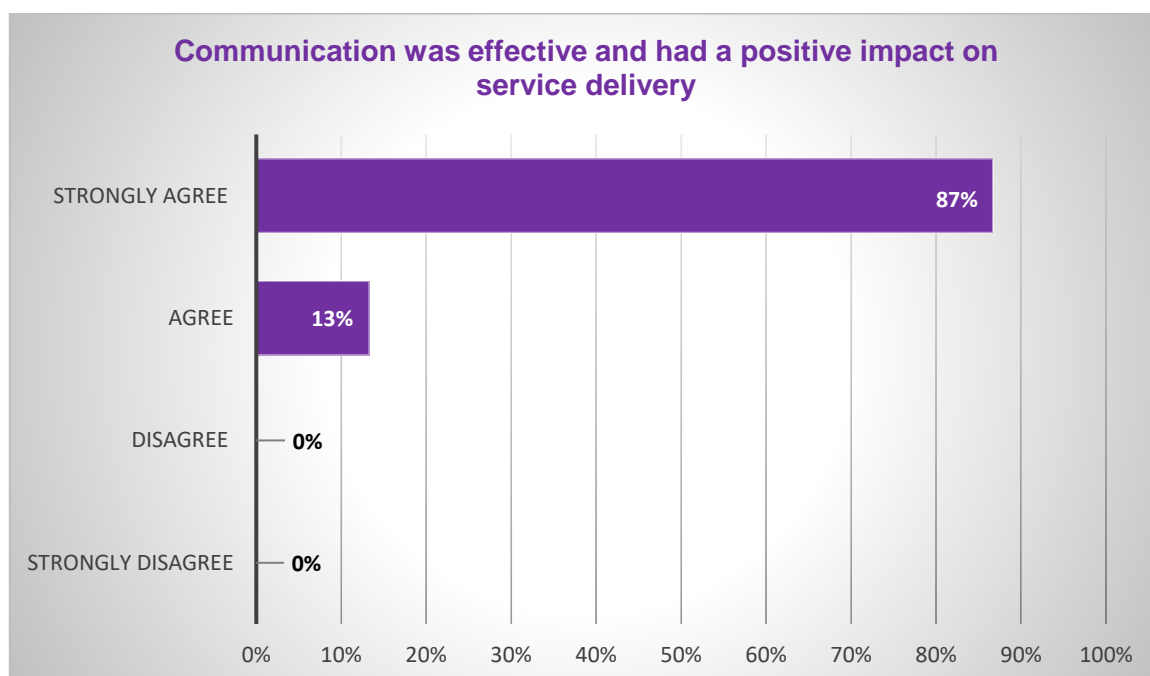
7d. When considering the re-opening of schools, **100%** of respondents agreed that Schools Service provided effective support for the wellbeing of staff and pupils, with **85%** strongly agreeing.



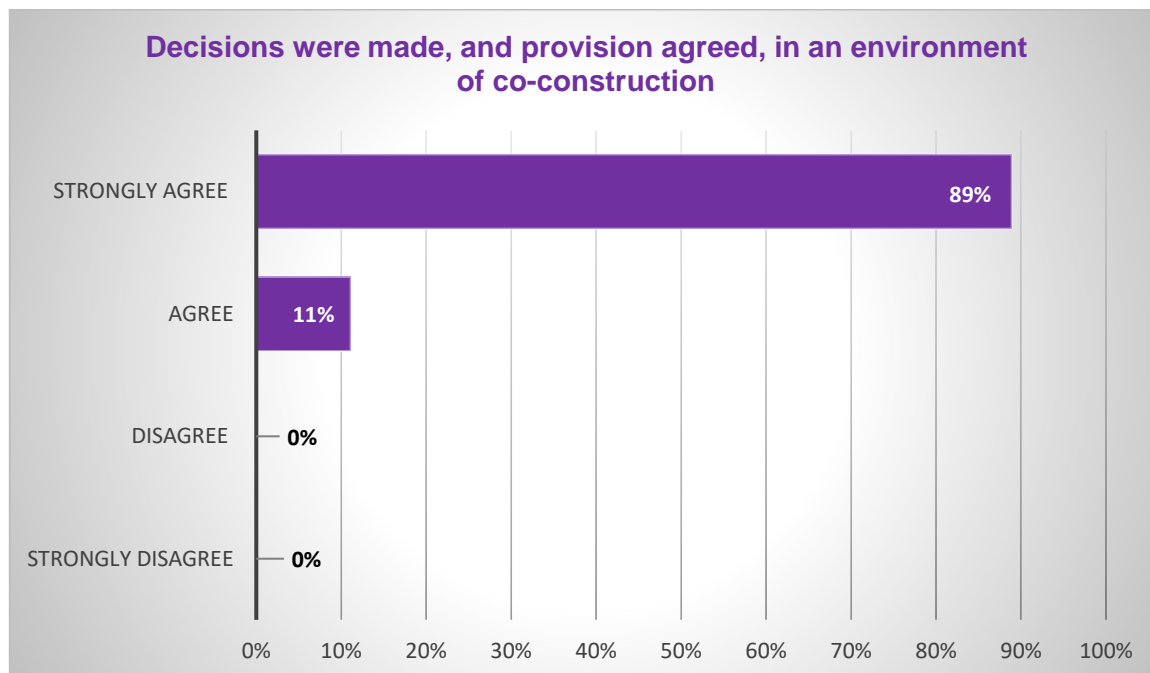
7e. When considering the re-opening of schools, **98%** of respondents agreed that the quality of support and guidance for pupils with SEN / ALN was excellent, with **53.3%** strongly agreeing.



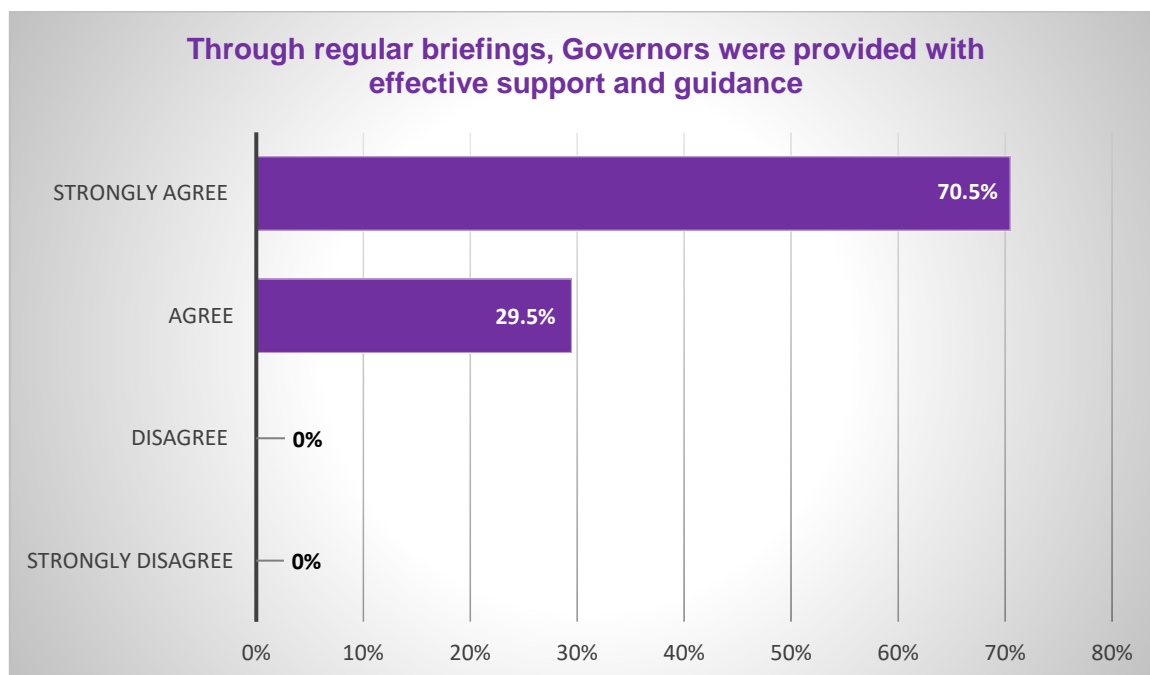
7f. When considering the re-opening of schools, **100%** of respondents agreed that communication was effective and had a positive impact on service delivery, with **87%** strongly agreeing.



7e. When considering 'Check In, Catch Up and Prepare', **100%** of respondents agreed that decisions were made, and provision agreed, in an environment of co-construction, with **89%** strongly agreeing.



7f. When considering 'Check In, Catch Up and Prepare', **100%** of respondents agreed that through regular briefings, Governors were provided with effective support and guidance, with **70.5%** strongly agreeing.



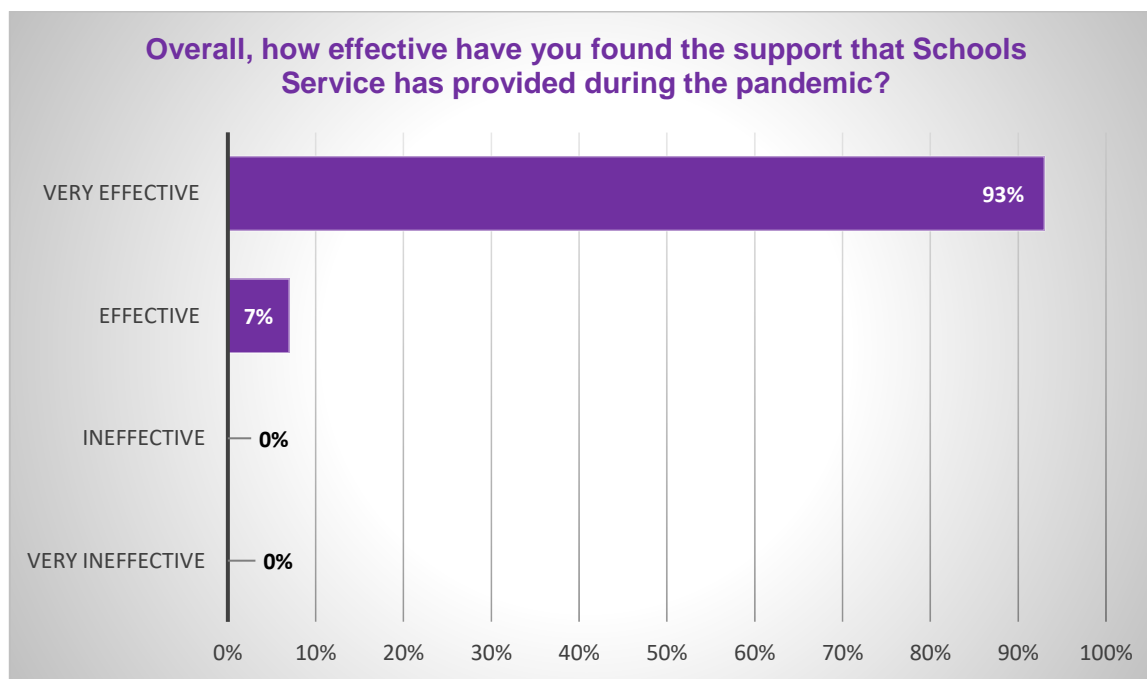
8. Headteachers provided the following additional comments about Schools Service support in respect of the re-opening of schools:

- As before, headteachers have met on a very regular basis with Lynette and her team of officers to plan effectively for reopening. All officers are extremely quick in responding to queries and offer to offer advice. We are continuing to meet weekly to discuss issues as they arise and communication from the LA is regular and clear.
- Powys ensured we were equipped before the summer in order to re-open so that Staff could actually have a summer break. Since re-opening the guidance has continued to inform us fully.
- This was made much easier due to all the hard work put in by everyone during the 4 weeks in school before the summer break. It gave all schools the opportunity to work on the risk assessments in preparation for a smooth return in September.
- No stone was left unturned. Even down to the finer details, schools service has been thorough in the planning for return to schools. The support to every school is clear and highly effective.
- I believe that the decision to make 1st and 2nd September preparation days was essential. Without these, heads would have had to spend considerable amounts of the shortened summer holiday in preparation, and staff would not have been involved in the plans as they should have been. This would have resulted in reduced understanding and consequently reduced safety for the staff and children. The clear expectations in the form of press releases etc to parents has provided a very considerable support to heads, who have been able to address parental disquiet with evidence that this is the expectation of Powys and/or Welsh Govt and not just a whim of the school.
- The most important factor through this time has been that the officers from the schools' service have 'got our backs'. Any well informed decision that we make, as heads, is fully supported by officers. We can approach the change with the utmost confidence which ... of course ... helps our pupils and parents which is crucial to all of this.
- My Chair has been very pleased with the level of communication that he has had and it has helped him to support our school. Again, regular communication has been the key. SMT also ensured that Heads were contacted as little as possible in the summer break, so they considered our wellbeing after such a difficult term.
- Again, communication has been excellent, queries (no matter how small), as answered promptly and professional. There is a real sense of teamwork and pride in the work we are carrying in the local authority. I also know that the weekly Chair of Governor meetings with Schools Service have been appreciated.
- Michael Gedrim has been a strong and consistent support throughout this period of challenge. While all Officers have stood up, he has been a voice of reason and common sense.
- Once again the re-opening of school has been planned for in a manner in which schools have felt supported and listened to. Channels of communications have been clear and the speed and clarity of response admirable. Regular headteachers' meetings have ensured that all schools have the same key messages in a timely fashion and concerns and queries can be answered immediately.

- I feel there were a lot more mixed messages about full reopening and some information was not clear. I am still confused on what guidance we are to follow - I thought Welsh Government but there appears to be union information that goes against this.
- The continued support from the local authority has been so valuable; from weekly heads meetings, phone calls from challenge advisers, continued delivery of PPE resources, governor briefings and so much more.
- All areas of re-opening in September were planned at an early stage so that by the end of July Heads and staff had plans and RA in place. Effective use of Heads time was utilised by the Schools Service in a professional manner taking into account views from all stakeholders. The Schools Service is very well led with a team that is supportive and productive.
- The officers of the authority have worked incredibly hard to assist school leaders with interpreting ever changing guidance and dealing with staff/union concerns.
- I am pleased that there has been continuity of support - our Team around the Cluster support officer continues to support us.

Overall Effectiveness of Support

9. When considering the overall effectiveness of the support that Schools Service has provided schools during the pandemic, **100%** of respondents agreed that through regular briefings, Governors were provided with effective support and guidance, with **33%** strongly agreeing.



10. Headteachers provided the following additional comments about the overall support that Schools Services has provided during the pandemic:

- The LA was very proactive from the start of lockdown and communication has been excellent throughout. Schools have been very fortunate to have such a committed team working for us and with us and this has continued into the Autumn term.
- Cannot fault the L.A. All personnel have supported and guided in an outstanding manner.
- The leadership in this area, has been outstanding. There is a culture of collaboration and trust, which wasn't there before. We feel as headteachers that our views are valued and that they will be taken into account to improve outcomes for everyone.
- Proud to be part of Powys Schools Service - our children are very fortunate to have such an effective team working for them and we are equally as fortunate to have such wonderful children to serve.
- Regular (weekly) meetings throughout school closure and again this term has been very valuable to ensure all heads have up to date guidance and also serve as an opportunity to share across all schools.

- The support received from the school service has been second to none. The officers have always responded very quickly to any emails, with constructive supportive advice. Where they did not know the answer, they went away and found out. On the occasion I needed urgent advice outside of the school day, I was able to speak to an appropriately informed officer by telephone at home and receive the advice that enabled me to make an informed decision. I have hardly needed to use this, but it has been reassuring to know it has been available. The regular briefings to cluster leads from relevant officers enabled a clear line of communication, which passed both ways, whilst enabling the majority of heads to continue with the day to day running of hubs, preparations etc. The more TEAMS meetings involving relevant officers and head teachers has been an excellent feature of the support provided to us and is something I would like to see continued moving forward - it has certainly brought us all closer together. Thank you to everyone involved. You have all, very clearly gone above and beyond for the staff, children and families. We are extremely grateful to you.
- Excellent. I am happy to be contacted for more detail should you require it.
- Support has been considered, effective and constant. Powys has worked as a team and it has helped to alleviate stress for HTs during this difficult time as well as ensuring that the learners have had access to learning, either in safe schools or through blended learning. Lynette and her team have worked tirelessly to navigate Powys through the pandemic, and I have felt very well supported, especially when I talk to colleagues from other authorities.
- As a headteacher of 14 years, I have never felt so completely supported in my role by the local authority, both when leading an emergency childcare hub and now that all pupils have returned to school. All officers have shown exceptional leadership and offered clear guidance during a very challenging time. Not only has there been a high level of professional support, I also feel that we have received so much pastoral support and care. The Interim Chief Education Officer has been nothing short of inspirational in her role. She has made herself available all day, every day (including weekends) to offer practical advice and support. If decisions have to be made, she has made them. If information needs to be sought from elsewhere, she has sought it and fed it back to us. She is also not afraid to get her hands dirty and worked at one of the childcare hubs during lock down. She leads by example. One of the most rewarding, possibly surprising developments of recent months have been the regular head teacher meetings via Teams. These meetings have been led by officers, however, as headteachers we all have the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered immediately. It is a completely open forum of 70+ headteachers and officers. These meetings are managed so well! They are purposeful and very effective. I really look forward to them and hope they continue!
- Amazing leadership and collaborative working throughout - the leading light for Wales!
- Support has been excellent on the whole. Lynette has been instrumental and has understood the challenging situation that we face every hour of every day. She has empathy, understanding and knowledge that is key to us as a team. Powys County Council has brought the Schools Service together more than ever – communication has had a significant impact on consistency. Other officers have been excellent in responding to any concerns or ramifications.

- The weekly meetings have been invaluable as things change so quickly. Lynette Lovell has responded to e-mails and text messages promptly. As a result, we all feel valued and trusted.
- Excellent communication. Good use of teams weekly briefings.
- Great collaboration and communication throughout.
- The quick response of the service was excellent. We were given help in a short space of time enabling us to be as efficient as we could be.
- The School Service have provided excellent support and guidance over the pandemic period at all phases. There has been a clear structure and a clear path to support in specific areas which has been easy to manoeuvre. The leadership has allowed for co construction of plans whilst also clearly taking very difficult decisions when the need arose.
- Lynette's meetings were really useful, and it was reassuring to touch base regularly.
- As mentioned above all school service staff have been very supportive. I feel that we are extremely lucky to work within this Authority. Senior leaders are transparent and as headteachers we are kept up to date with any changes / discussions that is going on. I would welcome the continuation of the weekly Headteacher meetings with senior leaders as they are very informative and gives us all an opportunity to raise any issues openly. DIOLCH YN FAWR.
- I think that the support, strategies and systems put in place by Lynette and all of the schools service team have been excellent. As a headteacher this situation has been totally unique and very stressful but I feel that I have been supported throughout - a great job everyone!
- Professionalism at its best.
- The school's service has done a fantastic job and I'm sure all heads would agree.
- Meetings have brought all Heads together across the authority with well led Teams of Heads and advisers working with the Schools Service to produce vital information packs, resources and guidance for all schools. I have been confident in the advice and guidance given and this has resulted in well organised Plans for the safe return to school for all of our members.
- It was - and is - a team effort in Powys and this supports each and every one of us so that no one person is working in isolation. We are a better team for the experiences we have been / going through!
- As an Acting Headteacher I felt fully supported by the Local Authority. Officers and Challenge Advisors were always at hand to provide guidance and support.
- Superb!!! Officers have worked with schools, recognising the issues and fluidity of the situation. Michael Gedrim deserves a special mention!!!

11. Headteachers were asked to provide details of any areas that they felt could be improved upon:

- Keep doing what you are doing!
- None.
- As a head of a school in an extremely busy cluster hub, I know that my staff worked many days across the lockdown. I (and my staff!) are also aware that in other clusters staff were required to work considerably fewer days in the hub, due to the lower take up of places by families. As a result some staff feel aggrieved, and whilst they were prepared to work extended hours, weekends, school holidays and bank holidays earlier in the year to help to get us through the difficulties, I am concerned that if we have to revert to cluster hubs again they will not be as supportive. We are all Powys employees, and all they seek is equity of expectation. I believe it will be vital to review how hubs are staffed should they become necessary moving forward.
- The continuation of regular communication will be crucial over this year.
- I feel there has been a change within the relationship between schools and the Schools Service. We are a partnership; a team, all with the same goals. I am proud to work for Powys and I think that the work of Lynette, as our leader, has been nothing short of inspirational.
- Not relevant.
- Develop a vaccine!!
- The governors briefings were great, they could have started earlier, I know it is a model we are trying to keep moving forward. There are many aspects of this situation that can be used to improve our working in future, the teams meetings were very effective.
- A rota for an emergency 24 hour hotline for officers as it seems to fall mainly on 2 people with clear guidance on when to use it.
- Some departments are still quite slow in replying to e mails (I know that everyone is busy) but doesn't help when you have an enquiry that needs answering before you can plan anything and move on, however on the other hand there are departments now answering e- mails much quicker and as schools I am sure that we would like to thank them immensely.
- None.
- I am happy with the support we have been receiving and would like this to continue. The Schools Service is effectively led.
- If you could eradicate Covid, that would be fabulous! Other than that, please keep up the good work because it is very much appreciated.
- NOTHING.