

SENCOs' views on suggestions made in the 2022 SEND Review



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Introduction

LLENDCIC is the body of 41 training institutions who provide the accredited NASENCo award. This means their training meets standards set by the providers and assessed annually.

The 'SEND Review: Right support, Right Place, Right Time' made several suggestions about the quality of SENCOs and their training.

LLENDCIC commissioned ASK Research to survey SENCOs who had recently received the NASENCo award on some of these suggestions. An online survey was developed collaboratively and a link to it distributed by the training providers through their contact lists and alumni communications.

The survey focused on two main questions:

- 1/What do SENCOs think about the standard of the existing NASENCo award?
- 2/What are their thoughts on proposals to change the award to a National Professional Qualification (NPQ)?

571 responses were received, with **542 responses from SENCOs who hold, or are in the process of gaining, the NASENCo award¹**.

Responses were from practitioners working across all areas of England (see Appendix A).

Findings

We now present the complete findings from these responses. Quotes within this report are from individuals' responses to survey open questions.

QUESTION 1: What did respondents think about the standard of the existing NASENCo award?

The SEND Review states:

“SENCOs’ play a critical role in sharing SEND expertise within schools, providing specialist guidance to the wider school workforce, setting the strategic direction, and making day-to-day provisions to support children and young people with SEND, including those with EHCPs.

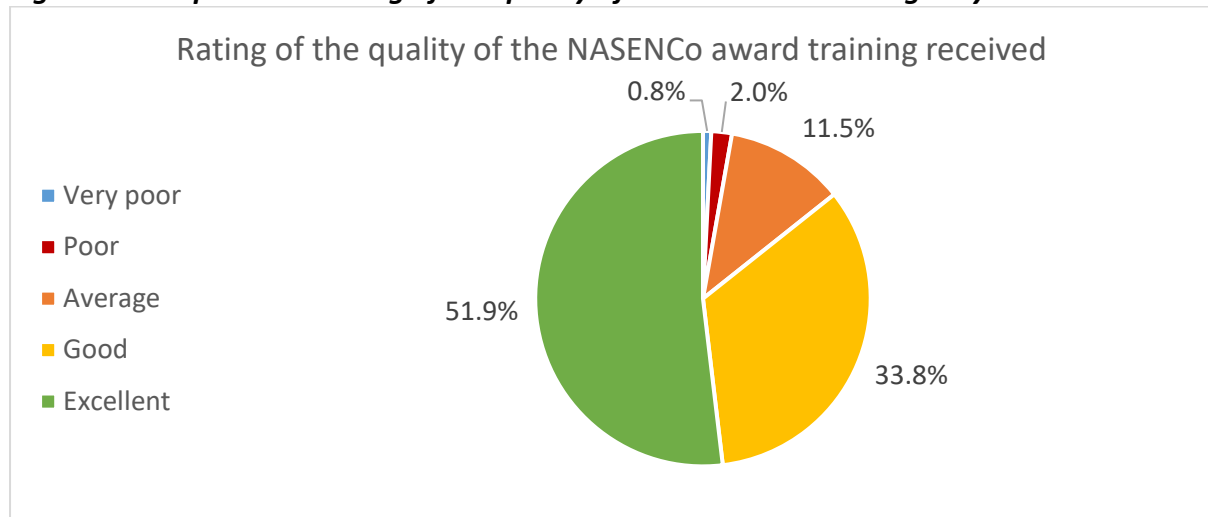
¹ The survey received 571 useable responses, of which 521 were complete responses (filling in all the questions). 95% (n=542) of respondents currently held or are studying for the NASENCo. Those that do not hold or are studying were asked a subset of questions, excluding ones enquiring about their experience of taking the course. The number of these responses are indicated on the subset questions. To assist completion no questions were mandatory.

We recognise that there is variability in terms of SENCOs' experience of the NASENCo and whether it provides the knowledge and skills needed for the role"².

SENCOs we heard from rated the quality of their NASENCo award training highly.

86% of respondents (n=431) described the course they undertook as Good or Excellent (Figure 1)³.

Figure 1 – Respondents rating of the quality of the NASENCo training they received



Source: LLENDCIC survey conducted by ASK Research (May 2022), based on 503 responses (39 no responses)

In terms of the importance of the NASENCo award on the SENCO role:

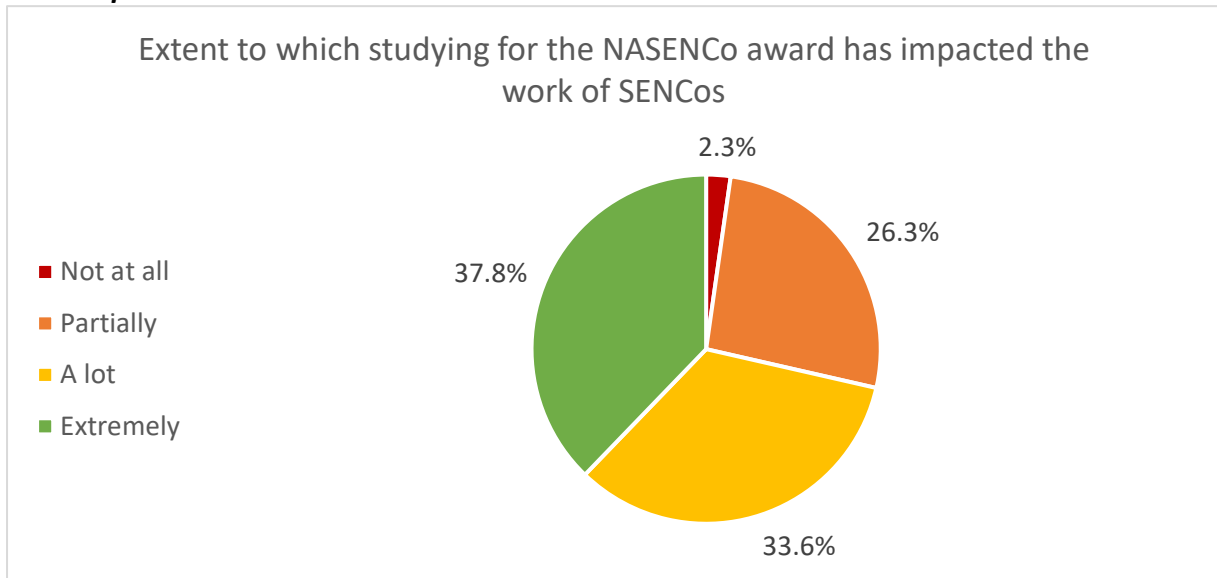
- 71% (n=380) felt it impacted the work of SENCOs a lot or extremely (Figure 2)
- 85% (n=482) agreed or strongly agreed that the NASENCo award gives status to the SENCO role (Figure 3).

² p 44

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1063620/SEND_review_right_support_right_place_right_time_accessible.pdf

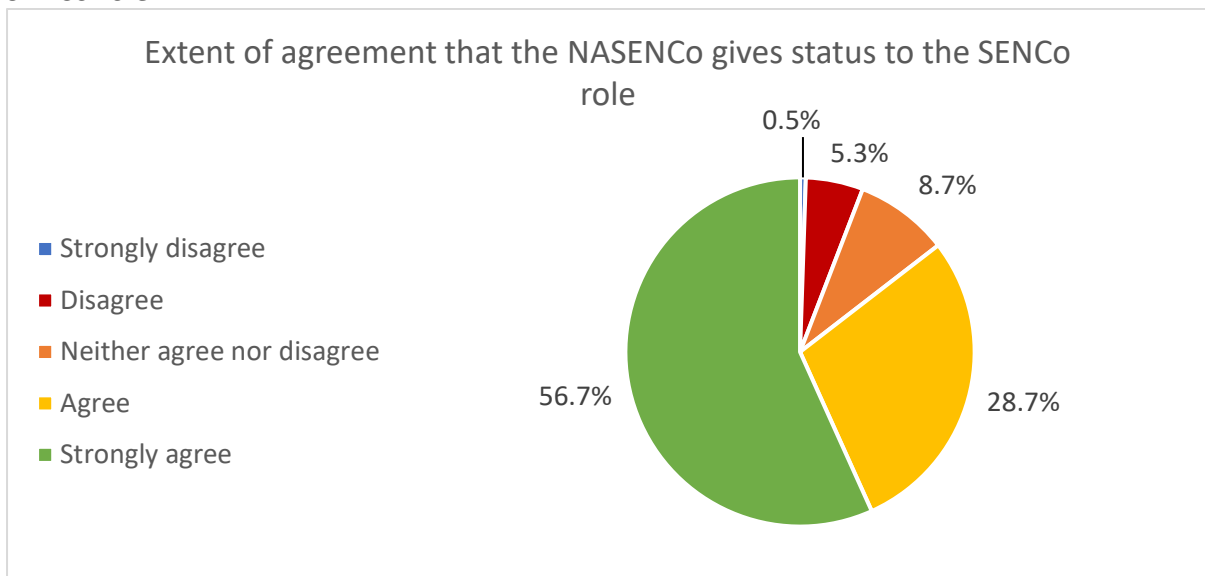
³ Respondents who rated their training as less than Good were significantly more likely to answer all of the questions about the effects of the award less favourably than other respondents

Figure 2 – Degree to which respondents thought having the NASENCo award impacts on SENCo's practice



Source: LLENDIC survey conducted by ASK Research (May 2022), based on 532 responses (10 no responses)

Figure 3 – Degree to which respondents thought the NASENCo provides status to the SENCo role



Source: LLENDIC survey conducted by ASK Research (May 2022), based on 564 responses (7 no responses)

In terms of the types and range of impacts the award has on SENCOs: (Appendix Chart B)

- 88% (n=475) said it developed their understanding of the legal and statutory responsibilities for SENCOs well or very well
- 84% (n=457) said it helped develop their understanding of inclusive education practice well or very well
- 85% (n=462) said it gave them an understanding of translating theory into practice well or very well
- 83% (n=451) felt it gave them critical reflection skills well or very well

- 76% (n=413) said it benefited them by giving them the skills to produce a portfolio of practice well or very well
- 78% (n=424) felt it provided the skills of reviewing academic literature well or very well
- 78% (n=423) felt it gave them in-depth subject knowledge well or very well
- 75% (n=406) said it developed their research skills well or very well.

Overall, respondents thought the NASENCO award gave them the: (Appendix chart C)

- Knowledge and skills to work with and influence strategic leaders within their setting well or very well (71%, n=387)
- Knowledge and understanding to support families to navigate the SEND system well or very well (64%, n=345)
- Knowledge and skills to develop meaningful use of pupil voice to improve outcomes for pupils with SEND well or very well (71%, n=381)
- Knowledge and expertise to fulfil the SENCo role well or very well (65%, n=352)

The majority of respondents thought that the award gave them the operational skills and understanding as a SENCo to: (Appendix Chart D)

- Understand well or very well how special educational needs and disabilities can affect pupils' learning (75%, n=394)
- Share SEND expertise with their setting well or very well (73%, n=384)
- Provide specialist guidance to the wider school workforce well or very well (68%, n=355)
- Make day to day provision to improve the outcomes of pupil with SEND well or very well (66%, n=349)
- Develop effective recording systems for monitoring the progress of pupils with SEND well or very well (63%, n= 333)
- Support the identification of SEND well or very well (63%, n=331)

Additionally the award was felt to support SENCo's leadership skills and understanding to: (Appendix Chart E)

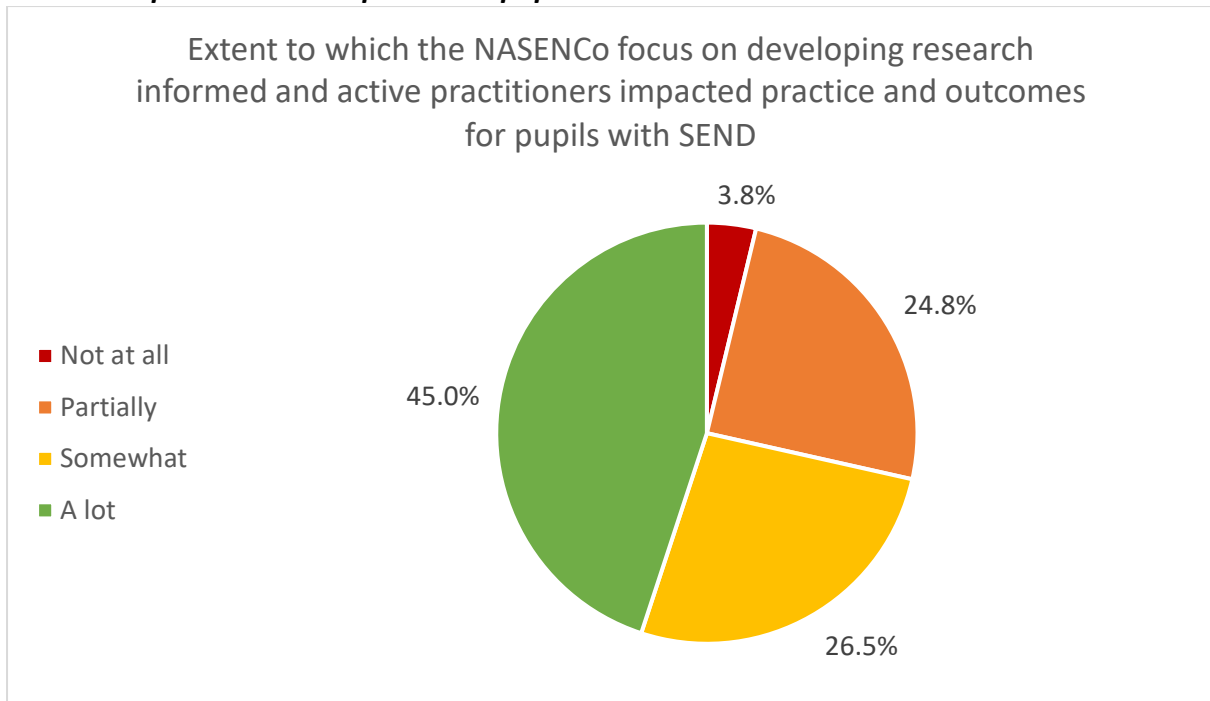
- Set the strategic direction for SEND in their setting well or very well (71%, n=367)
- Work collaboratively with a range of professionals to improve outcomes for pupils with SEND well or very well (71%, n=364)
- Develop the skills of the wider school workforce well or very well (66%, n=341)
- Deploy staff to improve outcomes for pupils with SEND well or very well (67%, n=344)
- Monitor and analyse provision, including effectiveness and value for money, well or very well (60%, n=310)

When asked to detail if the award had helped them in their role in any other ways 18% of respondents (n=93) suggested that studying for the NASENCo award had put them in touch with a network (of peers and experts) who they could consult for advice and support.

“[The award] enabled me to work with other SENCoS going through the same experiences. We still regularly communicate three years after finishing to ask questions or advice on individuals, resources, strategies, etc. as lots of the role of SENCo is about learning on the job and working collaboratively” (SENCo, North-West)

72% of respondents (n=361) felt that the NASENCo award’s focus on developing research-informed and active practitioners impacted practice resulting in better outcomes for pupils with SEND a lot or somewhat (Figure 4).

Figure 4 – Degree to which respondents felt the focus on developing research informed and active practitioners impacted on pupils with SEND



Source: LLENDCIC survey conducted by ASK Research (May 2022), based on 505 responses (37 no responses)

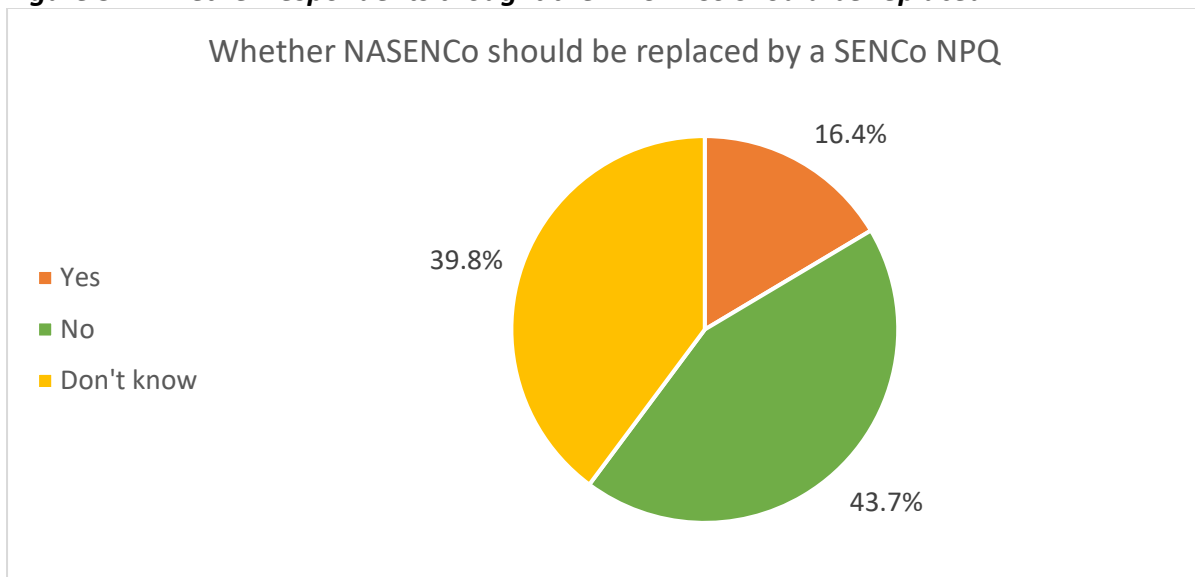
QUESTION 2: What did respondents think about proposals to change the SENCo qualification?

The SEND Review suggests:

“To improve the level of expertise and leadership amongst SENCos, we are proposing to introduce a new Leadership SENCo NPQ. The NPQ would replace the current NASENCo, bringing the SENCo qualification in line with other teaching training. The NPQ would help improve SENCos’ leadership expertise, making them well-placed to sit on a senior leadership team and inform the strategic direction of a setting.

Consultation Question 9: To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should introduce a new mandatory SENCo NPQ to replace the NASENCo?

Figure 5 – Whether respondents thought the NASENCo should be replaced



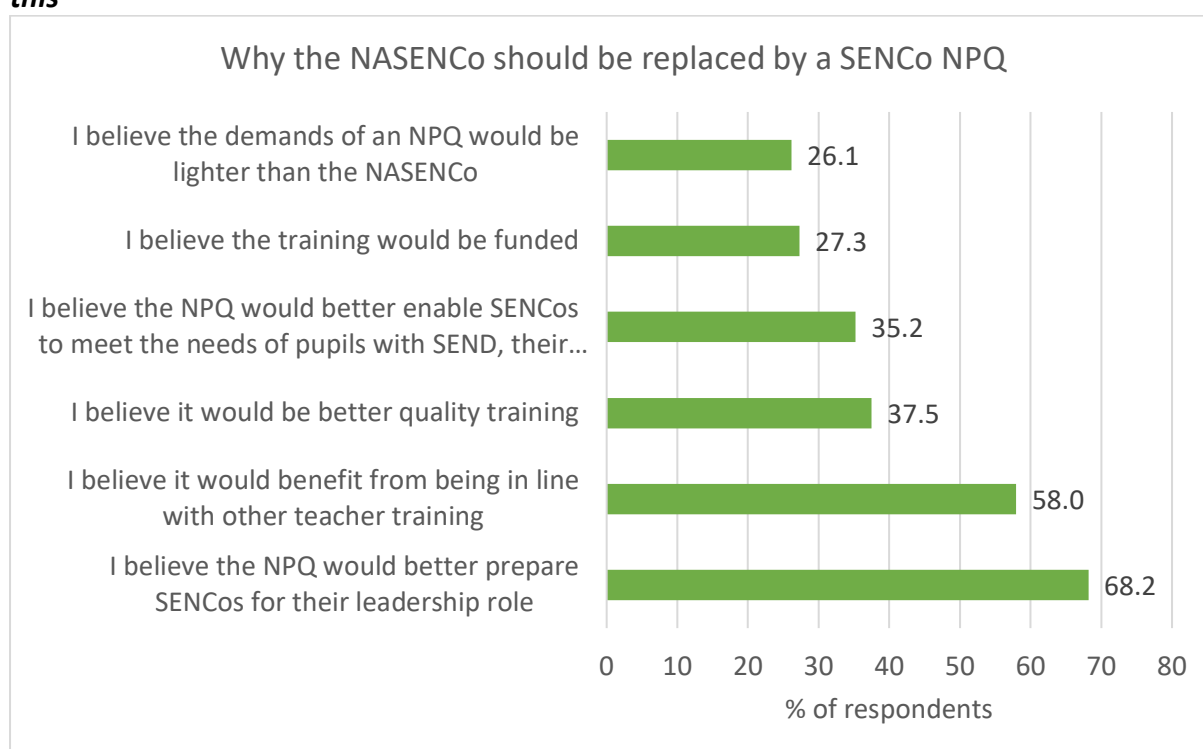
Source: LLENDIC survey conducted by ASK Research (May 2022), based on 535 responses (36 no responses)

Only 16% of SENCos we surveyed (n=88) agreed that the NASENCo award should be replaced by a Leadership SENCO NPQ⁴ (Figure 5). Of note was that respondents who rated their training as less than ‘Good’ were significantly more likely than others to agree that the award should be replaced.

Of these 88 respondents: (Figure 6)

- 68% (n= 60) thought that the NPQ would better prepare SENCoS for their leadership role
- 58% (n=51) thought that it would benefit from being aligned with other teacher qualifications
- 38% (n=33) said that the NPQ would be better quality training
- 35% (n=31) considered that it would better enable SENCoS to meet the needs of pupils with SEND and their families.
- 27% (n=24) supported the change to a NPQ as they believed the training would be funded and 26% (n=23) because they thought it would be less demanding for them to undertake than the NASENCo award.

Figure 6 – For those who agreed the NASENCo should be replaced, reasons they thought this



Respondents could select multiple options

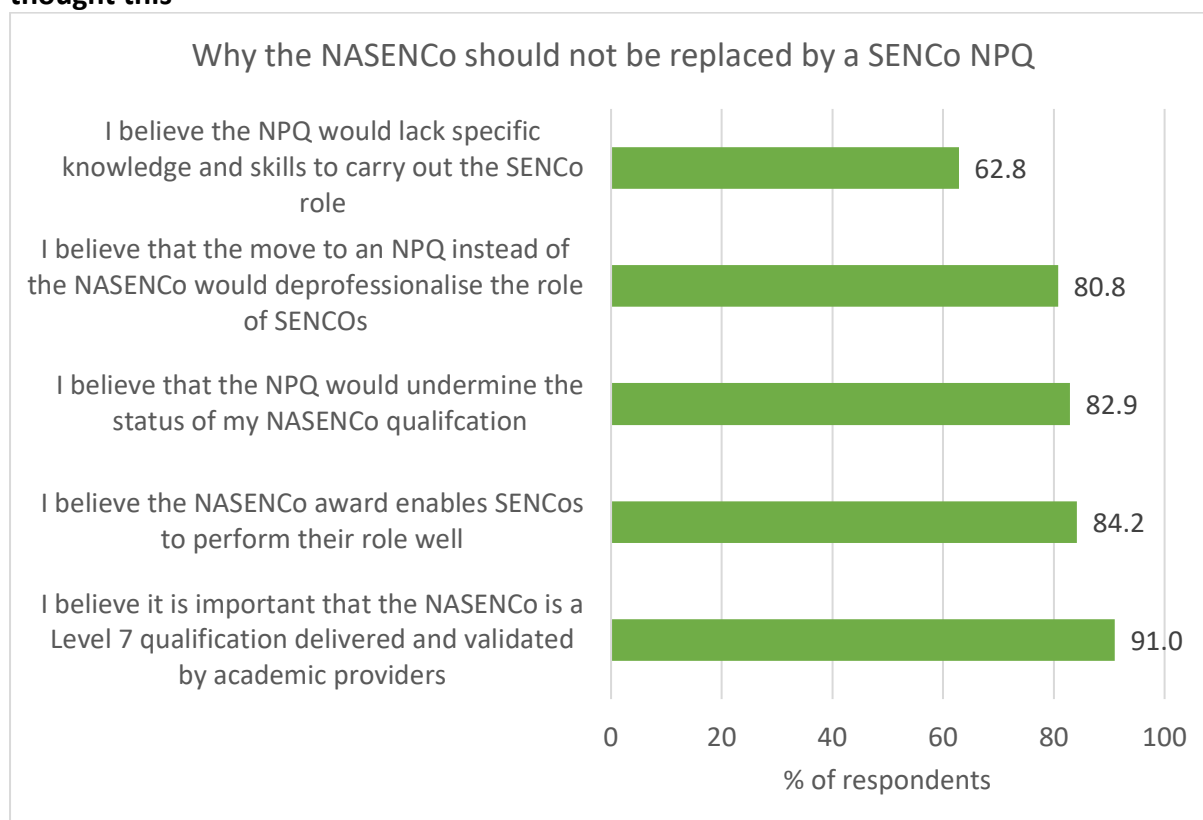
Source: LLENDIC survey conducted by ASK Research (May 2022), based on 88 responses

44% of respondents **did not** agree that the NASENCo award should be replaced by a NPQ and a further 40% did not know.

Of the 234 respondents who thought the award should not be changed: (Figure 7)

- 91% (n=213) felt it was important that the award stayed at Level 7 and was delivered and validated by academic providers
- 84% (n=197) thought the NASENCo already supports SENCOs to carry out their role
- 83% (n=194) felt the switch to a NPQ would undermine the status of those with the existing NASENCo award and 81% (n=189) felt it would de-professionalise the SENCo role
- 63% (n=147) thought that the NPQ would lack the specific knowledge and skills to carry out the SENCO role

Figure 7 – For those who did not think the NASENCo should be replaced, reasons they thought this



Respondents could select multiple options

Source: LLENDIC survey conducted by ASK Research (May 2022), based on 337 responses

There was a high level of uncertainty about the detail of the NPQ qualification and what it would mean for those who already hold the NASENCo award.

“Would the NPQ be looked at as ‘better’ by employers? How would a NPQ for SEN impact on NPQSL [A national professional qualification in senior leadership]? I have NPQSL which was completed with a project focused on SEN, how would this differ from a NPQ for SEN?” (SENCo, North-East)

Other key thoughts from respondents included that the existing award meets SENCOs needs, that dropping the level of the qualification risks undermining the SENCo role, potentially having a negative knock-on effect on recruitment and retention, that NPQs are a

lower quality of qualification and would not adequately support SENCoS in their day to day role and that the existing qualification should be given more recognition and status.

- Benefits of the existing NASENCo award

“It gives you an in-depth study of the role - meeting with other SENCoS develops expertise. It gives you a high level of study looking at research and developing critical thinking. It gives you time to develop your skills and to look at areas to develop which supports self-reflection. The NASENCo award gives credibility to the role and status. At a time when SEND is at its most challenging it would be a shame to demote the status and role of the award.” (SENCo, London)

- Need for other changes to support the SENCo role, instead of focus on their training

“Expectations and guidelines around working conditions for SENCoS are as important as training in terms of keeping SENCoS in the job.” (SENCo, South-East)

“SENCoS are not failing - they are often the most knowledgeable and inclusive teachers in school - the government has provided a lack of provision and resources for a number of years for children with high needs. The NPQ will not change what SENCoS need to know, the knowledge and evidence-based research remains the same as long as you keep up to date to inform practice - it is just a policy designed to placate those who feel they need to assign blame” (SENCo, Yorks & Humber)

“I believe the current award more than equips new SENCoS to do their role effectively, but the lack of protected time to do so, for many, has much greater impact. Redeploying funds and promoting or legislating protected time and adequate money in school budgets to allow provision support, and more detailed monitoring, early interventions and opportunities for supporting school staff would have a greater and more immediate impact. Currently SENCo time is recommended but not written as necessary, therefore not prioritised by senior leaders.” (SENCo, North-East)

“Support and further develop the NASENCo qualification and raise its profile rather than replace it and make it worthless.” (SENCo, South-East)

- A lower level qualification reduces the status of SENCoS

“The NASENCo award enables SENCoS to feel valued within not only the course but by colleagues and other professionals. By reducing the level of the qualification from 7 to 3 which is what is proposed with the introduction of an NPQ for SEND there is a real concern that it is going to result in a majority of SENCoS feel undervalued and demotivated. Dropping the level of the qualification by 4 points is ludicrous and only serves to make SENCoS feel worthless.” (SENCo, North-East)

“I feel that diminishing the requirements of the SENCo qualification is a hugely backward step in ensuring equal rights and inclusive practice for pupils with SEND. I also feel it makes my level 7 qualification worth very much less as the importance and strategic role of SENCos will be dramatically reduced. SENCos will not be seen as a leadership role.”

(SENCo, South-East)

“A level 7 qualification is required to authorise Access arrangements for testing, [SENCos not having this] would mean additional cost for schools to engage an external professional.” (SENCo, East)

“SENCo is already a difficult role in school, already undervalued by other professionals. A move to NPQ would undervalue it further” (Former SENCo)

- **Concerns about the status and quality of NPQs**

“Frequently, whichever one of my staff attends NPQ training, they have little to say about how well it prepares them for their role” (SENCo, West Mids)

“NPQ’s do not offer academic rigour. They are also highly impersonal, not delivered by experts and trainers lack local and specialised knowledge”.
(SENCo, West Mids)

“Having completed an NPQ I did not find this anywhere near as useful as the NASENCo award. I am SO proud of my NASENCo due to the status it holds.” (SENCo, South-East)

Conclusions

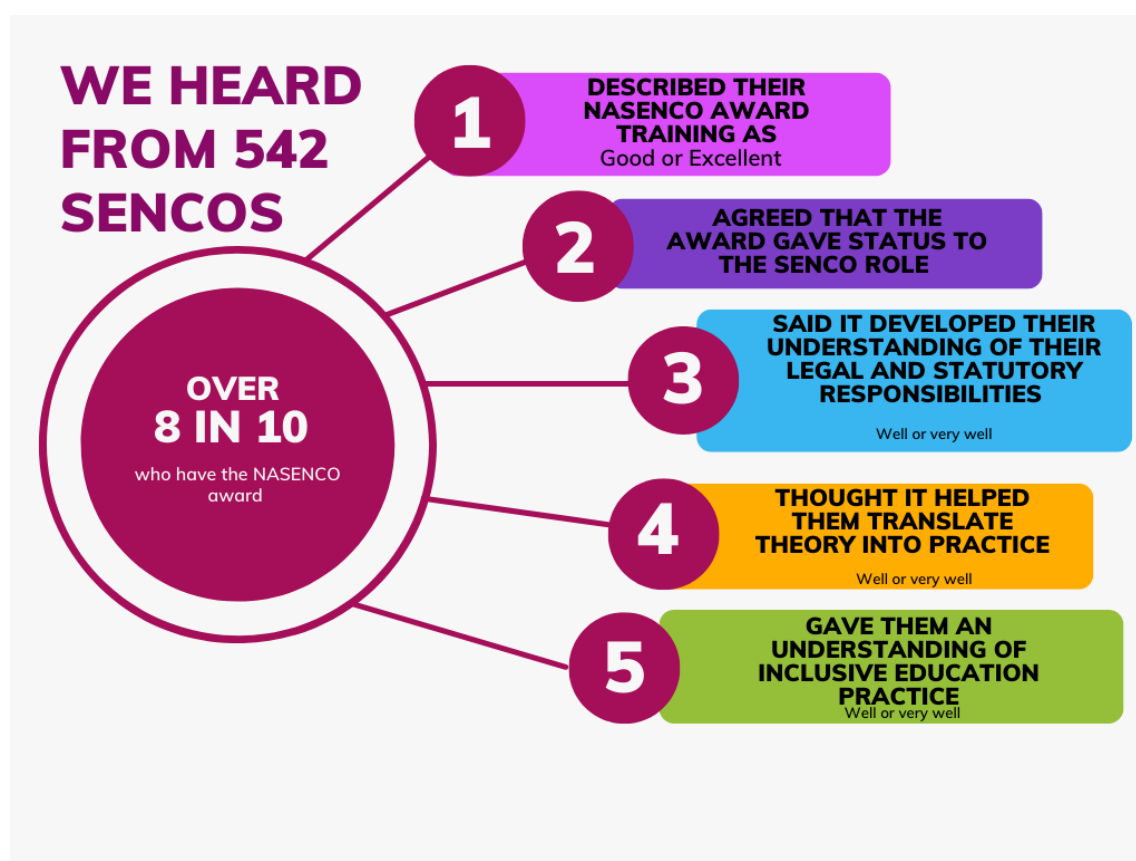
The Government's 'SEND Review: Right support, Right Place, Right Time' stated:

*“there is **variability** in terms of SENCo's' experience of the NASENCo and **whether it provides the knowledge and skills needed for the role**”*

and

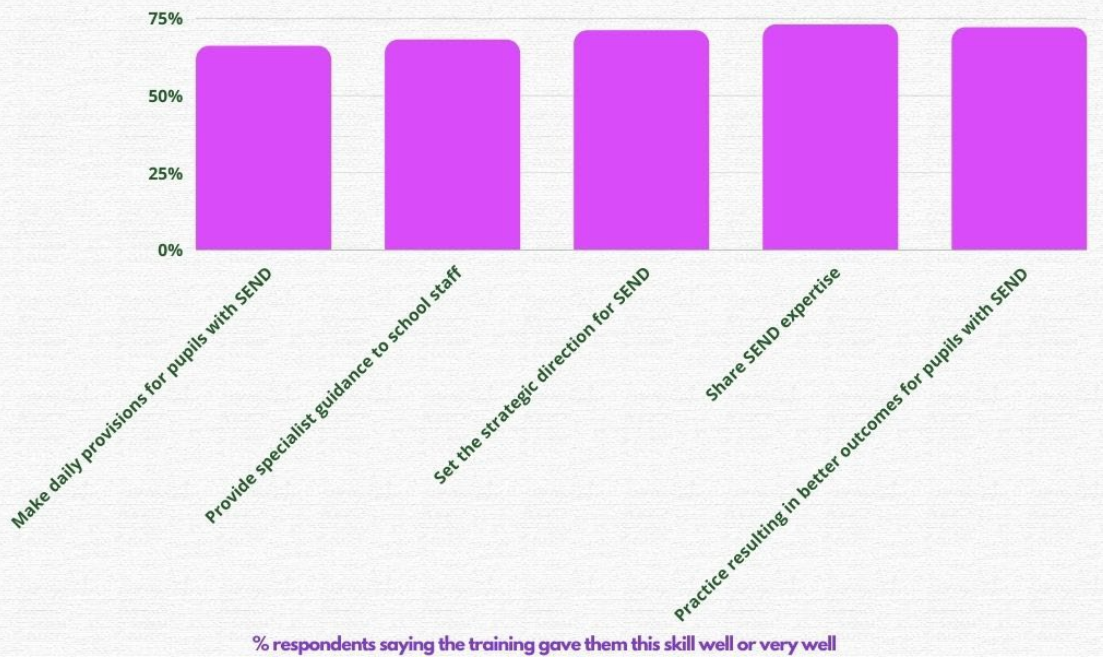
*“we are proposing to introduce a new Leadership SENCo NPQ [which] would **replace the current NASENCo**”*

Our findings show that the overwhelming majority of SENCos who have recently undertaken the NASENCo award found it a positive experience.



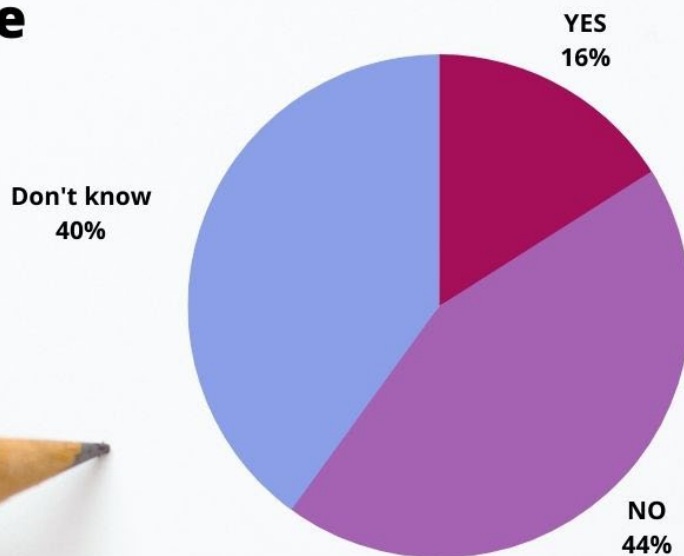
They also detailed the ways in which the training positively impacted on the knowledge and skills needed for the role, leading to better outcomes for pupils with SEND.

Impacts of the NASENCo award on SENCOs



In direct response to Consultation Question 9 in the Review, there was little support for the replacement of the NASENCo award with a Leadership SENCo NPQ.

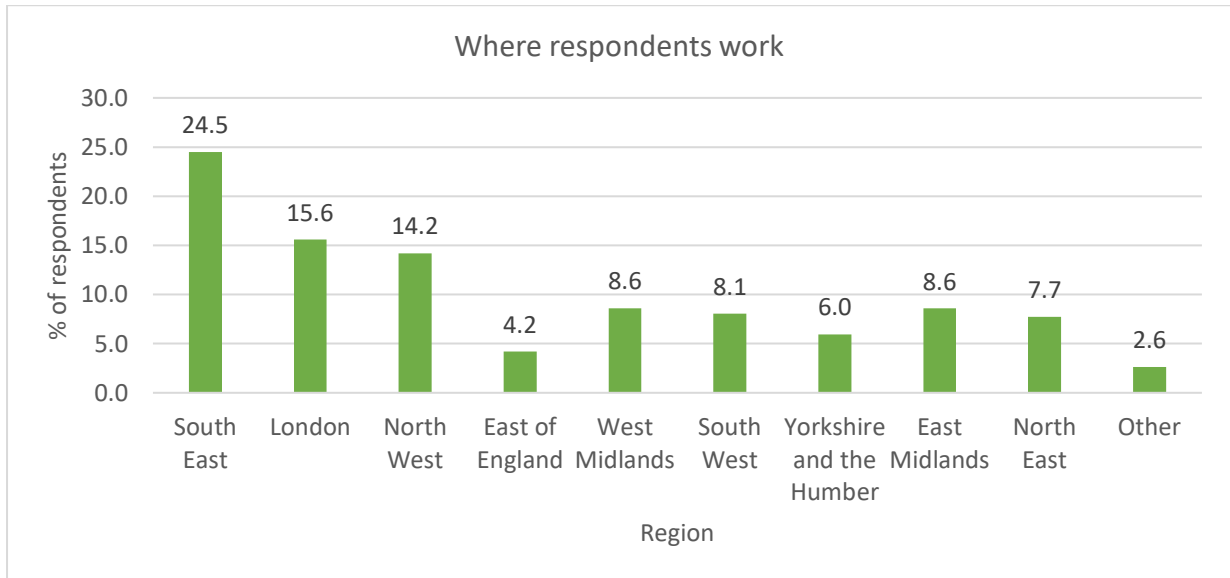
Do SENCOs agree with the proposal to replace the NASENCo award with a NPQ?



It is not clear on what evidence the claims made in the SEND Review are based, but our data appear to show that amongst current SENCOs there is little support either for the idea that the existing qualification is not suitable or that it needs replacing with a NPQ. Comments suggest that SENCOs believe there are much more pressing issues for the SEND system and their role which the SEND Review proposals fail to address, such as adequate time to carry out their duties and greater respect for their profession.

APPENDICES

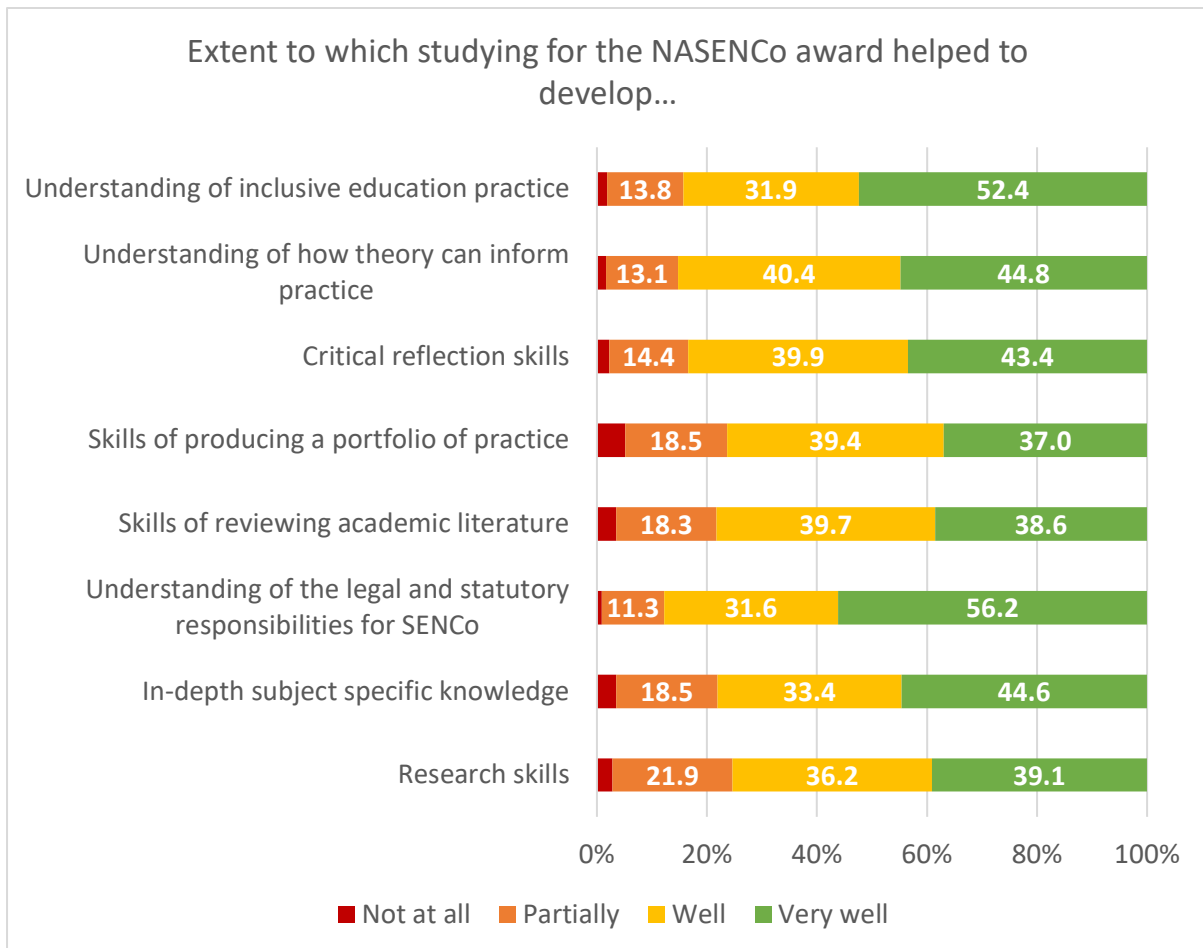
Chart A



Source: LLENDIC survey conducted by ASK Research (May 2022), based on 571 responses

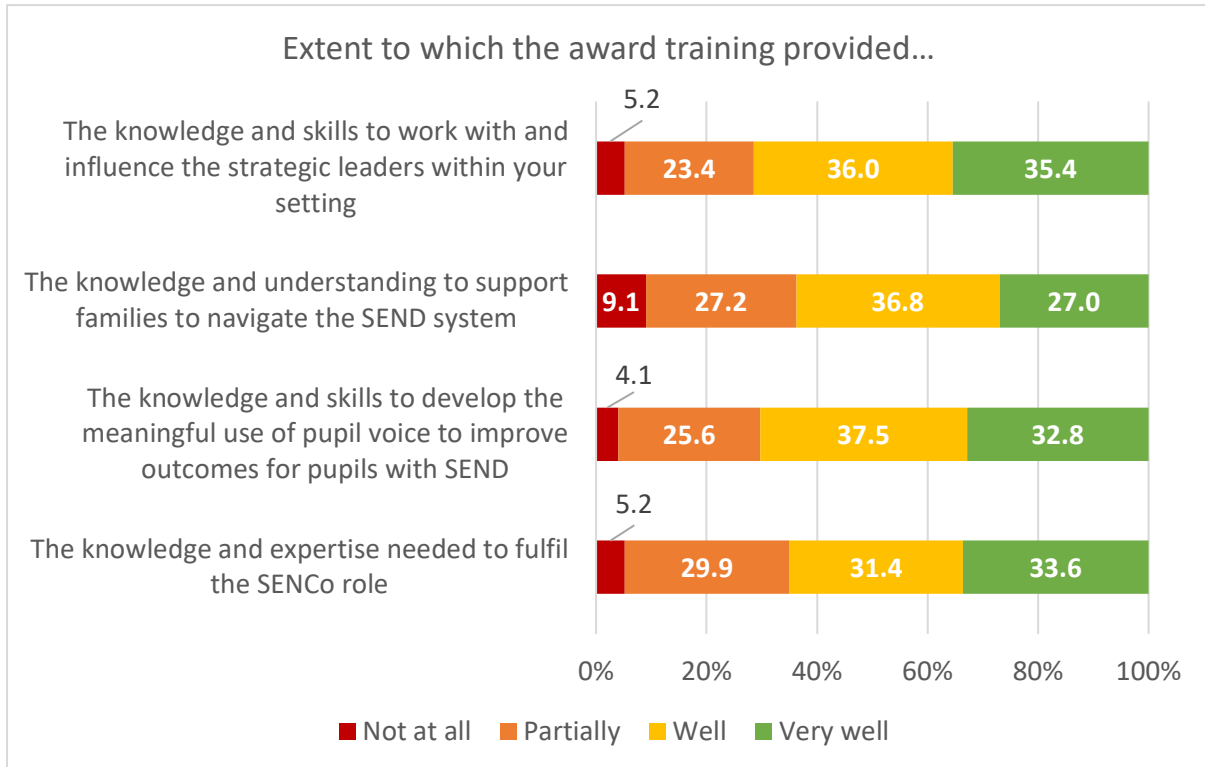
Note: 'other' regions included the Middle East, Northern Ireland and Spain

Chart B



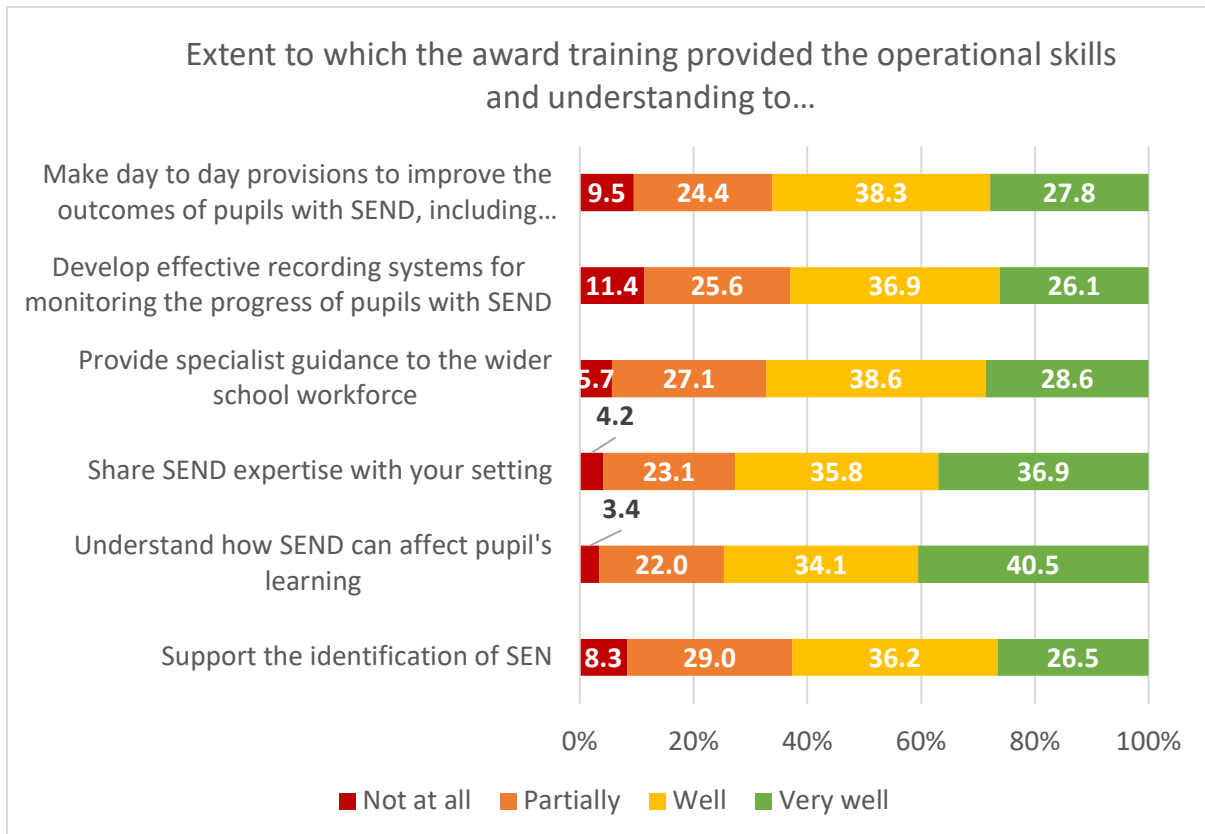
Source: LLENDIC survey conducted by ASK Research (May 2022), based on 542 responses

Chart C



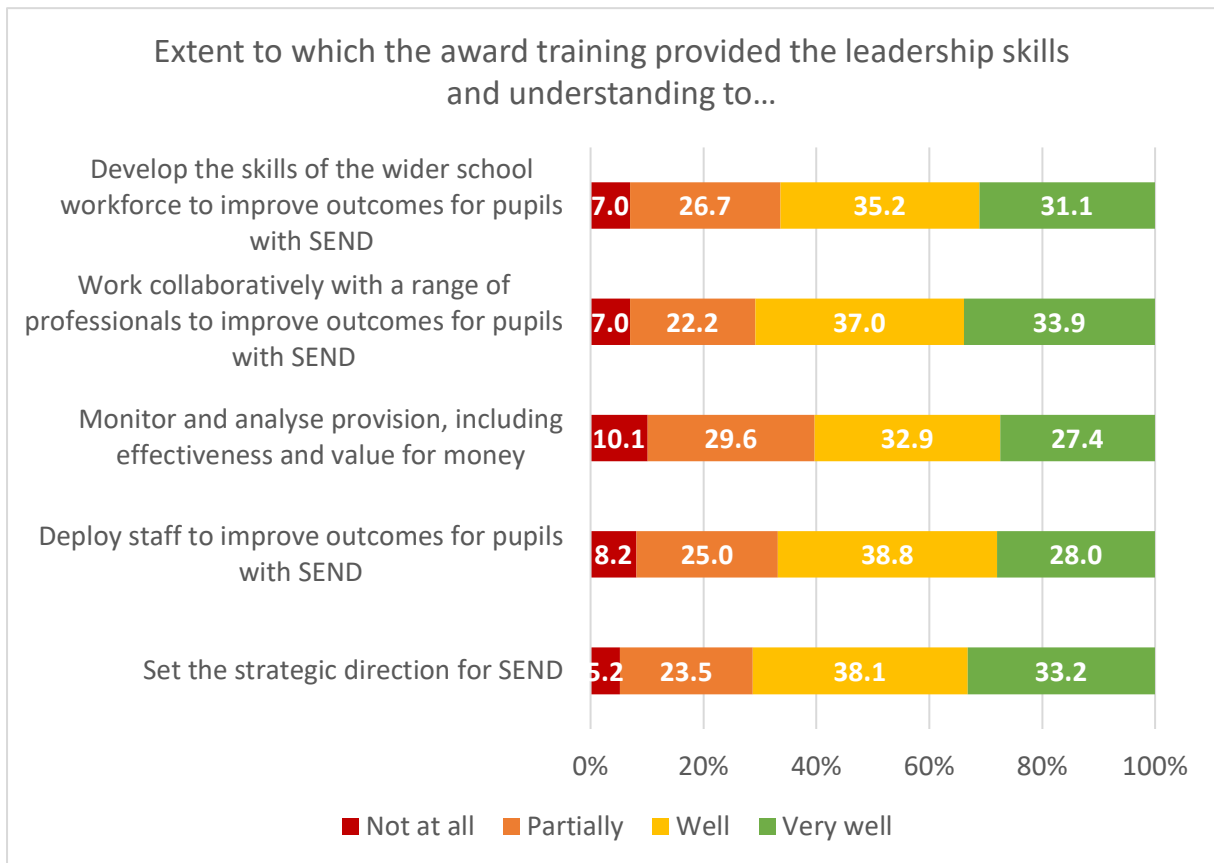
Source: LLENDCIC survey conducted by ASK Research (May 2022), based on 542 responses

Chart D



Source: LLENDCIC survey conducted by ASK Research (May 2022), based on 528 responses (14 no responses)

Chart E



Source: LLENDIC survey conducted by ASK Research (May 2022), based on 515 responses (28 no responses)