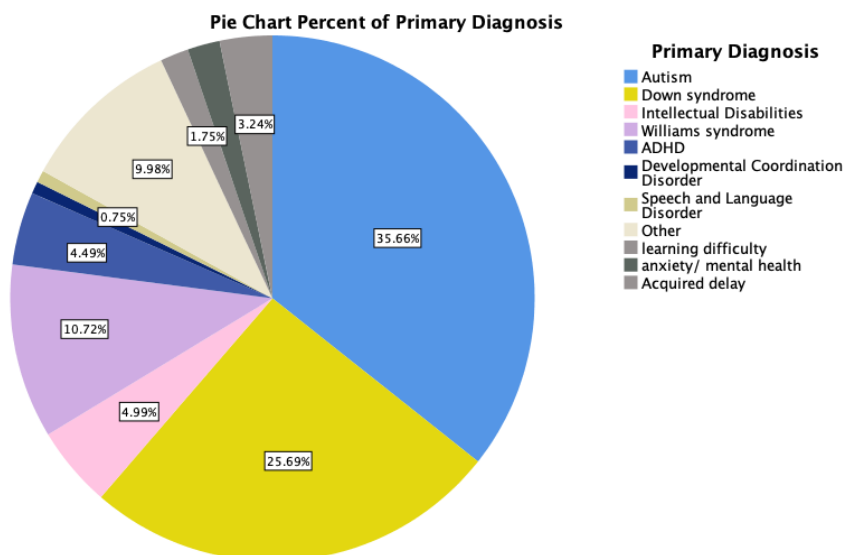


## The impact of COVID-19 on families of Children with Special Needs: Outcomes from the UK



A survey (see <https://www.specialneedscovid.org/>) was distributed to families of individuals with Special Educational Needs (SEND). The survey assessed the anxiety and wellbeing of the parent, the individual with SEND and any typically developing sibling, if they had one. For each question they were asked how they/their child felt before the pandemic started (before March 2020), when the pandemic started and when they completed the survey.

Between March- June 2020, **403 families of individuals with SEND** aged 1-45 years old in UK completed the survey, including also **183 typically developing** siblings.



### Anxiety in individuals with SEND versus typically developing siblings:

This project is part of an international collaboration to identify the COVID-19 that examined anxiety and concerns of children with special needs and their parents at the start of the pandemic (March to June 2020): <https://www.specialneedscovid.org/>



Anxiety was greater in siblings with SEND at all times.



Age, gender and health status were **not predictive of anxiety** levels in either group.



History of Anxiety



Parental Anxiety



Awareness of COVID-19

A **history of Anxiety**, **Parental Anxiety**, and **Awareness of COVID-19** were predictive of anxiety levels in individuals with SEND but not their TD siblings.

### Worries in individuals with SEND versus typically developing siblings



**School closures** and loss of institutional support made a greater impact on anxiety and wellbeing in individuals with SEND.



Both groups grew more concerned about **changes in routine** over time. However, this worry was greater in individuals with SEND than their siblings at all times.

Both groups grew increasingly worried about not being able to meet **peers and friends**. However, TD children's worries were significantly greater than their siblings at the start of the pandemic and at the time of the survey.



#### Take home messages:

- Overall, the findings suggest that the structure and support that schools and activity centres provide is crucial to reducing anxiety and increasing wellbeing in individuals with SEND, especially as they may require additional support for learning and managing day-to-day tasks.
- Individuals with SEND who have a history of anxiety disorders, who have parents with anxiety, and/or are aware of COVID-19 are more at risk of developing anxiety, and thus are in greater need of anxiety interventions.