



## Sparkle Stay and Play Sessions Evaluation March 2026

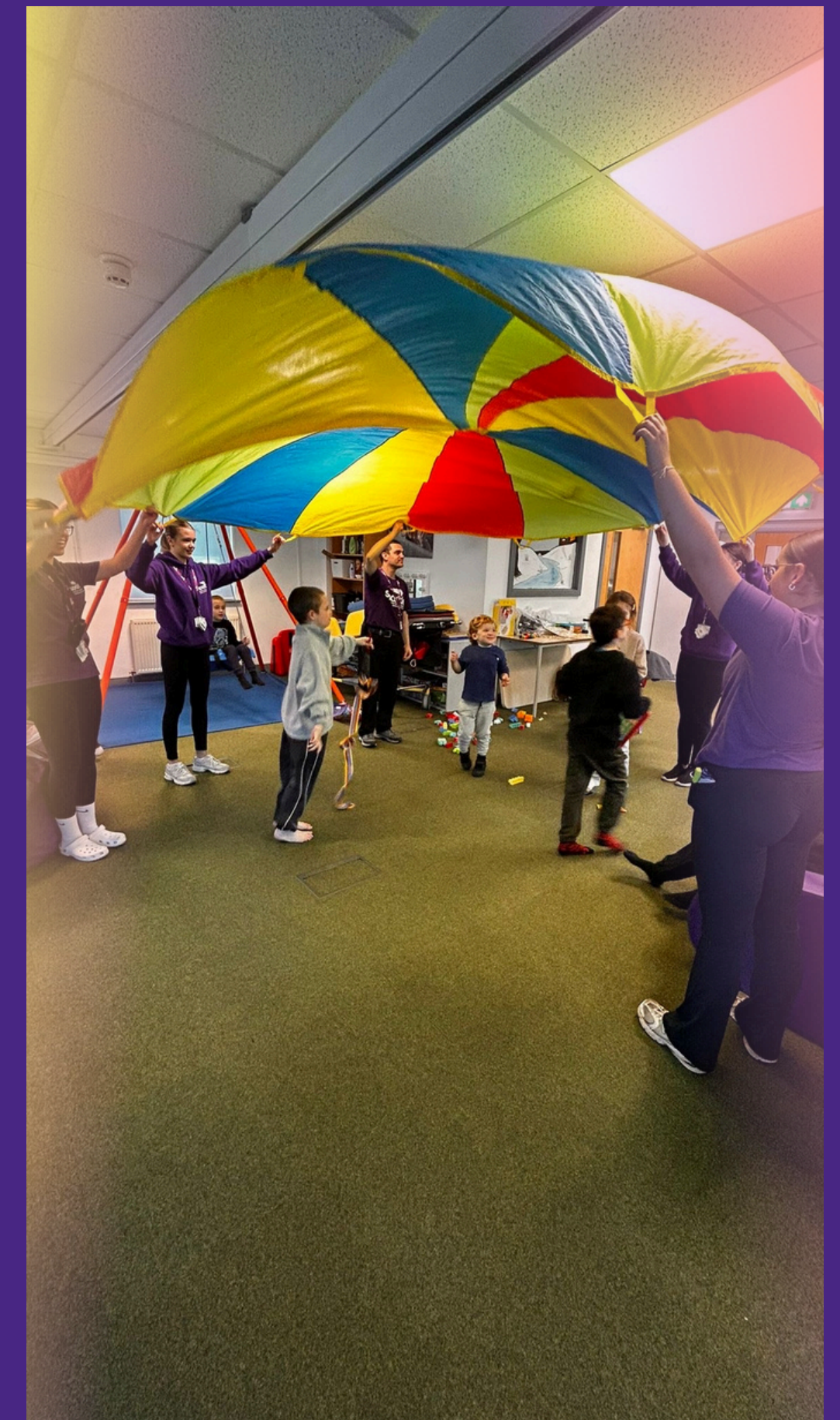
# Summary of the Stay & Play Sessions Project

**Sparkle delivered a three-month pilot of six professionally supported Stay & Play sessions for families of children and young people with disabilities and/or developmental difficulties in Torfaen. The project aimed to create safe, inclusive, and nurturing play environments where children could feel accepted, supported, and free to explore and interact at their own pace.**

Alongside meaningful play opportunities for children, the sessions were designed to offer parents and carers valuable respite, emotional support, and the comfort of a welcoming community. A key objective was to increase families' awareness of local specialist services, Sparkle membership, and the broader neurodevelopmental support available to them. By providing a warm, understanding space staffed by trained professionals with expertise in ALN-related challenges, the project sought to reduce isolation, build connection, and give families a trusted place to speak openly about their experiences and needs.

A feedback survey was shared with parents/carers of the children and young people who attended the sessions. This was completed by 50 parents/carers of 83 children and young people. There was a wide range of ages among the children and young people, from a few months to 17 years, with an average age of 6 years. The children had diagnoses of a variety of disabilities and developmental difficulties, including autism, ADHD and Down syndrome.

All parents/carers felt the sessions were positive, with the majority rating the sessions as 'excellent' or 'good'. They shared that the children most enjoyed activities such as the inflatables and soft play, arts and crafts, and face painting. Parents/carers appreciated the variety of activities on offer, and the opportunity to speak to Sparkle staff and other parents/carers.



# Sparkle Feedback

As well as the play and leisure activities on offer, there was the opportunity to gain information from the Sparkle team; 88% of parents/carers said they received helpful advice and information at the session. Parents/carers felt information about services and support, including Sparkle services, and information about activities and events, including Sparkle activities, was most helpful. It was also shared that they benefitted from compassionate and sympathetic listening. The majority (78%) of parents/carers would like more information on activities for their children, and over half would like more information on local services and specialist support available.

**88%**

Said they received helpful advice and information at the session.

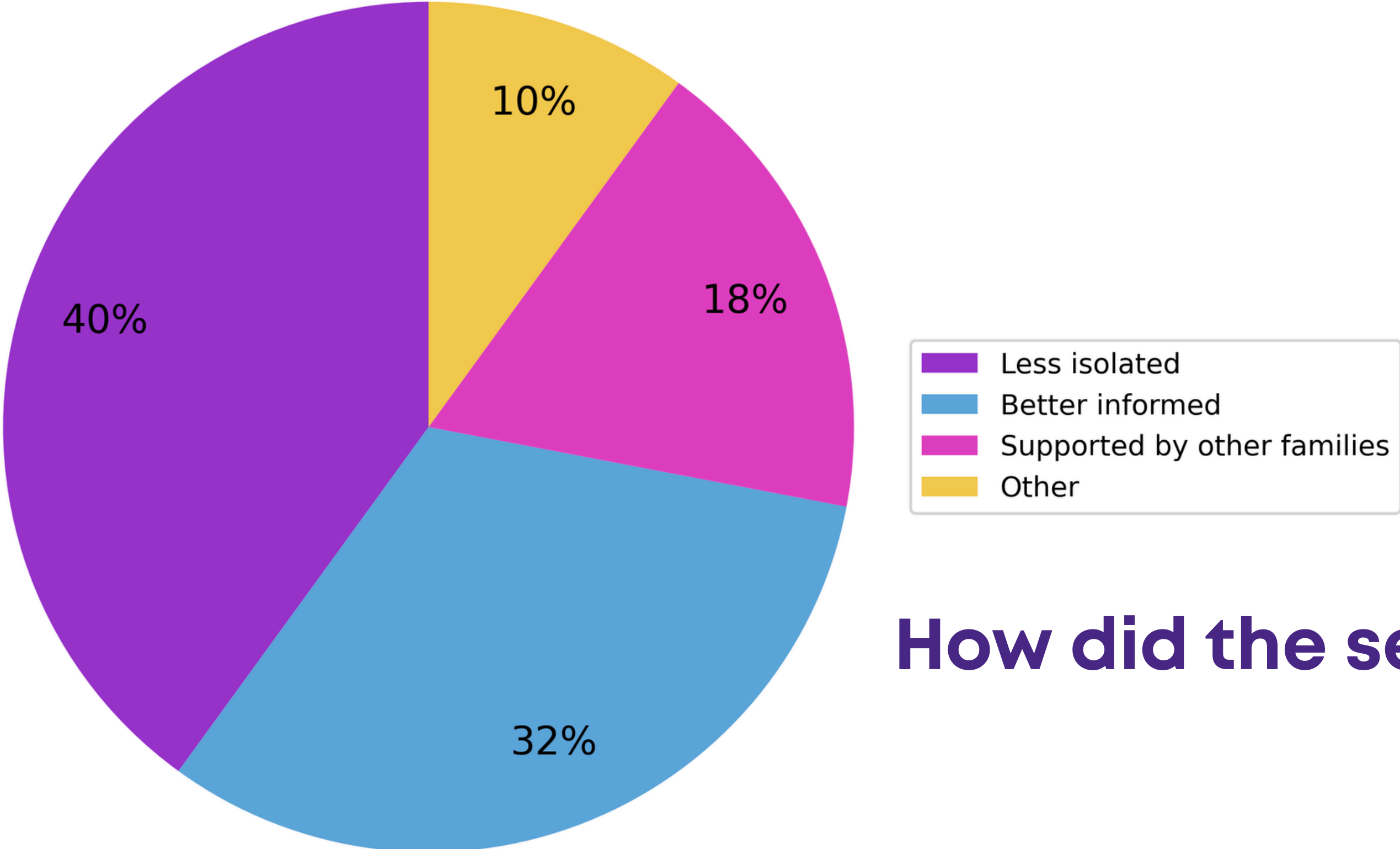
**100%**

Said the venue was accessible and welcoming.

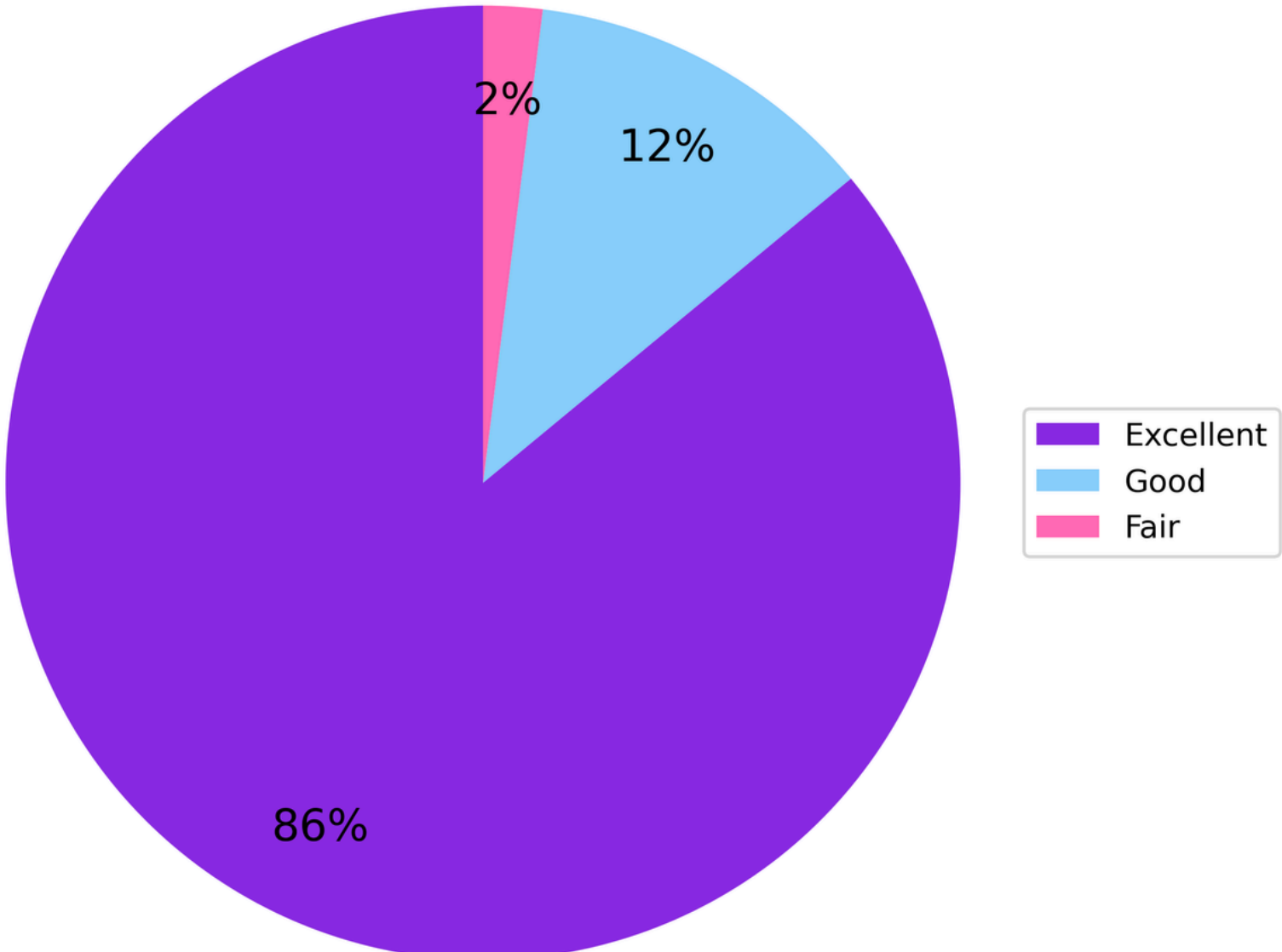
**78%**

would like more information on activities for their children

# How would you rate the overall session?



# How did the session make you feel?



All of the parents/carers said they would recommend the sessions to another family, and 98% would be interested in attending similar sessions in the future (2% responded 'maybe'). Parents/carers highlighted a number of valuable aspects of the sessions, including:

**The opportunity for children and young people to interact with their peers, playing in a safe environment, and for parents/carers to meet other families.**

“My son, engaging in play and engaging with other children, said ‘MUM, MUM, I’VE MADE MY FIRST EVER FRIEND’”

“Getting to play with other children in a wide and welcoming space .”

**Allowing the children and their families to feel comfortable to be themselves, without fear of judgement.**

“We felt free to be ourselves, there was no judgement, no harsh or nasty comments, no nastiness from other children or adults. It felt like a safe place for us. So thank you, and please keep this/these groups running as I/we will definitely be back.”

“My child being able to socialise and play without discrimination. It is also nice to have trained people watching the children that understands their needs and behaviour.”

The support and information provided by Sparkle staff and learning new things.

“Learning new things so my child can develop further”

“The staff, they've been amazing.”

The opportunity for parents/carers to relax and enjoy spending time with their children in this environment.

“Time to relax and an outlet for our child to have fun in a safe space”

“For me to sit and drink a hot coffee. For kids to relax and be themselves/have fun”

When asked how future sessions could be improved, the majority of parents/carers either said no improvements were necessary, or simply asked for more sessions to be offered. There were a few suggestions for a larger room/venue or smaller group numbers, sessions for specific age groups (e.g., toddlers, children, teenagers) and sessions on Saturdays.

“We feel like this is something that is needed to help support children with SEN and also an important reprieve for parents/carers.”

“Please run more sessions here, it’s been so much fun for my son and all the children here.”

“Just thankful this group/sessions have been provided and made accessible to me and my children. It’s a safe environment and the team provide loads of activities and the soft play part is a huge bonus. Thank you”

**Overall, the feedback received from parents/carers demonstrates that these sessions were not only well-attended, but well-received and provided a host of benefits for both the children and their families. A clear need for further similar activities in the area was highlighted by both demand and responses to the evaluation form.**