

# Parent Partnership Services in England

National benchmarking 2006



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## National benchmarking 2006

The following analysis is a result of a national collaboration between Parent Partnership Services (PPS), the National Association of Parent Partnership Staff (NAPPS), the National Parent Partnership Network (NPPN), and the Regional Partnerships.

This is the third year of benchmarking and is based on the work of the National Benchmarking Development Group. The group comprised of representatives of the organisations named above, including:

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Once again Nick Jolly of Kimpton Consultants carried out the analysis of the data. The co-ordination of the National Development Group and the collection of data were carried out by NPPN with funding from the DfES. Nick Knapman was responsible for the commentary.

Thank you to all the of the participating parent partnership services who made this possible.



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## ***Introduction***

This is the third national benchmarking report on Parent Partnership Services (PPS) in England. The first was published in 2004. This report once again brings together a range of data that should be useful to:

- parent partnership officers
- PPS steering and management groups
- local authority (LA) officers responsible for Parent Partnership Services
- all those with an interest in PPS at national, regional and local level.

This national summary gives a snapshot of the range of data that has been collected. Additional copies are available on the National Parent Partnership Network's website at [www.parentpartnership.org.uk](http://www.parentpartnership.org.uk). Every participating Parent Partnership Service has received this data in a form that enables them to benchmark against their statistical neighbours and within their regional networks.

In addition to the information provided in this report, services may wish to refer to other sources of benchmarking information to provide contextual data. This may include:

- indices of multiple deprivation
- free school meal entitlement
- additional educational need
- numbers of students at School Action, School Action Plus or with Statements.

These data sets are included in the National Performance Framework for special educational needs ([www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/sen/npf](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/sen/npf)).

## ***What do Parent Partnership Services do?***

Parent Partnership Services, which had developed over time in many local authorities, became statutory when the SEN and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA) amended the 1996 Education Act (adding section 332A). PPSs work with parents of all children with SEN, to provide information and publicity, training, advice and support, to foster networking and collaboration, and to inform and influence local SEN policy and practice. With the development of integrated Children's Services, some PPS are also providing services to other parents. Further information on the range of services provided, and examples of practice, can be found in the Parent Partnership Services Practice Guide<sup>1</sup>, published by the Council for Disabled Children in 2004.

The revised SEN Code of Practice (2001)<sup>2</sup> that supports the legislation sets out minimum standards for PPSs (2:18). These cover:

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<sup>1</sup> Stone, J. (2004), Parent Partnership Service Practice Guide, Council for Disabled Children

<sup>2</sup> Department of Education and Skills (2001) SEN Code of Practice

- provision of impartial advice, information and support to all parents/carers of children with SEN
- a role in ensuring that parents' views are heard and understood, and inform and influence the development of local SEN policy and practice.
- the provision (if possible) of Independent Supporters

The Code of Practice (2:21) also lists minimum standards for Local Education Authorities, which include monitoring of services and ensuring adequate staffing and resourcing. Additional work which builds on the minimum standards has already been done by regional parent partnership groups across the country, notably the South West and the West Midlands Regional Networks.

In order for PPSs to provide impartial information and for parents to have confidence in this they are expected to be at 'arms length' to the local authority. Guidance on best practice in providing Parent Partnership Services is included in the SEN Toolkit (2001)<sup>3</sup> and the Parent Partnership Services Practice Guide<sup>4</sup>.

During 2006 the Education and Skills Select Committee published their report<sup>5</sup> on special educational needs. Following this report, the Department for Education and Skills plans to give further guidance on how services should meet the minimum standards and ensure that they do operate at 'arms length'.

Prior to the Education and Skills Select Committee report, the DfES had commissioned an evaluation of Parent Partnership Services, which was undertaken by Canterbury Christ Church University College and published in 2006<sup>6</sup>. Their research made extensive use of the data collected for the first national benchmarking report in 2004.

At a time when all children's services are responding to the Change for Children agenda with its focus on the five outcomes described in Every Child Matters<sup>7</sup>, the developing role of Parent Partnership Services both locally and nationally will be informed by the Select Committee Report and the DfES's response, the national evaluation and the benchmarking reports covering 2004 to 2006.

### ***Who took part?***

This benchmarking exercise was developed in consultation with the nine Regional Parent Partnership Networks. Participation was voluntary and was sought through the National Parent Partnership Network's e-forum, and through attendance of the NPPN Development Officer at regional meetings.

All services were invited to complete a single data collection form. In 2006, 86% of services completed a return. This compares with 77% in 2004 and 72% in

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<sup>3</sup> Department for Education and Skills (2001), SEN Toolkit

<sup>4</sup> See Footnote 1

<sup>5</sup> House of Commons Education and Skills Committee, Special Educational Needs – Third Report of Session 2005-06 Vol 1, The Stationary Office (2006)

<sup>6</sup> Rogers, R., Tod, J., Powell, S., Parsons, C., Godfrey, R. Graham-Matheson, L., Carlson, A., Cornwall, J. (2006), Evaluation of the Special Educational Needs Parent Partnership Services in England, Department for Education and Skills Research Report 719

<sup>7</sup> Every Child Matters, The Stationary Office (2003)

2005. It should be noted that in 2004, while 77% of services had completed Form 1 (which provided basic information) only 55% submitted the supplementary Form 2. The number of services participating fully in this voluntary benchmarking exercise has therefore increased each year.

The breakdown of participation by region is shown in Table A.

**Table A Returns received by region**

<i>Region</i>	<i>No. of services in the region</i>	<i>Percent return in 2004</i>	<i>Percent return in 2005</i>	<i>Percent return in 2006</i>
East Midlands	9	100	100	100
Eastern	10	90	80	100
London	32	53	63	65
Merseyside	6	67	50	100
North East	12	67	83	100
North West	16	88	69	63
South Central	13	62	69	92
South East	6	100	83	100
South West	15	100	93	100
West Midlands	14	86	57	86
Yorkshire and Humberside	15	67	67	93

### ***Changes for 2006***

Following feedback on the 2005 data collection, the National Benchmarking Development Group made a small number of changes to the data collection form, which is reflected in the analysis provided in this report. These include:

- Additional questions concerning the location of the service.
- An amendment to the categories of work to better reflect the range of work that PPSs undertake.
- The number of Independent Parental Supporters now only includes those who are volunteers (parent supporters who are employed staff rather than volunteers are included in other staffing figures).
- An additional question about the number of volunteers who are not IPSs.
- An additional question about the frequency of Management or Steering group meetings.
- Removal of a question about the number of referrals to the PPSs, as this is no longer a performance indicator used by OFSTED. The number of parent/carer service users is considered by PPSs to be a more useful benchmark.

- Amendment to the questions about disagreement resolution and appeals to SENDIST to clarify the actual number of cases (as well as the percentage of cases) where the PPS has had prior involvement.

Where possible, this report provides some commentary on developments. However it should be noted that, at a national level, direct comparison between years is constrained by the fact that there are differences in which services submitted data (see *Cautionary Note 3* on page 9). Services that wish to make year on year comparison may use the regional and statistical neighbour charts that are available for each PPS.

### ***How can services be compared?***

The data collected in this exercise once again confirm the very wide variation in the size, scope, organisation, funding and use made of Parent Partnership Services. This is partly explained by the variation in size of local authorities (ranging from a 0 -19 population of 10,000 to 343,000), but also by the history of development of PPSs. This variation is also highlighted in the evaluation of PPSs carried out on behalf of the DfES<sup>8</sup>. While it is interesting to have evidence of the range of services available, the most useful comparisons are likely to be against a standard denominator.

Although PPSs are set up to provide services for parents, and do not normally provide direct services to children, the 0 -19 population figure for each local authority (derived from the Office of National Statistics mid-year estimates) is used in preference to other population figures (such as school or overall population) for the following reasons:

- 93% of participating PPSs provide a service to families of children in both the under 5 and over 16 age range.
- although most of the work of PPS is with parents, carers and professionals, young people are the focus of the information and support provided.
- the 0-19 figures include those living in the local authority area. School population figures can be distorted by numbers of pupils educated in neighbouring LAs, or where there is a high proportion of pupils educated in private schools.
- other benchmarking reports, including the Regional Partnerships' finance and out of authority placement data, use the 0 - 19 figures.

In many of the charts in this report two kinds of national average are included:

**Median** – This is the mid point of the data when placed in sequence and is generally less affected by extreme values.

**Mean** – This is the sum of all the data divided by the number of items.

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<sup>8</sup> See Footnote 6

## ***The service key***

The key matching services to the numbers shown on the charts in this document is available only to each individual service and their local authority. It was agreed that this would be a condition of data collection which would promote greater participation and protect against misinterpretation of the data. However it is open to individual services to reveal their identity to a third party. In particular, members of Regional Networks may wish to consider the benefits of sharing information in order to inform discussion at a local level.

## **Cautionary note**

*All benchmarking is only as good as the data contributed. Every effort has been made to identify obvious data entry errors. Nevertheless caution must be exercised in interpreting some of the charts.*

*In particular:*

- 1. It is not advisable to look at any one chart in isolation. For example, the percentage of time that PPS staff spend on different types of work may need to be interpreted alongside information on funding and staffing levels.*
- 2. Changes in national data may be the result of differences in the data sets available. 25 additional services contributed data in 2006, compared with 2005. 6 services that had contributed data in 2005 did not do so in 2006.*
- 3. None of the data reported enables any judgement to be made about the quality of a service. One service may be more or less expensive than another, receive more referrals, have more IPSs, etc., but this should not be used in isolation to reach a judgement about the effectiveness of the service.*

## ***The range of services***

The SEN Code of Practice states that:

- All LEAs must make arrangements for parent partnership services. (2:17)
- LEAs do not necessarily have to provide a parent partnership service themselves. They may provide an entirely LEA-based PPS if they wish, or 'buy-in' the service from another provider, or they may choose a mix of the two. In establishing PPS, LEAs are encouraged to work with voluntary groups and organisations to deliver services which best meet the needs of parents. Where the service is provided 'in-house' LEAs are encouraged nevertheless to ensure that they are run at 'arms length' to ensure parental confidence (2:18)

Local authorities provide the majority of PPSs, with staff in their employment. However there is considerable variation in the way in which such in-house services are set up, e.g. whether or not the PPS manager is responsible to an SEN officer, where the service is located, and who is represented on any Steering or Management Group.

25% of services are either fully or partially out-sourced. In those that are mixed, the local authority employ some staff (such as a Service Co-ordinator) while the voluntary sector may provide others (e.g. IPS or development workers).

There is a huge variation in the size of the 0 -19 population covered by services, ranging from approximately 10,000 to 343,000. Some PPS cover more than one local authority area, but benchmarking data is reported by local authority area.

Three years of benchmarking data indicate that:

- The percentage of participating services in each 'Type of Service' are similar to the percentages reported in 2005. Compared to the first year of benchmarking (2004) the percentage of participating services that are provided 'in-house' shows a slight rise, from 70% to 75%.
- About 75% of participating services cover the 0-19 age range, with a further 17% extending the age range to 25. Only a small minority (in the region of 6-9%) do not offer a service to the under 5 group.

Information on the location of PPSs was requested in 2006 for the first time. This indicates that the majority (59%) do have their own office, though a significant minority share premises. 63% are in buildings that are identified as local authority premises. Additional information provided suggests that the range of premises used by PPS includes:

- accommodation shared with SEN teams, Early Years and Sure Start, local authority support services or with multi-agency teams
- bases in schools or community centres

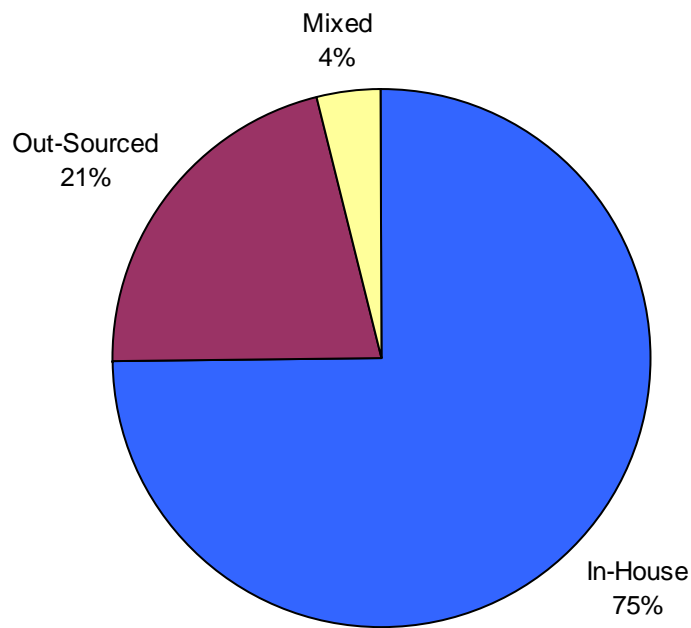
- home – based staff
- independent premises, including Citizens Advice Bureaux and buildings used by charities.

The latter two groups are likely to be small in number.

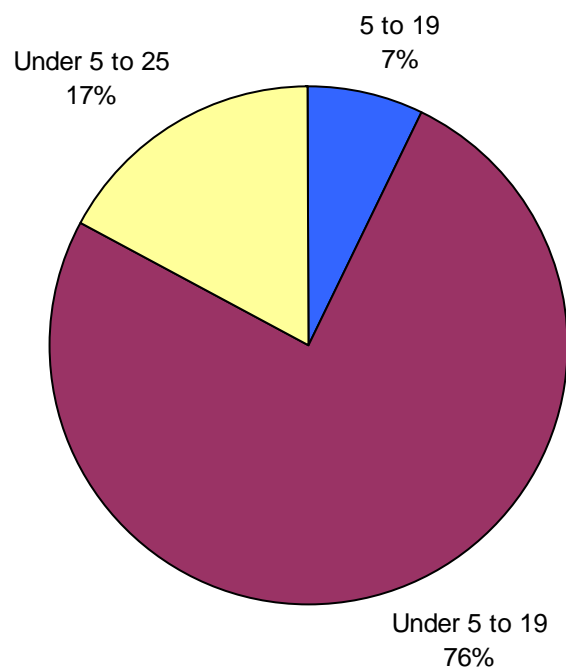
Charts 5 and 7 illustrate the range of work undertaken by staff employed by PPS. In 2006, some changes were made to the categories used for this analysis, so the results are not directly comparable with previous years. As shown in Chart 6, most of the figures are based on estimates provided by service managers. The charts do not include work done by volunteers, e.g. IPSs.

The two main conclusions from this analysis are that (a) the largest percentage of employed PPS staff time is taken up with direct work with parents and (b) there are wide variations between services in the distribution of paid staff time across the six categories of work. While this data should not be used to make judgements about the quality of a service it may be helpful when a service is undertaking a self-review to consider how and why the way in which employed PPS staff time is used may differ from regional or statistical neighbours.

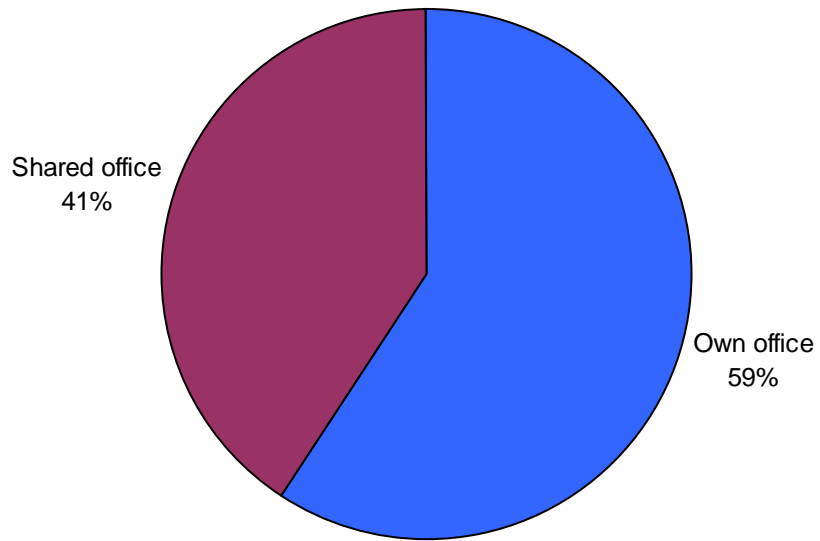
**Chart 1 Type of service (127 returns)**



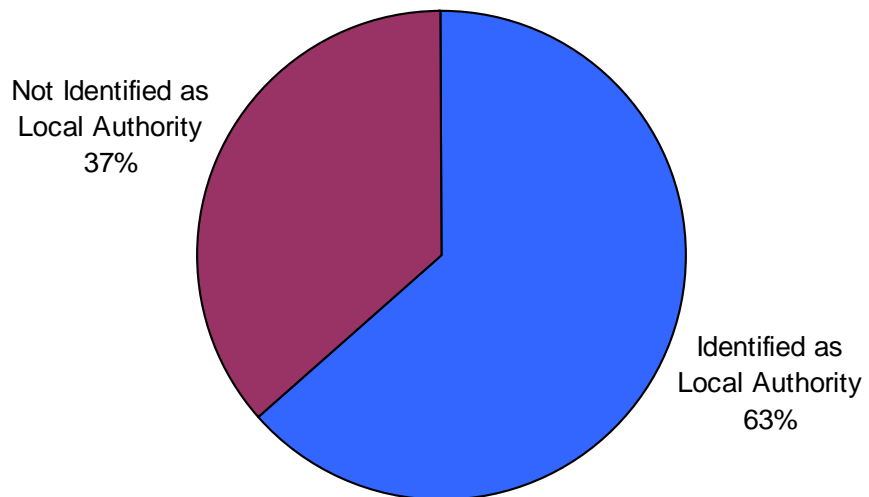
**Chart 2 Age range covered by the Parent Partnership Service (127 returns)**



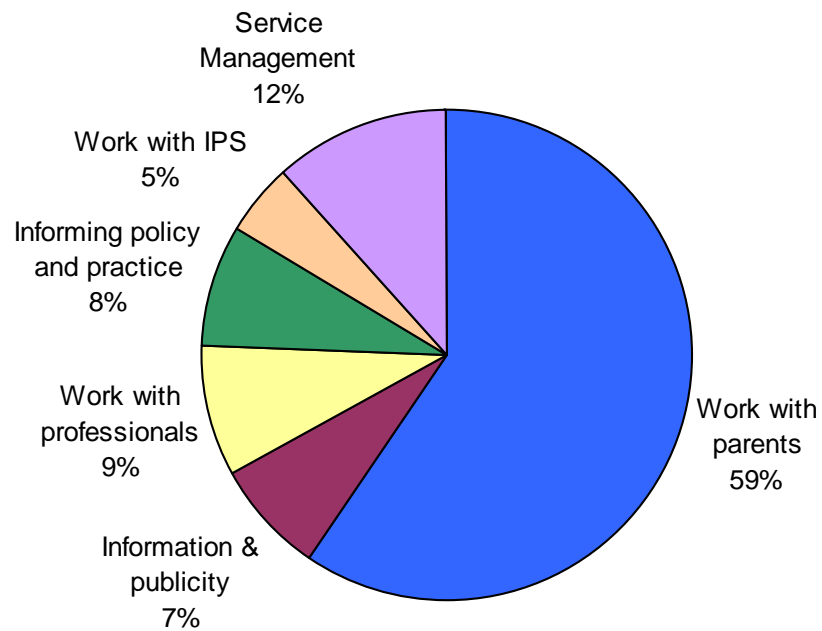
**Chart 3 Location of Service (125 returns)**



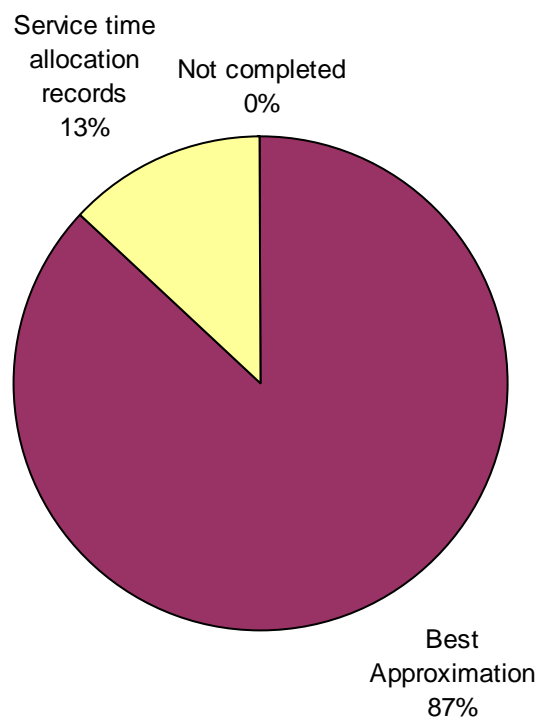
**Chart 4 Building identification (120 returns)**



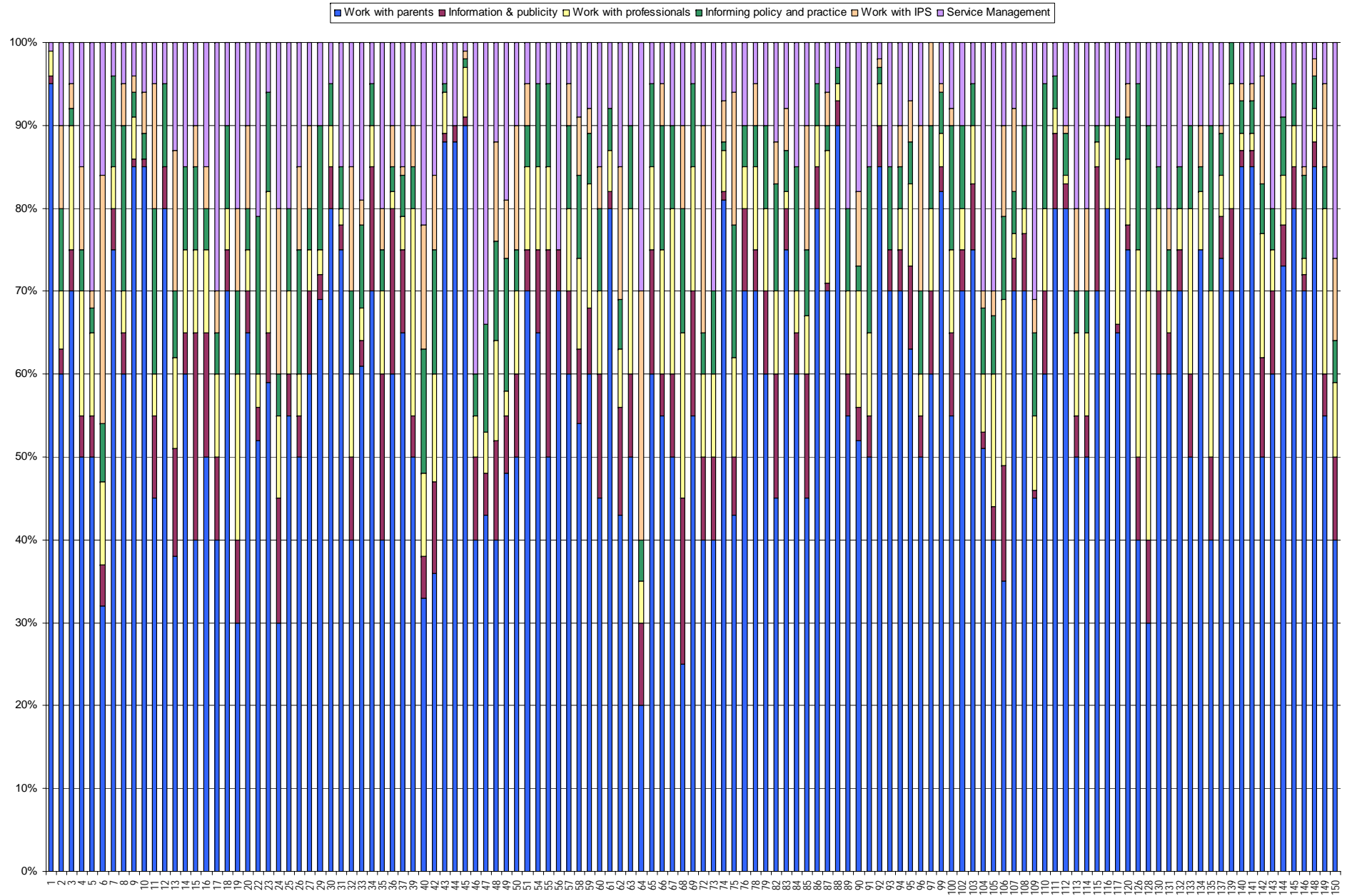
**Chart 5 Percentage of time allocated to each work area for employed PPS staff (125 returns)**



**Chart 6 Method used to calculate time allocation (115 returns)**



**Chart 7 Percentage of time allocated to each area of work for employed PPS staff (125 returns)**



## ***Funding and costs***

The SEN Code of Practice (2:18) minimum standards for Local Authorities in delivering effective Parent Partnership Services state that they are expected to:

- set out their funding and budgeting plans for the service (where appropriate the budget should be delegated to the Parent Partnership Service)
- ensure adequate resources and staffing to meet the needs of parents in their area.

In 2004, 87% of the Parent Partnership Services that submitted benchmarking data were funded entirely by the Local Education Authority. By 2005, 20% of participating services were funded through a unified Children's Services budget and this increased to 28% of participating services in 2006. This reflects the introduction of Children's Services Authorities across England. Funding sources are shown separately for those that are part of a Children's Service and those that are not yet in this position.

A minority of services receive funding from more than one source, i.e. are joint funded. Charts 9 and 10 show the percentage of services submitting benchmarking returns that received joint funding. In 2006, only 9 services reported that they received part of their funding from a source other than the Children's Service or Education budget.

Although services are asked to report their total spend/budget, including potentially 'hidden' elements, it is possible that some PPS may have difficulty in identifying the exact amount of some shared costs (e.g. heating in jointly used premises).

The evaluation of PPSs published in 2006<sup>9</sup> indicated that the *overall* level of funding of a PPS is more strongly associated with the level of service it could provide, than the funding level in proportion to population. In other words, services with smaller budgets are less likely to be able to deliver the same range of services as PPSs that have more funds, irrespective of the size of the population. This section includes charts that show both absolute funding levels and funding relative to population. It means that local authorities and PPSs can compare against common benchmarks.

Trends:

- The extrapolated total for the funding of PPSs suggests that there has been a small overall increase of approximately 4%. However increases in funding are distributed unevenly.

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<sup>9</sup> See Footnote 6

- The significant difference between the median and mean figures shown in both Tables B and C reflect the very wide range of funding levels for PPSs.
- 28% of participating services now receive a budget as part of an integrated Children's Service.
- Only 7% of participating services received joint funding (less than in 2004 or 2005).
- The median level of funding has risen each year (90p in 2004, £1.03 in 2005 and £1.09 in 2006), as has the mean (£1.00 in 2004, £1.12 in 2005 and £1.16 in 2006)
- However the range of funding per head of population varies enormously from 34p to £3.38 (31p to £3.91 per head in 2005).
- Service funding per parent/carer service user also varies widely.

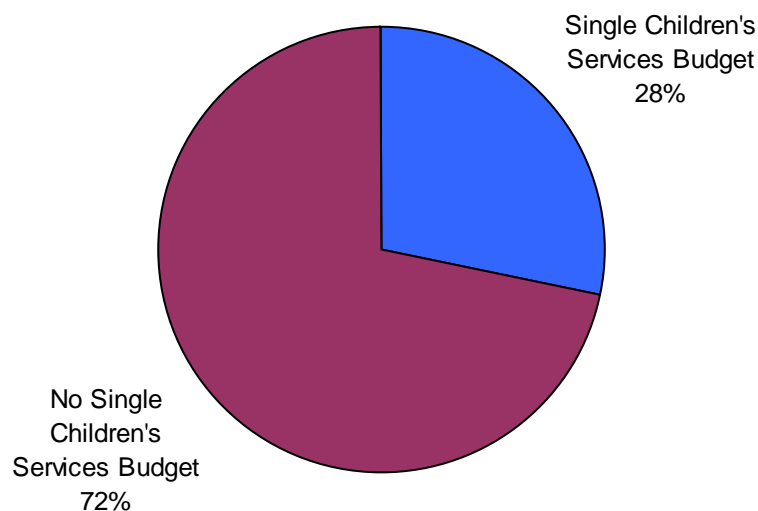
**Table B Total funding for PPS**

	2003 - 2004 (107 returns)	2004-2005 (102 returns)	2005-2006 (124 returns)
Total *	£9,287,752	£9,140,260	£11,575,167
Extrapolated total for 148 services	£11,260,846	£12,617,766	£13,157,614
Range *	£8,000 - £370,000	£12,000 - £341,020	£10,400- £370,000
National mean	£86,800	£90,500	£93,350
National median	£65,200	£65,650	£70,220

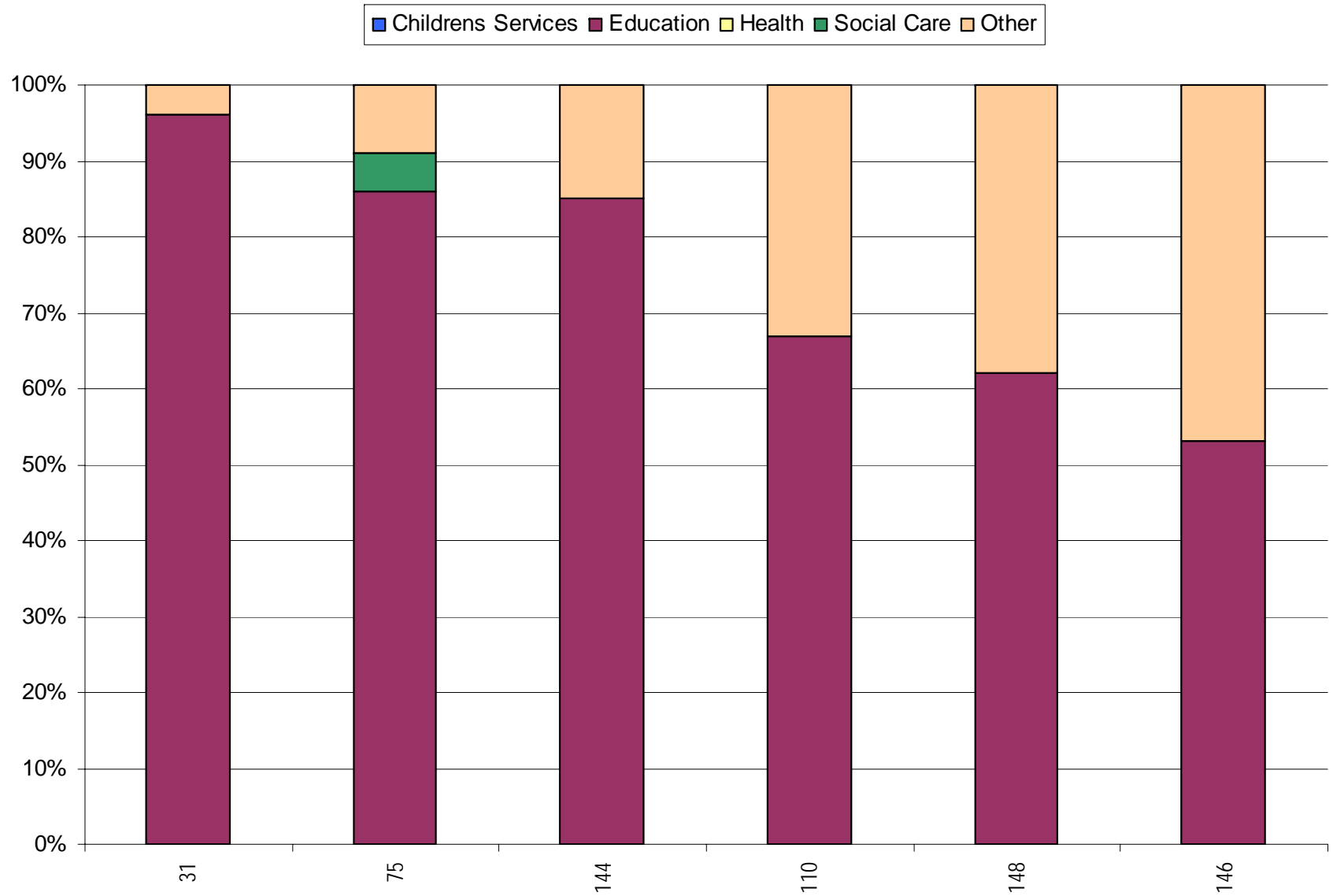
**Table C Total budget for PPS**

	2004 - 2005 (104 returns)	2005-2006 (101 returns)	2005-2006 (123 returns)
Total *	£10,289,418	£9,817,000	£12,188,593
Extrapolated total for 148 services	£12,475,306	£13,552,518	£13,854,902
Range *	£4,000 - £395,500	£12,500 - £335,000	£10,800- £370,000
National mean	£98,900	£97,200	£99,090
National median	£75,500	£75,000	£76,750

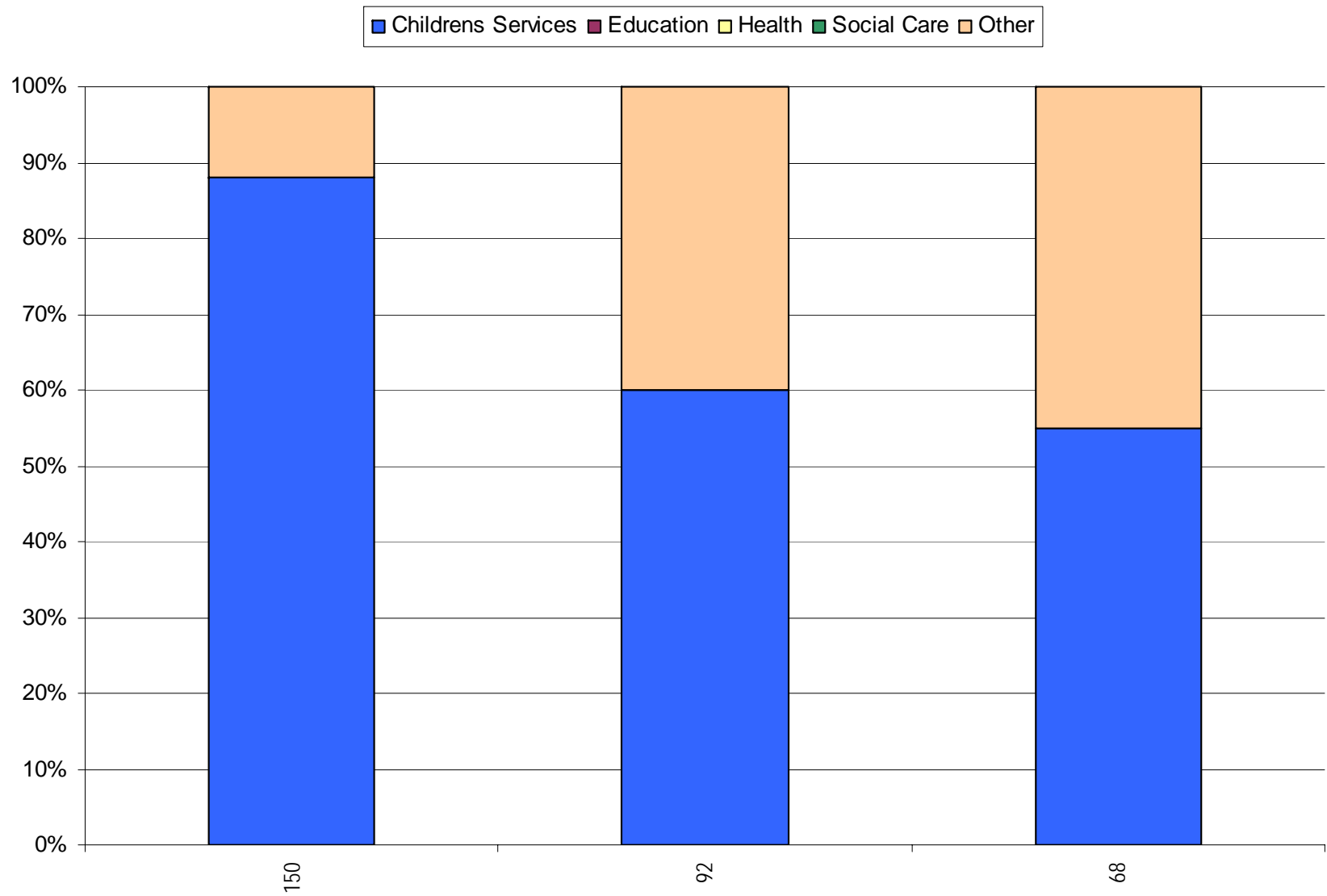
\* Note that the Total and Range for each year are not directly comparable as the sample is not identical.

**Chart 8 Single Children's Service Budget (127 returns)**

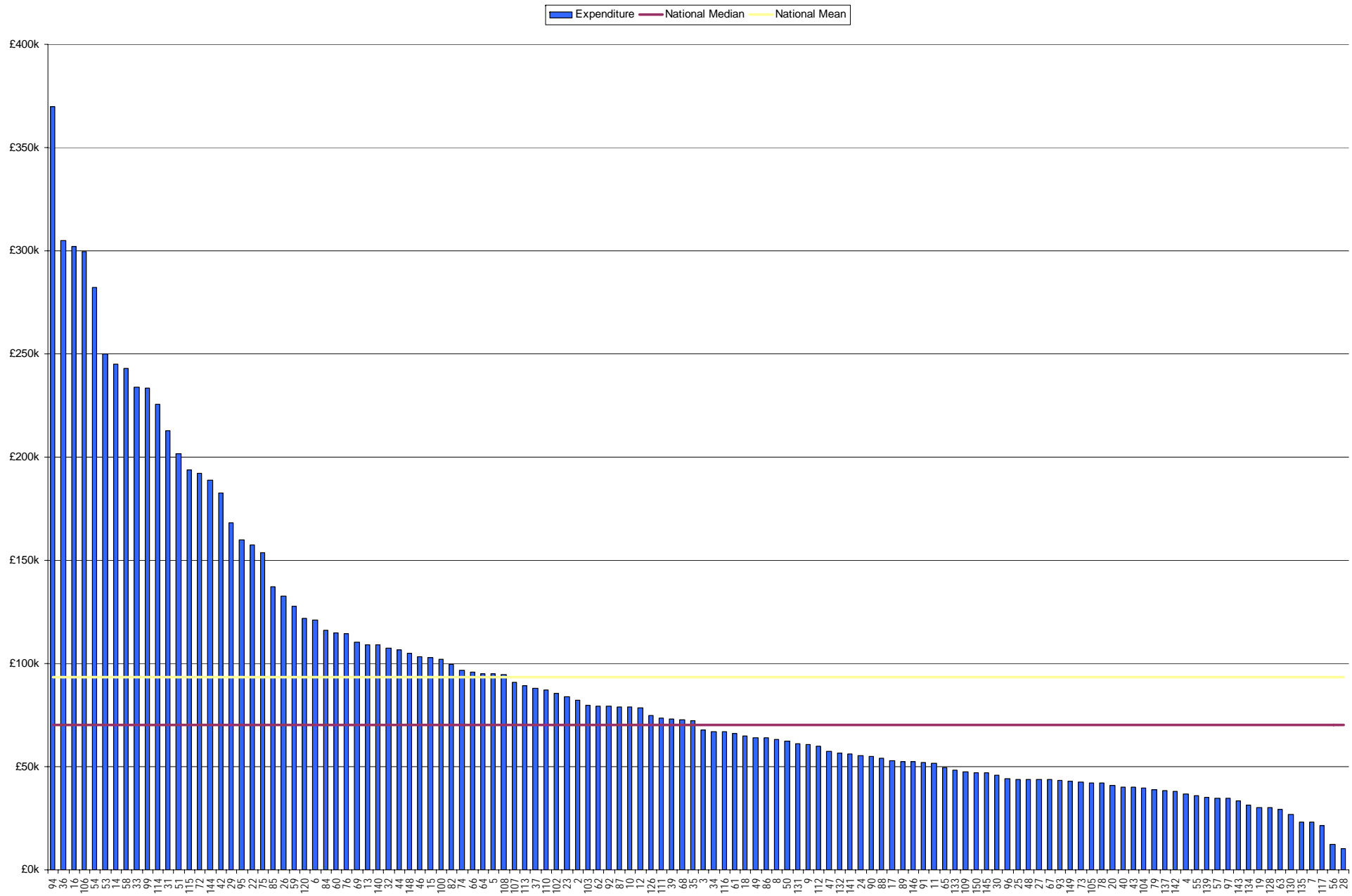
**Chart 9 Funding shares for jointly funded services - no Children's Service budget (6 returns)**



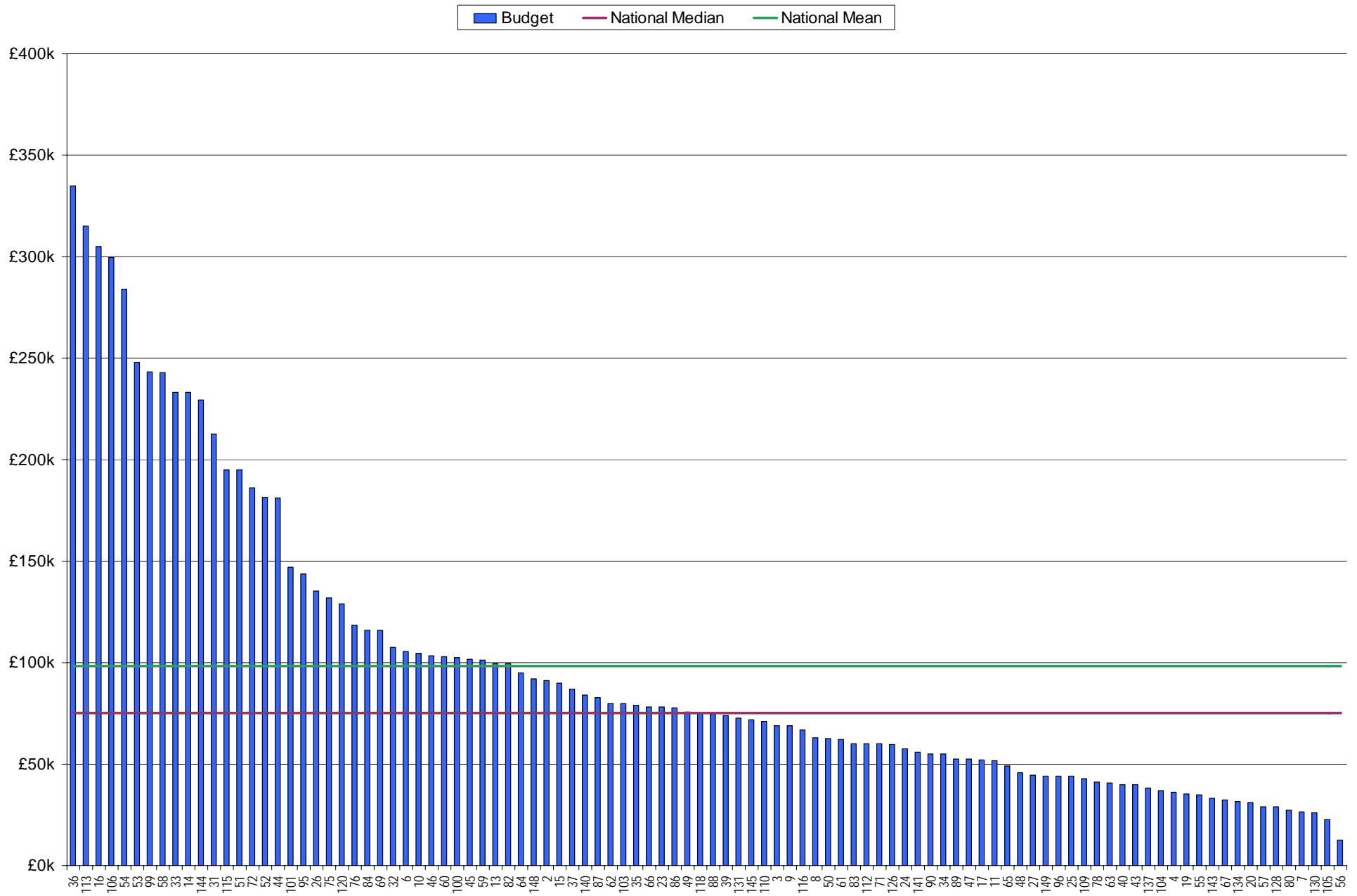
**Chart 10 Funding shares for jointly funded services - Children's Service budget (3 returns)**



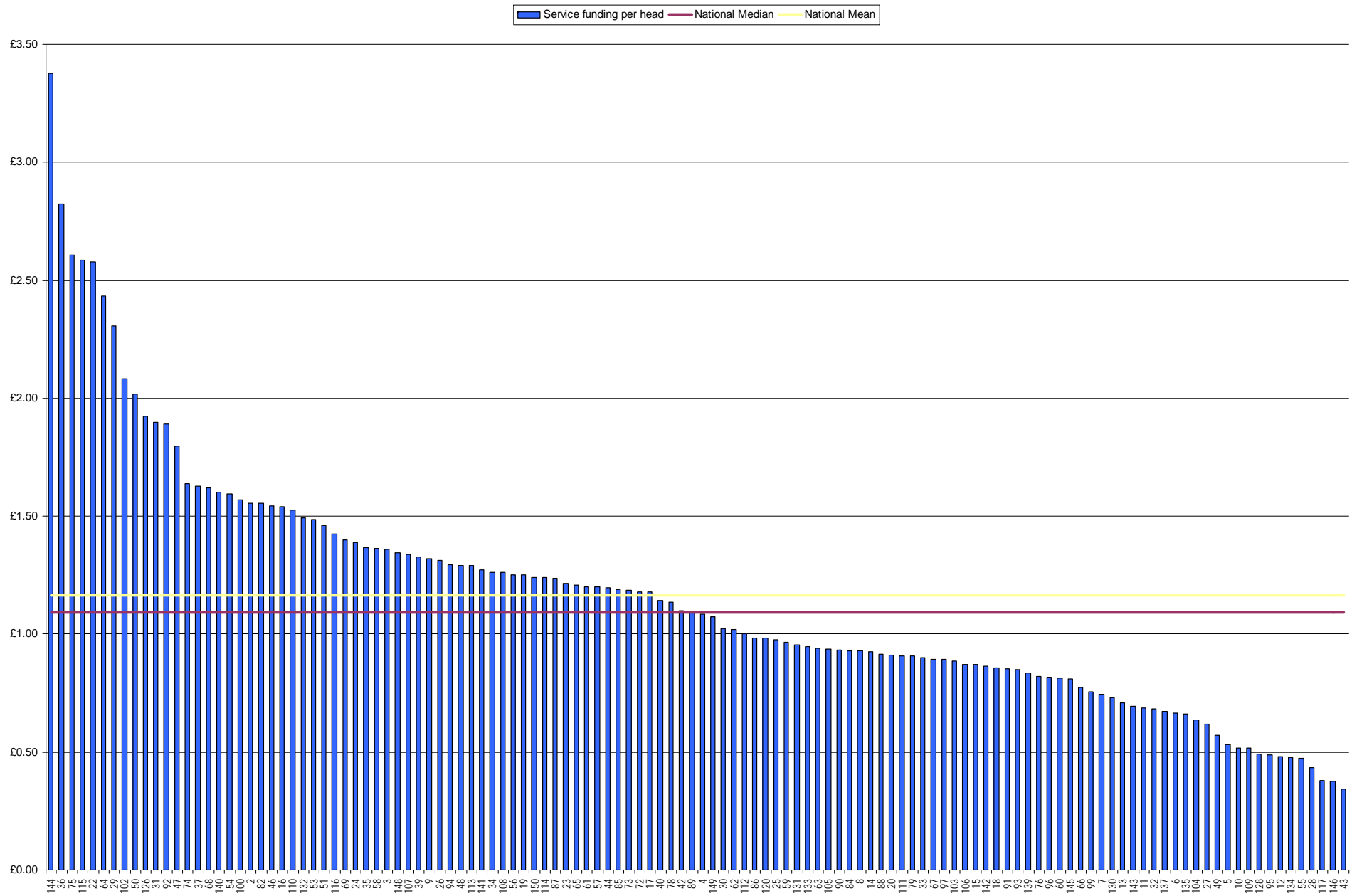
**Chart 11 Total funding for PPS in 2005 – 2006 (123 returns)**



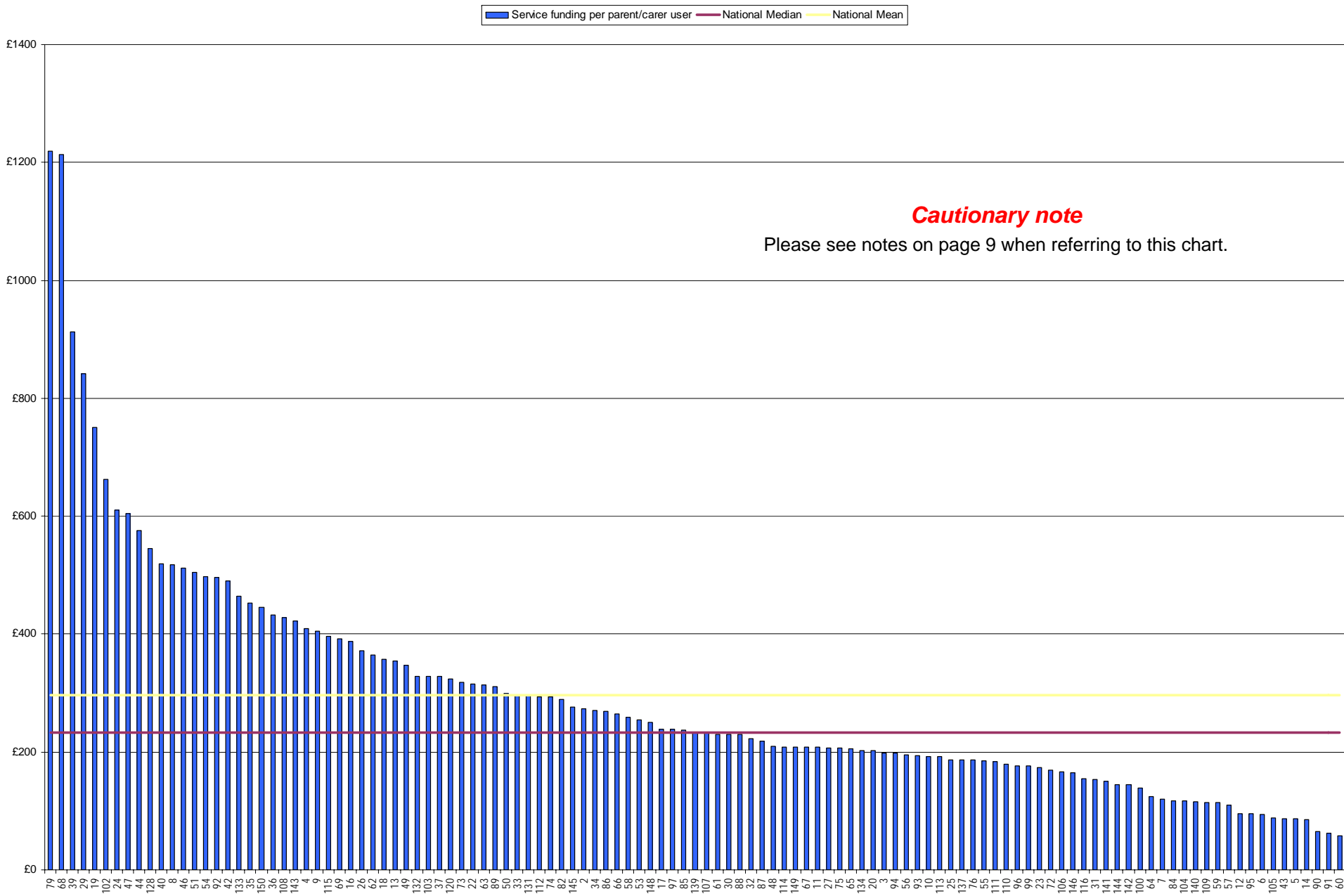
**Chart 12 Total budget for PPS in 2006 – 2007 (100 returns)**



**Chart 13 Service funding per head [0-19] (123 returns)**



**Chart 14 Service funding per parent/carer service user (117 returns)**



## Staffing

The SEN Code of Practice (2:18) minimum standards for Local Authorities in delivering effective Parent Partnership Services state that they are expected to:

- ensure adequate resources and staffing to meet the needs of parents in their area.

The minimum standards for Parent Partnership Services (2:21) state that services should ensure:

- they use their best endeavours to recruit sufficient Independent Parental Supporters to meet the needs of parents in their area, including arrangements for appropriate training, ensuring that they are kept up to date with all relevant aspects of SEN policy and procedures so that they can fulfil their role effectively.

The majority of services comprise a mix of employed staff and volunteers, with both groups undertaking a variety of roles. Staff may be employed by the Local Authority or by an out-sourced provider, and may include managers of services, other staff paid to carry out PPS work and administrative support staff. Volunteers may also carry out a variety of functions, including acting as Independent Parental Supporters. Note that the figures for employed staff are for full-time equivalents, while IPSs are actual numbers.

In order to clarify the extent to which PPSs are dependent on the use of volunteers the data collection for 2006 distinguishes between volunteers and others who perform similar roles. This means that the charts showing numbers of IPSs are not directly comparable with previous years.

Trends:

- Although there is some evidence that there has been a small rise in overall funding for PPSs (see **Funding and costs** above) this is not reflected in the staffing figures for PPSs.
- The number of 'active' IPS appears to be continuing to fall (although figures for 2006 are not directly comparable to previous years since they only include volunteer IPSs). This is reflected in the proportion of participating services with no active volunteer IPSs (39% of participating services in 2006).
- The number of IPSs trained has fallen for the third year running.
- 62% of participating services did not train any new IPS, compared with 50% the previous year.
- The proportion of training that was accredited remains low (at approximately 8%). All these are accredited by the Open College Network.

**Table D Number of staff employed by PPSs**

	2003 - 2004 (110 returns)	2004-2005 (105 returns)	2005-2006 (127 returns)
Total *	295.69	280.43	325.09
Extrapolated total for 148 services	358.39	386.85	369.54
Range *	0.2 – 13.0	0.3 – 9.9	0.23 - 11.0
National mean	2.69	2.67	2.56
National median	2.0	2.0	1.9

**Table E Number of active IPSs\*\***

	2003 - 2004 (110 returns)	2004-2005 (106 returns)	2005-2006 (127 returns)
Total	830	637	621
Extrapolated total for 148 services	1006	879	706
Range	0 – 68	0 – 59	0 - 40
National mean	7.5	6.0	4.9
National median	3.0	3.0	2.0

**Table F Number of IPS trained**

	April 2003 to March 2004 (110 returns)	April 2004 to March 2005 (106 returns)	April 2005 to March 2006 (125 returns)
Total *	352	248	254
Extrapolated total for 148 services	427	342	289
Range *	0 – 20	0 - 17	0 - 14
National mean	3.2	2.34	2.03
National median	1.0	0.5	0

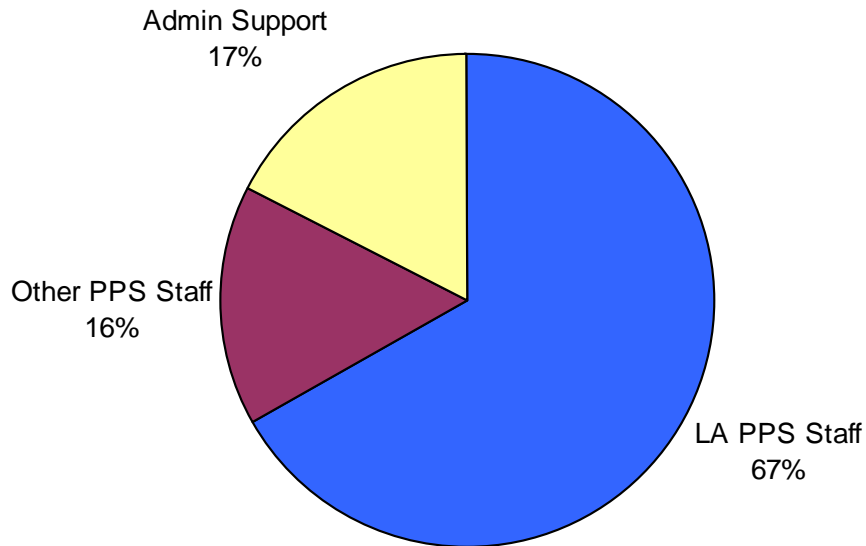
\* Total and Range for each year are not directly comparable as the sample is not identical.

\*\* From 2006, only volunteers acting as IPS are included. Figures from previous years are not directly comparable.

**Table G Number of other active volunteers not acting as IPS**

	2005-2006 (121 returns)
Total	215
Extrapolated total for 148 services	244
Range	0 - 36
National mean	1.78
National median	0

**Chart 15 Analysis of full time equivalent staffing (127 returns)**



**Chart 16 New IPS training accredited (127 returns)**

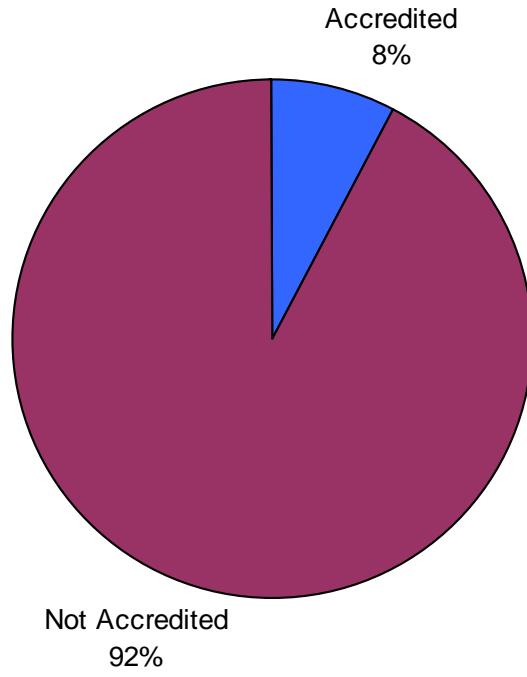
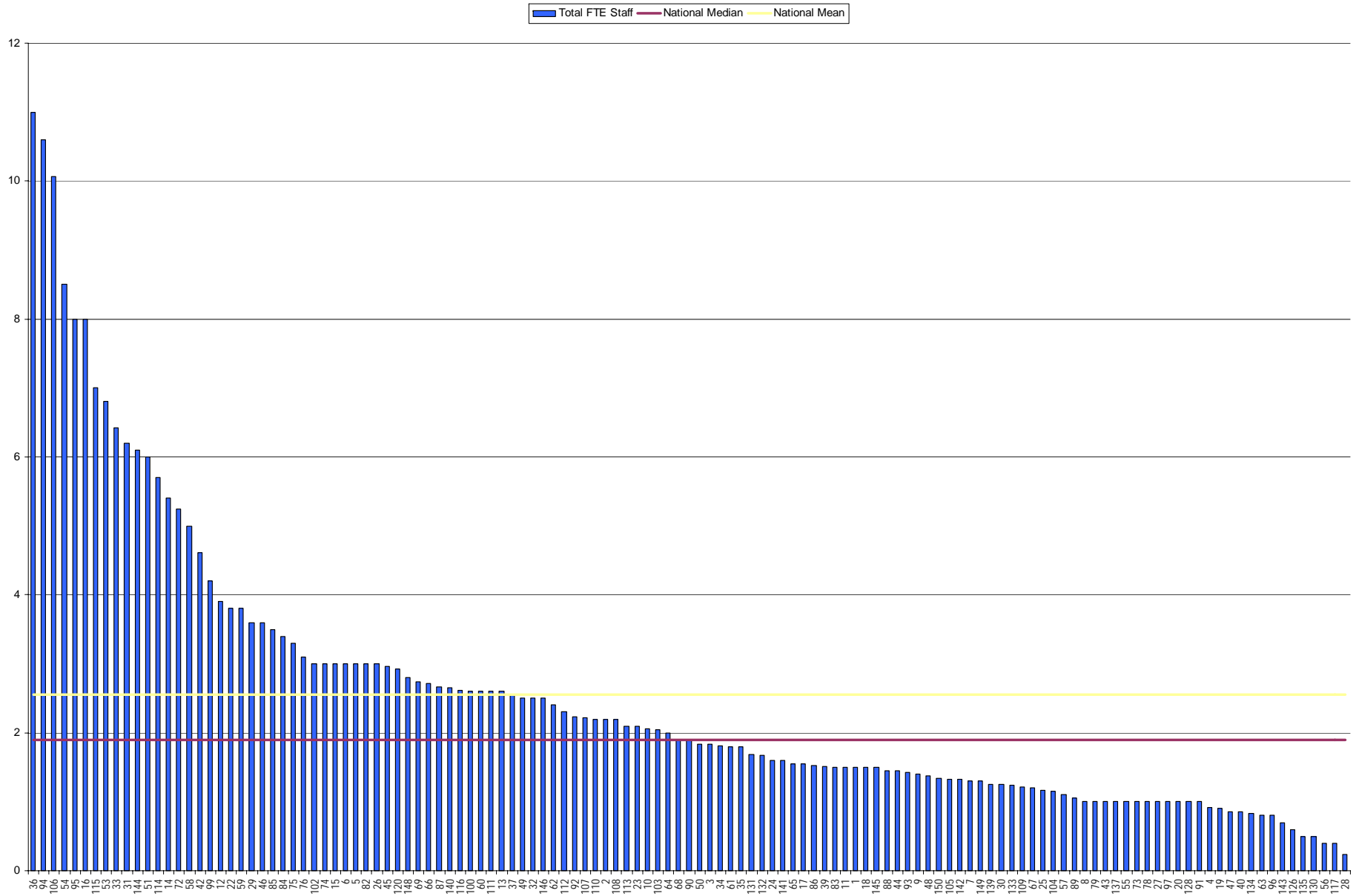
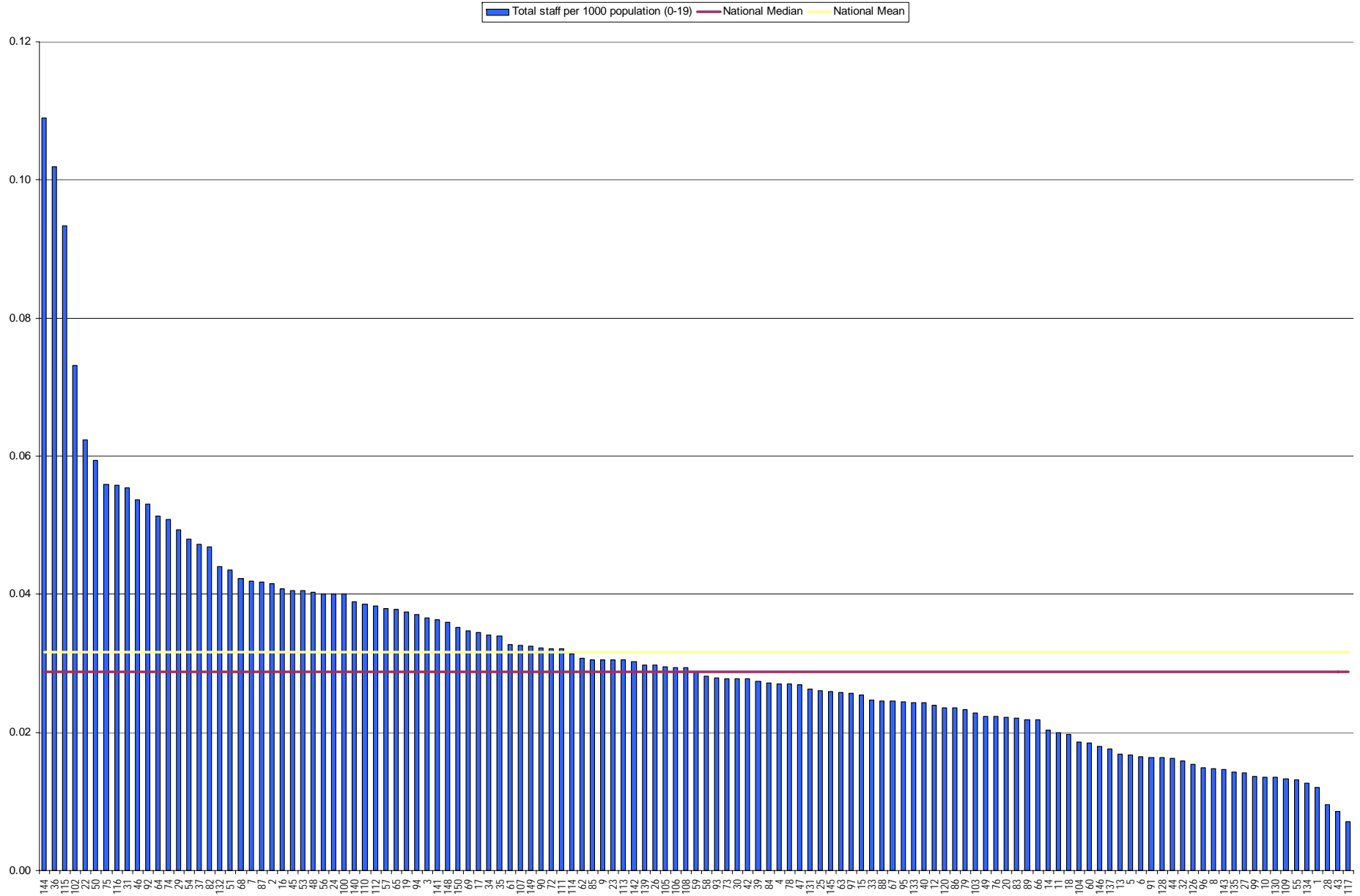


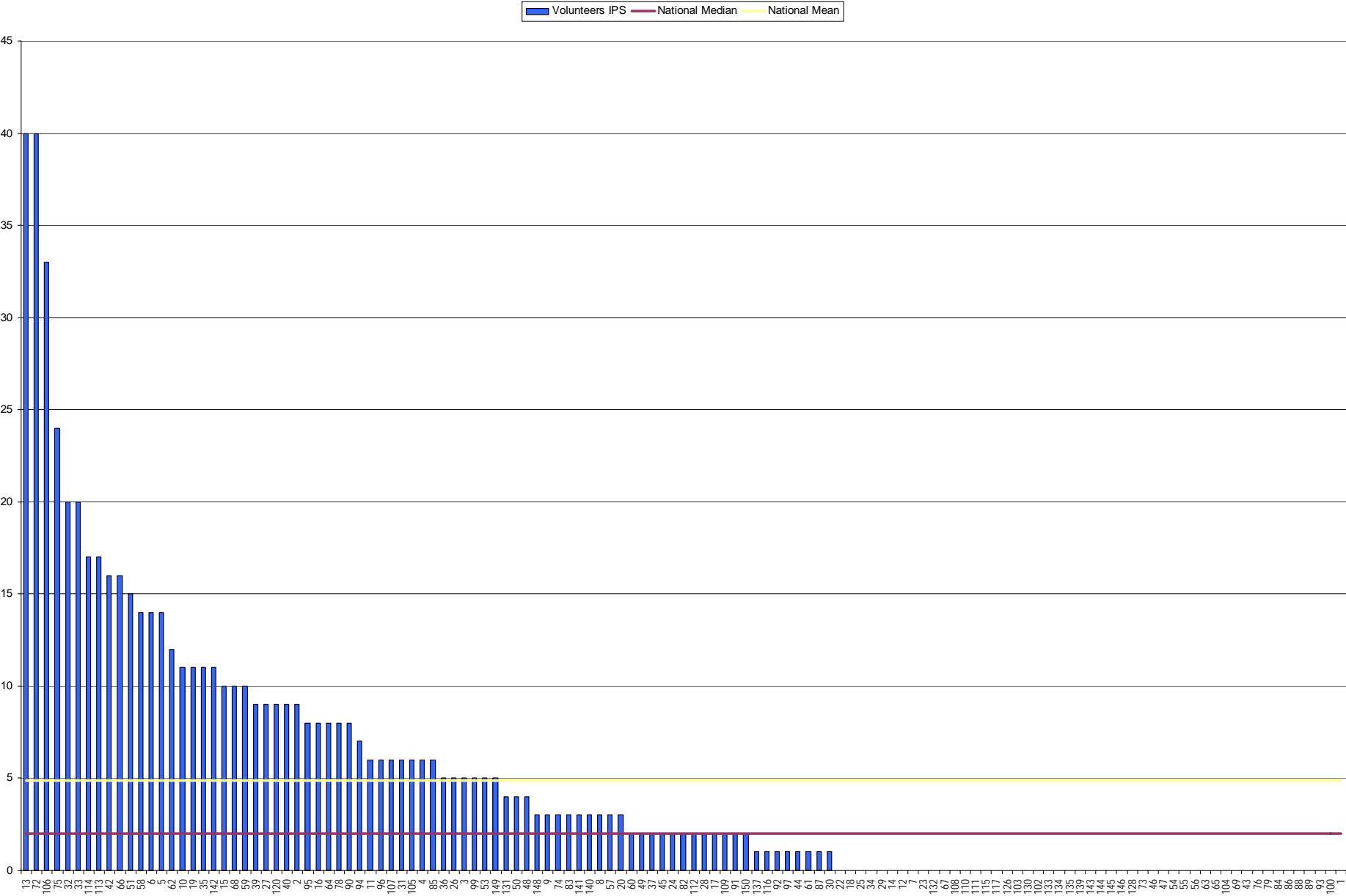
Chart 17 Total fte staff in post at 31st March 2006 (127 returns)



**Chart 18 Total employed fte PPS staff per 1,000 population [0-19] (127 returns)**



**Chart 19 Volunteers acting as IPSs actively working with the PPS at 31st March 2006 (127 returns)**



**Chart 20 Volunteers actively working as IPS per 1000 population (78 returns)**

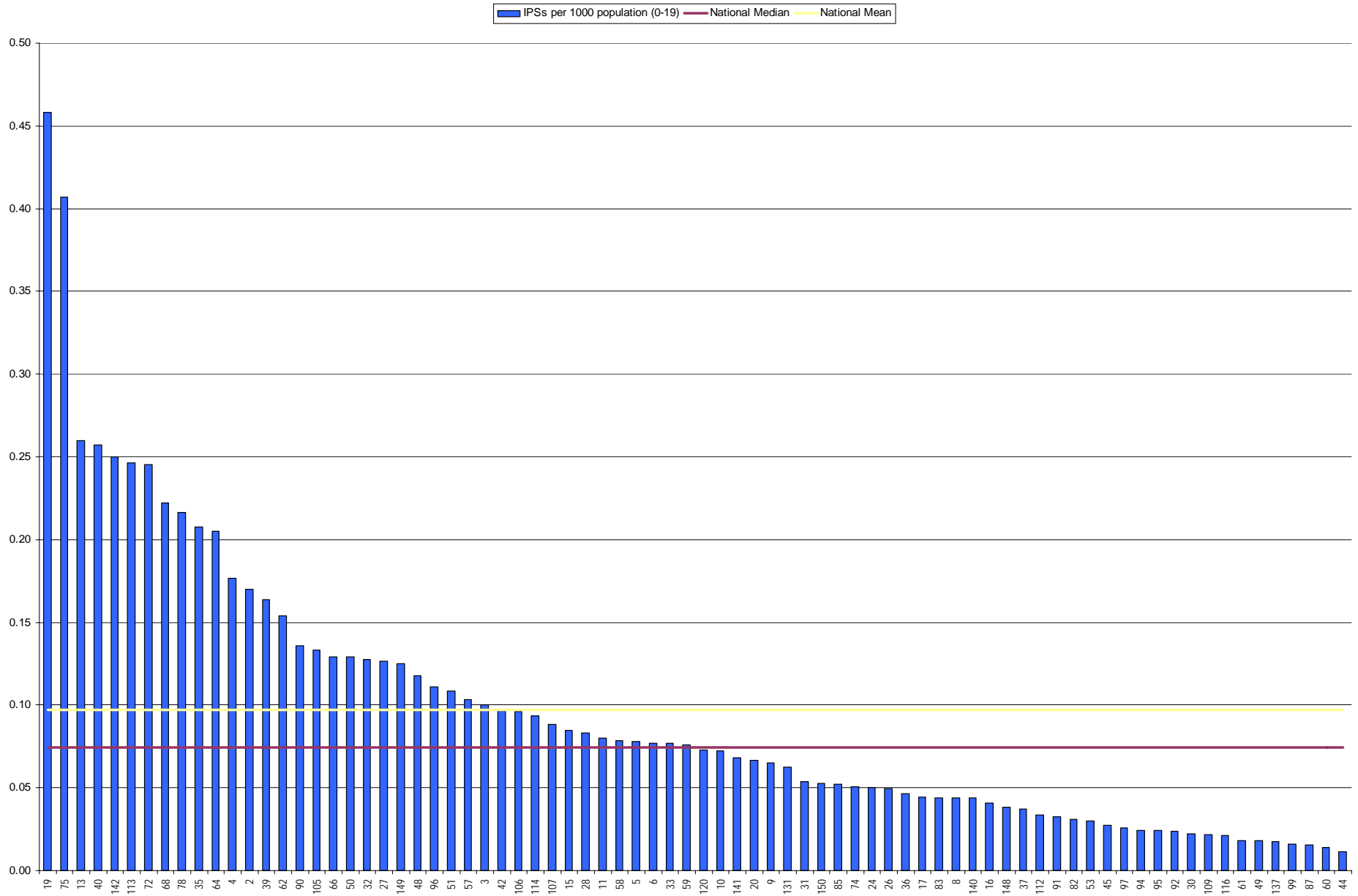
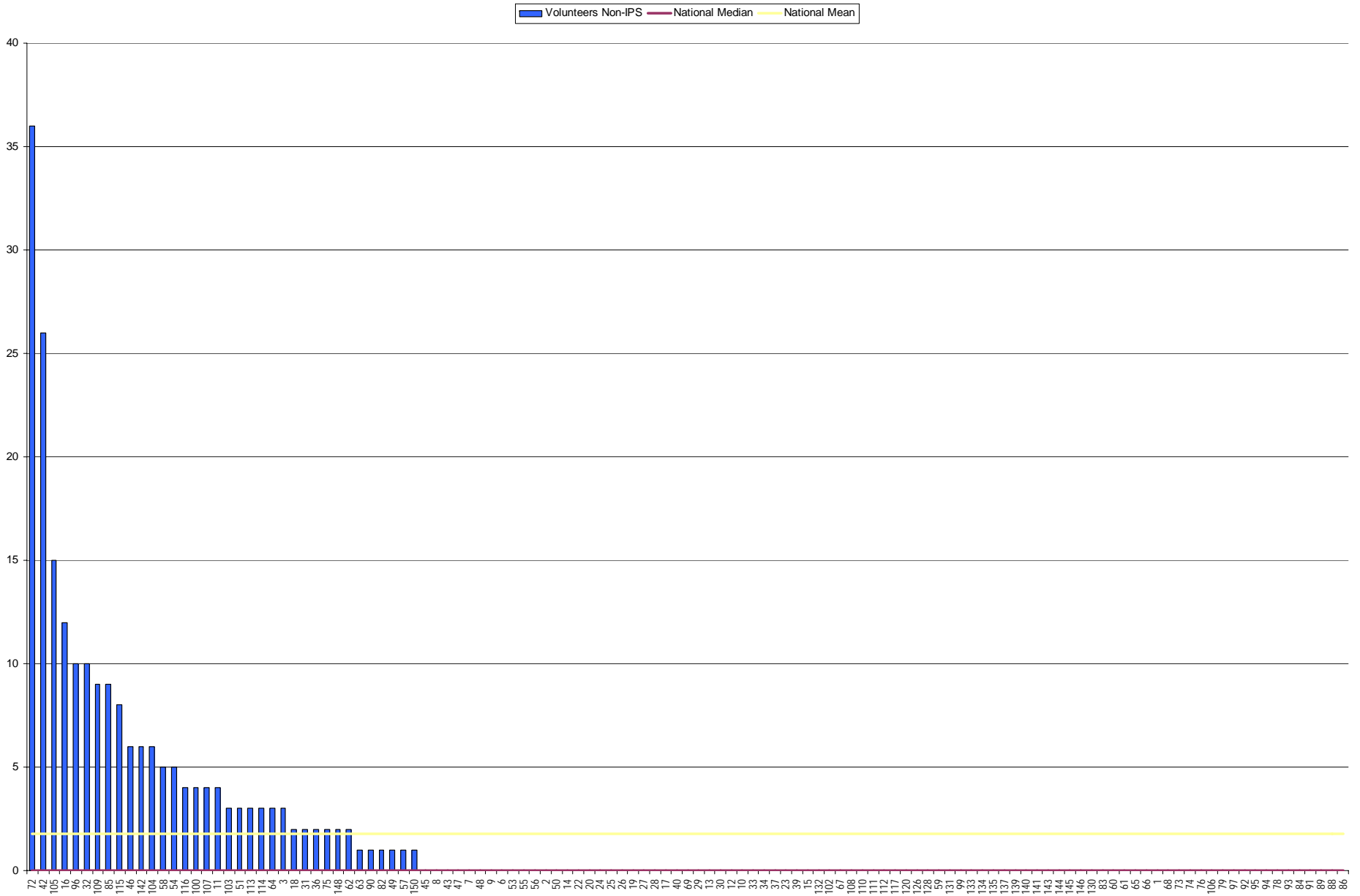


Chart 21 Other active volunteers (not acting as IPS) on 31st March 2006 (121 returns)





## ***Management of services***

The SEN Code of Practice (2:18) minimum standards for Local Authorities in delivering effective Parent Partnership Services state that they are expected to:

- ensure appropriate management structures for the service.

The SEN Toolkit Section 2 also suggests that LEAs provide “oversight of the parent partnership work through a management group with representation from voluntary organisations and parents’ groups”.

Only 56% of participating services have a management or steering group. This is a similar proportion to that reported in 2005, but a smaller percentage than in 2004 (62%). Although most steering groups meet frequently, a quarter of them meet less than 3 times per year.

The vast majority of management or steering groups include parents and a local authority representative (who may be an SEN Officer, an educational psychologist or advisory teacher).

90% of management or steering groups include representation from the voluntary sector. Of the 48 services that provided additional information, 18 have representation from more than one voluntary organisation. The range includes national and local, and generic and specialist groups.

29 PPSs provided information on other steering group representatives, including IPS representatives (6), Connexions (5), school governors (5), and council members (2)

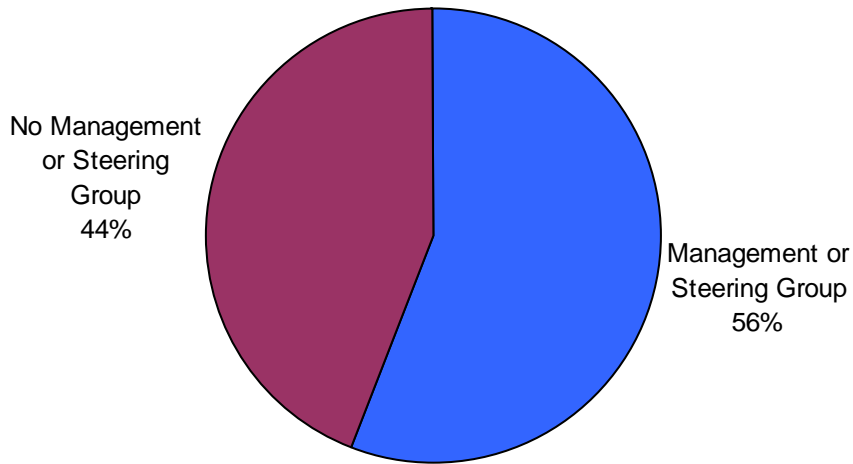
Many services already have management groups of the kind described in the SEN Toolkit<sup>10</sup>. However a significant minority do not. It is expected that the Department for Education and Skills will issue additional guidance on steering and management groups as part of the exemplification of the minimum standards, following the Education and Skills Select Committee Report on SEN<sup>11</sup>. Therefore, it is timely for local authorities and their PPSs to consider the need for a management group, its membership and function.

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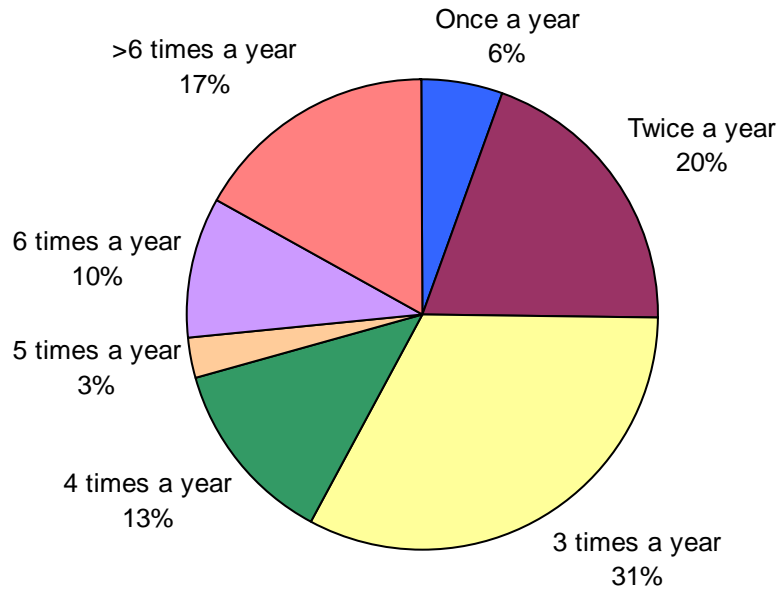
<sup>10</sup> See Footnote 3

<sup>11</sup> See Footnote 5

**Chart 23 Management or Steering Group (127 returns)**



**Chart 24 Management or Steering Group meeting frequency (71 returns)**



**Table H PPS management or steering group membership (72 returns)**

	Parents	Education	Health	Social Care	Schools	EP Service	Advisory Teachers	Early Years	Young People	Voluntary sector	Other
Count	60	55	38	37	40	34	17	30	1	65	29
Percent	83%	76%	53%	51%	56%	47%	24%	42%	1%	90%	40%

## **Access to services**

The SEN Code of Practice (2:18) minimum standards for Local Authorities in delivering effective Parent Partnership Services state that they are expected to:

- ensure adequate resources and staffing to meet the needs of parents in their area
- ensure that the service is flexible and responsive to local changes
- ensure that parents and schools are provided with clear information about the PPS, and about the various other sources of support in their area, including statutory and voluntary agencies

The minimum standards for Parent Partnership Services (2:21) state that services should ensure:

- that parents are provided with accurate, neutral information on their rights, roles and responsibilities within the SEN process, and on the wide range of options that are available for their children's education
- that parents are informed about other agencies...which can offer information and advice about their child's particular SEN.
- that information about the available services is publicised widely in the area using a variety of means
- the provision of neutral, accurate information for parents on all SEN procedures as set out in SEN legislation and the SEN Code of Practice
- the interpretation of information published by schools, LEAs and other bodies interested in SEN
- that a wide range of information is available in community languages, and to parents who may not be able to gain access to information through conventional means
- that advice on SEN procedures is made available to parents through information, support and training

See also paragraphs 11-13 and 21-24 of the SEN Toolkit Section 2.

A small minority of PPS (9% in 2006, compared to 5% in 2005) offer a 'term-time only' service. However, this is not related to the number of employed PPS staff staffing levels; of the 26 PPSs that employ 1 full-time equivalent staff or less all except one offer a service all year or all year with the exception of annual leave.

28% of services offer a dedicated helpline. Over 90% offer response to enquiries by phone, answer phone and email. 22% provide other means of access to the service, including referral from other services, information days, parents' evenings, parents'

groups, attendance at other organisations' events, via reception desk or customer service centre.

Response time to enquiries shows a small improvement compared to 2005, with all participating services responding to 90% or more of enquiries within 3 working days (compared with 95% of services in 2005).

98% of participating PPS have at least some information on the web, and many provide a variety of information (see Table J). In addition to the categories of information shown, some PPS include 'frequently asked questions', their support group programme, agendas and meeting notes, service directory, and a copy of the PPS annual report.

Provision of information other than in written English is much more variable. 49% of participating services do not offer information leaflets or publications in languages other than English. Less than 20% are able to provide information leaflets in the majority of languages used in the local community; this shows no change since 2005.

The majority report that they can provide translations on request or arrange for an interpreter. This would normally be available through the local authority's general arrangements for provision of interpreters or translation. Of the 32 services providing additional comments on translations, 6 note little or no demand, 6 report arrangements to use local authority or community services, 3 rely on use of DfES publications and 3 note budget constraints. Comments on use of interpreters suggest that many services depend on ad hoc arrangements, though a small number have a formal arrangement to provide an interpreter, usually through their local authority.

Less than half of PPSs are able to provide information in a range of formats; this indicates no improvement since 2005, when 52% of participating services did so.

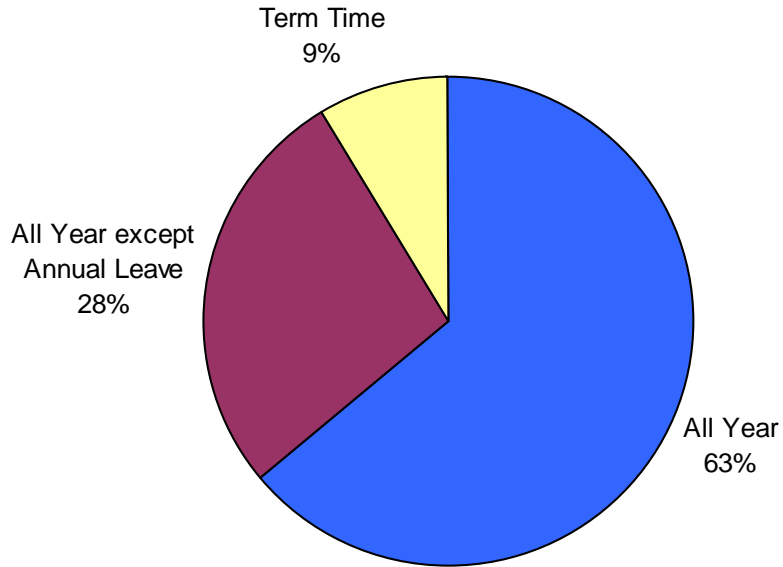
71 services report that they produce a newsletter, the majority of these being produced termly. 88 services indicate that they had provided an article or feature for another publication. This includes a wide range of publications, such as other organisations' newsletters (including local authority, governor, school, SENCO and voluntary network newsletters), local papers, and local radio.

Three years of benchmarking data indicate that:

- All services are able to respond to most enquiries within 3 working days.
- Most services offer a variety of methods for parents and carers to make initial contact, though this is likely to be more difficult for families for whom spoken English is not their first language.
- Almost all services now have a 'web presence', although only about 6% have their own dedicated website.

- Information in community languages is available in less than half of PPS. Although 83% of PPS report that they can make translations available on request this does depend on the family being aware that the service is available.
- Similarly information in alternative formats is available in less than half of PPS.
- There is an overall trend of increased use of local publications, newsletters etc. to publicise PPSs, though the proportion of services publishing their own newsletters shows no change.

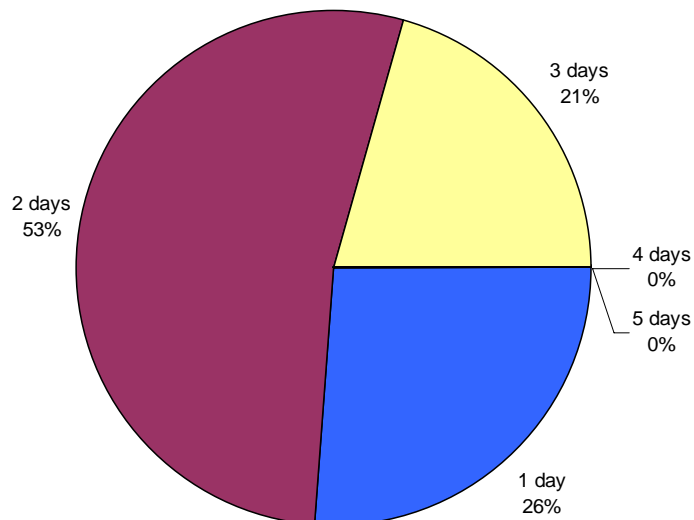
**Chart 25 Service availability for responding to enquiries (127 returns)**



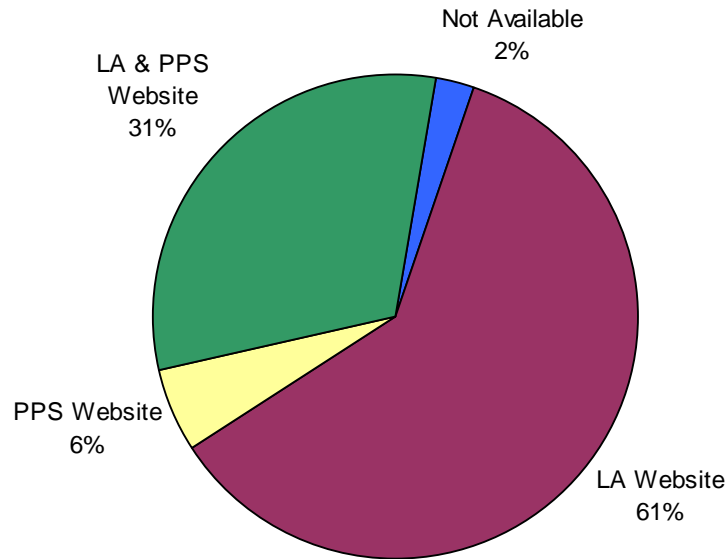
**Table I How enquiries are received (127 returns)**

	Dedicated Helpline	By Phone Office Hours	Answer phone	Email / Website	Mail / Letter	Drop in	Other
Number	35	111	120	117	115	84	28
Percent	28%	87%	94%	92%	91%	66%	22%

**Chart 26 PPS response time to enquiries (126 returns)**



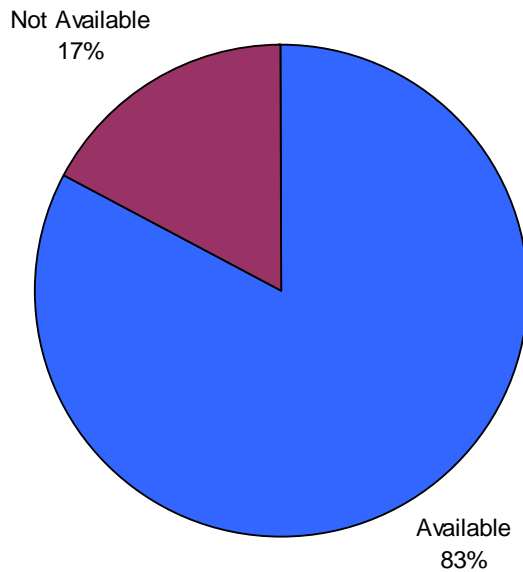
**Chart 27 PPS information available on the web (127 returns)**



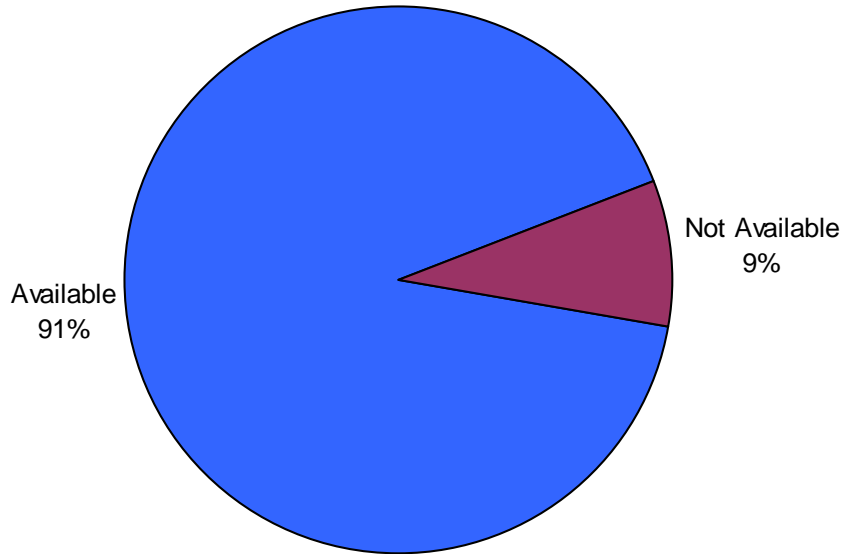
**Table J Range of information available on website (127 returns)**

	Contact details	Range of services provided	Information leaflets	Discussion forum	Newsletter	Links to other sites	Other
Number	123	115	76	8	48	77	24
Percent	97%	91%	60%	6%	38%	61%	19%

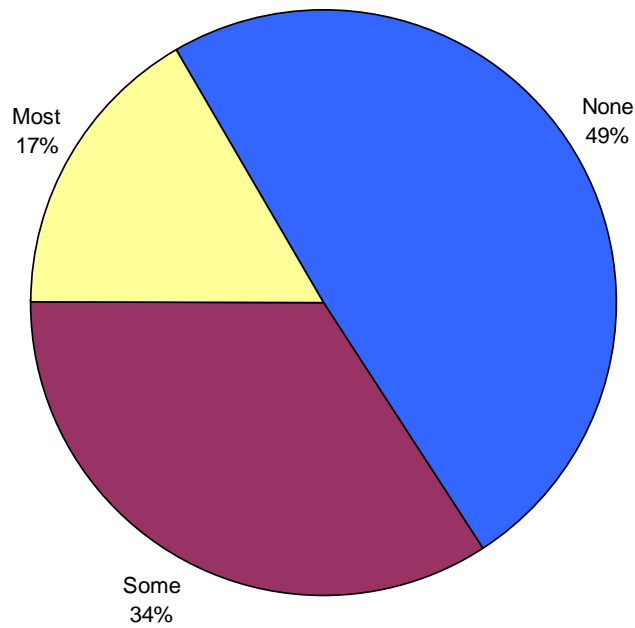
**Chart 28 Availability of translations (127 returns)**



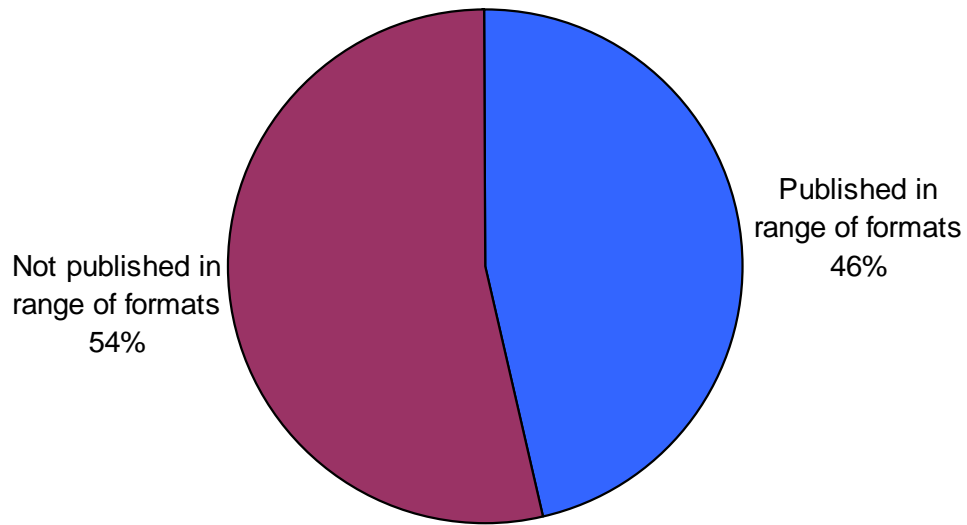
**Chart 29 Availability of interpreters (127 returns)**



**Chart 30 Availability of information in community languages (127 returns)**



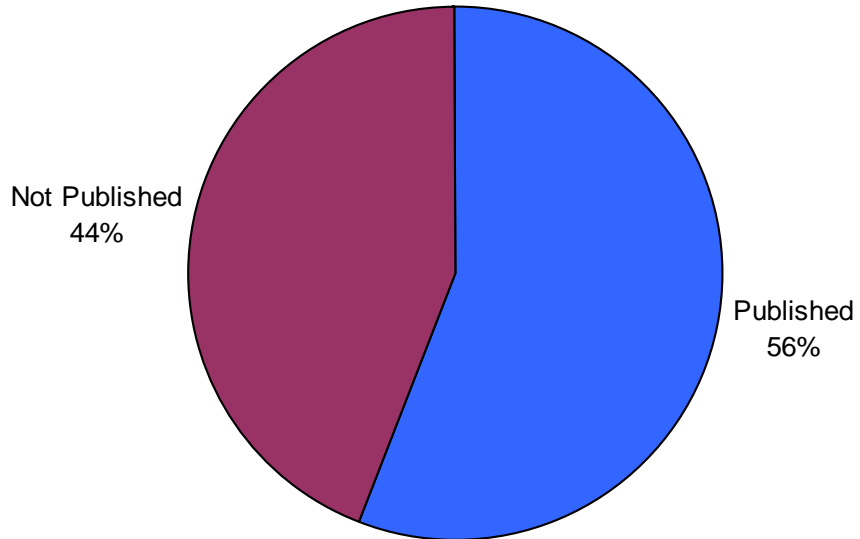
**Chart 31 Information published in range of formats (127 returns)**



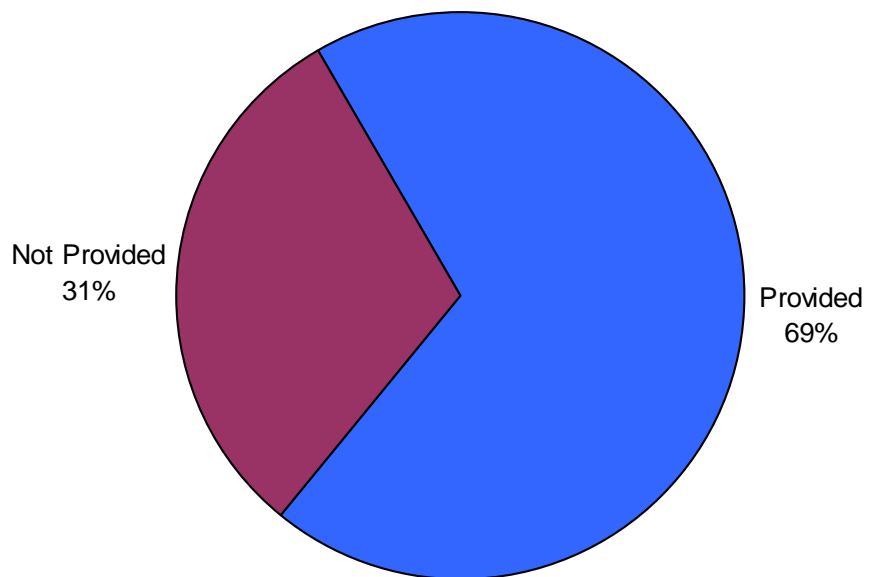
**Table K Formats used for publications (127 returns)**

	Audio	Large Print	Braille	Video	Other
Count	41	52	32	13	7
Percent	32%	41%	25%	10%	6%

**Chart 32 Newsletter published between April 2005 and March 2006 (127 returns)**



**Chart 33 News articles & features for local publications between April 2005 and March 2006 (127 returns)**



## **Casework**

The SEN Code of Practice (2:18) minimum standards for Local Authorities in delivering effective Parent Partnership Services state that they are expected to:

- ensure adequate resources and staffing to meet the needs of any parents in the area
- ensure that parents and schools are provided with clear information about the PPS, and about the various other sources of support in their area, including statutory and voluntary agencies

The minimum standards for Parent Partnership Services (2:21) state that services should ensure:

- the provision of a range of flexible services including using their best endeavours to provide access to an Independent Parental Supporter for all parents who want one
- that practical support is offered to parents, either individually or in groups, to help them in their discussions with schools, LEAs and other statutory agencies
- that parents are provided with accurate, neutral information on their rights, roles and responsibilities within the SEN process, and on the wide range of options that are available for their children's education
- that parents are informed about other agencies, such as Health Services, Social Services and voluntary organisations, which can offer information and advice about their child's particular SEN. This may be particularly important at the time the LEA issues a proposed statement
- that advice on special educational needs procedures is made available to parents through information, support and training.

See also paragraphs 14-20 and 25-29 of the SEN Toolkit Section 2

Direct work with parents (including provision of information and support, casework and group work) is an important aspect of the work of PPSs, but is by no means the only important function. Involvement in strategic planning, ensuring that parents' views are heard, recruitment and training of IPSs, providing training for other professionals, etc. are also very significant activities. However benchmarking returns have consistently shown that about 60% of employed PPS staff time is dedicated to direct work with parents. This will include travel time for casework, which for some services may be a significant factor. Volunteer IPS time dedicated to casework would be additional to this and will vary widely depending on the use made by services of IPSs.

Prior to 2006 data on referrals was collected as this was a performance indicator used by OFSTED and was already collected via LEA Form 4. However it was clear from benchmarking returns that there was concern about the value of the concept of 'referral' and significant variation in the interpretation of the term.

Form 4 is no longer in use and data on referrals has therefore not been collected this year. Casework data is now based on information about the number of parent/carer service users, which gives an indication of the use made of the PPS by families in respect of individual children. It is a measure of the total level of ongoing casework, rather than new demand. The definition is shown in Appendix 1.

### Cautionary note

In using the charts in this section please note that quantity should not be confused with quality! For example, a service that emphasises involvement in strategic work and/or produces high quality and extensive information for parents may work directly with a smaller number of parent/carer service users.

**Table L Number of parent/carer service users**

	April 03 to March 04 (96 returns)	April 04 to March 05 (96 returns)	April 05 to March 06 (120 returns)
Total *	48,023	50,508	55,420
Extrapolated total for 148 services	58,224	69,724	62,996
Range *	3 – 2396	33 - 2429	40-2887
National mean	500	526	462
National median	295	304	294

*\* Note that the Total and Range for each year are not directly comparable as the sample is not identical.*

Three years of benchmarking data indicate that:

- The extrapolated total for the number of parent/carer service users in 2006 is broadly similar to 2004. National median figures are also consistent across the 3 years. Whether there was a real increase in 04/05 is not clear. Confusion between the referral and parent/carer user categories may have been a factor.
- The range of parent/carer service users per 1000 population (Chart 36) and parent/carer service users per fte employed staff (Chart 37) remains very wide, but is much less extreme than in previous years. This is likely to be due to greater consistency in recording, partly because the removal of the 'referral' category has reduced confusion.

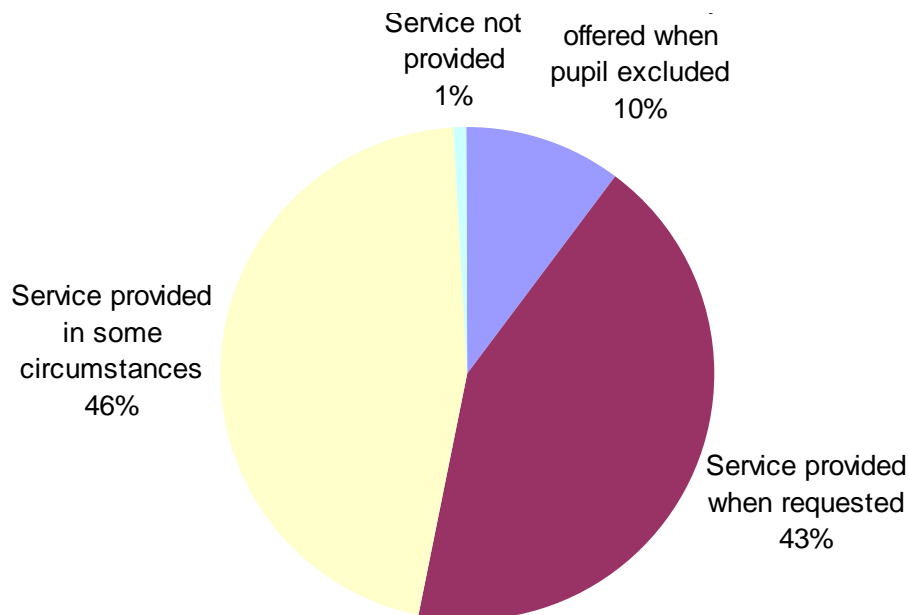
- The number of parent/carer service users per volunteer IPS varies widely (Chart 38). A significant proportion (39%) of PPSs have no volunteer IPSs at all (see **Staffing** above)

**The proportion of families ‘reached’ by Parent Partnership Services**

During the 12 month period covered by this benchmarking exercise the number of parents/carers actively using services represents approximately 0.5% of the 0-19 population. As an estimate, this represents approximately 4.1% of the SEN population in schools. These figures are similar to those reported in 2004 and 2005.

The January 2006 DfES statistics show that 18.6% of children and young people in school have special educational needs. It does not follow that 18.6% of families have a child with SEN; some families will have more than one child with SEN, while some children with SEN will have more than one family. Nor will all families who have a child with SEN need support from their PPS; some may obtain information from their PPS but do not need support, while others seek support from voluntary organisations, friends and family. Nevertheless the evidence suggests that less than 5% of families who might actively receive support from PPSs currently do so.

**Chart 34 PPS involvement in providing a service to the families of excluded pupils (126 returns)**



## **Involvement in disagreement resolution and appeals to SENDIST**

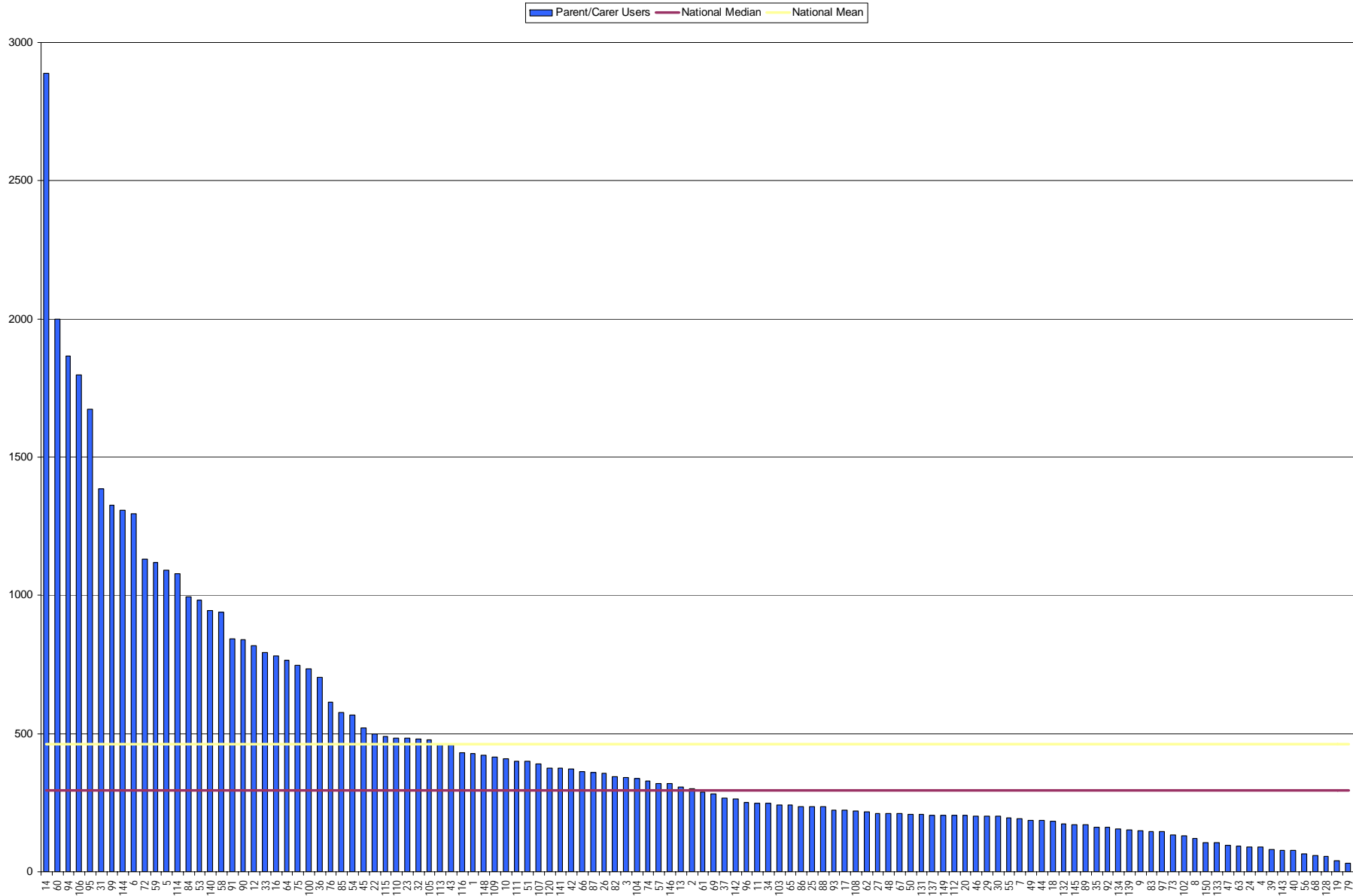
111 services provided data on their involvement in cases that were referred to the disagreement resolution service. 45% of services had had some involvement, with 35% involved in at least half of the cases that were referred. However 61 services reported no involvement, though in some cases this was because there had been no referrals for mediation. The majority of additional comments referred to low use of the disagreement resolution services.

By contrast, 79% of services had had involvement in at least some cases where an appeal had been lodged with the SEN and Disability Tribunal, with 55% (34% in 2005) involved in at least half the cases.

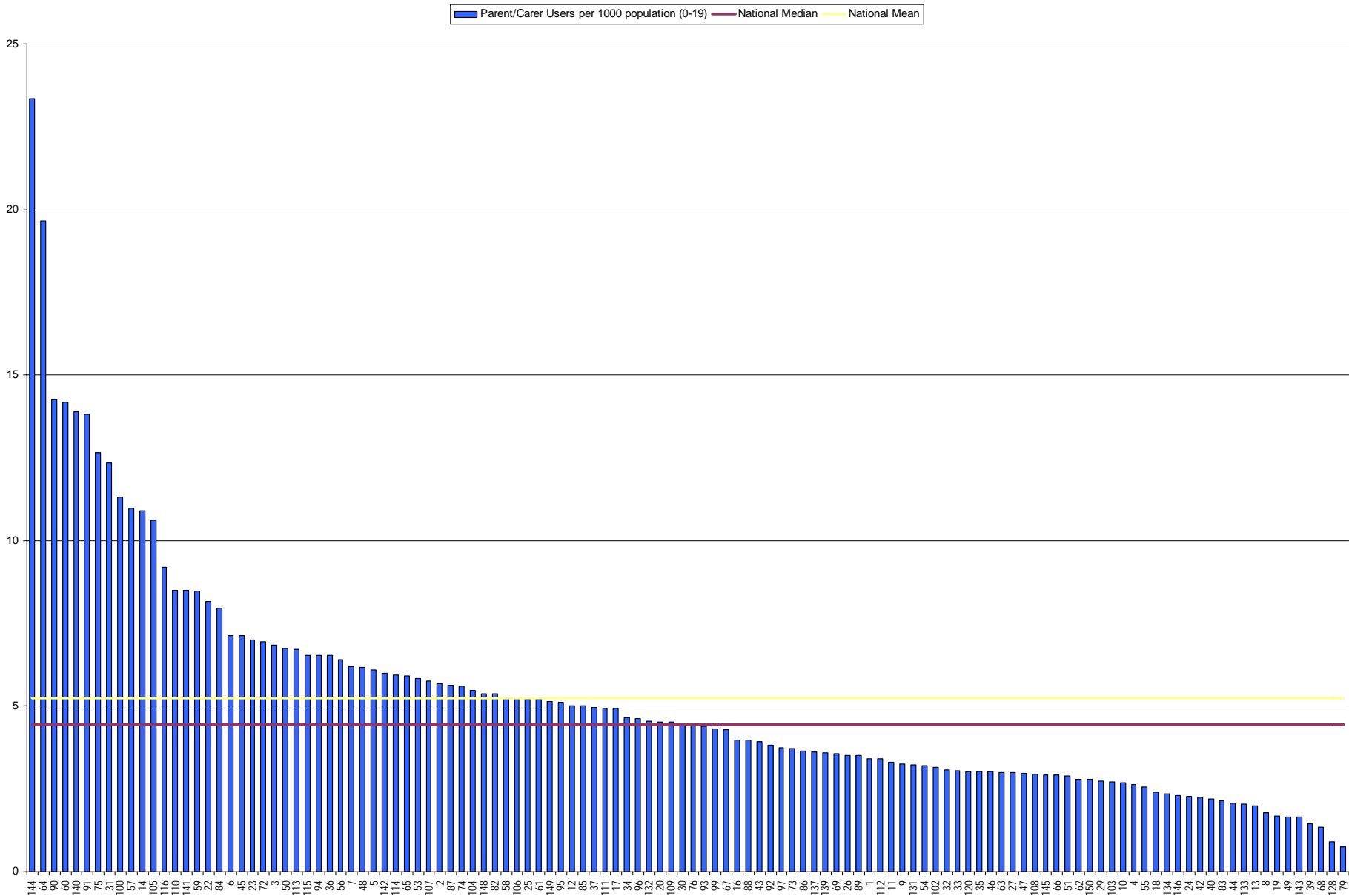
Three years of benchmarking data indicate that:

- Use of formal mediation (disagreement resolution) services remains low in most areas and therefore the number of actual cases going to mediation where there has been active PPS involvement in the previous 6 months is relatively small. Despite the small number of cases, more than 50% of referrals to mediation appear to have had no active input from PPS.
- It is much more likely that families going to tribunal will have had active support from the PPS, although a significant number of cases do not appear to have had such support.

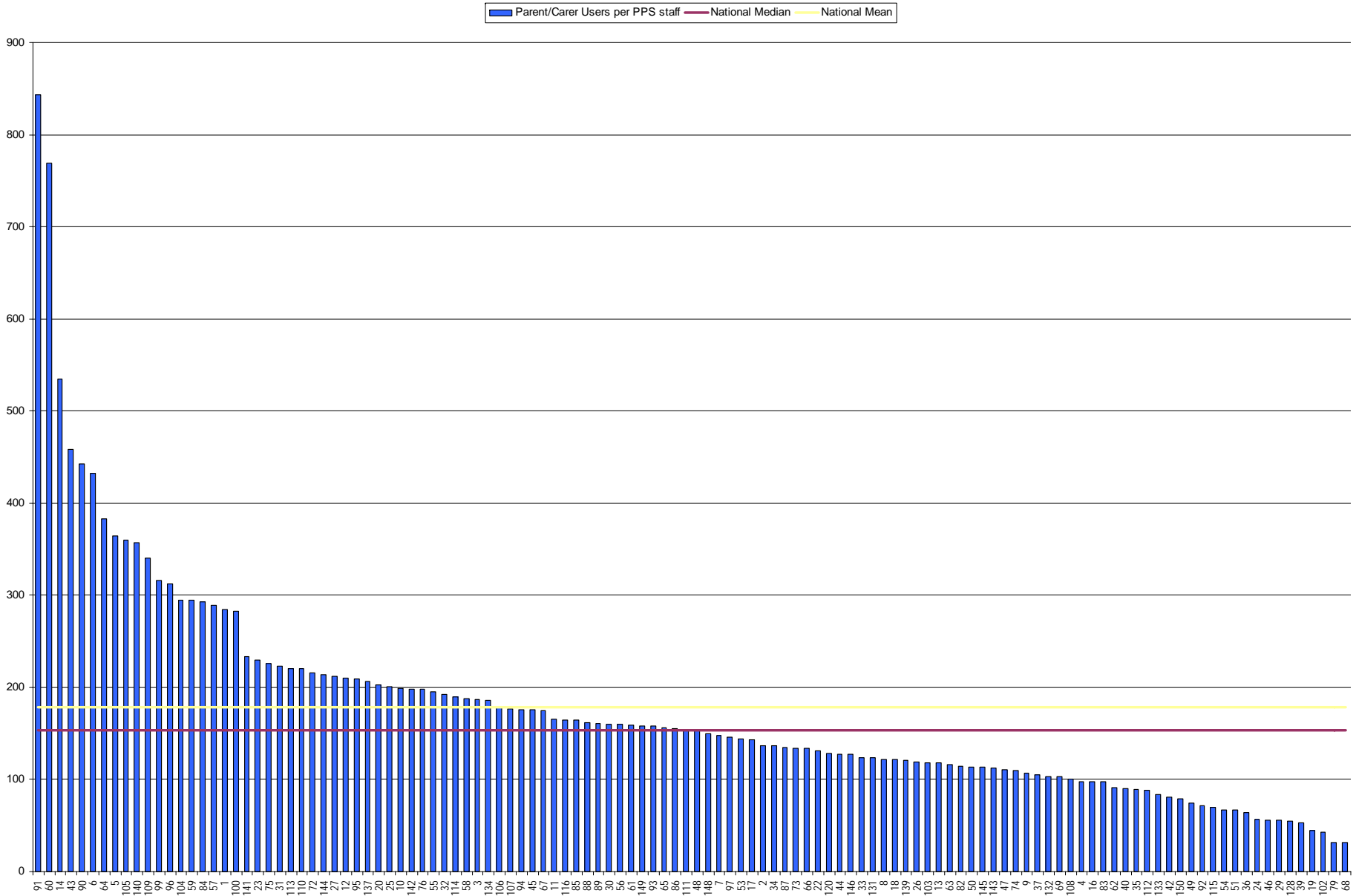
**Chart 35 Parent/carer service users – financial year April 05 to March 06 (120 returns)**



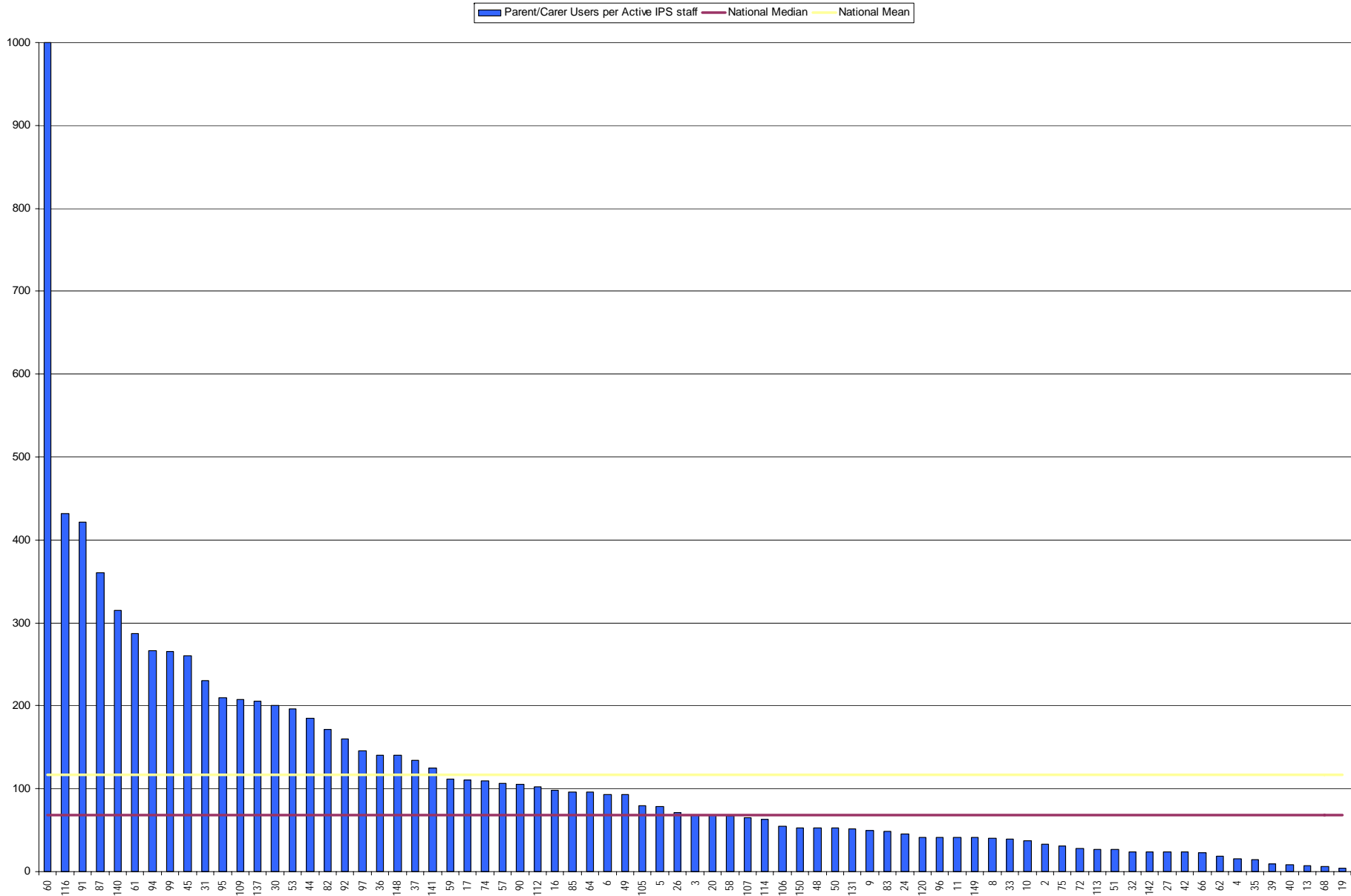
**Chart 36 Parent/carer service users per 1,000 population [0-19] (120 returns)**



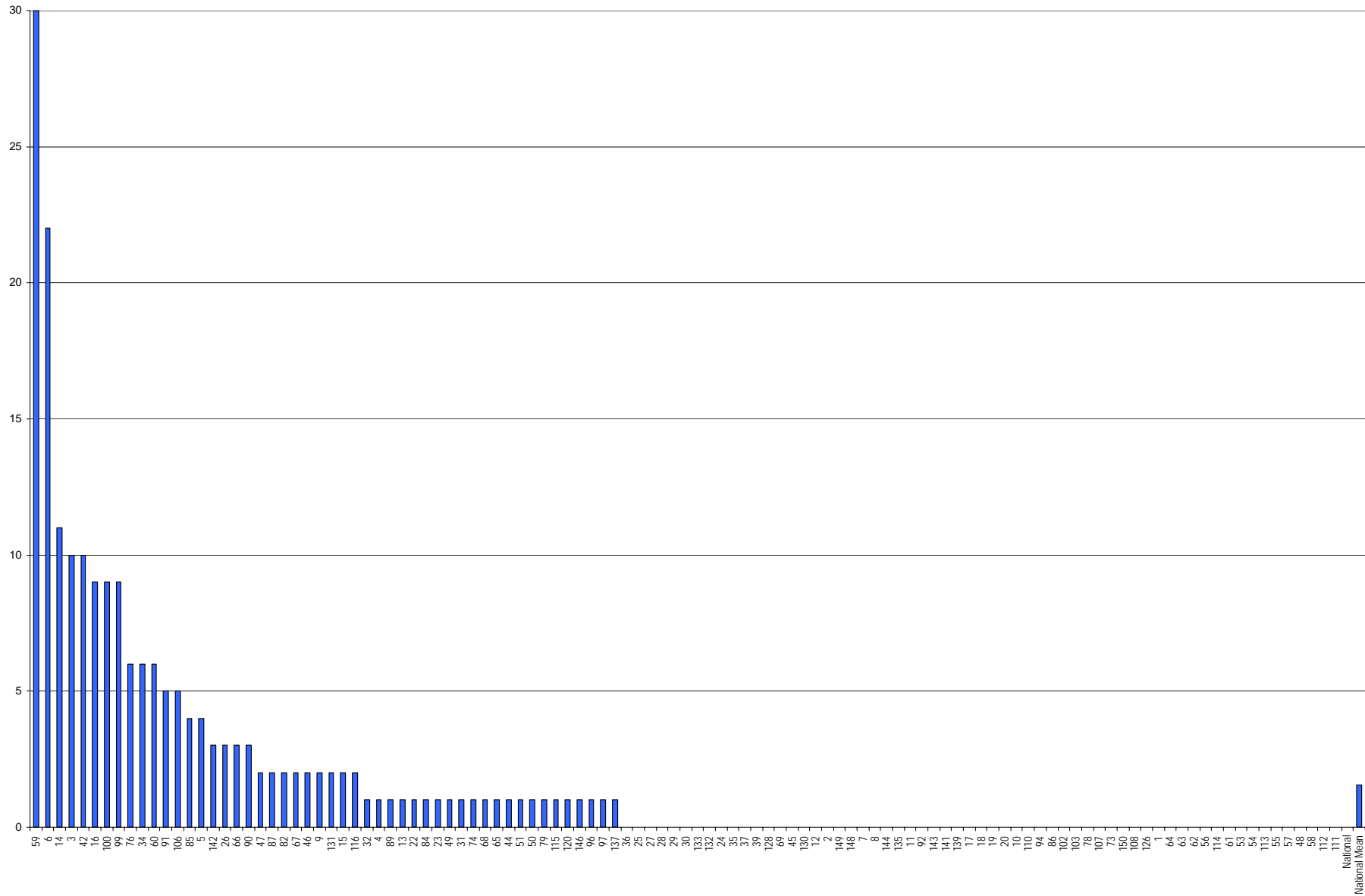
**Chart 37 Parent/carer service users to total employed FTE PPS staff (120 returns)**



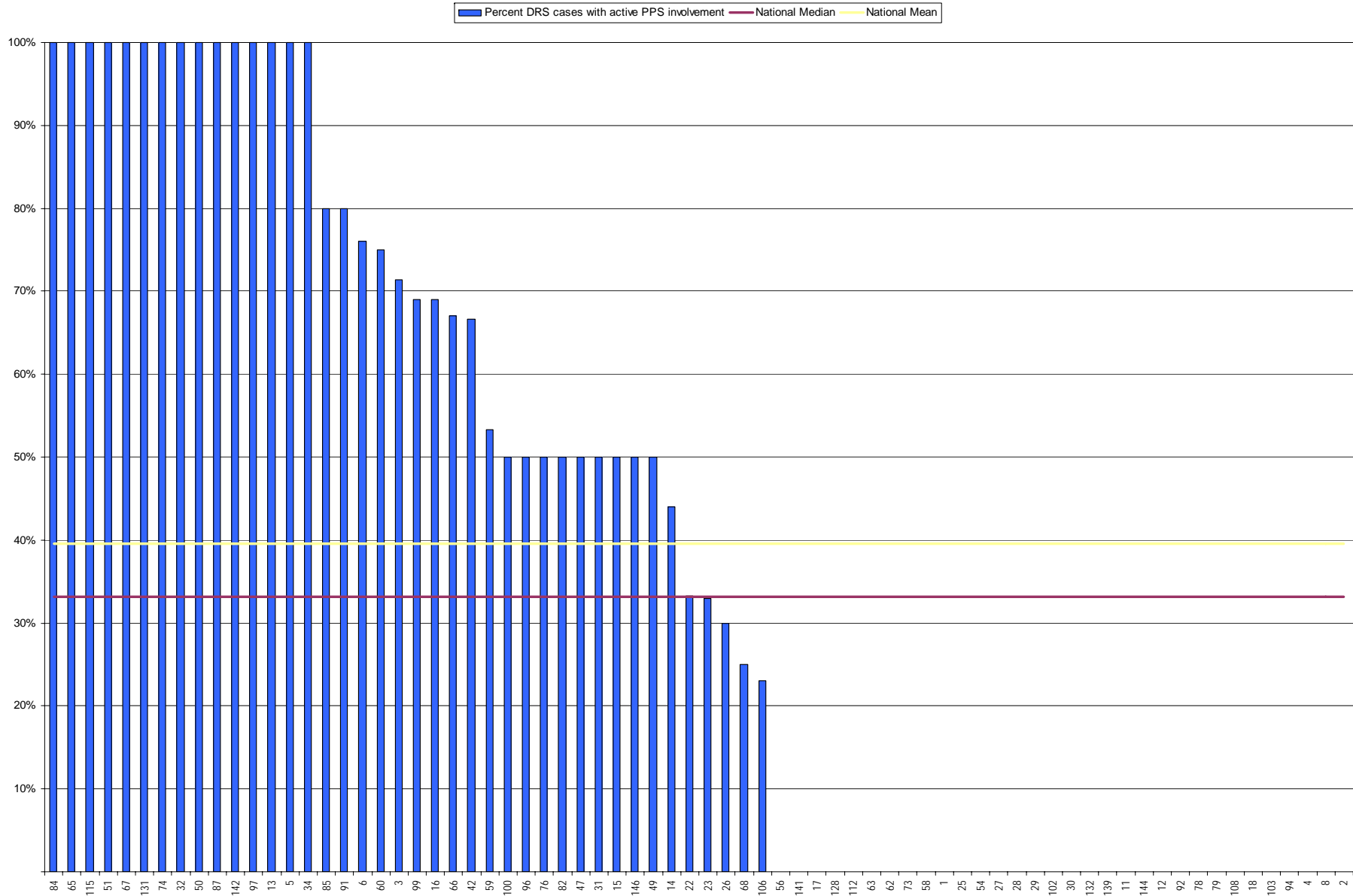
**Chart 38 Parent/carer service users to volunteers actively working as IPSs (75 returns)**



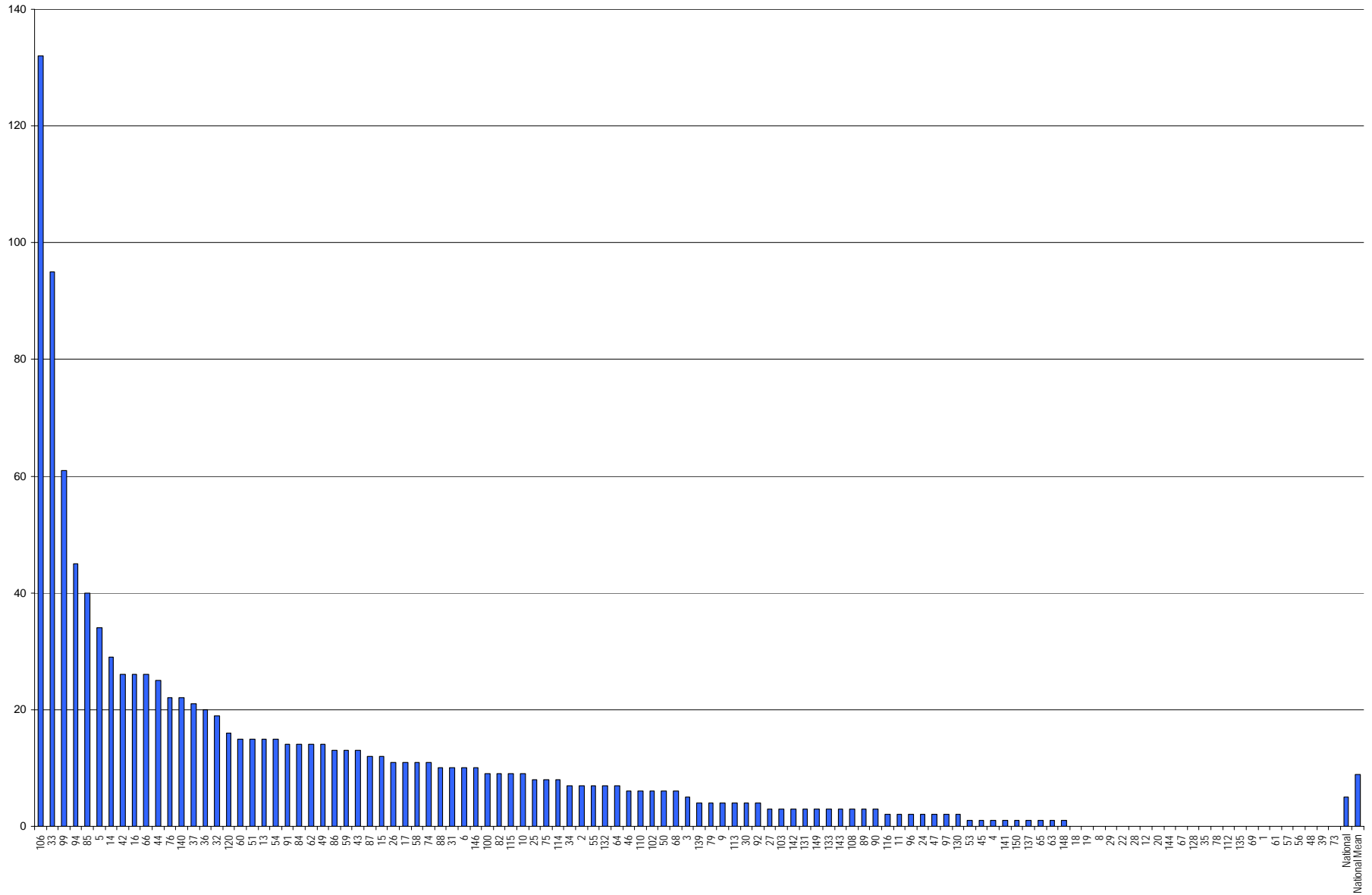
**Chart 39** Number of cases referred for disagreement resolution with active PPS involvement in 6 months previous to referral (111 returns)



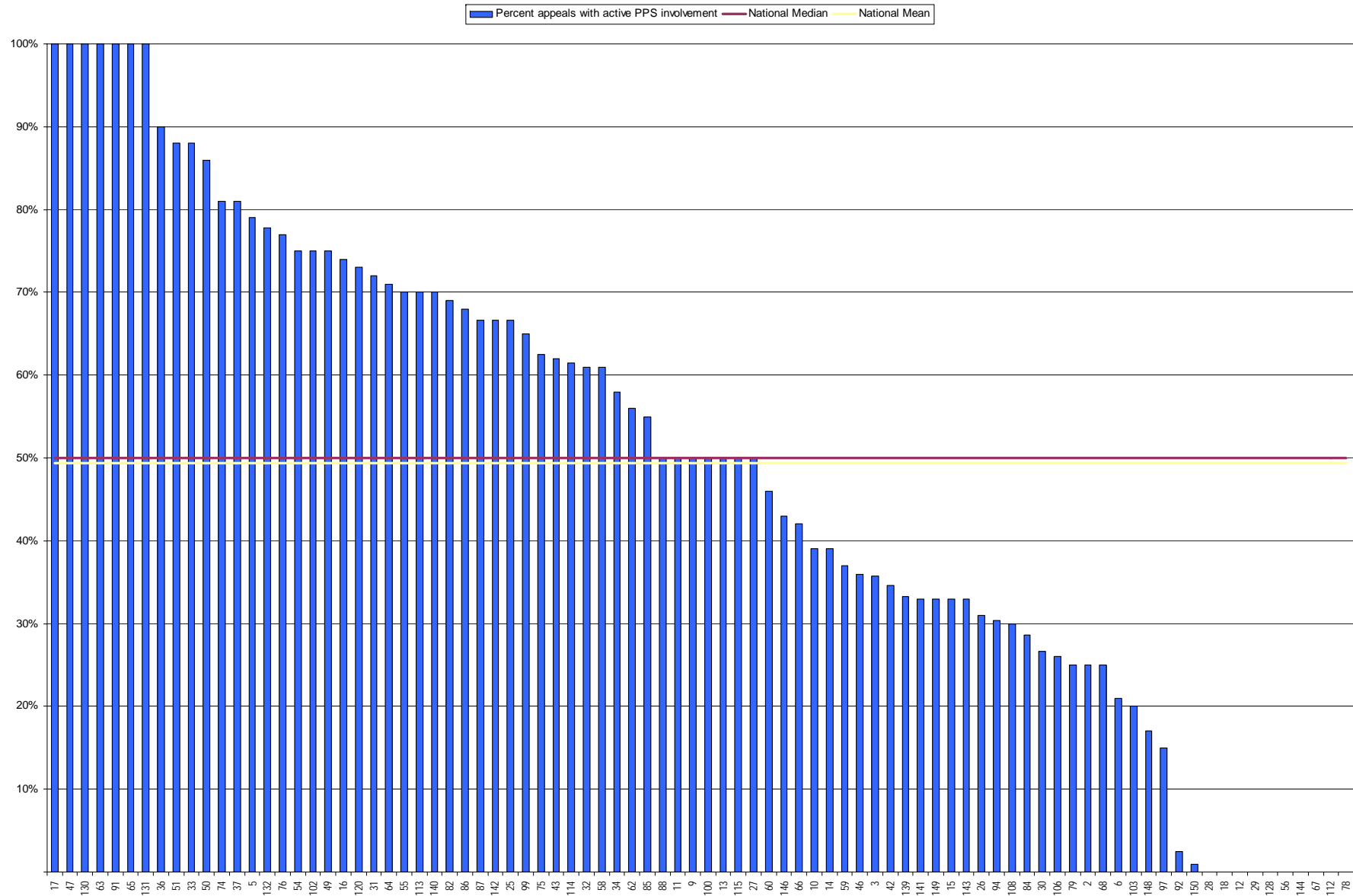
**Chart 40 Percentage of cases referred for disagreement resolution with active PPS involvement in 6 months previous to referral (72 returns)**



**Chart 41 Number of appeals lodged with SEN & Disability Tribunal with active PPS involvement in 6 months (111 returns)**



**Chart 42 Percentage of appeals lodged with SEN & Disability Tribunal with active PPS involvement in 6 months previous to lodging (86 returns)**



## **Strategic Work**

The SEN Code of Practice (2:18) minimum standards for Local Authorities in delivering effective Parent Partnership Services state that they are expected to:

- promote and facilitate arrangements for the service to work in partnership with other agencies such as health and social services, using local planning structures such as the Education Development Plan, Early Years Development and Childcare Plan, Connexions Plan and Children's Plan...
- actively seek feedback from the service and service users to inform and influence decisions on SEN policies, procedures and practices in order to improve communications and minimise the potential for misunderstandings and disagreements.

The minimum standards for Parent Partnership Services (2:21) state that services should ensure:

- that parents' views are heard and understood, and inform and influence the development of local SEN policy and practice.

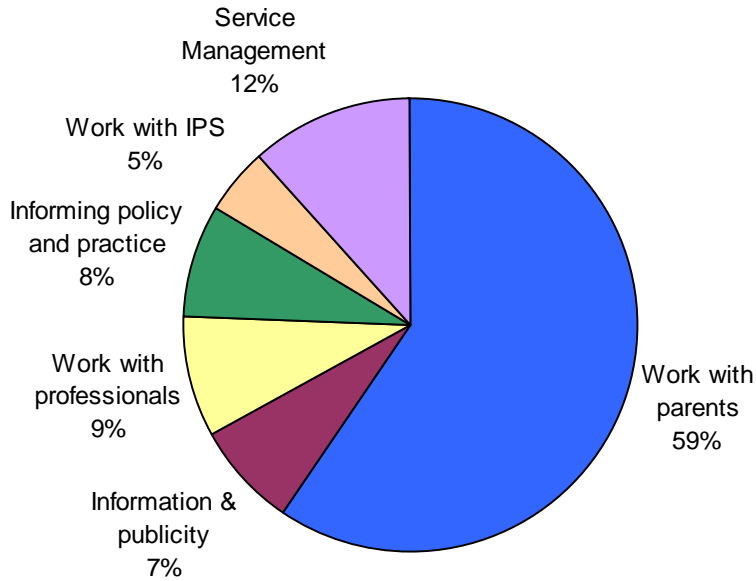
PPSs have always been expected to play a part in informing and influencing policy and practice. With an increasing emphasis on parent consultation and involvement in the planning and delivery of Children's Services as part of Every Child Matters, they have a crucial role in helping local authorities to take account of parents' views.

For the purposes of benchmarking, strategic work includes time spent contributing to working groups, forums, consultations, etc., as well as service development planning. Some of the main plans that PPS contribute to are shown in Table M, although additional comments indicate that individual services contribute to a wide range of local planning groups, including Children's Workforce Development, CAMHS, Parenting/Participation, Disabled Children's Strategy, Early Intervention, Common Assessment Framework, Transition etc..

Three years of benchmarking data indicate that:

- The proportion of time employed PPS staff spend on strategic work varies widely, from 0% to approximately 20% of time (see Chart 7). It is however a feature of most service's work.
- The range of plans and groups that PPSs contribute to is extensive.
- There is a rise in the participation of PPS in parent/carer fora (51% in 2004, 63% in 2005 and 65% in 2006)

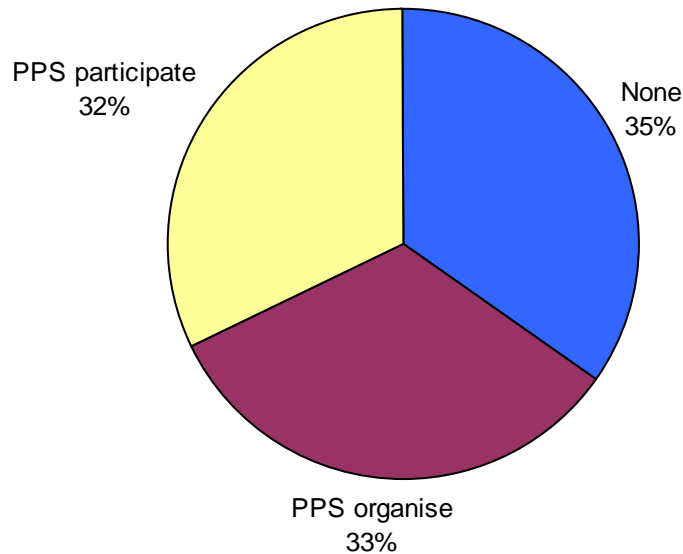
**Chart 43 Percentage of time allocated to each work area for employed PPS staff (125 returns)**



**Table M Involvement in strategic planning (127 returns)**

	Strategic Partnership	Education Development	Children & Young People	Children's Services	Children's Fund	Accessibility	Connexions	Behaviour Support	SEN	Early Years	Other
Count	30	50	59	47	10	30	13	35	85	31	35
Percent	24%	39%	46%	37%	8%	24%	10%	28%	67%	24%	28%

**Chart 44 Parent/Carer Forum Involvement (124 returns)**



## ***Planning, monitoring and evaluation***

The SEN Code of Practice (2:18) minimum standards for Local Authorities in delivering effective Parent Partnership Services state that they are expected to:

- ensure that the service has a development plan which sets clear targets and is regularly reviewed: such plans should specify short, medium and long term strategies and arrangements for evaluation and quality assurance
- have, irrespective of whether it is out-sourced or provided in-house, appropriate arrangements for overseeing and regularly monitoring and reviewing the service, taking account of best practice both locally and nationally.

The minimum standards for Parent Partnership Services (2:21) state that services should ensure:

- the regular review of the effectiveness of the service they provide, for instance by seeking feedback from users.

See also paragraphs 9 and 10 of the SEN Toolkit Section 2.

The National Parent Partnership Network and National Association of Parent Partnership Staff agreed guidelines on monitoring and evaluation arrangements. These were sent to all services in England in 2004 and have recently been revised. The Parent Partnership Services Practice Guide<sup>12</sup> also gives examples of arrangements made by services to plan, monitor and evaluate their work.

The great majority of PPSs have development plans, and this year 57% of participating PPSs published an annual report; of these 64% are in the public domain.

All services make some arrangements to monitor their work, with many using a variety of measures. The percentages of services monitoring the range of issues shown in Table N are broadly consistent with 2005. Service impact was added as an additional category in 2006 and the evidence is that only just over a quarter of services monitor this. A number of respondents reported that they endeavour to monitor outcomes, usually through follow-up questionnaires.

Monitoring arrangements made by local authorities continue to be less comprehensive, with most relying on either local authority representation on the steering group, regular meetings with managers or reports submitted by the service. Although 16% report that the local authority make other arrangements for

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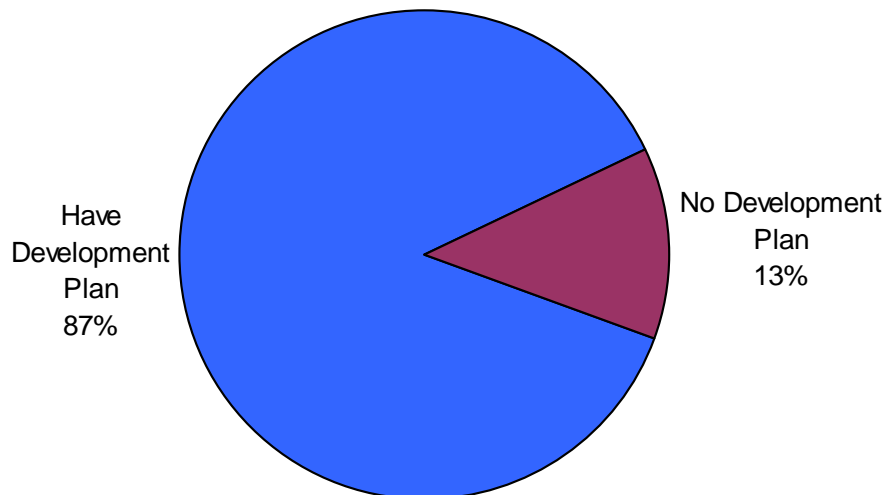
<sup>12</sup> See Footnote 1

monitoring, the additional comments given by respondents suggest that the majority of other arrangements do come within the listed categories, i.e., regular meeting/report or local authority questionnaire. The exceptions to this are a bi-annual independent evaluation, annually reporting to elected members, awarding of a Charter Mark and use of a service level agreement or contract review process.

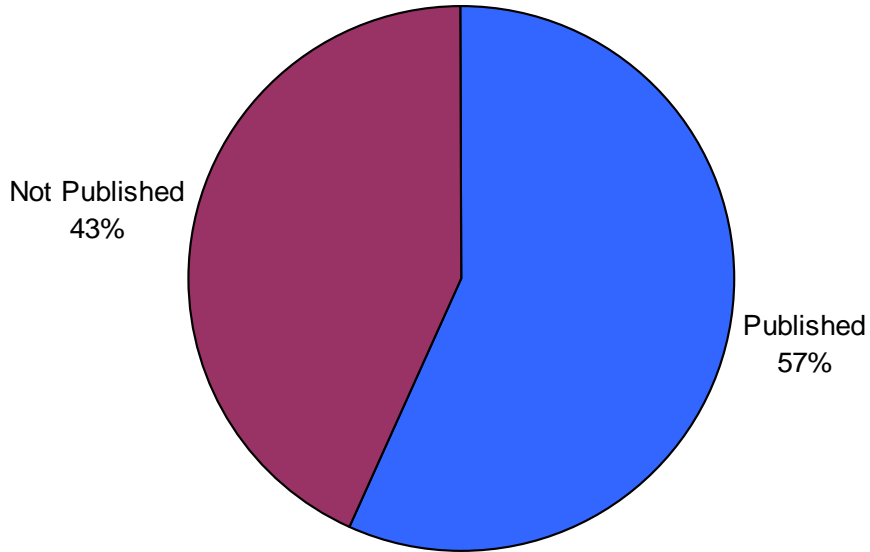
Three years of benchmarking data indicate that:

- Most, but not all, PPSs have a development plan.
- Since 2004, there has been a small increase in the percentage of participating services that publish an annual report.
- A higher proportion of services are monitoring a wider range of issues, though monitoring of impact is only undertaken by a minority.
- Some monitoring is carried out by most (over 94%) local authorities, usually in the form of regular meetings/reports by the PPS Co-ordinator to a local authority officer.

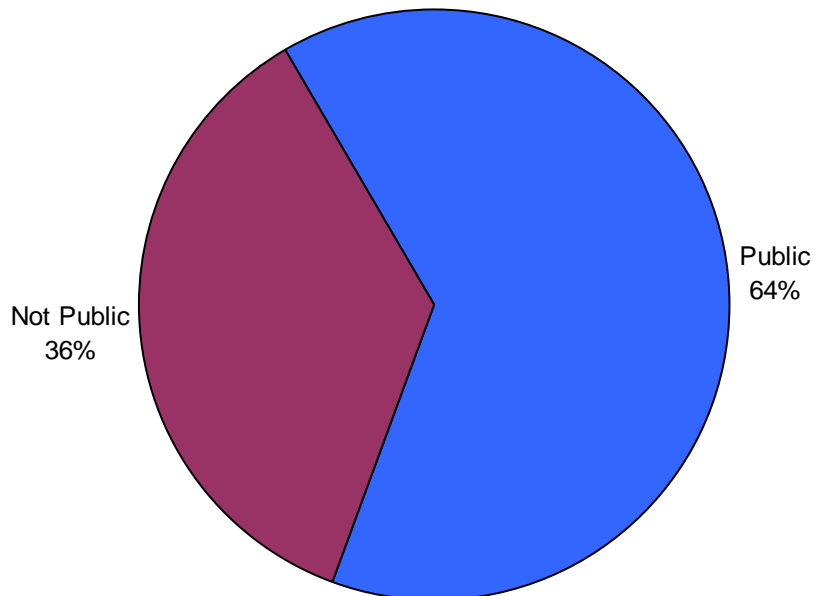
**Chart 45 Development plan (127 returns)**



**Chart 46 Annual report published by PPS (127 returns)**



**Chart 47 Annual report published in public domain (72 returns)**



**Table N Issues monitored by the Parent Partnership Service (124 returns)**

	How found out	Ethnic diversity	Response time	Casework details	Type of support	Website use	Client satisfaction	Complaints	Service Impact	Other	None
Count	113	64	75	102	105	33	112	83	34	16	0
Percent	91%	52%	60%	82%	85%	27%	90%	67%	27%	13%	0%

**Table O Issues monitored by the LA (127 returns)**

	Regular meetings	Questionnaire	N/A	Other	None
Count	104	15	7	20	9
Percent	82%	12%	6%	16%	7%

## ***Regional analysis***

This report forms one part of the analysis of data submitted by Parent Partnership Services in 2006. Participating services can also benchmark against regional and statistical neighbours using reports provided for each service.

### ***How to use the benchmarking data***

Parent Partnership Services and their LAs may use the information in this national summary and in the statistical and regional neighbours' summaries to:

- Make comparison between their service and national trends and averages
- Make comparison against statistical neighbours
- Provide data that may inform Annual Performance Assessments and Joint Area Reviews
- Note changes year on year
- Inform service development

In addition, Regional Parent Partnership Networks may use the data to prompt and inform discussion about a variety of aspects of service delivery. In order to do this, members of Regional Networks may choose to disclose their code number to other network members.

*Benchmarking data should be used to generate questions and hypotheses rather than to make judgements. In particular, this benchmarking data should not be used to make judgements about the quality of a service.*

Useful questions may include:

- How does our service differ from national/regional averages?
- How does our service differ from our statistical neighbours?
- What may lie behind such differences?
- What lessons can we learn from others?
- How can we use this information to improve what we do?

When considering what lies behind differences services may utilise a range of other contextual information (see ***Introduction***).

PPSs may also wish to use this data alongside information derived from their own monitoring and evaluation arrangements. The National Development Group has

already published 'Guidance on monitoring and self-evaluation', which is available from the NPPN.

### ***Future development of benchmarking***

The National Benchmarking Development Group has led this work on behalf of Parent Partnership Services. In addition to benchmarking, the group also developed guidelines on monitoring and evaluation which the National Parent Partnership Network and the National Association of Parent Partnership Staff have endorsed.

The National Development Group would welcome feedback on this report, particularly:

- How the report has been used
- How it could be improved
- What other information might be included in any future benchmarking of Parent Partnership Services
- Whether this data should be collected annually or less frequently.

Any comments should be sent to Daisy Russell, Senior Development Officer for the National Parent Partnership Network, at [drussell@ncb.org.uk](mailto:drussell@ncb.org.uk)

## APPENDIX

### Definition 'Parent/carer service user'

33	Number of parent/carer service users in financial year April 05 to March 06
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'Number of parent/carer service users' gives an indication about the use made of the PPS by families in respect of individual children. It is one measure of the total level of ongoing casework.

A parent/carer service user may be a family or one parent/carer to whom a casework service is provided. A family counts as one parent/carer user if they are all receiving the same service in respect of one child. However, if there are 2 children with SEN where a casework service is provided, count this as 2 parent/carer users.

Where parents or carers from the same family require a separate service (e.g. because they live apart and both request their own IPS) count this as 2 parent/carer users.

Requests from professionals for training, involvement in working parties etc. should not be counted as parent/carer users.

Some parent/carer users will remain active on the caseload from one year to the next. Parent/carer users should be considered as part of the active caseload if a service has been provided within the previous 6 months.

The number of parent/carer users will therefore include new referrals since the beginning of the financial year and ongoing cases.

Note that the time period used for this data is the **financial** year. This is consistent with most of the other data being collected and will enable service cost to be calculated more accurately.

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