



Information



Advice



Support

Providing confidential and impartial information, advice and support to help children, parents and young people take part in decisions that affect their lives.

Suffolk SENDIASS Annual Report

September 2019 to August 2020



Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Statutory framework	3
3. Contract, joint commissioning and governance.....	4
4. Resourcing and capacity	5
5. Provision of Information, Advice and Support	6
5.1 COVID-19 service response	6
5.2 Website.....	7
5.3 Written resources.....	8
5.4 Social media	9
5.5 Training (information sessions and workshops).....	11
5.6 Helpline and ongoing support (individual IAS provided)	14
5.6a Referrals.....	14
5.6b Contacts	18
5.6c Outcomes	20
6. Service-user feedback	21
6.1 Online feedback survey	21
6.2 SENDIASS Training Evaluation	23
6.3 Webinar evaluation	25
7. Other development and activities.....	26
8. Professional development.....	27
9. Conclusion	28
10. Jargon-buster and useful links	29

1. Introduction

At arms-length from the local authority and the CCGs, Suffolk SENDIASS is a statutory service which provides free impartial, confidential and accurate information, advice and support about education, health and social care for children, young people and their parents/carers on matters relating to special educational needs and disability. The service provides an Annual Report as part of its Service Level Agreement with commissioners.

The information, advice and support help to promote independence and self-advocacy for children, young people and parents/carers.

SENDIASS helps children, young people and families:

- by providing information to enable informed choices
- with questions about their own or their child's SEND, inclusion in schools and other settings, and the graduated cycle of SEN support (assess-plan-do-review).
- to feel confident to express their views and participate in decisions.
- find positive ways to communicate with schools and the local authority.
- understand their rights and navigate the law and processes relating to SEND, including with school exclusion and SEND appeals.
- through the EHCP process including help with forms, reports or letters etc.
- when things go wrong or there are disagreements – to explore and support options for raising concerns, including with SEND tribunals.

2. Statutory framework

Chapter two of the SEND Code of Practice 2015 outlines the duties for local authorities to provide a confidential, impartial and arm's length SEND information, advice and support service and says:

'Local authorities must arrange for children with SEN or disabilities for whom they are responsible, and their parents, and young people with SEN or disabilities for whom they are responsible, to be provided with information and advice about matters relating to their SEN or disabilities, including matters relating to health and social care.. (2.1)

Information, Advice and Support Services should be impartial, confidential and accessible and should have the capacity to handle face-to-face, telephone and electronic enquiries. (2.5)

The information, advice and support should be impartial and provided at arm's length from the local authority and CCGs.' (2.8)

Minimum Standards

There are a set of national [Minimum Standards](#) for services providing impartial information, advice and support relating to Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND). The Minimum Standards are developed by the [Information, Advice and Support Services Network](#)

Suffolk SENDIASS is a confidential, impartial, dedicated and easily identifiable service which operates at arm's length from the local authority and Clinical Commissioning Groups.



The service operates during normal office hours and throughout the year, including school holidays. The helpline has a voicemail facility and the service regularly sign posts and provides information about a range of local and national SEND organisations.

Staff are legally trained to IPSEA Levels 1 to 3. Information and advice are provided online, with leaflets and in group training sessions and workshops. Support is provided to families in various ways: by telephone, email, text, face-to-face and virtual meetings. The level of support provided varies according to the needs of the service-user and we explain more about our levels of support in chapter 5.

The service has its own website and provides branded publicity and information in a range of accessible formats.

3. Contract, joint commissioning and governance

The national Minimum Standards say:

‘The IASS is jointly commissioned by education, health and social care in accordance with the CFA 2014. A formal agreement is set out in writing which refers directly to these Minimum Standards, whilst also considering the need for continuity and stability of the service.’ (1.1)

A Service Level Agreement is in place for the three-year period September 2020 to August 2023.

Suffolk SENDIASS is an in-house service which is commissioned by the Local Authority. IAS services should be jointly commissioned across education, health and care funders. Currently the service is funded entirely by the local authority and it is hoped this can be reviewed with health colleagues in the next reporting period.

The budget is ring-fenced and managed within the service.

Advisory body

The national Minimum Standards say:

‘The Governance arrangements outline a clear management structure, encompassing a strategic manager within the IASS and a steering group or advisory body which includes representatives from service user groups and key stakeholders from education, social care and health.’ (1.7)

To meet required standards, the service has been keen to get this underway during this period and had secured commitment from partners across education, health and care to join the initial group meeting.

This had been arranged for early April 2020 and unfortunately was cancelled due to the pandemic. This is a key part of the service’s development plan and this work will continue into the next reporting period.

4. Resourcing and capacity

For the period September 2019 to August 2020, the team of was made up of:

Service Lead – 1 FTE (long-term absence, the role has been covered by team members for this reporting period)

Information Officer – 0.7 FTE (current Acting Service Lead)

Training and Development Officer – 1 FTE

Senior IAS Worker – 0.8 FTE

IAS Worker – 0.5 FTE

IAS Worker – 0.5 FTE

IAS Worker – 0.5 FTE

1 FTE, fixed-term contract until May 2021 (funded within the IASP – a national programme of funding to enable services to achieve minimum standards)

This amounts to 5 FTE (taking into account the absence of a Service Lead), with additional temporary uplift of hours for individuals, which has helped us manage increasing demand.

In addition, the team rely on Business Support colleagues from within the Engagement Hub. This is vital as helpline calls are managed and triaged by these two full-time colleagues.

Looking ahead

The absence of the Service Lead impacts the ability of the service to meet the required Minimum Standards, with resources diverted from other areas of the service to cover the role.

The funding from the national project IASP is due to complete in May 2021. The funding is being used to secure a full-time post to progress some of our project work. In addition, the post-holder has taken on a significant amount of helpline and ongoing direct work with families.

Our current website, though separate to the main Suffolk County Council site, has been created by their in-house developers and supported by the digital team within the authority. The council will not be providing this in the long-term and the service, along with the requirement to have its own stand-alone website, needs to secure a new website platform provider in the near future.

During the next reporting period it is anticipated we will need to seek to secure additional funding from our commissioners to fully resource the service to meet the required Minimum Standards.

COVID-19 continues to impact but the service has been quick to adapt – read more about this within the next chapter 'Provision of Information, Advice and Support'.

You can read more about things we are working on in our [Service Development Plan](#).(opens PDF)
A copy may be requested by emailing enquiries@suffolksendiass.co.uk

5. Provision of Information, Advice and Support

Headline data for the period 1st September 2019 to 31st August 2020:

Number of referrals (requests for information, advice and support)	2,423
Number of service-users accessing (number of children, young people, parents, carers and practitioners directly accessing the service)	1,588
Number of contacts (number of individual contacts made as part of a referral)	8,015
Number of training registrants	771
Website page views	94,169
Facebook reach	199,713
Twitter impressions	56,607
YouTube channel views	4,806

5.1 COVID-19 service response

The service was quick to adapt its offer and respond to new issues arising as a result of the pandemic.

The service provided, and continues to provide, its information, advice and support by telephone, email, text and virtually. This includes providing support at annual reviews of EHC plans and SEND Tribunals being held remotely. Our training offer has also been adapted to make sure the IAS needs of SEND children, young people and their parents and carers continue to be met.

As well as the overriding increased anxiety about the pandemic, and schools being closed due to lockdown, some families required additional support with viewing and responding to information online, and around digital access to virtual meetings. The pandemic highlighted that a significant number of families rely on mobile phones to view complex documents or take part in remote meetings and this creates additional barriers.

We started to build a picture of the additional anxieties and issues families were experiencing and this led to some co-production.

With the plan for schools to welcome all year groups back from September, we thought it would be useful to look at the information currently available, work with parents and carers about what additional resources might be helpful and bring them together in one place.

Drawing on our own data and service experience and working with Suffolk Parent Carer Network and [Specialist Education services](#) in Suffolk, we held two online chat sessions to gather views and

concerns from parents and share ideas for how families can be supported through this difficult period.

The information gathered informed the development of training and resources:

- [‘Back to school’](#). New information section on the SENDIASS website, including examples of transition support and links to other sources of information for families. In August this was our most viewed page, accounting for around a quarter of our total page views for the month (**1435/5917**). This August, website page views doubled on the previous year increasing from **2999** to **5917**. September saw this trend continue with our highest number of monthly page views this reporting period, **10986** – our Back to school/COVID pages accounted for **24%** of the total.
- Social media reach (Facebook & Twitter) within this project topped **15,000**.
- [‘Back to School – what you need to know in Suffolk’ video](#) - We created this video to help parents and young people understand what to expect, and to help them prepare for a successful return. The video has generated around **1000 views** and has received very positive feedback from practitioners like the parenting team and elective home education team who found it a helpful resource to share with families.
- [COVID-19 Information for parents and carers. Issue 2: 7 August 2020](#) - We worked with SPCN and the Inclusion Service on this publication, which is a direct response to the questions and concerns raised by children, young people and their parents/carers during the project.
- [Virtual session supporting communication difficulties](#) - We commissioned a Speech and Language Therapy service to offer a virtual session to help parents support children and young people with communication or learning difficulties to have a voice in the return to school. Feedback from parents has been positive with one parent sharing: *‘It was one of those moments where you come away and think about what was said, and you start to feel like you can actually make a difference in your child’s life.’*
- [Video: What is Elective Home Education?](#) – Many parents who were worried about the return to school have contacted our service and the local authority to enquire about home-educating their child. We worked with the Lead Elective Home Education Consultant to plan two virtual sessions for the start of September and we produced a video to help parents understand what this involves.

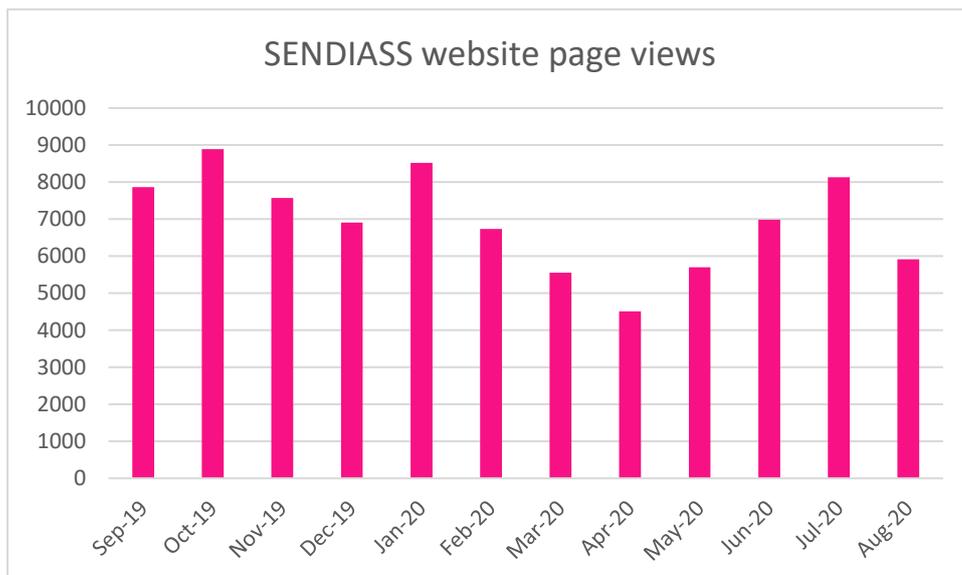
The project was recognised within wider children and young people’s services, shared to schools via a Suffolk Headlines special issue on 17th July, and a case study featured in a national publication from the CDC in October 2020.

5.2 Website

Suffolk SENDIASS has a website which is promoted within its publicity and communication channels. There are over 100 pages of information and advice for service-users to access and is a valuable reference resource for Sendiass team members.

It is a helpful tool for the team to guide service-users to specific information and the service has received comments that the website has helped them understand SEND processes and participate in discussions about support.

Page views for the website for the period September 2019 to August 2020:



Total page views this reporting period: **94,169**

Average monthly page views: **7,847**

August always sees fewer than average views, however, it's worth noting that in 2020 these were almost double from the previous year: **(2020 - 5917/2019 - 2099)**. This is due to development work and publicity surrounding our 'Back to School' project.

The service regularly reviews 'most viewed' pages to inform its information and training development. Significant sections of the website developed during this reporting period include information about 'Annual Reviews of EHC plans', 'Choosing a school', 'Appealing to the SEND Tribunal' and most recently the 'Back to School' information.

Over the course of the year, we have also been working hard to update the website to be compliant with new accessibility guidelines (which apply from 23rd September 2020)

Work will continue into the next period as the service carries out further improvements and replaces PDF and other documents to updated versions online. Progress updates will be added to its [published accessibility statement](#). The service has also started to explore options for a replacement website platform provider and expects to move this forward in the next reporting period.

5.3 Written resources

Leaflets

There is a range of service publicity leaflets available for families, links to the PDF versions are below:

- [Our service leaflet for parents and carers](#)
- [Contact card \(credit card sized\)](#)
- [Young person leaflet](#)
- [Child/young person postcard style leaflet](#)
- [Helpful contacts](#)
- [Impartiality postcard](#)

In line with the requirement to provide information in a range of accessible options, the service has 15 information leaflets which cover key subject areas. 4 new leaflets were developed during this reporting period which reflect our data of the common issues parents and carers contact us around.

Links to the PDF versions of our newest leaflets:

- [Choosing a school for a child with SEND](#)
- [School exclusion](#)
- [Annual Review of an EHC plan](#)
- [Appealing to the SEND Tribunal](#)

Publicity and information leaflets are available on the service's website to download as a PDF and can be provided as printed leaflets/booklets. These are regularly requested by schools and providers to make available for families.

E-newsletter

Service-users can sign up to receive news from us. The audience this year has been steadily increasing and now has a reach of over 1700. Though temporarily paused from the summer term due to diversion of resources, the service issued two termly newsletters this reporting period which included information items, promotion of SENDIASS events and partner updates.

The 'open rate' is around 30% for our termly newsletters, and far higher for our invite to complete our online survey.

5.4 Social media

Facebook

Daily posts are created via the service's business page. It is mostly parents and carers in Suffolk who follow us on Facebook to access news and information. The service relies on organic growth and has not used any of the traded post/audience boost options offered by Facebook. The service provides advice and support via this method too by responding to post comments and direct messages.

Page data

Total lifetime "Likes"	1,318
New page likes this period	312
Total of users who engaged with the page this period	11,866
Total reach this period (number of people who had any content from your Page or about your Page enter their screen)	199,713

Post data

Number of posts in the period	955
Lifetime reach for all posts posted in the period (number of people who had your Page's post enter their screen)	333,150
Lifetime "likes" for all posts posted in the period	245,496

Twitter

The service regularly tweets information and news. Though some parents and carers follow us here, it seems to be mostly local and national organisations. Our presence enables us to reach wider audiences and monitor news items and trends locally, and across the SEND sector.

"Tweet impressions" for period	56,607
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YouTube

The service has a range of video resources uploaded to YouTube, which are also embedded across the information pages of our website. The team regularly signposts service-users to our information videos.

Videos developed during this reporting period:

[Who we are and what we do](#)

[Back to school – what you need to know in Suffolk](#) {these were created as part of the

[What is Elective Home Education?](#) {service's 'Back to school' project}

[Completing the SEND35 Tribunal form](#)

[Completing the 'refusal to assess' SEND 35a Tribunal form](#)

A mix of new and refreshed videos saved to these playlists:

[Support for pupils with medical conditions](#)

[EHC needs assessments and plans](#)

[Equality and Inclusion](#)

'Channel views' for period	4,806
'Impressions'	29,300

5.5 Training (information sessions and workshops)

Our training offer reflects common questions or issues that families contact us around. Any co-production where we have gathered views of service users directly inputs to our training and development plan.

Until mid-March 2020, we offered face-to-face information and training sessions as part of a rolling training programme. To respond to the high number of calls around EHC needs assessments and annual reviews we co-produced, with parents and carers, a webinar explaining the Annual Review process and a webinar explaining the EHC needs assessment process. The parent responses were very similar to those shared by multi-agency practitioners in previous co-production so we felt confident that our EHC needs assessment webinar would help both parents and practitioners.

As a result of COVID-19, we had to cancel our face-to-face sessions and our Training and Development Officer focussed initially on delivering webinars, opening them to practitioners as well as parents and carers, and on creating a range of digital resources.

In this reporting period the service:

- Created two series of videos to help parents and carers fill in the different sections of the two types of appeal form to the SEND Tribunal, along with a video explaining mediation. These totalled 19 videos and were shared nationally through our Information Advice and Support (IAS) network. They have so far gained **2,668 views**. Feedback from other IAS practitioners and the National Children's Bureau has been very positive:

'They are very helpful and informative. I think the Tribunal will benefit from them too. We'd like to add them to our website.' (National Children's Bureau)

'We have shared your fantastic videos on our website and have referred people to them.' (Southend IAS)

'These videos are brilliant - really clear and comprehensive.' (Northumberland IAS)

- Refreshed or created a further series of 16 videos around SEND and EHC processes to help build the understanding and confidence of parents, carers and practitioners. The secondary aim of producing these videos was to support future training, for example, to send to attendees ahead, or following a session.

Supported the training and development of the Eastern Region IAS services. Following meetings and a survey of their needs, some bespoke video recordings around the EHC needs assessment process were provided to three regions and a variety of resources and approaches were shared. Feedback included:

'We have had an opportunity to review your PP and script and they are excellent. Thank you for all of your hard work.' (Southend IAS Manager)

- Invested a lot of time in reaching out to other services, inviting collaboration on our Back-to-School project (see chapter 5.1) and exploring further opportunities for working together in the interests of pupils with SEND. This led to the Specialist Education Outreach Services

agreeing to support a series of virtual online sessions which we will deliver from autumn 2020.

- Co-facilitated 4 x face to face sessions offered by the local authority to multi-agency practitioners. The aim of these sessions was to improve the quality of advice practitioners produce as part of the EHC needs assessment and Annual Review process.
- Delivered a whole day training in Birmingham on Solution Focussed Approaches to 28 Information, Advice and Support (IAS) managers and caseworkers from 10 local authorities. This received very positive feedback.
- Delivered the following information sessions:

Face-to-Face Sessions	No. of registrants
Autumn 2019	
EHCP workshops (north, west and south Suffolk)	48
SEN Support in Schools (north, west and south Suffolk)	37
2 x Gathering Views sessions for co-producing an Annual Reviews webinar (held in central and north Suffolk)	6
EHC Needs Assessment for Multi-agency Practitioners (north Suffolk)	15
2 x Working with Parents (for staff of two linked schools)	40
Named SEND Governor Training November 2019	5
Spring 2020	
EHCP workshops (north, west and south Suffolk)	21
SEN Support in Schools (north, west and south Suffolk)	27
Empower Your Child Workshop (at school request)	10
Empower Your Child Workshop (Stepping Stones parenting group)	5
EHC Needs Assessment for multi-agency practitioners (north, west and south Suffolk)	40
3 x Gathering Views sessions to co-produce an EHC Needs Assessment webinar for parents and carers. (held in the north, south & west Suffolk)	17
Named SEND Governor Training March 2020	11
Total registrants:	282

From mid-March all face-to-face sessions were cancelled due to COVID-19.

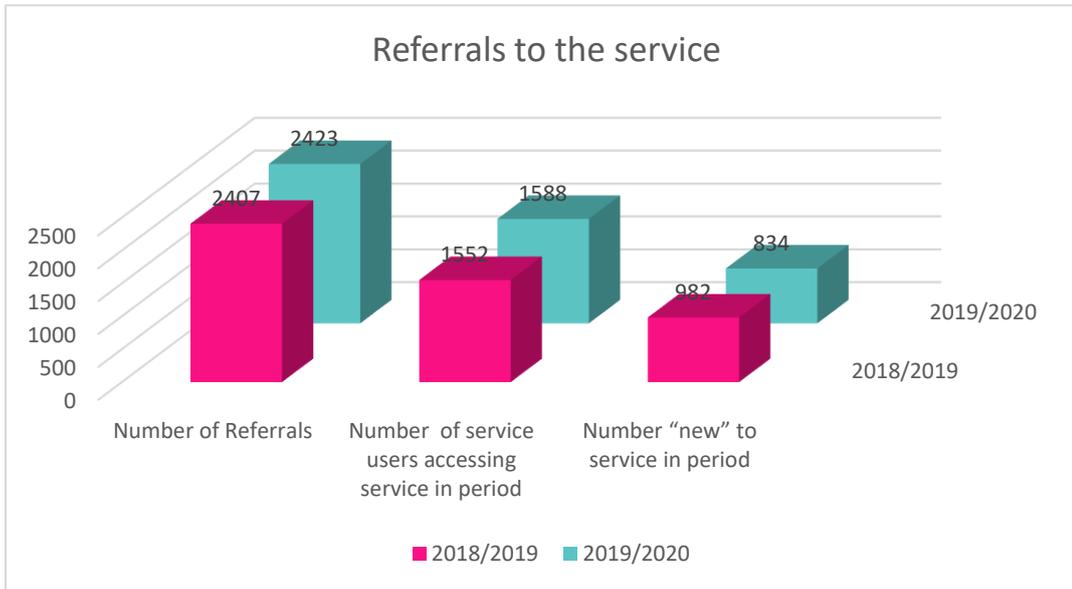
Webinars for parents/carers and practitioners	No. of registrants
Governor SEND Responsibilities October 2019 x 2 sessions	30 (15 + 15)
Governor SEND Responsibilities February 2020 x 2 sessions	15 (8 + 7)
Governor SEND Responsibilities May 2020 x 2 sessions	43 (22 + 21)
Annual Review webinar January 2020	53
EHC Needs Assessment webinar May 2020	209
Annual Review webinar June 2020	97
Total registrants:	447

Summer 2020 virtual sessions	No. of registrants
2 x online sessions to gather parent/carers views and questions regarding their child's return to school	26
Supporting Pupils with Communication Difficulties to Have a Voice	16
Total registrants:	42

Feedback about our training is included in chapter 6.

5.6 Helpline and ongoing support (individual IAS provided)

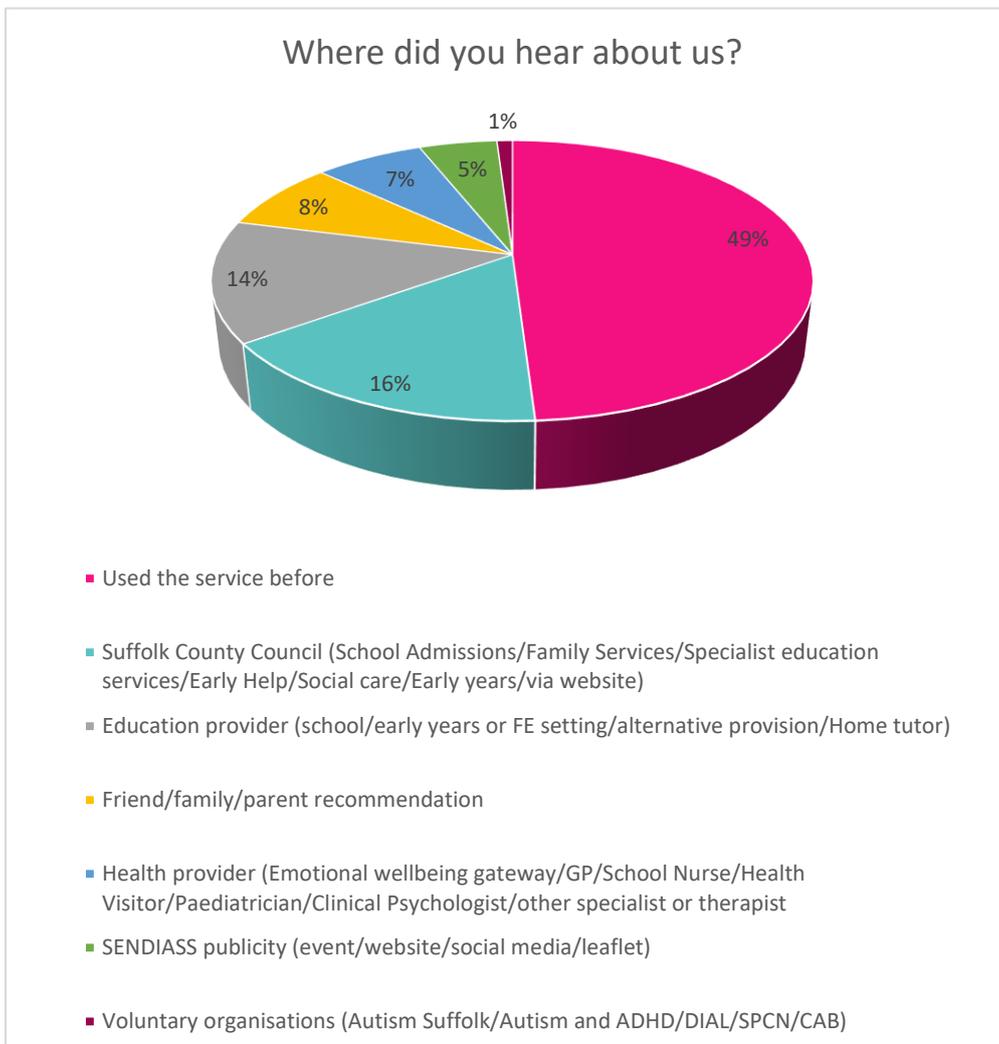
5.6a Referrals



A referral is the way we record a request for information, advice and support. These data include the previous year 2018/19 as well as the current reporting period, for comparison purposes, though numbers are very similar.

‘Where did you hear about us?’

SENDIASS is a self-referral service but we capture where the service-user heard about us. The data shows we have a **high percentage of ‘returners’ (49%)** clearly indicating that the information, advice and support we offer is valued:

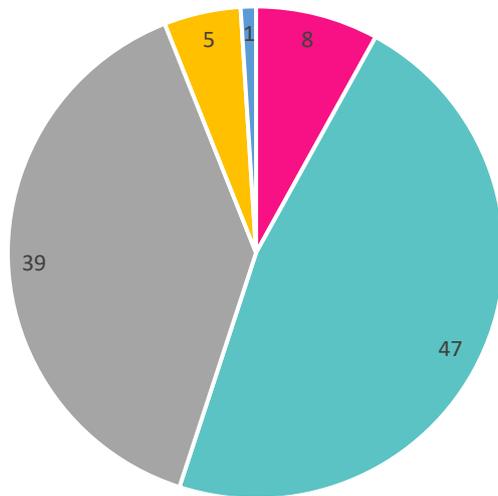


The chart shows the % split. It is pleasing to see that local authority education/social care services, schools/settings and health providers are signposting to our service.

Regularly the service receives comments, from parents and carers particularly, that they wish they had learned about the service earlier.

Moving forward, the service will be seeking input from partners to explore further ways to reach families.

Referrals by age band

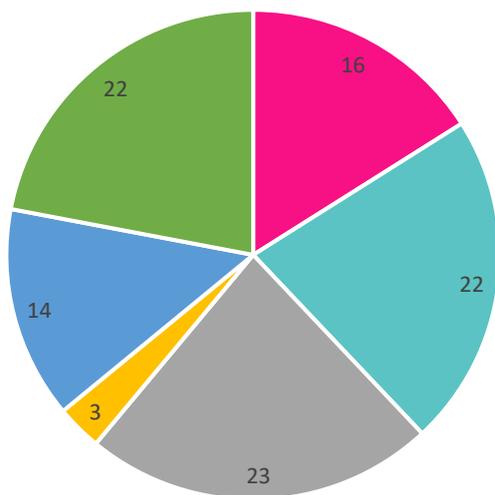


■ Under 5 ■ 5 to 10 ■ 11 to 15 ■ 16 to 18 ■ 19 to 25

% Referrals by age band:

The split across age ranges is very similar to previous years, with the majority of the children and young people we provide information, advice and support for being across the compulsory school-age years.

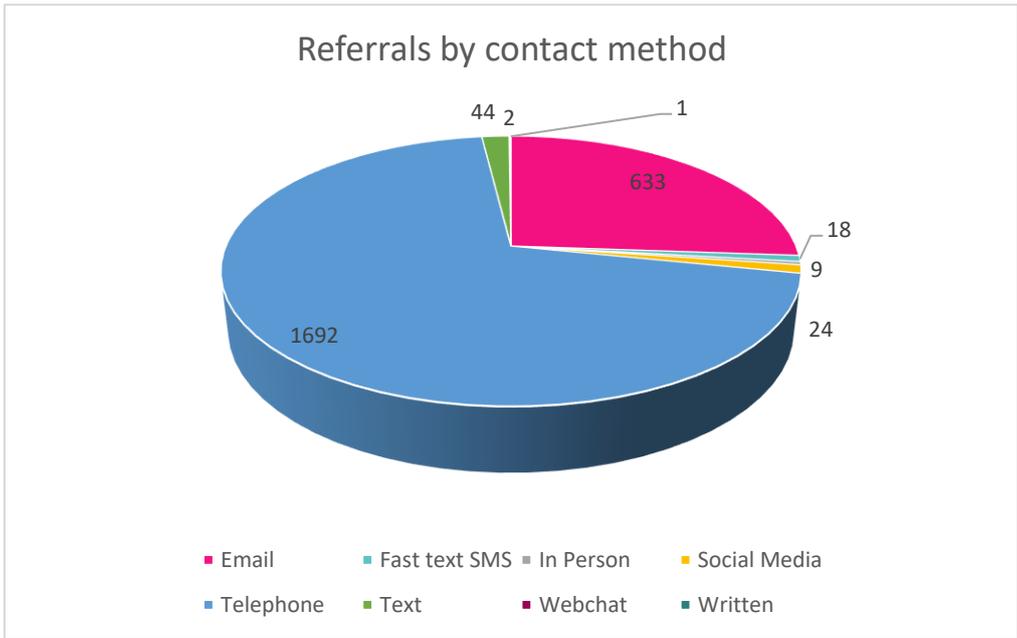
Referrals by district



■ Central and South Suffolk ■ Coastal and NE Ipswich ■ Lowestoft and Waveney
 ■ Out of County ■ SW Ipswich ■ West Suffolk

% Referrals by district:

The chart indicates an even spread across the districts across Suffolk. Lowestoft and Waveney, Coastal and North-East Ipswich, and West Suffolk see the highest share.



Number of referrals by contact method (total 2423):

Calling our helpline remains the highest frequency method of initial contact (at 70%).

The number of service-users choosing to access the service by email have increased this reporting period (633 for 2019 to 2020 (26%), up from 392 the previous year (16%).

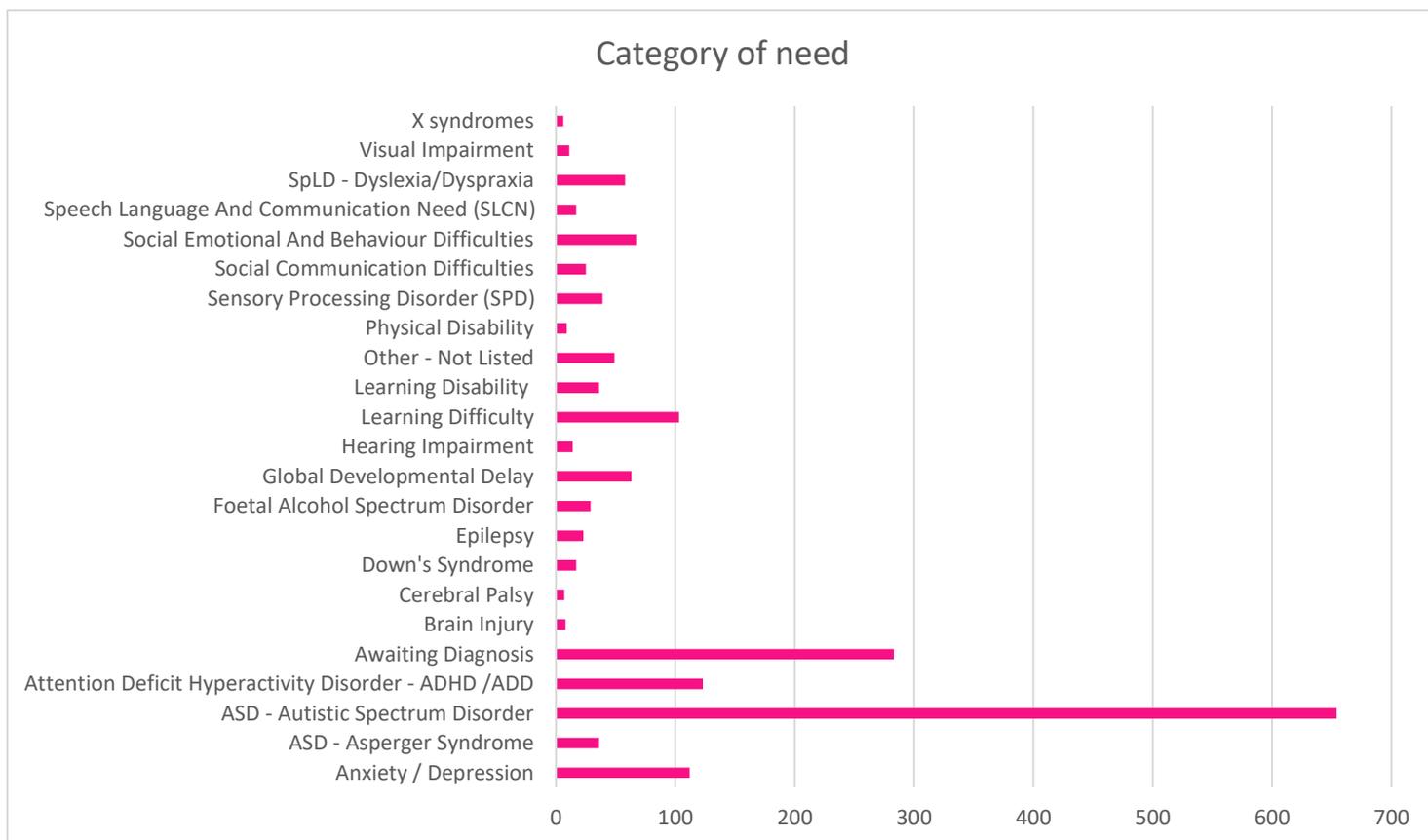
Ethnic origin

Ethnic origin recorded by the service	%
White – British	88%
White – European	5%
White – any other	2%
Mixed - Any Other Mixed Background	2%
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	1%
Black or Black British African	1%
Asian or Asian British - Indian	1%
Asian or Asian British - Any other Asian Background	1%
Mixed White and Black African	1%

Of the data collected, 88% of service-users in the period identified as White – British. The data appears to be reflective of the population in Suffolk.

The service is looking into how it can reach and reduce barriers to access for families, such as where English is an Additional Language. Read more about this in chapter 7.

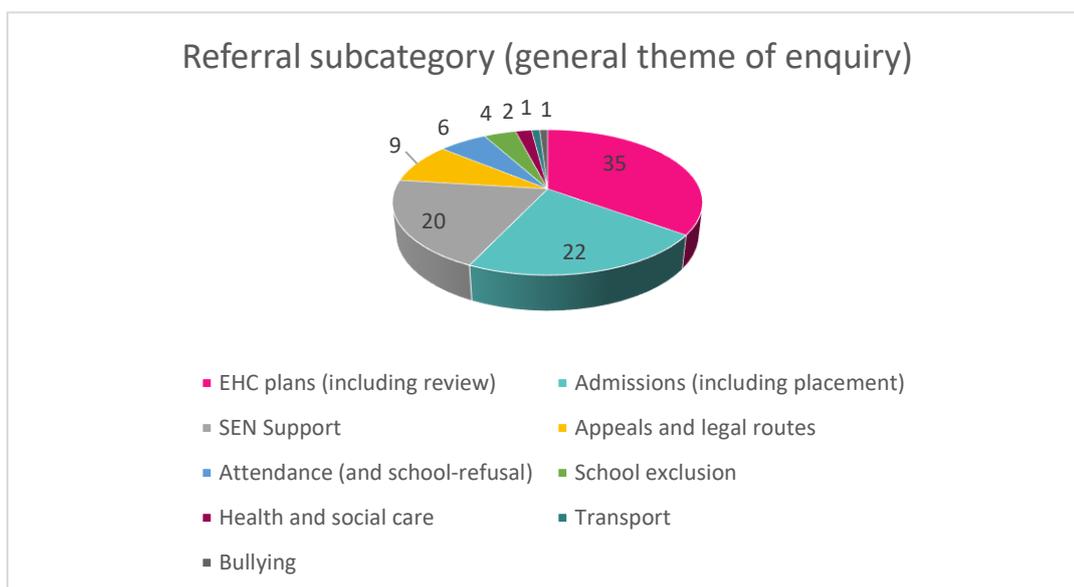
Category of need for the children and young people we supported in this period:



As has always been the case, the largest cohort of children and young people we support have a diagnosis of ASD (Autistic Spectrum Disorder). This reporting period saw significant increases for the 'Learning Difficulty' and 'awaiting diagnosis' categories. The increase in 'awaiting diagnosis' is likely to be a result of the pandemic, where parents may have delayed in seeking a referral or where assessments were postponed.

Project sub-category (theme of enquiries)

The team categorises each referral by selecting just one theme:



Shown as %, our capture of the referral categories for this reporting period continue to show a high number of enquiries about the EHC process (35%), admissions and naming a school in a plan (22%), SEN Support (20%) and Appeals and legal routes (9%).

We categorise generally and the data capture may not fully reflect all of the aspects of our discussion with the service-user, just the overriding theme of our discussion.

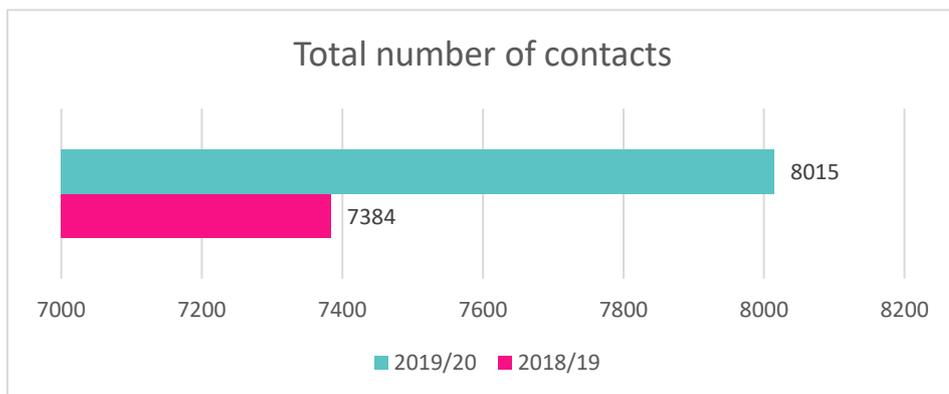
An example of this might be where a parent contacts the service for information about EHC needs assessments and plans and we categorise as such. However, a significant part of these conversations will include health assessments or provision (such as those provided by an Occupational or Physiotherapist, or pathways to diagnosis such as ADHD or ASD), in addition to specialist educational and social care assessments.

Another example might be where we discuss school attendance, perhaps where a child is displaying anxiety-based school avoidance, and input from mental health services is discussed.

We are exploring ways we can further refine our data collection for 2020/21 so that we can identify and report on specific issues which will enable us to provide meaningful intelligence to partners.

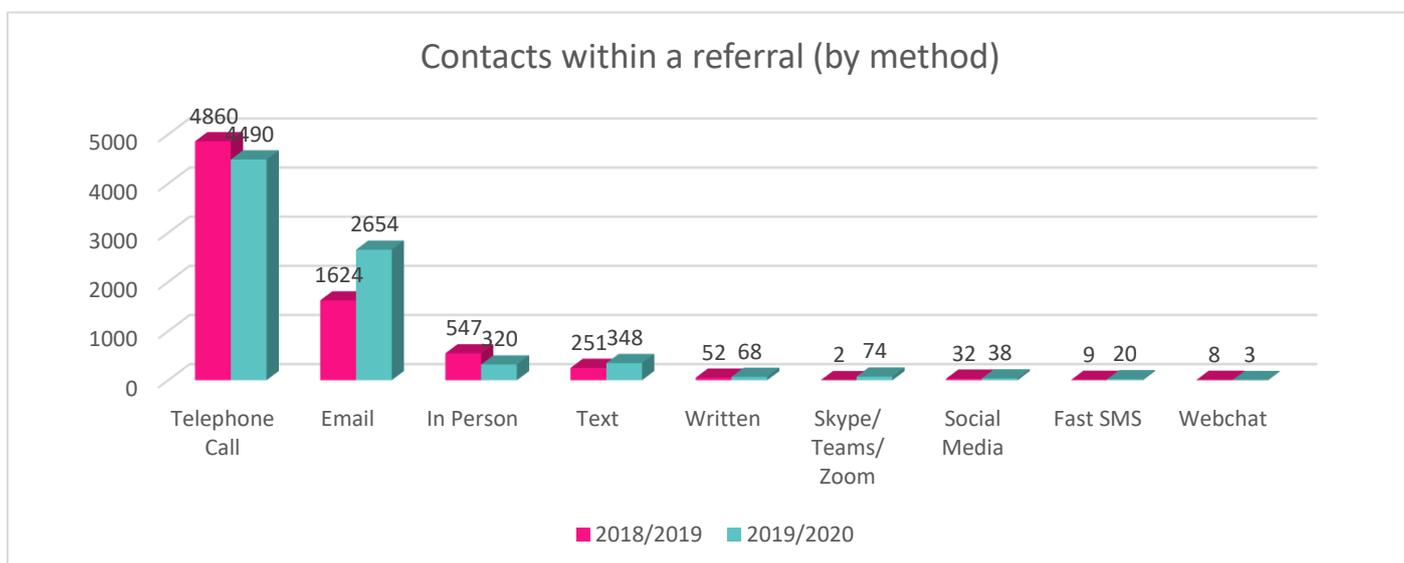
5.6b Contacts

A 'referral' can often result in a number of additional related contacts.

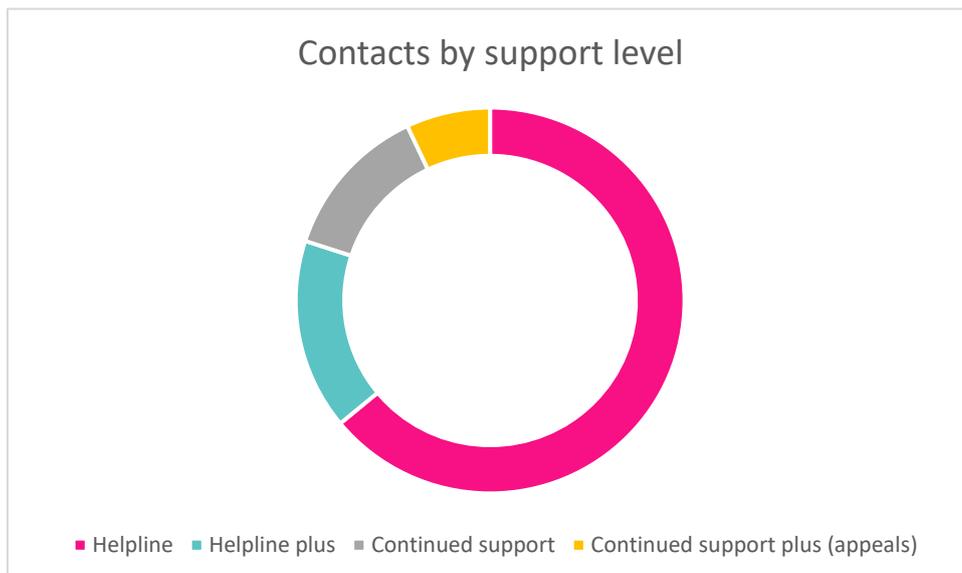


The total number of contacts is up from the previous reporting period. This is likely to be due to the high number of appeals and increased complexity of issues that the service is supporting families with – all of which require multiple contacts.

Also evident is the increase in numbers of support provided by email, with a slight downward trend for phone contact, but which remains by far the most frequent method of contact. And, as we would expect, a reduction for 'in person' (320 from 547) with a corresponding increase with providing our support virtually by Teams etc - due to the pandemic. (74 compared to only 2 the previous year):



Contacts by support level:



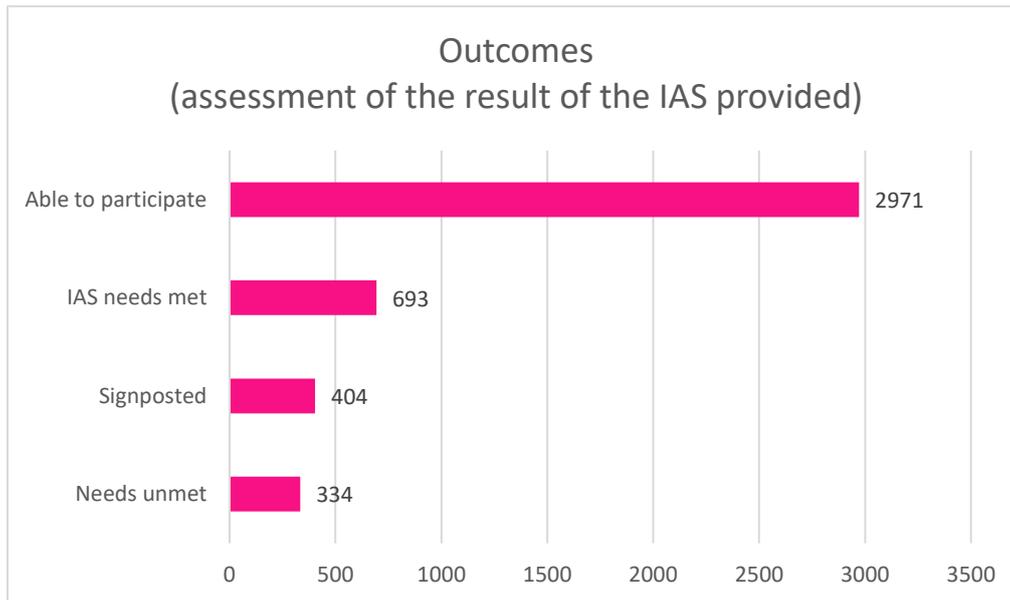
These data reflect the team view that there has been a significant increase in complexity of the issues and concerns families contact us around. The numbers within our lowest support level have reduced this year (5169 down from 5347), while in all other categories we have seen an increase, in particular for 'continued support plus' (at **558 up from 274** the previous period).

Contacts by support level are recorded by the team member using the following descriptors:

Level 1	Helpline	<p>Phone/ email/ webchat/ Skype or In Person support – tailored to the circumstances of service user who was a 'Student' 'Parent' or 'Professional'</p> <p>At the end of the intervention there were no actions remaining open <i>for me</i>.</p>
Level 2	Helpline Plus	<p>After the initial contact, I had further actions such as more emails or phone calls to the service user and/or others.</p> <p>I may have needed to do research or discuss the case with a third party before making contact with the service user again.</p> <p>I may have made a home visit to the service user.</p> <p>I may have attended one meeting with the service user.</p>
Level 3	Continued Support	<p>I may have provided support at more than one meeting or given ongoing support and guidance through statutory processes (EHC needs assessment, disagreement resolution, mediation etc.)</p> <p>I may have assisted with preparation for an exclusion appeal and support at the appeal meeting</p>
Level 4	Continued Support Plus	<p>I provided support to a 'Student' and or 'Parent/Carer'" during substantial legal processes</p> <p>This may include assistance with preparation for the legal process and support at, for example, a Tribunal hearing</p>

5.6c Outcomes

An outcome is recorded by a team member following contact with a service-user.



Outcomes can be recorded per contact, so for some referrals/service-users we will have multiple 'outcomes' captured. They are a snapshot assessment of the result of the IAS provided, for example: *'we were able to answer their questions; explain their options or provide information which helped them to take part in discussions'*.

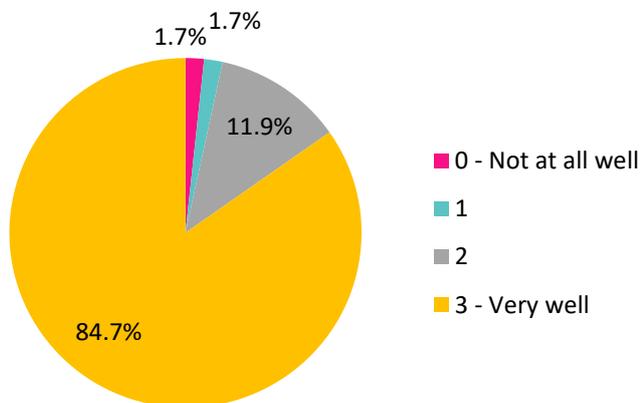
The 'needs unmet' category are a mix of our log of unsuccessful attempts to return calls, where a meeting or appointment was missed by the service-user, or where we could not accommodate attending a meeting due to availability.

6. Service-user feedback

6.1 Online feedback survey

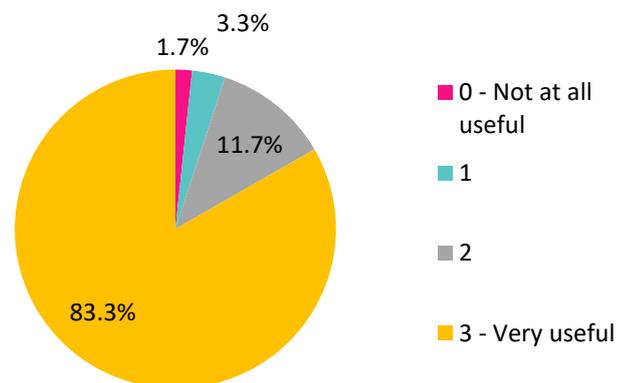
As the start of each month, anyone who has accessed our service during the previous month and given consent for us to contact them, are invited to complete a short online survey about the service provided. The key questions asked are shown below with all the responses received during this period of reporting:

How well do you think we understood your questions or concerns?



The chart on the left shows a high satisfaction level with around **97%** saying we **understood their questions and concerns**. The chart below again shows a high level of satisfaction around the usefulness of our information, advice and support:

How useful was the information, advice and support we gave you?

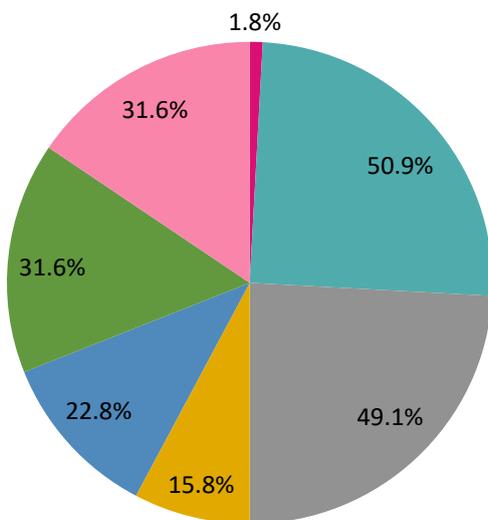


Pleasing to see that our service is viewed as being **impartial** by the majority of people completing the feedback survey, shown in the chart below:

How impartial do you think we were?(By impartial we mean we will give you unbiased information about what the law says and local policies).



What, if any, difference(s) have we made for you? (Please tick any that apply)



- I now have a better relationship with my child's school or setting
- I feel more confident
- I have a greater understanding of the educational process for children with SEN
- I feel more involved with my child's education
- I am happier/less worried about the future
- I feel my child has benefitted as a result of the service being involved
- Other (please specify):

Respondents can select multiple answers so the pie chart segments do not total 100%

Sample of 'other' comments received this reporting period:

'Felt a big sense of support and understanding from the advice you gave me. I felt I was being listened too.'

'I'm a practitioner much more empowered to involve parents in the process and I feel supported by SENDIASS to do this.'

'It's all still very new and have a long pathway ahead but I now have a direction of where and how to get support for my son which I never knew existed until you guys helped'.

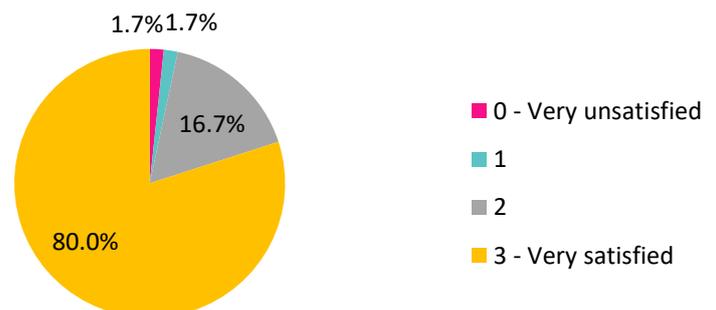
'In the process of an EHC plan having someone come to our group to talk about it made me understand more'.

'Working in collaboration with SENDIASS to improve our school offer. Excellent to work together to benefit services for our parents.'

The chart shows a high overall **satisfaction level** for the service at **96.7%**

We also ask how we might improve our service and some suggestions include: quicker response times; 'greater publicity of the service'; 'more information about medical EOTAS (education other than at school) and related specialist placements'; 'make sure parents feel listened to'.

Overall how satisfied are you with the service we gave?

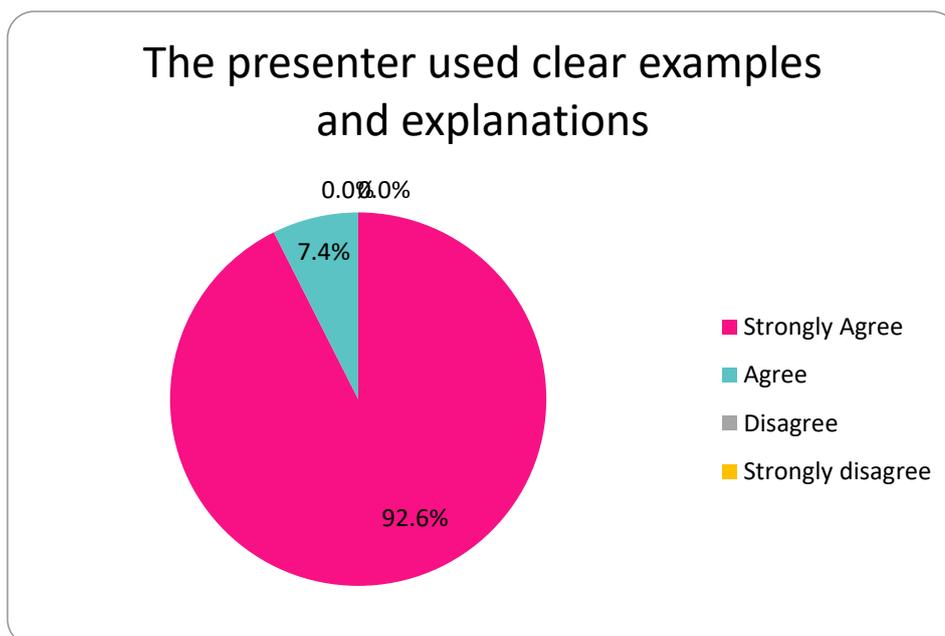


6.2 SENDIASS Training Evaluation

Sample of questions with responses for these sessions:

EHCP Workshop for parents and carers
SEN Support in Schools Workshop for parents and carers
Empower Your Child workshop for parents and carers
Working with Parents workshop for school staff
EHC Needs Assessment for Multi-Agency practitioners

Parent/carer face-to-face sessions:



For our face-to-face sessions for parents, carers and also practitioners, **100% of attendees strongly agreed or agreed** that our content was useful and would help them feel more confident and able to participate in the future. Also, **100% strongly agreed or agreed** that we used clear examples and explanations.

Sample comments from the parent/carer face to face sessions:

‘Good clear advice about EHC plans and how it fits with my child and who is responsible for what.’

‘Very informative and empowering.’

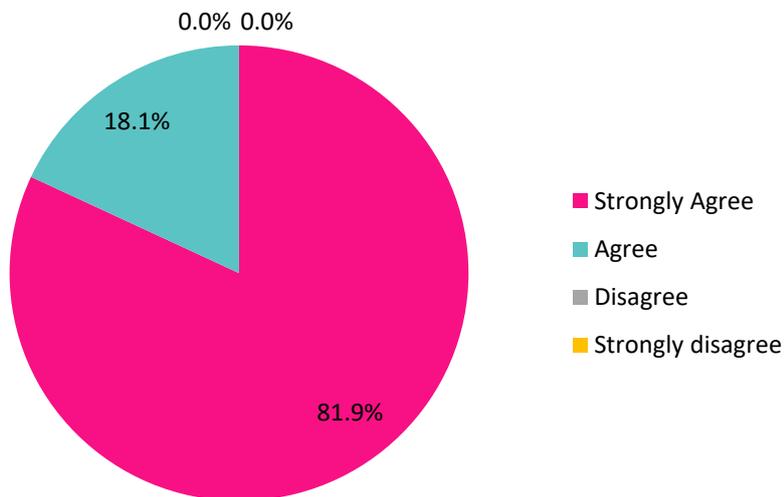
‘Lots of useful information - answered all my questions. Helped me to feel confident in being involved in putting together an EHCP and addressing my son’s needs.’

The content was useful and will help me feel more confident and able to participate in the future



Practitioner face-to-face sessions:

The presenter used clear examples and explanations



Sample comments from practitioner training sessions:

'I now feel more confident supporting CYP in my role regarding the EHCP process and know where to signpost CYP and families to. Thank you!'

'Looking at meetings from our point of view and the view of parents and recognising they are often the same. Definitely will help me reflect on my practice.' (Teacher)

'I feel more able to both support and challenge the SENCo and am now more aware of legal requirements.' (Governor)

The content was useful/appropriate

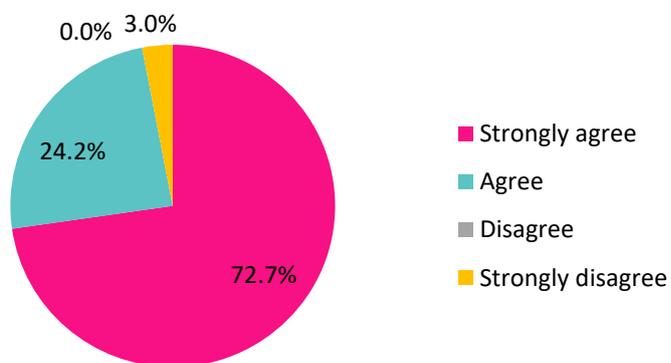


6.3 Webinar evaluation

Sample of questions with responses for these sessions:

Annual Review
EHC Needs Assessment
Mediation

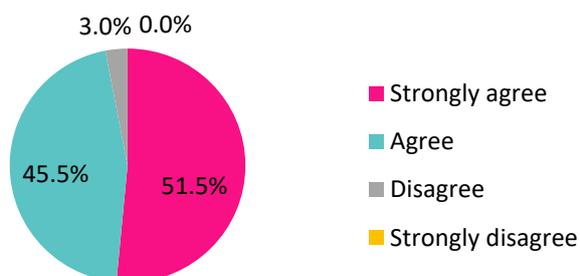
The webinar was presented in a way which was clear and easy for me to understand.



97% of parents/carers and practitioners **agreed or strongly agreed** that the webinar was presented in a way which was clear and easy to understand, increased their understanding and confidence and would help them participate in the future.

One parent (representing 3% of the 33 attendees who filled in an online evaluation, identified below) disagreed. The negative comment posted on the survey suggests there was a connectivity problem (*'I was watching it on a mobile phone and it kept exiting and I had to reload it lots of times'*) which meant they weren't able to access the webinar.

This webinar has increased my understanding and confidence and will help me participate in the future.



Sample comments for our webinars:

'Thank you for such clear guidelines. This webinar has given me a clearer view of the EHC plan process. Many thanks' (parent)

'Just wanted to say I have been a SENCo for quite a few years and there were things that I didn't know. This has shown I had some misconceptions, and it has enabled me to rethink things for certain pupils.'

'I am a SENDCo and I found that the process was explained far more clearly than in training aimed at SENDCos!'

'This was excellent! Thank you so much. Clear and easy to follow. I start as a SENCO in September and found this invaluable.'

Feedback from IAS staff for the whole day training delivered in Birmingham:

'Really interactive which was fab! Very informative – lots of thought to take back and put into practice.'

'Great session. Made me think about how I approach things with parents. Maybe this should be compulsory in the IASS training!'

'I thought all of the training was very useful and has given me lots to think about to include in our practice.'

'I think it was really useful and will help me with organising my workload by helping parents to focus on outcomes they are looking for earlier in conversations.'

'I found this morning's session very useful and I will look into solution focussed interventions further to inform my practice. This afternoon's session provided a lot of practical resources to develop.'

7. Other development and activities

As well as extensively adding to and adapting our information and training portfolio this period, the service has:

- Completed a ['Back to school' project](#) – see more information under 5.1 COVID-19 service response.
- Co-facilitated a [SEND YP Network event](#) – joining forces with Suffolk's Engagement hub to support an event celebrating the achievements of SEND young people.
- Initiated a project for families where English is an additional language (EAL) – A scoping project to better understand the needs of, and barriers for, families accessing the service. [Read more about the EAL project.](#)
- Presented to parent groups and parenting hubs and groups around the county (Stepping Stones for parents of children with additional needs and 'Triple P' parent groups), SENCo forums and a Q&A session for Early Help.
- We also presented to a women's refuge, the Alternative Tuition Service, carers through the Virtual School and at NQT Welcome Sessions. We attended the 'We are Family' (Mildenhall Community Services Networking) event and contributed to the voluntary and statutory partnership network meetings (VASP)
- Worked with local authority partners to input to priorities, draft policies and documents.
- Supported the 'Time to Listen' – SEND Strategy Event in Lowestoft and attended the Virtual Schools – Networking meeting with VS Team Ipswich
- Attended regional IASS network groups and team meetings - sharing knowledge and resources.

8. Professional development

The training completed by members of the SENDIASS team for the reporting period are shown and categorised below:

Law and supporting statutory duty	Supporting young people (and their families)	Local authority based
Coronavirus Act 2020	Engaging and working directly with children and young people	Accessibility briefings
DfE Supporting Pupil Wellbeing webinar	Supporting young people 16-25 with Autism in crisis	MS Teams Live
IASSN Minimum Standards	Advocacy	Signs of Safety/Safeguarding
SEND Law conference	Kooth Webinar (explaining their platform and support for YPs)	SCC SEND Self-Assessment, Moving into Adulthood
Tribunals training	People Plus (next steps for adults and young people with additional needs including training for Ready for Work)	Observation of Specialist Education panel
IASS Strategic Management Workshop	IASS Webinar (comparing platforms for online delivery)	Development coach
Digitisation and impact of COVID on Tribunal HMCT service	Thinking together training session – Psychology Information Services	
IPSEA SEND legal training	Mental Health Needs – SEN	
	School Avoidance	
	Managing Attendance	
	Support a safe and successful return to school using SWAN framework	
	Supporting bereaved children	

9. Conclusion

The team has continued to provide information, advice and support for all families accessing the service despite many challenges during the reporting period.

Due to additional funding from the IASP the service has been able to progress development priorities through its information and training offer, with specific project work ('Back to school' and EAL), with steps towards securing a new website platform, reaching young people directly and with governance (Service Development Plan and Advisory Body).

Positively, data suggests that schools and local authority partners continue to guide families to the service. However, more could be done around wider promotion. This will form part of SENDIASS priorities to raise the profile of the service.

The service is reaching families living across the whole of the county, and with all age groups of children - though mostly for those in compulsory school age (and in mainstream education). The service would like to explore further reaching families of early years, post-16, children and young people in specialist settings, and to families where there might be significant barriers to access.

Children and young people with a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) continues to be our single largest category. This period has seen an increase in the 'learning difficulty' category and a significant rise in the numbers 'awaiting a diagnosis', which we believe is likely related to the impact of the pandemic (families delaying seeking a referral and also delays in being seen or assessed).

The service would like to explore how the general 'referral categories' can be defined into more meaningful issues or themes, which it hopes in the future will inform the policy and practice of partners.

The period has seen high numbers of requests by parents and carers for support with appealing to the SEND Tribunal. These appeals are mostly in relation to a disagreement with the local authority about the school/setting named (or that no setting is named) in an EHC plan. As this is a formal legal process, these referrals require our highest level of support ('continued support plus'). This is reflected in our 'contacts' data, which show that the numbers in this support level doubled when compared to the previous year.

Service feedback continues to evidence high levels of satisfaction, both for our training offer and with the helpline and ongoing support. Data shows Suffolk SENDIASS is seen as impartial by the vast majority of those accessing the service. A high proportion of respondents to our surveys were satisfied with the service we gave/training received, most of whom gave the highest possible rating and significantly that they felt more confident and able to participate as a result of accessing the service.

We continue to receive regular comments suggesting wider promotion of our service with parents telling us they wish they had known about us sooner – this is a development priority moving forward.

We responded quickly to the restrictions around face to face contact due to the pandemic. Our training sessions were adapted so they would work remotely, and we rolled out webinars and virtual sessions. Meeting support was provided virtually, and we helped some families who were having technical difficulties to open documents or join Teams meetings, or who were anxious about attending in this way.

We understand the worry faced by families in 2020 and beyond and we will continue to respond rapidly to the changing situation and closely monitor, update and share local and national information as it emerges.

The resilience and professionalism of our team is clear to see from this report and I would like to thank them all for their hard work, support and commitment to helping children, young people and their families during this very challenging year. I feel very proud to be part of this team.

Nicki Howlett (Acting Service Lead)

10. Jargon-buster and useful links

EAL	Where English is an additional language
EHC plan	A legal document which describes the special educational, health and care needs for a child/young person and the help they will be given to meet these.
FTE	Full-time equivalent. A way of showing proportion of full-time hours
IASP	Information, advice and support programme – nationally run programme where services have been able to bid for funds to develop services in line with Minimum Standards
IASS	Information, advice and support service
Joint Commissioning	Commissioning and funding for IAS services should be shared between Education, Health and Social Care partners
Minimum Standards	National set of standards IAS services comply with
Outcomes	They are a snapshot assessment of the result of the IAS provided e.g., how were the needs of the service-user met during contact with us
Referral	A referral is the way we record a request for information, advice and support
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disability What is SEND?
SENCO	A qualified teacher in a school or maintained nursery school who has responsibility for co-ordinating SEN identification and provision
SEND Code of Practice 2015	Statutory guidance for those working with SEND children, young people and their families, which supports part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014
Service-user	Someone who contacts the service for information, advice or support. They might be children, young people, parents, carers or practitioners.