

# Biannual Report

## September 2020 - March 2021



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.

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# 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 annual and biannual reports as part of its Service Level Agreement with commissioners.

The information, advice and support 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.

## **IASP – Project funded by the Department for Education**

External project funding, which has been made available to IAS services to bid for within the past two years, has been significantly reduced for 2021/22.

This funding has been used to secure a full-time fixed-term post to progress some of our project work 2019 to 2021.

## **Joint Commissioning**

IAS services should be jointly commissioned across education, health and care funders. During this reporting period, the service has secured funding from two of the three Suffolk CCG's.

## 2. Provision of Information, Advice and Support

Headline data for the period 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021:

<b>Number of referrals</b> (requests for information, advice and support)	<b>1,480</b>
<b>Number of service-users accessing</b> (number of children, young people, parents, carers and practitioners directly accessing the service)	<b>1,106</b>
<b>Number of new service users during this period</b>	<b>684</b>
<b>Advice slot occupancy</b> (where in-depth discussion was required and a booked advice call was offered)	<b>94.5%</b>
<b>Number of contacts</b> (number of individual contacts made as part of a referral)	<b>5,713</b>
<b>Number of training registrants</b>	<b>856</b>
<b>Website page views</b>	<b>65,270</b>
<b>Facebook reach</b>	<b>65,111</b>
<b>Twitter impressions</b>	<b>31,342</b>
<b>YouTube channel views</b>	<b>6,007</b>

### 2.1 COVID-19

Due to Covid-19, a third national lockdown was announced on in January with all schools and colleges moving to remote learning, except for the children of key workers and vulnerable children. This remained in place until March 8th.

The service continued to provide its information, advice and support by telephone, email, text and remotely (via Teams) for the reporting period.

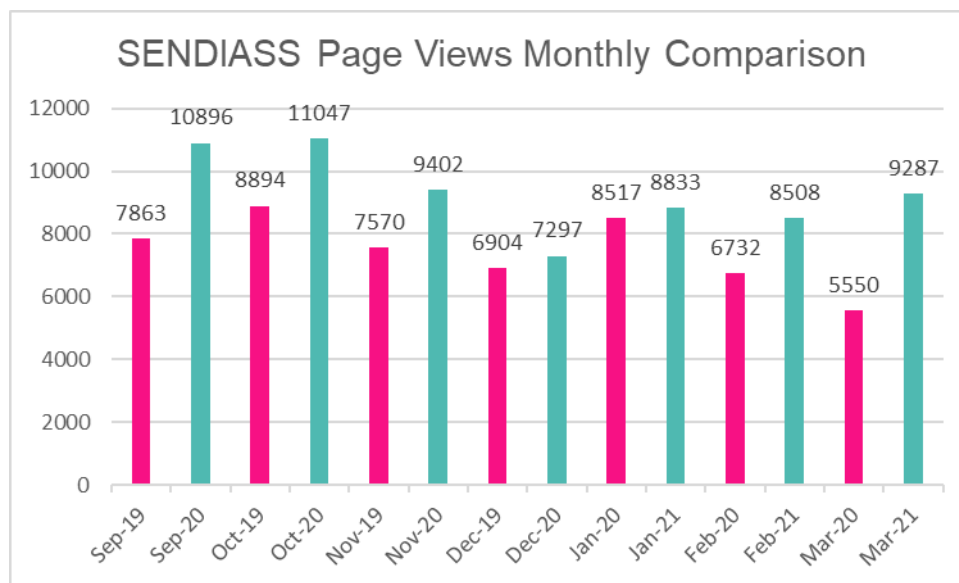
We developed our online sessions for parents, carers and practitioners to ensure that our training offer continued to address the most common questions or issues which families raise with our service.

### 2.2 Website, information and resources

The Information Officer was covering the Service Lead role for the duration of this reporting period. This has impacted development of website information, leaflets and with publicity and communications, for example with the e-newsletter circulation. Despite this, the website page views data continues to show an upward trend.

## Website page views, by month:

Month	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21	Total
Page views	10896	11047	9402	7297	8833	8508	9287	65,270



## Top pages viewed this period

Home	14,735
Contact us	3,269
Leaflets and resources	2,305
News and events	1,675

Choosing a school for a child with SEND	2,495
Requesting an EHC needs assessment	2,283
Choosing and naming a school in an EHC plan	1,558
EHC needs assessment and plans	1,146
Suffolk support services	1,031
Family views	1,027

## Most viewed information sections in this period:

1. EHC needs assessments and plans
2. SEN Support
3. Choosing a school
4. School Exclusion
5. COVID/Back to school

## 2.3 Social media

### Twitter “tweet impressions”

<b>Tweet impressions for the period</b>	31,342
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### Facebook

#### Page data

Total lifetime “Likes”	1,476
New page likes this period	149
Total of users who engaged with the page during this period	2,783
Total reach this period (number of people who had any content from your Page or about your Page enter their screen)	65,111

#### Post data

Number of posts in the period	394
Lifetime reach for all posts posted this period (number of people who had your Page's post enter their screen)	99,372
Lifetime “likes” for all posts posted this period	66,004

### YouTube

<b>‘Channel views’ for period</b>	6,007
<b>‘Impressions’</b>	46,800

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

We receive many enquiries from parents seeking advice and help regarding a SEND Tribunal appeal. We have created a series of videos to help parents and carers fill in the two different online SEND Tribunal appeal forms. The introduction videos alone have received 582 views (refusal to assess form) and 556 views (all other SEND appeals form).

The series of Tribunal form videos have so far gathered **3,631 views**.

## **2.4 Training (information sessions and workshops)**

We continue to receive lots of calls around SEN support in schools. Following a successful collaboration with other services on a 'Back to School' project in the summer of 2020, we reached out to the Specialist Education Services and health practitioners to explore further collaboration.

The SES services and Paediatric Occupational Therapists from health agreed to support a series of individual sessions in the autumn term of 2020, explaining the graduated approach to SEN support and what help schools could reasonably offer. Each session focussed on a different type of SEN and was supported by a practitioner with expertise in that area of need. These sessions gained very positive feedback from families and practitioners, so we offered them again in the spring term 2021 and explored further collaboration with specialist services.

The specialist outreach service for pupils with speech, language and communication needs asked us to host a short series of informal online 'coffee mornings/evenings' to help parents support their child's language development through simple games to play at home. These again proved popular and will be continued in the summer term of 2021.

The highest proportion of calls to our service concern EHC processes so we continued to offer our EHC Needs Assessment and Annual Reviews webinars in the spring and summer terms, opening it to families and practitioners to very positive feedback. These webinars had both previously been coproduced with groups of parents and feedback suggests the content and delivery still addresses parent and practitioner questions and uncertainties. We also adapted key sections of the EHCP face to face workshop (which we had previously coproduced with parents and carers), to offer an online session explaining the process of drafting and finalising an EHC plan and what to look for in an effective EHC plan. This was also well received so will be offered again in the summer term when Covid restrictions mean face to face sessions will still be on hold.

When the government announced the March date for the return to schools, we received calls from parents who shared their own and their child's anxieties about the return. We collaborated with services and agreed to host a short series of informal online sessions in March, to support children and young people's wellbeing for their return to school. We managed the bookings and promotion, introduced the sessions and helped support the Q&A while the Psychology and Therapeutic service and County Inclusion Support Service delivered the presentation.

Delivered the following information sessions between September 2020 and end of March 2021:

<b>Parent and practitioner training session registrants</b>	<b>Autumn term 2020</b>	<b>Spring term 2021</b>
What is EHE (2 sessions)	32	
EHC Needs Assessment webinar (inc practitioners)	92	43
SEN Support for pupils with specific learning difficulties	16	20
SEN Support for pupils with C&I, SEMH needs	17	15
Annual Review process webinar (inc practitioners)	54	56
SEN Support for Pupils with Speech, Language & Communication Needs	18	21
SEN Support for Pupils with Sensory Processing Needs	20	32
Governor SEND Training	24	50
Gathering Views co-production drop-in session	4	
Drafting and Finalising an EHC plan	13	10
SEN Support for Pupils with Coordination Difficulties	13	8
Working with Parents – school/SENCO/CISS sessions 24+25+17+34+		100
Language Games to Play at Home 30+17+16		63
Making Meetings Matter		9
Supporting Children and Young People's Wellbeing for their Return to School		104
Parent / carer drop in for specific schools		9
CoPro with SEND YP Network about website		13
<b>Total Registrants:</b>	<b>303</b>	<b>553</b>

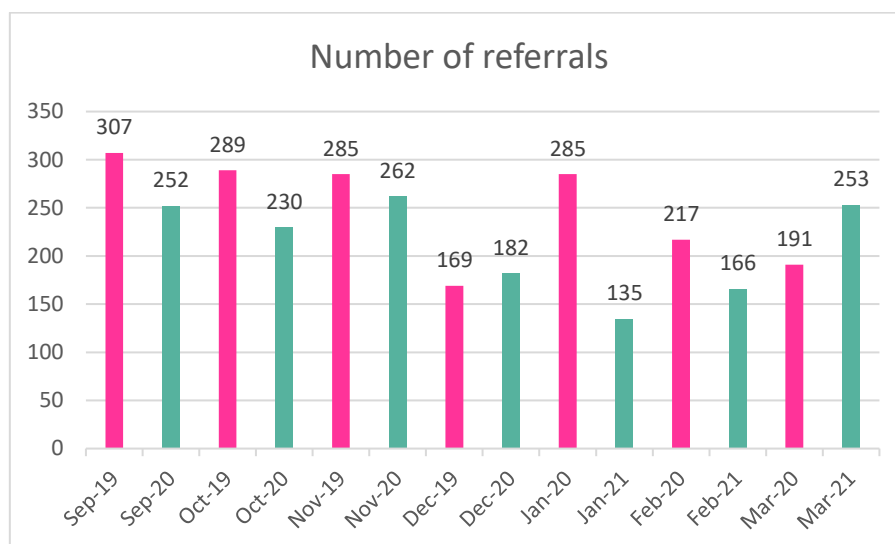
**Feedback about our sessions and workshops can be found in chapter 3.2**



## 2.5 Helpline and ongoing support (individual IAS provided)

### 2.5a Referrals

A referral is the way we record a request for information, advice and support.



	Sep 20	Oct- 20	Nov- 20	Dec- 20	Jan- 21	Feb- 21	Mar- 21	Total
Number of referrals	252	230	262	182	135	166	253	1480

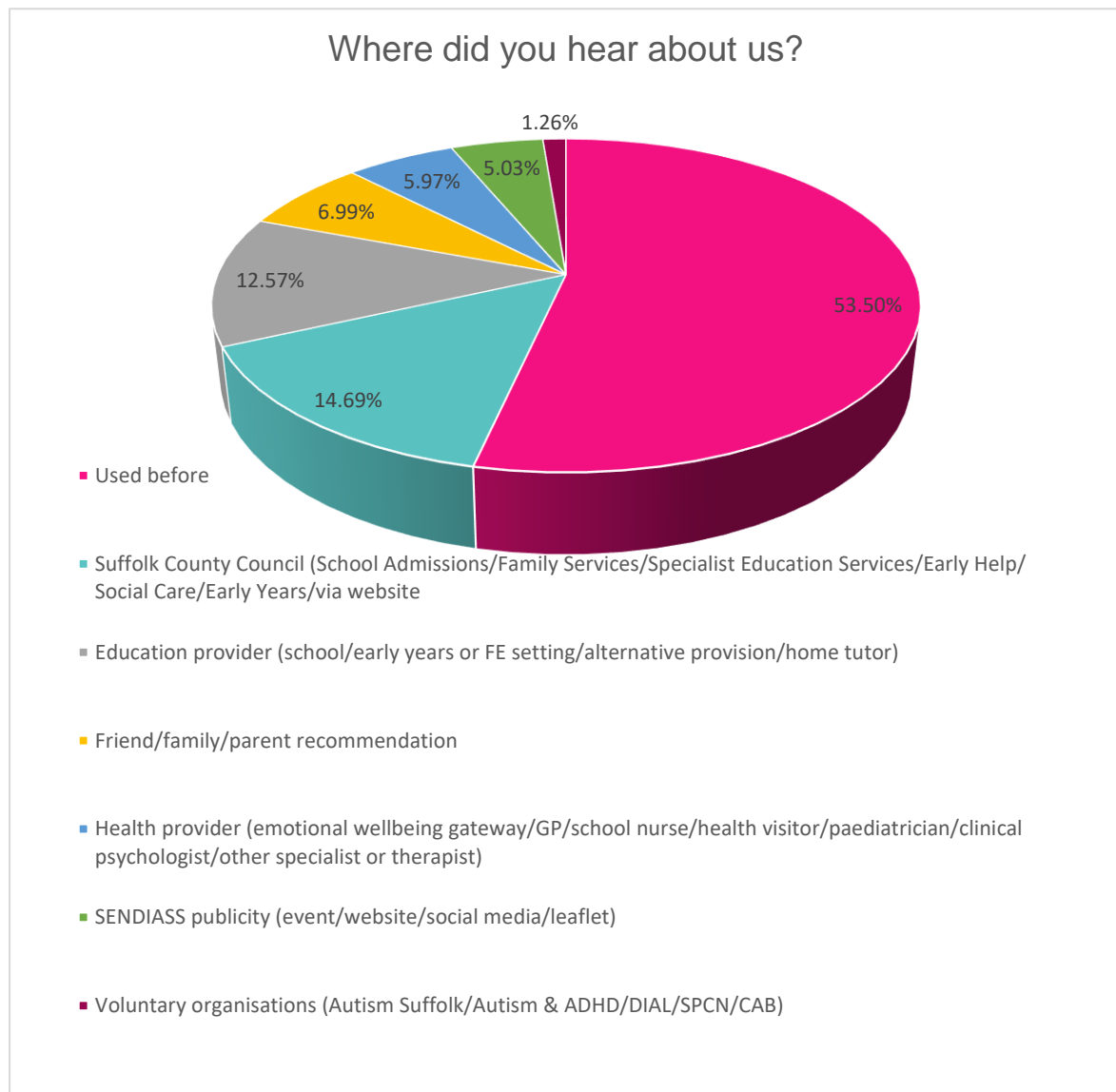
### Number of referrals

This reporting period includes a lockdown where schools were closed from 4<sup>th</sup> January to 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021 (except for vulnerable students and children of keyworkers).

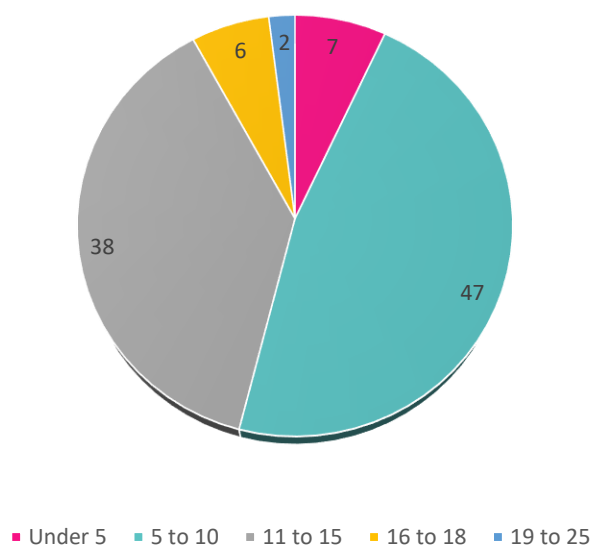
## Where did you hear about us?

Though SENDIASS is a self-referral service, we capture where the service-user heard about us. We have a high percentage of “returners” to the service (53.50%) indicating that the information, advice and support we offer is valued.

It is pleasing to see that the combined total for local authority education/health/social care services/schools/settings remains high (33.23%).



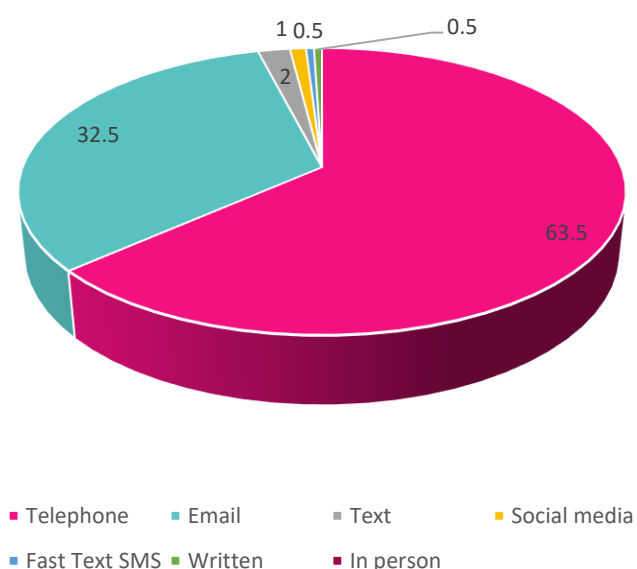
% Referrals by age band of child



### Referrals by age band:

The majority of the children and young people we provide information, advice and support for are across the compulsory school-age years **(85%)**

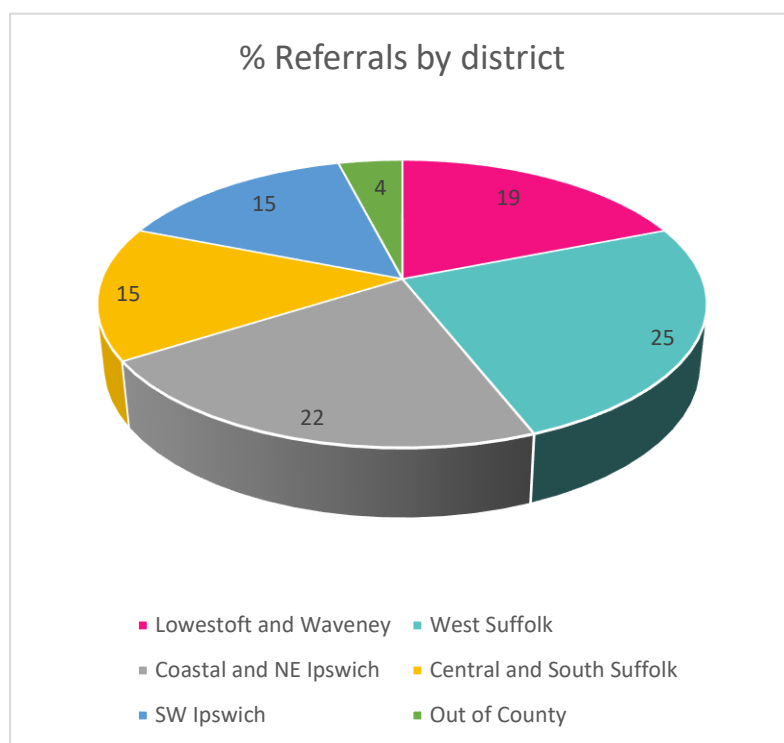
% Referrals by contact method



### Referrals by contact method:

Telephone remains the preferred method for parents to initially make contact with us, though this has declined when compared to annual data 2019/20 (**down to 63.5% from 70%**)

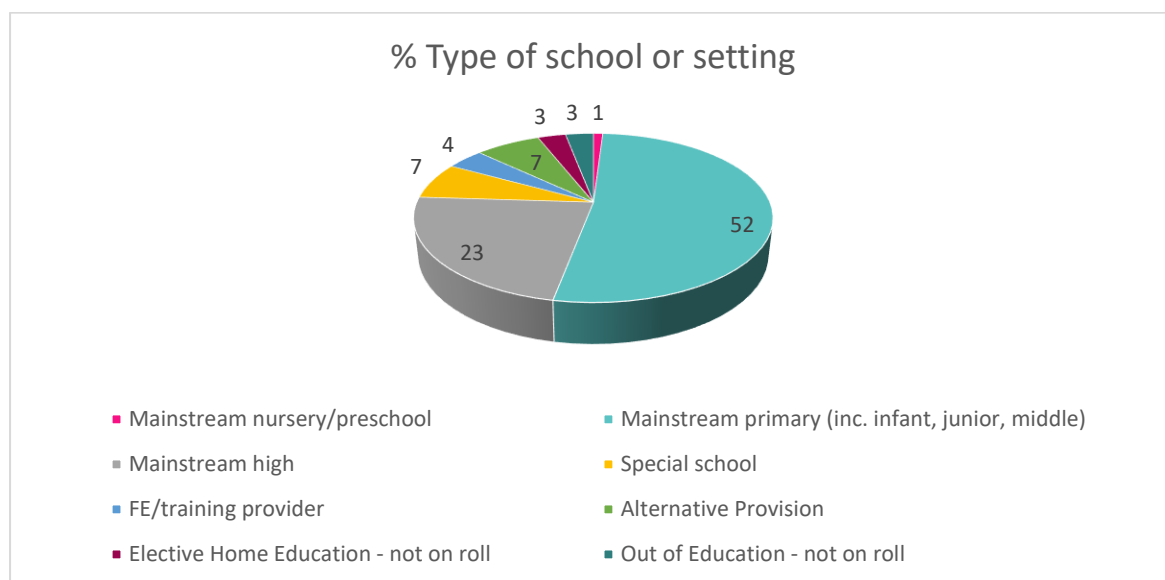
## Referrals by district:



The chart indicates a relatively even spread of referrals across all districts of Suffolk, with high frequency of referrals from West Suffolk and Coastal & NE Ipswich areas.

Compared to our 2019/20 Annual Report, this data shows an increase in the % of referrals from **West Suffolk** (to **25%** from 22%)

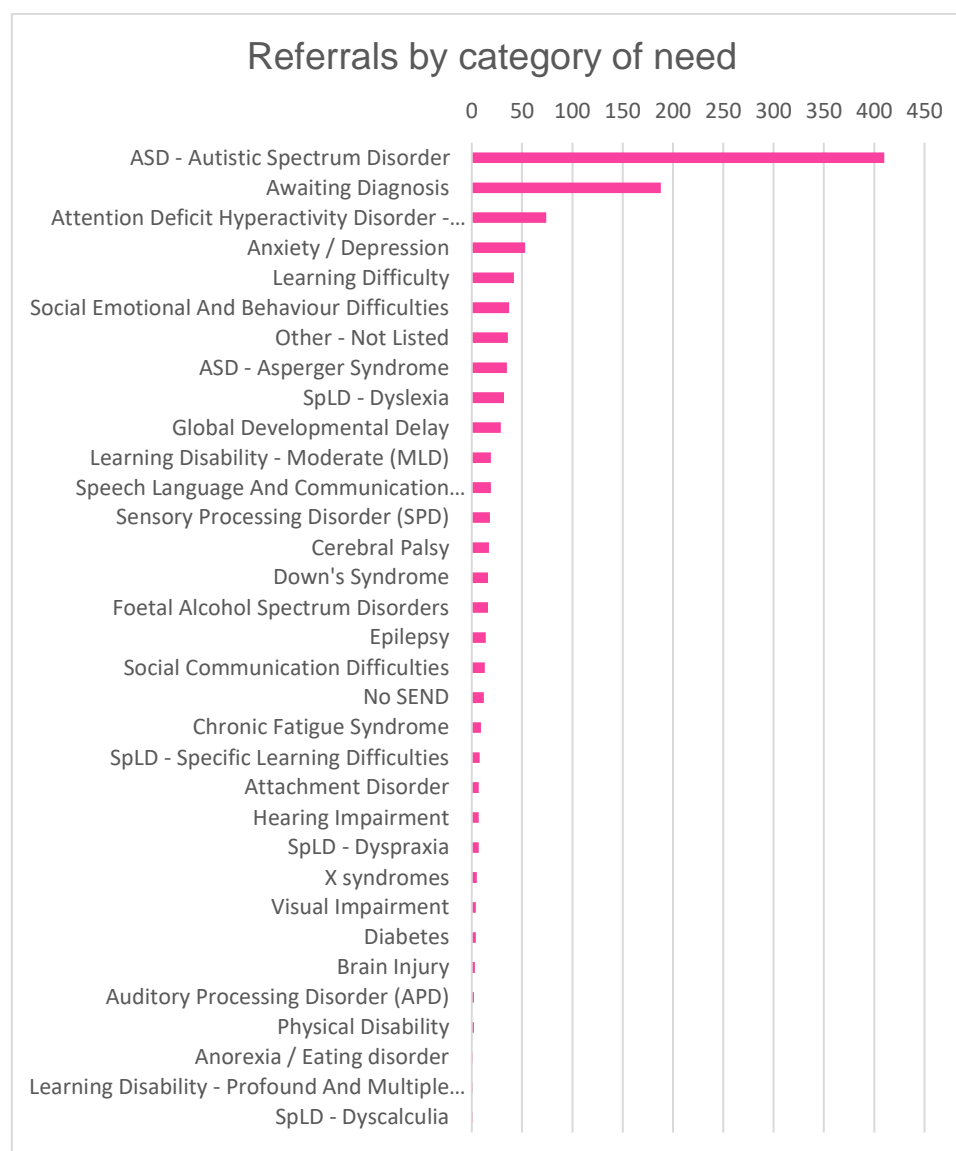
## Type of school/setting this period shown as % (where information known):



This is new data that has only been compiled since December 2020. These totals are average percentages over this period. It shows that our main cohort are children of compulsory school age and attending a mainstream setting (**75%**).

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

ASD – Autistic Spectrum Disorder is consistently the highest category of need recorded.



## Ethnic origin

Of the data collected, 87% of service-users in the period identified as White – English/Welsh/Scot/N.Ire/Brit. The data appears to be reflective of the population in Suffolk.

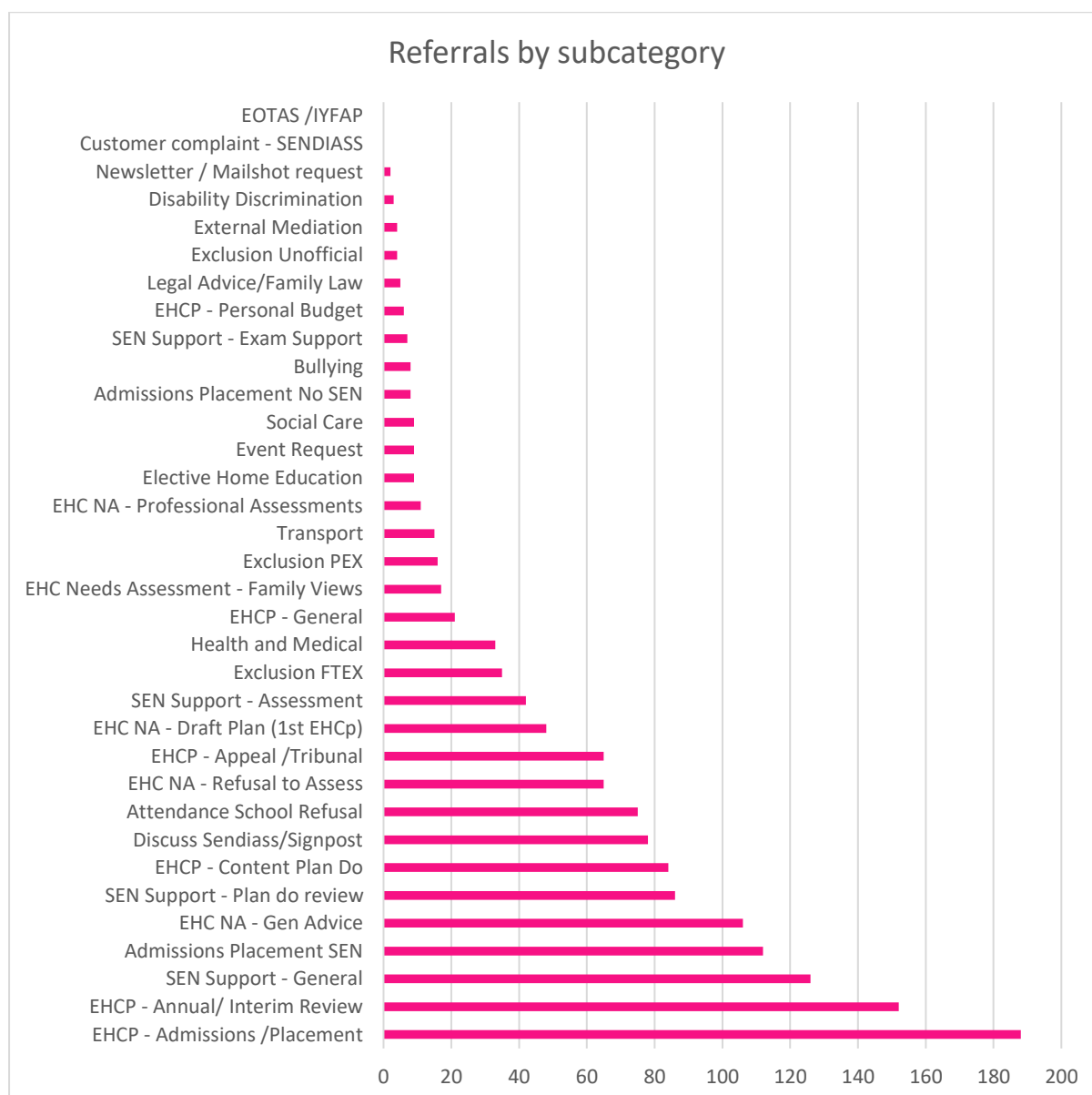
Prefer not to say	11
White - English/Welsh/Scot/N.Ire/Brit	899
White - Irish	3
White - Gypsy or Irish Traveller	4
White - Any other white	57
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	4
Mixed - White and Black African	2
Mixed - White and Asian	3
Mixed - White and any other	15
Asian/Asian British - Indian	10
Asian/Asian British - Pakistani	2
Asian/Asian British - Bangladeshi	2
Asian/Asian British - Chinese	0
Asian/Asian British - Any other	5
Black/Black British - African	5
Black/Black British - Caribbean	1
Black/Black British - Any other	1
Arab	1
Any other ethnic group	3

During this period, we also completed the report on our findings of the survey with settings across Suffolk to better understand the needs of families where English is an Additional Language (EAL).

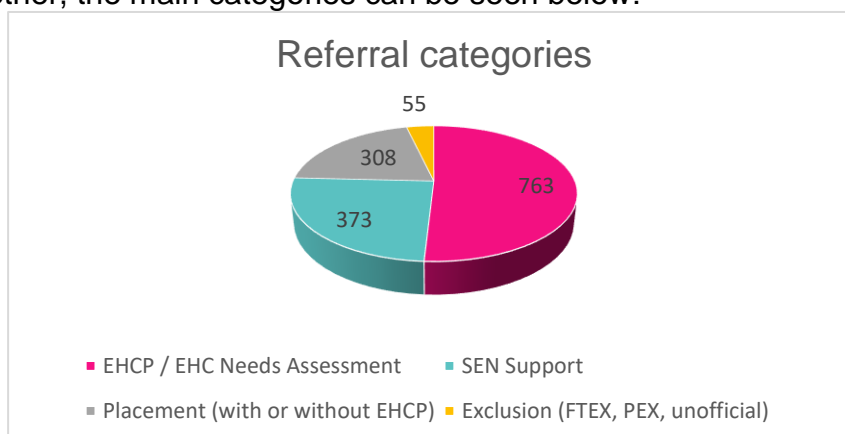
[View our EAL project report](#)

## Project subcategories (theme of enquiry)

The team categorises each referral by selecting just one theme:



Grouped together, the main categories can be seen below:



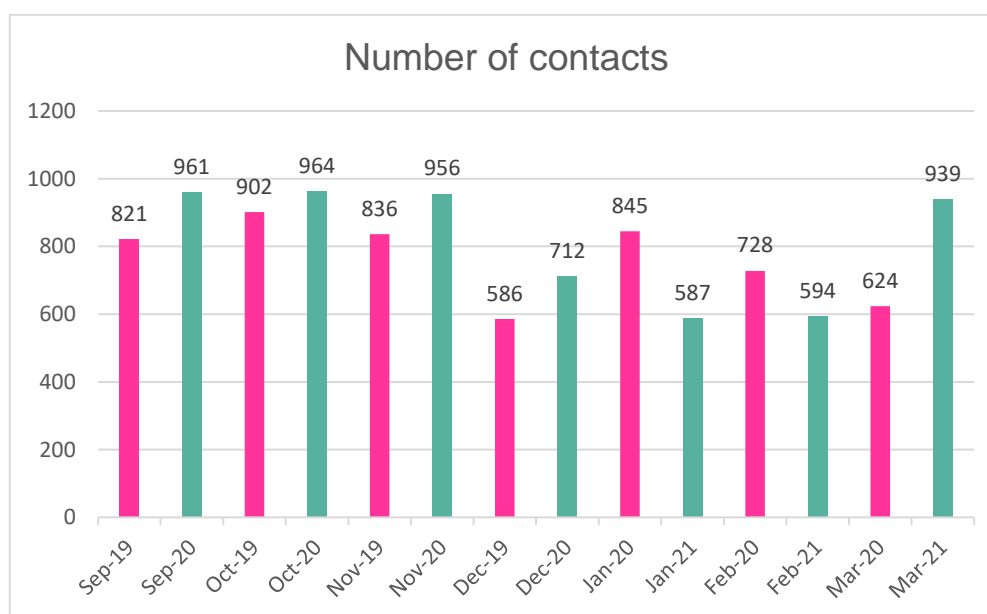
## 2.5b Contacts

A 'referral' will often result in a number of additional contacts with the service-user.

The number of contacts is higher than when compared to the same period the previous year. 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.

### Number of contacts and time spent - comparison to last academic year:

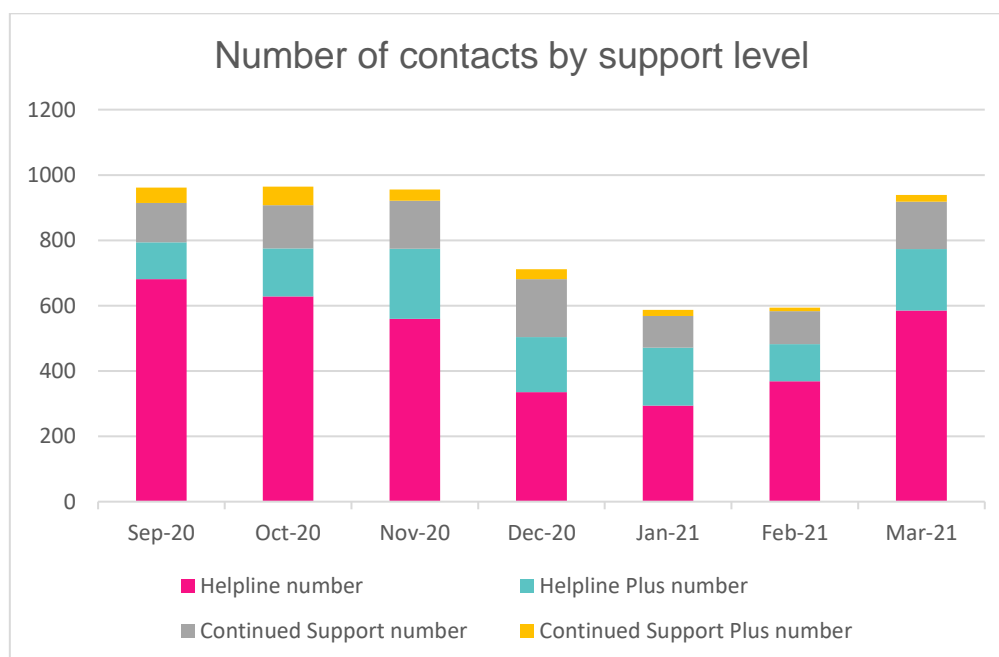
	Sep -19	Sep -20	Oct- 19	Oct- 20	Nov -19	Nov -20	Dec -19	Dec -20	Jan -20	Jan -21
<b>Number of Contacts</b>	<b>821</b>	<b>961</b>	<b>902</b>	<b>964</b>	<b>836</b>	<b>956</b>	<b>586</b>	<b>712</b>	<b>845</b>	<b>587</b>
Time	267 h58	344 h07	328 h29	343 h17	292 h03	350 h20	211 h11	263 h04	306 h43	235 h53
	Feb -20	Feb -21	Mar -20	Mar -21	Total Sep- 19 Mar-20		Total Sep- 20 Mar-21			
<b>Number of Contacts</b>	<b>728</b>	<b>594</b>	<b>624</b>	<b>939</b>	<b>5342</b>		<b>5713</b>			
Time	262 h32	227 h15	235 h32	387 h46	1904h28		2151h42			



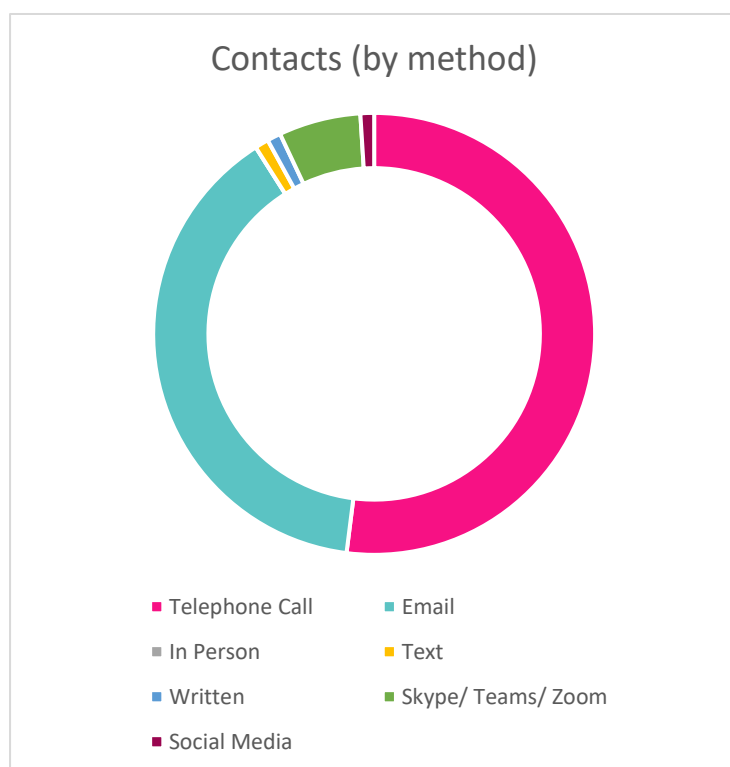


## Contacts by support level

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

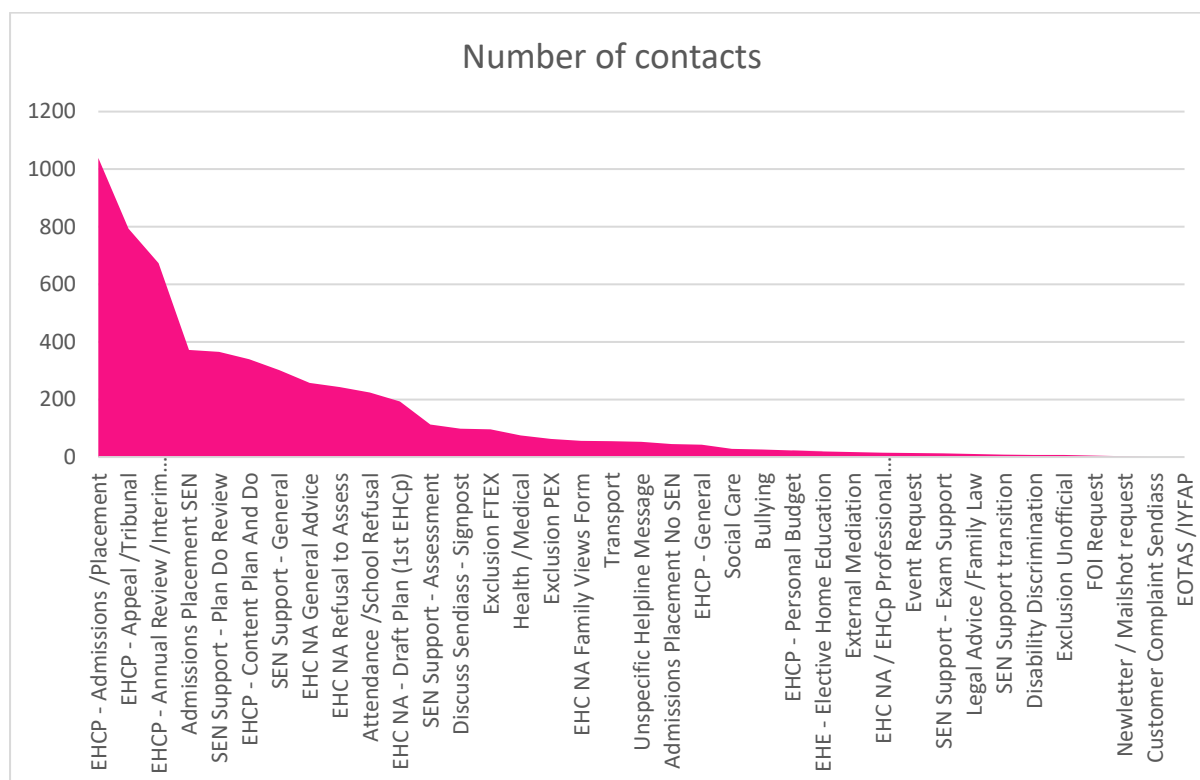


## Contacts by method:

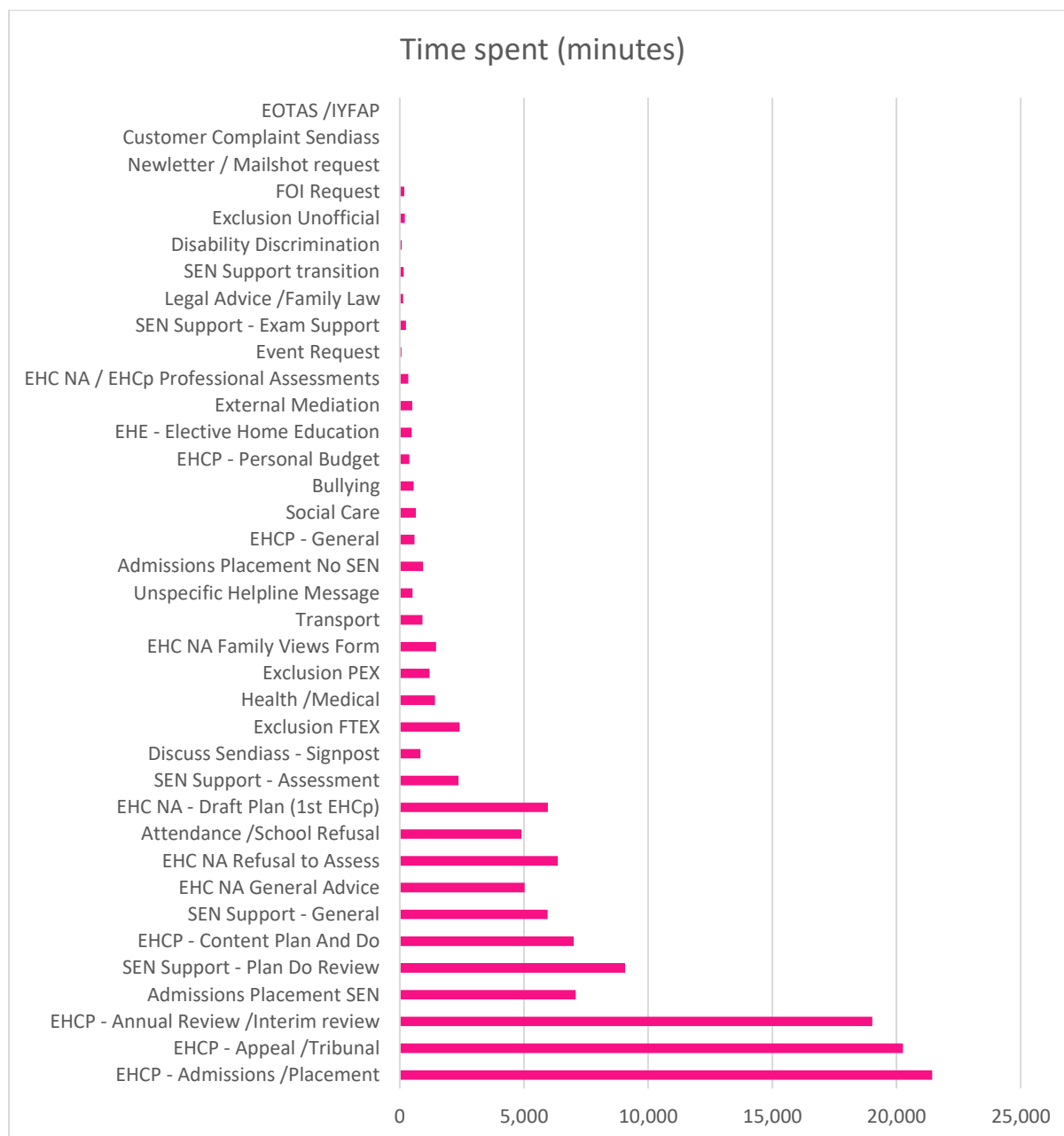


Whilst telephone contact remains the most popular method at 52% of contacts, followed by email at 39%, there has been a significant rise in contacts via Skype / Teams / Zoom. These now account for 6% of all contacts (284). During the whole of the last academic year we recorded 74 Skype / Teams / Zoom contacts, only 1 of which was prior March 2020 and the first national lockdown due to Covid-19. Note also that we have not offered any “in person” contacts during this period, due to the pandemic.

## Contacts subcategory (theme of enquiry)

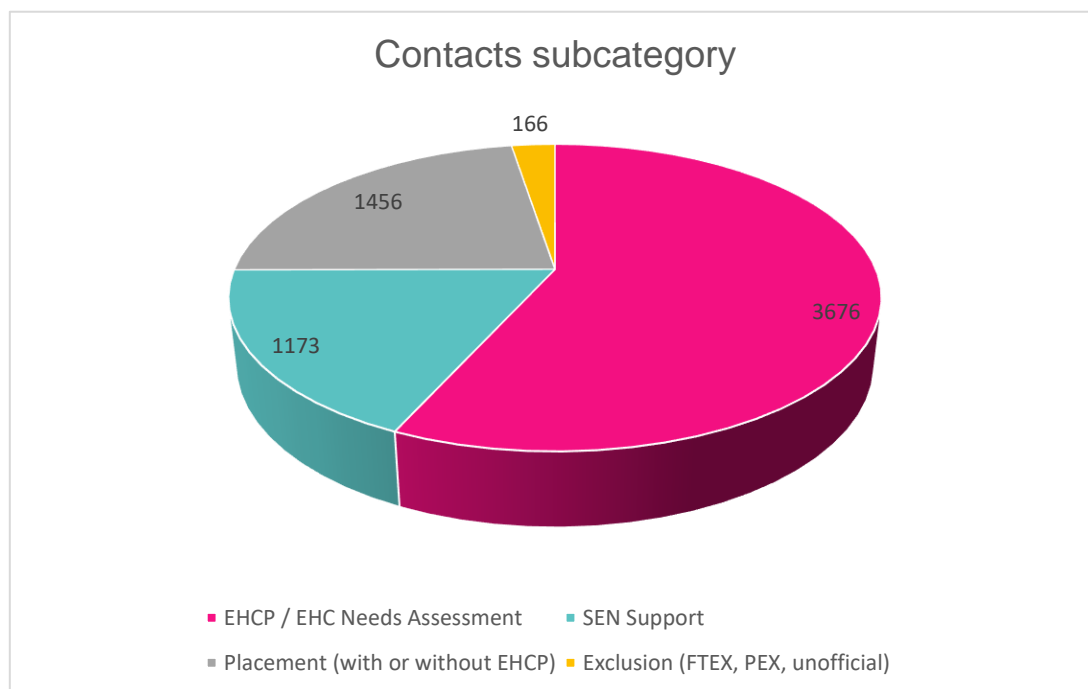


## Category of contacts, by time spent:



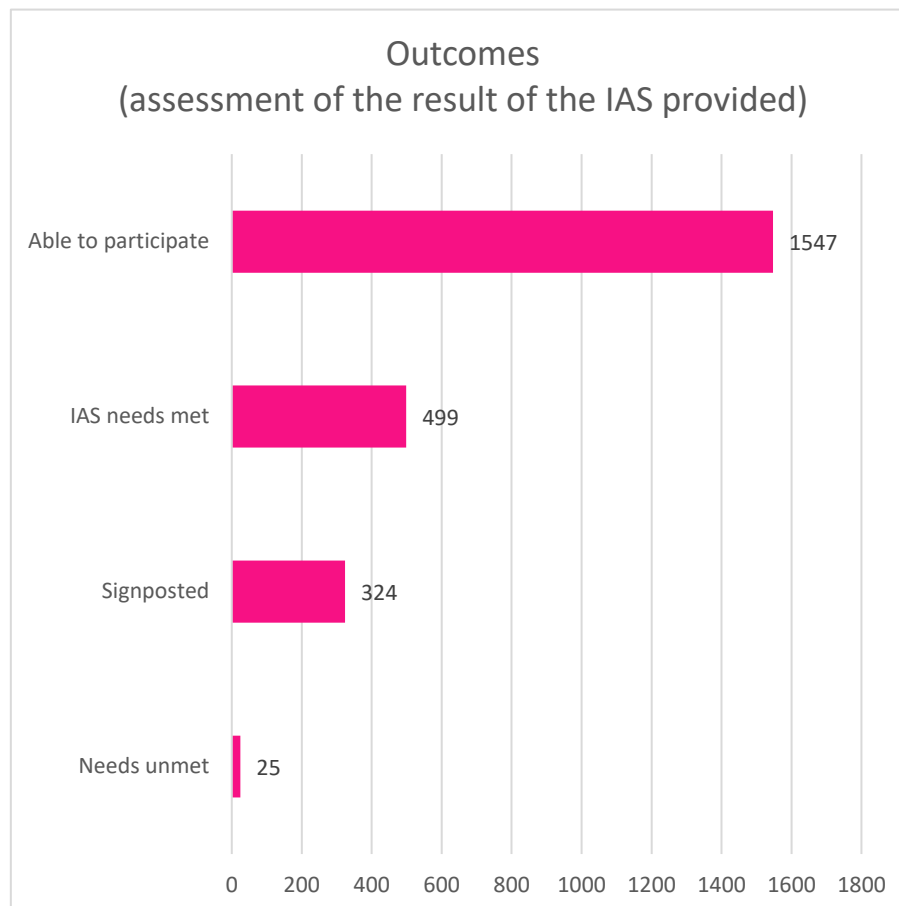
The complexity of Appeals / Tribunal can be seen here. They are the second highest contacts category with 794 contacts and 20,263 minutes (337.72 hours) spent on appeals during this period. We attended 5 appeal hearings via video conference to support parents.

Grouped together, the main categories, by number, can be seen here.



## 2.5c 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. The 'needs unmet' are mostly where we attempted return calls but could not get through, or where appointments were not attended:



### Needs unmet:

Of the 25 contacts recorded as Needs Unmet, 19 were that the parent didn't answer their phone for a booked appointment slot despite the caseworker making two attempts; 4 were that the parent cancelled at late notice due to illness or emergency; 2 were cancelled as the problem was resolved.

**A sample of the comments about the impact of the information, advice and support we provided:**

*'It helps just to talk it through and know I am on the right track. Thank you.'*

*'Many thanks for your invaluable support through the entire process.'*

*'Your help has been so useful in knowing happens next and how I can help my child.'*

*'A really good service, so quick and efficient to make contact and then speak to someone. It really helps to speak to someone who understands where you're coming from.'*

*'Thankyou so much for your time and advice I really do appreciate it.'*

*'That's been very very helpful and got me in the right mindset to move things forwards.'*

*'Thank you for your call and your patience. It has given me the confidence to move forward.'*

*'Thank you very much for your information and advice it is much appreciated. it is all a bit of a scary time for us, but you have really helped thank you.'*

*'You're so helpful, I don't think I would be able to get through this without you.'*

*'I'm so glad I rang you. You've made it so much clearer what my options are.'*

*'Thank you so much for phoning me. I've felt so alone it's such a relief to have someone helping me.'*

*'We appreciated the way you explained the options for my son and thinking about identifying the skills he will need as he prepares for adulthood.'*

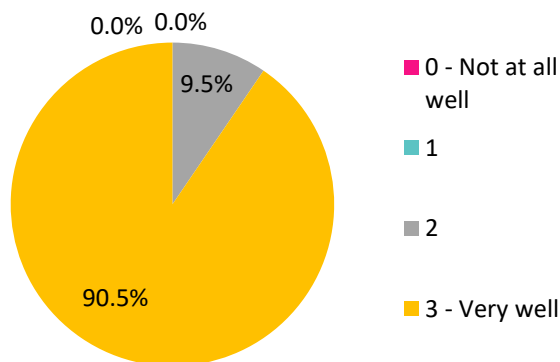
*'You've been really helpful today and I have also found the videos on your website useful.'*

### 3. Service-user feedback

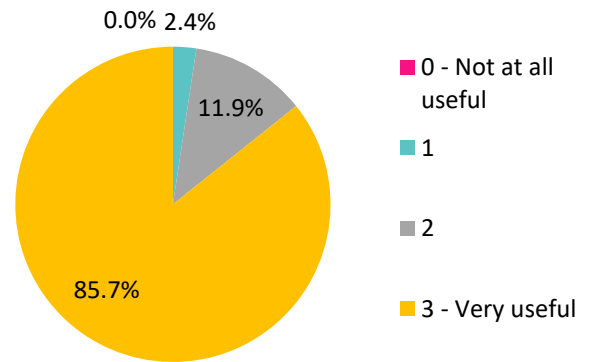
#### 3.1 Survey Responses

As the start of each month, anyone who has accessed our service during the previous month and gave 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?



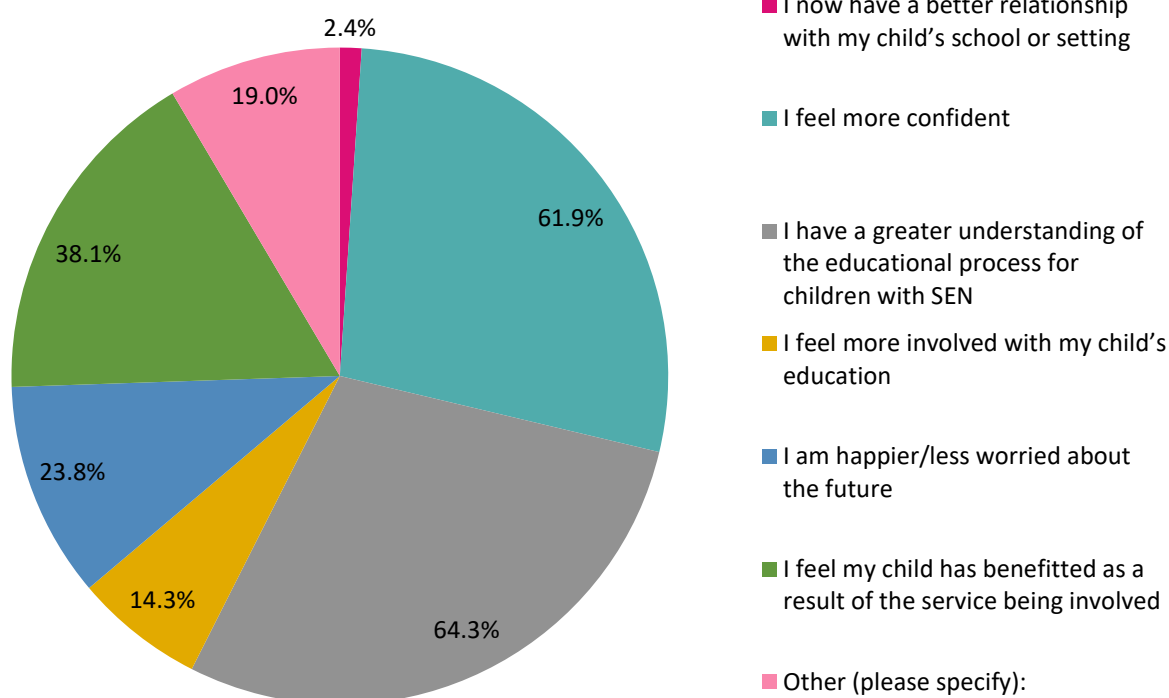
How useful was the information, advice and support we gave you?



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)



Respondents can select multiple responses, so the percentage values shown above exceed 100%

### Comments within 'other':

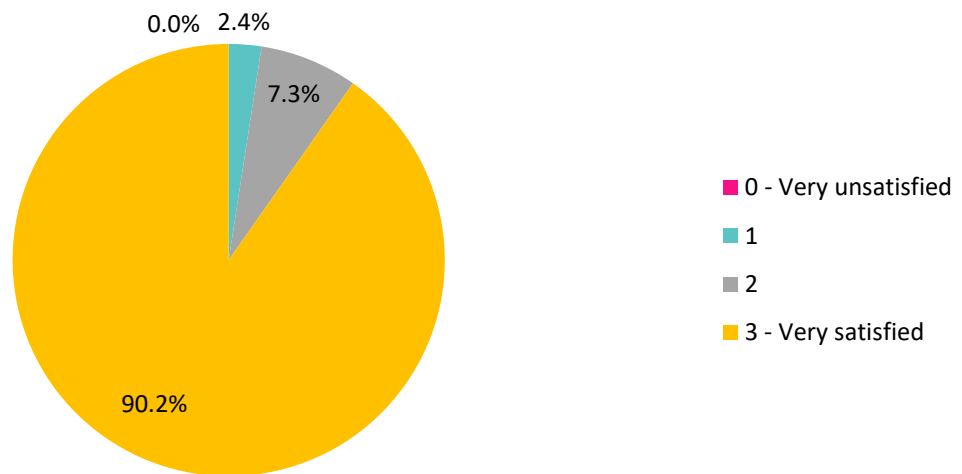
*'Advice and support given will help us build a stronger offer for supporting our students as they move into adulthood and take their next steps beyond FE.'*

*'Helped me to understand what my next steps need to be, and in what direction to find them.'*

*'Helpful info regarding the topic made things more manageable to proceed with and advisor was very clear with communication over the phone.'*



## Overall how satisfied are you with the service we gave?



### Suggestions received in our survey about how we can develop and improve our services:

*'No improvement necessary.'*

*'I feel that I found out about you from a Social Worker almost by accident, and I'm sure many parents never learn about your service. Perhaps wider publicity would be useful.'*

*'Just be more 'out there' in terms of how to contact someone and speak to them for support.'*

*'None - it was really so helpful and professional and easy to access. I am very grateful to you.'*

*'The help I've had has been amazing, I couldn't have asked for anything better.'*

### 3.2 Training feedback

#### Sample feedback from parents, carers and practitioners for our shorter virtual sessions in this reporting period:

*I've attended many of SENDIASS face-to-face sessions and found them incredibly helpful. This virtual session has been as helpful and informative as the face-to-face ones. It's been great to be able to access it from home.*

*It was a great insight and a non- biased view which is what I wanted to see.*

*The graduated cycle was explained very well and useful information for further support was offered.*

*It's been very useful – thank you very much. It's increased my trust and confidence in the SENCo.*

*Thank you it has been very informative and so clearly put across! I felt the advice for approaching school was very helpful.*

*Great advice - some parents may feel uncomfortable approaching school so being fully prepared and being positive and understanding too - sounds good!*

*Could you please keep making more of these workshops because are very useful for parents and carers.*

*Was good to find out the information so have more of an understanding of the processes. Was good to hear parents' experiences and concerns.*

*Really helpful in (looking at) the different sections. I feel a lot more confident with the process now and being able to advocate for my child.*

*Lots of important information and good answering all questions with examples.*

*Feel like this session was directed at exactly the issues I am having. Lots to think about. Will look at availability and will share this with staff too. (Teacher)*

*Thank you. It's really good to stop and think about it from the parent's perspective - we often don't stop and think because we are always busy. (Teacher)*

*The training session was really good, thank you so much for delivering it. I think it was especially useful for all our young and fairly inexperienced staff who do find it really challenging having conversations with some of our parents. (Headteacher)*

*Brilliant session and looking forward to the follow-up. (SENCo)*

*Thought the training session tonight was excellent. (SES practitioner)*

*It has been really helpful, thank you. Always good to have different perspectives on working with families. (SES practitioner)*

*Very useful, especially tips on improving engagement with parents in meetings. Thank you! (SES practitioner)*

*Thank you, this was very informative. Very useful for us in the future. (SES practitioner)*

**Sample feedback from parents, carers and practitioners for our lengthier webinars in this reporting period:**

*Brilliant. Thank you, this has been fantastic and really informative. Thank you for all your knowledge and help.*

*Really clear and concise, fantastic to have the resource material. Thank you.*

*As a professional from CYP- I now have a better understanding of what school's need to have done prior to EHCP application. Helps me to support the family and also challenge if required. Thank you, ladies, great webinar.*

*The webinar proved to be very clear in all aspects of the EHC and the process.*

*This has been really informative thank you. Great presentation- the ladies worked really well together. Clear information and well presented.*

*Thank you for your time this evening ladies- you guys are wonderful and support a lot of our families and professionals- thank you.*

*Great that it was interactive and that specific examples were given when trying to explain things.*

*Very informative and planned well. Thank you. Looking forward to receiving the resources and video.*

*I prepare paperwork for reviews daily and I found this very helpful.*

*This webinar has been a great help, thank you!*

*Really easy to understand the process of the review and I liked the True/False questions too!*

*Thanks so much for the session – accessible and clear.*

*Great presentation – concise and informative. Very good and encouraging and I admire your colleague for answering questions (in chat) as we go along.*

*Thank you for such clear and informative training on such complex issues. (Governor)*

*A very helpful session - lots of guidance and good examples- thank you. (Governor)*

*I think this webinar has been an excellent refresher for me so well done.... you have the right pace and explanations have been clear and straightforward. (Governor)*

*A good opportunity to review my knowledge in a well-presented session – thank you. (Governor)*

*Improved my understanding and confidence regarding SEND responsibility for governors, thank you. (Governor)*

## Conclusion

Referrals and contacts in this reporting period were spiky month-to-month, due to the ever-changing situation with COVID and lockdown. Despite this, the reach of the service is increasing as can be seen when proportionately comparing our headline data around number of 'referrals', 'service-users accessing' and 'contacts' alongside our last [annual report](#).

General categories (themes) of enquiries largely stayed the same, with EHC needs assessments and plans remaining our highest frequency closely followed by SEN Support and Choosing a school/placement. The highest frequency single category was 'EHCP Admissions/placement' - the choice of school when naming in an EHC plan. We continued to provide support for a significant number of appeals, most of which relate to disagreement about which school is named (or that no school is named) in the plan.

We categorise generally and the data capture may not fully reflect the wide range of advice covered during an enquiry, just the overriding theme of our discussion. We are working on refining our categories so that we can capture all the specific themes, which will help to guide our information and training offer and enable us to provide meaningful intelligence to partners.

In addition to our established sessions around SEN Support and EHC plans, training offered was dynamic and responsive to the needs of families in Suffolk during this period. We continued to collaborate with Education and Health services to coproduce new sessions for parents and carers, which were well attended, and we received excellent feedback.

Service-user feedback received is consistently very positive and shows the service continues to meet the needs of those accessing, despite particularly challenging times.

There has been further feedback this period suggesting more promotion is needed. We started reporting on the type of school during this period and this data shows 75% of the children and young people we support attend mainstream schools. We gained financial approval for a new proactive post, which has been made possible due to joint commissioning secured with health colleagues. This post, when up and running, will enable us to raise awareness and improve access to the service, for example with young people directly and through early years, post-16 providers and specialist settings.

Progress with our new website is slower than we would like in this period, however, this is due to our Information Officer continuing to cover the Service Lead role. This will be an area of focus as we move into the next reporting period.

The team has now established regular input to the SEND Priorities in Suffolk and has actively identified opportunities to work with colleagues and provide information and data which can help to inform policy and practice both locally and nationally.