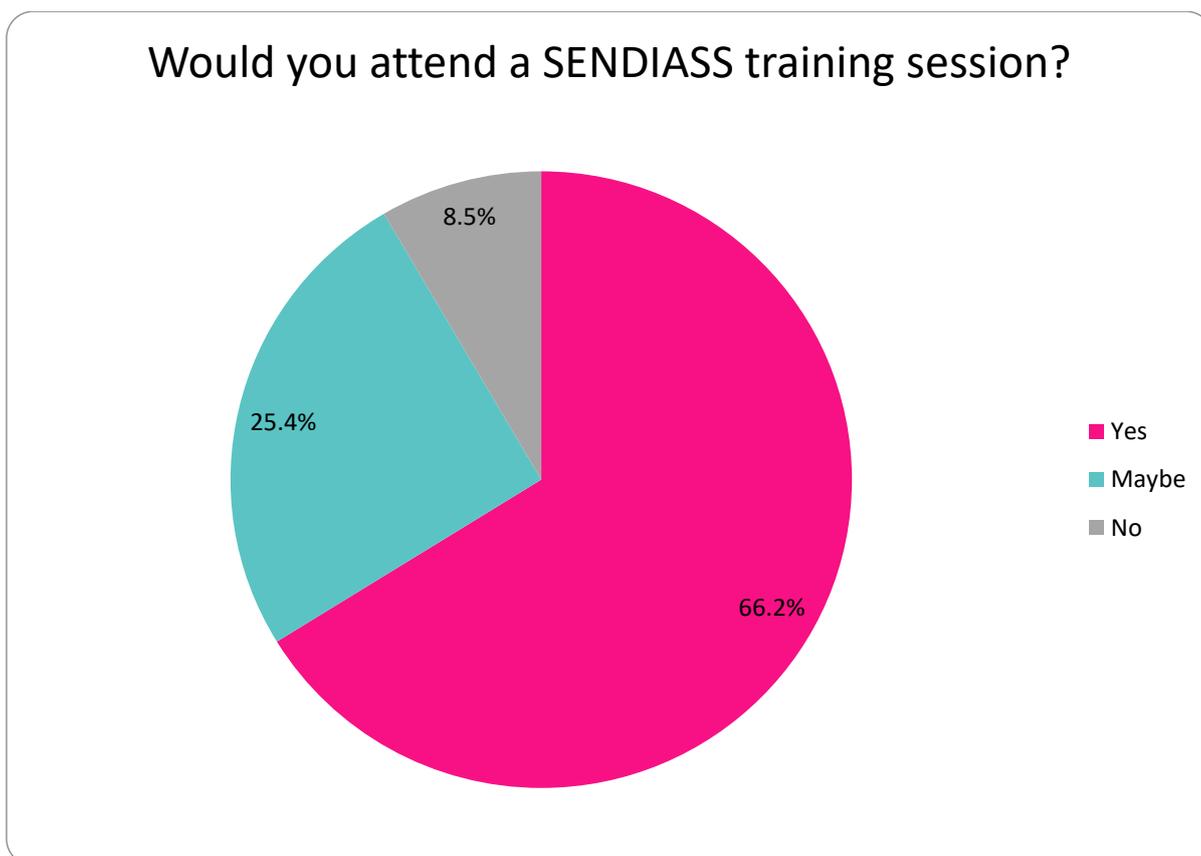


Information and Training survey June 2021

Question 1 enquired about who was filling in the survey and the respondents were parents or carers. We need to continue to reach out to young people to gain their views, initially via the groups we are currently working with, through the Engagement Hub.

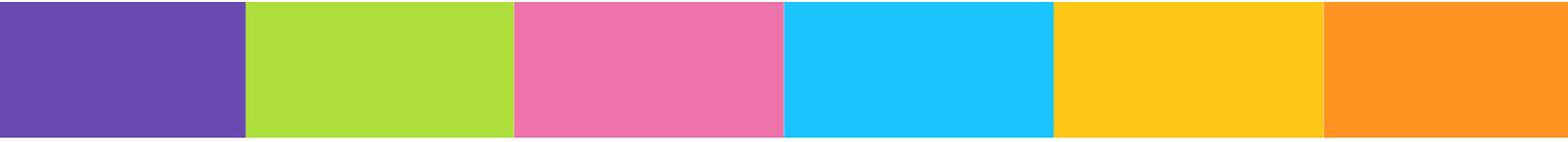
We have just recruited to a new role in our team of Community and Engagement Worker - engagement with young people is part of their remit.

Q2: Would you attend a SENDIASS training session?



If you answered 'maybe' or 'no' please explain what we could do differently to encourage you?

A number of responses were about timing and relevance of a session. Questions further on in the survey look at these aspects more closely. Other comments were:



'Don't know enough about them.'

'As they are all online at the moment and I am no good at online things.'

'Unless it was via a video call that required not talking on my part.'

'Not be affiliated with the LA.'

'Work and childcare commitments.'

'Child does not have SEN.'

'I would do online training if it was appropriate to me.'

'It would depend if it were relevant to me and my family, and also if it fit in with our schedules/routines. We have 2 young boys with ASD & ADHD and it is quite demanding to fit everything somedays.'

'There needs to be more information to understand what's going to be done at the session. One I went to today wasn't what I thought it was going to be so I did leave.'

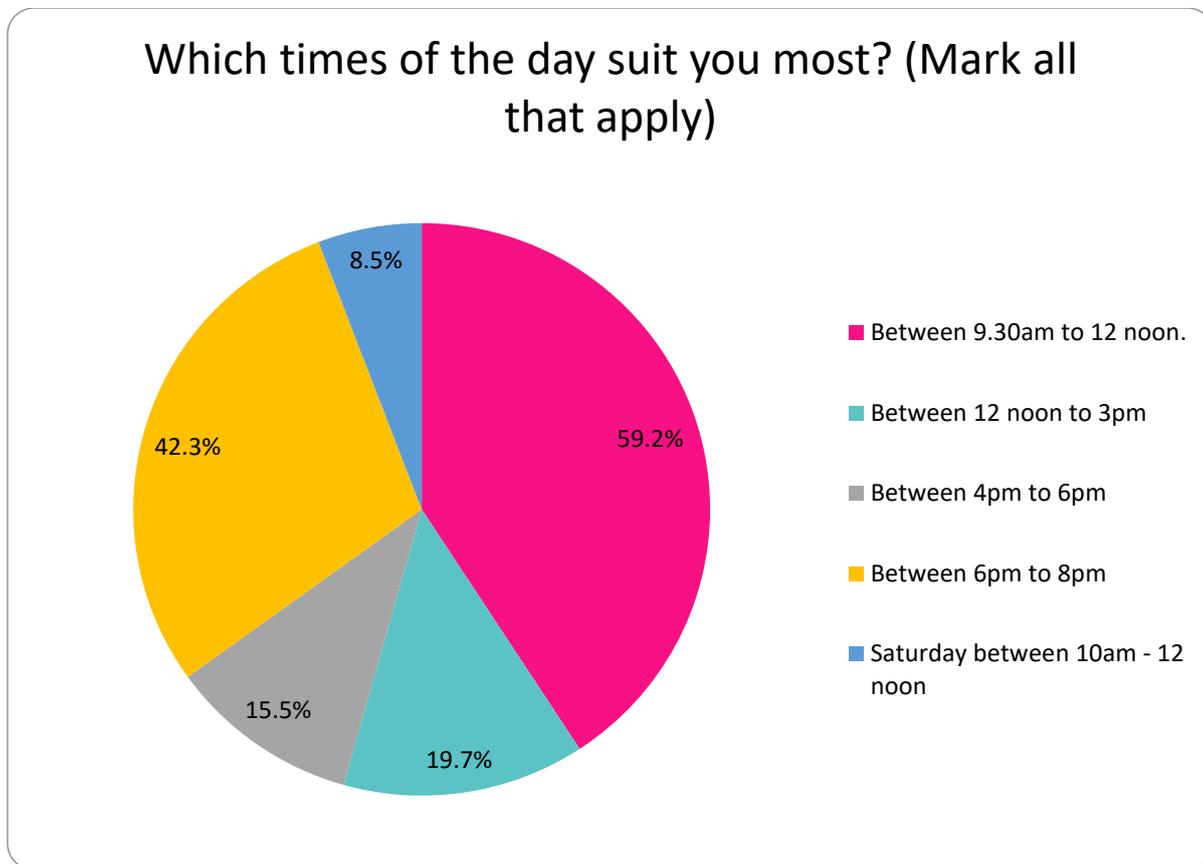
SENDIASS response: We are keen to offer face to face sessions again, as soon as government guidance is clearer. We would like to offer a blend of face-to-face and online sessions, supported by recordings which can be watched on demand. We may need to start the autumn term with online live sessions, until we can feel confident in offering face-to-face sessions safely.

We try to put as much information as is helpful on the Eventbrite descriptions and flyers and in promotion via socials and our regular newsletter. We have found in the past that if there is too much info, it is off-putting and has the opposite effect.

Families have also told us that they don't read the Eventbrite descriptions so it can be difficult to know how best to share session information.

However, for the sessions we have hosted rather than deliver, we could have sought more information. If we continue to host sessions in the future, we will ask for more information.

Q3: Which times of the day suit you most? (Mark all that apply)



Multiple responses allowed for this question and combined percentages therefore exceed 100%.

The highest frequency of responses to this question link with our current offer where we offer morning and early evening sessions.

We previously offered some afternoon face to face sessions, but these were poorly attended. There is the added difficulty that academies often finish at different times of the afternoon.

Going forward, we could offer virtual sessions at morning, afternoon and evening. For face-to-face sessions, it would be good to offer a selection of times, but this will partly depend on venue availability.

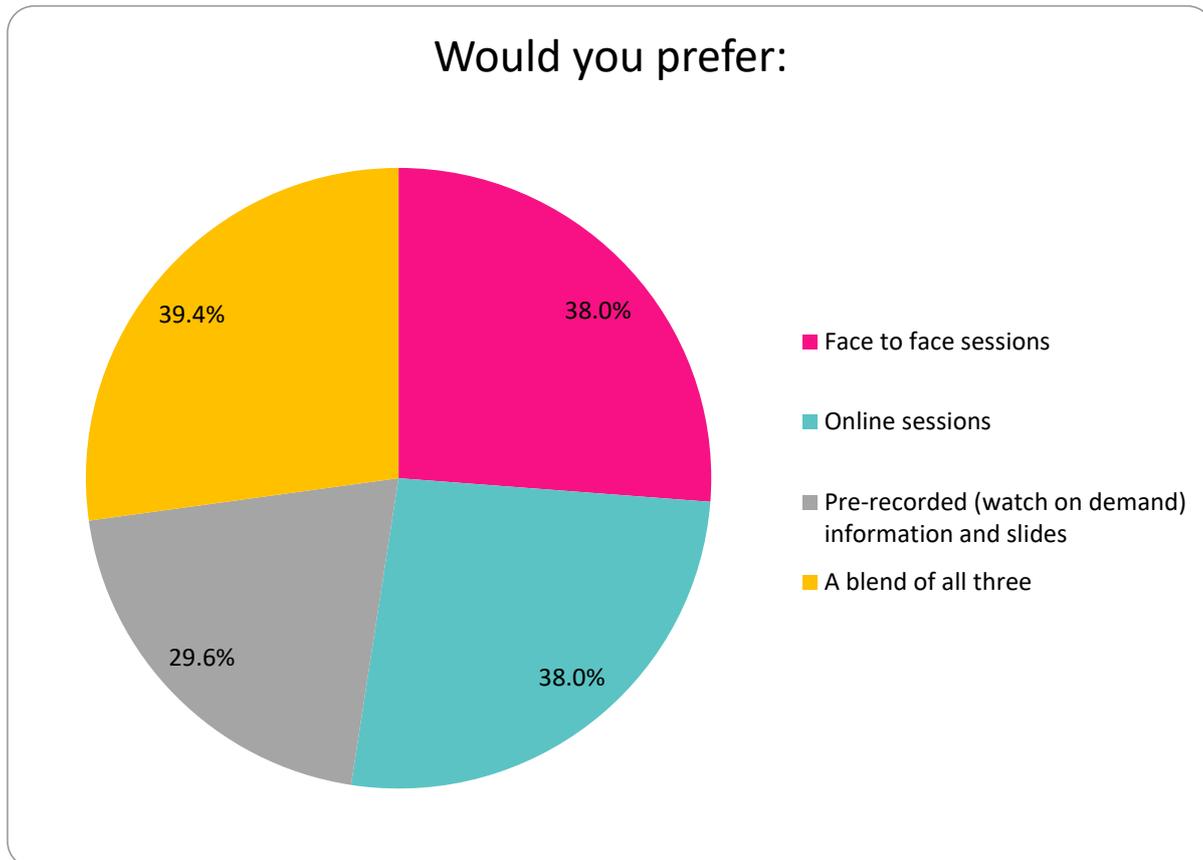
Q4: Would you prefer:

Face to face sessions

Online sessions

Pre-recorded (watch on demand) information and slides

A blend of all three

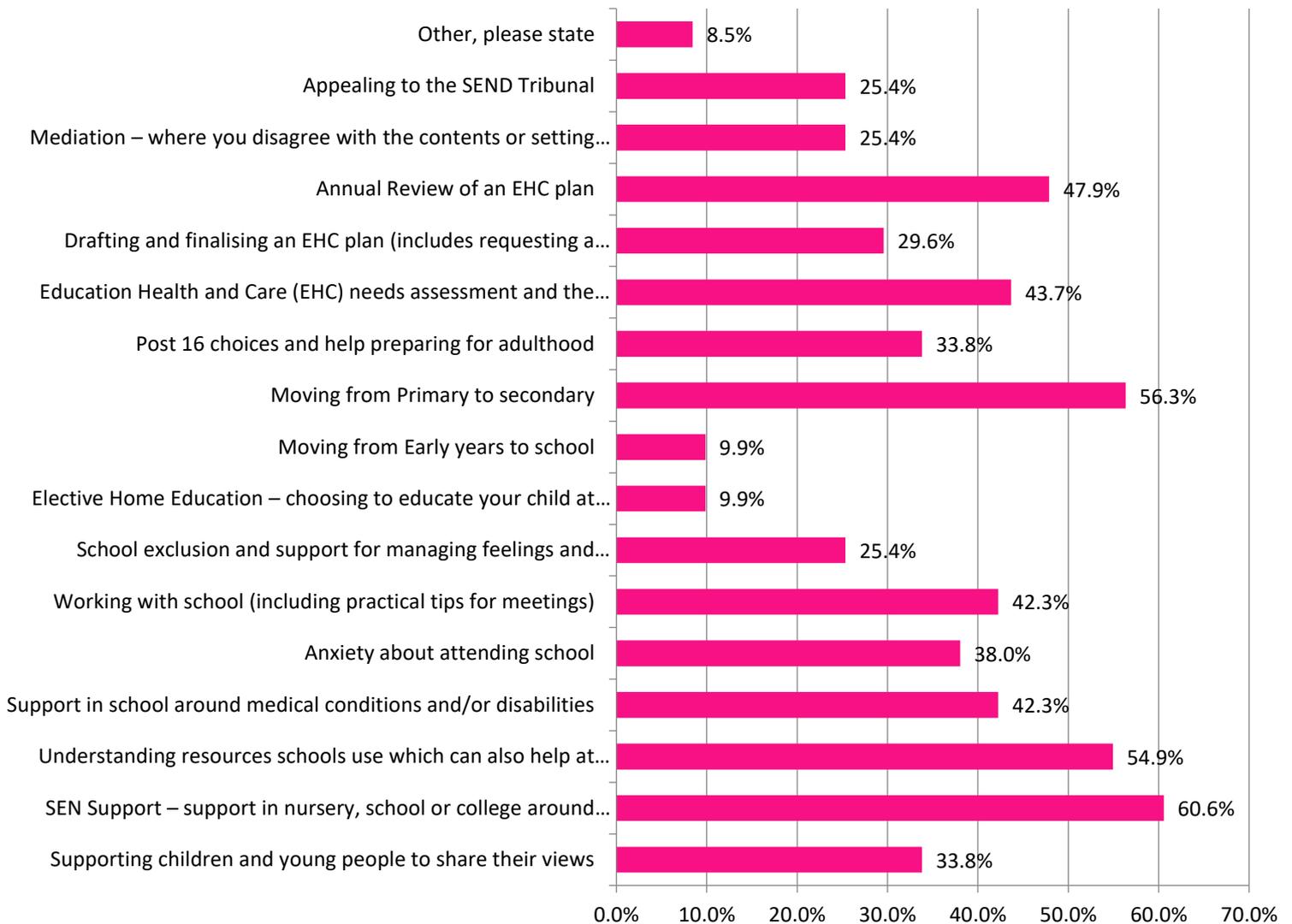


Multiple responses allowed for this question and combined percentages therefore exceed 100%.

A very even split here across all the options. Once guidelines permit, we aim to offer a blend of face-to-face and online sessions, supported by a range of full-length session recordings and videos which break the information down.

Q5: What are you most interested in? (Mark all that apply)

What are you most interested in? (Mark all that apply)

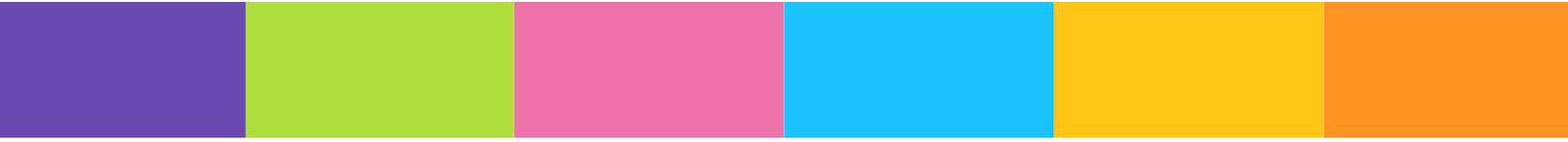


Multiple responses allowed for this question and combined percentages therefore exceed 100%.

Among the highest frequency of responses were sessions we already offer, such as SEN Support, EHC needs assessments and EHC plans and Annual Reviews of an EHC plan.

A high percentage of respondents would like us to offer something around moving from primary to secondary school. Led by your survey responses, we are offering some coproduction sessions with parents in July so that we can make sure the training we prepare covers your questions and concerns and helps you feel more prepared.

This survey also revealed significant appetite for 'understanding resources school use which can help at home'. We had informally gathered this view from families before COVID-19 and had therefore reached out pre-lockdown and begun to host sessions where specialist education services who support schools (to support pupils) deliver the content of sessions



exploring resources around specific needs, for example this term's Comic Strip Conversation session and the series of informal Language Games sessions.

We have agreed to host a future session explaining social stories and will continue to host the popular Language Games sessions while we explore working with other services, to build families' understanding of resources and approaches schools may use which can also help at home.

Q5b – suggestions offered by parents and carers who marked 'other'

1. Autism
2. ADHD
3. ASD and anxiety
4. Downs Syndrome

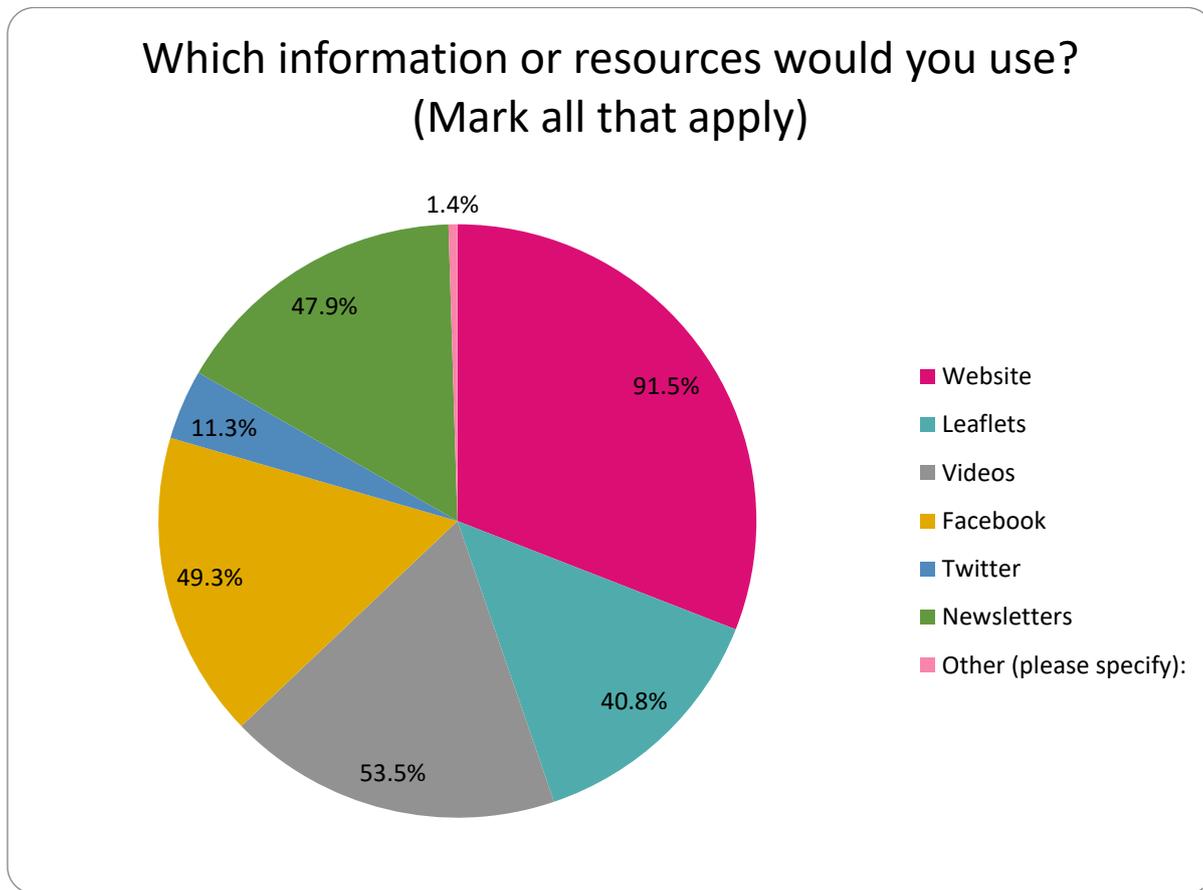
SENDIASS response: Our training is in SEND law – we are not experts on particular conditions. Section 2.8 of the SEND Code of Practice states that SENDIASS staff 'should work in partnership with children, young people, parents, local authorities, CCGs and **other relevant partners**' to bring you the information advice, advice and support you may need.

Your suggestions provide further support for us to continue to reach out to services, like Autism and ADHD, which have expertise in different conditions, to explore best ways we could work together to address the gap for families.

We may be able to commission a future session, as we did for the webinars we offered this summer term for young people with autism, through the Curly Hair Project. Or it may be helpful to host further sessions where the experts in that area of need present to families.

Alternatively, specialist services may prefer to work with us to produce a resource (web information, video) or we could encourage them to produce a resource which we can help share with families.

Q6: Which information or resources would you use? (Mark all that apply)



Multiple responses allowed for this question and combined percentages therefore exceed 100%.

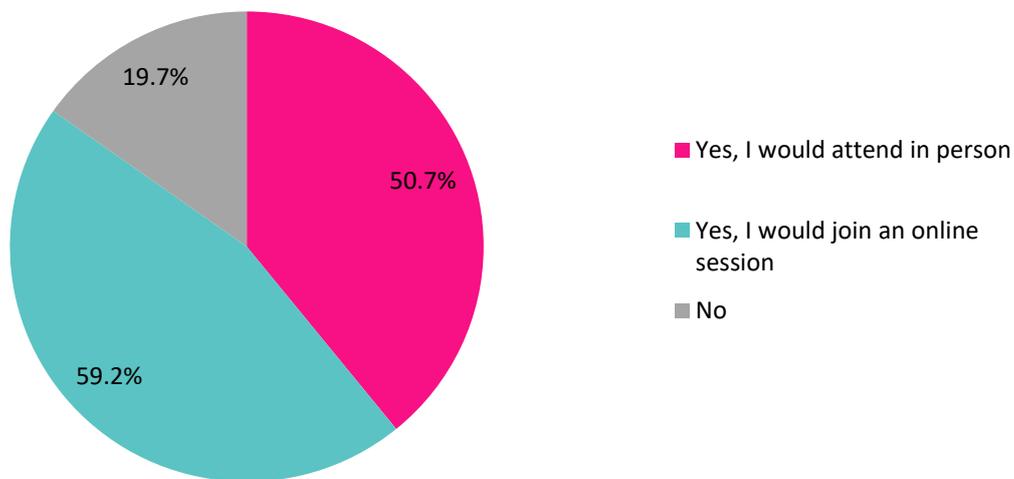
Unsurprisingly, the highest frequency response is 'website'. We realise how important a resource our website is and are working at the moment to move it to an improved platform. We gathered feedback from young people and parents/carers around its design and features - which have been shared with the developers, and we plan to launch our new site in August 2021.

Videos and newsletters, as we would again expect to see, feature high for families and these are continued areas of focus. This summer term we began trialling a regular fortnightly newsletter. Data suggests that a slightly less frequent letter might be more helpful from next term so we will trial monthly.

Over the summer we are updating and expanding our range of videos. These will include more full-length session recordings, and all will be time-stamped to help families access particular sections for processing and embedding information at own pace.

Q7: We give information and advice over the phone and by email or text to individuals. Would you attend a group 'advice clinic' as an alternative to 1:1?

We give information and advice over the phone and by email or text to individuals. Would you attend a group 'advice clinic' as an alternative to 1:1?

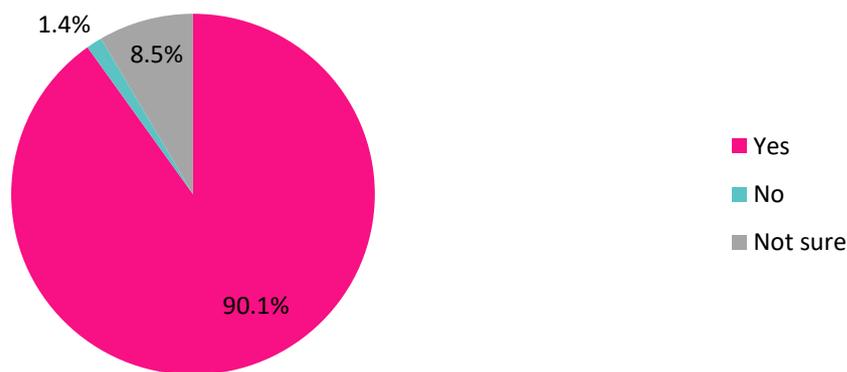


This is an area of development we have been considering. We know how much parents and carers gain from meeting one another and sharing ideas. We will be exploring this over the coming months and plan to run some trial events.

Finding an appropriate free venue with parking for face-to-face clinics will be a little trickier. This has always been a challenge for our previous face-to-face training sessions!

Q8: SENDIASS is an impartial service, which is 'arms-length' from the local authority. We provide unbiased information and advice about the local authority's policies and procedures and about the policy and practice in local schools and other settings. Do you understand what we mean by this?

SENDIASS is an impartial service, which is 'arms-length' from the local authority. We provide unbiased information and advice about the local authority's policies and procedures and about the policy and practice in local schools and other settings.

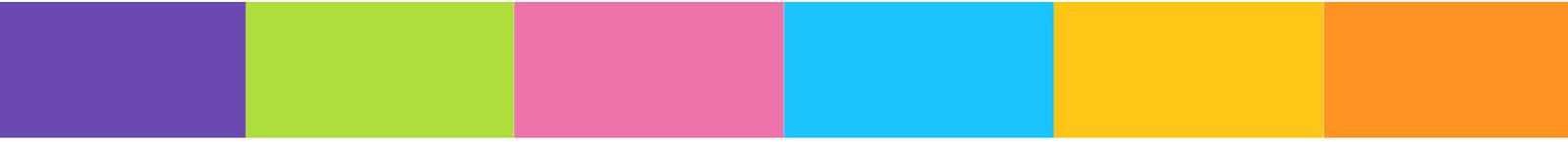


If you answered 'no' or 'not sure' please make any suggestions for how we could improve our information/leaflet:

'If SENDIAS work with the LA do they have a common agenda? Often it transpires that SENDIAS are not in fact unbiased but push the LA's agenda to parents.'

SENDIASS response: This comment is in complete contrast to those we consistently receive in our monthly service feedback from families who are accessing the service (which hovers around 100% satisfaction for our question about impartiality).

We encourage families to look at all perspectives and options and help them to express their own views and opinions about what they want to do next. In line with our remit, SENDIASS staff do not share an opinion when working with families or practitioners, nor do we campaign for a particular approach. We aim to empower families to make their own informed decisions.



We have not heard directly from any service-users that we have been unbiased in our approach when supporting them. We would encourage anyone who feels this way to get in touch so we can unpick this further with you. We keep clear confidential notes for our own purposes so, unless you contacted us anonymously, we can check back and respond to you individually.

'Think it needs to be clear it's a piggy in the middle service but has no authority or affiliation with schools/local authorities etc.'

SENDIASS response: Thank-you, we agree we need to improve our messaging and remove any misconceptions about our remit.

'How can the advice be impartial if you share offices with the send dept.'

SENDIASS response: Our team often worked from home before the pandemic. Emerging from the lifting of restrictions we have already begun to think about new ways of working for our team moving forward, including exploring alternative options than occupying main council buildings.

We don't have access to personal information held by Suffolk County Council and vice versa. Our database is for the SENDIASS service only and maintained separately. We operate 'arms-length', in line with statutory requirements and the national Minimum Standards.

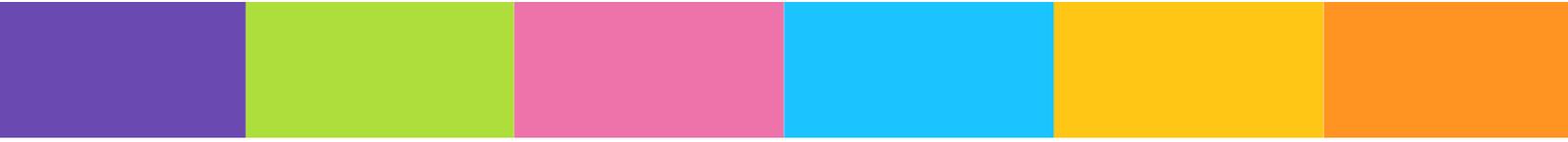
We are not influenced by anyone, nor have any personal or 'vested' interest in the outcome of any decision. Our staff understand the importance of remaining at 'arms-length' and we are confident this would never be compromised.

Q9: Do you have any other comments or suggestions?

'Accountability for wrongdoing is non existent in Suffolk Children's Services. What is SENDIASS doing about this.'

SENDIASS response: We cannot direct schools or the local authority, but we will highlight where a decision or process is unlawful. We are routinely sharing data, around the issues families talk to us about, with partners across education, health and care. We are working to refine our intelligence to be more meaningful (about the specific issues).

During 2020/21 we have provided input to work within the Suffolk SEND Strategy; we have highlighted areas for improvement and provided support where we can, for example,



where we might offer our views around family-friendly messages and information or with training. We are focusing on a proactive approach, aiming to reach families early and avoiding escalation of situations.

'No point.'

SENDIASS response: We are disappointed to hear this and would be happy to speak with anyone about their individual experience and concerns.

'Sendias is a good thing, highly appreciated and should be well supported!'

SENDIASS response: Thank-you for your encouraging comment!

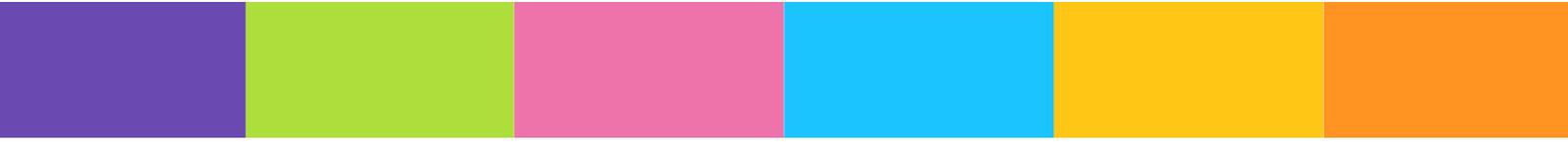
'Focus on holding the LA accountable to the send code of practice/disability discrimination law.'

SENDIASS response: Our team members receive accredited legal training and have secure knowledge of the Code of Practice and related legislation. We cannot direct schools or the local authority, though we will highlight where a decision or process is unlawful. We openly share what the law says with service-users and support them with the approach they would like to take - including with formal complaints and legal routes including SEND tribunals. You can see from our website, leaflets and videos that the law is a key part of our information offer (you will find many quotes from the statutory guidance the SEND Code of Practice).

'Such a shame you have moved away from being an impartial support to parents in meetings. Schools are very quick to gang up on parents when they've decided they don't want your child at their school anymore (had it happen from 2 different schools to us). Having an impartial 3rd person always stops them from being too rude. This is making the SEN school situation worse for families as the stress involved with an unsupportive school and county can become unbearable.'

SENDIASS response: We have not moved away from this at all. We continue to remain impartial, and we continue to offer support at meetings. We follow a set of National [Minimum Standards](#), which derive from the statutory remit of the service outlined in Chapter Two of the [SEND Code of Practice 2015](#).

Being impartial means that we don't seek to blame or side with a particular view. When we support families, whether it's by phone, email or at a meeting, we aim to build confidence



by providing information about the law, local process and options for taking forward questions and concerns. Our remit is to empower families and decisions about meeting support will vary depending on the needs. In the academic year from September 2020 to date, we have supported families at **311** meetings.

‘Sendiass continues to be viewed as NOT at arms length from the LA due to the variation in advice from the service. This distrust is something to work on.’

SENDIASS response: Thank-you for sharing this with us. We know from our monthly service feedback survey that people who access us consistently view us as impartial. However, we acknowledge that we need to work to break down barriers and build trust with those who are choosing **not** to access the service and may not view us as ‘arms-length’.

Before this survey, our development plans already included a drive to work to remove any misconceptions or barriers to access - we will be reaching out to families, services and providers to understand how we might build trust or better explain our impartiality. This is a key item to discuss at our next Advisory Body meeting.

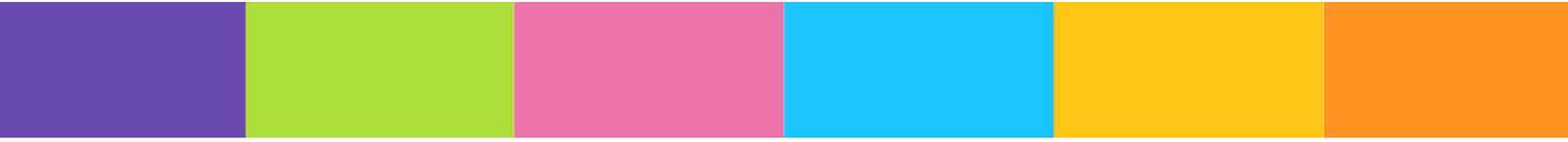
In response to the suggestion there is ‘variation’ in the advice, we wonder whether this is due to the way the service tailors its responses to meet the needs of families. Alongside the factual information we provide about law and local processes, the advice and support we give takes into account the views of the service-user (what they want and how they want to take things forward) and what level of support they may need to do this. Part of our statutory remit is to provide information, advice and support which **empowers** children, young people and their parents/carers to **express their views**.

We follow a national framework for determining level of support - which is explained further within the: [‘IASS national network Intervention levels’](#) The national body also have a useful definition explaining advocacy within our remit: [IASS Definition of Advocacy](#)

‘Why is your training not about the law and is more about how to support? Surely this isn't your remit?’

SENDIASS response: All of our SENDIASS information sessions and all of our 35 PowerPoint training videos and further 18 appeal videos are entirely based on, and refer frequently to, SEND law. We begin training sessions and our longer videos by sharing what statutory guidance we refer to and we give frequent exact references to SEND law or statutory guidance throughout all our information sessions and videos. Our short video explaining the [Process of SEN Support](#) offers an example of this.

Over the years in training and in our casework support, parents have fed back that they wanted help in knowing **how best to use the information about the law**, in order to get the



best outcome for their child or young person. Many parents ask for support so that they can work positively with schools whilst still ensuring that their child's rights and needs are respected. It is not uncommon for parents to say that they want to be able to refer to the law and support their child's rights in a non-combative way.

When parents ask for support in challenging schools or the local authority, we always explore all their options with them, so that they can choose which will be the most appropriate way forward. If for example, they would like help in appealing to the SEND Tribunal we will help them with this. If they would prefer support to seek informal resolution, we can help with this too.

Part of our statutory duty is to work in partnership with families, schools and the local authority. This also fits with the research which demonstrates that children and young people make the best progress when families, schools and the local authority are working together.

Alongside our information sessions, we offer a skills-based session called Making Meetings Matter (to be renamed Working with Schools). This begins with reference to law but is focussed on exploring practical solution-focussed strategies. This was initially developed at the request of families and this survey again reflects parent/carer desire for this different kind of training.

'Really helpful understand and I have more ideas to do with my child.'

'SENDIASS response: Thank-you for your encouraging comment.

Thank-you to everyone who took the time to complete this survey. Your views will feed into our information and training development plans.