

Suffolk SENDIASS Annual Report

September 2020 to August 2021

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	7
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)	16
5.6a Referrals	16
5.6b Contacts	21
5.6c Outcomes	23
6. Service-user feedback	25
6.1 Online feedback survey	25
6.2 SENDIASS Training Evaluation	27
7. Other development and activities	31
8. Professional development	33
9. Conclusion	34
10 Jargon-huster and useful links	36

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 <u>Minimum Standards</u> for services providing impartial information, advice and support relating to Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND). The Minimum Standards are developed by the <u>Information</u>, Advice and <u>Support Services Network</u>

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 Level 3, which is accredited training. 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 by the local authority with additional contribution from two of the three Clinical Commissioning Group's (CCG) in Suffolk. It is hoped that continued conversations will result in the service securing funding from the remaining CCG in the next reporting period.

The service is also keen to explore resourcing additional capacity to enable it to expand the offer for young people as they move into adulthood.

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)

The service has initiated an 'Advisory Body' in this reporting period. The group, which includes parents and representatives across education, health and social care, has met virtually three times.

The group discuss and share views about service development, review feedback and monitor overall performance of the service.

4. Resourcing and capacity

For the period September 2020 to August 2021, the team of was made up of:

Service Lead – 1 FTE (long-term absence, the role was covered by our Information Officer who was then made permanent in the lead role during this reporting period)

Information Officer – 0.7 FTE (for the duration of this reporting period was 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). From June 2021 made permanent in the role of Community Engagement Worker (funded entirely by health commissioners).

For the majority of the period, 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 the service manage increasing demand.

In addition, the team rely on Business Support colleagues from the Engagement hub, within Quality, Engagement and Professional Services.

Looking ahead

The service has a permanent lead now in place and is looking forward to recruiting to existing vacancies in the next reporting period. Fully staffed, the service will be able to focus once again on information development. Despite reduced capacity, the service has procured and launched a new website platform. This was a significant piece of work, and the next phase will be to focus on the section for young people.

Since we anticipated that the funding from the national project IASP would significantly reduce for the next period, 2021/22, we had already approached our commissioners and secured additional funding to enable us to continue existing projects to widen the reach of our service within communities.

We ran a survey in the spring term to find out from service-users what information and training they would like us to focus on and was a helpful check-in about feelings around appetite for face-to-face sessions as we emerge from the pandemic. <u>View the survey results and our responses</u>.

In survey responses, we had some comments which challenged our impartiality and arms-length position. From looking at the responses it seems many of these comments were made by parents who were choosing not to use our service, so we need to consider what the barriers are and work to break these down.

These are in complete contrast to the responses we consistently receive in our main service satisfaction survey (again evidenced in this annual report) which includes a question about how impartial we were - from those who do use the service.

Our development plans already include 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.

We will explore other options for building occupation, though our team in the main have worked remotely even prior to COVID and occupying office space is not considered essential to the delivery of the service.

The results of the survey, including questions and concerns raised about the impartial arms-length nature of our service, will be discussed at our next Advisory body meeting due to take place in November 2021.

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

Coproduction continues to be 'at the heart of what we do'. We value the input from people who have lived experiences of support needs and/or services, and welcome families to become equal partners in the creation and development of our service.

You can read more about projects we are working on in our Service Development Plan. 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 2020 to 31st August 2021:

Number of referrals (requests for information, advice and support)	2,466
Number of service-users accessing (number of children, young people, parents, carers and practitioners directly accessing the service)	1,720
Number of service-users 'new to service'	973
Number of contacts (number of individual contacts made as part of a referral)	9,295
Number of training registrants	1,571
Website page views	107,850
Facebook reach	110,275
Twitter impressions	47,565
YouTube channel views	10,903

5.1 COVID-19 service response

The service has continued to provide its information, advice and support by telephone, email, text and virtually. This includes support at meetings, including annual reviews of EHC plans and SEND Tribunals being held remotely.

We mentioned in our last annual report some families require 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 that we support families with.

Our training offer was further adapted and developed to offer all sessions virtually in this reporting period, to make sure the IAS needs of SEND children, young people and their parents and carers continue to be met whilst restrictions remained in place.

We need to think about our ways of working moving forward. The 'virtual' world has meant that we have been able to support more families, due to time saved with not travelling to and from meetings. We have been able to work more flexibly, with staff from any location being able to join a meeting remotely – previously it was very difficult to co-ordinate, and we inevitably had to decline meeting support on some occasions.

Virtual training delivery has meant we have been able to offer more information sessions, and collaborate with a variety of services to deliver more varied training. This has enabled us to reach almost double the number of families and practitioners we reached last year, as demonstrated by this year's registration figures. (see section 5.5 for detail)

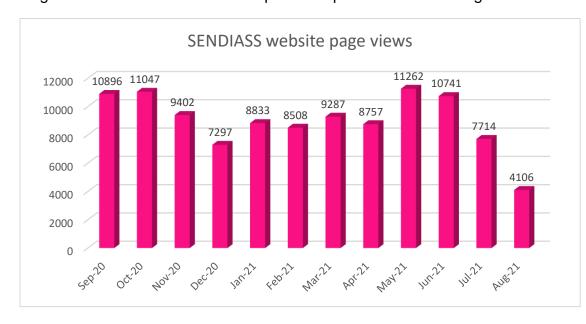
We have also been able to reach more practitioners and families through virtual presentations, to raise awareness of our SENDIAS service and the way we work and to encourage positive and solution-focussed partnership working between families, schools and the local authority. (See chapter 5.5)

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 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 2020 to August 2021:



Total page views this reporting period: **107,850** (an increase of 14% on the previous year)

Average monthly page views: **8,987**

August always sees fewer than average views.

The service regularly reviews 'most viewed' pages to inform its information and training development. The sections which remained our most viewed throughout this reporting period were EHC needs assessments and plans; Choosing a school; SEN Support.

The service has secured a replacement website platform within this reporting period which has improved navigation and accessibility. When our vacant post is filled, we will be able to once again focus on developing information, in particular our section for young people.

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.

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.

When our vacant post is filled, we will be able to once again focus on developing information – which may include additional/updated leaflets.

E-newsletter

Service-users can sign up to receive news from us and we currently have an audience of around 1,500 subscribers. Pre-COVID, our e-newsletters were sent out termly with articles of information and advice which followed the academic calendar. We have been trialling sending these more frequently so we can promote our sessions in a timely manner.

Engagement has improved and the 'open rate' is now around 40% (up from 30% last year) for our regular newsletters, and on average around 60% 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"	1,570
New page likes this period	222
Total of users who engaged with the page this period	4,366
Total reach this period (number of people who had any content from your Page or about your Page enter their screen)	110,275

Post data

Number of posts in the period	610
Lifetime reach for all posts posted in the period (number of people who had your Page's post enter their screen)	163,529
Lifetime "likes" for all posts posted in the period	104,182

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.

"Tweat improceione" for pariod	46,565
"Tweet impressions" for period	40,303
· ·	

YouTube

The service has a range of video resources uploaded to our <u>SENDIASS YouTube channel</u>, many of which are embedded across the information pages of our website. The team regularly signposts service-users to our information videos. The majority of the videos support our training, giving attendees the opportunity to revisit manageable chunks at their own pace and with family members. They are routinely sent out to families after training, and some are sent out before a training session.

Videos developed during this reporting period included webinar length recordings of popular online sessions:

- SEN Support Animated video for young people_Created by our colleagues in Norfolk, this short 3-minute video explains how SEND children and young people get help in education settings, including who to talk to.
- SEN support for pupils with specific learning difficulties
- SEN support for pupils with speech, language and communication needs
- SEN support for pupils with coordination difficulties
- SEN support for pupils with sensory processing needs
- Preparing for the transition to primary school

We also developed a video explaining the Process of SEN support which went on to gain 1.1K views. This has just been updated.

At the end of this reporting period, we began updating the majority of our videos to include new information about the restructured specialist education services and to make them more accessible.

This year has seen 'channel views' **double** when compared to the previous annual report. Our most viewed videos include EHC plans, Annual Reviews and SEN Support. Also gaining a high number, our videos which explain how to complete the SEND Tribunal forms.

'Channel views' for period	10,903
'Impressions'	91,700

5.5 Training (information sessions and workshops)

Throughout this academic year it wasn't possible to offer face to face training sessions due to lockdown or ongoing Covid restrictions. We adapted our existing popular information sessions for virtual delivery and extended our range of offer through collaboration with other services (see below). Our virtual sessions have continued to be very well received.

Practitioners in particular have expressed a desire for ongoing virtual delivery when Covid is less of a threat. Regarding parents and carers, we have been concerned that those having difficulty accessing technology would miss out on training opportunities.

We ran a survey in June 2021 which showed that in the future, a majority of families would like a blend of virtual and face-to-face sessions, supported by video resources. <u>View the survey results and our responses.</u> We continue to follow advice and measures around contact and it may not be possible to offer face-to-face sessions until the spring of 2022.

During this academic year, the highest proportion of calls to our service concern EHC processes so we continued to offer our EHC Needs Assessment and Annual Reviews webinars each term. We had previously delivered these via the webinar platform ON24; this year we adapted our webinars to offer a more interactive experience for attendees which has been well received.

We opened these webinars to families and multi-agency 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.

Collaboration with other services

Part of our statutory remit is to work in partnership with not only children, young people and their parents but also local authorities, CCGs and other relevant partners (SEND Code of Practice 2.8). In this reporting period, we developed a positive working relationship with the Headteacher and individual leads of Suffolk's Specialist Education Services (SES), the Psychology and Therapeutic services, the Early Years and Childcare team and health practitioners. Together we explored online possibilities for reaching more families, and supporting them to better understand SEN support and the services which can offer schools support and advice. This resulted in practitioners from SES and health supporting nine online SENDIASS sessions (principally explaining SEN support in schools) and further collaboration on a series of online sessions hosted by SENDIASS where other services presented the content (e.g., a series of online coffee mornings exploring language games to play at home, presented by the specialist education service for pupils with speech, language and communication needs.)

We continued to support the local authority each term to deliver online training to multi-agency practitioners to support them to write quality advice as part of Education, Health and Care needs assessments and as part of the Annual Review process.

Services partnering with us have said that they appreciated the impartial stance our service can bring to the sessions and the reach that our service has developed in the SEND community.

This collaboration has been received very positively by both families and practitioners.

We also reached out to ConnectEd, one of Suffolk's main training providers for school staff, to extend our reach to practitioners to encourage solution focussed partnership with families. We agreed to adapt and deliver our popular 'Working with Parents' session as two linked online sessions in the summer of 2021, to a mix of educational staff. The sessions explored practical, and solution focussed approaches for positive engagement, communication and partnership working with parents. Feedback was very positive, and we have agreed to deliver further sessions in the autumn term of 2021.

Our recent <u>Information and training survey</u> showed a strong interest from parents and carers in sessions focussing on Autism, Autism and anxiety and also on ADHD. We therefore reached out to the social enterprise <u>Autism and ADHD</u>. The organisation's founder Dr Annie Clements has kindly agreed to deliver two sessions in the autumn term, exploring practical strategies for families, to help them support their child or young person with Autism or ADHD. We will host these sessions, while Dr Clements will deliver the presentation.

Young person webinars

We have wanted to offer some training for young people with SEND for some time. We have more calls from parents and carers of children with Autism than any other type of need, so in the summer of 2021 we commissioned the Curly Hair Project to deliver three webinars for young people with autism and their parents: Managing Anxiety as an Autistic Person, Understanding Emotions as an Autistic Person and How to make and keep friends.

Numbers for the live session were capped at 18 so as not to overwhelm young people taking part. However, we were able to offer a link to a recording of the live session which was good for 7 days and this proved really popular. In total, 216 families received a webinar recording. See chapter 6 for the positive feedback received.

Transition

When it comes to training, we aim to coproduce any new sessions. At the start of this academic year, we had received more calls from parents of children in early years settings. We wanted to develop the information we offer, to help families prepare for the transition from early years settings to school and we wanted them to drive the content and format. We therefore promoted a short online survey What you want to know about transition to school short survey, and we offered two informal drop-in online sessions to gather the views and questions of parents and carers. In the spring term, we trialled an online session based on the questions, views and suggestions gathered. This received very positive feedback, so this session has now been added to our virtual training offer.

Our recent <u>Information and training survey</u> showed significant interest in a new information session about the transition from primary to secondary school. To start the process of coproducing this, we offered two virtual sessions in the summer of 2021, to gather the views and questions of parents and carers and find out what would help build their understanding and confidence in a session.

A lot of clear and helpful information and ideas were shared and captured on online whiteboards - see capture from the second session here. We then sent families a summary of family views and our actions so that connections to what they requested and what we proposed creating were clear.

In the next stage of coproduction, we created and sent a draft set of slides for an information session to everyone who booked on the 'gathering views' sessions, to seek further feedback and to an additional group of parents and carers. Following this further feedback, we will be trialling an information session in the autumn term of 2021.

Information sessions delivered in the reporting period:

An asterisk denotes the sessions prepared and delivered by SENDIASS with some additional live support from a specialist practitioner.

Parent and practitioner training session registrants	No. of registrants	
What is Elective Home Education 2 x sessions	32	
EHC Needs Assessment webinar (inc practitioners)	195	
Annual Review process webinar (inc practitioners)	139	
Drafting and finalising an EHC plan	33	
SEN Support for pupils with specific learning difficulties*	50	
SEN Support for pupils with C&I, SEMH needs*	46	
SEN Support for Pupils with Speech, Language & Communication Needs*	60	
SEN Support for Pupils with Coordination Difficulties*	31	
SEN Support for Pupils with Sensory Processing Needs*	67	
SEN Support for Pupils with Hearing Loss*	1	
SEN Support for Pupils with Vision Impairment*	1	
Making Meetings Matter	14	
Early Years to School Transition*	42	
2 x Gathering Views around transition from primary to secondary school (1st stage coproduction)	25	
Sessions for parents/carers hosted by SENDIASS with presentations from Specialist Education Services		
Language Games to Play at Home - input from SLCN team (x 10 sessions)	109	
Supporting Children and Young People's Wellbeing for their Return to School - input from P&T & SES services	104	
x 4 sessions		
Comic Strip Awareness session - input from CISS	21	

Specialist Education Services from September 2021 - input SES leads (x 2 sessions)	102
Webinars for young people with autism commissioned by SENDIASS & de Curly Hair Project	livered by The
Understanding and managing anxiety	61
Recognising emotions as an autistic child	61
How to make and keep friends	94
Training for practitioners only	
Named SEND Governor Training	98
Working with Parents – primary school session	24
Working with Parents – SENCOs, 2 x sessions	34
Working with Parents – New-to-SENCO session	15
Working with Parents –ConnectEd 2 x sessions	52
Engaging & Working with Parents – for CISS team	34
Working with Families for Home-Start staff and volunteers	26
Total registrants	1,571

Since the end of January, we have been experimenting with using the tool <u>Mural</u> as an online whiteboard during sessions and for immediate visual feedback capture. The response from parents and practitioners has been very encouraging.

Feedback about our training is included in chapter 6.

Presentations

Virtual meetings have enabled us to reach more practitioners and families through virtual presentations, to raise awareness of our SENDIAS service and the way we work and to encourage positive and solution-focussed partnership working between families, schools and the local authority.

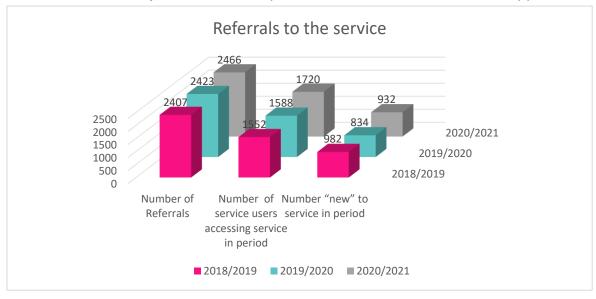
We were invited to present at the following online meetings:

- SENCo forum 99 SENCos were in attendance when we presented 'Just a quick note to say thank you so much for your support to the SENCOs and to us in helping us with the forum yesterday. The feedback has been really positive, and your contribution valued.' (Inclusion Consultant and Lead Officer of the Alternative Tuition Service)
 - 'It is so good to work together and we are all grateful for your support. Clearly the work of you and the team is highly valued by schools too. Thank you for joining us.' (Headteacher for Specialist Education Services)
- Early Years SENCos (as part of their NASENCo training)
- 4 x Stepping Stones sessions (Triple P parenting course for parents of children with additional needs)
- Activities Unlimited team
- Suffolk Teaching Assistant network

We were asked to deliver some more bespoke presentation sessions to services, focussing on the needs of their team members, to the former County Inclusion Support Service and also to HomeStart volunteers, to explain our service, use examples to demonstrate the way we work and explore some solution focussed approaches. Feedback to these bespoke sessions was very positive.

5.6 Helpline and ongoing support (individual IAS provided) 5.6a Referrals

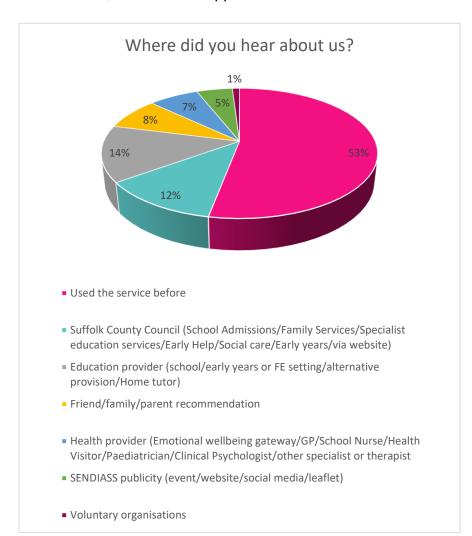
A referral is the way we record a request for information, advice and support.



These data include the previous two reporting years for comparison purposes. An increase from the previous year can be seen in all categories.

'Where did you hear about us?'

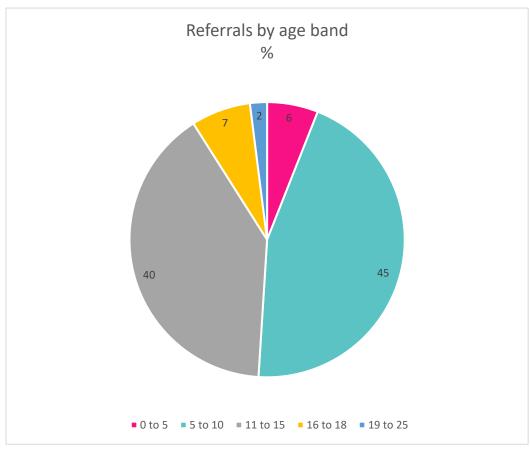
SENDIASS is a self-referral service, and we capture where the service-user heard about us. The data shows we have a **high percentage of 'returners' (53%)** clearly indicating that the information, advice and support we offer is valued. The chart shows the % split:



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

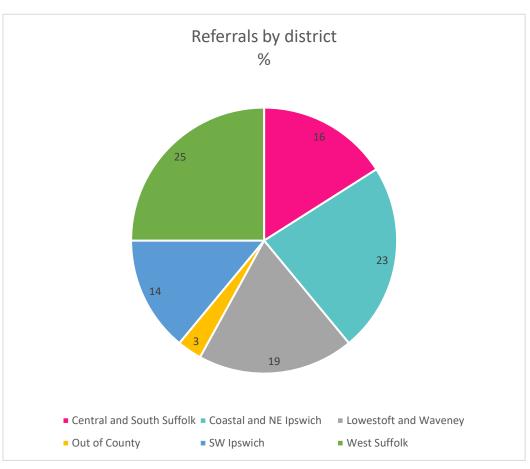
Regularly the service receives comments, from parents and carers particularly, that they wish they had learned about the service earlier.

The service continues to work with the community and partners to explore further ways to reach families.



% Referrals by age band:

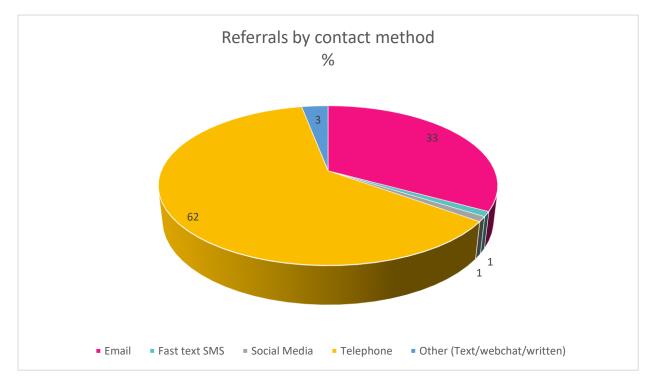
The split across age ranges is very similar to previous years, with the majority of the children and young people we provide information, advice and support for being across the compulsory school-age years.



% Referrals by district:

The chart shows the service is reaching the whole of Suffolk.
Lowestoft and Waveney, Coastal and North East Ipswich, and West Suffolk see the highest frequency of enquiries.

Number of referrals by contact method



Calling our helpline remains the highest frequency method of initial contact (at 62%). The trend of reduced overall percentage contacting us by phone in favour of email has continued.

The number of service-users choosing to access the service by email have increased this reporting period to 33% (26% in 2019/20).

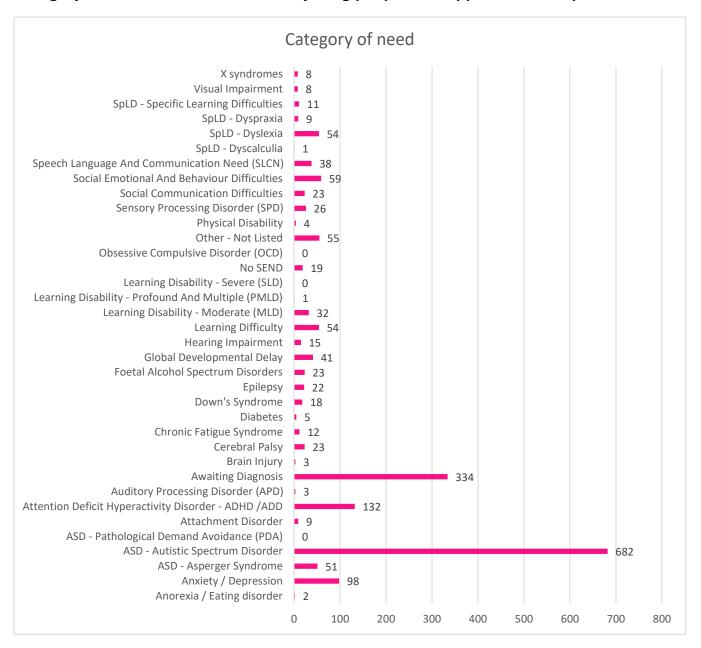
Ethnic origin

Ethnic origin recorded by the service	%
White – British	89%
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	2%
Asian or Asian British - Any other Asian Background	1%
Mixed White and Black African	1%
Prefer not to say	1%

Of the data collected, 89% of service-users in the period identified as White – British. The data appears to be reflective of the population in Suffolk.

The service is exploring how it can reach and reduce barriers to access for families, such as where English is an Additional Language.

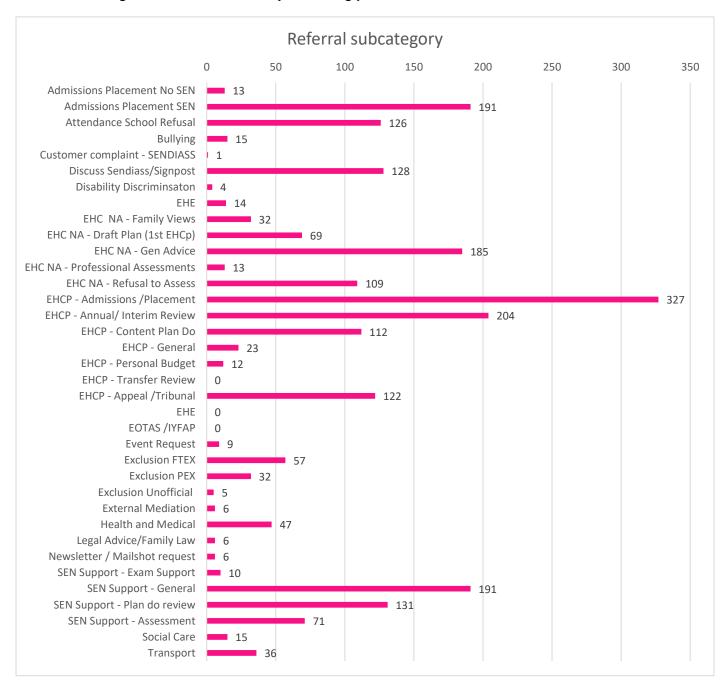
Category of need for the children and young people we supported in this period:



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 a continued increase for in the 'awaiting diagnosis' category. The increase in 'awaiting diagnosis' could be related to the pandemic, where parents may have delayed in seeking a referral or where assessments were postponed.

Referral sub-category (theme of enquiries)

The team categorises each referral by selecting just one theme:



Our capture of the referral categories for this reporting period continue to show a high number of enquiries about admissions, naming a school in an EHC plan and appealing to the SEND Tribunal about the school (or that no school) named in the plan.

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.

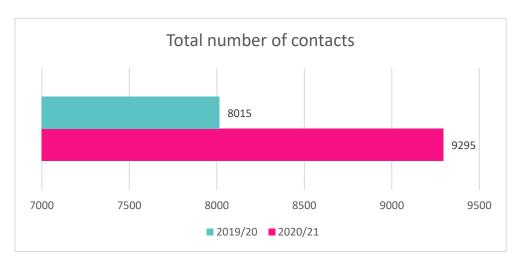
An example of this might be where a parent contacts the service for information about EHC needs assessments and plans and we categorise as such. However, a significant part of these conversations will include health assessments or provision (such as those provided by an Occupational or Physiotherapist, 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 enhanced our data recording during the summer break in 2021, so that we can provide more specific data for the next reporting period. This will enable us refine data reports regarding appeals, help us to plan casework on specific issues and provide meaningful intelligence to partners.

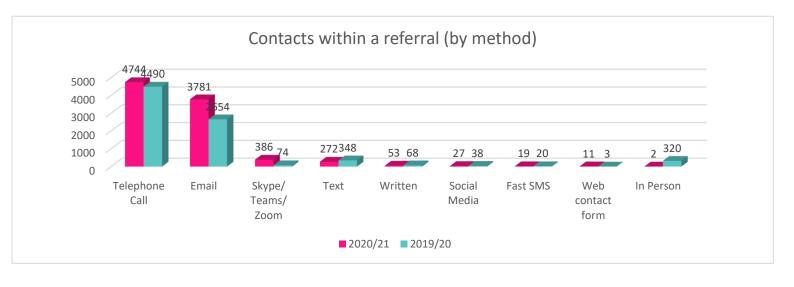
5.6b Contacts

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

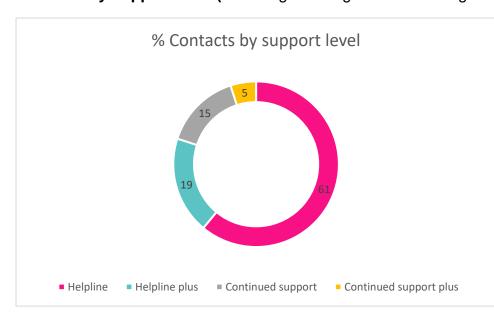


The total number of contacts is up from the previous reporting period. This is due to the continued high number of appeals and increased complexity of issues that the service is supporting families with – all of which require multiple contacts.

Also evident is the continued increase with information, advice and 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 huge reduction for 'in person' contacts with a corresponding increase to providing our support virtually:



Contacts by support level (the categories align with national guidance for IAS services):



These data show the spread of contacts across the categories we use to describe the 'level of support' provided.

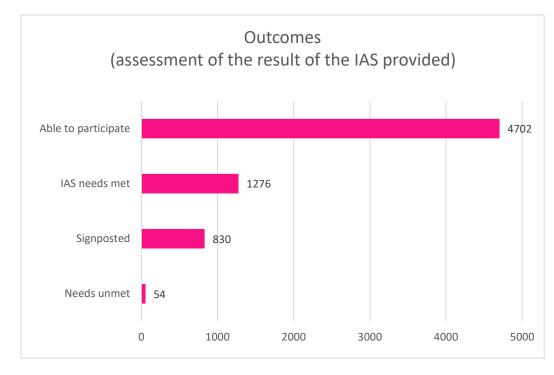
Time spent supporting families increases with each support level. Level 4, for example, we use to categorise tribunal casework. On average we spend 19 minutes per contact for level 1, rising to 26 minutes for level 4 contacts.

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

Level 1	Helpline	Phone/ email/ webchat/ Skype or In Person support – tailored to the circumstances of service user who was a 'Student' 'Parent' or 'Professional' At the end of the intervention there were no actions remaining open <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 attended 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 exclusion appeal 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

5.6c Outcomes

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



Outcomes can be recorded per contact. and 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 unanswered calls or where a meeting or appointment was made but was no longer required.

Some comments received this reporting period about the impact of our information, advice and support:

'Your service is so useful, having that impartial voice where I can ask questions'

'Thank you so much. It's so reassuring to have someone independent have a look through so I can be reassured'

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

'You've spoken some real common sense and I wish I had spoken to you earlier'

'You are fantastic. I've had a wobble and now feel ready to start again'

'That's been so helpful, you've made me think about it in a different way'

'Thank you, you have made my head a lot clearer. I know what to do next.'

'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, as after diagnosis everyone else just leaves you to get on with it'

'Thank you that was fabulous, you've answered all my questions'

'Thank you it's all so much clearer than before I got on the phone to you'

'We couldn't have done it without your support with preparation and coaching, well, you know how grateful we are'

'Thank you for your input the day before that helped no end, and just you being there gave me confidence. Thanks again.'

'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.'

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

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

'Thank you, you've gone through that bit by bit so I understand now'

'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'

'Thank you so much for your help. You know so much, sendiass is such a valuable resource, I don't know where I would be without you.'

'Thank you, I really appreciate your help to write what I want to say clearly'

'Thank you, having you in the background (on zoom) gave me confidence to say what I wanted. And I felt really prepared to get my point across as I had read all the info you signposted to. I was really proud of myself'

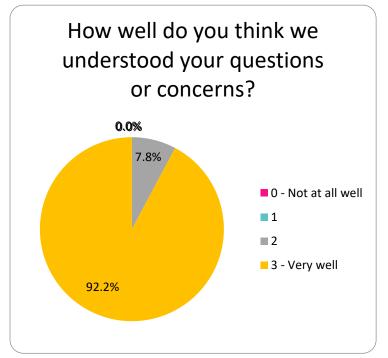
'You're the first person who has explained the situation clearly to me so I understand where I am and what my options are. Thank you'

'Thank you so much for your advice. I received this letter and I didn't really know what it entailed but after speaking to you, I know much more about what it is about and what to expect next.'

6. Service-user feedback

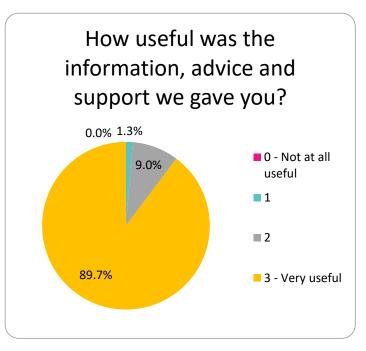
6.1 Online feedback survey

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:

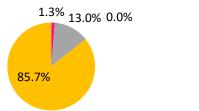


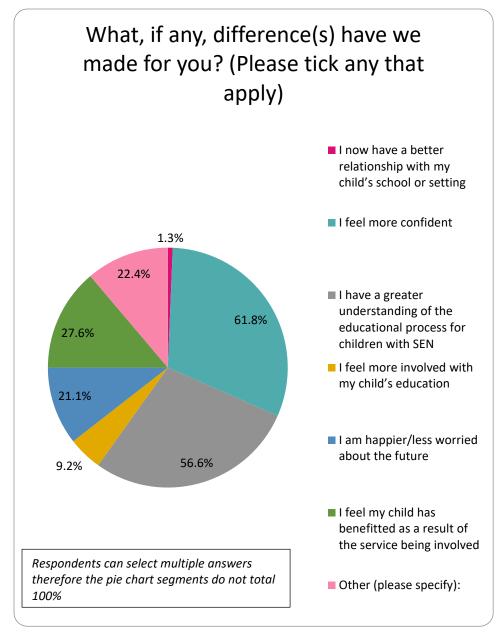
Pleasing to see that our service is viewed as being **impartial** by those accessing, at **98.7%** overall - as shown in the chart below. The percentage of people giving us the highest rating '**very impartial**' increased to **85.7%** (from 75.9% in the previous reporting period)

The chart on the left shows **92.2%** giving the highest rating when asked if 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 impartial do you think we were? (By impartial we mean we will give you unbiased information about what the law says and local policies. We will discuss options with you, we do not take sides)





Sample of 'other' comments received this reporting period:

'I previously had no idea just how significant the EHCP is, and I now feel informed as to what is needed in order to obtain suitable provision for my child.'

'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.'

'Feel more confident around EHCP process and expectations.'

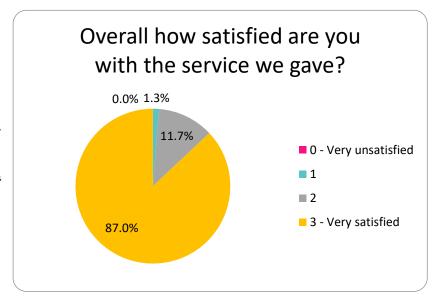
The chart shows a high overall satisfaction level for the service at 98.7%

We also ask how we might improve our service and some suggestions include:

'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'.

Most comments were from people saying no improvement necessary, for example: 'The help I've had has been amazing, I couldn't have asked for anything better.'



6.2 Training evaluation

After each virtual session, registrants are sent a link to an online evaluation. Despite email reminders, less than 2% of registrants filled in the evaluation in the last academic year. We therefore felt that producing pie-charts from such limited data was not meaningful.

However, parents, carers and practitioners have readily offered direct feedback in the Teams 'chat' during and at the end of all the online sessions.

This feedback has been overwhelmingly and consistently positive and we've been able to capture responses, in line with questions we ask in our evaluations.

Impact of our sessions on attendee overall understanding, confidence, and ability to participate going forwards:

It has given me the confidence to have more of a voice moving forward when undertaking the next annual review. (Parent)

Thank you for this session. It helped me understand what to expect from the school and what I can do and be more confident in working with the school. (Parent)

Very informative – we know what to do now. (Parent)

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

This has been excellent, I had no idea there was so much information out there, my child has been given an EHCP ready for school but now I know there are many other resources available. (Parent)

Thank you for today – it was good to gain an insight into the thought processes behind whole school and whole class approaches. As parents we can often get anxious about getting direct help for our children. My son hates to stand out as different, so it's helped to understand more about whole school adjustments. (Parent)

Very useful. I feel empowered to support my child to improve communication. Thank you. (Parent)

Thanks - very informative and useful for myself to now discuss a plan with the school SENCo (Parent)

Very helpful. Will use with my CAF worker, school, and draw and talks with my kids. Thanks! (Parent)

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

Very helpful, and I now feel more prepared for the (EHC) process. (Parent)

Thank you all so much, this has been incredibly helpful and supportive (Parent)

This has increased my learning and confidence as a relatively new governor. (School governor)

Presenting information in a way which is clear and easy to understand, using meaningful examples:

Thank you it has been very informative and so clearly put across! (Parent)

Thanks so much for the session – accessible and clear (Parent)

I have been to a few similar sessions (delivered by other services), and this has by far been the best. Very clear and just brilliant. Thank you. (Parent)

Good explanations and then questions to ensure we understood what was being said (Parent) Thank you for such clear and informative training on such complex issues (School Governor)

The webinar proved to be very clear in all aspects of the EHC process (Practitioner)

Great presentation – concise and informative (Practitioner)

So impressed how professional and engaging those who were talking were and how easy it was to ask questions and not feel silly. (Parent)

Great that it was interactive and that specific examples were given when trying to explain things (Parent)

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

A very helpful session - lots of guidance and good examples- thank you (School governor)

Lots of important information and good answering all questions with examples (Parent)

Sending attendees helpful resources and links in post-session emails:

Useful workshop, plenty of information, and fantastic email with lots of useful information. (Practitioner)

The resources you will send look amazing and will be very helpful to me personally and professionally. You provide an excellent service and have helped me on many occasions. (Parent and practitioner)

Thank you so much. It has been so beneficial. Having the resources to look through in my own time is fabulous. Also, to have resources aimed at young people as well as adults is great too. (Parent)

Really clear and concise, fantastic to have the resource material. Thank you. (Parent)

Thank you so much for this session. It has been really helpful. Thanks for the slides so I can talk my hubby through it all as well. (Parent)

Fostering positive partnership between families, schools, and the local authority and focussing on solution focussed approaches:

Really helpful, especially the importance of being prepared and being clear about what you want to gain from a meeting. I wouldn't previously have thought of asking the school about their experience and how my child presents in school. I would have assumed they see the same things as me. I am grateful for the knowledge and support. Really good session – I learnt loads. Really, really useful! (Parent)

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

Very useful information and good to see what resources can be used to build the relationship between home and school. (Parent)

I felt the advice for approaching school was very helpful (Parent)

This has been very helpful to me on how I can work with my child's school and what I can do at home (Parent).

Very helpful course - lots of practical help with handling formal meetings! Thank you! (Parent) It's been very useful – thank you very much. It's increased my trust and confidence in the SENCo. (Parent/carer)

I have always found you to be a great service - really neutral and supportive of parents and schools alike, navigating difficult situations. Picked up reminders of things I can do to enhance support. (SES practitioner)

As a teacher we have no training on how to run a meeting or approach things. This has been so helpful. This is how I try to approach things, but this is more focussed. Thank you. (School practitioner)

Absolutely super sum-up of strategies! Excellent reminders as really usable. Signs of Safety training is great, but this really related to situations we come across. (School practitioner)

Every bit of this (working with parents training) is important. I want to print out prompts to myself to turn things round. (School practitioner)

I have found it so helpful. I especially appreciate all of the resources and explaining ways of phrasing things to peers and parents. (School practitioner)

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. (School practitioner)

Helps us focus on what it is like when things go well for the child rather than on the negative behaviours. (School practitioner)

I'm going to plan my discussions with parents, use positive language in between negative ones. Plan my availability each week. (School practitioner)

Feedback for the webinars we commissioned for young people with Autism:

Great that they are suitable to watch with my daughter, as every training we have done so far has been for parents only.

As an adult with Autism and ASD and diagnosed late 20's-early 30's, I had no such support when I was a child / adolescent. I'm very thankful for the recording and my daughter with Autism will be too.

I found the advice helpful and being able to look and discuss other parents' comments very helpful. It gives you clarity on it is happening to other kids but mostly ways of how to deal with it. I also realised I can now explain our situations better to other people. As other people are doing and experiencing similar cause and effect. So, it's enhanced communication for me. Thank you all.

Clear explanations that make it easier for me to understand how my daughter views social situations. Lots of information given that will help us plan and prepare for social situations in the future.

Really clear and easy to understand.

Provoked some discussions about his behaviours and worries.

The webinar was wonderful (**)



Collaborating with the specialist education services and health practitioners to deliver training and welcoming practitioners to many of the sessions we offer parents and carers:

Having outside services join to give extra information worked well. (Parent/carer)

Really helpful and great to hear from the services out there that can provide support. (Parent/carer)

Good to have parents and practitioners listening together. (Parent)

Thank you all - this was helpful. I have learned a lot about these services that I did not know before and I have been in the system for years!! (Parent)

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

Thank you, this has been helpful to me as a SENCo to have a clear view of the advice going to parents and the support available to them (SENCo)

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

Thank you, this was very informative. Very useful for us in the future. (SES practitioner) Thank you so much for this. I really enjoyed the session last night and it brought in a lot of insight for me. (Practitioner)

Your webinars are so helpful! (SENCo)

7. Other development and activities

Collaboration

- 1. **SEND workforce:** We proposed some 'core principles' which focus on the general approaches to putting CYP at the centre, worked with the Engagement Hub on a draft which was taken forward to finalising (pages 4 and 5): <u>SEND Training Brochure</u>
- 2. **Ofsted Survey Visit:** The service input to the Suffolk response by providing evidence, an impact assessment of the work carried out by SENDIASS in response to COVID and attended the introduction and de-briefing meetings chaired by the Inspectors.
- 3. Contributed to the new Suffolk SEND Strategy vision 2021 to 2023 and continued to input to the four SEND priorities and related focus groups; SEND Programme Board, the <u>training programme for SEND</u>, the QA Multi-agency EHCP audit, draft coproduction agreement and were asked to input at a meeting to discuss a review of the School Nursing service.
- 4. Initiated the coproduction of a **family-friendly draft** of information to explain the local authority process for **requesting a specialist setting**. This is with the local authority for approval/conclusion.
- 5. We joined an initial session with the local authority to discuss improvements to the 'specialist education panel' process, where a team member shared views from the perspective of families who contact the service
- 6. Attended two meetings to discuss a **joint online feedback/experiences form** proposed by the parent carer network and alongside the Engagement hub.
- 7. **Worked with health partners** Reached out to the under-18s therapy team and the People Participation Lead within NSFT, attended 'demand and capacity' meetings and provided information to the Assistant DCO about the key issues related to health and EHC plans.
- 8. **Provided intelligence** to disabled children and young people's services about the key Social Care issues families tell us they have experienced and shared our ideas for information to go into a SEND Parent/Carer update. We also provided a draft response for the local authority around a FAQ that we alerted them to: 'What happens when my child who has an EHCP is excluded?'
- 9. Provided the local authority with some suggested **KPI's around Annual Reviews of EHC plans.**
- 10. Contributed to the **SEND Independent Review** in Suffolk and promoted feedback opportunities with families.
- 11. Presented to parent groups and parenting hubs around the county (Stepping Stones for parents of children with additional needs and 'Triple P' parent groups), SENCo forums, Teaching Assistant Network sessions, a session hosted by 'Home for Good' and contributed to the voluntary and statutory partnership network meetings (VASP). We also attended dropin session for primary schools to explain our support and worked to raise our profile with NSFT services.
- 12. **Input to the Eastern region** IASP strategic meeting and attended monthly network meetings with our counterparts across the region.

Development projects/updates

- 1. The service has a new post 'Community Engagement Worker' which commenced in June 2021. The role is a step-change for the service enabling us to take a proactive approach to improving access and widening the reach of the service to families across Suffolk. The service would like to reach families earlier to help prevent issues from escalating. In the short period so far, activity included attending networking opportunities and events with: young people in further education, a preparing for adulthood meeting with a group of year 14 students, a next steps information day for year 11 and 13 students, disability forums, Early Help coaches, Stepping Stones family support meetings, reaching out to special schools in Suffolk, and have made links with many providers.
- 2. **New Website** Procured and launched a new website platform, which went live 2nd August. The website now has a webform option for accessing the service. Results from our online survey about the draft of our new website were published and input to the design and navigation features. We met with a group of young people to seek their views on the design and navigation. This is very much a 'work in progress' and we will continue to develop the website in line with feedback received.
- 3. We ran an online **information and training survey** in the summer term 2021, to find out about the information and training that families would like from us and these have directly input to our training and information development plans: Read the results from our Information and Training Survey.
- 4. We have been working on some changes to our database to **refine data collection** to enable specific categories to be captured. The new categories will be used from September and our reports in the next reporting period will reflect these changes.
- 5. **English as an additional language (EAL)** Our project continues, and an online survey was circulated to schools, early years settings and post-16 providers to gather views around how the service can reach and support these vulnerable families. Survey results have informed next steps.
- 6. 'How we 'empower' families' Information about our decisions around level of support for families, which includes taking into account new ways of working as we emerge from the pandemic, has now been updated on our website.
- 7. **Advice clinics** Our information and training survey responses showed there was demand for the service to offer 'advice clinics'. We worked with a group of parents around whether a group session might work as an alternative to 1:1 advice. The group felt that individual short sessions would be more appealing for families wanting a quick chat or for a specific question, rather than join a group. It was decided to run a trial of 20 min bookable virtual slots which we will be offering in September.
- 8. We were asked by the IAS Programme (NCB) to share some good practice around digital engagement and resources. This has been published on the CDC website, 'Suffolk SENDIASS digital tools 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 and working with young people (and their families)	Service support
IASSN training on EOTAS and EHE	Solution Focussed training	Accessibility training webinar
Improving SEND provision (governor focus)	Making participation work	Database training
ACE Admissions & Appeals training	IASS focus group on disagreement resolution	New website CMS training
IPSEA refresher training	YP participation	Practical Movement session (workstation)
IASSN Tribunal Training	Seek Listen to and Act Developing Participation	Women in Leadership
EHC Law – Steve Broach	Engaging CYP with SEND Online Workshop	
SEN Law conference	'I can Be A' website Training	
Improving SEN provisions – Public Policy Exchange	Participation methods for children and young people	
Challenging discriminatory exclusions		
IASSN social care national updates training		

9. Conclusion

Despite another challenging year, the virtual world has provided us with some positive opportunities. Due to time saved with not travelling between home visits and meetings, we have been able to divert this time to directly supporting families. An increase was seen in the numbers of referrals, those accessing the service and those 'new' to service when compared to the previous two years.

Our online sessions have attracted different audiences - families and practitioners who would not otherwise have been able to attend training face to face have come along to our online events. This widened reach (training registrants 1,571 up from 771 last year) has enabled us to identify gaps in knowledge and hone our digital offer.

We have coproduced new training, collaborated with partners to offer sessions around areas of need, and continued to adapt our long-standing sessions to work remotely. We have produced pre-recordings of sessions so that families can watch on demand and updated and added to our collection of videos. The number of channel views on YouTube has doubled from the previous year.

Due to additional funding from the IASP, the service has been able to procure a new website platform. We gathered views from young people and their parents and carers about the design and navigation features which directly input to the project. The platform went live 2nd August, and we look forward to the next stage where we plan to work with young people on the content of their section. Page views this reporting period are the highest ever at 107,850.

Our digital offer (all our media, resources and training) has been recognised and shared online as 'best practice' nationally for IAS services.

We continue to receive regular comments from parents suggesting wider promotion of our service telling us they wish they had known about us sooner. This remains a focus for the service and links with our new post which started in June: 'Community Engagement Worker' which enables us to take a proactive approach to reaching more families and improving access.

Children and young people with a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) continues to be our single largest category. This period has seen a continued increase in the numbers 'awaiting a diagnosis'. Parents told us in our survey they wanted training around ASD, and we commissioned sessions from an outside provider for young people and their parents.

We have continued to see 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.

Delays with decisions about requests for specialist settings, and parents sharing concerns around communication from the local authority and transparency of processes, has had a significant impact to the service in this reporting period. Many families sought advice from us about what they could do, and the service continued to encourage dialogue alongside formal routes, and supported partners by drafting and inputting to family-friendly information.

A particular area of concern for the families we support was shared with partners around those moving between phases of education - and the impact to these children and young people due to delays with decisions.

We acknowledge the local authority is experiencing an overwhelming demand for specialist provision and are willing to input the family and lawful perspective to any re-design of this process, including with communications.

Team members continue to contribute to the four SEND priorities in Suffolk, and with actions around relevant areas of work.

We have been working on some changes to our database to refine data collection to enable specific categories to be captured. The new categories will be used from September and our reports in the next reporting period will reflect these changes

It is pleasing to see that service feedback continues to evidence high levels of satisfaction, both for our training offer and with the helpline and ongoing support. The service continues to be seen as impartial by the vast majority of those accessing, this period sees an increased percentage giving us the **highest rating (very impartial) at 85.7%** up from 75.9% last year. We acknowledge that there are families who choose not to access our service, and we will be reaching out to communities, to build trust and better explain our impartiality and the standards that we work to.

I feel very proud of our individual and team achievements during this period and would like to thank everyone for their hard work and commitment to supporting children, young people and their families during another very challenging year.

Nicki Howlett (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 services	
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.	