



Information



Advice



Support

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

Suffolk SENDIASS Annual Report

September 2022 to August 2023



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Summary

Demand for the service has again been high, with our highest annual number of referrals ever recorded. An **increase of 10%** can be seen compared to the previous year, and **28%** over the period since 2018/19.

We've seen a significant growth in engagement with our resources. Website page views show a staggering increase this reporting period (**up 38%**) and links with comments made to us by service-users that they value being able to get answers to questions and access advice in this way.

Likewise, with YouTube, which shows an impressive **31% increase** in channel views when compared to the previous year.

We can see a dip with our Facebook reach and will consider how we can improve engagement in the coming year. We reviewed Twitter (now 'X') activity this period and data showed that we were not reaching many families. We retain our 'X' presence for now and will continue to review our development strategy for social media more generally, focusing on platforms which reach families.

We have begun our work to improve access and expand information for young people. We coproduced a survey for young people with key partners (including a separate survey for practitioners), to better understand how we could reach young people what they would like from the service.

We're now working through the identified actions, for example, with planned outreach to young people through school or college, and coproducing content with them on the topics which are important to them. We've included some content on our website with links to local and national organisations which support LGBTQ+ young people. We are also committed to producing information as 'Easy-Read'.

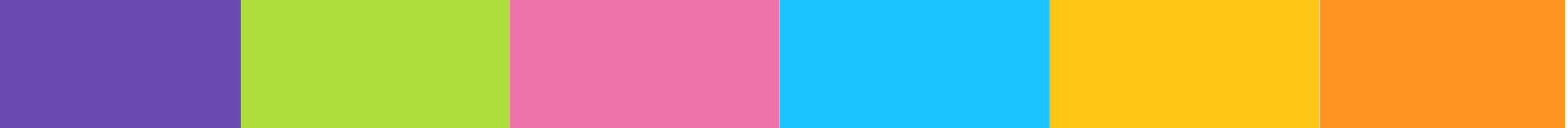
There were **1,201 training registrants** this year and we have continued to expand and develop our training. The termly offer now includes sessions to support families to prepare for the transition to secondary school as well as primary school, and we coproduced, with families, a new information session focussing on SEN support in early years settings.

We collaborated with the local authority Specialist Education Services and the [Curly Hair Project](#), hosting an additional 11 sessions where specialist teachers offered presentations focussing on the communication and interaction needs of children and young people.

We reintroduced face-to-face training sessions and were surprised to find very little engagement with these. We therefore took the decision to offer online sessions from the spring of 2023, with the option of a face-to-face session on request from groups of parents or practitioners.

We continue to deliver the Governor training around SEND responsibilities to positive feedback and multi-agency practitioners can join our EHC needs assessment and Annual Reviews webinars. We offer a popular 'Working with Parents' session to both schools and other services and have recently agreed to offer this as part of school NASENCo training going forwards.

We continue to focus on community outreach, **attending 61 events** and **reaching 723 people** this year. We were pleased to be part of a successful trial of SEND Advice drop-ins in Family Hubs across Suffolk and look forward to joining these ongoing.



We worked with Healthwatch Suffolk as part of their project to support services to think about ways to encourage and enable coproduction. This opportunity to share ideas enriched our projects, for example, with our [‘Coproduction pledge’](#).

In addition to the increased volume of service enquiries, we continue to see an increase both in the complexity, and with the support needs, of the person accessing. Some requests for our advice and support do require more time for us to manage. These trends are seen nationally and reflected in the new guidance issued for SENDIAS services around the 4 support levels.

We aim to respond to enquiries to the service within 3 working days though, at times this year, this has not been possible.

Due to increasing response times, we moved away from an appointment booking model and instead now aim to provide specific advice within the initial contact.

‘Front-loading’ our helpline in this way has improved the experience of service-users, who now receive information, advice and support more quickly. We have experienced members of staff supporting newest team members, particularly with more complex enquiries.

We took the difficult decision to pause new referrals for the two-week Easter holiday period in April 2023, to enable the team to catch-up with ‘waiting referrals’.

The local authority were responsive to our service needs and identified additional funds that we could use to resource an additional 0.85FTE. Some team members increased their hours and our newest recruit will join us during the autumn term and begin training (the SEND legal training takes up to 12 months to complete).

Our newest team members completed the SEND legal training this reporting period. We had another new joiner this year, who will complete their training in the next reporting period.

We will continue to carefully monitor our capacity to manage the increased volume and complexity of referrals.

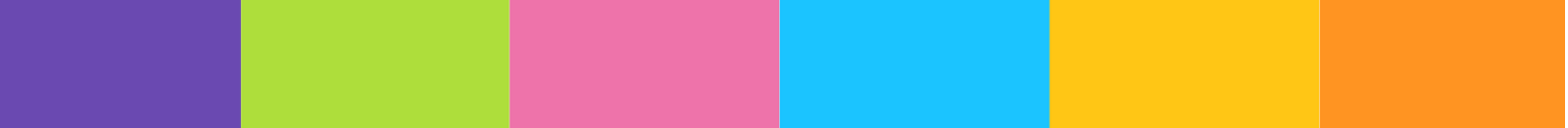
Satisfaction levels within our online feedback survey have dipped when compared to the previous year. We have had difficulty encouraging completion of this, fewer respondents can mean the figures can easily be skewed, with a very small number of negative ratings having a disproportionate impact to the overall percentages.

We know from some comments, that parents and carers are disappointed with our response times and this is linked to our capacity which we continue to review.

We want to be offering the best service that we can to the families in Suffolk and will make sure we review comments received and identify any improvements needed.

Highest frequency for our referrals continues to be around EHC needs assessments and plans, appealing the setting named (or that no setting is named) and SEN Support.

Classification codes help us to pinpoint specific common issues raised by families. For example, within EHC needs assessment, we are having more discussions about ‘Explanation of process’ and ‘Requesting EHCNA’.



Other high frequency classification codes to note are 'placement', 'suspension and exclusion', 'working with school', 'health/medical', 'working with the local authority', and 'attendance – medical/mental health'.

Parents often come to our service sharing that they are not feeling involved with discussions about their child's support in school and with difficulties arranging meetings or conversations with relevant members of staff.

We continue to provide information which dispels the 'diagnosis myth'. We find that we are regularly explaining that a diagnosis is not necessary for a child to receive SEN Support nor is it a requirement for an EHC plan. We often give information about the definition of a disability within the Equality Act 2010 (and the duty to make Reasonable Adjustments for disabled pupils).

We regularly hear from parents sharing that their child is too anxious to go to school, sometimes on waiting lists with health or wellbeing services, and where they wish to explore bespoke, alternative or specialist provision.

Parents and carers share concerns about the lack of transparency with local authority processes and with responses or decisions (particularly around placement) being communicated to them. We often provide information and advice about the options when legal timescales are missed (for EHC needs assessments and plans).

Frustrations have also been shared around waiting times (and thresholds) for assessments or therapies through health providers. We acknowledge that services (across education, health and social care) continue to experience high demand and the various SEND workstreams which are working towards improvements for families.

We continue to work with partners, for example, our involvement with strands within the SEND Priorities in Suffolk, and in response to suggestions from the local parent carer forum.

I would again like to express my thanks to our team for their hard work supporting families and for their flexibility as we adapt to the changing needs and continuously strive towards improving the lives of SEND children and young people and their families.

Nicki Howlett (Service Lead)

1. Introduction

At arms-length from the local authority and health commissioners, Suffolk SENDIASS is a 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 expectations (linked to s32 of the Children and Families Act 2014) for local authorities to provide a confidential, impartial and arm's length SEND information, advice and support service and says:

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

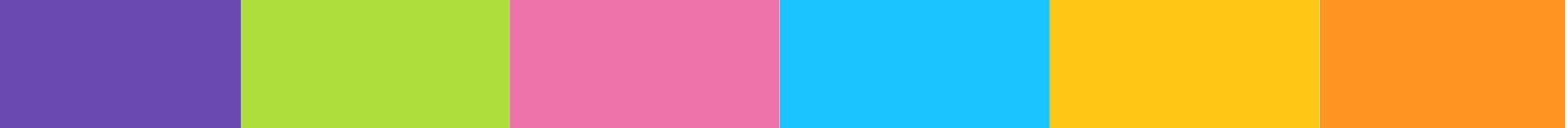
Information, Advice and Support Services should be impartial, confidential and accessible and should have the capacity to handle face-to-face, telephone and electronic enquiries. (2.5)

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

Minimum Standards

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

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



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 2023 to 2026.

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 health through the Integrated Care Boards covering Suffolk.

Remaining funds from the IASP contract (though the IASS national network, funded by the Department for Education) have been ear-marked for identified tools, training and resources to enable us to improve our reach and offer for children and young people.

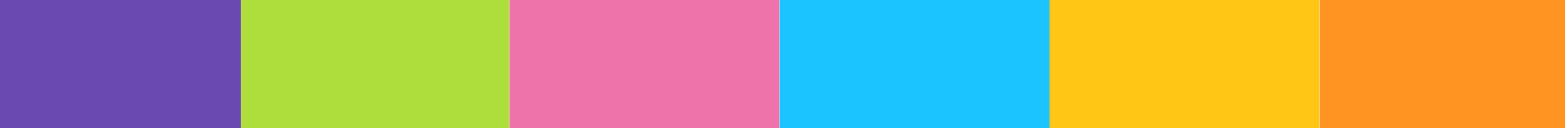
The service is also keen to explore additional investment to enable it to respond to the rising demand and complexity of referrals.

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 an [Advisory body](#) including parents and representatives across education, health and social care, which meets once every term. The group discuss and share views about the service development plan, review feedback and monitor overall performance of the service.

4. Resourcing and capacity

The team:

Service Lead – 1 FTE

Senior IAS Worker – 0.8 FTE

Senior IAS Worker – 0.7 FTE

Training and Development Officer – 1 FTE

Community Engagement Worker – 1 FTE

SEND IAS Workers (4) – 2.1 total FTE.

(Investment secured to resource an additional 0.85 FTE ‘SEND IAS Worker’ hours).

Looking ahead

We continue to be flexible to be able to meet the rising needs of families.

We want to make sure that we have the skills and resources to be able to help everyone who needs support to understand SEND processes and take part in discussions and will seek out opportunities for additional investment.

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.

Following on from the survey we ran for young people, a key area of focus for us now is to develop content with young people, particularly the young person section of our website. We are also committed to a focus around producing some Easy-Read information.

Our Community Outreach Worker was pulled away from their role for significant periods throughout this academic year, to support the helpline. With our vacancy filled, we should be able to realise capacity to explore the best ways to engage with young people and their families, for example, developing closer links with settings. We will also be reviewing existing social media channels and exploring new platforms.

We would like to build user/focus groups for people who would like to help us with our development, for example, with coproducing information and training.

Following a request, we have drafted some information for parents and carers around permanent exclusion and will roll this out in the autumn term.

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

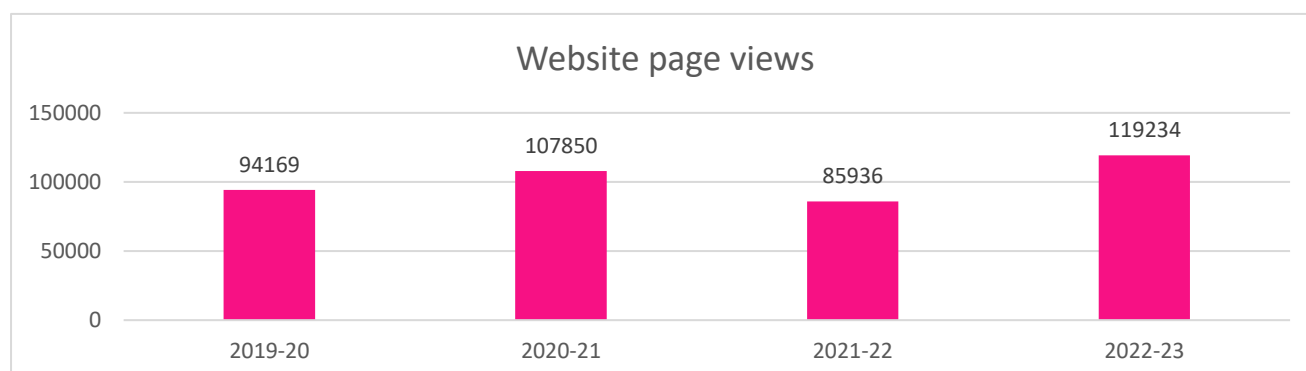
5. Provision of Information, Advice and Support

Headline data for the period 1st September 2022 to 31st August 2023:

Number of referrals (requests for information, advice and support)	3,098
Number of service-users accessing (number of children, young people, parents, carers and practitioners directly accessing the service)	2,254
Number of service-users 'new to service'	1,310
Number of contacts (number of individual contacts made as part of a referral)	6,261
Number of training registrants	1,201
Number of people reached through 'community outreach'	723
Website page views	119,234
Facebook reach	39,288
Twitter (x) impressions	14,275
YouTube channel views	27,700

5.1 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. This chart shows the annual trends:

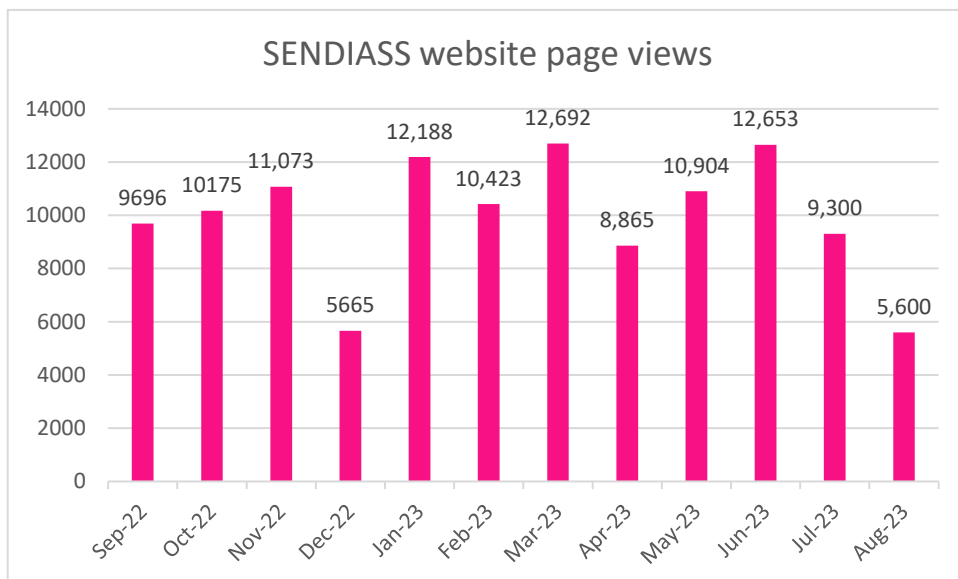


It is a helpful tool for the team to guide service-users to specific information and the service has received comments that the website has helped them understand SEND processes and participate in discussions about support.

We have begun to develop the content for the young person section of the website and plan to explore, with developers, different style options for this section.

This chart shows the monthly trends for the period September 2022 to August 2023.

Total page views this reporting period: **119,234** – a significant **increase of 38%** when compared to the previous year.



Average monthly page views: **9,936**

August always sees fewer than average views.

5.2 Written resources

Publicity and information 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](#)

During August, we began to work on creating Easy-Read versions of our child/young person publicity, and Easy-Read information development for young people will continue.

Moving forward, any new or updated leaflets will include a QR code.

In line with the requirement to provide information in a range of accessible options, we now have 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.

E-newsletter

Service-users can sign up to receive news from us, our audience has grown this year and now stands at 2,800 subscribers. Engagement is good with the 'open rate' at 54% for our regular newsletters, and on average around 65% for our invite to complete our online survey.

5.3 Social media

Facebook

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. The total reach this reporting period has dropped significantly to 39,288 (from 189,011 the previous year).

Page and post data

New page likes this period	97
Followers	2,534
Page visits	5,793
Total reach this period (number of people who had any content from your Page or about your Page enter their screen)	39,288
Number of posts in the period	311

Twitter, now 'X'

During this reporting period, we reviewed Twitter activity and data showed that we were not reaching many families. We retain our 'X' presence for now and will continue to review our development strategy for social media more generally, focusing on platforms which reach families.

"Tweet impressions" for period	14,275
Followers	558

YouTube

The service has a range of video resources uploaded to our [SENDIASS YouTube channel](#), 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.

In this reporting period, we have continued to develop the video range, adding recordings of new training sessions and also new stand-alone videos following specific requests. These include:

- a video coproduced with families exploring Mental Capacity regarding EHC decisions for young people. We had received parent feedback from the Suffolk Parent Carer Forum, requesting more information about this subject.

We created an additional version of the video to share with our Eastern Region counterparts as part of an agreement to work together and share resources.

- Two new videos to support families wishing to appeal to the SEND tribunal about a local authority decision to refuse to do an EHC needs assessment. This was following an uptick in requests to our service for help with tribunal appeals. These videos complement our existing range of tribunal videos and focus on supporting parents to fill in the appeal form and to prepare for a mediation meeting regarding a refusal to assess decision.

We also updated our series of EHC videos to reflect changes to local authority processes regarding EHC needs assessments and updated our SEND webinar recordings for governors to reflect changes to Department for Education guidance, local authority support for schools and new SEND data.

Our channel views this period **increased by 31%** when compared to the previous year. Impressions were **up by 165%**.

'Channel views' for period	27,700
'Impressions'	261,600

Our most viewed videos this period include:

[What is a Special Educational Need or SEN?](#) (3.3K views this period)

[Drafting and finalising an EHC plan](#) (2.2K views this period)

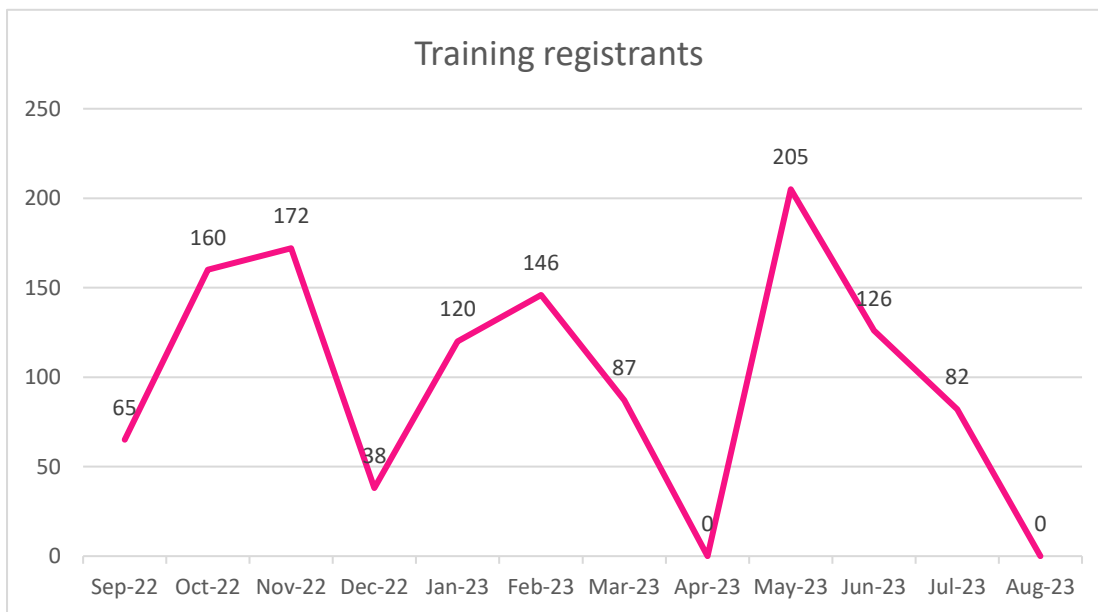
[SEN support for pupils with special educational needs \(SEN\)](#) (2K views this period)

[What is an EHCP or Education, Health and Care plan?](#) (1.8K views this period)

[What is a disability according to the Equality Act 2010?](#) (1.2K views this period)

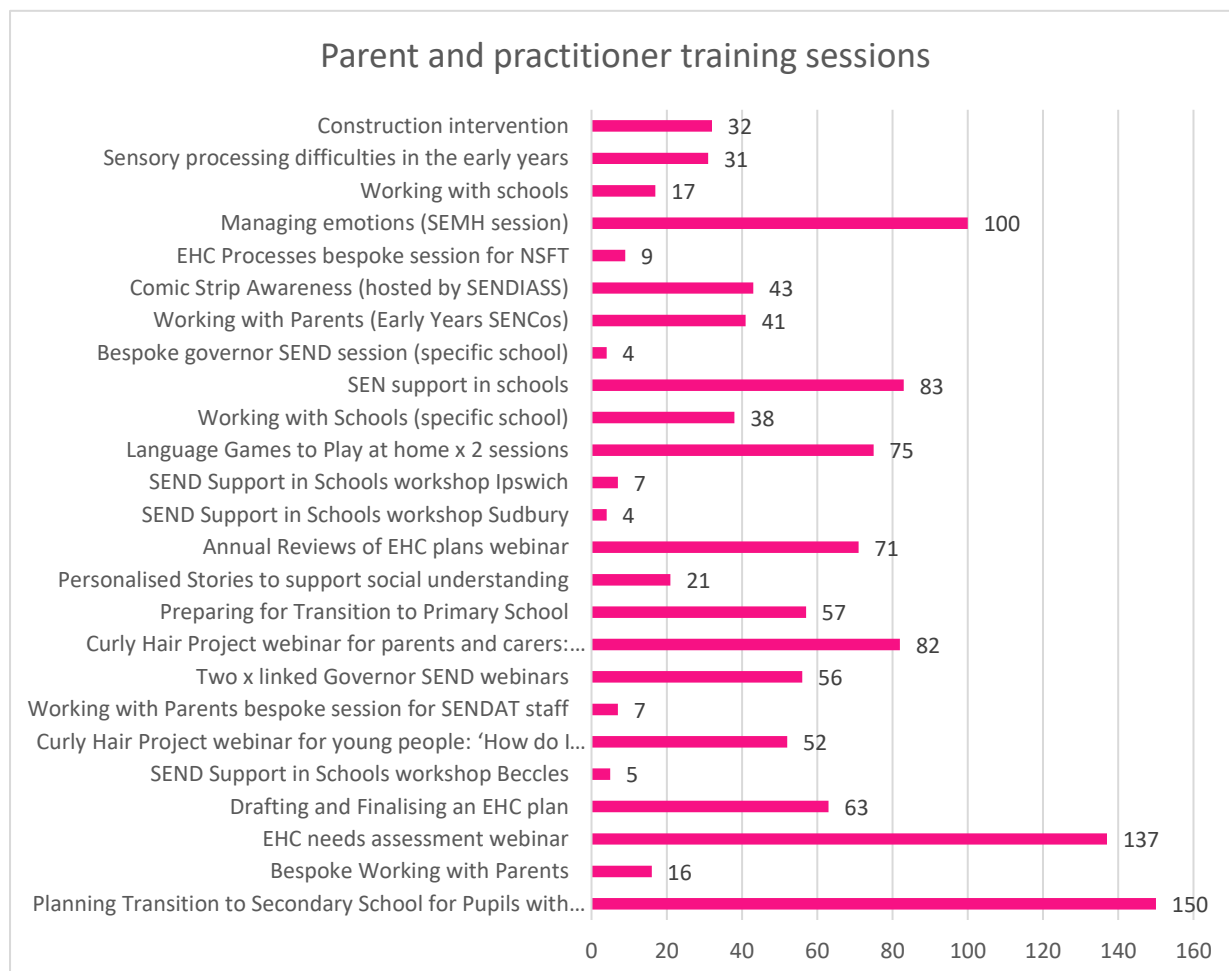
5.4 Training (information sessions and workshops)

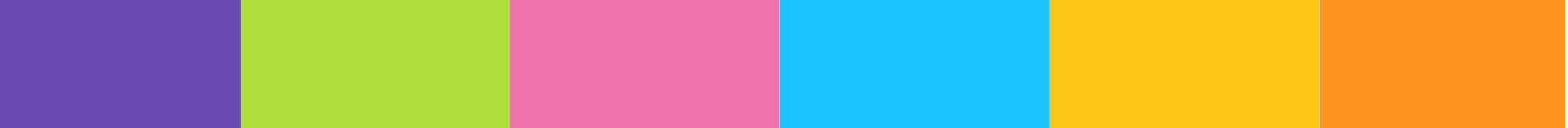
Total training registrants this period: 1,201.



Due to school holidays, we tend to see a dip in numbers for December, April and August.

Here, we show the number of registrants for the various sessions we delivered or hosted:





Each year, the majority of calls to our service focus on SEN support and EHC processes, so we have continued to offer live sessions every term around SEN support in schools, EHC needs assessments, Drafting and Finalising an EHC plan and Annual Reviews. Our termly offer also now includes sessions to support families to prepare for the transition to secondary as well as primary school.

However, in this reporting period we were receiving more calls to our service from parents of pre-school children, so we decided to coproduce with families a new information session focussing on SEN support in early years settings. Coproduction led to the new webinar being added to our termly offer (with accompanying video recording [SEN support in early years settings](#)) and an additional video resource to support parents and carers in [Choosing an early years setting for children with additional needs](#). We also arranged to collaborate with the Early Years and Childcare Service to host a session for families each term where one of their experienced practitioners explores sensory processing needs in the early years.

We regularly receive requests from parents for training which goes beyond our expertise, in particular around the needs of children with Autism. We aim to be as responsive to need as possible, so each year we reach out to other services to explore additional training for families. In this reporting period we collaborated with the LA [Specialist Education Services](#) and the [Curly Hair Project](#), hosting an **additional 11 sessions** where specialist teachers offered presentations focussing on the communication and interaction needs of children and young people.

In 2022 we had reintroduced face-to-face training sessions and were surprised to find very little engagement with these, to the point where they were no longer sustainable. In the autumn of this reporting period, an average of only 3 parents were turning up for the face-to-face sessions we offered around the county. We therefore took the decision to offer online sessions from the spring of 2023, with the option of a face-to-face session on request from groups of parents or practitioners. Our sessions continue to receive very positive feedback with no challenge about the move to offer predominately virtual training. In this reporting period we offered 6 face-to-face sessions. This included a SEN support session at the Suffolk Dyslexia Association Information Day.

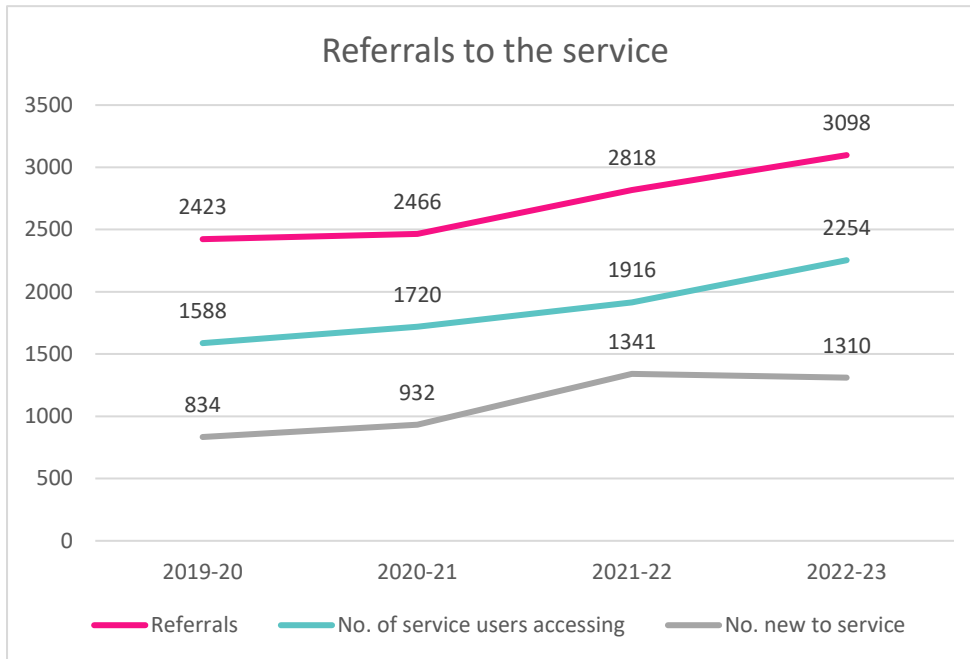
For practitioners, we continue to deliver the Governor training around SEND responsibilities to very positive feedback, which includes two linked webinars, recordings and access to a suite of resources. Multi-agency practitioners can and do join our EHC needs assessment and Annual Reviews webinars, and we offer a 'Working with Parents' session to both schools and other services. In the last academic year, we also delivered this session twice to Early Years SENCOs as part of their national award training and we have recently agreed to offer this as part of school NASENCO training going forwards.

Feedback about our training can be found in chapter 6.

5.5 Helpline and ongoing support (individual IAS provided)

5.5a 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.

There is a **10% increase** in referrals this reporting period and **28%** across the years shown here.

'Where did you hear about us?'

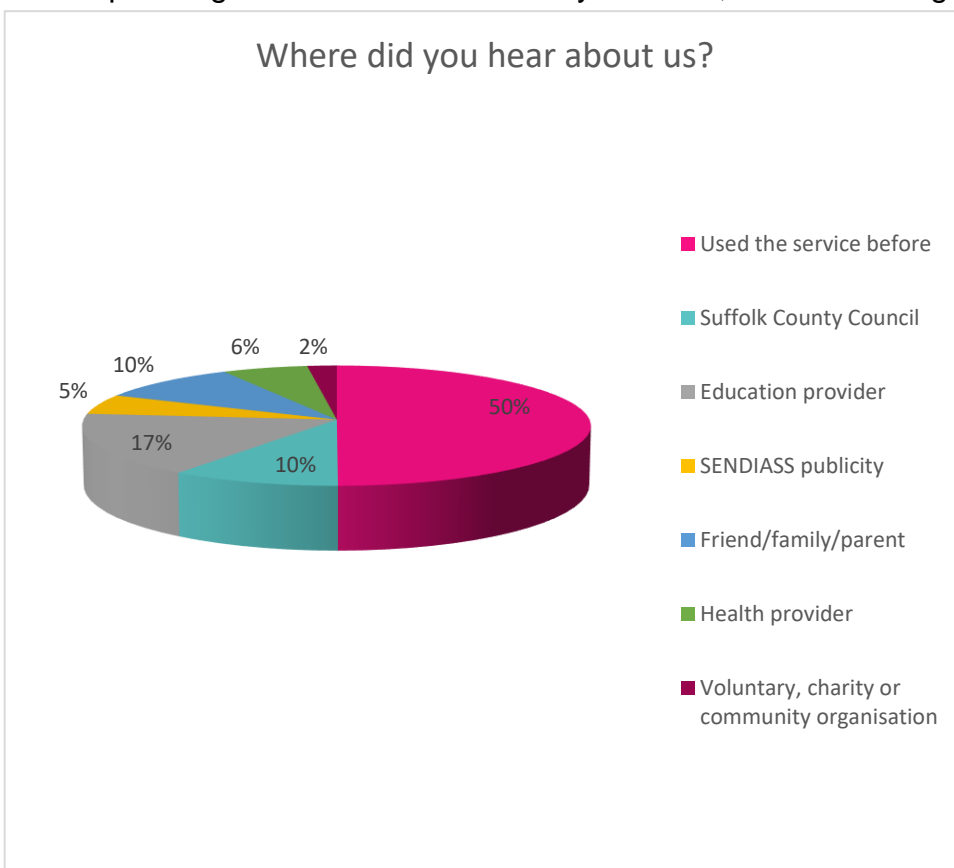
SENDIASS is a self-referral service, and we capture where the service-user heard about us. The chart shows the % split:

The data shows we have a **high percentage of 'returners' (50%)** clearly indicating that the information, advice and support we offer is valued.

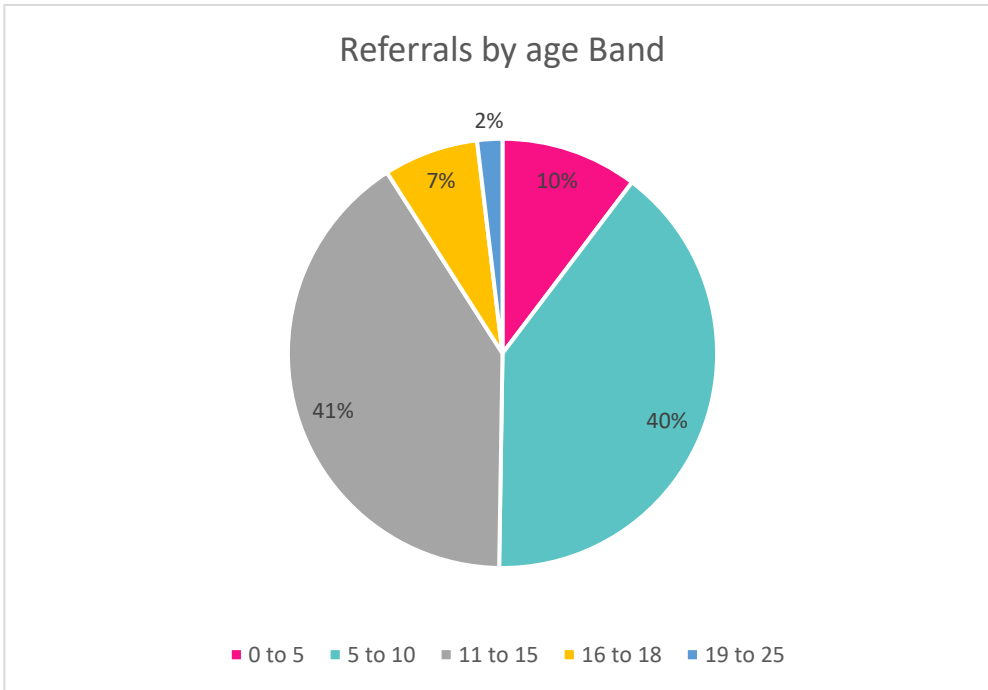
It is pleasing to see that local authority services, schools/settings and health providers are signposting to our service.

We receive comments from parents and carers that they wish they had learned about the service earlier.

We continue to work with the community and partners to explore further ways to reach families.

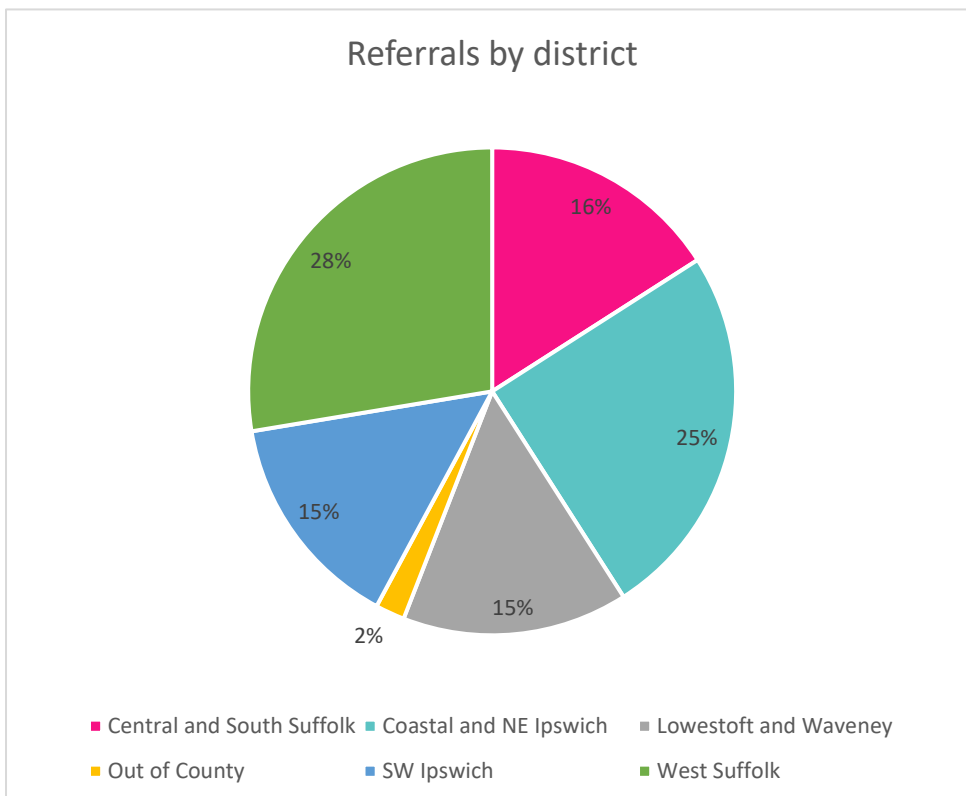


% Referrals by age band:



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

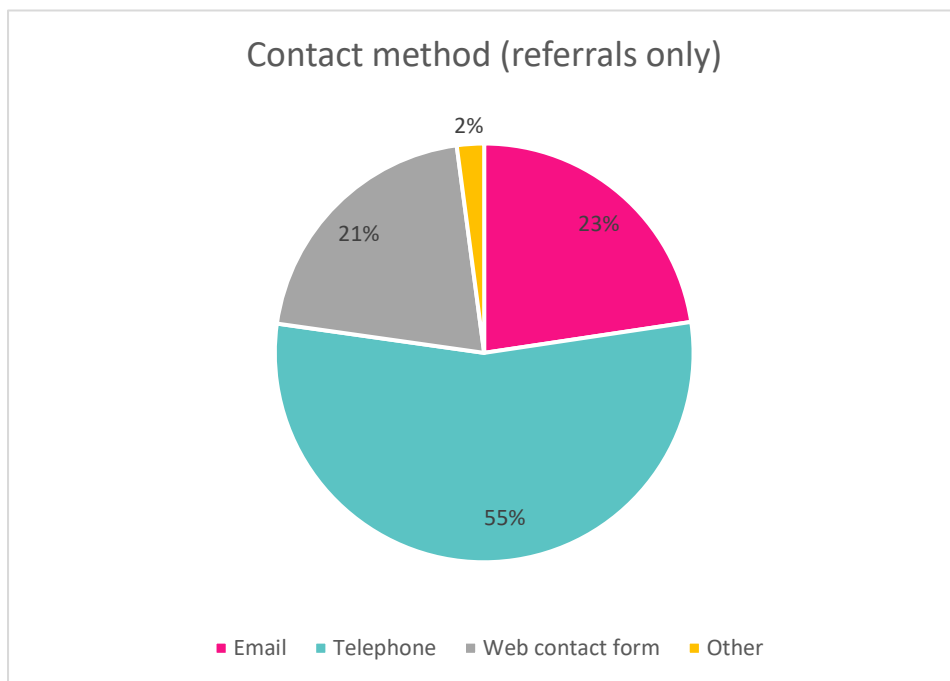
% Referrals by district:



The chart shows the service is reaching the whole of Suffolk.

'Coastal and Northeast Ipswich' and 'West Suffolk' see the highest frequency of enquiries.

Referrals by contact method:



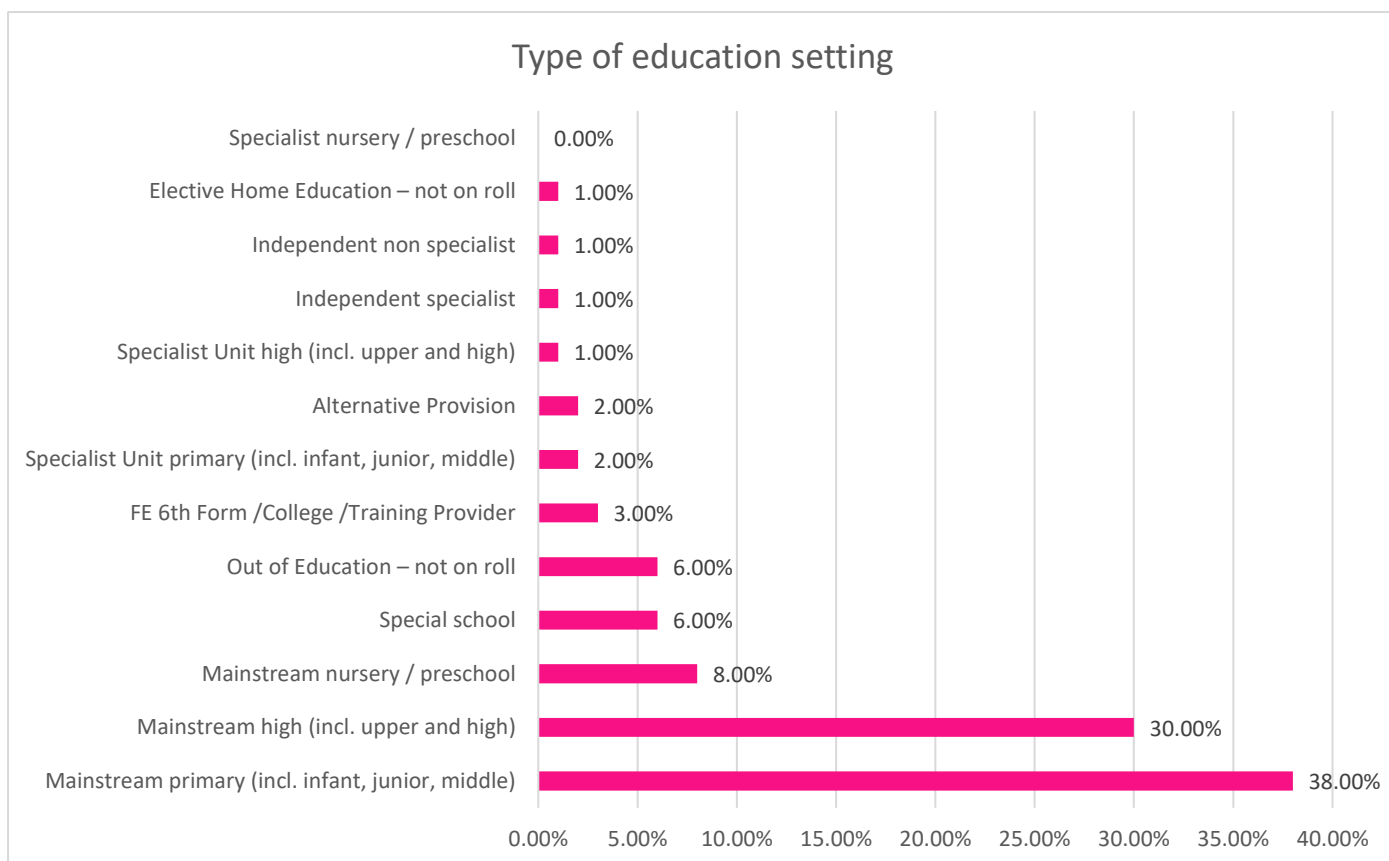
Calling our helpline remains the highest frequency method of initial contact (at **55%**).

This period, our **web contact form** option has shown to be a popular way for people to access the service (**21%, up from 16%** last year).

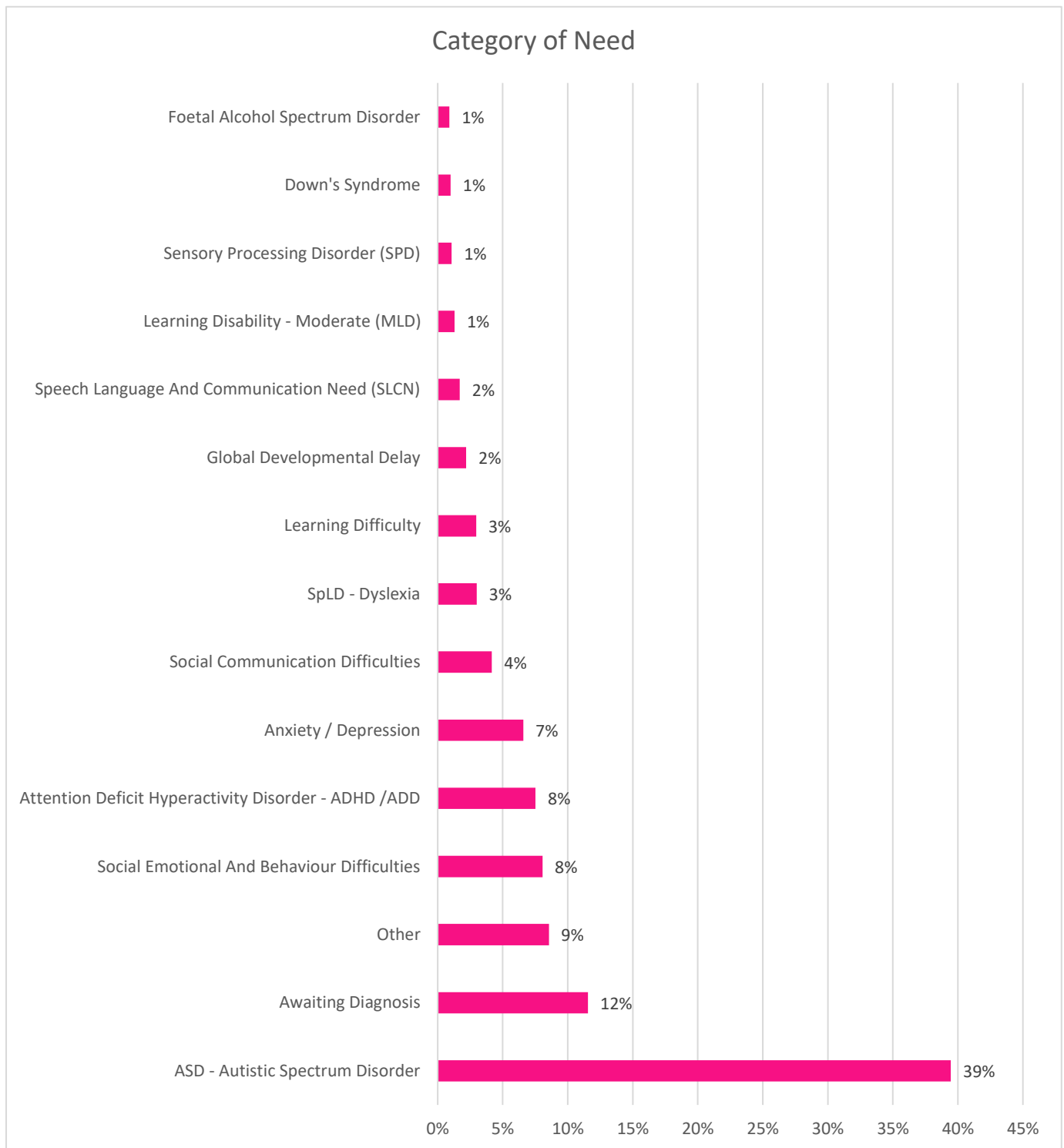
'Other' includes 'Text' and social media direct messages.

Referrals by type of setting:

The data continues to show that our main cohort are children of compulsory school age attending a mainstream setting (**38% at mainstream primary and 30% at mainstream high**). A small increase since last year in the % who are 'Out of education' (6% from 4% in 2021/22).



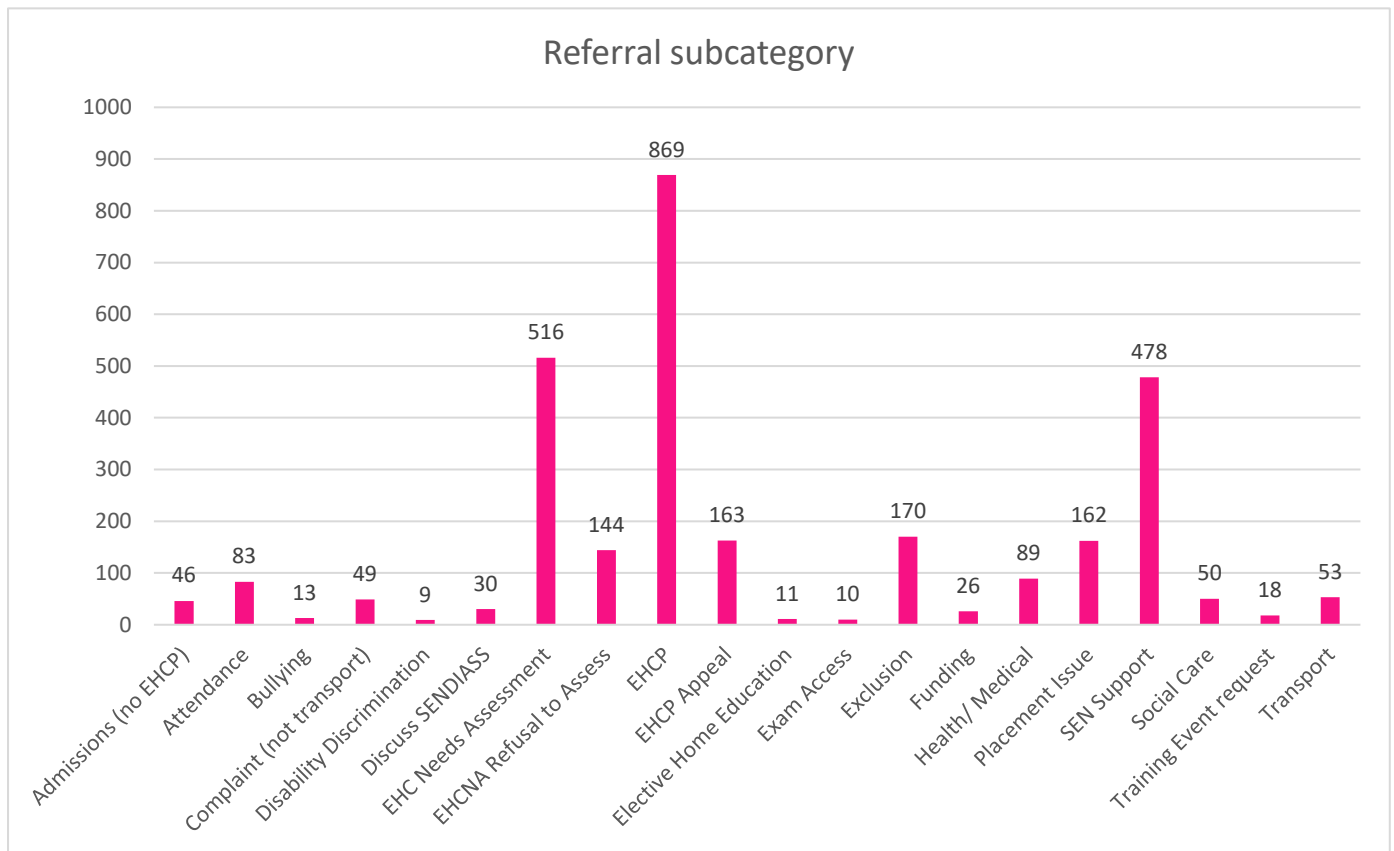
Category of need for the children and young people we supported in this period:



As has always been the case, the largest cohort of children and young people we support have a diagnosis of **ASD (Autistic Spectrum Disorder) at 39%** (up from 35% last year). Fewer in the 'awaiting diagnosis' category (12%, down from 20% in the 2021/22 reporting year).

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 SEN Support, EHC needs assessments and plans and appealing to the SEND Tribunal about the setting (or that no setting) 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.

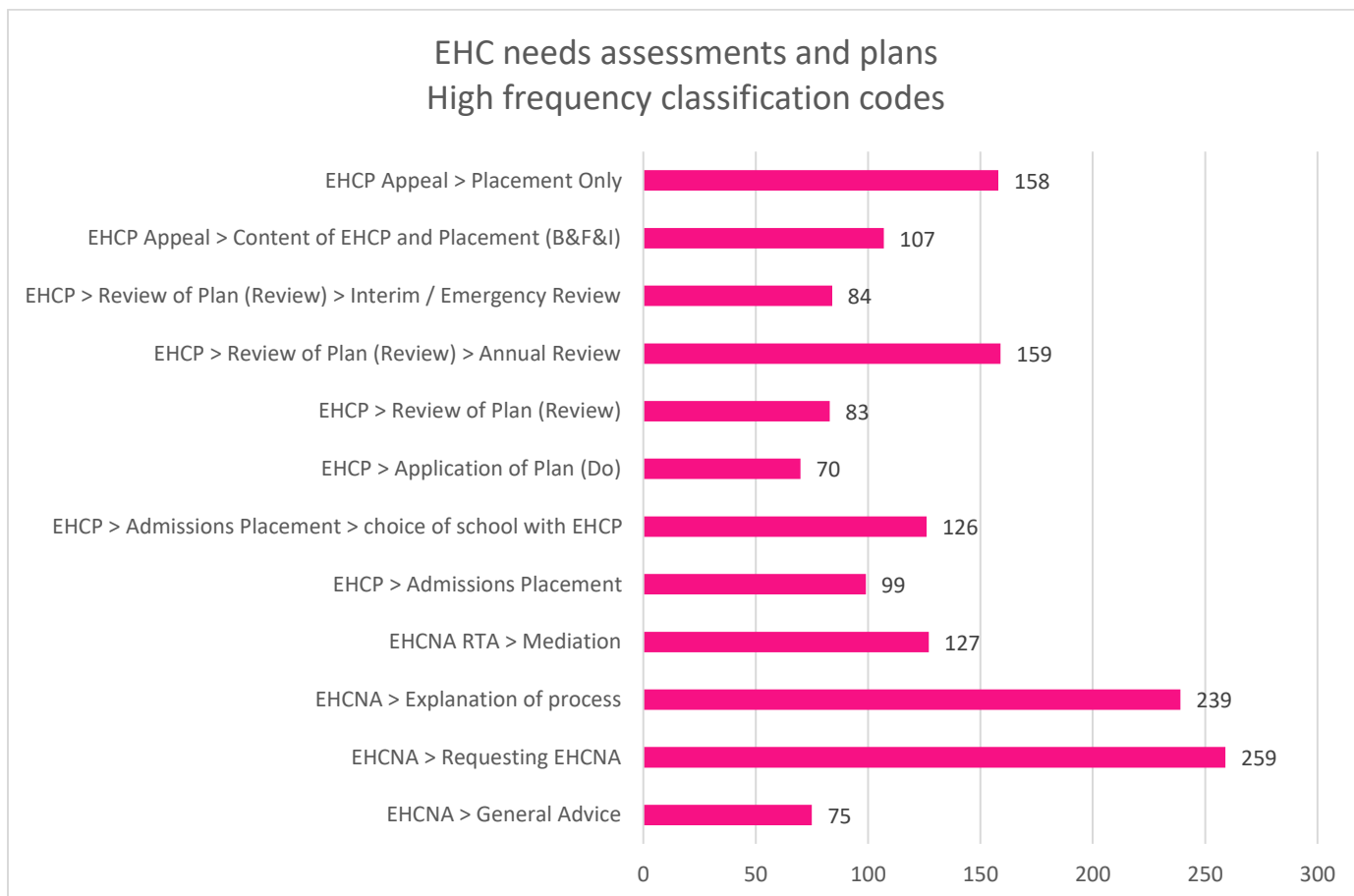
An example of this might be where a parent contacts the service for information about EHC needs assessments and plans and we categorise as such. However, a significant part of these conversations will include health assessments or provision (such as those provided by an Occupational or Physiotherapist,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

Using a series of classification codes on our database, we continue to refine our data to capture the full extent of a referral and provide a more specific snapshot of types of enquiries.

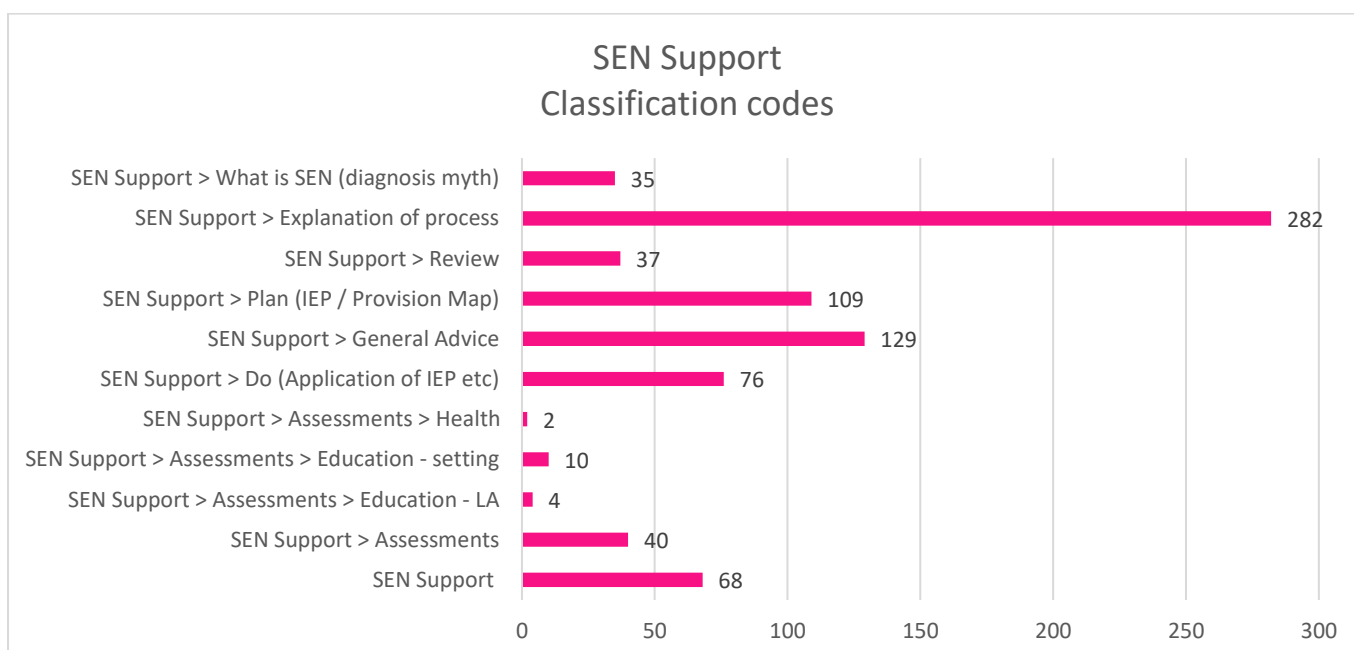
Classification codes

Here, we look at specific classification of referrals across the high frequency categories.

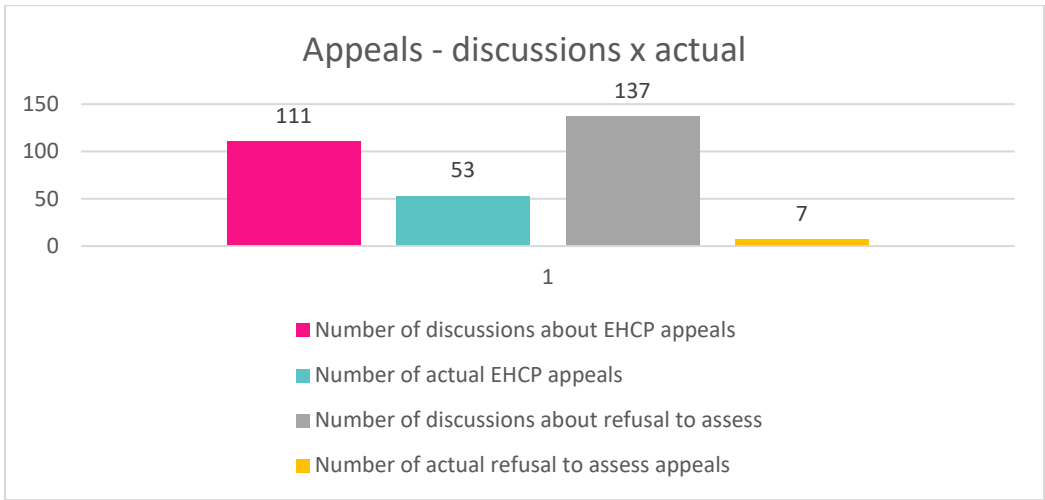
EHC needs assessments and plans (including appeals) classification codes:



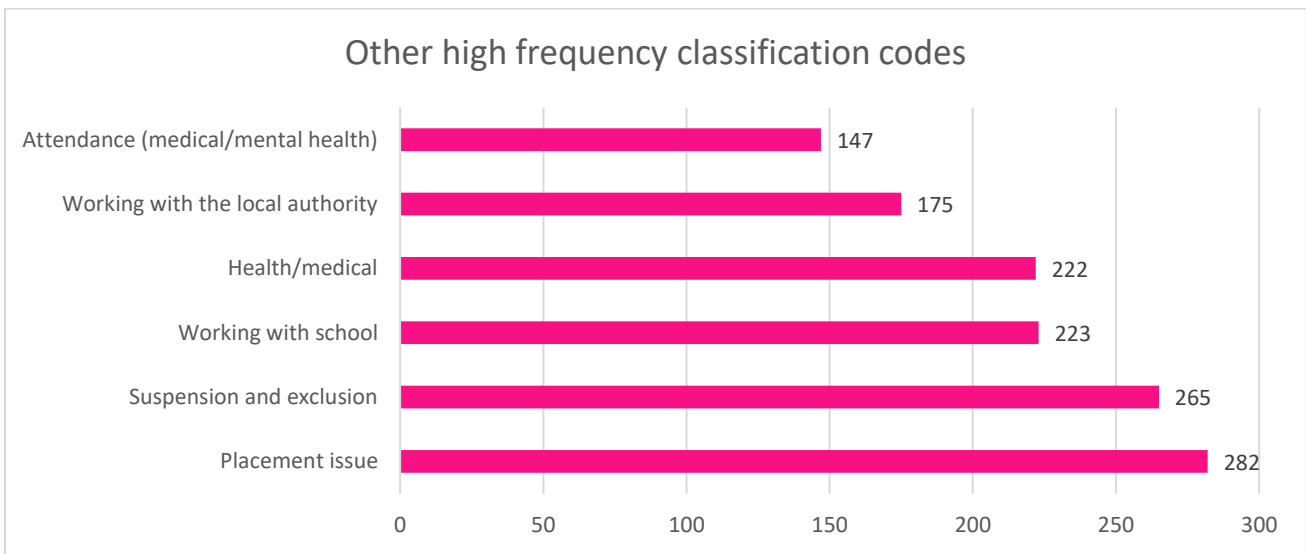
SEN Support classification codes:



Here, we look at the difference between the high number of discussions (classification codes) around appealing to the SEND Tribunal against the 'actual' number of appeals we supported with. This reflects the support we provide to families to resolve disagreements with the local authority informally:

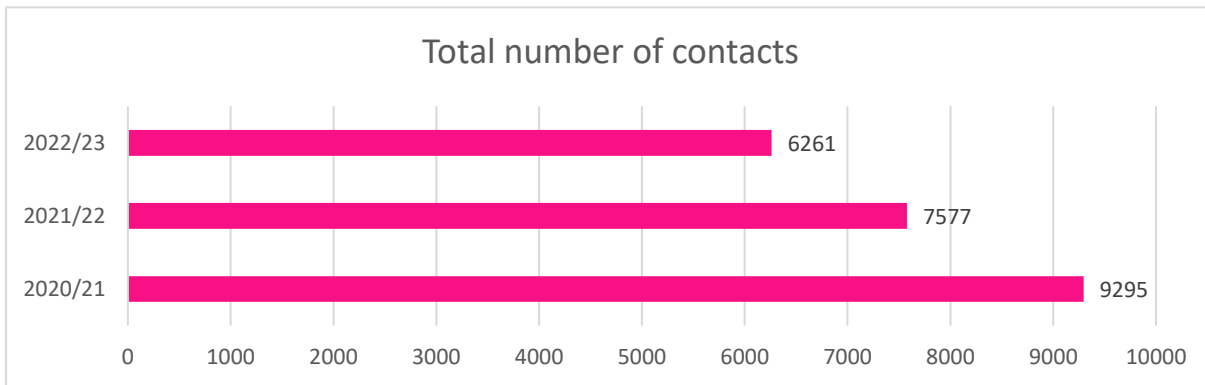


Other high frequency classification codes:



5.5b Contacts

A 'referral' may result in a number of additional related contacts:



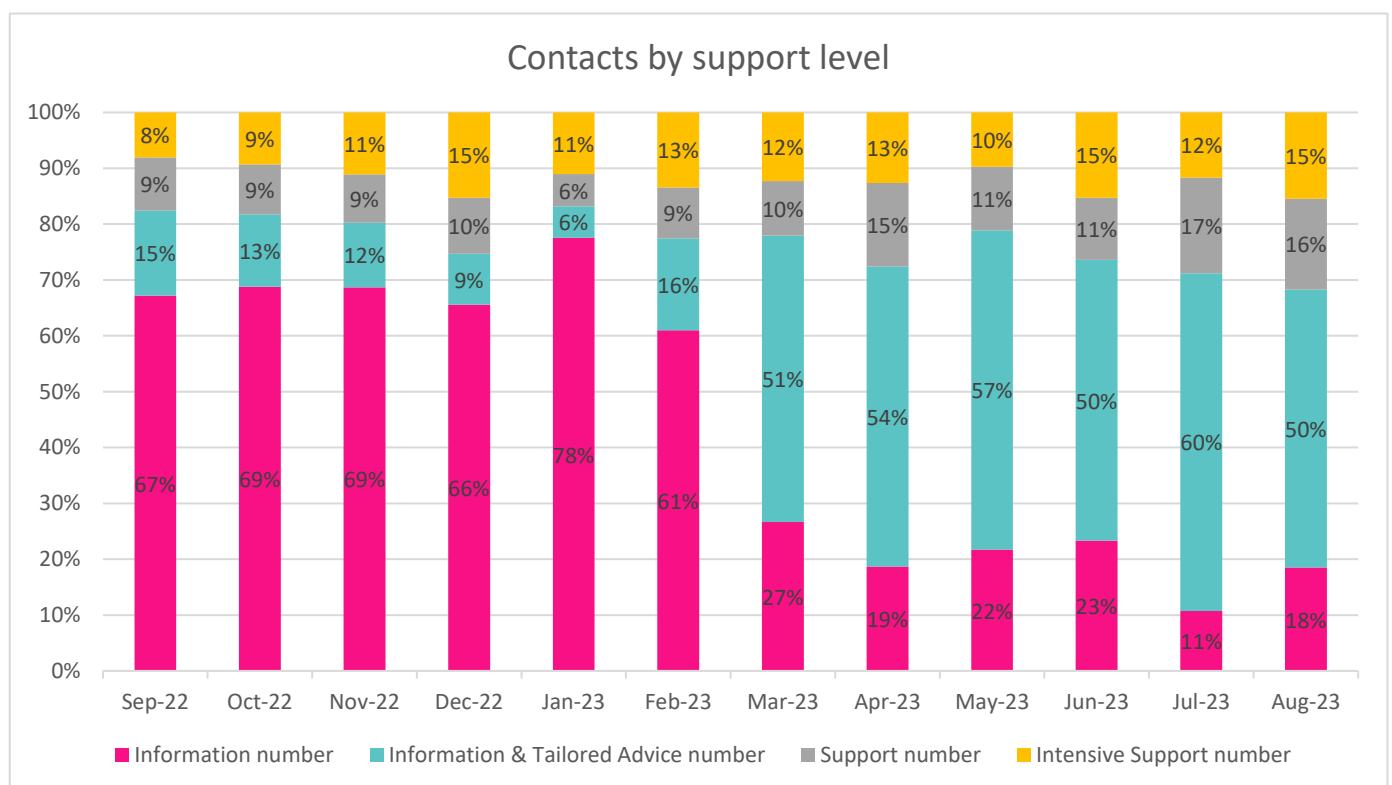
The total number of contacts has again reduced this reporting year. This is due to continued efficiency changes we made to the way we manage referrals.

Due to increasing response times, we moved away from an appointment booking model and instead now provide specific advice within the initial contact.

'Front-loading' our helpline in this way has improved the experience of service-users, who now receive information, advice and support more quickly.

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. There were some national changes to the support level descriptors for SEND IAS services linked to the increased complexity of referrals (higher proportion requiring tailored information and advice). In the chart below, you can see the impact of this from March 2023:

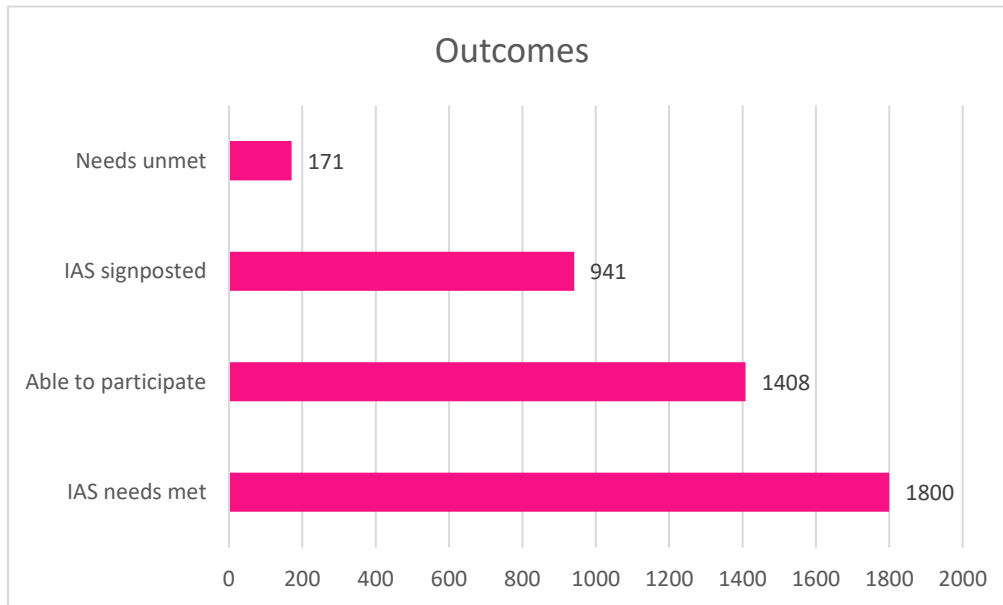


Contacts by support level are recorded by the team member using the following descriptors:

Level 1	Information	<p>General information and signposting (including website links, factsheets, forms etc).</p> <p>Service user is able to express their needs and those of their child and needs general (not specific child) advice to better understand the system and make an informed decision.</p>
Level 2	Information and tailored advice	<p>Information and specific advice tailored to individual need or circumstances, about education, health and social care SEND systems and processes.</p> <p>Service user is able to express their needs and those of their child. They may need more tailored or specific advice. May have previously had information and advice at level 1 and are now at the next stage.</p>
Level 3	Support	<p>Ongoing support, which may include advocacy in line with minimum standards, help with giving views, forms, meetings, or liaising with other services or providers.</p> <p>The service user is unable to independently navigate SEND processes.</p> <p>A child or young person requesting IAS.</p>
Level 4	Intensive Support	<p>Ongoing intensive support, which may include advocacy in meetings and reviews.</p> <p>Support with the appeals process.</p> <p>The service user is unable to independently navigate SEND processes or access justice.</p> <p>A child or young person who needs advocacy/representation.</p> <p>High need / high complexity.</p>

5.5c Outcomes

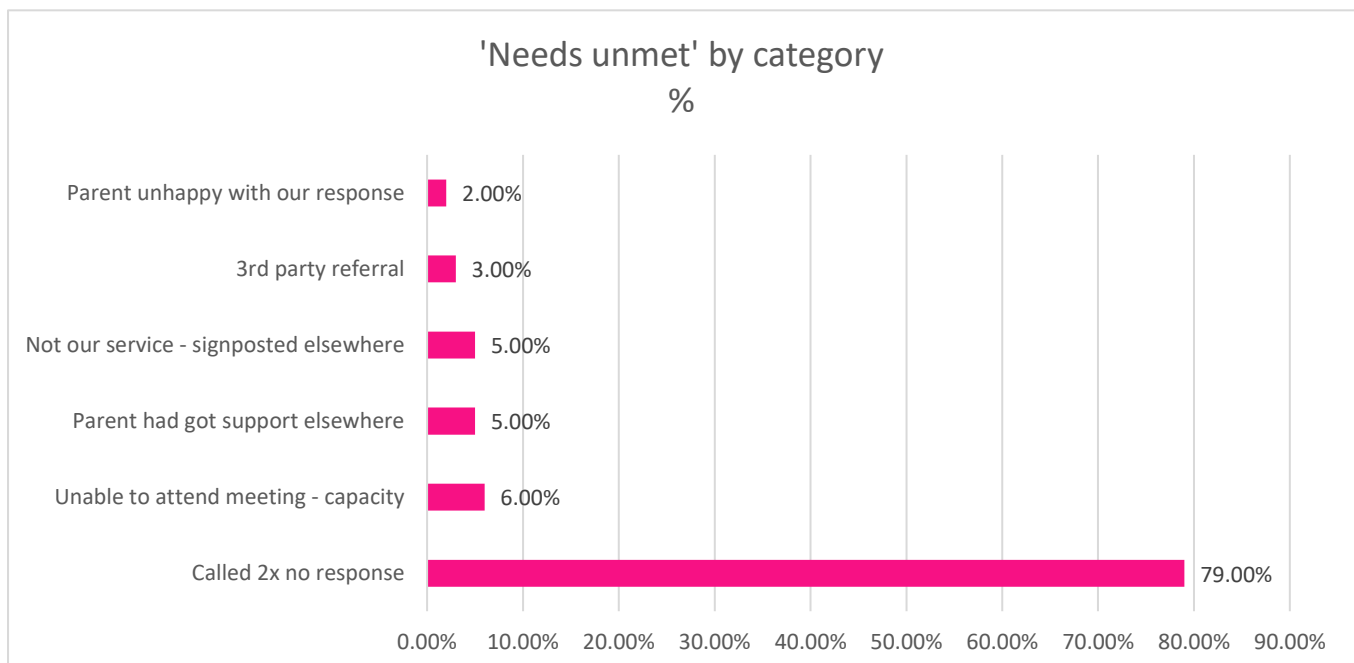
An outcome is recorded by a team member following contact with a service-user.



Outcomes can be recorded per contact, and for some referrals 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'*.

A significant rise in the 'needs unmet' category at **171** (this figure was 63 in the previous year). The high proportion (79%) in the category 'called 2x no response' we believe is linked to high service demand where we are unable to answer when the service user calls, and with our 'response times' being longer than we'd like.



Example of feedback within the 'parent had got support elsewhere' category:

'Situation resolved before sendiass able to respond, but thank you very much for the call anyway.'

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

'I just knew I needed to contact sendiass and you would help to put me on the right track'

'The information I received was very clear. I feel as though I understand where we are in the process for the first time.'

'Thanks so much. I knew you'd be able to help and point me in the right direction'

'You have been such an anchor of support and care and advice and never steered me wrong on my quest but I want you to know I really value you, your advice and your support thank you.'

'Thank you for calling me, it sometimes gets all muddled in my head so it helps to talk it through.'

'Thank you so much, there's no way I would have got this far if it wasn't for you.'

'You've been fantastic, thank you so much, we weren't sure what to do next, but I feel I know what to do now.'

'Thank you so much means so much to talk to someone. I am at my wits end.'

'A great deal of progress has been made regarding (child)'s education and you were a springboard for that to take off.'

'Thanks for all your help now and in the past it's good for me to know there is always help at the end of an email.'

'Thank you so much for all your help - I am so glad I contacted you - you have been so helpful and really explained things so well that I understand now.'

'Thank you for responding and making it seem like a less daunting process.'

'Thanks for your help - I really appreciate knowing we've got your support in the background'

'Thank you, I can sleep better now after your explanation and advice'

'This was really useful, helping me start joining the dots.'

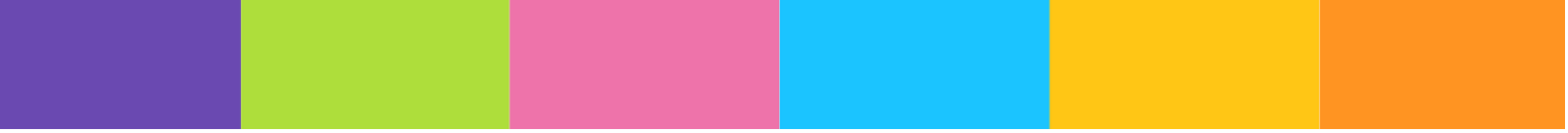
'Thank you, your service has been such a help supporting me and helping me take my next steps'

'Thank you, I think I have a bit of a plan that I would like to do next'

'Thank you that's so helpful to give me something to think about and a fresh pair of eyes.'

'Thank you, I feel so much less worried now I have spoken to you.'

'I have found the resources on your website helpful and have made use of webinars.'



'Thank-you so much, you can't always see things clearly when you're 'in it'. You've helped me think about a way forward.'

'Thank you for attending today. I feel it was a positive meeting.'

'Thank you, I feel so relieved after talking to you.'

'Thank-you for that, I hadn't understood that before now. Also, your website is fantastic!'

'Thank you so much, you have stopped me panicking.'

'Thank you, a fresh pair of eyes is just what I needed.'

'Can I just say thank you for ringing me back and for your advice, I felt like I was banging my head against a brick wall. You have restored my faith in mankind!'

'Thank you so much for talking this through and helping me with the email. That's amazing - thank you.'

'Thank you so much for calling me back...I feel much more positive about it [mediation] now.'

'Thank-you. The timing of your call was great, I have had a little cry this morning and your call has felt like my fairy-godmother.'

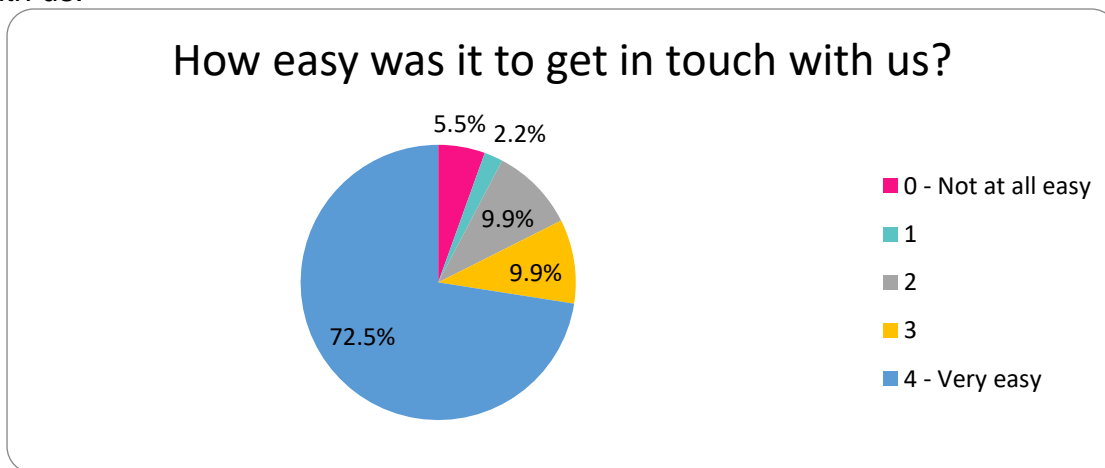
6. Service-user feedback

6.1 Online feedback survey

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

How easy was it to get in touch with us?

Due to high demand, we have found it challenging getting back to people within the 3 working day timescale that we aim for. Despite this, 72.5% of respondents said it was very easy to get in touch with us:

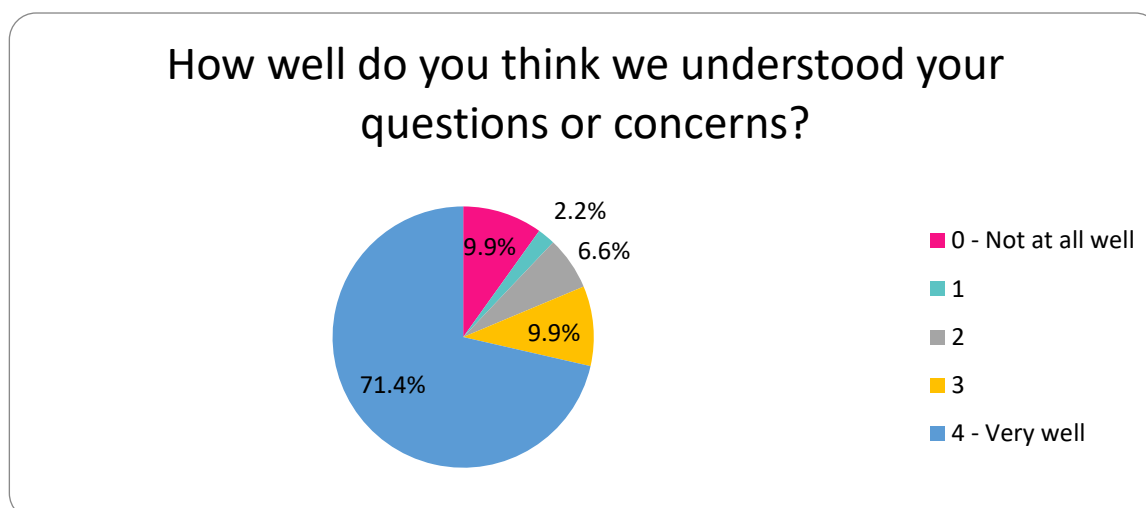


Other comments received:

'I understand that you are probably understaffed as every other department but having tried to ring several times then emailing with no response is tiring.'

'To have someone answer the phone, phoned many times with no response.'

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

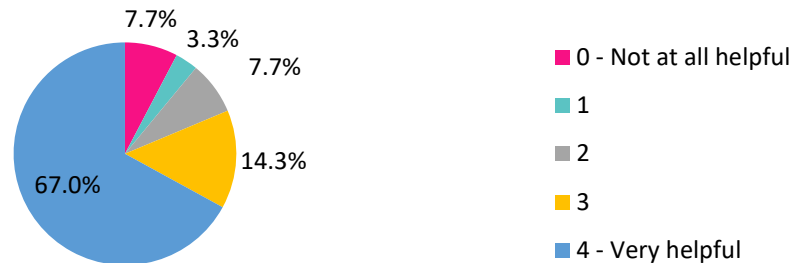


71.4% gave the highest rating.

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

The majority (81.3%) of responses found us to be either very helpful or helpful:

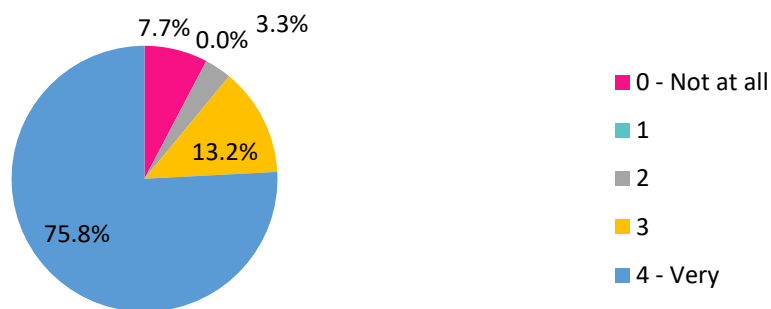
How helpful was the information, advice and support we gave you?



How neutral, fair and unbiased do you think we were?

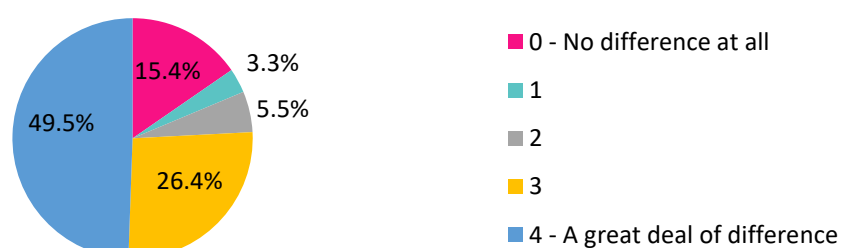
Pleasing to see that the majority of people using our service viewed us as being **unbiased**:

How neutral, fair and unbiased do you think we were?

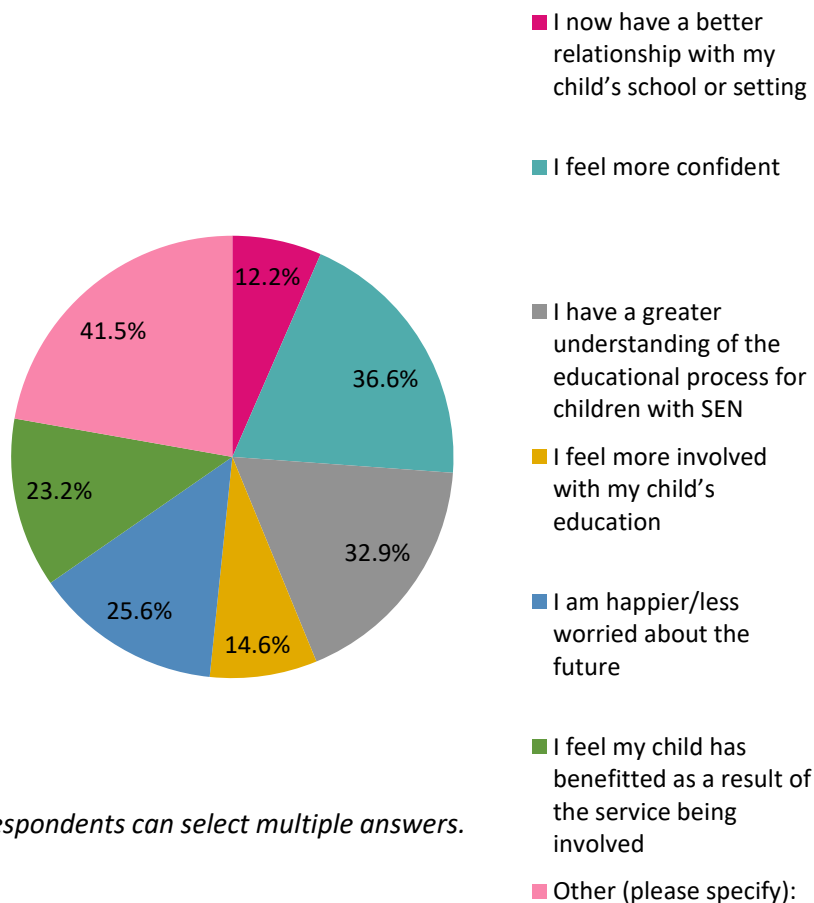


What difference do you think our information, advice and support has made for you?

What difference do you think our information, advice and support has made for you?



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



Respondents can select multiple answers.

Sample of 'other' comments received this reporting period:

'It has improved communication with the LA.'

'I have enjoyed knowing someone is there to listen even though you haven't been able to change the assessment refusal for my daughter.'

'At start of sendiass involvement but feel it's an excellent resource. Thanks I feel that more of the above may apply in future now I have lots of information.'

'I feel supported.'

'Easier to plan a way forward with EHC rejection and mediation.'

'Good to hear from someone with more knowledge of the situation.'

The chart here shows overall satisfaction level rating for the service.

Overall how satisfied are you with the service we gave?



We also ask how we might improve our service and recent examples (including our responses) can be viewed on our website: <https://suffolksendiass.co.uk/about-us/facts-figures-and-feedback/service-feedback/>

6.2 Training feedback

Very few attendees choose to fill in the online evaluation, which we send out after every session along with accompanying resources. Most prefer to offer feedback via Teams chat during or at the end of the session. In this reporting period, only 33 filled out an online evaluation.

Of these, and of those who filled in a paper evaluation for a face-to-face session in the autumn term, **100% strongly agreed or agreed** that the content was useful and appropriate, and the session was presented in a way which was clear and easy to understand.

All of these attendees, except one, strongly agreed or agreed that the session had also helped them feel more confident. The one who disagreed did not give a reason for this but gave positive comments for the session in the same online evaluation.

Sample feedback for the parent/carer sessions

'This has been great. To have the resources and information you have given is brilliant. I look forward to receiving the email and looking forward to sitting with my child and looking through things and visuals etc for him. Its fab to know we have the support and am incredibly grateful thank you.'

'Thank you again for all your time this evening. The SEND world is quite a maze to navigate and this session was instantly helpful.'

'So informative. There's nothing comparable to your service!'

'Super session and thank you for giving time for all our questions. SEN is new to me and am finding it all a bit of a minefield so really appreciate this – thank you!'

'We are so thankful to have Sendiass, you all have such a wealth of knowledge in helping navigate our way through this complex process. Thank you :).'

'Really helpful thank you! Learnt information I hadn't known about before as well as helping me feel more confident.'

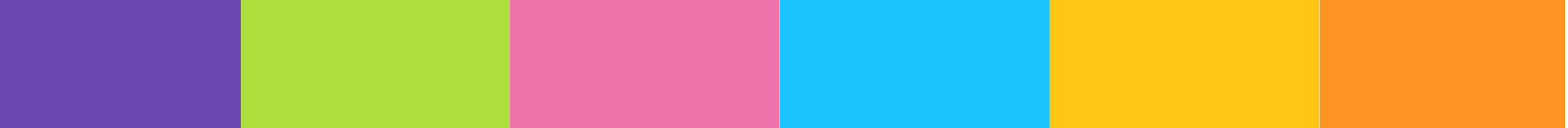
'I know more what to expect now. Especially helpful explaining the different sections of the EHCP and what to look for.'

'Really useful, I feel refocussed in what I need to do. Thank you.'

'Thank you for the information I'm now clearer on what help we can ask for and feel more confident to keep asking for help for both my children!'

'Thank you for a really helpful and informative session and for fully answering our questions.'

'I sat and watched your seminar with my 10 year old daughter, she was able to relate to nearly all of the things you went thru, and we found it very interesting and I was able to understand her world a little better, or as she sees things a little better.'



'Thank you, broken down really nicely so I can relay the info to family and friends that care for our daughter.'

'Thank you very much. This was so useful, alot to take in but helps to understand some of the behaviour of my son. which to us, seems odd, but I now understand.'

'Great knowledge to help me better understand my son and his way of thinking and behaving.'

'Thank you so much. I'm an EYFS practitioner and a parent of a child with ASD. This was really informative and hopefully I'll be able to help my daughter with some strategies you mentioned.'

'Thank you so much. This has been a very useful and helpful resource as I have an Autistic husband and child and I have found it hard to understand everything they are experiencing as they both have different needs.. So this was absolutely fab.. So much wonderful information. Thank you.'

'Really informative session and has given me a completely different outlook on how to deal with my sons 'meltdowns' '

'Thank you for some really useful tips on how to get the best working relationship with the school.'

'Given that this topic covered many different arenas and fields of knowledge-based examples, our trainer was able to transfer a very heavy session into examples that I could relate to and therefore store in my head in a much better capacity of understanding. It was an awesome and inspiring presentation! Allowing me to come away feeling empowered with knowledge and information, based around the legalities.'

'Thank you so much for the resources and I will be watching these this week. The course ran right at dinner/bed time and, as a single mum, it is hard to attend live so I am really grateful that they are available.'

'Just wanted to say a HUGE thank you for all the resources you have sent, they all look fantastic!'

Sample feedback for the practitioner-only sessions

'Very informative and delivered clearly. Thank you! Feeling so much more confident.'

'Really well tailored to our service. Thank you, really useful.'

'Great that the training was planned as bespoke so it was realistic to the work we do. Enforced the good work the team does too. Very good, everyone was engaged.'

'I'm going to take away the solution-focussed approaches and try and apply those to my communication with other members of staff and our staff meetings.'

'Will be sharing this information from this session as i feel it will help with any meeting with parent and getting staff to be more positive and help staff be more comfortable taking meetings.'

'Thank you so much. The meeting preparation email was really helpful. Also looking to the solution rather than the previous problems.'

'I feel I have always been close to my key children's parents, but I now realise that it's important to be working with all parents and being able to support them if needed. I feel that by having the relationship with parents we can offer the best support for the child.'

'Really informative session. It's helped me appreciate and understand SEN systems and support better, and the challenges for staff.'

'Thank you very much for the session- it's been a while since I've had any SEN training and this has been really helpful. It's reminded me of points I need to look at in more detail so that I can be more proactive in discussions with the Head.'

'Thank you – the session was really informative and helped me understand the complexities of SEND and the requirements of schools.'

Thank you, really helpful as also new to the role in a small school with almost 50% SEN, lots to get my head around!

'Thank you, especially helpful as I have only just been appointed as SEND governor.'

'Very helpful to me as an NQP SLT to learn about the EHC process.'

'Thank you. It was really helpful. I found it really helpful learning about how to talk to parents in difficult situations.'

'Extremely helpful, very upbuilding and given more confidence in talking to parents.'

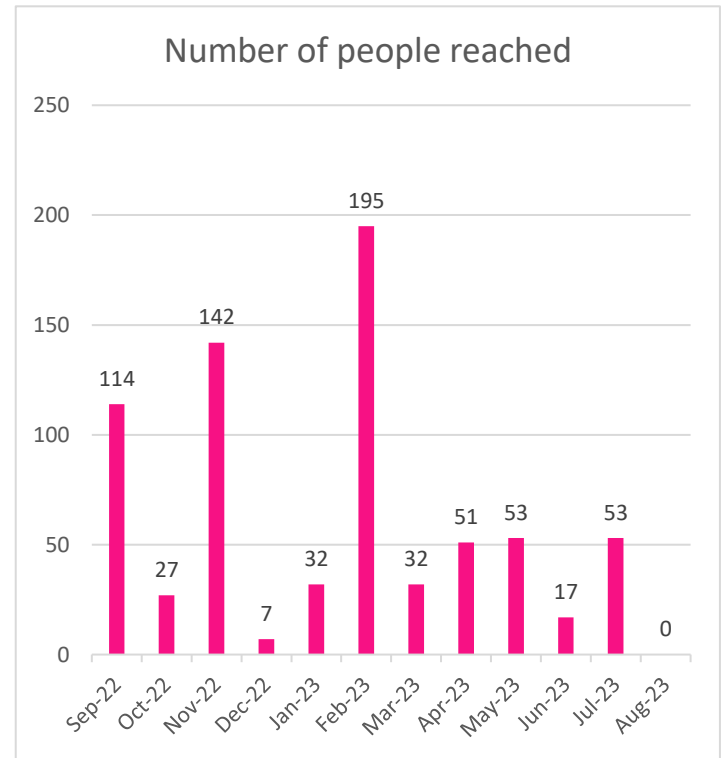
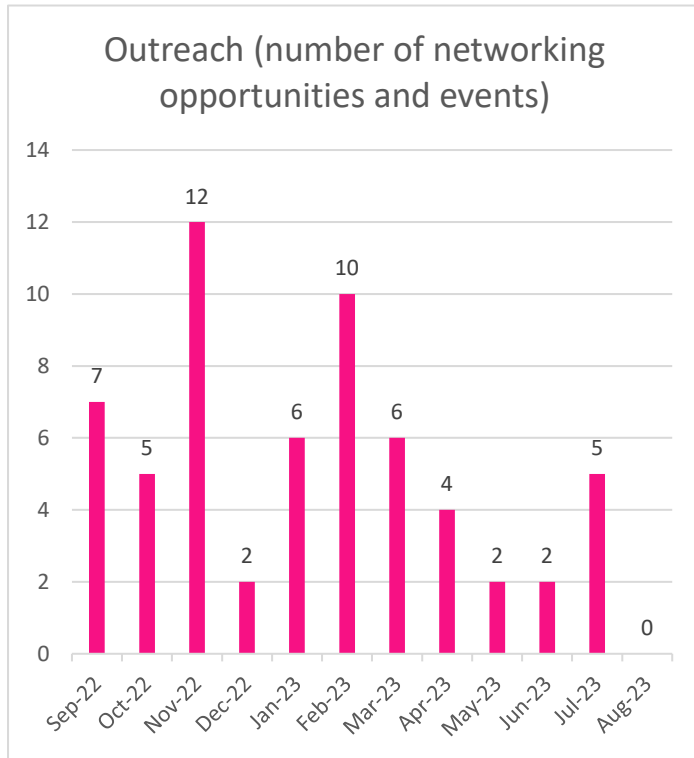
'Following your session I've produced a template pre-meeting email for staff to send to parents and a handout for colleagues regarding meetings with parents about a child's SEND. My colleagues are feeling more confident to speak to parents regarding SEND. If they are feeling more positive about it then they are more likely to give a good impression to the parents and make them feel more relaxed.'

'This was so helpful and really made me think, so thank you.'

7. Other development and activities

Community outreach

We have continued to seek out networking events and other opportunities to raise awareness of the service, this period we reached 723 people by attending 61 events (including drop-ins, coffee mornings and parent groups):



We have established links across the local community, and we will continue to expand our reach and awareness of the service.

We were pleased to be part of a successful trial of SEND Advice drop-ins in Family Hubs across Suffolk and look forward to joining these ongoing.

Informing and influencing local policy and process

‘The IASS works with local partners, including local parent and young people forums to inform and influence policy and practice in the local area.’

(2.3 national [Minimum Standards](#))

Sharing intelligence

Data reports shared with partners monthly and annually. This includes categories and themes of enquiries.



A summary of the key service activity this reporting period around informing and influencing local policy and practice is below:

September 2022

- Shared general experiences of families with Impower.

Offered to input to information which can be made available for parents and carers in relation to the revised local authority decision-making processes (EHC plans).

October 2022

- Review of Suffolk's specialist Learning disabilities and Autism Service.

Shared general experiences and themes of families that we hear from in relation to these specialist services, in particular, with the thresholds and criteria, with children and young people experiencing gaps. We suggested transparency about thresholds and the referral routes for families.

The service shared that families seeking support from SENDIASS usually do not have these specialist services in place and are trying to secure support and services which are available to them.

- Attendance/reduced timetables/anxiety.

Highlighted the upward trend we are seeing with families seeking support with 'Attendance' issues related to reduced timetables and anxiety/access to mental health services. Input offered to local authority services around pathways and information for families.

January 2023

- SEND Programme Board.

Shared trend that families are experiencing long wait times for children/young people's mental health services and the impact to their education. Highlighted that early intervention would prevent escalation (including increased demand for alternative, bespoke or specialist provision).

February 2023

- SEND Priority Leads.

Raised the lawful reasons to reject a parental request for a setting to be named in an EHC plan, in particular the concern around the use of the word 'full'. Discussion about being clear on which of the lawful reasons apply, when rejecting a parental request and communicating this with families.

- Local Offer development project.

Shared recommendations for information on preparing for adulthood on the Local Offer page.

- Informal discussion:

The finalisation of EHC plans for children transitioning to primary school, too late for support to be agreed and commissioned for their start.

Concern over SEND level one training, where wording does not reflect the robustness of the law and could lead to misunderstanding. (Linked to what was raised in SEND Priority Leads)

March 2023

- SEND Programme Board.

Input to discussions around the data presented by SPCF around the link with ASD and suicide risk.

Requested an update from the LA about the KPI's around Annual Reviews. (They were being revisited – scroll down to see entry for July 2021).

Shared that parents and carers coming through to SENDIASS tell us that are not always feeling involved in the APDR process and are finding they have to initiate discussion with SENCO's.

Deep dive into the NDD pathway – offered, and followed up by providing data for, referrals categorised ASD/awaiting diagnosis.

- High demand for the service.

March saw significant increase in demand for the service, resulting in 73 'referrals waiting' as of 31st March. A decision was taken and communicated to the local authority and partners, and with the Advisory Body, to pause new referrals to the service for the Easter break to enable essential catch-up by the team.

- Feedback to the local authority about the new EHC portal.

Concerns that initiating an EHC needs assessment request via the portal will be a significant barrier for many of the more vulnerable families in Suffolk. This may delay a young person or parent/carer being able to make a request (and cause delays for the child/young person getting the support they need).

Many of the parents we speak to cannot manage an email and may find the secure access daunting without help. Suggested that the phone number to ring, as an alternative to the portal, be made more prominent.

Suggested the idea of a phone call/email remaining as a way (a young person or parent) may make a request, which then would trigger the requirement to access the portal and allow further time to complete the family advice, or that their views can be taken over the phone. (ref. s36 of the Children and Families Act 2014, which says the parent or young person has the right to express their views to the local authority orally)

Clarity about the child and young person section (which section applies and at what age etc).

Within the online form, referring to a 'school of worries' or school of good things' may confuse some of the more vulnerable parents and carers with SEND.

Currently no option for a parent to upload a document (supporting information for the request).

- Local Offer development project.

Share recommendations for information on information, advice and support on the Local Offer page.

- SEND Accountability Board.

Shared there are far more families than the few who protested recently. Many parents and carers do not feel comfortable to raise concerns about their negative experiences and their voices are therefore not always heard by services.

Arranged to meet with the appointed Special Advisor.

- Understanding parental/family views, sentiment and satisfaction – Impower.

Met with Impower as they were keen to find out how we gather and use service feedback. Shared that we gather feedback:

Through casework – specific appraisal of how the person has viewed our involvement is captured in our database.

Outcomes (four categories are 'IAS needs met', 'IAS signposted', 'Able to participate' and 'Needs unmet'.

People accessing the service are asked if they would be happy to hear from us by email.

Those who consented are sent an invite to take part in an online survey.

Feedback received is reviewed and reported on monthly and annually.



Performance is measured nationally.

All attendees of our information sessions are sent an online evaluation and data from these is captured in our monthly reports, along with feedback shared in the Teams 'chat' at the end of the session.

Feedback received informs service development.

April 2023

- Preparing for adulthood – informing partners about SENDIASS support for young people.

SENDIASS have gathered views of young people and those that support them in a recent survey and are working on how it can support young people ongoing with providing information and advice in ways which work for them. Survey results to be published.

- Local Offer development project.

Reviewed content on information, advice and support on the Local Offer page.

- SEND Accountability Board.

Again, raised that the EHC portal was a barrier for some families and guided to the feedback provided in March.

Delays to issue of EHCP's within required timeframes – raised that a communications plan with families is needed.

May 2023

- Local Offer development project.

Shared recommendations for information on early years and childcare on the Local Offer page.

Reviewed content about health on the Local Offer page.

- Video to explain advocacy.

Began working with the Engagement hub to coproduce a video for young people to explain advocacy services. To include information about the specific form of advocacy SENDIASS can provide.



June to July

- E-learning – SEND Awareness.

We joined other practitioners and SPCF in reviewing and contributing to the local authority eLearning module around SEND Awareness, including the 'EHCNA at a glance timeline'.

July 2023

- Permanent exclusion – checklist for parents/carers.

Following a request from SPCF and a community supporter, drafted some information to help parents who want to challenge a permanent exclusion decision.

- 16+Transition Guide.

Input into discussion around preparing the check list for next year's Transition guide.

- SPCF SEND myth-busting document.

Reviewed and responded to draft information from SPCF.

- SENDIASS myths/FAQs.

In response to a suggestion from SPCF, drafted a document covering common myths and misunderstandings about the service.

August 2023

- EHC portal – draft guidance for families.

Reviewed and contributed to the local authority draft guidance for families around using the EHC portal to submit a request for an EHC needs assessment.

- SEND Employment Forum.

Joined the first SEND Employment Forum to explore how to support employers to support more young people with SEND.

8. Jargon-buster and useful links

Classification codes	How we specifically categorise the information, advice and support we provided.
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.