



**Information
Advice and
Support
Kent**

A service for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
– helping you to make informed choices

Information, Advice and Support Kent

Interim Service Report

30 September 2023

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**‘The service was exceptional. Helped with my anxiety.
Gave really good examples and were very practical and hands on’.**
(parent’s feedback September 2023)

Overview of IASK - Kerry Miles Service Coordinator

Information, Advice and Support Kent have had a very busy six months and experienced a **21%** increase in calls and emails to the helpline, compared with the same six-month period in 2022. During this time, we have recruited two Family Involvement Officers to fill vacant posts in North and East Kent. They have undertaken independent legal on-line training through IPSEA and virtual training to level 3 to support their understanding and knowledge of the law relating to special educational needs and disabilities. Both members of staff are working independently to support parents with preparing for meetings, assisting with paperwork, support with appeals paperwork and attending meetings and appeals with families who need that extra support to feel confident to have their views and thoughts heard.

As per parental request, we have continued to promote the service across the County at information roadshows attending six school parent groups and an SEN ASD locality event in Sheppey; providing market stalls at eighteen school and community events, this has included the Rise Expo, 2 special school moving on events. Attendance at two parent support groups. We have provided information to **241** parents, **63** children and young people and **235** people from various agencies and services from Kent, school staff and trainee Occupational Therapists physiotherapists.

Compared to the same 6 months last year, our face-to-face support offer for families who feel they needed our direct support rather than virtually, has reduced by **39%**. Virtual support at meetings has increased by **36%**, however the overall number of families receiving support either virtual or face to face is **333** which is the same as the previous year. **401** families have received support via bookable appointments and information sessions which represents a **38%** increase during the same time frame last year.

We have said goodbye and thank you to our Steering Group Chair, as he has turned 25, we wish him well with his master’s degree, and gaining employment in his chosen field. We have also said goodbye and thank you to other very supportive members of the group. We are seeking new members to join us, who can bring different experiences from the perspective of parents/carers and young people. The steering group will be up and running again with a new Chair by February 2024.

Impact over the six month period 1 April – 30 September 2023: (For full details of feedback please see Appendix 2, page 15)

The service has conducted user feedback surveys for cases that closed from 1 April to 30th September 2023. We sought feedback from **123** service users via telephone and email using google forms, which resulted in a **30%** response rate.

95% of respondents were likely (3*) or very likely to recommend the service to others

92% of respondents rated IASK as good (3*) or very good at being neutral, fair, and unbiased

(Note: A respondent scored one across all the questions, left no comments or contact details for the Co-ordinator to follow up).

97% of respondents found it easy (3*) or very easy to get in touch with us

100% of respondents felt IASK listened to their view

100% of respondents felt the information and advice provided met their needs

92% of respondents feel more confident

Ad Hoc feedback from service users outside of the usual survey: Email compliments direct to the service:

'Over the years working with you and your team at IASK, you've helped me tremendously. The support I have received over the years has truly been outstanding, every time I've called to get advice, I was always assured that someone will be on the phone to offer support. I really would not have been empowered to do a lot of things I've done in regards to my children's needs, if not for the wonderful support your organisation provides'.

'I want to say a massive thank you from the bottom of my heart to you X, for everything you have done for T and me over the whole course of the appeal and hearing. You have been amazing, you were always there to support and help me, your knowledge is amazing, and I will be forever grateful to you for everything. There isn't enough words to express how grateful I am, without you I wouldn't have been able to go through the appeal let alone the hearing. Thank you so much for everything'.

'The support IASK provided over the phone and through email was really useful and I felt prepared for the meeting by being sent this information'.

'We could not have done it without you, and I cannot thank you enough, I'm so grateful that you were there, your competence and knowledge got us the outcome that we needed and we are just so pleased and now relieved. You have made such a big difference to our lives. With huge thanks'.

'I wanted to thank you for all your help, guidance and support this academic year for myself and R'.

'Thank you so much for what you've done to help T! I'm so grateful for your wonderful ideas, support and guidance which without I could not have achieved EOTAS (Education Otherwise Than At School).'

Case Study 1:

BACKGROUND

Denise age 11 has a diagnosis of ASC, support provided through an Education, Health, and Care plan since December 2021, and due to transition to secondary in September 2023. Parent's preference was for a maintained specialist school, but all schools that the local authority consulted advised they could not meet needs due to Denise being 4 to 5 years behind her chronological age. The Local Authority named a 'type of school' in the final plan issued for secondary transfer.

Parent and Denise found an independent school they wanted to appeal for, but the local authority initially refused. During the process the LA conceded without consulting with parent and didn't resolve the issue by identifying a suitable alternative school. The original hearing date was vacated, and a case review hearing was allocated.

SUPPORT

Parent had difficulty understanding the paperwork and didn't know what her options were, when she found that her daughter had no named school. Parent contacted IASK and a Family Involvement Worker was allocated to provide support with understanding the appeals process and time frame. Parent received support to complete the appeal paperwork and was given key dates to speak with the Family Involvement Worker, to ensure that she did not miss any deadlines.

The Family Involvement Worker empowered parent to be involved throughout the appeal by supporting completion of the parental response; empowering parent to complete a working document and case review form; and providing information and advice to encourage conversations with the local authority to move the appeal along.

IMPACT

With dedicated support from the family involvement worker when required, the parent was able to manage the situation that arose when the local authority vacated the hearing without consulting parent. Following conversations and negotiations with the local authority to aid understanding of one another's viewpoints, the local authority agreed to name parental choice. This resulted in the parent no longer needing to attend the hearing.

Feedback from parent was that with IASK support she felt confident to carry on with the appeal and was able to keep going with appealing for the school that Denise preferred. Parent felt empowered to put her views across which led to the local authority agreeing to name the school of preference. Denise started her new school the third week in September and is very happy.

Case Study 2:

Background

Sue age 11, has a diagnosis of autism and attended mainstream primary with specialist resource provision (SRP). Despite spending about 90% of the time in the SRP, Sue still needed very high levels of support even during unstructured times. Sue was severely behind her peers, working at key stage 1 level and not progressing, even with the high levels of support.

When transferring to secondary, a mainstream school with an SRP was named in the education, health, and care plan. Concerns were raised by parent and the primary school about Sue's ability to cope in a mainstream secondary environment due to not coping on a reduced timetable, needing constant 1:1 support even within the SRP, not able to cope in the mainstream class at all, requiring support with social situations in the primary school. Sue was expected to navigate a large noisy environment with more children and dealing with multiple teachers with not a lot of access to the SRP. The secondary school also advised they could only offer key stage 2 level work, which would have been difficult for Sue.

Support

Due to her own needs parent came to IASK as she had expressed struggling with the appeals process, in particular the paperwork and how to cope in the hearing as parent needed extra time to process information. Parent had expressed she finds it hard to communicate with professionals, and get across what she wants to say and, also take in what is being said. IASK supported parent throughout the process and by taking each step of the process as slowly as she needed, mostly using MS Teams, to allow the caseworker and parent to look at documents together to discuss the contents, options, and next steps in the process. IASK were able to share information about what to expect at the hearing to help prepare parent to confidently engage with the process with support from IASK.

Impact

Initially parent felt she was not going to be able to speak in the hearing and was not confident to do this. Following the careful preparation, and IASK support on the day of the hearing, parent was able to fully participate at the hearing, confidently giving her opening and closing statements (that she had written) and engaged throughout. IASK asked for regular movement breaks and time to talk during the hearing when needed, and this allowed parent time to process information and plan a response.

At the end of the hearing, parent expressed that she was proud of herself and how she was able to get everything she wanted across, because she was able to play a full part in the process and the hearing itself.

Sue was awarded the school that her parent believed could best support and is doing extremely well. Parent's feedback to the service was: *'The knowledge, support and confidence I was given by X and others I spoke to was amazing. You always got back to me quickly'*,

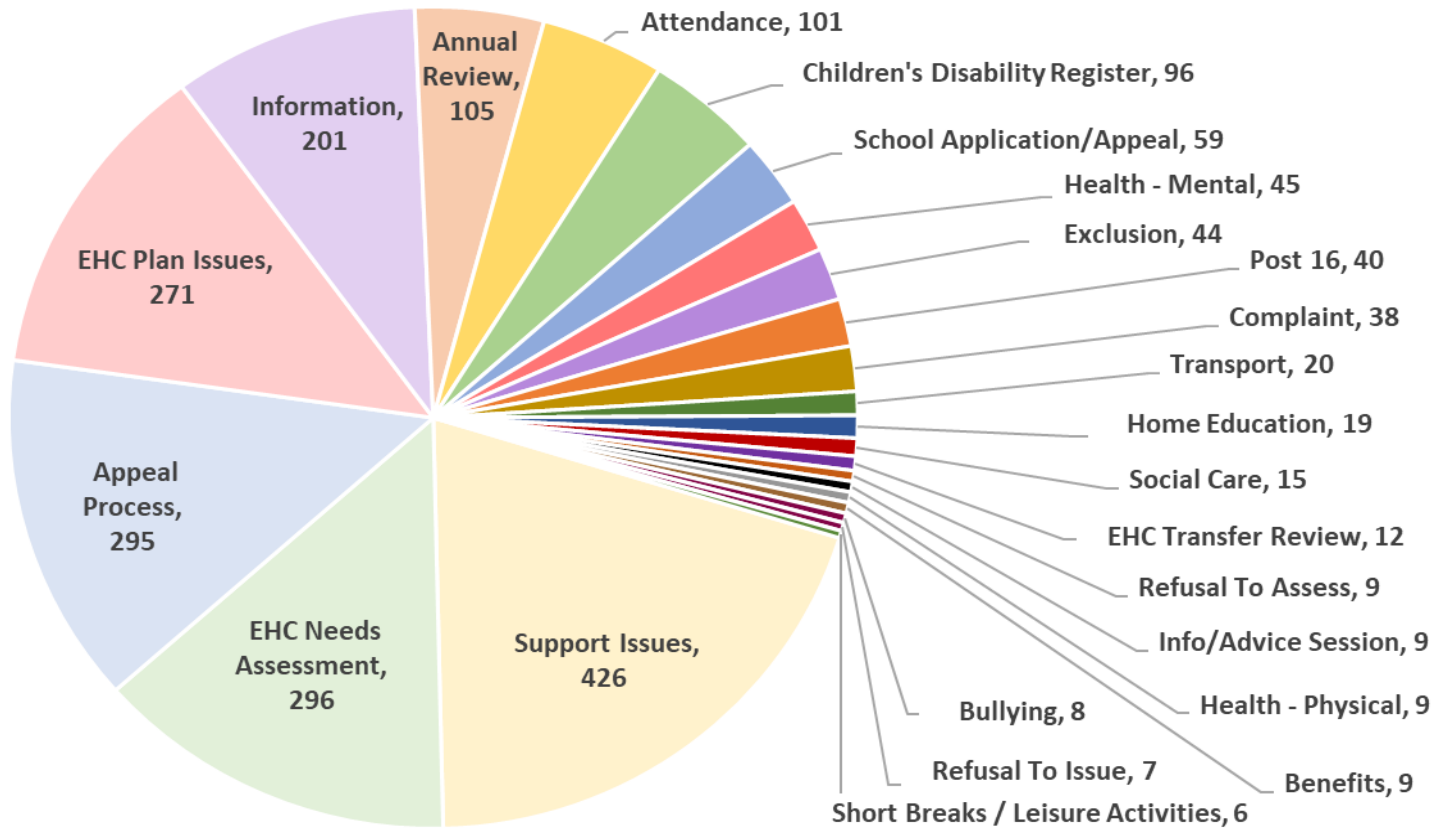
Service Outputs:

- **2813** calls and emails came through the helpline. Of the **2721** emails received, **1238** came through the website
- **2144** telephone calls and **3881** emails were recorded for all staff providing support to families
- **226** families have received support at meetings via video or telephone conference calls
- **387** booked telephone appointments – where we would usually have met face to face to go over paperwork
- **107** face to face meetings for families who would have struggled to have only virtual support
- **1013** New referrals for casework and **316** enquiries
- **23** virtual information sessions have been offered, with **36** attendees
- **115** young people over age 16 were accessing the service with support from their parents and **13** young people have received direct support from a caseworker with **231** contacts being made with young people
- **295** families have received information, advice and support relating to appeals to the SEND Tribunal, with **96** families being supported with paperwork and **54** tribunal appeals lodged
- Staff have virtually attended **4** mediations, **9** telephone case management hearings and Judicial alternative dispute resolution hearings, **16** tribunal hearings, supporting families who would otherwise have found it difficult to attend on their own. With IASK support **20** appeals were resolved before the hearing date
- Of the **296** families that have been supported through the Education, Health and Care (EHC) needs assessment **24** had support with the draft EHC plan and or support with co-production meetings, **10** had help with paperwork.
- **34** contacts included health discussions
- **121** discussions relating to social care of these discussions **15** referrals were recorded as the reason for contacting IASK, **6** referrals were recorded as queries relating to short breaks and activities
- Service attendance at: **6** Roadshows to school parent groups across the County, including an ASC event in Sheppey. **16** events providing a market stall including two moving on events; **3** virtual coffee mornings giving parents the time to talk, and **1** ASC virtual drop-in session Reaching **241** parents, **63** children and young people, and **185** people from various agencies and services from Kent, including school staff, trainee Occupational Therapist, health and social care colleagues
- An analysis of the of the data for the April to September 2022 compared to the data for April to September 2023 shows there is a **30%** increase in new referrals for casework, **50%** decrease in enquiries (enquiries are when the service provides generic information at Level 1 intervention level) this shows that there has been an increase in the service providing tailored advice and support. There has been a **7%** increase in case contacts.

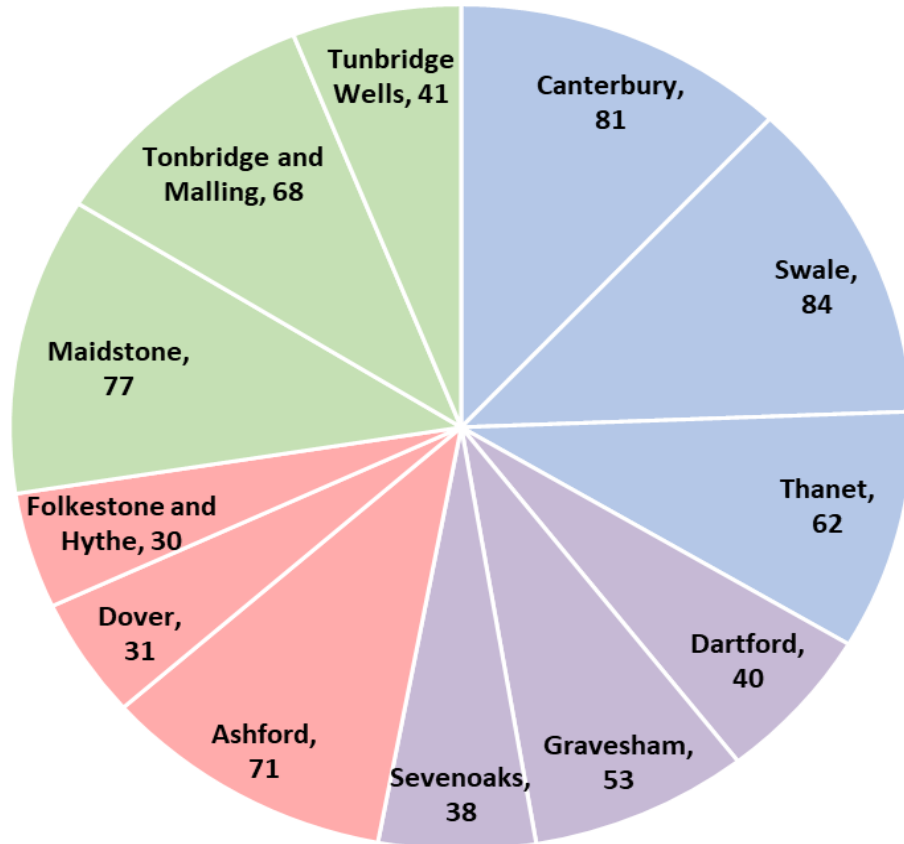
The graphs on the next 4 pages show referral reasons, referral reasons by district and main disability by district.

Please note: More than one referral reason can be recorded against both an enquiry and a referral for casework, which means the overall referral reasons is larger than the number of service users recorded.

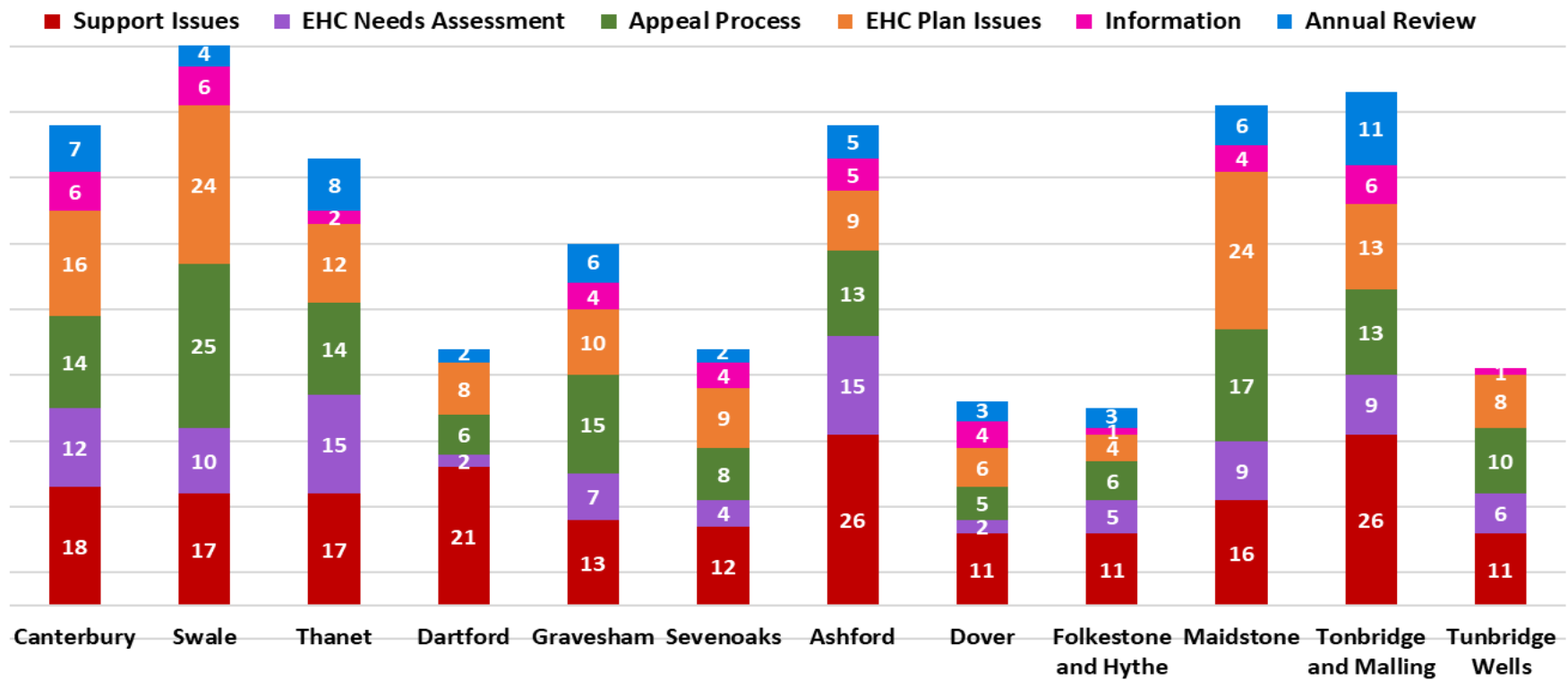
Total Referral Reasons from 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023



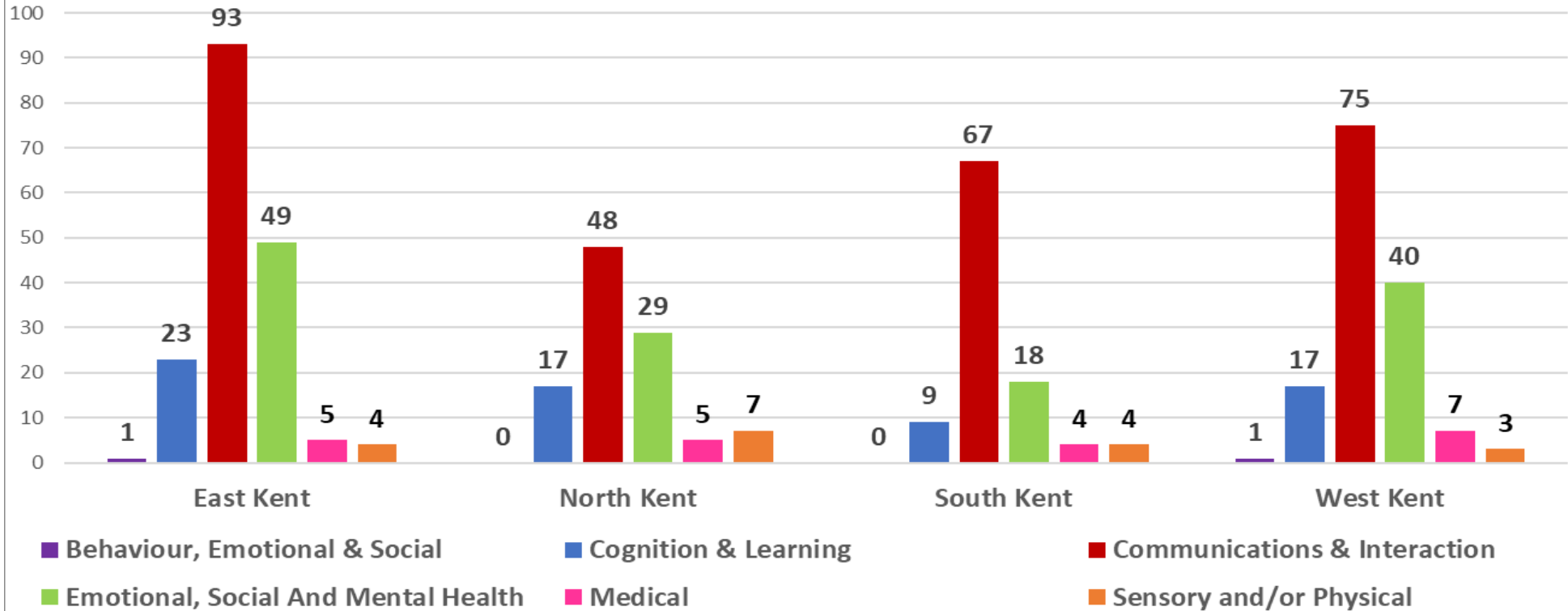
**Number of Referrals by District of Kent
from 1 April 2023 - 30 September 2023**



Top six referral reasons by district



Referrals across the four areas of Kent, by Main Area of Need as identified by the parent/carer or young person



Key Performance Indicators

IASK has mechanisms in place to monitor performance and these are reviewed monthly at team meetings.

From 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023:

100% of calls were responded to within two working days **exceeding** the target of 97%

100% of e-mails were responded to within two working days **exceeding** the target of 97%

97% of service users found it easy (3*) or very easy to get in touch with us, (Q1 user survey) **exceeding** the target of 90%

95% of service users found the service helpful (3*) or very helpful to them, (Q2 user survey) **exceeding** the target of 90%

92% of Parents had access to either virtual or face to face support at meetings when requested **exceeding** the target of 90%

Website Usage

Website use has continued to attract a lot of interest, with a total of **6,912** new users to the site and **23,803** page views. The top six viewed pages, excluding the home page, were: SEN Support and EHC plans, Frequently Asked Questions, Information Sessions and Drop-ins for parents, Inclusion and Equality, Appeals to SEND tribunal, Leaflets.

IASK Mission Statement

Information, Advice and Support Kent (IASK) believes children and young people thrive and achieve their potential when all partners (parents, children, young people, and professionals) work together to plan appropriate interventions and educational, health and social care provision.

Our purpose is to provide legally based information, advice, and support to empower parents their children and young people to make informed decisions.

IASK promotes working together based on mutual respect of the views, wishes and feelings of children, young people, and their parents. We are committed to providing a flexible and supportive service responsive to individual needs and to enable parents, children, and young people to be involved in decisions about education, health, and social care as it relates to them.

Service Overview

The Children and Families Act 2014 Part 3, Section 32 states (1) *'A local authority in England must arrange for children and young people for whom it is responsible, and the parents of children for whom it is responsible, to be provided with advice and information about matters relating to the special educational needs of the children or young people concerned'*. (2) *'A local authority in England must arrange for children and young people in its area with a disability, and the parents of children in its area with a disability, to be provided with advice and information about matters relating to the disabilities of the children or young people concerned.'*

Information, Advice and Support Kent (IASK) provide the information, advice, and support service for Kent County Council residents. IASK provides confidential and impartial information advice and support and operates at arm's-length from the local authority to ensure parents/children and young people have confidence in the impartiality of the support and information provided by the Service.

The Service focus is on education and health and social care as it relates to the child/young person's special educational needs and disabilities. For health-related queries the service signposts to Local Healthwatch, the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) and to SEAP for advocacy for health.

IASK has a steering management group which meets three times a year to monitor service operations. The Service Coordinator formally thanks the Steering Group for their time and commitment to attending meetings and supporting the management of the service.

Information, Advice and Support Kent Steering Group

Steering Group members:

George Whitney, Young Person from East Kent and Chair

Jan Gray, Parent from South Kent

Dana Aris, Parent from West Kent

Karen Ponte, Parent from West Kent

Sharon King, Parent from East Kent

Jan Smith Representative from the Weald Parent Support Group

Fiona Pender, Representative of Space 2 Be Me Telephone: 01622 764566 Email: info@space2beme.org.uk
Website: www.space2beme.org.uk/

Sarah Selby-Bird, Representative of SNAAP Telephone: 01227 367555 Email: info@snaap.org.uk Website: www.snaap.org.uk/

Nicola Bowden, Commissioning for Disabled Children's Services for Kent County Council

Siobhan Price, Education Officer, Mainstream Inclusion

Sue Gibbons, Designated Clinical Officer (SEND) for Kent and Medway

Kerry Miles, Service Co-ordinator for Information, Advice and Support Kent Email: iask@kent.gov.uk Website www.kent.gov.uk/iask

Information, Advice and Support Kent User Survey 1 April – 30 September 2023

For cases closed between the period of 1 April to 30 September 2023 a total of **123** parents and young people were contacted. We sought feedback from families who received more than 2 hours support during this period who are identified as receiving an intervention level 2,3 or 4.

37 responses were received resulting in a **30%** return rate

95% of responses recorded satisfied (3*) or very satisfied with the service

95% of respondents were likely (3*) or very likely to recommend the service to others

92% of respondents rated IASK as good (3*) or very good at being neutral, fair and unbiased

97% of respondents found it easy (3*) or very easy to get in touch with us

100% of respondents felt that we understood their questions concerns well (3*) or very well

100% of respondents felt IASK listened to their view

100% felt the information and advice provided met their needs

89% of respondents felt that the information advice and support provided has made a **great** deal of difference

Examples of the difference made:

83% have a greater understanding of the SEND Code of Practice and the arrangements that should be made for children/young people with SEN

92% feel more confident

75% of respondents felt their child has benefitted as a result of the service being involved

(Please also see charts on pages 4/5)

Comments about the service:

'The partnership with IASK has been instrumental for us! From the very beginning we had limited knowledge of our rights, of what our options were and how to get in touch with those who's assistance we needed. We have been supported every step of the way in incredibly timely manner each time. Once we knew we couldn't avoid going to Tribunal, wonderful X guided me through the daunting amount of information, making me fear less the unknown and guiding me through what I needed to submit and preparing me through everything that I was struggling with. X's support has been indispensable, not only was she there with clear and helpful answers, explaining information I struggled with, she was kind and sincere. I cannot thank her enough for it, as her helpfulness and compassion was what kept me going when I wasn't getting anywhere with LA. I have had IASK's support for over 2 years and I know I would not have been able to achieve what we have without it!!

'Being educated in an area I haven't previously experienced or understood. Help understanding what is available and what the school should be doing to meet my son's needs. Without IASK I wouldn't have gained the support or recognition from the school I desperately needed.'

'X was incredible, we sent through an appeal against the decision to name a mainstream school and she helped us immensely. She noticed an error the LA had made that we wouldn't have noticed. She really helped with things like that and giving advice. She let us know about things we weren't aware of and helped us keep on top of things'.

'X was just amazing; I couldn't have done it without her. She just knows her stuff. You are an invaluable service'.

'Given me lots more confidence'.

'I was really overwhelmed with the help and support I got; I don't think I would be where we are now if not for the service. X really helped us, it's been life changing'.

'Again we were overwhelmed with the help. X was there to empower and went above and beyond. We would thoroughly recommend IASK'.

'I went in blind and didn't know what I was doing but she looked at the tribunal application before I sent it off, thank you for all you help'.

'Absolutely exceptional staff. Angela is a credit to the team'.

'Already recommended. Very friendly and very helpful. All done in good time'.

'Went above and beyond. Really helpful, amazing help through the process'.

Suggestions to improve the service:

'It would be useful to be able to speak to advisor on the phone - whenever I have called it has gone to voicemail'.

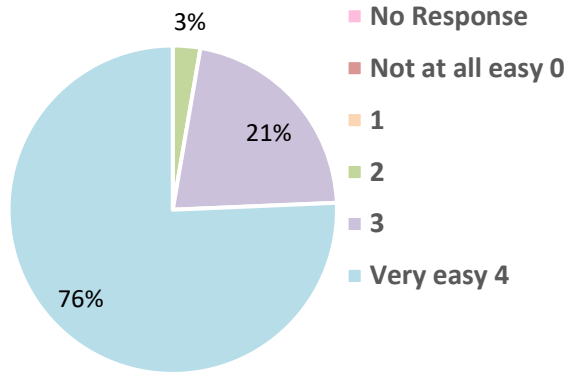
'The only thing was I needed emergency advice when my son ran away from school but I had to leave a message and there was a time delay getting back to me, though I appreciate it is a small team and I was happy with the service overall'.

'Communication, being able to get hold of somebody. That's me, I like things urgent, I don't retain information well'.

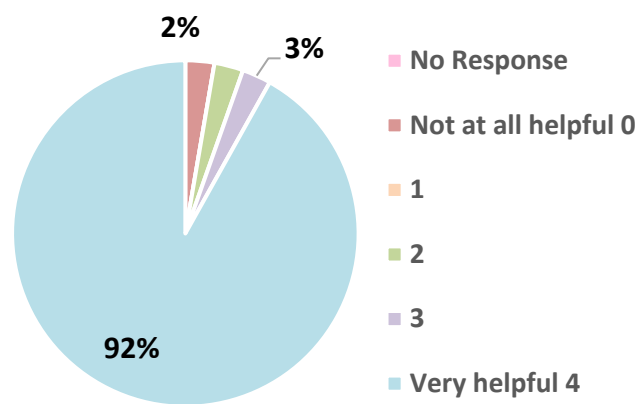
Following feedback from the Information, Advice and Support Kent User Survey 2022-2023 we have made the following changes:

You said	We did
'Need a follow-up discussion to make sure that the school meets their objectives and not slacken and need to get updates from the school to ensure they continue their obligations.'	Although this is not the service remit to keep schools on task. Staff do discuss further actions with parents/young people to empower them to contact school to chase actions and to ask for further meetings that the service can support at.
'There could be more prompts to coincide with statutory dead-lines'.	Staff diary further action calls when parents/young people are going through the statutory assessment process, or they are supporting with appeals. At other times families are asked to come back for support through the helpline to ensure their query is responded to within two working days. This also helps with the service capacity in meeting a high number of requests for support at meetings.
'IASK needs more people and more funding, even with the caseworker being so generous with her time'.	We have a set budget to run the service and therefore we have looked at different ways of working to maximise our offer of support i.e. virtual support at meetings and to support with paperwork instead of face to face. Workshops to explain processes and procedures. Attendance at support groups in the community to provide face to face support.

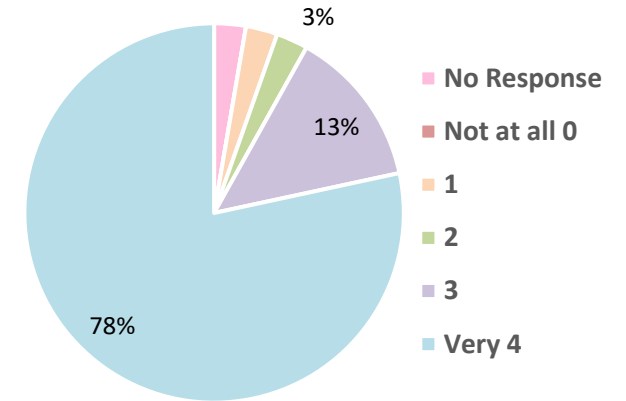
Q1 How easy was it to get in touch with us?



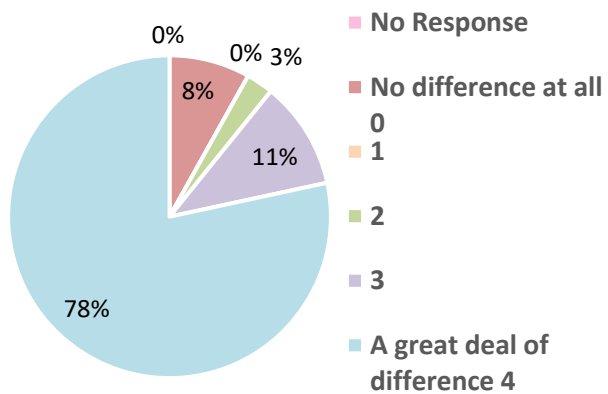
Q2 How helpful was the information, advice and support we gave you?



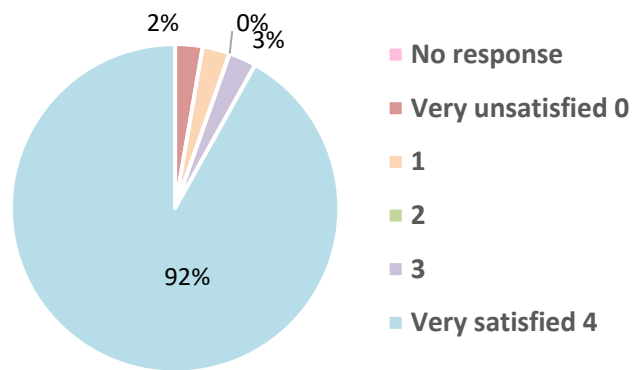
Q3 How neutral, fair and unbiased do you think we were?



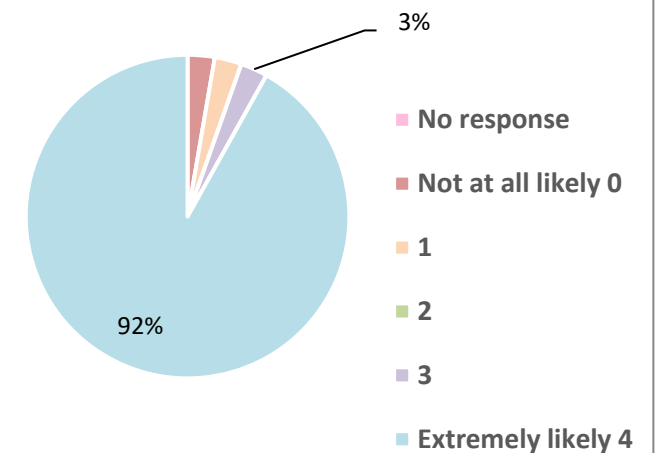
Q4 What difference do you think our information, advice or support has made for you?



Q5 Overall how satisfied are you with the service we gave?



Q6 How likely is it that you would recommend the service to others?



Q4b Can you tell us more about the difference(s) we made for you? (Please tick any that apply)

