



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

Annual Service Report

2017/2018

Information, Advice and Support Kent

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- helping you to make informed choices

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“I would have been lost without IASK support”.

(parent feedback survey 2017)

Information, Advice and Support Kent continues to deliver a high quality service to residents living in the Kent County Council Local Authority area. The service is well regarded as evidenced by the positive feedback from parents and referrals received from other agencies and services.

Introduction from Chair: It’s been a busy year for IASK with more emails and telephone calls to the service. Our young person’s independent supporter continued to increase awareness and use of our service to young people across Kent, which good work we hope to continue. George, studying at East Kent College, was elected as co-chair. With his direct insight we look to expand what we do for young adults and with young adults. I am excited to see how the service develops over the next couple of years.

Impact:

Information, Advice and Support Kent continually strives to provide a good service and to do this we seek feedback from service users. As part of the national data collected contact was made with the first 50 cases that closed in April 2017. Service users were contacted by telephone, the response rate to this method was 46% with a Service user feedback percent score of 89.9%. The national level of over 90% is an acceptable score, therefore, IASK plans to conduct the feedback survey differently this year to maximise returns.

The service also contacted 774 parents/carers who had used the service from August 2016 – end July 2017. The overall total of responses for 2016/2017 was 131. The return rate for the survey was 16%, which was the same as the previous year.

Majority of the feedback was extremely positive. We acknowledge that 4% fewer people found it easy to get in touch with us than the previous year and we have endeavoured to improve this by extending the triage service.

92% of responses recorded satisfied (3*) or very satisfied with the service

93% 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

85% of respondents found it easy (3*) or very easy to get in touch with us

Parents commented positively about the affect our service has had on them.

- *“It has given me the strength to carry on to see it through to the end. It has given us hope for the future”.*
- *“You answered my queries making me feel more reassured and feel supported. The service is good reassurance that you are doing things right”*
- *“My son has made progress at school and this is due to the help we received. The school have given extra help and implemented things that help him to achieve and be more settled at school”.*
- *“The confidence to apply and appeal EHCP and the right for the right school for my son. I would have been lost without IASK support”.*
- *“As a widow I needed someone knowledgeable about SEN to discuss/think out loud to, since my child's father could not help in decision making. I needed reassurance I was considering the right things of that my logic was not flawed”.*

(See Appendix 2 for further information about the survey).

The following case studies further highlight the impact of the support provided by the service:

Case Study 1:

IASK met B’s Mum at an event for children with SEN. Mum explained that her B was experiencing difficulties in coping in a mainstream school and was constantly being sent home from school because of severe behaviours in class. Mum received telephone calls most days from the school asking her to either go into the school to calm B, or to take B home. At this point the school were not officially excluding B. B had no diagnosis and no other outside support. Mum believed B had an underlying SEN which was a barrier to B accessing the learning environment.

IASK explained the law relating to unofficial exclusions and discussed types of support the school could put in place, together with information regarding the Local Inclusion Forum Team (LIFT), High needs funding and EHC needs assessment.

Mum felt that B needed an EHC needs assessment because B’s previous school had started to gather evidence because they felt B needed more specialist support. IASK explained that if the current school were not officially excluding they couldn’t build evidence to show barriers to learning.

Mum contacted the helpline following another incident when she was asked to collect B from school. Mum had the confidence to ask whether the school would exclude and discussed the law around unofficial exclusions. School agreed to exclude and a meeting had been arranged to discuss further support for B. Mum asked IASK to support her at the meeting.

Before the meeting, IASK contacted Mum to help identify the points she wanted to raise at the meeting. This meant that in the meeting Mum was able to confidently put forward her thoughts and feelings and to express her views about the unofficial exclusions. Mum addressed the fact that school had not been to LIFT, or applied for high needs funding despite B needing a high level of support in class. Mum also reminded the school that a paediatrician referral could not go any further because the school had not submitted their paperwork. Mum was also able to express that she felt B has complex needs that were not being fully identified or supported, and that he was just being excluded for his behaviour. School agreed to look into Mum's concerns and support the best they could.

A few days after the meeting, the school put B onto a part-time time-table because they felt they could not cope with B's needs.

Parent decided to request an EHC needs assessment and asked for independent support from IASK. This has included support with the initial request letter, appendix 1, support to understand the process and parental rights, and what to expect at each stage of the process. At Mum's request, IASK liaised with the SEN team to ensure all the evidence has been included. IASK supported Mum to go through the draft Education, Health Care Plan and the Education Psychologist's report in order for Mum to be able to respond to the local authority.

B has subsequently been diagnosed with ASD, ADHD and attachment disorder.

Impact: Mum had low self-esteem and always felt she isn't doing enough, yet she strived in every single way for her children and is an inspiration to others. Mum struggled with putting her concerns across because she never wanted to upset anyone. The information, options and support given by IASK has empowered Mum, so that she has been able to challenge the things she hasn't been happy with, in a positive way to move things forward. Over the past 7 months Mum has been able to express her concerns more confidently without upsetting anyone and the outcome for B is more positive. Mum concurs with this.

Case Study 2:

C had severe medical needs, confidence and anxiety issues which severely affected attendance and ability to engage in education. Relevant support was provided by the IASK service and an Independent supporter was allocated to provide support to the parent and child with an application for a statutory assessment. After a refusal and reapplication for a statutory assessment, following a deterioration of health, an assessment was carried out and an education, health, care plan issued naming C's preferred post 16 provision.

The family contacted the IASK for support with the Annual Review paperwork. Because the independent supporter had built a good relationship with C as well as the parent, the supporter was able to engage with the C to enable views and wishes to be formulated ready for the meeting.

Impact: The one to one support that had been provided periodically over a couple of years meant that C felt confident to talk through the process and prepare for the Annual Review meeting in advance. Consequently C was able to attend the meeting at the college with minimal support from her parent. C is enjoying the course, C's confidence and health have improved greatly and C is happy and engaging with College life.

Over the past year

The team has worked hard to successfully respond to a high number of telephone calls, emails and meeting requests. Although there has been a slight decrease of 6% in the number of telephone calls made by the service there has been an increase of 11% in email communication. The helpline has had a 7% increase in emails and telephone calls. Whilst the number of new referrals is slightly lower this year, typically cases are more complex, with parents and young people requiring a range of in depth support over a period of time. The number of face to face meetings has reduced by 32% which is as a result of two members of staff being off for a year with no extra funding to cover the absence. (See appendix 3 for further information relating to a comparison of service provision over the past 4 years).

The service has also provided the following:

- Regularly posting information on social media;
- production of a newsletter for organisations and services supporting parents and children/young people with special educational needs and disabilities;
- **with the support of young people**, a young person's leaflet has been designed and printed;
- 80 drop-ins delivered across the County with 217 people attending.
- three volunteers completed the training and undertook KCC training, 2 continued to undertake shadowing opportunities;
- young person's focus group set up in North Kent College
- continue to compile and update a comprehensive list of short breaks, activities, support groups and voluntary agencies that are able to offer additional information and support;
- received 37 invitations to attend a variety of events arranged by other organisations, schools, colleges and the voluntary sector for parents and young people;
- worked very closely with the Kent Parent Carer Forum, by attending all of the their Steering Group meetings and providing administration support to the forum;
- provision of Parents Participating Confidently training to Kent Parent Carer Forum members which was well received by the attendees;
- supported the Kent Parent Carer Forum with the provision of coffee mornings in three areas of Kent;
- provision of information and advice at four local authority SEND parent/carer information sessions;
- Independent Supporter for young people, as part of her development role for the service, has continued to be a representative on the national forum for information, advice and support services meetings for children and young people officers;
- Presentation delivered and well received to parents regarding post 16 options and annual reviews;
- IASK continues to be a member of the Kent 'Local Offer' monitoring group;
- IASK policies reviewed and updated as required.
- 260 young people age 16 and not in compulsory education are accessing the service.

Key Performance Indicators

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

From April 2016 to March 2017:

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%.

96% of service users found getting in touch with the service average to very easy on a 5 point scale (*Q1 user survey*) **exceeding** the target of 90%.

97% of service users found the service average to very helpful to them on a 5 point scale (*Q2 user survey*) **exceeding** the target of 90%.

90% of Parents had access to support at meetings when requested **meeting** the target of 90%.

IASK Mission Statement

Information, Advice and Support Kent (IASK) believes children thrive and achieve their potential when all partners (parents, children, young people and professionals) work together to plan appropriate interventions and educational 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 feelings, opinions and values. It is committed to providing a flexible and supportive service responsive to individual needs to give parents and young people the opportunity to be involved in educational decisions and outcome planning.

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.

Over the past three and a half years IASK has received Department for Education (DfE) funding through the National Children's Bureau and has recruited an Independent Supporter for young people. The purpose of the role is to develop working directly with young people who apply for an EHC Needs Assessment or are having an annual review of an Education Health Care plan. The independent supporter role was introduced so that young people can be offered their own supporter, in reality young people often prefer to work with the supporter alongside their parents. Young people once they have built trust with the worker have come back to ask for support and are engaging positively with processes in College with support of the independent supporter and sometimes their parents. The independent supporter has continued to maintain good working relationships with colleges and youth centres across Kent and has developed colleagues knowledge, so that the team have a good understanding of post 16 options.

The independent supporter role also entails developing the service, meeting with post 16 education and training providers and youth hubs to raise awareness of the service, and meeting with children and young people to encourage youth participation with IASK service development.

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:

Jan, Parent from South Kent and Steering Group Chair

Caroline, Parent from West Kent

Dana, Parent from Mid Kent

Cameron, Young person from South Kent

George, Young person from East Kent

Bonnie, Representative of Kent Parent Carer Forum Email: info@kpcf.co.uk Website: www.kpcf.co.uk

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

Natalie, Representative of SNAAP Telephone: 01227 367555 Email: info@snaap.org.uk Website: www.snaap.org.uk/

Jo, Commissioning Officer for Social Care for Kent County Council

Kerry, Service Co-ordinator for Information, Advice and Support Kent

Feedback from Information, Advice and Support Kent User Survey 2016-2017

824 surveys were posted to parents who have used the service at least once in the Academic Year 1 September 2015 - 31 August 2016.

116 responses were received resulting in a **16%** return rate, which is up on the previous two years.

Majority of the feedback was extremely positive with **94%** recording satisfied (3*) or very satisfied with the service

91% of respondents were likely (3*) or very likely to recommend the service to others

90% of respondents rated IASK as good (3*) or very good at being neutral, fair and unbiased

88% of respondents found it easy (3*) or very easy to get in touch with us

82% responded that the IASK service made a difference (3*) or a great deal of difference to them

Examples of the difference made:

46% have a greater understanding of the SEND Code of Practice and the arrangements that should be made for children and young people with SEND

51% feel more confident

54% of respondents felt their child has benefitted as a result of the service being involved.
(Also see charts on pages 12/13).

Comments about the service:

"I am more confident about raising my concerns and speak with confidence with school about my daughter's issues"

"Provide support when other agencies failed to do so".

"All staff are very understanding and never fob me off with unknowns".

"Very helpful + IASK never judges and always listens to what families needs are also if ask advice always given a neutral honest answer(s)".

"Used advice to secure specialist college placement".

"Member of the team visited and helped me complete paperwork which helped me understand better".

"Member of the team filled me with confidence and made a real difference".

"I felt empowered and supported and much more confident to speak to relevant authorities".

“Since one of your people accompanied me to a school meeting school has taken more notice of my child’s needs and implemented some of the recommendations made by the hospitals O.T”.

Suggestions to improve the service:

I understand you can't speak to people straight away. I had to wait 2 days for a reply. Your staff were very helpful but sometime you need to speak and understand LEA procedures a little quicker, or be reassured sooner. Thank you.

A follow-up telephone call maybe - just to see what was going on.

It would have been better if we had met prior to my appointment with the college.

The lady had a meeting after mine, which was running late. A talk after would have been good, by phone.

There is a definite perception among SEN parents that Parent Partnerships and equivalents are not independent from the L.A. (due to funding). I do think addressing this perception and being more available to the public (rep at support group) meetings would be useful.

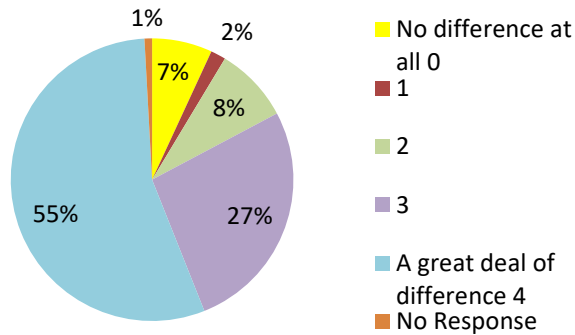
More people to help. Larger service.

Following feedback from the Information, Advice and Support Kent User Survey 2014-2015 we have made the following changes:

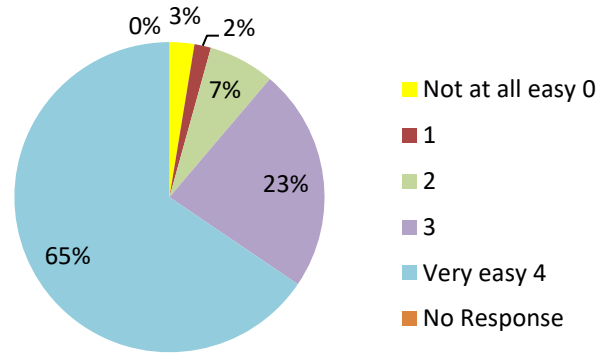
You said	We did
To keep in contact + follow up reviews to what is - or - being done.	The service has changed its policy and will be providing follow up calls where appropriate.
More staff! I had to leave a message, you got back to me which was fine but sometimes you need on-the-spot advice, if you've had a tricky day with school.	The Service has recruited to a 0.8 fte position to support the helpline.
More drop ins at children centres and local community centres.	Over the past year IASK has offered a variety of drops in the local areas with 11 extra than the previous year.
Advertise' yourselves better - easier access to the phone number etc. Perhaps a Facebook page - there are many SEN forum pages you could post on.	There are an increased number of places promoting the service including young people’s venues and Colleges. We now have a Facebook page: Information, Advice and Support Kent
Maybe have volunteer outreach workers in other areas. There is a lack of events etc in the Deal area.	A Dover Information Event was jointly delivered with Kent Parent Carer Forum in March 2016.

Information, Advice and Support Kent User Survey 2015-2016 Charts

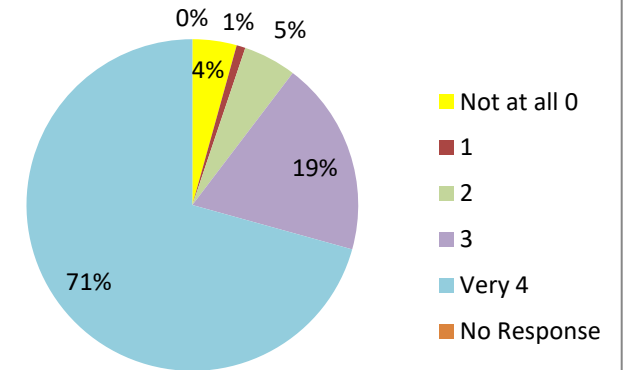
What difference do you think our information, advice or support has made for you?



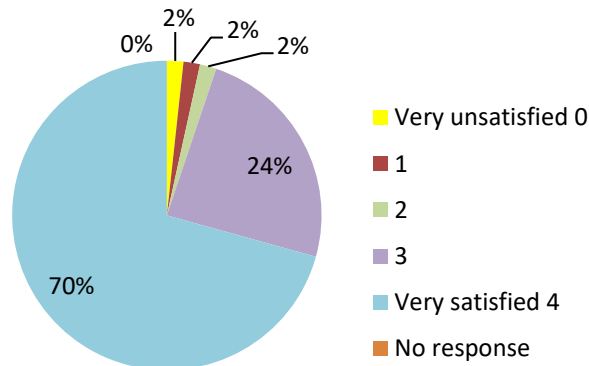
How easy was it to get in touch with us?



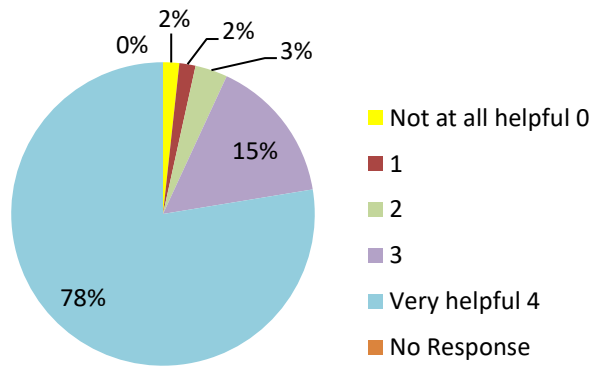
How neutral, fair and unbiased do you think we were?



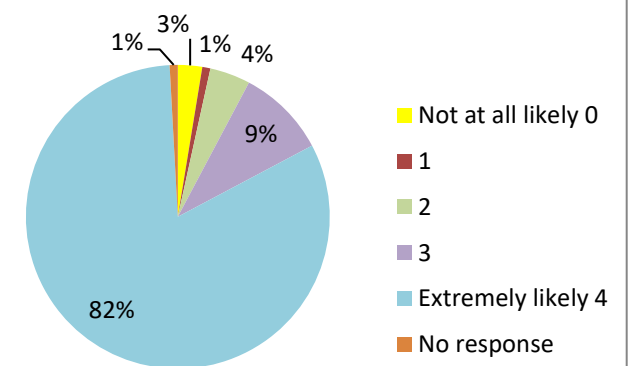
Overall how satisfied are you with the service we gave?



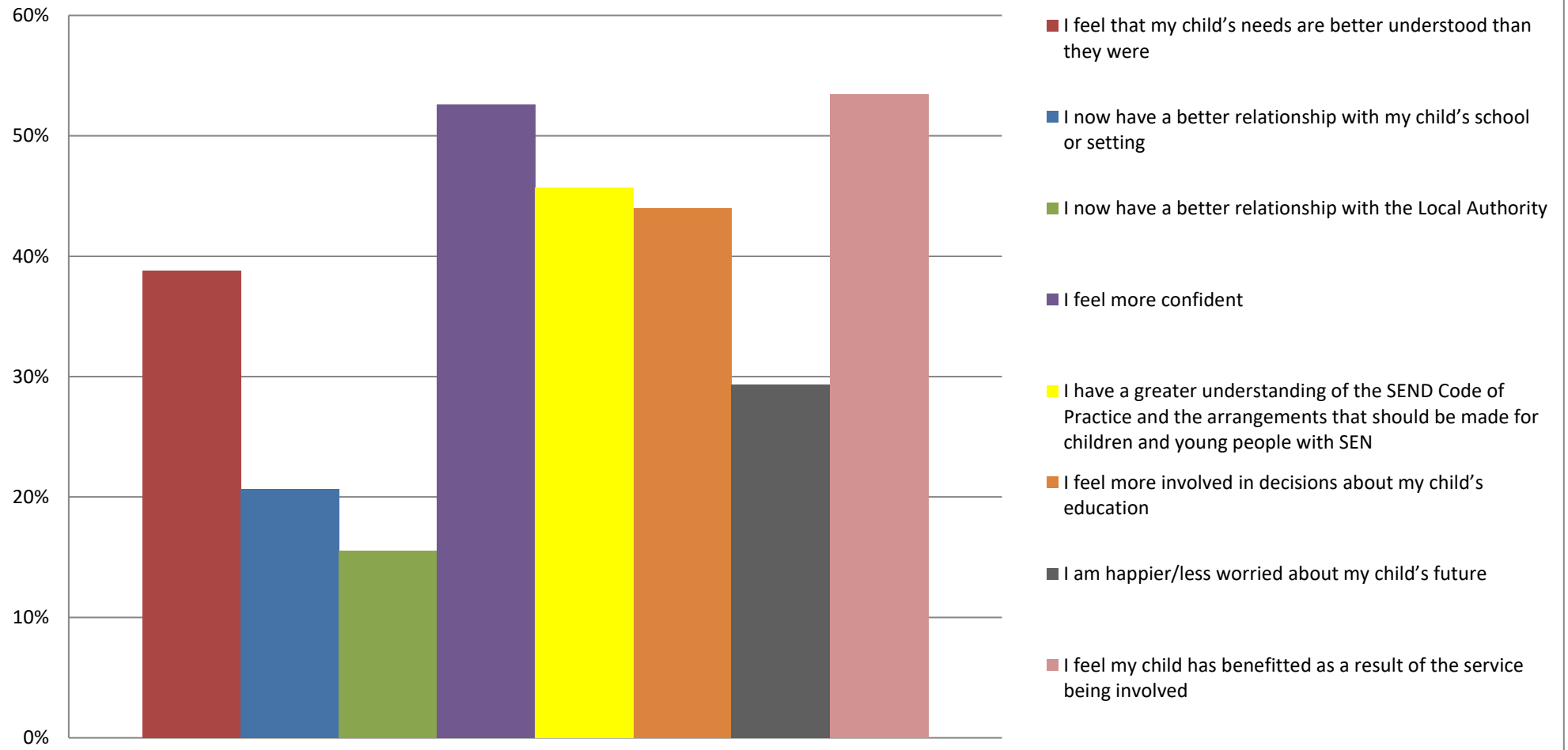
How helpful was the information, advice and support we gave you?



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



Can you tell us more about the difference(s) we made for you?



Information, Advice and Support Kent comparison of service provision over the past four years:

	April 2014 - March 2015	April 2015 - March 2016	April 2016 - March 2017	April 2017 March 2018	Percentage Increase/ decrease from previous year
Enquiries	386	611	606	548	- 9
New Cases/referrals	862	883	827	794	- 4
Total telephone calls	2719	2709	3219	3028	- 6
Total email	1587	2180	2603	2924	+ 11
Helpline emails/tel. calls	-	-	3066	3300	+ 7
Face to Face meetings	628	784	812	545	- 32