



**Information
Advice and
Support
Kent**

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

Annual Service Report

2018/2019

Information, Advice and Support Kent

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Contents

Introduction from Chair	3
Impact	4
Case Studies	5
Past year	7
Key Performance Indicators	8

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Steering Group Members	10
Appendix 2 User Survey Feedback 1 September 2018 31 March 19	11
Appendix 3 Comparison of service provision over the past four years	16

‘Couldn’t fault it. Every time I called, I had help straight away and always felt listened to and supported’

(parent feedback survey 2018/2019)

Information, Advice and Support Kent, Kerry Miles Service Coordinator

We have had an exceptionally busy year, with an increased demand for the service. As from October 2018 we have been supporting parents with paperwork and preparation for appeals to the SEND Tribunal, up to and including attendance at tribunal, with follow up support as required.

We applied for funding to the value of £32,000 through the National Information, Advice and Support Programme funded by the Department for Education. This required IASK to carry out a self-review to identify how well the service is performing against the new Minimum Quality Standards for Information Advice and Support Service. The report highlighted areas for improvement as identified by the service users and staff. Service users were invited to take part in focus groups to co-produce and prioritise service developments and make suggestions for how to implement the changes over the next two years to ensure IASK are meeting the Minimum Quality Standards.

We completed five bids and were successful, being granted £41,900 to fund developments in the service during 2019-2020. Using the IAS Programme funding the service has recruited to a temporary, part-time, Participation and Engagement Officer for 30 hours a week. The post holder will support delivery of the developments and to increase engagement with service users across the County.

We are currently looking to increase our steering group membership.

Introduction from Chair – Jan Gray:

It has been an extremely busy year for us: there has been a big increase in the use of our service; the Ofsted and CQC SEND inspection of Kent; several successful bids for funding and initiating a completely new independent website. We aim to expand the scope and use of our service especially with the exciting new website. Sharon and George spearheaded research into the website design features, from this basis Kerry sought preferences and views on best examples from parents, carers, children and young people throughout Kent. We received high quality responses, which is the basis of the design we are pursuing. We are looking forward to an exciting new year and the launch events will be taking place throughout Kent.

Impact:

The service has conducted user feedback surveys for cases that closed, up to December 2018 and up to 31 March 2019. We sought feedback from service users who received more than 2 hours support during this period who are identified as receiving an intervention level 2,3 or 4. We received only a few responses to an email survey sent to service users who had received a level 1 intervention.

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

95% of respondents rated IASK as good (3*) or very good at being neutral, fair and unbiased

92% 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% felt IASK provide a confidential service

77% feel more confident

For full details about the user feedback responses, please see Appendix 2.

Case Study 1:

Parent wished to appeal against named school on EHCP. Local Authority named a mainstream school. Parent, School and other professionals felt that specialist provision was more suitable.

IASK explained options and supported the parent by attending a ways forward meeting to ascertain LA position regarding the named provision. The parent requested support with completion of paperwork to lodge an appeal to the tribunal as the parent felt the ways forward meeting was not successful, and parent did not wish to go to Mediation.

IASK fully explained the process, procedures and time frame for appealing. IASK supported the parent with focussing on the reasons for the appeal. The parent had the opportunity to talk through the reasons and to seek affirmation that the reasons would be acceptable to the tribunal. This helped parent to feel confident to complete the appeal paperwork.

Once the appeal had been accepted, the parent kept in contact with IASK in order to seek advice and support along the way. IASK were able to talk through each step of the process when the parent felt the need for support, this included discussions related to explaining about following case directions from the Tribunal; completing responses to LA documentation; formulating questions for the tribunal and witness; preparing paperwork for the hearing; explanation and support to understand the procedure at the hearing.

IASK provided ongoing support and clarification via face to face, telephone and Email correspondence from January – July 2019 a total of 10 hours 25 minutes of support.

Impact:

Parent was able to confidently put together her response to LA independently.

Parent was able to work with LA to complete a working document and agreed to all changes to section B and F ahead of tribunal hearing, which resulted in LA agreeing to place the child in specialist provision without the need to go to tribunal.

Parent said that IASK had empowered her by providing the knowledge and support that gave her the confidence to go to the hearing on her own and to work with the LA.

Case Study 2:

IASK were requested to support with appeals paperwork late on in the procedure. The first hearing adjourned due to lack of evidence related to the child's complex needs, despite support from IASK to obtain the necessary information.

IASK continued to provide support to the parent who wanted our service to take over the responsibility for preparing parent's case for the next hearing. By providing good explanation about the next steps and encouraging the parent to put together their own information and evidence to support the case, the parent started to gain a good understanding of what they were aiming to achieve from the process.

With support to prepare for a telephone case management discussion, the parent was able to confidently put forward views, feelings and information as required to move the case forward without support from the service on the day.

IASK focussed the parent in order to empower the parent to write their opening and closing statement in readiness for the hearing date. The parent began to form a clear rationale about the case and was able to confidently work with the LA to make changes via a working document. Parent requested IASK support at the hearing (parent had no family support). On the day of the hearing IASK supported parent to understand and make notes for responding to late evidence submitted to the tribunal by the LA. This helped the parent when presenting the case at the hearing.

Impact:

As a result of IASK support the parent was fully prepared for the hearing. The parent understood the paperwork, knew exactly what they wanted to get across to the tribunal and the questions that needed to be asked. The parent appreciated the LA viewpoint and was also able to understand the case from the school's perspective. This allowed for good discussions and the ability to negotiate in order to seek an outcome that both parties could agree.

Although IASK's contribution to the discussions at the hearing were minimal, the parent thanked IASK for everything the service had done to support before and during the hearing. Parent said they felt more confident to put forward the case because of the preparation support beforehand, because it enabled them to understand the LA paperwork and what the parent needed to focus on. The parent also felt the IASK's presence on the day was like a 'safety blanket', someone to turn to if needed during the process.

Over the past year

The team has worked hard to successfully respond to a higher number of enquiries, telephone calls, emails and meeting requests. The helpline has had a 15% increase in emails and telephone calls. Whilst the number of new referrals is fractionally lower this year, typically cases are more complex, with parents and young people requiring a range of in-depth support. Callers contacting the service for more general information (recorded as an 'enquiry'), has increased hugely, this correlates with an increase in emails to the service which are not classed as a referral or a case. The number of face to face meetings is increasing now as a result of staffing levels stabilising over the past year. (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:

- 94 drop-ins delivered across the County with 244 people attending.
- recruited two new volunteers, one who is fully trained and supports obtaining service user feedback. Another new volunteer has started the training process.
- received 23 invitations to attend a variety of events arranged by other organisations, schools, colleges, health and the voluntary sector for a range of service users, either providing a market stall or delivering a presentation;
- 25 children and young people up to age 18, and 9 young people age 19 to 25 are accessing the service independently or with support from their parents;
- the service has provided 97 families information, advice and support relating to appeals to the SEND Tribunal. 75 of these families have received support regarding process and procedure, 22 have received intervention level 4 support with paperwork and staff have attended 3 tribunal hearings to support families who would otherwise have found it difficult to attend on their own.
- training delivered and well received by the four parents who attended a workshop about the Statutory Assessment process;
- continuing 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;
- IASK policies reviewed and updated as required.
- regularly posting information on social media;
- production of a termly newsletter for organisations and services supporting parents and children/young people with special educational needs and disabilities;
- the service continues to be a regular participant at the South East Regional Information, Advice and Support Services network meetings. The service also regularly attends a National meeting specifically relating to working with children and young people.
- 35% increase in contacts relating to the provision of information and responding to queries about social care and the disability register.

Key Performance Indicators

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

From April 2018 to March 2019:

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%.

92% of service users found it easy (3*) or very easy to get in touch with us, (*Q1 user survey*) **exceeding** the target of 90%.

94% of service users found the service helpful (3*) or very helpful to them, (*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 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.

The funding for the Independent Supporter for young people finished in August 2018. The service is now receiving funding through the Information, Advice and Support Programme from the Department for Education (DfE) to support meeting the National Minimum Standards for Information, Advice and Support Services.

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 Gray, Parent from South Kent and Steering Group Chair

George Whitney, Young person from East Kent – Co-Chair

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/

Matt Wellard, Commissioning Officer for Social Care for Kent County Council

Louise Burgess, Head of SEN A&P (commissioning from Education)

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

Feedback from Information, Advice and Support Kent User Survey 2018-2019

135 surveys conducted over the telephone and emailed/posted to parents and young people whose cases closed between the period of 1 September 2018 - 31 March 2019. We sought feedback from service users who received more than 2 hours support during this period who are identified as receiving an intervention level 2,3 or 4.

47 responses were received resulting in a **35%** return rate.

Majority of the feedback was extremely positive with **96%** 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

95% of respondents rated IASK as good (3*) or very good at being neutral, fair and unbiased

92% of respondents found it easy (3*) or very easy to get in touch with us

96% 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 IASK provide a confidential service

96% felt the information and advice provided met their needs

81% of respondents felt that the information advice and support provided has made a **great** deal of difference

Examples of the difference made:

74% have a greater understanding of the SEND Code of Practice and the arrangements that should be made for children/young people with SEN

77% feel more confident

74% of respondents felt their child has benefitted as a result of the service being involved

Comments about the service:

'Knowing that there is somebody there. Never feels rushed and it has been really helpful for us'.

'One of the few who always return my calls. You have never let me down'.

'Couldn't fault it. Every time I called I had help straight away and always felt listened to and supported'.

Family Involvement Worker 'really understood my son and his needs. She helped me with the paperwork which I struggled to understand. After such a battle she made me feel not judged and at ease'.

'I wish I had known about the service earlier and before all the problems happened. I feel any EHCP or SEN child/family should be automatically told about IASK by KCC'.

'Amazing service with amazingly knowledgeable staff'.

'X helped with difficult information and supported me to understand the processes'.

'I could not have done it without your help. My son got into a new school. Your service is amazing'.

'You've always helped at short notice'.

'Feel much more confident about dealing with everything'.

'IASK gave me lots of information and options that ultimately got my child into education – he is now settled in a specialist school'

'Having someone from an outside service school listened to me more. Someone who is impartial which really helped in a school meeting. X was fantastic'.

'More understanding of the whole process and helped her husband understand it as well'.

'IASK made a difference and good support but the outcome was not what I wanted'.

Suggestions to improve the service:

'Tribunal – would have been nice to have somebody with us'.

'Follow up calls would have been nice'.

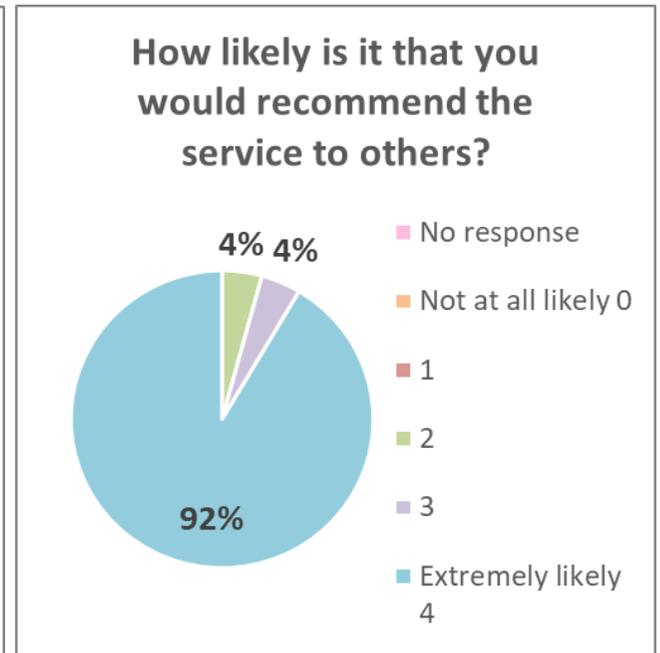
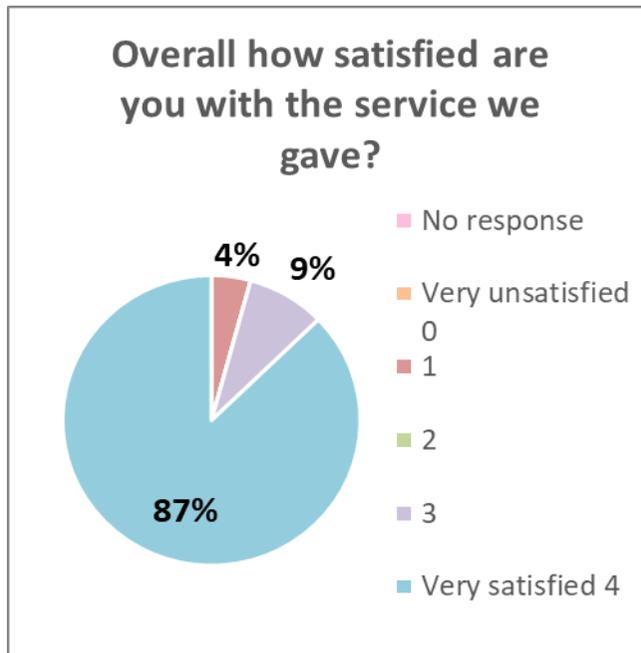
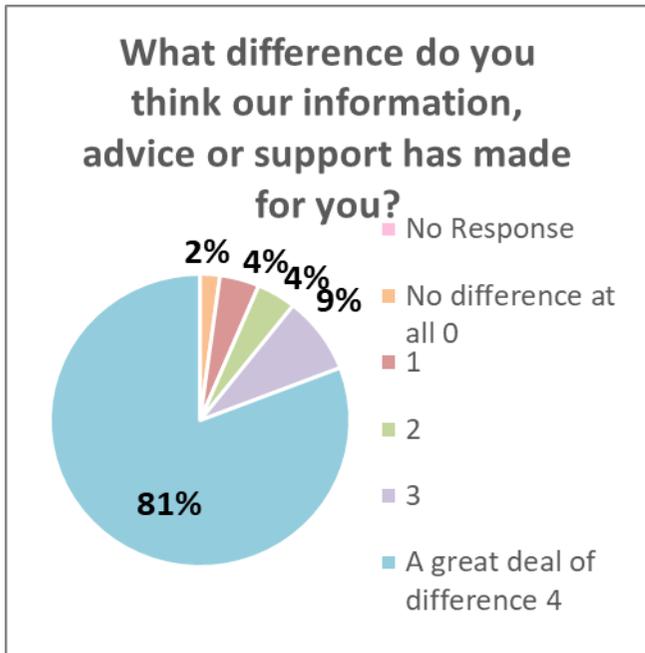
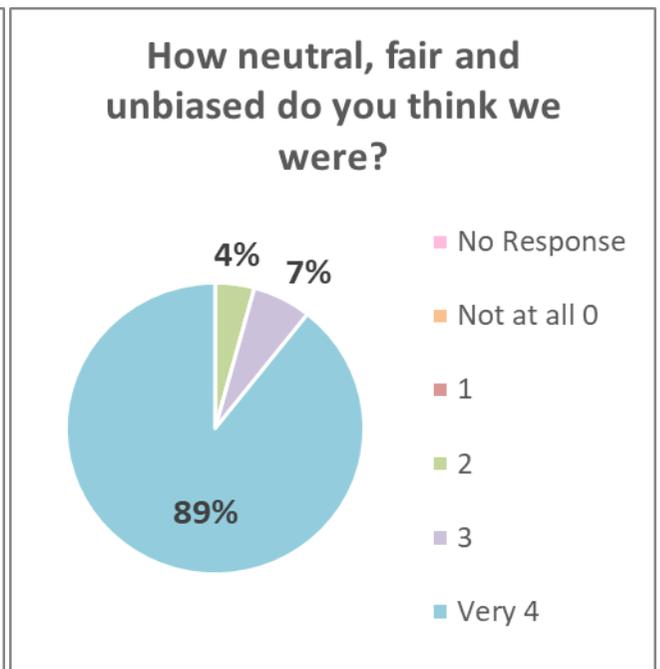
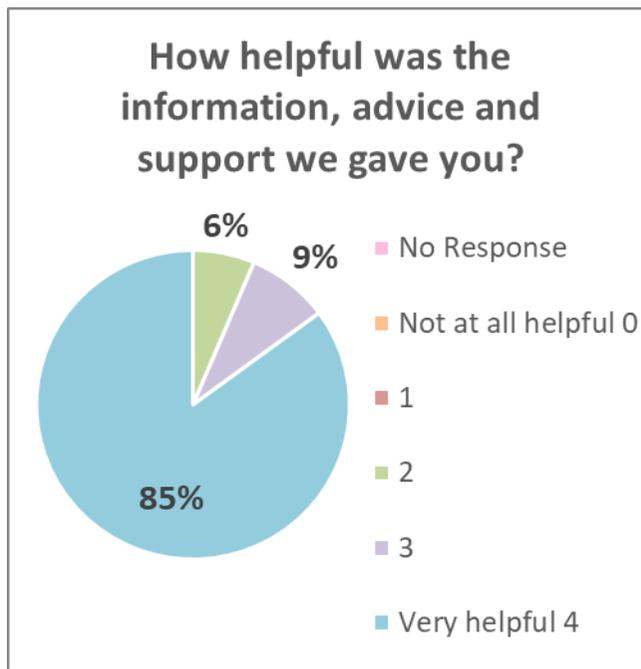
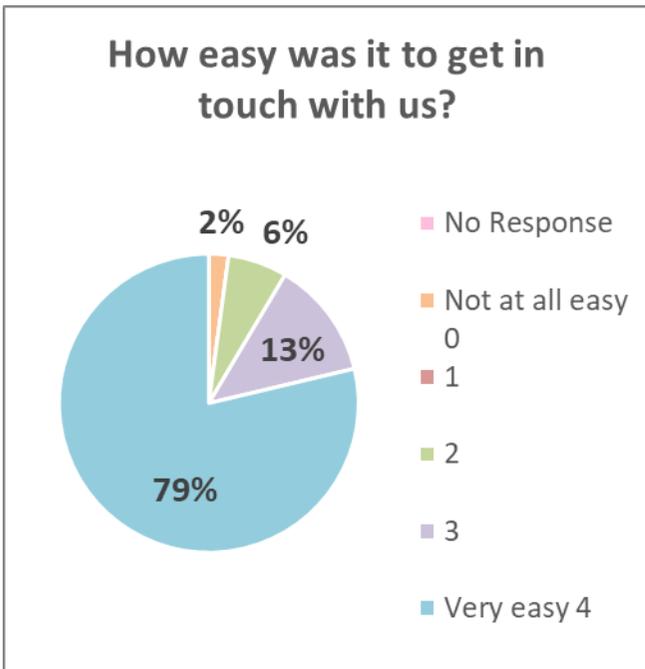
'Slight conflict of information between what IASK and IPSEA recommended. It should be clarified that IASK are not lawyers'.

'You are not very well advertised '

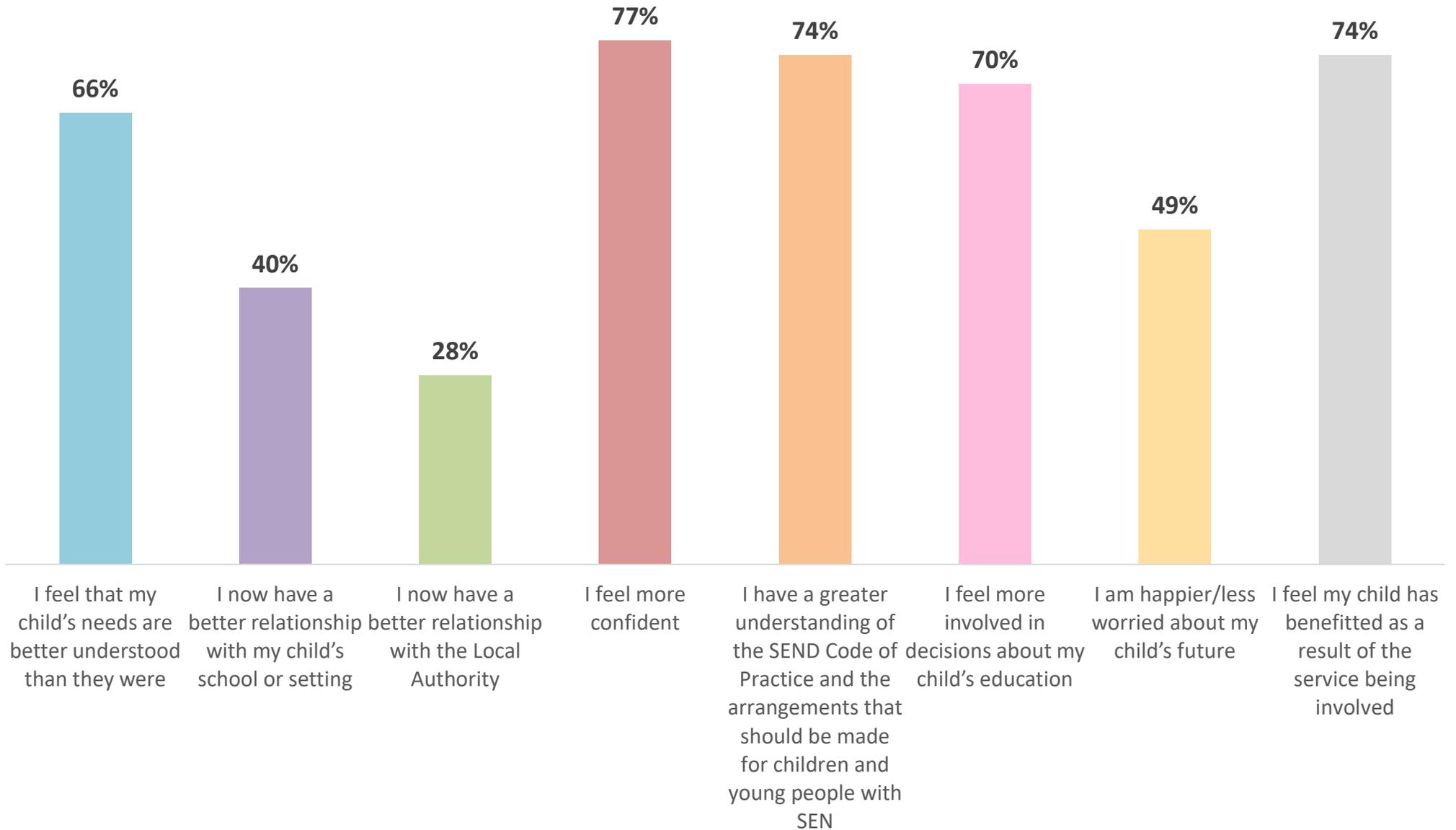
Following feedback from the Information, Advice and Support Kent User Survey 2017-2018 we have made the following changes:

You said	We did
'More publicity about the service'	We have taken this into account with our Development plan and will be holding 12 events across the County in November 2019 to raise awareness of the service.
'Took time to come back with an appointment. Appointments or meeting support were not easy to make or available'	There is always a high demand for face to face support requests. Our community workers have been changing their ways of working to maximise the numbers of face to face meetings that can be provided, by introducing bookable appointment at drop-ins. We have also trialled providing workshops for those going through the statutory assessment process.
'Triage - not really what you want, standardised turnaround response on the answerphone message makes you ring someone else. If the matter is urgent it would be so helpful just to have someone answer the call directly'.	We are making time during the day to answer live calls when possible. We have trained the triage supporter to be able to answer a range of queries directly.

Information, Advice and Support Kent User Survey September 2018 – April 2019 Charts



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



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

	April 2015 - March 2016	April 2016 - March 2017	April 2017 March 2018	April 2018 - March 2019	Percentage Increase/ decrease from previous year
Enquiries	611	606	548	939	+ 71
New Cases/referrals	883	827	794	790	- 0.5
Total telephone calls	2709	3219	3028	3828	+ 26
Total email	2180	2603	2924	3402	+ 16
Helpline emails/tel. calls	-	3066	3300	3806	+ 15
Face to Face meetings	784	812	545	794	+ 46