



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

Annual Service Report

2016/2017

Information, Advice and Support Kent

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

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“I felt empowered and supported and much more confident to speak to relevant authorities”

(parent feedback survey 2016)

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 by parents, carers, schools, services and voluntary agencies as evidenced by the positive feedback.

Introduction from Chair: As a parent I have benefited from support from IASK, subsequently I was invited to attend the re-establishing steering group and became chair at the first meeting. The committee membership represents a range of disabilities, health needs and providers, where we are delighted that young person’s views are heard and highly valued. This year, Information, Advice and Support Kent has maintained a high quality service with an increased overall workload, and there have been more complex cases, requiring intensive support.

Our Independent Supporter for young people has made great progress with engaging with Colleges, Youth Services and young people in Kent. This year we look to develop working collaboratively with colleges to engage young people with the IASK service and identify if any young people could be part of a service advisory group. (Steering group list Appendix 1)

Impact:

Information, Advice and Support Kent carry out an annual user survey using questions agreed nationally. Kent were also a part of the pilot project for trialling the user survey to produce national statistics for the Information, Advice and Support Services. The pilot included the responses to the first 100 forms sent out in June, we received 25 responses to the pilot survey and these were added to the overall total of responses for 2016 making a total of 116. The return rate for the survey was 16%, and this is has increased over the last two years.

Majority of the feedback was extremely positive:

94% of responses recorded 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

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

- *“I feel more confident about raising my concerns and speak with confidence with their child’s school”*
- *“IASK provide support when other agencies failed to do so”*
- *“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.”*

(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 A:

Z, aged 17 has ASD. Attending mainstream college in supported learning, with an Education, Health, Care Plan. Z felt that this was not the right placement, he became withdrawn and anxious, and his attendance dropped significantly. Parent was concerned about her son’s mental wellbeing as he was becoming reluctant to leave the home. Z wanted to leave the supported learning environment because he was finding the journey made him extremely anxious.

IASK provided information and suggested Z writes down how his feelings.

A meeting was arranged with mother, Z and the college to discuss the situation. The college used this opportunity as an interim review of the EHCP. At this meeting Z read out how he felt and why he wanted to change course. College agreed that they also felt that, academically, Z was not in the right environment and maybe a mainstream course would suit him better. The college suggested a meeting with the head of supported learning so that they could request a possible transfer onto a mainstream course.

IASK talked to the young person about his aspirations to ensure that an appropriate course was identified. The college were unable to offer the course identified as it was full and alternative courses available did not interest Z.

IASK advised other possibilities including a specialist college, supported internships or other mainstream college courses. Z at this point was very upset and didn’t understand what had happened. He did not want to return to the college, nor attend another mainstream college carpentry course. IASK identified alternative providers who could provide carpentry courses and explained to Z and his mother the process for requesting a change of placement. Z decided that a bespoke city and guilds carpentry/electrics course would be more suitable to meet his aspirations and through discussion with the local authority, a change of placement was agreed.

Impact: Z was empowered to put forward his views and opinions, explore alternative placements that would meet both his aspirations and needs. Z started at the new placement 6 months after the original meeting and is enjoying the course.

Case Study B:

B's relationship with the school had become very difficult. B felt the school were constantly blaming her parenting for her son's behaviour, rather than looking at the needs of her son.

IASK met with B to discuss the upcoming school meeting. B had possible ASD/ADHD disorder and expressed that she can come across as overpowering and loud in meetings and this is why IASK support was requested.

B wanted to address her issues with the school so that they could understand the situation from the parent's point of view. In particular, how upset the parent was about a social services referral that was made without speaking to the parent first and that she always felt the school were blaming her parenting rather than concentrating on her son's needs. B wanted to air her views in order for her to be able to move onto the most important reason for the meeting which was to discuss her son's progress and the support he was getting in school.

B was extremely angry with the school. IASK supported the parent to focus on the main points that she needed to raise at the school meeting, and also helped parent to think about how she could get the points across in a positive way, without coming across as being overpowering or loud. Parent was now hoping to build bridges and move things forward.

At the meeting with the school, and with IASK support, B was able to communicate thoughts and feeling to the school in a positive way. At the end of the meeting the school expressed they had had no idea of the way B felt, and took everything on board the parent had said, apologised for their part and expressed that they wanted to move forward and have a better relationship with B. They agreed to put more support in place and they wanted regular review meetings to see how things were going so that parent felt involved.

Impact: Over the past year the relationship between B and the school has improved. There are times where it has been difficult but because the school are more aware of the situation and mum is able to express herself without the school misinterpreting B, they appear to listen to B more, and work generally better with her. B is much more aware of how she comes across and now that she has a diagnosis of a disability, and is seeking appropriate support for herself.

IASK involvement is becoming less and less, because B is able to communicate better with the school and only asks for support at review meetings to help her understand the process.

Over the past year

The team has worked hard to successfully respond to a high number of telephone calls, emails and meeting requests. There has been an increase in telephone calls (by 18%) and emails and (19%). Whilst the number of new referrals is slightly lower this year, typically cases are more complex, with parents and young people require a range of in depth support over a period of time and this is evident by the increase in requests for face to face meetings from 784 last year to 812 this year. (See appendix 3 for further information relating to a comparison of service provision over the past 3 years).

The service has also provided the following:

- Introduction of a weekly information posted on social media;
- children and young people's promotional poster and business cards distributed to further education colleges, special schools, youth centres across the County;
- 121 drop-ins delivered across the County;
- volunteer opportunity published in Kent's 12 Districts through local volunteer bureaux and on the national Do-it website with a good response from an article in the KCC Pension Newsletter;
- five volunteers recruited, three undertaking the training;
- four staff members have successfully completed the Professional Development in SEN Casework BTEC award;
- all staff trained in the updated Level 3 IPSEA legal training, several team members had the opportunity to attend face to face training, which they shared with the team.
- compiled a comprehensive list of short breaks, activities, support groups and voluntary agencies that are able to offer additional information and support. This list is reviewed and updated on a monthly basis;
- working towards a new set of national quality standards for Information, advice and support services. The Standards have been devised by the National Information, Advice and Support Services Network, and are endorsed by the Department for Education. Information, Advice and Support has achieved 95% rating 2 and 3 (top rating is 4 but only achievable following verification of evidence). This means that the quality standard is met and a wide range of evidence is available most of the recommended outcome assessments are in place;
- received six 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;
- supported the Kent Parent Carer Forum Transition Information Event in Maidstone. Over 100 parents attended with positive feedback being received;
- service presentations delivered to Family Liaison Officers, School Nurses, West Kent Dyslexia Association, Clinical Governance Day, SEND Forum and Early Bird/Strengthening Families training sessions, YOT, Early Help;

- Independent Supporter for young people, as part of her development role for the service, has supported the setting up of a national forum for supporting staff working with children and young people. The work has also included attending open days and raising awareness of the service to colleges, training providers, special schools and youth hubs across Kent;
- IASK is a member of the Kent 'Local Offer' monitoring group;
- IASK policies reviewed and updated as required.

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%.

97% of Parents had access to support at meetings when requested **exceeding** 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 two 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, working separately from their parents at the young person's request.

The officer in this role also works with families of older children who are going through the assessment process or who are transferring from a statement to an education health and care plan. The 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.

Appendix 1

Information, Advice and Support Kent Steering Group

Steering Group members:

Jan, Parent from South Kent and Steering Group Chair

Caroline, Parent from West Kent

Jill, Parent West Kent

Laura, Parent South 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

Julie, Head of SEN Assessment and Placement for Kent County Council

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

Feedback from Information, Advice and Support Kent User Survey 2015-2016

743 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.

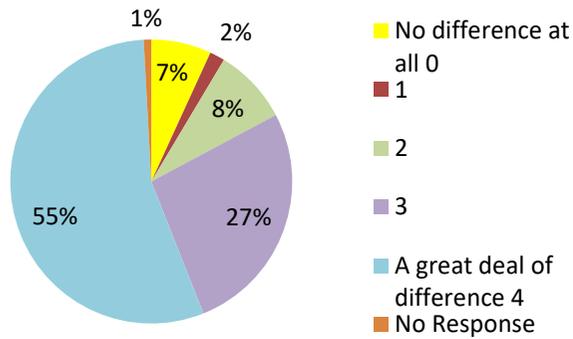
More people to help. Larger service.

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

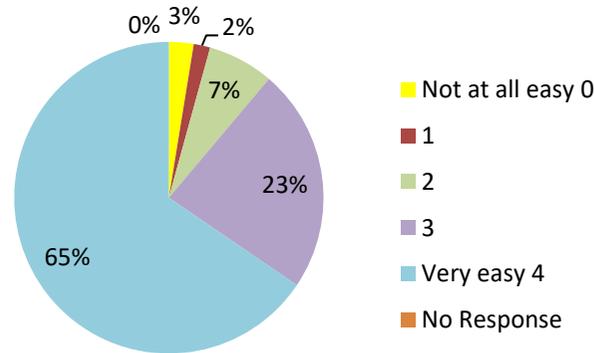
You said	We did
To keep in contact + follow up reviews to what is - or - being done.	The service has changed its policy and will be providing follow up calls where appropriate.
More staff! I had to leave a message, you got back to me which was fine but sometimes you need on-the-spot advice, if you've 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

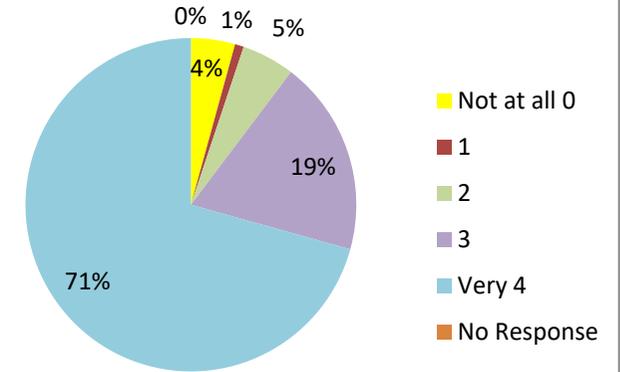
What difference do you think our information, advice or support has made for you?



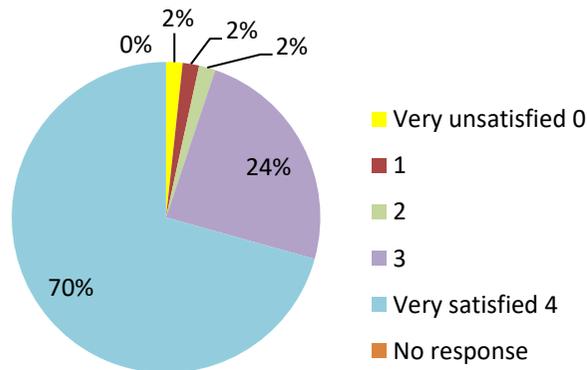
How easy was it to get in touch with us?



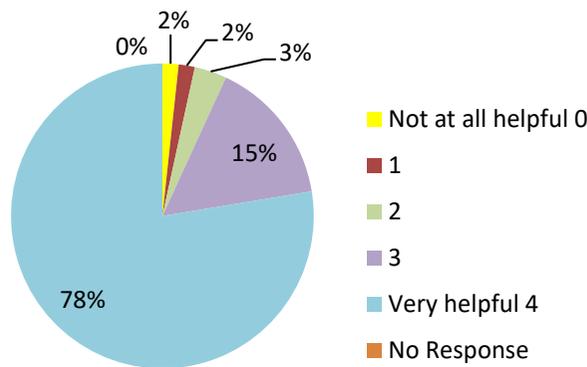
How neutral, fair and unbiased do you think we were?



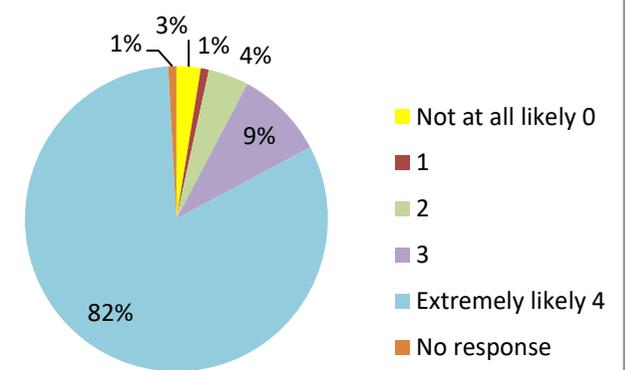
Overall how satisfied are you with the service we gave?



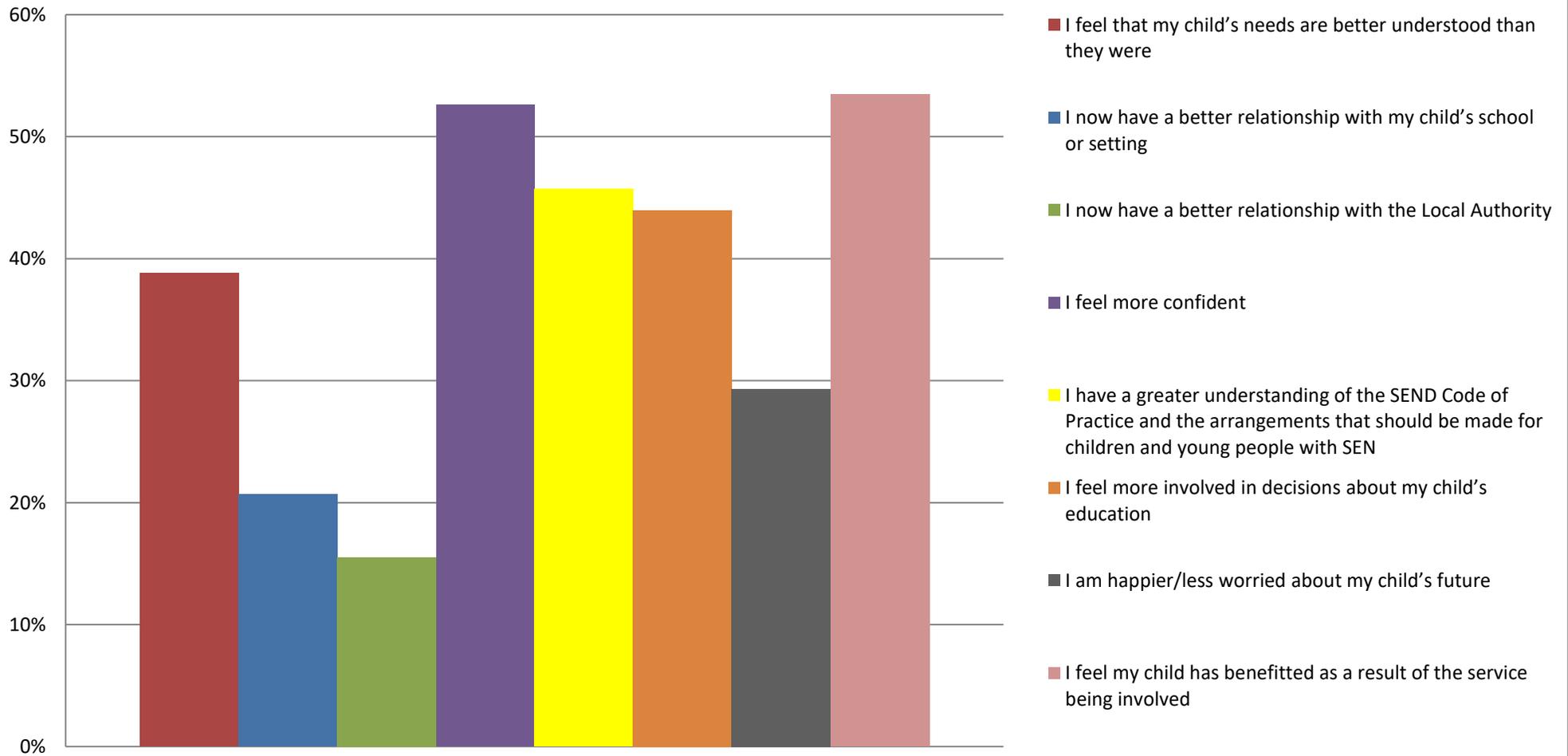
How helpful was the information, advice and support we gave you?



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?



Appendix 3

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

	April 2014 - March 2015	April 2015 - March 2016	April 2016 - March 2017	Percentage Increase/ decrease from previous year
Enquiries	386	611	606	-8%
New Cases/referrals	862	883	827	-6%
Total telephone calls	2719	2709	3219	+18%
Total email	1587	2180	2603	+19%
Helpline emails/tel. calls	-	-	3066	-
Face to Face meetings	628	784	812	+3%