

The logo for Information Advice and Support Kent features a stylized kite with a purple, green, and yellow body and a blue tail, set against a white background with a faint grid.

**Information
Advice and
Support
Kent**

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

Information, Advice and Support Kent

Annual Service Report 2021/2022

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‘My EHCP now contains the accurate information for me to receive the proper support at College. Thank you for your service’

(young person, feedback survey 2021-2022)

Overview of IASK - Kerry Miles Service Coordinator

This report gives an overview of Information, Advice and Support Kent over the past year, and covers statistics relating to outputs for the six-month period 1 October 2021 to 31 March 2022, with comparisons to the previous six months covered in the Interim Report.

There has been a major change in the way that IASK has been delivering services over the past two years, we have adapted to the changes brought about by Covid and are engaging differently with families of children with a special educational need or disability and other service providers. Changing our model of delivery has increased our capacity, by providing a high level of support via telephone appointments or virtual meetings instead of one-to-one meetings out in the community. This, coupled with continuing to offer virtual support at meetings, has reduced time needed for travel as well as reducing environmental impact. For families who find it difficult to access services in this way, we are providing face to face support, and we are now finding requests for face-to-face support is increasing.

This year we have continued to provide a good quality service during a time of increasing requests for support. We have seen an 85% increase in the number of Helpline enquires, a 60% increase in Helpline telephone calls and emails a 50% increase in new casework referrals since the previous year when figures were lower due to Covid. Comparisons over the past 5 years (see table page 18) show there is a significant increase in workload during this time. When comparing with pre-covid figures during 2019-2020, there has been an 85% increase in new referrals for casework and a 101% increase in total emails to and from the service.

We have supported the local authority to raise awareness about the support that should be provided to children with special educational needs in early years settings. A series of workshops were delivered to early years Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCo) for them to gain an understanding of the ‘graduated approach’ to supporting children with special educational needs, as well as finding out about the help they can access to assist them with their provision of support. To dovetail with this, Information, Advice and Support Kent offered four workshops (two of which were in the evening) for parents of children in the early years. The workshop explains about the support that parents can expect to be

provided in early years settings, as identified in the special educational needs Code of Practice. The aim being that nurseries and parents would have a shared understanding of the support available, and when it might be appropriate to consider an education, health and care needs assessment. Positive feedback was received, with 100% of attendees saying they would recommend the workshop. Feedback: 'I know where to go if I need help'. 'It was a really great session. thank you so much'. 'I've taken from this, what a school should do to support my child in school'. 'Working in early years, it has given me an insight into the parents' perspective and will enable me to improve my practice' – some of the attendees were from early years settings because they wanted to understand the process from the parent's perspective.

We understand from feedback to the service, that families feel that they don't know what support is available to them, and often tell us that we should publicise our service more. In collaboration with Kent PACT and the SEN Information Hub we are offering a special educational needs and disabilities 'Roadshow' to deliver presentations or hold market stalls across the County which will continue into next year. We have shared information about the Roadshows and have delivered several virtual and face to face presentations and events, which have been well received by parents and professionals.

Over the past year, the service has had a 28% increase in requests for information and support about appealing to the special educational needs and disabilities tribunal, following a local authority decision during the statutory assessment process. Family Involvement Workers and Casework Adviser are confidently and competently supporting at tribunal, and a variety of meetings with the Judges prior to the actual hearing, to look at how ready the case is for tribunal, which sometimes results in negotiations that lead to a tribunal being conceded.

Impact:

The service has conducted user feedback surveys for cases that closed between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022 and to those that have given us permission to contact them for this purpose. We sought feedback from 222 service users who received more than 2 hours support during a six-month period at intervention level 2,3 or 4. We have continued to contact parents via email or telephone to seek feedback and have had 66 responses and achieved a 30% response rate.

94% of respondents rated IASK as good (3*) or **very good** at being neutral, fair and unbiased.

100% of respondents felt IASK listened to their views.

98% of respondents felt that we understood their questions concerns well (3*) or **very well**.

97% felt satisfied (3*) or **very satisfied** with the service they received.

83% feel more confident.

94% of respondents were likely (3*) or very likely to recommend the service to others.

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

'Thank you' emails from service users outside of the usual survey:

Compliments direct to the service:

'X was lovely over the phone , very informative, kind and empathetic'.

'X would like to say thankyou to everyone who has been involved and supported us throughout the years. Thank you to IASK and Y especially. You've been amazing'.

'We are thrilled by this outcome and eternally grateful to you for your consistent, concise and considered support. We couldn't have done it without you and can't thank you enough. You do an amazing job and we thank you from the bottom of our hearts'.

'Thank you for attending the meeting today. We got a much more positive and understanding response from school than we've experienced so far. We really appreciate you being there.'

Thank you so so much for talking with me & X, your wisdom really helped us.
What you said to X was like magic, he was calm, and we both spoke with Y and X was polite, but heavily fixated on the journey and would not compromise, but he has gone to school, happily this morning. With great appreciation'.

Case Study 1:

Background:

Olivia has significant needs and is a wheelchair user who attends a special school.

Olivia's Mother had concerns about communication with her daughter's school and felt that her daughter's voice wasn't being heard. Olivia had been struggling to attend school due to COVID concerns relating to her own health needs and is classed as very vulnerable and therefore had to be shielding. During this period, communication with the school became difficult and schoolwork was either not sent to Olivia, or was sent in the wrong format making it very hard for Olivia to engage in distance learning.

Olivia's Mother contacted Information, Advice and Support Kent for advice and requested support at meetings with the school.

Support:

Information, Advice and Support Kent helped by initially supporting parent to prepare for several virtual meetings with the school, which IASK also attended, with a focus being on the support that they were providing during the time Olivia was not able to attend school.

Because Olivia found it very difficult to engage virtually, parent asked IASK to meet face to face in a neutral venue so that Olivia could discuss her views and her next steps in education. Olivia wanted to continue in education post 19 and wanted to find a school placement that could meet her complex needs.

At the annual review meeting, which was supported by IASK and the KCC Provision and Evaluation Officer, parent was able to express her concerns about the lack of support with the school work and IASK were able to confirm Olivia's views as per their face to face conversation. It was agreed that home tutoring funded by the school until the end of the school year, would be the best option to support Olivia.

Impact:

Parent feels that the tone of the meetings was more positive when IASK were present. Parent also felt more listened to because IASK were able to confirm that the views expressed were also Olivia's views as per their conversation.

At the annual review Olivia was prepared and able to express her views and was adamant about continuing with her education, which has meant that post 19 provision is being sought for Olivia.

Since working with the tutor, Olivia has made significant progress, which will support her evidence for the next phase of her education.

Case Study 2:

Background: Betty has ASD and learning difficulties and was struggling in a mainstream setting. At the nursery setting, Betty had received a lot of support, but Betty's Mother had become increasingly concerned that her daughter was not getting the right type of support at her mainstream school. Betty's Mother who had her own health difficulties, contacted Information, Advice and Support Kent to seek help.

Support: Information, Advice and Support Kent supported Betty's Mother over several years, initially to attend meetings with the school as she felt that because of her own wellbeing, she had difficulty in getting her views across without getting upset. Support was given to Betty's mother to help her prepare for meetings with the school, and over the coming months the school provided extra support and high needs funding was applied for. Despite the school saying the Betty was progressing, her mother felt that she was still struggling at school with communication difficulties, and she did not see the level of progress that the school were identifying.

Betty's Mother felt that the school was not right for her daughter because they were not meeting her needs, and wanted to request an education, health, and care needs assessment. An EHC needs assessment was requested and information, advice and support provided to Betty's Mother throughout the process, including helping her to consider suitable school placements. Betty's parents were not happy with the school named in the plan and they wanted to appeal. At this time Betty's parents had separated, and they found it difficult to be in the same room to discuss a way forward. Both parents requested support to complete paperwork as well as support at the tribunal.

Impact: Information Advice and Support Kent helped Betty's Mother to manage her wellbeing, by offering support that gave her time to process the information and shared information in a way that did not increase her anxieties. Betty's mother felt supported by the service and came back for further support over a period of a couple of years and received consistent support during this time.

Due to the trust that had been built with the service, staff were able to help both parents to have individual conversations about the appeal, which the service recorded separately. This enabled both parents to receive the same information about the tribunal procedures and to be fully engaged with the appeal process. This way of working took the pressure off the parents so that they could focus on getting the appeal right. Both parents had the same views regarding the school place.

The service was able to facilitate a three-way conversation with each of their combined thoughts and views being emailed to both parents. In collaboration with one another in this way, they agreed changes to sections of the plan and the appeal was successful and Betty is now at the school of her parent's choice and has settled well.

Parents have said to the service that they felt well supported and that they have appreciated the consistent support provided to the family over the past few years.

Service Outputs for the six month period 1 October 2021 – 31 March 2022

- **2124** calls and emails came through the helpline representing a 45% increase on the previous 6 months. Of the **1139** emails received, **53** came through the website representing a 72% and 43% increase on the previous 6 months.
- **326** families have received support at meetings via video or telephone conference calls and **77** face to face, this represents a 25% and 208% increase on the previous 6 months.
- **613** New referrals for casework showing a 45% increase.
- **779** Level 1 enquiries (information and advice given but not opened as a case) increased by 34%.
- **50 virtual** one to one information sessions with three slots were offered per session. **119** people attended.
- Regular virtual attendance at monthly Multi Agency parent sessions for parents of children who are on the pathway for an autism diagnosis, **2** virtual presentations to cygnet groups, **3** virtual and **1** face to face presentation to parent support groups, **6** face to face attendance at support groups or school events to provide information.
- **74** young people over age 16 were accessing the service with support from their parents and **30** young people were receiving direct support from a caseworker.
- **50** young people were supported to participate in meetings with **26** feeling confident to actively be involved in a meeting. **25** of these meetings were for school or college support, **8** at annual reviews, **3** at a tribunal hearing. Young people have been engaging with Education Health care plan drafts/co-production meetings, **6** with Statutory Assessment paperwork, **16** with appeals paperwork and 9 attending a preparation meeting.
- **258** families have received information, advice and support relating to appeals to the SEND Tribunal of these, we have supported **83** families with paperwork with **59** appeals being lodged. This represents an **18%** increase in requests for support with paperwork.
- Information, Advice and Support Kent have virtually attended **2** mediations, **1** Telephone case management hearing, **1** Judicial Alternative Dispute Resolution hearing, **9** tribunal hearings to support families who would otherwise have found it difficult to attend on their own. With IASK support **28** appeals were resolved before the hearing date.

- School support continues to be the highest reason for contact with our service and we continue to see an increase in parental concerns about mental health and wellbeing of their children. Parents report that schools are not acknowledging the difficulties that some children are facing when returning to school relating to their anxieties about returning, as well as being behind with their work and worried about exam results and accessing further education. We are also receiving queries about statutory assessment requests and information about appeals to the SEND Tribunal.
- Of the **56** health discussion, most are related to queries regarding mental health services. 25 referrals were recorded as the reason for contacting IASK.
- **34** discussions were relating to social care and **6** referrals were recorded as part of the reason for contacting IASK. **10** referrals were made relating to short breaks and activities, and **17** related to the disability register (which includes Max cards).
- Website Usage: Website use and new users have increased in the past 6 months by 35% and 40% respectively with a total of **6,854** hits and **6,895** new users. There has also been an increase of 35% in page views to **23,875**. The top seven viewed, excluding the home page, were: Parents and Carers, EHC plans, Information sessions/drop-ins, young people, frequently asked questions, leaflets and Helpline. We have received **53** email communications via the website.
- Virtual Workshops: **13** workshops were delivered to **84** parents and practitioners (**51** attended the Early Years workshops). Over the year we have offered a total of **24** workshops with **164** attendees. Workshop topics include - Early Years SEN support and transition to primary; SEN Support in mainstream schools and colleges; Review meetings; How to get the best out of a meeting, Options for post 16 transition, Mental Capacity and decision-making post 16

We received 100% positive feedback from respondents across the range of workshops, who also said they would recommend the workshops. Examples of feedback received:

'I have a better understanding of the Review process and will be more confident attending our meeting'.

'Confidence to attend meetings and know my voice will be heard'.

'It was an easier guide to understanding how Mental Capacity Act works on behalf on young people'. (Practitioner)

'I now understand the annual review process and what is expected, I am now in a much better position to support my daughter and ensure her review takes place in time'.

'A better understanding of what may be ahead of us in the near future sometimes the law is hard to read so this was a better way to understand it'.

'The right questions to ask before, during and after annual review meetings. Very useful and personal advice was offered IASK'.

'That it is ok to ask questions and clarify points during a meeting and that the meeting is for me as much as it is for 'them', but to try and remain positive when doing so'.

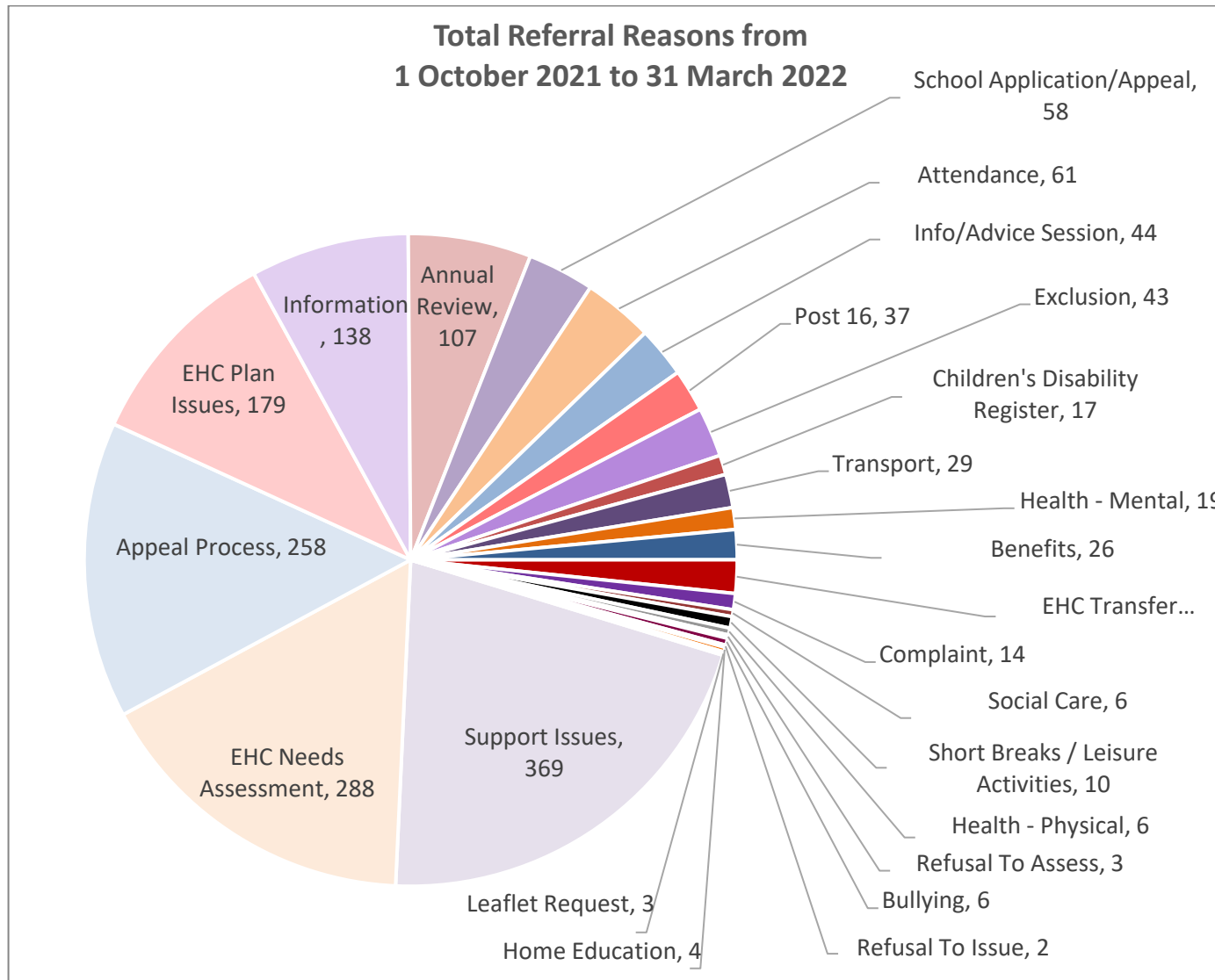
'That one size does not fit all and it has given me a direction for further research
Thank you'.

'Great to get more information about Kent processes for annual reviews'. (Practitioner)

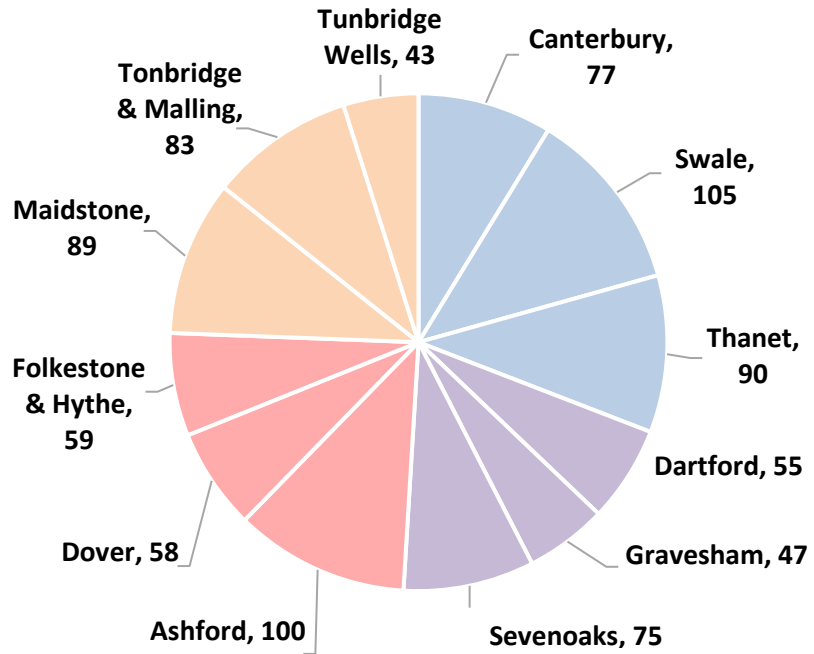
'An understanding of the options available at post 16, and to ensure my child has a voice in making his next step decisions'.

'A clearer understanding of the steps I need to put in place to support an annual (six month) review'. (Practitioner)

The chart below shows the reasons for contacting the service in the timeframe, more than one referral reason can be recorded against both an enquiry and a referral for casework which means the number of overall referral reasons is larger than the number of service users recorded.

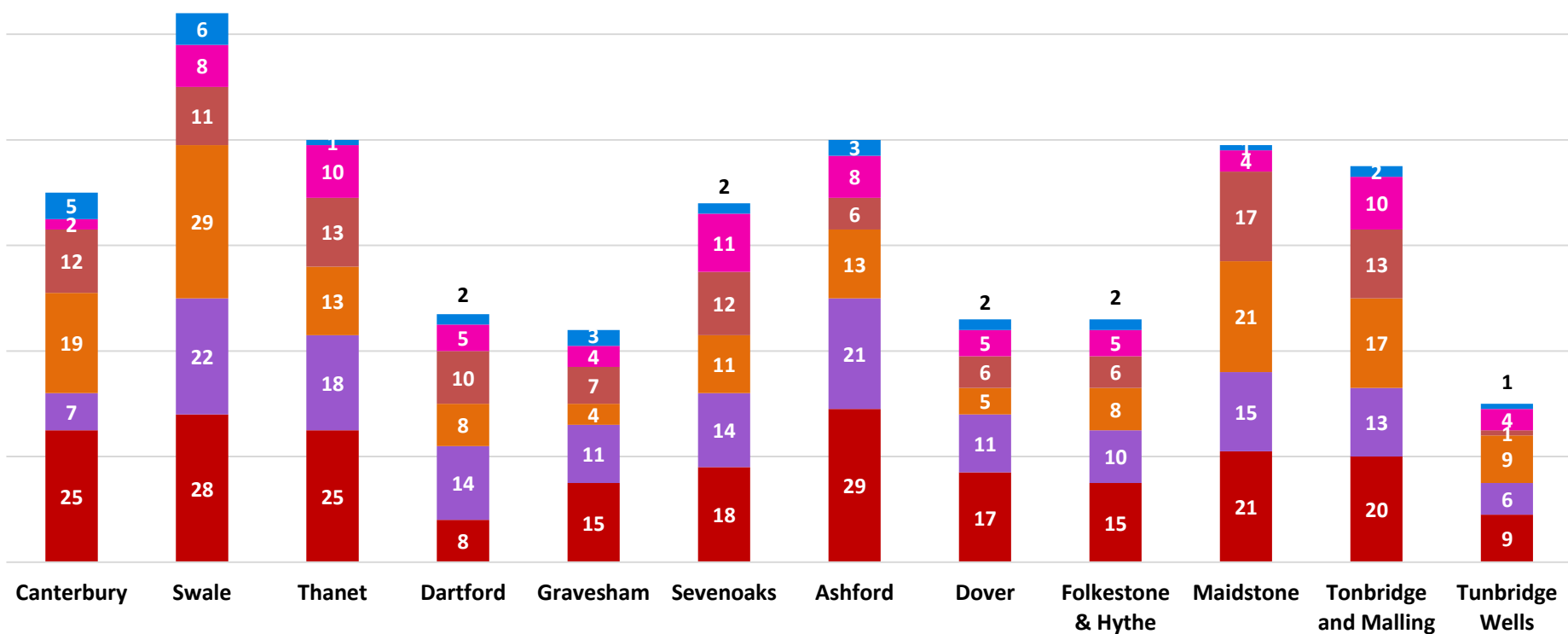


**Number of Referrals by District of Kent
from 1 October 2021 to 31 March 2022**

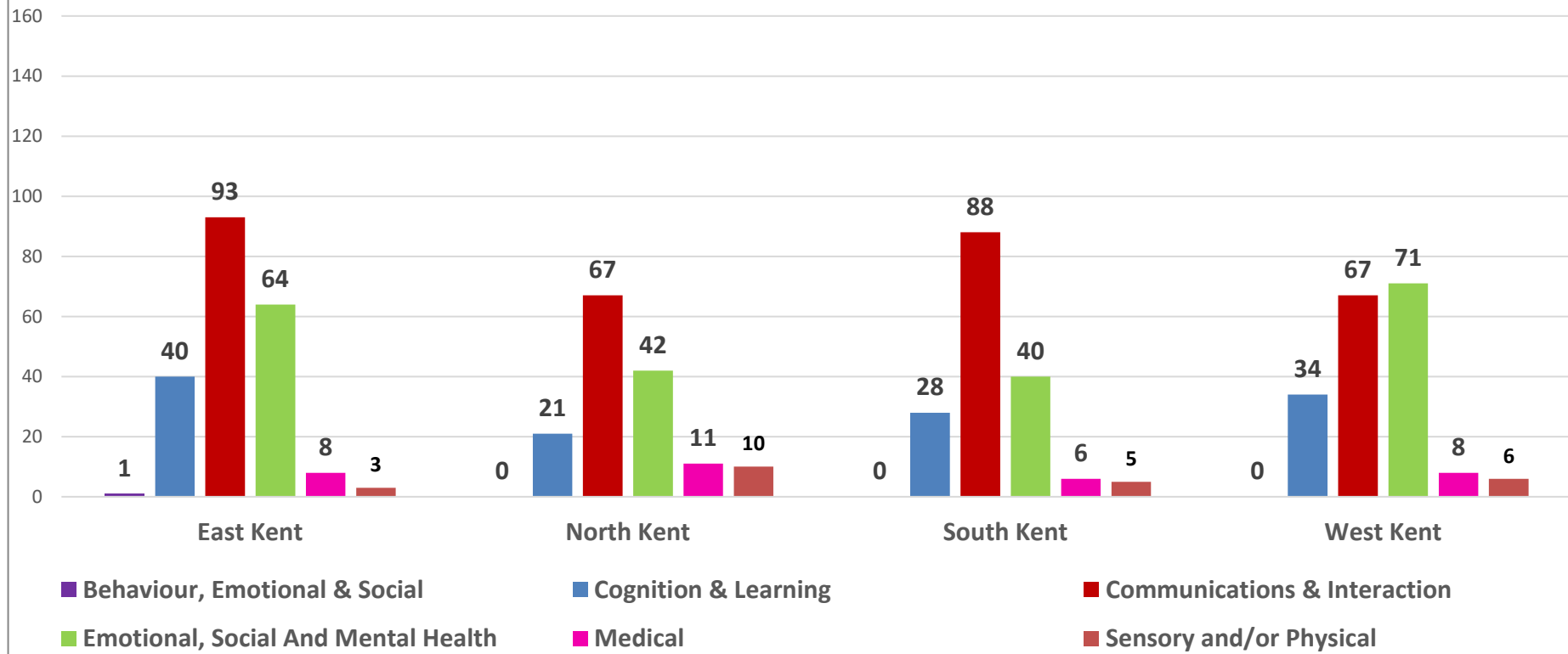


Top six referral reasons by district

■ Support Issues
 ■ Appeal Process
 ■ EHC Needs Assessment
 ■ EHC Plan Issues
 ■ Annual Review
 ■ Information



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



Annual perspective 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022

- IASK continues to be a regular participant at the South East Regional Information, Advice and Support Services network meetings with Kent chairing the meetings for over two years.
- the service also regularly attends National meetings specifically relating to working with children and young people.
- regular attendance at Kent County Council workstream meetings relating to the Written Statement of Action following Ofsted and CQC's visit in January 2018.
- regular attendance and contribution to the SEND Information Hub (Local Offer) operations group meetings.
- attendance at the Kent Special Educational Needs Partnership Engagement Group Participation group
- Staff Training:
 - Innovation Bitesize: Practical Skills, Minute taking. Whole team training about using new Microsoft business communication platform and software packages.
 - CDC specific IASS training: Challenging Discriminatory Exclusions; Tribunal and general exclusion training; Visual Impairment; Tribunal Update; IPSEA refresher.

Key Performance Indicators From 1st April 2021 – 31 March 2022:

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

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%.

94% of service users found it easy (3*) or very easy to get in touch with us, (*Q1 user survey*) **exceeding** the target of 90%.

97% of service users found the service helpful (3*) or very helpful to them, (*Q2 user survey*) **exceeding** the target of 90%.

99% of Parents had support at meetings when requested, **exceeding** the target of 90%.

Information, Advice and Support Kent Annual comparison of service provision over the past five years

Due to a reduced need for our service during Covid, figures for 2020 – 2021 are lower. Therefore, comparisons are made using figures from 2019-2020. The chart also shows the increase in service demand 2 years ago compared to the previous year 2019 – 2020.

| | April 2017 - March 2018 | April 2018 - March 2019 | April 2019 – March 2020 | Percentage Increase/De crease from previous year (2018- 2019) | April 2020 – March 2021 | April 2021 – March 2022 | Percentage Increase/Decre ase compared to 2019-2020 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| Enquiries | 548 | 939 | 1392 | + 48.2 | 734 | 1362 | - 0.2 % |
| New Cases/referrals | 794 | 790 | 554 | - 28% | 640 | 1035 | + 87% |
| Total telephone calls | 3028 | 3828 | 4255 | + 11% | 2900 | 4346 | + 2% |
| Total emails | 2924 | 3402 | 3763 | + 10% | 5032 | 7562 | + 101% |
| Helpline emails/tel. calls | 3300 | 3806 | 4749 | + 24% | 3251 | 5196 | + 9% |
| Face to Face meetings | 545 | 794 | 746 | - 6% | 3 | 102 | No annual comparison due change in service delivery |
| Bookable telephone appointment instead of a meeting in the community | | | | | | 470 | No annual comparison due change in service delivery |
| Virtual meetings – video or conference call | | | | | 394 | 586 | + 49 |

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 and 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's 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:

George Whitney, Young Person from East Kent – Co-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

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 April 2021- March 2022

For cases closed between the period of 1 April 2021 - 31 March 2022 a total of **222** 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. **66** responses were received resulting in a **30%** return rate.

97% of responses recorded satisfied (3*) or very satisfied with the service

94% of respondents were likely (3*) or very likely to recommend the service to others

94% of respondents rated IASK as good (3*) or very good at being neutral, fair and unbiased

94% of respondents found it easy (3*) or very easy to get in touch with us

98% of respondents felt that we understood their questions concerns well (3*) or very well

100% of respondents felt IASK listened to their view

98% felt the information and advice provided met their needs

79% of respondents felt that the information advice and support provided has made a **great** deal of difference
Examples of the difference made:

75% have a greater understanding of the SEND Code of Practice and the arrangements that should be made for children/young people with SEN

83% feel more confident

85% of respondents felt their child has benefitted as a result of the service being involved

(Please also see charts on pages 23/24)

Comments about the service:

'We can't thank you enough. E is knowledgeable, patient, clear, concise, honest, fair minded and caring. We couldn't have had better advice and guidance'.

'The help and support from T, absolutely fantastic. Punctual, helpful, and knowledgeable. And she stayed impartial and professional at all times'.

'Scheduled meetings are now more professional. Things that should have been done at the meeting and their behaviour is now different because I am going in with someone from IASK. I no longer feeling bullied and the meeting is on a more of an equal footing'.

'Very happy with the workers. B was brilliant and I was very happy with the service she provided. All of the staff were brilliant also, very compassionate when speaking with me'.

'T was a great help, supporting with emails to tribunal, and helped me contact everyone necessary so that we didn't need tribunal. So glad my son was moved from mainstream to special'.

'It made me feel more informed. A very complex situation which IASK helped make simpler despite being an unsolvable situation'.

'I was feeling lonely in this journey, it was incredible when IASK stepped in. It was so nice to have someone could hear me and my concerns about my child. I struggle most of the time myself in many ways specially to explain what is happening to me, to my child, but G understood what was happening, she could see how school was behaving just because G was involved the school made an effort. I wouldn't be able to deal with it on my own. It was so nice to see someone on my side. Thank you for being there for me'.

Suggestions to improve the service:

'Initially, getting an appointment online was confusing'.

'Picking up the phone instantly. The service is sometimes very busy.'

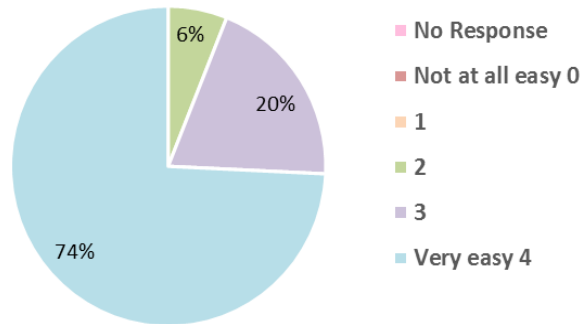
'High demand so sometimes difficult to get help at every meeting.'

'Having more people at IASK', 'Not having to make people wait 48 hours for a reply to a phone call or e-mail.'

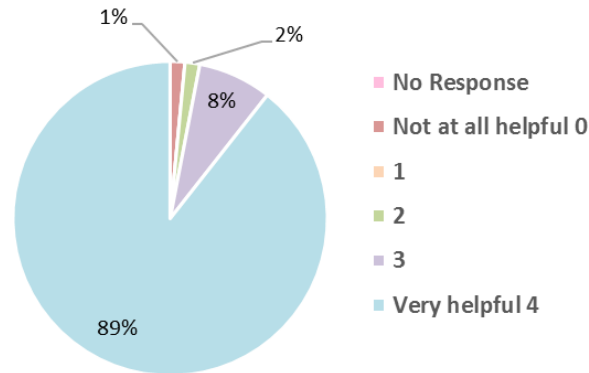
Following feedback from the Information, Advice and Support Kent User Survey 2020-2021 we have made the following changes:

| You said | We did |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>'Not a lot of people know about you. We have told people about your service'.</p> <p>'The only think that I would recommend would be to advertise your services more, parents do not seem to know that you exist and I'm not sure that many professional bodies do either. Maybe advertise in schools, clinics, doctors etc. Very helpful though when I have telephoned for advise. Thank you'.</p> | <p>We are working with Kent Parent and Carers Together (PACT) and KCC SEN Information Hub team to provide a Roadshow of the support services available to parents. Schools have been contacted and our intention is to visit schools and parent support groups across Kent over the next couple of years. We commenced this virtually in the Autumn.</p> |
| <p>'Schools should promote the service more – found out about IASK on line'</p> | <p>As above all schools will be contacted and information offered.</p> |
| <p>'Be more on the side of the parent. Would like IASK to be less neutral'.</p> | <p>As a team we have looked at our practice and the description of our role in the code of practice definition of impartial in order to inform the way we work.</p> |

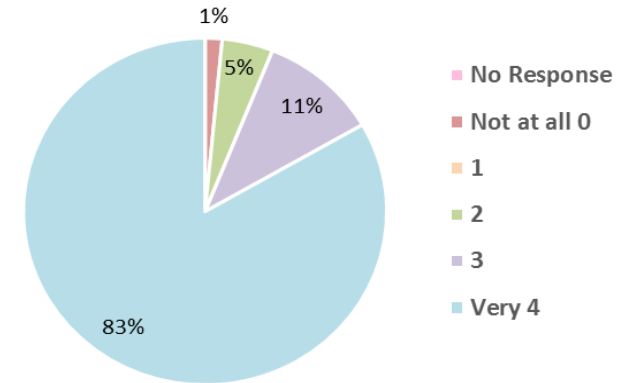
Q1 How easy was it to get in touch with us?



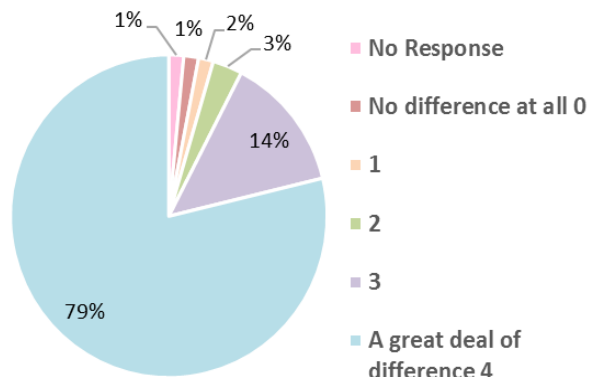
Q2 How helpful was the information, advice and support we gave you?



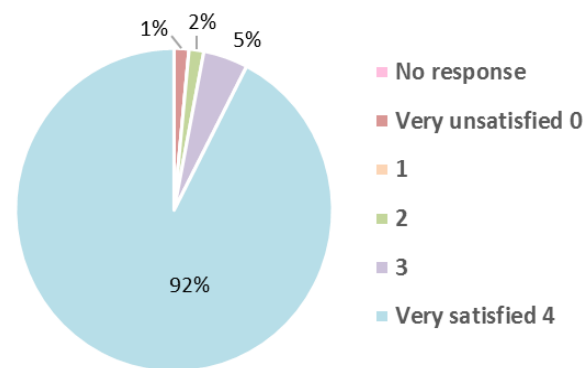
Q3 How neutral, fair and unbiased do you think we were?



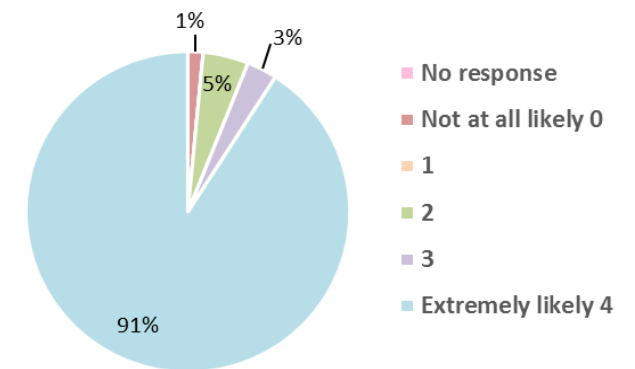
Q4 What difference do you think our information, advice or support has made for you?



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)

