

**Information
Advice and
Support
Kent**



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

Information, Advice and Support Kent

Interim Service Report

September 2021

Contents

Overview	3
Impact	4
Case Studies	5
Outputs	9
Key Performance Indicators	13
Mission Statement	14

Appendices

Appendix 1 Steering Group Members	15
Appendix 2 User Survey Feedback 1 April 2019 31 March 2020	16

'I feel empowered by the service'.
(parent's feedback September 2021)

Overview of IASK - Kerry Miles Service Coordinator

Information, Advice and Support Kent have had a very busy six months as children and young people have returned to their education provider. The team is continually adapting the model of working to provide a flexible tailored service of support which incorporates a hybrid model. Whilst support at appeals, mediation, school, and local authority meetings have continued to be carried out virtually (via video or conference calls), some families have received face to face support at school and local authority meetings due to their identified circumstances or needs. We have also supported families to attend appeals virtually, from our local office to ensure accessibility.

The provision of individual information sessions instead of local drop-ins has continued with evening sessions being offered and well received. The service has attended a multi-agency face to face drop-in for families of a child with or without a diagnosis of autism and the service is being invited to live events to provide a market stall.

We are providing workshops for parents of children in the early years in conjunction with specialist teachers who will be delivering workshops to special educational needs coordinators in early years settings, to ensure messages about special educational needs (SEN) support are shared and understood. It is hoped that the early years settings will signpost parents to our workshops, which will cover SEN support as well as transition to reception at school.

Development plans for the service this year are to:

- Re-connect with the volunteers – meeting planned for 5th November 2021. Ensuring that at least 4 volunteers are active by March 2021
- Pilot joint bookable virtual sessions for parents to speak to IASK and a Provision Evaluation Officer regarding concerns about their child's education
- Further update website – seeking feedback from service users.
- Annual review workshops specifically targeted at post 16.
- Re-engagement with young people to support developments within the service

Impact over the six month period 1 April – 30 September 2021: (For full details of feedback please see Appendix 2, page 15)

The service has conducted user feedback surveys for cases that closed from 1 April to 30th September 2021. We sought feedback from 123 service users via telephone and email using survey monkey, which resulted in a 31% response rate.

89% of respondents were likely (3*) or very likely to recommend the service to others

89% of respondents rated IASK as good (3*) or very good at being neutral, fair, and unbiased

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

95% of respondents found it easy (3*) or very easy to get in touch with us

100% of respondents felt IASK listened to their view

96% felt the information and advice provided met their needs

89% feel more confident

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

'I really appreciated your help and advice, so very much the conversation gave me confidence to begin the process. Your advice, expertise and help has been invaluable throughout the process. We are so pleased that because of this, 'C' will now receive the support she needs in an appropriate setting'.

'Without you, the outcome would not have been so positive. A tremendous and heartfelt thank you'.

'Thank you so much for all your help 'R' finally has a safe secure happy educational journey, and to not be misunderstood anymore. 'R' said thank you. It means a lot and thank you for supporting his needs'.

'I want to take this opportunity to thank you for all your support, guidance and hard work. I wouldn't have been able to get this far without you'.

'I cannot thank you enough for standing by me today and offering to follow through getting 'B' more support. Without you I would have crumbled'.

'Heart felt THANK YOU to the whole team for the support. A special thank you to X and X who gave most honest and clear advise. They really listened to my queries and proceeded to direct us as a family with lots of ideas and information'.

Case Study 1:

Background

Anita was not coping in her mainstream school and the family had been supported to apply for an Education, Health and Care needs assessment. As a result of the assessment an Education, Health and Care plan was issued and specialist placement agreed, but an appropriate school had not been identified.

IASK became involved with the family about a year later at which time Anita was on a part-time time-table, not engaging in learning, not progressing, and her attainment was severely behind her peers. The school were going above and beyond to support Anita, but she still could not cope in the school environment.

Parent was extremely upset and overwhelmed with what was happening for Anita particularly as the parent had specific health needs and was caring for five children all with special educational needs.

Support

IASK realised that the annual review of the Education, Health and Care plan was overdue, and suggested that this should take place as soon as possible to enable everyone to discuss Anita's difficulties and needs, the current support, and identify whether the current school is a suitable placement. IASK were able to explain the process of the annual review and how this would give the parent a 'right of appeal' if the evidence showed that the current school could not meet the needs.

Following the annual review of the EHC plan, an alternative placement could not be found, and parent asked for support to appeal to the SEND tribunal. As Anita did not have any assessments carried out during her EHC needs assessment, IASK supported parent to request an Education Psychologist assessment as well as a health and social care assessments as part of the appeals process.

IASK provided virtual support to the parent throughout the 20-week appeal process, supporting parent to successfully work with the SEN tribunal team to request appropriate assessments. Education Psychologist and social care assessments were completed, and an Occupational Therapist referral was made and completed.

Following the Education Psychologist's assessment, IASK supported with reading reports and empowered parent to complete the 'working document' by providing information, advice, support, and encouragement that enabled parent to liaise with the SEN tribunal team, resulting in agreements to change sections of the plan prior to the hearing.

Impact

Due to the changes in the plan the SEN team were able to consult with the right schools. A specialist placement was identified which both parent and SEN team agreed upon.

The appeal was cancelled, and Anita started the transition into her new school.

Parent expressed that she felt, without our support Anita would not have had a full assessment of her needs and therefore the right school placement would not have been found.

Parent has come back to IASK for support for another of her children and said 'Anita is doing well, and she wouldn't be where she is without the support of IASK.

Case Study 2:

Background:

Lisa attended a special school, but was struggling in the school environment, she could only attend for 30 minutes a day and the school would not increase the time because they could not manage her needs.

Following an annual review, the SEN team approached other schools and all consultations came back with a negative response. Lisa's social worker contacted IASK with parent's permission, requesting support with an appeal, and attendance at a multi-agency meeting.

Support:

At the multi-agency meeting IASK explained the process and how to lodge an appeal. Parents with the help of interpreters (the family had support from Asylum UK), ensured parents could be fully involved in the discussion. Everyone at the meeting including parents, agreed that the school wasn't suitable and that an alternative special school would be more appropriate. They all also agreed that the EHC plan did not reflect Lisa's current needs as identified in the updated reports.

At the meeting IASK worked with the interpreter to support parents with the appeal, obtain parents views and to complete the paperwork. Parents were able to explain why they wanted a different school.

IASK drafted an appeal form, using the information gathered from the parents at the meeting, and arranged an MS Teams virtual meeting with parents, social worker and an interpreter who helped the parents to read through the form, and changes were suggested. IASK submitted the form on parent's behalf because they were unable to do this for themselves.

Documents and paperwork relating to the appeal were sent to the parent empowering their involvement with the process. With support from the social worker, parents forwarded information onto IASK to provide the support and advice needed about the next steps. IASK had good communication with parents with support from the social worker and interpreter throughout and ensured that all paperwork was completed and returned well in advance of the submission deadlines.

Impact:

Working with parents, their social worker who they trusted, and the interpreter meant that the parents were able to be fully engaged with the process each step of the way.

Parents were provided with the correct information about the appeal process and supported to understand this. A preparation meeting before the hearing, meant that the parents knew what to expect at the hearing.

Working with the interpreters the parents voice was fully heard at the meeting, throughout the appeal process and at the hearing. Parents were empowered to ask questions and have their views known at the hearing.

The Judge checked in with the parents at the end of the hearing to explore whether their opinions and views were put forward and whether they felt fully involved with the process. Parents have said to IASK, that they felt supported during the tribunal having someone who understood their views and could get the points across when needed. They also felt that IASK understood their situation and explained everything so that they could understand.

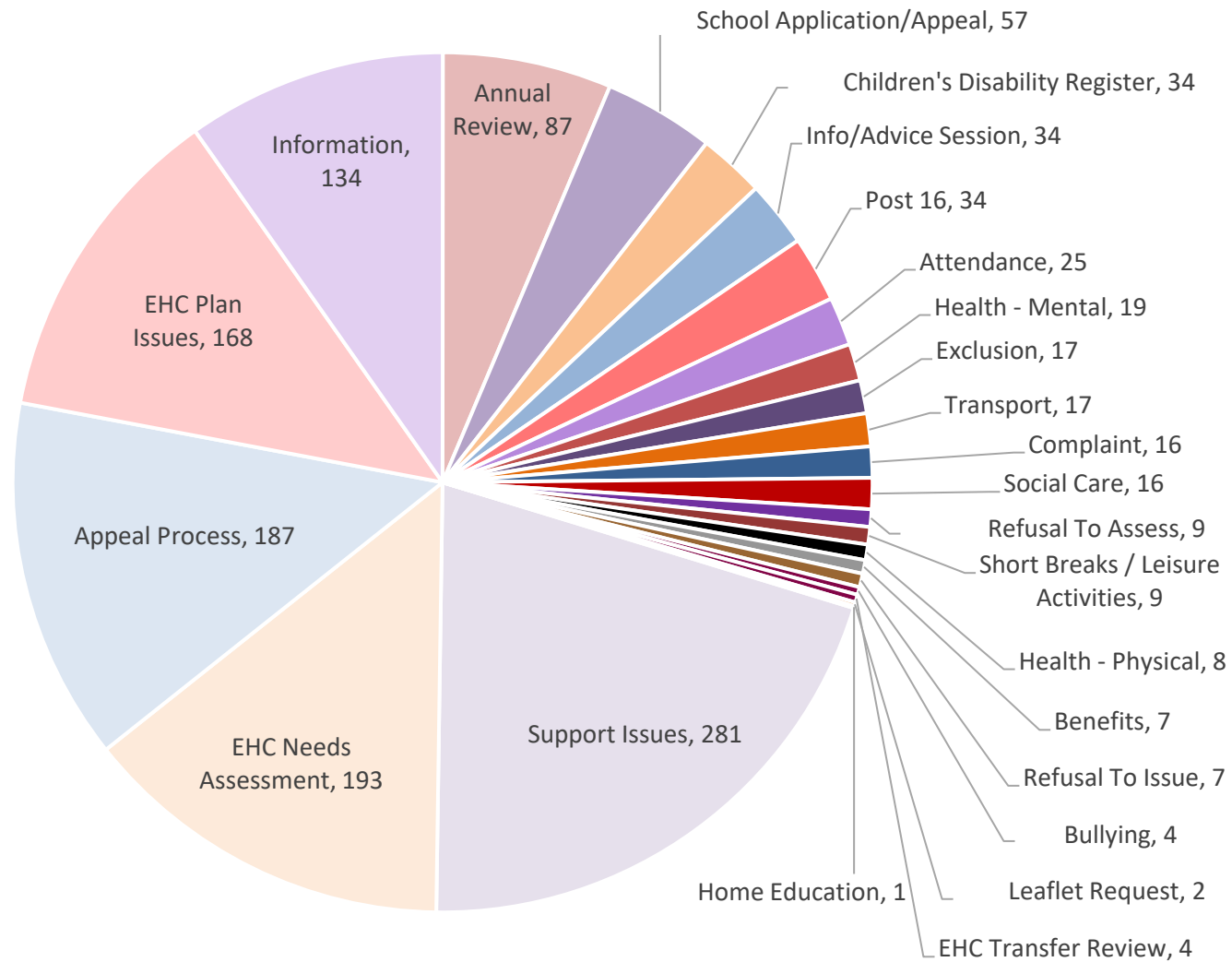
Service Outputs:

- **1464** calls and emails came through the helpline. Of the **697** emails received, **37** came through the website
- **260** families have received support at meetings via video or telephone conference calls
- **188** booked telephone appointments – where we would usually have met face to face to go over paperwork
- **25** face to face meetings for families who would have struggled to have only virtual support
- **422** New referrals for casework and **583** enquiries
- **28** virtual information sessions have been offered, with **43** attendees
- **12** workshops were delivered with **80** attendees, covering: SEN Support, Mental Capacity, Options Post 16, Getting the best out of meetings and Annual Reviews. Feedback has been positive all respondents said they would recommend the workshops. Using a 5-point scale with 5 being high, **82%** of respondents rated the workshops 4 or 5
- **93** young people over age 16 were accessing the service with support from their parents and **12** young people have received direct support from a caseworker
- **187** families have received information, advice and support relating to appeals to the SEND Tribunal, with **73** families being supported with the process
- Staff have virtually attended **4** mediations, **6** telephone case management hearings, **3** Judicial alternative dispute resolution hearings, **9** tribunal hearings, supporting families who would otherwise have found it difficult to attend on their own. With IASK support **11** appeals were resolved before the hearing date
- Of the **111** families that have been supported through the EHC needs assessment **46** had support with the draft EHC plan and or support with co-production meetings
- **89** contacts included health discussions
- **58** discussions relating to social care and **16** referrals recorded as part of the reason for contacting IASK, and **9** referrals relating to short breaks and activities
- Service attendance at: **4** ASC parent support sessions offered by the Neurodevelopmental and Learning Disabilities Service; **6** events providing a market stall (two virtually); and delivered two virtual presentations to parent groups raising awareness of our service.

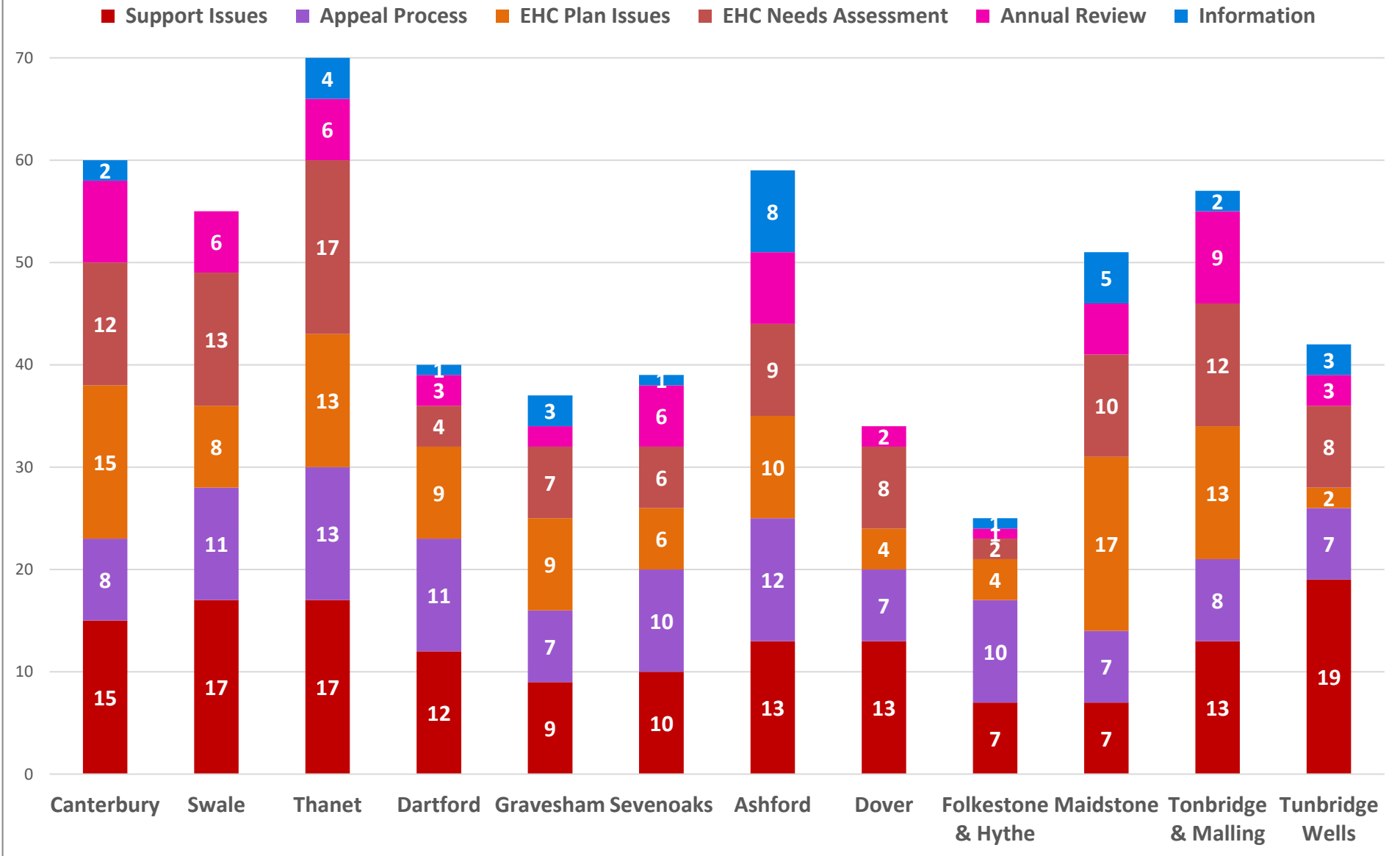
An analysis of the of the data for the April to September 2020 compared to the data for April to September 2021 shows there was a **48%** increase in new referrals for casework, **93%** increase in enquiries, and **36%** increase in contacts, returning to higher than pre-covid levels.

The graphs on the next 3 pages show referral reasons, referral reasons by district and main disability by district. Please note: More than one referral reason can be recorded against both an enquiry and a referral for casework, which means the overall referral reasons is larger than the number of service users recorded.

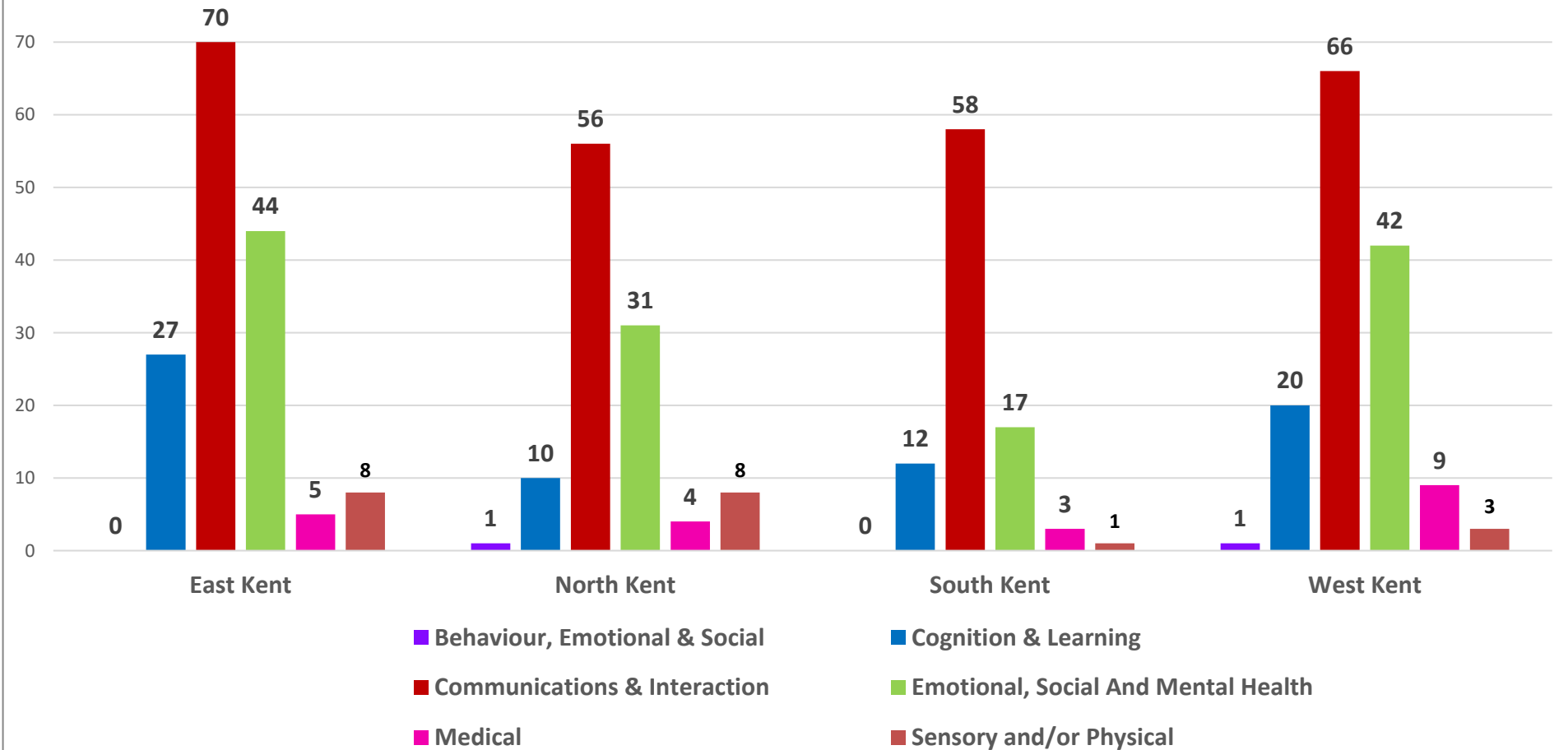
Total Referral Reasons from 1 April 2021 to 30 September 2021



Top six referral reasons by district



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



Key Performance Indicators

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

From 1 April 2021 to 30 September 2021:

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%

95% 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%

99% of Parents had access to either virtual or face to face support at meetings when requested **exceeding** the target of 90%

Website Usage

Website use has increased by 11% during the same six-month period in 2020, with a total of **5091** hits. There were **4916** new users to the site and **12,039** page views. The top six viewed pages, excluding the home page, were: Information for parents and carers, EHC plans, young people, information sessions/drop-ins, frequently asked questions, and leaflets. Young people's pages have been more popular than last year.

IASK Mission Statement

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

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

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

Service Overview

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

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

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

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

Information, Advice and Support Kent Steering Group

Steering Group members:

George Whitney, Young Person from East Kent and Chair

Jan Gray, Parent from South Kent

Dana Aris, Parent from West Kent

Karen Ponte, Parent from West Kent

Sharon King, Parent from East Kent

Jan Smith Representative from the Weald Parent Support Group

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

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

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

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

Information, Advice and Support Kent User Survey 1 April – 30 September 2021

For cases closed between the period of 1 April to 30 September 2021 a total of **123** parents and young people were contacted. We sought feedback from families who received more than 2 hours support during this period who are identified as receiving an intervention level 2,3 or 4.

38 responses were received resulting in a **31%** return rate

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

89% of respondents were likely (3*) or very likely to recommend the service to others

89% of respondents rated IASK as good (3*) or very good at being neutral, fair and unbiased

95% 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

96% 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:

70% have a greater understanding of the SEND Code of Practice and the arrangements that should be made for children/young people with SEN

89% feel more confident

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

(Please also see charts on pages 4/5)

Comments about the service:

'I haven't felt left on my own and any issues I have had with SEN, IASK has helped me sort out. We have then all met so I can talk about the worries I have and IASK breaks it down and explains to me what they are talking about and what things mean'.

'Could not have asked for better help or advice. Always on top of helping us and such a good support'.

'I feel empowered by the service'.

'My IASK contact gave me the information and confidence to achieve the best result for my son at a Ways Forward Meeting. Our appeal was successful- without IASK, things could have been very different. The service offered is essential to parents struggling with LA funding reductions'.

'I felt supported even though it was through Covid. Highly recommend the support'.

Suggestions to improve the service:

'Having more structure to the support rather than being needed. Offering support before needs arise'.

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

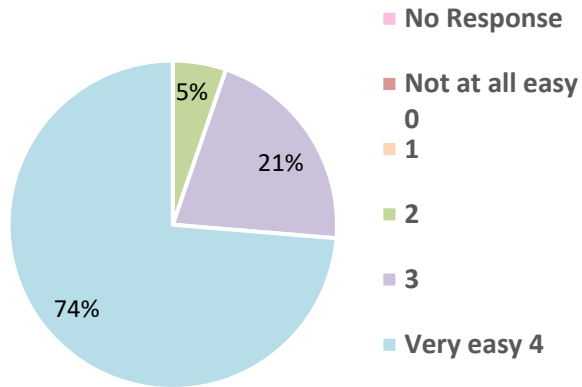
'Having more people at IASK'.

'Emphasis on law not policy.'

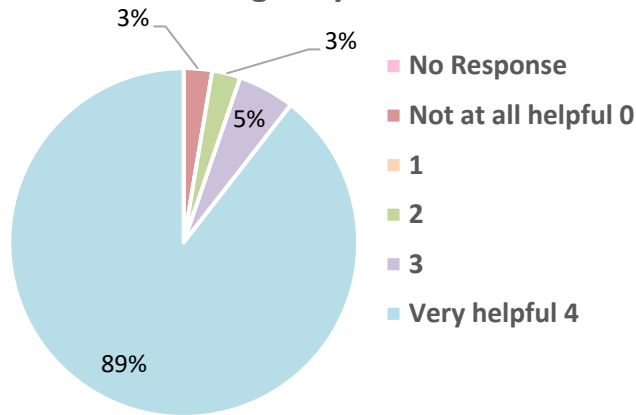
Following feedback from the Information, Advice and Support Kent User Survey 2020-2021 we have made the following changes:

You said	We did
<p>'Not a lot of people know about you. We have told people about your service'.</p> <p>'Schools should promote the service more – found out about IASK on-line'.</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 advice. Thank you'.</p>	<p>We continue to work on this and promote our service to nurseries, school, colleges, and other education providers. Our plan is to hold joint events with Kent PACT to promote the service more widely. This has been on hold due to Covid.</p>
<p>'Be more on the side of the parent. Would like IASK to be less neutral'.</p>	<p>The minimum standards for SEND Information, Advice and Support Services require us to be impartial. This means the information we give is based on the law and we must be neutral and fair in how we work. We have discussed in team training how we can maintain our impartiality by continuing to empower parents with the knowledge for them to make informed decisions appropriate to their situation.</p>

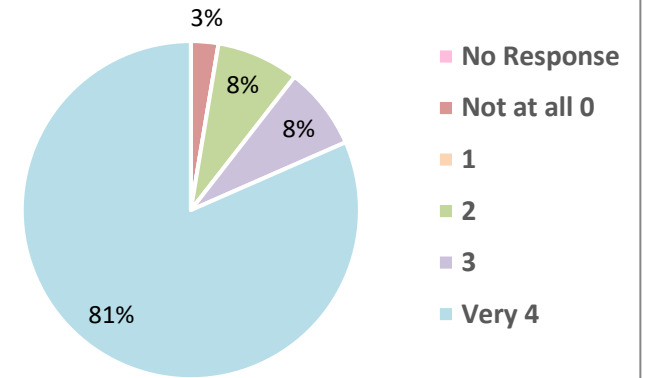
Q1 How easy was it to get in touch with us?



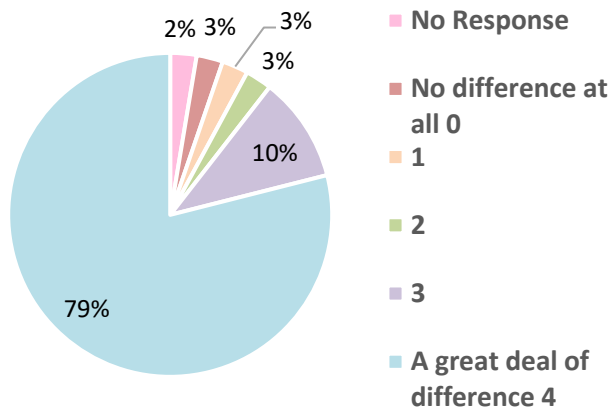
Q2 How helpful was the information, advice and support we gave you?



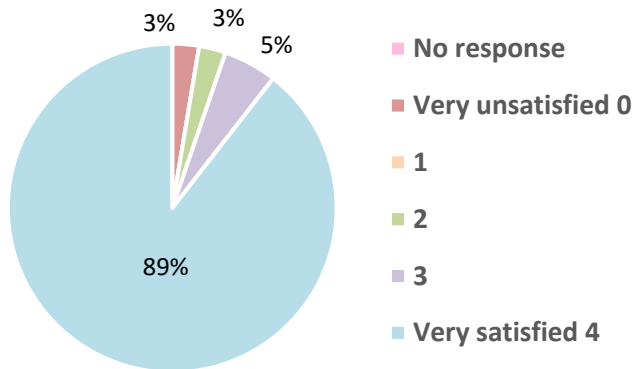
Q3 How neutral, fair and unbiased do you think we were?



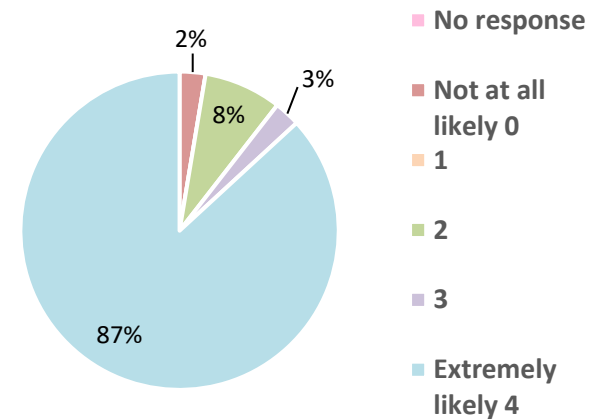
Q4 What difference do you think our information, advice or support has made for you?



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)

