

The logo for Information Advice and Support Kent features a stylized kite with a purple, green, and yellow body and a multi-colored tail (purple, green, yellow, and blue) that flows to the right.

**Information  
Advice and  
Support  
Kent**

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

# Interim Service Report

## September 2020

### Information, Advice and Support Kent

A service for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities  
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## **‘The service has made an incredible difference’**

*(parent feedback April - September 2020)*

### **Overview of IASK - Kerry Miles Service Coordinator**

This has been an interesting six months with all the team working from home and adapting to working in different ways to flexibly provide the same level of service to support families when they needed it. We made use of technology and were quickly able to support changes to service delivery conducting preparation meetings and support with paperwork via video, instead of face to face. We have also continued to support parents at meetings with schools, local authority and tribunal via telephone or video. Although the first few months were not so busy with calls, we took the time to make developments in the service: offering workshops on-line at different times of the day, producing a new leaflet about transition, making the service accessible outside of working hours by offering evening and early morning information sessions to replace our drop-in service. We have received positive feedback about our support and flexibility of offering to contact parents outside of usual working hours *‘thank you so much for suggesting calling me back in the evening, it made such a difference’, ‘thank you for the evening appointment I was able to concentrate on our conversation’.*

The service bid for a further £27,000 from the Information, Advice and Support Programme to continue developments in the second year of the development plan for 2020-2021, which was to be used to recruit to another member of the team to continue with participation and engagement work. Because we were in lockdown it was decided not to draw down the money as we rolled over money from the previous year.

The service has continued with the development plan and has achieved the following objectives:

**Objective 1)** Achieved in during the last financial year.

**Objective 2)** Minimum of 60 service users offered an alternative method for face to face meetings:

158 service users have been supported at meeting virtually via video or conference calls.

**Objective 3)** Minimum of eight training workshops offered with a minimum of 25 people attending overall:

The service has exceeded this target and is offering a range of workshops: SEN Support in Early Years, SEN Support in Schools and Colleges, Transition, Annual Reviews and the Statutory Assessment Process on request for those who have attended the SEN Support workshop or parents going through the process.

Since April, we offered eight workshops via video for the two main topics: SEN Support in the Early Years and SEN Support in Mainstream Schools and Colleges, which have been well received by 82 parents and practitioners. Feedback at the workshops have been positive: *'This session has helped me to identify the next steps and what to make sure is included in the further education SEN provision for my young person', 'Thank you for a great workshop', 'Wonderful workshop feedback is excellent on everything', 'I really enjoyed the course, everything was explained clearly and I loved that you could ask questions at the end. I am really looking forward to the next one'*.

Scheduled on-line workshops for the next four months are: Transition to Post 16, SEN Support in the Early Years and in Mainstream Schools (held in the evening) and Review Meetings to explain Annual reviews of an Education, Health and Care plan.

**Objective 4)** To have recruited a minimum of 4 volunteers.

We have changed our induction training programme. We recruited four volunteers last year who commenced the training and three are undertaking on-going training. We have recruited a further four volunteers who have undertaken mandatory KCC training (Data Protection, Information Governance, Prevent and Safeguarding). All volunteers are at various stages of completing the IPSEA accredited on-line training. We have held a volunteer induction session and volunteers will be offered opportunities to shadow our team at virtual school support meetings, we will also be doing further training regarding the legislation. We hope that by March 2021 we will have retained seven volunteers who will be working towards actively supporting parents.

**Objective 5)**

We have achieved Joint commissioned status for the service with an SLA for Education and Social care and are working towards achieving joint commissioning with the CCGs with input from service users into the design and delivery by April 2021.

As we did not recruit to the Participation and Engagement Officer post and also due to the Covid lockdown, we have not sought to engage parents or young people with: becoming a parent champion and/or young person peer mentor; sought feedback of how to further develop the website; explore further ways of using social media, increasing the numbers of children/young people participation in influencing policy and practice.

### **Impact over the six month period:**

The service has conducted user feedback surveys for cases that closed from 1 April to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020. We sought feedback from 120 service users via telephone and email using survey monkey and had a 15% response rate.

**95%** 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 Coordinator to follow up).

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

**94%** of respondents felt IASK listened to their view

**94%** felt IASK provide a confidential service

**50%** feel more confident

For full details about the user feedback responses, please see Appendix 2 (page 15)

### **Ad Hoc feedback from service users outside of the usual survey:**

Email compliments direct to the service:

*'I really appreciated your input. By giving 'T' time to think and make his own decision about his education made the whole situation less stressful for both of us. Thank you'*

*'thank you so much .... and thank you for all your help and guidance on the phone. It's been invaluable. I'm going to make a start on the appendix 1 now.'*

Feedback came through KCC on-line compliments:

*'On needing help and advice with an appeal against a school placement for my granddaughter I contacted IASK and was put in touch with XX. Without X's help and support throughout our arduous task of obtaining the right school for 'Ns' needs it would have been easy to give up. Her knowledge of forms and procedures was second to none and her friendly attitude made communication easy. I would not hesitate to recommend IASK to anyone who was need of support and especially X who I cannot thank enough. She is a credit your team'*

## **Case Study 1:**

### **Background**

Complex medical diagnoses, ASD, sensory diagnosis and has an Education, Health Care Plan. Had to stop mainstream college course due to medical conditions. Undertook two A levels online but due to medical conditions, unable to get a high enough pass grade. Was going to do a third A level but LA said this is no longer an option via the online provider.

### **Support**

The young person contacted IASK about options regarding a course that could lead onto University.

The family involvement worker had been working with this young person for 3 years and knew the young person well enough to understand his medical condition and support needs. She also knew what the young person's aspirations were.

In order to get the relevant qualifications to get to University, the young person needed 3 A levels.

After discussions with the YP, it was agreed that IASK would support the young person to find out further information about an 'Access to higher education – combined course' which is a 1-year course equivalent to 3 A levels offered at a local college.

After consultations with the college ALS manager and head of subject, it was agreed that the young person could do the course over a 2-year period, the specific topic and modules that would be covered and the support that would need be needed.

IASK supported the young person to apply for the course, to access the written task, on a visit to the college (prior to lockdown) and liaise with the SEN case worker over official consultations.

### **Impact**

The young person had been extremely concerned and worried that because of the lack of A levels would impact on the chosen career pathway. The young person felt empowered to be able to discuss an education pathway that had not been suggested before, and empowered to complete the paperwork.

The young person's choice of College was named in the plan and the YP has started the course, which with the correct support should enable a successful transition to University as per the young person's aspirations.

## **Case Study 2:**

Parent wanted support with meetings and with encouraging B (young person in post 16 education) to gain more independence and to be able to have a voice at meetings.

Parent felt the educational provider was being reactive rather than pro- active and was not taking into consideration B's EHC plan or making reasonable adjustments in relation to course work and during examinations.

IASK provided one-one support for B with completing Section A paperwork in preparation for an Annual Review of the EHC plan. IASK helped B to explore her views and feelings about the support she had been receiving and what support was needed going forward to help achieve her goals and aspirations.

The annual review meeting took place six months after the original proposed date, which meant that IASK supported B to re-visit section A, to ensure her views and wishes were up to date.

IASK attended the virtual annual review meeting with the education provider, SEN staff, subject lead and parent. With IASK support, B was able to share her thoughts and find a positive way forward.

### **Impact:**

With IASK support B has become more assertive and able to share wishes and feelings both on paper and at meetings.

Previous issues arising from miscommunication that had a negative impact on B's learning and productivity were resolved and B has been able to identify areas of support that have subsequently had a positive effect on her progression in learning.

B has subsequently met with the educational provider with parent support and is voicing opinions and concerns independently.

IASK information, advice given to the young person and their parent separately, was valued by B and her parent.

B felt supported by IASK and is confident to email IASK and ask questions with concerns about their plan. Further meeting arranged with B and the education provider to check progress and address any issues that are not dealt with on a day by day basis as they arise.

Parent feels the communication at the meetings were more positive and focussed with IASK present. Parent also felt that having an impartial supporter meant that B was more confident to speak at the meeting about her views and wishes.

Parent felt that with IASK support, any suggestions being raised were taken on board and actioned where previously suggestions of how to support B were acknowledged, but not actioned.

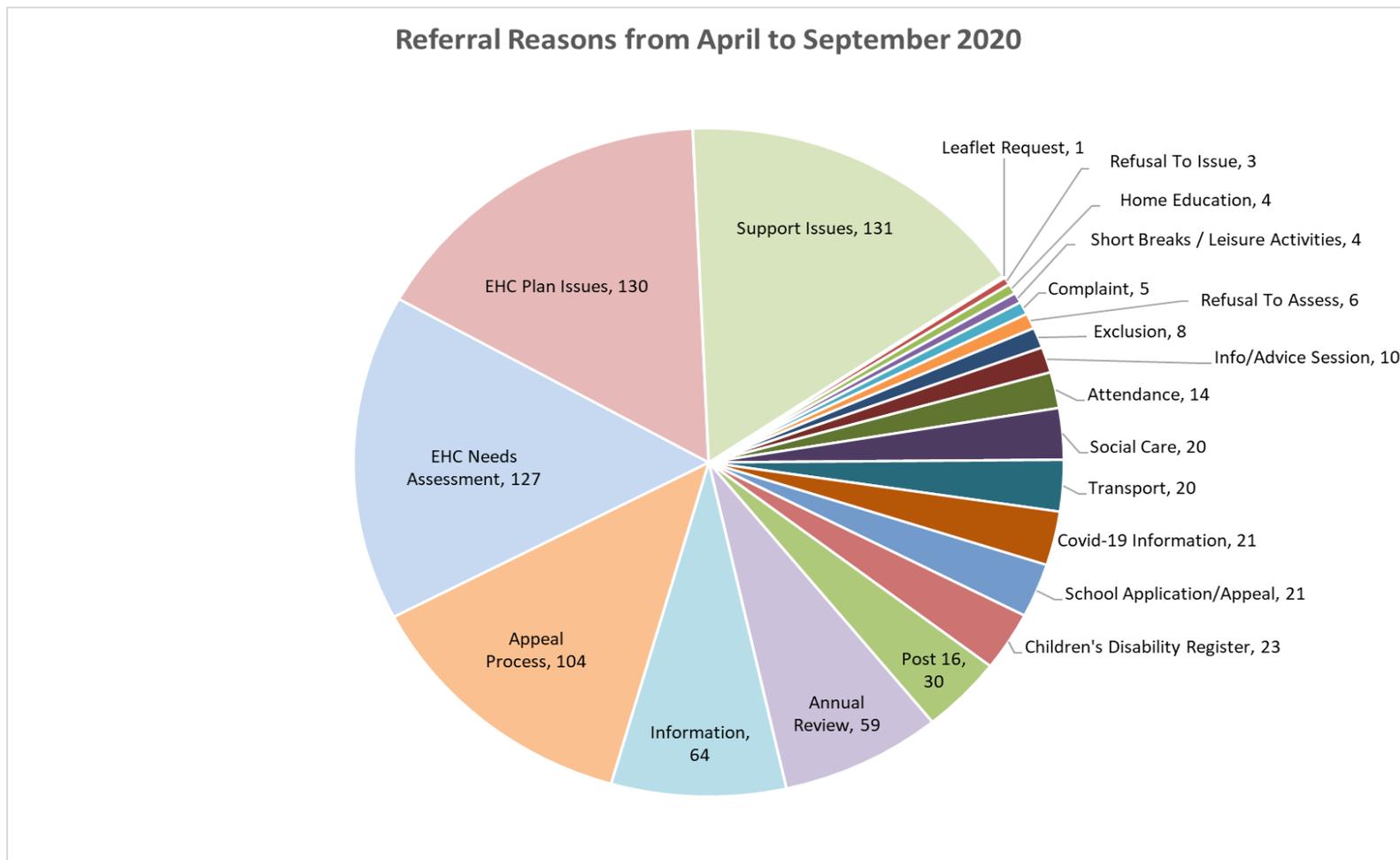
The educational provider is now being more proactive in many areas and looking at different ways to support and work with B to ensure they are meeting her needs.

### **Service Outputs:**

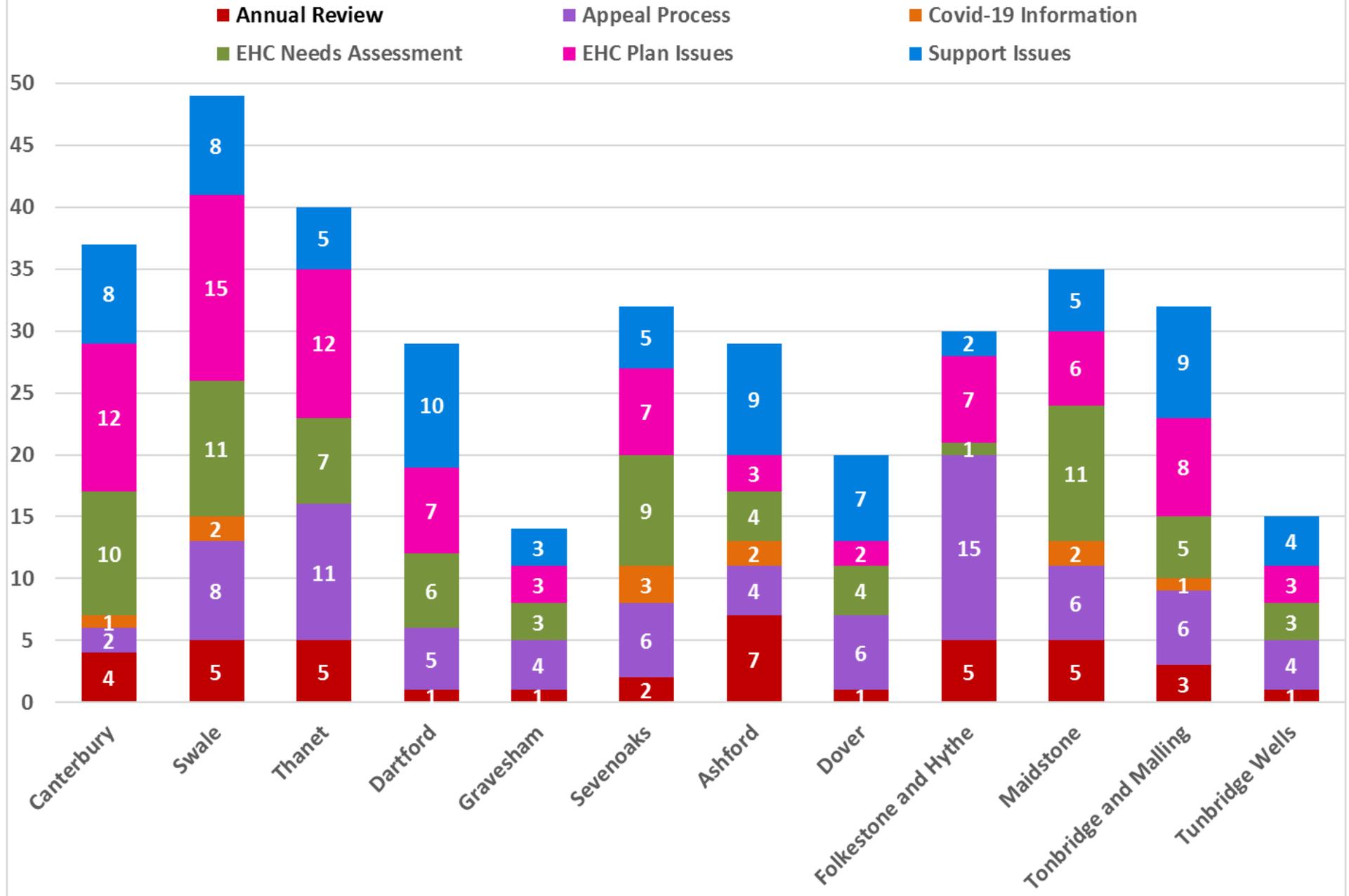
- 720 calls and emails came through the helpline. Of the 261 emails received, 20 came through the website.
- 157 families have received support at meetings via video or telephone conference calls instead of face to face
- 285 New referrals for casework and 301 enquiries
- 62 **virtual** information sessions have been offered, with 56 attendees
- Virtual presentations have been delivered at two ASD events and two support groups
- 134 young people over age 16 were accessing the service with support from their parents.
- 12 young people over age 16 and six children under the age of 16 were receiving direct support from a caseworker.
- 104 families have received information, advice and support relating to appeals to the SEND Tribunal.
- Staff have virtually attended four mediations, six Telephone case management hearings, four tribunal hearings to support families who would otherwise have found it difficult to attend on their own. With IASK support 10 appeals were resolved before the hearing date.
- 21 calls were recorded as a sole enquiry relating to Covid/Lockdown other conversations about Covid have been recorded as part of other discussions with the service. The themes are: Going back to school in June – structure, routine and concerns about health and safety, attendance – possible fines; Concerns about the Risk Assessments that schools were carrying out, sometimes relating to the fact that it meant their child couldn't go back to school, when the parent wanted them to; Child and parent anxiety and behaviour deterioration during Covid lockdown; Information about groups and resources; College place and social distancing – queries about distanced learning for vulnerable children, concerns about child having to attend school when there is a vulnerable person in their household; Returning to school/College in September – issues with not making reasonable adjustments for children who cannot wear a mask or not complying with Covid rules – exclusions have been threatened.

An analysis of the of the data for the April – September 2019 compared to the data for 2020 shows there was a 25% increase in new referrals for casework and 7% increase in contacts. Although there was a 50% reduction in calls and emails to the helpline during the beginning of the lockdown in April and May, there has been a steady increase in calls and emails, and in September only an 11% reduction has been recorded. In comparison the numbers of emails and telephone calls for the whole team has gradually increased on last year's figures from June onwards, seeing an increase of 14.8% in August and 12.3% in September 2020.

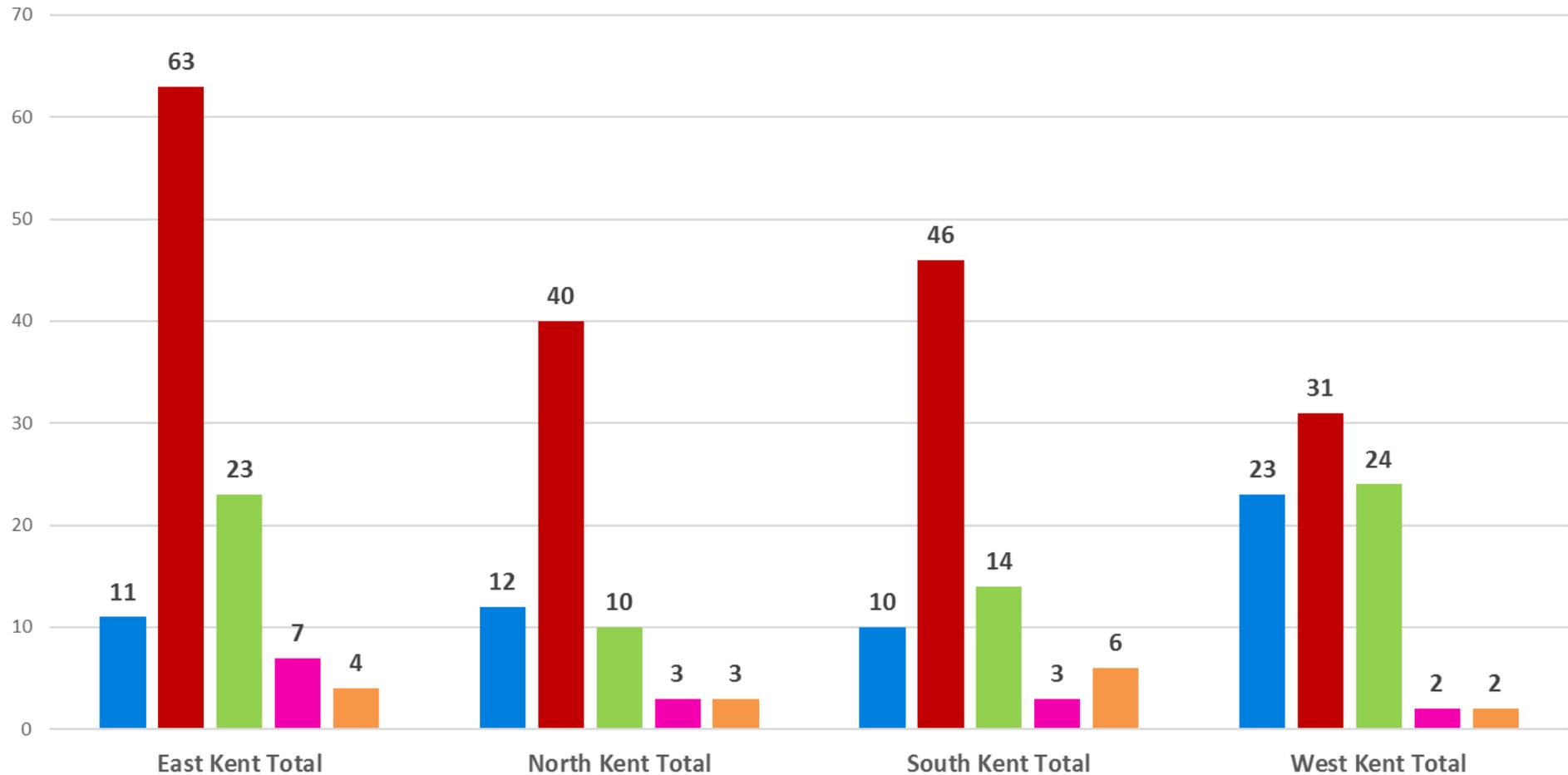
The graph below shows the reasons for contacting the service in the time period, more than one referral reason can be recorded against both an enquiry and a referral for casework which means the overall referral reasons is larger than the number of service users recorded.



## THE TOP 6 REFERRAL REASONS BY DISTRICT



## Referrals by Main Disability across the four areas of Kent



- Cognition & Learning (Downs Syndrome, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Global Developmental Delay, Learning Difficulty, MLD, PMLD)
- Communications & Interaction (Asperger Syndrome, Autistic, Language Impairment)
- Emotional, Social And Mental Health (ADHD/ADD, Mental Health Needs)
- Medical (Allergies, Diabetes, Disorder or Disease, Eczema, Epilepsy, Syndromes)
- Sensory and/or Physical (Brain injury, Cerebral Palsy, Hearing Impairment, Physical disability, Visual Impairment)

## Key Performance Indicators

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

### From 1 April 2020 to 30 September 2020:

**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%.

**95%** of service users found the service helpful (3\*) or very helpful to them, (*Q2 user survey*) **exceeding** the target of 90%.

**100%** of Parents had access to **virtual** support at meetings when requested **exceeding** the target of 90%.

## Website Usage

Website use has increased with a total of **4551** hits for the 6 months which is a monthly average of **758**, this is a **74%** increase for the previous monthly average between January and March 2020. There were **4,415** new users to the site and **15,277** page views. The top six viewed, excluding the home page, were: Parents and Carers, EHC plans, Information sessions/drop-ins, young people, leaflets, and social isolation resources.

## **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](mailto:info@space2beme.org.uk)  
Website: [www.space2beme.org.uk/](http://www.space2beme.org.uk/)

Sarah Selby-Bird, Representative of SNAAP Telephone: 01227 367555 Email: [info@snaap.org.uk](mailto:info@snaap.org.uk) Website: [www.snaap.org.uk/](http://www.snaap.org.uk/)

Tiffany Elliot, Commissioning Officer for Social Care for Kent County Council

Louise Hickman, Interim Head of SEN Assessment and Placement for Kent County Council

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



## Feedback from Information, Advice and Support Kent User Survey 1 April – 1 September 2020

surveys conducted over the telephone and emailed to parents and young people whose cases closed between the period of 1 April 2020 - 30 September 2020.

**18** responses were received resulting in a **15%** return rate.

**95%** of responses recorded the information we provided was helpful (3\*) or very helpful to them

**94%** 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

**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

**94%** of respondents felt that we understood their questions concerns well (3\*) or very well

**94%** of respondents felt IASK listened to their view

**94%** felt IASK provide a confidential service

**83%** felt the information and advice provided met their needs

**94%** of respondents felt that the information advice and support provided has made a difference or a **great** deal of difference

### **Examples of the difference made:**

**67%** have a greater understanding of the SEND Code of Practice and the arrangements that should be made for children/young people with SEN

**50%** feel more confident

**61%** of respondents felt their child has benefitted as a result of the service being involved

(Please also see charts below)

### **Comments about the service:**

'I would like to thank you all for the excellent and professional manner in which you conduct yourselves'.

'My son really appreciates the support'.

'I really appreciated the support I got and have done over the last few years, it's been amazing. Z has been brilliant and has such a wealth of knowledge, I can't thank her enough.'

'Genuinely life changing for my child. Having been told by previous schools he wouldn't qualify for an EHCP I was very anxious about making a parental request. With IASK support and advice my son now has an EHCP and is in a school that is equipped to help him.'

'Continuity of the same person supporting my young teenagers over the years has made a difference because she knew the issues involved and the family unit. There was less explaining to do and she was able to build a good rapport with them and myself and understood their individual needs'.

'X and Y were knowledgeable and compassionate. Their advice and support was excellent and I am grateful for everything they did to help with the EHCP and securing the best school provision for my child. I highly recommend getting in touch with them.'

'The service has made an incredible difference. For the first time I felt my child's needs were considered the most important through the whole EHCP application and was given the confidence to push on with what I can describe as an incredibly stressful process.'

'Both the people I dealt with were very helpful and a great sounding board. I've never had anything but excellent support from your team and I would recommend them to anyone'.

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

