

The logo for Information Advice and Support Kent (IASK) features a stylized kite with a yellow body and a tail made of three colored streamers: red, blue, and green. The text 'Information Advice and Support Kent' is written in a bold, sans-serif font to the left of the kite.

**Information
Advice and
Support
Kent**

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

Information, Advice and Support Kent (IASK)

Service Report 1st October 2024 – 31st March 2025

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‘IASK bolstered mine and my partner’s confidence. I was better able to argue for my child and was more aware of my rights. When I am in a formal setting it is now easier to have conversations than it was before’. (Feedback survey 2024-2025)

Overview of IASK - Kerry Miles Service Coordinator

This report gives an overview of Information, Advice and Support Kent with statistics relating to outputs for the six- month period 1 October 2024 to 31 March 2025 with comparisons to the previous six months covered in the Interim report, and comparisons over the past five years.

The service, has experienced a **79%** increase in enquires to the helpline for information and advice and a **3%** increase in referrals for casework support with paperwork, preparing for meetings, mediations and appeals relating to exclusions and the statutory assessment process. The service has received a similar number of requests for support at meetings as the previous six months and has continued to meet the service Key Performance Indicator of attending **90%** of meeting requests. The team has risen to the challenge and work flexibly to ensure calls are responded to within the two working day turnaround. Due to extremely high volumes of calls on a couple of occasions the return calls have gone into the third day.

We were pleased to receive funding from health for this year which enables us to fully meet the minimum quality standards for Special, Educational Needs and Disabilities, Information, Advice and Support Services.

With savings from a two month vacancy, the service has been able to increase the hours of the Family Involvement Worker for the North area to full time to support the growing requests for support in this area of Kent. We recruited to a vacant Family Involvement Worker for the East area, who has completed the mandatory training and three modules of independent training provided by the National IASS. We have continued to have the benefit of an additional member of staff funded through the Dynamic Support Service to provide support for families where a child or young person has mental health issues that are below the threshold for accessing support via the Dynamic Support Database. The training and knowledge that the post holder has benefited the whole of the team with their work in supporting families who have a child suffering from mental health or high anxieties. Our trained volunteer has provided support to the service by administering the service Facebook page, which has been well received and commented on by service users.

This year, Kent County Council commissioning team carried out a review of the IASK service. The overall feedback about the service was very positive. We have eight recommendations which will be carried out in the next year.

The service video was completed this year as a resource to promote the service through a different media, thank you so much to everyone who has been involved along the journey. We held four events across the County to promote the videos and also celebrating 30 years of offering information, advice and support to parents of children with SEND and since 2014 directly providing a service to children and young people. The events were well received by attendees who all really liked the videos and one person said that they didn't realise their son could play 'such a key role in their annual review'.

Along with the increases in other work there has been an increase in support around tribunals, as well as our 'returning satisfied customers' we have received increasing requests from new referrals. 50% of referrals are received from families whose ethnicity is White British, 10% from other ethnic communities including Asian, Black, European, Greek, Gypsy Roma, Turkish, Traveller. 40% are unknown as we would not refuse a service if they do not wish to respond to this question.

Outcomes:

Maintained high standards of service delivery meeting the national benchmarks for IAS Services.

Improved service for service users - Staff fully trained to deliver their role and new training opportunities undertaken: New member of the team has achieved all 3 levels of independent accredited on-line training through IPSEA. The team have undertaken training about supported internships. Casework Adviser has successfully completed the Managing in KCC Programme.

Raising Awareness within communities: Provision of market stalls and presentations. IASK have attended at 97% of requests to attend support groups and raising awareness events providing a market stall. This does not include Family Hub holiday events and groups, due to the number held across the county and staff capacity to attend.

Continued effective networking with partners: Co-ordinator regular attendance at the Youth Voice and Engagement Network and Special Education Needs and Disabilities Information, Advice and Guidance Partnership Group. SE Regional Network meeting for SEND Information, Advice and Support Service.

Raising on-line profile with the provision of two service videos which have been well received.

Increasing opportunities for volunteer involvement through ongoing training for volunteers.

Key Performance Indicators From 1st April 2024 – 31 March 2025:

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

96.6% calls were responded to within two working days **which is slightly under** the target of 97%.

86% of service users found it easy (3*) or very easy to get in touch with us, (*Q1 user survey*) **not** meeting the target of 90%.

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

96.7% of Parents had support at meetings when requested, **exceeding** the target of 90%.

Impact:

The service has conducted user feedback surveys for cases that closed between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025 **449** parents and young people were contacted, who had given us permission to seek their feedback. Feedback was sought from families who received more than 2 hours support during this period who are identified as receiving an intervention level 2,3 or 4. **73** responses were received resulting in a **16%** return rate not as good as previous years, but some families had responded to the service review questionnaire so didn't want to respond this time.

97% of respondents felt that we understood their questions concerns well (3*) or **very well**

98% of respondents felt IASK **listened** to their view

90% of respondents rated IASK as good (3*) or **very good** at being neutral, fair and unbiased

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

92% felt satisfied (3*) or **very satisfied** with the service they received.

93% of respondents felt that the information advice and support provided has made a **great** deal of difference

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

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

Thanks for checking in. X is loving his new school. They are really amazing there.
Thank you again, wouldn't have got this result on my own. Ur a real life superhero!

I would like to thank you very much for all the help and support you have given to my wife and I over the appeal for X's EHCP. It was valuable advice and gave us the confidence to know the forms and evidence we submitted to the appeal court were correctly filled in.

X managed to lift my spirits. She listened intently, and graciously accepted my numerous interruptions. Very importantly, she succeeded in making me feel stronger and more able to continue with my current 'fight'.

Please send a big thank you to X for supporting me yesterday at X's review. I think this is going to be an ongoing thing for quite a while. I did become very emotional so it was nice to know someone was there

I just wanted to share my gratitude with all the support I have accessed so far.
As a parent feeling overwhelmed with a Send child - I've had a very successful meeting with X which I've appreciated. Then today - an empowering call with Y after my hardest turn in the road.
Thank you. It's very hard to know where to turn when you're up against it. But what a fantastic service.

Case Study 1:

BACKGROUND

Chris aged 12 is autistic and has an Education, Health and Care Plan. Attended a mainstream secondary school awarded via a Tribunal Appeal, but was permanently excluded on first day of term.

SUPPORT

Parent wanted to challenge the permanent exclusion and required support to understand the process, and to empower them to put her views across and at the Governors meeting.

IASK Family Involvement Worker supported with the process, went through the permanent exclusion pack and highlighted specific information, parent has dyslexia and needed support with paperwork to fully prepare.

The Governors upheld the decision to permanently exclude. The Family Involvement Worker supported at an Independent Review Panel meeting to consider the decision.

Parent asked for further support to help them get their views and thoughts written down to enable a disability discrimination appeal to be lodged. The Family Involvement worker explained the First Tier Tribunal paperwork, the Responsible Body paperwork and enabled parent to make informed decisions and participate in an informal meeting with Responsible Body solicitors. The Family Involvement Worker also attended the disability discrimination hearing with parent as a supporter, to enable parent to understand and participate in the hearing.

IMPACT

Parent was able to participate and make informed decisions, have their voice heard both verbally at meetings and in writing as paperwork was typed on her behalf from conversations and checked prior to being submitted. Parent feedback was that they felt empowered and able to fully participate in the process, without IASK support, they stated that they would not have been able to undertake the full process themselves and likely would have given up. Parent won their disability discrimination appeal.

Case Study 2:

BACKGROUND

Case referred to IASK from CAMHS in November 2022 due to concerns raised about a Penny age 13, not being able to access school and hadn't attended since 2021, due to high anxieties and other difficulties. CAHMS requested support because Parent is registered blind. Parent had recently gained custody and was doing everything to support Penny back to school.

School had gone above and beyond with their support and had contacted relevant support services, including social services and The Rosewood School who offer temporary education for children with health issues.

CAMHS were stepping down because they felt Penny was not ready to access support from their service, but made it clear that they would support once Penny was ready.

The team from the Rosewood commenced their support in October 2023 and worked sensitively to engage with Penny who found it extremely difficult to leave the house. It took 3-4 months to build a trusting relationship before Penny felt able to attend Rosewood. This was a huge achievement for Penny who managed to slowly engage with the school over the next 12 weeks before the placement ceased in May 2024. This meant Penny was again not accessing education.

SUPPORT

IASK supported at Child in Need meetings and both school, CAMHS and social services felt Penny needed a specialist provision.

IASK supported parent to make a request for Education, Health and Care needs assessment which was turned down. The caseworker supported throughout the appeal process acting as a 'Representative' for parent due to their disability.

The Local Authority conceded and carried out the assessment. IASK Casework Advisor supported during this time, by communicating with parent via WhatsApp, to help parent fully engaged with the process. Answering queries and messaging to advise when documents and information were being emailed.

Once the local authority agreed to issue an Education, Health and Care plan, the caseworker supported parent to consider the draft plan and make representations including arranging a co-production meeting with the local authority to enable parent to be fully involved by sharing views and to provide parental preference for a special school.

The local authority named the current mainstream school despite the history of non- attendance and difficulties. For a second time IASK supported parent with an appeal, again acting as a representative to enable parent to play an active and informed role in the process. The case worker was acting as a representative, they ensured parent was included in every correspondence, always sought, views and wishes, which were reflected in all communication throughout the appeals.

The Local Authority conceded before the hearing date, agreed the specialist provision placement with a transition into the school's post 16 provision in September.

IMPACT

Parent, referred to the caseworker as "his eyes", who supported parent to understand the paperwork, the process and explained their rights. Parent felt empowered to be fully engaged in two appeals to the SEND tribunal.

Parent has advised the caseworker that everything was going amazingly well. The school are working closely with Penny, who has built trusting relationships with the staff and is attending the school on a regular part-time basis at the moment.

Parent has already seen a significant difference in Penny's confidence and behaviour. Parent said he was 'significantly grateful for IASK support and has constantly said without our support and "our eyes", he would never have been able to bring about the appeal and play such an active role within it'. He has expressed that IASK enabled him to be both empowered and confident throughout the processes.

Case Study 3:

BACKGROUND

Lesley age 7 is autistic and has speech and language delay, significant sensory needs, compulsive and disruptive behaviours. Lesley moved into the area with a younger sibling when Special Guardianship was given to a relative and was placed in a mainstream primary school, on a reduced timetable with support from the relative who had to stay on school site. Lesley has an Education, Health and Care Plan. However, the relative and school were looking at change in placement to a suitable special school.

SUPPORT

Assisted the relative with appealing to the SEND Tribunal, explaining about preference for a school. Assisted with Child in Need meetings to ensure relative had their voice heard over the complex issues, reduced timetable and the impact that having to remain on site was having upon her own child and Lesley's sibling.

The relative had their own medical issue and was unable to drive for a period of two months to get the three children to school and required Local Authority support with transport. IASK supported with the application and the transport appeal but transport was declined even though there were temporary special circumstances.

More than 10 special schools had unfortunately declined a place. IASK assisted the relative with highlighting specific schools and supported with arranging viewings of two potential schools, liaising with the SEN case officer. One of the schools viewed offered a place, IASK explained how to appeal to the SEND tribunal and next steps in the appeal procedure.

IMPACT

The relative had their voice heard about the impact upon her family and Lesley's sibling. All professionals were of the same opinion and were able to be supportive of moving the situation forward quickly.

Lesley visited appropriate schools, was offered a placement and Lesley is now settled, making progress academically, socially and emotionally, and looks forward to going to school. The relative did not have to continue with the appeal process which negated the several months wait for an outcome. Family life has improved and is more settled.

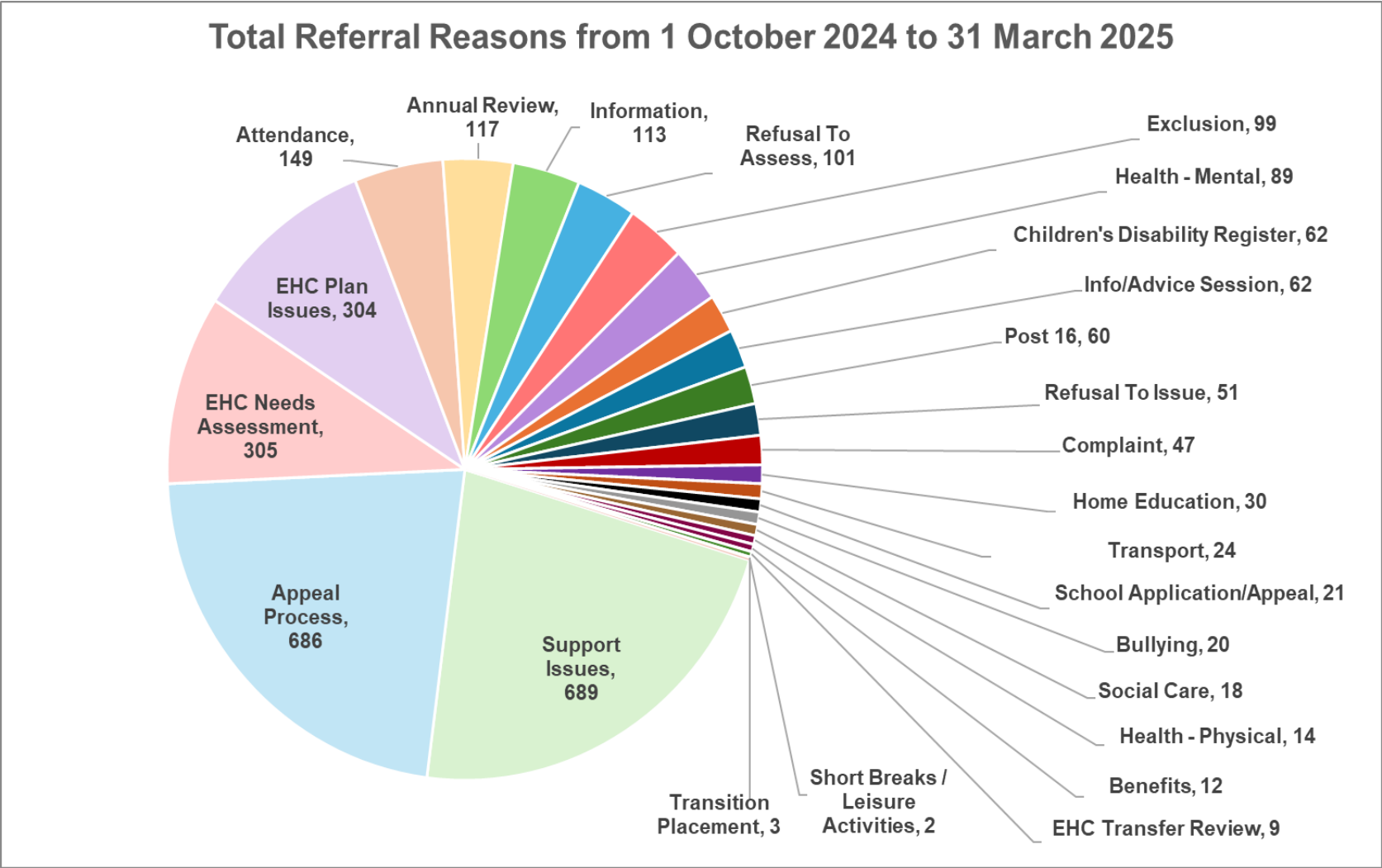
Service Outputs for the six month period 1 October 2024 – 31 March 2025 compared to the previous 6 months

- **3459** calls and emails came through the helpline representing a **11%** increase on the previous 6 months. Of the **1953** emails received, **129** came through the website which is similar to previous years.
- **494** families have received support at meetings via video or telephone conference calls or face to face, this represents **18.75 %** increase in support provided in this way.
- **700** telephone appointments were arranged, which is consistent with the previous six months.
- **1233** new referrals for casework showing a **3.8%** increase and the service has continued to support **801** previous cases which represents a **1.5%** increase.
- **41** virtual one to one bookable information sessions with three slots offered per session. **Eight** in person one to one bookable information sessions held in accessible locations in the four areas of the County. A total of **111** people attended the virtual and in person sessions.
- Virtual attendance at: **4** Multi Agency sessions for parents of children who are on the pathway for an autism diagnosis.
- **104** young people over age **16** were accessing the service with support from their parents and **15** young people were receiving direct support from a caseworker and **14** felt confident to be actively involved in their meeting. A total of **130** contacts recorded.
- **686** families have received information, advice and support relating to appeals to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal, the same figure as the previous 6 months. From this number, we have supported **223** families with paperwork and **84** appeals have been lodged. Virtual attendance at: **11** mediations, **19** Telephone case management hearing/Judicial Alternative Dispute Resolution hearing and **23** tribunal hearings to support families who would otherwise have found it difficult to attend on their own. With IASK support, **55** appeals were resolved before the hearing date.
- **689** referrals have been about education support issues, and this continues to be the highest reason for contact with our service, this represents a **36%** increase from the previous 6 months. There has been a significant increase in referrals relating to attendance and exclusion issues: **132%** for attendance and **102%** for exclusions. **89** referrals were about concerns for their child's mental health. (Please see graphs (page 14/15).
- **18** families' reasons for referring to the service were relating to social care, **62** were about the Children's Disability Register. **38** specific discussions were recorded for social care and **one** about a social care needs assessment.

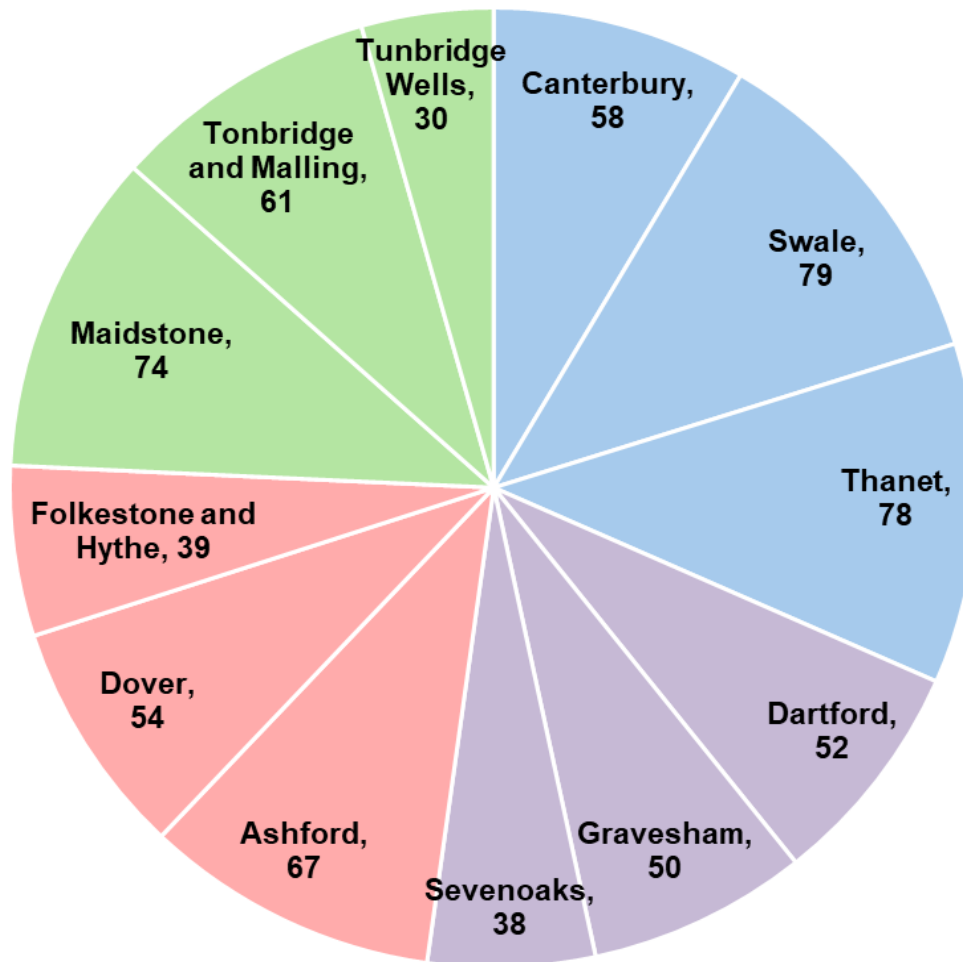
- The IASK website has attracted **8477** visits to the home page a **6%** increase from the previous 6 months with a slight decrease in new users of **5%** to **6,676**. There has been an increase in page views of **3%** to **26,098**, with a **36%** increase in views of the Information Sessions and Drop-ins page. The top seven pages viewed, excluding the home page, were: Parents and Carers, SEN Support and EHC plans, Frequently Asked Questions, Inclusion and Equality, Information Sessions and Drop ins, Young People and Appeals to the SEND Tribunal.
- **18** Virtual Workshops were delivered covering a range of topics. A total of **221** bookings were received and **126** parents and practitioners attended the workshops. We received **100%** positive feedback from respondents (half of these were from practitioners), across the range of workshops, who all said they would recommend the workshops and the **86.5%** of respondents scored a 4 or 5 (high) in response to their learning as per the workshop objectives.
- **Two** bespoke workshops were delivered: Oakley Special school for parents whose children are transitioning to the next phase of education, and a virtual session for the West Kent Autism Parent Support Society. Feedback from attendees was extremely positive.
- We continue to attend raising awareness activities across the County which include: Roadshows with colleagues from the SEND Information Hub and Kent PACT, Moving on/Careers events for children and young people, Early Years SENCO Conference, in-person parent support groups, and multi-agency Networking Event. ASC support groups, family hub groups and events, Children's Therapy Service, and supporting a parent session arranged by Care Navigators about School Avoidance. Reaching **250** parents, **108** children and young people, **188** practitioners from various Kent agencies and service.

To give an understanding of why parents and young people contact the service, the following graphs on the next 4 pages show referral reasons, referral reasons by district and main disability by district for the period 1 October 2024– 31 March 2025

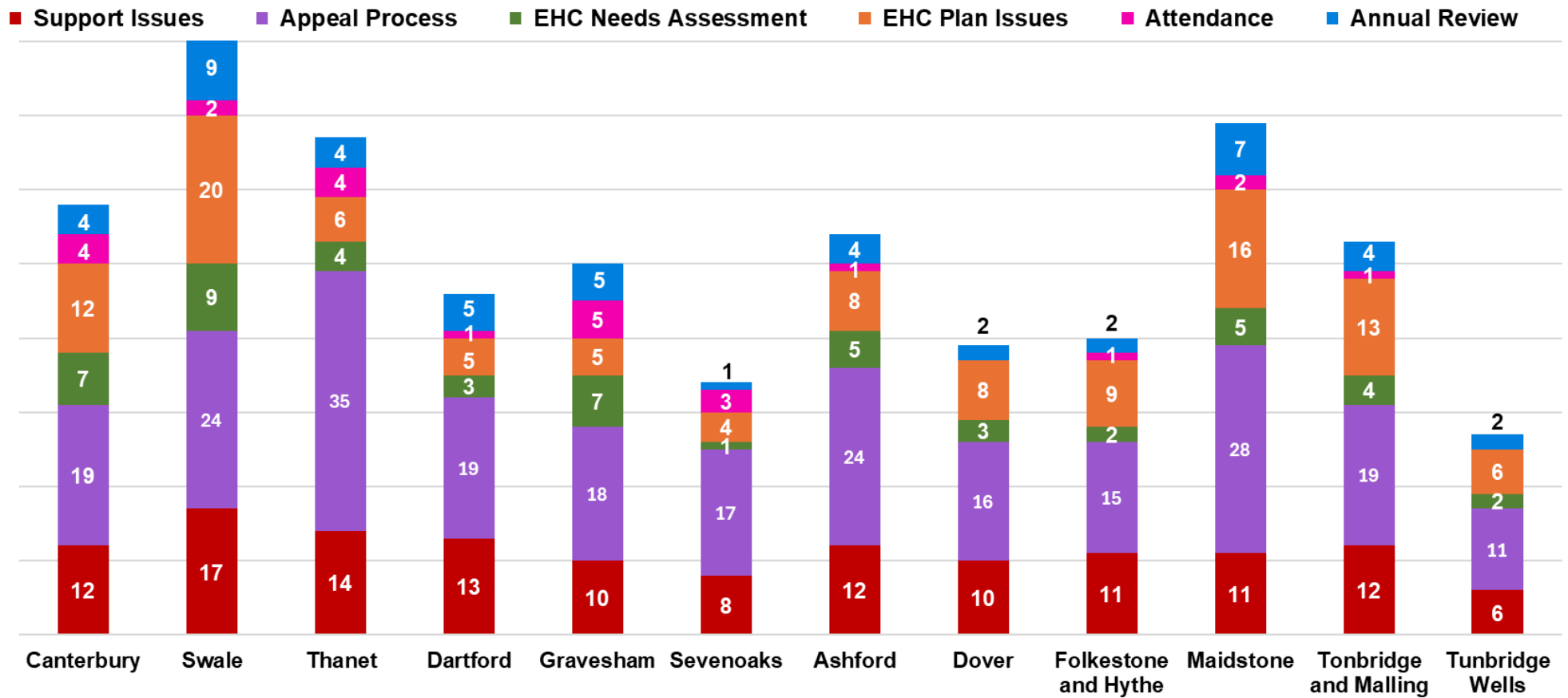
More than one referral reason can be recorded against an enquiry a referral for casework which means the number of overall referral reasons is larger than the number of service users recorded.



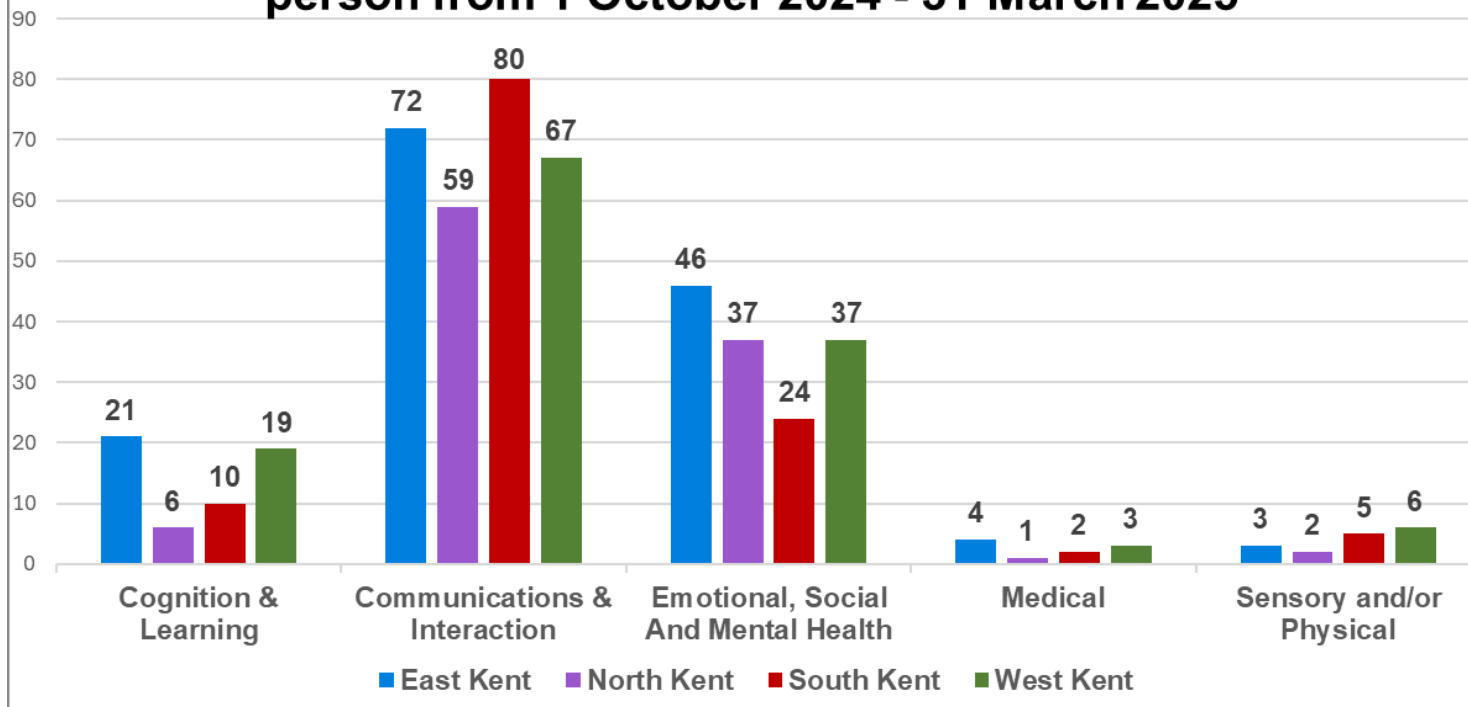
**Number of Referrals by District of Kent
from 1 October 2024 - 31 March 2025**



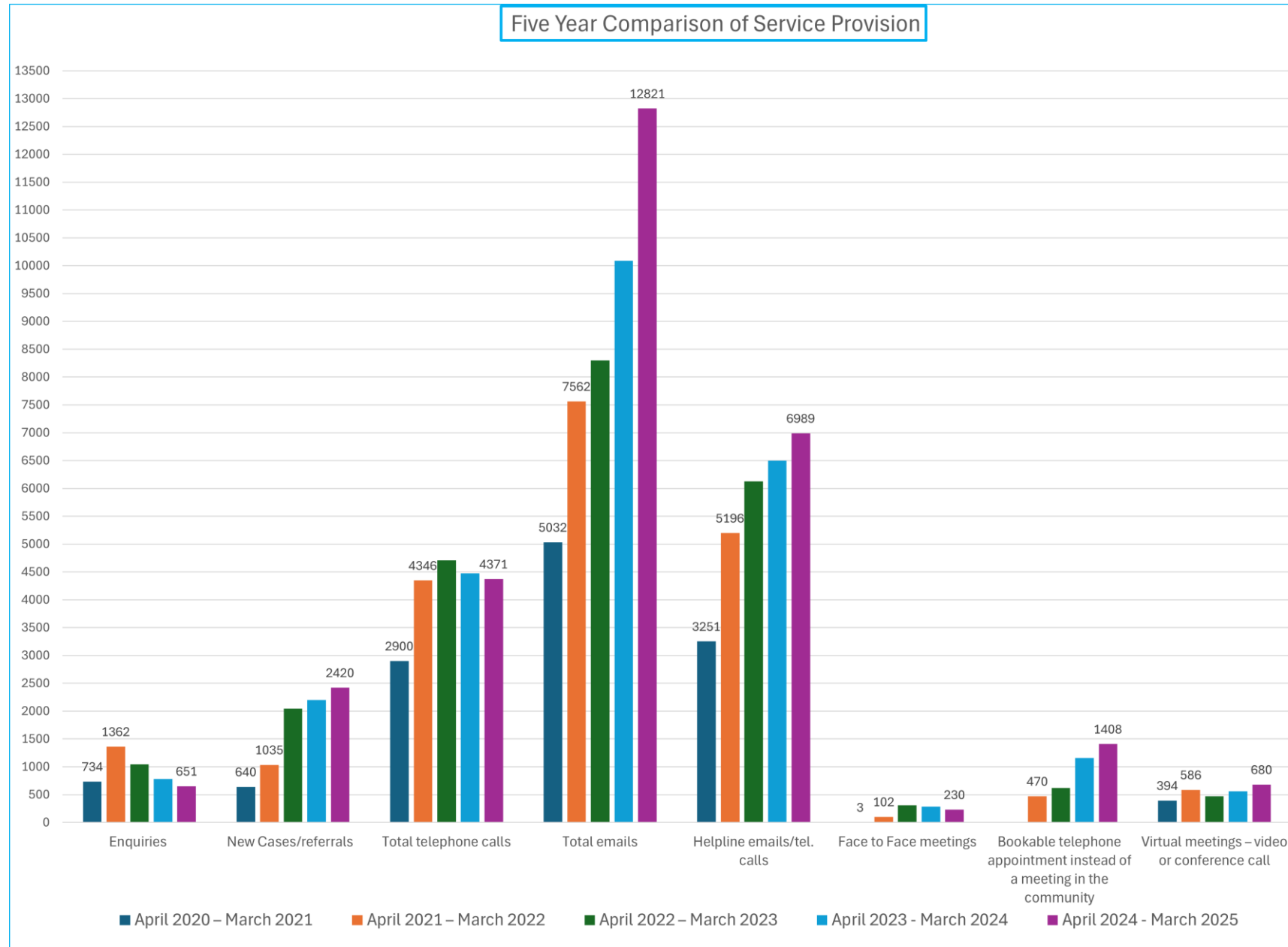
Top six referral reasons by district from 1 October 2024 - 31 March 2025



Referrals across the four areas of Kent, by the main disability, as identified by parents/carers or young person from 1 October 2024 - 31 March 2025



Information, Advice and Support Kent Annual 5 year comparison of service provision



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.

IASK has a steering management group which meets three/four 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 Members

Amy Chivers - Parent from West Kent – Chair

Sharon King - Parent/ Representative of Kent PACT (Parent Carer Forum)

Hannah Chandler - Parent

Becky Clark, Parent / Representative of 21 Together

Natalie Hanchett – Parent East Kent

Emma Hanson, Commissioning for Disabled Children's Services for Kent County Council

Claire Packman Designated Clinical Officer, NHS Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board

Kayleigh Leonard Young Person representative and Looked after Children

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

Siobhan Price, Kent County Council Mainstream Inclusion

Katie Wicks, Representative of SNAAP Telephone: 01227 367555 Email: info@snaap.org.uk Website: www.snaap.org.uk/

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 2024 - March 2025

For cases closed between the period of 1 April 2024 - 31 March 2025 a total of **449** parents and young people were contacted, who had given us permission to seek their feedback. Feedback was sought from families who received more than 2 hours support during this period who are identified as receiving an intervention level 2,3 or 4.

73 responses were received resulting in a **16%** return rate.

86% of respondents found it easy (3*) or very easy to get in touch with us

97% of respondents felt that we understood their questions concerns well (3*) or very well

98% of respondents felt IASK listened to their views

94% felt the information and advice provided met their needs

90% of respondents rated IASK as good (3*) or very good at being neutral, fair and unbiased

92% 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

93% of respondents felt that the information advice and support provided has made a **great** deal of difference

Top four examples of the difference made:

77% feel their child has benefitted as a result of the service being involved

69% feel more confident

65% have a greater understanding of the SEND Code of Practice and the arrangements that should be made for children/young people with SEN

61% feel that their child's needs are better understood than they were. (Please also see charts on pages 4/5)

Comments about the service:

'(In response to Q1 'How easy was it to get in touch with us?) - It may have taken day or so but you always contacted us as soon as possible . The Service was fantastic and helped us a great deal'.

It was really good and professional. The people were really lovely and wanted to listen and understand which is all you want as a parent.

'I work for NHS mental health services, I always recommend IASK to parents who are suffering due to the stressors of supporting their children with additional needs and struggling to communicate with the schools. IASK do such great work making school life better for children and their parents. Not just for our family, but for many others, I have had a number of parents whose mental health has improved greatly after IASK have supported and guided them'

'IASK was really helpful and took a lot of stress off me. They got things done and helping me figure out the system took a mental load off me'.

'IASK bolstered mine and my partner's confidence. I was better able to argue for my child and was more aware of my rights. When I am in a formal setting it is now easier to have conversations than it was before'.

'I have already recommended you to everyone I know. Thank you for all your help, it was really above and beyond'.

Suggestions to improve the service:

'Just having an advisor on the end of the phone. Sometimes when you get a reply from the school or LA you need an answer now but you have to leave a voicemail and wait two days. When they call back you may be busy have to try and remember parts your question'.

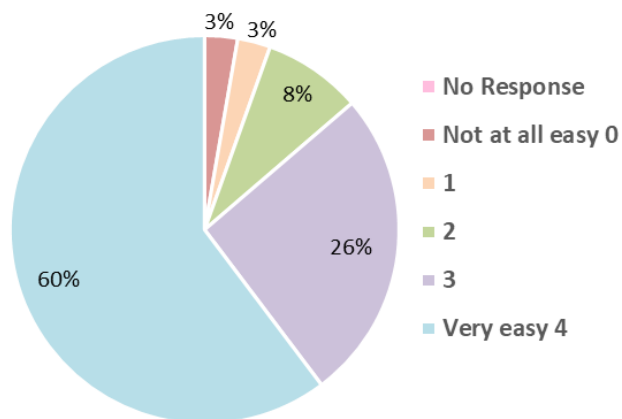
'Sometimes you want to speak with someone right away and it is frustrating to have to wait 2 days but I understand that you get a lot of calls. When you have to wait 2 days you may forget some things'.

'Response time, I know you are overwhelmed but I sometimes had to wait a few days for a response'.

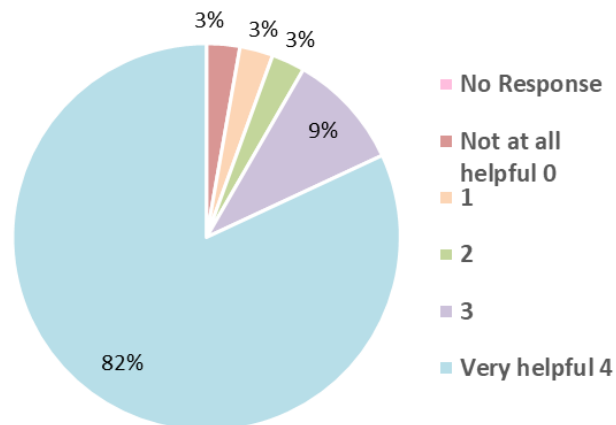
Following feedback from the Information, Advice and Support Kent User Survey 2023-2024 we have reviewed our practice:

You said	We did
<p>'It would be useful to be able to speak to advisor on the phone - whenever I have called it has gone to voicemail'.</p> <p>'The only thing was I needed emergency advice when my son ran away from school but I had to leave a message and there was a time delay getting back to me, though I appreciate it is a small team and I was happy with the service overall'.</p> <p>'Communication, being able to get hold of somebody. That's me, I like things urgent, I don't retain information well'.</p>	<p>We have looked at the way we handle calls to the service. Due to high volume of calls and emails, the helpline are not able to respond directly to calls. They do this when we are less busy, but this is on rare occasions.</p> <p>Our data and Information Officer will triage calls when capacity lends itself to this and urgent calls can be picked up and responded to if there is capacity within the team to do so.</p>
<p>'Provide your own independent minutes from meetings you attend'.</p>	<p>The service only makes a note of key conversations and key points to take forward, this is because we are there as an impartial supporter. We have considered this request and feel that our role is not to take minutes as it is the school and parent's meeting.</p>

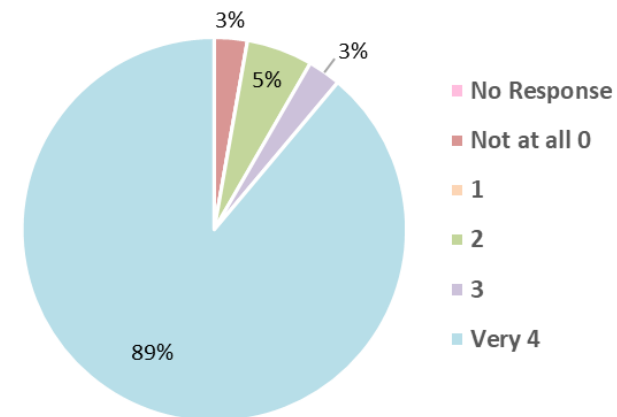
Q1 How easy was it to get in touch with us?



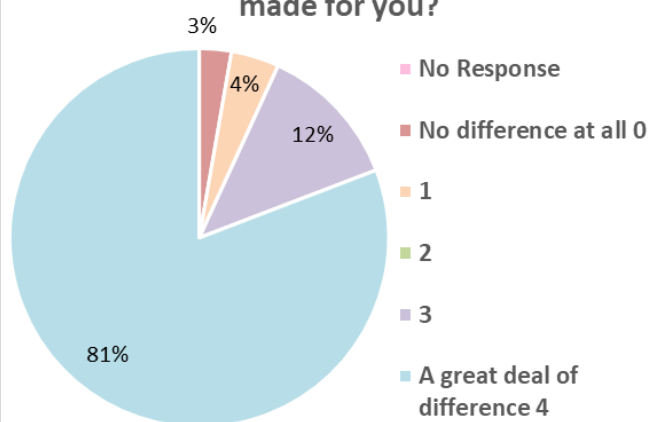
Q2 How helpful was the information, advice and support we gave you?



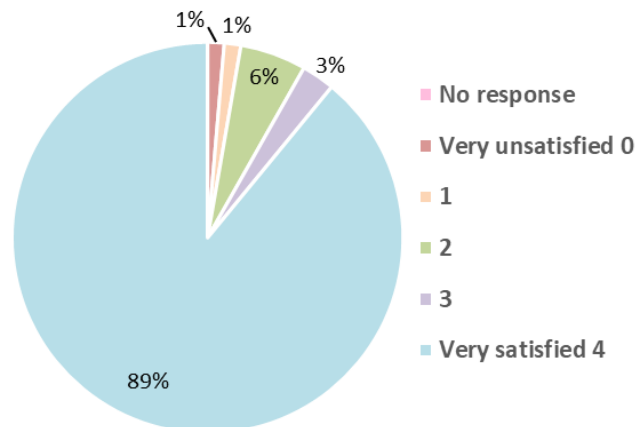
Q3 How neutral, fair and unbiased do you think we were?



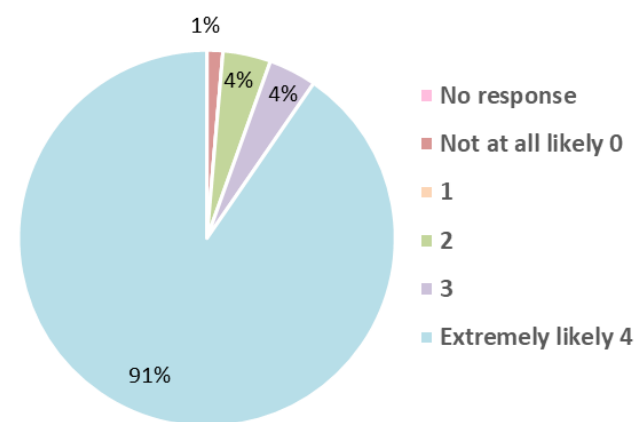
Q4 What difference do you think our information, advice or support has made for you?



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)

