

Essex SEND Information, Advice and Support Service

Annual Report

September 2023-August 2024

1. Introduction

The role of Essex SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (SEND IASS) is to ensure that children and young people with SEND (special educational needs and disabilities) and their parents/carers have access to impartial information, advice and support so that they can make informed decisions about matters relating to their special educational needs. This is achieved by working in partnership with parents, children, and young people, providing information, training, and identifying and encouraging working with relevant partner agencies.

2. Statutory Framework

The Children and Families Act 2015 places a duty on Local Authorities to ensure that children, young people up to age 25 and their parent carers are provided with free confidential, impartial advice and support on matters relating to special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). This should be available in a range of formats that are accessible for all users.

Essex SEND IASS is a statutory 'in house' service funded by Essex County Council with additional funding from Health agreed as part of a Joint Commissioning process. The Service has its own office spaces separate from any of the statutory SEND Services. We maintain our own impartiality and confidentiality processes and have dedicated email and telephone lines. We also have our own branded literature and have an independent website and database.

3. Staffing and capacity

As of August 2024 the Service consists of:

2 x managers job sharing the full time role

4 x case workers (one in each of the four quadrants- 3 x fulltime and 1 x 0.8) plus 1 x 0.6 vacancy June-August '24.

3 x fulltime helpline workers and 1 x 0.6 who is on a 1 year secondment from June '24 from a Caseworker role

1 x Promotion and Development Worker 0.6 This role leads on delivering training to parents/carers and professionals across health, education and social care

2 x Senior IAS Workers who lead on Tribunal work. 1 x fulltime and 1 x 0.6

1x fulltime SEND IAS Health Partnership Worker (secondment to Short Breaks Team from a Helpline role, funded by DfE)

5. Casework and Intervention levels

The intervention service levels for cases are recorded following the IASS (Information, Advice, and Support Services) national guidelines to monitor the demand for different types of support regionally and locally. There are 4 intervention

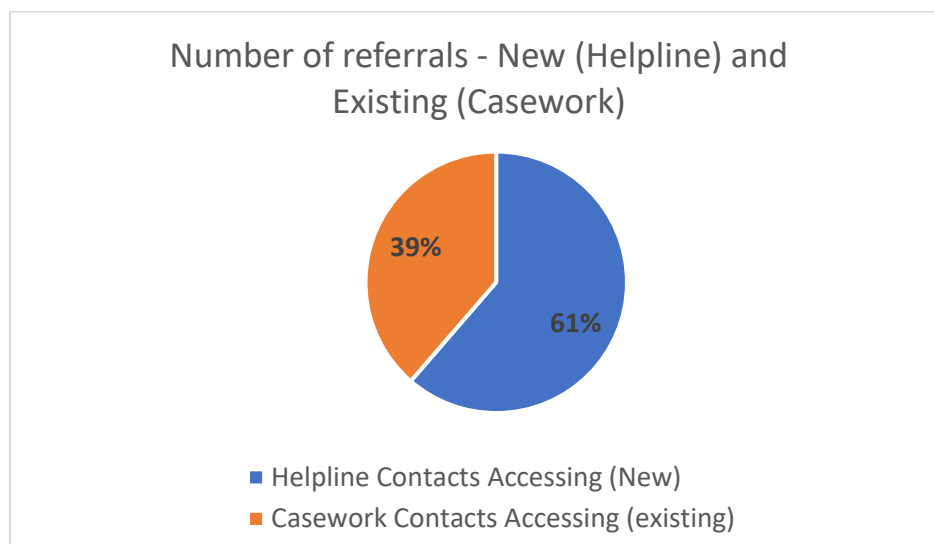
levels, which range from the delivery of a single piece of IAS (level 1) to the most complex of casework e.g. Appeal work, at levels 3 & 4.

The charts below show the numbers of referrals, types of casework delivered and intervention type undertaken by the service during the reporting period. A total of 3436 referrals were recorded during this reporting period. This is an increase of 641 from the previous year – a 10% increase in referrals.

5.1 Number of referrals.

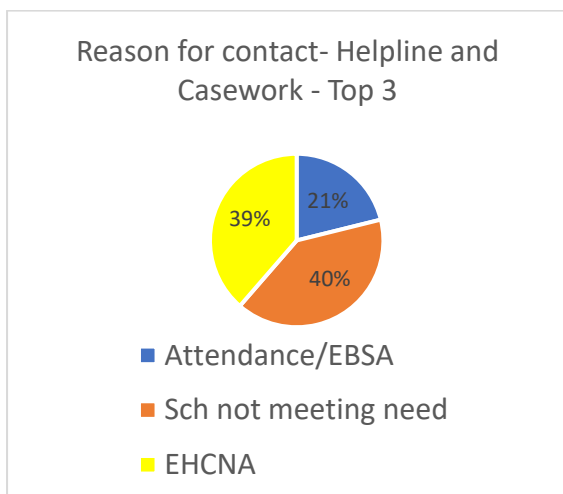
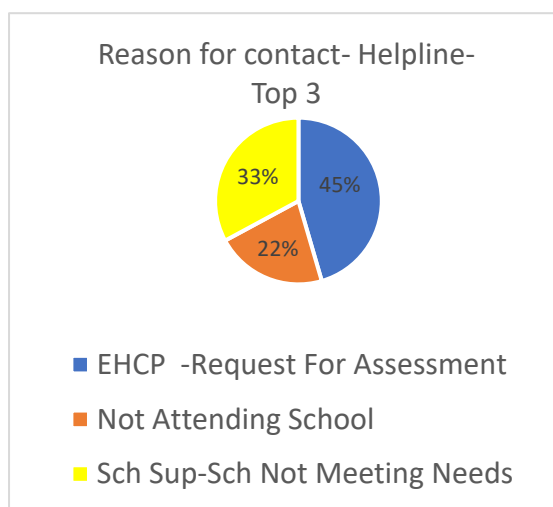
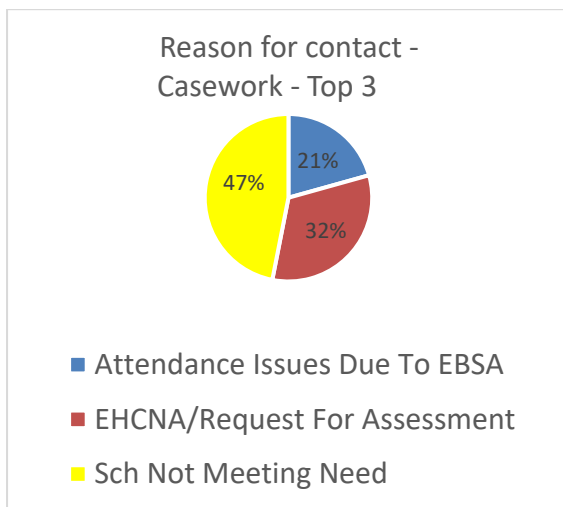
September 23 to August 24	
Number of Individual Families Accessing Service	2784
Number of referrals made (CYP) to the service the service (helpline & casework)	3436
Total Pieces of work generated from referrals (helpline & casework)	4172
Total Activities (telephone, email, text, meetings)	31622
Total face to face Meetings	510
Direct work with Child	6
Direct Work with Young Person	13
Helpline (New)	2108
Casework (existing)	1328

Existing cases refers to those that have carried over from one month to another where casework is ongoing or a parent / YP has come back to us to support. Many families will have contact with the team many times, sometimes over a number of years.



5.2 Reason for Contact

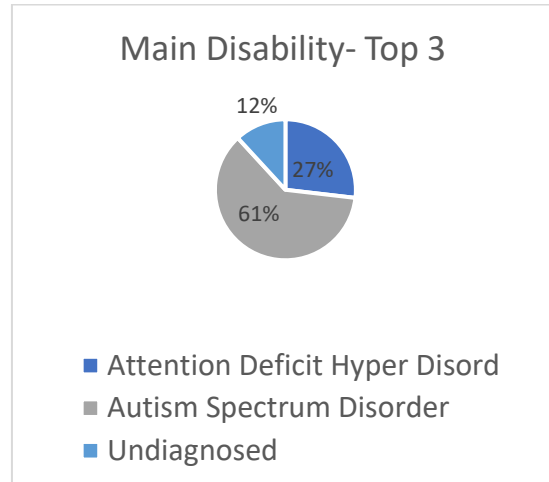
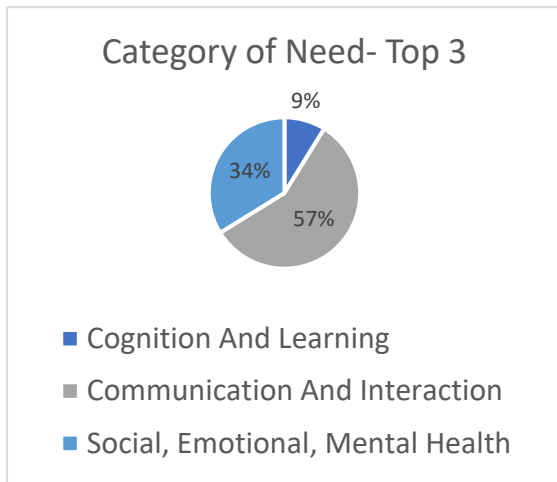
EHCNA/Request for Assessment continues to be in the top 3 reasons for contact with the service. Attendance due to Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) and School Not Meeting Needs are also in the top reasons we are contacted.



5.3 Category of need

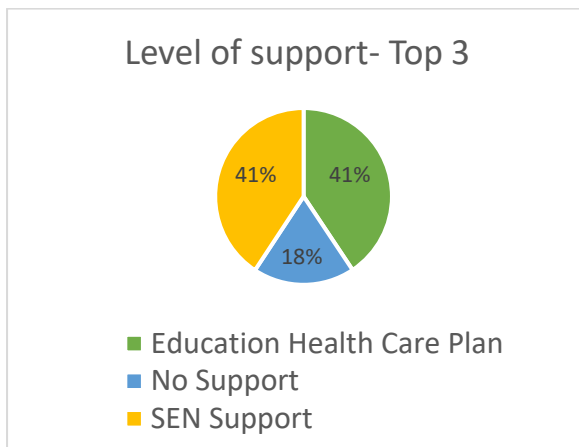
Referrals around children and young people who have ASD continue to dominate referrals, followed by children/young people who have ADHD.

Relating to this, the top category of need is Communication and Interaction, followed by Social, Emotional and Mental Health.

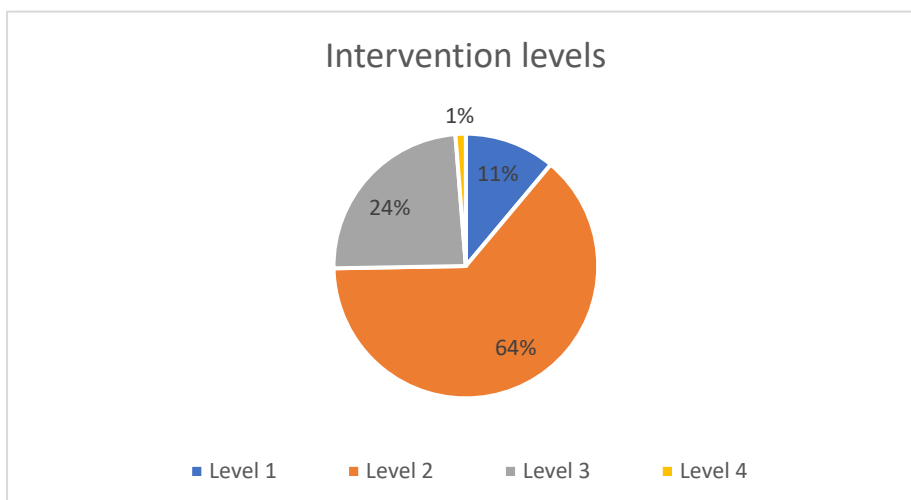


5.4 Level of support

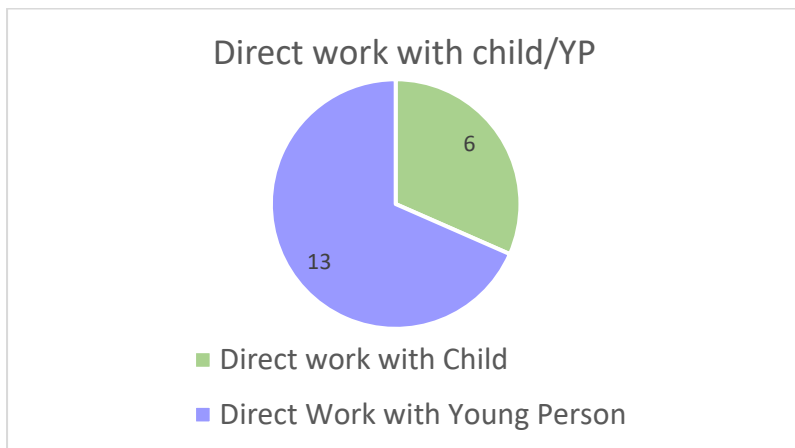
An equal number of referrals are received for those children/young people who are on SEN Support and those who have an EHCP.



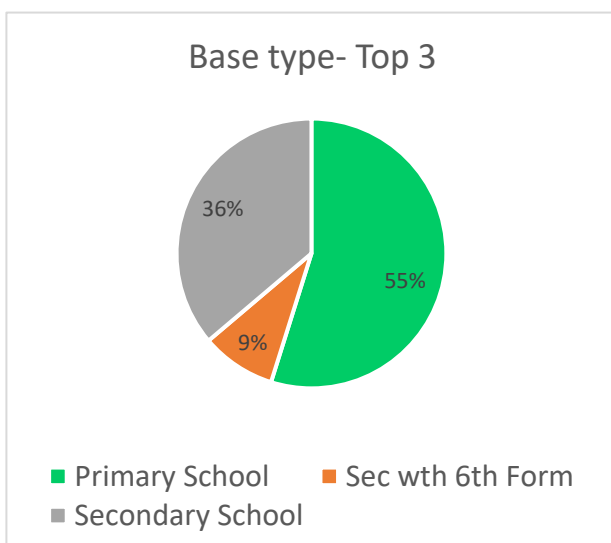
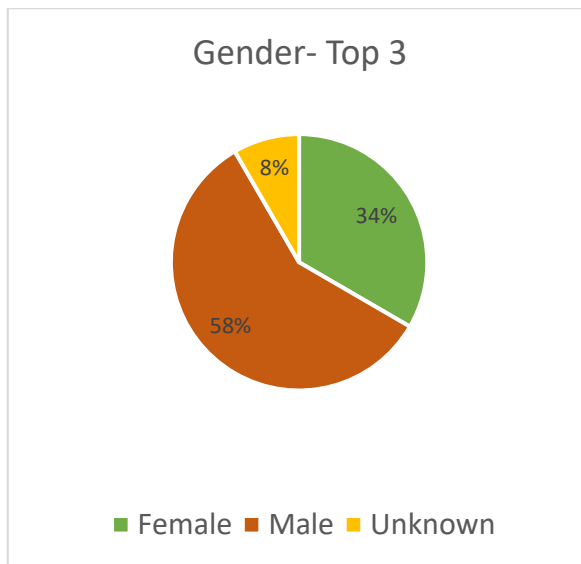
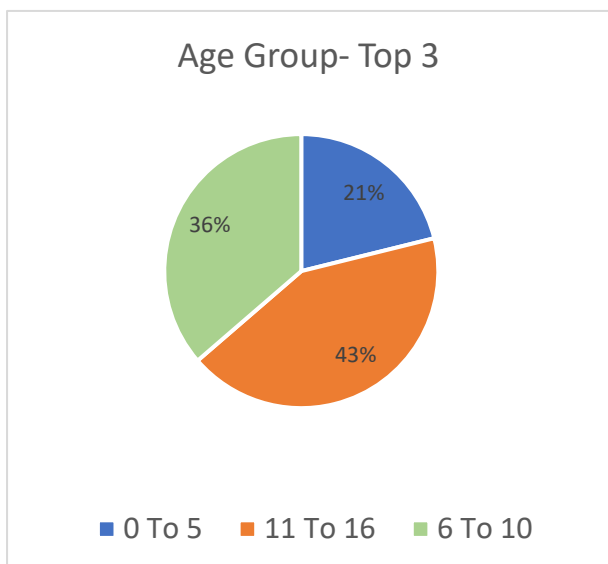
5.5 Intervention Levels attached to each piece of work delivered



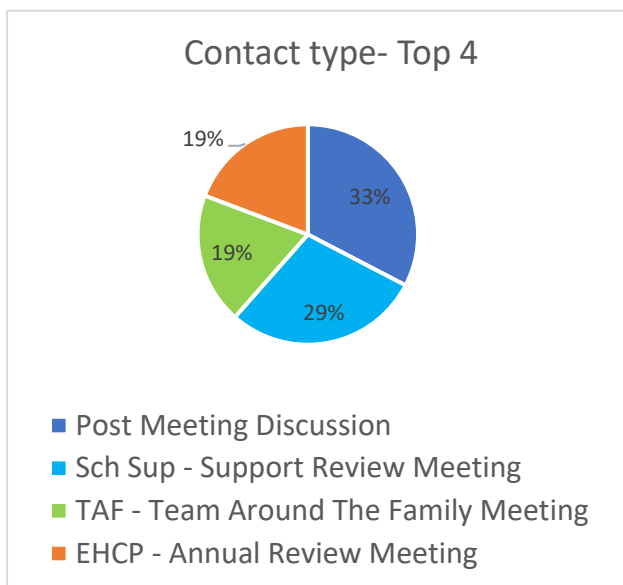
5.6 Direct work with children and young people



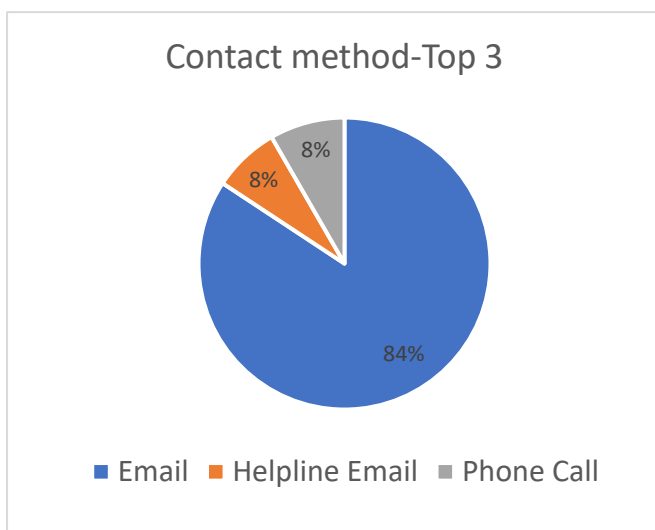
5.7 Age group, Gender and Education Setting (Base type)



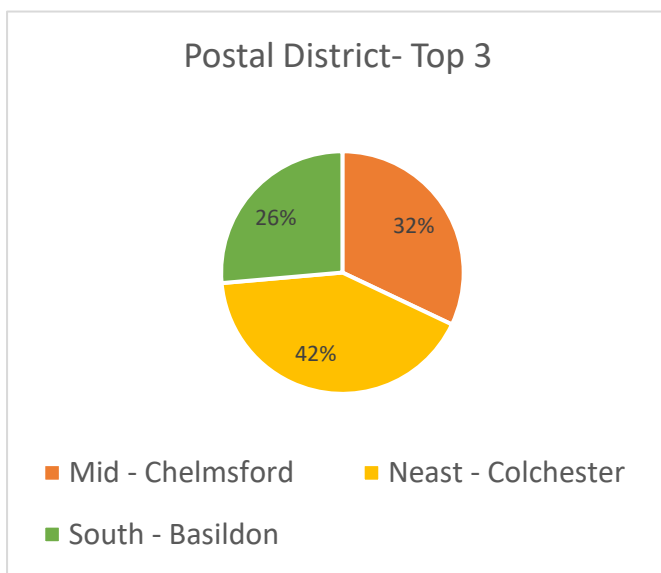
5.8 Contact type of IAS delivered



5.9 Contact method (All contact between service users and SEND IASS)



6. Postal district



6 Tribunal Work

The number of referrals requesting support around tribunal has grown. In addition to parents known to the service requesting input around tribunals, new referrals are increasingly coming in at the point at which support around tribunal is requested.

An evaluation survey for parents, specific to tribunal work is producing feedback that reflects the high quality of IAS delivered.

Training is delivered to the team on tribunal processes. Feedback on this training reflects the impact on the ability of the service as a whole to deliver support around tribunal work. An annual report on tribunal work delivered is available.

7. How we provide support

Referrals come into the service in a variety of ways. Our helpline receives emails, calls and online contact forms.

Our criteria for face-to-face support e.g. support at meetings and in a range of settings, is determined by the needs and circumstances of the parent carer, child or young person and by the capacity of service.

All parent carers, children and young people will be made aware that the main purpose of the service is to support them to understand their rights and empower them to have their views and wishes heard.

We are not an advocacy service and as we are impartial, do not favour either side or have influence over the outcome of any meeting.

Parent carers will in the first instance, be provided with telephone and or email advice and guidance to be able to access the information they need in order to represent themselves.

Through contact with our service, in addition to the advice we can offer we may identify the need for alternative support and signpost service users to additional sources of advice, information and support that may be available locally or nationally. We do not make or receive referrals.

We do not give priority to any particular impairment, disability or special educational need and we do not campaign for any particular approach to education

The website for the service went live in May 2022 and is an increasingly rich source of accessible information. The website enables a much greater degree of self service and accessibility.

8. Children and Young People work

Direct work with children and young people continues to be a vital part of the IAS that we deliver. Numbers of children and young people worked with are set out in the service data in section 5. Raising awareness about our work with CYP amongst

CYP themselves, their parents/carers, education settings, and services and agencies remains a priority for the service, to ensure access to the service from a wider range of CYP. Joint working projects with the Youth Service, Multi Schools Council and Education Settings enables the service to build on this ambition.

9. Feedback and evaluations

The service uses an online survey to evaluate parent carer feedback following input from the service, which includes 6 core questions as required by the IASS Network.

Feedback from parents and children who have had input from the service:

"Firstly, I want to thank you for the listening ear this morning, it was just so overwhelming for me. Thank you for all the resources and information shared during the telephone conversation and in the email. I was well informed and equipped."

"I really can't thank you enough, I really am over the moon with the result. Thank you so so much, I don't think you realise you've helped change my daughter's future. What would we do without SENDIASS and your service?"

"We really want you to know how much difference it is making to us by finally being heard and seeing the progress (child's name) is now being able to make after all these years. Thank you so much for helping us to bring up awkward conversations that need to be discussed and for making us feel more confident to do so; especially, your kind sensitivity when discussing our first daughter. We feel much more positive from seeing the difference you have made"

"From the first time that I spoke with (caseworker), it felt like a weight had been lifted. I felt like she really got to know (child's name) and how we are as a family. Her knowledge, support and attention to detail were amazing. She helped me to understand what was going to happen though out the tribunal process and what to expect.....By the time of the tribunal I felt I had the confidence to put forward my points and my parental preference. She has been truly wonderful and made a really overwhelming process so much easier"

"I don't believe anything could have been done better and I will forever be grateful for the support for my child, my child was a forgotten child who now has a voice and the impact sendiass has had being involved has changed his life forever in a positive way"

"A big thank you to the SENDIASS team they provide an easily accessible service which is quite literally priceless for parents trying to navigate an outdated and impossible system"

"(Caseworker) was everything I didn't know I needed. She guided me and empowered me to feel confident in what I was doing. Offered support and reassurance when things were difficult and I felt deflated. I felt supported until the very end of the current process."

Clare Woodcock and Louise Bracci

Managers Essex SEND Information, Advice and Support Service

September 2024