



# Annual Report

September 2019-August 2020

# 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 parent 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.

The Service operates within the council offices at arm's length from the Local Authority. We maintain our own impartiality and confidentiality processes and have dedicated email and telephone lines. We also have our own branded literature and are developing our own information resources. The database is only accessible to the SEND IAS Service.

### 3. Joint Commissioning

Section 26 of the Children and Families Act 2014 places a duty on local authorities and their partner commissioning bodies to make arrangements to jointly commission and secure provision for children and young people with special educational needs or disability.

It is a requirement that SENDIAS Services are jointly commissioned by Education, Health and Social Care.

Currently we do not have joint commissioning arrangements in place with Health or Social Care. However, a workstream has now been established on the joint commissioning of the Service and a business case submitted that outlined the need and requirements of a jointly commissioned service. The workstream aims to define the route by which joint commissioning can successfully be achieved.

### 4. Resourcing and capacity

**As of November 2020 the Service consists of:**

- 1 x full time manager (LA core funding)
- 4 x case workers (one fte in each of the four quadrants, LA core funding)
- 1 x fulltime helpline worker (LA core funding)

**In addition, we have three roles funded externally. The funding for two of these roles comes to an end on 31 March 2021:**

- Senior IAS Worker 1.0 who leads on Tribunal work (funded by the SEND Reform Allocation until 31 March 2021)
- Helpline Worker 0.6 (IAS Programme funded until 31 March 2021)
- A vital new role - SEND IAS Promotion and Development Worker - has been established and recruited to, which will start January 2021. This role will have responsibility to lead on delivering training to parents/carers and professionals across health, education and social care This is 0.4fte and is funded for one year by the IAS Programme.

To enable the service to meet demand and meet the Minimum Standards for IAS Services we need to retain and ensure the permanence of the three roles externally funded, making the Promotion and Development Worker fulltime, retain the Helpline role and ensure the permanence of the Senior IAS Worker. In addition, we need to consider the possibility of additional SEND IAS worker/s to cover our highest referring areas of Mid and NE and a SEND IAS worker to lead on developing our offer to children and young people and to develop our offer in relation to engaging volunteers.



# 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 level 4.

The charts below show the levels of casework and intervention type undertaken by the service during the reporting period. A total of 1647 referrals were recorded during this reporting period. This is an increase of 303 referrals from the previous year, despite the sickness absence leading to a vacancy of a fulltime caseworker in our highest referring area of North East (Colchester and Tendring) throughout this entire reporting period and despite a much quieter than normal period at the start of the initial Covid-19 lockdown.

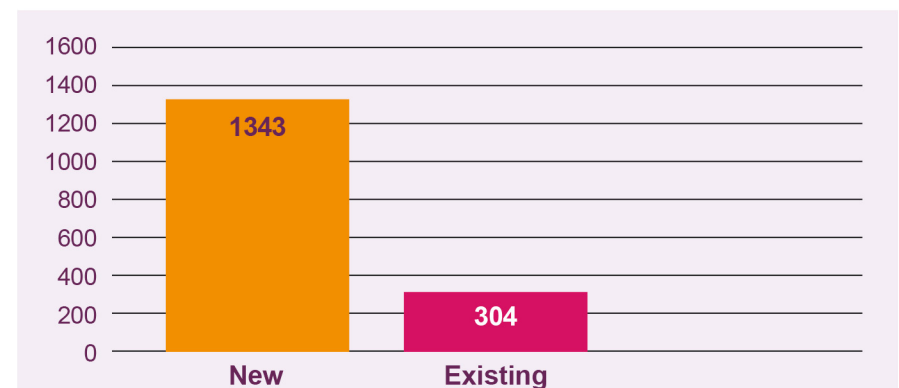
Data on tribunal work is recorded separately in the section below.

## 5.1 Number of referrals

Included in these referrals recorded are those received which are non-child/young person specific, but on which IAS is delivered. For e.g. SENCOs, health and social care colleagues who call the service asking for detailed information and advice on a range of SEND Processes, as well as those parents who contact the service but do not wish for their child's details to be recorded, but for whom Information Advice and Support is also delivered.

Existing referrals refers to those cases 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.

All Referrals - total 1647



## 5.2 Reason for Contact

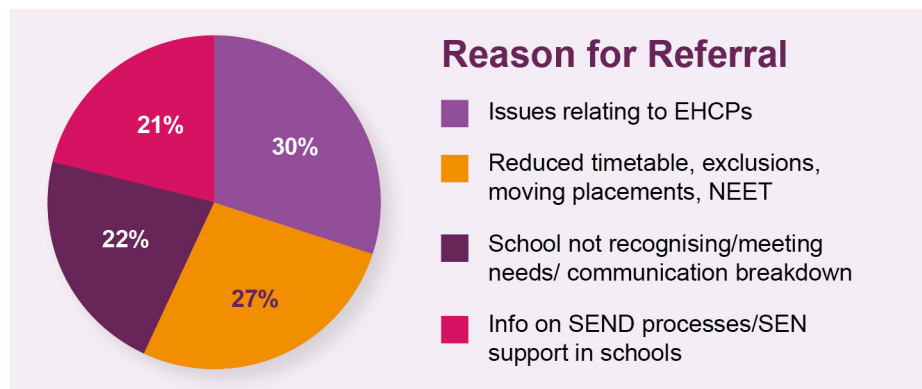
The top three reasons for contacting the service were around Requesting an EHC Needs Assessment, Information on SEN Support in Schools and concerns about School not Meeting Needs.

Overall, 30% of referrals received are in relation to EHCPs which includes requests for assessments, Refusal to Assess, issues with the content of EHCPs, Annual Reviews, amendments and ceasing EHCPs.

21% of referrals are in relation to information and advice on SEND processes/SEN Support in schools.

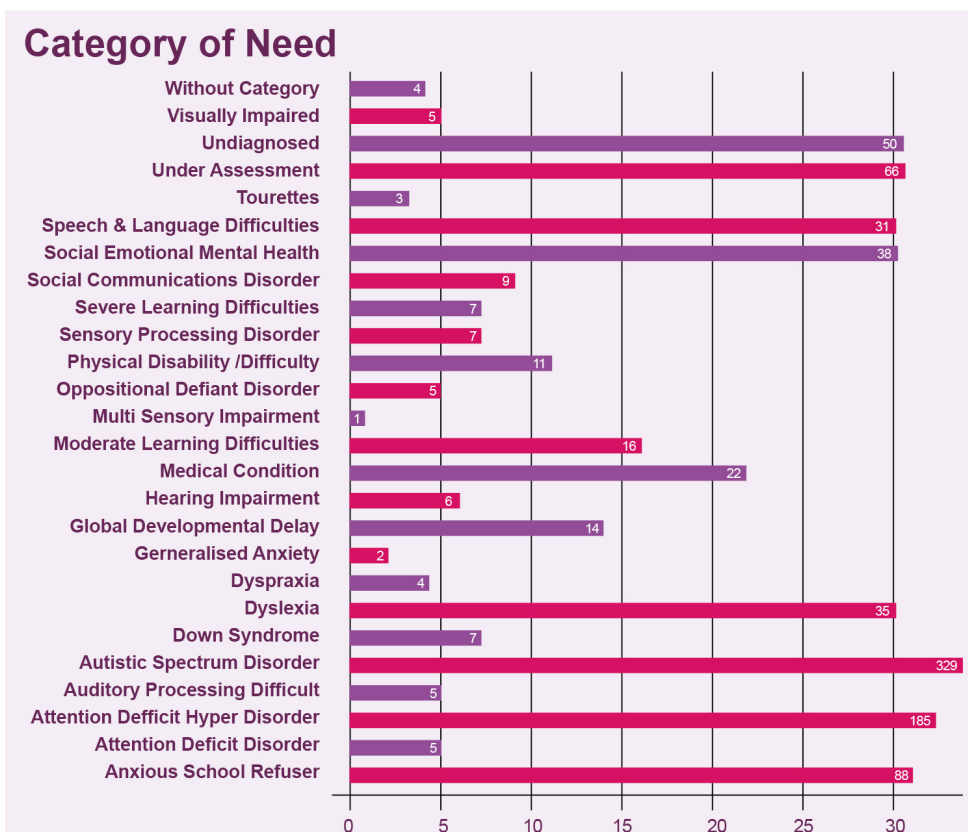
22% of referrals relate to a school not meeting needs, not recognising needs, concerns about lack of progress and breakdown in communication with school and information on moving to a different school.

The remaining 27% include referrals around reduced timetables, NEET, exclusions and moving placement.



## 5.3 Category of need

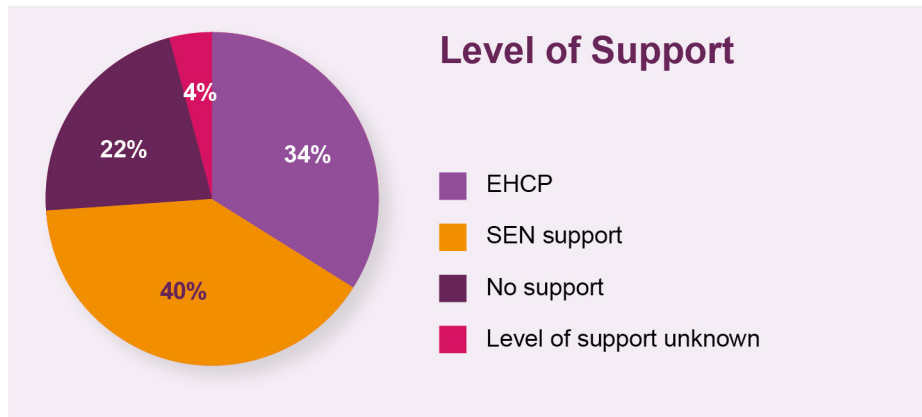
Referrals around children and young people who have ASD continue to dominate referrals (34%), followed by children/young people who have ADHD and then those children/young people who are experiencing anxiety in relation to attending school.



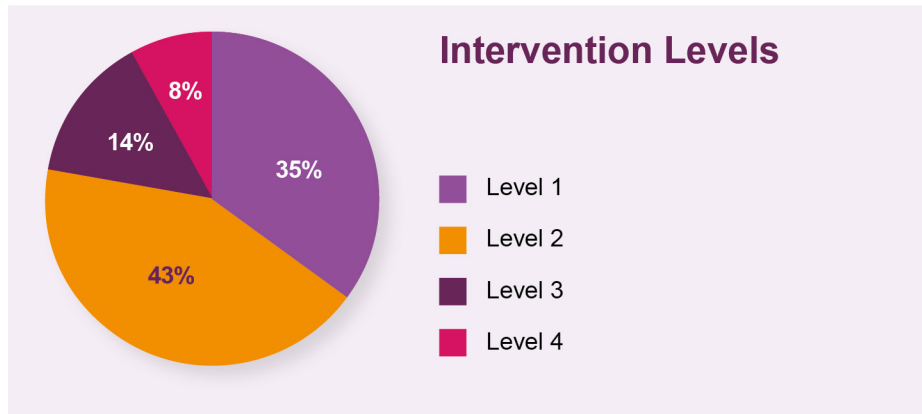


## 5.4 Level of support

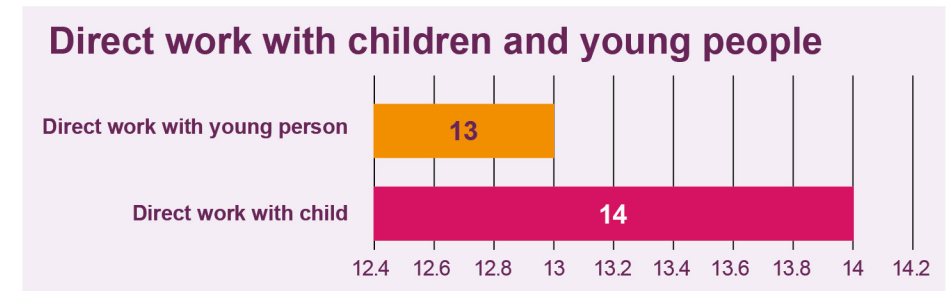
The majority of referrals that the service receives are for children/young people who do not have an EHCP (66%).



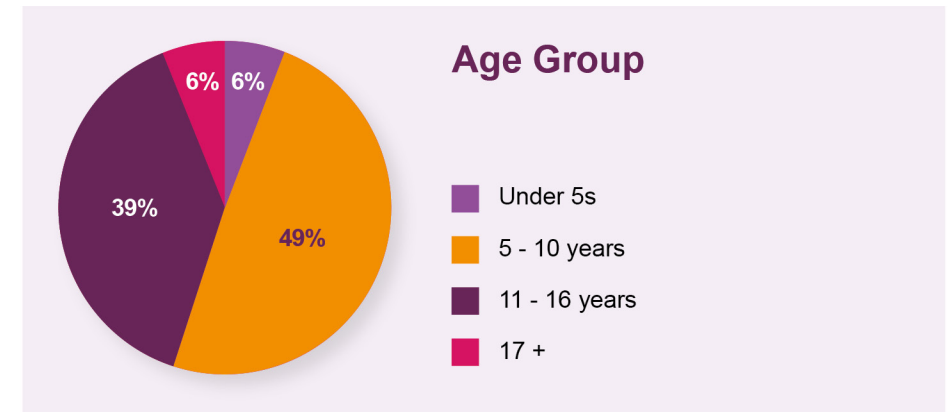
## 5.5 Intervention Levels



## 5.6 Direct work with children and young people

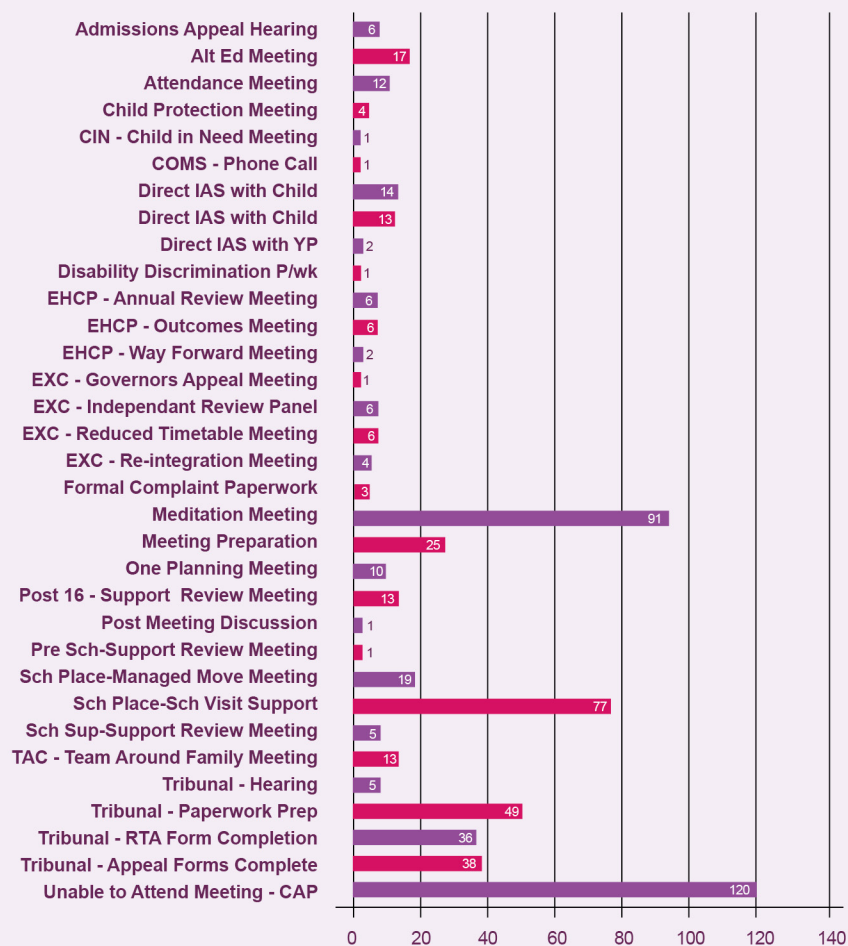


## 5.7 Age group



## 5.8 Face to face work/virtual meetings delivered

### Face to face work/virtual meetings delivered



## 5.9 Tribunal Work

The Senior IAS Worker Role was established in September 2018 to lead on the delivery of appeal/tribunal work.

The number of referrals requesting support around tribunal has grown since the Senior IAS Worker role was established. 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 has been developed and feedback 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:

**Signposting** 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.

## 6. 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.

We may signpost to other services.

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

We promote access with Contact who have a National Freephone Helpline, manned Monday to Friday during office hours. Their teams provide information and advice covering a wide range of matters relating to special educational needs and disabilities.

Contact, like SENDIASS also works in partnership with the Council for Disabled Children on the Information, Advice and Support Programme (IASP). Their national helpline and online advice service form part of the IASP. This brings together the IASS Network and Contact's services, offering families a more comprehensive service.





# 7. IAS Programme

The service was again successful in applying for funding this year from the programme for 2020-21.

Funding has been used for the continuation of the additional Helpline worker, the development of the Promotion and Development Worker (0.4 fte fixed term for 1 year) and to commission the Multi Schools Council (MSC) to lead a project titled SEND Young People Volunteers.

The Promotion and Development Worker role is described in above in section 4.

The aim of the YP SEND Volunteers project is for children and young people (CYP) to research what CYP who have SEND want and need from a SEND IAS Service and how they would best like to receive input from the service. The research is taking the form of virtual sessions using a format of questions designed by the MSC in collaboration with SEND IASS. The settings involved in the project are three SEMH settings- Ramsden Hall, Wells Park and Langham Oaks, plus North East Co-Operative Academy (NEAPPS) and also a group of young people who are NEET, accessed via MIND.

Based on responses/feedback from these sessions an offer for increasing our service reach to CYP who have SEND will be developed. Moving forward from this project, to sustain and build on this work, we would like to develop CYP ambassadors for the service, in collaboration with the MSC.

In addition, as part of the IASP monitoring and reporting, a website is in the process of being developed, joint commissioning discussions are underway with health and social care as described earlier and the tribunal role develops and grows.

The website for the service is in the process of being developed. The site has been set up and we are being supported in populating the content and the overall design. The aim of the website will be to enable 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. The responses received were as follows:

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

- 83% very easy
- 11% easy
- 6% average

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

- 90% very helpful
- 10% helpful

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

- 80% very neutral, fair and unbiased
- 10% neutral, fair and biased
- 10% average

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

- 86% a great deal of difference
- 7% a lot of difference
- 7% some difference

### Q5 Tell us some more about the difference(s), if any, have we made for you?

- 70% I have a greater understanding of the educational process for children/young people with SEND
- 52% I felt empowered to address my concerns
- 53% I felt listened to and supported

- 47% I feel more confident in approaching/communicating with educational settings in the future
- 30% I now have a better relationship with my child's school or setting
- 29% I am happier/less worried about the future
- 29% I felt I got more out of the meeting at Nursery/School/College/FE Setting
- 29% I feel my child/young person has benefited as a result of the service being involved
- 24% Communication with the education setting been improved around the education of my child/young person
- 24% I feel more involved with my child's education

**Q6. Were given information on other agencies/support groups which may be able to offer support/advice?**

- 47% were given information on other agencies/support groups which may be able to offer support/advice

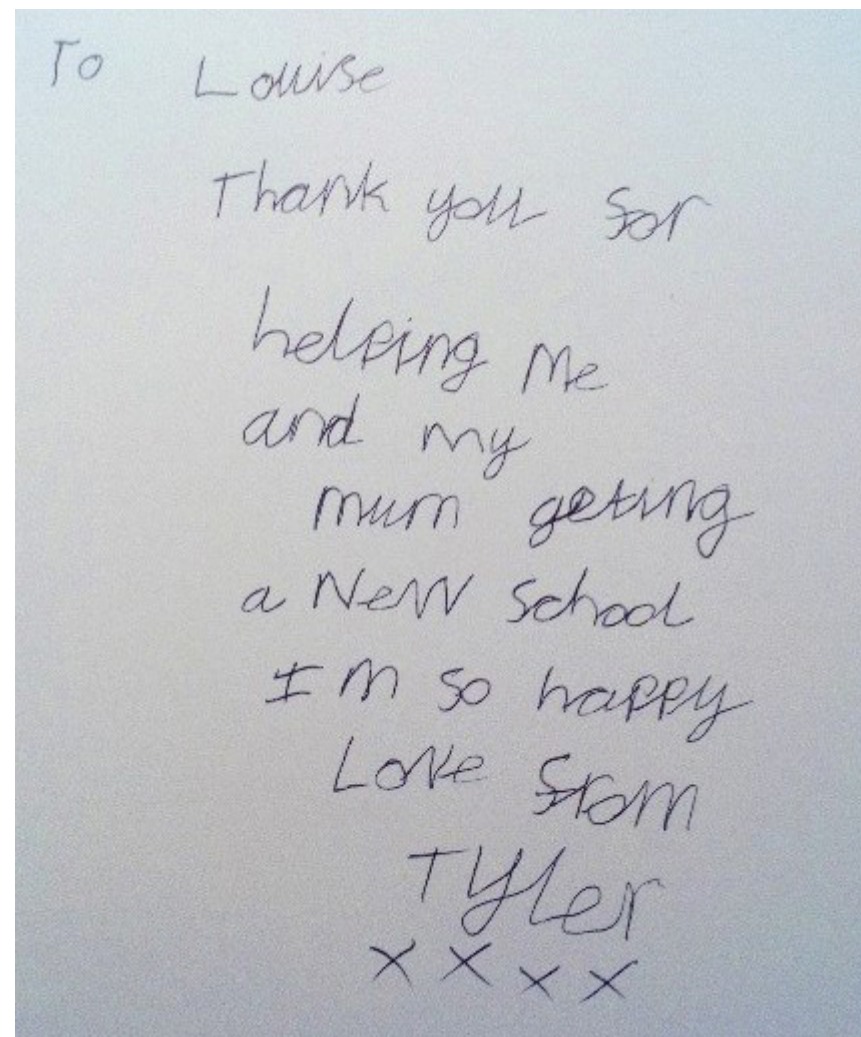
**Q7 Overall, how satisfied are you with the service we gave?**

- 86% very satisfied
- 3% satisfied
- 10% average

**Q8 How likely is it that you would recommend the service to others?**

- 90% very likely
- 10% average

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





“

*The advice and support I got from (caseworker) changed mine and my sons' life for the better, I could not have done this without her help. I felt I was no longer alone and only wish had contacted SENDIASS sooner. I have recommended the service to a friend. I cannot praise the service enough. It has helped me feel empowered to challenge things. I understand the SEND process now.*

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*“This process is so stressful for parents and (Senior caseworker) was exceptional with her advice and support. I could not have got through this process with her. She was always on the other end of the phone and responded quickly to any email queries, I honestly cannot fault her.”*

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*It was amazing how you centred the meeting around (daughter's name) and what her aspirations were for the future. I can honestly say it was an oasis of hope in what has been a difficult journey with many frustrations. Thank you for opening up choices for her, which is something she has had very little experience of recently, and I hope these will inspire her to take those little steps towards getting better.*

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# Contact Us

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