



**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**

**30 September 2024**

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**‘Invaluable service. Hugely helpful. I recommend it all the time.**

(parent’s feedback September 2024)

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

Information, Advice and Support Kent have had a very busy six months the helpline received **3108** calls and emails and **1,187** new referrals for casework. During this time, the service has recruited a new Family Involvement Worker to fill a vacant post in East Kent. Having started in September they have already completed Level 1 independent legal training through IPSEA and are undertaking their induction into the role.

Compared to the same 6 month last year, our casework contacts have increased by **42%**, helpline telephone calls and emails have increased by **13%**. All staff telephone calls have stayed the same, but the total of emails sent by all staff has increased by **59%**. Parents benefiting from pre-arranged telephone appointments, bookable information sessions and in person drop-ins has increased by **83%** from **423** to **778**. Our attendance at Tribunal Hearings, Telephone Case Management Hearings and Judicial Alternative Dispute Resolution hearings have nearly doubled. We have supported with **47** appeals that have been conceded before the hearing date which represents an **88%** increase.

As per parental request, IASK have continued to promote the service across the County attending **16** in person events, which have included: two locality roadshows; two special school moving on events; drop-in coffee mornings; Early Years District Conference, SEN Multi Agency event; Special school summer fair, careers fair; and an exploration day at Demelza House. We have also attended **2** virtual ASC drop-ins organised by NEFLT. We have spoken to, and provided information to **236** parents, **80** children and young people and **73** practitioners.

This year, we have been very pleased to receive funding from health as well as social care and education. Due to a short fall in the funding, we are unable to recruit to one full time equivalent post, which has affected the service ability to triage calls.

Commissioners are carrying out a review of the service and have contacted families in a variety of settings as well as young people, parents and carers who have used the IASK service in the past two years (and had given permission to be contacted regarding giving feedback). The feedback received is very positive and the IASK team are looking forward to receiving the commissioners report. As part of the review IASK are in the process of completing a Data Protection Impact Assessment and Equality Impact Assessment.

Three of our volunteers have completed the IPSEA on-line accredited training and are still in their induction period. One of these volunteers is also providing social media support. We would like to thank our three volunteers for their commitment to the service. We have also recruited another volunteer who is currently under-taking training.

**Impact over the six month period 1 April – 30 September 2024:** (For full details of feedback please see Appendix 2, page 17)

The service has conducted user feedback surveys for cases that closed from 1 April to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024. We sought feedback from **253** service users via telephone and email using google forms, which resulted in a **14%** response rate, which although lower than the previous year it is a representative figure. Some parents did not want to do the user survey because they had already responded to the Service Review questionnaire that they had received.

**91%** of respondents were likely (3\*) or very likely to recommend the service to others

**92%** 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).

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

**96%** of respondents felt IASK listened to their view

**86%** of respondents felt the information and advice provided met their needs

**57%** of respondents feel more confident

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

'Just wanted to say thank you again for attending my school meeting with me yesterday. Having you there made me feel so much better and more confident. I didn't feel so alone. Thank you to all of you at IASK, everyone I have ever spoken to or replied to an email or left me a voicemail. It is always with kindness and compassion. You do such important work and help us parents feel less alone. It is really appreciated.'

'Just wanted to say thank you so much for coming along this morning, the information and advice you gave to us and our families was so useful for them navigating their different journeys.'

'Wanted to thank you for all of your help, it really hasn't gone missed. Everything you do to help people/families like us can never be repaid. So thank you from the bottom of our hearts.'

'You are an absolute angel thanks ever so much I have linked in to that hub thing, managed to log in and send all information, your a star this is so helpful let's pray they can help like you have best wishes.'

'Thank you for coming to the meeting today, sitting next to me and making me comfortable enough to speak up in front of all of those people. Thank you for being present to back anything up, if it was needed. Thank you for reading out the statement I'd sent. I really appreciate the support all along, helping me trying to get things right for X. Being a sounding board and most importantly listening.'

'I don't think i would have been able to complete all this paperwork without you I am so grateful to you. I feel you have contributed to giving my little one hope for her future'.

'I have just completed the IASK survey and have given the service 10 out of 10 for everything. How parents would navigate this process without your expert support I have no idea. We would not have been able to. So, thank you for everything. We so appreciate it'.

## **Case Study 1:**

### **BACKGROUND**

Parent contacted IASK regarding a SEND Tribunal hearing due to take place in 4 weeks. Parent wasn't aware of the procedures leading up to the hearing and had been advised to contact IASK by Kent SEND Tribunal Team, due to concerns with the 'working document'. This document is used to agree changes to the Education, Health and Care plan prior to the hearing.

Parent was extremely upset and worried because Kent tribunal had explained they were not able to agree any of the parent's suggested amendments. The school placement had been agreed and the appeal was about the provision/support in Section F of the Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan. Parent explained they were also unhappy with 'Needs' identified in Section B of the EHC plan, but had not realised they hadn't included this in the appeal. Furthermore, parent was not aware that the working document is used to bring about agreements before the hearing, and that if everything is agreed between parent and the local authority, there might not be a need to attend the hearing.

### **SUPPORT**

A member of the IASK team was assigned to the family and they contacted parent to explain the appeal process and next steps. They also arranged a virtual meeting with parent, so that documents could be shared via MS Teams, and together they were able to work through the 'working document'. IASK supported parent to understand the SEND Tribunal working document "key", and how to apply this when proposed amendments are made. Helping parent to consider the proposed amendments they wanted, IASK explained how to use professional reports to evidence the request for changes. They discussed the importance of clear, specific wording, in the 'working document', not 'woolly' wording that could be misinterpreted; and the importance of using wording straight from professional reports.

### **IMPACT**

Following the meeting parent was able to make corrections to the 'working document', which was confidently shared with IASK prior to sending to the tribunal. Having discussed how to request making changes to Section B in the EHC plan, parent was able to complete the paperwork for this, and the request for changes was approved by the SEND tribunal. Parent was able to submit their 'working document', and the local authority organised a meeting with the hope they could reach agreements before the hearing.

Parent expressed they felt very empowered to work with the local authority on the working document, agreements were reached, and they maintained a good working relationship, which resulted in the hearing being vacated. Parent subsequently thanked the IASK member personally for the support given, saying 'she couldn't have done it without IASK'.

## Case Study 2:

### BACKGROUND

Eddy age 13 has ASD attends a special school. English is an additional language for this family. Eddy's Mother contacted IASK because he had become too scared to attend school due to being hit by another student whilst in school, and several other incidents. Although the school had addressed this, Eddy was refusing to go to school. Parents had thought about moving Eddy to another school, but when they visited, Eddy had a big meltdown and just kept shouting 'No School'.

### SUPPORT:

Parent wanted Eddy to go to another school and requested help. IASK supported parent to understand the process of moving to another school for a child with an Education, Health and Care Plan. IASK provided information in a way that was easier for the parent to understand. IASK supported discussions about 'a change of placement' at the 'Annual review' of the education, health and care plan. Despite support from the school, parent couldn't get Eddy into school due to his high anxieties. Parent requested further support from IASK because the Local Authority did not agree to change the placement. IASK Supported parent with completing the on-line form to appeal to the SEND Tribunal. Whilst waiting for the tribunal hearing, the current school tried to meet with Eddy to encourage him back into school, but this was unsuccessful. Based on this the school said they could no longer meet Eddy's needs.

Parent was concerned about her son's options for schooling, IASK advised about other schools in the area. Parent asked about 'Education, Other than at School' (EOTAS) and IASK explained the circumstances when the local authority might consider this option. IASK supported with understanding the tribunal process, what to expect at the virtual hearing and offered to support the parent 'in-person' to access the on-line tribunal hearing.

The Local Authority had consulted with several schools, but none could meet needs, this resulted in the appeal being adjourned to give the Local Authority further time to identify a suitable placement. The Local Authority agreed an interim education package and said they would consider an EOTAS package if they were unable to find a school.

### IMPACT:

Through discussions with IASK, parent was able to make informed choices and convey this to the school and local authority. Providing parent with in-person support for the virtual hearing enabled parent to be better engaged with the process, because they could talk directly to their IASK family involvement worker during the hearing to help with understanding of the proceedings and decisions being discussed. IASK support empowered parent to be engaged in the process and to play an active role throughout the hearing. Parent said that she 'felt well supported' and thanked IASK.

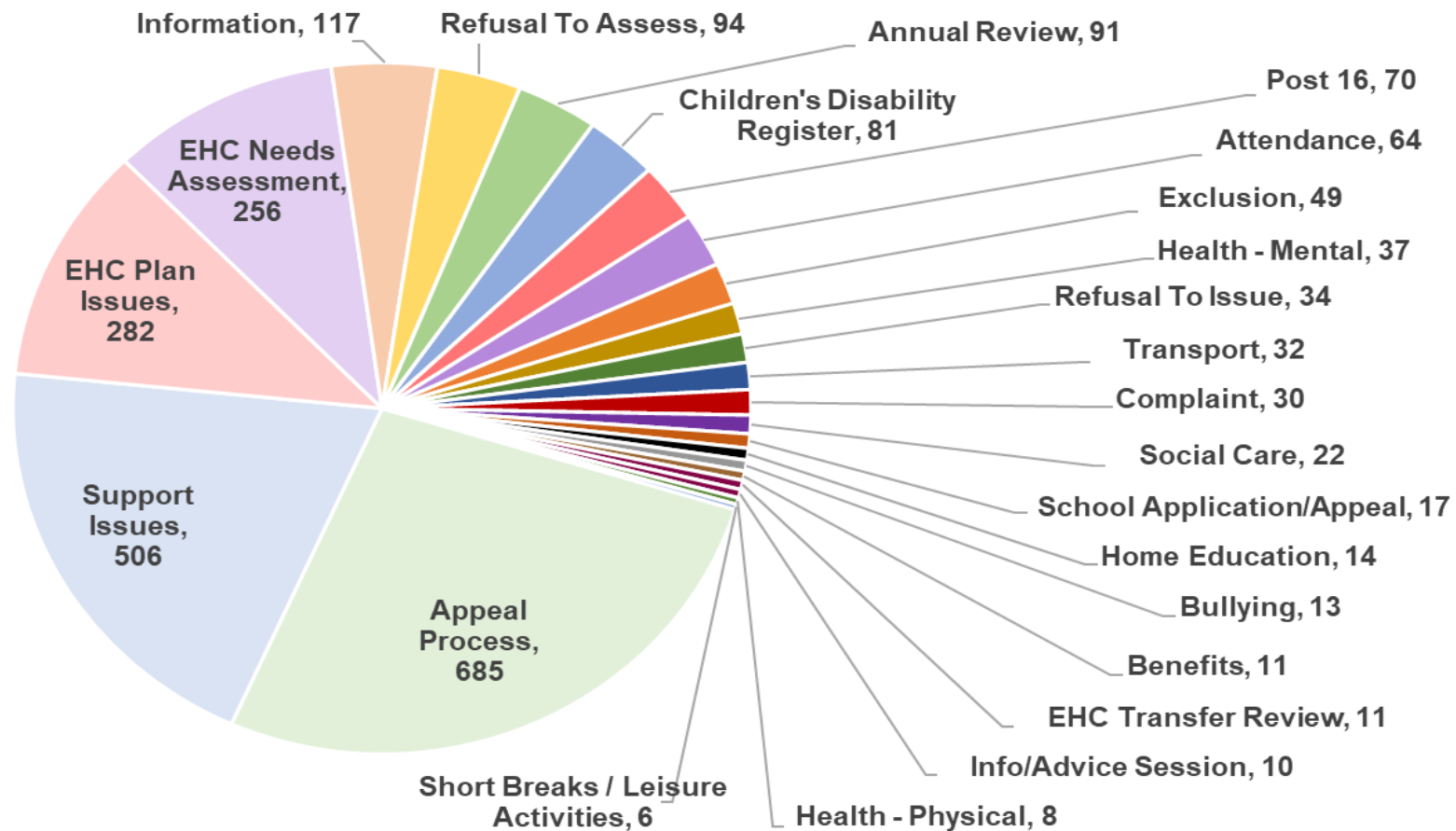
## Service Outputs:

- **3108** calls and emails came through the helpline. Of the **1172** emails received, **127** came through the website
- **2102** telephone calls and **6196** emails were recorded for all staff providing support to families
- **296** families have received support at meetings via video or telephone conference calls
- **708** booked telephone appointments – where we would usually have met face to face to go over paperwork
- **120** face to face meetings for families who would have struggled to have only virtual support
- **1187** New referrals for casework and **233** enquiries
- **29** virtual information sessions have been offered with one in person drop-in offered in the 4 areas of Kent, with a total of **70** attendees
- **142** young people over age 16 were accessing the service with support from their parents and **19** young people have received direct support from a caseworker with **262** contacts being made with young people
- **685** families have received information, advice and support relating to appeals to the SEND Tribunal, with **185** families being supported with paperwork and **95** tribunal appeals lodged
- Staff have virtually attended **20** mediations, **15** telephone case management hearings and Judicial alternative dispute resolution hearings, **27** tribunal hearings, supporting families who would otherwise have found it difficult to attend on their own. With IASK support **47** appeals were resolved before the hearing date.
- Of the **256** families that contacted the service for information and advice about the Education, Health and Care (EHC) needs assessment process, **15** had support with the draft EHC plan and or support with co-production meetings, **16** had help with paperwork.
- **9** contacts included health discussions most were regarding CAMHS referrals.
- **22** referrals were recorded as the reason for contacting IASK, **87** referrals were recorded as queries relating to short breaks and activities
- A bespoke training session was provided to Elective Home Education Staff about SEN support in mainstream schools and statutory assessment. Feedback was extremely positive and some of the responses to what staff got out of there session were: 'Details on what support can be accessed in school without an Education, Health and Care Plan'; and 'the part about the Education, Health Care assessment is really helpful for dealing with Elective Home Education registration requests and it provides vital information that we could give to parents'.

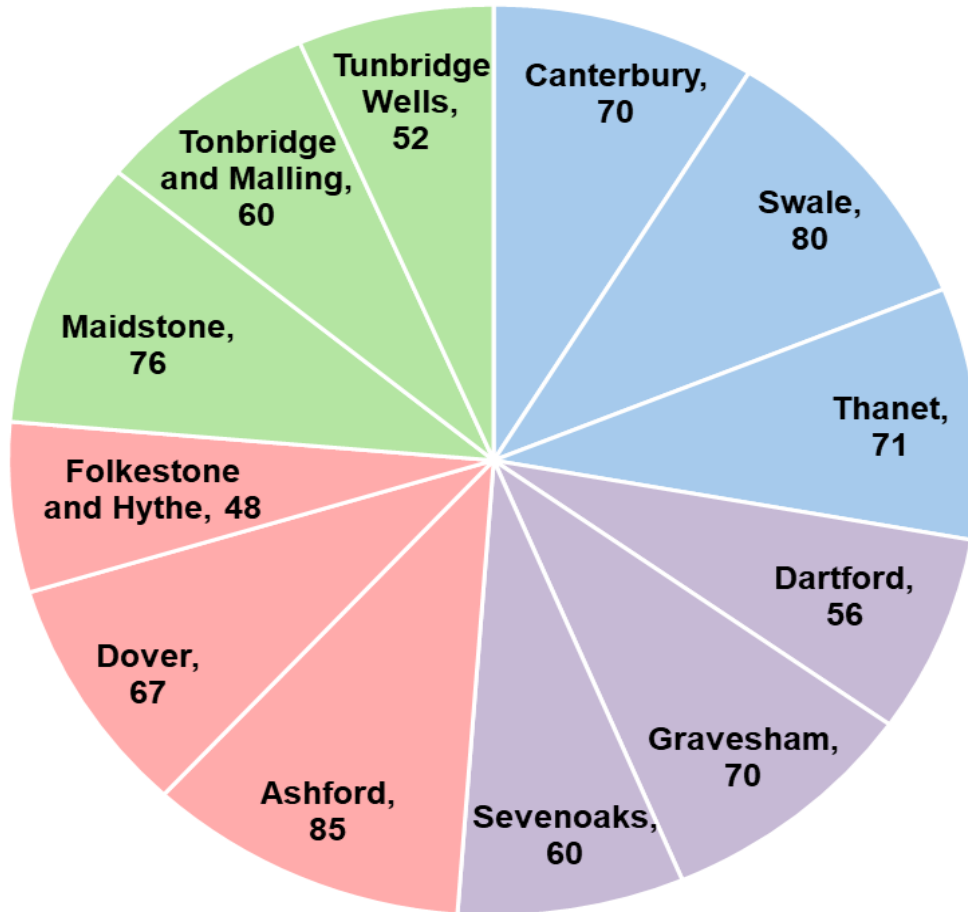


The graphs on the next 5 pages show referral reasons, referral reasons by district and main disability by district. Please note: More than one referral reason can be recorded against both an enquiry and a referral for casework, which means the overall referral reasons is larger than the number of service users recorded.

### Total Referral Reasons from 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024

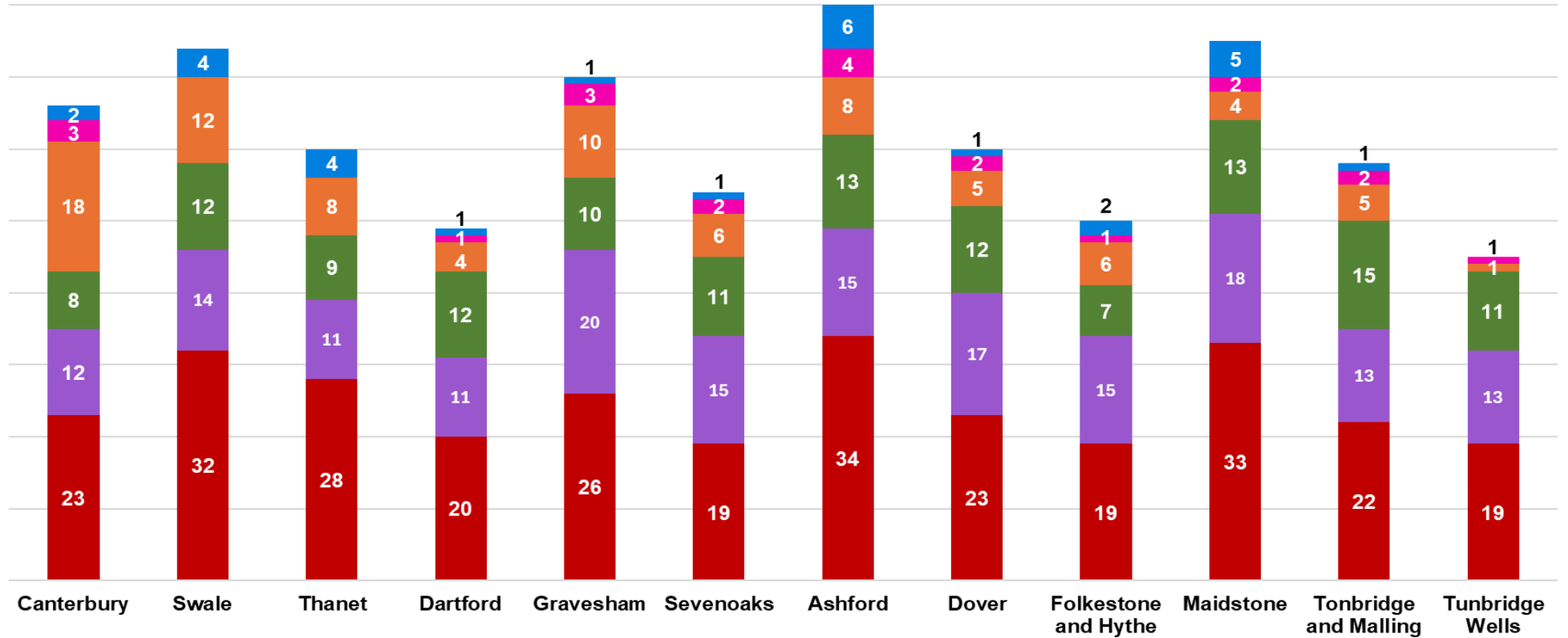


**Number of Referrals by District of Kent  
from 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024**

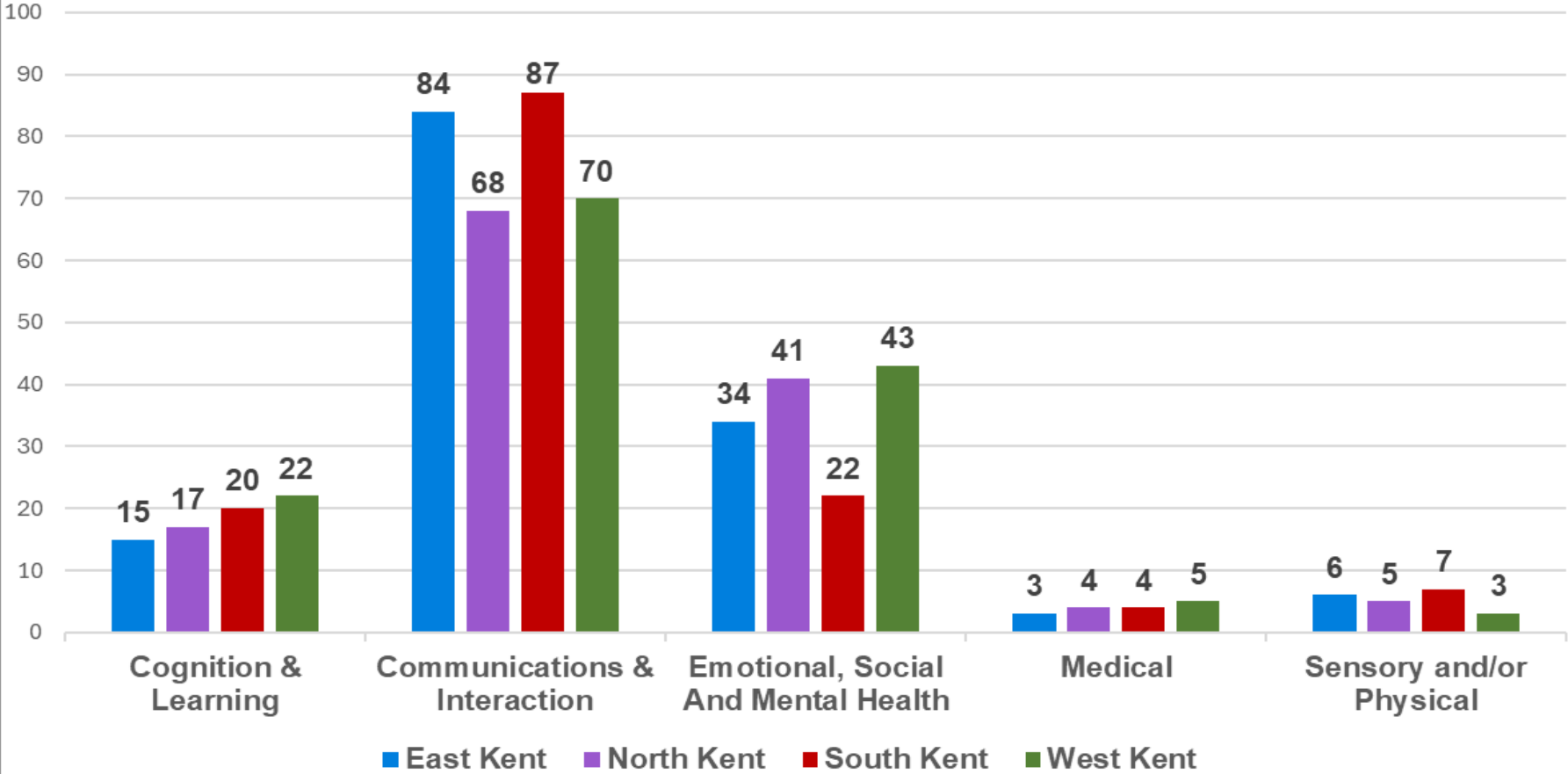


### Top six referral reasons by district from 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024

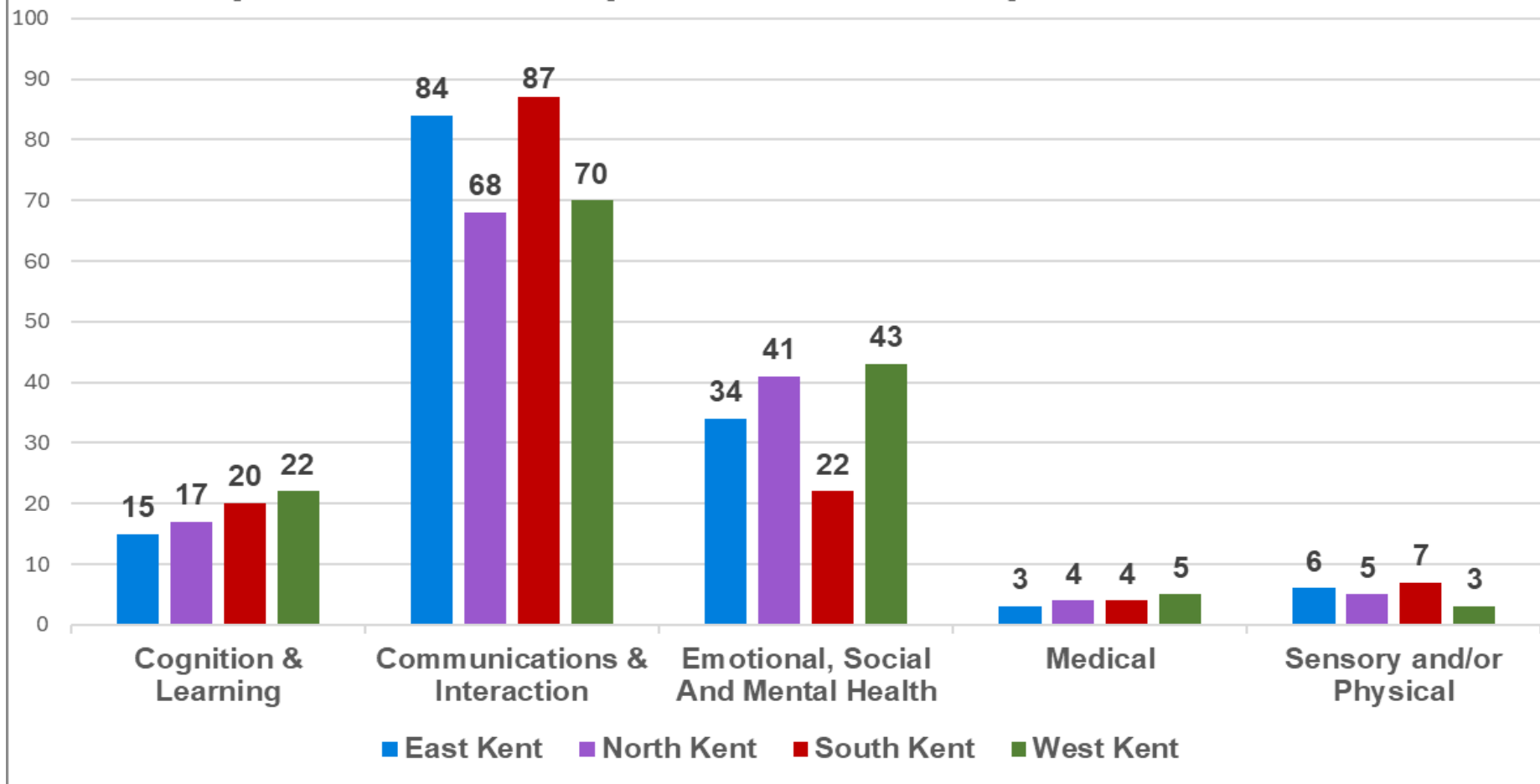
■ Appeal Process    
 ■ Support Issues    
 ■ EHC Plan Issues    
 ■ EHC Needs Assessment    
 ■ Information    
 ■ Refusal To Assess



# Referrals across the four areas of Kent, by the main disability, as identified by parents/carers or young person from 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024



## Referrals across the four areas of Kent, by the main disability, as identified by parents/carers or young person from 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024



## Key Performance Indicators

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

### From 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024:

**89%** of calls and emails were responded to within two working days **not meeting** the target of **97%** this is due to high volumes of calls to the service

**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%

**88%** of service users found the service helpful (3\*) or very helpful to them, (Q2 user survey) **not meeting** the target of 90%

**95%** 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 continued to attract a lot of interest, with a total of **7028** new users to the site and **25,244** page views. The top six viewed pages, excluding the home page, were: Information for parents and Carers, SEN Support and EHC plans, Inclusion and Equality, Helpline, Information Sessions and Drop-Ins for Parents, Appeals to the SEND Tribunal.

## **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

Amy Chivers Parent from West Kent – Chair

Sharon King Representative of Kent PACT (Parent Carer Forum)

Dana Aris - Parent

Hannah Chandler - Parent

Becky Clark, Parent Representative of 21 Together

Jan Gray, Parent

Natalie Hanchett - Parent

Sue Gibbons Designated Clinical Officer, NHS Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board

Kayleigh Leonard Young Person representative and Looked after Children

Steve Lusk, Senior Commissioner for KCC Strengthening Independence Service

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/)

Siobhan Price, Kent County Council Mainstream Inclusion

Katie Wicks, 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/)

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)



## Information, Advice and Support Kent User Survey 1 April – 30 September 2024

For cases closed between the period of 1 April to 30 September 2024 a total of **253** 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.

**35** responses were received resulting in a **14%** return rate

**89%** of responses recorded satisfied (3\*) or very satisfied with the service

**91%** 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

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

**93%** of respondents felt that we understood their questions concerns well (3\*) or very well

**96%** of respondents felt IASK listened to their view

**86%** felt the information and advice provided met their needs

**88%** found the service helpful (3\*) or very helpful to them

**74%** of respondents felt that the information advice and support provided has made a **great** deal of difference

### Examples of the difference made:

**54%** have a greater understanding of the SEND Code of Practice and the arrangements that should be made for children/young people with SEN

**57%** feel more confident

**71%** of respondents felt their child has benefitted as a result of the service being involved

(Please also see charts on page 19 and 20)

**Comments about the service:**

'X and team always goes over and beyond! Thank you for all the help and advise'

'You are an amazing service, I couldn't tell you how much you've bettered my Son's school life! Thank you!'

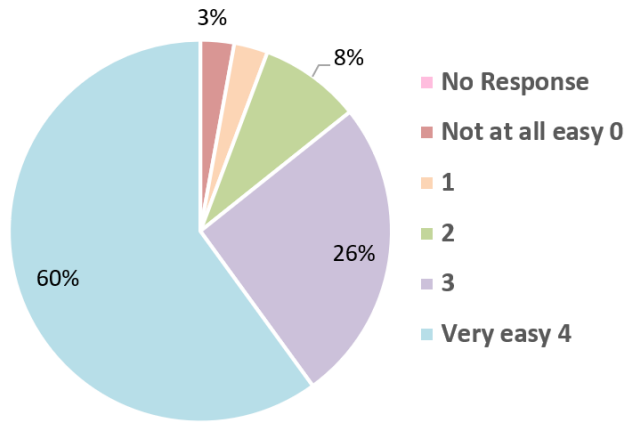
'X was very professional and supportive at all times and tried to understand our child's needs.'

'It really helped to know there was somewhere they could go to get advice. Everybody we spoke to was really approachable, knowledgeable and listened'.

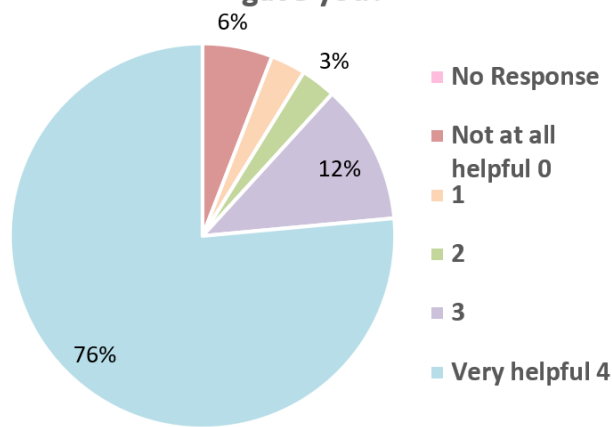
'I feel more parents need to know about your service. Maybe on online platforms like TikTok, Facebook Instagram.'

'X was very friendly and easy to talk too. I'm so glad i contacted iask and i would and have recommended them to many people. Should the need arise again i will be contacting them again.'

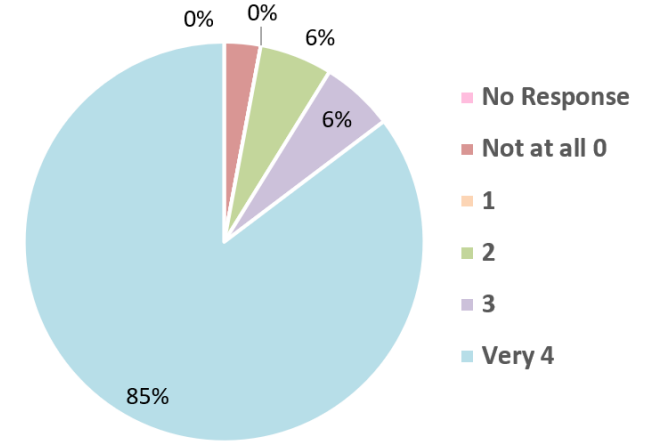
**Q1 How easy was it to get in touch with us?**



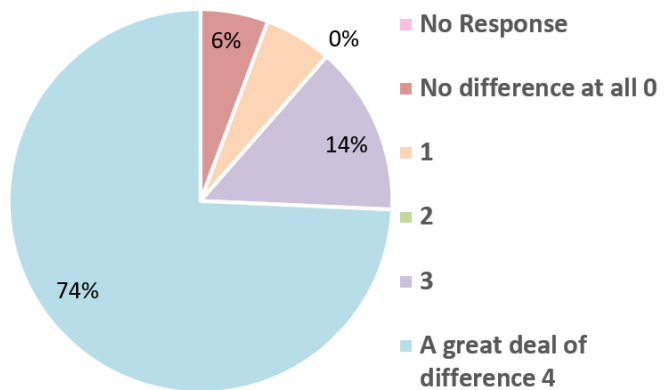
**Q2 How helpful was the information, advice and support we gave you?**



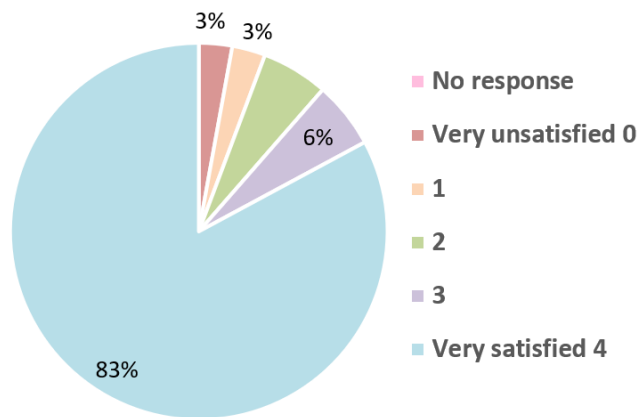
**Q3 How neutral, fair and unbiased do you think we were?**



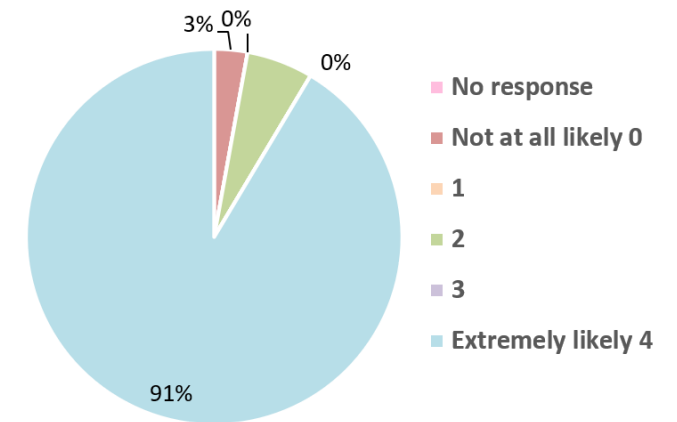
**Q4 What difference do you think our information, advice or support has made for you?**



**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)**

