

# Newcastle SENDIASS



Annual Report  
2022-2023

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## Introduction

This annual report aims to provide a formal service evaluation and an informative reflection that will give a sense of the achievement of the service.

We wanted to create a document which provides parents and professionals with information about the service enabling them to have a really clear understanding of what it does, how it helps and who can use it.

We have included feedback from parents, carers and young people as their views are important to us.

The world of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) is complex; in this review we will try to present information in a way that doesn't have any jargon or require any specialist knowledge to understand.

We are here to help so if there is anything in this review that you do not understand, please let us know.



## **Service values and practice**

**Newcastle Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS)** offers **impartial** and **confidential** information, advice and support to parents, carers, children and young people about matters related to their or their child's special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Staff are trained and have accurate and up to date knowledge of

- Education, social care and health law relating to SEND
- National and local policy and practice in meeting SEND
- SEND processes including Tribunal

Support is tailored to the individual service user, with the aim to build on that individual's skills, knowledge and confidence to promote independence and self-advocacy.

**The service is free for young people, parents and carers to use.**

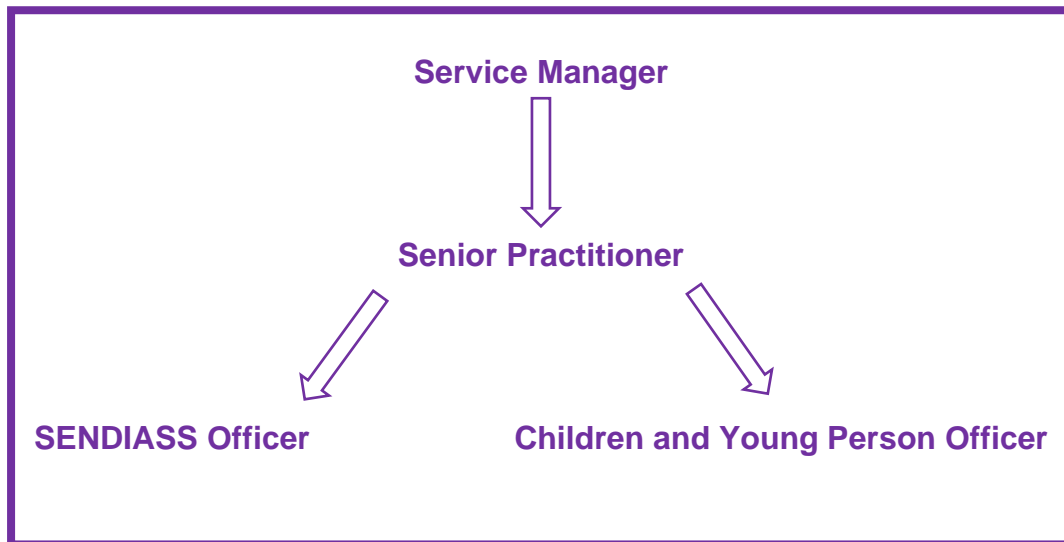
**You choose whether or not to use the service – you contact us not the other way around.**

**The service is confidential and impartial.**

The service can be accessed by children and young people independent of their parents. The service has adapted to include a text line and school drop-in clinics to make the service accessible for children and young people.

## Who delivers SENDIASS?

Newcastle SENDIASS is now jointly commissioned by education, health and social care in line with the national minimum standards. Following the joint commissioning agreement, the service has expanded and restructured. The diagram details the current structure.



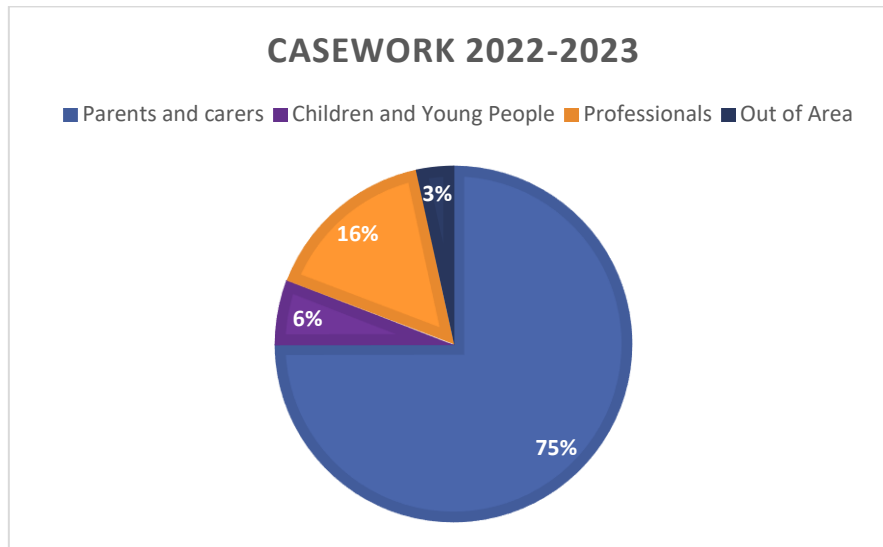
The service also has one part time business administrator.

Newcastle SENDIASS does not work in isolation. Each local authority has its own service, and they are all overseen by a national co-ordinator at the National Children's Bureau. The national co-ordinator

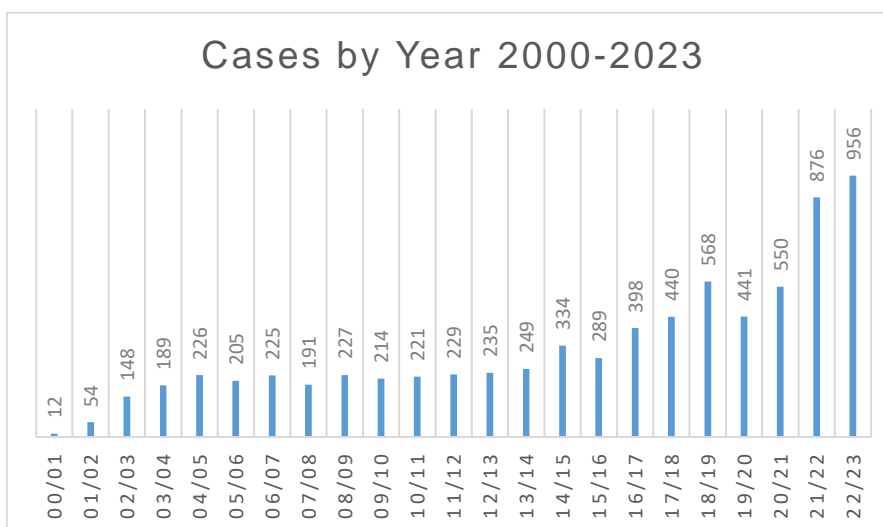
- Liaises with government, in particular the Department of Education
- Hosts an e-forum for all SENDIASS staff
- Gathers and publishes benchmarking data for each service
- Provides training on the law, mediation skills and regular updates on SEN policy and practice.

## Casework statistics

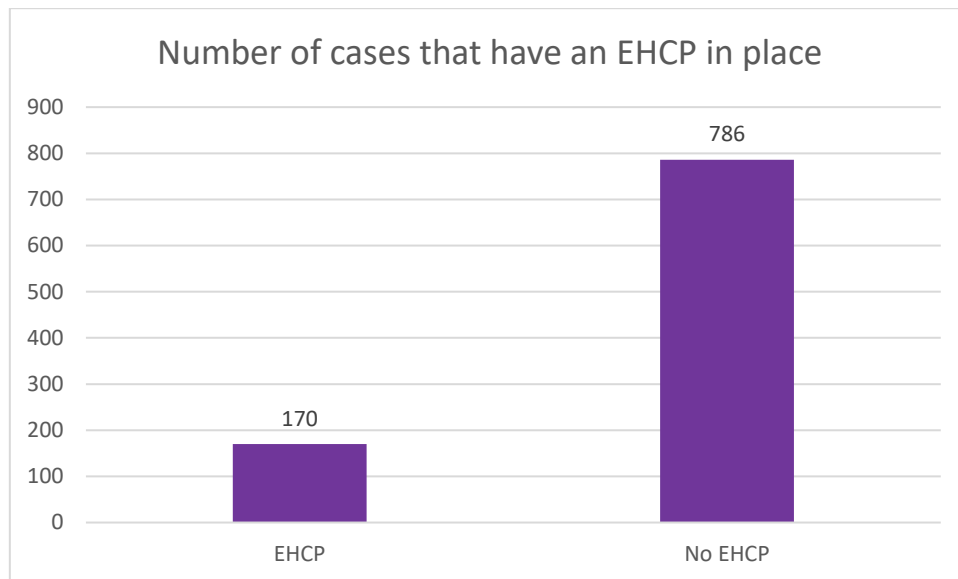
This year the service managed 956 cases. This is broken up into 887 parents and carers, and 69 children and young people accessing the service independent of their parents. On top of this the service also provided a service to 187 professionals and 40 parents and carers from neighbouring local authorities. The service also attended a number of events and coffee mornings providing information to many more parents, carers, children and young people.



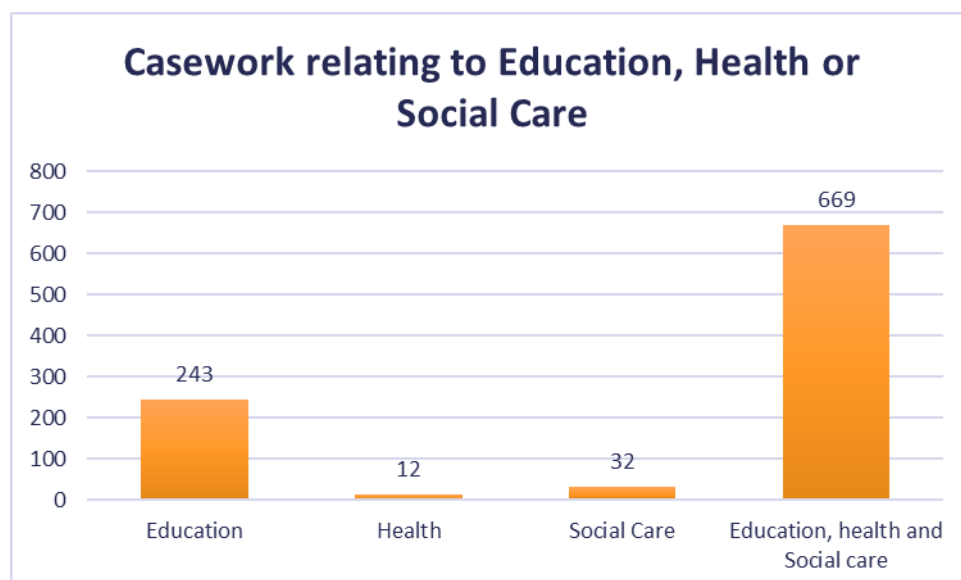
The service is seeing increasing demand with the number of cases going up every year. The chart demonstrates real growth in the number of cases that the service is dealing with. The chart shows a slight dip due to the impact of the pandemic, and last year's significant growth is potentially a result of that. This year the service was hit with staff absence which impacted on the delivery of the service for children and young people. Had it not been for this absence the numbers would be even higher.



Out of the 956 cases 170 had an Education, Health and Care Plan in place.



The service provides information, advice and support relating to education, health and social care. The chart below shows which category the case was relating to, with the majority being a combination of education, health and social care matters. This demonstrates how closely linked the three sectors are and how different needs can impact on all areas of a child's life.



## Social Media

The National Minimum standards specify that SENDIASS must have a social media presence. Newcastle SENDIASS has a Facebook page [www.facebook.com/NewcastleSENDIASS](http://www.facebook.com/NewcastleSENDIASS).

The data below is taken from the Facebook page professional dashboard which shows that in the last 28 days our posts have reached 133 people. This enables the service to share information with much wider audience.

### Page overview

Followers: 274

Create a post

Last 28 days

Post reach	133
Post engagement	15
New followers	2

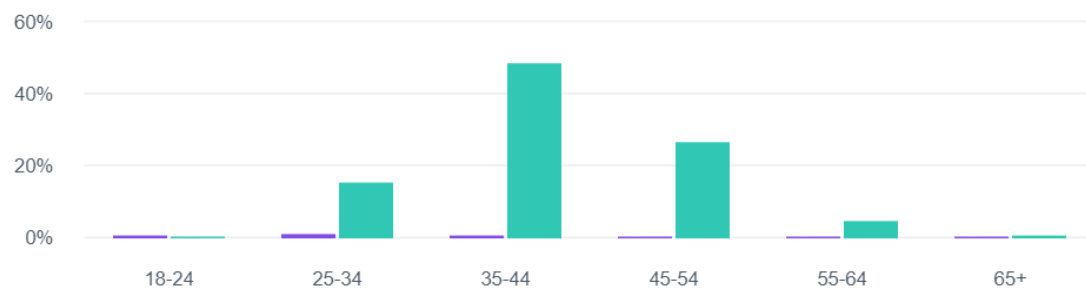
The graph below shows the population that access the social media page.

### Audience

274 Facebook followers

#### Age and gender

- Men 3.20%
- Women 96.80%





## Case studies

# Supporting a family with emotionally based school avoidance.

## Case study 1

11 year old child presenting with emotionally based school avoidance. Alternative provision has been put in place for the child, and he is now attending school for a short period of time.

### Introduction

The case involves an 11 year old child in their first year of secondary school. The family initially contacted SENDIASS for support to meet with school and discuss the needs of the child. The child was at risk of becoming a non-attender, although he was attending school on a partial timetable. This escalated to the point where the child was no longer able to attend.

### Background

We received request for support in February 2023 for the family of an 11-year-old child who was struggling in school. The initial request was an email from one of the intensive family support team with the local authority, with the parent copied in who confirmed they would like our support. The child was on a part time timetable when the family came to us, and asked for our support in a meeting to discuss an increase in the amount of time the child was to be in school. The child was becoming anxious at this prospect and had begun to withdraw from the part time timetable. The more the child was missing school, the more anxious he was feeling about going back. The child had a recent diagnosis of ADHD and had just started taking medication. There was no EHCP in place for the child, as school felt they could meet his needs; however, the family disagreed.

### Aims and objectives

Our objective was to ensure the family felt supported and able to express their views and feel heard. We wanted to aid the family and school to work together so that the child was supported to get to a place where he felt as though he was able to access his mainstream education. The child had expressed his wishes to transition back into school, but he was not ready to do this at present.

We also wanted to ensure that school had a good understanding of the child's needs and work with the family and school to form a plan to enable the child to attend school. We wanted school to understand their responsibilities and to provide the correct levels of support to meet the child's needs and ensure a smooth transition back into full time education.

### Approach

In the initial meeting with the family, school, and the intensive family support team it was established that the child was on the SEN register. The family fed back to the wider professional team that the child was worried about several aspects of school. These included being shouted at by teachers, getting negative planner comments for not completing his homework, and getting changed for PE. School noted that they have no concerns about the child's behaviour and would look into the concerns raised. School also agreed to seek out an alternative area for the child to get changed for PE. Family noted that the child does complete his reading homework, but he struggles to record that in his homework diary. It was suggested that he record his homework online, rather than handwriting it. School also agreed to extend the part time timetable for the child, with a view to a slower transition back into school. School do not think that the child needs an EHCP to meet their needs yet, as they believe they are able to do this within school. The parent expressed their wish to request an EHC needs assessment themselves and was provided the information and paperwork.

By the time the second meeting had been held, the situation had escalated, and the child was no longer attending school. SEND IASS supported the family to look at alternative options to help the child access education, it was at this meeting that school agreed that this would be needed in order to support a slow transition into back into school.

A 12 week placement with an alternative provider was then agreed and commissioned, the child is attending sessions with the provider four days a week. It was a very slow process, as dictated by the child's needs. The longer-term aim is that the child is able to access full time education and feel comfortable and safe in the setting.

### Challenge

In the weeks between the first and second meeting, the child had withdrawn from education completely.

School's focus was on increasing the days and hours in the initial part time timetable, and not on working with the child around his anxiety and his feelings towards school.

The family was increasingly frustrated with the situation and the relationship between school and the family started to become fractious.

## **Successes**

Implementing a package of alternative provision was very successful in re-engaging the child. Our involvement helped to keep the focus of conversation on the needs of the child, rather than focusing on attendance.

Our support opened up the communication between home and school. The family felt listened to and felt more supported by the school

The child's reported anxiety levels have decreased, and he is engaging in his alternative provision.

## **Conclusion**

When working with a child who is experiencing emotionally based school avoidance, it is important to be proactive rather than reactive. The needs of the child, rather than the needs of the school should be the main focus. The family came to us as they were feeling increasingly frustrated, their child's anxiety levels were increasing, and he was missing his entitlement to education. We helped the family to have their concerns heard and worked to get home and school working together on an agreed plan which centered around the child's needs. The family felt empowered and included in decision making for their child, the school were able to implement a plan that worked for the child and build a successful working relationship with the family, regaining their trust. The child was able to access education.

# Supporting a child to raise concerns around their lack of support in school

## Case study 2

Secondary aged child accessed SENDIASS independently to get advice for some difficulties he was experiencing in school. The agreed strategies were not in place, and he was finding lessons increasingly difficult.

### Introduction

This case involved a young person in a mainstream secondary academy who requested to speak with me after the academy displayed posters and flyers about the SENDIASS children and young person service. The young person wanted to discuss a teacher and their lack of support when time out was needed during a lesson.

### Background

The young person had a diagnosis of Autism and had strategies in place which had been arranged by the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO). Fidgets and a time out pass were recommended by the SENCO to allow the young person to take time out of a lesson when he became overwhelmed with noise, lights or workload. The time out pass recommended five minutes maximum time which was agreed with the young person.

The young person felt frustrated as the strategies were not being implemented in certain lessons. This was making the young person dread attending the lesson and masking his frustration towards the teacher until he could no longer cope, then display his frustrations in a verbal reaction.

### Aims and objectives

The aims were to create a safe environment for the young person to be able to discuss their concerns and to feel supported to have conversations with school to enable him to feel comfortable without distraction from peers and staff.

To support the young person to develop positive relationships and allow the young person to speak freely without judgement or correction of verbal language used.

To allow the young person to feel in control of the discussions..

To support the young person and provide a space where he could talk about anything he wanted to talk about and get support and advice. This would be

followed up on a fortnightly basis to discuss if the advice or support helped the young person or, if further support and advice was needed to provide positive impact on wellbeing, school or home life.

When information was shared with young person's consent to the SENCO, I would ensure the discussion was in the young person's words. This would be at face value as well as an email to ensure the discussion was shared and positive impact could be implemented through action in a person-centred approach.

### **Approach**

When I first met with the young person, he wanted to discuss a teacher within the academy that would not allow him to use his time out pass. He mentioned the teacher said the young person was using it as an excuse to leave the class as it was a lesson he didn't like. The young person said he would mask his behaviour until he could no longer control it and have an outburst which the teacher would then sanction him for. The young person stated this was a constant occurrence despite communicating to the SENCO and learning support staff that the issue was affecting him.

The young person reported that he had mentioned it to the SENCO as numerous of his peers that also had time out passes felt they could not use them when needed so collectively discussed their lack of enjoyment to attend the lessons.

The young person gave me permission to share the discussion with the SENCO to highlight the issues. Over a period of time I met with the young person and the SENCO many times to bridge the communication gap and help rebuild trust.

### **Challenge**

Overall, the SENCO and myself aimed to support the young person's wellbeing and academic achievement. The SENCO initially logged the discussions without any form of action which was discussed with the young person during frequent meets when he felt nothing had changed.

I highlighted to the SENCO that the strategies were not being implemented which was hindering the young person's ability to focus on the specific lessons and deliberately avoid the lesson by showing up late or walking out early due to frustration.

The young person reported he started to misuse his time out pass and not return to the lesson which resulted in his peers joining in. This disrupted the lesson for all attendees which hindered the academic learning and progress of the lesson structure.

The teacher was still unaware at this point that the young person and his peers were reaching out for support and advice to improve the lessons and feel confident that if he needed to use any strategies he would be allowed to do so.

### **Successes**

After numerous conversations with the SENCO, action was taken for the SENCO to speak with the teacher. The SENCO discussed the teacher was unaware of the young person's needs as he was a supply teacher. Although he was a consistent supply teacher for the same lessons, the SENCO acknowledged he was unaware of the specific needs of various young people. Therefore, to provide positive impact the teacher communicated to the SENCO that he would allow the time out passes to be used as well as the various fidgets need for the young person to cope with the school environment.

Due to the consistent clinics, I was able to bridge the lack of communication between the young person, SENCO and teacher and find a solution to allow the young person to feel listened to, action to be taken and positive impact upon his academic learning using additional strategies in place.

### **Conclusion**

Through the display of the posters and flyers, the young person was made aware of SENDIASS and was able to communicate his need for support and advice which could be offered in a confidential space at the academy.

The young person continued to use the service to verbally discuss any frustrations he had regarding home and personal life understanding that I would listen, and he could return to his school day feeling less frustrated – supporting his wellbeing.

### **Child/Young person feedback**

The young person developed a positive relationship and felt he could discuss anything with myself, and I would act appropriately to support him.

The young person would recommend the service to his peers who also started attending the clinics to receive appropriate advice and support.

# Disagreeing with the Local Authority over placement

## Case study 3

The parent contacted SENDIASS after receiving an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) naming a mainstream school. The child was in a child-led nursery provision and was due to begin reception. Parent wanted a specialist placement due to the severity of the child's needs.

### Introduction

The case involved a child during age phase transfer to reception. The child was currently attending a child-led nursery and had 1:1 support at all times. Considering the needs assessment, the local authority (LA) concluded that the child's needs could be met in a mainstream setting with support. Parents did not agree to this decision and contacted SENDIASS for support in appealing the decision.

### Background

The child had a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder and attended a child-led nursery. He was 4 years old but functioning at around 18-months. His diagnosis did not take place until the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) was being finalised. Amongst his needs, the child was non-verbal, did not respond to his name, had to wear a fastened vest to stop him eating his faeces and spent most of time stimming and presenting with Pica behaviours. Due to his sensory processing difficulties, he struggled in busy environments and found it difficult to tolerate other children.

Parents were very concerned that the local mainstream school had been named in the EHCP, as it was their understanding from other professionals working with their child, that he was expected to go to a school set up for children with autism.

Parents struggled to get responses from the LA in a timely manner, despite their numerous phone calls and emails.

They contacted SENDIASS to support them through appealing the decision.

## **Aims and objectives**

Our objective was to support the parents to present their views and evidence to the Local Authority to ensure that the EHCP was accurate and a clear description of their child's needs. This was necessary for a fair decision to be made with all the correct evidence considered.

We wanted the parents to understand the processes and criteria used by the LA in arriving at the decision of type of placement so that they had all of the information necessary to form their strongest argument.

## **Approach**

When the mother initially contacted SENDIASS, she had just received the final plan with a mainstream school named. She was distressed and did not understand how the LA had arrived at this conclusion. In addition, the plan was considerably over the 20-week deadline and there was only a short period before reception was due to begin.

We spent time talking to the parent, allowing her to express all of her frustrations and we were then able to explain the key information with regards to their rights and next steps. We provided information on complaints regarding the failure to meet statutory timescales and the appeals process to challenge the decision.

While waiting for a mediation date, the parents met with SENDIASS with the EHCP and advices received. We spent a significant time looking at Section B and finding key information missing. While some needs were briefly mentioned, much of it failed to explain the severity of the needs and were open to interpretation. Positive behaviours were taken out of context and parents felt it did not reflect their child and the difficulties he faced throughout the day.

We also supported the parents to understand the requirements for the LA to specify provision in Section F. There was clear evidence that the child had speech and language therapy and occupational therapy needs, but this was left vague and uncommitted in the plan.

We helped the parents to structure a response presenting the case with a clear, evidence-based approach.

We attended mediation with the parents and after an agreement was met we then attended a continuation meeting with the LA to revise the EHCP to accurately reflect the child's needs. We also reminded the LA of the duty to specify the provision and were able to provide guidance to this end.

## **Challenge**

Some of the advices received for the plan were written in an overly positive manner and did not provide context. Some difficulties were references with a "light



touch” which did not describe what this looked like for this individual child. For example, it referred to the child stimming but did not explain that this was most of the day. It referred to child not being fully independent in toileting; the child wore nappies, ate his own faeces, smeared and had not shown any interest in becoming independent. This had resulted in an EHCP that was not accurate and did not meet need.

The lack of specificity in Section F was a significant concern and parents were worried that this could lead to the child being on very long waiting lists for therapies.

Due to the poor communication from the LA to the parents, there was a lack of trust between parties, and this often made it difficult for the parents to express their views without becoming emotional which made it difficult to make their points clearly.

### **Successes**

The parents felt heard, they were listened to, and their frustrations were understood. The input of SENDIASS enabled them to develop a much better understanding of the documents and processes and empowered them to effectively challenge the LA.

The LA agreed to amend the plan on the day of the mediation. The extensive amendments were written into the plan and the parents were in agreement that the revised plan was an accurate description of the needs.

In addition, the LA agreed to specify the provision in Section F. For example, the original document stated “SLT input as advised by this service”. This was changed to *“(child) will assessed by a registered Speech and Language Therapist and the report will be shared with relevant staff working with (child) to inform strategies for his individual learning programme. This will happen by the end of the first term of starting school”*.

In light of the revised plan, the LA agreed that a specialist provision was required and consulted with an independent special school the following day. Following consultation, the school was named in the plan.

Supporting the family to work with the LA helped to rebuild the relationship, to garner trust and avoided the need to appeal to the tribunal.

### **Conclusion**

The parents reported that the support from SENDIASS helped them navigate a complex and stressful situation. Our quick response time to the parents’ calls and emails helped them to feel that they were supported, and we always had time to listen.

The professional relationship the service has with the LA enabled us to speed the communications between both parties. We helped parents to organise their direct responses to the LA with a calmer approach which was empowering.

Having knowledge and expertise in the language of EHCPs meant we were able to support the parents to understand the specifics of the shortfalls in the original plan. They also have confidence moving forward in ensuring the LA is fulfilling its duties in securing a lawful plan for their child that is fit for purpose.

### **Parent feedback**

“Thank you for all of your help with (child’s) plan. It was very stressful but having your expertise in understanding the processes was reassuring. Just having someone who answered my calls and was able to explain things in a way I could understand made such a difference. I also hadn’t realised that so much of the description of (child’s) needs were not clear in his EHCP as it just seems obvious to us as we know him so well. I get what you mean now by *the Devil’s in the detail*. I don’t think we would have the place at (special school) without your help”.

## Service feedback

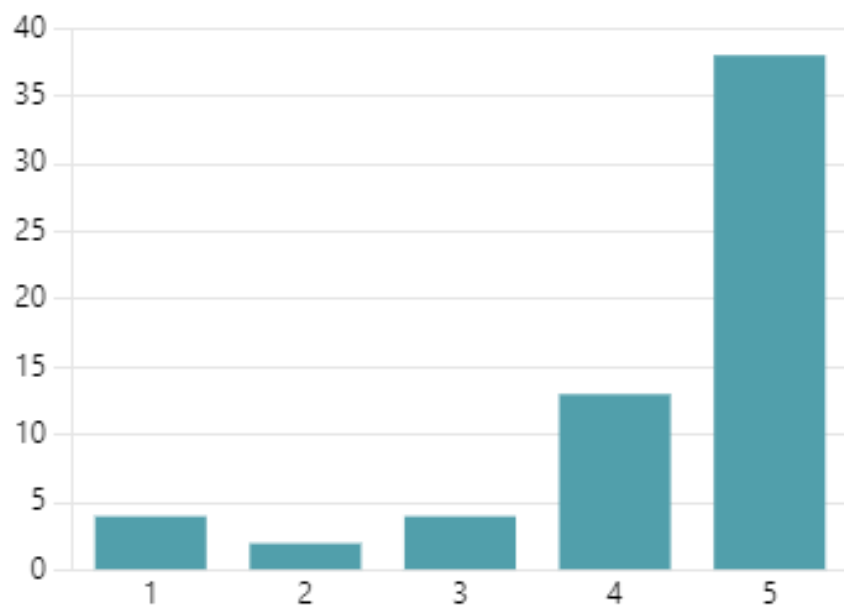
The Council for Disabled Children (CDC) set questions for all SENDIAS Services to use to gather feedback about the service. Below are the questions we asked, and the responses gathered.

### 1. How easy was it to get in touch with Newcastle SENDIASS?

1 - not very easy at all, to 5 - very easy

Average Rating

4.30

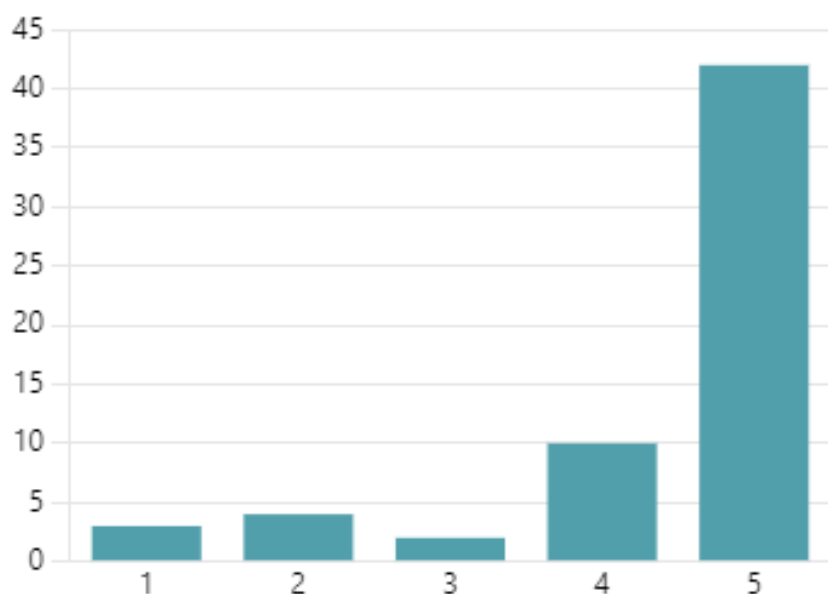


### 2. How helpful was the information, advice and support that we gave you?

1 - not very helpful, to 5 - very helpful

Average Rating

4.38

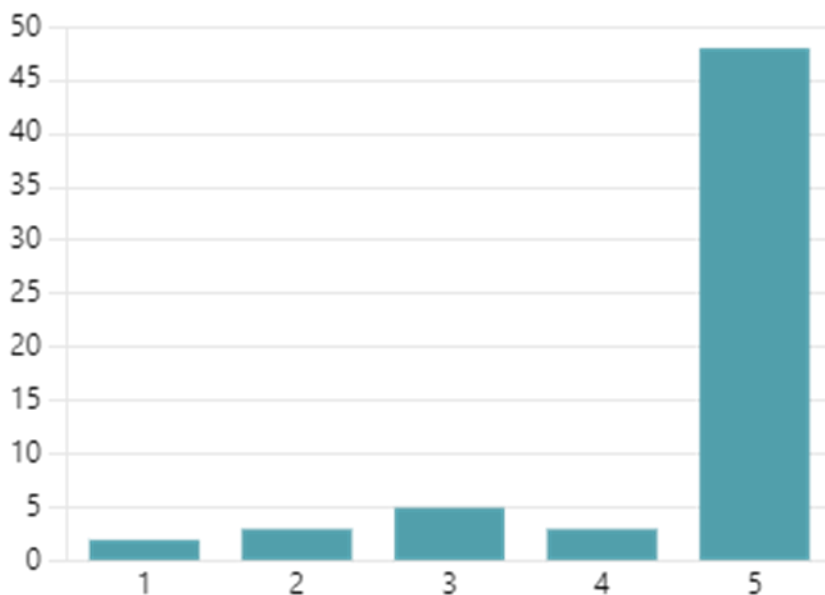


### 3. How neutral, fair and unbiased?

1 - not very neutral, to 5 - very neutral

Average Rating

4.51

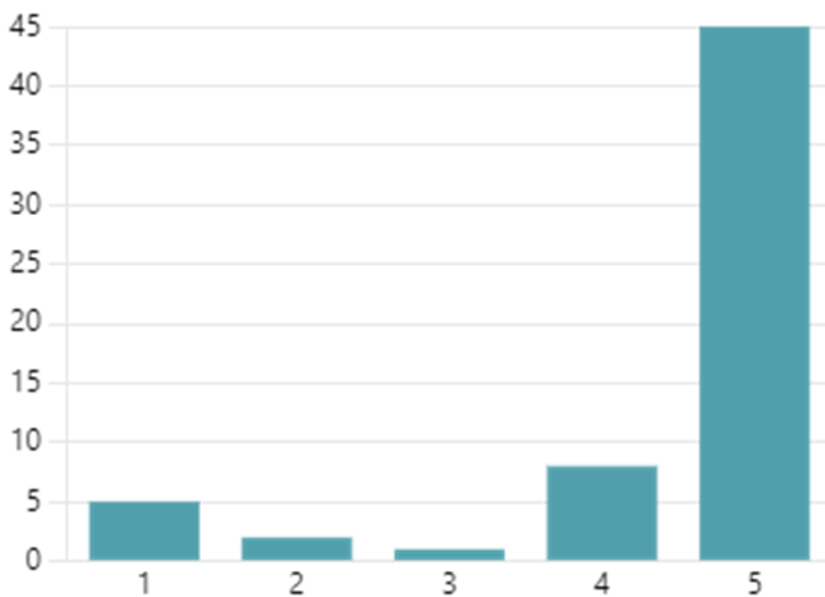


### 4. Overall how satisfied were you with the service we gave?

1 - not very satisfied, to 5 - very satisfied

Average Rating

4.41

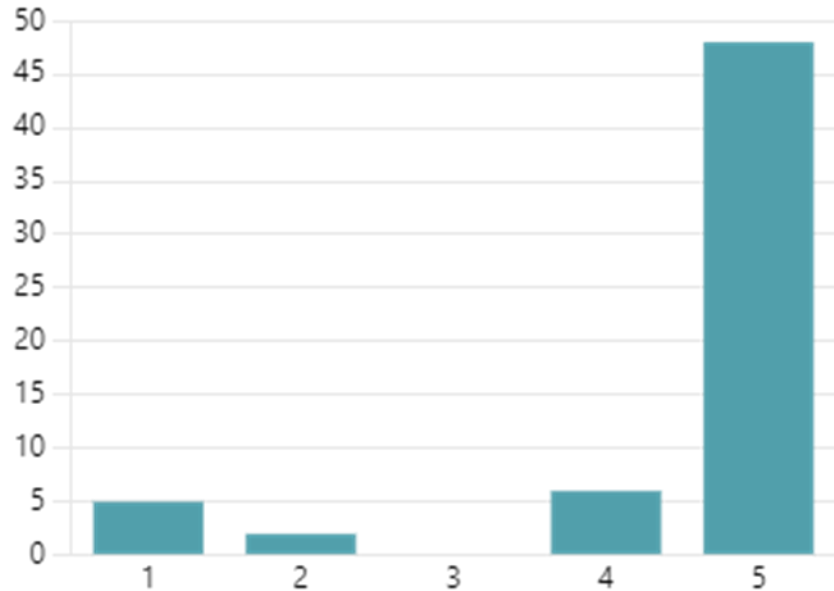


5. How likely is it that you would recommend our service to others?

1 - not very likely, to 5 - very likely

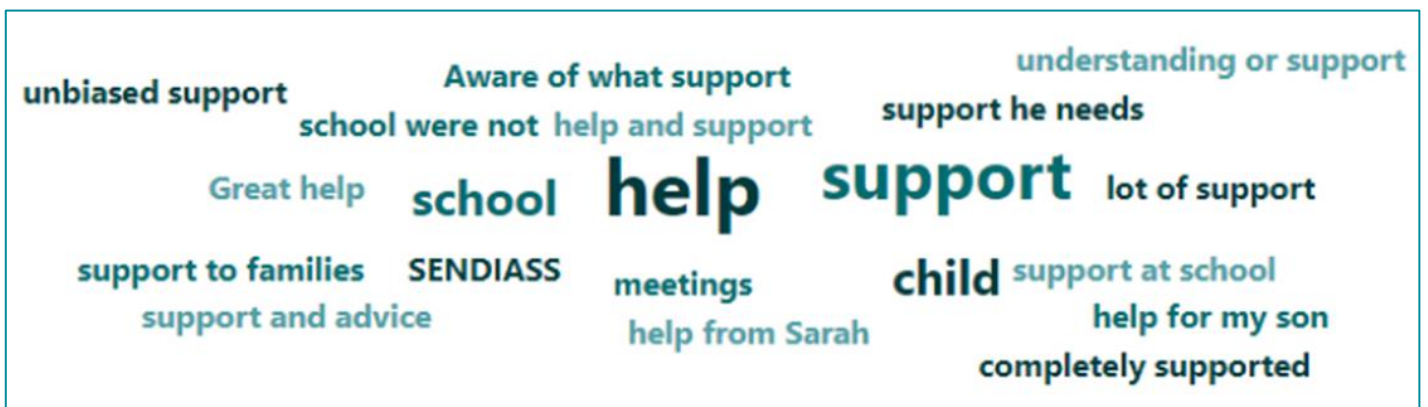
Average Rating

4.48



6. What difference do you think our service has made to you?

A word map of the key words and phrases used in the responses



## What people have to say about the service...

You have been a lifeline for us over the years, providing unbiased and factual advice that has helped move our daughter along - thank you so much!!!!

I don't know where we would be if hadn't of had the help and support from SENDIASS. From the start they gave good supportive advice, attended important meetings with us and supported us through the whole process. With their help we were able to achieve the best outcome for our son.

I was given clear instructions for what I needed to do which is great when you don't speak the professional lingo

Confidence to fight for what my daughter is entitled to in school.

I only wish you had more staff!

You are all so amazing at what you do but in short supply, time to expand (fingers crossed), so you can help more people!

The advice gave me a clear plan of what I needed to do, was informative and helpful, in a concise and honest way

There is someone always there to help you and advise you on the end of a phone. I cannot fault any member of the team they are great

If it wasn't for sendiass I'd be completely stuck and I actually think I'd be still poorly, they have supported me and my little boy for a very long time now and each member of staff have been fully supportive I was very low and stressed and had zero support till I found Sendiass, they are just simply angels 🙏 I'm so so grateful of the service the offer

I can't thank SENDIASS enough. Without them my son wouldn't have his ehcp or be getting the support he needs. I didn't have a clue where to start with the appeal, i found it really complicated, and without SENDIASS I don't think mentally I could of coped with the process. It's such a relief knowing my son will have the support he needs. Thank you so much, SENDIASS has made such a difference to our lives and invaluable to the rest of my sons education.

Without this service we would not have had the knowledge, understanding or support we required to enable us to go through the EHCP process. We would not have had to strength to push the LA to make the right decision for the child we care for and we would not have got the result we needed within the time frame we needed it to get our child in a provision which is able to suit his needs

Let me know there is somewhere to go for impartial advice and support

They give me the help I needed when ever I needed it, through any way the could.

They always went above when they needed to do, and never left me hanging around for weeks for answers. Thank you.

I do not know what I would have done without the help from SENDIASS with both my children. They have come to meetings, helped us encourage school to do their job better, helped defend us against the LA obstruction re EHCP. They need more staff however, and need to be better resourced to help more people. I am also a GP and I refer lots of my patients to SENDIASS. Until schools and LAs have the funding, training, skills and inclination to adequately provide support to kids with SEND needs, SENDIASS role is vital.

Helping to get EHCP accurate and correct

Attending our meetings has made us feel like a stronger team, with your knowledge & insight.

It was so lovely to speak to someone who listened and was able to point me in the right direction for next steps.

SENDIASS was the amazing game changer in our lives. They've supported my family through very tough times and navigated us through school/life supporting me to help scaffold for my autistic and adhd children. If it weren't for SENDIASS' support I don't think we'd ever have achieved anything with schools. I'm eternity grateful. I highly recommend sendiass most days to people/families I know.

Knowing that it is easy to contact Sendiass for unbiased support and advice has really been helpful in some tricky times.

## Future Developments

### Service Capacity and sustainability

Newcastle SENDIASS has always been a well-used service. Nationally SENDIAS services have seen an increase in demand and in the complexity of casework. The council for disabled children (CDC) set the national minimum standards for services to maintain, and they provide intervention levels to track the complexity of casework. They have recognized that there will not be any more government funding to support SENDIAS services and based on trends we can expect the demand to continue to rise. To manage the increasing demand the service will have to adapt. The service will continue to provide advice and information for anyone who contacts the service and will support parents and carers through processes to ensure they are informed and empowered to actively participate in all decision making. SENDIASS will be unable to attend meetings in the way that we have previously and will have to employ a threshold based on parent/carer capacity. The CDC have taken this move as a step towards empowerment and reducing the reliance on the service for emotional support.

### Service Governance

In line with the National minimum standards SENDIASS needs to have an advisory group comprised of stakeholders from education, health and social care, as well as parents, carers and young people. The service is in the process of establishing an advisory group who will help to evaluate the service and steer the direction of travel to ensure we are not only compliant with the code of practice, but we are also delivering a service in line with local need and priorities.

### Information and training

SENDIASS provides information in a range of ways including via our phone service, emails, our website, Facebook page and Youtube channel. Due to the increasing demand for the service we plan to develop some parent and carer training videos around the statutory processes for EHCPs, Tribunals, SEN support and how to navigate the SEND systems. This will enable the service to provide information to a much wider audience without placing additional demand on the service.





## Newcastle SENDIASS

Woodlands Children's Centre

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**0191 211 6255**

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[www.newcastleSENDIASS.co.uk](http://www.newcastleSENDIASS.co.uk)

[www.facebook.com/newcastleSENDIASS](https://www.facebook.com/newcastleSENDIASS)

<https://www.youtube.com/@newcastleSENDIASS4608>