Newcastle SENDIASS

Annual Report

2025-2026

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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.

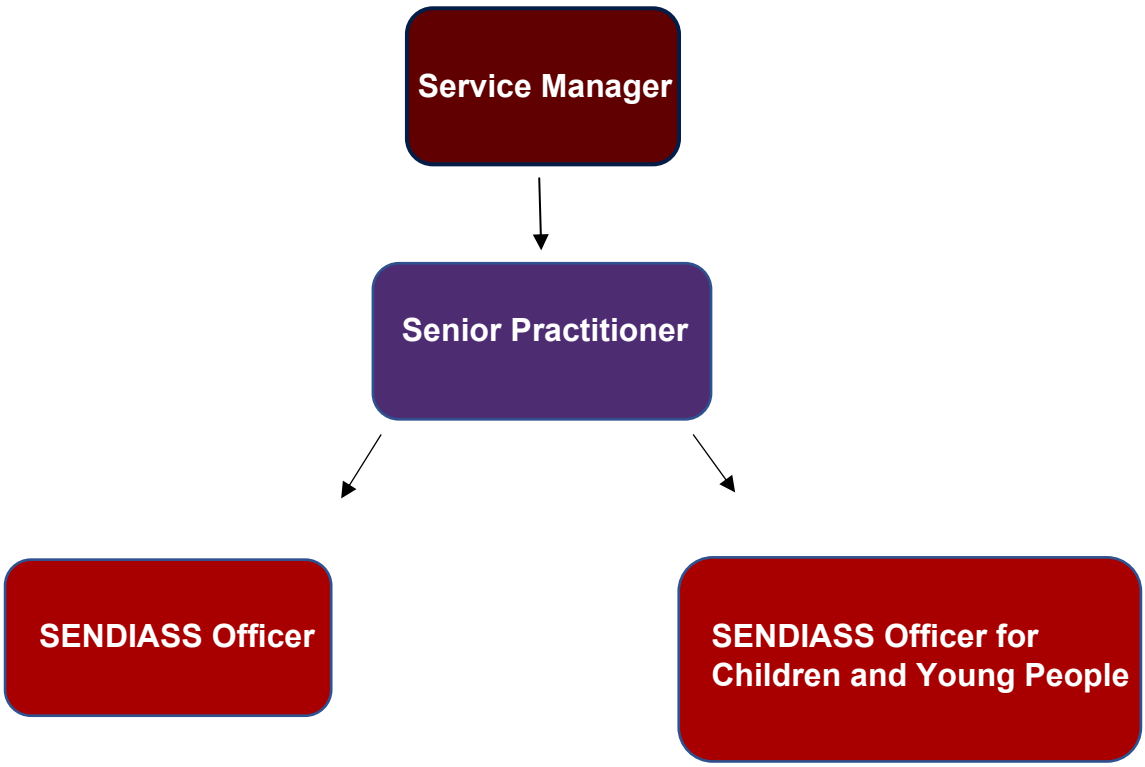
You choose whether or not to use the service – you contact us not the other way around.

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.
- Provides the National Minimum Standards that all services must adhere to

Advisory group

The National minimum standards state that all SENDIAS services must have an advisory group made up of key stakeholders.

1.7 The Governance arrangements outline a clear management structure, encompassing a strategic manager within the IASS and a steering group or advisory body which includes representatives from service user groups and key stakeholders from education, social care and health.

1.8 The IASS has a development plan reviewed annually with the steering group/advisory body, which includes specific actions and improvement targets.

Newcastle SENDIASS have formed an advisory group consisting of key stakeholders from education, health, social care and parents/carers. The group meet every academic term to review the progress of the service and feed into the next priorities.

Autumn Term

Annual Report for the previous academic year including parent/children/young people evaluations and feedback.

Agree the Service Development Plan for the academic year.

Spring Term

Progress with areas identified on the Service Development Plan.

Summer Term

Review Service Development Plan and achievements.

Identify local and national priorities.

Discuss areas for SENDIASS development.

The aim of the group is

- To monitor the continued development of the service in a way that best meets the needs of children, young people with SEND in Newcastle and their parents and carers
- To demonstrate the impartiality of the service and ensure it remains at ‘arm’s length’ to the Local Authority and the Integrated Care Board.
- To ensure that the service impartiality and confidentiality policies are reviewed and monitored and that they are implemented consistently and effectively.
- To evaluate the level to which the service achieves the Minimum Standards for services providing impartial, information, advice and support, as supported by the Department for Education, and is compliant with the SEND Code of Practice 2015.
- To monitor the impact of the service on improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND and their parents and carers, using service user feedback.
- To monitor that the service is engaging effectively with all relevant partners, locally, regionally and nationally.

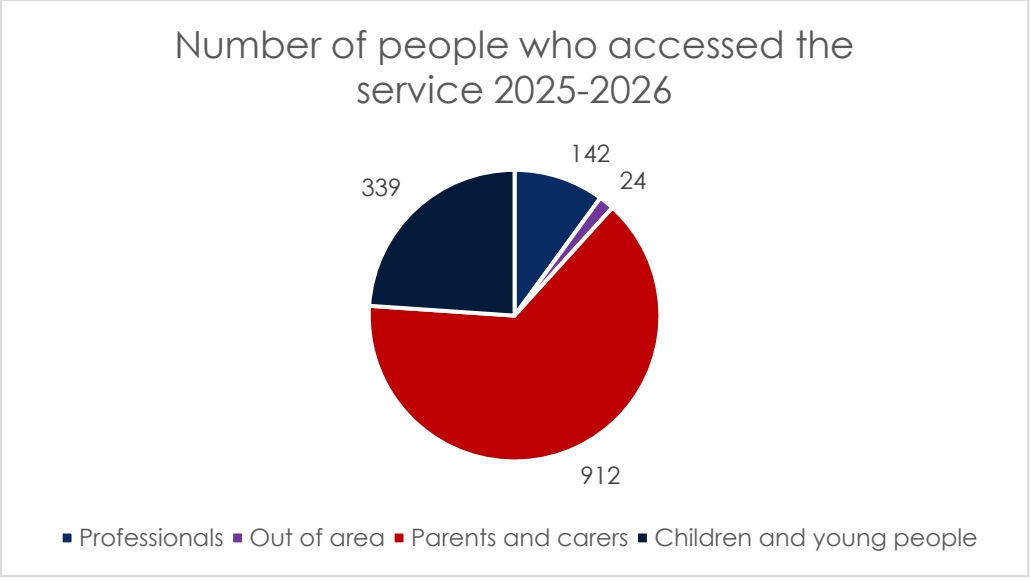
The advisory group looked at the service achievements over this academic year, the continued growth and increase in demand, and agreed the priorities for the service for the next academic year. We have recently recruited to the advisory group to increase membership from stakeholder groups that provide representation across the city.

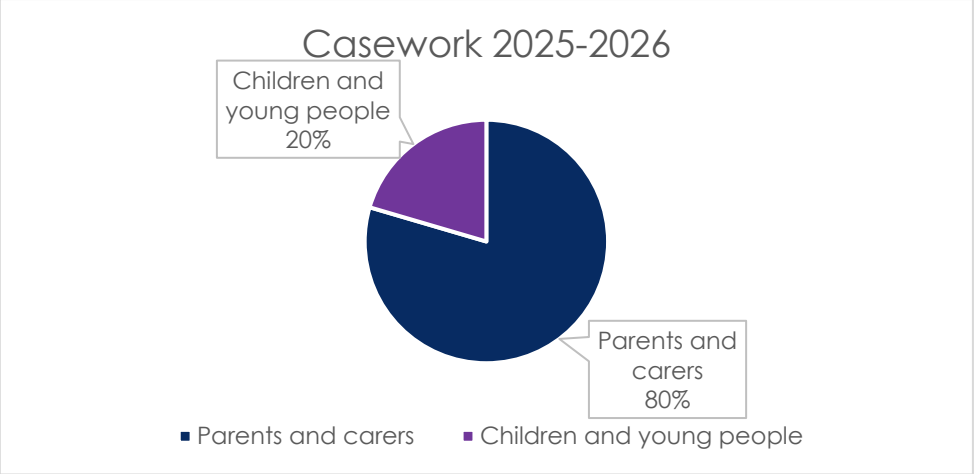
Casework statistics

The Council for Disabled Children (CDC) recognised that the amount of work and complexity of work that SENDIASS do was not reflected in the way in which we recorded our work. As an example, each family accessing the service was allocated a case number which was their number for the academic year. Some of these families would access the service to support them through statutory assessment, they then may come back to the service to support them with a complaint and then return again to support them with an appeal to the tribunal. All of those pieces of work would only count as one number on our statistics. We now allocate case numbers based on each piece of casework, so one family may end up with several case numbers by the end of the year. This gives us a more realistic reflection of the amount of work the service is doing.

In order to be able to monitor the growth of the service and compare our statistics from previous years we are also counting the number of families who access the service.

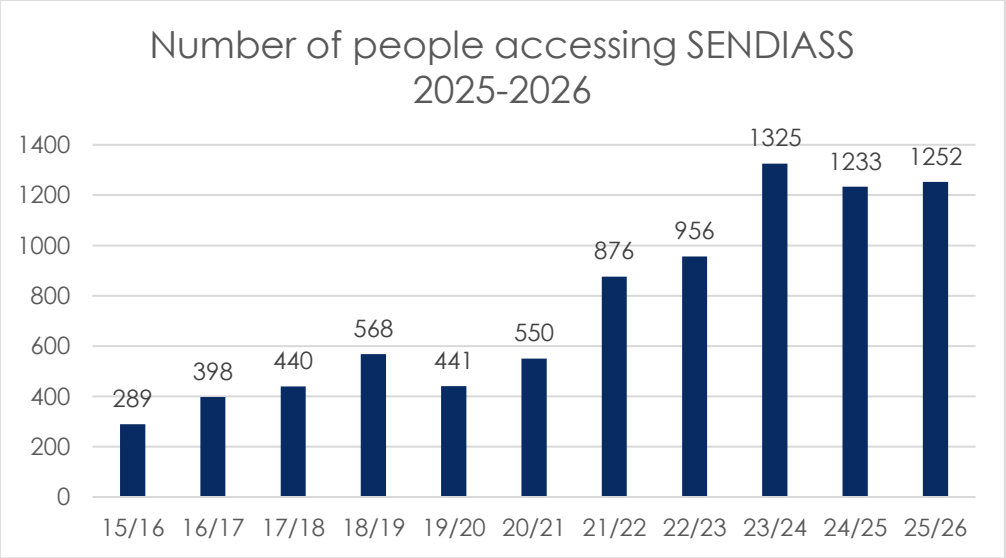
The service runs on an academic year, all case numbers are allocated starting in September 2025. We took the figures for this report from the end of July 2026. This academic year the service has provided information, advice and support for 3172 cases, this has been delivered to 1251 parents, carers, children and young people. There are 339 children and young people who have accessed the service independent of their parents; which works out around 27% of our service users. This demonstrates the difference that making the service accessible to children and young people has made. On top of this the service also provided a service to 142 professionals and 24 parents and carers from neighbouring local authorities.

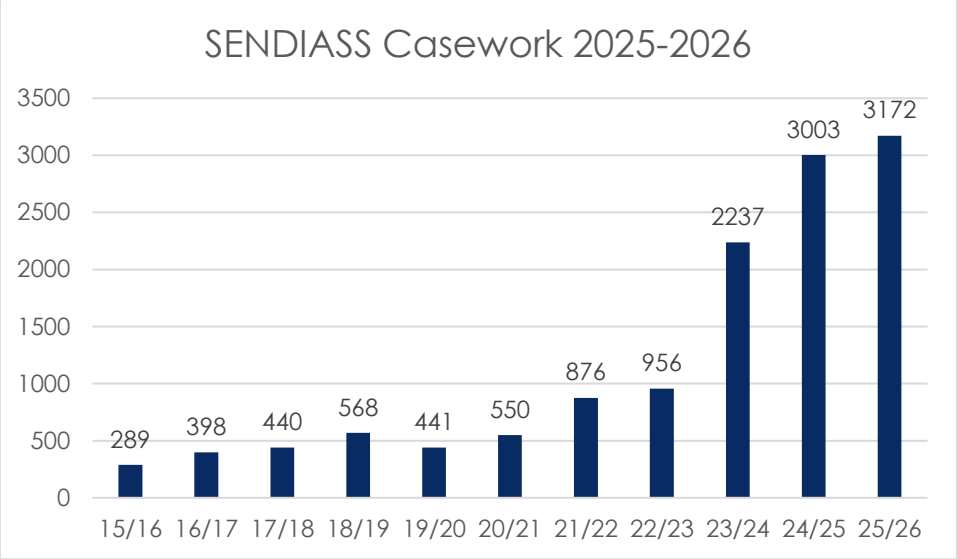




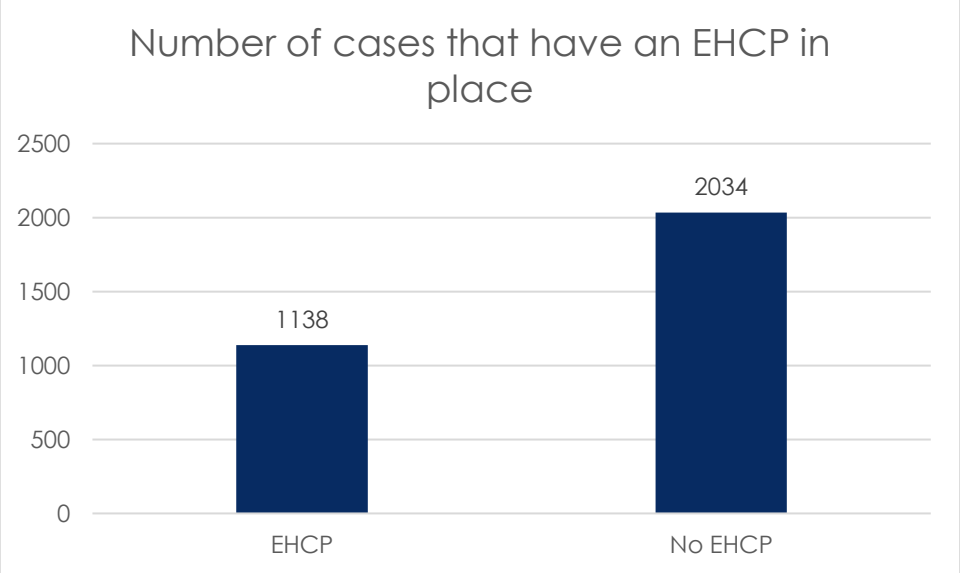
SENDIASS regularly attend events where we can deliver information to a much wider audience. This includes coffee mornings, training events, team briefings and SEND information events. 345 parents/carers and 237 professionals have attended events where we have delivered information or training. We have also attended and had a stall at larger information providing events where it is not possible to capture how many people attended; however, we can factor in that we are delivering information to a much wider audience than our records demonstrate.

The service has been seeing increasing demand with the number of cases continuing to rise. This year the service has handled 3172 cases, an increase on last year's 3003 cases. We developed a sustainability plan for the service to reduce the number of low-level enquiries to increase capacity for the higher-level complex casework. The initiatives in this plan included delivering training for frontline staff across education, health and social care, recorded information webinars and a signposting Padlet. The number of level 1 interventions was significantly decreased this year which demonstrates this plan worked and the impact it had on reducing the rate of growth for the service.

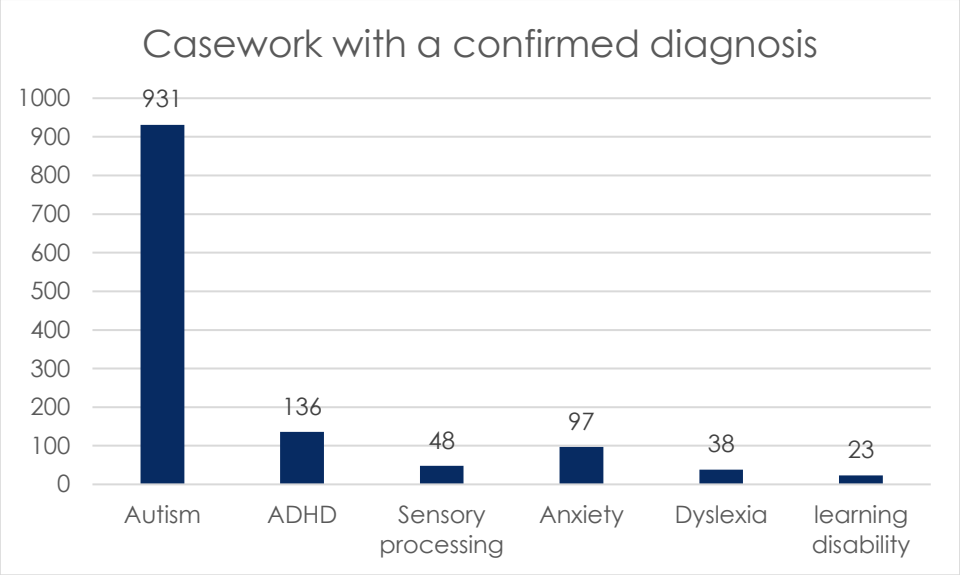




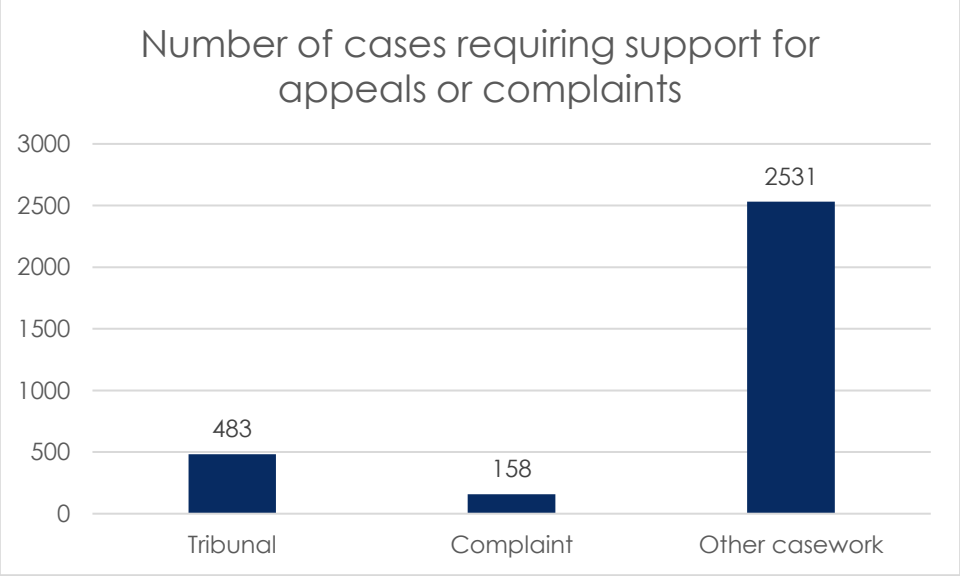
Out of the 3172 cases 1138 had an Education, Health and Care Plan in place.



SENDIASS provide support to children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, there is not a requirement to have a diagnosis in order to access the service. We do collect data relating to diagnosis. This chart illustrates the top primary needs identified for cases this year. There are a large number of children and young people who are currently waiting for assessment, they are not reflected in this data.

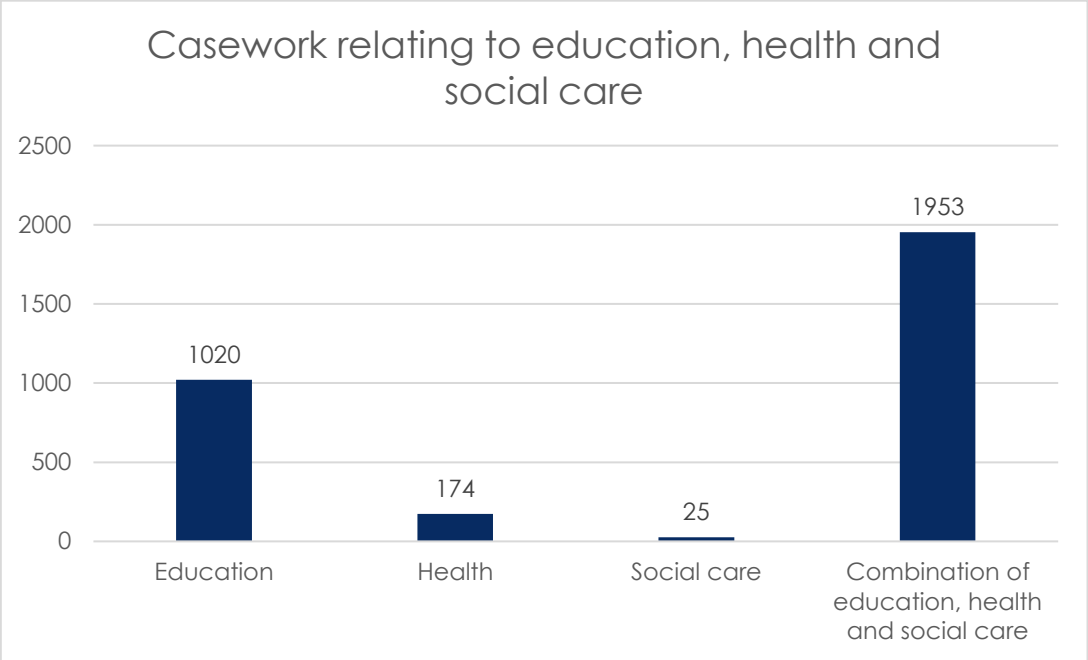


SENDIASS has the role to provide support when things go wrong. This academic year we have seen a rise in the number of cases that would like support to appeal to the tribunal and to submit formal complaints. Of the 3172 cases we have worked with this academic year 483 wanted advice and support to appeal to the first-tier tribunal, and 158 wanted support to submit a formal complaint. Whilst SENDIASS provide the information for individuals to be able challenge decisions through formal process, we also mediate and help to open up communications between parents, schools and the local authority. This means that although 483 people asked for advice on how to appeal to the tribunal, the number of appeals lodged with the tribunal is far lower. Only 74 of these cases progressed to requiring support and representation at mediation and tribunal preparation.



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.

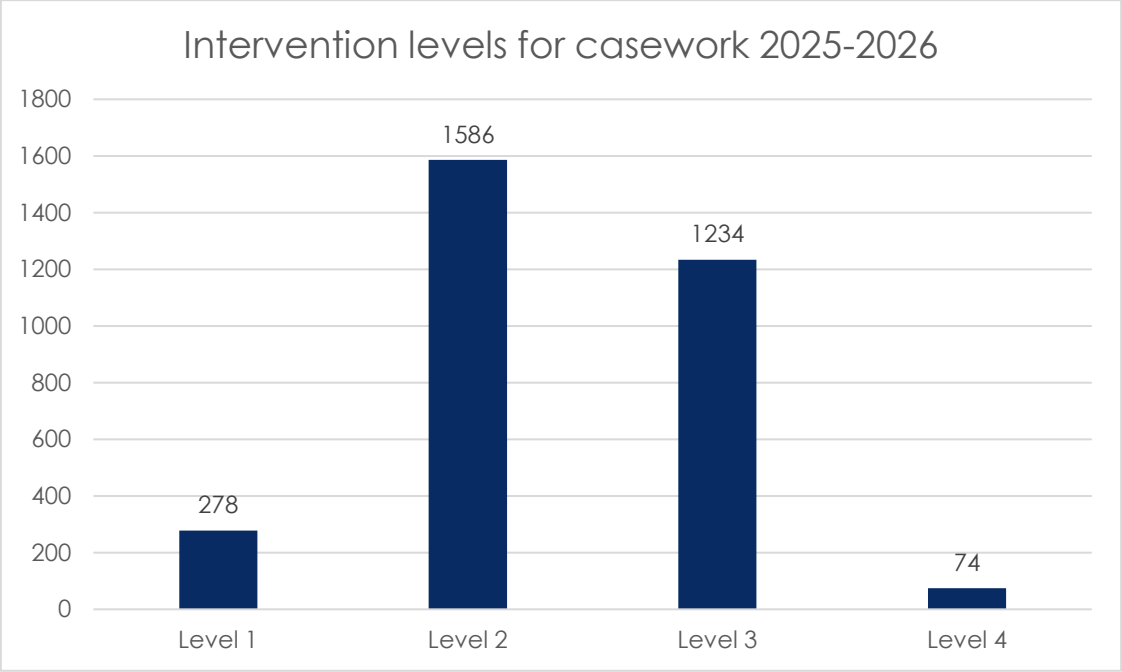


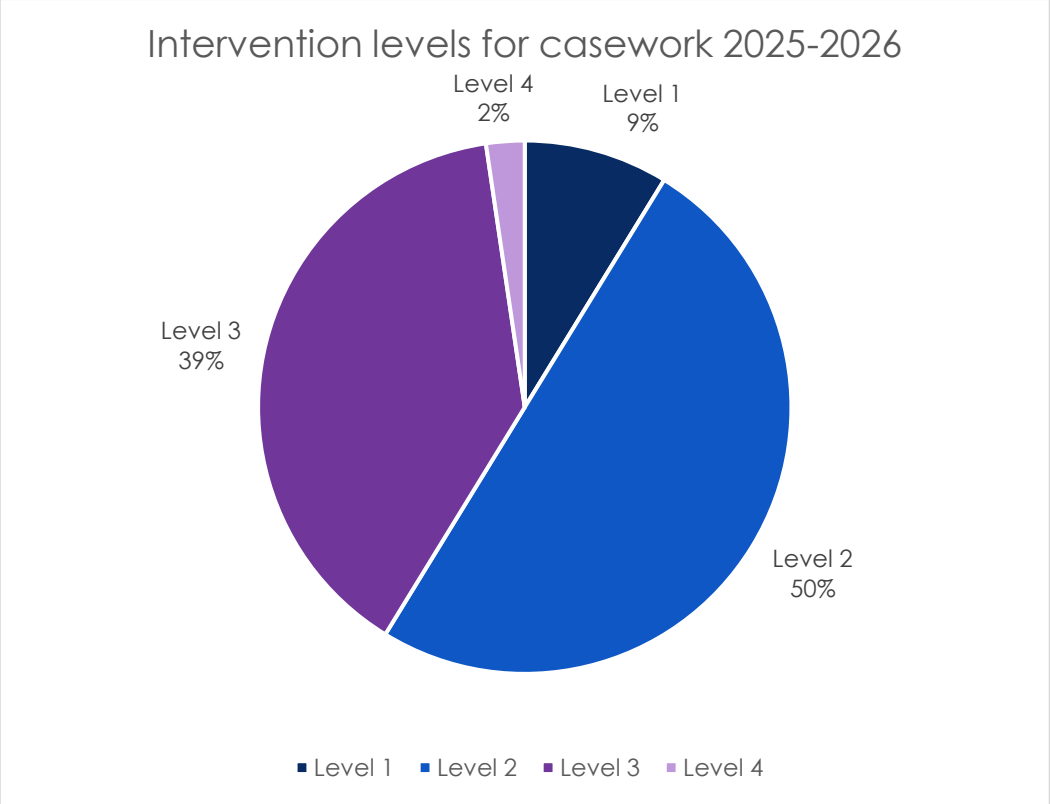
SENDIASS record the complexity of casework using intervention levels set by the Council for Disabled Children (CDC). This helps us to monitor the complexity of casework and the level of support needed, as this can vary massively. The intervention levels are detailed below.

Level 1	Information	Information and advice about education, health and social care SEND system and processes. Inclusive of initial concern up to appeals.
Level 2	Information and tailored advice	Service user is able to express their needs and those of their child. They need more tailored information and/or advice specific to their individual need or circumstance than is available at Level 1.
Level 3	Support	The needs of the individual service users and/or the complexity of their/their children's circumstances significantly impacts their ability to independently navigate the system. They are a child or a young person who need/want information, advice or support separate from that given to their parent/carer.

Level 4	Intensive support	The needs of the individual service users and/or the complexity of their/their children's circumstances means they are not able to independently navigate the system and/or access justice. They are a child or a young person who need advocacy/representation separate from or instead of their parent, this includes CYP who are looked after, those who are in residential schools and those in YOIs. Can include all of the support detailed in level 3 but must also involve: • Representation for parent, child or young person at meetings, appeals, mediation and CETRs • Ongoing and intensive casework/advocacy that includes representation.

The charts below show the intervention levels for the casework the service dealt with this year.





What we are seeing each year is an increase in the amount of time and support needed for casework. 1308 cases required intervention at level 3 and above. This demonstrates the level of demand that is put on the service. The reality is that the number of requests for support is far higher. The service has had to adapt its offer to be able to manage the demand. This means that the service no longer offers support at school meetings or Early Help meetings whenever we are asked but rather will only offer support at a meeting if the parent requires support due to their own capacity or for higher level more complex formal meetings. The service has developed an empowerment model, providing the knowledge and advice for parents to attend meetings without support. While this is possible, we are aware that some parents are not happy with the lack of support and that the outcomes for meetings are not as good when we do not attend.

SENDIASS Online

Website

The service website is regularly updated to make sure the information continues to be correct, accurate and accessible. We regularly receive feedback about the website being easy to use, and the information is clear and easy to understand.

https://www.newcastlesendiass.co.uk/

Videos

Newcastle SENDIASS have a Youtube channel where we post information videos. We recently filmed an information video for children and young people with Newcastle's youth voice trainees. Our aim continues to be to grow this video catalogue.

www.Youtube.com/@newcastlesendiass4608.

Facebook

The service has a Facebook channel to share updates and information. This channel is primarily used for reposting information and advertising events that we are attending across the city. The page has 458 followers.

https://www.facebook.com/NewcastleSENDIASS

Padlet

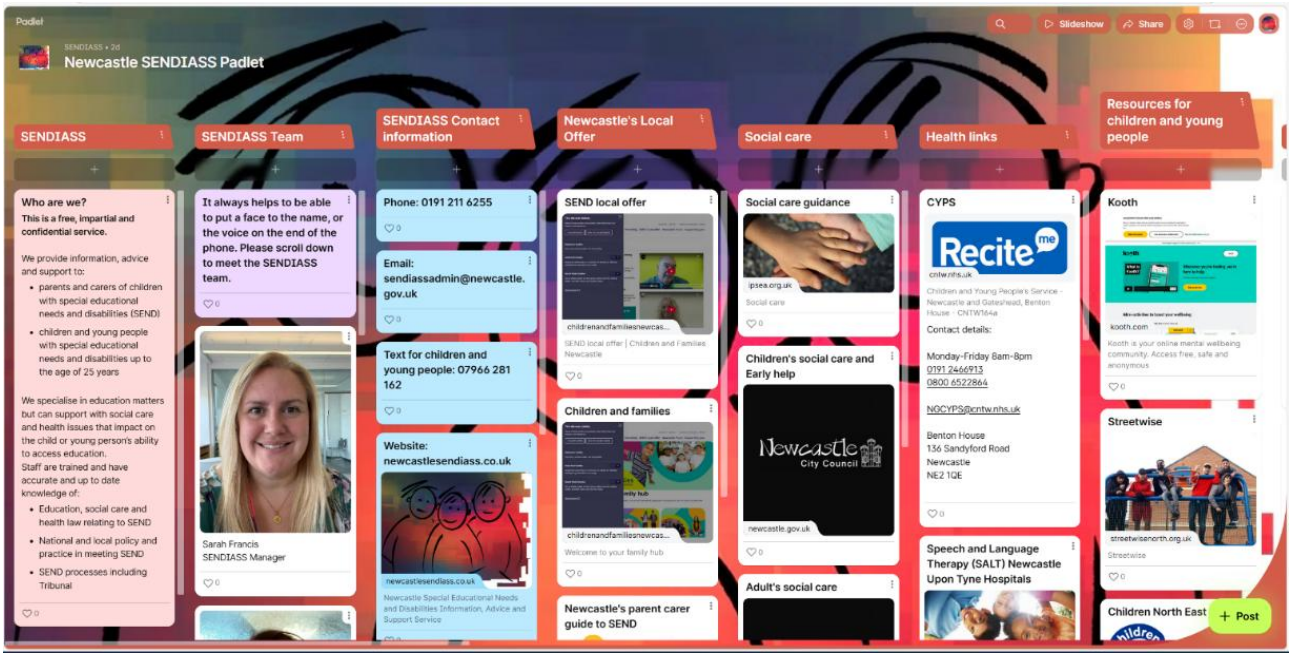
To manage the increase in demand for the service we have developed an information and signposting Padlet. This Padlet contains live links to services across education, health and social care, as well as information and guidance for SEND processes.

The aim of the Padlet is to upskill frontline staff across education, health and social care to be able to answer low level enquiries or to signpost without needing the parent or carer to contact SENDIASS. Taking this approach, we have seen a decrease in the percentage of casework at level 1, which is helping the service to direct its resources to the increasing demand for more complex casework.

The link to the Padlet is:

https://padlet.com/SENDIASS/newcastle-sendiass-padlet-3e0xqutxxvbdehsc

The landing page of the Padlet is the image below. It is an accessible format that simply requires scrolling along to the subject of interest and then scrolling down that column for the information and links.



Service development plan

The below table details the objectives that SENDIASS has set to achieve over the academic year 2025-2026. The objectives are all set against one of the national minimum standards.

Area of work/minimum standard	Objective	Expected outcome	Evidence	Time to be completed by
1.2 The IASS is designed and commissioned with children, young people and parents, and has the capacity and resources to meet these Minimum Standards and local need.	To adapt service delivery to increase capacity in line with growing demand. To look at service delivery for hard-to-reach groups	SENDIASS will be able to meet local need. SENDIASS will provide an accessible service for all.	SENDIASS will respond to all enquiries within 48 hours. SENDIASS will see an increase in case numbers based in hard-to-reach communities/areas of the city.	July 2026
3.6 The IASS offers training to local education, health and social care professionals, parents, young people and children to increase knowledge of SEND law, guidance, local policy, issues and participation.	To deliver training sessions to professionals and to parents and carers.	SENDIASS will reach out to teams across education, health and social care to deliver training sessions based on their remit and SEND processes. Training sessions will be held for parents and carers on SEND related topics. A range of information videos will be produced and	Professionals will be better informed and able to support parents, carers, children and young people in matters relating to SEND. Parents and carers will be better informed about their rights and the SEND processes.	Training sessions to be delivered across the year A catalogue of videos will be created and posted to the website by July 2026

		posted on the website and social media channels.		
3.1 The IASS provides; Impartial information, advice and support (IAS) on the full range of education, health and social care as defined in the SEND Code of Practice to the following service users – a) children b) young people c) parents This support is offered in a range of ways which includes face to face, a telephone helpline, email, website and social media.	To work with stakeholder organisations to develop a network of volunteers to provide frontline support.	People who struggle with literacy skills will be able to complete the paperwork for SEND processes and will understand all written correspondence.	Parents and carers will be able to engage with processes fully and submit their views.	Agreement in place by July 2026

Service developments and progress

1.2 – Amber

When the service is fully staffed, we respond to all enquiries within 48 hours, however during periods of staff absence this has not been possible. The service has also had to adapt to an empowerment-based model encouraging self-advocacy and advice as the service is unable to meet the demand and support parents to school meetings. The officer for children and young people is providing an accessible service in education settings across the city.

As a service our priority is to adapt what we do to be more accessible to minority communities. Our vision was to set up outreach clinics in community hubs. This year we have made progress towards this outcome; we have worked with different agencies to try and find a model that is viable. We have developed a plan focusing on key points of the academic year and working with schools to host our service. We will carry this priority into the next academic year as we strive to have a fully inclusive and accessible service.

3.6 – Green
This year we have continued delivering training seminars to parents and carers and teams of professionals across education, health and social care. We have seen a reduction in the number of low-level enquiries which we attribute to the knowledge and upskilling of all of the frontline teams.

We have spent time developing our online resources including information on our website, information videos and developing our signposting Padlet. Our aim is to expand our online resources to include a full video library.

3.1 – Green
SENDIASS set up partnerships with Barnardo's and the parent carer forum to provide volunteer support to the service for parents who need help to write their views onto forms. It has been difficult coordinating the volunteers and relying on their availability. We have had limited success using the volunteer services to help with the demand for the service. Unfortunately, this did break down, and the service stopped using volunteers. Going forward we need to look at a more reliable method, which may include recruiting and training volunteers directly to the service.

Case studies

All names have been changed to protect confidentiality.

Supporting a young person with their transition to a post-16 setting

Case study 1	Supporting a child to understand his school-based anxiety and identifying strategies that help to try and increase his attendance.

Introduction

A 15-year-old, year 11 student (Carrie) was referred to my clinic due to concerns about anxiety, low confidence and worries about transitioning from secondary school to a further education college. As a SENDIASS practitioner, my role was not to make decisions for the young person, but to ensure her voice was heard and was central to discussions. Enabling her to understand and express the support she required to access learning successfully.

Background

I initially met Carrie through my SENDIASS one-to-one clinic in school towards the end of the summer term while she was completing her GCSE examinations.

Carrie has a learning disability associated with a rare genetic condition, which has had a significant impact on her learning, communication and educational progress throughout her school life. At the time of our involvement, Carrie was preparing for a major transition from secondary education to a further education college, where she hoped to study Animal Care, an area closely linked to her interests and future aspirations.

Aims and objectives

To provide a private, confidential, and supportive environment in which Carrie could discuss her concerns regarding the support she receives and her academic progress.

To identify Carrie's support needs and communicate these effectively to the college, facilitating a smoother transition and increasing her confidence that appropriate support will be in place to meet her needs.

To accurately record Carrie's views and provide impartial information, advice, and guidance, while signposting her to additional services where further support may be beneficial.

Approach

A person-centred, solution-focused approach was used throughout a series of 1:1 interventions. The initial meeting focused on building rapport and establishing a safe environment where the young person felt comfortable sharing her experiences. I explained my SENDIASS role and how I could support her to participate in decisions about her education and transition planning.

During our initial conversation, Carrie shared that she felt her needs had not always been fully understood or effectively supported within her upper school setting. She expressed feelings of frustration and disappointment regarding her educational experience and reported that she often struggled to access learning in a way that met her individual needs.
Using strengths-based and open-ended questioning, I encouraged Carrie to reflect on her learning experiences. Questions such as, *"What helps you to learn best?"* and *"What would a good day in school look like for you?"* enabled her to identify both her strengths and areas where she needed support. Scaling questions were also used to promote self-reflection, for example, *"On a scale of 1–10, how confident do you feel about starting college?"* When she identified her confidence level as 3 out of 10, I followed up with, *"What would need to happen for that number to move to a 4?"* This helped her identify small, achievable changes rather than focusing on barriers.
Through active listening, summarising, and reflective questioning, Carrie recognised that unfamiliar environments and uncertainty about who to approach for help contributed significantly to her anxiety. She identified that meeting key staff before starting college would help her feel more prepared and confident.

She also noted that she often became overwhelmed when presented with large amounts of written information and was reluctant to ask questions due to worries about drawing attention to herself. She identified that she understood tasks better when instructions were broken down into smaller steps and when teachers checked her understanding discreetly.

I discussed how her views could be shared with school staff and explained the next steps available to her. Together, we recorded her views, interests and the support strategies she had identified. She was supported in sharing this information with the relevant person at college.

To further support her transition and ensure her voice was heard, I arranged a virtual meeting between Carrie, her allocated keyworker at the college and the

college SEN Officer. Prior to the meeting, I worked with her to identify questions she wished to ask and encouraged her to consider what information would help her feel reassured. During the virtual meeting, she was able to discuss her interests, share her concerns about transition, and learn more about the support available. This enabled her to familiarise herself with key members of staff before starting college and reduced some of the uncertainty she expressed when we last met.

Following the meeting, the young person reported feeling significantly more confident about the transition process and stated that knowing who she could speak to for support made college feel less overwhelming.

Challenge

Carrie had developed a negative perception of her academic abilities and felt that, despite her best efforts, she was unlikely to achieve positive GCSE outcomes.

Carrie reported feeling that her needs had not always been understood or met within her upper school setting.

Carrie's rare genetic condition impacted her learning and progress, creating barriers to accessing the curriculum and increasing her reliance on appropriate support strategies.

Moving from a familiar school environment to a college created uncertainty and heightened anxiety, particularly around meeting new staff, forming relationships, and understanding what support would be available.

Initially, Carrie found it challenging to identify and communicate the specific adjustments that would help her learn effectively, often focusing on what was not working rather than potential solutions.

Successes

Carrie was able to openly express her views, feelings, and concerns regarding both her school experience and upcoming transition.

Carrie began to identify her own strengths, recognise barriers to learning, and understand which strategies helped her access education more successfully.

Carrie was able to specify the support she felt would help her thrive in college.

The virtual meeting allowed Carrie to familiarise herself with key members of staff before enrolment. This reduced uncertainty, helped build a positive relationship, and increased her confidence about starting college.

Carrie was actively involved in planning her support and transition arrangements. This promoted independence and self-advocacy.

By the end of the interventions, Carrie demonstrated greater optimism about her future and was able to focus on her aspirations to study Animal Care, rather than solely on her previous negative experiences at school.
Conclusion Carrie was able to move from a position of low confidence and uncertainty to one where she felt listened to, understood, and actively involved in planning her next steps. Through solution-focused practice and effective questioning techniques, Carrie identified the support she required, developed confidence in expressing her needs, and felt better prepared for a successful transition to college.

Supporting a parent with English as a second language (EAL) through the EHCP placement process

Case study 2	The parent contacted SENDIASS following the Local Authority's decision to name a mainstream school for their child's Year 7 placement. The parent faced a number of barriers, including English as an additional language and difficulties understanding complex information, which impacted their ability to engage effectively with the EHCP process and communicate with professionals. As a result, they required enhanced support to navigate the statutory process, understand the legal framework relating to school placement decisions, and make informed decisions regarding their child's education.

Introduction

This case study demonstrates the role of SENDIASS in providing impartial information, advice and support to a parent facing significant barriers in navigating the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) process. The case involved supporting a parent whose first language was not English and who also experienced difficulties processing complex information and legal arguments. Through intensive support, regular communication, and liaising with professionals, the parent was enabled to make informed decisions and effectively participate in discussions about their child's educational placement.

Background

I was contacted by the parent of a young person with an EHCP who was approaching a key transition phase in their education. The Local Authority (LA) had issued a final EHCP naming a mainstream secondary school. The parent disagreed with this decision and believed that a specialist setting would be more appropriate to meet their child's significant special educational needs.

At the outset, the parent's preferred placement was a non-maintained special school. However, the parent had limited understanding of the legal framework surrounding school placement decisions and the factors considered by Local Authorities and the SEND Tribunal. English was not the parent's first language, creating additional barriers when interpreting professional reports, correspondence, and legal terminology. The parent also experienced capacity-related challenges that affected their ability to process large amounts of information and understand the implications of different options available to them.

The parent felt overwhelmed by the EHCP process and lacked confidence when communicating with professionals. They sought support from SENDIASS to understand their rights and determine the best course of action.

Aims and objectives

The aims of my involvement were to:

- Ensure the parent had access to impartial information, advice and support.
- Enable the parent to understand the EHCP process and their legal rights.
- Support the parent to participate fully in decision-making regarding their child's educational placement.
- Help the parent understand the strengths and limitations of different placement options.
- Facilitate effective communication between the parent, school and Local Authority.
- Empower the parent to make informed decisions based on evidence and the legal framework.

Reduce the parent's anxiety and increase their confidence in engaging with professionals.

Approach

Recognising the complexity of the case, I adopted a person-centred approach tailored to the parent's communication and understanding needs.

I arranged a series of meetings with the parent, both face-to-face and through Microsoft Teams, to provide flexibility and allow information to be revisited over time. Rather than attempting to explain the entire process in a single session, I broke down information into manageable stages and regularly checked the parent's understanding before moving forward.

During these meetings, I explained key aspects of the SEND framework in plain language and avoided technical jargon wherever possible. Where legal terminology was unavoidable, I provided clear explanations and examples to help the parent understand how the law applied to their circumstances.

With the parent's consent, I liaised with both the child's school and the Local Authority. This enabled me to obtain additional information, clarify areas of disagreement, and ensure that the parent had an accurate understanding of the evidence being considered. Maintaining communication with professionals also helped identify any misunderstandings at an early stage and ensured that information shared with the parent was current and relevant.

Part of my role involved supporting the parent to review professional advice and assess how well the evidence supported different placement options. We discussed the child's needs in detail and considered the provision available in various educational settings. I ensured that discussions remained focused on identifying a placement capable of meeting the child's needs, rather than relying solely on preference.

I also supported the parent to understand the legal tests that apply when naming a school in an EHCP. This included exploring the difference between parental preference and the factors that Local Authorities and Tribunals consider when making decisions. By explaining these issues in an accessible way, I helped the parent develop a clearer understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of their case.

Challenge

The primary challenge was overcoming the communication barriers created by the parent's limited English proficiency and difficulties in processing complex information.
The parent initially found it extremely difficult to understand the terminology used throughout the EHCP process. Professional reports, consultation responses and Local Authority correspondence contained technical language that was unfamiliar and often overwhelming. Information needed to be revisited several times and presented in different ways before the parent felt confident that they understood it.

A further challenge was managing the parent's expectations regarding placement options. The parent was firmly focused on securing a place at a non-maintained special school and initially believed that parental preference alone would determine the outcome. As discussions progressed, it became apparent that the parent had not previously received a clear explanation of the legal considerations involved in naming schools within an EHCP.

These factors meant that progress could not be achieved through a single intervention. Building understanding required patience, consistency, and a significant amount of time. It was essential to establish trust and create an environment where the parent felt comfortable asking questions and revisiting issues multiple times without feeling judged.

Successes

The most significant success was the parent's increased understanding and confidence throughout the process.

Through multiple meetings and ongoing support, the parent developed a much clearer understanding of the legal framework governing EHCP placement decisions. They became more confident in discussing their child's needs and were able to engage more effectively with professionals.

The parent gained a realistic understanding of the challenges associated with securing their preferred non-maintained special school placement. Through careful exploration of the evidence and legal position, they were able to distinguish between what they hoped for and what was most likely to be considered reasonable and achievable within the statutory framework.

As a result of this increased understanding, the parent made an informed decision to revise their preference from a non-maintained special school to a Local Authority special school that was better supported by the available evidence and

more likely to meet their child's needs. Importantly, this decision was made by the parent themselves after receiving impartial information and support, rather than through persuasion or direction.

The parent also became more confident when communicating with the Local Authority and school. They were able to ask relevant questions, contribute effectively to discussions and engage in the process as an equal participant.

The close liaison between SENDIASS, the parent, the school and the Local Authority helped ensure that communication remained constructive and focused on achieving the best possible outcome for the child. By maintaining professional relationships and ensuring that accurate information was shared, the case progressed in a more positive and productive manner.

Ultimately, the parent was empowered to make informed decisions based on a sound understanding of both their child's needs and the legal framework, which is a key objective of SENDIASS support.

Conclusion

This case highlighted the importance of providing tailored, accessible and person-centred support to families who face additional barriers when navigating the SEND system. The combination of language difficulties, capacity challenges and the complexity of SEND law created significant obstacles for the parent. However, through sustained engagement, clear communication and collaborative working, these barriers were successfully addressed.

The case demonstrates how SENDIASS can empower parents by improving their understanding, confidence and ability to participate in decision-making. Whilst the parent's position evolved during the process, this was achieved through informed choice rather than influence, ensuring that the principles of impartiality and empowerment remained central throughout.

The outcome was not simply a change in school preference but an increase in the parent's knowledge, confidence and capacity to advocate for their child effectively in the future.

Parent feedback

The parent reported feeling confused and overwhelmed by the EHCP process, particularly due to English not being their first language and difficulties understanding professional reports and correspondence. They said that the SENDIASS Senior Practitioner provided clear explanations, revisited information when needed, and helped them understand their rights and the legal framework relating to school placements. The parent felt listened to, supported, and empowered throughout the process. As a result, they were able to make an informed decision about their child's education and felt significantly more confident when engaging with professionals.

Supporting a Young Person to Request an EHC Needs Assessment

Case study 3	SENDIASS officer for children and young people worked with an 18-year-old to submit a request for an Education, Health and Care needs assessment so he could access education that would enable him to meet the preparing for adulthood outcomes.

Introduction

As a Children and Young Person Officer for SENDIASS, my role is to provide impartial information, advice and support to children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). This includes ensuring that young people understand their rights, are supported to express their views, wishes and feelings, and are empowered to participate in decisions that affect their education and future outcomes.

A key aspect of my role is promoting self-advocacy and enabling young people to make informed choices by providing accessible information about the SEND system, including Education, Health and Care (EHC) Needs Assessments and post-16 pathways. This case study demonstrates how a solution-focused approach was used during a 1:1 intervention with an 18-year-old young person to identify SEND strategies, explore preparation for adulthood outcomes, and support him to make an informed request for an EHC Needs Assessment.

Background

Ryan is an 18-year-old student attending a further education college. He contacted SENDIASS whilst at a careers event. He expressed that he was having ongoing difficulties that were affecting his ability to achieve his educational goals.

Ryan reported challenges with organisation, planning, concentration, processing information due to his diagnoses of Autism and Dyspraxia.

Ryan was becoming increasingly concerned about his ability to successfully complete his course and progress towards employment.

Aims and objectives

- To empower the young person to understand their SEND-related needs, participate meaningfully in decisions about their education, and make an

informed request for an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Needs Assessment.

- To promote self-advocacy, increase confidence, and ensure that the young person's views, wishes and aspirations were central to the process.
- To establish a positive and trusting relationship with the young person using a person-centred and solution-focused approach.
- To provide impartial information, advice and support regarding SEND rights, EHC Needs Assessments and post-16 entitlements.
- To reduce reliance on parental advocacy by developing the young person's self-advocacy skills and active participation in decision-making.
- To support the young person to navigate the Local Authority SEND Portal and understand the process for requesting an EHC Needs Assessment.
- To explore future aspirations, including employment and potential access to a Supported Internship, and identify how these relate to preparation for adulthood outcomes.
- To ensure the young person understood that factors such as requiring a longer educational pathway and support to transition into adulthood should be considered by the Local Authority panel when considering the request for assessment.

Approach

Ryan experienced difficulties with organisation, processing information, communication and managing coursework deadlines. Although he was motivated to succeed, he required significant support from his mother to manage appointments, complete paperwork, communicate with professionals and understand available support. Ryan wished to progress towards employment but lacked confidence in explaining how his SEND affected his education.

I arranged a 1:1 intervention to explore Ryan's strengths, aspirations and support needs. Rather than focusing solely on barriers, I encouraged Ryan to identify what was working well. He recognised that he attended college regularly, was committed to achieving qualifications and had a clear goal of gaining employment in the future.

I provided impartial information about Education, Health and Care (EHC) Needs Assessments and explained his right to request an assessment as a young person over the age of 16. I also supported Ryan to navigate the local authority SEND Portal, helping him understand the application process, evidence required and how to submit a request. This enabled him to access information independently and increased his confidence in managing the process.

We discussed preparation for adulthood outcomes. Ryan recognised that he was likely to require a longer educational pathway and may benefit from a Supported Internship to support a successful transition into employment. I explained that these factors should be considered by the local authority panel when determining whether an EHC Needs Assessment was necessary.

Ryan was able to take an active role in requesting an assessment, demonstrating increased self-advocacy and understanding of his rights and support needs.

Challenges

- Ryan relied heavily on his mother to manage communication, complete forms and advocate on his behalf, which meant he had limited experience of expressing his own views, wishes and feelings or navigating SEND processes independently.
- Ryan had limited understanding of the Education, Health and Care (EHC) Needs Assessment process and was unaware that, as a young person aged over 16, he had the right to independently request an assessment.
- The Local Authority SEND Portal appeared overwhelming to him due to difficulties associated with Autism and Dyspraxia.
- Ensuring that the request for an EHC Needs Assessment considered Ryan's long-term aspirations and preparation for adulthood outcomes.

Successes

Ryan is more confident in identifying and discussing the impact of his Autism and Dyspraxia on his education and future aspirations. He is now able to recognise his strengths, including his motivation to achieve, good attendance at college and commitment to progressing into employment.

Ryan developed self-advocacy skills and was supported to express his own views, wishes and feelings and take a more active role in decision-making.
He has increased understanding of his rights as a young person over the age of 16.
By breaking down the process into manageable steps and providing guidance on gathering evidence, Ryan felt more confident using the system and understanding what information was required to support his request.

Conclusion

My input enabled Ryan to make an informed request for an EHC Needs Assessment while ensuring his voice remained central to the process.
Consideration was also given to preparation for adulthood outcomes, including the likelihood that he may require a longer educational pathway and access to a Supported Internship to support a successful transition into employment.
Ultimately, the intervention increased Ryan's independence, confidence and participation, ensuring he was better equipped to access the support needed to achieve positive outcomes in adulthood.

Service feedback

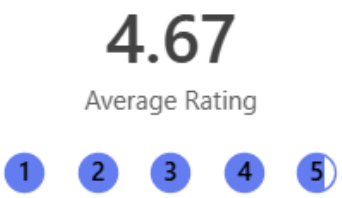
The Council for Disabled Children (CDC) set questions for all SENDIAS Services to use to gather feedback about the service. Below are the questions we asked, and the responses gathered. We have kept the feedback separate for parents and carers, children and young people as the way in which they access the service and the level of support they receive differs. The feedback questions were sent out via email to everyone who has accessed the service this year, the below results are from all of the responses we received.

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

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

Parents and carers

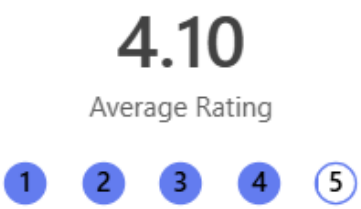
Children and young people



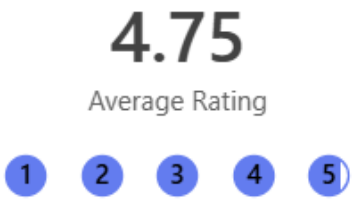
2. How helpful was the information, advice and support that we gave you?

1 - not very helpful, to 5 - very helpful

Parents and carers



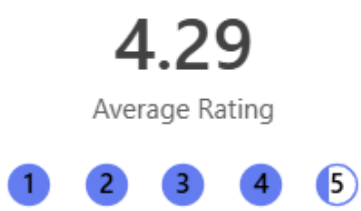
Children and young people



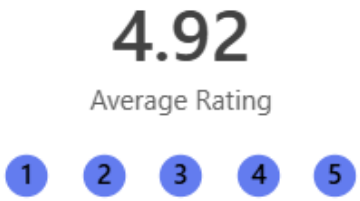
3. How neutral, fair and unbiased?

1 - not very neutral, to 5 - very neutral

Parents and carers



Children and young people

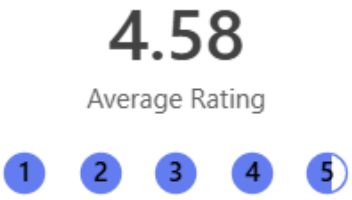


4. What difference do you think SENDIASS has made for you?

1 - no difference, to 5 - a great deal of difference

Parents and carers

Children and young people

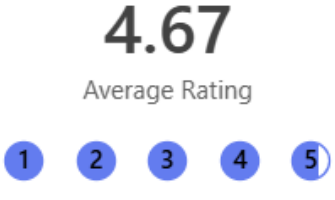


5. Overall, how satisfied were you with the service we gave?

1 - not very satisfied, to 5 - very satisfied

Parents and carers

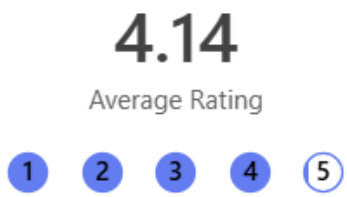
Children and young people



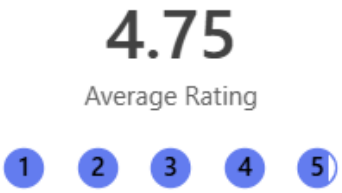
6. How likely is it that you would recommend our service to others?

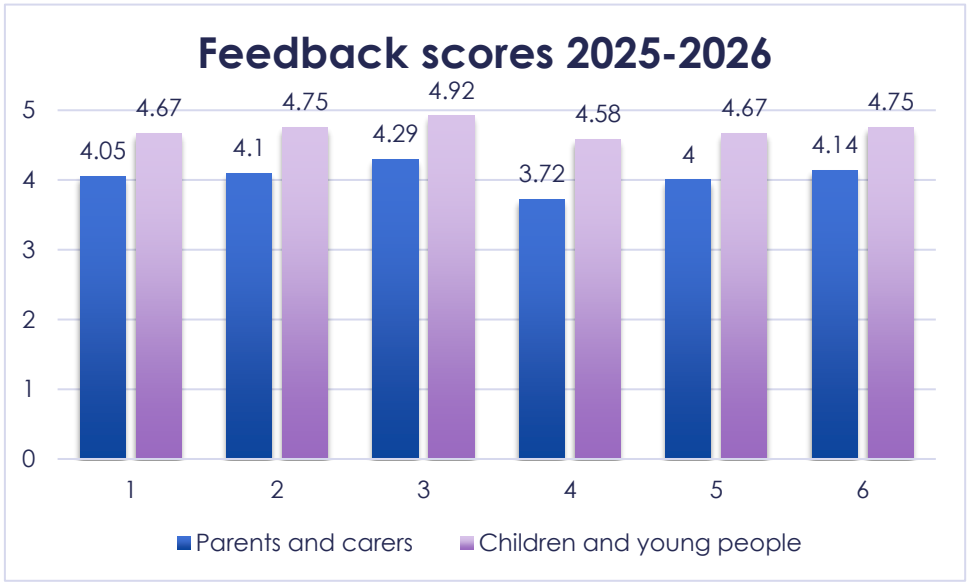
1 - not very likely, to 5 - very likely

Parents and carers



Children and young people





What is interesting from the feedback scores is that while the average score for parents and carers for the difference we made was 3.72, the average score for if they would recommend the service to others was 4.12. This is also reflected on a national level. The likely reason we are seeing this is due to the current capacity and demand pressures within SEND provision. There is a lack of specialist places and often people come to SENDIASS for help to secure a place. We can support parents through the process and how to challenge decisions via the tribunal, but ultimately, we are not responsible for decisions or able to change them which is why parents feel that their situation is unchanged. For children and young people, they had an average score of 4.58 for the difference we made. This shows us that children and young people seeking advice and support from the service saw a real difference. Our feedback shows us that a lot of the children who have accessed the service feel for the first time that they have been listened to and understood.

As a service people come to us when they are incredibly frustrated, often upset and angry. We listen to people and offer them information and advice, but we cannot fix their situation. The service is continuing to see an increase in demand which has not only changed the service offer but has also meant on occasion that we have been unable to return all calls within our 48hour limit. Despite this the service is highly regarded by those who use it and we continue to receive positive feedback.

Parents and carers

"SENDIASS made a significant difference for our family during a very challenging period. The guidance, information, and support provided helped us better understand the available services and the steps needed to support our son".

"I would just like to say a huge thank you to SENDIASS for the incredible support I have received throughout my son's EHCP process. Having someone knowledgeable, understanding and supportive made such a difficult and emotional journey so much easier. A special thank you to the staff member, who has been absolutely amazing. She has always taken the time to listen, explain everything clearly, answer my questions and reassure me when I felt overwhelmed. Her kindness, professionalism and genuine care have meant so much to me and my family. I honestly couldn't have asked for better support, and I will always be so grateful for everything she has done."

"We have been greatly impacted by the support and understanding shown by the service. I cannot say how much the input from SENDIASS helped my family. Thank you"

"Amazing support and guidance from an incredible team"

"SENDIAS has been an incredible help throughout the entire process. Their professionalism, dedication, and willingness to go the extra mile made everything much easier. They were always responsive, knowledgeable, and genuinely committed to finding the best solutions. I truly appreciate their support and would highly recommend SENDIAS to anyone looking for reliable and outstanding service."

"You guys have been super amazing 👏 super-fast and accurate with all the information. Ive never had to wait for any response. It's always been fast and easy to get through to someone. Keep up the hard work we appreciate you all. Thanks"

Children and young people

“I told people that you’re good and to talk to you I will definitely come and see you again.”

“Very helpful would always recommend.”

“The perfect person.”

Constructive criticism

“The only thing I think could be improved is getting through to someone; it was hard to actually speak to someone and took several days, but I'm sure that's due to not having many staff. Staff were fantastic once I got through to them- thank you!”

“Get good advice but no support. You need more staff”

“We met skilled, wonderful people who did their best with the resources they had all along.”

“This is a critical service for parents and while I know sometimes it can be difficult to get hold of staff, this just demonstrates the sheer demand for the service.”

“This is an essential service. I am a senior leader in education and have found the SEND systems incredibly difficult to navigate as a parent so I can only imagine how hard it must be for those families who don’t have that professional knowledge. This service is absolutely needed for our families in the region and, if anything, needs additional funding to expand its offer.”

Future Developments

Service Capacity and sustainability

The demand for SENDIASS is growing year on year so for sustainability we have to look for different approaches. Over the last year the service has focused on delivering training to frontline workers across education, health and social care to upskill their ability to answer basic SEND queries. We have also spent time developing resources to enable parents to access information without needing to call the service. Over the next year it is a priority to continue to look for solutions to manage the increasing demand on the service. It is so important to us that all parents and carers feel that they are included in decisions about their children and have the means and ability to express their views.

Accessibility

SENDIASS continues to have the priority to set of establishing outreach clinics for non – English speaking families and hard to reach communities. We have made connections with different teams providing support for asylum seekers, refugees and immigrants and promoted the service to staff working in our hard-to-reach communities. We have worked with schools at different key points through the year when their families may need more advice and support. Over the next academic year our plan is to increase our reach into minority communities and develop drop-in sessions across the city during key times. The aim is for the service to be fully accessible and inclusive.

Resources

SENDIASS have attended different team's meetings and run training seminars over the last year. Some of these sessions have been recorded and can then be shared with an even wider audience. The plan this year is to take the training and information presentations the service already has and turn them into webinars that can then become a video library on the website. The aim is to make all of our information as accessible as possible.

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