

Annual Report

2019 – 2020



Page 2

Who we've helped and
how we've helped

Page 3

Have you seen our webinars?

Page 4

Our website went live

Talking about our blog

Page 5

Meeting you 'in person'

Working with young people

Page 6

Closer liaison with
health colleagues

Your feedback in detail

Page 8

Meet the team

Our marketing and
communications plan

More ways to connect with us ... please get in touch!

Feedback from parent/carers, professionals in education, health and social care and partner organisations in the voluntary sector has informed everything we have achieved or set in place this year.

To better understand your needs and views, we undertook face-to-face sessions in November 2019 in Horsham and Bognor; we ran an online survey between November 2018 and January 2019, and we commissioned an independent consultant to research and write a report and recommendations.

One of the main things we learned was that you appreciated being able to keep in touch digitally and so we designed and built a new website (<https://westsussexsendias.org/>) and started to write regular blogs (<https://westsussexsendias.org/blog/>).

We became more active on our Facebook page (<https://bit.ly/38HuWhs>) and we have seen a considerable uptake in engagement rates. Based on your preferences, we also decided to stop printing our termly newsletter.

As we currently receive a grant from the Council for Disabled Children, we can test these new ways of working to see which are most successful and so inform which channels we should continue to focus on. Of course, you can still reach us on the phone or via email and our details are below.

Please do let us know if you think there is anything else we could be doing to improve the ways in which we connect with you and how else we might improve what we do - that is, providing information, advice and support to families across West Sussex.

Heather McIntosh, Service Manager



West Sussex
SENDIAS Service

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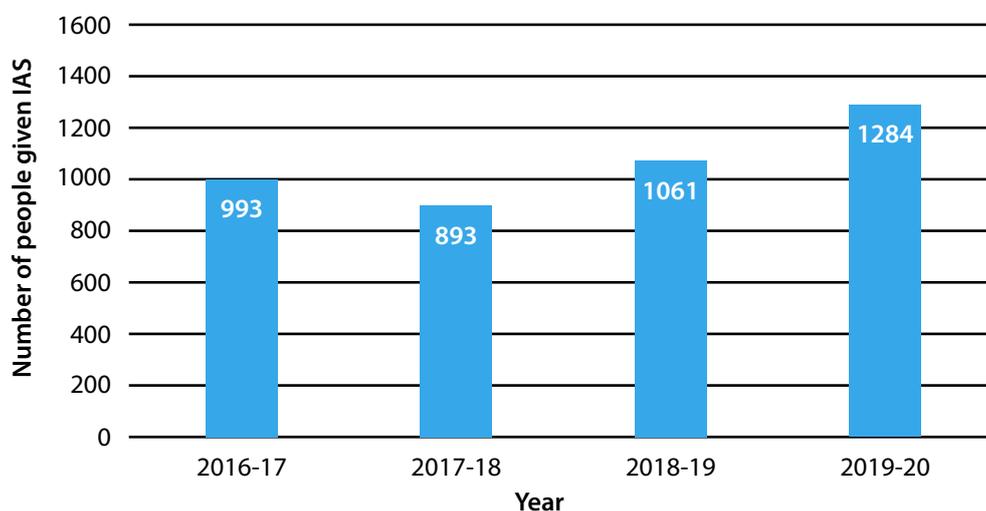
Email: send.ias@westsussex.gov.uk

Email for children and young people: cyp.sendias@westsussex.gov.uk

Who we've helped ...

We provide information, advice and support to parent/carers, young people and professionals. We have seen a steady increase in the number of people we've helped over the last four years.

The graph opposite shows how total numbers have risen in the last couple of years to 1,284 in 2019-20.

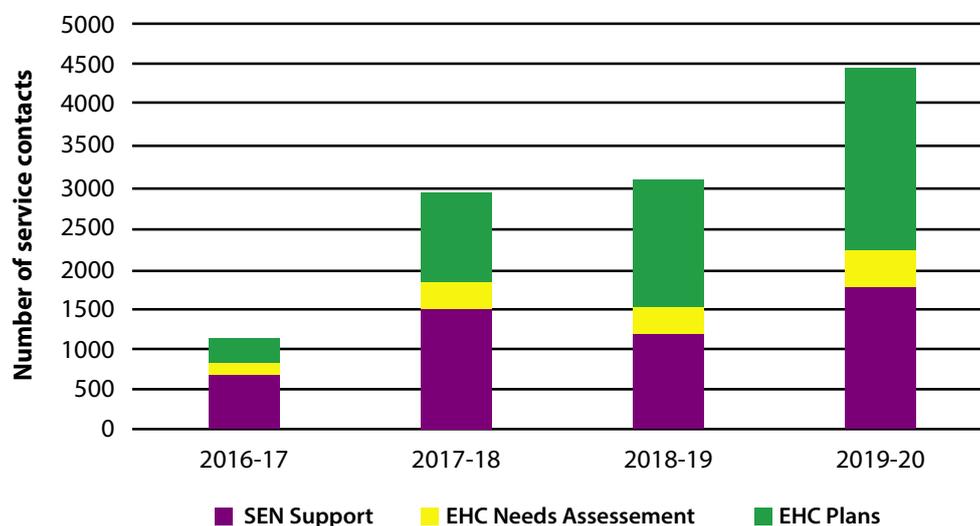


... and how we've helped

The graph (opposite) shows the types of queries that people come to us about, whether that's SEN support, Education, Health & Care needs assessment, (EHCNA) or Education, Health & Care Plans (EHCP).

In-depth analysis of the data tells us that the category 'EHC plan' has overtaken 'SEN support' in terms of queries over the last couple of years. Previously, SEN support saw the greater number of questions from parent/carers.

We think a contributing factor to this is that the number of EHC plans in West Sussex has increased. It may also indicate that we, as a service, need to find better ways to connect with mainstream early years, primary, secondary and 16+ settings.



What are people asking about?

'Placement worries' (that being worries about whether the child or young person is in the right education setting) was the top main reason for people to contact the service in 2019-20. It received 233 more contacts than 'support concerns' which came in at second place.

Often, if 'support concerns' (whether the child or young person is receiving the support and provision needed) are not addressed quickly, then they soon turn into 'placement worries'.

'Appeal/tribunal query' is in third place. This 'top three' reflects a typical pattern for queries over the years.

Main Reason for Contact	2019-20
Placement Worries	974
Support Concerns	741
Appeal / Tribunal Query	595
EHCP Assessment	502
EHCP Criteria Query	479
Meeting Support	423
Draft EHCP Concerns	398
Annual Review Query	295
Emotional Based School Refuser	269
EHCP Needs Assessment Refused	229

Have you seen our webinars?

We know that many of our parent/carers are keen to understand more about the law and related national guidance on specific SEND subjects. And so when we were successful in our bid for funding to the Council for Disabled Children to 'support innovation' we used the money to buy a year's webinar subscription. This meant we could deliver online presentations on topics which were important to our service users.

Since January we have completed webinars on:

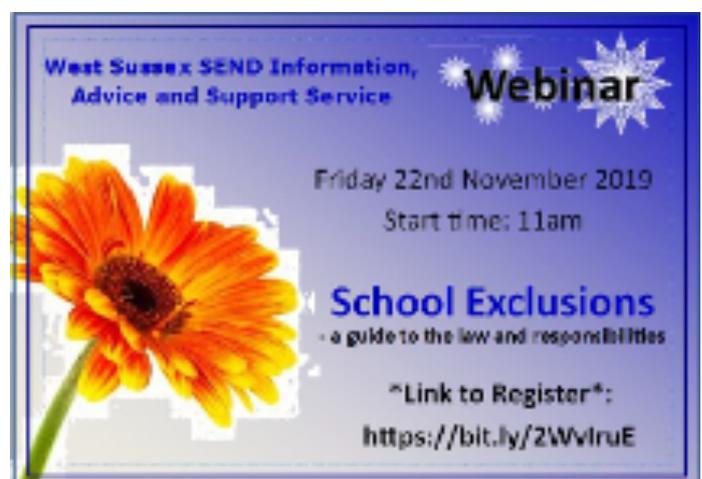
- School exclusions – a guide to the law and responsibilities
- SEN support at school
- Education, health and care needs assessments – criteria and requests

All three webinars can be found here: <https://westsussexsendias.org/videos-webinars>

Our aim is to empower families with the confidence to tackle their situation themselves, enabling our advisers to spend more time with those who are not in a position to do that.

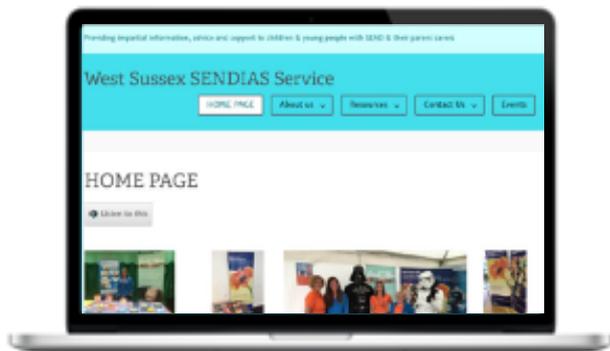
Please like our Facebook page (<https://bit.ly/38HuWhs>) to find out when future webinars are planned.

Keir Margrave, Local Offer Officer, has hosted and dealt with the technicalities of the webinars for us so that the advisers were free to concentrate on their presentation. Thank you, Keir!



Our website went live

One of the requirements of the national minimum standards for a SEND IAS service (<https://bit.ly/2Cr2Lak>) was that we must have a stand-alone, accessible website. We had pages within the West Sussex Local Offer website, but not our own dedicated web presence.



We did our research to make sure that any website we set up would be both affordable and sustainable. We 'went live' in September 2019 and have refined it and added to it as we have learnt what works well for our parent/carers and young people.

Please take a look and let us know what you think <https://westsussexsendias.org>

We also have a wiki and a blog and, taken together, we have been able to share information in different ways to suit most people's preferred ways of dealing with us. We think that in the longer term, our digital engagement methods will mean a reduction in calls to our helpline, meaning less of a wait for service users who do need to reach us by phone.

Talking about our blog

Our blog is regularly updated. We publish once a month on a topical subject and the blogs delve a bit deeper into subjects than our leaflets can. They are aimed at parent/carers and young people who want to know a bit more about the law, national guidance and rights and responsibilities. However, professionals have also found these helpful for their own learning.

The blog is promoted regularly through our Facebook page and shared by Local Offer and other partners, including West Sussex Parent Carer Forum, Reaching Families, Compass Card.

The 'top three' ways in which people came to our blog were from the Local offer website, search engines, and Facebook.

A screenshot of a blog post from the West Sussex SEND Information, Advice and Support Service. The post is titled 'Education, Health and Care (EHC) Needs Assessment' and features a large purple flower image. The text above the image says 'Our new EHC Needs Assessment blog has been published. It will help you with Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment (EHCNAs). To read about this, click on the link: <https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/education-health-and-care-needs-assessment>. Scroll down to the bottom of the page to sign up to receive all blog posts by email. Don't miss another one!' Below the image, it states: 'This blog post reached 4,349 people. Of that number, 291 engaged with it.'

“We have almost 70 blog followers and our web statistics show that the number of blog views is increasing with over 1,000 in January 2020”.

Meeting you 'in person'

We have held some face-to-face parent/carer 'by appointment' sessions and you have told us that you value these sessions. In Spring 2020 we had 42 appointments available and we had an 88 per cent take up rate. We used the Eventbrite website to make the bookings, and this has worked well. There is still an option to call us if you are unable to book online.

We have also worked with West Sussex Parent Carer Forum and made appointments available 'on the day' at the Coffee, Cake, Information and Networking sessions regularly held across the county by the Forum.



Working with our young people

We trialled a face-to-face session in a special school sixth form when one of our Child and Young Person Advisers met with students to offer impartial advice and guidance in thinking through their next steps.

She met with the young people on an informal basis individually and chatted with them about their aspirations, strengths and hopes for the future. She then researched possible courses, colleges, social activities, benefits, counselling and housing as these were all mentioned by the young people as important to them.

"The adviser showed great dedication to our pupils and quickly formed good relationships with them."

Lead teacher

She returned for a second visit to give the young people an 'easy read' version of the information she had gathered, tailored to each individual student. A more detailed copy of this was prepared for parents and teachers.

We also ran face-to-face sessions at:

- Pop-up events we went to with West Sussex County Council's SEND Participation Lead
- West Sussex Parent Carer Forum Coffee, Cake, Information and Networking events
- An autism event held by a college
- A transition event at a special college.



Closer liaison with health colleagues

Funding from the West Sussex Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG) enabled us to have an extra temporary part-time Adviser to support our permanent team of Advisers. This freed up time to raise our profile with health colleagues who might not have heard of the service. As of April 2020, the CCG has agreed to make funding permanent, which is fantastic news for our service.

Advisers visited Child Development Centres around the county and spoke about how we could support young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their parent/carers.

These visits have also helped us to understand what each centre does, how they differ, the specialised staff they have, their pathways to diagnosis and the time frame pressures they operate under.

We have also met with Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) staff, and they told us

“This year has seen an increase of 81 per cent in referral from health professionals.”

they were surprised by the breadth of information and advice that we cover. We are now discussing with them how we might be able to provide advice directly or indirectly to their service.

Having had the capacity to go out and meet health colleagues, we are noticing an increase in the number of parent/carers who have heard about our service from a health professional. ‘Hearing about the service from a health professional’ now features in our ‘top five’ referrals statistics where it never has before.

We will now develop a long term vision for the service, sustain improvements made so far, and further develop the service.

Your feedback in detail

Since we have been requesting for feedback on service users experiences soon after they have spoken to a SENDIAS Adviser, as opposed to collecting feedback once a year, we are getting far more responses and more meaningful feedback about the service. Over the last year, we have continued to improve the way we request feedback. Since June 2019 our Liaison Officer now sends out online evaluation forms by email to all those parent carers and young people that have contacted us and received information, advice and support (IAS) from an Adviser during that previous month. There was a total of 121 returns for the year.

We have been overwhelmed with the range of positive feedback we have received, so thank you to everyone who took the time to let us know how they feel about the service. We know that at busy times we are not able to get back to people

as quickly as we would like – so we were very pleased that over 85 per cent of respondents said it was ‘easy’ or ‘very easy’ to get in touch with us.

On the few occasions we receive negative feedback the team manager always attempts to contact the individual, if they have given us permission to do so, and listens to their concerns. She will then explain the situation, take action if needed and offer further advice/support from an Adviser if needed. Along with your positive feedback, please do give us constructive feedback as well if you feel there is any way we can improve. This then helps us to reflect on what we do and make improvements as a service.

The quotes from parents you see on the next page are just from the last four months (December 2019 – March 2020)

“Your support has made the whole process much easier and from my experience, would certainly recommend your services to parents requiring support”

“So nice to immediately get through to a real person. And to speak to an advisor directly within only a few days”

“Really grateful for your advice/support - thank you so much”

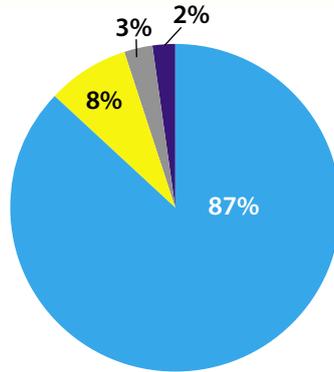
“the advisers did what they said they would do and have proactively been chasing up things for us”

“SENDIAS have been a great support for me with both my children. They have never let me down”

“I struggled to get a phone appointment, but managed to get a face to face appointment”

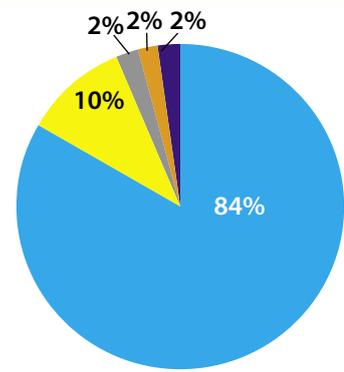
“Faultless customer service. Always understanding our questions and providing clear, full answers in an efficient manner.”

How helpful was the IAS we gave you?



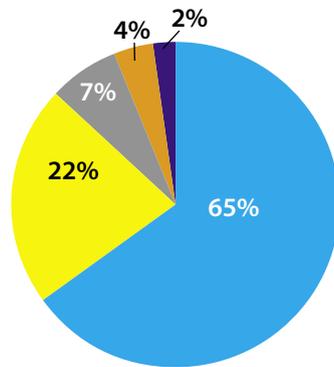
0 - not helpful at all 1 2 3 4 - very helpful

How impartial were we?



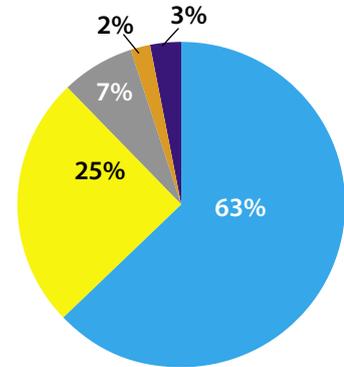
0 - not impartial at all 1 2 3 4 - very impartial

How easy was it to get in touch with us?



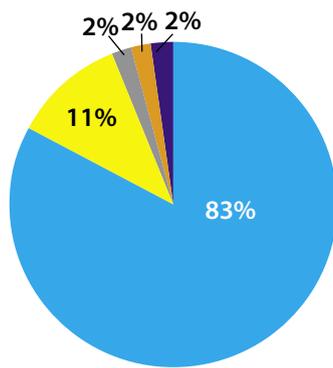
0 - not easy at all 1 2 3 4 - very easy

What difference has our IAS made?



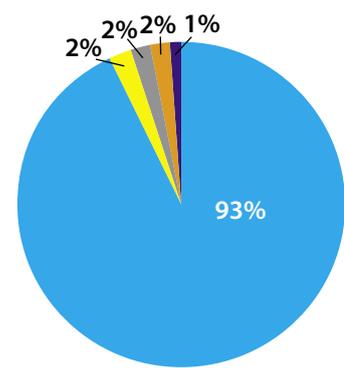
0 - no difference 1 2 3 4 - a great deal of difference

How satisfied are you with our service?



0 - very unsatisfied 1 2 3 4 - very satisfied

How likely are you to recommend us?



0 - not likely at all 1 2 3 4 - extremely likely

“You empowered me and kept me going through a really tough time; it was nice to know there was someone to turn to in the low moments or when I doubted myself. Thank you so much.”

“The kindness you have shown me has been beyond your duties and I will always be grateful to you for pulling me through this difficult time”

Meet the team



Heather McIntosh
Team Manager



Patricia Byrne
Parent Advisor



Shirley Sutton
Parent Advisor



Claire Chapman
Parent Advisor



Paula Bower
Advisor Support



Karen Hasted
Advisor Support



Susanna Whitaker
Child and Young
Person Advisor



Jacqueline Paterson
Child and Young
Person Advisor



Elizabeth Holland
Liaison Officer



Keir Margrave
Local Offer Officer

Our marketing and communications plan for 2020–21

We asked one of the parent/carers on our SENDIAS steering group, who has a background in communications, to carry out a marketing communications review of the service.

She made over 60 approaches to parent/carers, education, health and social care professionals, volunteers, staff and voluntary sector partners, resulting in 40 face-to-face, email or telephone interviews to find out what people knew about the service, if they had used it, how they had heard about us and their preferred ways of keeping in touch.

The information from these interviews was collated, alongside other research and feedback, and used as a framework to develop marketing communications recommendations as how we might better promote ourselves to reach more families in the county.

The report made 25 recommendations for us to consider. Some were already starting to be tackled by the team, so it was good to have confirmation that we were on the right track. The other recommendations will help inform our operational plan for 2020-21. Themes to consider are:

REBRANDING

Consider and explore the possibility of 'Rebranding' the West Sussex SENDIAS Service, to reduce current confusion.

ACCESSIBILITY

Continue improvement of the accessibility of the SENDIAS service

SOCIAL MEDIA

Continue and improve use of social media

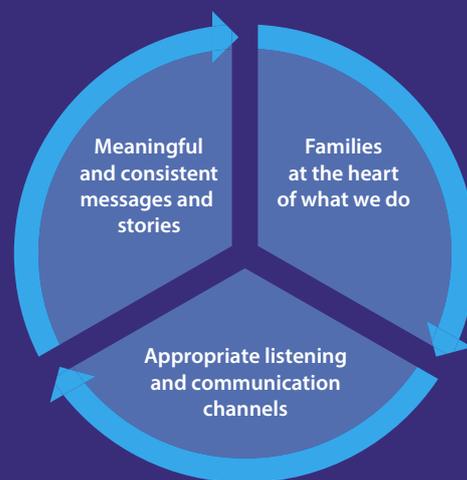
FACE TO FACE SUPPORT

Continue face to face support sessions, trialling different venues, times and working in partnership with other groups

YOUNG PEOPLE

Continue to connect with more young people and create more literature to support children and young people to understand and look after each other

We look forward to sharing the work that we will have completed, and how we achieved these outcomes in our next Annual report 2020–21.



West Sussex SENDIAS Service

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Local Offer