



# ANNUAL REPORT

APRIL 2025-MARCH 2026

## SENDIAS SERVICE REMIT

By law (the Children's and Families Act part 3) every Local Authority must have a SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIAS). [The Code of Practice 2015](#) is statutory guidance and explains in Chapter 2 how a SENDIAS should operate.

To find out more about a SENDIAS service remit, please see the [National Minimum Standards for a SENDIAS Service](#). If you would like to find out more about the service specifically in West Sussex, then look on our [SENDIAS website](#).

"A service is only good as the individuals working for it, and it is a privilege to be part of a team who are passionate about helping and advising parent carers and young people to access and understand the information needed to move their situation on in a positive way. This includes our volunteers, who give up their free time so that we can give additional support to those who may need it" - Heather McIntosh, SENDIAS Team Manager

## SENDIAS Steering Group

To find out more about how to volunteer for SENDIAS, see our [volunteer webpage](#)

Members of our Steering Group are made up of relevant voluntary organisations, Local Authority Officers and parent carers. They support, but also challenge us where needed to drive service improvement and ensure we are working in a impartial and confidential way. We meet 3 times a year and sometimes co-produce work together.

Thank you to all our Steering Group partners, who include: West Sussex Parent Carer Forum, Reaching Families, parent carers and relevant Local Authority Officers in Education, Health and Social Care.

To find out more about the steering group, see our [steering group webpage](#).

## WHAT TO EXPECT FROM US

To help answer any initial questions you have about how we may work with you in order to meet the needs of all our service users, please see our 'What You Can Expect From Us' factsheet on the ['How We Work' page on our website](#).



## What we said we would do:

### INCREASE VOLUNTEER SUPPORT:

Explore use of volunteers to widen the support given to the team, so that service users will get timely information, advice (and support where their needs require this).



### INCREASE RESOURCES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE:

- Develop factsheets and resources specifically for children and young people (CYP), on subjects relevant to them, so they will be able to understand and make decisions linked to their future aspirations.
- Guide YP and their families on how to produce concise One Page Profiles.
- Research and keep up to date with local SEND employment opportunities (our YPAs participate in the WSCC Supported Employment Forum).

### EBSA VIDEOS AND FAQs

Work with the 'Commissioner for Mental Health and Wellbeing' to produce a webinar/video to address Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA), frequently asked questions, and to promote LA resources produced by the EBSA working group.

This will help parent carers have a better understanding of school and LA decision making with regard to EBSA and be aware of what their options are in common situations.



## What we have achieved so far:

- Volunteers now assist with paperwork, e.g. EHCNA requests and checking draft EHC paperwork.
- Advisors have put together training and have delivered 2 sessions.
- Volunteers have also helped us in improving [practical guides to support parents in writing their EHCNA requests and to understand how to check their draft EHC Plan.](#)

We have produced:

- an easy read factsheet for children & young people (CYP) on EHC Plans.
- 7 factsheets containing more complex information for professional, parent carers & CYP
- a spreadsheet on post 16 schools & colleges, to aid young people and their parent carers in exploring their options.
- guidance on how a young person can write their one page profiles.



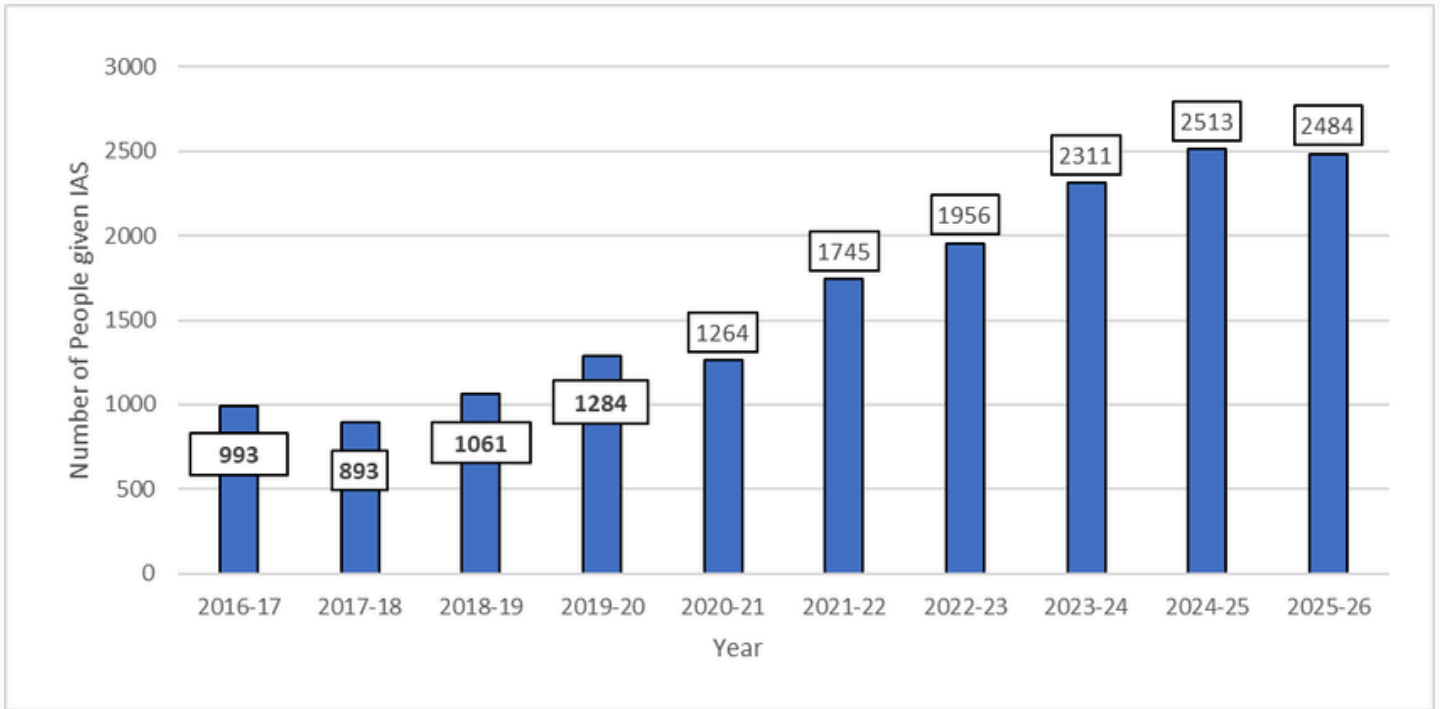
Unfortunately, the WSCC Supported Employment Forum ended last year, when funding ceased but we keep up to date from relevant colleagues.

- We are still working on the EBSA videos and hope for these to be out by the end of the summer holidays.
- We have put together 9 factsheets instead of 'frequently asked questions', in the hope of covering all aspects of EBSA that may cause concern.
- We signpost to the LA resources on the West Sussex County Council website, produced by the EBSA working group.



# STATISTICS APRIL 2025 - MARCH 2026

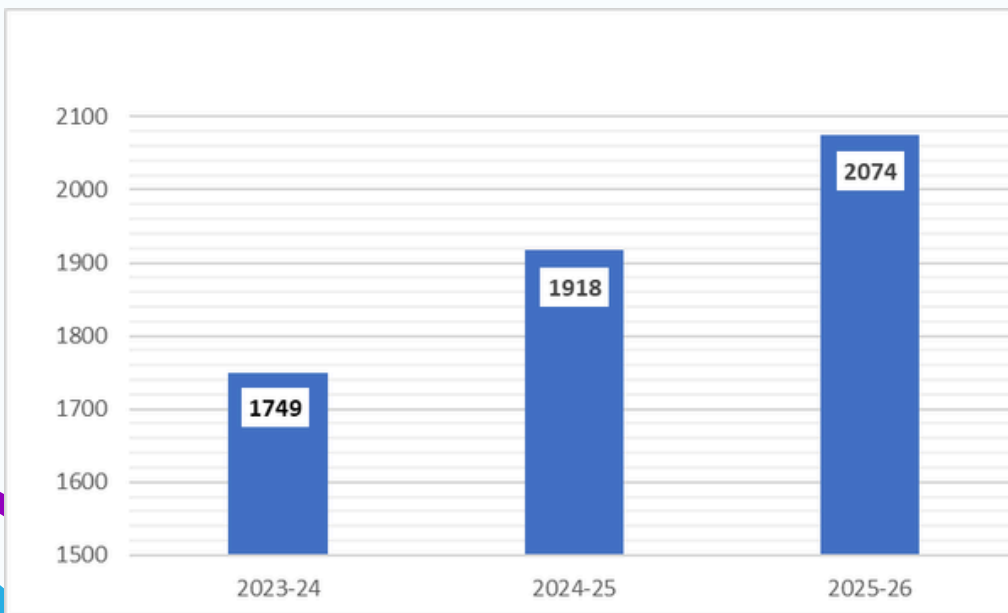
## Graph to show number of people contacting the SENDIAS Service



The number of people contacting the SENDIAS service has slightly dipped this year, but still high compared to preceding years.

This could be due to the fact that we are consistently improving the resources on our website for those who can move the situation on themselves, which then means we can focus on those who may need more time.

## Graph to show number of new contacts to the SENDIAS Service



Despite contacts decreasing overall, the number of new contacts has increased by 5% this year, with an average of 22% of service users coming to us for the first time each month over the past 12 months. Over the year we had 2074 new contacts. New contacts create more work for the team than repeat contacts as we often need to take a long history, as well as explain our

service remit, how we work and set up a database record for each child or young person before we can work with the family. Also, before they can give advice about a young person's specific situation, e.g. to a parent carer or professional, our Young Person Advisors have to check that the young person consents to this.

# STATISTICS APRIL 2025 - MARCH 2026

## THE TOP 10 MAIN REASONS YOU CONTACTED US...

Main Reason for Contact	2025-26
Placement Worries	1677
Appeal/Tribunal Query	1240
EHC Criteria Query	769
Draft EHCP Concerns	697
Support Concerns	655
EHCNA	508
School/Setting Avoidance	476
Annual Review Query	413
Education TFR Worries	408
AP / EOTAS	367
Complaint Process	297

Placement worries and Appeal/Tribunal query have been our top 2 reasons for contacting for a few years now.

Alternative provision (AP) and 'Education Other Than At School' (EOTAS) are in the top 10 reasons for contacting the service for the second time running, which may also indicate that there are still concerns with the placement or that the child's physical or mental health means they feel unable to be in school.

As the eagle eyed will notice we have included the top 11 reasons you contacted us, to

highlight the number of requests around complaints processes, as this has jumped up from previous years. This is likely due to concerns around lack of communication received, or their children not receiving suitable provision or services.

## HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT US?

The website continues to be our top reason for people finding us, showing the impact of ensuring we keep this up to date and relevant to parent carers and children/young people (CYP). We hope to work with relevant groups over the next year to develop our CYP section of the website and add further information and resources that will help CYP directly.

We were pleased to see a rise in people hearing about us through social care, health and nurseries, but noticed that voluntary groups have slipped out of the top 10, suggesting we may need to refocus our efforts in raising awareness of the service through them.

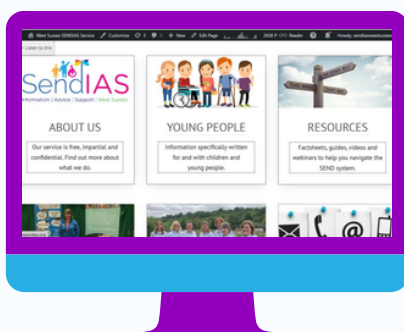
How did you hear about SEND IAS?	Annual Total
Website	572
Local Authority SENAT team	121
Another Parent / Young Person	81
Family Support Worker	71
School	60
Other LA Departments	58
Health Service	43
Parent / Carer of CYP	32
Social Care	14
Nursery / Pre school	13

## Website Statistics

Total Visitors = 30,870  
Total Views 92,508

Top 5 page views:

- 21,516 - Home Page
- 14,395 - Schools List
- 6,844 - Factsheets
- 6,394 - Contact us
- 3,163 - Sendias Resources



## Social Media Statistics

Our views on Facebook totalled 46,087 over the last year

Our follows increased by 4.4% from last year

**2,576 Total followers** ⓘ  
**+4.4%** from previous 365 days



**46,087**  
Views ⓘ

# EVALUATION STATISTICS JAN - DEC 2025

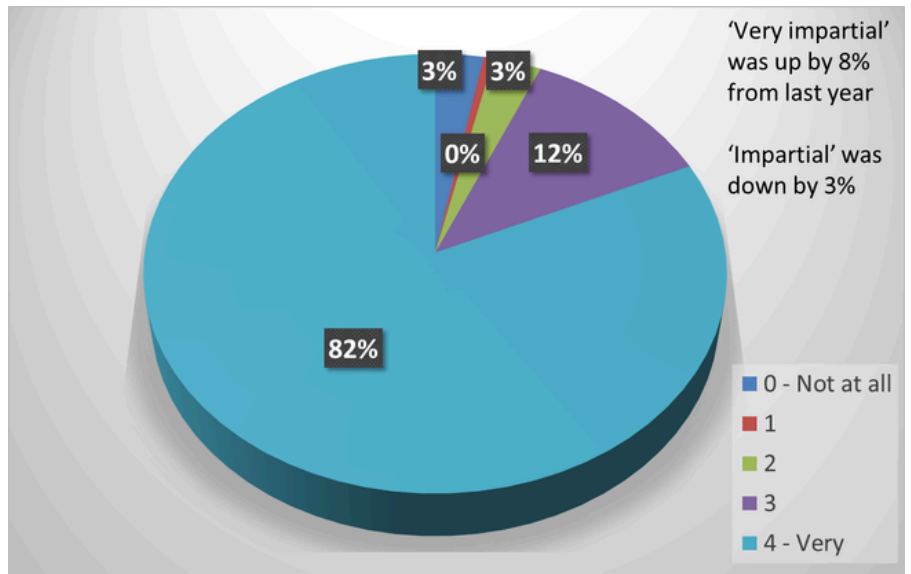
We report on our feedback to SENDIAS Steering Group members on a yearly basis. These statistics are based on the calendar year, rather than the business year as we report these to the national SENDIAS network.

Thank you so much for taking the time to complete our evaluations when they are sent out to you. We had a total of 170 evaluations in 2025. Here are a couple of statistics from the [feedback report](#):

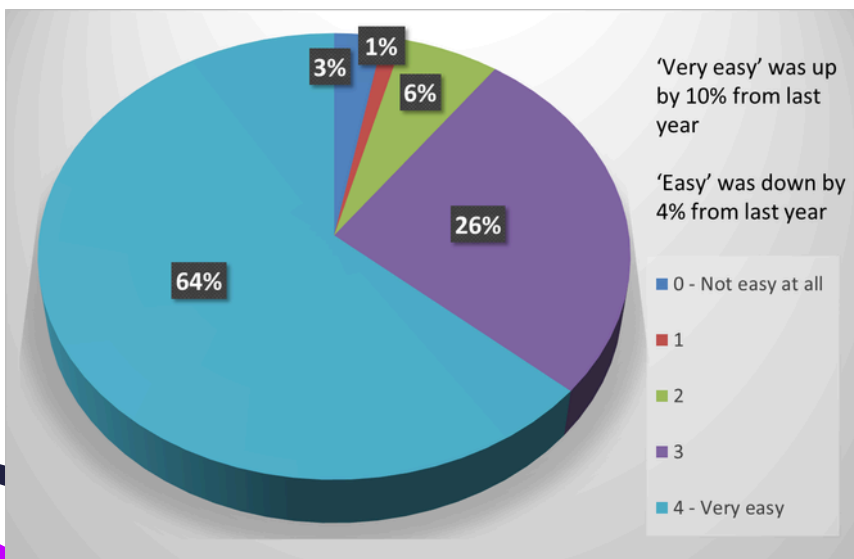
## How neutral, fair and unbiased do you think we were?

We were pleased that 94% of you thought that we acted in an impartial way, meaning we did not take sides, and based our information and guidance on law and statutory guidance.

We take this statistic seriously as it is important that you as the service user feels able to trust us. To ensure this, we work closely with voluntary groups that engage with parent carers and young people, and also ask our Steering Group to monitor that we are working in this way.



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



As demand to the service has increased over the years, this statistic becomes more of a challenge. We were therefore pleasantly surprised that 90% of you still feel it is easy to get in touch with us.

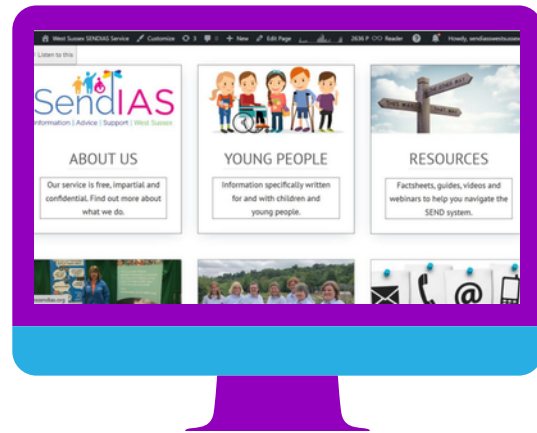
We have worked hard over the last few years to increase and improve our resources on the website, so that the majority of people are able to find the answer they need there. We then have more capacity to help those who need

a little extra support to access and understand the information.

Thank you for your patience during the times when we have had to take up to 7 working days to respond to you.

## SOME OF THE WORK WE HOPE TO DO THIS COMING YEAR...

We want to ensure our SENDIAS website is fully accessible and has achieved the ShawTrust accreditation so that all users can use our website affectively, irrespective of their disability/needs.



We also want to continue to improve the information we have on our website for children and young people (CYP) and hope to continue to work with CYP groups to shape the section in our SENDIAS website dedicated to CYP, including relevant information and factsheets for them.

We are currently working with 'Young Voices' and hope to partner with other relevant groups in West Sussex.

Produce summary videos on Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) to help promote our relevant factsheets and ensure parent carers understand the schools and LA decision making. Also to ensure they have the knowledge of what their next step options are in common situations.



We will also be starting to prepare draft web page guides and factsheets in preparation for implementation of new SEND reforms. These will be based on White Paper information and therefore subject to change and with detail pending.

**Please be aware:** these resources will not be published until the new law is implemented.





Elizabeth Holland  
Liaison Officer



Heather McIntosh  
Team Manager



Claire Chapman  
Parent Advisor



Patricia Byrne  
Parent Advisor



Paula Bower  
Parent Advisor



Helen Cockburn  
CYP Advisor



Linda Fairbairn  
CYP Advisor



Karen Hasted  
Advisor Support

## CONTACT US

If you feel you may need help from us then do not hesitate to get in touch.

**Contact line:** 0330 222 8555

**Email:** [send.ias@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:send.ias@westsussex.gov.uk) (parents of children age 0-16, and professionals working with them).

[cyp.sendias@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:cyp.sendias@westsussex.gov.uk) (Children and Young People up to the age of 25 yrs, parents of CYP age 16-25, and professionals working with them).

**Website:** [westsussexsendias.org](http://westsussexsendias.org)

## FEEDBACK

Thank you for all the feedback you gave us over this year. We get a high number of positive feedback which is really encouraging, examples are below. On the occasions we get negative feedback we look to see if there is anything we can do to improve the service, but sometimes it is due to confusing us with other services. We know how busy families are so we really appreciate the time you take to do this.

### A FEW QUOTES FROM SERVICE USERS:

"SENDIAS team always responded very quickly and took all of my concerns seriously. I couldn't have managed without them, through what has been one of the most stressful times of my life they have been invaluable. I am very grateful." (parent)

"A really helpful service - great to talk to people that are knowledgeable but independent and can support parents for free" (parent)

"You made me feel heard, and your advice and support are invaluable—so thank you." (parent)

"You helped me at a time I felt so alone and isolated. I was in new territory it felt so scary but you directed me to help and support and I cannot fault your service. Thank you so much." (parent)

"The support and guidance is excellent but the waiting time for calls and emails are too long." (parent)

"An amazing service, which is really informative and helpful. I wish I had known about them sooner." (parent)

"I have had a couple of experiences with SENDIAS. You have been so helpful to parents with helping them submit parent EHCNAs. This has been invaluable to them." (professional)

"A very helpful and timely response both to the parent and myself which was what was needed." (professional)