



**sendias**  
bathnes

**2023-24**

**annual  
report**

# Contents

- 3. Introduction
- 4. Message from Advisory Group Chair
- 5. Strategic Objectives
- 6. Context – overview of legal framework for SENDIASS
- 7. National and regional context
- 9. Our Team
- 11. Volunteers
- 12. Manager's Report
- Updates from:-
- 16. Information & Advice Officers
- 17. Children & Young People
- 18. Helpline, Media and Communications
- 19. Feedback
- 20. Snapshot
- 21. Outcomes
- 22. Feedback
- 23. People Given Information, Advice and Support
- 24. Reasons for Contact
- 25. Referrals/Enquiries Received
- 26. Thank yous
- 27. Accountability
- 28. Conclusion and Next Steps
- 30. Appendix

# Introduction

Welcome to Sendias Bathnes 2023–2024 Annual report. This report summarises the activities and evaluation of the service for the year September 2023 – August 2024. The report also looks forwards to plans for the forthcoming year. We hope that you enjoy reading it and as ever welcome any feedback that you have.

**'The focus meeting report on children missing education was shared amongst the team. Colleagues felt that it was informative and helpful to the work which the (Educational Psychology) service undertakes. Thank you for the work which everyone has put into this.'**  
**Josie Bainton and Jane de Ste Croix, EP Service**

**'Thank you so much for your time, support, advice and patience... We really appreciated your support in every way.'** Parent

## Message from Advisory Group Chair

**Welcome to the Sendias Bathnes Annual Report for 2023/2024. This report covers a period of extreme challenge for all families but especially so for those families where children and young people need extra support.**

As a service we strive to work with families with children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities in our area and as Dame Christine Lenehan, retiring Director of the Council for Disabled Children, recently said we work 'to stop people getting overwhelmed, break things into bite sized pieces and take people on a journey that is worth taking'.

We do this with empathy, knowledge, experience, and resilience. As Chair of the Advisory Group, and someone who works closely with the Team, I can wholeheartedly say that everyone from the growing number of volunteers to the Service Manager work with professionalism, integrity and a huge wealth of knowledge and experience. We truly believe that positive change is possible and support the families of Bath and North East Somerset to make the changes that will benefit their children and young people.

During this year we have directly supported over 800 families to navigate their way through the jungle of SEND processes, procedures, guidance and law

to enable them to improve the outcomes for their children and young people.

We prepare families for, and attend, meetings with families, review paperwork and advice, outline options and choices, but moreover we give families a safe space to speak and an impartial ear to listen.

To strengthen our impartiality and arm's length delivery from the Local Authority (LA) and Integrated Care Board (ICB) we have a multi-disciplinary Advisory Group which governs the service and meets quarterly during the year to plan and oversee the work we do; it also addresses key themes that affect our families. The Group is key to escalating real feedback to the LA and ICB and to that end I want to thank all partners who have recently taken part in themed discussions with us and contributed both experience and knowledge to the reports that were written.

Finally, I would like to record my heartfelt appreciation for the hard work and dedication of the SENDIAS Bathnes team. You make a significant difference to the lives of children and young people in Bath and North East Somerset. How do I know that? The families tell us time and time again how much difference having your support, knowledge and experience makes.

*Jackie Fielder*  
**Advisory Group Chair**

# Strategic Objectives

**Our vision is to support and empower children and young people with SEND, and their parents or carers, to feel confident in planning and making informed decisions about their own, or their child's, education, employment and training in preparation for adult life.**

**We aim to provide a high quality, accessible, impartial, and confidential SENDIAS service. We focus on achieving positive outcomes for children, young people and their families. By supporting good partnership working, we encourage families and professionals to work more closely together, in the interests of children and young people with SEND. We follow an empowerment model, designed to promote independence and self-advocacy for children, young people parents and carers.**

## Operational goals

To achieve its vision and aims, Sendias Bathnes offers free, impartial and confidential information, advice, and support to children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities and their parents and carers living in Bath and North East Somerset.

Advice is given about education and health and social care as it relates to education and training.

Information and resources are offered through our website, social media and training, information and outreach sessions.

We offer information, advice and support (IAS) through our enquiry line - by telephone, text, email and virtual or face to face meetings. Where support is needed, we may attend meetings, mediation and Tribunals.

We raise awareness of the service, signpost to other services and provide IAS through our outreach to partner organisations, education settings and community groups.

# Context – overview of legal framework for SENDIASS

## Overview of legislative framework & requirements

The Children and Families Act (CAFA) 2014, Equalities Act 2010, related Education Acts, regulations, and statutory guidance, including the SEND Code of Practice 2015, provide the legal framework within which the SEND Information, Advice and Support Services (SENDIASS) work. This legislative framework underpins the National Minimum Standards for Service Delivery (2018) endorsed by the Department for Education and the Department for Health and Social Care.

## Statutory duty

Local authorities (LAs) must provide children and young people (aged 0-25) with SEND, and their parents and carers, with clear, accessible information, advice and support about matters relating to special educational needs and disability, including health and social care as it relates to SEND (CAFA 2014). Bath and North East Somerset Council meets its responsibilities, together with the Integrated Care Board, by commissioning Sendias Bathnes to provide the sendias service in Bath and North East Somerset.

## Synopsis of requirements for sendias services

These are set out in full in the Minimum Standards for sendias services (see appendix). In summary, sendias services must be free, impartial, confidential, and provided at arm's length from the Local Authority and Integrated Care Board. They must have the capacity to handle face-to-face, telephone and digital enquiries. There must be strategies in place to enable service users to shape policy and practice and the Governance arrangements must include a clear management structure, encompassing a strategic manager within the service and a steering group or advisory body which includes stakeholders.



# National and regional context for SEND

## Population

In B&NES the total population is estimated to be 193,400 (Population Census 2021 Population and household estimates, England and Wales: Census 2021 – Office for National Statistics, ons.gov.uk), of which 30,197 is estimated to be of 'school age'.

The population in B&NES has increased by nearly 10% since 2012. This change is not evenly represented across age groups. The increase in the 0-15 age group has been approximately 7% and 38% in those aged 15 to 24. This reflects the growth in the student population in B&NES over a 10-year period (Strategic Evidence Base for B&NES).

## Population recorded as having SEND

B&NES Council recorded 1967 CYP with an EHCP in its SEN2 data for 2023. An increase of 259 since 2022. For 2024, this has increased to 2230. The number of children and young people with EHCPs in the area has almost doubled since 2017. The number of requests for EHCP needs assessments (including those moving into the area with a plan) has increased from 248 in 2019 to 514 in 2023.

There has been an increase year on year in the number of EHCPs issued by B&NES since 2015, growing by 13% per year between 2015 and 2023, on average. This is higher compared to national and regional growth trends during the same period (10% national and 11% South West).

The annual growth rate has been noticeably higher in B&NES between 2022 and 2023 (15%) compared to national and regional (9% and 8% respectively).

743 children and young people up to the age of 16 were recorded as having SEN Support for 2022–2023.

There has been a small but notable increase in persons aged under 16 self-reporting as disabled (either limited a little or limited a lot) from 2011 (3%) to 2021 (7%).

## Exclusions

The overall number of permanent exclusions is broadly in line with national figures, but the number of suspensions (fixed-term exclusions) is noticeably higher in B&NES.

Rates of suspension in those cohorts with SEN identified are higher both nationally and within B&NES compared to those with no SEN identified. For the SEN support cohort, the suspension rate in B&NES was higher than national in both 2020/21 and 2021/22 (24% B&NES vs 19% England). Rates of suspension in the SEN with EHCP cohort have been noticeably higher in B&NES than nationally for a number of years with suspension rates of 29% in B&NES compared to 18% for England in 2021/22.

## Mental Health

The Mental Health of Children and Young People (MHCYP) national survey found rates of probable mental disorder in 6–19-year-olds increased between 2017 and 2021 from one in nine (11.6%) to one in six (17.4%) in 6–16-year-olds and from one in ten (10.1%) to one in six (17.4%) in 17–19-year-olds. This would give an estimated 5,750 children and young people with a probable mental disorder in B&NES.

Except where stated otherwise, data has come from the Strategic Evidence Base (Feb 2024) (<https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/strategic-evidence>).





# Our Team

**Our team is made up of the following people:**

## **Administration and Enquiry Officers**

Our Administration and Enquiry Officers are the first point of contact for all enquiries to the service. They triage enquiries and provide initial information and advice. They provide a range of admin support for the team, manage our social media accounts, set up events and keep our website and news up to date.

**Susan Francomb & Louise Prior**

## **Information and Advice (I&A) Officers**

Our I&A Officers provide information, advice, and support for children and young people aged 0-25 with Send and their families. They aim to enable families to make informed choices about education, training and employment.

**Angela Conlon, Madeleine Town & Hannah Wilkins**

## **Volunteer Coordinator**

Our Volunteer Coordinator recruits, trains and supports our team of Volunteers and organises community engagement.

**Jane Kemp**

## **Volunteers**

Our volunteers help us in a range of ways, for example, as Volunteer Supporters, providing advice, as Parent Champions, raising awareness of the service as Administrative volunteers, collecting customer feedback, creating and designing media content and as Meeting Support Volunteers, supporting and note taking for families at meetings in schools and other settings.

## **Children and Young People's Service**

**Hannah Wilkins**, I&A Officer, has a focus on children and young people, working with our Young Person Volunteer Ambassador, Participation group and Participation Group Supporter.

**Summer Carey-Drew**

**Lucy Holt**

## **Manager**

Our manager has overall responsibility for the service we provide, how it runs day to day, and how it complies with the National Minimum Standards.

**Jo DGLISH**

## **Advisory Group**

Our Advisory Group guides the growth, development, quality and legal compliance of the service. It is made up of a range of stakeholders and has an Independent Chair.

**Jackie Fielder**



# Volunteering

The last academic year saw a large increase in the support provided by volunteers within the service. We now have 13 wonderful people who find time in their busy lives to support our work in the following roles:

- **4 Parent Champions who attend school coffee mornings and other events in the community, providing support and signposting to families**
- **1 Volunteer Supporter who is trained to provide information and advice to families**
- **3 Administration Volunteers, who bring skills that support us with marketing, social media, Service User Satisfaction Surveys and help with our Children and Young People's Participation Group**
- **1 Young People's Ambassador who attends events and produces accessible resources relevant to children and young people with SEND**
- **3 Meeting Support Volunteers who help families by taking notes for them during meetings**
- **1 Independent Chair of the Advisory Group**

Each week, our team of volunteers provide around 21 hours of support to our service – that's over 800 hours across the academic year!

We recognise the huge contribution that our volunteers make towards the service and recognition events for volunteers have included a festive gathering at the Civic Centre in December and a coffee and cake event in June for National Volunteers' Week.

Below are some quotes from our volunteers:

**"It's been great to volunteer in a fantastic team of highly committed and knowledgeable people, who really care about making a difference."**

**"My experience volunteering with Sendias Bathnes has been both eye opening and interesting.... helping me to learn about aspects of SEND support I didn't know about."**

# Manager's Report

In the paragraphs below, is a summary of the key areas of activity/development for the service over the last year. This is by no means reflective of all the work undertaken by the service and is only intended to highlight key points. Our service delivery is informed by the Minimum Standards for SENDIASS. In delivering a service, we are mindful that information, advice and support should help promote independence and self-advocacy for children, young people and parents.

We aim to work in partnership with other services to ensure the voices of children, young people and parents are heard in relation to specific issues and more widely, to inform the development of services.

We want children and young people, parents and carers to access free, impartial, accessible and legally accurate information, advice and support (IAS) via a range of methods and to signpost to other services and sources of information (e.g. the local offer), as needed.

## Accessibility

To fulfil its objectives in the face of rising need and largely static revenue, the service has strived to innovate and use technology to improve efficiency.

We have introduced a system of bookable appointments. This allows families to visit our website and book a phone call, a face-to-face meeting or virtual appointment with an advisor on a date and at a time which is convenient to them. Appointments are available throughout the week and on a termly basis into the evening. We recognise that this system won't suit everyone, and we are still here to answer enquiries and offer more help when needed.

## Website

Work has been ongoing to make it easier to navigate our website and to improve and increase the resources available on it. The site now includes a rotating carousel through which key messages can be shared.

## Social Media

There has been a 'soft launch' of our Instagram account. Our Facebook account has grown organically and is well on its way to reaching 1000 followers in the coming year. We have increased the offer of information which we have through short series on key topics. This has been popular, and we plan to replicate this in 24/25.

## Technology

We are extremely grateful to the Business Change Team who have supported us to make changes to link our web contact form to our data base. This will result in a significant reduction in the amount of time which we currently spend 'copying and pasting' information. It should improve accuracy and ensure that relevant data is captured at the initial point of contact.

## Working with others

Partners have been kind enough to welcome us to various events throughout the year. We have attended Livewell provider events, B&NES Parent Carer Forum cafes, Bath Area Play Project sessions, Butterflies Haven and Bristol Autism Support events. We have also visited several children's centres, schools and Bath College. This has helped us to extend the reach of our service, especially to families who may not contact us directly via telephone, web or email.

## Volunteers

The range and role of volunteers has been developed across the year. The service has been strengthened through the addition of a Young Person Ambassador and Young Person Coordinator for our participation group. Administrative volunteers have added capacity, enabling the service to develop its resources and improve its collection of service user feedback. Meeting Support Volunteers have been recruited and hope to be delivering a service in Term 1 of 2024/25. We have welcomed several young people completing work experience.

## Participation

Local and national opportunities for consultation and participation are shared through our social media. Information was shared to enable families to engage in consultation about home to school transport in B&NES and in the thematic review of transition carried out by Ofsted and the CQC. Our young people participation group shared their views in this review.

## Strengthening Representation in Service Design and Delivery

The aim and purpose of the Advisory Group is to ensure that Sendias Bathnes delivers a high quality, compliant service that is responsive to local need. It is also a key partner for service user consultation and representation. The remit of the group includes shaping the service design and delivery of the sendias service, providing feedback to the local authority area, raising issues, and influencing policies, practices, and procedures in relation to SEND.

To strengthen the role of the Advisory group a pilot has taken place this year in which the Advisory group have used alternate meetings to focus on a particular topic or theme. The first meeting looked at Children Missing Education. A report from this work was presented to the Local Area Inclusion Partnership. The service has created resources because of the findings. The group has also considered travel to education settings.

## **Training and information**

The service has delivered a series of online training sessions, covering topics from SEN support through to refusal to carry out an EHC needs assessment. Over 100 tickets have been booked for these events. Face to face sessions have also been delivered for the Southside team, Health Visitors and others.

## **Raising awareness/promotion of service**

We have launched two new newsletters. The first is aimed at parents and carers and provides information about upcoming events, local and national development. The second is aimed at children and young people. As well as providing news and information it is also a platform for children and young people to have their voice heard and have ownership of the newsletter's design and content.

Our volunteer Parent Champions have helped us to reach new communities and the team have increased awareness amongst other services and professionals, by attending open evening meetings and other events

## **Children and Young People**

The establishment of a children and young people's participation group and the recruitment of a Young People's Volunteer Ambassador has strengthened this area of work. The voice of children and young people is becoming embedded in our work. Their views in relation to travel shaped and informed the discussion of the Advisory group on travel.

## **Staffing**

All staff are now employed on permanent contracts. There has been a small increase in the number of Administration & Enquiry Officer and Volunteer Coordinator hours. Staff have been able to undertake IPSEA training commensurate with their role.

## **Finance**

With effect from 1 April 2024, a small increase to the Sendias Bathnes budget was secured. The purpose of this 'growth' item was to replace the grant funding which the service had received for several years, indirectly from the Department for Education, through a grant programme delivered via the Council for Disabled Children. This stability in finance has enabled changes to staff contracts as outlined above.

## **Analysis of direct IAS work with families**

Data is included from page 20 onwards.

Overall, there has been an increase in enquires to the service with 1144 referrals, (parents, carers, children young people and professionals) compared to 857 last year and 7,654 contacts compared to 6197 last year.

This year the issues for which families have sought information, advice and support remains similar to last year with a high level of enquires about statutory processes and SEN support. The complexity of some of these enquiries has increased, with staff spending more time to try and seek resolution/ identify next steps.

There has been a huge growth in the number of families seeking help with mediation, appeal and complaint. Enquiries relating to suspension and exclusion also remain high and those relating to children missing education.

We try to address these areas through our service offer. For example, offering information sessions on topics that feature in enquiries to the service. We aim to remove barriers which prevent people accessing the service. We have adjusted our service 50 times over the last year to accommodate the needs of service users.

## Conclusion

There have been challenges in delivering a service this year. Not least because of the increase in volume of work and at times disheartening picture in the wider send sphere. The commitment and dedication of staff in striving to improve the service and embrace new ways of working has been exemplary and I would like to record my thanks to them. I also thank our volunteers who have so generously given up their time for the service.



# Update from Information and Advice Officers

**In 2023/2024 we have needed to think creatively about how to meet increased need. Many parents/carers sought advice after being told that the local authority had decided not to carry out an EHC needs assessment for their child.**

We opened an evening virtual Teams space to share information. The initial session had a very positive outcome. Parents expressed a sense of relief in understanding that there was a way forward and a clear path to follow in challenging the refusal decision. Parents who had previously felt very alone and disempowered felt supported and gained a sense of solidarity.

Working in the spirit of partnership with parents remains the key. Reminding parents of their expertise in their child's needs has been very important in ensuring that they work as equals with professionals. This empowerment was described and supported as part of the SEND Reforms in 2014 and remains a live issue for families.

A strong sense of making a difference has come from the shared work with families in preparing representations for appeal processes following a permanent exclusion.

This has involved working closely together in a very stressful context. We have seen a rise in the number of children we are supporting who have been permanently excluded and who have an education health and care plan. A future challenge will be to reach families before a placement breaks down and ensure all measures are in place to help avoid exclusion.

An ongoing ambition remains making our information and advice as accessible as possible to all. Parents have been very open – and increasingly so, in sharing that they feel out of their depth in following statutory processes.

It's been especially satisfying to adapt information and advice to individual need. It is always a privilege to get to know a child through their parent and to work together to make a positive difference to that child's education and life experience.



# Children & Young People

In the last year, we have focused on growing children and young people's support through the SENDIAS service.

## How we have supported young people:

- We have supported young people to talk or write to their setting to express their voice and thoughts about the support they are receiving from their provision.
- We have advocated for young people at meetings to support them in understanding information and participate in decision making.
- We have advised young people on pre and statutory support in many post 16 education settings at various stages of their journey.
- We have informed young people of their rights when permanently excluded from their setting; this has included meeting support for the young person.
- We have supported young people to explore their next steps, including apprenticeships, work, supported living and social care arrangements.

## The Young People's participation group:

Since December 2023 we have been running a participation group for young people.

We want to understand what services, information, advice and support children and young people with SEND want and how and when they would like to access it. The group can influence our service design and delivery. The key topics we have focused on to date have been resources for young people, how to make our website more accessible and transport for young people with SEND in BANES. The group also gave feedback to Ofsted and the CQC on their experience of transition as part of the thematic review conducted earlier this year.

The group has played a key role in ensuring the voices and experiences of children and young people with SEND are heard and amplified through the strategic work undertaken by Sendias Bathnes within the wider SEND Community.

## Work experience:

This year, four young students have joined us for work experience placements. Each individual has had a different set of skills and outcomes they wanted to achieve with us. Many have progressed to further development and studies. One student is now our Young People's Volunteer Ambassador. She has a keen interest in SEN and for sharing her personal experiences positively, engaging with other young people, whilst promoting our service and highlighting ways we may be able to support them.

# Enquiry line, Media & Comms

The enquiry line has been very busy this year. We have received over 1000 referrals compared to 857 in the 2022-23 period. This is a 32% increase.

We do try to respond to all enquiries as quickly and accurately as we can. We know that at times this year it has been difficult to respond as speedily as we would like to.

We have added more information and resources to our website so that people can find answers to their questions without waiting to speak to an advisor.

**Engagement with our Facebook page has increased. We now have over 950 followers and our Instagram page has grown from 0-130 followers. We are using social media to share useful information. We find that this is the best way to send updates to reach you.**

**We have also been developing a new 'Get in Touch' form for our website. This will increase our efficiency, giving us more time to contact you. We hope that the form will be easier for you to fill in. It will only ask questions which are relevant to your enquiry.**

**We have also launched newsletters/ bulletins this year so that you can keep up to date about upcoming events, opportunities, news and more. You can sign up to this from our website.**

**We really enjoy speaking to everyone who contacts the service and welcome any feedback which will help us improve our service.**

# Feedback

**'Belatedly writing to thank you for this comprehensive and very helpful email.'**

**'Thank you doesn't really cover how much I appreciate all your support throughout this process. Your knowledge and tenacity has been invaluable to me, I don't think we would have reached this point without it. I am truly touched by your kind words ... All my sincere thanks imaginable and wishing you a wonderful summer ...'**

**'the Refusal to Assess seminar on Thursday was brilliant.'**

**'Thank you so much for your email. It really has meant so much to have your excellent support, I have felt heard by you and have trusted your highly knowledgeable advice and guidance throughout this process.'**

**'Thank you ... for such an informative session. I found it hugely useful ... I learnt so much ...'**

**'Apologies that it has taken me so long to respond and thank you for all the advice you have provided. Time has just run away with me. I have just met some of your colleagues xxxxxxxxxxxx and I told them how grateful I was for your advice and assistance. Hopefully they passed this onto you.'**

**'Thank you! I found it very useful.'**

# Snapshot

**1,000**

The service provides information, advice and/or support for over 1000 enquiries from children and young people, families and professionals.

## Main reason for enquiry:

- Education, health, and care needs assessments
- Provision – this includes health and social as well as education provision for those with and without EHCPs
  - Annual Reviews
  - Placement
  - Help with meetings

**828**

People given  
1:1  
information,  
advice or  
support

**103**

8 bespoke  
Training and  
information  
sessions  
delivered to  
over 100  
attendees

**950+**

Facebook  
followers

**11,498**

Website  
visits over  
6 months

# Outcomes

**74% of families felt their child's needs are better understood than they were**

**65% of families now have a better relationship with child's school or setting**

**60% of families now have a better relationship with the Local Authority**

**100% feel more confident**

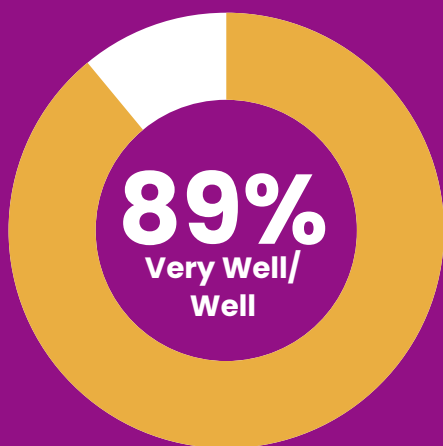
**89% feel they have benefitted as a result of the service being involved**

**84% feel more involved in decisions about child's education**

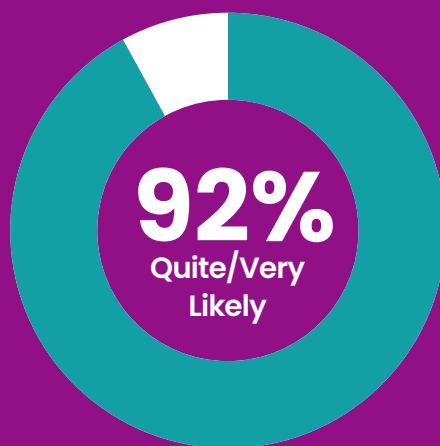
**85% feel happier/less worried about their child's future**

**90% have greater understanding off the law, processes and arrangements that should be made for children and young people with a SEN.**

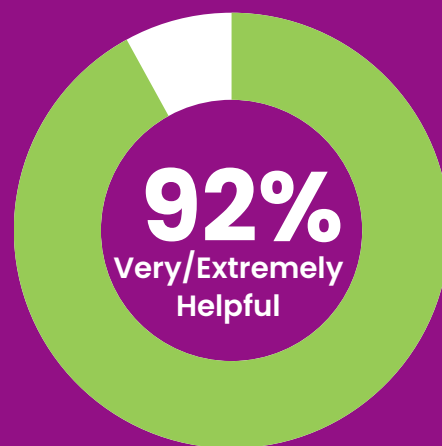
# Feedback



How well did we understand your questions/concerns?



How likely is it that you would recommend the service to others?



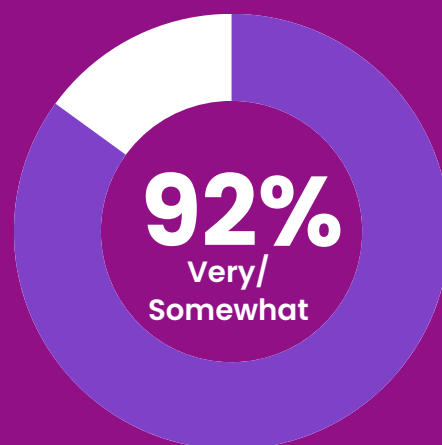
How helpful was the information, advice and support we gave you?



How easy was it to get in touch with us?

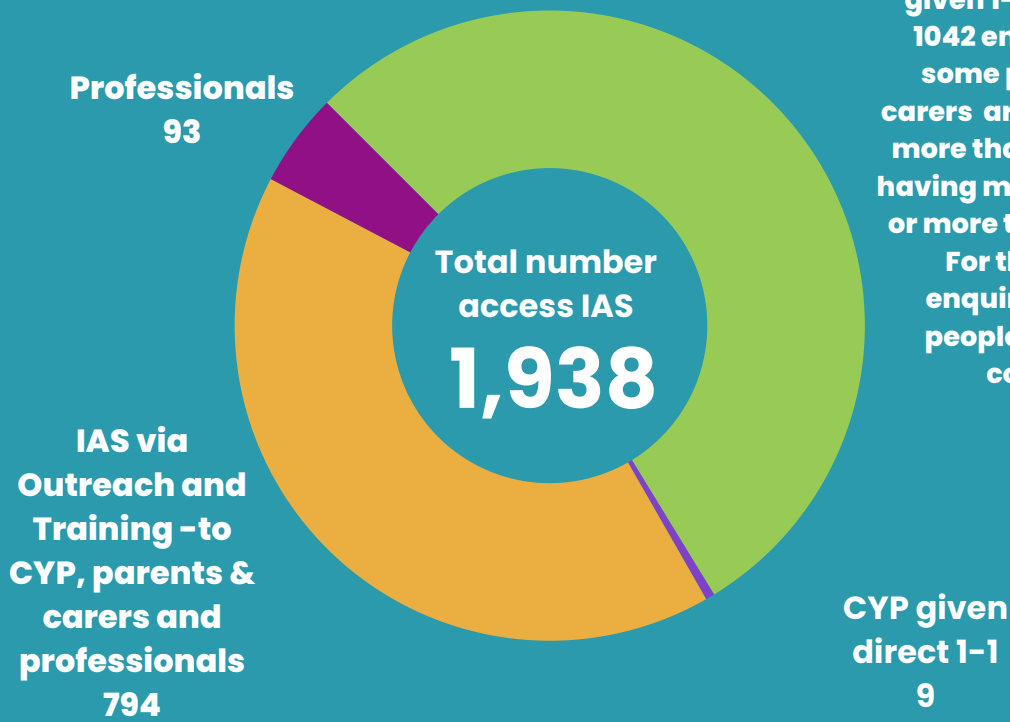


What difference do you think our information, advice or support has made to you?

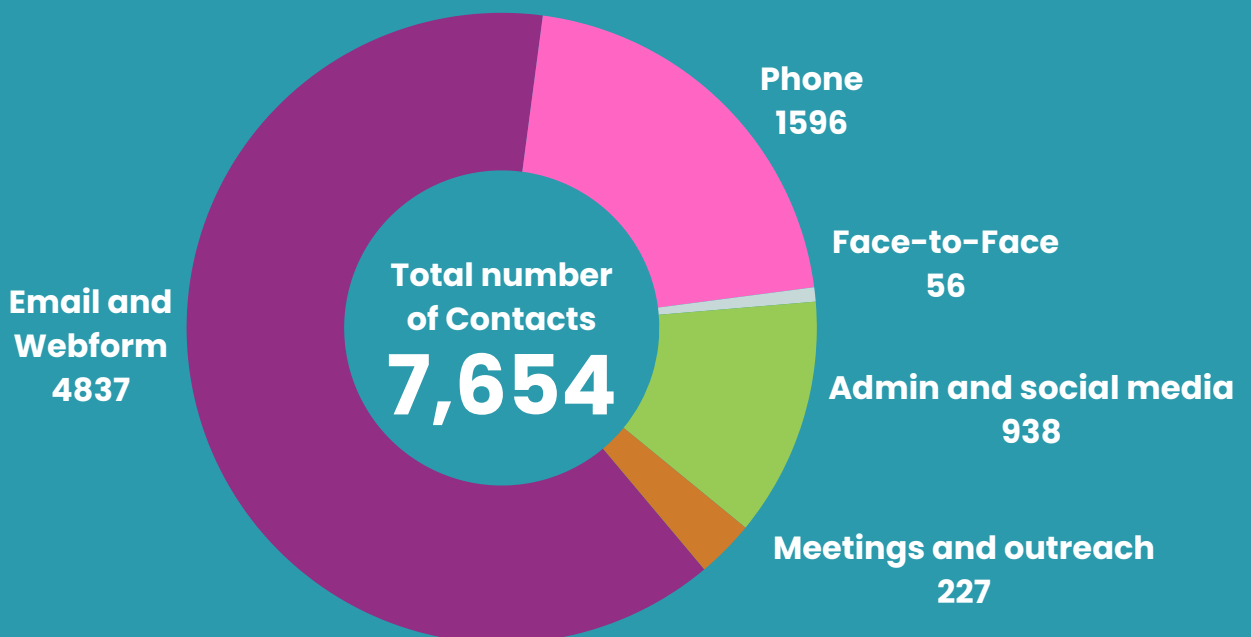


How neutral, fair and unbiased do you think we were?

# People Given Information, Advice and Support



Parents and Carers given 1-1 support for 1042 enquiries NB - some parents and carers are given advice more than once due to having more than 1 child or more than 1 enquiry. For this reason enquiries and not people have been counted.



# Reasons for Contact

## Initial and subsequent reasons

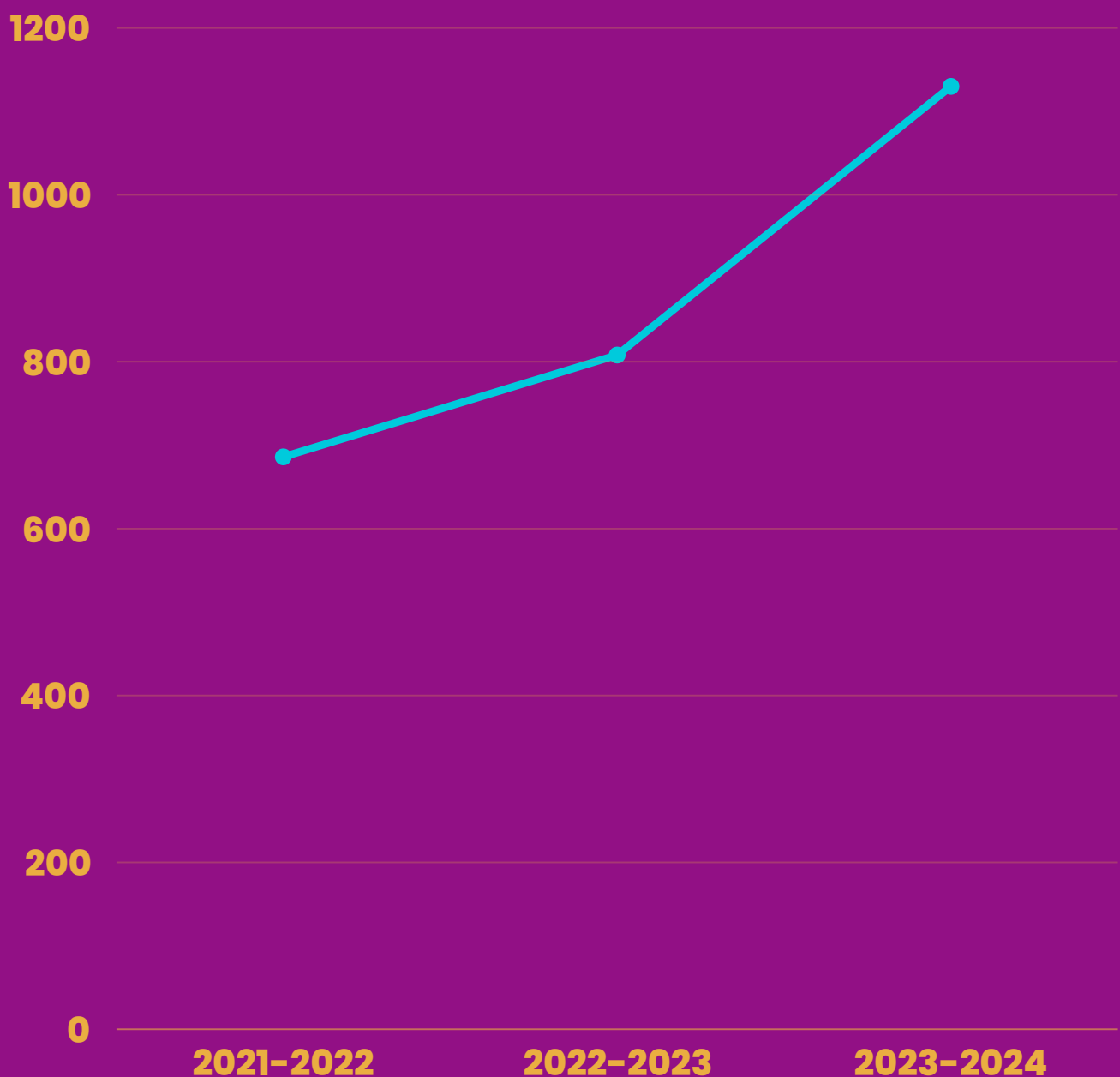


- Annual Review (113)
- Appeal (100)
- Attendance (111)
- Educational Placement (102)
- EHCNA (293)
- Exclusion (60)
- Health (164)
- Provision (287)
- Reasonable Adjustments (144)
- Signposting (138)
- Social care (108)
- Other (535) - NB includes categories where under 60 instances recorded.



# Referrals/Enquiries received

Total number of referrals Sendias Bathnes received in each of the 3 previous academic years



This represents a **65%** increase over the 3 years

**thank you**

**We would like to express our thanks to the many children, young people, parents and carers who have engaged with our service over the last year.**

**We also thank our partners and professionals who have worked alongside us, invited us into their settings and welcomed us at meetings. Thank you.**

**We are grateful to the continued commitment of stakeholders in participating in our Advisory Group. They are generous in sharing their knowledge and expertise and supporting development of the service.**

**Help from the Business Change and IT teams has been invaluable in modernising the service. The Livewell, Educational Psychology and Statutory SEN team have been generous in spending time with work experience students on placement with the service.**

**The service is indebted to our amazing team of volunteers who help us in so many ways. They enable us to have a far greater reach than would otherwise be possible. Our huge thanks to them.**

# Accountability

Sendias Bathnes is monitored against the Service Level Agreement (SLA) entered with the local authority and Integrated Care Board. The SLA incorporates the requirement for Sendias Bathnes to adhere to the Minimum Standards. The independent Advisory Group for Sendias Bathnes guides the growth and development of the service and helps to ensure that Sendias Bathnes works to the Minimum Standards and is responsive to local need and is impartial.

The annual self-assessment, which evidences compliance against the Department for Education and Department of Health and Social Care endorsed SENDIASS Minimum Standards Framework 2018, is ratified by the Advisory Group. (See Appendix for the current self-assessment).

The Sendias Bathnes Operational Plan is a series of actions to secure compliance with the Minimum Standards.

To support Sendias Bathnes' impartiality and 'at arm's length delivery' from the LA/ICB decision makers it sits within the Resources Directorate. This is distinct and separate from the Statutory SEN team and Children Services and Education, which sit in Operations.

Sendias Bathnes holds itself to account through its governance arrangements and by continually seeking feedback from stakeholders and examining the ways in which it can improve.



# Conclusion and Next Steps/Forward Plan

The overall assessment of the service's effectiveness, based on feedback from service-users and compliance with the service level agreement is good, but we cannot rest on our laurels and need to continue to move forwards and improve.

**We have identified the following areas that we wish to focus on in the coming year:**

## **Promotion of service to improve reach to early years**

We want to ensure that families are aware of our service as soon as possible in their 'SEND journey'. Too often families say that they wish that they had known about our service sooner. We want to increase the contact that we have with nurseries and other early years providers.

## **Quality Assurance**

We wish to focus on our internal processes to retain an efficient and high-quality service as we cope with increased demand. We are creating a handbook/manual so that our processes are clear and consistent and easy for staff and volunteers to follow.

## **Review**

In line with our forward plan for last year we have implemented several initiatives in 2023/24, including the use of Eventbrite, bookable appointments, monthly themes, sharing information and supporting the Advisory Group to hold focus meetings. A review of the effectiveness of these initiatives needs to be undertaken during the coming year.

## **Volunteers**

The expansion in the roles which volunteers are undertaking require systems of support and 'supervision' to be fit for purpose and robust. We need to keep the new ways in which we are working under review and ensure that volunteers and staff reflect on how the new roles and systems are working.

## **Children and Young People – direct work**

We want to increase the number of direct contacts the service has with CYP. We wish to explore the possibility of recruiting an apprentice to help us take this work forward by being an ambassador for the service and increasing awareness of the service among CYP and services.

## **Participation – children and young people**

Last year we said that we would create a participation strategy. We have done this and have established a participation group for CYP. This year we want to increase the membership of this group and strengthen its voice.



# Self-Assessment Minimum Standards

August 2024

Standard	Compliant /Partially Compliant	Notes
<b>1 Commissioning, governance and management arrangements</b>		
<p>1.1 The IASS is jointly commissioned by education, health, and social care in accordance with the CFA 2014. A formal agreement is set out in writing which refers directly to these Minimum Standards, whilst also considering the need for continuity and stability of the service.</p>	Compliant	<p>Limited funding from Children’s Social Care. No funding for the service from Adult’s Social Care. Service Level Agreement is in place.</p>
<p>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. For smaller local authorities (LAs) this may involve commissioning across local areas.</p>	Partially Compliant	<p>Local need has increased, together with inflation, but the contribution made to the sendias service from health, education, and children’s social care has remained static. This impacts on the capacity of the service. Demand for the service has increased. Work must be prioritised. There is less capacity for preventative and early-stage work. There is room for more coproduction activity especially with children and young people.</p>
<p>1.3 The IASS provides an all-year-round flexible service which is open during normal office hours and includes a direct helpline with 24-hour answer machine, call back and signposting service, including linking to the national SEND helpline.</p>	Compliant	

1.4 There is a dedicated and ring-fenced budget held and managed by an IAS service manager located within an IASS.	Compliant	
1.5 The IASS is, and is seen by service users to be, an arm's length, confidential, dedicated and easily identifiable service, separate from the LA, Integrated Care Board and/or host organisation.	Compliant	Service user feedback evidences this.
1.6 LA and IASS ensure that potential service users, Head teachers, FE principals, SENCos, SEND Teams, children's and adult social care, health commissioners and providers are made aware of the IASS, its remit and who the service is for.	Compliant	Ongoing.
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.	Compliant	
1.8 The IASS has a development plan reviewed annually with the steering group/advisory body, which includes specific actions and improvement targets.	Compliant	

## 2 Strategic Functions

2.1 Each IASS has a manager based solely within the service, without additional LA/CCG or host body roles. They have responsibility for strategic planning, service management and delivery, and quality assurance.	Compliant	
2.2 The IASS engages with regional and national strategic planning and training and demonstrates effective working with other IASSs to inform service development.	Compliant	
2.3 The IASS works with local partners, including local parent and young people forums to inform and influence policy and practice in the local area.	Compliant	MoU with LA, LiveWell and Banes PCF has been drafted and approved but is not yet signed by all.

		<p>Advisory group focus meetings address this standard.</p> <p>Advisory Group has wide membership.</p>
--	--	--

### 3 Operational Functions

<p>3.1 The IASS provides;</p> <p>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 –</p> <p><b>a) children</b> <b>b) young people</b> <b>c) parents</b></p> <p>This support is offered in a range of ways which includes face to face, a telephone helpline, email, website and social media.</p>	Compliant	Ongoing. We are working to increase resources and contact with CYP.
<p>3.2 The IASS provides branded information and promotional materials in a range of accessible formats.</p>	Compliant	
<p>3.3 The IASS has a stand-alone service website that is accessible to all service users. The website includes;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact details of the service</li> <li>• Opening hours</li> <li>• Response times</li> <li>• Information on a range of SEND topics</li> <li>• Signposting to other useful groups including parent groups and youth forums and national helplines</li> <li>• Signposting to the Local Offer</li> <li>• Key policies including a complaints procedure</li> </ul>	Partially Compliant	Compliance is being made clearer through the publication of a what to expect policy, accessible on the website.
<p>3.4 The IASS provides advocacy support for individual children, young people, and parents that empowers them to express their views and wishes and helps them to understand and exercise their rights in matters including exclusion, complaints, SEND processes, and SEND appeals.</p>	Partially Compliant	Awareness raising of the role of the sendias service in providing SEND advocacy for CYP is needed. Increased capacity/funding would be needed to deliver this more systematically.



<p>3.5 The IASS provides information, advice and support before, during and following a SEND Tribunal appeal in a range of different ways, dependent on the needs of the parent or young person. This will include representation during the hearing if the parent or young person is unable to do so.</p>	<p>Compliant</p>	
<p>3.6 The IASS offers training to local education, health and social care professionals, children, young people and parents to increase knowledge of SEND law, guidance, local policy, issues and participation.</p>	<p>Partially Compliant</p>	<p>When capacity allows the service delivers a range of training to a wide audience either delivered solely by Sendias Bathnes or in partnership with other agencies.</p>

## 4 Professional development and training for staff

<p>4.1 All advice and support providing staff successfully complete all online IPSEA legal training levels within 12 months of joining the service. Volunteers who provide advice and support should complete IPSEAs Level 1 online training within 12 months.</p>	<p>Compliant</p>	
<p>4.2 The service routinely requests feedback from service users and others and uses this to further develop the work and practices of the service.</p>	<p>Compliant</p>	<p>A volunteer has been recruited to ensure that we routinely gather feedback. The learning and action from this exercise needs to be followed through so that the service develops.</p>
<p>4.3 All IASS staff and volunteers have ongoing supervision and continuous professional development.</p>	<p>Compliant</p>	<p>Staff have regular reviews, supported by the Clear Review platform. Arrangements are in place for volunteers to have more formal 'supervision'.</p>