

sendias
bathnes



2024-25

**annual
report**

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Introduction

Welcome to our 2024/2025 annual report. The report highlights how we keep children and young people with additional needs and their parents and carers at the heart of all that we do. We reflect on our activities, achievements and progress from the past year and plans for improvement and development in the coming year.

Thank you so much for meeting with us and the quick response ...
... Thank you again your support is very much appreciated.

Thank you so much xx for your support. It means a lot to me. Thank you for your patience and everything 🧡
It's a big kindness.

Message from Advisory Group Chair

This report for 2024/2025 covers a period of extreme challenge for all families, especially for those families where children and young people need extra support. This is also a time when the current Government is reviewing Special Educational Needs and Disability provision, listening to stakeholders, talking to families and piloting new ways of working, but where there is still a great deal of uncertainty for those with existing support and for those seeking additional support for their young people.

Sendias Bathnes works with families with children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities in the Bath and North East Somerset area. We typically focus on holistic, lifelong goals for children and young people which include happiness, good health and, most importantly, meaningful employment and education. We understand and encourage these aspirations to ensure that support and interventions are tailored to individual needs and wishes.

I joined the service in 2010 when the service was the Parent Partnership and comprised a very small team, firstly as its Strategic Manager, but in the last 5 years

as the voluntary Independent Chair of the Advisory Group. The team is now about 8 strong but in the context of the increasing growing demand on services it has nowhere near the capacity to adequately help everyone who needs it.

However, I believe, after a great deal of reflection, that the time has come for me to hand over the reins to someone else who can bring a different perspective to the service and come with new ideas to tackle this challenging and ever changing landscape .

I can wholeheartedly say that all of the staff and volunteers I have come into contact with through the service (and there have been many!) have always demonstrated professionalism, integrity, resilience, empathy and a huge wealth of knowledge and experience. They truly believe that positive change is possible and with their support the families of Bath and North East Somerset are better placed to receive the support they deserve and need. I know that they will continue to do so and I offer them all the warmest of wishes to continue even when times are tough. When we are in the midst of delivery we sometimes lose sight of all the good we are doing. However, we need only speak to the families we work with and the value of our intervention is sung loud and clear!

I am always amazed by the number of families such a small team is able to



work with; during this year the service has directly supported nearly 1000 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. The team has prepared families for meetings, attended meetings with families, reviewed reams of paperwork and offered sound advice, outlined options and choices, but moreover given families a safe space to speak, an impartial ear to listen and the tools so that they can make a difference to the outcomes for their young people.

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, it has been a pleasure to work with you all.

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, training and employment 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, 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 & Population with SEND

In Bath & North East Somerset (B&NES) the total population is estimated to be 200,028, of which 16% are estimated to be aged 0–15.^[1] On 30 June 2025 there were 2,559 children and young people with an EHCP maintained by B&NES Council^[2]. For the academic year 24/25, a further 4,826 children and young people were recorded to be in receipt of SEN support/SEN without an EHC plan.^[3]

Growth in SEND

Since the SEND reforms started to be implemented in 2014/15, there has been a year-on-year increase in the number of children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). The number of EHCPs in B&NES has increased by 12% per year between 2014 and 2024, on average. This is higher compared to national and regional growth trend during the same period (9% national and 10% South West). The annual growth rate is higher in B&NES between 2023 and 2024 (13%) compared to national and regional (11% and 9% respectively). There has also been an increase in the number of CYP receiving SEN support or having SEN without an EHC plan. The number has increased on average by 10% per year from 2015/16 to 24/25.

Exclusions and Suspensions

The permanent exclusion rates for B&NES pupils on SEND support and those with EHCPs decreased in 2023/24, whilst nationally the rates continued to increase in these cohorts. However, for pupils on SEN support, the suspension rate increased notably in 2023/24, 42.6% in B&NES compared to 29.4% in England. For pupils with an EHCP, the suspension rates were also higher, 36.5% in B&NES compared to 25.6% in England.

[1] Mid-Year population estimate from the Office of National Statistics.

[2] Bath and North East Somerset (B&NES) Local Area Self Evaluation Framework for children and young people with Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) August 2025.

[3] <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/>

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/664d9706-f0f3-43bc-e4f7-08de00c7c93c>

Our Team including Volunteers



Volunteers

Manager

Advisory Group

**Information &
Advice Officers**

**Administration
& Enquiry
Officers**

**Volunteer
Coordinator**

**Marketing &
Communications**

**CYP
Ambassador &
Customer
Service
Apprentice**

**IASSN
(Information
Advice & Support
Services Network)**

**SWIASSN
(South West regional
Information Advice &
Support Services
Network)**

Local Partners

Manager's Report

The SEND sector faces ongoing challenges. We have received a record number of calls and emails from local families. Enquiries have increased in complexity. We are pleased to be able to support more callers, but it does reflect the increased difficulties faced by many families. We have adapted our service model to meet this demand and support diverse information needs. This report examines those changes and their impact.

Choice and Access

Families can make initial contact with the service in the following ways:

- Through a web form
- By booking a telephone call or face to face appointment through our online booking system (daytime and evening)
- By email, telephone, text or voicemail
- Face to face at any outreach session
- By attending a virtual information session on a range of topics

This year, the number of available appointments for families to book directly has been increased. A 'quick information offer' has also been introduced, allowing families to request

information from a dropdown menu of topics, with responses provided within one working day. This is designed to expand the Level 1 offering. In both planning and delivering services, information sessions have been arranged in response to enquiries and based on data showing higher demand for certain subjects, such as options following a decision to refuse an EHC needs assessment.

Outreach/awareness raising

Our expanded volunteer team worked with our Coordinator to reach more families early in their SEN journey. We offered visits and information to all early years settings and partnered with the library service to launch a reading group for pre-school children with additional needs and their families.



Participation in this offer was limited. We have collected feedback and are collaborating with partners to enhance the offer, with plans to relaunch a pilot in the autumn.

Website

Work on our website and developing the resources which can be accessed through it is ongoing. Highlights this year have been the addition of a comprehensive booklet for families at the start of their SEN journey and a series of 'bite-size' films about services available. Last year the website had 38,796 views.

Social Media

Our Facebook account has surpassed 1,000 followers. We offer structured information and are committed to engaging with and supporting families. We are in the early stages of making our Instagram content more interactive.

Technology and Infrastructure

Updates to our web contact form and a new telephony system are streamlining processes and giving staff more time for direct engagement with families.

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 BAS 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. Across the South West region, in collaboration with other SENDIASS services, we have contributed to research that resulted in the publication

of a report examining the impact of SENDIASS. This represents a significant project and is noted as the first of its kind in the country. The full report is available here:

councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk

Volunteers

Our wonderful team of volunteers have been busy. The Meeting Support Service has come to the end of its first year. It has provided valuable assistance to several families. The meeting supporters take notes and empower families to be heard. Our team of administrative volunteers have helped to collect feedback on the service and create information about the service. You may have met our parent champions at events, helping to raise awareness and signpost families to services.

We are delighted that two former volunteers have joined the staff team. It is with sadness that we say farewell to Jackie Fielder who has worked tirelessly as the Independent Chair of our Advisory Group for the past five years. The team give our sincere thanks to Jackie and wish her well in all her other ventures.

Participation

Local and national opportunities for parent consultation and participation are shared, primarily through our social media and newsletters. Our young people participation group, SEND Out, contributed to The Law Commission's review of the legal framework governing social care for disabled children in England and has also looked at advocacy, travel and participation promises made by the local authority.

Strengthening Representation in Service Design and Delivery

The Advisory Group has held focus meetings to support the design and delivery of Sendias Bathnes services, provide feedback to the local authority and the wider area, highlight issues, and contribute to the development of SEND-related policies and practices. Discussion topics have included travel, advocacy, and the EHCP process. Free bus travel is now available before 9:00 am for holders of a disabled travel card (Diamond Bus Pass). Actions have been taken to increase awareness of advocacy services in the area.

Training and Information

The service has provided online training sessions on topics ranging from SEN support to EHC needs assessment refusal. In-person sessions offering information and support have been delivered in schools, colleges, libraries, and other venues.

Awareness and Service Promotion

Regular bulletins and newsletters are distributed to parents and carers, and separately to children and young people through SEND Out newsletters. Volunteer parent champions have contributed to engagement with new communities, and the team has provided information about services to other professionals, for example by participating in events.

Children and Young People (CYP)

The establishment of SEND Out, a children and young people's participation group

and the recruitment of a CYP Ambassador & Customer Services Apprentice is strengthening this area of work. The aim is for the voice of children and young people to be embedded in our work.

Staffing

This year we welcomed Summer, Julie, and Edurne to the team, each making valuable contributions.

After 14 years of working with families through the sendias service, Madeleine Town has moved on. She is much missed.

Staff have been able to undertake IPSEA training commensurate with their role.

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 1,245 referrals, (parents, carers, children young people and professionals) compared to 1,144 last year and 7,842 contacts compared to 7,654 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 enquiries has increased, with staff spending more time to try and seek resolution/identify next steps.

The increase observed last year in the number of families seeking help with mediation, appeals, and complaints has persisted. Enquiries regarding suspension, exclusion, and children missing education remain frequent. Our service responds to these needs by adjusting our service offer, for example, by providing targeted information sessions on topics commonly raised in enquiries. We also work with partners at a strategic level to address need and make improvements.

We are committed to eliminating barriers to accessing our service. This year, barriers were removed or addressed by making specific adaptations for over 100 individuals. This is twice the number compared to the previous year.

Conclusion

This year has posed significant challenges in delivering the service, due to increased workload, staff shortage, and difficult circumstances within the wider field, including uncertainty around SEND sector reforms. I am grateful for the exemplary dedication of Sendias Bathnes staff and the generous support of our volunteers.





Intervention Levels and Model of Work

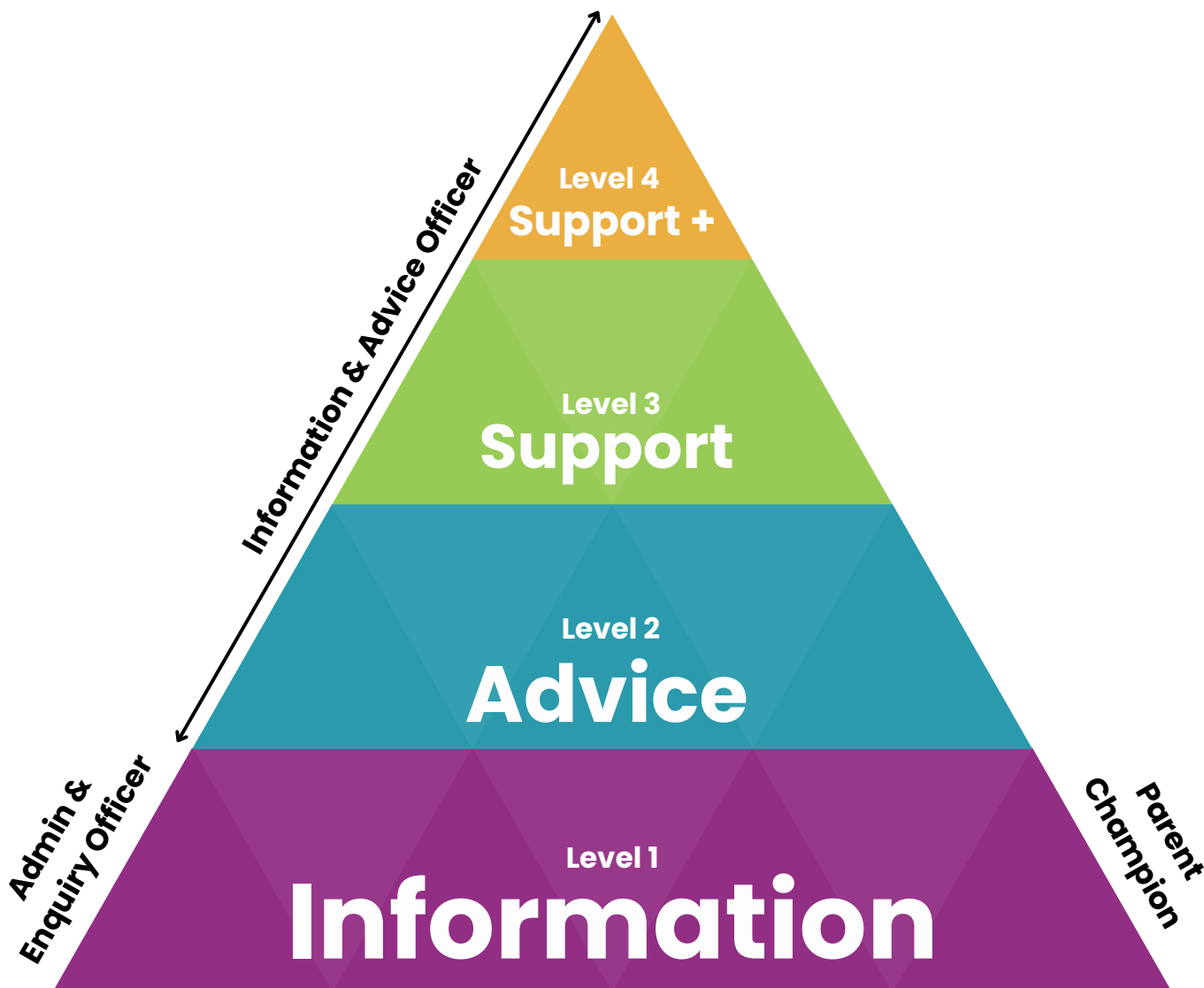
Population

In 2016, the IASS Network first published Intervention Levels for Information, Advice and Support Services to describe the range of casework support that IASS may provide. These were updated in 2022 to better reflect the type of work services undertake and how they do this in line with Minimum Standards for Sendias.

Sendias Bathnes offers Information, Advice and Support (IAS) on education, health and social care, as it relates to education, from initial concerns through to appeal.

The service does this using a pyramid structure with increasing levels of support available to individuals, from basic information at the base to intensive support at the top, ensuring that needs are met and support is targeted in the most appropriate way, given the finite resources of the service.

A visual representation of this and the levels of intervention are described overleaf:



Information Level 1 – At this foundational level, individuals receive essential information that helps them understand the basics. This is the starting point where people can access general information and resources to get oriented.

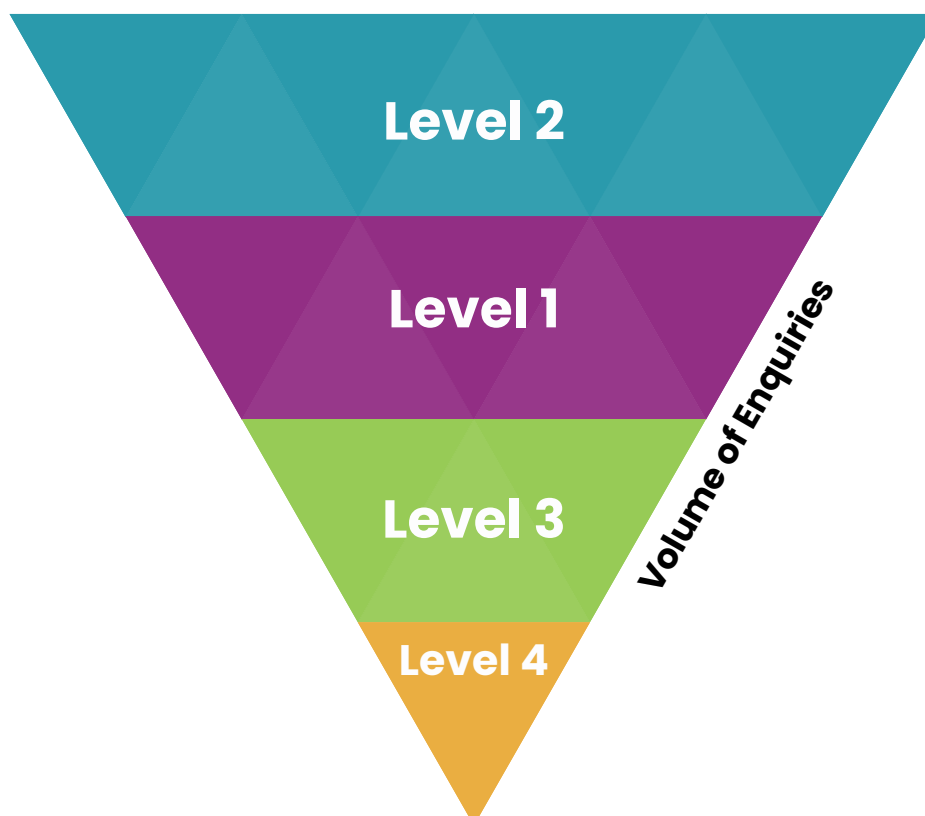
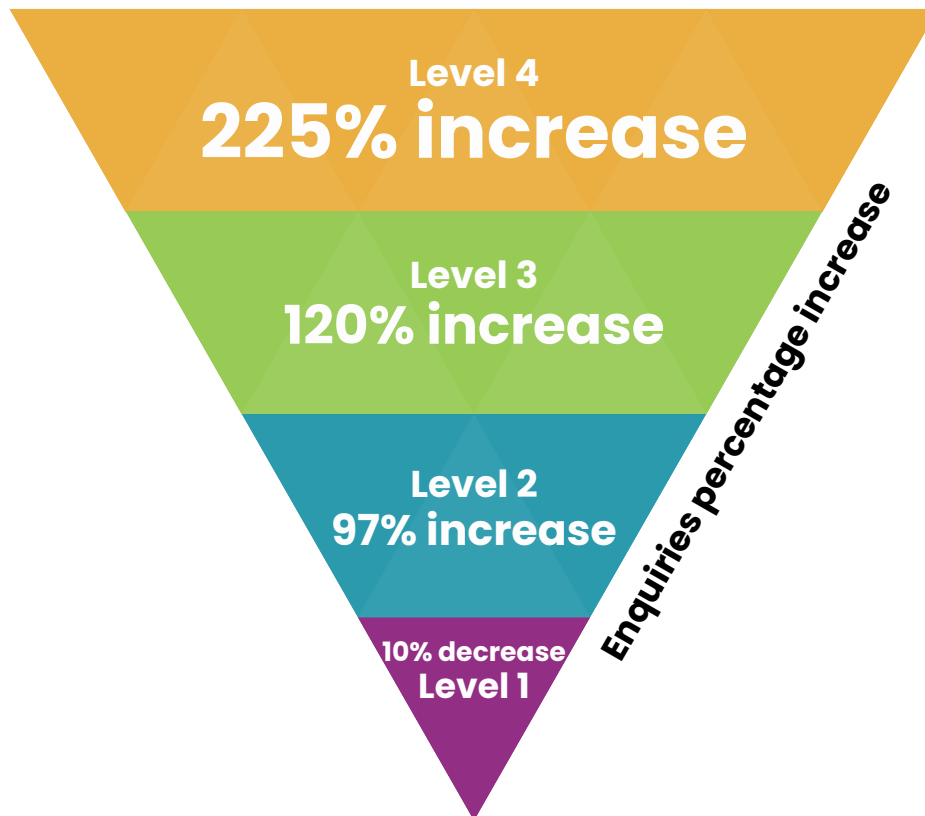
Advice Level 2 – Moving up, this level provides personalised advice and guidance. Here, individuals can seek tailored advice and information to help them apply the information to their unique situations.

Support Level 3 – At this stage, people receive more hands-on support. This could include one-on-one assistance, attendance at a meeting, or other direct help to address specific needs and challenges.

Intensive Support Level 4 – At the highest level, individuals receive intensive and specialised assistance. This is designed for those who require significant help and/or where there are complex issues.

Full details of the intervention levels can be found here: councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk

Over the past year, both the volume and complexity of enquiries have risen. Level 4 enquiries increased by 225%, level 3 by 120%, and level 2 by 97%, while level 1 enquiries fell by 10%. Consequently, our support pyramid structure has shifted.



Case Studies

The following case studies illustrate the work that the team undertake and the impact of this across all levels of support, from answering straightforward enquiries through to complex work. Our data shows a rise across all levels of support which we provide, but the impact of this is greatest at the higher levels of support which we provide where the issues involved are particularly complex, or the needs of the family we are supporting are high.

Billy

Level 1 Enquiry about reasonable adjustments (Ref 5067)

Background/facts

A parent reached out by email, concerned about Billy who had received several exclusions from school. The parent felt that reasonable adjustments to support their child's Special Educational Needs (SEN) were not being made.

Information, Advice and Support given

The parent was given information about the school's responsibility to make reasonable adjustments, as well as details about the suspension process and their rights. It was also suggested that the parent work together with the school and contact the Education Inclusion Officer for extra support.

Outcome

The parent met with the school's senior leadership team. The school agreed to make the necessary reasonable adjustments to support the child. The parent expressed gratitude, stating that the school leadership seemed willing to make changes that would benefit their child.

Key Takeaway

Open communication, clear guidance on legal rights, and collaborative meetings with school leadership can help ensure that children with SEN receive the support and adjustments they need to succeed in their education.

Case Studies

Bella

Level 2 Case Study - Right to a mainstream education (Ref 5061)

Background/facts

A parent of an 8-year-old in mainstream education sought advice after the school suggested a move to a specialist school and scheduled an early annual review of B's Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

Information, Advice and Support given

The parent was informed about their right to request mainstream placement, advised on ways the school could offer more support, and given options regarding specialist education and transitions. Relevant information and legal resources were provided.

Outcome

The parent received information about the law, enabling them to make an informed decision regarding their child's education. Prior to this guidance, the parent was not aware of the right to access mainstream education.

Key Takeaway

This case highlights the value of providing parents with clear legal information, enabling them to make informed choices about their child's education. With timely and supportive guidance, families can advocate for the best interests and needs of their child.



Case Studies

Buster

Level 3 Case Study – Securing Suitable Secondary School Placement (Ref 4639)

Background/facts

Buster, a Year 6 student with an Education, Health and Care Plan, was preparing to move to secondary school. He and his parent preferred a school they believed best suited his needs. However, the local authority was considering a different school, which, due to the parent's history of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) trauma, raised concerns about its suitability and caused the family distress.

Sendias Bathnes had previously provided support to the parent and established a relationship of trust, which led the parent to seek assistance with this sensitive issue.

Information, Advice and Support given

Sendias Bathnes supported the family by listening to the parent's concerns, providing legally based advice, and attending a meeting with the decision maker to communicate the family's needs. They facilitated specialist involvement and communicated directly with the local authority on behalf of the parent, aiming to reduce distress and ensure the family's perspective was considered throughout the process.

Outcome

The preferred school placement was secured, and the local authority agreed to an enhanced transition, ensuring a smooth move for Buster. The parent felt supported, empowered, and well-guided throughout the process. The anxiety which the parent had been burdened with when they first approached the service was lifted.

Key Takeaway

By listening to the family and tailoring support to their needs, Sendias Bathnes ensured that the family's concerns were communicated to the local authority. The service helped to ensure the well-being of both parent and child throughout the transition.

Parent comment: I don't know what I would of done without your help. 😊

Case Studies

Blossom

Level 4 Case Study – Advocacy support: empowering families to navigate SEN processes, work in partnership and secure support. (Ref 4273)

Background/facts

A parent of four children, who experiences their own additional needs, approached Sendias Bathnes for support regarding their 8-year-old daughter, Blossom. Blossom was struggling with school attendance, resulting in daily challenges from waking up through to arriving at school. She was on a reduced timetable and awaiting an autism assessment.

Information, Advice and Support given

Over an 18-month period, the Information, Advice and Support Service provided ongoing, tailored support to the family, which included facilitating appointments, attending key meetings at the school, arranging a referral to Speech and Language services, and assisting the parent – alongside a family support worker – with the submission of an Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment Request (EHCNAR).

Outcome

As a result of Sendias Bathnes's ongoing support, the parent felt consistently empowered to navigate through the complexities of special educational needs processes and to work in partnership with Blossom's school and other professionals. This led to the establishment of a tailored SEN support plan at school, the successful submission of an Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment Request (EHCNAR) to the Local Authority, and the initiation of a formal EHC assessment to better address Blossom's individual needs.

Key Takeaway

The capacity to offer sustained support was critical in assisting the parent to effectively navigate SEN processes and advocate for their child. This collaborative approach ensured that the right support was delivered at the right time, providing Blossom with targeted assistance within the school and subsequently facilitating further individualized support through an EHC plan.

Parent comment: ❤️ You were amazing.

Children & Young People

In line with section 19 of the Children and Families Act 2014, we want children and young people to feel heard and understood and be involved in planning their educational support and having the information needed to make decisions. Accordingly, over the past year, we have worked to improve access to our service

Our Young People Participation Group: SEND Out



We held six Youth Participation Group sessions, one each term, where young people with SEND shared their experiences and suggestions. These sessions have enabled us to discuss SEND topics like advocacy and the proposed social care law reforms. There has been an opportunity to influence not only the strategy, resources, and activities of Sendias Bathnes, but also to contribute to national discussions and proposals for legal reform. This year's sessions have helped us identify improvements for the forthcoming year.

Newsletters

SEND Out, our newsletter for children and young people, has celebrated its first anniversary. The newsletter includes content by and for young people, essential updates, resources, event details, and contact information. Growing readership has boosted engagement and positive feedback. We will continue to publish termly editions.

Outreach

During the last academic year, we have worked closely with local schools and colleges to grow our presence at SEND related events specifically for children and young people. This has included Apprenticeship Fayres, Preparing for Adulthood Events and Youth Groups to help raise awareness of our service and the support we can provide and to provide the opportunity for conversation in an informal setting.

Apprenticeship



Since November 2024, I have been undertaking a Level 3 Customer Service qualification alongside my role as the Children and Young People's Ambassador.

Every day is different. Key activities have included shadowing the team, outreach at local events, admin and enquiry duties, facilitating youth participation, preparing newsletters, and conducting feedback calls with families. Through this work I have learned about many of the different aspects that contribute to the smooth running of the service, tailored to our users' needs.

I have progressed through accredited SEND law training, gaining deeper insight into the law and processes that underpin the work of SENDIASS and how we work to support families in B&NES. The team has provided strong support, contributing significantly to my growth in skills, understanding, and confidence.

The team have been so wonderful and have truly done their best to help me develop skills and knowledge. My strengths have been highlighted, and new challenges have made me grow in confidence as the months have gone by.

I look forward to learning more from them during my apprenticeship.



Volunteers

Once again volunteers have played an invaluable role in the work of Sendias Bathnes throughout the year. Whether it be as a Parent Champion chatting to families at a SEND stay and play group, an Admin Volunteer contacting parents for feedback or designing information leaflets for our website, a Meeting Support Volunteer taking notes at school meetings or our Independent Chair guiding the work of our Advisory Group – every contribution has made a difference.

Every hour our volunteers have dedicated to the service has strengthened the support that we can provide. Parent Champions have reached out to 89 people at events, Meeting Support Volunteers have attended 18 educational meetings with families and our Admin Volunteers have given almost 200 hours of their time!

Our Parent Champions share details with families about the Sendias Bathnes service and other support organisations in BANES. Here is what some of our partners have to say:

'We work in close partnership with Sendias Bathnes and see first-hand the invaluable contribution their Parent Champions make. They are knowledgeable and approachable, consistently signposting families to BPCF and sharing information about who we are and what we offer.' Director and Head of Participation & Peer Support at BANES Parent Carer Forum.

'Ensuring parent carers and families are aware of what support, information and advice is available for them is so important and Parent Champion volunteers live up their name by championing services when they are out and about engaging with families'.
Live Well BANES (Local Offer) Team Lead.

Feedback from a parent who used our Meeting Support Service said that the Volunteer was a

“lovely calming presence - so nice - really really lovely - so grateful to have had her there to support and someone to witness and allow me to concentrate on my meeting”.

To our incredible team of volunteers, thank you, thank you, thank you for the time, commitment and skills you bring to our work.

This year we have welcomed new volunteers to the team while some have moved on and it has been wonderful to hear how their volunteering experience with us has helped open doors to further education or paid employment.

Next year we plan to engage volunteers to support families to better understand the EHCP process. Volunteers will meet with families to offer guidance around the system and key timelines.



Feedback from parents/carers:

Thanks for this, amazing advice that I will work through this week.

... I just wanted to update you as your support throughout has been so very appreciated and I don't think we would have got this far without your advice and support.

This is really helpful, thank you. Just being pointed in the right direction is a real help.

Thank you so much for all of the information. It's really useful to have all of the information at hand ... Thanks for getting back to me so quickly as well. I really appreciate it.

Was such a stressful process but thankful to you for all your help and support.

Feedback from professionals:

I just want to say thank you for asking xx to attend our SEND coffee event. I really appreciate the support, please pass on my thanks .

I wanted to thank you (andX) for making such a positive impact at this morning's Annual Review. Although the amount of work that comes out of the meeting feels daunting, I feel that we are in a much better and clearer position as a result of your advice, and X's insightful contributions

I really look forward to continuing to work together to support our young people moving forwards.

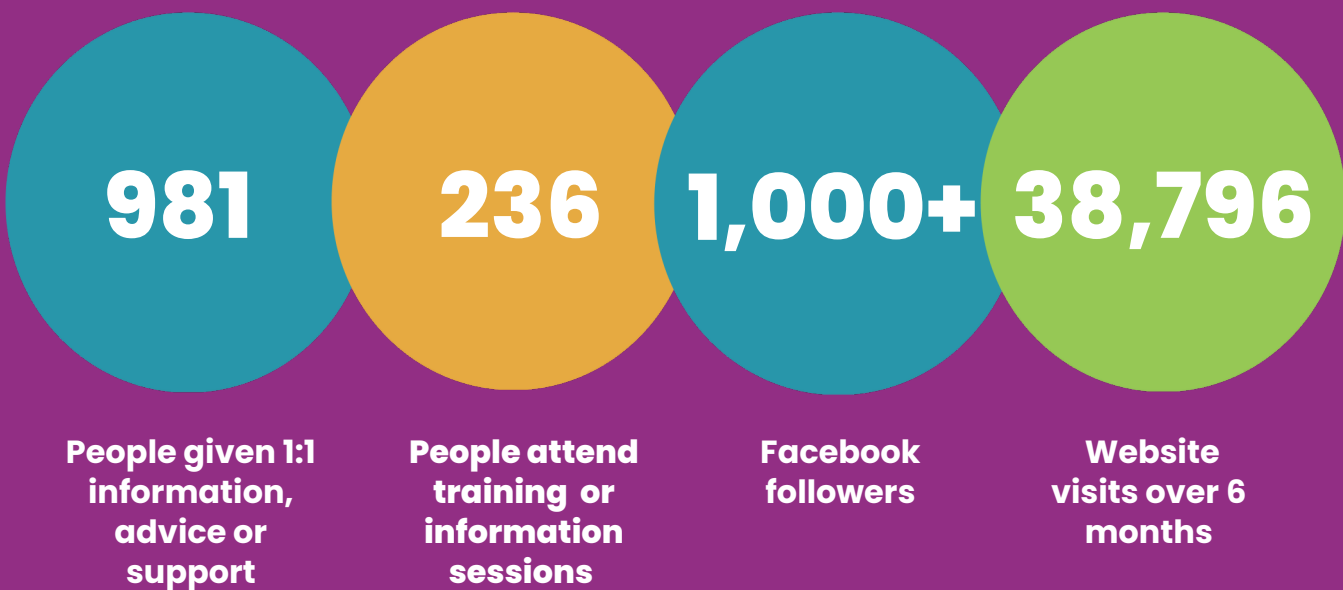
Snapshot

1,245

The service provides information, advice and/or support for 1,245 enquiries from children and young people, families and professionals.

Top 4 Main reasons for enquiry:

- Education, health, and care plan needs assessments
- Provision or support – this includes education, health and social care for those with and without EHCPs
- Appeals
- Annual Reviews



Outcomes

70% of families felt their child's needs were better understood

50% of families have a better relationship with their child's school or setting

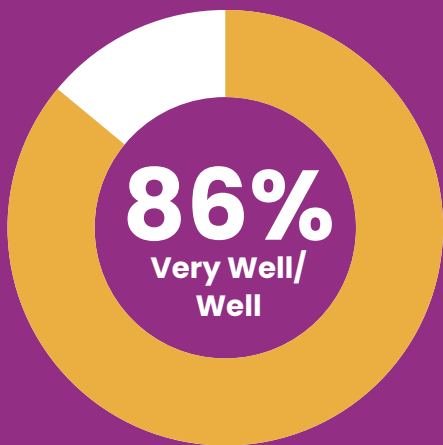
50% of families have a better relationship with the local authority

93% of families feel empowered and confident to take next steps

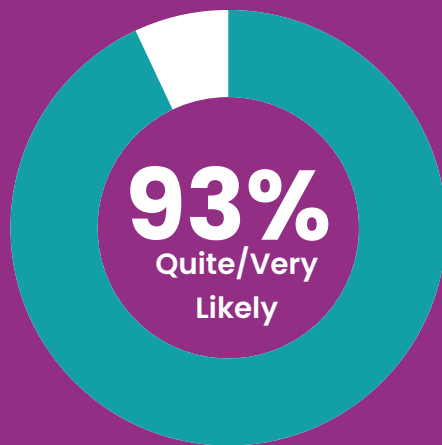
86% of families understand where to go for the help and how to access it

93% felt their child benefitted as a result of the service being involved

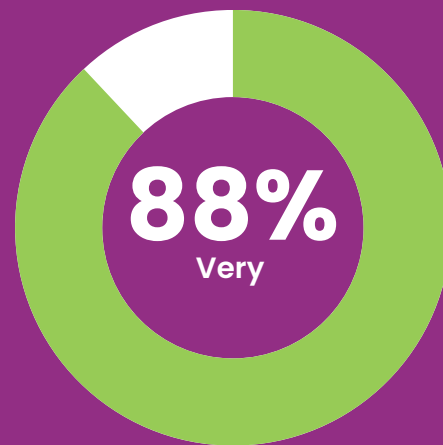
Feedback



How well did we understand your questions/concerns?



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



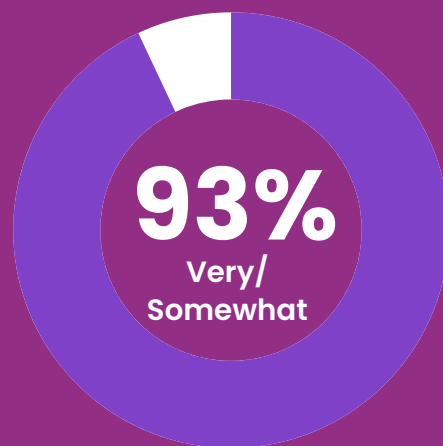
How satisfied were you with the information, advice and support we gave you?



How easy was it to get in touch with us?



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



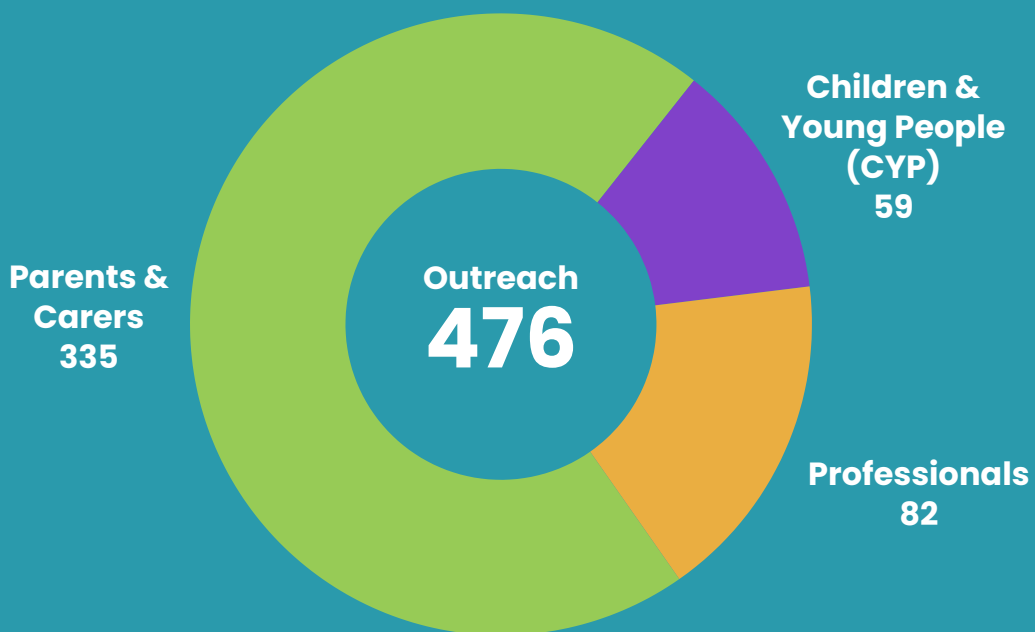
How neutral, fair and unbiased do you think we were?

People Given Information, Advice and Support

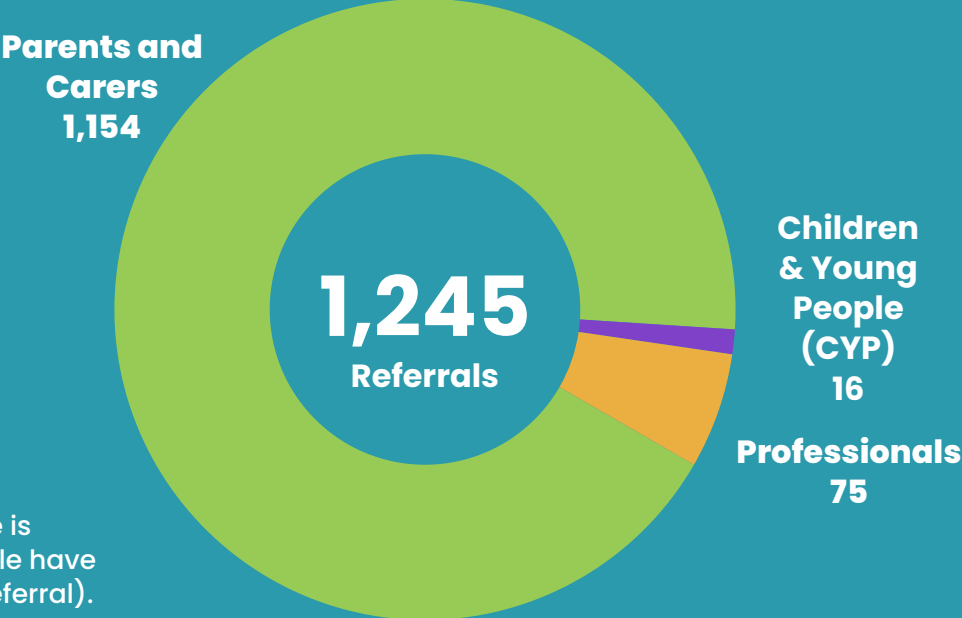
Through our outreach in the community in Bath and North East Somerset, we have provided information/engaged on a one-to-one basis with the following:

Training and information delivered to 236 individuals

Outreach where we have engaged on a one-to-one basis:



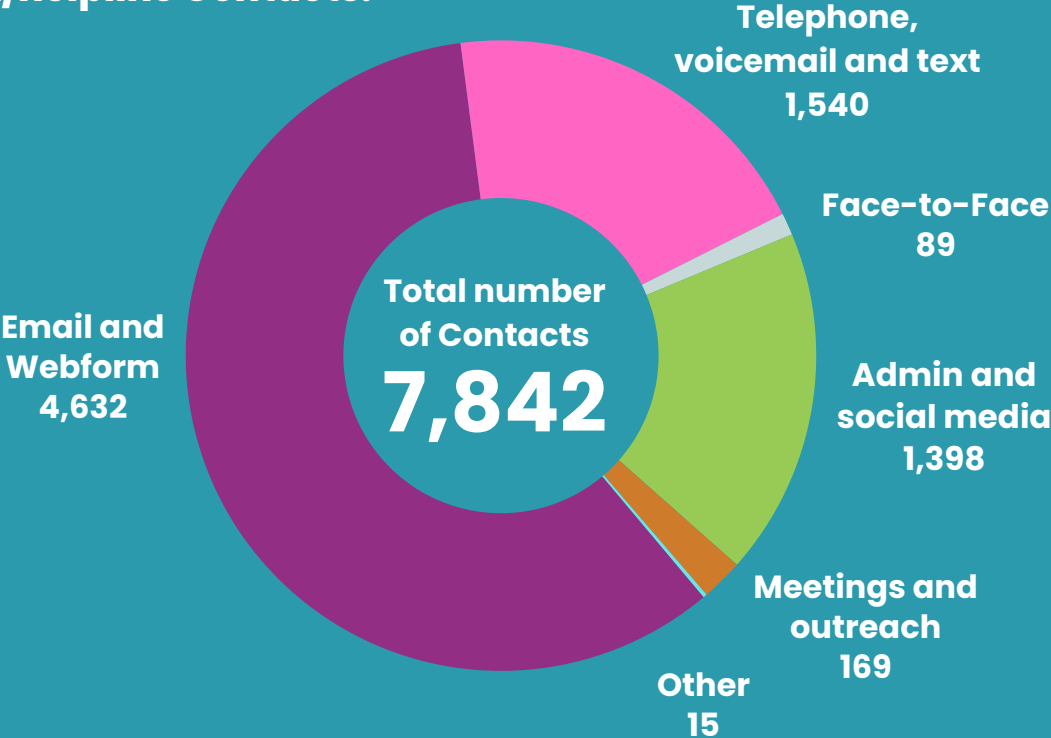
Referrals/helpline enquiries where individual Information, Advice and Support records are made:



(NB number of individual people is 981 – some people have more than one referral).

Overall number of people who access service through training and information, one-to-one outreach and one-to-one Information Advice and Support is **1,693**.

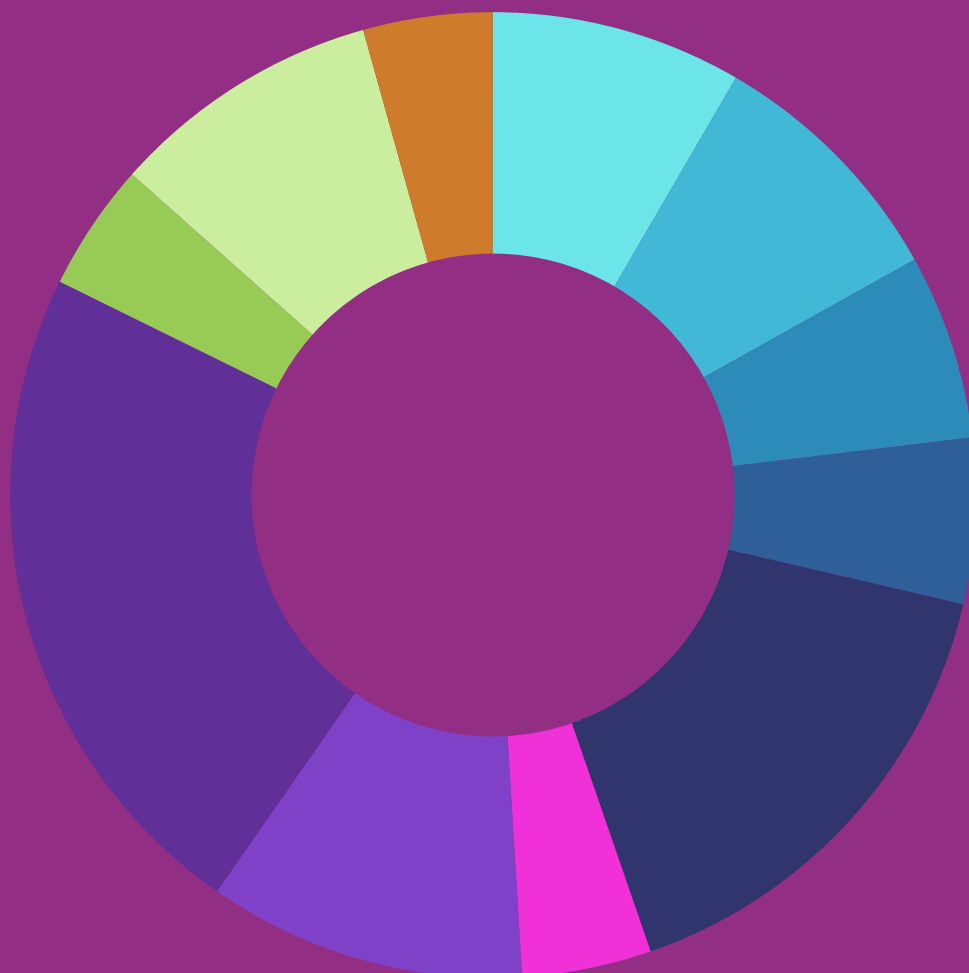
Information, Advice and Support/helpline Contacts:



Main Reasons for Contact

Initial and subsequent reasons.

NB data not included where numbers for a reason for contact are less than 70

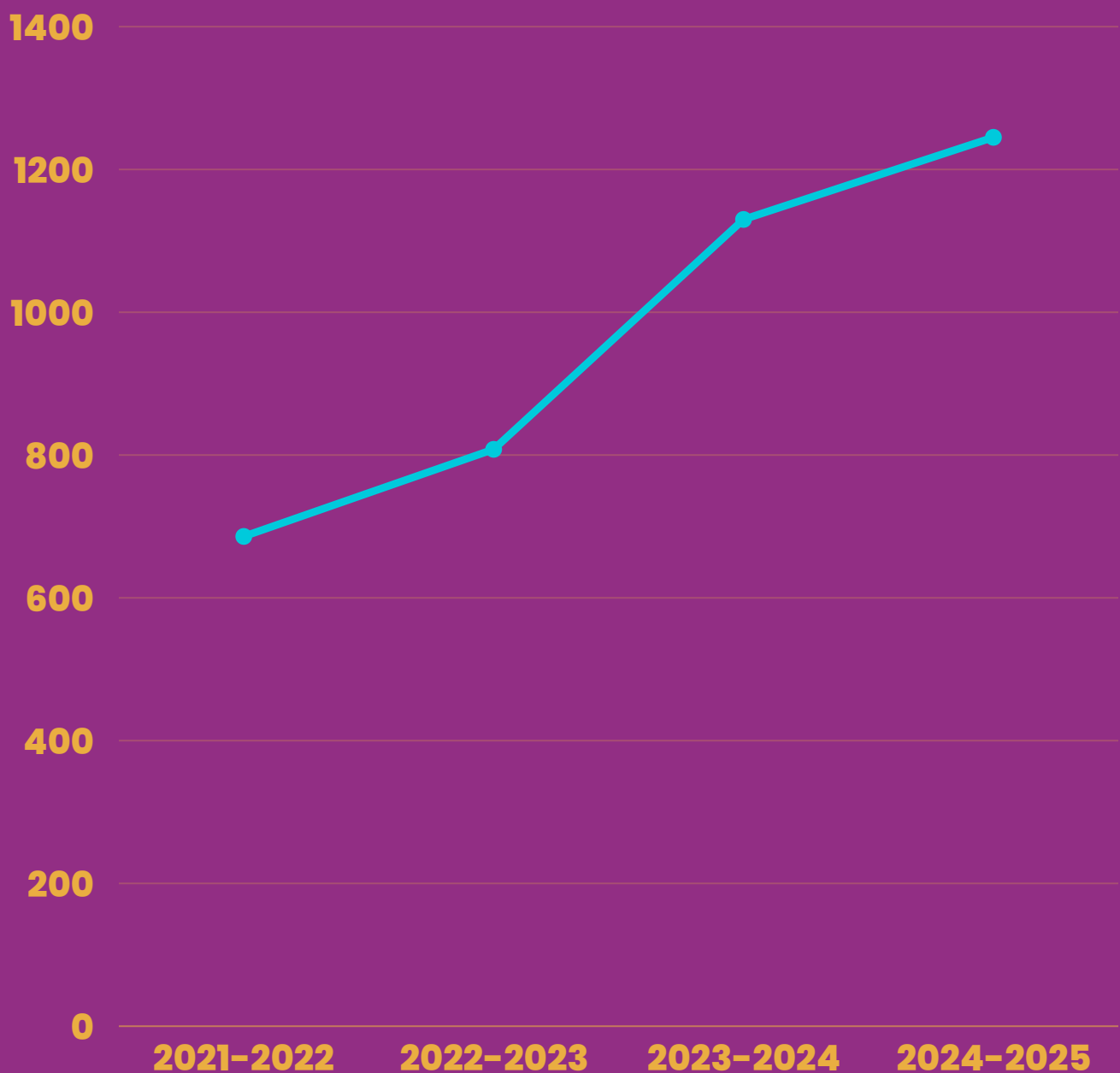


- Annual Review (153)
- Appeal (155)
- Attendance (113)
- Educational Placement (101)
- EHCNA (293)
- Exclusion (79)
- Health (194)
- Provision (412)
- Reasonable Adjustments (78)
- Signposting (166)
- Social care (79)

NB data not included where numbers for a reason for contact are less than 70

Referrals/Enquiries received

Total number of referrals Sendias Bathnes received in each of the 4 previous academic years .



This represents a **81%** increase over the 4 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.

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 positive; however, there are identified areas for continued development and improvement

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

Our aim is to inform families about our service early in their 'SEND journey.' Feedback indicates that families are often unaware of our service at the outset. We plan to strengthen communication with nurseries and other early years providers. Work on this began during the 24/25 academic year. In response to enquiries from families, a set of resources has been developed to provide support at the initial stages of the SEND journey. The goal for this academic year is to share and promote these resources and adjust them as necessary.

Quality Assurance

The organisation is working on its internal processes to support service delivery as demand rises. A Zoom contact centre is being implemented for incoming and outgoing calls. This system will provide tools for staff induction and support; generate data to track performance and assist with resource planning and allocation.

Volunteers

The Meeting Support Volunteer Project has operated successfully for a year. As current volunteers transition to paid employment or other opportunities, we are seeking to recruit new supporters. Building on the project's success, we plan to develop and pilot a hybrid initiative that will utilize both trained volunteers and paid staff to support families during the EHC needs assessment process.

Regional work

In the 2024/25 academic year, we partnered with SENDIASS in the southwest region to research the impact of SENDIASS, focusing on economic savings for Local Authority and ICB budgets, as well as benefits to families such as increased confidence and self-advocacy. We want to continue to develop this work and contribute to an annual report as a South West region.

Children and Young People – direct work

The service aims to increase the number of direct contacts with children and young people (CYP). In 2024/25, an apprentice was recruited for the position of Children and Young People’s Ambassador & Customer Services Apprentice. The objective for this academic year is to use this ambassador role to expand outreach and raise awareness of the service among CYP and related services.

Participation – children and young people

SEND Out, our participation group for children and young people, has been established. This year we aim to build momentum and increase the membership of this group and strengthen its voice.



Self-Assessment Minimum Standards

August 2024

Standard	Compliant /Partially Compliant	Notes
1 Commissioning, governance and management arrangements		
<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>	<p>Partially Compliant</p>	<p>Limited funding from Children’s Social Care. No funding for the service from Adult Social Care. Service Level Agreement has been in place and contains option to extend. This needs to be agreed.</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>	<p>Partially Compliant</p>	<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>	<p>Compliant</p>	

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>
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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>a) children b) young people c) parents</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	<p>Ongoing. We are working to increase resources and contact with CYP.</p>
<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"> • Contact details of the service • Opening hours • Response times • Information on a range of SEND topics • Signposting to other useful groups including parent groups and youth forums and national helplines • Signposting to the Local Offer • Key policies including a complaints procedure 	Partially Compliant	<p>A 'What to Expect' leaflet has been published on the website. This contains the information set out in 3.3.</p> <p>Work to refresh and update policies is ongoing.</p> <p>Some information is contained in PDFs and cannot be accessed via a web browser.</p>
<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>	Compliant	<p>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>

<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 whose role encompasses gathering feedback, ensures that we routinely collect this. 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>Systems for review, supervision and continuous CPD are in place.</p>