Rotherham SENDIASS

Annual Report

2023-2024



Written by

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SENDIASS Service Lead

What is SENDIASS

The SEND Code of Practice says…

Local authorities must arrange for children with SEN or disabilities for whom they are responsible, and their parents, and young people with SEN or disabilities for whom they are responsible, to be provided with information and advice about matters relating to their SEN or disabilities, including matters relating to health and social care.

Information, advice, and support should be provided through a dedicated and easily identifiable service. Local authorities have established Information, Advice and Support Services (formerly known as Parent Partnership services) to provide information, advice, and support to parents in relation to SEN. In addition, many local authorities provide or commission information, advice, and support services for young people. Local authorities should build on these existing services to provide the information, advice and support detailed in this chapter (2).

Information, Advice and Support Services should be impartial, confidential, and accessible and should have the capacity to handle face-to-face, telephone and electronic enquiries.”

**Minimum Standards**

SENDIAS Services have a set of [Minimum Standards](https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/files/Minimum%20StandardsFINAL%20with%20DfE%20DH%20logos_0.pdf) published and endorsed by the DFE and Department for Health. The Standards come under the headings of.

* Commissioning, Governance and Management Arrangements
* Strategic Functions
* Operational functions
* Professional development and training for staff.

The Service make use of the Minimum Standards to ensure we are operating as a ‘compliant service’

**Commissioning Governance and Management Arrangements**

Rotherham SENDIASS is funded from the base revenue budget in recognition of the statutory responsibility on LAs to provide such a service. The Service has also been provided with funding from the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and so is in line with the SEND Code of Practice which states.

‘The joint arrangements that local authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) must have for commissioning education, health and care provision for children and young people with SEN or disabilities must include arrangements for considering and agreeing what information and advice about education, health and care provision is to be provided, by whom and how it is to be provided.’

For this reporting period the Service was line managed by the Head of Commissioning.

The Service is based in Riverside House, this is a different building to the SEND related services. During this year all SENDIASS staff (alongside other services) continued to hybrid work which allows for flexibility of service and making better use of time management. Service staff have made use of Riverside House for Team Meetings, meetings with service users and for times when service delivery is enhanced by working in this environment.

**Monitoring Group**

The Monitoring Group has met three times during this period. The Group consists of representatives from Education, Health and Social Care as well as parent and young person involvement from the [Parent Carers Forum](https://www.rpcf.co.uk/) and [Guiding Voices](https://www.rotherhamsendlocaloffer.org.uk/guiding-voices/). Terms of Reference are agreed and in place. This year the Group have supported with monitoring service capacity and delivery of service, service delivery models specifically considering the offer for parent and young people workshops, and benchmarking against the minimum standards. The input from Guiding Voices also influenced the service Publicity Plan. Minutes of the Monitoring Group are made available on the [service website](https://www.rotherhamsendiass.org.uk/policies-1/sendiass-monitoring-group).

**Funding/Resources**

As stated above, the Service was provided with funding from ICB alongside the Revenue funding by RMBC.

**Staffing for this period**

Kerry Taylor – Service Lead (full time)

Rachel White – Referrals Officer (full time)

Anne Julie Childs – Business Support Officer (0.6)

Leanne Taylor- Children’s Information Officer (full time)

Kendall Stacey – SEND Advisor (0.8 and then full time from September 2023)

Andrew Lound – Children’s Disability Information Officer (0.8) (in post until October 2023)

Maria Ridge **–** Young Peoples Information Officer (0.9) (in post until July 2023)

As stated above, the service had two vacant posts from July and then November. Those posts were changed to better suit service needs and were filled by the following people;

Filip Taragel – SEND Advisor (0.9) (in post from December 23)

Samantha Bamford – SEND Advisor (0.8) (in post from end of January 2024)

This change in staffing meant the service had vacant posts totalling 8 months of this financial year.

**Strategic Functions**

The Service’s work is based around the four core activities of; Commissioning, Governance and Management Arrangements, Strategic Function, Operational functions, and Professional Development and Training for Staff. SENDIASS activity in terms of outcomes and impact on parents, children and young people is measured through case studies, training evaluations, hits to the website and views on YouTube, feedback from individuals, feedback via the website and complaints

There has been no complaints sent directly to/ or sent to RMBC complaints about SENDIASS during this period.

**Strategic Planning and Working Parties**

During this period service staff have been actively involved in; SEND Strategy Development via the working group for strategic outcomes, Local Offer Development, EHC Audit and Written Statement of Action following the SEND Area Inspection outcome, Parental Satisfaction Meeting.

**Participation and involvement with others**

The service has also participated and/or attended in the following during this period;

* Parents Forum Drop-in sessions
* Guiding Voices groups.



* SENCO Network
* Inclusion Event
* Hooton Lodge SEN and Disability Event (forum)
* Elements Drop in
* Maltby Manor Coffee morning for parents of children with SEND
* Herringthorpe Infants Coffee morning for parents of children with SEND

**Regional and National links**

During this period the service has linked with Regional SENDIASS to share practice and training opportunities, access national information and feedback, and discuss the remit of SENDIASS as a wider topic**.** The Service Lead is the current Regional Representative.The service has also participated in the national data collection and feedback.

**Operational Functions**

*Note – Local Data and data taken from the 2024 Census shows;*

* *45,763 CYP are in Rotherham Schools*
* *8,549 children are considered to have SEND*
* *Rotherham has 1907 children and young people aged 0-25 on an EHC plan*
* *1194 children attend Special Schools via their EHC plan with a further 140 in PRU’s*
* *7673 CYP have their needs met at SEN Support*

**SENDIASS Data for this reporting period compared to past four financial years.**

**Number of New Referrals to the Service (including parents/carers, children and young people)**

This indicates SENDIASS has offered IAS for 16.58% of CYP with SEND in Rotherham if each referral to the service reflected a different service user. This is an increase from last financial year (14.72%).

However this year we can take into account our service users who have contacted the service on multiple occasions as such, we have reached 13.62% of the SEND population this year.

Note – the additional contacts that we were unable to provide a service for is further explained in this report under ‘Case Work Development.’

**How was contact made?**

How had the service users heard of SENDIASS?

SENDIASS may help families from the start of their SEND journey as a family may contact us prior to speaking with schools/settings or if they feel school have not considered SEND as a reason for a child not making progress. As such we offer advice around discussions with the settings SENCO, make families aware of SEN Support and the Local Offer and where needed, support with those first conversations with the school or setting.

Historically the service has always seen a higher number of boys come to the service than girls. This has also been the case this reporting period. The unspecified cases are as a result of contacts coming into the service or emails being sent via the service website which don’t specify the child or young persons details. Please note, this data is captured from the schools system and doesn’t account for children and young people who may identify as a different gender or gender neutral.

The Chart above shows that the changes we implemented in previous year remain in place and service users are able to make more use of the information and advice section of the offer. However, as we have experienced higher numbers to the service this year, we would have expected support numbers to have increased more than they have, the reasons for this is due to the 8 month vacancy period we experienced where we had less options open to us to provide support to families. We expect this has also impacted on the type of feedback we have received too. The following are examples where this has been demonstrated. Although it is also worth noting that we have supported with more meetings this year than previously offered. (see chart showing number of meeting support)

‘*I have worked with you before for my oldest and you were great I just don't feel very supported this time.*

‘*You just explained the process which wasn't what I was asking for I was asking for support to go through the process’.*

‘*I have used SENDIASS in past and you were really helpful but not this time round’.*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 20/21Financial Period | 2021/22 | 2022/23 | 2023/24 |
| Number of open cases carried over from previous year.  | 235 | 201 | 220 | 161 |
| CYP on SEN Support (from new cases this reporting period – doesn’t include Website enquiries) | 228 | 385 | 351 | 402 |
| CYP with an EHC Plan (from new cases this reporting period – not including Website enquiries) | 258 | 390 | 521 | 497 |
| Level of commitment (note from 2023/24 the level of commitment data is taken at the close of a case. It is possible that this is lower than when the case was opened as a result of our involvement) | 1:2502:1353:1484:43Remainder yet to report | 1:5182:1593:1984:42Not reported 18 (due to being open cases and we report on this when the case is closed. ) | As we have amended the level of commitment mid-year, it has not been possible to capture data for comparison this financial year.  | 1:4842:3153:754:25(121 cases yet to report) |
| Number of meetings supported | 43138 mediations13Exclusions Including IR41 Map113 school or college based2 LA and parent0 Health Only168 service user only40 tribunal related3 Tribunal hearing support2 core group0 Multi agency re not accessing education10 – other(the majority of the meetings supported have been held virtually. Some discussions that would have been better via a meeting have also had to take place over the phone – these have not been captured in this data.) | 44334 mediations10 exclusions including IR’s56 Map meetings150 school or college based including AR’s7 LA and parent0 health only129 service user only28 Tribunal related8 hearing support8 core groups1 multi agency re not accessing education12 other | 49937 Mediations13 Exclusions including IR’s69 Map Mtgs104 School or college based15 LA and parent0 health126 Service user only36 tribunal Related0 Tribunal hearings1 Core Group meetings42 multi agency56 other | 50526 Mediations19 Exclusions including IR21 Map Meetings223 School and college based11 LA and parent only2 Health only113 Service User Only53 Tribunal Related0 Core Group37 multi Agency21 Map/EHC related |

**Ethnic Minority Monitoring**

Rotherham has a mainly White British population with the percentage from minority ethnic groups being about half the national average, although the Pakistani and Slovak Roma communities have above average proportions.

The following figures do not include the service involvements taken via the Website enquiries as these often don’t include any identifying information.

The figures show that the service is being predominantly used by families who identify from a White British background (85%). 1.76% of service users are from a Pakistani background and 1.56% of service users identify as White and Asian. Only 3 families accessing the service from a Roma/ Gypsy Roma background. There is an under representation from these groups. 1.37% of service users identify as White and Black Caribbean.

**Looked After Children**

Service staff work alongside colleagues from Social Care. In this period the Service has received 3 new referrals involving a ‘looked after’ child. During this period, we have captured data when we are informed by the service user at the start of involvement if they are considered CIN or if they are placed under a Special Guardianship Order (SGO). We were informed of 8 children being considered CIN during this year and 18 families whose children were under a Special Guardianship Order.

**School Attendance**

During this period **19.31%** of cases (excluding our website contacts due to vagueness or gaps in information provided by the service user) expressed a concern about school attendance as their child or young person were either on a reduced timetable, attendance at school had become sporadic or they were not attending their designated school placement at all at the time of contact.

**Referrals to Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal**

The LA were notified of 41 referrals to SENDIST within this timescale. Rotherham SENDIASS were actively involved with supporting the families of 33 of these Tribunal cases.

Of the Tribunals SENDIASS have actively supported, the following outcomes were reached (10 cases are still in progress). During this period, the Tribunal system had significant issues with their capacity and as such appeal timescales remained at 50 weeks rather than 12. As such this has impacted on the number of cases that remain ‘live’ and awaiting their hearing date.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Appeal conceded by the LA prior to the hearing | 6 |
| Agreement reached prior to the tribunal hearing and so consent order requested and provided | 14 |
| Appeal withdrawn by parent prior to hearing date | 2 |
| Unknown outcome (as the parent requested support with registering the appeal and nothing else within the process) | 2 |

During this period 110 service users contacted the service with the sole purpose of gaining information, advice and support around SEND Tribunal. This is an increase from previous year (62) and shows the impact SENDIASS advice can have to help families consider all their options with regards to rights of redress as some of these 110 service users will have gone on to access mediation rather than appeal straight away, and some will have made use of the information contained in the LA’s decision letter to continue their work with the school or setting taking into account the evidence based process of EHC Assessments and Tribunal involvements.

Advice given around Tribunals includes the process and timescales, the need to consider mediation where necessary and how to action this process, the options available which may not result in a tribunal including: looking in detail at the reasons why the LA has made their decision and how this could then be used to support processes in the future and conversations with settings, utilising the timescales to appeal wisely to ensure additional evidence is available to support ongoing discussions with the LA via mediation or informal discussions, consider what the support currently looks like for the child or young person at SEN Support and offering advice and support around further discussions with the school or setting.

Support for Tribunal work could include helping the family to register the appeal, gathering information, helping them to understand the paperwork and processes and supporting them to keep to deadlines. The service helps to establish or maintain communication with the LA in a positive way, build working relationships and offer support at the actual hearing date including preparing the family and offering advice and guidance to any witnesses that have been called by the family too. The data above supports the proactive work that SENDIASS (alongside the EHC Team) have undertaken in an effort to bring a mutual agreement to the forefront where possible, due to the number of consent orders that were requested prior to hearing dates. We also have video’s related to Tribunal on our YouTube channel and over this period of time the collective of videos were viewed 387 times.

Of the 33 appeals SENDIASS supported with, all except 2 cases included section I in their appeal (and in 8 of these cases either sections B, F or both were also included). Two cases included health however none of the cases supported by SENDIASS included Social Care needs or provision within their appeals. None of the cases SENDIASS supported with related to refusal to issue a plan or refusal to assess.

**Mediation**

81 service users specifically contacted SENDIASS around Mediation which is a significant increase from last year (40). We supported in 35 mediation meetings over this time frame (a slight decrease from the previous year).

Support at mediation may include things such as; preparation beforehand ensuring the service user has a clear understanding of the process, possible outcomes, and clarity around their situation including points to share/questions to ask. It could also include encouraging self-advocacy and where appropriate asking questions of the service user to prompt their thought process based on prior knowledge and discussions. SENDIASS also act as a point of reference to the legislation around the EHC, mediation and appeals process which may consist of reminders around the relevant legal tests which would need to be considered if a tribunal were to be lodged

Over this period, mediation reasons and outcomes were as follows;

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Reasons for mediation | Total number | Outcomes from mediation  |
| Refusal to assess | 10 | Agreed to assess at mediation – 5No agreement made – 1Overturned before mediation meeting – 2Still awaiting the mediation meeting - 2  |
| Refusal to issue a plan | 3 | Part Agreement – 2No agreement - 1 |
| Contents of a plan (only) | 1 | No agreement reached.  |
| Content of the plan and Section I  | 12 | Part Agreement - 6No agreement - 4 Full agreement 2 |
| Section I only | 9 | Full agreement – 1Part agreement 5No agreement 3 (one of which left the meeting and so it came to an end) |

When parents contact the service to request information, advice and support around mediation, like our work with tribunals, we also initially discuss all the options available for them including; looking in detail at the reasons why the LA has made their decision and how this could then be used to support processes in the future and conversations with settings, utilising the timescales to request mediation wisely to ensure additional evidence is available, consider what the support currently looks like for the child or young person at SEN Support and offering advice and support around further discussions with the school or setting. We also have video’s available on YouTube around mediation, and over this period of time the collective mediation videos have been viewed 133 times.

**Case work development**

**Timeliness of Service delivery**

During this period, parents contacting the Service for the first time were able to have an in-depth conversation with Kerry Taylor (Service Lead) or Leanne Taylor (Children’s Information Officer) about their concerns. Following this call each service user then receive detailed advice and information via email, or when needed, a case worker is allocated to offer support for a specific task. We aim to return initial calls and website enquiries to service users within a 5 working day period. 93.9% of contacts were returned within a 5 working days during this reporting period.

**Lost contacts**

To ensure all service users are responded to within 5 working days, and since the phone lines are always in use, service users are encouraged to leave a voice message on the machine on first contact. During this period, we have been unable to make return contact with 31 service users. In such circumstances, the service will always attempt contact on at least 5 different occasions and leave messages wherever this facility is available, before considering the contact lost. Some of these lost contacts were also as a result of the contact number no longer being available.

**Resolved situations before a service is offered**

We also had a further 55 service users whose situation had been resolved prior to our return call.

It is worth noting that the above 86 service users are not included in our statistics within this report and do not receive an evaluation of service delivery as it has not been possible to provide any level of service.

**The offer of Information, Advice and Support**

Ongoing parent, children and young people case work support was provided by the rest of the team. A significant amount of casework involves actively engaging with parents/child/young person, schools and LA staff to prevent or resolve disagreements or support to move situations on. The complexity of case work has increased during this period which has been evident in the increase in service users wishing to gain IAS around SEND Tribunals, Mediations, and Exclusions and the disagreement resolution work needed. The service has continued to offer all families detailed Information and Advice, maintaining capacity within the service to support those who have needs of their own, or whose situation warrants support due to the complex nature of the issues. This way of working has helped to increase capacity within the service enabling more service users to gain IAS in a timelier manner. However, during this period 18.8% of parent and CYP service users went on to require more in depth 1:1 support in the form of ongoing case work involvement, following the initial in-depth conversation, advice and follow up written information being received. This is a decrease from previous reporting period (22.7%) and not fully reflective of service users needs, but more a reflection of service capacity this year due to an 8 month vacancy within the team, leaving reduced options for support to be provided when needed. As a level of service has been offered, this is not reflective in the reporting of ‘service deficit’.

**Service Deficit**

Only 1 service user specifically asked for support at a meeting that we were not able to facilitate from the start of involvement.

**Exclusions:**

Over this period, the service has been contacted by 92 service uses requesting information, advice or support around Exclusions from school. This is an increase from previous year (72).

**Education, Health and Social Care:**

The following chart provides information relating to each area service users contacted the service for.

**Categories of Enquiry**

The following set of charts show this reporting periods referrals broken down into categories of enquiry, (topics the service users come to the service for). Over the past few years, enquiries about EHC related topics have been one of the highest topics reflected in our statistics, and this is the case for this period too, although referrals in this area are slightly down on previous year. The Service has however noticed quite a significant rise in SEND support referrals this year to previous years as is the case with Tribunals, Mediations and Exclusions. We have also noticed a large increase in the service being used for information where we are able to make use of the SEND Local Offer to support this enquiry. This shows us that the Local Offer is a very important tool in our work generally (the majority of contacts receive some form of Local Offer link which is relevant to their enquiry in our follow up emails).

It is worth noting that the section below for complaints is where the complaint was generic about SEND. Complaints within a specific area have been included in that specific category of enquiry for example a complaint about the SEND support on offer has been recorded under Send Support.

As previously stated, as of December 2024, the LA had 1,907 EHC plans in place. SENDIASS has worked with 359 service users around the EHC process this period. This equates to 18.82% of those with EHC plans in the LA.

As of December 2024, the LA had 7,673 children and young people being supported at SEN Support. SENDIASS has worked with 459 Service users specifically around SEND Support matters this period (5.98% of SEND Support CYP in Rotherham)

The following charts will break down some of the higher categories of enquiry to show where IAS has specifically had to target.

Working with Children and Young People directly

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 20/21 | 2021/22 | 2022/23 | 2023/24 |
| Number of new children (0-16) accessing IAS | 37 | 47 | 14 | 22This year, due to a staff member leaving the service, CYP have all been supported by one staff member and as such it has not been possible to distinguish between age groups.  |
| Number of new Young people (16-25) accessing IAS  | 34 | 30 | 24 |

**Service outcomes**

**As well as the outcomes from mediation and tribunal as listed above, the service also gathers outcomes on the close of each involvement. The following data doesn’t include website enquiries. During this period, the outcomes were as follows;**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Disagreement resolved** | **44** |
| **No further contact with service user** | **28** |
| **No further support requested** | **761** |
| **Other**  | **28** |
| **Referral to other services** | **41** |
| **Case yet to report** | **118** |

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**SENDIASS YouTube Channel**

The SENDIASS YouTube channel has received a total of 1,328 views over this period (this is a 151% increase from previous year where views were 528). From these views, only 57 were from those who had subscribed to the channel. Watch time of our content equates to 66.4 hours over this period. The service makes use of the video’s to support the advice we have provided which then provides the service user a time to reflect on our advice following their initial call.

During this period, the top 5 videos were;

1. SEND Support in Mainstream Schools – 148 views (went live 22nd August 2023)
2. Things to consider before lodging an appeal – 135 views (went live 11th May 2023)
3. Feeling prepared for a tribunal hearing – 112 views (went live 7th August 2023)
4. SEND Support – Guiding Voices Video – 110 Views (went live 6th March 2022)
5. Annual Review - a focus on requesting changes to the plan – 97 views (went live 11th August 2023)

It is worth noting that prior to August 2023 we had a previous SEND Support in Mainstream schools video which also had a total of 78 views for this period of time too

**Website**

Rotherham SENDIASS has its own dedicated website which went live on the 1st May 2015. The Website is also placed on the Local Offer. Updates are added when appropraite.

Summary of terms used:

**Sessions:** when a user opens our website or views a page

**Page views:** measures how often a specific page is visited, for example if a visitor visits page A, goes to the home page and then comes back to page A, it’s counted as two page views.

**Users:** the number of people who visited the site.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | April 20- March 2021 |  |  | April 21-March 2022 | April 22 – March 23 | April 23 – March 2024 |
| Sessions |  7,447 |  |  |  9,751 | 11,931 | 16,178 |
| Users | 11,121 (49% of which are new users to the site.  |  |  |  6,655 (82.9% of which were new visitors to the site.) | 7,698 (78.5% of which were new visitors to the site) | 10,729(99.7% of which were new visitors to the site) |
| Page views | 17,144 |  |  |  21,923 | 27,150 | 53,129 |

Top five pages:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 2021/22 | 2022/23 | 2023/24 |
| Page |  Page views | page | Page Views | page | Page views |
| Rotherham SENDIASS home page  | 5,626 | Home page | 10,493 | Home page | 7,076 |
| EHC Plans | 1,938 | Contact | 1,985 | EHC Plans | 3,948 |
| Contact Rotherham SENDIASS | 1,651 | Contact us | 1,689 | Contact Rotherham SENDIASS | 1,995 |
| Contact usRotherham SENDIASS | 1,541 | Support | 998 | Contact us | 1,950 |
| Guiding Voices | 895 | Information parents | 805 | Parent/ carers Tool Box | 1,573 |

Training within the Team

During this period, the team have accessed the following training sessions/ whole staff events

* Steve Broach Webinar - the law in relation to social care for disabled children
* Recruitment and Selection – Refresher
* Safer Recruitment
* Risk Management
* GDPR & Cyber Security
* Level 1 IPSEA for SENDIASS face to face and online
* Level 2 IPSEA for SENDIASS face to face on online
* New starter to SENDIASS - National induction
* Family network
* Tribunal Appeal. IASSN induction
* SENDIASS EHC workshop
* Emotionally Based School Avoidance – statutory guidance and the law
* Mediation and appeals – Team training in house
* Advice Line – Vicarious Trauma
* Human Rights and SEND
* ADHD Nurse and the offer in Rotherham – input into SENDIASS Team meeting
* Ipsea refresher training
* Tribunal Refresher training
* Training in SEMH in early years

SENDIASS Input to other training events

During this period SENDIASS have delivered or supported on the following

* What is SENDIASS – Input to New SENCO’s
* What is SENDIASS – Input into the SGO parent group
* What is SENDIASS – Input into Portage Team meeting
* What is SENDIASS – Input into Sitwell Junior’s parents group
* What is SENDIASS – Input into Rawmarsh Children’s Centre parent group
* What is SENDIASS – Input into Hill Top parent group
* Annual Review process – Input into Hill Top Parent Group

The Team has also had a presence at the following events

* Disability Awareness day – arranged by the Parent Carer Forum
* SEND parent session – Herringthorpe Infants
* SEND Parent Session – Maltby Craggs

**Workshops**

* During this period the service has arranged six workshops covering the topic of SEN Support in mainstream schools, and EHC Needs Assessment and Plans and Annual Reviews of EHC plans. These three topics were chosen due to the number of involvements we have related to these processes.
* The workshops were delivered both face to face and virtual and had the following interest.
* Sen support - 7 attendees (one of the workshops was cancelled due to limited interest)
* EHC Needs Assessment - 15 attendees
* Annual Reviews – 9 (one of the workshops was cancelled due to limited interest)
* Each workshop had a drop out rate and as such more were booked on than attended.
* Feedback for the workshops was positive
* **Virtual Workshops via YouTube**
* To support the advice we provide, we also have our workshops pre-recorded (alongside some of our factsheets which are in an auditory version on YouTube, which are available via our You Tube Channel. To enhance these videos we have also added a Frequently Asked Questions video for these topics too. Collectively we have had the following views to these tools.
* SEN support in Mainstream Schools – 246 views this period
* EHC Needs Assessment and plans – 164 views this period
* Annual Reviews – 117 views this period.

Due to the limited number of interested service users in the face to face workshops v’s the views on our YouTube Channel, the matter of changing our delivery to purely virtual was discussed in both our service development day and one of the monitoring groups. As such the monitoring group agreed that future workshops would be better focused purely via our virtual offer as this would be accessible at the time that the service user needs. This would have a positive impact on the core offer and better use of service capacity.

**Final thoughts…**

**Follow up of actions from the previous Annual Report (22/23) – our successes!**

* The Service has provided a SENDIASS overview to potential service users who have Special Guardianship Orders. We are now able to provide data on those who disclose their SGO status at the start of our involvement. This is also in place for those who disclose a Child in Need at the start of our input.
* The Service has employed a staff member who is multilingual. It is hoped this will have an impact on service reputation within some underrepresented communities.
* The Service has further developed the virtual offer, developing areas such as mediation and tribunals. The YouTube channel is being well used and this is significantly increased from previous year.
* The Service has provided postcards on SENDIASS to primary schools and intends to deliver these to other settings in line with our publicity plan.
* The service is now able to capture data on response times.

**What are we worried about? – Service specific**

* The service has experienced an eight month period where we have been on a limited offer due to staff leaving and the ongoing recruitment process. This has impacted on the feedback comments we have received.
* National Tribunal timescales continue to impact on the number of tribunal cases we hold ‘open’. This issue prevents cases from moving from open to closed over a reasonable time frame and if this continues, is likely to impact on a ‘bottle neck’ of cases within the team.
* Number of Children and Young People who are receiving IAS in their own right, have dropped this period.
* Minority Groups remain underrepresented.
* Workshops have a ‘dropout rate’ from those who book a place, and in some cases have shown limited interest too despite being publicised widely.
* Service users who have heard about SENDIASS from Schools remains low compared to other avenues. Having limited publicity materials available impacted on the full delivery of our publicity plan within specified timeframes. This has since been rectified and as such publicity can now continue.

**What are we worried about? – the wider picture**

* The Service has a high number of service users making contact about SEND Support. Broken down further this is predominantly due to limited or unclear communication between home and school on the support on offer and complaints about the SEND offer from schools. There is the additional concern as a number of families have also made contact as a result of the provision within section F of EHC plans not being delivered within their named setting (this is reported as ‘complaint other’ in the EHC section).
* Although enquiries that are related to EHC processes have not increased this year, enquiries about tribunal and mediations have almost doubled.
* Our data relating to EHC and Annual Reviews, show an increase in parents seeking information and advice about changing section I of their child’s EHC plan (the school/setting named).

**What’s working well?**

* All vacant posts have now been filled and staff are trained to a good standard, with just the advanced level of IPSEA Training to complete. It is envisaged this will be completed by the summer break in 2024.
* Although feedback on the offer of support may include some negative responses due to service capacity, we have offered more meeting support this year than requested in previous years.
* Service users continue to make use of the Website including the virtual pre-recorded workshops via the YouTube Channel. Views on the YouTube Channel have increased significantly as have hits to the website.
* The Service is compliant with all minimum standards and its offer of IAS to all service users in all areas as specified in the SEND Code of Practice.
* Service users are accessing the support on offer around the more complex situations they encounter such as exclusions, mediations, tribunals.
* Service reach has increased from previous year.
* Majority of service users receive initial contact from a trained staff member within 5 working days of their contact.
* All staff are able to access a high level of independent training on all SEND related topics.
* SENDIASS provides termly reports on service use which is shared with key staff within the local area to help inform policy and practice. The Service has also been involved in strategic development in some areas.

**What needs to happen?**

* For the service to further develop our reach to vulnerable groups such as those with SGO’s, LAC, CIN and those who have English as an additional language.
* For the Service to build on the virtual workshop offer (placed on YouTube) to particularly build on those topics where we see high demand of information, advice and support.
* For the service to consider the offer around workshops given the drop out rate v’s the use of YouTube.
* For the Service to consider ways in which the offer of IAS can be further utilised for children and young people (continued from previous year).
* For the Service to reach out to schools and settings, offering SENCO’s a quick solution to sharing the IAS offer when SEND is first identified (continued from previous year)