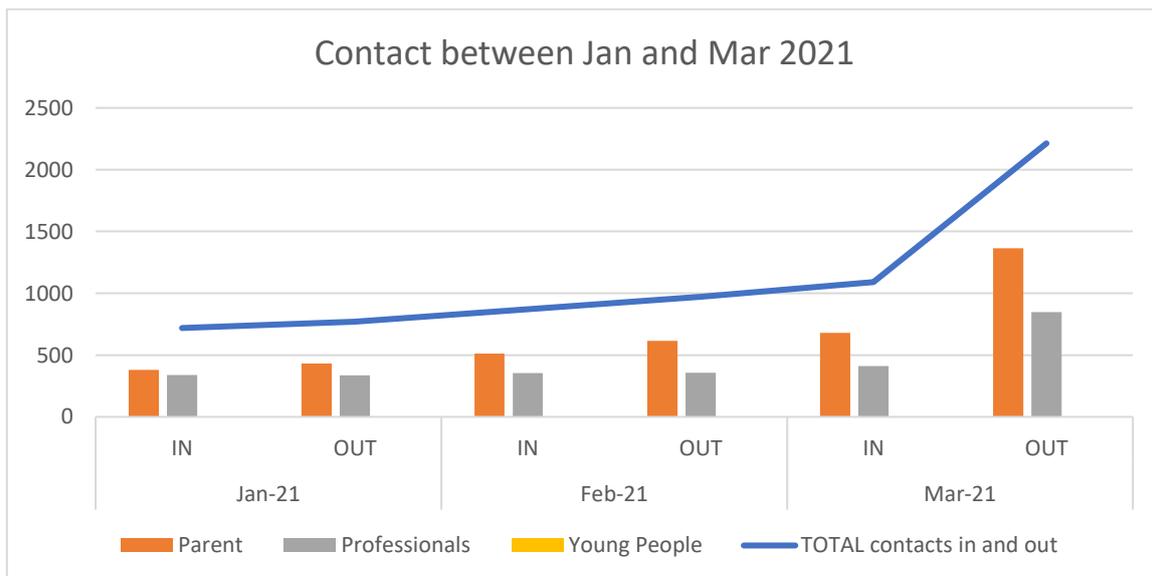


Annual Report for 2020 to 2021 from SEND Advice Surrey

We had two new Advisors start as we went into Lockdown and both undertook their training both online and ‘face to face’ extremely quickly. The support from the team was all provided over Teams.

The demand for the service continued to rise in this reporting period. We were surprised that there was no reduction during the first lockdown. The graph shows the number of contacts (April 2020 to March 2021) we received, broken down to parents, professionals and young people:



Due to the sharp increase last year and difficulties in being able to give timely responses as a result of the demand for the service, we have re-considered how we give information,

advice and support to ensure that we are empowering and enabling parents and young people to move on in their own situation, whilst managing their expectations.

This enabled us give time to those who needed more intense support, for example in representing in appeals, therefore they were not disadvantaged. We quickly improved our Information Sheets and used emails to support parents in a timely fashion whilst still keeping confidentiality while we worked from home.

The Top 10 main reasons for people to contact us in 2020 to 2021:

	Reason for contact
1	Appeals/Tribunals
2	Admissions
3	EHC Needs Assessments
4	Key Stage Transfers
5	Social Care
6	Placement
7	EHCP Advice inc. Final or Draft
8	No response from Case Officer
9	Annual Reviews
10	COVID-19

SENDIAS Information Sheets:

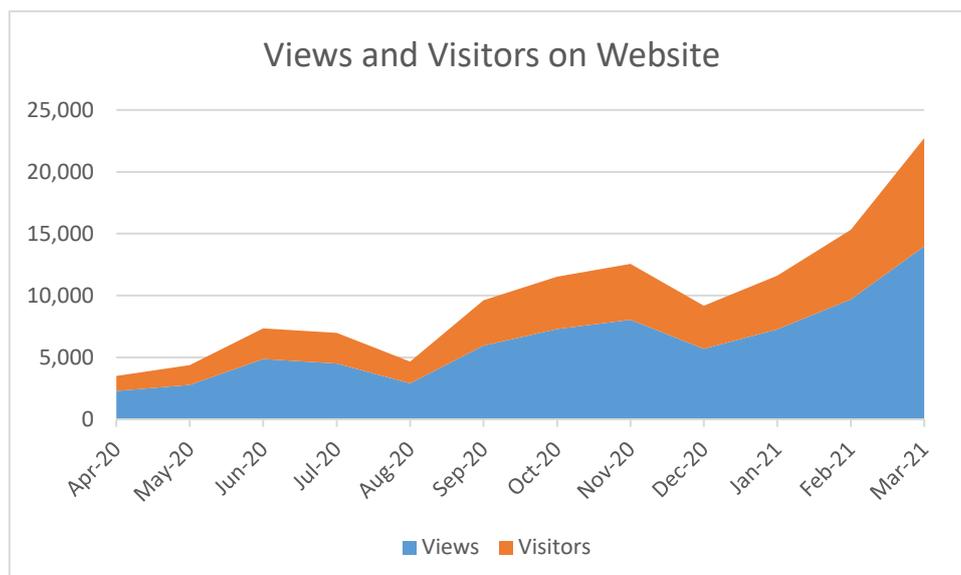
We now have 70 Information Sheets that are produced following an increase in calls regarding an issue. These are then used to email out to parents to ensure they have a resource to refer to following our advice and support. All can be accessed from our website.

Other councils have also contacted us to use our sheets for their sites.

We also see an increase in access to these Information Sheets form the website and a decrease in this type of call coming through to us.

Website:

This table shows the huge increase in visitors accessing our website and the number of views made. In April 2020 we had 1227 visitors with 2291 views then in March 2021 we increased to 8743 visitors with 13,980 views:



The top 10 downloaded pages from our website in 2020 to 2021 are:

	Downloaded pages
1	Child Friendly explanation of COVID
2	COVID info and guidance
3	Contact Helpline
4	Making a request for an EHC Needs Assessment
5	School Refuser
6	After I checked an EHCP
7	EHCP and the sections
8	Easy Read Minimum Standards
9	Our Flyer
10	Early Years who is who

We hope these sheets help our users and others, including professionals, to understand SEND processes and we hope they have a positive impact for all in understanding different aspects of the EHCP process and beyond.

Social media:

We continue to develop and improve our use of social media and our presence on the platform. We have used Twitter for a number of years but are hoping to improve the accessibility of the SENDIAS service by having a Facebook page as we know that Facebook is a good platform to share information, to follow what SEND-related information is trending at the moment, and to reach new people and services.

We hope that our twitter page will continue to promote new pages as they are produced. Most of our followers are business and companies rather than parents. Parents have fed back that they use Facebook over Twitter. We have had conversations with the appropriate teams in the LA regarding a Facebook page and hope our Business Case will be agreed. This is still work in progress.

We also wanted to be more strategic with how we use social media to promote our service, to show that we work in an impartial manner and share information and resources that may be useful for families.

We therefore put together a plan to promote:

- regular tweets that highlight how we work and how we can help with information, advice and support
- Weekly A-Z of SEND that would promote a particular subject and link to related resources depending on the trends we hear through contacts.

We have an Advisor who leads on social media and the website and we hope to have one of the new Advisors supporting moving forward.

We had 443 followers, followed 109 and had made 841 tweets in April 2020. By the end of the reporting period we had 536 followers, followed 144 and had made 1190 tweets (March 2021).

Face to face support:

During Lockdown we continued to offer face to face support but via Teams and Zoom. Our plan was to launch our Face to Face Friday sessions but these were put on hold due to the Lockdown. The sessions were to be offered following investigation into different venues e.g. cafes, libraires, different time slots and we worked with partners to ensure they would meet the needs of our users. We also used our knowledge from our booking slot system.

The plan was to offer 30-minute Teams slots between 10am to 12pm. We could also use this time to deliver training to parents as the plan is to have two Advisors marked out to attend each session. These will be term time only.

We would still offer Face to Face slots out of this time.

Moving forward we will target Schools to offer drop in face to face sessions at these times.

The Plan is to launch these sessions once restrictions relax.

Feedback:

Parents

“Thank you so much for all of this I really do appreciate it. You have been more helpful than anyone else so far so I am really very grateful and it was nice to speak to you. As I said I actually feel like we might now get somewhere and even if we aren't successful at least I am doing something to try. Take care and stay safe”.

“May I thank you from the bottom of my heart for all your dedicated work and help. It is much appreciated”.

“Thank you for producing your monthly trends. It's so lovely to see that I'm not the only person in this situation”.

“Every word is true and more, you deserve so much more, I know I can be a pain and probably have been throughout this process but if it wasn't for you I would have given up long ago, you've kept me fighting, so thank you from me and [child], try have a less stressful day, speak soon, all the best”.

Professionals

“Dear SEND Advice Team, firstly, thank you for the invaluable service you offer, I frequently refer parents to you and I know they appreciate the support they receive”.

“Thank you so much for your support mum will find this very helpful and will help to reduce some of her anxiety”.

Additional comments can be found on our monthly trends reports.

Surrey Says

We continue to send out the IASN questions to collect feedback. We now have an Advisor who leads on this piece of work and has been developing the database to ensure the correct users are contacted. A new Advisor will be supporting on this work once they are trained and settled. Summaries are produced and these go on our website but work is needed to tighten this process and improve the quality and accuracy of feedback.

Adapting during the pandemic

As mentioned, we haven't been able to offer face to face opportunities, but we have used technology to offer support that enabled interaction with our service users over and above phone and email support.

We had a Business Continuity Plan that included what to do in the case of heavy snow and we were able to put this into action to ensure there were no gaps in our advice and support given, providing a seamless service. The team have laptops, mobiles and we were able to access our voicemails from home.

When there were appeals we were representing at, we travelled to the office to ensure we were offering the best support (with the strongest internet access!) at the virtual hearings. We also travelled in to print bundles and post these to parents.

As mentioned we produced resources to empower those parents/carers/young people that are able to help themselves and be their own advocates. These include how to check your draft EHC Plan and how to request an Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA). These were then updated as the process changed in Surrey.

We have had some lovely feedback from parents who found these useful and beneficial as they were able to access information and advice quickly to reassure them as to the best course of action: *"The attached pdf is wonderful. That's the best organised information I got so far. I am trying google in last few days for info"*.

Now we have access to Microsoft Teams and Zoom, Advisers can attend meetings virtually with parent, saving travel time. Advisers have also used the online meeting software to support parents in completing forms whilst sharing their screens.

Volunteers:

Following work on getting people who were interested in becoming volunteers and producing materials to help with this, we had to put the recruiting on hold due to Lockdown. We had also met with our local volunteer's support group and had attended training and had spoken to HR to get this piece of work underway.

Understandably the two interested parties contacted us to say that they were withdrawing their interest so that they could home educate their children during the closure of Schools.

Planning for next year 2021 to 2022:

We are continually looking forward, to see what else we can do to further improve our service. Setting up a Steering Group will help with this along with using the feedback we get from Surrey Says questionnaires.

The priority for the team was to reduce the waiting time for those that contact us and to ensure there are supporting materials and training to ensure we offer the best service we can as a team. We also needed to support the newer team members especially as they started during the first lockdown and haven't even met the rest of the team face to face.

Area of development:

- **Steering Group:** to ensure that representation is made up of at least 25% parent carers and there is a clear induction process for all. Find parents that are interested in becoming a parent representative. Have the group agree to the supporting documentation and our policies.
- **Training for Professionals:** working with LA colleagues to produce online (maybe webinar) training for professionals on the 'basics of SEND'. This will help any professional that is supporting a family to have a basic understanding of 'SEN Support', Education, Health and Care Needs Assessments', 'Education, Health and Care Plans' and Annual reviews for example.

- **Parent videos/webinars:** look at the top downloaded documents from our website along with our knowledge, to produce webinars to support parents.
- **Translating:** investigate and research the languages spoken in Surrey and use the top 5 to translate the top sent and downloaded Information sheets into those languages.
- Look at ways that parents can share their stories of how the SENDIAS Service helped them in their situation. This could help other parents to understand SENDIAS more but also a way to give them the confidence to access our service if needed. continue to expand our Information Sheets as and when a trend is highlighted by the team. Get these on the website as soon as we can to support and empower parents.
- **Enable co-production** with children and young people by making stronger links with user participation team, developing information and advice for C/YP and having an area on our website if research shows this would be beneficial.
- **Volunteers:** use the work already carried out to develop a team of volunteers to support with meetings for example.
- **Website:** continue to develop the access and content for our families.
- **Collecting feedback:** monitor is collecting the feedback from users on a monthly basis improves the awareness of our service asking rather than that of other teams. Add 'our reply' to comments for users to see that improvement is being made or the reasons things happen.
- **Improve communication links to other services:** continue to develop links with other services and development avenues to share trends, concerns and positive news to improve our service and the experience for parents and families in Surrey.

SEND Advice Surrey Manager
Dated April 2021