



**MILTON KEYNES
SEND IAS**

SEND Information, Advice and Support Service

**Annual Report
April 2022 – March 2023**

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1. Introduction

The Children and Families Act 2014 and the SEND Code of Practice 0-25 requires that quality information, advice and support is offered to:

- children and young people (0 -25) with SEN and/or disabilities
- parents of children with SEN and/or disabilities

There should be access to free, impartial, accurate and confidential information, advice and support about education, health, and social care for children, young people and their parents on matters relating to special educational needs and disability. The provision of information, advice and support should help to promote independence and self-advocacy for children, young people, and parents. Chapter 2 of the SEND Code of Practice sets out the role and activities of an IASS service.

2. National Context

A dedicated and easily identifiable service providing impartial information, advice and support is a statutory requirement of every local authority. In Milton Keynes the SENDIAS Service delivers this support to children and young people with additional needs as well as their parents and carers.

The Children and Families Act 2014 underpins the SEND Code of Practice 2015 and together form the legislative framework for the service delivery of information, advice, and support (IAS) services across England.

The Information, Advice and Support Network (IASSN) provides training and support to local IAS services across England. All staff are required to undertake [IPSEA](#) SEND legal training. The [IASS Network](#) is funded by the Department for Education and is based within the Council for Disabled Children in the National Children's Bureau.

The SENDIAS Service in Milton Keynes links with other services within the East Midlands region to share good practice, facilitate cost effective training and benefit from peer support.

All IAS services are required to comply with the [Minimum Standards](#) endorsed by the Council for Disabled Children and Department for Education. The IASS Minimum Standards have the four areas: Commissioning, governance and management arrangements; Strategic functions; Operational Functions; and professional development and training for staff.

This report reflects how the SENDIAS service in Milton Keynes meets these standards, and the information, advice and support the service has provided to children, young people and parent/carers during the 12 month period from April 2022 to March 2023.

3. Delivery Model in Milton Keynes

Milton Keynes SENDIAS is a statutory 'in house' service commissioned by Milton Keynes City Council (MKCC). Since February 2021, the MK SENDIAS Service has been part of the Children's Services Directorate, positioned alongside the SEND service area. The service remains impartial and works at arm's length from the council. There are clear arrangements put in place for the service to retain its impartiality and confidentiality.

The role of the service is to ensure that children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and their parents and carers, have access to impartial information advice and support, so that they can make informed decisions about matters relating to their special educational needs.

The team is home based and mainly works remotely. We maintain an external database, independent website, dedicated email, and telephone line. We have our own social media account. We also have our own branded literature and information resources. The database is only accessible to SENDIASS team members.

The support for families is delivered via a dedicated advice line, email, and online referral process. For those needing a higher level of support, face to face support is available. Along with face-to-face meetings, we also offer virtual meetings. In addition, the service provides a range of outreach information and drop-in sessions (often collaboratively with other services and organisations), a training programme for families and professionals and an annual SEND information day (delivered jointly with PACA MK – the local parent carer forum).

Staffing:

Currently, the team comprises of a Team Manager, and three Caseworkers, one of whom is a Senior Caseworker. All members of staff are part-time, and the staffing levels equate to the equivalent of 2.95 FTE staff.

During the period covered by this report, one of our experienced staff members retired and we have taken on senior casework who have recently completed her legal training.

The budget is managed by the SENDIAS Team Manager. Core funding for the Service from the Local Authority has not been increased since 2013. The Service has some carried forward amount from an IASP grant which is helping to maintain the current staffing levels of 4 part time employees.

4. Information, Advice and Support Programme (IASP)

The DfE grant funded programme for SENDIAS Services ended in March 2022. The loss of the grant will affect all SENDIAS Services nationally and ultimately result in changes to the service we are able to offer.

We will continue to evaluate the Service against the Minimum Standards and will report any identified risks to the Service to the Service Commissioners.

Any unspent contract funding at the end of the financial year will be carried forward to help sustain the salary commitment for 23/24.

5. Service Level Agreement

The [Service Level Agreement](#) details the service delivery available for families living in Milton Keynes.

6. Service Delivery

Our aim is to empower people who contact us for support to navigate the SEND assessment processes, prepare for meetings and help with documentation. We are not an advocacy

service and as we are impartial, do not favour either side or have influence over the outcome of any meeting.

Our criteria for face-to-face support at meetings with school/setting is determined by the needs and circumstances of the parent/carer, child or young person and by the capacity of the service. We prioritise direct work with young people.

Parent/carers in the first instance, are provided with a telephone appointment, and/or email advice and guidance to be able to access the information they need to represent themselves. We may signpost to other services. We do not give priority to any impairment, disability, or special educational need, and we do not campaign for any particular approach to education.

Between April 2022 and March 2023:

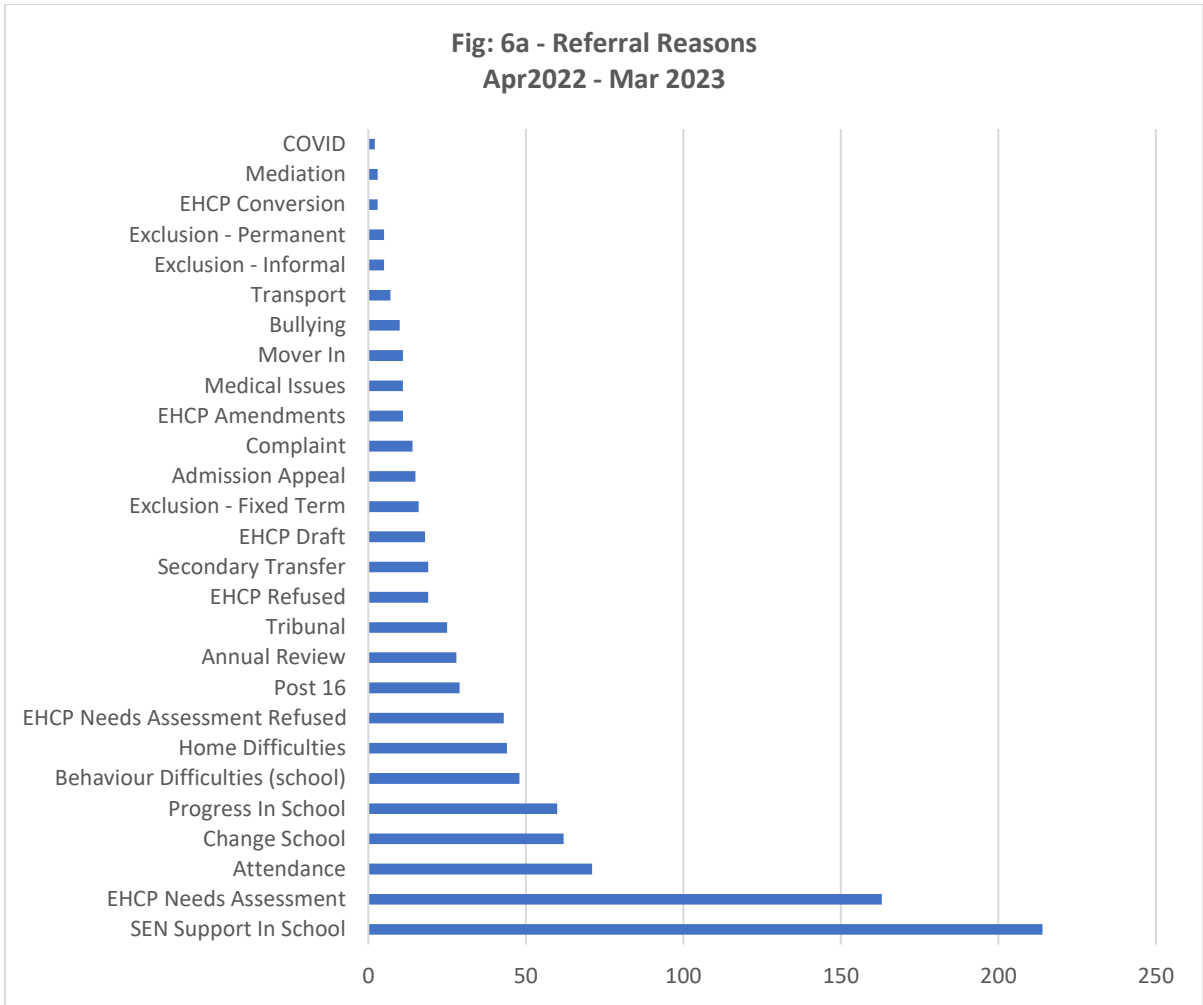
- 882 new referrals have been received (5.16% increase from last year)
- Almost 5,550 contacts (calls/email/meetings) were recorded.
- 895 families and professionals have accessed the service* (10.22% increase from last year)

*Due to an increase in contact from professionals from health, education, and social care teams, we now record and report these contacts as these are resulting in signposting support and/or advice.

The five main reason parent/carers contacted our service are:

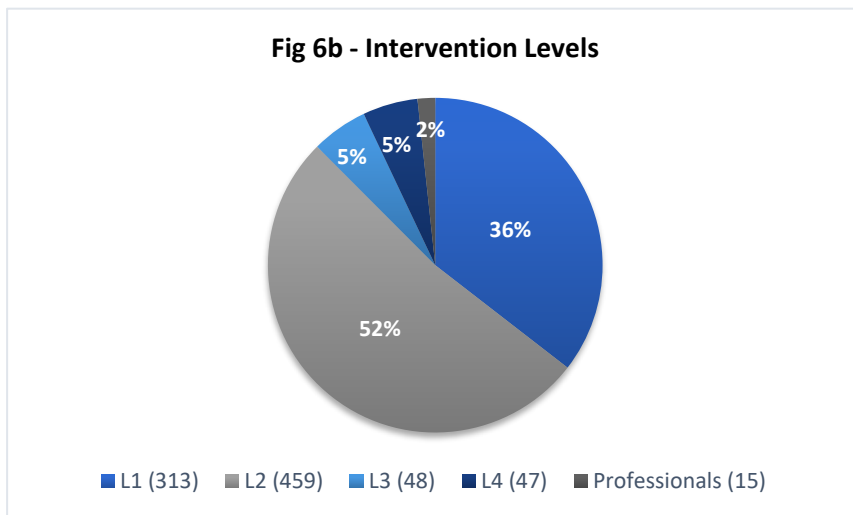
Reasons	Numbers
SEN Support In School	214
EHCP Needs Assessment	163
Attendance	71
Change School	62
Progress In School	60

The figure 6a outlines all referral reasons of new referrals.



Intervention service levels for casework: The referrals (casework) are recorded following the IASS (Information, Advice, and Support Service) national guidelines, monitoring the demand for different types of support locally and regionally. There are [4 intervention levels](#): L1 signposting, L2 casework, L3 complex, L4 Legal

The Service Manager reviews cases recorded under these on a half-termly basis to ensure accurate reporting. The table below show the levels of casework undertaken by the service during the reporting period.



7. Workshops, events, and outreach

- **Parent/carer Workshops**

SENDIAS have continued to deliver online workshops covering SEN Support, EHCP, Annual Review and School exclusion.

Apr22/Mar23	
No of workshops	5
Attendance	54

- **SEND Drop-in Sessions**

Due to the pandemic and lockdowns, we were unable to offer these sessions. In November, we resumed our drop-in session for MK families. The four sessions we delivered during the year have taken place at family centres: Rowans, Daisy Chain, Moorlands and Hedgerows. These sessions have been jointly delivered with the parent carer forum (PACA MK), Carers MK and MK Local Offer. Over 33 families have benefited from these sessions.

- **ASD/SCD Parenting Course**

SENDIAS is a regular contributor to the Autistic Spectrum Disorder/Social Communications Difficulties (ASD/SCD) Parenting Course. This 4-week multi agency delivered course is delivered termly via MS Teams and SENDIAS contribute to session # 4 on the support available for families.

The table below, summarises the events and number of attendees.

Apr22/ Mar23	
Drop-in sessions	4
Attendance (parents/carers)	33
Schools: Coffee morning and Wellbeing events	3
Attendance (parents/carers)	15
Community events	1
Attendance (parents/carers)	10

8. Additional Projects

Projects outside the core IAS work of SENDIAS include:

- Summer SEND Information Day – 18 June 2022**

This was a standalone event offered to families following our annual SEND festival in February, which was moved online due to rising Covid infections. Our aim was to offer families information and resources (information stands and children's workshops) that would normally have been provided through our annual information day in February.

The event was jointly hosted with PACA MK and took place at the Milton Keynes Professional Development Centre. It was attended by 97 adults and 55 CYP. 20 Organisations attended with their information stalls.

Only Children and Young People’s Workshops were offered, including Showtime Circus, MK Gallery craft workshop, Spectrum Arts and a glass-decorating workshop provided by Community Learning MK. Overall workshop attendance was low:

MK Gallery	Session 1 - 25%	Session 2 - 68%
Spectrum Arts	Session 1 - 30%	Session 2 - 50%
Showtime Circus	Session 1 - 100%	Session 2 - 28.5%
Glass Decorating	Session 1 - 0%	Session 2 - 60

b. Annual SEND Information Day – 04 February 2023

February saw another successful event with over 310 children, young people and adults attending our usual annual SEND information day. The previous two annual events were online. This event was organised in collaboration with PACA MK.

The event was formally opened by the Mayor of Milton Keynes - Amanda Marlow, and Jon Ralphs from NDTi gave the keynote speech ‘Top Tips from A Dad’s Journey Through SEND’. This was followed by a dance performance from “What’s the Drama”. The opening ceremony was live streamed on SENDIAS’ Facebook page.

Every year various services in the LA, health and voluntary sectors participate and this year was no exception. There were over 30 information stands. A free crèche and lunch were also provided. Guests could also visit Petite Ponies with their children.

Parent and carer workshops included: Positive Behaviour Support; POST 16 Options: Parents ‘Play Needs You’; Anxiety Workshop; Georgie’s Journey to work. Children and young people joined in workshops on arts and crafts, gymnastics, and dance.

c. SEND Strategy: Our service has worked on the Local Authority’s SEND Strategy for 2021-2025. We have worked collaboratively with SEND services, health and community organisations on five key priority areas.

d. Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) - A guide for parents and carers has been written by MK SENDIAS service along with colleagues from PACA MK (parent carer forum), Milton Keynes Educational Psychology Service and the LA’s Senior Attendance Officer (legal interventions).

9. Advisory Group

Our Advisory Group comprises of an excellent diverse group of people including young people, parents/carers, professionals from youth services, schools (primary, secondary and special) and social care. The group meets three times a year via MS Teams.

10. Website and Social Media

Website

In May 2022 we launched our new independent website <https://mksendias.org.uk/>. The website features SEND related information, advice and support including factsheets and template letters. There is a dedicated section for young people.

We have also changed the domain of our email address from *milton-keynes.gov.uk* to *mksendias.org.uk*. For example the Service's email is changed from mksendias@milton-keynes.gov.uk to contact@mksendias.org.uk

Social Media

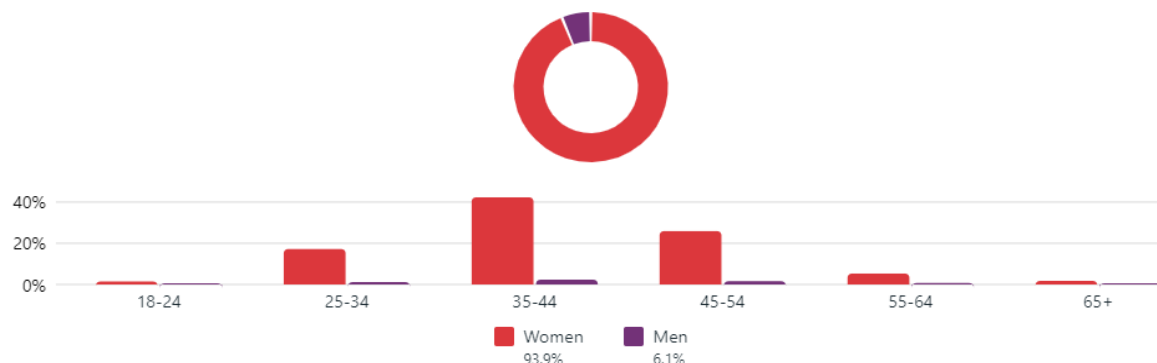
- Facebook

MK SENDIA Service has an active Facebook account. www.facebook.com/MKSENDIAS

All likes/follows are organic and based on the content of the page.

As of 31 March 2023, we have **1829 likes** and **2175 followers**. 93.9% are identified as female with the majority in the age range of 35-44. Most of our followers are from Milton Keynes (66.9%).

Age & gender ⓘ



Top towns/cities



- Twitter

Handle: @MKSENDInfoDay

This account has 70 followers and is active around annual SEND Information Day.

11. Service Feedback from parents and carers

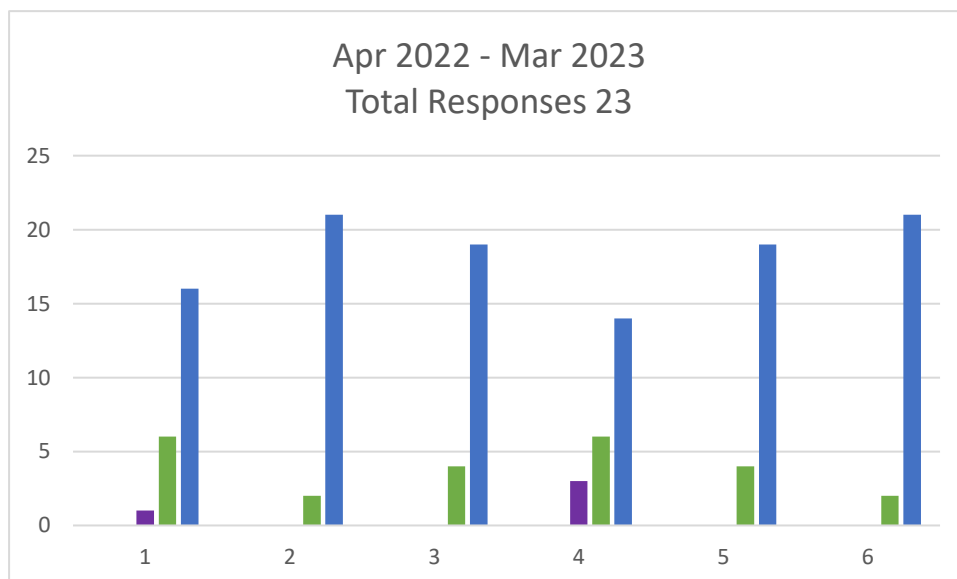
We have received 23 responses during 2022/23 period.

Apr22/Mar23	
Responses	23

Total six questions and text box for comments.

Scale **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** 5 😊 to 1 ☹️

1. How easy was it to get in touch with us?
2. How helpful was the information, advice and support we gave you?
3. How neutral, fair and unbiased do you think we were?
4. What difference do you think our information, advice or support has made for you?
5. Overall, how satisfied are you with the service we gave?
6. How likely is it that you would recommend the service to others



Comments included with feedback

XXX, who we had communication with, was so supportive in a stressful situation. I feel the advice given, really helped me prepare during the appeal process and has helped us get the best possible outcome for our son XXX (Jun 2022)

Although initially I booked a session with the SENDIAS team I forgot about it and kept thinking that I've to book again . It was a nice surprise when XXX called me and discussed all the challenges I was facing personally. It felt like a personal customised service and the signposting was so helpful . Thanks for the support. (Jun 2022)

We'd like to thank XXX for all her support and help with our son. She's been invaluable (Aug 2022)

XXX has been invaluable to me, and my case. Her advice has been great and made me feel empowered. (Aug 2022)

XXX, has been extremely helpful, answering my question very clearly and in a consistent manner, where I can understand the next steps and continuing to support me through my journey, which is not yet over. But I have faith that I will get the result my child requires. Thank You so much and continue the great work and support you provide us families. Regards XXX (Aug 2022)

Called during summer holidays hence score of 4 as waited for call back, happy too wait and someone did call. XXX was excellent, listened to my concerns and needs and very quickly emailed information and further contacts and advice. Is also looking for more information/contacts tba. Sam also said she was happy for me to follow up with her if struggling to get right support from college etc for daughter. Very helpful and polite. many thanks (Sep 2022)

Such a lovely lady. Really understanding. She offered some helpful advice on next steps. We just wish as parents we didn't have to fight so hard to get our daughter the support she so desperately needs. There is a serious lack of funding in schools. (Jan 2023)

Brilliant service. Clear and great advice and Information XXX was our caseworker she was amazing (Feb 2023)

Thank you it felt really good to talk through the situation and be listened too and to feel that something could be done; i just wish i had known to come to you sooner for support. (Feb 2023)

Great service with lots of support (Feb 2023)

XXX knows her stuff, but my mind at ease answered all my questions without judgement, able to offer advice without being biased.

Thoroughly would recommend to any family that need advice... (Feb 2023)

12. Moving Forward

In recent years, the team's capacity has significantly reduced. The team is still maintaining a high level of support to families via a dedicated advice line, email, website resources and virtual/face to face meetings if required.

Unfortunately, we have said goodbye to two experienced members of the team (Feb 2022 and Aug 2022). So, the challenge moving forward is to continue to deliver high-quality support and advice with a smaller team.

The team remains focussed on delivering training for parents and young people virtually and in-person alongside its core remit.

There is a strong ethos of collaborative delivery of support for families within Milton Keynes of which SENDIAS is a part alongside its partners such as the parent carer forum and colleagues from services and teams within the local authority, health and the voluntary sector.

Milton Keynes Special Educational Needs & Disability Information, Advice & Support Service (MK SENDIAS)

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MK SENDIAS Service is commissioned by
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