



## **Dorset SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS)**

**Annual Report 2022- 2023 (1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023)**

*Please refer to Appendix A for a list of acronyms and their meanings.*

### **Introduction**

Dorset SENDIASS is a free, impartial service for children, young people, parents and families requiring confidential information, advice and support about SEND.

The aims of the SENDIASS Service:

- Provide a high quality, impartial, accurate and confidential service, which is at arm's length to the LA
- Provide advice relating to the relevant legislative frameworks by an IPSEA trained member of staff
- Ensure that service users understand their rights, roles and responsibilities
- Empower children, young people, parents and families to take an informed and active part in decision-making in order to pursue desired outcomes
- Contribute to partnership working with providers of education, alternative provision, training, supported employment, health and social care
- Ensure service users' views are heard and understood
- Influence the future shaping of services for users through strategic partnerships and links

On 1<sup>st</sup> February 2022, Family Action, a charity delivering a wide range of family support services nationally, was contracted by Dorset Council to take over the delivery of Dorset's SENDIASS service in order to ensure that an impartial, compliant and effective service is provided.

The service has now been fully transferred to Family Action and the service is running successfully with no issues during the transfer process.

### **1. Staffing**

#### **a) The team**

1<sup>st</sup> February 2022 saw the team, comprising of 3 staff members, transfer from Dorset Council to Family Action; these were 3 Case Officers (2 FT x 37 hours, 1 PT x 22.5 hours). The Case Officers were joined in late March by an Operational Manager with strategic responsibility for Family Action's services in Dorset and Wiltshire (4 hours allocated for Dorset) and a Project Lead, with responsibility for the day-to-day management of Dorset SENDIASS, who commenced in June (21 hours). A full time Case Officer began maternity leave in June (a healthy baby boy!) and her role was taken over in August by a maternity cover Case Officer (32 hours). The team was also joined by an Information and Triage Officer (12.5 hours, 12 months fixed term contract, funded by Family Action).

At the end of this financial year in March 2023, we had 3 Case Officers (1.0 + 0.6 + 0.86), 1 Triage and Information Officer (0.3), 1 Project Lead (0.6) and an Operational Manager (0.2) in post. This is equivalent to 3.56 FT staff members. In comparison, when Family Action took over the Dorset SENDIAS Service, 2.6 FTE staff were TUPE'd across, so we had increased capacity by 0.96 over the course of the financial year 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 in order to mitigate increasing demand on the service. As noted above, the TIO role was funded wholly by Family Action during this time.

The budget is currently being reviewed in order to consider how best to use remaining funds to employ supporting staff during the next financial year (2023-2024) in light of recent staffing changes and the continuing increase in demand for our service.

We are also in the process of considering how to best enable volunteer work hours to enhance our service through work placement opportunities.

All staff have completed the initial mandatory Family Action training and have undertaken the IPSEA Level 1, 2 and 3 (Independent Provider of Special Education Advice) legal modules where relevant for their roles; these have been completed by attending the IPSEA webinars.

## **b) Supervision**

Each staff member has a monthly, 90-minute supervision session. In March 2023, all staff completed the Family Action appraisal process. In between these times, there are team meetings, team briefings, peer support sessions and the PL has an 'open door' policy and regular conversations are held via email, phone calls and Teams. We aim to meet face-to-face throughout the year and last had a Team Day for training updates on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2023.

## **2. Case work**

### **a) Work with families**

During the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March, 1,125 families contacted our service. The average working days to first response was 2 days, despite peak periods which caused some strain on the response times.

If an enquiry is marked as 'Closed Successfully', there has been information, advice or signposting provided that has been accepted by the service user as meeting their needs. There were 976 Initial Enquiries closed successfully.

A case marked as 'Converted to Case' means that further, ongoing, Level 2, 3 or 4 intervention is needed from the service. There were 149 enquiries converted to cases.

All support given by the Case Officers is based on their IPSEA training, knowledge of the SEND processes and experience of the Dorset County pathways. This support is accurate, impartial, confidential and at an arm's length as a service from the LA.

### **b) Safeguarding**

All staff are fully safeguarding and child protection trained. Some staff also have completed L3 safeguarding training from the Local Authority in addition to that provided by Family Action.

The DSL role has been handed over to the Project Lead in March 2023, and safeguarding remains a standing item during team meetings and supervisions to ensure oversight of risk assessed cases.

There have been 3 safeguarding incidents referred to CHaD and these have been followed up by the DSL in order to ensure a satisfactory outcome.

There were 23 Risk Assessments created in the 2022- 2023 financial year. Red risk assessments are reviewed monthly and amber risk assessments are reviewed 2 monthly. Red risk assessments include cases that have been referred to social care, cases involving children in care and children currently under a Child Protection order.

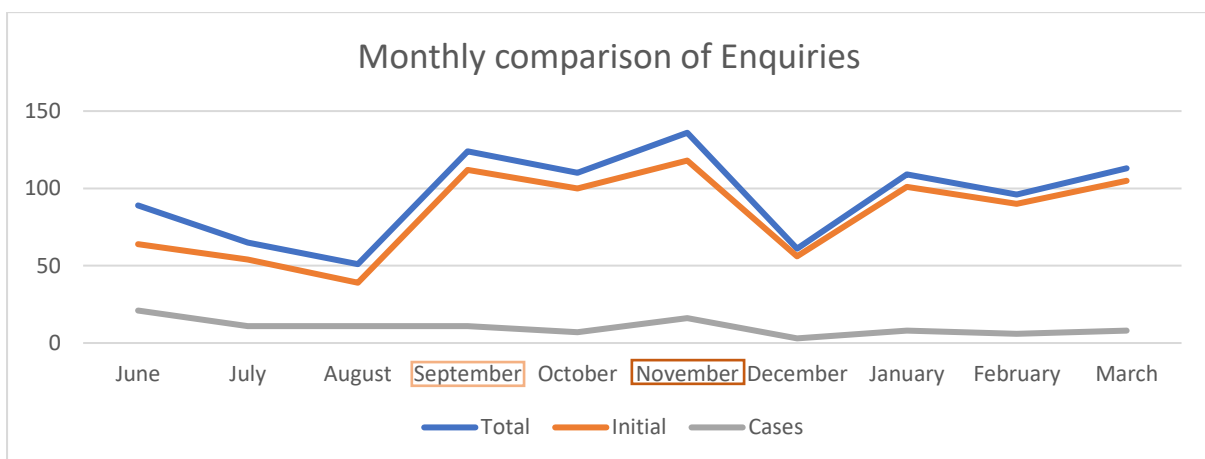
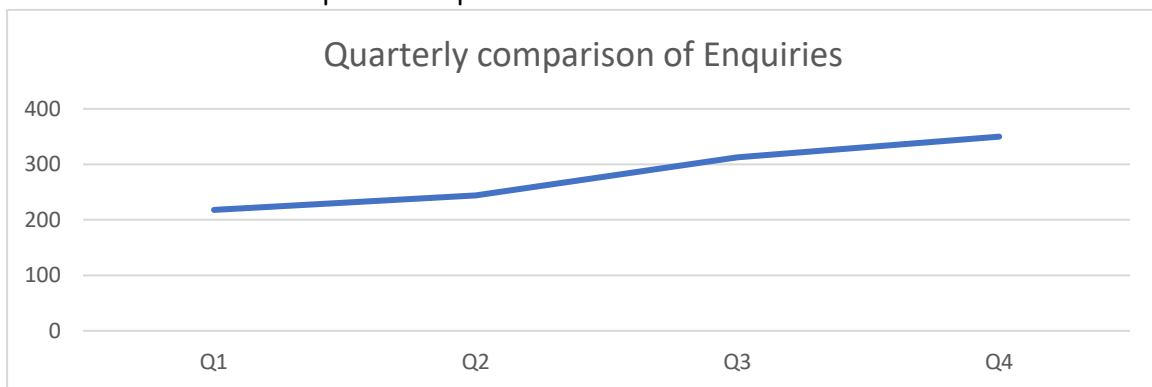
### c) Data Protection/ GDPR

All cases comply with Family Action’s Data Protection Policy and there has been no breach of confidentiality at a level that requires reporting to the ICO.

During an Initial Enquiry, staff gain service user’s permission (parents/carers, or a child/young person) to hold and keep data on InForm, Family Action’s case management system. Confidentiality and information sharing is discussed, after service users have read the Privacy Notice, which is signposted on our website. The nature of consent is agreed and recorded on Inform. Consent, data handling, processing and retention processes are clearly detailed on all survey forms and service users are asked to tick boxes to confirm that they have read and understood the Privacy Policy.

### 3. Summary of data

All data below covers the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022- 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.



Overall, Initial Enquiries have continued to increase throughout the financial year. It can be seen that case work decreased by the end of the financial year, after spikes in June and November, which reflects the (temporary) loss of an experienced case officer (maternity leave) and the need to close enquiries at an earlier level wherever possible.

September and November saw a spike in Initial Enquiries, with November generating a high amount of case work, too. The lower levels of enquiries, seen in August and December, are consistent with school holidays.

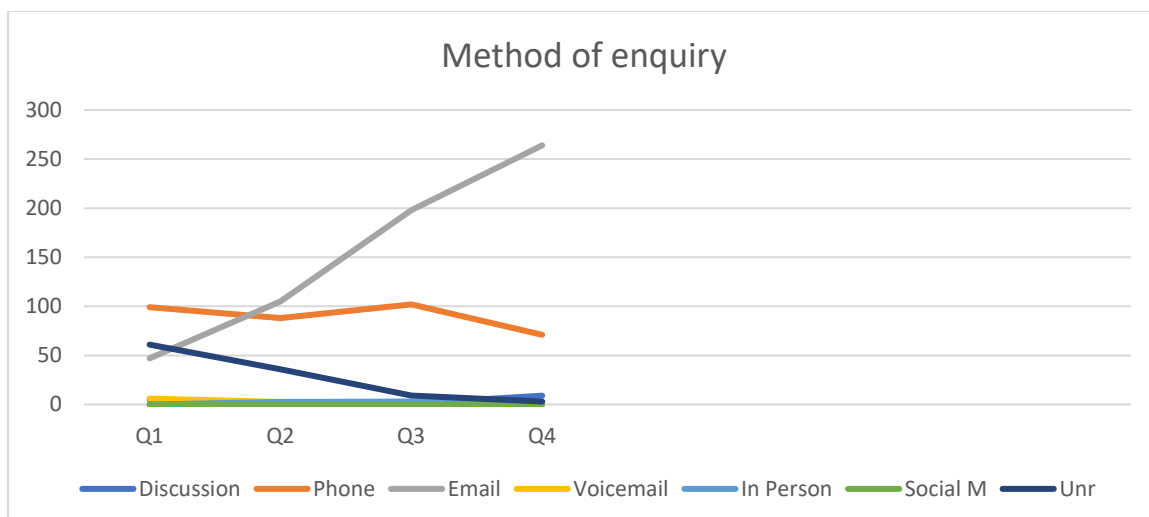
#### a) Locality of enquiries

	Purbeck	North	West	East	Dorchester	Chesil	Unknown	Total
<b>Q1</b>	23	53	16	44	15	42	25	218
<b>Q2</b>	37	35	12	44	20	35	61	244
<b>Q3</b>	35	42	23	67	32	50	64	313
<b>Q4</b>	27	53	33	53	35	80	69	350
<b>Annual</b>	122	183	84	208	102	207	219	1,125

The East and Chesil localities are consistent in generating the most enquiries, with the North peaking in quarter 1.

#### b) Method of enquiry

	Discuss	Phone	Email	Voicemail	In Person	Text	Social Media	Unrecorded	Total	%
<b>Q1</b>	5	99	47	6	0	0	0	61	218	19%
<b>Q2</b>	0	88	105	2.5	2.5	0	0	46	244	22%
<b>Q3</b>	1	102	198	0	3	0	0	9	313	28%
<b>Q4</b>	9	71	264	0	3	0	0	3	350	31%
<b>Annual</b>	15	360	614	8.5	8.5	0	0	119	1,125	100%
<b>%</b>	1%	32%	55%	0.75%	0.75%	0%	0%	10.5%	100%	



We started the financial year in April 2022 by setting up an enquiry system that could best deal with increased enquiries in a way that provided enough detail to successfully triage the service user. We promoted email contact via use of a Microsoft Forms on our website – an information gathering document - and it can be noted that email contact increased significantly, with fewer enquiries being taken over the phone.

### c) Reasons for enquiry

	Assessment	Complaint	Education	EHCP	Exclusion	Funding	Outreach	Signpost only	Social Care	Transition	Tribunal	Prep for Adulthood	Unknown	Total	%
<b>Q1</b>	27	7	44	82	7	4	1	0	1	3	16	1	25	218	19%
<b>Q2</b>	18	4	67	87	1	6	1	2	3	8	16	3	28	244	22%
<b>Q3</b>	7	4	115	75	10	5	1	1	0	19	30	2	44	313	28%
<b>Q4</b>	6	9	120	99	9	4	4	13	1	10	57	0	18	350	31%
<b>Annual</b>	58	24	346	343	27	19	7	16	5	40	119	6	115	1,125	100%
<b>%</b>	5%	2%	31%	30%	2%	2%	1%	1%	0.5%	4%	11%	0.5%	10%	100%	

'Education' and 'EHCP' have consistently been the main reasons for Initial Enquiries over the past 4 quarters. 'Education' includes themes such as: SEN Support, provision and curriculum; 'EHCP' includes: needs assessments, contents, placement, deadlines and discontinuation.

Each quarter has shown an increase in Initial Enquiries, with Q1 (19%) to 31% in Q4 – a 12% increase over the financial year.

### d) Enquiry outcomes

1,125 total Initial Enquiries = 976 closed with signposting advice + 149 converted to case

Signposting data:

District:	Unknown	Purbeck	North	West	East	Dorchester	Chesil	Out of Education	Total	% of 450 specified
<b>Unspecified</b>	114	63	81	36	91	38	102	1	526	
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> sector</b>	15	5	15	5	21	15	16	2	94	21%
<b>Advice Supp</b>	20	6	5	2	16	8	14	12	83	18%
<b>CCG</b>	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0.2%

<b>Ch Health</b>	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0.2%
<b>Healthwatch</b>	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
<b>LGO</b>	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
<b>Local Offer</b>	1	1	1	1	0	1	2	0	6	1%
<b>Mental Health</b>	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.2%
<b>Adult Social</b>	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0.2%
<b>Child Social</b>	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0.2%
<b>LA</b>	39	29	49	29	49	24	41	0	260	58%
<b>Total</b>	190	104	153	72	181	86	175	15	976	100%
<b>%</b>	19%	11%	16%	7%	19%	9%	18%	1.5%	100%	

The overwhelming majority (58%) of signposted enquiries were directed to the Local Authority.

This could have been for the following reasons:

- Directing those with an existing EHCP to the Provision Lead
- Discussions requiring Early Help
- Initial complaints about schools and provision
- Inclusion and attendance matters

The East generated the most Initial Enquiries of those where the district was known, closely followed by Chesil.

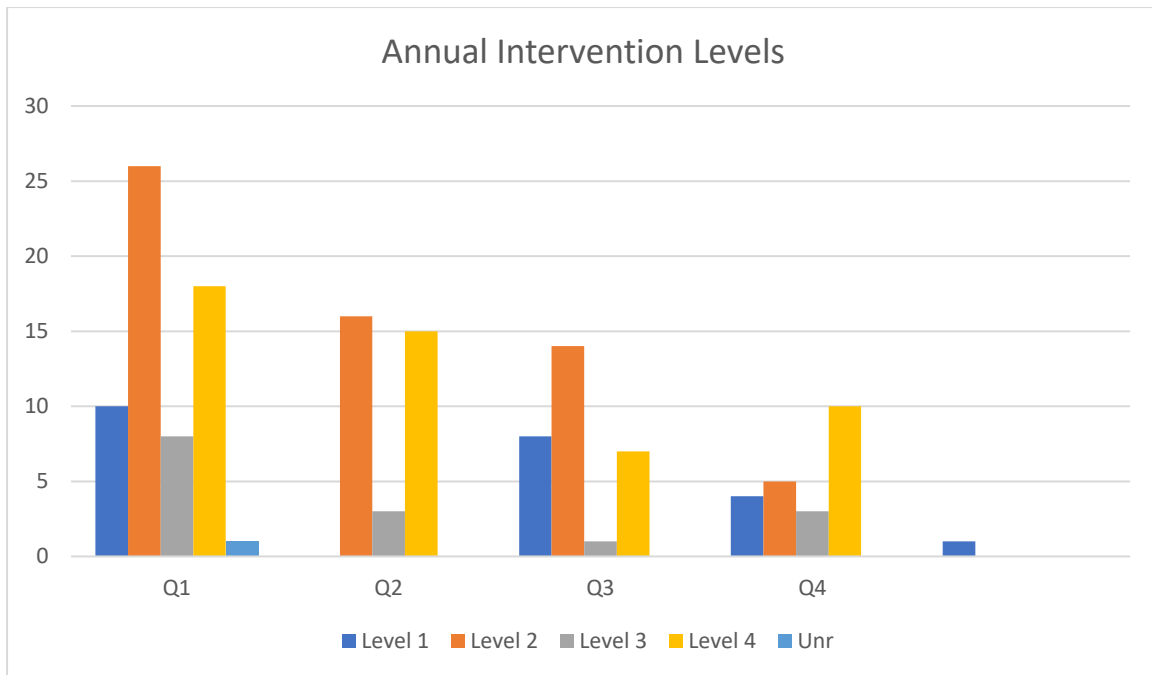
#### e) Open cases

There were 149 enquiries converted to cases in the financial year 2022- 2023; 53 of these became registered appeals (see information below).

#### f) Intervention levels

	L1	L2	L3	L4	Unrecorded	Total	%
<b>Q1</b>	10	26	8	18	1	63	42%
<b>Q2</b>	0	16	3	15	0	34	23%
<b>Q3</b>	8	14	1	7	0	30	20%
<b>Q4</b>	4	5	3	10	0	22	15%
<b>Annual</b>	22	61	15	50	1	149	100%
<b>%</b>	15%	41%	10%	34%	1%	100%	

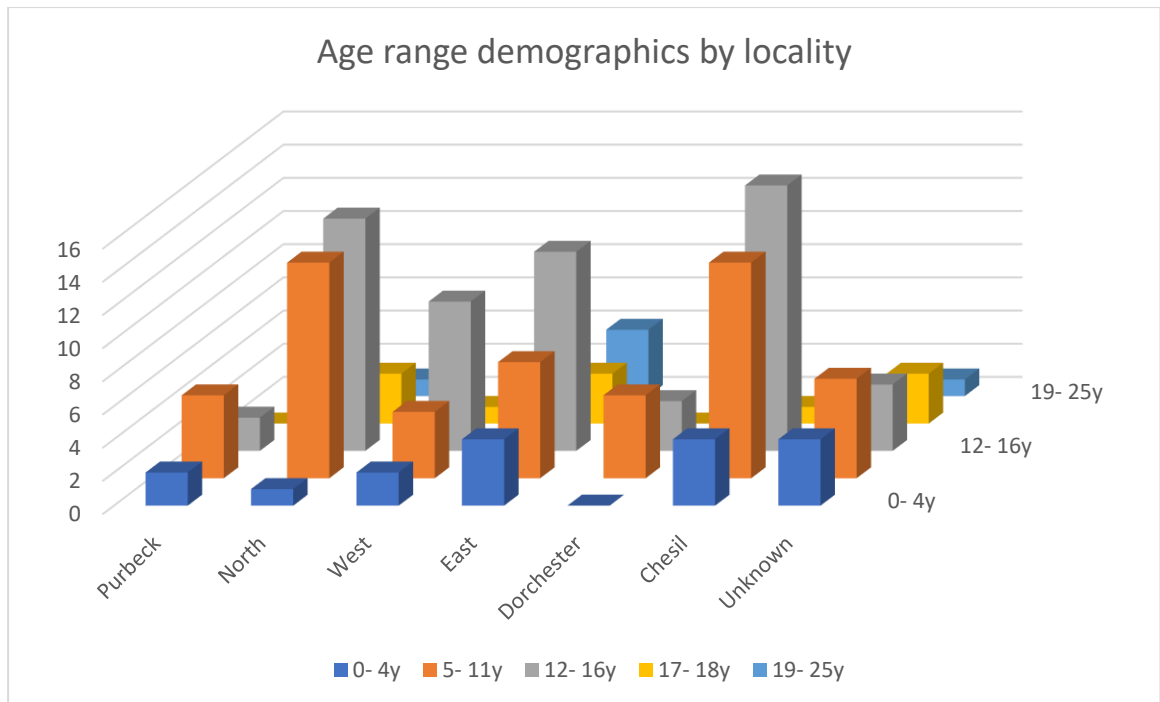
As demand grew for the service each quarter with an increasing number of complex Initial Enquiries, the capacity to convert to case work, in turn, decreased. Level 4 cases made up 34% of all cases in this financial year.



## g) Demographics

### Age ranges

	0-4	5-11	12-16	17-18	19-25	total	%
Q1	8	22	26	3	4	63	42%
Q2	5	10	16	2	1	34	23%
Q3	5	9	10	5	1	30	20%
Q4	2	11	8	1	0	22	15%
<b>Annual</b>	20	52	60	11	6	149	100%
<b>%</b>	13%	35%	40%	7%	4%	100%	



Throughout the quarters, the age ranges have swapped between 5-11 years (primary) and 12-16 years (secondary). This is likely to be due to phase transfer deadline dates. The areas with the highest demand with these age groups are the North and Chesil.

**Main SEND (NB: some users have 2 needs identified)**

	ASC	Asp	SLCN	MLD	SLD	SpLD	SEMH	ADHD	Physical Disability	Other	None	Total
Q1	36	6	3	10	2	2	11	0	2	0	9	81
Q2	24	2	0	0	0	0	4	4	0	0	0	34
Q3	17	0	2	1	1	1	6	0	0	3	1	32
Q4	16	0	1	2	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	22
Annual	93	8	6	13	3	3	23	5	2	3	10	N/A

ASC is the need most consistently enquired about, with SEMH (not including ADHD) as the secondary highest identified SEND.

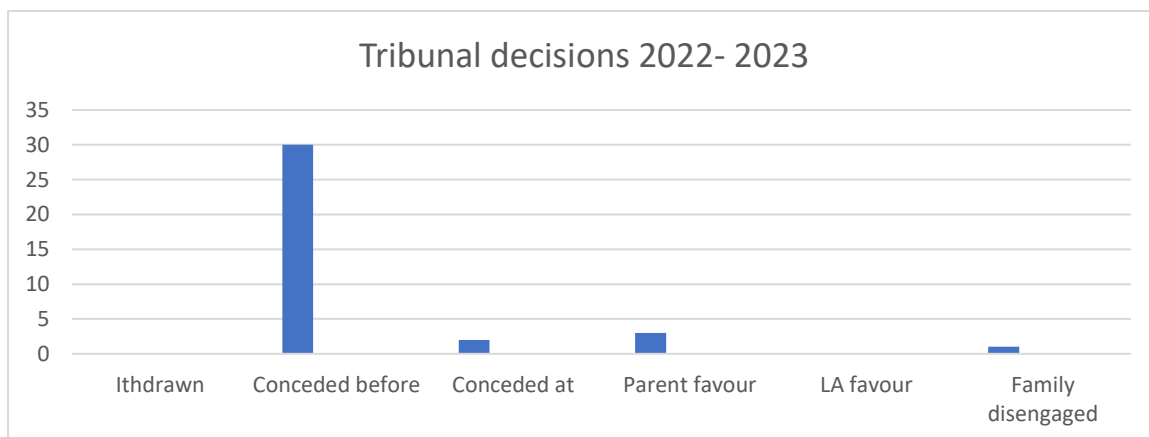
**Tribunal data:**

Tribunals April 2022 - March 2023		
Appeals registered in total	53	
Locality		
North	13	25%
West	9	17%
East	6	11%
Purbeck	6	11%
Chesil	16	30%
Dorchester	3	6%
Type of Appeal		



Refuse to assess	3	6%
Refuse to issue	3	6%
Content only	2	4%
Content and placement	17	32%
Placement only	20	38%
Extended Appeal	4	7%
Cease to maintain	4	7%
<b>Decisions (of 36 completed)</b>		
Withdrawn – agreement reached	0	0%
Conceded before Hearing	30	83%
Agreement reached/conceded at Hearing	2	6%
Parent favour	3	8%
LA Favour	0	0%
Case closed – family disengaged	1	3%
Ongoing	17	

Most tribunal work is generated from the North and Chesil localities with placement only, then content and placement, as the overwhelming type of appeal.



The decision data is striking with 83% of appeals being conceded by the Local Authority prior to the hearing. 91% of cases are either conceded before the hearing, or are in the parents' favour with 0% in the LA's favour during this financial year.

At hearings, 100% of decisions have been made in favour of parent, although there were only a few cases over the financial year that proceeded to a hearing.

There are also tribunals waiting to be registered. This work takes up a significant amount of work for our case officers.

#### **4. Feedback**

Due to the appointment of the Triage and Information Officer and the new, more streamlined processes for monitoring inboxes and inputting Inform data, we have an improved system for sending out Initial Enquiry, Case and Young Person surveys. However, we are still finding that few young people, in particular, respond to surveys.

## **Feedback received:**

Initial Enquiry = 4

Cases = 19

Young Person = 0

Please see **Appendix 2** for a sample of positive feedback received from our service users.

The Chair of the Steering Group and a Case Officer from Dorset SENDIASS represented the service during meetings with Ofsted inspectors, who conducted a pilot SEND inspection of Dorset Council in May 2022. The SENDIASS team was commended as part of the pilot inspection process. Inspectors reported very positively on the good leadership and effective service being provided for service users.

## **5. Case Audits and Themes**

### **a) Case Audits**

In July 2022, the wider team, including the Operational Manager, Chair and Vice Chair of the Steering Group, carried out two rounds of 'deep dive' case audits during in-person team meetings. The first audits (6 in total) focussed on identifying common themes within both Communication & Interaction needs (ASC) and complex Level 4 intervention work. The second 'deep dive' audits (3 in total) focussed on matters relating to Health. The outcomes of these meetings are detailed in the 'Themes' sections below.

From September 2022 onwards, the Project Lead has carried out monthly audits: one for each full-time Case Officer, with a specific focus. The outcomes influence 'Themes' meetings, help to identify gaps within the service and identify areas in need of further development.

### **b) Themes**

The 'deep dive' audits outlined above have identified themes that have been discussed at team meetings, steering group meetings, health boards, strategic/thematic senior management meetings and during other engagements with the Local Authority.

Themes that we have identified during the 'deep dive' case auditing process are outlined below:

- Assessment: processes and timeframes
- EHCPs: statutory deadlines and content
- Information Sharing
- Mental Health
- Children/Young People missing out on their right to a full-time education
- Children/Young People receiving no education/alternative provision at all
- Transitions
- Communication from Local Authority

The team collaborated with managers in order to produce a comprehensive document that outlined these identified areas in more detail, including reference to data gathered and the relevant legislation as outlined in the Children and Families Act, 2014. Themes have been shared and discussed in detail with the Health Designated Clinical Officer and other senior colleagues from education in several strategic themes' meetings held over the course of the year.

The Operational Manager led a themes' meeting with LA officials in January 2023 and presented a PPT with SENDIASS data, outlining the current and pressing issue of children/YP experiencing a lack of access to full-time education in Dorset. In agreement with the Director of Education, and in collaboration with DPCC, a questionnaire was sent out in spring 2023 to gain the views of those families experiencing a lack of full-time education for their children/young people. The results have now been analysed and a co-produced report written by DPCC and SENDIASS, with a meeting scheduled by the Operational Manager and Chair of the DPCC in June 2023 with the Director of Education, Chair and Vice Chair of SENDIASS and other senior LA colleagues to discuss findings.

## **6. Strategic functions and accountability**

### **a) Stakeholder Group**

The Stakeholder Group was successfully relaunched in April 2022, following Family Action's contract commencing on 1<sup>st</sup> February, with a well-attended in-person meeting at The Dorford Centre, Dorchester. The Stakeholder Steering Group has an average attendance of 13 professionals and includes interested parties from: Dorset Council, Dorset Advocacy, DPCC and Family Action, amongst others, including a wide range of represented roles such as Educational Psychologist, Designated Clinical Officer, SEND Head of Locality & Strategy and Service User. We sought further involvement in the Steering Group from other sectors, including social care professionals and young person representatives, in particular, and we now have representation from social care and CWAD teams.

We continue to have two committed and experienced volunteers as Chair / Vice Chair of the Steering Group, who were recognised nationally by Family Action's Volunteering Week back in June 2022 and they provide regular communication, input and support to the service.

### **b) Manager forums**

The Project Lead attended the regional IASS meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> July 2022 and will be attending the next managers' meeting in September. The Family Action SENDIASS network has also been a very useful source of information and ideas, as has buddying up with the Medway SENDIAS Service. The Project Lead has used these links and information to contribute towards the Volunteer and Young People's development plans, the marketing of the service and the new procedures for monitoring initial enquiries. Peer support for the challenges of running SENDIASS is a really important part of working as part of a larger organisation. Case Officers have made relationships across the organisation to support best practice, problem solving and so forth.

### **c) Local partnership working and development links**

Stronger links have been formed with the DPCC (Dorset Parent Carer Council). An annual schedule of meetings and Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) have been put in place for co-production work with DPCC.

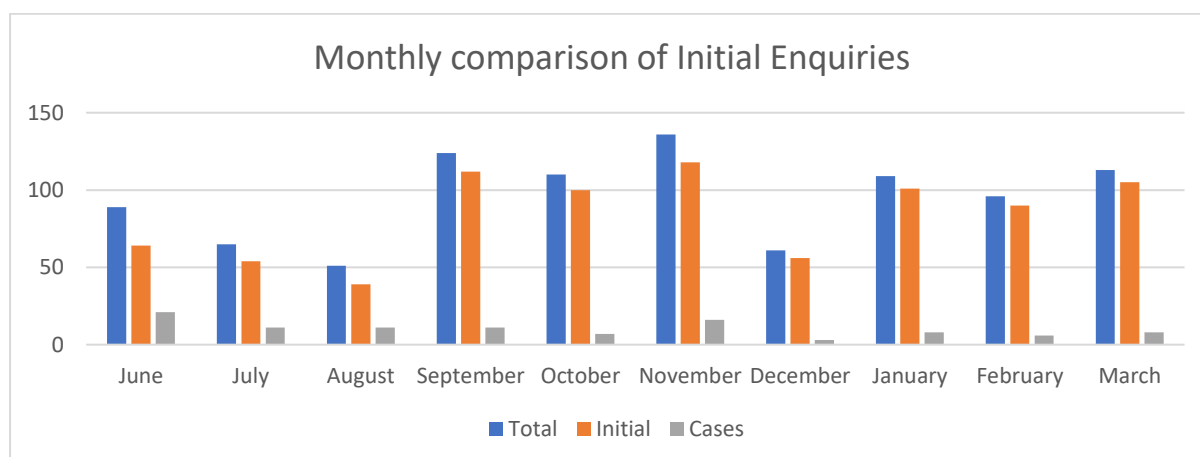
We have also had SENDIASS representation on the Dorset Health Forum, DEAL Board, locality SEND briefings, 0-25 VCS Forum and regular communication with Dorset Youth Association.

Dorset SENDIASS is now involved with the development work taking place with Family Hubs in the county and the PL will be working with the team to expand the online and in-person presence offer of the service.

There is now regular collaboration between the Family Information Service and Dorset SENDIASS with regards to the development of the Digital Family Offer. We will be part of the consultation and provide future information and training for key staff. We are continuing to develop and evolve our working relationships with partners as part of the strategic themes meetings to ensure we all get best value from these meetings. We aim to encourage any joint work needed between us being referenced in the local SEND /ICB transformation plans by Dorset Council officials. Case Officers have also attended joint Global Mediation training with Family Workers and SEND Provision Leads.

We continue to invest in our relationships with both LA and ICB commissioners, communicating and collaborating regularly outside of formal contract meetings.

## 7.Capacity



July and August then saw the capacity of the two Case Officers in post very much maximised: they had taken on additional cases due to the maternity leave of a full-time member of staff and had a sudden influx of enquiries due to issues arising at the Dorset special school, Coombe House.

With the employment, training and shadowing of the maternity cover Case Officer, and the Triage and-Information Officer and the Project Lead in post, there is now less pressure on the two existing Case Officers, although they have been dedicating much of their time to supporting the induction of new staff.

During September - November 2022, the service saw another spike in enquiries. At this point, and again in March 2023, an alert was sent out to those enquiring to the service that the response date may be up to 10 working days. The average rate for reply stayed, however, within our target of 5 days.

Continuing current staffing levels is imperative as the team continues to face an increase in demand, with one Case Officer currently working on 40 open cases, compared to the 25 that she had this time last year. Initial enquiries are also becoming more complex and taking much longer to respond to than previously, adding to workload pressures.

## 8. Service development

### a) Minimum Standards

All staff working within the Dorset SENDIASS team are aware of the Minimum Standards for Delivery 2018, we benchmark the service against these regularly to evidence compliance and they are referred to during team meetings and supervisions. We also share our progress and priorities regarding the minimum standards during each Steering Group meeting.

### b) KPIs

Area	Target	Actual	Commentary
Support to parent/ carers	550 - 650	1,125	149 enquiries converted to cases
Young People reached (increase in direct work/ independent access to the service)	12 – 15	23 cases involving YP 16+ during 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2022 – 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2023, but not all <b>direct YP</b> work.  <i>N.B. YP Plan will not be completed until July 2023</i>	Young Person Case Officer appointment (0.2) to begin w/c 15th May 2023. Pilot plan will involve approaching 2 schools – one special and one mainstream in summer term to gather views of YP. First term's work will include 2x groups of 6- 10 YP. Revised Action/Pilot Plan has been drawn up to combine YP officer and work experience student to target <b>direct</b> support for 16-25 age range.
Co-production	Contribution to development of the service	93 respondents to the co-produced CME survey (DPCC/SENDIASS)	Co- production has taken place alongside other services such as DPCC to discover the views of parent/ carers and YP (CME survey, spring 2023). Parent/ carer and YP surveys are sent out and discussed at team meetings in order to develop service One parent has attended the Steering Group on 3 occasions. See survey feedback in Appendix 2.
Visitors to website	Increase in visitors for new SENDIASS website – Starting point: Unique visitors: 3,559 No. of visits: 6,561 Hits: 88,668	Unique visitors: 5,307  No. of visits: 5,244 Hits: 10,315	Unique visitors increased from 3,559 to 5,307.  The tracking device on the website has been queried with the IT team as the number of actual hits appears to be very low in comparison to expectations following the release and publication of our new website earlier in the year.
Digital communication	Increase of digital viewing	Q3= 104 followers	A variety of content is published: sharing of events and groups, sharing of recent SEND updates, sharing of

	(previous data unavailable as n/a)	Q4 = 168 followers  Average reach= 414 users	surveys and survey results, created content relating to SEND legislation, created content relating to relevant awareness days, such as Rights of the Child (UNICEF event).. The page's highest reach was 181 and is in the 75 <sup>th</sup> percentile (amongst other similar businesses) of regularity and amount of posting. The site is averaging 5 new followers a month (on par with other similar businesses) Those contacting the service are not currently reporting that they heard of the service through our social media page.
Satisfaction	Previous= 3.93/ 4 overall satisfaction	4.05 (How effective has Dorset SENDIASS been in helping you achieve these goals?)	21 surveys returned; one incident of negative feedback regarding the statement: "I now have a greater understanding of the SEND arrangements for me or my child". As the surveys are anonymous, we are unable to contact parent/ carer in response. For examples of feedback, see Appendix 2.
Annual report	Published on website	Published on website	Latest annual report to be uploaded imminently.
Development of Volunteers' service	N/A	2 volunteers currently engaged as Chair/Vice Chair of SENDIASS	We have had 2 experienced volunteers working with us as Chair/Vice Chair of the Steering Group throughout this financial year. They have also been involved in deep dive case auditing and Strategic Themes meetings with SENDIASS/DPCC and the LA, as well as co-production activities such as the CME survey and forthcoming report. The Young Person Action Plan and Volunteer Action Plan will now be combined for 2023-2024 to take into account the decision to focus on a pilot YP project, as well as a focus on attracting work placement students to form the bulk of our volunteer development in supporting YP alongside the new 0.2 YP Officer (commenced May 23).

### c) Service Level Development Plan

Significant progress has been made with the following areas:

- ✓ the 'build up' of the team
- ✓ co-production meetings, events and CME survey/report
- ✓ addressing themes with the LA
- ✓ attendance and representation on local boards e.g., health care board, Local Offer group
- ✓ online presence – new website and Facebook launched
- ✓ development of the Volunteer and Young Person Action plans
- ✓ response time for the service
- ✓ mandatory and legal training
- ✓ initial safeguarding and induction processes completed for all staff, including Chair and Vice Chair

Areas with outstanding actions are outlined below:

- ✓ MoU with Dorset Youth Association (*if still applicable/DYA are in agreement with co-production work*)
- ✓ SENDIASS representation on education board (*no current space on this board*)

Priorities for the year ahead will include:

- ✓ Embedding of 0.2 YP Officer role to impact progress towards YP KPIs, so that the relationship with YP is fully established and YP feel better consulted, supported and empowered to be part of the decision-making process regarding their own futures
- ✓ Further development of the YP/Work Experience-Volunteer combined action plan to directly engage more YP and volunteers in-line with KPIs (as above)
- ✓ Reviewing staffing in light of the continuous increase in complex initial enquiries and pressure on capacity/workload of existing team, especially in light of the reduction in case officer hours available after staffing changes in May 2023
- ✓ Reviewing risk assessment completion and approval processes via auditing so fully in-line with Family Action's revised Quality Assurance Framework, leading to all risk assessments being of a consistently high standard
- ✓ Working towards implementing Inform 'detailed' recordings function as evidenced in case audits/supervision
- ✓ Continuing to develop the website and social media presence e.g., expanding professionals' page and increasing number of hits in-line with KPIs; improving reach for YP audience
- ✓ Identifying further training priorities in-line with Minimum Standards so wider professionals, parents/carers and YP have an increased knowledge about legislation for the benefit of service users
- ✓ Experimentation with surgery-style appointments instead of traditional drop-ins

#### **d) Volunteer Development Plan**

Research has been carried out by the Project Lead (PL) to identify gaps in the service that could be filled by volunteers or work place students, and she has also been in contact with other services that use volunteers to study how volunteers are effectively used. The Dorset SENDIASS team has been consulted about the findings of the research and have fed back further thoughts and ideas. The PL held a meeting with Family Action's Volunteer Coordinator and this has highlighted some logistical issues with the appointment of volunteers in the short-term. Thus, the service will be pursuing the appointment of student work placement volunteers and there are already discussions happening with a counselling student.

#### **e) Young Person Development Plan**

The PL and OM have attended 0- 25 VCS events and the PL has attended several support groups in the area (e.g.: AScape, Home Start, Dorset Libraries SEND sessions) to gain wider views on youth participation and engagement.

A Young Person's survey has been developed to gain views from young people who have used the service. Our Case Officer who has returned from maternity leave has an interest in supporting Young People and from May 17<sup>th</sup> will be taking on a one day a week role as the Young Person Officer. A pilot will involve approaching 2 schools – one special and one mainstream in the summer term to gather views of YP and the first term's work will include 2x groups of 6-10 YP. A revised Action Plan has been drawn up to combine YP officer work and work experience/volunteer students, with the aim of targeting improved support for the 16-25 age range. We look forward to this work developing over the course of the next financial year.

#### **f) Training Offer**

At last term's SENDCo briefings for the East Dorchester localities, a significant amount of SENDCos and Inclusion Leads expressed an interest in receiving training from SENDIASS with regards to SEND legislation and duties. A training Powerpoint has been sent out to the SENDCo network as well as to the Family Information Service and Early Help Hub and further meetings have arisen from this.

We also benefit from training offers from health and social care colleagues e.g., 14-year-old health checks, and we completed joint training with Global Mediation earlier in the year.

#### **g) Mediation**

There has been ongoing support from Global Mediation in the form of training for staff and discussions between Leads. The views of Dorset SENDIASS have been gained with regards to the renewal of the contract.

The team advise that it would be particularly helpful if issues could be resolved at an earlier stage, with agreed action plans produced by Global Mediation strictly adhered to by all parties as this could reduce the number of complaints and tribunals in the system, to the benefit of all parties. SENDIASS officers have also been briefed about the non-legalistic nature of Global Mediation meetings.



## h) Publicity and Promotion

The online presence of Dorset SENDIASS has been increased via an improved, new website offer and Family Action branding, including updates, additional pages and increased links with other services.

Three staff members (PL, a Case Officer and the Information and Triage Officer) have been trained to monitor and update the newly launched Facebook page and we have a 'Facebook Strategy' document that outlines objectives, desired audience, key messages, approach and timelines for monitoring and adding content.

A collaborative maildrop has been carried out with DPCC: a new advertising poster, along with a covering letter from the PL, has been sent to every school in the Dorset area, with a request to display these posters and also to signpost to SENDIASS and DPCC on their websites. This maildrop will be followed up by a personal email to schools, introducing the service and further outlining the support we offer.



Other promotional materials have been created: a stand-up display and information notecards for events, plus business cards that may be sent out with Dorset Council's 'Next Steps' letters.



The PL has been researching what other SENDIASS services offer professionals and is creating a document about how we can support other agencies, particularly those working within the education and health sectors. Once this has been created and agreed, a page will be designed for the SENDIASS website and support will be promoted through training and (e)mail drops.

## i) Drop- ins

The Spring term saw a pilot round of drop- ins arranged in co-production with Dorset Parent Carer Council. The drop-ins took place in Dorchester, Bridport, Ferndown and Blandford and averaged 11 parent/ carers receiving support.



### WE'RE HERE FOR YOU!

Drop in for parents and carers of children and young people age 0-25 years with special educational needs or disability. A place to meet other parents, ask questions and find information.



Free  
Friendly  
Informal

**Special Educational Needs & Disability Information Advice and Support Service**

**UPCOMING DATES:**

23 FEBRUARY	12.00PM - 2.00PM	@DORCHESTER LIBRARY DT1 1EE
2 MARCH	10.00AM - 11.30AM	@BRIDPORT CHILDREN CENTRE DT6 5LA
10 MARCH	10.00AM - 12.00PM	@BARRINGTON CENTRE FERNDOWN BH22 9TH
29 MARCH	9.30AM - 11.30AM	@BREWERY TAP BLANDFORD DT11 9LS

Whilst the sessions were well attended, the team feels that a less regular drop- in, but one that involves the entirety of the team would be of most benefit; in future drop- ins will be termly and possibly provide the opportunity of session booking.

## 9. Budget

Several areas of the budget were at capacity at the close of the financial year due to new staff members, inflationary increases arising from the impact of Covid19, Brexit and the Ukraine war, as well as the increase in purchasing promotional materials:

- ⊕ Marketing materials
- ⊕ Office equipment purchases for new staff
- ⊕ Postage for publicity and promotion purposes
- ⊕ Recruitment costs

There are no other planned costs in these areas for the remainder of the financial year and so the service is projected to stay within in-year budget.

## Appendix 1: Acronyms

Acronym	Meaning
CHaD	Children's Advice and Duty Service
CO	Case Officer
DEAL	Dorset Education Advice Line
DPCC	Dorset Parent Carer Council
DSAB	Dorset Safeguarding Adults Board
DSL	Designated Safeguard Lead
EHCP	Education Health Care Plan
FIS	Family Information Service
FA	Family Action
ICB	Integrated Care Board
IPSEA	Independent Provider of Special Education Advice
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
OM	Operational Manager
PL	Project Lead
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
SENDCo	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator
SENDIASS	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information and Advice Service
SLDP	Service Level Development Plan
TIO	Triage and Information Officer
VCS	Voluntary and Community Sector

## Appendix 2: Feedback

### ii) Anonymous service user case comments:

9. What difference do you think our information, advice or support has made for you/your child/young person?

21 Responses

ID ↑	Name	Responses
1	anonymous	I couldn't do it without the support.
2	anonymous	Reassurance that we are on the right track and that we are receiving all the support we can get.
3	anonymous	Guided me to what I needed to do and when I needed to do it
4	anonymous	They helped me secure another valuable year at college for my son
5	anonymous	We have secured the right placement for education.
6	anonymous	It put into motion the move to EOTAS and eventually specialist placement.
7	anonymous	Life changing
8	anonymous	It made a huge difference. After lodging formal complaint the issues were resolved relatively quickly.
9	anonymous	A happy final year at the educational establishment of choice and the chance to plan together the next stage, knowing that this is the last year.
10	anonymous	It is critical And a shame your SEN department isn't as helpful concerning parents and child's rights
11	anonymous	None as of yet as I'm waiting for reports from SALT, OT etc before I can submit the application

12	anonymous	Still an ongoing process, so still in limbo
13	anonymous	Huge. I was helped through the application process and finally felt someone was on our side.
14	anonymous	was able to proceed confidently
15	anonymous	██████ could have done nothing more. The constraints are found within the LA, and CAMHS
16	anonymous	Daughter now has a place at desired specialist school. For us, we felt supported in reaching this outcome and so less stressed and better informed.
17	anonymous	He has been given the appropriate provision after a long and unjust battle with the local authority. He has more self belief and confidence now he is in the right place which meets his needs
18	anonymous	Hopefully a lot
19	anonymous	Potentially life changing if she gets into the right provision for her needs
20	anonymous	Without it, I would not have been able to appeal
21	anonymous	I know understand what steps in need to take now a lot better than having to do this without guidance

11. Do you have any other comments about the difference Dorset SENDIASS has made to you and your child/children?

## 12 Responses

ID ↑	Name	Responses
1	anonymous	Absolutely invaluable service - the EHCP system is so hard to navigate and I couldn't have dealt with my situation without them - ██████████ is amazing!
2	anonymous	████████ helped me gain confidence in my ability to challenge the LA obstacles. In turn, my children benefit from an emotionally stronger mum who can fight for their rights
3	anonymous	It is an essential service. Schools lie and so does county - I wouldn't have known what should have been happening without ██████████ t sendiass
4	anonymous	Going through the EHCP process was one of the most difficult things I've ever experienced. In an already stressful situation. SENDIASS we're fantastic with supporting me to get the outcome we needed. I cannot thank ██████████ and ██████████ enough. ██████████ absolutely needs a medal in recognition of what she does for families. She is highly experienced and respected in the job she does. We will be forever grateful for the support she gave us. She kept pushing us forward with filling in forms etc when in the darkness of times it was not something I wanted to do. I will be forever grateful for her support.
5	anonymous	The support from SENDIASS meant that we went ahead with the appeal, which is still pending, and the laxity of the council in keeping up to date the EHC plan for my young person was brought to light for what it is. I felt my opinions were validated.
6	anonymous	They have ensured my child receives what they are entitled to from local authority r e education
7	anonymous	Just hope that we can find something in the end!!!
8	anonymous	I am hugely grateful to ██████████ as we now have an EHCP in place.
9	anonymous	████████ kindness and care, reliability and expert knowledge were crucial to us
10	anonymous	It's changed our lives. Our daughter has been secure in her AP and now has a place at a specialist school. She is less anxious and able to live life more fully.
11	anonymous	It has been a life saver ! it has enabled my son to engage with a provision which meets his needs and has allowed me to move forward to ensure that the local authority has now been held accountable for unfair and poor decisions which had a massively negative impact on my son and our family and has helped us understand the law in terms of SEND regulations and how those apply to my son
12	anonymous	Very grateful.