

**Cheshire East Information, Advice  
and Support Service (CEIAS)  
Annual Report**

**1<sup>st</sup> August 2024 – 31<sup>st</sup> July 2025**

Self-review of the Cheshire East Information Advice and Support Team to establish how the team is delivering on its responsibilities as required by the Children and Families Act and SEN Code of Practice 2014

## Introduction

Cheshire East Information Advice and Support Service (CEIAS) is an in-house service which operates at arms-length from the local authority. CEIAS is a statutory service which provides free impartial, confidential, and accurate information, advice and support about education, health and social care for children, young people and their parents/carers on matters relating to special educational needs and disability. The service provides an Annual Report as part of its Service Level Agreement with commissioners.

Cheshire East information, advice and support service helps to promote independence and self-advocacy for children, young people, and parents/carers.

There are a set of national Minimum Standards for services providing impartial information, advice and support relating to Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND). The Minimum Standards are developed by the Information, Advice and Support Services Network

[The Information, Advice and Support Services Network \(councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk\)](http://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk)

The service operates during normal office hours and throughout the year, including school holidays. The helpline has a voicemail facility and the service regularly sign posts and provides information about a range of local and national SEND organisations. Support is provided to families in various ways: by telephone, email, virtual bookable individual sessions and attendance at virtual multi agency meetings with schools and other professionals. The service has a stand-alone website and provides a range of information leaflets, animations and links to other relevant SEND services. CEIAS also have an active Facebook page for sharing information around SEND.

## EHCP Data in Cheshire East

Presently, there are 5,112 EHCPs supported by Cheshire East Local Authority.

4,172 of those are educated (school, college, nursery, training etc) within Cheshire East; 736 outside of Cheshire East.

There are approximately 6,359 children receiving SEN support in CE schools.

## CEIAS Staffing

The service is currently staffed by:

### **Case workers:**

1 x 36 hours

1x 35 hours

1 x 8 hours term time only

The service is still without a direct manager since December 2023 and does not have a business support officer which we have had in the past.

## What we have done over this reporting period

- CEIAS attend the SEND family hub in Crewe to hold face to face bookable appointments with parents and carers.
- CEIAS hold online bookable slots with parents/carers who need a lengthier discussion on a weekly basis, this period there has been 102 parents accessed these sessions this reporting period.
- Members of the team have attended 6 in person SEND coffee mornings at various schools and charitable organisations across the local authority.
- CEIAS have continued to work with the Parent Carer Forum monthly meetings both online and face to face and have done a joint Q & A event for parents which was very positive and parents fed back positive comments about the session.
- CEIAS have hosted an online coffee morning with the Cheshire East Autism Team where families have valued the opportunity to get support from the CEAT team and also ask questions to the CEIAS team.
- CEIAS have attended regular online meetings with our Northwest Consortium, and a member of the team attended the 2-day annual conference in Lancaster in March 2025. These meetings have been helpful in terms of sharing information and gaining support from our Northwest SENDIASS colleagues.
- CEIAS send out regular information guides to partners on a range of topics around SEND.
- An event at the SEND Family hub for preparing for adulthood was attended by a member of the team where parents and young people had the opportunity to ask questions and gain advice.

- CEIAS have met with other Teams and organisations to share information about our service including The Dynamic Support Team (NHS) new staff/ teams within the LA and charitable organisations relating to SEND.
- CEIAS have an active Facebook following which has a healthy engagement and the reach has grown, the page is updated regularly with articles in relation to SEND.
- Facebook currently has **1886** followers, average views per 28 days – 14.9k, average engagement per 28 days – **423**.

## E mail feedback

Feedback is collected regularly and is submitted to our National IAS service to gain a picture of national feedback across the country from all IAS services. This is done by asking a set of 6 questions developed from the national service.

Feedback is also gathered from email sent to us by families that we support, some of these comments have been captured below.

- “Apologies for adding to your workload but we genuinely appreciate your ongoing support”
- “Thank you for getting back to us so quickly, your advice is always so helpful and helps us to have a plan when meeting with the school”
- “Thank you for your time, you always validate everything”
- “I would like to say a big thank you for your support with X who has now got a full-time placement, thanks to you and your staff and keep the work going”
- “Thank you for your support at the meeting this morning, your knowledge was invaluable and has helped to move things forward for the family” (professional)
- “Just had my co production meeting which went well so thank you very much for all your help”
- “Thank you for your amazing support and expertise. It’s been an arduous process, and you've helped me navigate it”
- “Just a quick email to thank you sincerely for your support this morning. We are grateful to have an EHCP and at the same time it is a bit of a new world with new language to navigate, sharing your time and expertise with us this morning is hugely appreciated. You were able to jump in with suggested phrasings for things that we wanted to emphasise and clarify points that hadn't occurred to us”

## Meeting support

CEIAS have supported at **224** virtual Multi Agency meetings in this period, which is like last years recorded figures. We have been able to offer more support at meetings and meeting preparation due to primarily working remotely via Teams, the feedback from parents has been very positive.

We have also held **102** Individual bookable parent meetings via Microsoft Teams. These are between 30-60 minutes in duration and are offered, predominantly, to parents who are new to the service who contact us with a more complex query e.g., there may be a lot of paperwork which, where appropriate, we would support them to work through. These have received positive feedback and have given us the opportunity to enable and empower parents to make informed decisions and choices.

CEIAS have supported **20** parents regarding mediation this has decreased from last year which we presume that a significant number of mediations have been overturned before the mediation took place, CEIAS spend time helping to prepare parents for mediation and attend preparation calls with the mediation service prior to the mediation taking place.

CEIAS have supported **25** parents regarding appeals to the Tribunal and attended 1 tribunal telephone case management.

CEIAS have supported **14** families at 1:1 face to face sessions at the SEND Family Hub.

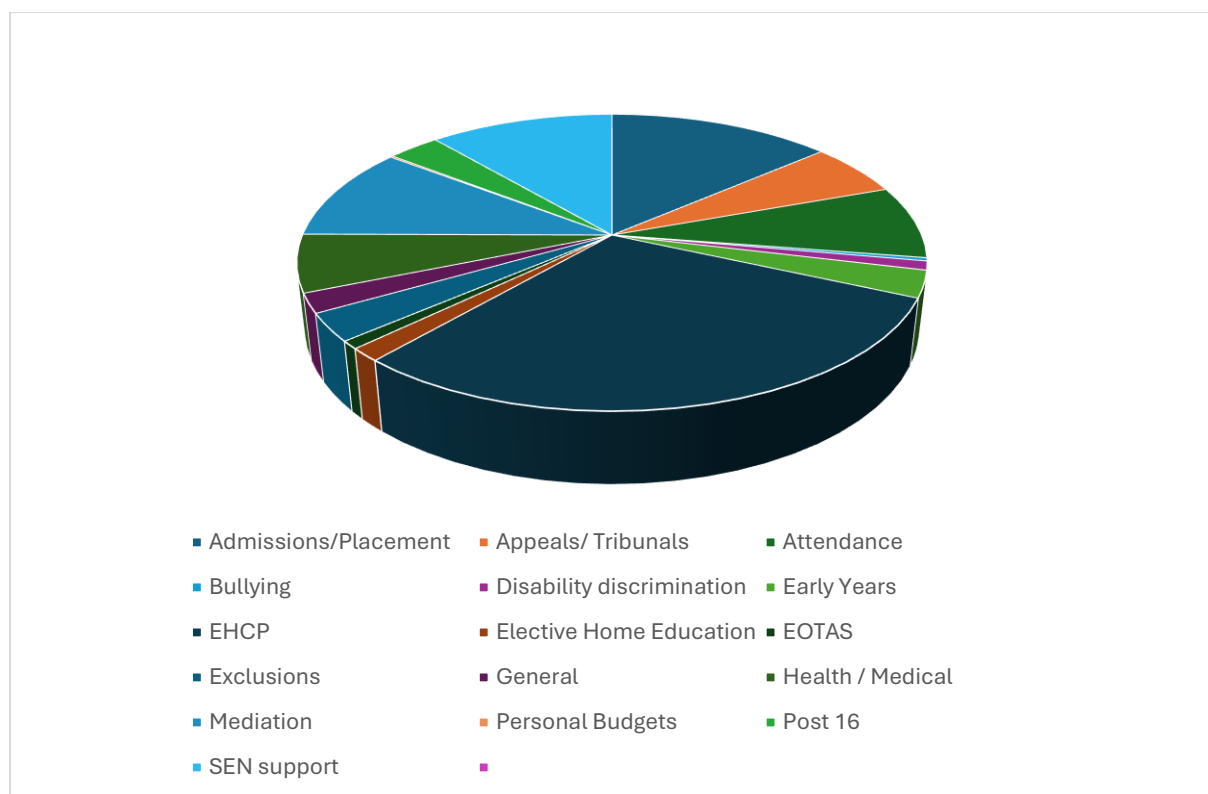
During the reporting period 1<sup>st</sup> August 2023– 31<sup>st</sup> July 2024 there have been **1,220** parent enquiries to CEIAS; these have either been new callers to the service or callers that have had previous involvement but who are requesting a new piece of work. There have also been an additional **93** enquiries from professionals requiring information or advice.

The figures may appear different to the enquiries recorded, this is due to a classification code being added to each enquiry so that we can capture the reasons for the enquiry; each enquiry can have more than one classification code, further enquiries from the same parent may mean further classification codes are added if the call is for a different reason, the actual number of contacts via classification code in the period is **3,696** in total. A new classification code is not always added if the enquiry is regarding the same issue.

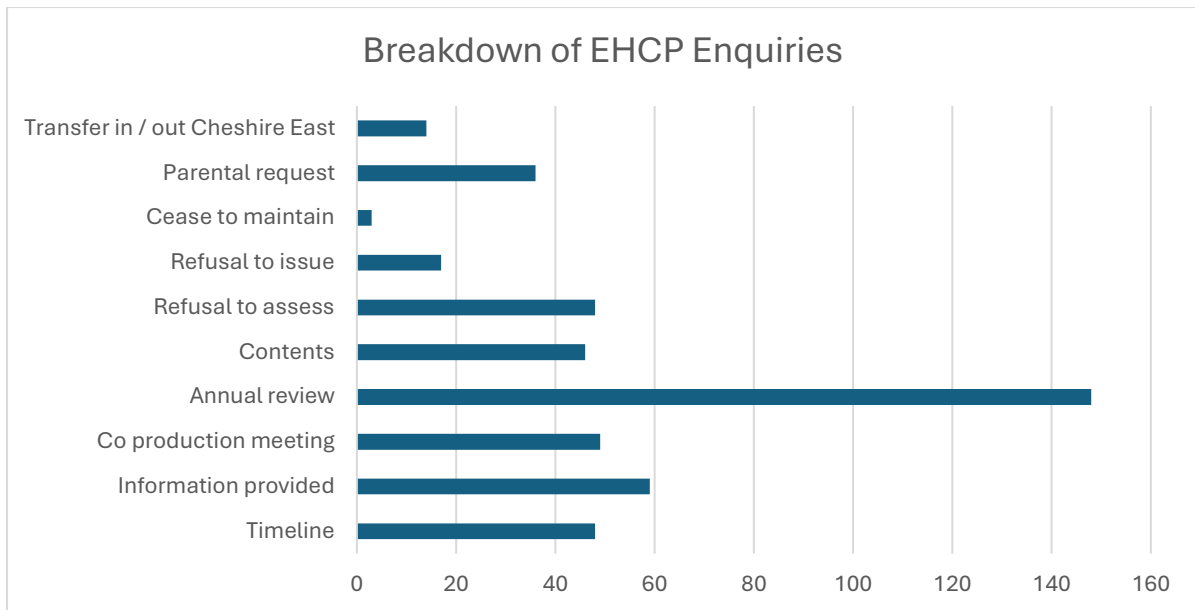
## Breakdown of Enquiries

Breakdown of service users contacting the CEIAS Service, most enquiries are from parent/ carers. Professionals contacting the service include social workers, family support, NHS professionals, SEND keyworkers, charitable organisations and other local authority teams.

The main area of enquiries this reporting period is EHCP along with school placement enquiries/ children out of school. There has been an increase in requests for mediation support and appeals/ tribunal support, although due to capacity we have been unable to support at tribunal but have helped parents to prepare.



A further breakdown of EHCP enquiries shows that annual review enquiries were the highest followed by similar figures around other areas of EHCP enquiries, cease to maintain was the least number of enquiries relating to the EHCP.



## Priorities for next year

The team are in the process of putting together the next calendar of events for the year and working with the parent carer forum to do some events jointly. These will consist of short workshops and coffee mornings with guest speakers to include a range of topics. Capacity in the team continues to be a barrier to plan/ arrange and deliver these events so joint events with other services are helpful during this time.

CEIAS are involved with the Family SEND Hubs and will continue to offer face to face sessions for parents and carers monthly as well as attending SEND coffee mornings to offer advice and support at schools and other SEND events across the LA.

We plan to add additional information to our website and revisit and revise information that is already available, also to add some information animations to provide visual support on a range of topics.

CEIAS will continue to work together with other LA Teams and charitable organisations to ensure that we can offer positive support for our parents, carers and young people.

**Thank you for your continued support and for taking the time to read our annual report.**

**The CEIAS Team**