



Cheshire **E**ast **I**nformation, **A**dvice and **S**upport
for SEND

Cheshire East Information, Advice and Support (CEIAS) Team

1st August 2021 - July 31st, 2022

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 statutory service which operates at arms-length from the local authority and the CCGs. CEIAS provide 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 their 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)

Access to Information

The service operates during normal office hours and throughout the year, including school holidays, except for the period between Christmas and the New Year; contacts can still be made during that period but a response will not be made until team members return. 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 individual sessions and attendance at, virtually or otherwise, multi-agency meetings with schools and other professionals. The service has a stand-alone website and provides a range of information leaflets and links to other relevant agencies.

The service has an active Facebook page which is regularly updated sharing information around SEND, there is a direct link from our website to access this. This reporting year the current follower numbers are 1,180 with an average monthly engagement of 580 a month.

The team share monthly one minute topic guides with a range of services and schools/colleges with information on key themes throughout the year.

CEIAS Staffing

The service is currently staffed by:

Case workers:

1 x 36 hours

1x 33 hours

1 x 10 hours term time only

Previous IASP funding enabled the team to have an independent manager for a 2-year period on a part-time basis. Due to this funding ceasing the post came to an end in July 2022.

CEIAS is again managed by a manager who also manages the Safeguarding Children in Education Settings team. Former measures have been re-established to ensure the privacy/confidentiality, of the parents making contact, from that manager so that this is not compromised.

All current caseworkers have completed the IPSEA training up to level 3 and attend refresher training annually as well as other training offered by the National IASS service and IPSEA.

Joint commissioning

The service has moved forward this year regarding commissioning by health. Funding of £26,985 has been allocated for 2022-2023 by Health for CEIAS (non-recurrent). An SLA has been drafted, and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) have been identified. This will be progressed in the year ahead.

A key change took place during this year in that the IAS Programme ended. In previous years (and until April 1st 2022) the team were able to bid for additional funding. This was linked to key delivery expectations and outcomes. The team had always been successful in these bids. As of April 2022 the programme has ended and there are no longer opportunities for IAS services to bid for additional funding.

Governance Group

During this period one meeting took place of the Governance Board. The meeting identified areas of development for the CEIAS team which have been incorporated into the team's action plan for the coming year. The meeting was also an opportunity for the team to share what they had been doing, successes and challenges.

Team modes of delivery

There are currently 3,789 EHCP's in Cheshire East this is an increase of 20% on last year's reporting period where there were 3,166 EHCP's. This increase has placed extra demand on the CEIAS service due to more parents requesting support around EHCP advice and information.

The team has continued to provide information, advice and support by telephone, email, text and virtually; this has included annual reviews of EHC plans, SEND Tribunals and mediation meetings that have been held remotely.

This 'virtual' world has meant that the team have been able to support more families due to time saved without travelling to and from meetings across the Local Authority. We have been able to work more flexibly, with staff from any location being able to join a meeting remotely. Previously team members would support by area however, due to work patterns, this was often difficult to co-ordinate and, on occasions the team had to decline support for meetings.

The team have spoken to parents and many have said that they prefer to attend meetings virtually due to childcare, finding it less daunting etc. Where parents prefer the team have attending meetings face to face.

Engagement with other teams and services

CEIAS currently attend Local Authority workstreams contributing to policy and decision making, these include:

- The Communication and Engagement Workstream
- The Assessment Monitoring and Quality Workstream
- The Gypsy Romany Traveller Operational Group

CEIAS also engage with the National and Northwest IASS groups to share and gain information on service delivery processes and access to training opportunities.

CEIAS have positive engagement with the Cheshire East Parent Carer Forum, attending regular steering group meetings and identifying opportunities for shared training and events.

CEIAS continue to engage with the LA youth support engagement and participation team to gather the views of young people with the view of continuing to update our website and the information they would find useful to them. CEIAS have attended regular SEND youth forum sessions where direct work with young people has taken place and information shared.

Workshops and coffee mornings

This year CEIAS developed an annual calendar of events, where regular information workshops and coffee mornings are held virtually with key speakers. During this reporting period well attended events have included coffee mornings with the Educational Psychology Team, Autism Team, The Supported Internships Lead and the Youth Support Service.

Workshops have included: Choosing a school, EHC needs assessments, Mediation, Meet the CEIAS Team and Preparing for Adulthood.

The team have also held two information workshops in the evenings in response to parents' requests for evening sessions due to daytime work commitments.

Meeting Support

CEIAS have supported at 172 virtual Multi Agency meetings in 2021-2022, which is an increase of 42.5% since 2020-2021. We have been able to offer more support at meetings and meeting preparation due to working remotely, and the feedback from parents has been very positive.

We have also held 84 Individual Meetings via Microsoft Teams. These are 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 **18** parents regarding mediation and have liaised with the commissioned service to facilitate positive mediations take place.

CEIAS have supported parents regarding **17** appeals to the SEND Tribunal and attended 6 Hearings and 3 Telephone Case Management Hearings. We have also supported 4 parents to come to agreement with the LA via Consent Orders prior to the Hearing.

There has been a significant time commitment from the team to provide the information, advice and support required to reach a positive outcome for the child. In the 2 years prior to 2021-2022 CEIAS had only been asked to support at 3 appeals which went as far as a Hearing and 2 Telephone Case Management Hearings. There are currently 8 ongoing appeal cases accessing CEIAS support.

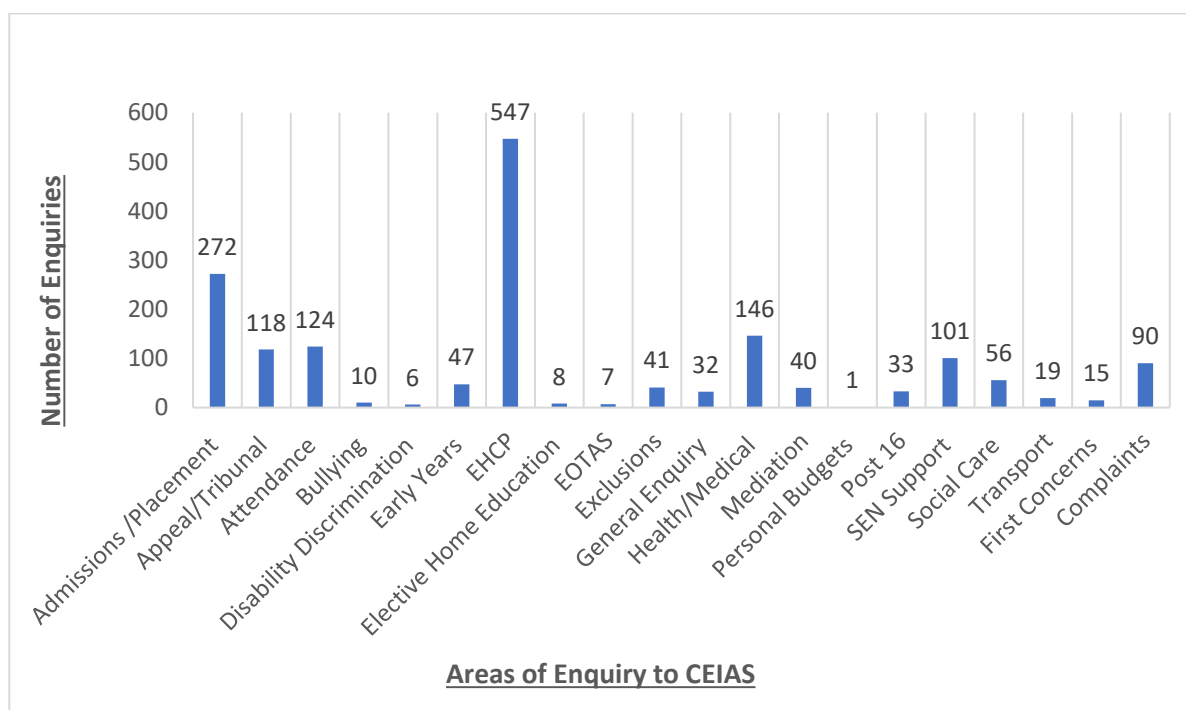
Ukrainian Project

A member of the CEIAS team supported the Ukrainian refugee families that were placed in Cheshire East and assisted in directly supporting these children over a 6-week period and also sharing information about our service with those families. This has been a collaborative project with other teams within Cheshire East and has been very successful.

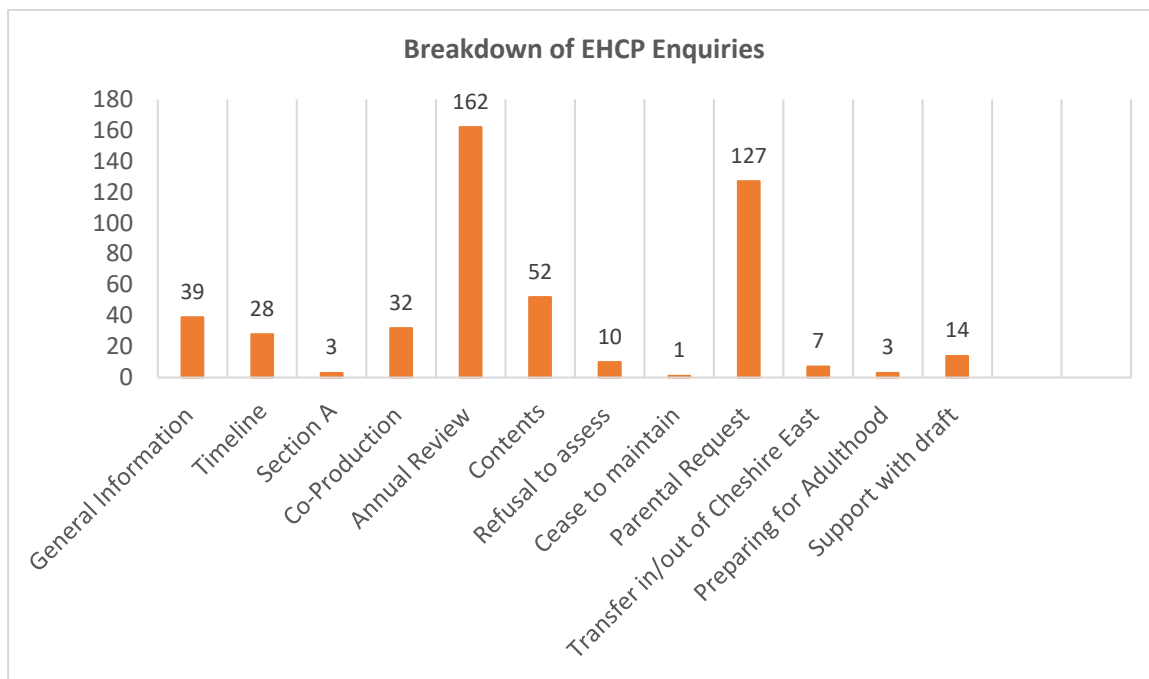
Areas of Enquiry

During the reporting period 1st August 2021 – 31st July 2022 there have been **652** 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. This is an increase from the last reporting period of **459** new enquiries

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 **1,715** in total.

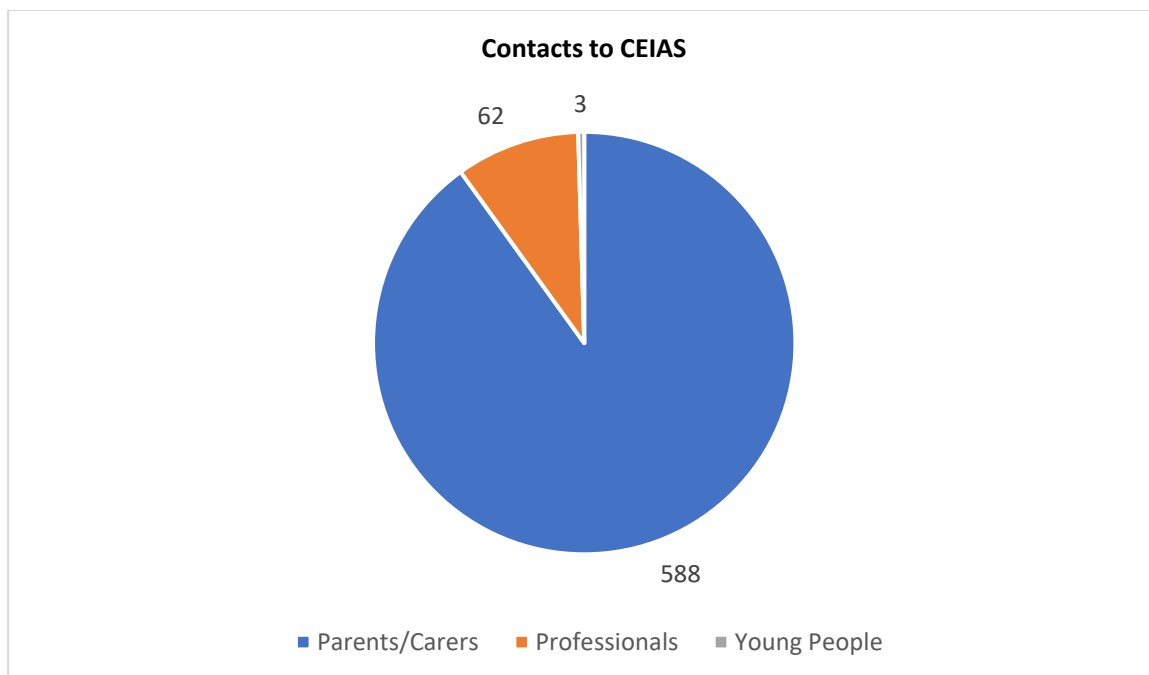


The main area of enquiry is still around EHCPs; there has been an increase in enquiries around admissions and school placement.



A further breakdown of the category “EHCP” shows that the main enquiries to the CEIAS service were around annual reviews and parental requests for EHCP’s these remain the same 2 categories as data gathered in the last reporting year.

As a result of these being identified as the main categories of enquiry we have planned further workshops for parents, including the annual review process and EHC needs assessments, for the next reporting year.



The data shows that we have had 588 parent/carers, 62 professionals and 2 young people contact the service, a total of **652**. Professionals making enquiries have included social workers, family support workers, SENCO’s, SEND Keyworkers, other local authority teams and

staff from charities relating to SEND. CEIAS have formed positive working relationships with team members from a range of LA teams and wider charities and organisations.

Feedback

The CEIAS team gather feedback in a range of ways; one way is, following contact from service users, a specific set of questions are asked, electronically and anonymously. This year:

90% of responses said it was easy to get in touch with the service.

90% of responses said the information given was helpful/very helpful.

80% of responses said the information was fair and unbiased.

70% of responses said the information given had made a great deal of difference.

90% of responses said they would be likely to recommend the service to others.

The following quotes are taken from feedback given to the team:

"I have always found the staff very helpful and knowledgeable; they prompt me when I forget things in meetings"

"The CEIAS Team are fantastic! They are professional, very kind and very helpful. I don't think I could have got the help needed for my son without the support from CEIAS"

"Incredibly supportive team offering fair advice who are patient when asked many questions"

"Amazing resource for parents, cannot recommend enough"

"My email enquiry was responded to in a timely manner, the response signposted me to where I needed to contact for information. The support from your service is vital in supporting families through a difficult system"

"Thank you for supporting us with the high school admissions process. My son has a final plan with our choice of school named. Thankyou for listening to me and replying to emails and giving nuggets of information on the law. I have spoken to all of the team at some point so please pass on my thanks"

Future working

CEIAS will continue to deliver workshops; these will be either virtual or face to face in small groups whichever is most appropriate. CEIAS will respond to parental requests for these to be delivered as evening sessions when required. The coffee mornings will continue virtually with guest speakers providing information to parents and carers. Parents have fed back what type of information sessions they would like in the year ahead and these sessions have been planned in.

CEIAS will continue to explore ways of engaging further with minority groups including Gypsy Romany Travellers and families from Ukraine and Eastern European families.

CEIAS will continue to engage with the LA youth support engagement and participation team to gather the views of young people with the view of continuing to update our website and the information they would find useful to them. CEIAS have recently been invited to attend

regular SEND youth forum sessions where direct work with young people will be completed and outcomes shared.

Thank you for your continued support during another challenging year and for taking the opportunity to read our annual report.

The CEIAS team