

Information Advice and Support Service's Network Minimum Standards Benchmarking Report 2025-2026

For any queries regarding any of the data please contact us via email iassn@ncb.org.uk

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Introduction

The IASSN Team

As part of the [Children and Families Act 2014](#) it is a legal requirement that all local authorities ensure children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities ([SEND](#)) and their parents have access to an impartial [Information, Advice and Support \(IAS\) service](#).

The IASSN are funded by the Department for Education ([DfE](#)) to support this.

We do this by:

- Working with the [SENDIAS](#) services to ensure they have the resources and training to provide high quality information, advice and support to children, young people and parents in their area.
- Listening to, and working with, SENDIAS services to understand their challenges and successes in order to feedback to the [DfE](#) to implement positive and necessary change.
- Working with SENDIAS services and other stakeholders to develop and promote the [Standards](#) for SENDIAS services

Participating in this report

Participation in this report is voluntary, but high levels of engagement ensure an accurate snapshot of the national picture.

This Data Report

Out of the 151 services we received full and measurable data from 110 which represents 73% of SENDIAS services. This is a voluntary exercise, and we are grateful for those who responded.

If you are a service reading this and feel any of this data is inaccurate, please get in [touch](#). We are unable to add data on if you were late submitting but are happy to amend if we have made a mistake. Previous data reports can be found on our [website](#).

Service differences

It is important to note the range of SENDIAS services when considering their ability to meet the Minimum Standards.

Nationally, each of the 153 local areas are covered by one of the 151 SENDIAS services. Each has a unique combination of funding, geography, population, size, range of stakeholders and arrangements with local authorities.

There are of course going to be challenges when comparing a service that operates in an area with 10,000–25-year-olds with a service operating in an area with 481,000 0–25-year-olds or a service that covers 12 km² with a service that covers 8037km².

A tool to find and compare services that are statistical neighbors and therefore similar in demographics can provide you with further insight in terms of comparison. This tool can be found [here](#).

Minimum Standards Benchmarking Data

Table A: Overall average percentage of services able to meet the standards

	Compliant	Non-compliant	Non-compliant with actions underway/ other
2025-26	87%	5%	8%
2024-25	88%	3%	9%
2023-24	88%	4%	8%
2022-23	92%	3%	5%
2020-21	80%	8%	12%

This situation further demonstrates that in order for services to meet all these standards and to provide the excellent work they do, funding must rise with the volume and complexity of pressures on services (see IASSN's latest [Service User Feedback and Ofsted Report](#))

Top five standards services are struggling to meet (2025-26):

- **1.1** The SENDIAS service is jointly commissioned by education, health **and** social care in accordance with the CFA 2014. A formal agreement is set out in writing which refers directly to these Minimum Standards, whilst also considering the need for continuity and stability of the service. **(46% fully compliant)**
- **1.2** The SENDIAS service is designed and commissioned with children, young people and parents, and has the capacity and resources to meet these minimum Standards and local needs. For smaller local authorities (LAs) this may involve commissioning across local areas. **(70% fully compliant)**
- **1.8** The SENDIAS service has a development plan reviewed annually with the steering group/advisory body, which includes specific actions and improvement targets. **(70% Compliant)**
- **1.7** The Governance arrangements outline a clear management structure, encompassing a strategic manager within the SENDIAS service and a steering group or advisory body which includes representatives from service user groups and key stakeholders from education, social care and health. **(75% Compliant)**
- **1.4.** There is a dedicated and ring-fenced budget held and managed by an IAS service manager located within a SENDIAS service. **(84% compliant)**

Top five standards Services are able to meet (2025-26):

- **2.2** The SENDIAS service engages with regional and national strategic planning and training and demonstrates effective working with other IASSs to inform service development. **(99% compliant)**
- **4.2** The service routinely requests feedback from service users and others, and uses this to further develop the work and practices of the service. **(97% compliant)**
- **4.3** All SENDIAS service staff and volunteers have ongoing supervision and continuous professional development. **(97% compliant)**
- **1.5** The SENDIAS service is, and is seen by service users to be, an arm's length, confidential, dedicated and easily identifiable service, separate from the LA, ICB and/or host organisation. **(97% compliant)**
- **2.1** Each SENDIAS service has a manager based solely within the service, without additional LA/CCG or host body roles. They have responsibility for strategic planning, service management and delivery, and quality assurance. **(96% compliant)**
- **1.6** LA and SENDIAS service ensure that potential service users, Head teachers, FE principals, SENCos, SEND Teams, children's and adult social care, health commissioners and providers are made aware of the SENDIAS service, its remit and who the service is for. **(96% compliant)**

Service Challenges – 2025-26

It is vital to read this report with an understanding of the growing pressure on services that is not being matched with a corresponding increase in service funding. A detailed exploration of this trend can be found in IASSN's latest [data report](#).

The IASSN recommends that commissioners of SENDIAS services consider this report alongside the [data report](#) and [Service User feedback and Ofsted report](#). These reports set out clearly how an adequately funded SENDIAS service that is compliant with the standards saves money, improves the relationship between a local area's population and its services and ensures children and young people are supported to achieve the best possible outcomes.

Table B shows a comparison in funding between the 151 services nationally using funding per head of the 0-25 population.

Table B: Comparison of funding per head between services

	Mean	Median	Range
Spend per head in 2019-20	£0.99	£0.90	£0.23- £2.78
Spend per head in 2020-21	£1.09	£0.97	£0.21- £3.13
Spend per head in 2021-22	£1.20	£1.10	£0.49- £3.31
Spend per head in 2022-23	£1.36	£1.22	£0.36- £3.60
Spend per head in 2023-24	£1.54	£1.36	£0.22- £4.05
Spend per head in 2024-25	£1.68	£1.53	£0.45- £4.81
Spend per head in 2025-26	£1.77	£1.63	£0.31- £5.25

Table C shows the growing volume of those accessing the SENDIAS services in their area:

Table C: A growing number of people accessing SENDIAS services

	2021- 22	2022- 23	2023- 24	2024- 25	2025- 26	% Increase 24-25	% Increase since collecting data (2019)
Average helpline enquires	1291	1610	1836	1959	2118	8%	64%
Average casework/ intervention numbers	724	1015	1212	1572	1770	13%	145%
Average number of Tribunal's inputted to	40	64	73	91	93	2%	133%
Average number of Tribunals supporting/ representing at	4	11	11	12	14	17%	250%

Table D sets out the growing level of complexity of cases that SENDIAS service staff are working with, based on the [IASSN intervention levels](#):

Table D- Intervention levels

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Level one	67%	63%	48%	48%	39%	40%
Level two	23%	22%	25%	30%	40%	39%
Level three	7%	11%	16%	15%	15%	15%
Level four	3%	4%	11%	7%	6%	6%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

And finally, Table E puts all that information into a single table to show that volume and complexity of pressures on SENDIAS services are rising at a much quicker rate than funding.

Table E- A growing challenge for SENDIAS services

	Helpline increase	Casework increase	Increase % of cases level three or four	Inflation	Mean funding increase	Mean FTE staffing increase
2024-25	8%	13%	0%	3.6%	12%	-2.6%
2019-25	64%	145%	10%	28%	92%	38%

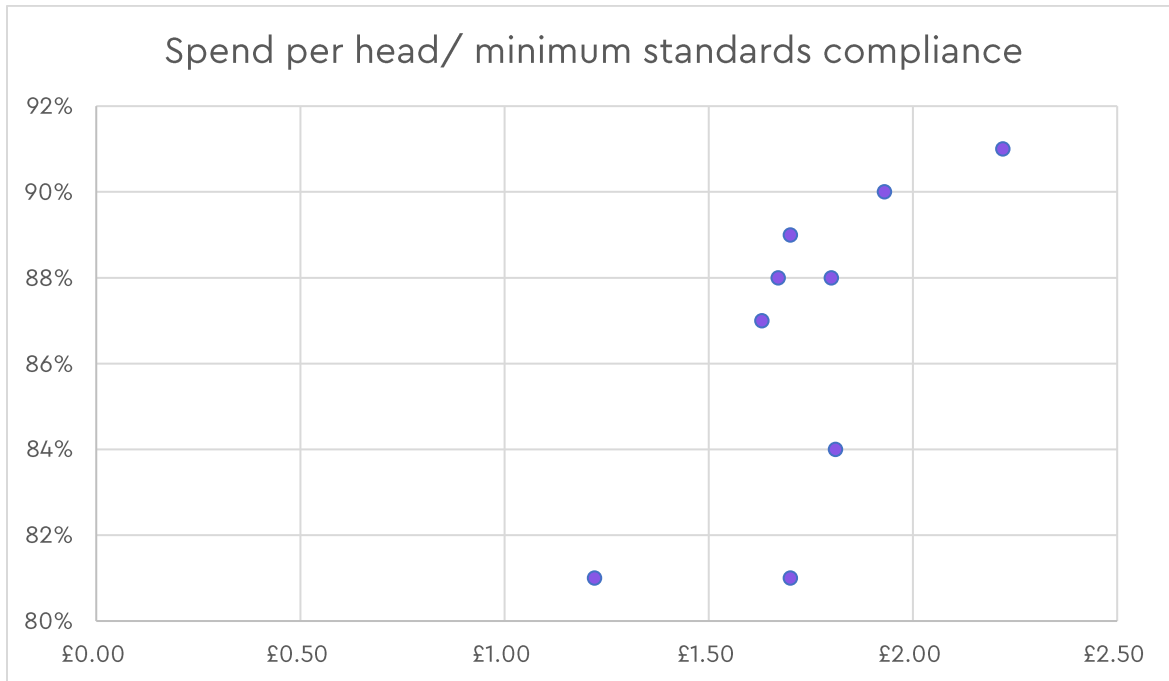
Regional difference

Table F contains regional data regarding funding and compliance with the standards. Where we do not publish individual service data on compliance with the standards, this is the best way to explore if funding does indeed impact services' ability to meet these standards.

Table F- Regional data

Region	Number of services	Mean geographical size (KM2)	Mean spend per head (0-25)	Minimum standard compliance
West Midlands	14	928	£1.93	90%
South-West	14	1688	£1.81	84%
South-East	19	1004	£1.63	87%
North-West	24	613	£1.67	88%
North-East	12	715	£1.70	89%
Yorkshire and Humber	15	1027	£2.22	91%
London	32	49	£1.80	88%
East Midlands	10	1736	£1.22	81%
East of England	11	1738	£1.70	81%
Mean across all services	17	832	£1.77	91%

Graph G considers mean spend per head and compliance in each region



At a regional level, there is a clear trend between funding per head and services ability to meet these standards.

Minimum Standards Benchmarking

The below explores data for each section of the Minimum Standards.

1. Commissioning, governance and management arrangements

Table H: Overall averages for section one of the Minimum Standards

	Compliant	Non-compliant	Non-compliant with actions underway/ other
2025-26	79%	8%	13%
2024-25	80%	7%	13%
2023-24	77%	9%	14%
2022-23	85%	7%	8%
2020-21	66%	14%	20%

Minimum Standard services are struggling to meet: 1.1- Joint Commissioning

Minimum Standard services are most able to meet: 1.5- ensuring services are, and are seen to be, confidential and arm's length and 1.6- making sure the service is visible and understood with the local area.

With regards to 1.1, the joint commissioning standard, it is worth noting that the majority of those who completed this as 'other' did so as they are funded by one or other of Social Care or Health, not both. Joint commissioning of services is one of the most challenging standards to meet. The trend upwards is one of the big successes over the last few years, but the overall figures show there is still some way to go.

Detailed Feedback:

1.1 The SENDIAS service is jointly commissioned by education, health and social care in accordance with the CFA 2014. A formal agreement is set out in writing which refers directly to these Minimum Standards, whilst also considering the need for continuity and stability of the service.

	Compliant	Non-compliant	Non-compliant with actions underway/ other
2025-26	46%	29%	25%
2024-25	53%	26%	21%
2023-24	42%	30%	28%
2022-23	35%	32%	33%
2020-21	17%	49%	33%

1.2 The SENDIAS service is designed and commissioned with children, young people and parents, and has the capacity and resources to meet these Minimum Standards and local need. For smaller local authorities (LAs) this may involve commissioning across local areas.

	Compliant	Non-compliant	Non-compliant with actions underway/ other
2025-26	70%	14%	16%
2024-25	65%	14%	22%
2023-24	60%	15%	25%
2022-23	82%	10%	18%
2020-21	46%	30%	23%

1.3 The SENDIAS service provides an all year-round flexible service which is open during normal office hours and includes a direct helpline with 24-hour answer machine, call back and signposting service, including linking to the national SEND helpline.

	Compliant	Non-compliant	Non-compliant with actions underway/ other
2025-26	94%	2%	4%
2024-25	94%	2%	4%
2023-24	95%	2%	3%
2022-23	96%	2%	2%
2020-21	92%	3%	5%

1.4 There is a dedicated and ring-fenced budget held and managed by an IAS service manager located within a SENDIAS service.

	Compliant	Non-compliant	Non-compliant with actions underway/ other
2025-26	84%	7%	9%
2024-25	81%	8%	11%
2023-24	83%	10%	7%
2022-23	94%	3%	3%
2020-21	86%	6%	8%

1.5 The SENDIAS service is, and is seen by service users to be, an arm's length, confidential, dedicated and easily identifiable service, separate from the LA, ICB and/or host organisation.

	Compliant	Non-compliant	Non-compliant with actions underway/ other
2025-26	95%	1%	4%
2024-25	96%	0%	4%
2023-24	94%	1%	5%
2022-23	99%	1%	0%
2020-21	93%	2%	5%

1.6 LA and SENDIAS service ensure that potential service users, Head teachers, FE principals, SENCos, SEND Teams, children's and adult social care, health commissioners and providers are made aware of the SENDIAS service, its remit and who the service is for.

	Compliant	Non-compliant	Non-compliant with actions underway/ other
2025-26	95%	1%	4%
2024-25	96%	0%	4%
2023-24	93%	6%	1%
2022-23	97%	1%	2%
2020-21	82%	4%	14%

1.7 The Governance arrangements outline a clear management structure, encompassing a strategic manager within the SENDIAS service and a steering group or advisory body which includes representatives from service user groups and key stakeholders from education, social care and health.

	Compliant	Non-compliant	Non-compliant with actions underway/ other
2025-26	75%	6%	19%
2024-25	81%	2%	17%
2023-24	77%	7%	16%
2022-23	86%	3%	11%
2020-21	53%	7%	38%

1.8 The SENDIAS service has a development plan reviewed annually with the steering group/advisory body, which includes specific actions and improvement targets.

	Compliant	Non-compliant	Non-compliant with actions underway/ other
2025-26	70%	5%	25%
2024-25	77%	2%	21%
2023-24	75%	4%	21%
2022-23	88%	3%	9%
2020-21	62%	3%	33%

2. Strategic functions

Table I: Overall averages for section two of the Minimum Standards

	Compliant	Non-compliant	Non-compliant with actions underway/ other
2025-26	96%	1%	3%
2024-25	94%	2%	4%
2023-24	95%	3%	2%
2022-23	97%	1%	2%
2020-21	89%	6%	5%

Minimum Standard services are struggling to meet: 2.3 The SENDIAS service works with local partners, including local parent and young people forums to inform and influence policy and practice in the local area

Minimum Standard services are most able to meet: 2.2- Engaging with National planning.

Detailed Feedback:

2.1 Each SENDIAS service has a manager based solely within the service, without additional LA/CCG or host body roles. They have responsibility for strategic planning, service management and delivery, and quality assurance.

	Compliant	Non-compliant	Non-compliant with actions underway/ other
2025-26	96%	0%	4%
2024-25	92%	5%	3%
2023-24	92%	6%	2%
2022-23	93%	4%	3%
2020-21	85%	10%	4%

2.2 The SENDIAS service engages with regional and national strategic planning and training and demonstrates effective working with other IASSs to inform service development.

	Compliant	Non-compliant	Non-compliant with actions underway/ other
2025-26	99%	0%	1%
2024-25	97%	0%	3%
2023-24	97%	1%	2%
2022-23	98%	0%	2%
2020-21	97%	2%	1%

2.3 The SENDIAS service works with local partners, including local parent and young people forums to inform and influence policy and practice in the local area.

	Compliant	Non-compliant	Non-compliant with actions underway/ other
2025-26	94%	2%	4%
2024-25	95%	0%	5%
2023-24	95%	2%	3%
2022-23	98%	0%	2%
2020-21	86%	5%	8%

3. Operational Functions:

Table J: Overall averages for section one of the Minimum Standards

	Compliant	Non-compliant	Non-compliant with actions underway/ other
2025-26	89%	4%	7%
2024-25	89%	5%	6%
2023-24	88%	3%	9%
2022-23	92%	3%	5%
2020-21	77%	7%	16%

Minimum Standard services are struggling to meet: 3.6 The SENDIAS service offers training.

Minimum Standard services are most able to meet: 3.1 The SENDIAS service provides; Impartial information, advice and support (IAS) on the full range of education, health and social care as defined in the SEND Code of Practice.

Operational Functions: Detailed feedback:

3.1 The SENDIAS service provides; Impartial information, advice and support (IAS) on the full range of education, health and social care as defined in the SEND Code of Practice to the following service users –

a) children, b) young people, c) parents

This support is offered in a range of ways which includes face to face, a telephone helpline, email, website and social media.

	Compliant	Non-compliant	Non-compliant with actions underway/ other
2025-26	94%	1%	5%
2024-25	92%	2%	6%
2023-24	91%	4%	5%
2022-23	98%	1%	2%
2020-21	83%	4%	12%

3.2 The SENDIAS service provides branded information and promotional materials in a range of accessible formats.

	Compliant	Non-compliant	Non-compliant with actions underway/ other
2025-26	91%	2%	7%
2024-25	90%	1%	9%
2023-24	87%	2%	11%
2022-23	94%	1%	5%
2020-21	77%	3%	18%

3.3 The SENDIAS service has a stand-alone service website that is accessible to all service users.

	Compliant	Non-compliant	Non-compliant with actions underway/ other
2025-26	91%	4%	5%
2024-25	86%	6%	8%
2023-24	82%	8%	10%
2022-23	81%	6%	12%
2020-21	58%	5%	36%

3.4 The SENDIAS service provides advocacy support for individual children, young people, and parents that empowers them to express their views and wishes and helps them to understand and exercise their rights in matters including exclusion, complaints, SEND processes, and SEND appeals.

	Compliant	Non-compliant	Non-compliant with actions underway/ other
2025-26	90%	4%	6%
2024-25	93%	2%	5%
2023-24	96%	0%	4%
2022-23	99%	1%	0%
2020-21	90%	5%	5%

3.5 The SENDIAS service provides information, advice and support before, during and following a SEND Tribunal appeal in a range of different ways, dependent on the needs of the parent or young person. This will include representation during the hearing if the parent or young person is unable to do so.

	Compliant	Non-compliant	Non-compliant with actions underway/ other
2025-26	88%	5%	7%
2024-25	91%	3%	6%
2023-24	90%	1%	9%
2022-23	93%	4%	3%
2020-21	89%	6%	5%

3.6 The SENDIAS service offers training to local education, health and social care professionals, children, young people and parents to increase knowledge of SEND law, guidance, local policy, issues and participation.

	Compliant	Non-compliant	Non-compliant with actions underway/ other
2025-26	82%	8%	10%
2024-25	82%	13%	4%
2023-24	79%	5%	16%
2022-23	90%	3%	7%
2020-21	66%	11%	21%

4. Professional development and training for staff

Table K: Overall averages for section one of the Minimum Standards

	Compliant	Non-compliant	Non-compliant with actions underway/ other
2025-26	96%	1%	3%
2024-25	96%	1%	3%
2023-24	94%	1%	5%
2022-23	96%	0%	4%
2020-21	89%	4%	7%

Minimum standard services are struggling to meet: 4.1 IPSEA Training

Minimum standard services are most able to meet: 4.2 and 4.3

Professional development and training for all staff: Detailed feedback

4.1 All advice and support providing staff successfully complete all online IPSEA legal training levels within 12 months of joining the service. Volunteers who provide advice and support should complete IPSEAs Level 1 online training within 12 months.

	Compliant	Non-compliant	Non-compliant with actions underway/ other
2025-26	93%	2%	5%
2024-25	94%	1%	5%
2023-24	93%	0%	7%
2022-23	92%	0%	8%
2020-21	79%	3%	16%

4.2 The service routinely requests feedback from service users and others, and uses this to further develop the work and practices of the service.

	Compliant	Non-compliant	Non-compliant with actions underway/ other
2025-26	97%	1%	2%
2024-25	95%	0%	3%
2023-24	92%	2%	6%
2022-23	97%	1%	2%
2020-21	90%	7%	1%

4.3 All SENDIAS service staff and volunteers have ongoing supervision and continuous professional development.

	Compliant	Non-compliant	Non-compliant with actions underway/ other
2025-26	97%	1%	2%
2024-25	99%	1%	0%
2023-24	97%	2%	1%
2022-23	98%	0%	2%
2020-21	93%	1%	5%

- [Ofsted Reports](#)
- [Statistical neighbour benchmarking tool](#)
- [IASSN Website](#)