

RIASS

Redbridge Information, Advice & Support Service
for Special Educational Needs & Disability



Annual Report 2026

Statistics, feedback & service development

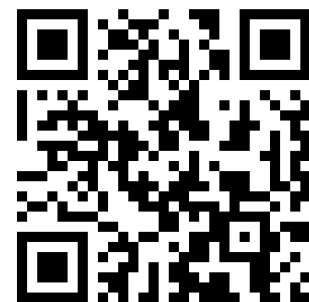
Minimum Standards

By law (the Children's and Families Act part 3) every Local Authority must have a SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS). The Code of Practice 2015 is statutory guidance and explains in Chapter 2 how a SENDIASS should operate. To find out more about SENDIASS service remit, please see the National Minimum Standards for a SENDIASS Service

What to Expect from Us

To help answer any initial questions you may have about how we work with you in order to meet the needs of all our service users, please see our 'What to Expect From RIASS' factsheet

RIASS Website



Welcome

This year has undoubtedly been one of the most challenging in RIASS's history, testing the resilience, dedication and commitment of everyone involved in delivering the service.

For a significant part of the year, I was absent from the service for seven months. During this period, RIASS faced additional staffing challenges, including a vacant Case Worker post and, more recently, our Adviser being on long-term leave. Between November and April, the service operated with only two members of staff. Despite these significant pressures, the team worked extraordinarily hard to ensure that families continued to receive the information, advice and support they needed.

I am immensely proud of what was achieved during this time. Whilst difficult decisions had to be made, including reducing our outreach activity and drop-in provision, our priority remained unchanged: ensuring that children, young people, parents and carers could continue to access high-quality, impartial information and advice. By concentrating our limited resources on direct appointments and information, we were able to continue managing referrals and responding to requests for information and advice, even though waiting times inevitably increased.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to the FiND Team, particularly Nancy, Hameeda and Debbie, for their invaluable support throughout the year. Their willingness to attend Engagement Hub sessions alongside RIASS staff enabled many of our drop-in sessions to continue when they might otherwise have had to close. They also helped raise awareness of RIASS at community outreach events that we were unfortunately unable to attend due to staffing pressures. Their support, alongside the collaboration of our wider SEND partners, has been greatly appreciated.

The service currently remains at 50% staffing capacity whilst awaiting approval to recruit to the vacant Case Worker position and whilst managing ongoing staff absence. As a result, some of the strategic development work typically associated with SENDIASS has had to be temporarily paused. During this period, we have been grateful for the guidance and support provided by both the National Information, Advice and Support Services Network (IASSN) and our regional SENDIASS colleagues, whose assistance has helped us navigate these challenges.

Despite these difficulties, demand for RIASS continues to grow. Referrals to the service increased by a further 4% this year, demonstrating the continued need for impartial SEND information, advice and support within Redbridge. Most importantly, feedback from families remains overwhelmingly positive, reflecting the dedication of the team and the quality of support they continue to provide under exceptionally challenging circumstances.

Whilst our focus remains firmly on providing information, advice and support to children, young people, parents and carers, we have continued to contribute to wider SEND developments across the borough. It has been a pleasure to work alongside the Local Authority and partner organisations on the SEND Priority Action Plan, supporting the implementation of improvements and contributing to the ongoing development of SEND services in Redbridge. RIASS is uniquely placed to bring the experiences of children, young people and families into these discussions, and I am proud that we continue to play a meaningful role in shaping future provision despite the operational pressures faced by the service.

Despite all that the service has experienced this year, RIASS continues to receive positive evaluations and increasing referrals. With only one formal complaint in the service's eleven-year history, unrelated to the service itself, I remain confident that RIASS has earned and maintained a strong reputation for delivering impartial, trusted and high-quality support.

I want to reassure all families that whilst we continue to work through these challenges, providing information and advice to parents, carers, children and young people remains our highest priority. The commitment, professionalism and determination demonstrated by the team this year has ensured that this core function has remained as strong as ever.

Although this year has been challenging, it has also demonstrated the strength, resilience and dedication of both the RIASS team and our partners. I am incredibly proud of what has been achieved under such difficult circumstances and look forward to rebuilding capacity, expanding our reach, reducing waiting times and continuing to provide high-quality, impartial support to Redbridge families in the year ahead.

Emma Bell
RIASS Manager
September 2026

“

RIASS were so helpful and sent the information I needed immediately. So nice to know help is there if you need it.

Anonymous parent

”

Casework Summary

Every week, we host two Drop-in Sessions at Gants Hill Engagement Hub, giving families the opportunity to access support, receive advice, and connect with a our service. In addition, we offer telephone appointments and provide ongoing advice and guidance via email, ensuring families can access support in a way that best meets their needs.

Email Contact

1498

emails with advice and guidance sent to our families

Phone Appointments

102

scheduled appointments, averaging an hour for each appointment

Referrals

344

new referrals from new and existing families.

Drop in Sessions

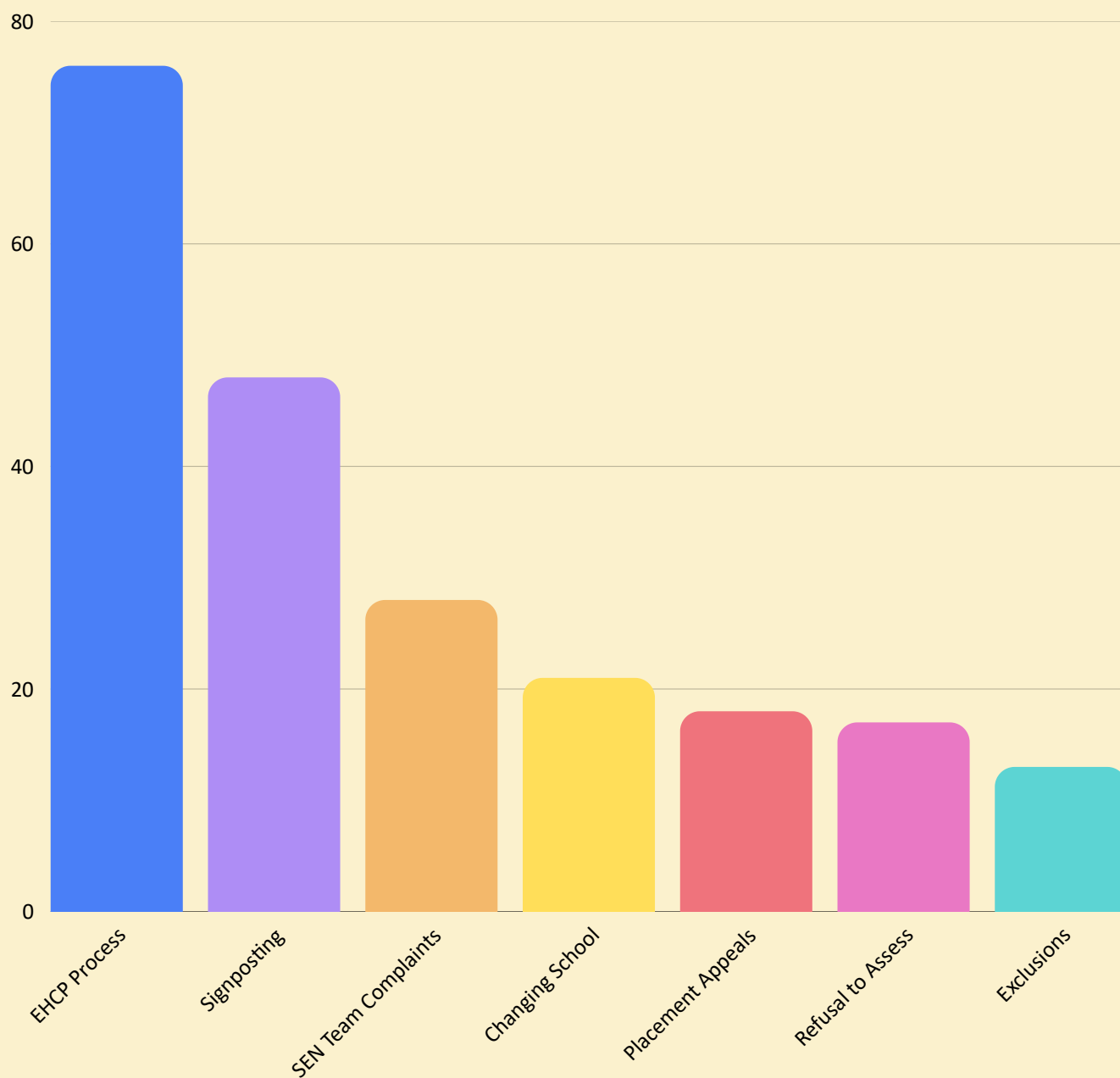
94

families advised at Gants Hill Engagement Hub

Learn more about RIASS on our website redbridgeiass.org.uk

Top Referral Reasons

Families come to us for many different reasons, seeking advice, guidance, and support on a wide range of issues. The chart below highlights the topics most frequently raised by families during the past year.



Casework Statistics

Measure	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026 YTD
Active EHCPs (LBR Data)	2839	3184	3426	3821	4116
Total referrals	358	395	401	500	286
Total contacts	1,040	3,139	3,746	4,317	2,969
Appeals registered	67	64	99	107	41
Cases resolved without appeal	24	38	54	66	11
EHCP needs assessment requests	577	654	696	700	307
Appeals lodged (LA notifications) *	36	42	41	73	46

Please note: These figures relate specifically to RIASS service data and should not be interpreted as overall SEND or EHC plan statistics for the London Borough of Redbridge. RIASS is an impartial information, advice and support service and is not aware of, notified of, or involved in every SEND case or EHC plan within the borough. The figures therefore reflect only the children, young people and families who have accessed RIASS.

Outreach

Outreach is a vital part of our work, enabling RIASS to connect with families and communities across the borough. By attending local events and community settings, we can raise awareness of the service, provide information and advice, and reach families who may not be aware of the support available to them.

Over the past year, we have engaged with approximately 1,950 people across Redbridge, offering information and advice and promoting greater awareness of RIASS and the support we provide.

**School Coffee
Mornings**

8

**PFA Online
Support Group**

4

ASD Workshops

4

**Transition
Events**

5

**SENDATS
Events**

2

**Redbridge Info
Events**

6



Social Media

Social media continues to be an important communication and engagement tool for RIASS, helping us connect with families, raise awareness of the service and share timely information, advice and guidance. Through our digital platforms, we promote SEND-related information, events, workshops and useful resources, while reaching families who may not have contacted the service directly. We will continue to develop our digital presence to broaden our reach, strengthen community engagement and ensure families across Redbridge are aware of the impartial information, advice and support available through RIASS.

158

Website
pages

368

Facebook
followers

23

YouTube
Videos

743

Newsletter
Subscribers

“

I am so grateful that RIASS was able to help me. They listened to my concerns, made me feel heard, were incredibly kind, provided excellent suggestions, and even followed up with additional information. I had the meeting with the school feeling confident and well-prepared to represent my child.

Anonymous parent

”

Drop in Sessions

RIASS is based at the Gants Hill Engagement Hub every Monday and Wednesday, where we provide a face-to-face drop-in service with no appointment required. This gives families the opportunity to speak directly with an adviser in a accessible environment.

By working alongside other hub services, including the Family Information Service and Citizens Advice, we are able to deliver a more holistic approach to support. This enables families to access a wide range of information, advice, and support in one convenient location.

“

Everyone in the team is very pleasant, easy to approach, understanding, empathetic and informative.

anonymous parent

”

Tribunal Support

RIASS support families with the completion of tribunal applications

Category	2025	2026 YTD
Refusal to Assess (EHCPNA)	27	21
Refusal to Issue EHCP	7	2
EHCP Content (Sections B/F/I)	9	3
Placement	34	20
Education & Social Care	2	0
Cease to Maintain	0	0
Total	79	46

RIASS plays an important role in supporting families to understand their rights, explore available options and, where possible, resolve concerns at an early stage before they escalate to the SEND Tribunal. So far this year, RIASS has supported early resolution in 182 cases that did not progress to tribunal. Using the national estimate of £8,500 per tribunal, this represents a potential cost avoidance of approximately £1,547,000.

Please note: These figures relate specifically to RIASS service data and should not be interpreted as overall tribunal figures for the London Borough of Redbridge. RIASS is not aware of, notified of, or involved in every SEND appeal within the borough. The figures therefore reflect only cases known to and supported by RIASS. The estimated financial figure is indicative and represents potential cost avoidance rather than a confirmed cashable saving.

Key Factors Contributing to Appeals Being Resolved Pre-Tribunal

The five most common reasons for appeals being resolved without proceeding to tribunal are:

1. Improved understanding of Local Authority decisions by families
2. Increased SEN support within educational settings
3. Engagement in formal mediation processes
4. Resolution through social care support rather than education provision
5. Local Authority withdrawal of decisions



“The support given by the RIASS Team is invaluable for any parent or carer going through the challenging EHCP process. RIASS have been outstanding in providing not only legal accuracy but also support and guidance on how to practically and effectively manage each step . Thank you!

Anonymous parent

Complaints

Complaints overview

Category	2025	2026 YTD
SEN Complaints	193	98
RIASS Complaints resolved ahead of formal	46	29
Total without RIASS Intervention	239	127

RIASS does not know of all corporate complaints.

Saving 188 formal complaints, the data indicates that, without RIASS intervention, the number of formal complaints would be significantly higher, highlighting the service's role in early resolution and demand management

Complaints – Detailed Breakdown

Category	2025	2026
SEN Team	34	19
School	9	9
Social Care	1	1
Health	2	0
Transport	0	0
Total	46	29

Evaluation

How easy was it to get in touch with us?	• 48% of parents said it was very easy • 35% said it was easy
How helpful was the information, advice and support we gave you?	• 76% of parents said it was very helpful, • 12% of parents said it was helpful
How neutral, unbiased and fair do you think we were?	• 71% of parents said we were very fair • 12% of parents said we were fair
What difference do you think our information, advice or support has made for you.	• 66% of parents said we made a great deal of difference • 17% of parents said we made some difference
Overall how satisfied were you with the service we gave?	• 82% of parents were extremely satisfied • 17% of parents were not satisfied
Would you recommend our service to others?	• 82% of parents would recommend our service to others

Case Study

Case Study: Supporting a Family Through the EHC Needs Assessment Process

A parent contacted the service after their Local Authority (LA) refused to carry out an Education, Health and Care (EHC) needs assessment for their young person, who had a diagnosis of ADHD. The parent was considering an appeal and required support to understand the legal process and the evidence needed to challenge the decision.

While the first part of the legal test for an EHC needs assessment was clearly met, as the young person had identified Special Educational Needs (SEN), the Local Authority argued that the young person's needs could continue to be met through SEN Support and that an assessment was not necessary.

We worked closely with the parent to gather evidence demonstrating the young person's needs and the impact these needs were having within their educational setting. This included obtaining detailed feedback from the school and helping the parent identify information that showed the support currently in place was not sufficiently meeting their young person's needs.

The service supported the parent in preparing for mediation by helping them develop clear arguments based on the available evidence. We highlighted that, without an EHC needs assessment, it was not possible to fully determine the nature and extent of the young person's needs or whether those needs could reasonably be met through SEN Support alone.

Despite these representations, the Local Authority maintained its decision not to assess. We therefore provided further support to the family in submitting an appeal to the SEND Tribunal. Throughout the process, we also worked directly with the young person to ensure their views, wishes and feelings were heard. We supported them to prepare a personal statement, which formed part of the evidence submitted to the Tribunal. At the hearing, the Judge carefully considered the evidence presented by the family, and young person. The Tribunal recognised the weight of evidence demonstrating the complexity of the young person's needs and recommended that the Local Authority carry out an EHC needs assessment.

Following the Tribunal proceedings, the Local Authority agreed to undertake the assessment.

This outcome ensured that the young person's needs could be fully explored through the statutory assessment process, enabling informed decisions to be made about the support required to help them achieve positive educational outcomes.

Impact

Through timely information, advice and support, the family felt empowered to challenge the Local Authority's decision and navigate a complex legal process with confidence. By helping the family gather robust evidence, supporting the young person to express their views, and providing guidance throughout mediation and tribunal proceedings, we contributed to a successful outcome that secured an EHC needs assessment.

This case highlights the importance of independent SEND information, advice and support in helping families understand their rights and ensuring that the voices of children and young people remain central to decisions about their education and future support

"I would like to express my sincere appreciation to RIASS for their courtesy, professionalism, and invaluable support throughout the process. The thoughtful guidance and prompt assistance made a real difference, and I am truly grateful for the care and dedication shown in handling my daughter's case".

Anonymous Parent

Future Focus

As we look ahead, our focus is on rebuilding capacity, strengthening accessibility and ensuring families are prepared for the changing SEND landscape.

The Next Steps Project, launched last year, has been temporarily placed on hold due to reduced staffing capacity and the ongoing recruitment of a Case Worker. However, the project remains a key element of our future vision. Designed to provide early, wraparound information, advice and signposting for families beginning their SEND journey it has the potential to help families access the right support sooner and navigate the future SEND reforms with greater confidence.

During August 2026, RIASS also began developing direct co-production opportunities with young people through the Youth and SEND Youth Council. We are excited to embed the voices and experiences of young people within the service and will continue exploring meaningful opportunities for participation and engagement over the coming year.

Alongside this work, we have been collaborating with partners across Redbridge to identify new community locations where RIASS can deliver more drop-in sessions. These opportunities include Health, Social Care and other community settings, enabling families to access information and advice in places they already visit and at an earlier stage in their SEND journey.

Once the vacant Case Worker position has been recruited to, we plan to expand both our community outreach programme and our co-production activity with children and young people. This will strengthen RIASS's position as a front-door service for SEND information and advice, improve accessibility, support earlier intervention and help reduce waiting times for families seeking support.

Looking ahead, proposed SEND reforms are expected to shape the national landscape over the coming years. RIASS is committed to ensuring children, young people, parents and carers remain informed and prepared for any changes. We will continue to monitor developments closely and provide clear, impartial and accessible information through our website, information sessions and community engagement activities as new guidance, publications and announcements become available.

Looking Ahead

Priorities for 2026-27

Over the next year, RIASS will focus on the following priorities:

- Service Capacity
- Recruit to the vacant Case Worker post.
- Restore staffing resilience and increase capacity across the service.
- Reduce waiting times whilst maintaining high-quality, impartial support.

Accessibility and Early Intervention

- Expand community drop-in provision across the borough.
- Establish drop-in sessions within Health, Social Care and community settings.
- Improve access to information and advice earlier in families' SEND journeys.

Information and Engagement

- Increase information sessions and engagement opportunities for parents and carers.
- Keep families informed of proposed SEND reforms and national developments.
- Continue to develop and maintain up-to-date SEND information on the RIASS website.

Co-production and Participation

- Strengthen engagement with young people through the Youth and SEND Youth Council.
- Embed the views and experiences of children and young people more directly within service planning and development.

Partnership Working

- Continue contributing to the SEND Priority Action Plan and wider SEND developments across Redbridge.
- Strengthen collaborative working with education, health, social care and voluntary sector partners to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

Service Development

- Relaunch the Next Steps Project following successful recruitment.
- Expand early support and signposting opportunities for families.
- Continue to develop RIASS as a trusted, accessible and responsive front-door service for SEND information, advice and support.

RIASS

Redbridge Information, Advice & Support Service
for Special Educational Needs & Disability

