

2015-16

# ANNUAL REPORT

SENAC is an independent Charity set up in 2003 to help meet the educational needs of children and young people with learning difficulties and disabilities throughout Northern Ireland.

# CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION

On behalf of the SENAC Board I am pleased to present our Annual Report and Statement of Accounts for 2015-16

The Board is committed to ensuring that the SENAC team is enabled in delivering an independent information, advice and advocacy service to clients. In the ongoing climate of budget cuts to education the need for practical information and advice on support in school for children with learning difficulties and special educational needs is even more pertinent.

Demand for what we do is increasing year on year. The challenge remains for us, as a priority, to secure appropriate funding sources and attract sufficient donations to continue our important work.

During the year we experienced a 27% increase in new callers to our confidential Advice Line. A key element of our service provision, the Advice Line is a gateway for us to offer help and support to children and families. We supported a total of 796 children and their families and received referrals from 75 organisations, across Northern Ireland, of families in need of our support..

In terms of resources, we welcomed receipt of new funding from the Halifax Foundation from Northern Ireland to develop our client database. We also received funding support from the Bombardier Foundation and the Souter Trust. We are grateful to these and all our funders for their financial support over the reporting period.

As part of our fundraising activities we held a successful table quiz night in Belfast in February. We participated in the Belfast Marathon relay in May with a team made up of staff and friends.

Both Marina Hughes and Viviane Treacy resigned from the Board. Paul Mullan announced his intention to step down as Chair. We thank Marina and Viviane for their services to SENAC and also to Paul for everything he has done during his tenure as Chair and look forward to continuing to work with him in his capacity as a Board Member. We also welcomed Frank Tipping as a new Board Member.

Looking ahead we will strive to continue to meet the demand from parents and carers for our services. We will also actively seek new funding streams and donations to sustain our activities. This is only possible through the work of our wonderful staff, a small team who all share the same focus and commitment. The Board thanks everyone in the staff team for their dedication and efforts and undertakes to provide them with good governance, guidance and support going forward into the next year.



Adèle Davidson      Interim Chair

# ADVICE AND ADVOCACY

It's been another busy year for our Advice and Advocacy Team. SENAC has engaged with parents, their children and young people, schools and the Education Authority to progress our common goal of securing the help a child needs to learn and access school.

## SERVICES INCLUDE:

- **A TELEPHONE ADVICE LINE** providing immediate advice to parents and professionals
- **A CHILDREN'S INDIVIDUAL ADVOCACY SERVICE** working with schools, families and the Education Authority to ensure the children's educational needs are identified and adequately provided for.

## Key Statistics

### Number of children supported 2015-2016

796



25% increase



Advice Line 535 Advocacy Service 261

### New Callers to the Advice Line

584

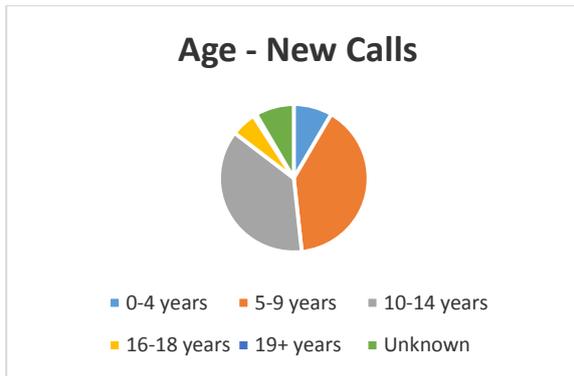
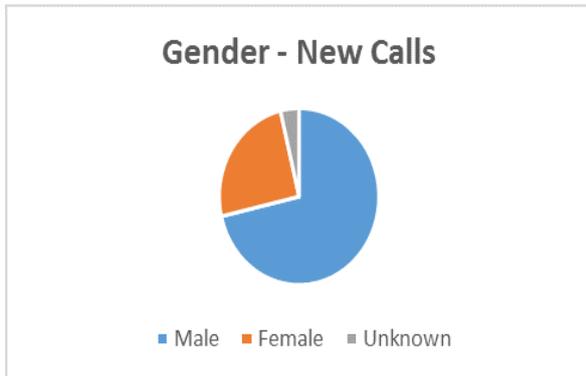


27 % increase



Of the **584** new children, **261 (45%)** were further supported by the Children's Advocacy service highlighting the need for additional support and advice beyond the initial advice call due to the complexity of the challenges facing the special educational needs sector.

## Key Stats Continued..



To advise and advocate for the children and young people SENAC’s staff and volunteers handled **3813** communications via telephone, email and meetings. This is a **38%** increase on last year reflecting the rise in demand and the increasing complexity of the special needs environment.

## Communications 38% increase

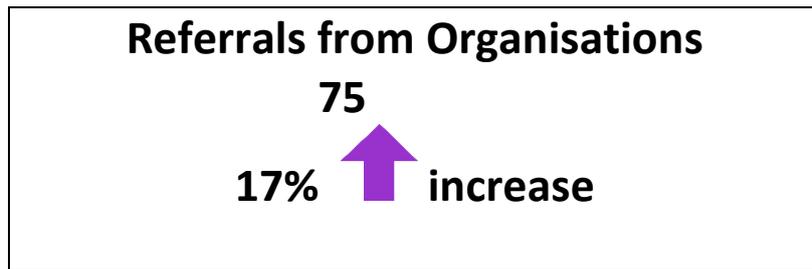
<b>ADVICE LINE</b>	<b>ADVOCACY SERVICE</b>
<b>1055</b>	<b>2758</b>

The children supported have a varying and individual profile of special educational needs.

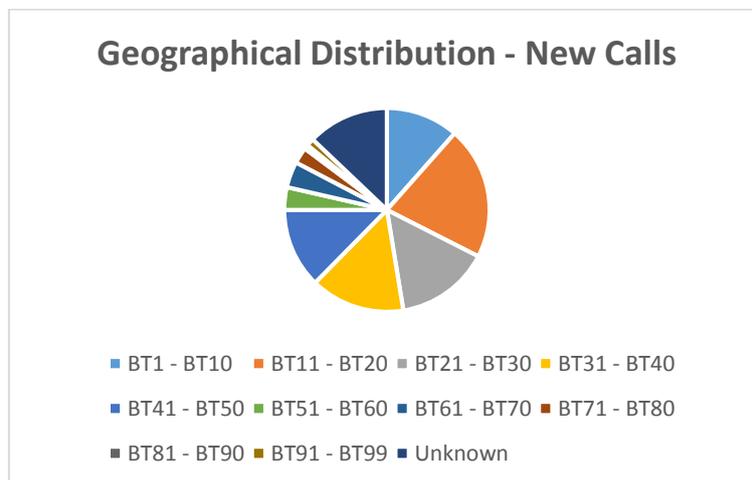
<b>Special Educational Needs</b>	
Autism / Aspergers	41%
ADHD/ADD	13%
Behavioural/Social/Emotional Difficulties	1%
Brain Injury	0.5%
Developmental Delay	2%
Downs Syndrome	1.5%
Dyslexia/Dyscalculia/Dyspraxia	13%
Hearing/Visual Impairment	1%
Learning Disability (Moderate, Severe)	5%
Medical conditions e.g. Epilepsy, Diabetes	6%
Speech & Language	3%
Other e.g. Attachment, Anxiety, FAS	13%

## Key Statistics Continued..

Families come to SENAC from a wide range of sources. Recommendations from friends, relatives or work colleagues who have used SENAC's services as well as referrals from many organisations and groups from within the statutory and community and voluntary sectors. The new Family Hubs developing throughout Northern Ireland have also been a valuable source for engagement with Hub members and increasing our ability to identify families in need of independent educational advice.



As a regional service SENAC supports families throughout Northern Ireland. Information collected on the geographical distribution of callers to the Advice Line tells us how well we are promoting our services across Northern Ireland and where we need to develop new community contacts to help more families in need find us.



## Feedback from families ....

'I feel much more confident now to go into a meeting with the SENCO after speaking to you'

'That has lifted a good weight off my shoulders'

'He is such a different boy. He wanted to kill himself but now he tells me 'I had a brilliant day at school, I feel I fit in now'

'Since the letter was sent to the school a lot has been done. I am so thankful to SENAC. He is doing really well and not complaining about going to school. He is totally different at night and the teacher has seen such a difference in him for the better'

'I would like to thank you and your organisation for all the help and knowledge to correct this statement for our boy. We are really pleased'

'He sat his first GCSE exam today and the scribe was available he came home from the exam smiling. The scribe is to be available for each exam, this has made a huge difference for him'

'The school placement is brilliant everything has been done that she wanted. Everything that needed to be accommodated could be, she is a lot happier and more relaxed'

## Examples of Outcomes

- Placement in school of choice
- Agreement to carry out a statutory assessment of needs
- Child happier going to school
- 1:1 Classroom Assistance in place
- Additional learning support in place
- Improved access to examinations

# COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND INFORMATION SERVICE

The Community Support and Information Officer (CSI Officer) has continued to work directly with parent groups, the education sector and professionals who work with families, primarily in areas of social disadvantage. Sessions have been delivered directly to parents, schools, family support groups, community workers and professionals. The Information sessions have been designed to increase the knowledge and confidence of parents and professionals so they can play an integral part in securing appropriate provision for their children's education.

With the funding from the Equitable Charitable Trust we have been able to capture more in depth evidence on impact. The feedback reveals that **100%** of parents who responded indicated that they now know more about the special educational needs system because of attending an information session. **100%** of parents who responded indicated that they are more confident about how to address any difficulties in getting support for their children in school.

The work of SENAC has also been promoted using social media, our website and through targeted advertising and editorial. As part of Parents Week in October 2015 we were featured in the Primary Times magazine. Two parents, whose children had benefitted from our service, wrote articles outlining how SENAC had helped them to get better resources for their children in school. Both parents had attended information sessions and highlighted that gaining knowledge had a positive impact on their confidence and ability to advocate on behalf of their children.

With the funding received for this year we have been able to capture data systematically and routinely to evidence the impact of our information service. This allowed us to carry out in depth interviews with those who attended Information sessions. The evaluation revealed that parents and professionals greatly valued the Information Service and particularly valued the sessions being carried out in their communities. Both parents and professionals welcomed the independent nature of the advice and support and the fact that the service is free to those seeking advice

The range of referral sources has increased in the last year by **25%** suggesting that we are continuing to broaden our reach. Information from our database has also revealed that we are reaching **69** different BT postcodes in Northern Ireland and in this last year we have expanded into **5 new BT areas**. One of our main objectives for this year was to increase our presence in the western area. Through analysis of our data we identified that this area had a significantly lower number of callers. This is a wide geographical area therefore the CSI Officer primarily focused on the Derry area. The CSI Officer has consequently worked with many key

community organisations and parent groups to try to build up awareness of our services. The caller rate from the Western area has increased by **52%**.

Our reach continues to be inclusive of areas of social deprivation. The last year has seen a continued increase in the number of families from BT areas 4 and 5, which are significant areas of social and educational disadvantage. The increase in the number of families accessing our services from West and North Belfast (primarily BT11 – 17) has continued (**33% increase**) in the last year. These trends coincide with the areas of focus for the work carried out by the IO over the last year.

We are very grateful to the Equitable Charitable Trust for their continued support of the Information Service. The recognition of the value of funding this service has made a significant difference to the charity's capacity to reach parents, communities and children who need our support.

## **FEEDBACK**

**'It has given me the renewed strength I need to get the help my child needs' (Parent)**

**'We got really positive feedback from the parents after the evening you were at the group. Without your service parents would be lost, they don't know where to turn and having someone out to the group was great for helping them understand the system and as you know education is a massive fight for them.'** (Autism Group)

**'The assistance the parent got from SENAC was life changing. Without SENAC the school would not have implemented strategies. The parent had a better understanding than the school. SENAC went to the school with the parent. Parents really need this information because the schools often do not have the knowledge.'** (Community Organisation)

**'Talking about the subject raises a lot of anxieties and being able to talk directly to someone helps so much. Parents are calmer and their anxiety is lifted.'** (Community Organisation)

**'It is always about helping parents to access information. They see a teacher and they are like a rabbit in headlights and they are afraid to question the jargon in a statement which is in very technical language.'** (Parent Support Worker)

Fiona O'Donnell Community Support and Information Officer

# 'EVERY CHANCE TO LEARN' PROJECT

The 'Every Chance to Learn' Project (ECL) is now in its third year supported by the Big Lottery Fund. The project provides a dedicated Advocate to support the special educational needs of children and young people living within the care system in Northern Ireland. The project has developed and utilized positive working relationships with the social workers, foster carers and other organisations who provide the valuable network of support for this vulnerable group of children.

Gender	Ages	
<b>61% Boys</b>	<b>0-4</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>39% Girls</b>	<b>5-9</b>	<b>30%</b>
	<b>10-14</b>	<b>53%</b>
	<b>15-19</b>	<b>7%</b>

Advice and advocacy was provided for **31** children and young people over the last year.

Referrals to the project have been received from each of the Health and Social Care Trusts across Northern Ireland.

## Feedback.....

'...Many changes in social workers and insecurities in the home placement have made it very difficult.. ECL provided a constant contact meaning the processes around the monitoring of \_\_\_'s statement could be managed better' (Foster Carer)

'ECL had a significant role in gathering information and providing support they advocated for home schooling in the interim and \_\_\_'s anxiety has reduced (Foster Carer)

'School and EA were made more aware of \_\_\_'s difficulties and as a result there is better provision in place.' (Social Worker).

In January the ECL Team welcomed a new colleague. Tracy Adams joined SENAC as the ECL Education Advocate to cover maternity leave. With a background and experience in education and psychology Tracy is a great asset to the project.



# THANK YOU

SENAC's charitable work is enabled and sustained by the commitment, effort and dedication of everyone who has donated, raised funds and supported the charity. The generosity of time and funds from all who have supported SENAC is respected and appreciated.

## Our Funders

A sincere thank you is expressed particularly to all the grant making Trusts and Foundations who have provided funding to support SENAC's services and projects. As funders of charitable work they are committed to investing in the lives and futures of children and young people and understand the importance of equality in education and helping children overcome the challenges they face.

### Thank you to:

BBC Children in Need

The Big Lottery Fund

The Henry Smith Charity

The Equitable Charitable Trust

St. Anne's Cathedral

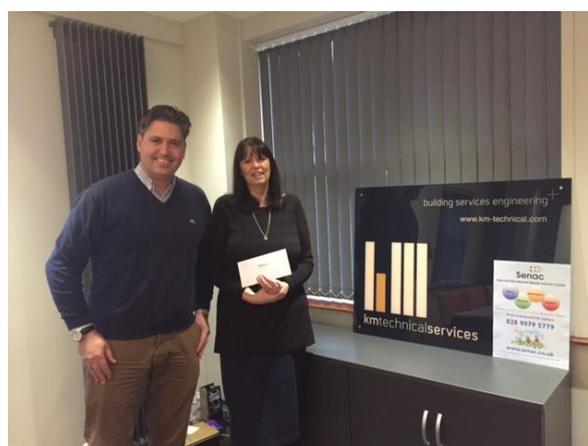
Baily Thomas Charitable Fund

Souter Trust

Halifax Foundation for Northern Ireland

Bombardier Foundation

**Thanks to KM Technical Services Ltd** who presented SENAC with a £1000 donation. This generous and most appreciated support was a lovely welcome surprise start to 2016.



Lee Kirkwood and Stephen McKeown of KM Technical Services present a cheque to Heather, SENAC's Education and Policy Officer at their offices in Heron Wharf in Belfast.

# THANK YOU

**Belfast Marathon** is always a great opportunity for supporters to take part in the excitement and fun of this special day. A huge thank you to everyone who sponsored and took part to raise funds this year for SENAC.



The Marathon isn't just about the runners though!

Patricia McCorry and daughter Catriona Bowman pictured crossing the finishing line after completing the Marathon walk.

Well done ladies!

## Charity Quiz Night at the Ivanhoe

Great fun and some very impressive knowledge was on show at SENAC's quiz night at the Ivanhoe in February. Thank you to everyone who came along and supported the evening and helped make it a great success. Over £1100 was raised from the event!



Pictured left, the Quizzy Rascals, just one of the many teams who took part.

Great quizzing everyone. Thank you

# THANK YOU

We all admire the commitment of the Dean of St. Anne's Cathedral in Belfast each Christmas when he takes on the Black Santa appeal despite the December chill. It means charities across Northern Ireland and those they support can benefit from the generosity demonstrated during this appeal. SENAC were therefore delighted to once again receive a donation of £800 from the appeal.

The cheques are presented each year at special thanksgiving service each February at St. Anne's.

SENAC Director, Adele Davidson accepted the cheque at the service this year for SENAC.



Local comedian Jimmy Cricket presenting a cheque to Adele.

# BALANCE SHEET

31<sup>st</sup> March 2016

	Notes	2016		2015	
		£	£	£	£
Fixed Assets					
Intangible assets	7		2404		3,004
Tangible assets	8		2,881		2,971
			5,285		5,975
Current assets					
Debtors	9	399		409	
Cash in bank and in hand		35,889		47,276	
		36,288		47,685	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	10	(2881)		(5,532)	
Net current assets			33,407		42,153
Net assets			38,692		48,128
Capital and reserves					
Unrestricted funds	11		8,065		5,986
Restricted funds	11		30,627		42,142
General funds			38,692		48,128



