



SENAC

Special Educational Needs Advice Centre

ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

CHARITABLE MISSION



The Special Educational Needs Advice Centre (SENAC) is a regional charity, set up in 2003, by parents of children with disabilities and special needs, to provide independent advice and advocacy on the application of the statutory Special Educational Needs (SEN) system.

SENAC are committed to the promotion and safeguarding of parents' and children's rights within the Special Educational Needs legislative framework to advance children's educational opportunities and ensure the best educational provision is available within schools for individual needs.



Visit www.senac.co.uk

Registered with the Charity Commission NI 101355

Limited Company Number NI48698

CHAIR'S INTRO

I am delighted to present the Annual Report and Statement of Accounts for the period spanning from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023, on behalf of the SENAC Board.

Once again, despite numerous societal and economic challenges, we have played a pivotal role in advancing the education of children and young people with special educational needs throughout Northern Ireland.

In the face of difficult funding conditions and the absence of a functioning government in Northern Ireland, operating as a charity has become increasingly demanding. These pressures have had a profound impact on the families we support, as well as the schools facing budget constraints that affect provision and priorities.

Regrettably, there are still many children who lack access to an education that adequately caters to their needs. Consequently, the demand for our services remains exceptionally high. During this reporting period, we provided support to 900 families through our Advice Line, Advocacy, and Appeals services - an impressive 14% increase compared to the previous year. The demand for all our services, which includes 44 workshops delivered to community and family support groups across Northern Ireland, has seen a significant rise. We commend our dedicated and highly skilled staff and volunteers for their unwavering commitment in meeting this escalating demand.

Our website continues to serve as an invaluable resource for parents and caregivers as they navigate the intricacies of the SEN system. With an average of over 5,000 unique visitors each month, it underscores the scale of the challenges we confront and reinforces the vital role SENAC plays in providing guidance and support to families.

In addition, we were proud to announce a successful partnership with Advice NI to implement a digital skills training programme specifically tailored for parents of children with SEN. This programme, funded by the Department of Health Carers Support Fund, marks a new chapter for us. Since its launch in Autumn 2022, it has been progressing very well.

I would like to take this opportunity to express our heartfelt appreciation to all our funders and donors, whose unwavering support has been paramount in sustaining our service provision.

I would also like to thank my fellow Board members for their invaluable time and unwavering support throughout the past 12 months. During this time, we bid farewell to Stephen Keery, and we extend our appreciation for his contributions.

Looking ahead, SENAC remains resolute in its mission to ensure that children with special educational needs are afforded the best support and opportunities to learn. To achieve this, we recognise the imperative need to attract additional funding and explore diversification of our income streams. This will be a top priority in the coming years, and we have already begun planning to recruit a Funding Development Officer to spearhead this new approach.

I would like to conclude by emphasising my sincere gratitude to the dedicated staff, volunteers, funders, and donors, whose active contributions have been instrumental in fostering long-term positive change for numerous children and their families.

Richie Finlay

Chair

SERVICE STATISTICS

APRIL 2022-MARCH 2023

CHILDREN SUPPORTED

Children supported by Advice, Advocacy and Representation services

900
+14%

NEW CALLERS

Calls to the Advice Line from parents, carers and professionals

669
+17%

APPEALS

Cases taken to SENDIST to appeal EA decisions

91
+21%

REFERRALS

Referrals from other organisations, charities and professionals

76
+17%

WORKSHOPS/EVENTS

Information workshops, networking events and consultation workshops

44
+19%

Advice Line
028 9079 5779

“We had no clue how to go about representing our child. SENAC really were lifesavers at a time when we were extremely downhearted and certainly felt like giving up. SENAC pulled out all the stops for our appeal, addressing all the aspects of the law, which we would not have been able to do - giving our child the best possible chance.”

“If I wanted to talk, I emailed or contacted SENAC. I just don't know how I would have got through. We certainly would not have got 1:1 support in the classroom. I've no idea what I would have done without them.”

“I feel listened to, and it feels like this is the first time in years we might get some help.”

“I'm just so relieved to be heard and understood.”

“It has been really beneficial talking to someone - I feel my shoulders relaxing a wee bit.”

“The workshop webinar was brilliant. It led me straight to the website and then I was able to go to the school to chat with the SENCo. It was really informative.”

“I learned about my right of appeal at a SENAC workshop. Then when I finally got my Statement, I knew it was too vague, so I was able to contact SENAC again for the appropriate wording.”

“The Advocate was like a ray of sunshine. She was constantly trying something, writing a letter, sending an email, telephoning somebody.”

“She advised us how to deal with things. She got in touch with the EA. As soon as she became involved everything got moving. It all fell into place. The assessment, then the Statement and then, the placement in a special school. My child has not missed a single day of school since they started.”

“I had no one else. There were always obstacles in the way. The Appeals Officer was my eyes and my ears to help me through. It is your child at the end of the day. They need your support and the younger they get the help the better for them later in life.”

“It was so good to have someone giving you sound advice about all that we needed to present our case.”

“Without your help and support to appeal, our child would have become another statistic to fall through the net and be left without any educational support”

www.senac.co.uk

NEWS AND EVENTS

BBC Community Life Appeal

SENAC were delighted to have the opportunity to raise awareness of our work and services through the BBC Community Life TV Appeal broadcast on 29th of May.

Our thanks to SENAC's Chair, Richie, and Fiona, SENAC's Community Support and Information Officer for their work and contribution to making the video for this appeal and special thanks to Louise, one of SENAC's service users for generously sharing her story on the struggle to get support for her son and the difference SENAC's help made to secure the educational support needed.

Thanks also to the BBC Community Life Appeal Team for this opportunity and their support and guidance in the making of the appeal film. The broadcast appeal can be viewed on SENAC's website and the BBC Community Appeals NI website.



Fiona O'Donnell, SENAC's Community Support and Information Officer talking about SENAC's services on the BBC Appeal

NEWS AND EVENTS

Project Partnership

IMPROVE YOUR DIGITAL SKILLS

Increasingly parents are required to communicate with authorities by email, complete online forms and scan & attach encrypted documents to get support for their children in school.

FREE TRAINING

ADVICE NI have partnered with SENAC to deliver a tailored Digital Skills programme for parents of children with additional needs.

YOU WILL LEARN ABOUT

- Using the Internet & online safety
- Carers' Benefits and Children's DLA
- Special Educational Needs System & rights
- Navigating the SEN system online & EA website

WHERE & WHEN?

- Course starts 10th January 2024
- 1½hr sessions over 10 weeks
- Device provided for course, if required
- Venue: ADVICE NI Forestview House, Purdy's Lane, Belfast BT8 7AK

To register interest or for more information
E: anne@adviceni.net
T: 02890645919

In September SENAC in partnership with Advice NI launched a project to deliver a digital skills training programme designed specifically for parents of children with additional needs. The programme provides training and guidance for parents who wish to improve their ability and confidence in the digital and online world. With many of the processes and correspondence related to the SEN system now online this project provides an opportunity for

parents to have the ability to engage positively in the SEN processes and gain greater understanding of those processes. Advice Ni will provide the digital skills training with SENAC providing the specialist SEN information and advice.

The project is funded by the Department of Health through the Carers Support Fund and was launched at Advice NI's offices in Belfast with staff and volunteers from SENAC and Advice NI and the Minister for Health, Robin Swann attending.



NEWS AND EVENTS

Fundraising Support

We are always very grateful for the support we receive from those who undertake fundraising activities for SENAC. In this year we received funds from two exciting events through sponsorship.

Glenarm Half-Marathon:



SENAC Chair, Richie Finlay took part in the Glenarm Half-Marathon in April. He raised a terrific £822 for SENAC through the generous sponsorship of friends and families.

Great Job!

Mourne Sprint Triathlon:

In September in the beautiful setting of Castlewellan and the Mourne SENAC supporter Joanne O’Kane participated in this annual sprint Triathlon which includes running, cycling and lake swimming! Joanne raised a fantastic £1000 for SENAC.

NEWS AND EVENTS



Joanne O'Kane on completion of the Mourne Sprint Triathlon

Well done, Joanne!

Sincere thanks to Richie and Joanne for taking on these amazing feats and achievements and to their supporters for their generous sponsorship.

THANK YOU

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

Grant- Making Trusts and Foundations funding SENAC's services.

SENAC's charitable services are only possible thanks to the Grant-Making Trusts and Charitable Foundations who support and invest in SENAC's mission and activities. We have been very fortunate to receive income from a range of Funders committed to investing in the lives and futures of children and young people and like SENAC, recognise and promote the importance of equality of educational opportunities and helping all children overcome challenges they may face.

Sincere thanks to all those who have funded SENAC and our services throughout this past year.

THANK YOU TO:	
The National Lottery Community Fund	Nationwide Community Fund
Garfield Weston Foundation	Halifax Foundation for Northern Ireland
Dormant Accounts Fund NI	Social Justice Fund
LFT Charitable Trust	Community For Justice Fund
DOH Carers Support Fund	

BALANCE SHEET

	Notes	2023		2022	
		£	£	£	£
Fixed Assets					
Intangible assets					
Tangible assets	8		446		557
	9		<u>1613</u>		<u>2016</u>
			2059		2573
Current Assets					
Debtors	10	2462		-	
Cash in bank and at hand		<u>131,432</u>		<u>147,095</u>	
		133,894		147,095	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	7	<u>(3770)</u>		<u>(4390)</u>	
Net current assets			<u>130,124</u>		<u>142,705</u>
Net assets			<u>132,183</u>		<u>145,278</u>
Capital and reserves					
Unrestricted funds	11		25,985		24,818
Restricted funds	11		106,198		120,460
General Funds			<u>132,183</u>		<u>145,278</u>

The financial statement was approved by the Board on 10th October 2023

SUMMARY INCOME + EXPENDITURE

		Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Year Total
Incoming Resources:	Notes			
From generated funds:				
Voluntary income:		3213		
Incoming resources from charitable activities	4		103,785	
Total Incoming Resources		3213	<u>103,785</u>	<u>106,998</u>
Resources expended:				
Costs of generating funds:	5			
Costs of charitable activities		(2046)	(118,047)	(120,093)
Total Resources expended		(2046)	(118,047)	(120,093)