



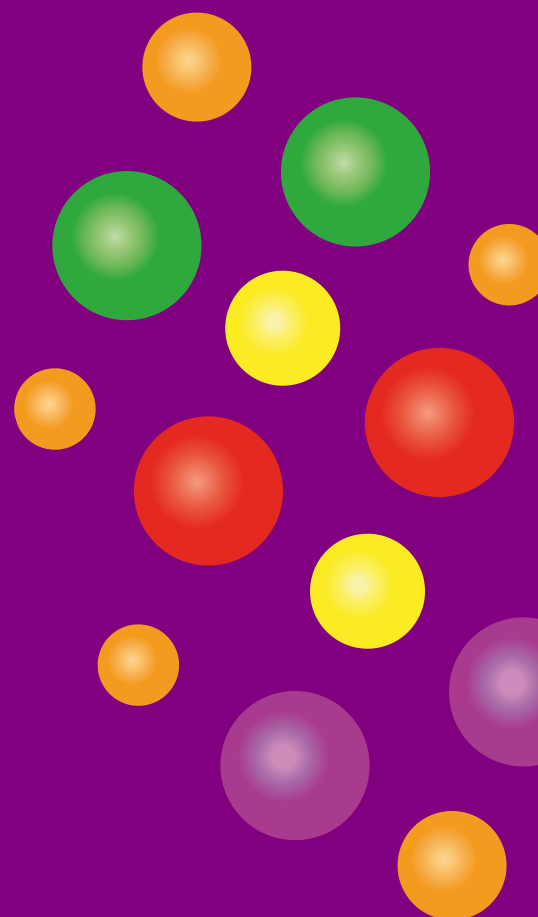
Special Educational Needs  
Advice Centre

# ANNUAL REPORT

APRIL 2024 - MARCH 2025

[www.senac.co.uk](http://www.senac.co.uk)

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# CHARITABLE MISSION

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

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.

**NI Charity Number: 101355**  
**Limited Company Number: NI48698**

# CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION

Mark Mc Cusker

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It is my pleasure to present the Annual Report and Statement of Accounts for the period from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025, on behalf of the SENAC Board.

During the reporting period, demand for SENAC services has grown significantly. Our Advice Line, Advocacy, and Appeals services supported 1,224 parents of children with SEN, an increase of 39% over last year. Within that figure, we supported 919 new cases, a 49% increase. As reported last year, the trend towards increasing complexity for typical cases has continued, resulting in the average time to support each case extending accordingly. Prior to this year, with the support of Ulster Garden Villages and the LFT Trust, we increased the frontline capacity of our Adviceline. That increased capacity has helped us greatly to meet the increase in demand. We anticipate demand will continue to grow, perhaps not at the rate we witnessed this year, but still at a significant rate and, that demand will put increased pressure on our frontline services as they approach capacity once again. The Adviceline is not the only area where we have been extremely busy. We delivered 43 community-based SEN workshops, an increase of 30% over the previous year and we also handled 139 appeals cases, an increase of 72% over the previous year. All of this points to a continued and growing demand for SENAC services.

Delivery of our community-based SEN workshops has been supported for the past 5 years by the National Lottery Community Fund and I am delighted to report that in December 2024, we secured a new 5-year grant with the National Lottery to continue delivering our Community Support and Information Service including delivery of the SEN workshops and support for our education policy work. During the period we have also received continued funding support from Ulster Garden Villages and LFT Trust for SENAC's Adviceline.

SENAC, like all charities, relies on support from funders and donors. None of our services could be delivered without their continued support. I would like to express our deep gratitude to everyone who has supported us during the reporting period.

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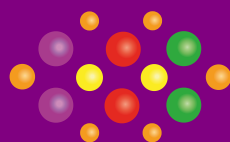
I would also like to thank my fellow volunteer Board members for their invaluable time and unwavering support throughout the past 12 months. Without their continued support, advice and direction, SENAC could not deliver its portfolio of services.

Finally, I would like to recognise and thank our staff and volunteers for their unwavering support and continuous dedication. Every member of our team shares a passion for supporting children with SEN and ensuring they receive the best education possible. As demand for SENAC's services has grown this year, that demand has been met with a wonderful combination of professionalism, empathy, and determination.

Looking ahead, we believe that demand for SENAC services will continue to grow. SEN support more recently has captured significantly increased political and media traction throughout the UK and it is clear that an agenda for change is starting to form. This change will be delivered in an environment where education funding is coming under increasing pressure. With change of this magnitude, SENAC's role in ensuring that children with SEN receive the correct support they need, and are legally entitled to, will continue. SENAC remains committed to helping parents navigate their way through the current and future systems to ensure their child receives the support they need.

I would like to conclude by once again offering my deepest gratitude to the dedicated staff, volunteers, funders, donors, and Trustees whose collective efforts enable SENAC to deliver an invaluable service to the community. Their continued support will help SENAC provide much needed support for many more children and their families.

**Mark McCusker**  
Chair



# SENAC

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# NEWS & EVENTS

## Expansion of our SEN Advice Line service

Thanks to funding received from Ulster Garden Villages and the LFT Trust two new Advisors were appointed to deliver our SEN Adviceline. Beginning in April 2024, we expanded Adviceline hours so callers could reach us every weekday morning. The introduction of a new telephone system also made it possible for more parents to receive callbacks from our Advisors. This enhanced service gives callers more opportunity to engage with our Advisors and receive immediate advice and information. These improvements have led to an increase of over 30% in the number of calls and enquiries handled by the Adviceline.

## London Marathon

SENAC Advisor Deborah Hughes Johnston undertook a huge but exciting challenge to run the London Marathon to raise funds for SENAC and for SOLAS, another NI charity. To date she has raised over £700. Well done, Deborah. Such a terrific achievement and we are all delighted and surprised when Deborah was interviewed live during the run on the BBC's marathon coverage.

Thanks so much to Deborah and all those who donated and supported her.



## Rights for Carers Digital Support Project

"I feel like we were really helping each other on the course. I know it made me feel more empowered and confident as a parent. Taking part showed me that I am not alone."

"Everything is so positive about the course. It is all so fresh to us as we are learning things for the first time."

This project, funded by the Department of Health under their Carers Support Fund offered in-person tailored digital skills training for parents of children with special educational needs. Advice NI and SENAC staff and volunteers addressed key topics including online safety, navigating SEN systems electronically, secure document attachment, encryption and children's rights. Each participant received a device as part of the programme. Over 40 parents completed the training and feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

Parents expressed greater confidence in accessing information and completing online forms and also reported an enhanced understanding of the Special Educational Needs (SEN) system. Participants also enjoyed the interaction with other parents, and felt less alone.

Our thanks go to Advice NI for their support, especially Advice NI Volunteer Trainers and Digital Champions Trevor and John.

APRIL 2024 -  
MARCH 2025

## SUPPORT

1224 children/families supported through advice, advocacy and representation. With 919 new cases and over 3997 communications.



## ADVICE & ADVOCACY

Advice given for 1028 children with 224 advocacy cases.

*“So much clarity after our chat. Before I was in the dark and so confused”*



*“I just wouldn't have known where to go with it all without SENAC helping me”*

## APPEALS

139 Appeal cases taken to SENDIST to appeal EA decisions



*“The Appeals Officer kept me on the straight and narrow, guiding me on the evidence, the right documents and reports”*

## WORKSHOPS/EVENTS

43 workshops, reaching over 640 participants through workshops and networking events



*“The workshop was great. It gave me such a push to move on things and get them sorted. Very informative”*

## REFERRALS

Over 80 organisations, charities and professionals made referrals to SENAC services



*“...really informative for me as a professional who deals with families who are going through the statementing process”*

*“You have given me so much wonderful info to support my family. I can really start to get the ball rolling”*

*“With SENAC's advice and support he got his GCSEs, he wouldn't be where he is today without SENAC. You are all just so amazing.”*



## The voices of our service users

*"I feel after our chat that I now have the confidence to contact the school and ask the right questions"*

*"Your advice has lifted a weight off my shoulders."*

*"I now feel more prepared as I was so lost. You provided me with more direction as I never knew what I needed to do but now I do"*

*"Thanks for such an informative session, it explained things so clearly and made me feel so much better informed as a parent".*

*"I can now tackle the application for SA myself as I felt I didn't know where to start with it all. I feel that I can get the ball rolling because as parents it is hard to know what to do."*

*"I was nervous before I called today. Now I feel a lot more informed. I am delighted there is someone out there at the end of the phone as this is so scary to do on my own"*

*"Now I feel I can go into my meeting all prepared and feel in charge of the statement."*

*"What you have said is really making sense and you have broken the information down so well for me to understand"*

*"As a professional who deals with families, I feel better informed as to the statementing process and I will be directing parents to SENAC and the website"*

*"I was finding everything so vague. You gave me so many clear pathways to follow, and you talked me through the processes"*

# THANK YOU

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2024-25

## GRANT- MAKING TRUSTS AND FOUNDATIONS

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





# SUMMARY INCOME and EXPENDITURE

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted funds	Year Total
<b>Incoming resources:</b>			
From generated funds:			
Voluntary income:	4928	150,324	
Incoming resources from charitable activities			
<b>Total incoming Resources</b>	<b><u>4928</u></b>	<b><u>150,324</u></b>	<b><u>155,252</u></b>
<b>Resources expended:</b>			
Costs of generating funds:			
Costs of charitable activities	(755)	(211,488)	(212,243)
<b>Total resources expended</b>	<b><u>(755)</u></b>	<b><u>(211,488)</u></b>	<b><u>(212,243)</u></b>



# SENAC

Special Educational Needs Advice Centre