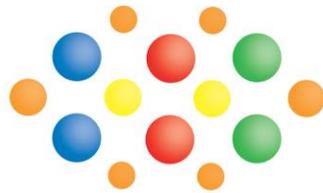
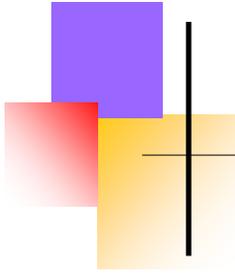


ANNUAL REPORT 2012-2013



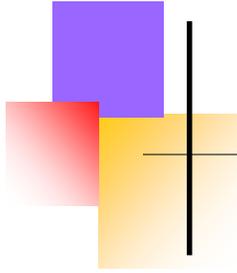
Sendac

Special Educational Needs Advice Centre



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.

We are committed to providing the children, young people and their parents with the advice, information and assistance they require to get the best educational provision available within school for their individual needs.



CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION

This last year has shown a continuing and growing demand for SENAC's advice services with nearly 1700 contacts handled, an increase of 55% over the previous period. This year-on-year growth in demand has been experienced over the last number of years and represents an on-going need to help parents secure the appropriate educational support for their children. All of this underscores the value of the work that we do and the need for the great support we get from all the funding organisations that have supported us over the years. We were also named as one of the three charity partners for the World Police and Fire Games in 2013.

Other valuable work has been undertaken over the last year. SENAC's confidential database underwent development to increase reporting and recording capacity, this work was funded by a grant from Lloyds TSB Foundation for Northern Ireland. To help us manage the demand for our advocacy service we recruited an advocacy assistant thanks to a grant award from the Trusthouse Charitable Foundation. We also recruited a temporary data input assistant to support the delivery of advice services. An award from the Volunteer Now Small Grants Programme towards the volunteer programme has enabled us to maintain the impressive contribution that volunteers make to both the advice line and fundraising. A two year grant was received from the Esmée Fairburn Foundation towards the work of the Education and Policy Officer. We also received a grant award from the John Moores Foundation towards the charity's running costs.

This year our Board commenced an on-going review of our governance arrangements. We also recruited two new Board members Suzanne McIlwee and Adele Davidson who will both be able to support a review of our human resources policies.

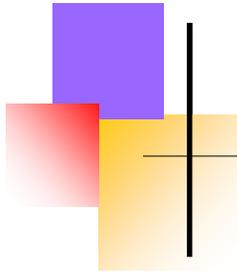
The financial year ended with a grant award from the Big Lottery Fund to enable SENAC to develop and deliver a five year project offering a dedicated education advocate to support children and young people with special educational needs living within the care system.

All of this work could only be achieved with a committed, enthusiastic and passionate staff and volunteer team and I commend the work that they do. I would also like to thank my fellow Board members whose commitment and advice is invaluable.

The focus for the next year will be on delivering the services that we provide in an ever challenging environment to the families and children who need them most.

Paul Mullan

Chair



INFORMATION SERVICE

The **Information Officer's** role is to promote the work of SENAC to schools, parent groups and other organisations throughout Northern Ireland primarily in areas of high social need.

This year we adopted a strategy to increase our presence within local communities. We identified a number of areas in Belfast where there is greater social need and contacted local community networks to give SENAC a public profile in selected communities. Information was placed in local community organisations, libraries, post offices, GP and dentist surgeries, pharmacies, politician's constituency offices, church organisations, parent and toddler groups, Leisure centres, schools and with parent liaison workers. The areas included Lower Ormeau, Castlereagh, Sandy Row and Belvoir. A postcode analysis of the calls to the Advice Line indicates that there is a steady increase in the number of calls coming from these areas. A further analysis shows that the highest percentage of calls that have a post code recorded, are from areas of greater social need throughout NI. These are areas that have been ranked highest on the multiple deprivation measure set by the NI Statistics and Research Agency.

To further increase our profile in East Belfast the IO worked with the East Belfast Partnership who produced a Parent's Guide. SENAC provided the information on the SEN system and guidelines about accessing appropriate education for inclusion in the Parent's Guide.

Parents have a vital role to play in advocating on behalf of their children with special needs. In this year we have continued to promote our services directly to parents by linking with parent support groups and organisations that work directly with parents. SENAC has continued to provide parents with information about services, events and training relevant to special needs education thus developing the support we offer to parents

SENAC has been invited to set up information stands at a range of community events for parents. These have included stands at 174 Trust, the Integrated Services for Children and Young People in West Belfast and Sandy Row in South Belfast. SENAC's capacity to attend events like these provides an invaluable opportunity to directly reach parents and those who work with families.

In August 2009 the Department of Education for Northern Ireland (DENI) initiated a major review of the statutory framework for special educational needs provision in Northern Ireland. This is the most significant policy change in special education in recent years. SENAC has continued to update parents on the progress of this review. In November 2012 we organised an Information session to update parents on the changes planned by DENI. The positive feedback received at this event highlighted the

appreciation of parents at the existence of an independent organisation that is actively promoting the needs of their children and keeping them updated on developments in the SEN system.

The Information Service has also connected with the Early Years and Home Start teams by providing information for conferences and parent groups. Information has also been shared with organisations that work with young people such as Voypic and Youth Inclusion Officers. As part of the overall development of SENAC's services the IO has been involved in collating information on the needs of children and young people within the care system. The IO has worked with Contact Youth to assess the needs of this group of vulnerable young people who may require additional support in relation to their education.

This year we successfully applied for the BBC NI Broadcast Appeal and work has begun on compiling the material for broadcast in October 2013. This is an excellent opportunity for us to raise our profile to a wide audience.

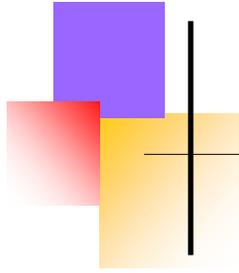
Future developments

This has been a successful year for building our profile in specific areas. We will continue to build our presence within the community and maintain and build networks with parent groups and forums. We will endeavour to use existing networks as a cost effective way of reaching our target audience and focus our promotion activities in specialised publications supplemented by editorial.

To address the role played by professionals in working with parents, we plan to run a Conference for legal practitioners to look at the role of the legal profession in considering the welfare of the child in relation to accessing appropriate education.

Fiona O'Donnell

Information Officer



ADVICE AND ADVOCACY

SENAC's advice and advocacy services have seen a significant expansion in the period with 378 children supported compared with 311 children for the previous financial year. There were 1688 contacts via telephone, email and meetings in order to support those children, compared to 1065 contacts for the previous year. The new database, which has been in use for part of this period, enables us to see that, of those children supported, there were 271 boys and 107 girls and, the most frequent conditions that give rise to special educational needs that we deal with, are Autistic Spectrum Disorder, followed by Dyslexia. The issues parents contact us about are unchanged, from issues in relation to the School Based Stages to difficulties regarding the implementation of a child's Statement of Special Educational Needs.

Of the 378 children supported overall, around one third were supported by the Advocacy service. This intensive level of support included 78 meetings to represent parents' concerns with schools and Education & Library Boards. The Advocacy service in this period has seen some significant successes with packages of educational provision being negotiated for some children who had been having great difficulty in school or had been out of school for some time. This advocacy work has resulted in closer links with a range of statutory agencies such as Educational Welfare and the Equality Commission and non-statutory agencies such as family centres and solicitors' practices.

The higher profile of SENAC, in general, can be seen in the number of parents contacting the service who have been told about the service by another parent, and the rising number of referrals through statutory services such as social workers, speech therapists and schools.

Volunteers

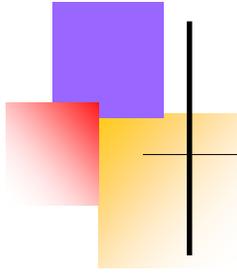
As always, the Advice Line service is supported by an invaluable team of volunteers. While no new volunteers were trained in this period, four existing volunteers continued to assist with the advice line, in total providing between eight and eleven volunteer hours per week. The commitment of these volunteers and their contribution to SENAC's work cannot be underestimated, particularly given the increase in calls and the corresponding intensity of the work. A volunteer 'Thank you' lunch was held in Made in Belfast in January, funded by Volunteer Now's Small Grants Programme.

Viviane Treacy

Rosie Oakes

Children's Advocate

Advice Coordinator



EDUCATION POLICY

Throughout the period under review policy work and engagement has been dominated by the continued efforts to bring attention to the issues and challenges of accessing appropriate special educational needs provision for the children and young people we support.

The reform of the statutory special educational needs framework remains ongoing and is key to addressing much of the educational disadvantage and inequality faced by children with disability within education. A priority for policy work both in this year and into the foreseeable future is to maintain awareness and analysis of changes to the statutory support system and the underpinning legislation and guidelines. Engagement will continue with the Department of Education (DE) and SENAC will continue to ensure that the experiences of those whom the charity supports, inform change. We will continue to keep parents informed of the changes and the impacts of the reform and opportunities for further consultation. In the autumn we delivered information sessions to parents and relevant groups on the proposals and changes. These meetings also provide valuable feedback from parents which can support our policy work.

Throughout the year SENAC's Education and Policy Officer has engaged with the Department of Education, interested MLAs, the Northern Ireland Inspectorate and, as part of the CDSA Education sub group, met with both the Minister for Education and the NI Assembly Committee for Education. SENAC also submitted briefings on SEN issues to the Education Committee. As an experienced charity providing independent advice on special educational needs provision for 10 years, these engagements offer valuable opportunities to express the charity's views and assessments informed by our work and represent the experiences of those supported by the charity's advice and advocacy services. We also presented to the NI Assembly All Party Group for children and young people and the All Party Group on Disability.

SENAC will continue to engage with government, statutory agencies, families and community and voluntary sector groups to gain and provide insight and views on the best way forward to meet the educational needs of the children we support.

Children with Disabilities Strategic Alliance (CDSA)

The CDSA brings together over 25 organizations from across Northern Ireland working with children and young people with disability and special needs and their families. The Alliance which is jointly chaired by

Children in Northern Ireland and Disability Action works together to influence policy impacting on children's lives and ensure it is informed by their needs and experiences. SENAC has been a member for a number of years and this provides valuable opportunity to engage with government and other organisations and strengthens our voice as a charity to represent the experiences and issues of the children and families we support. Within the CDSA is an education sub group which, with the support of all CDSA members, has been actively involved throughout the reform process of the statutory special educational needs framework and we anticipate we are approaching a challenging and busy period with the imminent release of amended SEN legislation.

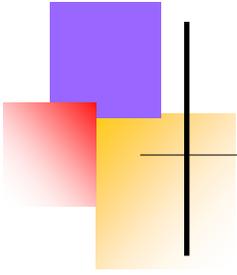
Consultation Responses

SENAC continues to participate in consultations of policies and proposals relevant to the education of children with disability and special educational needs. The primary concern for both policy and practice should be the children's rights and interests. Throughout consultations we seek to ensure their rights and interests are protected and promoted.

Significant in this year was the opportunity to give our views during the review of the Common Funding Scheme which is the scheme applied by the Department of Education to fund schools. We met with the review team and appreciated the chance to outline our concerns and issues on the funding that is available within schools to provide special educational needs provision, how funds are used and accounted for. This review provides the basis for the DE's consultation on the proposed changes to the Common Funding Scheme expected later in 2013.

Heather Larkin

Education and Policy Officer



THANK YOU

The charitable work SENAC undertakes is only possible with the support and commitment of all those who sustain the charity. To all those who have donated, organised and taken part in fundraising events and volunteered their time and skills we thank you on behalf of the growing number of children and their families who benefit from our services. We wish to thank our funders who recognise the value of the work we do and the importance of getting the right support for the children's education.

Thanks to our funders:

BBC Children in Need

The Henry Smith Charity

The Equitable Charitable Trust

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation

Ulster Garden Villages

John Moores Foundation

Trusthouse Charitable Foundation

Lloyds TSB Foundation for Northern Ireland

Volunteer Now

The Big Lottery Fund

Thanks to our fundraisers:

Belfast Marathon 2013

Preparations and training are well underway for SENAC's entry to the 2013 Belfast Marathon in May. The team this year is being led by one of our own Directors, Suzanne McIlwee. She has already recruited 19 runners both for the team events and the fun run. To date, at the end of this financial year and with two more months to go before the Marathon, almost £700 has already been raised in sponsorship. It promises to be another successful and enjoyable marathon for the charity. Thanks to all those taking part, sponsoring our team and especially to Suzanne for her commitment and energy in rallying this support for the charity.

Lisburn Half Marathon

Huge thanks to Karen O'Hare who took part as a first time runner in the Lisburn 10K run to show her appreciation for SENAC's help and raised £265.



Karen raring to get underway at the 10K

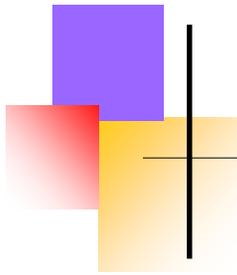
A special mention of thanks: World Police and Fire Games

SENAC were delighted to be chosen as one of three charity partners for the upcoming World Police Fire Games which is being held in Northern Ireland in August 2013 for the first time. This biennial event brings retired and serving police and prison officers and fire fighters from around the world to compete in a wide range of individual and team sports. In addition to being a sporting event the Games focus is to leave a lasting legacy from the engagement of services with community and young people. The opportunity given to the three charity partners to raise funds and awareness of our work at the Games also creates an important legacy. Investing in the Games also means investing in the future of children and young people in Northern Ireland as all three charities, SENAC, the Northern Ireland Cancer Fund for Children and SOS Bus all support vulnerable children and young people within our communities.



SENAC Chair Paul Mullan and representatives from SOS Bus
at the press launch of the WPFG Charity Partners

We look forward to what will be a busy but exciting summer and the unique opportunity to raise awareness about SENAC and fundraise at the Games.



FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

The directors and staff of SENAC are committed to applying sensible and prudent financial management to develop the charity's services and deliver advice, information and advocacy to increasing numbers of families in Northern Ireland.

In common with many other charities, SENAC has experienced ongoing pressures on its ability to raise funds and as with previous years, we are very reliant on a key small number of funders whose contributions enable the charity to offer the consistent high standards of help and advice from its staff and volunteers.

In 2012-13, the directors & staff of SENAC set its financial priorities as below

- Develop strategies to grow reserve funds.

The raising of unrestricted funds continues to be a challenge for the charity with a total of £2205 raised in the accounting period 2012-13. This total was low relative to previous years but it should be noted that considerable time and effort was spent by the charity on its efforts for WPF 2013, the rewards for which will only be recognised in the 2013-14 accounting period.

The priority for the next financial year will be to undertake a broad funding strategy to secure funding to maintain the Children's Advocacy Service and Advice Line and the Information Service.

A number of grants were awarded from the following bodies during 2012-13.

- Grant received from Lloyds TSB Foundation for Northern Ireland to develop SENAC's database.
- Grant reward received from the Trusthouse Charitable Trust which enabled SENAC to recruit an advocacy assistant to help meet the demand for the advocacy services.
- Award from Volunteer Now Small Grants Programme towards the volunteer programme.
- A two year grant was received from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation towards the work of the Education and Policy Officer.

- Grant award received from John Moores Foundation towards charity running costs.
- The financial year ended with a grant award from the Big Lottery Fund to enable SENAC to develop and deliver a five year project offering a dedicated education advocate to support children and young people with special educational needs living within the care system.

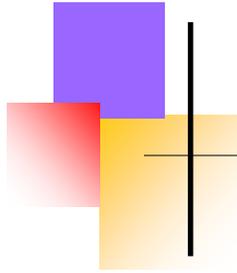
SENAC is likely to face ongoing challenges in 2013-14 to its ability to raise funds but is hopeful that, given the ever-enthusiastic and committed support of its staff & volunteers, the charity will continue to raise funds to meet its objectives.

The directors would like to express their grateful thanks and admiration to the office staff and volunteers whose daily commitment, enthusiasm and dedication is fundamental to the success and future of the charity.

A special mention of thanks goes to Jean Mc Bride of McBride Bookkeeping Services for her continued support and service to the charity.

Connla Hollywood

Treasurer



BALANCE SHEET

Balance Sheet 31 March 2013

Financial Activities Balance Sheet March 13

	Note	2013	2012
Fixed Assets		£	£
Intangible assets	9	868	1,085
Tangible assets	10	1,902	2,358
		2,770	3,443
Current Assets			
Debtors	11	1,146	542
Cash at bank and at hand		35,614	26,773
		36,760	27,315
Creditors: Amounts			
falling due within one year	12	(4,172)	(3,654)
Net Current Assets		32,588	23,661
Total Assets Less			
Current Liabilities		35,358	27,104
Net Assets		35,358	27,104
FUNDS			
Restricted Income Funds	13	32,289	19,707
Unrestricted Income			
Funds	14	3,069	7,397
Total Funds		35,358	27,104

This financial statement
was approved on 2nd
October 2013

