

The Index for Children and Young People with Disabilities or Additional Needs

ANNUAL REPORT 2021 – 2023



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CONTENTS

(To navigate to a certain section, click on the icon bottom right)

1. Background
2. What is The Index?
3. Summary of Index Registrations 2023
4. Key Achievements 2021-23
5. Priorities for 2023-24
6. Promotion of The Index
7. Enquiries to The Index
8. Feedback
9. Facts and Figures of Children and Young People on The Index
10. Summary
11. Contact Information

1. BACKGROUND

This Index Annual Report covers the last two years, from April 2021 to March 2023. It will provide an overview of Index activities over the last two years and will compare registrations and information gathered during registrations separately for each year.

The Children Act 1989 requires all service providers to work closely together, in partnership with parents, to set up a system to assess the needs of children and young people with disabilities and additional needs, and their families. In order to do this, each local authority must set up what the Act calls a 'register' – the Vale of Glamorgan calls it 'The Index'.

The Index was initially launched in the Vale in April 2005 and, through Families First Grant funding support, was re-launched in April 2012. The Index Officer sits within the wider framework of the Family Information Service (FIS). The Families First Grant funds a Temporary Index Officer post and the production of The Index newsletter.

The purpose of The Index is to directly provide families who have children and young people with disabilities and additional needs, with information on local services, clubs and activities. Families who are signed up to The Index will receive our newsletter – 'The Index' – and regular mail outs on workshops, benefit advice, networking, clubs and services, training opportunities, carers support and any relevant information from other agencies. Families can request specific information that may be of interest to them. The Index is also a way for parents to have a voice – they can contact us directly and we consult with them via survey and ebulletins.

The Index also assists service providers in planning their services and budgets. It can give a clearer picture of how many children and young people there are with disabilities or additional needs in the



Local Authority area. Having a clearer picture of the level of need will enable the agencies to work together to plan better services.

The children and young people included on The Index have been referred by their parent / carer, health visitor, social worker and other agencies. The information gathered is a factual record of the child's needs and the information is held confidentially on a stand alone secure system within the Family Information Service Team.

If you have any comments or queries in relation to this report, please contact:

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2. WHAT IS THE INDEX?

- The Index is Vale of Glamorgan's voluntary register of children and young people with disabilities or additional needs.
- In order to be included on The Index, the child / young person needs to:
 - have a diagnosed disability, be in the process of diagnosis or have confirmed ongoing additional needs
 - be aged up to 18 years
 - live in the Vale of Glamorgan
- The Index aims to provide information to:
 - Families – keeping families up to date with services, support and activities
 - Professionals – keeping professionals up to date with the needs of children and young people with disabilities or additional needs
 - Organisations – promoting existing services and support
- The Index is a point of contact for families and professionals

3. SUMMARY OF INDEX REGISTRATIONS 2023

- **1,013** children & young people registered on The Index as at March 2023
- **115** new registrations to The Index in 2021-22 and **164** new registrations in 2022-23, which is an increase of **43%**
- **97** children & young people have deregistered from The Index due to turning 18, moving out of the area or requesting to be deregistered
- **682** reviews carried out.

- The largest number of referrals to The Index have come from the Families First Advice Line (FFAL) (**19%**), closely followed by health visitors (**18.5%**). There has been a significant increase in referrals from FFAL over the last two years.
- In the last year, the majority (**62%**) of new registrations were male.
- **58%** of those on The Index live in Barry
- In the last year, almost half of all new registrations (**46%**) recorded ASD as the primary reason for registration
- When looking at all reasons for registration, over the last year, the most common reason for registration was ASD (**106 registrations, 67%**). This was followed by Communication and Socialisation Difficulties (**96 registrations, 60%**) and Behavioural / Emotional Difficulties (**89 registrations, 59%**). These were also the most common reasons for registration in 2021-22.
- FIS Team have received **372** enquiries from parents, carers and professionals asking about services and support for children with additional needs over the past two years.



4. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS 2021- 2023

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- *279 children and young people signed up to The Index in the last two years, which is a 48% increase from the previous two years.*
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- Kept families informed about changes to guidance from Welsh Government as we emerged from the pandemic as well as support services available.
- Produced the Index newsletter in hard copy in the community as well as a digital flipbook.
- Produced a Digital Audio Exchange advert with Global Limited, to promote FIS to people who stream music, radio, podcasts etc. as well as a radio advert on Bro Radio.
- Commissioned an animation to explain and promote The Index.
- Recorded a Q&A session with education professionals to explain the implementation of the new ALN Code. and improved joint working with ALNCOs.
- Improved joint working with the Families First Advice Line (FFAL) - referral pathway and outreach and increased referrals from 3 in 2022 to 51 in 2023.

- New simplified online registration form in consultation with parents and professionals, and streamlined back-end database

5. PRIORITIES 2023 – 2024

- Promote new online registration form and review in consultation with parents, carers and professionals.
- Investigate the ALN portal and potential for ALNCOs to refer children to The Index
- Promote the Childcare Information Wales website (linked to Dewis Cymru) and the new tiles showing services, support and activities for children with disabilities, to parents and professionals, as well as providers to add their information.
- Research digital flip books and improve accessibility of digital content, including reviewing the Index web pages
- Work with partners to increase outreach in schools and community events
- Migrate Index register to new spreadsheet and progress Power Automate software.

6. PROMOTION OF THE INDEX ACROSS THE VALE

6.1 OUTREACH

In 2021, outreach slowly re-started as we transitioned from a world of restrictions to a post-pandemic climate. We attended a series of community roadshows across the Vale, with the Play Development Team, talking to parents about their experiences during the pandemic, what they would like to see in their community with regards to play, childcare and any other issues families face. We resumed our weekly presence at Llandough Hospital and were later joined by our colleagues in the Families First Advice Line, coordinating our presence to new and existing patients attending the neurodevelopmental clinics.



By the summer of 2022, there were so many more events and activities that we could attend to engage with parents and families. The Summer of Fun funding from Welsh Government was used to facilitate over 140 free activities for children and young people and the FIS Team curated a Summer of Fun online holiday programme, which received over 23,000 views.

More recently, the Index Officer has linked with Adult Learning and attended family sessions in the schools in Barry, which has provided a great opportunity to promote The Index to parents and carers.



6.2 DIGITAL PROMOTION

Over the last two years, we have focused on digital promotion, which has included the following:

Q&A video:

The Index Officer recorded a Q&A session with education professionals, discussing the implementation of the Additional Learning Needs Code and how it affects parents. This was promoted widely. The video has received over 560 views on YouTube and the post on Facebook reached almost 10,000 people: [Moving to the new ALN system - for parents, carers & professionals - YouTube](#)

The Index takes enquiries from parents about the Code and its impact on them, and can act as a buffer for Education, reducing the need to escalate enquiries to them.



Social Media:

Social media has continued to be an effective marketing and communication tool and we have over 4,000 followers on Facebook, which is an increase of 1000 followers since two years ago. The most successful post was the Winter of Wellbeing Activity Programme, which reached over 12,000 people and resulted in almost 1000 clicks to the website and 48 new followers to the page.



Animation:

We commissioned a video to help explain The Index to parents and carers in a visual and accessible way <https://youtu.be/EX5nSx082PU> We have used this on social media, website and during presentations to professionals. It's been viewed over 400 times.

Radio and live streaming:

We commissioned a radio advert through Bro Radio, which is the local radio station for the Vale of Glamorgan. We also commissioned Global Ltd with a Digital Ad Exchange (DAX) as an innovative way to target our audiences. The advert promoted the Family Information Service, including The Index and services and support for families of children with disabilities. It was aired for two months and reached almost 6,000 people.

E-bulletins:

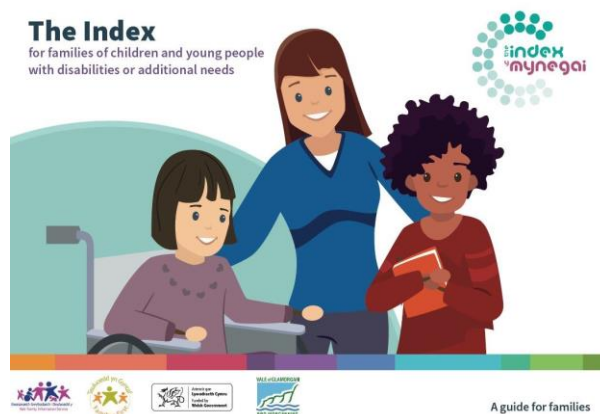
We send e-bulletins to families in between the newsletters, containing information on services, groups, activities etc. Some articles focused on the mental health and wellbeing of parent carers e.g Carer Emergency Grants, Pop Up Outreach Service, Online Support and 'Me Time' activities such as Mindfulness, Craft for Wellbeing etc.

Website:

The Index has its own web pages on the Council website: www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/TheIndex

Parents and professionals can access the [family friendly leaflet](#) explaining The Index and the benefits of signing up. They can also complete the [online registration form](#), view [past newsletters](#) and we have a section on Transition: Beginning to Plan for My Future.

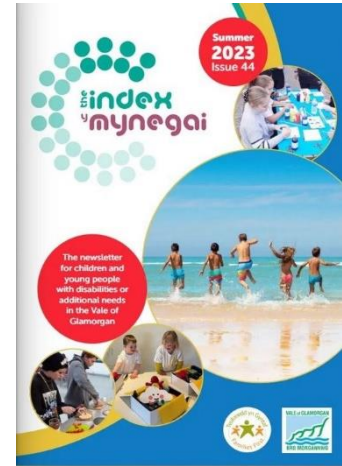
The Index web pages sit within a larger section called 'Children with Additional Needs'.



6.3 The Index Newsletter

We now produce [The Index newsletter](#) twice a year in Summer and Winter and we produce a hard copy, as well as a digital flipbook. The hard copy is available in the community and copies are sent to ALNCOs in the schools, health visitors, surgeries, libraries, dentists and key partners.

The aim is to make sure that the information is available to as many families as possible, and also to encourage families to sign up to The Index.



7. ENQUIRIES

The Family Information Service has received 372 enquiries from parents, carers and professionals asking about services and support for children with additional needs over the past two years. This is an increase of 78 enquiries in comparison to the previous two years. The majority of these then signed up to The Index. Enquiries are varied ranging from a parent concerned about her child in school to a parent wanting to know more about groups and activities. We also receive enquiries from professionals such as ALNCOs and health visitors.

8. FEEDBACK

Feedback is requested at the time of an enquiry or after getting in touch with the Family Information Service. Enquirers are contacted to gain feedback on the service they received from FIS and more specifically, The Index.

It is difficult to gain feedback and quite often we will contact a parent/carer and they haven't yet used the information provided, and so it's difficult to measure the impact The Index has had on a family.

- 97% of those who responded were happy with the service.
- 94% said they would recommend our service to other people.
- 61% said the information provided has made a positive difference to them and their family.

'I love getting the Index! I make a cup of coffee and sit here and digest everything. Another jam packed edition full of great content and interviews etc.

Really liked the parents chatting about how important TeenScheme is to them. Nice touch-proves how important these services are-long may they continue!

Look forward to the next edition' 😊

'With reference to the ALN Q&A Video: Although I am no expert on this matter-I thought the video was fab! I will certainly prompt my friends to watch, inform and act on behalf of their gorgeous son. Keep up the great work - your passion shines through yet again!'

'Very new to everything as child has recently been referred to the neurodevelopmental service. Process to register was very easy and based on the experience so far feels supported by the

service. The newsletter received on registering was very helpful, where else would you get a wide range of activities and services suitable to the needs of our children in our local area?!

'Quick and easy registration process (The Index), very informative service, the people spoken to are very kind and non judgemental which is a big deal as feel judged a lot. Also very understanding.'

'Pleased to receive information on parent support groups when signing up to the index. Came through quick after registering. It's so reassuring knowing there is a service doing the leg work for us as I wouldn't have a clue whats out there otherwise.. and whats suitable for my childs needs.'

'Very new to the Index, i have started receiving the newsletters and emails. They are very informative and suitable for the age and needs of my child. Only been registered a short time but very happy with the service so far and I would definitely recommend you to others in the same position as me.'

'Very pleased with the service. Registering was easy and quick. Its so reassuring knowing the newsletters are coming in time for school holidays as I have spent so much time searching in the past and getting nowhere. I know these services will be understanding of my situation.'

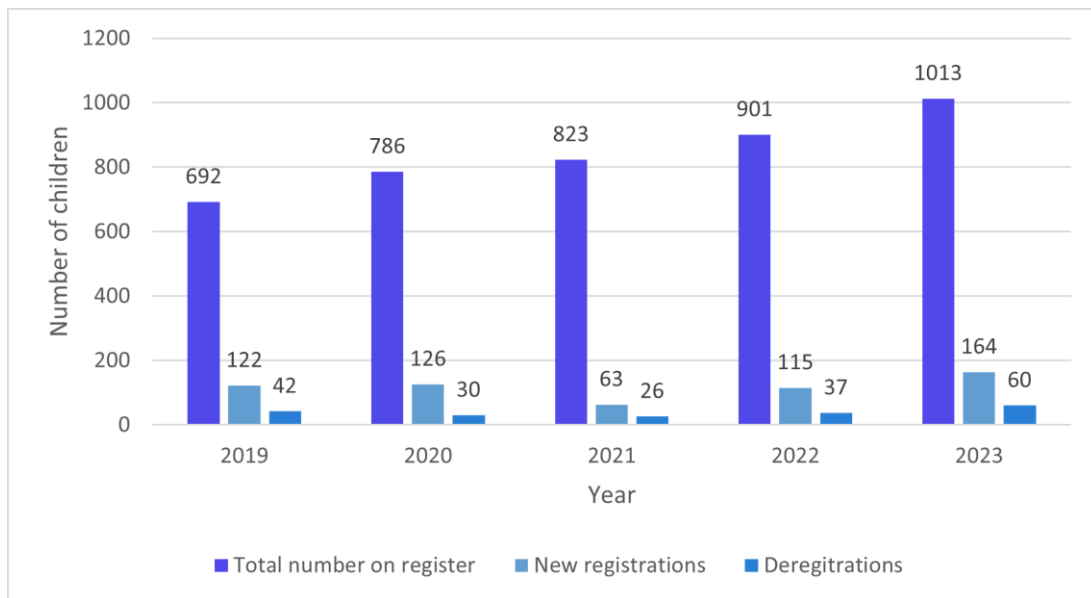
9. FACTS AND FIGURES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ON THE INDEX

9.1 REGISTRATIONS

There are 1,013 children registered on The Index and the chart below illustrates the number of new registrations, de-registrations and total number of registrations over the last five years. There was a dip in registrations in 2020-21 due to the COVID pandemic, but since then there has been a significant increase. The last year has seen the highest number of registrations 164, compared to 115 the previous year. We can see below that the main reason for this is the increase in referrals from the FFAL Team.

Over the last two years, 97 children have de-registered and the main reason is because they have reached 18 yrs old. We then ask if they would like to be placed on our transitions mailing list and they will still receive our newsletters and ebulletins. There are currently 32 young people on this list.

Chart 1: Number of children and young people registered on The Index over the past five years



9.2 REVIEWS

A 'Review' can take place at least every three years, or sooner if a parent contacts us to update their details. Over the last two years, 682 children have had their details reviewed.

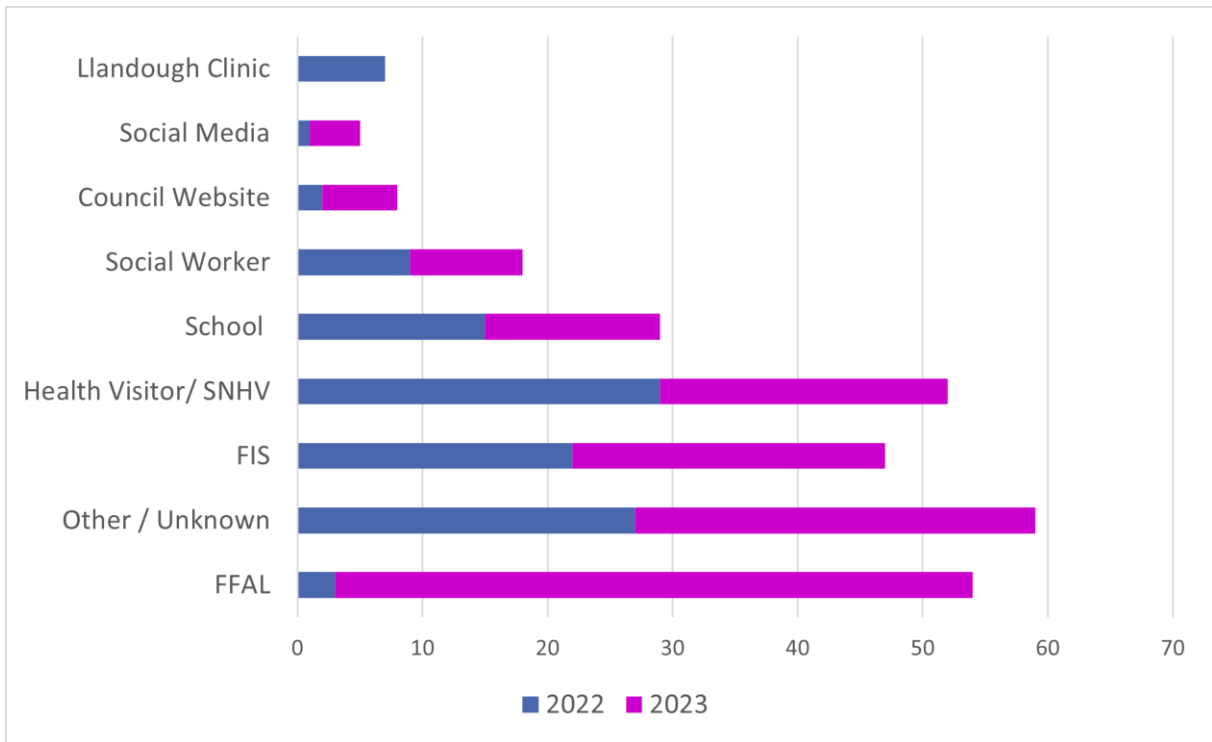
9.3 REFERRALS

We ask families where they heard about the Index and some professionals refer children directly. Over the last two years, the highest number of referrals were from the Families First Advice Line (FFAL 54 referrals), closely followed by the Health Visitor / Special Needs Health Visitor (52 referrals) and the Family Information Service (47 referrals).

When we compare the last two years, referrals remain fairly consistent. However, there has been a huge increase in referrals from FFAL, as there were only 3 referrals in 2021-22, compared to 51 in 2022-23.

The Index Officer has worked closely with the FFAL Team Manager and the Senior System Support Officer and referrals now automatically come through to the Index Officer on WCCIS, the Social Services information sharing platform. Following the parent/carer's initial conversation and assessment with a FFAL Advisor, The Index is discussed and if they would like to receive ongoing information about services and support, a referral can be made to The Index Officer. This new way of working reduces staff resources, duplication and is a more efficient service for the parent/carer.

Chart 2: Source of referrals to The Index 2021-23



9.4 AGE RANGE & GENDER

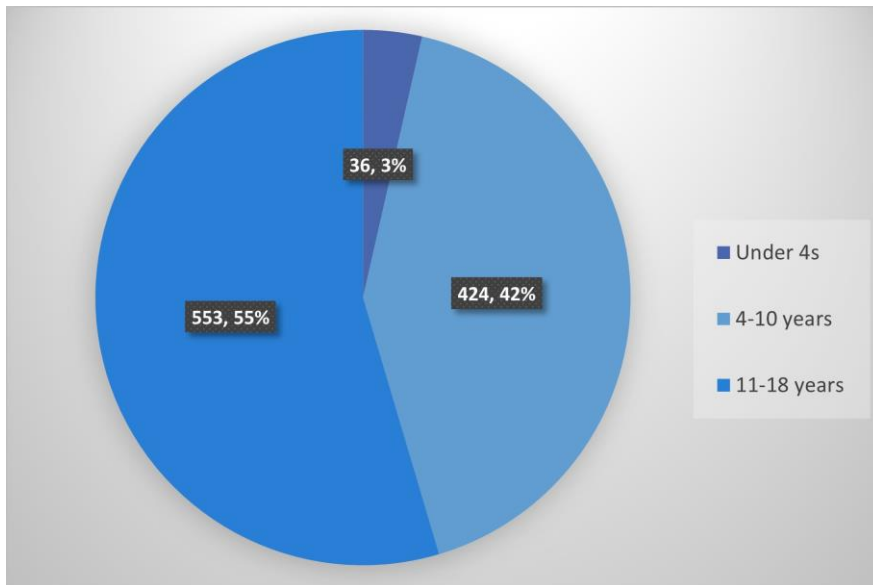
The majority of children (683, 67%) registered on The Index are male.

In the last year 62% of new registrations were male, 37% were female and 1% stated 'prefer not to say'.

In the last year, the majority (58%) of new registrations were age 4-10 years.

- 22 children age 0 - 3 years
- 96 children age 4 – 10 years
- 46 children age 11 – 18 years

Chart 3: Age range of children and young people on The Index



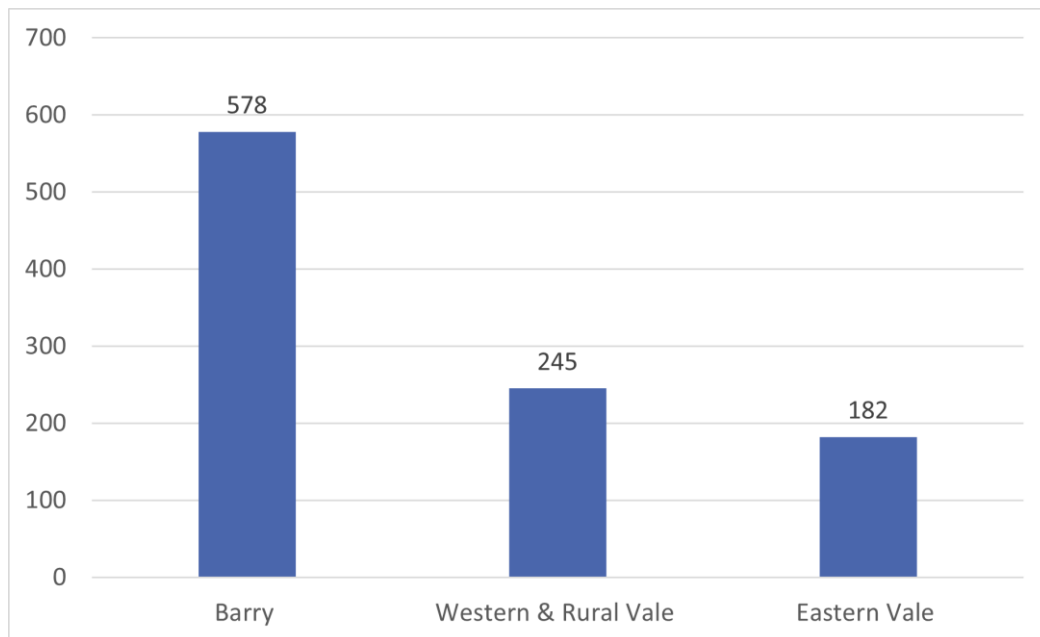
9.5 ETHNICITY

76.1% of children are white, 19.5% have not disclosed their ethnicity and 4.3% (total of 44 children) are from a minority ethnic background. The Office of National Statistics Census 2021 states that only 5.4% of the Vale population are from a minority ethnic background.

9.6 GEOGRAPHICAL BREAKDOWN

The majority of children on The Index live in Barry (58%), 24% live in Western and Rural Vale and 18% live in Eastern Vale.

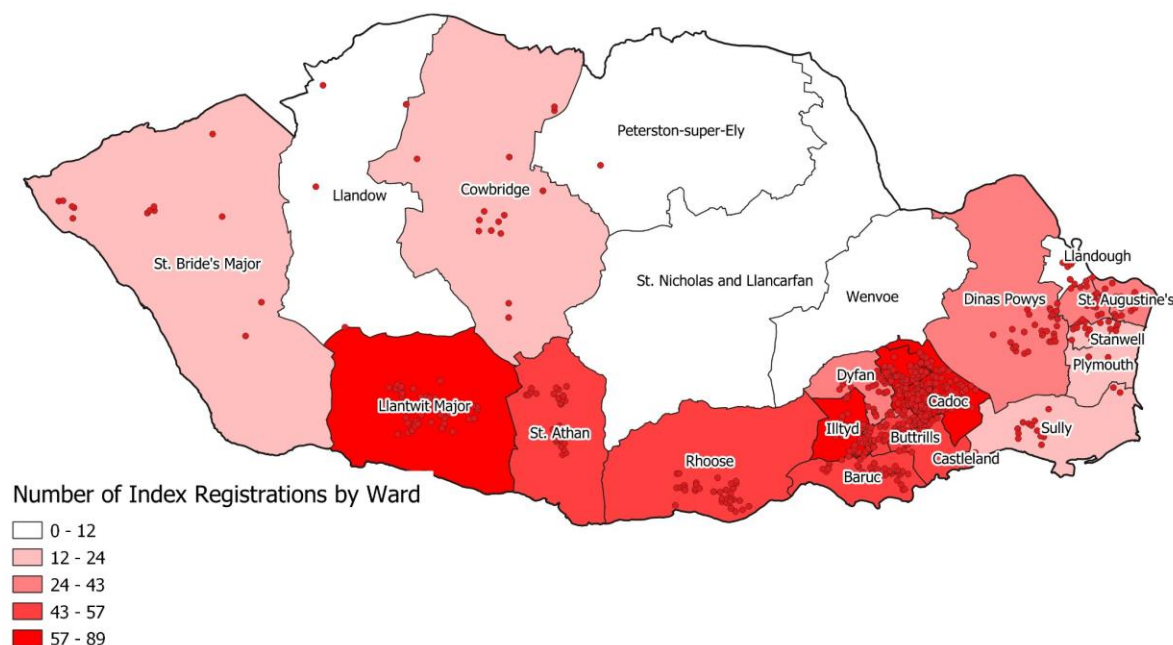
Chart 4: Location of children and young people on The Index



The map below illustrates Index registrations by ward. The darker shaded wards have a higher number of Index registrations. Some wards in Barry and Llantwit Major have the highest number of registrations. Whereas some rural wards have the lowest number of registrations. There have been a significant number of deregistrations in the Wenvoe, St Nicholas and Llancarfan wards over the last year. More promotion could be targeted at these areas.

Chart 5: Map of children and young people on The Index

Number of Children Registered on The Index by Ward in March 2022



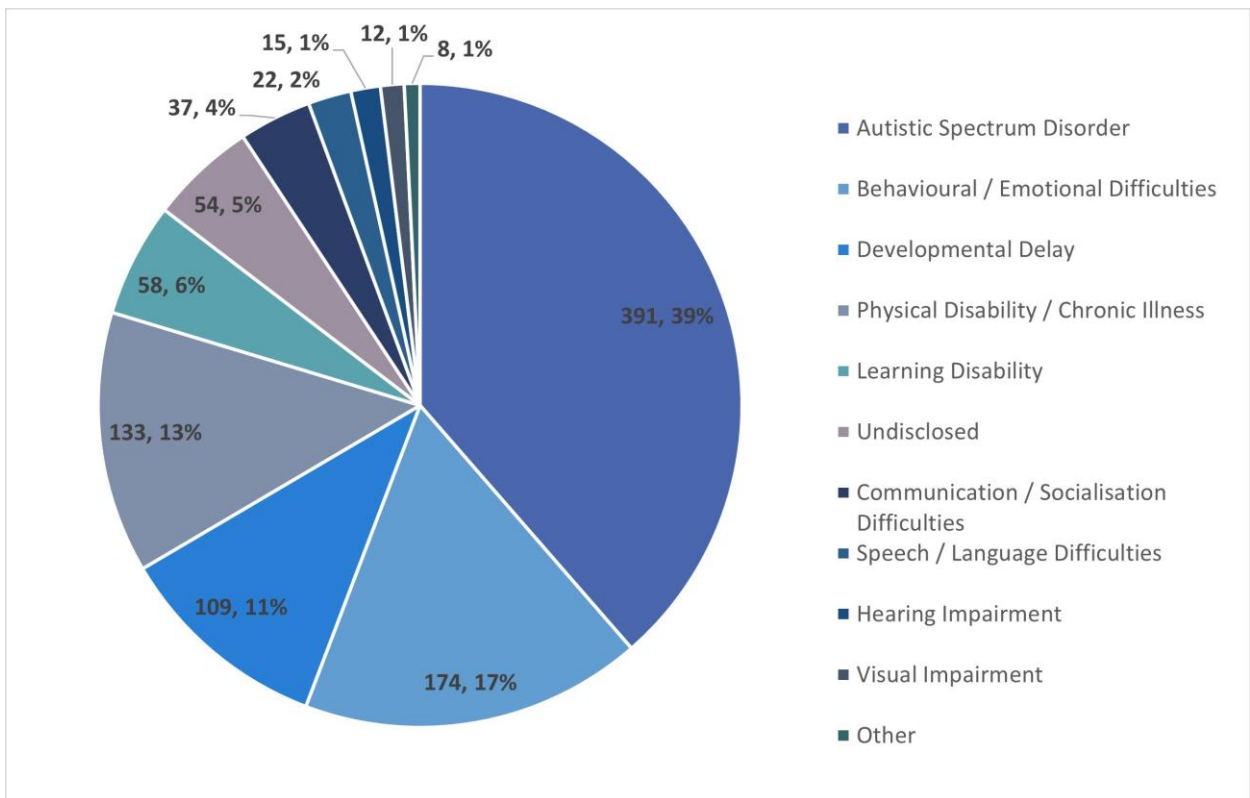
9.7 PRIMARY REASON FOR REGISTRATION

When signing up to The Index, parent / carers are asked to state one primary reason for registration as well as listing any other associated disabilities / difficulties.

It should be noted that the parent will state their child's disability based on diagnosis (if diagnosed), and also their perception of the disability and how it impacts the child/young person and the world around them.

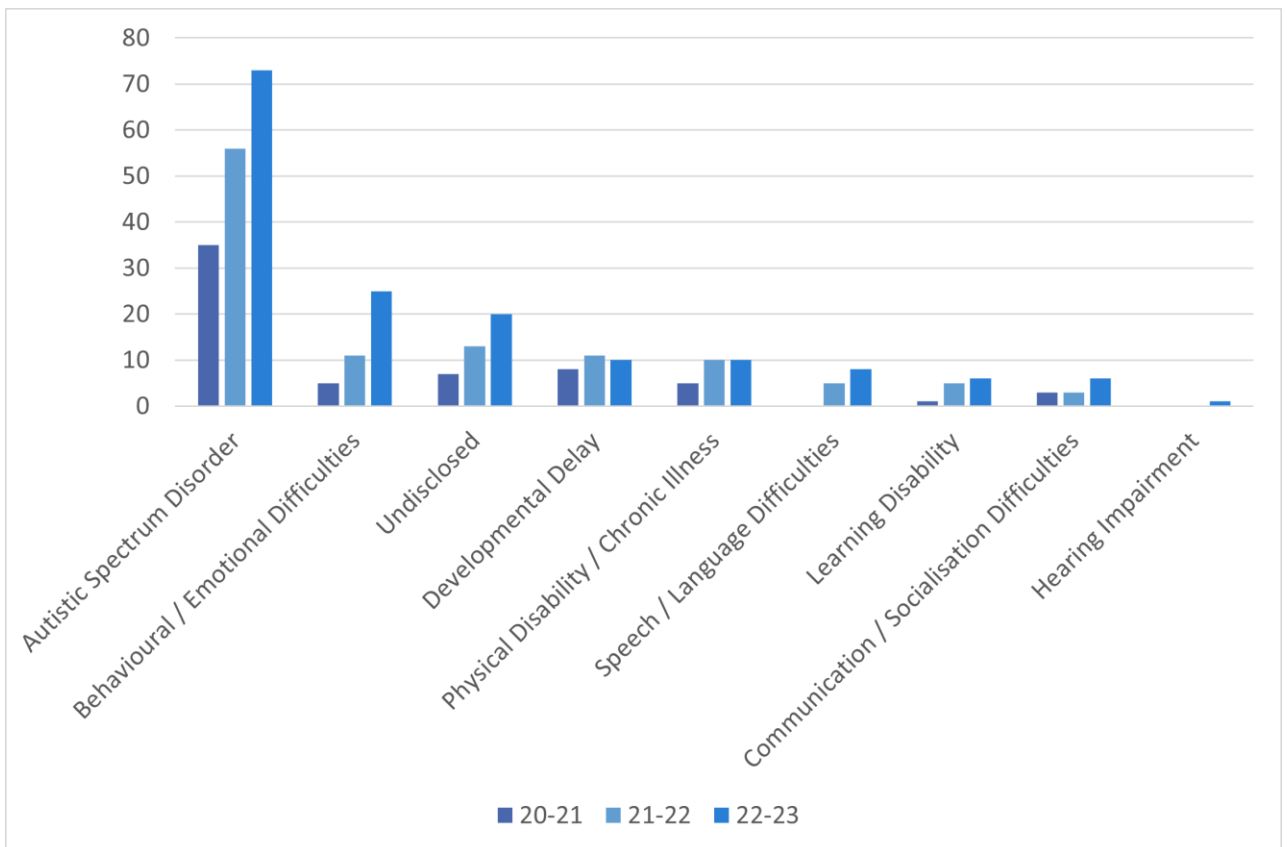
The chart below shows that the most common reason for registering on The Index is Autistic Spectrum Disorder (391 registrations, 39%). This is followed by 'Behavioural / Emotional Difficulties' (174 registration, 17%).

Chart 6: Primary reason for registering on The Index



We can compare new registrations over the past three years, to see whether the primary reasons for registering are changing. The chart below illustrates that there has been a significant increase in registrations for ASD, which accounted for 46% of all new registrations in 2022-23, and behavioural/emotional difficulties. There has also been a slight increase in registrations for speech/language difficulties, learning disability, and communication/socialisation difficulties.

Chart 7: Primary reason for registration on The Index over the last three years



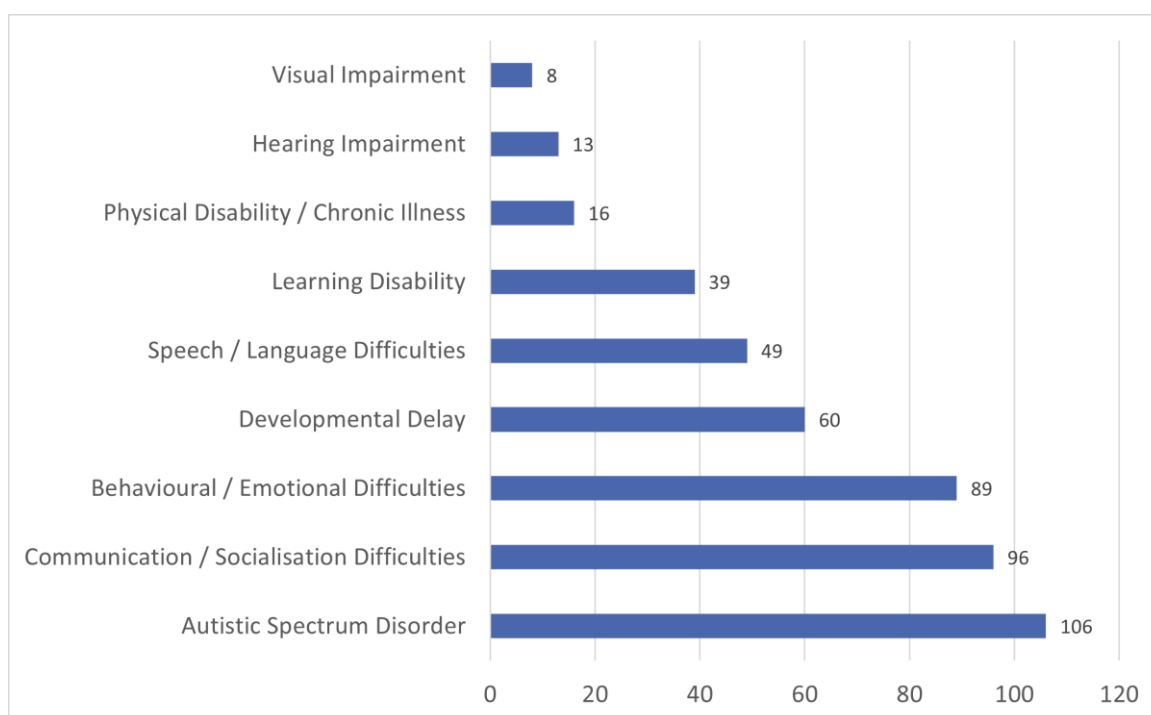
9.8 ALL REASONS FOR REGISTRATION

Whilst families state the primary reason for registration, many of the children and young people have more than one type of disability / difficulty that has an impact on their lives. Families are asked to state all reasons for registration. Please be aware that this includes children where the parent or professional has said that they are under assessment for a specific disability.

Over the last year, 106 registrations (67% of all registrations) gave ASD as a reason for registering. This was followed by communication/socialisation difficulties, which accounted for 96 registrations (60%), and then behavioural/emotional difficulties, which accounted for 89 registrations (56%).

The following chart illustrates this in more detail.

Chart 8: All reasons for registration on The Index in 2022-23



9.9 INFORMATION REQUESTED

During registration, we ask whether the family would like any information to support them and their child. There was a huge variety of requests including: family support services, support groups, benefits information, activities and inclusive sports clubs, childcare and respite services, parent / carer assessments, young carers support the new ALN system and independent support.

9.10 SOCIAL SERVICES

183 children on The Index have a social worker (18%) and in the last year, 12 children who registered have a social worker (7% of all registrations).

All parents and carers are provided with information about having a parent carers assessment to assess their own needs.

9.11 EDUCATION

The **Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018** ('the Act')

Aims to create:

- A unified legislative framework to support all children of compulsory school age or below with additional learning needs (ALN) and to support young people with ALN who are in school or further education (FE)
- An integrated, collaborative process of assessment, planning and monitoring which facilitates early, timely and effective interventions
- A fair and transparent system for providing information and advice, and for resolving concerns and appeals.
- It is expected the ALN system set out in the Act will be fully implemented over a three-year period. The implementation period is expected to run from September 2021 to August 2024.

- During implementation, the ALN system will operate in parallel to the existing special educational needs (SEN) system, which will gradually be phased out during the implementation period.

Further information is available here: [Additional learning needs \(ALN\) system: parents' guide](#)

There are 237 children on The Index who have either a Statement or IDP (23%) and in the last year, 30 parents stated their child has a Statement or IDP (19% of new registrations).

9.12 COMMUNICATION

78 children on The Index (8%) use PECs to communicate, 38 children (4%) use Makaton and 7 children (0.7%) use British Sign Language.

10. SUMMARY

As can be seen, The Index provides a vital service to families with children with disabilities or additional needs, ensuring that they receive accurate, up to date information, on services and support they can access.

The Index includes children and young people age 0-18 years and covers a wide range of individual requirements. Therefore, one of the challenges is to ensure that the information provided to families is beneficial to their specific situation. To monitor this we obtain feedback on our service and carry out a survey annually.

The last two years has seen a significant increase in registrations and the ability to carry out much more outreach work to engage with families.

11. CONTACT INFORMATION

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