



SEND Information Advice and Support Service

Annual Report to Steering Group

June 2020

Contents:

Overview

Commissioning, Governance and Management Arrangements

Strategic Functions

Operational Functions

Professional Development and Training for staff

SEND Information Advice and Support Service Report to Steering Group – June 2020

Overview

From 1st September 2014, Local Authorities have a statutory duty to provide SEND Information Advice and Support Services as outlined in the *Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice (0-25 years) 2015*. In September 2018, a new set of minimum standards were introduced as part of the Information Advice and Support Programme (IASP) which services are expected to meet, these standards are supported by the DfE and Department of Health and Social Care. They are based around four key areas:

- Commissioning, Governance and management arrangements
- Strategic functions
- Operational Functions
- Professional development and training for staff

These minimum standards outline clear expectations of SEND Information Advice and Support Services. They act to support both LA's and services themselves to ensure the quality of the service provided, and its impact for service users. They are also the basis for 2-year operational plans for 2019-2021 and linked funding in 2019/20.

The [minimum standards](#) can be read online, through the IASSN website.

Paragraph 2.19 of the Code of Practice outlines the key roles of the IASS:

To meet local needs, local authorities should consider providing the following forms of support through their information, advice and support service(s):

- Signposting children, young people and parents to alternative and additional sources of advice, information and support that may be available locally or nationally
- Individual casework and representation for those who need it, which should include:
 - support in attending meetings, contributing to assessments and reviews and participating in decisions about outcomes for the child or young person
 - directing children, young people, parents and those who support and work with them to additional support services where needed, including services provided by the voluntary sector. These services should include support relating to preparing for adulthood, including housing support, careers advice and employment support
- Help when things go wrong, which should include:
 - supporting children, young people and parents in arranging or attending early disagreement resolution meetings
 - supporting children, young people and parents in managing mediation, appeals to the First-tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability), exclusions and complaints on matters related to SEN and disability
 - making children, young people and parents aware of the local authority's services for resolving disagreements and for mediation, and on the routes of appeal and complaint on matters related to SEN and disability (see Chapter 11, Resolving disagreements)
- Provision of advice through individual casework and through work with parent carer support groups, local SEN youth forums or disability groups, or training events

In addition to the above, the Service also assists parents where their child has been excluded or is at risk of exclusion from school.

In its previous guise (Coventry Parent Partnership Service) the service was both well-established and well-regarded, both locally for service users and professionals, and further afield working with the national network of PPS's. As with the PPS, the SENDIASS receives its funding from the Local Authority (LA) but operates at "arms length" from it, to ensure parents have confidence in the impartiality of the advice, support and information provided by the Service.

The following report seeks to inform members of the Steering Group on the work and developments of the Service during the 2019/20 financial year.

Commissioning, Governance and Management

Finance:

2019/20: The baseline budget was set at £166,096. This increase of just over £10.5k (from 2018/19) was due to a general increase in staffing costs (across the City council, and changes to pension arrangements).

This was supplemented by the £11,029 carried forward from the previous years' IASP funding. We were also successful in bidding for additional funding through the IASP programme for 2019/20. This amounted to £35,100 from 3 funding pots. Altogether this amounted to a total budget of £212,225. There was a significant amount of underspend, particularly of the additional funding of which almost £25k was carried forward to 2020/21 to ensure that we can keep current staffing levels to meet the outcomes in the development plan for IASP.

2020/21: The baseline budget is set at £162,114 a slight reduction from the previous year. This will be supplemented by the carry forward of IASP money (25k) and also an extra pot of funding from the IASP for 2020/21 (equating to a maximum of £27,882). This gives us a maximum budget of £214,996. It is likely that this will again show a large underspend.

Staffing:

Staffing was mainly consistent through the period, with a temporary post in place until March 31st 2020. Whilst this was due to be extended, due to staff promotion, the post was vacant from January 2020. Due to the success of the CYP officer post, and it's alignment to the developmental plan for the service and outcomes in the IASP, this was extended by an additional 5 hrs per week (from 25 to 30hrs) from November 2019. Unfortunately, due to another promotion, this post was vacant at the end of this period.

Strategic Functions

Over the course of the year so far, the service has contributed in a number of ways to overall strategic functions in the context of local, regional and national developments.

Local

- We regularly attend the local SEND Board, especially with a view to supporting the involvement of young people and their parent/carers. This is reflected in our development plan in ensuring that we have children and young people contributing to the issues affecting them in relation to SEND, and have created the "Shadow" SEND board with secondary special schools for young people to contribute to local strategic decisions.

- “The AmbasSENDors Club”, for young people with additional needs in mainstream schools, has contributed to CAMHS long-term plan, after consultation around their key objective statements. This is due to continue in 2020.
- We continue to produce an e-bulletin which is distributed through This is on a 6 weekly cycle but is still very much an “in-house” production – we continue to get little or no information from sources across education, health and care (or indeed from service users).
- Continued to work with Public Health to monitor the parenting strategy across Coventry.
- Contribute to a local group looking at the “My Support Plan” document which has been developed for supporting Coventry pupils at SEN Support stage, including developing a guide for parents.
- Contributed to the local area Ofsted/CQC inspection in October, which included ensuring parental and young person involvement with the inspectors as well as the JSNA (see more in children & young people’s section)
- Supported local authority officer in redesign of the Local Offer, including working with young people and developing an engagement webpage; also worked with the LA and parents to look at specialist provision in the city to identify need and priorities.
- Signposting other agencies, particularly health and social care, to publications/events aimed at staff from those areas around the reforms/EHC plans.

Regional

Coventry IASS is a member of the regional West Midlands group for SEND IAS services, and service manager is currently the chair of this group. Coventry also has responsibility for the finance of this group as it works collaboratively in providing training opportunities for staff. It meets on quarterly basis through the year and includes involvement from the national network (IASSN).

National

- National developments have had a continued focus since April on the future direction of IASS services and how they are delivered. This Information, Advice and Support Programme developed by the Council for Disabled Children, has been in place since July 2018, and alongside the minimum standards seeks to support a comprehensive offer by IAS services. This has included additional reporting to the IASP with regards to the impact that funding has had, which has been used to support a request to the DfE for funding moving forwards.

We have also contributed to a number of national consultations, including a response alongside Council for Disabled Children around the Timpson Exclusions report. This is particularly relevant given the potential impact on IASS services that some of the recommendations in the report could have, regarding access for parents to impartial information advice and support around exclusion from school.

The IASS Network, provides an online forum to support both managers and staff of services, which has been updated with input from Coventry SENDIASS.

Provision of Information & Advice and Supporting Individuals

Individual casework support

SEND Information Advice and Support Service operates an open referral policy. This provides confidential, impartial information, advice and support to parents/carers, children and young

people of Coventry aged 0-25 years who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are excluded or at risk of exclusion from school. This remains a large and broad area for a service previously aimed solely at supporting parents/carers, with slightly increased staffing arrangements in place

Through liaison and partnership working the team provides active support to contribute to positive outcomes for children and young people. Dependent upon the individual characteristics of a referral for support the Service also works pro-actively on behalf of families across a wide range of statutory and voluntary agencies to secure good outcomes.

Individual casework support around Special Educational Needs and Exclusion continues to be the core element of activity with Officers supporting parents at SEN support meetings, issues around exclusion, annual reviews and throughout the EHC needs assessment process. The service operates a "Duty Officer" system where parents can usually speak to an IASS Officer on the same day, although as referrals have increased, this has become slightly less likely.

For many families IASS continues to take on more of a key worker / co-ordination role, often for those who are socially disadvantaged, where parents themselves have significant needs or who are simply worn out with the constant demands of supporting the additional needs of their child.

Case work support necessitates staff being able to draw upon a range of competences and methods using a high level of interpersonal skill. At times it requires an amalgam of skills and abilities usually identified in areas such as counselling, negotiation, mediation, conflict management and advocacy.

Cases require a great deal of knowledge, patience, encouragement and understanding together with liaison across a range of statutory and voluntary agencies in an attempt to reach a resolution and effectively support the family.

Due to capacity issues and in order to maintain an element of control over the large number and complexity of cases presented to the Service the "casework criteria" which determines the level of IASS intervention is used consistently and is very well established. Contacts are generally recorded as either;

Casework – where full details of the case are discussed with a child/young person or their parent by an IASS officer;

OR

General enquiries – where generalised information is given either where an individual child/young person is not identified or to a professional working with them.

Presenting issues:

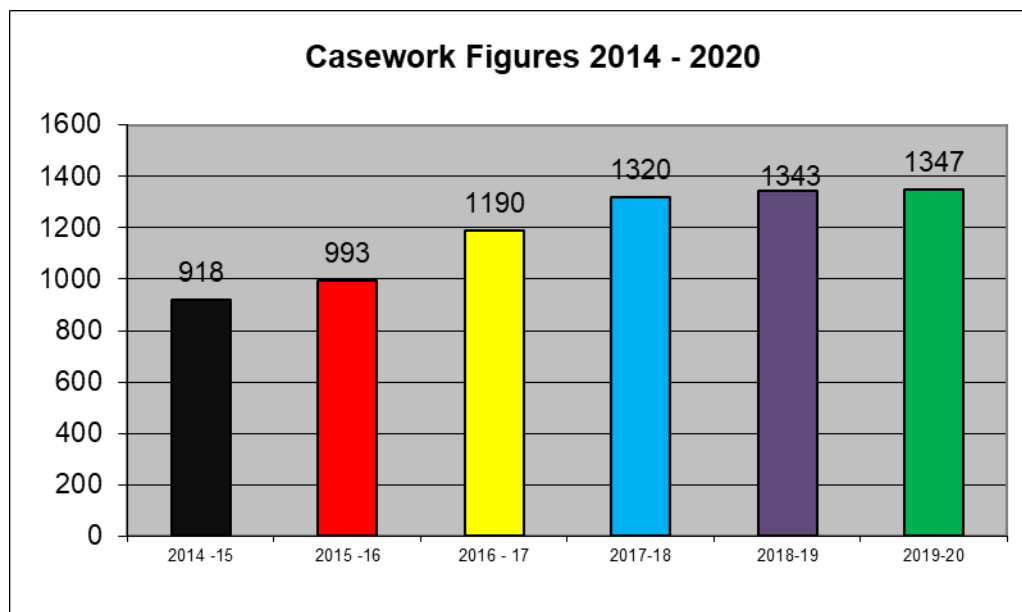
Some of the issues / pressures arising from casework support fall into the following areas:

- SEN support enquiries increasingly about schools/colleges informing parents that they are unable to provide the support required due to lack of funding. This often results in parents feeling that their only option is to make a parental request for EHCNA.
- The difficulty in communication between parents and the LA's STAR Team especially around unreturned phone calls, "lack of evidence" with refused EHCNA requests and annual review paperwork.
- An increase in the number of cases at level 4 (those involved with formal conflict resolution e.g mediation/tribunal). This saw 50 cases in the year, an increase of 150% from 2018/19. 31 of these were where an EHCP had been issued, with many of these lodged to challenge the setting named in section I.

- The long waiting times associated with a number of services, particularly where referrals have been made to specialist health services (including those with EHC needs assessments). This also includes the types of, and specificity of provision, outlined by health in EHC plans.
- Issues around securing home to school transport, although considerably reduced from the previous year,
- A number of children missing education, mainly new to the city, where provision has not been identified.
- An increase in the number of cases which include young people who are not attending provision due to anxiety/mental health concerns.

IASS Casework Support Figures: 1st April 2019 – 31st October 2019

Yearly analysis



These figures show the levels of casework since the 2014 reforms.

Ongoing cases:			
April	120	October	107
May	96	November	114
June	110	December	120
July	82	January	103
August	90	February	98
September	108	March	99

Number of contacts:			
April	325	October	368
May	338	November	429
June	424	December	240
July	287	January	367
August	105	February	306
September	398	March	360

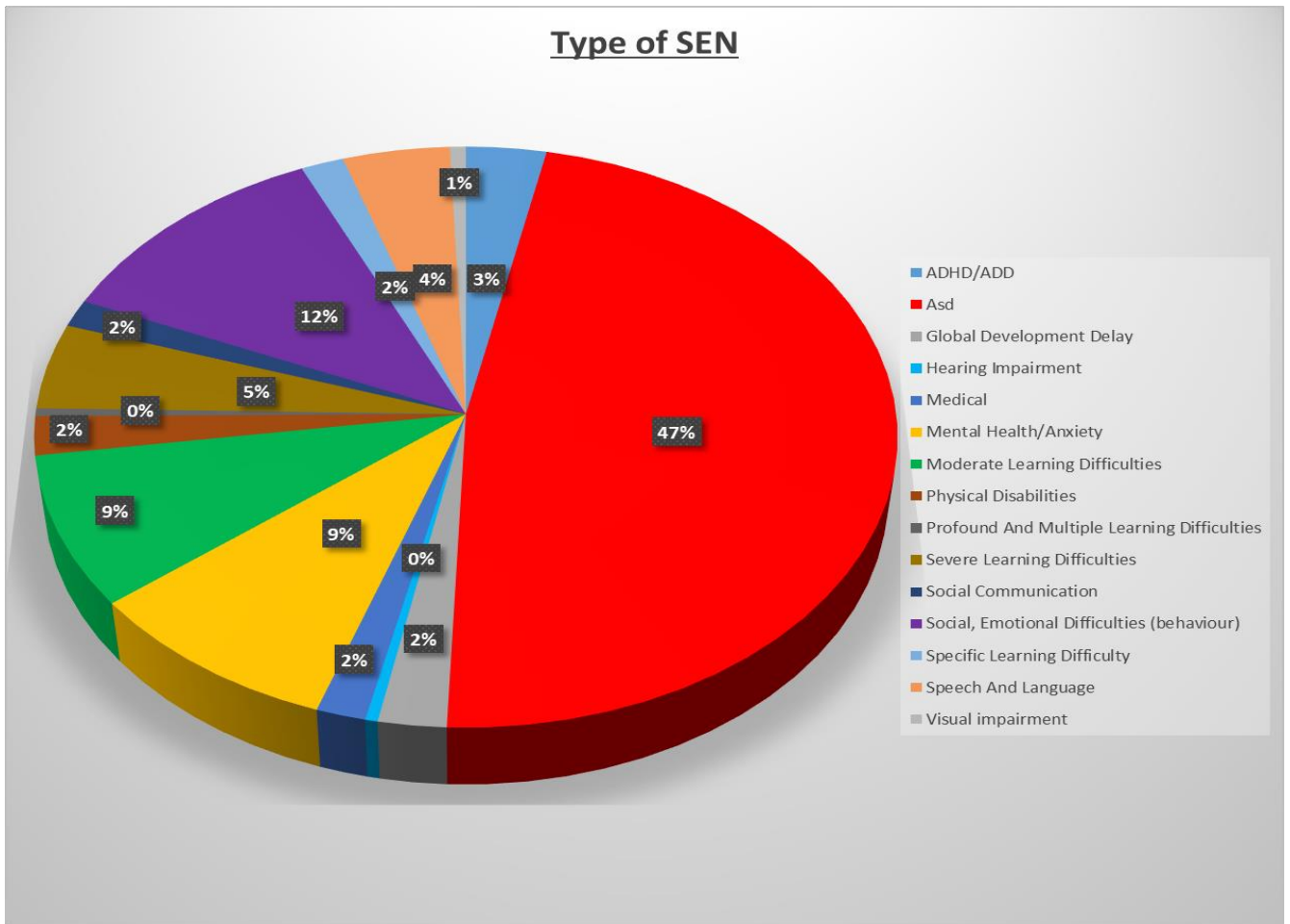
The depth of this individual on-going casework across a range of agencies per case is difficult to break down from current monitoring resources. Many of the cases that IASS become involved in are complex and require significant liaison between a number of agencies over a period of time to establish the issues and endeavour to seek solutions. They are monitored through termly reviews between the manager and officers.

The number of contacts helps to give a further layer of depth to work undertaken and reflects the increase in contacts with those ongoing cases. However it is still reliant on inputting of information into the system after every contact – this is likely to be under-reported due to the nature of some of the contacts and time factors in recording. For comparison, against the same time period last year, contacts have increased by 20%. (3282 vs 3947)

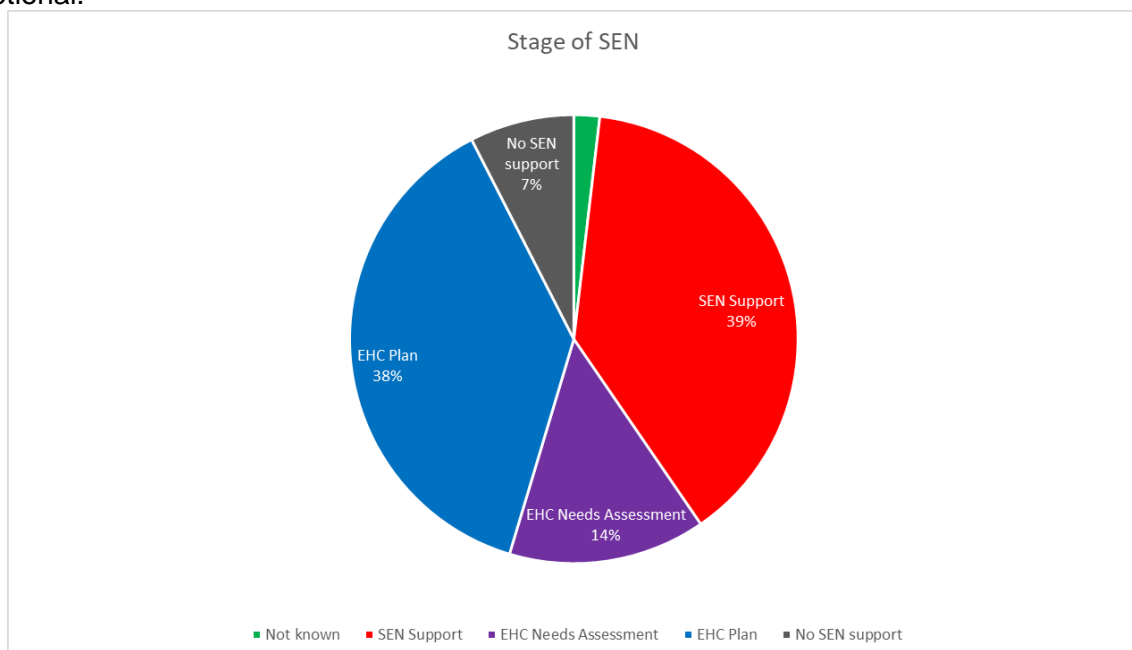
Response time: April 2019 – March 2020

From April 2019, 99.4% of calls had a response within the 2 day service standard (an increase of 0.1% on the previous year). The same day response remains slightly below our optimistic target of 75%, recorded as 53%. However, this is not necessarily reflective of customer experience on this front – more contacts now receive information, advice and support at the initial point of contact before contact from the duty officer. This is very difficult to log from figures on the database.

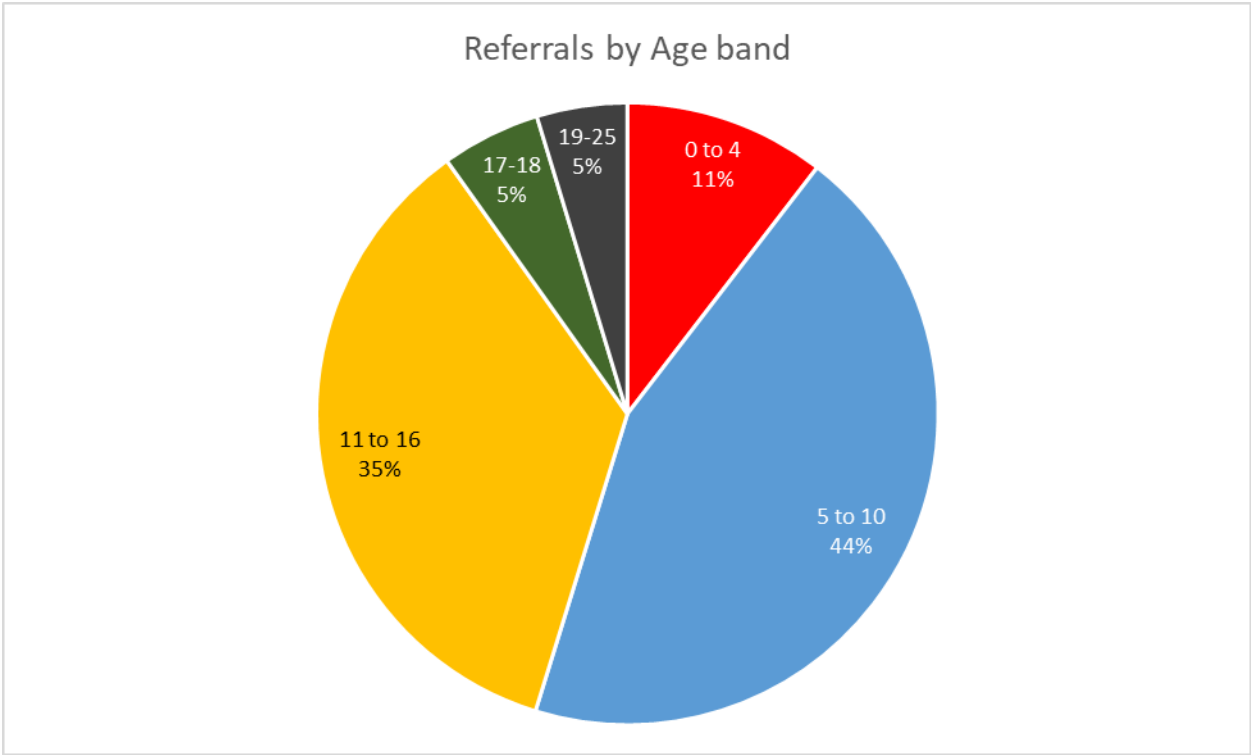
Type of SEN



ASD continues to be by far the largest percentage of primary area of need reported by service user during a referral, although a slight drop by 2% from the previous year. Although still representing the 3rd biggest category, mental health and anxiety continues to feature in an increasing number of cases, but often found under another area of need e.g. autism, social and emotional.



Since the implementation of the SEND reforms in 2014, we've seen a gradual shift towards more statutory related referrals. This appears to be continuing with an 6% increase towards this level – this is not wholly unsurprising with the number of requests for EHCNA, and EHC plans produced, increasing locally.



The biggest change so far in this area is the increase in primary age referrals (up by 5%). This difference is mainly from the secondary age group, having been an even 39% split in 2018/19.

Service User Feedback

Following continual discussion about the most effective way of achieving increased numbers of feedback, we have introduced (hopefully) a more effective way of gathering feedback from service users through “Let’s Talk”. This is an engagement website which enables us to have the questionnaire hosted away from the main council website, and direct people straight through to it from email signatures. Customer satisfaction continues to be very high, in both evaluating referrals and also of parent sessions. Whilst we have still not achieved the volume of feedback which we would like – the aim following our previous steering group is for 30% of referrals – based on current figures this would probably equate to something like 180 responses per year. All feedback has been positive, with 95% finding the information advice and support we gave to be very/quite helpful and neutral fair and unbiased. 90% also felt that the support provided had made a large/great deal of difference.

Excellent support especially with annual reviews meetings/forms .Staff will always returned phone calls if not available and are approachable and conscientious. Have recommended to several other parents/ carers.

absolutely amazing service, very friendly, patient staff with brilliant advice. I feel so empowered to face the school now. thanks so much

We have also started to receive some “reviews” through the Facebook page as well and although this is a very small sample size, all have been 5-star!

Information, publicity and communication

Ebulletin/ mailing list - The e-bulletin continues to be a prime source of information communicated to service users and other organisations. This was originally set up to work alongside the Local Offer, incorporating updates from across education health and care. However, it remains an almost entirely SENDIASS production, with only occasional input from other agencies. The bulletin is distributed to 2316 subscribers (increased by 4%)

The mailing list is held through our casework management system, and includes both service users and professionals. This currently lists almost 550 parents/carers, and also covers all schools and colleges, Family Hubs, and a variety of health professionals.

Website/social media - The new standalone website has suffered a number of delays since all information was updated in summer 2019. It is still currently under construction and should be online by the end of 2020. This will feature two sites, one for general information about the service and a redesign of the CHYP Shop website into a similar design (whilst keeping to the style which the young people who helped design it initially). The new site will be at www.covsendiass.co.uk, with www.thechypshop.co.uk continuing as the Young Person’s site (and a link between the two). This will help to solidify the arms-length nature of the service.

Our Facebook page continues to grow in its number of followers and has increased its reach by 16% in the period (704 current followers). Its primarily used to highlight SEND IASS events, or local information, but has become an increasing source of questions by service users. It’s feed is also linked into the Let’s Talk page, and will be linked into the website (this should help to update “latest news” without having to duplicate work).

We have 319 Twitter followers, which has increased by only 2% in the same period. It is felt that this platform is more useful to the service to find out information from other agencies, than it is for communicating to service users. Many of the followers are schools, and some will share SEND IASS tweets, which obviously means a potential wider audience

Information leaflets – We have updated a number of our popular “Your guide to…” booklets around SEN topics which will be available both electronically and in hard copy for service users and professionals. We have also developed some simple information sheets around other key areas of interest, based on queries dealt with through casework. This includes the tribunal process, which has seen an increase in numbers over the past year. These relate generally to the lack of places at special schools in the city, meaning that parental preference of setting in section I is not agreed, or where the LA has refused a request to assess for an EHC needs assessment.

Events – In 2019/20, we have been able to offer a wider variety of opportunities for service users to be involved, both with an eye on access to IASS and also in strategic voice. This has included a continuation of the drop in sessions at family hubs in the city, including a variety of different times, and also our first ever Stay, Play and Chat Away” held at Tiny Tim’s Purple Planet, which offered the chance for parents to attend with their children after school. This was in direct response to requests from working parents who were unable to get to daytime events. However, there is still regular feedback about the times of certain events – unfortunately, it seems that there is no guarantee of enabling every service user to access everything they would like to!

We have maintained our links with the One Voice group, and the LA, to support joint events, including one on Special School placements in April 2019, and in November 2019 around

Preparing for Adulthood. These events are both informative, but also a way to ensure service users voice in strategic development.

The service Coffee Morning continues to offer service users the opportunity to meet with other parents and discuss issues on a monthly basis. It is held at Central Library which seems to work well. There is no fixed agenda, which is generally driven by the group, but ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to talk and support each other. Attendance has continued to vary over the course of the year, with a high of 18 and a low of 4. Currently only one staff member attends, although when the numbers are much higher this makes the organisation of the session slightly more difficult.

Parent Training/information Sessions – We've continued to provide information sessions for parents on a monthly basis, which are well attended and cover a range of special interest areas. With the funding received through the IASP, we were able to offer two evening sessions again this year, using the Shopfront Theatre in the city centre. These were reasonably well attended, but not hugely different to daytime sessions – as indicated above, it's more to do with the subject matter which seems to drive attendance, as much as when the sessions are.

Given our high numbers of casework around autism, we were able to offer a larger number of parents the opportunity to attend a session in April around ASD and sensory processing, run by Louisa McGivney from CCT. Given the popularity of these events, we will be looking to replicate this again into 2020/21.

Networking and Collaboration

Service staff regularly visit a variety of groups, services and events to promote the services provided by SEND IASS.

Some examples include:

- Attendance at a number of school/college open evenings / coffee mornings to promote IASS, provide information and deal with individual parent enquiries related to SEN.
- Attendance at Woodfield School Year 6 Transition Evening.
- Attendance at information fair at The Welcome Centre with One Voice and Family Fund.
- Termly SENCo meetings.

One area that continues to be potentially problematic is professionals referring to the service for things that may not be things that IASS can support with, or placing a high expectation on what we can provide. We are looking at ways in which we can ensure that other professionals are clear about the role of SENDIASS, particularly across health and social care.

There is some concern too about the way the service is viewed by staff within the LA's Statutory Assessment and Review Team, particularly around "advocacy" for parents. This has been discussed with the LA, and agreed that a regular meeting between the teams may enable the role of SENDIASS to become clearer, especially as there are new members of staff. New members of staff are invited to visit SEND IASS as part of their induction (and vice versa, although we have had no new starters this year).

Parent/young people's Participation

Families of Woodfield Group - The group is now well established and continues to be supported by IASS with the school having identified two members of staff (Primary & Secondary) to support the group and liaise with senior managers at the school.

The group meets once a month and continues to have a steady flow of new parents that have expressed how much they value the group. This has included parents being encouraged by staff members to have a voice in making suggestions about school life, resulting in positive and trusting relationships. Parents have also found mutual support extending outside the group, including encouraging friendships with their children.

As with other parent sessions, there has also been the move to trying to hold the group in other locations across the city to try and engage with other parents; Limbrick Wood, Bell Green library and Central library. This will be monitored to July 2020 to see whether it stays in this format (although at the time of writing, the lockdown due to COVID-19, may prevent us from this).

Children and Young people

We are continuing to expand the range of service offer to children and young people in engaging with the service, and contributing to strategic arrangements. The Children & Young Person's officer has worked alongside a range of partners to engage with this group of service users, both in groups and on an individual basis. This has engaged 101 children & young people so far in 19/20, which is already an increase on 18/19 (86).

Some of the highlights of this have been:

- Offering a week-long work experience placement for a young person. The young person was involved in a range of opportunities including resource creation, event management and poster design.
- Delivering a "teach the teacher" session at a local mainstream secondary school with 6 young people. This was supported by school, Lesley Hill from NWCDCA and was delivered to around 60 staff members. The feedback was excellent, with staff hugely impressed by the young people and their delivery. The school are very interested in a possible similar session around ASD, and we are hopeful that other schools will also use a similar approach to some of their staff training.
- Creation of two "clubs" – a Shadow SEND board for young people in specialist provision in the city (5 schools, 1 college) and a monthly club for young people in mainstream schools with additional needs. This caters for up to 10 young people currently, although the young people don't want anyone else to come along!! Representatives from both groups were part of the Ofsted/CQC inspection which took place in October 2019 and received very positive feedback from the inspectors.
- Both groups also took an active involvement in supporting the local JSNA for SEND which was developed in early 2020. For the shadow board, this meant meeting in the council chamber at the council house, which was a very rewarding experience for the young people.



There has also been an increase in the number of young people working directly with the CYP Officer, especially for those older young people who are considering their options for the future – a resource called the "Outcome Road" has been used to facilitate this and help to put these at

the heart of discussions around future provision. There have been a couple of occasions where the CYP officer has been contacted by settings on an “independent advocacy” basis – this has had to be explained that this is not how referrals should be made, and that use of terms like “independent” and “advocate” are not appropriate. However, when given the option of meeting to discuss their views, the young people were very happy to speak with us.

The CYP officer, Eloise Heneghan, is also heavily involved in the network of IAS services, spreading the good practice that she has developed to other services, both nationally and regionally, with a local group now established in the West Midlands. Unfortunately, that good practice has been recognised by another Local Authority who offered her a considerable promotion, and she left the service at the end of this reporting period. Given the current situation, there may be a delay in recruiting to this position.

Professional Development and Training

Staff involved in case work are all trained through IPSEA’s legal training – 100% of long-term staff through to Level 3 (the highest level). Unfortunately, we also lost member of the team, Elley Aiyedofe, again to a internal promotion. Whilst gratifying that team members are developing their skills to the extent that they can develop their careers, it’s a shame to lose that knowledge and experience, especially given the extent of training required to do the role.

As well as completing more local training programmes, such as information governance, there have also been opportunities arranged through the West Midlands IASSN group – these are set to continue into 2020. There has also been interest in more detailed training around social care assessments.

All staff are also due to refresh their safeguarding training by the end of 19/20, in line with the IASS Safeguarding policy.

All staff receive regular termly casework review with the manager, allowing them to discuss progress of cases assigned to them.