

# North Tyneside SEND Information, Advice and Support Service

Annual Report

September 2018 – August 2019

**Date:** December 2019  
**Version:** 2  
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## Foreword

Information Advice and Support Services (IASS) provide free impartial, confidential and accurate information, advice and support about education, health and social care for children, young people and their parents on matters relating to special educational needs and disability. The provision of information, advice and support helps to promote independence and self-advocacy for children, young people and parents.

This Annual Report provides an overview of the service, key areas of work, feedback and future priorities and service developments.

### **The Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice 0 to 25 years (2015)**

states 'Local Authorities must arrange for children with SEN or disabilities for whom they are responsible, and their parents, and young people with SEN or disabilities for whom they are responsible, to be provided with information and advice about matters relating to their SEN and disabilities, including matters relating to health and social care. This must include information, advice and support to take-up and manage personal budgets. In addition, carrying out their duties under Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014, the local authority must have regard to the importance of providing children and their parents and young people with the information and support necessary to participate in decisions' (2.1)

North Tyneside SENDIASS is an in-house funded service situated within the Commissioning and Asset Management Directorate.

SENDIASS enables the local authority to provide impartial information, advice and support to fulfil its statutory duty, which is: - 'Information, advice and support should be provided through a dedicated and easily identifiable service. Local authorities have established services to provide information, advice and support to parents in relation to SEN. In addition, many local authorities provide or commission information, advice and support services for young people. Local authorities should build on these existing services to provide the information, advice and support detailed in this chapter' (2.4). And that: 'Information, advice and support services should be impartial, confidential and accessible and should have the capacity to handle face-to-face, telephone and electronic enquiries' (2.5).

The information, advice and support that we offer is based on the law and the SEND Code of Practice 2015. We provide advice about the local authority's policies and procedures and about the policy and practice in local schools and other settings.

## **Background**

From 1<sup>st</sup> September 2014 Parent Partnership Services (PPS) in every local authority became Information, Advice and Support Services. Each IASS provides support similar to that of a PPS, although the type of support and who is entitled to receive it has been significantly expanded. This now includes young people and children in their own right, along with the additional expectation to provide information and advice on all matters relating to health and social care.

Central to the work of North Tyneside SENDIASS is the recognition of the importance of the active participation of parents, young people and children in decisions around SEND provision. North Tyneside SENDIASS continues to see a steady increase in the numbers of children and young people who are contacting the service for direct IAS work. Where individuals are supported in preparing for meetings to discuss and review SEND provision and are enabled to express their views and participate in discussions, we are experiencing a significant and positive shift in the overall content and quality of meetings. Agreed actions are realistic but aim high and are driven by individualised, person centred outcomes.

## **Staffing**

The service is staffed by 2 full-time SENDIASS Officers. We continue to monitor and adjust the level of support provided to meet the ongoing increase in demand from parents and young people.

## **Accessing the service**

The dedicated phone lines and SENDIASS email address are the routes through which most referrals are received. During this academic year, there has been an increase in delivery of presentations and attendance at events which have led to more face-to-face referrals. For younger people and those who may prefer alternative methods of communication, the service is available via text. This is in addition to the above and face-to-face sessions that are provided to targeted groups of children/young people. Information about SENDIASS is also available on-line and via the North Tyneside Local Offer.

## **Training**

SENDIASS Officers are required to successfully complete levels 1-3 of the Independent Parental Special Education Advice (IPSEA) SEN Advisers Legal Training. The courses were developed by IPSEA for the Information, Advice & Support Services Network (IASSN) as part of the Government initiative to make special educational needs training accessible to local Information Advice and Support Services. The content of the courses has been accredited by the Bar Standards Board for 30 hours of CPD per level. All SENDIASS Officers have completed levels 1-3 of legal training.

SENDIASS officers attended the IPSEA SEN law conference which included updates on recent case law, and sessions on current national SEND issues, ombudsman complaints, joint local area SEND inspections, the role of health agencies in the Children and Families

Act 2014, and the interface between SEN and disability law. This was delivered by Matrix Chambers, Douglas Silas Solicitors and IPSEA.

In addition to this SENDIASS Officers have completed training on:

- GDPR;
- Preparing for adulthood;
- Mediation;
- Mindfulness;
- IPSEA legal training for LAs;
- Autism;
- SEND and the role of the Local Government Ombudsman;
- Planning for Year 9 onwards - training with Newcastle Connexions Service;
- Webinars on EHCP's;
- Exclusions;
- Home to school or college transport;
- Non-implementation of special educational provision;
- Transition and annual reviews.

## **Casework**

The number of active cases worked on within this academic year is 821. Of these 362 individual families/children/young people were supported, with an average of 5 contacts recorded per active case. Referrals can be made by a parent/carer, child or young person themselves. Referrals are made through a dedicated phone line, email or face-to-face at a range of events we attend to promote the service and training delivered both internally and externally to the LA.

The percentage of referrals is similar for primary and secondary school age children. Some of the key issues that service users raise with SENDIASS are difficulties around SEN support, requests for EHC Needs Assessment, exclusions and support to challenge and appeal decisions.

During this academic year the need for support around the SEND Tribunal process has increased dramatically. However the main issue about which referrers are requesting IAS continues to be concerns around the support that a child/young person is receiving within their educational setting. In addition to this there are often accompanying communication difficulties reported between parents/carers, children and young people and the educational setting. Many of these referrals involve a request for support in preparing for or attending a meeting within the education setting.

SENDIASS Officers have significantly developed their practice to enable them to work confidently and effectively to deliver IAS work with children and young people. The service has a number of person-centred resources that enable us to facilitate IAS work with children, young people and parents/carers, including those meetings where there is a threat of exclusion, an exclusion has already taken place or in completing the 'My Story' section of the EHCP.

Due to increasing numbers of complex case referrals and to manage demand, the service continues to prioritise referrals in terms of the type and extent of the support needed. The system used is supported by the Intervention Levels Guidance issued by the IAS Network. IAS services seek to ensure that priority is given for face-to-face work with children and young people and to those parents/carers that meet the criteria.

Each of the intervention levels are categorised by the time spent on each contact – see below.

- Level 1 (under 2 hours)
- Level 2 (2 hours to 2 days)
- Level 3 (more than 2 days)
- Level 4 (more than 3 days)

We are increasingly seeking to empower parents and carers by offering information and signposting to supporting documents. A key aim is to encourage self-advocacy.

Children and young people with autism and ADHD continue to make up a significant proportion of our case load. We also work with a large number of children and young people with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) difficulties.

## **Key findings**

Key findings for the reporting period of 2018-2019 (academic year) include:

- Increased demand for IASS due to increased visibility and service promotion. This has also been affected by pressures in other LA SEND departments which have led to an increase of service users requiring support;
- Referrals into the service are across all age groups;
- Increased demand around EHC needs assessments;
- Increased demand for mediations and appeals support;
- Service users continue to express confidence in the IAS service;
- A number of parents, carers and young people are struggling to navigate SEND processes;
- Parents and carers are reporting concerns about local services, policy and practice;
- Parents, carers and young people are increasingly accessing support in crisis;
- Parental experiences of the SEND system are inconsistent.

## Feedback from service users

North Tyneside SENDIASS requests feedback from service users who have received IAS. Data collected from customer feedback is available at Appendix 1. The responses from the feedback were largely positive with 100% of users satisfied with the service they received. Some of the comments received are stated below:

I really appreciate your advice and listening ear.

I found the information about the legal framework and current legislation was very reassuring and helpful. Thank you!

Thank you very much for giving up your time and coming to school. We think it was invaluable for our parents to have the opportunity to talk to yourselves. Look forward to working with you again.

Thank you so much for coming today. You were absolutely fantastic. You led the meeting and think the outcome will be as whole lot better thanks to your input. You have supported me right the way through, keeping me sane and you were like our super hero to the rescue today.

You are amazing. No idea what I would do without you.

Thanks again for coming to meet us and providing training. I personally found it really interesting, there is a definite gap in terms of support for parents and now we are more aware of your service, we are able to sign post families to you and other IASS. Everyone felt the training really set out what it was meant to do, and your knowledge about SEND Law etc really helped.

Thank you for sending me all the information that I needed and being so helpful!

We asked for support from SENDIAS in regards to an ongoing issue we had with the Local Authority regarding the correct placement for our Son for his educational needs. We can't thank SENDIAS enough for the help and guidance they provided throughout this difficult situation. They were extremely knowledgeable regarding any issues or questions we had. They were always available whenever we needed to contact them and nothing was too much of a problem. Although they were very professional both Nicola and Amanda seemed to genuinely care and helped us through an extremely difficult time. We feel that without the help and expertise offered by SENDIAS we would not have achieved the outcome we did. The service they provide is second to none and is an essential service from parents.

The trainers had excellent knowledge and were very helpful with all questions.

Thank you so very much for the lovely feedback and for your support. What a wonderful service you provide

Thanks for your email and thank you so much for all your advice. Without following the steps you outlined I do not think that the council would have changed their position. It has been invaluable and most importantly now a little boy will not be in environment for a year that we are told by his teachers that he is more than 80% unhappy in, which means the world to us. Thank you.

## **Work with Children and Young People**

In line with the statutory duty of delivering IAS directly to children and young people, we supported 24 students with workshop's entitled 'Knowing your Legal Rights'. These were facilitated by a maintained special school within North Tyneside. This is the third year that these sessions have been delivered

SENDIASS Officers have attended training on Preparing for Adulthood with NTDI to further develop their knowledge in this area.

## **Collaborative Working**

SENDIASS is represented on a number of SEND-related groups and networks enabling the service to offer advice and to influence the development of both policy and practice. We have also worked collaboratively to develop and improve SEND process within North Tyneside:

- IASP Workshop with Council for Disabled Children;
- Home to School Transport Group: This group is taking a whole system approach to identify opportunities to improve home to school transport arrangements and to increase the numbers of young people who can travel independently in line with Preparing for Adulthood Outcomes;
- SENDIASS attend the SEND Stakeholder briefings and the appropriate resulting SEND focus groups. These groups have been developed in preparation for North Tyneside SEND Local Area inspection. Alongside this, SENDIASS have taken part in additional SEND inspection planning meetings and have presented key issues to the SEND Strategic Board;
- SENDIASS were invited to attend the SEND Regional Peer Network in Darlington in the autumn, the purpose of this was to consult on the new National Minimum Standards for IAS services;
- Revision of SEND letters to support the Local Authority to be legally compliant;
- SENDIASS took part in a number of working groups supporting the Local Authority in developing a range of new templates and guidance including requests for Education, Health and Care Needs assessment, statutory advice for professionals, EHC plans, graduation and banding;
- SENDIASS works alongside North Tyneside Parent Carer Forum to ensure co-production. Officers regularly attend steering group meetings and provide information stalls at NTPCF events.

## **Outreach work**

SENDIASS continues to work in partnership with LA teams, health agencies and voluntary and community organisations across North Tyneside. This includes drop-in and outreach sessions which offer an informal means of IAS for those who need it.

Session aims are:

- To empower parents with knowledge relating to the support that education settings can give to children and young people with SEND;
- To help agencies learn about the Education, Health and Care Plan process from planning through to assessment and annual review;
- To understand the legal requirements and process for exclusions from school.

The following sessions have been delivered:

- Benton Dene Parents Consultation event;
- the Autism Conference held at Tyne Met College;
- North Tyneside Parent Carer Forum (NTPCF) Conference and marketplace events;
- The North East Parent Carer Forum Conference;
- North Tyneside Council Marketplace event;
- Support for a Post-Graduate Learning Disabilities Nurse.

In addition, SENDIASS have delivered presentations and training to:

- The Whole Life Disability Team;
- Connexions;
- Headteachers;
- SENCo's and members of school's senior management teams;
- Parent Factor sessions for parents of children diagnosed with ADHD;
- Brighter Beginnings (Early Years workshops for parents of young children with additional needs) in conjunction with Contact.

## **Information, Advice and Support Programme (IASP)**

In March 2019, SENDIASS were successful in their bid to secure funding for year 2 of the DfE Information, Advice and Support Programme (IASP). In order to secure this, SENDIASS carried out a comprehensive self-assessment to ensure compliance with the National Quality Standards for IASS. Bids were written for 5 separate funding streams with expected outcomes set against the contract timescales. All 5 bids were successful and task orders were issued by the Council for Disabled Children under contract by the DfE. These outcomes have shaped the priorities for SENDIASS for the latter part of this academic year and for the duration of the next academic year.

## **North East SENDIASS Group (NEIASS)**

North Tyneside continues its membership of this regional group, comprised of the 12 LA's represented in the region. Representatives from each service meet bi-monthly during term time. This provides a vital opportunity to share issues, developments and new initiatives within their services, to develop regional tools and resources as well as training opportunities which can be extended and shared across the region.

The group provides a confidential and supportive space for SENDIASS Officers to discuss issues affecting their service and also serves as a link to the National IAS Network and the IAS Staff Association.

Following on from our priorities for the last academic year, a SENDIASS regional sub group was formed to develop a regional training programme for parents. This has been planned and scheduled to take place in the academic year 19-20. Sessions include SEN Support in Schools, SEND Education Law and SEND Exclusions, Medical Needs and Children Missing Education.

## **National Trial – Single Route of Redress**

A 2-year national trial began on 3 April 2018 to extend the power of the special educational needs and disability (SEND) tribunal. As part of a special educational appeal, the SEND tribunal will be able to make non-binding recommendations on the health and social care aspects of Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans.

There has been additional training to increase the knowledge base within the SENDIASS service to support and inform parents and young people who appeal under the new arrangements.

With the trial now in its second year, a number of resources have been shared on the types of health and social care recommendations are being made by the First Tier Tribunal (SEND). These have been shared with Local Authority colleagues to inform future decision making.

In February 2019, SENDIASS Officers attended a National SEND Tribunal Trial briefing alongside the LA Interim SEND Manager. This was delivered by the DfE and the lead judge from the First Tier Tribunal (SEND).

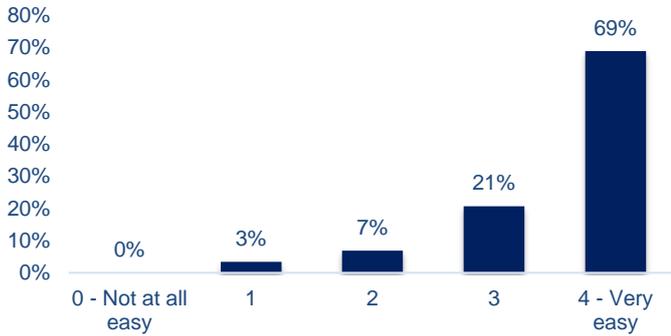
## **Priorities for 2019-20**

- Continue to use the IAS Intervention Levels when delivering IAS to ensure continued capacity and allocate additional support where it is needed most;
- Empowering parents to access the correct information required and encourage self-service where appropriate;
- To continue to ensure that parents, young people and children have access to support in preparing for and attending tribunal;
- Further development of outreach partnership work, especially working with young people and children;
- To develop our offer around Preparing for Adulthood (PfA) and post-16 outcomes including support for young people and the delivery of training to young people and professionals;
- To deliver and facilitate the delivery of regional training offer alongside the North East Information, Advice and Support Service (NEIASS);

- To attend training that is relevant to the further development of the service;
- To review and develop the way feedback is gathered to support the continual improvement of the service;
- To develop a stand-alone, accessible SENDIASS website;
- To develop and publish a range of SENDIASS leaflets and resources in accessible formats;
- To continue to attend working groups alongside other professionals and stakeholders. This will be to prepare for the upcoming SEND Ofsted/CQC Local Area inspection;
- To submit timely and robust data reports and case studies for the CDC/DfE Information, Advice and Support Programme contract.

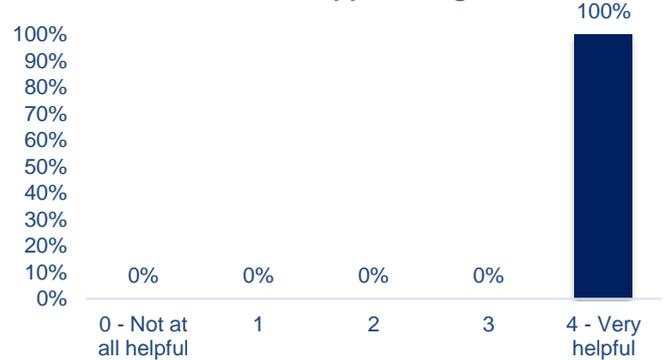
# Appendix 1 - Data collected from customer feedback (29 respondents)

**Q1. How easy was it to get in touch with us?**



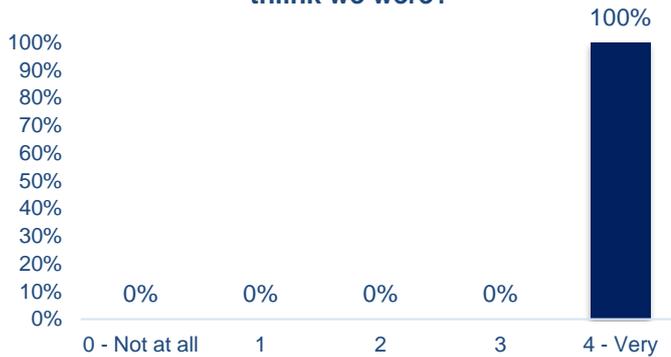
69% of respondents thought it was very easy to get in touch with SENDIASS.

**Q2. How helpful was the information, advice and support we gave?**



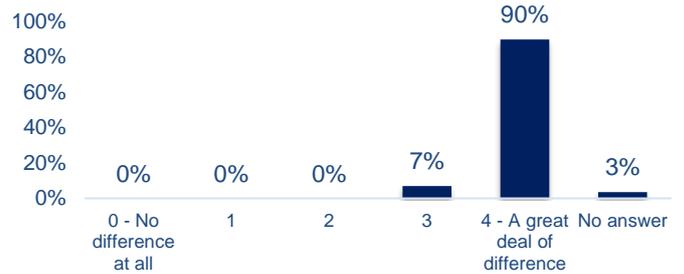
100% of respondents felt the information, advice and support they received from SENDIASS was very helpful.

**Q3. How neutral, fair and unbiased do you think we were?**



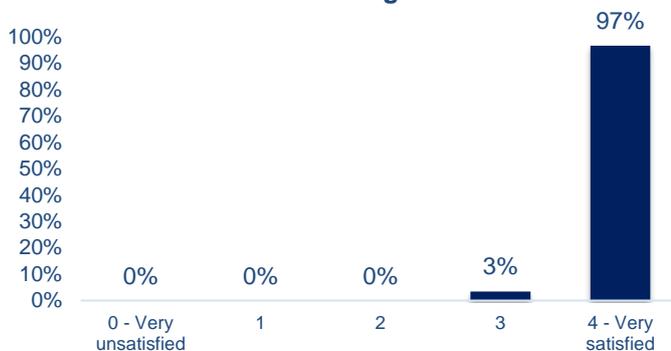
100% of customers thought that SENDIASS were very neutral, fair and unbiased.

**Q4. What difference do you think our information, advice or support has made for you?**



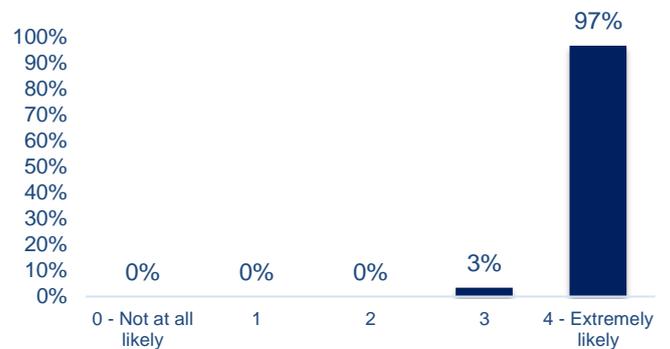
90% of respondents felt the information, advice or support received from SENDIASS made a great deal of difference to them.

**Q5. Overall, how satisfied are you with the service we gave?**



Overall, 97% of respondents were very satisfied with the service they received from SENDIASS.

**Q6. How likely is it that you would recommend the service to others?**



97% of customers would be extremely likely to recommend SENDIASS to others.



**North Tyneside Council**

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