

# North Tyneside SEND Information, Advice and Support Service

Annual Report

September 2019 – August 2020

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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 people who are contacting the service for direct IAS work. Individuals are supported in preparing for meetings to discuss and review SEND provision. This enables them to express their views and fully participate in an informed way. Outcomes are realistic but aim high and are individualised and person centred.

From March 2020, the service was impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. The service has had to adapt a number of times and in a number of ways due to the ever-changing landscape of SEN provision and Government guidance due to the effects of COVID-19.

Changes to service and service delivery included: -

- SENDIASS Officers changed to home-base working from office-based
- Changes to technology including virtual meetings and additional telephony requirements
- A shift in enquiries related to partial school closures and home education
- Definitions of vulnerable children/keyworker children and their entitlement to access education
- Difficulties around statutory timescales
- Concerns about the delivery of special educational provision in EHCP's
- Difficulties around identifying appropriate school placements and transition arrangements with schools being closed to visitors
- With demand significantly reduced in the early stages of the national lockdown, SENDIASS Officers supported in other areas of the local authority affected by the pandemic.

## **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 first half of the 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.

The service is also available to professionals across education, health and social care. This may be for advice and signposting to pass to families on their current caseloads. There has been an increase in contact from professionals, particularly health, which is a result of increased awareness of SENDIASS within these services.

## 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 social care duties towards children with SEND, post-19 SEN provision, the SEND Inquiry, an update from the LGSCO, implementing the reforms from a local authority perspective, disability discrimination, deprivation of liberty in the context of education, the role of the expert in the SEND Tribunal, SEND Tribunal update and educational provision for children and young people with SEN in custody. This was delivered by Matrix Chambers, Douglas Silas Solicitors and IPSEA.

In addition to this SENDIASS Officers have completed training on:

- SEND Tribunal
- Exclusions
- SEN education law
- SEN Support
- Engaging and working directly with children and young people
- Train the Trainer
- Introductory session to trauma (ACES)
- A session led by young people on challenges facing 16-25 year olds with SEND in the system
- Webinar on SEND Returning to School in September hosted by 39 Essex Chambers
- Coronavirus Act updates

## Casework

The number of active cases worked on within this academic year is 374. Of these 333 are new cases which may be a first-time contact to the service or a repeat user with a new issue. 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 remained steady but is increasingly complex. 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 and challenging decisions within schools and the local authority.

SENDIASS Officers have 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 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 which can be found [here](#). 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 seek 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 2019-2020 (academic year) include:

- Continued high demand for IASS due to word of mouth, 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 mediation information 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 and carers are seeking information about referral processes and waiting times for health;
- 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 have good leston about my future realy enjoy the 2 people.

Thank you for all this information. I thought that this would be the case. It just didn't feel right that this would be lawful. It's a weight of my mind that I have support with this.

I thought the trainers were extremely professional, knowledgeable, approachable, friendly and informative. It was helpful, useful, interesting and engaging.

Thank you to all that helped me get a place at my new school! I love it already! When I got in my class I signed 'bye mammy, go' and pointed to the door! She was cramping my style! Thanks again!

Very useful session, fab info and very relevant.

Thank you again for all your help. I dread to think how some of those meetings would have ended without you there to ground us all, and keep the conversation on track! Only a small- but vital- part of the role you played in supporting us both.

Thanks so much for this information. It was so helpful in trying to get my point across.

I just wanted to say a really bit 'thank you' for helping me navigate my way through the recent negotiations with the LA about \*\*\*\*\* placement. I found your support really invaluable from both a practical and emotional point of view. Obviously I managed to get the outcome for \*\*\* that I was hoping for, but had I not, I know I would have still been relying on you to help with the next steps. I am hoping (in the nicest possible way!) that I don't need to access your support any more, but really wanted you to know how much I have appreciated it.

All please keep safe and thank you again for all you continue to do to support \*\*\*\*\* and the family during this period.

Really helpful handouts, good pace and quality advice/information.

That is certainly a great start! Many thanks for all of your information. I will indeed signpost parents to the websites and to the SENDIASS service.

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

In line with the statutory duty of delivering IAS directly to children and young people, we supported 22 students with workshop's entitled 'Knowing your Legal Rights'. These were facilitated by a maintained special school within North Tyneside. This is the fourth year that these sessions have been delivered

SENDIASS Officers have attended training specifically for children and young people.

SENDIASS Officers have collaborated with North Tyneside SEND Youth Forum on the development of an easy-read service leaflet for SENDIASS and its distribution. They have also consulted on a range of easy-read information leaflets on SEND-related topics and promotional materials for the service.

## **Collaborative Working**

SENDIASS is represented on a range 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;
- North Tyneside SENDIASS were elected to be the Regional Representatives on the IAS National Staff Association;
- SENDIASS are represented on the SEND Quality Assurance group and are involved in multi-agency audits of EHCP's;
- SENDIASS work alongside the DCO and other colleagues from health to strengthen working relationships, develop knowledge and share training opportunities. This has included sharing learning and resources across organisations;
- Multi-agency work has been carried out with Workforce Development, North Tyneside Parent Carer Forum, health colleagues and social care colleagues on the North Tyneside SEND Workforce Development Strategy and a SEND e-learning package;
- SEND Strategic Board act as the Management Group for SENDIASS;
- SENDIASS are involved in working groups supporting the Local Authority in developing policy, practice and paperwork. An example of this would be the Graduated Response workshops;
- Regional peer support for SENDIASS colleagues
- 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. SENDIASS have worked alongside Local Authority Commissioners and schools on the proposed changes to special educational settings within the borough.

## **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.

In addition, SENDIASS have delivered presentations and training to:

- Headteachers;
- SENCo's and members of school's senior management teams;
- Parent Factor sessions for parents of children diagnosed with ADHD;
- Governor Services and School Governors;
- Student Health Visiting and Student School Nurses from the 0-19 service.

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

In April 2020, SENDIASS were successful in their bid to secure funding for an additional year 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. Our bid was successful, and a task order was issued by the Council for Disabled Children under contract by the DfE. The bid outcomes have shaped the priorities for SENDIASS for this year. The Quality Standards can be found [here](#).

## **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 serves as a link to the National IAS Network and the IAS Staff Association.

NEIASS elected North Tyneside to represent them on the National IAS Staff Association.

As a region, NEIASS commissioned and organised a regional training programme for parents. Sessions included SEN Support in Schools, SEND Education Law and SEND Exclusions, Medical Needs and Children Missing Education. Feedback was collected and reported upon (\*see appendix).

NEIASS held a regional development day to plan for future service development, however, due to COVID-19, work on this has been postponed.

## **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.

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.

The trial was extended beyond the original finish date and is currently running until 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021.

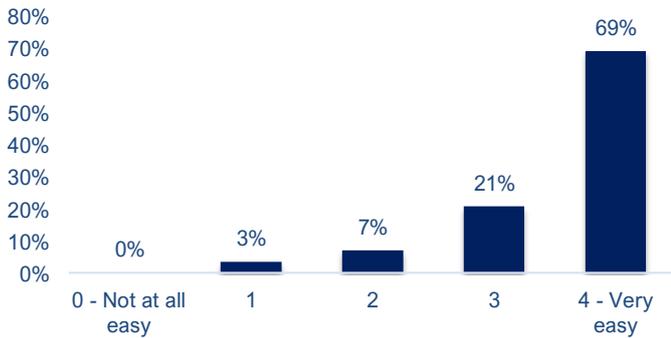
## **Priorities for 2020-2021**

- 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 secure an agreement to jointly commission the SENDIASS service across education, health and social care to meet the statutory requirements of the Children and Families Act 2014.
- 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 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 explore opportunities to review and strengthen an electronic case management system for SENDIASS.
- To continue 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;
- To submit timely and robust data reports and case studies for the CDC/DfE Information, Advice and Support Programme contract;
- To assist in the COVID-19 recovery phase.

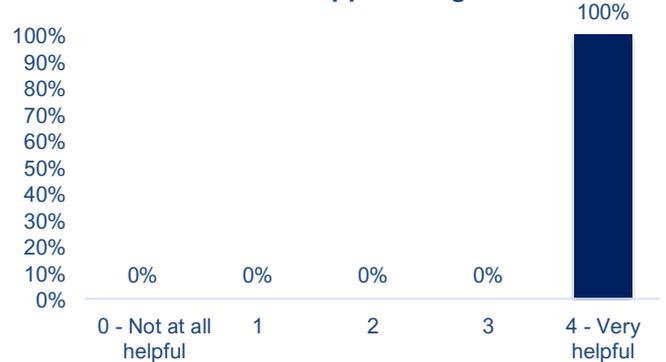
# Appendix 1 - Data collected from customer feedback (29 respondents)

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



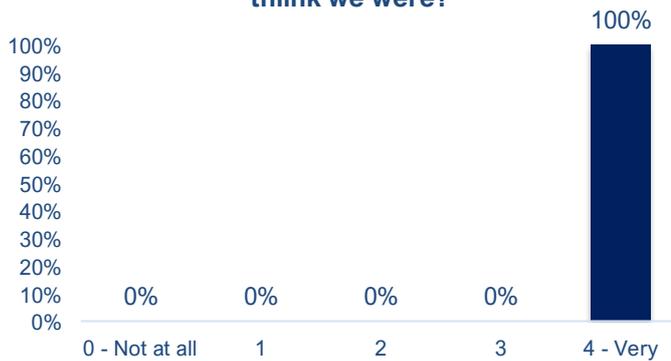
69% of respondents thought it was very easy to get in touch with SENDIASS.

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



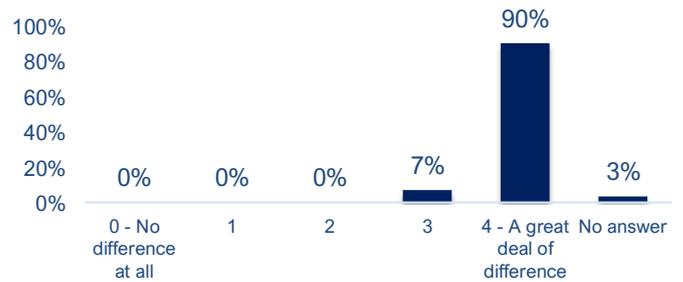
100% of respondents felt the information, advice and support they received from SENDIASS was very helpful.

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



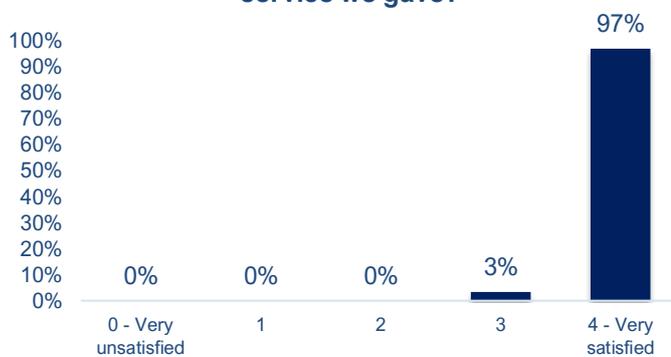
100% of customers thought that SENDIASS were very neutral, fair and unbiased.

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



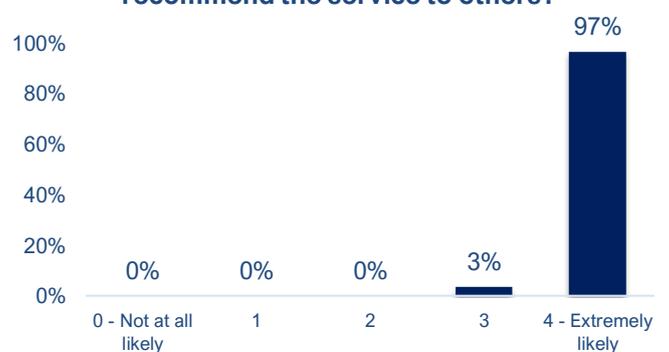
90% of respondents felt the information, advice or support received from SENDIASS made a great deal of difference to them.

**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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