

# **North Tyneside SEND Information, Advice and Support Service**

**Annual Report  
September 2022 – August 2023**



**North  
Tyneside  
Council**

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## **Glossary**

IASS – Information, Advice and Support Service  
SEND – Special Educational Needs and Disability  
IPSEA – Independent Provider of Special Education Advice  
IASSN – Information, Advice and Support Services Network  
CPD – Continuing Professional Development  
LGSCO – Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman  
CETR – Care, Education and Treatment Review  
EHCNA – Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment  
EHCP – Education, Health and Care Plan  
CDC – Council for Disabled Children  
SNJ – Special Needs Jungle  
ADHD – Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder  
JADR – Judicial Alternative Dispute Resolution  
LA – Local Authority  
SEMH – Social, Emotional and Mental Health  
CAFA 2014 – Children and Families Act 2014  
DCO – Designated Clinical Officer  
NTPCF – North Tyneside Parent Carer Forum  
CQC – Care Quality Commission  
CAMHS – Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services  
SENCO – Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator  
DfE – Department for Education  
NEIASS – North East Information, Advice and Support Services

## **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 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.

## **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, with some coming through the Contact Us section on the SENDIASS North Tyneside Website. For those who may prefer alternative methods of communication, the service is available via text, WhatsApp and video call. This is in addition to the above and face-to-face sessions that are provided to targeted groups of children/young people, specific groups and attendance at events. Information about SENDIASS is also available on-line via the North Tyneside Local Offer, and the new SENDIASS North Tyneside Website, which went live in October 22.

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. We continue to have contacts from professionals, across education, health and social care, resulting in increased awareness of SENDIASS within these services and positive outcomes achieved in previous cases. There has been a

steady, ongoing increase of contacts from parents who have been signposted to the service via professionals.

## **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 have 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, SEND law and policy, an update from the lead SEND Tribunal judge, Local Authorities and Health – Challenges and Implementation, SEN and International Human Rights law, Litigating shortages of special school places and provision, Early years and SEN – Missed opportunities for Early Intervention and Discrimination on the grounds of disability and other characteristics. The conference was a hybrid model with a face to face or virtual option and facilitated by Matrix Chambers, Douglas Silas Solicitors and IPSEA.

In addition to this, SENDIASS Officers have completed training on:

- IPSEA Refresher Training
- Oliver McGowan LD and Autism training for Health and Social Care
- Equality and Diversity
- General Health and Safety
- Climate Change
- Fire Safety
- Customer Promise
- CDC Tribunal Training
- EOTAS Webinar
- IPSEA Decision Making and Appeals
- Early Years and the Equality Act
- Suspension, Exclusion and Children out of Education for other reasons.
- Eating Disorders Training for Professionals
- SNJ SEND Review – the proposals, the implications and next steps.
- Information Governance
- Emotionally Based School Avoidance Issues in Practice
- Ceasing to Maintain an EHCP Webinar

## Casework

The number of active cases worked on within this academic year is **693**. These 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, contact us on SENDIASS website or face-to-face at a range of events we usually attend to promote the service, and training delivered both internally and externally to the LA.

Some of the main issues that service users raise with SENDIASS are difficulties around SEN support, requests for EHC Needs Assessment, Emotionally Based School Avoidance, exclusions, and support to challenge and appeal decisions.

During this academic year the need for support around appealing decisions and the SEND Tribunal process has increased in number and complexity. This has become a key issue about which referrers are requesting information, advice, and support.

In addition to these issues, there are often communication difficulties reported between parents/carers, children and young people 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 Section A: Views, Interests and Aspirations of the EHC Needs Assessment document.

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 (Up to 1 hour)

Level 2 (Up to 2 hours)

Level 3 (Over 2 hours, no maximum time allocated for casework support).

Level 4 (Over 2 hours, no maximum time allocated for casework support, includes \*representation e.g. meetings, mediation.)

\*Representation means attending meetings with parents/young person where you MAY need to speak their views for them, if they feel unable.

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, ADHD and social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) difficulties make up a significant proportion of our case load.

## **Key findings**

Key findings for the reporting period of 2022–2023 (academic year) include:

- Increasing demand for IASS. This has been affected by pressures in other LA SEND related departments which have led to an increase of service users requiring support.
- Referrals into the service are across all age groups, with a slight rise in post 16.
- Increased demand around EHC needs assessments, particularly parental requests.
- Significant demand for appeals support, specifically refusal to assess and cease to maintain appeals.
- Service users value the approach and knowledge of the IAS service.
- Parents and carers are reporting concerns around timescales associated with routes of redress.
- Parental experiences of the SEND system are inconsistent.
- The longer-term residual effect of the COVID-19 pandemic has had an adverse effect on children and young people's mental health, anxiety and resilience.
- A continued increase in enquiries related to Emotionally Based School Avoidance, anxiety and mental health conditions.
- Parents, carers and young people are struggling to navigate SEND processes.
- Compliance with statutory timescales.
- Concerns about the delivery of special educational provision in EHCP's
- LA's not naming in line with parental preference.
- Access to AP/alternative routes for post 16.



## Feedback from service users

Some of the comments received are on the following page.

Thank you so much for all your help. The changes that you have helped us make to \*\*\*\*s school life are priceless, we all as a family have seen and felt such a difference. Home feels like home again and I feel relaxed and happy again because I know \*\*\* is now.

Thank you so much for this morning's session it was excellent

Nicola the Joint Statement was inspired and 110% the right thing for \*\*\*\*\*. We can't thank you enough for opening our eyes to that

Thank you so much for your time. Your service really helped with my son. It is invaluable work that you do for parents.

Thank you so much for your time in delivering the training session. Your service really helped with my son a couple of years ago. It is invaluable work that you do for parents.

Thank you so much for coming to the annual review, I was dreading going until you said you would be there, and I knew we'd be ok.

My son is doing fab thanks to you and all your incredible help. I was on the verge of a breakdown till you helped us both.

I can honestly truly say you truly helped me through some of the hardest months of my life and making sure that I didn't spiral into despair, making sure my focus always remained on my child. My child is doing amazing and is a completely different child. Walking to and from school, made friends, working hard. I don't have to fight to get into school anymore which is amazing. Thank you again.

Thank you for all your help, you've been so knowledgeable and efficient and professional. The service is marvellous.

Cannot recommend North Tyneside SENDIASS enough, they are amazing! So supportive & they give you their all to make sure the kids have what they need. I can honestly say I wouldn't of got through the EHCP process without them.

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

In line with the statutory duty of delivering IAS directly to children and young people, we usually support students with workshop's entitled 'Knowing your Legal Rights'. They are facilitated by a maintained special school within North Tyneside. These haven't been delivered since the COVID-19 pandemic, but we are planning to restart these sessions in the following academic year.

SENDIASS were a stallholder at the Future Focus Careers Fair.

## **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:

- Barnardos Alliance Conference.
- 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 are represented on the SEND Quality Assurance group and are involved in multi-agency audits of EHCP's.
- Local Offer working group.
- Early Health Notification working group.
- 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.
- SEND Strategic Board act as the Management Group for SENDIASS.
- SENDIASS are involved in working groups and consultations supporting the Local Authority in developing policy, practice, and paperwork. Examples of this would be Customer First Workstream and the Essential Guide to Schools 2023-2024.
- Regional peer support for SENDIASS colleagues
- SENDIASS works alongside North Tyneside Parent Carer Forum to ensure co-production. We attended North Tyneside Parent Carer Forum's Conference.
- We have delivered training sessions to the Autism in Schools Project. This included professionals, school staff and parents and carers.

- Delivered training on the role of SENDIASS and SEND Support to the Connect Mental Health Support Team.
- Marden Bridge Middle School SEND parents session.
- Langley First School SEND parents group.
- SEND Tribunal User Group.

## **Outreach work**

SENDIASS continues to work in partnership with LA teams, health agencies and voluntary and community organisations across North Tyneside. This would include 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 needs assessment process, from planning through to assessment and annual review.
- To understand the legal requirements and process for exclusions from school.

SENDIASS have delivered online and face-to-face sessions to:

- CAMHS
- Early Years SENCO Network

## **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. These sessions continue to be virtual. 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. North Tyneside SENDIASS act as a peer supporter for regional colleagues including those new to the role.

NEIASS held a face to face away day, to give services a chance to come together for the first time since early 2020. This away day was for ALL SENDIASS staff in the region, and included update sessions from CDC, networking, training and an initial session regarding a new regional training programme for parents and carers. Previously 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.

## **Priorities for 2023–2024**

- 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 – ongoing with website content.
- To continue to ensure that parents, young people, and children have access to support in preparing for and attending tribunal.
- To attend training that is relevant to the further development of the service.
- To review the way feedback is gathered to support the continual improvement of the service.
- To review the range of SENDIASS leaflets and resources in accessible formats.
- To attend relevant working groups alongside other professionals and stakeholders.

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