



Cumbria SEND Information, Advice and Support Service

Offering impartial information, advice and support to children and young people with special educational needs and or disabilities and their parents & carers.

Annual Report Cumbria SEND IAS Service 2019-20

Introduction

This annual report is a summary of the work carried out by the Cumbria SEND Information, Advice and Support Service from 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020. Cumbria SEND IAS Service offers impartial and confidential information, advice and support to parents and carers with a child with a special need or disability and also directly to young people where this is requested.

A new service manager was employed from within the existing team in May '19. The manager is a member of the Co-production and Engagement Working Group as part of the SEND Improvement Programme and the service promotes this work with parents and young people, supporting parents and young people to have a voice in the improvement programme.

In addition to case work, Co-ordinators attend training, deliver presentations about our work and training to specific parental, school groups and local practitioner forums, attend regional events, visit support groups and support engagement events throughout the year. The service manager attends the bi-monthly North West Consortium Meetings and annual conference, sharing information with other SEND IAS Services in the North West. Co-ordinators attend the All Of Us Youth Forum and will take part in the planned virtual Transition Fair to support young people and their families. This will be after March

IPSEA legal training is provided by the Council for Disabled Children and Co-ordinators must complete level 1, 2 and 3. The levels consist of 10 x E-learning modules per level plus once day of face to face training. Current attainment levels in the team are: 6 (up from 3) staff fully trained to level 3 and one team member covering maternity leave starting level 1. The team are knowledgeable and confident working with families and understand the requirements of SEND law and are familiar with the SEND Code of Practice 0-25 years.

The service is currently taking part in a pilot project with the EHRC – trialling exclusion resources to support parents and young people to challenge school exclusions.

Challenges

Some challenges/issues the team have faced over this period are:

- Continued unprecedented rise in demand for services from parents and young people.
- Continued rise in the number of children unable to attend school due to anxiety or health reasons.
- Complexity of cases, requiring high levels of support from the team.
- Increase in parents and young people requesting support and attendance at mediation and dispute resolution meetings.

- Despite the efforts of the team to work with parents and professionals to broker solutions, we have seen an increase in requests for support with appeals to Tribunal. Some of the appeals are very complex and require a high level of intervention and support from the team.
- Some schools not delivering adequate SEN support.
- Continued rise in exclusions for children with SEND.
- Lack of knowledge from some schools that pupils with 'hidden' disabilities are protected by the Equality Act 2010 – reasonable adjustments, indirect discrimination etc.
- Continued rise in mental health issues in schools.
- Lack of Post 16 provision in the county and the rise in numbers of parents who want to send their children to providers out of county – concerns about in county provision significantly reducing due to proposed closure of Newton Rigg College.
- Rising need for more alternative provision for children for whom mainstream school is not suitable.
- Many parents are approaching the service stating schools are not providing the provision stated in their CYP's EHCP – this can be difficult to resolve between schools and the local authority.
- Some schools continuing to encourage parents to "off roll" their child.
- The perception of some schools and parents that a CYP has to be permanently excluded before alternative provision will be provided by the local authority.
- Working hard to achieve joint commissioning with Health and Social Care and their input into the service with an SLA in place.

Future Funding for Cumbria SEND IAS Service

The IASP recently supplied IAS Services with national comparisons for core funding, Cumbria is currently funded at £0.68 per head for 0-25, year olds. The national average is £1.03 with some LA's funding over £2, Wolverhampton LA fund their IAS Service at £2.47 per head.

There is a risk to the service offered by Cumbria SEND IASS if the additional funding from IASP continues to reduce or stops completely. Without the additional funding, our service offer to parent/carers, young people and support for projects and improvement programme would reduce significantly, it would be very difficult for us to continue to meet the Minimum Standards in the areas where we are currently compliant and we would not have the capacity to continue to work towards compliancy in the areas we are 'working towards' compliance. The IASP has suggested any future funding made available would be dependent on IASS being fully compliant with the Minimum Standards, the additional funding received between 2018/21 has been awarded for IASS to ensure compliancy.

COVID 19

Members of the service quickly adapted their ways of working after lockdown. We have supported parents and young people with virtual meetings, preparing and 'coaching' parents with this new way of meeting with professionals to discuss EHCPs and support. The service regularly updated parents and young people through social media on the changes to SEND Law, producing information sheets and supporting parents and young people to understand how the changes may affect the provision available to their child.

Successes for the team

- Several permanent exclusions have been overturned due to intensive SENDIASS support for the family and the successful partnership between Cumbria SENDIASS and the EHRC.
- Additional Co-ordinators hours funded by National IASS Project have been used to increase our work directly with young people age 16 and over, to engage with disadvantaged groups and to reduce cultural barriers to receiving support from the service. We currently employ a Co-ordinator on a temporary two year contract with the funding.
- The engagements and shares on the SENDIASS Facebook page has increased significantly, other organisations regularly ask SENDIASS to promote their services and advertise events.
- A stand-alone service website is in draft format with Digital Comms - waiting to go live to offer 'arms-length' information, advice and support to parents and young people – in compliance with national IASS Minimum Standards.
- The SEND IASS manager attends Senior SEND Managers meetings to share good practice, discuss issues and share information on a range of new initiatives
- Co-ordinators have delivered training on the Eq Act and reasonable adjustments at SENCO network sessions around the county.
- Continuing to offer a comprehensive service throughout lockdown.
- The launch of the SENDIASS Advisory Board – three meetings have taken place and we have a broad range of stakeholders as members. A parent is the Chair of the Board and parents are well represented.
- Initial meetings with Health representatives and the LA's commissioning team to discuss joint commissioning of the service. Positive progress has been made.

Data Collection

Co-ordinators record data on how many parents, carers and young people they work with and over the period April 2019 to March 2020- there were a total of 592 interventions (an increase of 143 on previous year) to help support families.

We grade our interventions according to the level of support a family needs from information or signposting (level 1) up through levels 2 and 3 with more time and support needed up to level 4, where a case may need months of research and support and may involve attendance at tribunals as support.

Level 3 interventions have seen the biggest increase of 75 on previous year. Interventions at this level require a higher level of time and support from the team, typically Level 3 includes:

- Provision of support at/for a series of meetings over a period of months.
- Ongoing support and guidance through statutory processes (EHC needs assessment, disagreement resolution, mediation etc.)
- Assistance with preparation for an exclusion appeal and support at the appeal meeting.

Intervention levels for SENDIASS cases April 2019 to March 2020 Countywide		Intervention levels for SENDIASS cases April 2018 to March 2019 Countywide
Level 1	209	180
Level 2	209	175
Level 3	153	78
Level 4	21	16

The SENDIASS service supported the families of 393 boys and 177 girls and worked with 4 young people directly on their own who are aged 16 and over.

The reasons people come to us for help and support with an issue have been recorded as:

Reasons for enquiry	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
Disputes with school	17%	21%	20.60%
Annual Review of EHCP	11%	14%	12.64%
Early help assessment	7%	6%	12.32%
Exclusion from school	3%	6.5%	11.52%
Transition/post 16	5.5%	7%	9.76%
General SEND advice	28%	30.5%	7.52%
Refusal to assess for EHCP	6%	3.5%	5.00%
Preparation for tribunal	6%	4.5%	4.20%
Refusal to grant a plan	0.5%	0.5%	2.48%
Cease to maintain a plan	0.6%	0.5%	0.80%
Transport	1%	3.5%	0.80%
Support through EHCP Process	7%		
Cases with Health/Social Care element of an EHCP	2%		
Cases with medical issues as predominant reason for enquiry	3.5%		

The increase in Level 3 interventions is reflected in the reasons for enquiry to the service above, increased support for parents, carers and young people with:

- Refusal to assess for EHCP.
- EHCP process.
- Medical issues linked to SEND.
- Early Help process.
- Preparation for tribunal.

This level of case work involves a high level of time and support from the team.

Of the work carried out during the year 2019/20, the type of education attended by the child is as follows:

Age of children	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17
Nursery	4%	4%	3.8%	3.7%
Primary	44%	45%	37.9%	44.5%
Secondary	32%	32%	44.2%	34.5%
Special schools	2.5%	4%	2.3%	5.1%
Independent/PRU	3%	3%	5.1%	0.3%
Home educated	1.5%	3%	1.3%	1.1%
Post 16	8.5%	6%	4.2%	9.1%

Parent Carer Forum/Engagement

Over 2019/20 members of our team attended Parent Carer Forum meetings to offer advice and support. We delivered EHCP and SEND Code of Practice training to members of the PCF in January '20. We attended the SEND Improvement Parent Engagement events across the county before lockdown to engage with parent/carers, promote the service and to offer advice and support.

Minimum Standards

Funding has been provided by the National Information, Advice and Support Project over the past two years to support our service with working towards meeting the Minimum Standards for IAS Services. The funding amounts available to services for the 19/20 period has decreased significantly from 18/19. To apply for the funding, we have been asked to:

- Think creatively about how our work will link to the minimum standards and beyond.
- Implement approaches new to our service, which supports the move toward compliance with the minimum standards.
- Trial new ways of working.
- Innovation which improves the service offer to parents, young people and children.
- Review the SENDIAS Service in Cumbria and produce a rag rated table against the minimum standards and produce a detailed report.
- Produce 3 case studies of work done with service users and on the evaluation process.

- Submit detailed development plans for 2019/20 and 2020/21 to show the action taken to meet all the minimum standards.
- Submit 2 detailed funding bids for funding to carry out the actions in the development plan for 2020/21.

The team continue to work hard to reach the minimum standards and in March 2020 the funding bids for 20/21 were approved and a task order drawn up.

Some of the minimum standards we will be working to put in place over 20/21 are:

- Joint commissioning with health and social care.
- A service level agreement in place between CCC and the SENDIASS service.
- Addressing cultural barriers to service engagement.
- Focused work to improve the service offer to children and young people.
- Strengthening tribunal support.
- Training for parents, carers and young people.

What difference did we make to families in Cumbria?

At the end of an intervention with a family, a link to a Survey Monkey questionnaire is sent out to parents and carers to give feedback on how they found the support received from the SEND IAS Service. From our Service User Feedback report produced in July for the period from May 2019 to June 2020, we have gathered some useful feedback. We had 39 replies received from parents and carers around the county.

90% of parents who responded to the questionnaire said they would recommend our service to other people who may need it. 95% of parents said the support they had received had met their needs. The questions on staff behaviours scored highly with 97.5% saying they had been treated with respect, 97.5% said their calls had been returned promptly and 97.5% said their views had been listened to. 97.5% said they found the advice they had received was very helpful. 97.5% of people said they had found the service to be very confidential.

Staff are rated as being knowledgeable about the law relating to SEND and about the services that are available across the county and nationally.

The service has had a very positive impact on parents, they report increased confidence levels, improved support for their child or young person and becoming more knowledgeable about SEND matters and more empowered through the EHCP process. The service is obviously effective as 95% of people who responded said they had had their needs met and 90% said they would recommend the service to others, many parents tell us they come to us from word of mouth recommendations. Other parents tell us that support from SENDIASS means their child has now returned to school with the appropriate support now in place for them.

These are just a few of the positive comments received:

“The advice and support I received from Polly Shields was fantastic. I don't think I would have managed without her help.”

“Sally has been very supportive, she has provided all the information I needed and reassured me in the process.”

“The support helps when I struggle to find the right words to say or will point us in the right direction where we need to look. This service gives us and our child a voice! This service listens respectfully, but fairly and helps us fight for our child's rights.”

“Tracey O who supported us through an IRP and governors meeting was amazing and so supportive.”

“Without Susan and her vast knowledge, we wouldn't have got as far with our son's education issues.”

“Thank you Celia for joining the meeting to support us, I was pleased with how it went. Thank you again for your advice and support.”

Looking forward

Cumbria SEND IASS are looking at innovative ways in how to tackle IAS service challenges to be compliant against the new minimum standards, looking into the design of new approaches to deliver the best possible service to parents, carers and young people to ensure positive outcomes for our service users.

