

Service User Feedback Report

Cumbria SEND Information, Advice and Support Service

June 2018 to April 2019

This report is an analysis of the service user feedback received from parents, carers, and professionals who had a service from the Cumbria SEND Information, Advice and Support Service from June 2018 to April 2019.

Methodology

The five IAS Co-ordinators, who work directly with families, send a link to an on-line service user questionnaire to parents, carers and some of the professionals they work with at the end of an intervention. This gives families and colleagues a chance to feedback on the service they have had from our co-ordinators. During this period, 39 replies were received; 15 from Furness and South Lakes, 7 from Copeland and Allerdale and 17 from Carlisle and Eden.

There is a range of closed, graded and open questions on the form and they are designed to measure satisfaction with the outcomes of the service, the level of service provided by the staff and offer suggestions on the ways the service could be improved.

Analysis of Feedback to the questions

Where did you hear about the service? (Service users can tick more than one box)

It is helpful to learn the range of places from where parents had heard about the service:

Source	Percentage of respondents
Internet	26%
Word of Mouth	26%
Educational setting	20%
Support Groups for Parents	17%
Health Colleagues	14%
Children's Services Colleagues	9%
Used the service before	11%

One person commented that they had heard about the SENDIAS Service via the Post Adoption support team, another from the Inclusion team and another from an Information Day held jointly with the Parent Carer Forum, so it's good to know that efforts to promote the service with other teams in the LA and also putting on events to promote the service with parents are paying off.

Why did you contact the SEND IAS Service? (Can tick more than one box)

Parents who responded to the questionnaire had contacted the service for various reasons over this period:

Reason for seeking support	Percentage of respondents
Support available for children with SEND	58%
Process for obtaining EHC Plan	52%
Help to resolve an issue	39%
Support at a meeting	39%
General support about their concerns	24%
Advice on how to appeal a decision	21%
Information on changing schools	13%
Health Services	8%

	Not at all easy 0	1	2	3	Very Easy 4
How easy was it to get in touch with us?	5%	5%	18%	10%	62%

62% of respondents said it was easy to get in touch with the service and this is down on 75% last year. This may be because the staffing levels were reduced from 6 to 5 co-ordinators, so each person has a higher caseload and it can take longer to respond to messages left.

	Not at all helpful 0	1	2	3	Very Helpful 4
How helpful was the information and advice we gave you?	5%	5%	3%	3%	84%

From the responses above, it is clear that the majority of parents and carers who answered the service found the information and advice they received very useful for their situation.

	Not at all 0	1	2	3	Very 4
How neutral, fair and unbiased do you think we are?	2%	0%	5%	18%	75%

93% of parents and carers scored the service highly, either 3 or 4, as regards the service they had received being neutral, fair and unbiased which is very positive.

Was the service you received confidential?	No	Yes
	0%	100%

Again this is a very high figure of satisfaction regarding confidentiality from those who answered the questionnaire and up from 93% last year.

What difference has our information, advice and support made to you?	No difference at all 0	1	2	3	A great deal of difference 4
	8%	3%	5%	13%	71%

Comments from parents show what difference the support from the service made to them personally. Parents said they were grateful for the help they had received; they felt listened to and comfortable and didn't feel alone. They said that the Co-ordinators were understanding and supportive and gave them confidence.

Respondents reported that Co-ordinators helped them to understand and follow process, had a wealth of knowledge, were helpful, gave good support and advice, helped with jargon and legislation and supplied up to date information.

Some of the comments parents and carers made about the difference the service made were:

“Just having someone knowledgeable, but impartial on the other side of an email or on the end of the phone is absolutely invaluable.”

“Emma was a massive help to me by putting me in touch with the right people in my area.”

“A voice of sanity and reason - kindness and empathy in an otherwise black world of being a parent of a child with autism and feeling isolated and powerless after 18 years devotion to his care and education. Thank you Emma for the time you took to listen and the practical advice you gave me to move forward.”

“My child's future has been made more secure on more than one occasion, partly because of the help SENDIASS has provided”.

“Weight was given to our arguments; we were taken a lot more seriously and better treated as there was a witness to events in meetings.”

“Tracey O’Roarty is an absolute god send to our lives; her support has been impeccable. Her knowledge has been outstanding and finding her has made us feel like we finally have some kind of help to which we can now take forward through the correct channels and fight for equality and diversity within the educational system to

help our child. Lastly she is such a lovely human being with great understanding and sincerity.”

“I have been able to get my son a much needed EHCP after the head mistress continuously refused to help.”

“It would have been helpful if your advisor had told us that there is a cut off for parents applying for EHCP is age 16. We missed this so the letter we sent was just returned telling us that our son needed to apply directly which he is reluctant to do now.”

Since contacting the SEND IAS Service is your child any better supported at school and making progress?

The survey results to this question were that 66% of parents thought their children were better supported at school and 11% said they were not. 23% said they did not know.

Closed Questions on Staff Behaviours

Did the IAS staff:	No	Yes
Return your calls/emails promptly?	3%	97%
Keep in touch?	14%	86%
Explain why decisions were made and what was happening?	16%	84%
Listen to your views?	6%	94%
Treat you with respect?	0%	100%
Explain who they were and what their role was?	6%	94%

The positive responses to the above questions show that parents and carers have found the standards of service they have received to be very good and are very satisfied with staff behaviours.

	No	Yes
Did the service you receive meet your needs?	11%	89%

Overall how satisfied are you with the service we gave?	Very unsatisfied 0	1	2	3	Very satisfied 4
	8%	3%	0%	14%	75%

How likely is it that you would recommend the service to others?	Not at all likely 0	1	2	3	Very likely 4
	5%	3%	3%	5%	84%

What did we do well?

This question aims to find out what families valued about the service they had had. Parents state they found the information provided is accessible, helpful and practical. Staff listen to them and are impartial. They give support and are great, kind and friendly people. They are polite and return parents' emails. Parents say staff go the extra mile and are proactive and responsive. They understand the needs of complex children in education.

“Just the support and advice alone was excellent. With the help of Susan, I was able to put my case together and go on to overturn my son’s exclusion. She was excellent and I wouldn’t have been able to attend the meetings without her.”

“The adviser was fantastic and supported me through my sons EHCP review. She was on hand to offer advice and listened to me. I felt I wasn't alone.”

“Personable and confident in their knowledge. Always responds to emails or calls. Listening and making me feel validated in my concerns.”

“You made me feel like my child mattered.”

“Offer support at meetings, guide towards appropriate information and resources, just being there to ensure the parents views and the child’s views are listened to.”

“Great support, all relevant information ready to hand and e-mailed. Fantastic communication and empathy, which gives a sense of hope when otherwise there is none.”

“You have the time to listen to concerns and are in a position to support parents who are trying to support their children. You provide the expertise that a parent needs in order to access a fair outcome for a child.”

“Supporting me and my son’s appeal - Tracey as always been a call away when I feel there is no hope. You demonstrated your expertise in SEND legislation nationally and locally.”

“Help parents who are stuck fighting an education system, which clearly fails child’s needs. Helped start EHCP, Helped fill out section A as I was struggling with some things. Attended draft plan meeting... and oversaw that everything was done including health, social needs; Sally and Celia were extremely professional.”

What do you think we could do better?

This question was included so information could be gathered on how the IAS Service could be improved. Eight respondents said there was nothing to improve on and they were very happy with the service. Other parents gave the following comments:

“Offer the service Monday- Friday.”

“Explain services available more for early years (pre 2 years).”

“Better specific knowledge and advice.”

“You need more staff as this would make a massive difference.”

“Employ more people like Emma to speed up the process and make the service more visible and reachable to everyone. Promote the service via schools and health and make sure that the information is included in every ECHP sent back by the council. Please make the leaflet a bit more inspiring with quotes of how the service has helped. If you employed more people then instead of being reactive the service could be proactive which would make the system run a lot smoother and avoid the stress points that lead to confrontation instead of communication. Officers could educate the schools and teachers about the rights of the child as at the moment there seems to be a great deal of teachers who are ill informed.”

“In a crisis it is hard to cope with getting answer machines, but I realise that is a reality which cannot be avoided with the funding as it is.”

“Being brave, it's hard to maintain a working relationship with a school and stand up for a 'problem child'.”

“When a person asks for help it's because they need it -not to be told you don't fit the criteria - if a child has mental health problems I am sure they should have an ehcp...”

“Let everyone know where you are and what you do.”

“Perhaps more phone contact.”

“I found reaching anyone on telephone was hard work, calls generally returned within a week.”

“You definitely need a full time send IAS as its frustrating when the support isn't there 5 days a week and no one during workers holidays. I feel you need to employ

more people as a lot of SEN children have been excluded so there needs to be more available to parents to help their child.”

“I would like to see information about the local offer in an easy read format for young people with SEND - Northamptonshire have a version.”

Strengths

82% of parents who responded to the questionnaire said they would recommend our service to other people who may need it. 89% of parents said the support they had received had met their needs. The questions on staff behaviours scored highly with 100% saying they had been treated with respect, 97% said their calls had been returned promptly and 94% said their views had been listened to. 84% said they found the advice they had received was very helpful. 100% of people said they had found the service to be very confidential.

People said they had found the staff to be very knowledgeable in the legal aspects of the SEND field and that they were friendly and built up their confidence. They describe staff as professional with a great expertise. When staff accompany parents to meetings they are treated better by other professionals and what they say is taken more seriously. Co-ordinators give hope to parents when times are dark and help them feel they are not alone when trying to get a good education for their child with SEND. One parent said the Co-ordinator was a “godsend” and another said her Co-ordinator made her feel that “her child mattered”.

Areas for development

Several parents raised the issue of capacity of the service – the 5 Co-ordinators work part time (18.5 hours per week) to cover the whole county and there is real pressure on the service. Extra funding has been made available by the National Children’s Bureau this year to support the development of SENDIAS Services, so some co-ordinators will be working extra hours this year as a result, which will hopefully ease the pressure and improve the response times.

There is a need to publicise the service further so more parents, carers and professionals are aware of the service and what it can offer.

One parents asked that the team have better knowledge and advice – the team work with parents of children with SEND from 0 to 25 which means they need to have a very wide range of expertise and knowledge. Three members of staff do hold a level 3 IPSEA legal training qualification and the others are working through at level 2 with the aim of completing level 3 this year.

Future plans

On closure of a case or intervention, the Cumbria SEND IASS Co-ordinators officers will continue to send out a service user feedback web link to parents they have worked with, so they may make comments on line about the service they have received and reporting

will be done regularly. Parents may comment at any time as the link to the Survey Monkey questionnaire is on each staff members' email signature.

This report will be circulated to the AD for Learning and Inclusion and the Senior Manager for SEND and cascaded to SEND IASS staff for discussion at the team meeting. This report will also be uploaded to the Continuous Improvement Website.

For information, given below is the web link to the on line service user feedback form for the Cumbria SEND IAS Service: - <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/HCJ5PWX>

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