



Cumbria SEND Information, Advice & 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 2018-19

Introduction

This annual report is a summary of the work carried out by the Cumbria SEND Information, Advice and Support Service from 1st April 2018 to 31st March 2019. Cumbria SEND IAS Service offers impartial and confidential information, advice and support to parents and carers who have a child with a special need or disability and also directly to young people where this is requested.

The Cumbria SEND IAS Service consists of 5 part time Co-ordinators who work 18.5 hours per week and one part time Manager. Each co-ordinator has been allocated around 70 schools and settings and could be contacted by parents, carers and young people from any of those settings including nurseries, primary and secondary schools, and further education colleges; the full 0-25 age range. The Co-ordinators work out in the districts of the county, so all parents have a local service and can meet with staff and have face to face support at meetings, as well as support by email and telephone.

IPSEA legal training is provided by the Council for Disabled Children for all Co-ordinators to undertake and staff must complete level 1, 2 and 3. These consist of 10 x E-learning modules per level plus face to face training in Manchester. Current attainment levels are: 3 staff fully trained to level 3 and 2 staff trained to level 2. Having undergone legal training, Co-ordinators are then confident and knowledgeable to work with families and understand the requirements of the law and are familiar with the SEND Code of Practice 0-25 years.

As well as their case work, our Co-ordinators attend training, deliver presentations about our work to specific parental or school groups and local practitioner forums, attend regional events, visit support groups and support Parent Carer events throughout the year. One of our co-ordinators attends the bi-monthly North West Consortium Meetings where she shares information with other SEND IAS Services in the North West and relevant issues are discussed. One Co-ordinator has delivered training for health colleagues in Carlisle and delivered a session to students at the University of Cumbria.

Challenges

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

- A rise in demand for services from parents
- A rise in the number of children unable to attend school due to anxiety or health reasons
- Some schools not delivering adequate SEN support in schools
- Rise in permanent exclusions for children with SEND – particularly from Academies with zero tolerance behaviour policies.
- Lack of knowledge from some schools that disabled pupils are protected by Equality Act 2010 – reasonable adjustments, indirect discrimination etc.

- A rise in mental health issues in schools
- Rising levels of adopted children with trauma, attachment, neglect and disassociation
- 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
- Need for more alternative provision for children for whom mainstream school is not suitable
- High thresholds and long waiting lists for CAHMS
- Schools encouraging parents of some children with SEND to “home educate” or risk exclusion, called “off rolling”

Successes for the team

- Several PEX have been overturned due to the intensive SENDIASS support Service for the family
- One Co-ordinator has been working with the Equality and Human Rights commission which has taken an interest in some of the exclusion cases and provided funding for a barrister to support the families.
- Three Co-ordinators have been working extra hours (funded by National IASS Project) to work directly with young people age 16 and over throughout the county to secure the education provision they need
- SENDIASS Facebook page promotes services and useful information to families
- Website updated to ensure there are useful factsheets and links to informative websites. Close working with Local Offer staff to ensure a range of useful information for parents
- The SEND IASS manager attends the monthly Senior SEND Managers meetings in order to share good practice, discuss issues and share information on a range of new initiatives
- Tribunal levels are low at present and this is due in part to the work of the SENDIASS team who try to avert cases going to tribunal. Co-ordinators work calmly with parents, who are often angry or upset, to clarify their issues and liaise with professionals from the LA, schools and health to work locally to broker the best solution possible for the child, without parents feeling they have to go to tribunal.
- Positive feedback for the SENDIASS service during the recent Ofsted SEND inspection
- Coordinators have delivered sessions for health colleagues raising awareness of service and well received
- Co-ordinators have delivered “Empowering parents” session at 6 Disability awareness days round the county
- Recommendations for parents to contact our service from fellow professionals both within the council and from other agencies
- Adoption and Fostering Teams have passed service details to families experiencing issues with support in school for their CYP resulting in a rise in adoptive parents contacting the service

Data Collection

Co-ordinators record data on how many parents, carers and young people that they work with and over the period April 2018 to March 2019 there were a total of 449 interventions to help support families.

We grade our interventions according to how much support a family needs from just 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 tribunals etc.

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

The SENDIASS service supported the families of 323 boys and 126 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	2018/9	2017/18
Disputes with school	21%	20.60%
Annual Review of EHC plan	14%	12.64%
Early help assessment	6%	12.32%
Exclusion from school	6.5%	11.52%
Help with Section A of plan	2.5%	9.76%
Transition/post 16	7%	9.76%
General SEND advice	30.5%	7.52%
Refusal to assess for a plan	3.5%	5.00%
Preparation for tribunal	4.5%	4.20%
Refusal to grant a plan	0.5%	2.48%
Cease to maintain a plan	0.5%	0.80%
Transport to school	3.5%	0.80%

Of all the work carried out during the year 2018/19, the type of education attended by the child is as follows:

Age of children	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17
Nursery	4%	3.8%	3.7%
Primary	45%	37.9%	44.5%
Secondary	32%	44.2%	34.5%
Special schools	4%	2.3%	5.1%
Independent/PRU	3%	5.1%	0.3%
Home educated	3%	1.3%	1.1%
Post 16	6%	4.2%	9.1%
Higher education	3%	1.2%	1.75%

SEND Ofsted Inspection

In March 2019, the Ofsted inspectors came to inspect the SEND provision in Cumbria for children and adults aged 0-25 in Cumbria. SENDIASS staff took part in several focus groups, including the Information, Advice and Support group, supported parents to come to parent engagement groups and supported the Parent Carer Forum throughout. The preparation that

had been done with the team, proved useful and meant each Co-ordinator was well equipped to play their role in the inspection. In the report from Ofsted in May 2019, the inspectors stated:

“Parents are fulsome in their praise of the SEND information, advice and support (SENDIAS) service. Several described the service as being ‘invaluable’. Many parents described how they felt ‘lost’ and unsupported by the local area. They told inspectors that staff from the SENDIAS service have played a pivotal role in giving them the confidence, knowledge and understanding to challenge the local area to do better for their children.”

Parent Carer Forum

Over 2018/19 various members of our team have attended the Parent Carer Forum monthly meetings to offer advice and support on how to develop the service and promote the recruitment of new members. We have also supported the PCF to set up and send out service user feedback questionnaires on transport and their children’s SEND provision and to write reports analysing the findings. We promote membership of the Cumbria Parent Carer Forum with parents and carers that we work with in an effort to raise the membership numbers. Members of the team have attended 6 Disability Days round the county organised by the Parent Carer Forum and given talks called “Empowering Parents” to families who attended the events and manned stalls with useful leaflets and chatted to individual parents about their worries and issues.

New Minimum Standards

During this period, a new set of minimum standards was introduced for all SENDIAS Services throughout the country. Funding was provided by the National Information, Advice and Support Service to enable Co-ordinators to do some work towards meeting those new standards for this year. We were also asked to:

- 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 itself
- Submit detailed development plans for 2019/20 and 2020/21 to show the action we would be taking to be able to meet all the minimum standards.
- Submit 5 details funding bids to bid for funding to carry out the actions in the development plan for 2019/20

This did take a lot of work over several months from several members of the team and in March 2019 the funding bids were approved and a task order drawn up.

Some of the the minimum standards we will be working to put in place are:

- The service should be jointly commissioned with health and social care
- There should be a service level agreement in place between the council and the SENDIASS service
- An advisory/steering group should be set up for the service
- The service should have a manager who does not hold another role in the council
- The website for the service should either be standalone or have a distinctive style which sets it apart
- Engaging in more direct work with young people age 16 and over

What difference did we make to families in Cumbria?

At the end of an intervention with a family, a link to an on line questionnaire on Survey Monkey is sent out to parents and carers for them to give some feedback on how they have found the support they have received from the SEND IAS Service. From our Service User Feedback report produced in April for the period from May 2018 to April 2019, we have gathered some useful feedback. We had 39 replies received from parents and carers round the county.

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”.

These are just a few of the positive comments received:

“Just the support and advice alone was excellent. With the help of my Co-ordinator, 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.”

“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 for the time you took to listen and the practical advice you gave me to move forward.”

Looking forward

A new manager has been appointed to run the Cumbria SENDIAS Service and this commenced on May 1st 2019. The service will also be recruiting a new Co-ordinator to support families in the Carlisle area and to support the roll out of tasks on the development plan for 2019-20. Funding has been made available to all SENDIAS Services through the National Children’s Bureau to strengthen the service and upskill the staff with the aim of meeting the new minimum standards.