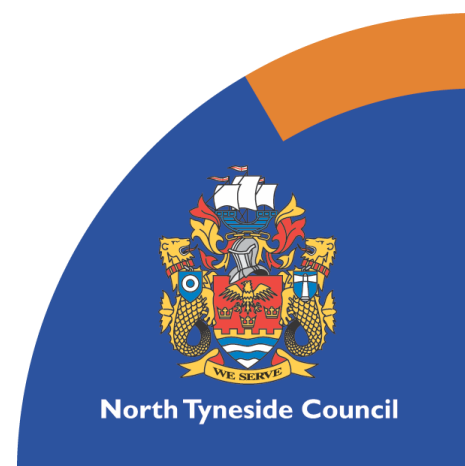


North Tyneside SEND Information, Advice and Support Service

Annual Report

September 2021 – August 2022

Date: August 2022
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SENDIASS Officers



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Glossary

IASS – Information, Advice and Support Service
PPS – Parent Partnership 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 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 1st 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.

Following the Covid-19 Pandemic, SENDIASS operated differently but still delivered a statutory information, advice and support service. SENDIASS continues to adapt in a number of ways due to the ever-changing landscape of SEND provision and Government guidance due to the long-term impact of COVID-19. This has continued for the rest of the academic year 2021-2022.

Changes to service and service delivery included: -

- SENDIASS Officers adopted a hybrid model of working combining home-based working, working from the office and meetings with school and parents.
- Continued use of technology including virtual meetings and additional telephony.

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. 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 when the situation allows. 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. We

continue to have a high level of contacts from professionals, across education, health and social care, which is a result of 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, an update from the LGSCO, an update from the lead SEND Tribunal judge, Deprivation of Liberty, Disability Discrimination, Exclusions – Issues in the context of SEND, Getting Left Behind – Overlap between mental health, SEN and Inpatient care, Transition Planning and the Care Act, SEN Law Past, Present and Future. The conference was delivered virtually and facilitated by Matrix Chambers, Douglas Silas Solicitors and IPSEA.

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

- IPSEA Refresher Training
- CETR Training
- Challenging School Exclusions
- Information Governance
- Accessing the Mobilize E-Forum
- CDC Mental Health Training for SENDIASS Staff
- Preparing a Legally Compliant EHC Plan
- CDC Early Years SEND Training
- SNJ SEND Review Legal Round Table
- IPSEA SEND Review - the proposals, the implications and next steps
- Understanding and Supporting ADHD Webinar
- Admissions Avoidance
- New School Exclusions, Suspensions and Pupil Movement Guidance
- Eating Disorders Training for Professionals
- Northern Tribunal User Group

Casework

The number of active cases worked on within this academic year is 597. 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 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. SENDIASS have taken part in a new judicial process called a Judicial Alternative Dispute Resolution Hearing (JADR).

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 (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, 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 2021-2022 (academic year) include:

- Continued high demand for IASS due to word of mouth and signposting. 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, particularly parental requests.
- Increased demand for mediation information and appeals support.
- Service users continue to express confidence in the IAS service.
- Many 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 and carers are increasingly requesting support in crisis.
- Parental experiences of the SEND system are inconsistent.
- COVID-19 has impacted across all areas of SEND. 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. Some children and young people with SEND had benefitted from the measures schools had implemented including remote learning and smaller-class sizes during partial closures.
- There have been difficulties with the phase transfer EHC Plans, naming appropriate placements and compliance with the CAFA 2014 and the SEND Code of Practice 2015. This has impacted on demand for IAS.
- An increase in enquiries related to Emotionally-Based School Avoidance, anxiety and mental health conditions.
- Compliance with statutory timescales
- Concerns about the delivery of special educational provision in EHCP's
- Refusal to name placements

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 on the following page

We just wanted to say thanks for your truly great input into the meeting today. Totally solution driven and problem solving thinking, it is really appreciated.

You are very knowledgeable so thank you once again for the support :-)

Thank you very much for all your help. Honestly you need an award you've helped and supported me so much, it's been so

Just wanted to say a huge thank you in all the help advice and support you gave us and for believing in me, your a true angel and I appreciate your help so much, thanks again

I can't thank you enough for getting us here I've got my happy kid that loves learning back!

Just wanted to show you this photo, ***** all ready for her first day at school yesterday. All went well, and behind that smile she was extremely nervous and very wobbly.

Once again, I can't thank you enough for all the help and support you have given us over this last year.

That's really helpful, thank you so much as always you've been brilliant!

Thank you so much for all your help and listening to my panicked calls and messages!

I just wanted to say a massive thanks for yesterday and for helping me with all of this. It's more appreciated than you could know.

I was not aware of your services and have never been directed to IPSEA. I feel so much more positive about being able to help my children now. More awareness is needed for other parents/ carers in my position.

Just to say a huge thank you for your notes - I have included them all! You have been such a great support - can't thank you enough!

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 hope to restart these sessions in the following academic year.

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

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:

- 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 are 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.
- Local Offer working group.
- Early Health Notification working group.
- Safer in Education working group.
- Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Services Conference
- 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 SEMH Support to Schools, Customer First Workstream and the Essential Guide to Schools 2021-2022.
- Regional peer support for SENDIASS colleagues
- SENDIASS works alongside North Tyneside Parent Carer Forum to ensure co-production. Prior to the COVID 19 pandemic, Officers regularly attended steering group meetings and provided information stalls at NTPCF events. We attended North Tyneside Parent Carer Forum's Conference.

Local Area SEND Inspection

In November 2021, North Tyneside underwent a joint CQC/Ofsted Local Area SEND Inspection. SENDIASS were involved in key workstreams in preparation for the inspection and contributed to a focus group on information, advice and support. Further information on Inspections can be found [here](#).

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. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, face to face drop-in and outreach sessions were temporarily ceased. In-person sessions are slowly returning.

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.

SENDIASS have delivered online sessions to:

- CAMHS
- Early Years SENCO Network

Information, Advice and Support Programme (IASP)

In April 2020 and April 2021, SENDIASS were successful in their bids to secure funding for additional years of the DfE Information, Advice and Support Programme (IASP). In order to secure these, SENDIASS carried out a comprehensive self-assessment to ensure compliance with the National Quality Standards for IASS. A sustainability plan was written and submitted alongside an updated operational plan. Our bids were successful and task orders were issued by the Council for Disabled Children under contract by the DfE. The bid outcomes have shaped the future priorities for SENDIASS. The Quality Standards can be found [here](#). This programme came to an end in March 2022.

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 represented NEIASS on the National IAS Staff Association until November 2021.

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. The group is currently working on a new regional training programme for parents and carers.

National Trial – Single Route of Redress

The National Trial commenced from April 2018 to August 2021 testing the extended powers for the SEND Tribunal. The DfE commissioned an independent evaluation of the National Trial which found broadly positive evidence in support of the Tribunal's extended powers, which can be seen [here](#).

Therefore, the Government has confirmed that they are continuing the extended powers of the First-tier Tribunal (SEND), sometimes referred to as the 'SEND Tribunal', to make non-binding recommendations about 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 being made by the First Tier Tribunal (SEND). These have been shared with Local Authority colleagues to inform future decision making.

Priorities for 2022-2023

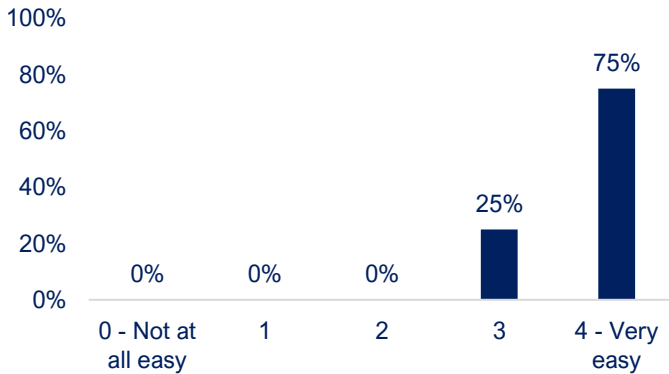
Some of these priorities have been carried forward from the previous year due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- 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 and reporting 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.

Appendix 1 - Data collected from customer feedback (8 respondents)

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



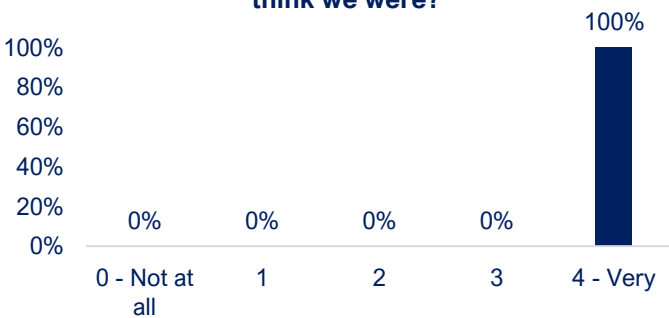
75% of respondents thought it was very easy to get in touch with SENDIASS.

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



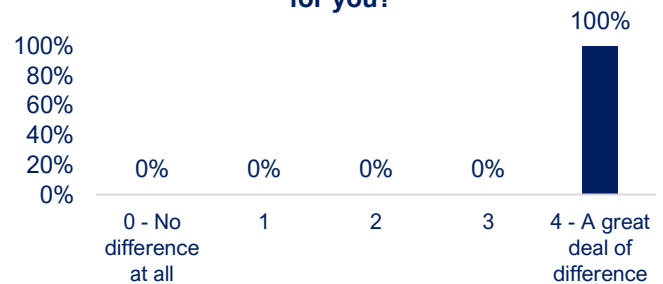
100% of respondents felt the information, advice and support they received from SENDIASS was very helpful.

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



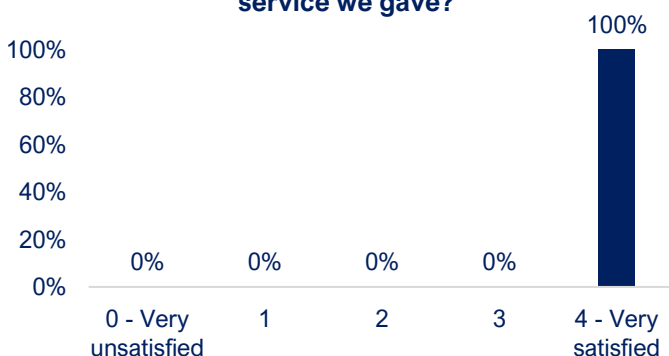
100% of customers thought that SENDIASS were very neutral, fair and unbiased.

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



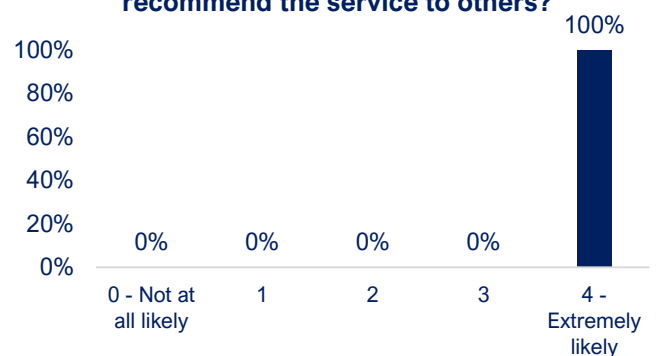
100% of respondents felt the information, advice or support received from SENDIASS made a great deal of difference to them.

Q5. Overall how satisfied are you with the service we gave?



Overall, 100% 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?



100% of customers would be extremely likely to recommend SENDIASS to others.



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