#

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

**Annual Report**

**September 2023 – August 2024**

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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, which transferred from Commissioning and Asset Management to the Corporate Strategy and Customer Service Directorate in December 2023.

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 every local authority must have a SEND Information, Advice and Support Service. Each IASS provides support to parents, carers, children and young people providing information and advice on education, 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 and budget

The budget is centrally funded to provide 2 full-time SENDIASS Officers and the associated costs for those staff. 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

Parent, carers, children and young people self-refer to the service.

The dedicated phone lines and SENDIASS email address are the routes through which most referrals are received, with increasing enquiries 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 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 SENDIASS North Tyneside Website, which has now been live since October 22.

The service is also available to professionals across education, health and social care. Whilst we do not accept referrals from professionals, we may provide generic advice and signposting to share with families on their 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 continues to be a large number 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 Provider 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 has been accredited by the Bar Standards Board for 30 hours of CPD per level. 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,Disability Discrimination in Schools,SEN transport, Migrant Children – Rights and Entitlements to SEN provision and opportunities for networking and group discussion. 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 June, the Council for Disabled Children and the IASS Network organised a regional event in Newcastle. This included an IASS national update with discussion about the DfE CHANGE and Safety Valve programmes, a training session on Disabled Children and the Equality Act 2010 followed by regional SENDIASS networking.

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

* Free school meals
* Information Governance
* Emotionally Based School Avoidance for SENDIASS
* Comprehensive communication and Vicarious Trauma
* Social Care Law
* Equality and Diversity
* Transition
* Preparing for Adulthood from the Earliest Years
* North Tyneside Graduated Approach
* Introduction to MS Forms
* United against bullying
* General Health and Safety
* Judicial Review & EA96 Section 19
* Combined authority
* Judicial review and consultation challenges in the SEND system
* Prosecution offences relating to education.
* Equality Act
* IASSN workshop
* Introduction on supported internships
* Corporate strategy/customer service

# Casework

The number of active cases worked on within this academic year is 628. 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, information about EHC needs assessments and requests for EHC Needs Assessment, Children out of school and Emotionally Based School Avoidance, exclusions and support to challenge and appeal decisions.

The need for support around appealing decisions and the SEND Tribunal process continues to be high with varying degrees of 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 authorityi.

SENDIASS have attended 2 tribunal hearings and supported 112 parent carers to prepare for tribunal. We estimate that SENDIASS were involved in 110 cases where tribunal hearings were avoided. This was achieved by clarifying legal tests with the LA and partners, informal mediation, accurate information on the SENDIASS website and signposting, assisting parent carers to complete paperwork and to compile relevant evidence, attendance at Tribunal User Group and liaising with SENDIST Tribunal Office and sharing information.

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](https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/attachments/Intervention%20Levels%201-4.%20final_0.pdf). 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 2023-2024 (academic year) include:

* Continuing demand for IASS. Cases are complex and service users often require support to navigate difficult processes.
* Referrals into the service are across all age groups and includes post-16’s.
* Help to understand SEND support in schools.
* High demand around EHC needs assessments. This includes information about processes, timescales and parental requests for assessments.
* Demand for appeals specifically refusal to assess, refusal to issue and placement appeals.
* Service users value the approach and knowledge of the IAS service.
* Parents and carers often require help to understand the contents of EHC plans and struggle to navigate SEND processes.
* Increasing numbers of children and young people are being educated at home, are receiving education other than in school or are not accessing any education.
* Support with part-time timetables for children struggling to access school.
* Requests for information, advice and support to help to access alternative provision have increased.
* A continued increase in enquiries related to Emotionally Based School Avoidance, anxiety and mental health conditions.
* Difficulties around statutory timescales for EHCP annual reviews.
* Concerns about the delivery of special educational provision in EHCP’s
* There has been an increase in suspensions and exclusions particularly for children and young people with SEMH needs.
* There are difficulties understanding eligibility for home to school transport.
* We continue to support with complaints against schools and the Local Authority.**Feedback from service users**

Cannot recommend North Tyneside SENDIASS enough. They are \*\*\*\*\*\*amazing! So supportive and they give you their all to make sure that the kids have what they need. I can honestly say I wouldn’t have got through the EHC process without them.

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

Thank you. I’d never be able to navigate this without your help.

Thank you so much for all the help you are giving. It’s nice to feel that someone is listening and wanting to help, instead of feeling like you’re banging your head off a brick wall.

Thank you, you have been invaluable to me. Honestly this is such a good service for people to use.

Many thanks for your support. \*\*\*\*\*\* and I have felt much more comfortable and confident that the correct action will be taken by the college since your involvement. Your service has been greatly appreciated and valued. Keep up the great work. You are making a huge difference.

Just to say thank you for your input and support at this morning’s meeting!
Really appreciate it!

I wanted to drop you a note to say thank you so much for attending the meeting at school this morning. Your input was invaluable, and I appreciate all of the suggestions you’ve made in terms of trying to turn things around for my child.

#

# Work with Children and Young People

In line with the statutory duty of delivering IAS directly to children and young people, we support students with workshop’s entitled ‘Knowing your Legal Rights’. They are facilitated by a maintained special school within North Tyneside. These were re-introduced this year as they hadn’t been delivered since the COVID-19 pandemic.

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.
* SENDIASS are represented on the SEND Quality Assurance group and are involved in multi-agency audits of EHCP’s.
* Local Offer working group.
* CQC Inspection Readiness Review
* North Tyneside Neurodiversity Symposium
* 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 share useful information.

* SEND Tribunal Northern User Group.
* Briefings with the SEND Support Service
* SEND delivery board.

# 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, as well as the capacity to deliver online sessions on SENDIASS, SEN Support and the Local Offer.

SENDIASS have attended in-person sessions to:

* Southlands School Parents
* Early Years Outreach Workers
* North Tyneside Parent Carer Forum
* Future Focus event

# 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 are a mix of virtual and face-to-face sessions. These provide 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.

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. This year work has started to develop a new training opportunity for parents and carers in the region.

# Priorities from 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.
* **This is ongoing.**
* Empowering parents to access the correct information required and encourage self-service where appropriate – ongoing with website content.
* **An additional section has been added to the website for ‘Help in Exams’. Content has been reviewed and additional information and updated links have been added. There have been 11,162 visits to the website this year.**
* To continue to ensure that parents, young people, and children have access to support in preparing for and attending tribunal.
* **This is a core element of our work with increasing complexities.**
* To attend training that is relevant to the further development of the service.
* **SENDIASS have attended a range of training.**
* To review the way feedback is gathered to support the continual improvement of the service.
* **This has been delayed.**
* To review the range of SENDIASS leaflets and resources in accessible formats.
* **All easy-read information has been reviewed and updated as well as general service leaflets.**
* To attend relevant working groups alongside other professionals and stakeholders.
* **In addition, we have set up bi-monthly meetings with the Senior Manager of the SEND Support Service to share themes and develop links.**

**Priorities for 2024-2025**

* Development of a database to assist data recording and assist with case management.
* Direct casework with families.
* Empowering parents to access the correct information required and encourage self-service where appropriate – ongoing with website content. A rolling task list has been created for this which will be added to.
* To continue to ensure that parents, young people, and children have access to support in preparing for and attending tribunal.
* To attend relevant working groups alongside other professionals and stakeholders.
* To attend training that is relevant to the further development of the service.
* To commission a regional training session for parents and carers on ESBA.

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