

# **SEND IASS**

Special Educational Needs  
and Disability Information,  
Advice and Support Service  
**(Formerly Parent Partnership)**

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# ANNUAL REPORT

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2014– 2015

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D. Harrington

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## Introduction

This report details the service developments, successes and challenges over the academic year 2014 – 2015 and sets it in the context of national and local changes for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). This has been a year of significant development for the service. This report will tell you about what we have been doing and what has changed.

On 1 September 2014 the Childrens and Families Act 2014 and the revised SEND Code of Practice resulted in a revision of the legal framework on which Parent Partnership work was based.

The function of PPS is cited in the new legislation but in a revised format:

*'Local authorities **must** provide all parents (and carers), children and young people with clear and accurate information, advice and support in relation to SEND, including the statutory assessment processes and Education, Health and Care plans.*

*Local authorities **must** also provide information, advice and support that covers social care and health, as they relate to SEND, and is confidential and free for children and young people aged 0 – 25 and their parents. This should be impartial and*

To meet the statutory requirements of the Children and Families Act 2014 the service changed its name and is now known as the Special Educational Needs and Disability Information Advice and Support Service or SEND IASS for short. The name was the preferred choice of parents who responded to a survey conducted by Parents Voice through their Facebook page.

To meet the requirements of the Children and Families Act we offer:

- Direct telephone access providing confidential, impartial advice.
- Face to face contact
- E-mail communication
- Advice sheets and booklets to help parents and young people develop their knowledge and understanding to support them in their discussions with the LA, schools/settings and other statutory agencies

- Information about other agencies, e.g. voluntary agencies and health services which can offer information and advice about their child's particular SEN and Disabilities
- Support in preparation of and/or attendance at meetings where necessary and/or appropriate
- The provision of trained Independent Supporters (IS) for all parents and young people who want one
- Support and advice to parents and young people either individually or in groups

The SENDIASS team has been involved in the SEND Reform agenda all year – supporting a number of the work streams associated with the major changes affecting process, policy and service delivery.

## **Additional Funding**

The Government recognised that the implementation of the SEND Reforms would impact on capacity, and so Parent Partnership Services were eligible to apply for grant funding from the Council for Disabled Children (CDC). This was to provide an element of Independent Support as well as use the funding to “build capacity” to ensure the new duties around the provision of information, advice and support were in place. We were successful in this bid and an additional £20,000 was allocated during the financial year April 2014–March 2015, with a further funding of £20,000 for the financial period to March 2016.

## **Service Management and Staffing**

The service is line managed via Hampshire's Childrens Services Education Officer for West Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. SEND IASS is operated as an arm's length of the local authority, located within FIZ building.

Dorothy Harrington Snr SEND IAS Officer

Emma Morris SEND IAS Officer

Heather Drudge, Admin Assistant

Plus 4 volunteers, Alison Priddle, Steve Palmer, Maxine Sewell and Trish Wray,

Emma Morris and Heather Drudge both joined SEND IASS in October 2015 filling posts that had been vacant since June 2015.

## **Changes to staffing due to additional funding**

Alison Priddle, Volunteer Co-ordinator Contract between Bowbridge  
Consultancy and IW Council until  
March 2016

The whole team has worked throughout the year to become conversant with the new ways of working. Staff and volunteers have all undertaken new legal training.

## **Increasing volunteer base**

It was agreed that the most cost effective way of using the additional funding from CDC was to build capacity within SENDIASS to meet the requirements of the SEND legislation, to support the recruitment, training and management of a volunteer workforce via a contract, with work to be identified and undertaken up until March 2016. The areas to be addressed through the role were identified and at the beginning of January 2015 a contract was agreed between the Isle of Wight Council and Alison Priddle of Bowbridge Consultancy Ltd.

Initially 5 additional volunteers signed up to start the training in April. Three completed the training sessions, and 2 have now completed the necessary forms to become IAS volunteers. A rolling programme is in place and a second cohort is planned for October 2015 and a third in January 2016. Our aim is to ensure that enough volunteers are available to meet the demands of the service when the Independent Support contract finishes in 2016.

## **Service Users between September 2014 and July 2015**

During this period 383 families were supported, this includes new referrals and ongoing cases. The service has a self-referral policy. Parents can contact us directly or they may be signposted by others including schools and voluntary agencies. The majority of parents contact us by telephone, where we will talk through the options available and/or signpost to other services if necessary. Requests for support were also received by email and from parents calling into FIZ.

Parents contacting the Service for the first time are able to have a conversation with a member of staff about their concerns and will receive information if required. Ongoing case work support is provided by other members of the team and we aim to allocate cases, where appropriate, within 5 days of the initial contact from the parent.

The volume and complexity of case work has remained high during this period. Service staff review and share good practice in casework on an informal basis, the close proximity of service staff enables casework discussion to take place on an ongoing basis as and when required. Calls to the service still continue to focus around the level of support the child/young person receives in school and how the support is being delivered. Accessing specialist provision, exclusions, particularly illegal exclusions and part time timetables has been more evident and the SEN Reforms has highlighted the lack of training for school staff on the new procedures.

## Referrals to the service

Enquiries not leading to casework (Information and advice)	New Referrals resulting in casework (Information, advice and support)	Total number of parents who contacted SEND IASS
<b>73</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>383</b>

Number of young people receiving a service (with their parent)	6
No of parents referred to Independent Support at People Matter	32
Number of parents supported with EHC process	88
Number of parents supported with Mediation/Tribunal Appeals	10
Number of parents supported at Tribunal hearing	0

## Volunteers

We currently have 4 volunteers who have been deployed during the past year and they have supported 30 families.

Our volunteers are DBS checked and have regard to our confidentiality and impartiality policies. They receive one to one supervision sessions from the officers within the team and their caseloads are carefully monitored and managed to ensure that we continue to deliver a quality and effective service to parents.

The volunteers have all taken part in additional training on the SEN reforms and updated safeguarding training.

Two volunteers are also fully trained as Independent Supporters. We are in the process of recruiting and training additional volunteers to work with parents and

young people and have an additional 2 volunteers ready to join our team in September 2015.

## **The Independent Support Programme**

The focus of the Independent Support programme is to help families with the EHC assessment process. The Independent Support contract for the Isle of Wight was awarded to People Matter IW. In October 2014 A Memorandum of Understanding and a Referral Protocol was drawn up, adapted for local need and agreed between SENDIASS, Parents Voice IW (Parent/Carer Forum) and SEN Services for the Isle of Wight Council. We have a good working relationship with People Matter. There are referrals from SENDIASS to People Matter and vice versa as appropriate, when the referral is outside of the Independent Support Contract.

## **Parent's views of SENDIASS**

Every year the service reviews its effectiveness by seeking feedback from users in the form of a survey. In July 2015 a questionnaire was sent out through survey monkey and via the post. 200 surveys were sent out and we received 35 responses, a rate of 17%.

SEND IASS also collects qualitative data throughout the academic through National Benchmarking Data; annual collection taken from termly monitoring is collated and fed into the Benchmarking survey.

### **How we make a difference...**

A parent/carers evaluation of the service was carried out in July. A full copy of the survey is at the end of this report.

The most common way that parents found out about SEND IASS is from other parents, (29%), school (18%) or had used the service before (18%). The majority of the responses were positive about the service they had received and the impact.

100% of respondents found the service very easy or easy to contact; 94% were happy with the speed of response from SENDIASS.

Of those parents that responded 97% were aware that the service is confidential and when asked if the information/advice given was impartial 94% answered positively 'always' (8%) or most of the time (7%).

*"Taking a detached view of the case really helped me to reassess what to say and how to make the relevant points in the school meeting."*

When asked the question: "To what extent, if at all, has the involvement of SEND IASS helped improve things for your child at school?" 56% felt that things had improved a great deal, and 27% a fair amount.

*"Without send IASS I would probably be home educating, we found a lovely new school with lots of support after a safeguarding issue"*

After contacting SEND IASS 78% of respondents said that they were more confident in addressing issues related to their child's SEN and 81% felt more knowledgeable.

Only 37% said that SEND IASS was promoted in their school and 44% didn't know.

Analysis of the responses suggested that parents particularly valued:

- Being supported through difficult times
- Help in dealing directly with the school
- Feeling empowered and more confident
- Impartial advice
- Knowledge of staff

The full results of the survey are attached (Appendix 1)

## Information and Publicity

### Publications

This year we have updated all our publications to reflect the new legislation. This has included rebranding ourselves as a SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (SEND IASS). We have produced a new service leaflet for parents and a service leaflet for children and young people which is also available as an easy read leaflet. Our service leaflet for young people has been produced with input from a young person and has been sent to the Young Inspectors before publication.

We have also produced a series of SEND information resources, for parents and will be starting to build the same range for young people. Our next step will be to promote the service to Young People and Post 16 providers during the Autumn term 2015.

## **Website**

Work to build a brand new website is ongoing at the time of writing this report. The Local Authority Web team have started work on a brand new interactive website but progress has been slow. The website will be officially launched after this reporting period.

## **Training**

### **Training delivered**

- ‘Communicating effectively with parents’ delivered to Early years and primary SENCOs.
- Volunteer training programme

### **Training accessed by service staff and volunteers**

- National IAS Network legal training Level One and the online modules for Level Two The training involved completing online modules and 2 days face to face training
- CDC on line modules and face to face training of the role of IS and the Law was completed by Dorothy Harrington, Emma Morris, Alison Priddle, and Volunteers Jane Pelosi and Maxine Sewell
- New staff and volunteers have accessed Safeguarding training
- IPSEA SEND Tribunals training was completed by Dorothy Harrington
- Engaging with Children and Young People was accessed by Emma Morris
- Person Centred Training
- Mental Capacity Act
- The Care Act
- All current volunteers have attended initial volunteer training.



## **Future plans for Service Development**

- Our main priority for the coming year is to develop our support to young people and we will be expanding our service to help them feel confident to be involved in the development of services.
- Keep confidentiality and impartiality policies under review.
- Launch our new website
- Develop information sessions for parents .
- Develop training opportunities for parents
- Continue to recruit and train volunteers to ensure that when the Independent Support contract ends with People Matter, we are able to meet demand
- Link volunteers to schools.

**If you have any comments/question please contact: Dorothy Harrington, Snr SENDIAS Officer, 11 Orchard Street, Newport, PO301JZ, Tel: 01983 825548  
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