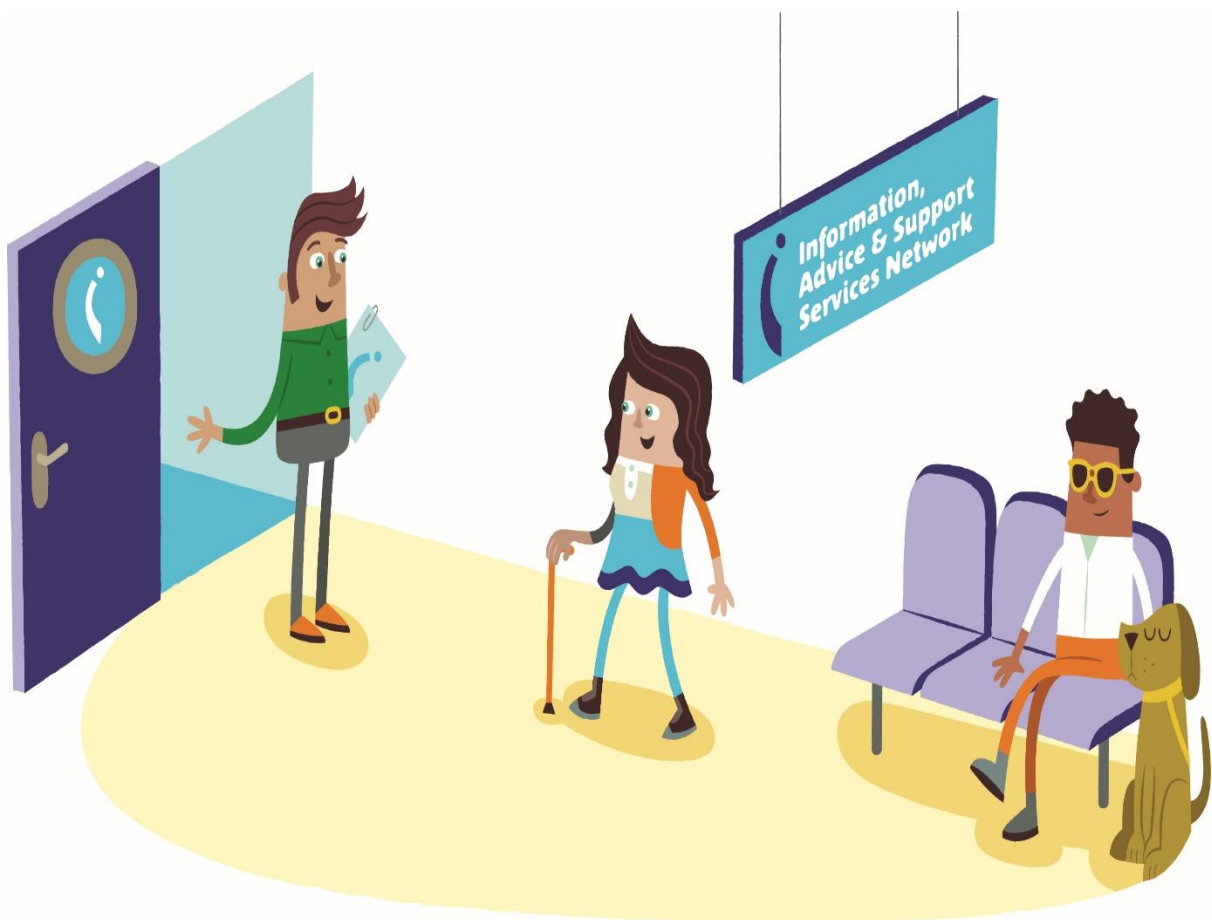


# The Information, Advice and Support Services Network Review 2022



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## Introduction

### The IASSN Team

As part of the [Children and Families Act 2014](#) it is a legal requirement that all local authorities ensure children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities ([SEND](#)) and their parents have access to an impartial [Information, Advice and Support \(IAS\) service](#). The IASSN team are there to support those services.

We do this by:

- Working with the [SENDIAS](#) services to ensure they have the resources and training to provide high quality information, advice and support to children, young people and parents in their area.
- Listening to, and working with SENDIAS services to understand their challenges and successes in order to feedback to the [DfE](#) to implement positive and necessary change.
- Working with SENDIAS services and other stakeholders to develop and promote the [Standards](#) for SENDIAS services.

The IASSN are funded by the Department for Education ([DfE](#))

This survey aimed to ask service managers to report on concerns for the future, training and support needs and to evaluate some of the work of the previous year.

## Concerns for the future

The IASP contract is ending in April 2022. This means services will no longer have access to apply for additional funding through the IAS program to develop and further the work that they do.

We asked services that considering this, what their concerns were for the year ahead.

The key concern reported back were services not being able to meet their responsibilities going forward. This is a concern as IASP funding was never meant to be used to meet statutory responsibilities, this is the responsibility of the Local Authority and the core funding they provide to the service.

Wrapped up in this concern is the increasing pressure on services not being backed up by increasing levels of funding.

In many instances' managers reported that IASP funding was being used to cover staff time and this enabled greater capacity in the services.

Three examples of the above are (my key concerns are)

*'Staffing and capacity. I have one FT member of staff, (which I am recruiting for now so am on my own). Core budget is not enough. Joint commissioning discussions taking place but will be a drawn out process and service is struggling with workload.'*

*'I HAVE HUGE CONCERNS ABOUT CAPCITY FOR THE SERVICE. THE IASP FUNDING CREATED A OFFICER'S POST SINCE 2014 MY CHALLENGE IS GETTING MY LA TO FILL THE GAP WHICH IS JUSTIFIED BY REFERRAL DATA AND CAPCITY.'*

*'Inability to provide quality service with increasing number of referrals, complex casework and reduced number of staff.'*

**Continuing our work with local authorities to ensure services receive the right level of funding going forward is key to our future work and planning.**

## Management reporting

We asked management questions to support our work and end of year reporting. Managers responded as such:

- 98.5% felt they understood the role of Contact and the National Helpline and the relationship between them and the IASSN
- 98.2% had at least one member of staff IPSEA level one-two trained
  - 1.8% ticked 'other' for this answer rather than 'no.' This was to tell us they have smaller teams and are booked onto the training this month
- 98.2% had at least one member of staff IPSEA level three trained
  - As above: 1.8% ticked 'other' for this answer rather than 'no.' This was to tell us they have smaller teams and are booked onto the training this month

## Communication

As per previous reports, IASS staff engage most with the general e-forum, managers forum, IASSN staff at meetings and individual staff via email. IASS staff engage least with IASSN staff via phone, the shared mailbox and the CYP e-forum.

IASS staff find contact via telephone or the CYP forum least effective.

87.3% are signed up to the IASSN newsletter. This is up from 80% at the last report.

96.4% of IAS services feel they understand the purpose of the information disseminated to services by the IASSN (for example policy updates or case studies). 3.6% somewhat understand and 0% do not understand the purpose.

92.6% said the level of information is just right with 7.4% saying they'd like even more. Those who like more, would like that to be focused on national policy updates.

91% said the level in which IASSN ask for feedback from them is right, 7.3% said it was too frequent, 1.7% said they'd like more chance to feedback.

We asked for feedback on our website and it's use over the past year. 29.6% said it had improved, 53.7% fed back it had stayed the same, 7.4% said they found it more challenging and 9.3% said that is was a mix.

## E-forum

98.1% said they would encourage new members of staff to join and engage with the e-forum.

40% said they accessed it weekly, 14.5% daily and 27.3% monthly. The remaining 18.2% use it via email rather than logging onto the site.

## Training

We have been clear that we need to be sure of proper engagement of virtual training to continue this. We asked services to bear this in mind when answering a question about what level of each types of training they would like. They answered:

- 61.8% said they would like a blended approach
- 34.5% wanted a virtual only approach
- 9.1% a return to face to face

This was overwhelmingly due to time and capacity savings.

In general, services supported repercussions for those that book onto, but don't engage with, training.

83.6% said they were happy with our training offer.

Of the 16.4% who were not, the key criticism was wanting more training and more places.

Some training topics people would like explored include:

- The SEND Review
- Social Care
- Education outside of the school
- Tribunals

61% have accessed our e-training through the portal. A key concern of those who haven't is the usability of the portal. This is a low number and will be a focus next year.

## Feedback to the IASSN team:

Lastly, we asked if there was any further feedback about the IASSN team. IAS services answered

*Thank-you for the work you do supporting our services. The complexity of cases and volume of enquiries may mean we cannot always attend. Access to the resources or a recording of events may be useful.*

*Thank you for all that you do :-)*

*Just to tell me you have won the tender!*

*I think the communication between IASSN has been very good and the Team have been very quick to respond to queries, thank you!*

*Thank you for all the work you do to support SENDIASS*

*I welcome the support and communication - thank you*

*We value the support of the staff at IASSN. Training and knowledge is always of a higher standard than external providers*

*Having worked in other support roles. I can honestly say the IASSN network is absolutely brilliant. Other industries have networks but none have the inclusivity that the IASSN has. The fact that you can send a question out and people respond within a day with suggestions is remarkable.*

*Thank you for all the team's hard work and support.*

*SENDIASS needs to be profiled and championed for its work and capability, instead it is pushed to a position of becoming an apologist for being effective set against a backdrop of failing SEND Services."*

*The IASSN team have always been very, very helpful.*

*Just to say thank you for supporting us all!*

*More accessible website so that all the great resources can found more easily would be brilliant. An opportunity to feed into the Send review via the IASSN. Consultation re the data IASSN collects so that we can make sure that it supports us e.g. in securing funding. More work on the levels of intervention. Work to encourage Ofsted to ask standard questions about the SENDIAS service in each area. ... Sorry a long wish list. The support of the IASSN is brilliant & much appreciated. I do worry that the voice of the IASSN may be diminished as a result of the conclusion of the IASP. It might be good for the network to think about its strategic role in light of this change & how as individual services we can support this.*

*Just good luck with the next year's work!*

*IASSN has been a fantastic support network for all levels of SENDIASS staff. The team are very supportive and knowledgeable. Sharing their knowledge, encouraging*



*engagement and delivering training has been key in the confidence levels and quality of advice in the service that is given. It helps to achieve high standards under difficult circumstances. It has helped to support the good reputation of the SENDIASS service.*

*I think communication in general has been better and now know who to contact usually - the response time is good.*

*"Thanks for everything and helping IAS services through the pandemic. I really hope that IASSN team gets the contract. I fear for IAS services if awarded to another service that really doesn't understand or have the knowledge about how IAS service work. It concerns me that the IAS services will not get the support or the recognition they deserve and at the end of the day, it will be the children with SEND that will be negatively impacted.*

*It's confusing coming into the service and then understanding about IASSN however a real asset to have! Thank you.*

*Thank you for all your continued hard work and support of SENDIASS services.*

*Always receive excellent support from the IASSN team and promptly. Thank you!*

## Key Recommendations

To improve the service that the Information, Advice and Support Services Network provide to IAS services we will implement the following recommendations:

1. We will continue to offer bespoke individual support to SENDIAS, LAs and ICSs to support the understanding and commissioning of high quality, minimum standards compliant services.
2. IAS services said they valued virtual training sessions as it allowed them to increase the uptake of training but enjoyed engaging with us most at face-to-face meetings. Moving forward, we will offer a combination of face-to-face and virtual training as we understand that face-to-face is preferred but that virtual is efficient.
3. There has been low engagement of the E-Training. We will continue to encourage this as a very valuable way to engage with training that is cost effective.
4. We will ensure our communication channels continue to build as we move forward.
5. We will continue to work with the DfE, NHSE, Ofsted and others to promote the role of SENDIAS