



Department  
for Education



## TELFORD AND WREKIN SENDIASS: Partnership working with the local Parent Carer Forum

### The Context

Telford and Wrekin SENDIASS is an outsourced service within Telford and Wrekin Council for Voluntary Services. The CVS organisation has been responsible for delivering the service from its introduction as the Parent Partnership Service in 2001.

As a voluntary organisation Telford CVS maintains positive relationships with Telford and Wrekin Local Authority and works closely to deliver a number of LA funded projects to vulnerable children and adults within the wider community.

SENDIASS is able to ensure that it continues to meet the National IASS Minimum Standards by ensuring that information, advice and support is impartial, accessible and equitable to all parents/carers, CYP living in Telford and Wrekin. SENDIASS is easily accessible within Telford town centre and maintains a positive profile within the wider local community. SENDIASS maintains a strong profile to influence and support local SEND strategic development and continues to strengthen relationships across local statutory and voluntary partners across Telford and Wrekin.

### The issue

The IASS Service had been involved in supporting the local PCF known as Parents Opening Doors (PODS) when it initially formed in 2009 and supported its growth, enabling parents/carers across Telford and Wrekin to participate and have a voice, express their views and identify areas of need across education, health and social care services by strengthening relationships with key stakeholders. Over the years the forum has grown and developed, and today has a strong strategic presence, and parents have a clear pathway to communicate their views to influence and shape local service provision, and work with key partners to support the planning and delivery of the local SEND Strategy. PODS works closely with the LA in order to facilitate consultation and challenge and ensure that parents/carers views are represented as part of a “You said, we did” approach to change.

The relationship between PODS and IASS has always been positive, although there were many opportunities missed to strengthen relationships and identify how both could work together more efficiently to ensure parents/carers were accessing appropriate and timely information, advice and support.

One of the priorities identified when the SENDIASS new service lead came into post in 2019 was to consider how both could begin to open up more regular communications. Meetings between SENDIASS and the PCF Strategic Coordinator took place providing the opportunity to discuss themes and barriers that parents were experiencing and how they could work effectively together to deliver information, advice and support in collaboration with PODS.

It was a challenge initially to strengthen communications. The IASP funding that enabled the IASS to increase capacity enabled the service lead to focus on this particular area and how to consider opportunities for parents to have a voice by ensuring they were being signposted to PODS at every contact to the service, and also to ensure that parents who were not represented through the PCF had opportunities to express their views, through joint consultations with IASS and PODS.

At the height of the pandemic and with services working from home and adapting to working with virtual platforms, the communication across key partners increased. Communication meetings were held on a

weekly basis with involvement from PODS, Education, Health and Social Care and all began to see the benefit of how effective communication can bring positive change.

PODS had identified some of the issues that parents were facing at this time. Identified areas of concern included; worries due to their child's anxieties, early years families where children were due to start school and around transition. Visits to schools were not able to take place meaning there was a need to think about how services might work together to support parents in these areas. During this time IASS was able to identify increased opportunities to work together to promote the IASS Service to a wider audience, through attending virtual parent wellbeing sessions and virtual coffee mornings being held by the PCF. IASS also managed to gain wider feedback from parents of CYP with SEND regarding the challenges they were experiencing and how as a service support could be provided to help overcome them. These included home schooling, access to education, and concerns for their child's transition into a different phase of education. By sharing information across media platforms, the benefits of working together to deliver appropriate support and information to parents during this time became apparent. Feedback gained from parents, supported the initial development of a short virtual online session for parents where children were re-entering education in September 2020 or moving into a different phase of education. IASS and PODS successfully delivered the session and feedback gained from parents identified how beneficial the session was in providing reassurance and helping with any question's parents needed to ask at this very important time for their child.

## **The support provided by IASS**

It became apparent during this time that it was vital to maintain regular communications across key partners and with the weekly Communication and Engagement meetings which included representatives from Education, Health and Social Care including commissioners, there were opportunities to identify other areas of collaborative working to support the delivery of SEND information, advice and support to parents/carers and YP.

This led to IASS and PODS leading on co-ordinating and delivering 2 further transition workshop sessions in June and July 21 with the support of key partners across Education, Health and Social Care, specifically for parents of children moving from Early Years into school and parents of children moving from primary school to the secondary phase of education.

Representatives involved in the workshop sessions included LA Early Years SEND Specialist services, LSAT Teams (involved the Steps project to support primary/secondary phase transition), School SENCOs, Social Care Early Help services, SEND Teams delivering information on SEND Local Offer, School Nursing Team, and included the voice of parents sharing their own experiences of what worked well for them. The sessions provided a valuable resource for parents to support them in their child's transition and gave them an opportunity to ask any questions and share any concerns they had. PODS were also able to provide information on the PCF and the various support that could be provided.

PODS and IASS had together promoted the events across their media platforms and through inclusion in their newsletters. The LA had also promoted the events through the SEND Local Offer and regular communications through SEND Newsletters. Working together had widened the reach to parents and both sessions were well attended.

## **The difference made**

The workshop events were evaluated and feedback gained from both parents and the professionals involved was extremely positive. The sessions provided a wide range of information and signposting to parents and also enabled parents to feel more confident and increased their understanding of the SEND processes in place to support their child. They were able to understand the role of the SENCO and also how to access other areas of support for their child and their family.

All partners involved fed back the value of collaborative working and this prompted further meetings with PODS to identify how IASS, the forum and other key partners could work together to deliver future events.

There is a further workshop event being planned by IASS and PODS in the Autumn term. Parents are asking for information on the Annual Review process and their child's EHCP in particular how this process supports their child's transition.

Parental feedback is shaping IASS delivery and the service is able to support parents collectively through workshops. It is hoped that the next event will be a return to face-to-face working, as parents value the opportunity of meeting in person with other parents.

This area of service development has enabled IASS to strengthen local relationships with key partners in the SEND delivery of information, advice and support to widen reach to parents/carers across Telford and Wrekin. The workshop events are promoting parental confidence in the SEND processes and in particular by working collaboratively with Education, Health and Social Care, it is able to support and signpost families of children moving across from early years settings into schools. The information, advice and support provided to parents provides increased opportunities for parents to have a voice and increases parental participation in their child's education.

There is a shared commitment from IASS and PODS to continue to maintain and strengthen relationships and identify future areas of working together, which will be of benefit to parents/carers. The IASS Steering Group now has established representation from PODS to ensure that parents/carers views influence and shape IASS service development and delivery.

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