



# Bath and North East Somerset: Making better connections with our customers...

## The context

SEND Partnership Service (SPS) in Bath and North East Somerset (B&NES) fulfils the local authority (LA) statutory duty to provide information advice and support (IAS) for children and young people aged 0 – 25 years with SEND.

B&NES is home to approximately 67,000 children and young people and is a blend of urban and rural areas. Bath is renowned for its prestigious, heritage attractions but there are also pockets of deprivation and rural challenges within the local authority reach. B&NES has a long history of joint commissioning and funding across education and social care and has well established integrated health pathways.

The service is currently delivered in-house as part of the Customer Services Division and is funded jointly by the LA with contributions specifically from Social Care and the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG).

Challenges have always been known to exist, in a local authority which has extremes of demographic, in getting good quality, accessible information to the wide range of potential service users. As defined in SPS' marketing policy all of the traditional methods to get information out have been used and yet still struggled to measure a reach of more than 15% of the cohort.

## How IASP funding has improved the IASS offer to it service users

When the opportunity to bid for some support funding was made by CDC, this was the area the team wanted to improve and set about to define what would make a difference. A case was made to purchase a stand-alone website for the service that would be hosted separately from the local authority site and sufficient funding to buy some development time.

The LA site is busy, complicated to navigate and full of a huge range of diverse information from parking to pest control and it was essential that families were able to access information that was relevant for them and easy to find. The site would also be a resource base to supplement case work – giving those more capable families information and advice that they could access and use themselves.

In addition, learning about the success other services have had with social media accounts and getting messages and connections out to a whole range of people and organisations it was agreed to give that a try too! So the additional funding bought some time and resources to help develop a strategy and set up an account.

## Ways in which improvements have positively enhanced the service user experience - evidence/examples

Success!

SPS new website [www.spsbathnes.org.uk](http://www.spsbathnes.org.uk) was *softly* launched during June 2019 with a plan to launch with a *noise* in the New Year. The activity on the site so far has been really impressive – there have been about 3000 page views, over 700 visitors to the site and people are spending well over 3 minutes looking at content. The most popular sections of the site are Information and Advice for Parent/Carers, Professionals and About Us, with FAQs following behind. The feedback from those who helped design and populate the site has been very positive – the site is clean, easy to navigate and very, very useful!

And the social media story ..... a new Facebook account was launched for the service at the beginning of the new academic year with the support of a social media expert (a resource again funded with the additional budget) In the month of September 111 people liked the page, 120 people continue to follow the page, SPS posted 29 times in September and the posts reached 4,833 people with 345 engagements (i.e. clicking, sharing or liking). The most popular post to date has been a link to Young Minds, a mental health charity for young people, which reached 1,100 people – 127 people clicked the link and 19 people reacted, commented or shared.

All staff have undertaken a commitment to find and save useful information for both web and social media and additional support has been engaged until end of March 2020 to help plan posts and campaigns for the year, set up performance management data systems, create links to other organisations and get the most out of the site. SPS is starting to work with a group of young people and several organisations supporting young people to test the idea of recording some live FAQ chats e.g. What's a plan? How can I get an apprenticeship? The intention is to add these as quick bites to the children and young people's part of the website and run through YouTube. The clips will be openly available to all through YouTube – and all of this has been funded through the IAS Project

## The approach being taken to sustain the improvements achieved

The purpose of the planning and initial development is to ensure that after March we can at least maintain and populate what has already been set up. What would make a huge difference is continuation of the funding to employ those with specialist skills with the available time to build and develop these resources – in order to keep the platforms interesting and relevant. With the constant rise in demand for the core work of SPS this isn't a resource available within the service.

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