

Bedford: increasing our targeted work with vulnerable groups of CYP with SEND

The context

Bedford Borough's SENDIAS service (formerly known as Bedford SEND Advice) provides a high quality and valued service to its users. However, in the past five years the service's core funding has dramatically reduced from 1.8fte (including internal managers post) to 0.8fte (12 months fixed term contract), despite year on year increases in demand for our services. IASP funding helped to reduce the impact on staffing and therefore helped maintain, in part, the services' capacity.

Nationally, Bedford Borough is in the mid-range on overall deprivation, ranking 148 out of 326 local authorities in England on the 2015 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). However, this average rating masks areas of significant deprivation affecting many residents in our borough. Of the 103 Lower-layer Super Output Area (LSOAs) in Bedford Borough, 5 are among the 0-10% most deprived areas in England on the IMD. In 2010 there were 4 LSOAs in the 0-10% decile and a further 9 LSOAs are in the 10-20% decile, with 11 more in the 20-30% decile.

Whilst being a small local authority, one in ten children in our schools and colleges require additional support for their SEND needs, beyond quality first teaching. Bedford Borough has a slightly higher percentage of pupils with SEND, as recorded by schools, in both primary and secondary schools. These figures are higher for our statistical neighbours and the East of England.

As the service has become busier, it has become increasingly reactive, undertaking very little publicity or joint delivery of events and training. Whilst it is commendable that the reputation of the service is so positive, most families became aware of our services by word of mouth. We are very aware that parents of many vulnerable groups of children and young people were and are unaware of the support they could access.

How IASP funding has improved the IASS offer to its Service Users

Historically, as have most IAS services, we have found meeting service user demands a constant challenge. Since IASP started, we took the opportunity to take a step back from service delivering in order to review our delivery against the new national minimum standards and in relation to local need as well as the views of existing users and local professionals. The IASP review processes required us to take stock and systematically plan our next two years priorities, which was very useful. IASP also required the reinstatement of internal managerial responsibilities and budgetary control, as part of the funding requirements.

Our work service development work has coincided with the local authority receiving a Written Statement of Action. Having a manager's post has enabled us help shape local changes to systems and processes, for local children and young people with SEND, particularly the voice of children and young people in mainstream education. This has also increased local knowledge about our service and the support we can offer. Traditionally, our Parent Carer Forum (PCF) has been predominantly representative of children in special schools, but the new chair is working to increase mainstream membership and participation. We are working closely with the PCF to increase the voice of local families in the decision making.

Whilst some of our timescales have slipped slightly due to staff changes, we have nonetheless created new links with organisations and professionals who work with the five target groups of particularly vulnerable children and young people, for example:

- **Looked after children and young people** – SENDIASS have spoken to the fostering and adoption teams and, as a result, we are supporting three new families with looked after children. Input into a foster carers training event has been organised.
- **Early Years** – input into Borough Early Years forum for Early Years providers took place in July and October. Support at Early Year's settings and Early Years transition into primary has increased.
- **School exclusions** – we have been able to support more young people and their families with advice and support at re-integration meetings and permanent exclusion appeals (97% of requests for support at meetings were fulfilled). We are working with the inclusion team to increase local families' awareness of our services.

Ways in which improvements have positively enhanced the service user experience – provide evidence/examples

We are a tiny service with 0.8fte core staffing. IASP has enabled us to advertise our service (something we have not been able to do for four years) and absorb increasing demand for our service. More parents and young people have benefitted from our help.

IASP funding has provided us with the opportunity to develop strategic links with other key organisations and professionals. We are now part of the local authority's SEND education group, which brings together hard and soft intelligence about the struggles we are facing with local schools concerning their delivery of support for young people who need additional support. Other professionals share many of the concerns we have, about a minority of our schools. Our Director of Health, the school improvement team and others work to prioritise support and monitoring using this intelligence.

We are proactively working with our joint health/local authority commissioners and operational staff to address issues related to health and social care. Proactive and strategic work had not been possible for some time, without IASP and the appointment of an internal SENDIASS manager. We know that proactively addressing issues is benefitting many other children and young people.

We have been very successful at delivering support to a larger number of young people (often via their parents at their request) and parents. We have delivered a 44% increase in contacts over the past three years, an increase in 25% cases in the past 12 months. Over the past three years (1st October - 30th September 2016-17, 17-18 & 18-19,) the number of contacts has increased 44.72% although core staffing has not increased. Continuing to deliver a quality, responsive service to an increasing number of families and young people and with increasingly complex cases has put the service under a great deal of pressure. Without IASP funding to increase capacity, Bedford SENDIASS' ability to meet the increase demand and undertake proactive work would have stalled.

Lessons the service has learnt making service improvements

Progress has been slower than hoped but applying for IASP had a substantial impact on the service, given the service only has 0.8fte core staffing. Maintaining service delivery and undertaking proactive work has been a struggle for a number of years. Engaging with IASP has proved difficult for very small services as the requirements are the same regardless of sizes of services, teams of four plus staff have greater ability to undertake proactive work and maintain service delivery.

Due to a negative impact on capacity, discussions did take place locally as to whether Bedford SENDIASS should apply for IASP funding at all, given our struggle to meet current needs. Applying for funding, planning for new initiatives and creating capacity has further affected the services ability to meet core demands. However, in the past six months, we feel IASP has enabled more progress for engagement in proactive work to hopefully drive forward plans leading to a SENDIASS that reflects the requirements of the Code of Practice (2014) while also being sustainable.

Approaches taken to sustain the improvements achieved

The requirements of IASP funding, i.e. the need for an internal service manager and at least 1.0 fte staffing, has legitimised and prioritised discussions locally to consider increasing funding of the core service, not only from the local authority, but also more recently from the CCG.

Bedford SENDIASS has the support of the Joint SEND Development Manager, a joint post with Bedford Borough Council and the CCG, who, along with the Bedford Borough Director of Education, are exploring innovative and sustainable approaches to delivering Bedford SENDIASS. The Bedford SENDIASS manager is working with the Senior Commissioning Officer and the Bedford the Joint SEND Development Manager to drive forward sustainable solutions to deliver a SENDIASS service, which meets the National standards and has capacity to meet needs for those children whose education, health and/or social care needs impacts on their education.

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