

# Bexley: Relaunching our local statutory service

## The context

Since 2014, Bexley Local Authority have historically commissioned Kent County Council to provide an IAS service for Bexley's parents and carers of children and young people with SEND. In September 2019 Bexley IAS service was brought back into Bexley LA to provide a local service, connected with the community and meeting local SEND family's needs. This decision was informed by substantial consultation work between Bexley LA, taking in the views of parents and carers of children and young people with SEND and the local PCF, Bexley Voice.

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

Since 'relaunching' the Bexley IAS service in time for the beginning of the school year, the Bexley IAS coordinator has established a local IAS service providing the following.

- **A Telephone helpline** 9am – 5pm daily (Section 3.1 of the Minimum Standards)
- **Email support** (Section 3.1 of the Minimum Standards)
- **A year-round service** including outside of school term time.
- **Coordinator** with both professional and lived experience of SEND support in Bexley and extensive professional experience of working with disabled families, SEND children and young people (CYP) and disadvantaged groups.
- **Stand-alone Bexley IASS Website** – [www.bexleyiass.co.uk](http://www.bexleyiass.co.uk) (Section 3.3 Minimum Standards) this website meets Government accessibility requirements [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG 2.1\)](#) by providing service users with SEN and / or a disability accessibility via the IASS disability button.
- **Policies, forms, templates and SEND information factsheets** which have been designed and developed, all bespoke to the Bexley IAS service, to ensure service users receive a consistent, professional experience and are supported through the IAS interventional levels.
- **Accessible materials** including, 'young people friendly' information and easy read documents. (Section 3.2 of the Minimum Standards) <https://www.bexleyiass.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Bexley-IASS-Parents-Carers-Info.pdf>
- **Face to Face information sessions** provided in Libraries in North and South locations of the borough to provide one to one support sessions and extend the reach and accessibility of the service <https://www.bexleyiass.co.uk/latest-news/bexley-iass-are-running-individual-face-to-face-advice-sessions/>
- **Bespoke and stand-alone data capture system** within Excel to enable Bexley IAS to capture data and identify themes which will shape the service moving forward. We will migrate the system to Cross Data once we have identified, from the first few months of the service being live, which fields are required.
- **Proactive partnership working and outreach** with local statutory and voluntary community sector partners, stakeholders including local parent carer forum, Bexley Voice, to begin to inform and influence policy and practice in the local area (Section 2.3 of the Minimum Standards) and raise awareness of the service and its remit e.g. presenting IAS at the AGM and attending 1:1 support sessions for parents organised by the Parent Carer Forum.

- **Steering group** terms of reference developed, membership identified and scheduled to meet for the first time in November 2019.

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

Bexley IAS offers empowering model that provides families with the impartial information they need. Evaluation of the service is ongoing and supported by questionnaires to service users via Survey Monkey. Responders to the survey report the following:

- How easy is it to get in touch with us? 81% reporting very easy, 19% having to retry.
- How helpful was the information, advice and support we gave you? 100% reporting very helpful.
- What difference do you think our information, advice or support has made for you? 100% reporting a great deal of difference.
- Overall how satisfied are you with the service we gave? 100% reporting very satisfied.
- How likely is it that you would recommend the service to others? 100% reporting extremely likely.

## Lessons the service has learnt making service improvements

The need for accessibility, knowledge and links with local area services and the voluntary sector are key in moving forward with the development of the Bexley IAS. In the short time the service has been running, we have identified several emergent themes which will lead discussions with the steering group to shape the operational plan for next year. These themes include:

1. The largest percentages of referrals to the Bexley IAS are currently around SEN support in schools and CYP with autism and with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.
2. In enquiries relating to Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP), assistance in requests for assessments, refusal to assess enquiries, issues with the content, draft amendments and contesting placement dominate those enquiries received.
3. The top issues around which people contact Bexley IAS other than EHCP enquiries are as follows:
  - Information on SEN support in schools
  - School not meeting need – those for whom no SEN had been identified or was not recognised by the setting
  - Requests for support around tribunal / other statutory advice
  - Not in education / extended school nonattendance
4. Perhaps the most interesting theme coming through however is the numbers of parents and carers who are disclosing their own disability in confidence to the IAS service. These are themes that will shape the development of the service moving forward and ensure parents and carers are informed, empowered and confident to speak for themselves and their CYP.

## The approach being taken to sustain the improvements achieved

Bexley IAS currently has 1 IAS Coordinator and we are seeking to recruit two 0.5 FTE assistants to support the service. An increase in capacity will ensure increased involvement from the IAS Coordinator in the development of:

1. A steering group (Section 1.8 of the Minimum Standards) to shape the service, improve on service offering in meeting service user needs, and to user test the service website and promotional materials.
2. An expansion of drop sessions to meet the emerging demand for support in meetings for parents, carers and CYP where necessary.
3. Partnership work with local schools, local services and voluntary sector partners to inform and influence policy and practice in the local area (Section 2.3. of the Minimum Standards).
4. A training programme delivered to education settings, parents, young people and professionals (Section 3.6 of the Minimum Standards).
5. Direct work with CYP.
6. Staff Training (Section 4.1 of the Minimum Standards) to ensure all relevant staff have successfully complete IPSEA legal training within 12 months of joining the service.

**Contact details:**

Kathie Canavan

Bexley IASS Coordinator

[Kathleen.canavan@bexley.gov.uk](mailto:Kathleen.canavan@bexley.gov.uk)

November 2019