



Brighton and Hove: a fresh look at a longstanding service

Brighton & Hove is a unitary authority with a largely urban population including neighbourhoods that fall within the 20% most deprived areas in England.

Amaze has been contracted to deliver the IAS Service for many years. Amaze is a Sussex-based charity established by parent carers over twenty years ago that offers a range of services in Brighton & Hove, West Sussex and East Sussex. In addition to delivering the IAS service Amaze offers, in Brighton & Hove, befriending and DLA/PIP services, two projects for young people with SEND, management of the Disability Register and an associated leisure discount card, support with the development of the Local Offer and hosts the local parent carer forum.

The challenge

Amaze is a well-established 'brand' in Brighton & Hove for a number of projects linked to SEN and disability so the IAS Service may not be perceived as standing alone from Amaze as host organisation. The need for the IAS Service to be clearly branded in its own right is a requirement of the new Minimum Standards.

Parent carers and Amaze have worked hard with the local authority to develop good co-production in Brighton & Hove meaning tribunal rates have been low but the number of appeals to the SEND Tribunal is increasing in the city requiring the service to develop tribunal experience to ensure it can deliver the necessary support required. The IAS Service does have mediation experience.

Amaze delivered the government funded Independent Support (IS) Service for Brighton & Hove enabling a seamless and holistic IS/IAS service to be delivered to families. Service capacity reduced when the IS programme came to an end in July 2018 but the requirement for advocacy has increased along with managing expectations from parents used to receiving intensive support regarding the education, health and care (EHC) plan process as was previously offered.

As with other former Parent Partnership Services the requirement was only to work with parent carers and although Amaze has experience of working with children and young people through the delivery of IS and other projects, there has not been a full IAS service available for children and young people as required.

Initial impact of IAS programme funding

Funding provided by the Information Advice and Support programme in year 1 enabled a comprehensive review of the IAS Service offer to ensure it could comply with new Minimum Standards. Consultations were conducted with parent carers and young people and action was taken to make improvements in year 1 particularly around identifying ways to increase capacity of the service. IAS programme funding was used to create two part-time development worker posts; one focussed on children and young people, the other on parent carers. It was clear there was a need to focus more on empowering service-users too so a review was undertaken of resources available to staff, parent carers and young people. A series of email templates were then created which staff adapt to send out targeted information to callers following contact via the

IAS Service helpline. This also ensures quality assurance of information being provided and reduces the time needed for staff to consolidate their response to calls.

The IAS Service development workers have created a range of differentiated materials and workshops for families. Economies of scale are being offered through the use of one team delivering an IAS Service across two authorities, the second being East Sussex. Management time was freed up to reshape the service and build and train the new combined team. Alongside this, other IAS programme funded projects have been designed to address high levels of need/demand for the service.

The review has also meant that consideration could be given to the longer-term implications and this informed the production of a two-year action plan to further develop the service including working with young people. It would have been impossible to continue delivering a high-quality IAS Service if the IAS programme funding had not been available.

Impact to service beneficiaries

IAS programme funding has allowed the development of a rebranding of the IAS Service so it can be clearly seen as a separate entity from the host organisation Amaze. The term 'SENDIASS' is used in new resources and in communication and publicity as well as in a new email address. Further work on the IAS Service website presence is underway.

The new resources available to parent carers and young people have been differentiated to address the needs of individuals and to empower them. Key information is available on fact sheets whilst more in-depth guides with references to the SEN Code of Practice have been produced for families who want more detail. Young person and easy-read versions of key topics are also being developed.

New workshops, such as "SEN support" and "Annual Reviews" have been created covering themes identified through consultations. Sessions have been delivered to groups of parent carers and mixed groups of parent carers and young people and are improving service capacity.

Relationships with post-16 providers have been developed which have informed plans for work with young people in year 2 of the IAS programme funding.

Lessons learnt

There is a need to offer an IAS Service in new ways that reflect the preferred methods used by parent carers to communicate and access information. Capacity has increased by producing self-access resources and by using platforms that allow multiple access to information or fast exchanges of communication. Children and young people are unlikely to use the IAS Service in the same way as parent carers so the IAS Service must continue to be proactive in identifying need and reaching out to them. The IAS Service is developing its use of technology as it is essential to quickly adapt to new products and the way that young people are using them.

How is the approach being sustained?

Having the new IAS standards as a framework has been useful in discussions with the local authority around the two-year development plan for the IAS Service. It supported the rationale for identified service priorities and secured some funding for the projects which offers assurance of their commitment to the

changes. The focus of the IAS programme supported clearer discussions with the local Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) about their contribution to the SENDIASS contract.

The development plan identified the need to increase the engagement of Health and Social Care to improve intelligence, which informs delivery of IAS and also for strategic development.

The attendee list of our steering group has been refreshed to drive development of the service.

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<https://amazesussex.org.uk/parent-carers/services-and-support/sendias-helpline/>