

Bromley: Supporting children and young people – an exciting challenge for IASS

Context

Following the 2014 SEND Reforms IAS Services have had a duty to support children and young people directly. It quickly became apparent that for this support to work well a dedicated Children & Young People's (CYP) worker was required. The IAS Programme enabled the Service to apply for match-funding from the Local Authority to engage a CYP worker for one year.

How IASP funding has improved the IASS offer to its service users

The Service is now able to provide face to face support from a dedicated CYP worker for every CYP that accesses the service. This support includes:

- Information and advice via emails and texts
- Meetings at venues across the Borough to offer information and advice
- Support at meetings at schools and colleges
- Support to complete Part A of an EHC Plan
- Support to complete one-page profiles
- Support with research into courses, internships and job opportunities
- Support with visits to schools, colleges and alternative provision placements
- Support with SEND Tribunal appeals
- Signposting to relevant organisations

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

Having the availability of a dedicated CYP Worker has made a real difference to IASS support to Bromley's CYP. Support was previously offered via parents and carers contacting the Service but can now engage CYP directly to offer support. The CYP worker now has a large and increasing caseload of CYP whose age ranges currently from 12 to 24.

The CYP Worker is trained to work in a way that encourages the engagement and participation of young people. One of the first tasks undertaken was to create a one-page profile for the CYP worker. This has been very successful in making CYP feel more comfortable sharing their stories. YP have told Bromley IASS that school staff are often not aware of their support needs and this can lead to problems. The production of one-page profiles that can be emailed to all school staff, has enabled CYP to make school and college staff aware of their difficulties in a simple format that does not single out the YP. The support with completion of Part A's has enabled YP to be involved with the EHCP process and understand the relevance of the Plan to support their aspirations.

Having someone to support YP at meetings with professionals can often make a difference to the outcome. YP have felt able to express themselves, having first discussed this with the CYP worker,

or have asked the CYP worker to speak on their behalf if it still feels too daunting. This way YP feel engaged in the process and that they are being listened to. School staff have told us that they value the support that the Service provides in mediating at meetings and ensuring that the young person feels able to engage.

A dedicated CYP worker has meant that the service has been able to engage with the local Pupil Referral Units in the borough. Support is offered at a monthly drop-in for secondary students. Students have fed back that their views were not previously sought and they felt disengaged from any SEND processes. The CYP worker has built up relationships with student and staff. The students now have trust in the service's impartial, arms-length remit, and welcome the fact that it is the same worker who attends every month.

The service is currently planning a dedicated website. As part of the research, the CYP worker has been working with local special school students to design web pages and a service logo. The CYP worker has worked directly with the YP to explain the remit of the projects. Without a dedicated CYP worker this co-production work would not be possible.

Lessons the service has learnt making service improvements

It quickly became apparent that working with CYP requires a specialist approach. It can be very different to working with parents and carers. To set up successful support for CYP takes time, training and the ability to focus on this particular work. It also needs a dedicated budget. CYP will not contact a service readily and need encouragement to do so. Having a CYP worker has made it possible to research and pilot different approaches. It has been established that the CYP prefer to be contacted primarily by text and will not call. To support this approach, there is now have a dedicated IASS CYP text phone.

Gaining feedback from YP has been a challenge. YP are not interested in completing forms even though they value the support received. When YP were asked what might encourage them to give feedback, technology was their first choice. The LA have been approached for additional funding for a tablet computer and the plan is to use different engaging templates of questions or emoji's to gain feedback.

Having a dedicated budget has allowed ongoing training in engaging and supporting CYP to be accessed. The IASSN CYP Network meetings have also been useful for sharing ideas on how to engage CYP.

The approach being taken to sustain the improvements achieved

All the support that the CYP have accessed has been recorded and used to produce highly detailed monthly management reports. This information will be used, along with feedback from CYP and professionals, to show how the post is vital to supporting CYP. A meeting between Bromley SENDIASS and the LA commissioners is scheduled for January 2020 to discuss funding for the CYP worker post from April 2020. Continued match-funding from the IAS Programme would be invaluable in supporting the sustainability of the improvements achieved so far and in building capacity for the future.

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