



## Derby City: IAS service and next steps

Derby is a city and unitary authority area situated in the south of the county of Derbyshire. At the 2011 census, the population was 248,700 with a current school population of approximately 44,000.

Derby has 1683 (2017/18) CYP with EHCP's. It has become a culturally diverse city and hosts 97 schools 6 of which are special schools. There were 315 requests for EHC needs assessments in 2017/18, an increase of 15.2 % on the previous academic year. SENDIASS in Derby City provides free impartial, confidential and accurate information, advice and support about education, health and social care for CYP up to 25, and their parents on matters relating to SEND to empower them to share their opinions and wishes and be able to make more informed choices for their future. The service is keen for everyone who needs to access their service to be able to do so and aims to remove all barriers currently preventing this from being the case.

### The challenge

Derby SENDIASS has always struggled to sustain a high enough level of capacity to deal with demand for the service. Prior to the additional funding the staffing ratio was 2.3 FTE, which was insufficient not only to meet the rising demand for support but also to meet many areas of the CoP including community based/ outreach work or providing training. The service was operating on a reactive basis whilst trying to manage high caseloads, many which were complex or involved intensive tribunal work. However, the aim is to work more proactively thus ensuring an offer of vital and key sources of information, advice and support are available in the early stages in decision making for families. Also to deliver information and support sessions/drop-in clinics to parents and professionals in order to empower parents and promote independence and self-advocacy at regular intervals to ensure the service is working as effectively and efficiently as possible. Recent changes to local area SEND provision and consultation on proposed SEND High Needs Funding changes has prompted unease in families which is likely to result in an increased demand for support from SENDIASS, particularly to support with EHC needs assessment requests and appeals to the SEND tribunals. In addition to these pressures due to the lack of capacity to meet demand for support requested by parents in Derby, a high profile local support group has been formed who are frequently challenging the LA processes in a more adversarial way.

There has been insufficient capacity within the service to offer training or outreach work to the local communities but there is strong desire to change this and become more compliant with the SEND CoP and IAS Minimum Standards.

### Initial impact of IAS programme funding

The additional funding has directly provided more capacity by increasing staff levels from 2.3 FTE to 4 FTE, which meant the coordinator had the time to reflect on current practice, review service development opportunities and with the support of stakeholders scrutinise the joint commissioning arrangements to explore more creative ways of utilising capacity and resources.

Due to the additional capacity, initial response times have been reduced from five days to within three days, allowing for a more proactive approach to be adopted and better outcomes achieved for all involved.

Work has also begun on building links with other colleagues working out in the community to assess priorities in relation to information and support needed. Regular information sessions are now being delivered with the support of interpreters to ensure the wider community has access to SENDIASS. YP have also been a priority area for development.

## Impact to service beneficiaries

The additional capacity has allowed for work to be undertaken with a small focus group of YP to ensure a useful and relevant service for them is being provided. These YP will be active members of the steering group too providing an invaluable voice of the YP of Derby. The service has found it really refreshing and empowering taking part in innovative projects with the Parent Carer Forum, who are a very proactive group offering a wide range of opportunities to Derby city parents. They have a wealth of knowledge regarding the type of support needed, by who and where. The service is pleased to be able to have the means to support such important causes.

SENDIASS has been able to become more strategically active by attending a range of strategic meeting's across the LA including the SEND Strategy Board and the Parents SEND meeting, both of which directly influence policy and practice in Derby City. The two year planning process helped by providing a focus on identifying service priorities, alongside assessing what resources would be required to deliver them in order to achieve the service aims and goals. Having some additional time made it possible to think outside the box, which supported a more creative approach regarding service delivery. This involved research into existing projects and looking at how the service could help enhance or develop them further, in order to reach a more diverse range of residents in Derby. This process also assisted the service in recognising its own achievements meaning it could build on the things it is good at and do more of this practice. Through conversations with a range of professionals including those involved with the joint commissioning arrangements, the service has been able to help others gain a better understanding of the role of the IASS including how by adopting a more joined up working approach can be of benefit to all by relieving work and stress for all involved. As a result of this, SENDIASS has managed to secure a separate office although still within the LA and it is now truly optimistic about the prospect of building on this new practice and having a sustainable broader scope of service delivery.

## Lessons learnt

Many families like a one-stop-shop approach, where they can get all the support they need from services all at the same time. In recognition of this, SENDIASS has joined up with other available organisations to share and utilise resources and provide different opportunities for children, their families and YP. It's been really useful to plan actual activities of work over the two year period instead of only being able to look at a six to twelve month timescale. This along with having the support and guidance of key stakeholders has been invaluable including an increase in confidence and belief within the service.

## How is the approach being sustained?

The Steering Group has been relaunched with broader representation to ensure it is able to meet the quorate. The Steering Group coupled with the support from the local parent forum will provide the necessary communication channels to ensure the LA remains fully informed about the impact the service can have in supporting and delivering their obligations and wider aims. By maintaining the level of recognition from the LA and the continued work of establishing joint commissioning arrangements, it is expected to agree and implement a service level agreement that will ensure service capacity to meet

service user demand, support the strategic proposals and on-going service development and improvements.

**Contact details:**

Michelle Lowe

SENDIASS Coordinator

Michelle.lowe@derby.gov.uk

[www.derbysendiass.org.uk](http://www.derbysendiass.org.uk)