

## Durham: Developing a new Youth Offer to improve its engagement and IAS service offer to young people

County Durham encompasses 13 towns and dozens of villages, both urban and rural and of course includes the beautiful and historic City of Durham. The IAS service reaches out to deliver a statutory service from a single office base but also reaches out to families by offering home visits, attendance at school meetings and supporting parents at tribunals when the need arise.

The main goal of Durham IAS service is to provide timely, clear and accurate advice and support to those who require it. To achieve that the service team work very closely with Durham's Parent Carer Forum and several other well connected parents groups across the county, who have helped to ensure the IAS service is well known to the local community and they know themselves how to access support at the earliest stage of need.

### The challenge

Since the Children and Families Act (2014) was introduced and at a time when educational settings have seen a year on year decline in their overall funding allocation, the Durham IAS service has experienced a year on year increase in parents, carers and young people seeking support from the IAS service team. The increase includes an overall rise in case work relating to children and young people with complex neurologically based difficulties and mental health issues. As a result of the increase pressures placed on the IAS service, time to enable strategic service planning and opportunities for service improvements have been limited or not taken forward.

### Initial impact of IAS programme funding

During 2018/19, the funding provided by the IAS Programme has enabled the IAS service manager to focus time and attention on establishing a new Youth Offer to support the needs of young people across Durham.

This offer includes a designated Young People's Officer, who has gone on to quickly established several young people's focus groups across the County and look strategically at how the IAS service can best support local young people and provide the opportunities for them to be involved in co-production.

The initial consultation with the young people's focus groups resulted in a 'Future's Event' being designed by and for young people. The event brought all the local services involved with young people with SEND together, to promote their offer to young people and encourage co-production.

Whilst the IAS service manager recognises there is still is a long way to go to properly establish and embed the Youth Offer within the IAS service, the focus groups and events staged so far with young people have certainly begun to have a positive impact in terms of engagement with young people across the authority.

### Impact to service beneficiaries

During 2018/19, the consultation and engagement with the local authority, parent groups and other key partners has begun to have a significant impact on the way they view their own strategic work with children and young people. For example, the Parent Carer Forum now includes elements of work with a focus on how it can support young people's engagement.

Targeted work through the new Youth Offer in the IAS service has led to school Area Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCO's) and local colleges becoming more aware of their requirements to seek and act upon the views and wishes of young people with SEND in order to meet their needs.

## Lessons learnt

SENDIASS Durham IAS service has already seen the benefits of consultation activities, strategic planning and how best to use the minimum standards as a management tool to check for compliance and identify where service improvements are required.

The IAS service manager has also seen the benefits of working smarter, to meet the increasing needs of service users. For example, the benefits of working more closely with ever increasing online parent support groups as well as the established and respected Parent Carer Forum. Smarter working has helped to promote the IAS service across the community and ensured that SEND related information is able to reach as many parents, carers and young people as possible.

Alongside developing a training offer to help schools and settings have a better understanding of the rights of children, parents and young people, the IAS service manager has learnt that technology can play an effective role within the broader IAS service and with its service users. The IAS service manager will be looking into developing this work further.

## How is the approach being sustained?

Historically ASD and SPD as well as children and young people's mental health are the focus of a majority of referrals received by the Durham IAS service. Therefore to support sustainability and ensure the IAS service meets its statutory requirement to be jointly commissioned by education, health and social care in accordance with the CFA 2014, the IAS service manager will be working strategically with the local authority and its key partners to ensure a jointly funded IAS service becomes a reality for the community it serves.

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