



Parent Advisory Team Thurrock SENDIASS Sustainability Plan

Background:

The Information Advice and Support Programme is a national government initiative which commenced in June 2018 and is due to end in March 2021. The programme seeks to ensure that in every local authority area, children, young people with SEND, and their parents have access to impartial and free information, advice, and support. This should support SEND issues through local statutory SEND Information, Advice and Support Services and the offer of a national helpline and online advice which is provided by Contact.

PATT SENDIASS have been successful in receiving grant funding through the programme to develop the service offer to ensure it meets the needs of the families in the local area and is compliant with the National Minimum Standards for SEND Information, Advice and Support Services and Chapter 2 of the SEND Code of Practice.

Funding applications were made and awarded on a payment by results basis. The SENDIASS Manager was required to provide progress reports and evidence of meeting targets at specified intervals before funding was released by the IASP.

During this year's programme, we have received to date: £16,795.29. We anticipate receiving the balance of £11,087.06 after the final report is submitted in March. This is due to 5% of the last payment being withheld due to being unable to meet all outcomes within the anticipated timescales due to Covid 19.

What has the funding been used for:

PATT SENDIASS is a local authority commissioned service. The contract is held by Thurrock Lifestyle Solutions which is a small local community interest company. The current contract with Thurrock Borough Council has a total value of £xxxx which includes a £xxxx contribution from Health. The IASP funding has been vital to the development of the PATT service and our compliance with the IAS Minimum Standards.

Over the life of the Programme, it has enabled us to:

1. Rebrand the service through consultation with service users, creating new leaflets and promotional items, resulting in raised awareness of the service through information packs being hand delivered to every school, library, and children's centre in the borough.
2. Establish an independent office base in an easily accessible high street location, enabling us to offer a wider range of appointment days and times and having facilities to offer small group training and workshops. This is in addition to the surgery venues offered across the borough across the week (all pre-Covid but will be able to re-establish these events when it is safe to do so). We are currently offering the same level of appointments through the week on a booked call-back service.
3. Recruitment and training of two fixed term part time (20hrs pw) IASS Officers.
4. Establish a strong working partnership with Southend SENDIASS which has enabled us to share resources and work together to offer free training and events for parent/carers, professionals and children and young people.

5. To improve and maintain our service website.

Ongoing Successes:

1. In October 2019, we successfully recruited and trained two part time (20 hpw) IASS Officers. We were incredibly fortunate to be able to employ such a highly skilled team. One member of the team is a qualified SENCO and early years specialist with 17 years' experience. The other, a qualified adult education teacher with experience of SENDIASS work in another authority. This has enabled the Manager to focus on local strategy work and the higher level tribunal and exclusion support. They have been able to pick up all the level 1 & 2 work and (prior to Covid), focus on raising our profile at school coffee mornings and local support group sessions. They will also progress our work through consultation to develop relationships with providers and colleagues across the system to improve our service offer to CYP.
2. Due to the additional staff, the manager has been able to play a major role in the development of the new Person Centred EHCP process, the development of new documentation and the on-going quality assurance of the EHCP process. They have delivered training to LA Senior Leaders and Case Officers on the EHCP process, writing outcomes and Person Centred Planning.
3. Whilst developing the social media profile of the service to share information with families, we have also set up an information portal (via social media) for Thurrock SENCOs. We felt that families would not feel comfortable knowing that the Facebook group was open to school staff but were aware that when lockdown happened that SENCOs were unable to meet and share good practice and offer support to one another. We were also aware that due to the huge workloads on SENCOs shoulders, that they were not accessing newsletter emails as they simply had no time within their working day. With the closed group, they can access information and catch up at their own pace.
4. Our website has been developed to enable families to book appointments at the weekly surgeries we hold at various venues across the borough (Pre-Covid) which are now being undertaken as booked call back appointments. We offer direct access to SENDIASS support with 97% of contact made within 3 days.
5. Partnership work with Southend SENDIASS, including the free training and information programme launched in Jan 2019 has now seen more than 2600 parent carers, professionals and young people across Southend and Thurrock attend. Feedback is positive and we have established a good reputation for providing access to free high-quality training. Therefore, removing cost as a barrier. During school closures we are offering access to these sessions via recordings for limited time following each event to support those whose attendance is now restricted due to family or work commitments.
6. We have achieved partial joint commissioning as we now receive funding from the CCG.

Ongoing Challenges:

1. Limitations in accessing families directly via weekly surgeries and drop ins across the borough continues to be an issue due to Covid-19. We are hoping to re-establish a face-to-face service as soon as possible in line with PHE advice.
2. We have recently had a change of Service Commissioner. In the last 5 years our Commissioner has been highly supportive. As a result of his first regional meeting, he negotiated and secured the CCG funding within the space of a few months. We must now start to build a relationship with a new Commissioner who is unfamiliar with the service and is new to SEND, so this is a major concern that we have lost a strong and engaged champion.
3. To increase CCG funding contribution to improve the service offer and enable the service to secure high quality external training and CPD for all staff and steering group.
4. To secure full joint commissioning in line with section 26 of C&FA 2014 – to secure commitment from Social Care (children's and adults).
5. Funding and staffing required to further develop and continue to deliver the free training offer for children, young people, parent/carers and professionals across the SEND system in line with Minimum Standard 3.6.

Risks:

1. Service may not be compliant in meeting our statutory duties and IASSN Minimum Standards without find resolution for the above challenges.
2. Unless we are able to secure funding in addition to the LA Core funding, we will be unable to maintain the current staffing level.
3. By losing one 20 hpw IASS Case Officer, we will be unable to offer the (Pre Covid) level of face-to-face support which we envisage re-instating post Covid. We will be confined to offering support mainly at our premises in Grays as we will not have the staffing levels to be able to be in more than one venue at a time. This will result in a poorer service offer to families who do not have access to transport.
4. We will be unable to undertake much of the strategy and development work currently undertaken by the Manager as they will be required to take on a significant amount of casework in order to maintain current service level. Rather than having the wide-ranging involvement from Early Years right through to Preparing for Adulthood, we will have to limit or withdraw from these areas of work.
5. The current IASP funding enables us to pay for a member of staff one day a week to maintain our website. Without this support we will be unable to keep the website updated and have significantly less time to maintain our social media presence. We will also be unable to fund the enhanced Zoom package that we currently use to facilitate training, online health drop-ins and the Preparing for Adulthood Strategy Parent feedback and training sessions we have recently developed as part of the adjusted IASP Task Order aims.
6. Over the past 5 years PATT SENDIASS has gained the trust and respect of families, schools, and professionals in Thurrock. This was a hard-earned achievement. The previous local authority in-house service had been without a service manager for an extended period and the service had been facilitated by one agency admin officer and a caseworker from another authority 2 days a week. Parent Partnership in Thurrock had lost the reputation that it had previously had in its early days and as a commissioned service it took a lot of hard work and commitment to build that reputation

back up. The reputation of the PATT SENDIAS Service has been enhanced by the “new” caseworkers that joined the service in October 2019. As a service deeply rooted in our SEND community, it is a fear that, by losing a member of staff, we risk being unable to offer the level of support and quality of service that we currently offer, and letting down both parents and professionals at a time when they need us most.

7. Much of the work currently developed from the 2020-2021 IAS Programme we will be unable to be develop beyond what is achieved by March 2021. Whilst the strategies have been agreed and the training programmes developed, we will have limited capacity to deliver them on a regular basis.

Action Plan

Area of focus	Target date for completion	Comments/Barriers
To secure agreement to increase joint commissioning funding from CCG. Proposal of increase from £xxxx to £xxxx	April 2021	This additional funding would be used to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fund 1x20hpw Case Officer This may be a difficult pitch as we will need to secure this funding via our new service Commissioner whom we have yet to meet to establish a working relationship with
To discuss the possibility of securing full joint commissioning from Social Care (Children & Adult services)	April 2021	This would ensure that the service is able to continue to provide training for families and professionals, undertake quality CPD and to continue to take part in local authority strategy and quality assurance projects.
To upskill remaining staff to undertake some of the website maintenance	June 2021	Whilst upskilling current staff to maintain website and possibly social media presence, capacity and time will remain a significant factor in the success of this action