

Derby IASS : Delivering support during a pandemic

The context that your service is working in

Derby's SENDIASS is an in-house LA statutory IAS service in Derby City. Prior to the introduction of the NCB funding Derby City SENDIASS were at risk of being unable to meet all the IASS Minimum Standards and the duties detailed in section 2 the 2015 SEND Code of Practice. This had put extreme pressure on the service, with insufficient capacity for the service to undertake proactive work and instead having to deal with high level of requests for support being received, many of which were conflict situations and leading to tribunals being lodged as a direct result of the under staffing, performance and processes of the LA's 0-25 SEND Team.

The issue that was identified to be tackled using IASP funding

Derby has had a significant number of appeals since 2016, with 62 being lodged in the academic year 2019/2020, the majority of these cases were supported by SENDIASS. The service was spending a disproportionate amount of time providing support in preparing cases which almost always resulted in the LA agreeing to what the parent was requesting within a few weeks of the hearing date. SENDIASS, alongside other professionals, felt this was causing unnecessary angst for families as well as being a waste of valuable time and resources. SENDIASS approached the LA to ask for a process to be established similar to that of a formal mediation, where a co-production meeting could be held to discuss an unfavourable decision to see if an acceptable solution could be found without the need for a formal appeal, particularly in regard to refusal to assess cases.

How the funding was used

The NCB additional funding enabled SENDIASS to increase the capacity within the team from 2.3 core FTE to 4 FTE initially and then to 3.4 FTE, its current level. This increase in staffing has enabled the service to focus on the gaps in service delivery that had been previously identified in the original funding bids and explore ways to bridge these while improving and enhancing delivery of the IASS Minimum Standards. Due to the pandemic and the requirement for virtual meetings rather than face to face, time was saved on travel to and from meetings resulting in more availability to target the pre-mediation work.

The difference made (i.e. the impact of your work and how your service/service users have benefitted)

As a result of conversations with the LA, jointly agreed 'pre-mediation' processes have been put in place. SENDIASS have worked with 24 families and supported them through this pre-mediation process and this direct work has averted 18 of a possible 24 appeals. This work has been praised and well received by all involved and this way of working will continue in the future as it has such a significant impact.

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