



Hounslow: Improving services to ensure a lasting legacy for IAS Service

The London Borough of Hounslow is situated to the west of the city, covering just over twenty square miles. It has a diverse population, both in terms of wealth and ethnicity. Within the borough, there are approximately 80,000 potential service users for IASS. Hounslow LA maintains approximately 2,200 education health and care plans (EHCP).

The IAS Service within Hounslow has traditionally been a single person service, which has relied on additional external funding through programmes such as Independent Support to help increase service capacity. IAS Service staff work directly with children, young people and their parents and carers to support them with education, health or social care related issues.

The challenge

As a single person service, it has not always been possible to have a full service offer to support the community. While all service users approaching the service have been given high quality advice, other areas such as building community relationships or offering training/workshops have had to be withdrawn. Alongside this, an area of difficulty has been managing the telephone service, as attendance at face to face meetings was time consuming. This has meant that Hounslow IAS Service has not have been able to meet all the quality standards, or the new minimum standards.

Having been awarded the first year of Information Advice and Support (IAS) programme funding, the IAS Service has been able to increase the capacity by employing two part-time staff. Within a very short time, the new team members have made sure the telephone line is managed effectively and have been able to offer advice on cases with low level difficulty. Data gathered for 2018/2019 show an increase from just over 600 cases managed in 2017/18 to just under 800 cases managed in 2018/19. The new staff have also freed up a significant amount of management time to allow for operational plans to be developed.

Initial impact of IAS programme funding

The IAS programme funding has made an enormous difference to the IAS Service in such a short time. Prior to funding, Hounslow IASS was a reactive service as there was little time to reflect on what was going well or less well, whether residents were aware of the service and whether the service was meeting local needs. Since the additional funding and the recruitment of two new team members management time has been spent considering how we can build local connections, through other in-house services and with external partners such as local charities, the Parent Carer Forum, local support groups, etc. IASS now has a clear strategy for the next two years that will improve our service offer and leave a lasting legacy for service users.

Within the senior management of Hounslow, the profile of the IAS Service has already been raised. The SEND Board invited the IAS Service to present to its members our self-evaluation and operational development plan and our aim of bidding for further funding.

Impact to service beneficiaries

The addition of the two part-time staff has already led to improvements with the telephone service. Service users are now having their calls returned within one working day, phone lines are monitored during key times and advice given in a timelier manner. Both staff are working towards IPSEA Legal Level 1 and are keen to take further levels to ensure that all staff can advise on all areas of the IASS workload.

Due to increased capacity, management time has been dedicated to building networks across health and social care. A number of team meetings have been attended to raise the profile of the service, which has had an impact on the number of professionals seeking our advice earlier in their processes. This is an exciting prospect, as the more professionals see the service as an approachable service and useful to them, the better the young person's outcome can become in the long term.

Lessons learnt

Undertaking the self-evaluation review highlighted several areas of strength but also a number of weaknesses within Hounslow IAS Service. The most challenging of the weaknesses is joint commissioning and increasing our core funding to be able to deliver a fully compliant service. Developing an operational plan has allowed the IAS Service to really focus on areas that will lead to significant improvements in data collection and ultimately help to deliver a better service to our clients. Time spent during this year has enabled new relationships to be developed with Health Commissioners and senior leadership within Hounslow. Time has been spent developing a new data collection method for the coming year, that should allow senior management to see how IAS Service involvement can help at an early stage, which may help to reduce crises' within Hounslow families that then require high level support.

How is the approach being sustained?

The self-evaluation and development planning have already had a significant impact on raising awareness of the IAS Service within the senior management of Hounslow SEND. By building new relationships across wider services the IAS Service Coordinator envisage that the service functions are now more widely understood and in turn our core funding may be increased.

The IAS Service also have an opportunity to develop strong governance arrangements that include key stakeholders, that can continue to drive service improvements to meet local need.

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<https://fsd.hounslow.gov.uk/kb5/hounslow/fsd/advice.page?id=MS95wl7aoLU>