

## Liverpool & Knowsley IASS: our service story so far...

### The context

Having developed the service operational plan and moved into the process of implementing the agreed goals and outcomes, writing this case study provides a useful opportunity for reflection on the process so far. The main overall challenge for Liverpool & Knowsley SENDIASS is capacity-related. Both LAs experienced significant austerity related changes and this led to a gradual reduction in service capacity. IASP funding and the associated minimum standards brought with it a need to prioritise service-development and planning for the future; including looking at both practical and innovative ways of increasing capacity where it is most beneficial.

Whilst considering sustainability and planning for the future, WIRED made a commitment to increase management resource to allow for a single service manager for Liverpool and Knowsley SENDIASS. As WIRED are committed to the long-term SENDIASS agenda, the extra resource was to help with sustained growth, enhanced strategic direction for the service and information flow. Discussions are underway with Liverpool & Knowsley LAs as to how this will be sustained when the service is re-commissioned.

### How IASP funding has improved the IASS offer to its service users

A tiered response system that commences with telephone and email support is a more sustainable model for the future given the current financial landscape. This system was designed to enable more face-to-face support to be available (from caseworkers and support officers) for those most in need, and to equip service-users with the knowledge and skills to take the lead on resolving issues themselves wherever possible, following helpline information and advice.

IASP funding has been utilised to create an Administrator & Information Officer role in order to support the management of helpline calls. This role was created to directly address the issue of a high number of calls going to answerphone, which families had said was a source of frustration for them. The role creates joined-up working across the two areas, as it is a Liverpool & Knowsley combined post. The Liverpool and Knowsley funding was pooled in order to create this role to improve service response times.

The direct engagement of children and young people (CYP) and development of this work had been a challenge for the service due to the need to prioritise existing demand from parents and carers. IASP funding enabled the service to recruit a specific CYP worker, and in order to maximise resources, a combined role was created across Wirral, Liverpool and Knowsley. This is working well as some of the development work is transferable across areas which allows for higher productivity and avoids duplication of tasks. The service is now engaging directly with CYP and in Liverpool and Knowsley has begun delivering training for the CYP workforce to ensure they are informed about graduated support and the legal duties upon schools, colleges and other post-16 providers.

The recruitment of SENDIASS Support Officers has improved the consistency of attendance at coffee mornings and evenings held by the parent carer forum in Knowsley. Drop-ins are scheduled for the coming months with Liverpool's parent carer forum. Strategic participation has increased in both areas and SENDIASS is part of the neuro-developmental strategy in Knowsley and the co-production strategy in Liverpool. It is also part of Knowsley Joint Operational Managers group and SEND board. In Liverpool it is contributing to work on the written statement of action following inspection and is a member of the SEN support group in which the focus is improving inclusive practice across the area.

## Ways in which improvements have positively enhanced the service user experience

Service users are now more likely to have their call answered on the helpline straight away and there is increased availability for meeting support. The service has always provided home visits but with the additional capacity it has been able to increase multi-agency meeting attendance. CYP now have a direct referral route and somebody who can work with them 1:1. A YP was recently supported to win a transport appeal and another YP is now in the process of considering alternative post-16 provision and a social care assessment is underway. Feedback from YP who the service has worked with so far is that they feel listened to and have been better able to understand information given.

The wider impact of the funding will also be felt by families not necessarily directly accessing the service, as training is now being delivered to organisations supporting parents and CYP. The intention is that as understanding of the SEND system increases, practitioners will know what should be provided for CYP with SEND and know what to do if this isn't happening. It is hoped that this cascading of information will help to set a shared vision of what good looks like across SEND support and the EHCP process, in-line with the SEND Code of Practice (2015) and will contribute to managing SENDIASS demand.

## Lessons the service has learnt making service improvements

The key setback since IASP funding began was around recruitment. It took three rounds of recruitment to find the right candidates for some of the posts, which delayed progress towards agreed outcomes. This was an unusual experience as in the past, when recruiting for Independent Supporters, the recruitment channels had proven to be successful in the first round. The issue this time was that although there was a high volume of applicants, only a small number had the skill set required for the roles. The approach was changed after the first round to add additional recruitment channels in. For future recruitment, all channels available will be used from the outset to reduce the likelihood of a similar setback.

## The approach being taken to sustain the improvements achieved

The strategic planning requirement under the IAS programme has helped to raise awareness of the IAS Service within each LA with strategic leads and commissioners. Each LA has demonstrated an appetite to raise the profile and contribution of the service and meetings have been held with Liverpool and Knowsley LAs and CCG to discuss joint funding. SENDIASS funding is an agenda item on Liverpool's Joint Commissioning Groups meeting in Nov 2019. A request has also been submitted for increased capacity which involved a proposal for a sustainable service model of delivery to Liverpool LA. This is currently being looked at as part of a zero-base budget exercise. The intention is to feed back on the outcome of this in November's monitoring report. Discussions with Knowsley LA are also underway regarding sustainability when IASP funding ends. Currently data is being collected to support a proposal for IASP roles to become core funded. Relationships are good between SENDIASS and Liverpool and Knowsley LA's, and there has been an increase in information flow and service involvement in the last quarter. Work continues in building and developing these relationships and to keep communication channels open for discussions around sustainability.

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