



North Tyneside: An Approach to strengthen strategic planning of the IAS Service

The Metropolitan Borough of North Tyneside embraces a unique combination of contrasting urban, rural, coastal and riverside environments. It is bounded by the North Sea to the East and the River Tyne to the South; whilst Newcastle City is to the West and Northumberland to the North. The population of North Tyneside is approx. 200,000. In 2018 there were 4,319 children and young people with SEND in the borough. 1,060 of these had an EHCP and 3,259 received SEN Support.

The North Tyneside SENDIASS is staffed by 2 full-time officers.

The service aims to provide a high quality, impartial service to meet the needs of children and families in North Tyneside. Central to the work of the team is the recognition of the importance of the active participation of parents and CYP in decisions around SEN provision.

The challenge

The latest comparative data continues to indicate that there is a significantly higher percentage of pupils with an EHCP in North Tyneside and the number of EHCPs maintained by North Tyneside continues to increase. Part of this increase can be attributed to the introduction of EHCPs up to the age of 25 over the past 2 years. Over the past four years there has been an increase in the 16-19 cohort of 100. In comparison, the percentage of pupils in North Tyneside at SEN support continues to be significantly lower than the national average.

The increased demand for statutory assessment has placed additional pressures on the SENDIASS team as we have continued to see a steady increase in the numbers of families and YP needing direct IAS work. We have also seen an increase in the number of SEND Tribunals. The challenge has been to manage this additional demand whilst maintaining the quality of support and ensuring that all agreed actions are realistic but aim high and are driven by individualised, person centred outcomes.

During the course of the year careful management was required to ensure the smooth transition of a long-standing member of the team leaving SENDIASS and a new team member being appointed.

Initial impact of IAS programme funding

As the IAS service manager, the additional funding has been instrumental in ensuring sufficient time and resources were dedicated to the longer term strategic planning needed to sustain the service. As a result this has allowed a more detailed self-assessment to be undertaken to review the strengths and areas of development against the new IAS Minimum Standards. Key priorities have been identified and these have been the focus of the operational plan. This approach provided a better evidence base and subsequently a clearer direction for IASS. It has allowed the service manager to exercise greater influence across the SEND partnership and provided increased confidence in the understanding of the quality of the IAS services.

Impact to service beneficiaries

The goal for the immediate term is to continue to provide a high quality IASS to the residents of the borough. To do so it is exploring ways in which to increase service reach in order to make SENDIASS more accessible to some of the under-represented groups within the borough such as post-16 learners and children and taking the opportunity to access groups and sessions to publicise the service further. Naturally this will impact on service capacity and the requirement to offer support to a greater number of service users. Going forward the focus will be upon increasing capacity and bringing successful challenge and influence on Education, Health and Social Care policy and practice.

As the service manager is a representative on the SEND Strategic Board and the CYP and Learners Board, it has been possible to raise the profile of SENDIASS through the North Tyneside SEND governance arrangements. The importance of IAS has been reflected in the new SEND Joint Commissioning Strategy that has been prepared with the CCG. This has allowed the IASS to work collaboratively with the CCG and wider partners for example on raising awareness of the "single route of re-dress pilot".

SENDIASS has also been able to influence the preparations for the forthcoming Ofsted Local Area SEND Inspection and this has raised its profile amongst senior leaders from across the partnership.

The service has offered training to schools, professionals, parents and any other relevant groups that have benefited from an increased knowledge of SEND law, guidance, local policy, issues and participation. A number of additional training sessions have taken place for SENCO's and other professionals such as Early Help and Public Health Teams (including Health Visitors and School Nurses). SENDIASS works closely and has a strong positive relationship with North Tyneside Parent Carer Forum, providing support in their infancy and continuing to support their work with parent carers. SENDIASS has also delivered workshops and training at North Tyneside Parent Carer Forum events on topics such as the Local Offer and Annual Reviews. Other sessions have included YP with moderate learning difficulties on knowing their legal rights.

Lessons learnt

The review has continued to highlight the nature of the increasing complexity of the cohort of cases being managed. SENDIASS often deal with extremely complex situations affecting CYP and their parents and carers and the need to employ extensive mediation skills with sensitivity and resilience is highly valued. Undertaking this work in the context of increasing demands for support has been a key driver for change in shaping the IASS operational plans.

The review has encouraged the IASS to think more about access to its services and what opportunities there might be to embrace digital technology. It has been identified that further work is needed to the IASS website and further opportunities are being explored to promote IASS through other media. It is keen to undertake research into programmes and systems which make the SENDIASS website more accessible to users. In particular, to do more to consult with YP to better understand their support needs and how best to engage with them. This is a key priority within the operational plan.

Collaborative working already happens across the North East region with the current focus being on some specific education and social care workstreams across the North of Tyne, including Newcastle and Northumberland. It is believed this will form the basis of further opportunities to learn from each other, share good practice and potentially collaborate on strengthening IASSs.

How is the approach being sustained?

Strategic planning will be sustained as an integral part of the local planning and budget cycle. Partners on the SEND Strategic Board understand SENDIASS at a senior level and there is commitment of senior leaders to ensure a robust, sustainable IASS continues into the future.

Similarly, the engagement of parents through the Parent Carer Forum will ensure that strategic plans for IASS will remain high on their agenda.

The service is looking forward to delivering on its operational plan during 19-20 and reviewing progress as part of the next cycle of strategic planning.

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