



Information
Advice
Support
Service

for SEND in Northamptonshire

INFORMATION, ADVICE & SUPPORT SERVICE FOR SEND IN NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

Sustainability plan 2021

IASP

Background

The IAS Service in Northamptonshire is currently well established and generally well-resourced and supported. It is commissioned by the Local Authority.

The service has been moved several times to try and improve the autonomy and currently sits with School Effectiveness and Governance having moved from Safeguarding and Quality Assurance last year.

Northamptonshire local government is undergoing major changes and this has, and will affect how the service operates. The County Council will cease to be from 1st April 2021. It, and the 7 district and borough councils will join to form two unitary authorities, Northamptonshire West and Northamptonshire North.

The IAS Service for SEND in Northamptonshire has just been notified that it will be held in the first instance in Northamptonshire North, but will continue to work across both authorities. The team will be placed in a new team, the Intelligent Client Function. In effect this will mean that in the short term the service will continue to operate across Northamptonshire as it does now.

The Service operates a full flexible service, including, telephone, email and web form contact for children, young people and their parents. The service is staffed during normal office hours Monday to Friday, a 24hour answer and call back service is also in place. The Service also offers face to face support at meetings and tribunals.

The Service has a published arms-length agreement on its website to which CYP and their parents are signposted to. The Service has its' own branded marketing materials. The IASS service has its' own budget that is managed by the IASS Service Manager who has no other LA responsibilities or duties.

The service is part of the regional IASS network (EMRIASS) and engages with training and meetings held by the group.

This plan is written to provide a plan for sustainability within the short and medium term situation, but will be regularly reviewed as and when changes occur.

Commissioning & Governance

The Service has an Advisory Group consisting of staff from members across the LA and Local SEND agencies and providers, incl. Healthwatch, CCG, Schools, Educational Psychology Service, Disabled Children's Team, Local Offer, Youth Groups, Northants Parent Forum Group and SEND Services.

Although not currently commissioned by health and social care, the service is part of a multi-agency group responsible for SEND within the Local Area and so has direct contact with health and social care. Members of health and social care also sit on the IASS Advisory group.

Joint commissioning arrangements for the Service continue to be a priority and further talks to discuss this are in place with both CCG and Social Care. Please note, that children's social care in Northampton is now an outsourced Trust.

Joint commissioning arrangements has become a key focus of the IAS Programme commissioned by CDC.

In 2019/20, the IASS for SEND in Northamptonshire at the request of the CCG embarked on a 10 conversational meetings with teams from a variety of health services, including OTs, Community Paediatricians, ASD Practitioners, School Nursing. The purpose of the meetings was to raise awareness and profile of the IAS Service but all to gather information about the teams and how they operate.

Data is collected about referrals to the IAS Service and this was reviewed before and after the visits. The Data showed that referrals from health practitioners increased after the meetings and that they were generally more focussed.

IASP Funding

The monies provided as part of the IASP funding has been used to support the design and delivery of a strategic change plan for the Service. The main focus of the development work has been to prepare for the Local Government changes in Northamptonshire.

Work has included future proofing staff and preparing staff, parents and CYP for any changes in service.

This has included:

- **Leadership** – IAS Service Manager and Officers completed a coaching and mentoring programme to support Caseworkers. New officer recruited to develop the CYP offer.
- **Development / training** – Continued review and development of service training needs. A programme of CPD and training for all staff. All staff have completed Talking Mats training to support the communication with CYP. All staff are regularly consulted about training opportunities and are encouraged to attend both professional and personal development courses, to ensure they are future proof and prepared for the changes taking place in Northamptonshire.
- **Review(s)** – Working with other local strategy groups and the local PFG to identify the needs based on the two geographical locations and review IAS delivery in these areas making sure that resources are available to meet need during any changes. Respond to local COVID instructions and guidance.
- **QA framework(s)** – A Quality Assurance framework has been developed to monitor and audit the delivery of the IAS Service in Northamptonshire. This includes regular case file audits and staff observations.
- **Partnership engagement** – Continuation of working with the Local Area SEND partnership teams and the Children First Teams to ensure that information from CYP and their parents is feed into their strategic development and delivery of services in Northamptonshire. Continue to attend or national and regional meetings and training.
- **Governance** – Regular Advisory Group meetings to develop the Service, support the change programme and hold the Service Manager to account. Data and reports to multi-agency SEND boards and to the CCG to be used to feed into the overall SEND local area development plans and to be used for Joint Commissioning discussion.
- **Operational** – continue to provide a first-class service to CYP and their parents, empowering and supporting them to achieve the best possible outcomes for young people. Ensure the Service offer includes advice and support across education, health and social care. Ensuring relevant signposting is in place for parents. Increased the number of ways to engage with parents and CYP. Provide training for professionals on the graduated response for SEND. Additional focus on increasing the offer to CYP by appointing an officer with that remit.

What have we done with existing funding and what it has enabled us to do

Under IASP funding, we were able to focus resources on the following areas;

- Service contribution- appointment of an IASS Officer with the remit of increasing and supporting the offer to CYP. This has also allowed the remit of the other Officer to concentrate on the offer to parents and carers. The additional staffing has also meant that we could concentrate on activities for vulnerable groups, incl. YOS, Virtual schools and young people in Social Care
- Supporting strategic functions- as Northamptonshire is planning to undergo enormous change, the additional funding has been used to support the manager in planning for change for staff and service users. As it was unknown where the service would be sitting, the Manager developed a Plan A and a Plan B scenario. Plan B with amendments is the one currently being put into place.
The service has undertaken a major review of its database system to ensure we have accurate data reporting and monitoring. Monies was used to ensure all staff were trained and confident in using the system changes and updates.
Training for the Advisory group has also been arranged to ensure it is as robust as possible to support the service through the changes.
- Supporting core functions - a fully trained workforce gives us confidence in delivering our core function of supporting and empowering CYP and their parents. In addition, the training and confidence in staff has meant that the wider offer to CYP and families is integrated into our core practice. This includes developing drop-ins sessions in schools (for CYP and parents), topic specific information sessions. We are also developing and delivering professionals workshops and this building better relationships, but also ensuring that CYP and families are getting consistent messages and information.
- Professional development- we have undergone a major review of staff training and individual training plans have been created. The plans are reviewed at 1-1 supervisions and as part of the Performance appraisal. The plans have both professional and personal development included. All staff have completed Talking Mats training to improve communication with CYP and further whole team training is planned. Staff
- Supporting innovation- a strong focus of the work has been about the engagement and offer to CYP. A new officer has been appointed and all staff have completed Talking Mats Training. The new officer has put together a plan of work to engage CYP, this has included a Post 16 Transitions Guide and a Train the Teacher Programme. We continue to consult with young people and plan to develop creative responses to their feedback.

What's next?

As the changes in Northamptonshire are actually out of our control, the IAS Service Manager has in the past year planned to ensure that whatever the changes, the IASS for SEND in Northamptonshire, was in the best possible position to ensure it could meet the changes with little or no effect on its service users.

As we are now aware that our immediate future will see some change but the longer term future is still uncertain, planning for change will remain a continued priority for the Service in 2021/22. It is hoped that with better communication as to the changes, the service will be able to consult more widely with its key stakeholders to try and ensure that service changes are in line with what the stakeholders both want and need.

Along with the whole country, this year has seen the team adapting to home working. The Service responded quickly to the pandemic and ensuring that we were fully equipped for home working from day 1. All calls were diverted to our generic email account that all staff members have access to, so calls were picked up from day 1. The team have quickly learnt how to use virtual platforms to allow them to meet with families and attend meetings virtually.

2021/22 will see the Service continue to deliver an excellent service. Priorities for the year will be to continue to be about managing change and sustaining a service to the CYP and families of Northamptonshire. In addition, priority will continue to be about supporting those groups who may be harder to reach such as YOS and young people in Social Care, developing the CYP offer and continue to develop partnerships with SEND services across the locality.

Staff well-being will also continue to be a priority. Change can be difficult to undertake and it is essential that the greatest resource we have – our staff – are equipped to manage it.

Area of development	Work we undertook with IASP funding	How we will sustain this/ what we need to do
Service contribution	Recruitment of an IASS Officer with remit of developing the CYP Offer	The post has been incorporated into our current staffing structure.
Supporting strategic functions	<p>Virtual roadshows to inform stakeholders of the changes for local SEND Services. Marketing materials to inform of changes</p> <p>Review and update of the database, plus training to adapt future changes.</p> <p>Joint Commissioning conversations are still underway.</p>	<p>Additional Funding sought from the unitary authorities to fund future change information sessions and marketing materials.</p> <p>EMRIASS all have the same database system, and share information re: updates etc. Additional support training funded through the EMRIASS.</p> <p>Continue to share data with Health and Social Care as part of the Commissioning conversation. Attend team meetings to other services to</p>

		highlight what we do and continue to build relationships.
Supporting core functions	<p>Review and development of training plans for all staff.</p> <p>Development of IASS offer to CYP – visits to youth groups, train the teacher session set up.</p> <p>Development of IASS offer to parents / carers – parent information sessions</p> <p>Development of IASS offer to professionals – health staff information sessions, social care information sessions</p> <p>Ensuring that we meet all of our Minimum Standards, can fulfil out contractual obligations to both the LA and IASNN.</p>	<p>Keep this under review</p> <p>Development frameworks now in place for offers to be continued and widened. Keep reviewing and look for sources of funding when necessary.</p> <p>Work with PFG and Local Offer to look at joint working to develop and deliver parent sessions.</p> <p>Develop the professionals offer for it to become income generating.</p> <p>Continually review contractual arrangements delivery plan to meet them, ensuring MS met.</p>
Professional development	<p>Review and development of training plans for all staff.</p> <p>Coaching and Mentoring training for Manager and Officers to support caseworkers.</p> <p>Team Training in Talking Mats to ensure we can communicate effectively with CYP.</p> <p>Solution Focussed Training arranged for whole team with Suffolk IASS</p>	<p>Free training from the Unitary authorities will be monitored and offered to the team.</p> <p>Look at apprenticeships as a way of improving the training offer.</p> <p>Promote shadowing of other teams.</p> <p>EMRIASS staff training programme already planned for June 2021.</p> <p>Some training could be paid for from monies saved from the 2020/21 travel budget.</p>

Supporting innovation	<p>Visiting CYP in their settings to gather their thoughts and feelings about how we can support them</p> <p>Post 16 Transition Guidance – document</p> <p>Train the Teacher module set up</p> <p>YouTube videos by young people for young people giving them information about Preparing for Adulthood.</p>	<p>This work will continue as the remit for the IASS Officer. The Train the Teacher module is set up and a pilot school identified. Once completed this could be an income generation model for the Service.</p> <p>The Post 16 – Transitions Guide has been developed and will just need to be reviewed to ensure it is accurate and up to date.</p> <p>Look at local funding to produce further information videos. Talk to YP groups to develop partnership projects to create more content.</p>
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Conclusion:

It has been a difficult year for the staff in Northamptonshire. Alongside the changes we all have experienced due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the service has faced uncertainty about its future with the local government changes that come into force on 1st April 2021.

In June 2020 the Service was moved from the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Team into School Effectiveness, this is after having only been with the SQAS team for 20months. The constant change and upheaval, of the changes, which included physical moves too, has been a constant source of pressure for the team who have worked hard to ensure that the Service delivery is of the high standard that families in Northamptonshire have come to expect.

I am pleased that the high quality of staff within Northamptonshire has meant that we have continued to deliver a great service that neither COVID or the uncertainty has been able to diminish.

We continue to provide a responsive service to CYP and their families who contact us and give impartial, individual advice and support as required. Alongside that we are building a service that works closely with other services and is an integral part to the development of SEND services in Northamptonshire.

The IASP funding has allowed us to explore and reach out to some groups that are harder to reach, namely YOS and YP in social care, we plan to continue to develop this work in 2021/22.

COVID has forced us to review our working practices and as a result smarter working that also is cost effective is now in operation. It may now no longer be necessary to travel miles across the County to attend a school meeting, saving both time and money.

Within the next year we will be faced with similar challenges faced this year. We aim to continue doing the work we do, but hopefully we will have a better opportunity to consult with our stakeholders so that their opinions and voices can be forwarded to the decision makers.

The priority will be that as we enter 2022/23, whether we are one team or split into two, we will be equipped to ensure that families in Northamptonshire regardless of if they are in the North or the West will have access to a first class IAS Service.