



Northumberland Information, Advice and Support Service Sustainability Plan

Introduction

The vision for the Northumberland IASS (Information, Advice and Support Service) is to be a high quality and innovative service which, through its work with children, young people, parents and other partners, supports and empowers children and young people with SEND to achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes which prepare them effectively for adulthood.

Our mission is to ensure that children with SEND and their parents, and young people with SEND:

- are provided with high quality, free, impartial, confidential, and accessible information, advice and support for matters relating to the child/young person's SEN and/or disabilities, when they require it
- are supported with communicating their views, wishes and feelings and participating fully in decision making processes, as equal partners; and
- are given the support they need to promote independence and self-advocacy

IAS Programme funding over the past three years has enabled service improvement and the further development of our service offer. The funding has been used in a variety of ways, including:

- enhancing service staffing capacity
- promoting the service widely through a range of events and activities
- developing the support provided for children and young people, through the increased use of technology
- increasing confidence in the impartiality of the service, which has included the development of a stand-alone website

- producing a half-termly information bulletin, which provides information about local events, services and news in Northumberland and the North East for children and young people with SEND and their families

Current funding through the programme is enabling us to improve upon our local statutory service offer and work towards resolving areas of non-compliance with the IASS Minimum Standards. The aims and outcomes for the work funded through the programme were identified with a view to how they could be sustained into the future. This report sets out how the service will maintain and build upon the work completed during the IASP funding period.

Stakeholder priorities for the service

The key priorities identified by our service users and key stakeholders are:

- Raising awareness of the service and its remit with service users and key stakeholders, including through the increased use of social media
- Ensuring that the 'voice' of children and young people with SEND and their parents and carers is heard at both a strategic and operational level, to inform policy and practice in the local area

To address these priorities, targeted work supported by IASP funding has included:

- The co-production of a Communications and Marketing Strategy with service users and key stakeholders, to ensure that all partners are aware of the IASS and its remit, and who the service is for.
- Development of the use of social media for promoting the service and sharing information with service users and stakeholders.
- A focus on how the service works with the Northumberland Parent Carer Forum and other representative user groups to ensure the views and experiences of children, young people and parents inform policy and practice.

Collaborative work with local and regional partners to support sustainability

We work collaboratively with a range of local, regional, and national partners to ensure effective communication and partnership links are maintained. The service steering group is well established and includes representatives from service user groups and key stakeholders from education, social care, and health. The IASS Manager is a member of the Northumberland SEND Strategic Partnership Board and the Parent Carer Forum SEND Network group which meet monthly and attends the regional NE SENDIASS (North East SEND Information, Advice and Support Services) meetings held half termly. The IASS Officer attends the Post-16 Preparing for Adulthood and the Strategic Participation Group meetings hosted by the Local Authority.

These networks are an efficient and effective way to share information, good practice, training and resources. For example, the NE SENDIASS group pools resources financially through a service contribution on an annual basis. The group also has a wide range of experience, skills and knowledge. Our collaborative work supports our professional development and supports us with the delivery of local and regional activities, including training for IASS staff, SEND practitioners and parents and carers.

We have a close working relationships with the Northumberland Parent Carer Forum, the Northumberland Disability Youth Forum and a range of parent and children and young people support groups. This supports us with service activities, including the co-production of service tools and resources, and in ensuring that service user and stakeholder feedback informs policy and practice in the local area.

How the location of the service supports its sustainability

The service sits within the LA (Local Authority) Education and Skills Service framework as part of the Learning and Skills Service, the post-16 education, employability and careers guidance arm of Northumberland County Council. It is separate from other LA services and functions that commission or deliver services to children and young people with SEND and/or their families which supports our impartial and arm's length remit. Our office is located in the Morpeth Adult Learning Centre building away from County Hall, the main Local Authority base. There are meeting rooms and classrooms within the Adult Learning Centre building that we can access free of charge for meetings with service users and the delivery of training.

The service has the advantage of being within a larger organisation, which provides the opportunity to network widely with professionals to the benefit of families, share procurement and purchasing for best value goods and services, access to a wide range of delivery points through which to engage with families and a wider approach to communications and marketing to residents and key groups in the community.

Priorities for sustaining service improvements and achieving full compliance with the Minimum Standards

The action plan below sets out the priorities for IASS service activities for achieving full compliance with the Minimum Standards. It has been shared with the Local Authority and Clinical Commissioning Group through the Northumberland SEND Strategic Partnership Board.

| Link to IASS minimum standards | Service priority | Action | Expected outcome | Responsibility for action | Measurable evidence | Timescale |
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| <p>1.Commissioning, governance and management arrangements</p> <p>1.1 The IASS is jointly commissioned by education, health and social care in accordance with the CFA 2014.</p> | To identify what information and advice about health and social care provision will be provided by the service and how it is to be provided. This will include priority areas identified by service users, including Mental Health, Transition and Preparation for Adulthood. | IASS Service Manager to liaise with Key Contacts from Health and Social Care. | The information and advice provided by the service regarding health and social care provision and how it is provided are clearly defined. | AB LA /CCG representatives | Scoping completed of the information and advice about health and social care provision to be offered by the service. This will include Mental Health, Transition and Preparation for Adulthood. | Jan – Mar 2021 |
| 1.6 LA and IASS ensure that potential service users, Head teachers, FE principals, SENCos, SEND Teams, children’s and adult social care, health commissioners and providers are made aware of the IASS, its remit and who the service is for. | To raise awareness of the service and its remit with service users and stakeholders. | Communication and Marketing Strategy in place and implemented through a timeline of activities across the calendar year. This will include attendance at Team meetings and Parent/Young People forums, support and focus groups to talk about our role and remit and answer any questions. | <p>More stakeholders aware of and signposting potential service users to the service.</p> <p>An increase in the number of parents, children and young people contacting the service for information, advice and support.</p> | IASS Staff | <p>Timeline produced,</p> <p>Number of meetings attended to promote the service.</p> <p>Referral data indicates a 10% increase in the number of parents, children and young people contacting the service for information, advice and support compared with the previous year.</p> <p>Referral data indicates that service users have</p> | <p>Jan 2021</p> <p>Jan – Aug 2021</p> |

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| | | To work closely with the Northumberland Parent Carer Forum, and Children/Young People forums and focus groups, to co-produce promotional flyers targeted at specific audiences, including children and young people with SEND, parents of children with EHC plans, parents of children at SEN Support, and key stakeholders. | | | heard about the service through a range of education, health, social care and voluntary organisation sources. Examples of co-produced service promotional materials for a range of audiences. | Dec 2020 – end Feb 2021 |
| <p>2. Strategic functions</p> <p>2.3 The IASS works with local partners, including local parent and young people forums to inform and influence policy and practice in the local area</p> | To ensure that CYP with SEND and their parents and carers have a voice in the design, development and implementation of SEND services. | To attend and feed into strategic meetings with the Northumberland Parent Carer Forum and SEND organisations to share information and feedback from service users and provide updates which can be fed back to families. | Children, young people and parents feel that they have participated fully in the process of design, commissioning and implementation of SEND services and have a sense of co-ownership. | Alison Bravey Vicki Graham | Meetings attended by service staff. Examples of how feedback from service users has influenced local policy and practice through termly reports to IASS steering group and annual report to SEND Strategic Partnership Board. | On-going from December 2020. Termly reports Feb, July and Oct 2021 Annual report Oct 2021 |

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| <p>Operational functions</p> <p>3.1 The IASS provides: Impartial information, advice and support (IAS) in the full range of education, health and social care as defined in the SEND Code of Practice to the following service users: a) children b) young people c) parents This support is offered in a range of ways which includes face to face, a telephone helpline, email, website and social media.</p> | <p>To increase the use of social media incrementally, starting with Facebook, through the implementation of the service social media strategy,</p> <p>To provide information on the graduated approach and the different stages in the EHCP process through a series of animated video clips to be published on the service website and Facebook page, and shared with other services and organisations.</p> <p>To continue to produce a half termly information bulletin which provides information about local events, services and news in Northumberland and the North East for children and young people with SEND and their families</p> | <p>To develop and implement an annual timeline for Facebook activities across the calendar year which ties in with the service Communication and Marketing Strategy.</p> <p>To produce a series of video clips using 'Biteable' software.</p> <p>To investigate the use of YouTube channels for sharing videos.</p> | <p>Increased awareness of the service with service users and stakeholders.</p> <p>Service users are provided with the information they require about SEND processes to participate as fully as possible in decisions.</p> <p>Service users and stakeholders are aware of local events, services and news in Northumberland and the North East for children and young people with SEND and their families</p> | <p>IASS Staff</p> | <p>Timeline produced</p> <p>Number of 'likes' and 'shares' on service Facebook page.</p> <p>Referral data indicates a 10% increase in the number of parents, children and young people contacting the service for information, advice and support compared with the previous year.</p> <p>Service evaluations indicate a high level of service user confidence (>90%) in the quality of information and advice provided.</p> <p>Video clips produced and shared. Number of 'views' of video clips.</p> <p>Number of service users and stakeholders subscribing to the newsletter.</p> | <p>Jan 2021</p> <p>Jan to Mar 2021</p> <p>On-going – annual report Oct 2021</p> <p>Feb 2021</p> <p>On-going – annual report Oct 2021</p> <p>Mar 2021</p> <p>On-going – annual report Oct 2021</p> |
| <p>4. Professional development and training for staff</p> <p>4.3 All IASS staff have ongoing supervision and continuous professional development.</p> | <p>To ensure that service staff receive the training they require for the provision and delivery of information and advice about Health and Social Care provision.</p> | <p>To assess staff training needs.</p> <p>To identify training to be attended by service staff.</p> | <p>Staff confidence, knowledge and skills are strengthened, and the range and quality of information and advice provided to service users about health and social care provision are enhanced.</p> | <p>IASS staff</p> | <p>Number and range of training events attended by service staff. Service evaluations indicate a high level of service user confidence (>90%) in the quality of information and advice provided.</p> | <p>Jan – July 2021</p> |

Resources to sustain service improvements and achieve full compliance with the Minimum Standards

Service Funding

The service has a dedicated, ring-fenced budget held and managed by the service manager. Core funding for the service is provided through the Education and Skills directorate for the Local Authority. It covers permanent staffing and operational costs. Additional funding through the IAS Programme has been used to part-fund a temporary member of staff to provide administrative and back office support.

The Northumberland SEND Strategic Partnership Board, which includes strategic representatives from the LA (Local Authority) and CCG (Clinical Commissioning Group), has been fully briefed on the function and work of the IASS and the joint commissioning requirement for the service. However further progress towards joint commissioning has been delayed by organisational changes within the Local Authority and CCG, which have included commissioning functions, and more recently by pressures from the Covid-19 pandemic. This has been outside of the control of our service, but we will continue to work with LA and CCG colleagues to ensure that this requirement is met.

Staffing

One of the future challenges for the service will be to ensure that staffing capacity can meet any increased demands on the service, both operationally and strategically. Current staffing comprises the IASS Manager and IASS Officer, both full-time permanent posts, and the IASS Administrative Assistant, a temporary full-time post. This has proved to be an optimal level of staffing for the service. Having administrative support has boosted service capacity and freed up staff time for operational and strategic work. It is hoped that joint commissioning arrangements for the service will enable current staffing levels to be sustained. As mentioned above, arrangements for taking forward the joint commissioning of the service have not yet been determined. The impact and implications of any changes to staffing levels will need to be considered and addressed in exit-planning arrangements.

Training

All relevant training opportunities are taken to strengthen staff confidence, knowledge and skills and enhance the quality of support provided to service users on the full range of education, health and social care as defined in the SEND Code of Practice. The current CPD (Continuing Professional Development) offer for staff within the wider Council and Learning and Skills Service framework

the service sits within includes a range of training opportunities, including face to face and online learning. Training requirements and priorities are identified through the annual staff appraisal process and through staff supervision.

The service also accesses national and regional training provided by the IASSN and CDC. This has included IPSEA legal training to ensure that staff are able to offer high quality support around statutory processes, We also access training provided by our regional NE SENDIASS and Parent Carer Forum groups, and through the range of local partners we work with. Most of this training is provided free of charge or at a nominal cost.

Technology

The use of technology has been a major focus for the service over the past few years and this will support future service sustainability. Service capacity and efficiency has been improved through investment in hardware and software to enable us to engage with service users and stakeholders in a range of innovative, effective, and efficient ways. The use of technology has become the preferred way of communicating and sharing information for many people because of increased demands on their time. It is a quick, efficient, and cost-effective way of sharing information, e.g. through email attachments and links.

We promote independence and self-advocacy with services users through the use of technology, where possible. For example, the service website enables service users to self-serve. This helps to improve service efficiency by freeing up staff time for other operational and strategic work. The service electronic newsletter which was launched in October 2019 enables us to share information about different areas of SEND and now has well over 100 subscribers. Obtaining feedback from service users through electronic evaluations and surveys is an efficient way to inform service improvement and development and enables us to inform and influence policy and practice in the local area.

Technology has played a key role in providing a responsive service during the pandemic. For example, staff have been able to attend on-line meetings with service users and stakeholders in a range of contexts, and to attend on-line training. This has enabled staff to build their knowledge, skills, and confidence with the use of communication and collaboration software, including Microsoft Teams, Google Meet and Hangouts, and Zoom. The knowledge we have gained from our work during this time will be used to inform service delivery moving forward. It is vital that the service continues to optimise the use of technology, including the development of our social media presence, to promote the service, provide information and engage with all service users and potential service users in effective, efficient and innovative ways.

Conclusion

As mentioned at the beginning of this report, the aims and objectives of work undertaken by the service through the IAS Programme were designed and taken forward with future sustainability in mind. Additional staffing and activities funded by the programme have provided a welcome boost to the service, enabling us to move forward with service development and improvements for the benefit of our service users and stakeholders. We have been able to set up the framework and infrastructure for key areas of work, including the service website and use of technology, and communication and marketing, including the use of social media. The service is now compliant with all areas of the IASS Minimum Standards, with the exception of joint commissioning. Planning for the service exit from the IAS Programme is in progress and will be informed by future developments around joint commissioning.