SEND Information, Advice and Support Services: A 'deep dive' review of current practice challenges and solutions

Commissioned by the Information Advice and Support Programme Team

January 2018

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Executive summary

Background and aims

In October 2018, the Information Advice and Support Programme team based at the National Children's Bureau (NCB), commissioned NCB's Research and Policy team to carry out a 'deep dive' review of existing practice across a select number of Information Advice and Support (IAS) services. The purpose of this exercise was to identify learning from IAS services that could be shared with others as they seek to meet the recently published 'minimum' standards for IAS Services. The review consisted of three data gathering exercises:

- A rapid scoping review of relevant data gathered by the Information Advice and Support Services Network (IASSN) since 2017 (which helped to inform the survey and interview topic guide)
- A short online survey open to all IAS services in England (49 respondents)
- Telephone interviews with 14 IAS service managers

The most challenging aspects of service delivery identified by the survey were:

- Making the service accessible to children and young people (CYP)
- Helping other agencies understand the law
- Informing strategic decisions of local authorities (LAs) and other agencies

Working with children and young people

Over half of respondents reported that direct work with CYP accounted for between 0 and 5 per cent of their work. A total of 92% said that it accounted for at most one fifth of their work. Capacity was identified as the main barrier with a direct impact upon the ability to carry out outreach work with CYP. It could also impact upon the time to invest in communicating the service appropriately and building trust with CYP. Other barriers related to communication and awareness, parental control and complexity of support needs.

A number of actions had been taken or were planned to enable more effective direct engagement with CYP, including:

- Employment of a CYP-specialist outreach worker
- Changing the opening hours of the service to be more CYP-friendly
- The development of social media apps and a text messaging service
- The production of videos, webinars and easy-text publications aimed at CYP by way of promoting the service
- Development of YP participation groups
- Workshop delivery at schools and other YP-directed organisations
- Partnership building with other local agencies which work with CYP

Relationships with LAs

Working relations with LAs was highlighted as a key challenge by participants. Respondents identified the following issues in particular:

- Challenges of communication
- High turnover in SEND leadership staff
- Lack of IAS capacity
- Pressure on LA budgets and lack of ring-fenced budgets
- Amount of influence which the service has over LA practice

The ability to foster a positive working relationship with the LA, particularly regarding inclusion of

the IAS service on the local strategic board was highlighted as key in ensuring influence of the service and enabling CYP voice to be heard at a strategic level. The need to invest time in awareness raising of the service amongst key stakeholders within the local authority was identified as a key component of the overall service delivery.

Working with other agencies

Interviewees discussed the importance of building relationships with education providers – schools, colleges and further education settings, as well as other settings locally which work directly with CYP. Many participants attributed the success of such relationship-building to a dedicated CYP outreach worker. The development of such roles can also play an important part in helping to dispel myths of what the service can and cannot achieve through the delivery of training in other settings, such as health, education, and social care. The issue of joint commissioning was also raised as having an impact upon the delivery of minimum standards. Positive ways of engaging with other agencies to improve service delivery included:

- The development of joint memorandums of understanding
- Joint social media campaigns
- The delivery of training to staff in other agencies working with CYP

Introduction

Background and aims

In October 2018, the Information Advice and Support Advisory Board that has been set up to oversee delivery of the Information Advice and Support Programme, commissioned the National Children's Bureau (NCB) Research and Policy team to carry out a 'deep dive' review of existing practice across a select number of Information Advice and Support (IAS) services. The purpose of this exercise was to identify learning from service providers that could inform the Advisory Board, Department for Education and statutory service providers as they seek to improve upon service delivery and provide a compliant service offer in line with recently published 'minimum' standards for IAS Services.

This report sets out the findings of the review, with a particular focus on practice and solutions in areas of service delivery that IAS services find particularly challenging. One of these areas, direct work with children and young people (CYP), was identified in advance of the review. Further priorities were identified as the review progressed. The review consisted of three data gathering exercises:

- A rapid scoping review of relevant data gathered by the Information Advice and Support Services Network (IASSN) since 2017
- A short online survey open to all IAS services in England
- Telephone interviews with a sample of IAS service managers

Box 1: About IAS Services

The Children and Families Act 2014 places a duty on local authorities (LAs) in England to provide information advice and support in relation to provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. It requires that this is provided to disabled children and young people and those with special educational needs, and their parents and carers. Local information advice and support services (IAS services, sometimes known as SENDIASS) provide a range of support including:

- Information and advice about SEND matters, such as the legal framework, specific special educational needs and local services and support groups
- Support in communicating with schools, local authorities, and other local agencies
- Support in filling in forms and accessing services
- Assistance and guidance with preparation for, and support at the First Tier (SEND) Tribunal and other redress and complaints routes.

Information, Advice and Support Services replaced existing Parent Partnership Services from 2014. This transition involved, amongst other changes, the expansion of their remit to include health and social care issues in relation to SEND, provision for young people aged 19-25 and a greater emphasis on supporting children and young people to be involved in decision making.

In addition to requirements set out in primary and secondary legislation and statutory guidance, the provision of IAS Services is informed by guidance, training and support from the Information Advice and Support Services Network (IASSN). The work of the IASSN, funded by the Department for Education, has included the development of Quality Standards for IAS Services, which were superseded by Minimum Standards in December 2018. The Information, Advice and Support Programme is providing support to local IAS services to work towards meeting these standards.

Methodology

Rapid scoping review

Key data and reports produced by IASSN were reviewed, including service user feedback, the results of a review of IAS services carried out in early 2018 and data on funding staffing. This was a short exercise designed to identify any areas of practice to which the proceeding stages of research should pay particular attention.

Survey

An online survey was developed in consultation with the IASP team. This consisted of 3 closed and 5 connected open ended questions (as well as 6 items of respondent information), seeking views on:

- The extent of direct work with CYP, readiness - and action undertaken - to increase this, as well as obstacles to doing so
- Which from a list of practice areas (based on the minimum standards) are most challenging to deliver, why, and what action is being taken to address this
- Achievements since 2014

The survey was sent to all members of the IASSN via email with no restriction on which or how many staff from each IAS should complete it. The survey was open from 12 October 2018 until 9 January 2019 and received 49 valid responses. Whilst there was an element of self-selection in the sample, respondent information collected suggests diversity amongst respondents in terms of role, geography, length of service, and whether their service is outsourced (see Appendix 1 for further details).

Interviews

A selection of 20 IAS service managers were invited to take part in a 30 minute semi-structured telephone interview. The selected sample was drawn up to include a mix of in-house and outsourced services, urban and rural locations in different regions, and different child population sizes. Fourteen individuals consented to take part (see Appendix 2 for a breakdown of respondent characteristics).

The interviews were run according to a topic guide developed in consultation with the IASP team. They focussed on the same three lines of inquiry as the survey (as listed above). Interviewees were probed in more detail about different aspects of work with CYP (marketing, referrals, communication with existing clients etc.) and the skills and resources needed to do this. They were also invited to reflect specifically on the minimum standards and what changes might be needed in their local area in order to implement them. The interviews also provided an opportunity to tease out particular achievements and good practice, what facilitated these and resulting learning for other services.

Timing and sequencing

This project was completed over a relatively short timescale in which potential respondents would have limited capacity to engage in research activities. This has meant that the survey and interviews were carried out concurrently. The focus of the qualitative analysis set out in chapters of this report has, however, been informed by the quantitative results of the survey, focussing on the areas of practice most commonly reported as being challenging. For the same reasons, it was not possible to top up the interview sample to reach the desired participant number of 20, or to pilot or carry out cognitive testing of the survey.

This report

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- **Review of existing evidence** summarises the relevant content found in the rapid scoping review
- **Survey of IAS practitioners and managers: top level results** sets out the top level quantitative results of the survey, focussing on identifying challenging areas of service delivery
- This is then follow by three chapters that explore **in more depth** the most challenging areas of service delivery, drawing on results of both the survey and interviews. They focus on:
  - **Working directly with CYP**
  - **IAS services' relationships with Local Authorities**
  - **Working with other agencies**
- **Conclusions** draws out the key themes of the deep dive review, highlighting areas where there is most scope for peer learning from the practice examples identified.

Review of existing evidence
Service user feedback (2017)

Starting in January 2017, all IAS services have been invited to participate in the national collection and sharing of data based on ratings given by service users on the 6 core questions. Once a year feedback is sought from the next 50 service users from a given start date.

The 2017 results, published in November 2017, included the following findings:
- 91% suggested that it was easy to get in touch with the service
- 95% said that the information and advice and support they received was helpful
- 95% considered that the information, advice and support they received was neutral, fair and unbiased.
- 89% indicated that the intervention made by IASS had made a difference.
- 95% suggested they were satisfied with the service overall
- 96% said they would recommend the service to others

The vast majority of these responses were from parents and carers, although the data is incomplete in this regard. The IASSN report setting out these results also includes 12 case study examples informed by more in-depth feedback from the individual service users. These reflect how much the information advice and support is valued but also how long and complicated a process getting the right support for CYP with SEND can be.

IAS review (2018)

In early 2018, IASSN commissioned a group of consultants and IAS Service managers to undertake a review of IAS services across England. They heard from 43 IAS services through a combination of full day meetings and written submissions. It identified a number of strengths in the way in which IAS services work and the way in which they are supported at a national level by IASSN, the Independent Parental Special Education Advice (IPSEA) and others. Concerns identified by the review included:

- Capacity to deliver what the law, SEND Code of practice and Quality Standards require, in the face of rising demand
- Limited participation of and service for CYP
- Variation in the content and quality of websites
- The extent to which commissioners understand and engage
- The extent to which an IASS has any strategic management within the service

Priorities identified by IAS services included:

- Development of capacity
- Service to CYP
- Improvements to recording/analysis and reporting
- Training for parents (empowerment)
- Governance arrangements
- Planning processes
- Development of resources (including websites)
- Training for other professionals

Data on funding and staffing (2018)

Data collected by IASSN during 2018 to complement the review also highlights a wide degree of variation in the resources made available to IAS services across the country. Out of 95 local authority areas for which there was data available:

- 29 had a cash terms funding cut from 2016/17 to 2017/18 (twelve of which were by more than 10%)
- 23 had no cash terms change in their funding
- 43 had a cash terms increase in their funding (18 of which by more than 10%)
- In 2017/18 funding per head of population (aged 0-25) ranged from £0.22 to £2.66

7 out of 150 IAS services were jointly commissioned by the local authority and the local health commissioner (with the remainder commissioned solely by the local authority). 52 out 134 utilised volunteers alongside their formally employed staff.

Survey of IAS practitioners and managers: top level results

This section sets out the top level quantitative findings of the online survey, providing an initial insight to the areas of challenge faced by IAS services.

Respondents were asked to reflect on their own experience over the last 12 months and select from a list what they thought were the three most challenging aspects of delivering IAS services. An option to suggest aspects other than those listed was also provided. The results are set out below in Table 1.

Table 1 Most challenging aspects of delivering IAS, from highest to lowest frequency

Aspect of IAS service delivery	Number who identified this as a top three challenge area	Percentage of respondents (*n*=47)
Making your service accessible for all young people	27	57%
Helping other agencies understand the law	24	51%
Making your service accessible for all children	19	40%
Informing strategic decisions of local authorities and other agencies	18	38%
Other	13	23%
Recurring themes specified under 'other': - Meeting demand with limited staffing and resources (*n*=4) - Planning and maintain staff morale in the face of uncertainty of future funding (*n*=4) - Coping with unpredictable peaks in demand caused by variation in practice (*n*=3) - Managing expectations, particularly where other agencies do not understand the role of IAS services (*n*=3)		
Representation at tribunals	10	21%
Understanding legal and contractual obligations and other expectations of the local authority on your service	8	17%
Gathering and acting on feedback from service users	8	17%
Making your service accessible for all parents	7	15%
Keeping in touch throughout the process of a tribunal or grievance being addressed	6	13%
Ensuring your advice and support is impartial	3	6%
Providing initial information and advice to parents and children and young people	3	6%

Ensuring IASS staff have the knowledge they need (including up to date legal knowledge)	2	4%
Ensuring IASS staff have the skills they need	0	0%

The aspect of service delivery most frequently identified as challenging was making the service accessible to all young people, with 27 respondents (57%) picking this as one of their top three challenges. Making the service accessible to all children was also frequently identified as challenging (*n*=19, 40% - the third most frequent). This compares to 7 respondents (15%) who suggested that making the service accessible for all parents was a top-three challenge. These findings reinforce those of the IAS service review in 2018 which identified developing service to CYP as a top priority. It further justifies the decision to include direct work with CYP as a key line of inquiry for this 'deep dive' review.

The second most commonly identified area was helping other agencies understand the law, with 24 respondents (51%) selecting this as one of their top three most challenging aspects of service delivery. Knowledge and practice of other agencies also came into play for those specifying aspects of service delivery not listed. Three respondents, for example, suggested that challenging peaks in demand were the result of inconsistent practice of local authorities and schools whilst the same number suggested other agencies did not understand the role of IAS services.

The fourth most commonly identified challenge area (*n*=18, 38%) was informing strategic decisions of local authorities and other agencies. With nearly twice as many respondents choosing this than the next listed area of service delivery. This area, along with wider issues relating the position and perceptions of IAS services locally, was chosen as the third and final area for in depth analysis set out in the remainder of this report.

It may be expected that respondents would downplay the role of their own strengths and actions in any challenges they report. With this in mind it may not be surprising that few respondents identified knowledge or skills of IAS staff as a challenge area. Only 2 out 47 respondents included 'ensuring IASS staff have the knowledge they need' in their top 3 challenging aspects of service delivery, and none at all doing so for 'ensuring IASS staff have the skills they need', which may be reflective of the training and support given by the IASSN.

Respondents were asked to estimate what proportion of their work was carried out directly with CYP as opposed to with their parents. The results are shown below in Figure 1.
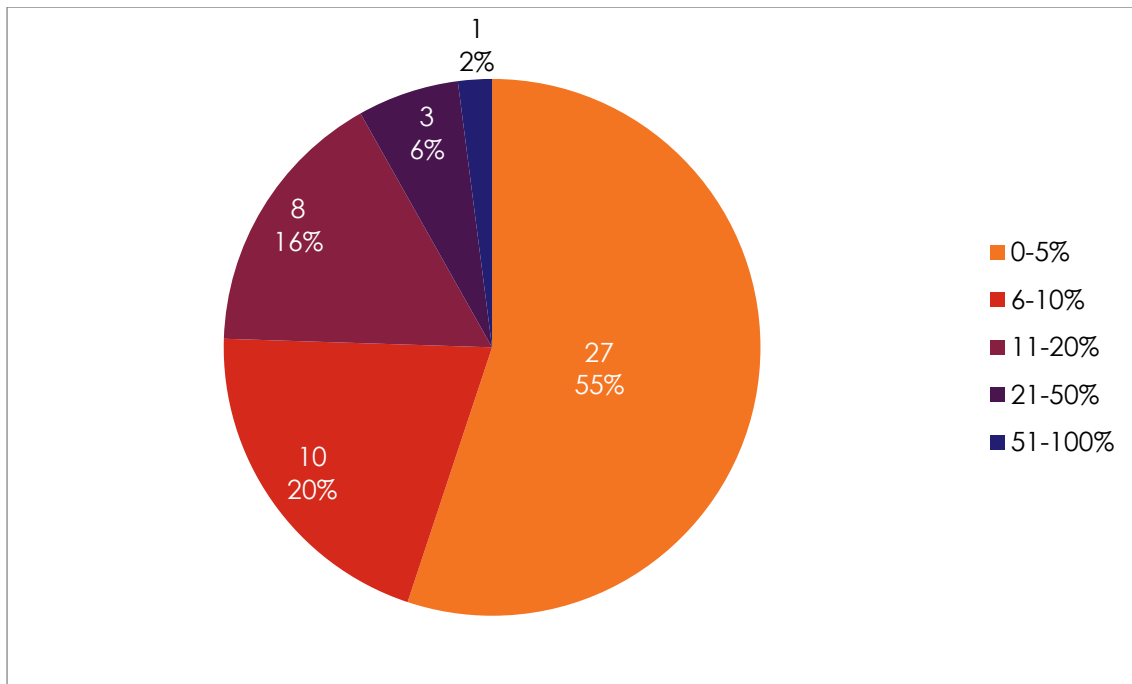
Figure 1 Proportion of work carried out directly with CYP (total n=49)

Over half of respondents (*n*=27, 55%) said that direct work with CYP accounted for between 0 and 5 per cent of their work. A total of 92% said that it accounted for at most one fifth of their work. However, as discussed in the following chapter, some IAS services invest considerable time in understanding CYP's views and feelings, even if the first contact with the service is made by a parent.

Respondents were asked to what extent they thought their IAS service was able to support all CYP who want to access information advices and support directly, rather than through their parents. The results are set out below in Figure 2.
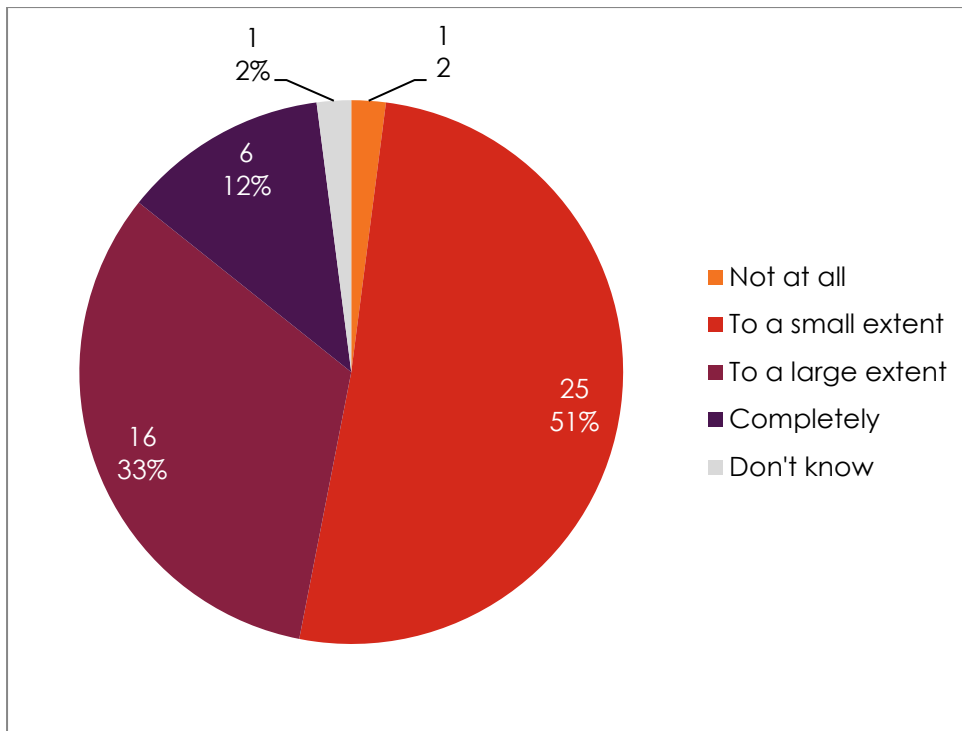
Figure 2 Extent to which respondents thought that their service was able to support all CYP who want to access information advice and support directly (total n=49)

Over half of respondents (51%) thought that their IAS service was able to support all CYP wanting to access their help directly 'to a small extent'. This compares to a third who said they were able to 'to large extent' and 12% who said that they could 'completely'. Just one respondent thought that their service was not at able to support these CYP at all.

These figures would indicate that whilst the proportion of direct work with CYP is relatively low when compared with parents for example, where direct engagement is taking place, approximately one third of respondents are satisfied that their service can support all CYP who wish to access information, advice, and support

There are a range of possible reasons why IAS services may not feel able to support all CYP wanting to access the service directly. These possible reasons, along with what IAS services are doing to address them, were explored through the survey's open-ended questions and the telephone interviews, the findings from which are discussed in the following three chapters.

Working directly with children and young people

As highlighted in the top-level results of the survey above, a very limited proportion of IAS activity is accounted for though direct work with CYP, and many practitioners and managers indicate that their service has a limited ability to carry out this work. The majority of interviewees also highlighted the low levels of direct engagement with young people, and especially with children. Potential factors contributing to these low levels are discussed further below.

Barriers to CYP access of service

Survey respondents were then asked to name the biggest barriers to CYP accessing their service. Responses were given in a free text box and broadly fell into one or more of the categories listed below in Table 2. Some respondents listed a number of barriers as part of their answers, whereas others named only one. One respondent replied that direct work with young people in their region is contracted separately and delivered by another service provider.

Table 2 Barriers to CYP accessing the service

Type of barrier	Percentage of respondents (total *n*=49)
Capacity (linked to funding)	35%
Parental control	33%
Communication and awareness of service	27%
Lack of social media	12%
Lack of time to build trust with YP	12%
Confidence of YP to engage	10%
Style of promotion materials (if any)	8%

Capacity

Capacity was seen as the main barrier with a direct impact upon the ability to carry out outreach work with CYP. It could also impact upon the time to invest in communicating the service appropriately and building trust with CYP. The following response from one organisation captures a number of the issues which services are grappling with:

> *"We don't have a dedicated Advisor for children and young people. We don't make links to Schools, colleges and FE due to current workload and lack of a team. It is on our plans. No current networking with SENCOs or headteachers. The current name of our service doesn't explain who we are or how we support. Marketing materials aren't C/YP friendly."*

A number of respondents indicated that they would like to engage the services of a dedicated CYP outreach worker but that their funding would not be sufficient to cover such a role. Several indicated that they aim their direct work with young people at those aged 14+ as the nature of the SEND means that working directly with children younger than 14 would be challenging.

One interviewee stated:

> *"We've got that [direct work with CYP] on our engagement plan, and we started some activities around that. I think by the very nature of SEND […] you wouldn't expect to get children under 16 phoning the service, it tends to be 16-plus, those going on to further education, but that's an area for us that we've identified ourselves for development going forward."*

Parental control

Parental control featured highly amongst responses, but as one respondent indicated:

> "A lot of children and young people are happy for parents to take the lead - in fact a large number aren't interested in statutory process etc. They just want to go to school with their friends."

Many interviewees alluded to a combination of complexity of support needs and reluctance of young people to engage directly with services as leading to the almost inevitable outcome of more direct engagement with parents. Several interviewees indicated that parents would be more keen (depending on the level of the young person's support need) for the young person to have direct access with the service as the young person reaches adulthood (aged 16+) and more independence in general is being encouraged at that age.

Many services see engagement with schools and colleges as key in facilitating more direct work with CYP but this is not always possible depending on capacity. One respondent referred to the opening hours of the service being a barrier to working with CYP attending school with the (day) timing of the service lending itself more naturally to working with parents.

Communication and awareness of service

The challenges of promotion of the service was a feature of responses across the surveys and interviews. As one interviewee stated:

> "We can have a really nice website but people still need to know that that website exists."

Some interviewees referred to a lack of capacity within the service to carry out effective promotional work. However, one talked at length about the extensive promotional work the service had carried out which had not translated into higher numbers of young people accessing the service directly:

> "Certainly, in my time, we haven't had a single referral into the service from a young person. I would say it's because they don't know that we're here. If I had to tie it down to one thing, I would probably say that's what it is, because we do still get that feedback from families and schools, that they don't know we exist, as a service. We have done an awful lot of promotional work over the last 18 months, since I've been here. It's just I would probably say it's because they don't know that that service is there for them to come to, I would guess, if I had to tie it down to one thing."

A number of interviewees also referred to some of the practical and logistical issues associated with promoting the service. One for instance works for a service where their social media outputs are linked with those of the LA. The interviewee highlighted the potential impact of this on perceived impartiality of the service on the part of families.

> "One of the other big issues that we do have is, when that happens, obviously that knocks parental confidence in the fact that we are at arm's length, and we are independent of the local authority. That's another mini battle that I'm having, at the moment."

One service has the requirement that any promotional material includes the LA's logo – another potential impact upon how the service is perceived. The costs of producing materials and budget implications (i.e. confusion over who is responsible for this) were also discussed.

Complexity of support needs

Interviewees also stressed how the complexity of the support needs presented by some of the CYP they work with can mean that even specialist staff would need further training and development to be able to enable meaningful and effective engagement:

"I guess, perhaps one of the challenges is, for those young people who perhaps might not have the mental capacity and I think that's still an area that we're still developing our skills around… It certainly is an area that we are wanting to explore and develop […] That is a very time-consuming area, it comes down to resources, […] it is something that, yes, we're very aware of and we would, if the circumstances arose, we would try and support a young person who might have limited communication skills."

An interviewee also alluded to staff's perception that young people, especially of teenage age, may not want to draw attention to anything which may make them look different or stand out from their peers:

"I just don't think it's something that a young person would really want to make themselves feel different or acknowledge really that they have got these needs that are different to other people."

Trust

The time necessary to build up trust with young people was specifically referred to at numerous points in the surveys and interviews. Some of this related explicitly to the relationship between the support worker and the young person:

"Trying to build up a trust, which is vitally important because young people aren't, as I say - which is why we don't get very many direct calls is because a young person is going to go, '"'ve got a few issues. I don't think I get the support at school that I should have." They're not just going to ring somebody out from the paper. They're going to want to know who is that person on the end of the phone?"

Another interviewee talked about the changes they have made to their working practices in light of the additional time which needs to be invested in the building of relationships with young people:

"I think the thing that you need more of is time to build your relationship. Whereas when you're working with a parent, you can have your initial conversations over the phone, even before you go to a meeting, obviously, with young people, you can't do that. You have to meet them, usually first of all with the parent, gradually get to know them. We had to adapt a lot of our forms and a lot of the way we put things over that really when we sat down and thought about it, it wasn't that much different. It just took a little bit longer."

Others highlighted the time necessary to build up trust within the service itself in terms of what it can and cannot achieve, to manage expectations and to explain the processes to young people who may not be as familiar with 'the system' as their parents:

"Admittedly the whole SEN arena is awash with jargon and so it is hard to explain what some of the things mean. Most of the young people, they don't really know what their educational health and care plan is. They don't really understand what it is that it can and should be doing for them. Yes, it is a lot of time explaining the system, giving them confidence to speak up for themselves because some of the young people, they've either been bullied at school, been written off, they don't have much self-esteem and so it's helping those areas really and just to be heard and listened to."

Actions taken to improve CYP access

The survey also asked respondents to give details of any specific actions taken to make the service more accessible to CYP. Whilst a small number of responses gave details of actions already taken, most respondents referred to planned future activities or ideas in the pipeline. For example, one respondent stated:

"None at present. We would like to have a dedicated Advisor, more marketing, change our name, website page for C/YP, other ways to communicate, e.g. What's App, Improve our Tweeting / Social Media."

Table 3 Action taken/planned action to increase engagement with CYP

Type of action	Percentage of respondents (total *n*=46)
Dedicated website or section on website	34%
Workshops and other engagement with schools and colleges	32%
Production of publicity material specifically aimed at YP (e.g. easy reads and videos/animations/webinars)	23%
Partnerships (formal or ad-hoc) with local youth services and other service providers already working with YP	13%
YP advisors	11%
Attendance at or holding of specific engagement events	11%

Two responses referred directly to co-production work with CYP in the development of resources. A small number of respondents highlighted their helpline service with one specifically referring to a 'late-night' helpline one evening a week to enable young people to access after school hours. One response referred particularly to dedicated work with young people in Year 11 and the transition to the post-school environment. Another indicated that they offer home visits for those young people not engaged in an education environment outside the home. A number of responses again re-emphasised that their plans or list of 'would likes' are being hampered by a lack of capacity. One respondent indicated that raising the issue of young people's participation at council strategic meetings and LA area inspection consultations has meant that the service is now working closely with LAs to increase participation opportunities for young people.

Challenges to delivering IAS services (CYP-related)

References to limited resources ran as a thread throughout responses to the question of why direct engagement with CYP is a challenge.

"In order to make our service accessible to all CYP we need to do some very specific work directly with CYP to find out what they want from us and what would make us accessible. We then need to do a great deal of publicity work - getting in to a range of Education providers etc to make sure that CYP know about us. We then would need more staff to meet the demand of CYP who would like support from us. We have ideas about creating a schools pack for PSHE and maybe developing a "buddies" program to establish peer supporters but this all takes capacity and resources too."

"Resources. We are not meeting parental demand so can only do limited work with young people and none with children. The IAS Programme will help us address this but when this ceases we will be back in the same position."

There was an indication across the body of responses that the production of more CYP-targeted publicity material by IASS and CDC would be welcome.

A number of respondents indicated that increasingly complex cases and vulnerabilities across the caseload of people they work with means that face-to-face support is preferable but difficult to

deliver within available resources. One respondent referred to the impact which temporary contracts is having on the ability to build trust with the families, leading to increased levels of anxiety within both staff and those accessing the service.

One respondent highlighted the challenge of convincing the LA to understand that working more closely with CYP would help to achieve better outcomes and a better preparation for adulthood.

Some organisations reported on their specific action(s) to mitigate against the challenges of direct engagement with CYP. These actions mainly focus around one or more of the following:

- Dedicated CYP engagement plans and strategies
- Employment of CYP workers
- Drop-in sessions at schools and colleges and other providers working directly with CYP (for example, children's centres, career services)
- Extending opening/contact times into the evenings
- Co-production of resources
- Production of a text helpline

Skills and experiences for working directly with CYP

The in-depth interviews with practitioners provided the opportunity to explore further which skills and experiences have been identified amongst the workforce as being helpful in engaging directly with CYP.

One interviewee referred to the level of impartiality which a Diploma in Advice and Guidance can help evidence. One respondent made reference to their very mixed team in terms of skills and experience (including experience in autism; children; SEND administration). Others indicated that their service's staff have significant experience in working within an education environment (including trained SENCOs). A background in working in education was referred to a number of interviewees has helpful experience when working for the service. Combined with a background in education, this interviewee also referred to the requirement of staff to hold the necessary 'soft skills' in sensitive engagement with young people with SEND: '*you don't want someone who isn't going to "gel well" with people.*'

Another interviewee talked about the need for developing a communication style adapted for CYP:

> *"That is something, you know, that area of capturing young people and communicating in a medium that's best for them, is something that we really try to listen to young people about, and take their advice, because it's really different in how we communicate with parents."*

Another interviewee spoke in more depth about the differences in communicating with parents and young people directly, particularly in terms of managing expectations and disaggregating support needs related to SEND from other issues which can affect the lives of any young person transitioning into adulthood.

> *"It's the stuff that's SEND specific is harder to disaggregate from the other stuff and turmoil of growing up and having SEND. For example, certainly the young person's worker often finds herself in situations where they start talking about education settings and moving that forward. Then it very quickly becomes a whole quagmire of social, emotional, mental health needs and how to unpick that, but equally that's wrapped up in the fact that they're a teenager and they're also experiencing some situations about relationships and what a teenager brings. It's really hard to say to them… Like with a parent we'd park that and go, "Well, let's signpost. We can do that. That's not my bag." Parents will understand that. The young person doesn't care whether that's your bag or not. If you've got their ear, you've got*

their ear, so it's harder to almost pull away the bits that you need to that sticks specifically with SEND and information, advice and support."

Another highlighted the need for the staff team to be open to adapting their skillset as the sector and wider environment changes.

"Increasingly, we're all training ourselves to be able to jump in on the social media. So I think it's a changing skill set. What we would have done even five years ago is really different to what you would do now. So we try to keep that moving and according to what our children and young people and parents need and want."

Examples of good practice

Survey responses which referred to examples of good practice in working directly with CYP mainly referred to working closely with schools, colleges and other education providers and the recruitment of specialist CYP workers. These roles were mainly for working with those aged 14+ or 16+ and not with younger children.

"I think our Post 16 coordinator has demonstrated flair and ingenuity in developing work that includes the voice of local young people in service design and delivery. Their commitment to building trust with young people and supporting them to access appropriate education and support, supporting them to challenge decisions including at tribunal, to resolve concerns about special education provision is excellent."

A smaller number of responses also highlighted their participation work and embedding young people's voices throughout the process by establishing post-16 participation groups. One interviewee spoke about their participation work with young people, and in particular their work experience programme, and how that can positively impact upon their wider engagement:

"We use a lot of social media. We welcome young people to come and do work experience with us as part of their Journey to Adulthood, and while they're here, we get them to advise us on how best to communicate our offer to young people. So they might jump on our Twitter, they might do some posting. We've also partnered up with young people who run a really large social media and they have a following of 15,000. So we help them with their business and what they're doing, and opportunities, and in return, they'll post our stuff out to their community of young people. We also work with schools directly and have events for young people, like Journey to Adulthood events where they can come and see what's on offer, but that's something that we keep trying as well."

Another interviewee also referred to the benefits which can be brought about through work experience placements. Such benefits can be a two-way process which support both the service and the development of confidence in CYP.

"We have a lot of people on placement, we had about 30 in the last two years, and when they're here, doing maybe anything from a week to a six-week placement. They can do a really quality piece of work which helps us to identify what young people need and what's useful for them. Providing that work experience, and lots of those young people, we said to come and do it here because no one's given them any opportunities, or they've missed out at school, or they were excluded, or because of their needs they weren't offered work experience. So it helps them on their journey, it gives them some skills and also, at the same time, it allows us to learn from them. So I think that's been a huge piece of learning for us. That's been really helpful."

The way in which CYP (and their parents) can influence the process through their direct participation was also highlighted by another interviewee:

"We've got a consortium, a parents and young people's consortium where we offer seats at the table to parents and young people who influence change, and they might well have a large following of parents themselves. So that will be like the Parent Carer Council, Voices for Autism, and we have a couple of young people on that group. So that meets monthly and they really look at the big ticket items in the council and things that need changing. So they could be looking at our service and what we deliver; they could be looking at short breaks, or an all-age disability team which they're currently putting together, so they're looking at large items."

Another interviewee talked about how their young people's participation group has helped to influence the delivery of the service itself:

"We've got a young person's group here, young people who've used SENDIASS and they're our young people steering group. They're just brilliant. The ideas that they come up with, really good. They helped us design some of our information leaflets. They've helped us design the wording on some of the letters because before September 2014, obviously, it was all to parents or carers. They've looked at that. They've done two videos that we, the YouTube video things that we've got on our website. They gave us the idea of having fridge magnets with our number on. They've come up with a list of things that they want us to look at this next 12 months, which I've been able to incorporate into the IASP funding, so the kind of things that they wanted for us to do, to have Facebook and Instagram."

That same interviewee also spoke about the impact that involvement in the participation group has had on the young people's confidence and willingness to engage with others:

"Up until probably about 12 months ago, they didn't want anybody new to join the group. The majority of them are on the autistic spectrum. They've opened up and they're feeling confident to let other people in. They're wanting speakers to come to the group, so we've had the director of children's services here twice and he's answered their questions. Basically, and they're wanting to meet more often. They're wanting to really get involved."

IAS services' relationships with Local Authorities

There were many examples of different types of relationships between IAS services and LAs. However, 38% of survey respondents identified 'informing strategic decisions of local authorities and other agencies' as a challenge, which means that working relations with LAs is a relatively important issue for IAS staff. When elaborating on why they saw this as a challenge, survey respondents mentioned lack of communication, high turnover in SEND leadership staff, lack of IAS time and resources, and pressures on LA budgets. But mainly, it seemed to be related to the positions most IAS services have in relation to LAs, as noted by one respondent: *"Since we have no power over local authorities and other agencies it can be hard to influence them, even when they are not complying with national policy or the law."*

This section explores the nature of these relations in terms of awareness, attending meetings, membership of strategic boards and control over budgets, before ending with examples of good practice.

Awareness

Not all interviewees found that LAs were always aware of their existence and role in relation to the SEND area. Several mentioned feeling invisible and constantly having to raise awareness of themselves and their work:

> *"We try and be as involved as we can. I don't think it's as good as it could be yet. I think there are still people that forget we're there and we have a part to play, but again that is something I'm working on to build those relationships and to build more established routes of communication and escalating."*

In order to have good relations, stakeholders at least recognise each other's existence. Therefore, the lack of LA awareness was a key hindrance to mutually beneficial relationship between IAS services and LAs, although a number of interviewees felt they were making progress through their continuous communication.

Attending meetings

Attending strategic meetings was another key concern of those interviewed for this project. Having a place at the table was seen as the first step towards strategic influence at the LA level and engage with other stakeholders. Being invited to meetings was a first step and a way to get to communicate the concerns of the IAS services and get decision makers to react to them, as expressed by one interviewee:

> *"Generally the relationship with the local council is fine, it's okay, yes. I go to quite a lot of their strategic meetings, as manager of SENDIASS, to put our point forward. It varies, sometimes they don't like it when you draw things to their attention that aren't working. But we do draw things to their attention so I meet once a month or once every couple of months with the SEND manager and say what we find. So they are willing to listen, they don't always do anything about it but they are willing to listen and sometimes they address it."*

Many described a direct link between the above-mentioned lack of awareness and not being invited to meetings. As such, presence at the table was seen as leading to more awareness, which again led to inclusion in more decisions. Consequently, not being able to attend strategic meetings was seen as problematic and a way in which IAS services were isolated from the wider SEND effort in LAs. Again, many interviewees mentioned working to change this, but there still seem to be pockets where IAS services have not yet managed to raise awareness of themselves and join strategic LA meetings:

"I haven't been to any SEND strategy group meetings, even though I know that they're going on, and parents are attending those, but we don't go along. Hopefully, in the next month that'll change."

SEND strategic boards

Another way to access strategic decision-making processes was sitting on LA strategic boards. Being on these boards was described as giving access to other key players in the SEND field, e.g. from social care, health and education. This was seen by interviewees as a way to stay informed as well as a way to influence decisions regarding SEND, as illustrated by the following quote:

"We could probably build on that but we sit on the strategic partnership board which is chaired by the local authority, but it has representation from health, education, social care, the voluntary sector and very much strategic issues are discussed at that meeting, so we are aware of what's going on locally, and also involved."

As with the strategic meetings, not being on a SEND board was seen by interviewees as directly linked to a general lack of awareness and influence within the wider LA system. Some interviewees were particularly concerned that this could mean that the voices of CYP and families are not being heard, as one interviewee explained when discussing their challenging work relations with the LA:

"There's some conflict at times. The only other one I can point out (…) is in regards to we seem to be hidden a lot. In terms of challenging policy and practice, or informing about policy and practice, good practice, feeding back our clients' feedback to the rest of the local authority and services within it, we're kind of hidden and excluded from all strategic boards."

In that sense, strategic boards function much like attending meetings in that having a place meant awareness and an opportunity to inform decisions. There was no evidence that difficulties in accessing the strategic board varied across in/out-sourced services. Whether or not an IAS Service would have a place was described as depending on the relations with the LA, which meant that it was generally seen as worthwhile to build a good rapport with key people within LAs and the wider SEND system.

Budgets

According to point 1.4 in the minimum standards for IAS services, they should have a dedicated and ring-fenced budget which is managed by an IAS service manager. However, this was not always the case, which often was related to the working relations with the LA in which the IAS was placed. Often, interviewees expressed being frustrated and feeling caught up in the efforts to cut budgets within LAs, as described by one interviewee:

"We have never had a budget. We have no control over our own finances and we find it extremely difficult to get anything approved."

In many LAs, holding budgets was limited to senior managers, which in many cases left out IAS service managers, as illustrated by the following quotes:

"Because of the local authority structure, I manage the service, but I will never have oversight. Not oversight. I would never have responsibility for a budget, because within local authority, that's only given to team managers and above."

> *"I have not got a management role, other than I line manage two members of the team, but in terms of making strategic decisions, in terms of budget and resourcing, I have no power in regards to how those decisions are made."*

Even in cases where services had a ring-fenced budget, they would not always have influence on the size of that budget, which again was described as linked to increasing pressures on LA finances. This made it difficult for service managers to plan ahead in terms of staffing and outreach, as there was general uncertainty over the size of budgets and little room for negotiation, as explained by one interviewee:

> *"we have that ringfenced budget (…) from the authority, we have that, but that's very much dictated to us by the authority. Each year you just get given the budget, there's no negotiation. I don't know how that works in the rest of the world, but you're just given it."*

The lack of strategic information and control regarding their own budgets was a source of frustration to many interviewees, and it was seen as a hindrance to building a well-functioning and independent service. It also appeared as one of the main reasons for feeling left out and having less than ideal relations with the LA.

Examples of good practice

Good relations with LAs are the key factor for general awareness of IAS services, being invited to strategic meetings, sitting on strategic boards and managing own budgets. This means that for IAS services the starting point for having strategic influence is building relations with LAs. Several interviewees who had good relations with their LAs highlighted the importance of working *with* them and listen to different viewpoints. IAS services with good relations to LAs were generally willing to make compromises if necessary, but also expected reciprocity if they aired criticisms, as one interviewee explained:

> *"We have got a very good working relationship with the local authority. I think we've helped in terms of - by working together, remaining impartial but being that critical partner, if you like, sometimes to make sure that things are changed and if things aren't right, that we can work with them to put them right for parents."*

Establishing individual as well as institutional contacts was also stressed as a good way to build positive relations between stakeholders. Having a place at the table and sitting on strategic boards meant that IAS workers would come into contact with other professionals with whom they could then discuss best approaches to SEND issues. This would also allow IAS service workers to bring the voices of CYP and their families to those discussions and make sure they was heard. This virtuous circle of good feedback and influence was described by one interviewee:

> *"I think it's just sort of being there and getting to know people and having good feedback. When we have our contract reviews, we've always had positive feedback so they can see that people are happy with what we're delivering but they also know that we are not going any trying to inflame situations that are quite difficult. I don't know, I'm guessing it is just that sort of working and knowing the professionals that are responsible for SEND in the local authority, and also the parent carer forum and being able to have those links."*

Those IAS services with good relations with LAs had often invested a significant amount of work into the building of those relationships and prioritised meeting and board activities. Although this was sometimes described by interviewees as tricky because of the general lack of resources, there was general agreement that it was a worthwhile investment that could result in strategic influence,

gaining access to crucial information, communicate positive feedback and even in some cases lead to more independence and funding for the service.

Working with other agencies

The survey responses revealed that after working with CYP, 'helping other agencies understand the law' was the second biggest challenge faced by IAS staff. This next section of the report aims to unpick the ways that service managers are engaging with and increasing awareness amongst other agencies, including education, social care, health, and local community services. This section will showcase the ways in which services have developed successful collaborations, as well as outlining the key challenges faced by joint-working, namely issues of capacity, misinformation, and joint commissioning.

Positive engagement with other agencies

This section begins by outlining examples of positive relationships with other agencies; sharing methods which have been successful and the benefits this can offer the IAS service, including increases in referrals and improved outcomes for CYP. Examples of best practice are also shared, taking individual overarching 'agencies' in turn.

Education

Interviewees discussed the importance of building relationships with education providers – schools, colleges and further education settings. Capacity allowing, an ideal scenario would be to develop a rolling programme across education settings to promote awareness and understanding. Interviewees reported that some local colleges support young people to access their service, but they would prefer to spread the word directly to students themselves.

Where services have developed strong links with schools, this has been made possible by having a dedicated Young Person's Advisor in place. Part of their role is to go out to colleges and events and promote the service to young people and engage with those with capacity issues via parents, carers, and teachers.

Having the time and resource to nurture relationships with school staff can have positive impacts on referral rates. One service commented that schools are their main referrer due to a successful partnership: *"The main way that we get referrals is that we have quite a good relationship with schools* [in local area]*"*, taking time to run a number of *"promotional events for schools and other partners, advertising what the service is that were offering and what parents are able to access*."

One interviewee stressed the importance of having better relationships with SENCOs and the knock on benefits this can have on links to parents, and ultimately, children's outcomes:

> *"Making sure they really know what we do and actually appreciate the benefits of us being involved, but actually we do have a role. If they have a better relationship with parents, they'll have a much quicker relationship with parents everything will be done more efficiently, they won't have anxious parents on their doorstep every other day. They'll just have a conversation, a good working relationship and that's actually going to be better for everybody and not to mention the outcomes for the child themselves."*

One IAS service flagged the need to remember that not all young people will be in education settings, so consideration of home visits to publicise the service is important too.

Many services discussed a range of proactive initiatives to increase awareness and engagement with education providers. A number of services mentioned a more informal drop-in service as being a great success, and also having the opportunity to discuss the service with school staff and parents via parents' evenings, open evenings, after school meetings.

Examples of initiatives to increase awareness and engagement with education providers
- Delivery of age-specific workshops for schools, including workshops for year 9s exploring rights-based approaches and a workshop for year 11 students focusing on transitions
- Delivery of workshops in special schools

- Speaking at Head Teacher conferences
- Introductory briefings in early September for sixth form students
- Representation at fresher's fairs at local colleges
- Collaborating with college careers services to offer 'drop in' advice service for students
- Training workshops for SENCOs
- Training workshops for parents to increase awareness of SEN processes
- Co-produced resources, including a video to show in schools, colleges and youth settings; an animation to show in school assemblies; a leaflet for Further Education settings

Local authority and social care services

One interviewee discussed the value of forming a good relationship with the inclusion teams within their local authority, "*because they are making so many decisions for children with SEND, but children with SEND who are undiagnosed, so don't have an education, health and care plan.*" This particular service discussed taking time to get to know the CYP who have been permanently excluded, capturing "*their voice, their experience, what they want next, what difficulties they have before the inclusion team make the decision to place them somewhere.*" This information is then shared (with permission) with the fair access panel who decide on their future provision. Having this close relationship and sharing of information between services can lead to very positive impacts, including the CYP being "*less likely to then become NEET again, so not in any education or excluded again.*"

Another interviewee discussed their conscious effort over the last 18 months to make contact with several different teams within the local authority, including Early Help, Early Years, Youth Offending, Attendance and Inclusion teams. This engagement included delivering a presentation about the IAS service and what it can offer children and families. However, it was also noted that this can be a subsequent drain on resource, especially when there are several localities teams, e.g. "*if we went out to the Early Help team within one locality, we would then have to repeat that six times across the other localities. It's not like we could just go out and do it once. We've got that repetition of going out to team meetings and giving the presentation to spread the word about the service.*"

One interviewee made reference to where they were positioned within the local authority structure and the benefits that this brought, sitting **"*under the safeguarding and quality assurance part of children's services.*"** In practice, this feels a sensible decision as they are part of children's services, but *"not tied to SEN or social care*", and it has also meant that they have now got *"managers that buy into the idea a bit more and I think we're probably sat in the right place to do this work now."*

Other interviewees discussed the benefits of delivering briefing sessions for social care teams, incorporating the SENDIASS offer to CYP, and the legislation aspects, but they also highlighted the need to be cautious of increasing awareness and not being able to meet increased demand:

> "*If you raise the profile too much, we just get flooded and then we can't cope, you know what I mean, because we've got a limited capacity. If you do too much then you get so much coming in. It's a fine balance really.*"

Local community providers

Working in partnership with local youth services and mentoring organisations who already have a relationship with CYP was discussed as an effective way to deliver specialist advice.

This includes linking up with specific groups where CYP with SEND meet, visits to young person "Voice" groups, and also services which run parental groups, such as those in children's centres. One interviewee mentioned that:

> "*There's all kinds of coffee mornings and events that parents go to that we could perhaps go along and do our little sales pitch to*."

Again, similar to the IAS services who have developed their relationships with education providers, having an advisor in the service who works directly with young people in youth clubs has been beneficial. Advisors have delivered a variety of advice to youth club attendees, for example:

> "offering advice on everything across the board, including transition advice as well, so that they are able to give that careers advice to the young people who potentially aren't getting the right correct advice from their school; although the school is obviously, by law, supposed to be providing it, that's not necessarily giving the correct advice, so we're there to help support them in that way as well and also talk about the local leisure things that are going on, et cetera, housing - whatever it is, we're there to support."

Other IAS services

Several interviewees highlighted the benefits of engaging and sharing best practice with the IASSN and that having more opportunities to network with other services would be helpful.

> "Without the amazing support from the SENDIASS Network we could not keep up to date with changes in the law"

One interviewee commented on the positives of having regular regional meetings:

> "It's just an opportunity to get together, really, and communicate what services do differently, and the scenes that they're finding in their area. That gives you quite a good picture that, actually, it's not just this area that that's happening, that's happening here, and here, and here".

Another mentioned that having the chance to "have a discussion and the understanding of what the role is with somebody who really gets it, who's doing the job," has been highlighted as "really important".

These regular opportunities to share practice across services has been especially helpful for the work around tribunals.

Barriers to engaging with other agencies

Capacity issues

Capacity is an important barrier. Without the time and necessary resources, it is very difficult to initiate or extend more work with other agencies. It is recognised that this has a knock-on effect on referral rates. One interviewee commented that:

> "We find ourselves is quite bogged down, almost, with the day-to-day casework without trying to generate any more referrals."

Capacity issues were also discussed when collaborating with local voluntary organisations. Several services would like to do more to reach out to them "making sure they're aware of us and signposting", but there is no time to do this work.

Furthermore, even when there is capacity in the IAS team to offer training to other agencies, other professionals are sometimes in no position to attend due to lack of time at their end:

> "Other agencies who don't understand the law (and in some cases, LA case officers and managers) say that they don't have time for training which we have offered and also don't always acknowledge that we know what we are talking about and can help them understand."

With regard to the law, some services shared that other agencies can misinform parents, something which then needs to be rectified by IAS staff. One interviewee commented that this leads to understandable "*frustration at mixed and wrong messages given by other teams and agencies*", and further highlights the importance of having more time and resource for thorough legal training to be given to other agencies.

Although, one interviewee felt that IAS had *"no power"* to make any real changes in this regard. Other agencies may be more likely to go on what the local authority policies say rather than understanding the law, as one interviewee elaborates:

> "*Other agencies believe that all local policies and practices are lawful and sometimes it can be extremely difficult to support them to understand that the law trumps local policies. This can cause services to get very defensive and take things personally.*"

Furthermore, budget pressures within local authorities, schools and other organisations have meant that *"local policies/decision-making processes have been developed often negating the law and creating higher thresholds, as a means to manage shrinking funds."*

Other respondents also made some interesting observations on the differences in the way documents are presented between IAS and the local authority which is confusing for both staff and service users.

Myth-busting

A related challenge for many services is then having to bust several myths about what IAS do and do not provide. This seems particularly apparent for schools and social care around SEN assessment, with one interviewee sharing that:

> "*It is often assumed that we are just saying something because that's what the family want, not because that's what the law says*."

One interviewee used the phrase *"feast or famine"* when it comes to promotion of their service by local schools:

> "*Even the schools that promote access to the service can often initially tell parents/children/young people a slightly skewed version of what the service can do/provide - this can be despite numerous interactions with that setting, distribution of our leaflets etc.*"

A crucial impact of lack or inaccurate knowledge about what services are set up to provide can result in poor quality request and referrals, which then often *"get rejected and then require mediation and appeals."*

Tribunals

Some interviewees have noted that relationships with LAs have become strained due to a conflict of interest in relation to tribunals. One interviewee noted that they support families throughout each stage of the appeals process "*from the beginning of the appeal all the way through, with paperwork, evidence, et cetera, literally right up until actual attendance at a tribunal,*" but the service cannot offer support and representation at the actual tribunal because the *"local authority sees it as a conflict of interest because we are based within the local authority."*

The same interviewee notes it would be helpful to be able to offer more support to families *"especially those that really kind of need that extra bit of support,"* but reflects that they are currently limited by capacity issues. In an ideal world, they would like to:

> *"Have a dedicated tribunal officer within the SENDIAS team, I think we could strengthen that offer to families but also have a better argument in terms of the local authority and how we could be meeting that minimum standard."*

Impact of joint commissioning

This section focuses on the impact of joint commissioning, mentioned by several services as being the biggest challenge to delivering the minimum standards:

> *"One of the biggest challenges we're going to face is getting the service level agreement commissioned by both the local authority and CCGs"*

Even services which report having a positive relationship with social care and health, where *"everybody really values"* the service, have not been able to influence any funding changes:

> *"When it comes to actually putting money up front, we've not been able to do that"*

Financial pressures may impact the funding that can be made to IAS services from health and social care because *"like everybody else, they're strapped for cash".* Some of these pressures can be overcome by finding the *"right decision maker, because you need that person to take this forward, but that to me it's a relationship you have to build up. They're not just going to hand over money."*

One interviewee stressed the importance of getting the *"right person around the table"* and to be ready to clearly articulate the level of demand for the service and why it is needed.

It is also clear from the interview responses that there is a lack of clarity amongst service managers about what 'joint commissioning' actually means, as one interviewee discusses:

> *"When they're saying they want us to be jointly commissioned with health, what that should look like in terms of does that mean they have to put funding in? Does that mean they have to put expertise in? Nobody's really spelled it out, what it should look like."*

The same interviewee shared that it would be helpful to know whether the joint input should be *"a certain percentage of your income comes from health or there should be someone in the team that's got health knowledge or something."*

Some interviewees revealed that they face particular difficulties engaging with health and less so with education:

> *"Health feel that this is still an education thing or a local authority thing; it's not really anything to do with us."*

There are very real frustrations with getting everyone on board *"because trying to speak to them or trying to get anything from them is like pulling teeth."*

Issues around tendering have also made it difficult to plan for the future and increased stress levels among existing IAS staff:

> *"Unfortunately, the council's decision to offer a lengthy tender process near to the end of our contract has caused real uncertainty with funding and affected our ability to plan and to recruit new staff. Uncertainty around DfE funding following the cease of IS funding has also created uncertainty so we are working hard to support staff through additional employment assistance programmes to try to retain staff and avoid sick leave as a result of stress."*

Engagement across agencies in the commissioning process can also be more difficult to navigate for those areas with multiple CCGs*, e.g. "there are three CCGs, so we've got to work with all three of them, and I don't think massive engagement is going on."*

Although none of the respondents were currently jointly commissioned by education and health, one interviewee reflected on the impact that this could have in the future:

> *"I think if we were jointly commissioned the impact would be, what I would envisage the impact would be is actually we would become busier because people would expect more for their money and rightly so."*

Opportunities to improve work with other agencies

Some interviewees volunteered a few suggestions about how to improve joint working with other agencies. One survey respondent talked about how their service is developing a series of Memorandums of Understanding to set out how they will work with different agencies, including health, social care, and voluntary organisations.

Another interviewee discussed the mutually-beneficial opportunity that increased social media uptake could bring, in terms of increasing awareness with other local agencies and also being able to signpost services users to other relevant support services:

> *"They advertise our stuff, we advertise their's - links, re-posts, re-tweets, whatever you want to call it - so that we're seen wider and well-known in the local area."*

Another way to improve cross-agency working is to invest in staff training and upskill the current staff body in specialist knowledge which could be of benefit for other agencies. As an example, one interviewee mentioned that their Young Person Advisor has undertaken an NVQ Level 6 course in Careers Guidance and Development and this has led to positive changes in terms of working with schools. Firstly, it "*meant that we could offer more information advice and support to young people",* but also to give the service *"an edge"* to get into schools*.*

Similarly, having the capacity and resource to deliver training to other agencies is valued by IAS staff and has led to objective service improvements by way of an increase in referrals, increased breadth of referral sources, and increased understanding across education, health and social care. The positive impact of providing training and support to other agencies was mentioned by several services as one of their proudest achievements since 2014, for example:

> *"This has had the beneficial effect of not only improving their knowledge and skills but of increasing referrals to SENDIASS."*

> *"Sessions delivered to groups e.g. social workers, health visitors, young people have been well received and we have noticed a spike in contacts from groups (themselves and from people they've passed info to) following sessions delivered."*

Conclusions

Working directly with CYP

Across the body of material gathered for the purposes of this 'deep dive', the main concern reported by respondents connected to the delivery of their services is capacity, linked to available resources. Limited capacity has an impact upon the ability of services to engage directly with CYP and to promote the service in proactive and effective ways. There was also acknowledgement, however, that even if take-up of services by CYP were to improve, the available resources would not necessarily be able to meet the increased demand.

The main challenges of service delivery identified by participants related to:

- Making the service accessible to CYP
- Helping other agencies understand the law
- Informing strategic decisions of LAs and other agencies

The main barriers identified to effective engagement with CYP were based around capacity (linked to funding), communication and awareness of the programme and parental control. Some services acknowledged that young people of teenage age may prefer that their parents have more of a direct link with a service provider than the young people themselves. The need to ensure that support work is tailored for communicating with CYP (as opposed to with their parents) was also highlighted. Many services have taken or are planning positive steps to increase their engagement with CYP, including:

- Employment of a CYP-specialist outreach worker
- Changing the opening hours of the service to be more CYP-friendly
- The development of social media apps and a text messaging service
- The production of videos, webinars and easy-text publications aimed at CYP by way of promoting the service
- Development of YP participation groups
- Workshop delivery at schools and other YP-directed organisations
- Partnership building with other local agencies which work with CYP.

Services report that they would welcome more collaboration with CDC around the promotion of the service directly to CYP, particularly in the development of materials.

Relationships with LAs

Working relations with LAs was highlighted as a key challenge by participants. Respondents identified the following issues in particular:

- Challenges of communication
- High turnover in SEND leadership staff
- Lack of IAS capacity
- Pressure on LA budgets and lack of ring-fenced budgets
- Amount of influence which the service has over LA practice.

The ability to foster a positive working relationship with the LA, particularly regarding inclusion of the IAS service on the local strategic board was highlighted as key in ensuring influence of the service and enabling CYP voice to be heard at a strategic level. The need to invest time in awareness raising of the service amongst key stakeholders within the local authority was identified as a key component of the overall service delivery.

Working with other agencies

Interviewees discussed the importance of building relationships with education providers – schools, colleges and further education settings, as well as other settings locally which work directly with CYP. Many participants attributed the success of such relationship-building to a dedicated CYP-outreach worker. The development of such roles can also play an important part in helping to dispel myths of what the service can and cannot achieve through the delivery of training in other settings, such as health, education, and social care. The issue of joint commissioning was also raised as having an impact upon the delivery of minimum standards. Positive ways of engaging with other agencies to improve service delivery included:

- The development of joint memorandums of understanding
- Joint social media campaigns
- The delivery of training to staff in other agencies working with CYP

Appendix 1: Survey respondent characteristics

Which of the following best describes the area your service covers?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Rural, i.e. serving one county or rural unitary authority	49%	24
Urban, i.e. serving one or more metropolitan/London boroughs	31%	15
Both	14%	7
Don't know	6%	3

How many local authority areas does your service cover?

Answer Choices	Responses	
A single local authority area	94%	46
Multiple local authority areas	6%	3
Don't know	0%	0

Is your service delivered 'in-house' (by people directly employed by a local authority) or is it outsourced (delivered by an independent organisation that has a contract with the local authority)?

Answer Choices	Responses	
In-house	78%	38
Outsourced	22%	11
Don't know	0%	0

In which region are you based?

Answer Choices	Responses	
North East	10%	5
North West	4%	2
Yorkshire and Humber	6%	3
West Midlands	18%	9
East Midlands	4%	2
East of England	10%	5
London	10%	5
South West	14%	7
South East	22%	11

Which of the following best describes your role?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Volunteer	0%	0
Front-line employee	49%	24
Service manager	51%	25

How long have you worked for the IAS service in which you are currently based?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Less than 1 year	14%	7
Between 1 year and 4 years	35%	17
More than 4 years	51%	25

Appendix 2: Interview participant characteristics

Procurement model of local IAS service	Sample	Interviewed
In-house	14	11
Outsourced	6	3

Region	Sample	Interviewed
North East	2	1
North West	3	1
Yorkshire and Humber	3	3
West Midlands	2	2
East Midlands	2	1
East of England	0	0
London	4	3
South West	2	2
South East	2	1

Local population (0-25yr)	Sample	Interviewed
0-80K	6	4
80-150K	9	6
150K+	5	4