



## Portsmouth : An empowerment IAS Service model

Portsmouth is the most densely populated city in the UK outside of London. It is bordered by the much larger Local Authorities (LA) of Hampshire and West Sussex. Portsmouth IAS Service is outsourced from the LA and is based in a community building in Southsea where several other local charities and services are located, including the Parent Carer Forum, Portsmouth Parent Voice. Most queries are received via telephone, email and social media. The IAS Service is well known in the local area.

### The challenge

Deprivation levels in the city are high, with Portsmouth ranked 63rd of 326 local authorities where 1 is the most deprived in terms of the average score. 22% of all dependent children under the age of 20 years are living in poverty, which is above the England average with levels at twice the national average in some areas of the city. The city has an ethnically diverse population with 20% of school-age children being of non-White British ethnicity. Over 100 languages are spoken by pupils attending Portsmouth schools. As a result, enquiries in to the service are often complex and requiring high levels of support, often on a face-to-face basis. Advisers had adapted their ways of working to accommodate this key client group, however, due to time pressures were not always working to an empowerment model, even when it might have fulfilled their requirements.

### Initial impact of IAS programme funding

The funding has enabled additional management capacity to conduct a comprehensive service review and prepare a detailed two year plan for the IAS Service. It has also allowed time for reflection and a detailed review and scrutiny of casework notes to fully comprehend the levels of support the service had been providing.

### Impact to service beneficiaries

In Year 1 the Information Advice and Support (IAS) programme funding was used towards:

- Developing a triage model for all new referrals. This approach assesses the capacity of the caller to help themselves and when deemed appropriate provides factsheets and initial information to provide initial support instead of automatically being put through to an adviser. This means only more complex cases are passed to the advisers.
- Making improvements to self-service resources to support the triage role.
- Creating a dedicated YP adviser for 12 hours a week to proactively engage with young people about what they require from the service.

## Lessons learnt

- Good, accessible resources (fact sheets, template letters etc) enable the IAS Service to give information more efficiently now and in the future.
- The importance in assessing the capacity of the parent carer or young person rather than assuming a high level of support is needed.
- To make better use of volunteers in order to improve sustainability and help meet the growing demand on the IAS Service.
- A positive and constructive relationship with the LA SEN team and other key partners leads to better solutions for families.

## How is the approach being sustained?

Planning is now in place to establish a multi-agency steering group which should inform the joint commissioning of the IAS Service for April 2020

The IAS Service will continue to work closely with the Parent Carer Forum

Developing volunteer roles will improve capacity to meet demand, allowing managers to prioritise strategy and team development over casework

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