

Rochdale : Supporting Strategic Decision Making & Use of Resources

Rochdale is a borough located within Greater Manchester and encompasses Rochdale, Heywood and Middleton. The borough has urban and rural communities with almost a third of the population of Rochdale Borough living in areas amongst the 10% most deprived in the country. There are vibrant and well established Black and Minority Ethnic communities within the borough making up 21% of the population.

The IAS Service is outsourced to Barnardos and currently supports children, young people and their parent/carers from pre-school into Further Education offering impartial information advice and support on the full range of enquiries received relating to special educational needs (SEN). It has established links with Parent Carer Voice, Education, Health, Social Care and other organisations who support children with SEN and their families.

The challenge

The IAS Service has significant amounts of data that track the issues being experienced and wanted to use this to inform senior managers in their decision making, alongside service development across Education, Health and Social Care. Families have shared that where they need to involve more than one service to have issues addressed, they would like this to be co-ordinated and would like information packs relating to their issue readily available. The Local Area SEND report states 5025 children, 13.9% of children receive SEN support or have an EHCP. The IAS Service is very busy and needed additional time in order to reflect and effectively plan to ensure it is able to make best use of resources and maximise efficiency of a small team with the aim of meeting local need.

Initial impact of IAS programme funding

Funding through the Information Advice and Support (IAS) Programme has given the Children's Services Manager an opportunity to establish and strengthen local relationships, including making stronger links with Health, which had not been possible previously. This has resulted in the steering group having a Health representative involved in the decision making process at strategic level.

Funding has helped provide additional capacity to reflect on how to best use the data collected by the IAS Service, to then inform strategic leads of the recurring and emerging themes being presented to the IAS Service. Work to reflect on current practice and delivery has also enabled more involvement of children and young people, parents and carers and further engagement with other IAS Service providers, as well as those IAS Service delivered by Barnardos in other areas. This has led to more sharing of resources and training opportunities that has gone on to benefit everyone involved in IAS Service delivery.

Impact to service beneficiaries

The service now offers drop-ins in the evening and during the day. These sessions enable individuals to access key people by providing young people, parents and carers with a “one stop shop” approach. Representatives from IAS Service and Parent Carer Voice as well as the SEND manager are always in attendance along with other key professionals who attend on a more occasional basis.

The data collected regarding issues currently faced, the prevalence, any particular groups of children and young people impacted upon has been used to create a report that has been presented to the Children with Disabilities Partnership Board. The outcome from this was the establishment of a task and finish group that explores one of the key themes highlighted; identifying the scale of the issue and action required to address it.

The extra funding was also used to increase service capacity by increasing hours of staff time. This additional time was used to develop new resources on key topics. These are available to all and pull together information. Quality assurance is assured due to consistency, particularly for any situation set out in law and the Code of Practice.

Lessons learnt

Going forward the service is in a stronger position having strengthened relationships, comprehensively reflected on and facilitated discussions regarding how best to meet the identified needs. IAS Service development tasks are informed and prioritised by this knowledge and understanding and are included in the 2019/20 plan.

How is the approach being sustained?

Discussions regarding Health contributing to the service going forward have been had. The steering group has strengthened and widened its reach and it is now an active and supportive body holding the service to account against its plans and its implementation. Parent Carer Voice has representatives on the steering group and are very proactive in ensuring the IAS Service works in a co-productive manner. The Local Authority have fully supported and actively engaged in the aims and plan for the service going forward.

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