

West Sussex IASS: Empowering Families through Webinars

The context

The service is based within the Education and Skills Service, working at 'arms-length' from the LA with a dedicated Team Manager and service budget. West Sussex has 3921 CYP with EHCPs and **15,974 CYP on 'SEN Support'**.

The issue identified to be tackled using IASP funding

The ability to deliver webinars would help to video and record information and advice to help empower parent/carers with the knowledge and confidence to move their own situation on in a positive way.

This would address the following issues:

- Empower those parents who want to understand a bit more about the law and related national guidance on specific SEND subjects.
- Offer information and guidance quickly whilst service users are waiting to speak to an adviser
- Ensure advisers have the capacity to give more intense support to those who need it
- A place for professionals to go to build on their SEND knowledge, helping them when supporting families.

How funding was used

Purchase of a year's webinar subscription (Click Meeting)

The difference made

Although this decision was made before the pandemic occurred, it proved invaluable as the team had already learnt the 'online' way of working and delivering information and advice. This was especially useful as the platform (Microsoft Teams) was not implemented within the service until around September 2020.

The service tried to think of different ways to engage with families to deliver information and advice. It had previously trialled delivering a webinar about IASS (using a free trial of a webinar platform) a couple of years earlier. Based on the feedback received this seemed successful so it was decided to purchase a year's webinar subscription so online presentations on specific subjects could be delivered on topics that were known to be important to service users based on information received during consultation in 2019.

The live webinars gave attendees the opportunity to ask their questions at the time the webinar was being recorded. Following this the webinar were then added to the website, so they can be viewed whenever

needed. Included below the webinar are links to all the documents referred to and any other additional relevant information.

The subjects delivered since January 2020 are:

- School Exclusions – a guide to the law and responsibilities
- SEN Support at School
- Education, Health and Care Needs Assessments (EHCNA) – Criteria and Requests
- Introduction to Options after Year 11

The webinars can be found here: <https://westsussexsendias.org/videos-webinars/>

A voluntary group kindly posted a comment via the Local Offer, on the SENDIASS summary card after one of the webinars took place: "Your first Webinar today was very successful. I have already shared my experience with my organisation and passed on the downloaded copy of the Webinar."

Further live training has since been delivered through the meeting platform 'Zoom'. This has been in partnership with local partners, 'Reaching Families' and the 'Parent Carer Forum' as they both now have 'Zoom' subscriptions.

The service has also gone on to produce tools and resources to empower those parent/carers that are more able to help themselves and self-advocate to resolve their situation. These include tools on checking your draft EHCP, and how to make a request for an EHC needs assessment (EHCNA). These are accompanied by a short video (using the online software) with an adviser explaining the information and resource, ensuring that those who may need additional support know they can still call IASS. It is felt that this is helpful for those who want to access information and advice quickly to be reassured re the best course of action. The service will continue to develop further resources in other subject areas. Advisers can email any of this information out, or if an adviser is very busy the Liaison Officer may be able to send out the information on their behalf. This may help the service user while they are waiting for the adviser to make contact or it may even give them the answer they needed. This all helps give advisers extra capacity to work with those service users that may need more intense support ensuring they are not at a disadvantage.

In addition, the 'Click Meeting' subscription meant the service could develop online training for volunteers on a dedicated, private page on the service website. Although this was primarily aimed at inducting new volunteers, it has also been very well received from more experienced volunteers to revise and refresh their knowledge. SENDIASS also worked with other local partners e.g. Educational Psychology Service, Autism and Social Communication Team, School Effectiveness and Ethnic and Minority and Traveller Achievement Service to enable them to deliver training early on in the pandemic (when other platforms were not yet available). This helped with partnership working with these teams and highlighted the need and benefit of the LA sourcing something similar for all their employees.

One of the advantages of the pandemic is it forced the issue for the need to have a way of engaging with colleagues and service users online, where face-to-face was not possible. This has led to all West Sussex County Council employees having Microsoft Teams on their computers, meaning SENDIASS advisers were able to attend virtual meetings with parent/carers. Advisers have also used the online meeting software to support parent/carers by sharing screens and talking through documents/letters with them. The following quote is feedback given by a parent following her experience using this method to support checking her child's draft EHCP: "Due to my autism/dyslexia I find it extremely hard to take lots of information over the phone, if it had not been for the SENDIASS adviser adapting her service and providing Teams meetings, I would not have been able to access the much needed support for our family. I feel this service (Teams meetings) should be used and rolled out as a regular form of contact as it helped me. Thanks to SENDIASS adapting their services, I now have an EHCP for my daughter and a light at the end of our very long tunnel."

Moving on past the pandemic the service now sees 'Microsoft Teams' as a vital tool (without the need to renew the 'Click Meeting' subscription) to continue to engage with and empower service users in the future. Whether it be through knowledge and resources or the ability to attend meetings or support parent/carers when it is not possible, for whatever reason, to physically be there.

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