

# SENDiass



SEND Information, Advice and Support Service for  
Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council  
area  
(SENDiass4BCP)

**Sustainability plan 2021**

**IASP**

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## **Context and requirement for IAS sustainability, including sustainability plan**

SENDiass4BCP is an inhouse, statutory service as part of the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council Local Authority area. Despite austerity and funding challenges within wider local government, there is wide recognition that the scope of the service is ever increasing- most significant since the 2014 reforms and continues to do so in the ever changing climate of the education sector.

IASP funding has been gratefully received. The funding dove-tailed with local government reorganisation and enabled joint planning, between what were Bournemouth and Poole SENDiass, prior to coming together as a single service across BCP on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019. The IASP development plans, agreed between 2018 and 2021, have allowed us to focus on key future priorities and enabled us to ensure, as a new service, we developed compliance with IAS Minimum Standards. Furthermore, it allowed us to evidence the need for additional staffing with senior Managers within BCP Council, enabling previous fixed term contracts to become permanent from April 2020. In addition the funding has allowed for training and development, and moreover, improve our service offer as a whole.

We appreciate that there is not an endless pot of money to enable this to continue, and so wanted to look at ways we can ourselves, sustain the outcomes we have achieved under IASP. The outcomes we were previously funded on, we feel, are still relevant when moving forward.

## **What have we done with existing funding and what it has enabled us to do?**

Under IASP funding, we were able to focus resources on the following areas:

- Service contribution- ensuring we were adequately staffed, with the recruitment of additional members of the team, to meet local increasing demand for support and more specifically to build our core offer to children and young people. Funding also enabled back-fill for the Manager's post, to remove the need for case work within the role and to enable more focus on the strategic remit.
- Supporting strategic functions- building capacity within the team structure to ensure that we are able to work effectively with our local partners, to influence policy and practice across the new BCP Council area, due to the expansion of SENDIASS remit across Christchurch, as well as Bournemouth and Poole. Fundamentally this has had the participation of children and young people, at its heart and developing opportunities for co-production.
- Supporting core functions- permanent staffing has afforded greater stability within the team structure and has ensured we can maintain our response times all year round. We have ensured we worked towards the mitigations of the risk register where we identified potential difficulties in meeting need

across a wider geographical area. This has been tested rigorously in times of COVID, where we have shown that despite significant service disruption, we have been able to assure service continuity without any break, or hinderance on the families using us.

A recent consultation with parent carers regarding our operational plan, has identified that on the whole parent carers prefer the new way of working, which includes access via virtual platforms but with the addition of clinic type sessions, within local communities.

- Professional development- we have been able to assess for, secure, and attend training to enhance the team's knowledgebase and skill set, and enrich the offer we have to give families. We now have three staff who have received train the trainer accreditation and through the funding we have been able to extend this opportunity to the Co-chair of our local Parent Carer Forum. Thus, promoting partnership working between our organisations, as strategic partners and enhancing the delivery of our training programme to parent carers and professionals.

All SENDiass Officers have received advocacy awareness training, which has enhanced their understanding of statutory and non-statutory advocacy and how that relates to the support delivered by IAS. We were able to secure training via a local independent advocacy charity, which has also developed our partnership working ensuring a referral route for young people and parent carers, who may require additional advocacy support over and above that which is offered by SENDiass.

- Supporting innovation- through engagement with BCP Parent Carer Forum, Parent Carers Together (PCT) regarding the design and development of SENDiass4BCP, we were able to identify a gap in providing early IAS to parent/carers & how utilising expertise of parent/carers to support others, could be beneficial. Thus, we have been able to use grant funding to develop a Parent Champion project whereby volunteers are being recruited and trained. The emphasis is to develop partnerships with local schools, so that volunteers can link in with parent carers and deliver information and signposting, to parent carers whilst raising awareness of SENDiass4BCP, Parent Carers Together and other local/national routes of support depending on needs.

### **How we will try to ensure continuity, and our action plan**

We feel strongly that the outcomes above are the right ones to carry on with as priorities for the service. The impact of the funding in allowing these outcomes to be delivered, has meant that families accessing us, have genuinely had the best possible service we can deliver. Using the funding to build capacity and demonstrate the need for stability and continuity within the service, enabled the securing permanent posts, through the local authority. This has enabled the 'spread' of work to be more even amongst team members and has allowed flexibility within

their working week, to focus on development activities such as developing parent carer and professional workshops, with an overall benefit to the children, young people and families we serve. The team now have very busy, yet manageable caseloads and this has served to reduce some of the stress relating to work matters. A further benefit of a larger, stable team (which has been seen as a particular benefit during COVID and remote working) is that there is always someone to contact to chat through a particular situation, to offload some of the stressors and to share some lighter moments! We have built in buddy groups, weekly peer supervision and twice monthly team meetings, all of which are much more effective, productive, and valuable with a larger team. We have embedded the Action Learning Set process within peer supervision, which all team members are benefitting from in terms of resolving conundrums within case work.

We currently have a stable work force, who are well supported and perform very well, despite the challenging times. We have sustained response times of within two working days, and have access to information, advice and signposting 24/7, through our website. We have been able to carry out engagement work with young people regarding the website and are acting on their suggestions to make it more meaningful and accessible for them. We have listened to young people's views on social media access and now have a SENDiass4BCP Instagram page, alongside Facebook and Twitter. We have also increased access to IAS outside of office hours, through developing webinars which have been uploaded to SENDiass4BCP You tube.

Area of development	Work we undertook with IASP funding	How we will sustain this/ what we need to do
Service contribution Supporting strategic functions	<p>There will be capacity within the team structure to ensure that we are able to:</p> <p>Ensure the participation of children and young people in the strategic development of our children and young person's SENDiass offer.</p> <p>Work effectively with our local partners, to influence policy and practice across BCP, due to the expansion of SENDIASS remit across</p>	<p>We were able to secure x3 additional fixed term SENDiass Officer posts, including the Children and Young Person's Development Officer. From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 these posts became permanent. As a service including the Manager, we have an overall FTE of 5.57.</p> <p>This has enabled the following work to develop and continue: Ensuring young people's voice is included within the steering group and</p>

	Christchurch, as well as Bournemouth and Poole.	<p>influences the development of SENDiass locally.</p> <p>Children and Young People have been consulted regarding their views of SENDiass and other services they are involved with.</p> <p>Working collaboratively with LA and CCG representatives to embed SENDiass participation work, within the local Participation Strategy and co-production agenda within BCP SEND Services.</p>
Supporting core functions	Ensuring compliance with the advocacy element of SENDiass duties, outlined in the IAS Minimum Standards.	<p>Training workshop received through a local advocacy charity, further developing team understanding regarding pathways for advocacy support, when it is outside of SENDiass remit or role.</p> <p>Knowledge within the team can now be cascaded to new team members, as required.</p>
Professional development	We have staff within the team who have attended accredited courses, to develop their training delivery skills.	For more specific or cost implicated training, we will have some savings from the lack of travel/ mileage expenses claimed throughout COVID which can be added to the training pot.

Supporting innovation	To expand reach within the service through developing an identified group of Parent Champion volunteers, who can support parent/carers with signposting to services and Level one information/advice.	We are recruiting a Parent Champion Coordinator, in partnership with our local Parent Carer Forum. This will be a fixed term 2 year contract, to develop and embed the project locally. It is planned that following the initial set up of the project including training programme and systems, the project will then be sustained after 2 years by a representative from SENDiass and the Parent Carer Forum.
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### Joint working arrangements

SENDiass4BCP and Parent Carers Together (the parent carer forum for BCP Council area), have always worked hand in hand together and share the same values and ethos. We have developed a joint memorandum of understanding to reflect our strategic partnership and joint working. We have for some years now, met regularly to discuss key issues and more recently have engaged PCT in chairing our Steering Group meetings. We are also co-providing virtual coffee mornings for PCT members and others, to access SENDiass in an informal way.

PCT have consulted with parent carers on the workshop themes they would like SENDiass to focus on and team members have then written and designed the workshops, drawing on our legal knowledge. PCT have then facilitated us in their building (pre-COVID) and then virtually. Parents and carers are invited jointly by both organisations and the workshops are always free to parents and carers. Feedback from attendees has enabled us to develop and change the training, as required.

We have, however, started designing between us bespoke packages for schools and professionals, where we are initially focussing on awareness of the role and remit of both organisations, SEN Support, co-production and partnership working.

We have jointly been tasked within the BCP Council SEND Improvement Plan to collaboratively develop co-production training for professionals and have recently worked together on both parent carer contribution to EHCPs and a co-production charter, in partnership with SEND colleagues across education, health and social care.

At the start of the pandemic in March 2020, our partnership and relationship went from strength to strength, and became co-dependent, as both organisations strived to ensure families were supported to the best of our abilities, and were kept informed

in a factual, consistent way. Early in the first lockdown period, PCT approached SENDiass to provide an FAQ document, in response to key themes emerging from parent carers. At that stage, there was a particular focus on home learning, the delivery of provision identified in section F of an EHCP and concerns about the provision of therapies and other support, whilst pupils were unable to attend school. This joint working evolved into a weekly virtual meeting, 'Communicating with parent carers during COVID', hosted by BCP Council SEND Services and the CCG and a weekly bulletin going out from the Local Offer. SENDiass has since been regularly asked by the Local Offer Manager to provide updates and advice to parent carers, as part of this bulletin.

Furthermore, we are collaborating on the Parent Champion project. We have agreed a level of joint funding and as this is a new post, have co-produced the job description and will be writing the recruitment advert together. PCT will be part of the recruitment process with SENDiass, from shortlisting, to interviewing, to appointing. This is a very exciting development in our working together and represents huge progress in the partnership between our organisations.

### **The impact on our families and other stakeholders**

SENDiass4BCP is proud to retain a responsive and accessible service. During the challenges of COVID, feedback indicates 4.5 out of 5 stars for accessibility and whilst we strive for a 5 star rating, we are pleased that the vast majority of respondents felt that we were still easy to get in touch with. The full feedback details and figures will be published in our annual report 2020/21 and are fed back to IASSN upon request.

Our qualitative feedback is always extremely positive, with the most common statements families make being:

- The friendliness of staff and their ability to people at ease
- How reassuring and helpful the information, advice and guidance has been
- The information and advice have enabled a greater sense of confidence
- That things are now better or improving for them

We also enclose a case study to highlight the impact in one case regarding a young person (Appendix A).

### **Final note**

All staff within SENDiass4BCP are passionate and committed to providing an exemplary service to those who require it. This has been evident throughout the last year, as we grappled with the impact of the pandemic. They have continued to effectively deliver information, advice and support in increasingly complex circumstances and have embraced the new ways of working we have been forced to develop as part of our prolonged remote working throughout COVID. There has

been no detriment to service delivery and team members have gone above and beyond to support those who have found the virtual world difficult to manage.

The profile of SENDiass has been significantly elevated during the last year, not least because of some very positive comments regarding the service, within the LGA Peer Review conducted in January 2020. Alongside this we have been able to secure increased capacity within the team, courtesy of IASP funding initially, thus enabling greater representation within the SEND strategic boards, SEND improvement working groups and CCG development and behaviour pathway strategic group.

Capacity will be further developed following the securing of additional funding through joint commissioning with the CCG. The plan is to recruit additional posts, including SENDiass Level 1 Advisors to be first point of contact, for incoming calls to our advice line and additional Officer hours. These developments will further support the stability and continuity of SENDiass4BCP for the future.

The narrative outlined in this plan, hopefully demonstrates the tenacity, creativity and resilience within SENDiass4BCP and that we plan to continue the trajectory that we have enjoyed progressing, under IASP contracting, with the increased LA and CCG funding we have now received.

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## Appendix A Case study

<p>What was the CYP/family situation when they came to the IAS Service?</p>
<p>A young person contacted SENDiass directly and advised they were a Looked After Child and had a long-term medical condition that had affected their ability to attend school and study for GCSE's. The young person had attended the local medical school/alternative provision and had limited options in the number of exams they could access.</p> <p>The young person found travelling to one FE College, where they were studying at Level 3, very difficult due to their condition. They wanted to transfer to another more local college. The problem was, that Academic Year the College had changed its entry requirements for the Level 3 course, requiring five rather than the four GCSE's, which the young person had already gained.</p>
<p>What support did the IAS Service provide?</p>
<p>The Children and Young Person's Development Officer, met the young person at home and went through the information, supporting them to prepare for an admission's meeting with a tutor at the FE College. They were very well organised and motivated but were nervous and anxious. However, they expressed feeling more confident after the initial meeting and felt more prepared.</p> <p>Two days later the young person was supported by SENDiass at the College, with the Career Advisor from the medical school who had been very supportive and written a letter of support for their ability and aptitude. The young person did very well in explaining the situation and their desire to study at Level 3. They struck up a good rapport with the tutor who duly signed them up for the Level 3 course and was impressed that they had come ready with all certificates for uploading to the college systems.</p> <p>During the meeting the young person broke down saying they were tired of having to go through all this every time and tell their story. With support from the Children and Young Person's Development Officer they were able to continue and were able to sign up to start the course the very next day.</p>
<p>What was the impact of IAS support on the CYP/family?</p>
<p>The Children and Young Person's Officer was able to respond quickly and supportively to the young person's initial enquiry and ensured that they had the opportunity to be empowered to develop their aspirations and views, to present to the college meeting.</p> <p>In advocating on behalf of the young person within the meeting, the Children and Young Person's Officer was able to assist the College Tutor's understanding of the young person's educational experience and clarify the remit of the medical school. This seemed to change the tutor's openness to hear the young person's point of view.</p> <p>The young person provided feedback following SENDiass support and advised that they have been able to sustain the Level 3 course so far and have independently negotiated SEN support, within college, to meet their needs.</p>





