

## Gloucestershire IASS: Supporting our community during the pandemic

### The context

Gloucestershire is a large rural county with 86,500 children of statutory school age and 142,000 CYP between the ages of 0 and 19. There are 4,045 CYP with EHCPs and 11,872 CYP receiving some form of SEN Support. Currently there are 246 primary schools, 40 secondary schools and 11 special schools in the county as well as a number of independent schools, non-maintained special schools, independent special schools, free schools and a range of Post 16 provision.

Throughout the pandemic, the Gloucestershire SENDIASS noticed that engagement with its social media increased quite significantly and parents were more likely to make contact through the website, by email or by text rather than by phone. Calls to the helpline varied hugely over the past year, seeing some very quiet times (3 or 4 calls a day) to incredibly busy times (30 parents waiting for a call back).

### The issue that was identified to be tackled using IASP funding

The service priority was to develop a high-quality service for YP, to reach seldom heard communities or those communities where their home language wasn't English and to develop some joint training sessions with the local Parent Carer Forum.

As a small service (a Service Manager and 1 fte adviser), it was agreed that in order to do everything that was required to expand the service, it would need to recruit an additional adviser. The IASP Funding was used to recruit a YP's Adviser for 18.5 hours per week.

The YP's Adviser has taken the lead on developing this area of the service including contacting a number of Post 16 settings and colleges, local SENCo cluster groups, training providers, other organisations that offer support to YP as well as YP and their parents/carers.

Ways of working have had to change quite significantly since the pandemic began including finding alternatives to home visits to vulnerable families (such as those who can't leave their homes due to mental health difficulties or where their children cannot be left in someone else's care because of their needs). The YP's Adviser also wanted to be able to meet YP face-to-face as it was believed this would have been the most effective way to build relationships. Instead a more flexible approach had to be adopted including the use of different platforms according to the individual needs of the person. The platforms used included MS Teams, Zoom, WebEx, Jabber, Skype, Google Hangout, Google Meet and WhatsApp. The YP's Adviser has also been looking at apps such as 'Mind Of My Own' that can be used with YP.

## How the funding was used

The funding was used to pay for a part-time YP's Adviser, who has:

- Helped to prepare for, and attended a number of meetings and Annual Reviews with YP
- Developed the YP's area of the SENDIASS website and uploaded information videos
- Developed a 'Get Ready!' Toolkit for families and YP to work on for PFA
- Been invited to take part in BBC Glos breakfast show to promote seeking support SEND post 16 especially during lockdown
- Reached out to local Forest of Dean radios and free magazines
- Developing a podcast with a student from the University of Gloucestershire
- Established links with the Youth Shaw Group and Gloucestershire Youth Support Team
- Working with an external organisation to translate our leaflets into Syrian and Punjabi

## The difference made (i.e. the impact of your work and how your service/service users have benefitted)

Without the IASP Funding, it wouldn't have been possible to offer the level of service to YP that it has. There is now a designated area of the service website which YP can access independently or with support, so they can find out more about what their rights and options are. Also, it wouldn't have been possible to offer the YP the 1:1 support at all the meetings and Annual Reviews that the service was asked to attend.

Some positive working relationships have now been established between IASS and a number of post 16 settings, colleges, training providers and employers. These relationships didn't exist before because there wasn't the capacity for the service to develop these.

Parent/carers have also been pleased to know that there is support available for their YP but that (where necessary and/or appropriate) they won't be excluded from some of the discussions about what the YP wants and their wishes for their 'next steps'. When the YP's Adviser was first in post and was asking parent/carers how they would feel about their YP seeking advice independently of them, most of them were in favour but several parents said that they would be happy 'as long as people weren't going to put ideas in their YP's heads'. The YP's Adviser has worked really hard to gain parents' confidence, recognising that for many YP, if their parents aren't 'on board' with what they would like to achieve it becomes difficult for everyone to help that YP fulfil their wishes and aspirations.

The YP's Adviser has had to have some difficult conversations with professionals about a YP's aspirations too. At an Annual Review, the YP's Adviser was presenting the YP's views, as the YP felt that he wasn't able to take part in the AR and the parent had asked for him not to be there. As the YP's Adviser was reading his views, she said that he had expressed a wish 'to be a train driver'. Without discussion the person leading the AR, half laughed and said 'well we all know that's not going to happen'. The parent felt a little put out that that was how the school saw her son but didn't want to say anything (possibly because she was upset), but the YP's Adviser stepped in and challenged the school's view as to why they had felt that wasn't achievable and even if it wasn't, why the school hadn't considered that there might be other roles that would be suitable for him at a train station. This led to a more productive discussion about how the YP could be supported to achieve their goal of working with trains. After the AR, the parent fed back that she was pleased that the YP's Adviser had challenged the school as she didn't feel that she was able to.

### Contact details

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