

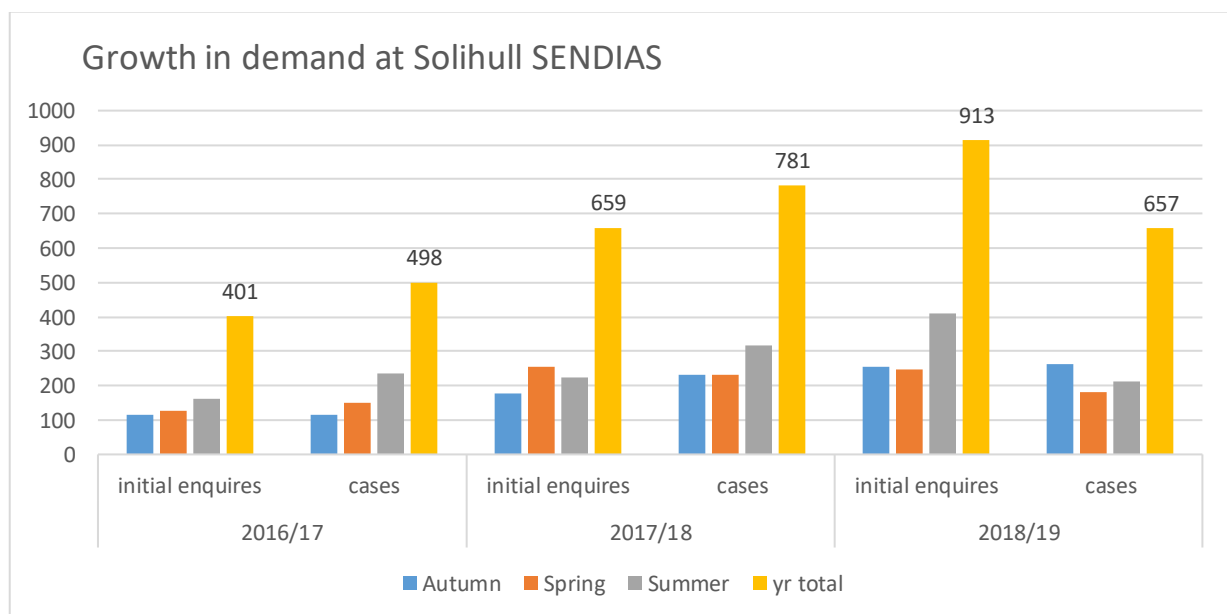
Solihull IASS : Strengthening service delivery and service engagement with young people

The context

Solihull is located in the West Midlands and is considered by many to be an affluent area. However, 23 areas are listed in the 20% most deprived areas in the country and 6 areas are in the bottom 5%. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) estimates that Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council had a resident population of 214,909 in 2018, with approx. 51,440 under 19 year olds. In 2017, Solihull Council school place commissioning reported there were 4,900 pupils (11.9%) on SEN support (11.6% national average). According to SEN2 data in 2018, Solihull maintained a total of 1,444 EHCPs; representing an overall increase of 2% from 2017 and an increase of 17% since 2016. In 2018, Solihull Council issued 206 new EHC plans with 23% of these being issued within the 20-week timeframe; additionally the LA had 72 mediation cases 9 of which continued to tribunal. SEN2 data states that by January 2019 Solihull were maintaining 1461 EHC plans.

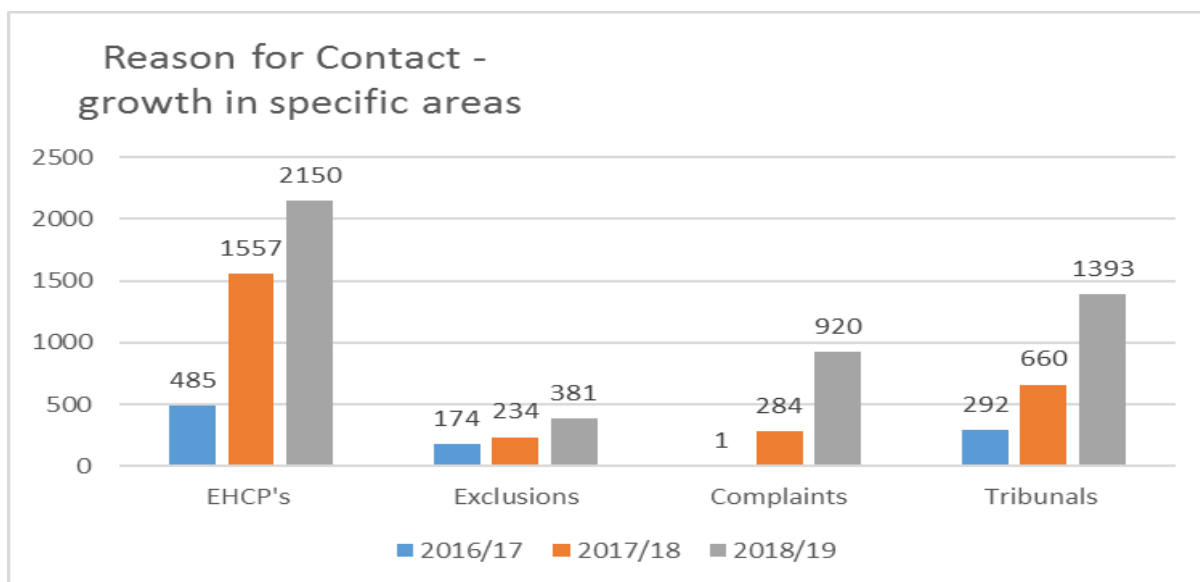
Solihull SENDIAS is an outsourced service and has been managed by Family Action since September 2016. The LA fund 3 posts: a service manager (full time), admin support (7 hours) and a caseworker (18 hours). It currently has 2 volunteers: one helps with admin tasks the other is a caseworker.

Since 2016 Solihull SENDIAS has seen a significant increase from parents and a few YP for support in both initial enquiries and casework.



On contacting families, parents and young people are given initial advice and sent any relevant information sheets and/or signposted to other sources of free information and advice (Local Offer, IPSEA, CONTACT). They are informed that they will be added to the waiting list but to call back if their situation changes.

The biggest areas of concern for families are support for EHC plans (requests to assess & Annual Reviews) and tribunal support (which includes support at Mediation). However, we have also seen significant growth in families wanting support around complaints and exclusions.



These are often the most time intensive areas of support, which also limits service capacity to undertake lower level casework. This impacts on families as unresolved matters often escalate meaning too many children and YP then end up at crisis point including school refusal, high anxiety, or poor mental health.

How IASP funding has improved the IASS offer to its service users

IASP funding has enabled the recruitment of 2 part time staff: a CYP worker and a caseworker. Both have been busy over the summer gaining the knowledge necessary to support families, including through Family Action's in house training & IPSEA legal training. They have also been shadowing experienced staff and the volunteer caseworker to gain knowledge on local processes and procedures. Both now have the necessary skills and knowledge to deal with initial enquiries and are starting to take IASSN level 2 casework. This extra capacity within our team means we have been able to greatly reduce the waiting list.

The CYP worker has been in contact with local YP groups to start to develop engagement with YP. The plan is to extend this reach to secondary schools and colleges in 2020. The CYP worker is also in contact with a local advocacy group SATa, who have a contract with Solihull Council to set up a SEND YP forum. They will work together to get this forum up and running.

The additional staff have enabled the service manager to work more strategically & to promote volunteering within the service, which has encouraged a previous volunteer to return, & led to an application from a new volunteer. The partnership and strategic work Solihull SENDIASS undertakes helps inform local, regional and national policy and practice. Its strategic presence ensures co-production with more than the Parent Carer Forum, as it works with all the SEND support groups in the area; ensuring that SEND families are supported to be heard and that the voice of children and YP with SEND are represented and heard at strategic levels across the LA and CCG.

Ways in which improvements have positively enhanced the service user experience

As our "bank" of information for YP grows, the webpage has been adjusted making it clearer what information is intended for YP www.solihull-sendias.org.uk. Feedback from YP says that this is better for them, and some parents have accessed the YP information for themselves, as it is in easy read format. The selection of information available here will continue to be expanded on.

Following on from work last year with a YP to design the YP service leaflet, SENDIASS has been engaging with YP (with SEND) to co-produce the new YP webpage; some initial ideas were shared with several groups of YP for feedback. It soon became obvious that what SENDIASS considered appropriate for a YP webpage and what the YP wanted differed.

YP commented on the use of graphics, the formatting used, the use of language and the relevance of some of the information. Some also analysed the draft webpage idea from their peers' points of views.

Comments included:

- The photo only represents hidden disabilities and doesn't have any YP with physical disabilities.
- Some pictures are not relevant to what they are supposed to be representing.
- Some of the words are too complicated to read "impartial"
- Some people won't know what some words mean – concerning, expressing, signposting
- The text inside the signposts is difficult to read because the colours clash.
- The colours are nice and it's in sections that are easy to find.
- Easy to navigate & good layout.
- It's not too long,
- The section "things to do" is irrelevant to why YP would look at SENDIASS.
- It's good that the names of the workers are on there but a photo would be good too.
- It's good that it says who people are and what they do.

The SENDIASS Marketing and Communications team are drafting the new webpage for YP to review again before this goes live.

Lessons the service has learnt making service improvements

One of the main things the increased capacity has allowed the service to do is be able to spend more time engaging and consulting with YP. Moving forward recognition that this area of development coupled with work undertaken to proactively raise awareness of the service, will mean there will be a need to deliver a higher quality service but also meet the increasing demand on the service.

The work to co-produce a new YP webpage involved widely consulting with YP in order to fully engage them with the work of the service. This process has greatly improved our understanding of the needs and wants of YP when accessing the service. SENDIASS original ideas as to how to present information were often different to what the YP considered appropriate or ideal so this was an important lesson in ensuring the information provided is as effective and accessible as possible.

The approach being taken to sustain the improvements achieved

The impact of having two new additional members of staff will be difficult to sustain beyond the end of March 2020 without further funding. However, the CYP worker will have engaged with settings and the aim is that CYP will be more aware of the service and of their own rights regarding the support they want and need. Information that is specifically for YP will exist, making SEND information more accessible to them. This will help CYP know what support they can access and provide a stronger voice in their setting, the local area and nationally. The difficulty will be how to meet service demand as CYP's knowledge of the service improves, along with the growth in demand from parents for support.

Contact details:

Hazel Clarke

Service Manager

Solihull IAS Service

Hazel.clarke@family-action.org.uk