



**NATIONAL  
CHILDREN'S  
BUREAU**  
Part of the family



## Wolverhampton IASS : Multi agency response to third lockdown

### The context

Wolverhampton IASS has worked remotely throughout the pandemic and has continued to provide IAS to CYP with SEND and their parents/carers. Ways of working had to be adapted in the early days of lockdown in 2020 but the IASS has continued to provide a high level, quality service which continues to receive positive feedback.

Wolverhampton is known for its excellent partnership working and this is a strong foundation as it continually seeks to improve and strengthen the way in which it meets the needs of CYP with SEND and their families. There is an excellent relationship across Education, Health and Social Care and with the local parent/carer forum.

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

Wolverhampton wanted to learn lessons from the experiences of families throughout the first lockdown. Through a [survey conducted by Wolverhampton IASS](#), it was clear from the 140 responses that many families felt isolated and struggled with many challenges. The PCF also raised many concerns on behalf of local parents/carers and the challenges that the pandemic posed.

In response to the announcement of the third lockdown, the LA and its partners in Health and Social Care responded to the PCF about needing a more frequent discussion and an arena to share concerns and seek solutions in relation to the challenges of the pandemic and the restrictions. It was agreed that a weekly meeting would take place at a time to suit parent representatives. Membership was agreed to include heads of service from the LA (Education and Social Care) and a representative from CCG, IASS, Educational Psychology Service, SEN Assessment and Review Team and the Outreach Service. 3 members of the PCF were invited to these meetings which were called “**Lockdown Update and Support Planning**”

The IASS has been incredibly busy with increased referrals for casework (both in terms of number and complexity). The IASS has also seen a significant increase in its strategic work across the SEND partnership. This, coupled with the additional remote learning and training offer, has led to the IASS being in huge demand. As always, Wolverhampton IASS is keen to be proactive and look for ways to reduce a reliance on firefighting. It was deemed that ensuring regular attendance at these meetings would not only strengthen the relationship with partners but help it in being able to respond to issues in a more considered manner.

## How the funding was used

The IASP has allowed the IASS to focus staff time on a number of different projects. It has ensured that the IASS Manager has been able to concentrate on ensuring not only that the IASS meets the national minimum standards but also that it is aware of and responsive to local need. It was deemed important that the IASS joined these meetings.

Either the IASS Manager or the IASS Officer attended these weekly meetings which were held virtually every week at the end of the day. Topics and the range of discussion included the vaccination programme, testing in schools, support around mental health and well-being, statutory duties and legislation in relation to SEND, practical support with access to food/prescriptions and general updates on national and local developments. In late February it was agreed by all parties that the meetings will reduce to fortnightly.

It was recognised that messages and updates needed to be shared with all parents and carers, not just those who are part of the PCF. The IASS produces a monthly ebulletin, packed full of information, news and support for anyone with an interest in SEND but primarily aimed at parents and carers. It was agreed that this ought to be the main vehicle to share updates and news. As a result, the IASS agreed to increase the frequency of its ebulletin to fortnightly. Again, funding from the IASP was able to support focused time to support this.

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

By taking part in these meetings, the IASS and other partners were able to respond instantly to concerns and or questions raised on behalf of local parents/carers by the local PCF who could inform and update their members.

By investing a relatively short period of time (initially one hour per week), the IASS was able to support a partnership approach which listened and responded to local need. The sessions have provided an opportunity to discuss many issues and agree a response, often instantly, by the breadth of knowledge of the partners involved.

In addition, the increased frequency of the IASS e-bulletin provided regular updates for parents/carers on themes and issues that were required. This required time to collate and prepare. There was an increased sign up to receive the e-bulletin and it was shared widely through a variety of means including schools, partners across Wolverhampton and via the Local Offer. It is recognised that an e-bulletin does not meet the needs of all families, particularly those with difficulties in accessing technology, but it was a positive step to support an increase in reach.

Here is [an example](#) of the IASS ebulletins. Others can be found on the [IASS website](#).

By taking part in these meetings and the subsequent increased frequency of the ebulletin, the IASS has deepened its partnership working and been part of a collective approach to responding to the direct needs of families at such a challenging time. The discussions have helped to shape plans for forthcoming training and virtual events as well as supporting the relationship with the local PCF and a reminder that the IASS is the service to provide information, advice and support thus flying the flag for IASS.

It has been agreed that some positive case studies will be produced to demonstrate the impact of this work.

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