

# **Service User Feedback Report**

## **Cumbria SEND Information, Advice and Support Service**

**January – July 2015**

This report is an analysis of the service user feedback received from parents, carers, and professionals who had a service from the Cumbria SEND Information, Advice and Support Service from January 2015 to the end of July 2015. This service was formerly known as the Parent Partnership Service.

### **Methodology**

The six IAS Co-ordinators, who work directly with families, have sent a link to an on-line service user form or sent out a paper copy (if they prefer) to parents, carers and some of the professionals they have worked with since January 2015. This has given families and colleagues a chance to feedback on the service they have had from our co-ordinators.

Having an online feedback mechanism ensures complete freedom for families to make whatever comments they wish and the paper copies are returned to the Business Planning and Improvement team.

The on-line form used to gather the feedback was developed by the IAS team during spring 2015 and all the questions were agreed as being appropriate to gain feedback on the service from start to finish. This service user feedback project was launched in May 2015. Going forward, all parents or carers or young people that co-ordinators work with will be sent an online link or a paper form as appropriate at the end of an intervention as a matter of course.

From the launch of the project, 87 links or forms were sent out to families and 10 to professionals that coordinators had worked with this current year and the BPI team received 42 responses. The IAS team also sent the link to members of the Parent Carer Forum who have been supported by our IAS team and the link is also on the signature of each co-ordinator every time they send an email.

There are a range of closed, graded and open questions on the form and they are designed to measure satisfaction with the outcomes of the service, the level of service provided by the staff and offer suggestions on the ways the service could be improved.

### **Feedback Gathered in response to questions**

#### **Where did you hear about the service? (Service users can tick more than one box)**

It is interesting to note the range of places from where parents had heard about the service: 27% of parents had heard about the Cumbria IAS service from an educational setting, 32% from word of mouth and 32% from a support group. 24% had been informed of the service from Cumbria County Council and a high number, 34%, had used the service before, showing that families do come back time and time again for support with a range of issues which come up over their child's life.

### Why did you contact the SEND IAS Service? (Can tick more than one box)

Families contacted the IAS Service for a range of reasons. 60% of families wanted support for their children with SEND, with 45% wanting general information, 43% wanting support at a meeting and 43% wanting support with an EHC plan. 43% of parents wanted help to resolve an issue and less than 20% of parents wanted help with health, appeals and changing schools.

### Was the information you received useful and relevant?

	Poor	Ok	Good	Very good
Was the information you received useful and relevant?	0%	0%	7%	93%

From the figures above, it is clear that the parents and carers who answered the service found the information they received very useful. It is very rewarding for staff to feel their services are so appreciated by the families that they work with.

### What difference did the information and support given to you by the IAS service make to you?

Given below are some of the comments made by parents, carers and a couple of professionals to this open question:

“A huge spiritual and emotional support as well as academic support was provided for both myself and my child as we both have forms of Dyslexia and other underlying difficulties that make communications difficult and trying. So this life line is immensely important for those of us trying to support our children in an environment that does not always meet their needs. Parent Partnership has been there for myself and my son and without this support we would most definitely suffered detrimentally. Thank you to all the wonderfully equipped Parent Partnership workers for your hugely beneficial support and thank you to my co-ordinator! Wonderful job. Thank you.”

“Without the help of my Co-ordinator, we would not have the strength to cope with the pressure of dealing with the authority. She has supported us through one of the most difficult & emotionally challenging times of our lives. She made us believe in ourselves, she took the time to listen to us & was there for us. She gave 110% commitment & effort in helping us find a solution.”

“I felt like I wasn't on my own and had someone there on my side. Gave me much needed support and confidence.”

“I was provided with relevant & useful information that enabled me to be fully informed when I went into a meeting with my son's teacher & school SENCO. I was empowered by the information given. Also having a SEND IAS expert sitting with me in the meeting was invaluable.”

“The information I received from the SENDIAS service was fantastic, she was a massive support to me and my partner while our boys were obtaining their statement /EHP. She attended a meeting with me, explained areas of the plan of which I was finding difficult getting my head around. She always returned my telephone messages/ e- mails etc. I don't think I could have got through it without her. The new EHP are not the most easiest of things to follow.”

“Very helpful with completing EHCP application and support during the process.”

“Advised on things I hadn't thought of. Gave information on rights as parent and for my child I wasn't aware of. Felt more confident when dealing with services when but informed, had confidence to challenge things I felt not good enough or not right. Signposted to other help and advice. Good to know somewhere to go and ask and know you'll get straight answer and can offer support if/when needed.”

“We were not sure of what intervention was available after our son was initially diagnosed with dyslexia in December last year and had not received appropriate support from the school. Our co-ordinator at SEND IAS provided us with relevant, impartial information on dyslexia and our sons rights under current legislation. As a result we were better informed when we met up with the school SENCO.”

Parents clearly value the wide range of knowledge that IAS co-ordinators have and their guidance and information on available services. Many quoted the range of practical support they had received around the EHC Plan and filling in forms but also the moral support/confidence building. Many parents welcomed the clarification of what was happening and the accurate and correct information provided and also the signposting to other relevant services.

Responses from professionals who replied:

- It helped me to inform a parent about Support and Guidance
- Have enabled some young people to obtain provision/funding
- We are able to refer families who need information, advice and guidance on SEN matters to allow them to make informed decisions about their child's education.

### **Since contacting the SEND IAS Service is your child any better supported at school and making progress?**

The survey results to this question were that 89% of parents thought their children were better supported at school and 11% said they were not. It would seem that most parents thought that help from the IAS team had helped their children to get the support they need at school to support their learning.

We asked a range of closed questions on staff behaviours and responses and the results were as follows:

<b>Did the IAS staff:</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>
Return your calls/emails promptly?	0%	100%
Keep in touch?	0%	100%
Explain why decisions were made and what was happening?	0%	100%
Listen to your views?	0%	100%
Treat you with respect?	0%	100%
Explain who they were and what their role was?	0%	100%
Was the service you received impartial?	0%	100%
Was the service you received confidential?	0%	100%
Did the information you received meet your needs?	0%	100%
Would you recommend this service to another person?	0%	100%

The positive responses to the above questions show that parents and carers have found the standards of service they have received to be excellent on all counts.

### **What did we do well?**

We posed this question to find out what families valued about the service they had had. These are just a few of the many positive comments about the Cumbria IAS service that parents had experienced:

“Most importantly is looking at individualism and treating each family with the professionalism they need. Individuals that make up families can be complex and ensuring support is given to achieve a beneficial outcome for a child in the early stages of education is vital. Supporting the parent with children is also vital.”

“Our IAS Co-ordinator gave us the information & support we needed. She helped us understand the processes we had to go through. She is an amazing, intelligent, knowledgeable kind lady. Without her we would not have coped with the stress of fighting for our son’s educational rights.”

“Helps young people and parents to understand the new system better. Gives excellent directions on options for the future and the EHCP.”

“Very supportive to parents who don't understand the constantly changing systems.”

“The quality of knowledge and caring support. The help and advice I received was excellent and I'm extremely impressed and feel very supported.”

“Offer support to parents who are not sure where to turn for impartial advice.”

“You support parents when they think they are on their own. Having my IAS Co-ordinator on my side gave me confidence to ask questions why my son's support is like it is and made me realise that I don't have to agree for everything, when I think it is not right for my son and doesn't meet his needs. Great job.”

“Professional, knowledgeable service with staff and volunteers who have first-hand experience of SEND issues.”

“Respond promptly, identify the need, carry out research and provide appropriate support and guidance, offer options and support parents/carers and young people to make informed decisions and follow up outcomes.”

“Support to parents when needed, do not judge the child/young adult, listen and give advice to the family, also support to give a voice when in meetings.”

“Taking the time to listen to my concerns and helping to explain the new processes in easy to understand terms has been very helpful to me. The new EHC system is very different so their support during the transfer has been invaluable. Understanding how important the voice of the child and their family is now to the process has made me much more confident.”

“Information they hold would take me a very long time to find independently.”

“Every time I have needed help over the last 14 years, you have known what to do, supported me and advised me.”

Replies from professionals:

- Comprehensive support and guidance
- Regularly recommend to parents that they contact service
- I recommend the service on an almost daily basis as I am now the autism family support worker

### **What do you think we could do better?**

We asked this question as we wanted to know how the IAS Service could be improved. Parents gave suggestions for improvement as follows:

“As a service provider it is vital that you maintain and deliver support in the same way, younger members should be working with older or even retired members one to one or online. A parent needs to feel that the person supporting them has a wide knowledge of understanding to ensure that the rights of families are made aware and choices can be made without mistakes. I have had support from Parent Partnership now for seven years. In that time I have met an array of individual supporters which are unique in their own

way. However the most efficient ones were those confident in their knowledge and would not have anything missed out or over looked.”

“We didn't know about this service until our son was 16 & worry that other parents don't get this help because they are unaware this service is available.”

“The service needs more people in place to help the many that need it.”

“Promote the service to the agencies families are involved with, they are more cautious when families have support and time is taken to reach life changing situations, for the people involved.”

“More staff are needed to be able to support more parents as there can be a considerable wait for a face to face meeting.”

“Have more people available to deliver the service so waiting times are less and the current staff are not over stretched.”

“Contact more families who need help.”

### **Strengths**

From the comments respondents have made, it is clear that parents value the impartiality and confidentiality, the supportive and helpful service and feel they have been treated with empathy. They value the knowledge of the staff and many parents stated in the feedback that the IAS co-ordinators listened to them and then give straightforward answers to their questions. Various people described co-ordinators as caring and supportive and a good source of information, particularly on the new EHCP process and during this period of transition.

### **Areas for development**

One of the issues people raised were that staff should have more hours or more staff should be employed, to increase the capacity of staff to deal with an increased number of families wanting support during this period of transition, so as to be able to cut down on waiting times. Another issue raised was to contact more families to advertise the service more widely so more people understood what the service could offer; promotion of the service with other agencies was another suggestion. One parent encouraged the services to keep standards high.

### **Future plans**

On closure of a case or intervention, the Cumbria SEND IAS Co-ordinators officers will continue to send out a service user feedback web link to parents they have worked with, so they may make comments on line about the service they have received and reporting will be done regularly.

For information, given below is the web link to the on line service user feedback form for the Cumbria SENDIAS Service:

<https://cumbriacountycouncil.researchfeedback.net/wh/s.asp?k=143152772376>