

# Service User Feedback Report

## Cumbria SEND Information, Advice and Support Service

July 2017 to May 2018

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 July 2017 to May 2018.

### Methodology

The six IAS Co-ordinators, who work directly with families, send 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 work with at the end of an intervention. This gives 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. During this period, 28 replies were received; 10 from Furness and South Lakes, 11 from Copeland and Allerdale and 7 from Carlisle and Eden.

There is 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.

### Analysis of Feedback

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

It is helpful to learn the range of places from where parents had heard about the service: 22% of parents had heard about the Cumbria IAS service from an educational setting, 14% from word of mouth and 21% from a support group; 11% from Children's Services staff, 7% from health colleagues and 21% from the internet. Several people commented that they had heard about the service from more than one source. 14% (down from 37%) of respondents had used the service before for support with other issues. It would appear that more and more parents are using the internet to source information from our website and through the Local Offer and we have had more *new* service users than last year.

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

Parents who responded to the questionnaire had contacted the service for various reasons over this period:

48% of people said they had contacted SENDIAS for help with an EHC Plan and 51% wanted to find out what support/provision was available for their children with SEND. 44% said they were seeking help to resolve an issue and 18% said they wanted to find out how to appeal against a decision about their child's support. 22% said they were

seeking general help about SEND issues and 15% said they wanted information about a health problem. 17% said they were looking for help and advice about attending a meeting with professionals about their child and 15% wanted information on how to change their child's school.

### How easy was it to get in touch with us?

This question was introduced this year in response to one of the action points from last year which was that the SENDIASS team needed to let more people know about the SENDIAS Service so the information reaches as many parents, carers and young people as possible. The team have actively promoted the service during this period with nurseries, schools, parents, social care staff including the fostering and adoption service, professionals from other agencies and on line via the new Facebook page, website and Local Offer presence.

	<b>Not at all easy 0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Very Easy 5</b>
<b>How easy was it to get in touch with us?</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>75%</b>

As 75% of respondents replied they found it easy to get in touch this is good news and I think the promotional activities have paid off. The team will continue to promote the help and support provided by SEND IASS as new parents and new schools staff need help on a continual basis.

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

	<b>Not at all helpful 0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Very Helpful 5</b>
How helpful was the information and advice we gave you?	3.5%	3.5%	3.5%	3.5%	86%

From the responses above, it is clear that the majority of parents and carers who answered the service found the information and advice they received very useful for their situation.

Being impartial is very important to the SENDIASS Service and the following question is designed to measure what parents and carers think about this:

	<b>Not at all 0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Very 5</b>
<b>How neutral, fair and unbiased do you think we are?</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>86%</b>

86% of parents and carers thought the service they had received was neutral, fair and unbiased which is very positive.

Confidentiality is also an important part of the service and respondents answered this question as follows:

	No	Yes
<b>Was the service you received confidential?</b>	7%	93%

Again this is a very high figure of satisfaction from those who answered the questionnaire.

	No difference at all 0	1	2	3	A great deal of difference 5
<b>What difference has our information, advice and support made to you?</b>	7%	3%	0%	15%	75%

Comments from parents show what difference the support from the service made to them personally. They talk about the service being reliable, reassuring and helpful, staff are easy to talk to and quick to respond; staff answer their concerns and give them confidence; they understand their rights and what to expect from the process. Some of the comments from parents and carers:

*“Your support gave me the confidence to complete the EHCP paperwork and your help at the draft meeting meant we all able to walk away feeling more positive.”*

*“Tracey is amazing, a fountain of knowledge and very supportive. I wouldn’t dream of going into any EHCP meeting now without her help! Knowing there is someone who knows the systems inside out on your side is so reassuring, especially at a time of great stress (which EHCP meetings always are)!”*

*“It has made a huge difference as I wouldn’t have been able to do this on my own.”*

*“Without Susan’s knowledge and advice, we wouldn’t have got anywhere with our issues.”*

*“I now feel heard. I often feel like a pushy or annoying parent when I point out my child’s needs and ask how they might be met. Emma’s support helped to make it less personal, looking at my child’s rights and helped everyone to find solutions.”*

*“This service is invaluable. I have 2 young people that would not have the support they have now if it wasn’t for this fantastic service.”*

*“It has been a difficult year in the extreme. Karen's warm support, knowledge and professionalism has been invaluable.”*

*“Sally was extremely knowledgeable and was a fantastic help at the meetings we asked her to attend.”*

*“Amazing difference. We have accessed other services but this has been one of the more useful in retrospect.”*

*“Have had to score low as no one actually got back in touch despite leaving a message with my contact details.”*

**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 65% of parents thought their children were better supported at school and 10% said they were not. 25% said they did not know.

**Closed Questions on Staff Behaviours**

<b>Did the IAS staff:</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Return your calls/emails promptly?</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>93%</b>
<b>Keep in touch?</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>93%</b>
<b>Explain why decisions were made and what was happening?</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>93%</b>
<b>Listen to your views?</b>	<b>3.5%</b>	<b>96.5%</b>
<b>Treat you with respect?</b>	<b>3.5%</b>	<b>96.5%</b>
<b>Explain who they were and what their role was?</b>	<b>3.5%</b>	<b>96.5%</b>

The positive responses to the above questions show that parents and carers have found the standards of service they have received to be very good and are very satisfied with staff behaviours.

**Did the service you receive meet your needs?**

	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Did the service you receive meet your needs?</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>89%</b>

## Overall how satisfied are you with the service we gave?

	Very unsatisfied 0	1	2	3	Very satisfied 5
Overall how satisfied are you with the service we gave?	7%	0%	0%	7%	86%

## How likely is it that you would recommend the service to others?

	Not at all likely 0	1	2	3	Very likely 5
How likely is it that you would recommend the service to others?	7%	0%	0%	3.5%	89.5%

## What did we do well?

This question aims to find out what families valued about the service they had had. Several parents talked about how important it was to have an independent and neutral service when their relationships with school were difficult. Parents and carers also say the Co-ordinators are professional and organised and provide empathy, good support and guidance and make people feel heard and listened to. They have good knowledge and respect service users. These are some of the many positive comments about the Cumbria IAS service that parents had experienced:

*“I do not have any experience working with children therefore when I started this process. It was a minefield of information and I did not know where to start. Susan helped me understand my rights under this and how I could try and support my son when the School were not proactive in doing so. Susan has always been pleasant and helpful and answered any questions I have promptly. She is an asset to the team and has supported me at meetings and given me the confidence to speak up as I have more knowledge in the field.”*

*“Give support and advice when it is needed most. Reduce my anxiety throughout a difficult process.”*

*“In this instance Emma Stephenson tried in more than one way to get the help we required and made the effort to simply not give up. For that service I give a top mark.”*

*“You listen and act. When going through stressful times like this you couldn't ask for anyone better”*

*“Help parents through and to understand the constant battles to get services and support that young people need.”*

*“Explaining the law and the processes/intricacies of an EHCP. How the funding is allocated and can be used.”*

*“Sally was fantastic in helping diagnose and help our son. I often contacted her out of the blue and she was able to pick up where we left off. My calls and e mails where answered very promptly .I felt Sally went well out of her way to help and support my Family.”*

*“I felt I was listened to and understood. The help I received was invaluable and I thank Cumbria SENDIASS a lot. Many thanks to Celia.”*

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

This question was included so information could be gathered on how the IAS Service could be improved. Six respondents said there was nothing to improve on and they were very happy with the service. Other parents gave the following comments:

*“Contact was difficult. Calls were always returned but it was difficult to get through to anyone.”*

*“She should be devolved the power to intervene more strongly with the school and act on the child and parents behalf.”*

*“Reply to messages and get in touch.”*

*“Get our referral put into action and not on a waiting list.”*

*It's not really what you can do better but having more co-ordinators would be helpful, but I understand about funding.”*

*“There needs to be more trained personnel.”*

*“Maybe be available more hours.”*

### **Strengths**

86% of parents and carers said the information and advice they had received was very helpful, 86% said the service was neutral and unbiased and 93% said they had found it very confidential. 75% of people said they had found the service had made a great difference to them and some said the difference was “huge” and some “amazing” and other said it was “invaluable”. On the closed questions on staff behaviours, the answers were 93% and more positive for parents and carers who were happy with how they had been treated by SENDIASS Co-ordinators. 89% said their needs had been met by the SENDIASS service and 89.5% said they would recommend the service to other parents. Parents said the service reduced their anxiety, gave them confidence, helped them find their way through the SEND processes and explained the law and their rights to them.

### **Areas for development**

Some parents reported that it was difficult to get through to staff sometimes and they had to wait to receive a call back. Parents and carers said that there needed to be more staff

in the SENDIAS service and they thought staff should work more hours. Some parents and carers thought the Co-ordinators should have more power to intervene in cases and be able to action things for parents.

### **Future plans**

The role of the SENDIASS Co-ordinator is to give information, advice and support so they will not be able to take a more active role to intervene cases as suggested by some parents as it is beyond their remit.

From March 2018, there has been a reduction in staff numbers from 6 part time staff to 5, so the suggestions around having more staff are unlikely to happen as the budgets cuts affect the service.

SEND IASS Co-ordinators are employed to work 18.5 hours per week, so it can be several days sometimes before a call can be returned to a parent, but all staff do their best to return calls and answer queries as soon as they are back in the office and able to do so.

On closure of a case or intervention, the Cumbria SEND IASS Co-ordinators officers will continue to send out a service user feedback web link to parents they have worked with or a paper copy if requested, so they may make comments on line about the service they have received and reporting will be done regularly. Parents may comment at any time as the link to the Survey Monkey questionnaire is on each staff members' email signature.

This report will be circulated to the AD for Learning and Inclusion and the Senior Manager for SEND and cascaded to SEND IASS staff for discussion at the team meeting. This report will also be uploaded to the Continuous Improvement Website.

For information, given below is the web link to the on line service user feedback form for the Cumbria SEND IAS Service: - <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/HCJ5PWX>

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