

# Annual Review

## Sept 2018 – August 2019



Information



Advice



Support

Providing confidential and impartial information, advice and support to help children, parents and young people take part in decisions that affect their lives.

# Suffolk Sendiass Annual Review – 2018/2019

Suffolk Sendiass is the **Special Educational Needs and Disability Information Advice and Support Service** for parents, carers, children and young people in Suffolk.

We provide a wide range of information, advice and support (IAS), on education, health and social care issues relating to special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Our service offer consists of direct work with service users, a website and social media presence and the provision of relevant training and workshops across the county.

We also deliver information and advice, support and training to professionals from education, social care and health, who work directly with families who have children with SEN or disabilities.

This is our annual report for the academic year 2018/2019. It is a commentary on the year, reflecting the challenges and successes the team have experienced. It seeks to raise or maintain the profile of Suffolk Sendiass, depending on whether you are familiar or less familiar with our service offer.

The report demonstrates how we comply with the National Minimum Standards for SEND IAS Services. These standards are endorsed by the Department for Health and Social Care and the Department for Education. They are based on the SEND Code of Practice 2015, underpinned by the Children and Families Act 2014 and acknowledged by Ofsted.

Therefore, the report includes explanation and clarification of the ways in which we work with service users. For example, we have included sections on 'Confidentiality', being 'at Arm's Length', 'Impartiality' and how we work with service users when they have a disagreement with schools, the LA or Health Services.

We have taken the opportunity to share, in our commentary on the statistics provided, some of the concerns raised and commentary made by the parents, carers and other service users who have contacted us during the year. The report is by its nature an historical document and we do acknowledge that some of the issues raised have been addressed while some continue to remain live.

2018/2019 was a challenging year. We saw not only a significant increase in demand for our services, but also an increase in the complexity of the information and advice which was being requested by and provided to service users.

At the same time, like many IAS services across the country we have been engaged in the Information Advice and Support Programme, (IASP). This is a Department for Education (DFE) initiative, overseen by the Council for Disabled Children, (CDC) designed to encourage service development and improvement nationally. Suffolk Sendiass embarked on the second year of this programme with an ambitious set of goals, which formed its development plan, and continued to work towards them despite staff absence and the high demand from service users.

As Acting Service Lead for Suffolk Sendiass, I am incredibly proud of the achievements of our team and how the hard work and dedication of the staff involved is reflected in the overwhelmingly positive service user feedback we receive.



**Debbie Amor**  
Acting Service Lead - Suffolk Sendiass

## 1. Suffolk Sendiass – Service Offer and Organisation

### Contacting our service

Suffolk Sendiass has a dedicated telephone helpline which is available during office hours, with a 24-hour answerphone for times when a Helpline Operator is not available.

- **Helpline** 01473 265210

Service users can also contact the service via

- **Email** [enquiries@suffolksendiass.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@suffolksendiass.co.uk)
- **SMS** text ADVICE4ME to 87007
- **Facebook** SendiassInSuffolk
- **Twitter** @SSendiass

Or view the extensive information resources on our website and YouTube channel

- **Website** [www.suffolksendiass.co.uk](http://www.suffolksendiass.co.uk)
- **YouTube** Suffolk Sendiass

### How do service users choose to contact us?

Despite the variety of options for contact, 78% of initial contact or 'referrals' to Suffolk Sendiass in 2018/2019 were by phone. The next most popular being email at 16%.

Enquiries via social media have increased this year although still represent less than 2% of initial referrals. The SMS text service has been in place for over a year recorded only 9 referrals. We will continue to offer the text service and hope, as we develop our services for young people, that this might become a more attractive point of contact.

### What happens next?

However service users choose to contact us, a response will usually be provided on the same day or next working day at the latest. Since developing the role of our Helpline Operators (see page 8) we have been able to achieve this consistently across the year.

Our Helpline Operators are trained to provide an initial basic triage service. Their role is to clarify the needs of the caller and determine if they are best met by

- providing links to the Suffolk Sendiass website,
- signposting to other services,
- suggesting one of our training sessions,
- booking an appointment with an IAS Worker for a more detailed discussion.

Timed appointment slots with IAS Workers are available across the working week and can be arranged out of office hours by request. The IAS Worker will contact the service user, spend time understanding their concerns and responding with appropriate information and advice. Our target for booking appointments is that a caller should have to wait no more than three working days for a booked, timed appointment.

During 2018/2019 we recorded 14 days where levels of demand meant that we were booking slots 4,5,6 or, on one day, 7 working days ahead. This was over the late May, June

and July period 2019. We had unprecedented demand and no capacity to add additional booked appointment slots as IAS Workers were already engaged in direct support with service users.

Where discussions suggest further support is required, the IAS Worker will offer additional telephone, email or face to face contact as appropriate. This may include home visits, attendance to support at meetings with school, LA or health professionals, up to and including support at Independent Review Panels (IRP) for school exclusions and SEND Tribunal hearings for Education Health and Care (EHC) plans.

## **Key principles**

There are a number of key principles to which we work, in line with our National Minimum Standards.

### **Promoting Independence and self-advocacy**

Suffolk Sendiass work with individual parents, carers, children and young people as well as providing workshops and training to promote the concept of self-advocacy. Staff work on the basis of providing information advice and support which enables service users to understand and exercise their rights, to express their views and wishes and make informed decisions on matters of SEND.

### **Impartiality**

The information and advice given by staff at Suffolk Sendiass is based on national law and guidance supplemented by extensive knowledge of local policies, practices and procedures in Suffolk. Staff do not seek to influence service users but work to empower them and enable them to participate fully in discussions and decisions around SEND.

Where service users have a disagreement with school, LA or health services, regarding SEND issues, staff work with service users to seek understanding, use mediation where appropriate and try to reach agreement.

Where agreement cannot be reached, staff will support the service user to pursue resolution through routes such as local or national complaints procedures, exclusion appeals or SEND Tribunal.

### **Confidentiality**

Suffolk Sendiass has a Confidentiality Policy and service users are made aware that staff will not share information with third parties unless the service user has given permission to do so.

Contact with service users is recorded using Crossdata, a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) database. The database is separate from all other LA data gathering and is used and managed in line with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) guidelines.

### **Free, accurate and responsive to the needs of users**

The information advice, support and training provided to parents, carers, children and young people by Suffolk Sendiass is free at point of contact.

The SEND environment both locally and nationally continues to develop and change at ever increasing pace. Staff at Suffolk Sendiass make best endeavours to stay up to date and

provide accurate information. This is achieved through a combination of national and local training, engaging with the regional and national Information Advice and Support network, (IASSN), local networking and attendance at relevant meetings and working groups across the county.

We offer a wide range of information and resources on our website including access to leaflets, short video explanations on key issues as well as signposting to the Suffolk Local Offer and other useful groups and resources locally and nationally. Through our website and social media, we can respond with relevant information and resources quickly as issues develop.

However, as an information advice and support service, for the vast majority of our service users, it is the opportunity to have direct contact with a member of our team, whether face to face, on the phone or via email or social media which we are consistently told is most valued.

## Arm's Length

Like approximately 70% of IASS services nationally, Suffolk Sendiass is an 'in house' service where staff are predominantly, permanently employed by the LA. Suffolk Sendiass sits within the Quality Engagement and Professional Development service (QEPD) at the LA which means that it is 'at arm's length' from management structures and direct links with Inclusive Services or other teams within Education or Social Care at the LA.

QEPD is currently overseen by Loretta Greenacre, Acting Head of the Service. QEPD sits across Adult Community Services and the Health, Wellbeing and Children Services directorates within Suffolk County Council.



## Benefits to Suffolk Sendiass of sitting with QEPD

- The QEPD service sits at arm's length from Inclusive Services and the majority of other Education or Social Care teams who work directly with our service users.
- QEPD have been able to support Suffolk Sendiass by providing Business Administration time and Management advice on HR and Finance.
- Working within QEPD had enabled positive links between Workforce Development and the Suffolk Sendiass Training Offer.
- Being part of the same overall service as the Engagement Hub, who are engaged in innovative projects with Young People on SEND, is enabling Suffolk Sendiass to build positive relationships with the Hub and learn from their experiences of engaging with children and young people.

## Staffing Structure

Suffolk Sendiass is a small team, covering the whole of a large county. When at full capacity the substantive staffing structure is 7 people. However, part time roles mean the team has the equivalent of 5.1 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff. (See page 7)

### Permanent Roles

#### **1 x Service Lead – 1 FTE**

Suffolk Sendiass Service Lead is based solely within the service, without additional LA/CCG roles. Responsible for strategic planning, service management and delivery, and quality assurance.

#### **1 x Training and Development Officer – 1 FTE**

Responsible for developing and providing the Suffolk Sendiass training offer to local education, health and social care professionals, children, young people, parents and carers, with a remit to increase knowledge of SEND law, guidance, local policy, issues and participation.

#### **1 x Information Coordinator – 0.8 FTE**

Responsible for the communications strategy at Suffolk Sendiass which includes the development and maintenance the Suffolk Sendiass website, additional publications and resources and oversight of the social media presence.

#### **1 x Senior IAS Worker – 0.8 FTE**

In addition to direct work with service users, responsible for day to day support of IAS Workers, oversight of Helpline Operators and booked appointments. Point of contact for complex cases and attendance at SEND Tribunal.

#### **3 x IAS Workers – 1.5 FTE**

Responsible for day to day direct work with service users via booked helpline appointments, and face to face work through home visits, attending meetings and supporting at SEND Tribunal.

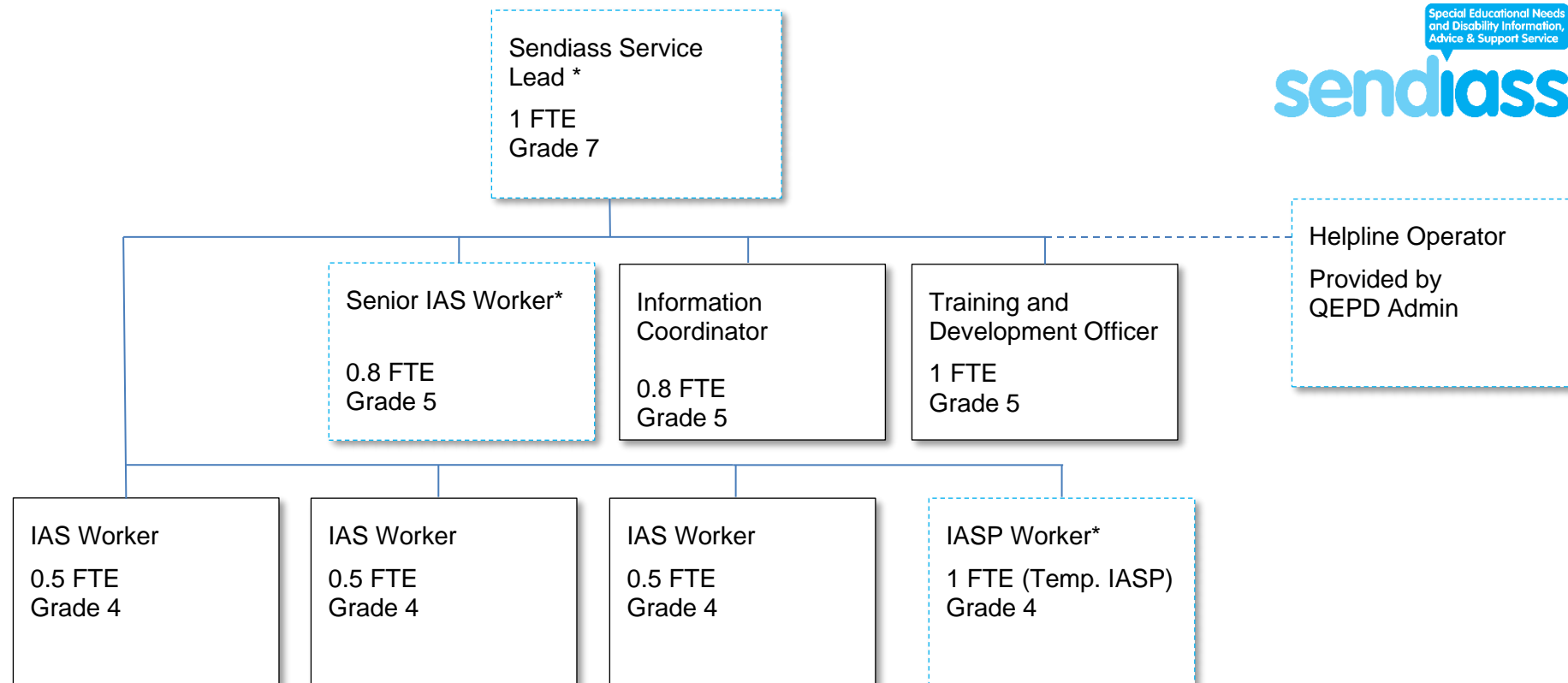
### Additional roles

#### **1 x IASP Worker – 1 FTE**

Suffolk Sendiass is currently benefiting from having an Information Advice and Support Program (IASP) Worker a post which is funded until July 2020 through the IASP.

### Helpline Operators

We also benefit from additional support form QEPD staff who are currently performing the role of Helpline Operators for the service.



Notes\*

- Service Lead currently on long term sick leave
- Senior IAS Worker - Acting Service Lead from Sept 2019
- IAS Workers working additional 18hrs a week on temporary basis until March 2020 to cover Senior Caseworker and contribute to IASP
- IASP Worker – working on IASP and backfilling to support IAS Worker roles.
- Helpline Operators - providing cover to helpline/email/Facebook contact and additional business support provided by QEPD

## **Staff issues in 2018/2019**

### **Ill health and maternity cover**

The reduced hours and then absence of our Service Lead, has impacted on the team this year. Initially overseen by Loretta Greenacre at QEPD with support from the team, (in particular Nicki Howlett and Sian Monteith working hard to represent the service at events) from September 2019, the role of Service Lead is being covered by Debbie Amor, acting up, while she continues to fulfil some of her Senior IAS role.

The year also saw the service continuing to cover for the maternity leave and sickness of one of its IAS Workers. To mitigate the situation, we were fortunate to be able to fund the continued secondment of Nikki Brownlie, previously employed as an Independent Supporter with Suffolk Sendiass. Nikki worked extremely hard to maintain our presence in the west of the county. When the position became vacant, we were pleased to recruit Nikki to the permanent role of IAS Worker. She is due to take up the role as of January 2020.

### **Helpline Operators**

As a result of funding secured from the national IASP Program Suffolk Sendiass trialled the use of a Helpline Operator to triage calls and emails which came into the service. The trial period of three months proved successful and significantly improved response times. Instead of waiting 2 to 3 working days for a response, service users now usually receive a response on the same day or next working day.

When the original Helpline Operator left for a new full-time role elsewhere, QEPD were able to support Suffolk Sendiass to maintain the role with hours from their Business Support staff. Building on the work of the original Helpline Operator and, with ongoing support and supervision, two part time staff share the role of providing an important first point of contact for the service. This allows the IAS Workers more time to do more detailed direct work with service users.

### **IASP Worker**

Funding from the national IASP has enabled us to employ a temporary full time IASP Worker. Helen Cumbers was previously an Independent Supporter, working with the charity Scope. She has been working on a combination of IASP project work and engaging in direct work with our service users. Her flexible approach, previous experience and the additional hours she has been able to offer in support of IAS Work have been invaluable.

At present the IASP Worker contract runs until Jul 2020. There is no guarantee of additional funds from IASP programme to date.

### **Independent Supporters no longer exist... but the work remains**

National funding for the Independent Supporter (IS) programme ceased in May 2018, but additional funding was secured through the LA until June 2019. At Suffolk Sendiass we have worked hard to absorb the role into business as usual for our IAS Workers through 2018/2019 and beyond. It has however created capacity issues.

To properly support parents, carers and young people in the process of understanding an EHC plan requires time. It takes time to read, not only the draft plans themselves, but also the evidence used to write those plans. Particularly for some of our most vulnerable service



users it is important to take time to enable discussion which supports service users in understanding the documents and seeking amendments where necessary.

Much of the increase in staff time which is reported later on in this document has been as a result of IAS Workers supporting service users with EHC plans. Specifically, around the understanding content of draft plans or in seeking to appeal content within in existing plans, which similarly requires significant time input to support due to the documents and administration involved.

## **Staff Training and Development**

All staff who provide advice and support have successfully completed their Levels 1,2 and 3 Ipsea Legal Training in information Advice and Support. These awards are a set of nationally recognised standard qualifications for IAS Services.

Our membership of the National IASS Network and Eastern Regional IAS group also provides for refresher training on the legal framework which underpins SEND.

In addition, staff undertake continuing professional development (CPD) attending external training days on key topics, work shadowing and attending networking opportunities, engaging in peer to peer support and receiving regular supervision.

Training undertaken by whole team and individuals for 2018/2019 has included

- Social Care, Legal Framework for Children and Young people
- Children Missing Education
- SEND Tribunal Training
- Engaging with the Roma Community
- Identifying and Support Young People with Autism
- Safeguarding Refresher Training
- IASS Minimum Standards
- Local Government Ombudsman training day
- Sensory Processing Information session
- Inclusive Services Workshop
- SEN Law Day – London
- Eastern Region Managers meetings x3

## Financial Information

As per the National Minimum Standards there is a dedicated and ring-fenced budget held and managed by an IAS service manager located within an IASS.

	2017- 18	2018-19	Additional information
<b>Staff salary costs including NI and pension contributions</b>	£165,682	<b>£174,322</b>	Increased costs due to pay inflation, move to revised pay scales wef 1/4/19, PDR payments, payment of accrued holiday pay to leaver
<b>Training/ conference attendance fees</b>	£1,418	<b>£2,051</b>	IPSEA SEN Law events & ACE Education Training, contribution to Eastern Region training fund Helpline Partnership training for Helpline Operators
<b>Travel costs</b>	£8,160	<b>£7,773</b>	Staff absences slightly reduced costs
<b>Publicity materials printing costs</b>	£2,723	<b>£8,191</b>	Increase due to redesign/print of various leaflets/banner
<b>Conference costs</b>	£1,336	<b>£1,575</b>	
<b>Other supplies &amp; services costs</b>	£2,140	<b>£4,145</b>	Webinar software purchase, £6,000 – recoup of £4,500 through shared arrangement with HR
<b>IASP/NCB grant spend (Independent Supporters/IAS Workers/Business Support)</b>	£26,062	<b>£52,159</b>	Combination of spend from cfwd and new grant money: Sept 18-Mar19 £13,018 (from 17/18 cfwd) + £17,618 (from £32k 18/19 grant) Apr 19-Aug 19 £8,745 (from 18/19 cfwd) + £12,778 (from £45,900 19/20 grant)
<b>Total spend</b>	£207,521	<b>£250,216</b>	

## Expenditure for the period Sep 2018 to Aug 2019

Staffing costs (with or without inclusion of the IASP funding) accounted for around 90% of service expenditure over the academic year 2018/2019. The academic year spans two financial years. In the previous year the IASP grant allowed for some carry forward. This funding primarily supported the employment of the trial Helpline Operator and the IASP Worker.

Contribution to the Eastern Region IAS Network enables 7 services across the East to pool resources and provide access to regular updates through its managers meetings and training events.

Webinar software was funded in this year and the license continues until January 2021. Working with the support of LA procurement we were able to share the platform with HR and recoup some of the initial outlay.

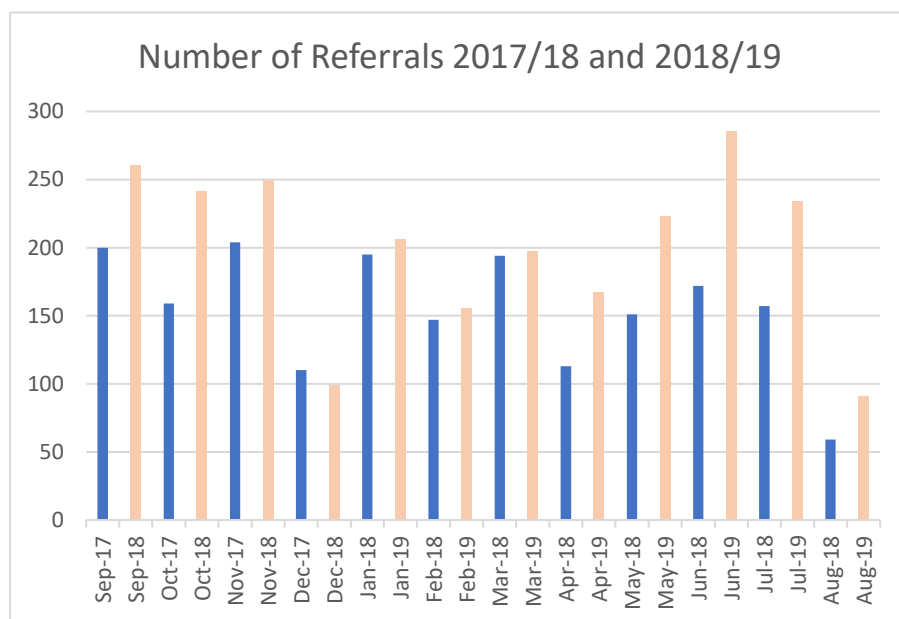
## ❖ Looking forward

It remains unclear whether further funding will be available from the IASP going forward. Our data clearly shows a level of demand which supports the requirement for funding additional IAS Worker hours. To develop the service further we would also like to free up time of our Training and Development Officer and information Coordinator to enable additional service development, particularly regarding children and young people.

# Suffolk Sendiass - Helpline and Casework

## Referrals

At Suffolk Sendiass a 'referral' is the initial contact made by a service user. One service user may make a number of referrals over the course of a year if they contact Suffolk Sendiass regarding more than one issue or regarding a recurring issue but with a significant time lapse between contacts.



The number of referrals recorded for the year 2018/2019 was 2407, a rise of nearly 30% on last year's figure of 1861.

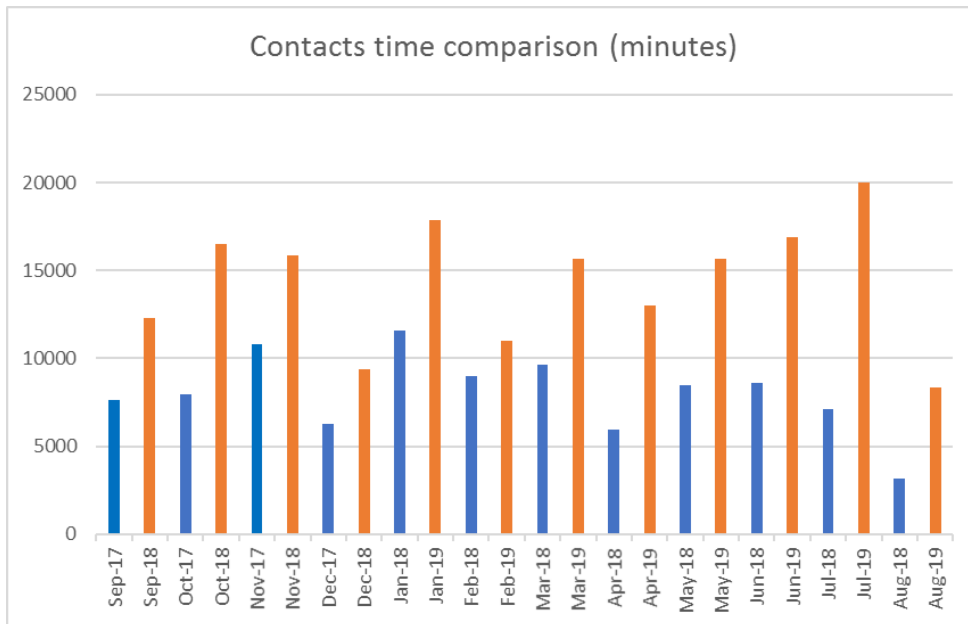
This reflects both an increased level of demand from service users but also our absorption of the Independent Supporter role into business as usual for our IAS Workers.

As the graph above demonstrates, every month except December showed an increase in referrals compared the previous year, with significant increases in September and October 2018 and June and July 2019.

## Contacts

After an initial referral, we record ongoing contacts with service users if they require additional 'casework' support or other contact. As expected, the increase in numbers of referrals led to an increase in the number of ongoing contacts we received or made over the year, with an increase from 5941 last year to 7384 for 2018/2019.

What was more surprising was how the amount of time we spent on those contacts had increased compared to 2017/2018. Anecdotally IAS Workers had been commenting on how the complexity of the case work they are involved with had increased. Parents and carers contacting us with a number of issues which needed unpicking meaning that IAS Workers were spending more time on individual cases than previously and that Tribunal work was increasing.



What our data showed was that our contact time spent for the 2017/2018 year was 96296 minutes while in 2018/2019 it was 172574 minutes. This is an increase of 79.2%.

Analysis of our data suggests a number of factors, impacting on number of contacts, including:

- The result of bringing the Independent Supporter work in to our business as usual. For example our 'in person' contacts, where we physically meet with the service user, have doubled compared to last year as it is often necessary to meet with service users to work with plans and reports.
- Parents and carers contacting us on numerous occasions when unable to get a timely response from the LA Family Services Teams.
- Parents and carers seeking support and reassurance from a service which is available to discuss concerns, at a time when there is much publicity about SEN and many negative news stories.
- Service users seeking more detailed and informed responses as their own levels of understanding are increasing or questions are raised in the local or national news.
- Higher numbers of service users seeking support with appeals to the SEND Tribunal and the increased complexity of being able to challenge health and social care elements of an EHC plan in addition to educational elements.

## ❖ Looking forward

The only way in which we have been able to service the demands placed upon Suffolk Sendiass has been to draw in every ounce of capacity from the team, using staff who are employed in other roles (Service Lead, Training and Development, Information Coordinator and IASP Worker) to support the IAS Workers. From a service point of view this is not sustainable. It has impacted on development work, partnership working and moving our service offer forward for children and young people. These are all areas of work which we not only want to engage with but are required to develop as part of our minimum standards. We will be looking at how we can bring additional IAS Worker hours into our system in 2019/2020.

## Why do service users contact us?

Most of our referrals, 80%, fell into the categories of 'Education Health and Care Plans', 'SEN Support' and 'Education Health and Care Needs Assessment'.

The remaining 20% of referrals were regarding a wide range of issues including admissions to schools and colleges, bullying, transport, social care support and assessments, health assessments, elective home education, school refusal, disability discrimination, mediation, queries regarding the Local Offer and, unfortunately, disagreements and complaints with other services.

## Education Health and Care Plans

Almost one third of our total referrals, 32%, were enquiries about existing Education Health and Care Plans.

We had 781 referrals in this category. Conversations within this category are often wide-ranging and usually cover a number of issues. This makes it difficult to use anything other than our 'EHCP General category' (35%), however we do attempt to identify and record specific issues when possible and in 2018/2019 these were;

### **23% EHCP - Annual Review**

*Discussions included; how the process should work, timescales, additional evidence and assessments, what to expect at the annual review meeting, how to manage disagreements*

### **20% EHCP - Admissions and Placement issues**

*Discussions included; how to assess if current placement is appropriate, consideration of different placement, transition between schools and/or to college, specialist versus mainstream setting, Local Offer versus independent provision*

### **12% EHCP - Appeal and Tribunal**

*Discussions included; the process of taking a case to SEND Tribunal, timescales, mediation, completing documents, gathering evidence, calling witnesses, practicalities of attending, what to expect on the day, role of LA*

**8.4% EHCP - Plan and Do** (Queries regarding application of the provision outlined in the EHC plan) *Discussions included; finding out if the education setting is making the provision in the plan, building positive communications with the setting, what to do if you have concerns, how to approach school and manage meetings with Class teacher/SENCo/Head, what to do next if provision is not being made*

## Key concerns raised by parents and carers included

- Frustration at delays in responses from the LA Family Services Teams to enquiries by phone or email
- Significant delays in LA providing amended EHC plans after Annual Reviews
- Lack of clarity about LA 'panel' processes and timescales when decisions about a case were 'sent to a panel'
- That the person attending mediation meetings was not always a decision maker

## SEN Support

The next largest category of referrals was regarding SEN Support in schools and colleges. We had 774 referrals which was a little over 32% of the total in 2018/2019. Once again this is a large catch all category, where one conversation can cover a wide range of issues.

Discussions included; admissions to schools and school choice with SEN' 'what is SEN Support, whether a child or young person should be receiving SEN Support, the importance of the process of Assess, Plan, Do, Review in school and college environments, what tools schools use to assess need, how they can use the LO to support children and young people, how to engage in conversations with school about SEN Support, what to do if things are going wrong.

### Key concerns raised by parents and carers included

- Schools not communicating to parents as to how they assess progress and attainment and make judgements on SEN Support offered
- Schools not engaging with parents before putting SEN Support measures in place or changing them with the parent or carer being aware
- Concerns that (particularly in High/Upper Schools) where a number of staff will be involved with a child's learning, information about the child's needs and required SEN Support is not shared effectively – particularly at transition from primary school
- Confusion over when school can make a referral to health services and when the referral should go via a GP – parents getting stuck between both saying it is others' responsibility

## EHC Needs Assessment

Over 16% of total referrals for 2018/2019 were regarding the EHC Needs Assessment. Within this category

### **39% 1<sup>st</sup> draft of an EHC plan** (as a result of EHC Needs Assessment)

Discussions included; content of draft plan, how to get additional information added, whether provision was /should be specified and quantified, how to read an EHC plan, what each section means

### **22% Refusal to Assess**

Discussions included; why the LA have refused, whether the parent/carer felt all possible information had been shared with LA, whether mediation might be helpful, next steps approach to school/ the LA/ SEND Tribunal

### **11.3% Family Views Forms,**

Discussions included; how and when to complete the LA Family Views Form, what to include, what information to send with the form, what happens next

### Key concerns raised by parents and carers included

- Lack of helpful, child specific details as to why the decision to refuse to assess was made
- Uncertainty as to the role of mediation
- Lack of information regarding specialist provision when parents came to indicate their school preference when returning their draft EHC plan

## Other referrals

Of the remaining 20% of referrals

- **4.4%** related to **attendance at school/school refusal**, slightly up on last year.
- **4.7%** related to **exclusions, permanent, fixed and illegal/unofficial**
- **1.2%** were **health and medical related**
- **0.9%** were about **bullying**
- **0.9%** were **transport** related
- **0.7%** were regarding **Elective Home Education (EHE)**

## How do people hear about us?

The top 5 referral routes to us, service users tell us, is that they hear about us from Family and Friends, SENCo's at their child's school, through Early Help teams and Family Services teams the LA, and from Health Professionals.

The LA Local Offer/ website accounted for 28 referrals while our own website/ social media /leaflets and contact with staff at events accounted for 53 referrals.

We introduced a category 'discuss Sendiass and signpost' to our data collection this year. This enables us to find out whether we were getting many referrals that were simply not relevant to the service. We were pleased to find that only 17 referrals to the service were cases where the issue was not one we support with and needed to signpost elsewhere.

## Categories of need

Where our referrals are linked to a specific child or young person. (which would not be the case if we have provided general advice to a professional or other service user), with permission we capture additional data such as the age and the primary category of need of the child (as identified by the parent/carer). For 2018/2019 our data showed the following.

### Autistic Spectrum Disorder - ASD

Similar to the previous year those children with a primary category of need of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) account for over 25% of referrals. This rises to almost 30% if we include Aspergers diagnosis.

### Awaiting diagnosis

8% of referrals told us they were 'waiting for diagnosis' This could be for any number of conditions. Unfortunately we still speak with parents who are being told by schools that for SEN Support to be put in place, or for a request for an EHC plan to be successful, that there needs to be 'a formal diagnosis.' We support parents in unpicking these conversations and challenging where appropriate.

### Anxiety and Depression

6% of referrals were regarding a child or young person whose primary need was 'Anxiety and/or Depression'. Parents and carers continue to raise concerns over the time lag between, levels of anxiety becoming an issue which is preventing access to education and the time taken to get appropriate support in place.

Some parents and carers also reported that they are struggling to balance the requirements of educational settings and education welfare concerns while their child is waiting for mental health assessments and support. While they feel pressured to do so, it is not always clear whether encouraging their child back in to the school environment is the right course of action.

## ADHD and Dyslexia

5.9% of referrals related to ADHD as the primary category of need while 2% of referrals identified Dyslexia as such.

## Age and educational settings

Most children and young people we spoke with or discussed with service users were on role within mainstream primary or high schools. About 10% of our referrals this year were regarding children on role at special or alternative provision. 2% were identified as being Electively Home Educated.

The spread across the age ranges is very similar to 2017/2018 with a slight decline in contact with the 16 to 18 age range and a slight increase in the 19 to 25 range.

Age Band	Total for year
0 to 5	124
5 to 10	836
11 to 15	778
16 to 18	109
19 to 25	42

## Ethnic minority data

This year we were able to collect ethnic minority data on about 16% of our referrals and of these 2.2% identified as other than 'White British'. We continue to have concerns that we need to modify our service offer in order to be accessible to families from ethnic minorities. We began work this year, through the IASP, to develop our service offer, and as a result are resetting our focus on identifying and support service users and potential service users where English is an additional language.

## A note on IT resources and encrypted email

### Key concerns raised by parents and carers

- For many of us who have access to up to date technology is it easy to assume that parents would be able to share reports and information easily via email. What we continue to find is that many of our service users struggle with IT resources. Lots of parents and carers we speak to have mobile phones but no access to larger laptops, PCs or printers. This can compromise their ability to access reports and larger documents such as EHC plans electronically. This can be particularly problematic for parents and carers when trying to gather and share information, such as with the SEND Tribunal.
- A number of service users also shared that they find it difficult to access reports and information which are sent to them by the LA via encrypted emails.



## Customer Feedback

'Smart Survey' is one of the main ways in which we collect customer feedback and gauge customer satisfaction. We do not engage in 'cold calling' to seek customer feedback but ask service users at the point of contact with the service, whether they would be happy to receive a feedback survey.

For 2018/2019, **356 service users were** invited to complete our Smart Survey. **We know that 66%** of the requests were viewed, i.e. the email was opened. This then resulted in 60 responses to the survey for the period, an approximately 17% response rate.

The survey responses on the whole refer to our direct work with service users as those who engage with our training offer complete evaluation forms at the training sessions.

We collate responses once a term, Autumn, Spring and Summer, to a standard set of questions to allow for comparison. Users can choose options 1 to 4 when answering the questions, with 1 being unsatisfied, 2, being slightly satisfied, 3 being satisfied and 4 being extremely satisfied.

*The percentages given below, with the questions, are the cumulative response for the year 2018/2019, where responses were either satisfied or extremely satisfied.*

<b>1. How easy was it to get in touch with us?</b>	<b>97%</b>
<b>2. How quickly did we respond?</b>	<b>98%</b>
<b>3. How well do you think we understood your questions or concerns?</b>	<b>98%</b>
<b>4. How useful was the information, advice and support we gave you?</b>	<b>98%</b>
<b>5. How impartial do you think we were? (By impartial we mean we will give you unbiased information about what the law says and local policies. We will discuss options with you, we do not take sides)</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>6. How much difference do you think our information, advice or support has made for you?</b>	<b>95%</b>
<b>7. Overall how satisfied are you with the service we gave?</b>	<b>96%</b>
<b>8. Would you feel happy to contact the service again if you needed to?</b>	<b>97%</b>
<b>9. How likely is it that you would recommend the service to others?</b>	<b>97%</b>

Those responding to the questions also have the option to add commentary. While the majority of responses were as positive as the statistics, we also received commentary and complaints which we try to use to improve our service offer going forward.

Compliments attached to the survey results included;

'Advice offered gave me the confidence to take control of my/our child's education and challenge his school when I felt they were not supporting him effectively'

'My knowledge & understanding of the system is growing & it was reassuring to know that someone is there to talk to help with that understanding.'

'Feeling support is the most important as it can feel like your alone within the system. Cannot thank you for support enough.'

### **Key Concerns raised included**

- A request for improved advertising and promotion of our service
- Increased ability to provide staff to support at meetings
- Third parties finding it difficult to make referrals on behalf of parents and carers
- A desire for an immediate response from an IAS Worker, rather than having to book an appointment or leave a message
- More and better information about specialist educational settings

### **❖ Looking Forward**

In addition to our Smart Survey data we attempt to collect 'Outcome data' at the end of helpline contacts and extended pieces of IAS Work. This is captured on Crossdata, our CRM database. It would be fair to say we are still learning when it comes to gathering this data and making use of it for service improvement.

For 2019/2020 we will be looking at how we can improve the capture of the outcomes data and use it effectively to support service development going forward.

## **Suffolk Sendiass - Training and Development**

The remit of IAS training is 'To promote awareness of the service and of our role in fostering positive partnerships and empowering children & young people with SEND and their parents and carers'. We are fortunate at Suffolk Sendiass to have a full time Training and Development Officer. Sian Monteith combines her wealth of knowledge from her previous role as an IAS Worker with her previous experience of teaching to provide workshop and training opportunities for parents and carers as well as practitioners from education, health and social care.

In 2018/2019 Sian developed and delivered training to 217 parents and 206 practitioners, in addition to organising and presenting our annual parent conference.

### **Training for parents and carers**

Our aim was to deliver a rolling programme of 'EHC plan' and 'SEN Support in Schools' workshops for parents and carers throughout the county. This year we booked venues in different, smaller locations each term rather than Bury, Ipswich and Lowestoft, to try and reach parents for whom transport, and childcare might be difficult. However, smaller localities resulted in attracting smaller groups to the sessions. As ever in such a large county trying to get the balance of resourcing versus coverage continues to be a challenge.

We also offered a 'Making meetings matter' workshop, designed to support parents and carers to get the best out of meetings about their child with professionals. And 'Empower you child' to support parents and carers in supporting their child to develop skills around articulating their needs and seeking support for themselves at school. These sessions were offered on an as and when basis.

Development of the 'SEND Champions' programme, designed to encourage peer support among parents of children with SEN while generating interest at county level did not provide us with a group of parents in one area with whom we could work to develop the programme. However, several parents who were involved with the SEND Champions programme went on to provide parent voice at co-production events, contributing to developing training and resources for professionals.

While initial demand and bookings for some of our courses were high, we have struggled with a high number of 'no shows' on the day. Sian has done some follow up work on this and many parents simply missed the sessions due to unplanned/pressing family circumstances which took priority.

For those parents who were able to attend we had excellent feedback on the training they received. In evaluation of the training provided, 100% of parents and practitioners agreed that

- the aims of the training were clear
- our training was useful and would help them feel more confident moving forward
- we used clear examples and explanations
- the style of presentation worked well

### **❖ Looking Forward**

In 2019/2020 we are looking to develop online webinars. We hope this will offer live interaction with the facilitator at the time, which we know parents and carers value, in

addition to enabling someone unable to attend at the specific time to access the recorded webinar at a time convenient to them.

## **Parent Carer Conference**

We held a parents and carers conference in March on the theme of 'Building Skills for Life' which aimed to look at ways in which children and young people with SEND could be supported to achieve positive outcomes. Unfortunately, bookings for the conference were lower than in previous years and we received many cancellations just before and, on the day, due to predicted bad weather and the closure of the Orwell Bridge.

Nevertheless 30 parents and carers attended the day and provided extremely positive feedback on the content and presentations which were given around the themes of supporting children and young people's voice.

We were particularly pleased to welcome some young people from the Young Peoples SEND Network, supported by the Engagement Hub, who shared their views of the importance of including young people's voices in SEND decisions.

## **❖ Looking Forward**

We have run parent carer conferences for a number of years, but these took place at a time when we were not able to offer as many workshops and training session across the year. Developing a conference takes significant resource and we need to be confident it remains an approach that parents and carers would value going forward. In our post conference evaluation, we decided, as a team, that for 2019/2020 we would take a break from organising a parent carers conference and work with the Engagement Hub look to developing our work with young people.

## **Training for Practitioners**

### **Webinar trial**

In the autumn and spring terms of 2018/2019 Sian, with support from Nicki our Information Coordinator spent a lot of development time trialling different webinar platforms with a view to improving access to our training offer across the county.

The system went live with the provision of training sessions to School Governors. Feedback from the session was extremely positive.

This is a brilliant initiative and makes learning modules much more flexible and accessible, saves time and fuel travelling, great delivery and responses to questions.'

'An excellent experience. More like this please.'

Despite some IT glitches and teething problems Sian and Nicki experienced, it suggests to us that continued development of this approach might be a way forward.

## **Training and Workshops**

Using more traditional methods, in total Sian delivered training and workshops sessions to 206 practitioners from health, social care and education attended across the county.

These included

- 8 x SEND briefings to School Governors
- A co-production session with social care practitioners to explore and agree content, format and resources for an EHCp workshop resulting in 1 x focussing on the EHC needs assessment process and EHC Plan responsibilities
- A co-production session with Work Force Development (WFD) to explore and agree the content and format of a workshop for writing quality advice for EHCp's which led to delivering 2 x training sessions.
- A co-production session with representatives from varied services and Research School Academy Partnership to explore and agree the content, format and resources for a 'Not Fine In School' workshop for school staff, school governors and parents which resulted in 1 co-facilitated workshop in Haverhill
- 3 x Sessions on working with parents delivered to Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) in the West of the County

Sian also represented the Eastern Region IASS group at the National Annual IAS Conference in Birmingham over the summer, delivering 2 sessions to IAS Workers on the benefits of Solution Focused approaches to their work with service users.

## Promotion of the service

National Minimum Standards require that the LA and IASS ensure that potential service users, Head teachers, FE principals, SENCoS, SEND Teams, children's and adult social care, health commissioners and providers are made aware of the IASS, its remit and who the service is for.

The ongoing training offer to professionals continues to raise the profile of Suffolk Sendiass among health, social care and education professionals. As our data shows, referrals come to our service having been recommended by SENCoS, Early Help and Family Services Teams within the LA, as well as health professionals. Clearly the workforce in SEND is huge and everchanging so we continue to publicise our service with annual mailshots and contact via social media.

In Summer 2019 we sent a mailshot regarding our services and resources to all schools in Suffolk. This will be followed by contact with FE Colleges, health (surgeries, clinics) and others providers such as Children's Centre, Voluntary organisations and Public Libraries.

### Suffolk Dyslexia Association

Sustained links with voluntary and non-statutory agencies led to an invitation to deliver a workshop to parents and carers around SEND at the Suffolk Dyslexia Association Information Day and to hold a stand for the rest of the day to raise our profile and answer parent/carer enquiries. The Suffolk Sendiass stall was extremely popular with a queue for advice for most of the day.

### Other events

Sian and Nicki both provided input to the final sessions of the 'Stepping Stones' course (a Triple P parenting course for parents of children with additional needs).

While other events where Suffolk Sendiass was represented included

- SEN Funding session x 2 – Lowestoft and Ipswich

- SENCO network meeting – Lowestoft
- Suffolk Voluntary and Statutory Partnership - Woodbridge
- Stallholder at Sharing Parenting whole day event – Newmarket
- Stallholder at Rainbow conference whole day event - UCS Ipswich
- Stall at the SPCN Wellbeing conference – Trinity Park, Ipswich
- Children’s Information Day – Lowestoft
- ‘A Blank canvas’ (co-production in Suffolk) – Kesgrave
- Stallholder at International Festival of Learning– West Suffolk College
- Multi-agency SEND/EHCP workshop – Lowestoft
- QEPD whole service day – present Sendiass service and updates
- Suffolk Sendiass also met with Ofsted in January 2019

# Suffolk Sendiass – Website and Communications

## Website

Our website, social media and information resources play a significant role in supporting our direct work and our training offer by enabling access to information advice and support in a variety of formats twenty-four hours a day.

Our website at [www.suffolksendiass.co.uk/](http://www.suffolksendiass.co.uk/) is a stand-alone site, not a set of pages on the local authority website. ICT teams at the local authority support the sites infrastructure which does impact on some of the design decisions we have to make. However, we have direct control over content and are able to review and update on a day to day basis where necessary.

Our Information Coordinator, Nicki Howlett, monitors local and national SEND developments and combines this, with our own service data collection via Crossdata and that gathered from feedback from training sessions, to inform development of resources which are relevant to service users enquiries and support the IAS Workers.

So for example we identified that parents were finding the concept of mediation around EHC plans somewhat confusing and Nicki responded by creating improved information about the process for our website with a revised frequently asked questions section.

In addition to the continued maintenance and updating of existing pages, 2018/2019 saw the development of content on the website around

- Transport
- Health
- Social Care
- Working with school, including child voice, attendance, school trips.
- Mediation

## ❖ Looking forward

A major challenge for the website is for it to be compliant with legal requirements on accessibility by September 2020. This will be a key piece of work going forward for 2019/2020.

We are also looking to trial the option of webchat on the website in addition to developing both practitioner pages for professionals supporting children and young people with SEND as well as resources for children and young people themselves.

## Printed resources

In addition to the website we have a series of information leaflets which we keep continually under review, all of which can be found on our website. For service users who prefer to have a printed copy we can supply them, free of charge, by post.

For 2018/2019 we focused on

- Production of a new impartiality postcard
- Major update of our Helpful contacts leaflet
- Redesign of 11 of our information leaflets

## ❖ Looking forward

For 2019/2020 we will be updating and developing our leaflets on

- Annual Review
- Appealing to the SEND Tribunal
- Choosing a school
- Exclusions
- Transport

## Social Media

Our social media presence continues to expand, and we have had a number of very active conversations on Facebook which we welcome. At the year-end we had

- Facebook 1129 followers
- Twitter 329 followers
- YouTube 1950

## ❖ Looking forward

We are hoping to encourage an increased use of our YouTube videos as we see this as a key area of development in making our offer more accessible.

## E - News

In addition to providing a rich set of information resources we also look to how we can encourage communication and share information as widely as possible. We use Mailchimp to distribute our termly E-News Newsletters to those service users who have requested subscription. At year end we had 1,183 subscribers to the newsletter.

From Mailchimp we know our average open rate for our termly newsletter is **51.75%**. According to Mailchimp the average open rate is **20.81%** so while we are always keen to do better, we have been performing well above what might be expected.

## News Circulation Group

High priority news items and all events - workshops, conference, new resources are circulated via a saved distribution group in outlook which is predominantly professionals and contacts who we hope will cascade information on our behalf. 63 contacts use this service. Nicki also taps in to key LA communications bulletins such as Suffolk Headlines to advertise and raise awareness of events and activities for the service.

## ❖ Looking Forward

The development of webinar resources as we work with new technology and link it to new and existing information resources



## **Participation**

### **Advisory Group**

Suffolk Sendiass previously had a steering group which struggled to bring on board professionals and parents and carers who were able to consistently support it through contribution and attendance. Issues of geography were also challenging in seeking countywide engagement and we had no representation from young people.

We are looking to bring together a new Advisory Group in 2019/2020 and hope to make better use of ICT to enable participation and to include engagement with children and young people.

### **Joint Commissioning**

The SEND Code of Practice requires the LA and CCGs to look at joint commissioning arrangements for information and advice about education, health and care provision.

Suffolk Sendiass will be looking to develop its links with other relevant information services serving Suffolk and approaching the LA and CCG to discuss how they would like to develop the commissioning process, including representation on the new Advisory Group.

### **Partnership**

Through its development work under the IASP and ongoing with its links to the LA Engagement Hub, Suffolk Sendiass will be looking to develop partnerships that will enhance its work with Children and Young People while it continues to feedback to the LA on issues raised through its contact with parents and carers.

### **Regional and National Working**

Suffolk Sendiass has a positive relationship with staff at Council for Disabled Children / National IASS Network who provide advice, training opportunities and support. Suffolk Sendiass also continues to engage with and support the Eastern Region IASS Network with plans to offer training and support through the IASP to regional colleagues going forward.