

## **SENDIASS Oxfordshire Annual Report 2015-2016**

### **Introduction**

The Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice 0-25 years sets an expectation that children, parents and young people should be involved in the identification, assessment and decision making about the provision to meet special educational needs or disabilities.(SEND) The Code requires that quality information, advice and support is offered to: children and young people with SEN, parents of children with SEN, children and young people with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities.

Access to free, accurate and impartial information and support is intended to promote effective partnership working and facilitate the active involvement of parents and young people in decisions about special educational provision.

The Children and Families Act 2014 (CAFA) and the revised SEND Code of Practice 0-25 aimed to strengthen the participation of parents, children and young people.

IASSN (Information, Advice and Support Services Network) has produced, with the support of the DfE, a national quality standards framework to support the provision of impartial information, advice and support as set out in the legislation and associated guidance.

SENDIASS Oxfordshire works within the bounds of the legislation, guidance and quality standards to provide impartial information, advice and support to parents and carers of children with SEND, and children and young people themselves through the newly formed CHYPSS (Children and Young People's Partnership Service) element of SENDIASS. It promotes partnership between parent and carers, Children, Education and Families Services, schools and other agencies. The aim of the service is to empower, enable and encourage parents to take an informed and active part in their child's education, and young people to be involved in decisions about their own education and futures.

### **Staffing**

Up until May 2015, the service consisted of 2 co-ordinators, both part- time, one specialist administrator (15 hours per week) and a full-time term- time only assistant co-ordinator.

On the retirement of the 0.8 fte co-ordinator in May 2015, the remaining co-ordinator (0.6 fte) decided that the service required a redesign to make it more cost-effective and fit for purpose. Because the timing of this coincided with fundamental organisational changes within OCC, the service was unable to recruit staff into post until January 2016 so the service was greatly understaffed for over 6 months. We were however able to make use of some very experienced casual staff to help cover the caseload during this period.

From September 2016 we will have a service manager (0.6 fte), three SENDIASS advisers, all part-time and term-time only, each with generic helpline and support duties but with an additional individual specialism: one has responsibility for working with the volunteers; the second is being additionally trained to support in exclusions and admissions appeals, the third will have responsibility for working with 16-25 year olds. Unfortunately the staff member originally recruited for the third post resigned after 5 months but

SENDIASS has successfully recruited another member of staff to start in September 2016. We have a dedicated 15hour per week specialist administrator.

Additionally SENDIASS Oxfordshire was able to access external funding from the DfE to provide Independent Support but this came with the requirement to recruit a further member of staff. SENDIASS currently therefore has a one day per week temporary casual post from April 2016-March 2017. This post holder is experienced both in Education, Health and Care Plans and Post 16 provision. This will help upskill the new member of staff in this particular age range.

### **Caseload**

There are in Oxfordshire 290 schools, and 12,733 pupils with identified SEN aged 5-16.

The number of statements/ EHC plans in Oxfordshire has increased by 18% since 2010 and there are now a combined total of 2,420. 200 new EHC Plans were issued in the 2015. The caseload in SENDIASS reflects this and we are, year on year, receiving more calls on our helpline with an increase in complex cases. Numbers of new cases increased to 500 this academic year. This does not include ongoing cases so the actual caseload is greater. Previously the majority of calls were concerning School- based levels of support. In 2015/2016 around 200 cases involved the new Education, Health and Care Plans.

The cases themselves have become increasingly complex with more capacity to become contentious.

### **Helpline**

Because of budget constraints and patterns of service demand, SENDIASS Oxfordshire now advertises itself as having term-only cover on the helpline. This clarifies for parents what they can expect from the service and also allows for management tasks and forward planning to be completed during the quieter times.

### **Staff training - Attendance at National conferences/ training**

IASSN Sept 2015

Law conference Reading October 2015

Autism Oxford October 2015/ April 2016

IASSN/IPSEA Level 2 Legal training

OCC SEN Team tribunal training November 2015

Council for Disabled Children training event

Jordan's Annual SEN Conference March 2016

Whole team plus volunteers SEND Tribunal training day March 2016

Whole team ACE SEND Training April 2016

Council for Disabled Children training event in May 2016

## **Information, support and publicity**

### **- New leaflets, promotional videos and info sessions:**

With the change of our service name to SENDIASS Oxfordshire, all Parent Partnership leaflets needed up-dating. It was decided not to have all leaflets re-printed but to produce one generic SENDIASS leaflet. These were distributed to all schools and other settings. All existing ones with current advice were updated to reflect the new style of SENDIASS. Some new leaflets have been written; 'Make a Difference' to recruit volunteers and a further 3 to inform parents about different aspects of SEND Reforms following the Children and Families Act:

- A parent's guide to SEN Support in Schools
- SEN Support in FE Colleges and
- How is my child doing at school- this reflects the changes in measuring progress in line with Age Related Expectations.

The 'Annual Review' leaflet is still current and will remain until 2018.

All information leaflets are available to download from the SENDIASS webpages within the Local Offer on Oxfordshire County Council's website.

SENDIASS now has a series of 3 publicity films on its web pages; one to highlight the role of the service, one to recruit volunteers and one with parents expressing their views on the support they received from SENDIASS.

### **- Talking SEND information sessions**

These were developed in response to parental requests for further information after the successful roadshows covering aspects of the SEND reforms co-produced with Parent Carers Voice Oxfordshire and Oxfsn in 2014.

In the academic year 2015-2016 Talking SEND sessions on Transfer Reviews were held in Didcot in September 2015, in Kidlington in October 2015 and June 2016 and Witney in November 2015; Talking SEND sessions on SEN Support were held in Oxford in January 2016, in Banbury in February 2016 and Thame in March 2016.

## **Volunteers**

National benchmarking of all IAS continues to show Oxfordshire as having the highest number of volunteer IPS. In 2013 across 150 services there were 400 volunteers, 30 of whom were SENDIASS Oxfordshire volunteers. Only 4 services nationally have more than 12 volunteers in total. Since then SENDIASS volunteer numbers have increased to 43, 7 of whom are also trained as Independent Supporters on a nationally accredited training course.

In September 2015 the SENDIASS manager was invited to represent the South East region of IASS on a 2-day event to develop strategies and necessary policies and practice to encourage greater use of volunteers by IAS.

Oxfordshire is one of the lowest funded services nationally and would find delivering a comprehensive service difficult without the high quality volunteers. The level of service provided by volunteers is evaluated with parents and with school SENCOs.

Year on year parents praise the contribution of their volunteers in achieving positive outcomes for their children. Schools that have had IPS involvement overwhelmingly recommend the service to parents, highlighting the quality and impartiality of the support and advice provided.

We deliver the 4 - 5 session basic training course for volunteers 3 times per year  
In Oxfordshire we hold monthly support meetings for the volunteers in order to ensure that the volunteers feel confident in offering accurate and up-to-date advice. We believe that in order to retain such high quality volunteers we need to provide high quality training and on-going support. We also arranged bespoke legal training around helping parents prepare for Tribunals in March 2016

#### **- IPS recruitment**

SENDIASS latest publicity advertising for new volunteers has been published in Oxfordshire Women's Institute Newsletters and sent to a variety of community centres/libraries. There have been new posters printed and further advertisements are planned for the autumn. SENDIASS IPS featured large at the OCC Volunteer awards event with one of the IPS and her experience appearing on the front page of the intranet.

#### **CHYPPS (Children and Young People's Partnership Service) development:**

As required by CAFA 2014, the previous remit of the Parent Partnership Services was extended as new statutory duties were placed on local authorities to provide information advice and support to children and young people with SEND, as well as their parents. SENDIASS Oxfordshire commissioned a consultation with young people 14-16 with SEND in Oxfordshire to ascertain their views on what type of service they wanted to be designed and what they would want the name to be. The responses indicated that most of the young people preferred to get information and advice from trusted adults already known to them and that any service would need to have friendly and welcoming staff. The majority thought CHYPPS (Children, Young People's Partnership Service) was a good name for the service.

SENDIASS commissioned a variety of logos for the new CHYPPS service to enable the service to have a separate identity. Young people were asked for their views and a rainbow logo and livery were chosen. Leaflets explaining the role of CHYPPS were produced and distributed countywide to a range of settings and a confidentiality policy was ratified. One of the new SENDOASS Adviser posts has responsibility for CHYPPS casework and Independent Parental Supporters who have additionally trained as Independent Supporters can support children and young people if required. We also work closely with Independent Support via Adviza to provide a service to post 16 young people.

CHYPPS Information is currently on the Oxme website.

#### **Database**

Negotiations for a new standalone database to replace the existing one which was no longer appropriate in light of the SEND reforms started in February 2014 and the database was uploaded in September 2016

It enables SENDIASS Oxfordshire to securely record data separately from the LA, and to identify trends in parental concerns as well as providing the key information required for national benchmarking of all IASS  
To ensure we use the database to best effect in both recording information and collecting data for national benchmarking/ potential Local area SEND inspections, further training in its use and developing KPI reports has been commissioned.

### **Policies**

The service now has the following policies:

- Confidentiality policy for SENDIASS and CHYPPS
- Impartiality policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Complaints policy
- Lone Working policy

Policies currently awaiting updating or steering group ratification:

Equality, Supervision and Steering group Terms of reference

### **Attendance at local support groups/ conferences**

Oxfordshire Family Support Network Conference Wednesday, 16<sup>th</sup> March 2016.

SENCO Conference July 2016

Autism Oxford- 2 dates Oct 2015

SHIFT- October 2015,

Fizharry's Partnership TAs SEND training event – supported by a parent

POSCH ( Parents of special children) Bicester November 2015

OASIS

### **Contribution to policy development**

The Service has continued to develop good practice and contribute to national and local policy through membership of the following groups:

- IASSN (Information, Advice and Support Services Network)
- SE/SC regional IASS Network
- BOB (Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire IAS Network)
- OCC SEND reforms implementation working groups
- Local Offer Review group

- Local Area Inspection group

### **Achievements in 2015/2016:**

#### **- Exclusions**

All of the permanent exclusions where SENDIASS Oxfordshire supported parents in the academic year 2015/2016 were overturned either at the Independent Review panel stage or at the Governing Body Disciplinary Committee stage.

#### **- Talking Points Drop in Sessions:**

These now take place monthly in County Hall as the weekly across the county sessions were often poorly attended. They have been replaced by increased and regular attendance at some parent-led support groups or 'surgeries' to ensure that parents were able to access advice locally.

- **Talking SEND information sessions**
- **Increased numbers of volunteers**

### **Main issues concerning parents in 2015/2016**

- Local Authority refusals to make Educational and Health Care Needs assessments (EHCNA)
- How to provide good quality information to support their EHCNA (parental requests)
- Mediation - in particular whether LA representatives had authority to make agreements on the day.
- Requests for placements in special schools, in particular Autism appropriate placements
- FE Colleges and their lack of awareness of their duties under the new legislation

### **Main issues for Young people post 16**

- FE colleges' view that young person requires EHCP to access SEN Support
- Difficulties with getting evidence for EHCNA request as poorly written or no Learning Disability Assessments (LDA)
- Lateness of receiving information regarding need to request EHCNA for those supported by LDA
- Transport and travel training

## **PRIORITIES FOR 2016/2017**

- Stronger links to be made with FE Colleges. SENDIASS will organise a half day briefing session for FE SEN departments to help with understanding of new duties under SEND reforms.
- Development of more CHYPPS information, using consultation with young people including finalizing and distribution of CHYPPS FE leaflet
- Development of EY SEN Support leaflet
- Additional policies to be ratified- equalities and supervision.
- Greater understanding of functions within database to ensure consistency of office procedures, data collection and benchmarking, particularly re service reach.
- Development of range of case studies to evidence outcomes from SENDIASS involvement
- Collecting examples of good evidence-based paperwork submitted with requests for Education, Health and Care Needs Assessments to use when helping parents complete paperwork
- Outcomes training planned for April 2017
- Promote on going rolling training programme for parent led groups on participation