



‘Your views, we’re listening’

Our response to survey comments

Special Educational Needs
and Disability Information,
Advice & Support Service



Are there other areas you feel the service should develop?	
Going to schools for training	We offer a range of workshops to schools and practitioners and to newly qualified teachers. We regularly deliver training to school governors and will be offering webinars for governors next term which we hope will further increase engagement. We arrange to work with schools at their request and will be focussing on publicising this offer more widely to schools in the next year.
Supporting parents through the EHCP process is very important	We agree. Many other parents have also told us this and national research shows that families, including children and young people, feel that they understand the process better and that their plans are better when they have had support through the process. Our team has always offered this support to families. While there was additional funding available, we were lucky enough to have dedicated team members supporting families through the EHCP process. We will continue to offer this support now that the Independent Support funding has ceased. It will go back to being part of what the team offers rather than having specific staff doing only EHCP advice. In addition to this we have co-produced an EHCP workshop for parents which is now offered on a regular basis around the county, and we have lots of information on our website . We plan to develop our information and offer alternatives, such as digital guides and videos around the EHC process.



<p>You need to become more well known to parents and practitioners as the support is fantastic.</p>	<p>Thank you. This is a priority area for development for us, we plan to get better at letting people know who we are and what we do. We currently work closely with the parenting team to make sure parents know about our service, including regularly attending Triple P sessions, and we intend to further develop our links with other services. We will get more regular information out to schools and education providers, we will circulate our publicity more widely and we will try to encourage other agencies to share our information.</p>
<p>Advocacy in meetings</p>	<p>We do attend meetings with parents and children/young people. We do not have any remit to direct education providers and tell them what they must do. Our role is to support parents/ carers and children/young people to ensure that they understand processes and the law and that they can get their voice heard. The new Minimum standards for IAS services say that we will provide advocacy and they use this definition to make it clear what our role is. Attending meetings is dependent on having the capacity within the team to offer this and it can be very difficult to provide support at short notice. We are always happy to discuss issues and strategies with parents before meetings to help them plan ahead. We offer a workshop for parents 'Making Meetings Matter' which is designed to help parents make the most of meetings and conversations with educational settings and the local authority.</p>
<p>More in-depth on certain subjects i.e. education rights on medical long-term illness. Workshops on EHCP personal budgets what you can ask for before and after 16 years entitlements</p>	<p>We have information online, including videos explaining disability rights and support for medical needs. We are still developing the information on our website and there will be more information about personal budgets. However, the Local Authority have not yet finalised a personal budget policy and, like many local authorities, are still in the early stages of developing personal budgets for education. Families can contact our service to speak with a caseworker who will discuss personal budgets on an individual basis as each child's or young person's needs are different...</p>



	<p>...An education personal budget can only be given for specific provision written into a plan and is not additional funding, but would come from an education Providers' notional budget (with their agreement) or from the high needs (element 3) funding.</p>
<p>1:1 support in meetings. It's not enough to "train" the parents to communicate better in meetings... professionals are more professional when there's an independent supporter in the meeting. More case support needed that's not biased towards what the council wants (i.e. costing them as little as possible)</p>	<p>In some cases, we know that our workshops and our information have been enough for parents to feel more able to attend meetings and be confident and pro-active, but we know that this is not true for all parents and we try to provide support where possible, if needed. We are currently trialling a new helpline process which means that callers get an initial response more quickly and that caseworkers can manage their time and workload more efficiently. This appears to be helping caseworkers make more time to work directly with families. We are still evaluating the impact of this, but feedback so far has been positive.</p>
<p>Services for SENCOs - advice on who to refer to for specific difficulties and how. GPs keep sending parents back to us!</p>	<p>SENCOs and other practitioners are welcome to use our helpline to ask for information and advice, as well as having access to our website. Please use the feedback facility to let us know what else you would like to see on there. Practitioners have told us that they value our 'helpful contacts leaflet' which outlines contact details for relevant local and national services.</p>
<p>Take referrals from school staff who are supporting parents who don't feel comfortable or able to request support for themselves.</p>	<p>We are not able to accept referrals from practitioners. This is the policy of the National IAS network based on the legislation that supports IAS. Referrals from practitioners are seen to affect our impartiality and confidentiality.</p> <p>We appreciate that more vulnerable parents and young people may find it difficult to make the first call and may prefer to use our text service. They can type ADVICE4ME to 87007. This sends their number to us and they will get...</p>



	<p>...a message saying that a caseworker will be in touch.</p> <p>If the parent does not have a mobile phone the practitioner could call us while they are with the parent so that we can have the opportunity to check that the parent knows who we are & would like our advice & help.</p> <p>Parents or children and young people can also refer by email which practitioners could support them to write and send to: enquiries@suffolksendiass.co.uk</p>
<p>SEND training for parents. Rights, law etc</p>	<p>We have developed a series of short information videos around SEND which are embedded on our website and YouTube, which include relevant references to law and statutory guidance. These aim to increase parents' understanding of what they can reasonably expect in terms of SEND support and increase their confidence and ability to participate in decisions around their child's learning. We plan to further develop these videos in 2019.</p> <p>We offer regular workshops on SEND support, keep an eye on our events calendar. We also have lots of information on our website and additional leaflets and links and parents can contact our helpline to discuss any specific queries.</p> <p>We are developing our workshops, responding to feedback, and hope to be offering webinars soon.</p>
<p>More of an advisory service which can give direction and rights information to parents and carers, more than such an overriding emphasis on neutral listening and understanding of parents as a listening ear. The listening is obviously very important aspect...</p>	<p>We do give information and advice on options and rights. We cannot make decisions for you. Listening can be valuable in helping an individual feel heard and get things clear but, as a service, we strive to do much more than that: empowerment is a key principle of our service. If you feel that we have not given information about rights or ways forward at any time, please get in touch with me directly (Stacey.ford@suffolksendiass.co.uk) to discuss this. We are continually developing the information on our website, in as many different forms as possible, and developing our training offer, so that we can empower...</p>

...with impartiality, but it has to go further in recognition that by the time parents and carers actually call SENDIASS, they're sometimes at the end of their tether and thus may need more than just a listening ear - they would appreciate the service giving more direct advice on rights and entitlements, otherwise there's a risk that users may form an opinion that SENDIASS could simply try to deter parents, carers and children from demanding or receiving associated resources. I appreciate this is a fine line for the team, but it has to appreciate that users will often have expended efforts to understand the 'system' themselves, before using SENDIASS for help.

...parents and build their knowledge and understanding *at an earlier stage*, before they reach the end of their tether.

The co-production with parents of our EHCP workshop demonstrates our commitment to this. In the sessions the parents highlighted what information they wished they'd known before, including legal rights, and what kinds of questions they felt most parents would want to know early on. This has been incorporated into the workshop which is offered as a rolling programme around the county to very positive feedback.

Is there anything you would like to say about the SENDIAS Service?

They don't cover independent schools apart from giving the parent general advice. I wish they could. Independent schools become off the hook for not binding with SEND code of practice. SEND children in independent schools do not get enough support and nobody could say anything. Unfortunately, we...


We do support where pupils are placed in an independent setting by the Local Authority.
Other Independent Schools are not included in SEND legislation (children and families act 2014) and all the Law relating to the role of IAS services comes from this legislation.

We will offer information, advice and support to families whose children have SEND even if they are in an independent school and some of these parents...



<p>couldn't move to LA mainstream schools because they are so big and our child couldn't cope. Wish SENDIASS could help to get the support in independent school by educating the staff at school starting from learning support herself.</p>	<p>...have attended our free workshops and annual conference and have also told us that they have found the information and videos on our website helpful.</p> <p>However, we have no remit (and not enough capacity) to control what these independent schools do. There is a wealth of SEND training available to independent schools should they choose to access it.</p> <p>Independent schools are bound by Equality legislation and we will advise on that where appropriate.</p>
<p>Stronger objective advocacy is required. If an educational placement is not meeting their statutory obligations, this needs to be made clear.</p>	<p>We understand this point as it is often frustrating to know what should be happening may not be. We can inform practitioners of the law and guidance as we also inform parents and young people. However, it is not within our remit to tell an educational placement what to do. We have no power over them. We can inform parents what they can do if they want to take something further and will support families with these processes including complaints where necessary.</p>
<p>Not enough staff for the amount of issues that Suffolk county council and other professional agencies cause. This is not SendIASS' fault. It the fault of the system that's been created.</p>	<p>We would love to have a bigger team. We will pass on your comments to the Local Authority but will also continue to do the best we can with the resources we have 😊</p>
<p>I have previously felt the service to be biased towards schools and council objectives rather than being particularly independent. I also felt almost blamed like my attitude was to blame for a certain schools appalling behaviour...</p>	<p>We are very sorry to hear that any parent working with us has felt judged or felt that we are in any way biased. We do not take any side or judge children, young people or parents, schools or the local authority and we do not collude with families or practitioners. We are always focussed on what options might help the child or young person's situation move forward positively...</p>

<p>...because as soon as I had a member of Sendiass attend a meeting then the School were lovely in the meeting!! I soon sought advice and support via scope who were far better. The only reason I'd seek your help now is because [REDACTED] works for you.</p>	<p>...One of our statutory duties is to help encourage positive partnership working between parents, schools and the local authority as research shows that children and young people make the best progress when everyone is working together to support them. We therefore encourage parents and schools to acknowledge and affirm the experience and views of each other.</p> <p>We really value feedback and always seek to improve our practice. Please get in touch with me directly (stacey.ford@suffolksendiass.co.uk) if you would like to discuss this in more detail.</p>
<p>I note this survey question 7 includes a question about SENDIASS giving advice, but the training we've received implies this is not the objective of SENDIASS, which instead is more of a listening service.</p>	<p>The SENDIASS team do offer information, advice and support. I think you may be referring to the SEND parent Champion training? This course does not train parents to do the work of SENDIASS, nor does it require them to have any SEND knowledge or undertake any volunteering. The idea of the SEND Parent Champion course is to develop skills which will enable parents to champion a positive, solution-focussed attitude which may help others move forward.</p>
<p>The service is not easily accessible for our EAL parents and those who require us to advocate for them.</p>	<p>We hear you! We are aware of this and part of our operational plan for 2019/20 is to link up with services who work with minority groups and find out how we can become more accessible.</p>



Many of the additional comments were very positive, saying that the service is valued. Thank you for these:

“Without the help of *** I dread to think of how I would be with it all she is truly fabulous thank so much for all your help”**

“This service has been a great help with three of my children who have Sen and I'm not sure they would still be in education without the support received from Sendiass”


“This service is amazing, you all always go above and beyond. we have received excellent information and support over the last three years from our case worker and now have an ECHP and private school setting that meets my child's needs. Thank you all so much.”

“Don't know what I would have done without the help of ***”**

“The work you do is so supportive. This is particularly important for parents and children trying to work their way through the education maze and when schools say nothing can be done.”

“Just that it's been an invaluable source of guidance and support for me.”

“SENDIASS provides an excellent and trusted service. We are happy to recommend it to parents we work with, and to continue to find ways of working together.”



**“Have helped my family with advice concerning EHCP.
Always gets back to me when I leave a phone message.
Said they would come to meetings if I needed them to.
I hope they can be trusted to keep what we talk about between us.
Confidentiality is very important.
First point of call if I need answers.
Needs to be very knowledgeable about SEND.”**

“Brilliant people - excellent service, I now know a lot more than I did which has helped our family.”

“Have always appreciated the expertise and availability of SENDIASS team despite the enormous pressure on them with limited resources.”

“Have used before and found them always knowledgeable and sympathetic.”