



Buckinghamshire SEND IAS Service

End of year report to Steering Group

March 2022

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Our role:

All local authorities, by law, have to provide children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), and their parents/carers, with information, advice and support. Buckinghamshire SENDIAS Service is the information, advice and support service here. Our service is free, confidential, impartial and at arm's length from Buckinghamshire Council (BC). We have exclusive use of accommodation separate from County Hall. No referral is needed to access our service.

We offer accurate and up to date information, advice and support around all matters relating to SEND. We do this face to face, by telephone and email support, as well as by attending meetings and delivering training. Our aim is to empower our service users to understand the complexities of the law and local processes and to self-advocate as far as possible.

We deal with cases ranging in complexity, and operate a case management system to ensure the most effective use of our resources, triaging into levels of involvement: level 1 is the least complex, level 4 is the most: One is signposting, Two is straightforward work including attendance at annual review and other meetings, Three is for more complex work e.g. permanent exclusions, Four is direct involvement in tribunals.

We play a key role in influencing improvements to local strategy and processes provided for our service users by BC, Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), educational settings, and other organisations.

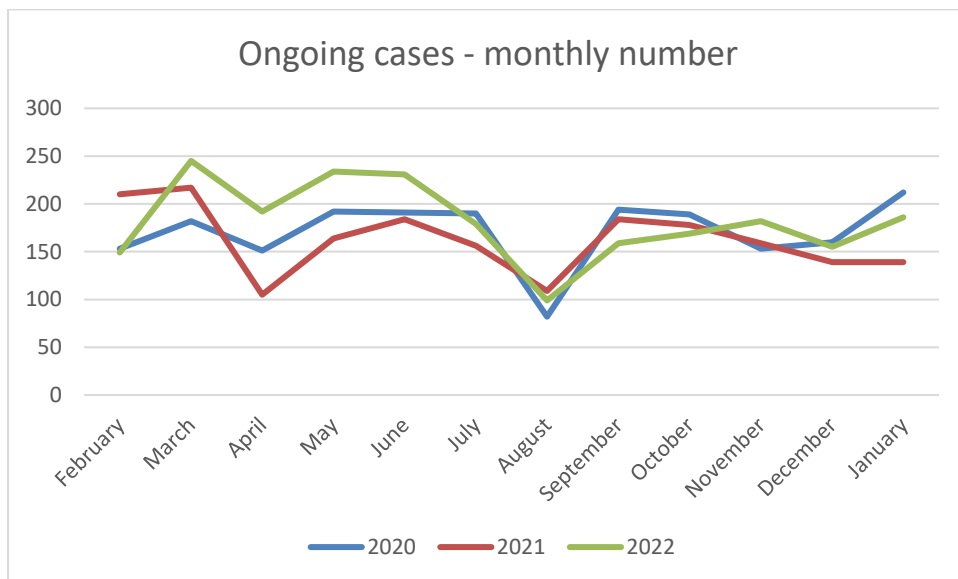
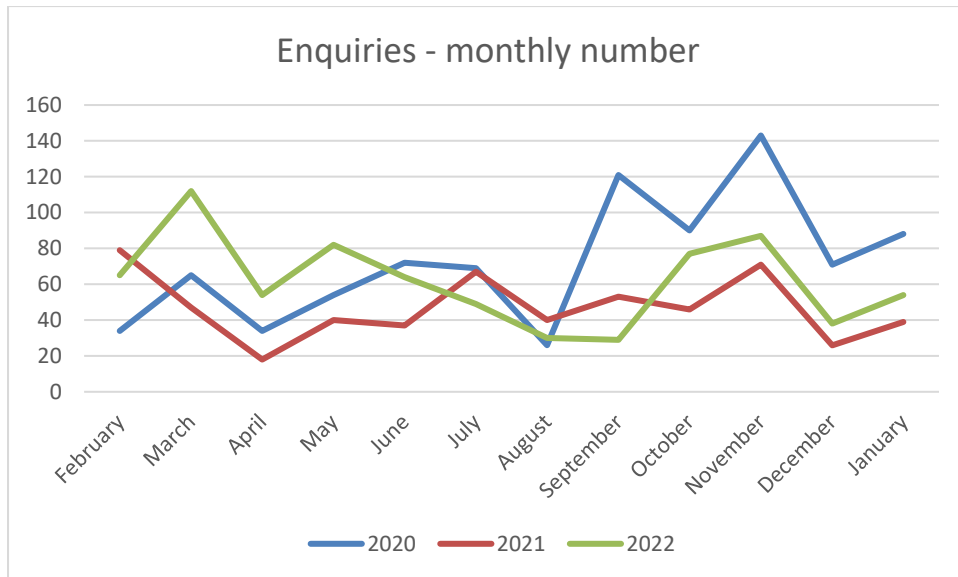
We work to national [Minimum Standards](#) agreed by Council for Disabled Children, Department for Education, and Department for Health and Social Care.

The SENDIAS Service team leader is line managed by Maxine Moore, Education Project Manager (SEND Resolutions Team), based in Children's Services, Buckinghamshire Council.

We have an informal commissioning arrangement with the BC Integrated Commissioning team. We report to a Steering Group led by the chair of the parent carer forum FACT Bucks.

Our performance 2021-2022

Headline figures 24.2.2021-23.2.2022



| | | |
|--|---|--|
| New referrals: 482 (405)(590) | New enquiries: 794 (566)(845) | Ongoing cases: 904 (860) (1011) |
| <i>New referrals relate to a specific child or young person's record begun that month once we have the relevant consent.</i> | <i>New enquiries relate to a referrer's record begun that month. Often this will be parent/carer, but it can also be a professional. No consent is necessary to be added as an enquiry as only generic responses are given.</i> | <i>Ongoing cases include new referrals and referrals which were set up during a previous month, but are still requiring active involvement from the team that month.</i> |
| <i>Headline figures for 24.2.2021 – 23.2.2022 in green, 24.2.2020-23.2.2021 in red, 24.2.2019-23.2.2020 in blue</i> | | |

Summary of year's performance

The context of the past year has been the gradual, intermittent ease out of lockdown relating to the COVID-19 pandemic. We have seen a very significant rise in demand compared to 2020-21, the year of lockdown, and levels of ongoing cases very similar to our busiest ever year 2019-20. We have faced a significant reduction in funding:

| SENDIAS FUNDING | | | |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 |
| Core funding from Buckinghamshire Council (Education) | 108,734 | 111,704 | 111,552 |
| Council for Disabled Children Information Advice and Support Programme task order funding | 45,900 | 26,899 | 10,000 |
| FACT Bucks funding for online training for parents | | | 3,180 |
| Early Help Funding (0.5 fte Business Support Officer 1-year fixed term to manage backlog) | | 19,987 | |
| Early Help Funding (Adviser Overtime – one off funding) | | 13,800 | |
| Total | £154,634 | £172,390 | £124,732 |

We have dealt with this with 2.4FTE total staffing compared to 4.2 FTE in 2019-2020, leading to increased pressure on advisers:

| Date | Ongoing cases | FTE Advisers | Cases per FTE Adviser |
|-------------|----------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|
| 2021-2022 | 897 | 2.3 | 390 |
| 2020-2021 | 860 | 2.3 | 374 |
| 2019-2020 | 1070 | 3 | 346 |

As in 2020-2021, we have only been funded for 0.5FTE Business Support, which has led to backlogs in processing queries. Not surprisingly, despite mitigations, many service users allocated a call with an adviser have had to wait several weeks for this to take place. Mitigations have included very successful recruitment of 4 additional volunteer advisers and a business support volunteer, a new guide to service users on what to expect from us, improvements in triaging, delegation and use of templates. They have also included a reduction in adviser calls offered and in meetings attended – we have no longer been able to offer to attend tribunal hearings. Despite this, our end of year survey of service users who used our service in this period shows improvements in satisfaction levels. I believe this is testament to the effectiveness of the service once a service user does receive our help.

Due to concerns regarding our ability to meet the Minimum Standards raised by the Chair of the Steering Group, the Local Authority commissioned an extensive internal review of our services. Whilst confirming the effectiveness of the team it also highlighted the need for additional resourcing in the team. Business improvement expert resource has since been provided to further improve the service user journey involving sophisticated analysis of interviews with service users, team and stakeholders. This is leading to concrete proposals for improvements, such as to our webform, database and webpages – we are expecting that the improvements will improve self-service by service users where possible and so allow more time for the team to support those most in need.

In addition, tripartite funding from education, health and social care was agreed in December 2021 following the internal review. This was for 2 additional FTE advisers, one fixed term for 2 years, the other fixed term for 1 year. These have been recruited and are due to start in March and April 2022 respectively. The impact of this is still to come, but is expected to improve the experience for families who use our service – improving response times and freeing up adviser time to support more young people directly. We will also be able to provide a consistent year-round service and win back time for the team leader to engage in more stakeholder involvement and business improvement including developing our direct role with children and young people and enhancing our webpages.

Together these developments will lead to hugely improved compliance with national [Minimum Standards](#).

Strategic involvement:

SENDIAS is well placed to play an important role, in line with national [Minimum Standards](#), in influencing local strategy, policy and processes so that these are developed in line with the law and reflect the views of local families. We are in a strong position to do this because:

- on a daily basis a large number of families tell us about the issues they are facing
- we have unmatched experience, breadth and depth of knowledge on SEND law and local provision across education, health and social care and across age ranges 0-25

In light of the context described in our performance review, our availability for strategic involvement has inevitably reduced. We have had to withdraw from most Local Area SEND strategic groups and seek different ways of influencing, for example by meeting separately with key stakeholders. We are active members of the SEND Operations group which focuses on the effective delivery of SEND services locally and also meet monthly with the head of SEND Improvement and Transformation, the head of the integrated SEND team, and the chair of FACT Bucks to share news and influence policy and process development. For example, in the past year we have given significant input on the SEND and Inclusion Strategy, the Sufficiency Strategy, the Specialist Teaching consultation, Personal Budget and Mover In policies, Children and Young People Therapies Stakeholder Engagement Group terms of reference. SENDIAS continues to have indirect influence beyond these groups because our advisory steering group chair is also the chair of FACT Bucks and he and other FACT representatives continue their membership of strategic groups. We continue to be called upon frequently to collaborate on Local Area SEND developments, testifying to the value of our involvement – in the main though we do not have the resource to contribute. Our absence has been noted, and FACT Bucks in particular are keen for SENDIAS to be resourced to enable fuller strategic involvement once our enhanced capacity allows this, for example around the Local Offer and SEN Support

Despite these limitations, we still have strong, mutually productive collaboration in the local area with partners across education, health and social care e.g. with FACT Bucks, iSEND, SEND resolutions, CYP therapies, CAMHS, YOS, Family Support, education providers, SEND Participation. We are seen as a vital sounding board with our finger on the pulse e.g. feeding back to SEND local area teams on process issues raised by families as they arise – leading to improvements. We help local area teams do their job better – for instance by lobbying senior leaders, highlighting where the law is not followed or processes are failing

families and raising awareness of schools and other professionals about their responsibilities – with individual cases, training and our email updates.

As we have fewer opportunities to meet routinely with other professionals though, we have found it more difficult to keep abreast of developments locally, putting us at risk of missing out on information relevant to our service and service users.

Examples of how our input has made a difference at a strategic level:

| We said: | This contributed to: |
|---|---|
| One reason why only 51% families provided information for Appendix A during an EHC needs assessment in Buckinghamshire in 2021 is that the instructions on the letter from the integrated SEND team responding to a request are not clear. | More clearly worded letter coproduced with the integrated SEND team and now in use. However, the rate of return of Appendix A remains very low. |
| There should be a special focus on identifying children with an EHC plan without a school place or not attending and finding them a suitable alternative education. Some are out of school for far too long. | The Head of iSEND has developed team routines to identify these children and pursue suitable alternative education with vigour. This is successfully reducing the numbers and the length of time out of education. A Sufficiency Strategy has been agreed, coproduced with SENDIAS, and the first phase of delivery is in progress. |
| Failure by professionals to follow up actions agreed at mediation leads to damaging breakdown of trust with families, is unlawful and likely to lead to costly Tribunals. | Senior level agreement in principle for additional training of EHCos around mediation and monitoring of mediation actions. |
| Some families with children with EHC plans are highlighting a deficit in therapy provision. There should be a plan to deal with this coproduced with families and their representatives and this plan should be communicated to families as soon as possible. | Coproduction meetings with therapies, commissioning, FACT Bucks and SENDIAS to discuss options for a way forward and how best to communicate this to families. |

Operational functions:

A key asset for us is the team itself - we have a small, very hard-working, cohesive and resilient inhouse and volunteer team totalling 2.8 full time equivalent inhouse staff and 5 volunteer advisers and 1 volunteer business support with an impressive range of skills, many are also parents of SEND children. Families benefit from a very high commitment from our team, the volunteer commitment is substantial. Across the team there is almost no absence.

We are good listeners who are solution-focused

All the respondents to our survey say we listen to their views. 83% say that we gave information and advice which met their needs. 64% said their involvement with us benefitted their child. We listen, understand the unique needs of the individual child, help them to work out clear options for next steps and help them to take the steps they choose, so they experience a sense of progress.

Our advice is practical, accurate and helpful

We are IPSEA trained, we seek out training to provide IAS which meet needs e.g. in aftermath of Covid, on Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA). We share knowledge within the team effectively - to ensure team upskills and the family gets the best advice. Our average survey score for helpfulness this year is almost 9 out of 10, compared to 7 out of 10 last year. We have a key role to play in promoting information on SEN support to ensure education providers are making full use of this to meet children's needs where possible. We help families to self-serve where possible so that we can focus on giving more support to those who need it most.

Working with children and young people

Uniquely in the local area, we provide impartial information, advice and support directly to individual children and young people. This role is vital to ensure that their wishes and aspirations are understood and they become equipped to make their own decisions. All advisers are trained to support children and young people. Typically, individual advice for children and young people takes considerably more time per service user than our work with adults. We have a 0.2FTE year-round Lead Children and Young People's (CYP) worker to develop accessible resources and training for children and young people and promote our service to them. Unfortunately, reduced staffing resource has meant that we have largely had to curtail CYP developmental and promotional activity – to deal with the high demand from other service users and to provide even a very small adviser input during the holidays, the CYP Lead has mainly had to focus on IAS for parents/carers. Nevertheless the team did work with 13 individual children and young people directly in the past year (compared to 20 the previous year), for example helping them to negotiate a return to college following informal exclusion.

Dispute resolution

We work hard to try to help service users to resolve their concerns as quickly and easily as possible. We continue to find that families feel that they have no option but to take steps towards mediation and tribunal appeal once an appealable decision has been made which they disagree with – as they don't succeed in obtaining a response to their requests to the local authority for discussion and negotiation.

We have continued to be very successful in assisting service users to resolve their appealable decision by making best use of the mediation and tribunal process and less formal options, without a tribunal hearing being necessary. We save families and local stakeholders time, stress and money through perseverance to resolve disputes in as informal way as possible. One measure of this is the number of tribunals we are involved with. In the past year we gave significant advice about tribunals to 55 families with an appealable decision, helping them to prepare for and follow up mediations, and helping with tribunal paperwork for 13 of them. As far as we are aware, all but one was resolved without a tribunal hearing being necessary (although see below*).

| Date | Tribunal advice | Mediations attended | Tribunal preparation | Tribunals required |
|-----------|-----------------|---------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| 2021-2022 | 121 | 7 | 13 | 1 |
| 2020-2021 | 114 | 21 | 17 | 3 |

It has continued to be very hard to resolve complex cases without having to support families to escalate their concerns to senior managers in education, health and social care.

Complexity relates to:

- lack of or inconsistent communication with families by professionals
- lack of legal training and understanding by professionals leading to mistakes
- delays and incomplete processing of annual reviews
- shortages of alternative provision and specialist placements and failure to challenge responses to consultations

We help to resolve long-running disputes when families are stuck in the system – we make children out of education our priority - whether no school place, excluded, not attending - whatever the reason for the delay or difficulty we work hard to raise awareness and help the situation move on e.g. towards a suitable school place or alternative provision, for example, with consent from the family by team leader speaking directly to relevant senior leaders. It has become even more time-consuming to resolve these disputes as the ability of the SEND Resolutions team to move on referrals re our service users has declined in the past year in the face of staff churn in their own team and the integrated SEND team.

Despite this, feedback shows our effectiveness has improved e.g. average score in our survey was 8/10 for how useful the help was from SENDIAS in sorting out their problem, compared to 7/10 the previous year.

There is more scope for our involvement to resolve disputes. In the February 2022 joint FACT Bucks and SENDIAS SEND Local Area survey which had 368 responses, only 27% of those who used informal dispute resolution during the past 12 months, and only 2 of the 24 who made a formal complaint took advice or help from SENDIAS. 8 of the 24 who contacted Global Mediation had help or advice from SENDIAS. *3 of the 13 who lodged an appeal which led to a hearing say they had help or advice from SENDIAS.

Training for local SEND families and professionals

We have moved away from face to face training and outreach towards live recorded webinars. This has simplified administrative arrangements, allowed better use of time and easier coproduction of content with others and leads to a lasting product which service users are signposted to routinely, saving adviser time. The momentum for this has come chiefly from our close relationship with FACT Bucks, the parent carer forum, which funded 4 and coproduced these with us. We also sought out the opportunity to work on 2 others in collaboration with the iSEND team around preparing for adulthood and were asked by Chilternwood School to provide a series of 3 others on annual reviews. We have had invaluable help delivering these from the BC Comms team. The webinars will all be available on our new webpages, the SEND Local Offer and Bucks Schools Web in due course.

Accessibility:

Staff resourcing issues have had a detrimental impact on our accessibility:

- We triage so that the most urgent cases are dealt with immediately. Response times for some cases though are too long.
- We are not currently able to provide a consistent year-round service.
- We have reduced capacity to attend meetings with service users, even online.
- Direct work with children and young people is very limited.

We provide an individualised service, triaged using case management levels. Our offer can include virtual/face to face support, help with paperwork, use of interpreters, liaison with relevant professionals (with service user consent). Approximately 75% of service users now contact us via our online contact form. We also have a mailbox, voicemail and a twice weekly webchat session during term time. At our first response, we provide relevant step by step information templates on a wide range of topics from SEN support to disability discrimination and contacting the integrated SEND team.

We reach over 1000 parents/carers, young people and professionals with our Mailchimp email news updates which include accessible links. But we could do better, families still say they don't know about us.

Improvement work on our service user journey, webpages and webform has begun with BC expertise beyond our team, based on feedback gathered as part of our internal review.

Feedback

We routinely invite service users to agree to receive our surveys. Currently over 900 have consented to do so. We gained in depth feedback from telephone interviews held with 5 service users as part of our internal review. Every day we receive anecdotal feedback from service users – a selection is included in Appendix E.

As part of our contractual obligations to Council for Disabled Children we issue an annual survey in early spring each year using their set questions. In February/March 2022, volunteers phoned a random list of service users from 2021-2022 gaining 15 responses. These responses evidence a return to the high scores we achieved in 2018-19 when staffing was higher and demand was lower.

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Impartiality rated at least 7/10</p> <p>85% (65%)</p> | <p>Difference we made rated at least 7/10</p> <p>85% (49%)</p> | <p>Satisfaction rated at least 7/10</p> <p>93% (57%)</p> |
| <p>92% (62%) would recommend our service to others</p> | | <p>Number of complaints</p> <p>1(0)</p> |
| <p><i>Previous year's figures in red</i></p> <p><i>15 respondents - see appendix E for full survey results</i></p> | | |

Minimum Standards

Unfortunately, reduced funding has compromised our compliance with the national [Minimum Standards](#), especially the following:

- **1.2** *The IASS is designed and commissioned with children, young people and parents, and has the capacity and resources to meet these Minimum Standards and local need.*
- **1.3** *The IASS provides an all year-round flexible service . . .*
- **2.3** *The IASS works with local partners, including local parent and young people forums to inform and influence policy and practice in the local area.*
- **3.6** *The IASS offers training to local education, health and social care professionals, children, young people and parents to increase knowledge of SEND law, guidance, local policy, issues and participation*

However, huge benefits are expected following the internal review which has led to the doubling of the adviser resource and major and wide-ranging business improvements all to take effect in the next reporting year.

The only standard which is not expected to be not fully compliant by this time next year is:-

3.3 *The IASS has a stand-alone service website* – This is because website options have been thoroughly explored using cost/benefit analysis as part of the internal review resulting in a decision to continue to use the BC platform. This was confirmed by recent SEND inspectors as an acceptable approach as it doesn't compromise impartiality.

A full review of our compliance with the [Minimum Standards](#) is included in Appendix A.

Overview from our chairman Andrew Howard

A year ago, I wrote about the unprecedented year that had just ended, little thinking that a year later I could easily write the same. So an immediate thanks to the staff team for all their ongoing efforts to provide a first class service in ways we would never have thought possible in the early Spring of 2020: for they have never failed to give their utmost, working with great professionalism, commitment and empathy.

The year has concluded with the much awaited OFSTED and CQC Inspection of the Local Area's provision for SEND. SENDIAS had a focus meeting with the Lead Inspector when we were able to highlight the

benefits which the service brings to the Local Area response and the testimony of parents (through our survey and in other ways) that the lived experience of the service is highly valued.

We were also able to bring to the Inspector's attention our service users' experience of other teams which include a lack of:

- effective and timely communication from professionals
- person-centred approach/co-production
- understanding of and adherence to SEND law
- sufficiency of specialist places

We have raised these issues consistently since 2014. Since 2019 planning for improvement has seemed much better resourced and focused, senior leaders are well informed and responsive and there is greatly enhanced collaboration across education, health and social care. We have noticed many improvements, especially with improved guidance such as OAP for SEN Support and processes such as for quality checking EHC plans and for delivering annual reviews. Unfortunately though, many families we work with are not yet reaping the benefit of this, mainly because of high turnover of staff across SEND. We await the Inspection report with interest to see how they have viewed the reality in Bucks, alongside the delivery of the commitments made in the last 2 years by the Council and CCG.

We have previously noted that one of the deficits in the Local Area offer is training focussed on parents and carers. In the last year we have been able to address this in collaboration with FACT Bucks and Heritage House – a series of webinars have been offered live and as recordings – on topics including ECHPs; SEN Support; Health Service; Preparing for Adulthood and Coproducing confidently. We are currently agreeing how we can continue to develop this resource in the year ahead.

We were very pleased by the results of the survey which have shown a return to previous levels of user satisfaction. This has been achieved not only within the context of the COVID landscape but also with a significantly reduced staff resource base compared with 2019-20. We are very glad to note that the outcome of the report commissioned by the Director of Education is an enhanced financial offer which has allowed us to recruit new full time advisers who begin this Spring, alongside improvements in office functions and the website thanks to resources provided by the Council. We are very excited to be able to plan for a reduction in the waiting time currently experienced by clients.

In the aftermath of Covid – we hear all too often of children with Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) not attending school regularly or with enjoyment. Strategies to support children with EBSA are still at an early stage of development locally, but work is going on and we are playing our part. (E.g. with a comprehensive step by step guide for families coproduced with a senior psychologist and the education entitlement team). We are hoping that the additional team members will give us the capacity to further engage in strategic developments and leverage our knowledge of the lived experience of families to improve the SEND offer in the Local Area.

Andrew Howard – Chairman Bucks SENDIAS Service and FACT Bucks

Appendix A: compliance with Minimum Standards

| Minimum Standard | Met/working towards/unmet | | | |
|--|---------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | 2018-2019 | 2019-2020 | 2020-2021 | 2021-2022 |
| 1. Commissioning, governance and management | 4/8 met | 6/8 met | 6/8 met | 6/8 met |

1.1 The IASS is jointly commissioned by education, health and social care in accordance with the CFA 2014. A formal agreement is set out in writing which refers directly to these Minimum Standards, whilst also considering the need for continuity and stability of the service.

1.2 The IASS is designed and commissioned with children, young people and parents, and has the capacity and resources to meet these Minimum Standards and local need. For smaller local authorities (LAs) this may involve commissioning across local areas.

1.3 The IASS provides an all year-round flexible service which is open during normal office hours and includes a direct helpline with 24-hour answer machine, call back and signposting service, including linking to the national SEND helpline.

1.4 There is a dedicated and ring-fenced budget held and managed by an IAS service manager located within an IASS.

1.5 The IASS is, and is seen by service users to be, an arm's length, confidential, dedicated and easily identifiable service, separate from the LA, Clinical Commissioning Group and/or host organisation.

1.6 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.

1.7 The Governance arrangements outline a clear management structure, encompassing a strategic manager within the IASS and a steering group or advisory body which includes representatives from service user groups and key stakeholders from education, social care and health.

1.8 The IASS has a development plan reviewed annually with the steering group/advisory body, which includes specific actions and improvement targets.

| Minimum Standard | Met/working towards/unmet | | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 2. Strategic functions | 2018-2019 | 2019-2020 | 2020-2021 | 2021-2022 |
| | 3/3 met | 3/3 met | 3/3 met | 3/3 met |

2.1 Each IASS has a manager based solely within the service, without additional LA/CCG or host body roles. They have responsibility for strategic planning, service management and delivery, and quality assurance.

2.2 The IASS engages with regional and national strategic planning and training and demonstrates effective working with other IASSs to inform service development.

2.3 The IASS works with local partners, including local parent and young people forums to inform and influence policy and practice in the local area.

| Minimum Standard | Met/working towards/unmet | | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 3. Operational functions | 2018-2019 | 2019-2020 | 2020-2021 | 2021-2022 |
| | 2/6 met | 2/6 met | 2/6 met | 2/6 met |

3.1 The IASS provides:

Impartial information, advice and support (IAS) on the full range of education, health and social care as defined in the SEND Code of Practice to the following service users –

a) children

b) young people

c) parents

This support is offered in a range of ways which includes face to face, a telephone helpline, email, website and social media.

3.2 The IASS provides branded information and promotional materials in a range of accessible formats.

3.3 The IASS has a stand-alone service website that is accessible to all service users. The website includes:

☐ Contact details of the service

☐ Opening hours

☐ Response times

☐ Information on a range of SEND topics

☐ Signposting to other useful groups including parent groups and youth forums and national helplines

☐ Signposting to the Local Offer

☐ Key policies including a complaints procedure

3.4 The IASS provides advocacy support for individual children, young people, and parents

3.5 The IASS provides information, advice and support before, during and following a SEND Tribunal appeal in a range of different ways, dependent on the needs of the parent or young person. This will include representation during the hearing if the parent or young person is unable to do so.

3.6 The IASS offers training to local education, health and social care professionals, children, young people and parents to increase knowledge of SEND law, guidance, local policy, issues and participation.

| Minimum Standard | Met/working towards/unmet | | | |
|--|---------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 4. Professional development and training for staff | 2018-2019 | 2019-2020 | 2020-2021 | 2021-2022 |
| | 2/3 met | 3/3 met | 3/3 met | 3/3 met |

4.1 All advice and support providing staff successfully complete all online IPSEA legal training levels within 12 months of joining the service. Volunteers who provide advice and support should complete IPSEAs Level 1 online training within 12 months.

4.2 The service routinely requests feedback from service users and others, and uses this to further develop the work and practices of the service.

4.3 All IASS staff and volunteers have ongoing supervision and continuous professional development.

Appendix B: Workforce

In-house staff team:

| Role | FTE | Funding source | Experience with SENDIAS |
|------------------|-------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| Team Leader | 0.85 | BC | 16 years |
| Adviser | 0.54 | BC | 2 years 3 months |
| Adviser | 0.42 | BC | 3 years |
| Adviser | 0.23 | BC | 3 years |
| CYP Adviser | 0.20 | BC | 7 years |
| Business Support | 0.5 | BC | 2 months |
| Totals | 2.74 | | |

Volunteer SEND IAS Adviser (VSA) team:

| Role | Number | Average hours/wk/ term time/ volunteer | Experience |
|----------------------------|--------|--|-----------------------|
| Volunteer Adviser | 1 | 8 | 1 year 3 months |
| Volunteers Advisers | 4 | 8 | 9 months |
| Volunteer Business Support | 1 | 12 | (Previous postholder) |

Appendix C: Buckinghamshire SEND IAS Service local context

In the 2011 census there were 153,465 children and young people under the age of 25 in Buckinghamshire. Results from the 2021 census are not yet available.

In January 2021, 95,708 of these were registered at a school.

Nationally, the number of pupils with an EHC plan has risen by 10% to 325,600 in 2021. The number of pupils with SEN support has increased by less than 0.5% to 1,083,100. In Buckinghamshire in January 2021, 3644 or 3.8% pupils had an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) compared to 3.7% nationally. 9713 or 10.1% were on SEN Support compared to 12.2% nationally. ([SEN in England 2021](#))

The total numbers of new EHC plans issued in Buckinghamshire for 2021 was 708. For the same period in 2020, 589 were issued, demonstrating a significant increase of 20%, twice as much as nationally.

There was a total of 1120 requests for EHC needs assessment for 2021. This is an increase of 19% from 2020 and an increase compared with 2019 of 19%. This demonstrates a **significant spike in demand**, since schools return post-lockdown in 2021. 67% of these requests have been agreed, a slight increase on 2020 (63%). There has been a notable increase in requests coming from parents. Requests from parents were significantly less likely to be agreed than from settings. Nationally for 2020 the % of all requests agreed stood at 78%, and for the south-eastern region 74%.

For 2021, 75.7% assessments have been completed within 6 weeks (547 out of 723). For 2021, 82.0% of all plans were issued within 20 weeks, excluding exceptions. This compares to 97% recorded in December 2020.

There continues to be great difficulty in meeting the 6-week deadline for appendices – especially for health and social care.

There continue to be very lengthy delays for the SEND team to process annual reviews.

There is a continuing issue around a shortage of specialist placements.

During 2021, the Integrated SEND Team participated in 80 mediation meetings, which is a decline on the 100 meetings held during 2020. The majority of disputes (57%) were around sections B,F,I, with placement being the primary motivation with the remainder around the Refusal to Assess (RTA). The RTA cases represent around 10% of the total number of requests that were turned down during 2021. Approx. 28% of the cases that went to Mediation during 2021 later progressed to an appeal, with the remainder coming to some form of resolution with no further escalation. This is a slight decline on the 32% that escalated during 2020.

iSEND received 157 appeals during 2021, of which 34 were appealing the RTA decision, therefore 123 appeals about content of EHCP or placement, representing 2% of all children with EHCPs in

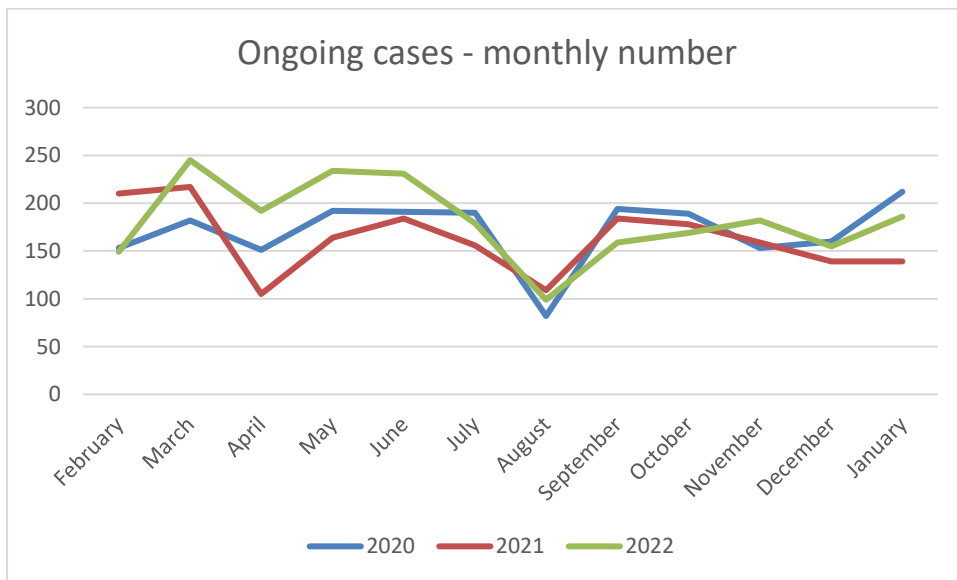
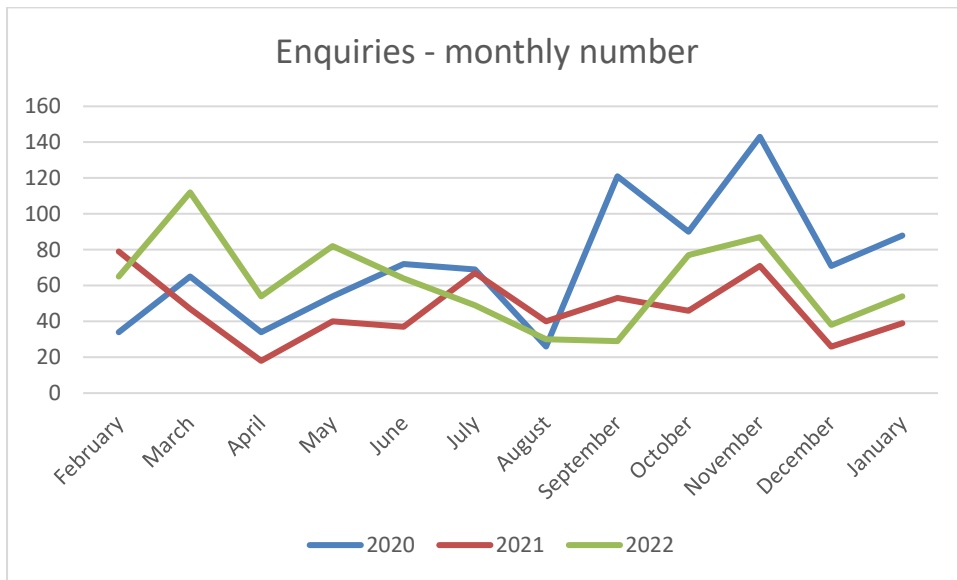
Buckinghamshire (5409). During 2020 we received 169 appeals, of which 49 were against RTA decisions and 129 appeals about content of EHCP or placement, representing just over 2.5% of all children with EHCPs (4910). In keeping with previous years, the majority of appeals are against Section I and with 40% of these seeking an independent setting, either mainstream or special. (*Data from SEND Resolutions, March 2022*)

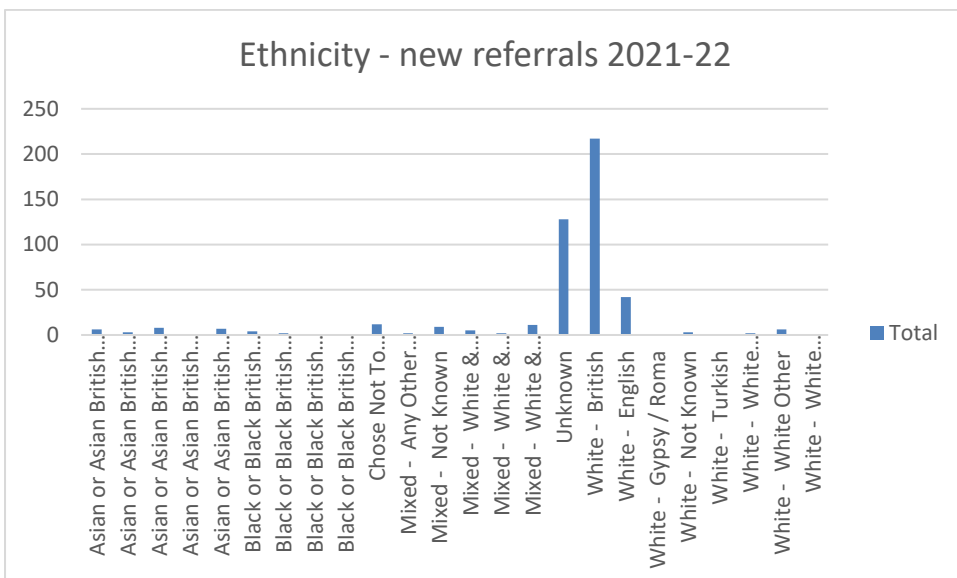
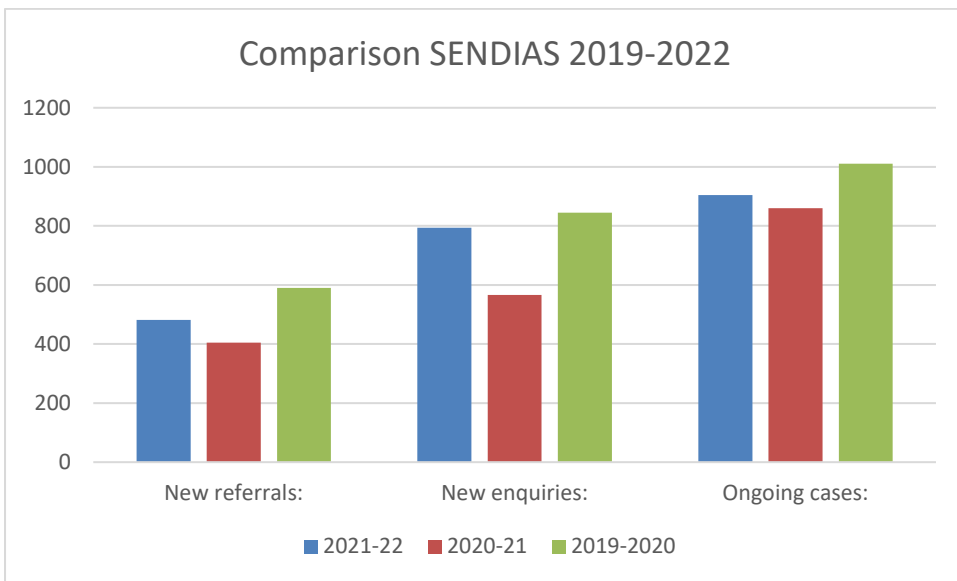
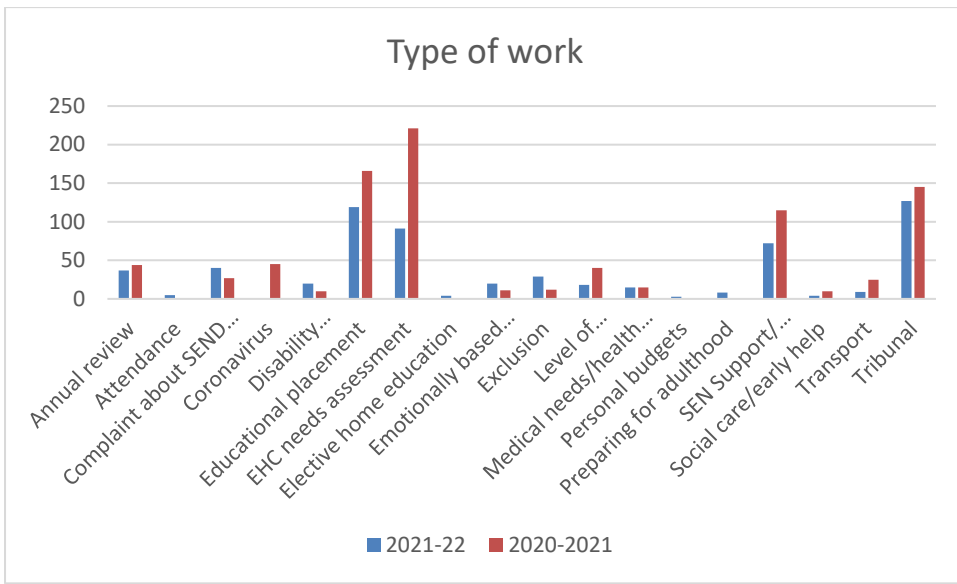
The most common type of need nationally among pupils with an EHC plan is Autistic spectrum disorder, with 92,600 pupils (30% of pupils with an EHC plan).

The most common type of need among pupils with SEN support are Speech, Language and Communication needs, with 245,200 pupils.

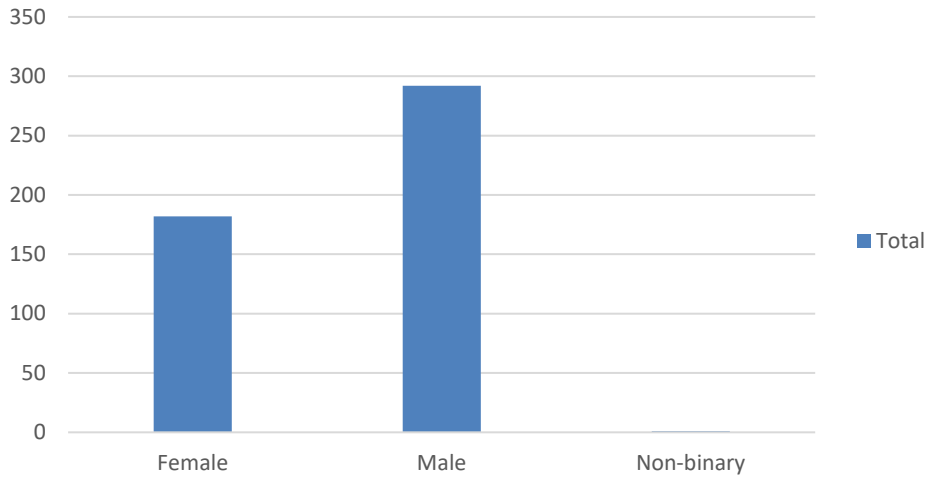
Appendix D: Statistics from our database

Headline figures 24.2.2021-23.2.2022

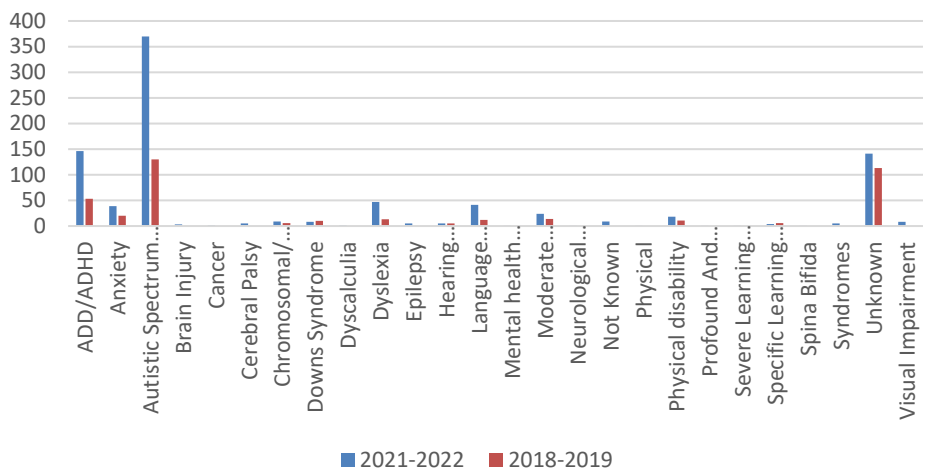




Gender - new referrals 2021-2022



Main disability



Appendix E: Our survey results – March 2022

Bucks SENDIAS Service end of year service user survey Feb/March 2022 – please see attached document.

Appendix F: Volunteer statements:

Volunteer A: I came across the Bucks SENDIAS volunteer advisor advertisement at a point when I was able to offer the required 8-10 hours per week to the role. Having seen the difficulties faced by my brother and his family around SEN support, EHC assessment and school placement, I appreciate the value of the support that the SENDIAS service provide to children, young people and their families and the role immediately appealed to me.

Although this was an entirely new area for me, I have been provided with the comprehensive training, access to the IPSEA qualifications and ongoing support needed to equip me to undertake this role.

The Bucks SENDIAS team have been welcoming and supportive from the start, making me feel valued and able to ask for help and advice whenever needed – even when I have needed help to be repeated more than once this has always been offered freely and without judgement.

I really enjoy the rewarding and varied role as a SENDIAS adviser as well as being part of such a dedicated and devoted team. It has taken me longer than I first imagined to feel that I am able to make a contribution as a member of this team, as there has been so much to learn, not just about the law around SENDIAS provision but also at the Local Authority level too, but the support and help that I am given has ensured that I have always had the information and advice needed to help the users of our valued service.

Volunteer B: Overwhelmingly positive, but more shadowing would be good. Summer holiday got in the way a bit and September was full on.

Volunteer C: found the team to be very supportive despite her lack of computer skills, appreciated having been shown how to do things.

Appendix G: Case Study:

How working closely with our local Parent Carer Forum has impacted on the reach and capacity of Bucks SENDIAS Service

The context

Bucks SENDIAS Service is an in-house service funded by Buckinghamshire Council and by CDC as part of the IASP programme. Our local Parent Carer Forum, FACT Bucks, originated in 2012 as a venture by the Council, building on an existing group of parent representatives, supported by a paid participation worker. From 2014 it became an independent PCF supported mainly with Government funding. We have always had a close relationship with it.

This has always involved:

- Working together on local strategic groups to ensure that relevant policies and processes have regard to the views of children and young people with SEND and their parents/carers.
- Promoting each other's roles, information and events with families.
- A committee member of FACT Bucks acting as chair of the SENDIAS termly steering group.
- Coproducing events, training and resources.
- Informal meetings at least twice a term between the chair of FACT Bucks and the SENDIAS team leader to share updates and approaches to issues.

The story

In summer 2019 the PCF committee member who chaired the SENDIAS steering group resigned. Rather than replacing her with another committee member, the PCF and the SENDIAS team leader decided that the chair of the PCF should take on the role himself. This was in part in acknowledgement of the increased expectations on the steering group in terms of governance and funding, relating to our national Minimum Standards and our contract with Council for Disabled Children, for example, working towards a Memorandum of Understanding with stakeholders and towards joint commissioning of the SENDIAS service. The PCF chair is immensely influential on matters relating to SEND in the local area, taking a role on the highest-level decision-making strategic groups relating to SEND, and his ability and experience are widely-respected. Closer working with him has been of mutual benefit to both SENDIAS and the PCF, but especially to SENDIAS, even more so than we might have anticipated. As chair of our steering group, he is now party to the key issues affecting our service, including level of demand, staffing capacity and compliance with Minimum Standards, and has lent his weight very effectively to helping the team leader to resolve them. Closer working has also ensured we are aware of and capitalise very promptly on more opportunities for coproduction.

The outcome

Some of the benefits of being chaired by the chair of the PCF have included:

A fresh look at our governance: The PCF chair's experience with governance led to new Terms of Reference to restructure our steering group which now consists of:

- A Big Meet of influential stakeholders once a year, including parents/carers, young people and their representatives, senior leaders from education, health and social care aimed at promoting the beneficial impact of our service and seeking future support.
- A termly small advisory group including a commissioner, the designated clinical officer, the designated social work officer, senior SEND team manager, the SENDIAS team including volunteers aimed at supporting the team leader to deliver the service.

A drive towards closer support from stakeholders – we now have a written Memorandum of Understanding with stakeholders agreed by the steering group. The chair is taking on the role of seeking new signatories to it across education, health and social care.

A gateway to senior decision-makers: following our steering group meeting in March 2021, the chair met with the local authority's Director for Education to explain our concerns with compliance with the Minimum Standards. The Director immediately commissioned an internal review. This found that the service is very overstretched with very high demand and caseloads for advisers some of the highest in the country. It recognised the innovative approaches the team has in place to maximise efficiency. The review led to a report with recommendations which include a major input of additional funding, which has been agreed in principle. The expectation is that this funding will be tripartite, not only from education, but also from health and social care, to reflect our IAS role in all these areas. Another recommendation has been a detailed investigation of the 'customer journey' by a business improvement team, involving interviews with service users, team and stakeholders. This is expected to lead to concrete proposals for improvements.

New, more prominent reporting mechanisms: for the first time, the team leader was invited to a meeting to present the SENDIAS annual report to the Director for Education and other senior leaders. This was a very rare and welcome opportunity to share the SENDIAS team's recent successes and constraints directly with senior leaders, building the reputation of the service and influencing their level of endorsement for it. The Director for Education has requested that this is repeated annually.

Coproduction opportunities in the interests of local SEND families: We have worked together for some years on an annual joint survey of their views on their experience of the SEND reforms, which is valued by the local authority and health organisations. In 2020, instead of this, we worked with the PCF to capture and analyse over 1000 responses to two surveys on the impact of Covid, which were very influential locally in shaping local support. This year, the SEND survey questions needed updating and we decided more individualised questions would be useful. The PCF worked on the questions and funded an enhanced survey tool for us allowing a smoother experience for respondents and more sophisticated analysis options. Using it, we obtained over 500 responses which are being used to shape improvement plans locally, e.g. the new local area SEND and Inclusion Strategy and the Sufficiency Strategy. We also work together on training for parents/carers. In the past this was face to face, well-received, but with limited attendance.

This year, knowing that development of webinars was in our business plan, with the potential to reach many more people, the PCF decided to fund us to provide 4 over period of a year. So far we have delivered two: [FACT Bucks/Bucks SENDIAS EHC needs assessment webinar July 2021](#)

[FACT Bucks/SENDIAS SEN Support webinar October 2021](#)

Appendix H: Memorandum of Understanding



Buckinghamshire SENDIAS Service

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 sendias@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

 www.buckscc.gov.uk/education/bucks-send-ias/

 shorturl.at/jzBQ4

Buckinghamshire Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information, Advice and Support Service

Memorandum of Understanding with our partners

2022-2023



1 What is an Information, Advice and Support service?

It is a statutory service: our legal purpose is set out in section 32 of the [Children and Families Act 2014](#) and in Chapter 2 of the [SEND Code of Practice 2015](#):

Section 32, Children and Families Act 2014

Advice and information

(1) A local authority in England must arrange for children and young people for whom it is responsible, and the parents of children for whom it is responsible, to be provided with advice and information about matters relating to the special educational needs of the children or young people concerned.

(2) A local authority in England must arrange for children and young people in its area with a disability, and the parents of children in its area with a disability, to be provided with advice and information about matters relating to the disabilities of the children or young people concerned.

(3) The authority must take such steps as it thinks appropriate for making the services provided under subsections (1) and (2) known to—

(a) the parents of children in its area;

(b) children in its area;

(c) young people in its area;

(d) the head teachers, proprietors and principals of schools and post-16 institutions in its area.

(4) The authority may also take such steps as it thinks appropriate for making the services provided under subsections (1) and (2) known to such other persons as it thinks appropriate.

[Section 26 of the Children and Families Act](#) says that this advice and information must be jointly commissioned by the local authority and partner commissioning bodies. In Buckinghamshire this is [Buckinghamshire Council](#) and the [Buckinghamshire Clinical Commissioning Group](#).

Chapter 2 of the [SEND Code of Practice 2015](#) says that SENDIAS services should help to promote independence and self-advocacy for children, young people and parents and have the following distinctive features:

- Free of charge
- Impartial
- Confidential

- Accessible
- Dedicated and easily-identifiable
- At arm's length from the local authority
- Jointly commissioned
- Dedicated and ring-fenced budget

SENDIAS services are expected to have the capacity and resources to meet local need and the national [Minimum Standards](#) approved by the Department for Education and the Department for Health and Social Care.

The SENDIAS service has real power to impact decisions made regarding young people's education, providing advocacy support for children, young people and parents. The service should be seen by users to be independent of the Local Authority and Clinical Commissioning Group and be identified as an arm's length, confidential, dedicated and easily identifiable service.

When supporting individual users and families must be confident that the SENDIAS service is not influenced by any local strategies or decisions which may impact the outcome of their complaint/appeal or process challenge. The governance of the service must have a clearly defined management structure which includes a IASS manager based solely within the service and a steering group or advisory body who oversees the development of the service plan to ensure the principles of independence.

2 The aim of this Memorandum of Understanding

2.1 The overarching aim of this MoU is to formulate an agreement between all subscribers on how Bucks SENDIAS Service will work with them in the interests of Buckinghamshire children and young people with SEND and their parents/carers.

3. Expectations of subscribers:

There are specific expectations of the parties of this Memorandum of understanding.

3.1 Expectations of Commissioners and CCG:

- Promote Bucks SENDIAS to 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.
- Commit to the [Minimum Standards approved by the Department for Education](#).
- Ensure the integrity of the service through defined reporting and structured governance to ensure the integrity of the service: confidential, impartial, arm's length, free to service users
- Provide funds to enable the Service to meet the [Minimum Standards](#) and local need.

3.2 Expectations of Bucks SENDIAS Service:

Bucks SENDIAS Service will:

- Produce an annual Business Plan to deliver the service requirements set out in section 1 which ensures the Minimum Standards are met.
- Produce an Annual Report on our work
- Facilitate termly meetings of our Advisory Group for representatives of our service users – this Group will support the SENDIAS team leader to deliver the service
- Facilitate annual meetings of our Stakeholders Group for all who subscribe to this Memorandum of Understanding in order to share intelligence and influence.
- Engage regionally and nationally.
- Seek out and listen to feedback from service users and families
- Offer training to local education, health care professionals, children and young people and parents to increase knowledge of SEND law, guidance and local policy issues.

4. Partnership objectives

This MoU includes a description in Appendix A of how we contribute to local area priorities and explains what we need from others to maximise the impact of our work in the interest of children and young people aged 0-25 with SEND and their parents/carers in Buckinghamshire.

Each year there will be specific partnership objectives which will be agreed in the business plan.

4 Monitoring

The stakeholder group will monitor this MoU on an annual basis.

5 Impact evaluation

The impact of this MoU will be evaluated via our annual report.

6 MoU governance and oversight

This MoU will be reviewed annually by the Stakeholder Group. Reference will be made to the MoU in the SENDIAS annual report. The SENDIAS Service will report annually to the Buckinghamshire Integrated Service Board (ISB).

7 Financial contributions

The Local Authority and CCG will provide the necessary level of funding to deliver the statutory service, meet local demand and be compliant with the [Minimum Standards. This funding is a dedicated and ring-fenced budget held and managed by the IASS service manager.](#)

8 Disclaimer

8.1 It should be noted that by signing this document or by participating in the [name of partnership], the partners are not committing to legally binding obligations. It is intended that the partners remain independent of each other and that their collaboration and use of the term 'subscriber' does not constitute the creation of a legal entity, nor authorise the entry into a commitment for or on behalf of each other.

Signed on behalf of *[Subscriber A]*

..... Date

[NAME, POSITION]

Signed on behalf of *[Subscriber B]*

..... Date

[NAME, POSITION]

Signed on behalf of [Subscriber C]

..... Date

[NAME, POSITION]

Appendix A

| SEND Strategy aim | Objective | What SENDIAS offers | How partners help |
|--|---|--|---|
| <i>I am able to keep myself safe and healthy</i> | Health information, advice and support is provided across the local area to children and young people with SEND, their parents/carers, and professionals. | Training for children and young people and parents/carers and professionals on navigating the health service | Providing access to senior leadership support and influence |
| | | IAS to service users to facilitate access to health services for children and young people | Promoting our service verbally and in publications |
| | | Promotion of health services via our email news updates | Encouraging individuals to self-serve via webpages/ Local Offer as far as possible |
| | | Involvement on health stakeholder groups | Referring families to our service with relevant consent |
| | | IAS to contribute knowledge on legal duties relating to health to support development of compliant local strategies, policies and procedures | Sharing up to date relevant information e.g. new referral arrangements; liaison re Ready, Steady Go |
| | | De-escalation and dispute resolution | Coproduction of training |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| | | | <p>Liaising with our service on behalf of an individual</p> <p>Anonymised data and intelligence available to SENDIAS to inform planning.</p> |
| SEND Strategy aim | Objective | What SENDIAS offers | How partners help |
| <i>I can participate in wider society</i> | Social care and early help information, advice and support is provided across the local area to children and young people with SEND, their parents/carers, and professionals. | IAS to service users to facilitate participation in wider society for children and young people including independent living and accommodation, transport, community activities. | Providing access to senior leadership support and influence |
| | | <p>IAS to contribute knowledge on legal duties relating to social care to support development of compliant local strategies, policies and procedures.</p> <p>De-escalation and dispute resolution</p> | Promoting our service verbally and in publications |
| | | | <p>Encouraging individuals to self-serve via webpages/ Local Offer as far as possible</p> <p>Referring families to our service with relevant consent</p> <p>Liaising with our service on behalf of an individual</p> |

| | | | Sharing up to date relevant information e.g. new referral arrangements |
|---|---|---|--|
| | | | Anonymised data and intelligence available to SENDIAS to inform planning. |
| SEND Strategy aim | Objective | What SENDIAS offers | How partners help |
| <i>I can achieve my ambitions in education, work or other meaningful activity</i> | SEN Support information, advice and support is provided across the local area to children and young people with SEND, their parents/carers, and professionals. | SEN Support and PfA IAS for individual service users on demand provided by IPSEA trained advisers including volunteers face to face and virtually, by telephone, email and via webchat. | Providing access to senior leadership support and influence |
| | | | Promoting our service verbally and in publications |
| | Preparing for adulthood information, advice and support provided for children and young people with SEND, with a particular focus on years 9-13, and their parents/carers | | Encouraging individuals to self-serve via webpages/ Local Offer as far as possible |
| | | | Referring families to our service with relevant consent |
| | | | Liaising with our service on behalf of an individual |
| | | SEN support and PfA information in a range of formats coproduced with service users and partners | Sharing up to date relevant information e.g. new referral arrangements |

| | | | |
|---------------------------------|--|---|---|
| | | | Expertise on formats, e.g. EAL, BSL, Braille, |
| | | | Commitment to coproduction |
| | | | Promotion of information |
| | | Training for groups of children and young people, parents/carers and professionals coproduced with service users and partners provided face to face and via e.g. webinars, videos, podcasts | Promotion of training to families and professionals |
| | | Anonymised data and intelligence available to partners to inform planning. | Commitment to coproduction |
| | | De-escalation and dispute resolution | Sharing of training opportunities relevant to SENDIAS team or our service users |
| | | IAS to contribute knowledge on legal duties relating to education and training to support development of compliant local strategies, policies and procedures. | Anonymised data and intelligence available to SENDIAS to inform planning. |
| | | | Named link person and agreed response times |
| SEND Strategy aim | Objective | What SENDIAS offers | How partners help |
| <i>I can live independently</i> | Independent living advice and support is provided across the local area to children and young people with SEND, their parents/carers, and professionals. | Providing service users with information, advice and support re accommodation options for young adults | Providing access to senior leadership support and influence |
| | | | Promoting our service verbally and in publications |

| | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
| | | Providing service users with information, advice and support re independent travel training and transport options | Encouraging individuals to self-serve via webpages/ Local Offer as far as possible |
| | | De-escalation and dispute resolution | Sharing up to date relevant information e.g. new referral arrangements |
| | | IAS to contribute knowledge on legal duties relating to independent living to support development of compliant local strategies, policies and procedures. | Referring families to our service with relevant consent |
| | | Anonymised data and intelligence available to partners to inform planning. | Liaising with our service on behalf of an individual |
| | | | Anonymised data and intelligence available to SENDIAS to inform planning. |