



BRACKNELL FOREST INFORMATION, ADVICE AND SUPPORT SERVICE (IASS)

ANNUAL REPORT FOR

ACADEMIC YEAR SEPT 23 / 24



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1. INTRODUCTION

a.) Background – Legislation

The Children and Families Act 2014 Sections 19, 26 (3), 32 and 49 places a statutory duty on Local Authorities to provide impartial information, advice and support (IAS) for children, young people and parent/carers regarding Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) across education, health and social care relating to children and young people's educational outcomes.

The Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice 0-25 years sets an expectation that children, young people and parents / carers should be involved in the identification, assessment and decision making about the provision to meet special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Access to free, accurate and impartial information and support promotes effective partnership working and recognises the importance of the active involvement of children, young people and parents / carers in decisions about special educational provision.

The Children and Families Act 2014 and the revised SEND Code of Practice 2015 are intended to strengthen the participation of children, young people and parents / carers. In addition, the National IASS network provides a set of minimum standards, endorsed by the Department for Education to support the statutory provision of impartial information, advice and support as set out in the legislation and associated guidance.

b.) IASS Vision

At Bracknell Forest IASS, we believe that children, young people and their parents or carers should be involved in the identification, assessment and decision making about provision to meet special educational needs and disability (SEND). Also, that access to free, accurate and impartial information, advice and support, promotes effective partnership working and recognises the importance of the active involvement of children, young people and parents/carers in decisions about special educational provision.

Therefore, our vision is that:

All children and young people in Bracknell Forest with SEND and their parents/carers are aware of our service, understand what we do and know how to contact us.

We seek to engage as much as possible with children and young people directly, as well as with parents / carers. Our goal is to always provide timely high-quality information, advice and support which is accessible to all. We want all service users to feel empowered with relevant information, advice and support, enabling them to make informed decisions. We aim to make continual improvements to our service through analysing service user feedback and reflecting on best practice.

c.) IASS Mission

Our mission is to continue to offer Bracknell Forest families a high-quality service providing impartial information, advice and support to children and young people and their parents/carers about matters relating to SEND, including matters relating to health and social care. Our service is, self-referral, free to use, confidential and run at arms-length from the Local Authority and Integrated Care Boards.

We work to the IASS national minimum standards. We review our service regularly to ensure compliance with these standards and seek regular service user feedback which we analyse and make service improvements accordingly.

2. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS THIS YEAR

This year, we have focused on ensuring that we continue to provide a high-quality service to an increasing number of service users. This includes ensuring compliance with the IASS minimum standards. Some key achievements are set out below:

Continued data and information supplied to IASS network:

We continued to provide annual statistics and reports to the IASS network and completed their surveys as requested.

Continued direct work with children and young people:

Since the commencement of the role in September 2019, we have been raising awareness of the role of our Child/Young person officer. From Feb 23, regular drop-in session for young people with SEND at Bracknell and Wokingham college were established and these have continued throughout this academic year, with our Child/Young person officer attending the college's end of year celebration in July 2024.

Our Child/Young person officer's YouTube video, explaining the work that she does with young people has now been viewed 160 times. This academic year 34 children and young people were supported to share their views and written profiles were created. These profiles have contributed to SEN support discussions with schools and colleges, section A of EHC plans, mediations, SEND Tribunal appeals and permanent exclusion Governors Disciplinary committee meetings.

IASS believes that for SEN support at school or college to be as effective as possible it needs to work for the student and collecting views ensures that the student's voice is heard and can be powerful in ensuring that the provision works for them. Seeking views ahead of annual review meetings or in appeal situations ensures that the voice of the child/young person is always captured.

This academic year, we created a feedback survey for children and young people and responses can be seen in the appendices to this report. In January 2024, our Child, Young person officer attended the Preparing for Adulthood roadshow to meet with young people and raise awareness of our service.

IASS resources

This academic year, we updated and revised our specialist school lists with an index and ordered the schools according to local authority area they are located within, to make it easier to navigate for families. We shared our lists with the SEN team.

Website updates and creation of new resources

We have kept our website up to date with the most recent versions of our policies (reviewed and updated as required each January), annual report and checked all links and updated links where required. In Oct '23, we adapted a masking fact sheet with permission from another IAS service, created a new SRP (specially resourced provision) fact sheet and finalised four other fact sheets. We updated information on our website about our remit and included information to consider if working with other advisory services.

We created a new 'phase transfer' video and put this on our website's home page for ease of reference, as well as within our expanding video resources. We also added some feedback quotes from families onto our website on our 'Give us your views' page. In the past year we had nearly 4000 visits to our website, and we can see that the number of views on our YouTube channel has been steadily increasing.

Started to record our cases according to intervention levels from Sept '23

To better help us to understand our data, from September '23, we began recording case work in terms of 4 'intervention levels as follows:

Level 1: where we have provided information and signposting via factsheets / website resources / presentations. We will also note self-service such as the number of website hits within level 1.

Level 2 – where we have provided telephone / virtual meeting support and / or emailed detailed follow up information or advice, where the work has taken no more than approx. 2 hours work.

Level 3 – where we have provided case work support of over 2 hours

Level 4 – where we have provided more involved casework such as representation for parents at mediation / appeals and / or Care, education and treatment reviews (CETR)

Continuing to regularly post onto our Facebook page:

We continue to post regularly on our Facebook page and 'likes' and 'followers' continue to steadily rise. We currently have 191 'likes' (up from 152 last year) and 226 'followers' (up from 185 last year). We offer to share information from other services as requested, e.g. in Jan '24, we shared the integrated therapies survey.

Continuing to hold termly steering group meetings:

We continue to hold termly steering group meetings with key members from education, health and social care. After each meeting, we circulate minutes. We also share our monthly and annual reports and service development plan with our steering group and invite comments. These meetings have been useful to raise awareness of our service and to gain feedback about ways to improve. They have also enabled us to have closer links with health and social care.

Continue to advertise for Volunteers:

Our website and email signature continues to advertise for volunteers for our service and we talk about this at our steering group meeting. This past academic year, one long-term volunteer continued to support us in the role of peer mentor (providing impartial support at meetings) and with some administration tasks. In June '24, we received interest from a potential new volunteer, we have discussed the role and provided all necessary documentation and hope that the new volunteer will be able to work with us soon.

Continued presence at a range of meetings and working with other teams

We continued to attend SESC meeting with other South East IASS Managers to share information and benchmark and we continue to attend IASS budget meetings.

IASS continue to attend several regular strategic meetings including, Bracknell Forest's SEND Assurance Group (previous SEND Improvement Partnership Board) and Education and Learning staff briefings. In December, we attended Bracknell Forest Council's Safety Valve Presentation. We also continue to meet with individual teams regularly, such as monthly meeting with SEN team management and six-monthly meetings with Education Transport and other key services such as Education Welfare, Inclusion, EBSA, from time to time.

This academic year we supported SEN team colleagues by reviewing the education complaints process policies and meeting with SEND Business Manager to discuss and help the team to simplify information into an infographic setting out key points about the various routes of redress such as complaint and appeal. We have also always offered to meet up with new starters at the SEN team and have continued to do this as and when requested. We supported testing and providing feedback on the new local offer website and we also met with the Early Years and Childcare sufficiency manager and posted their survey on our Facebook.

Health

We continued to meet regularly with health colleagues alongside IASS representatives from Windsor & Maidenhead and Slough to give feedback on relevant issues and trends and to gain useful updates. We also attended the Frimley health steering groups in November '23. In December '23, we also emailed the CCG about the Bracknell Autism Strategy to gain useful updates for families.

It is a requirement as part of our minimum standards that IASS is jointly commissioned with health. For some years we have had an SLA setting out our arrangements. Health colleagues were keen that all IASS services within the East Berkshire area had similarly worded service level agreements (SLA). We therefore, requested to receive copies of the original documents from each service and drafted a new template SLA for use of each IASS services in East Berkshire (Bracknell/ Windsor & Maidenhead and Slough). In February '24, we prepared a presentation to health colleagues about our service. We have also had several emails and some meetings with health representatives and neighbouring IAS services to discuss our joint commissioning arrangements and the ongoing level of funding that will be provided as part of our SLA.

Continue to seek feedback

Alongside our existing surveys for service users, we created a new survey in March '24 to capture views more formally of children, young people and their parents where our Child/Young person officer has completed some direct work with CYP (see appendix 3) for survey questions and results.

Compliments

We get a lot of informal feedback over the phone or via email, where parents feel that we have gone above and beyond our remit and express their gratitude. This academic year, we began to send both formal and informal (anonymised) compliments received to Bracknell Forest Council's complaints manager to record.

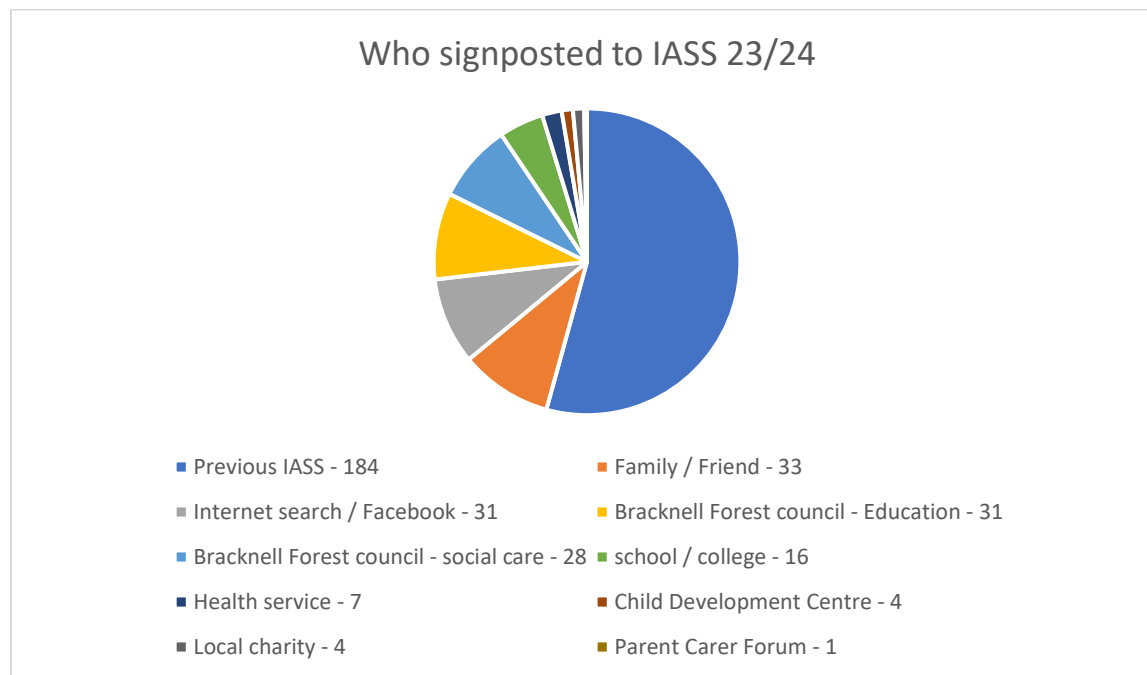
Working with the Parent Carer Forum (PCF):

We continued to offer to support the PCF and attend any meetings as required. A member of the PCF has continued to support our steering group meetings. This academic year we prepared and delivered a virtual presentation on phase transfers to the PCF, which was recorded and widely viewed.

3.IASS STATISTICS

a.) How did individuals hear about IASS

Parents, carers, children and young people get in contact with IASS via our helpline, our email or our website's contact form. When an individual contacts us, we explain our impartiality and confidentiality and they are given the option of having their details recorded on our confidential software system, CrossData should they wish. For those who are happy to have their information recorded, we also ask how they heard of IASS. We do this so that we can analyse where to focus our raising awareness efforts. This academic year we recorded signposting sources as follows:



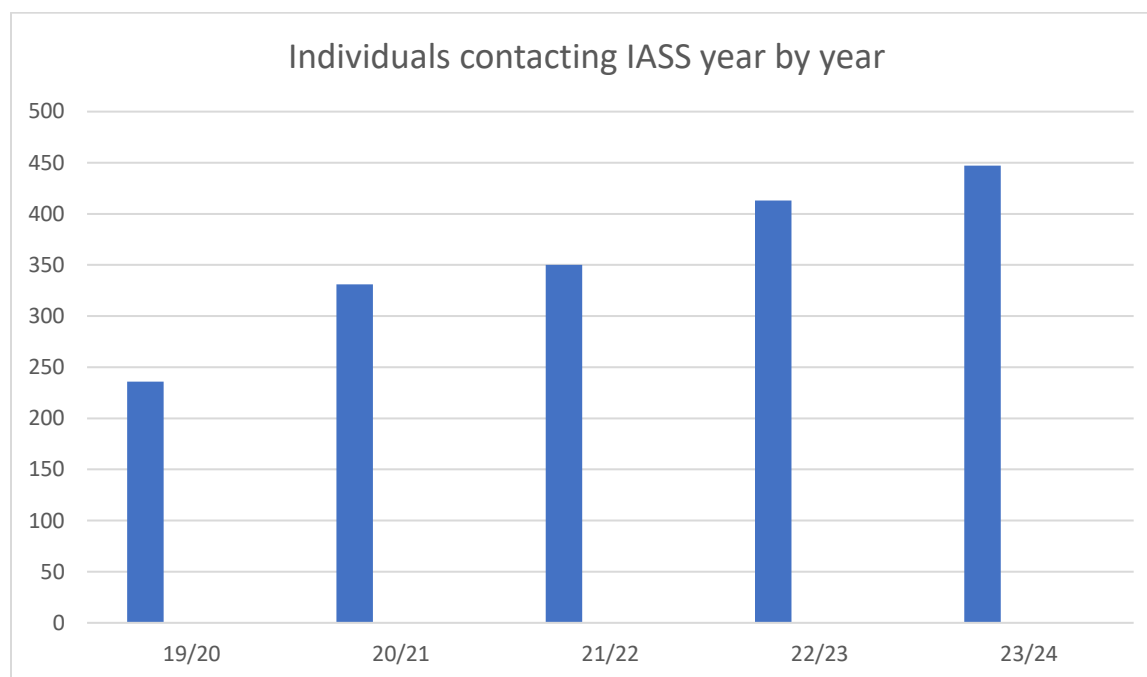
The data shows that many individuals get in contact again at some point after their original contact. This year 184 were returning service users. 33 people came to us via recommendations

from family or friends, showing that at word of mouth is strong. 16 contacts were informed about IASS via a school or college¹.

b. New individuals contacting IASS this year

During the academic year of September 2023 to August 2024, IASS records show that we provided information, advice and support to 447 (413 previous year) new individuals. This number is on top of cases already open at the start of the academic year. The actual number of new individuals that we worked with will always be higher than the amount recorded, since some wish to keep anonymity and not be recorded on our database. The volume of work is also not reflected in this figure as some individuals will contact us at several different points during an academic year about separate concerns and many will contact us about more than one child. The below table shows the year-on-year increase in how many new individuals are contact IASS.

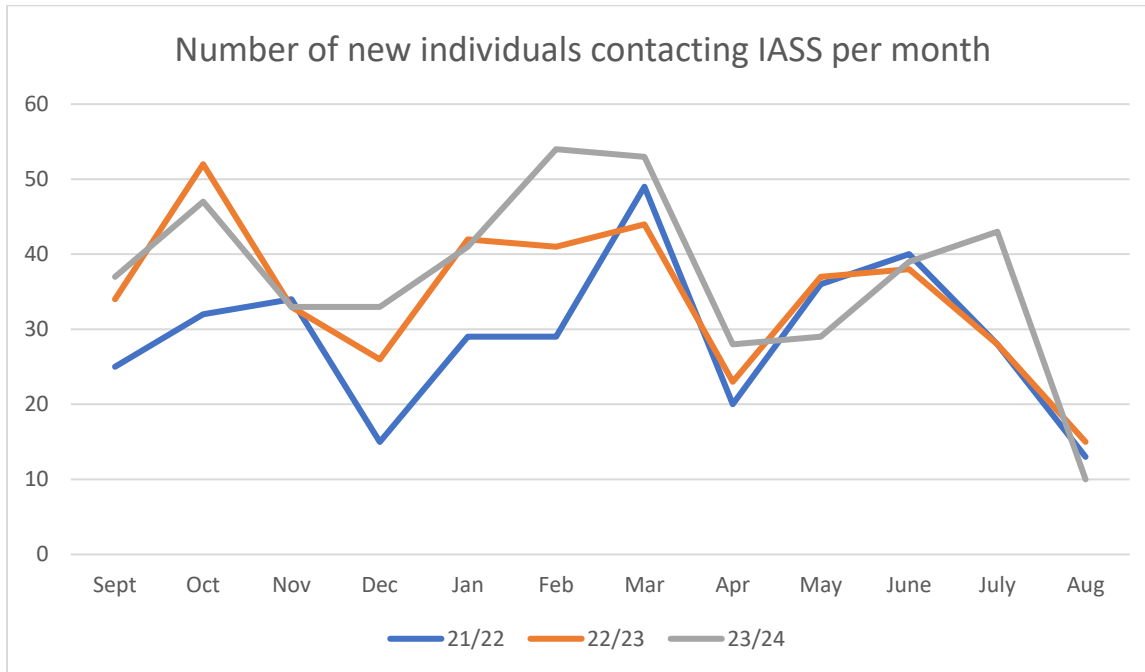
This year's total of 447 is an increase from 413 in 22/23, 350 in 21/22, 331 in 20/21 and 236 in 19/20. This this nearly a 90% increase in demand since academic year 19/20. To help somewhat, in April 24, after discussion with line management and our steering group, we changed and published our new response time, which is 72 hours (up from 48 hours).



c. New individuals contacting IASS each month – month by month comparison

¹ Schools that referred to IASS in academic year 23/24 were the following: Binfield primary, Crown Wood, Fox hill, Jennetts Park, Sandy Lane, St Michael's Sandhurst, Warfield, Wildmoor Heath, Kennel Lane, Brakenhale, Easthampstead Park, Garth Hill college, Kings academy Binfield, Bracknell & Wokingham college,

The chart below shows the number of new individuals contacting the service each month. The trend over the past three years shows high levels of new contacts in Oct and February / March and lower levels of new contacts occur during the school holidays in December, April and August.



d. Total number of individuals contacting IASS this year

On top of the new individuals contacting IASS this academic year, we were working with approximately 120 individuals at the beginning of Sept '23. Therefore, the total number of individuals worked with in the academic year was **567** (120 existing plus 447 new). Up from 533 last year.

e. How was information, advice or support provided

The way in which we have provided information, advice and support is broken down in the chart below.

Type support	of	21/22	22/23	23/24
Impartial support meetings	at	38 school / LA meetings	50 school / LA meetings	42 school / LA meetings
		2 Care Education Treatment Review (CETR) meetings	1 CETR	2 CETR meetings
		6 mediations	7 mediations	8 mediations
		1 tribunal hearing.	2 Tribunal hearings	2 Tribunal hearings

		2 Tribunal case management hearings	1 JADR 1 Independent Review Panel
Service user helpline calls ²	563	533	484
Service user email service ³	2810	2821	2997
CYP views sought	27	41	34
Draft EHC plans checked	46	65	70

Please note that this data is taken from our online database, CrossData and is only as accurate as the data recorded. Often, our staff will record a telephone call or series of calls and follow up email or series of emails as one single entry as this can be more time efficient. Therefore, the actual number of calls and emails made will always be significantly higher than the data captured.

f. Intervention Levels.

From September '23, we started to record our case work according to intervention levels to give an idea of the level of involvement / complexity of the cases. Our statistics were as follows:

Level 1 – 101 (in additional to 3,900 website self-service hits)

Level 2 – 611

Level 3 – 1815

Level 4 – 895

g. Types of enquiry

Most of our information, advice and support falls in the following categories:

In connection with the EHC plan process, including:

- Considering whether to apply and explaining the process
- Submitting views or request letter
- Reviewing draft EHC plan
- Supporting to consider school options
- Discussing legal tests e.g. in regard to naming a school in an EHC plan
- Supporting with disagreements and appeals (including mediation and Tribunal)

² Data taken from calls recorded on CrossData system – not all calls will have been recorded so the actual number will be higher

³ Data taken from emails recorded on CrossData system – sometimes multiple emails will be recorded in one entry so the actual number of emails sent will be higher

- Supporting with the Annual Review process

In connection with SEN Support, including

- to understand the SEND Code of Practice and Children and Families Act
- in preparing for school meetings and impartial support at school meetings
- information for families experiencing school refusal or anxiety and other mental health difficulties
- information and advice in relation to exclusions
- School transport enquires
- Supporting a child's medical needs at school

In addition, we provide a lot of signposting information on education, health and social care matters including to Bracknell Forest's Local offer.

4. RAISING AWARENESS OF IASS

The SEND Code of Practice says that local authorities must take steps to make their information and advice services known to children, their parents and young people in their area as well as schools and colleges. Bracknell Forest IASS, whilst small, places great emphasis on raising the profile of the service. During this academic year, IASS have regularly contacted numerous individuals and services to ensure that they and their staff have enough information about IASS including access to service leaflets, postcard and website links.

This year, amongst those we have liaised with to raise awareness of IASS are:

Schools and colleges: We ensured that our service was included in Bracknell Forest Council's Graduated Approach document shared with all local schools. In Dec '23, we ensured that our details were included in the SENDCO newsletter circulated to all local SENDCOs. Separately, as and when a question or opportunity to raise awareness has arisen, we have been in contact with the following Bracknell Forest schools; Birch Hill, Great Hollands school, Kings Academy Easthampstead Park, Brakenhale School, Kings academy Binfield, Sandhurst school, College Hall, Kennel Lane, Garth Hill College, Ranelagh Bracknell & Wokingham college. Also, Cheapside school, Reading school, Knowl Hill school, Manor Green and the Link at Manor Green, Hartbury College. In June '24, a colleague from the Family Information Service, included our information in a presentation at the SENDCO forum. We also ensured that our details were in relevant documents on Bracknell Forest Council's Can Do site for schools. We also met with Bracknell Forest Council's Schools FSA Co-ordinator so that IASS details could be shared this way via all local FSAs. IASS also had a presence at Bracknell Forest's Preparing for Adulthood roadshow in January '24. As we do each year, we also checked our details on external websites and emailed schools to correct our details, where needed.

Bracknell Forest council services: Including SEN team (also attending a SEN team meeting in November '23), Educational Psychology service, social care, Early Help, Inclusion, Family Information Service, social care and in Sept '23, we met with the Tuition service at their building and provided more information about our service.

Health: Service leaflets and postcard were shared with Forest Health group. In March '24, we sent our information to CAMHS's learning disability team.

Other: In July '24 we attended a parent/carer session for local charity, Parenting Special Children, where we spoke about our service, provided leaflets and general SEN information and guidance. In July '24, we were in contact with a family liaison officer at SERCO who had contacted us about a local ARAP family who have been housed in BFC. We asked that details of IASS be shared among their team.

5.IASS STAFF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

This year our staff attended the following courses:

- GDPR refresher training 2024 (all IASS staff)
- Safeguarding face to face training (all IASS staff)

Our Administrator / Triage officer, completed IASS legal training level 3, now meaning that all four IASS staff members have all passed all 3 levels of legal training.

In addition, this academic year, a member of IASS attended the following and fed back to all:

- SENDIST User group sessions lead by SEND Tribunal representatives and providing useful updates
- IASS Helpline Training Session
- Kooth Webinar about their mental health offer
- ICB presentation about the new integrated therapies model and provided feedback.
- IASS network - co-production training session
- Ipsea's webinar on children out of school.
- An IASS network organised Emotionally Based School Avoidance training session.
- Anti-bullying training for IASS staff run by the Anti Bullying Alliance
- Bracknell Forest council run Preparing for Adulthood training
- CAMHS LD presentation (and IASS fed back on information)

We also continued to keep abreast of changes in legislation including statutory and non-statutory advice and guidance.

We keep an up to date training record for all staff so that we can review what training is needed and ensure that all are fully trained.

6.SERVICE EVALUATIONS AND FEEDBACK

We receive a lot of positive feedback informally (usually through emails) and we record this in our monthly reports. We also send our service users online evaluation surveys.

Short evaluation surveys via Smart Survey were emailed to service users who had received initial telephone and email support, but no ongoing case work. Extended surveys were sent to those who had received a higher level of support. We also created and began circulating a new 'Child/Young person views collection' survey.

This year we received 22 Short Survey responses (up from 12 last year) and 44 Extended Survey responses (up from 28 in the previous year) and 2 responses from the new Child/young person views survey. Feedback scores and comments were very positive. Full survey results can be read in Appendix 1, 2 and 3.

7.FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS – WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE

We have reviewed our compliance against the national IASS minimum standards and we are confident that we continue to run an effective and compliant service. Feedback received from families continues to be positive. Our service development plan is included in Appendix 4 and sets out our plans to continue to run a high-quality service with a good reputation.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

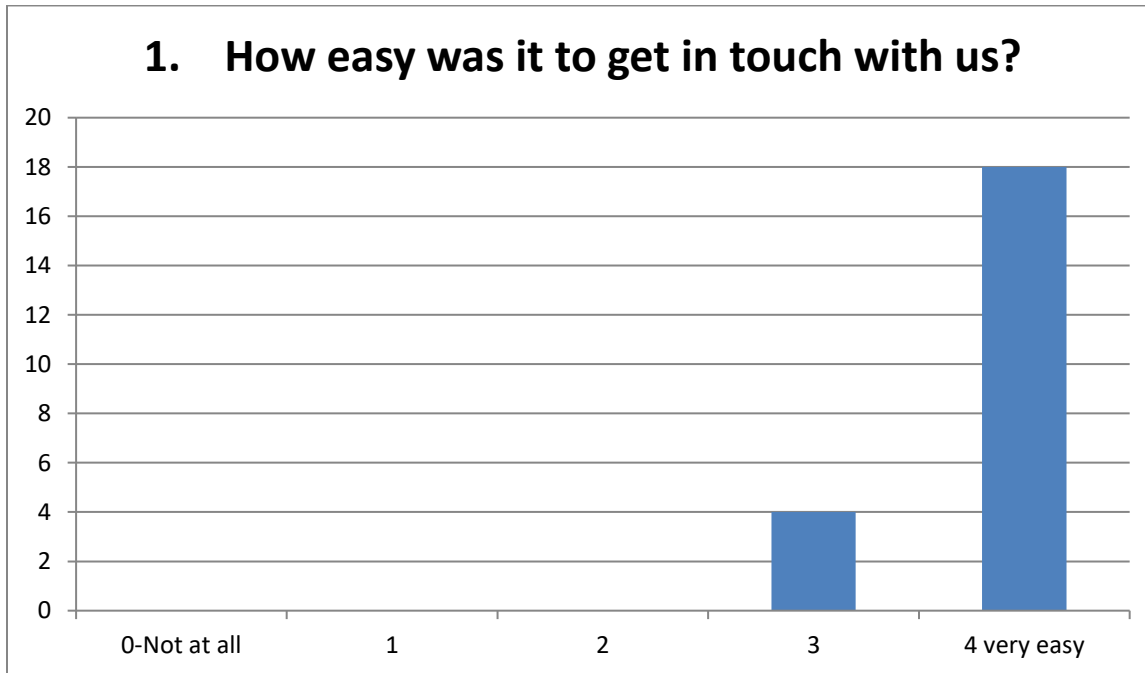
Short Evaluation Form Feedback for academic year 23/24

Short evaluation surveys via Smart Survey were emailed to “level 2” service users who had received initial helpline telephone and email support but no ongoing, more involved case work.

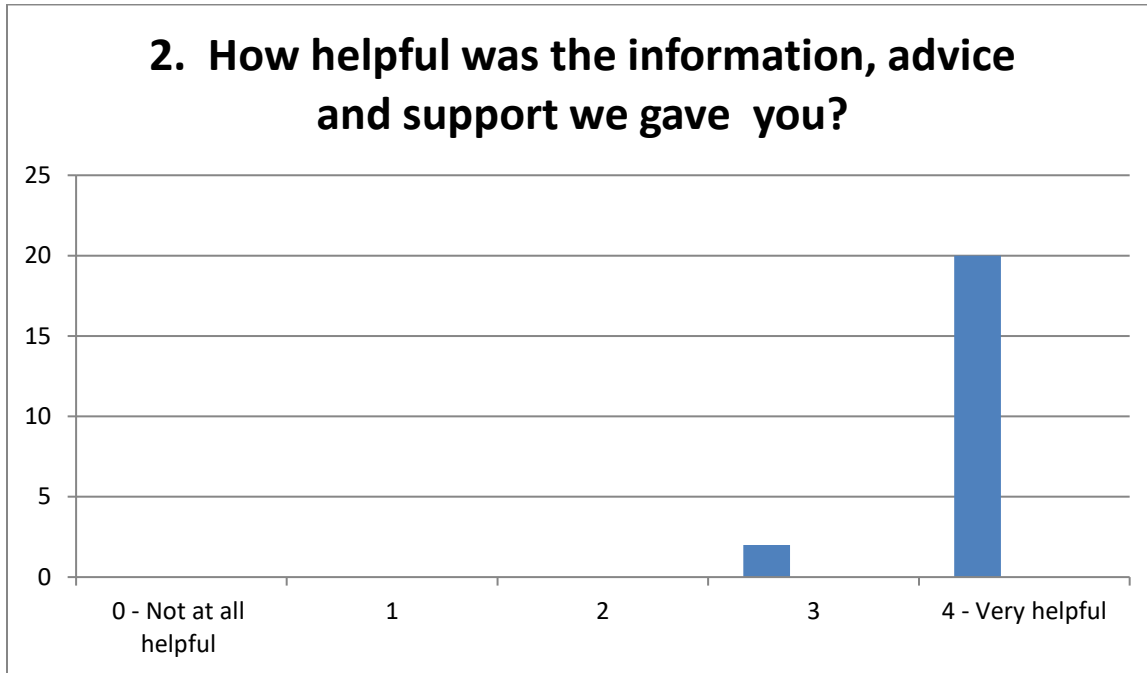
Short Surveys completed: 22 (same amount as last year)

Results

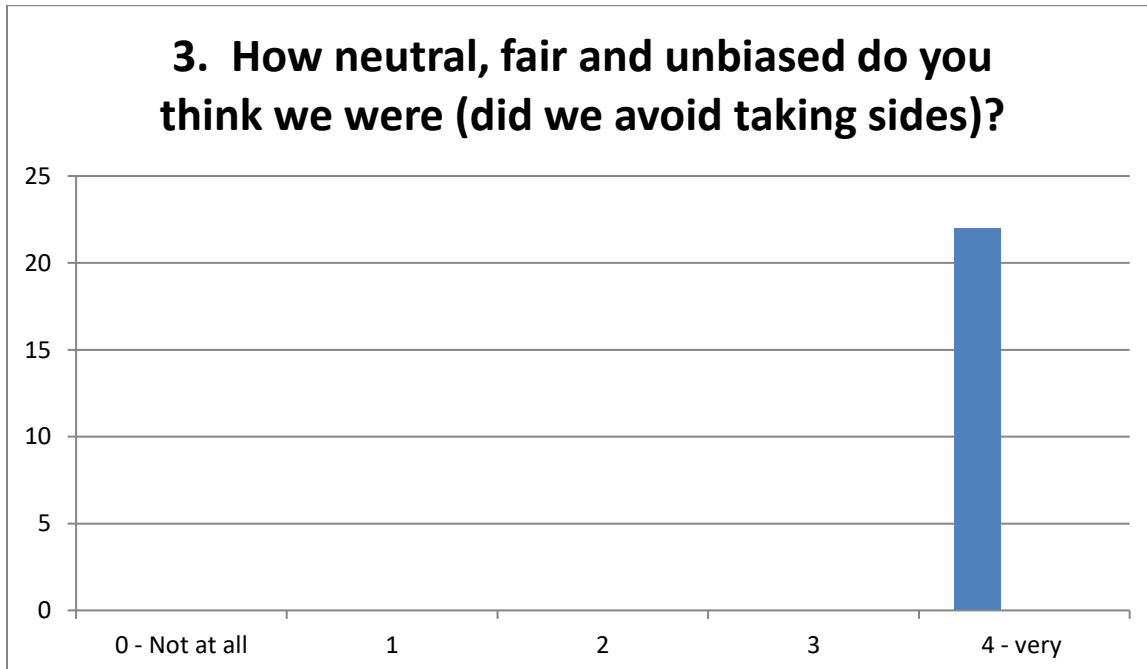
Question 1: Mean Rating: 3.82



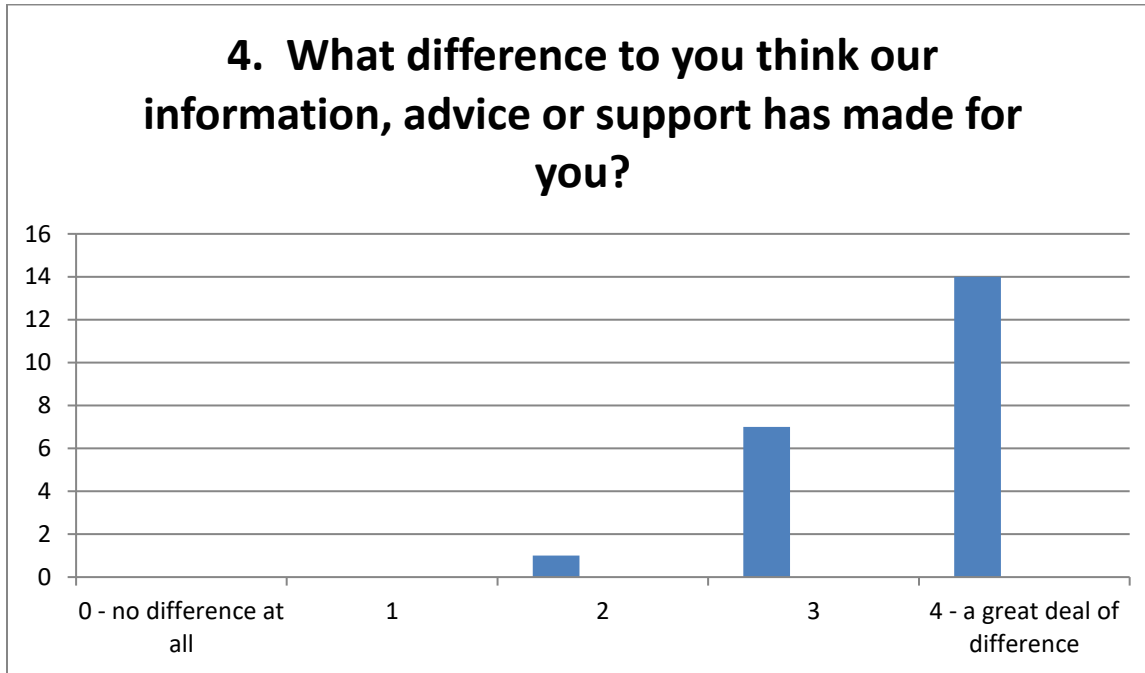
Question 2: Mean Rating: 3.91



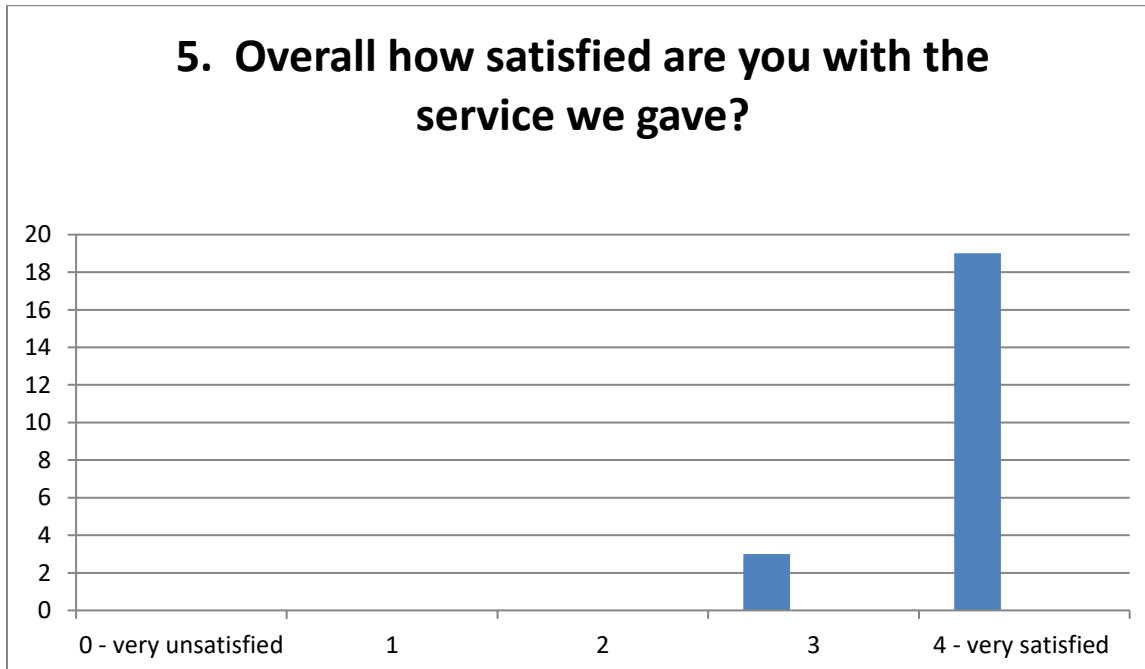
Question 3: Mean Rating: 4



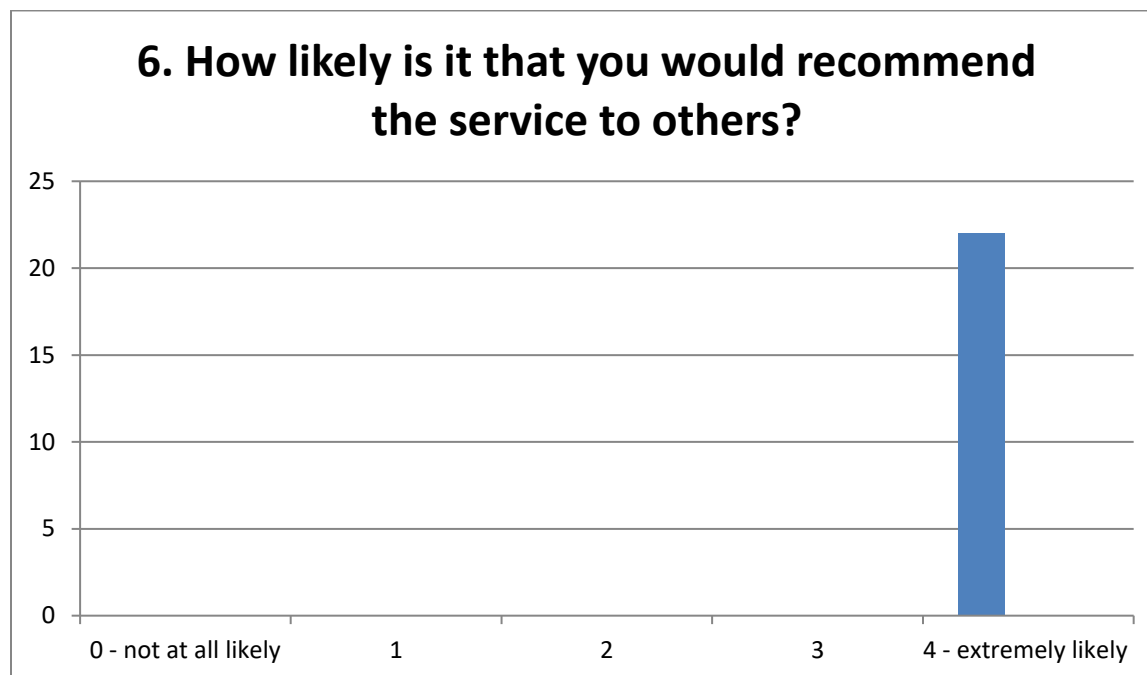
Question 4: Mean Rating: 3.59



Question 5: Mean Rating: 3.86



Question 6: Mean Rating: 4



6b: Is there anything else you want to tell us about our service:

NOTE: IASS staff members names have been changed to IASS staff member. Individual names have been anonymised.

Consent has been received to publish these comments:

- Your service at all times has been extremely responsive, professional and informative. *IASS staff member* has always returned my calls or emails promptly and given her time and expertise to answer any questions and to give impartial advice and support. The service has given invaluable help and always follows up with written summary of our conversation. Thank you.
- Just a massive thank you for being there and being so helpful
- My contact person is *IASS staff member*. She is professional, friendly and patience.
- Invaluable service. They gave me the confidence that I was doing the right thing by helping me understand my child's legal rights. They listened with empathy and made me feel that my child and me do matter when so many other services/organisations made us feel like we were undeserving or that the problem was us. This was empowering. I don't think we would have had our complaints upheld, or that my child would have completed their GCSEs had it not been for *IASS staff member* and *IASS staff member's* impartial advice and support. SENDIASS gave me the strength to continue and fight for my child's rights when I was confused and exhausted by it all.

- Thank you to *IASS staff member* in the first instance who made me feel I was not alone and thanks to *IASS staff member* for great advice and breaking things down to make easier to understand at times when things felt overwhelming.
- Special thank you to *IASS staff member* who managed to get more from XXX than anyone has. The pupil voice has been and continues to be very important in gaining XXX help at school.
- It was great to speak to someone who was so knowledgeable and had all the answers straight away
- Great service, was given alot advice and help.
- A huge thanks you to *staff member* at IASS she has made a huge impact on my battle with my Local LA in regards to a very long EHCP process. Her time and information provided has had a huge impact in helping me achieve the best outcomes deserved and needed in order for my child to receive the education he is needs to meet his needs.
- THANK YOU!
- *IASS staff member* spent a decent amount of time on her telephone call to me and I did not feel rushed and the conversation was free-flowing and not scripted, therefore it made the phone call personable and she showed care when I discussed the challenges that my son is facing. I had already informed myself well about the processes for an EHCP application but it was very useful to receive *IASS staff member's* follow up email after our phone call, which gave clear and helpful bullets and links.
- When a parent of a SEND child is broken, worn down, disillusioned and feels nobody understands your service was a life line. the information you gave over the phone and followed up with an e mail was so helpful. Fighting an underfunded, underresourced system is exhausting but you made it that bit easier. Thank you
- The information and advice was impartial, helpful and thorough. The only issue was unfortunately feedback with regards to our son's draft EHCP arrived after the final has been issued.
- I can't tell how you how grateful I am for your call and for the information provided in your follow-up email which covers all the areas we discussed in detail and with some excellent advice and links to further reading
- Very quick response, understanding and very friendly and supportive

APPENDIX 2

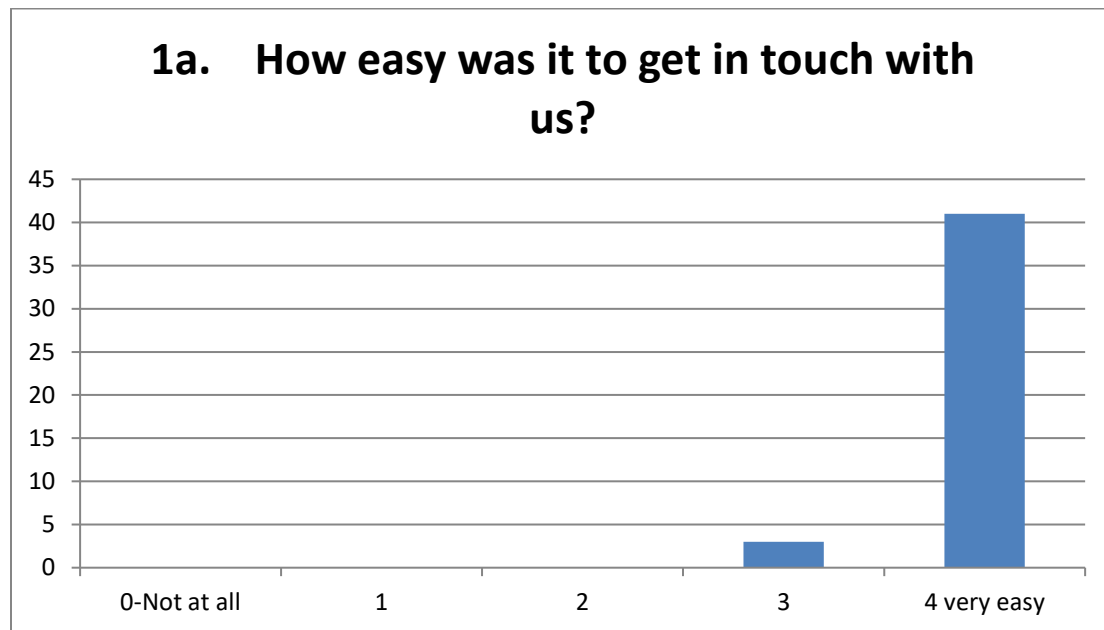
Extended Evaluation Survey for academic year 23/24

Extended evaluation surveys via Smart Survey were emailed to level 3+ service users who had received more involved case work support including mediation / appeals.

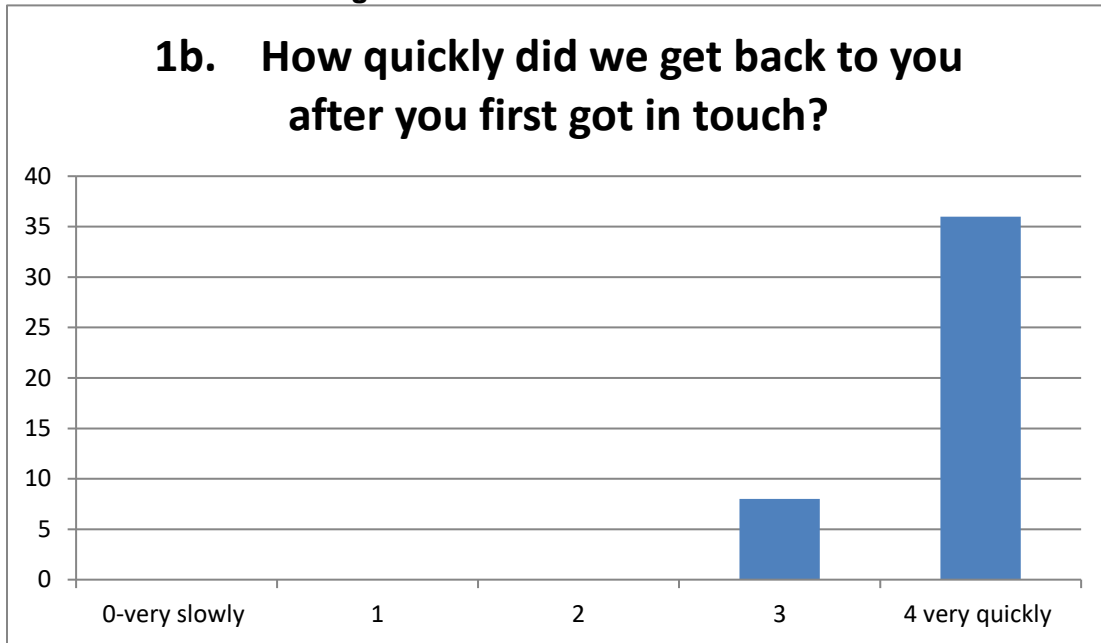
Evaluation forms returned 44

Results

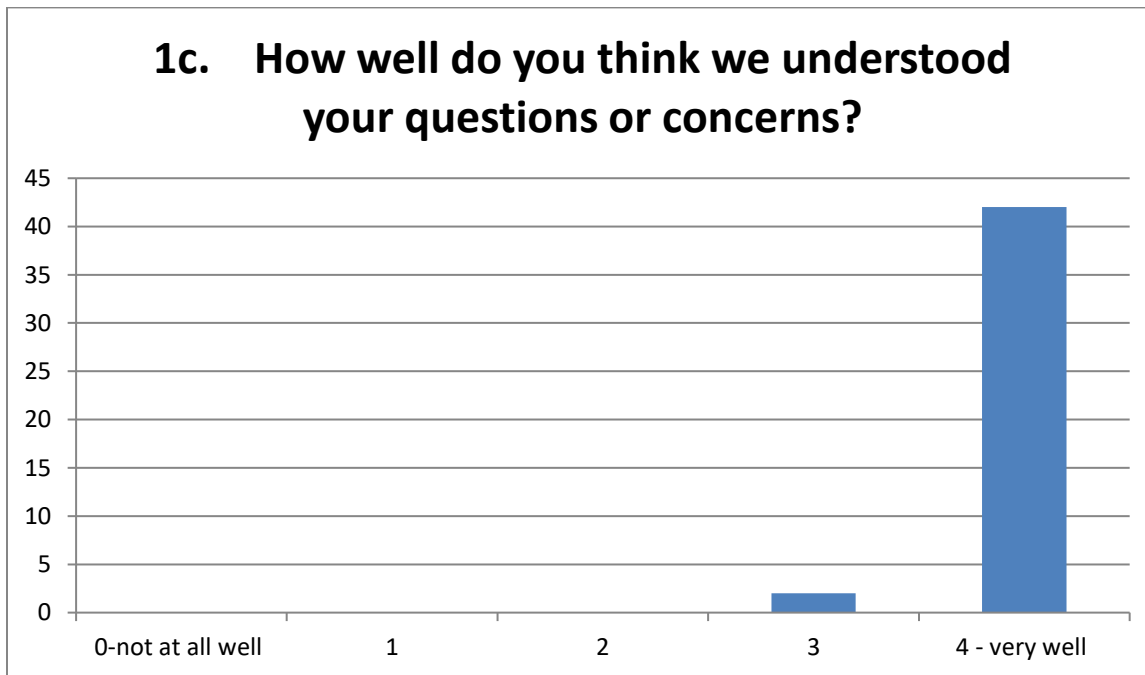
Question 1a: Mean Rating: 3.93



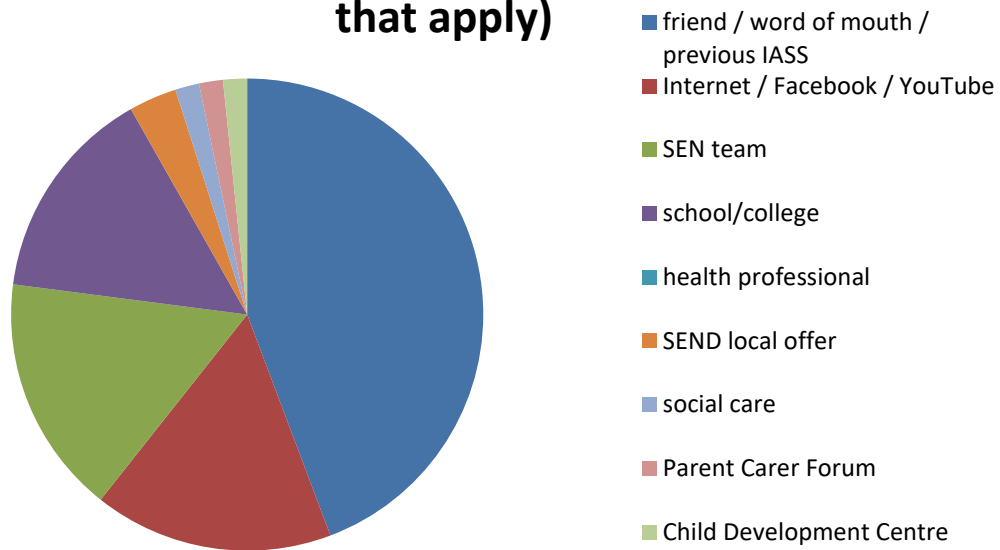
Question 1b: Mean Rating: 3.82



Question 1c: Mean Rating: 3.95

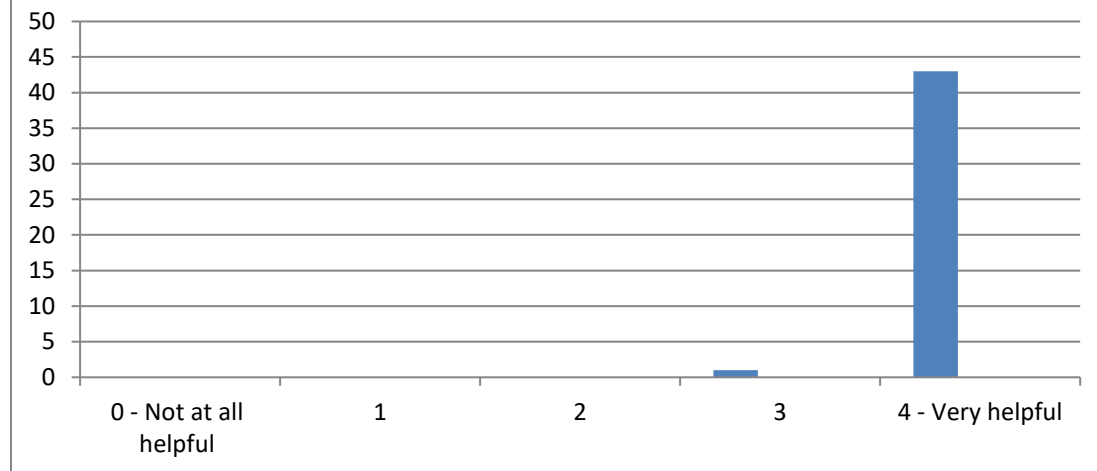


1d How did you hear about us? (Select all that apply)



Question 2a: Mean Rating: 3.98

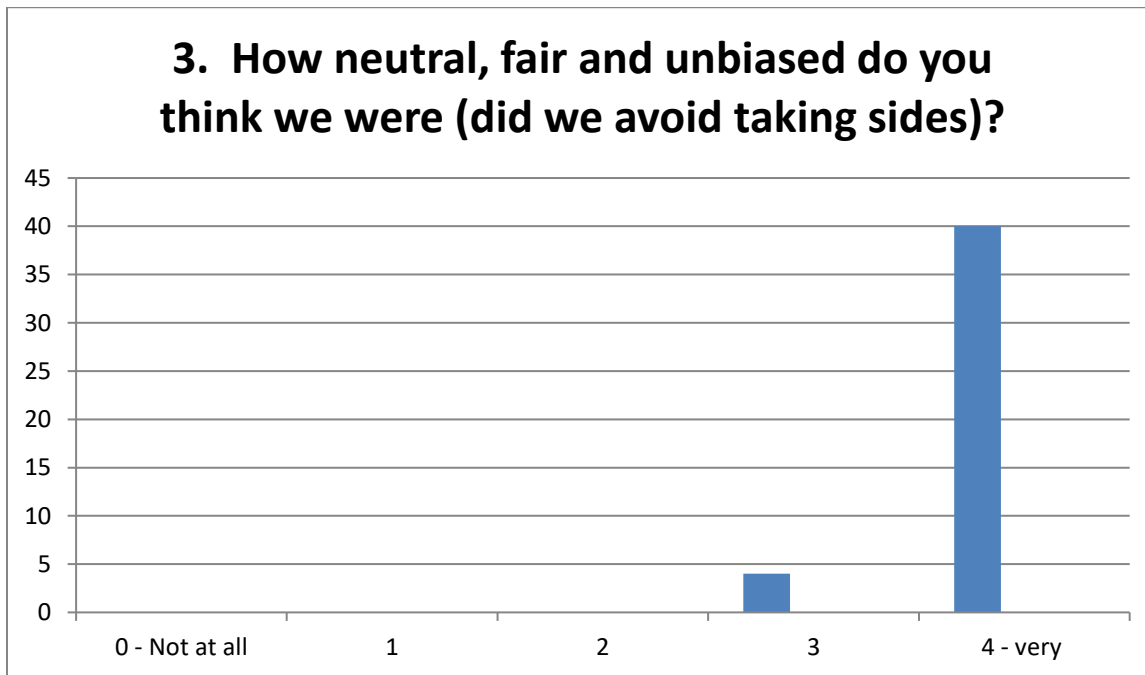
2a. How helpful was the information, advice and support we gave you?



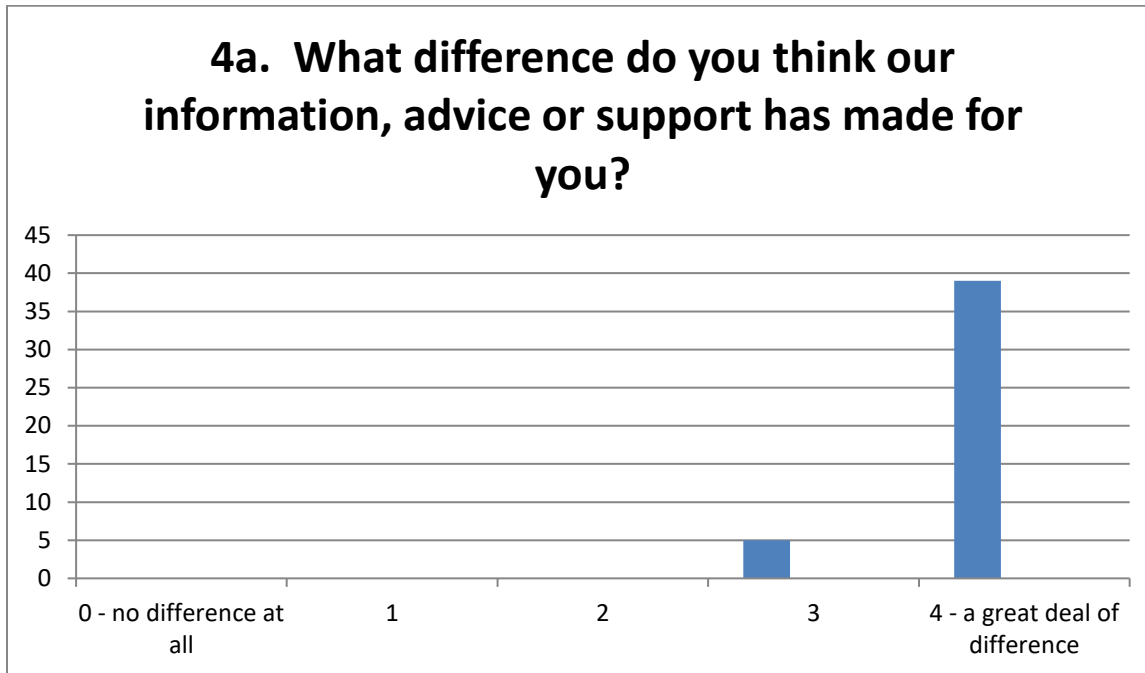
2b When you asked us to help did we (select all that apply):

Return your calls, emails or texts quickly?	98%
Keep in touch with you so you knew what was happening?	98%
Explain why decisions were made and what would happen next?	100%
Treat you with respect?	100%
Explain who people were and what their role was?	100%
Provide a confidential service? (In other words, if you told us something did we always check with you that it was ok for us to tell other people what you had said)	100%
Give you the information and advice that you wanted?	100%

Question 3: Mean Rating: 3.91



Question 4a: Mean Rating: 3.89



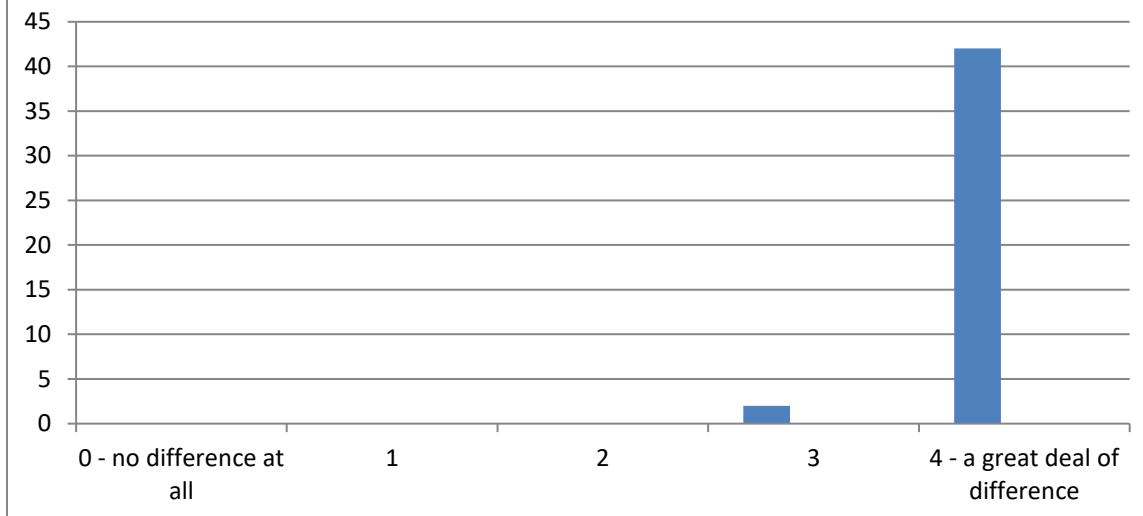
4b. Can you tell us more about the difference(s) we made for you? (Select any that apply)

I feel that my needs and concerns are better understood than they were	64%
I now get on better with staff at my/my child's school or college	
I now get on better with staff who work for the Local Authority	2%
I feel more confident	65%
I have a better understanding of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice and the arrangements that should be made for children and young people with SEN	77%
I feel more involved in decisions about my/my child's education	52%
I am happier / less worried about my future	27%

I feel that things have got better for me/my child because of the help I have had from the Information, Advice and Support Service	66%
<p>Please explain any other differences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>IASS staff member</i> from the Bracknell Forest IASS team has provided a Big Support and guided me impartially on how to find a school placement for my son. • I felt with IASS supporting me in a meeting made the school listen to me. Before my concerns were just brushed aside. • IASS did an individual session and got my daughter's views. • To have a point of contact who you can turn to and ask what the legalities are of any child/school related situation has been a huge benefit to me, knowing there is someone accessible who can provide the facts to base my own decisions on. To the point of my adviser becoming a household name due to the length of time I have required IASS's service, even my child accepting them openly which is a first. They have been consistent and fair throughout and I would not have been able to have come this far without them. Their knowledge gave me strength to keep going. • Knowing that someone else had my back. • I know that I can trust my contact at IASS for sound advice if I encounter difficulties with the school. So I never feel alone in the fight. • I feel like I always have someone there to guide me and it's a HUGE deal in the SEN world, to always have advice and support. 	

Question 5a: Mean Rating: 3.95

5a. Overall how satisfied are you with the service we gave

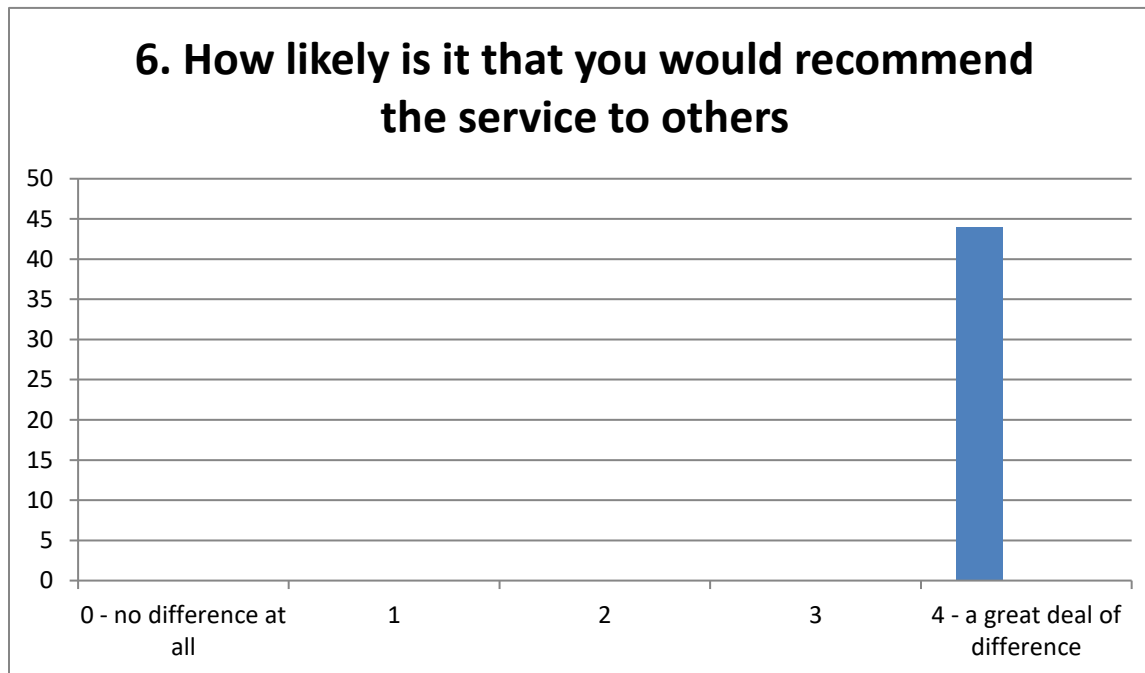


5b Was there anything we could have done better?

- *Staff member* from the Bracknell Forest IASS team has helped me for over 8 months to provide me with the useful information and appropriate step by step instructions all the way to filling the case with the Tribunal since my son, XXX had been out of school after moving to Bracknell-Forest area in October 2023. It's due to her help and the new SEN Officer, XXX, XXX has now been able to get a placement at the XXXX School from September 2024. *IASS staff member* had always been available listening to my problems, suggesting the next steps and providing me list of schools appropriate for XXX. *IASS staff member* has been amazing in helping me and XXX and I wish all the best for her.
- Not that I can think of
- No
- No. Such an amazing service.
- I cannot think of anything, as we would not be where we are without the hard work and dedication my advisor gave.
- No. *IASS staff member* has gone above and beyond to help me out. I am really happy with the service she has given me, she knows all the information that I don't have.
- *IASS staff member* is an asset to the service, her advice and support has been completely invaluable during our SEND journey.
- Absolutely not - other than let me buy you a thank you gift!
- None
- No
- No
- No, everything you do is perfect: giving me advice and information, showing me my options, and following up until the issue is resolved.
- Nothing at all. *IASS staff member* has been nothing short of amazing. I couldn't be more grateful to her for all the help and advice and support and patience and kindness.

Whenever I was confused or overwhelmed *IASS staff member* has been 1 email away with an array of advice. I'm a lot more confident now and less alone since being in touch with *IASS staff member*. Thank you for all that you do.

Question 6: Mean Rating: 4



6b Is there anything else you want to tell us about the service?

- I was very stressed out and wasn't sure how I was going to understand the process of Appeal and tribunal. your advice and service helped so much. Thank you.
- I wish IASS team is empowered to provide right instructions both to the LA and the school and has direct contact with the legal team of the local authority.
- Many thanks to *IASS staff member* for all her information and patience! She's a credit to your already wonderful service.
- Just a brilliant service all round. I've worked with *IASS staff member* for years now on multiple occasions with my different children and every time she adds so much value to the process, we would not be where we are now without her. I can't express how grateful we are for her patience, knowledge, professionalism and ability to understand and help. Working in the sen world can be so challenging, and having this support is invaluable. Thank you.

- The help and advice along with all the relevant links to various codes of practice has given me more confidence in approaching the school. I'm now more aware and 'clued up' with what is right and wrong so I can go back to the school with confidence in what I'm saying is correct.
- We really appreciate the support. I felt like there was nobody's to help and support us apart from IASS. As an adult and a parent I was overwhelmed and how to deal with all of the information / paperwork to fill out, who could help us and what we actually had to do.
- IASS's *staff member* guided me through this and made me feel like it was possible and helped us achieve a EHCP for my son. I know that IASS are always there with any help and question I have with my son, his needs and the journey we continue to take. Thank you.
- I used the IASS service several times when first applying for an EHCP assessment for my daughter (I completed a parental application with no support from school). I didn't contact IASS until the LA refused to assess (as I wasn't aware of the organisation). IASS taught me about costing maps, requesting a SARs, and ensuring when I was appealing to tribunal it was written in a way that focused on education rather than behaviour. In addition to this they spent a session getting my daughter's views and documenting this so I could send it to tribunal. Overall I found IASS guidance and support very helpful.
- *IASS staff member*, has now helped me through 2 tribunals for both of my children with positive outcomes. I absolutely could not have done it without her help. She is very knowledgeable but above else is caring and compassionate and gives you the support you need to help you succeed for your child. We have also used *IASS staff member* services for taking our children views down and again she was super kind and made him feel at ease. The services is invaluable to us as parents and I am very grateful to have been able to access it over the years.
- *IASS staff member* is an angel! So professional and helpful.
- *IASS staff member* was amazing...she had was great at calming.me down, listening and advising me. Our EHCP journey Started in July last year and she has been with me virtually at every step. Every piece advice she gave was very professional and knowledgeable. Without *IASS staff member* I don't think I would have got the great decision for our sons future. I always suggest your service to parents as you make the process less stressful. Thank you so much for all your help and support. I will 100% update on how our boy is doing over the coming months as he starts a new chapter in new environment :)
- *IASS staff member* made sure I was well informed and that I totally understood. I felt *IASS staff member* really invested her time and support into my concerns. She made me feel I had been listened to and taken seriously. She showed compassion. What a fabulous service.

- I want to say how incredible *IASS staff member* was. She was informative and kind and really took the time to listen and help me understand the whole appeal process. It made a huge difference to my journey.
- *IASS staff member* has been incredibly helpful and saved me so much time. I'm truly blown away by your service and the level of commitment you gave to me. All of the advice was comprehensive and set out so I could use it in my email to the SEN team. Thank you so much.
- *IASS staff member* was absolutely amazing! She really did help me. I had a form I didn't really understand and she has helped me to fill it out.
- I feel IASS is a critical service to have for all families with school aged children. Their knowledge is invaluable and is the only positive experience I have received from my LA. I do not feel so alone in the world of SEN now.
- *IASS staff member* has been wonderful. So supportive and helpful every step of the way. From getting my sons ehcp to getting him into the right setting! Can't thank her enough.
- *IASS staff member* was fantastic, always made me feel supported and helped me so much with forms and the whole process. Extremely satisfied.
- *IASS staff member* has been an absolute ROCK throughout our tribunal process. Without her, I would not have been anywhere near as prepared as I was and I really don't think we would have got the positive outcome that we did. She has been fantastic and I can't thank her enough.
- *IASS staff member* has been my contact approx 8 months she has been with supporting and encouraging me/my family through a very difficult journey. Her knowledge and advice has been so invaluable in this area. She is extremely clear when explains subject matters, next steps, positivity, exceptionally calm, remains neutral but shows empathy and kindness. Anytime I have dealt with other members of the team they have also been exceptional kind and helpful. We are extremely lucky to have access to an amazing group of people.
- Do you provide regular workshops for the LA? I feel they don't understand the law and could benefit from this.
- The knowledge has helped greatly when challenging professionals as to why things were being carried out and what should be happening.
- *IASS staff member* was absolutely amazing. The advice she provided made us able to improve the outcome for our child and identify areas that we were able to improve on. *IASS staff member* was a fountain of knowledge and able to answer every question we had, she truly made the experience a lot better for us and we would not have had the same outcome.

- Absolutely fantastic help. *IASS staff member* has literally been our saving grace. I would not have been able to cope or get through this awful battle without her. Very informative, professional and supportive. Thank you.
- Very professional, really felt we were heard and spoken to with information that we could understand. Information was sent promptly and always got back to if needing help. Was so reassuring that we could contact no matter if it was a while since needing help.
- Not at the moment: I don't see how you can improve further since I'm very happy with the service.

APPENDIX 3

IASS Views Collection Survey

This is a new survey created in March 2024 and shared with parents, children and young people after our Child/Young person office works directly with a child / young person to collect their views.

This academic year, two 2 parents of a child/young person who worked face to face with our Child/Young person officer, responded to the survey questions as follows:

Q1: How happy were you with the range of choice of how we worked with you (or your child / young person) ? e.g. Teams / phone call / in person

Both scored: 4/4 Very Happy

Q2. What difference do you feel our support to share your (or your child / young person's) views has made?

Both scored: 4/4 A great deal of difference

Q3: Overall how satisfied are you with the service we gave?

Both scored: 4/4 very satisfied

Q4: How likely is it that you would recommend the service to others?

Both scored: 4/4 very likely

Q5: Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

- Both my children have met with *IASS staff member* several times now, getting to know her in the process, and updating their changing views and wishes throughout the EHC application process right through to the inevitable tribunals. *IASS staff member's* support has been invaluable in ensuring that their authentic voices are heard by the adults who make the decisions about their futures! Thanks to *IASS staff member* it really is the child speaking, not me their parent/carer. From a wider perspective I am incredibly grateful to

IASS, *IASS staff member* in particular, for all the great advice and support she has provided me with. Even before the EHCP applications she helped me in discussions with school; without her I'd never have managed a parent-led application; she knows the law inside out; she's supported through every step of the process; and is now supporting into tribunal. *IASS staff member* has occasionally chipped in too, both with general advice in the forums and when *IASS staff member* has been unavailable. BFC IASS is an incredible service, without which many children wouldn't get the support they so desperately need. I've noticed their workload go up (logically it must parallel the number of EHCP applications) yet they have no more people. Why not? BFC bosses, if you're reading this: You should immediately increase IASS funding and headcount in line with EHCP applications and your ever-growing SEND Education team!

- Whilst I am preparing myself for the worst when we reach the governors meeting next week, I feel *IASS staff member* allowed my son to feel heard. Aside from helping my son feel heard it took a lot of pressure off of me at an already difficult time.

APPENDIX 4: IASS SERVICE DEVELOPMENT PLAN (written Feb 2024)



Bracknell Forest Information, Advice & Support Service (IASS)

Service Development Plan based the IASS Minimum Standards for providing information, advice and support for the period 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025

Mission

Our mission is to continue to offer Bracknell Forest families a high quality service providing impartial information, advice and support to children and young people and their parents/carers about matters relating to SEND, including matters relating to health and social care.

Vision

Our Vision is that all children and young people in Bracknell Forest with SEND and their parents/carers are aware of our service, understand what we do and know how to contact us.

IASS Minimum Standards

This service development plan should be read in conjunction with IASS's national minimum standards accessed here and which we adhere to: Minimum Standards for Information Advice and Support Service

[Minimum Standards for Information Advice and Support Service](#) #

Key areas in 24/25

This financial year, we plan to continue to provide our mission and strive for our vision, by adhering to the

IASS minimum standards, with a particular emphasis on the following areas:

(1) Raising awareness of IASS

- Continue to raise awareness of the service to local schools and colleges
- Continue to keep the profile of IASS high in the local area by attendance at meetings and contacts with other local authority services
- Continue to raise awareness with local charities and services outside of the local authority
- Continue to post regularly on our Facebook page

(2) Marketing material and resources available to service users

- To continue to keep our website up to date and relevant
- Expanding upon resources and our digital training videos on our YouTube page.
- To continue to develop our Facebook page
- To continue to seek feedback from professionals and service users including children and young people about our service and make adaptations to our website and resources in terms of content and accessibility as needed.

(3) Addressing service demand and providing high quality service

- As the number of referrals continues to increase, to continue to respond to queries in a timely manner.
- To continue to access up to date and relevant staff training and continue to provide high quality advice.
- To continue to send out evaluation surveys, analyse the results and make service improvements accordingly.
- To continue to develop our volunteer project to provide peer support, help with seeking CYP views, help with raising awareness and admin support.
- To provide training sessions and workshops to parents, as required

(4) Joint Commissioning and strategic work

- To continue to host termly steering group meetings and obtain feedback on how to improve our service

and take steps needed in response.

- Continue to meet representatives of the SEN team, health and transport regularly to feedback on general trends and issues.

- To continue to attend South East meetings with other IASS managers and work collaboratively with other services.

- To continue to attend SIPB meetings and feedback on strategies and other key documents.

- To continue to work with the LA and others in relation to the steps outlined in Bracknell Forest's Written Statement of Action.

- To continue to attend PCF meetings / provide training when requested

(5) Reporting and policies

- To continue to prepare monthly and annual reports and publish the annual report on our website.

- To review our policies each year and keep on our website.

Updated February 2024

APPENDIX 5: IASS Development history to date

Established 1999

Bracknell Forest Parent Partnership Service was established in 1999, with one part-time member of staff. In line with the 2014 SEND reforms, it was decided to build on this existing Parent Partnership service and work began in the summer of 2014 to highlight the gaps in service provision and to establish a way of developing the service. In October 2014, the service became Bracknell Forest Information, Advice & Support Service (IASS), with a new logo, service leaflets and a web presence on Bracknell Forest's Local Offer.

SEND Reforms Oct 2014 – Independent support contract through the IASS network

In 2014, nationally IAS services were given the opportunity to apply for funding from the Council for Disabled Children (CDC) to provide Independent Support (IS). IS was a service for parents/carers and young people who were transferring from Statements of Special Educational Needs to Education Health and Care Plans (EHC plans) or those who were requesting an EHC plan for the first time. Later the remit of IS extended to cover Annual Reviews of existing EHC plans. In October 2014, Bracknell Forest IASS were successful in securing a bid for IS work in Bracknell Forest.

Voluntary organisations were also given the opportunity to apply for funding to carry out IS work. Adviza were successful with their bid to provide IS across Berkshire. IASS worked closely with Adviza to write a Memorandum of Understanding in order to work collaboratively to ensure that Bracknell Forest parents/carers, children and young people could access IS. We regularly met to discuss best practice and developments.

The IS funding was to be used to develop the IAS service as well as to provide IS. The funding allowed the service to employ two additional part time members of staff to support the service. It also enabled us to purchase the software system, CrossData to keep service users and case work information in one secure online location and to allow more in-depth analysis of service needs, demands and source of referrals.

April 19-March 20 – New IASS programme contract

In July 2018, the Independent Support contract ended. IASS worked with Adviza to ensure that there was a handover process. IASS would now deal with all SEND related queries in Bracknell Forest. With the Independent Support programme ending in July 2018, an opportunity arose nationally for IAS services to tender for a new contract with the Council for Disabled Children and funding bids. In June 2018, we submitted our tender application and in July 2018, we received confirmation that our tender had been successful.

The next step was to prepare a detailed self-review document. We reviewed our service compliance in line with the SEND Code of Practice and IASS Quality Standards and draft new minimum standards. In June –September 2018 we asked for feedback about our service from service users and a wide range of other professionals, we set up face to face meetings, email questionnaires and telephone interviews to collect the feedback. From our own review and feedback, we prepared a detailed self-review document, which was submitted to the Council for Disabled Children in September 2018.

In December 2018, we submitted a detailed operational development plan, including operational plans for the next two financial years and a risk register, to the Council for Disabled Children. We

also applied for the maximum funding available across five separate funding bids (totalling £45,900). We received confirmation in February 2019 that we were successful in all our five funding bids and the new IAS contract commenced in April 2019. We were subsequently sent a task order setting out the funding conditions and completed a statement of engagement. We completed an updating report on our progress with the requirements in the task order in Summer 2019 and a further report in Autumn 2019.

April 20 to March 21

In February 2020, we applied for additional funding and sent an operational plan. We were successful in our application and received the full amount. We have also produced case studies, as requested. We receive very positive feedback on our reports and case studies from the Council for Disabled Children. One of the case studies was sent to the DofE and published in the IASSN newsletter. We have fully complied with the requirements set out in our task orders and accordingly, received the full amount of funding.

In November 2020, we reported on our progress and received confirmation that we could invoice for the full amount again. We prepared a Continuity and Sustainability Plan in January 2021 and received news that further funding would become available.

April 21 to March 22

The maximum financial amount of funding available from CDC was reduced to £10,000. Because of this we used our underspend of funding from 2014 in its entirety in order to keep existing staff to meet service demands and meet the minimum standards. In March 2021, we prepared a report and case study and received confirmation that we could invoice for the entire amount. In the same month, we prepared an Application and Operational Plan for further funding. In April 2021, we received confirmation that our application for funding had been successful and we were sent a new contract and task order which included requirements to create and share a digital image, improve our CYP resources and create a digital training catalogue on the website. We were successful in completing our task order and able to invoice for the full contract amount.

There has been a reduction in funding from the Council for Disabled Children nationally and we have therefore prepared a business case in order to try and retain all of the current staff.

The service during this academic year comprised of four part-time members of staff:

Senior IASS Co-ordinator (job-share) - 24 hrs pw term time only

Senior IASS Co-ordinator (job-share) – 20 hours pw term time only

Administrator – 18.5 hours pw all year round.

Children and Young Person's Officer funded by CDC 18 hours pw all year round

April 22 to March 23

Our business case to Bracknell Forest council was successful and we were able to retain all existing staff until March '23. We receive 90% of our budget from the local authority; 80% from education and 10% from social care. We receive the further 10% from health. We are reliant on our Service Level agreement and accompanying budgetary contributions in order to maintain current staffing levels. We have submitted a smaller budgetary request to Bracknell Forest council for the next academic year to make up the shortfall of contributions that we lack from external funding.

April '23 to March '24

Four staff members are now all on permanent contracts and funding by the local authority and Frimley ICG with health contributing 10%. Four staff members are Child/Young person officer (working 18.5 hours per week), 2 x Senior IASS co-ordinators (job-share working 20 and 24 hours per week term time only respectively), IASS Administrator (working 18.5 hours per week).

April '24 to March '25

The ICB confirmed they could no longer fund the service at 10% and plan to reduce their contribution to a set fixed amount, lower than previously paid. From April '24, after a job re-evaluation via Bracknell Forest Council's HR team, our Administrator role was changed to Triage officer to better reflect the work undertaken and service demand. Staff work principally from home, booking office space at the Willows Family Hub as required for parent or child/young person face to face meetings. From Sept '24 we are no longer able to use the Willows and are seeking a new space.

END OF APPENDICES / REPORT