



BRACKNELL FOREST INFORMATION, ADVICE AND SUPPORT SERVICE (IASS)

ANNUAL REPORT FOR

ACADEMIC YEAR SEPT 24 / 25



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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 service user feedback which we analyse and make service improvements accordingly where we can.

2. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS/EVENTS THIS YEAR

Some key achievements and events of this academic year are set out below:

Continued compliance with the IASS minimum standards & other reporting

With high demand for the service and increasing complexity of cases, continuing to provide a good quality service to local families is of the utmost importance. In November '24, we reviewed our compliance against these standards and completed a benchmarking report for the IASS network to confirm that we were compliant with them all. IASS minimum standards can be read here: [Minimum Standards for SEND Information, Advice and Support Services](#). In ensuring compliance about being arm's length to the local authority, we ask all of our service users for feedback and are scored highly on our impartiality.

Continued direct work with children and young people

Our service is for children and young people as well as their parents and carers. We are passionate about hearing the voice of the child and young person. For another year, we have been able to support children and young people to capture their thoughts in a 'views document'. This work was undertaken by our Child /Young person officer and in addition, we have worked with and trained an IASS volunteer who has been able to supplement our views collection offer.

Views documents can be useful to support discussions with schools and colleges. They can be included in EHC plans or support appeals. IASS have found that capturing the views of the child/ young person can be powerful in helping to put in place support for learning that works for the individual. Positive feedback about our views collection work has been received.

Support from our Volunteers

This academic year our service and the families we serve, have benefited from the support of our volunteers. Our long-term peer mentor volunteer continued to provide impartial support to parents / carers in online or face to face meetings. This helps IASS to have a presence in more meetings than we would otherwise have capacity for. Another volunteer supports us with admin tasks such as reviewing and updating our signposting information and website links. As mentioned above, this year, we have trained and started working with a new volunteer who is supporting to collect children and young people's views either face to face or online.

New IASS office Space

IASS staff largely work from home, however from time to time need to book a space to work with families. After some visits and preparation, a new space at Portman Close was officially opened

(in January '25) now known as Stellar Grove. IASS have use of the front office space to store resources for children and young people's meeting and this is a useful space to meet with families as needed.

Keeping IASS resources and documents up to date and regularly posting on Facebook

Throughout the year we have revised and updated our template emails for easy of communication with families. Additionally, we have updated our service remit document that we send out to new contacts. A useful new resource is a template letter that we developed for parents wishing to 'make representations' about their child's suspension or permanent exclusions from school. The letter contains various key points of legislation and can be adapted according to the particulars of a case. We also have kept our specialist school lists up to date, with several new revisions as new schools are opened or registration details are amended. As required, we have updated our website with the most recent versions of our policies (which are reviewed and updated as required each January).

We continue to post regularly on our Facebook page, approximately twice per week. We currently have 248 'followers' (up from 226 last year).

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

We continued to regularly attend SESC meeting with other South East IASS Managers to share information and benchmark and we continue to attend IASS budget meetings. In addition, we are a regular presence at Bracknell Forest's SEND Assurance Group and the Education and Learning staff briefings.

Monthly meeting with SEN team management and six-monthly meetings with Education Transport have continued. In addition, from time to time we meet with other staff and services to share useful updates, e.g. local authority Tribunal staff and the Access to Education team. In October 2024, we met with the Access to Education team and hear more about the AV1 robots used to support some children. Our Child / young person officer began attending the Local offer steering group this academic year.

We continue to hold termly steering group meetings with key members from education, health and social care and the PCF. 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.

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. It is a requirement as part of our minimum standards that IASS is jointly commissioned with health, and we have a service level agreement in place. In April '25, we prepared and presented a slide show at the service review meeting with the ICB and worked to update our SLA. The meetings we have with Health, transport and the SEN team are important for us to feedback if we have any concerns about trends or policies.

Reporting and Feedback collection

We continue to seek and receive feedback from service users. We receive a lot of informal, positive feedback as well as formal feedback via our online surveys. Anonymised feedback is in the appendices to this report. This academic year, we also received feedback via the PCF survey, which was useful as it provides views from a wider audience and was largely very positive. All feedback is analysed to see whether any actions or improvements can be made as a result. There were a few comments about our remit in regards to the SEND Tribunal and we have posted information on Facebook about being able to support families through an appeal process and to provide impartial support in a Tribunal hearing, as required.

We continue to prepare monthly reports and collect stats on the types of cases we are responding to, numbers of new referrals and level of complexity of the work. This helps us to observe trends. Annually we also report back to the IASS network on case statistics, appeals and Tribunal work as well as feedback from service users.

Training for professional and families

In September 2024, we ran two online training sessions for Early Help to talk about our service and the key themes and areas that we provide support on. These sessions received positive feedback. In November '24, we delivered an evening presentation to electively home educated parents. Also in Nov '24, we delivered a presentation to parents of upcoming new school starters at the Child Development Centre.

Ofsted / CQC visit

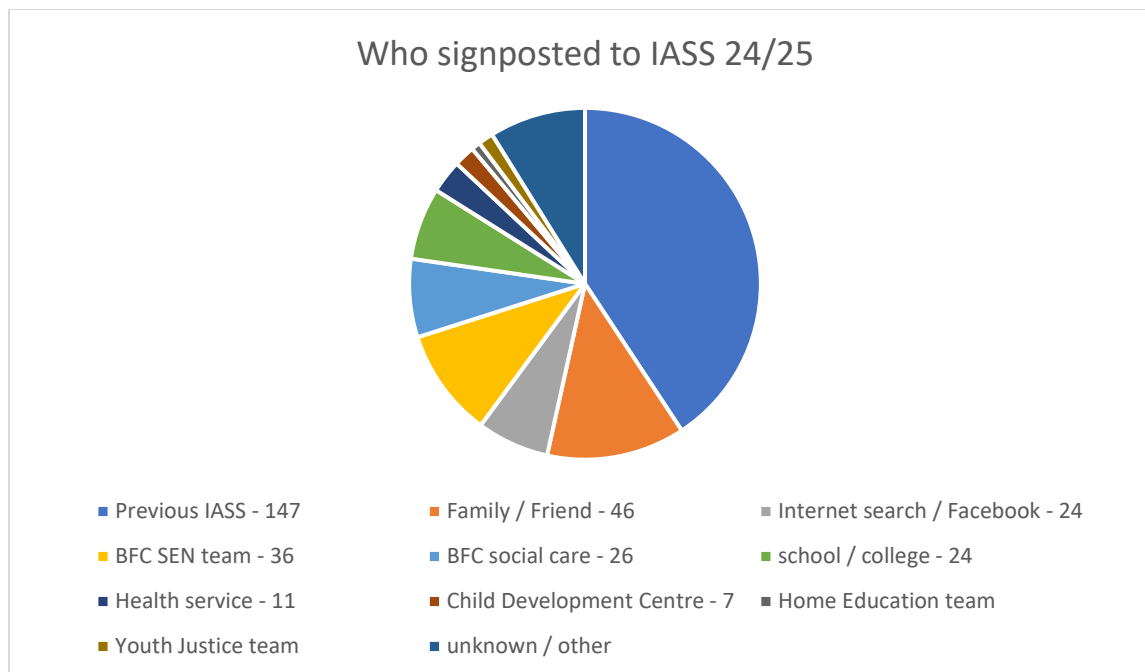
This academic year, we attended an Ofsted webinar and prepared our reports for Ofsted/CQC SEND inspection visits. We publicised the visit to families via our website, Facebook page and via (bcc) email, circulating a survey. We met with the Ofsted and CQC inspectors to discuss our service, where we informally received positive feedback from the inspectors.

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:

Who signposted to IASS 24/25



The data shows that many individuals get in contact again at some point after their original contact. This year 147 were returning service users. 46 people came to us via recommendations from family or friends, showing that at word of mouth is strong. 36 referrals came via the SEN team and 26 via social care (including Early Help, MASH). 24 contacts were informed about IASS via a school or college¹. 11 contacts were referred from a health service, mainly CAMHS and 7 came via the Child Development Centre. Among the 'unknown / other' category are parents who are not sure where they heard of us and those signposted via CEAS, Gems, Kids and the Wayz.

b. New individuals contacting IASS this year

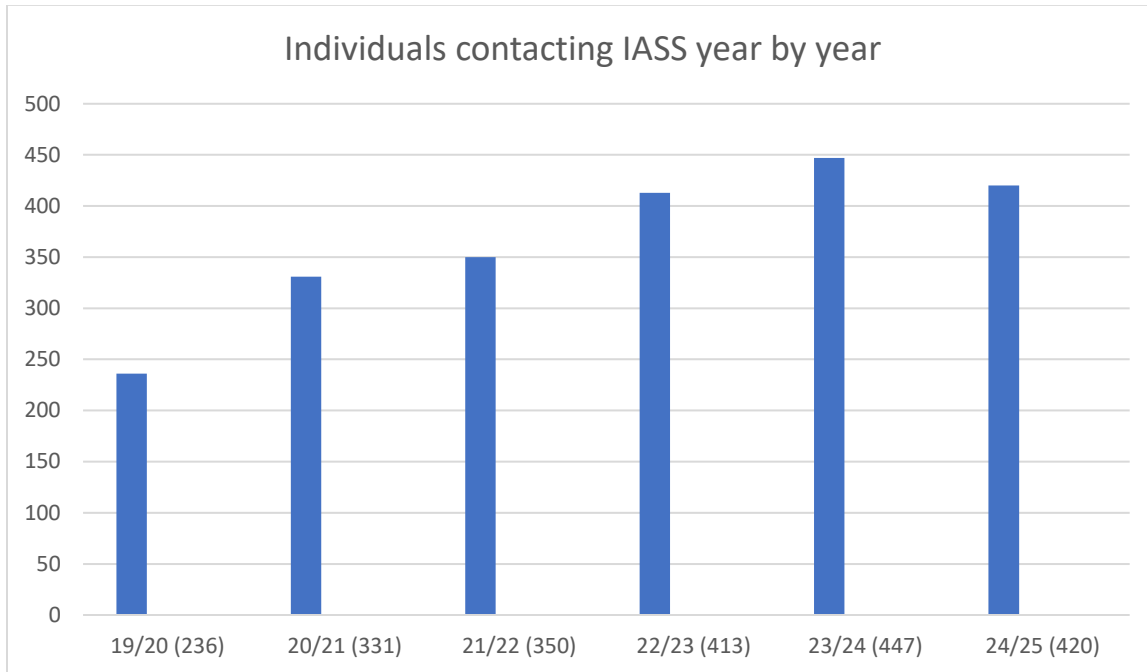
During the academic year of September 2024 to August 2025, IASS records show that we provided information, advice and support to 420 new individuals. For the first time in recent years this is slightly down on the previous year (where we recorded 447 new referrals) but still an increase to prior years.

We note that due to the complexity of cases our workload is no less, as can be seen by the statistics on intervention levels below. We are reviewing ways in which we get in contact with new referrals. Currently we email new contacts but they do not always reply we are considering reverting to calls or exploring text.

Please note, 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

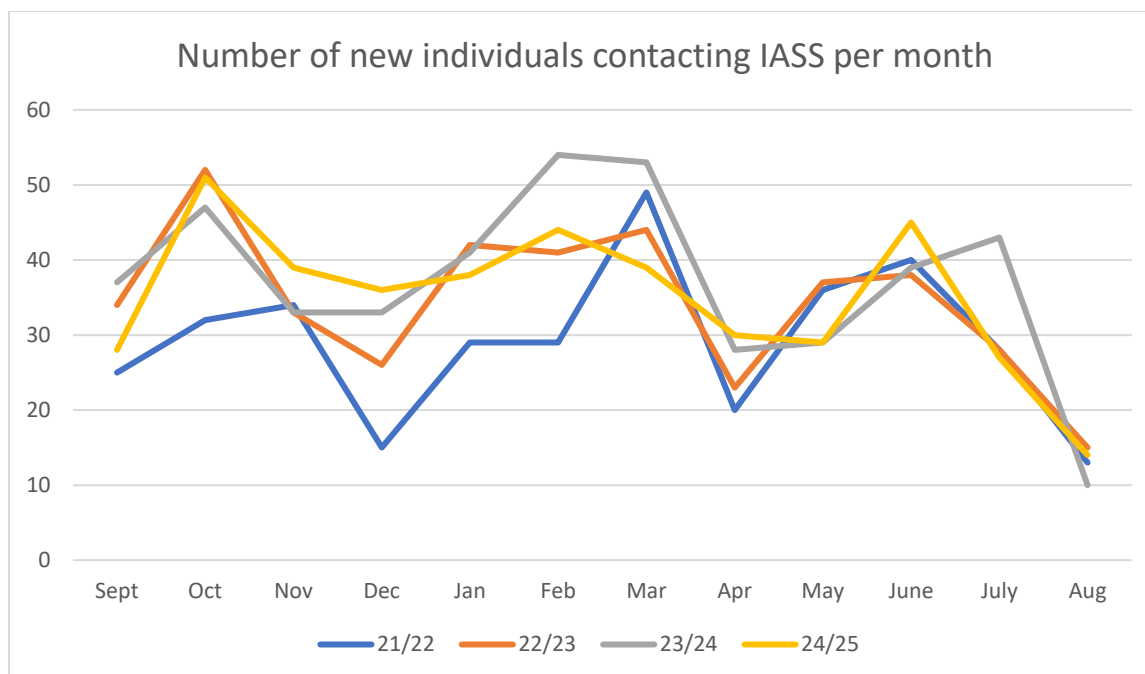
¹ Schools & Colleges that referred to IASS in academic year 24/25 were the following: Ascot Health, Binfield primary, Bracknell & Wokingham College, Brakenhale school, Crown Wood, Fox hill, Garth Hill College, Great Hollands school, Harman's Water, Jennetts Park, Kennel Lane, Kings Academy Easthampstead Park & Binfield, Meadow Vale, Owlsmoor, Sandy Lane, St Michael's Sandhurst, Wildmoor Health, Wooden Hill.

more than one child. The below table shows the year-on-year totals of new individuals contacting IASS:



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

The chart below shows the number of new individuals contacting the service each month is broadly similar each year. The trend over the past four 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. In 24/25, the highest number of new referrals hit in Oct '24 (51) and the lowest in Aug '25 (14).



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 '24. Therefore, the total number of individuals worked with in the academic year would have been approximately **540** (120 existing plus 420 new).

| Type of support | 21/22 | 22/23 | 23/24 | 24/25 |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Support at meetings: | | | | |
| School / LA meeting | 38 | 50 | 42 | 31 |
| Mediation | 6 | 7 | 8 | 15 |
| SEND Tribunal Hearing attendance (including JADR and Case management reviews) | 1 | 4 | 3 | 8 |
| PEX and IRP meetings | - | - | 1 | 3 |
| CETR | 2 | 1 | 2 | - |
| Service user helpline calls ² | 563 | 533 | 484 | 675 |
| Service user email service ³ | 2810 | 2821 | 2997 | 3013 |
| CYP views sought | 27 | 41 | 34 | 36 |

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

| | | | | |
|---|----|----|----|----|
| Draft EHC plans checked (including amendment notices and working documents) | 46 | 65 | 70 | 83 |
|---|----|----|----|----|

e. Intervention Levels.

To better help us to understand our data and the complexity / level of involvement in each case, we record 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

Level 1 – 147 (101 last year) (in additional to 5,392 website self-service hits)

Level 2 – 569 (611 last year)

Level 3 – 1754 (1815 last year)

Level 4 – 1568 (895 last year)

It is notable that that most complex cases, often support in appeals has increased significantly this year.

f. 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)
- 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.

Each month this year we have recorded the percentage of cases relating to each topic. The average for this academic year is displayed below. We gather detailed data about these queries to enable us to better target resources and raising awareness efforts.

| Nature of Contact | Percentage of time |
|--|---------------------------|
| SEN support | 15% |
| EHCP (includes requesting an assessment, process, annual reviews etc.) | 31% |
| Appeals (includes advice on option to appeal, appeal advice on process, mediation, tribunal) | 30% |
| Suspension / Permanent Exclusion | 3% |
| Home to school transport | 2% |
| Health (including school related anxiety) | 11% |
| Social care (including signposting) | 9% |
| complaints | 1% |

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:

As and when a question or opportunity to raise awareness has arisen, we have been in contact and shared leaflet and service information with Kennel Lane School, Winkfield St Mary's, Harman's Water school, Edgbarrow school. We have been in contact with some outside of area schools, such as St Jude's school, Green Corridor and Pride Academy and Pioneer Educational Trust. We have shared our details with alternative provisions including Wildflower Meadows and Story Group. As we do each year, we also checked our details on school websites and emailed schools to correct our details, where needed. Additionally, Our Child/Young person officer attended Bracknell and Wokingham College to raise awareness of her role and our service and continued to do some drop in sessions and in January 2025, attended Bracknell Forest's Preparing for Adulthood roadshow to meet with young people and raise awareness of our service.

Bracknell Forest council services: Including SEN team, social care, Early Help, Short Breaks, Communities, Engagement and Equalities team, Migration team, Family Information Service,

Education Transport, Youth Justice. We talked with a local counsellor about our service and provided information via email. Additionally, in March '25, we promoted our service at the Young Carers Action Day.

Health: Service leaflets and postcard were shared with a Specialist community health nurse a senior mental health practitioner at Berkshire Healthcare and CAMHS Getting Help Team.

Other: In the charity section, we shared service details with GEMS and Promise Inclusion. Additionally a contact at the Job Centre confirmed that families were being signposted where relevant. We checked our details on various website including the National Autistic society's website and Advice Finder.

5.IASS STAFF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

All IASS staff have completed all three levels of legal training. Additionally, this academic year our staff completed Bracknell Forest council's GDPR refresher training and climate training.

We continued to attend SENDIST User group sessions led by SEND Tribunal representatives and providing useful updates from the Tribunal and our child / young person officer attended coproduction training.

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 (e.g. 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. Child/Young person views collection surveys were sent to those who had met with our child/young person officer or volunteer to have a views document produced.

This year we received 6 Short Survey responses and 45 Extended Survey responses and 7 responses from the Child/young person views collection survey. Feedback scores and comments were positive. Full survey results can be read in Appendix 1, 2 and 3.

In terms of service development, analysing any more constructive feedback can be most helpful. We have considered the individual who mentioned that 'There's a lot of information and links provided that can be overwhelming and difficult to read through especially when English is an additional language. One to one support with form filling and appeals would be greatly welcomed.' We try to break out information into manageable paragraphs and check in to ensure understanding. We offer over the phone and Teams meetings to look through forms. Where essential, we will offer a face-to-face meeting.

Looking back 5 years to academic year 2019-2020, 83% of individuals said that they felt more confident due to IASS involvement and 44% were less worried. These percentages are much higher than this year, with only 44% saying they are feeling more confident due to IASS involvement and only 24% feeling less worried. Despite this, this year, a higher percentage (64%) of surveyed individuals feel that things have got better for them / their child due to IASS involvement (only 56% said the same 2029/2020). This may reflect the increasing overwhelm that we have anecdotally observed.

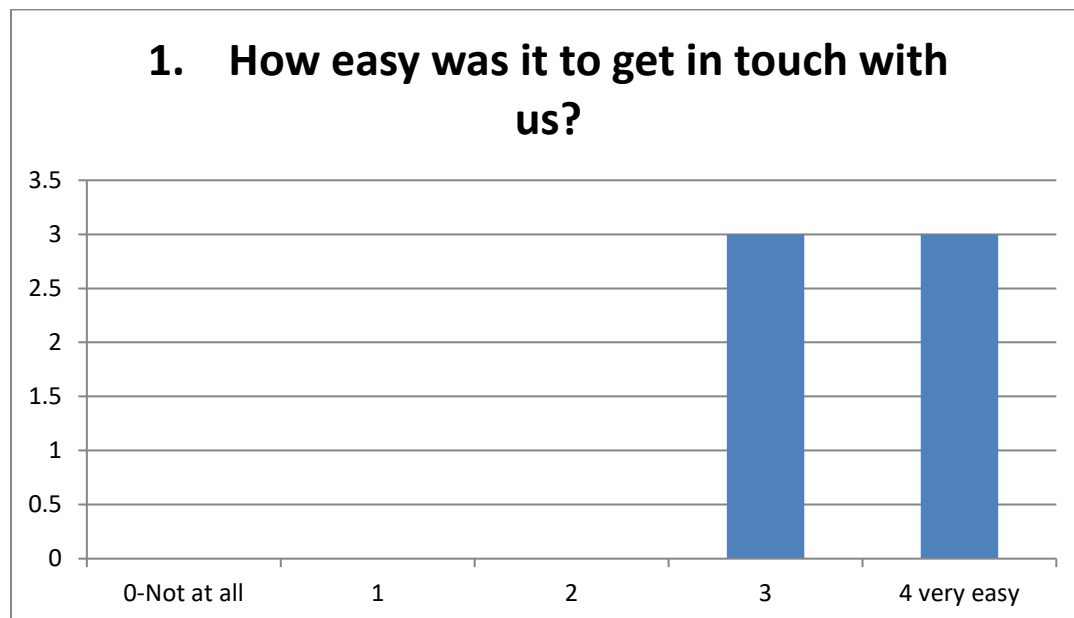
7.FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS – WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE

We have reviewed our compliance against the national IASS minimum standards and we are confident that we will continue to run an effective and compliant service. Feedback received from families continues to be positive. In light of the increasingly overwhelm some service users are experiencing, we will continue to consider how to most effectively respond to enquiries and provide clear, concise and relevant information. 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.

APPENDIX 1 Short Survey academic year 24/25

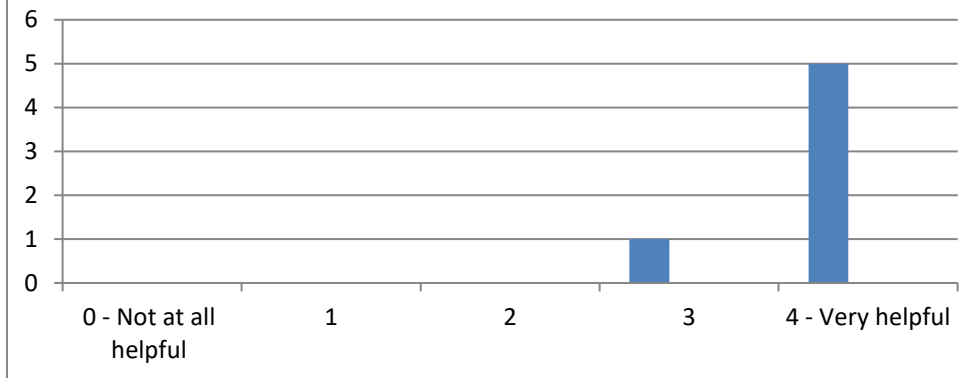
Short evaluation surveys links (via Smart Survey) were emailed to “level 2” service users who had received initial helpline telephone and email support but no ongoing, more involved case work.

6 short survey responses were received for academic year: 24/25



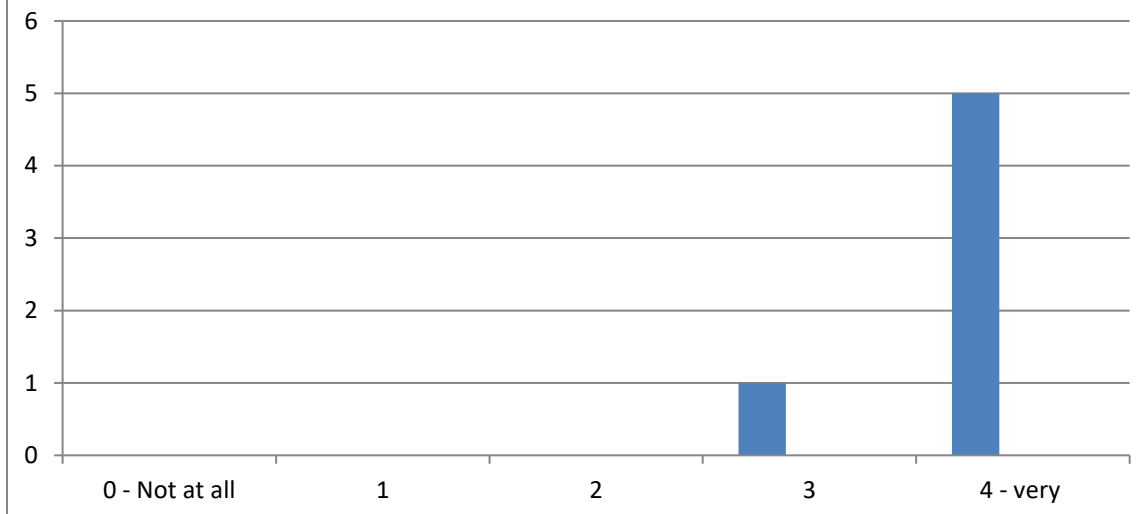
Question 2: Mean Rating: 3.84

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



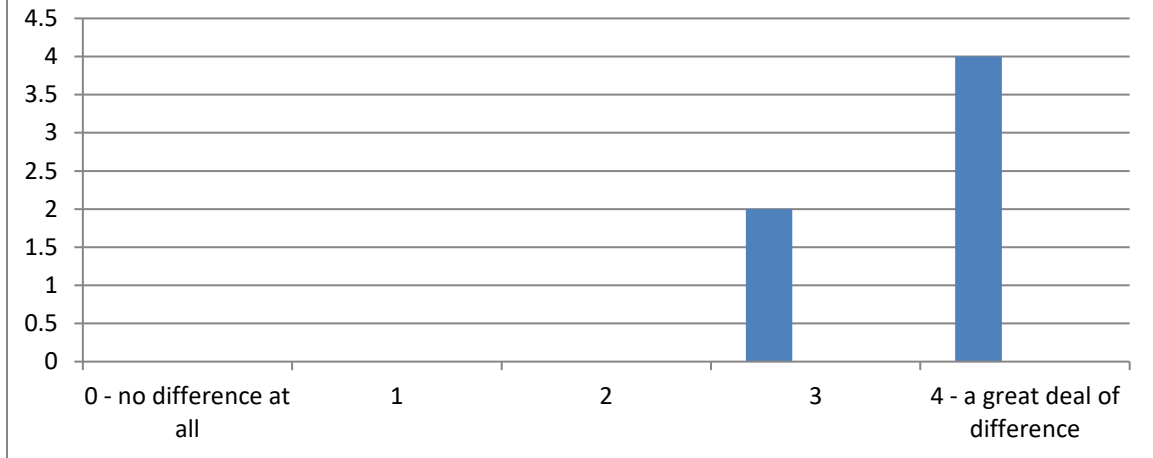
Question 3: Mean Rating: 3.84

3. How neutral, fair and unbiased do you think we were (did we avoid taking sides)?



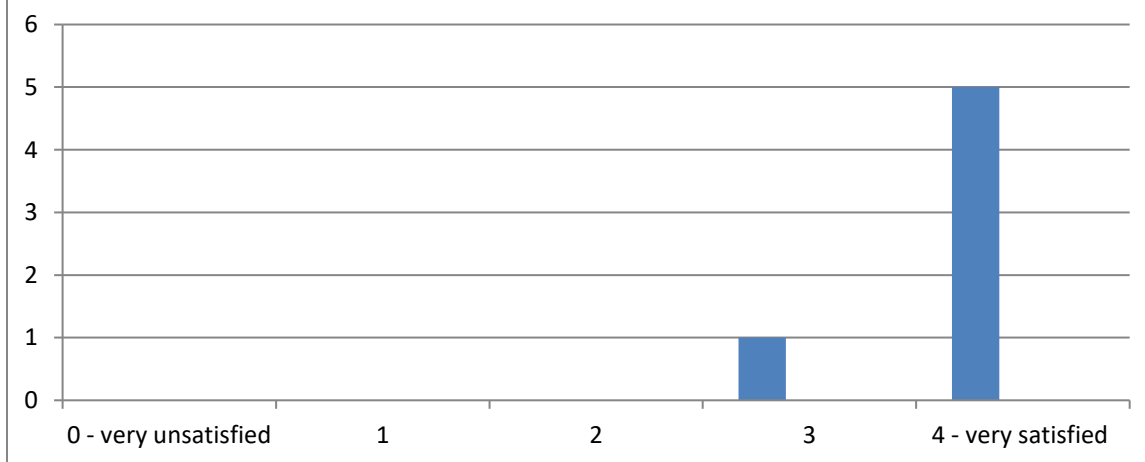
Question 4: Mean Rating: 3.67

4. What difference to you think our information, advice or support has made for you?

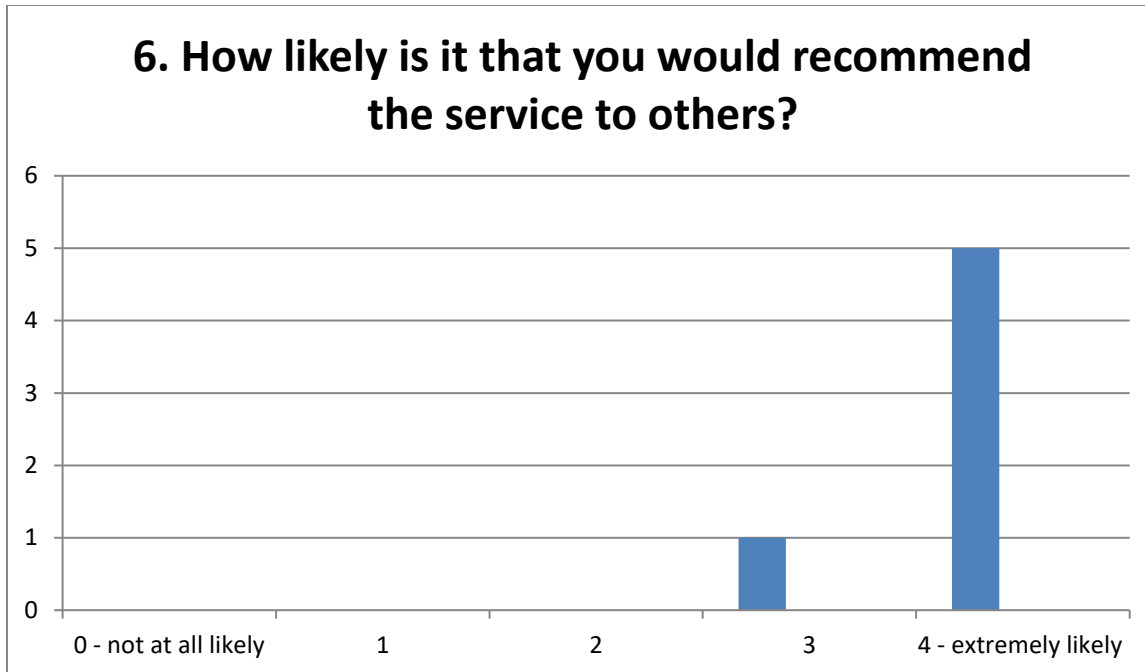


Question 5: Mean Rating: 3.84

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



Question 6: Mean Rating: 3.84



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

- I found the phone call really helpful and the following up detail was really useful as I had forgotten some points. Gave me something to refer back to.
- *IASS staff member* was extremely helpful.
- I was unaware that this service existed but once I did (from a family member), I had all my worries and questions listened to and answered. I felt reassured and as though I had people in my corner (for my son) to help. Thank you so much.
- I have been very happy with the support I have received to date. You have helped me understand the process in regards to the EHCP application and the choosing schools etc. Without it, I would have felt very lost adding to stress of the whole process.

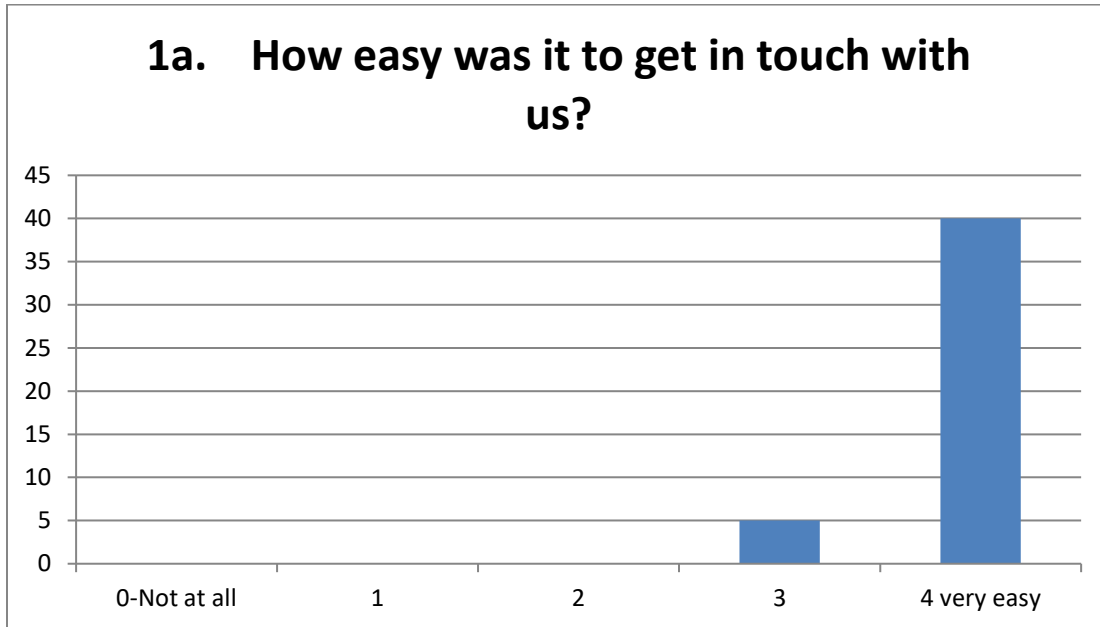
APPENDIX 2

Extended Evaluation Survey for academic year 24/25

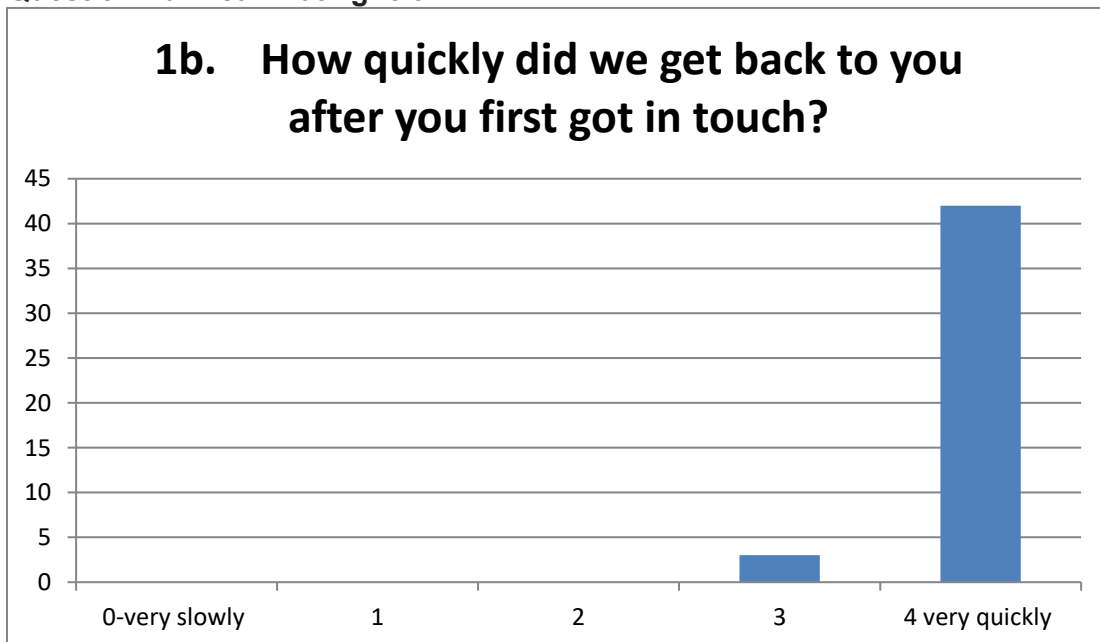
Extended evaluation surveys via Smart Survey were emailed to “level 3+ ” service users who had received more involved case work support including mediation / appeals.

Evaluation forms returned 45

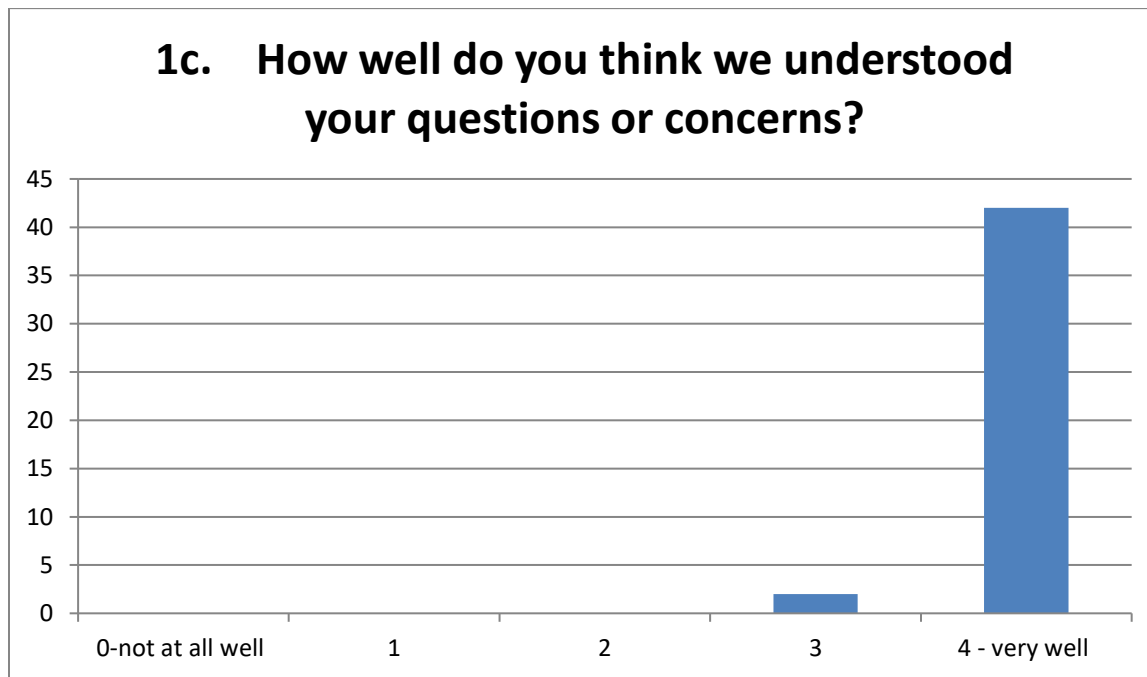
Question 1a: Mean Rating: 3.89



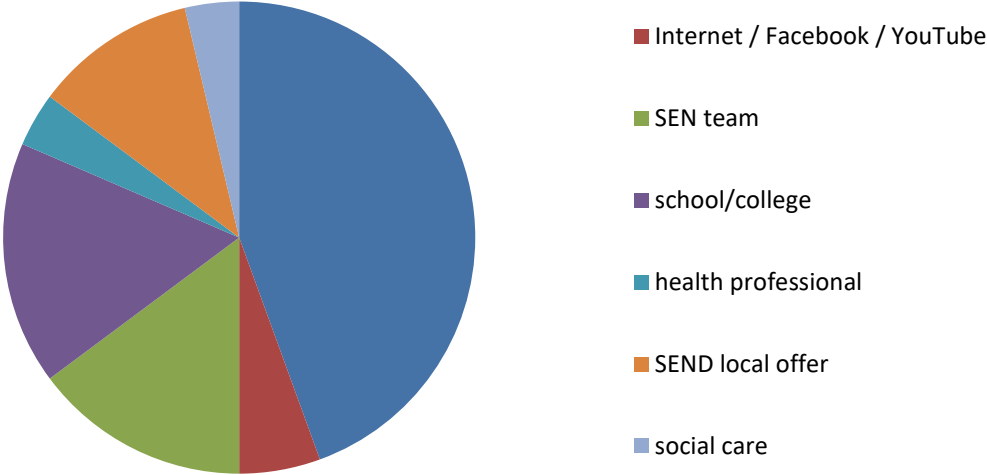
Question 1b: Mean Rating: 3.94



Question 1c: Mean Rating: 3.96

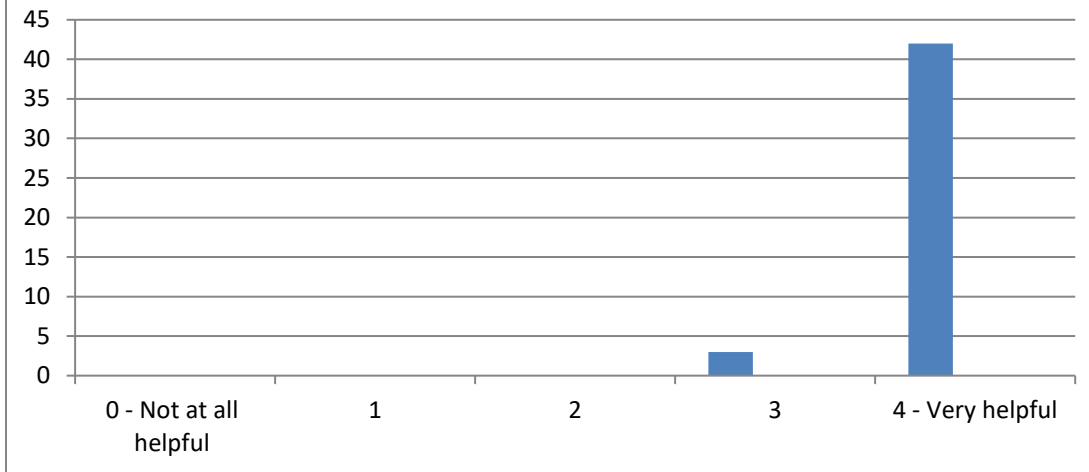


1d How did you hear about us? (Select all that apply)



Question 2a: Mean Rating: 3.93

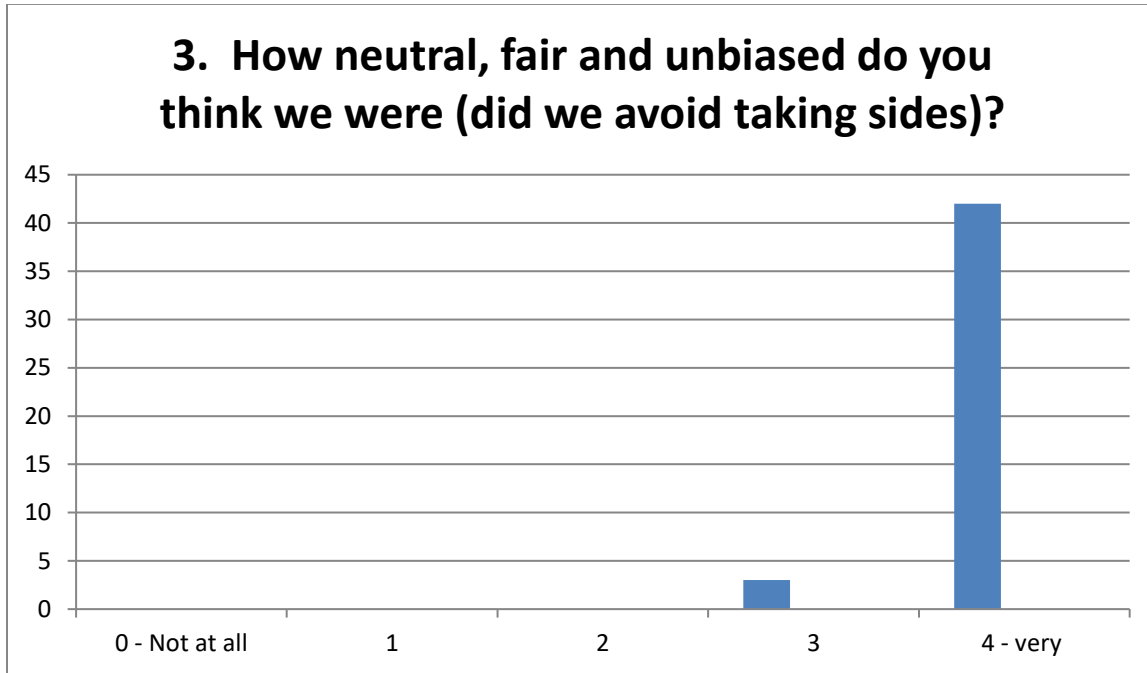
2a. How helpful was the information, advice and support we gave you?



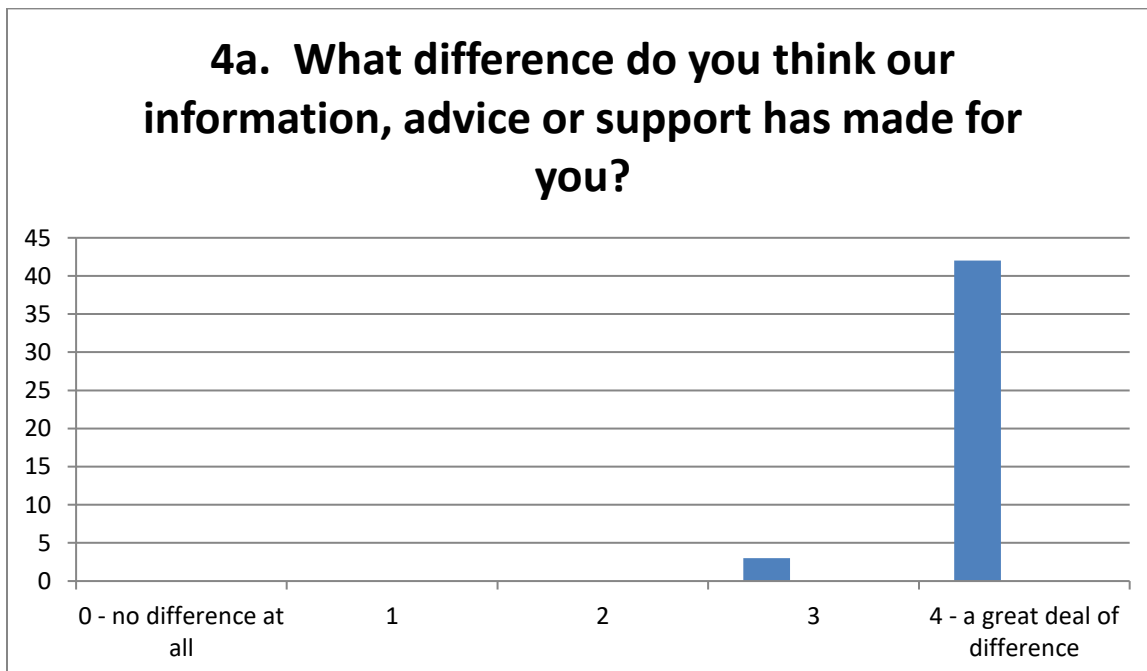
2b When you asked us to help did we (select all that apply):

| | |
|--|------|
| Return your calls, emails or texts quickly? | 100% |
| Keep in touch with you so you knew what was happening? | 100% |
| 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: 3.93



Question 4a: Mean Rating: 3.93



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

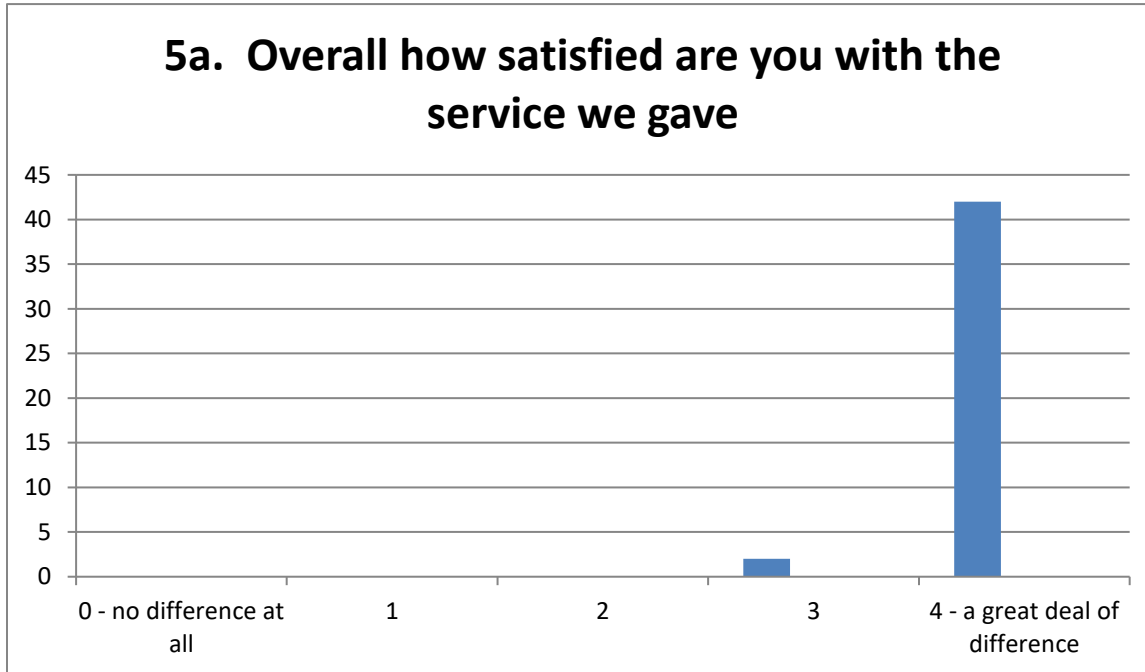
| | |
|--|-----|
| I feel that my needs and concerns are better understood than they were | 60% |
| I now get on better with staff who work at my child's school/college | 2% |
| I now get on better with staff who work for the Local Authority | 7% |
| I feel more confident | 44% |
| I have a better understanding of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice and the arrangements that should be made for children and young people with SEN | 67% |
| I feel more involved in decisions about my/my child's education | 49% |
| I am happier / less worried about my future | 24% |
| 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 | 64% |

Please explain any other differences:

- It has helped us sleep at night, knowing that IASS are there to help others understand us and state what the law requires, which as a parent is hard to state, thank you!
- It gave me confidence to go to my son's school knowing I had support alongside me.
- Getting the outcome that we wanted
- Amazing support to get the paperwork done for son's school appeal
- I would be lost without your service.
- Just made things easier for us and help us understand what everything was and in what we were doing putting us at ease giving us information we needed
- We had the wording to support what our child needed.
- I was given a lot of help and support with my son's difficulties and the troubles I am facing with the school. I was advised on a few different options and help was given when required.
- I am in a position to appeal my son's EHCP with specific details and requirements
- *IASS staff member* is fantastic and given me more support than anyone else in my life (professional)

- I now have a greater understanding of the legal aspects of SEN and EHCP process
- We're still working through our mediation / appeal process, but your input has been invaluable!
- I haven't ticked the boxes not because IASS did anything wrong with these other options, but because the other organisations don't make me feel those ways if that makes sense?

Question 5a: Mean Rating: 3.93



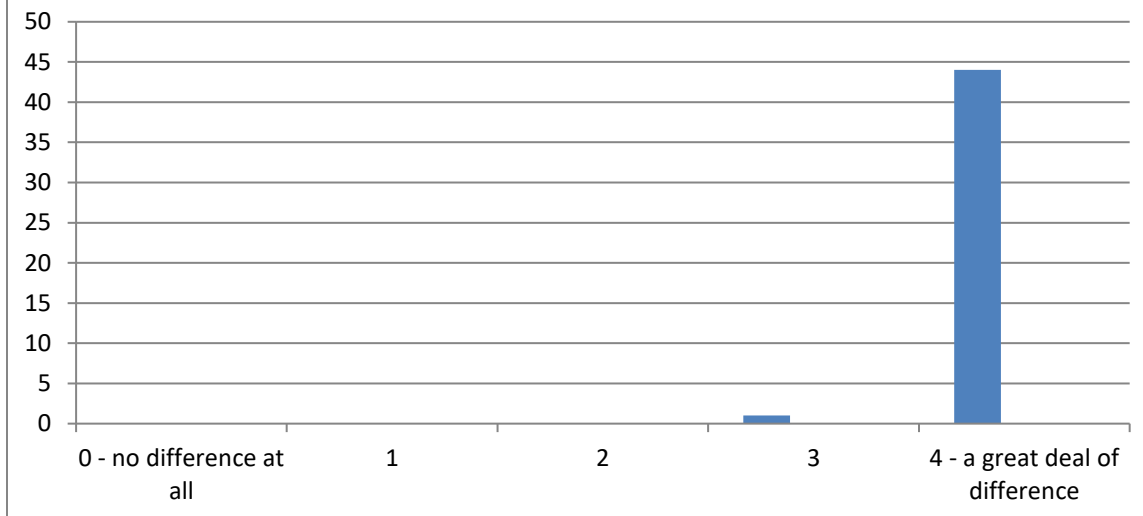
5b Was there anything we could have done better?

- There's a lot of information and links provided that can be overwhelming and difficult to read through especially when English is an additional language. One to one support with form filling and appeals would be greatly welcomed.
- You doing well !
- Nothing at all
- Nothing perfect service, help understanding is provided
- If more advisers are available that will be more beneficial to provide the service more efficiently.
- Nothing I was very happy with all the support
- No
- No
- No, your service has exceptional. Lovely Team Support. Keep doing what you do.

- No *IASS staff member* was amazing thank you
- *IASS staff member* has been fantastic from day one. This is my oldest son so it's our first time going through something like the this. The thought of doing it alone was scary and extremely stressful. *IASS staff member* had been the biggest help ever and has made our family life so much better. Words cannot put into effect how grateful we are and how much this service makes such a positive influence in our lives. Going at it alone is not only unfair in life as you never would think you would need to go against and battle your own local authority. You would like to think your local authority would be doing everything to support you which unfortunately in my case was not true and we needed to go to tribunal. This service and *IASS staff member* had been absolutely amazing and supportive. I really feel like we have been supported and the impartial advice has been the biggest help over. All my worries have always been answered. Thankyou so much
- No
- No
- I understand the need for impartiality so this maybe out of your control, but ideally I would have been given guidance to say whether someone with experience in IASS thought I should / shouldn't appeal the EHCP.
- Nope
- No
- Nothing
- Produce a magic wand to make all other organisations as kind and caring and understanding as the IASS team is? Haha.

Question 6: Mean Rating: 3.97

6. How likely is it that you would recommend the service to others



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

- Many thanks for your support and guidance.
- Keep helping others!
- The particular lady I communicate with is so supportive and understanding and makes me feel seen and validated. I feel like I have someone on my side fighting with me for my son, with all the key support she gives.
- *IASS staff member* is amazing at her job. I can't thank her enough for the help she has provided.
- We have worked with *IASS staff member* for several years and at several stages in the EHCP process - including assessment / issue of the EHCP, Annual Review, Tribunal, mediation, . We have always been very impressed with her knowledge and support and have felt heard and understood. *IASS staff member* has taken the time and been proactive in emailing us relevant information and legislation. She has empowered us to go through each stage without the need for costly legal support.
- *IASS staff member* was exceptionally helpful and caring and provided so much information and support
- I am truly grateful to *IASS staff member* for all her support with my son's school appeal. I was so scared and didn't know what I was doing, *IASS staff member* supported me through every step. Thank you
- I would be lost without your service, wouldn't have had a clue where to start. *IASS staff member* is amazing very responsive but impartial. I certainly received the help I needed I would recommend IASS.

- *IASS staff member* was a pleasure to talk to, very friendly and made me feel at ease every time. No question too big or small. Lots of advice and links to access. She made me feel like I was being listened to and supported. The service always respond promptly and help me in more ways than other services have and I am truly grateful. I have a better understanding going forward and the confidence in making decisions for my child.
- Was recommended by a work colleague who had communicated herself with IASS and I'm really glad she informed me of them. I would also recommend onwards to others!
- Thank you so much.
- *IASS staff member* has been absolutely unbelievable and surpassed any hopes for support I had. Her communications are clear and timely, attention to detail is outstanding, knowledge is encyclopedic and willingness to help is second to none. I am blown away at the level of help and support she has provided. My son's future prospects are greatly improved thanks to her and I will never be able to say 'thank you' enough. IASS provides a crucial, amazing service for children who need it the most. Thank you.
- I am very grateful to *IASS staff member* for her support. She's been a fantastic help and so kind and supportive.
- I've had the most supportive people who really care, helping me and extremely grateful.
- The IASS service has been outstanding. Their knowledge, compassion and commitment have made a significant difference in helping us navigate the complex SEND system. *IASS staff member* has stayed on later than her hours in order to stay in meetings with us. From the outset, she has always been incredibly well informed, approachable, and patient. She has taken the time to listen to our concerns, explain our rights clearly, and guide us through through each step of the process with empathy and professionalism. This is always always followed up with an email outlining the relevant points of legislation she has shared with me. What really stood out, was her genuine care – not just for the process, but for the outcome for our children. Knowing that I am able to contact IASS any time we have a stage in the process has been invaluable, and has given us reassurance during some quite hideous and stressful times.
- IASS staff member has been absolutely amazing! I am honestly so grateful for the help she's given me. She's really helped me understand the EHCP process and helped me make adjustments etc. IASS staff member doesn't work the holidays but she made sure she helped me before she went on leave and also reassured me that the service is still open if I did need help across the holidays. Thanks again for all your help.
- The service was amazing
- *IASS staff member* at IASS has had such an impact on my child's life, she guided us through our darkest times, kept in touch with us through out, explained our options to us at each and every turn. Whilst support was impartial it was exactly what we needed and more. My son will never know you personally but I certainly will always tell him the role you played in his development and how pivotal it was - without your support I dread to think where we would be. Whilst funding and investment in SEND children is extremely poor, it's important we champion the unsung heroes, as of which *IASS staff member* is

exactly that. Thank you *IASS staff member* for everything and know what you do makes the difference not just for our child but the family too.

- *IASS staff member* is amazing she has been such a great help that I wouldn't be able to do without her help thank you can never be enough
- The service has been fantastic which we have received from *IASS staff member*; The most supportive and informative person we couldn't be more grateful than you.
- It is the first education service that has truly listened to us. Support was professional with clear options allowing us to make the decisions and feel empowered.
- Service goes over and above with staff attending tribunals when they are on holiday
- I wouldn't be where I am today without IASS. *IASS staff member* has been amazing! Will recommend your service to others.
- *IASS staff member* has been absolutely amazing. She replies quickly with such detailed information that I honestly don't know how she sees all that and then puts it in an email in the time available. Even when I haven't responded, she has followed up with me to ensure I have everything I need, which is going beyond the call of duty really. Absolutely invaluable service - thank you all so much.
- *IASS staff member* is fantastic so factual and so patient
- I would've been clueless lost without your service. *IASS staff member* was very impartial but extremely helpful at the same time. Thank you to IASS and the team for all the help.
- IASS has been my family's lifeline towards securing our preferred local school that meets our child's special educational needs. *IASS staff member* has been instrumental in this process and we felt our views heard and respected for the first time. She guided us by providing the relevant information which helped us make the right choices including going for mediation and subsequently lodging an appeal with the SEND Tribunal after failure to resolve matters with the LA. The success of our appeal was fundamentally because of her in-depth knowledge on the subject matter, which played a pivotal role in the document/evidence submissions prior to our final hearing and presentations on the day of the hearing. She helped me organise myself for the hearing and offered to come to my home to support me during the hearing, something I will always be grateful for. Finally, our appeal has been allowed by the Tribunal and our child can now attend his local school with his sibling. I cannot thank IASS enough. The patience to deal with frustrated parents who are desperately looking for help with their special needs children is no mean feat and I applaud this incredible organisation. Thank you IASS!
- I can't thank IASS staff member enough for her incredible ongoing support throughout our journey with the SEN and EHCP process for both of my children. Her knowledge and guidance have been invaluable, especially as we navigated both the application, draft and final stages of the EHCP. She provided clear, impartial advice that made each step so much more manageable.

- *IASS staff member's* responsiveness is always exceptional, she was always there to answer questions, provide clarity, and reassurance during a process which can be very overwhelming for parents. Her dedication made a world of difference, and I truly always feel supported every step of the way.
- Thanks to *IASS staff member's* advice and signposting I have also obtained legal aid and now receiving support from a legal firm for the appeal process. I will continue to ask for *IASS staff member's* advice for other matters relating to my children's SEN needs, provisions and their EHCPs.
- I'm very grateful for all your help and advice. I think I would have given up by now if it wasn't for you. Thank you. As a side note, I have already recommended your service to several people I have met who are struggling with placement for their children with regards to their EHCP. I have found the whole process much easier with the help and support of the IASS as I had no clue what to be looking for and how to manage the EHCP. Everything is very new to us still and the IASS information has enabled us to provide coherent and comprehensive planning documents to the LA prior to the mediation which made an easy meeting take place. I could not have done this without you
- Just that IASS (in particular *IASS staff member*) was the light at the end of a very dark tunnel on many occasions. The support I have received from her has been so valuable.

APPENDIX 3

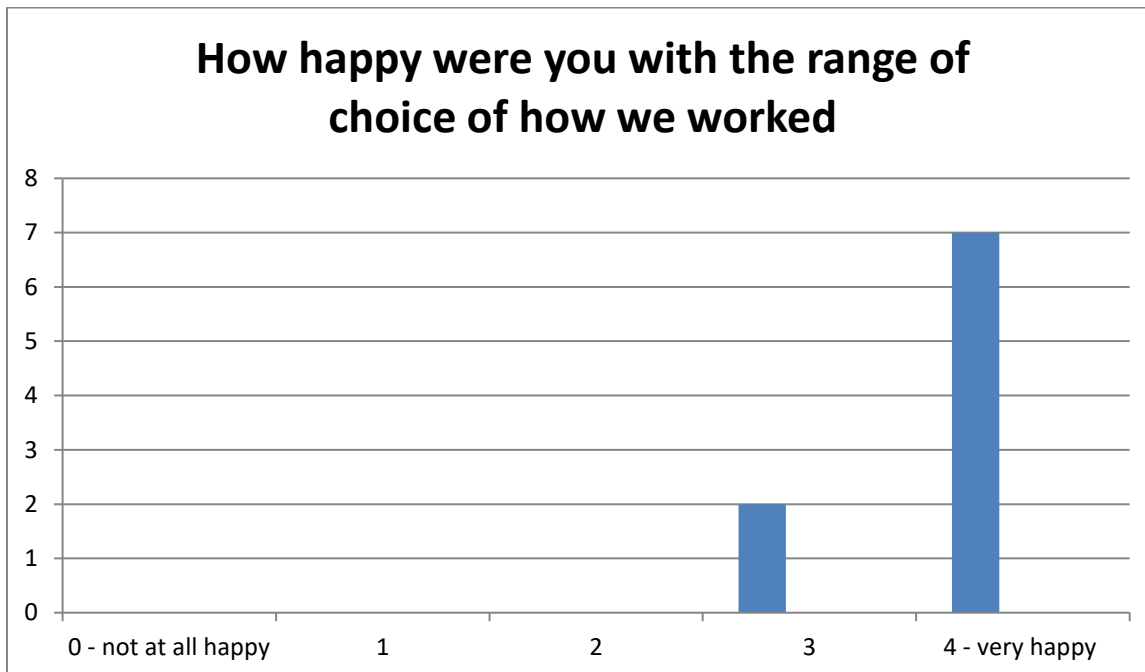
IASS Views Collection Survey 24/25

This survey is sent to parents, children and young people after IASS have met with them (face to face or via Teams) to discuss their views and support collate their views into a document. Views collect work was carried out by our Child/young person officer, or a trained professional, working as a volunteer with IASS.

This academic year, 7 survey responses were received. Results were 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

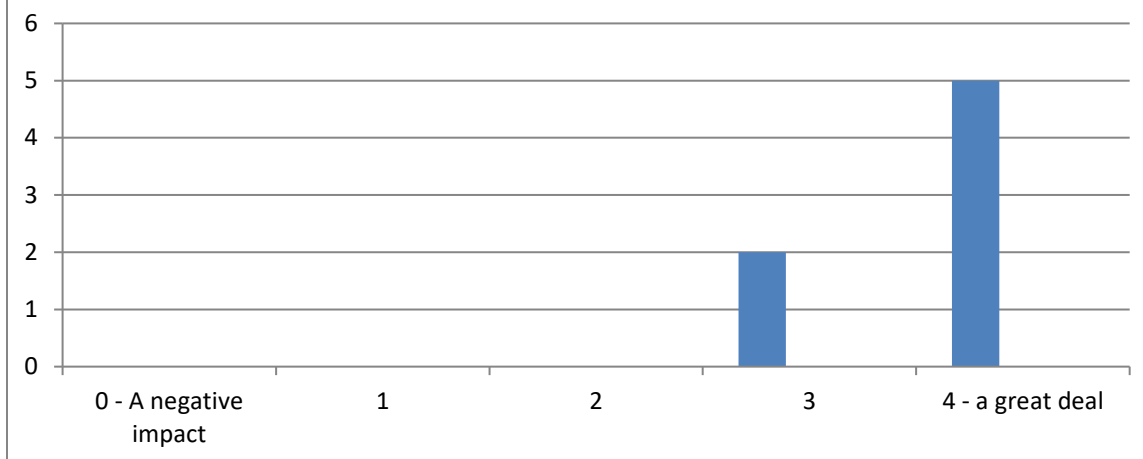
Mean score: 4



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

Mean score: 3.71

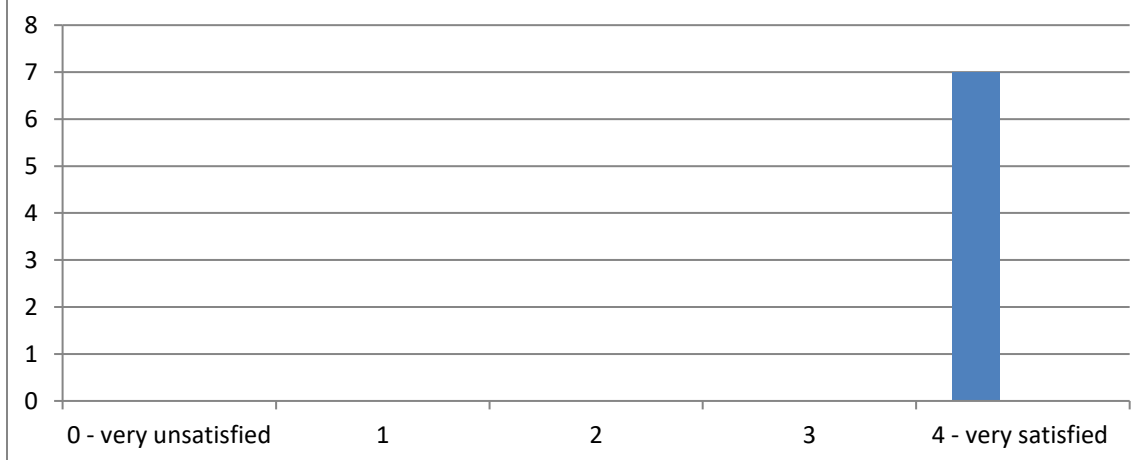
2. What difference do you feel our support to share your (or your child/young person's) views has made?



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

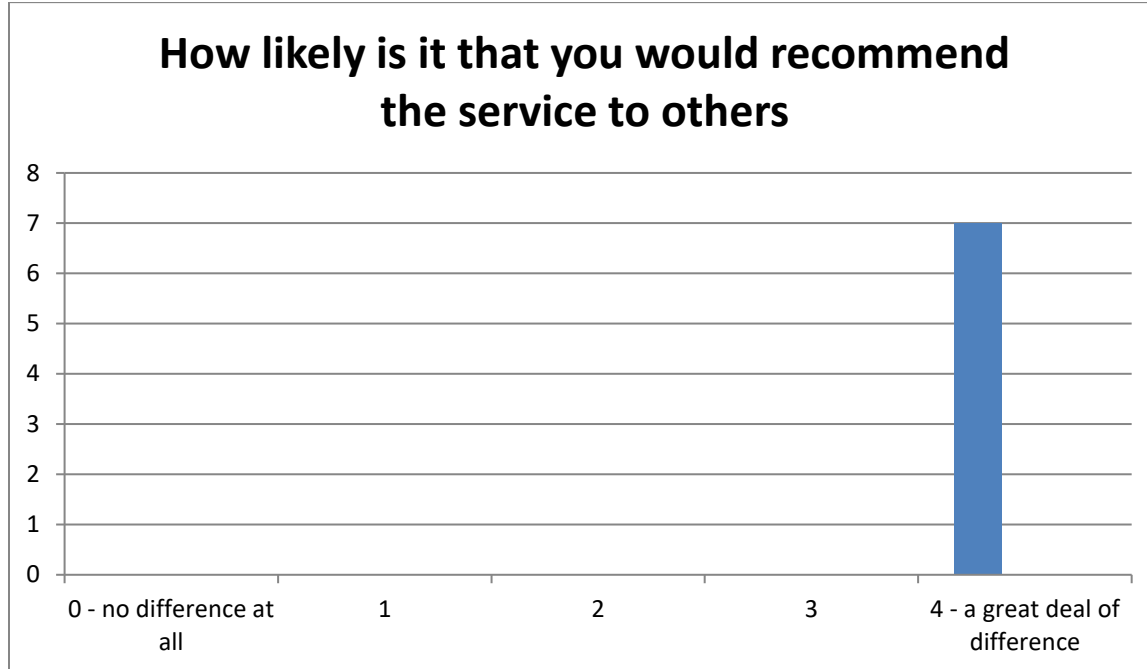
Mean score: 4

3. Overall how satisfied are you with the service we gave?



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

Mean score: 4



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

- XXX was great with my son, she was so patient & took the time to wait until he was ready to talk/answer the questions and went along with what he was playing with at the same time. She made him feel comfortable so he could express his views even though he found it hard.
- The whole experience was fantastic. It's so lovely to see XXX's feelings put down on paper as so many people don't bother to find them out due to his communication difficulties. XXX was fantastic, made him feel reassured. When I read the views report back to him when we received it, he gave a huge smile and said "that's what I told the lady" with a huge sense of pride!
- I'd just like to say how lovely XXX was when we had a meeting yesterday. Amazing at listening to my son express his feelings.
- Thank you very much for the time you spent with XXX and for compiling her thoughts in a professional and easy to understand way. XXX felt comfortable at the setting and you knew exactly the questions to ask her. You also gave some food for thought in areas we hadn't previously considered. Thank you so much for your time and for providing your kind, caring and attentive service to us.
- Thank you very much for excellent service, professionalism and understanding given to our daughter during this difficult time.
- My son spoke to XXX. He is not very good at speaking to strangers but she put him at ease and showed empathy for his long, emotional journey. She allowed him to form his own views and was led by him in a sensitive manner. XXX said that he liked talking to her and liked her questions. This was the first time XXX was able to speak freely about his own education, rather than feeling like he had to agree to the pressures of professionals in educational roles. It taught me some new things about him too, identified some of his trauma and anxiety. I now know where the support needs to be and how XXX would like his learning to be delivered. Great service - thank you so much.

- XXX was great with my son. He felt really uncomfortable and XXX helped make him feel at ease. Thank you.

APPENDIX 4: IASS SERVICE DEVELOPMENT PLAN (written March 2025)

Bracknell Forest Information, Advice & Support Service (IASS)

Service Development Plan

for the period 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026

Mission

Our mission is to provide 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 special educational needs and disability (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. Bracknell Forest IASS is fully compliant with these standards and they can be accessed here: [Minimum Standards for Information Advice and Support Service](#)

Key areas in 25/26

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 areas below.

(1) Raising awareness of IASS

- Raise awareness of the service to local schools and colleges
- Keep the profile of IASS high in the local area by attendance at meetings and keeping in contact with other local authority services
- Raise awareness with local charities and services outside of the local authority
- Post regularly on our Facebook page

(2) Marketing material and resources available to service users

- Keep our website up to date and relevant
- Expand upon resources and our digital training videos on our website / YouTube page.
- Develop our Facebook page
- Seek feedback from professionals and service users including children and young people about our service and make adaptations to our resources in terms of content and accessibility as needed.

(3) Addressing service demand and providing high quality service

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

(4) Joint Commissioning and strategic work

- Host termly steering group meetings and obtain feedback on how to improve our service and take steps needed in response.
- Meet representatives of the SEN team, health and transport regularly to feedback on general trends and
- Attend regional (South-East England) meetings with other IASS managers and work collaboratively with other services.
- Attend SEND Assurance Group meetings and feedback on strategies and other key documents.
- Attend PCF meetings / provide training when requested

(5) Reporting and policies

- Prepare monthly and annual reports and publish the annual report on our website.
- Review our policies each year and keep on our website.

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.

April '25 to March '26

An SLA with health confirms a lower fixed contribution amount. All four staff members work from home, booking a room in a Family Hub or other space when required.

END OF APPENDICES / REPORT