

# Annual Service Report

## Information, Advice and Support Kent

### 2015/2016

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**Information, Advice and Support Kent** continues to deliver a high quality service to residents living in the Kent County Council Local Authority area. The service is well regarded by parents, carers, schools, services and voluntary agencies as evidenced by the positive annual service user feedback survey and other anecdotal comments written.

### **Mission Statement and Team members**

**Information, Advice and Support Kent (IASK)** believes children thrive and achieve their potential when all partners (parents, children, young people and professionals) work together to plan appropriate interventions and educational provision.

Our purpose is to provide legally based information, advice and support to empower parents their children and young people to make informed decisions.

IASK promotes working together based on mutual respect of feelings, opinions and values. It is committed to providing a flexible and supportive service responsive to individual needs to give parents and young people the opportunity to be involved in educational decisions and outcome planning.

Our 4 point charter, we will:

- provide a flexible, confidential, impartial and supportive service that is responsive to individual needs;
- work in partnership with \*parents/children/young people, schools/Local Authority and other organisations by providing support, information and training
- remain impartial in our work with all our service users;
- use feedback given to us by our service users to help us improve the service we deliver.

The team currently consists of 9 fte substantive posts and 1 fte temporary post funded by the NCB (Independent Support for Young People), and 0.8 fte temporary post funded by disabled children's service to provide information advice and support for social care and short breaks:

Kerry Miles	-	Service Co-ordinator
Ali Cobb	-	Casework Advisor
Val Ansell	-	Family Involvement Worker
Sue Cunliffe-Jones	-	Family Involvement Worker
Bindi Deo	-	Family Involvement Worker 0.6 fte
Emma Harvey	-	Family Involvement Worker
Teresa Hay	-	Independent Supporter for young people
Lianne Cheeseman	-	Helpline Officer
Dean Britter	-	Helpline Officer
Sue Chapman	-	Helpline Officer 0.5 fte (social care)
Miriam Layton	-	Data and Information Officer 0.3 (social care)
Daniel Heard White	-	Data and Information Officer 0.5
Daniel Heard White	-	Administration Assistant 0.5
Michelle Dafoe	-	Administration Assistant 0.5

\*parent is used to describe all those adults with parental responsibility.  
Young person age 16 and over compulsory school age up to age 25.

## **Service Overview**

*The Children and Families Act 2014 Part 3, Section 32 states (1) 'A local authority in England must arrange for children and young people for whom it is responsible, and the parents of children for whom it is responsible, to be provided with advice and information about matters relating to the special educational needs of the children or young people concerned'. (2) 'A local authority in England must arrange for children and young people in its area with a disability, and the parents of children in its area with a disability, to be provided with advice and information about matters relating to the disabilities of the children or young people concerned.'*

Information, Advice and Support Kent (IASK) provide the information, advice and support service for Kent County Council residents. From November 2015, IASK has been commissioned by Bexley Local Authority to provide a telephone helpline service to Bexley residents.

The role of the Service has developed over the past 18 months to extend the service to provide information, advice and support to children and young people with SEND up to the age of 25 as well as to their parents. Since October 2015 the service has been commissioned to provide information, advice and support about social care and short breaks and is developing knowledge and information to provide information and signposting as appropriate.

The Service focus is on education and health and social care as it relates to the child/young person's special educational needs and disabilities and signposts to Local Healthwatch, the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) for health related queries, and to SEAP for advocacy related to health and social care users.

IASK operates at arm's-length from the Authority to ensure parents/children and young people have confidence in the impartiality of the support and information provided by the Service.

The Service has received Department for Education (DfE) funding through the National Children's Bureau. This is national grant funding is to develop services to provide the increased duties that is required of an Information, Advice and Support Service. IASK has recruited an Independent Supporter for young people with the purpose of working directly with young people applying for an EHC Needs Assessment separate from their parents if required by the young person. The officer in this role also works with families of older children who are going through the assessment process or who are transferring from a statement to an education health and care plan. The role also entails developing the service, meeting with post 16 education and training providers and youth establishments to raise awareness of the service and meeting with children and young people to encouraging participation with IASK service development.

In April 2014 IASK was integrated into the SEN Assessment and Placement team within the Education and Young People's Services Directorate and the service is line managed by Julie Care (tribunal manager).

The Service is based at Oxford Road in Maidstone, which is not a main KCC premises. There is also a bungalow away from the main office, where parent meetings, drop-ins and volunteer training takes place. This helps to promote the impartiality of the service. The service is confidential and information will only be shared with other professionals with explicit permission of parents/children and young people, unless it involves a 'safeguarding' issue.

The Service will work towards a new set of national quality standards devised by the Information, Advice and Support Services Network which are endorsed by the Department for Education.

The purpose the Service is to provide information, advice and support to enable children/young people and their parents to make informed choices about the child/young person's education and other outcomes relating to the child/young person's aspirations and goals moving into adulthood. The Service places an emphasis on empowering children young people and parents to have their views and wishes heard.

All paid staff and volunteers have the opportunity to undertake the updated SEN legal training following the changes to the legislation. The on-line legal training modules are devised by IPSEA (Independent, Parental Special Education Advice) and are provided through the Information, Advice and Support Services Network. All relevant staff members have passed the Level One on-line modules and five have attended the face to face training and fed back to the team. All team members have completed Level 2 on-line modules and 3 have attended face to face training. 4 have completed level 3 and the remaining will have completed the modules by August 2016.

The Service currently does not have a separate website from the local authority, however, a case has been made for this to be considered. IASK is clearly identified on the 'Local Offer pages' with a link to service pages on the local authority website and provides information about the service and a range of leaflets for parents and easy read versions. The web pages ([www.kent.gov.uk/iask](http://www.kent.gov.uk/iask)) are monitored to ensure that information is appropriate and does not duplicate other information available on the KCC website.

The Service is currently exploring the benefits of using social media as a method of sharing information with parents, children, young people, schools, voluntary organisations and the wider community.

The Service signposts where appropriate and holds a comprehensive list of support groups and voluntary agencies that are able to offer additional information and support. This list reviewed and updated on a monthly basis.

During this year, leaflets and posters about the service have been distributed to the local community and further information leaflets and posters have been sent to all schools, children's centres, libraries and Gateways, SEN resource centres in the KCC area. The service has raised awareness with other KCC teams such as Early Help and Preventative teams, Specialist Teaching Service, Troubled Families, Youth Offending Service, Specialist teachers for early years, Skills and Employability, Adult Social Care, Disabled Children's Service, Autism Team, Inclusion Service Kent and Portage. An advertisement was placed in a health magazine, but to date no callers have said that they heard about our service from seeing this advertisement.

## Statutory Responsibilities

The duties expected of information, advice and support services are identified in paragraph 2.19 of the Special educational needs and disabilities code of practice January 2014.

These duties include supporting children, young people and their parents/carers as follows:

- *Signposting to alternative and additional sources of advice and support that may be available locally or nationally*
- *individual casework and representation for those who need it, including:*
  - *support in attending meetings, contributing to assessments and reviews and participating in decisions about outcomes for the child/young person*
  - *directing children, young people and parents and those who support and work with them to additional support services where needed – relating to preparing for adulthood, housing support, careers advice and employment support.*
- *support in arranging or attending early disagreement resolution meeting*
- *support with managing mediation, appeals to the First-tier Tribunal, exclusions and complaints on matters related to SEN and disability*
- *raising awareness of local authority services for resolving disagreements and for mediation, and on the routes of appeal and complaint on matters relating to special educational needs and disabilities.*

## Services offered by IASK

**Telephone Support:** IASK offers impartial information, advice and options via telephone. There is also a 24hr answer machine and e-mail facility. The Service aims to respond to all calls within two working days. During the last year this target was achieved. The calls are recorded on a secure database.

There has been an increase in helpline staff in the morning and a triage system operates in the helpline during the afternoon to ensure as many callers as possible speak to a member of staff the first time they call (parents have told us they do not like leaving messages). The purpose of triaging is to reassure the caller that they will be called back by a helpline officer, a few details of the call are recorded and sometimes the call can be actioned immediately i.e. responding to general enquiries about the service or queries related to signposting to other services. The majority of calls are passed onto the helpline officers and the parent is given an idea of when they can expect a return call and this is always within 48 hours of their call. However, during very busy periods, there are occasions when callers will be required to leave a message on the answer machine.

**Casework** is defined as services that range from information and advice given over the telephone to on-going support either over the telephone or individual support in the community. This includes support for parents/children and young people at meetings which can include Reintegration Meetings, Annual Reviews, multi-agency meetings, Local Authority meetings regarding the Statutory Assessment process and mediation meetings.

**Drop-ins in the local community and support groups:** Provision of drop-ins at local venues in the community and attendance at a range of other agency support groups across the County to ensure that service users can access the Service locally. The Service regularly attends several Parent Led Charity parent support groups in North, East and South Kent. In West Kent the service regularly attends a multi-agency ASD drop-in and facilitates the Weald Parent Support Group in the rural area of the Tunbridge Wells district, providing a drop in at the same venue.

## **Training Provision**

IASK continues to offer:

- Bespoke training for parents aimed at promoting better communication
- Parent's Participating Confidently training for parents wishing to feel more confident to take a role as a parent representative at steering groups and boards that influence the planning and delivery of local services.
- Information about SEN processes.

The service has delivered training to Kent Parent Carer Forum and Bexley Voice (parent carer forum) which received positive feedback.

## **What has been achieved over the year?**

The number of cases has remained the same but often they are more complex, with parents and young people requiring a range of support over a period of time. Often parents return to the Service on and off over a number of years as the needs of their children change and particularly at times of transition.

There continues to be a channel shift with an increase of 37.5% in service users corresponding with the service via e-mail this has resulted in a slight decrease in telephone calls.

To maximise use of time and reduce travel time and costs, telephone support is provided in the first instance and those requesting or requiring face to face support are offered a local drop-in venue or a home visit as an alternative if drop-in dates and times are not convenient to the service user.

The Service provides support to parents and young people who are not happy with the local authority decision by supporting parents/young people at meetings with the local authority and at mediation. The service also provides information and advice about the appeals process and procedures and other organisations such as IPSEA or Kent Autistic Trust, to ensure parents/young people have access to a range of quality advice and support appropriate to their circumstances.

The Service seeks to find ways to engage with users who find it difficult to contact our Service. We do this by seeking to develop partnership working with statutory and voluntary agencies. Other services and schools have found that with IASK support parents will engage with them more readily. We continue to support multi-agency drop-ins and various support groups across Kent. This has enabled the Service to draw on the expertise and support of other organisations, whilst helping to raise our own profile.

Calls to the service are mainly about concerns about lack of support in school, parents being advised to apply for a plan themselves as it would be quicker, EHC Needs Assessments, Exclusions.

The table below shows a comparison between the last three years which indicates a noticeable increase in enquires for information, advice that do not constitute case work.

	April 2013 - March 2014	April 2014 - March 2015	April 2015 - March 2016	Percentage Increase from previous year
Total Service Users	1890	2149	2461	14.5%
Enquiries	267	386	631	63%
New Cases/referrals	863	862	883	2.5%
Total telephone calls	2754	2719	2709	-
Total e.mail	1462	1587	2180	37.5%
Parents attending drop-ins/ support group	171	358	548	53%
Face to Face meetings	486	628	784	25%

**Note:** Enquires are calls that are not cases i.e. just a call requesting information from other agencies, schools, this includes non-case specific queries, or general queries about the legislation and procedures or just signposting. Also if we meet parents at a support group or event and have no personal details we will log conversations as an anonymous enquiry.

### **Provision of outreach**

Outreach works includes:

- attendance at meetings with parents
- face to face support
- attendance at school transition events
- supporting community events organised by the LA, and other relevant agencies including the voluntary sector
- IASK stands at relevant conferences – raising awareness of the service
- workshops explaining the Statutory Assessment process
- provision of communicating effectively and Parents Participating Confidently workshops

IASK regards outreach as a part of our service delivery. It is one of the most effective ways of informing users and all stakeholders of the role of the Service and the support we can offer. It is also one of the most successful means of engaging families in most need of support who may not have knowledge of the Service.

Evidence shows that when, outreach activities are undertaken the service is successful in reaching more parents either directly or through other professionals.



Between April 2015 and March 2016 IASK received 8 invitations to attend a variety of events arranged by other organisations, schools, colleges and the voluntary sector for parents and young people. The Service jointly planned an information event in Dover with the Kent Parent Carer Forum over 100 parents attended with positive feedback being received. IASK provided presentations to early years SENCOs, Specialist Teachers for early years, troubled families, parents, Garlinge school.

IASK delivered Parents Participating Confidently workshops to Kent Parent Carer Forum with 8 participants attending. The training was also delivered to 12 parents from Bexley Voice (parent carer forum).

All training, presentations and stallholders received positive evaluations.

### **IASK Strategic Involvement**

IASK is a member of the Kent 'Local Offer' monitoring group.

IASK supports the work of the Kent Parent Carer Forum and regularly attends their Steering Group and events. IASK promotes the Forum, their events and consultations.

### **Parental Views**

The Service encourages parents to give their views on local policy and practice and the opportunity for this is often at meetings where parents/carers and IASK are attending, for example meetings in school and with the LA. The Service signposts parents and other organisations in the voluntary sector, to consultations carried out by the Parent Carer Forum and Disabled Children's Team and any other relevant consultations.

### **Team Training and Development**

Training opportunities and requirements are discussed and planned at both team meetings and individual 1:1s. The Service understands the value of on-going training and development for its staff including its volunteers. Training and Development for staff this year has included:

- on-line IPSEA legal training Level 2 and 3
- Information Governance, Data Protection, Prevent, Children and Adults Safeguarding
- Information from a range of organisations including Library Services, SEN team (High Needs Funding), Young Kent

### **Volunteer Independent Supporters**

Several of those we trained have moved on due to changes in their circumstances. The service currently has two active volunteers, one of whom is trained as an independent supporter. Two other volunteers are currently shadowing and preparing for attending meetings on their own. Volunteers have also had the opportunity to attend group supervision session, Safeguarding training and one to one supervision.

The Service has recruited two volunteers who are awaiting training this has been postponed until September 2016.

## **Achievements in the past year**

- the team has worked hard to respond to an increase in telephone calls, e-mails and meeting requests.
- Three news bulletins produced and circulated
- Poster and business card designed with the support of children and young people
- policies have been reviewed and updated as required
- staff have completed sections of the SEN BTEC award
- all staff are trained in the updated Level 2 IPSEA legal training some have completed the face to face training. 4 have completed Level 3 IPSEA legal training to date
- 116 drop-ins provided across the county individually or as part of a range of support groups (April 2015 – March 2016).
- Collaborated effectively with Kent Parent Carer Forum to deliver an information event in Dover which received very positive feedback.
- Introduced a new database to record and monitor activity fit for use with new client group
- Updated user feedback questionnaire to reflect benchmarking requirements and new Quality Standards.

## **Impact**

From the September 2015 user survey (see appendix 1) it is clear that IASK provide a service that has a positive impact for parents.

The following case studies highlight the impact of the support provided by the service:

### **Case Study A:**

Parent requested support at the next school meeting as she wanted to get her views across in a positive way. Parent felt the school were against her and had made a judgment about her and did not listen to her point of view.

At a preparation meeting the parent explained that she felt very angry towards the school and expressed that she was going to be aggressive in the meeting because and believed she could not control this anger. Case worker talked to parent about her concerns and supported the parent to identify strategies to help her get her points across in the meeting in a positive calm way.

Impact: At the meeting parent was calm and positive expressed her concerns and was able to tell the school how she felt. The school had no idea how the parent felt and apologised for how their actions had come across to the parent. Parent was able to take on board what the school said and the meeting was very productive and the relationship between parent and school is getting much better.

## **Case Study B**

Young person in sixth form going to be taken off role due to only 50% attendance. B had a Statement but his parents didn't have a copy.

Caseworker supported young person to obtain a copy of his Statement and set up a transfer review. Support was provided to enable B to complete the paperwork showing clear Aspirations and the support he felt he needed to achieve his goals. Support was provided at the transfer meeting and the young person was able to voice his opinions.

Impact: A few months later the SENCO who had held the Annual review/transfer meeting advised that the young person B had returned to school, has 100% attendance, is achieving his targets. Because of the support the B now receives, he has started another short course without prompting from the school. The SENCO expressed her thanks to our service for supporting B to express his wishes and concerns and thus helping him succeed.

## **Case Study C**

Child Yr 6 struggling in school. Several illegal and legal exclusions from school due to poor behaviour. Had Statement/Plan for two years, same targets, never met. No SEN provision offered.

For Secondary school Mum had chosen the local rural mainstream school as the child was reported as 'not achieving as anticipated'.

Child was adopted from care at 16mths and has always been 'behind'.

Caseworker suggested meeting with SENCo. Parent organised this, IASK supported at meeting.

As well as his physical difficulties a recent CATS test showed child was significantly behind ALL his peers, being Yr 2 secure in all areas.

Current EHCP outcomes/targets not SMART or achievable.

An immediate 12 point action plan was drawn up at the meeting to support both in and out of class, engage with SALT, SENCo to link with local special school for specialist outreach and advice.

IAS supported Parent with request for an early annual review. Parent and child where appropriate have been fully involved by school in planning/wording outcomes and provision in new Plan.

Impact: Child has appropriate achievable targets in school, with 25 hours support.

Trigger points in the school day are identified and avoided.

Child is significantly calmer and motivated.

Mum feels welcome to go into school and discuss issues with Class Teacher, she has a named point of contact.

New Educational Psychologist's Report has been requested.

Child has been assessed with Severe Learning Disorder. All staff are aware and working to support a smooth transition to secondary school in September.

Mum has a better understanding of child's limitations and behaviour, she has modified her expectations of him. Their relationship is improved.

## Key Performance Indicators

IASK has mechanisms in place to monitor performance and these are discussed on a monthly basis at team meetings.

Key Performance Indicators	April 2015 – March 2016
97% of calls to be responded to within two working days	100%
97% of e-mails to be responded to within two working days	100%
90% of service users to find getting in touch with the service average to very easy ( <i>Q1 user survey</i> )	84%
90% of service users to find the service average to very helpful to them ( <i>Q2 user survey</i> )	89%
90% of all requests for information and training sessions to be met	100%
90% of Parents have access to support at meetings when requested	99%

## **Appendix 1 User survey**

### **Analysis of responses from the September 2015 revised annual survey**

IASK actively seeks feedback from parents and this is usually accomplished by parents and carers completing a feedback form carried out annually. Sometimes parents offer impromptu feedback over the telephone or by sending in their thanks to the office. IASK used a new feedback form devised by the Information, Advice and Support Services National Network which includes more analysis on the difference our service has made the key points were:

- 747 surveys were posted to parents who have used the service at least once in the Academic Year 1 September 2014 - 31 August 2015.
- 95 responses were received resulting in a 13% return rate, which is up on the previous two years.
- Majority of the feedback was extremely positive with over 81% of responses recorded 3 and 4 (4 being the highest).
- 90% of respondents scored 3 and 4 (4 being extremely likely) to the question 'How likely is it that you would recommend the service to others?'
- When asked 'what difference do you think our information, advice or support has made for you? 54% responded 'a great deal of difference'. Examples of the difference made:
  - 48% have a greater understanding of the SEND Code of Practice and the arrangements that should be made for children and young people with SEN
  - 49% feel more confident
  - 53% of respondents felt their child has benefitted as a result of the service being involved.

### **Comments about the service:**

"We have a happier household as my son is now within a school setting that better suits his needs. This reflects in his behaviour at home".

"I felt the IAS were my beacon during a very dark, confusing and frustrating time. I don't know what I would of done or how I would have coped without the lovely people who helped me. I am very grateful. Please thank them again".

"Thank heavens for your service! There is little to none in regards to support for parents going through this extremely stressful process. Staff were honest, knowledgeable, impartial and did everything they could in very quick time frames - could not ask for more, thank you".

**Suggestions to improve the service:**

“More staff! I had to leave a message, you got back to me which was fine but sometimes you need on-the-spot advice, if you've had a tricky day with school.”

“Make it easier to contact the person supporting you direct.”

“Maybe have volunteer outreach workers in other areas. There is a lack of events etc in the Deal area.”

**What have we done as a result of these comments:**

- Supported an information event in Dover which was promoted in the Deal area.
- Drop-ins have been offered in the Deal area.
- Changed practice: The helpline monitor the calls and will ensure the team member that has been working with a parent responds to their call where practical to do so.