

# **DIAS Annual Report**

**April 1st, 2017 - March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2018**





## Snapshot of the year

### What have we been doing?

- 13 Parent Information Events delivered**
- 13% increase in casework support provided**
- More training delivered for parents**
- 91% increase in advice for exclusions, mediations and tribunal**

### What is new?

- 2 new staff**
- 5 new factsheets for young people**
- Training delivered by a parent**
- New online information guides and top tips for parents**

### What difference have we made?

- DIAS Information Principles adopted by Local Authority SEND Board**
- Increased use of the website**
- More parents aware of importance of the child's voice**

# The DIAS team

## Who we are

The team have a range of roles and expertise to provide the knowledge and skills we need. Enquiry line staff, Casework officers, Information Officer, Volunteer Co-ordinator and a Liaison Officer who manages the service.

## All Change!

2017- 18 brought quite a few changes to the DIAS team

We said goodbye to Debbie Wheeler who had been the DIAS Officer providing casework support for East Devon for nine years. She had supported hundreds of families who often told us what a difference she had made for them. Thank you, Debbie, for all your huge knowledge, persistence and infectious enthusiasm that you gave to families and the team.



We also said goodbye to Vicci Worthy who started as a Casework Officer for Exeter and then took on a role as our Information Officer. With her artistic and design talents she helped us navigate our way as we changed our name to a new logo and website.

Some of the team changed role. Sarah Smith moved from Exeter casework officer to Information Officer to enable development of the website and resources. Steph Maynard stepped into the Exeter post to become a permanent member of the team.



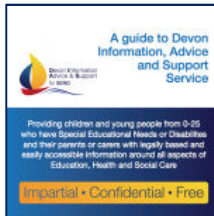
We were really pleased that Nicky Nicholls and Sarah Skinner joined the team as Casework officer for East and cover for West Devon.



Staff team day May 2017

## What we do

DIAS enables the Local Authority, Devon County Council, to meet its statutory responsibilities. We provide impartial and confidential information, advice and support on Special Educational Needs and Disability shaped by what is described in chapter 2 of the [SEND Code of Practice](#) and the [National Quality Standards for IASS services](#). We provide this for children and young people with Special Educational needs and disabilities aged up to 25 and their parents or carers. This report will give you information about what we have provided in the last year and how we have improved or changed to help us provide a more effective service.



# Information

## Parent information events

Working with Devon SEND Local Offer, we ran 13 parent information events across Devon during the autumn and spring terms. The events were aimed at parents and carers and explained how SEND support works in Devon. Parents were given information about the SEN graduated response, SEN funding, Early Help, the Local Offer and support within schools.

## Leaflets and factsheets

One of the outcomes from our consultations with parents in 2016/17 was that parents valued having practical information that helps them to problem solve and make progress on getting the right support. We developed 'How to Guides' and top tips for parents. We published [a guide to elective home education](#) and [a guide to checking a draft EHC plan](#) and worked with DIAS volunteers on some [top tips for getting the views of a child](#) or [a young person](#).

In response to changes in funding for children and young people with SEND in Devon, we produced factsheets explaining what these meant. These were widely circulated among the parent carer community in Devon and feedback from parents about the funding changes was passed onto the Special Education 0-25 team.

## Website

There were just under **10,000 visits to the DIAS website**. There was a significant increase in people accessing the site using a smartphone or tablet and a decrease in those using a desktop computer. The most visited pages were the home page, contact us, about us and pages about SEN support.

The pages about the service were all extensively updated, including more information about the role of DIAS officers, face to face support, training and confidentiality. Dates of publication and review were added to all pages to ensure that visitors know how up-to-date information is.

## Factsheets for young people with SEN

We published **five new factsheets** for young people - two are easy read, which means the information is presented with clear text and plain language, supported with pictures. The factsheets explain [what DIAS provides](#), confidentiality and [EHC plans and assessments](#).

## Information principles

Following the consultation work with parents and carers in 2016/17 we developed some overarching [information principles](#). These are the principles that parents and carers feel should underpin the development and production of information resources and services for parents and carers. These have been adopted by the SEND Improvement Board and widely circulated among children and young people's services

# Advice

Our enquiry line takes calls and emails from young people, parents and professionals wanting advice. It is manned 10am-3pm every day with an answerphone facility 24/7. All staff providing advice have had training on SEND law and are able to give initial advice and signposting to other sources of information. They also identify which callers need further one to one casework support. At busy times response times for casework support increase. Survey feedback told us that some people were not happy with waiting times of a week or longer after initial advice. As a response enquiry line staff now endeavour to provide more information, advice and signposting to DIAS resources at initial call.

The advice activity by phone and email on the enquiry line is not counted. To gain an idea of the significant range of advice given, from January to March 2018, we recorded the types of advice provided. Here are some of the examples:

- advice on choosing a school with a CAIRB
- signposting to Coram legal service
- IPSEA checklist and independent support number given
- advice about applying for extension of time for draft EHC plan
- schools admissions appeal
- checking an EHC plan email sent and advice on choosing a school
- pupil premium contacts for a college given and MENSAs website
- how to apply for EHC needs assessment
- advice on section 47 meeting and signposting
- moving to Devon from Bristol advice
- military family returning to UK from USA
- information for young adults (18-25) in Devon with autism
- help with trying to find an advocate for social care issues
- advice re social housing for health reasons
- information on restraint training for parents
- information on funding for two-year olds
- support groups for a 22-year-old
- financial support for disabled son
- extensive advice on naming school in EHC plan process
- advice for parent with child on ASD waiting list in early years to get support and funding for nursery place
- provided support group details for Kingsbridge area
- discussed referral and what service DIAS offers for complex school issues
- discussed referral process for ASD assessment and what DIAS offer
- gave advice about contacting independent support for discussion re draft EHC plan
- email advice about moving out of Devon for 18-year-old with EHC plan
- advice about EHC plan not for university
- advice about rights of appeal for refusal to assess
- signposting to the single point of access for referrals for care and therapy services
- signposting to SEN 0-25 team

## Parents' comments after getting advice through the enquiry line

Our advice must be impartial

Very clear advice, and impartial. Practical and logical

Telephone Advice:

Many of our phone calls are followed up by sending information by email

'Wow. That's a huge amount of information. Thank you for your time. That's fantastic.'

"Thank you for the information and help on the phone - much appreciated."

Email Advice:

This year we have noticed that we are getting more enquiries by email

"Brilliant, thanks. So much useful stuff here. Thank you again. I'm so pleased I contacted you. "

"Many thanks for your help today and for forwarding the information."

Thank you so much for the call and the feedback link. The school guide will be really useful.

Social Media:

We don't provide individual advice on our Facebook page as it would not be confidential but will message and signpost to our enquiry line for support

'That's brilliant. Thank you for your time. It has been really helpful. I only found out about your service on a Facebook post'.

# Support

DIAS provides information advice and support at three levels

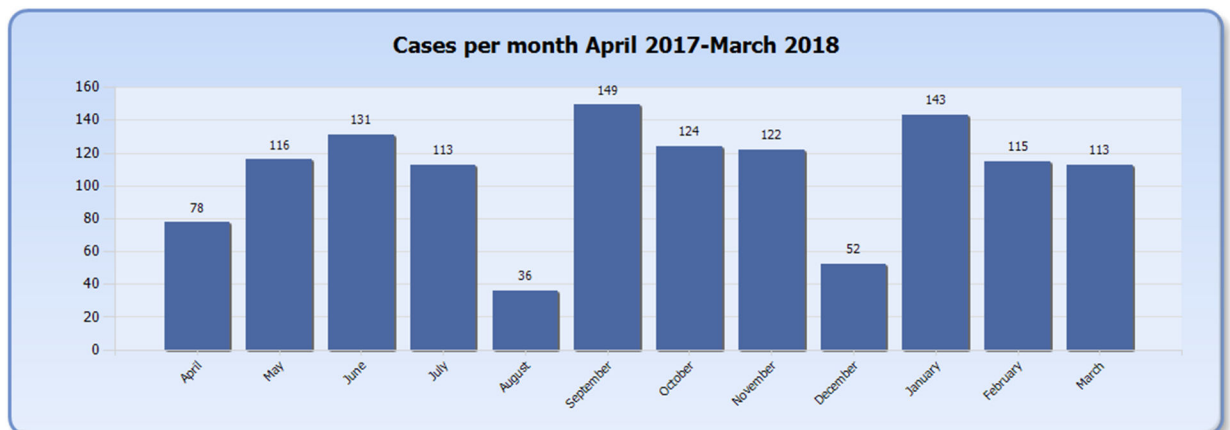
- information and signposting
- telephone and email advice
- casework support

The data in the following analysis relates only to the casework support provided for those parents who have given consent for their information to be kept on our database. It does not reflect those who had support but did not want their notes on the system or the significant amount of activity on the enquiry line where information, advice and signposting is given.

## Analysis of data

The number of casework support enquires for the year is **1331**. In the previous year we had 1181. **This is an increase of 13%**

### Cases opened per month 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017- 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018

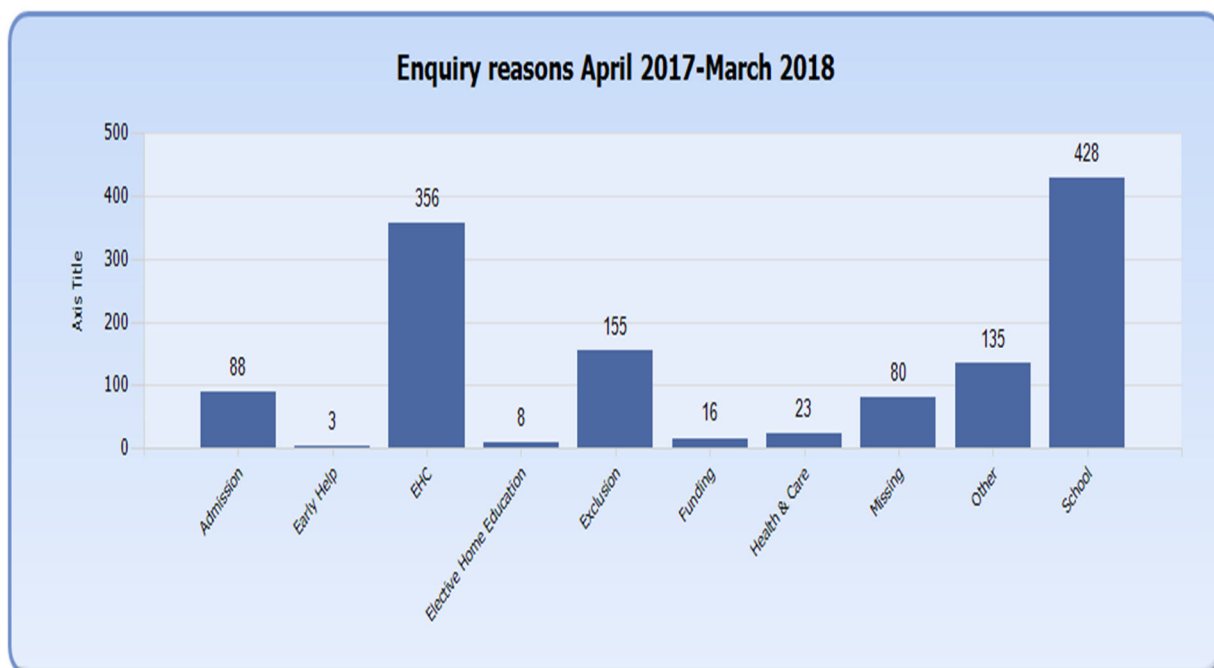


The demand for the service dips at school holiday points in the year, as seen in August and December, with smaller reduction in April. There are expected fluctuations during the year due to cyclical processes such as admissions however the spikes in demand also respond to changes in Local Authority processes such as E3 non-statutory funding changes which were published in September and implemented from January. This caused a lot of anxiety and a spike in EHC needs assessment requests.

#### Impact: Parent empowered to self advocate

“Thank you so much for your time and advice today. It was so helpful to have someone with a clear head and an objective view to listen and so eloquently record all of the concerns. I will write to both schools over the next few days and request a meeting after half term. Thank you” and for the EHC plan info. I will definitely follow this up.





The enquiry reasons data shows notable increases in three areas.

- Requests for support related to the **Education Health and Care assessment** processes has **risen by 38%** from 259 to 356. In this same period the Local Authority had a significant rise in requests for statutory assessment and they were still in the process of transfer from statements to EHC plans requiring reassessment for all these pupils. In addition to the support DIAS has given to families we have also directly referred 120 families to Independent Support who provided additional support capacity through Department for Education funding and signposted many others.
- There has been an **increase of 48%** from 54 to 80 in the support requested for **children and young people missing education**. This mirrors trends that have been noted nationally. There are a range of scenarios, but many have some element of anxiety or mental health difficulty. When possible, we raise these, with consent of the family, to the Local Authority meeting that looks at the provision for this group.
- The third group includes **exclusions, mediations and tribunals**. These have **increased by 91%** from 81 to 155. Of these we had 70 requests for tribunal advice, 41 of these we supported during tribunal, an increase from 33 advice requests in the previous year. We have also supported at 6 mediations.

#### Impact: Parental choice

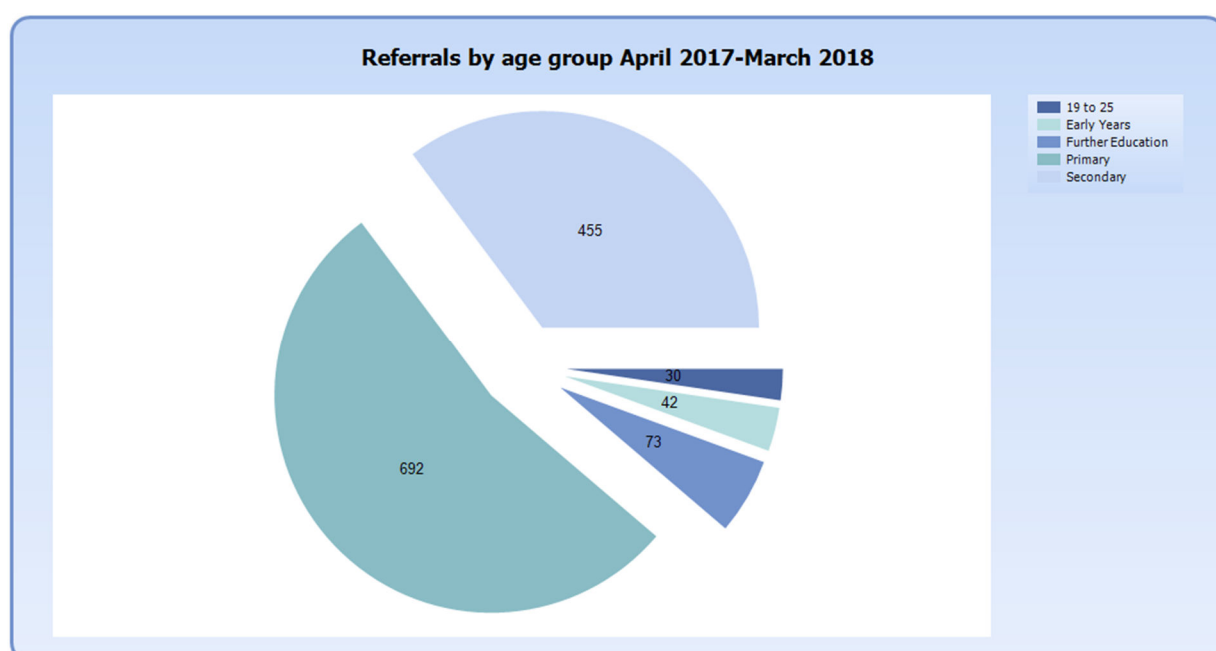
We heard from Tribunal yesterday that XX school will be named in section I of C's EHCP. We are absolutely thrilled and our success would not have been possible without the support from both of you. I have sent the report from Tribunal in the hope that it may be useful for future cases that you are involved with. Many, many thanks for your time, patience and expertise with us. DIAS is a fantastic service that we will always be grateful to.

We have supported 75 families around exclusions which have included exclusion appeals at both governor and Independent Review panel. All these situations are extremely stressful for the families and take a considerable amount of time to support, requiring a high level of expertise and knowledge of staff. These patterns are also reflected in national statistics for these areas.

**Impact: Child remained at school after exclusion**

Parent comment after permanent exclusion appeal:

WE WON!! Unanimous decision by the governors. XXXX stayed at school he was having a wobble but he's ok now. Thank you so, so much for all your help and support. Without you I don't know if we would be in this position.



These are the comparison between 2016-17 to 2017-18:

- Early Years- 37 to 42
- Primary – 600 to 692
- Secondary- 355 to 455
- Post 16- 81 to 73
- Post 19- 58 to 30

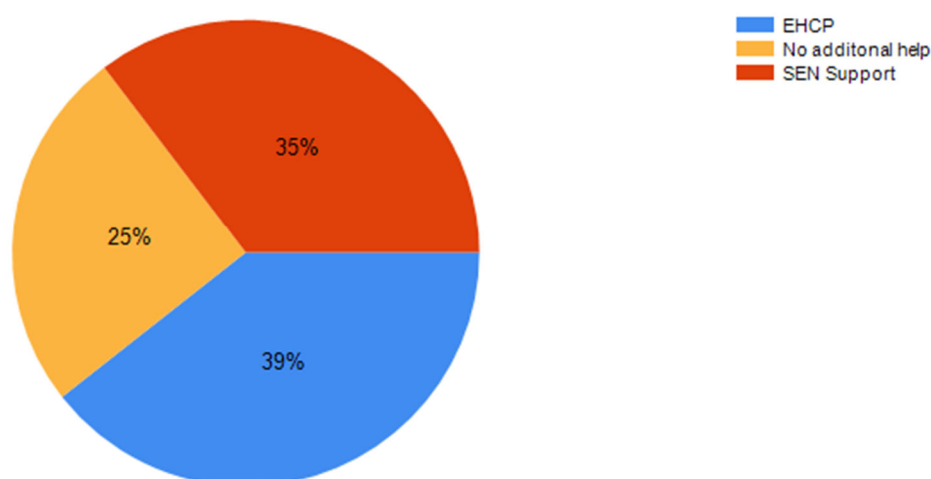
Secondary referrals show the biggest **increase of 28%**, which is a change from the previous year. This may be influenced by the notable rise in support requests related to anxiety and missing education which is more prevalent in the secondary sector. Primary has risen by 15% and Early years by 13%.

The continuing fall in requests for post 16 and 19 could indicate that with the end of LDAs there is less demand for advice, but also may indicate that awareness among young people of their right to IAS is not high. In addition, the Independent Support provider had a focus on working with young people.

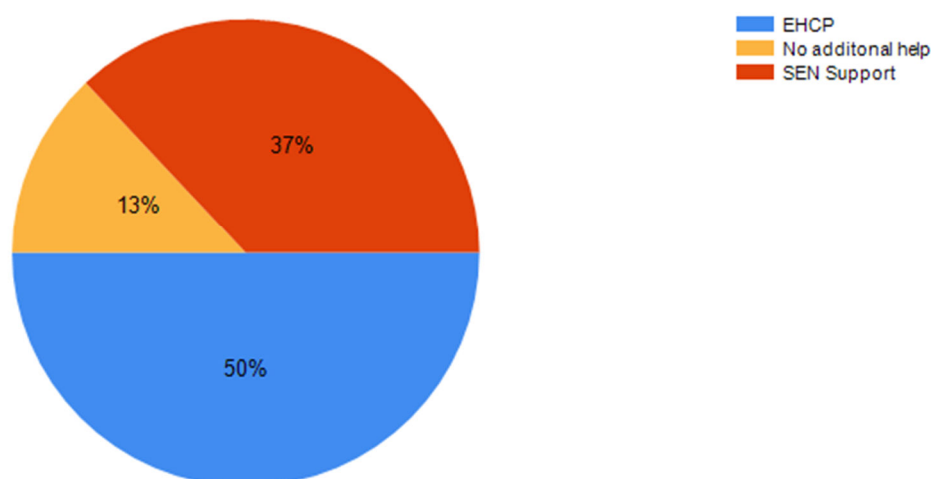
**Action:** Consult with young people about their awareness of their right to IAS and how to develop this more effectively.

### Graduated Response Level of Support

Level of SEN Support (at time of Involvement) April 2017-March 2018



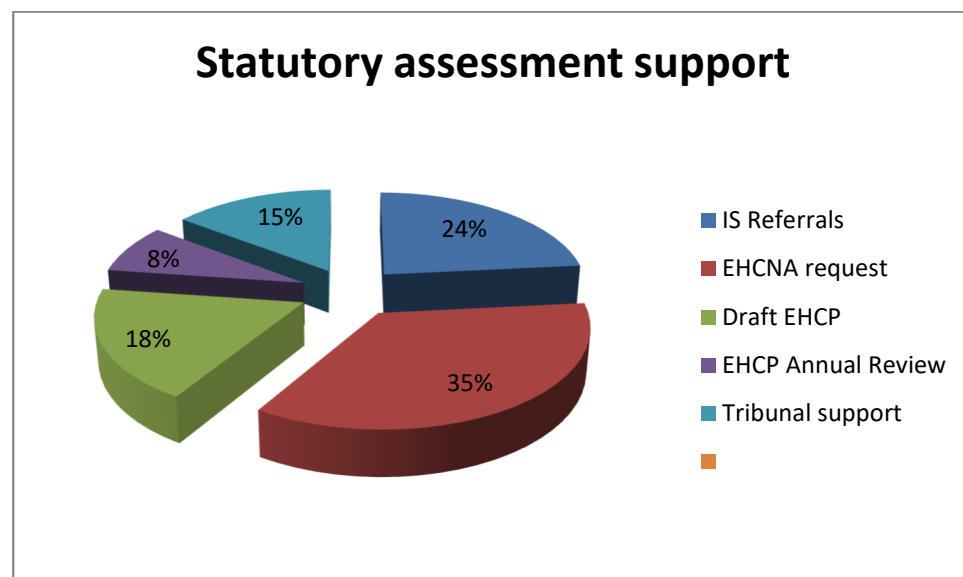
Level of SEN Support (Current SEN) April 2017-March 2018



These charts enable a comparison between level of support when a family requests our support and what is provided for the same child at the end of the year. We have requests for support from families when they are concerned that their child's needs are not being recognised and they are not getting the support they need. The chart shows that of those who contacted us with no additional help have reduced from 25% to 13%. This indicates that DIAS support is having an impact on needs being recognised.

We would expect the percentage receiving EHC support to rise as we provide support for all aspects of the EHC needs assessment process.

“I just wanted to say a really big thank you to you and to the volunteer, who was absolutely brilliant. The meeting was very different with someone from DIAS being there. I heard all about the positives and how well he is doing. It was great to hear this, but so apparent that they completely do not recognise his needs, which may be why he is so stressed about school. I am hoping that things may improve now”



This chart shows which areas of the Statutory assessment process families are wanting support with. In comparison with the previous year we have:

- made more direct referrals to Independent Support, 112 compared with 54 in 2016-17. In addition, we referred 34 that we had already provided a range of support for.
- Had twice as many requests for support for EHC needs assessment request 169 compared with 85 in 16-17
- Supported 39 for annual review compared with 25 in 16-17
- Support with 88 draft EHCPs compared with 60 in 16-17
- Tribunal support requests has more than doubled 74 compared with 30 in 16-17

## Supporting children and young people

- Direct work with young person on their own= 6
- Volunteer worked with child/young person= 2
- Work with child or young person with parent= 70

We have not worked directly with many children and young people, but it has increased from the previous year. This work happens in the home, a neutral setting or in school with some happening by phone and email. We have worked with more children/young people and their parents together. In addition, we have been very proactive in talking to parents about gathering and sharing their child's/young person's views, giving advice about the benefits and tips for how to do this. We also created information resources available on the website to support this.

### Impact: parent awareness to seek child's view

"Thank you again for your support by asking the question why is xx not wanting to go to school? I was able to ask xx this and we worked out a plan together. Many Thanks"

Please tell (volunteer) he was absolutely wonderful on Friday teasing the paperwork from me, not an easy task, and putting it in order! and that XX also felt comfortable and liked him very much. XX found it helpful to think of ways in which he could contribute and reflect on how he might manage attending sixth form rather than doing distance learning for his A levels. This together with your ongoing support has taken much burden and worry off my shoulders. I could never have got this far on XX's behalf without the dedicated support from DIAS and our family friend over the past few years

We have been limited by capacity to promote this work. We have used a skilled volunteer for some of the direct work with children and young people.

We have focussed our development on creating information resources for young people that we have made available on the website, we have five new factsheets with some in easy read versions.

The meeting went well, B spoke up for himself....., many thanks for your help and getting me to realise he needs to be able to have a bigger say in what happens to him.

At the end of the year we changed our processes for gaining young people's consent so that we are compliant with the new GDPR which came to effect in May 2018.

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Total number of parent casework support enquiries	884	928	1181	1331
Total number of direct young people/child enquiries	1	19	11	11
Total number of professional enquiries	82	58	91	37
Total number of volunteer enquiries	7	12	13	14
Total number of enquiries	974	1,017	1,296	1,393

**Impact: Professional SEN knowledge increased** ( feedback from support worker)

“Thanks so much for your reply and the really helpful focus points.

I’m glad that you think we’re on the right approach, thanks for the encouragement, and of course the benefit of that means you can spend time advising other families.”

**Impact: Benefit for child** (Parents comments from survey)

“I was able to write the for and against list for the school I wanted and didn't have to go to tribunal. Helped me understand the process”

“I am happier about my child's future; my child has benefitted”

“Helped us when we knew what we wanted but in a difficult position, to stay focussed. Helped us with forms that were unusual in format with processes new to us. Helped us by picking up on important points we would have missed.”

“good prep for meeting. Feels more confident; feel more involved in decisions re child's education; child has benefitted”

## DIAS Volunteers

Our volunteers undertake a range of roles which enhance our capacity. Meeting support is very highly valued support by our service users and our volunteers enable us to significantly increase the amount of this work that we can offer. For every meeting described below a DIAS officer will have provided extensive advice and meeting preparation support, the volunteer is briefed so that they are clear about what they need to provide for each meeting. This year volunteers have supported at **115 meetings** in comparison with 89 in the previous year.

**Volunteer Numbers:** 15 active volunteers

volunteer activity	Apr 17-Apr 18
School meeting support	115
Home visits (forms, meeting prep etc)	2
Mediation	1
Tribunal	1
Permanent exclusion governors hearing	1
Young person's view gathering	2

Parent feedback on a volunteer who had supported her:  
"The outcome for X has been 'life changing for the whole family and we cannot thank you enough'.

It was fantastic to have (DIAS volunteer) at the meeting. She was great at keeping the meeting on track, helping to make sure everything was covered and that a plan was made. She was impartial, professional and very confident without overpowering. I found her to be a great support, and there was a marked difference in the way I was treated when she had left the meeting. I could not have attended the meeting without her there, and very much hope she can come to the next one. I know that (my son) feels very pleased to have someone on his side and is comforted that she is there as he hasn't previously been included in the meetings.

Feedback from Special Guardian support worker:

"Please can you thank volunteer for attending the TAF school meeting on Friday for the family I support. The meeting felt far more positive than it has in the past with more emphasis on supporting the young person.

# Training

## Training attended

To provide accurate advice on SEND legislation, DIAS staff need to have high levels of specific knowledge. All staff providing casework support undertake the three levels of IASSN legal training both online and face to face training. New staff joining the team complete level one online modules within the first month, they also complete information security and data protection training. Access to face to face training is subject to availability. In the past year the team has attended or completed

IASSN legal training level 1 online modules	2
IASSN legal training level 2 face to face	1
IASSN legal training level 3 modules	1
Independent Support training	2
Independent Support Refresher training	2
Contributing to EHCP's	1
Early Help Right for Children	2
Level 2 safeguarding eLearning	2
Information sharing	2
Data protection	2

## Volunteer training

- DIAS volunteer initial training delivered in July 2017 and October 2017.
- Whole team day training for staff and volunteers.
- June 2017: Topics covered -Knowledge – Early Help, Skills - Record keeping.
- March 2018: Topics covered – Knowledge - EHCP plans, Skills - Use of social media.

## Training delivered

During 2017-18 we have delivered training to

- **327 parents**
- **134 professionals**



In response to parental concerns about Devon SEN funding changes, we developed an information session and delivered it with the Local Offer Participation Officer. Our aim was to explain the law, SEN graduated response, Local Offer and SEN funding. To reach families in areas of Devon where they feel more remote from services, we asked schools to host and promote the events. We were able to hear families' questions and feedback on provision, and to use this to adapt and create responsive information resources. See more information in Appendix: PIE evaluation

We continued to develop and improve our skill-based training for parents - Better Outcomes from Meetings. We commissioned a parent to take on the responsibility for its content, promotion and delivery. She trained a volunteer to co-deliver the training. More sessions were delivered to a wider range of parents including special guardians, as part of a parent ASD awareness session and in local parent groups.

We have a mirrored skills training for professionals "Making Meeting Work". Take up for this is not as high, but the number of sessions has increased alongside the range of participants. The materials have been adapted to provide sessions on

- working with parents for Educational Psychology students
- the SENCO Award training, delivered via Babcock in conjunction with Plymouth University

Type of training	Number of sessions	Participants	Number of participants
Parent Information Events	13	Parents	195
Better Outcomes	10	Parents, Carers and Special Guardians	132
Making Meetings Work	3	Special, primary and secondary School staff	59
SENCO Award working with parents	1	SENCOs	30
SENCO Award Mediation and tribunals	1	SENCOs	30
Working with parents	1	Educational Psychology students	15
<b>Total</b>			<b>461</b>

Training feedback from special school headteacher

"I thought the training was very useful, I have already been reflecting on changes that I can make personally as well as improvements our school can make."

Making Meetings Work feedback:

"Engaging, clear presentation, loved the "throwing questions into the air" and variety of teaching, questioning, group work, videos and feedback. Great to meet a parent of a child with SEN and hear of her experiences."

Better Outcomes feedback:

"Parent carer deliverers gave authenticity- very useful scenarios, really practical strategies- useful take a ways - feel much more confident"

"This was very helpful and I now feel confident that I will get much more out of future meetings"

# Strategic Functions

## Influencing Policy and Practice

### Local

DIAS informs Local Authority SEND policy and practice and provides challenge by the service manager contributing to the following:

- Inclusion Project Board.
- SEND Improvement Board.
- SEND Workforce Development working group.
- SEND Engagement working group.
- Children Missing Education Meeting.
- SEND Early Years strategic peer review.

### Impact of contributions

- Highlighted to workforce development and the SEND improvement Board the need for training sessions for parents that gave the same information provided in SEND training for professional about changes in processes. Outcome: developed and co-delivered 13 Parent Information Events across Devon.
- Actively supported a parent from the LORG who took a lead on developing SEND Core competency framework for the workforce development group.
- Influenced content of Local Authority SEND Engagement strategy. Outcome: supported parents to be actively involved in creation of strategy.
- Inclusion project (not SEND specific). Contributed to Board the impact on SEND children and families of non-inclusive practice.
- With parental consent, raised specific cases of children missing education where processes were not enabling resolution. Contributed to shaping of policy and process change.
- DIAS staff consulted to inform LA Purposeful Systems project on changing ways of working. DIAS shared learnings from consultation events and themes through practice. DIAS identified as a service which is customer focussed and had expertise which could inform other service areas.
- Devon Councillor responsible for children services attended a DIAS team meeting to hear the themes of casework to understand where stresses were for families, and which processes were not working effectively.

### Issues raised

- Transport- raised issues and made suggestions to improve parental experience with dealing with transport department and understanding of processes.

- Mediation- raised issue about LA representative at mediations not making decisions and deferring to panels. Position was clarified and all LA representatives given authority to make decisions at mediations.
- DIAS advice about EHC queried by LA: advice based on law explained.

### **Parent Participation**

- Parent Carer Forum: DIAS supports Devon Parent Carer Voice, by supporting and contributing to its events. November events content were facilitated by DIAS team and included consulting with parents to advise information development. Learning was shared with the local authority (see Appendix 1). This year in conjunction with the Local Offer Participation lead we helped develop training for forum members on being a representative.
- Local Offer Reference Group: DIAS supports and contributes to the activity of Local Offer Reference group. Impact of this group can be seen on the [Local Offer](#).

### **Regional**

DIAS service manager is the chair of the South West regional IASS network. Outputs and impact from this work include:

- Being regional representative for the Regional Disagreement Resolution and Mediation Advisory Group. Raised issues about confidentiality, decision-maker attendance and attendance of young people.
- Organised regional training events for managers and for staff to enable sharing of practice
- Provided peer mentoring on working with volunteers
- Contributed to SEND regional network sustainability discussions

### **National**

- DIAS took the lead of the Steering group for the organisation and delivery of the IASS staff Association National conference May 2017.
- Member of DIAS staff delivered workshop on managing volunteers at National IASS conference.
- Participated in IASS Outcomes pilot developing national IASS monitoring systems.

# Commissioning, governance and management

DIAS is an “in house” service commissioned by the Head of Education for Devon County Council. The Service is managed day to day by Sue Brealey, DIAS Liaison Officer.

## Reference Group

DIAS has a Reference Group to monitor its impartiality and gather feedback from service users and other stakeholders on service plans, outputs and developments. Most members are parents, covering a range of needs and age groups. Professionals represent education services from inclusion, special schools, SEND advisory services and early years commissioning. The Parent Carer Forum, LORG and charity groups are also represented. The group met three times this year, in July, November and February.

Topics covered:

- Independent Support, its remit and impact.
- Information Principles approved and endorsed.
- Information Events content and feedback.
- Better outcomes training for parents, outputs and feedback.
- Changes in staffing - the Reference Group were involved in all recruitment.
- Change of location of office – The Reference Group made representation to the local authority about concerns related to confidentiality.
- Reshaping of casework support consulted on and agreed.

## IASS Service User Feedback Report

DIAS participated in the national evaluation pilot to develop a feedback questionnaire and process for all IASS to collect and collate data on service user satisfaction and outcomes. We used the IASS feedback survey to ask 50 service users six questions.

- **90%** of service users providing feedback rated the service as good or very good.
- **94%** said that they would be likely or very likely to recommend the service to others.

We also asked for comments on the questions, to gain better understanding of the scoring. Some of these comments are in appendix 3.

DIAS participated in the national trial of data collection about level of support provided, intervention levels.

A DIAS case study was used as an exemplar in the [IASS national report](#) with the results.

## **Independent Support**

DIAS received external funding from the Independent Support Programme to enhance capacity for advising on new EHC requests and transfers from Statements to EHC Plans. The demand for this support increased in line with the rise in EHC needs assessment requests to the local Authority. DIAS worked co-operatively with the external Independent Support partner CSW. Significantly more families were referred to CSW for support. 112 initial referrals were made, in addition to the cases signposted or referred following some casework by DIAS. The managers met regularly to share expertise. Concerns were raised jointly to the Local Authority.

DIAS manager reported to the national programme as required and attended regional events.

## **DIAS Development Plan 2017-18**

### **Targets**

**1. Clear service offer which is delivered equitably across all Devon areas through revised service areas**

Achieved: From activity at the DIAS staff team day and feedback from service users it was evident that to meet the growing demand on the service and to provide a more equitable service offer across a large county the service would need to reshape how it delivered support. A new structure was developed and proposed to align casework areas with those of the 0-25 SEN team. The plan allocated one full time equivalent post per area, delivered by two part-time staff per area. A bid was successfully submitted to increase the capacity of the team to enable this to start in 2018.

**2. Information creation formalised and wider range available on website**

Achieved: Consultation through DPCV/DIAS events gave direction for a DIAS Information plan to be written which outlines how all our information should be changed in style, content and delivery mechanism. See Appendix 1.

A style guide for all DIAS information was started.

More information has been developed and is on the website

**3. Parental understanding of local SEND systems improved through delivery of training and information sessions**

Achieved: Parent Information Events content developed and delivered in 13 schools across Devon. See Appendix 2

## Appendix 1

### DIAS learning from DPCV and Open Space events

Parents and carers **need** information that:

- helps them focus and gain clarity and understanding
- is trustworthy and reliable
- helps them to feel prepared, confident and able to deal with difficult situations or relationships
- aids decision making, whether that's a big or a small decision
- reassures and feels supportive

Parents and carers **trust** information that:

- Is from a 'reputable' source and it's clear who has written and produced it
- Is clear, easy to understand, evidence based and impartial
- Is relevant to them and resonates with their own beliefs
- Confirms what others have said or matches the information from other sources

Parents and carers use a wide range of sources to access information, including online, social media, national and local support organisations, professionals and informal sources such as friends and family.

There is no single 'gatekeeper' to services which makes information dissemination more challenging for DIAS and finding trustworthy information more challenging for parents.












**Information and support should:**

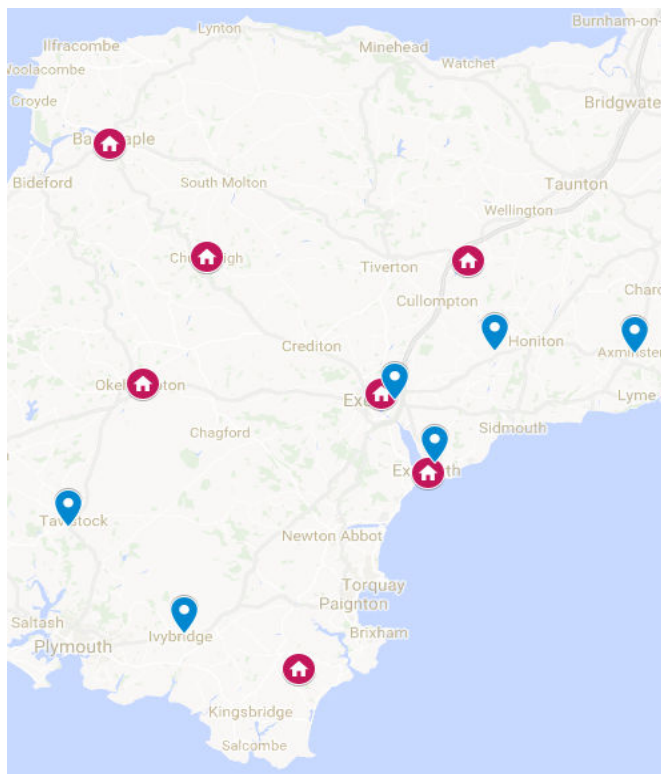
- be comprehensive, as parents don't always know what they need.
- be accessible - available in several formats for a range of audiences, easily sourced from the places where parents and carers are
- provide various levels of detail to meet a range of abilities and needs, and to enable parents and carers to build up their knowledge over time - parents are on a learning journey themselves, so information will need to meet them at their level of expertise.
- be empathetic, reassuring and supportive
- train parents in skills development, including challenging effectively, negotiating and communicating their child's needs and their views effectively.
- incorporate an aspect of peer support
- give support around transition stages.
- be legally based information and make clear what parents and professionals rights and responsibilities are, but also be balanced with real life experiences
- support shared decision making between professionals and parents/carers
- be provided in more visual formats – flow charts for processes, diagrams, films etc
- be honest, realistic, open and transparent
- explain processes, professional roles and systems
- be user friendly, clear and jargon free
- be accurate, up to date and regularly reviewed.
- be influenced by parents, carers children and young people (throughout the production process)

## Appendix 2

### DIAS SEND Parent Information Events Autumn Term 2017 – Spring Term 2018

#### Event locations

-  The Grove, Totnes
-  Uffculme Academy
-  Okehampton - The Ockment...
-  Chulmleigh Community Colle...
-  Ladysmith Infant School Co...
-  The Beacon School, Exmouth
-  Liberty Centre, Petroc, Barnst...
  
-  Feniton Youth Centre
-  Withycombe Raleigh School
-  Tavistock college
-  Exeter St Peters
-  Axminster - Acorn Academy
-  Ivybridge community college



#### SEND Parent Information Events Summary (autumn 2017-spring 2018)

- 195 people reached over 13 events
- Average (mean) attendance AUTUMN = 13 people, SPRING= 15 people
- Highest attendance = 41 (Exeter), lowest attendance = 5 (Barnstaple)
- 100% of respondents said the event was helpful
- 71% of respondents shared information from the event with other parents
- 86% found the information 'good' or 'excellent'

#### Top 5 requests for information

- Support available in school and the community for specific needs;
- Information about transition to post-16;
- Personal budgets/direct payments;
- The EHCP process;
- Support for children taking exams, particularly those with dyslexia.

#### Common Concerns

- Timeliness of EHCPs
- Communication with the SEN 0-25 Team
- Lack of awareness that schools offer any kind of SEND support
- Perception that school staff should do more to meet children's needs.

"Provided in a helpful, friendly, easily understood way"

"Very friendly and spoke in simple terms so we could all understand!"

"Gave me a starting point to untangling the acronyms"

"The information was great and supported me to give parents I support better information."

"Good to meet others, and to meet parents I already know in a new context, and share more stories."

"Useful information which we could take away and use when needed."



## Appendix 3

### Survey April 17

#### Sample of response comments

#### 1 How easy was it to get in touch with us?

Just the delay before someone called me back but understand if they are busy that's hard.

The opening times of the office is rather limited, although I do understand.

I received a leaflet about DIAS, which had phone number and online address.

Leaflets are in meeting area at school. School gave me leaflet and social worker told me how to contact you.

Recommended by Hugo Squires MP.

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

Gave me simple easy to understand advice and targeted questions that I could ask school and directed me to website documents which meant I was well prepared for TAC meeting.

Breaking down the questions/problems into manageable chunks. Meeting prep. Sending the right info e.g. On exclusion. The document guide to preparing for a meeting and what to do in it was very helpful. Very clear advice, and impartial. Practical and logical.

Communication was really easy by phone and email and the advice given was great.

#### 3 How neutral, fair and unbiased do you think we were?

They were neutral and fair often explaining the answers I had been given from Devon County 0-25 team in a way that I could understand as well as supporting my issues

#### 4 What difference do you think our information, advice or support has made for you?

I feel the advice given is in my child's best interests, other info can be confusing and conflicting. So in short, I feel I can trust the info and support received from DIAS. It is very welcome.

A big difference. I normally just agree to everything because I feel grateful for any support but after speaking to DIAS I felt confident to ask and expect more.

Good prep for meeting. Feels more confident; feel more involved in decisions re child's education; child has benefitted.

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

Very easy to talk to and very empathic with the situation

Advice was spot on.

Would have liked support at a school meeting but no-one was available

The only criticism would be that the initial response time is quite slow, but I understand this is probably because of the demand on your service.

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

I would definitely recommend. I struggled in the past without support.

Really good. Really clever. Really experienced.

If you are going through or thinking of trying to get an EHC plan it would be invaluable.

Have already recommended.

## Appendix 4

# How to Contact Us

If you or someone you know would like any of the following:

- to receive some advice or support
- information about SEND
- information about training
- to know how to become a DIAS volunteer
- any other information about DIAS
- give feedback on the service

Please contact us by phone or email:

Telephone: [01392 383080](tel:01392383080)

Email: [devonias@devon.gov.uk](mailto:devonias@devon.gov.uk)

Alternatively, if you would like information about the service we offer, please visit our website or check out our twitter feed:

Website: [www.devonias.org.uk](http://www.devonias.org.uk)

Twitter: [@DiasforSEND](https://twitter.com/DiasforSEND)

## Comments, Compliments and Complaints

We welcome feedback from service users and others about the work of DIAS so that we can continue to monitor, evaluate and improve the service we provide. This includes feedback on the Annual Report.

Once you have looked at this report, if you would like to let us know your views, please contact us so that we can use the information to shape the way that we formulate our report in the future.