

DiAS Annual Report

April 1st, 2018 - March 31st, 2019





Snapshot of the year

What have we been doing?

Provided casework support for 1615 people, an increase of 11%

Gave enquiry line advice to 235 people

Supported at 202 school meetings

Delivered 26 training sessions to 520 people

What is new?

New DIAS service leaflet and poster design

2 new areas on the website on parent, child and young people's views and the EHC needs assessment process

Website made more accessible - Browsealoud function added

What difference have we made?

60% more people using the website

60% more people following on Facebook

Worked with DCC transport and admissions teams to redraft their information for parents

Presented information expertise to regional IAS services

Contributed to new Information, Advice and Support Service (IASS) Minimum Standards

The DiAS Team

Who we are

The team includes a range of roles and expertise - Enquiry line staff, Casework Officers, Information Officer, Volunteer Co-ordinator and a Lead Officer who manages the service. Together we have the knowledge and skills to provide information, advice and support.

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 (SEND), shaped by the guidance in chapter 2 of the [SEND Code of Practice 2015](#). We provide this for children and young people with SEND aged up to 25 and their parents or carers. This report has information about our provision in the last year and how we have improved or changed to help us provide a more effective service.

Introduction

Every year at DiAS brings change as we endeavour to give the best service we can for families in Devon. We listen to what families tell us and consult with our DiAS Reference Group.

During this year new IASS minimum standards were developed, to reflect the requirements in the Children and Families Act 2015 and adopted by Dept for Education and Dept for Health. DiAS was involved in this work and has used the minimum standards to shape our service offer.

This report tells you what we have been doing to ensure we meet the requirements of our core business – providing information advice and support. It also tells you about key events in the year including our training, OFSTED Local Area Inspection and proposals submitted for the IAS programme grant.

This year we said goodbye to Melissa Clark who gave support in North Devon for six years. This gave us the opportunity to reconsider how we could best provide cover across a large county and were successful in gaining a small increase in staffing. The casework support team were increased by a part-time post and we were able to rearrange the team into four areas with two full time equivalent posts per area. Jane Pope and Kate Boyd joined the team to cover the North Devon area. Sarah Smith, our Information Officer, increased her hours to two days a week to enable us to grow our information offer. We identified this as a way to reach more families, especially through our online materials.

We hope this report will give you a flavour of the range of our work as we reflect on what we have delivered, consider themes and trends and celebrate our achievements.

Sue Brealey, DIAS Lead Officer

Information

Our aim has been to increase the amount of information on the website and make it more accessible.

Leaflets and factsheets

Our jargon buster and preparing for adulthood factsheets, plus our elective home education and checking and EHC plan how to guides were updated. We created a publications list which contains details of all our resources.

We also created new information about:

- EHC needs assessment
- asking for an EHC needs assessment.
- appealing the health and social care parts of an EHC plan
- parent carers views
- supporting your young person to give their views
- helping your child give their views



The DiAS leaflet and poster about our service and what we offer was totally refreshed with new text and a new design. Around 3000 leaflets we sent out to parents via the SEN 0-25 team, and to schools, other professionals and direct to parent carers via training and support groups.

Website

There was a **60% increase** in the number of people using the site and the number of visits, compared to the previous year. The number of men using the site has shown a small increase and there is a more even spread of age groups this year compared to last.

How people access the site is changing from year to year. Although around two thirds use a PC and a third use a smartphone, the number of people using a PC is slowly declining and those using a smartphone is gradually increasing.

The most visited pages were the home page, contact us, factsheets and resources and the news story about elective home education. There has been a **60% increase** in the number of people accessing our factsheets and resources and a **600% increase** in people looking to see what DiAS does! There are also significantly large increases in the number of users looking at web pages that explain how our service works and what DiAS officers do.

Browsealoud accessibility software was added to the website to ensure that people with literacy difficulties, mild visual impairment and English as a second language could use it easily.



We published two new sections on the information area of the site - one about [parent, child and young people's views](#) and a second about the [EHC needs assessment process](#). These areas contain comprehensive information for parents and carers, including helpful tools, top tips, resources and frequently asked questions.

We also added information pages about [training](#) and [volunteering](#), including a password protected area which holds information and resources for our volunteers.

Facebook

The DIAS Facebook page has gone from strength to strength. There was a **60% increase** in followers across the year and a similar increase in Likes. Using Social Sign-in, an online engagement platform which allows us to schedule posts when we want them, we've been able to ensure a steady stream of news items, events and resources.

Other items

- Our termly newsletter was set up as a subscription service for parents and professionals, with a new look and administration through the Gov delivery email service.
- We worked with the staff from the transport team and admissions at DCC to redraft information for parents. Our Information Officer joined the speech and language IACSS project parent engagement.
- Our Information Officer presented at the regional IAS meeting in Taunton to show how we have worked with parents and carers to get our information right.
- We published the DiAS style guide and mini style guide to help us be consistent with the information that we create for the public and internally.
- The SENDIB adopted our information principles in the form of the EARACHE principles, and these were shared widely within DCC services.
- We commissioned a graphic design agency to produce a new look for DIAS materials and began work on initial designs, including consulting with parents.

Impact:

Simply wow, thank you so very much for all of this, I must say this is the most factual information for help I have ever received since he started school at 5 years old. Thank you so very much, this is really supporting and helping me feel more confident.

Advice

Our **enquiry line** takes calls and emails from young people, parents and professionals who want advice. It is staffed between 10am and 3pm every day with an answerphone facility when the enquiry line is not open. All staff providing advice have had training on SEND law and are able to give initial advice and signpost to other sources of information. They also identify which callers need further one to one casework support. It is difficult to record all the advice activity, but here is a snapshot of the type of advice provided where no further support was required.

We have recorded **advice to 170 parents**. Here are some of the topics they asked about

- Funding - personal budgets, grant funding for equipment, childcare funding for Down Syndrome, funding a school place, school uniform, DLA and PIP and housing benefit.
- Moving to Devon - finding a CAIRB unit for post 16, from range of places in the UK but also including Brazil to Exeter!

- School - choosing a school, particularly special schools, transition to secondary school, advice about keeping a child back a year, attendance issues, school trips, home education advice, bullying, dyslexia, Educational Psychology assessments and reports, school transport and post 19 transport.
- Health - referral to Healthwatch and PALS, information about epilepsy support, cerebral palsy, mental health issues, addiction support, CAMHS referral, selective mutism, ASC assessment and ASC counselling.
- Social Care - access to adult services, short breaks, enabler support and Early Help.
- Activities - summer clubs, support groups
- Gathering child's views
- How to make a complaint to DCC

We also get calls from professionals. We have recorded advice to 62 professionals from a range of agencies including: SENCOs, school head teachers, support workers, employment and training staff, children centre staff, charity staff and pre-school staff.

These are some examples of the range of subjects where advice was given:

- how to find the local offer
- activities, support groups and parenting courses
- apprenticeships and traineeships
- DiAS leaflet supplies and how to make a referral to us
- advice for a parent on choosing a school
- checking a draft EHC plan
- equipment funding
- admissions appeal
- accessible transport

Parents' comments after receiving information and advice from our enquiry line staff

"Thanks so much for the information below. It's so refreshing communicating with someone so helpful and 'human'."

"I would like to say thank you for getting back to me so quickly and for the help that was given on the phone as the phone call helped a lot. Your service has been really good and helpful."

"Thank you for the information you sent through yesterday I'm sure it will help me to fill out forms and to get the children's views"

"Thank you for this- it was really helpful as I haven't thought to include the child's voice- which should be obvious, and I was asked it in the meeting!.... thankfully I had two quotes ready to go. Meeting went better than anticipated."

Support

DiAS provides information advice and support at three levels:

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

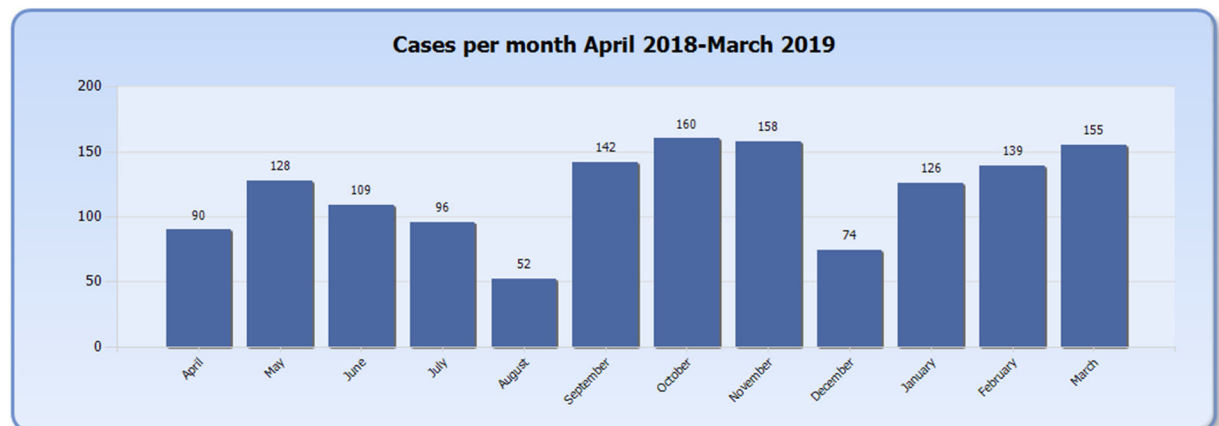
	2017-18	2018-19
Advice through enquiry line	32	170
Casework support not recorded on database	34	11
Casework support recorded on database	1293	1434
Total	1359	1615

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

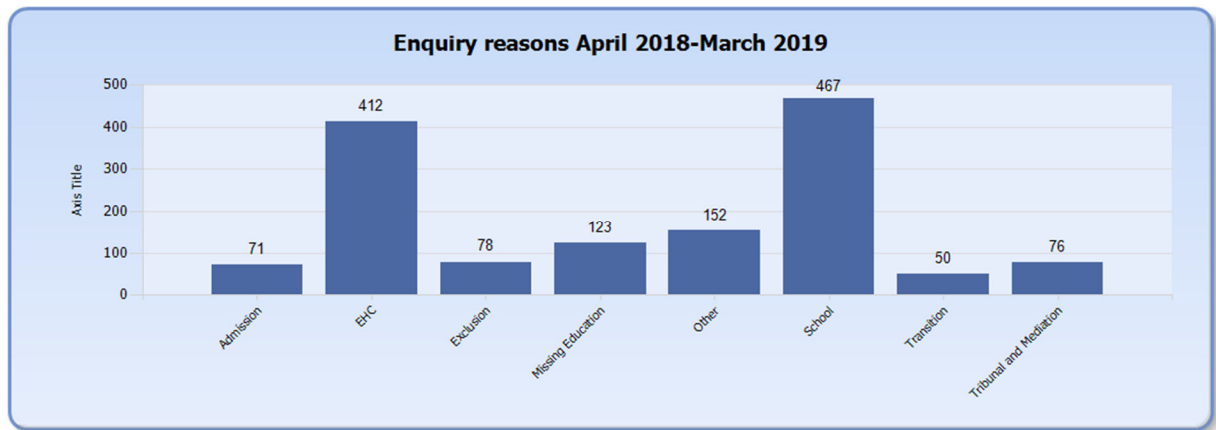
Analysis of data

The number of casework support enquires for the year is **1434**. In the previous year we had 1293. **This is an increase of 11%**

Cases opened per month 1st April 2018- 31st March 2019



There is rising demand over the year with service dips at school holiday points in the year, as seen in August and December. Some of the spikes in demand are in response to Local Authority processes such as schools' admissions in September/October. Peaks in February/March may be related to school places for children moving to secondary school with an EHC Plan.



Impact

“Heartfelt thanks for your advice and support at the meeting and for all the information you have provided for me. It was so important for me to try to get things right for A and quite honestly, I don’t think I would have been able to proceed without the knowledge and advice you provided me with. It is an emotional journey and imperative that I keep sight of the facts. You helped me to do this.”

We record the principle reason that we are contacted. Often there is more than one area where support is given, but we are not able to record this on our system.

During 2018-19 we had a **40% increase in support for children missing education**, from 88 to 123. This is the second year we have seen this level of increase. This enquiry reason includes children still on a school roll but who due to anxiety or mental health difficulties were not able to attend and who in many cases did not leave their home. We have supported more families who have taken their child off a school roll and electively home educate, and they are included within this data. We raised our concerns about this rise to the Local Authority and highlighted the challenges some had in accessing CAMHS.

Requests for support with admissions rose from 45- 70 which is a **56% increase**.

Support related to any part of the **Education Health and Care Needs assessment rose by 16%** from 356-412. During this period the Local Authority had an increase in the number of EHCNA requests.

Impact

“I have just received a letter in the post to say they are accepting to do the EHC assessment for A which is great news. Also, I just want to thank you for all of your help advice and support since our first contact it really has helped”

“Devon County have just rang and offered J a place at X. After all this time and stress, unbelievable! I think we are going to take it. I have cancelled the Tribunal, just had to fill in a form and they were happy to withdraw. Thanks for all your help, it was much appreciated.”

Support about **school issues rose by 12%** from 417 to 467. This is in line with the overall rise in the number of cases. This includes giving support about communication with school, resourcing and funding, school complaints, bullying and explaining SEN Support.

Impact

"Thank you SO much for coming to the meeting. My hubby said that was the most useful meeting we've had out of the 20 or so TAC meetings, so thank you. Things have been improving for x which is really heartening."

Transition support rose by 16% from 43 to 50. This support covers all the transition points. The transition from primary into secondary, into post 16 and into post 19 each had about an equal number of cases. The requests for post 19 support more than doubled. There were fewer requests for support from early years going into primary. This may be because these parents feel supported by others or they are unaware of DiAS.

Impact

"Really so very appreciative of your help and support through this whole process from start to finish. You have helped me stay on target throughout and I am hopeful this will be a positive long term move for F. Thanks again"

Exclusions and tribunal support requests have remained about the same. We supported 78 families around exclusions, 64 of these children were excluded. Families contact us at varying points so some are already excluded from school, but our input for those at threat of exclusion can sometimes help to enable the child to stay in school. We have supported families at Governor's permanent exclusion meetings and at Independent Review panels (see table).

Impact

"Thank you very much, school have agreed to let him go in and do a gradual reintegration and assess at the end of each week to see what more can be done. They were completely different this afternoon"

Of the 65 cases that requested advice about tribunal, only 26 proceeded to appeal hearing. We work with families to support communication with the Local Authority to try and resolve the issues. As part of this support we attended mediation meetings and tribunal hearings.

Impact

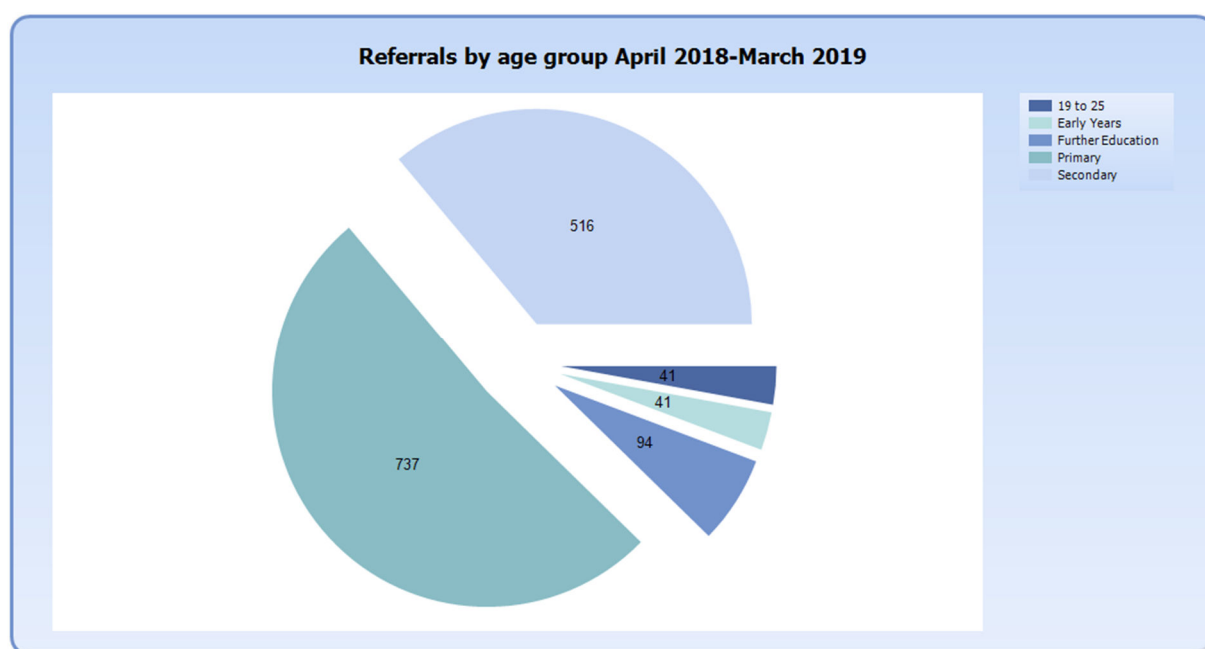
"As you can see, I have withdrawn my request for tribunal. I want to thank you personally for jumping in so quickly to help me with X's situation. "

"K is thriving in school and in foster care, I have met with him now and there is hope for him which is good. Thanks again for supporting me through the tribunal process to get him there"

Type of support	North area	South Area	East Area	Mid Area	Total
School Meetings	11	38	37	39	125
Mediations	0	3	6	3	12
Tribunal Hearing	0	0	2	2	4
Exclusion Appeals		1	1	2	4
LA Meetings	1	2	4	10	17
Home Visits	1	1	8	4	14

DiAS staff provide a listening ear and help families to find their way through what can feel at times a difficult journey.

Casework support by age group



These are the comparison between 2017-18 to 2018-19:

- Early Years - 42 to 41
- Primary – 692 to 737 = 6.5% increase
- Secondary - 455 to 516= 13.4% increase
- Post 16 - 73 to 94=29% increase
- Post 19 - 30 to 41=37% increase

Although the numbers of cases at post 16 and post 19 are not as high as in other age groups, the increase in both areas is significant.

- Post 16: Nationally the further education sector has been raising concerns about the level of funding they receive. DiAS has noted that this discussion is part of many of the cases we support.

- Post 19: There is still confusion about what the legal entitlement is for education provision between ages 19 and 25. DiAS provide advice and information to families about this and discussed that the route out of education is as important as the route in. This also includes advice about access to social care and health support delivered through adult services.

Action: Early years is the only age group with no change in numbers. This will be a focus area for outreach in 2019-20.

Graduated response level of support

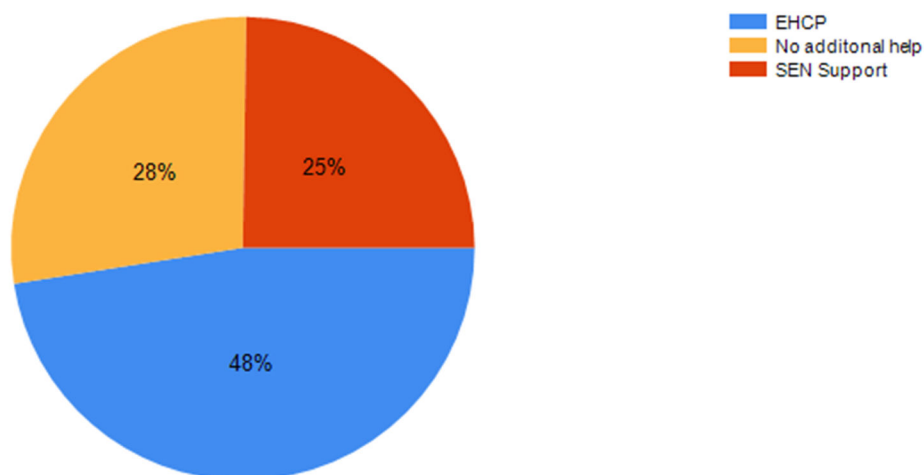
We give information and advice to families receiving SEN support at all levels, including support provided by schools as well as statutory support. We enable families to contribute to discussions about the assess, plan, do and review cycle to help them get the right level of support.

Impact of support

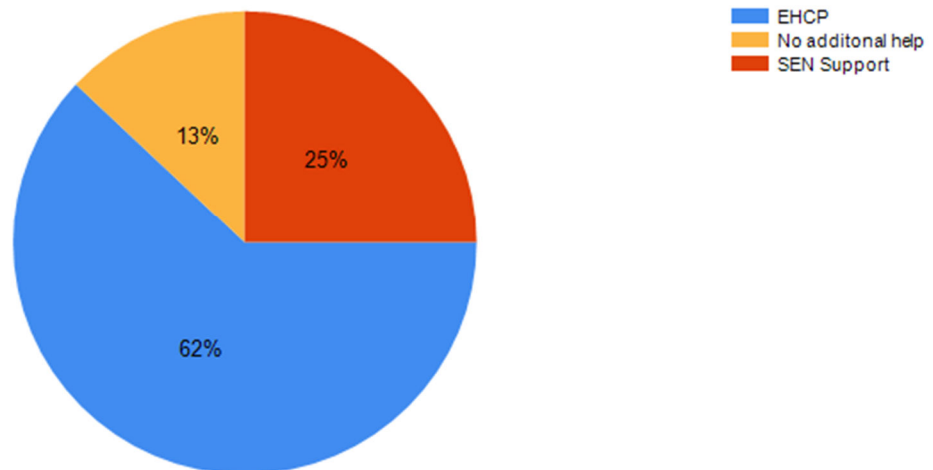
By comparing the level of SEN support at the time of contact with the level of support after DiAS input, we found that

- SEN needs were recognised for additional 15% of children and young people, where previously they had no extra support.
- 16 % of children and young people with SEN support moved to statutory level with an Education Health and Care plan.

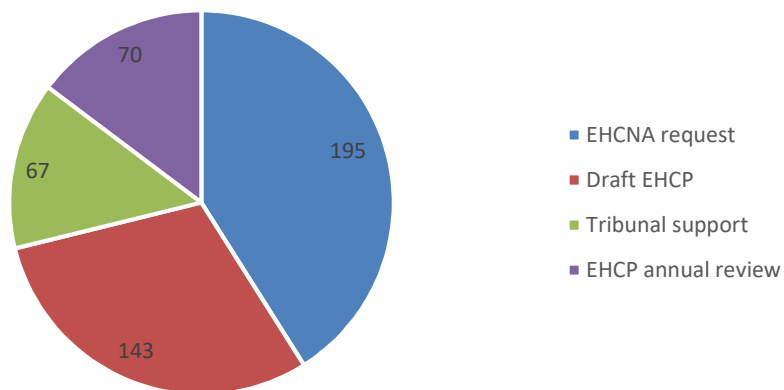
Level of SEN Support (at time of Involvement) April 2018-March 2019



Level of SEN Support (Current SEN) April 2018-March 2019



Statutory Level Support



The chart above shows which areas of the statutory assessment process families ask for support with. In Devon there has been a continuing rise in requests for statutory assessment which reflects national trends.

In comparison with the previous year there has been:

- a 15% increase in EHC needs assessment support
- a 62.5% increase in support given for draft EHC plans
- a 79% increase in support for annual reviews
- stable support for tribunals - requests have remained the same

Elements of support

We have started to monitor how much advice we provide about health and care as well as education. This data is not yet fully established, but this table is an indicator of the range of advice the service gives and will inform how we shape the range of our IAS service offer.

Involvement with Education, Health or Social Care				
Reason Group	Education	Health	Social Care	No Category
School	520	97	22	67
EHC	367	33	17	45
Admission	69	4	4	2
Other	174	32	18	18
Early Help	2	0	0	0
Exclusion	76	5	1	2
Transition	47	4	5	3
Health & Care	27	23	7	1
Totals	1282	198	74	138

Impact on practice

Feedback from professionals

"I just wanted to pass on my thanks and let you know how impressed I was with DIASO today, we attended a TAF meeting together for a family and she was so calm and professional in very frustrating situations. I was struggling to not get "ranty" as their lack of understanding and support was at times shocking. DIASO raised really valuable points in a very calm and professional manner. You all do a fantastic job and I am so grateful as a parent and a colleague"

Headteacher re TAF meeting

"Your input was extremely helpful this morning - thank you"

Supporting children and young people

During the year we explored how we maximise our skills and opportunities to offer a service directly to children and young people. As part of our work with parents we focus on the importance of their child's views in decision making and explain how they can play a role in gathering these views. We have delivered direct face to face support for some children and young people and we have used a skilled volunteer to support this area.

- DiAS Officers worked directly with five young people on their own.
- A DiAS volunteer worked with six children and young people.
- DiAS Officers worked with 23 children and young person alongside their parent

Feedback from parent after home visit by volunteer to gather child's views:

Please can you thank the volunteer on my behalf, her report is very thorough and is X to a t! It will be really helpful for the EHCP.

Action

From the IAS Programme audit we have identified that resource is needed to develop our service offer for children and young people and a bid was submitted for a grant to take this work forward.

Feedback from young person after telephone and email support:

“There was no pressure on me at all, so I felt comfortable talking. You understood quite well, which I was very happy about. It has helped quite a bit, especially with the lunch problem, I now get it earlier on Thursdays and Fridays and can eat my lunch and have some free time.”

Impact

“Support, both practical and emotional, really helped us in a situation where we felt ill-informed and out of our depth. Advice and support focused on the child’s needs.”

Impact

“Thank you so much. The DiASO is the only person who has been part of the SEN, TAF, EHCP etc process for us from the beginning and she has supported me step by step in navigating the best way through it. Having someone with that level of specific knowledge and the continuity of help has been extremely beneficial. It is very reassuring to feel that there is someone genuinely on your child's side.”

Volunteers

Summary of Volunteer Activity

Over the year, our volunteers have supported parents at 77 school meetings. Some of our volunteers, who have completed legal training, have also supported at mediation and tribunal hearings. In total our volunteers have supported parents at 6 EHC mediation meetings, and at two tribunal hearings. Our volunteers also supported parents completing paperwork and helped parents, children and young people to express and record their views. Volunteers have visited parents or young people, either at home, school or in the community, on 10 occasions in this role.

Month	Research/ admin	Parent meeting support	Parent home visit	Young Person's Support	Tribunal	Mediation
Apr	4	10	2	2		
May	4	5			1	
Jun	3	12		1	1	
Jul	5	3		1		2
Aug		1				1
Sep	3	9				
Oct	3	7		1		
Nov	4	10				

Dec	2	5				1
Jan	3	6				1
Feb	4	2				1
Mar	4	7	2	1		
Total hours	114	77	4	6	2	6

Some of our volunteers have been involved in gathering and recording feedback from service users as part of our monitoring process. We also have a volunteer who comes to the office weekly and supports with developing our recording and analysis of enquiries data. In total volunteers have given 114 hours of time to admin tasks in this capacity.

Recruitment, training and ongoing support

Initial two-day training sessions for new volunteers was held in North and South Devon in September 2018, and in Exeter in February 2019. In total 14 prospective volunteers attended the training. Of these, five are now active volunteers with DiAS.

We held two whole team training events for our volunteers during the year. In July 2018 our training officer delivered “Better Outcomes from Meetings”, our training offer for parents and school staff. Some of our volunteers have since been involved in supporting our training officer to deliver this training. We also had a session on accurate and consistent note-taking and two sessions on specific parts of the EHC plan, including gathering the views of children and young people. We also covered the changes in law around tribunal powers for appeals.

Parent Feedback on Volunteer Support

Impact

More information shared

“The volunteer was a great support and I’m sure we covered more with the volunteer being there than we would if it was just myself. Please thank them for their time it was very much appreciated.”

“Thank you so much for the help of the DiAS volunteer – they brought up things I never would have thought of.”

Impact

The child at the centre of decision making

“Just to say, the volunteer was fantastic and the situation with the school following the meeting has transformed! Your advice and volunteer’s experience has been amazing and we are heading in the right direction with our son at the centre of everyone's focus.

Impact

Increased confidence

"I have to say the DiAS volunteer was fantastic, I felt much more confident having him with us. He made things more clear to us as parents. Just by having him there I felt the things we were asking from the school were the right things, and it wasn't too much that we were expecting from them. We were asking them for help and support for our daughter's needs and the volunteer really helped get that point across."

"It was very helpful having the volunteer there to support and help make sure we covered key points. She really helped highlight the need for school to have proper plan drawn up and shared with teachers."

Impact

Increased knowledge

"Please pass on our deepest gratitude to your volunteer, was a huge help having so much knowledge to assist us."

Training

DiAS provides training for both parent carers and professionals. The main aims were to support DIAS service delivery, to enable parent carers to take part in more effective SEND meetings and to train more DCC staff in effective meeting practice.

During 2018/19 we changed the format and name of our professional training and trained DIAS staff and volunteers to deliver training.

Training delivered

DIAS delivered SEN information sessions around all aspects of SEN law and processes. A parent trainer delivers skills training to parents and to professionals to support improved communication and participation. This was well received by parents who said "Great to have parents who 'get it' running it"

26 training events were delivered to a total audience of 520. Of these, 264 were parent/carers, 56 were volunteers and 200 were professionals.

Type of training	Number of sessions	Participants	Number of participants
SEN/DIAS Information sessions	6	Parents	126
SEN/DIAS Information sessions	2	School staff	80
SEN/DIAS Information sessions	1	Homestart volunteers	25
Better Outcomes	8	Parents and Carers	138
Working with parents	3	Children Centre staff	45
SENCO Award Effective transitions	1	SENCOs	30

SENCO Award Mediation and managing conflict	1	SENCOs	30
Volunteer initial training	2	DIAS volunteers	13
Volunteer SEN training	1	DIAS volunteers	18
Working with parents	1	EP trainees	15
Total	26		520

Highlights

- The 'Better outcomes from meetings' training was provided in a wide range of venues across Devon to support groups and school groups and reached 138 parents/carers.
- Improved connection with Early Years through children centres.
- Talks delivered to post ASD diagnosis training for parents reached 80 parents.
- Connection with community and voluntary sector delivering to Homestart volunteers

Feedback from professionals

"Thanks again for your support today – It felt like a positive, productive session."

"Really good training. Great to go over good practice and to think about what we could adapt and improve"

"Thank you for an informative and personal session. Always good to bring our practice back to real scenarios and personal experiences"

Feedback from parents

"I have an ASD son who is struggling in school and their help and advice made me feel more empowered about my choices and how to hold meetings."

"The whole session was informative and gave me an insight into what I can do"

"I have learnt to prepare well, remain calm and try not to blame, however remain firm and be clear in my aspirations"

Training received by DIAS staff

- **Legal Training.** The IASS minimum standards require all staff providing support to have legal training at three levels. This year casework staff, DIASO's, completed 3 level 3 IPSEA Legal training, 4 level 2 IPSEA Legal training and 2 level 1 IPSEA Legal training courses. Resulting in 5 DIASO's being level 3 - 7 being level 2 and all 9 being level 1 trained by April 2019.
- **Safeguarding.** 7 staff received safeguarding level 2 training meaning that 11 staff are level 2 trained. One member of staff is level 3 as safeguarding lead.
- **Data protection and information handling.** 3 new staff courses completed this year and a total of 9 staff trained.

Other training received in 2018-19

SEND Conference: 4 staff

Solution Focused approaches: 9 staff

Regional IAS meeting: 10 staff

Tribunals: 1

Exclusion Law: 1

Early help roadshows: 6 staff

Right for Children: 1 staff

Annual review: 5 staff

Mental Health Law: 1

Staff have also trained independently using webinars and online training on a wide range of subjects including: understanding autism, exclusion, tribunals, transport, single point of redress, non-implementation of special education provision and Office 365.

Strategic Functions

These are the IASS minimum standards regarding strategic functions:

- **2.2** The IASS engages with regional and national strategic planning and training and demonstrates effective working with other IASSs to inform service development.
- **2.3** The IASS works with local partners, including local parent and young people forums to inform and influence policy and practice in the local area.

Local SEND policy and practice

DiAS informs SEND policy and practice by contributing to several Local Authority strategic workstreams and activity including:

- Inclusion Project Board
- SEND Improvement Board
- SEND Engagement working group
- Improving Access to Communication Services project
- SEND review of the Local Offer and Early years Local Offer development
- SEND Tribunal National trial: local arrangements
- Children missing education meetings
- Local Offer Reference Group
- Local area Ofsted SEND inspection preparation

Impact of contributions

- Supported the development and promotion of the 'Listen, Hear, Understand' and 'Ask me first' participation strategy led by parent and child and young person views.
- Contributed to audit of communication services, identified need for improved information for parents about speech and language and supported participation to shape its development.
- Worked in partnership with the Local Offer Participation Officer to engage parents from the forum and other groups, to shape the Local Offer and its web content.
- Contributed SEN legal knowledge and practice experience of SEND tribunals to local response and planning. A process was created and required personnel and training needs identified.
- Contributed to OFSTED Local Area inspection preparation and participated in session during the inspection on Participation and the Local Offer. DIAS included in action plan developed as response to inspection.

Parent participation

- DIAS supports and contributes to the activity of Local Offer Reference group. The impact of this group can be seen on the [Local Offer](#).

Regional

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

- Regional representative for the Regional Disagreement Resolution and Mediation Advisory Group.
- Organised regional training for managers and for staff to enable sharing of best practice.
- Contributed to SEND regional network sustainability discussions

National

- DIAS Lead Officer was part of the IASSN steering group which undertook the work on the IASS Minimum Standards for the Department for Education.
- DIAS Lead officer is chair of Information Advice and Support Services Staff Association.
- Led the national steering group of nine regional IASS representatives organising the IASS Staff Association National conference in May 2019.

Information Advice and Support Programme

Following the end of the Independent Support Programme in July 2018, a new government funded grant programme was initiated to enable services to become more compliant with the [IASS Minimum Standards](#). DIAS was successful this year in a bid for funding in the first phase, to enable the service to undertake a comprehensive audit of service provision against the IASS Minimum Standards. This included wide consultation with stakeholders to put forward development proposals for further funding.

This work identified that the service was not fully compliant with the IASS Minimum Standards and needed development in these areas:

- 1.1 Service needs to be jointly commissioned by Education, Health and Care. Currently service is commissioned by Education.
- 3.1 Service should be available for children and young people separate from their parents. Currently service to children and young people is very limited.
- 4.1 Staff providing support should all be legally trained to level 3. Some but not all staff are yet trained to this level.
- 3.6 Service training offer has been successful through use of parent trainer. Further development of this model proposed.
- 1.6 Awareness of the service is impacted by geographical spread. An outreach model through locality-based volunteers was developed based on the success of parent information events held in local communities. This was proposed as joint project with the Parent Carer Forum (DPCV).

Commissioning, governance and management

DiAS is an “in house” service commissioned by the Head of Education for Devon County Council. The service functions in a way that is “arms-length” from the Local Authority and is managed day to day by Sue Brealey, DIAS Lead Officer.

We constantly gather feedback from service users and use this to make changes in how we deliver our service.

- **96 %** of users said that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the service they have received.
- **92%** of respondents were likely or highly likely to recommend our service to others.
- **91%** said that the information, advice and support we gave them was extremely or very helpful.

You can read about how we gathered feedback and changes we have made as a result in Appendix 1: Service User Feedback.

DiAS Reference Group

The Reference Group monitors our impartiality and gathers 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, Local Offer Reference Group and charity groups are also represented. New parent representatives joined the group this year. The group met three times this year.

These topics were discussed.

- Information Advice and Support Programme proposals.
- GDPR - DiAS compliance discussion and privacy notice feedback.
- Better outcomes training for parents, outputs and feedback.
- Changes in staffing - the Reference Group were involved in all recruitment
- Ofsted Local Area inspection - DiAS contribution.
- DiAS website and Information - all changes reviewed.

DiAS Development Plan 2018-19

DiAS has an annual development plan which is used and reviewed with staff and the Reference Group. Targets are used for staff appraisal discussions and set the focus for the year.

Targets

- 1. To create a draft two-year service commissioning plan informed by staff, stakeholders and services users for all levels of SEND**

Achieved: As part of the Information Advice and Support Programme, families, the DIAS reference Group, DIAS volunteers and Local Authority managers were consulted to inform the drafting of a two-year plan. This was submitted to the national programme and agreed with further funding to follow.

- 2. To identify current demand for health and care information and advice to inform future commissioning.**

Achieved: A monitoring system has been set up to record the quantity of advice requested through the enquiry line for health and care. This recording is limited to those cases which require additional support and have records kept on our database. The data is not for a complete year so will need more than one year for comparison.

3. To strengthen equitable access for children, young people and parents supported by improved working partnerships across Devon casework areas.

Achieved: An additional 0.5fte caseworker enabled reorganisation of casework team into four areas which aligned with the SEN 0-25 areas. This enabled more equitable cover in remote areas and better connection with SEN 0-25 teams to support fuller understanding of working practice. It improved SEN 0-25 understanding of DiAS confidential and impartial working practice.

"You go above and beyond "just doing your job", particularly when dealing with emotionally over stretched parents such as myself. Your patience and grace are very much noted and more than appreciated."

Appendix 1

Service User Feedback

What are we are doing?

We are continually trying to improve our service to ensure our families are getting the support they want and need. One way we do this is by capturing feedback.

We collated feedback from 94 families over a 6-month period in several ways using postal questionnaires, telephone interviews, internet surveys and questionnaires following training events.

How are we doing?

96 % of users said that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the service they have received.

92% of respondents were likely or highly likely to recommend our service to others.

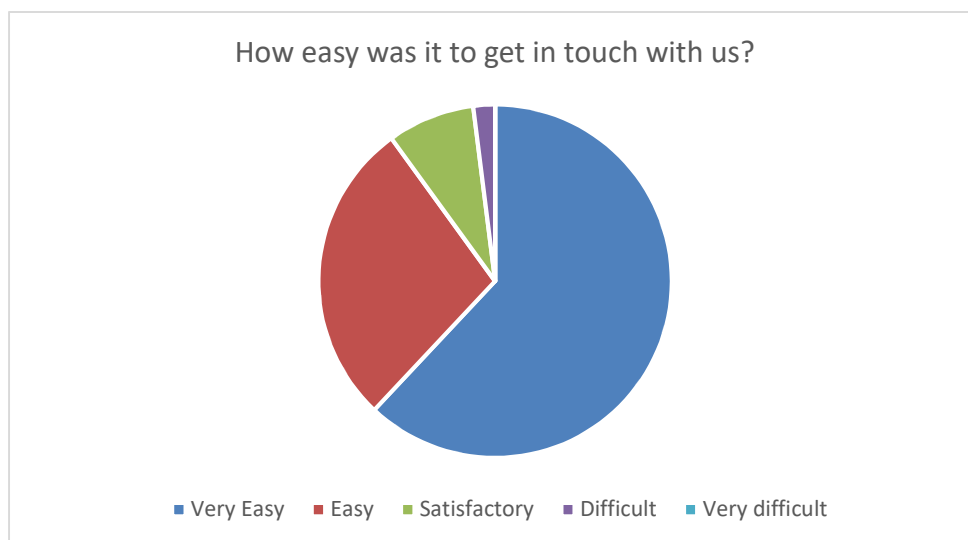
91% said that the information, advice and support we gave them was extremely or very helpful.

Respondents that commented positively about the service said that:

- I've done everything on my own but this [DiAS] made me feel stronger and more confident and not so undermined.
- I could not have sorted out my situation without your help and support.
- [DiAS] helped me focus on the important issues that would help me get my son the education he needs and has a right to.
- It was a great help to have someone to point me in the right direction.
- DiAS couldn't have been more helpful.
- DiAS gave me some great advice, but also supported me and continue to support me through my daughters EHCP process.
- This service was amazing, I learned so much from one phone call.
- Really helpful and made me feel a lot less stressed when I didn't know which way to turn.
- All relevant facts given to allow me to feel more prepared for dealings with my daughter's school.
- Parents need help. The only place they will get good advice is DiAS. Fact.

Where we received unsatisfactory comments, we analysed this feedback, revisited the piece of work to see what more support we could give and either re-contacted the service user or used this information to reflect on our practice.

Our feedback data found that some users did not always find it 'very easy' to get hold of us.



Other feedback and our response

You said...	We responded...
The service offered is fine, however trying to get hold of DIAS can be challenging	<p>We increased the capacity of the enquiry line and plan further increases.</p> <p>We take messages outside the hours on the answer machine and call back as soon as possible.</p> <p>If the phone line is busy, then another officer can take the incoming call and offer initial support.</p>
It took time for an independent supporter to call me back.	<p>We have increased our caseworkers and now have 2 officers per geographical area.</p> <p>Our enquiry line officers give support at the initial contact so that no family is waiting for support. Then further advice is given when the case worker calls.</p> <p>Families are signposted to links by the enquiry line officers, so they can be reading information before the casework officer calls.</p> <p>At peak periods we explain how long they will be waiting for a call.</p> <p>When there are peaks and trends, such as at admissions, transition time or exam time we publish specific information on social media and the website to help families access specific information more quickly.</p>
The information was very helpful however, unsuccessful due to an uncooperative school.	<p>We offered training to professionals on improving conversations/ meeting outcomes with parents. These are held in schools and children's centres across Devon.</p> <p>We offered training to parents on how to improve outcomes with schools across Devon.</p>

	<p>We concentrated on having conversations with parents on how to improve outcomes from school meetings. We drafted a resource to help them prepare well for meetings to achieve better outcomes.</p> <p>We improved our information and resources so that families know what they can ask for.</p> <p>We have increased our volunteer numbers so that more meeting support is available.</p>
I have literacy or language needs that makes it hard to access information.	<p>Our website has SEN accessibility and more recently, other language options.</p> <p>We have updated all our information leaflets to make them more accessible.</p>
I don't have a PC, so I use my phone to access information.	<p>We have made our website mobile and device compatible.</p> <p>We have increased the use of social media to disseminate information and planning a live chat option.</p>
There are not many services in my area.	<p>In rural areas, where families feel less supported, we networked with other professionals, made links with local teams and attended local events to help improve support.</p>

What are we doing next?

We plan to further develop our feedback rate and reach by using examples of good practice from other IAS services. This includes:

- Using social media more to improve our feedback return rates for caseworker support
- To encourage feedback on other areas of our service such as information sharing through the website, Twitter and Facebook.
- To collect feedback from our families on how our volunteers supported them at meetings.

We plan to analyse our data geographically to determine specific areas of need across Devon. We will also examine specific comments to build a picture of our service training needs and then address this need with our DIASOs and volunteers.

We will monitor trends and themes more robustly using our IT systems to allow us to offer more information on specific subjects at the right time through Facebook and the website.

Appendix 2

How to Contact Us

If you, or someone you know, would like any of the following please visit our website:

- 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 the contact us form on our website, phone or email:

Website: www.devonias.org.uk

Telephone: 01392 383080

Email: devonias@devon.gov.uk

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.