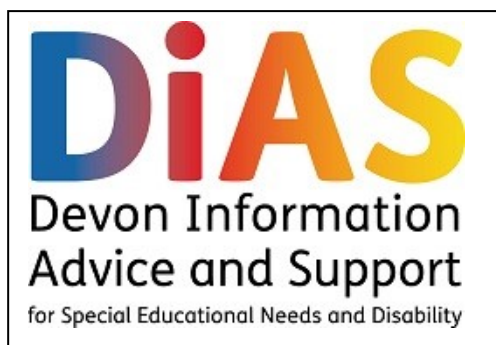


# **DiAS Annual Report**

## **April 1<sup>st</sup> 2019 – March 31<sup>st</sup> 2020**



# Introduction

DIAS provides the information, advice and support that is a statutory requirement for the Devon Local Authority (LA) and Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) as described in chapter two of the [SEND Code of Practice](#). The framework of what we need to cover is set out in the [IASS Minimum Standards](#). It has the following four areas:

1. **Commissioning, governance and management arrangements**
2. **Strategic functions**
3. **Operational Functions**
4. **Professional development and training for staff**

This annual report shows progress for the four areas and is a taste of DIAS achievements and developments during 2019-20

Here are a few highlights to look out for in the report.

## What's happened

- A Children and Young People's (CYP) development project started with a CYP
- Joint commissioning agreement drawn up

## What's new

- A new logo was developed and launched.
- The Ambassador Volunteer Project began which is a joint initiative with the parent carer forum. Joint commissioning of DIAS was initiated.

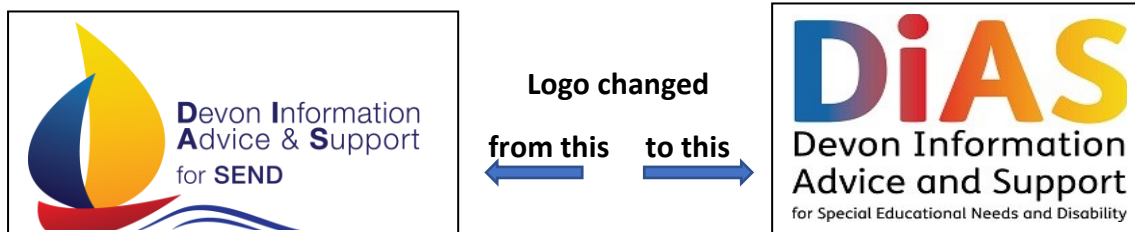
## What's changed

- A move to a different style of information with emphasis on empowerment and self-help.
- Arrangement of casework staff to increase equity.
- More ways to request support using a "contact us" form.

"Thank you –support from you has made me feel empowered as a parent for the first time"

# Information

There were some significant changes to our information this year. We have increased our reach and profile with information that has been made more accessible. Visits to the website **increased by 30%**. Promotion and connection via **social media increased by 55%**. There was a shift in focus, realising information’s role to empower, we began to increase our range of information from knowledge of processes to the experiences of families and skills that help navigate SEND.



## Improving our information resources

This year we developed and finalised a new logo. This followed feedback which showed our service was recognised by its acronym DIAS rather than its full title Devon Information Advice and Support. This led to a new look for our publications aimed at parents and carers. The new look extends to booklets, factsheets, guides and top tips resources and ensures that we have a consistent look and feel to all materials. The new logo has a more modern feel and focuses on the name we are best known by.

We created new web-based information to help parents [new to SEND](#), linked to an awareness raising postcard. Working collaboratively with other Devon County Council staff we developed information that aimed to answer some of the key questions parents had, as well as reassuring and supporting them.

Our first new look booklet was published – [EHC needs assessment: A guide for parents and carers](#). The guide was available as a printed booklet and as an interactive PDF and covered all stages of thinking about and applying for an assessment, as well as the needs assessment process itself.

We also updated and created the following information:

- A factsheet about [exam support](#)
- A tool called [The Three Houses](#), which helps parents to get their child’s views
- Two editable forms for young people and parents to gather and share views – This is me and This is my child
- Web information and a factsheet about [moving to Devon with a child with SEND](#)
- A new information section on our website about EHC needs assessment

A [new contact form](#) was launched on the DiAS website, to support the enquiry line staff by reducing need to contact the service by telephone. This enabled parents, carers and young people to fill out an online form asking for information or support.

You said	We did
Families told us they wanted a way to contact us outside of office hours.	In addition to our answer phone facility we created an online “contact us” form on the website.

## Increasing our reach and profile

**Website:** There was an increase of just under **30% in unique visitors**, and those visitors stayed for longer on the site, compared to the year before. Slightly more men are visiting than they were last year, and the number of younger people aged 18-24 visiting has **risen from 4% of the total to 7%**.

**Facebook:** The DIAS Facebook page continues to go from strength to strength. There was a **55% increase** in followers across the year and a similar increase in Likes. We posted significantly more content each week and the general level of engagement also increased, with more users sharing, commenting and engaging with content.

**Browsealoud:** This is the accessibility software package on the DiAS website which enables visitors with English as a second language, literacy difficulties and visual impairment to use the website. It was used just under **2000 times** across the year – the most used functions being reading the text aloud and translating it.

“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”

You said....	We did
I would like more information on the website on managing at-home strategies.	We collated and published some information on this subject on Facebook and Twitter as well as making some information available on the website.

“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”

## Advice

The enquiry line is the route for people to access our service by phone, email and website. We provide initial information, advice and signposting on a wide range of education, health and care issues which require significant knowledge of local processes and options. For some enquiries initial advice is enough. There has been a **42% increase** in these requests. All cases who require further support also get initial advice when they contact us.

Improvements we have made this year included:

- More advice and information provided at the enquiry point so that no family is waiting too long for support.
- Developed the internet enquiry form so that families can ask for support when they are available.
- Increased enquiries from schools, health professionals, Family Support Workers and Paediatricians from our work improving local professional contacts.

You said	We did
The only difficulty is the wait to speak to someone in person as the phones are often very busy or ring out.	To help us increase the ways that people can access the service we developed a route to request support via the website. This is a “Contact Us” form

## What’s new

The DiAS enquiry line takes phone calls, receives emails and “contact us” forms which are sent in via the website. Enquires from all these routes are seeking information, advice and support. The staff responding on the enquiry line decide which level of support is required. They provide level one advice. Levels two, three and four are more complex and need more in-depth support. These are provided with initial advice and then passed to a DiAS officer.

### Level one: information, advice and signposting by phone or email from the enquiry line administrators.

- **241 level one advice:** in comparison with 170 in 2018-19.
- **61 requests for advice from professionals** – DiAS is recognised as a reliable source of impartial SEND advice across a range of education, health, care and community services e.g. GP surgeries, Social Workers, Schools, Nurseries, voluntary organisations. The enquirers asked about a range of topics including apprenticeships, finance routes, moving to Devon and SEND processes, admissions, inclusion and elective home education.
- **180 requests for advice from parents** - they were advised about a wide range of topics such as: special schools information, EHE, dyslexia information, moving to Devon, exams reasonable adjustments, EHC processes, social care direct payments, EHC personal budgets, Adult social care and mental capacity, Funding, safeguarding complaint, childcare and early years, housing, school attendance, CYP view gathering, ASC assessment

You said:

“I’d just drop you a line to say how helpful Georgie has been on the last few occasions I have had to phone your team. On both occasions she emailed me some guidelines, answered my questions and forwarded really useful information.”

“I honestly really appreciate all the support you have offered in under 3 hours of initial contact!

“Amazing what can be achieved when given vital information.”

You said	We did
My recommendation is maybe an e mail summary after the phone call with links.	We created subject specific email templates with relevant links to ensure that all families were getting the same level of support at the enquiry stage and case officers e mail families after the call to summarise the support given.
The service offered is fine, however trying to get hold of DIAS can be challenging.	We increased the capacity of the enquiry line and plan further increases. We take messages outside the hours on the answer machine and call back as soon as possible.  If the phone line is busy, then another officer can take the incoming call and offer initial support.

# Support

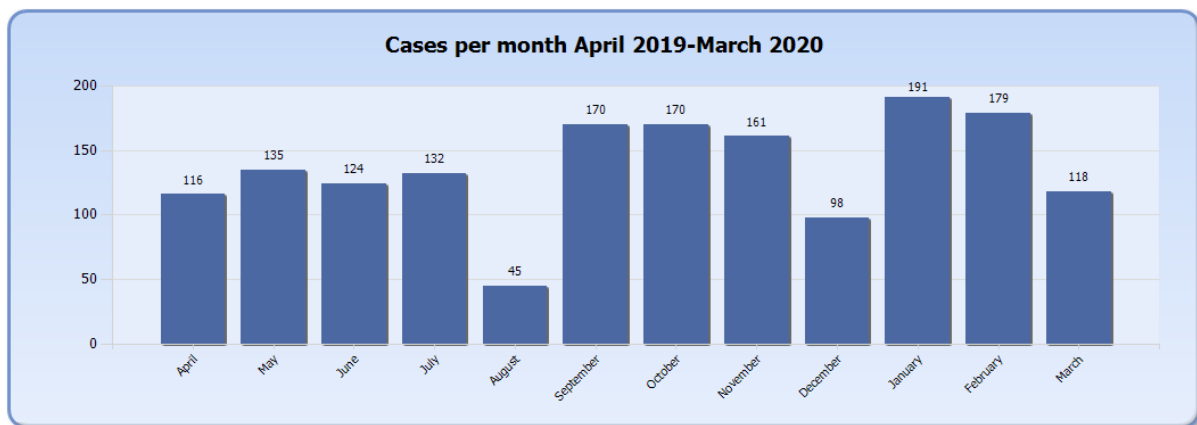
If initial advice is not sufficient, the support is passed to a casework officer. The amount of support required, and the complexity, varies widely. Enquiries can range from getting better support in school to explaining EHC Needs Assessment processes, to support for exclusions and SEND tribunal appeals. The support worker requires a high level and wide range of SEN legal knowledge.

## Number of cases - casework support

Total number of casework cases 2019- 2020 = **1638**.

This is a **15% increase** in cases supported from the previous year (1429 cases)

Pattern of referrals over the year shows demand increased in September to November This peak corresponds with the timing of transition to new schools and advice about admissions applications. In January, February there was a corresponding peak in advice about EHC needs assessment requests to the Local Authority.



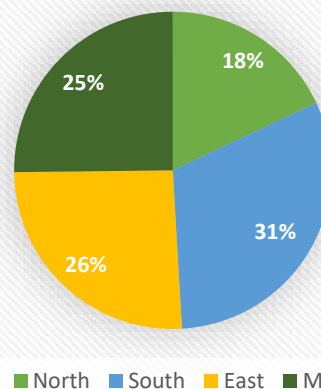
"I really must express our heartfelt gratitude to you for helping us with R's EHCP! You totally 'found' my daughter deep within that plan, it was though you knew R and helped her totally get the support that should assist her in making progress as she starts a new chapter in her education. please do not stop helping families in our situation. you have directly assisted one little girl in getting the education she deserves in order that she thrives within the system"

## Numbers per area

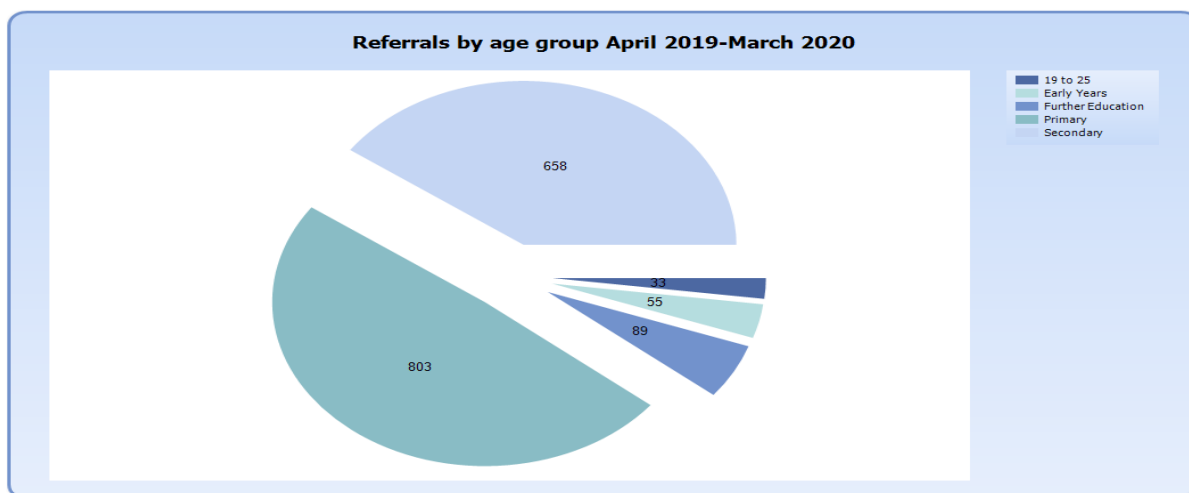
Areas of Devon vary by geography, provision of services and population. This is reflected in DiAS support requests by area. This year we looked at how we increase our reach in areas where we receive fewer requests. In North Devon we trialled two drop-in surgeries at parent support groups. There was a good response and we were able to support 12 families who would not have been confident to contact us directly. We aim to use this in other areas too.

We have changed the way that support work is allocated, so that it is more evenly spread across the team.

## Support requests by area



## Numbers by age group/phase of education



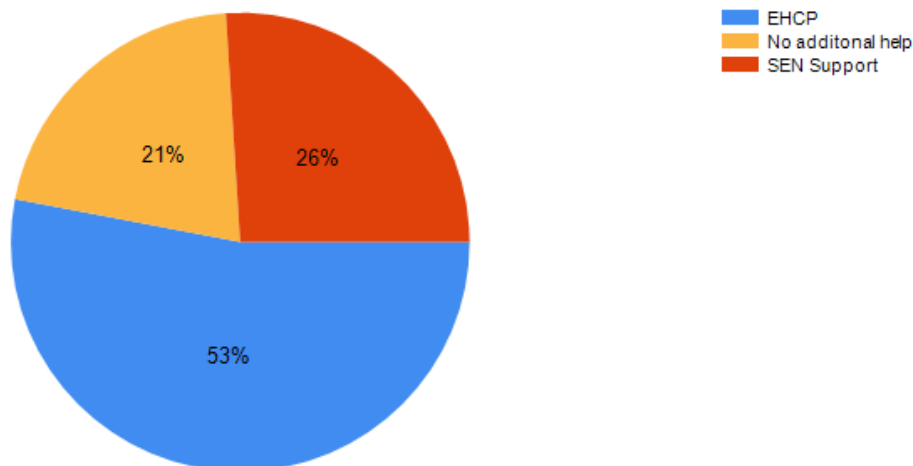
Primary and secondary cases have both increased, with **larger increase of 27%** in secondary cases 516 to 658. We have noted more challenges for SEND pupils with mental health and anxiety.

Early years has increased by **25%** from 41 to 55. We have built better links with Children Centres, delivering training to their staff.

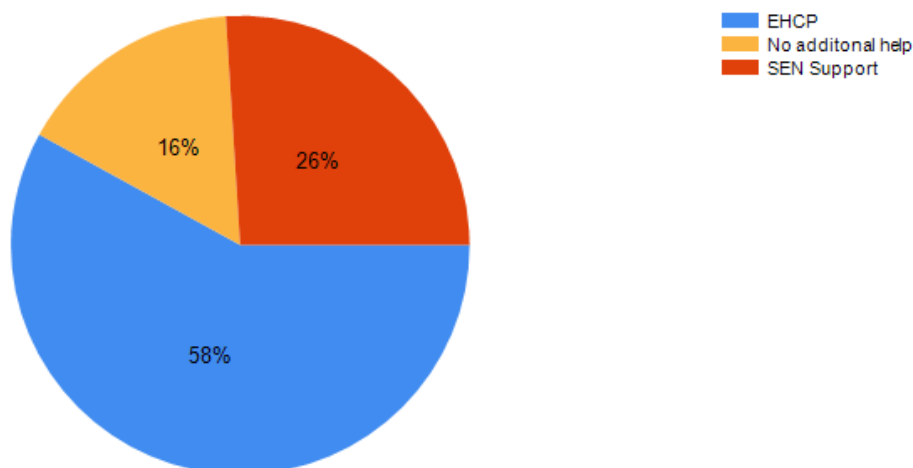
Further Education cases remained static and support for 19-25-year olds reduced from 41 to 33. As the 2015 SEND legislation has become more embedded the criteria is better understood for this age group.

## Numbers at SEND level of support

Level of SEN Support (at time of Involvement) April 2019-March 2020



Level of SEN Support (Current SEN) April 2019-March 2020

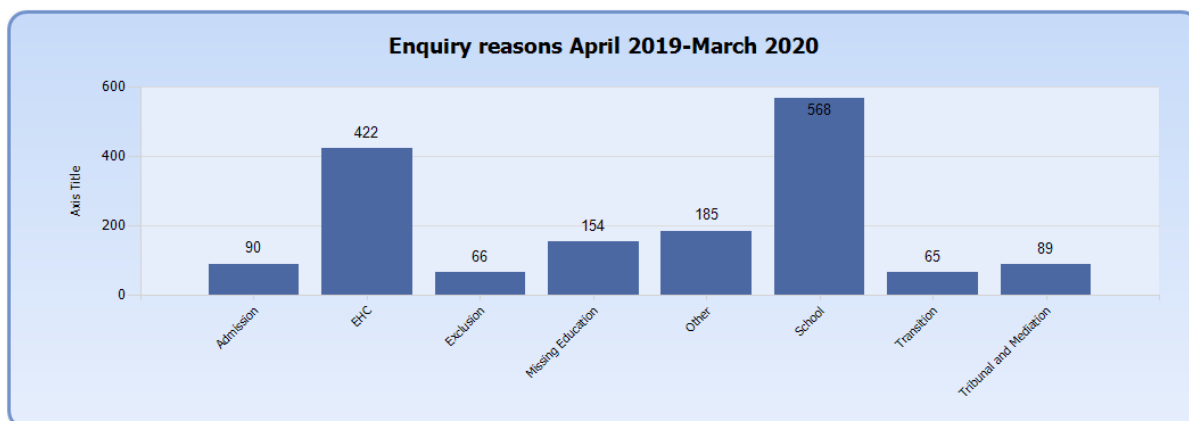


These charts show the change in SEN support level for cases, from when support is requested to six months later. The number receiving no support has decreased by 5% and support for EHCP has risen by 5%. Some seek our support to get SEN recognised and assessed in school, others want help to seek further support through an EHC needs assessment.

“Just a quick email to say a big thank you for your help and advice with the EHCP for my son. I wouldn't have done it without your guidance. I hope that a positive change is on a horizon for X and that the EHCP for him will be a right tool to reach that. Thank you. I really appreciate your help”



## Reasons for support



School situations remain the highest reason for people initially contacting the service. Often, we find the family needs wider advice and support around health and care too. School and Team around the family (TAF) meeting support are common request themes.

DiAS staff **supported at 246 meetings** - 117 school meetings, 21 meetings with the LA and 11 other meetings. This was enhanced by volunteer support at 97 meetings.

You said:

“DIAS has been SO INSTRUMENTAL in guiding me to the help I need to keep my Daughter safe at school. I FEEL so supported at a time when I feel I am on my knees, begging for help.”

“Thank you so much for yesterday, your support was absolutely fantastic as always. I felt it was a massively different meeting from others and I am being listened to.”

### Tribunal and exclusion

DIAS has provided tribunal advice for **83 cases**. This is a **rise of 19%** from the previous year. This does not mean that every case will result in a tribunal hearing as we support the family to try and find resolution through support with mediation processes and working with the Local Authority.

“I just wanted to thank you for making the effort to get to the Mediation meeting this afternoon. It is such a relief that we do not have to go to a Tribunal over this and I am sure having extra reinforcements who had a knowledge of the rules, helped our cause. It has given me faith in the mediation process which I had thought would just be a formality to go through en route to Tribunal.”

### Exclusion support

Involvements	Students	Exclusions in Same Period
66	61	53

Requests for exclusion advice and support, including support at appeal, has fallen by 15% compared with the previous year. This mirrors the reduced number of exclusions in Devon schools in 2019-20. Our aim is to support the prevention of exclusion, as can be seen by the difference between the

support requests and exclusion above. Some families contact us once permanent exclusion has happened and then advice is focused on appeal and future provision.

### Reasons for Education Health and Care Advice

Involvements with Education, Health or Social Care Elements				
Reason Group	Education	Health	Social Care	No Category
School	665	203	52	52
EHC	386	70	16	35
Admission	88	12	9	2
Other	221	47	25	21
Early Help	3	1	0	0
Transition	64	12	4	1
Exclusion	62	9	5	4
Health & Care	22	18	7	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1511</b>	<b>372</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>116</b>

Education remains the dominant request for advice, but DIAS are providing more Health and Care advice than the previous year and often this is not stand alone. This advice covers a wide range of health and care issues including

- explaining health and care services
- signposting to relevant health referral routes such as access to CAMHS,
- explaining Autism assessment pathway and how to apply or raise new concerns,
- explaining social care assessment for disabilities and short breaks processes.

We are using the holistic approach to talk to families about education, health and care needs and their impact across the range of situations and will discuss Early Help with most of our advice and support.

## Children and Young People

We looked at our offer to Children and Young People (CYP) and how we could increase the ways in which we can directly support them. To start this process, we commissioned Devon’s Youth Service ‘SPACE’ to support our consultation work. The purpose was to find out where and how CYP with SEND in Devon access support with their education, and how they could potentially access DiAS.

**79 CYP were involved** from primary and secondary schools, further education, alternative provision and a SEN youth group.

We also put questions to SENCO’s about how CYP are involved in their education plans and meetings and ways in which CYP could access DiAS. The response was varied, and our DiAS CYP Officers Amy and Jane have since worked with the results to help shape our CYP offer. This has included offering

- direct support at SPACE SEND youth groups
- writing our CYP policies

- creating assemblies to deliver in schools
- developing a CYP feedback group
- enhancing our offer to CYP through the enquiry line and casework (offering support to the young person as well as their parent)

The consultation has really helped build stronger links with SPACE and Amy and Jane have also formed links with the Local Authority Participation Team and look forward to closer working with the SEND worker from this team. The consultation [Executive Summary](#) gives more details.

We started to develop our direct support for CYP. We successfully offered some older young people support by telephone and email when suitable. We have a volunteer with skills in this area who has provided face to face gathering support to 13 children and young people. The next part of the bigger picture is for a CYP worker to join the team as a full-time member of staff, to develop our direct support for CYP.

**24 young people** were supported, 9 of these about transition, 7 about EHC processes.

**2 children** were supported about school situations.

## Volunteer Report

DiAS has a cohort of trained volunteers who are a valued part of our team and enable us to provide more support for families. This year they have

- supported parents at **97 school meetings**
- supported **children and young people on 13 occasions**
- co delivery with DIAS staff of **5 training events**
- provided **114 hours support** for administration tasks

You said	We did
Staff are extremely well trained, but unfortunately too busy to support us at meetings.	We increased the number of volunteers in the service to help support those families who need face to face meeting support. We trained volunteers in meeting support and some in higher-level support such as mediations and tribunals. We developed our offer of pre-meeting support so that families are equipped and confident to attend meetings alone where we are unable to support them face to face.

### Summary of Volunteer Activity

Over the year, our volunteers have supported parents at **97 school meetings**, or meetings with the LA. Some of our volunteers who have completed legal training have also supported at two EHC mediation meetings. Our volunteers also support with completing forms and helping parents, children and young people to express and record their views.

This year volunteers have supported **children and young people on 13 occasions**, an increase from previous years. Three of our volunteers were also involved in co-delivering or supporting the delivery of five DiAS training events for parents and professionals. We also have a volunteer who comes to the office weekly and supports with developing our recording and analysis of data relating to enquiry numbers. In total she has given 114 hours of time to administrative tasks in this capacity.

Month	research / admin	parent meeting support	parent home visit	YP Support	tribunal	mediation
Apr	4	4		1		
May	4	9		1		
Jun	3	1				
Jul	5	3				
Aug		1				
Sep	3	6				
Oct	3	16		1		
Nov	4	15		2		
Dec	2	9				
Jan	3	15	1	6		1
Feb	4	12		1		1
Mar	4	6				
totals	114 hours	97	1	13		2

### Recruitment, Training and Ongoing Support

Initial training for new volunteers was held in October 2019 and 12 prospective volunteers attended the two-day course. Four of these are now active volunteers. Two others went on to attend Ambassador Volunteer training and are now engaging in that project.

We held two whole team training events during the year. In July 2019 we had a two-part interactive training event which included a morning focusing on Education, Health and Care Services in Devon, and a second session about website development, led by our Information Officer Sarah Smith. Our December training focused on the EHC review process, and DiAS's role in supporting families in review meetings and throughout the review. Several DiAS volunteers also attended training about hearing the child's voice, delivered by Speech and Language Therapist Val Brooks. All sessions were well attended with positive feedback from volunteers on the value of the training.

As the number of volunteers in all areas has increased, we now hold regional team meetings for all volunteers at least termly, as well as individual supervision sessions. These involve discussing trends and themes, updating volunteers on relevant national and local changes and training opportunities. They provide an opportunity to discuss casework and volunteers' experiences and observations. Both staff and volunteers find these helpful, and the new volunteers have said it helps to make them feel part of a team.

**Feedback from a parent** "Thank you so much for sending a volunteer to our meeting. Just having him there actually really empowered me. I've never asked questions before. Please pass on my gratitude, he made such a difference."

**Feedback from a Volunteer** "I just wanted to say a massive Thank-you for giving us the opportunity to attend this training. It was extremely valuable to my own family needs as well as the young people I am going to work with."

**Feedback from a professional** “I felt the volunteer was very professional and helped both the parent and professionals throughout the meeting. They helped the lead professional and myself with the word of some of the answers whilst staying impartial and were very good at putting parents’ mind at ease not only during the meeting but before and after.”

## Training

The IASS offers training to local education, health and social care professionals, children, young people and parents to increase knowledge of SEND law, guidance, local policy, issues and participation. IASS Minimum Standard 3.6

Through external grant IAS project funding we have been able to increase our training delivery significantly to both parents and professionals.

We have **trained 417 people** in 31 sessions.

- 18 sessions covering 3 topics for 220 parents
- 13 sessions covering 3 topics for 197 professionals

Read more about our training [here](#)

### Impact

“I will encourage my daughter to have more of a say and feel empowered.” Parent

“I have learnt that I have the right to have my point heard and that I am entitled to some help at college.” young person who attended with Mum

“I will be more confident about asking for certain items to be discussed in meetings. That it is ok to expect action and positive outcomes” Parent

“I have learnt about the importance of empowering parents at every stage. The session has refocused my thinking of the need for better preparation, time allocations in meeting and clear actions that are child focused.” Professional

## Commissioning, governance and management arrangements

The IASS is jointly commissioned by education, health and social care in accordance with the CFA 2014. A formal agreement is set out in writing which refers directly to these Minimum Standards, whilst also considering the need for continuity and stability of the service. Minimum Standards for SEND IAS services

## Joint Commissioning arrangements

The Children and Families Act 2015 sets out a joint commissioning duty for Education, Health and Care. The SEND Code of Practice 0-25 sets out how Information Advice and Support should be commissioned and describes the kind of service that should be provided.

This year DiAS had constructive discussions with the health commissioner and the Local Authority commissioner, with advice from the national IASS adviser. This led to a draft service level agreement being created to describe joint commissioning arrangements. This agreement will need to be completed and formally agreed at the Health Reference Group.

## Reference Group

The Governance arrangements outline a clear management structure, encompassing a strategic manager within the IASS and a steering group or advisory body which includes representatives from service user groups and key stakeholders from education, social care and health. Minimum Standards for SEND IAS services

The DIAS Reference Group is the advisory body with representatives from service user groups and key stakeholders from education, social care and health. This year the Designated Clinical Officer joined the group as a health representative. A social representative is to be decided.

3 meetings were held July and November 2019, March 2020

The DIAS reference group advised the service on

- Updated Terms of Reference
- Access to the service improvements
- Branding and design including changes to logo
- Support for external funding of projects through the IASS programme
- Children and Young people's consultation findings and developments
- DIAS Commissioning: progress and self-audit
- Training development and connection with schools and parent groups.

## Strategic functions

The IASS works with local partners, including local parent and young people forums to inform and influence policy and practice in the local area. Minimum Standards for SEND IAS services

DiAS has been invited by the Local Authority to provide input on a range of strategic groups to help shape SEND policy and practice. We are very careful to maintain our impartiality and remain arm's length, whilst sharing themes and trends we observe from our support work of families experience of accessing Devon services.

Strategic meetings attended:

- SEND Reference Group

- Early Years SEND review group
- Children Missing Education meeting
- SEND Improvement Board, SEN Choice and Control group, SEND Engagement Group
- Improving access to communication services strategic group including the AAC subgroup
- SLA commissioning with health
- SEND Local Offer Reference Group + support for PCF development

### **Examples of contribution, and impact:**

- The Local Authority asked for DIAS advice when writing their New to SEND information postcards. DIAS created our own New to SEND information to link with Local Authority information. This was used to model their Local Offer information.
- Advice was requested and given on several Local Authority SEND guidance documents.
- Feedback on the new electronic system for EHC needs assessment was gathered through DIAS social media was passed on to inform the development of the EHC hub.
- Themes of concern were through gathered casework support and reported to the Local Authority, for example, schools observed suggesting parents take children off roll.

### **Regional and National contributions**

The IASS engages with regional and national strategic planning and training and demonstrates effective working with other IASSs to inform service development. Minimum Standards for SEND IAS services

DiAS has an active role both regionally and nationally. Examples include:

- National: DiAS manager is chair of the steering group that organised a national conference for IASS staff attended by 130 people. Input included key speakers from the DfE, national IAS programmes and a workshop on the Power of Information from Sarah in the DiAS team.
- Regional: DiAS manager led a regional network workshop for IASS managers on strategic planning and development.

### **Working with local partners**

This year DiAS worked with and supported the Parent Carer Forum as it underwent a review and planned for a transformation to strengthen its participation and representation. We have a strong working relationship and worked together to ensure parents can participate individually with support through DiAS, and strategically as a group through the forum. The Ambassador Volunteer Project to support this was jointly developed between DiAS and the parent forum, run by DPCV.

## **Information Advice and Support Programme**

The Department for Education (DfE) made available funding to support IAS services to improve their service offer so that they were more able to fulfil the requirements in the IASS Minimum Standards. DiAS applied for grant funding to increase our work in five areas.

1. Develop and deliver a new training package for parents and professionals.
2. Support joint commissioning of the service.
3. Increase the service offer for children and young people.
4. Increase access to legal training for DiAS staff.

5. Increase the service reach to more areas of Devon.

Activity and impact on the first four points are covered in other parts of this annual report.

To deliver on point 5, an initiative was developed jointly with the Parent Carer Forum to create a network of volunteers who would act as points of contact in communities, Ambassador Volunteers. To facilitate this, work an additional member of staff, an Ambassador Volunteer Coordinator was appointed in August 2019.



## The Ambassador Volunteer project

The aim of the project is to recruit volunteers to be a link in their own community, ensuring parents of children with SEND are informed, know how to access advice and support and have their voice heard.

The project was greeted with enthusiasm and made very good progress from its onset. September 2019 to March 2020 was the initial set up phase of the project with a focus on awareness raising, promotion, recruitment of volunteers, training, establishing communication mechanisms and development of Ambassador Volunteer community peer support groups.

**23 volunteers were recruited** and trained. This enabled connection with a range of community groups, school groups and organisations across Devon. Several joined the programme so that they could initiate a support group. **3 groups were established and 4 more are in development.** Through the project we were also able to deliver training to new parent groups, send out DiAS, local and national SEND information and gather feedback on parental experiences to inform our development.

You can read about the project on the [DiAS website](#)

## Service Plans for 2020-21

- Joint commissioning – engage social care in commissioning arrangements of the service and consolidate the service level agreement.
- Children and young people - CYP views to inform service delivery, an increase in direct support and advocacy and an increased range of ways CYP can access the service.
- Ambassador Volunteer project - More volunteers and groups to increase service awareness and reach, increase access to training offer through group delivery.

### Conclusion

This annual report has given a taste of the range of DIAS activity with evidence of how we have responded to feedback, changed and developed the service. We always welcome feedback, if you have any ideas, want to comment on anything in this report or be involved in helping us to improve our service offer, please get in touch.

Sue Brealey

DiAS Lead Officer



# Appendix 1

## Service User Feedback 2019/2020

### 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 in a variety of ways and responding by making changes to the way we work.

We collated feedback from 84 families over the 12-month reporting period using an internet survey tool.

### How did we do?

- **92 %** of users said that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the service they have received.
- **94%** of respondents were likely or highly likely to recommend our service to others.
- **92%** said that the information, advice and support we gave them was extremely or very helpful.

Respondents that commented positively about the service said that:

‘We now have EHCP that represents my daughters needs and hope for a future within a school place that can support her.’

‘It just felt really great to have a knowledgeable voice on our side.’

‘From the initial communication to the meeting the team were very knowledgeable and supportive.’

### Volunteers

We also received feedback on our DIAS volunteers.

#### Families told us:

‘I believe that the meeting was only successful because the volunteer was able to reassert what we wanted and to get through the ‘script’ that the SENCO stuck to.’

‘I found the volunteer to be outstanding in all aspects-professional, neutral, informative and professionally supportive -a true asset!’

‘I was very happy with the help from the DIAS volunteer, she was very helpful, knowledgeable and she made sure I was happy and understood everything at the meeting.’

#### Professionals told us:

‘I felt the volunteer was very professional and helped both the parent and professionals throughout the meeting.’

‘The volunteer helped the lead professional and myself with the word of some of the answers whilst staying impartial.’

‘The volunteer who came to the TAF was very professional. She was unbiased but helped the parent put across their concerns in a supportive role. She also helped by asking for certain aspects to be clarified.’

‘Very good at putting mums mind at ease not only during the meeting but before and after. Gave the parent real peace of mind as she was quite nervous.’

As before, we regularly analysed the feedback so we could respond in a timely way to specific comments and to feed the information into our strategic plan. Here are some comments you gave us and what we did in response...

You said....	We responded...
I would like more information on the website on managing at-home strategies	We collated and published some information on this subject on Facebook and Twitter as well as making some information available on the internet.
Staff are extremely well trained but unfortunately too busy to support us at meetings	We increased the number of volunteers in the service to help support those families who need face to face meeting support. We trained volunteers in meeting support and some in higher-level support such as mediations and tribunals. We developed our offer of pre meeting support so that families are equipped and confident to attend meetings alone where we are unable to support them face to face.
My recommendation is maybe an e mail summary after the phone call with links	We created subject specific e mail templates with relevant links to ensure that all families were getting the same level of support at the enquiry stage and case officers e mail families after the call to summarise the support given.
The 0-25 team did not publicise you as well as they might	We improved connections with the 0-25 teams in our areas so that they know to signpost to us when appropriate. We ensured that our service is included in the Local Offer information and regularly monitor this. We checked letters sent to families from the LA to see if we are signposted where appropriate and advise them when we are not.
Some support around special school places would be helpful	We made contacts with special schools in our areas and have gathered information about all the available independent provision in Devon so that families can find out what is available and appropriate.

We made the following improvements to our service from our own team observations and general feedback and from the plans we made last year.

- More advice and information are provided at the enquiry point so that no family is waiting too long for support.
- Increased our social media output by sharing responsibility for this between staff.
- Increased quantity and quality of the information and resources produced and made this available more widely and to adapt information more quickly when it changes.

- A new logo and look to make our service more recognisable.
- Developed the internet enquiry form so that families can ask for support when they are available.
- Using the web statistics to understand users browsing and highlight high areas of traffic.
- Increased enquiries from schools, health professionals, Family Support Workers and Paediatricians from our work improving local professional contacts.
- Developed drop-in sessions in the North of Devon where families feel they have less access to services locally.
- Ambassador Volunteer Project has improved the reach of our service in the 'harder to reach' geographical areas.

### **What are we doing next?**

- To continue to use social media to improve our feedback return rates for caseworker support.
- To continue our work on gathering feedback on other areas of our service such as information sharing through the website, Twitter and Facebook.
- To collect feedback from our children and young people as part of our developing CYP work.
- To improve our involvement from service users on developing or service and testing our current practices through reference groups, families, volunteers and through our Ambassador Volunteer Project.
- Increase our understanding of how data already gathered on our systems can be used more effectively to improve practice.
- To continue to collect data on themes and trends as they emerge to enable us to respond more timely to specific situations.

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