

Annual Report

Executive Summary

April 2021 - March 2022

DiAS is a statutory service. It provides free impartial, confidential, and accurate information, advice and support about education, health and social care for children, young people and their parents on matters relating to special educational needs and disability.

Key findings

The Service has seen rising demand for yet another year. This year's increase of 40% has had a significant impact on the team, with the additional challenge of no extra capacity and changes in staff. There was a significant increase in both health and social care related enquiries - 96% and 157% respectively.

The demand on other services, such as the continuing rise in EHC needs assessment requests and ASD assessment referrals, has an immediate impact on demand for our service.

The service continues to be highly valued by its users. 90% of enquirers responded with the highest rating to the question 'How helpful was the information, advice and support we gave you?' on our feedback form.

The development of the children and young people's offer has been very successful and contributed to a Devon-wide vision to promote the voice of the child. It has enabled compliance with our statutory requirements.

The Ambassador Volunteer Programme, run jointly with Parent Carer Forum Devon, has successfully built local connections for SEND families and delivered our training offer. It has been recognised nationally as a model of good practice.

The DiAS website for parent carers and young people has also been recognised nationally as an example of best practice.



Recommendations

To enable commissioners to meet their strategic responsibilities, all DiAS staff fulfilling core strategic functions should be made part of the permanent work force. This includes child and young person advocacy workers, who support the wider Devon agendas, and the Ambassador Volunteer co-ordinator.

Review and recommissioning of the service should be a priority for partners. Health funding should be prioritised to make the area wide partnership statutorily compliant. Strategic and commissioning connections should be increased with health and care.

DiAS expertise on information and communication could be enhanced to advise the OFSTED Local Offer response.

2021-2022 in summary

Staff dealt with a significant increase in the number of enquiries from parents, young people and professionals. A high number of these related to exclusion, children missing education and general school support impacting on school attendance and wider inclusion. Requests for information, advice and support around health have continued to increase. 45% of enquiries included advice around health.

DiAS managers contributed to the SEND Improvement Board and several workstreams, gave strategic input into discussions about improving school attendance, worked in partnership with Parent Carers Forum Devon and took a lead role in Regional IASS network and National IASS Steering group.

The information offer for parent carers and young people expanded and was improved. There was a full review of the website and resources and information for children and young people. There were new practical resources about managing when things go wrong and sharing child, young person and parent views.

There was a significant increase in the number of children and young people supported directly by DiAS. This was as a direct result of the recruitment of two Children and Young Peoples' workers.

A review of the way the service handles enquiries started. This included a user survey, staff discussions and meetings with other IAS services.

DiAS delivered training and information sessions to 731 participants in 55 sessions - an increase of 350%. Three specific training sessions were delivered about SEND support, EHCP reviews and the child's voice.

33 Ambassador Volunteers across Devon connected with 9,000 families and approximately 43 SEND social media groups. Outreach to families increased by 50% since 2020.

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Devon Information Advice and Support

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