

# Annual Report

## Executive Summary

### April 2022 - March 2023

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

A continuing increase in the number of requests for EHC needs assessments to the Local Authority brought an increased demand for advice, with 30% of enquiries to the service. This was also reflected in an increased number of enquiries requiring advice and support for Tribunal processes. This work requires a high level of expertise on legal processes.

A rising number of exclusions from Devon schools together with changes to Government Exclusions guidance is reflected in a 96% increase in the number of requests for exclusion advice.

Confusion about health and care referral routes and long waiting lists have resulted in the service providing more advice on all these areas. Finding routes to share the themes from our work with health and care services has not always been clear.

In response to reported low parental confidence of support for SEND in schools, DIAS developed new SEN Support information resources both printed and published on the website. Views of these website pages increased significantly from 4% to 23%.

A reduction in capacity for delivery of training due to staffing changes meant that we were not able to deliver as many training sessions for parents and carers as in previous years.

We introduced a new service delivery model to improve access to the service and help staff well-being. The satisfaction survey showed that 93% said it was now easy to access the service.

DIAS resources are recognised nationally. Feedback from other IAS services in England has been positive and at least five are using our information and citing DIAS as the author.

Improved reach of the service continues through 43% increase in number of Ambassador Volunteers across Devon and significant increase in those following our social media account.



## Recommendations

Strategic and commissioning connections should be increased with health and care. To enable commissioners to meet their strategic responsibilities Health funding should be prioritised to make the area wide partnership statutorily compliant.

To improve links with strategic partners the DIAS Reference group membership should be broadened to include representation from all key stakeholder groups.

Data recording and reporting should be reviewed to fully align it with commissioning requirements and mechanisms to inform SEND improvements identified.

Capacity for delivery of the DIAS training offer should be increased.

## 2022- 2023 in summary

During 2022-23 We significantly changed our way of providing information, advice and support to a help line model. Using solution focussed approaches we have encouraged a self-help model for families. This has been well received by service users. 3296 people contacted our service for information advice or support during the year with the busiest months in November and March.

A new DIAS website was launched with a specific section for children and young people following consultation with parents, children and young people and volunteers. We had a 15% increase in new users to the website who stayed on the site longer and viewed more information, the number of pages viewed increased by 215%.

Information resources were developed in response to the themes from advice provided. EHCP self help tools take up increased significantly.

There were notable increases in the number of enquiries relating to exclusion, children missing education and general school support impacting on school attendance and wider inclusion. A high proportion of these learners had a primary need of Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) or Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC).

Strategic work undertaken on a commissioning agreement was agreed. Positive progress has been made towards joint funding from education, health and care commissioners, but health funding has not yet been secured. Strategic links for the service have been impacted by changes following the OFSTED revisit and need more development.

Devon Information Advice and Support

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