

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



### Key findings

- The **total number of enquiries** to the service continues to increase significantly year on year, with a **35% increase** in the last year alone. Despite this additional demand, service users report high levels of satisfaction in relation to accessibility, response time and overall experience.
- There was a **marked increase in the number of enquiries where Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH)** was identified as primary presenting area of need. Many of these enquiries related to accessing SEN Support in school, Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA) and accessing mental health support through early intervention services or CAMHS. Secondary school aged children were the most affected.
- DIAS gave **direct support to 70 service users to access the SENDIST appeal process**. In one third of those cases, hearings were avoided with DIAS support, with a positive resolution being achieved ahead of the hearing. This work requires a high level of expertise on legal processes.
- Our **direct work with children and young people is growing**. Most support is given at level 3 which means virtual or face-to-face meetings, often with more than one session. Children and young people in **years 9 to 11 are the biggest group of service users in this area**. They are most often supported to share their views and take part in decision making about their support.
- **Significantly more professionals contacted the service than in previous years**. These enquiries came from professionals working in education, health and social care and were spread across a wide range of topics. These included providing evidence for EHC processes and the SEND Tribunal, clinical and social care assessment routes and support for children out of education due to health reasons.
- The DIAS **information offer continued to expand its reach, scope and uptake**. Website content continued to diversify with a wide range of topic-based information and the number of **users increased by 20%**. Social media delivery was more consistent and targeted toward specific resources, leading to an increase in connections and engagement.



## 2023- 2024 in summary

During 2022-23 we significantly changed our way of providing information, advice and support to a help line model. This continued to be well received by service users, with staff able to manage an increase in demand without a drop in satisfaction levels for users. Staff were able to access helpline training on how to manage complex calls and vicarious trauma.

The DIAS website continued to grow in reach and the diversity of its content. The number of users increased by 20% and the number of return visitors, compared to new ones, has also increased. The range of information topics web users looked at significantly broadened over the course of the year.

This year there has been a review and revision of the DIAS Training offer. The service has appointed a Training Officer, working 0.2fte. They developed an overview training plan, focussed on the outcome of consultation with users, and then created a new training offer based on the findings.

A new Ambassador Volunteer Co-ordinator was appointed in June 2023. The programme reached around 50,000 people across the year via its networks, connected with 18 schools and organised training for Children's Centre staff, to build connections with Family Hubs.

Strategic input widened to include contributions to a range of workstreams, including SEND improvement, the Local Offer, co-production and Ordinarily Available Inclusive Provision (OAIP) development. Commissioners value DIAS data and feedback as it gives an insight into the impact of wider services.



## Service priorities

1. The capacity of DIAS children and young people's worker roles should increase in line with increased demand. This is essential to ensure that the service is compliant with IASS Standards and that the Local Authority and ICB fulfil their statutory duty.
2. Links and formal feedback routes with strategic partners within health and social care should continue to be developed and strengthened. Clear arrangements for continued funding from these areas should be in place.
3. In response to an identified need, resources and information should be developed around school attendance and EBSNA.
4. Links with Early Help leads should be improved, to ensure a clear understanding of their offer and to facilitate connections between DIAS Staff, Early Help Practitioners and Family Hubs.
5. Capacity for delivery of the DIAS training offer should be increased to enable face to face as well as virtual training for parent carers.

DIAS (Devon Information Advice and Support)

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