



# **Annual Report**

**July 2017 to July 2018**

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## Introduction and overview

2017 to 18 has brought with it challenges and successes. Calls to the advice line have continued to keep our advisors busy. Illness within the team have put pressure on those still at work. Pressures on finances across the LA and educational establishments have impacted on the service by additional casework and cases not moving on.

Despite this there are exciting possibilities ahead with additional funding available to bid for, we would use this to enhance access to our service for families across Norfolk.

Please refer to the three Quality Standard and Service Development Reports issued across the academic year for greater detail.

## Some of our achievements in 2017/18

Tribunal training on sections B: Needs, F: Provision and I: Placement was very well attended with positive evaluations. Many of the families have kept in contact as they go through the process.

Work with the Parent Carer Forum has created closer ties and joint working. We have delivered training for parents during question and answer sessions to enable Family Voice to report back families experiences to the LA. Also training for committee members very similar to that delivered to families.

Business Support has been working with Big Fork to enable the new SENDIASS website to go live and we are receiving positive feedback from families and other professionals. You can find it at [www.norfolksendpartnershiass.org.uk](http://www.norfolksendpartnershiass.org.uk).

We now have day to day control of the website content meaning that links and information can be updated in a timely manner. We still have lots ideas about ways to deliver additional information online and will work to continue developing the site, e.g. we hope to record some webinars in the future for those who find these a useful way to learn.

Booklets have now reached the dizzying number of 18 with the newest being *Disability Discrimination* which will go live in the next few weeks, also, *Writing your views for an EHC Plan* and *A Young Persons guide to an EHCP*. We have also split the EHC Plan information into smaller chunks, starting with *An Overview*, *Needs Assessment*, *Reading and Understanding*, *Reviewing an EHC Plan* completing the set with *Reviewing an EHCP*.

The team have been busy completing the Bar Standard accredited law training. The manager, support advisor and two of the advisors have completed all three levels, with our third advisor currently working on level three and will be doing the face to face training on all three levels after Christmas 2018. This means the team have a high level of knowledge of SEND law with access to online and face to face training written and delivered by IPSEA (the Parental Special Educational Advice Service).

The database, Cross Data, is now giving accurate statistical information and we have our first set of figures which can be compared to the previous academic year.

We have changed our evaluation system, making the questionnaire shorter. For online responses, the questions that are asked are now dependent on previous answers; this has streamlined the way that responses are collated online. We are now using the online evaluation system wherever possible, linking in to national statistics.

The service is also reporting data to the national IAS Service, to enable them to compare services across the country. This comparison has not been available since 2013.

The Team Manager has delivered tribunal training in Manchester, Birmingham and twice in London to SENDIAS services. This has been an interesting venture which has raised Norfolk's profile and enabled us to understand how many other services work across the country.

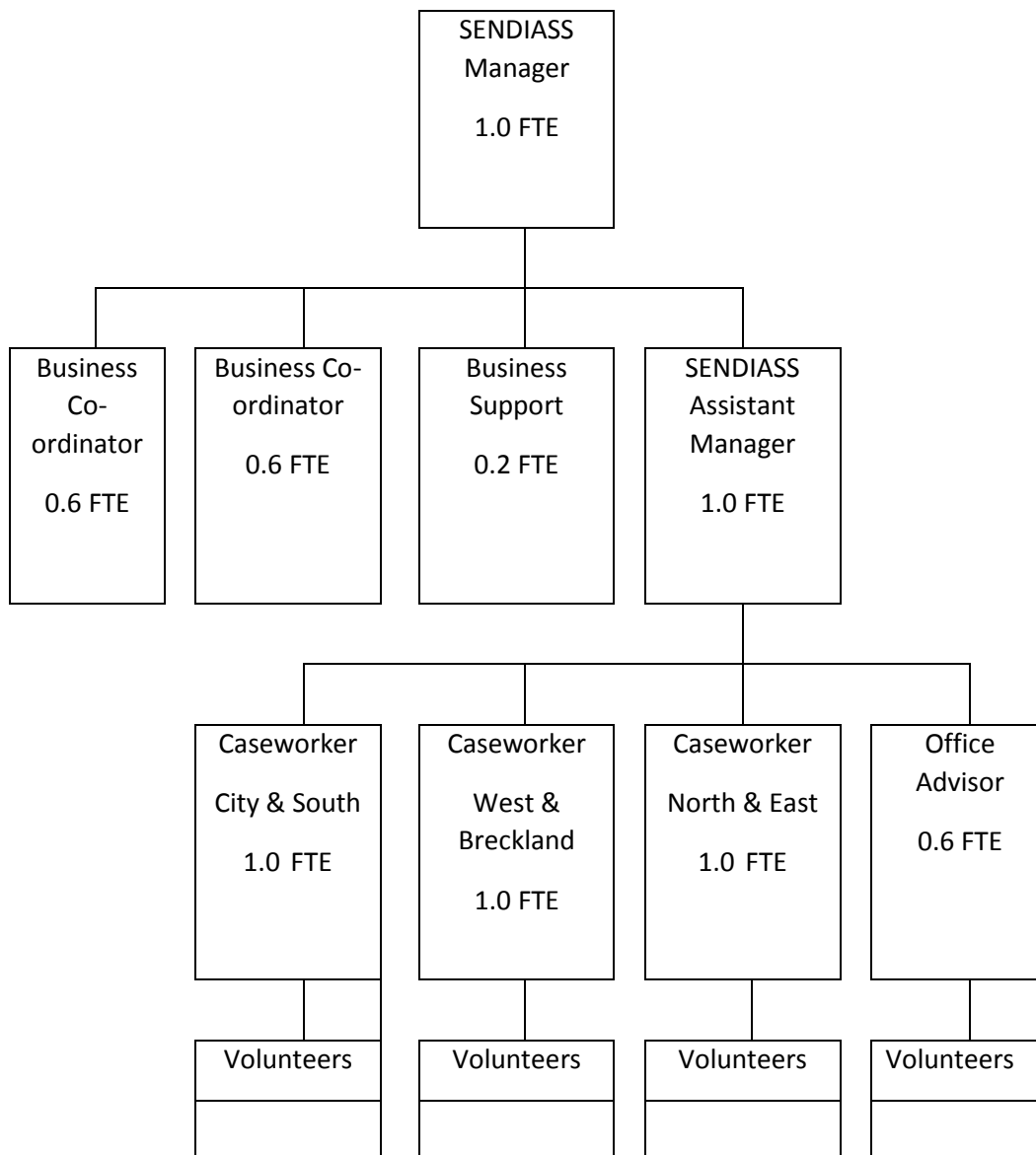
## **Our goals for 2018/19, developing the service**

A team day was held out of the office to look at how the service could be improved to meet the current needs of families in Norfolk. It was agreed that the level of work expected from our volunteers was now too difficult subsequently creating additional work for the Support Advisor when cases are returned and acknowledged that we were losing volunteers because of it. Usually as volunteers leave, a new cohort will fill the gaps, but the last few year's training courses have given us very few people

who have stayed to support or have the capacity or willingness to do what families need from them.

We decided that a complete overhaul of how SENDIASS is implemented in Norfolk was needed and a new structure was proposed. This brings about new roles for advisors as caseworkers, visiting families to give the hands-on support as well as helpline advice and a small group of volunteers. This does mean additional funding will be needed from the LA.

### Proposed restructured of SENDIASS service



This will hopefully run alongside the Information Advice and Support Programme financing which could add further funding to increase the delivery of the service.

## Information Advice and Support Programme

To be successful in the first stage the service manager had to show that the LA are appropriately funding the service to deliver the quality standards. The confidential report was delivered towards the end of September and has it has been agreed that we can move on to the second stage although the RAG rating did have some areas on red. The second report is due in by the 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2018 the task order is:

*to submit a clearly structured operational plan covering 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020.*

This includes identifying needs from stakeholders and staff and then reviewing what we already do and what is needed.

Funding is available for:

Service contribution.....	up to £10,000
Supporting strategic functions.....	up to £4,800
Supporting core functions.....	up to £12,600
Enhancing skills/supporting professional development.....	up to £6,000
Supporting innovation.....	up to £12,500

(These are Net amounts)

This is a large piece of work and it has taken most of the summer holiday for the manager to complete the first report. The second is due in not later than 3<sup>rd</sup> December with a completed application form for each fund requested also has to be in.

A restructure is needed to enable the service to give more support across the very rural county of Norfolk, and the SENDIASS roles which are missing are those which can support children, young people, complaints and appeals as well as hands on support for families.

Changing the role of our advisors will:

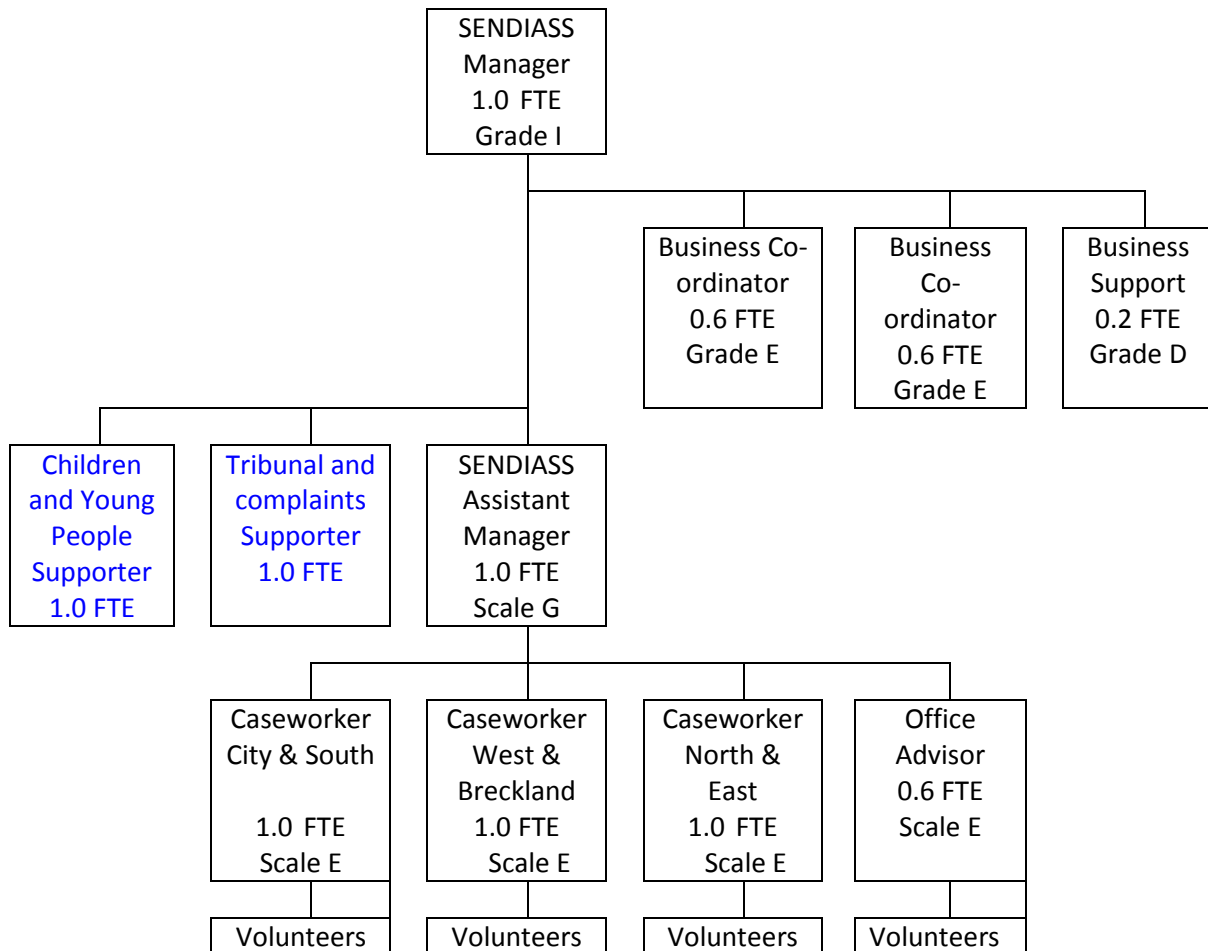
- Increase hands on support for parents, young people and children.
- Enable the team to give support in educational establishments where relationships have broken down or there is a lack of understanding of responsibilities and expectations.
- Give closer support to volunteers and additional training for educational establishments, parent groups and young people.

Although the amount of IASP funding had already been made clear, the split was only shared with us at a meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup> October so I think it unlikely that both the hoped-for positions can be covered by this programme.

Currently we have our own thoughts on where this funding would be most useful and that is in staff, see below.

We will be asking the Steering group to support us in our aims over the coming year.

Restructured service plus **suggested IASP positions**



FTE: Full time equivalent.

IASP: Information Advice and Support Programme.

## Our team

The Independent supporter, left the service in October of 2017 to go back into private practice. This role was filled May 2018 through internal secondment and will remain in post for no more than three days a week until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019, no new cases will be taken on after December 2018 to enable support through the process for those families who need it. This member of staff will then return to her substantive contract.

We lost an Advisor in August 2018 and reappointed this contract which will finish on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019, this is the last of the additional funding from the new duties money. The temporary Advisor position following secondment to IS has been filled, also until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019. We have grave concerns about how we are going to cope if the helpline only has 5 days cover instead of the current 8 as we already struggle to keep within the LA timeframes during term time.

## **Day to day management**

1-1 support has not been as regular as expected but staff are available should a conversation be needed. All appraisals were positive and completed as the LA expected with a new process in place aiming at pieces of work being completed by various periods in the year.

## **What people say about us**

*'Very empathetic but also professional and understanding. I think the service is wonderful and I have found it extremely helpful. I always recommend to other parents'*

*'I found the service very understanding of our needs. I would highly recommend the team to other parents'*

*'I could have had the same result without the service'*

*'Was great overall. Without it I doubt I would have had confidence in the tribunal and knowing what forms to fill in without the help I received.'*

*'People really need organisation that can give advice and support through difficult times. Even just talking to someone is a help as you often feel alone - or you (v) L.A which is big and has own legal support etc'*

*'A very good service with excellent communication'*

*'like every other avenue I have tried to get help for my son, we have been left to cope on our own. I'm extremely disappointed with SEND as I felt this was our last resort, to be let down yet again'.*

*'The information I needed was sent promptly and the issue I wished to discuss was dealt with well. A valuable and useful service, offering much needed advice and support from approachable and friendly individuals'*

## **Consultations and strategic work**

We have worked with the Local Authority on various documents including the newest EHC Plan template, letters going out to parents and young people and the SEN support information often called the Local Offer. This is what the LA expects to be available at SEN support levels from education providers. It can be found on the

Local Offer website at: [www.norfolk.gov.uk/send](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/send). I have been working with a group and the LA on an online SEND course aimed at professionals which we hope will also be available to families. It is currently being written into an online format by professional programmers. .

We have continued to attend strategic meetings to give a reflection of how LA policies and Norfolk practises have impacted on families and been involved in national consultations sharing these with families through the website, Facebook and twitter as appropriate.

## **Volunteers**

We have some very dedicated and supportive volunteers giving their time and expertise, unfortunately, these are a diminishing resource. We are finding that many of those we are training do not stay to volunteer, it is costly to put on and deliver the course and so we have developed a new programme. This will be trialled in November, it means that all who wish to volunteer must pass the IPSEA level one law course online before they can attend the new three-day face to face training in November.

## **Working with parents**

Ongoing work with parent carer groups have been attended over the year as well as working with the parent carer forum Family Voice and attending conferences and training sessions. See the quarterly reports on our website for further details.

Our new Advice sessions held once a month for parents have been very popular and all have been full. We have covered SEN support, many EHC Plans (both draft and final), tribunals, exclusions, personal budgets, etc.

## **Statistics**

The statistics show a 3.5% increase in contacts and 8% increase in referrals. Issues most discussed are still EHC Plans, slightly decreasing by 5% from last year. SEN support calls rising by 25%, exclusion by 37% and POST 16 by 32%. Top schools by referral show Home Education being the most discussed. Website stats show that SEN Support and EHCP booklets are top downloads, alongside the SEND Local Offer. The referrals by category of need shown that Social, emotional and mental health difficulties are the biggest sector with 46% of our enquiries having this as their main need. Evaluation returns are still very low despite a push to increase the uptake. See the SENDIASS Statistics on our website for further information.



## Round up

It has been another busy and challenging year with a difficult balance of quoting and explaining what the law says whilst knowing the impact of financial constraints and lack of school placements on schools and the LA. Again, short term staffing has, and will continue to have, an impact on the team. Without the changes being agreed and additional finance to enable us to deliver to the expectations of the 2014 Children and Families Act (should OFSTED appear to assess the LA) I will have grave concerns on how we could show we are supported appropriately by the LA based on the assessment of need. Let's hope things move forward and instead of this we can have a positive impact on any assessments with an appropriate service meeting the needs of Norfolk families thus enabling early intervention and avoiding some of the ever-rising permanent exclusions, tribunals and complaints.