

Introduction

This report gives information about the activity of the IASSEND service for the duration of 2021.

Bolton IAS is a statutory commissioned service- solely funded by Bolton Local Authority, to provide information, advice and support to parents carers and young people with SEND, about matters relating to education, health and social care. There are around 7500 children and young people in Bolton with a special educational need. All are entitled to use our free service.

COVID

Bolton IAS took decisive action at the start of the pandemic, meaning they were in a sound position to deal with lockdowns, work from home orders, and remote working practices. Because of the planning and early delivery of such ways of working, the service have been able to transition seamlessly and have delivered the service every day throughout the pandemic. Despite some staff absence at the start of the year, we have managed this well, and, as such, COVID hasn't affected the hours, terms, or expectations of business throughout 2021.

Support figures

- This year, we have supported 2646 families on a one to one basis, through direct casework.
- We have trained over 400 parents and carers and professionals with legally based workshops- half of which were evening based
- We took on average 256 calls per week
- We provided DRS services on over 77 occasions
- We dealt with an average of 63 new referrals per week

Complaints and compliments data

In this period (Jan- Dec 2021), we received no complaints about the service, its staff, or delivery.

We have sought regular feedback from users via our anonymous survey. The results for the period are below.

Finance

- We received £76,400 from Bolton council to run the IAS service for one year.
- We received £10,000 from Bolton council and Bolton CCG for a separate DRS (dispute resolution service) contract.
- We received some additional funding for implementation and delivery of the core service to meet the exceptional demand from Council for Disabled Children

Staffing

The office is staffed at a ratio of 2.5 FTE weekly.

We are supported in the office by the Business Manager from COG, our collective charity, and volunteers.

The office is open from 9am until 4pm, with phone lines manned from 8.30am until 5pm.

The website provides a contact email which generates a guaranteed response within 24 hours.

We are available throughout the school holidays.

We adhere with our Minimum standards to be a 365 day a year service.

Work themes

- EHC plans, the whole process
- Appeals (DRS, Mediation and Tribunal)
- Exclusions, including IRP's
- Delivery of training
- Transport
- Accessing health services and assessments
- Accessing social care services and assessments
- Challenging local authority decisions
- Accompanying to meetings and appointments
- Supporting with non implementation of SEN support queries
- Supporting schools with all types of queries
- Visiting community hubs and engaging with CYP outside of school/ work time

- Requesting changes of placement
- Support with bullying issues
- Support at CETR's
- Supporting CYP with mental health needs
- Advocating for families who cannot engage
- Whole school/ service training on SEND Law
- Provision of easy to read material for parents carers and cyp on different SEND based topics

Affiliation/ directed work with other groups/ services

- COG
- Bolton Parent Carers
- Breaking Barriers NW
- BLGC
- Educational Psychology
- CAMHS

We are part of the co-production task group
 We are part of the SEND steering group

Governance structure

Head of service- Cheryl Wyatt, responsible for x3 IAS officers. Reports to the board of Trustees.

Chair of Trustees- Ms Nicola Greenwood. Supported by a board comprising of x4 lay members.

All sitting under the COG charity umbrella- charity number

Significant changes

Sadly, the founder of our charity, and previous head of service, Nicola McGuinness, passed away in January 2021. Nicola had continued to support the service and its work in a voluntary capacity up until the time of her passing.