

# Hartlepool **SENDIASS**

Hartlepool Special Educational Needs and Disability  
Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS)

**Annual Report**  
September 2023 - August 2024

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## Introduction

Welcome to Hartlepool Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) Annual Report. This report aims to provide a helpful insight and overview of the service, our work and our developments and priorities.

From 1st September 2014 Parent Partnership Services (PPS) in every local authority became Information, Advice and Support Services (IASS). Each IASS provides support similar to that of a PPS, although the type of support and who is entitled to receive it has been significantly expanded. This now includes young people and children in their own right, along with the additional expectation to provide information and advice on all matters relating to health and social care.

The Children and Families Act 2014 requires local authorities to provide children with information, advice and support relating to their SEN or disability. Many children will access information, advice and support via their parents. However, some children, especially older children and those in custody, may want to access information, advice and support separately from their parents, and local authorities must ensure this is possible.

The Send Code of Practice 2015 in chapter 2 states: 'Local authorities must arrange for children with Special Education Needs (SEN) or disabilities for whom they are responsible, and their parents, and young people with SEN or disabilities for whom they are responsible, to be provided with information and advice about matters relating to their SEN or disabilities, including matters relating to health and social care. This must include information, advice and support on the take-up and management of Personal Budgets. In addition, in carrying out their duties under Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014, local authorities must have regard to the importance of providing children and their parents and young people with the information and support necessary to participate in decision.

## Who we are

Hartlepool Special Educational Needs and Disabilities information, advice and support service (SENDIASS) provides free confidential, impartial support and advice to children, young people (aged 0 – 25 years) and their parent/carers, about matters related to their or their child's Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND), including matters relating to health and social care.

We are a self-referral, in-house statutory service which is funded by Hartlepool Borough Council (HBC), situated within Children's and Joint Commissioning Directorate.

## We are here to

- Support Children and Young People who have or may have special educational needs.
- Offer free impartial advice and information to Parents/Carers, Children and Young People.
- Recognise the importance of Parents/Carers, Children and Young People's 'voice' and 'views'; to be at the centre of SEND processes.
- Help Parents/Carers, Children and Young People, Local Authority, Schools, Health, Social Care and professionals to work together to meet the needs of Children and Young People.

## Our aim is

- To provide a service that can meet local demand and ensure that it is accessible for all children, young people, and parents/carers.
- Increase children, young people, parents/carers and professionals knowledge of SEND guidance and legislation.
- Allow children, young people, parents/carers and professionals to access appropriate information and virtual support and training in respect of SEND guidance and legislation.
- Provide information to children, young people, parents/carers and professionals about the public, private and voluntary and community sectors to improve the accessibility to appropriate advice and support.

## How we operate

- **Referrals:** Referrals are made directly by a Parent/Carer, or Child/Young Person themselves. Referrals are made via a dedicated telephone line, email or virtual/face-to face interactions at a range of drop-ins, events and training sessions.
- **Neutral and Impartial:** We don't take sides; we provide Parents/Carers, Children and Young People with impartial factual information and advice, based on SEND guidance and legislation, so they feel empowered and enabled to make informed decisions about their next steps, which is unbiased and is not influenced by any particular party's point of view or local policy.
- **Confidential:** We will not discuss Parents/Carers, Children and Young Peoples circumstances or information with anyone without their verbal or written consent.
- **Informative:** We offer Parents/Carers, Children and Young People information on an extensive range of topics in relation to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), including Health and Social Care.
- **Supportive:** We enable Parents/Carers, Children and Young People to understand and make effective use of the information and advice provided.
- **Accessible:** We provide a free, all year round and flexible service which is open during normal office hours and includes:

- A direct helpline with 24 hour answer machine,
  - A call back and sign posting service, including links to the national SEND helpline and other sources of support for outside of office hours and 24/7 access to dedicated website.
- **Arms-length:** The service must legally operate arm's length from HBC Education and Social Care Services, as well as Health services such as the Integrated Commissioning Board (ICB).

**The service maintains an "arm's length" position by;**

- *Being measured against The Children and Families Act 2014, The SEND Code of Practice 2015, and The Council for Disabled Children (CDC) National Minimum Standards 2018, rather than locally agreed parameters.*
- *Having a ring fenced delegated budget and protected recording system restricted to members of SENDIASS only.*
- *Keeping secure all information specifically communicated (either orally or in writing) by Parents/Carers, Children and Young People which is completely separate to LA's Education, Health and Social Care services.*
- *Having and maintaining its own service website.*
- *Service staff have undertaken nationally provided training which ensures they have knowledge and understanding of SEND law and guidance.*
- *Having working links and networks both nationally and regionally.*
- *Service staff do not take part in any LA local decision making processes.*
- *Impartiality is a core element of practice.*

## Our service offer to Parents/Carers, Children or Young People

### **We:**

- Accept referrals from Parents/Carers, Children and Young People and provide telephone, email, virtual and face-to face information, advice and support, which is factual and unbiased. This is based only on relevant SEND legislation and national guidance, so individuals feel empowered and enabled to make informed decisions and able to apply it to their own situation. We work with new referrals and don't re-address an enquiry where advice has already been given.
- Provide Parents/Carers, Children and Young People with someone impartial to talk to in confidence to help them understand the child/young person's legal rights in relation to SEND, to listen to any views and concerns they might have and advise on overcoming issues in relation to SEND Law.
- Provide Parents/Carers, Children and Young People with a straightforward explanation of educational procedures. We don't offer to automatically complete forms or check EHCP's for errors unless we have been asked about a particular section we are supporting Parents/Carers, Children or Young People with.
- Help Parents/Carers, Children and Young People to express their views and advocate for change to help influence and shape policies and procedures.
- Meet with Parents/Carers, Children and Young People virtually/in person and attend meetings with them relating to their Child or Young person's educational support when appropriate and required.
- Support, problem solve and resolve issues with Parents/Carers, Children and Young People with a wide range of issues related to SEND including (but not limited to) needs not being met, supporting communication and trust with services, SEN support (known as a graduated approach), assessment of need, Education, Health and Care Plans, provision at risk of breaking down, supporting appropriate challenge, complaints, exclusions, mediation, appeals, tribunals and advice around legislation. We don't make decisions for Parents/Carers, Children or Young People or on their behalf or attend meetings in their absence.
- Signposting and information about what support is available (the Local Offer, Voluntary and National Organisations).
- Provide representation at local and regional meetings for IASS, Education, Health and Social Care when appropriate and required.
- Endeavour to respond to all queries in a timely manner.

## Our service offer to Professionals

Our service covers all aspects of special educational needs and disabilities related areas, from promoting inclusion and reasonable adjustments, navigating and understanding SEND processes and SEND law, supporting with education, social care and health concerns (where SEND may or has been identified), signposting to other services, supporting with disagreement resolution and so forth.

### **Professionals can;**

- Use our service to learn about our function as 'SENDIASS', and the information, advice and support service that we offer.
- Get advice from us without discussing individuals, as well as use the information we offer to build on their own knowledge and understanding.
- Work with us by signposting Parents/Carers, Children and Young People in need to SENDIASS and encouraging them to visit our website, where they can find resources and contact information.
- Help us provide effective information, advice and support to Parents/Carers, Children and Young People by being clear about any additional support needs individuals may have. This will mean that we are able to make adjustments in how we make information available. For example, those that may need shorter meetings or simplified information.
- Contact us for training and information sessions on SEND e.g. navigating and understanding SEN support from early years to post-19, reasonable adjustments, ways of accessing services to support education, and signposting to other services, Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA) process, Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and Annual Reviews, SEND Law, disagreement resolution – complaints, exclusions, appeals and tribunals.
- Work in partnership with us to support children and young people with special educational needs, and their parent/carers, in enabling children and young people with SEND to reach their best possible outcomes in life.

## Our work

**Staffing and Training:** The service is staffed by 1 full-time SENDIASS Manager, who has successfully completed levels 1-3 of the Independent Parental Special Education Advice (IPSEA) SEN Advisers Legal Training.

**Casework:** The service creates a case file and record for each Parent/Carer, Child or Young Person who accesses the service. We use the following intervention levels below set by the Council for Disabled Children (CDC). This helps us to monitor the complexity of casework and the level of support needed, as this can vary greatly.

The number of cases worked on within this academic year is **182** (Combination of new (first-time contacts) and pre existing (Currently/previously known to the service). However under '**1 case**' there has often been multiple enquiries/involvements which sometimes again doesn't not fully reflected the work involved. An example of this is;

- A parent/carer, child or young person contacts the service for some generic service offer information then contacts the service again for advice and support on SEN Support / Graduated Approach, then again when going through statutory assessment process, then to make support them with a complaint, and then to support them with an appeal to the tribunal. All of those pieces of work would come under '**1 case file and record**'

The intervention levels are detailed below;

<b>Level 1</b>	<b><u>Information</u></b> General Information and Signposting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Clarification of SENDIASS' remit and SEND Law.</li><li>- Signposting to services/groups, local offer and relevant resources/websites.</li></ul>
<b>Level 2</b>	<b><u>Advice</u></b> Information tailed to specific circumstances and advice around options and processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Some casework and advocacy is required.</li><li>- Help with communicating with School/LA/Services.</li><li>- Navigating the EHCNA/EHCP process.</li><li>- Understanding SEND Law and documentation.</li></ul>
<b>Level 3</b>	<b><u>Support</u></b> To go through processes, advocacy and representation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Complex and ongoing casework/advocacy.</li><li>- Assistance in overcoming serious breakdown in communications with school/LA/other services.</li><li>- Assistance in overcoming breaches of SEND Law.</li><li>- Assistance with complaints procedures.</li><li>- Requiring intensive support due to personal circumstances (e.g. low literacy levels, learning</li></ul>



		<p>or sensory difficulties, or English as an additional language).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Representation at/for a series of School/Professional Meetings and EHCP/Annual Review Multi-agency meetings.</li> <li>- SENDIASS undertaking key working roles with other agencies.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Level 4</b></p>	<p><b><u>Intensive Support</u></b> To go through processes, advocacy and representation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Preparation and/or representation with Mediation and First Tier (SEND) Tribunal (including Disability discrimination).</li> <li>- Preparation and/or representation with complaints to First Tier (SEND) Tribunal, Ombudsman, Judicial Review, or relevant services.</li> </ul>

- Over the last 12 months the service has been asked by parent/carers, children and young people to attend an increased number of face-to-face and virtual meetings to offer support due to experiencing difficulties around the following:-
  - SEN support and reasonable adjustments.
  - Requests for EHC needs assessment.
  - Fixed-term and permanent exclusions.
  - Lack of spaces in both mainstream and specialist provisions.
  - Challenging and appealing decisions.
  - Challenges in communication with professionals and services.
  - School attendance/Non-attendance including issues around anxiety, mental health and those going through the Neuro Development pathway process.

## Our work with professionals and services

- **North East SENDIASS Regional Network Group (NEIASS):** The service continues its membership of being a part of the regional SENDIASS group, comprising of the 12 local authorities SENDIASS represented in the region. Managers/Lead representatives from each local authority meet up to 4 times a year. The group provides a confidential and supportive space for the managers/leads to discuss and share issues, national and regional developments, explore new funding initiatives and access tools and resources, as well as to access and develop training opportunities to increase knowledge and skills to enrich the service offers across the region and serves as a link to the National IAS Network.
- **Parent Carer Forum and Hartlepool Carers:** The service continues to work in partnership with the Parent Carer Forum - 1 Hart 1 Mind 1 Future (PCF) and Hartlepool Carers to raise awareness amongst Parent/Carers, Children and Young People of the services and support available. We provide SENDIASS drop-in sessions at Hartlepool Carers and attend monthly Multi-agency Parent Carer drop-in sessions arranged by PCF. Whenever possible, the service also attends regular information days and steering group meetings which are organised by PCF and information shared via the PCF Face Book page.
- **SEND Operational Group:** The service continues to engage and contribute to the Local Authority's SEND Operational Group and SEND Improvement Plan. This allows us to work collaboratively with the Local Authority, Parent Carer Forum, Health and other services to discuss and review the current local offer of services and provide verbal feedback. We also attend training and workshop events to increase the knowledge and skills of SENDIASS staff as and when appropriate.
- **Hartlepool Family Hubs and In-Studio:** The service is currently working with Hartlepool Family Hubs, In-Studio and the Parent Carer Forum to develop a brand new website. We hope this will increase the digital offer to Parent/Carers, Children and Young People to enable greater access to up-to-date advice, support and information in a way which is accessible to all.

## Our Developments and Priorities

Over the next 12 months we will look to continue our work towards the following developments and priorities to;

- Continue to provide and develop a service that can meet local demand and increase parents/carers, children, young people and professional's knowledge of SEND guidance and legislation.
- Continue to develop and enhance our digital offer and resources to parents/carers, children and young people so appropriate up to date advice, support and information is accessed, in formats which is accessible to all.
- Continue to provide varied drop-ins, events and training to parents/carers, children, young people and professional's about SEND information, advice and topics where further information is beneficial.
- Enhance, obtain and review feedback from parents/carers, children and young people on the service to influence and support service design and delivery.
- Continue to access and attend events and training to further develop knowledge and skills within service to enrich the service offer to parents/carers, children, young people.
- Review data collection methods and analysis in relation to themes around SEND issues and service interventions.
- Continue to benchmark against all of the Minimum Standards for SEND Information, Advice and Support Services as set out by the Council for Disabled Children (CDC).

**Please contact us** if you need any further information regarding our report **OR** if you need any information, advice and support, **we are here to help!**

### Hartlepool Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS)

**Location:** Centre for Excellence in Teaching & Learning, Brierton Lane,  
Hartlepool, TS25 4AF

**Opening Times:** Monday - Thursday 9am - 5pm and Fridays 9am - 4.30pm.

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