

WIAS&S



Wandsworth Information, Advice & Support Service

Providing an Impartial Service to Children and Young People (aged 0-25)
with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities and their Parents



Annual Report 2020/2021

Wandsworth Information, Advice & Support Service (WAIASS)

WAIASS believes that children and young people (CYP) will achieve their potential if everyone (parents, children & young people, education settings and professionals) work together, and the family is actively involved and is at the centre of decision making.

Our overall aim is to contribute to better outcomes for children, young people and their parents by:

- **Providing confidential, impartial information, advice and support** to children and young people (aged 0-25) with SEND and their parents who are residents of Wandsworth, to make informed decisions.
- Providing Information, advice and support that is at **arm's length** from the LA and CCG.
- Ensuring the information, advice and support offered is **accurate** and in formats that are **accessible** and responsive to service user needs.
- Staff providing information, advice and support **work in partnership** with children, young people, parents, LA, CCG and other relevant partners/services.
- Ensuring provision of information, advice and support **promotes independence and self-advocacy** for children, young people, and their parents.
- Working with **young people/youth and parent carer forums** to ensure that the views and experiences of children/ young people & parents **inform local policy and practice**.



Introduction

Role of Information, Advice and Support Services (IASS)

All Local authorities have a duty to provide information, advice and support to children and young people, with Special Educational Needs or Disability (SEND) aged 0-25, and their parents.

In Wandsworth, this is provided through the Wandsworth Information, Advice & Support Service (WIASS).

Information, Advice & Support Services (IASS) are:

- Statutory- (there must be one in every local authority)
- Free, Impartial and Confidential
- Work at arm's length from the LA and Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)

The obligations and expectations of IASS are set out in **Chapter 2 of the SEND Code of Practice (2015)**: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/398815/SEND_Code_of_Practice_January_2015.pdf



“Local authorities must arrange for children with 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”.

“Local authorities must take steps to make these services known to children, their parents and young people in their area; head teachers, proprietors and principals of schools and post-16 institutions in their area, and others where appropriate” **SEND Code of Practice 2015, DfE**

Commissioning responsibilities for IASS

Section 26 of the Children and Families Act 2014, places duties on local authorities and their partner commissioning body (Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to decide to **jointly** commission and secure provision for children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) or disability and their parents.

The IASS Network Commissioning Guidance can be found following the link below:
<https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/attachemnt/Commissioning%20Guidance%202018.pdf>



Standards

Accountability:

We continue to work within the DfES, Department of Health & Social Care supported IASS Network Minimum Standards for SEND Information, Advice & Support Services 2018:

https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/documents/Minimum%20StandardsFINAL%20with%20DfE%20DH%20logos_0.pdf

All LA's are expected to ensure that IASSs work towards these standards, which support with planning, implementing, reviewing service delivery and drive service improvements.

A yearly service improvement plan is written which is linked to the minimum standards and *feedback received from CYP and parents.

Improvement priorities and performance indicators are set for the year and reviewed on a termly basis by the team.

*We seek formal feedback from CYP & parents (who have been directly supported by the service) via a survey. This includes six questions the DfE require all IASS' to obtain feedback on. The feedback responses are reviewed on a regular basis and annually including any follow up action required.

Service users:

We provide a direct service to CYP with or who may have SEND (aged 0-25) and their parents (with parental responsibility). This could be from where there may be a concern about progress and learning (Education), Social and Health needs or where a CYP has been identified with SEND and is receiving SEN Support (support from an education setting's resources) or via Education Health Care plan.


Referrals:

We have a self-referral policy. Parents and CYP can contact us directly or they can be signposted, with their permission by others, for example, family members, schools, colleges, and other professionals/services.

Independent Training on Law and Guidance:

All staff who work directly with parents and CYP must complete and pass the IPSEA delivered Legal Training (accredited by the Bar Council). **Level 1-3**. One member of staff completed and passed Level 3 this year.

The remainder of the report summarises the service activities, developments, successes over the most challenging financial year the service and families have experienced due to start and on going Pandemic.



WIASS budget and staffing

1 April 2020- 31 March 2021

Service Budget

The core budget for the service remained at **£105,000.00** which funded the following posts:

- WIASS Manager (full time)
- Information, Advice & Support officer (full time)
- Administration Assistant (one day, term time only).

Additional Funding and Posts

Children and Young Peoples Support officer (full time).

This post was mainly funded by an under spend carried over from the the DFE Independent Supporter Scheme and IASP programme:

<https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/information-advice-and-support-programme>

The value of additional funding obtained this year was: **£27,882.35**

WIASS Staffing

From 1 April 2020 – March 2021:

- WIASS Manager- (Monday - Friday)
- CYP Support Officer
- Information, Advice & Support Officer (Monday - Friday) Vacant
- Administration Assistant (Tuesday - Term time only)

Key Developments and Successes:

This year's report will read very differently and will not be compared to data from the previous year due to the impact and disruption at the start of and the ongoing Pandemic on families, education settings and LA and health services.

Furthermore, an additional issue for our service was long term staff vacancies and illness.

Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, and staff shortages the service still achieved many positive things for local families.

For example the service:

- Quickly adapted to remote service delivery at the start and over the pandemic to ensure parents/CYP had a consistent and a clear understanding of how to get in touch with the team and how information, advice and support would be provided. This included regular updates on the service webpage and Out of Office replies, which our Business Support officer took a lead on.
- Listened too, supported/signposted residents to the appropriate Community support in response to the pandemic.
- Supported parents obtain laptops/devices/data to support their children with remote learning

- Supported keyworkers children and those who were entitled to attend school in person when parents requested support for this.
- Continued to link up with Children Looked After and the team who supports them
- Wrote and circulated Parent Information sheets on EHC Needs Assessments and EHC plans
- Obtained agreement from the LA to fund an additional Information, Advice and Support officer post.
- Completed all the required tasks and obtaining full payment of £27,5000 from the DfE Independent Supporter Scheme and IASP programme

Activities from 1 April 2020 - 31 March 2021

The service continued to provide

- **Telephone and email service**
- **Casework Support**
- **Face to Face meetings with CYP and/or Parents** - including school and college meetings.



Key Referral Data for the Year

Below is a breakdown of key data collected and analysed when parents or CYP made their first contact or returned for further support:

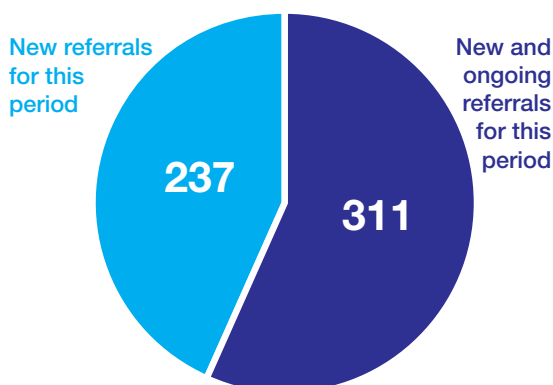
Number of Families Supported

- During this period **311** families were supported compared to **481** the previous year.
- Initial contact by parents continued to be made by phone or email.
- Referral rates increased significantly from September 2020 onwards when schools and colleges fully opened to all pupils.
- *New referrals for this period was **237** which meant that **76%** cases had come to the service the first time or returned after six months.
- The service endeavoured to provide case work support to all families who requested it however due to staffing issues this was not always possible, and we had to sign post to other organisations, including support with appealing SEN decisions.

*New referrals and ongoing cases:

A new referral is when a family has contacted us for the first time or contacted the service after six months of their last contact. Cases are considered ongoing when case work support has been provided (i.e. follow up/attendance at a meeting, looking through paperwork) outside of the month of referral.

Number of families supported 2020-2021



How Families heard of WIASS:

The three main ways parents/CYP found out about the service were:

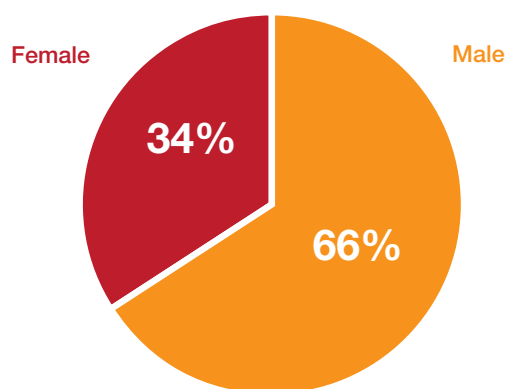
- They had used the service before or were informed by another parent
- The LA or other services/professionals including schools/colleges
- Internet

Service Reach (Postcodes):

Most of the families lived in the following localities:

- Battersea
- Roehampton/Putney
- Wandsworth

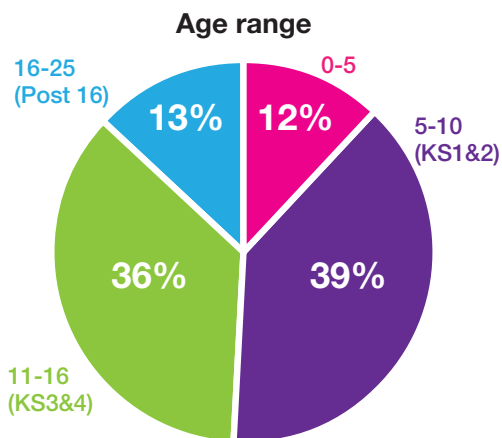
Gender



Gender

66% of all referrals were for male CYP.

34% of all referrals were for female CYP.



Age Range

Most referrals were of Primary and Secondary age pupils

- 39% Primary age
- 36% Secondary Age
- 13% Post 16
- 12% Under 5's

Education Settings

Most referrals were related to CYP who were attending a mainstream education setting.

However, 9% of the families we worked with, the CYP were out of school (compulsory school age aged 5-16) because a school placement had not been found or NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training-aged 16 or over).

Reason's children were out of school of school or withdrawn were:

- The LA had not named their parental preference in the EHC Plan
- Children who were newly arrived in the borough

Reasons why YP were NEET were:

- Not having a device to access college courses remotely

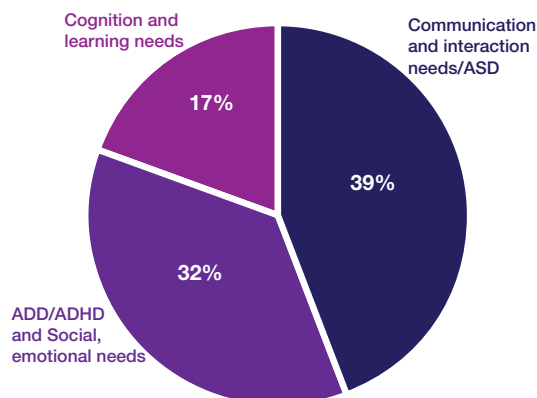
- Colleges informing YP that they needed an EHC plan to be enrolled on a course to meet their SEN.

Type of SEN

The families supported this year:

- 39% were CYP with Communication and Interaction needs - the majority in this group had a diagnosis of Autism.
- 32% were CYP with an ADD/ADHD followed by anxiety diagnosis (although many were identified with SEMH-social, emotional and mental health) needs.
- 17% were CYP with Cognition and Learning needs.

Types of SEN



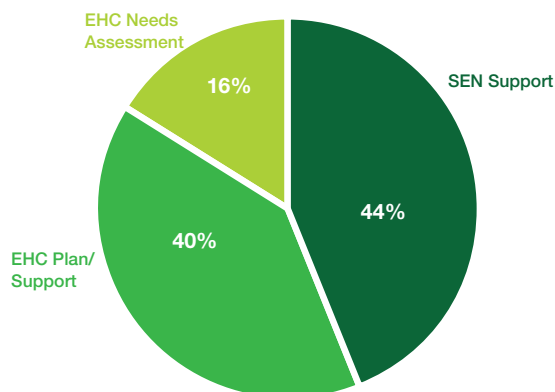
Stage of SEN Support (type of SEN support CYP were receiving at referral)

The families supported this year:

- 44% SEN Support
- 40% CYP with an EHC plan
- 16% EHC Needs Assessment



Stage of SEND Support



Reasons for Referrals:

The main reasons the service was contacted at the referral stage, were for the following reasons (in order of highest):

- EHC Needs Assessments
- SEN Support (school/college-based support for CYP without an EHC plan) in school/college

*During the pandemic a common trend we notice was parents reporting issues with a lack of progress with learning because their child was not receiving adequate support to meet their SEN needs due to remote learning.

- EHC Plans issues (delivery of provisions in Section F - support) school placements

Ethnicity:

Of the **224** families who consented to provide this information:

- **44%** were from white British families
- **28%** were ethnic groups other than white British
- **12%** were from mixed ethnic or cultural heritage

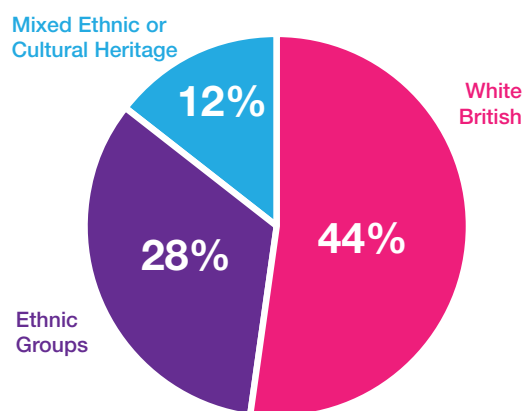
Provision of Information, Advice and Support

All IASS are expected to work towards providing advocacy support to individual CYP and their parents which:

“Empowers them to express their views and wishes and helps them to understand and exercise their rights in matters including exclusion, complaints, SEND processes and SEND appeal” -IASS Network -Minimum standard 3.4

Below is a breakdown of the data gathered to demonstrate how the service met the above standard.

Ethnicity



Breakdown of Case Work Data:

General

Complexity of cases

The service continued to use the National *IASS Network Intervention levels for IASS' to identify and monitor the complexity of case work support provided by the team - monthly and annually.

The IASS network intervention levels document (see link below) provides a descriptor for each level (1-4) with Level 3 and 4 being the most complex:

www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/documents/basketwork/Intervention%20levels%20for%20IASS%20August%202016.pdf

Case work* Intervention Levels break down 2020-21

Level	2020-2021
Level 1	41%
Level 2	49%
Level 3	10%
Level 4	0%

The table above shows that **90%** of total families required **Level 1 or 2 support** during the pandemic however we acknowledged that they may have required a higher level of support at 3 and 4 intervention level, as reported earlier on in the report this was not always possible due to staff shortages.

On average the action rate between April to August 2020 was **50 per month** whereas from September 2020 to March 2021 it increased significantly to on average of **300 per month** due to an increase in referrals and schools/ colleges fully opening.

Meetings

The service met or attended **109** meetings virtually with parents and or CYP.

The 1:1 meeting we attended with parents/CYP were mainly to,

- Support with an EHC NA (request and or during the actual assessment)
- Looking through a draft/proposed amended EHC plan

Meetings attended with parents at schools/ colleges, or the LA were for the following reasons:

- SEN Support(getting school-based support for children without an EHC plan)
- Annual Reviews of an EHC plan
- Discussion about the EHC plan provision being delivered
- Team Around the Child meetings



Appeals work

All IASS services are expected to offer impartial information, advice & support (IAS) up to and after a SEND tribunal as outlined in the IASS Network Minimum Standards 2018.

The service provided IAS to **16** parents who were given a right of appeal to Special Educational Needs & Disability Tribunal (SENDIST) for the following reasons:

- Refusal to start an Education, Health Care Needs Assessment (EHC NA)
- Contents of the EHC Plan (Section B, *C, *D, F, *G, *H & I)

*This included the new **SEND Tribunal: single route of redress national trial**: the trial gives parents and young people(aged 16-25) new rights to request recommendations about the health and social care needs and provision specified in EHC plans, in addition to the educational aspects, when making a SEND appeal

Below are key data and trends for the appeals work carried out:

- 1 The main reason that parents wanted to appeal was because of the contents of the EHC plan -mainly Section I the name of the school
- 2 **62%** of CYP had a diagnosis of Autism
- 3 **31%** were CYP who had a speech and language need
- 4 **69%** were families of primary or nursery aged pupils

Please note: As mentioned earlier in the report, due staff shortage, we were unable to support parents lodge an appeal and steps once an appeal was lodged.

Instead where possible we tried our best to support parents to resolve informally including supporting parents to prepare and/or attend Independent or informal disagreement resolution meetings.

Supporting families before obtaining a right of appeal:

This year we worked with **37** parents who would have had a right of appeal at the end of the process we were supporting with.

The main areas we were contacted for direct support were:

- Advice on or support to request an EHC NA
- Draft EHC plans(looking through)
- Annual Reviews of an EHC plan
- Change of school placement named on an EHC plan
- Delay in the LA naming a school in Section I of an EHC plan

Transport Appeals

The service was approached for support to challenge transport decisions for children with EHC plans and the majority of the support provided was to submit Stage 1 and Stage 2 appeals, which our CYP officer supported with.



Direct work CYP

The SEND Code of Practice 2015, Chapter 2 and IASS Network Minimum Standards clearly states that all IASSs must provide Information, Advice & Support directly to CYP with SEN/D with or without their parents.

The direct work is carried out by the services CYP Support Officer since 2017.

This year the number of CYP provided with IAS directly compared to previous years decreased significantly due to the lockdowns during the pandemic. Additionally several young people did not have to access to devices/data to access their college courses and information, advice, and support online. We fed back this issue of lack of access to devices to the LA and the main distributor.

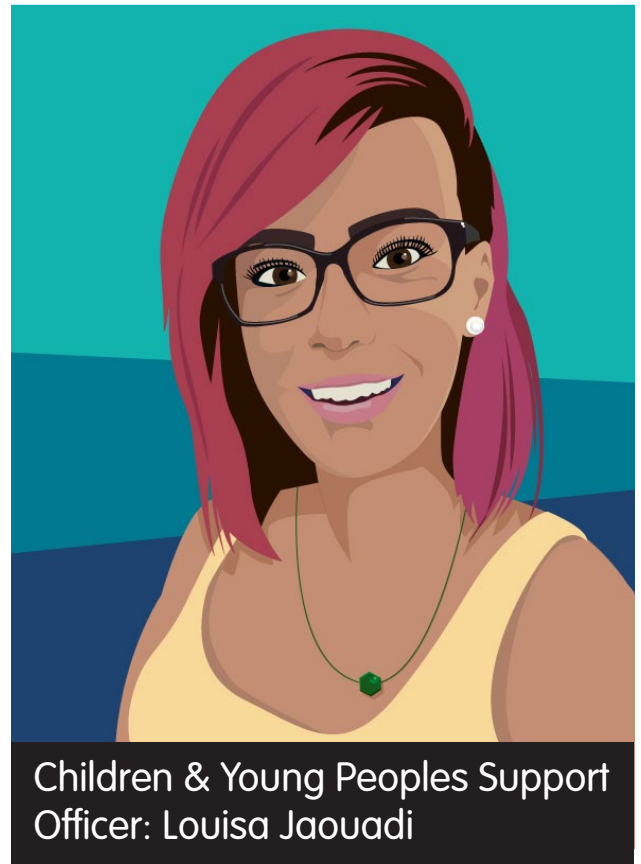
14 CYP were supported directly by the services' CYP Support Officer mainly jointly with their parents. CYP who were supported independent of their parents were mainly referred by the local college.

The service moved its South Thames College Drop In's online however take up was low for the reasons stated above.

The majority of the CYP supported had EHC plans between the ages of 16-19.

Most of the support provided to CYP were in the following areas:

- Annual Review of the EHC plan
- Post 16 Transfer-obtaining a college placement or when the college refused to enrol a young person without an EHC plan



Children & Young Peoples Support Officer: Louisa Jaouadi

Performance Indicators

Every year the service sets Performance indicators which are linked to the Service Improvement Plan (SIP). This year we adjusted these due to the staff vacancies.

Below are is a summary of the key Performance Indicators and how we did:

Service Performance Indicators	Update
100% of all messages left on the Call Back/ email service returned within 3 days (April 2020-January 2021) 5 days from February -March 2021.	100% of all messages left on the Call Back/ email service message within 3-5 days
50 of the total number of parents who used the service in 2020-2021 provided formal feedback on the information, advice, and support (IAS) received.	57 of the total number of parents who used the service in 2020- 2021 provided formal feedback on the information, advice, and support (IAS) received.
5 of the total number of CYP who were provided with direct I, A & S in 2019-20 provided feedback on the information, advice, and support (IAS) received.	0 Received
Total Number of formal feedbacks received	57



Service Evaluation

Parent Feedback

Parents are asked for formal feedback using a survey.

The survey includes the six questions the DfE expects all IASS' to ask when obtaining feedback for parents and CYP:

Please note: The variation in percentage reflects that not every parent answered each question on the survey sent to them.

Out of 57 formal parent feedback the following was fed back:

Did WIASS	2020-21
Listen to your views?	96%
Treat you with respect (where we polite)?	98%
Explain who we were and what our role was?	94%
Provide a confidential service?	94%
Give you information, advice and support (help) that met your needs?	92%
Do everything we agreed to do?	91%

How impartial (neutral, fair and unbiased do you think we were?)	88% of parents agreed the service provided was impartial.
How helpful was the information, advice and support we gave you?	70% of parents agreed that information advice and support was very helpful.
What difference do you think our information, advice or support has made for you?	75% of parents agreed that IAS provided made a difference to their situation (see Summary Report for examples of the difference the service made).
Overall how satisfied are you with the service we gave?	89% of parents were satisfied with the service provided to them
How likely is it that you would recommend the service to others?	92% of parents would recommend the service to others.



* What difference do you think our information, advice or support made?	2020-21
I feel that my child's needs are better understood than they were	12%
I feel my child is getting support and doing better at nursery/school/college as a result of the service being involved	11%
I feel my child is happier at nursery/school/college as a result of the service being involved	9%
I now have a better relationship with my child's nursery/school/college	9%
I now have a better relationship with the Local Authority (council) or services working with my child	5%
I feel more confident about giving my views to the Local Authority/School/College other services	12%
I have a greater understanding of my child and my rights, the law and the support that should be made for children and young people with Special Educational Needs or a Disability	19%
I feel more involved in decisions about my child's education	14%
I am happier/less worried about my child's future	8%
I feel less confused or overwhelmed	11%

Comments:

The main comments provided by parents on how to improve the service were to reduce the number of days that parents' calls were responded to and to reinstate the Advice Line. Furthermore parents wanted practical support when they had a Right of Appeal, lodging an appeal and support preparing for the hearing. This was not possible this year due to the staff vacancies.



Quotes from parents:

WASS has given Children and Families another positive way of looking at education, social impact on children's life, helping to improve child's confidence, and they help therefore children are in the right place.

Service invaluable, reassuring and comforting. Just what we needed in times of uncertainty. Precise and detailed information.

I can't applaud you enough. The support is amazing, and the advice is invaluable.

Very, very helpful - never heard of real people and resource to empower parents.



Final comments from the WIASS Manager

I would like to thank our CYP Support and Business Support officers for their commitment to the service and families all through the Pandemic despite of the staff vacancies and sickness. They ensured that local families and members of the community were listened to with care and empathy especially at the early stages of the pandemic and signposted to the Community Hub when required.

We want to also acknowledge and say thank you to all the parents who juggled remote learning for their children, work, other caring responsibilities.







How to contact us:



Call back service: 020 8871 8065
(24 hour answer machine)



Email: wiass@wandsworth.gov.uk



Web: www.wandsworth.gov.uk/wiass

