

West Sussex Partnership Agreement

(between Special Educational Needs/Disabilities Information, Advice and Support Service and the West Sussex County Council and West Sussex Clinical Commissioning Groups)

“Information Advice and Support Services (IASS) provide free impartial, confidential and accurate information, advice and support about education, health and social care for children, young people and their parents on matters relating to special educational needs and disability. The provision of information, advice and support should help to promote independence and self-advocacy for children, young people and parents. Chapter 2 of the SEND Code of Practice sets out the role and activities of an IASS” – taken from the national minimum standards for a IASS.

The Department for Education’s SEND Code of Practice 2015 states *“The joint arrangements that local authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) must have for commissioning education, health and care provision for children and young people with SEN or disabilities must include arrangements for considering and agreeing what information and advice about education, health and care provision is to be provided, by whom and how it is to be provided. These joint arrangements should consider the availability of other information services in their area (services such as youth services, Local Healthwatch, the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) and the Family Information Service) and how these services will work together.”*

Purpose

- To outline an agreement between the West Sussex SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (hereafter referred to as “SENDIAS”) and West Sussex County Council (hereafter referred to as “the LA”) and the 3 Clinical Commissioning Groups in West Sussex: NHS Coastal West Sussex, NHS Crawley and NHS Horsham & Mid Sussex (hereafter referred to as “CCGs”).
- The agreement will cover all the requirements outlined in the national **Minimum Standards** relating to an IASS, as set out in the Children’s and families Act (CFA) 2014, the SEND Code of Practice and on additional advice commissioned by the IASS Network. It will also cover other requirements relevant to the West Sussex SENDIAS Service.
- To identify the roles and responsibilities of all parties: SENDIAS, the LA (including Children and Adults Services), and CCGs in working together to ensure that parent carers and young people receive relevant information, advice and support in a timely manner.
- To specify the arrangements for monitoring and review to ensure that all parties are working effectively together to provide the above.

Please note: *Any wording in italic font will have been taken directly from the National Minimum Standards for an IASS.*

1. Commissioning, governance and management arrangements

1.1 *The IASS is jointly commissioned by Education, Health and Social Care in accordance with the CFA 2014, and this document will act as the formal agreement set out in writing which refers directly to the Minimum Standards, whilst also considering the need for continuity and stability of the service.*

1.2 *The SENDIAS Team Manager will ensure that the IASS is designed and commissioned with children, young people and parent carers. The LA and CCGs will ensure that the service has the capacity and resources to meet these Minimum Standards and local need.*

1.3 *The LA will ensure that the IASS provides an all year-round flexible service which is open during normal office hours and includes a direct helpline with 24-hour answer machine and call back service. This means that the caller will not have to go through any point of contact in the LA to reach the SENDIAS. The SENDIAS Team Manager will ensure that the SENDIAS also provides a signposting service, including linking to the national SEND helpline.*

1.4 *The LA will ensure that there is a dedicated and ring-fenced budget held and managed by an IAS service manager located within an IASS.*

1.5 *The LA will ensure that the IASS is seen by service users to be an arm's length, confidential, dedicated and easily identifiable service, separate from the LA, Clinical Commissioning Group and/or host organisation.*

1.5.1 *The LA will ensure that the SENDIAS Team Manager does not share the same Line Manager as the SEN Assessment Team Service Manager.*

1.5.2 *The LA will make every effort to ensure that where possible, the SENDIAS is located in a building separate from the main County Council buildings. As a minimum, it is agreed that the SENDIAS and SEN & Assessment Team (hereafter referred to as SENAT) will not share an office space.*

1.5.3 *The LA will arrange for the SENDIAS team to have a separate office space from other LA employees, to ensure that calls can be made within a confidential environment.*

1.5.4 *A decision was made by the Local Authority to put the Local Offer in the SENDIAS. By doing this, the LA agree that the Local Offer post and work is carried out at 'arms-length' from the LA, falling in line with the statutory obligations for a SENDIAS.*

1.6 *The LA and CCGS understand that the SENDIAS will act impartially and not give their own personal opinions, but all advice will be specific to national law and guidance.*

1.7 *The LA and CCGS understand that the SENDIAS will support parent carers and young people with the pathway that they choose to take. On some occasions, this will involve supporting them at a SEND Tribunal, where they are appealing Local Authority decisions.*

1.8 *The LA and CCGs understand that the SENDIAS is not able to share any information with anyone outside of the SENDIAS without the parent carer's or young person's permission (other than where there is a safeguarding concern).*

1.8.1 *The LA and CCG understand that the SENDIAS is not able to receive any information about a parent carer or young person without their permission (this includes being included in emails where SENDIAS have had no prior involvement).*

1.8.2 The LA and CCGS understand that in the majority of circumstances, the SENDIAS will only speak to those parent carers and young people who have voluntarily contacted the service themselves, and this will always be the preferred method of engagement. However, it is recognised that this may restrict some from receiving IAS from the service for various reasons. Where this is the situation, the SENDIAS will trust professional judgement and the professional will explain the service to the individual and seek their permission for the SENDIAS to call.

1.9 The LA and SENDIAS Team Manager will *ensure that potential service users, Head teachers, FE principals, SENCOs, SEND Teams, children's and adult social care, health commissioners and providers are made aware of the IASS, its remit and who the service is for.*

1.10 The SENDIAS will continue to support schools and colleges in engaging positively with parents by offering a folder of information and delivering workshops that give an overview of the 'Structured Conversation' within meetings with parent carers and which ultimately result in better outcomes for the child/young person.

1.11 The LA will ensure that there are *Governance arrangements which outline a clear management structure, encompassing a strategic manager within the IASS.* The SENDIAS Team Manager will ensure that the service has a *steering group or advisory body which includes representatives from service user groups and key stakeholders from education, social care and health.*

1.12 The SENDIAS Manager will ensure that the *IASS has a development plan reviewed annually with the steering group/advisory body, which includes specific actions and improvement targets.*

2. Strategic functions

2.1 The LA will ensure that the *IASS has a manager based solely within the service, without additional LA/CCG or host body roles. They have responsibility for strategic planning, service management and delivery, and quality assurance.*

2.2 The SENDIAS Team Manager will *engage with regional and national strategic planning and training and demonstrates effective working with other IASSs to inform service development.*

2.3 The SENDIAS Team Manager will ensure the SENDIAS *works with local partners, including local parent and young people forums to inform and influence policy and practice in the local area.*

2.3.1 The SENDIAS will follow the Co-Production Framework for West Sussex, which was agreed and signed off by West Sussex County Council SEND Core Group. The framework can be found on the Local Offer: www.local-offer.org

2.3.2 The SENDIAS Team Manager will work with the Youth Participation Officer to ensure that the service is reflecting different 'user group' needs. This will be primarily through the SENDIAS Steering Group, and agreed termly meetings.

2.3.3 The LA and CCG will ensure that a SENDIAS representative will be invited to all relevant LA/CCG meetings which involve improving information, policies and practice related to families with SEND.

3. Operational Functions

3.1 The SENDIAS Team Manager will ensure that the IASS provides; *Impartial information, advice and support (IAS) on the full range of education, health and social care as defined in the SEND Code of Practice to the following service users – a) children b) young people c) parents*

Also, that this support is offered in a range of ways which includes face to face, a telephone helpline, email, website and social media.

3.1.1 The LA and CCGs will inform the SENDIAS of any new information that is relevant to families with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This will be sent to the SENDIAS via their email: send.ias@westsussex.gov.uk. They will also make sure that all relevant services and information are included on the Local Offer and kept up to date (N.B. it has been agreed that the Local Offer sits within the SENDIAS in West Sussex).

3.2 The SENDIAS Team Manager will ensure that the IASS provides *branded information and promotional materials in a range of accessible formats.*

3.3 The SENDIAS Team will ensure that the IASS has a *stand-alone service website that is accessible to all service users. The website includes: Contact details of the service • Opening hours • Response times • Information on a range of SEND topics • Signposting to other useful groups including parent groups and youth forums and national helplines • Signposting to the Local Offer • Key policies including a complaints procedure*

3.4 *The SENDIAS Team Manager will ensure that the IASS provides advocacy support for individual children, young people, and parents that 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 appeals. All service users will be treated in a non-judgemental way, irrespective of personal opinion.*

3.5 The SENDIAS Team Manager will ensure that the IASS provides *information, advice and support before, during and following a SEND Tribunal appeal in a range of different ways, dependent on the needs of the parent or young person. This will include representation during the hearing if the parent or young person is unable to do so.*

3.5.1 The LA will understand and respect that the SENDIAS will sometimes represent parents or young people at a Tribunal Hearing and ensure that all relevant staff are aware of these arrangements.

3.6 The SENDIAS Team Manager will look for opportunities where the IASS can offer *training to local education, health and social care professionals, children, young people and parents to increase knowledge of SEND law, guidance, local policy, issues and participation.*

3.7 The Team Manager will arrange for monthly statistics to be sent to relevant Senior Managers in the LA and National Health Service (NHS). Any relevant information will then be discussed / reviewed and, if necessary, disseminated by Senior Managers to specific teams and services under their remit, within the LA and CCGs.

4. Professional development and training for staff

4.1 THE SENDIAS Team Manager will ensure that *all advice and support providing staff successfully complete all online IPSEA legal training levels within 12 months of joining the service. Volunteers who provide advice and support should complete IPSEAs Level 1 online training within 12 months.*

4.2 The SENDIAS Team Manager will ensure that the *service routinely requests feedback from service users and others, and uses this to further develop the work and practices of the service.*

4.3 The SENDIAS Team Manager will ensure that all *IASS staff and volunteers have ongoing supervision and continuous professional development.*

4.4 The LA and CCG will ensure that all SENDIAS staff have access to opportunities for regular training and attendance at relevant conferences and events, so that IAS given is accurate and up to date. This will be captured through staff appraisals and logged in the SENDIAS training spreadsheet that outlines the impact on the individual's learning, knowledge and skills.

5 Duration

5.1 This Partnership Agreement should be reviewed annually to ensure that all parties are agreeable that the partnership is working effectively, and parent carers and young people are receiving the information, advice and support they need in a timely manner.

6 Monitoring

6.1 The partnership agreement will be monitored by the 'IAS Planning Group' on an annual basis. Through the year, the SENDIAS Steering Group will refer to this partnership agreement and constructively challenge any relevant party where necessary.

Partnership Agreement Signed:

On behalf of SENDIAS:



(signature)

Name: Heather McIntosh

Title: SENDIAS Team Manager

On behalf of LA:



(signature)

Name: Danny Pell

Title: Head of Post-16 and Compliance

On behalf of CCGs:



(signature)

Name: Alison Nuttall

Title: Head of Commissioning; All Age Services

Date all signed by: 12/12/2019 Review Date: Dec 2020-Jan 2021