Introduction

Luton SEND Information, Advice & Support Service (Luton SENDIAS) is a statutory service that provides free, confidential, impartial information, advice and support for parents, carers, children and young people (up to the age of 25 years) in relation to Special Educational Needs and disability.) This is in accordance with Section 32 of Children and Families Act 2014.

Details of what the service should provide are outlined in Chapter 2 of the SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 Years - https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25

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.

Information, advice and support should be provided through a dedicated and easily identifiable service. Local authorities have established Information, Advice and Support Services (formerly known as Parent Partnership services) to provide information, advice and support to parents in relation to SEN. In addition, many local authorities provide or commission information, advice and support services for young people

Information, Advice and Support Services should be impartial, confidential and accessible and should have the capacity to handle face-to-face, telephone and electronic enquiries.

Luton SENDIAS is a member of the Information, Advice and Support Service Network (IASSN) and works to the IASSN Quality Standards. https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/information-advice-and-support-services-network/resources/ias-services-quality-standards

Luton SENDIAS operates at Arm’s length to the local authority. IASSN describes arm’s length as follows:

A service is at arm’s length when it is able to act, and is seen to act, independently and impartially, with no undue influence or control from the local authority or CCG in which it is based. Whether a service is, and acts effectively at, arm’s length is not judged by whether it is outsourced or in-house, but whether it is seen as being impartial by those parents, children, young people and professionals who use it.
What Service Users have said about Luton SENDIAS

Luton SENDIAS provides impartial, confidential and relevant information, advice and support to
- the parents of children and young people who have, or may have, SEN or a disability
- children and young people who have, or may have, SEN or a disability

This is what they have said about us

“Service provided is brilliant”

“Very Helpful”

“It made me and my son feel safer. Genuine cares and concerns with resulted in excellent support and understanding. We were treated as people and not disabilities”

“This is one of the best services for parents and as well as children. Staff is excellent and very helpful”

“Receiving help and advice from you was the best thing that could have happened for my child and myself to understand”

Governance and management arrangements

There are two SENDIAS Officers who are responsible for the delivery of Luton SENDIAS Service. They are Vicki Lloyd (0.8) and Olwen Davies (0.5). They are responsible for both the planning and delivery of services. Luton SENDIAS Advisory Group meets twice a year to consider the performance of SENDIAS and to advise and comment of the future development of the service. The terms of reference for the group were last reviewed in November 2016 and include the following aims

- to address issues raised by service users, with a focus upon promoting inclusion
- to act in a consultative capacity at a strategic level in relation to policy and service development for children and young people
The dates of the Advisory Group meetings are advertised in the termly SENDIAS Newsletter to encourage stakeholders, which include parents and young people to attend. This year we have had management representatives from the following services attend and give feedback: Luton SENAT, Educational Psychology Service and SEN Service. Representative from the following organisations have also attended Luton Parent Carer Forum, Core Assets, Centre for Youth & Community Development (CYPD) as well as individual parents.

This year Luton SENDIAS took over co-ordination of the Student Voice Forum on behalf of the Local Authority and there is an active and committed multi-disciplinary team that plan and facilitate the meetings that take place on the first Tuesday each half term. At the Luton Excellence Awards in May 2017, this multi-disciplinary team won the Commitment to the Community Award.

**Strategic functions**

The Advisory Group meetings and Student Voice Forum provide opportunities for parents, children and young people to give feedback that can inform policy and practice within the authority. Outcomes of the Advisory Group meetings have included identifying joint working opportunities and consultation on workshop planning to avoid duplication between services. It has also provided the opportunity to inform and gain feedback from stakeholders regarding IASSN initiatives including the proposed intervention levels for SENDIAS services and the National Feedback Surveys.

Over the Year Student Voice have voiced their concerns to the government regarding proposals to expand selective schools and change the requirements for faith schools, met with Sally Rowe who was at the time Corporate Director of People, prepared and delivered a presentation at the Autism Awareness Day to encourage more young people to join the forum and written articles in the SENDIAS Newsletter to encourage an increase in membership.

Luton SENDIAS continues to be an active member of the Eastern Region IASS Network. This is a forum for IAS Services across the region to share practice and expertise, exchange information, promote evidence based practice, consider and respond to national and regional policy initiatives. It also provides collaborative and mutual peer support, access relevant training opportunities. It also provides feedback to and from national and regional organisations (e.g. IASSN and the IASS Staff Association).
Provision of information and advice

Luton SENDIAS Service provides information, advice and support that

- enables the participation of parents, children and young people in decision-making relating to their education
- encourages partnership working, in order to achieve the best possible educational outcomes for children and young people
- supports parents, children and young people to have their views heard; including in situations where the views of education providers and services differ

Information advice and support is provided in line with the following SENDIAS Service Policies

- Confidentiality Policy
- Impartiality Policy
- Casework Policy

The service provides impartial information about:

- Education, health and social care
- National and local policy
- Special educational needs and processes, including the EHC assessment and planning process
- Opportunities to participate for parents/cares and young people
- Other agencies that can offer information and advice for example voluntary groups
The diagram below shows the scope of the advice and support provided this year

Information and Publications

A range of information, relating to special educational needs, is provided for parents/carers, schools, other organisations and services. A summary of the information is given below.

Newsletter

The SENDIAS newsletter, 'Luton SENDIAS Links', has continued to be widely distributed. Newsletters go out to Local Authority departments, voluntary organisations, libraries and health centres. Newsletters are available on the SENDIAS website.

Newsletters are sent out to all Luton schools / nurseries.

SENDIAS Service Website

The website includes information about Luton SENDIAS Service.

www.luton.gov.uk/sendias
Supporting Individuals

The diagram below show the numbers individuals for whom support was provided by Luton SENDIAS. The figures show that there has been an increase in both referrals for both core activities and also independent support.

The number of new cases each month for 2016-17 are as follows –
The age profile pattern is roughly similar to last year but there has been a 10% increase in referrals for children who are at primary school age.

The diagram below shows the reported disabilities of children or young people for whom information, advice or support was sought.
There was no significant change in the SEN stage at the point of referral.

Independent Support

All Independent Supporters with Luton SENDIAS have undertaken the National Council for Disabled Children (CDC) training. During this academic year Luton SENDIAS achieved the contract requirements for Phase 3 of Independent Support and were awarded Phase 4.

This funding enabled us to appoint in April 2014 a Lead Independent Supporter – Ghazala Khan and fund additional hours from existing staff to build capacity for the service and deliver Independent Support for families accessing Education Health Care assessment, planning and review activities. Between September 2016 and August 2017 there were 44 new referrals made to Luton SENDIAS for Independent Support.
Server User Feedback Report

The IASSN Quality Standards for Information, Advice and Support Services emphasise the importance of accessing the outcomes of the work done by Information, Advice and Support Services (IASS). One of the key sources of evidence highlighted in the Quality Standards is feedback from service users. 6 Core questions are used. The second key source of evidence highlighted in the Quality Standard is the impact IASS has on policy and practice. In order to start to inform this, the IASS Network has stated to collect case study examples where involvement of IASS has resulted in changes in local policy and practice.

As part of the National Feedback Survey – services were asked to collect the first 50 service users cases closed after a given start date (23 April 2017 for Luton). The cases needed to be at intervention level 2 -4.

National results

- 109 (72%) of IASS submitted a return between 1 January and 29 September 2017.
- 13 servicers included date from more than 50 service users
- 38 IASS services surveyed fewer than 50 service users, usually because they did not complete sufficient interventions within the specified time period. Luton fell into this category and have been advised in future to conduct the survey after a specific piece of work has been completed rather than wait for the case to be completed.
- The return rate of service users surveyed was 48.1%. The return rate for Luton was 87.5%

National Analysis of maximum potential score

This year the maximum possible score was 91.8%.
- 38% of services achieving 95% or more – This included Luton SENDIAS with a score of 98.2%
- Achieving 90-94.9% - 33% of services
- Achieving less than 90% - 29% of services
The core questions asked were:

**How easy was it to get in touch with us?**

- **National** 94%
- **Luton** 72%

**How helpful was the information, advice and support we gave you?**

- **National**
  - Rating 0: 1%
  - Rating 1: 2%
  - Rating 2: 4%
  - Rating 3: 12%
  - Rating 4: 82%

- **Luton**
  - Rating 0: 1%
  - Rating 1: 1%
  - Rating 2: 4%
  - Rating 3: 19%
  - Rating 4: 100%
Workshops

The overarching aim of the workshops offered by Luton SENDIAS is to help promote independence and self-advocacy through building upon service users’ skills, knowledge and confidence. Over the academic year the following workshops took place

- How to get the Best out of Meetings - September 2016
- Managing Challenging behaviour – October 2016. This was a very well received workshop with Senior Educational Psychologist, Dr Naomi Hartnell.
- Social Communication Difficulties – November 2016
  In this workshop Karen Thomas and David Whalley from the SENS team gave a general overview including looking at Autism Spectrum Disorder and Asperger Syndrome
- SEN Support and when to consider requesting an EHC needs Assessment – January 2017
  This workshop was joint delivered with Core Assets and was designed to enable parents to gain an understanding of the graduated support offered within school and college SEN support and to gain an insight into the factors that need to be considered when decisions regarding EHC Needs assessment requests. It also gave participants the opportunity to meet Independent Supporters. A handbook was written to accompany the workshop
- Transition to a New School – March 2017
  This was a very popular workshop run in partnership with Luton Parent Carer Forum. The format of the workshop gave opportunities for parents to learn from each other and a practical handout was produced to accompany the workshop.

Professional development and training

Luton SENDIAS is committed to ensuring the continuing professional development of staff. Training this year has included completion of National Legal Training Level 3, Independent Supporter refresher training and Safeguarding Level 2
Case study

Working in Partnership - Karl’s story

Karl had been identified as a young carer and he and his family were being supported by a Stronger Families worker. Karl was finding school increasingly difficult. The Stronger Families Worker thought that Karl might need an Education Health Care plan but as this was not something she knew much about she contacted IAS on mum’s behalf to ask for support. The IAS/IS worker supported mum at the next TAF meeting and was introduced to Karl. At that meeting the Educational Psychologist with Karl’s permission shared the main findings from her recent assessments and voiced her commitment to support a request for an EHC needs assessment and plan. A follow up meeting was arranged where the IAS/IS worker was able to explain what the process for seeking an EHC needs assessment was and to start to help Karl think through his aspirations for the future, and his views and comments on what had and has not helped him in school. The conversations included his thoughts and ideas about post 16 provision and the rights of young people with regards to EHC needs assessments and plans. Gaining qualifications was very important to Karl but he felt that he had fallen so behind that he would be unsuccessful in school and therefore had more or less given up on school as he felt that they had not helped him. He was highly anxious about attending school, lacked confidence in himself and had low self-esteem. He could not see himself going to college but physically brightened when he learnt that there were smaller providers he could go to. The Stronger Families Worker arranged to go with him to visit some of the providers that IAS worker told him about and this helped increase his motivation and hope for the future. With the support of the Independent Supporter from Luton SENDIAS, information was collected to support the request Karl wanted to make for himself for an EHC needs assessment. This was request was supported by key professionals who had worked with Karl. As supporting evidence was being collected and the developing submission for an EHC needs assessment drafted by the IS worker in consultation with Karl written, it was evident that Karl was becoming more hopeful about the future. The request was made in early July and Karl was able to make it in his own right. Through discussions with the Stronger Families Worker, SENDIAS adviser and Karl back up plans had been made so that Karl would have support regardless of the outcome of the EHC needs assessment request and over the summer Karl was allocated a Youth Support Worker. By this time Karl’s confidence had grown and he was thinking positively about college. The Youth Support worker took him to college open days, helped him make an application and has supported Karl in his first weeks at college. It was during his induction at college that Karl received the news that the Local Authority had agreed to his request for an Educational Health Care Needs Assessment and he is excitedly preparing for the Co-ordination meeting and enjoying college.