



Strategic Management Group (SMG) SENDIASS 13/12/22

1pm – 2.30pm

HYBRID - Room 14, Barnsley Town Hall/TEAMS Virtual

Present

SW, KP, JW, TG, LF, JV, ME, HH, SD, PS, JJ, JC

Apologies

HR, KB, KB, JHC, NW, SK (representative sent), RA (representative sent)

Invited

SB, SH, EB, AT,

1. The Chair (KP) opened the meeting by welcoming everyone back to the SMG and a welcome to the new members. An invitation was given for everyone to introduce themselves.

The Terms of Reference (ToR) have been updated and had been distributed with the email invitation to the meeting. These were requested by Head of Service (HoS) as one of the outcomes of the SENDIASS Review is to re-establish SMG as a priority. PS questioned why he had not received any communication from SW about the SMG or an invite to the meeting and neither had he received a copy of the new ToR. SW explained why these had been refreshed, this had been requested of her and they needed to be complying to the outcomes of the SENDIASS review. PS commented further that he had provided SW with an email address, and he had not received any communication from SW in the last 10 months. SW was clear that she had included PS in communications about SMG, but she would look further into this and agreed to ensure a copy of the refreshed ToR were sent to him and that she would ensure that she has PS's current up to date email address.

ACTION

Investigate emails about SMG to PS and send the refreshed ToR too.

ACTION FOR:

SW

2. The Chair welcomed SW back to SENDIASS following her secondment to BSPCA and asked for an update on what has been happening.

SW explained she had been seconded to BSPCA and a robust handover had been put in place upon exit from SENDIASS but unfortunately the staff member stepping into the management role didn't feel it was for them and stood down. Interim arrangements were then put in place. Staffing levels in SENDIASS have been an issue and have contributed to capacity issues, they continue to do so.

SW returned to SENDIASS earlier than originally planned and has taken the past month to establish herself back into the role and to become familiar with the outcomes of the SENDIASS review, SW explained it's expected that SENDIASS is delivered in line with the review outcomes going forward. SW said that the time on secondment had given so extremely valuable experiences and she had returned with a renewed enthusiasm.

SW talked about the SENDIASS review that had taken place and the TRIAGE model and recruitment and selection processes being underway. The SENDIASS review generated discussion with some members expressing confusion about why it was undertaken, poor communication around access and being aware of it and general lack of understanding as to the rationale for it. Questions were raised as to why SENDIASS and the SMG members had not been told that this was taking place. There were also concerns about it not being well advertised. SW explained an Executive Summary has been produced and published, however, BSPCA talked about a request being made to be able to see the complete review and this has not yet been issued. SW agreed to take these queries back to the Local Authority to ask for the required information. SMG members expressed the view that they should have access to the full report to support the development of the service. There was also concern that the overall aim is to outsource the service and members were seeking reassurances about the future of the service within the local area. SW agreed to raise this with Head of Service and Commissioning for a response back to the group. TR expressed the view that during SW's absence she had only been involved in one meeting with the interim SENDIASS Manager and so had not been part of any discussions around the review with SENDIASS or as SMG members. LF commented this was the same for her also. PS pointed out he had not seen any information following the review and wasn't aware there was a published executive summary.

ACTION

Feedback required about SENDIASS Review, future for outsourcing or in Borough provision of IASS in the local area. Access to full report/Executive Summary.

ACTION FOR:

SW to take to KB/SH

3. Successes in the service - SW reported staffing has changed with the two previous longer serving case officers/assistant case officer having left SENDIASS to take up new roles. Chloe had been appointed as a case worker this year to work alongside Pride. Charlotte (currently on temp contact) has been working as an information officer and has run a triage system which ensures that the right case workers are allocated to families. She has also developed a workable spreadsheet which tracks

the cases coming into the service and the allocation to case workers. This is a useful resource for being able to monitor and review the caseloads and spread of requests.

Funding has been secured to recruit further staff. This is currently going through recruitment and selection processes. There will also be further temp support up until March to help with the capacity. The new roles advertised will be a full-time case Information officer and a full-time case officer.

SW reported the enthusiasm of the current team. The staff currently have a 30 minute catch up session on a Monday morning to check in with each other to start the working week and group email communication on a Friday, so they can check in on each other and share the successes along with any difficulties. This is proving to be valuable and helping with staff wellbeing.

SW reported the challenges the service is experiencing and that capacity issues are an ongoing concern, but the triage system is helping with this. The length of time families may need to wait for return contact is currently between 5 – 10 days. The hope is that this will be reduced to 3 days when the service is staffed to full capacity, but that recruitment and selection processes take time. Currently this creates a tension with parent's carers feeling the response time is too long and so chasing up stating they have not heard anything back if they have waited a few days.

Over the past month there have been an influx of new requests coming into the service, particularly concerning mediation, tribunals, and school exclusions. SW explained these take up more officer time as they are level 3/4 case worker intervention and demand more hours than lower-level cases.

Some families have contacted the service to ask for SW to take over their cases upon hearing of her return. SW explained that as part of the review outcomes it is not expected that as manager, she will hold a high case load (although due to capacity issues will be backfilling where needed until recruitment and selection processes are completed), therefore SW is covering cases where needed. SW talked about the need to also put two case officers on some cases and that some staff are asking for a buddy due to the nature of some cases. SW stated staff wellbeing is being monitored around challenges with case work demands.

Questions and comments from the SMG members.

LH spoke about how Early Start and Family Support Workers are also struggling with capacity issues now which may also be a contributing factor to more queries coming into SENDIASS. They have however secured funding to appoint 26 new family support workers which will hopefully help to alleviate this. It was agreed that SW and LH would link up with the plan to look at what areas fall into their respective roles to ensure that queries are triaged to the appropriate place. LH talked about sharing some information with the group if there was time but if not that she would send it to SW.

ACTION

Early Help and SENDIASS to meet up to look at each remit and create a communication pathway to help families understand the difference roles and routes to right service at the right time.

ACTION FOR:

SW/LH

JW queried if it is possible to get a breakdown of the requests that are coming into the service. SW said that the spreadsheet created by Interim information officer along with the CRM enable this information to be collated and reviewed. SW explained that quarterly data is already collected and reported into the LA. However, part of the SENDIASS review is that SENDIASS Manager work

strategically and provide data into these processes, and this is also a priority target to be set up. SW talked about looking at data thematically and using a deep dive approach for strategic reporting in line with the new SEND OfSTED Inspection Framework. SW said this data could also be reported into SMG and it was agreed that this will begin at the next SMG meeting.

ACTION

Deep dive data sample reported into SMG

ACTION FOR:

SW

PS asked SW where the service development plan was querying why SW had not provided this since the last one was presented at SMG at the end of 2021. SW explained that there was an action plan, and this had been re drafted by SW since returning into the service 1 month ago and was in line with the SENDIASS review outcomes. SW reported that case work and capacity meant that until next week (end of term) when it's a little quieter due to school closures and less demand for IASS she couldn't do further work to finalise it as case work demand had taken over, more so because service staff members had also been taking leave during December which had placed further demand on capacity to provide case work on the run up to the end of term. SW pointed out when this was completed it would be sent to SMG members.

ACTION

Finalise development plan and circulate.

ACTION FOR:

SW

4. SW asked the group for thoughts about how the SENDIASS Facebook page should run. SW explained that there had been some expectations of the service by a few parents' carers that the page be used to advertise specific information and to be a more generalised information offer. SW pointed out that it was duplication to advertise things that were already on the Local Offer and other face book pages and that historically the SENDIASS Facebook page had been an engagement and communication tool to interact directly with its service users on matters relating to them and IASS in the local area. The question posed was whether it should remain as what it had been set up to be and that being a joint interactive sharing page between service users and the service, or should it be a duplicate of other pages and be advertising other groups etc and be more of a generic information page or indeed a mixture of both?

JW offered the view that this was always a connecting page between the service and its service users and always around joint issues and sharing and thus providing information, advice and support for its services users directly. JW pointed out that SENDIASS should be impartial and be able to demonstrate that. SD also added that SENDIASS should demonstrate an arm's length approach. Members agreed these thoughts were in line with their thinking too, discussion took place around this with the shared view that impartiality be at the heart of everything the service offers. It was suggested by various members that it is very easy for lots of different pages to duplicate the same information, but this was not always productive. ME talked about how before SW was seconded to the Alliance FIS and SENDIASS worked well together, meeting regularly about sharing of information and avoiding duplication, ME pointed out this had slipped during SW's absence. SW agreed there had been good collaboration between SW and ME and that it would be valuable to renew this partnership.

JW spoke about how this was a good example of joint working between SENDIASS and other services and hoped it was reflected in the review report.

Various members spoke in depth about impartiality and JW advised that social media should be a shop window to families. Working together with other groups/professionals is extremely important but we should be mindful that families may look to different services as being the ones who they trust. Discussion took place about creating a clear picture of what the SENDIASS face book's purpose is.

ACTION

Be clear and create a short policy for how SENDIASS Facebook will be an impartial offer and engage with its service users in relation to SENDIASS and its families. To share this and publish it on the website so it's clear what the purpose of the service face book page is and is not.

ACTION FOR:

SW

SD talked about requirements for a SENDIASS website is the expectation that it would be separate from the Local Authority. A discussion took place about the current website being hosted by the LA and so is not truly separate from it. SW pointed out despite trying to secure an independent website she had faced many barriers internally and in addition to this due to the ongoing costs of hosting a website and the management of it meant that if hosted by the LA then there are no on costs to managing a website. SW pointed out that as there is no money in SENDIASS budget to fund external website in the end it was necessary to have something that could be continued without reliance on external funding. SW pointed out that any information that needs to be shared to the SENDIASS page is sent to the appropriate place and they then add it to the website and that SENDIASS have complete control and autonomy about what is added and what is removed. If anyone were to request changes to the webpage apart from SENDIASS, a request would be sent to SW to check if it should be accepted and acted upon. SD added that she was aware that was a model that was also acceptable, and LH echoed the fact that the ownership of it sat with the service and no other staffs as was their experience also with their individual websites too.

SW also added that the service had permissions to post the videos it has made on you tube and will pick up this side of information and advice again and make some more coaching and training tools for families. A question was asked as to if videos could be added to the website as they do offer short, targeted information for families to help with topics such as requesting and EHC plan, what happens at mediation etc. SW pointed out that they should be on the website as the information officer had been previously tasked with that role and to also upload them to the YouTube account and this was in line with offering another platform for families who do not use Facebook to get information.

PS raised the issue of information needing by law, to be available in forms other than just online. This would be for people who may have some disabilities or who do not have access to the internet. PS suggested this is investigated and make sure that information is available in as many ways as possible. SW pointed out that this was true for all services not just a SENDIASS and the service do provide information in other platforms, for example through attendance at Local Offer drop in events, one to one session with parents etc. LH pointed out they too provide alternative platforms for sharing information through Family Centres and Libraries etc and offer the opportunity to use the internet to find out information and this is something people could be made aware about. JW asked how the DS group did this for its members. PS thought this a good question.

5. AOB - Parental worry was raised as query by JW about some of the wording in the SENDIASS review executive summary and that as the chair of the DfE funded parent carer forum he must report the view that parents and carers are concerned by the mention of the service being outsourced and what that would mean. SW said she couldn't comment as she didn't know the long-term intentions but would take this away and report back with any updates. SW said that she had also sought advice from national advisor about this too and has been advised to advise the LA to put out a statement about this too.

ACTION

Raise concerns with Head of Service and provide feedback to SMG.

ACTION FOR:

SW/KB

SMG Membership was raised by KP, and SW explained that she has received requests from parents' carers who would like to join the SMG. Since the last meeting there have been one member who had resigned which opens a space. SW felt that in the first instance a letter should be sent to thank the parent who stood down for their commitment to the group and the support they have previously given. KP queried as to how we should best go forward with filling the space. It was agreed that an invitation would be put out for parents and carers to apply. This will ensure that it is democratic and there will be a need to bring these back to the group to decide how to go forward with the once the expressions of interest once they have been received.

ACTION

Letter of thanks sent to recent parent carer members who have resigned. Scope out a process for recruiting new parent carer members to comply with ToR membership requirements.

ACTION FOR:

SW

6. SW agreed she would arrange further dates of the SMG to meet next year and distribute the invitations in early advance of those meetings to get them into calendars. These can be held face to face but also with the hybrid approach of joining via Teams if that is needed.

ACTION:

SW to scope out future dates for the coming year (in line with ToR) and send out the meeting invites before end of term.

ACTION FOR:

SW

7. Meeting closed with KP as the chair thanked everyone for their positive contributions to the meeting and for the time they gave.