

Impartial Information, Advice and Support (IIAS)

The Children and Families Act 2014 is the key legislation when we look at the provision of impartial information, advice and support about SEND to parents, carers and young people. There is a more detailed explanation of this in Section 2 of the [SEND Code of Practice](#)

All local authorities in England have a statutory duty to provide IAS in their area. The key change brought in by the 2014 Act was that the service should cover education, social care and health and not just education as with the previous Parent Partnership service Helpfully [IAS Minimum Standards](#) were introduced in 2018

IAS services are supported nationally by the Information, Advice and Support Service Network [IASSN](#). In Hertfordshire our service is [SENDIASS Hertfordshire](#) Across England there is variability in the resourcing and location of IAS services, whether they are in house (part of the LA) or commissioned services (run by a third-party organisation). The SEND Local Offer is also key in terms of the information offer to families and you can see HPCI's position statement on the SEND Local offer [HERE](#)

HPCI believes that having access to good quality information, advice and support is vital for families with SEND as this is a complex area to navigate and understand. Access to IAS can help prevent issues and situations escalating and builds families own abilities to understand and navigate the SEND world and services for themselves.

It is a positive move that recent changes in IAS in Herts have led to a single point of contact in the SENDIASS service rather than two separate services with overlapping offers. It is vital that the SENDIASS service is adequately resourced to meet growing demand and to be able to develop its offer to meet that need. This also is key if the service is to meet and maintain national minimum standards. HPCI would, however, like to see the service enabled to exceed the standards.

In our view SENDIASS is best located within the LA and not outsourced to a third-party organisation. This is because an in-house service is more easily and effectively able to access professionals in SEND services as well as share its data and feedback to influence decisions within HCC and health. HPCI's view is that there are too many conflicts of interest if the service is overseen by any single area of Children's Services and would be better placed in a customer focused area of HCC. Recent moves such as developing a new, independent website, new email addresses and presenting joint webinars with HPCI all help to improve and underline the arm's length nature of the service from HCC.