

**Service User's Advisory Group (SUAG)  
Minutes  
27 January 2021**

**Present:**

Bob Burton	Senior Caseworker SEND
Linda Pearce	Senior Caseworker Parenting Programmes
Nicolle Gallagher	Facilitator Youth Ascends
Claire Wills	Special School Head Teacher
Jenny Hutton	Early Years
Aaron Meredith	Primary Head Teacher
Anzel Lai	Parent
George Osborne	Young Person, Youth Ascends
Claire Paddon	Plymouth Parent Carer Voice
Janet Greaves-Stocker	Commissioning Officer, Plymouth Local Authority
Judith King	Project and Finance Officer
Jo Best	Project and Finance Officer

**Apologies:**

Emma Veale	Parent
Jim Barnicott	SEND Advisor, Plymouth Local Authority
Graham Rosser	Secondary Head Teacher
Matt Rundle	Parent

**1. Minutes and actions of previous meeting**

- The previous minutes were agreed.

**2. Manager's update**

- As a result of the Education, Participation & Skills (EPS) restructure Plymouth Information, Advice and Support for SEND (PIAS) has moved from direct line management from SEND to come under the remit of Access and Learning to be more clearly 'arm's length' to comply with the 'minimum standards' whilst remaining an 'in house' Local Authority service. BB confirmed that the post for the PIAS Manager will be advertised soon and we hope to have someone in place by 31 March 2021.
- To comply with 'minimum standards' both sides of the PIAS team will continue to be under the interim management of Jo Siney until the new PIAS Manager is appointed. LP reported that it is anticipated this will lead to a consolidation of the PIAS statutory SEND IAS function, and a realigning of the Parenting function to sit within the Early Help and Targeted Support Hubs going forward.

### **3. Volunteers:**

- Six volunteers commenced their training at the beginning of November and four have managed to complete all of the IPSEA training which PIAS managed to obtain free. All six are very keen and have engaged well with training. Part of the funding for the Information, Advice & Support programme is that we put together a plan for moving forward next year and we are looking ahead to take on another four volunteers.
- PIAS have been able to ensure that all of the volunteers have had access to suitable IT equipment which has enabled them to fully participate in the training and the volunteer role. All have commenced the IPSEA legal training and aim to be ready to sit the Face to Face training in March 2021. Once the face to face training is completed they will be equipped to offer legal advice to service users, under the supervision of the senior caseworker.

### **4. Information, Advice and Support Programme (IASP) funding Update:**

- The November monitoring report has been submitted. The Council for Disabled Children were happy with the report and the reasons why three of the tasks had been delayed was due to Covid 19. We will need to get the remaining tasks completed to ensure that the full funding is received. More on that in the next couple of months.
- We are not expecting any additional funding from the Council for Disabled Children.

### **5. Parenting Update:**

- *Delivery overview*  
Following on from the update provided for the September meeting, the parenting team have completed both a full length Incredible Years (IY) Basic 3-6 programme pilot in partnership with Barnardos Plymouth, and an IY Autism Spectrum/Speech & Language Delay 2-5 programme pilot in partnership with Action for Children Devon. The team have also completed the series of five 7 week taster IY programmes, to offer as many families as possible virtual support over the Autumn Term. The team received training on Microsoft Teams and took part in a webinar from Caroline Webster-Stratton from Incredible Years which gave us the confidence to run groups virtually.
- Of the 63 parent/carers allocated to a virtual course, 23 took up the offer, with an 84% retention rate evidenced. This has been very encouraging for the parenting team in their inaugural virtual group delivery.

- From October 2020, a full length SPOKES programme has been completed virtually with Virtual School carers, and a further five full length IY programmes have started, with another about to start in partnership with Barnardos. A SPOKES programme has been planned with Beechwood School families but has now been delayed due to the national lockdown. At this point a further 104 parent/carers have been allocated to a virtual programme, with 41 taking up the offer of a place. These courses are either ongoing or about to start.
- JB reported on the fantastic feedback received from our SPOKES online courses and we now have another seven schools on our waiting list who wish to go ahead with an online SPOKES programme. LP stated that the demand is there but we are a very small team.
- LP reported we have received positive feedback from parents regarding the online forms we have used for the IY Virtual programmes. If anyone wants to see them, LP can share.
- The team haven't been able as yet to run a Strengthening Family programme due to the three part nature of the programme and the challenges young people would face having a group separate from parents whilst at home with parents. To provide support for families waiting for it to be safe to run the Strengthening Families tri-partite programme we have delivered a 7 week IY School Age course aimed at parent/carers of 10-12 year olds and are about to start another. These families will then be offered Strengthening Families as soon as guidance allows.
- *Education Psychology Assistants (EPAs)*  
We are excited to have the four new EPAs with us for part of their placement time with the Educational Psychology Service. As well as being a valuable training experience for them, they have already added significant capacity and value to the work of the parenting team. LP reported that they have all been 'a godsend', it wouldn't be possible to deliver what we are delivering without their support.

CW asked if PIAS have advertised this year for Educational Psychology students on the website. LP confirmed that the EP service are keen to give the students a broad experience and part of their time is on placement with us working with our families. CW stated that anyone can advertise offering placements for EP students in a field that's relevant, she has information on this for anyone who's interested.

- *Returning to face to face group delivery (Covid permitting)*  
Discussion with Barnardos regarding a possible pilot Covid risk assessed small group IY co-delivery has now been put on hold in line with National and Local guidance based on the increased level of local infection risk and duty of care to staff and families. This will continue to be reviewed.

- *Covid-19 Parenting Help Line*

As part of our response to the pandemic, the PIAS parenting team have been supporting the case work team and responding to calls from parent/carers by providing additional phone support around strategies for managing being in lockdown with children, often with special needs. Where significant concerns have been identified, and with parental consent enquiry details have been sent through to the Educational Psychology and Communication Interaction teams via Dr Alan Ebbens, for specialist phone support. (See Annual Report 2019-2020)

JK stated that she has received quite a few enquiries from parents of different age groups who are distraught at the moment who have welcomed a 1:1 support call. It was mentioned that the reason why only 41 of 104 took up a place on a parenting course was that these figures were from a backlog list from the Covid year and also some parents were not able to engage as they now have their children at home.

## 6. Youth Ascends update

- Since the last SUAG Youth Ascends had two meeting before the summer term ended.
- Young people continued to have quizzes on Microsoft Team and spoke about how they are feeling with the pandemic.
- Young people produced a Covid-19 questionnaire and it has been sent out to young people of Plymouth to find out how they have been coping during lockdown.
- Young people have been asked to produce another questionnaire around the transition back into education during this time – this is ongoing
- Having sessions virtually has been difficult for our young people for example feeling they aren't getting the full experience from the group – missing that face to face contact – not being able to speak about things or issues if an adult was present or in the next room
- GO reported that they had a meeting last Thursday with Barnados which was exciting.
- GO and NG have discussed the possibility of some of the group assisting those that want jobs working with young people.
- NG reported that the young people have been involved in the 10 Wishes Project which will be launched mid March. The 10 Wishes Project is what young people would like from professionals when they attend a meeting and how they engage with them.
- The Celebration event, which was due to go ahead this March, has had to be postponed for another year due to the extension of lockdown.
- NG stated that the online meetings have started again and are proving more successful this time, a lot of young people are now used to being online.

## 7. Annual Report

A discussion took place on the in-depth Annual Report.

- JG-S asked BB for further information concerning, for example, numbers of families we have supported so that she can start to understand what those figures mean in terms of what the team is achieving, what's the impact of our service. JG-S already has a template she could send to PIAS for us to complete from the data PIAS already hold. We could then share it with this group.

**Action - JG-S to send the template to BB for completion**

- Claire Wills – Noted the increase in tribunals almost trebling from 2018/19 to 2019/20. Bob stated this was the case across the country.

**8. Meeting dates**

- BB suggested June 2021 followed by October 2021.  
**Action – BB to send dates out to the group.**

**Acronyms:**

DFE	Department for Education
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
IAS	Independent, Advice and Support
IY	Incredible Years (Parenting Programme)
PIAS	Plymouth Information, Advice and Support
SPOKES	Supporting Parents on Kids Education in Schools
SUAG	Service Users Advisory Group
Youth ASCENDS	Youth Acting to Spread Cohesion and Educate about Needs, Disability and SEN (Special Educational Needs)
EPS	Education, Participation and Skills
EPA	Educational Psychology Assistant
IPSEA	Independent Provider of Special Education Advice