



# **SUPPORTIVE PARENTS**

*Support for parents, children  
& young people about SEND*

# **Annual Report**

**1st April 2016 - 31st March 2017**



## Annual Report: 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 - 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017

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### **Supportive Parents – the SENDIAS Service in Bristol, North Somerset & South Gloucestershire**

From 1st September 2014 the Parent Partnership Service in every local authority became the Information, Advice and Support Service. Supportive Parents continues to provide free, confidential and impartial information, advice and support (IAS) to parents and carers, children and young people with any type of special educational need and/or disability (SEND). We also offer support to young people aged 16 – 25 with SEND, in line with the requirements of the Children and Families Act 2014.

Our IAS service covers all aspects of SEND from the earliest stages of concern, through SEN Support in schools to support during statutory assessment, which may lead to an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and beyond. This includes social care and health concerns, appeals, complaints and exclusions where SEND is identified. We liaise with and work in partnership with Parent Carer Forums, other parent groups and vol sector services and organisations in each authority. In many authorities, the SENDIAS Service is provided by a local government officer, but government guidance supports as best practice the model of arms-length independent service delivery as provided by Supportive Parents. We believe that in the foreseeable future parents, children, young people and professionals, will continue to need and benefit from the service we provide.

### **Our objectives**

Supportive Parents has 5 primary strategic goals:

1. To support all parents, their children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, ensuring that they have equal educational opportunities.
2. To publicise the service, and to provide parents, children, young people and professionals with accurate unbiased information.
3. To provide training for parents and others on SEND processes and to enable parents of children and young people with special educational needs to support each other.
4. To encourage parents, voluntary groups, schools and other professionals to work more closely together in the interest of the children and young people, and to support strategic planning and service development by the Local Authority.

5. To voice the views of parents and young people, to ensure that their voices directly influence the development of local SEND services, policy and practice.

### **Our goals**

Supportive Parents has 3 primary operational goals:

1. To provide parents, children and young people with information and training so that they are well-informed about the range of services available to support them and to have increased understanding of the SEN process;
2. To provide parents with support so that they become more confident of their expertise in relation to their own child, enabling them to work more effectively in partnership with their child's education setting and with the Local Authority; and
3. To encourage families and professionals to work more closely together in the interests of, and improving outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs.

### **Some of our achievements in 2016/17 included:**

- Contributing regionally and nationally to advisory groups on Quality Standards, commissioning of mediation service and the work of the First Tier (SEND) Tribunal.
- Holding an autumn networking event to showcase our service.
- Securing DfE funding to deliver phase 4 of the Independent Support Programme. This additional funding will allow us to continue to deliver our enhanced and extended service until 1st April 2018, including retention of trained staff.
- Recruiting new members of staff to the organisation, including a link worker (who will improve service delivery of our helpline and in-house communications) and a new member of our IAS team (Bristol-based helpline post).
- Recruiting existing in-house staff to vacant posts within the organisation – to Bristol Local Coordinator and Deputy Head of Service (from South Glos Coordinator) following retirement of the incumbent to that post – to South Glos Coordinator (from a helpline-based IAS team post) – our retiring Local Coordinator has returned to us, stepping across to fill the consequently vacant helpline post and allowing us to retain her exceptional skills and providing additional expertise to our helpline service. Another of our helpline staff has moved into an LA-based post in S. Glos.
- Refreshing our existing publications including a redesign and reissue of our trifold (hook) leaflet and revision to our animations to update and improve accessibility.
- Recruiting a new Trustee to our Board.
- Delivering presentations about our service and about SEND reforms, to EP doctoral trainees at Bristol University, and to SENCOs, parents and professionals across 3 authorities.
- Delivering a termly issue of our newsletter and regular e-bulletins to our service users, voluntary sector and other professionals, including a range of settings and services.

- Delivering our annual service user satisfaction survey – contributing to a national pilot.
- All staff are continuing to update their skills, completing accredited legal training in relation to new legislation, regulations, statutory guidance and safeguarding.
- Continuing to develop use of our data management systems and reporting so that our processes are streamlined, transparent and secure, and provide quality data to our trustees and to our commissioners to support service development. We advise LAs both on the delivery of our service against set targets and of the level and extent of need and successful outcomes demonstrated by our service-users.
- Raising grant funding to allow us to refurbish our office, improving the environment for staff and for service-users, improving storage of confidential material, increasing amenity and improving access to resources, accurate information and our service.
- Improving our telephone system so that callers no longer get an engaged tone during live helpline sessions but can leave a message, so that call-back is speedier and more calls are responded to directly.
- Raising grant funding to enable us to improve data security and sustainability by upgrading our IT systems and replacing outdated equipment for key staff.
- Updating and delivered a 4-session parent course to parent-carers on SEND.

**Our goals for 2017-18 include:**

- Raising grant funding to enable us to undertake innovative service improvements, including recruitment of additional training capacity to increase our offer, both in-house and across the region we cover. This will include training and upskilling our Local Coordinators to deliver our parent course in each LA in the coming year.
- Leading a regional peer network which aims to develop and support our service delivery by using our national Quality Standards.
- Delivering an event for parents and professionals in summer 2017.
- Securing DfE funding to deliver continuing Independent Support beyond March 2018, transferring developments into sustainable practice and retaining trained staff, with a particular focus on our post 19 offer and increased helpline capacity.
- Recruiting and successfully inducting new staff across the organisation as required.
- All staff completing accredited legal training in the new legislation, to level 3.
- Updating our website and raising grant funding to allow us to develop a new linked but separate website for young people aged 16-25, which is guided by a focus group of young people, so that it is purposeful and accessible.
- Updating our Business Plan, Strategic Action Plan, Business Continuity Plan and Hazard Analysis for 2017-19.

- Purchasing additional IT equipment and improving our IT system, to support our staff and improve security of data, efficiency and flexibility of working.
- Recruiting new Trustees to the board, specifically with expertise in funding and finance

## **Our Team**

### **Supportive Parents' Board of Trustees 2015-16**

Carolyn Sims – Chair

Chris Gardner – Deputy-Chair – Chair, Employment Sub Group

Anne Bush – Treasurer - safeguarding

Moira Lloyd - Training

Meryl Woodgate - Trustee

Maya Vaitilingam – fundraising

Sue Osborne – fundraising – Health & Safety (appointed 1<sup>st</sup> July 2015)

Liz Kelly - co-opted member of Board of Trustees (as of September 2016)

The role of Company Secretary is carried out by Maggie Potter, Head of Service.

**Day to day management of Supportive Parents is delegated to the staff team. They are currently:**

**Head of Service**

**Deputy Head of Service (currently also a Local Coordinator)**

**Office & Finance Manager**

**Information & Communications Coordinator**

**3 Local Coordinators (one for each Local Authority)**

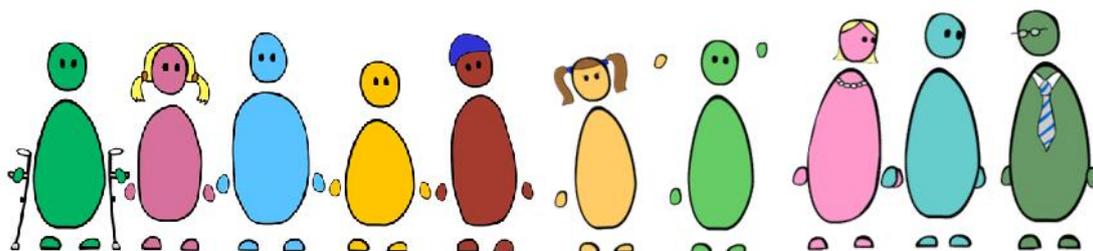
**Post-16 Coordinator**

**8 Information, Advice & Support Team members**

**Independent Examiner:**

Lloydbottoms  
Chartered Accountants  
118 High Street  
Staple Hill  
Bristol  
BS16 5HH

Tel (0117) 957 3537  
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### **Report from our Chair of Trustees – 2016-17**

This last year has brought more changes, more challenges and more demands on us as parents and carers, on our children and young people with SEND and on the services which support us. Upheavals and cut-backs continue as the political situation unfolds, as our schools become academies and austerity continues to bite.

For our service, the year has hopefully provided more opportunities to provide information, advice and support, to help achieve better outcomes for all our service-users. We are pleased that continuing funding from our Local Authorities, the Department for Education, grant funders and even our local supermarkets has allowed us to continue to do more and reach out to our communities more effectively. We have never felt more necessary, or more in demand! This has allowed our service to respond to the needs of those who call on us and to build on and develop our ways of working.

We have brought in three new posts this year – a Post-16 Coordinator, a Helpline Link Worker and an Information and Communications Coordinator – to ensure that we have the capacity, resources and skills to continue to make a difference in the lives of those affected by SEND. Many of our staff have moved into new and more demanding roles within the organisation and we have also succeeded in recruiting some incredibly skilled and committed new members of our team.

Sadly two of our most experienced and long-serving members of staff have left us and I would like to thank Davina Evans (Deputy Head of Service and Bristol Coordinator) and Jackie Oxley (North Somerset Coordinator) for their long years of commitment and dedicated support. Equally, we had to say farewell to one of our trustees – Lorri Farrell. We wish them all the very best for the future.

However, I'm really delighted that Davina has continued to support us by offering us a couple of sessions each week on our helpline. The number of families we support continues to increase significantly, year on year, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our staff for their hard work and dedication. Their commitment to ensuring that all service-users get the best possible outcome is as remarkable as it is inspiring.

I would also like to thank my colleagues on the Board of Trustees for their dedication and hard work too. There is ongoing interest by committed individuals to joining our Board, so welcome this year to Liz Kelly. We continue to need trustees – especially with financial expertise - and we welcome your interest. Please contact us if you would like to find out more about joining us.

We have also continued to work closely with other groups and organisations in the sector – Parent Carer Forums, other voluntary organisations like Contact a Family, Kids, Bibic and Cerebra – and consequently continue to look forward to the future with confidence in our capacity and expertise. Partnership working equals more impact!

After almost 20 years in our office we have had to think seriously about refurbishing – especially when we started to trip over holes in the carpet! A lot of outdated information (and dust!) can collect on shelves and in electronic files in that time! We finally had to accept that we needed to update or archive our resources and refurbish our premises to improve the working environment for staff and for our service-users – an arduous and moderately costly exercise – and I would like to thank Quartet for a grant towards improving soundproofing and replacing the carpet. However greatest appreciation goes to staff who supported by clearing, moving, packing (or discarding) many years of accumulated “stuff” ..... and picking the old blu-tac off the walls! Special mention goes to Carlyne Ablitt and Maggie Potter who, with able support from Rhiannon Chaloner, Frances Mallender and Carlyne's son Dan, oversaw the final activity during the summer holiday. It was such hard work, but has been a resounding success.

I would like to end with a personal message. I am proud to be chair of such a fantastic organisation which is needed as much, if not more, than it was when I helped its formation 28 years ago, so I'd like to encourage you to join us and make a difference! Support us.....help us to continue to do the work that we do. Even the smallest contribution to our work can make a positive impact on the outcomes for families and for children and young people and we welcome your support.

**Carolyn Sims, Chair of Trustees, June 2017**

### **Treasurer's Report**

Local Authorities are now under a statutory duty to provide information, advice and support for parents (carers) who have children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disability and for young people with SEND up to 25 years of age. Supportive Parents recognised the need for this help and support in getting the right education for individuals as early as 1989 and began providing this locally through the establishment of the charity. Eventually the government recognised the importance of this work and required local authorities to provide it. The three local authorities who provide our funding recognised the excellent work the charity had been doing over many years and chose to meet their statutory duty by continuing to support us in this work.

At the time of this report we have completed the first year of separate three year funding agreements with North Somerset, Bristol and South Gloucestershire. It should be noted that the funding amount provided has not increased since 2011 – nevertheless we appreciate the confidence shown in us by the continued funding over many years.

For the past three years we have also received funding from the Department for Education via the Council for Disabled Children, to extend our service, including the provision of help and support for the transfer of individual children and young people from the old “Statement of Special Educational Needs” to the new “Education, Health and Care Plan” designed to meet their needs more appropriately. We have expanded our service to meet this need but currently the funding is due to end at March 31<sup>st</sup> 2018.

Our day-to day finances are managed very well by Carolynne Ablitt, our Office and Finance Manager, and decisions about additional spending are carefully scrutinised by both her and the CEO. A financial report of income and expenditure is made to the trustees at each meeting, and the overall annual income and spending is subject to an Independent Examination. The Independent Examiner completes a summary of the Accounts to be added to the formal Trustees Report for the year and has to be satisfied that anything in the Trustees Report is justified by the financial record. The resulting document – the Trustees Report and Accounts 2017 – is agreed by a Trustees’ meeting and presented to the members of Supportive Parents at the AGM. The document is then made available to the Charity Commission and Companies House, and can be viewed on their website.

In 2016/17 we planned to spend a specified amount of reserves in addition to income in order to make necessary improvements to the office and ITC systems. The Accounts demonstrate that we have met these objectives in a very satisfactory way.

As treasurer I should like to compliment the staff as a whole for exceptionally prudent budget management – keep up the good work!

**Anne Bush, Treasurer, June 2017**

### **Manager’s report: Maggie Potter, Head of Service**

Supportive Parents provides the SEND Information, Advice and Support (SENDIAS) Service for Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire via a Service Level Agreement which requires us to deliver against the duties identified in the Children & Families Act and the SEND Code of Practice.

SEN Code of Practice, s2.1: 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 special educational needs or disabilities, including matters relating to health and social care. This must include information, advice and support on the take-up and management of Personal Budgets.

Currently our SENDIAS service is available in term time, with a reduced service available in school holidays. We aim to offer an accessible, flexible, responsive service. In addition to our 3 weekly helpline sessions we respond to all answerphone messages and emails within 2 working days, in term time. We can offer face-to-face meetings, support with paperwork and support at meetings. **We have provided information and support to 3079 enquiries (including 800 families) through our Information and Support Line during the last year.**

We provide a website, LinkedIn, Facebook and twitter plus a regular e-bulletin and a termly newsletter for parents and professionals.

We deliver monthly peer networking/parent support groups which includes regular speakers on items of interest. We also provide presentations and courses on SEND and related issues to parents and professionals, and can provide presentations to groups on request. We offer drop-in sessions for parents in community settings – e.g. colleges, schools and Early Years settings – parents and young people value networking opportunities and face-to-face communication.

We identify and work in partnership with any other local/national provider of services for families of children & young people with SEND. We support and signpost parents and young people to find and access other services, including social care/leisure activities and short breaks provision. This also allows us to highlight shortfalls in provision to the local authority.

Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014 introduced changes to the system of SEND support and provision, implemented from September 2014. These included:

- Giving parents and young people control over the decisions about the support they receive
- The replacement of SEN statements and learning disability assessments (LDAs) with new, child-centred, birth-to-25 Education, Health and Care plans (EHC plans)
- The offer of a personal budget to all parents and young people with EHC plans
- A duty for local authorities to provide a Local Offer which will outline the education, health and care services available locally to all young people and families, and to disabled young people and their families more specifically.

In order to support families of children with SEND and young people, build confidence and support local areas in implementing the SEND reforms, SENDIAS Services are tasked with supporting families through change to ensure that children and young people with SEND can take full advantage of developments in SEND policy and provision.

**Changes to staffing:** 2016 has seen the biggest turn-over of staffing in our history. Our Development Programme Coordinator came into post to support our service development following the Children and Families Act in 2014. Clive Osborne left in 2016 and we decided to recommit this funding to develop our offer for young adults. Kirsty Cottier moved across from our IAS team to take up this post in April 2016 and we also appointed an Information and Communication Coordinator in the same month. Frances Mallender works to produce up-to-date SEND information and manages our newsletter and social media.

In addition to these new posts we have had quite a number of in-house moves – all following a vigorous assessment of skills and competences - and we would like to thank all our valued members of staff, who have supported us so positively and actively through a period of huge changes. We would also like to welcome Jo Daghish, Kirsty Armitage and most recently Kate Hale as new members of our team.

In particular Davina Evans retired from her Bristol Local Coordinator/Deputy Head of Service post in December 2016 and at the start of the year Jackie Oxley, North Somerset Coordinator, decided she would leave and we wish her all the very best for the future. In January we appointed Kathryn Mason as Bristol Local Coordinator and Deputy Head of Service, vacating the South Gloucestershire Local Coordinator's post in consequence. In February we were delighted to welcome Davina back; she is now lending her considerable expertise to this work and currently offers us two helpline sessions a week during term time.

Santie Human has now taken over as South Gloucestershire Local Coordinator and we were also pleased to appoint Sarah Trevitt as North Somerset Local Coordinator.

**Welcome to our new Trustee:** SP are always looking for new Trustees and we are pleased to confirm that Liz Kelly joined our Board in September 2016. We would like to give our very best wishes to Lorri Farrell who had to step down in October 2016 due to personal commitments.

**INDEPENDENT SUPPORT for the EHCP assessment process:** An EHC plan should be seen as a 'living' document and not one to be put on the shelf once it's completed. As children grow, their aspirations change and develop and they become bright young adults with their own ideas and dreams. Good planning depends on trust between professionals and families; trust that often takes time to nurture and develop. It is so important that people have a voice and can make informed choices – which will in time hopefully lead to better life chances for young people.

Independent Support (IS) is a Department for Education (DfE) programme to support young people and their parents during the EHCP assessment process. Supportive Parents have secured continuing funding to deliver this service until 2018.

A recent survey of the experience of those receiving an EHCP asked parents and young people if they had heard of or used a range of different services and awareness was highest for SEND IASS. Over half (55%) had heard of IASS (in contrast 43% had heard of the Local Offer and 20% had heard of IS). 26% had used IASS, 14% had used the Local Offer and only 7% had used IS. More specifically 66% had been informed about IASS with 81% going on to use the service and this was associated with a more positive experience of the EHCP process.



A report by NDTi identified IASSs as a low-cost service, compared to IS and provided strong evidence of satisfaction from over 940 users of IASS from across the country:

- 94% of users thought the IAS provided by their local service was helpful
- 96% said their local IASS was “very neutral, fair and unbiased”
- 90% of users thought IAS made a difference and
- 95% of service users would recommend IASS to others

#### **What people say about us.....**

##### **Parent's comments:**

*“just to provide you with an update following your advice earlier this year. We went through mediation with a representative from [the council] – with E's school also present. Following mediation the school re-submitted E's EHCP application and we have today been notified that he is going to be assessed.”*

**Thank you for the help and support that you provided to us.**

**To all the team, just want to say a big thanks for all you did for [our son] ..... We visited him again yesterday at college and he has made tremendous progress. He now feeds himself, takes part in preparing meals, is much more independent around the college, takes part in college activities, initiates social interaction, is getting the key one to one support he needs to become more independent. He is loving life, as are all the people who support him. We feel this would not have been possible without all your support..... Thanks once again**

*'Hi, I thought that you would like to know that our son had been invited to Buckingham Palace to meet the Royal Family on 23rd of May. This is because of the work he does and the talks he does about bullying. He has already won an 'Anne Frank' award from [the] Council last year.*



*He is flying high at college and has been living out in the community since September with minimum support. Also,*

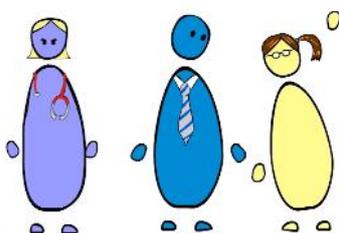
*we have just got third year funding for next September. We would like to thank you once again. We realise if it had not been for your experienced and professional advice and support, we would never have gotten through this with the right decision for our son and his future. He does not know yet, but as you have been on this rollercoaster ride with us, we would like you to tell other parents that dreams do come true!'*

**Thank you so much for all this, you must have taken a lot of time and it's very much appreciated. This is such great support. I will have a proper read through when I get home from work. It's reassuring to see I can progress this now.**

**Professional Comments:** ADHD parent course: "A big thank you to our guest and yourself. A job well done!" Charmaine Lynch, Barnardo's HYPE Team

"Thank you so much for supporting autism awareness week....We have had really positive feedback from the week and lots of people now know more about autism than they did before, which is great!" from Weston College

Visit to Tourette's Action: "It was lovely to see so many yesterday at the support group meeting. And thank you to Santie and Sara from Supportive Parents for their contribution. Best wishes, Jo and Lindsay (Tourette's Action)"



"Thank you so very much for your comprehensive and detailed reply. It was so kind of you to spend the time doing this and I greatly appreciate it. I now feel I was almost there at those workshops!"

From Integra Schools, S Glos Inclusion Support Service, following attendance at the Integra Autism South West Conference, November 2016

"I was really pleased that you came to the briefing it is so helpful for school staff to see us all together." Principal Education Psychologist, following attendance at the SENCO briefings March 2017

"The PowerPoint that accompanied the handout sheets was clear, concise and very accessible. The format on the sheets was excellent, bold font, brief summaries, simple and easy to comprehend, informative." ".....I particularly liked the interactive activities" "very good handouts and high-quality information": Review workshop at Weston College

**Consultations and strategic work:** We facilitate parent participation events and we work closely with the Parent Carer Forum. Our Local Coordinators work at a strategic level with our Local Authorities to support strategic planning and implementation of SEND reforms, including development of processes and procedures related to EHC plans and personal budgets and to support the delivery of the Local Offer and person-centred approaches. For a detailed overview of the work they have been engaged in this year, take a look at their locality reports.

Supportive Parents runs monthly support groups for parents and professionals and all Local Coordinators regularly visit other local groups run by parents, educational settings and local voluntary organisations in each authority. Regular visits from speakers have ensured that parents and carers find out about changes and developments in their local authority. In addition, members of the team sit on regional advisory groups in addition to contributing directly to local strategic developments on SEN and services for children with SEN and disability.



Our work to support the Parent Carer Forums (PCFs) continues to enable and empower the voice of parents to contribute to strategic planning and delivery of statutory services for children and young people with SEND, and their families. We work closely at a national and regional level with our SENDIASS colleagues in other authorities and with the DfE (via IASSN; the national IAS Service Network), SENDiST (First-tier Tribunal - Special Educational Needs and Disability), Global Mediation, Council for Disabled Children and Contact a Family. We have regular meetings with KIDs, the voluntary organisation which also provides IS, and with the PCFs and senior LA managers. We also sit on regional advisory groups on disagreement resolution (mediation) and SENDiST. Regionally we have led a peer review of national Quality Standards for IASS services and we have contributed at a national level to development of the Quality Standards and to the development of an evaluation framework for our service.

**Training for staff:** In light of the new legislation staff training has been an ongoing significant burden on the organisation and we are deeply appreciative of the commitment and enthusiasm that all members of our staff team have evidenced, in their determination to become fully prepared to offer skilled and confident information and support to our service-users.

All staff have now completed level one accredited legal training in SEND. All staff have completed the on-line modules for level two and are in the process of becoming fully accredited at this level. All key staff are now accredited to level three and the rest of our staff



are in process of completing the electronic modules. In addition, all staff have completed additional training on writing good Education Health Care Plans, time management and prioritisation, and our accredited safeguarding training has just been refreshed. Key staff have also completed training in tribunal processes and procedures and in preparing for adulthood: engaging with young people and young people's rights. We have delivered in-house training on anti-bullying, mental capacity and the Care Act for all operational staff. Our Office & Finance Manager has completed her NVQ level 3 in Information Technology.

We remain determined to offer the best service possible to our clients, and competent support and advice to other professionals who are working to navigate or interpret legislation, regulations or statutory guidance to achieve best outcomes for children or young people with SEND and their families.

**Training for parents: Supportive Parents FREE course “SEND and You”** – Supportive Parents’ free course “SEND and you” ran four weekly sessions from 21<sup>st</sup> February with ten parents from Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire completing the course. Our course includes an overview of current SEND legislation, an exploration of the experience of being a parent of a child with SEND, the processes involved in assessing and providing support in settings including surviving meetings and working in partnership with professionals, with a specific focus on effective communication and the statutory assessment process. Parents heard about our course via the Parent Carer Forum as well as through our own advertising.

We hope that in the coming year we will be able to access grant funding to enable our Local Coordinators to complete training in delivering this course, so that in future we will be able to offer it separately across the three LAs on an annual basis.

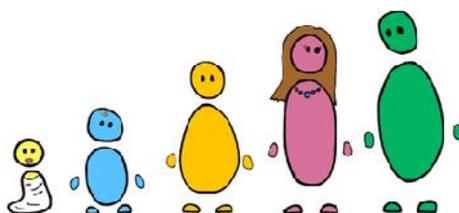
**The participant’s feedback was positive:** What I got from the course:

- “Information, ideas and confidence! Thank you – it’s been great!
- “How to approach meetings – the bigger picture – how to proceed with confidence. Brilliant!
- “Deepening of knowledge on SEND, experiencing other’s histories, tools for practice”

**Additionally we network closely with professionals** from both the statutory and voluntary sectors including health and social care, sharing developments and changing practice with a range of professionals across all 3 authorities. Staff regularly attends regional networking meetings; a crucial opportunity to share good practice across the South West and feed up issues, concerns and comments on national developments to DfE.

**Training for professionals:** A key aim of delivering presentations is to raise the awareness of professionals to the significance and uniqueness of the part played by parents in the education of children with special educational needs, the promotion of the importance of partnership between parents and professional and the critical significance of listening to the voice of the child or young person in achieving best outcomes. Supportive Parents always encourages positive, effective relationships between parents and with professionals, to the benefit of children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disability.

**Professionals told us:** “Really insightful and interesting – particularly the descriptions of what it’s like for the parent in various situations”. “Passionate! Activity was really engaging and helped demonstrate the points made – very relevant to our job role!” “Really informative session – interesting to hear more about the service – clearly have lots of knowledge.”



**Thanks to everyone for all your hard work in 2016/17!**

**How we make a difference.....**

**A report of the work of our Information, Advice & Support (IAS) Helpline:** It’s been busier than ever on the helpline this year. We now have a team of 8 trained advisers who work across three sessions each week during term time, providing telephone and email support to parents and young people from North Somerset, Bristol and South Gloucestershire. They are independently legally trained to provide an impartial, accessible and free service to all callers.

The team works tirelessly to support parents to deal with concerns about SEN provision, EHCP applications, refusal to assess, exclusions, funding issues and how to access health services. We are attending an increasing number of annual reviews as well. Our IAS team supports parents to navigate the mediation, appeal and tribunal processes around EHCPs and have achieved some successful outcomes.

Typically, we have 3 members of the team on each session, plus a senior practitioner Cover Coordinator. Our new phone system has enabled us to respond in a more efficient way to enquiries and allows us to take and respond to answer machine messages during a helpline session (previously callers were met with an engaged tone if all lines were busy). This has enabled us to offer a more robust call back response and has increased our capacity to get back to parents, often well within the 48hour response time which we commit to.



We encourage people to reach us through our helpline, support@ email account or via the contact sheets available on the website. We do respond to general Facebook enquiries and encourage people to keep in touch with SEND news in that way but we also need to remind users that it could be a breach of confidentiality if they post a detailed personal message on the public page. If you need individual advice, we would ask you to use one of the other means of contact as outlined above or to post a brief message asking us to contact you during a helpline session.

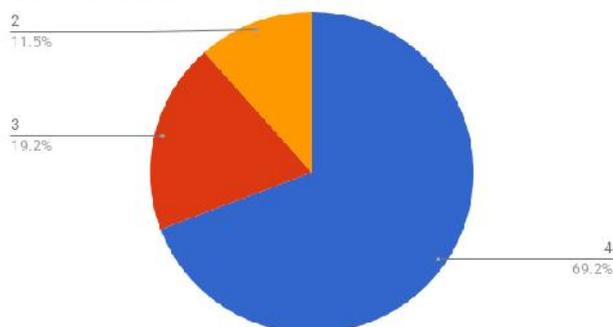
People often ask how we use the information we gather? We anonymise data and collate issues and recurring themes, to enable our local co-ordinators to feed back to their relevant local authorities. In this way we work to ensure that the voice of our service-users informs the development of SEND services and so that local authorities are aware of gaps in provision or procedures. This is to ensure they are working positively to meet the requirements of local area inspections, which are there to make sure LAs are putting SEND reforms into practice in line with the new duties introduced by the Children and Families Act 2014.

### Service User Satisfaction Survey (SUSS)

Our service user satisfaction survey was done online. A paper version was available for service users who requested this. Their responses were keyed in to the electronic version. The survey was targeted at the first 100 callers on the first occasion they called. The response was **27%**.

**92 %** of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with our service.

How easy was it to get in touch with us?



*This chart was based on the question: "How easy was it to get in touch with us?" Participants used a scale of 0 "Not at all easy" to 4 "Very easy" to respond.*

92% thought we understood their questions or concerns;

92% found our information helpful, or very helpful;

92% described us as, neutral, fair and unbiased.

63% of respondents said we replied to their enquiry quickly. (Enquiries came by telephone, email, web enquiry form, post and the occasional transcribed facebook message.) This is in line with our aim of responding to all enquiries within 48 hours.

63% told us we explained who we were and what our role was.

81% told us **we listened** to their views.

37% reflected we explained why decisions were made and what was happening.

81% of callers felt they were treated with respect and told us they received a **confidential service**.

89% told us we gave them information and advice that met their needs. 26% would like us to keep in touch. One (Bristol) parent said they would have liked a follow up call to see how things were going.

When asked about how they heard about our service, information comes from a range of sources:

Respondents were invited to tick all the ways that they had heard about our service. The choices on the evaluation form were in rank order:

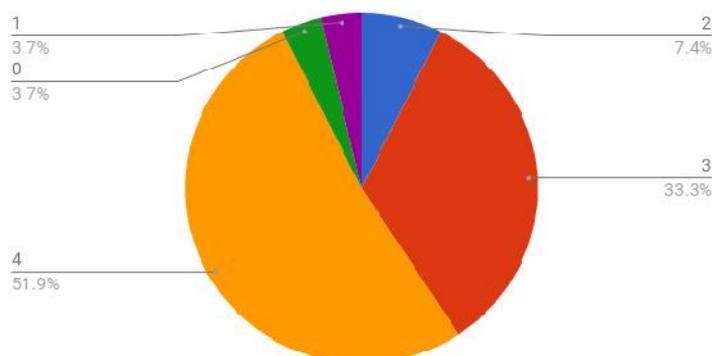
Another Parent or Friend	24%
Leaflet about the service	19%
The Internet	16%
Health Professional	11%
“Other”	8%
The school, early years setting or college	8%
Social Services	5%
An Education Psychologist or Advisory Teacher	3%
The Local Authority’s SEND Team	3%

Looking further at what “other means”:

It is wonderful that parents and carers recommend our service to others, salutary that our leaflets remain an important means of highlighting our service to potential users, and great to learn that other voluntary sector services from Kids, and Springboard, to Bristol Autism Support CIC signpost parents to our service. One parent shared “I’ve been in touch for so long, I can’t remember”.

The chart below was based on the question: "What difference do you think our information, advice or support has made for you?" Participants used a scale from 0 "No difference at all" to 4 "A great deal of difference" to respond.

What difference do you think our information, advice or support has made for you?



When asked what difference our information, advice and support made over **85%** told us it made a difference or a great deal of difference.

Comments about the difference our service made included:

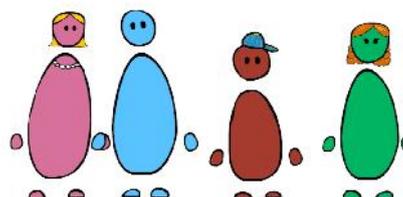
"I feel more confident ... I now have sources I can go to to seek more information"

And "... the service has been there and given me the confidence to go ahead"

And "...I was signposted to other relevant organisations and given good advice."

"It was so lovely for someone to listen and validate my concerns regarding my child's education ... I know I can come back to you if things don't get resolved"

"I now have a better relationship with my child's school"



And "... They helped me realise I had a valid concern."

"I feel my child has benefitted as a result of the service being involved [I] now have more knowledge. Understand the options we have"

And "Gave me confidence when I was stuck trying to proceed. Great listeners when I just needed to vent."

"I have greater understanding of the SEND Code of Practice ... Helped me with paperwork re EHCP review"

"I am happier/less worried about my child's future ... Confidence in knowing you have someone to turn to if needed"

A young person told us "I feel more involved in decisions about my education."

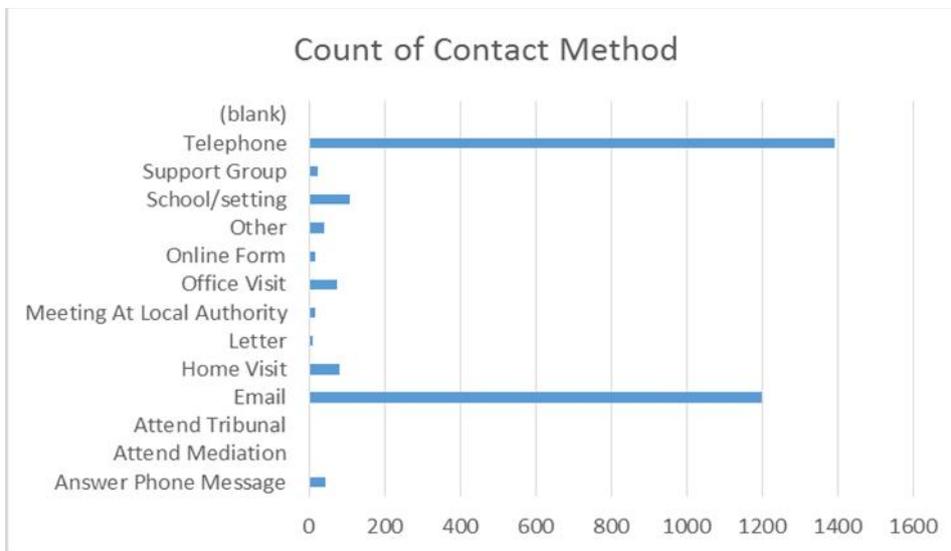
Parents would like us open more hours, five days a week, and with more service availability during half terms. Bristol parents would like us to go into schools, and one commented they would like us to be more visible in their community.

Thank you to those parents, carers and young people who took the time to comment on our service. We will take your comments into account in our service development.

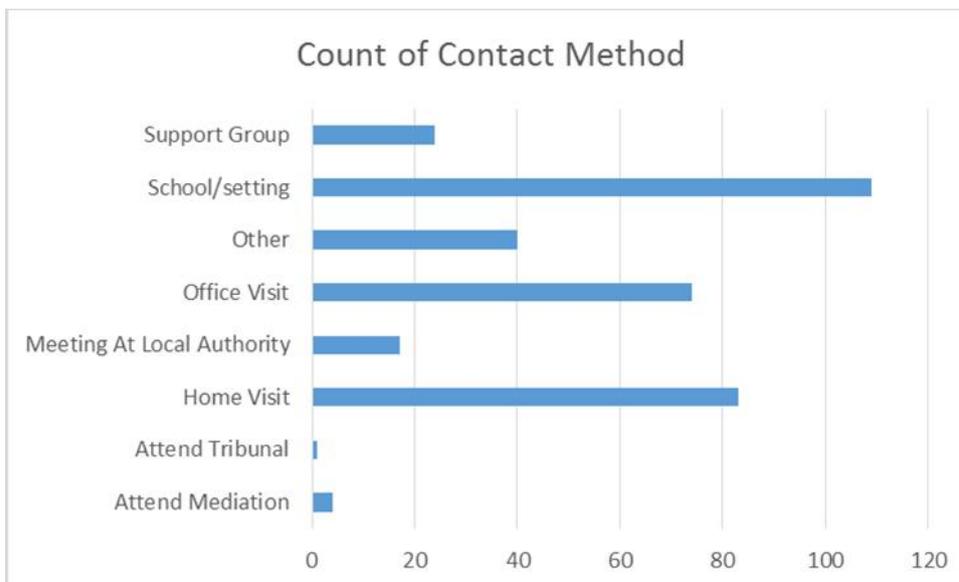
For the full results and analysis, including all of the comments please go to our website.

### Working with parents: Call Monitoring

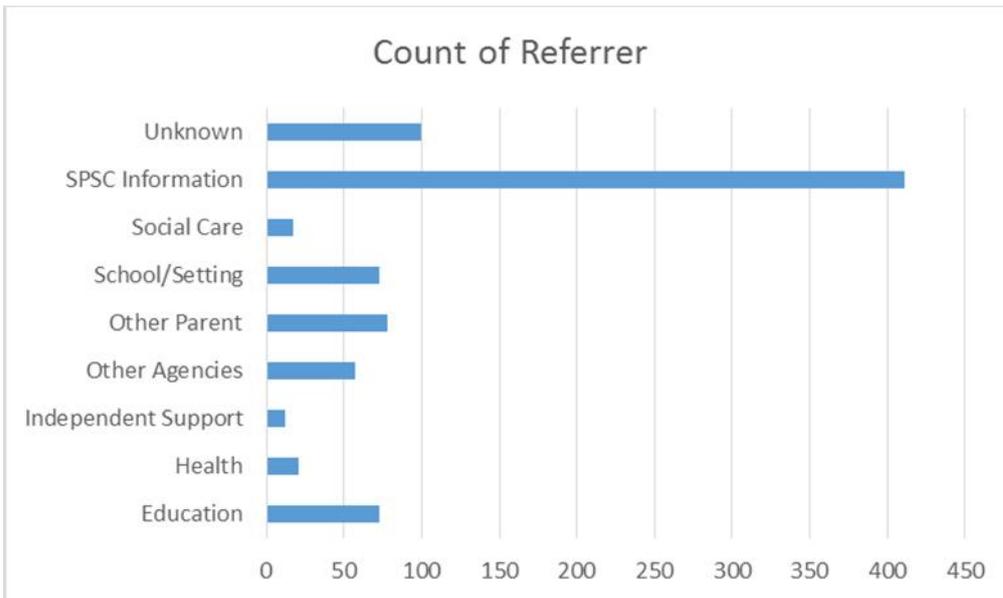
We are in our second year of using the Charitylog data management system. In that time more Information Advice and Support Services have adopted the system, and refinements have been made. It isn't straightforward to capture comparative data.



There has been a 31% increase in the number of contacts over the period (1 April 2016 – 31 March 2017). The majority of service users contact us by telephone, although email contact has increased. Face to face meetings, in a variety of settings, account for 11% of our contacts. The percentage is broadly the same as last year, with most of these meetings being in an education setting.

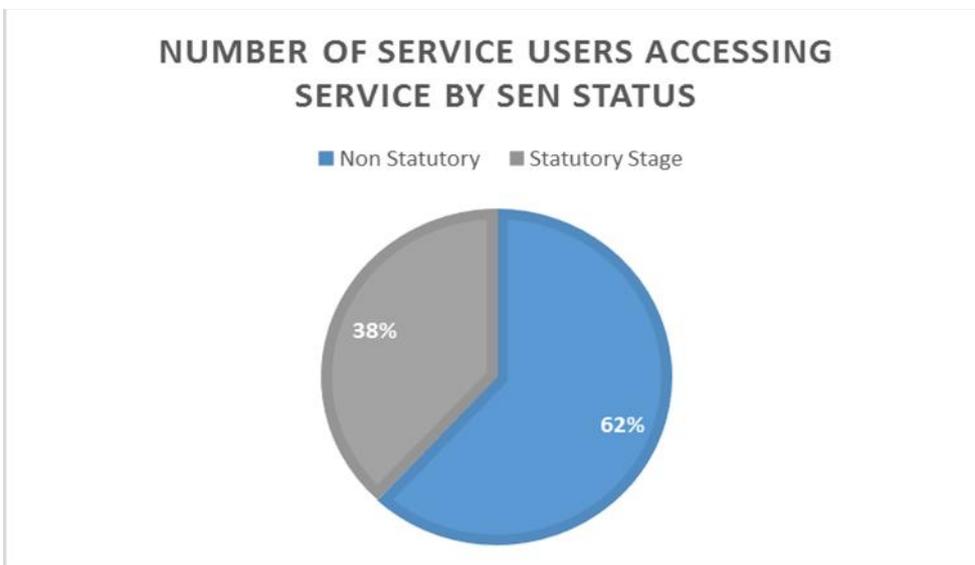


When parents, carers or young people contact us for the first time, we ask them how they found out about us. This helps us identify where we may need to improve our visibility, for example, with health professionals, or with agencies supporting young people aged 16-25. This is so we can ensure professionals are aware of our service and can tell potential service users about us.



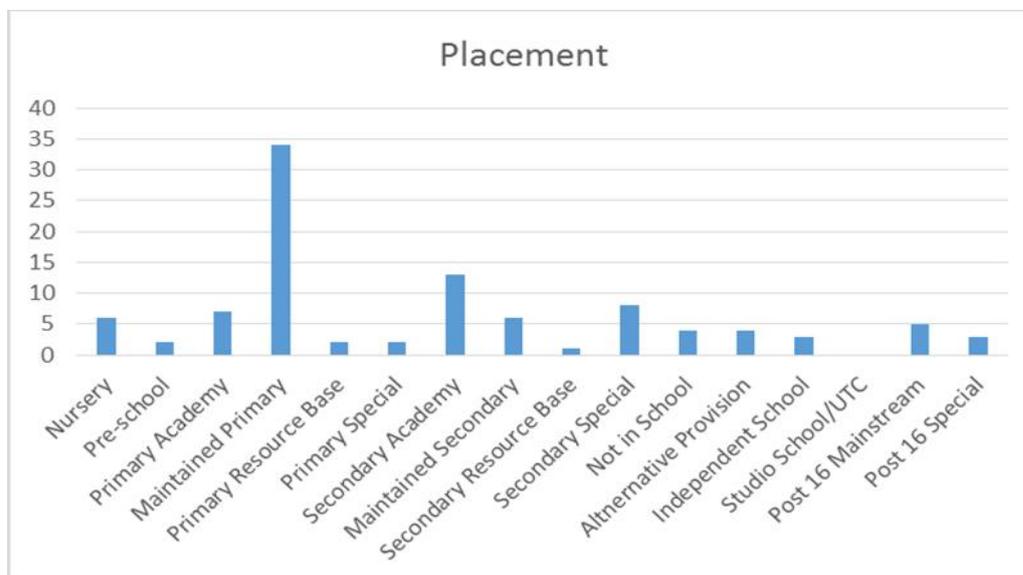
The range of work is extensive, from a simple information request, to the time-consuming, more complex work of supporting a family to prepare for tribunal, or complain to the local government ombudsman. Although the number of contacts is up by 31%, the overall increase in the number of new users was small. This indicates an increase in contacts per individual and in the complexity of the work being undertaken.

Supporting young people to think about their futures, and help them to identify what help they may need to achieve successful education and training outcomes is also something that requires much more time. As an example, a case which included attending mediation and preparation for tribunal, required over 50 contacts.



The amount of time we spend on non-statutory work is just over 60%. This ranges from supporting parents whose children are not accessing education, to work on exclusions, we are finding that the exclusion may relate to an unmet need. 18 families contacted us regarding permanent exclusion, mostly parents of boys in Bristol. The children and young people affected ranged in age from 5 to over 16, and they attended both maintained and special schools, primary and secondary academies.

Key issues parents, carers, children and young people contacted us about remained similar to 2015-16, with 22% of calls about SEN Support (the amount and type of provision, the evaluation of interventions) in the education setting. There has been a 2% increase in the number of individuals contacting us for support with a request for Education Health and Care Needs' Assessment. Refusal to assess remains the main reason parents contact us about mediation or tribunal. This is holding steady at around 5% of the work we do. The number of contacts about attendance or fulltime provision is broadly the same as last year.



Calls reflected all age ranges. Over 50% of calls were about individuals who did not have an identified disability. Of those who contacted us with an identified disability, the most frequent calls were from parents or carers of boys with an autism diagnosis, aged between 4 and 11.

### What else have we done?

#### Reports from our Local Coordinators

**Promoting our work with service-users aged 16-25:** Since coming into post Kirsty Cottier, our Post 16 Coordinator, has worked hard to publicise and promote this extension to our service across Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire. In the last year Kirsty has visited schools, colleges and events for young people across the three LAs – there is a lot happening and her aim is to promote the voice of young people and their families and support them to contribute directly to planning.



In Bristol Kirsty promotes the views of parents and young people at regular Progressing into Independence meetings run by the City Council. She is also part of a collaborative group improving young people's participation and has met with WECIL to gain young people's perspectives on SEND. Kirsty supported a Preparing for Adulthood event run by Contact a Family at New Fosseway School, ran a stall at Kingsweston's Transition event and attended

Autism Independence and Contact a Family's transition event for the Somali community. She has visited City of Bristol College to learn more about their provision and attended a workshop run by the City Council to help SENCOs and colleges work together to improve transition. In South Gloucestershire Kirsty has promoted our service at various events, including South Gloucestershire Council's Training and Employment Event for Young People and a transitions

event at New Siblands. Kirsty gave a presentation at Warmley Park and worked with several families as a result. Kirsty and our South Glos team visited South Glos & Stroud College in December, to find out more about their SEN provision.

In North Somerset Kirsty attended a 'Building Resilience' event in Priory School and held a stall at a Westhaven School event. She met staff at Weston College and Weston Bay to understand what SEN provision was available. She spoke to the college's ambassadors' group about our service, who agreed to provide us with feedback from students about our resources. She ran a workshop for students on annual reviews, held a stand at Weston College's 'transitions' event in November and gave a talk to parents at Weston Bay.

Kirsty's work as Post 16 Coordinator includes providing support to parents and young people across the three local authority areas. A lot of the work undertaken has been with parents from the Somali community. The key issue for them is accessibility of EHC plans, which are generally not translated. Kirsty has also been involved with some ongoing complex cases with post-18 students including two young people who took cases to tribunal over college placements and a post-19 student who had been out of education for a year. Transport issues remain a common concern.

Her work has also included support for families who had been to mediation or tribunal where there was concern whether the young person could continue in education. Kirsty has worked to directly support a young person with no educational provision as the school was unable to safely meet their needs and were inaccurately recording that the student was being 'educated off site'. The LA had initially 'refused to assess' but the student is now being assessed for an EHC Plan. Other referrals have included information on EHCPs for students wishing to access in-county specialist college provision and enquiries regarding what support is available for students finishing college. Kirsty also supports colleagues to work with young people and their families; e.g. she has supported them to advise when a draft statement was never finalised into an EHCP, which resulted in the college attempting to review an out-dated statement.

Looking ahead Kirsty is focused on updating the website with relevant and accessible resources as they become available and hopes to improve this further with grant funding in the coming year. She has a focus on increasing staff confidence to deliver our service to this age-group and they are 'shadowing' her when this is acceptable. She is also developing a range of post 16 information for each local area and is working on creating a tool kit of relevant resources, based on the range of issues arising for families and young people.

**BRISTOL:** In the autumn Davina and Jo Sampson worked with Bristol Parent Carers, Kids Independent Support, Bristol City Council and Health partners to develop the Bristol "toolkit". This guide, available online in Bristol's local offer Findability, explains how Bristol delivers support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. It included work on updating the annual review contribution forms.

Bristol City Council planned to convert more than 560 statements to EHCPs, for pupils transferring between phases of education in 2016-17, Supportive Parents and KIDs offered Independent Support with the conversion process; we met the council regularly to flag up any issues arising, keep up to date with any changes to practice. Jo Sampson also helped the council with its moderation of education health and care (EHC) plans, across the age range, reviewing their consistency and quality,



and checking that the process of transferring from a statement of special educational needs to an EHC plan was done in line with the guidance in the SEND Code of Practice 2014.

September brought the departure of Anne Donaghey, and the arrival of Jo Daghish to the Bristol team. Jo got straight into teamwork, supporting Jo Sampson with the new SENCO induction event held by the council. Davina and Kathryn Mason gave separate talks to parents and professionals at Barton Hill and the Vassalls' Centre, raising awareness of what we do. As a team, we attended a wide variety of meetings to make sure that changes to service delivery were done in line with the Children and Families' Act, SEND regulations, and the Equalities Act. The range of initiatives included work on an updated Access strategy and on the Inclusion audit being rolled out for all publicly funded schools in the authority. This exercise, intended to be annual, looked at how different settings include their students. We contributed to working groups for OfSTED CQC Local Area SEND inspection readiness too.

It was lovely to welcome one of Bristol's Principal Education Psychologists to our Xmas coffee morning in November. Vikki Jervis explained how the service would be working to fulfil its statutory duties, and its traded work with schools following the departure of specialist behaviour support teachers. We followed up by attending the Spring SENCO briefings across the City, and the SENCO conference in March.

The end of term in December saw Davina retire after sixteen years in service. Kathryn Mason moved across to Bristol to start the New Year with a new job. Her diary was quickly filled with new opportunities. In January Kathryn attended the Autism Education Trust's launch event for its DfE-funded school resources - the aim being every Bristol school could access these to support its students. Bristol are at the front of a national initiative to improve early access to mental health support school, and Kathryn attended two days' training delivered by the Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families to understand how this might look. **Bristol team are all able to offer support not only to parents and carers of children but also to young people, not only with independent support, but from an initial query about getting extra help, to challenging decisions about what kind of education and training opportunities will support them to achieve the best possible outcomes.**

We continue to support the work of Bristol Parent Carers. In January, Jo Sampson contributed to an education workshop, empowering new parent carers to understand more about SEND processes, and join in with developing services. Where possible, we have been visiting their different support groups to offer parents a different opportunity to access information, advice and support.



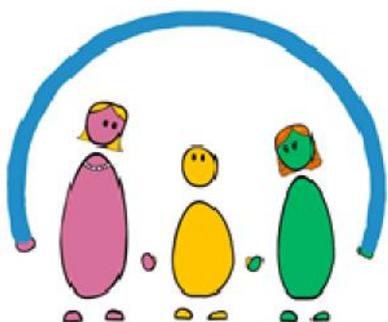
Then there's the reason, **Supportive Parents** exists: working with parents, carers, children and young people and their education settings to achieve the best possible outcomes. This last year has seen a rise in the number of exclusions from primary settings in Bristol. The team have supported individual families to find solutions, and challenged decisions where families wanted this. Challenge around the amount and type of special education provision, access to full-time learning, and transport to special schools, were all issues parents wanted face to face support with.

We are grateful to Davina Evans and the team (Anne, Kathryn, Jo and Jo) for the work they have done to develop our service in the city. It has been a very busy year and our next challenge is to develop ways of working that enable us to meet the increase in contacts and sustain the quality of our service delivery.

**NORTH SOMERSET:** During the Summer of last year the North Somerset team received a high volume of requests for support in checking draft Education Health Care (EHC) plans and devoted a significant amount of time to enabling parents to achieve a satisfactory outcome. **Jackie, Sarah and Helen** have worked to ensure information, advice and support has been provided to parents and young people throughout every stage of the EHCP transfer process and beyond. They also provided a number of speaker-led support group sessions which included a partnership event with the LA SEND Manager providing further insight for parents into the statutory assessment process and the graduated approach to SEN support in schools. Specialists in holistic occupational therapy and behaviour management also gave talks at support group which were very well received by parents.

Calls to the helpline have been around communication with schools, refusals to carry out assessment and school refusal due to anxiety based conditions. We have particularly noticed a big increase in calls to our Information, Advice and Support helpline from parents or carers of children and young people who were not receiving any extra help (SEN support) in schools. Close partnership working with the SEND Manager and contributions at an EHCP engagement group enabled the team to feedback on these key issues which culminated in the development of a 'best practice' guide for SENCOs. This is now available across the Authority. Furthermore, the team were able to feedback, on social care and health related concerns being raised by parents to our service, at strategic meetings with the Disabled Children's team and the CCG.

Over the winter the team continued to provide Information, Advice and Support via a number of avenues including termly visits to specialist pre-school settings, representation at all three of the Special School parents' evenings and Inclusion Coordinator (INCO) events and by attending three sessions at Weston College, promoting our service offer to college teams and directly to young people. This has led to our involvement with the Young Ambassadors group and regular drop in sessions being offered to college by our 16-25 Coordinator, Kirsty Cottier. On a strategic level the team have contributed to consultations on the short breaks service, the ASD adult strategy, the SEND transport review, the Equality Impact Assessment and the Schools Accessibility Strategy.



In Spring of this year we were sorry to say farewell to Jackie Oxley who has worked for Supportive Parents as North Somerset Coordinator since 2004 and has been associated with the charity for 25 years. However we have been pleased to promote **Sarah Trevitt** from our IAS team into the role of North Somerset Coordinator. The current work in North Somerset remains focused on transferring statements to EHCPs before March 2018 but coupled with this we are seeing an increase in calls for support and advice around the Annual Review process as we see the first year of EHCPs coming up for review. The team are working to develop information resources for parents and carers to address two of the key issues raised over the past year, namely checking the draft plan and participating in Annual Reviews - we hope to have these available very soon.

**SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE: Summer:** Nadine Etter, an experienced member of our Helpline, joined the S. Glos team and extended her work into the South Gloucestershire local area. Parents and young people needed help our help with writing letters, challenging exclusions and part-time timetables. There was an event at Abbeywood School, with the launch of the National Autistic Society (NAS) South Gloucestershire Campaign where Sara Maggs (S.Glos team) and Kirsty Cottier (Supportive Parents Post 16 Coordinator) were available to parents. An information session which we offered at New Siblands School was also very well attended.

During this time we were working with the local authority to make sure we are prepared, as a service, for the OfSTED SEND area inspection, whenever that happens.

At the end of the summer it was a privilege to go to events focused on young people as they prepare for adulthood. We went to speed networking on 'involving children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in their care' at the Armadillo, learned about Post-16 opportunities at Beechwood College and had an information stand at the local authority training and employment event at Cleve Rugby club. All of these focused on what can be done locally, with relevant support, whilst still providing choice and aspiration.

**Autumn:** Nadine and Sara supported parents and carers to prepare for meetings with school, the local authority, and responded to other concerns about special educational provision. We told professionals about the challenges facing our service-users, whether we are supporting parents to work with schools on planning provision, or challenging local authority decisions through mediation or tribunal. We attended SENCO Clusters, Dr Brooks' disability away day, 0-25 Provider Forum and Integra's Autism Conference. We also attended S. Glos Parents and Carers' annual event in October 2016; At the end of 2016, Kathryn Mason's role as Local Co-ordinator changed and she became the Deputy Head of Service and Bristol Local Coordinator for the organisation.

**Spring:** In January 2017 Kathryn's successor, Santie Human, stepped into the role as S. Glos Local Coordinator. The South Gloucestershire team now consists of Santie, Sara Maggs and Nadine Etter with Kirsty Cottier supporting post 16 work.

In February 2017, we were concerned to hear news that Ofsted had rated South Gloucestershire Council's Children's Services department as 'failing'. An improvement notice was issued. In order to improve these results local authority arranged a SEND Peer Review to enable them to establish areas of improvement and to establish a clear plan in moving forward. The local authority engaged with a range of organisations and Supportive Parents was invited too.

February 2017 we attended a useful opportunity at the SENCO conference where we could network and engage with school staff and Sencos, as well as other professionals. Sara and Nadine attended and engaged with parents in March 2017 at the Resound parent course. They stayed and also met other parents at an extended coffee morning opportunity at the same venue.

We continue to support parents at South Gloucestershire Parent Carers (SGPC)'s coffee mornings, at Children's Centre 'Rainbow' groups, Jigsaw and 'Little Treasures Early Years' settings. The ADHD parent course for parents of children newly diagnosed with ADHD is still well attended. This course offers information sessions providing support understanding the diagnosis and offers health, social care and educational advice.

The team offers Parent Support Groups in Yate and Kingswood as an opportunity to meet parents and enable service users to navigate through the local area processes and policies to support their children as best they are able to. The team is also attending other voluntary groups in the local area which includes Tourette's Action and Incredible Kids.

We are continuing to strengthen our relationship with the Parent Carer Forum (SGPC) and the voluntary sector with meetings and attending groups. Memorandum of Understanding meetings with the local authority, SGPC and KIDS continues as well as Link Meetings with the local authority manager.



### **Our service – in print and on line**

We want everyone to know that we are still offering a comprehensive, free, impartial and confidential service about SEND so this year we have redesigned and reissued our trifold information leaflet. We provide regular mailings to statutory and voluntary sector services, settings, parent groups and professionals, of information about our service and about SEND in Bristol, South Gloucestershire and North Somerset. Parents, professionals and young people can sign up to receive a regular e-bulletin. We use Facebook and Twitter to provide information that assists, advises or might otherwise be of interest to our service-users and to our community. Our website is a critical tool in our efforts to provide up-to-date, relevant and quality information about our service and about SEND.

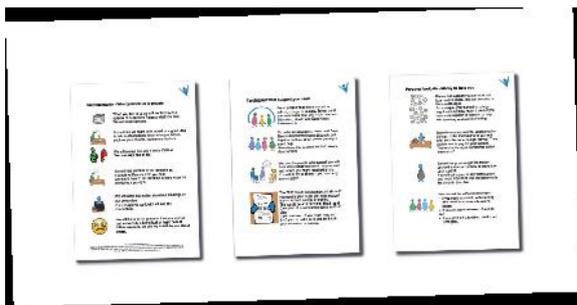
### **Developing our service to meet the wider age range, up to age 25 – what SP16-25 offers you!**

In 2016 Supportive Parents launched a new section of our existing website to deliver news and information for young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Features of the SP16-25 pages includes news items, general articles, lots of useful links including to blogs by young people, video clips and SEND information resources. We set up SP16-25 to tell young people with SEND about us and for them to tell us what more we can do to help. Young people have told us that they would like their own website so we have been raising funds with the aim of setting up a new website just for them. This is our goal for the coming year and we would like to hear from anyone aged 16 to 25 who would be interested in getting involved and supporting us to make the new website as accessible, useful, interesting (and as much fun!) as possible.



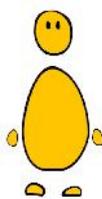
We have a range of downloadable SEND resources: We think that it's vital that parents, children and young people have quality information about the SEND process. To complement our existing suite of booklets, which aim to help people understand EHC plans and the law about Special Educational Needs/Disabilities, we also produce printer-friendly versions which can be downloaded directly from our website. This year we are in the process of developing further resources, based on the needs of our service-users, which we have identified as a priority based on the calls we have taken. These will be progressively launched during the coming year.

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**Easy Read leaflets and accessible resources:** We produce several leaflets designed to be easy to understand for people who can have problems reading standard leaflets. They cover Confidentiality, EHC Needs Assessments, Getting the Right Support, Personal Budgets and the Local Offer. You can find the Easy Read leaflets on our website.

## **EHC PLAN**



**Have you watched our animations?** We are really proud of our internet-based animations, tailor-made for Supportive Parents. We hear so often that too much information can be overwhelming, so we have made our sure our animations are eye catching and straightforward. Our videos only last for about 3 minutes and explain what our service offers and how to get in touch, all about Education Health and Care Plans and about Personal Budgets. We are finding that other groups, services, service-users and professionals are starting to create links to our animations and we love to think that this accessible format is

increasing our reach, to provide valuable information to a wider audience.

**We will continue to offer events, workshops and provide accessible information** for parents and young people on topics highlighted by them: ie - local leisure options; transition to college; post-16 and post-19 options; finding and keeping a job; benefits; personal budgets; making decisions; planning for and getting the most out of EHC Plan meetings.



**November coffee morning:** This year we held our regular “Xmas coffee morning” event in Royal Oak House. It is always a great opportunity to show off our newest publications, introduce new members of the team and polish up our network! Although it took place at the end of November we still enjoyed mince pies and the company of colleagues from the statutory and voluntary sector who wanted to find out more about us and tell us about developments in their area of endeavour. We were also joined by interested parent carers who wanted to know more about our service, and about signing up for our parent course or about becoming a trustee. It was great to meet you all!

**Thanks also:** to Sue Rickerby and Lloydbottoms (chartered accountants) Quartet (Trustee training & fundraising), Peninsula (HR), Third Sector (IT), Mike Taylor (website), Rhiannon Chaloner (design and animation), VANS, VOSCUR & The Care Forum (VCS networking) and so many more!

**Thanks guys – you have contributed to our journey immeasurably!**

### **Fundraising and finances**

Thanks to all those who offered us financial support this year. We received over £230 in personal donations, £613 from Waitrose and £88.47 from a book sale held at a local branch of Tesco. A huge thank-you to you all – your kindness makes a significant difference and contributes directly to the quality of our service.

For details of our financial activities please refer to our Report and Accounts 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017.



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Answer phone at all other times  
Admin/Fax: 0117 9897724  
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Email: [mail@supportiveparents.org.uk](mailto:mail@supportiveparents.org.uk)**

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