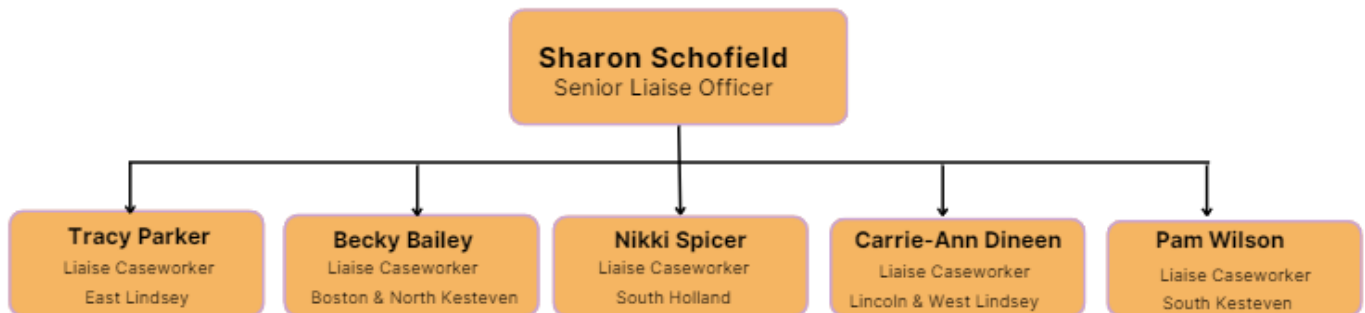


Liaise Annual Report 2023/24

We are pleased to present the annual report for Liaise, the SEND Information, Advice and Support Service in Lincolnshire, for the year 2023/24. This report provides an overview of our activities, achievements, and progress made in delivering information, advice and support whilst meeting the National minimum standards in the past 12 months. Through this report, we aim to provide you with a clear understanding of our accomplishments and the strategic direction we have pursued to ensure ongoing development of the service.

Team Structure

Liaise sits in the Quality and Standards service, Children's Services, within Lincolnshire County Council. The service is managed by a Senior Liaise Officer and has a team of five caseworkers to cover the county.



Information, Advice & Support Provided - our year in numbers

Here are the number of referrals received into the Liaise Advice Line in the past 12 months, shown in a comparison table for the past five years:

April 2019 to March 2020	1144
April 2020 to March 2021	830 (drop in referrals due to covid)
April 2021 to March 2022	1182
April 2022 to March 2023	1400
April 2023 to March 2024	1710

This data shows that referrals have increased by 49% over the past five years.

Service users self-refer into the service either by a telephone triage service or by using the Liaise online contact form. We aim to respond to all new referrals within two working days. Initial information and advice are provided in response to the referral either by email or by a pre-booked telephone appointment with a caseworker on the advice line.

If further support is required following initial contact on the advice line, a caseworker can then be allocated to the family to deliver support via a Support Agreement which is drawn up and agreed with the family. The number of families who have received support from a caseworker since 2020 are:

April 2020 to March 2021	89 cases
April 2021 to March 2022	67 cases
April 2022 to March 2023	41 cases
April 2023 to March 2024	43 cases

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This data shows how we have adapted the service delivery model over the past four years to enable us to deal with the increase in the number of referrals, as we are dealing with more families via the advice line with fewer families receiving casework support.

Category	Number of Case Allocations			
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
EHC Assessment	5	1	0	1
General SEN Support	2	5	3	0
Attending meetings (including SEN Support meetings, Team Around the Child, Governors Exclusion meetings and Annual Reviews)	14	39	24	16
Mediation	22	6	5	7
SEND Tribunal (including Disability Discrimination hearings)	46	16	9	19

This data shows that families require caseworker support to prepare for and attend a variety of SEN meetings, and to support them through the mediation and SEND Tribunal Appeal process. More recently, a SEND tribunal appeal can take up to 52 weeks to be heard, so these are more complex, legally based longer periods of support where a case can stay open for over a year.

Service Developments for 2023/24

From April 2023 to March 2024 the service worked on the following five areas as part of the Service Development Plan. This is a summary of the outcome achieved:

Objective	Outcomes
Develop the service in line with the new IASS Intervention levels, to include: 1) reviewing how calls into the service are handled 2) email responses: reviewing content and writing quick parts, ensuring consistency, parental support packs, snippets index, managing and reviewing folder content 3) updating advice line processes 4) developing the recording of information onto the database	The service QA theme for 2023/24 was the advice line. Caseworkers developed a new library of advice line email templates. Changes were made to the database to improve the quality of data recording.
Promoting Liaise within localities by 1) delivering locality drop in sessions 2) develop links with special schools 3) develop links with day care centres	Caseworkers visited several special schools and held Liaise drop-in sessions in Children's Centres.
To develop and improve more flexible ways for young people and other service users to access the service	Work has begun with Lincolnshire Young Voices, and we have developed an action plan for future work.
To continue to develop our Post 16 links with colleges across all localities	Caseworkers have visited post 16 settings including colleges, YPLP, sixth forms and other post 16 establishments.

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National & Regional SENDIASS



The Information Advice and Support Services Network (IASSN) is the national network which supports the work of IAS services across England, based within the Council for Disabled Children in the National Children's Bureau.

They do this by:

- Working with SENDIAS services to ensure they have the resources and training to provide high quality information, advice and support to children, young people and parents in their area
- Listening to and working with SENDIAS services to understand their challenges and successes in order to feedback to the DfE to implement positive and necessary change
- Working with SENDIAS services and other stakeholders to develop and promote the standards for SENDIAS services

The Senior Liaise Officer represents the East Midlands region on the National IASS Staff Association group. This is a national organisation that connects IASS regional networks and represents and supports IAS service staff across England. The staff association represents the interests and development of individual IAS service staff, and they meet termly to consider issues related to staff in services across the country. The group meets four times a year, and one of its main functions is to organise a biennial national conference.



Information Advice and Support
East Midlands

The work of the East Midlands Regional Information Advice and Support Service (EMRIASS) group continues. The membership of the group is made up of SENDIASS service managers from:

- Leicestershire
- Leicester City & Rutland
- Nottingham City & Nottinghamshire
- Milton Keynes
- Derby City
- Derbyshire
- North Northamptonshire
- West Northamptonshire
- Lincolnshire

We hold three virtual meetings per year, plus the Annual General Meeting which is in person.

Lincolnshire continues to hold the role of Treasurer within the group and produces financial summaries for consideration at each regional meeting. The Information, Advice and Support Services Network attend these meetings and provide updates about regional training requirements and opportunities, and a range of issues and topics relating to IASS to support the on-going development of services in the East Midlands region.

Lincolnshire has specifically supported the work of the group over the past twelve months by:

- Organising the virtual meetings and inviting the network to attend
- Organising the payment of membership subs directly into the group bank account, and producing a financial forecast to support planning
- Writing and updating the group action plan
- Taking the minutes at regional meetings

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- Updating and circulating group documents
- working in a task and finish group to organise the latest regional staff development day
- meeting with other managers for peer support

A regional Staff Development Day was held in Nottingham on 15.11.2023. The day was attended by approximately 50 staff and volunteers from all regions. The theme of the day was a focus on health services in the East Midlands region.

The staff development day provided a great opportunity for staff to network with other staff from different services. Feedback showed that this staff found this to be the most beneficial element to the day.

Staff Development and Training

The National Minimum Standards state that all advice and support providing staff must successfully complete all online IPSEA legal training levels within 12 months of joining the service.

All Liaise staff have completed this training to ensure that we are qualified to deliver Information, Advice and Support to parents, carers, children and young people, in line with the National Minimum Standards.

Throughout the year, the team attend national seminars and training events to ensure that their skills and knowledge are kept up to date, such as

- The 2024 SEND Law Conference
- IPSEA Refresher Training
- Telephone Helpline training
- Early Years: Ordinarily Available Provision
- SEND Law in relation to Social Care for Disabled Children
- Anti Bullying

All staff follow the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership six year training pathway, which is a recommended programme of Safeguarding training to meet the requirements of the National Competencies Framework for Safeguarding Children, ensuring that all staff have up to date safeguarding knowledge when working with children and young people.

Staff also access training through the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Adults Board which supports us to fulfil multi-agency responsibilities in relation to the protection of adults at risk from abuse and neglect.

As part of their continued professional development Caseworkers also undertake the Lincolnshire County Council corporate mandatory training five year pathway, including information assurance, equality, diversity and inclusion and Prevent training.

Quality Assurance

We began a new and updated quality assurance programme within the service in September 2022 which we have continued to develop over the past two years. The theme for 2022/23 chosen by caseworkers was Advice Line.

These quality assurance days were designed to evaluate the effectiveness and adherence to established standards within the service for the identified theme of Advice Line. The aim of the new quality assurance schedule is to review current practices to support the ongoing development of service delivery. Each year we hold three quality assurance days, with each session following a pre-set agenda. We review procedures and undertake group themed audits of cases dealt with on the advice line.

As a result, we have made recommendations, identified areas for improvement within the service, and agreed follow up actions.

The quality assurance days provided an excellent opportunity to share good practice, and the caseworkers said that they benefitted from peer support and being able to share and discuss suggestions for working practices. They found this to be of particular benefit as we are no longer an office-based team. The caseworkers welcomed the opportunity to come together and have open discussions.

The theme currently being undertaken for the 2023/24 quality assurance programme is Allocations.

Partnership and Stakeholder Work

Liaise Steering Group

A service steering group is a requirement of the IASS Minimum Standards. The Liaise steering group is now well established and continues to meet three times per year. The group is led by the Chair Hannah Kinkade, and has a membership which includes representatives from health, the LA, educational settings, service users and the Lincolnshire Parent Carer Forum. The group allows for our key partners to have a strategic overview of the service, and to contribute to ongoing service development. The group also ensures that the service meets the minimum standards.

Lincolnshire Parent Carer Forum

We continue to work in partnership with the Lincolnshire Parent Carer Forum, meeting twice a year to plan events and joint working activities. Liaise supported the LPCF Week of SEND event in January 2024, and we value their support with the steering group. Liaise actively promotes LPCF events on the face book page.

Lincolnshire Young Voices

We are delighted that we continue to work with the Chairs of Lincolnshire Young Voices Alfie Allison and Nandi Caine. Two Liaise Caseworkers were welcomed at a LYV committee meeting where discussions began to plan a new participation project with them over the coming months. Alfie and Nandi both attend Liaise steering group meetings and have helped with reviewing policies ensuring we have input from a young persons perspective.

The NHS Lincolnshire Integrated Care Board

We greatly value our ongoing working relationship with Russell Outen-Coe, the Designated Clinical Officer for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disability, and his support and recognition of the work of the service. The DCO's guidance and support have enhanced our ability to provide effective information and advice.

We continued to deliver the SEND Clinician's Training Programme during 2023/24. This is a series of three virtual workshops with a focus on SEN Support within Educational Settings and a total of 23 health professionals attended when we ran the programme in 2024. In future years, the programme will be delivered twice a year.

The Senior Liaise Officer sits on the SEND Health Committee, and twice a year reports data on the number and type of health related queries received into the service. This is helping with future planning for advice and resources. The DCO sits on the Liaise Steering Group.

The Local Offer

The Senior Liaise Officer sits on the Local Offer Working Group who meet every two months. We continue to work on reviewing the Local Offer to ensure that it is compliant with the requirements of the SEND Code of Practice.

Stakeholder Engagement Group

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The Senior Liaise Officer also attends the Children’s Services Stakeholder Engagement Group, where there is a focus on gathering feedback from service users, reviewing engagement activities and developing the ‘You Said We Did’ initiative.

Service Promotion

The caseworkers are committed to actively promoting the service across the county, supporting us to reach a wider range of individuals and families in need. We participate in various events held across the county, where we can engage with the local community directly. In 2023/24 there were a total of 32 events which included:

- 4 drop-in clinics
- 11 stands at events
- 9 presentations

By attending these events, we can share information about our service and answer questions, and also provide information by signposting to other services. Our active engagement on Facebook enables us to connect with a larger audience and disseminate helpful information. We also maintain close relationships with educational settings, collaborating with them to promote our work and raise awareness about the services we provide. By actively promoting our service within Lincolnshire, we aim to ensure that individuals and families are aware of the support available to them and can access the assistance they need, and also to learn about and make contact with other services within the community.

Service Evaluation and Feedback

Liaise uses a national service user feedback form on completion of all support provided, which was developed by the Information, Advice and Support Services Network in 2015. It includes six core questions which cover both support provided on the advice line and also direct casework support. Liaise is required to report annually to the Council for Disabled Children on the feedback we receive for support delivered so that they can collate evidence of service impact at a national level.

Here is a comparative table which shows the survey results for the past four years:

Q1. How easy was it to get in touch with us?	Not at all easy 0	1	2	3	Very easy 4
2020/21	2%	<1%	5%	24%	67%
2021/22	0%	2%	13%	15%	70%
2022/23	2.6%	2.6%	7.7%	28.2%	59%
2023/24	0%	0%	27.6%	17.2%	55.17%

Q2. How helpful was the information, advice and support we gave to you?	Not at all helpful 0	1	2	3	Very helpful 4
2020/21	0%	<1%	3%	14%	82%
2021/22	2%	1%	1%	5%	92%
2022/23	0%	0%	5.1%	12.8%	82.1%
2023/24	0%	0%	24.1%	13.8%	62%

Q3. How neutral, fair and unbiased do you think we were?	Not at all 0	1	2	3	Very 4
2020/21	2%	<1%	4%	9%	84%
2021/22	2%	0%	1%	8%	89%
2022/23	0%	0%	5.1%	5.1%	89.7%
2023/24	0%	0%	24.1%	17.2%	58.6%

Q4. What difference do you think our information, advice and support has made for you?	No difference at all 0	1	2	3	A great deal of difference 4
2020/21	6%	2%	4%	15%	71%
2021/22	3%	1%	4%	19%	73%
2022/23	2.6%	0%	13.2%	21.1%	63.2%
2023/24	0%	0%	31%	13.8%	55.2%

Q5. Overall how satisfied are you with the service we gave?	Very unsatisfied 0	1	2	3	Very satisfied 4
2020/21	0%	2%	3%	11%	85%
2021/22	1%	0%	5%	5%	90%
2022/23	0%	0%	5.3%	10.5%	84.2%
2023/24	0%	0%	24.1%	13.8%	58.7%

Q6. How likely is it that you would recommend the service to others?	Not at all likely 0	1	2	3	Extremely likely 4
2020/21	<1%	<1%	4%	7%	87%
2021/22	0%	2%	1%	5%	93%
2022/23	0%	0%	5.3%	7.9%	86.8%
2023/24	3.4%	0%	24.1%	10.3%	62%

Impact of Liaise work – feedback from service users

Below are some examples of the feedback we have received from parents and carers who have accessed the Liaise service this year:

‘So very helpful when I felt in despair and didn’t know where to go for advice.’

‘The Caseworker made all the difference at the meeting I had with school. I was feeling very lost, anxious and struggling to get the support school should provide my son. The Caseworker gave me lots of information and advice on how we could move the SEND support forward. They were neutral and fair in their approach which allowed me to discuss and then research some options ahead of the school meeting. In the meeting the Caseworker was able to support myself and school to know the law and what assessments and support is available to both of us and how to access them. Thank you so much.’

‘Our caseworker listened to us at a very isolating time and empowered us with knowledge, with legislation, always being there to guide us and help you onto the next step in a very painful process which we are still on. Whatever the outcome we are in a better place because of her and our son has a chance when he had none. We are eternally grateful. Thank you.’

‘My Caseworker was very supportive and understanding she made me feel at ease, I would definitely use this service again.’

‘The caseworker was a fantastic support to myself and my daughter, she is a total asset to Liaise her knowledge and encouragement are absolutely outstanding, her commitment to us has been unbelievable and we can’t thank her enough. My daughter will now be going to specialist school and we can’t express how the outcome has turned out with the caseworkers professional kindness and attitude she is outstanding and I have also learnt a great deal from the pleasurable yet stressful experience which the caseworker made easier for me.’

‘We were very happy for your support and help.’

‘Lady I spoke to was very understanding and helpful.’

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Service Development for 2024/25

Our annual service development plan details the priority areas for development over the next 12 months. The development plan is worked on by all staff and feeds into individual yearly appraisal targets. In 2024/25 the areas of development are:

- development of a new Liaise website, including working with Lincolnshire Young Voices on a new young people's area of the website
- promoting the service within locality Early Help Teams in Lincolnshire
- developing a new SEN Support & the Graduated Approach webinar for parents

The service development plan supports the service to meet the minimum standards and ensures we have a focus on continuous service development.

Summary

This annual report highlights the work and successes of our service over the past twelve months. Throughout the year, the caseworkers have shown their commitment to supporting the families of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), as well as the children and young people themselves. We have dealt with over 1700 referrals into the service, worked with our stakeholders, promoted the service and delivered workshops and training.

We will continue to deliver information, advice and support to the families of Lincolnshire with the aim of empowering and educating. If you have read our annual report and have any questions or feedback, please do contact us at liaise@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Report written by Sharon Schofield, Senior Liaise Officer

June 2024