



Ambassador Volunteer Project

<https://devonias.org.uk/about-us/the-ambassador-volunteer-project/>

Ambassador Volunteer Project overview:

Since August 2019, DiAS and the Parent Carer Forum Devon (PCFD) have been working in co-production to build a network of volunteer ambassadors for parents and carers of children with SEND. The Ambassador Volunteer (AV) project aims to connect parents within their own communities and more widely into a support network across Devon. AV's are based in their own communities across the county functioning as a link in their area to the wider Devon network ensuring parents are informed and know how to access advice and support.

AV's are parent carers of children with SEND and some are professionals and support staff who work with them. What they all have in common is they are at the right place and time to offer peer support to others. They all have a desire to help families on their SEND journey and all understand what life is like with a child with special educational needs.

Volunteers do two main things:

- They share information from DiAS about all kinds of SEND issues and help parents to access DiAS services. This means parents get the most up to date information and support to help them make decisions and understand what's available for their family.
- They help parents share their views about Devon services and support through Parent Carer Forum Devon. This is a great way to influence policy and change the way services work for children and young people with SEND in Devon.

Ambassador Volunteer Project Update:

The start of 2021 has been a hectic time for volunteers and their families. This lockdown has seemed to drain some resilience from everyone, but Ambassador Volunteers are still out in their communities supporting parents and carers virtually! It is amazing that despite a third lockdown AV's are still connecting across Devon; offering peer support and sharing service information with each other, promoting other groups and connecting with PCFD. AV's have also focused on cascading information and advertising the Demystifying SEND sessions throughout their networks.

Our demystifying SEND sessions (delivered by [DiAS](#) as part of the [Ambassador Volunteer project](#) and in partnership with [Parent Carer Forum Devon](#)), were hugely successful. 9 sessions have been delivered to date. Ambassador Volunteers gave us feedback that families in their networks and local areas had questions about how SEND support works in Devon. We used these questions to create an information session for parents. Due to the lockdown the sessions were offered virtually, and we found this worked well on the whole. The sessions provided information, signposting and support for around 80 families directly. The sessions explained SEN support and how it works, signposted to information and other services that are already out there and linked to the [Devon Local Offer](#).

Parents attending the sessions were all at different stages of their journey and the feedback they gave after the events was very positive.

“What has been the most useful aspect of the session?”

- ❖ *“Knowing that just because you are at the start of a very long pathway to an assessment, that you're not alone and there's resources available to whatever part of the journey you're on.”*
- ❖ *“Really good to understand the difference between health/social/mental and educational needs assessment.”*
- ❖ *“Understanding the graduated response & the websites to go to for more information/support.”*
- ❖ *“Thank you for all the information received, I now feel a lot more at ease about starting this journey with my daughter.”*
- ❖ *“Insight into professionals that we may need to use and where to find pathways to access them.”*

Ambassador Volunteer Celebrations

Paula in Exeter is working in partnership with her SENDCO in school and cascades all our information, fingers crossed we can get a school group running post COVID!

Hannah in West Devon. A huge congratulations she has started a new job in a local school! She also cascades information out to her support networks in Holsworthy.

Georgia in East Devon; “We try and feature your DIAS info in our Mill Water Facebook posts and newsletters to parents. The WAVE project has been quieter this year, with the restrictions mean lesson sessions being run, but this should pick up in the spring and there's now a very active WAVE project 'hub' in Sidmouth, run through Jurassic Paddle. Guy who runs JP is very good.”

Daisy in East Devon continues to share throughout her social media networks for the elective home educators in Devon and feedbacks thoughts and views regularly!

Jane in Exeter is working in partnership with her SENDCO in school and has gone through many changes offering a virtual offer during COVID. Jane and her SENDCO are working together with the parents in their school to ensure that the group evolves to meet the needs of their families.

Sarah-Lou in Honiton.

Sarah Lou has developed the Parental Minds CiC and taken it to new levels in Honiton I have added attachments to your email with full details about their work supporting families with mental health (😊) Hopefully she will be able to share some really exciting news in January!



parentplus@parentalminds.org.uk

Kate, Jo & Hannah in EXETER.

“Things are going really well with the group, we have met with our new Headteacher a few times and are now going to have our own website page, email address and newsletter section so we can make sure we get information on Dias stuff out and also advertise the support group. We have formed a steering group, made up of those who have done the AV training or who will do it next time. We have made plans to run face to face and online next term depending on Covid. We will have our own regular meeting room and time so parents can drop in. The group is currently consulting with school on play equipment, which we have suggested could be multipurpose and used by TAs supporting children i.e. during sensory breaks or to support regulation. We are also implementing a sensory walk around school, where there will be various things to do such as jump and touch this shape; push against these handprints etc etc. We also have some good news we applied for the Devon CC Covid funding (which you circulated info about) and it was successful. So, we have £480 to spend on re-launching the group. The funds are being held by Exeter Connect (a part of Exeter Community Initiatives) and exist to help support small informal community groups. “



Tracey in North Devon. Supporting families in their area throughout lockdown. Successfully supporting other parents and applying for funding to help with running her support group.

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<https://www.facebook.com/sidebysidetawandtorridge/posts/2612652168839009>

Heather in Okehampton. Supporting families face to face and virtually. Full details of the services for parent carers in the Okehampton and hamlets can be found through this link.

<https://www.communitylinks-sw.co.uk/support-services/>

