



The Ambassador Volunteer Project

Annual Report 2024

(March 2023- March 2024)



Working together to support the development of the Parent Carer Forum Devon

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Overview

The Ambassador Volunteer Coordinator, Megan Kenneally-Stone, left for a new post in May 2023, and after a short handover, Sarah Lord took on the role.

The change of coordinator provided an opportunity to review the programme and identify areas for further development. A comprehensive review was undertaken in collaboration with Ambassador Volunteers, DiAS managers and the Parent Carer Forum Devon. This led to the creation of a 'Code of Ambassador Volunteer Practice' to emphasise the vision, aims and values of the programme and define roles within it.

Most aspects of the programme remain unchanged; key developments which further the scope and reach of the programme are presented later in this report.

Programme Vision

The Ambassador Volunteer programme is a network of empathetic, non-judgemental, caring and respectful volunteers. Ambassador Volunteers have knowledge and understanding of a diverse range of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) through their personal experiences and professional roles.

Our purpose is to listen and connect with parents and carers of children and young people with SEND, signpost to support, share information and give feedback to DiAS (Devon Information, Advice and Support) and PCFD (Parent Carer Forum Devon).

This Code of Volunteer Practice is intended to give volunteers clear guidance regarding their role, and the confidence to carry it out effectively and ethically. (See Appendix 1 for full Code).

Programme Values



Empathy

Every Ambassador Volunteer has extensive lived experience of raising or supporting children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities; this makes our programme different to other types of services which may be delivered by professionals only. Our Ambassador Volunteers understand the challenges parents and carers face; they can therefore respond with empathy and awareness. This is not to say that they assume everyone's experience is the same, or like their own, but they can hear everyone's story compassionately with a background understanding of the wider SEND environment.

Non-judgmental

Ambassador Volunteers understand that every family's circumstances are different and there is no 'right' or 'wrong' approach for all. Anything shared with an Ambassador Volunteer will be met with openness, kindness and understanding.

Well-informed

Navigating the SEND system can be confusing and overwhelming. There is a wealth of information available online which is often valuable but can sometimes be misleading. Ambassador Volunteers undertake training and have access to regular updates and sharing of information which has been quality-checked and comes from reputable sources. This aims to ensure that any signposting by an Ambassador Volunteer is accurate and reliable.

Impartial, Respectful, Confidential

In all interactions, Ambassador Volunteers recognise that every person and family has their own experiences, needs, preferences and hopes. We do not promote any approach or service over another, and we respect that every family has the autonomy to make their own decisions. Our communications will be informative and impartial, and a family's wishes will always be respected.

Experiences shared by families will always be treated confidentially. However, one purpose of the AV programme is to give feedback to DiAS and PCFD regarding the lived experiences of families in Devon. Therefore, consent may sometimes be asked to share information directly or anonymously. Nothing disclosed to an Ambassador Volunteer will ever be shared without consent.

Programme Aim

The Ambassador Volunteer Programme is jointly managed by DIAS and PCFD; these organisations have a mutual interest in developing a service user network which communicates information regarding support for families of children with SEND and gathering the views of these families in relation to their lived experience.

The main aims of the programme are:

- Increase awareness of DiAS, PCFD and SEND support available across Devon
- Create a mechanism for connection for SEND parent carers
- Increase the reach of DiAS and PCFD to:
- Gather feedback from families
- Share SEND information effectively and widely

Programme activity

- Recruit and train ambassadors
- Provide ambassador support and ongoing training
- Build communication mechanisms
- Deliver parent carer information events based on feedback
- Deliver training in collaboration with associated projects, e.g. Autism in Schools
- Feedback to DCC, Parent Carer Forum and DiAS
- Coordinate coproduction on SEND improvement strategies

Reach

- 35 Ambassador Volunteers across Devon
- Volunteers have a wide reach on various online platforms (Facebook pages, websites, YouTube channels etc): 49,489
- Volunteers have given in-person support to approximately 1900 people in the last year.
- The AVC has visited or had meetings with 18 secondary and primary schools across the county.
- The AVC has met with Action for Children Managers to link the Ambassador Volunteer programme with Family Hubs. Children's Centre staff will be trained as AVs in April 2024, significantly increasing the reach of the programme into 2024-25.

Information gathering:

From AVs:

In order to write a development plan for the Ambassador Volunteer Programme, and identify the steps required for its continued growth, a survey was sent to all current AVs to gather their feedback (Appendix 2).

A summary of responses is below:

1. 89% of respondents felt that the induction training gave them enough knowledge to carry out their role. 11% felt they needed much more.
2. 89% of respondents felt that the regular online meetings provided enough information and training for their role. 11% thought that 'maybe' it did.
3. Approximately one third of respondents would like further training in the EHCP process. Supporting parents in their relationships with professionals; supporting parents in caring for their child; and the SEND process from early identification, were also listed as requests for additional training in supporting families.
4. Other suggestions for training to develop their role were: understanding the ongoing role of AVs and what other AVs are offering in different areas, as well as sign posting for relevant services, updates on changes in names and processes of allied professionals.
5. 89% of respondents like training to be delivered online, with 11% preferring face-to-face training.
6. The best time of day for training was fairly evenly split between morning, afternoon and evening.
7. Other suggestions included recording meetings and training, and appreciating not being put under pressure to attend when life is busy.
8. 78% of respondents preferred communications from the AVC to be a combination of email and What's App. 22% preferred email only.
9. 89% respondents were happy for information to be passed on as and when it is received. 11% would prefer a weekly round-up and 11% would like a monthly round-up.
10. 78% of respondents would like half-termly AV meetings; 22% would prefer monthly.
11. The main barrier to attending meetings was work schedule, with family and caring commitments also being a barrier for some.
12. There were a variety of suggestions for making meetings more accessible which included recording them, and some specific suggestions for days and times. One was not sure of the benefit of the meetings and another felt that we already do everything we can.

In response to the surveys, online meetings were scheduled to run half-termly, rather than monthly as previously. In order to facilitate attendance by as many people as possible, they are held online and offered at three different times: morning, afternoon and evening.

In response to training requests, a DiAS officer has attended each half-termly meeting to deliver some training in a specific area. Topics covered include the appeals process, the EHCP

process, and gathering the views of CYP. For future meetings, organisational member AVs have been invited to share details of their organisation and what they can offer.

During the half-termly meeting, AVs have the opportunity to share their views, challenges and successes. The What's App group also provides a mechanism for feedback. This is monitored by the AV Coordinator, DiAS lead and one of the chairs of PCFD.

From parent carers:

Information from parents and carers across the county continues to be gathered through AV activities within their communities. This is shared with the AVC usually by email, and sometimes by What's App. The AVC also gathers a lot of information from attendance at school and group meetings. The Coordinator adds this feedback to a spreadsheet which is shared with DiAS managers and PCFD monthly. They then extrapolate relevant information for managers of different teams and pass it on.

Connection between PCFD and Volunteers:

- Half-termly catch-up meetings PCFD and AVC.
- AV team meeting led by AVC and PCFD co-chairs attending. PCFD can update and connect with AVs directly through email and What's App.
- What's App also being used to share information, signposting and new opportunities to support PCFD events.
- PCFD attending biannual in-person volunteer event in Exeter. AVs and DiAS volunteers attend and meet DiAS staff, PCFD co-chairs and DiAS leads.

Development Plan

An evaluation of the programme was carried out with DiAS leads and PCFD once the AV survey feedback was received. This information fed into a development plan which aims to grow the network of AVs, strengthen links with schools and further consolidate coproduction with PCFD and DiAS. The full development plan can be viewed in Appendix 4.

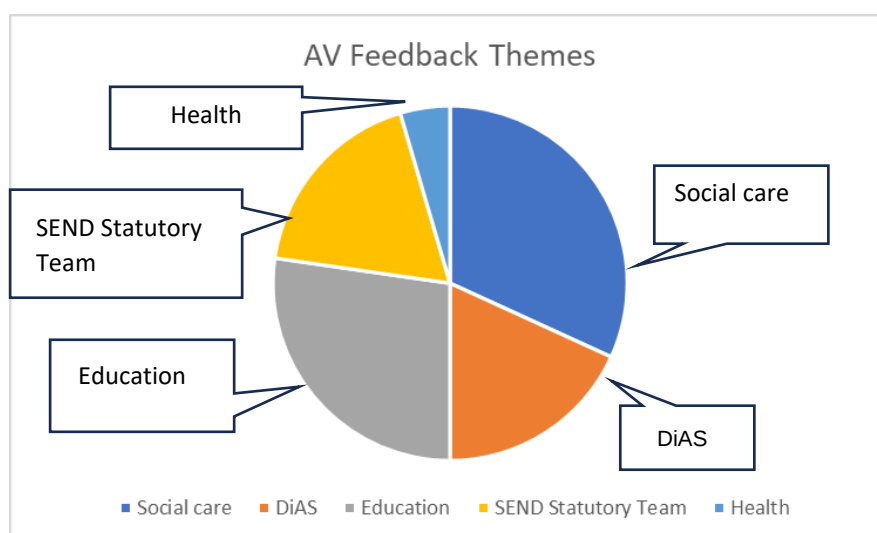
The key points to share are:

- Audit of current structure and organisation led to the development of the Code of AV Practice. The Code clearly defines the vision and values of the programme, the types of Ambassador Volunteer roles and the role of the AV Coordinator.
- The network has grown with new AVs recruited and a partnership being redeveloped with Action for Children.
- Links strengthened with DiAS volunteers.
- Wider contributions to school support through collaboration on projects such as Autism in Schools.

Feedback

Feedback from AV's has been used to:

- Develop resources for Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA). A working group was formed with the DiAS Information Officer.
- Finalise DiAS' 'At Risk of Exclusion' guidance.
- Inform the SEND Improvement Strategy. AVs are working with Kellie Knott, SEND Strategic Director, as part of a working group on ongoing improvement work.
- An AV was part of the Neurodiversity Expert Reference Group, reviewing and giving feedback on the Autism Strategy development work.
- Inform SEND Strategic Team Managers of challenges and successes from the perspective of parents.
- Review changes to EHC Hub.
- Develop a survey for parent carers on Short Break provision.



Information out:

The Ambassador Volunteer Coordinator continues to cascade information from Parent Carer Forum, DiAS, Devon County Council services (SEND, Education, Social Care), health services and other commissioned services. Information was sent out through What's app, emails, face to face at parent carer support groups and during the AV team meeting and training session. Examples include:

- Parent training sessions provided by DCC teams, such as 'Autism and Us' delivered by the Communication and Interaction Team.
- Parent training sessions and drop-in events delivered by DiAS.
- Relevant information from Early Help Newsletter.
- Ambassador Volunteer What's app group continues to grow and link AVs across the county. Along with Coordinator information sharing, the group enables volunteers to share events, guidance and resources from their own networks more widely.

Examples include:

- North Devon Family Fun Day Event
- An interactive map of specialist and alternative provision across Devon
- Autism support resources and webinars from various sources including Newbold Hope, Neurodive and Neurodiversity Celebration week.
- Youth Forums and Youth Councils
- Devon Wallet
- Young Carers events
- Contact
- Kinship Carers

Parent Carer and Professionals support/signposting:

The Ambassador Volunteer Coordinator attended 35 events for parents, carers and school staff to give support and signpost to relevant services. Events included: coffee mornings, training events, network meetings, one to one consultations.



Strategic work:

- Ambassador Volunteers have been invited to participate in SEND Improvement Strategy development led by Kellie Knott, Director of SEND Improvement, including team leaders from health and disabled children's services. 3 AVs have joined this group and attended the initial meeting. Further meetings and workshops have been arranged.
- The Ambassador Volunteer Coordinator has met with a Service Lead for the Children's Centre to discuss the role of AVs within the new Family Hubs. The programme will be central to the signposting support of Action for Children family practitioners who will all receive AV induction training.

Training:

Training sessions have been delivered to school staff, and parent carers in collaboration with schools, Communication and Interaction Team, SEND Support Team, Parent Carer Forum Devon and DiAS.

Professional training sessions:

Autism in Schools: This project was delivered principally by the Communication and Interaction Team. The AVC delivered sessions in secondary schools across the county, sharing the role of DiAS and the Parent Carer Forum and giving advice on engaging with parents of autistic children. (6 sessions)

SENCO Network Forum (South Devon): The AVC joined a staff member from DiAS to deliver a presentation about the role of DiAS for families and inform SENCOs how they could engage with parent carers through the AV programme. (2 sessions)

Individual consultations with SENCOs: Bespoke conversations to discuss parental engagement in their schools and how this could be improved. (11 meetings)

Parent information sessions:

Autism and Us: Online training for parent carers on how DiAS can support them and their autistic children. (2 sessions)

Listening to your child's views_ - How to help your child express their hopes and opinions on their education and care. (1 session)

Parent Carer group sessions - face to face sessions support parent carer groups with bespoke sessions. (11 sessions).

Volunteer training sessions:

Half-termly online meetings: Each meeting has a training element in response to training requests or identified themes. (5 sessions)

Volunteer training day: In-person training and workshop alongside DiAS staff and DiAS Volunteers. AVs were given data and information about DiAS and PCFD, their roles as part of these larger organisations, and workshop time to develop the AV Code of Volunteer Practice. Following the success of this initial session, this is now planned biannually.

Mental Health Training Day: The AVC, as a qualified mental health practitioner, created a half-day training session for Ambassador Volunteers and DiAS volunteers to support them in their roles supporting others.

Inductions: Every new AV receives a day's induction training with the AVC. (5 sessions)



Next Steps:

- Develop strategic development opportunities for Ambassador Volunteers: Build on the work that has begun with the SEND transformation team and work in collaboration to coproduce policies, projects and strategies with DiAS, PCFD, Devon County Council, NHS, Department for Education and social care partners. The Ambassador Volunteer Coordinator has been invited to contribute to the Multi-Agency Strand Plan for SEND transformation and is involved in the PINS project (Partnerships for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools).
- Develop links with schools: The AVC has created an audit and support package for schools to use to develop parental engagement. This will be presented at the annual SEND Conference in June. There will be an opportunity for school staff to become professional practitioner volunteers and this sub-group will have its own networking group.
- Expand network: Recruitment in the South of the county has been successful; the next area of focus will be West Devon where we have only 2 Ambassador Volunteers currently.

Appendix 1



Ambassador Volunteer Programme



Code of Ambassador Volunteer Practice

Our Vision

The Ambassador Volunteer programme is a network of empathetic, non-judgemental, caring and respectful volunteers. Ambassador Volunteers have knowledge and understanding of a diverse range of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) through their personal experiences and professional roles.

Our purpose is to listen and connect with parents and carers of children and young people with SEND, signpost to support, share information and give feedback to DiAS (Devon Information, Advice and Support) and PCFD (Parent Carer Forum Devon).

This Code of Volunteer Practice is intended to give volunteers clear guidance regarding their role, and the confidence to carry it out effectively and ethically.

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1. Abbreviations

Abbreviations are sometimes used within this document to simplify and shorten the content.

A list of common abbreviations is as follows:

AV: Ambassador Volunteer

AVC: Ambassador Volunteer Coordinator

DiAS: Devon Information, Advice and Support service

PCFD: Parent Carer Forum Devon

SEND: Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

2. Ambassador Volunteer Programme Overview

The Ambassador Volunteer Programme is jointly managed by DIAS and PCFD; these organisations have a mutual interest in developing a service user network which communicates information regarding support for families of children with SEND and gathering the views of these families in relation to their lived experience.

The programme is led by an Ambassador Volunteer Coordinator (AVC) and Ambassador Volunteers are situated across Devon. Some run parent support groups, some have professional roles in supporting families and some receive information in order to pass it on to others they are in contact with as appropriate.

The main aims of the programme are:

- Increase awareness of DiAS, PCFD and SEND support available across Devon
- Create a mechanism for connection
- Increase the reach of DiAS and PCFD to:
 - Gather feedback from families
 - Share information effectively and widely

3. Core Values and Principles



We recognise the value of the Ambassador Volunteer role and the importance of keeping to the values and principles of the organisations we represent. At all times we endeavour to fulfil our core values.

Empathy

Every Ambassador Volunteer has extensive lived experience of raising or supporting children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities; this makes our programme different to other types of services which may be delivered by professionals only. Our Ambassador Volunteers understand the challenges parents and carers face; they can therefore respond with empathy and awareness. This is not to say that they assume everyone's experience is the same, or like their own, but they can hear everyone's story compassionately with a background understanding of the wider SEND environment.

Non-judgmental

Ambassador Volunteers understand that every family's circumstances are different and there is no 'right' or 'wrong' approach for all. Anything shared with an Ambassador Volunteer will be met with openness, kindness and understanding.

Well-informed

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Impartial, Respectful, Confidential

In all interactions, Ambassador Volunteers recognise that every person and family has their own experiences, needs, preferences and hopes. We do not promote any approach or service over another, and we respect that every family has the autonomy to make their own decisions. Our communications will be informative and impartial, and a family's wishes will always be respected.

Experiences shared by families will always be treated confidentially. However, one purpose of the AV programme is to give feedback to DiAS and PCFD regarding the lived experiences of families in Devon. Therefore, consent may sometimes be asked to share information directly or anonymously. Nothing disclosed to an Ambassador Volunteer will ever be shared without consent.

4. Registration requirements and process

We welcome Ambassador Volunteers from diverse backgrounds and experiences. An understanding of SEND either through own family experiences, a job or through another context such as volunteering is beneficial. Anyone who feels they could help others with awareness, empathy and a non-judgemental approach could be an Ambassador Volunteer.

The process for registering is:

1. Expression of interest

Discuss the role and your interest with the Ambassador Volunteer Coordinator.



2. Submit registration form

Complete the AV registration form and send it to the Ambassador Volunteer Coordinator: sarah.lord@devon.gov.uk



3. Discussion with AVC

Online meeting with the AVC about your role and the level of support you would like to give. Discuss any special interests or potential conflicts of the role.



4. Complete online safeguarding training

Logins for Devon eLearning will be supplied so that basic safeguarding training can be completed.



5. Attend induction training

Induction training will be arranged in person; you will be able to meet other new Ambassador Volunteers and go through training relevant to the role with the AVC.



6. Decide appropriate role

The volunteer meets with the AVC (usually on the induction day) to discuss the most appropriate role for them to undertake at this stage. A mutual decision is made which can be reviewed at any time.



7. Get started!

Join the What's App group and mailing list to begin receiving information.
Attend half-termly AV meetings online.

5. Safeguarding

Whilst Ambassador Volunteers do not have statutory safeguarding responsibilities, we believe that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. For this reason, it is a requirement that AVs complete the online level 2 safeguarding training with Devon E-Learning. This course will equip them with the knowledge of what to look out for as signs of potential neglect or abuse, and what to do if worried about a child or vulnerable adult's safety. The Ambassador Volunteer Coordinator is level 3 trained and is available for discussions on request if an AV is concerned. They will then decide the best course of action and support them in carrying it out.

Alternatively, an AV can contact MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) independently on **0845 155 1071** or by following the links on the website:

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/educationandfamilies/child-protection/>

The NSPCC website also has lots of relevant information on safeguarding and child protection: <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/>

6. Sharing of information

In order for SEND services across the county to meet the needs of families and children, it is important that the Local Authority, SEND Statutory Team, and health and social care commissioners, know and understand the lived experience of families.

We regularly give feedback to DiAS Managers and PCFD about themes and trends Ambassador Volunteers have noticed, as well as individual situations which parent carers consent to us sharing. In turn, this information may be shared with decision-makers such as those listed above to facilitate effective change.

What's App

When Ambassador Volunteers, or the Ambassador Volunteer Coordinator, has information about services that may be of interest to other members of the programme, this may be shared via a What's App group for members only. The What's App group is a confidential space where signposting information can be shared and requested. Specific details of a family's circumstances will not be revealed on this platform but general requests can be made. For example: "Does anyone know of an Autism support group in the Tavistock area?"

Where specific information needs to be shared in order to signpost more effectively, volunteers will request a consultation with the Ambassador Volunteer Coordinator.

Social Media

Social media is a very useful way of sharing information. Ambassador Volunteers may run their own social media pages or contribute to others. In doing so, AVs will be mindful of the values of the programme, in particular **impartiality** and **confidentiality**. Information gained through their AV role will not be inappropriately shared and any signposting will be done carefully, recommending only known organisations and services. When signposting to other organisations on social media, a link will be given directly to the source website so that it is clear where the information originates from.

7. Types of Ambassador Volunteer Roles

Individual

Individual volunteers are parents and carers of children with SEND who wish to receive information from DiAS and the Parent Carer Forum Devon to share with their existing network, e.g. their child's school and other families they know. They do not lead groups or have contact from new parents seeking support via DiAS/PCFD.

Individual Connectors

Individual connector volunteers receive information as above to share with existing networks, but they are also available to make contact with other parents and carers who request peer support via DiAS and PCFD. They have a 'This is Me' one-page profile which can be shared for this purpose. They can signpost to support available locally, although they do not give individual ongoing support. Individual Connectors communicate parent views to the Ambassador Volunteer Coordinator and can request support and guidance from them at any time.

Group Leader

Group leaders run their own peer support groups in their local area or online. They share information from DiAS and PCFD, and feedback the experiences of families that they support. Group leaders have regular check-ins with the Ambassador Volunteer Coordinator. They have a 'This is Me' one-page profile which may be shared with other parents and carers who request support. The groups are the responsibility of the group leaders and DiAS/PCFD are not responsible for any operational considerations, although the AVC will always endeavour to support and advise the leaders where appropriate.

Organisational Volunteer

Organisational volunteers belong to existing organisations such as charities and community interest companies. Their work in these organisations brings them into contact with parents and carers of children with SEND and therefore their Ambassador Volunteer role complements their existing role. Organisational volunteers share information from DiAS/PCFD and feedback the views and experiences of parents and carers.

Organisational volunteers recognise that they may occasionally have paid-for and free services which would be of interest to the parents and carers they support. In the interests of transparent and ethical practice, these services will be declared to the Ambassador Volunteer Coordinator who will keep a directory of available support; this will include free and centrally funded services from the local authority and NHS. Organisational volunteers will not approach parents and carers independently in their Ambassador Volunteer role to promote their paid-for services.

Professional Practitioner Volunteers

Teachers, SENDCOs, Children's Centre and Early Years practitioners, amongst others, have a mutual interest in supporting parents and carers of children with SEND. Experience from their professional role can be invaluable and many also have personal experience of SEND within their own families.

Professional Practitioner AVs share information from DiAS and PCFD as part of their role and recognise that sometimes parents and carers need a safe space to share with peers. They may therefore put parents and carers in touch with other AVs where appropriate, and may lead parent groups within their schools and other settings. They will signpost to and promote the work of DiAS and PCFD within their networks.

8. The role of the Ambassador Volunteer Coordinator (AVC)

The Ambassador Volunteer Coordinator (AVC) oversees the operation of the programme, supported by managers of DiAS (Devon Information, Advice and Support Service) and the Co-Chairs of PCFD (Parent Carer Forum Devon). The AVC is flexible in responsiveness to the needs of the volunteers, with the core functions of the role being:

- Recruiting and training Ambassador Volunteers
- Networking with parents, carers, organisations and individuals to grow awareness of the Ambassador Volunteer Programme.
- Holding regular meetings with volunteers to deliver training and information, and to gather feedback.
- Keeping up-to-date with information shared by Devon County Council and partner organisations to disseminate as appropriate.
- Sharing information through a What's App group, emails and meetings.
- Ensuring policies and procedures are clear, up-to-date and well-communicated.
- Collecting data on the effectiveness of the programme and sharing this with managers and commissioners.
- Maintaining mechanisms for gathering feedback from parents, carers, children and young people and presenting this feedback appropriately.
- Triaging referrals from DiAS and Early Help, signposting and supporting as required.
- Ensuring safeguarding concerns are responded to promptly and appropriately, maintaining own training and awareness to the required level.
- Providing guidance and support to Ambassador Volunteers as and when required to enable them to carry out their role safely and effectively.
- Maintain a database of services which can be shared with AVs to assist their signposting support.

The role of the AVC is to support the Ambassador Volunteers and therefore the requirements of the role are flexible to the ever-evolving needs of individuals. The AVC will provide, to the best of their ability, the resources and support necessary for volunteers to fulfil their roles.

9. Ongoing AV activities and support

It is recognised that an Ambassador Volunteer's ongoing activities and support requirements will vary according to their type of role.

All volunteers are required to maintain contact with the Ambassador Volunteer Coordinator in order to receive and share information with and from their network.

Volunteer team meetings take place once every half term and are offered at different times to enable as wide an attendance as possible. Volunteers are asked to attend as many of these as they can to keep their training up-to-date and to feedback themes from their network.

There is an annual training and networking day with DiAS volunteers, and other training will also be offered as and when it is available.

Each Ambassador Volunteer will meet one-to-one at least once a year with the AVC; these meetings will be more regular for those AVs running groups.

Ambassador Volunteers are invited to attend open days, parent meetings and coffee mornings etc. with the AVC to support the promotion of the programme.

Ambassador Volunteers **signpost** families to support available in their area or remotely, and provide **information** which may be useful to them. They will recognise when families may need advice and support from DiAS and refer them to this service accordingly.

Ambassador Volunteers are **not** mentors or support workers; they cannot provide ongoing one-to-one support and they do not have caseloads. In order to protect the wellbeing of volunteers and ensure families receive appropriate support, it may sometimes be necessary to signpost to other organisations and services.

Author	Date written	Review date
Sarah Lord, Ambassador Volunteer Coordinator	January 2024 (draft)	April 2025

Appendix 2

Ambassador Volunteer Survey Feedback **October 2023**

Thank you to all who completed the AV survey shared in September. Your feedback is really helpful in guiding the ongoing development of the programme.

A summary of the feedback is below. The next step is for me to meet as many of you as possible to share our thoughts on how we could improve the programme even further. In order to enable attendance for as many people as possible, I will be holding Teams meetings half-termly with a morning one, an afternoon one and an evening one each time. They will have the same content presented, so you can choose the time that works best for you. I'd like to hold the first ones in the next few weeks and will send dates out today.

1. 8 out of 9 respondents felt that the induction training gave them enough knowledge to carry out their role. One felt they needed much more.
2. 8 out of 9 respondents felt that the regular online meetings provided enough information and training for their role. One respondent thought that 'maybe' it did.
3. 3 respondents would like further training in the EHCP process. Supporting parents in their relationships with professionals; supporting parents in caring for their child; and the SEND process from early identification, were also listed as requests for additional training by one respondent each.
4. Other suggestions for training were: understanding the ongoing role of AVs and what other AVs are offering in different areas, as well as sign posting for relevant services, updates on changes in names and processes of allied professionals.
5. 8 out of 9 respondents like training to be delivered online, with one preferring face-to-face training.
6. The best time of day for training was fairly evenly split between morning, afternoon and evening.
7. Other suggestions included recording meetings and training, and appreciating not being put under pressure to attend when life is busy.
8. 7 out of 9 respondents preferred communications from the AVC to be a combination of email and What's App. Two preferred email only.
9. 7 out of 9 respondents were happy for information to be passed on as and when it is received. One would prefer a weekly round-up and another would like a monthly round-up.
10. 7 respondents would like half-termly AV meetings; one would prefer monthly.
11. The main barrier to attending meetings was work schedule, with family and caring commitments also being a barrier for some.
12. There were a variety of suggestions for making meetings more accessible which included recording them, and some specific suggestions for days and times. One was not sure of the benefit of the meetings and another felt that we already do everything we can.
13. In response to the question about support needed from the AVC, some felt they were already well supported, and it was felt that emails and regular meetings were

enough. One respondent would be interested in socialising training, Lego therapy and speech and language.

14. There were some great examples of successful practice shared:

“When given notice of any training for parents it goes directly on to dojo. I've had feedback from parents and the Senco that they are of great benefit. It also gets passed through out the learning academy for a wider distribution” (from an AV who is also a Teaching Assistant)

“Supported a parent to access support and services they weren't aware of before.”

“Lots of examples! Probably informing parents of DLA and helping them fill in the form and seeing the difference it makes to their family when they are awarded DLA and then Carers Allowance feels most successful.”

“In a personal capacity, word of mouth recommendations. In my professional capacity working at an SEN school, disseminating information that we know will provide support to parents and carers.”

“Talked to a parent at a drop in at a school who was really stressed. Managed to get the family support worker to speak to her. The support worker relayed that parent was grateful.”

“Signposting and sharing DIAS info on parents SEND WhatsApp groups and family mentoring.”

Appendix 3

Ambassador Volunteer Programme

Development Plan 2023-24

Aim	Actions Required	By who	By when	Outcome measures	Evaluation
To establish Ambassador Volunteer groups in the south of the county, based on a school-hub model.	Contact schools and SENCos to offer introductory meetings for secondary schools and their feeder primaries. (Use Ofsted framework guidance in communications)	SL	End of September	School responses	Responses received from: Glendinning Newton Abbot College Stoke Fleming Primary School Kingsbridge Primary Dartmouth Academy St John's Primary Kingsbridge Community College
	Arrange and attend meetings and take expressions of interest from attendees. Send application forms.	SL	Throughout Sep-Dec	Meetings arranged & attended Expressions of interest from attendees	Meetings attended at: Stoke Fleming Primary Dartmouth Academy Kingsbridge Primary Glendinning Academy

				AVs recruited	UTC, Newton Abbot, Newton Abbot College
	Train volunteers and establish regular 'hub' meetings.	SL/AVs	November	Training attendance Meeting schedule	8 new AVs recruited: Ivybridge, Newton Abbot (3), Teignmouth (2), Cullompton (2). Hub meetings have not taken place due to time constraints, but AVs are attending half-termly meetings.
To develop a structure which facilitates specialist groups for signposting and regular support for group leaders.	Audit current AVs for special areas of interest and views on potential structure of area leads being the first point of contact and receiving supervision to support.	SL/AVs	End of September	Audit responses	Evaluated following audit and different types of AVs identified in order to target support.
	Get expressions of interest for group leaders and establish roles.	SL/AVs	October	Group leads identified	3 group leads and 4 organisational volunteers leading groups identified. There are also several professional practitioners who run groups within their educational settings.

	Establish regular group supervision.	SL/AV leads	November	Supervision taking place	It has been decided not to offer formal supervision due to capacity, but to offer group meetings.
	Identify AVs with specialist knowledge in specific areas and create a database of skills (linked to areas of need?)	SL	October	Database created	Information added to AV spreadsheet, but it is not complete.
To create a joint training package for DiAS volunteers/AVs	Liaise with AC-J to create initial training package.	SL/AC-J	October	Training delivered and feedback received	Training package has been updated following creation of new Code of AV Practice. One joint training session has been undertaken with DiAS volunteers and another is planned for June.
To create an ongoing training package for AVs specific to peer support.	Map out dates for training throughout the year; write and deliver the training support.	SL	Ongoing	Dates set, training delivered	Training is delivered half-termly at AV meetings. Topics covered so far: Appeals, the EHCP process, getting your child's views. Additional training has also been delivered in mental health awareness.
To develop mechanisms for feedback from AVs into PCFD.					Feedback spreadsheet is shared with PCFD and DiAS.

PCFD: To explore funding for developing support for group leaders.					Not yet actioned.
To create a group contract for AVs, making boundaries of the role clear.	Create a draft with suggestions for code of practice.	SL		Jan 2024	Completed – see final Code of Practice.
	Meet with AVs to co-produce the code of practice.	SL		Jan 2024	As above
To create specialist support groups within the AV network.	Create potential groups in co-production with AVs	SL			Informal steps have been taken to introduce AVs with similar roles/specialisms. To be formalised.
To build the network through the Autism In Schools/Autism and Us project	Contribute to training at the schools	SL & PCFD			Completed – all sessions delivered.
	Create specific content for Autism and Us presentation for creating/connecting with support networks through AV project	SL			Completed.