



**helping** parents  
help their **children**

Annual review 2005/06



**ipsea**

Independent Panel for  
Special Education Advice

For further information please look at our website  
**[www.ipsea.org.uk](http://www.ipsea.org.uk)**

For advice on problems with the education of special  
educational needs children please ring IPSEA's Advice  
Line free of charge on **0800 018 4016**

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## Chair's introduction

**We are very aware that there are still many children with special educational needs whose requirements are not being properly met. We must continue to challenge Education Authorities to defend children's right to the special education provision to which they are entitled.**



**“With your support we hope to come closer to achieving our aim to ensure that children with special needs are properly supported.”**

We will continue to campaign for greater understanding, more respect and more enlightened responses from decision makers. The past year has been one of considerable change and development in IPSEA, as you can see in the Highlights opposite. We are very dependent on and hugely grateful to the dedicated volunteers and staff who use their experience and expertise to provide parents with the support and advice that they need. So we really notice when there are changes in personnel.

It has been tremendous to see how our work has expanded under the guidance of our new Chief Executive Roger Inman, who joined IPSEA in May 2005. We have also been delighted to welcome Beth Coxon, Julia Hancock and others to the IPSEA staff team. In 2006 we saw the retirement of both John Wright and Christine Richardson who both cared passionately about children with special needs, did much to ensure that education authorities met their legal responsibilities and campaigned hard to ensure that the legal rights of those children were not eroded. The year also brought sadness with the death of Liz Arrondelle, a long-time trustee and former chairman who used her wisdom, charm and compassion to steer IPSEA through some challenging times in IPSEA's earlier days.

With your support we hope to come closer to achieving our aim of ensuring that children with special needs are properly supported to get the education that is their right.

**Anne Keatley Clarke**  
Chair of Trustees

## ipsea staff and trustees

### **Staff in 2005-2006:**

Vikki Compton  
Beth Coxon (joined in November 05)  
Roger Inman (joined in May 05)  
Joan Ford (retired in September 05)  
Julia Hancock (joined in September 05)  
Stephanie Tharle (joined in April 06)  
Christine Richardson  
John Wright

We were assisted by numerous administrative volunteers, to whom we are very grateful.

### **Trustees in 2005-2006 were:**

Elizabeth Arrondelle  
Paul Chadwick  
Peter Crane  
Naomi Burgess  
Astrid Hansen  
Anne Keatley-Clarke (Chair)  
Richard Ludlow (Treasurer)  
Rosemary Sage  
Sue Truscott  
Sadly Elizabeth Arrondelle died during the year after many years of very dedicated and effective support.

**Left to right**  
Stephanie Tharle, Vikki Compton,  
Roger Inman and Beth Coxon



# ipsea at a glance

## Who are we?

IPSEA is a registered charity (first established in 1983) offering free and independent advice to parents of children with special educational needs in England and Wales on Local Authorities' legal duties to assess and provide for children with Special Educational Needs.

## How do we work?

IPSEA is a volunteer-based organisation and many of the volunteers providing telephone advice and Tribunal support are themselves parents of children with Special Educational Needs who have been helped by IPSEA in the past. This review has information about each of the services we offer.

## Highlights of 2005/06

- Our Tribunal Support Service helped nearly 900 families in 2005/06 with the preparation of their Appeals to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal (SENDIST).
- This year saw a major boost to IPSEA's ability to help children who suffer disability discrimination at school through the signing of a service agreement with the Disability Rights Commission (the DRC) to assist with all their schools casework in England and Wales.
- We acted on widespread frustration with the handling of complaints about Local Authorities' practice to the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) by making a formal complaint to the Parliamentary Ombudsman about the DfES performance.
- This complaint was followed by a direction from DfES to all Local Authorities to follow the law on statementing and follow the principles set in a previous test case brought by IPSEA in the High Court.

## What do we do?

IPSEA's aims are to help ensure that all children with Special Educational Needs receive the special educational provision to which they are legally entitled, and to help ensure that the views of parents/carers are taken fully into account when their children's needs are assessed and decisions are made about their special education provision.

## Who do we help?

Whilst we help all families that come to us for advice, we target information about our services to disadvantaged families so that we can concentrate our support on parents/carers who may be less confident and/or less able to fight for their children's legal entitlement to special educational provision.

## Advising parents on Local Authorities' duties towards children with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

IPSEA's freephone Advice Line (**0800 018 4016**) has been described by many parents as a 'life-line', providing them with independent and accurate information about their Local Authority's legal duties to meet their children's SEN. In addition to accurate information about the law, the

The Advice Line is staffed by fully trained IPSEA volunteers who are mainly parents of children with SEN and who work from their own homes via a telephone diversion system. These Volunteers provide up to 56 hours a week access to parents seeking help. This includes

### **Parents are calling the Advice Line for help with:**

- Provision for children with SEN at School Action and School Action Plus;

- Problems with Statement implementation: including negotiation with LAs and referrals to solicitors when legal action is necessary;

# advising

Advice Line aims to give strategic advice on how best to present a case to a school or a Local Authority (LA). It also provides practical support for those parents who need it with writing letters, understanding professional reports and writing their own descriptions of their children's needs.

evening sessions for working parents. If a parent is unable to benefit from telephone advice and needs more intensive, face-to-face support (which might include help with a meeting at school or at the Local Authority offices) a referral is made to a member of IPSEA's Home Visit Network. In 2005/6 our Advice Line was not able to meet the heavy demand for its services and our monitoring indicated that 60–100 parents a week found it engaged.

**“We have been going through the statementing process for the last 6 months. We contacted IPSEA's Advice Line 2 months ago and their advice has been invaluable and has helped us enormously. We now have our son's statement which includes help at the level we required. We can't thank IPSEA enough!”**

- Requesting Statutory Assessments: including advice on the assessment process and, in particular, making written parental contribution to that process;
- Responding to the wording of proposed Statements, in particular, advising on how a Statement should be written to ensure that a child's needs are appropriately met;
- The content of Finalised Statements, including advice on what is involved in appealing to the SENDIST, and where appropriate, referring parents to IPSEA's Tribunal Support Service;

## **0800 018 4016**

This is IPSEA's freephone Advice Line number. It operates Monday to Friday during the day and also on Monday to Thursday in the evenings.

- The Annual Review of a child's Statement of SEN, including advice on how parents can influence the outcome of Reviews;
- Issues relating to disability discrimination in schools, with referral when appropriate to IPSEA's specialist Disability Discrimination team;
- Procedures relating to the exclusion of SEN children, with referral when appropriate to IPSEA's specialist School Exclusion Advisers.

## Supporting parents appealing to SENDIST

SENDIST has been hearing parents' appeals against LA decisions regarding educational provision for children with special needs for 12 years. IPSEA's Tribunal Support Service is also in its 12th year of providing specialist support for parents wanting to appeal to SENDIST, including

Appealing to the SENDIST against an LA decision regarding educational provision for a child with SEN is a complex and stressful process for any parent. For less confident and/or less able parents, it can seem an impossible task.

### **Members of IPSEA's Tribunal Support Service provide advice and support at two levels:**

- First, all parents are helped with the preparation of their appeal by IPSEA's trained Tribunal advisers;

**“Two years ago we began a long hard struggle to secure a statement that truly reflected our son's special educational needs. Today we took possession of that statement and we feel our son's future is more secure. It is a wonderful result which would not have been possible without IPSEA's solid, unwavering support and help.”**

- Second, parents who would be unable to represent themselves at a hearing, and who would be unlikely to make an appeal if they had to attend alone, are offered – in addition to the above help with preparation – representation at hearings by one of IPSEA's trained Tribunal representatives.

# supporting

representation at hearings. The service operates through both volunteer and paid part time advisers and during 2005-2006 around a quarter of all parents nationally appealing to the Tribunal were supported by IPSEA with their appeal.

Many parents would not take their case forward without the high level of support of the kind provided by IPSEA's Tribunal Support Service.



### **Running for IPSEA**

#### A tribunal support case study

“Johnny started at St. Mary's school this term. The transformation in him has been a mini miracle. His speech and confidence are 100% better. It would be easy to be bitter. I have had to go to the high court to get him there. It has been traumatic and painful and frustrating.

Johnny's education is secure (hopefully) for the next three or four years. Other parents are not so lucky, and are still battling to get the help their children need.

To have a professional person with a good working knowledge of the special educational needs guidelines and laws in that tribunal room with you, is priceless. That so many professional and competent people are willing to give up their spare time is amazing. IPSEA are offering a much needed service. So when my father, (who hit 70 last year) decided to run the London Marathon he chose to raise money for this very valuable charity.”

## Collaborating with the Disability Rights Commission to combat Disability Discrimination in Schools

This year saw a major boost to IPSEA's ability to help children who suffer disability discrimination at school through the signing of a new service agreement with the Disability Rights Commission (DRC).

disability discrimination (and associated SEN and exclusion) problems at school. A support agreement has been signed, and IPSEA is now the sole supplier of this support to DRC Helpline callers in England and Wales.

# collaborating

In our experience, multiple problems are frequently found in such cases and so for some time IPSEA has worked to provide joined up services which tackle not just the disability discrimination that children experience, but also any associated issues such as unmet special educational needs and the risk of exclusion. In recognition of this holistic approach, the DRC invited us to tender for funding which would allow us to provide advice and support to parents who call the DRC helpline with

We are very glad to have the opportunity to use the IPSEA model of services for the benefit of this new group of families. Early results have shown the benefits of our holistic approach with the solution of multiple problems in many cases. In addition to providing direct casework support, we are also tasked to develop disability awareness in local communities with the aim of reducing disability discrimination in schools.

Initially we will be providing local advice agencies and local parent groups with training talks and materials to empower them to help families in their area.

**“I would like to express my appreciation for the great service that IPSEA provides for parents with special needs children. I am amazed by the deep knowledge of the advisors.”**

This disability discrimination service commenced in March 2006 and is fully funded by the DRC. It has been carefully designed not to cause any further strain on IPSEA's already stretched resources whilst being linked up to IPSEA's other services.



## Helping to get excluded children back into education

Nearly two thirds of all children excluded from school have SEN, and in very many cases exclusion happens because schools are unable to meet children's special needs. IPSEA's Exclusions Service is delivered through a specialist team of paid advisers who are trained in

**IPSEA's Exclusion advisers support parents as they tackle a wide range of issues, including:**

- Making sure that children's needs have been adequately assessed and fully understood

IPSEA commonly advises parents of excluded children against a backdrop of mutual resentment. Parents often believe an exclusion to be unfair and caused by the school's inability to meet their child's needs. Schools often believe that unreasonable demands have been



### Successfully fighting our son's exclusion An exclusion case study

“Our youngest son is 15 years old and he had some excellent help with his behaviour. Unfortunately, at the start of the academic year, the school withdrew this support without informing him or us.

Our son was then involved in an argument with another pupil who was goading him about his 'need for help'. Without any support from his class teacher our son became very angry and school staff claimed that he grabbed their arms. This was not substantiated by our son or any other witness. The head teacher decided to permanently exclude him. Our son was devastated and the effect on our family life was immense. IPSEA helped us in so many ways. They gave expert help in putting together an appeal and they supported us against a system which was stacked very heavily in favour of the school. We are so grateful to the team at IPSEA for all their help over the last few very difficult months. With the help of IPSEA, we applied for an independent appeal. The outcome was a withdrawal of the exclusion.”

# helping

supporting parents of children with special needs and/or disabilities who have been excluded from school. Providing this advice and supporting parents and carers in this situation is almost always complex because parents and carers face a minefield of options and decisions when a child is excluded.

- Checking that any statement clearly specifies the special educational provision that a child should receive
- Ensuring this provision is actually delivered
- Finding out whether the excluding school could cope with more support or finding a suitable alternative school

“When it seems like there is nowhere to turn its good to know that organisations like IPSEA exist.”

made on them due to inadequate resources and training. IPSEA's main focus is to help parents and schools work together to achieve re-instatement and increased support for the child's SEN as early as possible, in a setting that can be sustained in order to provide them with maximum opportunities for their future.

## Encouraging better policy and practice – IPSEA's Campaigning Work

During the year IPSEA continued to receive a consistently high number of reports of apparent unlawful policies and practices on the part of LAs. We also acted on many years of frustration with the handling of complaints about LAs to the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) by

- Acceptance of inadequate excuses for LA law-breaking and failing to take firm action when LAs admit to law-breaking.

# encouraging

making a formal complaint to the Parliamentary Ombudsman about the DfES performance, in particular its:

- Failure to investigate complaints promptly, needlessly damaging children's education;
- Failure to find out what is actually going on at the LA level;

The complaint was made by IPSEA's Patron, Dr Rudi Vis MP, and after it was filed and copied to DfES, IPSEA did detect some improvement in the handing of such complaints. Regular meetings between IPSEA and DfES will now take place with a view to improving overall policy and practice in LAs.



**As a direct result of our work in this area, notable developments in 2005-2006 have been:**

- We acted on widespread frustration with the handling of complaints about LAs practice by DfES by making a formal complaint to the Parliamentary Ombudsman;



**“ DfES directed all Local Authorities to follow the law set in a test case brought by IPSEA.”**

Roger Inman  
Chief Executive

- This complaint was followed by a direction from DfES to all LAs to follow the law on statementing and follow the principles set in a previous test case brought by IPSEA in the High Court;
- The Secretary of State has looked at Bedfordshire Statements and directed this LA to amend Statements which do not clearly describe the help a child should receive;
- DfES have recommended to a number of LAs, including Harrow, that they consult IPSEA regarding the formulation of specific SEN policies.

## ipsea in numbers

The Tribunal Support Service helped nearly 900 families in 2005/06 with the preparation of their Appeals to SENDIST. Of these families, 38% received help on the day of the Tribunal hearing from one of IPSEA's Tribunal Representatives. IPSEA aims to reach households with low incomes to offer them the help that they may not receive otherwise. Although income is not a criterion when deciding which parents need representation, the majority (approximately 70%) of those parents who were represented in 2005/6 came from households with an overall income of below £15,000 per annum.

In 2005/06 IPSEA's Advice Line received 1459 new callers and approximately 9500 calls overall. 326 of these callers were referred to IPSEA's Tribunal Support Service for help with appealing to SENDIST. 72% of the parents that called our Advice Line were referred to us from other parents or by family members and nearly a fifth of the parents had been referred by other voluntary organisations.

**900** families helped

**38%** of these had help on the day of their tribunal hearing

**70%** of these have a household income below £15,000

IPSEA aims to reach parents from ethnic minorities and of the parents that IPSEA represented in 2005 nearly a fifth were from ethnic minorities. IPSEA helped 447 parents in 2005 whose children had issues with exclusion from school. In addition to supporting these parents, IPSEA held a successful training course to help other organisations towards a better understanding of the processes involved when a child is excluded from school. In total, 49 other organisations benefited from the free training IPSEA provided. IPSEA helped 44 parents with Disability Discrimination issues in School during 2005-2006.

## ipsea volunteers

**As the demand for IPSEA's services continues to increase, we are always looking to recruit more volunteers. Professional qualifications are not necessary although experience of the assessment and statementing procedures as a parent/carer would be an advantage (although not essential). Full training is provided and all out of pocket expenses are paid.**

The first stage of recruiting volunteers is to help them to decide which service to volunteer for – this decision is usually based on their current knowledge and experience and the time they have available for volunteering. Our Advice Line often suits people with childcare responsibilities as they are able to commit to staffing the line (from home) on a day when children are in school. It also suits those who work full-time but are able to commit to staffing the line one evening a week. Many lawyers opt to be Tribunal representatives as they wish to use their advocacy skills to assist parents.

Volunteer training is a three stage process which takes place over several months. The first stage is written modules which potential volunteers complete at home and return for marking. Once these modules are successfully completed the next stage is a two day training course. The final stage of the training is supervised casework.

Upon successful completion of the training, volunteers are awarded a certificate, receive regular volunteer mailings including legal updates and are invited to IPSEA training sessions and other events. Volunteers are requested to carry out a certain level of work every year to ensure their skills are up-to-date and that we can provide the necessary service to parents and carers.



**“ As the demand for IPSEA's services continues to increase, we are always looking to recruit more volunteers.”**

Beth Coxon  
Head of Volunteering and Training

Anyone interested in volunteering should visit our website [www.ipsea.org.uk](http://www.ipsea.org.uk) or ring us on **01394 384 711** to request a volunteer pack and details of upcoming training courses.

## Summary statement of financial activities

As planned, IPSEA's turnover has increased, with expenditure increasing to £344,550 against £241,040 for the previous year.

The increase in fundraising was the result of intensive work to raise funds from Grant Making Trusts and Foundations in order to support the development of IPSEA's existing services, and a major new service agreement with the DRC. Our services continued to be delivered in a very cost effective manner.

During the year, New Philanthropy Capital assessed IPSEA cost's per successful Tribunal Intervention at £270 (compared to £250 in 2004), with the average value of annual educational support for families resulting from those interventions at £3,000.

At the end of the year IPSEA's reserves stood at £123,931. The significant majority of these are payments received in respect of our new agreement with the DRC which have not yet been spent.

These are extracts from IPSEA's audited financial statement and as such they may not contain sufficient information to allow for a full understanding of the financial affairs of IPSEA. For further information, copies of the annual report and audited accounts are available on request.

Notes	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total £	2005 £
<b>Incoming resources</b>				
<b>Incoming resources from generated funds</b>				
Voluntary income				
Donations and gifts	8,420	–	8,420	3,345
Activities for generating funds				
Fundraising	–	9,000	9,000	15,000
Investment income	3,605	–	3,605	3,530
<b>Incoming resources from charitable activities</b>				
Publications	2,947	–	2,947	2,373
Training	26,609	–	26,609	6,086
Contracts & service agreements	155,760	–	155,760	10,666
Advice Line	–	40,721	40,721	40,035
Tribunal support service	–	102,775	102,775	71,653
Exclusion service	–	54,975	54,975	56,730
Campaigning	–	40,000	40,000	20,000
Strategic review	–	23,000	23,000	–
<b>Other incoming resources</b>				
Gain on disposal of fixed assets	550	–	550	–
	197,891	270,471	468,362	229,418
<b>Resources expended</b>				
<b>Cost of generating funds</b>				
Fundraising	–	9,000	9,000	–
<b>Charitable activities</b>				
Training	9,421	–	9,421	4,000
Contracts & service agreements	85,087	–	85,087	10,400
Advice Line	–	39,098	39,098	58,040
Tribunal support service	–	99,474	99,474	100,157
Exclusion service	–	55,581	55,581	54,249
Campaigning	–	40,000	40,000	10,108
<b>Governance costs</b>				
	6,889	–	6,889	4,086
<b>Total resources expended</b>	101,397	243,153	<b>344,550</b>	241,040

## ipsea funders in 2005-2006

IPSEA relies on funding from trusts, foundations, companies and many others to make a difference to the lives of children with SEN and their families.

### **We thank the following for their support during 2005-2006:**

- Alchemy Foundation
- BBC Children in Need
- Big Lottery Fund
- Bridge House Trust
- City Parochial Foundation
- Disability Rights Commission
- Downs Syndrome Association
- Equitable Charitable Trust
- Esmee Fairbairn Foundation
- Friends of IPSEA
- Linklaters
- Matrix Chambers
- Paul Hamlyn Foundation
- Platinum Trust
- Mrs. Smith and Mount Trust
- True Colours Trust
- and all the anonymous individuals and trusts who gave us their support

## How you can help us

IPSEA volunteers are the foundation of our services and the reason we can continue to offer our independent advice free of charge to parents that need our help. If you would like to be an IPSEA volunteer, please visit our website **[www.ipsea.org.uk](http://www.ipsea.org.uk)** or ring us on **01394 384 711** for a volunteer pack and details of upcoming training courses.

Friends of IPSEA is a group of people who commit to making a small, regular contribution to our work. They set up monthly standing orders and in return we send them regular newsletters so that they know how we are using their donations.

If you would like to become a Friend of IPSEA please contact us on **01394 384 711** and we will send you an information pack.