

Our impartiality policy

All local authorities must provide an impartial information, advice and support service (IASS) for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and their parents as set out in special educational needs (SEN) legislation and the SEND Code of Practice 2015.

The role of an IASS, is to ensure that children and young people with SEND and their parents are enabled to recognise their rights and take part in decisions that affect themselves or their child/young person. (Section 19, Children and Families Act)

The information, advice and support provided “should be impartial and provided at arm’s length from the local authority and Clinical Commissioning Groups” (SEND Code of Practice 2015 2.8).

All IASS are expected to meet certain minimum standards, developed by the Council for Disabled Children and IASS services alongside the Department of Education (DfE), and based on the SEND Code of Practice.

All references to “parents” throughout this policy includes "parents and carers".

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Impartiality in our services

"Demonstrating impartiality - the Parent Partnership Practice Guide" (Stone 2004.20) states that an impartial stance is demonstrated by:

- reflecting the perspectives and wishes of parents, children and young people
- being seen not to have a vested interest in the outcome of any discussions
- ensuring that staff and volunteers who attend decisions making meetings are clear whether their role is:
 - to support or represent an individual
 - to contribute and discuss on strategic issues
 - to participate in decision-making

SENDIASS North Yorkshire coordinators will use this guidance on supporting casework, with a clear emphasis on enabling those they are supporting to make informed decisions. This will be done by presenting information and advice grounded in facts, legislation and the SEND Code of Practice 2015.

Relationship with the local authority

Well over 75% of SENDIASS are described as 'in house' of which SENDIASS North Yorkshire is one. All SENDIASS are funded by their Local Authority and by being 'in house' means that North Yorkshire Council, and staff are local authority employees.

It is understood that for this service to be seen as independent, neutral and impartial, it must operate at "arm's length" from the local authority. The local authority recognises and respects this position. SENDIASS North Yorkshire maintains an "arm's length" position in the following ways:

- the service is measured against national DfE standards, rather than locally agreed parameters (IAS National Minimum Standards)
- the service has a delegated budget and secure independent recording systems
- the service keeps all information secure specifically communicated to it (either orally or in writing) by service users.
- the service occupies a separate space from the local authority SEND Team
- the service maintains their own website
- service staff have nationally provided training which ensures the SENDIASS team have knowledge and understanding of SEND law and guidance, as well as local policy and procedure
- the local authority supports the role of the IASS as an impartial service in networking and collaboration at a national, regional, and local levels
- service staff do not take part in local authority decision-making processes
- impartiality is a core element of staff training and reflective practice

Supporting parents, children, and young people

SENDIASS Staff:

- will provide parents, children, and young people with a balanced and comprehensive range of information enabling them to make informed decisions upon individual circumstances of the referral
- will provide support to ensure that the views of children, young people and their parents can be heard
- may, with consent, put forward the views and wishes of parents, children and young people either during a meeting or telephone call whilst, at the same time, ascertaining the views of professionals involved with the family
- will inform the Service Manager of any conflict of interest in relation to individual families, such as holding a position as a governor at a related school; these cases will be referred to other team members
- will signpost parents, children and young people to other agencies that enable them to verify the impartiality of the information and advice provided such as the Advisory Centre for Education, IPSEA and Contact (a family)

- will, where possible and circumstances permitting, state their role at the beginning of meetings they attend to clarify the position taken
 - will maintain professional relationships with the parents, children and young people they support
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Liaising with other professional and organisations

SENDIASS North Yorkshire Staff and volunteers:

- may have parental or young person's consent to act as an intermediary by relaying their perspective to school or local authority professionals; this does not indicate bias in favour of the parent or young person, nor does it represent the views of IASS staff
 - should make it clear that they have no vested interest in the outcome of any decision-making process which are in relation to an individual child, young person, or family
 - will maintain an impartial stance whilst collaborating and engaging with relevant organisation and networks
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Publications

SENDIASS North Yorkshire has its own identity, including an identifiable service logo, standalone website, SENDIASS resources and lanyard with SENDIASS North Yorkshire logo which takes precedence over other identities.

The service has responsibility for the content and maintenance of its own web pages, it includes relevant internal and external links and downloads.

SENDIASS North Yorkshire will ensure any publications, media posts or resources on media sites that have not originated from SENDIASS North Yorkshire will be clearly identified and the original source cited if possible.

Training

SENDIASS North Yorkshire staff and volunteers providing advice have access to nationally provided training, which ensures they have a sound knowledge and understanding of SEND law and guidance, as well as local policy and practice.

Information sessions and training provided by IASS will include a range of providers and organisations to ensure impartial delivery.

Steering Group

The IASS Steering Group has representation from a number of agencies and professionals and includes parent carer and young people's groups who have been involved with this service and who are well placed to provide a perspective on the effectiveness and impartiality of the service activity.

Steering Group meetings are chaired by a parent carer member.

The Steering Group has Terms of Reference which include monitoring the effectiveness and impartiality of all service delivery.

Policy effectiveness

On initial contact the impartiality statement will be verbally shared with parents, children or young people either over the phone or face to face, IASS literature states the impartial nature of the service.

A copy of the Impartially Policy will be published on the service website and copies of the Policy will be made available to service users when requested.

Every effort will be made to publicise the impartial role of the IASS to other service and organisations.

Existing and new staff and volunteers will be introduced to the policy through induction and training and it is expected that all staff will adhere to the principles of the impartiality outlined in the policy.

Monitoring the Policy

Day-to-day monitoring of the policy will be undertaken by the Service Manager.

Feedback from service users will act as a reflection of service satisfaction.

Members of the Steering Group will periodically be asked to monitor the impartiality of the information developed and provided by the service.

This policy will be reviewed annually and any amendments must be placed on the agenda of the Steering group and with agreement to any actions, they must be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.