

IMPARTIALITY POLICY

Statutory Framework

The Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (2015) states that SENDIASS

services should be:

“impartial, confidential and accessible and should have the capacity to handle face-to-face, telephone and electronic enquiries.” (SEND Code of Practice January 2016)

In addition when designing SENDIASS services local authorities should take into account those services should be:

“impartial and provided at arm’s length from the local authority and CCGs” (SEND Code of Practice January 2016)

Impartial in this context means:

“Not biased towards or influenced by any particular party, point of view or policy, including local authorities, schools, education ideologies, and campaigns. Not giving priority to any particular impairment, disability or SEN over another; accurately reflects the law.”

Greenwich SENDIASS

An in-house “arm’s length” statutory service. The SENDIASS officers aim to offer accurate, timely and impartial advice to all service users, this includes parents, young people, children, practitioners and any other relevant party.

The service works within the context of the Royal Greenwich Children’s Services and partners values, namely:

- Children, young people and families are at the heart of everything we do
- We are honest, compassionate and respectful
- We listen, learn and do things better
- We promote diversity, celebrate difference, challenge discrimination and oppression
- We work together with children, young people, families, carers and our partners to bring about lasting change

SENDIASS policies

- SENDIASS officers deliver services via a local government contract of employment meaning that their performance, capability and conduct is managed by a Royal Greenwich service manager
- SENDIASS officers work to Royal Greenwich policies but adopts its own policies on key issues such as impartiality and confidentiality
- SENDIASS specific policies reflect the values and principles of the service and are informed by service users

- SENDIASS policies reflect the specific role of SENDIASS in the context of their work in a bigger organisation

SENDIASS demonstrates its impartial service delivery position by:

having an impartiality policy that sets out to users and staff what impartiality is and how it is maintained and demonstrated throughout service delivery offering free, accurate and up to date impartial information

- offering free, accurate and up to date impartial support
- offering free, accurate and up to date impartial advice
- collecting and using feedback from service users of their perceptions of its impartiality to improve the service
- working with a steering group, where service users are represented, to discuss the work of the service
- ensuring its staff are trained in SEN law and continue to learn from research and best practice
- routinely and consistently reflecting the perspectives and wishes of parents, young people and children
- making sure they are seen not to have a vested interest in the outcomes of any discussions
- ensuring they are clear, at decision making meetings, what their role is in terms of support and advocacy; contributing to strategic development of other services and / or directly involved in decision making

SENDIASS will not:

- take decisions on behalf of a parent, young person or child
- give directive advice / instruction
- act on behalf of the Local Authority or other agency

SENDIASS will:

- make sure all officers are aware of the impartiality and understand how to follow it in all areas of their work
- not “take sides” with any party
- consistently provide information and advice based on what legislation and guidance says, helping service users to understand such
- provide, parents, carers, young people and children with enough information so they can make their own informed decisions in ways which are accessible to them
- support parents, carers young people and children to speak for themselves and take part in decision making procedures by building confidence and providing support
- respect, parents, carers, young peoples and children’s views and decisions without making judgments, irrespective of their own views as individuals
- make sure that there is a clear and comprehensively defined relationship, set out in a service level agreement, between SENDIASS and the host organisation (Local Authority) that articulates the understanding of the “arm’s length” position of the service

- work to reflect the views and concerns of parents, parent / user groups, young people and children to the local authority and other relevant agencies
- make sure that staff complete all available levels of the IASS Network/IPSEA legal
- training so they are aware of law and legal guidance relating to their role, keeping up to date in light of any changes
- make sure that staff are able to support a partnership approach when attending meetings with parents, young people, children and professionals, enabling everyone to have a voice and engage in constructive, solution focussed discussions
- make sure that parents, young people, children and practitioners all understand that the role of SENDIASS is to offer impartial support, advice and information
- establish that SENDIASS staff does not have any vested interests in the outcome of any decisions taken in relation to an individual child, young person or family.
- collate and share information from both local and national organisations with parents, young people and children along with that produced by SENDIASS as well as actively encouraged them to make use of the Local Offer resources
- ensure its literature has its own branding which is prominently displayed and easy for service users to recognise
- provide a website which offers a wide range of accessible and up to date impartial information about SEN, Disability and the work of SENDIASS. This website will also provide updates on changes to legislation, new guidance, resources and training. It will also publish consultations relating to SEN and Disability across education, health and social care – whether local or national and clearly note how services users can be involved.
- ensure service user representation is included in the recruitment process for SENDIASS staff
- sit within a department of the local authority that is separate from the SEND Department

SENDIASS Staff will:

- inform SENDIASS management of any conflict of interest in relation to individual families; parent support groups, schools, nurseries, colleagues or other agencies
- inform SENDIASS management of any personal or voluntary involvement in issues relating to education or SEN that might impact upon their work

Monitoring and Quality Assurance

- all casework will be confidentially evaluated to ensure the services provides and is seen to provide impartial information, advice and support
- all SENDIASS training will be confidentially evaluated to ensure it was impartial
- an Annual Report will be produced and published on the website, identified key outputs, outcomes and user feedback with particular reference to impartiality
- this Impartiality Policy will be published on the SENDIASS website and Local Offer so service users are aware of this policy and can provide feedback about how it manages and demonstrates its impartiality

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the managers responsible for SENDIASS and the chair of the SENDIASS steering group

Policy date: January 2022

Reviewed: January 2023

Next review: January 2024