



WALTHAM FOREST SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY INFORMATION ADVICE AND SUPPORT SERVICE (SENDIASS)

IMPARTIALITY POLICY STATEMENT

Background/Legislative Context

The service provided by Waltham Forest SENDIASS is impartial. It is independent from the council and all other organisations in the borough. It is open to everybody, irrespective of ability, age, gender, gender identity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation and social or economic status. Advice and help will be given on any subject without any preconceived attitude.

This guidance must be seen in the context of the service's other principles of free, independent and confidential advice, and its equality and diversity policies.

Appropriate action will be taken on behalf of the client regardless of how unpopular or unpalatable it may be with the community or Waltham Forest SENDIASS itself. The provision of an impartial and objective service demands that Waltham Forest SENDIASS staff must recognise their own prejudices and take action to control their feelings when dealing with a particular client.

Section 19 (c) of the CFA sets out the functions Local Authorities must provide in order to support and involve children and young people in decisions relating to their education, health and care needs and provision.

It states:

....a local authority must have regard to the following matters in particular: -

(c) the importance of the child and his or her parent, or the young person, being provided with the information and support necessary to enable participation in those decisions...

The Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice 0 – 25 years provides further guidance for the arrangements and services to be provided through SENDIASS. Specifically it requires:

- Details of how to access information and advice must be included in the Local Offer
- The service must be dedicated and easily accessible
- The service should be impartial and confidential and available for telephone, face to face and electronic enquiries. Furthermore, it should be provided at 'arm's length' from the LA

Waltham Forest SENDIASS impartiality policy meets both these legislative requirements and also to reflects service best practice as recommended by the National Information Advice and Support Network.

Impartiality

Waltham Forest SENDIASS provides free, confidential and *impartial* advice, information and support to children, young people and families to ensure they are able to participate and influence as fully as possible decisions regarding their education, health and care arrangements.

To do so our 'Impartial' service will mean:

- We aim to assist our service users on an equal, non-judgemental basis, providing the required level of support irrespective of age, gender, nature of SEN or disability or placement;
- Our responsibilities are to support families and children and as such we will service children and young people fairly and openly and will assist service users to question or dispute decisions they disagree with
- We will help families with decisions regarding services and options in relation to schools and other service providers in a similar, open manner
- We will provide full information and advice distinguishing between guidance, legislation and local policy to assist families to fully explore all options and to come to their own decisions. We will avoid advising people 'what to do'
- In very rare cases where a SENDIASS officer declares a potential conflict of interest, an alternative officer will be allocated to the case and the reasons explained to the family.

Maintaining impartiality

We will maintain our impartial service on an ongoing basis through a number of activities and mechanisms:

- All new staff will be fully briefed and aware of the policy and its implications prior to taking on casework
- We will inform all parents and families of our impartiality service commitment at the outset of any service request
- We will publish our policy as well as information regarding our full responsibilities and services to parents, children and young people, public and other stakeholders
- We will ensure that the policy is agreed through our governance arrangements with our senior management and the SENDIASS steering group.
- We will build good cooperative relationships with our colleagues throughout the local authority and health services to ensure that our respective roles are well understood and respected
- We will facilitate good working arrangements with schools and other stakeholders to ensure similar good understanding of roles to promote positive working relationships in achieving the best outcomes possible for children and young people with SEND.

Monitoring effectiveness

This policy will be reviewed and refreshed on an annual basis based on any changes in legislation, guidance or best practice; as well as importantly any feedback from our service users or stakeholders.