

Rotherham SENDIASS Impartiality Policy

Impartiality is key to the delivery and development of the SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS). The Special Educational Needs Code of Practice 0 to 25 states that "Information, Advice and Support Services should be impartial, confidential and accessible" Local Authorities have a legal duty to regard the SEND Code of Practice 0-25. Impartiality is reinforced throughout the Minimum Standards for Services providing Impartial Information, Advice and Support.

The Service views impartiality as not taking sides, not favouring one person or one point of view over another. Whilst providing a service to parents, carers, children (0-16) and Young people (16-25), Rotherham SENDIASS has a range of service stakeholders including Parent Support Groups, voluntary organisations, schools, and practitioners within Education, Health and Social Care. The Impartiality Policy applies to all service users and stakeholders.

Relationship between SENDIASS and Rotherham Local Authority

The Service has its own delegated budget, has a dedicated website and has a clear service identity; its own logo, font and style. The Service has its own secure record keeping systems and ensures information provided by service users will not be passed on without their permission. The only exception to maintaining confidentiality is in regard to information which leads us to believe a person is at serious risk of harm.

The Service produces a range of information and also provides information from independent bodies such as the Advisory Centre for Education, Department for Education, and Independent Parental Special Educational Advice (IPSEA). Contact details of other local or national independent organisations are provided. Information is made available to both parents and practitioners. Service staff are keen for all parties involved in discussions to access factual information to inform the decision making process.

Rotherham SENDIASS is managed as an in-house but 'arms-length' service of RMBC. The Service is based in Riverside House which is separate from the SEND Hub which is placed in a different part of the

borough. SENDIASS staff do not participate in the decision making process of the Special Educational Needs and Disability procedures of the Authority and do not have a vested interest in the outcome of any discussions.

SENDIASS staff who are employed by Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council have job descriptions which state they must ensure advice, information and support provided to parents/carers/ children/ young people is impartial.

Any volunteers supporting the Service have received clear information on Impartiality and have signed a document to say that they understand the importance of this. Training for Service staff is provided by RMBC and independent organisations.

SENDIASS staff contribute to local policy and practice.

Casework

The Impartiality Policy is given prominence in all Service publicity. Service staff are aware of the implications of equal opportunities and endeavour to ensure the Service is as accessible as possible to all service users. Service staff will maintain the confidentiality equally of all Service users in line with the Confidentiality Policy.

When contacting the Service, service users are informed of the Impartiality Policy. Once service users have given permission to contact the schools, schools are also reminded of the policy.

Service staff will support parents/children/ young people, individually or collectively, to convey their views to schools, the Local Authority and other agencies. Service staff will endeavour to provide factual information and will not express a personal opinion or make recommendations but instead will ensure service users are aware of all their options. They will help parents/children/ young people to make their views known or understood and will also try to ensure the parent/child/ young person is able to understand the views or comments of others who are working with them or their child.

Service staff seek to empower service users to make their own contribution to meetings. At times they need to pass on the views and wishes of the parent/child/ young person or to help them raise the issues

they want to discuss. In doing so Service staff are representing the parent/child/ young person rather than their own perspective.

Service staff help parents/children/ young people put their views in writing for a range of documents. These are drafted using information from the parent/child/ young person. Service staff will make suggestions regarding wording to improve clarity, accuracy or reduce potential conflict. Any documents produced are checked with the service user prior to being sent and represent the view of the parent/child/ young person not SENDIASS staff.

This practice should not be seen by any service users as indicating or implying agreement with the position or beliefs outlined. Service staff may constructively challenge service user's perceptions of events. They may also explain the importance of being aware of other perspectives.

Service staff will discuss the range of options open to parents/ carers/children/ young people, this may include SEND Mediations, appeals to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal Service or schools complaints procedures. If parents wish to make an appeal to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal, Service staff can help them with this, and may also signpost them to an independent organisation such as the Independent Parental Special Education Advice (IPSEA) for support in preparing for and attending the hearing. Service staff will continue to support parents to work with schools and the Local Authority to resolve issues outside of the appeals process and offer advice and support regarding the local Disagreement Resolution Service. (See policy for Tribunals)

Training and Supervision

Service staff and volunteers use training and supervision to monitor standards of impartiality and encourage reflective practice. All staff receive supervision on a quarterly basis as a minimum. Supervision will encourage reflective practice to encourage impartiality, address barriers to impartiality and challenge bias.

Monitoring the Policy

The Service has a Monitoring Group made up of parents and other service users who examine Service operation and arrangements for maintaining impartiality. The outcomes of Monitoring Group meetings are available on the Service website.

All new members of staff and volunteers working within the SENDIASS will be made aware of the Impartiality Policy via induction and training.

This policy will be monitored in consultation with the SENDIASS Monitoring Group. It will be reviewed at least every 3 years.

The Service has a complaints policy which Service users can use if they believe the Service has not acted impartially.

LA response

Rotherham Local Authority is aware of and respects the position of the Rotherham SENDIASS with regard to impartiality.