



Cumbria SEND Information, Advice & Support Service

Offering impartial information, advice and support to children and young people with special educational needs and or disabilities and their parents & carers.

Impartiality Policy

Basic Principles -

Cumbria SEND IAS Service understands that you (our client) need to know that:

- We are based in accessible premises and in an environment that you feel comfortable with
- the information we give you will be accurate, unbiased and cover all available options
- the help we provide to you in considering what is likely to be the result of the various options will aid you to decide for yourself which ones will best meet your needs
- the support we offer you will enable you to deal more confidently with the people who work with you
- if you wish us to support you when you disagree with the LA, school or other agencies, we shall do our best to ensure you get your views across and have access to any appeals processes
- you can speak to us, or write to us, in complete confidence (see our Confidentiality Policy)

1. Management Arrangements:

- 1.1 Cumbria Local Authority (LA) has a statutory duty to provide the funding to make a SEND IAS Service available to children, young people with special educational needs and or disabilities and their parents and carers.
- 1.2 Cumbria SEND IAS Service will be managed on by the SEND IAS Service Manager supported by the SEND IAS Service Co-ordinators who are collectively responsible for ensuring that the service meets the government's minimum standards for SEND IAS Services, including that it should be impartial and separate from the LA.
- 1.3 The Cumbria SEND IAS Service will be strategically managed and monitored by an identified LA Officer within Children's Services, who will challenge and support the SEND IAS Service Co-ordinators in this role.

2. Legislation and Practice

- 2.1. **The Special Educational Needs Code of Practice 0-25 years (2014) 2.1** states that the "LA must arrange for children with SEN or disabilities for whom they are responsible, and their parents, and young people with SEN or disability for whom they are responsible, to be provided with information and advice about matters relating to their SEN or disability, including matters relating to health and social care. This must include information, advice and support on the take up and management of Personal Budgets. In addition, in carrying out their duties under Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014, local authorities must have regard to the importance of providing children and their parents and young people with the information and support necessary to participate in decisions."

3. Aims

3.1. Cumbria SEND IAS Service is funded by but independent of the Local Authority. The Service will be impartial in all its dealings, not favouring any person or organisation more than another, but aiming to be fair and unbiased, while giving factual information and guidance to resolve the issues with which it is presented. Please ask for a copy of our Code of Conduct.

4. Demonstrating Impartiality

4.1. An impartial stance is demonstrated by:

- Reflecting the perspectives and wishes of service users
- Being seen not to have a vested interest in the outcome of any discussions

Staff who attend decision-making meetings should be clear whether their role at a particular meeting is either to:

- to support an individual or
- to contribute to discussion on strategic issues.

5. Supporting Parents

5.1. For Cumbria SEND IAS Service, the practical implications for impartial service delivery are:

- Staff who may hold positions associated with a school (such as School Governor or Clerk to the Governors) will not work with children, young people and their parents at the same school; on such occasions another member of staff will assist the family. Staff will not work with families with children who are at the same school that their own children attend.
- If a parent known socially to a Co-ordinator requests support from the Co-ordinator, a discussion will take place and an agreement made at the beginning of the case regarding whether they or another Co-ordinator would be the best person to support, this agreement will be regularly reviewed throughout the case.
- SEND IAS Service staff will state their role at the beginning of meetings they attend.

6. Responding to Parental Views

6.1 All views expressed by service users are given full and appropriate attention and, when these views reflect on the quality standards of the service, they are tested to see if practices can be improved. Service users may occasionally take the view that the Service is biased towards the school or local authority when staff explain that actions which have been taken are legitimate. This does not demonstrate bias but does confirm when correct procedures have been followed.

7. Liaising with other Professionals

7.1 The role of the Service is to empower children, young people and their parents by giving them impartial information, advice and support on legislation and its application through local policies, as well as helping them to understand the pros and cons of any decisions they take.

8. Training and Supervision

8.1. Training of staff is the responsibility of the SEND IAS Service manager who makes sure that staff knows the importance of impartiality at all times in all their dealings with service users and organisations. Where possible appropriate external and nationally accredited training is used.

8.2. Training with other groups around SEN and Disability issues will always include the importance of impartial, accurate information and the rights of children, young people and their parents or carers to complete confidentiality in their dealings with the SEND IAS Service.

9. Consultation

9.1. Parental views will be obtained in several ways. The SEND IAS Service will send out a service satisfaction survey at the end of any intervention to gather feedback on the quality of the service they have received, which includes a question on impartiality.

9.2. The SEND IAS Service is supporting the Cumbria Parent Carer Forum. This has a county wide Steering Group and also includes a wider membership of local parent support groups where parents' views on the Cumbria SEND IAS Service are often put forward.

9.3. The Service is also promoted through visits to schools, pre-school settings and colleges including attendance at Parent Support Groups. That provides informal opportunities for parents to feed back their concerns on any matters of policy. Those visits help to reach parents that otherwise might not use or know of the service and allow a wider range of parents to inform service delivery.

10. Information Exchange

10.1 Another role of the SEND IAS Service is to exchange information with all relevant parties, which is accurate and impartial. Occasionally this may not be what the school, the organisation or the service user want to hear; SEND IAS Service staff will act professionally at all times, acting diplomatically and effectively while discussing the situation and exploring any options available, with a complete lack of bias.

This policy will be reviewed every two years by the SEND IAS Co-ordinators and the manager of the SEND IAS Service to reflect accurately the implementation of new working practices based on the most recent SEND legislation and guidance.

Date policy to be reviewed – Jan 2021