



## What do we mean by impartial information, advice and support?

This information is about the impartial information, advice and support required by the **SEND Code of Practice**.

### What does the SEND Code of Practice say?

The **Children and Families Act 2014** says local authorities **must** provide information advice and support about special educational needs (SEN), disability, health and social care for children, young people and parents.

The **SEND Code of Practice** says:

*Local authorities must arrange for children with SEN or disabilities for whom they are responsible, and their parents, and young people with SEN or disabilities for whom they are responsible, to be provided with information and advice about matters relating to their SEN or disabilities, 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. (2.1)*

This means that every local authority should provide a service that is free, easy to access and confidential and that can help children, parents and young people take part in decisions that affect their lives.

The [Local Offer](#) must include information about the sources of information, advice and support for parents, children and young people and how this is resourced.

In County Durham this service is provided by the Families Information Service.

### What do we mean when we say we are impartial?

The **SEND Code of Practice** says:

The information, advice and support should be impartial and provided at arm's length from the local authority and Clinical Commissioning Groups (2.8)

This means that the information, advice and support that we offer are firmly based in the law and the **SEND Code of Practice**.

We provide unbiased information and advice about the local authority's policies

and procedures and about the policy and practice in local schools and other settings.

We do not give priority to any particular impairment, disability or special educational need, nor do we campaign for any particular approach to education.

By being impartial we aim to help parents, children and young people have clear, accurate and relevant information that will help them take part in decisions about their lives.

You can read our Impartiality Policy at [www.durhamsendiass.info](http://www.durhamsendiass.info)

## How do we know that we are impartial?

It is very easy to be biased. Everyone has opinions about most things! Sometimes people can be biased without even realising it.

That is why we really value your opinion about the information, advice and support we offer. We want you to tell us if you think we are not impartial. To help us check that we are impartial we routinely ask those who use our service to say whether they think we have been biased one way or another.

At **DURHAM SENDIASS** we follow a national set of **Quality Standards for services providing impartial information, advice and support** developed by the **Network of Information, Advice and Support Services**. This helps us to monitor the effectiveness of our service we provide and ensure that it is 'at arm's length' from the local authority. By this we mean that we act, and are seen to act, separately and impartially, with no undue influence or control from either the local authority or the Clinical Commissioning Group in our area.

## What information, advice and support do we offer?

We offer accurate, up to date and impartial resources and information about the law on special educational needs and disability. This covers:

- education, health and social care
- national and local policy
- the Local Offer
- your rights and choices
- your opportunities to participate
- where you can find help and advice
- how you can access this support.

We provide information in many ways, including our website; [www.durhamsendiass.info](http://www.durhamsendiass.info) , publications, training events and conferences.

Sometimes information alone is not enough. You may want help to gather information, make sense of it and apply it to your own situation. We call this advice and we offer this service by email, on the telephone, face to face and through work with groups or in training.

We can also offer more intensive support if you need it. This can include helping with letters, attending meetings with you or supporting you in discussions with the local authority, school or other setting. We may be able to help you find a **key worker**, or an **Independent Supporter** or a volunteer who can support you.

When we are not able to help we will do our best to tell you about, or put you in touch with, other groups or organisations that can help. We call this **signposting**.

### **Is the service confidential?**

**YES!**

We will not share your information with anyone unless you tell us we can. The only exception to this would be because we have a specific concern about a child's safety.

You can find our **Confidentiality Policy** on our website.

We will often work with parents and children or young people together. Sometimes we will work with them separately. When we do this the same confidentiality rules apply.

### **Where can I find out more?**

You can read about impartial information, advice and support in the **SEND Code of Practice** Chapter 2.

Durham's [Local Offer](#) includes details of Durham County Council's arrangements for providing information, advice and support.

Look at the **DURHAM SENDIASS** website for information about our services, copies of our publications and contact details.

**SENDIASS** helpline number: 01915873541

Or Email: [sendiass@durham.gov.uk](mailto:sendiass@durham.gov.uk)