

Impartiality Policy

Hartlepool's Information, Advice and Support Service views impartiality as one of the defining characteristics of service practice. It is vital that all organisations, personnel and service users recognise and accept the impartial nature of service delivery.

» Practical Arrangements - Relationship with the Local Authority

Hartlepool's Information, Advice and Support Service operates in house but is arms-length from the Local Authority, situated within the Standards, Engagement and Development Team, Child and Adults Services Department under the responsibility of the Standards, Engagement and Development Manager.

This means that the service is funded by the Local Authority and that service staff are employees of the Local Authority; the difference being that IASS staff are not expected to support or represent the views of the Local Authority, they are employed to support parent/carers children and young people.

It is understood that in order for the service to operate in an independent, neutral and impartial manner, it must be independent and at arms-length from the Local Authority. The Local Authority also supports the role the IASS to enable them to network and collaborate at local, regional and national level.

In order to gain the confidence of parents in the impartiality of Hartlepool SENDIASS we will:

- Inform all parent/carer children and young people of the impartial nature of the SENDIASS and issue a copy of the policy to them when they first approach the service.
- Be clear with parent/carer children and young people that the role of the SENDIASS is to help them participate in any decisions made and to provide advice on their legal rights. SENDIASS can support parent/carer children and young people to put across their views but that the service remains impartial and therefore, does not advocate on their behalf or take sides against agencies such as the Local Authority, Schools, Health Authority;
- Empower parents/carer, children and young people to speak for themselves and make their own decisions, rather than pushing them towards a particular course of action;
- Always respect the views and decisions of those who approach the service;
- Provide factual information and advice based on what the guidance and legislation says, not offering our own opinions or promoting local policy.

Hartlepool SENDIASS will make sure that schools, the Local Authority and other agencies understand the impartial role of the service by:

- Making it clear that the best outcomes for children and young people with SEN and disabilities is the ultimate aim of SENDIASS and its role is to support to achieve this over time.
- Informing the local authority, education settings or any other agency of the impartial nature of the service and making them aware of this policy.
- Not allowing relationships with local authorities, education settings or any other agency to affect the information or support SENDIASS provide for parent/carer, children and young people.
- Being clear that SENDIASS do not undertake local authority functions or act on behalf of the local authority, educational setting or other agency.
- Being clear that SENDIASS do not take sides with the local authority, education setting or any other agency.

Hartlepool SENDIASS will ensure the effectiveness of this policy by:

- Making sure all staff, relevant voluntary agencies and independent supporters receive a copy of the impartiality policy and it is explained to them.
- Sharing the policy with the local authority and other agencies so they are aware it exists and understand it fully.
- Promoting the policy in service documents and on the website.
- Reviewing the policy annually.

» Data Protection

Although we are part of Hartlepool Borough Council, any record we make of your contact with us is confidential to the Information, Advice and Support Service except where you agree to us talking with other agencies, or if a child is at risk.

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