

*Impartial means 'not favouring any person or party more than another, but striving to be fair and unbiased'*

SENDIAS services' are expected to meet certain Quality Standards as set out by the National Information, Advice and Support Services Network (IASSN) and the Department for Education (DfE). The Quality Standards state that 'Parents, children and young people are entitled to high quality, impartial and accessible information, advice and support, appropriate to their needs' The SEND Code of Practice also states that 'the information, advice and support should be impartial and provided at arm's length from the local authority and CCGs'.

Solihull SENDIAS works to maintain the impartiality of the service by having in place the following arrangements:

#### **Relationship with the Local Authority**

- Solihull SENDIAS is an outsourced service. Family Action are commissioned by Solihull Local Authority (LA) to provide the service. Solihull SENDIAS staff are employees of Family Action, not Solihull LA.
- There is a contract in place between Solihull LA and Family Action, which includes Service Specifications and Performance Targets in line with the national Quality Standards.
- The service operates at 'arms length' from the LA, our impartiality is respected, and supported by Solihull LA.
- The LA promotes the impartiality of the service and accepts that at times this will involve challenges to policy and practice
- The service occupies an office in a geographically different area to the LA's 0 to 25 SEND team (which includes the StART team)
- The service has its own budget and independent recording systems
- Regular meetings are held between the SENDIAS Manager and LA commissioners to monitor service activity.

#### **Publicity**

- The service has its own identity including service logo and letterhead which is distinct from any other service and reflects its impartiality
- The service produces its own materials including service information and a range of SEND information leaflets
- Solihull SENDIAS has its own web page, as part of the Family Action website, which is regularly maintained and updated. The website is distinct from the Local Authority and there is a link from Solihull's Local Offer website to Solihull SENDIAS' page.

## **The role of SENDIAS**

- Solihull SENDIAS provides information, impartial advice and support to enable children and young people with Special Educational Needs & Disabilities and their parents to make their own informed decisions. We seek to help service users to have a full understanding about any decisions they may wish to take.
- Solihull SENDIAS ensures that all staff access high quality independent training. This includes IPSEA SEND Legal Training (Levels 1,2 & 3), Safeguarding, Personalisation & Outcomes as well as a range of relevant training which individual staff have accessed.
- Staff inform Solihull SENDIAS' manager of any conflict of interest in relation to individual families e.g. child at the same school, governor at the school. These cases are then allocated to other team members.
- Solihull SENDIAS aims to form positive relationships with voluntary support organisations including the local Parent Carer Forum (PCF) SEND Youth Forum and SEND support groups.
- Solihull SENDIAS offers a range of information that provides service users with all available options, so that they are empowered to make informed decisions.
- Solihull SENDIAS will signpost parents and young people to other relevant agencies, so they have a wide range of information available and can ensure impartiality.
- At times, with consent, we may put forward the views and wishes of service users at meetings (if they feel unable to do so themselves). We may also with consent of a parent or young person, act as an intermediary by relaying their views to the Local Authority or school. This does not indicate bias towards the service user, nor does it represent the views of SENDIAS staff.
- Solihull SENDIAS make it clear that we have no vested interest in the outcome of any decision making process in relation to any service user.
- Solihull SENDIAS will maintain a professional relationship with parents and young people whom we support and other agencies.

## **Disagreement resolution**

- Solihull SENDIAS provides Information, Advice and Support to families of SEND pupils who have been excluded from school.
- Solihull SENDIAS helps to bring about early resolution of disagreements between parents and schools and/or the LA and informs parents of their rights to formal disagreement resolution including mediation & appeal to SEND tribunal.
- Solihull SENDIAS can support and help parents to prepare their case for mediation and tribunal. (Parents are signposted to relevant organisations if they want representation at tribunal).