

Impartiality Policy

One of the foundation principles of the DiAS service is impartiality.

The Children and Families Act 2014 is the SEND legal guidance for local authorities. It states that every local authority **must have an impartial information advice and support service**. In Devon, that is DiAS.

This is what being an impartial service means in practice.

How we work

- We are commissioned to provide the service by Devon County Council as part of their legal obligations. Although we are part of the Council we are at 'arms-length' and by law we must be impartial.
- We work as an independent team. We are based in an office on a different site from other Devon County Council SEND services and teams such as the SEN 0-25 team, inclusion team and SEND specialist advice services. We do not take part in any local authority decision making processes.
- We have a dedicated budget and our own service managers. Our budget is ring-fenced, which means it cannot be spent on anything else, other than the service.

The information advice and support we give

- When we talk to services and teams on your behalf, we only do that with your permission (unless it must be shared to protect someone from harm).
- We always aim to give advice and information that is non-biased, non-prejudiced and fair. We do not take sides. Instead, the information and advice we give sets out the possible options available, unless there is only one course of action. We use the law to support and guide our discussions with you. We have the same approach when we work with schools, services, and the council.
- Our website is stand-alone and separate from the Devon County Council website. We aim to make it as accessible as possible for users.
- Our leaflets, website, social media and publicity materials are developed using set procedures to make sure they are accurate and impartial. That includes working with subject matter experts and users, using high quality sources of evidence, and checking and reviewing information regularly. All our staff who give advice have IPSEA legal training to level 3.
- We support children and young people, parents and carers, to prepare and present their own views. We do not promote or defend any particular point of view.
- We give support that is tailored to each child and family, taking their individual situation into account.
- Whether we're working with children and young people, parents and carers, or professionals we will take into account the factors that may be affecting their response. We may constructively challenge where the facts or perceptions are inaccurate.

Training and Supervision

- All staff and volunteers have training about how to provide impartial information, advice and support. This is routinely discussed in team meetings and monitored through regular supervision.
- All our staff, volunteers and members of the Reference Group read, explore and then understand the impartiality policy during their induction and training.

Monitoring Impartiality

- Any service user who is unhappy with our service, including our impartiality, can make a complaint by following our complaints procedure.
- We ask for feedback about our impartiality from service users, using our feedback questionnaire.
- Staff and volunteers must declare any conflicts of interest.
- The effectiveness of the Impartiality Policy is monitored and reviewed every year by the DiAS Reference Group using the information collected through service user comments and staff and volunteer discussion.

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