

## **Arms length agreement between Northamptonshire County Council and the Information, Advice and Support Service, Northamptonshire**

This document describes the relationship between the local authority and its Information, Advice and Support Service and the measures that are taken to protect the impartiality of the service.

### **Management:**

Information Advice and Support Service staff are employed by Northamptonshire County Council. The service is managed by the Principal Improvement Manager – Leadership, Governance and Safeguarding which is located within the School Standards and Effectiveness Team. The manager of the Information, advice and support service is invited to management meetings to ensure that a parent's, children and young people's perspective is included in discussions designed to inform and develop practice.

### **Location:**

Although the service is housed in local authority offices, it is away from county council headquarters where senior managers are based. This environment protects the confidentiality of the service whilst providing easy access to LA personnel.

### **Confidentiality:**

The service has a secure database. Any information that is held by the service is totally confidential and is not shared with any other party including other sections of the county council unless a parent requests this and gives prior permission.

- Information, advice and support service staff do not access any information relating to a child, young person or their family unless they have their permission.
- Information, advice and support service staff do not inform any other party that a parent or young person has approached the service unless they have their permission.
- Nobody can refer a family to the service unless they have the parent's or young person's permission.
- Information, advice and support service staff do not disclose any information about a child, young person or their family to any other party unless they have their permission.
- Information, advice and support service staff do not contact anyone involved with a child or their family unless the parent has given permission.
- Information, advice and support service staff protect the identity of families when they communicate concerns to other parties.

### **Role of the Information, advice and support service:**

- The service provides information, impartial advice and support to parents and carers of children with SEND and young people with SEND, or who are excluded from school.
- The service supports parents and young people with admission to school and colleges and participating in policy and service delivery decisions. It does not provide advocacy for parents or young people.
- The service aims to ensure that the views of parents, carers and young people are heard and although local authority personnel are committed to listening to parents and trying to find resolutions to disagreements, they accept that the service must challenge their policies, procedures and practice at times.
- The service helps to bring about early resolution of disagreements between parents and schools or the local authority and informs parents and carers of their right to disagreement resolution including mediation or to appeal to SEND.
- To avoid a potential conflict of interest, Information, advice and support staff do not attend tribunals with parents, except in a support capacity if they wish. They do help parents to prepare their case and offer support after the tribunal decision. Parents are signposted to national or local advocacy organisations if they want somebody to speak on their behalf at a tribunal.

### **Work with schools and early years providers:**

The service provides training on involving parents to school staff and governors. It also helps to set up support groups for parents within schools. Staff work closely with Portage supervisors and early years teams to ensure that parents have access to information and impartial advice and support. The Service also contributes to training for early years staff in a range of settings.

### **Work with voluntary organisations and professionals outside education:**

The service aims to form close links with voluntary support organisations and signposts parents and carers to appropriate sources of support. The service also works closely with agencies that support families who have a child or young person with SEND, or who are excluded from school. The service is expected to keep up to date with information about voluntary support organisations and legislation relating to agencies involved in supporting vulnerable children and young people.

### **Information:**

The local authority delegates the responsibility of providing information for parents, carers and young people about SEND legislation and local procedures to the information, advice and support service. The service has its own logo, letter heads and house style to reflect its impartiality.

### **Summary of measures taken to protect impartiality:**

The service has an advisory group which has parents, representatives from voluntary organisations and the health service who are independent of the local authority

- The line manager is not a member of the advisory group
- The service has its own budget

- Information, advice and support service staff have the right to challenge local authority policy and practice if this appears to breach parents' or young people's rights .
- The service has its own telephone lines and phone calls are private and confidential
- It has its own logo, website, leaflets and letter heads
- Staff are based in offices away from the main county council headquarters
- The service has an independent, secure database

This information can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

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