



**Stoke on Trent
SEND Information,
advice & Support
Service
(SENDIASS)**

**Impartiality Statement
January 2026**



Raising pupil achievement by empowering parents/carers or young people to take an active and informed role in their child's or the young person's own education.

Throughout the document the term 'parent' includes all those with parental responsibility, including parents and those who care for the child.

The information, advice and support should be impartial and provided at arm's length from the local authority and Integrated Care Board. (ICB) Information, advice and support offered should be free, accurate, confidential and in formats which are accessible and responsive to the needs of users.

Staff providing information, advice and support should work in partnership with children, young people, parents, local authorities, ICB and other relevant partners. They will help promote empowerment and self-advocacy for children, young people and parents.

All staff and volunteers are required to operate impartially, not favouring one person more than another, making every endeavour to be fair and unbiased.

Aim

Stoke on Trent SEND Information, Advice & Support Service (SENDIASS) is an 'in house' service that operates at 'arm's length' from the Local Authority (LA). The service aims to be impartial in all its dealings, not favouring any person or party more than another, but striving to be fair and unbiased, whilst presenting accurate factual information and guidance in order to bring about a resolution to the issues with which it is presented.

We aim to work in partnership with children, young people, parents and partners to achieve positive outcomes, to promote a culture of communication and cooperation between all parties involved. will enable parents, children and young people to participate in decision making, and to ensure that their views, wishes and feelings are heard and valued.

An impartial stance is demonstrated by:

- reflecting the perspectives and wishes of children , young people and parents
- being seen not to have a vested interest in the outcome of any discussions
- ensuring that the information, advice and support that we offer is firmly based on the law and the SEND Code of Practice
- Providing unbiased and factual information and advice around the Local Authority's policies and procedures and around the policy and practice in education settings.
- ensuring that staff and volunteers who attend Statutory meetings are clear whether their role is to:
 - support or advocate for an individual,
 - contribute and discuss on strategic issues

Location of Service

The Service runs as a hybrid model. Staff are expected to work in a confidential space within their home environment. For two days a week the service will be office based, being located separately from services whom we would have direct contact with on a day to day basis, regarding any decision making that will impact on casework. E.g SENMAS, ICS, schools.

The Service actively minimises barriers to access by having central meeting rooms for service users plus access to confidential meeting areas located city wide. At times the service may also arrange meetings with the parent in a confidential room in an educational setting if appropriate, in order to be as accessible as possible. Protocols are in place at all the locations to ensure confidentiality at all times.

Relationship with the LA

Stoke-on-Trent SENDIASS is an 'in-house' service. It is jointly commissioned by the LA and ICS. The LA and ICS recognise and respect the need for the Service to operate at 'arm's length'.

To raise confidence in the Service, Stoke-on-Trent SENDIASS has:

- an independent database/recording system
- a shared responsibility for service development between the LA and The Steering Group
- its own identity, including a Service logo and marketing.
- Premises that are based away from services that make key decisions impacting on casework.

The Steering Group

The Steering Group has representation from a number of services across all sectors involved with parents of children with SEND, and children and young people with additional needs. The group includes parental representation, whom have been involved with the Service and who are well placed for providing a parental perspective on its effectiveness in service delivery.

The Steering Group has an rotational ~~elected~~ chair, which is agreed at the first meeting of each academic year and the Chair will then serve for the remainder of that year.

The dates of the meetings are published. At each meeting, reports are presented by the Team Lead followed by discussion and an exchange of views. Minutes are taken at each meeting and are circulated to all members; approval of the minutes is sought at the next meeting. Action points, noted in the minutes, are acted upon by the relevant people within agreed timescales. Outcomes of the Steering Group meetings are available on the web site.

The role of the Steering Group is:

- to have a clear understanding with the LA on the role of the Service
- to promote a culture of challenge and support both to the SENDIASS and the LA in its service delivery and its arrangements for maintaining impartiality
- to help the Service to develop partnership with, and communication between, all parties
- to offer views and advice to inform procedure and practice of the service in line with its Minimum Standards.
- to review and comment on information including the development plan produced by the SENDIASS and monitor the effectiveness of service delivery
- To acknowledge the potential for conflict between the role of the Service as part of the LA and the role of the Service in empowering and supporting parents and young people.

Supporting Children, Young People and Parents

The practical implications for the service delivery are:

- The Service will provide impartial advice, information and support to children, young people and parents when communicating with education settings, the Local Authority and other relevant agencies, at the same time, ascertaining the views of professionals involved.
- The Service will ensure that children, young people, parents, and practitioners clearly understand the role of SENDIASS. Where possible, and circumstances permit, staff will state their role at the beginning of meetings they attend in order to clarify the position taken.
- The Service will ensure staff are independently trained and able to support the impartial, solution focused approach.
- Staff who may hold positions associated with the school (such as School Governor or Clerk to the Governors) will not work with parents at the same school; on such occasions another member of staff may assist the family.
- Staff will not assist parents that they already know; casework will be passed to another member of staff.
- SENDIASS staff will signpost children, young people and parents to other agencies and will establish through its website a range of local and national organisations that offer advice, support and information relating to SEND.
- The Service will ensure that a wide range of information from both local and national organisations along with 'in house' publications is available to children, young people and parents on request.
- The service is adaptable to parental need, but also has a strong focus on empowerment and self-advocacy.

Training

SENDIASS will ensure access to high quality training in current and relevant education law, policy and practice in relation to Special Educational Needs and Disability for all staff and volunteers. This will be via IASSN and other trusted organisations.

Individual supervision and casework management will be made available for all staff and volunteers.

Liaising with Professionals

The role of the Service is to empower children, young people and parents to self advocate where possible by providing them with information, advice and support that includes relevant national legislation and its application through local policies, as well as helping them to understand any decisions they ultimately take. SENDIASS staff request consent from parents/carers and young people to act as an intermediary in relaying their perspective to education settings, Local Authority or relevant professionals. This does not indicate bias in the favour of the child, young person or parent, nor does it represent the views of SENDIASS staff.

Effectiveness

The Statement will be made available to all children, young people and parents on their initial referral to the Service.

A copy of the Statement will be displayed on the SENDIASS web site and copies will be available on request.

The Impartiality Statement will be part of an Induction Programme for all new staff and volunteers, and will be made known to all agencies that engage with the Service.

All staff will be expected to adhere to the principles set out in the Policy.

Monitoring

The Policy will be monitored by the SENDIASS Team Lead.

Feedback from user questionnaires will indicate service satisfaction.

The Steering Group will be required to monitor the impartiality of the Service.

The Policy will be reviewed annually by the Steering Group.

Administration

This policy was written and published in consultation with the SENDIASS Steering Group.

Date written – updated October 2018

Previously Amended – October 2019

Amended- March 2023

Review date – March 2021

Amended – July 2023

Amended- January 2026