



Confidentiality Policy

Note: All references to “parents” throughout this policy includes parents and carers

Introduction

SEND Information, Advice and Support Services (SENDIASS) are statutory services offering free impartial advice and information for children, young people and their parents, about special educational needs (SEN) procedures as set out in SEN legislation and the SEN Code of Practice 2015.

SENDIASS's are expected to meet certain minimum standards as prescribed by the Government and, in addition, ensure that “Confidentiality and impartiality are key to providing services that parents and young people will trust”.

Confidentiality Statement

Coventry SENDIASS is committed to providing a confidential service to its users and recognises that all children, young people and their parents should be able to access the service in confidence. SENDIASS respects the right of anyone to contact the Service anonymously and will not try to elicit detailed information if the caller wishes to preserve their anonymity.

The service is committed to the principle that children, young people and their parents have a right to expect that the information they share with us will:

- be respected and not passed on to anyone else without their express permission (unless we have a statutory obligation to do so)
- that we will handle any such information in ways that conform with the GDPR/Data Protection Act requirements, **unless** there are strong public interest concerns (please see our privacy notice for details)

Practical arrangements

- The Service operates a self referral system – where children, young people and their parents contact the service directly. In exceptional circumstances a parent/young person who requires SENDIASS support may feel unable to make contact, in which case we recommend that the professional makes the initial contact on their behalf ideally whilst the parent is present.
- SENDIASS will only provide in-depth casework support directly to children & young people or to those parents / carers who hold parental responsibility. Children/young people and their parents may occasionally contact the service independently of each other in which case staff will treat both parties as separate enquiries. Extended family members who contact the service will only be offered general information not pertaining to an individual.
- SENDIASS staff will always obtain permission from parents/young people prior to speaking to or discussing the situation with other professionals and this consent will be recorded in the case file.

- SENDIASS will always obtain permission from parents/young people to access any records from other professionals; these are often required in order to build a background of the case and to provide appropriate support.
- SENDIASS staff will not tell any other person or agency that a parent/young person has approached the Service without parental/young person's agreement.
- Observations or information about the family are not recorded or communicated unless they are directly relevant to the issue under discussion
- The SENDIASS telephone line is externally provided via BT – no one else has access to this line or to the answer phone service attached to it.
- SENDIASS would usually consider it acceptable to contact parents/young people via home / mobile telephones but should check with parents/young people whether it is acceptable to call them at work or to leave messages on answer phones or with family members / work colleagues.
- Parent/young person consent will be sought prior to their contact details being included on the SENDIASS mailing list. When sending information care will be taken to establish correct mailing details.
- The SENDIASS is based in a Local Authority Building separate from the SEN Management Services, and has its own private office space with the ability for parents to meet SENDIASS staff in a private room without interruption. There is also a separate entrance and sign in procedure.
- A limited number of paper files containing factual case information and personal details are kept in locked cabinets accessed only by SENDIASS staff. Occasionally in order to effectively support parents, paper files are taken out of the office by SENDIASS staff; it is their responsibility to ensure these files are kept safe and secure.
- Case notes are also held electronically, with only SENDIASS staff having access to the system. All computers used by staff have two layers of password protection, and the Crossdata casework management system which is used by the SENDIASS, also requires two levels of security to access.

Use of Data – Privacy Notice

As part of the arrangements under the GDPR which came into effect on May 25th 2018, SENDIASS has provided a full privacy notice on its website. The notice outlines the reasons for collecting information/data from service users and the legal basis for doing so.

Provision of information

- Should there be a Subject Access Request for Personal Information from a parent, child or young person, whose information is held by the SENDIASS, the request will be dealt with in line with the principles in the Data Protection Act.

Policy Effectiveness

- On initial contact the confidentiality statement will be verbally shared with parents either over the phone or face to face. SENDIASS literature states the confidential nature of the Service.
- A copy of the confidentiality policy will be displayed in the SENDIASS office and on the SENDIASS website.
- Existing and new staff and volunteers will be introduced to the confidentiality policy via induction and training.
- It is expected that all SENDIASS staff and volunteers will adhere to the this policy: volunteers with the service will be expected to sign a confidentiality agreement.
- All SENDIASS staff will receive training around data protection as part of their on-going staff training.

The Service complies with Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adult procedures.

All Staff have a legal obligation to report concerns – this includes reporting any incidents of threatening/abusive behaviour from service users towards staff members.

Monitoring

- Day to day monitoring of the Policy and privacy notice will be undertaken by the Service Manager
- The Policy will be reviewed annually by the SENDIASS Steering Group; any amendments should be agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting.