

Impartiality Policy

Bolton IAS is a statutory service offering free, accurate and impartial information and support for parents, children and young people on special educational needs (SEN) procedures as set out in SEN legislation and the SEND Code of Practice 2015. We are expected to meet certain quality standards as prescribed by the National Network of Information Advice and Support Services and the DfE.

The Minimum Standards for services providing information advice and support, states that we should ensure; "Parents, children and young people are (provided with) high quality, impartial and accessible information, advice and support that are appropriate to their needs, extends their knowledge and maximises their involvement in decision making"

To ensure parents carers, children and young people have confidence in the service, it is important that staff and volunteers are able to operate impartially.

Our Impartiality Statement

The Information, advice and support offered should be impartial and provided at arms-length from the Local Authority and CCG (SEND CoP 2015, 2.8). Here at Bolton IAS, we are part of The compass Partnership Bolton, a not-for-profit organisation. IAS have their own offices, staff, phone lines and website within this organisation. Our ties to the LA are through funding only. As a statutory service, LA's **must** commission and IAS service in **every area**.

Aim

Bolton IAS aims to secure service user confidence by the provision of neutral, factual information and advice based on current special educational needs (SEN) and exclusion legislation and thereby empowering and informing them of the options available to them. IAS will also act strategically alongside our sister organisation, Bolton Parent Carer Forum, to ensure the families we support are heard and their experiences shared with the right people to influence change.

Relationship with the Local Authority

Bolton IAS is an "out sourced" service. This means that the service is funded by the Local Authority but service staff are Compass Partnership employees. It is understood that in order for the Service to be seen as independent, neutral and impartial, it must operate at "arms length" from the Local Authority. The Local Authority recognises and respects this position. The Service is managed independently from the LA and we have our own advisory board who support us operationally and strategically.

The Service will keep secure all information specifically communicated to it (either orally or in writing) by parents carers and young people. The Service has a delegated budget and

independent recording systems that are not accessed by the LA. Similarly, IAS have no access to LA recording systems.

Supporting parents, children and young people

The role of the Service is to empower parents, children and young people by providing them with relevant information, advice and guidance that includes national legislation and its application through local policies and practices. It seeks to help them to understand the law and allow them to make informed decisions for themselves.

IAS staff (or volunteers) will:

Provide parents, children and young people with a balanced and comprehensive range of information setting out all options available, enabling them to make informed decisions dependent upon the individual circumstances of the referral. We may, with consent, put forward the views and wishes of parents, carers, children and young people either during meetings or telephone calls whilst, at the same time, ascertaining the views of professionals involved with the family. We will inform the Manager of any conflict of interest in relation to individual families e.g. The family are relatives of an IAS officer. These cases will be referred to other team members. We will signpost parents, carers, children and young people to other agencies that enable them to verify the impartiality of the information and advice provided e.g. IPSEA , CONTACT. Furthermore, we will maintain a professional relationship with parents, carers children and young people they support.

Liaising with Other Professionals and Organisations

IAS Staff (and volunteers):

May have parental/carer/young person's consent to act as an intermediary by relaying their perspective to school or Local Authority professionals. This does not indicate bias in favour of the parent/young person, nor does it represent the views of IAS staff. We will make it clear that we have no vested interest in the outcome of any decision making process in relation to an individual child/young person or family, and do not work to an IAS agenda. We will maintain an impartial stance whilst collaborating and engaging with relevant organisations and networks.

Publications

Bolton IAS has its own identity including service logo which is distinct from other services and the LA. The IAS has responsibility for the content and maintenance of its own website as it is entirely separate from the LA website (although we are on the Local Offer too). Our website includes relevant internal / external links and downloadable documents, a blog, workshop and survey offers, feedback opportunities and other useful information. The IAS writes much of its own materials with input from parents, children, young people and professionals. We also share some publications with the parent carer forum, and appear on some of their literature and vice versa.

Training

IAS will ensure that all staff and volunteers access high quality, independent training in current and relevant education law, policy and practice in relation to Special Educational Needs and Exclusion. Information sessions and training provided by the IAS are conducted with parent carers co-delivering from the parent carer forum to show impartiality. We also welcome professionals from schools, the LA, health and social care, to attend any of our sessions. This helps ensure a consistent message and accurate information is delivered to all.

Management committee

Bolton IAS sit under The Compass Partnership Bolton CIC, and, and are a registered company. The Compass Partnership Bolton is supported by an advisory board. Our board members come from a variety of backgrounds, but non work within Bolton LA .

Policy effectiveness

This policy is available to anyone who should ask for it, and is available on our website. Existing and new staff and volunteers will be introduced to the policy via induction and training. It is expected that all staff will adhere to the principles of Impartiality outlined in the policy.

Monitoring

Day to day monitoring of the Policy will be undertaken by the Service Manager. The Policy will be reviewed every year.

Last review March 2025