

The **Children and Families Act 2014** says local authorities **must** provide information, advice and support about special educational needs (SEN), disability, health and social care for children, young people and parents. Every local authority should provide a service that is free, easy to access and confidential and that can help children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and their parents, take part in decisions that affect their lives.

In Northumberland this service is provided by Northumberland Information, Advice and Support Service (which was previously known as the Parent Partnership Service).

The service can be contacted: **01670 623555** or **01670 620350**
or email: **iass@northumberland.gov.uk**

The SEND Code of Practice says:

Local authorities must arrange for children with SEN or disabilities for whom they are responsible, and their parents, and young people with SEN or disabilities for whom they are responsible, to be provided with information and advice about matters relating to their SEN or disabilities, including matters relating to health and social care. This must include information, advice and support on the take-up and management of Personal Budgets. In addition, in carrying out their duties under Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014, local authorities must have regard to the importance of providing children and their parents and young people with the information and support necessary to participate in decisions.

(Paragraph 2.1)

The information, advice and support should be impartial and provided at arm's length from the local authority and Clinical Commissioning Groups.

(Paragraph 2.8)

The Local Offer must include information about how information, advice and support related to SEN and disabilities can be accessed and how it is resourced.

The Local Offer for Northumberland can be found at <http://northumberland.fsd.org.uk>

What do we mean when we say we are impartial?

This means that the information, advice and support that we offer are firmly based in the law and the **SEND Code of Practice**. We provide unbiased information and advice about the local authority's policies and procedures, and about the policy and practice in local schools and other settings.

We do not give priority to any particular impairment, disability or special educational need, nor do we campaign for any particular approach to education. By being impartial we aim to help parents, children and young people have clear, accurate and relevant information that will help them play an active part in decisions about their lives.

The service follows a national set of Minimum Standards for services providing impartial information, advice and support, developed by the SEND Information, Advice and Support Services Network.

This helps us to monitor the effectiveness of the service we provide and ensure that it is 'at arm's length' from the Local Authority. By this we mean that we act, and are seen to act, separately and impartially, with no undue influence or control from either the Local Authority or the Clinical Commissioning Group in our area.

What information, advice and support do we offer?

We offer accurate, up to date and impartial resources and information about the law on special educational needs and disability. This covers:

- education, health and social care
- national and local policy
- the Local Offer
- your rights and choices
- your opportunities to participate
- where you can find help and advice
- how you can access support.

Sometimes **information** alone is not enough. You may want help to gather information, make sense of it and apply it to your own situation. We call this **advice** and we offer this service by email, on the telephone, face to face, through work with groups or through training.

We can also offer more intensive **support** if you need it. This might include helping with understanding paperwork, preparing for meetings, attending meetings with you, or supporting you in discussions with the Local Authority, school or other setting.

When we are not able to help we will do our best to put you in touch with other groups or organisations that can help.

Is the service confidential?

YES! We will not share your information with anyone unless you tell us we can. The only exception to this would be because we have a specific concern about a child's safety. We will often work with parents and children or young people together. Sometimes we will work with them separately. When we do this the same confidentiality rules apply.

If you would like to receive this leaflet in a different format, please contact us:

Email: iass@northumberland.gov.uk or Telephone: 01670 623555