

SCHOOL GUIDANCE: SEND ADVICE AND GUIDANCE SERVICES FOR PARENTS IN CAMDEN

Who are SENDIASS?

Information Advice and Support Services (IASS) provide free impartial, confidential, and accurate information, advice and support about education, health and social care for children, young people and their parent/carers, on matters relating to special educational needs and disability. [Introduction to IAS Services](#)

THE IAS Service in Camden is SENDIASS Camden: <https://sendiasscamden.co.uk/> Our website contains downloadable information on a range of SEND topics. SENDIASS is also available to offer general information, advice to professionals, in support of families.

SENDIASS staff attend all SENDCo Forums, school coffee mornings, Special Parent Forum meetings/workshops, with the Service Manager also attending LA working groups, to promote the work of the Service and build good working relationships.

All SENDIASS Services are governed by the [Minimum Standards for SEND Information, Advice and Support Services:](#)

What do we do?

- Offer confidential and impartial telephone support & information.
- Assist with the understanding of statutory processes, whilst empowering others through the provision of information, knowledge, and guidance.
- Provide written information.
- Support at meetings with local authority, schools/colleges & professionals.
- Provide information sessions and training, (for parent/carers & professionals).

We can help with:

- SEN & Disability issues (0-25 years)
- Statutory Assessment Process
- Annual Reviews of EHC plans
- SEN Support at school or colleges
- Personal budgets
- Help with understanding reports/documents
- Help with writing letters
- Parent/carers and Young Person training
- The Local Offer

Why refer to SENDIASS?

Parent/carers, children, and young people, have a right to free impartial information, advice, and support from trained, SEND specialists. They can of course, choose to pay for additional support and services if they so choose.

The recent rise in cases to the SEND Tribunal (SENDIST), has also seen a rise in individuals setting themselves up as advocates. While parents and young people are free to use whoever they wish to support them, below are questions to use which may help inform and support that choice.

Things for parent/carers/young people to consider when looking for support with Tribunal or Disputes:

1. What qualifications and training does the organisation or individual have and how relevant/recent are they/ is it?

Are they a specialist in the SEND field? Do they have extensive knowledge about relevant law?

2. What experience do they have?

Ideally the person supporting you will have lots of different experience of supporting in meetings, assisting with statutory requests, Tribunal, and the tribunal process, and if not, will be supported by others who have. Be wary of those claiming high success rates - some will present marginal impact as success.

3. Do they have references and are these easily available, positive, and recent?

Ideally any reference would talk about the quality of the support given and not just 'winning'.

4. Are they paying?

If so, make sure they know exactly what they are paying for and how much. Before they pay, it is worth fully exploring all the free local and national options, (SENDIASS, IPSEA, Contact etc).

5. Do they have liability insurance?

If things go wrong and the parent wishes to take action against their advocate for poor advice, or if the Tribunal seeks costs (rare but not impossible), do they have adequate insurance to cover this?

6. What is their reputation?

It may be tempting to use someone who is aggressive and promises to win but this is not something that generally come across well at a meeting or Tribunal hearing and can damage ongoing relationships with the LA/CCG. Looking at social media, doing an internet search and asking people who have used them is always a good idea.

The SENDIAS Service in Camden has established links with the Local Authority, Health, Schools, Colleges, voluntary and community groups, etc, which aid in collaborative working.

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Code of Conduct

Advocates may have a conflict of interest which may prevent them being impartial when acting on a parent's behalf. Schools are required to vet anyone who comes onto its premises, and this would include anyone a parent invites to accompany them to meetings on the school site.

The following code of conduct has been designed to support schools when meeting with advocates to ensure reasonable expectations of both advocates and schools. It aims to recognise the rights of parents, the obligations of the school and advocates working with schools and parents.

It is recommended that Governing boards ratify this code of conduct and adopt this practice when arrangements are made for meetings with SEND advocates. Should an advocate refuse to sign this agreement, the expectations of the code of conduct remain nonetheless, and refusal to adhere to this code of conduct are reasonable grounds for a school to cease engagement with an advocate.

Code of Conduct for working with families and advocates

This document sets out expectations for advocates working with parents of young people and students at Hampstead School. It has been agreed with the local SENDIASS service as setting out reasonable expectations of advocates and schools. It aims to recognise the rights of parents, the obligations of the school and advocates working with schools and parents.

The school will

- Recognise that parents have a right to choose a friend or advocate to attend meetings with them, and the school will accommodate this wherever possible.
- Wherever possible, work enthusiastically and constructively with advocates when appointed by parents.
- Recognise that advocates and parents are committed to getting the best outcome for their child.
- Work with advocates and parents to secure the best outcomes for the child/young person.
- Share information with parents and advocates in a timely fashion.
- Keep a clear record of discussions and decisions taken at any meeting.
- Publish this code on our website and share a copy of this code with any parents who appoints an advocate and any advocates appointed.

In return, the school will expect that advocates:

- Work constructively and respectfully with the school staff in and outside meetings, including in any public comments they make about the school and its staff.
- Act appropriately, in good faith and competently.
- Allow reasonable time periods for the school to produce or gather relevant documentation.
- Do not record meetings without prior consent.
- Respect confidentiality of discussions with the school and their clients.
- Use social media in a responsible and constructive way, without targeting or harassment of school staff or pupils.
- Any verbal abuse or conduct that crosses the boundary of appropriate behaviour will lead to the meeting being stopped.

Should the school believe that an advocate's conduct has breached reasonable expectations of professional conduct, we may restrict our engagement with that advocate and their participation in meetings with the school as it will not be in the interest of the child. Where this is the case, we will always signpost the parent to SENDIASS where they can secure free impartial and specialist advice. We are also happy to participate in a meeting to resolve any issue and where necessary, enter formal mediation.

Acceptable Agreement for advocates attending meetings with parents:

I WILL:

- Be respectful towards members of staff and the school at all times during the meeting
- Place the interest of the child at the forefront of our discussions

I WILL NOT:

- Use social media to criticise or make derogatory comments about the school or members of staff on the issues discussed
- Covertly record the meeting without the consent of all present

Signed (advocate):

Date:

Signed (school):

Date: