

Confidentiality Policy

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 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”.

Richmond & Kingston 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.

Richmond & Kingston SENDIASS respect 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 e.g. a safeguarding concern)
- 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

Richmond & Kingston SENDIASS is an opt-in service and as such operates a self-referral system whereby children, young people and their families contact the service directly. In exceptional circumstances a parent/young person who requires SENDIASS support may feel unable to make contact, a professional can make a referral for an individual in this case but is only accepted if the individual has indicated their consent.

Richmond & Kingston SENDIASS will only provide in-depth casework support in line with the eligibility criteria in the service model. Casework support will only be provided 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.

Richmond & Kingston 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.

Richmond & Kingston 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.

Richmond & Kingston 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.

Richmond & Kingston SENDIASS would usually consider it acceptable to contact parents/young people via home / mobile telephones but will check with parents/young people before calling them at work or to leaving messages with family members / work colleagues.

Richmond & Kingston SENDIASS does not share database or filing systems with the Local Authority. Our privacy notice gives details of how data is processed and controlled.

In some cases, it is necessary for a limited number of paper files containing factual case information and personal details to be kept by caseworkers. All caseworkers are home based and have individual arrangements to ensure that files are kept safe and confidential. Paper files are destroyed as soon as a case is closed.

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

Policy Effectiveness

The confidentiality policy will be provided in the About Us section of the service's website. On initial phone or email contact with the service, staff will share with young people or parents, the location of the policy.

Existing and new staff and volunteers will be introduced to the confidentiality policy via induction and training.

Monitoring of the effectiveness of the policy and privacy notice will be undertaken by the Service Manager through quality assurance procedures

The Policy will be reviewed biannually by the SENDIASS Steering Group; any amendments should be agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting.