

Factsheet #28: Organisations who can provide specialist advice and support

Specialist advice and support is available from a range of organisations nationally, including specialist solicitors firms and charities.

There are a number of specialist charitable organisations who can provide advice and assistance, particularly if the individual is not eligible for legal aid or does not have the funds to pay privately for legal advice. These include:

- **IPSEA** is a registered charity offering free and independent advice to parents of children with special educational needs in England and Wales on:
 - local authorities' legal duties to assess and provide for children with special educational needs;
 - exclusions of children with special needs/disabilities;
 - actions or inaction by local authorities and/or schools which discriminate against children with disabilities

General Advice Line: 0800 018 4016 for advice on: Problems with schools; requesting statutory assessment; proposed statements; annual reviews; possible disability discrimination; exclusion from school, etc.

Tribunal Help Line: 0845 602 9579 for next-step advice on SEN appeals and disability discrimination claims to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal including whether the individual requires casework support

- **Contact a Family National SEN Advice Service** provides education specialist advisers from Monday-Friday, 9.30-5.00 pm to answer queries: 0808 808 3555 and can help on any aspect of education in England and Wales.

In order to access legal advice and assistance under the Legal Aid scheme on matters relation to special educational needs, there is now a mandatory telephone gateway and individuals must telephone **Civil Legal Advice** on 0845 345 4345 or use the online inquiry form at <https://claonlineadvice.justice.gov.uk/> who, if appropriate, will refer the case to a law firm who has a legal aid contract to provide advice and assistance on education law.

The following groups do not have to apply via CLA – they can seek advice directly from a face-to-face provider:

- young people under 18, and
- those assessed by the CLA in the previous 12 months as requiring face-to-face advice, who have a further linked problem, and are seeking further help from the same face-to-face provider

In the event that the legal issue relates to health and social care, or is an education law issue where the remedy is likely to be judicial review (see separate factsheet) then there are a number of specialist law firms who can provide advice under the legal aid scheme.

They be identified using the search engine on the **Community Legal Service website** – see www.communitylegaladvice.org.uk/en/directory/directorysearch.jsp or call 0845 345 4345.

There are also law firms who can provide advice on a privately funded basis and whose details can be obtained from the **Law Society**: <http://www.lawsociety.org.uk> 020 7242 1222.

