

WIAS&S



Wandsworth Information, Advice & Support Service

Providing an Impartial Service to Children and Young People (aged 0-25)
with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities and their Parents or Carers



Arm's Length Policy

**CONFIDENTIAL
IMPARTIAL
FREE**



Arm's Length from the Local Authority

All local authorities must provide an information, advice and support service (see The Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice: 0-25 (2015)). The SEND Code of Practice (2015) states that an information, advice and support service should be impartial and provided at arm's length from the local authority and clinical commissioning groups (CCGs).

The role of WIASS is to ensure children and young people (0-25) with SEND and their parents or carers have access to confidential and impartial information, advice and support so they can make informed decisions related to special educational needs and disability (SEND).

This is achieved by offering a confidential, impartial (neutral/ objective) service to children and young people who have special educational needs and disability (SEND) and their parents/carers. A young person in this case is defined as an individual over compulsory school age (16) and under 25.

Wandsworth Information, Advice and Support Service (WIASS) is funded by Wandsworth Council and is located within the department of education and social services. WIASS is part of the National Information, Advice and Support Services Network (IASSN for SEND).

What is Working at Arm's Length?

A service is at arm's length when it is able to act impartially, with no influence or control from the local authority or CCG in which it is based.

WIASS achieves the requirement to be arm's length by having:

- A separate office base used only by WIASS staff and volunteer Independent Parental Supporters (IPSs) and located in a different building from other education and social services teams.
- Confidential electronic files available only to WIASS staff and stored securely (password protected).
- A dedicated phone line for parents/carers, children and young people, with voicemail facilities.
- A dedicated email facility.
- Volunteer IPSs for parents/carers wanting independent support.
- A WIASS advisory group (WIASS-AG) consisting of parents, volunteer IPSs and professionals from education and social services teams, health and the voluntary sectors. This group meets at least three times a year and is consulted on WIASS' developments and to ensure that WIASS is providing an impartial service to parents.
- Referral systems to signpost children, young people and parents/carers to voluntary sector organisations.
- Legal and other training provided by external agencies, for example, Independent Parental Special Education Advice (IPSEA).



W&ASS staff are not involved in any decision-making processes for children and young people, for example, statements of SEN, SEN support, Education, Health and Care(EHC) Needs Assessments or Plans. Therefore W&ASS can be completely impartial (neutral/objective) in discussions with children, young people and parents/carers.

Information given to parents/carers, children and young people by W&ASS is based on national SEND legislation (law) and guidance.

Identity

W&ASS has its own identity and logo which is used on all W&ASS information sheets and publicity.

Ensuring the Effectiveness of our Arm's Length Policy

- W&ASS' office base and confidential files are only accessible by W&ASS staff and volunteer IPSs.
- W&ASS staff are trained in SEND law by external agencies.
- W&ASS staff are clear that the service does not undertake local authority functions or take sides with the local authority, education setting or any other agency.
- Our arm's length policy is reviewed annually by W&ASS-AG.

This policy was last updated in March 2017.



How to contact us:



Advice line: 020 8871 5237 (school term time only)

Monday: 10am -1pm, Wednesday: 1.30-4.30pm, Friday: 10am-1pm.



Call back service: 020 8871 8065

(24 hour answer machine)



Email: wiaas@wandsworth.gov.uk



Web: www.wandsworth.gov.uk/wiaas

