

Memorandum of Understanding

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) sets the terms and understanding between the Partnership Organisations: Contact a Family Wandsworth, Wandsworth Positive Parent Action, Wandsworth Information Advice and Support Service and Wandsworth Borough Council to deliver advice, information and support to families, children and young people with special educational needs and/ or disabilities aged 0-25 years around the Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan, under the Children and Families Act 2014 in the London Borough of Wandsworth.

I. BACKGROUND

As part of the new SEND system, an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan is a document that replaces Statement of SEN and Learning Difficulties Assessment (LDAs) for children and young people with special educational needs.

An EHC plan can only be issued after a child or young person has gone through the process of an EHC needs assessment. At the end of that process, the local authority has to make a decision either to issue an EHC Plan or not.

In the London borough of Wandsworth, Contact a Family Wandsworth and Wandsworth Information, Advice and Support Service (WAIASS) are funded by the Council for Disabled Children (CDC) to provide Independent Support Scheme around Education, Health and Care plans. This can involve support around new plans or conversions from Statements or LDAs to EHC plans.

The Partnership Organisations have agreed to work jointly to help ensure that this additional resource (Independent Support Scheme) enhances existing services and that it helps families in most need of support.

Independent Supporters are a mixture of paid staff and volunteers offering help targeted around the assessment and Education Health and Care (EHC) Plan processes.

They are a resource for parents of children aged 0-15 transferring from a statement to an EHC Plan and for young people aged 16-25 who are transferring from a statement or Learning Difficulty Assessment to an EHC Plan. Independent Supporters are also available for families with children or young people who are being assessed for an EHC Plan for the first time. They offer a range of time-limited, targeted support, for up to 20 weeks for each family or young person requiring an Independent Supporter (IS). The IS will signpost to other relevant services if the family or young person require this.

Contact a Family Wandsworth

Contact a Family is a leading UK-wide charity, providing advice, information and support to families caring for children aged 0-25 years old with any disability or additional needs. Contact a Family Wandsworth is our local project in the London Borough of Wandsworth.

Contact a Family is a local charity, part of a UK-wide organisation, independent from the LA. It has been established in Wandsworth for 40 years, working with the parents of disabled children 0-25 through a team of family workers. The Independent Supporter will be based at 1 Siward Road London SW17 0LA and will report to the manager of the service who is also based there. Working with the Project's Manager, Family Workers and the Parent Carers' Forum, the IS will provide advice, guidance and support through face to face meetings, phone and online support, and participation in multiagency meetings and other group work activities.

The Wandsworth Information, Advice and Support Service (WIASS) – *formerly known as Wandsworth Parent Partnership Service*. Is the local statutory Information, Advice and Support Service on SEND for parents/carers, children and young people, whether or not they have a statement or EHC Plan. It is part of the national Information, Advice and Support Services Network (IASSN for SEND). In addition, WIASS has been given funding via the CDC for the Independent Support Scheme to develop its capacity to implement the new IASS responsibilities required by the CF Act 2014 and recruit at least one volunteer Independent Supporter to assist young people and their parents/carers alongside the Young People's Information, Advice and Support officer through the EHC Needs Process-when in post.

The Service has been established in Wandsworth for 16 years. WIASS staff are trained on SEND law by IPSEA (The Independent Parental Special Education Advice) an independent organisation.

Positive Parent Action (PPA) – local parents' forum, this forum meets monthly at the Early Years Service and has a steering group of local parents, many of whom have been co-chairing with the LA on the work streams that have informed the development of services to comply with the Children and Families Act (CFA).

Wandsworth Borough Council (WBC)– the Head of Special Educational Needs, Disability and Psychology has, together with local parents, led on the development of the new processes in line with CFA.

II. PURPOSE

The Independent Support Scheme is not intended to be a universal service taken up by everyone going through the EHC assessment process (as the funding available does not provide the capacity for this). Rather it is a service that families can choose to access if they want/need it and it is envisaged that the provision of the Independent Support Scheme will be focussed on the more vulnerable families and/or those with needs that are more complex.

The role of the Independent Supporter is:

- To help families undergoing the EHC plan process.
- To target specific groups where Contact a Family/WIASS has evidence of higher levels of need. These include:
 - 1) New entrants to the SEND system
 - 2) Children and Young People with a statement of SEN converting to an EHC plan
 - 3) Young People with a Learning Disability Assessment (LDA) converting to an EHC plan
- To support families to achieve positive outcomes
- To help to build resilience in families by offering a range of time-limited support such as liaison across different agencies and advice on personal budgets. The level and nature of that support will be tailored to the particular needs of individual families.
- To work with other statutory or voluntary organisations as deemed appropriate.

III. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

Partnership Organisations have agreed their specific roles and responsibilities. The following highlights the key areas:

Specific focus of the two providers of CDC funding for Independent Supporters

Independent Support at Contact a Family Wandsworth

Contact a Family Wandsworth has employed an Independent Supporter from 1st November 2014. The Independent Supporter will report to the Manager of Contact a Family Wandsworth. The Independent Supporter will be based at their Wandsworth office (c/o the Early Years Centre, Siward Road, Earlsfield SW17 0LA).

Independent Support at WIASS

WIASS is in the process of recruiting a Young People's Information, Advice and Support Officer who will then support with the recruitment of volunteer Independent Supporters (to provide support to Young People and their parents/carers, 16-25)

WIASS will offer Information Advice and Support Service to parents and carers of children & young people with SEND whether they have a statement/EHC Plan or not.

Independent Support at Contact a Family Wandsworth

The Independent Supporter at Contact a Family Wandsworth will also work closely with the Partnership Organisations to develop the programme or any related information. This work will be delivered along the following lines:

- i) The Partnership Organisations will set up agreed referral protocols to minimise or avoid any service duplication. .
- ii) The Independent Supporter will provide parents of children and young people with SEN and/ or disabilities with advice, guidance and support through face-to-face meetings, phone and online support, and participation in multiagency/Team Around the Child (TAC) meetings and other group work activities.

Information Sharing about the transition plan from statements to EHC Plans:

Information to be provided to parents/carers/young people:

Wandsworth Council will update all partners' organisations about any changes to the transition plan for implementing the transfer of existing statements to EHC plans – i.e. the timing of when specific year groups will be transferred.

Information to be provided to parents/carers/young people:

- i. Contact a Family Wandsworth and WIASS will make a clear distinction between their respective offers and make this clear to all families and young people. At all times the parents, carers and young people with special educational needs and/ or disabilities should be able to state their preference and should be supported by the agency of their choice – subject to capacity and demand on the service.
- ii. Contact a Family Wandsworth and WIASS will produce joint publicity in the form of a flyer/leaflet, outlining the Independent Support Scheme provision on offer and how it can be accessed, to distribute among parents and carers through their two organisations.
- iii. Contact a Family Wandsworth and WIASS will provide publicity flyers to the Special Educational Needs Assessment (SNAS) outlining the Independent Support Scheme provision on offer and how it can be accessed.
- iv. WIASS will also provide Wandsworth Council with publicity about the wider services WIASS provides to parents/carers and young people.
- v. Contact a Family Wandsworth and WIASS will circulate this publicity in the borough via, children’s centres and other community organisations.
- vi. Wandsworth Council will circulate to SENCo’s in all schools in the borough (and out-borough schools with pupils with a statement) information about the availability of the Independent Support Scheme and how it can be accessed, as well as information about WIASS.

New applications for EHC assessments:

Wandsworth Council will inform all parents/carers and young people who make a new application for an EHC assessment about the availability of the Independent Support Scheme, how they can access this and information about the WIASS and Contact a Family Wandsworth. This will be done in writing (or send a flyer) at the time that the request for an EHC assessment.

Transfers from statements to EHC Plans:

Wandsworth Council will inform parents, carers and young people about the availability of the Independent Support Scheme from Contact a Family Wandsworth and WIASS at the time that the transfer process from statement to EHC plan is initiated.

- iii) Confidentiality will be maintained at all times – with the exception of safeguarding concerns, which will be responded to according to current guidance and law.
- iv) The Partnership Organisations will signpost families for mediation as necessary.
- v) All Independent Supporters and their supervisors are expected to complete and pass the CDC Legal and the Role of the IS Training.

The Partnership Organisations will endeavour to:

- Work together in a spirit of co-operation to ensure that parents and carers and young people will benefit from the outcomes in the EHC plans
- Attend all scheduled meetings between the Partnership Organisations and if not possible, nominate a proxy
- Share appropriate communications and information across all the Partnership Organisations
- Make timely decisions and take action so as not to hold up the programme
- Notify all members in the Partnership Organisations as soon as practical, if any matter arises which may be deemed to affect the development of the partnership

IV. INFORMATION SHARING AND REPORTING

The Partnership Organisations will review this Memorandum of Understanding every quarter.

Contact a Family Wandsworth and Wandsworth IASS will evaluate the effectiveness and adherence to the agreement.

No information will be shared without the consent of the parents, carers or young people involved. The only exception would be if there were safeguarding concerns for the child, young person or any other member of the family.

The Council for Disabled Children (CDC) will manage the process and oversee independent evaluation of the Independent Supporters Scheme.

V. REFERRAL PROTOCOL

Referral protocols will be established to ensure that families going through the EHCP process are made aware of the Independent Support Scheme. These agreed referral protocols should minimise any service duplication.

1. Prioritising vulnerable families

In a situation where the capacity of the Independent Support provider agencies to offer immediate Independent Support is full, the provider agencies will then prioritise referrals using the following criteria:

- Children /young people subject to a Child Protection Plan
- Children/young people in Need
- Families who have English as a second language/those with no recourse to public funds and other hard to reach marginalised groups
- Children /young people with particularly complex needs or vulnerability.

In the event of demand from parents and young people becoming particularly high, an initial appointment will be made and support will be planned to ensure that there is timely advice for families at the beginning of the process.

VI. CONFLICT RESOLUTION

In case of any conflict between the involved parties, this shall be brought to the review meetings between Contact a Family Wandsworth, WIASS, Wandsworth Borough Council and Wandsworth Positive Parent Action for discussion. If unresolved it should be escalated to directors of respective organisations prior for a dissolution of the agreement.

VII. DURATION

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is at-will and may be modified by mutual consent of authorized officials from the Partnership Organisations. This MOU shall end on 31st March 2016, subject to the Partnership Organisations successfully completing both Phase One and Phase Two of the programme.

VIII. CONTACT INFORMATION

CONTACT A FAMILY WANDSWORTH	
Rosie Noble Manager 1 Siward Road Earlfield SW17 0LA Telephone: 020 8947 5260 E-mail: rosie.noble@cafamily.org.uk	Signature: _____ Name: _____ Position: _____ Date: _____
WANDSWORTH INFORMATION, ADVICE & SUPPORT SERVICE (WAISS)	
Rina Patel Manager/Co-ordinator Room 223 Wandsworth Town Hall Wandsworth High Street Telephone: 020 871 8065 E-mail wiass@wandsworth.gov.uk	Signature: _____ Name: _____ Position: _____ Date: _____
WANDSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL	
Carole Payne Position Address Telephone E-mail	Signature: _____ Name: _____ Position: _____ Date: _____
WANDSWORTH POSITIVE PARENT ACTION	
Name Address Telephone E-mail	Signature: _____ Name: _____ Position: _____ Date: _____



Wandsworth
Information,
Advice & Support
Service

Providing an impartial information, advice and support service
on Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)