



## **Dorset SEN & Disability Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS)**

**A free, confidential and impartial information, advice and support service for children and young people with SEN and/or disability and their parents and carers**

### **Dorset SENDIASS Confidentiality Policy**

This policy should be read in conjunction with the document “The Dorset SENDIASS” and the “Dorset SENDIASS policy for child protection”. These policies have been agreed with the Local Authority.

#### **Basic Principles:**

Parents and Carers have a right to expect that information they share with SENDIASS will be respected and not passed on to others without their express permission.

SENDIASS is a confidential service for all parents/carers of children with special educational needs and/or disability and any information shared with the Service is in confidence and is therefore protected under Common Law and the Data Protection Act 1998.

SENDIASS will handle personal information in ways that conform with the Data Protection Act requirements, unless there are strong public interest concerns, i.e, child protection.

In agreement with Dorset County Council any request received by them under the Data Protection Act will result in SENDIASS releasing data held by them directly to the parent and not as part of the information sent by the County Council. This policy ensures parents can have confidence in the confidentiality of the information they provide.

#### **The Service will:**

- Respect parents/carers and the child’s right to privacy.
- Respect parents/carer’s right to contact SENDIASS anonymously and in confidence.

- Adhere to SENDIASS' commitment to principles of confidentiality in its relationship with parents.
- Give priority to child protection issues at all times.
- Ensure parent / carers are informed of their rights in relation to the data held by SENDIASS about them and the release of any such data.
- Ensure all staff and volunteers receive training in confidentiality issues and a copy of this policy.
- Make parents aware of this policy when they first approach the service and make a copy of this policy available to them upon request.
- Ask parents' permission to record personal details when they first approach the Service.
- Take referrals to the Service from anyone other than parents / carers only if parents / carers have given permission for this to happen.
- Make any documentation held on parents / carers or their child available to them upon request.
- Seek permission from parent / carers prior to contacting other professionals / services involved with the family or whom may be involved with the family in the near future except in circumstances relating to child protection.

### **Documentation to be kept by the Service**

SENDIASS Officers will keep case notes for each referral they have received. Case notes will normally include basic details of the referral that has been made to the Service, a brief summary of case progress, action agreed and final outcome when one is reached. The level of detail required will be at the discretion of the SENDIASS Officer concerned but should be sufficient to allow a colleague to take over the case if the need should arise. Personal contact details should only be kept with parents/carers permission. Documents will normally be retained in a secure archive until the date of the young persons 25<sup>th</sup> birthday, following which they will be destroyed.

### **Storage of Information**

SENDIASS Officers are home based. In order to meet the requirements of the Data Protection Act, a lockable filing cabinet will be provided for their use at home to store all paper based notes and correspondence. All SENDIASS documentation should be stored securely in this cabinet which must be kept locked at all times.

Documents relating to on-going cases should be kept by the SENDIASS Officer. Documents relating to closed cases should be passed to the SENDIASS Manager to archive 12 months after the date of the last correspondence. Documents can be returned from archive where a re-referral is subsequently received.

For Electronic based documentation such as e-mails, SENDIASS uses Dorset County Council hardware and software which includes all necessary security safeguards and archiving facilities required under data protection whilst

maintaining service confidentiality. All staff are required to adhere to the Dorset County Council ICT security policy and standards, copies of which can be accessed on the Dorset County Council website (dorsetforyou.com). Training will be organised as appropriate by the SENDIASS Manager. Staff are responsible for ensuring they follow all necessary procedures and protocols in order to keep electronic data safe and secure.

**Review of this policy:**

This policy will be reviewed annually or more frequently should changes in data protection legislation require it. The policy will be reviewed by the SENDIASS Manager and/or the SENDIASS Steering Group as considered appropriate.

SENDIASS officers, the Local Authority and other agencies will be informed when an up-dated version of the policy is issued. A hard copy can be provided upon request or the policy can be accessed on the SENDIASS page of the Dorset County Council website. SENDIASS officers will ensure that parents / carers of any active cases at the point of policy up-date are made aware that an up-dated version of the policy is now available and can supply a copy of the policy upon request or signpost to the SENDIASS page of the Dorset County Council website.