



Ensuring Impartiality

Brighter Futures for Children is a not-for-profit company, owned by, but independent of, Reading Borough Council. The company took over the responsibility for the delivery of children's services in Reading in December 2018.

The company is responsible for the delivery of children's social care, education (including SEND), early years & prevention.

Service users who seek support from Reading Information Advice and Support Service for Special Educational Needs and Disability ("Reading IASS") must have confidence in the neutrality of its operation; therefore the service should be run at arm's length from Reading Borough Council ("RBC")-/Brighter Futures for Children ("BFfC"). The best outcomes for children and young people with SEN and/or disabilities are the ultimate aims of Reading IASS and our role is to support service users to achieve this. This policy statement outlines how the Reading IASS relationship with RBC/ BFfC aims to demonstrate this and thus strengthen the confidence of service users.

BFfC decided that Reading IASS would be an in-house service. An important role of the service is to encourage positive relationships between parents (reference to parents includes carers), schools and statutory agencies. When it is not possible to resolve differences between parents and schools or parents and RBC/BFfC, the service will advise parents of the independent mediation service and explain their rights to complain or when appropriate appeal to the First Tier Tribunal for Special Educational Needs and Disability ("the Tribunal").

Reading IASS is located in the Whitley Health and Social Services Centre and maintains a standalone website, database and a dedicated phone line. It has a Management Group to oversee its development and to monitor that it meets the minimum standards as outlined in the SEND Code of Practice and the IASS Network/ Department for Education Quality Standards for Impartial Information Advice and Support Services. The management group consists of Reading IASS officers, parents, RBC/BFfC officers and voluntary sector representatives. The group is chaired by a representative from the community.

BFfC delegates a budget for Reading IASS, which is managed by the IASS Team Manager. The service has developed its own service style for all its printed materials, including its own logo and website. Members of Reading IASS team make the distinction to all the parents

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and practitioners they work with, that although employed by BfC the service does not participate in any of the decisions that are made by RBC/BfC, e.g. decisions regarding statutory assessment, issue of Education Health and Care Plans, school placements or level of support. Our “Confidentiality Policy” is also explained to service users.

Members of Reading IASS team are unable to pass on any news regarding SEND Panel decisions as it is the responsibility of the allocated Case Worker in the SEND team to inform the family concerned. They will, however, be able to offer support once the decision has been passed on.

Reading IASS may in some circumstances be able to offer a parent the support of a trained volunteer. Service users will also be signposted to other local and national organisations and the Local Offer when appropriate. Reading IASS may signpost parent carers and young people to local and national organisations for support, information, advice and guidance, however we do not endorse any of the organisations, and we recommend service users carry out relevant checks prior (due diligence) to signing up to using any of the services.

BfC places no constraints on Reading IASS staff or volunteers supporting parents at tribunal. Staff and volunteers will also be able to support parents at mediation, at independent LA appeals regarding admissions, exclusions and SEND transport.