

Lone Working with Children and Young People

Policy and Procedures

for

Information, Advice and Support Services

Introduction

Under the 2015 SEND Code of Practice, all disabled children and young people, and those with special educational needs, have the right to access Information, Advice and Support Services separately from their parents. Whilst the Code suggests that the majority of children and young people will attend services with their parents or carers; services must make it possible for them to access alone, if they wish.

Policy Statement

Information, Advice and Support Services recognise that, during the course of their work, it may be necessary for employees to work alone (on a one-to-one basis with a child or young person). This may occur as a regular part of an employee's working practice or may occur on an occasional basis. In either situation, it will arise from the understanding that this is the most appropriate and effective way of working with a particular child or young person. The safety of children, young people and workers is paramount and Information, Advice and Support Services are committed to minimising the risk of lone working for its employees.

Procedures

When meeting alone with children or young people, the following procedures should be adhered to.

- Staff working with children and young people must have a current Enhanced DBS check.
- Any staff members conducting lone working and their line manager must be familiar with their local safeguarding and child protection policy and the Local Safeguarding Children's Board guidance for managing safeguarding concerns.

- Staff members must ensure from the outset that the child or young person understands that their meetings are confidential, but there are limits to confidentiality in line with safeguarding practice (see Confidentiality Policy for details). Staff members should never agree to keep 'secrets' and must ensure that children and young people understand this position.
- Staff members must ensure, from the outset of the work, that the child or young person understands the boundaries of what the worker and the service can offer, and what they cannot offer. The child or young person should know that support may be time-limited and will cover specific matters relating to the child or young person's special educational needs or disabilities. The child or young person should be supported to access other services to meet other needs.
- The child or young person should be asked to provide emergency contact details and medical information before the meeting starts. This information needs to be stored securely and the child or young person must understand that this information will only be used in case of emergency (see Consent Form).
- Children and young people should be seen when other members of staff are at hand, in the same building. This can include other staff members outside of the IAS Service, such as school or children's centre staff.
- Another member of staff, in the same building, should be identified and informed that the meeting is taking place. The location, time and expected length of the meeting should be recorded in a central place, for example, a team whiteboard, signing in book or electronic calendar.
- The staff member should not physically touch the child or young person.

In some exceptional circumstances, such as a child or young person with a visual impairment needing guidance, or a child or young person needing support to walk (linking arms, for example), a staff member may need to touch the child or young person to support them appropriately. In these circumstances, the child or young person should always initiate touch, although this can be suggested by offering your arm to support them or asking them if it is alright to guide them. If you need to touch the child or young person, then touch their hands, arms or shoulders only.

- Staff members must be mindful of maintaining professional boundaries with the child or young person. They should not share unnecessary details about their personal lives, and should not seek unnecessary details of the child or young person's personal life. The staff member should not give gifts to the

child or young person. As with all service users, staff members should use their professional judgement with regard to accepting gifts from children and young people. A parting gift from a service user may be acceptable, but regular gifts may compromise impartiality. Staff members should consult with their line managers, if they are unsure.

- Staff members should not have contact with children or young people outside of work. This includes contact via social media. If a child or young person initiates contact outside of the service, it should be explained to them that this is not allowed by the service and contact should be ended.
- Children or young people should be invited to attend meetings in professional settings where other members of staff are at hand, such as the offices of the Information, Advice and Support Service or their school or college. Lone home visits or meetings in the community should be avoided. If exceptional circumstances occur which warrant the need to visit a child or young person at home without their parent or carer present, then members of staff should visit in pairs or in partnership with another professional involved with the child or young person, such as a teacher or SENCO.
- If, during the course of your work, concerns are raised that the child or young person may present a risk to others, then the child or young person should be asked for permission to speak to someone who knows them well in order to better understand their support needs. The nominated person should be asked to clarify if there are any risks or concerns related to seeing the child or young person alone, without details of the specific IAS request being shared. Explore the options and make best endeavours to resolve how best to support and work with the child or young person safely. If necessary, the child or young person can be seen with another colleague or professional present.

If you have explored all the options and attempted to be as flexible as possible without finding a safe solution, then consider remote IAS via email or phone. If the child or young person refuses permission for a nominated person to be contacted (for example, their teacher, support worker or probation officer), and there is reasonable cause for concern, then the service manager should make a decision based on professional judgement of whether face to face contact should be refused.