



## **Independence & Impartiality Policy**

### **SEND Assist – SEND Advocacy Service**

#### **1. Purpose**

SEND Assist is committed to delivering independent, person-centred SEND advocacy that is free from undue influence.

This policy explains how we ensure our advocacy remains independent, impartial, and focused solely on the needs and wishes of the child, young person, or parent carer we support.

#### **2. Our Commitment to Independence**

We confirm that:

We are structurally and operationally independent from Local Authorities, schools, health providers, and social care services.

We do not allow funders, commissioners, or partner organisations to influence casework decisions.

Our advocates act solely in the best interests of the individuals we represent.

Our advocacy supports families navigating duties set out under the Children and Families Act 2014 and associated SEND legislation.

#### **3. What Independence Means in Practice**

Independence means:

We work for the family or young person, not for the Local Authority or school.

We are not decision-makers; we support individuals to understand their rights and express their views.

We challenge decisions where appropriate, respectfully and lawfully.

We do not prioritise organisational relationships over the rights of the people we represent.

#### **4. Impartiality**

Impartiality means:

We provide accurate, balanced information about rights, responsibilities, and processes.

We explain all available options, even where families may prefer a particular route.

We do not take sides in personal disputes.

We base advice on law, evidence, and good practice.

Our guidance reflects the SEND legal framework, including duties placed on public bodies.

## **5. Avoiding Conflicts of Interest**

To maintain independence and impartiality:

Advocates must declare any actual or potential conflict of interest.

Advocates will not take on cases where personal relationships could compromise impartiality.

Staff must not accept gifts or incentives that could influence professional judgement.

Where a conflict arises, the case will be reassigned or alternative arrangements made.

A conflicts register will be maintained by the Director or Service Lead.

## **6. Funding and Commissioning**

Where services are commissioned or grant-funded:

Funding agreements will not compromise our independence.

Casework decisions remain with the advocate and the individual supported.

We will not share case information with funders unless lawfully required or consented to.

## **7. Professional Boundaries**

Advocates will:

Maintain professional boundaries at all times

Avoid dual roles that could impair independence



Not act in a capacity that creates legal representation unless appropriately qualified

Not provide advice outside their professional competence

## **8. Transparency**

We will:

Clearly explain our role and limitations

Provide written information about our independence at the start of support

Be open about how decisions are made

Explain when we cannot assist and why

## **9. Accountability**

To ensure independence and impartiality are upheld:

Staff receive regular supervision

Casework is quality reviewed

Complaints are handled in line with our Compliments & Complaints Policy

This policy is reviewed annually

## **10. Policy Review**

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if legislative or organisational changes occur.

Approved by: Victoria Hunt

Position: Founder & Director of SEND Assist

Date: March 2026

Review Date: March 2027