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| TITLE | **IMPARTIALITY POLICY** |
| **Version** | **1** |
| **1. Background** | Family Action is committed to building stronger families and developing services that will meet the needs of our service users. This commitment is based on our Strategy and our Articles. Family Action complies with all relevant and current legislation.    Family Action is therefore required to draft and establish certain policies that deal with the daily operational business of Family Action. |
| **2. Objectives** | The purpose of this Policy is to set out Family Action’s compliance with the Information, Advice & Support Services Network Quality standards, to ensure that children and young people with SEND and their parents/carers have access to impartial information, advice and support and are supported to self-advocate. |
| **3. Scope** | This policy will apply to all Family Action employees, workers and volunteers that work in our SENDIAS services. |
| **4. Policy** | **Background**  The Children and Families Act 2014 says local authorities must provide information, advice and support about special educational needs (SEN), disability, health and social care for children, young people and parents.  The SEND Code of Practice says: Local authorities must arrange for children with SEN or disabilities for whom they are responsible, and their parents, and young people with SEN or disabilities for whom they are responsible, to be provided with information and advice about matters relating to their SEN or disabilities, including matters relating to health and social care. This must include information, advice and support on the take-up and management of Personal Budgets.  In addition, in carrying out their duties under Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014, local authorities must have regard to the importance of providing children and their parents and young people with the information and support necessary to participate in decision making. This means that every local authority should provide a service that is free, easy to access and confidential and that can help children, parents, and young people take part in decisions that affect their lives.  The SEND Code of Practice says: The information, advice and support should be impartial and provided at arm’s length from the Local Authority and Clinical Commissioning Groups.  This means that the information, advice and support that we offer is firmly based in the law and the SEND Code of Practice. We provide unbiased information and advice about the Local Authority’s policies and procedures and about the policy and practice in local schools and other settings. We do not give priority to any particular impairment, disability or special educational need, nor do we campaign for any particular approach to education. By being impartial we aim to help parents, children and young people have clear, accurate and relevant information and will help them take part in decisions about their lives.  Family Action follows a national set of Quality Standards for services providing information, advice and support. This helps us to monitor the effectiveness of the service we provide and ensure that it is “at arm’s length” from the Local Authority. By this we mean that we act, and are seen to act, separately and impartially, with no undue influence or control from either the Local Authority or the Clinical Commissioning Group in our area.  **Impartiality means:**   * Family Action does not stand to gain or lose whatever the outcomes of any discussions may be. * Not taking sides with anyone. * Providing factual information and advice based on what the guidance and legislation says. * Providing children, young people and parents/carers with enough information so they can be empowered to make their own decisions; not telling them what to do.   **When working with children, young people, parents and carers we will ensure impartiality by:**   * Informing parents/carers and young people of the impartial nature of the Service and presenting this policy to them when they first approach the service. * Supporting parents and young people that do not agree by working impartially and also separately with both the parents and the young people. * Providing children, young people, parents and carers with a balanced and comprehensive range of information setting out all options available, enabling them to make informed decisions. * Ensuring that staff inform the Service Manager of any conflict of interest in relation to individual families e.g. governor at the same school. These cases will be referred to other team members. * Signposting children, young people and parents/carers to other agencies that enable them to verify the impartiality of the information and advice provided, as necessary. * Maintaining a professional relationship with children, young people and parents/carers we support. * Being clear with children, young people, parents and carers that the role of the Service is to help them participate in their child’s/their own education and advise on their rights, not to advocate on their behalf or take sides either with the Local Authority or with parents. * Empowering children, young people, parents and carers to speak for themselves and make their own decisions. * Always respecting children, young people, parents/carers’ decisions without making a judgement. * Providing factual information and advice based on what the guidance and legislation says, not offering an opinion or reflecting local policy.   **When working with professionals we will ensure our impartiality by:**   * Having consent to act as an intermediary by relaying Parent’s/Young People’sperspective to professionals and refraining from discussing any case details with professionals without this consent (unless there is a safeguarding issue involved) This does not indicate bias in favour of the children, young people and parents/carers, nor does it represent the views of SENDIAS staff. * Making it clear that staff have no vested interest in the outcome of any decision making process in relation to an individual child/young person or family. * Maintaining an impartial stance whilst collaborating and engaging with relevant organisations and networks. * Making it clear that the best educational outcomes for children with SEN and disabilities are the ultimate aims of the Service and our role is to support children, young people and parent/carers to achieve this. * Informing local authorities, education settings or any other agency of the impartial nature of the Service and making them aware of this policy. * Not allowing relationships with local authorities, education settings or any other agency to affect the information or support the Service provides to children, young people and parent/carers. * Being clear that the Service does not undertake local authority functions, or act on behalf of local authorities, educational settings or any other agency. * Being clear that the Service does not take sides with the Local Authority, education setting or any other agency.   **The Local Authority will ensure our impartiality and the appearance of impartiality to families by enabling:**   * offering performance monitoring, supportive strategies and professional management, but not the management of the service or service development. * training (including legal training) that is not exclusively provided by the Local Authority. * a budget that is managed by the Service. * If required and necessary, a steering/advisory group for the management of the service and service development. * a separate postal address. * a direct phone line, rather than going through the Local Authority switchboard. * our own logo. * Family Action branding for all promotional materials, using a different format from the Local Authority’s corporate style. * Providing a platform for us to feedback information from parents, children and young people about local practice |
| **5. Timescales** | With immediate effect |
| **7. Linked Policies** | Code of Conduct  Discipline at Work Policy  Probation Policy |
| **8. Legislation** | The Children and Families Act 2014 |
| **9. Policy Lead** | Director of Services and Innovation |
| **10. Approval at EG** | 7 June 2016 |
| **11. Review Date** | 2 years from Effective Date- 31 May 2018 |
| **12. Effective Date** | 7 June 2016 |