



BRENT

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES INFORMATION, ADVICE AND SUPPORT (SEND IAS) SERVICE

SERVICE SPECIFICATION

Introduction

Brent Special Educational Needs and Disability Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) offers impartial, confidential information, advice, and support on matters around Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) to children, parent carers, and young people up to the age of 25, across Brent.

The aim of the service is to limit misunderstandings and secure true partnership working arrangements between parents, carers, young people, schools, the Local Authority, and other services; ensuring that the views of parents, carers and young people are listened to. This enables parents, carers, and young people to take an informed and active role in decisions.

The strength of the service is its 'partnership' approach with a wide range of agencies, the impartial nature of the service role and the knowledge that exists within the team.

The Service operates at 'arm's length' from other Local Authority Services.

What you can expect from us

Every Brent child and young person (age 0-25) with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and their parents and carers are entitled to receive information, advice and support from Brent SENDIASS which is provided:

- Free of charge
- Confidentially
- Impartially
- At arm's length of the Local Authority and other statutory organisations.

Being impartial and at arm's length means that we do not take sides. The advice we give is based on what the law says, not local policies and procedures.

The main purpose of the service is to support parents/carers, children and young people to understand their rights and empower them to have their views and wishes heard.

As we are impartial, we use the following definition of advocacy to describe how we can support:

'Advocacy means getting support from another person to help you express your views and wishes and help you stand up for your rights. Someone who helps you in this way is called your advocate.' (Mind.co.uk, 2021)

We do not fulfil the role of statutory advocates.

We do not favour either side or have influence over the outcome of any decisions.

Referrals

We accept self-referrals from parent/carers of children and young people with SEND and directly from young people. Other services can support young people and/or parent/carers to make a referral to us provided they have been given the express permission of the individual to do so. If a referral from a third party is received, Brent SENDIAS shall request that a consent form, completed by the individual is completed to confirm that they agree to be contacted by us.

Other services and professionals can also contact us for general advice around SEND legislation and processes.

Referrals to our service can be made via:

Telephone: 020 8937 3434

Email: sendiass@brent.gov.uk

What we offer

In the first instance, individual information, advice, and support will be provided via telephone and email. The service will offer adjustments to this, if necessary, such as video calls through booked appointments with an officer or the use of translators.

Where necessary, casework support may be provided.

What is casework support?

Casework support means that an adviser will collaborate with a young person or parent/carer to help them have their views and wishes heard and help to try and resolve any difficulties directly, over a period of time. This might involve attending meetings or supporting with understanding paperwork, for example.

When an adviser begins casework, they will talk to the person they are supporting to decide what outcomes need to be achieved and what support they will be able to provide.

We categorise our involvement based on how much support is needed. We refer to the guidance Intervention levels for IASS published by the IASSN August 2016.

	Service user need	Support	Outcome
Level 1	Information and advice about SEND matters, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the legal framework• local SEN processes and procedures• support groups• special educational needs or disabilities• funding arrangements• local services• web based resources• national organisations	Phone or email support – tailored to the circumstances of the service user.	Service user confirms that their information and advice needs have been met AND/OR Service user is signposted elsewhere. The service user feels confident to access further information and advice and/or to pursue matters independently or with support from other agencies or services.

Level 2	<p>Any or all of Level 1 plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • help to understand or complete documentation • support in communicating with school, the LA, other services. • detailed and personalised guidance on following SEND or exclusion procedures • assistance in accessing services 	<p>Any or all of Level 1 plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • phone or email support over a period of time • research and provision of specialised advice and information • face-to-face meetings (in person or video) as required. • provision of support at/for meetings. • liaison with other agencies. 	<p>Service user confirms that their information and advice and support needs have been met.</p> <p>Service user feels confident to continue without further support from IASS or with support from other agencies or services.</p>
Level 3	<p>Any or all of Levels 1 and 2 plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • detailed and continuing assistance and guidance with statutory processes • complex, multi-agency needs assistance in overcoming serious breakdown in communications with school/LA/other services • requires intensive support due to personal circumstances (e.g. low literacy levels, learning or sensory difficulties, English as a second language) 	<p>Any or all of Levels 1 and 2 plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provision of support at/for a series of meetings over a period of months • Ongoing support and guidance through statutory processes (EHC needs assessment, disagreement resolution, mediation) • assistance with preparation for an exclusion appeal and support at the appeal meeting • IASS undertakes key working role with other agencies 	<p>Service user confirms that support has enabled them to participate in processes.</p>
Level 4	<p>Any or all of Levels 1,2 and 3 plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed and continuing assistance and guidance with preparation and support during: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ First Tier Tribunal (SEND), including DDA complaints to Tribunal ○ Complaints to Ombudsman ○ Judicial Review ○ Disputes about Child Protection 	<p>Any or all of Levels 1,2 and 3 plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of intensive support for the service user(s) during the legal processes. This may include assistance with preparation for the legal process and support at, for example, a Tribunal hearing 	<p>Service user confirms that support has enabled them to participate in processes.</p>

Who may be offered casework support?

Children and young people aged up to 25 with special educational needs or disability who approach the service directly, and who require support to take part in processes where their views should be considered.

Parents/carers who require additional support due to needs of their own.

Other situations as determined by and at the discretion of SENDIASS as warranting casework support.

When will casework support stop?

The case will be closed:

- When the agreed outcomes are achieved
- If the child, young person, or parent/carer decide they no longer wish to have support from us.
- If the child, young person, or parent/carer is using another service to access information, advice, and support around the same issue(s).
- If the child, young person, or parent/carer is using another service such as a solicitor or other legal representation.
- If no response/further correspondence from the child, young person or parent/carer has been received by the service for a period on 3 months or more.

What happens if help is needed again?

If a young person or parent/carer needs information, advice and support from the service again then they can self-refer as described above.

Supporting mediation and tribunal appeals (Level 4)

When Local Authorities make certain decisions about the education and/or training of a child or young person with SEN, there is a right of appeal to an independent Tribunal – The Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal, known as “SENDIST.” (<https://www.gov.uk/courts-tribunals/first-tier-tribunal-special-educational-needs-and-disability>)

The appealable decisions are:

- refusal to conduct an EHC needs assessment (and refusal to reassess).
- refusal to issue an EHC plan.
- refusal to amend an EHC plan following a review or reassessment.
- a decision to cease to maintain an EHC plan.

There are also rights of appeal about the contents of an EHC plan which can be about:

- The child or young person’s special educational needs.
- The special educational provision specified in the EHC plan.
- The school or other setting named in the EHC plan or the type of school or setting; or
- If no school or other setting is named, that fact.

For a child or young person in custody, the appropriate person during the period of detention can appeal to the First-tier Tribunal (SEN and Disability) about:

- a decision by a local authority not to conduct an EHC needs assessment.
- a decision by a local authority that it is not necessary to issue an EHC plan following an assessment.
- the school or other institution or type of school or other institution (such as mainstream school/college) specified in the plan as appropriate for the detained person on their release from custody or that no school or other institution is specified.

SENDIST also hears claims about disability discrimination against the responsible bodies of schools.

Procedures relating to tribunal appeals

The role of Brent SENDIASS will include exploring all the options available to the parents/young person to resolve disagreements with the LA. This can include setting up and/or supporting with discussions and/or meetings involving the parents/young person, educational staff, LA officers, clinical commissioning groups and other statutory and voluntary agencies. In these meetings the role of Brent SEND IAS Service may include facilitating an agreed

resolution to the situation and ensuring parents/young people are aware of their rights and responsibilities.

, Brent SENDIASS can help parents/young people request access to mediation/ disagreement resolution service for any SEND, health, social care or disability discrimination dispute with the LA, the educational setting, and/or the health commissioning bodies.

Brent SENDIASS will train all its staff and volunteers to:

- Ensure that all the team are familiar with the procedures and workings of SEND tribunal appeals.
- Have access to videos and other resources to inform parents and young people about the SEND tribunal process.
- Understand the reasons for lodging an appeal and the powers of the tribunal.
- Understand the time limits relating to tribunals.
- To support and empower parents and young people in putting together the paperwork and information required for a tribunal submission.

In supporting parents and young people with appeals Brent SENDIASS can:

- Explain rights and grounds for appeal.
- Direct to other sources of advice e.g., IPSEA.
- Help with understanding and completing relevant paperwork.
- Discuss re-submission to LA decision-making panels if new evidence is available.
- Encourage ongoing dialogue with LA SEN Officer and/or educational setting.
- Explain the options for independent disagreement resolution and mediation.
- Explain timelines and processes relating to tribunals.
- Discuss the role of witnesses.
- Attend a hearing as a 'Parent helper' for a parent or as a 'Young person's helper' for a young person.
- On occasions a member of the team may be required to attend a hearing as a witness, if subpoenaed.

On occasions parents/young people will approach the service after they have already lodged an appeal with Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal (SEND). On such occasions Brent SENDIASS will act swiftly to explore the situation with the parents/young people and seek to set up a discussion and/or meeting with the relevant SEN Officer as quickly as possible to explore options and attempt to resolve the situation before the tribunal.

The Brent SENDIASS team is not legally qualified and must explain this to parents/young people immediately upon referral.

Some parents/young people will not qualify for free legal support and will not be able to afford to pay for it. The team will always assist in finding out whether the parents/young person qualifies for free expert legal advice e.g. from IPSEA <https://www.ipsea.org.uk/> and Coram Children's Legal Service <http://childlawadvice.org.uk/>. Legal Aid: <https://www.gov.uk/legal-aid/overview>

For those who want to pay for a solicitor, we will refer them to <http://solicitors.lawsociety.org.uk/> and recommend that they request a solicitor specialising in special educational needs.

When parents/young people opt to use a solicitor, Brent SENDIASS will withdraw from actively providing advice until legal proceedings are over, to avoid confusion and duplication.

Brent SENDIASS will not normally attend Tribunals where parents have legal representation, except for training purposes or unless expressly asked by the parent carer/young person.

The role of Brent SENDIASS in all cases is to provide support through the SEND tribunal procedure and hearing but not to act as an advocate. There may be rare occasions when parents/young people who are unable to present their views effectively request that the Brent SENDIASS speaks on their behalf to clarify their position and/or ask questions on their behalf. The adviser is named on the SEND form as 'Parent Helper' specifically to be able to speak and assist parents/young people in presenting their case at the Tribunal hearing, rather than to represent them.

"Schools" refers both to early educational settings and all schools (including non-maintained schools) and post-16 educational settings e.g., colleges

What we do not do:

- Make decisions for you - you know your child's, or your own, wishes and needs best.
- Attend all meetings.
- Arrange meetings or take minutes.
- Write letters or emails for you.
- Complete paperwork on your behalf
- Print or photocopy documents for you.
- SENDIASS does not hold power over local authority or school policies or procedures and practices.
- Make decisions.
- Brent SENDIAS are not representatives of the SEND 0-25 Team or other Local Authority teams.
- Complete, advise or review benefits forms e.g., DLA or PIP

Created: August 2023

The Principles for SENDIASS Involvement Statement of Intent has been approved by the Brent SENDIASS Steering Group.

Approved: (Reviewed) 29th September 2025

Date of next review: September 2026