



## ENSURING IMPARTIALITY

Parents who seek support from the Parent Partnership Service must have confidence in the neutrality of its operation. Therefore, whether in-house or out-sourced, the service should be run at arm's length from the Local Authority (LA). This policy statement outlines how the Reading service's relationship with the LA aims to demonstrate this and thus strengthen parental confidence.

In Reading, the LA decided that Parent Partnership would be an in-house service. To demonstrate its independent operation when carrying out its statutory role, the service will endeavour to recruit and train volunteer independent parental supporters (IPS). An important role of the service, is to encourage positive relationships between parents, schools and statutory agencies. When it is not possible to resolve differences between parents, schools and the local authority the service will advise parents of the independent mediation service and explain their rights to complain or when appropriate appeal to the Special Educational Needs & Disability Tribunal Service (SENDIST).

The in-house Reading Parent Partnership Service is located in the Avenue Centre and maintains a standalone website, a discrete 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 SEN Code of Practice and exemplified by the Department of Children Schools & Families (DCSF). The management group consists of parents, key stakeholders from the statutory, voluntary and community sectors. *The group is chaired by a representative from the community.*

The LA delegates a budget for Parent Partnership, which is managed by the co-ordinator. The service has developed its own house style for all its

printed materials, including its own logo. The PPS co-ordinator makes the distinction to all the parents and professionals she works with, that although employed by the LA the service does not participate in any of the decisions that are made by the LA, eg. decisions regarding statutory assessment, issue of statements, school placements or level of support.

Service staff and volunteers will also stress that they are unable to pass on any news regarding decisions as it is the responsibility of the allocated Case Worker in the SEN team to inform the family concerned. They will, however be able to offer support once the decision has been passed on. The service is able to offer a parent the support of a volunteer IPS as and when requested by a family. Parents will also be signposted to other organisations when appropriate, eg Advisory Centre for Education, Special Educational Needs & Disability Tribunal (SENDIST), Independent Panel for Special Education Advice (IPSEA) and other supportive voluntary organisations.

The LA places no constraints on service 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 SEN transport.