Respectful Communication Policy

Purpose

SIASS is committed to providing impartial information, advice and support to children, young people, parents, carers and professionals.

We recognise that families often come to us during challenging periods in their lives. Discussions about special educational needs and disabilities, education, health and care provision, and future outcomes can be emotional and, at times, frustrating. We understand this and seek to approach every interaction with empathy, professionalism and respect.

This policy sets out the principles that underpin our work together and explains how we will respond when communication makes it difficult for us to provide a safe, effective and equitable service.

Our shared commitment

Positive outcomes are most likely to be achieved when relationships are built on mutual respect.

SIASS will always seek to:	We ask our service users to:
• Listen without judgement. • Treat people fairly and with respect. • Value different views and experiences. • Communicate clearly and honestly. • Be transparent about what we can and cannot do. • Work collaboratively to find solutions. • Ensure children, young people and families remain at the centre of our work.	• Treat staff with courtesy and respect. • Recognise that staff are working within legal and professional responsibilities. • Communicate concerns in a constructive manner. • Respect individual staff members and professional boundaries. • Work with us in a way that supports productive dialogue.

Being respectful does not mean always agreeing.

Families have every right to:

- Question advice.

- Seek clarification.
- Challenge decisions.
- Express dissatisfaction.
- Make complaints where appropriate.
- Advocate strongly for their child or young person.

SIASS recognises and values the important role that parents, carers and young people play in ensuring needs are understood and met.

Respectful behaviour

SIASS understands that parents, carers and young people may at times feel frustrated, distressed or strongly disagree with advice, decisions or processes. We welcome constructive challenge and will always listen to concerns.

However, all members of our community have the right to be treated with dignity and respect. Frustration or disagreement does not justify behaviour that is abusive towards staff.

Behaviour that is inconsistent with the values of this policy may include:

- Swearing directed at staff.
- Personal insults or derogatory remarks.
- Aggressive or hostile language.
- Threats, whether explicit or implied.
- Harassment of staff members.
- Discriminatory language or behaviour.
- Persistent accusations directed at individuals rather than focusing on the issues being discussed.
- Communication that causes staff to feel intimidated, distressed or unsafe.

SIASS is committed to ensuring that staff are treated with dignity and respect. Where communication is considered abusive or inappropriate, we will take reasonable and proportionate steps to address the situation and protect staff wellbeing.

When communication becomes unhelpful

There may be occasions when the way communication takes place makes it difficult for SIASS to provide an effective service.

This may happen when communication:

- Focuses on criticism of individuals rather than progressing discussion about the issues being considered.

- Is so frequent that it significantly impacts the service's ability to support other families.
- Repeatedly revisits matters that have already been considered and responded to without new information being presented.
- Involves contacting multiple members of staff about the same issue simultaneously.
- Creates unnecessary conflict or tension that prevents constructive discussion.
- Includes language or behaviour that could reasonably be experienced as intimidating, hostile or offensive.

The impact of communication is often as important as the intention behind it. Where concerns arise, SIASS will seek to address them openly, fairly and sensitively.

Our approach

Where communication becomes difficult, our first step will always be to try to rebuild a positive working relationship.

This may involve:

- Having an honest conversation about how communication is affecting the working relationship.
- Agreeing the best method of contact.
- Escalating communication to the service manager.
- Agreeing realistic timescales for updates and responses.
- Refocusing discussions on the outcomes being sought for the child or young person.
- Establishing clear expectations about future communication.

Our aim is always to find a way forward that enables support to continue effectively, however if necessary SIASS will signpost to other agencies who may be better placed to support.

SIASS recognises that communication styles may be influenced by disability, neurodivergence, mental health needs, cultural differences or periods of significant stress and we will consider reasonable adjustments to support effective communication and engagement.

Our commitment to working together

SIASS believes that positive outcomes for children and young people are most likely to be achieved when everyone involved works together respectfully, even where there are differences of opinion. This policy is intended to support constructive relationships, protect the wellbeing of everyone involved and ensure that families continue to receive a fair, safe and effective service.