**SE7 LOCAL OFFER FRAMEWORK AND GUIDANCE //P 21**

People and services commissioned by the local authority to support children and young people with special educational needs should complete the following questions. If the service provides direct teaching to children and young people with special educational needs it should use the questions for educational settings.

1. **What does your service do?**
* *What is the key purpose of your service and how does it contribute to better outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities and their families?*

The Independent Supporter service offers parents/carers and young people extra advice and support while they go through the process of getting an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan. From September 2014, EHC plans have been replacing Statements of special educational needs and this extra support has been funded by central government to help families through this period of change. We are an independent service introduced to help with new plans and transfers from Statements to add to the support from Plan Coordinators.

* *What are the typical activities that you do?*

An Independent Supporter works alongside a parent and/or young person during the weeks when they are being assessed for an EHC plan, while the plan is being written and discussed and then finalised. They will not take over, but will give a helping hand. They can:

* Explain what is happening and how you should be involved
* Give practical support to record any information you are asked for
* Make sure you feel able to get your views across
* Check you have the information you need, including on the Local Offer and Personal Budgets
* Signpost you to other support if you need it
* Attend meetings about the plan with you and help to make sure you have said everything you want to and had your questions answered.
* Look through reports with you to be sure you understand them fully
* Ensure you know when you have choices or decisions to make about the EHC plan
* Help you check through the EHC plan to see if you are happy with it.
* Support families to recognise their skills and knowledge and to build resilience.
* *Do you have any limitations on the amount of time your service will support a child or young person? Do you provide any on-going support?*

The Independent Supporter service is simply there to provide support for families during through the 20 week needs assessment process for a new EHC plan or the 14 week transfer process from a statement to an EHC plan. If a family needs ongoing support then the Independent Supporter will support the family to refer to other services.

1. **Where is it located and what areas does it cover?**
* *Where are your main locations and do you work across the whole local authority area?*

The Independent Support service in the whole of West Sussex is provided by Amaze, a charity based in Brighton & Hove that supports parents of children with special educational needs and disabilities. We operate our service from offices in Brighton and Chichester and hope to develop “hot-desks” in other parts of the county.

The service is working in partnership with other similar independent charities across West Sussex.

* *Are there any differences in your offer in different parts of the local authority area?*

Families across the whole of West Sussex will receive the same level of service from an Independent Supporter. Independent Supporters have been allocated to specific parts of the county to ensure full coverage.

1. **Who does your service provide for?**
* *What types of need and age ranges do you cover?*

Under the new system there are four categories of special educational need:

* Cognition and learning
* Communication and interaction
* Social, emotional and mental health
* Sensory and/or physical needs

Any child who was eligible for a statement under the old system will be eligible for an EHC plan under the new so the Independent Supporter service will work with any of these eligible families. Any child or young person from 0-25 who meets these eligibility criteria for a plan will have one and the Independent Supporter service will work with any of these families who request it and who will benefit from the extra level of support available.

Any young person, aged between 16-25, can have an Independent Supporter in their own right – someone who will work exclusively with them and not their parents. Some families may even have one Independent Supporter working with the parent/carer and another with the young person.

The level of support on offer will vary with each family’s needs.

* *What are the eligibility criteria to use your service?*

Any family where the child or young person is eligible for an EHC plan could potentially receive support from the service. We are not able to provide a service for those families who are not eligible for a plan.

The service will seek to work with any parent who requests their help but resources are limited and it might be necessary to prioritise those families who would not be able to contribute fully to the process if they did not receive that extra level of support.

Issues such as making a request for an EHC plan or having a dispute about the plan cannot be dealt with by Independent Supporters but families would be given assistance to find more appropriate services.

* *Are there any types of disabilities that you do not provide for?*

We can work with any child or young person (and their families) going through the process of getting an EHC plan .

1. **How can I start using the service?**
* *I can make direct contact myself or would there need to be a referral from someone else and if so, who?*

Any parent/carer who or young person aged between 16 -25 who is going through the EHC plan needs assessment can refer themselves to the service by telephone or email. Please call 0300 123 9186 or email independentsupportWSx@amazebrighton.org.uk. If they do not feel able to ask for this support directly they can ask any professional working with them to contact us on their behalf. Any SENCO, EHC Plan Coordinator or other professional who feels that a family would benefit from the service can refer them to us but they must seek the permission of the parent/carer and/or young person to share their details with us. Professionals should use the referral form which is available to download and email from the Amaze website.

* *Do you charge for the service and if so, what are the costs?*

We do not charge any family for the service they receive.

* *Can I use my personal budget to pay for the service or to add to the service?*

There is no charge for the service.

* *Are there any waiting lists and if so, how long are they?*

Because the service is time limited to the 20 week assessment process of the 14 week transfer process then we do not have a waiting list but will aim to make contact with the family as soon as possible from the date of the referral.

1. **How are decisions made about who can use your service?**
* *How are these decisions made and who makes them?*

Decisions about who can use the service have been made by a steering group made up of representatives from Amaze, the manager of the Independent Supporter service, the West Sussex Parent Carer Forum, the West Sussex Parent Partnership Service, the West Sussex SEN and Inclusion Team and other interested parties.

Each request for an Independent Supporter will be looked at individually by the Independent Support Manager and Co-ordinator to assess the individual needs of each family. The family will be offered the level of service that best meets their needs. This could vary from a single phone call to face to face meetings that take place over the course of the assessment process.

* *How will I know the reasons behind their decisions?*

If the Independent Support service is not able to offer support the family will be given the reason. We will also support the family to find other information or services which is better able to meet their needs.

* *How will you help me understand them?*

A key part of the Independent Supporter role is to make sure you understand all the information you have been given.

**6. How do you communicate with service users and how are they**

**involved in decision making/planning?**

* *What are your usual methods of seeking the views of service users?*

Amaze likes to seek views from their service users in a variety of different ways – by face to face meetings, by evaluation reports and by electronic surveys. Because the Independent Supporter service is a new service and is being delivered across the country there will be a national satisfaction survey that is carried out throughout the duration of the project. However Amaze will be seeking to gather their own satisfaction ratings for the service to help put together a case for the service to be funded beyond March 2016 when the funding from central government will cease.

* *Do you use any specialist communication system e.g. signing?*

When working with young people the service will seek to use communication methods that are familiar to the young person such as PECS and Makaton. We have two members of the team who can use BSL.

* *What leaflets and information do you have?*

We have leaflets that explain the service to parent carers and how they can access the service. We will also be producing a leaflet for young people that helps explain the service to them. Information about the service is available on the Amaze website.

* *How does the service communicate with parent carers whose first language is not English?*

If the service is working with a family who require the services of an interpreter then we do have access to translators to help aid communication.

* *How will I know how well my child or young person is doing?*

Not applicable

* *Do you offer any parent training or learning events?*

We can work with groups of parents/carers to deliver information about the EHC plan and to discuss how to complete the Parent Book.

**7. Is your service fully accessible?**

* *Is the building fully wheelchair accessible?*
* *Have there been improvements in the auditory and visual environment?*
* *Are there disabled changing and toilet facilities?*
* *Do you have a changing places facility? What support is there for a child with additional needs in general areas e.g. waiting rooms?*

The Independent Supporters aim to make visits to locations which are familiar to the child/young person and the family such as home, school or college which are accessible and meet their needs.

* *How will my child or young person be able to access all of the activities of*

*the service and how will you assist him or her to do so?*

The involvement of the child or young person is central to the work of the Independent Support service. We will make all reasonable adjustments necessary to ensure our service is inclusive and meets their needs.

Young people may choose to work with an Independent Supporter of their own. All of our team will endeavour to adapt the service to the needs of the child/young person and to build resilience.

**8. What training are the staff supporting children and young people with**

**SEND had or are having?**

* *This should include recent and future planned training and disability awareness.*

All the Independent Supporters have undergone four days of training before they are able to work with families. Two of the days are carried out by completing online training in the legal aspects of the new Children and Families Act 2014 and the role of the Independent Supporter. This training is then complimented by two face to face days of training where these aspects are explored in more detail.

Independent Supporters receive a thorough induction which covers aspects of the role including safeguarding, lone working and issues and services for children and young people with SEND and their families.

* *Are there any specialist staff?*
* *Do any other services work closely with yours?*

We work closely with the West Sussex Parent Carer Forum, Parent Partnership Service and SENAT team and other voluntary and statutory agencies in the county. We are delighted to have office space in PACSO’s Chichester office.

**9. Who can I contact for further information?**

* *Who would be my first point of contact if I want to discuss something about my child/young person?*

If you think the Independent Support service would be of use to you please call 0300 123 9186 or email independentsupportWSx@amazebrighton.org.uk

One of the Independent Supporters will contact you to discuss the service and how we may support you through the EHC process.

* *Who else has a role in my child’s/young person support?*

The school also have a role in supporting your child but if you are concerned about any aspect of their education then you can contact the Parent Partnership service on 0845 0751008 or by e mailing parent.partnership@westsussex.gov.uk

* *Who can I talk to if I am worried? Who should I contact if I am considering whether child/young person would benefit from the service?*

Any of the Independent Supporters is able to talk to you about what our service can offer and should be able to offer you support with the EHC plan. Please call 0300 123 9186 or email independentsupportWSx@amazebrighton.org.uk