

Parent Partnership Services – increasing parental confidence

Exemplification of minimum standards for PPS and Local Authorities

department for
children, schools and families



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National Governors' Association

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Northamptonshire Local Authority

North West Region PPS Group

Ofsted

South East Region PPS Group

South West Region PPS Group

West Midlands Region PPS Group

Yorkshire and Humberside Region PPS Group

These exemplifications focus on the minimum standards relating to the impartiality of PPS and providing an 'arms length' service and do not reflect the full range of work expected of, and carried out by PPS, which include all of the standards set out in Chapter 2 of the SEN Code of Practice and additional work on excluded children and the Disability Discrimination Act. The exemplifications have taken account of a range of existing documents and guidance, including:

The SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001) and *The SEN Toolkit* (DfES, 2001)

The Practice Guide (Council for Disabled Children, 2004)

Guidance on monitoring service delivery and assessing the impact of Parent Partnership Services (NPPN and NAPPS, 2007)

Evaluation of the SEN Parent Partnership Services in England (DfES, 2006)

South West Parent Partnership Network Regional Standards (SW Regional Partnership – revised 2007)

PARENT PARTNERSHIP SERVICES – INCREASING PARENTAL CONFIDENCE

This document sets out the Government's expectations of good practice in the provision of impartial Parent Partnership Services (PPS) and increase parents confidence in them. The aim of this work is to further build parental confidence in the advice and information they receive from PPSs. These standards apply to all PPS whether they are run by the local authority (LA) or partly or fully outsourced to another organisation to provide. The standards equally apply to LAs who are responsible for overseeing, monitoring and reviewing their local PPS in addition to ensuring adequate resources and staffing to meet the needs of parents in their area. References to parents throughout this document are to parents/carers and include anyone who has parental responsibility for the child/young person.

The standards in this document are part of the priorities for action 2006-2009 set out in the Government response to the Education and Skills Select Committee on SEN (October 2006): 'In order to strengthen the "arm's length" nature of Parent Partnership Services and improve the quality of those services in every area we will set out by way of exemplification of the minimum standards in the SEN Code of Practice clear expectations for the Parent Partnership Service in every area.'

The exemplars illustrate a range of practice from the minimum to best practice and build on the cluster model for self-evaluation and development set out in the *Evaluation of the SEN Parent Partnership Services in England* (DfES, 2006). The evaluation also reported that PPSs had developed to meet the minimum standards in the SEN Code of Practice 2001. The examples provide a range of increasingly effective practice to assist the development of local PPS, as well as practice that would be considered 'non-compliant' with the minimum standards where there is doubt about the quality of service provided. It is intended that PPSs and LAs will use the exemplars as a self review tool alongside their current monitoring and evaluation processes¹.

As a local service, the quality of Parent Partnership Services is one aspect of local authority inspections and copies have been passed to Ofsted to assist them in this process. This document has also been passed to the National Strategies SEN Team to include in their May 2008 Network Meetings and follow up with a sample of LAs in Autumn 2008. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools has been asked to review progress in 2009/10 of the key priorities set out in the Government Response to the Education and Skills Committee Report on Special Educational Needs (October 2006) and the review will incorporate the views of pupils and parents/carers.

¹ See *Guidance on monitoring service delivery and assessing the impact of Parent Partnership Services for Parent Partnership Services and Local Authorities* (revised 2007) available from the National Parent Partnership Network.

FUNDING/BUDGET

In delivering effective Parent Partnership Services Local Authorities are expected to:

- set out their funding and budgeting plans for the service (where appropriate the budget should be delegated to the Parent Partnership Service)
- ensure adequate resources and staffing to meet the needs of the parents in their area.

Exemplar	Best practice	Good practice	Minimum practice	Non Compliant
<p>The local authority provides the support and resources to enable the PPS to provide an impartial and effective service and to be innovative and creative in doing so.</p>	<p>Budget and staffing levels informed by analysis of needs and priorities identified in the PPS service development plan (SDP). SDP reviewed annually in conjunction with PPS steering or management group, service users, the LA and other stakeholders. The LA and the PPS work in partnership within the framework of the SDP.</p>	<p>Budget and staffing needs informed by priorities identified in the PPS SDP. The LA actively engages with the PPS to positively develop the service.</p>	<p>PPS SDP specifies the available budget and staffing resources. Local authority understand their responsibility for the service and take steps to ensure it meets the minimum standards.</p>	<p>PPS SDP does not describe available budget or it is not adequate to meet identified needs.</p>
<p>The budget for the PPS is delegated to the service and ring fenced.</p>	<p>The budget enables the PPS to fulfil strategic, casework, training and advice roles and meet all agreed development needs. PPS working collaboratively with other PPS, local voluntary and statutory agencies to maximise use of available funding by identifying alternative resources including funding and personnel.</p>	<p>The budget provides sufficient capacity for casework demands with some resources for strategic work. The budget is clear and transparent and the process for determining the budget is explicit.</p>	<p>PPS has a delegated budget which is sufficient to enable the service to meet the core activities set out in Section 2 of the SEN Toolkit. Budget setting process is understood.</p>	<p>The LA hold the budget and it is restricted to basic staffing costs.</p>

MANAGEMENT

In delivering effective Parent Partnership Services Local Authorities are expected to:

- take responsibility for setting and monitoring the overall standards of the service and ensure it is subject to best value principles
- ensure appropriate management structures for the service
- ensure adequate resources and staffing to meet the needs of the parents in their area
- ensure that the service has a development plan which sets out clear targets and is regularly reviewed; such plans should specify short, medium and long term strategies and arrangements for evaluation and quality assurance
- have, irrespective of whether it is outsourced or provided in-house, appropriate arrangements for overseeing, regularly monitoring and reviewing the service, taking account of best practice both locally and nationally.

Exemplar	Best practice	Good practice	Minimum practice	Non Compliant
<p>The PPS has an effective multi agency Steering/ Management Group.</p>	<p>The PPS Steering/Management Group has published terms of reference, including responsibility for ensuring the impartiality of the PPS.</p> <p>The Steering/Management Group has delegated responsibility to manage the PPS. Where the service is provided by a charity they can co-opt parents, other voluntary organisations to a parent partnership management group.</p> <p>The Steering/Management Group has broad representation, including a majority of parents and an independent Chair.</p> <p>The Steering/Management Group monitor the effectiveness and impartiality of the service in accordance with national guidance and report regularly to the local authority including the Children’s Information Service.</p>	<p>The PPS has a Steering/ Management Group that has published terms of reference, including responsibility for ensuring the impartiality of the PPS.</p> <p>The Steering/Management Group works with the PPS and the LA to support the policy, practice and development of the PPS.</p> <p>The Steering/Management Group has broad representation, including parents.</p> <p>The Steering/Management Group monitor the effectiveness and impartiality of the service and report to the local authority.</p>	<p>PPS has a representative Steering/Management Group, including parents, who support service development and report regularly to the local authority.</p>	<p>The PPS has no Steering/ Management Group or the LA SEN budget holder leads the steering group.</p>

WORKING WITH PARENTS

In delivering effective Parent Partnership Services Local Authorities are expected to:

- ensure that the service is flexible and responsive to local changes.

An effective Parent Partnership Service is expected to meet the following minimum standards and ensure:

- the provision of a range of flexible services including using their best endeavours to provide access to an Independent Parental Supporter for all parents who want one
- that practical support is offered to parents, either individually or in groups, to help them in their discussions with schools, LEAs (sic) and other statutory agencies
- that parents (including all those with parental responsibility for the child) are provided with accurate neutral information on their rights, roles and responsibilities within the SEN process, and on the wide range of options that are available for their children's education
- that parents are informed about other agencies, such as Health Services, Social Services and voluntary organisations, which can offer information and advice about their child's particular SEN. This may be particularly important at the time the LEA issues a proposed statement
- that where appropriate and in conjunction with their parents, the ascertainable views and wishes of the child are sought and taken into consideration.

Exemplar	Best practice	Good practice	Minimum practice	Non Compliant
<p>The confidence of parents in the PPS is fostered through an explicit policy on confidentiality.</p> <p>The handling of information that parents provide complies with the requirements of the Data Protection Act and is not shared with anyone outside of the PPS unless:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they have given permission for it to be shared or there are strong public interest concerns, i.e. child protection. 	<p>Confidentiality is rigorously upheld and understood by LA and PPS and regularly reviewed.</p> <p>The PPS confidentiality policy is explained to parents from the time of their first contact.</p> <p>Steps are taken to ensure that all agencies fully understand and respect PPS confidentiality policy.</p>	<p>Confidentiality is rigorously upheld and understood.</p> <p>The PPS policy on confidentiality is explained to parents from the time of their first contact.</p> <p>The PPS policy on confidentiality is agreed with the local authority.</p> <p>PPS is able to support and where necessary act on behalf of parents in challenging SEN policy and practice.</p>	<p>An appropriate written confidentiality policy is in place, adhered to and clearly communicated to all parties.</p> <p>LA is aware of PPS policy.</p>	<p>There is no written confidentiality policy.</p>

WORKING WITH PARENTS *continued*

Exemplar	Best practice	Good practice	Minimum practice	Non Compliant
<p>All parents have access to independent parental support when requested.</p>	<p>The PPS is able to offer all parents who request it access to appropriately trained independent parental support from a wide range of high quality providers, which may include independent volunteers recruited by the PPS, voluntary organisations, or signpost them to staff employed by other organisations.</p> <p>Monitoring process ensures that all independent parental support meets quality standards agreed with the PPS.</p>	<p>The PPS is able to offer all parents who request it access to independent parental support from a range of high quality providers, which may include independent volunteers recruited by the PPS, voluntary organisations, or signpost them to staff employed by other organisations.</p> <p>Monitoring process around independent parent support are in place to ensure the quality standards agreed with the PPS are met.</p>	<p>The PPS is able to offer all parents who request it some access to independent parental support from a limited range of high quality providers, such as independent volunteers recruited by the PPS, or signpost them to voluntary organisations, or staff employed by other organisations.</p>	<p>PPS is not able to offer access to independent parental support for all parents who request it either by allocating a PPS volunteer or signposting to other agencies.</p>
<p>Parents receive support in preparing for a SENDIST hearing.</p>	<p>Parents are able to access support from PPS before, during and after a Tribunal.</p>	<p>PPS provides support to parents before and after a Tribunal hearing.</p>	<p>PPS provides information to parents to enable them to prepare for a SENDIST hearing.</p>	<p>PPS is prevented from providing any support to parents who are contemplating using SENDIST.</p>

INFORMATION AND PUBLICITY

In delivering effective Parent Partnership Services Local Authorities are expected to:

- ensure that parents and schools are provided with clear information about the parent partnership services, and about the various other sources of support in their area, including statutory and voluntary agencies
- ensure that the service is provided with accurate information on all SEN processes as set out in the Education Act 1996, relevant Regulations, and the SEN Code of Practice and relevant information about the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

An effective Parent Partnership Service is expected to meet the following minimum standards and ensure:

- that information about the available services is publicised widely in the area using a variety of means
- the provision of neutral, accurate information for parents on all SEN procedures as set out in SEN legislation and the SEN Code of Practice
- the interpretation of information published by schools, LEAs and other bodies interested in SEN
- that a wide range of information for parents is available in community languages, and to parents who may not be able to gain access to information through conventional means.

Exemplar	Best practice	Good practice	Minimum practice	Non Compliant
Published policy on how the PPS acts in an impartial way and provides a comprehensive and balanced range of information for parents.	The PPS has a published policy on impartiality that is regularly reviewed with input from parents/carers. All documentation is written and produced in accordance with the policy.	The PPS has a published policy on impartiality and has formal processes for reviewing it. New publications are written in accordance with the policy.	A written impartiality policy is in place, but there are no formal processes for reviewing it.	No written impartiality policy established or in development. Range and balance of information is not in evidence.
Procedures to monitor impartiality of information and publicity.	The PPS has a procedure in place to regularly review the impartiality of all information and publicity materials produced by the PPS. This procedure involves service users and other parent/ carers providing independent monitoring of all information and publicity and advice on impartiality. continued next page	The PPS Steering/Management Group reviews impartiality of information and publicity. New information and publicity produced by PPS is monitored for impartiality.	No formal procedures in place to review impartiality of information and publicity produced by PPS; there is a reliance on informal feedback/comment.	LA edits leaflets with no input from PPS.

INFORMATION AND PUBLICITY *continued*

Exemplar	Best practice	Good practice	Minimum practice	Non Compliant
	<p><i>continued from previous page</i></p> <p>Publications routinely include references, bibliographies and recommendations for further reading.</p>			
<p>PPS has own service identity including e.g. logo, colour, style, strap line etc. and the Steering/ Management Group considers any other issues concerning the identity of the service, which may undermine parental confidence in the impartiality of the service.</p>	<p>The PPS identity is always given greater prominence than other service identities (e.g. corporate logo, colours etc.) on all information/publications.</p> <p>PPS has some/a degree of autonomy over wording of publications.</p>	<p>The PPS has its own identity and written style, which is used on all information leaflets/ publications.</p> <p>The PPS has its own direct line to avoid parents going through a LA switchboard or non PPS staff.</p>	<p>The PPS has its own identity and style, which is used on some information leaflets/ publications.</p>	<p>No evidence of separate identity in printed materials.</p>
<p>PPS website.</p>	<p>The PPS maintains its own dedicated website which is regularly reviewed and new information added as soon as it becomes available (with clear PPS identity) which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contact details • information on the range of services provided • a copy of the PPS policy on impartiality • copies of all published information leaflets/ newsletters • a link to the LA website • links to other relevant websites. 	<p>The PPS has a dedicated area which is reviewed regularly (with clear PPS identity) within the LA website. The PPS area includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contact details • information on the range of services provided • a copy of the PPS policy on impartiality and confidentiality • copies of most published information leaflets/ newsletters • links to other relevant websites. 	<p>Basic information on the PPS is included on the LA website, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contact details • information on the range of services provided. 	<p>No information on the PPS is available on the web.</p>

TRAINING, ADVICE AND SUPPORT

In delivering effective Parent Partnership Services Local Authorities are expected to:

- ensure, where the service is provided in-house, that the staff receive appropriate initial and ongoing training and development to enable them to carry out their role effectively.

An effective Parent Partnership Service is expected to meet the following minimum standards and ensure:

- that advice on special educational needs procedures is made available to parents through information, support and training
- that they use their best endeavours to recruit sufficient Independent Parental Supporters to meet the needs of parents in their area, including arrangements for appropriate training, ensuring that they are kept up to date with all relevant aspects of SEN policy and procedures so that they can fulfil their role effectively
- that training on good communication and relationships with parents is made available to teachers, governors and staff in SEN sections of the LEA.

Exemplar	Best practice	Good practice	Minimum practice	Non Compliant
<p>PPS staff receive training which enables them to provide accurate and impartial information advice and support.</p> <p>Staff are also able to facilitate training to volunteers, parents and other groups in accordance with a published service policy on impartiality.</p> <p>Staff identify and seek to redress their own development needs including, but not exclusively, courses leading to nationally recognised qualifications.</p>	<p>The PPS Steering/Management Group regularly reviews the range of information, support and training to ensure that it meets with quality standards for impartiality specified in the service policy.</p> <p>A wide range of providers and organisations are involved in delivering training including parents.</p> <p>Information materials from a wide range of organisations are made available via the PPS.</p> <p>All training needs identified in the Service Development Plan are met.</p>	<p>Informal arrangements for ensuring impartiality are used.</p> <p>Some information materials produced by other organisations are made available via the PPS.</p> <p>The Service Development Plan identifies the further training needs of PPS staff and arrangements are made to meet these needs.</p>	<p>Information, support and advice are made available on request.</p> <p>Most training and information materials are produced in-house.</p> <p>A limited range of providers are involved in delivering training.</p> <p>All PPS staff receive basic training to undertake their role.</p>	<p>No formal/regular LA arrangements for PPS staff to receive training that enables them to undertake their role.</p> <p>Information and training materials are all developed and provided by the local authority.</p>

TRAINING, ADVICE AND SUPPORT *continued*

Exemplar	Best practice	Good practice	Minimum practice	Non Compliant
<p>The PPS provides training for PPS staff and volunteers in accordance with a published service policy on impartiality.</p>	<p>All staff/volunteers are trained in current and relevant national, regional and local education law, policy and practice including training on exclusions and SEN and disability tribunals. PPS can use this knowledge to support and train parents and others.</p>	<p>All staff are trained in current and relevant national, regional and local education law, policy and practice including training on exclusions and SEN and disability tribunals.</p>	<p>Some staff are trained in education law, policy and practice including training on exclusions and SEN and disability tribunals.</p>	<p>No staff training in education law, policy and practice.</p>

Note: where it is not practicable for PPS to provide sufficient independent parental supporters for all parents that want one in their area, they should provide information about alternative sources of support for parents.

NETWORKING AND COLLABORATION

In delivering effective Parent Partnership Services Local Authorities are expected to:

- develop co-operative arrangements with the voluntary sector to ensure the mutual exchange of information and expertise
- promote and facilitate arrangements for the service to work in partnership with other agencies such as health and social services, using local planning structures such as the Education Development Plan, Early Years Development and Childcare Plan, Connexions Plan and Children's Services Plan and more recently Children and Young Person Plan. Provisions under the Health Act 1999 allow LEAs and health and social services to pool budgetary and management resources, such arrangements might therefore include the provision of joint information services.

An effective Parent Partnership Service is expected to meet the following minimum standards and ensure:

- that they work with schools, LEA officers and other agencies to help them develop positive relationships with parents
- that they establish and maintain links with voluntary organisations.

Exemplar	Best practice	Good practice	Minimum practice	Non Compliant
The PPS is involved in networking and collaboration (locally, regionally and nationally) in order to develop and sustain a high quality and impartial service.	<p>The PPS has established effective partnerships with an extensive range of regional and local networks.</p> <p>The PPS can demonstrate how this has impacted on the delivery of a high quality impartial service.</p> <p>The PPS can evidence how it influences other agencies and networks.</p>	<p>The PPS has raised its profile and is known locally as an effective contact across a range of agencies. There is some evidence of change to PPS and of the PPS influencing other agencies.</p> <p>Budget provides for limited representation at regional and national meetings.</p>	The PPS is involved with networking with some agencies.	PPS is not involved in networking.

NETWORKING AND COLLABORATION *continued*

Exemplar	Best practice	Good practice	Minimum practice	Non Compliant
<p>PPS impartiality is maintained when working with other voluntary and statutory agencies.</p>	<p>The PPS policy on impartiality (agreed with the LA) states how the PPS engages with relevant networks and organisations as an impartial facilitating service.</p> <p>The policy is agreed, published and reviewed annually.</p> <p>The PPS engages in regional and national initiatives to develop policy and practice in relation to impartiality.</p>	<p>The PPS policy on impartiality exists and is promoted with relevant networks and organisations.</p> <p>PPS participates and shares good practice re impartiality with regional and national networks.</p>	<p>The PPS policy on impartiality exists but is not actively promoted with relevant networks and organisations.</p> <p>The PPS has established links with Regional Parent Partnership Networks and NPPN.</p>	<p>PPS does not engage in collaborative working.</p>
<p>LA supports the role of PPS as an impartial service in networking and collaboration at national, local and regional level in the context of Every Child Matters.</p>	<p>A formal written agreement with LA is in place to sustain policy and practice in relation to networking and collaboration.</p> <p>Impartiality is demonstrated by the way the LA respects and responds to feedback from the PPS' networking and collaboration.</p>	<p>Terms have been discussed but no finalised written agreement is yet in place.</p>	<p>Involvement of PPS is ad hoc and terms have not been discussed.</p>	<p>PPS is not able to engage in networking or collaboration due to funding or staffing levels.</p>

INFORMING AND SHAPING LOCAL POLICY AND PRACTICE

In delivering effective Parent Partnership Services Local Authorities are expected to:

- actively seek feedback from the service and service users to inform and influence decisions on SEN policies, procedures and practices in order to improve communications and minimise the potential for misunderstandings and disagreements.

An effective Parent Partnership Service is expected to meet the following minimum standards and ensure:

- that parents' views are heard and understood, and inform and influence the development of local SEN policy and practice
- the regular review of the effectiveness of the service they provide, for instance by seeking feedback from users.

Exemplar	Best practice	Good practice	Minimum practice	Non Compliant
<p>The PPS facilitates the involvement of parents and carers in informing policy and practice.</p> <p>The PPS seek feedback from parents and carers about the impact of parents' and carers' participation.</p> <p>The LA and PPS regularly review the effectiveness of PPS participation.</p>	<p>The PPS supports the active involvement of parents in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing and reviewing the implementation of Children's Service policy • developing and reviewing the implementation of PPS policy. <p>The PPS provides a support structure to enable parents and carers to fully participate in shaping ECM policy development.</p> <p>The LA and other bodies seek PPS representation on key strategic groups.</p> <p>An open channel of communication between the LA, PPS and schools enables misunderstandings and disagreements to be resolved at an early stage.</p>	<p>Training and support is available for parents' and carers' to support their participation.</p> <p>Processes are in place to collect parents' and carers' views to both inform policy development and review and be reflected in policy development and evaluation.</p> <p>PPS are represented on some key strategic groups.</p> <p>Regular dialogue between the LA and PPS to enable misunderstandings and disagreements to be resolved.</p>	<p>Parents and carers are routinely consulted about policy.</p> <p>The PPS is normally consulted about policy.</p> <p>There is PPS representation in general policy discussions on an ad hoc basis.</p> <p>There is some dialogue between the LA and PPS to enable misunderstandings and disagreements to be resolved.</p>	<p>Parents, carers and PPS are not routinely consulted about policy or given sufficient time to respond.</p>

LOCATION

Exemplar	Best practice	Good practice	Minimum practice	Non Compliant
<p>The siting of PPS takes account of the need to comply with the PPS' impartiality and confidentiality policies and to facilitate collaborative working with Children's Information Services and Choice Advisers etc. (i.e. other relevant parent/carer information services.)</p>	<p>The PPS has its own base in premises that, from the perspective of parents and carers, are independent of the LA.</p> <p>The PPS does not have access to records on children and young people, except with the permission of the parents/carers and the holders of the relevant records.</p> <p>Collaborative working is well – developed with Children's Information Services and Choice Advisers (possibly co-located) from an easily accessible base.</p> <p>Collaborative working is in full accordance with the PPS policies on impartiality and confidentiality.</p> <p>Regular reviews of collaboration by steering/management group in accordance with policies.</p>	<p>The PPS is separate from LA SEN teams and in an environment that parents feel comfortable with – expectation is that this would not normally be within the main LA building.</p> <p>The premises should be easily accessible to parent/carers and suitable for its intended purpose.</p> <p>The location of the PPS base facilitates collaborative working with Children's Information Services and Choice Advisers (possibly co-located).</p> <p>Collaborative working is in accordance with the PPS policies on impartiality and confidentiality.</p> <p>Any expectation of PPS renting accommodation or covering additional overheads should be reflected in the delegated budget.</p>	<p>PPS has own office space away from SEN casework team – not overheard and with access to private meeting facility to meet with parents.</p> <p>Some collaborative working with Children's Information Services and Choice Advisers is developing.</p>	<p>Based within or close to SEN casework team.</p> <p>Isolated service, no links with Children's Information Services and Choice Advisers.</p> <p>PPS does not have the capacity for confidential data storage, nor appropriate, accessible space for confidential meetings with parents where conversations can be overheard.</p>

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Please quote ref: 00959-2007DOM-EN

PPCP/D35/1107/33

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Children, Schools and Families

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