

Independent Parental Supporters



Handbook And Working Practice

**Raising pupil achievement by empowering parents/
carers to take an active and informed role in their
child's education.**



Welcome to Devon Parent Partnership Service

We are delighted that you have chosen to join our team as a volunteer Independent Parental Supporter and we hope you find your work with us to be rewarding, interesting and (sometimes!) challenging.

This handbook is designed to provide you with information and guidance regarding your role as an IPS. It looks at best practice and administrative requirements, as well as covering some of the difficulties you may possibly encounter. We have tried to cover all angles but please do let us know if there are any other topics you feel it would be helpful for us to include. We are open to your suggestions.

IPS join us for all sorts of reasons – you might want to learn and develop new skills, work with new people, boost your CV credentials or make a difference in your own community. Whatever your reasons, we aim to support you to get the best out of this volunteering opportunity.

As you know, there are many ways you can support our work, from liaising directly with parents to attending networking meetings and from representing us at events to doing research. So please let us know which areas interest you the most so we can work better together.

The Devon Parent Partnership Service comprises a small team which is based at Great Moor House in Sowton, Exeter.

“We keep smiling, whatever the conditions!”



Debbie Wheeler

Georgie Cridland

Sue Brealey

Liz Batchelor

Cath Butland

Please remember that we are always happy to answer any of your questions or address any concerns, so do not hesitate to call us on tel 01392 383080

We look forward to working with you

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Devon Parent Partnership Service

Mission vision and values

Mission:

- To provide accurate and impartial support and information to parent/carers whose children may have additional educational needs
- To ensure that parents'/carers' views are heard and understood
- To make sure that parents/carers understand their roles, rights, and responsibilities
- To work with staff and governing bodies in schools and a range of other settings, as well as across the Local Authority and other agencies, to develop parent friendly policies and partnership working with parents/carers

Vision:

- To provide a high quality, impartial and confidential service to support children, families and carers and empower parents/carers to play an informed and active part in their child's education
- To contribute to embedding partnership working with parents/carers across all schools, agencies and other settings through a programme of training and information exchange that focuses on the achievement of positive outcomes for children, young people and their families, in line with Every Child Matters (ECM) and the Devon Children and Young People's Plan

Values:

- **Quality:** We will have an unswerving commitment to high quality
- **Partnership:** We can best achieve our goals through collaboration: we will work with parents/carers and partner organisations in a positive and impartial way to support the achievement of the ECM 5 outcomes
- **Equity:** We will champion the right of all parents/carers and their children to equitable treatment from our service and any other service that they wish to access

Independent Parental Supporter

Job description

An IPS is a volunteer who is trained, CRB checked, supervised and supported by the Devon Parent Partnership Service (DPPS). As an IPS, you will understand the mission, vision and values of the service and agree to work to these standards. There are a range of roles that can be undertaken by an IPS; these will always need to be agreed and supported by a Parent Partnership Officer.

Parent support role

The IPS volunteer's role is that of a facilitator – an IPS is not a parent's representative or advocate. Everything about the role should work towards encouraging parents to see themselves as an important and valued partner in working with others to meet the needs of their children.

This will be achieved by:

- Enabling parents to understand the importance of contributing their unique perspective on their child
- Listening to parents' views and concerns
- Reading and interpreting documents about their child
- Discussing options and the consequences of choices
- Explaining the SEN process
- Encouraging parents to tackle areas of conflict
- Identifying the right person to talk to or meet with
- Preparing for meetings and supporting at meetings if requested
- Promoting the inclusion of the child's view

DPPS representative role

As an IPS volunteer you may act as a representative for the Devon Parent Partnership Service. You will need to be able to explain the range of services offered by DPPS and to be able to feedback information gathered to members of DPPS staff.

The types of representation may include:

- Attending network meetings for professionals to explain the work of DPPS and to raise the profile of the parents view
- Visiting schools and school events to promote DPPS, providing information and publicity materials
- Visiting parent groups to explain the range of services offered by DPPS, to listen and feedback the views of parent's to DPPS and to take initial information for referrals to DPPS

Research, administration and IT roles

DPPS has a responsibility to provide or signpost, up to date and relevant additional educational needs information to parents and professionals.

As an IPS you may support this work by:

- Assisting with the website to ensure that information provided is current and accessible
- Researching for information on specific subjects on request
- Collating, checking and cataloguing information stored in the DPPS library
- Assisting with the development of DPPS leaflets

Person specification

Skills

There are a number of skills that are useful for an IPS to have when working with parents and other professionals. The IPS training will provide a framework for developing and enhancing the following:

- Good communication skills – listening, speaking and writing
- Ability to relate to different types of people
- Ability to ask for help when needed

Qualities

IPSS come with a variety of background experience. You will bring a range of qualities but the following are essential:

- Confident, patient, honest and reliable
- Able to respect confidentiality
- Flexibility and motivation
- Free of any potential conflict of interest (impartial)
- Empathetic towards parents of children with additional educational needs
- Committed to developing positive relationships between parents, schools and the LA

Knowledge

Additional Educational Needs is a vast subject. DPPS does not expect IPSS to be experts or to carry all the knowledge they need. IPSS will have participated in an initial training programme but we recognise that accumulating knowledge is work in progress for all of us. By thinking about the following, you will help us to identify any additional training sessions that we may need to run:

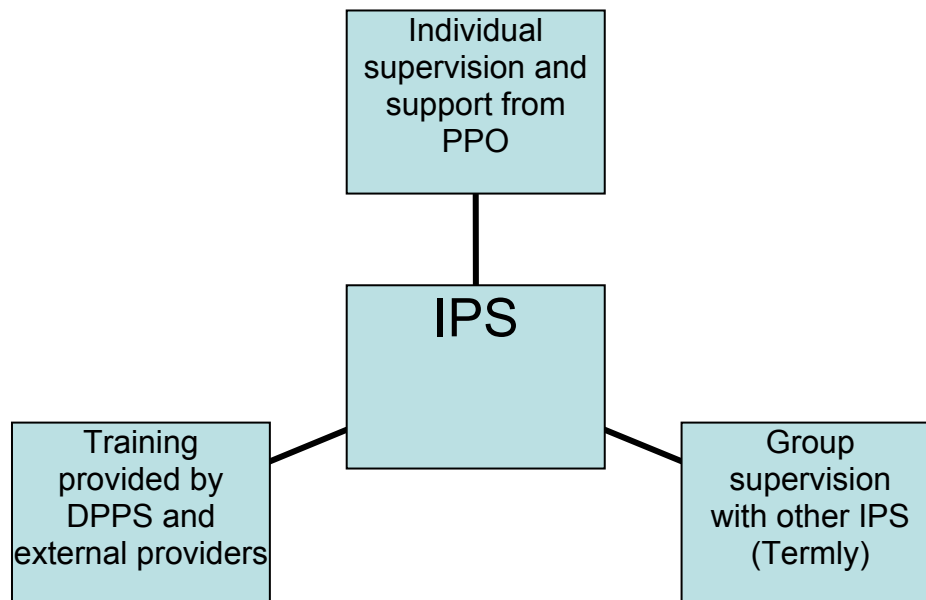
- SEN process
- DPPS protocols
- Devon County Council SEN policies
- Local and national support agencies and groups

Independent Parental Supporters should be fully informed about local and national SEN policies and procedures and feel confident to work with parents in a variety of different situations (Code of Practice 2001; 2.21)

Our commitment to you

IPS support and supervision

Devon Parent Partnership recognises the importance of providing all its staff and volunteers with support and regular supervision to enhance and monitor the quality of parental support, training and information provided by the service. We are committed to providing appropriate levels of supervision to ensure that the service offered meets all the requirements to keep staff and service users safe and supported.



How often will supervision happen?

Individual supervision sessions – termly face to face meetings and ongoing telephone and email support

Group supervision sessions – termly

County IPS meeting - annually

What happens at supervision sessions?

You will have the opportunity to discuss what you have been doing, ask for advice, raise concerns, identify further training needs and share experiences. We will not give you tasks that you do not feel comfortable with or are too complex but will endeavour to increase your skills and provide work that is rewarding, interesting and sometimes challenging.

- The Parent Partnership Officer (PPO) will talk to the families and professionals that you work with and seek feedback on how helpful they have found the support provided. The PPO will discuss this with you at your supervision and this will help you to analyse areas that may require additional support or training.
- If you have not experienced supervision before and would like to ask more questions, let us know.

How will you progress?

At your supervision session you will discuss with the PPO any areas where you feel that you need more knowledge and skills. The PPO will discuss with you what training you need and how it can be provided. This training may be at your individual session, in group sessions, at special events or training provided by other organisations.

Training

What kind of training will you do?

We will provide core elements that are essential for your work. In addition there will be ongoing training opportunities offered. Some of the training may be through online or personal study; for other sessions you may need to travel.

Core elements

The 3 day Introduction to IPS will include the basics of

- Safeguarding
- Record keeping
- Lone working / Health and Safety
- Confidentiality and Impartiality
- SEN processes
- Working with Parents
- Representing PPS at meetings

Further training sessions will be included in termly group meetings on these and other agreed topics. Other specialist topics may be identified and offered at other times. (NB. You may claim for travel expenses only.)

Expenses

We will monitor and pay reasonable agreed expenses incurred as a result of the IPS volunteer role.

Equal opportunities

We are committed to ensuring that all volunteers and prospective volunteers are treated fairly on their relevant merits and abilities regardless of circumstance.

We will take positive steps towards implementing and encouraging equal opportunities practices by monitoring and identifying any inequities in access, opportunity or participation and addressing our practice. If you consider equal opportunities are not being maintained or have ideas about how equal opportunities can be ensured please discuss these with the PPO.

Insurance

IPS insurance cover

Volunteers are covered under Public Liability insurance in the same way as Devon County Council employees.

The Public Liability insurance covers:

- employees and volunteers for any loss, damage or injury caused by the Council's negligence
- any loss, damage or injury caused as a result of the volunteer's actions if they have acted negligently.

Volunteers have equal rights with paid staff regarding this cover. Further details of the Insurance Policy can be obtained on request.

However IPSs are liable for any loss or damage to personal property that they use whilst on IPS business.

Motor insurance

It is the IPS volunteer's own responsibility to ensure that any vehicle they use for the purpose of travel relating to IPS work has adequate and current insurance. In any accident you would need to claim from your personal car insurance.

IPSs are advised to contact their insurers to inform them of the volunteer role.

IPSs are required to have a current, appropriate driving licence and to have motor vehicle tax for their vehicle.

We may ask to see your insurance documents and driving licence.

Health and safety

We are committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of voluntary members as individuals and in groups.

We intend, as far as is reasonably practicable, to ensure that the obligations of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1979 and any other Health and Safety

Legislation relevant to the work carried out by volunteers will be implemented and maintained by DPPS.

Our commitment to service users

Monitoring and evaluation

We have a statutory duty to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the Devon Parent Partnership Service, including that provided by our IPSs. The feedback we receive from parents, schools and professionals will help us support and manage IPSs through individual supervision and their annual appraisal. It will also help us to improve our support to parents/carers.

We use a questionnaire to ascertain:

- if we are user-friendly
- how effective we are
- how knowledgeable we are
- the impartiality of the service.

Monitoring and evaluation is undertaken by questionnaire* and telephone:

- When an IPS has had telephone, email or face-to-face contact with a parent we will contact the parent to ask for feedback.
- When an IPS has supported a parent at a meeting with their child's setting and/or professionals, early years setting, school or college, we ask parents and the setting and/or professionals for feedback on the service.

*See appendix 4

Annual appraisal

The annual appraisal you have follows a set format. It is an opportunity to discuss the progress made through IPS work achieved during the year, identify any concerns and to set targets. The discussion will inform an action plan for the coming year to include support, supervision, training needs and to set new challenges.

Report to the Steering Group

A Steering Group is being set up which will meet 3 times per year to monitor the delivery of the Devon Parent Partnership Service against the National Minimum Standards for Parent Partnership Services. This includes the provision of IPSs. Nominated members of the Steering Group will include an IPS who is a parent.

Reports will be given on IPS training, activity and feedback from service users.

Your commitment to us

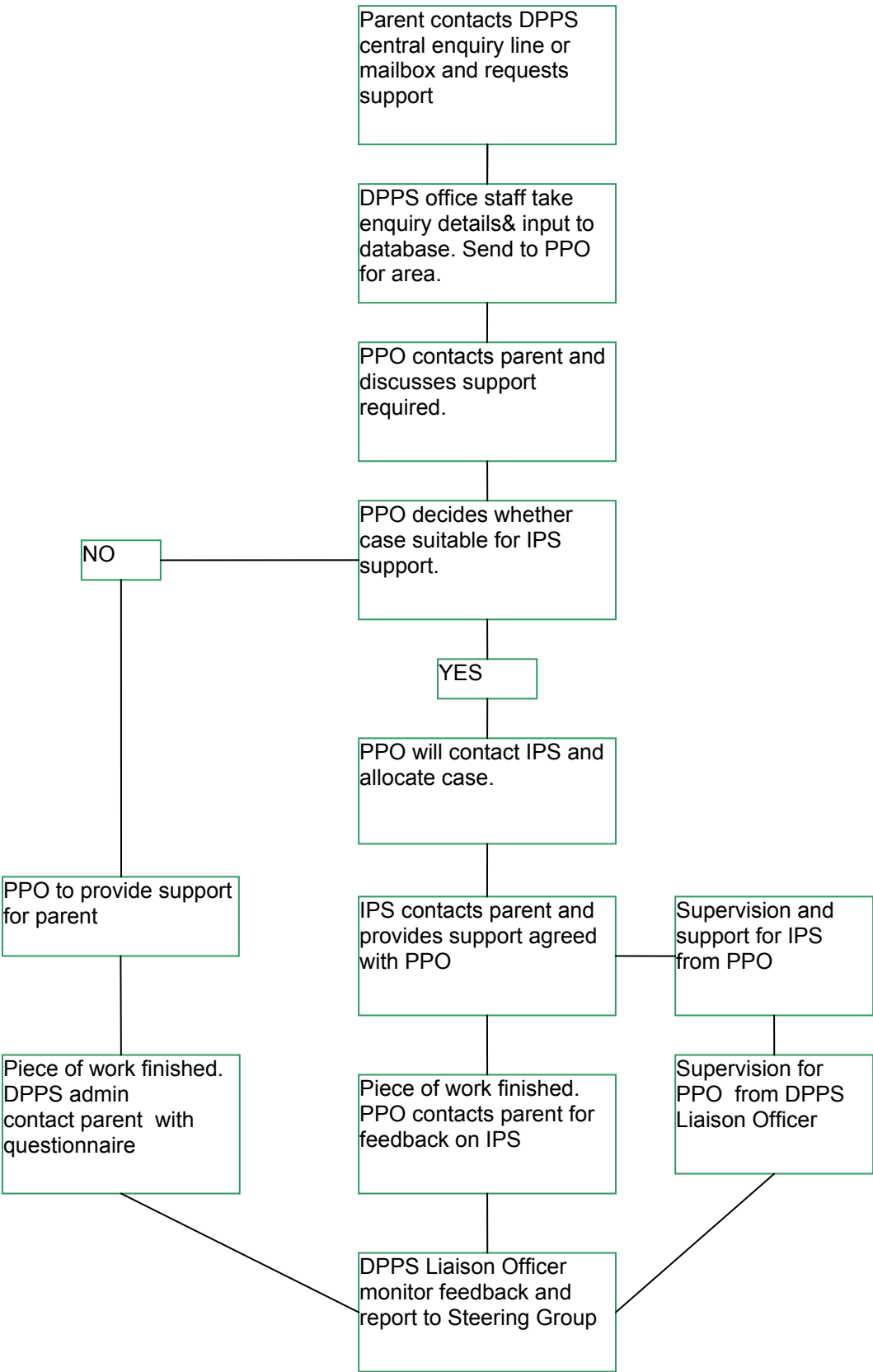
We have an expectation that as an IPS you will:

- Understand and follow the DPPS mission, vision and values statement
- Understand and follow the IPS code of conduct and working practice guidelines
- Familiarise yourself with and work within the following policies
 - Safeguarding
 - Lone working, including the safety protocol for home visits
 - Confidentiality, including data protection
 - Impartiality
 - Health and safety
 - Equal opportunities
- Commit to attend regular supervision and support meetings, training and team meetings as required
- Read and keep to the IPS Agreement (see appendix 5)
- Self-evaluate the work that you do and acknowledge training needs or gaps in knowledge
- Make risk assessments of your work environment to ensure your own and service users' safety
- Let us know if there is any change in your circumstances that could affect your role as an IPS

Policies

It is important for you to have a working knowledge of and work within our policies. This handbook has a condensed version for IPSs (see the appendices). Full versions of the impartiality and confidentiality policies are available on our website. A paper copy of others may be requested from the central office.

IPS Referral Process



Working as an IPS in practice

IPS code of conduct and good practice guidelines

We greatly value the support of our team of trained IPSs as their work strengthens the capacity of Devon Parent Partnership Service to offer a high-quality service to service users.

IPSs may support DPPS in a number of ways

- Working in the community
- Working in our central office or from their own computer
- Working with parents

This guidance will give you the information about practical arrangements for how to carry out your duties in these areas.

Procedures

Practical arrangements when working on your computer

- Your PPO will email you information in a password protected attachment giving you a file number and initial to use to identify the case when emailing your record back to them. The password will be sent separately and must be stored securely.
- Any notes you wish to email to parents or professionals should be sent to your PPO who will forward them to the intended recipient in order to keep your own email address confidential.
- Ensure you have a password protected area in your computer to store all your DPPS information for the minimum time needed.

To set a password: left click on Tools in the top of the toolbar, select options, this will open a window, select security, find 'password to open', write in password and click OK.

- Open and save DPPS emails to the password protected area immediately they are received.
- Ensure you either open DPPS sent items and save them to your password protected area or delete them and then delete them from your recycle bin.
- Adhere to the guidance in this document regarding our Record Keeping and Data Protection Act.

Practical arrangements for working on the telephone

- Always dial 141 before the parent's number to prevent parents identifying your home number.
- Ensure that you are speaking with the correct person and that it is a convenient time for them; between 9am and 5pm weekdays.
- Use your 'introductory phrase' as an IPS; explain confidentiality, impartiality and record keeping.
- Use your listening skills – be aware of safeguarding issues.
- Encourage the parent to seek the views and wishes of their child.
- Explain or offer to research options; compare potential action outcomes with the status quo.
- Remind parents that decisions are theirs.
- Summarise your discussion with any actions, responsibilities and timescales agreed.
- Ensure you have the parent's permission, if they have asked and you agree, to discuss their child with a specified professional or agency.
- Exit phrase – explain to parents they may contact you again if they wish by using our central telephone number.
- Type the agreed actions, responsibilities, timescales and permission and email to your PPO with the parent's code number – ensuring that there are no identifying details within the email or the summary bar.
- Create a list of each date you use your telephone as an IPS and every telephone number you use and how much time was spent so that your telephone bill can be verified as a legitimate expense. Save this in your password protected area.
- Once the enquiry or telephone bill period is finalised delete all records from your password protected area and from your deleted box.

When working in the community as an IPS

- Carry your identity card and introductory letter.
- Carry copies of leaflet DPP11 with you.
- Be prepared to introduce yourself at meetings and explain DPPS Impartiality and Confidentiality Policies and IPS role (i.e. working with parents to enable them to make informed decisions for and with their child) and DPPS monitoring and evaluation.
- If approached for support by a family, Devon Parent Partnership Service must be informed on the same working day using the recognised route of referral; phone 01392 383080 with parent's name and telephone number.
- Email your PPO a brief summary of the event or contacts made, adhering to the record keeping guidelines.
- Smoking tobacco, drinking alcohol or using illegal drugs is not allowed at any time you are working as an IPS.

Practical arrangements for meetings with parents

Once your PPO has agreed, you may meet with the parent or parents;

- Consider and agree an appropriate venue with the parent – a receipt for two hot or cold non-alcoholic drinks will be accepted for the use of a quiet café.
- Arrange meeting and visit times between 9am and 3.30pm on weekdays – be prompt or call if delayed.
- Allow no more than 90 minutes for the meeting.
- Occasionally it may not be appropriate to meet in a neutral venue. If following discussion with your PPO you decide to meet in the parent/carer home you must follow the DPPS lone working procedure for home visiting i.e. notify your PPS Officer or the DPPS central number 01392 383080 of each visit, the venue, its contact details and your expected return time. You would never take a parent to your own home.
- If your plans change, let someone know.
- Notify DPPS staff when the home visit finishes. Someone from the DPPS office or your PPO will attempt to contact you if the deadline for calling following the end of the visit is not met. The DPPS office closes at 5pm. If no-one from the DPPS is available contact your nominated family member.
- Ensure DPPS have next of kin contact details.

Actions during and after a meeting with a parent

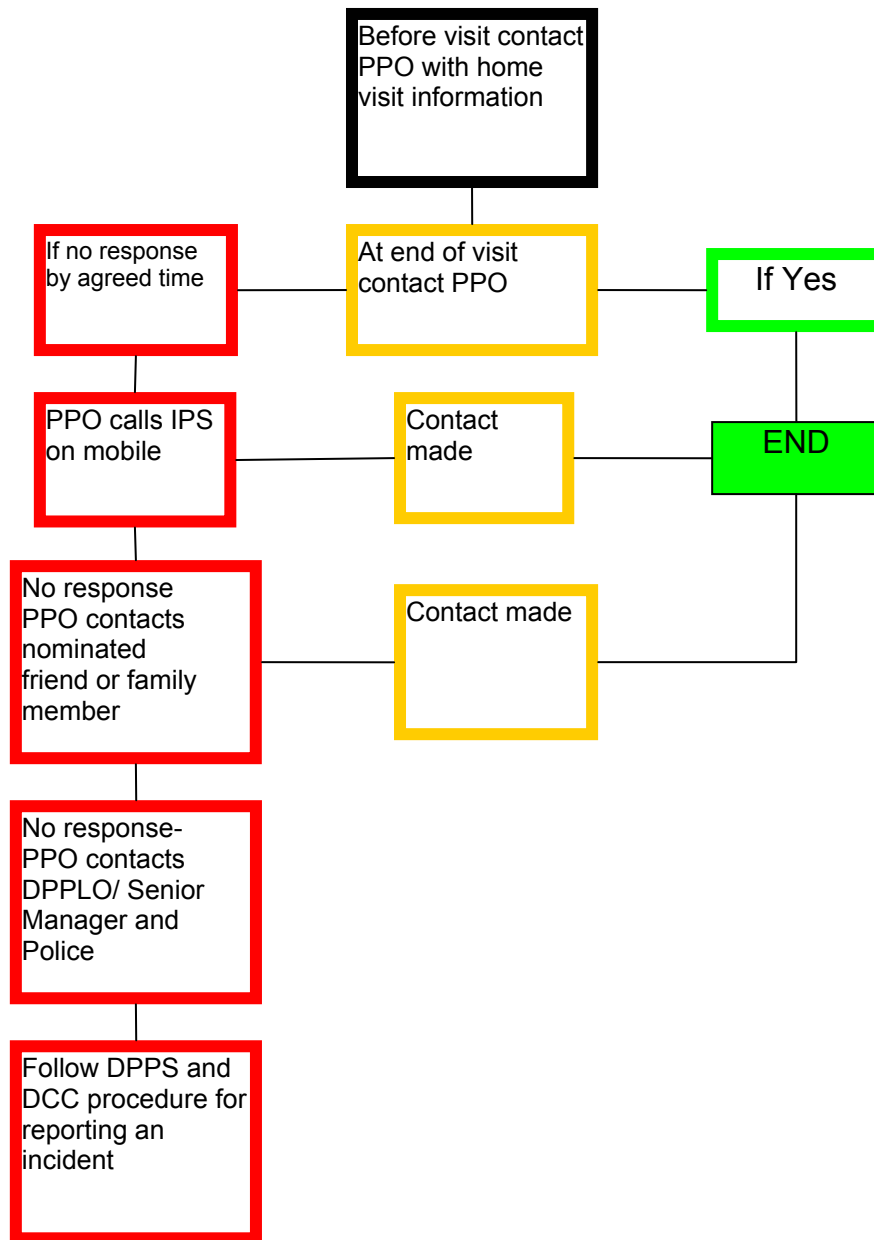
- Carry your identity card.
- Be prepared to take bullet point notes at the meeting of agreed actions, responsibilities and timescales.
- If it is agreed that you take responsibility for follow up work, ask the parent for their consent to discuss their child with others and record this as a bullet point.
- Explain to the parent that they will need to contact 01392 383080 for further support.
- Never give the parent your personal telephone number, email address or home address.
- Email your PPO your notes of the meeting.
- Save the notes for the minimum time required in a password protected area of your computer.

Personal safety

You are responsible for your own safety whilst undertaking IPS work. We expect you to follow these practice guidelines and the Lone Working Policy (see appendix 3).

The following safety procedure for home visits flowchart shows how DPPS and your PPO will provide a reporting system for you to follow.

Safety procedure for IPS home visits



- Before the visit the PPO will make an initial risk assessment with information available to DPPS to ascertain that as far as we are aware it is safe for you to visit.
- You will need to make your own risk assessment during the visit using the IPS Lone Working Practice Guidance for Home Visits.
- If you do not have a mobile phone use the nearest public phone to let the PPO know that you are safe.

What does an Independent Parental Supporter do when supporting a parent?

You are empowering parents/carers of children with Special Educational Needs to enable them to take an active and informed role in their child's education by providing independent information and support.

These are the things that you could reasonably be expected to be involved in:

- Talking through parents'/carers' worries and concerns in confidence and in a non-judgemental way
- Assisting parents/carers to establish and record the views of their child
- Helping parents/carers to understand letters and reports
- Providing information on points of contact with professionals and voluntary organisations
- Assisting parents/carers in discussions with professionals
- Helping parents/carers respond to documents from the LA
- Helping parents/carers to express and record their views
- Helping parents/carers to formulate the right questions to ask at meetings
- Attending meetings with parents/carers
- Writing up notes and action points from meetings
- Providing information on parents'/carers' rights and responsibilities, the law and local SEN procedures/policies
- Considering the options available and finding out more information if required
- Visiting schools with parents/carers
- Attending Annual Review meetings
- Reading literature connected with SEN
- Keeping case records following the guidance on page 21
- Contributing to the monitoring of the service

The IPS may do any of these things to support parents/carers. The nature of the individual duties of an IPS will be agreed between the DPPS, the parents/carers and the IPS and will be kept under regular review.

Preparing for meetings and conduct in meetings

Meeting preparation

Discussion with the parent may take place on the telephone or by meeting with the parent. This is an important opportunity to understand the concerns and current knowledge of the parent and to help them establish what their aims for the forthcoming meeting are. The purpose of the preparation is to enable the parent to clarify points they wish to raise and questions they want to ask. If you are going to attend the meeting with them this will help you to

ensure that the parent has been able to raise all the points discussed, if they so wish.

- Ascertain the purpose of the meeting and who will be attending
- Help to organise topics into bullet points for discussion
- Help parents to formulate effective questions
- Help parents to decide whether it would be helpful to circulate suggested topics before the meeting

Supporting a parent at a meeting

During all meetings it is the role of the IPS to ensure that the parent/carer has their view heard. Always clarify what the parent has said if you or others have not understood. Offer to take bullet points of actions decided. If a parent has not raised all the questions, that were prepared with you before the meeting, check whether they wish to discuss them before the meeting closes.

- Remember confidentiality.
- Ensure everyone is in agreement about the time and length of the meeting and clear on the agenda.
- Be prepared to introduce yourself at the meeting and explain the purpose of your attendance i.e. to support the parent/carer at the meeting.
- Do be prepared to call for a short break in the meeting or bring the meeting to a close if necessary. If the situation remains unresolved ensure another meeting is arranged.
- Leave with the parent.

If you are meeting in a school

- Ensure the school has been made aware that the parent/carer will be accompanied by an IPS.
- Take your identity badge and letter of introduction.

Equal opportunities for service users

All parents/carers of children with Additional Educational Needs have a right to equality of opportunity with regard to the use of the Service.

If you consider a child or their parent/carer is being discriminated against during a meeting or at any other time please raise your concerns. If appropriate to do so, this should be done when the discrimination occurs. If not, the IPS should report the incident to the PPO who will decide on what further action is required.

IPS and safeguarding

As an IPS you have a duty of care to raise and pass on any concerns you may have about the wellbeing and/or safety of a child, young person or parent who you become aware of through your role. It is not, however, your responsibility to initiate any proceedings.

These are the steps you should take if you are worried by a situation. As it is unlikely you will meet face-to-face with a child or young person, your concerns could be triggered by what you hear from the parent/carer or other people working with the child.

- If your concerns are aroused do make notes (mentally if not initially written) but do not ask leading questions of the people concerned.
- Contact your PPO* by telephone as soon as possible with the information you have gathered and the reasons why you are bringing this to their attention.
- It is then the responsibility of the PPO to look into the situation further, gain more information and decide if a referral needs to be passed to the relevant agency.
- *If your PPO is not available then you can contact another officer or the DPPS Liaison Officer.
- If your concerns are raised, it is out of hours and you do not feel you want to leave things to the next day then you should call the Emergency Duty Team and talk it through with them. You will need to note down your actions and any discussions and pass this to your PPO as soon as possible.

List of numbers

Parent Partnership Central Office

01392 383080

Parent Partnership Liaison Officer(Manager)

Sue Brealey 01392 383957 mob. 07812100187

Parent Partnership Officers

Liz Batchelor 01803 527849/ 07855 215944

Cath Butland 01566 784986/ 07540 671331

Debbie Wheeler 01392 383080/ 07545 420357

Emergency Duty Team 0845 6000 388

MASH – 0345 1551071

Record keeping

IPS record keeping and data protection

You are expected to undertake your duties in a manner which meets the requirements of the **Data Protection Act 1998**, as determined by the policies of the Local Authority and Parent Partnership Service.

All information handled and processed by an IPS is sensitive data and there are procedures that must be followed. With respect to Data Protection, an IPS is viewed the same as a paid employee and is expected to comply with organisational policies that support the law of the land.

Data protection

The Data Protection Act 1998 sets standards for obtaining, recording, holding, using or disposing of personal data. All information given to IPSs and the DPPS comes under the Data Protection Act. There are eight Data Protection Act principles as follows:

Personal data must be:

- 1) Processed fairly and lawfully.
- 2) Processed for specific purposes.
- 3) Adequate, relevant and not excessive.
- 4) Accurate and kept up-to-date.
- 5) Not kept for longer than necessary.
- 6) Processed in accordance with the rights of data subjects.
- 7) Protected by appropriate security.
- 8) Not transferred outside the European Economic Area without adequate protection.

To work within the Data Protection Act IPSs are expected to:

- Keep objective, succinct and careful records of all meetings and telephone conversations with parents.
- Use your home computer to type these records and save them to a password protected area on your computer.
- Email your record to your PPO identifying the parent using only the DPPS reference number.
- When emailing your PPO, you should maintain confidentiality by using initials instead of names.
- Destroy your handwritten notes as soon as the record is typed.
- Delete your computer record as soon as you have finished your work with that family; then delete those records from your recycle bin.
- All reports, notes and papers given to you by the parent should be kept safely and securely to ensure confidentiality and should be locked away at home. They should be returned (posted with proof of posting) to the parent at the earliest opportunity.
- When working with a parent in the community or school all papers should be kept securely, not left in unattended cars or placed where others can see.

- When working with a parent in a neutral venue it is important that names of professionals or other parents or children are not used in case you are overheard; use roles instead e.g. class teacher, Educational Psychologist.

IPS disagreements / complaints procedure

Complaints, grievance and disciplinary procedures are ways in which the quality of any service is maintained and developed.

We hope that most things that you are concerned about can be settled quite easily by discussing the problem with those directly involved at the earliest opportunity.

Complaints about another service

There are different routes for complaints about issues in schools, the Local Authority etc. The first step would be to discuss your complaint with your PPO. They will inform you of the appropriate channel for your complaint and may support you with the process.

Complaints about DPPS

If you wish to express a complaint or grievance about the working practices of

- The Devon Parent Partnership Service (DPPS)
- Your PPO
- The DPPS Liaison Officer (DPPLo, service manager)
- Another IPS volunteer

Step One Contact your PPO who will listen to your complaint, make a written record of the discussion and suggest appropriate action. They will record this and give you feedback within an agreed timescale after relevant investigation with a senior officer if necessary.

Step Two If the matter has not been resolved or you are not satisfied with the response from your PPO you can discuss the matter with the DPPLo.

Step Three If you are still not happy that the matter is resolved you should contact the Senior SEN Officer, Anne Porter on 01392 38910. At this point the Steering Group will be informed.

If the complaint is about your PPO begin at **Step Two**. The DPPLo will investigate the complaint by talking to both parties and decide what action should be taken.

If you are involved in a disagreement with a parent/carer, you should inform the PPO and a support session will be arranged. The IPS will be supported if they feel the most appropriate course of action is to withdraw from that particular case.

In the event of the parent/carer contacting the DPPS to inform them of a disagreement with the IPS, the PPO will offer the following options:

- Bringing the parties together to resolve the disagreement informally
- Withdrawal of the current IPS worker
- Offer an alternative IPS worker
- Offering the formal complaint procedure

Complaints about an IPS

If a parent/carer or a member of staff makes a complaint about an IPS:

Step One the PPO will initially look into the complaint. An explanation of the role of the IPS may be sufficient to alleviate the problem.

Step Two If this is not the case the complaint will be taken up with the IPS to try and resolve the complaint informally.

Step Three If this is not successful the complaint will be taken to the DPPLO who will consult with both parties and decide what further action should be taken. The parent will be notified in writing of the outcome.

Step Four If the parent is not happy with the outcome, the complaint will be taken to the line Senior SEN Officer and the Steering Group will be notified.

Complaints can be seen as a way of increasing good practice and should be viewed in a positive light.

Disciplinary procedure

When our monitoring, evaluation or complaints procedures find a breach of the working practice described in this document, including safeguarding, we will take the necessary action to:

- Modify the practice and support of the IPS
- Support the family that has been affected
- Report illegal activity to the police

All investigations and actions will be recorded in writing and the Senior SEN Officer and Steering Group will be informed.

If any complaint or allegation is of a serious nature (e.g. breach of confidentiality, child protection issues, accusation of theft) it will be necessary to discuss the situation with a senior officer. Depending on the nature of the complaint, as a volunteer it may be necessary to suspend you from your duties. This action is taken to protect the parent/carer/child from harm and to protect you from further allegations being made.

You will be supported by a member of DPPS who will keep you up-to-date with the progress of the investigation.

If the allegation is proved you will no longer be able to be an IPS volunteer. DPPS disciplinary procedures are designed to support the parent/carers and professionals we work with as well as guiding our IPS to maintain high standards of practice.

Termination procedure

DPPS would only consider terminating the service of a volunteer for serious misconduct eg

- Conviction of a serious criminal offence
- Falsification of facts/evidence at application, reference or interview
- Inappropriate conduct towards DPPS staff including another IPS, client or the client's family
- Discriminatory behaviour or breach of confidentiality

Then the supervising PPO has the right to suspend the IPS while the DPPLO investigates the case.

The IPS will be informed of the DPPLO's decision within one month of the suspension and has the right to appeal against the decision.

This appeal will be heard by the Senior SEN Officer and a representative of the Steering Group.

If the IPS is still not happy with the outcome, Devon County Council's complaints procedure can be used.

Expense claims

- Monthly expense claims should be posted to your PPO to arrive no later than the 14th of each month. Please ask your PPO where they would like the form sent.
- Expenses will only be paid with an appropriate receipt for legitimate expenses; telephoning DPPS, stamps, bus or train travel, hot or cold non alcoholic drinks for the use of a quiet café, car parking.

- Fines for overstay in a car park or illegal parking will NOT be paid by DPPS.

Guidance for completing expense forms

Claims are to be made using the DCC form 'CT/PumaV', FOZ reference TM7S

NB: IPS complete sections 1, 2, 3 and the top box on the reverse of the form (DPPS officers complete sections 4 and 5)

Section 1

IPS to complete this **every time** a claim is made and sign as the claimant
(The next box to be signed by Georgie Cridland (admin) with our telephone number)

(The fourth box is for signing off and dating by relevant PPO)

Section 2

Check you use the correct month; e.g. April = month 1, 2010, May = month 2, 2010

Section 3

IPS to complete this for the **first claim only**

National Insurance number

Details of car; registration, exact cc capacity

Date started claiming in this role

Section 4

(Completed by DPPS)

Section 5

(Completed by the DPPS)

Reverse of the form – top box

IPS records dates for individual journeys as well as dates for telephone and postage.

Columns 1 and 2 will always be completed;

Column 3 for mileage

Column 6 or 7 for postage or telephone or meeting beverages. For telephone costs we will need copies of bill. Postage receipts.

Totals at the bottom please.

Return completed form to relevant PPO to agreed address by 14th each month.

We will need copies of receipts to accompany all claims, this will include copies of telephone bills.

Ending your time as an IPS

We hope you will enjoy volunteering for the DPPS and that you will benefit from the experience. We understand that there will come a point when you will no longer wish to volunteer for the service. If you are considering leaving the

service we ask that you discuss this with your PPO and agree a date you will leave.

We will be happy to provide you with a reference identifying your experience as an IPS as well as any training you have undertaken with our service.

Appendix1
Devon Parent Partnership
Impartiality Policy (DRAFT)

Summary for Independent Parental Supporters (IPS)

In all our work we seek to ensure that information and support is given to parents and professionals in an impartial way. The SEN Code of Practice says that we should provide for parents 'accurate, neutral information on their rights, roles and responsibilities within the SEN process, and on the wide range of options available, to enable them to make informed decisions.' (SEN Code of Practice 2001:26)

We are an 'in house' service that sits at 'arms length' from the local authority. We aim to be impartial, not favouring any person or party more than another and striving to be fair and unbiased. We will endeavour to present factual information in order to bring about a resolution to the issues which are presented.

As an IPS we need you to support the impartial delivery of our service with us in the following ways:

Removing Barriers to Impartiality

- You must be committed to positively opposing discrimination.
- You will acknowledge and respect every person as an individual and will endeavour to be responsive, courteous and helpful to anyone who contacts us.

Relationship with the Local Authority

- We are managed as an 'in house' service but maintain our impartiality by having someone sufficiently independent of the Local Authority (LA) to line manage the service but also have a close enough relationship to contribute to local policy and practice.
- When parents disagree with the LA you may have to provide impartial information and support to explain policy and help them understand their entitlement.

Monitoring Impartiality

- We will establish a Steering Group that will include parent representatives. It will have responsibility for steering and safeguarding the effectiveness and impartiality of the service.
- The Steering Group, Parent Forums and service users will be asked to regularly review the impartiality of DPSS.

Networking and Collaboration

- When working with other professionals you will make them aware of the impartial nature of our service.
- Whether working with parents or professionals you need to consider factors that may be affecting their behaviour which may influence our impartiality.
- You will ensure, when attending meetings, that you are clear about the impartiality of our role.
- To support parents and professionals you will offer constructive challenge to perceptions of some events.

Reflective Practice

- We are aware that other factors may have an impact on our impartiality and we will provide training and supervision for you to monitor standards and encourage your reflective practice.
- You will support parents to prepare and present their own views so that they can be understood by others but will not advocate on their behalf so as to promote or defend any particular point of view.

Working Practice of Challenge

- You will seek to resolve any conflict between the views of the school, Local Authority or the parent rather than promote any of them.
- You will support parents, individually or collectively, to convey their views to schools, the LA or other agencies.
- You will provide information and guidance to help facilitate a resolution to any issue that we are supporting you with.
- If you are unhappy with any aspect of our service, including our impartiality, you can make a complaint. We will provide you with information about how to do this.

Training and Supervision

- All IPSs will follow the guidance in the Impartiality Policy. This will be part of the training and will be monitored through supervision.
- IPSs will be introduced to the Impartiality Policy through induction and training.

Information and Publicity

- Our leaflets, website and publicity materials will provide accurate and neutral information which meets the requirement to be impartial. They will be regularly reviewed by staff, the Steering Group and Parent Forums.
- The Impartiality Policy will be published, accessible on the DPPS website and reviewed annually.

Location

- The central office is located in a LA building but not with the SEN Team. Together with other staff you will use working practices to ensure that DPPS work is not seen or overheard by other departments.
- We will use drop-in surgery facilities around the county to provide independent access for parents.
- When working away from any DPPS base you will ensure that you maintain the confidentiality and impartiality standards.

We recommend that you read a full version of the DPPS Impartiality Policy on our website: www.parentpartnershipdevon.org.uk

Appendix 2
Devon Parent Partnership Service
Confidentiality Policy (DRAFT)
Summary for Independent Parental Supporters (IPS)

Devon Parent Partnership Service (DPPS) is a confidential service for all parents of children with additional educational needs – this means that the principles of confidentiality must operate in all areas of the service and management.

- Nothing will be shared outside DPPS without permission unless it could cause harm.
- DPPS can be entrusted with information and will treat it with respect and discretion.

These are the ways that as an IPS you will make sure that DPPS is being confidential:

- Any information given to an IPS should be regarded as confidential to the IPS and DPPS Staff. IPSs are expected to discuss their work and any issues of concern with a Parent Partnership Officer (PPO) or the Parent Partnership Liaison Officer (PPLO) to ensure that they are able to provide appropriate support to parents.
- If an IPS finds that a service user wishes to confide in them and asks them not to pass information on, the IPS needs to explain the limits of confidentiality (see DPPS Confidentiality Policy and exception below*). An IPS will only be expected to support parents with matters relating to SEN.
- An IPS must not pass on information about a service user to any agency without the informed consent of the individual and having discussed this with the PPO or PPLO.
- Care should be taken to ensure that discussions, conversations and telephone calls with, or relating to service users cannot be overheard by anyone outside the DPPS.
- Any written records of meetings or telephone conversations must be stored securely to prevent accidental or intentional viewing by anyone who is not involved in DPPS. These will be sent to the PPO or PPLO at the earliest opportunity and once passed to DPPS no records will be kept by the IPS.
- IPS application forms and other confidential information in relation to them will be stored securely in the DPPS office.
- IPS home addresses and telephone numbers should not be disclosed to service users.
- IPS may have access to their own personal records, including their application forms, supervision records, police checks and references. This can be arranged with a PPO or the PPLO.

***Confidentiality will need to be breached if there is serious risk of harm to any individual.**

We recommend that you read the full version of the DPPS Confidentiality Policy on our website www.parentpartnershipdevon.org.uk

Appendix 3

Lone Working

IPS Practice Guidance for Home Visiting

SAFE WORKING

These guidance notes are for IPSs who have arranged to visit Service users or parents in their home. It is DPPS policy that wherever possible a meeting with a parent will take place in a public place. If this is not possible then a home visit can be arranged with the agreement of the PPO and the following practice guidance must be followed. In no circumstance should you arrange to meet the parent in your own home.

No home visits are to finish after 5.00 p.m.

IPSs should prepare for home visits by:

- Making sure that their movements (including information about place and time and expected attendees) are clearly known to the PPO
- Always carry your identification badge
- The PPO will check existing records to find out as much as possible about the home circumstances before the IPS visits. If no records exist, check with the referring school/agency.
- If there is anything of concern the PPO will advise the IPS that the case is not suitable for their support.

Carrying out a home visit:

- Plan your introduction
- Speak slowly, gently and clearly
- Maintain eye contact
- Stay calm yourself
- Listen and empathise
- Be aware of your body language
- Be aware of exits
- Try to keep yourself between the client and the door
- Watch for signs of rising tension

In addition:

- Avoid entering a house if the person you are expecting is not there.
- If the parent(s) or carer(s) is (are) judged to be improperly dressed, in no fit state to conduct an interview or co-operate, tell them that you will arrange another appointment, and then leave.
- If there is an animal present which appears to you to present a health hazard or a threat, do not hesitate to ask for it to be removed. If this is not done, explain your view and tell the person that you will make another appointment to meet at another venue.
- If the occupants are smoking and you consider this to present a health risk through passive smoking, ask them to stop and if they refuse you may remove yourself from the premises.
- The presence of other people should not inhibit the interview. If that presence is clearly with the agreement of the person you have called to

see, that is acceptable but if the presence of a 3rd party causes concern, remove yourself from the situation.

- In particular, the person you are visiting is quite entitled to have a friend or representative with him or her to assist the conversation.
- In exceptional circumstances additional facilities may be required to enable the interview to take place, for example, an interpreter or a signer. IPSs should make requests for such support through their PPO.

During the interview:

- Other than a simple cup of tea/coffee you should politely refuse all other hospitality (in particular alcohol).
- Under no circumstances should IPSs accept gifts.
- Make sure you sit a reasonable distance from the person (it may be wise to sit on the door side of them).
- A handshake on arrival and departure may be appropriate. You should avoid other physical contact as this may be misunderstood.
- If at any time during the interview there appears to be a risk to your health and safety, leave immediately. Try to arrange an appointment to continue the interview at a later date.
- Do not reveal your home address or telephone number.
- Try to be sensitive to non-verbal signals and react accordingly. Similarly try to avoid giving signals that may be open to misinterpretation (e.g. hands on hips, folded arms, raised arm, physical contact, raised voice etc).
- Where service users show signs of becoming aggressive, try to remain calm and confident. Try to walk your way out of difficulties and seek a compromise whilst planning a potential escape if necessary. **Do not** meet aggression with aggression as this can easily lead to confrontation.

After the interview:

- You should record the meeting in line with IPS practice guidance. The person interviewed can have a copy of the points raised and any plans that have been agreed.
- If the meeting has been difficult you should draw the circumstances to the attention of your PPO so that others visiting may be suitably forewarned.
- The PPO should mark the file accordingly.

In some circumstances the continuation of a service to the Service user may be reviewed. If any IPS is threatened with, or subjected to violence, they should make a full written report to their PPO. This must be drawn to the attention of the Senior Manger. Form PO3 (Appendix B) must be completed.

RISK ASSESSMENT

When carrying out a home visit the IPS must consider the following risk factors:

- Animals on the premises
- Aggressive occupants
- Bad reception areas for mobile phones/no communication back-up
- Gender issues
- Difficult parking areas/visiting in the dark
- Dangerous locations – such as volatile estates
- Restricted entrance and exit-blocks of flats
- Asking difficult questions

Animals

Do not enter without first making contact with the owner of the animals to ensure that it is safe to do so. Always pre-arrange your visit. If in doubt, **do not** enter the premises or ask the client to shut the animal in. If you are bitten, you should arrange for an immediate tetanus injection (check that your tetanus jabs are kept up to date – a jab will be effective for 10 years).

Carrying passengers

- Your car must be insured to allow you to carry other people for business use
- Your car must be roadworthy
- Seatbelts must be in working order and you must comply with legislation governing the transport of small children. Never take a child unless accompanied by a parent and you have appropriate seating.

Consider gender issues when transporting a lone parent or child. It may be necessary to ask a colleague to accompany you. All clients being taken by car must be known to the Service and to the best of your knowledge have no history of aggressive behaviour.

Aggressive clients

If the person is known to be aggressive an IPS will not be allocated to the case.

If the person you are with starts to become aggressive or you feel intimidated, indicate calmly that this is not a good time to discuss the particular issue and leave. Inform your PPO and they will decide if it is appropriate for you to continue with the case or arrange another meeting.

Signs of threatening behaviour:

- Rising tension in face and body, shouting, swearing, kicking/banging furniture and walls
- Personal insults intended to cause distress or harassment

- Verbal threats, gestures, stances or obstruction
- Possession of any kind of weapon regardless of the overt threat to use it
- Being incapable whilst under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Racial harassment/sexual harassment/disability harassment
- Deliberate silence
- Bullying
- Assault, grasping, pulling clothes, poking, punching, shouting
- Any unwanted physical contact
- Assault causing ABH or GBH
- Threatening use of dogs/animals/minder

RECORDING AN INCIDENT

- All incidents must be reported to your PPO who will help you record what happened on Form PO3.
- The PPO has a statutory duty to report appropriate incidents to the Health and Safety Executive within 10 days (see Form PO3).

COMMUNICATION

We are not able to issue IPSs with a mobile phone but if you have your own we advise you to take this with you. Although mobile phones do not work everywhere they give added security. Store emergency contacts under ICE. If you have more than one, then ICE (1) ICE (2) and ICE(3).

- Ask yourself 'Who knows where I am?'
- Phone the PPO when the visit is finished

In areas of known poor reception, telephone beforehand to alert the PPO that you will have no communication back up.

- State where you are
- Estimate time of visit
- Check to ring back after completion of the home visit

If at any time a PPO becomes concerned about the whereabouts or safety of an IPS it is essential to inform the DPPLO or Senior Manager and if necessary, the police.

Appendix 4

Devon Parent Partnership Service

IPS questionnaire for service users

Following parent support being provided by an IPS the PPO will contact the service user by phone to check that the parent is happy with the service provided. This is a check list of questions that can be used as a guideline. Feedback will also be sought from professionals who have worked with the IPS. All comments will be discussed with the IPS and ways to improve or enhance the service offered by DPPS will be explored.

Name of parent :
Name of IPS:

Date of questionnaire:

1. How did the IPS support you?

- Support by telephone
- Researching information
- Preparation for meetings
- Support at meetings
- Sent information
- Support with letters/forms

2. Have you received the DPPS leaflet about IPS? Yes/No

3. Did the IPS contact you during office working hours Yes/No

If No please explain when.....

4. Did the IPS offer to baby sit or look after children?

It is important that IPS do not offer. DPPS is not a child care service and here are safeguarding implications. DPPS can direct you to services that provide child care and respite.

5. Do you think that the IPS support offered was unbiased Yes/No

6. How would you describe the IPS support you have received?

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

Brief description of what was helpful.....
.....

7. How could the service be improved?.....
.....

Thank you for your time as your answers are valuable to us. We may contact you again to ask your views of the Devon Parent Partnership Service.

Appendix 5
INDEPENDENT PARENTAL SUPPORTERS
An agreement with the Devon Parent Partnership Service

As an Independent Parental Supporter (IPS) with Devon Parent Partnership Service (DPPS) you can expect:

- Training and an induction period to help you meet the responsibilities of this role.
- Ongoing support and regular supervision meetings to help you to develop your volunteering role with us and provide feedback.
- Fair treatment under our equal opportunities policy (see IPS Handbook)
- Reimbursement of legitimate out-of-pocket expenses (see IPS Handbook).
- Adequate public liability insurance in keeping with the Devon Policy
- An assurance that we will try to resolve any difficulties or complaints you may have as soon as possible (as detailed in our complaints procedure policy – see IPS Handbook).

In return we ask that you:

- Remember you are a representative of the DPPS, treat people with respect and be aware of the boundaries of your role.
- Perform your role to the best of your ability.
- Read the IPS handbook and follow all the DPPS procedures, standards and policies included within it.
- Adhere to the DPPS confidentiality and impartiality policies (see IPS handbook).
- Meet agreed time commitments and give reasonable notice if you need to change any arrangements.
- Provide referees and agree to a Criminal Records Bureau check.
- Attend regular supervision and volunteer team meetings.
- Assign any IPS written work or photographs, undertaken as part of your role, to DPPS

This agreement is binding in honour only and is not intended to be a legally binding contract. It may be cancelled at any time by either party. Neither party intends for any employment relationship to be created by this agreement.

Agreement explained and discussed on

IPS signature..... Date

PPO signature.....Date

Our volunteer IPSs are an important and valued part of our organisation and we hope that you will enjoy volunteering with us and being part of our team.

Appendix 6

Glossary & Useful Abbreviations

Throughout this document the word ‘parent’ is taken to include all those with a direct responsibility for parenting. These might be birth parents, step-parents,

grandparents or other members of the family, foster or adoptive parents or other adult caregivers.

DPPS Devon Parent Partnership Service
IPS Independent Parental Supporter
PPO Parent Partnership Officer
PPLO Parent Partnership Liaison Officer - Service Manager

Devon County Council

CSET County Special Education Team
ICSAT Integrated Children's and Statutory Assessment Team
EP Educational Psychologist
EWO Education Welfare Officer
CA Choice Adviser
EMA Ethnic Minority Achievement
LA Local Authority

Health and Social Care

JAT Joint Agency Team
ICS Integrated Children's Services
CAF Common Assessment Framework
TAC Team around the Child
SLT Speech and Language Therapist

School Personnel

SENCO Special Education Needs Co-ordinator
PSA Parent Support Adviser

Special Educational Needs

SEN Special Educational Needs
AEN Additional Educational Needs
CoP Code of Practice
SA School Action
SA+ School Action Plus
C& I Communication and interaction
C& L Cognition and Learning
BES Behavioural, Emotional and Social
S&P Sensory and Physical
M Medical

See our 'What does it mean? A glossary of terms for parents and carers' leaflet.