

From the IPSEA (The Independent Panel for Special Education Advice) web site www.ipsea.org.uk

For years IPSEA and many other organisations and individuals have been reporting their concerns to the DfES about widespread and deliberate failures by LEAs across the country to carry out their job properly in providing for children with Special Educational Needs. In particular:

- LEAs have been using unlawful blanket policies to deny many SEN children any assessment of their needs;
- When assessments are made, Statements of Special Educational Needs (the passports to the help children need) are often unlawfully worded -- they lack the detail needed to make them enforceable by parents.

The SEN and Disability Division of the DfES have now stepped in to advise all Chief Education Officers and Directors of Children's Services that they:

- must not operate blanket policies of refusing to assess particular groups of children who have special educational needs, but must consider children's needs individually and on their merits;
- must, in their Statements, specify the special educational provision necessary to meet the needs of the child concerned, detail appropriate provision to meet each need identified and normally quantify the provision.

Commenting on the Secretary of State's action, Roger Inman, IPSEA's Chief Executive, said:

"IPSEA very much welcomes this explicit legal guidance to LEAs on their duties towards children with special educational needs across a range of issues, including when making assessment decisions and when drafting Statements.

"We look forward to firm action from the Secretary of State against LEAs who ignore the guidance.

"Of course, it will be vital that as many parents as possible know of the guidance in order that they can quote it to their LEAs. For this reason, IPSEA will be publicising the Secretary of State's letter as widely as possible."

If you want to read a copy of the letter it is available on-line and to download at the IPSEA web site. <http://www.ipsea.org.uk/DfESletter2LEAs15-Nov-05.pdf> .