



# ***HARD TO PLACE PROTOCOL***



June 24

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### **Introduction**

Torfaen County Borough Council is responsible for admission to all community and voluntary controlled schools in Torfaen. This responsibility is carried out in accordance with Welsh Government legislation and is set out in the Council's School Admissions Policy.

The aim of the policy is to ensure that access to appropriate education is secured quickly for all learners. However, educational opportunities for some learners are put at risk because they may be regarded as vulnerable, for a variety of reasons, and may experience delays in admission to school or find themselves unable to access a school place as a result. Therefore, to ensure that each placement is given the best chance to succeed, the Council operates a 'Hard to place' protocol for admitting the most vulnerable learners and those with challenging behaviour effectively, outside the normal admissions round.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Welsh Government Statutory School Admissions Code and Torfaen City Council School Admissions Policy.

### **The Aims of the policy**

- a. To ensure that the needs of vulnerable learners who are transitioning outside of the normal admission round are allocated a school placement within a timely manner.
- b. To ensure that the admission of 'Hard to place' learners is supported so that the placement succeeds.
- c. To ensure that there is openness and fairness in the process.
- d. To ensure that there is an agreement to admit to a school a learner covered by this protocol within twenty school days of an application being made.
- e. It is the expectation that the current school (if the learner in question attends a Torfaen School) have followed all existing guidance and processes in relation to any learner who experiences any Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties.

### **Learners who might benefit**

Whilst, most in-year admissions are managed through the usual school admissions process, more complex in-year transfers into mainstream education are processed in accordance with this policy. More complex referrals generally include vulnerable learners who are likely to experience difficulties in securing a school placement and will typically include learners of compulsory school age who:

- Have been permanently excluded from a school;
- Have been out of education for some time (two months or more) and have severe attendance problems despite ongoing Education Welfare Service involvement (following their graduated response) and require a fresh start elsewhere.
- Are electively home educated and their case is more complex which makes them harder to place.
- Have had little prior experience of formal education and/or are new to English or Welsh language learning;

- Have Youth Offending Team involvement and require a change in educational placement or readmission to mainstream education;
- Learners who access a PRU or another specialist placement but who are now ready to be re-included back into mainstream education. Some of these learners will still be on the roll of their previous school with the intention that they will return there, but some parents may wish for their child(ren) to attend an alternative mainstream school.
- Are in temporary accommodation i.e. receiving refuge support;
- Are carers;
- Have been withdrawn from school by their family, following fixed term exclusions;
- Have complex additional learning needs but may not have a statement of SEN/IDP -
- Are confirmed as having complex needs in relation to mental health and wellbeing.

This protocol does not apply to learners who are currently, or have previously been looked-after, nor learners with an IDP or Statement of SEN.

This protocol does not apply to learners who have been through the admissions and appeals process and remain dissatisfied with the outcome.

Other learners requiring a school place will continue to be placed in accordance with the usual admission procedures.

### **Principles**

The first principle for all cases being considered under this policy is the needs of the learner.

This is closely followed by trying to ensure that no single school, including those with places available, is required to admit a disproportionate number of learners with a particular need, or who have been excluded from other schools.

Decisions are guided by parental preference. Although the LA would be able to advise a parent that the school they have chosen may not be the most appropriate, ultimately parental preference takes precedence and the LA is unable to refuse admissions where places are available.

There is a collective responsibility for the young people involved and the key to successful implementation of the policy will be:

- Simplicity;
- Equity between schools;
- Full participation;
- An honest exchange of information;
- A sense of urgency to ensure the appropriate quality of information is available.

## **How 'Hard to place' applications are processed**

It is expected that all parties will act with a sense of urgency to identify a school place for any learner who falls under this policy to ensure that all learners are admitted to a suitable school as quickly as possible. This may include potentially admitting learners to schools that are already full. A 'Hard to Place' application must not be refused solely due to the admission number. The LA is unable to refuse a place at an undersubscribed school and applicants are entitled to appeal the decision when a place is not offered at the preferred school if the school has already reached its capacity (WG school admissions code 3.61).

The School Admissions Team refer all 'Hard to Place' secondary in-year transfers to the Managed Move Panel (MMP) for information sharing, the process is as follows;

1. The in-year application is received and reviewed by the School Admissions Team. A change of placement form is sent to the current/previous school for completion within 5 school days. Completion of this paperwork can only be requested, not enforced. Non-receipt of information from a school cannot delay a decision, which in such cases will be taken on the basis of the information provided with the application.
2. The information is received and reviewed by the School Admissions Team to determine whether it meets the criteria of a 'Hard to place' application.
3. If so, the application is referred to MMP for consideration/information share under this policy, noting the parental preference.
4. Once a school place is offered, it is expected that admission arrangements be made within 20 days of the decision.
5. It is recommended that throughout the transition period the new and previous school liaise to information share and schools access Torfaen ALN services as required and implement suggested strategies in their own school.

## **Potential outcomes**

1. Learner is admitted to the first preference school; or,
2. Learner is offered an alternative school placement (if the school is full and unable to admit). The applicant has the right of appeal against any place not offered; or,
3. The applicant withdraws the application to transfer.

## **Monitoring arrangements**

- a. The LA will retain a record of every 'Hard to Place' learner admitted via the Admissions Team/MMP and timescales.
- b. Foundation and VA schools should notify the LA of the admittance of any 'Hard to Place' learners, as defined in this Protocol to ensure correct data capture.
- c. The LA will report to the Admissions Forum at every meeting and annually to Welsh Government.
- d. If applicable, the LA will put in place monitoring and support arrangements following the admission of all 'Hard to Place'.

- e. The admissions team will report annually on the outcome of 'Hard to Place' admissions.
- f. The policy is reviewed annually.