
THE LOCAL ADMISSIONS FORUM

Purpose of Report

1. To inform Members of the work of the Local Admissions Forum

Information and Analysis

2. The School Standards & Framework Act (1998) required all Local Authorities to set up Admissions Forums. Membership for the Local Admissions Forum includes representation for Community and Voluntary Schools, Foundation Schools, Faith Based Schools and Academies. Membership of the Admissions Forum is also extended to the Roman Catholic and Church of England diocese, to capture the viewpoint of Voluntary Aided schools.
3. Admissions Forums have a key role in ensuring a fair admissions system. In Darlington an “Equal Preference” system has been adopted as the agreed scheme. Forum Members help the operation of the scheme by:
 - (a) considering how well the admission arrangements meet the needs of children and parents in the Authority
 - (b) promoting agreement on admission issues
 - (c) commenting on the accessibility and comprehensiveness of admission literature and admissions application forms
 - (d) monitoring the arrangements for children who arrive in Darlington outside the normal admissions round; and
 - (e) promoting arrangements for children with special educational needs, children who are ‘looked after’ and children who have been excluded from school.
4. The Schools Forum is responsible for receiving the proposed admission arrangements from all schools and may comment on schools’ proposed oversubscription criteria. The Forum may refer objection to the Schools Adjudicator in any cases where they deem matters to be unfair or unlawful, or where admissions authorities have disregarded their advice.
5. The Forum must also agree, promote and monitor the In-Year Fair Access Protocol (formerly the Hard to Place Pupils Protocol) for potentially vulnerable children who are hard to place or arrive in the Authority outside the normal admission round.
6. The Local Admissions Forum also have the power to publish an annual report detailing:
 - (a) a breakdown of preferences met by ranking and the main factors affecting whether preferences were met
 - (b) the number of admission appeals made for schools in the area
 - (c) the ethnic and social mix of pupils in the area and factors which affect this
 - (d) the extent to which existing and proposed admission arrangements serve the interests of vulnerable children

- (e) how well In-Year fair Access Protocols are working and the number of children admitted to each school under the protocol; and
 - (f) whether primary schools are complying with Infant Class Size legislation.
7. The Annual Report will be drawn upon by the Schools Commissioner in drawing up his two yearly national review of Fair Access.
 8. The minutes of the Local Admissions Forum for 12 February 2008 are attached to this report for information (**Appendix A**).

Legal Implications

9. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

10. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. It is not considered that the contents of this report have any such effect.

Impact on Looked After Children

11. The Looked After Children's co-ordinator is a standing member of the Local Admissions Forum. She is in a position to influence and comment upon policy and procedure proposed by the Forum which can affect admission or attendance of Looked After Children in Darlington schools.

Recommendations

12. Members are asked to:
 - (a) receive the report for information and
 - (b) request the Director of Children's Services to forward the Local Admission Forum's Annual report to the Children & Young People's Scrutiny Committee

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Background Papers

No Background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

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