

Boarding provision for vulnerable children – pathfinder

What it means for participating
local authorities

department for
children, schools and families

2 Pathfinder

This guide is a general introduction to the Boarding Pathfinder. For more detailed information please see also:

- *Boarding Provision for vulnerable children – pathfinder: Protocols and Guidance for participating local authorities and boarding schools : DCSF April 2007*
- *Boarding School Placement: a children's views report* (Commission for Social Care Inspection 2006)
Dr Roger Morgan, Children's Rights Director (www.rights4me.org).
- *Boarding Pathfinder: Directory of Boarding Schools in the Boarding Pathfinder: BSA/SBSA 2007*
- *Boarding Pathfinder: A leaflet for young people: DCSF 2007*

DCSF is pleased to acknowledge contributions to this guide from members of the Pathfinder Steering Group, the Association of Directors of Children's Services and the Local Government Association

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Introduction

Message from the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools, Andrew Adonis, and the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children, Young People and Families, Kevin Brennan MP:

Many vulnerable children are taken into local authority care through no fault of their own. Their family may be torn apart or at risk of breakdown because of bereavement, mental illness, substance abuse, domestic violence, neglect or abuse. The family may not have received the support it needed in time to prevent family breakdown.

The lives of vulnerable young people can lack the stability, safety and security they need to realise their potential and their future life chances can be limited unnecessarily.

For example, only 12% of children in care achieve 5 A-C* at GCSE compared with over 60% of their contemporaries. This is not acceptable.

Many boarding schools provide excellent pastoral care and achieve good outcomes for the vulnerable young people in their care.

But the number of vulnerable children who have the opportunity to benefit from a boarding school education is at present very limited. An estimated 300 such places are funded principally by charitable education trusts or through school bursaries, but rarely by local authorities. In fact, a recent survey showed that many local authorities made no use of boarding provision at all. Yet, there is evidence from research into the placements that do exist that such referrals can be hugely successful.

We have launched a new partnership to see how boarding school placements can support families, to prevent family breakdown, or to provide an alternative, more appropriate care placement.

The Boarding Pathfinder, works with 12 local authorities, more than 70 state-maintained and independent boarding schools, the Boarding Schools' Association (BSA), the State Boarding Schools' Association (SBSA), the Frank Buttle Trust, Royal Wanstead Children's Foundation and the Joint Educational Trust. We are looking at how a boarding place could improve the prospects for larger numbers of vulnerable children by providing them with a different, and potentially more stable, environment in which to grow up.

We want to show you what a boarding place can offer.

This guide explains how the pathfinder works and how you and your local authority colleagues can be involved. It is for all who have a role in assessing the needs of and options for vulnerable children and for those for whom it is suitable, to help you to select schools that have the expertise and ability to support the child, and to help them maintain a stable base in their community.

To help you decide what could be right for an individual child the BSA and SBSA have produced *Directory of Boarding Schools in the Boarding Pathfinder: BSA/sbsa November 2007*. This shows the wide range of provision on offer. And detailed information to help you incorporate this option into your existing procedures is available in the *Boarding Provision for vulnerable children – pathfinder: Protocols and Guidance for participating local authorities and boarding schools: DCSF April 2007*.

We also want to draw your attention to a leaflet for use in discussion with young people and their families. *Boarding Pathfinder: A leaflet for young people* answers some of the questions they will have and is based on a report of interviews with young people living away from home in boarding schools, either because they were in care or had a need to board. The report, *Boarding School Placement: a children's views report* (Commission for Social Care Inspection 2006), by the Children's Rights Director, Dr Roger Morgan is available at www.rights4me.org

We want to see children's outcomes improve as a result of having had the right services, at the right time, in the right place.

To help achieve this we want all local authorities to consider boarding as one option for vulnerable children, alongside other packages of care. And we particularly want them to consider this pathfinder programme as a form of early intervention to prevent family breakdown. This is a way of engaging the resources of boarding schools to give educational opportunities (in the broadest sense) to children who are severely disadvantaged by their family circumstances.

Of course, this type of provision will not be right and appropriate for every vulnerable child; it is not primarily an option for hard-to-place young people, for example. And the needs and wishes of the child or young person will always remain our primary concern. But we know that educational stability is one of the strongest drivers of educational attainment which in turn determines lifetime outcomes.

Every child matters and those who are suited to boarding will be real winners.

This boarding pathfinder will add to the opportunities available to vulnerable young people and their families by offering excellent support and improved outcomes to even more vulnerable children.



Andrew Adonis



Kevin Brennan

Section 1: The Boarding Pathfinder – background

What is it?

The Boarding Pathfinder for vulnerable children is a partnership between the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), twelve local authorities, more than 70 independent and state maintained boarding schools and three Education Trusts. It is being developed as an integral part of Every Child Matters, which aims to transform children and young people's services in the context of the Children Acts of 1989 and 2004.

The aim is to create a new approach to improving outcomes for some vulnerable children and their families, by using boarding school provision to help those young people who can achieve more. Local authorities are familiar with the use of specialist boarding provision to support children with special educational needs. This pathfinder is intended to widen consideration of this option for all vulnerable children. In particular we hope to increase the use of boarding schools as one of a range of early or preventative interventions in the context of providing family support under s17 of the Children Act 1989. This type of placement may be particularly helpful as part of a package of support to prevent family breakdown or to support a kinship care arrangement. It can also be used as an alternative provision for children in care (mainly under s20 and s31 of the same Act).

Who is it for?

Principally, the pathfinder is for children on the "edge of care". These young people will be in a situation where living with their birth family is becoming unsustainable, and they have:

- Strong links with their family network, but where full-time, long-term care by the wider family is not possible;
- An identified care arrangement out of term;
- Average to good educational potential, though this is not necessarily a criterion for entry and will vary between schools;
- Good attachments and the ability to make and sustain positive relationships.

In addition, you may identify children who are currently looked after but who may be able to benefit from this experience.

Why boarding schools?

We know that at present there are many vulnerable children, young people and families who, for a variety of reasons, do not get the support they need soon enough. As a consequence, children often end up in situations in which they achieve poor or limited outcomes.

Most parents want their child to be supported in their local communities and local day schools. However, for some children this will not always be the most effective way to ensure that their individual needs are met. And for some children, a move out of their home area could be beneficial. Although it will not be the right option for every child, boarding schools can be one of the ways used to meet the needs of young people in difficult situations to prevent family breakdown or a formal move into the care system.

This is not a new idea. Until the early 1980s boarding education was a placement of choice for vulnerable children and young people with problems in mainstream schools, the majority of children with disabilities, and for those whose family circumstances were seen to be affecting their education and other life chances. Many local authorities ran their own boarding schools.

Changes in care and education philosophy and practice, led by a combination of research findings and changes in law, resulted in an increased use of family placements rather than residential care and the use of mainstream education or day special schools rather than boarding schools.

But this does not have to be an 'either/or'. To meet the needs of an individual child we need to consider a range of options. Today many families whose circumstances are complex and vulnerable, and whose child needs support, use boarding schools to ensure they get it. They do so with the financial and other support of educational trusts and school bursaries and, in a very limited number of cases, from their local authorities. The care, support and education the child is getting are valued by them and their families and the outcomes are good.

Are there any other benefits for the authority?

For many local authorities, the pathfinder does not constitute a wholly new placement option as most rely on boarding school placements for some children with special educational needs and in the past, some authorities have used boarding placements for those in care. However, importantly, the inception of the Pathfinder has re-enthused and re-invigorated some local authorities to consider the benefits of such placements, and to begin to develop more structured processes for considering the appropriateness of this option for some young people. Overall, the professionals interviewed during the interim stage of the evaluation were positive about the ideas underlying the pathfinder:

*I think it's an excellent concept
(LA middle manager)*

The evaluation found that the benefits of having joined the pathfinder from the local authority perspective included: support for an innovative approach to meeting the needs of some children and their families; a placement which would potentially lead to better outcomes for the child, and the possibility of long-term savings for the local authority:

*In the long-term a boarding school placement can be cheaper than many residential placements
(social worker).*

The scheme was seen as an opportunity to facilitate partnership working between the local authority and nearby boarding schools:

*Five years ago no one would have thought we would be talking about placing vulnerable children in boarding schools – so there has been a real movement for the better
(Head of a boarding school involved in local Pathfinder Steering group).*

A number of respondents noted how the process of developing and implementing the Pathfinder locally had actively promoted a process of joint working within the local authority, especially where an active steering group had been established:

*The scheme has really brought staff together – across the local authority, including schools – it has really galvanised this process. The scheme has become a focus for taking forward the integrated work agenda
(LA senior manager).*

*The Pathfinder has offered the opportunity to continue with exploring the potential of boarding school placements – but to intensify our focus
(LA Assistant Director).*

Section 2: The children and young people who benefit

The Pathfinder is designed to provide an alternative approach to family support services for children on the edge of care. This is a way of engaging the resources of boarding schools to give educational opportunities (in the broadest sense) to children who are severely disadvantaged by their family circumstances. NB This will not normally be an appropriate option for young people with complex needs.

Enhancing prospects

12% of looked after children received 5 A*-C at GCSE in 2005, up from 7% in 2000, but the national average is over 60% and rising faster so the gap is widening. The educational outcomes of vulnerable children play a crucial part in determining their future opportunities and prospects. We want to break the pattern of a child's profile and past limiting their progress and prospects.

We are changing the way we think about and deliver education for vulnerable children, recognising that all children have individual learning needs and need stability to thrive. We want to give these young people access to an achievement culture and the cultural and enrichment opportunities that we know can make a real difference to their lives and those of their families.

Indicators that may suggest a child could benefit from a place in a boarding school include:

- The child's family may be dealing with complex situations such as severe mental illness, disability, drug or alcohol problems, domestic violence, illness or severe disabilities, homelessness, acute financial hardship, and instability, and may be on the verge of breakdown;
- The child may be cared for by siblings, grandparents, aunts or uncles, or other extended family members because of the death of their parents, or the inability of their own parents to care well and safely for them. Their carers may themselves be disabled, elderly or ill and unable to provide 52 week care;
- The child may have problems socialising, be withdrawn or isolated and have few friends. They may have minor mental health problems and exhibit self-harming behaviours, anxiety or bereavement disorders. They may also have experienced instability, or a life lacking in structure, and be likely to flourish in a setting with clear routines and structures;
- They may have special educational needs, and be assessed as having a level of need under the Special Educational Needs *Code of Practice* but most are unlikely to have a full formal statement of special educational need.

The child most likely to have the best outcomes from boarding school will have no intractable behaviour problems.

ESSENTIALLY, the child will have a significant adult figure with whom they can spend holidays and who has a good relationship with them, and

CRUCIALLY the child and their family or primary carers will be fully involved in the choice, will have high aspirations and will be committed to the idea. The child will actively want to go to a boarding school.

Because every young person should be considered in relation to his or her own needs and circumstances there is no guidance regarding the child's age. You may want to consider placements around secondary transition, planning ahead for children in Years 5 and 6. Education Trusts also have examples of younger children for whom a boarding placement has been very successful and an earlier placement can help to prevent the development of more complex problems.

The views of young people

A report from the Children's Rights Director, Dr Roger Morgan: *Boarding School Placement: a children's views report* (Commission for Social Care Inspection 2006) (www.rights4me.org) found three main types of reason why the participants had been placed in boarding schools. The interviewees were young people who were in care and also children not in care but placed and funded, either by a local authority or by a charity specialising in this field, because of a 'boarding need' ie to meet a welfare need as well as any educational objectives.

First, a boarding placement may have been chosen to provide stability and avoid frequent placement change or change of schools.

Secondly, boarding might have been selected as a 'halfway house' between staying at home and being placed away from home. Children could stay at school in term time but return to their families during school holidays, for example, where a grandparent was unable to cope with parenting a teenager all the year round.

Thirdly, the boarding school may have offered significant educational advantages which, when added to welfare needs, triggered boarding rather than another type of placement. For some this option offered opportunities or challenges more relevant to their needs than their existing school, or the availability of necessary special tuition or support, and the availability of extended activities and support outside of class time.

Boarding Pathfinder: A leaflet for young people: DCSF 2007 is based on this report. It shares views of their experience, including their involvement in the decision, the positives and negatives of being at a boarding school, expectations and reality, how far boarding helped with personal problems, family contact and school holiday and peer relationships.

The views of professionals working with vulnerable children

The interim evaluation of the pathfinder invited local authority staff and those working with them in the education trusts to reflect on the value of the boarding option:

It is an alternative to care and will lead to better outcomes while also maintaining links with the family, and very importantly – the family has to retain responsibility (LA middle manager)

Respondents identified a number of situations in which boarding school could offer a solution. The most commonly identified case type was when the local authority was aiming to maintain a child in a family situation, either their own or a foster/ adoptive placement:

It is a family support option – helping to maintain an adoptive or foster care placement (LA Assistant Director)

A boarding school placement can offer the possibility of respite, while facilitating the maintenance of familial bonds, and a 'home' the child can return to during the weekends and holidays. This might occur where children are living with parents experiencing mental health difficulties, or with extended or adoptive families who are unable to cope full-time with a child or young person.

One respondent emphasized the importance of children in boarding schools needing a proper home base, even where there are troubled relationships:

The worst thing for children is not knowing where they are going back to in the holidays – they need predictable anchorage. The few cases that have broken down are often because children are terrified about what's happening at home (Trust representative).

A team manager in one local authority emphasised that boarding schools would also be appropriate in situations where a child had to enter the public care system, but was unable to form a new attachment to another family (or it was thought that the family

from which the child was being removed was going to stand in the way of new attachments being formed).

A social worker in another authority felt that boarding school might also be an appropriate placement for a young person who was educationally motivated but their current environment was putting them at risk – for instance they were being drawn into a peer group involved in offending.

One local authority was taking a much longer-term view of how a boarding school placement could most appropriately be used:

I don't see boarding school as a provision for 14/15 year olds, for crisis cases – we need to identify children at Year 6. Children shouldn't be going for 6-12 months, boarding schools shouldn't be used in an emergency/reactive way – it should be a positive placement choice – that's why I see this more an option for those on the edge of care, identified early on during Years 5 and 6 (LA senior manager).

Annex 2 provides a structure for identifying young people who may be able to benefit from the option.

Section 3: The Pathfinder Boarding Schools and Educational Trusts

Which schools are supporting the Project?

Boarding schools, whether independent or state maintained, vary enormously and provide a wide range of educational and social experiences. A significant number have charitable status or links with charitable trusts and are both used to, and required by their charters, to support children in a variety of circumstances. Their fees vary significantly and most offer bursaries. Many already have a significant number of vulnerable children attending them. As well as the academic curriculum they can provide a wide range of extra-curricular experiences (sport, art, theatre, music etc). They also provide a structured, caring and supportive 24-hour environment with a range of pastoral care services available. Entrance criteria vary, with some requiring an exam. They are all registered with DCSF and subject to statutory inspection.

The Boarding Schools' Association and State Boarding Schools' Association, which are supporting the pathfinder, have compiled a directory to help you identify the location of boarding schools, the opportunities that might be available, and their suitability for your vulnerable young people: *Boarding Pathfinder: Directory of Boarding Schools in the Boarding Pathfinder: BSA/SBSA 2007*. The information it contains includes the following:

Pathfinder boarding schools by local authority:

* denotes state maintained boarding schools

Local authority	School with boarding provision
Berkshire	Horris Hill School
Buckinghamshire	Ashfold
Cambridgeshire	Cambridge Centre for Sixth Form Studies
Cumbria	Sedbergh School
Derbyshire	Mount St Mary's College
	St Anselm's School
Devon	Grenville College
	Kelly College
	St Peter's School, Devon
Dorset	Canford School
	Milton Abbey School
	Sherborne School for Girls
East Sussex	Brighton College
Essex	Felstead School
	Friends' School, Saffron Waldon
Gloucestershire	Cheltenham College
	Cheltenham College Junior School
Hampshire	Lord Wandsworth College
Hertfordshire	The Royal Masonic School for Girls
	St George's VA School *
	Beechwood Park
	Bishop's Stortford College

Local authority	School with boarding provision
	St Christopher's School
	St Margaret's School
	Edge Grove Preparatory School
Kent	Ashford School
	Bethany School
	St Edmund's School
	St Lawrence College
	Wellesley House
Lancashire	Lancaster Royal Grammar School *
Leicestershire	Ashby Grammar School*
	Burleigh Community College*
	Loughborough Grammar School
Lincolnshire	De Aston School *
Norfolk	Gresham's School
	Gresham's Preparatory School
	New Eccles Hall School
North Yorkshire	Bramcote School
	Giggleswick School
	Malsis Preparatory School
	The Mount School
	St Peter's School, York
	Terrington Hall School
Nottinghamshire	Worksop College
Oxfordshire	Dragon School

Local authority	School with boarding provision
	St Edward's, Oxford
	Sibford School
Somerset	Brymore School *
	Chiltern Cantelo School
	Monkton Combe School
	Sexey's School *
Suffolk	Culford School
	Framlingham College
	Framlingham College Preparatory School
	Royal Hospital School
Surrey	Aldro School
	Caterham School
	Frensham Heights School
	King Edwards School Witley
	Reed's School
	The Royal Alexandra and Albert School *
West Midlands	Old Swinford Hospital *
	The Royal Wolverhampton School
West Sussex	Brambletye School
	Christ's Hospital
	Cottesmore School
	Slindon College
	Steyning Grammar School
	Windlesham House School

Local authority	School with boarding provision
Wiltshire	Leaden Hall School
Worcestershire	Abberley Hall
	The Downs School

and in Scotland, Fettes College and Fettes College Preparatory School, and in Wales, Llandoverly College.

2 CReSTeD category names and definitions

CReSTeD is the Council for the Registration of Schools Teaching Dyslexic Pupils. The Directory contains information from the CReSTeD website, www.crested.org.uk showing which schools offer specialist provision, which have a dyslexia unit, specialist classes, or schools where dyslexic pupils are withdrawn from appropriately selected lessons for specialist tuition from a teacher qualified in teaching dyslexic pupils.

3 Schools supporting pupils with behavioural difficulties

The Directory will provide details for schools which will be able to help with particular behavioural issues.

4 Schools by age range and whether they are state-maintained or independent

Details of each of the schools, including for some, a visual tour, are available on the school's website, together with inspection reports of their boarding operation. You can use these reports to profile the school against the needs of the child.

Do talk to and visit the school before considering any proposal to place a child so that you can be satisfied how well the educational and other services offered by the school match the needs of your young people. Things you might look for could include:

- The overall ethos of the school and how well it would suit the child you are representing;
- Variations in ethos between boarding houses eg 'sporty'; 'laid back'; 'structured';
- The support available, including, for example, whether the school has a separate counselling service that the child can contact for advice on personal or welfare matters;
- The type of activities on offer and whether they are available to all children. What if the child you are representing is not interested in or good at the normal sporting curriculum for example? Does the child have a particular interest and could it be satisfied or developed by the school?
- The latest CSCI or Ofsted report on the school's boarding provision.

After the first few placements, authority staff should come to know a school, its staff and what it can offer quite well which will save time in considering future placements.

Preparation and working with the school is essential to manage expectations and to help the child and family deal with unfamiliar situations. If an entrance test is required, for example, perhaps you could arrange for the test to be taken at the child's current school.

Education Trusts

The three charitable trusts supporting the Pathfinder – the Frank Buttle Trust, the Royal Wanstead Children's Foundation and the Joint Educational Trust (JET) – are making themselves available to help local authorities in all aspects of identifying, placing, and funding vulnerable children in boarding schools (see also pages 18 and 19).

Buttle, Royal Wanstead and JET invite all Pathfinder local authorities to consult them on:

1. The possible choice of boarding school
2. Specific requirements or issues
3. Financing/ cost arrangements

Further, the Trusts would each be pleased to discuss any aspect of boarding schools for vulnerable children and to share their views, experience and expertise with local authorities.

These three Trusts, which together are currently supporting some 300 vulnerable children at boarding schools throughout the UK, have substantial experience in this area and invite you to contact them whenever any assistance, guidance or practical help is required.

In their experience, the use of boarding schools works best as a preventative measure, helping avert the need for vulnerable children to be taken into care.

Further details are available from:

Frank Buttle Trust:

Contact: Gerri McAndrew

Tel: 020 7798 6229

Email: gerrimca@buttletrust.org

www.buttletrust.org

Royal Wanstead Children's Foundation

Contact: Sue Rigby

Tel: 01932 868622

Email: director@royalwanstead.org.uk

www.royalwanstead.org.uk

Joint Educational Trust:

Contact: Julie Burns:

Tel: 020 7283 3445

Email: admin@jetcharity.org

www.jetcharity.org

Section 4: Case histories

Susan

When Susan's mother, who is a single parent, was taken into hospital with psychological problems, Susan became a looked-after child at the age of 9. The attached social worker believed that her mother might recover enough to live at home but was concerned about Susan's education. After a number of visits and an interview, Susan started as a boarder within a few weeks of the hospitalisation of her mother.

Susan is of above average ability and did well in boarding, being a member of various sports teams and generally, but not consistently, being in top sets. Her adolescence was not easy – she is very strong-minded! – but problems were managed together by her Housemistress and the excellent attached Social Worker.

Susan went home for half terms and the holidays, but each time Social Services did a risk assessment first, as Susan's mother was diagnosed as being paranoid schizophrenic and there was, and still is, a fear that Susan will be harmed by her mother or even killed to "keep her safe".

She did reasonably well in her GCSEs, passing nine and with three at grade A. In addition, and very importantly she became a school prefect in Year 11 and was an excellent role model for other black girls. As she was allowed no social life at home and her friends were, in the main, fellow boarders, Social Services funded a sixteenth birthday party for her in the school – the first time she had ever had a party.

In the Sixth Form she worked with great dedication for two years and finally realised her real potential by achieving four grade As at A level.

For the school the greatest problem was when Susan's excellent Social Worker moved on and we had to do a lot of work to explain to the successor

what was actually happening – and even to persuade her to communicate with the school as, initially she insisted that she only talked to Susan and not to the school.

Susan is now taking a gap year before starting a Law degree.

Bruce

Bruce is in the care of a London Borough and has no living relatives. He had been living in a children's home and was making average progress at school, though staff thought he had greater potential. Following several visits from staff at the children's home and a trial 24 hours in boarding, Bruce started as a full time boarder. There have been problems. He can get very 'wound up' and once locked himself in a lavatory and refused to come out. He has also had a number of tantrums when he has not been coping with the pressure of boarding life.

There has been good and regular liaison between the children's home, which is still his primary placement, and the school and Bruce is making steady progress. His school work indicates that he should certainly achieve more than 5 GCSEs at grade C or above and will be Sixth Form material, but ability tests indicate that he does not have quite the potential that care staff originally thought. He has also progressed as his interpersonal skills have developed and he has begun to take an interest in the wide variety of activities and sports that are available.

Chris

Chris was living with elderly grandparents who were increasingly unable to cope with him. There were several preliminary visits by attached Social Workers from the shire county where he lived.

The initial interview with Chris went well and he started boarding.

It then became apparent that Chris clearly had significant interpersonal skill difficulties, which was initially attributed to the fact that his grandparents live in a rural setting and he was never allowed to bring friends home.

When consulted about this, the attached social worker eventually revealed that Chris was being seen by the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Team. This information had not been previously revealed to the school. In order to try to support Chris in boarding, Social Services eventually agreed to finance support. This support was swiftly put in place, with the equivalent of a Teaching Assistant to support him during some boarding hours.

After a full term of such support, the school reluctantly concluded that the placement was not working. Social Services were very reluctant to accept this judgement, despite only rarely visiting the school and having infrequent telephone contact with the school. Chris left boarding and returned to his grandparents and the local day school.

Debbie

Debbie was the only witness to the murder of her father by her uncle. Her mother had a breakdown and the fellow siblings were taken into care.

With the support of Social Services, Debbie joined us as a boarder soon after the start of her secondary education. She was neither academically able nor particularly sporty or musical, but made reasonable progress in class while keeping herself to herself in the boarding house, where she was a silent and occasionally tearful girl, who rarely talked to adults, and who took a long time to make friends.

She left with six GCSEs and moved on to a College near home. Her mother has made progress in recovering, and Debbie now lives at home and is able to provide her mother with some support while getting on with her own education.

The term after Debbie left, she returned to the school to collect some GCSE coursework and to thank a number of her teachers. "I know I was difficult when I came to school," she said. School staff consider it was well worth putting up with that difficulty to see the confident young lady who now looks adults in the eye and smiles.

Anna

Anna's father left her mother and two other younger children and moved abroad. Severe epileptic attacks meant their mother had, on occasions, to be taken into hospital, and Anna became increasingly a 'child carer', looking after the younger children. Anna came into boarding in Year 8 and spent four very successful years at the school. As well as becoming a school prefect, she gained excellent GCSE results.

The relationship with her mother grew more strained over the last couple of years and at the same time she re-established contact with her father. After GCSEs she went abroad to join her father and has resumed her education there. Her latest e-mail to the school talks enthusiastically about applying to university.

Emma and Frances

Emma and Frances, sisters, came to the attention of Social Services when alerted by their schools. Their mother had died of a brain tumour and father, an alcoholic, was not coping. The children told teachers that they were often 'frightened' at home. A children's home or fostering seemed the only short-term option until distant relatives decided they had to offer to help.

The relatives are a childless early-retired couple who are aware that they do not have the experience required, but are determined to do their best for the children.

Children's Services agreed that Emma and Frances, who were only 7 and 11 at the time, should live with the relatives during the holidays and board during term time, with all boarding costs to be covered by Social Services. The girls joined the school in the middle of the summer term.

After spending the summer holidays with the relatives, both girls returned as boarders. Neither girl wanted to go home for the first two weekends of the autumn term, though they were expected to go to their relatives' home on both occasions.

Both times the relatives came to collect them, had Saturday lunch with the girls in the School Dining Hall and then spent the afternoon watching the girls happily taking part in school activities before going back home.

Two years later both children are thriving both socially and academically and home life with their relatives is becoming more relaxed.

Winston

Winston's mother is a single parent who had been unable to work for several years due to poor health. Winston began to get into trouble during his last years of primary education and it was clear that his mother could not cope. Winston recently left after five successful years at boarding school.

He always found school work a struggle, but achieved five good GCSE passes and was an excellent sportsman, representing the County at both rugby and football. Perhaps due to the success that he felt he enjoyed at the school, he was excellent at showing visitors round, and one set of prospective parents made a point of telling the Headmaster that Winston was 'a credit to the school'.

He has kept in touch with the school and came back to see staff and pupils last term. He has a semi-professional contract with a football club and plays for them and has another part-time job while attending college two days a week.

Section 5: Paying for it

What are the costs?

The cost of a place in a boarding school varies considerably between schools depending, for example, on the age of the pupils, the facilities offered, and whether boarding is weekly or termly. Cost information will be available on schools' websites. Annual fees for state boarding schools (where boarding fees only are payable) range from £6,000 to £12,000 while independent school fees (including tuition costs) can be up to £25,000.

Having established the type of placement that would be most suitable, local authorities will need to compare costs between schools and with the costs of other care and education options. It is particularly important to compare the costs of a boarding place with the costs that would be incurred if it became necessary for the child to be taken into care (where the average cost nationally is £30,000 per year but can become far more expensive if the child develops complex needs. For example a placement in a children's home averages £127,000). Investing in the child to prevent family breakdown or the development of more complex problems can be extremely cost effective.

Boarding school placements can be funded from a number of sources:

- Boarding school bursaries;
- Local authorities from the Schools Budget or the children's services budget;
- Grants from The Frank Buttle and Joint Educational Trusts and the Royal Wanstead Children's Foundation, who have committed to provide financial support in cases which meet their grant making criteria;
- Contributions from smaller charities arranged by the above Trusts;
- Families.

The independent schools in the pathfinder will usually offer bursaries, which can significantly reduce fees. These will depend on the resources they have available but many schools will try to offer bursaries of between 30 -50%.

From April 2008 local authorities who contribute to the funding package will receive Dedicated Schools Grant from DCSF where they meet the full cost of tuition in independent boarding schools (ie fees after bursaries minus the boarding costs) either from the Schools Budget or from the Schools Budget with contributions from children's services.

The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is the core Government funding in support of the Schools Budget. Changes are to be made to DSG guidance from January 2008 (to feed into 2008-09 DSG allocations) to make it clear under which conditions pupils in independent boarding schools will be included in their DSG allocations:

- A child placed in an independent boarding school can be included as long as the local authority (either from the Schools Budget or from the Schools Budget with contributions from the children's services Budget) covers the full cost of the education element i.e. the day fees element (usually the published day fee) less any bursaries awarded by the school specifically in respect of education provision;

- Charitable trusts, school bursaries, parents and / or children's services can currently contribute to the wider residential costs of boarding without it affecting the local authority's DSG.

Funding for pupils in state maintained boarding schools is not affected. Guidance is included as part of the autumn school funding settlement.

Three Education Trusts are supporting the Pathfinder: Royal Wanstead Children's Foundation, the Frank Buttle Trust, and the Joint Educational Trust (JET). They currently collaborate on paying a proportion of the fees for some 300 vulnerable children at boarding schools throughout the UK, and the Buttle Trust and Royal Wanstead have now committed to provide financial support to pathfinder authorities for vulnerable children in cases which meet their grant-making criteria. They will not, however, themselves provide support for young people for whom a local authority has a financial responsibility i.e. children in care. JET will also provide finance to support children aged 11-13 and has a history of providing funds to help children in full local authority care, as long as there is some contribution from the local authority.

All three will assist local authorities in securing school bursaries and, where necessary, whatever additional funding might be available from other smaller trusts.

Example of a funding package

Annual cost of place in an independent senior school: £20,000

Funded by a package of support, for example:

	Education element (usually day fees): £14,000	Boarding costs: £6,000
School bursary eg 40%:	£6,000	£2,000
LA from schools budget or schools budget plus children's services budget:*	£8,000	
Families, trusts, LA (non-education):		£4,000

*** These pupils can be counted for Dedicated Support Grant purposes. The amount of DSG varies by local authority but on average is around £4,000 per pupil.**

Section 6: Local authority procedures

The overriding aim of the pathfinder is that consideration of this option should be integrated with your own authority's procedures. In April 2007 DCSF issued *Boarding Provision for vulnerable children –pathfinder projects: Protocols and Guidance for participating local authorities and boarding schools*, which is designed to help you to ensure that all aspects of a boarding placement have been considered. It includes a toolkit to help you and you can adapt the model procedures for use in your own authority.

Planning ahead, if possible, will help with finding the right place at the right time. While individual boarding schools can help with emergency situations, it will be better for the child to know where they are going well in advance, if possible. Independent schools will show their application timetable and entry requirements on their websites. For entry to state maintained boarding schools admissions arrangements and timescales will vary across the country so do check the closing date for applications. For entry to year 7 this is usually some time in October. Offers of places are then made on 1 March.

The transition to secondary school provides an opportunity to minimise the disruption of going to boarding school as peer groups change with moves to different schools. Considering children in years 5 and 6, with the help of primary school staff, can enable early intervention for children who might otherwise need to be taken into care.

Annex 1 describes essential elements that authorities need to consider when deciding whether to offer boarding provision for vulnerable young people (see also *Boarding Provision for vulnerable children –pathfinder projects: Protocols and Guidance for participating local authorities and boarding schools: Introduction*).

Annex 2 is intended to help you in identifying young people who might benefit (see also *Boarding Provision for vulnerable children –pathfinder projects: Protocols and Guidance for participating local authorities and boarding schools: pages 20-23 and Appendices B-G*)

Annex 3 is a Q&A for some of the questions that you might be asked.

Information sharing, confidentiality and the Data Protection Act

Some local authority staff may have concerns about Data Protection issues. There needs to be a clear and explicit agreement with the family and child, before any discussions with the school, that in order to explore options the school will need to understand all about the child's needs and circumstances. Before the school is approached, the child and their parent or primary carer need to agree with the lead professional the final content of the child's profile, their needs and the Outcomes and Services Plan. The family and child will need to understand that the documentation that has been prepared through the assessment will need to be shared with possible schools and give their consent to this.

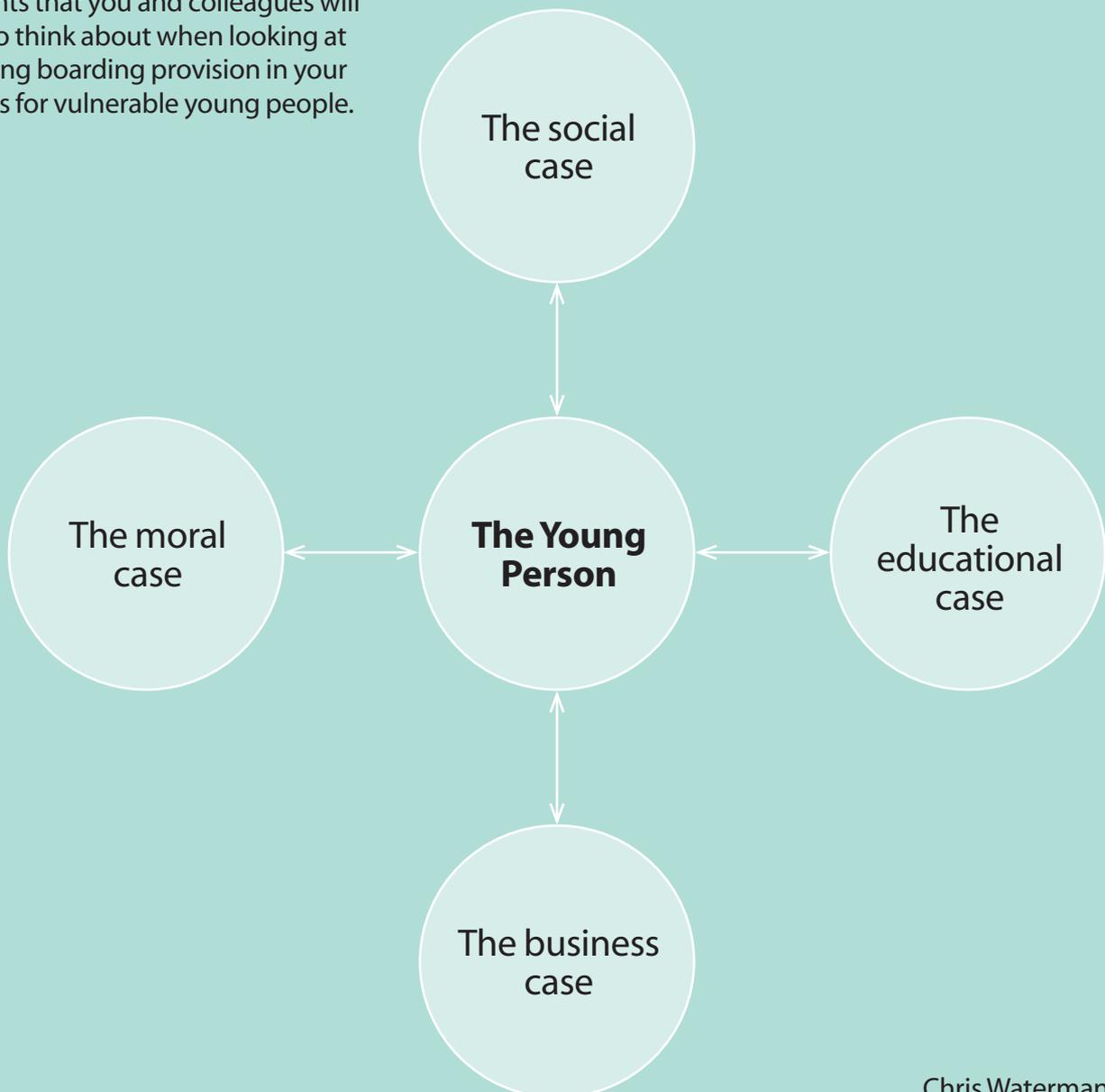
Whilst confidentiality is important, it is equally important that the school has all the information necessary to inform the child, family and lead professional about whether they think they could meet the child's needs. All parties need to be able to share information with confidence. Files should not be handed over where they contain third party information, but the school needs to have any information that might be relevant and important in deciding whether they can help the child. Information sharing is fundamental to Every Child Matters and the matching tool provided in *Boarding Provision for vulnerable children –pathfinder projects: Protocols and Guidance for participating local authorities and boarding schools: DCSF April 2007* was designed on that basis. The school is part of the placement process and of the team around the child in terms of partnership and so are entitled to be given all relevant information.

It is also important that the school is clear that the information shared at the point of considering a match is to be kept confidential to the Headteacher, unless agreement has been given by the child and family to share it with a wider constituency.

Some placements in boarding schools, sadly, but inevitably, do not work. Local authorities should work towards maximising the chances of successful placements by ensuring that the school is in receipt of all information that the Head might consider relevant.

When will boarding be best for vulnerable young people?

This diagram sets out the essential elements that you and colleagues will want to think about when looking at including boarding provision in your options for vulnerable young people.



1. The young person

The over-riding concern in any case of a young person who is unlikely to be able to remain 'at home' (with birth family, extended family, foster family) for fifty two weeks a year is what is going to be best for that young person.

A boarding school placement, termly or weekly, as part of a package of support to the young person and his/her carers, might be the best option for a percentage of children on the edge of care. For more troubled children, or those for whom consistent out-of-term arrangements cannot be sustained, boarding in a 'mainstream' school (state or independent) is unlikely to be the best option.

2. The moral case

We know that at present there are many vulnerable children, young people and families who, for a variety of reasons, do not get the support they need soon enough. As a consequence, children often end up in situations where they achieve poor or limited outcomes. We want to be able to offer different types of placement to meet very different needs. The most important view here is that of the child. Two thirds of looked after children said they would have liked to have been given the option of a boarding place. That's an important message for us. We need at least to consider it with children or young people during and after any assessment of need.

3. The social case

Boarding will not be the right option for every child and most parents want their child to be supported in their local communities and local day schools. However, for some this will not always be the most effective way to ensure that their individual needs are met. And there will be young people for whom a move out of their home area could be beneficial. Boarding schools have great potential as an additional option in meeting the needs of these young people and to prevent family breakdown or a move into the care system.

4. The educational case

12% of looked after children received 5 A*-C at GCSE in 2005, up from 7% in 2000, but the national average is over 60% and rising faster so the gap is widening. The educational outcomes of vulnerable children play a crucial part in determining their future opportunities and prospects. We want to break the pattern of a child's profile and past limiting their progress and prospects.

We are changing the way we think about and deliver education for vulnerable children, recognising that all children have individual learning needs and need stability to thrive. We want to give these young people access to an achievement culture and the cultural and enrichment opportunities that we know can make a real difference to their lives and those of their families.

5. The business case

The pathfinder is aimed at supporting a future reduction in the number of looked after children, which nationally is currently some 61,000 at any one time and up to 85,000 in the course of the year. We believe that there is already enough evidence to show that boarding schools can provide the stability and continuity of education which will reduce the need for a child to be taken into care and offer better outcomes for those for whom this is a suitable option.

For an authority this option could help to reduce costs overall. This will, of course, depend on the circumstances of the individual child, for example, whether foster care would be needed during the holidays. But typically a boarding place will cost up to £20,000 compared with the average cost of placement with foster families or children's homes of £30,000. Part of the pathfinder's aim is to help young people before they develop the complex problems which necessitate more expensive care options (up to £127,000 per year for example for a place in a children's home) and to offer a way to keep families together.

Local authorities will also be able to work with schools and educational charities to identify additional financial support that can be used to meet the needs of individual children.

Identifying young people who could benefit

The following flow chart offers some questions you should ask in thinking about using a boarding placement. It sets out the essential conditions that will need to be met if a placement is to be made. While it is set out sequentially, for ease of reference, the questions can be considered in any order. If the answer, on balance, to any of them is 'no', there is little purpose in pursuing this option. Notes are included to help you consider each question.

Each authority will have its own mechanisms and policies for deciding upon residential placements, and will be able to decide how to deal with each of these questions (and who will deal with them). Using this type of process will assist in arriving at consistent decisions across the authority.

Key points to remember:

- The purpose is to meet individual children's needs and improve their outcomes;
- The centrality of the child and their family or carer in the decision. Help them to be well informed;
- This is a commitment for as long as it is in the child's best interests;
- Make sure you consider holiday provision;
- The role of the social worker in working with the school to identify and provide support is crucial.

Notes on the diagram for the user

While this flow chart is presented in sequential order, some of these processes need to happen simultaneously:

- Identification of children who can benefit;
- Exploring suitable placements;
- Negotiating a funding package.

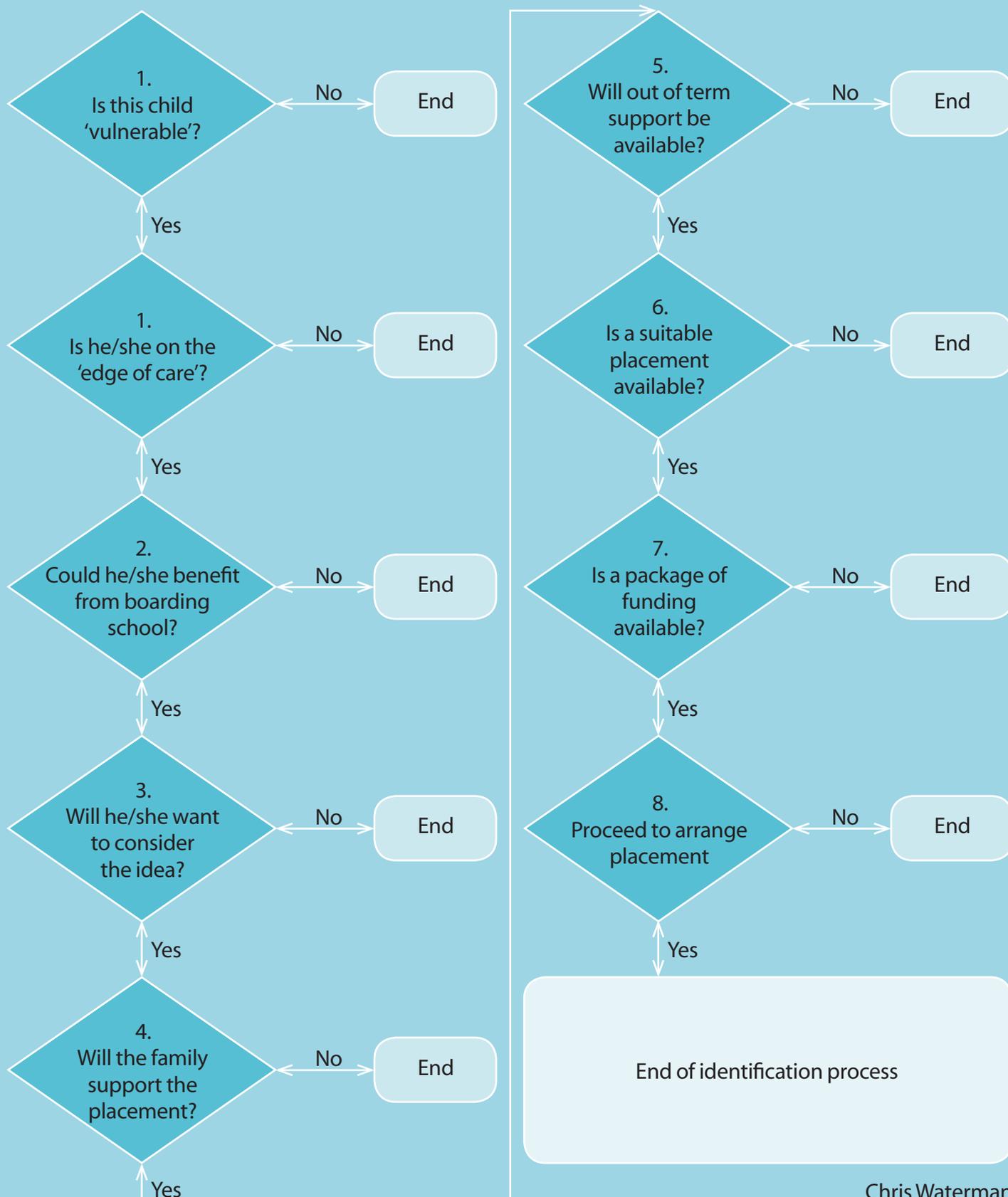
If at any stage of the process it becomes clear that, for whatever reason, the process will not go to completion, the process should be stopped.

It is important to work with the child and family, taking care neither to raise false expectations that could add to the child's vulnerability, nor to miss opportunities to raise aspirations.

1 Is this child vulnerable/on the edge of care?

- These are children and young people who are in need because there is a risk to their wellbeing, either because they may be at risk of harm and/or they do not have the opportunity to achieve the five Every Child Matters outcomes – to stay safe, be healthy, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution to society and achieve economic wellbeing.
- The child's family may be dealing with complex situations such as severe mental illness, disability, drug or alcohol problems, domestic violence, illness or severe disabilities, homelessness, acute financial hardship, and instability, and may be on the verge of breakdown.

Process for identifying potential beneficiaries



- The child may be cared for by siblings, grandparents, aunts or uncles, or other extended family members because of the death of their parents, or the inability of their own parents to care well and safely for them. Their carers may themselves be disabled, elderly or ill and unable to provide full time care.
- You might find it interesting to look at how others in similar circumstances have been placed in the past and the outcomes, and then consider whether a boarding place might have provided better opportunities.

2 Could he or she benefit from boarding school?

- 12% of looked after children received 5 A*-C at GCSE in 2005, up from 7% in 2000, but the national average is over 60% and rising faster so the gap is widening. The educational outcomes of vulnerable children play a crucial part in determining their future opportunities and prospects. We want to break the pattern of a child's profile and past limiting their progress and prospects.
- We are changing the way we think about and deliver education for vulnerable children, recognising that all children have individual learning needs and need stability to thrive. We want to give these young people access to an achievement culture and the cultural and enrichment opportunities that we know can make a real difference to their lives and those of their families. A boarding school can offer these opportunities.
- Indicators might be that they may well have problems socialising, be withdrawn or isolated and have few friends. They may have minor mental health problems and exhibit self-harming behaviours, anxiety or bereavement disorders. They may also have experienced instability, or a life lacking in structure, and be likely to flourish in a setting with clear routines and structures.
- The child most likely to have the best outcomes from boarding school will have no intractable behaviour problems or need for specialist support.

- They may have special educational needs, and be assessed as having a level of need under the Special Educational Needs *Code of Practice* but most of the children being placed are unlikely to have a full formal statement of special educational need.
- Because every young person should be considered in relation to his or her own needs and circumstances there is no guidance regarding the child's age. You may want to consider a placement around secondary transition but Education Trusts also have examples of younger children for whom a boarding placement has been very successful and an earlier placement can help to prevent the development of more complex problems.

3 Will the young person want to consider this idea?

- The child must be properly informed about the opportunity and what it would mean for them. An explanatory leaflet is available as a basis for a discussion and the child will need to visit the proposed school before any decision is made. The child must actively want to go to a boarding school.

4 Will the family or other significant adult want to support a boarding placement?

- The family or primary carers must be fully involved in the choice, have high aspirations and be committed to the idea, having been given the opportunity to understand fully what is on offer.

5 Will out of term support be available?

- The child must have a significant adult figure with whom they can spend holidays and who has a good relationship with them. This may be a family member, a godparent, a foster parent or their children's home.

6 Is a suitable placement available?

- Compare the assessment of the child's needs, including educational needs, with the opportunities described in the Boarding Pathfinder Directory. Staff at the three participating Education Charities will be happy to give you more information to help with matching (see page 19).

7 Can a funding package be made available?

Boarding school placements can be funded from a number of sources:

- Boarding school bursaries;
- Local authorities from the Schools Budget or the children's services budget;
- Grants from The Frank Buttle and Joint Educational Trusts and the Royal Wanstead Children's Foundation, who have committed to provide financial support in cases which meet their grant making criteria;
- Contributions from smaller charities arranged by the above Trusts;
- Families.

See Section 5 for details.

Q and A

For children at risk of being taken into care:

We don't think this is a suitable option for a child

Surely the most important view is that of the child. Two thirds of looked after children said they would have liked to have been given the option of a boarding place. That's an important message for us. We need at least to consider it with children or young people during and after any assessment of need.

This is only for a small number so it's not a priority

It may not be as small a number as you think. And it should be a priority because every child matters and local authorities have a duty under s17 of the 1989 Children's Act to promote the welfare of every child in need and their families.

We don't provide for these children

No, but you should do (see above). At present they fall into the gap between universal and tier 2 provision, and that for children at tier 4 (on the register or looked after children). They are entitled to family support services but in many authorities no one is taking responsibility for helping to meet their needs. We need to plug that gap.

Is this just a replacement for looked after children provision?

No. Boarding provision will not be appropriate for most looked after children, who need a full-time care placement so they can develop a strong bond with the carer. They may also require specialist services to help them overcome their harmful experiences before they came into care. Any decision about a looked after child has to be based on an assessment of their needs. However, some looked after children may benefit, where boarding is deemed to be a more appropriate environment for them. The two types of provision are also not mutually exclusive – if it makes sense for the child, it should be possible to look at combining boarding provision with a consistent out of term foster carer who keeps closely in touch during the term. This might meet some children's needs better and might attract new people into foster care.

Boarding schools can't be trusted to provide a safe and caring environment.

This is not the case. Changes in boarding practice in recent years completely alter the stereotype – they have good pastoral care, are focused on safe practice and many of their care staff have additional care or counselling qualifications. They are also regulated and subject to inspection.

Our children don't want to go to boarding school

That's OK. No one wants to force them. But are they making an informed decision? Have they had the offer explained? Have they visited a school?

Our parents don't want help from Social Services

Why should just social services be involved – they are children in need and so the whole of children's services are responsible, including a range of education staff so parents can accept support without feeling stigmatised.

But could families also be given a bigger say in what should be provided to support them and how any money is used? Have you turned away any whose child could benefit just because they didn't seem to fit the usual criteria?

Boarding isn't right for this child because:

- *He/she lacks a supportive adult.* That might be true. Boarding is more likely to work where the child has a supportive adult champion but it doesn't have to be a full-time carer or family member so it is worth exploring. It could be excellent as shared care support for kinship carers;
- *They haven't experienced good attachments and have trouble making secure relationships.* This could make it harder for them to settle into a boarding environment but it could still be suitable;
- *Their educational potential isn't high enough.* The participating schools vary in the academic potential of their pupils and some schools can help with specific problems so shop around;
- *Their behaviour is too challenging.* They may not be the right 'fit' in a boarding school but why not check it out?

We only provide s17 services and family support to children who meet our threshold criteria and have had an initial and core assessment of need

Then that child could suffer systemic disadvantage. How creative can you be?

We want to do this but we just don't have the money:

- How much would you actually need? Have you checked costs and the funding that could be provided through bursaries and Education Trusts?

- From April 2008 local authorities who contribute to the funding package will receive Dedicated Schools Grant from DCSF where they meet the full cost of tuition in independent boarding schools (ie fees after bursaries minus the boarding costs) either from the Schools Budget or from the Schools Budget with contributions from children's services;
- Could you move funds from Looked after Children to preventative care in the longer term?
- You might be able to extend s17 and move funds from other social care budgets;
- Could family members make a contribution?
- Are there other creative solutions?

And for children already in care:

Children do better with foster families

A boarding placement can help to keep young people with family members who might not otherwise be able to cope all year round. This option can therefore support kinship care packages of support. And fostering and boarding can be complementary, for example, with foster care in the holidays or where a foster carer needs extra support.

Children should not be placed out of the authority

Under normal circumstances, we know that children will be less likely to thrive if they are living well away from their own communities, and – if they are in care – at some distance from the local authority that has parental responsibility for them. That said, in most instances local authorities will be working with boarding schools that are in their local area (if not necessarily within the authority itself), where distance will not be a significant issue.

There may be circumstances where a local authority feels that an out-of-authority placement is clearly in the child's best interests. Some children may have secure and positive family attachments at home but for various reasons cannot live there full-time. In those circumstances they (and their carers) may prefer a boarding school place to foster care nearer home. And for some children a move away from their home area could be beneficial.

Some boarding schools select by ability. Won't they worry that placing vulnerable children in their schools will damage their academic results?

This assumption is based on a misconception that vulnerable children are, by definition, poorly performing academically. An analysis of the children who are currently supported in boarding placements by the main educational trusts shows that they come from a broad range of social backgrounds, have relatively few behavioural or learning problems, were educationally able and had passed the school's normal entrance criteria, and had high aspirations about their performance at the school. Many vulnerable children may well be under-performing while living in difficult family or social environments; however, it is generally the circumstances they are being asked to cope with, rather than any lack of ability on their part, that is the key factor. Boarding schools offer a secure, supportive and nurturing environment that will allow many of these children to flourish academically.

Surely these children will not fit in at boarding school?

This is not the case. Many such placements already take place very successfully. The population of most state and independent boarding schools is very mixed. There is also a lot of experience out there, such as among the charitable education trusts, of matching a child with the right school for their needs – we will be working closely with the education trusts to tap into this expertise.

Won't local authorities just cancel placements once a child's home circumstances change, leading to disappointment and a lot of moving school?

We would not want to see boarding placements become the victim of their own success, where placements were regularly disrupted or ended because they had successfully alleviated the issues that made the child vulnerable and the cases were, therefore, no longer considered a funding priority. In line with general Government policy, we would expect appropriate long-term commitments to stability in a child's placement. All of the local authorities and schools in the pathfinder project have signed up to this general principle. That said it is

right for local authorities to be able to keep all placements they make under review, taking into account the best interests of the individual child.

Is there any additional Government money for this initiative? If not, why not?

Local authorities already receive funding to address the needs of vulnerable children. From April 2008 local authorities who contribute to the funding package for a boarding school placement will receive Dedicated Schools Grant from DCSF where they meet the full cost of tuition in independent boarding schools less any education bursary from the school. And individual placements may also attract funding from a number of other sources: grants from charitable education trusts, a school bursary, a contribution from the family. See Section 5 for details of costs and funding packages.

At the moment, the vast majority of local authority resources for vulnerable children are targeted at those children most in need (i.e. those currently within full-time care). However, one of the objectives of the pathfinder project is to see whether local authorities are able to refocus some of these resources into early intervention and prevention strategies, in order to prevent some of these children moving into the care system in the first place. The Department will fund the research project which will evaluate the success of the pathfinder pilots and is considering what other support might be needed.

Copies of this publication can be obtained from:

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