

## **Proposed changes to the Fair Access procedures.**

Since introducing the revised Fair Access Protocol (FAP) at Easter we have been considering how we might better improve our procedures relating to the Protocol.

Many aspects of the Fair Access Panels are working very well and young people are being placed, in most circumstances, quickly and effectively. We need to ensure that we are able to fairly and accurately record all those young people who are placed in schools that are covered by the Protocol.

- It is proposed that:
  - Education Leeds record, by FAP category, all young people placed through the Panels, and those in criteria 1 and 2 who have been sent directly through to schools.
  - Any transfers that have been sent through to schools, where the young people are subsequently found to fall into a FAP category, be brought to the attention of the next FAP panel to be recorded as such.
  - Education Leeds record any appeals that are successful, where the young person falls into a FAP category, either under the FAP category **OR** under a separate heading of Appeal.
  - Any transfers arriving from outside of the Leeds authority who meet the FAP categories are counted.

One area of the Protocol which has not yet been refined and has the potential to lead to placements that are not necessarily the most appropriate for the parents and young people, is that where a parent lives in one area of the City but expresses preferences for a school in another. At present the Protocol requires a school in the area where the parent lives to make an offer if none of the schools preferred by the parent have made an offer.

- It is proposed that we introduce a moderation process in these circumstances. The chair and project director, or other representative, from the two areas concerned will be asked to meet with the Fair Access Manager to mutually agree the area which should make the offer. This would be based on the knowledge of local schools requiring protection in particular year groups, where children in that area generally attend, as well the specific needs and preferences of the young person in question.

We would particularly welcome feedback to develop this proposal. It is further proposed that should moderation be unsuccessful, or not supported by colleagues in this consultation, that we consider changing the fall back position to the area containing the school that the young person has as their nearest school. That area would then be required to make an offer taking into account the 'fair sharing' arrangements and accessibility.

Finally we have had a number of circumstances where the social worker for a looked after child has expressed a preference, in good faith, based on their

beliefs about a school's ability to integrate the young person successfully. Often these cases progress to appeal.

- It is proposed that where the first preference school for a looked after child, consider that they are not the most appropriate school, a meeting be called with a representative from the current school, the preferred schools, the social worker and the Fair Access manager to discuss the transfer request. This will better facilitate a full understanding by all interested parties in the circumstances surrounding the young person in order to reach a decision that is in the child's best interests.

As ever we are striving to provide the best service possible to quickly and appropriately place young people in schools. We wish to do this in a clear and transparent way. It is our view that the proposed procedural changes will take a further step in that direction.

We would particularly like to receive feedback from you on these proposals with a view to beginning the next academic year with an improved process in place.