

## **Access Routes for Residential Placement at a Surrey Residential Special School**

**February 2006**

### **Introduction**

Moving to a residential school placement is a highly significant step for a child or young person and not to be undertaken lightly. This paper indicates the routes to accessing a residential placement and the conditions that are expected to apply. There are 4 pathways to residence in a Surrey residential special school, three which generally apply and a fourth specifically when a school has unused residential capacity.

The three that generally apply reflect the following circumstances or needs:

- 1. To support the achievement of educational outcomes**
- 2. Where the day placement is appropriate but home circumstances are far from satisfactory, and the child's needs cannot be met in the community.**
- 3. Distance from home to school is such that travel times are unsustainable**

In nos 2 and 3 the residential 'experience' may mean a longer-term process – up to 4 nights per week for 38 weeks. No. 1 should be fixed term by nature, outcome focused and curriculum related. In the event of no 3 being a "grey area" the decision for residence should be made in relation to pathways 1 and 2. Increasingly schools will be able to offer extended day experiences which will potentially meet some needs thought to be "residential". Schools will be at different stages in the development of extended day provision but this option should be taken into account when considering arrangements for particular pupils.

In the event that Surrey's planned place allocation for a Residential Special school is under-used (i.e. there are 'spare' places) then, following the agreed process, a fourth pathway can be negotiated as described at the end of this paper.

## Pathway 1: achievement of educational outcomes

- Educational needs for residence should be determined through the statutory assessment process before a pupil starts in a residential special school. Evidence should demonstrate that (i) the pupil brings a level of challenge to the school or the learning process that requires more consistent management, or (ii) the context of the pupil's life outside of school (e.g. chaotic home circumstances or issues in community) is having a negative impact on learning. This evidence may be part of a statutory assessment but more often as part of an annual review of a statement.

The Educational Psychologist, Social Worker (if involved at this stage) and other professionals contributing to the assessment should build up a picture of the child in context and present a judgement about the negative impact of aspects of this on the child's learning. The judgement should take into account the *current* learning setting's attempts to meet the child's needs and the capacity for the wider social and community context to change to meet the pupil's needs. In addition to this collective evidence the Educational Psychologist should identify the specific educational and developmental outcomes that would reasonably be achieved through a residential placement. Educational outcomes need to be SMART – specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bonded.

- This evidence will be passed to the area ASNM and Senior EP who will make a preliminary judgement as to whether the papers should proceed to the appropriate Panel. They should look at the overall picture and balance the needs of the child against :
  - 1) the needs of others similarly identified in a context of finite resources
  - 2) costs and benefits for the pupil when judged against the capacity of the specific residential setting(s) under consideration to meet the needs that have been identified .

Final decision about residential provision will be made at the Panel.

- When provision is a special school for BESD pupils, and there has not been social work involvement with the family to date, the relevant Partnership Social Worker will undertake an assessment to complement the evidence so far available (see below). On the basis of this and in collaboration with the involved Educational Psychologist (if necessary) and parents/carers the headteacher will identify the precise residential arrangements most appropriate for the pupil's needs.
- This process should take into account the Local Authority's expectation that students will move on to day provision post-16.

## **Pathway 2: unsatisfactory home circumstances**

- In the BESD schools the Partnership Social Workers undertake home assessments of children who are placed at the school through the BESD panels, to assess whether a residential place is necessary and desirable. This assessment fits within the core assessment part of the DoH Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families, but a full core assessment may be inappropriately intrusive for this purpose.

In this pathway – access to residence because of issues relating to perceived risk at home – increasing life chances etc. – cases need to be assessed and agreed with by a social care professional and based on need rather than want. The assessment will be of the level of need and risk; the result of this assessment could be to support access to residence in the school, or some other input, or could come to the conclusion that the threshold has not been met. Through this the BESD schools will have a service which can provide an objective eye on the access to residence and broker the coming to a view about need and appropriateness. This will always take into account the evidence of need presented by other involved professionals.

- In the other schools with residential facilities but no attached partnership social worker a similar assessment will be required to support a residential placement. This will be provided by either the existing social worker involved with the family, a referral to the social care assessment team or (if this is deemed inappropriate) through the support of a social worker from the RSU.
- Until this assessment is complete, longer-term residence arrangements cannot be agreed by the schools
- Emergency access to residence that arise from the intrinsic needs of the child will only be deemed appropriate where the level and nature of the disability is such that acute episodes of volatile behaviour might threaten the viability of a school or home place, and the child's needs and behaviour can be best addressed by a time-bonded intervention based on a 24 hour school support package. Normally such arrangements will apply to children with BESD and at the more severe end of Autistic Spectrum Disorder. In such cases the Head can make an agreement, but any extension beyond a half term must be subject to a social care assessment.

## **Pathway 3: unsustainable journey times**

- Where a school offers a specialist service which is de facto a county-wide provision, pupils should have access to residence when the time involved in travel would be detrimental to their welfare and education. Surrey's policy is to determine places as residential when the daily travel inevitably exceeds one hour in each direction.
- Where there may be a 'grey area' – for example, where sharing a taxi might mean a journey which exceeds the rule, but where the provision of a different

arrangement would make the journey shorter – the decision should be made with reference to pathways 1 and 2, as above.

- The decisions should be made in consultation with relevant Area SEN Manager.

#### **Pathway 4**

In the event that Surrey's planned place allocation for a Residential Special school is under-used (i.e. there are 'spare' places) then, following the agreed process, a fourth pathway can be negotiated:

- A residential experience for up to 2 days per week, for a fixed period of a half-term at a time
- Family consent provided and recorded on an assessment and agreement form, endorsed by the Head and returned to the LEA
- Parent/carer understanding that this residential experience carries no implications for future residential placement and is taking place principally to ensure best use of resources in the school concerned
- A residential experience of this would by definition fall outside the previous criteria for residential placement **and would not require an amendment to the pupil's Statement.**
- Given the expectation that students would attend day provision post transition this would not normally be available to Y6 or Y11 students.

Pupils whose needs are identified under Pathways 1-3 must take priority over pupils who are accessing residence under Pathway 4.