

**DEDICATED SCHOOLS BUDGET – SCHOOL ADMISSIONS TEAM**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. The Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to provide a school place for all children living in Wiltshire it also has a statutory responsibility to co-ordinate main round applications (Reception - Primary, Year 3 - Junior and Year 7 – Secondary) for all residents in Wiltshire. The School Admissions Team is DSG funded.
2. This report provides details of changes that are taking place in the School Admissions Service.

**Main Considerations**

3. The Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to provide a school place for all children living in Wiltshire.
4. It also has a statutory duty to act in accordance with the School Admissions Code and has a statutory duty to formulate and operate schemes to co-ordinate the admissions to all maintained schools and Academies within its area.
5. There is a legal requirement to have schemes in place for the co-ordination of admission to the schools within Wiltshire. The purpose of co-ordinated arrangements is to make the application process simpler for parents by ensuring that each child gets one offer for one school place.
6. The co-ordinated schemes include the provision to co-ordinate all admissions to all schools for the main years of entry. The main years of entry are Reception, Year 3 (Junior) and Year 7. ***In line with the School Admissions Code, there is no longer the statutory requirement for In Year applications to be co-ordinated within county.***
7. However, in the interest of safeguarding, the Local Authority still co-ordinates all applications (including In Year) for all children to Wiltshire schools. This ensures that the School Admissions Team can monitor which children are potentially out of the school system. If a parent is unable to secure a place at their preferred school, the School Admissions Team will ensure that a place is allocated at a reasonable alternative. The School Admissions Team carried out a consultation with all its schools when the requirement to co-ordinated In Year Applications was removed. The results from the consultation were extremely positive with over 95% of Wiltshire schools in favour of us continuing to co-ordinate.

8. The co-ordination of In Year applications is currently a traded service in other Local Authorities. In Wiltshire, this is currently provided to all schools, including own admission authority schools, free of charge.

### **Number of Applications**

9. On an annual basis, the School Admissions Team receives in excess of 16,000 applications. Approximately 10,500 of these are for the main round of entry, the others are for In Year Transfers applications. The team continue to receive an increase of around 500 In Year applications across the county, on an annual basis.
10. The team is a small team and faces many pressures on a daily basis. Our current staffing structure is as follows;
  - 1 - School Admissions Co-ordinator who has day to day management responsibility, Fair Access, Appeals.
  - 1 - Appeals Officer who presents the appeals for all Local Authority schools and any schools which have opted to purchase the appeals traded service.
  - 3 - Allocations Officers who consider and deal with all the applications that are received. This can often be extremely challenging, especially where there is pressure on school places in a certain geographical area. Allocation Officers also write all appeals cases for VC and C schools. They also write them for schools who purchase our appeals traded service.
  - 4 - Admin Assistants (one of whom is an Apprentice), Admin Assistants input applications received daily as well as carrying out many other tasks.
11. The Local Authority is keen to retain the co-ordination of In Year applications in the interest of safeguarding however, without the current staffing structure in place the team would struggle to provide this service. As with many services our budget is currently under pressure and we have a small shortfall in DSG funding to enable us to cover all costs.

### **Army Basing**

12. In 2019 there is initiative to rebase serving armed forces personnel in Germany back to England. The Garrison towns around Salisbury Plain in Wiltshire will be target destinations for a significant proportion of these service families. It is anticipated that an approximately 4,000 Soldiers and their families will be relocating to Wiltshire. This is expected to generate around 1,000 admissions applications and place the team under more pressure. The basing programme will continue into 2020 and 2021. The Local Authority continues to work closely with the Children's Education Advisory Service (CEAS), a tri-service organisation funded by the MOD, to make the transition for children and families in Germany as smooth as possible and remove unnecessary complexity.
13. In September 2018, Baroness Scott as well as other colleagues in the Local Authority visited Germany to provide support and guidance to the families on their re-location to Wiltshire.
14. To support the Army Basing Programme, the Local Authority submitted a bid for additional funding to the MOD and I am pleased to say that this has been successful. This will enable us to maintain our current staffing structure for the

next financial year and employ an additional short term member of staff to support the Army Basing Programme leading up to September 2019.

### **New software - Liquid Logic**

15. In January 2019, the School Admissions Team will also begin a project to switch over to a new IT system. This system will go live in September 2019.

16. Once fully implemented, we hope that it will provide us with a more streamlined way of working and enable us to provide our schools with information in a more efficient way.

### **Funding Arrangements**

17. The current funding for admissions is from central schools services block. The 2018/19 budget report requested an increase for the team funding which was not approved. It is hoped this report will outline some of the duties of the service. A further report will come to Schools Forum should the co-ordination of In Year applications continue to place financial pressures on the service which cannot be managed within the current levels of DSG.

### **Proposals**

18. Schools Forum is asked to note the current pressures that the School Admissions Team face around the DSG funding allocation.

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