Appendix 8 – Rationale and Case

Change to maintenance of Waiting List positions for Nursery, Reception and Year 7 places

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| **1.** | **Introduction and Background** |
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| 1.1 | We are proposing a change to the Local Authority's maintenance of waiting list positions for Nursery, Reception and Year 7 places allocated during the ‘normal admissions round’. |
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| 1.2 | The Local Authority (LA) co-ordinates the admissions arrangements for all schools in Stockport, as the Admissions Authority for all maintained schools, and on behalf of Governing Bodies for Academies, Voluntary Aided, Voluntary Controlled and Free Schools. |
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| 1.3 | The normal admissions round refers to the major admissions process that allocates children into Nursery, Reception and Year 7 each year. ‘In-Year’ admissions which allocate children to all other year groups at any time of year are considered outside the normal admissions round and remain unaffected by this change. |
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| 1.4 | Normal admissions rounds have nationally prescribed closing dates and offer dates every year for applications into Nursery, Reception and Year 7:

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| **Admissions Round** | **Closing Date\*** | **Offer Date** |
| Nursery | 31 March | 17 May |
| Reception | 15 January | 16 April |
| Year 7 | 31 October  | 1 March |

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| 1.5 | Applications received after the closing date are ranked according to each school’s oversubscription criteria. An oversubscription criteria is used when there are more applications than places available at a school. The criteria provides a clear and fair means of prioritising and ranking applications to decide which applicant(s) should be offered a place over another. Waiting lists are also ordered by oversubscription criteria. |
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| 1.6 | The Local Authority currently maintain waiting lists for the full academic year, with places being offered to children at the top of the lists when they become available. |
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| 1.7 | Other neighbouring Local Authorities adopt differing coordinated schemes which limit the length of time children remain on the waiting list for Nursery, Reception and Year 7 places  |
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| 1.8 | The Admissions code states: *‘Each admission authority must maintain a clear, fair, and objective waiting list until at least 31 December of each school year of admission, stating in their arrangements that each added child will require the list to be ranked again in line with the published oversubscription criteria. Priority must not be given to children based on the date their application was received, or their name was added to the list. Looked after children or previously looked after children allocated a place at the school in accordance with a Fair Access Protocol must take precedence over those on a waiting list’* |
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| 1.9 | Stockport wants to make its admissions arrangements as easy to understand as possible. By aligning its coordinated admissions arrangements to that of other neighbouring local authorities and the expectations of the Admissions Code of Practice, applicants can have the same experience regardless of where they live and what schools thye apply for. Impacts are discussed in **Section 3** however it is anticipated that by making this change, the likelihood is that waiting list places beyond 31 December will be allocated to children living local to a school. |
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| **2** | **Proposal** |
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| 2.1 | The LA is proposing to make an amendment to the co-ordinated admission scheme within the normal admission round regarding the length of time waiting lists are maintained. |
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|  | The LA is proposing two options: |
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| Option 1 | Applications for the normal admissions round remain on the waiting list for the full academic year.  |
| Option 2 | Applications for the normal admissions round remain on the waiting list until 31st December of the year of admission. The waiting lists will then be cleared, and a new in year admissions process will take over using the normal oversubscription criteria for each School. |

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| 2.42.5 | The rationale for Option 2 is to ensure we are aligned fully to other neighbouring local authorities, and the expectations of the Admissions Code of Practice. Option 2 also allows us to support better transitions if the formal process in-year transfers is followed. By following an in-year transfer process from 1 January, information can be shared up front about a child’s start in Nursery/Reception/Year 7 and allow appropriate supports to be available at the new school, if allocated. |
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| 2.6 | Should option 2 be implemented, information and guidance to parents and schools will change; The admission offer letters will provide information to parents about this change in waiting list maintenance. A banner will be added to the School Admissions website throughout December to remind parents that waiting lists will be cleared on December 31st, and a new application will be required to be added to the waiting list in January. |
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| 2.7 | Advice and guidance for normal in-year application processes to be followed will be available on the school admissions website and policy documents will be updated to reflect the change.  |
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| **3** | **Impacts** |
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| 3.1 | Approximately 900-1,000 children will be removed from waiting lists, based on current figures for the 2022-23 academic year.  |
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| 3.2 | Children who wish to remain on waiting list for their preferred school will be able to do so by following the current in-year admissions process. This will allocate them a waiting list position based on current criteria if the school is full to their published admission number. The current in-year process is bypassed for applicants who applied for a school place up-to a year prior.  |
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| 3.3 | School places offered from waiting lists to applicants currently must allow a reasonable amount of time for applicants to respond. This leads to unnecessary delays where applicant has since started at their allocated school and no longer requires the place. This leaves a space available for a significant amount of time where there may be an applicant who wants/ may require it.  |
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| 3.4 | The impacts of proposals are summarised as follows:

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|  | Positive Impacts  | Negative Impacts |
| Option 1 | * All children who applied for a School will remain on their waiting list for the full academic year
 | * Does not follow published in-year admissions process and does not support good transitions between schools.
* Children moving into borough who are allocated place at ‘nearest available school with room’ may be lower on waiting list than children with current place at one of their preference schools.
* Does not always allow local children to attend local schools.
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| Option 2 | * Children moving into the Borough will not be disadvantaged by pupils on the waiting list that applied over a year ago
* Greater alignment with neighbouring LAs
* School in-year admissions process will be followed
* This requires completion of an in-year transfer form by parents and current school, this allows schools to share information for a better transition for the child and parents to discuss concerns with their current school and facilitate a positive dialogue between parents and school where necessary
* Remove delays in offering waiting list places to children who need them, rather than going to top of waiting list who often no longer requires place
 | * Children removed from waiting list who may wish to stay on it for full academic year
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