Appendix 4 – Rationale and Case

How applications received after the closing date are considered as part of the co-ordinated admission arrangements

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| **1.** | **Introduction and Background** |
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| 1.1 | We are proposing a change to the Local Authority's co-ordinated admission scheme on how applications received after the closing date are considered for Nursery, Primary, and Secondary school applications within 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. |
| 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 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. |
| 1.6 | Common to all Stockport schools is that applications received after the closing date receive the lowest ranking and therefore the lowest priority. An applicant who submits their application after the closing date will expect to be at the bottom of any ranked list, this significantly affects their chances of securing a place at a preferred school and will significantly affect their waiting list position, further impacting their ability to secure a place at that preferred school. Schools’ oversubscription criteria can be found in the Stockport Council’s School Admissions Policy and Procedures (<https://www.stockport.gov.uk/admissions-explained/school-admission-information>)  |
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| 1.7 | In accordance with the current co-ordinated admission scheme, these applications are considered as being ‘received after the closing date’ for the entire academic year. Applicants unable to secure a place at a preferred school are placed on the waiting list also for the entire academic year ranked according to the oversubscription criteria, meaning those that applied after the closing date are ranked lowest.  |
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| 1.8 | The LA currently can use its discretion to treat applications as being ‘received on time’ in exceptional cases (where opportunity, capacity or capability of the applicant has been proven to be compromised) and for those who’ve circumstances have changed considerably (e.g. unplanned house move caused by uncontrollable factors).  |
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| 1.9 | Other neighbouring Local Authorities adopt differing coordinated schemes which limit the impact of submitting an application late or after the closing date.  |
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| 1.10 | Stockport’s co-ordinated scheme for processing applications received after the closing date has been challenged by the Office for Schools Adjudicator (OSA) multiple times, most recently in early 2021. The OSA have found the scheme complies with the mandatory requirements of the School Admissions Code of Practice, and found it to be fair and reasonable.  |
| 1.11 | Despite successfully defending challenges, officers are now reflecting on whether this scheme works for Stockport residents, particularly local residents wanting places at local schools. The impacts of the current and proposed scheme are considered in **Section 3**. |
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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 how applications are processed.  |
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|  | The LA is proposing two options alongside keeping current arrangements unchanged: |
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| Option 1 | Applications ‘received after the closing date’ are considered as such until national offer day, at which point, all applications received after the closing date will be considered as being ‘on-time’ applications  |
| Option 2 | Applications ‘received after the closing date’ are considered as such until 14 days after offer day, at which point, all applications received after the closing date will be considered as being ‘on-time’ applications |
| Option 3 | To maintain the current scheme where applications ‘received after the closing date’ are considered as such for the entire academic year |

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| 2.3 | Option 1 and 2 allow applicants who applied ‘on-time’ to still be given greater priority during the initial allocation process above those who did not apply ‘on-time’.  |
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| 2.4 | The rationale for Option 2 and a pause of 14 days is to allow for a small amount of movement to occur shortly after national offer day distinguishing between those who applied ‘on-time’ and those who did not. |
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| **3** | **Impacts** |
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| 3.1 | The current admission arrangements for applications received after the closing date is persistently queried and generates a lot of complaints amongst parents and school. Comments from stakeholders regarding late applicants being too harshly penalised has lead the LA to consider whether the arrangements are morally fair, and clear.  |
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| 3.2 | The impacts of proposals are summarised as follows:

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|  | Positive Impacts  | Negative Impacts |
| Option 1 | * Children living closer to the school who previously failed to apply ‘on-time’ will have a greater chance at securing a place at a local school
* Number of children travelling significant distances to schools will be reduced
* Fewer appeals lodged
* Greater alignment with neighbouring LAs
 | * Perceived to be fairer to those who applied ‘on-time’
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| Option 2 | * Children living closer to the school who previously failed to apply ‘on-time’ will have a greater chance at securing a place at a local school
* It lessens the perception of unfairness from applicants who applied ‘on-time’
* Number of children travelling significant distances to schools will be reduced
* Fewer appeals lodged
* Greater alignment with neighbouring LAs
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| Option 3 | * Perceived to be fairer to those who applied ‘on-time’
 | * Currently disproportionately impacts families experiencing acute stress
* Ultimately impacts the child, particularly if the parent/carer fails to prioritise the admission process
* Waiting lists for popular, oversubscribed schools tend to feature applicants living further away at the top versus those who live close at the bottom
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