

16 July 2012

Agenda Item: **14****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, EDUCATION STANDARDS AND  
INCLUSION****ESTABLISHMENT OF A PERMANENT ADMISSIONS ADVICE AND  
INFORMATION OFFICER POST WITHIN THE SUPPORT TO SCHOOLS  
SERVICE****Purpose of the Report**

1. This report seeks approval to establish a permanent 1.0 fte post of Admissions Advice and Information Officer, located within the Support to Schools Service, based at County Hall.

**Information and Advice**

2. Prior to the publication of the new Admissions Code of Practice in 2011, Local Authorities were under a statutory obligation to provide advice to parents in reaching choices about admissions to schools. There was also a requirement that such advice should be provided independently of the Local Authority. These duties were therefore absorbed within the Parent Partnership Service (PPS), which is a service which operates at arm's length from the Local Authority.
3. The publication of the new Code of Practice in 2011 has removed the statutory duty to provide a specific choice advice service. The new code indicates that Local Authorities must provide advice and assistance to parents when they are applying for school places, but does not dictate the manner in which this is provided.
4. The roles of the advice and information officers within PPS were originally intended to focus primarily upon the provision of advice and support for parents and families of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The provision of advice about admissions to schools is a universal service, which does not require the expertise in SEND which is the focus of the work within PPS.
5. Following a recent restructuring of the PPS, the number of advice and information officers has reduced and this has impacted upon the capacity within the team to deliver services which are in addition to their core offer, including choice advice.
6. The advice and information officer within the PPS who currently undertakes the role of choice adviser has experienced an increase in the numbers of parents requesting support with school placements. A significant proportion of these cases have involved

specific issues relating to difficulties in securing a school place within the increasing numbers of Academies.

7. The provision of advice for parents relating to the admissions process and the provision of support during school admission appeals has been particularly valued by parents across the County. It has served to increase parental satisfaction, not only providing benefits for the parents and children, but also for schools and the Local Authority.
8. Due to the current pressures within the PPS, it is proposed to retain 4 advice and information officers, who would focus on the provision of advice and support to parents and carers of children with SEND, but would no longer deliver choice advice. It is also proposed that this function is delivered through the establishment of a new post of Admissions Advice and Information Officer, which would be located within the Admissions Team in the Support to Schools Group. This post would be responsible for a range of duties in relation to the provision of information about choice advice to parents, carers and schools and the provision of support for admissions officers in order to promote fair access to schools, particularly for vulnerable pupils.

### **Other Options Considered**

9. The County Council could provide all support and advice regarding admissions to schools in the form of published documentation. However, this could generate an increase in the numbers of admissions appeals and complaints made by parents and would remove the support available to vulnerable groups.

### **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

10. It is recommended that a post of Admissions Advice and Information Officer be established within the Support to Schools Service in response to the identified increasing need for support by parents when navigating the admissions to schools process.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

11. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

### **Financial Implications**

12. The costs for the proposed 1.0 fte post (indicative Grade 4) at salary maximum, including on costs, would be £25,409 per annum. The costs of the post would be met from the Education Standards and Inclusion Division's budget.

### **Human Resources Implications**

13. The proposed post of Admissions Advice and Information Officer would be located within the Support to Schools Service. The indicative grade for this post would be Grade 4. Recruitment to the new post will be in accordance with County Council staffing regulations.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1) That approval is given to the establishment of a 1.0 fte permanent post of Admissions Advice and Information Officer (indicative Grade 4) located within the Support to Schools Service, within the Education Standards and Inclusion Division.

**John Slater**  
**Service Director, Education Standards and Inclusion**

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### **Constitutional Comments (LM 26/06/12)**

14. The Children and Young People's Committee has delegated authority within the Constitution to approve the recommendations in the report subject to the Employment Procedure Rules.

### **Financial Comments (NDR 25/06/12)**

15. The financial implications are set out in paragraph 12 of the report.

### **Background Papers**

None.

### **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

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