



**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**20<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2018**

**PARTNERSHIP WITH UNITED WORLD COLLEGES (UWC) ATLANTIC COLLEGE**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDERS, CLLR J ROSSER AND CLLR C LEYSHON.**

**AUTHOR:** Esther Thomas, Tel: 01443 744001

**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To provide members with information about the opportunities a partnership with United World Colleges (UWC) Atlantic College could offer learners at post 16 in Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- 1.2 To give members more detail about the College's ethos, philosophy and outcomes.
- 1.3 To explore whether the College's ambition to reach wider within Wales through their Outreach Programme could benefit young people in RCT schools.
- 1.4 To consider the efficacy of funding places for a small number of pupils who are looked after as an alternative to care.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Agree that Officers work in partnership with UWC Atlantic College to forge links with schools in RCT to promote the opportunities on offer.
- 2.2 Agree that Officers from Education and Children's Services work with the college to identify suitable candidates.

- 2.3 Agree that a further report to inform on progress is presented to Cabinet after a 12 month period.

### **3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 In a drive to broaden the College's impact and to apply its unique educational philosophy and ethos more widely, over the next few years, the College intends to focus its efforts on strengthening its outreach programme to support students from disadvantaged backgrounds from within the UK and specifically Wales. Senior staff from the College have approached the Director to explore the potential for partnership working with schools and learners in RCT.
- 3.2 As a College that is based in Wales, the vision is to increase support for students in the local area establishing an Associated Schools Programme linking the College to schools in RCT.
- 3.3 In addition to a scholarship(s) being offered to a student(s) from RCT, the College is interested in establishing a wider programme of engagement with other schools for joint student programmes.

### **4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 UWC Atlantic College established in 1962 is the founding member of the United World Colleges (UWC) movement, a group of 17 independent international schools and colleges spanning Europe, North and Central America, Asia, and Africa. It is a residential sixth form college for young people aged 16-19, situated at St Donat's Castle, Vale of Glamorgan. It is important to note that unlike other independent schools, students are selected to the College irrespective of their nationality, religious or ethnic background and socio-economic means, leading to a truly diverse student body. The College believes all people are of equal worth regardless of wealth, status, gender, sexual orientation, physical ability, race or faith. The aim is to build a community that embraces individuality and responsibility and celebrates difference.
- 4.2 The College's outreach programme aims to break down intangible boundaries that continue to exist in the UK educational sector, by bringing the College's unique learning to a greater number of disadvantaged young people, unlocking potential, creating higher education aspiration and raising academic achievements.
- 4.3 Students at the College study the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme - a full-time two-year course that falls into two parts: the academic curriculum and a parallel co-curricular programme

of experiential learning that focuses on key aspects of peace, social justice and a sustainable future. Students serve in the community, organise conferences and help in the delivery of faculty programmes. Physical activity, youth leadership, initiative and authentic responsibility; team work, instilling community values and positive youth activism are key aspects of the curriculum. The College is also in the process of developing new career pathways that are more vocational in nature.

- 4.4 UWC Atlantic College is also very proud of the outstanding levels of pastoral care that it collectively, as a community, provides to all students. In this respect, there is extensive support to young people who have experienced disrupted lives. These, and other students can access support from house parents, welfare professionals, linked parents (based in the local community) and the career advice and guidance team.

## **5. RATIONALE FOR DEVELOPING A PARTNERSHIP WITH ATLANTIC COLLEGE**

- 5.1 Nationally, the education and social outcomes for children in care are significantly lower than for non-looked after children. As the number of looked after children continues to increase year upon year, local authorities are under increasing pressure to find effective ways to support children in need so they can achieve improved outcomes across social care and education.
- 5.2 The latest Welsh Government statistics show there is still a wide gap between the educational attainments of children who are looked after and that of other pupils. Clearly boarding is not the right option for every looked after child, but for some it could provide the necessary stability and security, a place of 'belonging', a strong ethos of personal and social development to enable a child to gain access to many enriching extracurricular activities, as well as provide significant opportunities for educational success. There is already a wealth of evidence that supports this analysis. One example from Norfolk County Council is attached at Appendix 1.
- 5.3 In terms of selection it is suggested that the College in partnership with RCT schools and officers from the Council follow a 12 month selection/induction process timeline from identifying the learner(s) to entry at the school. This would include a group of potential pupils visiting the school, shown around campus, being provided with literature about the school, being interviewed by the head teacher or another senior member of staff and meeting some of the students. These visits would provide the pupil with a realistic understanding of

what it would be like to board at the school. Family members (as well as local authority professionals) would also be invited and encouraged to visit the school and spend time there, in order to demystify the often stereotypical image of a how boarding schools are run. It has to be clearly understood that the ethos of UWC Atlantic College is very different to that in a typical independent school.

- 5.4 Central to the success of the student placement would be the careful and suitable matching of the learner(s) to the College. In addition to the College's extensive experience of recruiting young people from all kinds of backgrounds, which is as varied as Syrian refugees, children from war-torn countries and deprived areas from the UK. The College can also draw from the expertise of organisations that specifically work in this area such as The Boarding Schools Partnership endorsed by Kirsty Williams, Education Minister Wales and the Royal National Children's SpringBoard Foundation (Appendix 2)..
- 5.5 Candidates would ideally be aged 16 or 17 on the 1st of September of the year they would start at the College. They would apply to the college while in (or about to enter) their last year of GCSEs or first year of AS-Levels (or equivalent). Whilst strong academic achievement is highly valued by the College, it selects students based on its ethos and the knowledge and skills that shape its students as sound individuals. Important attributes include the ability to mix with others and to be tolerant of fundamentally different opinions and attitudes. The student (s) would need to have the ability to keep up with the challenges of the International Baccalaureate or the individual subject Certificates (which are less academically demanding).

## **6 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 An Equality Impact screening form has been prepared in relation to this proposal and concludes that a partnership with UWC Atlantic College will have a positive impact and therefore a full Equality Impact Assessment is not necessary. The screening form can be accessed by contacting the Author of the report or the Cabinet Business Officer.

## **7 CONSULTATION**

- 7.1 A consultation exercise is not necessary for this proposal

## **8 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

- 8.1 Funding for placements is available from existing resources, but in addition, UWC Atlantic College is in contact with a number of trusts and

foundations such as the Royal National Children's SpringBoard Foundation, Buttle UK and the Reedham Children's Trust, who might potentially be interested in co-sponsoring the student in partnership with the Council.

**9 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**  
**CORPORATE PRIORITIES/SIP**

- 9.1 Reducing the number of children and young people becoming looked after remains a key priority of RCT Council – Children's Services Delivery Plan 2018-19 and the Council's Corporate Plan

**10 CONCLUSION**

- 10.1 Members are asked to consider the information provided and decide whether officers from Education and Children's Service should jointly further explore opportunities in partnership with UWC Atlantic College to improve the life chances of learners in RCT.

**Other Information:-**

**Relevant Scrutiny Committee:** Children & Young People

**Appendices Papers**

Appendix 1: Boarding School Placement for Vulnerable Children & Young People

Appendix 2: Extract from the Boarding School Partnership Website

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**01443 744001**

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

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**Item: PARTNERSHIP WITH UNITED WORLD COLLEGES (UWC)  
ATLANTIC COLLEGE**

**Background Papers**

None.

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# Boarding

# School

A STUDY OF THE SOCIAL

# Placements

EDUCATIONAL AND FINANCIAL OUTCOMES

# For Vulnerable

OF BOARDING PLACEMENTS

# Children and

BY NORFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL

# Young People

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Department  
for Education



Norfolk County Council

The Department for Education and Boarding School Partnerships acknowledge the dedication and commitment of Norfolk County Council managers and staff in undertaking this research. This study was produced by: Judi Garrett, Norfolk Boarding School Partnerships Coordinator who is Service Development Manager - Alternatives to Care - at Norfolk County Council; Dr Sarah Hatfield, Educational Psychologist; Brian Feltham-Daniels, Data Analyst; and Lauren Boesley, R&D Assistant.

The research was co-ordinated by Boarding School Partnerships, and supervised and validated by Dr Claire Maxwell and Dr JD Carpentieri, of the UCL Institute of Education.

[www.boardingschoolpartnerships.org.uk](http://www.boardingschoolpartnerships.org.uk)

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# Introduction



## **Lord Agnew** **Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Schools System**

It gives me great pleasure to introduce this research into the outcomes of vulnerable young people funded at state and independent boarding schools by Norfolk County Council over the past 10 years.

This is the most substantial piece of boarding school research conducted by a local authority in recent years. It, therefore, provides a valuable complement to existing research into outcomes of young people in and on the edge of local authority care.

It reinforces the Department for Education's recent launch of Boarding School Partnerships as a network of schools, charities and government to help local authorities access all the expertise they need in order to evaluate boarding

opportunities. The success of Norfolk Boarding School Partnerships confirms the extent to which boarding schools really can help to transform the life and prospects of vulnerable young people. It shows that, in some circumstances, boarding placements can help reduce vulnerable young people's level of risk.

It is clear that – for the right person at the right school at the right time – boarding school can be transformative. The individual attention, pastoral care and sense of community at so many of the country's boarding schools can be invaluable for these young people. Nobody believes boarding school would be appropriate for all young people, but this research shows how effective it can be.

The individual attention and pastoral care can be invaluable

I commend this report to professionals in children and young people's services everywhere. I believe there is much to learn from it. This research will help us develop our policies and strategies for young people on the edge of and in care.

I congratulate Norfolk County Council and Boarding School Partnerships for their excellent work in producing such a valuable source of reference.

# How boarding schools really can help to change lives



**Dr Wendy Thomson**  
CBE, Managing Director of Norfolk County Council

It is 10 years since Norfolk County Council embarked on what we now call Norfolk Boarding School Partnerships. Like all new initiatives, it started quietly. But, over that time, we have been able to help 52 vulnerable young people to improve their life chances in collaboration with some excellent state and independent boarding schools.

As you can see from the outcomes in this report, no fewer than 33 of these young people were able to come off the risk register completely through their placement at boarding schools. That is the statistic which gives me the most pleasure because it proves what can be achieved from what was once a mere experiment by Norfolk County Council.

This report gives all of us in local government many reasons to be encouraged by the whole concept of Boarding School Partnerships. In

addition to the social success of this programme, there has been the measureable improvement also in academic achievement and in the costs of support. Anyone who needed proof that a reasonable number of vulnerable young people in and on the edge of care can benefit from a well-chosen and well-managed boarding school relationship will find this report rewarding and instructive.

But this is just the start. Norfolk County Council is proud to be among the leaders among local authorities in collaborating with boarding schools to improve (often quite dramatically) the lives of young people in and on the edge of care. This report reflects great credit on our professionals who have worked so hard to help these young people achieve their success over the past ten years.

Our motivation in joining with the Department for Education's Boarding School Partnerships to undertake this research has been to share the lessons with our colleagues in local authorities everywhere. But we are learning too. A programme which has never had any staff of its own might now require some new approaches as we digest the learnings and endeavour to help even more young people to benefit from Norfolk Boarding School Partnerships. It's an experiment no more.

# Changing the question from Why? to How?



**Colin Morrison**  
OBE, Chair, Boarding School Partnerships

Boarding School Partnerships is a Department for Education network of specialist charities and boarding schools to help local authority professionals evaluate boarding placements.

We recognise that relatively few professionals in local authorities have had the knowledge and expertise readily available on the occasions when they may need to consider boarding placements. That is why so many are now using the online resources of Boarding School Partnerships.

During our first nine months, we have been in regular contact with a growing number of local authorities, have helped to facilitate placements with charities, and have arranged visits to boarding schools. These are the signs of growing confidence in boarding school as an option for many more vulnerable young people. Even those of us who have been successfully involved in charity-funded 'assisted boarding'

for decades recognise that boarding school is not an appropriate option for everyone. We also recognise the funding challenges of long-term boarding school fees for local authorities.

That is why this research by Norfolk Boarding School Partnerships is such valuable learning. It shows the extent to which boarding placements can prevent the need for many young people to become Looked After, and for some LAC to come out of care altogether after a few years in boarding school. It proves how social and educational outcomes can be enhanced by boarding school placements. Additionally, while actual longer-term cost savings can be difficult to calculate with certainty, it is clear that many of the Norfolk placements have been truly cost-effective. Maximum boarding fees correspond to 50-60% of LAC costs so success in reducing the numbers of actual or prospective LACs through boarding placements can

effectively produce cost-savings relatively quickly.

Local authorities now have the opportunity to use the research alongside the Boarding School Partnerships web site as an objective guide to the challenges and opportunities of boarding placements. This report provides clear evidence that boarding school can be an increasingly effective option for vulnerable young people in and on the edge of local authority care.

I am confident, therefore, that it will help many more local authorities to consider boarding placements. We should all be grateful to the committed and enthusiastic teams at Norfolk County Council for producing this excellent research for the future benefit of so many vulnerable young people. LAs everywhere now have every reason to focus on 'How boarding placements should be evaluated' after decades of wondering 'Why?'



# Foreword:

## "A thorough analysis"

**Dr Claire Maxwell**

**Reader, Sociology of Education, UCL Institute of Education**

The Institute of Education of the University of London, published an evaluation in 2008 of a pilot national DfES Pathfinder Scheme: Boarding school Provision for Vulnerable Children which aimed to explore whether such a placement might be a viable alternative to more traditional forms of local authority care.

There had been considerable interest in the scheme from boarding schools - 50 of whom signed up - and education charities, many of whom had already been offering financial support to families to take up or maintain a boarding school place. By the time the scheme was evaluated, 76 children or young people had been considered for a boarding school placement across the 10 participating local authorities, but only 17 were eventually placed. The evaluation then emphasised that the sometimes-negative perceptions of what 'boarding school' represented had an effect on the take-up of this option and that relationships between the various stakeholders (social workers, boarding schools, local authority commissioners and families) was critical in facilitating

and maintaining successful placements.

For the past 10 years, most boarding placements have been made by the specialist boarding school charities and by individual school foundations. Norfolk County Council, almost alone among local authorities, made a commitment to invest resources into exploring the extent to which boarding school might be beneficial for vulnerable young people in and on the edge of care. It initially did this in collaboration with the Royal National Children's Foundation.

In 2017, the Department for Education launched Boarding Schools Partnerships service to help local authorities collaborate with charities in order to place vulnerable children in state and independent boarding schools. This was a collaboration between boarding schools, charities, central and local government.

One of the first initiatives of the BSP has been to analyse and measure the effectiveness of what is now known as Norfolk Boarding School Partnerships. This report seeks to offer interested stakeholders

(specifically, other local authorities) an outline of how the scheme has been developed by Norfolk, and the social and educational outcomes for those children and young people who have participated in it, and the financial implications for Norfolk County Council itself.

The results of Norfolk's boarding placements highlight that: a) the risky - emotionally and physically stressful - situations individual children and young people find themselves in can be ameliorated; b) educational outcomes can be improved; and c) placement in boarding schools can be more cost-effective than other forms of provision. The analysis of the 52 young people in this study highlights that stable, long-term boarding placements increase the likelihood of improved outcomes. The reduced risk profile of many young people tends to support the view of charities in this sector, that successful boarding placements can help to strengthen families experiencing significant difficulties.

I have researched boarding schools and young people's experiences of them since 2003. The immersion that the boarding school space

offers to its students facilitates a comprehensive focus on education, extra-curricular activities, but also the support and care of the whole child. However, critical to the success of all children's experiences of boarding schools is a focus on how to integrate different students into the broader peer group, so no one feels excluded because of their background. Additionally, it is vital that relationships with family/home are carefully attended to. Anxiety or feelings of alienation about what might be happening at 'home' or how and where the holiday period will be spent can mar a child's engagement with the opportunities being offered through the boarding school.

The boarding school sector is relatively small in the England, and has been associated with certain groups traditionally using this form of provision, such as those from the middle or upper social classes. While in some cases, such descriptions may be a more or less an accurate representation, there is now significant variety across the sector, in terms of size and ethos of the school and make-up of the student body. I have met young

people from a wide range of backgrounds attending boarding school, and interviewed staff who have demonstrated incredible commitment to supporting the children and young people in their care – educationally, socially and emotionally.

The expansive curriculum, extended extra-curricular activities and round-the-clock care offered by boarding schools make them a form of provision which can meet the needs of many different families and ensure that young people can achieve improved outcomes in a range of ways. Many boarding schools themselves increasingly are seen to have the appetite to contribute to this area of social policy and to help develop it, but want to work in partnership with others in order to do so.

However, our evaluation here of Norfolk's 10-year investment in this initiative, and my own observations of life at boarding schools emphasise the vital importance of carefully matching young people's needs to a specific boarding school in each case. The success of Norfolk Boarding School Partnerships emphasises the build-

up of its experience in selecting carefully both the young person and the proposed boarding school.

It highlights the two issues that need to continue to be considered. First, it is critical to reflect on how well students from different backgrounds can be helped to 'feel like they belong' when assessing whether to place a child in a particular boarding school. Second, family members (as well as local authority professionals) should be encouraged to visit the school and spend time there, in order to demystify how boarding schools are run – they are neither like the stereotypes of Tom Brown's School Days or Hogwarts!

I commend the long-term commitment of Norfolk County Council and the thoroughness of this research and analysis. It is an important contribution in seeking to encourage local authorities everywhere actively to evaluate the possibilities of boarding placements and to invest the necessary time to understand how boarding schools can help improve the social and educational outcomes of many vulnerable young people in and on the edge of their care.

# Executive Summary

Norfolk Boarding School Partnerships (NBSP) is a programme of boarding school placements which have helped to improve the education and social care outcomes of vulnerable children and young people in Norfolk.

These placements offer an alternative option for families where difficulties may necessitate children and young people either in or at risk of needing to be taken into local authority care. Nationally, Norfolk County Council is believed to have directly made the highest level of assisted boarding placements of any local authority. Over the past 10 years, the NBSP has gained a record of success in placing and supporting 52 pupils across 11 state-maintained and independent boarding schools.

The placements are seen to have provided children and young people with the opportunity to benefit from the high levels of pastoral care, individual attention,

structured living and community offered at state maintained and independent boarding schools. Working in partnership with families and schools, the NBSP has ensured that children for whom boarding school is considered an appropriate option are found the most suitable placement where their individual care and education needs can be most effectively met.

This report demonstrates the positive social care, educational and financial outcomes of these boarding school partnerships, and hopes to encourage more local authorities to explore boarding provision either as an alternative or complement to care.

- From a social care perspective, the boarding placements have contributed to the successful reduction in children and young people's individual risk profiles, with almost three-quarters (71%) of cases showing a reduced level of risk, and up to two-thirds (63%) of cases moving out of a high-risk category<sup>1</sup> and into universal or mainstream services.
- From an educational perspective, more than two-thirds (64%) of young people in the programme attained a formal qualification (GCSE or equivalent) by 16 years. Norfolk boarding placements attained a significantly higher percentage of results for GCSE Maths and English with A\*-C or equivalent grades than either national or local figures for LAC in 2016.

- From a financial perspective, boarding placements are found to be relatively cost-effective. The Norfolk placements show that, with a reduction in LAC, the whole programme can even become self-financing. The key is that the maximum boarding fees correspond to some 50-60% of LAC costs. Even with the initial duplication of costs, four years of boarding school for a Looked After Child could be 'paid back' in under three years if they ceased to be LAC as a result. The Norfolk success in reducing the risk profile of 37 (71%) boarding placements underlines how cost-effective these can be for local authorities. The fact is that, across the past nine years, the outcomes of at least 37 young people have been measurably enhanced for a total cost of c£3m – some £81k per person, or less than 1.5 x Norfolk's average annual LAC cost. Even allowing for add-on costs like clothes, equipment and school trips, the positive financial impact could be enhanced by independent school bursaries and placements in state boarding schools.

Significantly, successful outcomes were positively correlated with average placement length. Children and young people who attended boarding school for an average of *3 years or more* showed improved outcomes across social care and education in comparison with those with a placement of *2 years or less*. Central to the success of boarding school placements is the careful and suitable matching of children to boarding schools, the effective collaboration between and within young people's services, and a long-term and sustained commitment from all stakeholders including schools and family.

1

Risk profile levels were developed to reflect children's level of need and are represented numerically, with the lowest level of need at Risk Profile 1, and the highest level of need at Risk Profile 5. See 'Social Care Outcomes' for further information.



# Boarding School Partnerships

## Background

Boarding School Partnerships (BSP) is a national initiative launched in July 2017 by the Department for Education and the Welsh Government in collaboration with the Boarding Schools' Association, local government and the specialist boarding school charities, the Royal National Children's SpringBoard Foundation, Buttle UK, and the Reedham Children's Trust.

The BSP seeks to encourage local authorities to access the resources and expertise of the charities and boarding schools (which together have funded more than 2,000 boarding placements in the past 30 years) in order to evaluate options for vulnerable children and young people. The pastoral care, individual attention and security of boarding school can be a life-changing experience for young people; it can give pupils from diverse backgrounds a stable, caring and supportive environment in which to succeed and fulfil their potential.<sup>2</sup>

Such placements may be appropriate where a young person's home circumstances are (or at risk of becoming) unsustainable. The boarding school can work alongside the family and local authority services to offer an alternative pathway to becoming a Looked After Child. Many of those

local authorities that have placed young people in boarding school believe it is the most appropriate placement, improves outcomes and is also cost-effective.<sup>3</sup>

Nationally, the education and social outcomes for children in care are significantly lower than for non-looked after children.<sup>4</sup> As the number of looked after children continues to increase year to year,<sup>5</sup> local authorities are under increasing pressure to find effective ways to support children in need so they can achieve improved outcomes across social care and education. Every local authority seeks to protect and promote the welfare of children in need by providing support services that will enable children to be brought up within their own families, wherever possible. Boarding placements can help to meet these aims by supporting the individual needs of young people and by working to support family relationships.

Almost a decade before the launch of Boarding School Partnerships, Norfolk County Council sought to follow the lessons of the specialist charities which have dominated so called "assisted boarding" for the past 40 years. Prompted by a previous government initiative, the Pathfinder, it established a budget

for boarding placements in 2008. Norfolk is believed to have made the highest number of boarding placements in mainstream schools by local authorities during the past 10 years. As a result, the DfE / Boarding School Partnerships asked Norfolk County Council to conduct this research into outcomes. The BSP arranged for its validation by the Institute of Education of University College London, which previously conducted research into boarding placements for vulnerable young people in 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Straw, S., Bamford, S. C. and Martin, K. (2016) Evaluation of the Royal National Children's SpringBoard Foundation: Year 3. Slough: NFER. Online <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/S3BF03/SBBF03.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Department for Children, Schools and Families (2007). Boarding provision for vulnerable children - Pathfinder: What it means for participating local authorities. [http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130323071503/http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/LAs\\_Pathfinder.pdf](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130323071503/http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/LAs_Pathfinder.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Department for Education (2017). Outcomes for children looked after by local authorities in England, 31 March 2016. [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/602087/SFR12\\_2017\\_Text.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/602087/SFR12_2017_Text.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Department for Education (2017). Children looked after in England (including adoption), year ending 31 March 2017. [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/664935/SFR50\\_2017-Children\\_looked\\_after\\_in\\_England.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/664935/SFR50_2017-Children_looked_after_in_England.pdf)

## How Norfolk achieved these outcomes

The Norfolk Boarding School Partnerships (NBSP) programme was initially based in the Virtual School for Children in Care, under the leadership of a senior educational psychologist, before being transferred to the commissioning team in 2013 following the need for higher levels of social care involvement.

The programme is now under the leadership of the service development manager for the commissioning team. Successful boarding placements require a combination of information gathering both from education and social care, assessment of educational, psychological and social care need where necessary and, then, careful matching of pupil need with the available school provision. Placements are monitored through the social care system, to ensure continuing support for children, families and schools as required.

Norfolk County Council has constructed a successful practice model that has involved linkage of elements of Norfolk County Council across different departments, brought together around a shared commitment to children close to or in care.

Much of the NBSP success has been due to this ability to combine the processes around commissioning and social care placement with educational knowledge and expertise.

## How the process works

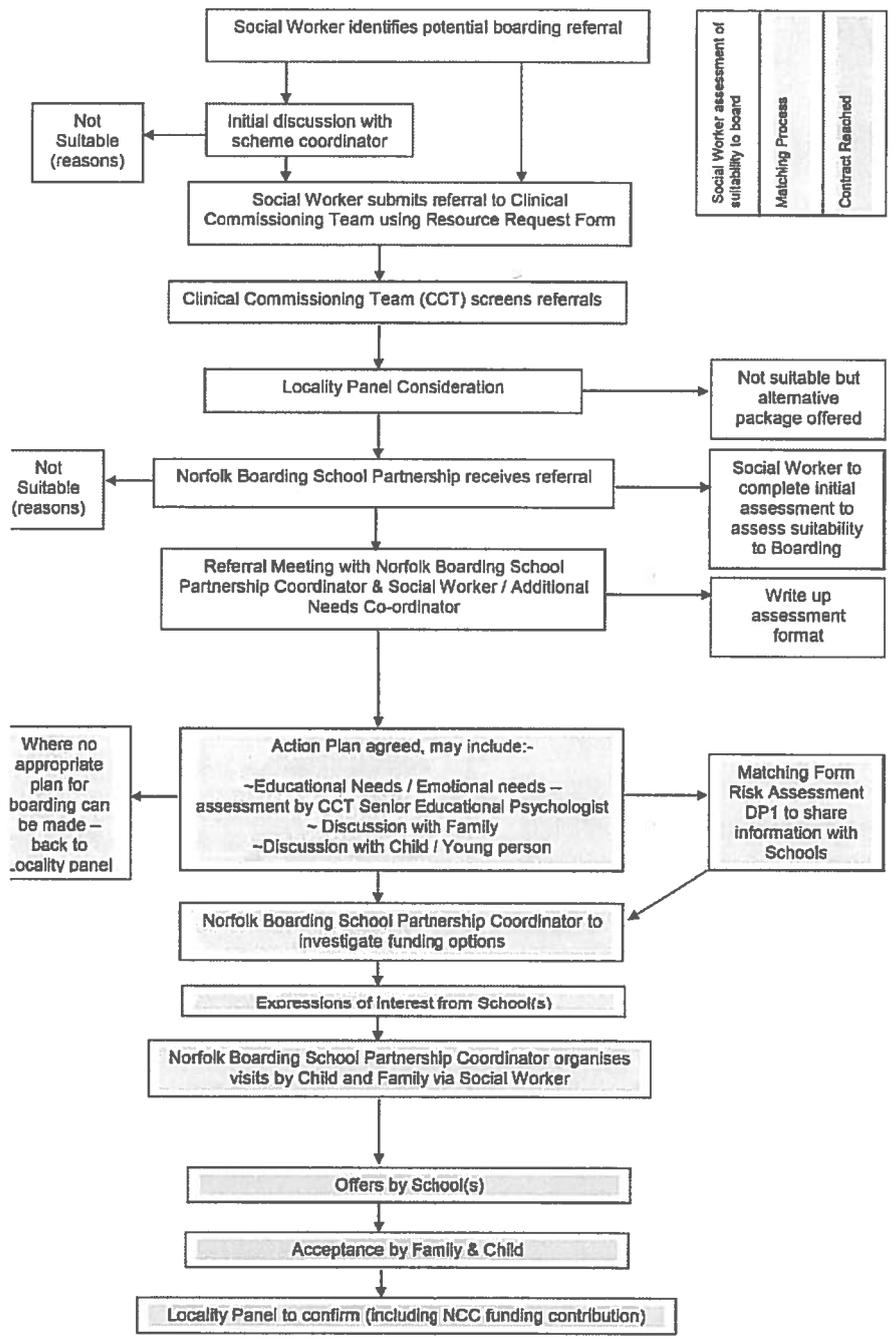
The process of referral and placement through the NBSP has three stages: referral, matching and contract arrangements.

**Stage 1** begins with the identification and assessment of the young person's suitability to board. Social Worker referrals are submitted to the Commissioning Team, Locality Panel and the NBSP Coordinator for consideration. The Social Worker then completes an initial assessment of "suitability to board" for discussion during a referral meeting between the NBSP Coordinator and Social Worker.

**Stage 2** involves creating an action plan for boarding and identifying a suitably-matched boarding school placement for the young person. The plan outlines the child's educational and emotional needs as assessed by an educational psychologist and through discussion with the young person and their family. Once complete, the action plan is shared with schools, the funding options are investigated by the NBSP Coordinator, and school visits are arranged.

**Stage 3** is reached when a placement offer is made by the school, followed by acceptance by the family and child. A contract is agreed and the Locality Panel confirms the placements, including details of Council funding contributions and possible school bursaries.

**Figure 1**  
The NBSP referral and placement process



# Report structure

The report begins with an overview of placement demographics, including a summary of the children and young people's age, gender, ethnicity and school placement. Subsequently, the report explores their social care and education outcomes, followed by a review of the programme's financial outcomes.

Finally, the Appendix provides additional background material in

the form of a research review by the UCL Institute of Education. It examines the current situation of, and key issues and outcomes for vulnerable children and young people, with a specific focus on Looked After Children (LAC) and those on the 'edge of care'.

Where possible, comparisons with national data for LAC have been made to offer a reasonable evaluation of the programme

impact and to improve insights. Comparison outcomes with a matched sample of vulnerable children and young people in Norfolk who *did not* take part in Norfolk Boarding School Partnerships was unattainable due to constraints around viability and practicality.

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# The Boarding School placements

From 2008 to 2018, there has been a total of 52 children placed through Norfolk Boarding School Partnerships in 11 boarding schools.

# Placements by age

Children's age at initial placement have been classified into three year groups:

## KS2

(Year 5 & 6) – typically represents students 9-10 years

## KS3

(Year 7, 8, 9) – typically represents students 11-13 years

## KS4

(Year 10, 11, 12) – typically represents students 14-16 years

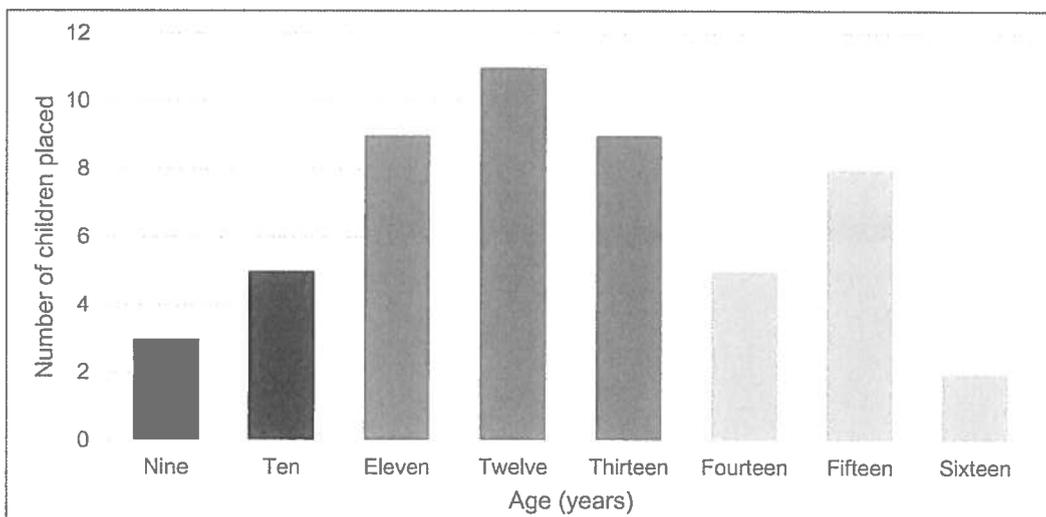
**Table 1**

Children's age and year group by average placement length

Year Groups at initial placement	Number of children	Mean age	Average placement length
<b>KS2</b> (Year 5 & 6)	8	10.0 years	4 years 8 months 5 days
<b>KS3</b> (Year 7, 8, 9)	32	12.2 years	2 years 8 months 15 days
<b>KS4</b> (Year 10, 11, 12)	12	14.8 years	1 year 7 months 5 days

**Figure 1**

The distribution of children's ages when first placed in boarding school



# Placements by gender

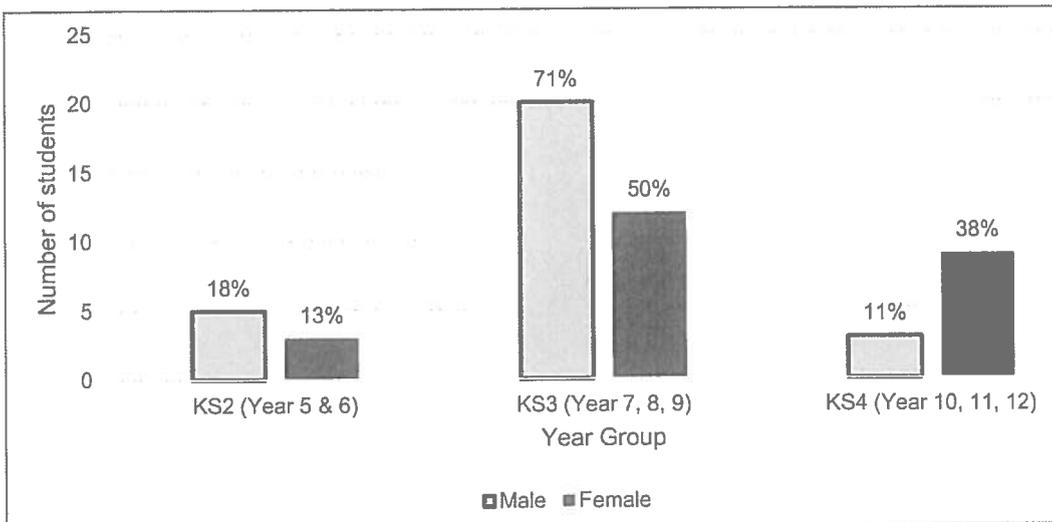
Of the 52 children, there was a slightly higher proportion of males than females (male = 54%; female = 46%).

The average length of placement was equal across the two gender groups (approximately 2 years, 9 months).

**Table 2**  
Placement overview by gender

Gender	Number of children	Year Group	Average Age at placement	Average duration
Male	28 (54%)	KS2: 18%	11.8yrs	2 years 9 months 4 days
		KS3: 71%		
		KS4: 11%		
Female	24 (46%)	KS2: 13%	12.8yrs	2 years 8 months 28 days
		KS3: 50%		
		KS4: 38%		

**Figure 2**  
Total placements by gender and year group



# Placements by ethnicity

The ethnicity of the children and young people placed through NBSP reflect Norfolk's wider ethnic make-up which is predominantly White British<sup>6</sup>.

**Table 3**  
Ethnicity of children placed in boarding school

Abbreviation	Full Explanation	Number	Percentage
AOMB	Any other mixed background	2	4%
BA	Black African	1	2%
BAOB	Black any other Background	1	2%
WA	White Asian	1	2%
WB	White British	41	79%
WBA	White & Black African	1	2%
WBC	White & Black Caribbean	1	2%
WOB	White other background	4	8%

<sup>6</sup>  
See 2011 Census ONS <http://www.norfolkinsight.org.uk/isa/people/ethnicity>

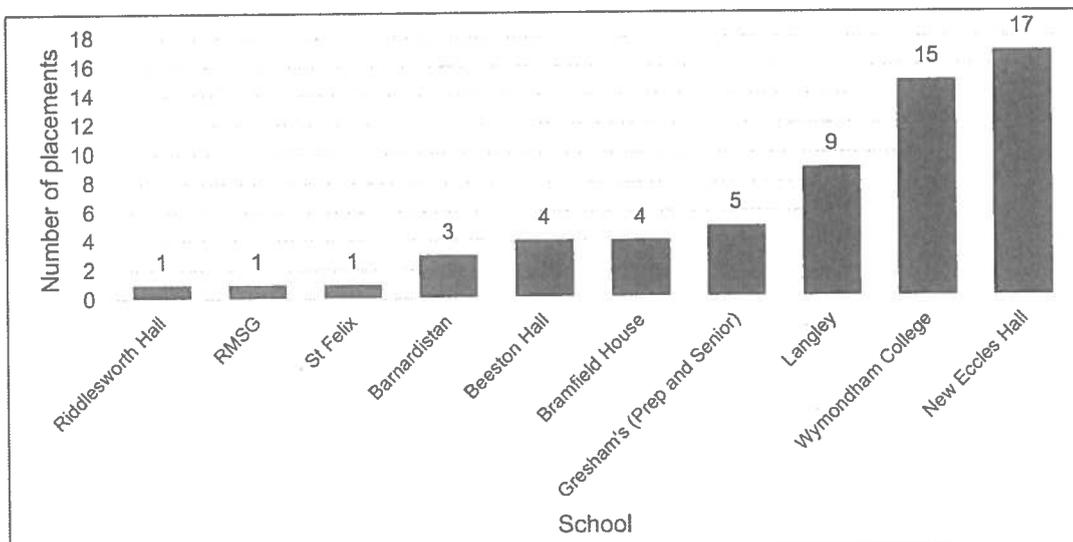
# Placements by school

Of the 52 children placed through the NBSP, seven children had more than one placement, totalling 60 boarding school placements overall. Multiple placement reflects either a change of setting (i.e. primary to secondary) or changes in the suitability of placement for individual students.

**Table 4**  
Average placement duration by school

School	Total placements	Average duration (years)
Riddlesworth Hall	1	0.25
St Felix	1	0.5
Langley	9	1.75
New Eccles Hall	17	2.25
Beeston Hall	4	2.25
Bramfield House	4	2.5
Wymondham College	15	2.6
Barnardistan	3	2.75
Gresham's	5	3.7
Royal Masonic School for Girls	1	5.9

**Figure 3**  
Total number of placements by boarding school



# Social care outcomes

## The impact on risk profiles

Children and young people were classified into one of five risk profiles, measured at the initial point of placement, and again at the end of boarding. Risk profile levels were used to reflect the young person's level of need and are represented, numerically, with the lowest level of need at Risk Profile 1, and the highest level of need at Risk Profile 5:

*Risk Profile 5*  
*Looked after Child (LAC)*

*Risk Profile 4*  
*Child Protection (CP)*

*Risk Profile 3*  
*Child in Need (CIN)*

*Risk Profile 2*  
*Early Help (EH)*

*Risk Profile 1*  
*Universal Services (US)*

**Looked after Child (LAC):** the child is considered to be in the care of the local authority, either with their parents' consent or by a court order. These children will live with approved carers, such as foster carers, family members or in residential children's homes, and have access to a social worker.

**Child Protection:** there are significant concerns about the safety or wellbeing of the child and the local authority has a duty to investigate. Parents and carers must enable the investigation to take place and make the child available to a social worker.

**Child in Need:** the child is considered to need the provision of services from the local authority in order to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health or development, or to prevent significant or further harm to their health or development.

**Early Help:** a lower risk category, and involves the authority working with children, young people and their families to support them in resolving their own challenges and prevent further problems in the future. Support may be provided by a single agency or practitioner, or a number of professionals depending on need.

**Universal Services:** also known as "mainstream services", which are provided and available to all children and families. These children are achieving expected outcomes and have their needs met through universal service provision. This is a low-risk category.

**Table 5**  
Change in risk profile for children from initial placement to end of placement

Category	Risk Profile	Number of children at start of placement	Number of children at end of placement
Looked After Child	Risk Profile 5	17	12
Child Protection	Risk Profile 4	16	3
Child in Need	Risk Profile 3	19	3
Early Help	Risk Profile 2	0	1
Universal Services	Risk Profile 1	0	33

Note. Both Kinship Care and Adoption cases<sup>7</sup> were considered for the programme because of escalating needs with a trajectory of these children coming back into the care system.

**Notably, 37 young people (approximately three-quarters of the boarding placements) showed a reduction in their individual risk profile (71%); approximately two-thirds of these children and young people moved out of a high-risk category and into universal services.**

Of the 17 children at Risk Profile 5 (Looked after Child):

- Eight remained at Risk Profile 5 (Looked after Child)
- Two **decreased** in risk to Risk Profile 3 (Child in Need)
- Seven **decreased** in risk to Risk Profile 1 (Universal Services)

Of the 16 children at Risk Profile 4 (Child Protection):

- Two *increased* in risk to Risk Profile 5 (Looked After Child)
- Two remained at Risk Profile 4 (Child Protection)
- One **decreased** in risk to Risk Profile 3 (Child in Need)
- Eleven **decreased** in risk to Risk Profile 1 (Universal Services)

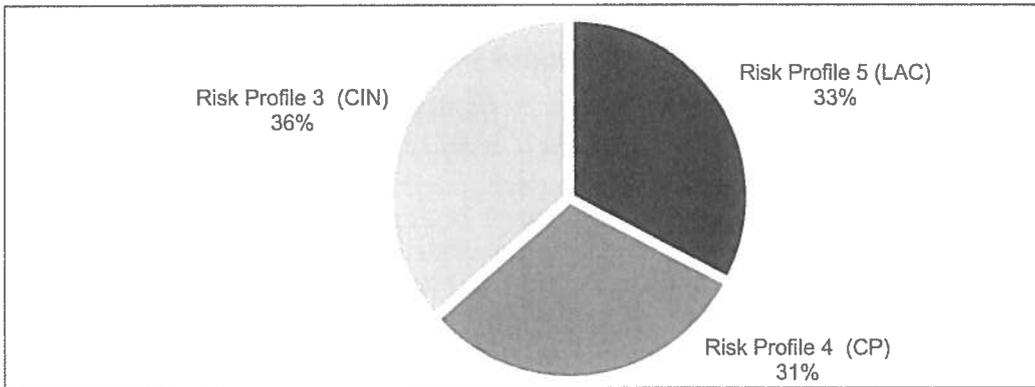
Of the 19 children at Risk Profile 3 (Child in Need):

- Two *increased* in risk to Risk Profile 5 (Looked After Child)
- One *increased* in risk to Risk Profile 4 (Child Protection)
- One **decreased** in risk to Risk Profile 2 (Early Help)
- Fifteen **decreased** in risk to Risk Profile 1 (Universal Services)

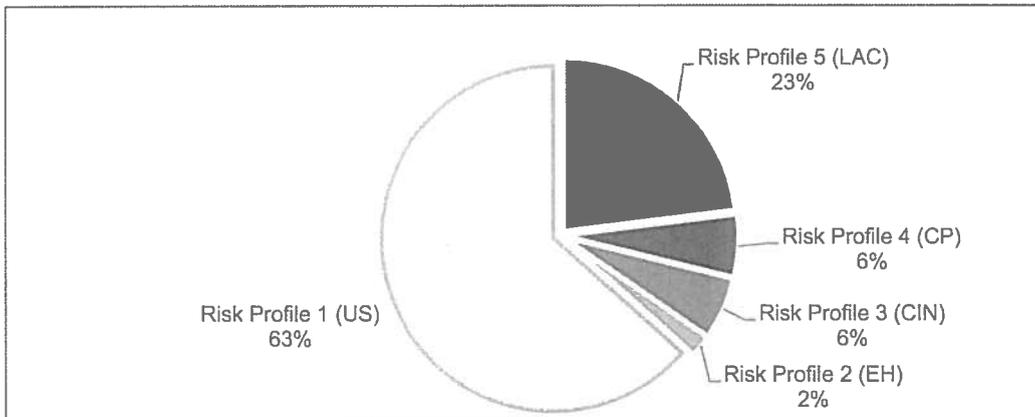
<sup>7</sup>

Kinship care is an arrangement where a child who cannot be cared for by their parent, goes to live with a relative, friend or other connected person. This is usually on a temporary basis. In contrast, adoption is for life, and anyone who adopts a child becomes the legal parent, taking on all the rights and responsibilities that the birth parent had.

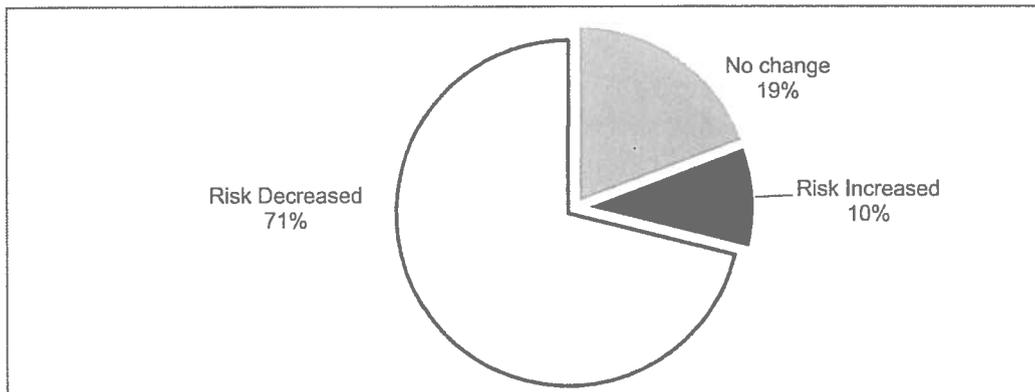
**Figure 4**  
Proportion of children's risk profile levels at point of initial placement



**Figure 5**  
Proportion of children's risk profile levels at the end of placement



**Figure 6**  
Overall change in risk profile levels for children with a boarding school placement



# Change in risk profile by placement length

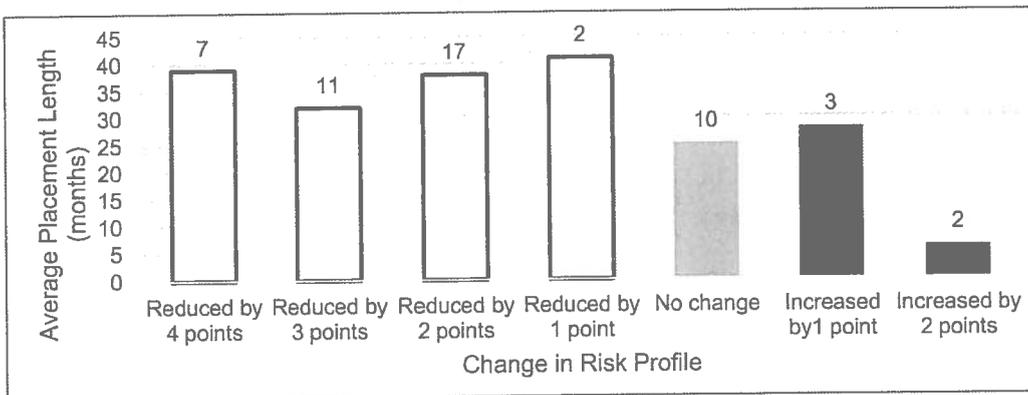
The findings suggest that, as the length of the boarding placement increases, the risk profiles decrease. Of the 52 boarding placements, almost three-quarters showed a reduction in risk profile by 1-4 points (n=37; 71%). The average placement length for cases that met social care outcomes was approximately **3 years**.

Comparatively, the average placement length for children who remained at the same risk profile (n=10; 19%) was approximately **2 years**. Those children which showed an increase in risk (n=5; 10%) had an average placement length of **less than 2 years**.

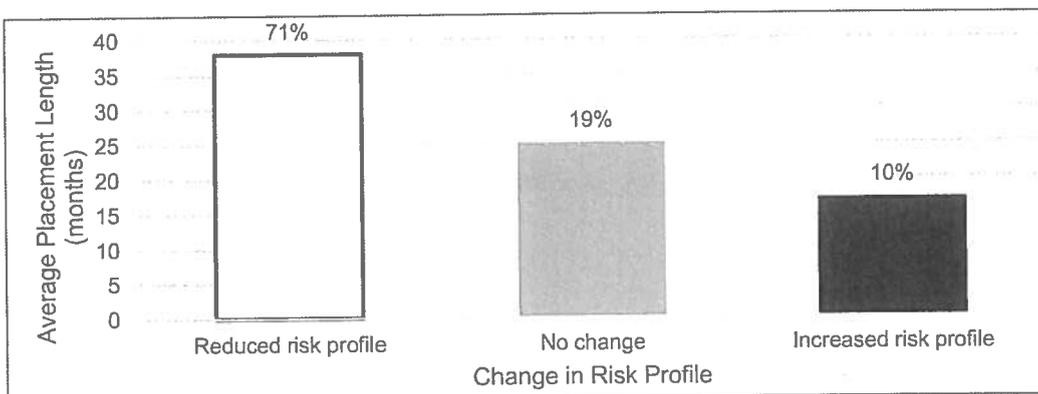
**Table 6**  
Overall change in risk profile by average placement length

Risk Profile Change	Number of children	Average Placement Length
Reduced risk profile	37	3 years 1 months 15 days
No change	10	2 years 0 months 27 days
Increased risk profile	5	1 years 4 months 29 days

**Figure 7**  
Change in to risk profile points by average length of placement



**Figure 8**  
Overall change in risk profile by average length of placement



# Education outcomes

Although the aim of the NBSP is to provide a stable and supportive educational experience through placement in a boarding school, the pupils placed also showed successful educational attainment outcomes.

No complete data set is yet available to measure outcomes such as resilience and self-efficacy, although it is planned to include such baseline measures in a larger group of children for future placements.

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# The impact on educational attainment

Education aims for the programme were to help students gain a formal qualification at the age of 16 (GCSE or equivalent). Based on this categorisation, 14 students aged under 16 years were not considered for analysis.

Additionally, data for 5 students was unavailable as education tracking ceased when the boarding placement ended.

# Education outcomes for remaining 33 students were classified as

## Met education outcomes

These students have gained a formal qualification at the age of 16 (GCSE or equivalent).

## Did not meet education outcomes

These students did not gain a formal qualification by age 16.

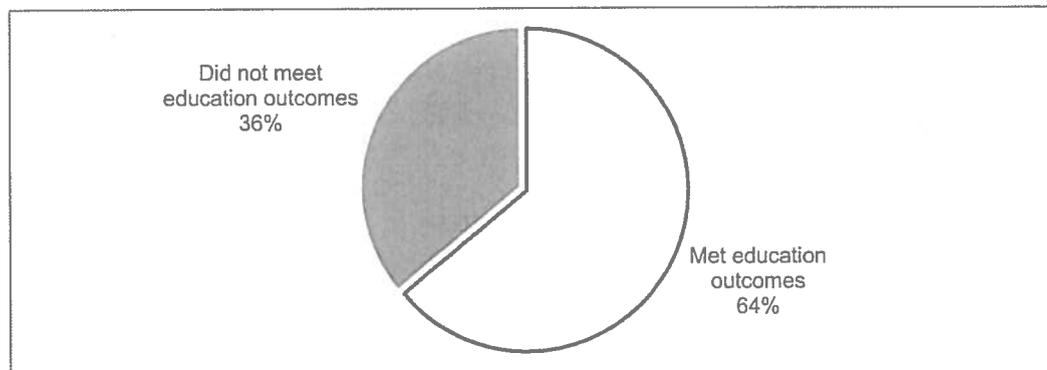
**Table 7**

Comparison of education outcomes by length of placement

	No. of children	Ave Placement Duration
Met Education Outcomes	21	3 years 7 months 23 days
Did not meet Education outcomes	12	2 years 4 months 2 days

**Figure 9**

Overall education outcomes for children with a boarding school placement



# Education outcomes explored

Of the 33 students in this analysis, two-thirds (n=21; 64%) met education outcomes by attaining a formal qualification (GCSE or equivalent) in maths and English. Of those who met education outcomes:

- Seven attained GCSE maths *and* English with A\*-C
- Two attained GCSE maths or English
- Two attained an Entry Level Certificate in maths and English
- Ten attained GCSE maths and English below A\*-C

The remaining one-third of children (n=12; 36%) were unable to meet education outcomes for the following reasons:

- Two exclusions
- Nine attendance-related – did not sit
- One exceptional circumstances – bereavement

## Comparison with Norfolk and National LAC outcomes

Of the 33 students supported by NBSP, 21% attained GCSE maths and English with A\*-C. This is higher than the National 2016 results for Looked after children nationally (17.5%) and in Norfolk (19.8%)

**Table 8**

Key Stage 4 results for GCEs in maths and English across Norfolk Boarding School Partnerships and the Norfolk and National LAC results

Key Stage 4	Norfolk 2016-17 (Prov LA data for 2017)	National 2016 (DfE published results)	Norfolk Boarding School Partnerships
Year 11 Pupils with results - Attainment - CLA Cohort	148	4890	33
A*-C/Grade 4+ in GCSE English & maths - % achieving	19.8%	17.5%	21%

# Education and social care outcomes

On average, children who remained in their boarding school placement for **at least 3 years** were more likely to attain a formal qualification at age 16 and to show a reduction in their individual risk profile.

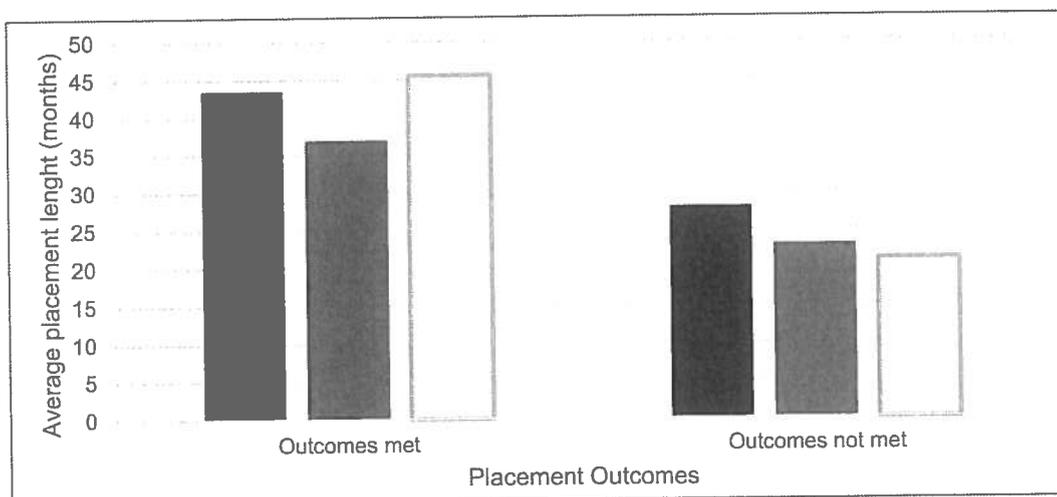
In comparison, children who remained in their school placement for **less than 2 years** were less likely to attain a formal qualification at age 16 or to show a reduction in their individual risk profile.

**Table 9**  
Comparison of education and social care outcomes by average placement length

	Education	Social care	Combined
<b>Outcomes met</b>	3 years 7 months 23 days	3 years 1 month 3 days	3 years 9 months 17 days
<b>Outcomes not met</b>	2 years 4 months 2 days	1 year 11 months 3 days	1 year 9 months 1 day

These findings highlight the importance of providing effective, stable and secure boarding placements for these children and young people. Those who were supported for at least three years were notably more likely to meet both education and social care outcomes, emphasising the need for a strong and long-term commitment from stakeholders towards these placements.

**Figure 10**  
Placement outcomes for education and social care by average placement length



# Exploring baseline and additional measures

Education outcomes based on formal qualifications may not fully reflect academic progress made by children. Gathering baseline education measures at the point of initial placement, (e.g. through Educational Psychologists' assessment) would provide a more accurate measure of education progress.

Additionally, there is strong empirical evidence connecting childhood mental health to academic attainment and life outcomes. Looked after Children are more than twice as likely as the child population as a whole to have social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, identifying, monitoring and supporting positive SEMH outcomes is an important future consideration for the NBSP programme.

Baseline and follow up SEMH measures (e.g. self-efficacy, resilience, and trauma symptoms) through the support of Educational Psychologists could help:

- Identify areas of need and strengths within children at an early stage;
- Monitor SEMH changes and outcomes throughout childhood and placement to ensure suitability and support;
- Inform recommendations for effective intervention, strategies or training to school staff to develop children's strengths and work through areas of challenge.

<sup>8</sup> Department for Education (2017). Outcomes for children looked after: by local authorities in England, 31 March 2016. [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/602087/SFR12\\_2017\\_Text.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/602087/SFR12_2017_Text.pdf)

# Financial outcomes

It is believed that boarding placements have been very cost-effective for Norfolk because of the sharp improvements in the risk profile and hence reductions in care costs. Placing children and young people in boarding schools can be significantly more cost-effective than placing them into local authority care. The annual cost of the NBSP school fees has ranged from £11,000 for state boarding schools to £35,000 in the independent sector, compared with Norfolk's average annual cost of supporting a Looked after Child at £56,212.

While it is recognised that most of this LAC cost applies also to those LAC children who attend boarding school, it is also believed that a proportion of the 36 non-LAC in the NBSP would have become LAC if they had not become boarding placements.

The scale of the NBSP achievement is that, rather than experiencing an increase in the number of LAC among the boarders, Norfolk was able to report a decrease of 29% in the LAC boarders and a sharp reduction in those at risk of becoming LAC. During the period 2014-17, for which Norfolk County Council holds full financial information, the council estimates that net savings of £1.6k as a result of the boarding placements, i.e. the 30 young people who were funded at boarding school during the four

years cost the Norfolk £1.6m less than they would have cost if all had become LAC and not attended boarding school. That might be said to be the 'best case' given that it could not be assumed that all the boarders would have become LAC but it is one way of estimating maximum possible benefit.

More cautiously, it can be shown that, across the past 9 years, the lives of at least 37 young people (those whose risk profile has improved) have been measurably improved for a total cost of c£3m in boarding school fees - an average of £81k per young person which corresponds to less than 1.5 x the average annual cost of a Norfolk LAC.

Financial measures are, of course, incidental to the primary objectives of the NBSP, and there is no 'best' way to calculate apparent cost-effectiveness, especially during the relatively short time-period under review. However, given Norfolk County Council's c£400k annual budget of Norfolk Boarding School Partnerships (comprising £100k from the Dedicated Schools Grant and £300k from the children's services budget), the following observations can be made:

- The expenditure of £35k (the current level of many independent boarding school fees) for a LAC for, say, 4 years - where it enables a child to cease to be Looked After - could be said to be 'recouped' in under

three years, given Norfolk's annual LAC cost of £56.2k

- Where boarding placements are able to prevent children needing to become LAC, that £35k of boarding fees could be said to be 'self-funding' since they eliminate the requirement of the LAC costs. This financial impact would be enhanced substantially in the case of state boarding placements (with fees of £15k or less) or where independent school bursaries or charity grants were obtained.

The critical issue, inevitably, is the level of boarding fees relative to LAC costs. Norfolk's range of £11k-£35k fees paid reflects the contrast between state maintained boarding places and those in independent schools. The overwhelming majority of NBSP placements were fully funded by Norfolk without either bursaries or charity support. Even allowing for add-on costs like clothes, equipment and school trips (possibly up to £5k per year), the positive financial impact could be enhanced by independent school bursaries and placements in state boarding schools. Ultimately, wide-ranging reductions in the risk profile of boarders (including those young people who ceased to be LAC) are likely to ensure that such placements are favourable in financial terms, especially if maximum boarding fees correspond to about 50-60% or less of LAC costs.

# Conclusions

The impact of effective boarding placements has been demonstrated across three areas:

- **Social care:** the NBSP has contributed to the successful reduction in children and young people's individual risk profiles, with almost three-quarters (71%) of cases showing a reduced level of risk, and up to two-thirds (63%) of cases moving out of a high-risk category and into universal or mainstream services.
- **Education:** more than two-thirds (64%) of young people attained a formal qualification (GCSE or equivalent) by 16 years. More of the boarding placements achieved Grades A\*-C for GCSE maths and English than LAC nationally or in Norfolk.
- **Financial:** placing children and young people in boarding schools can be significantly more cost-effective than placing them into local authority care. Norfolk's annual cost of placing a child at boarding school has ranged between £11k for state boarding and £35k in the independent sector, compared with its average £56.2k cost of supporting a Looked after Child. Although LAC boarding placements incur the additional costs of these school fees, the reductions in risk profile (and especially in the number of LAC) are capable of producing significant cost savings to a local authority over 3-5 years.

Crucial to the impact of successful social care and educational outcomes was the average duration of placement. The Norfolk children and young people who were supported for an average of 3 years or more in a boarding school showed improved outcomes across social care and education by comparison with those with a placement of 2 years or less. This demonstrates the importance of providing effective, stable and secure boarding school placements and emphasises the need for a strong and long-term commitment from stakeholders.

Additionally, the success of boarding school placements relies on the careful and suitable matching of children to boarding schools combined with effective collaboration between and within young people's services, schools and families.

## Appendix

# Research review by UCL Institute of Education



This research review examines the current situation of, and key issues and outcomes for, vulnerable children and young people, with a specific focus on Looked After Children (LAC) and those on the 'edge of care'. There is some inconsistency around precisely what constitutes 'edge of care' but a recent review by Rees et al (2017) of the edge of care strand of the DfE's Children's Social Care Innovation Programme stated that the term generally refers to those:

*"...where entry into care is being actively considered as a likely option to meet that young person's needs. Children and young people on the edge of care are often described as the most challenging, or those with the most complex needs..." (p.7)*

The review first provides an overview of statistics and issues regarding children and young people in and on the edge of care. The review then summarises research on educational outcomes for LAC and children and young

people on the edge of care, before looking at factors influencing these outcomes. The review concludes with a summary of research on the specific role of boarding schools in potentially shaping outcomes.

### **The current situation regarding children and young people in and on the edge of care**

In the UK, there are increasing numbers of children and young people across all categories of vulnerability. It is estimated that more than 2 million children are living in difficult family circumstances (OFSTED, 2015); this includes parental drug and alcohol dependency, domestic abuse and mental health problems. The rate of referrals to Children's Social Care Services has been steadily increasing over the past 10-15 years; in 2014-15, local authorities recorded 635,600 referrals to children's social care services because of concerns about a child's welfare (NAO, 2016).

There are also increasing numbers of children assessed as being 'a child in need of help or protection' (CIN); as of the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017, there were 389,430 children in England in this category equating to 3.4 per 100 children aged under 18 years (DfE, 2017a). Of particular concern are adolescents aged 10-15 years who are over-represented amongst those assessed as being in need, this age group now constitutes 31% of the total.

The number of children starting to be subject to a Child Protection Plan (CPP) has also been rising steadily. Between 2010 and 2017 there has been a 35% increase with 66,180 children being made subject to a child protection plan in 2016-17, a rate of 0.5 per 100 children (DfE, 2017a).

Finally, the numbers of LAC are growing, particularly those aged 10-15 years and 16 years and over. As of 31 March 2017, there were 72,670 children and young people in care in England, a 3% increase on the previous year and a 7% increase since 2013. In 2012, 56%

of those in care were aged 10 and above but, by 2017, this had risen to 63% (DfE, 2017c).

A recently released report by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Children (2017) into the current state of Children's Social Care in England stated that the system is struggling to meet demand. The report went on to say that Local Authorities are too often failing to reach children and families who need help at all stages: early intervention, statutory support for Children in need (CiN) and statutory support for those in care. The inquiry found that local authority resources have become increasingly strained and, as a result, they are largely focussed on child protection concerns and mainly directed towards children who have already suffered abuse or neglect or who are at risk of serious harm, at the expense of early intervention and prevention and support for families. The APPGC (2017) stated that the consequence of this focus on late intervention is that young people's needs too often escalate to high levels before any support is provided, leading to more needing to be taken into care and, consequently, poorer outcomes for vulnerable children and their families.

As previously highlighted, vulnerable adolescents have been identified as particularly at risk and there are calls for a far more flexible approach to support and intervention for this group. Nearly

half of adolescents coming into care do so because of acute family stress, difficult behaviour or crisis in family circumstances (Godor, 2014). Research evidence points to poorer outcomes for those coming into care as adolescents, as well as the need for more innovation in the range of support available to adolescents and their families to try and prevent family breakdown and avoid adolescents entering care (Dixon et al, 2015).

#### **Outcomes for LAC and young people on the edge of care**

Children in and on the edge of care often face multiple complex and acute difficulties that can have negative and long-lasting impacts throughout childhood and into adulthood. They are significantly more likely to have far poorer educational outcomes compared to the child population as a whole. LAC are 4 times less likely to achieve the basics of GCSE grades A\*- C in English and Maths than those not in care and many LAC leave education with no qualifications at all. While achievement among the general population is growing, improvements in the educational attainment of children in care and in need is not.

In England, there is evidence that, while children of primary school age who are in care cover the full spectrum of cognitive ability (Jackson & Martin, 1998), they do

not achieve the same results as their peers in national school tests, and their relative performance declines as they get older, contributing to their lack of GCSEs at age 16 (Welbourne & Leeson, 2012). Longitudinal research by O'Sullivan & Westerman (2007) that followed children throughout their school career found a progressive decline for children in care, steepest at secondary stage. This attainment gap is not only apparent at age 16 but is also seen much earlier on, with younger children in care and in need having far lower levels of attainment than other children at Key Stages 2 and 3.

The most recent data on educational attainment highlights this continuing trend of far poorer educational outcomes for LAC and CiN in comparison to other children throughout compulsory schooling (Tables 1-3). Of note is the educational attainment at KS2 of the CiN group which is lower than for LAC, this supports the finding of Sebba et al (2015) that care can often provide an environment that is more conducive to education than that experienced by children and young people in need. Sebba et al (2015) found that CiN were more likely to have special educational needs, poor attendance, more exclusions from school, and progressively poorer relative attainment than children not in need or in care.

**Table 1**  
percentage reaching required standard at Key Stage 1

	Looked After Children	All children
Reading	50%	74%
Writing	37%	66%
Maths	46%	73%
Science	58%	82%

Source: Department for Education (2017b). Outcomes for children looked after by local authorities in England, 31 March 2016.

**Table 2**  
percentage reaching required standard at Key Stage 2

	Looked After Children	Children in need	All children
Reading	41%	38%	66%
Writing	46%	44%	74%
Maths	41%	40%	70%

Source: Department for Education (2017b). Outcomes for children looked after by local authorities, 31 March 2016

**Table 3**  
percentage achieving 5+ GCSEs including English and Maths

Looked After Children	Children in need	All children
13.6%	14.9%	53.1%

Source: Department for Education (2017b). Outcomes for children looked after by local authorities in England, 31 March 2016

Educational attainment is hugely significant because it has been consistently identified as a key protective factor for later life outcomes. Analysis of data from the 1970 British Cohort Study, carried out by Whitty et al (1998), found that by age 26, those without educational qualifications were four times more likely to report poor physical and mental health than

those with the highest qualifications. Other positive outcomes from high levels of learning have been found to include improvements in self-esteem, self-efficacy, inter-personal trust, access to wider networks of social support and social engagement, all of which increase resilience which in turn reduces stress and benefits overall health

(Ross & Mirowsky, 1999). Jackson and Martin (1998) compared 'high achievers' with a care background to a matched group of young people who left school with low levels of attainment and found significant differences in their post-care experience. The outcomes for the low attainment group were typical of those experienced by many care leavers including

unemployment, dependence on welfare payments, poor health, early parenthood, substandard housing, episodes of homelessness, drug and alcohol misuse, and some of the young men from the low attainment group were in prison. The 'high achievers' group had relatively few difficulties of the kind experienced by the low attainment group and, to a large extent, seemed to have overcome the disadvantage they had experienced in childhood.

More recent research further highlights the increased risk of a range of negative outcomes for those with a care background (HM Government, 2013). In 2017, 32% of care leavers were NEET (not in education, employment or training) at age 19 compared to 10% of 18-year-olds in the general population (DfE, 2017c). It is estimated that over a quarter of adults in prison have been in care and approximately a third of those who are homeless have spent time in care (NAO, 2014). Current statistics show that 5% of LAC aged 13-15 years and 9% of LAC 16-17 years were convicted or subject to a final warning or reprimand during 2016 compared to 1% and 2% respectively of all children (DfE 2017c).

LAC and those on the edge of care are also at significantly higher risk of poor social, emotional and mental health (DfE, 2017c). Mental health and educational progress are

closely linked; research has consistently found that young people's emotional health and wellbeing can be obstacles to educational progress (Cameron & Jackson, 2014). All children in care should be assessed using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) to ascertain their mental health status, and the most recent data shows that 12% of all those in care had average SDQ scores that were of borderline concern and 38% had scores that were of concern (DfE, 2017c).

Poor mental and emotional health in vulnerable children and young people often persists into adulthood (Cheung & Buchanan, 1997). Cameron (2007) found that around a quarter of care leavers and over half of a comparison sample of young people 'in difficulty'<sup>10</sup> but not previously looked after 'did not feel well' most of the time, while 39% of care leavers and 45% of the comparison group reported themselves to be depressed at the time of interview or in the past.

### **Factors influencing outcomes young people in and on the edge of care**

The disadvantaged backgrounds and traumatic lives of those in and on the edge of care significantly increases the likelihood of low academic achievement and negative later life outcomes (Cairns, 1999; Jackson & McParlin, 2006). Of particular concern are adolescents in and on the edge of care who experience longer exposure to risk factors and difficult family circumstances meaning they are more likely to have highly complex needs, are very likely to have had a previous episode in care (around half) in what has been termed 'oscillation between home and care' and so are more likely to experience a larger number of placements. Research has found that those who experience this 'oscillation' and unstable reunions with their families had the worst overall outcomes (Wade et al, 2011). The Care Inquiry report (2013) emphasised the need for greater support for families, both to prevent breakdown and entry to care, but also to prepare for and sustain a child/adolescents' return home to prevent readmission.

Whilst the family backgrounds and difficult lives of those in and on the edge of care are hugely significant, there is a large body of research that shows this is often compounded rather than alleviated by their experience of the care system (Jackson & Cameron,

<sup>10</sup> Defined as being homeless and/or having two or more of the following difficulties in their lives: living apart from family, pregnancy or parenthood; addiction problems such as those with alcohol or illicit drugs; a criminal record or offending behaviour; unemployed; learning or physical disabilities; belonging to a minority ethnic group and leaving school with no qualifications

2014). Oscillation in and out of care, frequent placement moves and/or school moves, a high turnover of social workers and other key professionals, poor long-term planning and a lack of encouragement and support given to education by carers, social workers and other professionals have all been found to affect outcomes for LAC and those on the edge of care (Jackson & Martin, 1998; Munro & Hardy, 2006; Jackson & Cameron, 2014).

Instability has been found to be particularly damaging; one of the most critical factors influencing educational attainment and later life outcomes is placement stability and, associated with this, consistency and stability in schooling (Munro & Hardy, 2006; O'Sullivan and Westerman 2007; WMD, 2008; Cameron & Jackson, 2014; Sebba et al, 2015). Placement moves and school changes in examination years are especially damaging (Jackson, 1998; Francis, 2000; Evans, 2000). Children who experience more than one placement in their most recent care episode are significantly less likely to achieve five good GCSEs than those who have had a single stable placement (Fletcher-Campbell & Archer, 2003; DfE, 2013). In England in 2017, 36% of all children who ceased to be looked after had three or more placements and 22% had 4-10 placements. The average (mean) duration of placements ceasing in the year ending March

2017 was 314 days, approximately 10 and a half months (DfE, 2017c).

Conversely, research has established the benefits of a stable placement for educational success (Jackson et al, 2005; Cameron & Jackson, 2014). Jackson et al. (2005) found that among young people who had gone to university from care, most had spent five or more years looked after by local authorities, and most of them had had fewer than average placements, experiencing relatively stable and supportive childhoods through being in care. They had attained educational qualifications close to the norm for their age group; with around 70% attaining 5 GCSEs (A\*-C).

It should be said, however, that a placement change is not always negative; in approximately a third of cases, moves are made for largely positive reasons (Wade et al., 2010). Additionally, changing placements is not an insurmountable obstacle to educational achievement. Research suggests that quality of final placement is more important than the number of moves (Jackson et al., 2005).

Instability in relation to schooling is also critical; Sebba et al (2015) found that around 3% of all children change secondary school but that the rate is more than four times higher (16%) for children who were in care for less than 12 months by KS4. The rate was also higher for

children who were in care for 12 months or more by KS4 (12%) and for CiN (9%). These analyses showed that school changes in the later years of schooling were particularly damaging for the KS4 attainment of both LAC and CiN.

Research has found that, where carers and professionals, including teachers, were stable and actively involved themselves in the everyday school lives of young people, this helped to compensate for young people's disadvantage; young people were able to make use of this support to improve their outcomes in education. Helping with homework, supporting informal learning and leisure activities, acting as confidants, providing pastoral care and believing in a young person's abilities have been found to be particularly significant factors in terms of how carers and professionals can help to improve outcomes for young people in and on the edge of care (Jackson and Sachdev, 2001; Jackson et al 2005; Jackson & Cameron, 2014).

The importance of long term planning and permanence in the care and education of LAC and those on the edge of care has also been found to be critically important for promoting better outcomes in attainment, mental health and wellbeing (Munro & Hardy, 2006; Cameron & Jackson, 2014). The Government has emphasised the importance for

children of 'a sense of security, continuity, commitment and identity' through childhood and beyond (DfE, 2010). A review by Boddy (2013) highlighted the importance of quality and continuity and the need to:

*"place equal value on other ways of achieving permanence, including support for children and families at the 'edges of care', as well as through permanent return to birth parents" (p.4).*

### **The potential role of boarding schools for children and young people in and on the edge of care**

In view of the statistics and research evidence on the outcomes for LAC and those on the edge of care and the key factors that influence these outcomes, what role might boarding schools have in addressing the needs of these children and young people?

Research suggests that boarding schools can promote positive outcomes for vulnerable children, including children in and on the edge of care, through the provision of high quality education, support and pastoral care, individual attention, security and structure (RNCF, 2015; Buttle UK, 2017).

The DfE (2017d) states that: *"A boarding school placement can offer these children the possibility of term-time respite that also helps them to develop relationships with the adults working at those schools, alongside a home*

*environment they can return to during the weekends or holidays. These types of arrangements can be particularly beneficial where children are living with parents experiencing mental health difficulties, or with extended families who are unable to cope full-time with a child".*

Research by Straw et al (2016) found positive impacts for vulnerable children at boarding school in relation to academic progress and attainment, raised aspirations, broadened horizons and enhanced future prospects, improved social skills, increased confidence and wellbeing. These outcomes were largely attributed to the stable and secure school environment.

A review for the Royal National Children's Foundation (2015) found increased levels of security and self-esteem, improved relationships with adults and peers in their lives, heightened aspirations, broadened horizons, greater ambition and motivation and positive effects for the wider family including increased coping and resilience.

The report of the Department for Education's Pathfinder Evaluation of Boarding provision for vulnerable children (Maxwell et al, 2009) included the recommendation that boarding schools should be considered by local authorities as a placement option for children and young people on the edge of care and for those in care where their care arrangements were at risk of

breaking down, when it is deemed that they could potentially benefit from such a placement.

There is also evidence that, in addition to the aforementioned benefits for children and young people, boarding schools might be a more cost-effective option for LAs in providing care for some vulnerable children and young people than state provided options. Boarding, on average, has been estimated as being a quarter of the cost of caring for a young person in a residential home (RNCF, 2015). The average annual spend on a foster placement is between £29,000 and £33,000 with the average annual spend on a residential place between £131,000 and £135,000 (NAO 2014) compared with an average annual cost of placing a child at boarding school of £11,000 to £35,000 (the Norfolk Boarding School Partnerships report 2018.) Potential costs savings where Boarding School is deemed to be a suitable option may be an important, if secondary, consideration in the current climate of severely stretched LA funding and resources. Added to this is the potential for further financial savings in the long term if boarding school provision can ameliorate risk factors in childhood and adolescence and so reduce the likelihood of costly negative outcomes in adulthood such as unemployment, poor health, homelessness and contact with the criminal justice system.

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[www.boardingschoolpartnerships.org.uk](http://www.boardingschoolpartnerships.org.uk)

A collaboration of the Department for Education, the Welsh Government, the Boarding Schools' Association, Buttle UK, Reegham Children's Trust, and the Royal National Children's SpringBoard Foundation

**Welsh Government support – Extract from the Boarding School Partnership web-site**

**Kirsty Williams AC/AM - EDUCATION MINISTER WALES**



On behalf of the Welsh Government, I am pleased to welcome the launch of Boarding School Partnerships. This new service offers expertise, resources and support for those considering boarding school placements for vulnerable young people.

The service is intended to give commissioning teams in local authorities and other children’s organisations the resources they need to be able to assess the suitability – and availability - of boarding school placements for young people in and on the edge of their care.

This site represents a collaboration of the dedicated charities and boarding schools which, over the past 30 years, have supported more than 3,000 vulnerable children and young people in Wales and throughout the UK.

These “Assisted Boarders” are predominantly young people with one or no active parents who have suffered from seriously adverse home, family or day school circumstances. Many are regarded as being on or close to the edge of local authority care. They are seen to have benefitted from the pastoral care, individual attention, structure and sense of community available at state and independent boarding schools in Wales and across the UK. Many might otherwise eventually have needed to be taken into care.

We know that boarding school would not be appropriate for all children and young people and that is why I welcome this sharing of expertise with the charities and schools which have 24/7 experience of boarding over the long-term.

I commend to you Boarding School Partnerships and, on your behalf, thank the volunteer team under Colin Morrison, former chair of the Royal National Children’s Foundation, which has built this new service for our professionals in children and young people’s services.

**Kirsty Williams AC/AM**  
**Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg Cabinet Secretary for Education**

