

First Steps (Bath)

Bath Opportunity Preschool Admissions Policy and Procedure

Policy statement:

Bath Opportunity Preschool (BOP) provides a specialist environment where children with additional needs can be supported to develop to their full potential. It is the only Opportunity Pre-school in Bath and North East Somerset to provide this specialist service.

First Steps BOP aims to improve the individual development, learning and wellbeing of children aged 2 – 5 years with additional/complex needs living in Bath and North East Somerset, through delivery of high quality, specialist early years provision and promoting inclusive practice in mainstream early years settings. Where appropriate preparing for all the child's early years education to be accessed within the mainstream setting.

The service will work in a multi-agency context with the Local Authority and child health services to ensure seamless, holistic support to each child and their family, maximising access to mainstream early years settings and facilitating transitions into specialist or mainstream schools.

The following procedure (see appendix 1) is designed to provide a fair and transparent system for prioritising places. Places are allocated to children where the admission criteria are met (see appendix 2). Children are considered for placement at BOP on receipt of a referral form, usually from a professional (e.g., Health Visitor, Early Years Practitioner) or parents can self-refer. To ensure joined up working, referrals will always be discussed with relevant professionals involved with the child/family. Referrals will be processed by BOP in consultation with the Local Authority representatives. It is an expectation that most children will have a place within a mainstream setting, the BOP service providing the specialist and therapeutic support enabling the specialist service and mainstream setting to fully meet the child's needs.

Families will be consulted with to ensure that sessions can be always accessed however there are circumstances where there is regular, unexplained non-attendance. Where this occurs, the child may be at risk of losing their placement at BOP.

All children will have an individually designed 'settling-in' time to meet their specific needs and parents/carers will be encouraged to attend Specialist Family Support Stay and Play sessions prior to starting sessions.

Exceptional Circumstances

There is a process to ensure that children whose needs may not be able to be met in a mainstream setting may still access their Early Years Entitlement. (See appendix 2)

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Step Down

When support from BOP allows children to access a shared place/full entitlement in a mainstream setting BOP Early Years Practitioners will work in partnership with settings that share a child's placement.

There is a process to ensure a smooth transition to the full early years entitlement being accessed in a mainstream setting, ending the specialist placement. This will happen when the mainstream setting has developed their competence and expertise in partnership with the specialist service and reviews of progress show that a child's needs can be met in the mainstream setting without the need for attending BOP. (See appendix 4 and flow chart)

Parents will be given access to BOP policies and information about services for children with SEN e.g. The Rainbow Resource.

Procedure

- BOP receives completed referral form signed by the parent.
- Referral discussed with parents, and where appropriate with the referring professional and/or the mainstream early years setting. In some circumstances the Local Authority Early Years Representative will be involved and/or other professionals
- The needs of the child will be fully understood, and parents invited to see the setting and attend Stay and Play sessions.
- If the admission criteria are met, sessions will be allocated balancing the availability of requested days to spaces and input required by visiting or resident therapists or specialists.
- A list will be used if necessary and parent/carers will be kept informed of available places.
- A welcome letter will be sent to parents and guardians confirming their child's place and outlining the next steps of the admissions process.
- Children aged 2-3 will be allocated up to 6 hours per week of term time educational provision.
- Children 3-4 years (in their preschool year) will be allocated up to 12 hours.
- families will be encouraged to explore a shared place with a mainstream setting; an early year's professional may support this.
- Children will be offered a lunch, and parents/carers will be billed for this, families living on a low income may access a free lunch for their children. (This cost is covered through fundraising)
- Where children are attending BOP and making better than expected progress / identified as no longer needing BOP discussions will be held with parents, professionals and the shared placement setting to move to access the majority/all their funding in a mainstream setting and reduce hours at BOP enabling the child to access all their Early Years entitlements at the mainstream setting. (See process appendix 3)

Policy drawn up through consultation with staff, parents, Early Years SEND advisors and Local Authority Inclusion team.

Approved by Trustees in January 2019

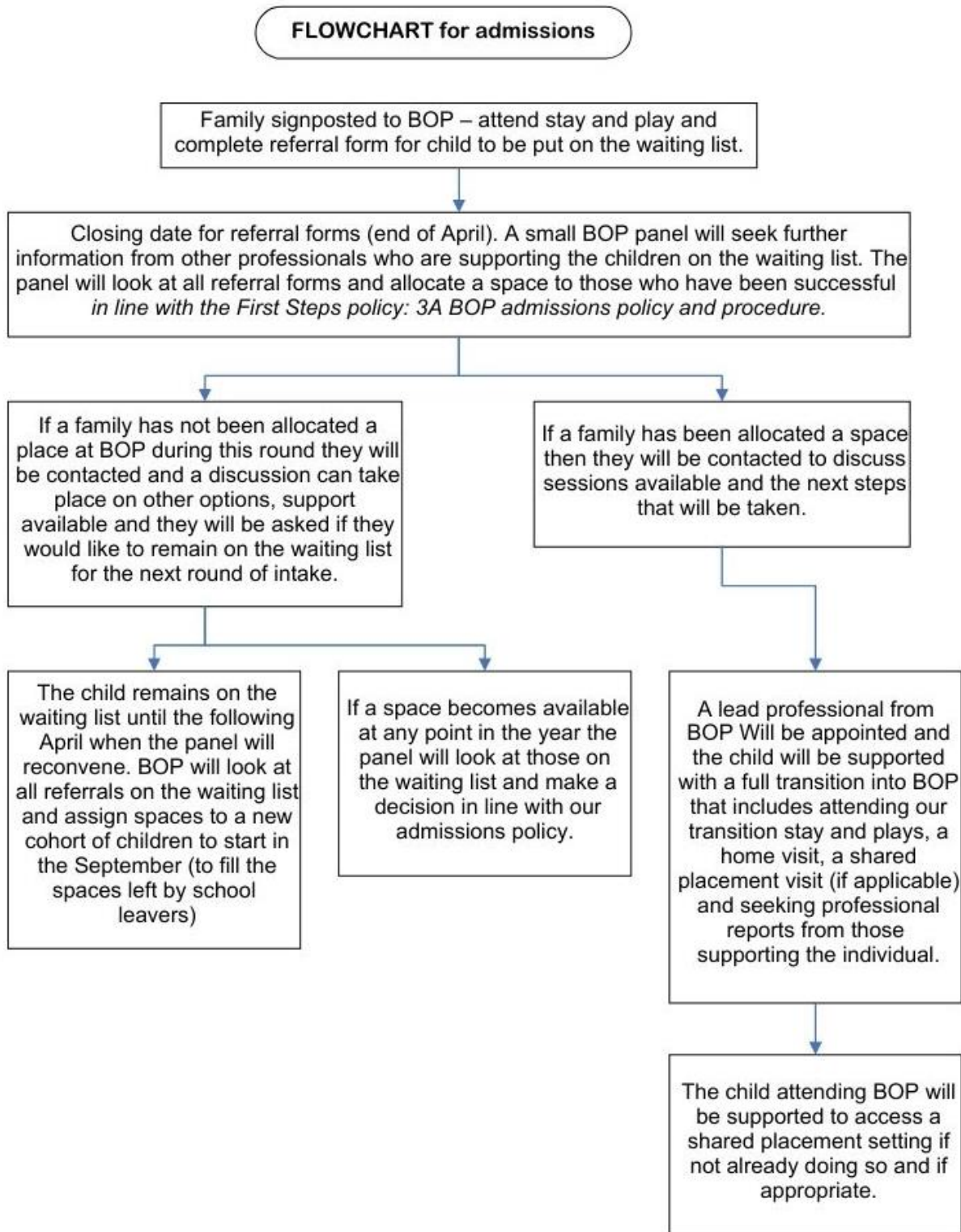
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Reviewed by SMT April 2019
Reviewed by SMT April 2021
Reviewed by SMT April 2022
Reviewed by Stef Walbyoff February 2023
Approved by Trustees April 2023

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Appendix 1



Appendix 2

First Steps (Bath)

Bath Opportunity Preschool Admissions Criteria

These criteria are used to ensure that spaces at BOP are allocated fairly and that every child receives the correct support to meet their needs at the right time.

- Children with complex needs who are having professional support. (For example: physiotherapy, occupational therapy, visual or hearing support)
- Children with a range of sensory needs
- Children who are likely to reach the level of requiring an Education, Health, Care needs assessment / plan (EHC)
- Children living in B&NES
- Wider family needs

Appendix 3

First Steps (Bath)

Bath Opportunity Preschool exceptional circumstances:

Where a child's needs are not able to be met in a mainstream setting, an application may be made in consultation with specialist health providers and other key stakeholders, including the SEN team to agree on a case-by-case basis if all a child's allocated funding can be used at BOP. (See criteria below to assess exceptional circumstances). An offer of up to 15 hours per week for 3- and 4-year-olds and 12 hours for 2-year-olds, term time only can be made.

All exceptional circumstances decisions will be made in consultation with specialist professionals working with the child, the SEN Team and discussed at the Early Years Specialist Educational Needs and Disability Inclusion Panel (SENDIP) for sign off. Each situation will be considered on a case-by-case basis and will be reviewed every three months by BOP with an update brought back to SENDIP (information for SENDIP can be found on the B&NES local offer).

Criteria to meet exceptional circumstances.

- Where a child's needs are complex and are not able to be met in a mainstream setting and a shared placement is impractical even with relevant support.
- Where specialist professionals involved with the child agree it would be beneficial for them to attend BOP for additional hours above the standard offer.
- A place is available in a session that meets the child's needs.

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Appendix 4

First Steps (Bath)

Bath Opportunity Preschool step-down process – when support from BOP allows children to access a shared place/full entitlement in a mainstream setting.

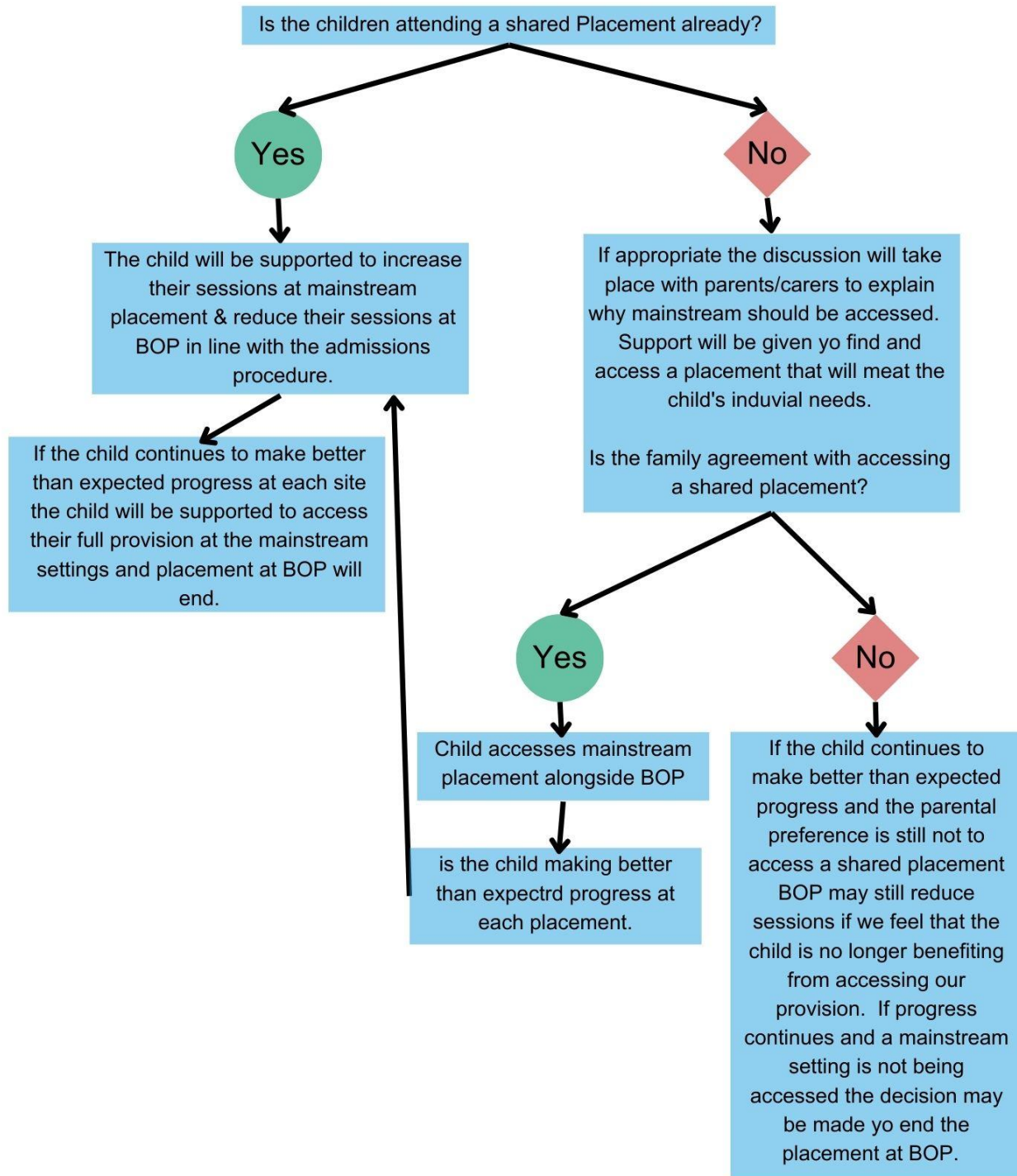
A key aim of the service is to support parents and families and mainstream settings to welcome and include children with SEN, for both parents and mainstream settings to be confident. Consequently, there will be regular reviews of the progress of children accessing BOP to determine whether the placement continues to meet their learning and developmental needs. This process ensures that each child is supported to make progress and achieve positive outcomes in line with the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum and the SEND Code of Practice 2015.

- Children may make significant progress, or their needs may change whilst they are placed at BOP and as a result they may benefit more from interaction with children in a mainstream setting. This may mean that children making progress will be identified to access a shared placement/full entitlement in a mainstream setting, to best meet their needs in the future.
- Where a mainstream setting develops ability, the child will be expected to use all their early years entitlement at their mainstream setting.
- Formal reviews will be carried out on a regular basis (at least once per three months) and informed by contributions from parents/carers, as well as any other professionals supporting the child, to ensure that appropriate planning, support, and intervention is in place.
- The Local Authority will be always involved in this process to ensure the best possible provision is identified and transition is supported. Children moving from the provision should be supported to do so with a robust transition, planned carefully with sufficient time to ensure a smooth transfer from one setting to another.

See explanatory flow chart.

Step down procedure

If a child is making better than expected progress at BOP then the following steps will be applied.



If you are unhappy with a decision to end a child's placement at BOP please refer to the First Steps compliments and complaints process or speak to the Head of Education Commissioning Education Inclusion Service Bath & North East Somerset Council

Email: Olwyn_Donnelly@bathnes.gov.uk

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