



The Lioncare School Policy for Admissions, Exclusions and Disruptions of Placement 2019-20

| Policy Type and Title | Related Documents | Related Legislation and guidance | Author | Consultation | Curriculum Links | Date Created | Date for review |
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| Admissions, Exclusions and Disruptions of Placement | This policy relates to the Behaviour, Sanctions and Anti Bullying Policy | The Independent School Standards | Sara Fletcher | The Executive Director The Assistant Director for Care and Support The Referrals coordinator The Deputy Head Teacher The adult team at The Lioncare School | All | Dec 17 | August 18 (completed SF) August 19 (Completed SF/CB) Next review August 20 |

Introduction

The Lioncare School is a small and specialist setting which takes great care to nurture a community that can successfully live and learn together.

Therefore each and every child and young person is subject to an admissions procedure best suited to their individual situation and needs. This policy sets out the general framework under which children and young people are considered and chosen for admission to our school.

A Child Centred Community

Central to the therapeutic education model practiced at the Lioncare School is the belief that an individual child can only have damage from their earliest years addressed in a setting that allows for relatedness to others. Our practice is based on Psychosocial Theory, influenced by Group Relations thinking, informed by the work of Klein, Winnicott, Bion, Bowlby, and Hinshelwood amongst others. In this way, the model used at The Lioncare School resembles the Therapeutic Community Approach¹. The idea at the heart of the model is one of equality between people and of the capacity in each of us to help and heal each other and to contribute to each other's development. It emphasises the quality of communication between adults and children (and between the adults), and on the connections between the help provided to individuals and the overall task with the whole group. Therefore, the key areas we are constantly attempting to nurture in the children at The Lioncare School (and the adults working with them) is the ability to be honest, open and reliable with each other, and willing to find ways to communicate difficulties and problems more effectively and to begin to take responsibility for their own actions, decisions and lives. It is our firm belief that our Therapeutic Curriculum based on the following five principles is a protective mechanism for keeping our children and young people safe both in school and over their journey to interdependence.

Attachment: Children and young people attending The Lioncare School need to feel a healthy sense of belonging. They are encouraged to become full members of a group that values them and gives them something to value. This is a fundamental first step in the feeling of self-worth necessary for learning to begin and it also means that they will not accept being treated badly by others and will speak up for themselves, trusting others to hear them. They will begin to accept that a reliable adult can hear about unpleasant experiences without blaming or rejecting the child. The low self-worth will contribute to risk taking behaviours online and a vulnerability to those who use the internet to exploit others. All adults should be aware that traumatized children are more vulnerable than their chronological peers.

Containment: Safety is paramount for our children and young people. All children and young people have a need to experience an appropriate degree of consistency, predictability, and regularity in their daily lives, and it is this that promotes a child or young person's sense of being 'safe' and is a prerequisite for children and young people developing the ability to retain new facts and skills (i.e. 'learning'). Our children and young people have

often had limited experience of this. When the child recognises what feeling safe is like they can begin to identify those things that were and are not safe and begin to want to protect themselves in healthy ways. This includes children and young people understanding that adults will uphold all boundaries around on line usage.

Communication: Children at The Lioncare School need to see that openness is important in moving forward and that the adults can work honestly and respectfully with everything they need to communicate. In school this means teaching socially appropriate communication is more successful when adults show they can understand and manage less positive communication. Our children have often had early experiences that have deprived them of knowledge of the wider world and of different communities and therefore online worlds can be enriching and reparative in these areas but all adults must be aware that children and young people need to be taught the conventions of online communication in order to stay safe.

Involvement: The children and young people attending The Lioncare School learn about "growing-up" by experiencing the interdependency of participation in individual and group learning. In school this means a number of different activities are planned each week to give new experiences at the right level for each child; these can be very small step achievements , but by finding value in them self-worth grows and the capacity to assert choice. Adults must stay attuned to when online activity is an enhancement to this or used by a young person to defend against involvement.

Agency: Agency can be defined as the acquiring of skills, actions, medium, or means by which to accomplish things. As children and young people move through the school they grow closer to taking control of their lives and learning post-16 and need to experience both success and failure to do so. This also means that as children and young people progress through the school they are actively encouraged to take up roles and positions of increasing responsibility and authority through making and evaluating decisions. This means greater online autonomy can be planned for as young people reach the capacity to manage this and adults are clear on how they will be able to evaluate the success of any such steps.

We believe this ethos, in partnership with the robust procedures detailed below, informs an environment where children learn to keep themselves safe, demand safety from others and in which adults are attuned to how to work safely and how to spot the earliest possible indicators that things are not safe. Children learn to recognise and manage risks. in different situations and then decide how to behave responsibly, judge what kind of contact is acceptable and unacceptable and recognise when pressure from others (including people they know) threatens their personal safety and wellbeing and develop effective ways of resisting pressure. These skills are meaningful online and in real life.

'Acknowledgment is duly given to the work of Adrian Ward, Senior Lecturer in the department of social work at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust. 5

² Haigh, R. (2013) "The quintessence of a therapeutic environment", *Therapeutic Communities: The International Journal of Therapeutic Communities*, Vol. 34 Iss: 1, pp.6 - 15

Referral

The overriding criteria for The Lioncare School to choose to admit a child or young person to our school is evidence that our therapeutic education model will be effective in meeting their academic, social and emotional needs and improve their outcomes over time, and that this work can be undertaken without undue negative impact on those children and young people already in placement. Children must be aged six or over upon enrolment and can be placed here until they are in Year 11. Usually, but not exclusively these children have had traumatic early experiences that have impacted on their education and working with this in a psychologically informed manner is the heart of our specialty. Usually, but not always, children and young people have an additional diagnosis of an additional need –typically an autistic spectrum condition, ADHD or a mild or global learning disability/difficulty. Key to our admissions system is establishing that our approach will meet all needs or whether a specialist SEN setting would be more appropriate.

There are two main routes for referral to The Lioncare Care School

- 1) For a joint education/residential placement

Initial enquiries for referrals made by local authorities should be made to the Referrals Coordinator at our administrative headquarters:

Lioncare House,
58a Livingstone Road,
Hove,
East Sussex BN3 3WL
T: 01273 720424
E: referrals@lioncare.co.uk

The Referral coordinator will liaise between the Assistant Director For Care and Support and The Assistant Director For Education and Learning (Head Teacher) and the relevant referring authorities to make an initial assessment of the viability of the referral, gather information and coordinate the completion of any procedure such as Placement Proposal Form (or similar) that may be used by the referring authority and will ensure all contracting arrangements are in place. As part of this process contact with Virtual School/SEN Teams will be established.

2) For School Only Placements

Many of the children and young people who attend the Lioncare School live in the organisation's Therapeutic Children's Homes in Hove but we also work successfully with a number of families who have fostered or adopted children, look after children from their extended family or who feel that an alternative approach to education is necessary for a child or young person. Assessing these referrals requires close work between the school, the family, the placing local authority and any other agency that may be involved in supporting or funding the placement. The majority of these referrals come via local authority purchasing/commissioning systems and follow these procedures.

Anyone who is interested in a school only placement outside of such a system needs to email schooladmin@lioncare.co.uk with the following information:

Their name, role and contact information.

The child or young person's family situation and date of birth.

An overview of the educational history and current placement (if any) of the child or young person.

The most recent Education Health and Care Plan for the child or young person, along with any recent assessment reports.

The name and contact details of the placing local authority's SEN caseworker if known.

The Head Teacher will then arrange a telephone conversation to assess the viability of the placement, including the role of the local authority. If appropriate, the next step is a meeting with the young person and a visit to the school. A series of meetings will be planned appropriate to the situation of the young person- these include an observation in the current school, meetings at home and at The Lioncare School. Over these meetings the whole network around the child, including key family members, will be involved. Simultaneously the school will work with the placing authority to establish that all relevant information has been shared. As The Lioncare School's primary role is to work with children with disrupted early years it is likely that social care documentation may be requested. If such requests are refused it may be that assessment for a place at the school cannot be continued.

If these stages indicate the placement is likely to be successful then it is usual that the school will need to be named on the Education, Health and Care Plan if one is in place. As each authority has different arrangements for this a planning meeting will be held to determine next steps.

Refusal of Placement

The Lioncare School will only offer a placement to the referring authority or family where we feel we can reasonably expect to meet the child's assessed and recognised needs. The Lioncare School is not able to offer placements for children with severe or profound learning disability, severe sensory or cognitive impairment, or who have a severe physical disability requiring specialist and/or a high level of nursing or health care. Whilst it may transpire through the course of a placement (following admission) that a child is experiencing mental health problems, The Lioncare School is not intended as positive placements for those children with clinically diagnosed and severe mental health disorders. We would consider a placement in a healthcare setting to be more suitable and appropriate. All families and agencies should note that whilst restrictive physical intervention is used as a last resort in some situations we are not a secure setting. Similarly, we cannot offer placements for children who present on admission with drug or alcohol dependence, but would endeavour to work through such issues, alongside other professional agencies, should a child develop dependencies

during the course of their placement. Due to the nature of our therapeutic ethos and its basis in building secure attachments we are unlikely to take children into Years 10 and 11 who are not also within our therapeutic residential settings.

We will also refuse placement if our Initial Impact Risk Assessment indicates the placement would be detrimental to the school community and if families or carers refused to sign or work within our home/school agreements.

Once a placement has been agreed and offered the Lioncare School would expect an Individual Placement Agreement to be signed before placement commenced. In the case of completely private or alternative arrangements other contractual arrangements will be established.

Beginnings at The Lioncare School

When a referral to The Lioncare School has been accepted, the following procedure is followed:

Where the child has recently moved to one of our residential children's homes, they and their caseworker are invited to visit the school. There may be a period of between 1-2 weeks between admission to the home and a visit to the school to allow the child time and space to become familiar with the home setting before being introduced to the school setting. They are introduced to the adults at the school, and the other children. One child is encouraged to show the visiting child around, and presents them with a handbook, which the visitor will be encouraged to read at their leisure with their Caseworker once they return to the home setting.

A date for the child to begin attending the school will be agreed at the admissions conference. The start date is decided on an individual case basis, and is dependent on the child's needs and abilities, giving due recognition to the difficulty in readjustment they may be experiencing if they have recently moved in to one of our residential therapeutic children's homes. It is usually expected that a child would be ready to begin attending the school within 3-6 weeks of moving to the home. However, this may be increased if it is agreed that the child requires a longer period in which to settle in to the home environment.

For children who are referred for school only placements the above procedure will be personalised dependent on the child or young person's individual circumstances.

Over the first eight-weeks of the child's placement at The Lioncare School, information relating to their ability, academic attainment, presenting behaviour, emotional functioning, social skills, and learning difficulties is ascertained and forms the basis of a Baseline Assessment Report; this allows the child and the adults teaching and supporting them in the school to develop a baseline measurement (i.e. how was the child when they started at the school) against which their relative progress during their time at the school can be compared. During the Baseline Assessment period, the teaching staff and learning support assistants continually monitor the child's ability to cope in their environment, and re-evaluate the attendance level accordingly. The exact arrangements for the Baseline Assessment may change depending on whether the child is undergoing or has undergone statutory assessment for an Education, Health and Care Plan. If appropriate arrangements will be made for assessment by our consultant Educational Psychologist, Speech and language Therapist and Occupational therapist subject to the correct permissions.

Disruption and Exclusion

The following factors may affect the decision as to whether The Lioncare School is an appropriate setting for meeting the needs of an individual child or young person:

- Lack of cooperation, support for our specialist ethos and working practices or active sabotage of the placement by the family, residential placement or other setting
- The child displaying high levels of excessive and extreme violence, or sexually harmful behaviours towards adults or other children
- Confirmed propensity towards Arson (fire setting) by the child
- The child clearly and consistently stating they do not want to attend The Lioncare School and acting in such a way that indicates continuation of the placement would be detrimental to their well-being.

The Lioncare School does not use temporary or permanent exclusion as a behaviour management measure. Children who are in need of therapeutic education have in the past often broken down multiple placements through behaviour that has been deemed as unacceptable. A policy of exclusion

carries the risk that the emotional difficulties underlying this behaviour, and the inherent communications being conveyed by the behaviour, are not given due consideration. Individual children may have used a cycle of disruption and exclusion to withdraw from the intense challenge of being educated. Therefore, we believe exclusion is inherently un-therapeutic as they can replicate and deepen unhealthy feelings and experiences of rejection and abandonment.

Adults at the Lioncare School will wherever possible support children to stay in school when their behaviour becomes challenging, using a range of strategies to keep everyone safe and to maintain a suitable learning environment for others. Close liaison between home and school may result in a child having a brief “cooling-off” period out of the building if necessary; where possible and safe to all. We endeavour to avoid giving out the message that children who can’t manage are sent home.

Part of the decision making around cooling off periods will be made in consultation with the wider Lioncare Community-for example if extremes of behaviour are causing a disruption to the learning of others then home and school may plan for a supported reintegration over time involving additional community meetings for all or part of the school. If challenging behaviour has reached the threshold where the police have been asked to intervene (see our Positive Behaviour Management Policy) there may be a period out of school where the primary purpose is to allow residential staff, family members or other agencies to support the child in understanding the processes they are involved in, reconciliation and reparation will be planned into this period.

Where possible the school will use a restorative justice meeting to address challenging interpersonal behaviours and while the intention will be to do this the day after an incident if all parties cannot attend a risk assessment will be carried out to establish if it is safe for all children to attend in the interim.

There is some behaviour that may require that a professionals’ meeting be called to determine the best ways to support the placement or to review whether the placement continues to be in the best interest of all involved. These may include

- An unacceptable risk to other children or adults

- Fire setting
- Persistent absconding resulting in high-risk situations.
- Disagreement in the network around the child

If a child is in need of frequent cooling off periods due to persistent damage and harm to others The Head Teacher will discuss the situation with the Senior Leadership Team and Executive Director in order to decide whether a Disruption of Placement meeting should be held.

It is the stated intention of The Lioncare Group to maintain placement stability for every child where possible, through being 'good enough' to work with and alongside the child in reaching a healthy resolution to difficult situations, however hard this may be. This is what makes The Lioncare Group a truly "outstanding" provider.

However, it is an unfortunate but important fact that some children will only respond to, and are actively searching for, the ultimate boundary of having their placement ended. For these individuals, other systems may be an insufficient deterrent, and their levels of unacceptable behaviour and/or actions will continue or increase despite the efforts of the adults caring for them.

In this situation the Head Teacher will authorise initiation of the Disrupting Placement Procedure. The procedure below is based on the child being residential with us. When this is not the case the same steps will be taken but the details modified for the circumstances of the individual child and their network. In such circumstances the Assistant Director for Education and Learning will take on the role allocated to the Assistant Director For Care and Support below.

The Assistant Director For Care and Support is responsible for organising discussion between all relevant agencies (including professional consultants, the placing authority, the child's IRO, the team, and the child) regarding the continuing appropriateness of the current placement. If it is felt that the child's placement is breaking down, that all possible intervention and means have been sought and exhausted, and that the behaviour and actions of the child meet the criteria set out below, the Disrupting Placements procedure is enacted.

The procedure involves a 3-stage process of formal meetings of increasing severity:

Stage 1: 1st Disruptions Meeting

The first meeting is called in response to, and only after, all possible alternative interventions to help the child to moderate and manage their behaviour have been tried and exhausted, and when it is recognised that the child's placement is potentially breaking down i.e. the current situation leaves the team of adults feel their ability to continue caring for and supporting the child is in question.

Stage 2: 2nd Disruptions Meeting

If the child's level of unacceptable behaviour or actions continues after the first meeting, then a second meeting is called. At this meeting the placing authority will be advised to begin seeking an alternative placement for the child, in preparation for the possibility that the child's current placement may need to be ended, and in order to maintain good practice by reducing uncertainty and promoting good planning through ensuring continuity of care for the child in a placement that can best meet their needs.

Stage 3: Final Disruptions Meeting

In the event that the child's behaviour or actions warrants a third and final meeting, the Director will give notice to all interested parties that the child's placement within The Lioncare Group is terminated and that the child needs to be moved to the alternative placement identified at the second meeting. Time scales and arrangements for this move will be formalised at this meeting.

Criteria for Initiation of the Disrupting Placement Procedure:

- Continued and persistently high levels of violence and aggression towards adults or other children employed / residing within The Lioncare Group.
- Continued and persistent levels of absconding that is deemed to place the child in situations of unacceptable danger or risk.
- Continued and persistent refusal to attend their education setting.

- Continued and persistent creation by the child of situations in which the team can no longer guarantee their safety and welfare or that of others and/or that creates unacceptable levels of disruption and distress to other learning and working within The Lioncare Group or the surrounding community.

Aims and Objectives of the Disrupting Placement Procedure:

1. Empower the child to make decisions and choices affecting the continuation of their placement within The Lioncare Group.
2. Provide the child with a clear message that their current behaviour or actions are unacceptable and that their placement within The Lioncare Group may be ended.
3. Provide the child with an opportunity to review the consequences of their actions with an aim to recognising and accepting the boundaries being set.
4. Formally recognise and acknowledge the severity of the current situation for both the child, and for the other children and adults being affected by the disruptions.
5. Assist the child in owning for themselves the current phase of their life history, and provide them with more healthy and positive alternatives and opportunities to re-engage in their process of care and education to promote better outcomes for themselves.

Exemptions from the procedure:

Certain specific behaviours or actions are considered too great a risk to the safeguarding, welfare, and protection of the child, other children in placement, adult carers / educators, the home or school, or the surrounding community.

In these cases, the Disruptions procedure outlined above will not be initiated. Instead, the Director will terminate the child's placement with immediate effect and work with the placing authority to secure an appropriate alternative emergency placement within 72 hours. The Lioncare Group will endeavour to contain and manage the child to the best of its ability during this 72 hour period.

The behaviours or actions that this section refers to are as follows:

- Directions from the Police to end the placement (may be due to persistent criminal activity, high risk of sexual exploitation, and the child persistently going missing from care and deemed to be highly vulnerable).
- Recognition that the child is in need of interventions greater than can be provided by The Lioncare Group (i.e. The Lioncare Group is no longer an appropriate placement to meet the child's needs).
- Allegation of the child perpetrating sexual abuse against another child in placement: The Lioncare group would attempt to work with the situation without the need to permanently remove the child. However, it is recognised that Safeguarding procedures may well determine otherwise.

Ending Education Only Placements

Once the school has reached second level disruptions meeting the Lioncare School would inform the placing authority of their concerns and indicate that they may no longer be able to meet needs. If possible and with the agreement of all parties the second disruptions meeting would also be an emergency review of the Education, Health and Care Plan, this would ensure all agencies are involved in ascertaining the best next steps and minimises any risk of the child being out of education. In most cases the child will stay on roll until a transition to a new provider is underway and the Lioncare school will work positively with requests to provide education off site, or via a third party tutoring service during these transitions unless the well being of adults or young people is in some way compromised.