

Broadening Educational Pathways for **Looked After** and **Vulnerable Children**

Providing care-experienced young people with opportunities to attend a boarding or independent school



Message from the CEO

There are over 1,000 independent and boarding schools across the UK. In 2020 the Department for Education announced their aim to ensure far more young people with social care experience can attend these schools, when social workers and Virtual School Headteachers consider this in their best interests.

This, the “Broadening Educational Pathways (BEP) for Looked-After and Vulnerable Children” scheme, is managed on the DfE’s behalf by Royal National Children’s SpringBoard Foundation (RNCSF).

We are passionate about widening access for young people to the independent and boarding sector and have hundreds of schools in our ‘accredited schools network’. These schools are all deeply committed to funding a large majority of the school fees profile associated with these placements under their bursary schemes, but also, and as importantly, to the ongoing training for their pastoral teams and teachers in attachment and trauma-based practices and Adverse Childhood Experiences. For most of these schools this is not entirely new for them – they are staffed by compassionate, dedicated members of staff with knowledge and experience of supporting young people to thrive from a range of socio-economic circumstances, ethnic and cultural backgrounds and childhood experiences. And they want to do so for more young people facing challenging circumstances.

We know that a boarding education can provide opportunities for many care-experienced young people to flourish: with trusted adults providing 24/7 pastoral care through the boarding house environment; the stability of school placement; and the all-round education on offer, with the provision of on-site co-curricular opportunities.

For others, boarding would not be right. The independent day schools sector can provide a longer school day, specialist teaching in non-facilitating subjects (arts, drama, music etc.), smaller class sizes, more dedicated tutor time and tailored advice for post-18 higher education routes that will make a huge difference to a care-experienced person’s emotional, social and academic outcomes.

In all cases, we work hard to understand each child or young person so that we can match them to the school that is best suited to their needs and interests. Throughout the course of their bursary placement we work in close partnership with the Local Authority Virtual School, social workers and the school itself to provide help and support to ensure each pupil thrives in their new school environment.

We know that this intervention does not suit all children, but we have really strong evidence that for many children it can be a life-transformative pathway. Our Impact Reports on our website show the benefits of a decade-long endeavour of building up expertise and understanding of the types of child and school where this can work really well. Hundreds of care-experienced young people have now completed their independent or boarding school journeys. We connect this growing body of alumni – ‘SpringBoarders’ – with young people considering/preparing for an independent or boarding school placement, so they can hear about and learn from their experiences.

Through the Broadening Educational Pathways scheme I hope more Virtual Schools, social care professionals and Directors of Children’s Services will consider an independent or boarding school education for the young people in your care.

Ali Henderson
Chief Executive,
Royal National Children’s SpringBoard Foundation

The BEP Scheme at a Glance

At a Glance

Local authority supported referrals for Looked After and Vulnerable Children (LAVC) to access boarding or independent day school places.

In scope for the (state or independent schools) **boarding bursary placements programme** are:

- Children who are Looked After
- Children previously Looked After where there is risk of adoption breakdown
- Kinship care/SGO arrangements
- Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Minors
- Young carers
- Those with significant social care experience (e.g. CPP/CIN)

In scope for the **independent day school bursary placements programme** are:

- Children who are Looked After or previously Looked After

For LAVC not suitable for a boarding or independent day school place RNCSF also run a programme to **prioritise access to independent school facilities/teaching resources outside of school**. Get in touch with RNCSF to learn more about availability of these ‘SpringForward’ schemes in your area.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why boarding?

Our impact evidence (www.royalspringboard.org.uk) shows that boarding places not only improve outcomes for LAVC, but also present a cost-effective alternative to other care arrangements.

How much does boarding cost the local authority?

Some of the BEP-participating schools provide fully-funded placements and so there may be no cost to the Local Authority. For the majority of placements RNCSF will broker transparent co-financing arrangements under the principle that independent schools provide at least 60% fee remission, which can leave a shortfall of anything between £5k-£15k p/a to be met from within local authority budgets. Get in touch with RNCSF to access advice on making the case for funding within your authority (e.g. avoided costs of foster care placements in term-time).

When is an independent day school a better pathway?

For some vulnerable children the effects of boarding on attachments to foster carers would not be suitable. But they would nonetheless benefit from accessing opportunities available in their local independent school. There are hundreds of BEP-participating schools that have committed to prioritising LAC within their bursary schemes for full- or significant (90%-100%) fee remission places. Get in touch with RNCSF to find out which independent schools in your area are committed to the scheme.

Are these schools best suited to the needs of LAVC?

All BEP participating boarding/independent day schools have been ‘accredited’ or quality assured by RNCSF. They have experience of enabling vulnerable children to thrive and a strong pastoral system that RNCSF have supported them to adapt to the needs of LAVC. The schools have in place ‘RNCSF Reps’ as designated teachers with training in e.g. attachment and trauma based practices. These Reps act as focal points for discussions with all agencies involved in the child’s care. RNCSF can provide expertise in the choice of which school would best suit individual children’s academic, pastoral and co-curricular needs and interests.

Our impact in the last year

What the young people say

80%

feel they're making better progress.



"I feel I am making excellent progress in the sense that the things that I didn't know at my previous school I am now being able to revisit."

"There is no way that I would have the opportunities in life, or would have become the person I have, without being able to go to boarding school. Boarding has helped me to understand how to live in a community where everyone cares for each other. It has given me self-confidence, and the belief in myself that I'm not worthless, but can achieve my goals with persistence and patience."



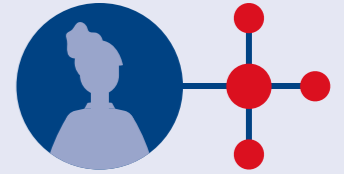
Voice of Virtual School Heads:

For some Looked After Children boarding school is an excellent option. It works best when the whole team supporting the young person is involved in early identification and supportive of the opportunity. Where we have placed [pupils] we have done so in an independent school where staff are trained to be very attachment aware. This coupled with the support from RNCSF has resulted in 100% success for our young people. They have all settled, thrived and achieved. A stable foster placement and consistent Social Worker is ideal but understandably not always possible. The support, advice and guidance from RNCSF has been invaluable.

90+



90+ LAVCs have secured places to attend independent/boarding schools under the BEP scheme in the last year, representing referrals from 60 Local Authorities.



100%

of LAVC are either relatively or significantly engaged in the wider school community.

85%

feel they have discovered new talents, strengths or qualities.

I have even started learning to swim!

75%

of LAVC have improved their attainment (with remaining 25% staying the same).



"She walks around campus beaming and has made good friends."

Voice of Virtual School Heads:

We currently have four children who are looked-after by the Authority in independent school placements. For me it is about investing in each of those children's futures and indicating to them that we believe in their abilities and that their hard work at school is paying dividends. The relationships that they have been able to develop through the strengths-based curriculum on offer in those schools have made all the difference to their emotional and social development. They have certainly benefited from the classroom teaching on offer, but it is more the other things on offer - the outdoor space, the facilities and the care of their tutors that they say are the things they most love about their schools.

85%

feel their aspirations are higher.



"his engagement is at the highest level (outstanding)."

100%

of LAVC have tried new activities.



Case Studies



"A" had been in a number of foster care placements over a period of 5 years from the age of 5 years old. This upheaval, alongside her early years experiences, had given her few opportunities for stability and care. Her foster carer supported the social worker's assessment that a placement in a boarding school offered an opportunity to place the foster care arrangement on a long-term footing (allowing the foster carer to care for much younger foster children alongside), whilst also providing A with the care available in a small boarding school with a nurturing boarding house environment.

RNCSF brokered her placement in one of their accredited schools that has experience of supporting care-experienced young people to thrive. Key staff at the school undertook additional training in Adverse Childhood Experiences and trauma-based practice provided by RNCSF.

Since starting in her placement A has already visibly grown in confidence, her effort and attainment has shown good improvements, and she has taken on a role supporting the tech for the school play as well as in Film Club.

"She is very much at home in the boarding house and has a lovely group of friends"



"B" has been on a Child in Need plan for many years due to concerns around neglect presented by the mental health issues affecting both his parents. He had experienced a number of adverse childhood experiences affecting his ability to thrive at school and develop emotionally and socially. RNCSF worked with B's social worker, parents and later, B, to find a year 7 boarding place where B would be able to build trusted relationships with his Houseparent, have a safe and supportive environment in which to focus on his studies and take part in a plethora of sports. The social worker feels that the placement has dramatically reduced the prospect of B becoming a LAC. Since joining, his attainment has improved, he has thrown himself into the sports opportunities on offer, participating in team hockey, rugby, and cricket and has "been a big influence on the u12A football team."

"As corporate parents we want the best for our children, and for some of those children an independent school is the best pathway for them. Particularly the facilities that they can offer for music, art, sports and drama. There is a broader curriculum sometimes that our children can really benefit from."

Virtual School Head



"K"'s 11-16 years school suggested that he should consider an independent school for his post-16 schooling. Given K's ambitions to go on to University to read Engineering, his Virtual School Head supported his application to RNCSF to broker a placement in an academically selective independent day school that offered both Physics and Design & Technology at A-level. K is really ambitious for his future and speaks of his strong desire that he is "not to be defined by his early years experiences". He is working hard to achieve the GCSE grades needed to take up his conditional place, with preparation support to ensure he continues to grow in his academic confidence prior to starting his bursary place in September.

'After a childhood full of family problems, moving around and bad school attendance, my bursary helped me to see life in a whole different way. It helped me to gain control of myself and my future choices - I was so lucky to benefit from this life-changing opportunity!

Former pupil



Following the death of "M"'s single mum, M was placed in a care arrangement with an extended family member. The opportunity to attend the local independent school was suggested by her social worker as part of the supporting arguments to provide both M and Aunt with the opportunities to secure a stable care pathway. For both, the ability to offer a longer school day, specialist on-site music and drama as well as high-calibre teaching in the subjects that M most enjoys has provided a positive outlook for her future years.



LAVC Boarding/ Independent school placements scheme

The process takes 18 months from initial application to securing a place. This careful lead-in time is crucial to manage child and carer's expectations, and to align with most independent/boarding schools' admissions cycles.

Who?

LAVC (see p.3 for eligible categories) at the natural school entry points of Year 7 or Year 12 (some boarding placements can start at Years 8 or 9).

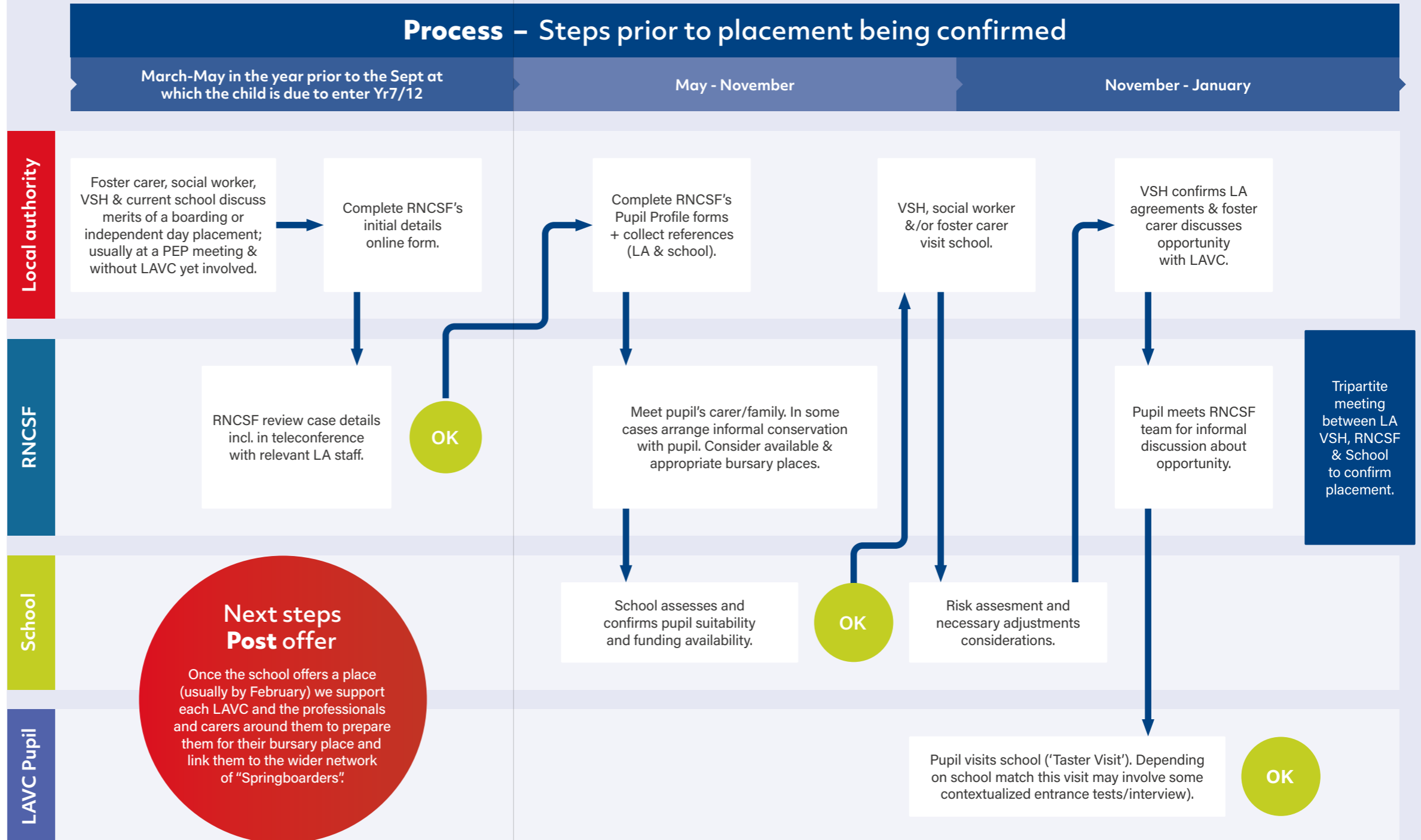
What?

Boarding for LAVC who would benefit from the placement stability/respice that boarding can bring and for those who would, with support, engage in all boarding has to offer.

Day for LAC for whom boarding would not be appropriate (very settled in care placement but who would benefit from longer days, relational infrastructure, co-curricular opportunities etc).

Funding?

60%-110% bursary brokered by RNCSF from school bursary schemes. Any funding shortfall (boarding only) would need to be plugged with LA support up to ~ £15k p/a.



Why independent or boarding school?

Some examples of the circumstances where young people would really benefit from this intervention

- to support a LAVC where there is a parent/extended family member/SGO care order able to provide a loving environment and supportive care during the school holidays but access to boarding in term-time can confirm this as a long-term solution
- to secure continuation of a foster care placement, where the attachments are strong but the foster carer is e.g. elderly, has a disability or is focused on the care of younger foster children
- to provide young carers with an educational and pastoral environment in which to lead a more carefree childhood, where arrangements can be made for their caring responsibilities to be taken on by others in school term-times
- for unaccompanied-asylum seeking minors, where the level of English is not prohibitive to accessing a mainstream education, and sustainable holiday care arrangements can be put in place
- where there is a single parent in a palliative care/with complex medical needs that suggest the child will become looked-after in time, and a boarding placement can offer the introduction of new trusted adults to offer stability through the transition

These are only examples, there are many others for whom this intervention can make all the difference to their life chances. One of the common themes and challenges is to shape the supporting care arrangements that need to be in place for the longer school holidays. Do get in touch to discuss any individual cases.



How to refer or find out more?

Step 1

A professional working with the child (member of the virtual school/social worker/young carer key worker etc) can make an initial enquiry by talking to a member of the LAVC Programme team or via our website.

Step 2

A conversation is held to explore the child or young person's eligibility and suitability.

Step 3

You'll be invited to complete an application on the child or young person's behalf and provide any other useful information. A member of the RNCSF team will visit the child in their home, arrange discussions with the child's current LAC designated teacher (or equivalent) before advising on appropriate and available bursary places. This will depend on school fee remission schemes.

Find out more at
www.royalspringboard.org.uk/our-programmes

Get in touch

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