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| Title: | North West Flexible Purchasing System for SEND |
| Date: | February 2021 |
| For: | Bulletin for Parents and carers |

# Introduction

This is another bulletin to keep you up to date with the development of the North West Flexible Purchasing System for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) school placements.

# Background

The Local Authorities in the North West are developing a contract to be able to source SEND school placements (called a ‘Flexible Purchasing System’) for children and young people up to the age of 25 that have an education, health and care plan.

The Flexible Purchasing System will support placement finding for the following types of schools:

* Independent and non-maintained special schools
* Special Post-16 Institutions

The aim is to establish a regional SEND FPS which will provide consistent quality standards, streamline processes, improve communication and encourage innovation.

Specialist Post-16 Institutions were not included in the first round (Phase 1) and the lots for this type of provision are still being developed.

Three types of school placements will be included in the purchasing system to start with: -

* Day placements,
* 38-week residential placements,
* 52-week residential placements.

Extra services (lots) can be added to the purchasing system in the future to enable innovation. This would be based on feedback on need and demand from commissioners, parents, and providers.

# Progress so far

Since our last bulletin, we have advertised to invite providers to submit a tender and join the FPS.

This has resulted in:

* 27 providers likely to join the FPS in this round,
* 65 schools being included on the FPS,
* 31 residential settings associated with schools being included on the FPS.

We are pleased with this number of providers joining in the first round and there will be subsequent rounds to allow more providers to join.

A contract start date of 1 March 2021 has been set. After this date local authorities can use the FPS to source school placements.

# Next steps

After the FPS start date we will begin to develop Phase 2 to include Specialist Post 16 Institutions. We are planning to work with Natspec on this and will consult with local authorities and Parents and carers as part of this process.

We hope to be able to include Post 16 provision on the FPS by November 2021. However, as local authorities and providers are currently under additional pressure it may be that we are unable to meet this timetable.

# Further information

There will be information on the FPS made available on the NWADCS website: [www.nwadcs.org.uk/regional-purchasing-systems](http://www.nwadcs.org.uk/regional-purchasing-systems), please note that some content is restricted and can only be accessed by local authorities.

If you have any queries or would like to provide feedback, please contact placementsnorthwest@bolton.gov.uk.

Any feedback on how the FPS is working for parents and carers will be passed to the governance group to consider when they are developing the FPS.

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