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## Executive Summary

# **The enablers and barriers to successful managed moves: The voice of children, caregivers and professionals**

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Commissioned by Together for Children, Sunderland

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## Executive summary

In the Autumn of 2018, the University of Sunderland was commissioned by Together for Children (TfC) to 'investigate the factors that impact upon social and emotional wellbeing of children and young people from 3-16 years in Sunderland City which may lead to exclusion from school'. As part of this research a core arising theme related to experiences of the managed move process. The literature review provided is a synthesis of current and well-established academic research concerning the history and process of managed moves. It also includes a discussion of relationships, effective communication, personalised support, belonging and connectedness and the importance of these for the social and emotional development of children and young people. The review of the literature and primary research also provide the theoretical foundation for a suggested managed moves model for adoption in the City of Sunderland.

The first objective of the research was to elicit the perceptions and experiences of multiple stakeholders including those who the protocol of managed moves aimed to support, that is, those who were deemed to be on the verge of school exclusion. The second objective was to produce a report with supporting evidence to inform strategic provision planning and training for education professionals within the local area of Sunderland. The ultimate purpose was to create a model that exemplifies good practice in managed moves based on working in partnership with children and caregivers and in creating a sense of belonging.

There were 174 individuals who participated in the commissioned research through face to face semi-structured interviews, which discussed the barriers and enablers to mainstream schooling. Of these, 49 referred to the managed move process and included; 20 children and young people (7 of whom also formed an advisory group) 12 caregivers who had children excluded from school, 11 special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs), two health professionals, two secondary and two primary school headteachers. Their responses form the basis of this report.

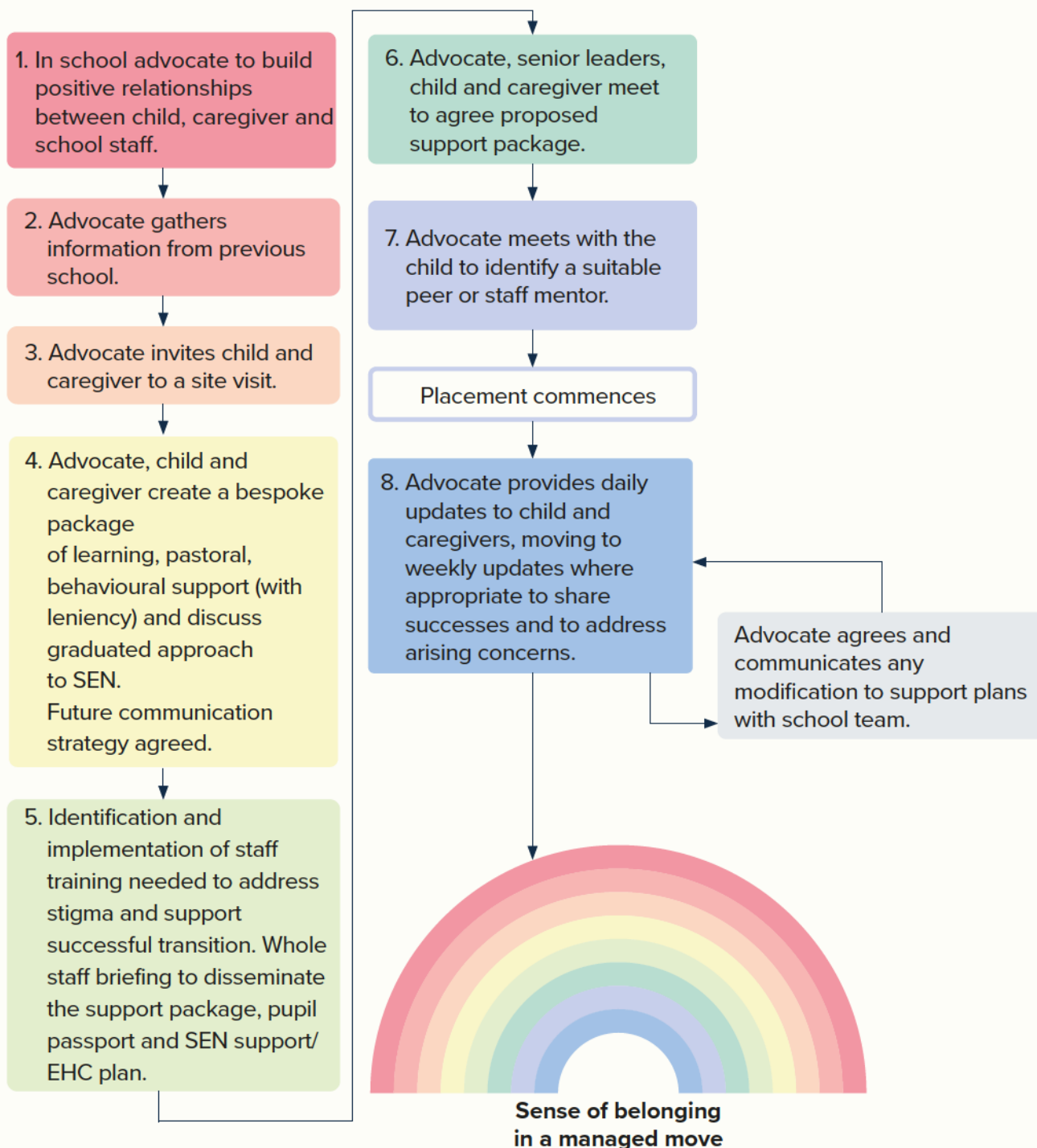
The findings of this research are that the managed move process did not work for these children; some had multiple moves, each one failing, leaving a long term impact on their self-worth. The findings signify that a formalised transition structure that is underpinned by person-centred approaches and thorough knowledge, understanding, and empathy for the child's learning and social, emotional, and mental health needs. The development of enduring relationships with teachers and peers is fundamental to creating a sense of belonging within the receiving school. There needs to be consideration that managed moves are not appropriate for all children; some will inevitably fail due to the unsuitability and ethos of the new placement school.

This research suggests a further barrier to the children succeeding in their new school is due to inflexible behaviour systems. The caregivers and children felt that there was a lack of leniency during the transition period, many of the children are moving to mainstream following placement in alternative provision, and this requires a period of adjustment. Many of the caregivers also felt that their children had unidentified learning and emotional needs. This may be a factor contributing to why the mainstream school placement failed and could explain why managed moves are requested. The failure of managed moves affirms the need for a timely assessment and identification of a child's holistic needs across education and health services to ensure any underlying needs are identified. This would then enable schools to have a better understanding of the child's multifaceted needs and strengths to allow for an evidence-based response to provision and practice. The research indicates that there is a training need in the local area to ensure evidence-based approaches in meeting the varied abilities and needs of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are embedded across all schools and age phases of learning.

The recommendations provided are both local and national with a focus on protecting the wellbeing of children and young people on a managed move. For ease of reading the term 'children' will be used to refer to all children and young people.

## The proposed managed move model

Following analysis of the data and literature review, the following model has been created to illustrate the enablers to successful managed move for all children. This is a sequential model in that it begins with the receiving school identifying a suitable member of staff (potentially the SENCO or pastoral lead) to be an advocate for the child and their caregivers. The role of the advocate is to support the transition process by securing positive and ensuring relationships with staff and peers.



## Recommendations

**Recommendation 1:** The Local Authority to adopt the managed move model in appendix 1, with careful consideration of the appropriateness of this approach for individual children. The model should be incorporated into protocol documentation and cascaded during training with schools. The managed move model should be monitored for impact to see if it increases the number of successful managed moves with a pilot group of children and schools.

**Recommendation 2:** Local training for senior leaders in education to make explicit the legal position for the use of managed moves. One of the recommendations of this training would be to clarify that managed moves cannot be used where a child has additional needs or a disability that the school are unable to cater for.

**Recommendation 3:** Further training for schools on the particular needs of children with SEMH and/or learning needs to ensure effective and timely evidence-based learning and teaching approaches. The training needs to be evaluated for impact by the SENCO and senior leadership teams.

**Recommendation 4:** Early assessment and identification of any underlying special educational needs and/or disabilities before negotiating the managed move. All children need a transition plan, SEN support plan, and where required, an application for an EHC needs assessment. These must be agreed in partnership with the child and caregivers, including reasonable adjustments to support wellbeing, learning and behaviour.

**Recommendation 5:** To implement a monitoring system alongside school exclusions data records to analyse the following:

- The number of managed moves each child has attempted, the number of successes and a narrative outlining the reasons for any failed placement. The records should include the length of time the child was in the school before the termination of the placement.
- The long-term outcomes of children who have experienced managed moves.

### National Recommendations

- To create a national system of recording managed moves to capture the number attempted by individual children, how many succeed, how many fail, the length of time they sustained the placement and a narrative account of why they failed. This evidence will support if there is a need for a thorough review of the management move process.
- Due to the stigma of 'pupil referral units' and 'alternative provision' the terminology should be reviewed with a consideration of the name 'school' or similar regardless of the designation.
- To invest in further research to research the long-term academic and wellbeing outcomes to evidence that the managed move system is an appropriate alternative to school exclusion.

**Sarah Martin-Denham**

March 2020



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