

St John's College Admissions Policy for Admission September 2026

1. Introduction

This policy applies to St John's College which is registered with the Department for Education as an educational placement approved under [section 41 of the Children and Families Act 2014](#) England and Wales. This policy is published on our St John's College website.

The College is owned and run by Ambitious about Autism (AaA) a national charity for autistic children and young people. AaA's vision is for a future where every autistic child and young person can be themselves and realise their ambitions. Our mission is that we stand with autistic children and young people, champion their rights and create opportunities. St John's College is funded through Local Authority fees and voluntary income.

The College is located in Brighton. It has relationships with Local Authorities in London, the home counties and counties surrounding Brighton.

Our admissions processes consider applications in light of duties arising under the Children and Families Act 2014, SEND Code of Practice 2015, the Equality Act 2010, and other relevant statutes where applicable.

To understand the cohort of young people suitable for a college place at our main campus sites or our internship, please visit [Prospectus St. John's College](#)

2. Admissions Criteria

St John's College will admit young people aged 18-25 (residential) and 16-25 (day placement with a primary diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) and who may also have learning disabilities. The College may on an exceptional basis admit a young person without a diagnosis of autism where they demonstrate behaviours frequently associated with autism or who have social communication challenges similar to our autistic learners.

Places are usually taken up at the start of the academic year. By arrangement with the Head of College, places may be accessed at any time of the year where space is available and depending upon the application of the admissions criteria and needs of the young person and other learners.

As part of the process of finalising an EHC Plan, parents/carers/learner¹ have the right to request the Local Authority that maintains the plan to name their preferred choice of school or college (s 38 (2) (b) (ii) Children and Families Act (C and F Act)). Where St John's College is given as a preference, the Local Authority will be required to consult with the Head of College (s 39 (2) C and F Act). The Local Authority is required to name the parent/carers preference in the EHC plan unless it can show one of the following apply (s 39 (4) C and F Act):

- That the proposed placement is unsuitable to the age, ability, aptitude and SEN of the child/young person.

¹ For young people aged 16 or over who have the capacity, under the Mental Capacity Act, to make the specific decision in question.

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- Naming the proposed placement is incompatible with i) the efficient education of other young people in the setting, and/or ii) the efficient use of resources.

Each application to St John's College is considered on an individual basis. In every case, our admissions process evaluates the needs of the individual young person and determines whether the College can meet the special educational needs (SEN), provide the special educational provision (SEP) and meet the outcomes in the young person's EHC Plan with reference to the factors set out above in s 39 (4) of the C and F Act.

For residential learners, in addition to the factors above, the admissions panel will consider the ability of staff to meet the learners care needs and the availability of suitable space.

Additionally, the following factors will be considered:

- Whether the college may need to provide additional support for a young person whose safety or that of others is unusually at risk. This would not necessarily prevent admission. The additional support would be determined by assessment with the cost of the placement adjusted accordingly.
- The distance from the college and the time of travel to school will be considered during the admissions process and any concerns reported.

3. Admissions Process

Parents/carers/learners must be asked by their Local Authority to give their school/college preferences at the time a draft EHC plan is issued. Occasionally there may be other circumstances – whether parent/carer/learners or Local Authority driven – when a new school/college place is sought. We strongly encourage parents/carers/learners and potential learners to visit prior to making a request for a place at St John's College whether directly or through their Local Authority. The details how to book a space for a tour are published on our website. From time to time there may be situations where we are not able to provide onsite visits. In this situation virtual visits and/or question and answer sessions would be provided.

If following a visit, a parent/carer/learner is interested in a place at the college, there are two routes for admission, via a parent/carer/learner request (see Appendix A for main campus and Appendix C for supported internship) or through a Local Authority consultation (see Appendix B for main campus and Appendix D for supported internship). If an application is via parent/carer/learner's request then the applicant should also contact their Local Authority to ask them to consult with us. Where St John's College is given as a preference by parent/carer/learners and that initiates a consultation process by the Local Authority, or where a consultation process is initiated by a Local Authority itself without parental knowledge, we will communicate the decision to the Local Authority and in most instances to the parent/carer/learners unless otherwise advised. As part of the admissions process the views and aspirations of the learner will be considered.

i) The College Admissions Panel

Applications to the College are processed by the Admissions Team and considered by our College Admission Panel. The panel comprises:

- The Head of College
- Curriculum/Operations Managers
- Admissions Manager/members of the Admissions Team

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- Residential Managers
- Any other professional staff required to support the admissions process.

Responses to consultations for a college place are determined by:

- Consideration of the documentation received (i.e., draft or final EHC Plan, Annual Review reports, professional reports);
- Observing the young person where a decision cannot be made on the documentation alone.
- Offering an assessment for applications/consultations for our main campus sites which may be at current school, at home or on campus as described below for a young person, where a decision cannot be made on documentation and observations.
- Reviewing the care needs identified from the paperwork, enquiries and assessment. Offering an invitation to attend a selection event at our supported internship with the programme tutor and job coach for applications/consultations for our supported internship.

Our observations and assessments should ideally be conducted at St John's College. Where this is not possible, individual arrangements can be made including assessment via a home visit or where appropriate a virtual assessment.

In most cases there is no charge raised for the assessment. If the current educational placement is a significant distance outside the Greater London area, requiring extended travel and a potential overnight stay, the College reserves the right to charge the Authority for costs incurred for the assessment using a 'best value' model for travel and subsistence, in line with our Staff Expenses Policy.

The College's Admissions Panel will thoroughly consider each application for a place prior to making a response, and in all cases will respond within the 15-day requirement unless agreed otherwise with the Local Authority.

ii) Outcome of Panel decision

If the College Admissions Panel agrees that College can meet the special educational needs and provision of the young person, a college place is offered and the costings provided to a Local Authority. The offer may contain other conditions which will need to be considered by the Local Authority concerned. We will communicate the decision to the Local Authority and in most instances to the parent/carer/learners unless otherwise advised. All other requests for costings are considered on an individual basis.

The offer of a place is conditional upon funding being approved and confirmed by the relevant Local Authority. Where St John's College is named on an EHC Plan, St John's College will assume that the Local Authority has agreed to fund the place.

If after carefully considering an application, the College Admissions Panel feels it cannot meet the special educational needs and provision of the young person, or if admitting the young person would be incompatible with the efficient education of others, the parent/carer/learner and the local authority will be advised of the outcome of the decision. We provide a right to appeal this decision with our Appeals Panel (please see below). This right to appeal is independent of the right to mediation or to appeal to the First-tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability) set out within the C and F Act and the Special Educational needs and Disability Regulations 2014.

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Where offers of a college place are made these are **not reserved** until such time that a Local Authority notifies the college in writing that they agree to fund the place and the college confirms a space is available. Offers will **automatically lapse** after six months. To request that a place does not lapse, either the relevant Local Authority or parent/carer/learners will need to contact the Admissions Team to ask for the offer to remain open and must provide the reasons why. Prompt consideration will be given to this request. Once an offer is over six months old, the College Admissions Panel reserve the right to carry out a new assessment to confirm the offer of a place. If the College becomes over capacity, it reserves the right to withdraw an offer of a place. Should this occur the Local Authority and parent/carers/learners will be notified as soon as possible.

The college reserves the right to delay the enrolment of a new learner where funding decisions are made by Local Authority after the statutory deadline set out in Regulation 18 of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2015.

Please note if an extension is needed to the programme please see Appendix E, Exceptional Extension to Educational Placements at the College.

4. Reserve List

Where we are unable to offer a college place because we are at capacity (having taken into account our duties under the Children and Families Act and SEND Code of Practice) we may decide to open a reserve list. For a young person to be added to our reserve list, the Local Authority must first have agreed to fund a place at the College. A reserve list will operate for campus, course and class groups. Learners on the reserve list for their appropriate campus and course and class group will be ranked in accordance with the criteria below:

1. Looked after children or previously looked after children;
2. Young people with siblings already attending College (for this purpose, sibling includes natural sibling, step sibling, foster sibling and adopted sibling permanently living at the same address);
3. Young people with a medical or social need who require a place specifically at Ambitious College, as supported with appropriate evidence;
4. The time and date that funding was confirmed by the responsible Local Authority.

If a place becomes available in a campus and course and class group operating a reserve list, the relevant Local Authority and parent/carer/learners will be notified.

5. Funding and Contracting

i) Funding

Our College receives funding from The Department for Education (DfE)

Funding is allocated based on the date that funding was agreed by the Local Authority and the admission date for the young person.

The level of funding required is detailed in the offer letter sent to the Local Authority. The College will negotiate the additional (top-up) funding from the Local Authority commissioning a place and these fees are paid by the Local Authority.

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ii) Contracting

Our college uses the 'National Schools and College Contract' with the Schedule 2 (short form version) and the Schedule 6 for a variation due to General Data Protection Regulation for the contracting of placements together with the Schedule 4 (Arrangements for the Provision of Education, Health and Care in Colleges).

In accordance with the DfE requirements, a contract signed by all parties must be in place prior to the commencement of the placement.

6. Further Information

Website: <https://www.st-johns.co.uk/st-johns-college/>

Phone: 01273 244000

Admissions Team

Phone: 01273 244003

Email: admissions@st-johns.co.uk

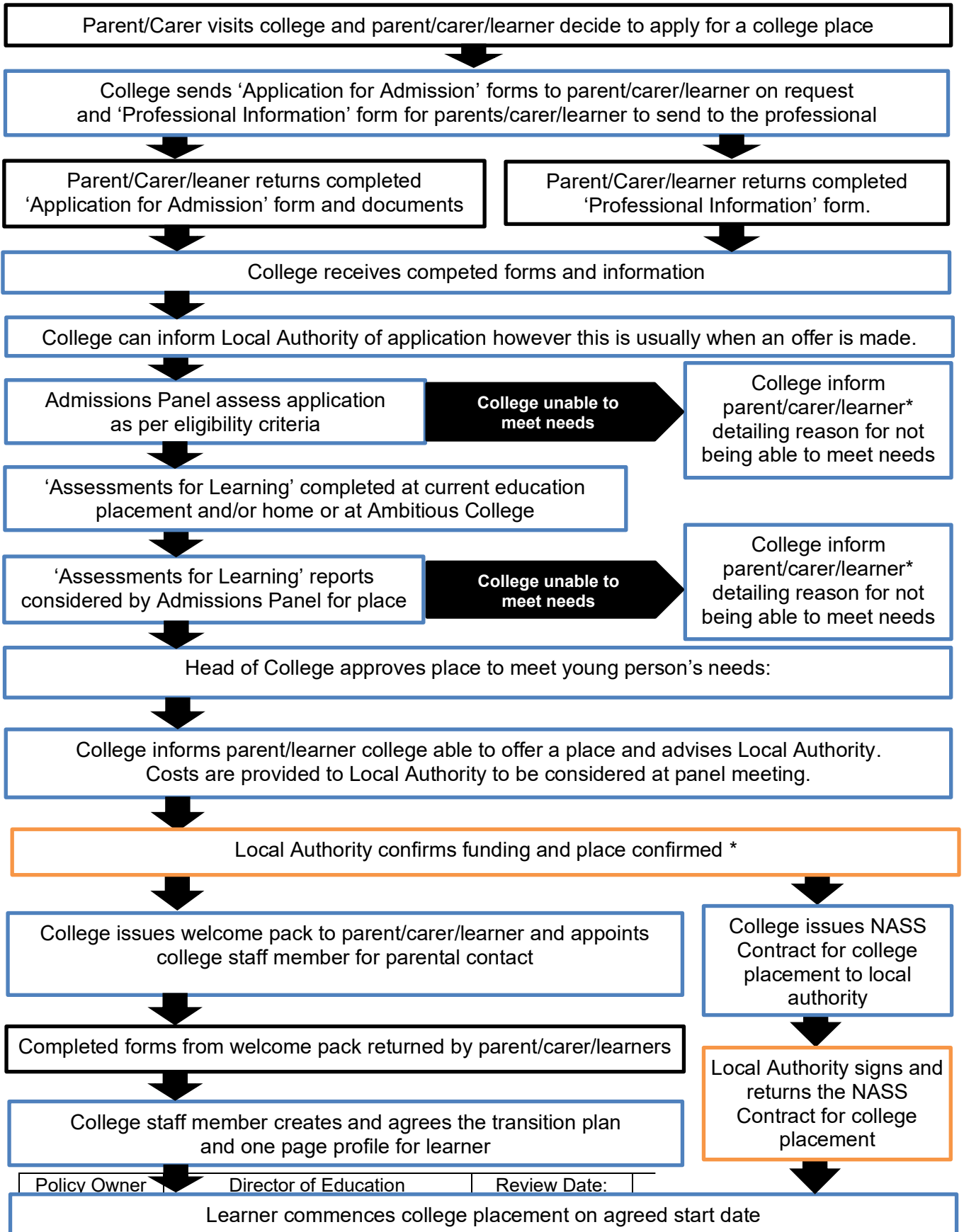
Other college policies and further information can be found via the following [link](#)

- Teaching and Learning Policies
- Adult at Risk Safeguarding Policy and Procedure
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedure
- Compliments and Complaints Policy

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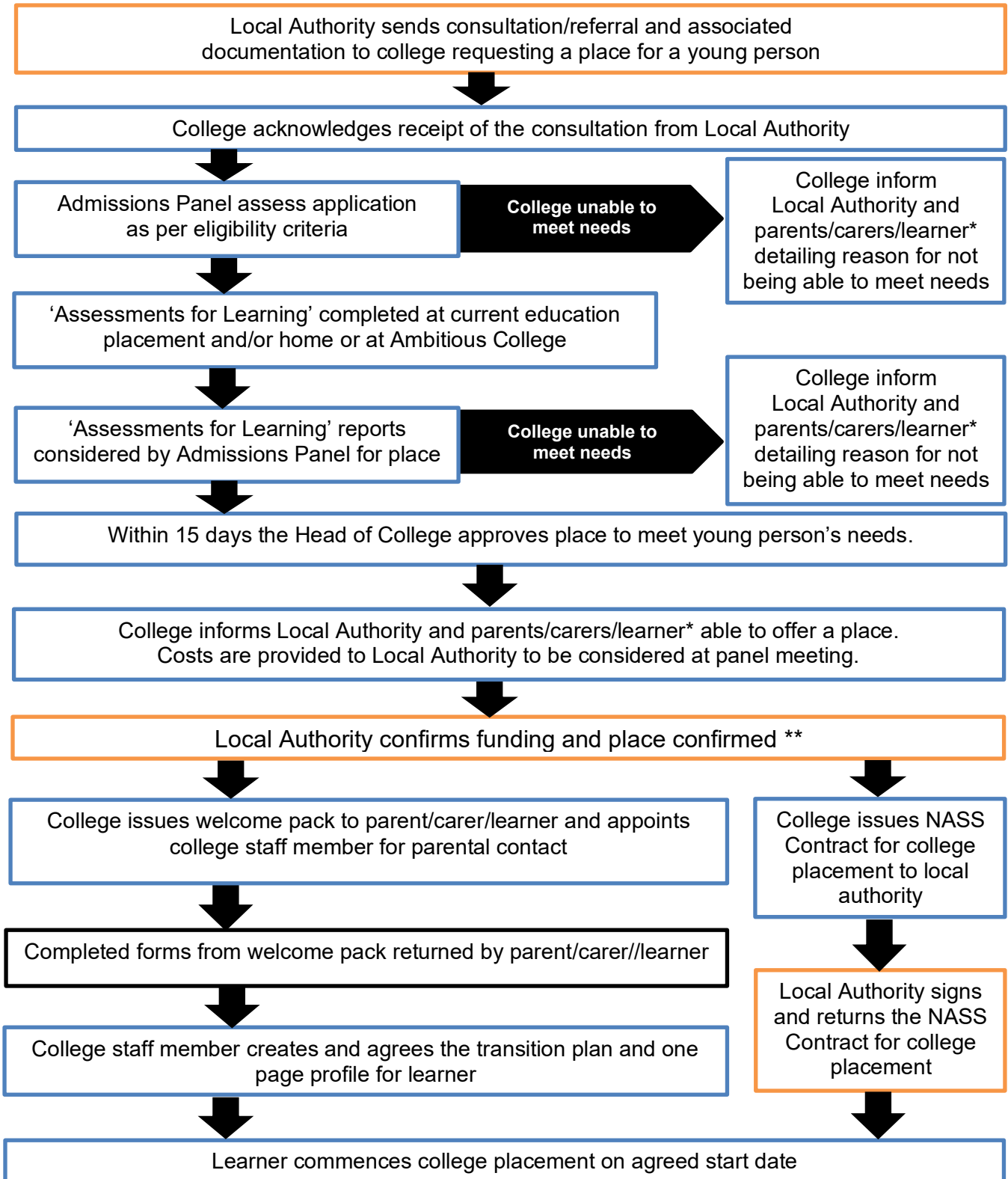
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Appendix A: Application process for main college campus - parent/carer/learner initiated



* If a place is not available then learner could be placed on the reserve list

Appendix B: Application process for main college campus Local Authority initiated

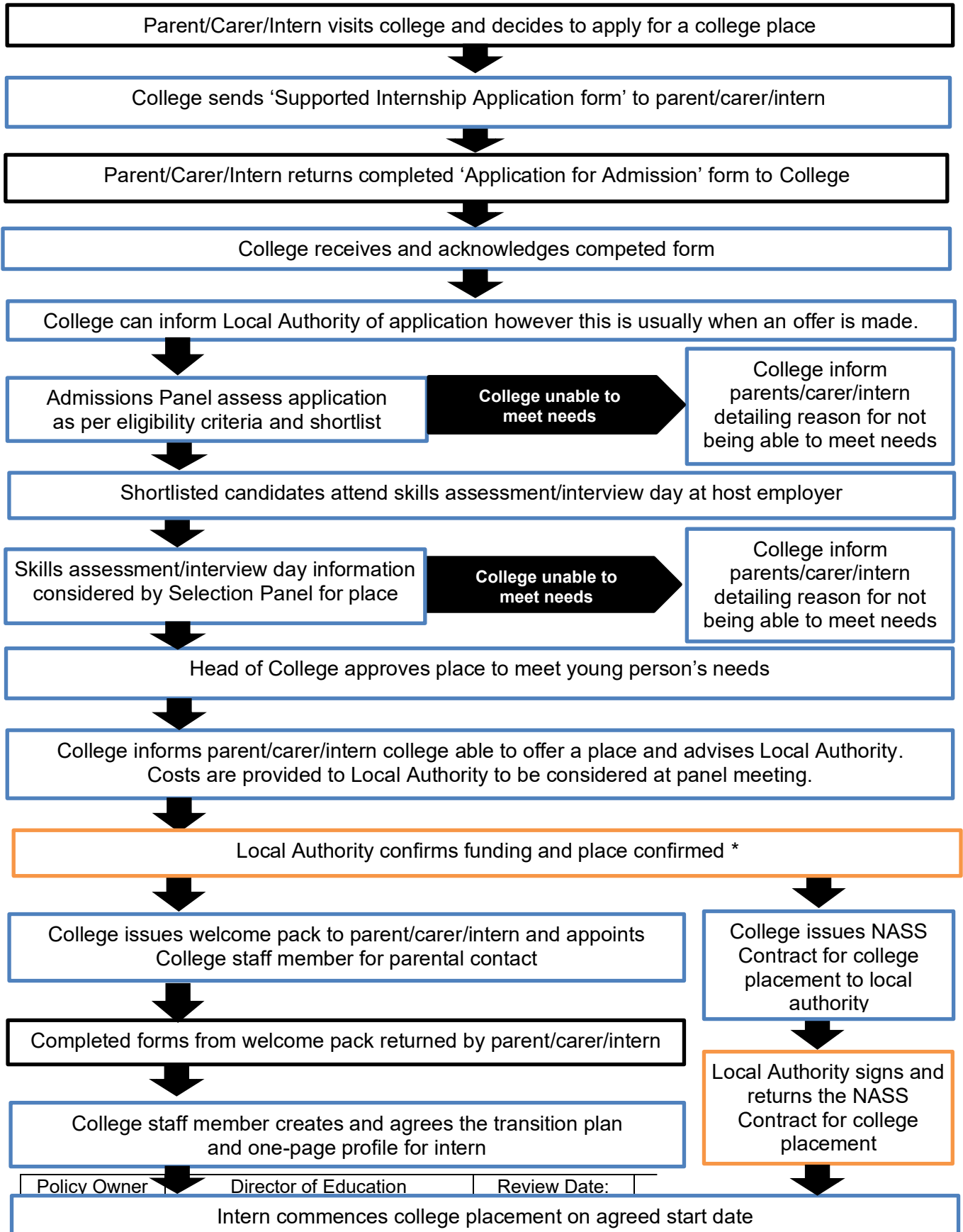


* Where directed by the Local Authority parents would not be informed

** If a place is not available then learner could be placed on the reserve list

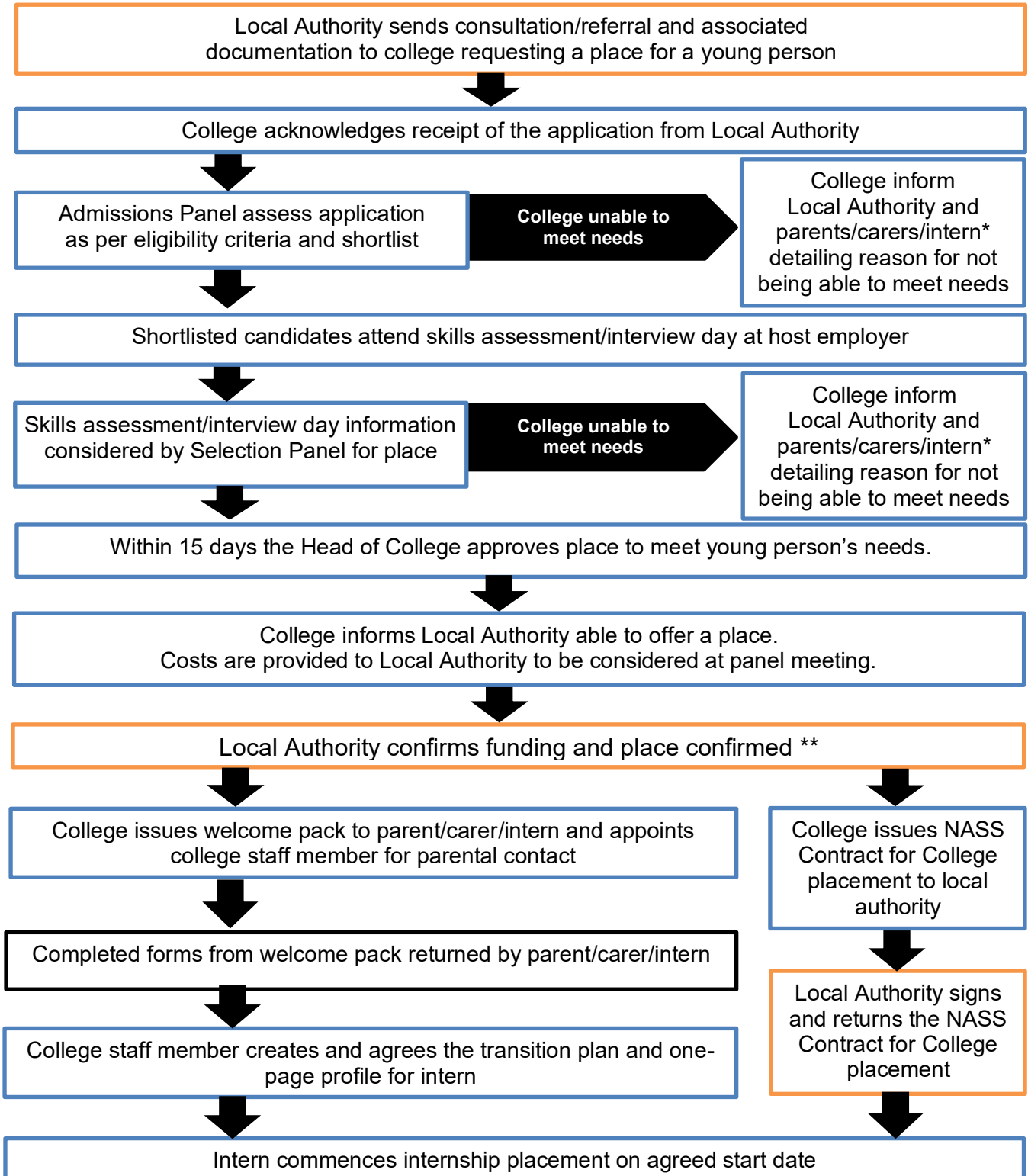
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Appendix C: Application process for supported internship parent/carer/intern initiated



* If a place is not available then intern could be placed on the reserve list

Appendix D: Application process for supported internship Local Authority initiated



* Where directed by the Local Authority parents would not be informed

** If a place is not available then intern could be placed on the reserve list

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Appendix E: Exceptional Extension to Educational Placements at the College

When St. John's College has offered a learner a 3-year learning programme, the expectation is that, on completion of the programme, the learner will be prepared to engage with their next placement or provider. By prepared we mean that the young person has:

- Undertaken all necessary elements, including completion of relevant coursework, unit/credit accumulation, and exams in order to achieve the qualifications they have been working towards, as identified on admission.
- Been supported in identifying areas of interest in vocational, leisure, living and social options – with the aim that a successful transition plan can be followed.
- Been made aware of various future options and supported to make choices about where they would want to live and what they want to do.
- Been able to communicate those choices, and have those choices understood and respected.

Although 3-year learning programmes are offered, it is understood that placements are agreed for one year at a time, and following years are agreed based on progress made, and potential for future progress on the programme as identified through the placement review process.

St. John's Senior Leadership Team (SLT) will only consider extensions to placements (i.e. beyond three years) in exceptional circumstances. Those circumstances may include (but are not limited to):

- A learner being absent from college for a considerable period of time, either due to illness or accident, that significantly impacts on their programme of learning.
- A learner not being offered placement with any other provider or service where other providers have been sought or have fallen through and facing serious disruption such as being made homeless.
- An identified educational need that can be best met at St. John's college and in the best interests of the learner.
- A request from the Local Authority to extend the placement.

To be considered for an extension, learners or their families or representatives should write to St. John's Principal and copy in the Learner Journey Manager (admissions@st-johns.co.uk) to make known their intention of requesting an extension. The letter/email should include clear reasons why the placement should continue, risks associated with not continuing the placement, and describe what benefit continuing the placement would have for the learner. St. John's will acknowledge receipt of a written request within 10 working days (within term time, however this may take longer in holiday time).

St. John's Admissions Panel will provide multidisciplinary advice to the Senior Leadership Team who will make the decision on suitability to extend their placement. SLT's decision will be based on the application made, the learner's personal situation in relation to the above mentioned circumstances, and other available information (such as discussing with keyworkers, families, and other involved professionals). SLT must also take into account:

- Available vacancies - including places that have already been offered to other learners.
- Best interests of the learner – including the learners views and aspirations, any protection or safeguarding considerations, personal /family circumstances.
- Programme content - including suitability, availability, and level of accreditation.

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- Suitable peer group, both residentially and educationally.
- Availability, capacity and suitability of continuing therapeutic intervention.
- Support levels – understanding the expectation from Local Authorities that support levels should reduce over a programme, and that during an extension period support levels may be reduced further.

St. John's will communicate whether the request is agreed in principle or whether it is rejected. This will be done as soon as all relevant information has been collected.

N.B. The decision to agree to extend a placement beyond the expected end date lies with the Local Authority. St. John's College runs a planned three-year programme with progression built in at the end of each year.

Some young people and/or their families request a fourth year.

St. John's remains neutral on this matter and if the young person and/or their families come to an agreement with their Local Authority that a fourth year meets one or more of the criteria below, then St. John's will provide this fourth year. However, if we did not feel this would be in the learners best interests or we did not have any available space, this would be subject to further conversation with the young person/parents carers and Local Authority

Criteria:

That a fourth year:

- can show further progression.
- is qualitatively different.
- compensates for a gap in earlier provision.
- supports the welfare of the young person.
- or another exceptional reason.

Residential placements will only be held for a limited time (date set by St. John's) for learners who are applying for an extension, even if they are undergoing tribunal proceedings.

For further information on our curriculum and cohort of learners please visit our website:

<https://www.st-johns.co.uk/st-johns-college/admissions/>

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