

Toolkit for Schools Commissioning Alternative Provision

Based on the latest statutory guidance and best practices from the Department for Education (DfE) and local authorities, this is a toolkit for schools to use when commissioning alternative provision (AP) to support children.

Toolkit for Schools Commissioning Alternative Provision

Legal Duties and Statutory Duties - Compliance Essentials

Schools must comply with the following legal responsibilities when commissioning AP:

- **Education Act 1996, Section 19:** Local authorities must arrange suitable full-time education for children of compulsory school age who cannot attend mainstream school due to exclusion, illness, or other reasons.
- **Statutory Guidance (DfE, 2025):**
 - Schools must ensure AP is suitable for the pupil's age, ability, aptitude, and any special educational needs (SEN).
 - AP must be full-time unless part-time is agreed as appropriate.
 - Schools must monitor the quality and impact of AP and ensure safeguarding is robust.
- **From Day 6 Rule:** Schools must arrange suitable full-time education from the sixth day of a suspension is over 5 days.

Schools must ensure:

- Pupils remain **on roll at the commissioning school**
- Provision is:
 - Suitable to age, need and SEND
 - High-quality and safe
- Safeguarding standards meet **KCSIE**

Unregistered Provision Rules

- Avoid full-time placement in unregistered settings
- Recommended limits:
 - **≤15 hours (typical)**
 - **≤18 hours (maximum)**

Pre-Commissioning Checklist

		✓
Assess Need	Evidence graduated response (Assess, Plan, Do, Review)	
	Consider outreach and in-school support first	
	Have clear intended outcomes	
Provider Selection	Ensure provider is registered with DfE and/or LA	
	Check provider's safeguarding, curriculum offer, and staff qualifications	
Due Diligence	Safeguarding audit	
	Staff qualifications	
	Insurance	
	Health & safety compliance	
Quality Assurance	Conduct site visits	
	Use a commissioning agreement template	
	Agree on outcomes, curriculum, and reintegration plans	
Safeguarding & Health and Safety	Ensure provider follows <i>Keeping Children Safe in Education</i> guidance	
	Confirm DBS checks and safeguarding policies	

Commissioning Framework (Core Questions)

Provision Details -	What is being delivered? Where and how?
Purpose -	What is the aim? What outcomes are expected?
Impact Measurement -	How will progress be measured? Frequency of monitoring? Who is responsible?
Engagement -	Will provider: • attend reviews? • submit reports?

Service Level Agreement

Include:

- ✓ Child details
- ✓ Dates
- ✓ Provision type
- ✓ Outcomes
- ✓ Cost and payment schedule
- ✓ Reporting expectations
- ✓ Review cycle
- ✓ Named school lead
- ✓ Named provider lead

Quality Assurance Model

Monitoring & Oversight:	LA Link
• Maintain regular contact with the provider. • Track attendance, progress, and wellbeing. • Review placements regularly.	• Check if provider QA completed with LA • Request documentation where needed

Safeguarding Assurance

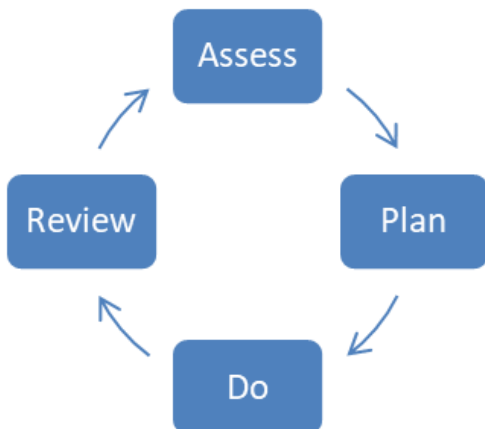
Providers must:	Providers must have:
• Hold DBS checks • Follow KCSIE • Provide safeguarding training	• A qualified DSL • Reporting procedures • Risk assessments

Pupil Voice & Experience

Schools should:

- Gather student feedback
- Monitor engagement
- Use feedback to review provision effectiveness

Review and Exit Planning



- Regular **review** meetings
- **Assess:**
 - progress
 - attendance
 - wellbeing
- **Plan:**
 - reintegration OR
 - next provision

Red Flags Checklist

Do **NOT** proceed if:

- No safeguarding evidence
- No clear outcomes
- No monitoring framework
- Full-time unregistered placement risk
- No defined reporting structure

All concerns about providers should be raised with -
SCTExceptionalprovision@gloucestershire.gov.uk



If you have used a provider from ODAP
we'd love to know what you think!!

[Alternative Provision – Feedback Form](#)

Template for Commissioning Alternative Provision

Commissioning Agreement Template

Child Name:	School Name:	Provider Name:
Start Date:	Review Dates:	End Date:
Agreed Outcomes:		
1.		
2.		
3.		
Signatures	School:	Provider:

Quality Assurance Visit Checklist

Date of Visit:	Visited By:
Health & Safety Compliance:	YES/NO
Safeguarding Policies in Place:	YES/NO
Provider Safeguarding Lead:	
DBS Checks Completed:	YES/NO
Safeguarding Training Provided:	YES/NO
Incident Reporting Procedure:	
Safeguarding Policy Reviewed On:	
Curriculum Suitability:	YES/NO
Staff Qualifications Verified:	YES/NO
Notes:	

Pupil Placement Review Form

Start Date:	Review Date:	End Date:
Attendance:		
Progress Against Agreed Outcomes:		
1.		
2.		
3.		
Next Steps:		

Start Date:	Review Date:	End Date:
Attendance:		
Progress Against Agreed Outcomes:		
1.		
2.		
3.		
Next Steps:		

Start Date:	Review Date:	End Date:
Attendance:		
Progress Against Agreed Outcomes:		
1.		
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Next Steps:		

