

| Version | Date     | Updated by  |
|---------|----------|-------------|
| 1.0     | 25-09-23 | Cate Tumman |
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## Admissions and Transition Policy

- Admissions arrangements to Silver Linings Schools are transparent and apply equally to all placing authorities.
- We do not accept direct referrals from other institutions, such as schools and alternative providers.
- We will facilitate visits for prospective families prior to a formal consultation from the child’s placing authority, only where an EHCP has already been issued.
- Silver Linings Schools are not an approved provider under section 41 of the Children and Families Act.

### REFERRALS

- Referrals should always be sent via email to office@silverliningsed.co.uk

### OUR SCHOOLS

- Our schools cater for children with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).
- We are unable to consider referrals for children whose primary needs relate to autism.
- Vacancies depend on availability within specific age groups/classes at the time of referral.
- We do not cater for children in the early years foundation stage (EYFS).

### THE STANDARD REFERRAL & ADMISSIONS PROCESS

- Formal referrals to our schools are made by a child’s local authority’s special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) team, either in writing, via email or using an online portal. These referrals are made with, or without, initial parental consent/preference. Our fees are always provided on request to SEND teams.
- Families can express a preference for Silver Linings School to their local authority’s SEND team and should they consider us able to meet the child’s needs, the SEND team will usually contact us to discuss a potential referral.
- Referrals for placements are initially received by the Head teacher before being discussed with the Proprietor and other relevant senior leaders. Referrals typically include the child’s education, health and care plan (where appropriate, as sometimes the child’s needs are in the process of assessment) and associated reports.
- An assessment is made based on the initial documentation provided and the SEND team will be written to confirming whether a potential placement may or may not be available (or the online referral will be declined if it is decided that the school cannot meet the child’s needs).
  - If the placement is confirmed by both the schools and local authority (usually following a decision at SEND Panel), an admission date for the placement will be arranged. (This can only be agreed once the school are in receipt of completed child forms), and the Transition Plan can begin.

*Silver Linings School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. It is our aim that all pupils feel safe and fulfil their personal emotional and academic potential.*

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- Distance from our schools is not part of the admissions criteria.

**DIRECT REFERRALS AND ADMISSIONS FROM FAMILIES**

- Direct referrals are considered from private, fee-paying families. Interested families who do not wish their child to be placed through their local authority’s SEND team should contact the Head teacher.

**TRANSITION PLAN**

**School Visits for child**

Visiting a new school for the first time will likely raise a child’s anxieties outside of their window of tolerance (see Appendix 1), particularly if previous educational experiences have not been positive. Therefore, it is important that an adult accompanying the child is someone that the child has developed a trusting relationship with to allow for co-regulation.

**Visit 1:**

- Heightened anxiety and triggering of past trauma can also affect cognitive ability; hypervigilance on the first visit may result in the child only focusing on their “safety” within the moment, therefore only a small number of staff are met on the first visit and a picture booklet is provided for the child to take home with them. Caregivers can then facilitate the child to view the booklet and process their first visit to the school, familiarise themselves with the school from a place of psychological safety and think about what else they would like to know about their new school, hence providing some autonomy to the child.
- The child will also receive a transitional teddy bear. This is important for the first stages of emotional attachment to school and a sense of school becoming a safe space to develop. Moreover, the transitional teddy bear gives the child the opportunity to explore how they are feeling about attending a new school whilst remaining safe within the 3<sup>rd</sup> person. For example, curiosity from care givers around how “Teddy” might be feeling about coming to a new place away from his carers, and what might make “Teddy” feel safe can give the child opportunity to relate to how they are feeling and to give voice to their feelings via the “teddy”.

**Visit 2:**

- The child will re-visits the school with their trusted adult. Having been able to view the school booklet with care givers, the child is less hypervigilant and more able to make sense of their surroundings. The visit is led by the Child’s questions such that the child is given some agency in their own sense of safety but also feels acceptance.
- A member of the senior leadership team will ask the child if they would like to come to this school. This invitation lets the child know that they are accepted and indeed wanted but also enables them to retain autonomy in “choosing” their school. The child is welcomed into the school, receives their uniform and thus begin to gain a sense of belonging to the school community.

**Start of School:**

The table below outlines the transition plan to full-time education for children attending Silver Linings School. It is designed to gradually expand the child’s window of tolerance through titrating exposure to the routine and boundaries of the school day and to daily social interactions thus providing a successful transition to full-time education which can then be maintained.

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**Table 1. Silver Linings School Transition Plan**

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Week 1    | Monday – Friday 9-12.00 noon  |
| Week 2    | Monday – Friday 9- 12.30 (lunchtimes introduced)                    |
| Week 3    | Monday 9-3pm, Tuesday – Friday 9-12.30 (Lunch at school)            |
| Week 4    | Monday & Tuesday 9-3pm, Wednesday -Friday 9-12.30 (lunch at school) |
| Weeks 5-7 | Full days continue to be added until attending full-time **         |

- Week One is designed to assist the child into a new routine of getting up and attending school each day; routine and the introduction of boundaries help to reduce anxiety and instill a sense of safety through predictability – school becoming a consistent, reliable, safe care-giver, meeting an early relational need of many children who have experienced developmental trauma. Social interactions are introduced gradually via morning club. Welcome activity also gives the child time to transition to school surroundings and reduce anxiety before more cognitive academic tasks are undertaken. Children and adults learn and adapt to the expectations each has of the other.
- During Week 2 children stay for lunch at school. Mealtimes can be a source of much anxiety for many children since both the uncertainty of having hunger relieved and uncertainty surrounding social group expectations can be triggering. By gradually introducing a lunchtime routine, children gain further reassurance from the predictability of nurture and can be supported to practice social interactions in a safe environment.
- From Week 3 through Week 7, afternoon learning sessions are gradually added week by week. A phased change of routine enables the child to gradually adapt to full time education and become accustomed to changes of staff; this titrated method of introducing full time education being designed to reduce the likelihood and impact of emotional, cognitive and physical exhaustion.

\*\* Every young person is an individual and their capacity to accept co-regulation and / or self-regulate and adapt to change will vary according to familial, environmental and social factors. Children are closely monitored for any signs of psychological distress and re-traumatisation throughout the transition period and should any young person present as not managing the expectations of an increased school timetable then the process between weeks 5 and 7 will be slowed accordingly, whilst still maintaining the aim for children to successfully attend and maintain full time education within an acceptable time frame.

Siegel, D.J. (2012). *The Developing Mind: How relationships & the brain interact to shape who we are*. New York, USA: Guilford Press.

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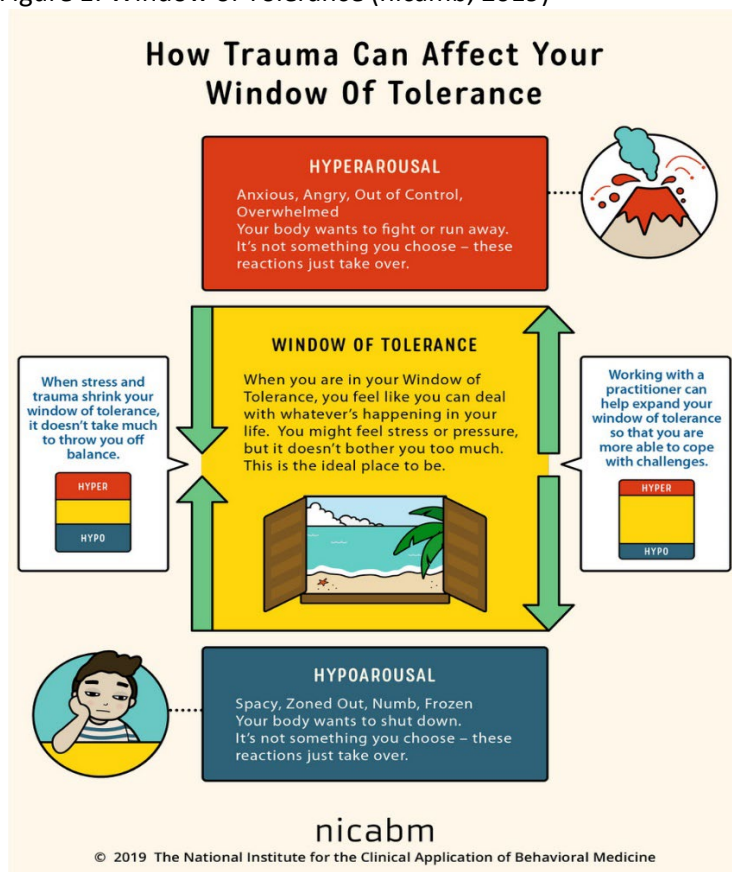
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## Appendix 1

### Window Of Tolerance

All human beings have an optimal arousal zone, known as the Window of tolerance (Siegel, 2012) (see Figure 1) where they have capacity to manage emotions even when under stress. Where Children have experienced early life trauma, developmental, attachment or complex trauma, their autonomous nervous system becomes attuned to high levels of stress hormones (Cortisol and Adrenaline) and their capacity to self-regulate diminishes. This results in a narrow window of tolerance and over-reactions to present stressors with hyper-arousal (anxiety, hypervigilance, anger (Fight / Flight) or hypo-arousal (withdrawal, dissociation (freeze / fawn/ flop) responses.

Figure 1: Window of Tolerance (nicamb, 2019)



The Transition Plan implemented by Silver Linings School is designed to support children to gradually expand their window of tolerance, gain a sense of safety from nurture, routine and safe boundaries and accept the school as a secure base from which to make and sustain meaningful attachment relationships. When a child feels safe within their environment, their cognitive and social ability improves thus fostering a safe and successful transition to full-time education which can be maintained in the long term.

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