

Report of Children's Services – Targeted Services

Report to Inner East Area Committee

Date: 2nd April 2013

Subject: Targeted Services response to managing School Attendance

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	X <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Burmantofts and Richmond, Gipton and Harehills, Killingbeck and Seacroft
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes X <input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes X <input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

Poor attendance is often a symptom of more complicated family issues and cannot be dealt with in isolation or by an individual service. The approach developed through Children's Services and the clusters aims to provide a variety of options for schools and parents to support attendance at school. The lead family practitioner model and the use of an appropriate assessment of need should ensure that the right resource and services are used at the right time.

A detailed breakdown of each school within the Inner East Area Committee Area provides the latest position regarding attendance rates and current numbers of persistently absent pupils. While most schools have improved their rates of attendance there are still some schools that are significantly below the city average.

While the statutory requirements to support Academies remains, the non-statutory element is no longer provided by the Council unless as a traded service.

Where efforts at working with families to improve a child or young person's attendance have not been successful, in a small number of cases the local authority is obliged to make use of the statutory enforcement tools available to take legal action against parents.

Legal enforcement will be used where appropriate and the use of Education Supervision Orders is increasingly being used as a positive tool to support children and their families.

The transient nature of the population in some areas of the city can have a significant impact on attendance rates and while there are procedures in place for dealing with Children Missing Education (CME) the volume of this work and the impact on children's education should not be underestimated.

Recommendations

The Area Committee note the content of the report.

The Area Committee identify any specific areas of interest raised in the report for which they would like further detailed information; this could include:

- The impact on the area created by the highly mobile/transient nature of the local population.
- Further information on the tools and powers available for dealing with persistent and entrenched poor attendance – including case studies
- Further information on the role of Governors in relation to school attendance with the offer to provide a bespoke awareness session for Councillors who may also have a role as a school Governor.
- More information on specific initiatives to improve attendance (as detailed in **Appendix 2**)

Purpose of this report

- 1.1 Following the Inner East Area Committee meeting on 21st March 2013, additional detailed information was requested in relation to the attendance performance of schools within the Inner East Area Committee area. In particular information was requested to be broken down by attendance rates and persistent absenteeism for individual schools; details of the main contacts from the council providing support to schools for attendance related issues and what action was being taken for those schools where attendance continued to be an issue.
- 1.2 Councillors also asked about the impact caused by the transient nature of the population in the area, while this is a significant and complex issue it has not been possible to provide the level of detail within this report. It is recommended that a future report considers this area in more detail.
- 1.3 This report will focus on the schools which fall within the Inner East Area Committee area which comprises of parts of three cluster areas; Inner East, Seacroft and Manston and CHESS. **Appendix 1** details individual schools and their respective clusters.

2 Background information

- 2.1 Children's Services has restructured its services to align to the 25 clusters within the city. Clusters have evolved from the extended services offer and are now

more than just school focussed partnerships, having broader involvement from a number of different statutory and voluntary sector services. Clusters have developed structures and services to meet the needs of children and young people who live or who attend schools within the cluster. Clusters have their own staffing and resources but work in partnership to provide early intervention and prevention services. Each cluster in the city has a local authority funded targeted services resource allocation to focus on improving the outcomes for children and young people who are at particular risk from becoming a Child Looked After (CLA), having poor or non-school attendance or becoming NEET (not in education, employment and training).

- 2.2 Children's Services provides a number of resources directly aligned to the clusters, these resources are based on levels of need and comprise in each of these three clusters of a Targeted Services Leader and a number of full time equivalent Attendance Improvement Officers (AIOs). An additional targeted services resource is currently been recruited to Inner East cluster. In addition to the cluster targeted resource there are 2.5 Attendance Advisers for the East North East Area, each Attendance Advisor has responsibility for a number of clusters. The contact details for all these staff can be found in **Appendix1**.

3 Main issues

3.1 Managing Attendance responsibilities

- 3.2 All children of compulsory school age are entitled to an education that is appropriate to their age, ability and aptitude. This right is embedded in law – both in the Education Act 1996 and Human Rights legislation. In order to secure regular attendance at school (because outcomes for children and young people who do not attend school regularly are far worse than for those that do attend), parents are held responsible for their child's regular attendance at school or otherwise. Failure to secure their attendance can result in legal enforcement action being taken. In Leeds our Attendance Advisers, are granted the power to discharge this statutory duty on behalf of the local authority.
- 3.3 All schools, whatever their status, should aim to achieve the highest possible levels of attendance as schools, children's services and local authorities are all accountable for outcomes for children and young people.
- 3.4 Schools are responsible for their own attendance levels and although there is no longer a legal requirement for a school to set a target the Ofsted framework also sets out that when evaluating the behaviour and safety of pupils at the school, inspectors "*will consider pupil attendance and punctuality at school and in lessons*".
- 3.5 Every school should have a current, effective attendance policy detailing the procedures and systems for encouraging regular school attendance and investigating the underlying causes for poor school attendance. There should be a clear escalation of intervention within the school which is understood by all teaching and non-teaching staff.

3.6 In 2012 Children's Services Scrutiny Board undertook an enquiry into attendance across the city. The report focussed on two case study areas one of which was Inner East. The report recommendations and Directors Response can be found on the following link below¹

Children's Services approach to managing attendance

3.7 Poor school attendance is often the symptom of much wider issues and in Children's Services we are working towards a model of delivery in which the lead family practitioner (from whichever discipline they may come) is the best person to understand the needs within a family and how those needs can be supported. This means that attendance improvement officers are part of a wider workforce who can support families to overcome barriers to regular attendance. The success to improving attendance will come about because we don't just rely on one service to deal with attendance in isolation. In the clusters relevant to the Inner East Area, AIOs are now embedded as part of the cluster resource. AIOs bring expertise and specialist knowledge and have close working relationships with schools, they also have a number of other specialist areas and skills with which they can work with families, these are;

- Individual family case work – taking lead family practitioner role including coordinate of the CAF (the preferred assessment of need)
- Fast track to attendance initiatives providing a less intensive intervention where attendance issues are emerging or are not yet problematic
- Supporting school staff and providing school training for CPD in full
- Preventative, attendance improvement initiative work and parenting work

3.8 The AIOs strengths in the area of family support and expertise on attendance are complemented by Attendance Advisors who not only have a statutory enforcement function, but also support the clusters to be aware of national developments, changes to legislation and development of whole school/cluster policy; they support schools to prepare for Ofsted and to act as a critical friend to support the development of improvement action plans.

3.9 A six stage process has been developed which sets out the roles and responsibilities of the school, local authority (non-statutory role) and local authority (statutory role). This document can be provided by contacting the report author.

3.10 Each cluster has a guidance and support structure which is the main referral route for attendance cases from school requiring additional support.

3.11 The status of schools does have a bearing on services that can be provided by the local authority. Academies are funded directly for the provision of support services for attendance and therefore do not receive any non-statutory provision from the local authority. Within the Inner East Area Committee there are currently 5 Academies (3 High Schools and 2 Primary Schools) with a further 2 in train for conversion this year (Oakwood and the new school at Florence Street) See **Appendix 1**.

- 3.12 A service level agreement is in place for Academies which sets out the statutory provision and allows Academies the opportunity to buy in additional traded services.
- 3.13 Details of the statutory service to academies can be provided on request to the report author.

Statutory Enforcement

- 3.14 Where efforts at working with families to improve a child or young person's attendance have not been successful, in a small number of cases the local authority is obliged to make use of the statutory enforcement tools available to take legal action against parents. This represents a relatively small proportion of the total work with families and is only sought when all other avenues have failed to secure an improvement in attendance.
- 3.15 The range of such tools spans the use of Penalty Notices to Education Supervision Orders. The evidence base for their impact is a challenge as these families are, by their very nature, those with the most deeply entrenched problems. The use of Fast Track to Attendance Initiatives is often successful as a very swift early intervention where a warning of the level of attendance is sufficient and they are widely used across schools and clusters. Education Supervision Orders are an order that is placed on the child and the local authority is appointed by the court to supervise that child's education either at school or at home for specified period of time. Education Supervision Orders are often successful when the parent is willing to engage with services but feels unable to bring about changes without significant support.
- 3.16 Although the evidence that the more punitive measures are not effective is hard to establish, their deterrent effect should not be discounted. When custodial sentences (which are extremely rare) have been publicised many schools reported increased attendance and that parents had an increased awareness about their responsibilities and the consequences of failing to meet those responsibilities. In a Child Friendly City, the aim should be to increase the use of Education Supervision Orders. Local authorities must consider applying for Education Supervision Orders before prosecuting parents.
- 3.17 Local authorities have the power to prosecute parents who fail to ensure their child's regular attendance at school, under section 444 of the Education Act 1996. Section 444 has two separate but linked offences; section 444(1) where a parent fails to secure the child's regular attendance; and section 444(1A) where a parent knows that the child is failing to attend school regularly and fails to ensure the child does so. **Appendix 2** provides an overview of the enforcement action taken during this current school year for schools in the Inner East Area.

Individual School Performance

- 3.18 **Appendix 2** provides an overview of the current and past attendance rates for each of the schools in the Inner East Area. A commentary has been provided for those schools

4 Corporate Considerations

4.19 There are no corporate considerations this report provides information requested by the area committee into specific local activity.

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

4.1.1 The report provides additional information relating to school attendance issues for the committee area, as a result of the report further consultation with key stakeholders may be required to focus on specific areas of the report.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

4.2.1 Equality issues are implicit in the information provided in this report. The differences shown illustrate that there are different levels of need and outcomes across the area and the wider city.

4.3 Council policies and City Priorities

4.3.1 A significant proportion of the information included in this report relates to the city priorities for children and young people and the outcomes contained in the CYPP 2011-15

4.4 Resources and value for money

4.4.1 There are no resource implications in this report

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.5.1 This report is not eligible for call in due to being a Council function

4.6 Risk Management

4.6.1 There are no risk management implications in this report.

5 Conclusions

5.1 As requested at its last Area Committee meeting, this report provides information on the attendance performance of schools within the Committee's area and the range of work done to support improved attendance. Members of the Area Committee may wish to identify specific items of interest that they would like to consider further in future reports. This could include:

The impact on the area created by the highly mobile/transient nature of the local population.

Further information into the tools and powers available for dealing with persistent and entrenched poor attendance – including case studies

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Further information on the role of Governors in relation to school attendance with the offer to provide a bespoke awareness session for Councillors who may also have a role as school Governors.

More information on specific initiatives to improve attendance (as detailed in Appendix 2)

6 Recommendations

6.1 The Area Committee note the content of the report.

6.2 The Area Committee identify any specific areas of interest for which they would like future reports.

7 Background documents¹

7.1 ¹ Scrutiny Inquiry into School attendance -
<http://democracy.leeds.gov.uk/documents/s69741/directors%20response%20-%20scrutiny%20inquiry%20into%20improving%20attendance.pdf>

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.