

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE

A meeting of Children and Young People Select Committee was held on Wednesday 17 April 2024.

Present: Cllr Carol Clark (Chair), Cllr Barbara Inman (Vice-Chair), Cllr Stephen Richardson, Cllr Paul Rowling, Cllr Emily Tate, Cllr Marcus Vickers (sub for Councillor David Reynard), Cllr Sally Ann Watson and Cllr Katie Weston.

Officers: Eddie Huntington, Vanessa Housley, Mandie Rowlands (Ch S) and Judy Trainer (CS).

Also in attendance: Kevin Burns (DfE), Janet Bradley (HealthWatch)

Apologies: Cllr Ray Godwin and Cllr David Reynard.

CYP/1/24 Evacuation Procedure

The evacuation procedure was noted.

CYP/2/24 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

CYP/3/24 Minutes

AGREED that the minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

CYP/4/24 Scrutiny Review of Narrowing the Gap in Educational Attainment

The Select Committee received a presentation from Kevin Burns, the newly appointed regional DfE Attendance Adviser.

The presentation covered:

- The new Statutory Guidance: Working Together to Improve School attendance which had been published on 29 February 2024 and was coming into force on 19 August 2024
- Progress to date:
 - 90% of schools now had a senior champion
 - 85% of schools were now sharing data on a daily basis
 - Two thirds of Local Authorities were either fully delivering the new expectations or had an agreed plan to do so by January 2024
 - 89% of Local Authorities now had a single point of contact for schools in their area
- What might be working:
 - Targeting Support Meetings – holding termly conversations with schools, using their attendance data to identify pupils and cohorts at risk of poor

- attendance and agreed targeted actions and access to services for those pupils
- Multi- disciplinary support for families – proving access to early help support workers to work intensively with families to provide practical whole-family support where needed to tackle the causes of absenteeism and unblock the barriers to attendance
- The focus of work in Stockton – understanding that attendance is everyone’s business:
 - What is the impact on the Local Authority?
 - What change could be made at an operational level?
 - What change could be made at a strategic level?

Key issues highlighted and discussed were as follows:

- Understanding of the issues/ problems specific to Stockton cohorts was essential
- A need to understand how schools and the Local Authority can position resource to address the issue
- Absenteeism had still not returned to pre-Covid levels
- Many Local Authorities reported issues with anxiety and mental health as a key factor in absence
- Members questions whether schools were adequately resourced to make up for lost learning due to Covid and to fully integrate children back into the classroom
- Attendance Hubs had a role to play in sharing best practice and developing support networks
- Member queried whether a “safe space” within mainstream schools could provide a stepping stone for children with additional needs to integrate back into the school system
- Attendance was not as important as it used to be in Ofsted judgements. If this changed, it might encourage more schools to return to the interventions they used to employ
- Schools should make adjustments to respond to the needs of the community
- Home visits could have a positive impact on improving attendance
- Some young people would be better placed in alternative provision
- The extent to which waiting times for mental health support was impacting on attendance needed exploring locally
- An absenteeism and suspension dashboard was under development and would include data from partners. According to the data, early indications were that Year 10 had the highest absenteeism for Stockton; this year group had been in Year 7 in 2020 and were likely to have been adversely affected by Covid disruption. Absenteeism also seemed to be an issue on a Friday and could possibly be attributed to parent/ carers’ changing home working patterns
- ImpactEd Evaluation had launched Understanding Attendance as a national project to help schools understand the drivers behind poor attendance in their setting. The project launched in Spring 2023 and early findings using survey data from over 30,000 young people and attendance data from over 200,000 pupils revealed the following key factors were having an impact on attendance in schools at a national level:
 - Sense of school belonging as a key driver of attendance across all contexts.
 - An emerging challenge of a ‘second transition’ from Year 7 to Year 8 that deserved greater attention
 - Attendance drivers were intersectional. School leaders should avoid considering demographic factors in isolation. Female pupils who were

eligible for Pupil Premium and had a special educational need were particularly likely to be low attending

- Awareness of sanctions and consequences wasn't strongly linked to improved attendance. Understanding of the importance of school and relationships with peers and teachers were more strongly associated with attendance

The Understanding Attendance project was being expanded to help more schools and Trusts analyse the drivers of attendance in their setting, and access effective strategies.

AGREED that the information be noted.

CYP/5/24 Chair's Update and Work Programme

It was proposed that the May meeting should be an informal session to facilitate a discussion with health colleagues. This would mean re-scheduling the summary of evidence session to June and consideration of the final report to July.

AGREED that the work programme be amended as set out above.