

**Date:** Wednesday 17 April 2024 at 5.00 pm

**Venue:** Meeting Room 1, Jim Cooke Suite, Church Road, Stockton - on - Tees, TS18 1TU

**Cllr Carol Clark (Chair)**  
**Cllr Barbara Inman (Vice-Chair)**

Cllr Ray Godwin  
Cllr Stephen Richardson  
Cllr Emily Tate  
Cllr Katie Weston

Cllr David Reynard  
Cllr Paul Rowling  
Cllr Sally Ann Watson

## **AGENDA**

- 1 Evacuation Procedure** (Pages 7 - 8)
- 2 Apologies for Absence**
- 3 Declarations of Interest**
- 4 Minutes**  
To approve the minutes of the last meeting held on 13 March 2024. (Pages 9 - 14)
- 5 Scrutiny Review of Narrowing the Gap in Educational Attainment**  
To receive evidence from the regional DfE Attendance Adviser and nominated attendance hubs. (Pages 15 - 26)
- 6 Chair's Update and Work Programme** (Pages 27 - 28)

**Members of the Public - Rights to Attend Meeting**

With the exception of any item identified above as containing exempt or confidential information under the Local Government Act 1972 Section 100A(4), members of the public are entitled to attend this meeting and/or have access to the agenda papers.

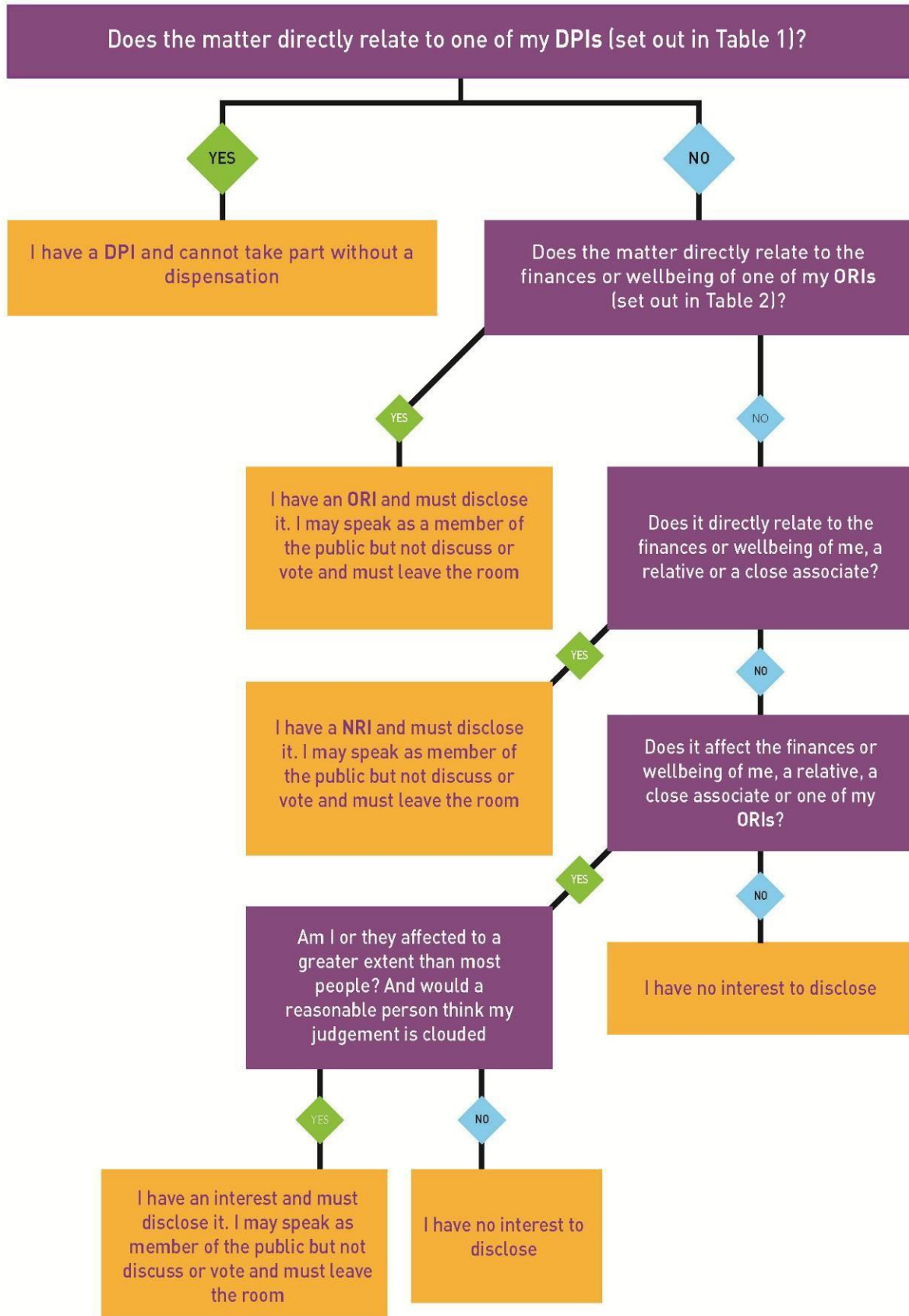
Persons wishing to obtain any further information on this meeting, including the opportunities available for any member of the public to speak at the meeting; or for details of access to the meeting for disabled people, please

Contact: Judy Trainer, Democratic Services Manager on email [judy.trainer@stockton.gov.uk](mailto:judy.trainer@stockton.gov.uk)

**KEY - Declarable interests are:-**

- Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI's)
- Other Registerable Interests (ORI's)
- Non Registerable Interests (NRI's)

**Members – Declaration of Interest Guidance**



**Table 1 - Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation</b>	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain
<b>Sponsorship</b>	Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the council) made to the councillor during the previous 12-month period for expenses incurred by him/her in carrying out his/her duties as a councillor, or towards his/her election expenses. This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.
<b>Contracts</b>	Any contract made between the councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners (or a firm in which such person is a partner, or an incorporated body of which such person is a director* or a body that such person has a beneficial interest in the securities of*) and the council — (a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and (b) which has not been fully discharged.
<b>Land and property</b>	Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the council. 'Land' excludes an easement, servitude, interest or right in or over land which does not give the councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/ civil partners (alone or jointly with another) a right to occupy or to receive income.
<b>Licences</b>	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the council for a month or longer.
<b>Corporate tenancies</b>	Any tenancy where (to the councillor's knowledge)— (a) the landlord is the council; and (b) the tenant is a body that the councillor, or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/ civil partners is a partner of or a director* of or has a beneficial interest in the securities* of.
<b>Securities</b>	Any beneficial interest in securities* of a body where— (a) that body (to the councillor's knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the council; and (b) either— (i) the total nominal value of the securities* exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or (ii) if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the councillor, or his/ her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners have a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.

\* 'director' includes a member of the committee of management of an industrial and provident society.

\* 'securities' means shares, debentures, debenture stock, loan stock, bonds, units of a collective investment scheme within the meaning of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 and other securities of any description, other than money deposited with a building society.

## Table 2 – Other Registrable Interest

You must register as an Other Registrable Interest:

- a) any unpaid directorships
- b) any body of which you are a member or are in a position of general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority
- c) any body
  - (i) exercising functions of a public nature
  - (ii) directed to charitable purposes or
  - (iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management

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## **Jim Cooke Conference Suite, Stockton Central Library** **Evacuation Procedure & Housekeeping**

If the fire or bomb alarm should sound please exit by the nearest emergency exit. The Fire alarm is a continuous ring and the Bomb alarm is the same as the fire alarm however it is an intermittent ring.

If the Fire Alarm rings exit through the nearest available emergency exit and form up in Municipal Buildings Car Park.

The assembly point for everyone if the Bomb alarm is sounded is the car park at the rear of Splash on Church Road.

The emergency exits are located via the doors between the 2 projector screens. The key coded emergency exit door will automatically disengage when the alarm sounds.

The Toilets are located on the Ground floor corridor of Municipal Buildings next to the emergency exit. Both the ladies and gents toilets are located on the right hand side.

### **Microphones**

During the meeting, members of the Committee, and officers in attendance, will have access to a microphone. Please use the microphones, when directed to speak by the Chair, to ensure you are heard by the Committee.

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## Children and Young People Select Committee

A meeting of the Children and Young People Select Committee was held on Wednesday 13 March 2024.

**Present:** Cllr Carol Clark (Chair), Cllr Barbara Inman (Vice-Chair), Cllr Ray Godwin, Cllr David Reynard, Cllr Stephen Richardson, Cllr Paul Rowling, Cllr Emily Tate, Cllr Sally Ann Watson, Cllr Katie Weston

**Officers:** Vanessa Housley, Eddie Huntington, Mandie Rowlands, Sharon Stevens (ChS); Gary Woods (CS)

**Also in attendance:** None

**Apologies:** None

<b>1</b>	<p><b>Evacuation Procedure</b></p> <p>The evacuation procedure was noted.</p>
<b>2</b>	<p><b>Declarations of Interest</b></p> <p>There were no interests declared.</p>
<b>3</b>	<p><b>Minutes</b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the minutes of the Children and Young People Select Committee meeting which was held on 14 February 2024 for approval and signature.</p> <p>AGREED that the minutes of the Committee meeting held on 14 February 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.</p>
<b>4</b>	<p><b>Scrutiny Review of Narrowing the Gap in Educational Attainment</b></p> <p>The latest evidence-gathering session for the Committee’s ongoing review of Narrowing the Gap in Educational Attainment focused on a recent report that had been presented to the Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) Cabinet regarding school performance 2022-2023 for vulnerable pupils. A supplementary paper containing national, regional, Tees Valley, and Stockton-on-Tees attendance data released by the Department for Education (DfE) for the Autumn 2022 and Spring 2023 terms was also tabled for information.</p> <p>This annual report on vulnerable groups across the Borough enabled Cabinet to monitor educational standards and achievements, and to evaluate the impact of Local Authority monitoring, challenge, intervention, and support. The report presented a summary analysis of vulnerable pupil performance in the academic year 2022-2023 for all key stages and all providers in the Borough, and was informed by the latest available data (some of which remained unvalidated) and compared to national averages where they existed. It included performance outcomes for:</p>

- Pupils in receipt of Pupil Premium Funding
- Performance by gender
- Black and Minority Ethnic children
- Children and Young People in Our Care
- Children with Special Needs
- Attendance and exclusion figures for Stockton-on-Tees

Introduced by the SBC Assistant Director – Education, Inclusion & Achievement, the report began with data / statistics relating to pupils identified as vulnerable within the Borough, and then described what had worked well, and any areas for development / challenges, for each of the six categories listed above. SBC officers present noted an encouraging development in terms of a forthcoming meeting within the community to address some of the issues emerging from the outcomes noted in the report.

Key issues highlighted and discussed were as follows:

- Members felt the term ‘vulnerable’ should also acknowledge young carers and questioned whether all such individuals were known to services. It was acknowledged that the Cabinet report centred on a finite number of groups and did not include young carers – however, they were factored into the ‘Closing the Gap’ Network and services utilised Eastern Ravens to identify young carers and address the challenges they faced. The Equalities Network also signposted such groups to available support.
- The issue of children from the travelling community coming into and leaving education during a school year was raised. Whilst numbers were likely to be low, a growing concern was the increasing prevalence of ‘working poor’, a cohort which may require inclusion when considering future school performance.
- The Committee recognised that there were a number of reasons for disruptive behaviour at school, though queried how much of this was a challenge / pushback to being punished in the first place. Officers reinforced the need for everyone to be on the same page when it came to making ‘reasonable adjustments’ in relation to behaviour which may be perceived as inappropriate, and also noted that actions which made a positive difference for one child may not work / be appropriate for others.
- Members asked why girls’ reading performance at the end of Key Stage 2 had become worse – officers stated this required further investigation.
- Referencing the supplementary attendance statistics, the Committee commented that whilst the data suggested SBC was broadly matching many of the regional / national averages, the additional context outlined within the Cabinet report demonstrated that local performance was very encouraging given wider issues around funding restrictions and external factors such as cost-of-living pressures. Officers added that the ‘detail’ page at the start of the Cabinet report had been included to explain (but not to excuse) context, and that the Council remained ambitious for children and young people within the Borough.
- Officers raised the issue of persistent absences from school and the potential for this to be linked to incidences of crime and disorder.

<p>Recently published crime figures had shown an increase in reported incidents during the school day, and the Council / schools could be viewed as complicit in this activity if they were not following up on pupil absence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bringing those young people who had become disaffected with education back into the fold was discussed, including what the curriculum should look like to encourage attendance. Members were informed of a pilot which was soon to commence around different curriculum options.</li> <li>• Continuing this theme, the Committee expressed concern that education had become overly focused on academia and did not appeal to a significant proportion of young people, nor equip them for their futures. At the same time, local schools being in line with national performance (e.g. maths) did not mean that this was good enough.</li> <li>• Members were wary about the term 'targeted support', a concept which had been promoted nationally (particularly in relation to COVID-recovery plans) but had not always been adequately supported or realised. Officers considered that the most effective help for a pupil was when their teachers fully understood their needs / challenges and provided consistent help.</li> <li>• The Committee asked if the rate of permanent exclusions / suspensions was having a detrimental impact on staff recruitment and retention. Officers acknowledged that, for some school personnel, such cases did adversely affect their desire to enter / remain within the sector, though many were very resilient and understanding of the numerous factors which may be contributing to problematic pupil behaviour. Ultimately, schools had a duty to protect / support staff (which included the provision of appropriate training), many of whom were working with vulnerable pupils and those on the edge of care. A further pilot in relation to support for teachers in this regard was noted.</li> <li>• Members further probed the existing landscape around school recruitment and retention, with officers commenting that the level of Teaching Assistants (TAs) was currently the most significant cause for concern, particularly for those schools with a higher proportion of pupils with additional needs. Conversely, Head Teacher recruitment was very positive, with a high volume and standard of applications for vacant posts. From a retention point-of-view, new teachers were only remaining in the profession for around three years on average, and a number of senior school leaders were also leaving (often citing behaviour of pupils and complaints from fellow staff or parents). Members noted the move to a nine-day fortnight for schools in other parts of the country (presumably to assist with staff recruitment / retention), though felt that many young people and their parents / carers may not be as enthused about such an arrangement. Officers highlighted that Gateshead Council was having some positive results in terms of reduced exclusions, principally as a result of schools making 'reasonable adjustments' (a required part of the educational code of practice).</li> </ul> <p>Attention turned to the recent '<i>Reducing the Educational Attainment Gap</i>' stakeholder event which took place last week (8 March 2024). The Committee Chair spoke of a very positive day which comprised powerful</p>
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speeches, an excellent networking opportunity for those in attendance from a variety of interested parties (Councillors, Council officers, charities, schools), and the raising and discussion of numerous ideas which may help in addressing this scrutiny topic.

An important element of the stakeholder gathering was the relaying of feedback following engagement with schools, pupils, and parents / carers around educational attendance. For the benefit of those Members who could not be present at last week's event, the SBC Service Lead – Education and Wellbeing, the SBC Service Lead – Early Support and Projects, and the SBC Team Manager – Inclusion and Vulnerable Learners led the Committee through the main features of the feedback which covered:

- Schools (primary and secondary): top challenges and those areas of concern which had increased since 2022-2023.
- Pupil Voice (those on the edge of disengagement, not, for example, school council students who were generally engaged): how they learn well; what gets in the way of learning in school / home; what would help them stay in school; what activities they would like to do in / after school that did not currently happen.
- Parent / Carer Voice: how their child learns best; what gets in the way of their learning; what a 'good' and 'bad' school day looks like for the parent / carer; what their ambition was for their child; how they link with school.

The importance of building and maintaining teacher / pupil / parent / carer relationships was readily apparent throughout the feedback received.

An electronic questionnaire (comprising three separate sets of questions for either primary school pupils, secondary school pupils, or parents / carers with school pupils) was also administered to gain further insight on similar 'pupil voice' learning themes as listed above – this was still live and was due to close on 19 April 2024. It was noted that responses to some questions involved pre-loaded answers, though opportunities for an expansion on the option chosen was provided.

Reasons for and barriers to attendance were then highlighted (including pastoral, school curriculum / process, and multi-agency factors), as were efforts to eliminate school absence (involving pastoral, support mechanisms, and rewards v sanctions considerations). Reference was made to a previously published report around 'understanding attendance' which could be circulated to the Committee if required.

Key issues highlighted and discussed were as follows:

- Officers stated that there was an apparent dip in school attendance between Year 7 and Year 8 (secondary education), with the Committee subsequently debating the reasons for this. Members felt that some pupils may not see as much value in Year 8 given it fell between their first experience of secondary school (Year 7) and their decision on which GCSE subjects to opt for (Year 9).

- Members noted the original ethos of the Ingleby Manor Free School (including a longer school day with academic lessons in the morning and other elements held in the afternoon), and asked whether, in light of the questionnaire feedback, this was an arrangement which could be re-looked at. Officers stated that, as the school had now been brought into an academy structure, it was unlikely to return to its original way of operating – that said, stakeholders across the Borough were investigating any potential flexibility around the existing school curriculum requirement.
- The Committee contrasted those aspects which young people reportedly liked / valued about school (which appeared to be ‘emotional’ elements) with those which caused them issues (which appeared to more ‘functional’ / ‘practical’). It therefore seemed prudent to concentrate future focus on ‘emotional’ factors / support.
- Members spoke of their awareness of pupil fatigue / tiredness which was impacting upon the ability to learn – the apparent constancy of mobile phone / device use was deemed a major factor here.
- Mindful of the increasing prevalence of commentary around ‘woke’ interventions (felt by some to be unnecessary), Members stated that measures put in place by schools to support pupils (particularly those considered vulnerable) were very much necessary. From a staff perspective, teaching could sometimes be an intimidating role, and the drive to achieve national targets could undermine staff who were having to manage a range of challenging situations within the classroom.
- It was noted that attendance policies could be adversarial, and that care was needed around ‘rewarding’ attendance when some young people experienced environments which could, and indeed does, impact on their ability / motivation to access school at all times.
- Building relationships was acknowledged as a key necessity, and reported experiences of negative relationships between school staff and pupils and / or parents / carers was concerning. Members highlighted the significant level of responsibility / tasks that teachers already had – taking the required time to develop positive relationships whilst managing existing demands could be difficult.
- Members queried if a lack of in- / after-school clubs was contributing to attendance issues as out-of-classroom activity could often aid staff-pupil relationships. Officers noted that many schools now employ external providers to deliver extra-curricular activities due to the workload of their staff.
- Discussion took place on the merits / challenges of some pupils being placed in mainstream education when it may be felt that they would benefit from a more specialised setting. Members and officers agreed that, as far as possible, young people should access mainstream providers, though this should not be to their detriment.

Concluding this item, the Committee Chair reminded those present about the next stakeholder event taking place on 22 March 2024 (11.00am – 3.00pm) and encouraged Members to attend where possible.

AGREED that the information presented be noted.

<b>5</b>	<b>Select Committee Work Programme</b>  The Committee's next meeting was scheduled for 17 April 2024 input from primary and secondary schools was planned.  AGREED that the Work Programme be noted.
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Department  
for Education

# **Working together to improve school attendance**

Stockton

Children and Young People Select Committee

**Kevin Burns**

**Attendance Adviser- Department of Education**

# **Working together to improve school attendance**

Statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities

**Published: 29 February 2024**

**Applies from: 19 August 2024**



**Expect**

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

**Monitor**

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

**Listen and understand**

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

**Facilitate support**

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues

**Formalise support**

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an attendance contract or education supervision order.

**Enforce**

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention: a penalty notice in line with the National Framework or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

## Progress to date

### Update on reforms to the attendance system and implementation of *'Working together to improve school attendance'*

**School implementation** – Departmental surveys plus the work of the attendance advisers show good progress in implementing the core elements of the new expectations, including 79% with an attendance policy, 90% with a senior champion, 56% having termly meetings with the LA. However, there's further to go this year.

**LA implementation** – attendance advisers have- or are- working with all LAs to support them to implement the new expectations. There's significant progress across the country. Survey of LAs at the end of term showed 1/3 are delivering and 2/3 will be delivering by January. 89% of LAs have SPOCs in place, 67% will be delivering TSMs this AY, 93% reported improved joint working on attendance.

**Policy** – consultation response published on modernising school registers and improving consistency in the use of fixed penalty notices.

**Updates and clarifications on common sticking points** – including working with cross-border pupils, how to deliver effective and efficient targeting support meetings and on trading additional services with schools.

- **90%** of schools now have a senior champion
- **85%** of schools are now sharing data on a daily basis
- **2/3** of LAs either fully delivering the new expectations or with an agreed plan in place to do so by January 2024
- **89%** of LAs now have single point of contacts for schools in their area

## What might be working-Targeting support meetings

### Examples of strong practice in the use of TSMs

A clear, structured agenda shared in advance, that may flex to suit the time of year. Where all participants are clear about what the meetings are expected to achieve and what they will need to participate fully. For example, different themes for Autumn, Spring and Summer term with appropriate attendance at the meetings from senior school leaders.

Understanding the data to identify trends and risks at a strategic level but also at a pupil level. What types of challenges are specific to a particular group and what can be done using all the available resource in school and their partners. This may lead to specific agenda items and focus for some schools.

Opportunity for honest, open reflection with decision makers in school- a focus beyond the absence to the reason behind it and discussion about what might be possible in terms of challenge and support.

### Top tips

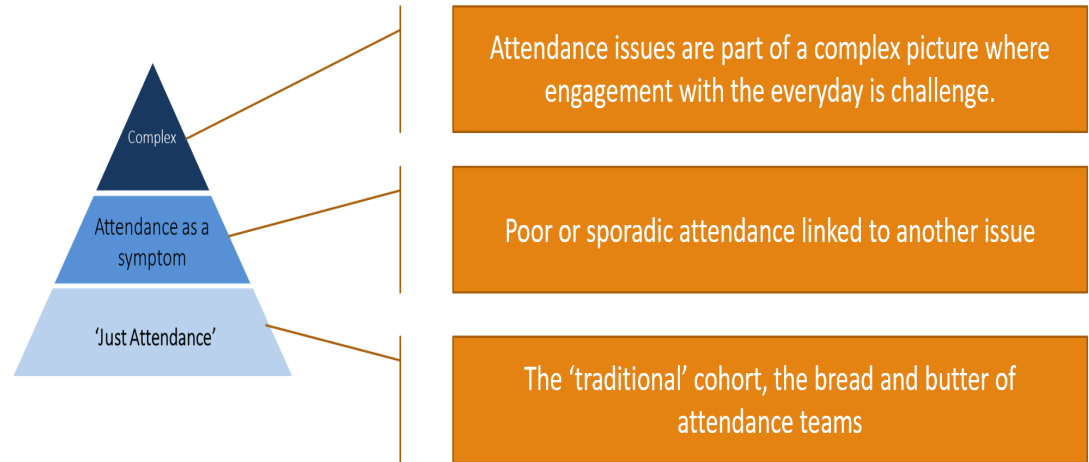
- A focus on making a difference
- The right level of participation and engagement
- Simple systems for booking and confirming meetings
- Live recording and agreement of actions so no need for minutes and delays in follow up.

### 'Targeting Support

**Meetings:** hold termly conversations with schools, using their attendance data to identify pupils and cohorts at risk of poor attendance and agree targeted actions and access to services for those pupils'.

# What might be working -Targeting support meetings

## Examples of strong practice in the use of TSMs



Using the meetings to really understand and explore the cohorts. What works well is finding a shared language that simple to understand and follow.

### Top tip

- Use the opportunity to stop and really consider the barriers to attendance and how these might be tackled

**'Targeting Support Meetings:** hold termly conversations with schools, using their attendance data to identify pupils and cohorts at risk of poor attendance and agree targeted actions and access to services for those pupils'.

# What might be working- Multi-disciplinary support for families

## Examples of what may be impacting

- Early help is the front door for all attendance concerns.
- Each school has a Link Worker with a role across early help and attendance. These are managed by the Locality Manager.
- An Early Help School Attendance Matters Pathway for Schools articulates the graduated response.
- A Local School Attendance Panel triages cases.
- Head of Early Help sits on the EHCP Panel to ensure attendance is a priority there.
- Social Care include attendance in all plans and there is a clear route into educational neglect.
- Health have agreed to use the same early help assessment tool for their assessments across 0-19, including school nurses, health visitors etc.

## Top tips

- Invite services and partners to populate the DfE self-assessment tool.
- Articulate what contribution partners can make in their day-to-day business through pledges.
- Ensure attendance data is shared with key practitioners, early help workers, social care and training is given to interpret this data.
- Ensure the graduated response for schools around attendance identifies clearly the role of all agencies.

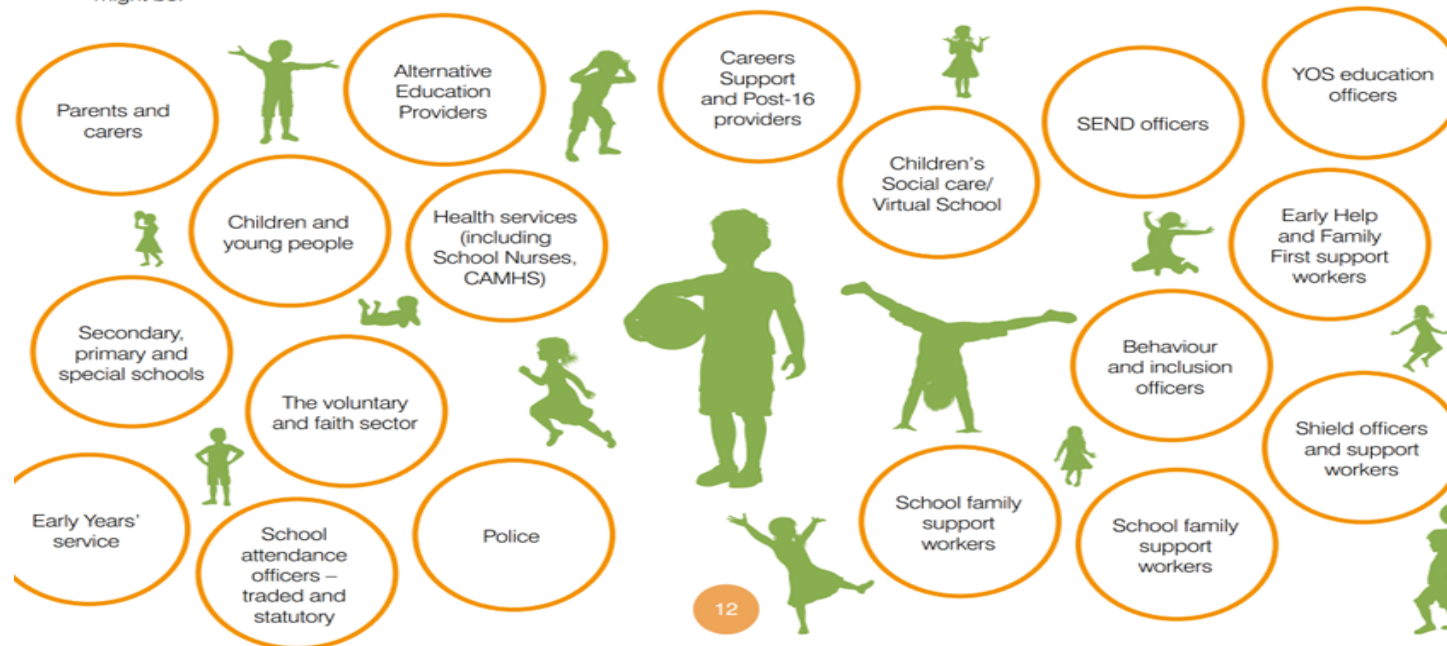
**‘Multi-disciplinary support for families:** provide access to early help support workers to work intensively with families to provide practical whole-family support where needed to tackle the causes of absenteeism and unblock the barriers to attendance’.

# School attendance support Team- Multi-disciplinary support for families

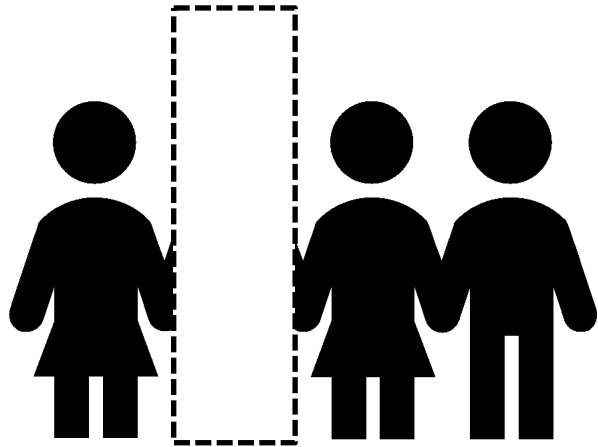
- Tiered response document to ensure multi-agency working around attendance.
- A Complex Low Attendance and Avoidance Group with senior managers from services across health, social care, education, early help ensures oversight of cases.

## Working in partnership: who is going to help us?

Securing good attendance is everybody's business – if we are to achieve our ambitious goals we all need to work together. Lead professionals working with the family may identify key partners as some of the following, depending on the needs of the child and family might be:

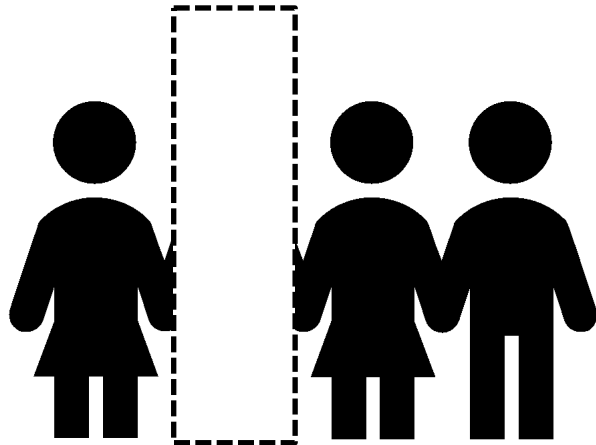
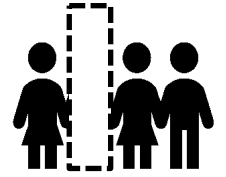


# What is the focus of work in Stockton? Understanding that attendance everyone's business



If a child or young person  
is absent from school  
what impact does it have  
on your work?

# What is the focus of work in Stockton? Understanding that attendance everyone's business



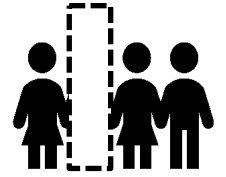
If a child or young person is absent from school what impact does this have on your work?

What change could you make at an operational level?

What change could you make at a strategic level?



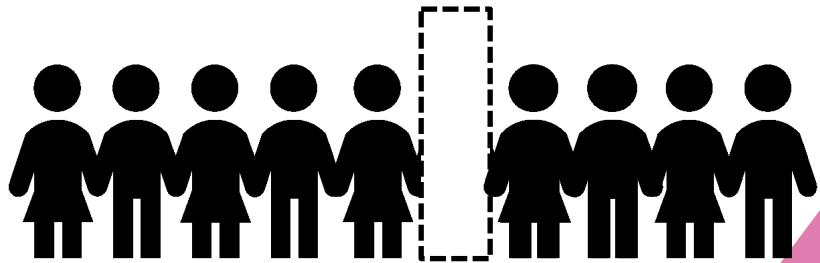
# What is the focus of work in Stockton? Understanding that attendance everyone's business



Complex reasons for absence

Low or sporadic attendance where there is a specific issue

Attendance that can be managed through traditional approaches- 'just attendance'



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**Children and Young People Select Committee  
Work Programme – 2023-2024**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Attending</b>
19 July 2023	Children’s Services Overview  Action Plan – Contextual Safeguarding and Youth Relationships	Martin Gray Cllr Lisa Evans  Adele Moore
15 November 2023	Review of Educational Attainment  Progress Update – Care Leavers EET  Progress Update - Scrutiny Review of Child Poverty	Vanessa Housley Eddie Huntington  David Willingham  Haleem Ghafoor
13 December 2023	Review of Educational Attainment  Presentation – New Team around the School Partnership Offer	Vanessa Housley Eddie Huntington
17 January 2024	Review of Educational Attainment: Presentation – New Attendance Strategy	Vanessa Housley Eddie Huntington
14 February 2024	Review of Educational Attainment: Presentation – Early Help Appreciative Inquiry	Anthony Douglas Charisse Monaro
13 March 2024	Review of Educational Attainment: Vulnerable Groups – Outcomes and Activities	Vanessa Housley Eddie Huntington
17 April 2024	Review of Educational Attainment: Presentation – Regional DfE Attendance Adviser	Vanessa Housley Eddie Huntington
15 May 2024	Review of Educational Attainment: Workshop and Engagement Feedback Summary of Evidence	Vanessa Housley Eddie Huntington
12 June 2024	Review of Educational Attainment: Final Report	Vanessa Housley Eddie Huntington

**Items to be scheduled each year**

**Annual**

Overview of Children and Young People’s Services and Annual Safeguarding Report

**Six Monthly**

Children and Young People Performance Reports

**Progress Updates**

Progress Update - Contextual Safeguarding and Youth Relationships - July 2024

Progress Update Care Leaver EET – July 2024

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