

EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH A SOCIAL WORKER: NEWSLETTER



Hello and welcome to the second issue of our newsletter for education and children's social care professionals to keep you in touch with news and developments about how Northumberland local authority is fulfilling a new duty to promote the education of children with a social worker.

Just a reminder that there are 4 workstreams underway: Attendance, Behaviour, Learning and Wellbeing. This issue of our newsletter is focussing on promoting the education of children with a social worker through improved **ATTENDANCE**.

Northumberland's Principal Education Welfare Officer and the Attendance workstream lead is Sarah Wintringham.



Improving attendance so that it is no longer a barrier to education is vital if we are to improve educational outcomes for children with a social worker. All professionals who work with children should prioritise attendance. This newsletter is just the beginning to introduce you to the work that is underway. More will follow ready for the new school year in September, and that will include more information about fulfilling the new guidance *Working together to improve school attendance* (DfE May 2022).

Jane Walker, Northumberland's Virtual School Headteacher

ATTENDANCE IS EVERYONE'S BUSINESS

Why help is needed

Children with a social worker are around 3 times more likely to be persistently absent from school and between 2 to 4 times more likely to be permanently excluded from school than their peers. This group are also over ten times more likely to attend alternative provision settings than all other pupils.

(Promoting the education of children with a social worker, DfE June 2021 page 9)

Statistics show that persistent absentees (with attendance of less than 90%) are less likely to achieve their full potential and can affect GCSE grades and a child's future prospects.

Children who are persistently absent and not accessing education are at significant risk of being victims of harm, exploitation, or radicalisation, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life.

Research shows that in England children on the edge of care and criminality share poor attendance as a common factor.

Did you know

For some, 90% may seem like an acceptable level of attendance, but the reality is that 90% attendance means that the child will miss half a school day each week or 19 days of school during the school year –that's nearly 4 school weeks and 80 lessons. The DfE says "If over 5 academic years a child has attendance of 90%, the child will miss half of a school year and that's a lot of lost education".

EVERY SCHOOL DAY COUNTS

100% attendance	is 190 days (one school year)	with NO absences
95% attendance	is 180 days	which is 2 weeks of absence
90% attendance	is 171 days	which is 4 weeks of absence
85% attendance	is 161 days	which is 6 weeks of absence
80% attendance	is 152 days	which is more than half a term of absence
75% attendance	is 143 days	which is more than 9 weeks absence

Punctuality matters. Being frequently late for school adds up to lost learning:
 Arriving 5 minutes late every day adds up to over 3 days lost each year
 Arriving 15 minutes late every day adds up to 2 week's absence a year
 Arriving 30 minutes late every adds up to 19 days' absence a year

England

Rate of sessions recorded as not attending due to COVID circumstances
21.3%

Overall absence rate
4.6%
 Better than 4.7% in 2018-19

Percentage of persistent absentees (10% or more missed):
 primary
8.8%
 Not as good as 8.2% in 2018-19

Percentage of persistent absentees (10% or more missed):
 secondary
14.8%
 Not as good as 13.7% in 2018-19

Northumberland

Rate of sessions recorded as not attending due to COVID circumstances
20.6%

Overall absence rate
4.7%
 Better than 4.9% in 2018/19

Percentage of persistent absentees (10% or more missed):
 primary
8.3%
 Not as good as 7.4% in 2018-19

Percentage of persistent absentees (10% or more missed):
 secondary
13%
 Not as good as 12.3% in 2018-19

ATTENDANCE IS PART OF THE PLAN

Key documents

- [Working together to improve school attendance](#), DfE May 2022
- [Where are England's children? The Children's Commissioner's attendance audit March 2022](#)
- [Improving school attendance: support for schools and local authorities](#), DfE May 2022

Children at risk of missing education (CME)

In Northumberland we have a robust system in place to identify every month children that are at risk of missing education. Every school, alternative provider and some key local authority services are required to submit a monthly return that gives us information about children who are not in school, for whatever reason, for the normal hours of a school day, for example they attend alternative provision or experience multiple fixed term exclusions. This information is used at a monthly multi-agency CME Tracking Panel meeting to safeguard children not in school and to ensure that they are not missing out on their entitlement to full time education. Agencies attending the CME Tracking Panel include: Admissions, Primary Mental Health, SEND, the HASH, Children's social care, school representatives.

- At the end of the Spring term almost 750 children were identified as at risk of missing education
- 14.5% (or 107 children) had Early Help Assessments
- 7.8% (or 58 children) were Children in Need
- 3% (or 22 children) were on Child Protection Plans
- 5.1% (or 38 children) were looked after

The main reasons for being at risk of missing education were being in alternative provision, non-attendance or having part time timetables.

Barriers to attendance

Education Welfare Officers, Designated Safeguarding Leads and children's social workers are well aware of the common barriers to attendance for children with a social worker.

These barriers can change over time, but common ones at the moment include:

1. increased mental health and wellbeing needs, including parental mental health
2. living in a household where someone is clinically vulnerable or at a comparatively increased risk from COVID-19 and anxiety resulting from this
3. living in a household where children experience or observe domestic abuse and/or substance misuse
4. where economic deprivation and the impact in the sudden rise in the cost of living are affecting how well parents can take care of their children. For example many families are saying that they have to walk to school as they don't have petrol or bus fares, some don't get in at all; school uniform has become unaffordable; childcare costs and after school clubs are unmanageable; families can't afford to feed their children during the school day
5. stigma leading to bullying, social isolation, lack of friendship group

Benefits of attendance

1. School is a strong **protective factor**, a safe space for children
2. Children are **visible** to and supported by professionals
3. Children have a supportive and expert **network around them**
4. **Routine** creates stability in children's lives
5. The **social** benefits promote a child's development

What we're doing in Northumberland

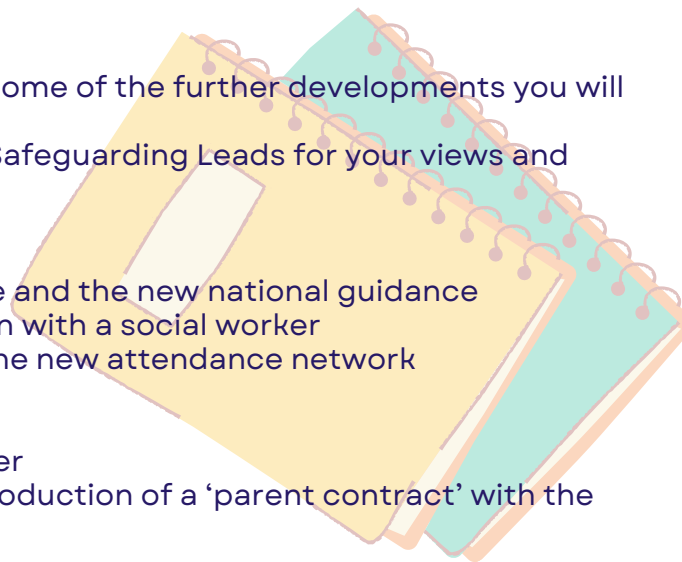
The extended duty to promote the education of children with a social worker has created opportunities for us in Northumberland and improvement work is well underway. We have already:

- appointed an additional Education Welfare Officer and Education Welfare Support Officer to target children with a social worker who are the poorest attenders
- developed the integrated work between Education and Welfare and Early Help to provide the right level of targeted support to return individual children to education
- completed an Early Help team around the school pilot, and have started to recruit to new posts of Early Help Worker (Education)
- used the existing CME process to track children with a social worker who are at risk of missing education
- created a 'tab' in the children's social care information case management system to show when children have involvement with Education Welfare
- introduced Attendance Workshops that are small group intervention sessions with children to prevent them from becoming persistent absentees. A themed Attendance Workshop for children with a social worker will be held during the summer term

We're working on it

The Attendance workstream is gaining momentum and some of the further developments you will see as the year progresses will include:

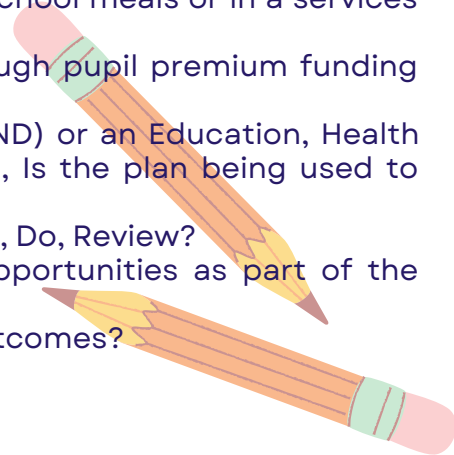
- asking our children's social workers and Designated Safeguarding Leads for your views and ideas
- convening a new network for attendance leads
- introducing a regular half termly attendance briefing
- training for schools and social workers on attendance and the new national guidance
- case studies to demonstrate what works with children with a social worker
- regular provision of contextual attendance data via the new attendance network
- a visible school attendance campaign
- a School Attendance Policy template
- introduction of a Children Not in School (CNIS) register
- in response to the new attendance guidance, the introduction of a 'parent contract' with the Education Welfare Service



**NON-SCHOOL ATTENDANCE IS A SYMPTOM
OF SOMETHING ELSE**

Some questions for professionals to ask about the attendance of a child

- What is the child's current attendance percentage? If it's below 95% then this is below national average
- How is better attendance being encouraged eg Breakfast Club?
- Academically, is the child on track to meet their age-related expectations? If not, is anything in place to improve their progress?
- Is the child eligible for pupil premium funding (if eligible for free school meals or in a services family) or pupil premium plus?
- What additional support or interventions are they receiving through pupil premium funding and is it working?
- Does the child have a special or additional need or disability (SEND) or an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)? If attendance is below 95% for the child, is the plan being used to prioritise and improve attendance?
- How is the education setting using the graduated approach of Plan, Do, Review?
- Is the child accessing Covid 19 catch up funding or tutoring opportunities as part of the National Tutoring Programme?
- Is behaviour and exclusion impacting on the child's educational outcomes?
- Is there a pastoral support plan in place?
- Is mental health or wellbeing impacting on attendance?



Education support teams who social workers might want to link up with

Education Welfare Service

- Principal Education Welfare Officer, Sarah Wintringham, 07584 273772

Schools' Safeguarding Team

- Team Manager, Carol Leckie, 07584 313178

Inclusion Team Early Help Workers (Education)

- School Admissions and Inclusion Team Manager, Jill Atkinson, 07768 470616

Inclusive Education Services

- High Incidence Needs Team (HINT) Manager, Fiona Tarn, 07970 341508
- Low Incidence Needs Team (LINT) Manager, Allison Cox, 07966774444
- Psychological Services Manager, Katinka Bryan, 01670 620028

**Next Issue
Coming Soon -
focus on
BEHAVIOUR**