

Working together to improve school attendance – The role of the LA and partners

Edwina Langley MBE - Lead Attendance Officer



 RESET

 RESHAPE

 RESTART

Housekeeping

- Session is being recorded and will be available after the event – please leave the session if you don't want to be recorded
- Please keep cameras off
- Please keep microphones off
- Time for questions through the session and at the end



Session content

- Working together to improve school attendance – reminder
- Chapter 4: 'Expectations of local authorities'
- Attendance strategy and data
- School attendance support team
- Communication and advice
- Targeting support meetings
- Multi-disciplinary support for families
- The Birmingham offer
- Support First – we want your help!
- Summary



Working together to improve school attendance - reminder

- 'Improving attendance is everyone's business'
- Statutory guidance from 19th August 2024
- 'Must have regard to it'
- Eight chapters – Chapter 4
- Sets out expectations of partners
- 'Support first' – not punitive action first
- Schools - Duty to share attendance and absence with DfE and LAs
- Schools - Duty to consider legal action when all else fails



Chapter 4: Expectations of local authorities

- Schools and academy trusts – crucial role in raising attendance for all their children
- Proactive role and best placed
- Spot early indicators of poor attendance
- Sometimes barriers go beyond school gates
- Absence can be a symptom of wider issues in a child's life
- Local issues and contexts

'The local authority, statutory safeguarding partners and other local partners therefore have a crucial role in supporting pupils to overcome those barriers and ensuring all children can access the full-time education to which they are entitled.'



Local authorities

- Facilitators of wider support
- Families and schools
- Overcome short term barriers
- Strategic role
- Working across a geographical area
- Longer term barriers
- LAs differ in size, demographics and organisation
- WTTISA doesn't specify how roles are discharged

But...



All local authorities are expected to...

- **Rigorously track local attendance data** to devise a strategic approach to attendance that prioritises the pupils, pupil cohorts and schools on which to provide support and focus its efforts on to unblock area wide barriers to attendance.
- Have a **School Attendance Support Team** which provides the following core functions free of charge to all schools (regardless of type):
 - **Communication and advice:** regularly bring schools together to communicate messages, provide advice and share best practice between schools and trusts within the area.
 - **Targeting Support Meetings:** hold regular 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.
 - **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.
 - **Legal intervention:** take forward attendance legal intervention (using the full range of parental responsibility measures) where voluntary support has not been successful or engaged with.
- Monitor and improve the **attendance of children with a social worker** through their Virtual School.



Rigorously track local attendance data...

- Clear strategic approach
- Across all areas of council responsibility
- Frontline operational staff – social workers, early help workers, youth justice – as a minimum
- Statutory and voluntary partners – police, health etc
- Their part in attendance delivery
- How we will all work together
- Birmingham Attendance Strategy
- Action planning
- School improvement board



Includes...

- Recognition that improving attendance is part of improving wider pupil welfare
- Key feature of all services but safeguarding and education
- Attendance data from all schools – identify pupil cohorts, schools, neighbourhoods at risk (national and regional benchmarks)
- Clear vision with long term and short term aims
- Resourced appropriately
- Regularly evaluated by senior leaders and members, service user, schools, partners
- Gives partners and schools the opportunity to shape service priorities
- DfE and LA data



School attendance support team

- Requirement for all LAs
- No requirement for specific delivery model
- Four core functions
 - Communication and advice
 - Targeting Support meetings
 - Multi-disciplinary support for families
 - Legal Intervention



Communication and advice

- Clear guidance to schools and other partners
- Clarity on what schools should be offering
- When the LA may become involved in cases
- Provide a named point of contact – queries and hold targeting support meetings
- Build good relationships with school leaders
- Opportunities to share good practice
- Show leadership across schools
- Address common issues



Targeting Support Meetings

- LAs to organise 'regular meetings'
- Severely absent pupils – agree action plans
- Agree approaches for persistent absence management
- Agree lead practitioner for severe absence – school in most cases
- Data analysis – school improvement
- Not referrals!
- Not an EWO or ESW!
- Advisory role
- Short, focussed mainly virtual meetings
- Senior attendance champion



Targeting support meetings - frequency

- Attendance levels below national average – at least termly
- Next group – annually
- No meeting required for schools with strongest attendance
- Ongoing contact with single point of conduct
- Request for termly meetings – met if resources allow
- School expected to take part
- Safeguarding duties
- If targeting support meeting offered but not accepted
- Follow up – concern based on data
- School provide evidence of improvement - accepted



Multi-disciplinary support for families

- Joint approach for all severely absent pupils
- Build on existing early help offer
- Not additional resource
- Provide schools with information on services
- Build strong relationships with partners
- Data sharing with partners
- Working closely with health
- Collaborative culture locally and across the city



Support First - WTTISA

- Support includes any activity designed to improve a child's attendance without a penalty notice or prosecution
- Speaking to the child
- Informal meetings with parents
- Adjustments made in school
- Early help assessment
- School nurse referral
- Forward Thinking Birmingham etc

'The local authority's decision on whether sufficient support has been provided before issuing a penalty notice should be treated as final.'



Traded services - attendance

- Support outlined – free
- LA doesn't provide traded services for attendance casework
- Won't be providing EWOs or ESWs
- Won't be replicating the service provided by external agencies now



Birmingham - WTTISA

- Birmingham Attendance Strategy – Scrutiny 17th July 2024
- Legal Intervention – ELIT
- Education penalty notice code of conduct – comments by 19th July 2024
- Multi-agency offers detailed in guidance – not severe absence so far
- Targeting support meetings – additional staff
- Business transformation
- Consultation
- Recruitment and training – won't be in place for September 24
- 'Attendance and Inclusive Pathways Service'
- RAG rating – who will be offered targeting meetings first!



Support First – we want your help!

- Local gaps or barriers?
- Want included in ‘Support First’ guidance if possible?
 - Please indicate in the chat or email:
attendance@birmingham.gov.uk



Schools - next steps

- Review 'Working together to improve school attendance'
- Leadership requirements – role of the Senior Attendance Champion
- Attendance policy/whole school approaches
- Get to know your attendance data
- Registration codes and deletion from roll
- Registers in order – contact your MIS provider to ensure they are ready for the new codes
- Ensure the school is signed up to Wonde/IDAMs
- Early help provision
- Severe absence – review all children
- School portal – admissions and deletion notifications
- Noticeboard – illness absence notifications and CME/deletions/point of contact



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- Next steps
- Reminder – Birmingham Education Penalty Notice Code of Conduct
- attendance@birmingham.gov.uk



Questions?





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