



## SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL Cabinet Report

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**Report of:** Jayne Ludlam/Dawn Walton

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**Date:** 16 January 2013

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**Subject:** Sheffield Attendance Strategy  
(for Early Years, Schools, Academies and Colleges)

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**Author of Report:** Diane Dewick 0114 250 6865

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### **Summary:**

The purpose of this report is to explain the changes to the Local Authorities (LA) policy with regard to the delivery of Statutory Duties and to improve School Attendance.

The report explains:

- Reasons for the new Attendance Strategy;
- Current position of attendance in Sheffield;
- 5 key themes of the Strategy;
- Outcomes of the consultation on the Strategy;
- Implementation of the Strategy.

The new and different approach for Sheffield, outlined within the new strategy in Section 3, will be to help achieve our Big Ambition for Sheffield – that every child, young person and family achieves their full potential by raising expectations and attainment and enabling enriching experiences:

By working in partnership and developing strategies that ensure:

- A Great Start in Life
- Every school a great school
- Young people active, informed & engaged
- Skills and training for life and employment
- Every child, young person and family safe, healthy and strong

Which will ensure

- That every child and young person is in education every day

And to

- Encourage schools to take an increased role in low level attendance issues prior to requesting support from the Multi Agency Support Teams (MAST);
- Implement the early intervention approach where all MAST workers have attendance as a key priority;
- Implement the whole family approach with regard to attendance;
- Prioritise Looked After Children;
- Work in a targeted way with schools requiring additional support which will prioritise Special Schools, the Inclusion Centres and vulnerable groups;
- Make full and effective use of Legal powers available to the LA;
- Increase Sheffield's attendance to match or exceed the National Average;
- Lower Persistent Absence.

**Reasons for Recommendations:**

The purpose of this report is to seek approval of the new Attendance Strategy for Sheffield and to agree its implementation which will enable us to achieve our Big Ambition and Corporate Strategy.

**Recommendations:**

Cabinet is recommended to note the outcomes of the consultation on the draft Attendance Strategy and to approve:

- The new Sheffield Attendance Strategy including the 5 major themes and priorities;
- The implementation of the Attendance Strategy for CYPS, Schools and partners.

**Background Papers:**      **The Draft Attendance Strategy**  
    **The Attendance Strategy Consultation Feedback Report**

**Category of Report:**      OPEN  
    **Statutory and Council Policy Checklist**

<b>Financial Implications</b>
YES Cleared by: Andy Bray
<b>Legal Implications</b>
YES Cleared by: Nadine Wynter
<b>Equality of Opportunity Implications</b>
YES Cleared by: Bashir Khan
<b>Tackling Health Inequalities Implications</b>
YES/NO

<b>Human rights Implications</b>
YES/NO:
<b>Environmental and Sustainability implications</b>
YES/NO
<b>Economic impact</b>
YES/NO
<b>Community safety implications</b>
YES/NO
<b>Human resources implications</b>
YES Kath Selman
<b>Property implications</b>
YES/NO
<b>Area(s) affected</b>
<b>Relevant Cabinet Portfolio Leader</b>
Cllr Jackie Drayton
<b>Relevant Scrutiny Committee if decision called in</b>
Children, Young People and Families
<b>Is the item a matter which is reserved for approval by the City Council?</b>
YES/NO
<b>Press release</b>
YES/NO

## REPORT TITLE

### 1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 Schools and the Local Authority (LA) have a statutory duty under Section 175 Education Act 2002 to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- 1.2 The proposal to implement a new Attendance Strategy for Sheffield is due to the changing role of the LA in relation to support services provided for schools. This includes schools continued move towards greater autonomy and the expectation, therefore, that schools will take more responsibility for improving school attendance. This report seeks permission to implement the Strategy with Schools, CYPF and Partners.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to explain the:
- Reasons for the new Attendance Strategy;
  - Current position of attendance in Sheffield;
  - 5 key themes of the strategy;
  - Outcomes of the consultation on the Strategy;
  - Implementation of the Strategy.
- 1.4 The new and different approach for Sheffield, outlined within the new strategy in Section 3, will be to help achieve our Big Ambition for Sheffield – that every child, young person and family achieves their full potential by raising expectations and attainment and enabling enriching experiences:

By working in partnership and developing strategies that ensure:

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And to

- Encourage schools to take an increased role in low level attendance issues prior to requesting support from the Multi Agency Support Teams (MAST);
- Implement the early intervention approach where all MAST workers have attendance as a key priority;
- Implement the whole family approach with regard to attendance;
- Prioritise Looked After Children;
- Work in a targeted way with schools requiring additional support which will prioritise Special Schools, the Inclusion Centres and vulnerable groups;

- Make full and effective use of Legal powers available to the LA;
- Increase Sheffield's attendance to match or exceed the National Average;
- Lower Persistent Absence.

## **2. WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR SHEFFIELD PEOPLE**

- 2.1 Sheffield families will have their support needs identified at an earlier stage and have access to high quality services.
- 2.2 In addition to universal services, the services provided via the Multi Agency Support Team (MAST), will be targeted to meet the needs of the most vulnerable including Looked After Children (LAC), Young Carers and children and young people with Learning Difficulties and or Disabilities (LD/D). These needs and risk factors will also be identified and support targeted via the 'Building Successful Families' programme.
- 2.3 The targeted support will also extend to identify minority groups as identified in the Equalities Impact Assessment.
- 2.4 Families will have access to the right support at the right time and place which is accessible and welcoming regardless of where they live in Sheffield.
- 2.5 By improving school attendance we will not only enhance achievements and the life chances of children but also their parents and carers who will be supported to meet their identified needs which may provide opportunities for them to improve their skills and/or take up employment.
- 2.6 By improving school attendance we will be safeguarding children and young people and protecting their human rights.

## **3. OUTCOME AND SUSTAINABILITY**

- 3.1 The proposals provide a clear framework for improved practice in the LA and in schools which is the foundation of the new Attendance Strategy which will contribute towards health inequalities and will safeguard children and young people.
- 3.2 The LA will provide the leadership, challenge and monitoring to ensure that processes and practices surrounding school attendance are adhered to. In addition the LA will promote the effective use of legal powers, where appropriate, to improve school attendance and outcomes for children.
- 3.3 Schools will become more effective by becoming more creative, innovative and by seeking more efficient ways of working to ensure that more children attend school regularly. The LA will support this work by helping schools to build their capacity, to identify needs and risk factors at an early stage.
- 3.4 Working together with our partners from health and other sectors and by developing joint solutions with improved integration of services, we aim to improve the effectiveness of universal services, thereby reducing the need for families to access specialist services.

## **4. MAIN BODY OF THE REPORT**

### **4.1 REASONS FOR A NEW STRATEGY**

Schools, Local Authorities, parents/carers and the wider community all have

a role to play in improving attendance. Schools have a statutory duty under Section 175 Education Act 2002 to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Every school therefore should have policies and procedures designed to ensure that all its pupils attend regularly and the LA should have clear policies and procedure in terms of how they will carry out their statutory duties and support schools with the wider attendance agenda.

- 4.2 Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, as amended, parents/carers are responsible for ensuring that a child of compulsory school age receives efficient full-time education suitable to the child's age, ability, and aptitude, by regular attendance at school or by educating the child otherwise (home education).
- 4.3 The LA has developed the new strategy as a result of the introduction of the significant changes which have taken place since the last strategy in 2002 and the introduction of MAST and Early Intervention and Prevention strategy.
- 4.4 Furthermore, improving school attendance is central to all the priorities in the city's corporate plans, which are:
- Improving skills
  - Raising attainment and aspiration
  - Improving children's health
  - Safety and happiness
  - Looked after children
  - Successful transition to adulthood

Most of these priorities are linked to the Corporate Plan ambition of ensuring a better life for children and young people.

- 4.4 The new and different approach for Sheffield, outlined within the new strategy in Section 3, will be to help achieve our Big Ambition for Sheffield – that every child, young person and family achieves their full potential by raising expectations and attainment and enabling enriching experiences:

By working in partnership and developing strategies that ensure:

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4.5 **CURRENT POSITION**

Improving school attendance has been, and continues to be, a challenge for schools, parent/carers and the LA. The overall picture for school attendance in Sheffield, and nationally, has shown an increase in all phases from 2001. However the table below (also in the draft Attendance Strategy **Appendix A**), indicates that from 2008 to 2011 the picture for Sheffield has stayed fairly

static, which demonstrates that Sheffield is falling behind the national picture.

4.6

	Primary		Secondary		Special	
	National	LA	National	LA	National	LA
<b>2008</b>	94.74	94.41	92.66	92.22	89.43	85.90
<b>2009</b>	94.70	94.27	92.80	92.49	89.28	85.7
<b>2010</b>	94.79	94.38	93.20	92.59	89.75	89.26
<b>2011</b>	95.0	94.55	93.5	92.59	90.0	88.30
<b>2012</b>	*	95.25	*	93.60	*	88.87

\* National figures not yet released due in February 2013

4.7 Following the implementation of the MAST Service Redesign in November 2011, and during the development of the new Attendance Strategy, many aspects of the new strategy have already been implemented. This may have contributed towards the improved attendance figure in all three phases at the end of 2012.

4.8 A key priority both nationally and locally is to reduce Persistent Absence (PA). A child or young person is deemed to be PA if their overall total attendance is below 85%; this benchmark has recently been raised from 80%.

4.9 The current picture for PA in Sheffield in 2012 shows an improved position for primary of 4.3% and secondary 9.0% but disturbingly, PA in special schools has increased by 0.9% to 20.6%. Unfortunately we are not able to compare this nationally as the figures will not be available until February 2013.

#### 4.10 KEY THEMES AND PRIORITIES

The Strategies key themes and priorities are:

- Schools' own management of attendance
- Early Intervention and Prevention
- Support for Looked After Children
- Local Authority Targeted Support for Schools
- Full and Effective use of Legal Powers

#### 4.11 CONSULTATION

4.12 The draft strategy was developed in the spring term of 2012 and has been shared with schools, governors and staff for their views on the content.

4.13 All the consultation feedback has been collated and the highlights are in the Attendance Strategy Consultation Feedback Report. **(Appendix B)**

4.14 Following consultation, the strategy has been amended; overall the majority of feedback supported the five major themes and priorities, particularly having a focus on 'Looked After' and vulnerable children.

4.15 The concerns raised by schools and staff were largely around the lack of resources to deliver the strategy but most people were in favour of having an early intervention and prevention approach to the issue of improving school attendance. Schools did however express concern about the 'loss' of dedicated Education Welfare Officers (EWOs).

#### **4.16 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY**

Following the redesign of MAST, staff have already undertaken training on the new ways of working outlined in the strategy to support improving school attendance. The skills and knowledge of the old 'EWOs' have been shared with staff in the new roles of Prevention and Intervention Workers.

4.17 In addition, within the new MAST structure there are seven dedicated specialist Attendance and Inclusion Officers (A & I Officers), three of which are Social Work Qualified (SWQ). The A & I Officers offer a range of support to staff, schools and families. The A & I Officers (SWQ) in addition have a specific remit to support the attainment and achievements of Looked After Children (LAC) and also oversee the process of utilising the legal powers available to the LA.

4.18 Once the Strategy has gone through the political process, it will be rolled out across the city at a series of meeting for schools and partners, for full implementation in January 2013.

### **5. COMMUNICATION**

5.1 There is a communication strategy for parents, partners and key stakeholders regarding the support provided for children, young people and families in the city. One strand of this communications strategy is specifically related to attendance. This strand includes regular public campaigns to raise the awareness of the importance of children attending school every day.

### **6.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

6.1 The only alternative considered was to relaunch the 'Making a Mark' strategy of 2002. It was felt that this was an excellent strategy of its day in terms of standardising procedures, sharing good practice and raising the profile of the importance of raising school attendance. As with most strategies the agenda required a refreshed approach from that of several years ago.

6.2 Also taken into consideration were the major changes to support services within the LA and the central position of schools being responsible for the attendance of children within their schools.

6.3 It had also been identified that there was a need to continually strengthen and improve the attendance for vulnerable groups of children.

### **7.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

7.1 Improving school attendance and safeguarding children and young people is central to Sheffield's Corporate Plan ambition of ensuring a better life for children and young people. The overall reason for the recommendations therefore is to improve school attendance which in turn will positively impact on life chances and educational outcomes for children and young people and keep them safe. It will also enable Sheffield to improve its attendance position when compared to National, Statistical and Core City data.

7.2 Cabinet are asked therefore to approve a change in policy in relation to school attendance and our LA Statutory duties and responsibilities. This change in policy reflects the changing role of the LA in relation to the support provided to school and the increasing expectation that schools will take an



increased responsibility for this agenda.

7.3 **The Local Authority** will promote the five themes of the strategy with schools, families and partners to ensure that due process is followed and legal responsibilities are adhered to.

7.4 **Schools** - will adopt the recommendations in the attendance strategy which will support them to implement an early intervention approach, request additional support when required and contribute towards achieving a consistent approach across the city to improve school attendance and keep children safe.

7.5 **Families** - will have their support needs identified at an earlier stage, have access to high quality services and be supported to improve their children's school attendance.

## 8.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no financial implications as this strategy is to be funded from within existing resources.

## 9.0 REASONS FOR EXEMPTION (if a Closed report)

9.1 No exemption requested.

## 10.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

### 10.1 Recommendations:

Cabinet is recommended to note the outcomes of the consultation on the draft Attendance Strategy and to approve:

- The new Sheffield Attendance Strategy including the 5 major themes and priorities;
- The implementation of the Attendance Strategy for CYPS, Schools and partners.

## APPENDICES

Appendix A  
Appendix B

**The Draft Attendance Strategy**  
**Attendance Strategy Consultation Feedback Report**

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