

Meeting:	Overview & Scrutiny Co-ordination & Finance Committee
Date:	9 October 2024
Title:	Family Friendly Sub Committee Task and Finish Group Report
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Author:	Lisa Ramshaw, Head of Education and Inclusion Allison Mitchell, Head of Governance Sonia Stewart, Manager: Democratic Services
Service:	Governance Education and Inclusion
Wards affected:	All
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PART 1

1.1 Executive Summary:

A request was made as part of the work programme of the Family Friendly Sub-Committee to set up a Task and Finish Group to look at attendance and issues relating to attendance at North Tyneside Schools.

A cross-party task and finish group was established and has reached the conclusions outlined in section 1.4 of this report. As a result of the information presented to the Task and Finish Group a list of actions have been identified at paragraph 1.4.4.

1.2 Recommendation(s):

- (i) The Committee is asked to consider and comment on the proposed actions listed in Paragraph 1.4.4 of the report
- (ii) Consider and comment on the proposed recommended actions listed in Paragraph 1.4.4 of the report
- (iii) To note that Family Friendly Sub-Committee will receive update reports in respect of the recommended actions listed in Paragraph 1.4.4, to consider whether attendance has improved in schools in North Tyneside

1.3 Council Plan and Policy Framework

This report relates to the following priorities in the 2021/25 Our North Tyneside Plan:

A family-friendly North Tyneside

Background and Findings of the Task and Finish Group

- 1.4 Following a meeting of the Family-Friendly Sub-Committee on 7 July 2023 at which the Sub-Committee discussed the work programme for the 2023/24 municipal year. It was agreed that a Task and Finish Group would be established to look at attendance

The Committee agreed to look at the Attendance Policy in depth, the policy was developed in line with the DfE Guidance by a multidisciplinary group. Working together to improve attendance was published by the DfE May 2022.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/63049617e90e0729e63d3953/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf.

On 19 August 2024 statutory requirements will come into effect regarding attendance for all schools and educational settings up to the age of 18.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65f1b048133c22b8eecd38f7/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_applies_from_19_August_2024.pdf

- 1.4.1 The Task and Finish Group met on three occasions.

The first meeting established what information the Task and Finish Group would like officers to provide for consideration.

The second meeting was a presentation of the key data around attendance which produced some questions from the Task and Finish Group and which led to the recommendations contained within 1.4.4 of this report.

A third meeting took place to finalise this report to Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordination and Finance Committee.

- 1.4.2. Education North Tyneside have briefed head teachers schools and settings on the key changes set out in the statutory requirements listed in paragraph 1.4. Support and challenge for these changes will come through the attendance network run by the

attendance and placement team combined with the headteacher briefings and collaborations within the school support team.

The Task and Finish Group heard that:

- Overall average absence is lower than national and North East averages. In 2022/23 the North Tyneside figure was 6.8%, the North East was 7.8% and the National figure was 7.4%. Pre covid North Tyneside Overall absence rate was 4.43%
- The Persistent Absence rate is classed as 90% or lower attendance. In 2022/23 Nationally the Persistent Absence rate for all schools in England was 21.1%, in the North East was 21.8% and it was 18.7% in North Tyneside schools. Pre Covid the Persistent Absence rate in North Tyneside was 9.51%
- In 2022/2023 the Persistent Absence figure in Primary Schools in North Tyneside was 17.4%, and the National figure was 17.2%. In the same year in Secondary Schools in North Tyneside Persistent Absence the figure was 23.5% and Nationally it was 28.3% . 2018/2019 the Persistent Absence rate for North Tyneside was 9.51% and Nationally was 10.9%.
- The Severe Absence rate is classed as 50% or lower attendance. In 2022/23 the national data was 2.0%, North East 2.3% and North Tyneside 1.6%.
- The new Labour Government is working towards a Children's Act 2025. This is expected to contain guidance and further statutory changes with regards to attendance.

Key Findings

1.4.3 When examining different types of data about attendance the group was able to identify some trends which are of a concern which sit below the good overall attendance.

- Like national trends absence recorded as Illness is **higher than pre pandemic**, 2018/19 2.48%, 2023/24 3.64%
- **Unauthorised term time holidays** are higher in North Tyneside than National data, 0.67% which is similar to pre pandemic. Nationally unauthorised term time holidays are 0.5% There has been inconsistency across the borough for schools recording Unauthorised or Authorised holidays. The statutory changes which come in on 19 August 2024 state that only in exceptional circumstances should term time holidays be authorised (5 consecutive school days).
- **Severe absence** (50% or less Overall attendance) has increased in North Tyneside. The task and finish group heard that whilst North Tyneside figures are lower than the national average 2023/24 was 1.6% compared to 0.54% 2018/19. Nationally the Severe Absence rate 2022/23 was 2.0, North-East was 2.3% Within

these figures are children and young people who are Emotional Based School Non Attendance (**EBSNA**). The Task and Finish Group heard that from October 2023 the Children Missing Out on Education (**CMOOE**) multi disciplinary team have met every month to ensure that each child or young person is known to the team members and has an attendance action plan or the appropriate support.

It was also explained to the group that data for Children and Young People from Free School Meal 6 (**FSM6** deprivation indexed to Pupil Premium) and those with an Education Health Care Plan have a lower school attendance than their peers.

Overall Absence rates

Primary: FSM6- 7.65%, non FSM6- 5.37%

Secondary: FSM6- 12.01%, non FSM6- 9.41%

Primary: with Education Health Care Plan 9.37%, no SEND 4.89%.

Secondary: with Education Health Care 9.16%, no SEND 8.59%.

Permanent Exclusion (PEX)

The number of children and young people who are permanently Excluded from schools has a significant impact on the Overall Absence rate. Nationally PEX rates have increased post pandemic. In 2028/18 the North Tyneside figure was 0.08%, North East was 0.17% and national was 0.10%. In 2022/23 the North Tyneside figure was 0.28%, the North East was 0.2% and the National figure was 0.11% .

Pupils who are permanently excluded from a school will receive education from the 6th day at the Moorbridge Alternative Education Provision. In line with statutory guidance the North Tyneside Fair Access panel meets to allocate a school place for the pupil in another school in North Tyneside. The task and finish group heard that the increase in numbers has had an impact on Overall Attendance and Persistent Absence rates.

The Task and Finish Group heard that similarly to permanent exclusions, there has also been an increased use of Suspensions nationally and in North Tyneside schools, this has impacted on pupil attendance data. In 2018/19 the figure in North Tyneside was 3.23% compared to 5.36% National figure and 8.00% in the North East. In 2022/23 in North Tyneside the figure was 9.36% compared to 9.33% nationally and 14.96% in the North East. One of our Secondary schools was an outlier which contributed to the increase in the figures significantly in 2022/23. Local Authority Officers have worked to support and challenge this school on their relational practice. Their figure is significantly lower 2023/24.

With regards to Emotional Based Non Attendance (EBSNA) –

EBSNA is when a child or young person struggles to attend school due to emotional reasons, like anxiety, stress, or feeling overwhelmed. It's important to understand that they often *want* to go to school but find it difficult because of these feelings.

How it affects young people:

- **Academic impact:** Missing school can disrupt learning, making it harder to keep up with classmates.
- **Social isolation:** Being away from school can lead to feelings of loneliness and missing out on social interactions.
- **Mental health:** EBSNA itself can worsen existing mental health issues or contribute to new ones.
- **Long-term consequences:** Prolonged absence can affect future opportunities, such as higher education and employment.

It's crucial to address EBSNA early on to prevent these negative impacts. Support from schools, families, and mental health professionals is key to helping young people overcome their challenges and return to school successfully.

To address this identified need North Tyneside Officers from a variety of teams have worked to produce training and guidance for all schools in North Tyneside on EBSNA.

1.4.4 Recommended Actions 2024/25

- a) That the Family Friendly Sub Committee receive an annual report on the impact and progress of the attendance policy; including Unauthorised Absence, Term Time Holidays, Severe Absence, Elective Home Education, Children Missing Out on Education and Permanent Exclusion data, so that it can be seen if the steps being taken are proving effective in reducing absenteeism.
- b) The Family Friendly Sub Committee receive a report on the impact of statutory changes to attendance which come into effect on 19 August 2024. This will include impact information on:
 - Attendance network for schools
 - Term Time Holiday practice, to ensure that attendance in school is seen as primary importance.

- c) To note the refresh of the North Tyneside Attendance Code of Conduct
- d) To support the work of the Permanent Exclusion and Suspension working group
The working group will continue to work with relevant stakeholders to reduce absences in relation to Permanent Exclusions and Suspensions.