



To the Chair and Members of CABINET

DONCASTER ATTENDANCE STRATEGY

| Relevant Cabinet Member(s) | Wards Affected | Key Decision |
|----------------------------|----------------|--------------|
| Councillor Nuala Fennelly | All | No |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The purpose of this document is to introduce Cabinet to the Attendance Strategy and associated delivery plan for the improvement of Attendance and Persistent Absence at school level.
2. This programme is the LOCYP response to the request for a report that investigated the scale of the issue and how it links with the Doncaster Children and Young Peoples Plan 2017-2021 and the Social Mobility Opportunity Area, enabling teams to maximise their skills and expertise on delivering improved outcomes to children and young people.
3. The Doncaster Children and Young Peoples Plan 2017-2020 clearly articulates 'strengthened partnership working and the acceptance that it is a collective responsibility to ensure that we create the right conditions for children and young people to thrive in Doncaster' (p4) and targets a significant shift in outcomes around attendance.
4. There is a sense of collective responsibility and purpose evident across the Team Doncaster partnership to address the issues that schools in Doncaster face. Building on the evidence of the CYPP the Education & Skills Commission seeks to strengthen schools by improving the quality of teaching and learning, improving teacher recruitment and retention, and by ensuring that there is a broad and balanced curriculum that both meets the needs of pupils and the labour market. This is reflected in our 'Raising aspiration and achievement strategy', which sets out how local partnerships will impact upon school provision and outcomes including, specifically attendance.
5. Attendance is one of the three strands of the work of the Doncaster Growing together Inclusion board, which provides overall governance for this strategy.
6. This is strongly correlated with the ambition and intent of the Social Mobility Opportunity Area. Doncaster is set to receive £6m in funding over the next three years to improve the life chances of children and young people; an initial analysis of the challenges we collectively face has focussed on the home learning environment, narrowing the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their more affluent peers, persistent absence, and higher level qualifications.

EXEMPT REPORT

7. Not exempt.

RECOMMENDATIONS

8.

- To note that the poor performance of schools in this area is a key issue for Team Doncaster and impacts on a multitude of associated economic and social outcomes for children and young people.
- To explore underlying reasons.
- To give priority to a public attendance campaign that draws attention to the scale of the problem and the social and financial costs of allowing this position to continue, whilst setting out a clear position to the community regarding the value of attending school.
- To endorse the strategic actions in this plan and to monitor the impact of this work, notably:
 - To directly support and challenge all Doncaster schools who are performing below the National Average for attendance.
 - To offer professional development opportunities for school leaders and governors so that they are increasingly able to improve attendance in their settings.
 - To review the work of the DMBC attendance service in order to ensure greater impact upon attendance and persistent absenteeism.

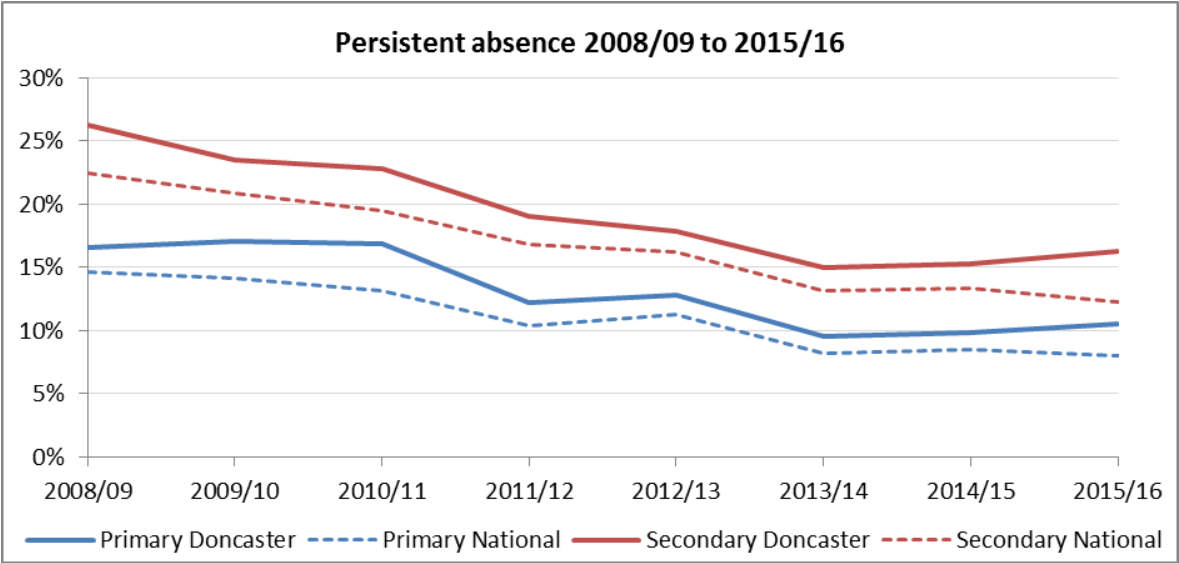
WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER?

9. The impact of high levels of school absence are a significant problem for citizens, limiting equality of opportunity, employment, economic activity, aspirations and the quality of educational provisions and their outcomes.
10. Whilst children are not attending school they are of much greater risk of harm and this presents a genuine safeguarding risk. For individual citizens there is great risk of longer term problems with employability, engagement and poverty. Reversing this trend is a priority activity.

BACKGROUND

11. Doncaster's attendance and Persistent Absentee figures have been significantly below the National Average in both compulsory phases of education for the last nine years and are worsening.
12. Students counted as persistently absent have attended school for less than 90%. This represents half a day per week. Young people with this level of absence has a significant effect on outcomes, with over 90% of students in this category failing to achieve 5 A*-C with English and Maths at GCSE.
13. There are a significant number of schools that are above the National Average for persistent absenteeism, with only three secondary schools at or above the National

Average for persistent absenteeism. Seventeen schools have persistent absenteeism affecting over 20% of their cohort. This is a key issue for children in the borough.



14. Aims of the strategy

- To develop collective responsibility for driving improvements in attendance.
- To deliver greater accountability for Doncaster schools around absence and P.A. ensuring that schools have a whole school approach to improving attendance.
- To ensure that school improvement services have a clearly defined role in improving attendance.
- Ensure that the attendance service is having a clear impact upon schools

15. Summary of actions:

- Conducting a Doncaster-wide campaign stressing the fundamental importance of school attendance and highlighting the risks of continuing poor performance in this area.
- To develop a Doncaster wide approach to and ownership of attendance issues.
- To identify schools who are persistently below the National Average for absence and support and challenge them to improve their practice.
- To offer a programme of professional development including networking opportunities that will develop the leadership capacity of schools in this area.
- To provide support and challenge to schools in order to reduce the impact of fixed term exclusions upon whole school attendance.
- To provide renewed leadership to schools by strengthening guidance and expectations around enforcement and day to day practice.

16. What success looks like

- There is effective targeted support in place from across the council for all schools who need to improve attendance and pupil behaviour.
- There is a consistent approach to the managing of attendance and behaviour across Doncaster.
- There is a reduction in persistent absence and an increase in pupil attendance across all schools so that the Doncaster statistics are in line with the national average..
- There is a reduction in the number of fixed term exclusions across all schools.
- There is a diminishing distance between disadvantaged pupils and their peers in relation to persistent absence and attendance.
- Improve the quality of provision (educational and therapeutic) available for CYP with behavioural difficulties both in a mainstream setting and in alternative settings.
- There are strong networks and CPD opportunities for those leading behaviour and attendance in schools.

- The L.A. and key stakeholders have a clear role in supporting the improvements in attendance, fixed term exclusion rates and the quality of behaviour provision in Doncaster.

17. Officers have been engaged in working directly with schools since October 2017. We expect to see improvements in rates of attendance and a reduction in persistent absence over the first year of the project. The strategy is expected to maintain its delivery through academic years 2017-2018 and 2018-2019.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED

18. There are no alternative options within this report.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION

19. There are no recommended options.

IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL'S KEY OUTCOMES

20.

| | Outcomes | Implications |
|--|---|--|
| | <p>All people in Doncaster benefit from a thriving and resilient economy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Creating Jobs and Housing</i> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Be a strong voice for our veterans</i> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Protecting Doncaster's vital services</i> | <p>Improve social mobility and economic activity by improving school engagement and outcomes.</p> |
| | <p>People live safe, healthy, active and independent lives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Safeguarding our Communities</i> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Bringing down the cost of living</i> | <p>Ensuring that all school prioritise student safety and have robust procedures for minimising school absence. Reducing the likelihood of anti-social behaviour through school absence.</p> |
| | <p>People in Doncaster benefit from a high quality built and natural environment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Creating Jobs and Housing</i> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Safeguarding our Communities</i> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Bringing down the cost of living</i> | |
| | <p>All families thrive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Protecting Doncaster's vital services</i> | <p>Schools become more effective in providing support and guidance for families and ensuring greater engagement with the school system and other agencies.</p> |
| | <p>Council services are modern and value for money.</p> | <p>The authority will, as part of this strategy, review the effectiveness of its</p> |

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| | | attendance provision in order that it impacts upon a broader range of families and schools. |
| | Working with our partners we will provide strong leadership and governance. | Focused training and network events are provided through the Local Authority. Supporting and challenging school leaders in order to improve systems and practices within their settings. |

RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

21. Doncaster's schools are challenged by their Governing Bodies, the Local Authority and OFSTED in order to ensure that children attend school.
22. The Local Authority monitors results and progress and exercises its duties in accordance with the Doncaster School Improvement Strategy.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

23. A local authority has a number of statutory duties concerning attendance and this strategy assists in ensuring these duties are met. Specific relevant duties include identifying children not receiving education and sending a written notice to parents; power to prosecute a parent for a child's non-attendance; publishing a Code for penalty notices to address poor attendance and administering the penalty notice regime; and to investigate the whereabouts of pupils who have poor attendance and are at risk of being deleted from the schools' admission register.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

24. The total controllable expenditure budget for the Attendance and Education at Home team is £668,290. The staffing posts included within this budget are subject to the on-going LOCYP Functional Analysis.

Any additional expenditure arising from the Attendance Strategy will need to be fully costed to ensure that funding is available from existing resources.

HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

25. There are no specific HR implications related to the content of this report. If there are HR implications arising from specific elements of the Attendance Strategy and associated delivery plans these will be addressed at the appropriate time.

TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS

26. There are no technology implications arising from this report.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

27. We must give due consideration to the extent to which the Council has complied with its Public Equality Duty and given due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity. The equality of expectation for all children, including those that disadvantaged, is a core value within all aspects of the work

undertaken in education settings and underpins the support and challenge provided by officers.

CONSULTATION

28. No further consultation is required for this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

DMBC Attendance Strategy report

REPORT AUTHOR & CONTRIBUTORS

Martyn Owen
Head of Service, Behaviour and Inclusion
martyn.owen@doncaster.gov.uk

Louise Greatrex, Consultant,
Louise.greatrex@doncaster.gov.uk

Damian Allen
Director of People