**Supporting Social Workers to Improve the Attendance of Children with a Social Worker**

**What is the Aim of the Guidance?**

The guidance aims to provide clear and practical points for Social Workers to consider in their day-to-day practice, to support the attendance of the children and young people they work with. It has been adapted using the Department for Education [Working Together to Improve School Attendance](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1099677/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf) guidance, including attendance of Dudley’s youngest children in accessing their early years provision, and the [Top Tips Guide: Supporting Social Workers to Improve the Attendance of Children with a Social Worker](https://mcusercontent.com/8c6d6be0d6c1464621c09381c/files/d54ab902-e687-bb56-a041-45b3c6c220fe/CSW_Attendance_top_tips.pdf), which draws upon examples of good practice within the Social Work profession where practitioners have used innovative approaches to encourage attendance, building strong partnerships across Schools and Local Authorities.

Education Outcomes and Integrated Early Years have supported the creation of this guidance in partnership with Dudley Children’s Services.

**Dudley’s 5 Point Attendance Strategy**

Dudley is committed to addressing attendance issues and have developed a Five Point Plan as follows:

**Step 1: Leadership at all levels**

***‘Attendance is everyone’s responsibility to ensure all children are in full time education, and early years children are accessing their early years entitlement within the family’s chosen provision. Everyone in the structure is a leader in driving good attendance’***

**Step 2: Policy and Personalised Protocol**

*‘****Robust systems are in place, communicated, understood and followed by all stakeholders’***

**Step 3: Effective Identification**

***‘Knowing your children, knowing their circumstances and respond with support and challenge to their needs’***

**Step 4: Data Driven Intervention**

***‘Data tells the story. Know the story and know what needs to be done to drive improvement. Use this to inform future approaches’***

**Step 5: Family and Partnership Engagement**

***‘Ensuring personalised support for each child, recognising all families are individual and their needs are specific.’***

Dudley Children’s Services Attendance Strategy can be accessed here:



**Tips for Practicing Social Workers**

**Think attendance**

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* Think about the child or young persons’ attendance in *every* professional conversation.
* Think about and work with the child and young person and their family to explore their relationship with education or their early years educational provider.
* Where there may be issues with attendance, take the time to listen to the child or young person and understand why this is the case, before identifying how their attendance could be improved.
* When speaking with the child, young person and their family about school attendance and/or attendance at their early years provision, consider framing the attendance in terms of days, rather than the overall percentage, as what can sound like a high percentage of attendance can still mean a lot of education has been missed. For example, ‘*Charlie’s attendance currently being \_% means that he has missed five days from school in two weeks, which equates to Charlie missing 35 hours of learning*.’

**Attendance in Assessments**



When completing an assessment for a child or young person where attendance is a concern, aim to understand the support currently being received, and where there may be gaps. Explore the following:

* What is their current attendance?
* Low level attendance is usually a symptom of underlying issues for the child or young person and their family. Try to identify these issues to inform the types of support needed.
* If the child or young person is not on roll at a school or their nursery attendance is low, what measures are being taken by the person / people caring for them to enrol them? If the parent or carer is reluctant, why is this?
* Is their mental health or wellbeing impacting on attendance?
* Is anxiety playing a part in low level attendance? If so, how can the child or young person be supported in managing this?
* If their school or nursery attendance is under 90% (or at risk of being that low), what is the plan to improve this? These children or young people may be referred to as **Persistent Absentees.**
* Is their behaviour impacting on their attendance and educational outcomes?
* Have they been suspended or permanently excluded from school?
* Are they on a reduced timetable?
* Is there a pastoral support plan or other type of place in place? For example, an Attendance Support Plan, a Personal Education Plan (PEP), or a Parenting Contract (this list is not exhaustive).
* What support strategies are being used in school/setting?
* Is the child or young person on track for age related expectations? If not:

1. Are they eligible for Pupil Premium funding such as free school meals/Ever6 or Pupil Premium Plus?
2. What additional support or interventions are they receiving through Pupil Premium and how effective are they? What additional support are they receiving through Early Years inclusion funding, Early Years Pupil Premium or Disability Access Fund (DAF)?
3. Do they have a special or additional need or disability (SEND) or an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)?
4. How is the education provider using the graduated approach, does this need to be reviewed?
5. What additional support or interventions are they receiving and how effective are they?
6. Are they accessing any additional Catch-Up Funding or tutoring as part of the National Tutoring Programme?

**Incorporating Attendance Support in Practice**

* Provide space to listen to the child or young person and their family, and provide targeted, individualised support.
* **Get curious.** What is the child or young person doing while they are not attending school/setting? How can the child or young person get what they want or need without missing time from school?
* Draw on the support of those people with whom the child or young person has strong, supportive, and healthy relationships, to support improving attendance.
* Explore push and pull factors. For example, agreeing an open-door policy with the Head of Year could be an effective pull-back to school.
* Stay in contact with the child or young person’s school to share information that can inform conversations about school attendance during home visits.
* If a child or young person is not enrolled at a school, then ask the family why, understand any barriers they may be experiencing with this and offer support in getting them registered.

**A child or young person that I am supporting is missing or not attending education - who do I contact?**

There are professionals available for Social Workers to contact if there are issues regarding school attendance.

* **Children or young people who have 10 days of unauthorised absence:**

The Schools Attendance Officer (each school will have a named senior member of staff responsible for school attendance and they should be contacted in the first instance).

If a child is not being brought to their early years provision and missing their all-important developmental opportunities, the Integrated Early Years team maybe be able to offer advice and guidance.

**Dudley Children’s Services Education Support Services**

* **Children or young people who are not attending school regularly:**

Education Support Service (01384 814317) - [Ess.cs@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:Ess.cs@dudley.gov.uk)

* **Children or young people not enrolled at a School or have moved out of the borough:**

Children Missing Education Team - [childrenmissingeducation@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:childrenmissingeducation@dudley.gov.uk)

* **Children or young people who are receiving Elective Home Education:**

Elective Home Education Service - [EHEService@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:EHEService@dudley.gov.uk)

* **Children or young people who are Gypsy Roma Traveller (GRT**):

Gypsy Roma Traveller Service - [GRTService@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:GRTService@dudley.gov.uk)

* **Children or young people of school age who are working or participating in performances or modelling**
* Child Employment & Entertainment (CEE) - [Child.employment@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:Child.employment@dudley.gov.uk)

Integrated Early Years Service [IEYS.Admin@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:IEYS.Admin@dudley.gov.uk)

**Date: March 1st 2023**

**Updated: February 13th 2024**