



LocalEd 2025 Pilot 1: Support for vulnerable pupils

A summary of the “granular approach”

30 January 2025

Pilot 1: Taking a “granular approach” to understanding and addressing vulnerability

Why is it needed?

Young people who are “vulnerable” are not vulnerable in uniform ways. Addressing a young person’s vulnerabilities requires an understanding of why that young person is vulnerable (which one cannot get from a macro level).

What is it?

A virtuous cycle for practice improvement – (a) pick a lens, “hold up the mirror” to an area of practice; (b) work with individual cases (both retrospectively and pro-actively); (c) draw out learning and embed in practice.

What difference can it make?

Individual children and families – improved attendance, engagement, wellbeing, and relationships.
Local area and setting practice – inform changes to practice and routines, “ripple effect” and focused CPD.

Can it be scaled up?

Yes – the cycle of focusing on a sample of cases to test an area of practice is repeatable; and the learning from each cycle can be embedded in the work of existing practitioners.

‘The granular approach is licence to do things in a small steps way, and it shows that small steps can have a huge impact.’

(Pilot lead)

‘We have seen significant impact from looking at a small sample of cases ... The methodology of focusing on acute areas of an issue provides opportunities for system leaders to grapple with the issues in a completely different way.’

(Pilot lead)



Support for Vulnerable Young People – Tackling Severe Absence

Steve Kay – Director of Schools & Employability
Birmingham City Council

Katie Digiorgi
Strategic Lead – Engagement and Attendance
Rochdale Borough Council



“Attendance is everyone’s responsibility”

Beginning and beyond...



- Raising Rochdale - A whole system ambition – What is our common moral purpose and culture by design
- System ambition to examine vulnerability and the decision on severe absence as a lens
- Operation went well, patient dead – invisible children
- Granularity and lived experience
- Greater Manchester LAAA
- Birmingham – Adventure continues

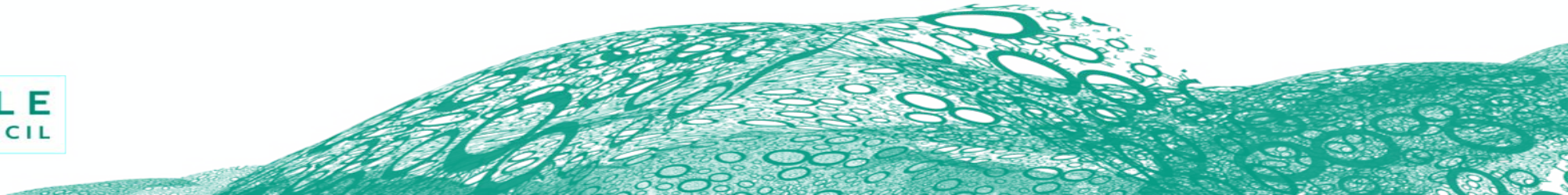
Cohort One – Understanding Vulnerability through Severe Absence

Objective

“Adopt a holistic approach to understanding and addressing severe absence, considering our moral responsibility to identify and support children who may be overlooked in the data and unseen by the system.”

Our Approach in Action

- In-depth data analysis at a granular level
- Comprehensive quantitative and qualitative research
- Modelling professional curiosity
- Key insights on causes and experiences
- Audit of 10 cases – conversational audits, building relationships, active listening



Insights & learning on individual audits

Snapshot: 5 of the 10 case audits

- Learning for the system, importance of listening and building authentic relationships

Case 1	Attendance at start 3.77%	Current attendance 94.7%	Parent/child/school voice captured Key learning that made the difference: Parent stated it was the relationship with a Rochdale Additional Needs Service practitioner who listened and took the time to build a relationship with the young person.
Case 2	Attendance at start 38.39%	Current attendance 66.00%	Therapeutic care package, Individual attendance support plan, building up timetable. Child says he is happier at school. Social worker says he is more settled and is able to sit and talk about how he feels.
Case 3	Attendance at start 15.38%	Current attendance 93.0%	Change of school – the young person has an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) and is now attending a specialist provision.
Case 4	42.86%	91.00%	Parents have been supported & supportive relationships built, Early Help support and a team around the family. Tailored attendance plan in place, support for the child to build friendships at school.

Case Study – Child 5 – Attendance 0% - June 23

School Attendance:

- Year 9 at X Academy with 0% attendance.
- Started secondary school in September 2020 but only attended for 5 days before ceasing attendance (important to note the impact of covid, lockdown and transition).
- Extensive prior involvement with the attendance enforcement team
- Parent fined £634 in July 2022 for the child's non-attendance; parent contacted courts to arrange payments of £50 per fortnight. Financial difficulties mentioned

Family Situation:

- **Mother's Health:** Mother is in very poor health, with terminal cancer and multiple strokes. Professionals noted that she was taking the child to chemotherapy appointments.
- **Elder Sibling:** The elder sibling has anxiety and mental health issues, diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) and is Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET). Noted a history of self-harm leading to hospitalisation.
- **Financial Struggles:** Records note mother's struggles with bills and an understanding that mother cannot work due to ill health. She is a single parent.
- **Family Relationships:** The child mentions not seeing her father but a desire to. She says he has a new family now, with half siblings, and a belief that he doesn't have time for her.
- **Young Carer:** Concerns that the child is a young carer helping mum at home.

Case Study – Child 5 – Attendance 0% - June 23

Child's Voice (via Education Welfare Officer):

- Aspirations to be a criminologist.
- Finds it difficult to make friends and dislikes crowded places.
- Worries about her mum and feels anxious.
- Wants to be liked and involved in school and doesn't want to feel low and anxious.
- Support plan underway, referred to young carers, and open to the Emotionally Based Non-Attendance (EBNA) panel.

Interventions and Support:

- Referred to the Education Welfare Service again in March 2023 with a different, supportive approach focusing on building trust and relationships.
- Efforts to get the child ready to learn again are slowly improving, as is the relationship with the parent.
- Early Help assessment led by the school. Regular reviews, with flexibility around the venue
- Support for transition, including the use of an AV1 Robot and a flexible approach.
- Alternative provision as part of a reintegration pathway.
- Young carers now involved and providing support. Plan to link in with the attendance Support Plan
- Mental Health Support Team referral

Final Reflections: Progress is not linear, many steps forward, many steps back; Time as a barrier to progress. Always doing what's right for the child longer term.

Culture Vs Strategy! Relationships and Kindness – core values

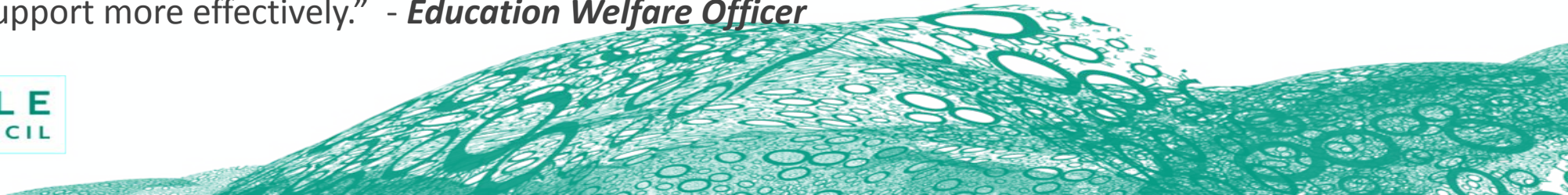
Impact and key stakeholder feedback

“Rochdale are light years ahead of the last local authority that I worked at in terms of support for schools, and also the focus of support before sanctions for families” – ***Attendance Lead – Secondary Academy***

“We’re now looking at the root cause, capturing the voices and exploring past and present lived experience, and what has contributed to the non-attendance. This has really helped us to understand what support is needed for the family, working in partnership with other agencies.” – ***Pastoral Lead – Secondary Academy***

“Things are going really good, X has a really good relationship with her tutor and she likes her. Her attendance is 32%. That’s really good as she was 0%.” – ***Parent of child 5***

“The whole concept relies on students having key trusted people who can understand and support them in a way that is unique to the individual. Working together has meant that the crucial element of supporting this work is owned collectively. The trusting relationship means that we are much better equipped to obtain the students voice and therefore target support more effectively.” - ***Education Welfare Officer***



Impact on data - Severe Absence

Autumn/Spring Term Data: 2019/2020 to 2023/2024

Aut-Spring	Primary	Secondary	Special
19/20	0.6	1.4	5.8
20/21	0.8	1.3	12.0
21/22	0.7	2.8	10.8
22/23	0.9	3.6	9.7
23/24	0.3	2.5	6.8

Primary: rates lower than pre-pandemic levels. Rochdale primary schools had the lowest rates of severe absence across GM in 23-24.

Secondary: Steady decline of 1.1% from 22/23 to 23/24 – 2nd lowest rates across GM

Special: Continual decline since 2020/21 to but the most significant reduction from 22/23 to 23/24 of 2.9%

What did we learn about the causes and experiences of vulnerability for young people?

- Our findings highlighted how socio-economic factors impact vulnerability, particularly when viewed through the lens of severe absence.
- We noted that services were working separately, rather than coming together in a more co-ordinated and holistic way.

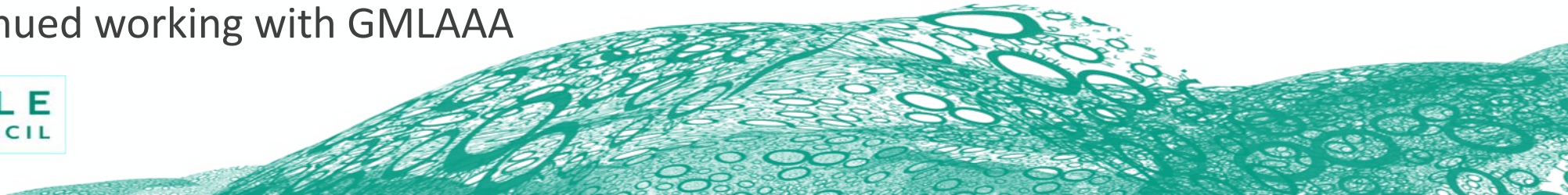
Strategic Approach to Support Attendance

- Service Restructure – bringing together a more cohesive and collaborative offer for attendance support
- Approved strategic plan to support attendance, with a support first principle
- Highest expectations for attendance
- Additional funding to support the attendance strategy via schools forum.
- Changing the narrative of the Education Welfare Service
- Adopting a neighbourhood model to support attendance. EWOs integrated with family hubs.
- Increased recruitment - Education Welfare Officers (EWOs) and a Early Help Lead
- Supportive 'Early Help' approach - 'Fast Track to Improving Attendance' Panel.
- Roll out of neighbourhood parent groups
- Revised penalty notice (PN) referral form and managerial oversight for PN referrals for irregular school attendance



Strategic Approach to Support Attendance

- Review of transition arrangements
- Co-production of the 'Rochdale Attendance Tool Kit' and 'Rochdale's attendance workbook' (to support targeting support meetings)
- Collaboration with school nurses to understand & respond to absence linked to illness (via the workbook)
- Attendance Conference and training package for all schools – Inclusive Attendance
- Emotionally Based Non-Attendance Multi-Agency Panel, including commissioning of Barnardo's Key Worker & Mental Health Support Team
- Recruitment to the Whole School College Approach (WSCA) Lead for Mental Health
- Commissioning of 10x Av1 Robots to support Emotionally based non-attendance/medical needs
- Continued working with GMLAAA



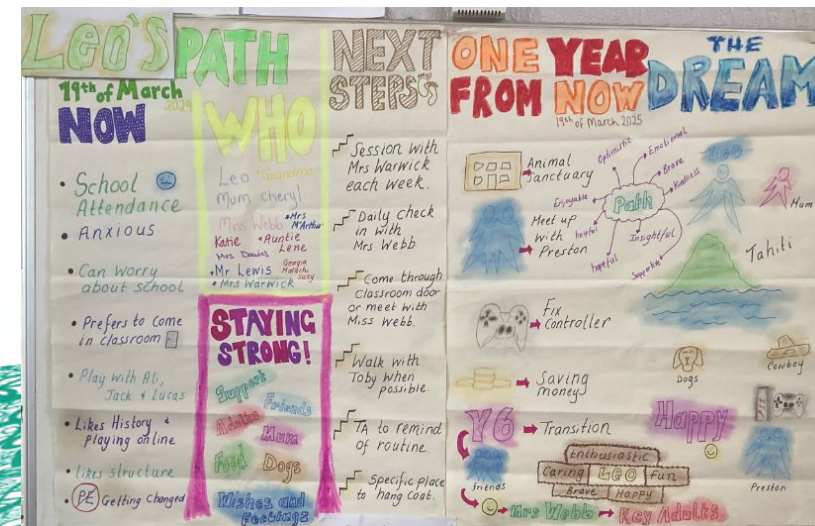
Cohort Two – Planning alternative tomorrows with hope (PATH Model)



Planning alternative tomorrows with hope (PATH)

- Pilot school identified
- A core group identified to support (Educational Psychologist / Asst. EP)
- Training delivered (Jan 23) to: Education Welfare Service, Fair Access Team, EHC/SEN Team – CPD for key staff
- Longer term vision – ‘Train the Trainer’ model for the school workforce

Applying the approach and key learning: Keep things simple! Don't overcomplicate the importance of relationships and conversations!



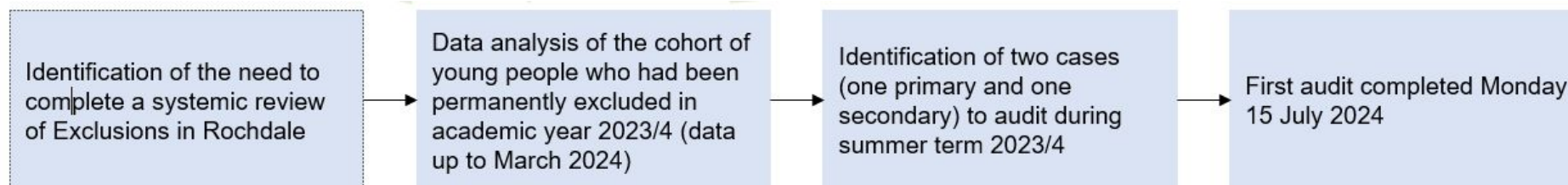
Cohort Three – ‘A Right to Thrive’ *A Review of Exclusions*

A system wide approach to reducing permanent exclusions. Changing how we approach and examine the situation with exclusions in a similar way to the approach for severe absence.

Vision:

“A multi-agency holistic review of pupils exclusion, to understand the learning journey of children and young people excluded from school, to inform system change and culture”

- Seek to understand what has happened in a supportive, non-judgemental way
- A review of data, granular analysis
- A lessons learned approach
- Multi-agency audits / conversational audits with head teachers, parents, young people.
- Overseen by an Independent chair
- Collective responsibility across the system, aligned to Raising Rochdale
- Positive feedback from agencies - key learning for agencies in relation to both case audits
- **15 learning points for the system following the case audits**



Final Reflections and key learning...

The Power of the Granular Focus:

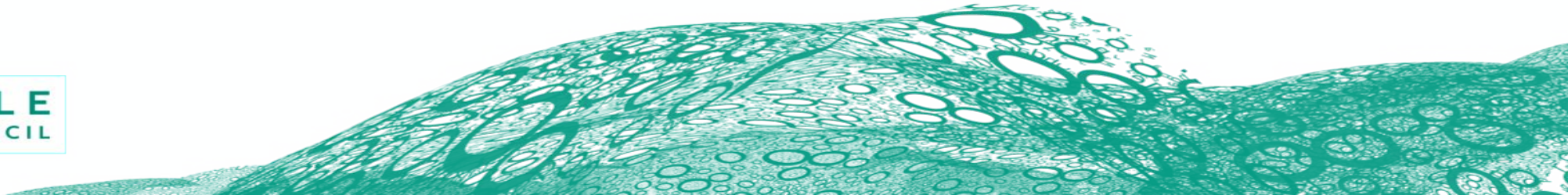
- Understand how the system works (or not) for those who are often invisible. It is essential that unmet needs are recognised and addressed by the system

Authenticity, empathy and kindness:

- Leadership and Culture: Leaders set the culture and role model expectations
- Genuine Relationships: Building genuine relationships is essential
- Authenticity: Authenticity is key to establishing trust and effective communication
- Be kind

Collaborative Problem-Solving:

- Develop a model of working together to problem-solve.
- Recognise and build on existing strengths—there are always positives to highlight.
- Engage in solutions-focused discussions to address challenges collaboratively.
- Encourage the child's voice and actively listen to their perspectives



Wakefield AEC Pilot 1: Support for Vulnerable Young People

Updated : January 2025



Context



- Team Around the School model, in operation since 2021, is an offer of early help to families.
- Brings together a team of professionals from early help, education, and health (plus professionals who are specialists in a specific area of work)
- Focus is on what families have asked for help with, i.e. what their worries are. A family support plan is developed with the family.

This could be worries about...

Family routines and/or child development, sleep, or getting to school

Health concerns

Drug and/or alcohol misuse

Emotional health and wellbeing

Housing support

Parenting

Speech and language development

Money worries

Managing behaviour and setting boundaries

Parental relationships and/or child to parent relationships

- ✓ Through AEC work, chose to prioritise CYP not open to formal support services to learn more about potential missed opportunities.
- ✓ In Wakefield, CYP open to any formal support are already regularly dip-sampled/ audited and learning shared. Therefore, it was felt that overlap with this criteria would not be as beneficial for new learning.
- ✓ CYP not open to formal support are much more likely to not be visible within the system. We wanted to learn about any gaps in our provision and how we can best support those families that we may not be reaching or may not necessarily be on anyone's radar.

Our Cohorts / Activity



- **Partner workshops to agree flags of vulnerability** – agreed a number of flags, but that poor attendance was a very good indicator of potential vulnerability and warranted further exploration.
- **Co-produced new Attendance Strategy**
- **Picked 3 cohorts** - to explore, work with and learn from.
- **Cohort 1 - primary-aged children with attendance below 50%, but not open to any formal support service.** Worked with 9 CYP from a specific geographical area. Referral route still ongoing.
- **Cohort 2 – secondary-aged pupils with attendance below 50% and attending a Pupil Referral Unit.** Working with 10 young people.
- **Cohort 3 – primary to secondary transition.** Working with two high schools and their feeder primaries to target CYP with existing poor attendance and/or have a sibling in the secondary whose attendance is poor to try and break the cycle. We also have identified Year 6 pupils who have less than 50% attendance and working with them to prepare them for secondary transition.



**Wakefield
Attendance Strategy
2023-2026**

Cohort 1: Case Study Example



Background:

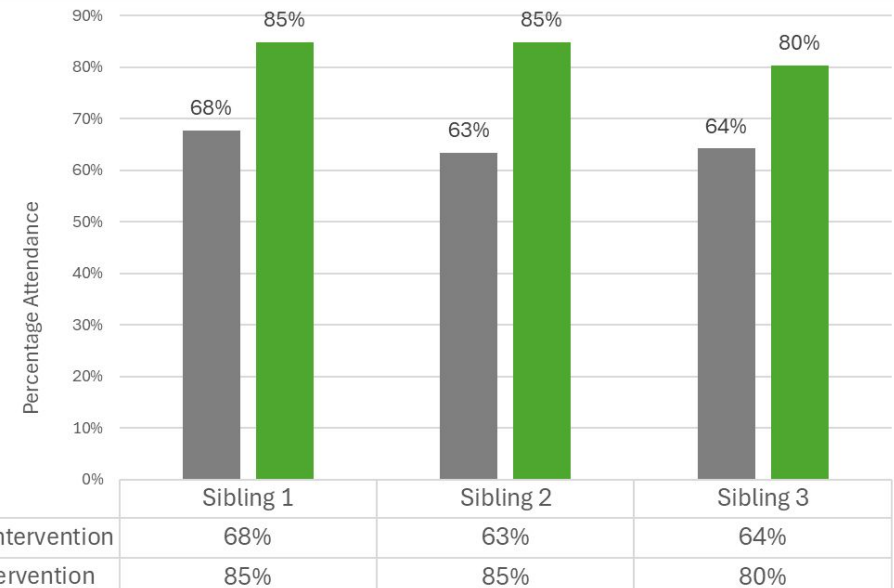
- 3 siblings were in care and returned to mum after death of their father.
- Mum was previously in the care system and has been exposed to a domestic abusive relationship with the children's father.
- Mum previous had serious dis-trust with services, and mental health struggles.
- Due to the children's behaviour and mum's ability to travel on public transport with 3 children, and concerns of the children's safety, she sent the children via taxi to and from school; resulting in mum getting herself in debt to get the children to school.

Actions Taken:

- The mentor has supported mum by taking and registering the family at a food bank, Turning Point (mental health support), and Cash Wise (financial support).
- Autism / ADHD Referral submitted for one child.
- Mum appealed and successfully received school transport so can now get the children to school without getting into debt.
- Mum gained trust of the mentor allowing a TAS referral to be submitted.

Learning and Outcomes:

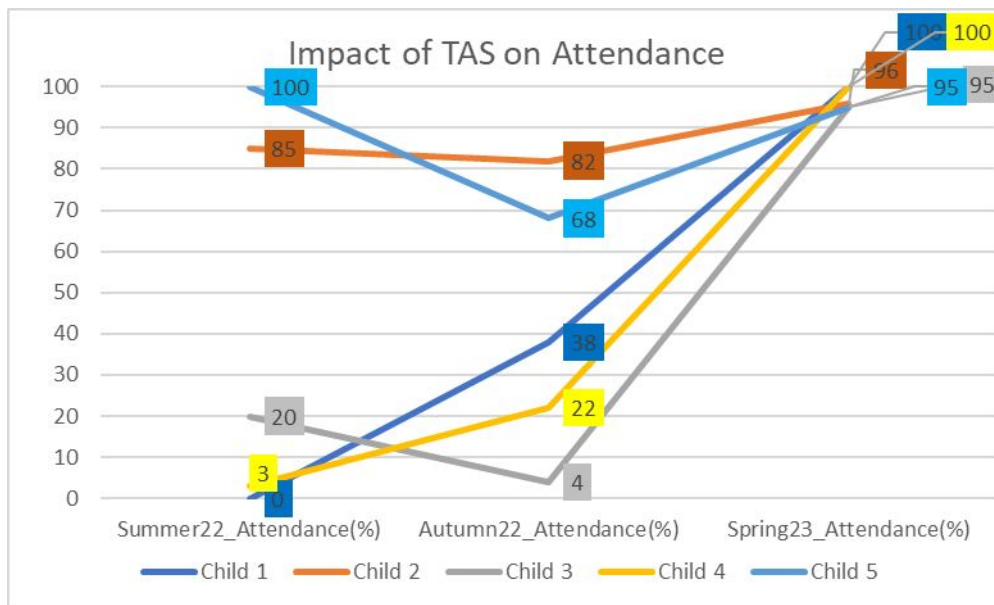
- Education Welfare Service have been able to break barriers with school to explain that the family need support not punitive measures being enforced.
- That when moving from school-to-school, some information around SEN is being lost or not pursued.
- That some parents need more support and encouragement than others.
- That the ability to build a relationship with the right worker can give a family a voice and confidence. Without the mentor mum would not have attended the transport appeal panel giving her story, mum would not have gone and registered with the food pantry, financial or mental health support nor re-engaged with the Family Hubs via a TAS.



Evidence to Support Learning



Below is the data following a Case Study of 5 primary-aged young people whose poor attendance led them to a TAS meeting. From the graph you can see the improvement in their attendance over 3 terms as a result of the support put in place following a TAS.



IDENTIFIED NEEDS Referred to TAS by school when in year 10 as young carer for mum and poor school attendance as nervous leaving mum at home.

SUPPORT PROVIDED

- Put young carer plan in place.
- agreement put in place that they won't get detention if late and changed seating plan in lessons.
- Referred to young carer group
- Completed one-to-one sessions on wide range of topics

OUTCOMES Young person attended all their GCSE exams and achieved 3s in English and Maths and 2x 4s. Currently studying L1 Health and Social Care at Wakefield College, L2 English and L2 Maths, and now working part time. Their relationship with Mum has improved as the young person is more independent which gives both of them some respite.

Cohort 2: Case Study Example

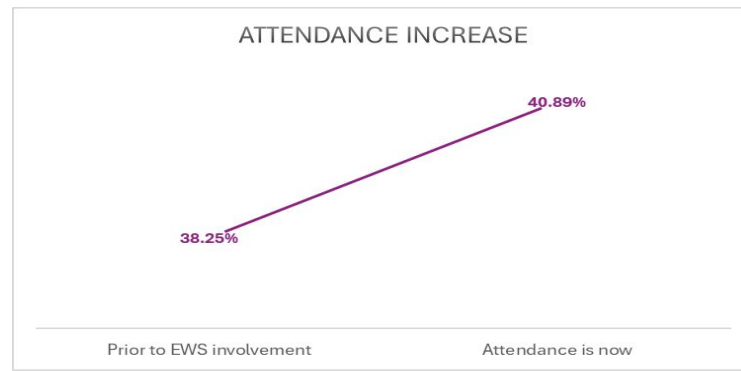


Background:

- Child who struggled with relationships with male teachers due to a history of domestic violence.
- Child was suspended from secondary school 31 times – due to persistent disruptive behaviour: receiving 89 logs of poor behaviour.
- Manage-moved to another school, as a 'respite', then also another place at a local secondary school both of which the child refused to attend, prior to the permanent exclusion from mainstream school. Then moved to the AP.
- Struggled with this due to fobbed rooms & no contact with friends in class. Wanted school to be their 'safe space', doesn't like to follow school rules.

Actions Taken:

- Support identified by the mentors for the child around trauma from domestic abuse, keeping safe due to vulnerability and areas around healthy and appropriate relationships.
- Change to school timetable to ensure their safety during the school day and some time with friends.
- 1:1 support by school staff. As school continue to use phased reintegration timetables to enable the child to access education.
- Further exploration around potential neurodiversity.



Learning and Outcomes:

- Child's lessons were previously 30 minutes and have now increased to 2 hours per day.
- Child has also undertaken work during the school holidays to try and support academic progress.
- Child's confidence has now developed, to which they now play in a rugby team.
- Only a small percentage increase in attendance, but for a young person who was suspended on 31 occasions, to be now attending school for 2 hours per day and engaging in work, is a major achievement.
- Child has now transitioned to KS4 provision, and with the support of the mentors, parent and school this was successful transition and the young person has now taken her entry exams for English and Maths
- Education Welfare Service built up a positive relationship with the child and family through regular supportive work.
- The 1:1 support provided by the AP had a positive impact on education gaining the child's trust.
- The voice of the young person helped to understand her holistic family needs and the importance of peer support.
- For schools to understand that for children who have been exposed to significant trauma, their issues cannot be fixed overnight by the usage of rigid or punitive approaches. Tailored holistic approaches are required.

Cohort 3: Case Study Example



Background:

- Home Life concerns with older brother violent towards young person and mum. Police have been called multiple times and is not accepting outside support from Early Help or social care.
- The young person did not attend primary school and wanted to be with mum throughout the day.
- Concerns over lack of food in the home due to brother eating everything in the home and leaving nothing for her and mum.

Actions Taken:

- Support identified by the mentors for the child and work with school to implement support.
- Partnership working with EWO and St Giles and Youth Offender Team to get support with brother
- Work completed with mum and young person on how to stay safe in the home
- Support with school to provide breakfast for the young person
- Weekly support visits to school to establish positive relationship with young person.

Learning and Outcomes:

- Young person is now attending school with attendance over 90%
- Education Welfare Service built up a positive relationship with the child and family through regular supportive work.
- The voice of the young person helped to understand her holistic family needs and the importance of peer support.
- For schools to support the young person in school with positive behaviour and providing breakfast for the young person

Feedback: Mentor Support



Throughout the mentoring programme all mentors have gathered feedback from families, young people and partner schools to ensure the programme continues to provide targeted holistic support for families the mentors are working with.

This feedback allows the mentors to continually improve the support that they can provide and allows us to gain a better understanding from the family and young people of the provision that we have provided in support in increasing their attendance at school.

Feedback from PRU:

The most helpful thing from the programme has been mentors supporting students to visit school site and build confidence. To support with engaging in lessons when needed and increased on site attendance. We have welcomed additional support and is always welcomed.

Feedback from Parent:

From meeting the mentor to present day she has been brilliant and couldn't of asked for a better educational welfare mentor. She really took her time to bond with my son and gain his trust. She took things at his pace, and she managed to get my son to attend school on a reduced timetable which he did for a while, and even when my son no longer attended his primary school, she always checked in on him to see if there's anything she could do.

She has always been there for me too sorting out meetings, paperwork and finding the right secondary school for my son. When I've needed help with form filling or chasing things up she's always helped when and where she could nothing was ever too much trouble for her.

Feedback from Young Person:

In our opinion the mentor is a super star and couldn't of got to where we are now without her.

All the feedback received supports the mentoring programme and all families would recommend the mentor support .

What has changed and what has been the impact?



Attendance, and improving attendance, is very much a system-wide priority now in Wakefield.

Greater use of the Team Around model for some attendance issues, enabling access to targeted support and early help for the child and wider family.

Development of the Case Management System and Power BI to make more children visible, utilise data, measure progress and monitor cases.

The relationships with other services has developed in a positive way, more joint problem-solving. The voice of the family and child has been vital in the project.

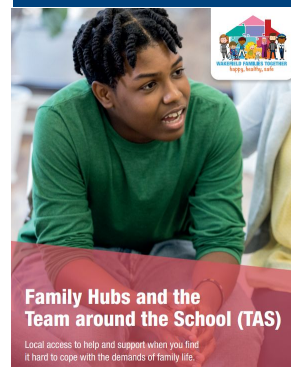
Identified that further training is required with schools to help them understand when it may not be appropriate to prosecute a family.

Links to Ed Psychologist has enabled the team to do sorting cards based around EBSA with the young people.

Some children wouldn't have gone into school or had referrals back into mainstream and who would've otherwise been lost in the system.

Lots of linking with other areas of support to families – i.e. working with supported living/WDH, mental health services to provide wider family and parental support.

Knowledge from the pilot has enabled us to put in place actions to improve wider system working e.g. Pilot has informed Ofsted/CQC Local Area Inspection/ DfE Change Programme/ SEMH Early Help pilot .



Family Hubs and the Team around the School (TAS)

Local access to help and support when you find it hard to cope with the demands of family life.



wakefieldcouncil
working for you

Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA):

Parent & Carer Information

Wakefield Educational Psychology Service

EBSA Resources developed and available to schools. Reviewing approach taken by schools and AP's (data, case development etc.)

Key Learning



Practice

- Child and family voice is critical and MUST shape the offer of support.
- Relationship-based approach has the biggest positive impact (positive parent relationship key too).
- Support, rather than sanction, has a more positive impact.
- Integrated, multi-agency working makes access to support easier.
- Flexibility/tailored support has a greater positive impact.

System

- Poor attendance is a reliable flag of wider vulnerability and requires holistic family support to improve.
- TAS model has helped break down an “us and them” rhetoric with schools and support services.
- Strong & visible data sets help us to target support.
- It is possible to use a non-consent pathway to kickstart a positive early help relationship.
- A Trauma-Informed workforce and way of working needs further strengthening.

Governance

- System-wide shared priorities (e.g. attendance, investment in TAS, aligned commissioning) all help to create a more effective early help offer.
- Shared data across the system helps foster a shared responsibility.
- Taking learning from practice audits helps improve service design (both pathways and the support offer).
- Simple pathways are essential to support early access to help.