

Education, Children and Families Committee

10am, Tuesday, 23 January 2024

Maximising Models of School Attendance

Executive/routine
Wards

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 The Education, Children and Families Committee is asked to:
 - 1.1.1 To note the background section of this report containing an update on the outcome of the consultation on “staffing models for attendance”, as requested in the SNP Addendum at Children and Families Committee, 7 November 2023.
 - 1.1.2 Agree the outcome of the consultation and the proposed revised model for maximising attendance in our schools, including refreshed policy and procedures on managing attendance and a re-design of the Education Welfare Service.

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Report

Maximising Models of Attendance

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report responds to the Addendum by the SNP group at Education, Children, and Families Committee 7 November 2023 Item 7.6 and the committee agreement to provide an update on the outcome of the consultation and proposed new model for managing attendance.
- 2.2 This report provides an overview of the outcome of the consultation and the resulting proposals for maximising attendance in the City of Edinburgh's schools, including refreshed policy and procedures and a proposal for the redesign of the Educational Welfare Service.

3. Background

- 3.1 In February 2015 the Scottish Government launched the Scottish Attainment Challenge to bring a greater sense of urgency to achieving equity in educational outcomes with a particular focus on closing the poverty related attainment gap. Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) was introduced in session 2017/2018 as a key financial resource to directly support schools and this was supplemented by Strategic Equity Funding (SEF) in 2022/2023. These national initiatives led to a significant increase in financial resources and strategic planning for improved equity outcomes including attendance. In session 2022/2023, across all schools £7.9m has been received in PEF funding. In total 58 schools have chosen to employ a Pupil Support Officer (attendance) utilising approximately £2.5 million of PEF funding for school-based posts to maximise attendance.
- 3.2 As a result of the significant additional funding for equity, the Revenue Budget Framework agreed on 7 February 2023 contained an incremental saving of £600K to be made via the rationalising posts which provide consistent, targeted and/or intensive support for maximising attendance in schools.
- 3.3 The Education Welfare Service was identified for organisational review, to be considered alongside the resources and interventions that had been developed by schools to maximise attendance as a result of PEF and SEF funding.

- 3.4 In line with the Managing Change Policy, there was engagement with stakeholders to explore the range of options to maximise attendance in schools and it was proposed that the Education Welfare Service should close. It was acknowledged that the service was long standing and that no other alternatives for making revenue savings could be found from existing approaches to maximising attendance. This was largely as a result of the terms and conditions set by the Scottish Government regarding PEF and SEF funding.
- 3.5 A range of stakeholders contributed to the consultation on the proposal, including schools, service users and other key partners. Overall, the response highlighted a high number of strengths regarding the available resources to maximise attendance including: the introduction of Pupil Support Officers based in schools and/or learning communities; the role and remit of the Educational Welfare Service; and the development of school practices and ethos which promote school attendance. Identifying support for children/young people and their families at an early stage, when barriers to school attendance emerge, was highlighted as an area for improvement and collaborative co-constructed approaches to maximising attendance identified areas that could be enhanced through a refresh of policy and practice with clear guidance on thresholds for interventions.
- 3.6 As a result of the consultation, alongside our local commitment to maximise school attendance, the proposal to close the Education Welfare Service has been withdrawn. Instead, the focus of the work moving forward has been to scrutinise attendance data, review policy and procedures and develop a proposed service redesign of the Education Welfare Service whereby the skills and experience of the service is retained within the wider scope and remit of the Education Inclusion Service.

4. Main report

- 4.1 The City of Edinburgh Council has placed a strong emphasis on the importance of maximising school attendance and the monitoring of school attendance data. A detailed analysis of attendance data for the City of Edinburgh schools in session 2022/2023 and emerging trends in session 2023/2024 can be found in Appendix 1. Overall attendance patterns are improving more significantly within primary schools compared to secondary schools. Within primary schools the numbers of poor attenders (those with an attendance rate of below 85%) is falling and there is a narrowing of the gap between attendance levels of pupils attending schools in areas of high deprivation (Quintile 1 SIMD) and the levels of attendance of pupils attending schools in areas of low deprivation (Quintile 5 SIMD). In secondary schools, attendance is more static with this year's attendance patterns so far remaining in line with the figures and trends from the same time last year. Care experienced children and young people are at greatest risk of low attendance.
- 4.2 A short-life working group has considered national research evidence and good practice alongside local data analysis and consultation responses from 118 schools

and key partners, including Police Scotland, Social Work colleagues, ASL and Educational Psychologists. This has led to the development of a new proposed model for maximising attendance in our schools, including a refreshed policy and procedures on managing attendance and a revised service delivery model for the Educational Welfare Service.

- 4.3 Appendix 2 and 3 outlines the draft policy and procedures for managing attendance in our schools. This focusses on collaboration at all levels to achieve positive outcomes for children and young people. It provides a framework for all staff to promote attendance and manage absence within an inclusive ethos and culture. A staged intervention approach ensures interventions are timely, managed and impactful. Universal supports promote high levels of school attendance, early intervention to address barriers and targeted support where patterns of non-attendance emerge offers more intensive provision for families.
- 4.4 Appendix 4 outlines the proposed new model for the delivery of the Education Welfare Service. The model proposed is an evidence-based approach to meet the aims of maximising school attendance. It employs a joined-up approach, focussing on collaboration at all levels, to utilise resources within and between our establishments, learning communities and localities to achieve positive outcomes for children and young people.
- 4.5 It is proposed that the Educational Welfare Service will be renamed the Education Wellbeing Service to align with the national GIRFEC approach and focus on wellbeing indicators (as opposed to attendance). The Education Wellbeing Service will sit within the wider Education Inclusion Service led by the Head of Education (Inclusion) and will contribute to the Children's Strategic Partnership's aim of supporting children, young people and families within their communities by providing early assessment and intervention, as opposed to referrals to statutory services such as Social Work and Police.
- 4.6 The Education Wellbeing Service will have the following core features:
- Building trusting relationships with children, young people and their families to assess and address specific barriers to wellbeing and attendance;
 - Connecting schools, children, young people and families to appropriate wellbeing support services in their communities;
 - Supporting schools to deliver family education and wellbeing programmes;
 - Consultation and advice for schools including case reviews where attendance and wellbeing are key concerns prior to referrals to statutory services.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 In order to implement the redesign of the service, Council officers will continue to finalise a proposed structure for the new service, supported by draft job descriptions and all the other documentation required to support the change process, as set out in the Managing Change policy. The new job descriptions will reflect the tasks that need to be done by the redesigned service. They will be submitted for provisional grading and shared with stakeholders, along with all the other documentation, as part of the formal consultation process.
- 5.2 In line with the Managing Change policy, formal consultation will last 45 days during which feedback on the new proposed service will be considered. At the end of formal consultation, any changes to the structure or the job descriptions will be made and a decision made on what the final structure will look like. A matching and assignment process to posts in the new structure will then follow.
- 5.3 Once the review process has completed, the policy for maximising school attendance will be finalised with an implementation date of August 2024.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 The Education Welfare Service in its current form has a budget of £600k set aside. The new model will be delivered within this funding envelope, taking into consideration changes proposed via HR job grading exercise.
- 6.2 It is proposed that the Education Welfare Service is funded from PEF subject to approval from the Education Finance Board or funded from the existing Devolved School Management budget.

7. Equality and Poverty Impact

- 7.1 Primary and secondary schools in areas of deprivation have lower rates of attendance than those schools in more affluent areas. Attendance rates of pupils in schools in the least deprived areas are consistency lower in both primary and secondary sectors of 5.9% points and 7.2% points respectively.
- 7.2 Pupils who are care experienced have the lowest rates of attendance than any other group with protected characteristics.
- 7.3 A causative link between non-attendance and poorer longer-term outcomes is hard to evidence due to the often-complex factors involved in non-attendance in schools. However, Education Scotland guidance on improving attendance states that progress, attainment and achievement can be impacted by any absence. Evidence suggests that attendance that falls below 90% can have a negative impact and the higher the absence rate, the greater the impact on attainment.

8. Climate and Nature Emergency Implications

- 8.1 This report does not contain direct implications for the Climate and Nature Emergency. However, strands of work referred to within this report will outline their impact on equalities and poverty as they are brought forward.

9. Risk, policy, compliance, governance and community impact

- 9.1 This report was prepared to provide an update of the consultation and engagement with stakeholders on maximising school attendance. As a result of the consultation an updated policy and procedures on maximising school attendance have been developed alongside a redesign of the Educational Welfare Service. Strands of work referred to within this report will outline their impact on risk, policy, compliance, governance and communities as they are brought forward.

10. Background reading/external references

None

11. Appendices

- 11.1 Appendix 1 – Attendance data analysis for session 2022/2023
- 11.2 Appendix 2 – DRAFT policy and procedures for maximising school attendance
- 11.3 Appendix 3 – DRAFT Staged Intervention to maximise school attendance
- 11.4 Appendix 4 – DRAFT new service delivery model for Education Welfare Service



Overview of the Data for Attendance Session 2022/2023

December 2023

Introduction

The City of Edinburgh Council has placed a strong emphasis on the importance of school attendance and the monitoring of the data around school attendance. This report has been written to inform senior officers with a summary of the data for session 2022/2023 and an analysis of patterns for academic session 2023/2024 up until the end of November 2023.

Summary

Session 2022/2023 recorded an overall attendance rate of 91.6% which is higher than the national average of 90.2% but lower than that recorded in session 2020/2021 which was 92.6%. The data for the City of Edinburgh Council compares favourably with the other cities in Scotland. The attendance rate fell between 2020/21 and 2022/23 for every local authority in Scotland (see [Summary statistics for schools in Scotland 2023 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/summary-statistics-for-schools-in-scotland-2023/pages/summary-statistics-for-schools-in-scotland-2023.aspx)).

Overall attendance patterns are improving within primary schools compared to secondary schools. Within primary schools the numbers of poor attenders (those with an attendance rate of below 85%) is falling and there is a narrowing of the gap between attendance levels of pupils attending schools in areas of high deprivation (Quintile 1 SIMD) and the levels of attendance of pupils attending schools in areas of low deprivation (Quintile 5 SIMD). In secondary schools, attendance rates are more static with this year's attendance patterns so far remaining in line with the figures and trends from the same time last year.

Attendance of our Care Experienced children and young people remain the poorest of any group. As such the Education Leadership Team is placing further emphasis upon improving supports, interventions, and awareness of the needs of this group of pupils.

Overall, where there was Educational Welfare Officer involvement, the attendance rates improved for 55% of pupils, remained the same for 8% of pupils and decreased for 37% of pupils. With Education Welfare Officer support the improvement in attendance rates is more notable for the pupils in primary schools than pupils in secondary school.

Detailed Analysis

Table 1 describes the overall attendance rates in our primary and secondary schools for session 2022/2023 and the rates according to levels of deprivation. Special schools support children and young people across the Local Authority and therefore it is not appropriate to include any analysis regarding deprivation.

Table 1 shows that overall attendance rates for session 2022/2023 are higher in primary schools compared to the secondary and special school sectors (93%, 90% and 88.2% respectively). Attendance rates of pupils in schools in the least deprived areas are consistently lower in both primary and secondary sectors of 5.9% points and 7.2% points respectively.

The City of Edinburgh Council collects data that focuses on the rates of attendance of pupils designated as poor attenders at school. Poor attendance is defined currently as attendance below 85%. Low attendance figures relate to pupils in primary schools and pupils in S1-4 in secondary schools only. Table 1 shows that in session 2022/2023 there were fewer poor attenders in primary schools compared to secondary schools and special schools.

Table 1: Overall attendance rates for session 2022/2023 according to deprivation and percentage of pupils with below 85% attendance

Sector	Overall attendance rate	SIMD Quintile 1	SIMD Quintile 5	Gap (Q1-Q5)	% pupils below 85%
Primary (n*=30,058)	93%	89.5%	95.4%	5.9 % points	10.4%
Secondary (n*=23,150)	90%	85.8%	93%	7.2 % points	18.7%
Special (n*=686)	88.2%				21.2%

*n= number of pupils

In Table 2 we see a comparison of 2022 and 2023 data for the month of November. This data indicates an improvement in the number of poor attenders. Data for the month of November 2023 reports that 9.4% (n=2810) of primary school pupils are poor attenders compared to 12.1% (n=3670) in November 2022. Data for the month of November 2023 reports that 17.8% (n=2990) of secondary school pupils in S1-4 are poor attenders compared to 18.5% (n=3070) in November 2022. Although this is a relatively small percentage point improvement it related to 860 pupils in primary schools and 80 pupils in secondary schools.

Table 2: Monthly comparison of poor attenders across sectors

Date	Primary	Secondary (S1-S4)
November 22	12.1% (n=3670)	17.8% (n=2990)
November 23	9.4% (n=2810)	18.5% (n=3070)
Difference	+860 pupils	+80 pupils

Graph 1 and Graph 2 highlight in more detail the attendance rates for primary and secondary schools according to deprivation for the whole of session 2022/2023 and the data we have available for session 2023/2024 (Aug-Nov 2023).

Graph 1: Overall attendance rates across all primary schools and comparisons between most deprived areas and least deprived areas for session 22/23 and 23/24 until November

Percentage Attendance in Primary Schools up to November 2023

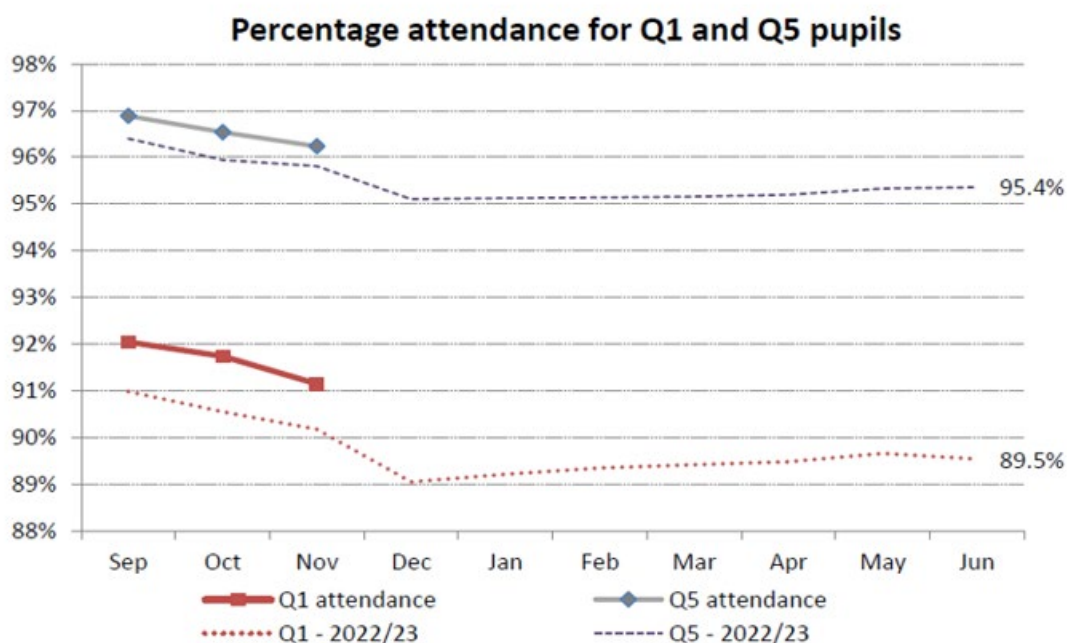


Table 3: Monthly comparison of primary school attendance rate according to deprivation

Date	Quintile 1	Quintile 5	Gap
November 22	90.2%	95.8%	5.6 % points
November 23	91.1%	96.2%	5.1 % points

Table 3 shows that in November 2022 primary schools in the most deprived areas (Quintile 1) had an overall attendance rate of 90.2% compared to a rate of 91.1% in November 2023. In November 2022 primary schools in the least deprived areas (Quintile 5) had an overall attendance rate of 95.8% compared to a rate of 96.2% in November 2023. This data shows very little change in the gap between the most and least deprived schools.

Graph 2: Overall attendance rates across all secondary schools and comparisons between most deprived areas and least deprived areas for session 22/23 and 23/24 *until November

Percentage Attendance in Secondary Schools up to November 2023

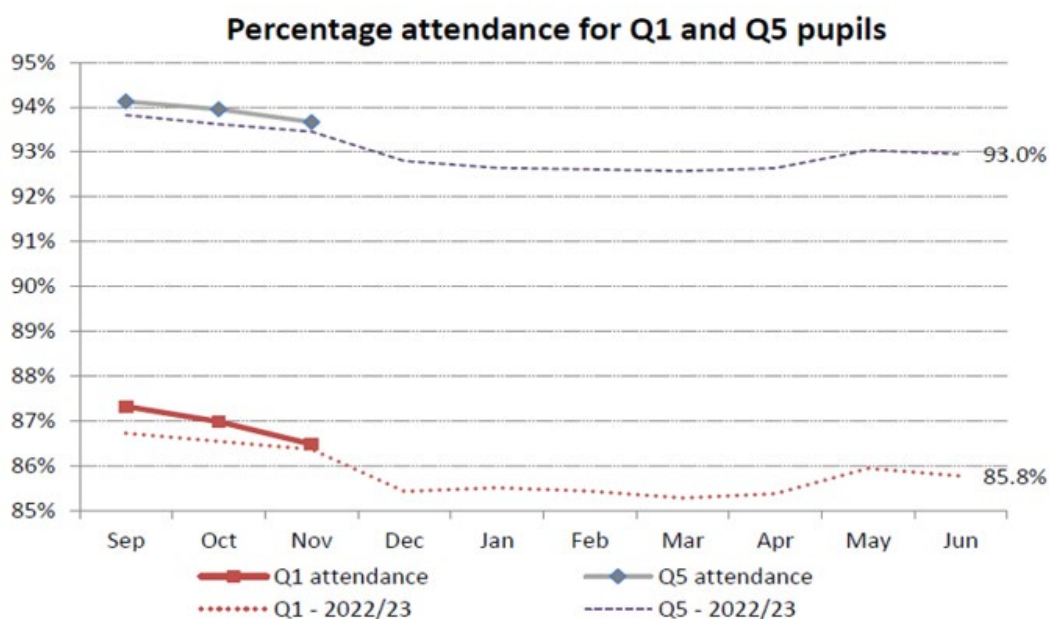


Table 4: Monthly comparison of secondary school attendance rate according to deprivation

Date	Quintile 1	Quintile 5	Gap
Nov 22	86.4%	93.5%	7.1% points
Nov 23	86.5%	93.7%	7.2% points

Table 4 shows that in November 2022 secondary schools in the most deprived areas (Quintile 1) had an overall attendance rate of 86.4% compared to a rate of 86.5% in November 2023. In November 2022 primary schools in the least deprived areas (Quintile 5) had an overall attendance rate of 93.5% compared to a rate of 93.7% in November 2023. This data shows no change in the gap between the most and least deprived secondary schools.

Data for Care Experienced Children on a Compulsory Supervision Order

The attendance of our Care Experienced pupils on a Compulsory Supervision Order in the City of Edinburgh Schools remains a real concern. Table 5 and Graph 3 provides the attendance data for the 316 pupils during session 2022/2023.

Table 5: Overall attendance rates of children and young people on a compulsory supervision order during session 2022/2023 and % of these pupils with below 85% attendance as of June 2023.

Sector	Overall attendance rate	Care Provision	% pupils below 85% in June 2023
Primary (n*=180)	86%	Home: 78% (n=85) Away: 93% (n=95)	33% (n=59)
Secondary** (n*=136)	74%	Home: 60% (n=52) Away: 83% (n=84)	51% (n=69)

*n= number of pupils

The overall attendance rates during session 2022/2023 for the 316 care experienced children and young people on a compulsory supervision orders was 86% primary and 74% in secondary schools significantly below the attendance rates for non-care experienced pupils. As of June 2023 there were 59 pupils in our primary schools and 69 in our secondary schools with attendance below 85%. The attendance rates for pupils looked after at home compared to those looked after away from home is significantly lower in both primary and secondary school sectors.

Graph 3: Care experienced children and young people on a compulsory supervision order with low attendance in primary schools and secondary schools for session 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 up until November 2023

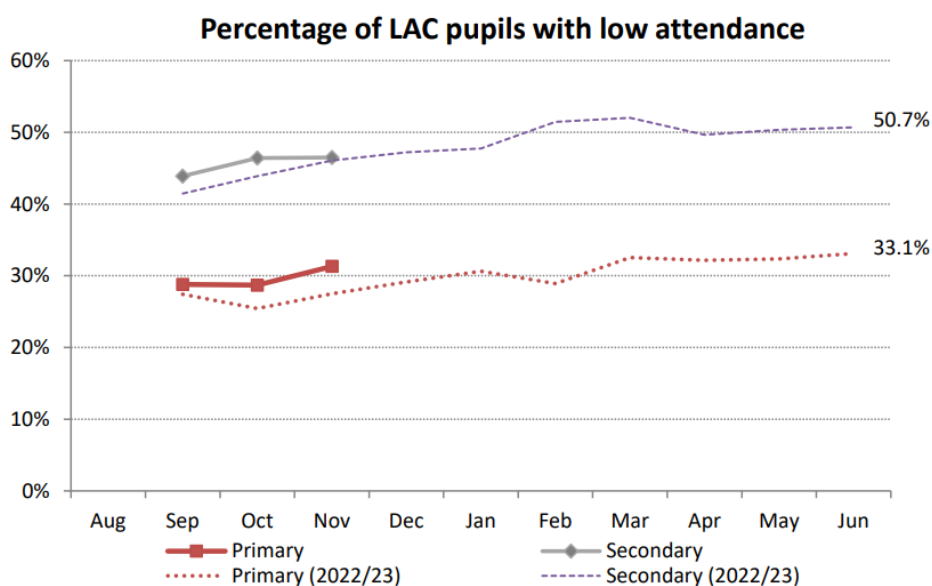


Table 6 shows a comparison of monthly data between November 2022 and of the number of care experienced children and young people on a compulsory supervision orders with attendance lower than 85% according to sector. Overall the total number of pupils has reduced however the percentage of primary and secondary pupils with poor attendance remains the same.

Table 6: Monthly comparison of the number of care experienced children and young people on a compulsory supervision orders with attendance lower than 85% according to sector

Sector	No of pupils - November 2022	No of pupils - November 2023
Primary	46% (n=65)	46% (n=51)
Secondary	53% (n=76)	54% (n=60)
Total	141	111

Impact of the Education Welfare Service

The Education Welfare Service are a team of Educational Welfare Officers who support children and young people where their attendance has fallen below 85%. An organisational review of the Education Welfare Service has meant that only 62 primary schools and 16 secondary schools have a named Education Welfare Officer. A further 8 primary schools and 7 secondary schools have had access to a centralised referral service and the remaining 10 primary schools have received no service.

Table 7: Education Welfare Officer provision in Primary and Secondary Schools

Service	Primary (n=90)	Secondary (n=23)
Allocated EWO	62	16
Centralised Service	8	7
No Service	10	0

As of November 2023, there were 1239 pupils referred to the Educational Welfare Service. Data for each child was analysed according to attendance rate at the point of referral and the attendance rate as of May 2023. Data was categorised into three categories (improved attendance, attendance that stayed the same, decreased attendance).

Table 8: Numbers of Primary and Secondary School Pupils referred to Educational Welfare Service and their attendance rate by category as of May 2023

Sector	Improved	Neutral	Decreased
Primary (n=491)	63 % (n=310)	9% (n=43)	28% (n=138)
Secondary (n=748)	49% (n=369)	7% (n=57)	43% (n=322)
Total (n=1239)	55% (n=679)	8% (n=100)	37% (n=460)

Table 8 shows that where there was the involvement of an Education Welfare Officer when the pupil's attendance fell below 85%, the attendance rate improved for 63% of primary pupils and 49% of secondary pupils. In total 37% of referred pupils school attendance continued to decrease most notably in the secondary sector with 43% of pupils.

Overall, where there was Educational Welfare Officer involvement, the attendance rate improved for 55% (679) of pupils, remained the same for 8% (100) of pupils and decreased for 37% (460) of pupils. The improvement in attendance rates is more notable for the pupils in primary school than the pupils in secondary school.

Appendix 2

Maximising School Attendance

Policy Draft

POLICY STATEMENT

Maximising School Attendance is The City of Edinburgh Council's approach to support schools to develop strong partnership working to promote high levels of school attendance. It focusses on collaboration at all levels, to utilise resources within and between our establishments, learning communities in our localities and citywide to achieve positive outcomes for children and young people. Attendance at school is a key driver to raising attainment. We must all work together to encourage and motivate our children and young people to maximise their attendance at school.

SCOPE

This policy sits within a suite of policies which all promote a positive ethos of inclusion. The purpose of this policy and its associated guidance is to provide a clear and consistent framework for all staff to promote attendance and manage absence. In this policy a multi-agency approach has been adopted and requires considering the holistic needs of the child within the GIRFEC framework where services and partners work together with a 'one service approach'.

DEFINITIONS

ACEs: Adverse Childhood Experiences

Child / children / young person / young people: this document uses these terms to describe any person under the age of 18

CME: Children Missing in Education

GIRFEC: Getting it Right for Every Child, the Scottish national practice model

Named Person: Children, young people and families need to know who they can contact when they need access to relevant support for their own or their child or young person's wellbeing. Within the GIRFEC approach, these foundations are carried out through the role of a named person who is able to provide a clear point of contact within universal services, if a child, young person or family want information, advice or help.

Looked After/ Care Experienced: is an umbrella term which can mean children / young people who are looked after at home through a Compulsory Supervision Order (CSO), looked after away from home in a residential children's house, in a foster placement or in a kinship placement, previously looked after, where at some point in their lives they have had any of the above experiences. The child/ young person may never have been formally looked after.

Parents: Describes any person who has parental responsibilities and any person who has custody of a child, including foster carers and a parent who shares custody of a child

Pupils: Describes all children and young people who are enrolled or seeking to enrol in City of Edinburgh Council schools

Schools: All local authority schools, mainstream and special schools, and all settings providing early learning and child care on behalf of City of Edinburgh Council

Staff: describes all Children and Families staff

POLICY CONTENT

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to schools about positive approaches to promoting and maximising school attendance. Promoting attendance is a multifaceted task that requires schools and learning communities to promote relationships within an inclusive ethos and culture.

IMPLEMENTATION

Maximising school attendance will:

- ensure that every child has the entitlement to an education directed towards realising their potential
- help develop a young person's relationships with their peers opening up opportunities to make friends and to be involved in clubs and activities
- build relationships between our children, young people and families, key staff within our establishments and partners in our communities
- serve as a protective factor when challenging or stressful circumstances arise for children and their families, the National Child Protection Guidance 1 stresses the importance of promoting good attendance at school as a protective measure for children that may be at risk
- help to develop a young person's relationship with their teachers who they can trust to support them in reaching their full their potential
- promote academic success which can open up exciting future pathways
- support progression onto positive post school destinations as school attendance is one of the key factors affecting a person's employability

Key Principles:

The following key principles promote effective whole school approaches to ensuring good attendance:

- demonstrating a strong attendance ethos
- welcoming educational establishments which prioritise positive and nurturing relationships underpinned by high expectations and core values
- there is a common understanding that school absence affects attainment, achievement, wellbeing and wider outcomes
- children and young people are fully included and engaged in the life of the school in order to encourage good attendance
- a rights based approach which takes account of the UNCRC and encourages children and young people's participation in their learning is also likely to ensure children are included, engaged and involved in their school and community, and therefore more likely to be motivated to attend

- schools have additional supports and strategies in place for children and young people who have additional support needs and/or are care experienced
- promoting attendance is part of regular conversations with parents and children and young people
- schools have in place clear procedures for monitoring the attendance of all children and young people
- every member of staff has a legal responsibility to accurately record the attendance and timekeeping of pupils
- there are sound systems in place to detect absence including effective homeschool communication and schools have clear and consistently applied measures for following up on unexplained absence
- staff, parents and children and young people are clear about attendance procedures
- schools work collaboratively with families to understand and respond to barriers to attendance for individual children and young people and intervene early to any emerging patterns of non-attendance
- staff understand absence from school is a potential safeguarding risk and understand their role in keeping learners safe.

Universal Support and Engagement:

Child/ Young person: Attendance at school by children and young people is essential in order that they receive the education to which they are entitled. Excellent school attendance supports children and young people to fulfil their potential and become valuable citizens, contributing to society and achieving their ambitions and life goals.

Parent: The responsibility for a child's education rests with their parent to work collaboratively with the school. Once a child/young person is enrolled at an authority school the law states that the child must attend school unless permission has been given by the authority to withdraw the child / young person from school.

- parents and carers will be responsible for the safety and wellbeing of their children whilst they are not in school
- parents should be made aware that it is in the best interests of their child's safety and wellbeing to make sure that the school has their up to date contact details and to provide the school with emergency contacts
- parents inform the school if the child is absent
- parents should respond promptly to communication from the school
- parents work in partnership with the school to promote and support positive relationships and maximise attendance.

School: Schools need to take into consideration the individual circumstances for each child, young person and family and seek solutions. All staff have a duty to promote school attendance, including through the provision of appropriate, engaging and inclusive learning experiences and support when required.

Pastoral: All staff in school have a role to play in promoting good attendance and helping to reduce absence from school. The GIRFEC framework states that Named Person has a specific role in supporting children and young people to maximise their school attendance:

- respond quickly to absence, to ensure children and young people are safe and well
- follow up on absence, to enable the school and partners can make an effective response

- support reintegration into learning on returning from absence
- be aware of early signs or concerns which may cause absence, and use the GIRFEC framework to assess, identify and evaluate appropriate interventions
- ensure absence does not become a pattern or habit following a specific issue
- develop positive and trusting relationships with pupils and parents to prevent difficulties arising and to ensure difficulties are discussed and resolved when they do take place.

Utilising Data:

School attendance is measured centrally and analysed monthly to monitor improvements based on a school SIMD profile.

- schools should set their own attendance target annually based on this data and monitor progress in relation to this regularly throughout the session
- schools should continually review their performance in relation to their attendance
- schools should utilise their data on attendance to focus on specific groups of children and young people
- schools should use data to target interventions by identifying barriers for individual and groups of children and young people and foster interventions to maximise school attendance.

Staged Intervention

The City of Edinburgh Maximising School Attendance policy is in place to promote school attendance and to ensure measures for early intervention and support are put in place when there are concerns about a child or young person's school attendance.

- Universal supports are in place to promote high levels of school attendance for all children and young people.
- Early intervention will help to address the spiralling effect of non-attendance. Where a pattern of non-attendance emerging, schools must act quickly to support children, young people and their families.
- Targeted support should be in place for children and young people where patterns of non-attendance emerge using a staged intervention approach to ensure interventions are timely, managed and impactful. When relevant and available supports have been tried and have not worked, schools will move to the next stage.

This approach links closely to the GIRFEC framework and processes of Team Around the Child.

Reasons for Non-Attendance or Identifying and Addressing Barriers to Attendance

Children and young people may be absent from school for a number of reasons. It is important to understand the individual circumstances of children who are struggling to attend and use the GIRFEC framework to ensure that barriers to learning and attendance are identified and appropriate support provided in agreeing and maintaining an appropriate pattern of attendance.

Parental Engagement and Communication

Parents are key partners in their child's education, and it is particularly important that they are aware of their responsibilities and encouraged and supported to enable their child to attend school. Working in partnership with parents will ensure positive and trusting relationships are in place to realise this responsibility. Communication with parents is essential in promoting the positive

benefits of regular attendance as well as supporting at an early point any difficulties in attending school. It should be clear to parents and children and young people that any strategies or supports will be respectful and considerate towards any family circumstances. In discussing attendance with parents, it is important to recognise the challenges that can be part of family life, such as balancing work commitments; or dealing with financial challenges that may occur. Schools and settings need to be aware of barriers that parents face in processing information, for example dyslexia and reading difficulties; memory and processing difficulties; living through traumatic situations. In particular, they may find it hard to discuss personal poor mental and physical health circumstances that are impacting upon their child's ability to attend.

Curriculum Design

Schools must support children and young people's engagement and attendance through offering and delivering individualised curriculum pathways to meet the needs of all children and young people.

Partners from sectors within and out with the local authority should, where possible, support schools in providing packages of support to engage children and young people.

School Attendance Monitoring and Managing Absence

In line with Scottish Government Guidance on maximising school attendance, "Every Day Counts" has been adopted by the City of Edinburgh Council to deliver a consistent message on the importance of school attendance, promoting high levels of school attendance and explaining the meaning and impact of school days missed due to absences. Every school day counts for a child and to support attendance it is important to look beyond the attendance percentage levels in isolation and consider what the percentage levels mean in terms of missed opportunities for learning and personal development.

Definition of Attendance

The Scottish Government (2019) has defined attendance as the "participation in a programme of educational activities arranged and agreed by the school".

This includes, but not limited to:

- attendance at school
- learning out with the school provided by a college or another learning provider while still on the school roll
- educational visits, excursions and residential visits
- debates, sports, musical or drama activities in conjunction with school
- study leave for learners participating in National Qualifications if arranged by the school during the period of examination timetable
- attending external examinations
- receiving education via hospital or outreach teaching services
- interviews and visits relating to further and higher education or careers events
- interviews with prospective employers
- work experience or volunteering.

Children and Young People Unable to Attend School Due to Prolonged Ill Health

For some children and young people, their learning is interrupted due to prolonged ill health. This can be for a single block of time or for a number of episodes. Although not an exhaustive list, this can be as a result of:

- accidents
- trauma
- chronic, long term, life limiting or terminal conditions
- mental health issues
- conditions which require repeated medical intervention, such as dialysis.

Equality and diverse communities

Schools should recognise and work to mitigate the particular challenges faced by specific groups of children and young people and the risks that these pose to their attendance at school. Full consideration is given to promoting equality and preventing discrimination with regard to children's needs arising from their gender, ethnicity, religion, culture, sexual orientation, health abilities and disabilities. When identifying and addressing barriers to attendance, schools should also be aware of the particular challenges faced by specific groups of children and young people with protected characteristics.

Child Protection and Safeguarding

Where there is occasional absence without parental awareness, consistent and vigilant school-based processes are essential for safeguarding children and young people. Follow-up action must be taken following identification of a child not in school without their parent's knowledge.

Social Work are notified immediately by telephone of the absence of any child who is on the Council's Child Protection Register or of a child is deemed to be 'at risk'.

Exclusions

School attendance enables the fulfilment of a fundamental right of every child and young person and is a protective factor related to positive future outcomes. Exclusion reduces opportunities and for the pupil to be present, participating, achieving and supported. As such exclusion from schools must be a last resort. All schools should look to develop alternatives to exclusion specific to their individual context.

Exceptional Circumstances and Alternatives to School Attendance

In the City of Edinburgh Council, for the overarching majority of children and young people, the right to an education which meets their needs will be through full time attendance at school. There are exceptional circumstances in which the needs of some children and young people are best met through other attendance to a full-time place at school. In all circumstances time out of education should be kept to a minimum and steps taken to provide the child or young person with their statutory entitlement of education.

Attendance beyond Statutory School Leaving Age

There is no statutory requirement for young people to continue their education at school once they reach the age of 16. Young people, who choose to stay on at school beyond school leaving age,

and their parents should be strongly encouraged to consider their continued commitment to maximising their school attendance. Their curriculum should support them to working toward their next step beyond school. School leaving arrangements are determined by [Education \(Scotland\) Act 1980](#). Attendance must be monitored to ensure proper entitlement to the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA).

Children Missing in Education

There may be occasions where a child or young person goes missing from education for an extended period of time and the school has made extensive unsuccessful attempts to make contact with a family. In line with the principles of GIRFEC, the City of Edinburgh Council is committed to working in partnership with colleagues from other agencies to prevent our children and young people becoming missing from education.

Attendance in the Early Years

It is widely recognised that regular and consistent attendance at nursery contributes positively to early learning progress. It promotes the building of routines and the value of education and impacts positively on a smooth transition to primary school. Although attendance at Early Years establishments is not statutory, it is recommended that all settings with early years classes have policies and practices focussed on promoting and maximising attendance.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Head of Education – Inclusion has responsibility for the maintenance of this procedure. School senior management teams are responsible for the implementation of this procedure within their school.

POLICY BASE

This procedure has been developed to support the local authority to implement Scottish Government Guidance...

List here:-

The Department's policy the procedure has been developed to implement;

- Legislation, directives or guidelines the procedure has been developed to implement.

Where possible provide HTML links to the above documentation.

LEGISLATION AND ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

[Getting it Right for Every Child \(GIRFEC\)](#)

[Included Engaged Involved Part 1 - A Positive Approach to the Promotion and Management of Attendance in Scottish Schools](#)

“Four key features of inclusion ensuring all children are: present, participating, achieving and supported.” [Included Engaged and Involved in Edinburgh](#)

Attendance is one of the 5 key drivers of the Scottish Attainment Challenge [Scottish attainment challenge](#)

In this policy a multi-agency approach has been adopted and requires considering the holistic needs of the child within the GIRFEC framework where services and partners work together with a ‘one service approach’ [GIRFEC policy](#)

[Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#)

[Schools General \(Scotland\) Regulations 1975 All schools are required to keep an attendance register for every pupil](#)

[Education \(Scotland\) Act 1980 section 30](#)

[Curriculum for excellence](#)

[The Promise](#)

[Developing the Young Workforce Scotlands Youth Employment Strategy](#)

[The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\)](#)

[Improving Outcomes for Learners at Risk of Exclusion](#)

[Children missing from education-scotland-guidance-for-local-authorities](#)

[Keeping children safe in education 2023](#)

[Scottish Children's Reporter Administration Edinburgh](#)

[Children unable to attend school due to ill health](#)

Appendix 3 DRAFT Staged Intervention to Maximise School Attendance

Stage 1 - Universal support	
Attendance between 100% and 95%	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Communication with home: <div style="margin-left: 20px;">Communication with all (termly?) Recognition on improved attendance where appropriate</div> 2. Attendance monitoring: Who? E.g. Office Admin/ PSO 	
Stage 2	
Attendance drops below 95%	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Communication with home: <div style="margin-left: 20px;">GroupCall/ Email/ Phone call to alert parent of attendance pattern and or their child's attendance %</div> 2. Attendance monitoring: escalated, list of all pupils between 90% and 95% attendance reviewed (monthly?) Who? E.g. Office Admin/ PSO and discuss with PSL/ DHT attendance 	
Outcomes and next steps: Attendance improves revert to Stage 1 monitoring Attendance continues to decrease move to Stage 3 interventions	
Stage 3	
Attendance drops below 90%	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Communication with home: <div style="margin-left: 20px;">Email/ Phone call to discuss concerning attendance pattern and gain an insight into the barriers facing the child or young person or their family to attending school</div> 2. Attendance monitoring and early interventions escalated: list of all pupils between 85% and 90% attendance reviewed (monthly/ more frequently?) Who? E.g. PSO/ PSL/ DHT attendance 3. Classroom and school-based supports to address barriers to maximising attendance 4. Interventions logged on pastoral notes on SEEMIS (and shared with staff?) 	
Outcomes and next steps: Attendance improves revert to Stage 1 monitoring or Stage 2 interventions, recognition on improved attendance where appropriate Attendance continues to decrease move to Stage 4 interventions	
Stage 4	
Attendance drops between 80% and 85%	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Communication with home: <div style="margin-left: 20px;">Arrange parental meeting Home visit if/ where appropriate</div> 2. Attendance monitoring and targeted support to address barriers - list of all pupils between 80% and 85% attendance reviewed (monthly/more frequently?) Who? E.g. PSL/ DHT attendance 	<u>Targeted approaches:</u> Consult with Education Wellbeing Service GIRFEC framework to plan further support to address barriers and meet wellbeing needs School based interventions logged within plan and shared with staff <i>A Team Around the Child Meeting is convened when all available interventions (including appropriate work around emotional wellbeing, anxiety or school refusal) have been explored by the school and have been unsuccessful. Reasons for absence, barriers to attendance, and supports in place or possible in the future should all be explored.</i>
Outcomes and next steps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance improves, recognition of improved attendance, close Child's Plan if appropriate • Attendance continues to decrease move to Stage 5 interventions 	

Stage 5 (a)		Stage 5 (b)	
Attendance drops below 80%			
1. Communication with home: Initiate regular CPM meetings 2. Close attendance monitoring and enhanced support to address barriers.	<u>Targeted approaches:</u> GIRFEC framework being used to plan interventions and review effective supports and success Child's Planning Meeting to assess further need and plan school-based interventions Attendance figure and interventions part of Child's Plan used for review and target setting Child's Plan minute to seek additional support collaborating with Team Around the Learning Community through locality resources/ local authority services School based interventions and any other agreed information shared with staff	1. Communication with home: Regular Child's Planning Meetings are already being held 2. Referral to Education Wellbeing Service 3. Close attendance monitoring and enhanced support to address barriers including accessing external resources	<u>Targeted approaches:</u> GIRFEC framework being used to plan interventions and review effective supports and success Education Wellbeing Officer engages with family Child's Planning Meeting to assess further need and plan school-based interventions Attendance figure and interventions part of Child's Plan used for review and target setting Referrals made to partners to seek additional support collaborating with Team Around the Learning Community through locality resources/ local authority services School based interventions and any other agreed information shared with staff
Outcomes and next steps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance improves, recognition of improved attendance, close Child's Plan if appropriate All interventions have been explored and sufficient time to affect change has been given through successive and regular Child's Planning Meetings and attendance continues to decrease, move to Stage 5(b) 		Outcomes and next steps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance improves, recognition of improved attendance, close Child's Plan if appropriate Referrals made to partners to seek specific external Learning Community or locality support, family engage with partners All interventions have been explored and sufficient time to affect change has been given through successive and regular Child's Planning Meetings and attendance continues to decrease, Education Wellbeing Service in agreement move to Stage 6 	

Stage 6
<p><i>All other aspects of the maximising attendance procedure are designed to avoid reaching this stage. A referral to the Children's Reporter should be a last resort and appropriate, proportionate, and timely</i></p> <p>Refer to Children's Reporter for consideration of compulsory measures of supervision.</p> <p>To request a children's hearing through the Children's Reporter, there must be clear evidence of :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> parental non-cooperation with the school's attempts to improve the child's attendance supports being offered and tried but which have not been successful efforts to clarify reasons for absence over a prolonged period of time parent/carer not having demonstrated sufficient willingness to address the issue social work contacted (SCD) to ensure there are no welfare concerns impacting the child's ability to attend or the family circumstances

DRAFT: Appendix 4 Education Wellbeing Service Proposed Model

Background:

School attendance is measured centrally and analysed monthly to monitor improvements based on a school SIMD profile. Schools set their own attendance targets based on this data and monitor progress in relation to this throughout the session. Schools review their performance in relation to their attendance to target interventions by identifying barriers for individual and groups of children and young people and foster interventions to maximise school attendance. The proposed new Education Wellbeing Service Model would support schools in their attendance work which sits within priorities of the Scottish Attainment Challenge and the National Improvement Framework.

The Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families indicate that the reasons for children and young people not attending school exist at different levels – those of the child or young person, the family and home, the school level or community and the interaction between these factors. Family pressures can be compounded if the school environment is not sensitive to individual or family issues or where the focus is solely on academic attainment and achievement. Instead fostering readiness to learn via a culture, ethos and staff which is supportive of the wellbeing of pupils and their families is beneficial.

Public First's 2023 research in England highlighted a "seismic shift in parental attitudes to school attendance that is going to take a monumental, multiservice effort to change." This shift is due to a number of factors including impact of COVID19, rise in mental health and wellbeing issues, cost of living crisis, 'family time', physical health and logistical demands.

Key themes that positively impact school attendance featured in the Education Scotland Improving Attendance Understanding the Issues case studies include:

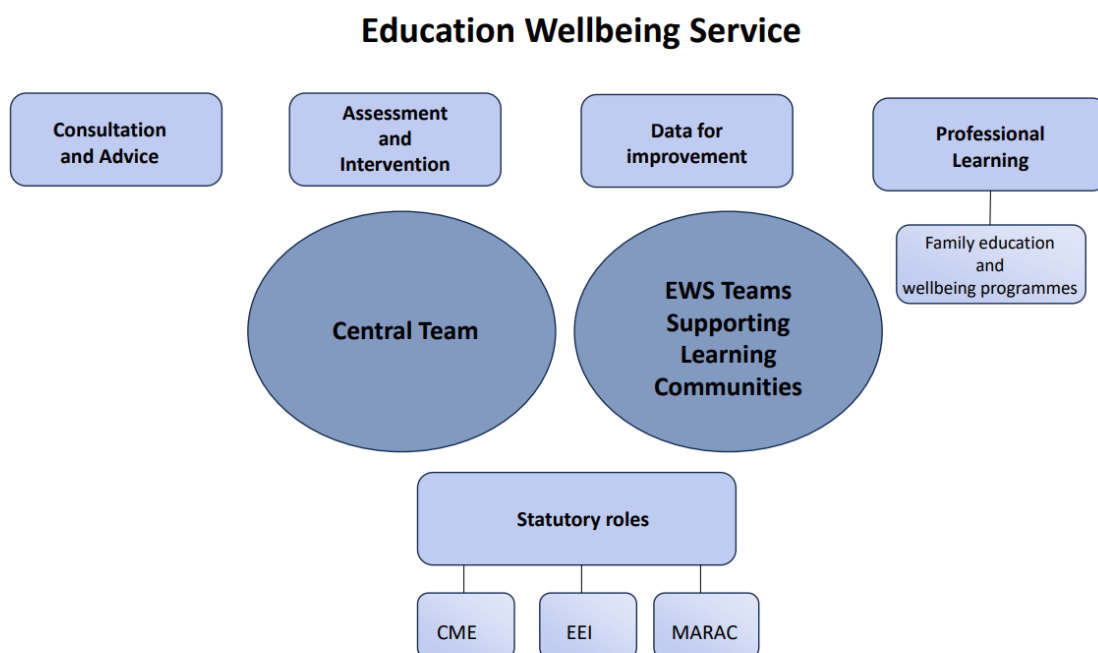
- trusted relationships with families and children and young people are vital
- communication and explanation of impact of not attending is shared
- varied support packages bespoke to each situation has the most impact
- regular reviewing of data and tracking the impact of individualised support packages
- alternative education packages explored with families and young people
- nurture provision within each establishment is based on needs analysis
- consideration of cost of the school day and the impact of the cost-of-living crisis
- working in partnership with other services and/or third sector providers is important.

Education Scotland Improving Attendance Understanding the Issues (Nov 2023): Actions for Consideration:



The City of Edinburgh Council highlights how it will prioritise its work in the Edinburgh Children’s Services Plan 2023/26. It maintains that multi agency collaboration will be employed to make best use of the partnerships’ collaborative gain and the influence that combined service provision can have to address complex social issues and that prevention and early intervention will be realised to prioritise objectives that help protect our children and young people from poor outcomes.

Education Wellbeing Service Model



The role of the Education Wellbeing Service is for the team of Education Wellbeing Officers to act as a consultation service to access wider supports and address barriers to maximising school attendance through a universal and targeted support offer (see

appendix 3 Staged Intervention Model). They will provide a quality data driven support, consultation, and advice service to schools to effect change and improvement. Where attendance continues to fall and supports in place are not having an impact on attendance at school, the EWS team will offer targeted support to children, young people and their families through assessment and intervention. This will be achieved through collaboration with partner services to address barriers to school attendance promoting positive home-school links, developing trusting relationships understanding the needs of the child young person or family, providing advice and training to parents.

The proposed service design for an Education Wellbeing Service would assist schools meet the needs for support as identified in this research through a learning community model. Schools work in partnership with families to ensure effective supports can be provided to address barriers and maximise school attendance. Education Scotland's research shows that working with partners that are not school staff can help schools to make gains in improving school attendance. The EWS will be the "connectors" linking schools with partners so that a joined-up approach to partnership working to maximise attendance can be realised. EWS Teams sit within localities and are represented in each learning community. In this way they will develop a wide knowledge of resources as well as the local area in which they are allocated.

A Central Team would lead the strategic overview of the work being carried out in learning communities. Their role would include:

- coordinating EWS teams
- lead whole team meetings
- oversee central referrals process
- quality assure work of teams including targeted caseload work
- responsible for data analysis
- lead self-evaluation
- coordinating the statutory work of the team
- coordinate professional learning and liaise with the CEC parent and carer support and family wellbeing team to facilitate access to family education and wellbeing programmes.
- managing social work referrals through consultation and review evaluating if the plan is robust and comprehensive and that avenues of support been explored and exhausted before referrals are submitted hence reducing the high numbers of cases which are single agency referred directly to Scottish Children's Reporter Administration.

Core Functions of the Education Wellbeing Service:

- Consultation and Advice
- Assessment and Intervention
- Data for improvement
- Professional Learning

Consultation and Advice:

Communication and understanding effective practice are key elements of a multi-agency approach. EWS would act as a soundboard for schools to discuss data caseloads at various trigger thresholds. They would be a point of contact to seek advice, clarification and signposting to service providers. This would include supporting Special schools who currently do not receive any support from the Education Welfare System to maximise school attendance.

Early intervention is a key factor in supporting attendance and addressing barriers. Schools have suggested that this is an area of challenge for them. EWS can help schools to establish supports and early interventions that promote attendance e.g. walking buses, breakfast club, data analysis to target interventions based on identified gaps.

The EWS teams would support and advise on any attendance related elements of the Child's Plan, and be part of the team around the family if necessary. Where families have multiple needs, EWS would seek to align the routes to support to ensure that they receive a holistic, co-ordinated package of support in order to increase the chance of successful outcomes. Understanding the barriers to attendance, the patterns of poor attendance and the impactful interventions would be an aspect of providing a consultative service to schools. The EWS team would also signpost and provide advice on appropriate referrals to partner services, linking schools to the support and advice that is available.

Assessment and Intervention:

Universal offer - Central Team and EWS Team supporting Learning Communities:

Attendance is a concern where colleagues should work collaboratively to ensure endeavours are coordinated and involve planned cross sector working so that impact is maximised. Clear leadership on promoting attendance and reducing absence will support this collaborative approach to promoting attendance and to tackle common barriers and issues across the learning community. Consistency in approaches to policy and procedure would be enabled through this model. EWS will help to maintain relationships across the learning community and ensure that attendance promotion remains high on the learning community agenda.

Kearney (2008) has highlighted the importance of understanding the reason for children and young people's difficulties with attending school. We need to use a holistic lens to consider the child or young person's context and why they are not attending school, including challenges around the school environment. If we understand the underlying difficulties, we are more likely to develop appropriate supports and interventions.

EWS would participate in learning community meetings alongside representatives from education and partner services, to support attendance strategy for the learning community. Their responsibilities would include:

- ensuring policy and procedure in place
- shared approach to attendance promotion across the learning community
- advisory role for communication e.g. Every Day Counts, letters
- quality assurance for consistency in SEEMIS coding

- support schools with attendance self-evaluation toolkit (see appendix Self-evaluation Attendance Questions to Support Practice)
- leading professional learning which supports managing and maximising attendance.

The EWS would build strong relationships with a range of services and partners that can help with specific barriers to attendance and how to access them, empowering those working with families to solve challenges for and with children and young people. This in a learning community could include health, youth justice, voluntary and community sector, Additional Support for Learning services to support educational needs, educational psychologists, and housing/ finance support. The team would meet regularly with leads from these services and ensure they know what their role is in attendance support, why it is important and how they fit into the local authority's wider strategy on attendance.

Targeted Support - Where barriers to attendance for a pupil or family are complex and signposting to services is not sufficient, schools and partner services will work together to provide more intensive whole family support to address them as soon as it becomes clear they would benefit from it. EWS engagement providing targeted support would be part of the GIRFEC framework utilising Child's Planning Process which ensures that targets are set, supports investigated and attempted and impact of interventions monitored. EWS would contribute to decision making, by giving information and advice to help others make informed choices about children and young people designing and implementing interventions which support individuals to grow, develop and build resilience. A strength of the service which was highlighted through the consultation would be in the EWS's ability to build relationships with families so as to understand barriers making school attendance challenging. This can be achieved through short term case centred work with children or young people and their families engaging with the GIRFEC framework led by Named Person/ Lead Professional. The EWS team may for example; foster communication through home visits, build connections with a key person(s) e.g. mentoring services, support family learning e.g. resilience building through a parent education offer.

Research findings indicate rates of school attendance vary widely and are likely to disproportionately negatively affect pupils who are vulnerable. Pupils from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to have reduced levels of attendance than their peers from higher socio-economic backgrounds (Kearney et al., 2022). This only helps to accentuate the ongoing challenge of addressing the poverty-related attainment gap at a time where the number of pupils living in poverty remains at 1 in 5 in Edinburgh (20%) with long term poverty trends in the city expected to follow the National picture of increasing risk of very deep poverty. These trends are demonstrated by evidence showing that some 10,000 Edinburgh families regularly skipped meals because they could not afford enough food during 2022 (End Poverty in Edinburgh Annual Progress Report, 2023). The complexity and inequity of attendance highlights the need for effective partnership working at all levels/

Certain groups are more vulnerable to low attendance (e.g. Care Experienced). EWS would be knowledgeable of supports available in the learning community for these specific groups, assist schools to highlight individuals and groups that would benefit from targeted support to maximise attendance through data analysis, with the aim of interventions bridging the gap in the attendance of some of the most vulnerable groups of pupils. This would result in a reduction in contacts requesting a statutory social work service –

meaning that families are supported within local communities by those who already know them and can provide early intervention at a very early level.

Statutory roles - The EWS would continue to engage in these roles as local authority officers supporting children's services.

CME: When CME Edinburgh are notified of a Child Missing in Education an email is usually received from another council to notify Edinburgh of the movement of that child to the area.

If a check is carried out on SEEMIS and the child is found not to be registered at a school in Edinburgh, the details of the family are then shared with EWS to make contact with.

EWS would aim to speak to parents and ascertain whether the family are in the process of enrolling their child in school. At this time advise on which schools would be in their catchment and the registration process for schools if they have not already begun this process can be offered. EWS maintain contact with families throughout this process until such time as the child/children are enrolled in school.

Once the child is enrolled in school and have a SEEMIS record, EWS inform the previous council area of the school the child is now registered in, so that the child's record is updated correctly and accordingly.

EWS may check with housing to confirm address details and an EWO may make a home visit to assess the wellbeing of the child. This may entail working with ICT for translation service support to assist in calls and school visits where a translator is needed.

EI: Each week an Early & Effective Intervention (EEI) meeting is held. During this meeting, children who have been charged by Police Scotland are discussed. EWS represents Education in this meeting. Other professionals involved include Police Scotland, Social Work, Family & Household Support and Young Peoples' Service. Each case is discussed in turn by the professionals in attendance and a decision as to where the case will be diverted is made. Whichever service the case is diverted to will then take the case forward. The consideration for diversion of cases is based on the GIRFEC principles.

Throughout the week, Police Scotland will share concern reports for children who have been charged in Edinburgh. Each concern reports contain a VPD ID (Vulnerable Person Database), Name, Date of Birth, School attended, Parent Name, Home Address, details of the incident, charges made against child.

For each report, the team will check the details within the report are correct and advise of any amendments which are required to ensure accuracy. The pupil's school record will be checked to provide clarity on this, what their attendance level is, and any exclusions are also recorded. The HT or DHT of the pupil's school as well as the EWO for that school are contacted to be notified of the charge, or in cases where the child is under 12 and therefore under the age of criminal responsibility, that the case will be considered under ACRA. The school are also asked for feedback on the pupil, a form is shared to be completed and returned to EWS.

If the pupil is known to EWS, the EWO will provide feedback as well as school. The EWO who will be attending the EEI meeting that week will then review all reports and all feedback received in order to share an informed view and background at the meeting.

Each week, EWS share the input feedback with Police Scotland.

Following the meeting EWS will advise school of the decision made and where the case is being diverted to. If the case is diverted to Education a copy of the diverted concern report for the charge is also shared at this point. In cases where the diversion has been to Education, EWS also write, and send by post to the pupil charged and act as the main contact to the parent advising them that the case has been diverted to Education to progress and outline the potential next steps should the pupil come to the attention of EEI again.

EEI Data 2019-2024

	2019 – 2020	2020 – 2021	2021 - 2022	2022 – 2023	2023 – 2024
Numbers of pupils taken to EEI	495	357	370	350	208 (to date)
Numbers diverted to Education	109	127	156	156	69
EWO input for EEI	495	357	370	350	208

MARAC: A Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference is a local meeting where representatives from statutory and non-statutory agencies meet to discuss individuals at high risk of serious harm or murder as a result of domestic abuse. The meeting provides a safe environment for agencies to share relevant and proportionate information about current risk.

EWS represent Education at this meeting and discuss any children involved in these cases. The victims who are discussed are at the most risk of murder or serious harm. Cases are referred in by a number of agencies, but most common is Police Scotland or Edinburgh Women’s Aid.

A list of case names is shared around 1 week prior to the meeting. There are usually 4 meetings held throughout the day, each to cover the different geographical locations in Edinburgh North East, North West, South East & South West.

When the case names are shared, these are checked and information gathering will begin for any children involved, this involves confirming the education setting they attend, ensuring their information is correct, if the perpetrator is listed as a contact on their file, if here are any pastoral notes relating to concerns around the safety and wellbeing of the child. Once this information is collated, the HT of the setting will be contacted and advised of the meeting and asked to share any information they feel would be appropriate. Responses are collated and shared with the EWO attending the meeting. They are then able to present current information or concerns relating to the child involved.

Following the meeting, if there are any actions to be carried out by school, the EWO who attended will contact school to feedback on next steps.

Data for Improvement:

A key aspect to tackling attendance, is an in-depth understanding of data across school populations and at local authority levels. There is significant variation across the local authority in how data around attendance is collated and used. The limited accuracy and consistency of recording can hinder data analysis, meaning that the data may not be able to help answer some vital questions necessary to help target support timeously and proportionately. This includes the scale of the non-attendance and the school stage/year in which the concern becomes most pronounced. It also means effective targeting of resources could be hindered by current data available.

EWS are placed to be able to collate data that would support schools with their interventions, demographic information, frequency of analysis. Data would be gathered to identify impactful early intervention, act as a trigger for communication and support. Rigorous tracking and monitoring of absences would initiate consideration of the barriers to support re-engagement. Analysis of data would highlight absence through a range of lenses which would include demonstrating patterns, trends and groups (e.g., Care Experienced children and young people, SIMD/ FSM, ASN, EAL, anxiety-based school avoidance). This data would guide resourcing of services based on need. The data from the Education Welfare Service demonstrates the service having a greater impact in Primary Schools than in Secondary. This would indicate an early intervention model for the service would be a recommendation for the service re-design. Consistency in data including using SEEMIS coding would ensure our data for the local authority is accurate and robust. This function would also include EWS maintaining an overview of flexible/ alternative timetables and hostings. Effective systems and data dashboards are required for the rationale of schools with the support of the EWS to utilise data to resource appropriate interventions.

Data demonstrating EWS referred cases where there has been attendance improvement

Total number of pupils referred to EWS	Secondary school referrals	Referrals with improved attendance in secondary school	Greatest attendance % improvement in a secondary school	Primary school referrals	Referrals with improved attendance in primary school	Greatest attendance % improvement in a primary school
1239	748	369	94%	223	148	34%

The smallest attendance % gain has been 1% seen in both high school and primary school referred cases.

The greatest attendance % decline was 91% in high school and 30% in primary. These figures must be considered within the wider challenges and barriers to attending school faced by the specific children and young people.

Professional Learning:

EWS would lead and support professional learning for education establishments across the learning community to support attendance developing the skills of other professionals through training, using evidence informed approaches. This would result in all staff

confidently understanding absence as a symptom of wider need, those with responsibility for attendance would be upskilled to carry out their roles e.g. SEEMIS coding, sharing good practice sessions, attendance networking or conferences.

Family education and wellbeing programmes - Parental mental health and/or anxiety and families experiencing financial stress were cited in the Education Scotland research as family barriers and challenges to school attendance in Scotland. The Education Welfare Officers were noted through the consultation as capable of building compassionate, flexible relationships with families. The EWS would have a role in supporting families to build their confidence through family education and wellbeing programmes to develop family skills and resilience. Examples of opportunities may include PPP, Raising Children with Confidence. The benefits of this would be improving outcomes for the whole family and maximising attendance at school would be a result.

Conclusions:

Through consultation, a new model for an Education Wellbeing Service is proposed as an evidence-based approach to meet the aims of maximising school attendance. It employs a joint up approach focussing on collaboration at all levels, to utilise resources within and between our establishments, learning communities in our localities and citywide to achieve positive outcomes for children and young people.

References:

The Scottish Attainment Challenge

[Scottish Attainment Challenge | Programmes | Learning in Scotland | Education Scotland](#)

[Scottish Attainment Challenge - 2022 to 2023 – 2025 to 2026: fairer Scotland duty assessment - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

Attendance: the next pandemic?" Scottish Division of Education Psychology and Education Scotland November 2023

[sdep-think-piece-nov-23.pdf](#)

Improving Attendance Understanding the Issues (November 2023)

<https://education.gov.scot/about-education-scotland/planning-and-reporting/improving-attendance-in-scotland/>

Edinburgh Children's Services Plan 2023/26

[117960 Edinburgh Children Services Plan 2023 - 26 24PP A4 PROOF \(003\).pdf](#)