
The Education Welfare Service Transformation Project

Report

3 November 2022

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Executive Summary

Reducing school absenteeism has been a priority for successive governments over many years both in GB and in Northern Ireland. However, despite improvements in general levels of affluence and children's health, attendance rates here have barely changed. The rate of unauthorised absence reported by schools in Northern Ireland has remained relatively static since 2013 and Northern Ireland schools report relatively higher unauthorised absences compared to other countries within the United Kingdom. Geographical differences in school attendance have previously been connected to levels of social deprivation, although this is not a complete picture, with some schools in deprived areas showing better attendance rates than others. Currently, in Northern Ireland, attendance at school is supported through the dedicated service provided by the Education Authority's Education Welfare Service (EWS).

The Education Authority (EA) was established in April 2015 and assumed responsibility for all of the operational functions previously carried out by the five Education and Library Boards (ELBs) in accordance with the Education Orders. The Education Authority commenced a significant change program to rationalise policies and to bring about consistency of practice, reducing duplication and developing quality models of service delivery to meet the needs of children and young people. The EWS Transformation Project was introduced to transform service delivery for children, young people, families and schools, using a rights based approach and aimed at improving engagement in education with better outcomes for young people of school age.

The Project was developed in response to reports from the Northern Ireland Audit Office (2004 & 2014) and the Public Accounts Committee (2014), which concluded that there was a need for efficiency and effectiveness across the Education Welfare Service (EWS) as well as the implementation of a consistent model of delivery. Recommendations were initially worked upon in a phased approach and the Transformation Project represents the completion of the fundamental review of the service called for in the PAC Report and initiated by the Education Authority in 2017, following the move from the five Education and Library Boards to the single authority.

The current Education Welfare Service has many strengths and during the recent COVID-19 pandemic it was to the fore in supporting vulnerable young people and their families. The Service is highly valued by schools; by young people and their families and by the partner organisations they work with. Staff are dedicated and experienced and for many families and young people the Education Welfare Service staff represents the face of the Education Authority.

However, as noted by the Northern Ireland Audit Office (2004 & 2014) and the Public Accounts Committee (2014), the Service has faced challenges, with a lack of clear understanding amongst stakeholders regarding the precise role of the Service. These reports identified an ineffective and inconsistent use of data and associated technology; inconsistent regional delivery; a disparity in the allocation of resources; lack of a clear pathway for stakeholders to access the services; varied processes relating to court work; no framework for performance management; fluctuating staffing levels and inconsistent mechanisms to ensure that opportunities from partnership working were optimised in the best interest of children and young people. The EWS Transformation Project has sought to address these issues and provides a genuine opportunity to reimagine the Educational Welfare Service (EWS) and to deliver a service that truly meets the needs of young people and their families in the 21st century.

The Transformation Project undertook extensive initial engagement with key stakeholders, building on previous engagement completed as part of the initial review process in 2017. This engagement included targeted engagement with School Principals and Pastoral staff, Young People and their Parents/Carers, EWS Staff and Key Education Partners. The various stakeholders were provided with opportunities to influence the process, to challenge existing models of service delivery and to make suggestions that would inform the future service delivery model.

It should be noted that Education Welfare Officers, a key group of stakeholders, withdrew from the Transformation Project as part of industrial action regarding a pay dispute. However, they had been extensively involved in the initial engagement (2017) for the review process and had participated fully in the Transformation Project's discovery workshop and the initiation phase of the project, with members participating on each of the workstreams. Deputy Chief and Senior Education Welfare Officers have continued working throughout the Transformation Project to ensure representation of EWS throughout the process.

The Transformation Project aims to address any outstanding recommendations from the Northern Ireland Audit Office (2004 & 2014) and the Public Accounts Committee (2014), providing the more proactive, 're-engineered' EWS called for in the Public Accounts Committee Report. This 're-engineered' service will provide a greater ability to carry out preventative work and be supported by an improved management information system, ensuring that all pupils requiring attention are identified at the earliest possible opportunity and that the service can act with greater urgency to respond appropriately to the needs of these young people and their families.

Currently, the service is skewed towards a mostly reactive, intensive intervention service that often occurs too late for significant positive outcomes for the young people it is intended to help. This situation has been exacerbated by the return to school following the COVID-19 pandemic, aligned with industrial action taken by Education Welfare Officers, causing an increase in unallocated cases currently on a waiting list. Both research and feedback from stakeholders identifies that what is needed is a service that engages young people and their families early and positively about the benefits of school attendance, provides a systemic response to overcoming identified attendance barriers and opens up the potential of wider support networks and community development, whilst still providing intensive help to those families in need.

Previous work in the review process (Appendix 1) had considered the relevance of other systems across a range of countries. In some jurisdictions, the responsibility for school attendance is placed solely with schools. Some countries have no designated Education Welfare Service, relying on other services to support attendance at school; in others the Service has been contracted out to the private sector, whilst in other jurisdictions only the statutory element of the service is provided and schools have to purchase any additional support they may require. Although consideration was given to these different approaches within the Transformation Project, there was no traction for a wholesale change away from the current dedicated service approach.

A review of research has also shown that different approaches have been adopted globally to improve school attendance, although in general adopting a more preventative approach appears beneficial. Certain other elements have also been identified as good practice and are often cited as significant to improving school attendance levels. This embraces early intervention, including community development and public health approaches to attendance, capacity building and effective partnership working. The transformed Service looks to incorporate these within its new model of delivery.

Consequently, the following 6 key areas were identified, along with the associated work to regionalise and continuously improve aspects of the Service:

1. The development of a more preventative and proactive model of delivery;
2. Career Progression and Professional Development - considering service structure and the development of specialist roles;
3. Developing an Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) Framework;
4. Developing consistent Policy, Standards and Guidance;
5. Working Collaboratively with Pupils, Parents and wider Partners to provide Accessible and Visible Services; and
6. Ensuring appropriate IT and Office Infrastructure.

These key areas of focus were then taken forward through individual work streams.

This 're-engineered' service will not be operational overnight and it will take several years, along with appropriate resourcing, to embed properly. The Transformation Project, therefore, will establish a Business Plan alongside an Implementation Plan, with an identified Implementation Team to take forward delivery of the new model. This Implementation Plan must also consider how best to reduce the current waiting list.

The Project also recognises that the Education Welfare Service is not wholly responsible for delivering improved and sustained attendance for young people. This can only happen through a partnership between the service, schools and the Department of Education. It calls for funding and government sponsorship of those foundational school supports, such as improved school estate, access to transport, universal access to appropriate technology and seamless connectivity that will help encourage improved attendance. However, we can support those young people experiencing personal difficulties with attendance, by first developing a universal and system-wide response to removing any systemic barriers to attendance and providing welcoming, fit-for-purpose learning environments that encourage young people to want to be in school.

Section 1: The Transformation Project

1.1 Context for the Transformation Project

The Education Authority (EA) has been developing services to meet the needs of children, young people and their parents. In developing these services, EA has sought to bring clarity and transparency to how it operates and how children and parents can effectively access support. Across EA there is a recognition that working effectively with partners in health and social care and the voluntary and community sectors is the best way to develop integrated support to meet the needs of our children. Together, with our partners, the EA will strive to continue to make significant progress in improving services for children and young people. The goal is to provide early intervention to improve pupil outcomes for those with the greatest needs and to give parents and others confidence in the delivery of services and provision from EA.

The Education Welfare Service across the legacy Education and Library Boards (ELBs) had been the subject of extensive inspection and subsequent recommendations, leading to a

fundamental review of the service, initiated in 2017 and completed with this Project. Of particular relevance to this Project are:

- Education and Training Inspectorate - Report 2002;
- Northern Ireland Audit Office Reports (2004) and follow up Report recommendations (2014);
- The Public Accounts Committee recommendations (2014).

1.1.1 Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) 2002

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) completed an inspection of the then 5 Education and Library Boards (ELBs) Education Welfare Services during 2000 and identified several strategic priorities and emerging themes to underpin any future development of the EWS in Northern Ireland.

The inspection report acknowledged the expanding role of the Service and the trend towards developing more preventative approaches to its work, particularly within the Primary School Sector. While endorsing this approach, ETI indicated the need for the Service to review staffing levels to ensure that post primary provision was adequately supported.

The Report also acknowledged that some EWOs had inadequate training in group work or classroom management and that teaching staff were not sufficiently involved in the development of programmes. There was an absence of formal mechanisms for routine information sharing and a lack of joint protocols to inform practice had resulted in differing rates of cross departmental working across Northern Ireland. In addition, the Report highlighted that there was an ineffective means of collating information on attendance and the outcomes of intervention and that poor levels of information and communication technology (ICT) was a major issue that should be prioritised.

The need to develop a more effective approach to the use of Education Supervision Orders (ESO) and to improve the resources to facilitate the Service to implement, more effectively, its responsibility in respect of discharging duties associated with ESOs was also highlighted.

1.1.2 Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO)

In 2014, the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) published 'Improving Pupil Attendance: Follow up Report'. This was a follow up to the NIAO report 'Improving Pupil Attendance at School' (2004) which highlighted the actions taken by the Department of Education, the Education & Library Board's and schools to improve attendance at schools across Northern Ireland.

In total, this report included fourteen recommendations, some of which related specifically to the Education Welfare Service (EWS). In particular - Recommendation 9 of the NIAO report stated that:

- The Department should consider whether any improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery can be identified in the Education Welfare Service.
- There should be a particular focus on ensuring that the approach adopted by the Education Welfare Officers is consistent and that all disengaged pupils have access to the same services.

1.1.3 Public Accounts Committee (PAC)

The PAC report (2014) recommended that:

- A fundamental review of the EWS should be carried out, with the ultimate aim that schools should refer all cases where intervention is considered necessary and after the school has endeavoured to resolve the attendance issue itself; and
- The re-engineered EWS should be more proactive, carry out more preventative work, act with more urgency and should put in place a mechanism to ensure that all pupils requiring intervention are identified at the earliest possible opportunity.
- The remit of the review should include urgent measures to address the current lack of basic management information available to EWS and inconsistent service provision across the five Education and Library Boards (ELBs), as these failings prevent the EWS from doing its job effectively.

1.2 Aim of the Transformation Project

The aim of this Project was to transform service delivery for children, young people, families and schools employing a rights based approach that will result in improved engagement in education and better outcomes for all young people. This Transformation Project has addressed the recommendations of the NIAO and the PAC, in particular the need to be more preventative and proactive in its approach. It has also addressed the issues of effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery, consistency of approach across the EA and the effective collection of attendance information through improved information and communication technology (ICT).

The key areas of focus within the Project and dealt with through work streams were:

- reviewing the Service Delivery Model, with a focus on preventative approaches as well as effective interventions;
- reviewing Career Progression & Professional Development, including the need for any 'specialist' provision within the service;
- developing an Outcomes Based Accountability Framework to monitor and evaluate performance (this will include developing procedures for the collation, management and analysis of data and will include collection of section 75 disaggregated data, in line with legal obligations);
- reviewing Policy, Standards & Guidance;
- reviewing how the Service collaborates with Pupils, Parents, the Education Sector and wider stakeholders; and
- reviewing IT provision, digitisation of the service and improving Office Infrastructure

1.3 Methodology

A PRINCE2 methodology was adopted for management of the Project as a systematic approach to ensuring that the project goals would be met in a logical and systematic way. As part of the approach it considered afresh the views of key stakeholders, including Staff, Key Education Partners, Children and Young People and their Parents. A Project Board and Project Reference Group were established to oversee the Project. These were composed of EA cross-directorate

representatives and wider stakeholder groups from schools and children's advocacy groups and presented a challenge and support role for the Project.

Within the establishment phase of the Project consideration was given to:

- The existing Legislative and Policy Framework; and
- The current Service Profile.

The Project also built on previous work that had been undertaken in respect of:

- Available and appropriate comparison information and research; and
- Previous information from Stakeholder engagement.

This information was used to inform recommendations that were considered by the Project Board and Project Reference Group prior to and following consultations and enabled a revised Service Delivery Model to be produced.

Section 2: Relevant Legislation

The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 sets out the primary duties of public authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people and the legal duty of parents or guardians to secure full time education for their child or young person of compulsory school age. This legislative context adheres to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) Articles 28 & 29.

The United Nations Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) is an international human rights treaty which aims to promote, protect and ensure the human rights of people with disabilities on an equal basis to others. It is based on the social model of disability, aiming to remove barriers which hinder full and effective participation by deaf and disabled people in society. The UK government has undertaken to implement the rights within the UNCRPD. All of the rights within the UNCRPD apply to children.

Primary legislation pertaining to the statutory education of children and young people is contained within the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 and Article 86 of the Education (NI) Order 1998 which sets out the mandatory legal duty of the Education Authority to make arrangements *“for the provision of suitable education at school or otherwise than at school for those children of compulsory school age who by reason of illness, expulsion from school or otherwise, may not for any period receive suitable education unless such arrangements are made for them”*.

Further details of all relevant legislation is given in Appendix 2.

Section 3: Policy Context and Government Priorities

There have been a range of Government Priorities, Policies and Strategies which have driven the policy context for the approach to managing attendance at school.

3.1 ‘Every School a Good School: A Policy for School Improvement’ (2009)

This policy document outlines the ‘Characteristics of a Successful School’ including child-centred provision; high quality teaching and learning; effective leadership and a school connected to its local community. The child-centred provision indicators highlighted are

particularly appropriate to this Project in that they relate directly to how the Service engages with service users. It is important that the promotion of equality of opportunity and concern for individual pupils, effective interventions and appropriate support to meet the additional education and other needs of young people, help to overcome barriers to learning, involvement of the young person in discussions and decisions that directly affect them and high standards of pastoral care and child protection are in place.

3.2 'Improving Pupil Attendance Strategy' (2016)

This DE publication provides a strategic framework for all those involved in managing and improving attendance in schools and maximising pupil attendance. The Strategy is considered a fundamental part of the Department's contribution to the Executive's Draft Programme for Government outcome to "give our children and young people the best start in life". The overall policy aim is to: "maximise the attendance rate of pupils so that they are in school being supported to reach their full potential". The simple phrase 'Miss School = Miss Out' summarises and simplifies the potential impact of non-attendance at school and reflects the evidence that indicates a link between school attendance and educational attainment.

The strategy establishes the strategic direction in respect of school attendance to inform the actions of those responsible for managing attendance, provides a framework which brings together and builds upon the work already in progress, articulates the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders and reflects the crucial role played by both schools and parents working together in establishing patterns of good attendance and in identifying and addressing any attendance concerns at an early stage. The strategy identifies 4 key themes that underpin a successful approach to managing pupil attendance:

- school leadership;
- early intervention;
- tailored support; and
- collaboration and engagement.

Again the need for early intervention and collaboration is key.

3.3 'Miss School = Miss Out, Improving Pupil Attendance Strategy' (2016)

This strategy reaffirmed the need for each school to develop robust school attendance policy and procedures. Each school must develop its own attendance policy that is kept under regular review to ensure its relevance and effectiveness. There is also a requirement for the improvement of pupil attendance to be prioritised within its School Development Plan.

Alongside the 4 key themes, there is recognition of the need to share good practice to enable schools to learn from techniques and approaches that have been employed successfully in other schools. This can be through formal local mechanisms such as Area Learning Communities where schools can engage directly with each other through the informal relationships often developed between school leaders or through provision such as the Education and Training Inspectorate's (ETI) good practice guide 'Part One: Attendance in Schools ETI Good Practice Report' issued in July 2016.

The Strategy also outlines EA's responsibilities in relation to pupil attendance through the Education Welfare Service, as it primarily seeks to support referred pupils and their families to stay engaged with education by helping them to tackle barriers to attending school, working in partnership with the young people, their families, schools and other educational services as well as statutory and voluntary agencies.

3.4 The Northern Ireland Executive's Draft Programme for Government (PfG) Framework 2016-2021

This framework introduced and developed an outcomes-based approach to set a clear direction for travel for improving societal well-being. This new approach offers an opportunity to enter a collaborative phase of working between departments, and across government, the private sector and the voluntary and community sectors to maximise what can be achieved collectively.

The draft PfG notes that its priorities can only be achieved through genuine collaboration across government, and through genuine partnership with parents and families and with others who support them. The draft PfG recognises the need for a system of Government that works across boundaries, organisations, groups and communities for the common good.

This emphasis on collaboration reflects the need for EWS to collaborate with other EA Services as well as with other relevant external partners and agencies.

3.5 The Draft Children and Young People's Strategy 2017-2027

This strategy is a key component to the desired PfG outcome 'giving our young people the best start in life'. The Strategy sets out a direction of travel for how the Northern Ireland Executive wants the lives of children and young people to improve and is in line with the statutory obligation placed on the State through the Children Services Co-operation Act (2015). It outlines how relevant parties will work together to improve the well-being of children and young people, to deliver positive long-lasting outcomes.

The Strategy places an emphasis on prevention and early intervention (intervening at an early stage in a problem and/or at an early age) and on children and young people who need most help. This is in keeping with draft PfG commitments that our children and young people have the best start in life and everyone can reach their potential. Again this need for prevention and early intervention has been developed in this Transformation Project.

3.6 DE Circular No. 2022/07 - Attendance Guidance & Absence Reporting by Schools

This circular identifies that the Education Authority, through the Education Welfare Service (EWS), have a legal duty to make sure that parents/guardians meet their responsibility towards their children's education. If a school is concerned about a pupil's pattern of attendance and/or if and there is a cause for concern they will be referred to the EWS, if appropriate. EWS will support staff and parents in developing and implementing strategies to address or improve school attendance. Paragraph 21 provides guidance aimed at deterring the use of reduced timetables, for emotional, behavioural and welfare reasons under Special Education Needs or a phased return after a long illness.

3.7 'A Life Deserved: "Caring" for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland' Strategy (2021)

This strategy aims to improve the wellbeing of children and young people who are already in care, at risk of entering care and those who have recently left care. The rights-focused approach was developed in collaboration with care-experienced children and young people and

has been informed by carers, those who work directly with them or on their behalf across the statutory, voluntary and community sectors, including a number of government departments.

3.8 Children & Young People’s Emotional Health and Wellbeing in Education Framework (2021)

The main emphasis of ‘The Children & Young People’s Emotional Health and Wellbeing in Education Framework’ is to support educational settings to promote emotional health and wellbeing at a universal level, through a holistic, multi-disciplinary approach, and providing early and enhanced support for those children and young people who may be at risk or showing signs of needing further help.

3.9 A Fair Start - Final Report & Action Plan (2021)

The Expert Panel on educational underachievement submitted its Final Report and Action Plan - “A Fair Start” - to the Minister in May 2021 and it was endorsed by the Executive on 27 May 2021. “A Fair Start” programme highlights the need for communities and schools to work together to support children’s learning, and projects within this including The Reducing Educational Disadvantage Programme, which provides the potential for important issues such as pupil absence from school and the issues behind this to be addressed both within school but also, importantly, within families and the wider community.

3.10 Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND) Strategic Development Programme (2021-ongoing)

The SEND Strategic Development Programme aims to ensure that all children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities and their families are receiving the tailored and effective supports that they need to secure the best educational outcomes, delivered by a child-focused, responsive, co-ordinated, transparent, efficient and sustainable system.

Section 4: Profile of Current Service Provision

4.1 Background

The Education Authority was established in 2015 and many services have moved to a locality model of working, although the Education Welfare Service retains the five area office model. However, the five EWS area offices have worked more closely together to try and establish a regional service. Some variation in the service delivery, processes and procedures still exists as a legacy from the ELBs and these differences can cause confusion with stakeholders and has the potential for inequity in service delivery.

Since 2000, under Circular 38, all new entrants in Educational Welfare Officer roles must possess the basic social work qualification and are registered with the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC).

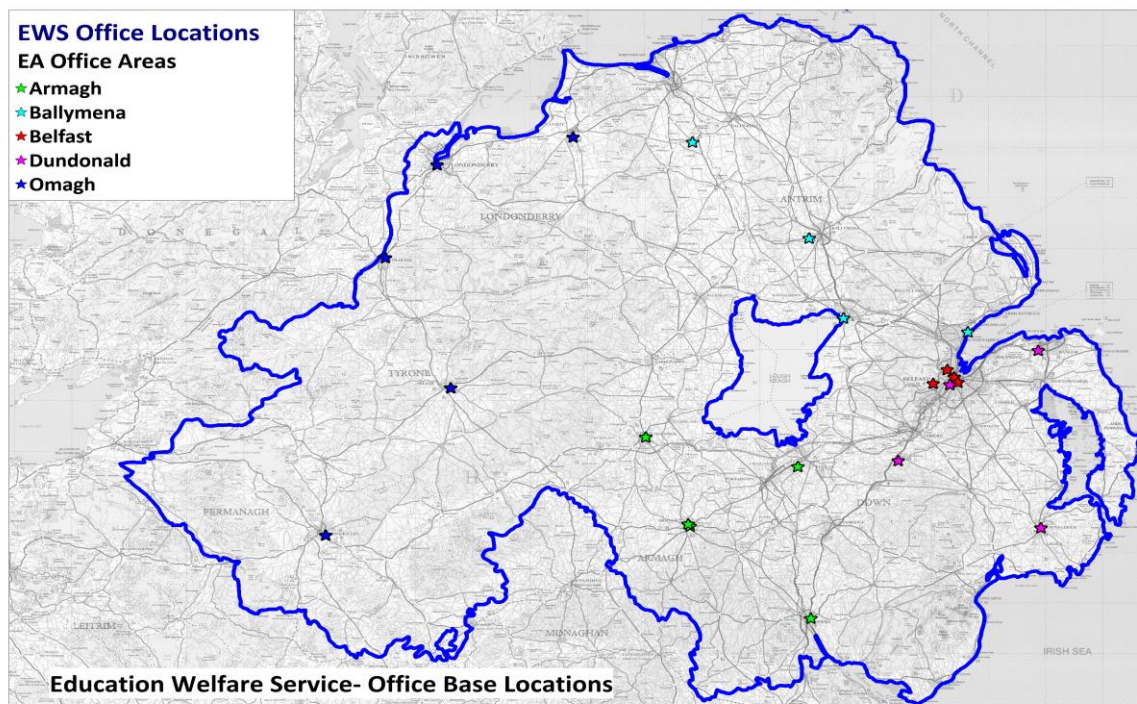
The EWS receives the majority of referrals from schools, normally following an attempt by the school to intervene and where this attempt has not resolved the attendance issues. A small number of referrals are also received from parents and other sources such as Social Services. Most referrals involve working with children and families who are experiencing complex problems and many of the children referred to the EWS are from families that are already known to Social Services. For many families improving attendance of children is brought about by a variety of approaches including supporting parents and dealing with wide family dynamics.

The key statutory functions of the EA, delivered by the Education Welfare Service are:

- a. Enforcement of duties of parents to secure full-time education for their children in relation to their regular attendance at school or otherwise according to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have.
- b. Issuing of School Attendance Orders (Education & Libraries (NI) Order 1986, Schedule 13, part I)
- c. Prosecution of parents in Court (Education & Libraries (NI) Order 1986)
- d. Application to the Family Proceedings Court for Education Supervision Orders (Children Order 1995, Article 55)
- e. Fulfilment of the employer requirements of the regulatory body (NISCC) in relation to the professional standards of the registered social workers and social care workers employed in the EA.

4.2 Location of EWS Staff

There is a general regional spread of EWS offices across the EA with a concentration of offices in the Belfast area. The map below shows the current EWS office locations across the EA.



The number of schools in each area is shown below:

| Area | Total schools | Nursery Schools | Primary Schools | Special Schools | Post Primary | EOTAS Settings |
|---------------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|----------------|
| Armagh | 293 | 19 | 211 | 6 | 51 | 6 |
| Ballymena | 273 | 15 | 197 | 9 | 46 | 6 |
| Belfast | 164 | 29 | 81 | 12 | 37 | 5 |
| Dundonald | 217 | 19 | 140 | 12 | 39 | 7 |
| Omagh | 229 | 11 | 164 | 6 | 38 | 10 |
| TOTALS | 1176 | 93 | 793 | 45 | 211 | 34 |

4.3 Core Work of the Service

The core EWS work is illustrated below:

| Area of Work | Specific Work Undertaken |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Statutory Obligation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance • Suspensions/Expulsion of pupils from School |
| Work with Parents/Carers & Children | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home visits and maintaining links with home • Advice and Information • Assessment of Need • Case Planning • Mediation • Individual work with Children • Multi-Disciplinary Work and liaising with other agencies • Group Work with Parents/Carers and Children |
| School Support | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaison with school staff • Consultancy on Attendance Policy • Home/School links • Partnership work with Parents/Carers • Primary Attendance Matters • School Aged Mothers (SAMs) • Young Carers • Multi Agency Support Teams (MAST) |

4.4 Staffing Structures

The EWS currently employs 167 staff across the Education Authority in five offices aligned to the legacy ELBs i.e. Omagh, Armagh, Dundonald, Belfast and Antrim. There is currently 1 Head of Service supported by 5 Deputy Chief Education Welfare Officers. There are 16 Senior Education Welfare Officers who provide direct supervision for the 125.4 (FTE) Education Welfare Officers. The EWS staff are supported by a team of 21 (FTE) admin staff.

4.4.1 Deputy Chief Education Welfare Officers (DCEWOs)

The DCEWOs are responsible for ensuring the operational service of the EWS including taking the lead in:

- Operational Managers Group Meeting;
- Court Panels which are held on a monthly basis;
- Representing the EA at a range of multi-agency fora - EA/Trust Service Managers meeting, EWS/Trust LAC Forum;
- Professional development in line with NISCC post-registration training and learning (PRTL);
- Staff deployment;

- Disciplinary proceedings;
- Preparing reports for the DE;
- Responding to Assembly Questions, Freedom of Information and Data Protection requests;
- Maintaining regional consistency in the EWS practice across the region and sharing good practice.

4.4.2 Senior EWS (SEWOs)

SEWOs manage teams and are responsible for the day to day delivery of the service within their team area, which includes ensuring that Partnership Agreements are in place with schools.

The role of the SEWO includes;

- Leading a team of EWOs
- Quality assuring referrals from schools
- Allocating referrals received from schools and other sources to EWOs to ensure equity of caseloads
- Ensuring that work meets professional standards required by NISCC, through regular supervision and file audits.
- Organising and chairing Education Planning Meetings (EPMs) which are multi-agency/multi-disciplinary meetings. EPMs are legally required before any court action and are set out in the regulations of the Children (NI) Order (1995).
- Organising and chairing team meetings
- Attending and bringing forward cases for discussion at the Court Panel
- Representing the EA in parental prosecution cases in Court
- Quality assuring applications and reports for ESOs
- Representing the EA in multi-agency meetings - SAMs Networks, MAST meetings etc.

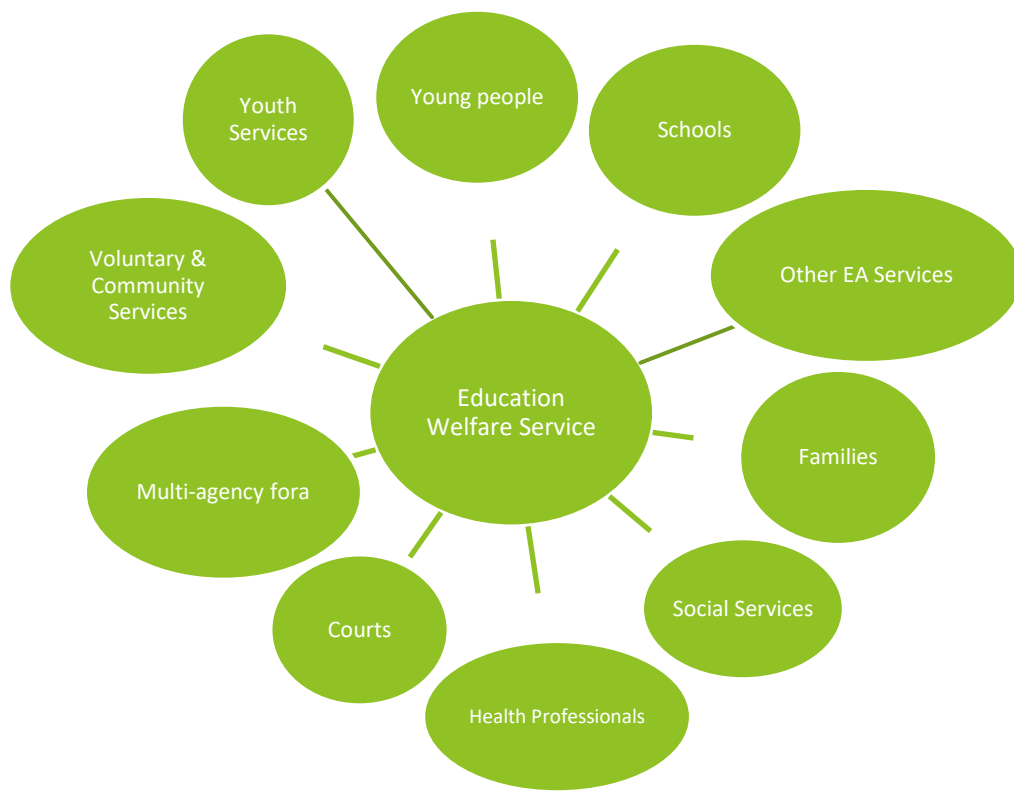
4.4.3 Education Welfare Officers (EWOs)

EWOs across Northern Ireland are recruited using a regionally agreed job description. The role of the EWO includes;

- Capacity building in schools;
- Liaison with schools about referrals and the provision feedback;
- Carry out school audits to ensure schools are making appropriate referrals;
- Carry out assessment of cases, using UNOCINI and following the regionally agreed 'Pathway through Casework' Guidance;
- Develop and monitor individual action plans;
- Attend multi-disciplinary and multi-agency meetings, including Child Protection Case Conferences;
- Record case work to regionally agreed standards;
- Prepare cases for court, where appropriate;
- Give evidence in court;
- Manage Education Supervision Orders; and
- Prepare for and undertake professional supervision.

4.4.4 Partnership Working

The range of partners that the EWS staff may work with in relation to their casework is shown below:

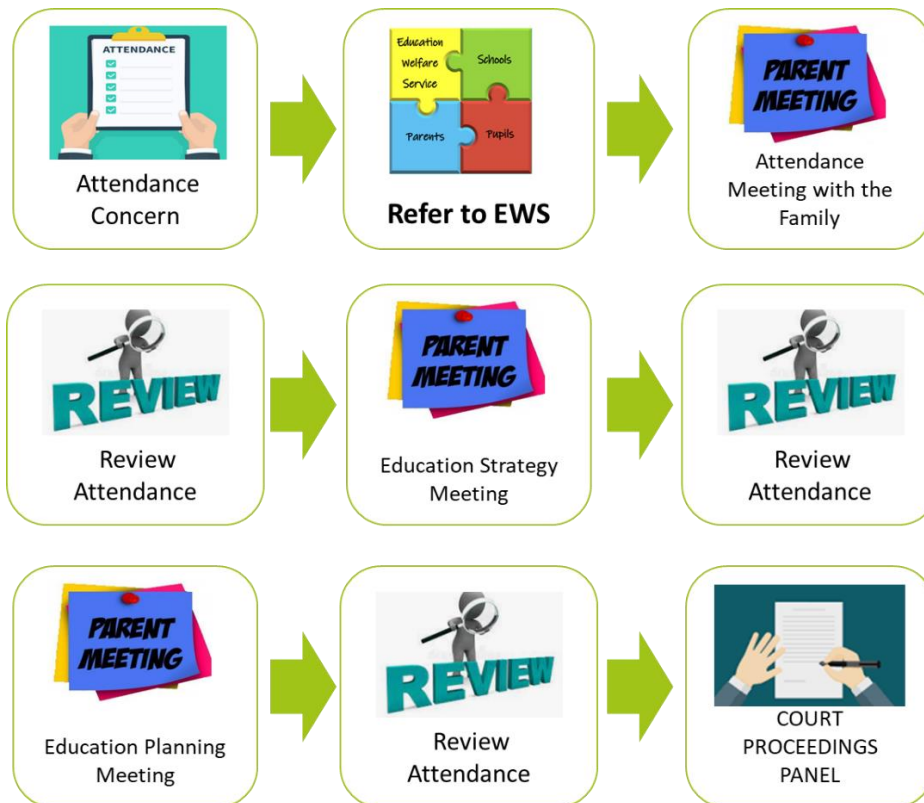


4.4.5 School Aged Mother Co-ordinator (SAMs)

The SAMs co-ordinator works within each office area. The role of the SAMs Co-ordinator is to provide support for young women of compulsory school age who are pregnant or who have children, to ensure they do not suffer educational disadvantage compared to their peers. Like EWOs, the SAMs Co-ordinator will work with multi agency partners, including schools, Women's Aid, Health Visitors, Family Nurse Partnerships, Midwives and Social Services to support the school age mothers.

Section 5: The Current Model

The model currently utilised by the EWS is predominantly focussed on referrals, mainly from schools, of those children and young people previously under 85% attendance, although through COVID the 85 % threshold was removed to allow schools to refer cases where there were concerns and this has been continued following the pandemic (DE Circular No. 2022/07). Referrals are allocated to the EWOs for action, through the pathway through casework model, shown in the following diagram:



There is some preventative practice, along with some early intervention work but this is not a main feature and is currently not quantified, or measured consistently, by the service.

EWOs undertake initial assessments in line with the *Hardiker (1991) Model of assessment and devise a support plan for intervention in partnership with the child and family and the school. EWOs can be the bridge between school and home and are involved in challenge of both, in the interests of supporting the holistic needs of the child.

The EWS provide a link EWO to all schools and in the main referrals from a school should be allocated to the link EWO and in discussion with them. This can be impacted on by staff absences and difficult for managers to maintain. Likewise the number of referrals from schools to the service can differ from year to year meaning many children referred can be unallocated support for a long period of time.

* The Hardiker Model is the agreed regional multi-agency framework for assessing the needs of children and young people.

Section 6: Research & Engagement

Under the Transformation Project, there was an initial focus on evidence building and gathering data on the need of young people, schools and families. The project considered a review of research literature and progressed an extensive engagement plan with service users and stakeholders.

6.1 Review of Relevant Research

The links between positive school attendance and life chances are well known (Meador, 2020; Hancock et al., 2013) with life chances for children lowered for poor attendance, irrespective of gender, race, disability or poverty. The pandemic has exacerbated this with more children than ever missing school due to isolation or illness. Existing risk factors driving absence have been aggravated, with additional ones now coming to the fore. There is therefore a need for the transformed Education Welfare Service to be proactive and responsive to this increasing need.

There is also a link between positive school attendance and good long term health outcomes (Allison et al, 2019). Attending school regularly, when school is safe and secure, is arguably very good for you. It is in the best interests of children and young people that they are supported to attend school.

A review of relevant literature was undertaken to determine what works in promoting good attendance. A substantial body of research exists on the costs of school absenteeism both for the individual and society as a whole (see, for example, Levin, 2009; Malcolm et al 2003). Considerable research has also been dedicated to finding ‘what works’ in education, particularly for disadvantaged groups of children and young people. Levin (2008) highlights robust evidence for the positive effect of high quality early years education, reduced class size and instructional reform on levels of high school completion among disadvantaged groups. Other researchers have pointed to the value of a combination of strategies in targeting at-risk students (Lamb and Rice, 2008), identifying that ‘no strategy worked unilaterally in addressing the participation, attendance and retention of children in education’ (Morris and Parashar, 2012). However, those strategies that were found to be effective involve multi-agency approaches, family involvement, supportive school cultures, and early identification and intervention (Morris and Parashar, 2012). Research has also highlighted the positive impact of after-school activities and holiday programmes on young people’s socio-emotional well-being and engagement (Kataoka and Vandell, 2013; Martin et al., 2013). This has been successfully developed in the USA under the auspices of the National Summer Learning Association. (Every Summer Counts: A Longitudinal Analysis of Outcomes from the National Summer Learning Project, 2020, Jennifer Sloan McCombs, Catherine H. Augustine, John F. Pane, Jonathan Schweig).

In ‘A Better Picture of Poverty: What Chronic Absenteeism and Risk Load Reveal About NYC’s Lowest-Income Elementary Schools’ (2014, Kim Nauer), it was found that the schools in the study currently monitor an average attendance, showing the percentage of pupils present in school on any given day. This average attendance is often above 90 percent, which may appear reasonable, but obscures the number of pupils at risk of missing too much school. A school with 90 percent attendance on any one day may have many pupils at risk due to chronic absence. Data, currently measured, shows how many pupils are absent, who they are and how many days missed. However, it does not reveal the more helpful data of the patterns or causes behind the absenteeism and the research showed that reasons for high rates of student absenteeism, vary from school to school and from student to student. This study suggests that

to reduce chronic absenteeism, schools need to engage with students and families to discover what drives high absenteeism. It suggests three relatively low-cost solutions:

- “Raise the profile of chronic absenteeism, both publicly and in schools;
- Offer visual tools that allow principals to easily see which students are chronically absent and what their patterns of absenteeism are; and
- Help schools identify the primary drivers of absenteeism and develop a three-pronged approach to reducing absenteeism:
 - (i) Focused personal attention from concerned adults in the schools, including rewards for better attendance;
 - (ii) a guidance counselor, principal or other caring adult work with parents on simple strategies to improve attendance;
 - (iii) assistance from professional social workers or social service agencies.”

In the 2016 ETI report ‘If you don’t attend you can’t attain’ it was pointed out that while it is impossible to make a causal link between the strategies and improvements and academic attainment, the evidence is that a relentless focus on promoting attendance can help to break the cycle of deprivation and raise standards. The ETI analysis indicates that those schools which adopt a holistic approach, effect improvement best of all. Such schools do not regard poor attendance as an inconveniently chronic and fundamentally unfixable problem, but rather as a symptom that indicates that they are, in some way, failing to meet the needs of all of the young people. These school leaders take responsibility for prioritising good attendance and building a culture which makes the intrinsic link between attendance and attainment in the minds of staff, pupils and parents alike. They review and revise the curriculum offered, and evaluate and improve teaching to ensure that it is engaging for all learners, ensuring that they want to come to school for fear of missing out.

The ‘Youth Mental Health in Ireland and Northern Ireland An AcCESs Evidence Report’ by Sarah Rochford, Professor Mark Morgan, Dearbhla Quinn and Niamh Farren (March 2018) considers how best to support positive mental health in young people, and identifies some learning outcomes from research that may be useful for practice, focussing on those issues that have emerged as recurring mental health issues for young people in Ireland and Northern Ireland. It identifies the importance of prevention as part of its conclusions, referencing the Durlak and Wells, 1997 study of primary school programmes, aimed at preventing the development of mental health problems in children and young people. Within this study, there was consistent evidence that interventions aimed at changing the school and classroom environment are especially successful. The study also found that methods involving interactive strategies are more effective than those without interaction and feedback. Targeted programmes aimed specifically at young people at risk were identified as being more effective than universal programmes, although given their potential to reach a larger number of young people, universal programmes were also considered relevant. Targeting specific young people and using interactive approaches were found to be more important than the duration of any specific programme. It was observed that effects were larger for young people with higher levels of initial problems as well as those who had experienced disruption recently e.g. where a young person took part in an intervention shortly after their parents divorced or experienced a family bereavement.

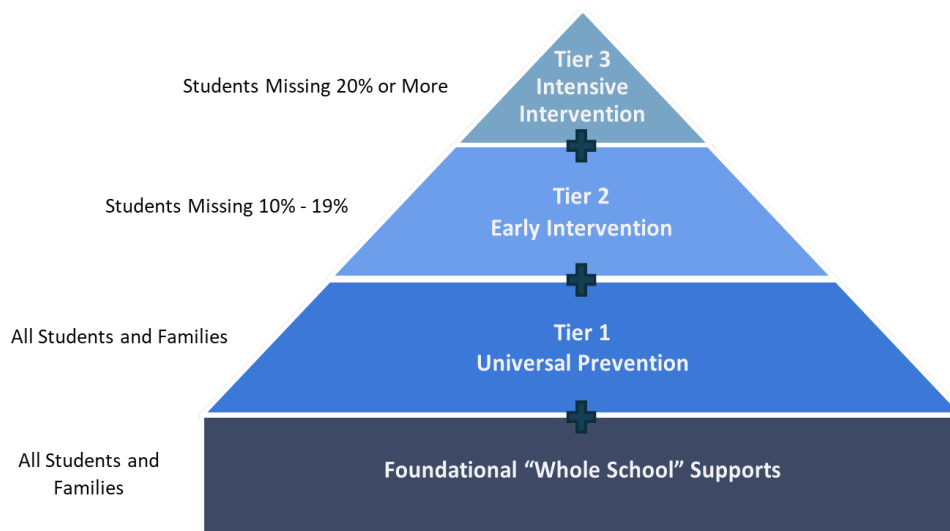
In a draft report (Action for Carers, 2022) produced by the Young Carers Inclusive Group (YICIG) the impact of being a young carer in education was highlighted. Barriers were identified as a lack of communication channels with and from schools. The report suggests that if schools were aware of their Young Carers and the difficulties they face then they would have a better

understanding of that child or young person’s needs. Therefore, working in partnership with YGIG could provide proactive and early support to the young carer rather than being reactive to the different challenges and responsibilities they face daily compared to their peers in the classroom, again highlighting the need for early intervention and prevention.

‘Attendance Works’ is a US based organisation that was established to advance student success and close equity gaps by reducing chronic absence. It uses a research and evidenced based approach to improving chronic attendance and has the following key messages for attendance on its website:

1. “Reducing chronic absence can help address educational inequity.
2. Building trusting relationships that promote belonging is fundamental to improving student attendance and engagement.
3. Students are more likely to attend school if they feel safe, connected and supported.
4. A positive, problem-solving approach driven by data will improve attendance.
5. Supporting students, families and school staff physically and emotionally improves attendance.
6. When the whole community collaborates with families and schools, we can overcome systemic barriers to attendance and engagement.”

Based on the research evidence a multi-tiered approach is suggested that begins with prevention:



Part of this approach calls for funding and government sponsorship of foundational whole school supports including:

- Healthy learning environments
- Enrichment activities and clubs
- Access to tech equipment and connectivity
- Challenging and Engaging Curriculum
- Traditions and celebrations
- Learning Supports
- Welcoming, safe school climate
- Advisories or Morning Meetings to Build Community

The Department of Education will be publishing a new guidance document based on the above approach to support schools in the 2022/23 academic year.

The project was able to develop a delivery model that reflected the evidence from this research as well as the considerable engagement with stakeholders. In addition, the service was mindful of the impact of A Fair Start Final Report and Action Plan and the emphasis of

“Preventative approaches, which tackle problems early, can minimise costs in the long-run and provide enhanced outcomes for individuals, taxpayers and society as a whole” (Page 6) Preventative, earlier intervention, done well, lessens the need for more high end, intensive support. It is also right that professionals are not involved in children’s lives for longer than is necessary.

6.2: Review of Engagement Feedback

A survey was issued through attendance leads in school and engagement sessions were held through Locality Leadership Network meetings, with Principals. A staff survey was issued and a letter and survey was issued to all pupils and parents through schools, and targeted focus groups and surveys were held through CYPs Directorate Services. A general survey was issued through social media. Feedback was received from around 9000 individuals (Appendix 3) and this resulted in a detailed overview being developed of the principles of the model. Analysis of the engagement was used to support further detail of the model. This allowed Workstream 1 to profile these needs for developing a model of service delivery.

As a result of this engagement with young people and other stakeholders it was discovered that there was a need for the service to:

- Focus on helping to support **positive and healthy relationships** in all areas of school life;
- Support the **emotional health and wellbeing of young people**;
- Provide **someone in school young people can talk to** about any issues impacting their attendance;
- Deliver programmes targeted at specific issues affecting young people today such as **Bullying, Drugs and Alcohol, Resilience, and Friendships**;
- Consider **financial support** in attending school related to travel, food, and to **remain in education** in post primary years rather than moving to early employment because of financial issues at home;
- Improve our communication with you about school attendance;
- Develop programmes that enable parents and empower them to support their children attending school;
- Focus on emotional health and wellbeing in supporting parents to manage challenges with their children;
- Provide a single point of contact in schools so that parents can access support;
- Improve our partnerships with health services so that we can offer a more collaborative approach in supporting families;
- Develop positive relationships with parents and provide specialist support for the needs of their families;
- Focus on training and supporting schools with culture, ethos and policy directly on attendance;
- Provide a consistent model of service delivery across the region;
- Focus on the emotional health and wellbeing needs that impact school attendance;
- Be flexible to the changes in need and growing complexity of need for children and young people, and families;
- Provide timely intervention and support with a known link officer;
- Support other professionals with specialist knowledge and expertise regarding areas that impact attendance and engagement in education including mental health and wellbeing, special educational needs, newcomer pupils, vulnerable groups, court processes;

- Develop a range of preventative programmes to support schools and early intervention work instead of a referral only based service;
- Develop “team around” framework for the child, the family and the setting;
- Create “menus” of support for schools, children and young people, and families; and
- Foster a “joined up” approach from education and health services.

These are substantial for one EA service and on its own EWS would not be able to achieve this. This, again, highlights the need for the involvement of other relevant EA services and indeed other agency involvement, if we are going to proactively meet the needs of children and young people and support schools. The draft model is aspirational and will require both resource and commitment from DE and EA. The intention of the service would be to further develop the ‘EWS Pathway Through Casework’ model to ensure staff are clear on their role and have tools to support this across the continuum of work.

Section 7: Proposed Service Delivery Model

7.1 Introduction

The service delivery model needs to be clearly articulated, understood by users and embedded in practice. It must set clear expectations and have a consistent approach across all providers and users.

The service delivery model will:

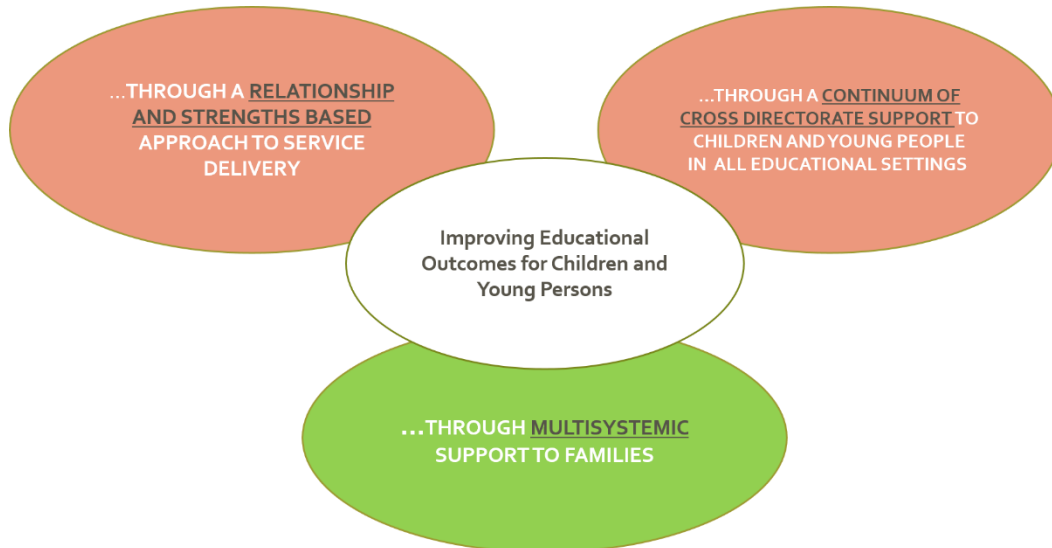
- Focus on children and young people, their families and the challenges they face;
- Reflect and respond to these challenges;
- Fit in with statutory functions and roles prescribed by guidance and circulars
- Provide children, young people and their families with the knowledge, skills and tools to address the challenges they face; and
- Improve attendance.

The EWS delivery model will set out:

- Visions & Values (to reflect overall EA vision and values);
- An agreed philosophy of working - a clear ethos that all staff adhere to;
- How suitable preventative work will be carried out;
- How suitable interventions will be carried out - what models of intervention work;
- What help, care and protection can be provided for children, young people and their families;
- Clearly identified thresholds;
- How cases move through the system;
- How the service fits to the legal and procedural context;
- What the service is expected to do; and
- How the service is monitored for quality and effectiveness.

7.2 Principles of the Proposed Model

From the initial engagement some themes and high level and interlinked principles to guide the model were developed as shown:

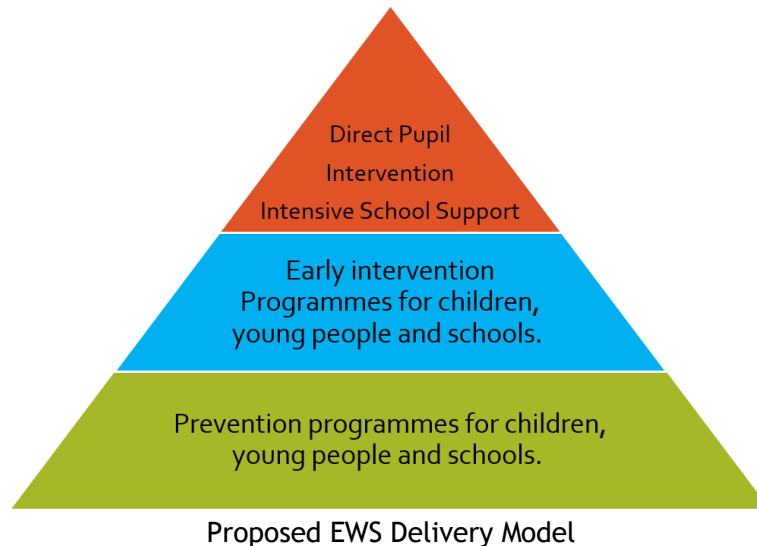


The new EWS model of delivery will focus on:

- Moving more towards early intervention and prevention in attendance issues.
- Intervening earlier and **supporting young people earlier**
- Focusing more on **supporting** young people and their families with their **emotional health and wellbeing** and **relationships**.
- Collaborating with health services in providing support and advice.
- Focusing more on supporting emotional health and wellbeing and positive relationships in school and other settings.
- Addressing the impact of poverty and financial issues on attendance at school.
- Training and capacity building for education staff in various areas that impact attendance and attendance monitoring and intervention.

7.3 Proposed EWS Delivery Model

Based on the evidence and emerging themes, the following tiered model was developed. This model continues to be in line with the Hardiker (1991) Model (see page 18) and aims for all children and young people to experience preventative activities provided by DENI, Schools and EWS working on its own or with others. Preventative work is therefore, universal. Less children and young people will then require direct support programmes, which will be targeted at need and implemented as early as possible, further reducing the number of children and young people that will require intensive intervention. The model is theme focused based on identified need, best practice and on achieving outcomes for children and young people.



The model has been further broken down to indicate what activities/interventions can be expected, at each level, by:

- (i) young people and their families; and
- (ii) schools

7.3.1 The Child's Journey through the Model

Given that preventative work will be universal, a child will have received information and resources in relation to school attendance at key points in their school life and specifically at transition periods. The same child could go on to have experience of early intervention via a specific programme of work from EWS after the need was highlighted at the multi-agency school meeting/ area learning community or even via GIS mapping. The child could be referred to EWS at the same time as the early intervention work is ongoing or more likely following this and the EWO could, after assessment, undertake direct intervention, initiate the team around the child, involving other EA services and/ or make use of the statutory tools open to the service.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE - PREVENTIVE MODEL

- Media campaigns targeted at Children and Young People.
- Information for school displays on attendance, supports for barriers etc.
- Focus on relationship- based approaches and key adults in school to talk to.
- EWO advocate and promote healthy lifestyle, relationships, friendships and anti-bullying approach in school environment with assemblies.
- Media campaigns targeted at Children and Young People.
- Information for school displays on attendance, supports for barriers etc.
- Focus on relationship- based approaches and key adults in school to talk to.
- EWO advocate and promote healthy lifestyle, relationships, friendships and anti-bullying approach in school environment with assemblies.
- Promotion of recognition awards - good attendance/improved attendance/effort (caution to be sensitive and in line with code of practice SEN policy)
- Movingforward.me web development.
- School/ Parents/ Children and Young People access to the right people/ service at the right time.

- Preventative programme provided by all services by theme at a local level including:
 - Intercultural Education Service
 - Child Protection & Support Service
 - Youth Service
 - Behaviour Support Service
 - Pupil Support Services
 - Early Years
- Parental advice on separation anxiety- post covid response. Link to SEN, link with Early Years as well as general.
- EWS attendance advice helpline.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE - EARLY INTERVENTION MODEL

- Specific programmes of delivery based on need for year groups, classes, groups and individuals focussed on:
 - Relationships
 - Emotional Health And Wellbeing
 - Anti- bullying
 - Community
 - Friendships
 - Team Around The Child Framework
 - Truancy
 - Child Missing In Education
 - Young Carers
- Youth Services/BST/EWS collaborations
- Drugs/Alcohol/Gaming addictions
- Anxiety Based School Refusal - Educational Psychology
- IES/EWS support for Displaced Young Person, including Irish Traveller and Roma community.
- EWS attendance helpline - 3 locality helplines that will take calls from parents and if appropriate take parental self-referrals for their child.
- Parenting groups - parenting through transition/parent your teens/attendance.
- Group Work On Specific Issues.
- Collaborative cross service developed programmes co-delivered and focussed on theme.
- Focus on overall emotional health and well-being and relationships.
- EWS Triage/Gateway Service - all referrals will be received centrally by locality. RAG rating of need.
- Each locality to have a team to do the following:
 - Ensure all pre-referral steps have been completed and there is sufficient information on the referral.
 - Telephone to parents to ascertain more information to grade the referral in terms of priority - low, medium or high.
 - EWS staff attending family support hubs and offering support to parents when attendance is a concern.
 - Supporting schools to visit parents/carers
 - Relationship focus piece.
- Framework for schools (eg: Link to Solihull)
- EWO attendance at Multi Agency School meetings. (MAST/SBCM/TAC)
- Presentations to incoming P1, Y8, Y10/Y11 parents - targeting transition years. (At Induction, Open Days, Parent/Carer Meetings etc.) - according to data analysis.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE - INTENSIVE MODEL

- Ensure all interventions are understood in the context of Adverse Childhood Experience/Trauma Informed Practice
- Direct Intervention By Theme
- Therapeutic Support Programmes
- Specialist Focused Programmes
- Team Around The Child Framework
- Statutory Process Support And Advocacy
- Court Work
- Identified Key worker for child
- Arranging multi-agency meetings and liaising with all necessary services. "Team Around the Child" formalising of a Framework
- School Aged Mothers Support/School Aged Fathers
- Support for care experienced children and young people
- Central referral portal/triage
- Ability to intervene in crisis at short notice - Systems Support Modelling
- Assessment of Needs - Free School Meals (Humanitarian Grounds), Transport Assessment (Exceptional Panel)
- TAC approach means all EA support is exhausted or considered inappropriate prior to court action - in line with our EA values and ensuring court action only if in the child's best interests.
- Family/ Children's access to EA services enhanced. Multi-disciplinary locality teams supporting children
- Clear pathway through casework/ direct intervention and links with other services - clear programme and outcomes focus - Specialist EWOs to develop the intensity of support model/deliver the programme.
- Restorative Practice Interventions within families by trained facilitators - family group conferencing model - improving the informal support around a child and support parents in their parenting role. (Framework- systemic- relationship).

7.3.2 The Schools' Journey through the Model

Given that all schools will access the preventative part of the model, the school lead on attendance will ensure that the attendance policy is robust and governors will ensure this is ratified. School attendance and the strategies used will be discussed at meetings of the governors and attendance will feature on the school development plan. The school, making use of their own data on attendance across year groups, for example, could see a need for specific support with small group on a theme that impacts on attendance. The school attendance lead will link with EWS and agree a programme of work to be undertaken in partnership with the school and other EA services and this will be delivered within an agreed timeframe. Under intensive support a school will refer individual children to EWS who will utilise the pathway through casework and, if necessary, use their statutory mandate. EWS will also have the capacity to work creatively, moving resource to focus on any particularly identified school. An example of this would be to place an EWO in a school on a full time basis for an agreed timeframe. While this outlines the intensive support to the school, all areas of the model apply.

SCHOOL - PREVENTION MODEL

- Package of information - Miss School/Miss Out - campaigning - media and social media.
- Legal responsibilities/helpful tips for good attendance leaflet.
- Targeting transitions - training for EWS and staff.
- Parental advice on separation anxiety.
- EWS attendance advice helpline.
- Board of Governors Training/Pastoral Care Team Training - supporting with ETI safeguarding pro-forma.
- Interactive website for parents - giving resources and information on all aspects of attendance.
- Setting up of a parents/carers steering group to help gain the views of parents in terms of attendance.
- Developing early alert systems for parents in term of attendance/ Target setting- sims app, etc...
- EWS/Families/School meetings to consider concerns regarding attendance before they become an issue.
- SEND and Inclusion awareness raising (re early identification and equality of opportunity/ disability awareness).
- Restorative Interventions when suspensions impact on a pupil's attendance -improve relations between parents and schools - reduce likelihood of further suspensions. Addressing issues around informal exclusions.

SCHOOL - EARLY INTERVENTION MODEL

- EWS Gateway Service - all referrals will be received centrally by locality. Each locality will have a team to do the following:
- Ensure all pre-referral steps have been completed and there is sufficient information on the referral.
- Telephone to parents to ascertain more information to grade the referral in terms of priority - low, medium or high.
- This service would give parents greater understanding of the type of support that could be given and the approximate time that targeted/intensive support can be offered
- Short-term interventions can also be carried out by this team if assessed as appropriate (one off home visits, referrals to more appropriate agencies/other EA services.)
- Presentations to incoming P1, Yr 8, Yr10/Yr11 parents - targeting transition years. (Based on need and data)
- EWS attendance helpline - 3 locality helplines that will take calls from parents and if appropriate take parental self-referrals for their child.
- Parenting groups - parenting through transition/parent your teens/attendance.
- Attendance meetings with EWO, school and parent - this meeting to be offered/completed prior to referral.
- EWO attendance at Multi Agency School meetings.
- Schools to be engaging with parents at an early stage with meetings.
- Referrals to family support hubs - by school or by EWO after a short intervention.
- Drugs, Alcohol, Gaming, Gambling - Addictions support
- EWS staff attending family support hubs and offering support to parents when attendance is a concern.

- Restorative Interventions when suspensions impact on a pupil's attendance -improve relations between parents and schools - reduce likelihood of further suspensions.

SCHOOL - INTENSIVE MODEL

- Thorough assessment of need which includes family need - and targeted intervention by EWOs (further training needed for interventions that work - package of work).
- Best Practice forums - Area Learning Community links.
- Manual for EWOs on effective interventions with families.
- Clear pathway through casework.
- Complex case panels and being able to access support from other EA services.
- Arranging multi-agency meetings and liaising with all necessary services.
- Targeted parenting groups.
- EWO attendance and input at social services meetings/family support meetings/case conference - provide reports on involvement and intervention.
- Restorative Practice Interventions within families by trained facilitators (family group conferencing model & improving the informal support around a child and support parents in their parenting role).
- EWO placed in targeted schools for a time limited period to work towards agreed outcomes in collaboration with School Development Service.
- Joined up training on issues around attendance - Ed Psych, EWS, AAIS, ETA, Youth service. Data Analysis and support to Area of Targeted Needs
- Team around the child - Improved collaborative working between Ed Psychology, EWS, AAIS, ETA and Youth Service to provide a package of support for the child and family.
- Investment & greater support for parents & families with children with complex needs and SEN.
- School Aged Mothers Support - Childcare, Transport, Training etc.

In addition the model recognises the need for specialist support areas (Appendix 4) within the service. These areas will be developed according to need, although currently are identified as follows:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restorative Practice • Training • Workforce Development • Team Around Child approaches and methodology • CLA - Post primary • Suspension/Expulsion • Transitions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentoring Support to Primary and Post - Primary • Children Missing Education/ Elective Home Education • School Aged Mothers • Mental Health/Emotional Wellbeing • Wellbeing and connections with Health • Young Carers |
|--|---|

7.3.3 Roles & Responsibilities

Attendance is 'Everybody's Business' - attainment, social, emotional health and wellbeing will be negatively impacted by irregular School Attendance. Within the model there is a tiered approach to delivery and at each tier there are elements for which different stakeholders will be responsible.

The Department of Education will have responsibility for developing and producing wider policy and legislation to support and underpin school attendance. This includes for example guidance on attendance see: <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/circular-2022/07-attendance-guidance-and-absence-recording-by-schools>. DE have also developed universal programmes and products to highlight and explain the benefits of positive school attendance such as:

- [Miss School Miss Out Strategy for Improving Pupil Attendance](#)
- Challenge of Improving Pupil Attendance at School - Case Studies Paper <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/challenge-improving-pupil-attendance-school-case-studies-paper-november-2018>.
- Extended Leave Circular
- Covid 19 Attendance Code Advice
- 2019/2020 Attendance Promotion - 'Every School Day Counts'
- Broadcast on social media, TV, Shared in multiple languages
- A Fair Start (Final report and Action Plan May 2021)

The delivery of these preventative programmes will rest with schools and the Education Authority. Schools will also have a responsibility to deliver preventative programmes to their entire school populations. The EWS will be involved in training school staff and providing support to ensure they have the correct resources and materials to deliver these preventative programmes.

Early intervention programmes will be jointly delivered by schools and EWS. The role of the EWS will be to build capacity within school staff so that they can deliver some of the early intervention strategies. This work will include direct interventions with Young Persons in Group based activities, family work and training off relevant Pastoral Care leads in School to include Board of Governors.

The intensive interventions will be led by the EWS, who will either engage directly with the young person and their family or will engage support from other agencies such as Social Services and CAMHS etc.

Interventions/activities will be developed based on need, what has been demonstrated to work and the evidence base that supports this.

The new model is designed to meet the needs of service users, addresses the objectives of the Transformation Project and delivers on the outstanding NIAO and PAC recommendations in the timeframe given. It will also improve the use of resource to meet needs of schools and young people and develop working with multiple services.

Section 8: Project Progress

The Transformation Project aimed to develop a more proactive and ‘re-engineered’ service and set out to achieve this by identifying key actions to be delivered. The Project has made progress against the majority of these actions and overall progress on these actions is captured in the Project Dashboard (Appendix 5). The actions completed to date represent completion of the review process and the remaining actions will be taken forward in the implementation phase.

To date the following has been achieved:

- Extensive engagement with stakeholders;
- A proposed, new delivery model based on prevention and early intervention has been developed;
- The project has identified some of the necessary structures as well as the policies and procedures required to support the introduction of the proposed model;
- Proposed new job description for Education Welfare Officers and a career pathway to develop through specialist practice;
- Guidance for and a process to capture short term recording;
- The introduction of Complex Case Panels and guidance and a range of further policies to complement the Pathway through Casework Handbook. This has included developments on short term recording, caseload triage, referral information, case closure guidance;
- The service has developed a Microsoft Teams site to house documentation and ensure any changes are available across the region consistently;
- Identifying enduring structures through EWS committees for:
 - Quality Improvement and Research ;
 - Policy and Procedures Development; and
 - Communications;
- The service has developed a draft service charter and has begun work on a range of leaflets and products for young people, families and schools;
- Work with DE in the development of policy in respect to Children Missing Education;
- All staff have received appropriate IT equipment to facilitate more agile working and connectivity issues have been resolved to allow remote connection across the region;
- The Project has identified and captured suitable performance data for reporting on a monthly basis;
- Systems have been devised to monitor and respond to issues revealed by the data;
- A draft Outcomes Based Accountability framework has been developed to support and direct ongoing performance management of the service;
- GIS mapping has been developed to identify future need across the region;
- The agreed ‘Pathway through Casework’ document has been updated and its consistent use provides a clear pathway for stakeholders to access the services;
- Standardised processes relating to court work have been developed through the development of Court Panels;
- Processes around suspensions and expulsions have been updated, including a digital referral system;
- The EWS content on EA website has been updated;
- A consistent mechanism has been developed through ‘Local Education Partnerships’ to ensure that any opportunities for partnership working with schools and Health & Social Care Trusts are optimised in the best interest of children and young people; and
- The development of an implementation plan to ensure new model becomes embedded.

8.1 Consultation on Proposed Model - Feedback from Stakeholders

In an on-line survey, issued in summer 2022 (Appendix 6), a range of comments were received on the proposed Delivery model. The vast majority of these were very positive, welcoming the pro-active nature of the model and recognising the potential benefits of early intervention. Most respondents agreed that moving to a preventative model was correct, with a minority unsure and a small number disagreeing.

A majority identified the new model as an improvement with a significant minority unsure and only a small number disagreeing. Although the number of unsure responses is significant, it is a minority and the number of respondents in disagreement remains a small number, with the number in agreement remaining substantial.

In terms of clarity of roles, most people agreed that the role of the EWOs in the proposed model was clear; most felt the schools' role was clear; most felt the parents' role was clear and a majority felt the role for Young People was clear. This suggests that the roles have generally been clearly identified, although some further work is perhaps needed with the role for Young People.

Of the proposed intervention activities, almost all respondents felt all or some preventative activities were useful; almost all respondents felt all or some early intervention activities were useful and almost all respondents felt all or some intensive intervention activities were considered useful. This suggests that intervention activities identified will be useful and are worth pursuing.

A majority considered the identified specialist areas to be appropriate, with a significant minority unsure and a small number in disagreement. Anyone who disagreed had an opportunity to suggest other areas and these were captured and considered.

A number of additional comments were received and these could be summarised as the need for more:

- Emotional health and well-being support;
- Access to specialist support; and
- Supporting schools to connect positively with parents/ carers / families.

These findings are reflected within the changes to the Delivery model which have been made since the survey was issued and it will continue to be refined as it is put into practice.

8.2 Progress against NIAO and PAC Recommendations

In response to the recommendations of the Northern Ireland Audit Office (2004 & 2014) and the Public Accounts Committee (2014) identifying the need for efficiency and effectiveness across the Education Welfare Service (EWS), as well as the implementation of a consistent model of delivery, the Service had worked to:

- Clearly define role and function of EWS Services (www.eani.org.uk)
- Agree the broad strategic direction and priorities for EWS moving forward
- Provide assurances and an assessment of comparative performance including available data, processes and management information
- Identify and share examples of established best practice

The Service has previously provided a comprehensive report on the progress made against each of the individual recommendations and this is contained within Appendix 7. The report

identified that all but one recommendation had been addressed, namely a re-engineered service. This Transformation Project addresses the single outstanding recommendation, completing the fundamental review and beginning the 're-engineering' of the Service.

Section 9: Further Recommendations

The Transformation Project has successfully identified and aims to introduce several enduring structures, policies and procedures that will support the proposed model. The implementation plan is designed to initiate these enduring structures that will enable the service to review and update on an ongoing manner. It is critical that these structures are developed and the implementation plan is delivered. In particular, is recommended that:

1. a new staffing structure is more fully developed to reflect and meet the overall needs of the service in line with the proposed model;
2. any structures, roles and functions are consistent across the Education Authority and are delivered across Locality Areas, based on District Council groupings as already established within other EA services;
3. there is a clear and deliberate focus on ensuring that there is consistent service delivery across the region;
4. the EWS should identify and proactively target schools in areas of social deprivation and provide a range of targeted support, focussing on prevention and early intervention strategies processes, such as place based initiatives;
5. a partnership approach through the development of a Team around a Child and Team around the School model should be developed and maintained within CYPS, to work collaboratively to support children and young people whose attendance at school or otherwise is a particular concern;
6. strategies to assist schools in developing positive relationships between staff, parents and pupils should be promoted;
7. an effective engagement strategy including structured feedback is developed that will enable the Service to gather the views of service users and stakeholders across the EA on an ongoing basis;
8. ensure that there is consistent messaging around school attendance at strategic partnership level and that this consistent message is shared and understood at all levels;
9. local partnerships are established and maintained between EWS and Health and Social Care Trusts across all areas as the interface between EWS and Social Services;
10. the draft Outcomes Based Accountability framework is continuously reviewed and developed to focus on positive and effective EWS outcomes;
11. an EA EWS Triage system is developed that includes a Helpline to provide timely and relevant advice to parents/carers and school staff in relation to attendance matters; and
12. a digital referral system is developed as part of the EdIS project to receive and distribute all EWS referrals.

Section 10: Conclusions

The Education Welfare Service Transformation Project has provided a genuine opportunity for the service to consider and develop a transformed offer, placing prevention and early intervention at the centre of the service's interactions with young people and their families. Initial consultation has shown that there is significant support for the proposed model and the move towards prevention and early intervention in particular. It is appropriate, therefore, for the service to begin implementation of this model and to consider how best to achieve this implementation in as effective a way as possible.

The proposed model also requires changes to the staffing structure and envisages a 3 locality structure in line with other services in the Education Authority. The project has identified the need to develop structures, as well as the policies and procedures required, to support the introduction of the proposed model. The introduction of Complex Case Panels, establishing enduring arrangements for (i) quality improvement/use of evidence and research, (ii) policy and standards and (iii) the service's internal and external communications represent specific immediate actions to support implementation of the model. An implementation plan (Appendix 8) has been developed to manage this implementation stage in a phased and planned way. This will help embed the model within the service and ensure that all statutory functions are being delivered in a compliant manner.

During the initial phases of the project, which also coincided with the Covid pandemic, progress was made in providing all staff with appropriate IT equipment to address connectivity difficulties and to allow remote connection across the region.

The Project has also worked with data analysts to identify and capture suitable performance data for reporting on a monthly basis, including the number of new referrals received, the number of unallocated referrals by length of time waiting, the length of time cases are open from first allocation, the number of cases closed in a month and the length of time these cases were open. Systems have been devised to monitor and respond to issues revealed by the data, particularly with regard to waiting lists. A draft Outcomes Based Accountability framework (Appendix 10) has been developed to support and direct ongoing performance management of the service and this will be continuously reviewed within the enduring structures being established.

The development of GIS mapping as part of the Project will enable the service to identify and respond to need across the region, addressing any disparity in the allocation of resources. The agreed 'Pathway through Casework' document has been updated and its consistent use provides a clear pathway for stakeholders to access the services. Standardised processes relating to court work have been developed and the processes around suspensions and expulsions have been updated, including a digital referral system.

The EWS presence on the EA website has been updated and provides a wealth of useful information for schools, parents and other stakeholders. A continuous review system will be established to ensure the website remains relevant and up to date.

A consistent mechanism has been developed through 'Local Education Partnerships' to ensure that any opportunities for partnership working with schools and Health & Social Care Trusts are optimised in the best interest of children and young people.

The transformed service will also allow for greater career opportunities through the development of specialisms. Continuous professional development will be embedded within the model to support the EWS workforce development. The addition of specialist posts will result in an increase in overall number of staff addressing concerns with staffing levels and

ensuring a workforce that is able to deal effectively with the increasing complexity of need of young people and their families.

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Glossary of Terms

| Term | Meaning |
|--------|--|
| ACE | Adverse Childhood Experience |
| AEP | Alternative Education Provision Panel |
| ASD | Autistic Spectrum Disorder |
| CAMHS | Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services |
| CAPITA | Consulting, transformation and digital services business |
| CCMS | Council for Catholic Maintained Schools |
| CEET | Child Employment and Entertainment Team |
| CIPD | Chartered Institute for Professional Development |
| CLA | Children Looked-after |
| CLC | The Children's Law Centre |
| CPD | Continuing Professional Development |
| CPP | EA Court Proceedings Panel |
| CPSS | Child Protection Support Service |
| CSSC | Controlled School's Support Council |
| DCEWO | Deputy Chief Education Welfare Officer |
| DE | Department of Education |
| DfC | Department for Communities |
| DHSSPS | Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety |
| EA | Education Authority (Northern Ireland) |
| ECHR | European Convention on Human Rights |
| EdIS | Education Digital Information System |

| Term | Meaning |
|-------|--|
| EHE | Elective Home Education |
| EITP | Early Intervention Transformation Programme |
| ELB | Education and Library Board (Historical) |
| EMS | Educational Management System |
| EOTAS | Education Other than at School |
| EPS | Education Psychology Service |
| ESO | Education Supervision Order |
| EWO | Education Welfare Officer |
| EWS | Education Welfare Service |
| HSCNI | Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland |
| LAC | Looked After Children (historical) |
| LEA | Local Education Authority |
| MARAC | Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference - victim focused information sharing and risk management meeting attended by key agencies, where high risk domestic violence cases discussed |
| META | “Metamorphis”- project working around social skills, self-esteem and drug misuse issues |
| NHSCT | Northern Health and Social Care Trust |
| NIAO | Northern Ireland Audit Office |
| NICCY | The Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People |
| NICIE | Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education |
| NISSC | Northern Ireland Social Care Council |
| PAC | Public Accounts Committee |
| PAM | Primary Attendance Matters Programme |

| Term | Meaning |
|---------|--|
| PfG | The Northern Ireland Executive's Draft Programme for Government |
| PRINCE2 | Projects in Controlled Environments (project management methodology) |
| PRTL | Post Registration Training and Learning |
| PSNI | Police Service of Northern Ireland |
| SAMS | School Aged Mothers |
| SAN | School Attendance Notice (Ireland) |
| SBNI | Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland |
| SRO | Senior Responsible Office |
| SEBD | Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties |
| SEWO | Senior Education Welfare Officer |
| SIMS | Schools Information Management System |
| TAC | Team Around the Child |
| TESS | Traveller Education Support Service |
| TUSLA | The Child and Family Agency in Ireland |
| UNCRC | United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child |
| UNOCINI | Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland |
| VPRS | Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme |

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Comparative Information

During the initial review process information was considered, in a desktop review, from across a range of jurisdictions to contrast and compare aspects of service delivery. The aim was not exact comparison, but an exploration of how similar services (or elements of services) perform in order to identify significant differences, the reasons for them and the extent to which they might help improvements in the current service.

In carrying out the study, it was recognised there are several factors that make meaningful comparisons difficult, including:

- Differences in statutory and policy frameworks across jurisdictions;
- The use of different and varied performance measures, mainly focusing on inputs/outputs rather than outcomes; and
- A disparity in service delivery models and how different jurisdictions allocate resources.

These factors should be borne in mind when making decisions with regard to the current service. The following geographical areas were included in the review.

England:

- Lancashire County Council
- Leeds City Council
- Birmingham City Council
- Derbyshire County Council
- Essex County Council
- Nottinghamshire County Council
- Kent County Council
- Surrey County Council
- Gateshead Council
- West Berkshire Council
- London Borough of Sutton Council

Wales:

- Powys County Council
- Pembrokeshire County Council
- Swansea Council

Scotland:

- The Highland Council
- South Lanarkshire
- North Lanarkshire
- Edinburgh

North America:

- Philadelphia,
- New Jersey

Canada:

- Alberta

Ireland,

Japan,

Norway,

Finland &

Australia

The findings indicated that processes regarding intervention, prevention and attendance management varied widely across these countries and jurisdictions. The review concluded that:

“There are a vast range of delivery models employed globally to managing, improving and supporting attendance in school-age children. These include:

- Contracting out of the services (traded EWS);
- Schools employing their own school attendance staff;
- Service provided by LEA’s/district councils;
- Part provision of service by LEA’s with schools ‘buying in’ other parts of the service;
- No service at all, with schools and parents and voluntary organisations being solely responsible for the promotion and management of attendance.”

In addition it noted:

“From the comparison information available, it is apparent that there is no one model of ‘best practice’ in one jurisdiction, but rather there are elements of good practice for aspects of the work. For example, it can be concluded that the combined effort of promoting parent, student and teacher relationships has a positive effect on school attendance levels.”

“It is also apparent that countries with some provision to support school attendance have the lowest rates of unauthorised absences. These services primarily focus on promoting attendance for students with <90-95% attendance.”

“Focusing primarily on attendance and allowing schools the responsibility of providing early interventions and make referrals to other services, enables Staff who work in school attendance to prioritise those students with below-average attendance and prevent a continued decline.”

Appendix 2 - Relevant Legislation

The Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986

This order outlines the duties of parents to secure full time education for their children {Article 45, Pt. 1 & 2} detailing that the parent of every child of compulsory school age (i.e. attained the age of 4 years and not attained the age of 16 years) “shall cause him to receive efficient full time education suitable to his age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs he may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise”. Furthermore, the provisions of Schedule 13 apply to the enforcement of the above and a parent who contravenes the provisions of the Schedule shall be guilty of an offence and liable to the penalties provided by paragraph 4 of that schedule. Parents must therefore either register their child at school or make suitable arrangements such as elective home education.

Once a child has been registered at a school, parents are legally obliged to ensure that they attend school regularly. If it appears that a parent of a child of compulsory school age is failing to ensure that their child has been registered at a school or otherwise it is the duty of EA to serve a School Attendance Notice (Article 45, Schedule 13, Part I) requesting that within fourteen days the parent satisfies the EA that the child is receiving an efficient full-time education. If a parent on whom the notice is served fails within the period specified in the notice to satisfy the EA that the child is receiving efficient full-time education, EA will issue a School Attendance Order (Article 45, Schedule 13, Part I). Under Part III of Schedule 13 to the 1986 Order, if a child or young person who is registered at a school does not attend regularly, a parent can receive a fine not exceeding £1,000 in court (for each child).

The Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 2003

This Order has a primary focus on the welfare and protection of pupils. Article 17 of the Order extends a duty to the Board of Governors of all grant-aided schools to safeguard and promote the welfare of all registered pupils, whether they are on the school premises or elsewhere while in the lawful control or charge of a member of the school staff. Pupil welfare is considered to embrace all aspects of pastoral care, child protection, pupil behaviour, health and well-being, safety and security and includes the oversight of school attendance.

Article 18 of the Order places specific duties on the Board of Governors of every grant aided school to have in place a written child protection policy and sets out how this should be done. Any written policy is required to incorporate the most recent best practice guidance and this position was reinforced by the introduction of specific arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care, including child protection, in schools. Article 19 of the Order further outlines the need for school discipline policies to incorporate measures to prevent bullying and that any new policies must be developed in consultation with pupils and parents.

The Children (NI) Order 1995

This Order is the principle statute governing the care, upbringing and protection of children in Northern Ireland. It places child’s welfare as a paramount consideration and a general duty of authority to provide personal social services for children in need, their families and others. It outlines how it is the general duty of every authority to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within its area who are in need and, so far as is consistent with that duty, to promote the upbringing of such children by their families by providing a range of personal and social services appropriate to those children’s needs. It covers the full range of safeguarding activity

including the promotion of a child's welfare, assessment of a child's needs, provision of support for children and families, protection of children and powers to assume or secure parental responsibility for children when required. An Education Supervision Order (ESO) could also be made by a court under Article 55 of the Children (NI) Order 1995 and is one of the options available to the service to promote school attendance.

The Suspension & Expulsion of Pupils Regulations (NI) 1995

These Regulations outline that Schools must notify the Education Welfare Service if a consultation meeting has been convened. An Officer from the EA currently attends the Consultation Meeting to enable the child welfare component of such meetings and EWS staff act in an advocacy role for the young people and their families in these. Staff from the Education Directorate also play a key role in ensuring that Schools comply with the regulations.

The Registration and Attendance of Pupils Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1974

This sets out the duty a school has to keep details of their pupils' attendance and have arrangements in place to address attendance issues. The Education (School Development Plans) Regulations (Northern Ireland) (2010) state that schools should include strategies for promoting attendance in their School Development Plan.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is a legally binding international agreement setting out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of every child, regardless of their race, religion or abilities.

The Convention provides the overarching framework to guide the development of local laws, policies and services so that all children and young people are nurtured, protected and empowered. Each of the 41 Articles in the Convention (Articles 42-54 are compliance and defining conditions) set out a different type of right to form one integrated set of children's rights and how governments should work together to make them available to all children. Central to the UNCRC is the acknowledgement that every child has basic fundamental rights, including the right to education (Articles 28/29) that enables children to fulfil their potential.

The Education Authority is committed to working towards an inclusive society where all children can participate, are valued and have their rights respected and guaranteed without discrimination and where every child can achieve their potential. The authority recognises that, in order to be Children Rights compliant, it should be endeavouring to ensure that services tasked with supporting children and young people to enable their full participation in education are 'rights compliant'.

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998)

Under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998) EA, when carrying out its functions, is required to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity across the nine identified Section 75 categories and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations, to address inequalities, particularly those experienced by Section 75 equality groups.

The Children's Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015

This aims to improve the well-being of children and young people in a manner which realises their rights. It places several duties on all children's authorities to work together and co-operate to devise and implement cross-cutting strategies in the best interests of children and young people. Under the CSCA, eight areas are set out which define well-being of children and young people, one of these being 'learning and achievement', with others including play and leisure, physical and mental health and living in a society that respects children's rights. The Act is key to ensuring improved outcomes for children by supporting, enhancing and encouraging co-operation so that services are integrated from the point of view of the child or young person. It also provides for authorities to share resources.

The Safeguarding Board (Northern Ireland) Act 2011

This provides the legislative framework for the creation of a regional Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI) which was established in September 2012 by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS). The Education Authority is a prescribed member of the Safeguarding Board for NI and must ensure compliance with Article 12 duties.

The Human Rights Act (1998)

The Human Rights Act incorporates the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) into UK domestic law. Public authorities including, for example, the Education Authority and Health Trusts must ensure that they act in compliance with children's and families human rights under the Act. No child should be denied the right to education (Article 2, Protocol 1) and nor should they experience unlawful discrimination on any protected ground (including disability, race, religion or other status) when accessing human rights (Article 14). The right to family life is protected under Article 8, which includes the right to proactive support for family life by the State, which can include enabling attendance at school and implementation of appropriate child protection measures. The EA recognises its responsibilities in terms of compliance with children's human rights, including through screening and monitoring of this policy.

The United Nations Conventions on the Rights of Persons with disabilities (UNCRPD)

The United Nations Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) is an international human rights treaty which aims to promote, protect and ensure the human rights of people with disabilities on an equal basis to others. It is based on the social model of disability, aiming to remove barriers which hinder full and effective participation by deaf and disabled people in society. The UK government has undertaken to implement the rights within the UNCRPD. All of the rights within the UNCRPD apply to children. Article 7 provides that the best interests of disabled children should be a primary consideration and that the child should be an active participant when decisions are being made which affect them. Children are entitled to age and disability-specific assistance to enable true participation. Article 24 provides for a fully inclusive education system, with the right to education without discrimination, including through the making of reasonable adjustments and provision of individualised support to maximise the academic and social development of disabled pupils.

Appendix 3 - Engagement Analysis on Model Requirements for Service Delivery

Introduction

Workstream 1 of the Education Welfare Service Transformation Project is responsible for developing a model of Service delivery within the transformed Service. The workstream will present for consultation, proposals for delivery models that:

- meets the needs of young people, families, and schools,
- ensure that the EA fulfills any statutory duties related to supporting school attendance,
- delivers support to address barriers to good attendance and engagement with education
- ensures that all proposals are evidence based.

The workstream has taken forward significant engagement to ensure that the voice, needs and reflections of service users are fully considered and guide the direction of proposals for future service delivery. This engagement, together with data and research evidence available has allowed the workstream to develop key themes and principles for the service model of delivery and develop this into proposed models of delivery to be finalised and consulted on in the coming months.

Purpose of Engagement

The purpose of the engagement was to understand from service users, what challenges they face in school attendance, what their needs are and possible means of meeting their needs to support positive attendance at school for all young people. This was from a school staff perspective, a children and young person perspective, as well as from parents/carers, staff and partners. This engagement focused on experienced service users, as well as engagement with general audiences who have not experienced the Education Welfare Service.

Methods of Engagement

Engagement was progressed by the workstream in two approaches, general stakeholder engagement and targeted stakeholder engagement. The table below demonstrates the engagement audience, type of engagement and number of respondents.

A total of 9,195 responses were received across the 15 different engagement programmes taken forward by the workstream 3,288 were children and young people, 5,264 were parents/carers and 434 are currently school principals or attendance leads in schools.

| Audience | Type | No. Of Participants |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Young People | General - via social media survey | 51 |
| 2. Parents/carers | General - via social media survey | 227 |
| 3. Public | General- via social media survey | 186 |
| 4. EOTAS Pupils | Targeted | 71 |
| 5. Young People open to EWS | Targeted | 21 |
| 6. Youth Service Young People | Targeted- Focus groups | 22 focus groups (Av 4) =88 |

| | | |
|---|------------------------------------|--------------|
| 7. EWS experienced parents/ carers | Targeted | 21 |
| 8. School Attendance Leads | Targeted | 189 |
| 9. Senior Teachers/Principals focus group | Targeted - Reference Group session | 8 |
| 10. Primary Pupils | General - Survey | 1,006 |
| 11. Post Primary Pupils | General Survey | 2,051 |
| 12. Parents/Carers | Targeted - school aged children | 5,016 |
| 13. Staff | Targeted - survey | 7 |
| 14. Principals | Targeted - focus groups | 245 |
| 15. Project Reference Group | Targeted- focus group | 8 |
| Total Responses | | 9,195 |

Themes Emerging from Stakeholder Engagement

A wealth of information and reflection was collected and considered from stakeholders. Key areas of feedback from engagement included:

For Children and Young People

- a) A need for a relationship-based approach and a focus on positive and healthy relationships in all areas of school life;
- b) A need to focus on the emotional health and wellbeing needs of children and young people, and their families, in being ready and able to access education and engage in learning through school attendance;
- c) A single point of contact in schools for children and young people to access support regarding issues that impact on attendance at school;
- d) A need to focus on the family circumstance and challenges as a whole rather than on the individual child attending school;
- e) A need for a more collaborative approach from health and education services in supporting with the presenting barriers to positive attendance for a child or young person;
- f) A need for programmes targeted at specific issues experienced by young people, eg: Bullying, Drugs and Alcohol, Resilience, Friendships;
- g) A need to connect learning challenges with attendance at school and ensuring appropriate supports are in place;
- h) A need to support with behaviours in school related to responses to challenges in learning, mental health and emotional welling struggles, and social and family concerns;
- i) A need for financial support for children and young people in attending school related to travel, food, and to remain in education in post primary years rather than moving to early

employment because of poverty and finance related issues in the home or for the young person.

For families

- a) A need for improved communication and understanding on positive attendance, the impact of absence, and strategies to support routines regarding positive attendance at school;
- b) A need to challenge and support the negative experience that some parents/carers had of education and their mindset on the necessity or importance of education for their children;
- c) A need for programmes for parents/carers that enable and empower parents/carers to support the needs of their children and young people attending school, particularly at periods of transition;
- d) A need to focus on emotional health and wellbeing and how parents/carers can support and manage challenges with their children and young people;
- e) A need to focus on the emotional health and wellbeing needs of children and young people, and their families, in being ready and able to access education and engage in learning through school attendance;
- f) A single point of contact in schools for parents/carers to communicate and access support regarding issues that impact on attendance at school;
- g) A requirement for specialist area support to understand need and differentiate approach with families and children and young people. EG: Special Educational Needs, challenging behaviours and impact on attendance, neurodiversity etc;
- h) A need for a collaborative approach from services supporting families across education and health;
- i) A need for a focus on relationship building and relationship sustainability with families where longer term or intensive support is required.

For Educational Settings

- a) A need to train and support schools with culture, ethos and policy directly on attendance, as well as those policies impacting on attendance such as SEND, Positive Behaviour and Safeguarding detailing supportive interventions to address absences;
- b) A requirement to support and train schools with SIMS, data monitoring, data analysis and action planning regarding attendance and absences from school;
- c) A need to focus on the percentages communicated regarding positive and negative attendance, and consider how the interpretation of this and understanding of this is a challenge;
- d) A need to support settings - EOTAS Centres and Special Schools with differentiated approaches to mainstream schools;
- e) A requirement to define support to early years and which settings are included;
- f) A need for consistency of approach but consideration of context - rurality issues vs urban issues;
- g) A need to focus on the emotional health and wellbeing needs that impact school attendance, nurture, safety and support;

- h) A need to respond and be flexible to the changes in need and growing complexity of need for children and young people, and families;
- i) A known link officer for schools with intensive officer support in some educational settings including staff being based in the school and focused on the needs of one/group of schools of high needs;
- j) Requirement for specialist knowledge and expertise regarding areas that impact attendance and engagement in education including mental health and wellbeing, special educational needs, newcomer pupils, vulnerable groups, court processes;
- k) A need for a range of preventative programmes to support schools with culture, ethos and approaches to areas impacting attendance at school;
- l) A need for early intervention work and not referral of individuals only
- m) A requirement for enhanced support around transition - at all stages of transition with preventative and early intervention approaches
- n) A requirement that direct intervention work is focussed on the family rather than just the child;
- o) A need to use “team around” approaches for the child, the family and the setting;
- p) A need for resource in schools to focus on attendance and absence interventions;
- q) A need for clear “menus” of support for schools, children and young people, and families;
- r) A need for a “joined up” approach from education and health services.

Essential areas for model development from engagement with stakeholders

There are a broad range of considerations to be made in the development of the model but themes consistent across service users that are essential for inclusion in the proposed new model for service delivery are:

- Improved connection and collaborative working with health and education services;
- Specialist areas of service delivery to support particular areas of need and growing areas of need;
- A shift in focus to preventive approaches and early intervention approaches in place of intensive and direct support/ casework;
- A focus on emotional health and wellbeing, nurture and relationships in service delivery;
- Training and capacity building for education staff in various areas that impact attendance and attendance monitoring and intervention;
- Clear and effective communication strategy for schools, parents/carers and children and young people;
- Intensive programmes of support for families and schools of high need including placement in schools for some Service staff;
- Single points of contact for young people, for parents and carers and for schools from the school and the Education Authority;
- The impact of poverty on attendance at school and effective supports necessary from across services and agencies to address this.

Further Considerations

This engagement and the needs for service users highlighted within the area of attendance at school and engagement of education links to many strategic areas of work being progressed. This will present opportunity for further building of the model, connection across the system and possibly funding to ensure that outcomes for young people continuously improve. These include, “A Fair Start” programme which highlights the need for communities and schools to work together to support children’s learning, and projects within this including The Reducing Educational Disadvantage Programme which provides the potential for important issues such as pupil absence from school and the issues behind this to be addressed both within in school but importantly also within families and the wider community. The SEND Strategic Development Plan, the DE Review of Suspensions and Expulsions, the DoH review of Children Services and DoH review of Regional Facilities are some programmes that will impact and be impacted by this area of service delivery.

Conclusion

Engagement responses from almost 10,000 service users and the public has provided an effective evidence base for the need and requirements in the delivery of the new service model. This engagement has been essential in guiding the direction of the proposals within the new service delivery model. Although there was variance in some feedback with areas of need dependent on the service user, and the experience of the service, there was consistency across feedback for the key themes identified above.

Workstream 1 will use this information to make recommendations on the new service delivery model to provide an efficient and effective service that meets the needs of children and young people, families, and educational settings in areas of attendance in 2022 and into the future.

Appendix 4 - Rationale for Specialist Posts

Initial engagement with stakeholders clearly identified the need for specialist areas to:

- Deliver ***programmes targeted at specific issues*** affecting young people today such as **Bullying, Drugs and Alcohol, Resilience, and Friendships**;
- ***Develop programmes that enable parents*** and empower them to support their children attending school;
- ***Focus on emotional health and wellbeing*** to supporting parents to manage challenges with their children; and
- ***Support other professionals with specialist knowledge*** and expertise regarding areas that impact attendance and engagement in education including ***mental health and wellbeing, special educational needs, newcomer pupils, vulnerable groups, court processes***.

Through the work of Work Stream 1, the proposed model clearly identified the development of these specialist roles within the service as a priority. Consultation on the model (Appendix 6) has confirmed support for this, with most respondents agreeing with the overall model and the majority of respondents agreeing that the identified specialist areas were appropriate.

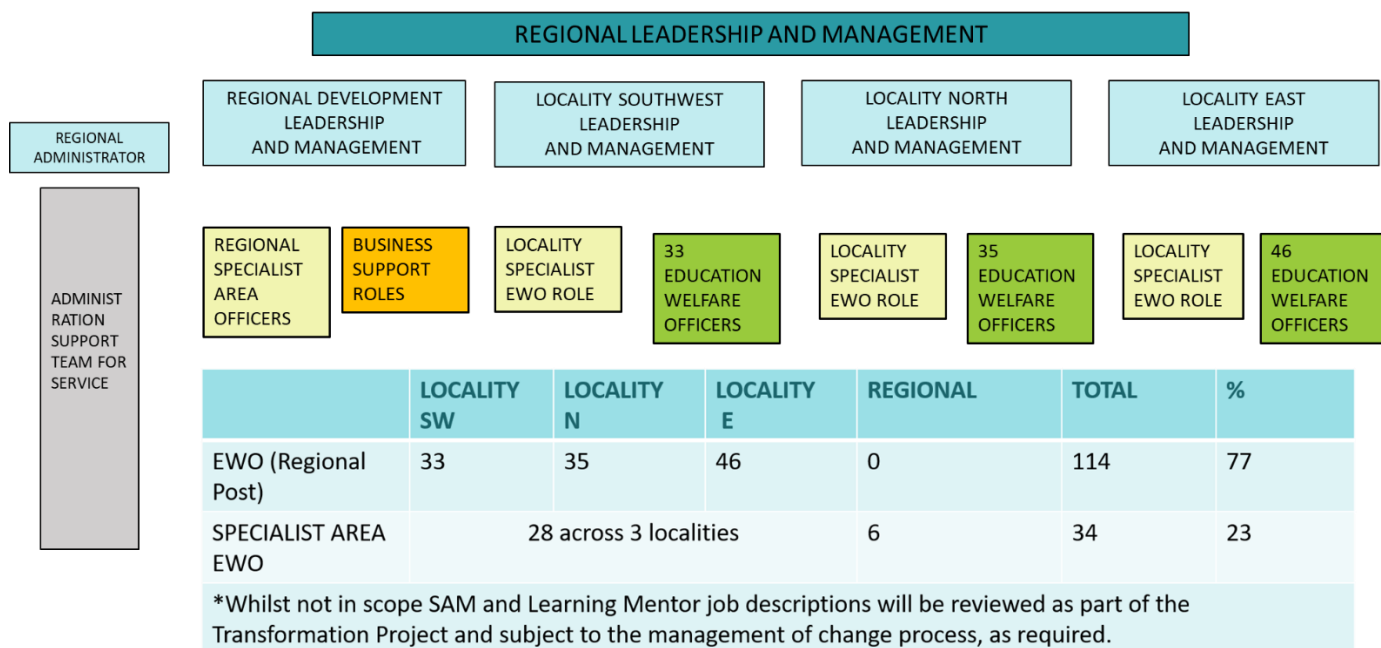
Through this consultation, suggestions were made for further specialist areas and one respondent commented that “with the development of specialist support in various areas, there would be greater understanding of risk factors and support to families and other professionals working with the child to address these”.

Identifying Numbers of Specialist Posts

The exact number and location of staff will be dependent on the final, agreed structure for the service and the balance of need identified across the region. The intention is to spread expertise geographically according to need, with staff expected to work across any local boundaries and regionally in the development of the specialist areas. The specialist areas have been identified as areas of need at this point in time and the number and focus of these specialist areas should be kept under review to ensure relevance and need going forward.

It is envisaged that posts will have both local and regional elements and staff will be expected to carry a caseload of more complex cases that fit with specialisms, where possible.

With a proposed move to a locality basis, and given the current number of Specialist Areas proposed in the model, it seems reasonable to have some of these specialist posts within each locality, with regional leads in specific areas. An initial proposed structure was developed and shared with staff, although industrial action has stalled further progress. This possible structure that was shared with staff is shown in the following diagram:



Although the precise detail of Specialist Areas remains to be agreed, numbers have been suggested based on the feedback from the model, school numbers and current identified need in each locality. Numbers and Specialist Areas should be kept under review to respond to emerging need and changing circumstances.

Appendix 5 - Transformation Project Dashboard

The dashboard is a working document used to monitor progress against proposed actions identified at the start of the project. Of the tasks remaining many involve consultation on proposals (11), costing of proposals (9) or continuous review (7). For this reason it is appropriate to carry these over into the Implementation Phase. Workstream 6 will be taken over by EA's response to Education Beyond Covid and the EdIS Project.

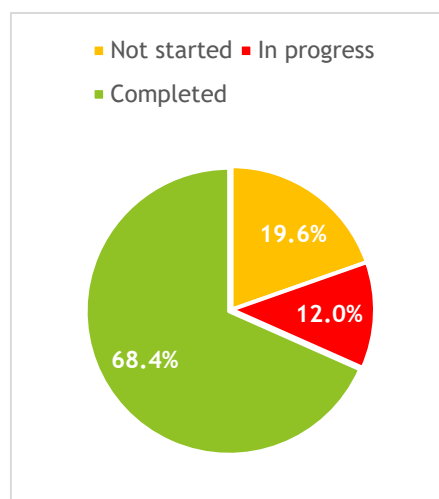
Workstream ☰ ✕

WS1 WS2 WS3 WS4 WS5 WS6
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v

Lead ☰ ✕

AN CR CW EC GW MFJ

Overall Task Progress



Workstream 6 will be taken over by EA's response to Education Beyond Covid and the EdIS Project.

| Task | Action | Lead | Start Date | End Date | Progress | Workstream |
|-------|--|------|------------|----------|----------|------------|
| 1.1.1 | Produce Draft Action Plan | EC | 01-Jul | 22-Jul | 100% | WS1 |
| 1.1.2 | Produce Draft High Level Service Model to present to Project Board | EC | 01-Jul | 05-Aug | 100% | WS1 |
| 1.1.3 | Produce Draft High Level Service Model to present to WS2 | EC | 01-Jul | 26-Aug | 100% | WS1 |
| 1.1.4 | Research regarding the main issues preventing successful engagement in schools | EC | 01-Jul | 10-Feb | 100% | WS1 |
| 1.1.5 | Assess available data regarding population needs, service user and key themes preventing engagement in education | EC | 01-Jul | 10-Mar | 100% | WS1 |
| 1.1.6 | Consider co-design framework with young people | EC | 01-Jul | 25-Aug | 33% | WS1 |
| 1.2.1 | Engage generally with the public to get initial general feedback | EC | 01-Jul | 26-Aug | 100% | WS1 |
| 1.2.2 | Engage with young people to achieve more targeted feedback of Service experienced users | EC | 01-Jul | 02-Sep | 100% | WS1 |

| | | | | | | |
|-------|---|----|--------|--------|------|-----|
| 1.2.3 | Engage with parents/carers to achieve more targeted feedback of Service experienced users | EC | 01-Jul | 13-Jan | 100% | WS1 |
| 1.2.4 | Engage with school staff to achieve more targeted feedback of Service experienced users | EC | 01-Jul | 13-Jan | 100% | WS1 |
| 1.2.5 | Engage with staff to achieve targeted feedback of Service delivery | EC | 01-Jul | 13-Jan | 100% | WS1 |
| 1.2.6 | Consult with Programme Board on recommendations on an ongoing basis | EC | 01-Jul | 25-Aug | 90% | WS1 |
| 1.2.7 | Consult with schools on recommendations and model delivery proposed | EC | 01-Jul | 08-Jul | 100% | WS1 |
| 1.2.8 | Consult with service users on recommendations and model delivery proposed | EC | 01-Jul | 08-Jul | 100% | WS1 |
| 1.2.9 | Consult with all stakeholder on recommendations and model delivery proposed | EC | 01-Jul | 08-Jul | 100% | WS1 |
| 1.3.1 | Scope need of population of Service uses | EC | 01-Jul | 16-Dec | 100% | WS1 |
| 1.3.2 | Advance research and data working groups in the area of the model | EC | 01-Jul | 16-Dec | 100% | WS1 |
| 1.3.3 | Consider ongoing research in this area to inform Service development | EC | 01-Jul | 27-Jan | 100% | WS1 |
| 1.3.4 | Provide research and data related to all recommendations | EC | 01-Jul | 27-Jan | 100% | WS1 |
| 1.4.1 | Financially assess the cost of model delivery | EC | 01-Jul | 03-Mar | 0% | WS1 |
| 1.4.2 | Propose financial investment aligned with outcomes for young people and the population | EC | 01-Jul | 03-Mar | 0% | WS1 |
| 1.4.3 | Develop business cases as is required to support the model of delivery | EC | 01-Jul | 03-Mar | 0% | WS1 |
| 1.4.4 | Work in collaboration with the finance directorate to consider the impact and opportunities with finance | EC | 01-Jul | 03-Mar | 0% | WS1 |
| 2.1.1 | Review service delivery model from WS1 and develop possible organisational structure to match with model. | AN | 01-Jul | 16-Dec | 100% | WS2 |
| 2.1.2 | Consider recommendations from WS1 in terms of EWS needs and mapping of service provision. | AN | 01-Jul | 16-Dec | 100% | WS2 |
| 2.1.3 | WS1 to work on modelling to be shared with WS2. | AN | 01-Jul | 16-Dec | 100% | WS2 |
| 2.1.4 | Proposed structure to PB. | AN | 01-Jul | 28-Jul | 93% | WS2 |
| 2.1.5 | Consult on proposed structure. | AN | 01-Feb | 15-Mar | 0% | WS2 |
| 2.1.6 | Analyse feedback to identify preferred structure. | AN | 14-Mar | 28-Mar | 0% | WS2 |

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|-------|--|-----|--------|--------|------|-----|
| 2.1.7 | Make recommendation on a preferred structure. | AN | 28-Mar | 11-Apr | 0% | WS2 |
| 2.1.8 | Agree organisational structure at January Project Board. | AN | 02-Aug | 03-Aug | 0% | WS2 |
| 2.2.1 | Scope roles with similar purpose across sectors and jurisdictions, including specialist and management roles. | AN | 01-Jul | 12-Aug | 100% | WS2 |
| 2.2.2 | Assign task and finish groups as appropriate | AN | 01-Jul | 12-Aug | 100% | WS2 |
| 2.2.3 | Review regional SAM workings and programmes of offer to ensure consistency of service. | AN | 01-Aug | 10-Sep | 100% | WS2 |
| 2.2.4 | Learning Mentors working group to develop clear programmes of offer | AN | 01-Aug | 10-Sep | 100% | WS2 |
| 2.3.1 | Identify and fast track any high priority training to be delivered in short term. | AN | 01-Jul | 12-Aug | 100% | WS2 |
| 2.3.2 | Identify professional development needs to support development of all EWS staff. | AN | 01-Jul | 12-Aug | 100% | WS2 |
| 2.3.3 | Identify how these professional development needs can best be met. | AN | 01-Jul | 26-Aug | 100% | WS2 |
| 2.3.4 | Prioritise the professional development needs in terms of staff and time line ie who needs what and when? | AN | 01-Jul | 26-Aug | 100% | WS2 |
| 2.3.5 | Develop a programme of professional development to be delivered throughout the year on an ongoing basis. | AN | 01-Jul | 12-Aug | 100% | WS2 |
| 2.4.1 | Consider the cost of delivering professional development opportunities identified. | AN | 01-Jul | 12-Aug | 0% | WS2 |
| 2.4.2 | Assign professional development priorities against costs. | AN | 01-Jul | 12-Aug | 0% | WS2 |
| 2.4.3 | Consider which additional professional development opportunities can be met from current EWS budget. | AN | 01-Jul | 12-Aug | 0% | WS2 |
| 2.4.4 | Develop business cases as is required for any additional professional development outside budget. | AN | 01-Jul | 12-Aug | 0% | WS2 |
| 2.4.5 | Work in collaboration with the finance directorate to consider how to access/secure funding for on-going professional development. | AN | 01-Jul | 12-Aug | 0% | WS2 |
| 3.1.1 | Complete initial research on outcome based accountability - MFJ to provide material. | MFJ | 01-Jul | 09-Sep | 100% | WS3 |
| 3.1.2 | Research best practice of OBA within service and wider. | MFJ | 01-Jul | 09-Sep | 100% | WS3 |
| 3.1.3 | Establish understanding of Outcome Based Accountability and how it will be used within service. | MFJ | 01-Jul | 18-Nov | 100% | WS3 |

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|--------|---|-----|--------|--------|------|-----|
| 3.1.4 | Research training for OBA - Who delivers it? How is it delivered? When is it available? | MFJ | 01-Jul | 29-Jul | 100% | WS3 |
| 3.1.5 | Secure funding for training if required. | MFJ | 01-Jul | 12-Aug | 100% | WS3 |
| 3.1.6 | Deliver training to all appropriate staff. | MFJ | 01-Jul | 21-Oct | 100% | WS3 |
| 3.1.7 | Identify what we want to achieve for all Children, Young People and their Families. | MFJ | 01-Jul | 18-Nov | 100% | WS3 |
| 3.1.8 | Identify and develop suite of OBA indicators that can be used to measure quality of service. | MFJ | 01-Jul | 10-Feb | 100% | WS3 |
| 3.1.9 | Develop Draft OBA Framework | MFJ | 01-Jul | 10-Mar | 100% | WS3 |
| 3.1.10 | Monitor & Review on ongoing basis | MFJ | 01-Jul | 01-Sep | 85% | WS3 |
| 3.2.1 | Audit of current data capture, outcome measurement and KPIs. | MFJ | 01-Jul | 23-Sep | 100% | WS3 |
| 3.2.2 | Review and re-define performance metrics to ensure all are relevant | MFJ | 01-Jul | 12-Aug | 100% | WS3 |
| 3.2.3 | Identify data sources for metrics that are not currently reported on. | MFJ | 01-Jul | 23-Sep | 100% | WS3 |
| 3.2.4 | Match performance metrics with corporate reporting. | MFJ | 01-Jul | 21-Oct | 100% | WS3 |
| 3.2.5 | Continue to redefine and include new KPI's as required. | MFJ | 01-Jul | 01-Sep | 85% | WS3 |
| 3.3.1 | Review metrics currently being collected. | MFJ | 01-Jul | 12-Aug | 100% | WS3 |
| 3.3.2 | Identify key metrics for measuring improvement. | MFJ | 01-Jul | 12-Aug | 100% | WS3 |
| 3.3.3 | Develop way of recording metrics, if not already available | MFJ | 01-Jul | 10-Mar | 100% | WS3 |
| 3.3.4 | Use metrics to benchmark EWS to determine initial starting position. | MFJ | 01-Jul | 10-Mar | 100% | WS3 |
| 3.3.5 | Record key metrics on agreed timeframe eg monthly. | MFJ | 01-Jul | 13-Jan | 100% | WS3 |
| 3.3.6 | Develop reporting system for line managers within service. | MFJ | 01-Jul | 07-Apr | 100% | WS3 |
| 3.3.7 | Produce regular reports eg monthly. | MFJ | 01-Jul | 13-Jan | 100% | WS3 |
| 3.3.8 | Monitor and review reports to identify trends, issues etc. | MFJ | 01-Jul | 07-Apr | 100% | WS3 |
| 3.4.1 | Carry out audit of current feedback processes/systems within service. | MFJ | 01-Jul | 02-Jun | 100% | WS3 |
| 3.4.2 | Liaise with other services to determine how feedback from young people/schools is currently processed | MFJ | 01-Jul | 12-Aug | 100% | WS3 |

| | | | | | | |
|-------|--|-----|--------|--------|------|-----|
| 3.4.3 | Liaise with Young People and schools to determine how they would like to provide feedback. | MFJ | 01-Jul | 02-Jun | 100% | WS3 |
| 3.4.4 | Draft a Communications/Feedback plan. | MFJ | 01-Jul | 22-Jul | 0% | WS3 |
| 3.4.5 | Consult with Young People and Schools regarding proposed plan. | MFJ | 22-Jul | 02-Sep | 0% | WS3 |
| 3.4.6 | Update plan based on feedback from consultation | MFJ | 01-Sep | 22-Sep | 0% | WS3 |
| 3.5.1 | Identify and explain 'brief interventions' | MFJ | 01-Jul | 12-Aug | 100% | WS3 |
| 3.5.2 | Identify what we want to capture within 'brief interventions'. | MFJ | 01-Jul | 23-Sep | 100% | WS3 |
| 3.5.3 | Identify how we can capture data from 3.5.2. | MFJ | 01-Jul | 11-Aug | 100% | WS3 |
| 3.5.4 | Develop reporting mechanism for 'brief interventions'. | MFJ | 01-Jul | 01-Sep | 92% | WS3 |
| 3.6.1 | Establish data working group. | MFJ | 01-Jul | 23-Sep | 100% | WS3 |
| 3.6.2 | Arrange weekly meeting of the data working group, agree roles and responsibilities, outline approach and expected time commitments. | MFJ | 01-Jul | 07-Oct | 100% | WS3 |
| 3.6.3 | Create data dictionary and technical definitions of performance metrics. | MFJ | 01-Jul | 01-Sep | 85% | WS3 |
| 3.6.4 | Create definitions of data quality metrics & initial data quality reports. | MFJ | 01-Jul | 01-Sep | 85% | WS3 |
| 3.6.5 | Create full set of data quality reports, initial root cause analysis supporting identification and prioritisation of areas of improvement. | MFJ | 01-Jul | 01-Sep | 85% | WS3 |
| 4.1.1 | Review current policies/procedures across service to produce comprehensive database of same. | CR | 01-Jul | 30-Sep | 100% | WS4 |
| 4.1.2 | Number of priority policies/procedures identified and assigned to WS. | CR | 01-Jul | 30-Sep | 100% | WS4 |
| 4.1.3 | Assign identified policies to WS 'Task & Finish' sub-groups to update. | CR | 01-Jul | 26-Aug | 100% | WS4 |
| 4.1.4 | Task & Finish' subgroups report initial findings. | CR | 01-Jul | 23-Sep | 100% | WS4 |
| 4.1.5 | Task & Finish' subgroups produce initial drafts for WS to consider. | CR | 01-Jul | 07-Oct | 100% | WS4 |
| 4.1.6 | Feedback from WS used to update initial draft | CR | 01-Jul | 21-Oct | 100% | WS4 |
| 4.2.1 | Work ongoing to digitise guidance ensure QA and sign off processes and develop of a common resource library | CR | 01-Jul | 18-Nov | 100% | WS4 |
| 4.2.2 | Paper to Project Board on establishing identified standing groups. | CR | 01-Jul | 12-Aug | 100% | WS4 |

| | | | | | | |
|-------|---|----|--------|--------|------|-----|
| 4.2.3 | Develop ToR for agreed groups | CR | 01-Jul | 12-Aug | 100% | WS4 |
| 4.2.4 | Consult within EWS on ToR for groups. | CR | 01-Jul | 13-Jan | 100% | WS4 |
| 4.2.5 | Establish timeframe to introduce agreed groups and implement. | CR | 01-Jul | 09-Sep | 60% | WS4 |
| 4.3.1 | Some immediate amendments made to Pathway through Casework document. | CR | 01-Jul | 07-Oct | 100% | WS4 |
| 4.3.2 | Complete review of 'Pathway Through Casework'. Ensure fit for purpose for long-term use within service. | CR | 01-Jul | 13-Jan | 100% | WS4 |
| 4.3.3 | Paper on complex case panel developed | CR | 01-Jul | 04-Nov | 100% | WS4 |
| 4.3.4 | Scoping and standardising Assembly presentations | CR | 01-Jul | 09-Sep | 80% | WS4 |
| 4.3.5 | Development of information leaflet for young people and families | CR | 01-Jul | 09-Sep | 80% | WS4 |
| 4.3.6 | Children missing in education guidance | CR | 01-Jan | 02-Sep | 80% | WS4 |
| 4.3.7 | Developing with WS3 a solution to brief intervention recording | CR | 01-Jul | 12-Aug | 100% | WS4 |
| 4.4.1 | Service standards being developed in line with EA charter standards | CR | 01-Jul | 10-Feb | 100% | WS4 |
| 4.4.2 | Consultation on draft Service Standards necessary with service. | CR | 01-Mar | 12-Apr | 100% | WS4 |
| 4.4.3 | Take draft Service Standards to Programme Board. | CR | 01-Jul | 05-Jul | 100% | WS4 |
| 4.4.4 | Engagement and feedback with service users. | CR | 01-Jan | 02-Sep | 80% | WS4 |
| 5.1.1 | Identify key audiences - schools, young people, parents etc. | GW | 01-Jul | 12-Aug | 100% | WS5 |
| 5.1.2 | Carry out audit of current communications with identified audiences. Who is contacted, when, how and why? | GW | 01-Jul | 12-Aug | 100% | WS5 |
| 5.1.3 | Carry out research with audiences about how they would prefer to receive communications. | GW | 01-Jul | 28-Jul | 100% | WS5 |
| 5.1.4 | Analyse and consider research to produce a draft EWS communications/engagement strategy. | GW | 08-Jul | 29-Jul | 100% | WS5 |
| 5.1.5 | Consult with audiences about proposed strategy | GW | 14-Aug | 23-Sep | 0% | WS5 |
| 5.1.6 | Update strategy based on consultation feedback | GW | 30-Sep | 14-Oct | 0% | WS5 |
| 5.1.7 | Implement strategy | GW | 31-Oct | 12-Dec | 0% | WS5 |
| 5.1.8 | Continuous review and update of strategy | GW | 12-Dec | 27-Feb | 0% | WS5 |

| | | | | | | |
|-------|--|----|--------|--------|------|-----|
| 5.2.1 | Carry out research with audiences about how they would prefer to receive communications. (Link to O1:A3) | GW | 15-May | 24-Jun | 100% | WS5 |
| 5.2.2 | Hold Focus Group workshops on possible communication products. Based on survey results. | GW | 04-Aug | 25-Aug | 8% | WS5 |
| 5.2.3 | Identify new products for development. Produce new products | GW | 01-Sep | 22-Sep | 0% | WS5 |
| 5.2.4 | | GW | 01-Sep | 22-Sep | 0% | WS5 |
| 5.3.1 | Identify current links with H&S - who, what format, how often, when etc. | GW | 01-Jul | 29-Jul | 100% | WS5 |
| 5.3.2 | Consult with EWS staff regarding need for links with H&S. | GW | 01-Jul | 05-Aug | 100% | WS5 |
| 5.3.3 | Identify most appropriate links to develop with H&S. | GW | 14-Aug | 27-Aug | 100% | WS5 |
| 5.3.4 | Arrange initial meetings of link groups identified. | GW | 01-Sep | 13-Oct | 0% | WS5 |
| 5.3.5 | Consider how to share data/information effectively. | GW | 14-Aug | 24-Sep | 100% | WS5 |
| 5.3.6 | Develop a suitable forum/platform for sharing expertise, data and information between EWS and H&S. | GW | 14-Aug | 05-Nov | 100% | WS5 |
| 5.4.1 | Review current EWS website involvement. | GW | 01-Jul | 12-Aug | 100% | WS5 |
| 5.4.2 | Review current EWS intranet involvement. | GW | 01-Jul | 12-Aug | 100% | WS5 |
| 5.4.3 | Consult with EWS staff regarding use of website & intranet to identify need. | GW | 01-Jul | 12-Aug | 100% | WS5 |
| 5.4.4 | Consult with service users to identify required use of website/intranet. | GW | 01-Jul | 12-Aug | 100% | WS5 |
| 5.4.5 | Develop website with website team. | GW | 01-Sep | 19-Jan | 100% | WS5 |
| 5.4.6 | Review and refine on ongoing basis. | GW | 01-Jul | 30-Aug | 14% | WS5 |
| 5.5.1 | Review & clarify role of EWS in suspensions/expulsions. | GW | 01-Jul | 12-Aug | 100% | WS5 |
| 5.5.2 | Review suspensions and expulsions data to identify trends. | GW | 01-Jul | 12-Aug | 100% | WS5 |
| 5.5.3 | Consider what data needs to be recorded. How it will be captured and what use will be made of it. | GW | 01-Jul | 12-Aug | 100% | WS5 |
| 5.5.4 | Consult with schools about support required re suspensions/expulsions. | GW | 01-Jan | 11-Feb | 0% | WS5 |
| 6.1.1 | Review current ICT provision. | GW | 01-Jul | 22-Jul | 100% | WS5 |
| 6.1.2 | Consult EWS staff on current ICT need. | GW | 30-Jul | 20-Aug | 100% | WS5 |
| 6.1.3 | Determine current deficit in ICT provision. | GW | 30-Jul | 13-Aug | 100% | WS5 |

| | | | | | | |
|-------|--|----|--------|--------|------|-----|
| 6.1.4 | Provide sufficient ICT hardware as required to clear deficit. | CW | 01-Jul | 12-Aug | 100% | WS6 |
| 6.1.5 | Review ICT provision to identify any further gaps. | CW | 30-Jul | 13-Aug | 100% | WS6 |
| 6.1.6 | Identify funding, if required, to resolve any emerging ICT issues. | CW | 30-Jul | 13-Aug | 100% | WS6 |
| 6.1.7 | Update technology as possible/required. | CW | 01-Jul | 12-Aug | 100% | WS6 |
| 6.2.1 | Review current office infrastructure and usage. | CW | 01-Jul | 12-Aug | 50% | WS6 |
| 6.2.2 | Consider need for office infrastructure given post-pandemic work arrangements. | CW | 01-Nov | 13-Dec | 50% | WS6 |
| 6.2.3 | Develop plan for use of office infrastructure | CW | 30-Dec | 13-Jan | 0% | WS6 |
| 6.2.4 | Implement plan for use of office infrastructure | CW | 31-Jan | 14-Mar | 0% | WS6 |
| 6.3.1 | Review current file storage system. | CW | 01-Jul | 12-Aug | 100% | WS6 |
| 6.3.2 | Consider need for secure electronic storage system. | CW | 12-Aug | 02-Sep | 100% | WS6 |
| 6.3.3 | Liaise with IG regarding security measures required for electronic storage system. | CW | 01-Sep | 22-Sep | 100% | WS6 |
| 6.3.4 | Develop plan for developing secure electronic storage system. | CW | 30-Sep | 28-Oct | 0% | WS6 |
| 6.3.5 | Implement plan for secure electronic storage system. | CW | 01-Nov | 13-Dec | 0% | WS6 |
| 6.4.1 | Review processes used within service to identify any opportunities for digitisation. | CW | 01-Oct | 29-Oct | 100% | WS6 |
| 6.4.2 | Prioritise areas for digitisation. | CW | 01-Dec | 15-Dec | 100% | WS6 |
| 6.4.3 | Determine first area for digitisation and develop plan to deliver this. | CW | 01-Jan | 11-Feb | 100% | WS6 |
| 6.4.4 | Implement plan for digitisation of first priority area. | CW | 01-Mar | 12-Apr | 0% | WS6 |

Appendix 6 - Online Survey Feedback

Introduction

123 responses were received in total of which 52 were school based staff, 42 were EA staff, 3 were from representative bodies, 23 were from Young People, 2 were from parents and 1 was designated as other.

The 23 responses from Young People were completed by groups of between 2 and 10 working alongside an adult. Not all groups indicated numbers, but of the groups that indicated actual numbers 36 young people were in the groups that responded.

This means that the total number of respondents was over 150, with similar percentages of School Staff, EA Staff and Young People participating.

For the purpose of presenting the feedback in a more comprehensive way, general terms are applied, which should be interpreted as follows:

- Almost/nearly all more than 90%
- Most 75%-90%
- A majority 50%-74%
- A significant minority 30%-49%
- A minority 10%-29%
- Very few/a small number - less than 10%

Summary Analysis of Responses

Most respondents agreed that moving to a preventative model was correct, with a minority unsure and a small number disagreeing.

A majority identified the new model as an improvement with a significant minority unsure and only a small number disagreeing. Although the number of unsure responses is significant, it is a minority and the number of people in disagreement remains a small number and the number in agreement remains substantial.

In terms of clarity of roles, most people agreed that the role of the EWOs in the proposed model was clear; most felt the schools' role was clear; most felt the parents' role was clear and a majority felt the role for Young People was clear. This suggests that the roles were generally clearly identified although some further work is perhaps needed with the role for Young People.

Of the proposed intervention activities, almost all respondents felt all or some preventative activities were useful; almost all respondents felt all or some early intervention activities were useful and almost all respondents felt all or some intensive intervention activities were considered useful. This suggests that intervention activities identified will be useful and are worth pursuing.

A majority considered the identified specialist areas to be appropriate, with a significant minority unsure and a small number in disagreement. Anyone who disagreed had an opportunity to suggest other areas and these were also captured and analysed within the qualitative feedback below.

Any qualitative statements were considered within different stakeholder groups and themes were identified within this qualitative feedback on model. These themes are shown in the following table:

| Stakeholder | Emerging Themes |
|--------------------|---|
| School based Staff | <p>Specialist support -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In School Support for reluctant attenders (possibly non-teaching) • Anxiety/Separation anxiety • Developing resilience • Court • ASD • Addictions - gaming etc • Mental health issues <p>What else is needed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with other agencies • Improved levels of support for and engagement with parents • Implications and impact of poor attendance • More rapid response in terms of support and intervention <p>Any other comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to Services quickly / early • Connecting parents positively with value of education/schools |
| EA Staff | <p>Specialist support -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental Health/ Emotional Health and Well-being • Adverse Childhood Experiences • Special Education Needs • Transition to adulthood <p>What else is needed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration/ cross service/ agency working • Tangible support for schools • SEN support • Transition to adulthood <p>Any other comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential duplication of services. • Concern re pay dispute and impact on recruitment. • Need to focus on statutory functions of EWS. |
| Young People | <p>Specialist support -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for mental health and emotional wellbeing |

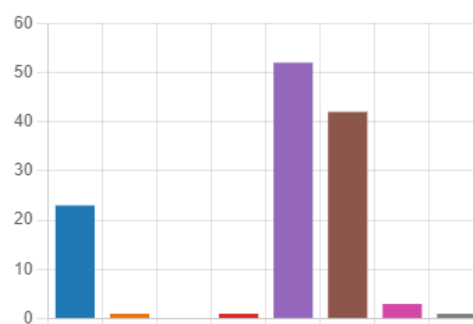
| Stakeholder | Emerging Themes |
|------------------|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substance misuse (parental and/or YP) • Poverty • Career advice • Bullying - homophobia <p>What else is needed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groupwork with friends • Information about what agencies are going working with us from the start • Access to the EWO in school • 1 EWO working through the different tiers <p>Any other comments</p> <p>None</p> |
| Parents & Others | <p>Specialist support -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific support for parents - eg who struggle academically to support their child/children; adoptive parents; after school activities; court; ASD • Clarity to distinguish between levels of support - ie when does early intervention become intensive? <p>What else is needed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater focus on impact of non-attendance <p>Any other comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern over duplication with other agency offers |

Actual Response Data Collected

1. Which of the below best describes you? *

[More Details](#)

| | |
|--|----|
| ● Young person/child | 23 |
| ● Parent/Carer of a pre-school ag... | 1 |
| ● Parent/Carer of a primary schoo... | 0 |
| ● Parent/Carer of post primary sc... | 1 |
| ● School-based staff member | 52 |
| ● Education Authority staff member | 42 |
| ● Representative of a relevant inte... | 3 |
| ● Other | 1 |

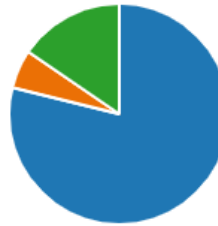


2. The new model focuses more on preventing attendance issues rather than reacting to them. Is this the right thing to do?

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

| | |
|---|----|
| ● Yes | 97 |
| ● No | 7 |
| ● Not sure | 19 |



3. Is this model an improvement on the current Education Welfare Service delivery model?

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

| | |
|---|----|
| ● Yes | 79 |
| ● No | 5 |
| ● Not sure | 39 |

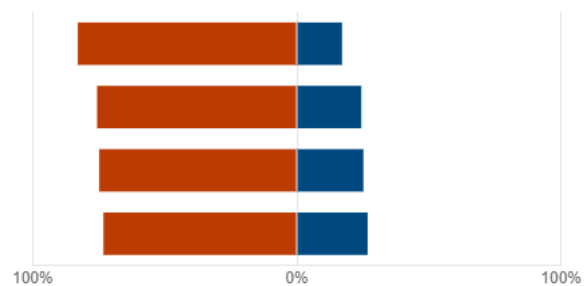


4. Are the roles for the following people clear in the proposed model. (Tick all that apply)

[More Details](#)

■ Yes ■ No

- Education Welfare Officer
- School staff
- Parents & Carers
- Young People



5. Would you find the proposed **prevention methods/activities** helpful?

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

| | |
|--|----|
| ● All | 40 |
| ● Some | 81 |
| ● None | 2 |



6. Would you find the proposed **early intervention methods/activities** helpful?

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

| | |
|--------|----|
| ● All | 45 |
| ● Some | 74 |
| ● None | 4 |



7. Would you find the proposed **intensive support/direct interventions** helpful?

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

| | |
|--------|----|
| ● All | 49 |
| ● Some | 72 |
| ● None | 2 |



8. What else would you like to see included in the proposed model?

[Please do not include information which may identify you (or anyone else)]

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

66

Responses

Latest Responses

"Is prevention not a task for the school, to make it stimulating and engaging..."

28 respondents (44%) answered **school** for this question.



9. Have we identified the right areas for specialist support ?

[More Details](#)

| | |
|------------|----|
| ● Yes | 73 |
| ● No | 11 |
| ● Not Sure | 39 |



10. In which other areas do you think children and young people would need specialist support?
[Please do not include information which may identify you (or anyone else)]

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

67
 Responses

Latest Responses

"The last three years have made a serious dent in motivation levels and lack ..."



11. Any other comments?

[Please do not include information which may identify you (or anyone else)]

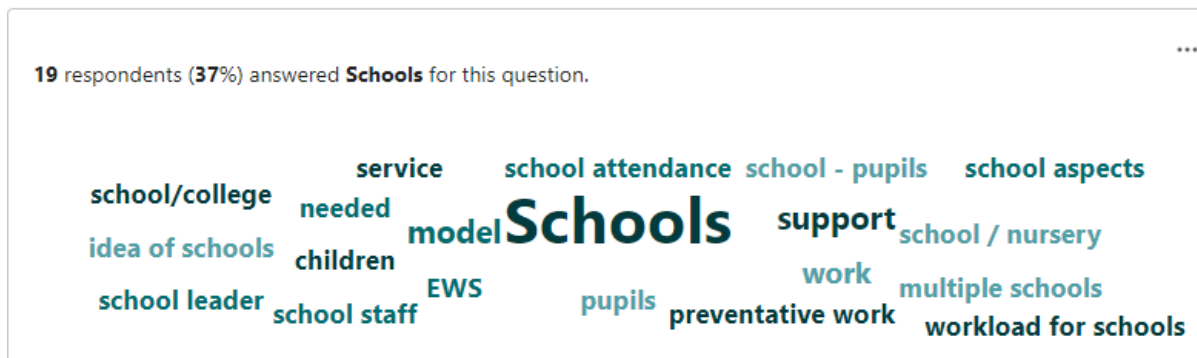
[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

53
 Responses

Latest Responses

"NOT SHOW UP AT 9 IN THE MORNING"



Qualitative Statements - Grouped by questions and stakeholders

These statements are the actual comments from the respondents reproduced verbatim, without any editing.

Q8. What else would you like to see included in the proposed model?

School-based staff

- Context as to how the model is going to be effectively resourced given the limitation of current resources in particular at EA level in terms of availability of EWO personnel
- Learning Mentor who links in with the school weekly. Shared between a cluster of schools who will work with families in the area providing support at home and in school.
- This model is another example of just moving everything to the school. The model assumes that schools are not trying all the strategies before the referral is made.

- Could EWO visit homes as part of the early intervention? Often this gives an invaluable insight in to the home situation that is previously unknown - makes it easier for schools to work with the family when they know more about the specific dynamics.
- Allocations of funding to schools to cope with the additional workload.
- clearly identified, specific and transparent definitions of what duties are expected of EWS, schools and families. Schools can take no more new responsibilities our duties on in relation to attendance, unless they get further funding for resources (Human). They are already overworked and cannot be held any more responsible for addressing attendance or lack of. than they already are. Tasks, strategies and duties can be adapted to fit into the new model, but ultimately once schools have exhausted every avenue and there is no or little improvement and they decide to refer to EWS, at this point, the EWS should be expected to step up and take the lead. Not the school. We want and need a pro-active service, who are robust, hands on and set achievable outcomes for improvement whether by carrot or stick. This is at this juncture, not the lead role of the school and should remain as such.
- No matter how much prevention is undertaken there are always families who that will not work with. Where in the model is a focus on difficult non attending families? Statutory duty regarding court? We have seen in our school court bring significant change to poor attenders.
- Better communication between professionals, especially social services
- An explanation of what is meant by "pre referral steps"
- starting in nursery school.... often patterns of attendance and attitudes start in nursery... If tackled in nursery could help in primary school. when I try to address attendance with parents of nursery aged children they say..... sure they don't have to come to nursery....sure we wont see a WFO
- Chances for key workers from EWO to work with the students in Schools
- The intervention that the EWO can provide to schools is welcome - however, we have concerns over the practicalities of impelmenting this. For example, how could the EWO advocate and promote healthy lifestyle and relationships in a meaningful way in a large school? Would a team be available for every school to cover all assemblies.
- The proposed model is very detailed and aspirational. The Counselling model in schools has been a success because of actual counsellor resident in school. If each school had a resident EWO for a day/week to follow up on attendance issues I think there would be a radical change overall. I know some schools in the past in the wider area did have EWS based in the school e.g Newtownabbey Community School
- EWOs contact the parents directly as soon as attendance falls below 85%
- A timeframe for delivery, assurance that EWS staff are available for delivery (given the reduction in staff availability we have experienced) as there is a considerable increase in the planned engagement with schools
- At what stage after all preventative measures and actions taken to support children, can a student request intensive support from EWS
- EWO staff attached directly to the school and working in the school at least 1 day per week taking on the duties of formal referral, connecting with parents and families as a member of school staff.
- all okay
- More specific targeted intervention for EOTAS young people

- More training for school staff
- Steps are timebound
- More face to face meetings with EWO, parents and pupil together.
- Teacher support , referral system easier .
- Quicker recourse to punitive measures in order to hold parents accountable
- One person in school - a designated attendance officer/teacher that you can speak to on a drop-in basis.
- Specific support and strategies. A lot of that which is being proposed doesn't seem to have been scoped for "how will this actually be delivered in schools", by who and what resources will they have.
- A focus on school engagement rather than attendance.
- Nowhere in the model is the chronic, hard line attendance cases addressed. There are a number of children in our school whose parents are unresponsive to any intervention. Why are the models in England not being looked at? The culture of non attendance at present is awful.

Education Authority Staff

- Life skills
- greater co-operation with voluntary sector that are already offering targeted programmes in schools to ensure no duplication of services and better use of EWS resources.
- Many issues affecting children/young people are not linked to school and will arise even with preventative work. The old model will likely still be needed in conjunction with this.
- individual support work / project workers to complete intense support with children.
- If there is an issue with attendance in school, i believe the youth service who are currently working with young people can help support the EWS.
- Collaboration with Local Youth Service/Workers working with the young people, they attend our programme regular
- The role of other agencies/services in schools delivering similar activities and how they can best compliment each other without overlapping
- WE have to look at the core of the problem and why the child and older youth are disengaging in formal education through continuous poor and inadequate attendance
- Planning to ensure non duplication and ensure EWS and other services have the same key messages in relation to helping children address barriers to school engagement which can be for a variety of reasons
- schools appear well equipped to address prevention strategies. It's the families that don't adhere to this that will always require further, more intensive support
- bespoke programs for those with learning difficulties to meet their understanding
- Where collaboration with other services has been mentioned how this would look- have these other services been consulted and a plan of action laid out? Have the time, resources and availability of other services been taken into account? Also, with training for staff are you proposing that staff would have sub cover? Otherwise many schools may not buy into this- this should be addressed clearly in the model

- more support for anxiety based school avoidance
- It is hard to see how such a broad plan of work could be implemented on a regional basis by such a relatively small team. This plan needs more detail on how you will deliver.
- Service Advisory Groups (Young People/Parents/MDT's) - advising on all aspects of the EWS
- Clearer communication with schools and parents.
 - support
- Detail - how, apart from improved attendance, is success measured - where is capacity built?
- Seems thorough already

Young People

- Group work with mates
- Group work with mates
- To know what agencies we would be working with to help us return to school
- An information session at start
- ???
- Tell us what specialist agencies we would be working with to engage us back into education
- Bullying
- More visits to school
- i don't know
- A consistent EWS member of staff working with a young person through all 3 tiers.
- Easier access to EWO, students to be made aware of who the EWO is so they can talk to them about issues, drop ins for advice

Others - parent/interest group/social worker

- Clearer transition threshold between the different intervention levels for stakeholders, teachers, families and young people.
- Support for children and their peers to manage change associated with class retention ie a child having to repeat a year
- Greater focus on impact of non attendance

Q10. In which other areas do you think children and young people would need specialist support?

School Based Staff

- Reluctant to go to school children need a person to help them transition into school, sometimes on a daily basis. this could be very short term or long term. Teachers do not always have the time to spend on this issue.
- Not sure
- Great role for EWO in working with other agencies - CAMHS, AAIS, Social Services - can help to move processes along more quickly.

- Separation anxiety needs qualified specialist provision, this should not be the role of the school to advise on.
- Court, Asd/anxiety
- It would be useful to have more support for parents, more education for parents and a greater focus on improving levels of engagement
- nursery
- In understanding the effect poor attendance has on their performance in school
- What are the implications for a young person with poor attendance? At the moment, it is difficult to see the power that the EWO has to ensure pupils attend school. There needs to be a more joined up referral process for EOTAS/ETA schemes. Pupils need to develop their resilience and understanding of the impact on their education and future career prospects if they continue to have poor attendance.
- Anxiety related issues/ addictive support for gaming especially when financial gain involved.
- parent courses - and parents should have to contact the EWO to explain absences
- A comprehensive range of support areas is covered here, it is a huge development in the provision by EWS.
- Being able to access the supports early on, not having to wait an excessive amount of time for supports to start, including being on the unallocated list
- I think it is mainly the parents of non attending pupils who need the support and intervention. nothing will change for the pupils while parents remain disconnected from the benefits of school.
- LAC pupils
- They need correct identification need causing issues with attendance and it needs to be a more rapid response in terms of support and intervention
- EOTAS provision
- School refusal is a mental health issue-most children who refuse school are seen by CAMHS. CAMHS input is vital but unfortunately is often lacking
- intensive support
- Mental Health
- Social anxiety a massive area, so should be addressed within Mental Health.
- Mental health issues; on-line bullying
- SEN
- What consideration has been given to the fact that EWS support is removed very early (Term 1) of Year 12. For many of our young people that have and need the support of an individual EWO they have that support person removed at such a critical stage (examinations ect). In many cases the EWO has been involved for a long period of time and built fantastic relationships with home/school but for it to be taken away at a time when the school/pupil needs it most.
- Self esteem

EA Staff Member

- supporting young people for moving into adulthood and the simple life skills like setting up a bank account.

- major focus on mental health support needed for pupils
- educational neglect with poor parental engagement with school and support services including a focus on the impact of multiple adverse childhood experiences. Children with care experience including children who have been adopted. Children with special educational needs including ASD that need additional support.
- Difficult to answer, permissive parenting, peer influences and drug usage in area I work has had a massive impact on young people's education.
- Children need project workers - EWOS carry a big case load to provide intense support to every child.
- Resilience
- In areas like interactions with other peers and significant caring adults to help them overcome the barriers that prevents them from engaging in a caring and supportive learning and welcoming environment.
- Mental health and counselling
- Repeated ongoing minor ailments / parental anxiety
- Trauma Informed Practice and understanding of ACES should be included in this I believe mental health and recovery after COVID are huge issues. I see these as specialist roles OUTSIDE of education
- sourcing employment from special education sector
- n/a
- Children with SEN or medical difficulties- sometimes no one is applying for ETA etc on these children's behalf and the schools are unaware of the procedures etc. This can lead to no educational support for these children. Specific populations of SEN children may need to be targeted more than others due to the increased likelihood within that population of anxiety difficulties which could prevent them attending school.
- anxiety
- Emotional Health and Wellbeing
- Elective home education, homeschooling support.
- Project work - intense 1-1
- Can not think of any

Young Person

- Don't know
- Autism, Jobs (careers)
- intervention in the home situation, help to catch up school work
- Practical advice and strategies to help pupils with anxiety.
- Substance misuse/parents living in poverty which is having an impact on us/me
- mental health
- need help with my mental well-being
- Mental health or sumin
- substance misuse/ parents living in poverty and how it impacts us/me and my education

- I don't know
- i'm not sure
- I think children and young people would need specialist support for their emotional support.
- Mental health, cyber bullying, homophobia
- Mental health and homophobia
- With motivation to enjoy all subjects at school and develop a thirst for learning earlier in life.
- Career support before picking GCSEs

Other (Parent/Social Worker/Interest Group)

- Within preventative programs would this include support around afterschool activities, such as homework clubs, social activities that would support the preventative/ early intervention. Preventative support for children whose parents cant support academic abilities at home, due to their own issues which don't fit need of social services
- Children who are adopted must also be identified as their needs as a looked after child do not disappear with an adoption order
- Court and asd

Q11. Any other comments?

School-based Staff

- N/A
- The key to this model being effective in its roll out is for it to be fully funded to allow for short waiting lists to access additional support and for there to be an enlargement of the EWO resource itself. Case loads at present mean that only the poorest attenders are getting targeted but by the time they are actively engaged with the volume of learning lost is significant as are the reinforced behaviours and patterns
- Schools have enough on their plate. Another service reverting to advisory.
- Great to see a focus on a new way of looking at this!
- The current service is unfit for purpose - this seems as if the workload for schools will be increased to make up for shortfalls in the service
- Schools already completed the a range of preventative work in schools What is needed are more people to assist. EWOs are required to support pupils parents and schools
- We have had training in trauma and attachment and are doing many of the preventative things planned, but the over all attendance is still poor following the pandemic. The interventions are very demanding of teaching time so it is important support is resourced and funding for parenting staff would help with family liaison.
- Our school has all the work being undertaken that you have described. When we refer to ewo it is for more intensive specialist work with family and young person. This is vital and if preventative work takes them away from that it would be a loss. Who is going to work with those who prevention does not impact?
- There would be concerns with a number of parts of the proposal - regarding the idea of schools visiting parents/carers; delivery of early intervention programmes - how would these fit into an already stretched curriculum? - who would design these programmes?

- i have worked in pre-school / nursery and the children with poor attendance in pre-school/ nursery generally continue that pattern
- We feel that we are going round in circles once we identify pupils with poor attendance. There is no threat to parents of a fine or court action that seems to be effective. We have written to EWO regarding the complex issues that we are facing in school - pupils are able to slip through the net if they have good behaviour but present with mental health/anxiety issues. It is almost impossible to obtain an Educational Psychologist referral and we are unable to obtain alternative placement without this referral.
- My concern is the responsibility of implementation of some of the school aspects. Heads of Year currently have 1 hour 40 minutes per week on their timetable to complete all pastoral work, not just attendance. The volume of work is already profound. I understand that EWS is also struggling with workload too, allocation of referrals currently taking approximately a year. (I received a EWS letter this week to notify me of EW allocation when the referral was submitted June 2021. Pre - covid was not any better.) So allocation of referrals with more EWOs to begin work is a key improvement. Attendance support based in school a day a week would be a great help. Personnel able to complete work is key to the success of any planned model. Sadly, I do not have confidence in referrals anymore.
- Building capacity among school staff is a sound proposal; have Principals and Governors agreed to facilitate such programmes in a timely manner?
- I am very concerned that this model places even more pressure on school based staff already at their limit in what they can do to support their pupils. This model is actually the opposite of what we need,
- none
- It seems to take a long period of time from when the student is first referred tp EWS to the time that they are allocated
- No
- We have 3 students currently involved with EWO.
- My experience, as a school leader for approaching 10 years in multiple schools in socio-economically deprived parts of Belfast, is that EWS has been largely ineffective in positively impacting upon parental attitudes towards ensuring their children attend school regularly and punctually. The focus should be on getting it right as early as possible- nursery, KS1 and early in KS2. I fear that the reluctance to pursue through the courts those parents who will resort to every excuse under the sun in order to justify not giving their kids the same chance as others means that the changing cultural attitude we aspire to create simply is not there. In fact, it has only gotten worse due to Covid. I would like to see quicker recourse to warnings and then action.
- In our school we have excellent relationships with the EWS/EWOs and we see them as an important part of our school "team". I am intrested in the proposal that an EWO would be available to resource to a specific school.
- It is wonderful to see so many aspects replicated from the Children Looked After Education Project - our school has been involved in this for so long. However I still feel the focus on attendance as being too narrow.
- The model neglects to address and look at action when children do not attend.

EA Staff

- Exciting times ahead and a whole new direction and focus for EWS.

- I hope the new model works
- NA
- no
- Families need the support, help and direction of the EWS to enable to seek appropriate interventions to instill in their child/children the importance to attend their school/college that with continuous help and support, the pupil will begin to excel and enjoy learning the skills that prepares them for adulthood and career based employment. It is only by regular school attendance the key essential academia skills can be learnt that impacts on the pupil/person's to reach their full educational attainment that promotes confidences and being valued as a citizen within wider society with so much to give back.
- it is good to see models improved
- I think overall the model looks very good. However, some of the proposed activities e.g. group work on friendship could be a duplication of the work delivered by behaviour support. I would be concerned that if there is not a joint up thinking approach then school could receive multiple messages around the same issues which could be confusing and infact dilute messages. I feel that EWS should be closely linking in with services at a very strategic level for planning purposes such as behaviour support and nurture service to ensure key messages and approaches are the same and there is no duplication of services provided to the school. For example there will at times be a cross over in relation to school attendance of a pupil and perhaps SBEW needs. If there is not very close cross departmental working it will mean EWS will remain in a silo. I know there is reference to linking with other EA services but this needs to be done in a meaningful way to ensure effectiveness so EWS needs adequately resourced to form these meaningful strategic relationships
- This plan appears to require many more EWO's. I am ware they have been striking due to unequal pay with Trust colleagues. I would be concerned as to where and who you are going to recruit based on their salary.
- n/a
- N/A
- Social workers working for the Education Authority should be paid on par with their colleagues in the HSCTs. The EA either sees the value in the social work profession, or it doesn't. This issue needs to be resolved.
- The model refers to assisting schools with the ETI proforma - there could be confusion of roles here as this primarily sits with the Child Protection team and SDS. EWS role in this process would need to be clarified.
- Service should focus on statutory obligation of service only = to address attendance issues only. Other support functions should be addressed by other services across EA and CYPS specifically. EA cannot afford to keep doing 'nice to do' function but should comply with statutory duty
- The proposed model is good and can be built on in future. Great work from those involved in developing the model.
- Well done for all those involved

Young People

- no one likes school if they do they are weird
- don't need school to learn. can use your phone

- nah
- Nothing
- No
- no

Others

- How will the Education welfare service sit with the new trauma informed support services for LAC on offer for some pilot schools?
- I am glad to see the proposal for the widening of the EWS model. I have always felt their intervention was much too late with little focus on welfare. The proposed model is much more holistic with a focus on addressing some of the issues before they become barriers and targeting support in early intervention. I hope also that with the development of specialist support in various areas, there would be greater understanding of risk factors and support to families and other professionals working with the child to address these
- The roles described are very broad for one person to do. In my community there are many organisations offering specialisms you have said so why recreate?

Appendix 7 - Response of EWS to NIAO(2014) and PAC(2014) Reports

This Report was commissioned as a result of reports from the Northern Ireland Audit Office (2004 & 2014) and the Public Accounts Committee (2014). The recommendations concluded that there was a need for efficiency and effectiveness across the Education Welfare Service (EWS) as well as the implementation of a consistent model of delivery. From establishment of Education Authority NI (EA) Education Welfare Services evolved as a Regional Service (2016). Education Welfare Services (EA) have been 're-engineered' to address the lack of regionalisation of practice identified in both reports above. EWS Services are now more proactive, carry out more preventative work, act with more urgency and have put in place mechanisms to ensure that all pupils requiring support are identified at the earliest possible opportunity. To assist in this, available data is utilised to support the improvement in attendance in partnership with Schools, DENI, ETI and Health and Social Care Services.

As a part of Service improvement, we have worked to clearly:

- Define role and function of EWS Services (www.eani.org.uk)
- Agree the broad strategic direction and priorities for EWS moving forward
- Provide assurances and an assessment of comparative performance including available data, processes and management information
- Identify and share examples of established best practice

This Report seeks to address these recommendations and reflect EWS Service development and transformation in EA as a Regional Service. A number of recommendations make reference to DE and we have provided content where this is appropriate and the outworking has an interface with EWS.

| Recommendations 2014 NIAO | Date Achieved | EA EWS Progress Report |
|--|---|--|
| <p>Recommendation 1</p> <p>It is imperative that the Department implements the recommendations made by the NIAO in a timely way. The Department should view, as a priority, the development of an overarching Strategy to address the issues associated with school attendance.</p> | <p>April 2013 Annex A 2015 2015 2016 2016 2018 Oct 19/Revised Feb 2020 2019/14 2020</p> | <p>EWS and DENI have developed clear strategies to address School Attendance in NI:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Attendance Matters • Sample Pupil Attendance Policy • Absence Notification Form • Miss School Miss Out • Strategy for Improving Pupil Attendance Consultation Booklet • Challenge of Improving Pupil Attendance at School – Case Studies Paper • Attendance Guidance and Absence Recording by Schools • Extended Leave Circular • Covid 19 Attendance Code Advice • 2019/2020 Attendance Promotion – ‘Every School Day Counts’ Broadcast on Social Media, TV, Shared in multiple languages |
| <p>Recommendation 2</p> <p>When it is developed, the Department’s Strategy on Attendance should target the specific groups which are most at risk of failure due to non-attendance at school.</p> | | <p>In identification of Key Groups and targeted interventions EWS (EA) have developed key Regional interventions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EWS/DENI working groups address Key Targeted Interventions • Targeted Schools based on data analysis • Partnership Plans (EA EWS) with Schools • Audit Meetings – agreed meetings between Pastoral Care Team and EWS (Team around the Child) |

| Recommendations 2014 NIAO | Date Achieved | EA EWS Progress Report |
|---------------------------|---------------|--|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity Building- these include attendance workshops, Assembly, focused work with year • EWS Promotion – www.movingforward.me • EWS Resources Booklet • EWS Video Promo • School Aged Mothers team and regionally agreed approaches and interventions • Support for Traveller children and regular liaison with the EA Intercultural Education Service • Support for Looked After Children with EWS LAC Staff participating in the EA EITP LAC Project which trains and assists key adult(s) in schools to proactively support Looked After Children with attachment issues/disorder to help support the child within their school placement with the aim of improving educational outcomes for LAC • EWS LAC Staff have continued to link with the HSCT in the development and roll out of Personal Education Plans (PEPs) • EWS Staff have supported families arriving in Northern Ireland as part of the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (VPRS) – this has involved EWS staff liaising with the families key workers, assisting with school placements and co-working on supporting with the EA Intercultural Education Service • An EWO is employed to provide specific support to Roma families • Development of Regional Transitions Programmes – Supporting Primary 7/Year 8 Pupils with Transfer to Post primary • Targeted EWS EA Attendance Interventions based on KS – KS1-2 Puppet Show/School Attendance Matters Lesson Plan • Individual Work – as identified in Supervision and in partnership with School, Parent and YP |
| Recommendation 3 | | In supporting School Attendance EWS (EA) and DENI have developed key strategies and resources to ensure Schools, Parents and Young Persons are conversant with the |

| Recommendations 2014 NIAO | Date Achieved | EA EWS Progress Report |
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| <p>We welcome the progress made by the Department in addressing pupil attendance in socially deprived areas and recommend that the Department, through the Education Welfare Service, continues to offer support to help schools in these areas to drive down non-attendance. The Department must also address outstanding recommendations from the 2004 report and, in particular it should establish an attendance network for schools in deprived areas to share information and good practice.</p> <p>Overall responsibility for ensuring that children attend school lies with the parents and therefore, in our view, promoting the importance of attendance to parents is a worthwhile investment. We recommend, therefore, that the Department considers issuing the Parent’s Guide to the parents/guardians of all primary and post-primary parents.</p> | | <p>importance of School Attendance, connections to attainment, socialisation, friendship and opportunity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Attendance Matters • Sample Pupil Attendance Policy • Absence Notification Form • Miss School Miss Out • Strategy for Improving Pupil Attendance Consultation Booklet • Challenge of Improving Pupil Attendance at School – Case Studies Paper – Particular focus on schools with attendance less than 90% • Attendance Guidance and Absence Recording by Schools • Extended Leave Circular • Covid 19 Attendance Code Advice • 2019/2020 Attendance Promotion – ‘Every School Day Counts’ Broadcast on Social Media, TV, Shared in multiple languages <p>Further to the above EA EWS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have targeted Support Schools with a Revised EWS/School Partnership Plan • Have ‘revised’ referral procedures • Have an identified ‘link’ EWO for each school in NI • Development of an information booklet for families and schools promoting the importance of regular school attendance • EWOs engage in regular structured capacity building with school staff, parents and pupils, to promote the importance of good attendance • Development of pre referral meetings as a regional platform to address attendance before it reaches the threshold for referral |

| Recommendations 2014 NIAO | Date Achieved | EA EWS Progress Report |
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| <p>Recommendation 4</p> <p>There is a link between attendance and educational performance. We recommend, therefore, that schools ensure that attendance statistics are part of the tracking and monitoring of pupils' overall performance throughout their time in compulsory education and an item for discussion at parent/teacher meetings. As part of this process primary schools should maintain attendance statistics for individual pupils and this information should be made available to the pupil's post primary school.</p> | | <p>Data Analysis of attendance is shared with EA EWS termly from DENI and Yearly Statistics are published annually. In Audit and Triage meetings EWS will update Pastoral Care Teams on School targets and comparative data:</p> <p>The data is analysed to produce overall attendance figures for each academic year, including information on the levels of absence, type of absence and reason for absence. The reports also contain more detailed statistics by school sector as well as pupil characteristics, such as gender and ethnicity.</p> <p>Attendance and absence rates, both authorised and unauthorised, for each school in Northern Ireland are also produced, where available.</p> <p>Attendance data is available from 2007/2019 annually.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools will populate this information into SIMS C2K and this information is available to EWS (2018) via direct access permissions <p>Termly audits across all key stages to identify clusters/groups requiring targeted intervention are carried out in all schools. The service has also examined DE data for 2018/19 with individual schools with less than 90% attendance clarifying underestimations of school attendance.</p> |
| <p>Recommendation 5</p> <p>We recommend that study leave should be omitted from the attendance figures reported for Year 12 pupils. This will help authorities to</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance Guidance and Absence Recording by Schools October 2019 | <p>The issue of Study leave is addressed in the 2019 DENI Circular as reflected below. EWS will also address any issues in respect of Study leave with Schools. EWS work closely with year 12 Pupils to ensure they are afforded the best opportunity in accordance with their needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Code S*: Study Leave |

| Recommendations 2014 NIAO | Date Achieved | EA EWS Progress Report |
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| <p>gain a more accurate picture of attendance at this level.</p> | | <p>This code should be used for study leave as agreed by the school.</p> <p>Study Leave is unsupervised time out of school and should only be applied to public examination candidates, in Years 11 to 14, during the examination period.</p> <p>Study Leave should not be granted to pupils not involved in public examinations. (Public examinations are those which are authenticated or awarded by an external organisation, and not internally by the school. The main examples of such examinations include GCSEs, A Levels and BTECs).</p> <p>Supervised study or revision classes provided in school should be coded Present / (am) or \ (pm).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study leave should not be used in advance of the commencement of the examination timetable. |
| <p>Recommendation 6</p> <p>We recommend that schools place a greater emphasis on following up absence to enable a more meaningful reporting of absence information which, in turn, will afford more effective monitoring and analysis.</p> <p>ETI reviews school attendance as part of its school inspections and is, therefore, in an ideal position to identify good practice in schools with</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2016 • 2018 | <p>Education Training and Inspectorate have undertaken two key interventions to promote attendance with Board of Governors and to ensure Best Practice is shared:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part One – attendance in Schools ETI Good Practice Report July 2016 • Every School a Good School – A Governor’s Role. Circular 2010/18 - Chapter 16 |

| Recommendations 2014 NIAO | Date Achieved | EA EWS Progress Report |
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| <p>good or improving attendance. It is important that this information is disseminated throughout the education system. We recommend that the Education and Training Inspectorate shares this information with the Department and that the Department considers how best to promulgate good practice in attendance management identified during school visits. As highlighted in paragraph 2.15 the purpose of inspection is to promote the highest possible standards of learning, teaching and achievement and this recommendation would be consistent with this statement.</p> | | |
| <p>Recommendation 7</p> <p>We understand and acknowledge that there may be exceptional circumstances which may result in pupils being absent from school for extended periods of time. It is, however, unacceptable that the Education Welfare Service is discouraging schools from referring pupils who miss more than 15 per cent of school. It is vitally important</p> | <p>2017</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EWS EA Single Service Model Developed | <p>EWS Services have developed key Regional Practices which ensure attendance related matters are addressed in a consistent manner – ensuring the best outcome for Young People. The issue of prevention and early intervention is throughout all our services. All of the key principles below have developed Regional Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EWS Supervision Policy Regionally Agreed • Each School in NI – Primary and Post Primary will have an identified Link EWS Officer • EWS (EA) Partnership Plans – agreed in September and reviewed annually with Pastoral Care Team • Annual Review of School Attendance Policy • EWS is capturing short term preventative work carried out by officers regionally and will report in our core data set |

| Recommendations 2014 NIAO | Date Achieved | EA EWS Progress Report |
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| <p>that schools have the freedom to refer all pupils who meet the 15 per cent threshold and, in their view, require intervention. Without this freedom there is a risk that the education system could be failing the most vulnerable pupils. We recommend that schools refer all cases where intervention is considered to be necessary. Although this is likely to result in an increase in demand for the EWS and potentially contribute to an increase in waiting lists it is essential that the Department has an opportunity to analyse the real level of demand for the service and consider how best to resource it.</p> | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EWS Audit meetings agreed in Partnership Plans – all referrals to EWS and alternative support EA/Community agreed in Partnership with School Pastoral Care Team • Parents made aware of referral to EWS in accordance with School Attendance Policies • EWS Referral form available on EA Web Page, SIMS, Digital and via Partnership Plan - Regional • EWS Pathway Through Casework Model Developed Regionally • EWS Resources Booklet – advises on EWS interventions, Parents, Schools responsibilities – available on EA EWS www.eani.org.uk • EWS Court Panels Developed Regionally – September 2020 • EWS EA Best Practice Working Groups – these groups have been developed to address OBA, Court Panels and Best Practice Development • EWS EA Data Team – see attached reporting on EWS Data capture which is now a functional aspect of service development • EWS (EA) use Capita to record Casework and data analysis • Risk Assessment model on Waiting Lists Developed |
| <p>Recommendation 8</p> <p>Tackling the problem of persistent absenteeism is undoubtedly one of the biggest challenges that our education system faces. We recommend that the EWS places a greater emphasis on preventative measures through the provision of training and consultation for staff in</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2016 • 2017 • 2018 | <p>In consultation with CYPS Partners, Schools, YP's, DENI, DFC and others we have developed key resources to support and diversify approaches to EWS interventions. Listed are a number of key interventions currently available to EWS and Schools in supporting attendance related concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EWS (EA) Primary/Post Primary PowerPoint Presentations for BOG/Pastoral Care Team/Parents • EWS (EA) Resources Folder • EWS Transition Officer Post Developed www.movingforward.me • Transitions DVD, Transition On line resource |

| Recommendations 2014 NIAO | Date Achieved | EA EWS Progress Report |
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| schools with attendance responsibilities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2018/19 • 2019 • 2020 • 2016 • 2019/20 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EWS KS1/2 Puppet Resource with Lesson Plan • EWS (EA) Resources Booklet • EWS Video shared on Social Media • DENI/EWS (EA) 'Miss School Miss Out' • DENI/EWS (EA) Every School A Good School <p>The service works extensively at the pre referral level with schools and pupils whose attendance is declining but above 85%. Capturing this data is part of our core data set.</p> |
| <p>Recommendation 9</p> <p>We understand that once the Education and Skills Authority (ESA) has been implemented there will be one regional Education Welfare Service for all schools. The Department should consider whether any improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery can be identified in the Education Welfare Service. There should be a particular focus on ensuring that the approach adopted by the Education Welfare Officers is consistent and that all disengaged pupils have access to the same services.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education Authority (EA) 1 April 2015 • 2017-2020 EWS Regional Service | <p>With the creation of the Education Authority (NI) Education Welfare Services have responded to the needs of developing a single service with regional consistency. Included for reference are a number of the key developments which have enabled transformation of services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of Education Welfare Service Appointed 2017 • Management Structures created regionally • Regional Administrative Manager appointed to manage Regional EWS Admin team and EWS process • EWS Teams located in key geographical locations • EWS 147 Core staff Regionally – covering all Primary and Post Primary Schools • Regional Pathway Process developed and shared with all staff • Regional Referral form developed and reviewed annually • Regional Partnership Plans developed and agreed annually with School Pastoral Care Teams • Regional SharePoint Site for Best Practice • Regional Best Practice Teams |

| Recommendations 2014 NIAO | Date Achieved | EA EWS Progress Report |
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| <p>If the implementation of ESA is delayed for any reason, we recommend that the Department gives consideration to a more joined up and consistent approach in the provision of an Education Welfare Service under the current five Board structure. This should help to streamline the working relationships between schools and the Education Welfare Service and should ensure that all disengaged pupils receive the same opportunities.</p> | | <p>Current Working Groups established in EA EWS to further develop regional consistency and ability to respond to changing demands:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Data Team and core data set developed • Regional Review of Casework/Risk assessment • EWS Court Panels established regionally from 2020 <p>The usage of data has been a key concept of EWS interventions and will further lead to OBA analysis and Service delivery models:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional access to C2k • School Attendance Data • EWS Data Team <p>All Education Welfare Officers are Registered with the Northern Ireland Social Care Council and regulation ensures we work with key partners and professionals in Northern Ireland and across the UK to ensure workforce learning and development is a key element for organisations providing social care services. Together we are developing a workforce that is innovative, skilled and sustainable; one that fosters economic growth and sustainable communities across the UK.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional NISCC Registration • Regional Practice Teacher Forum – EWS offers 10 x 2 Social Work Placements annually • Regional School Aged Mothers Team (SAM): |

| Recommendations 2014 NIAO | Date Achieved | EA EWS Progress Report |
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| | | <p>EWS have a Regional SAM Team Managed by DCEWO Leads. The primary aim of the SAM Programme is to support young women of school age who are pregnant or who have become mothers, to continue their education with as little disruption as possible. It is possible to support the young women to continue their chosen course of study at their own school by making a few reasonable adjustments, and facilitating time off as required. Many young women stay in school until a few weeks before the baby is born and return within six weeks after the birth.</p> <p>SAM coordinators now operate regionally, working intensively with families and schools to provide the necessary support, through assessment, planning and ongoing review.</p> <p>If a School Age Mother needs childcare to continue in school, the Coordinator completes an Assessment for Childcare, approved by the Deputy Chief Education Welfare Officer. Guidance and agreements are sent to the family, the registered childminder and the school. School attendance is monitored by the Coordinator to support payment and issues are addressed as needed. This is funded by the Education Authority.</p> |
| <p>Recommendation 10</p> <p>It is vital that the Education Welfare Service has access to the basic management information that it requires in order to complete its role effectively. We recommend that the Department provides the Education Welfare Service with access to the C2k system and that EWS's current management information systems are reviewed. Basic management</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2016/17 C2k/EA EWS Agreement | <p>As a further development in digitalisation of services and improved access to data EWS in 2016/17 agreed access process with C2k – this now ensures remote access to real time attendance data and further enables responsive intervention models:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EWS can access School Attendance Module in SIMS/C2k remotely • EWS use Capita One for recording Case Work – enabling regional accessibility • Regional Court Work recording via Capita for data analysis purposes and development of OBA • EWS Pathway Through Casework – Regional • EWS Data Report 2018/19 |

| Recommendations 2014 NIAO | Date Achieved | EA EWS Progress Report |
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| <p>information such as caseloads and waiting lists should be available at the touch of a button.</p> | | <p>The development of a small data team and culture of outcome measurement has allowed the service to develop a core data set and key metrics covering all aspects of the service's function.</p> |
| <p>Recommendation 11</p> <p>There is a wide range of factors that can impact on a pupil's attendance at school and for this reason it is not appropriate to apply a single approach in tackling the problem of non-attendance. In our view, the best results can be achieved through the implementation of innovative practices tailored to meet the local circumstances of individual schools.</p> <p>We recommend that the Department and the ELBs should work together to identify and offer support to those schools with high levels of unauthorised absence and/or a high concentration of vulnerable pupils. This should involve providing schools with examples of good practice and working with them in developing and applying a tailored approach to tackling non-attendance.</p> | | <p>EWS (EA) in partnership with DENI have developed robust, consistent, timely, assessment-based interventions to ensure EA/DENI Statutory roles are addressed and reviewed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervision Process to review all cases and agreed outcomes. • Clear Pathway Guidelines for staff and easy read for Schools • Clear Audit/Triage Process • Pre-Referral Clinics – these Clinics address cases pre 85% to ensure early intervention and support measures in partnerships with Parents and YP – School Attendance Policy • Regional Referral Process reviewed annually • Regional Assessment Framework – developed to address the needs of YP and key supports with timelines • Regional Feedback process with Schools to include directions and timelines • Development of Key Stage specific resource interventions • Clear EA Partnership working with Schools, Parents and Young People – with Welfare of the Child as Paramount |

| Recommendations 2014 NIAO | Date Achieved | EA EWS Progress Report |
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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear Partnership working in accordance with 2015 Co-operation Act (NI) |
| <p>Recommendation 12</p> <p>Early identification of patterns in pupil absence can assist schools in putting measures in place to prevent persistent non-attendance at school. Since our last report in 2004, there is now more data available to school Governors and principals and it is essential that this data is used in a meaningful way. We recommend that all schools are required to set their own realistic but challenging targets for pupil attendance and that progress against the targets is monitored regularly with early intervention where an individual pupil's attendance record gives cause for concern. Pupil attendance should be a standing item on the agenda of Board of Governors meetings.</p> <p>It is clear that tackling the problem of non-attendance, and in particular persistent non-attendance, is highly complex and in certain cases it may be necessary to involve a wide range of</p> | | <p>Service Level Agreements/Revised 2019 EWS Partnership Plans</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EWS/DENI data specific shared with Schools • C2k reporting Analysis • Review of School Attendance Policies • Regional Audit/Triage Process agreed with the service • Pre-Referral Clinics and processes established in all teams |

| Recommendations 2014 NIAO | Date Achieved | EA EWS Progress Report |
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| <p>stakeholders. We strongly recommend that the Department considers ways of ensuring that there is a more cohesive and joined up approach in addressing the issues associated with non-attendance. In developing an overarching strategy to address issues associated with school attendance (see Recommendation 1) the Department should consider how it will work with other relevant agencies.</p> | | |

Appendix 8 - Implementation Plan

Initial Transition Plan May -October 2022



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| <p>General</p> | <p>Communicate with SEWOs and wider EWS staff.</p> <p>Establish a transition plan from Transformation Project to implementation phase.</p> <p>Identify Implementation Team (DCEWOs/SEWOs & others?)</p> <p>Consider role of Project Board and need for lead 'driver'.</p> | <p>Identify enduring structures from Transformation Project to take forward. (Consider if and what new Workstreams are needed & who will lead them).</p> <p>Establish 'Implementation Team'.</p> <p>Report/Evaluation on Transformation Project to date.</p> | <p>Establish implementation structures – Steering Group? Implementation Board? Working Groups/Workstreams?</p> <p>Identify timeline for meetings and delivery – ensure these are set in calendar going forward.</p> |
| <p>(WS1) Service Delivery Model</p> | <p>Draft Model – available April/May</p> <p>Consultation with schools YP & families– May/June</p> | <p>Feedback analysed and model updated.</p> <p>New Service Model – confirmed July/Aug</p> | <p>Assimilation to EA Locality Model implementation date 1 September</p> |

Workstream



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| | Review of model by PRG and PB (May) | | Engage cross-directorate support Behaviour etc Embedding new delivery model & program of offer to schools – schools fully aware of what EWS can do for them Comms about model |
| (WS2) Staffing Structures | Structural Model – June/July Roles /JD role being worked on - TUS dependent Roles /JD - agreed by June | Functional Leads in place/team leaders in place Need for Specialist posts Consider need for networks for training/support and development Create networks for training / support and development | Recruitment phase– 3months Workforce development post recruitment as before – (possibly 29 posts needed) Build in training for these |

Workstream



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| | Admin – Structure developed Recruitment process commenced - TUS dependent | | |
| (WS3) OBA Framework | Draft OBA Framework agreed. Review & update monthly reports on corporate metrics as required. | Draft OBA Framework reviewed & updated. Draft OBA Report Cards produced. Consult with EWS staff. Monthly reports on corporate metrics finalised. | OBA Training for EWS staff rolled out. Formalised mechanism for managing monthly corporate metrics reports. Produce initial OBA report |
| (WS4) Policies, Standards & Guidance | Complex Case Panel – Devise roll out plan via DC/SEWOs | Complex Case Panel – Devise roll out plan via DC/SEWOs Develop plan for interim digitising of short term | Complex Case Panels established and running consistently across service. |

Workstream



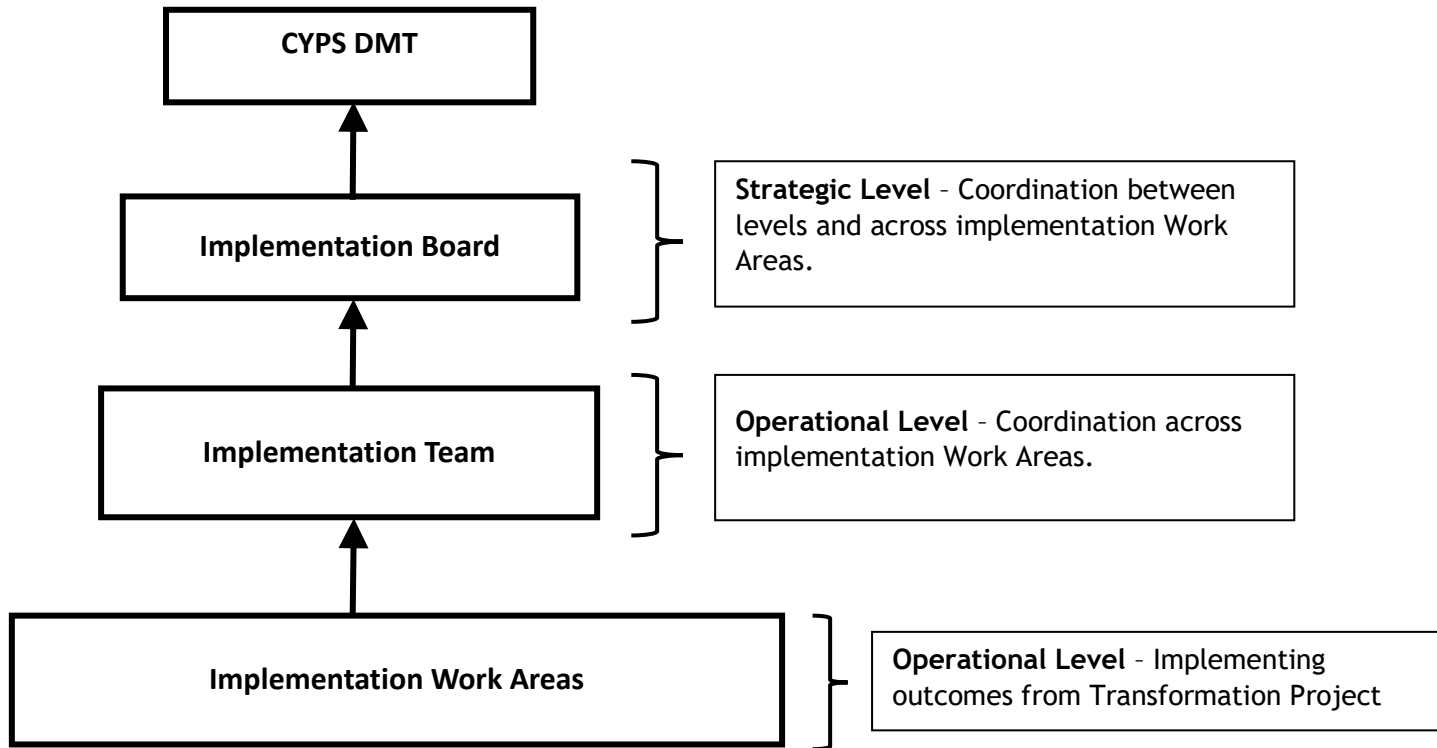
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| | <p>Consider digitising of short term recordings — through DC/SEWOs</p> <p>Develop plan for roll out of initial Standards improvement/ governance ‘standing’ groups - by May/June</p> <p>Complete initial review of ‘Pathways Through Casework’ – establish policy review schedule.</p> | <p>recordings — through DC/SEWOs</p> <p>Instigate roll out of initial Standards improvement/ governance ‘standing’ groups - by May/June</p> <p>‘Pathways Through Casework’ updated to reflect new model.</p> | <p>Embed structures for implementing Standards Improvement/ Governance – eg standing groups established & operating for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) R&QI (ii) (ii) Comms & (iii) (iii) to supersede WS4 <p>EHE,CME responses/policies developed</p> |
| <p>(WS5) Engagement / Communication with Stakeholders</p> | <p>Review of website structure & content.</p> <p>Survey of stakeholders on engagement methods/ platforms & scheduling.</p> | <p>Website updated.</p> <p>Engagement strategy established - identifying appropriate platforms, feedback mechanisms.</p> | <p>Function and name of service – possible rebranding following consultation.</p> <p>Website reviewed and updated on regular basis.</p> |

Workstream

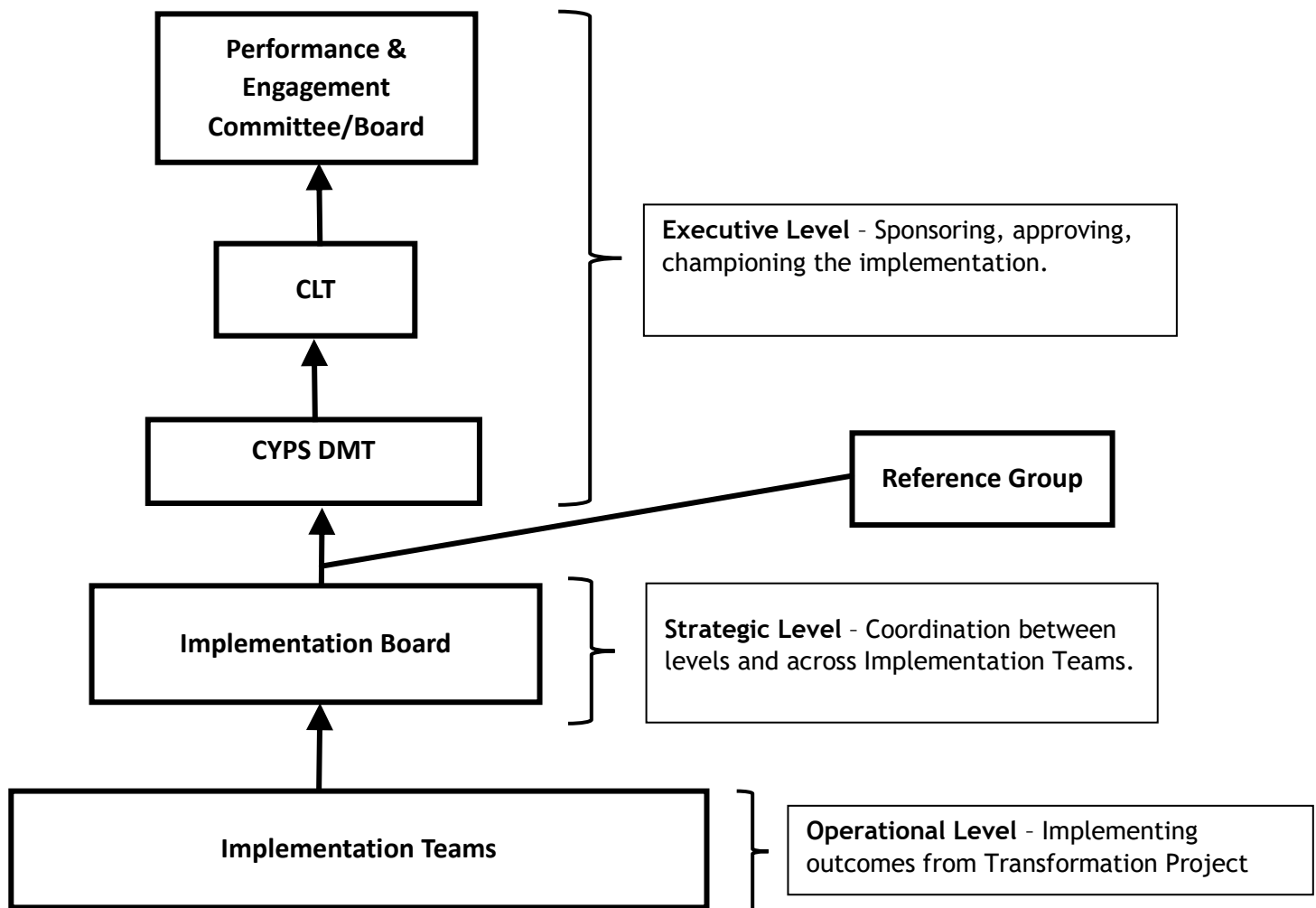


| | | | Enduring Comms strategy and working group to review going forward. |
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| (WS6) Infrastructure & Digitisation | <p>Initial consultation with all EA staff regarding preferences on post-covid working arrangements.</p> <p>Links established with EdIS Programme to identify key areas of digitisation for service</p> | <p>Digital proposals developed within EdIS for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral process • Brief Interventions • Storage of files <p>Data sharing with Health</p> <p>Proposals for EWS post-covid working arrangements.</p> | <p>Introduction of suitable post-covid working arrangement – eg hybrid model of working, office sharing etc.</p> <p>EdIS takes on responsibility for digitising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral process • Brief Interventions • Storage of files • Data sharing with Health <p>Education Beyond Covid takes responsibility for post-Covid working arrangements.</p> |

This transition plan will be further developed into a more comprehensive Implementation Plan with specific work areas identified to deliver the outcomes and recommendations from the Transformation Project.



Implementation Phase - Proposed Governance Structure



A draft implementation plan has been developed. Implementation of all elements of the plan is contingent on the Business Case, particularly in respect of developing the staffing structure to support the new model. The timeline for the plan is therefore an indicative timeline, although many elements of the plan can be progressed without the need for the Business Case.

March 23 - October 23:

| Implementation Stage | Mar-23 | | | | Apr-23 | | | | May-23 | | | | Jun-23 | | | | Jul-23 | | | | Aug-23 | | | | Sep-23 | | | | Oct-23 | | | |
|--|--------|---|---|---|--------|---|---|---|--------|---|---|---|--------|---|---|---|--------|---|---|---|--------|---|---|---|--------|---|---|---|--------|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Stage 1: Implementation Planning | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Establish Implementation Team | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Identification of the Implementation Workareas & Leads | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Establish Outcomes to be achieved | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Mobilisation Meetings for work areas | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Develop outline timelines | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Stage 2: Project Set up | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Agree Implementation Plan at Project Board Meeting | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Approval of Governance for Implementation Plan, Process and Engagement Strategy | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Information Sessions for EWS Staff about the Implementation Phase | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Information Sessions for schools about Implementation Phase | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Information Sessions for DE about the Implementation Phase | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Financially assess the cost of model delivery | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Develop business case as required to support the model of delivery | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Business case submitted for approval* | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| * Approval for the business case is required to advance complete implementation of the new model with the proposed staffing structure. Many elements of policies and procedures may be progressed without a business case. However, the full implementation is contingent on approval of the business case and the timeline is, therefore, an indicative timeline. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Stage 3: Implementation and Evaluation | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Arrange initial meetings for identified workareas | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Develop / agree detailed (SMART) Action Plans for implementation of work areas | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Implementation of workstream action plans* | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Communication regarding Implementation Phase | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Arrange Stakeholder Information Sessions (EWS staff, Principals, Parents, Young People) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Analysis of feedback/suggestions | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Stage 4: Project Completion | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Agreed final framework for future delivery for the Education Welfare Service | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Meetings / Reports | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Meetings of individual work areas | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Meetings of Implementation Team | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Meetings of Reference Group | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Reports to DMT/CLT Committees | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Meetings with DE | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Appendix 9 - Draft Outcomes Based Accountability Framework

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of an OBA Framework for the EWS will take cognisance of outputs from other work streams, including redesigning the service delivery model, career progression and professional development, policy standards and guidance and collaboration with Pupils, Parents & the Education Sector. Membership of Work Stream 3 includes the EA's Corporate Performance Manager and Data Analytics and Insights Manager to ensure that the Framework aligns with EA's Corporate Reporting and Data Quality Frameworks.

The EWS is a large complex service, which is set to undergo significant change. It is critical that the EWS OBA framework takes cognisance of this change in helping to measure performance, and improve outcomes for those children and young people served by those functions.

2. BACKGROUND TO THE EWS

The EWS is an education support service within the Children and Young People's Services (CYPS) Directorate of the Education Authority (EA) whose primary statutory function is promoting positive attendance at school. The Service assists young people of compulsory school age to attend school regularly and works with these young people and their families to address barriers to positive engagement in education.

3. OVERVIEW OF OBA

OBA is a disciplined way of thinking and taking action that can be used to improve the quality of life in communities, towns, cities and countries (population accountability). OBA can also be used to improve the performance of programmes, services and organisations (performance accountability). OBA starts at the ends and works backward, step by step, to the means. For communities the ends are conditions of well-being for children, adults, families and the community as a whole. For programmes, services and organisations, the ends are how service users are better off when programmes, services and organisations work the way they should.

With population accountability a group of agencies take on responsibility for achieving a condition of wellbeing for a population within a geographical area, for example 'all children within Northern Ireland will be happy, healthy and achieve their full potential'. In order to achieve such a result or outcome, the range of partners must include all agencies that can make an impact, for example education, health and justice etc. Responsibility for achieving the desired outcome is then shared across all partners.

Performance accountability focuses on the wellbeing of identified stakeholder populations rather than whole populations: for example, pupils referred to the EWS, pupils undergoing statutory assessment etc. Organisations, services or programmes identify their specific service users, clarify the desired results or outcomes for these groups and decide how these outcomes can be measured and improved.

4. OBA APPROACH

In the New Decade New Approach deal, the Northern Ireland Executive agreed to retain an outcomes-based Programme for Government (PfG), where the work of the Executive and the broader public sector would be directed towards a set of agreed population wellbeing outcomes. The Executive launched a new Outcomes Framework for consultation in January 2021, in which it affirmed its commitment to using Mark Friedman's specific approach to OBA. Current PfG population outcomes are listed below:

- Our children and young people have the best start in life
- We live and work sustainably - protecting the environment
- We have an equal and inclusive society where everyone is valued and treated with respect
- We all enjoy long, healthy active lives
- Everyone can reach their potential
- Our economy is globally competitive, regionally balanced and carbon-neutral
- Everyone feels safe - we all respect the law and each other
- We have a caring society that supports people throughout their lives
- People want to live, work and visit here

The key to delivering population outcomes is government's collaboration and teamwork with key stakeholders and partners. Government does not work in isolation towards solving the wide ranging and long-term issues that relate to education, health, the environment, infrastructure, the economy and beyond. To achieve these outcomes requires departments to think and work outside of their boundaries. They must create, or co-design and co-produce, strategies and plans that cut across departments and sectors to tackle societal problems and improve wellbeing for all. Equally, the EWS on its own is unable to end poor attendance in schools. Ending the conditions that result in some pupils having poor attendance in the first place will take many more partners than just the EWS. However, the EWS must demonstrate an ability to make a positive impact on the attendance of those whole school communities who receive early intervention support from the EWS and those referred pupils who receive direct support from the EWS.

The identification of population outcomes within an OBA framework for the EWS requires an EA corporate approach to OBA, which incorporates a strategic vision on EA's collaboration with those stakeholders and partners who have a shared responsibility for achieving population outcomes. Corporately, the EA is not yet at this stage with OBA. As a result, the development of the EWS OBA Framework has focused initially on performance accountability whereby the required outcomes relating to the EWS' main functions are identified, measured and improved, for those pupils/schools supported by the service.

The Work Stream's approach to performance accountability has been separated into three phases, illustrated below.

Phase 1. Identify core functions, stakeholders, outcomes and measures

1. Identify core function
2. Identify stakeholders
3. Agree stakeholder outcome/s
4. Establish performance measures, working backwards from ENDS to MEANS:
 - Is anyone better off (effect)
 - How much did we do? (effort)
 - How well did we do it? (effort)

Phase 2. Report and drawing baselines/trends

5. Report on measures - use data available and get better data
6. Establish baselines/trends

Phase 3. Understand, plan and act

7. Understand the story behind the baselines/trends
8. Identify partners who may be able to help
9. Create action plan
10. Implement action plan

Return to phase 2

5. EWS CORE FUNCTIONS

Although the EWS is undergoing change, it is anticipated that the future service offering will include the key functions listed below. As a result, these functions have been identified for inclusion within the EWS OBA framework.

- Supporting regular school attendance - early intervention / preventative activities;
- Supporting regular school attendance - referral support / responsive activities;
- Provide young people and their families with guidance and support to help make a positive impact on wellbeing and school attendance;
- Provide schools with guidance and support to help make a positive impact on school attendance.
- Provide school age mothers, families and schools with guidance and support to ensure young women who wish to continue their education at school, whilst pregnant or caring for a baby can do

6. EWS STAKEHOLDERS

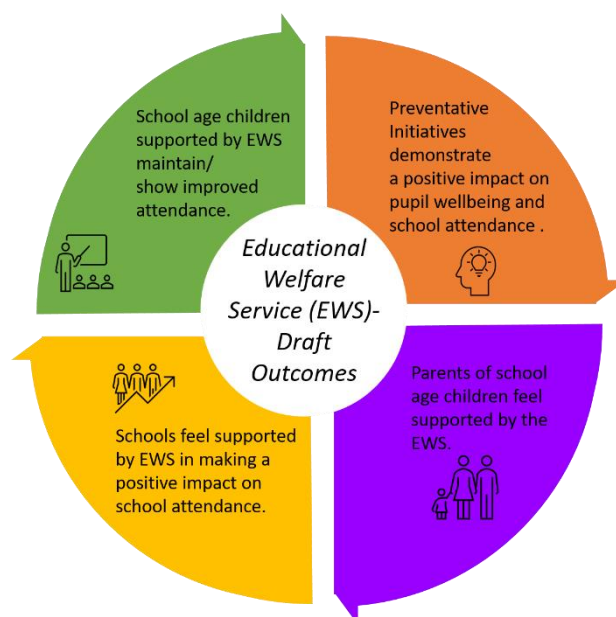
The following have been identified as the key users of the Education Welfare Service:

- Children and Young People referred to and supported by the service (includes groups such as School Age Mothers and Children Looked After).
- Parents and Carers of children and Young People referred to and supported by the service.
- Schools of pupils referred to and supported by the service
- Whole school communities who receive preventative school attendance support from the EWS.

7. EWS OUTCOMES

Having identified the key stakeholders and functions for the service we can establish outcomes for the service. The following four draft service outcomes have been identified:

- Preventative initiatives demonstrate a positive impact on pupil wellbeing and school attendance.
- School age children supported by EWS maintain/show improved attendance.
- Parents of school age children feel supported by EWS.
- Schools feel supported by EWS in making a positive impact on school attendance.



It should be recognised that these are draft outcomes and may be developed following further consultation. Performance Measures will be developed to specifically measure the impact of the service on these outcomes. The performance measures that have been identified within each key function area are outlined in the next section

8. PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Within any performance level OBA framework, these are the key metrics which are used to measure performance and improvement of performance. These give an indication of (i) how much is done by the service, (ii) how well it has been done and (iii) is anyone better off as a result of what is done.

Performance Measures have been identified in each of the key areas identified as the core functions of the service.

Core function:

Supporting regular school attendance - early intervention / preventative activities.

Identified stakeholders

Whole school communities who receive preventative school attendance support from the EWS.

Stakeholder outcome/s

Whole school communities who receive direct preventative school attendance support from the EWS, demonstrate a positive whole school attendance trend and a reduction in full EWS attendance referrals.

Performance Measures - Supporting regular school attendance - early intervention / preventative activities.

| How much did we do? | How well did we do it? |
|--|--|
| The No. of targeted school interventions conducted | % of targeted school interventions conducted |
| The No. of pre-referral meetings conducted | % of pre-referral meetings conducted |
| The No. of school audits completed | % of audits delivered during the first term of the school year |
| | % of parents/guardians who attended pre-referral meetings |
| Is anyone better off? | |
| No. of supported schools showing a positive attendance trend | % of supported schools showing a positive attendance trend |
| No. of pre-referral cases which do not progress to a full referral | % of pre-referral cases which do not progress to a full referral |

Core function:

Supporting regular school attendance - referral support / responsive activities

Identified stakeholders

Pupils referred to and supported the service, their families and schools

Stakeholder outcome/s

School age children supported by the EWS show improved/maintained attendance.

Schools feel supported by the EWS in making a positive impact on referred pupil school attendance.

Parents/guardians of children supported by the service, feel supported in making a positive impact on their child's school attendance.

Performance measures - Supporting regular school attendance - referral support / responsive activities

| How much did we do? | How well did we do it? |
|--|---|
| No. of new referrals entered on the system | % of acknowledgement letters issued within 10 working days from date of referral received |
| No. of repeat referrals entered on the system | % of initial assessments completed within 25 days from date of referral received |
| No. of acknowledgement letters issued | % of cases closed at initial assessment stage |
| No. of initial assessments completed | % of cases closed at education strategy meetings stage |
| The No. of education strategy meetings conducted | % of cases closed at education planning meeting stage. |
| The No. of education planning meetings conducted | No. of referrals closed during the quarter |

| Is anyone better off? | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No of referred pupils who show improved attendance at 26 weeks. • No of referred pupils who show sustained attendance (same % attendance) at 26 weeks • No of referred pupils who show improved attendance at referral closure • No of referred pupils who show sustained attendance at closure • No of repeat referrals received • No of schools who report feeling supported by the EWS in making a positive impact on referred pupil school attendance • No of parents/guardians who feel supported by the service in making a positive impact on their child's school attendance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of referred pupils who show improved attendance at 26 weeks • % of referred pupils who show sustained attendance at 26 weeks • % of referred pupils who show improved attendance at closure • % of referred pupils who show sustained attendance at closure • % of repeat referrals received • % of schools who report feeling supported by the EWS in making a positive impact on referred pupils' school attendance • % of parents/guardians who feel supported by the service in making a positive impact on their child's school attendance • % of parents/guardians who feel supported by the service in making a positive impact on their child's wellbeing |

Core function:

Provide school age mothers, families and schools with guidance and support to ensure young women who wish to continue their education at school, whilst pregnant or caring for a baby can do so.

Identified stakeholders

School age mothers supported by the service, their families and schools.

Stakeholder outcome/s

School age mothers supported by the service remain in education.

School age mothers supported by the service achieve formal qualifications

School age mothers feel supported by the EWS in remaining in education and attaining qualifications

Schools feel supported by the EWS in making a positive impact on age mother's opportunity and ability to continue their education

Parents/guardians of school age mothers feel supported by the EWS in making a positive impact on their child's ability to continue their education.

Performance measures - School age mothers supported by the service

| How much did we do? | How well did we do it? |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. of new referrals recorded on the system • No. of SAM1:1 support sessions delivered • No. of initiatives involving SAMs (events, programmes etc) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of new referrals with initial contact within 10 days from date of referral received • % of SAMs attending initiatives organised by the service • % of SAMs availing of Childcare support (who require it) • % of SAMs availing of transport support (who require it) • % of SAMs availing of school enrolment support (who require it) • % of SAMs availing of tuition support (who require it) |
| Is anyone better off? | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. of SAMs supported by the EWS, remaining in school • No. of SAMs supported by the EWS, who have continued into further education • No. of SAMs supported by the EWS, who have maintained their school attendance rate • No. of SAMs, supported by the EWS, attaining 5 + GCSEs (A - C grade) • No. of SAMs, Supported by the EWS, attaining 3 + A Levels (A - E grade) • No. of SAMs who feel supported by the EWS in remaining in education and attaining qualifications • No. of Schools who feel supported by the EWS in making a positive impact on age mother's opportunity and ability to continue their education • No. of Parents/guardians who feel supported by the EWS in making a positive impact on their child's ability to continue their education. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of SAMs supported by the EWS, remaining in school • % of SAMs supported by the EWS, who have continued into further education • % of SAMs supported by the EWS, who have maintained their attendance rate at school • % of SAMs, supported by the EWS, attaining 5 + GCSEs (A - C grade) • % of SAMs, Supported by the EWS, attaining 3 + A Levels (A - E grade) • % of SAMs who feel supported by the EWS in remaining in education and attaining qualifications • % of Schools who feel supported by the EWS in making a positive impact on age mother's opportunity and ability to continue their education • % of Parents/guardians who feel supported by the EWS in making a positive impact on their child's ability to continue their education. |