



Norfolk Safeguarding
Children Partnership

A Staged Intervention Pathway for Promoting Good School Attendance



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Working Together to Improve School Attendance states:



Improving attendance is everyone's business. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families ... and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, schools and partners should work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place ... It cannot solely be the preserve of a single member of staff, or organisation, it must be a concerted effort across all teaching and non-teaching staff in school, the trust or governing body, the local authority, and other local partners.



Introduction

This staged intervention pathway for the management of school attendance is part of the County Councils' Strategic approach to addressing absence from school: [Attendance is Everyone's Responsibility](#). The aim of this guidance is to provide a defined pathway for schools, families and all other professionals to support them to set clear expectations about attendance and identify and support vulnerable groups by responding to attendance concerns at the earliest opportunity.

This model has been designed in accordance with the requirements placed upon schools, local authorities and other agencies as outlined in the Department for Education guidance '[Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#)'. It should be read alongside the NSCP Continuum of Need Guidance relating to integrated multi-agency support for the needs of children, young people and families in Norfolk. In order to refer cases for children with poor attendance to the Attendance Team for consideration of a parental prosecution, there is an expectation that the staged intervention model will be followed. However, where there is evidence of a lack of parental engagement and continued poor attendance, the referral for consideration of legal action should not be delayed.



Key Features of Effective Intervention



All Pupils

Promote the understanding of trauma and attachment aware practice within schools and how this can impact on a child or young person's attendance.

Consistent and [restorative approaches](#) to addressing behaviours that challenge.

A strong focus on relational practice.



Targeted Groups

Early Identification

[Mental health and well-being support](#)

Engaging with families

Multi-agency and community sector responses

Academic engagement and support



All Professionals

Communities of Practice including [Attendance Surgeries](#), Attendance Networks, access to [Attendance Duty/Advice](#), Inclusive school leadership & whole school approaches.

Our vision for effective practice in the management of attendance:

- the child's voice is at the centre of all support and interventions;
- all plans seek to identify and tackle the root causes of absence at the earliest opportunity;
- family network and trauma informed approaches are embedded in practice;
- the link between school attendance and safeguarding is clearly understood;
- through clear signposting schools, children and their families have access to appropriate support making full use of Voluntary & Community Sector partners;
- we continue to consistently apply the full range of parental responsibility measures where required;
- there is a multi-agency response for the most vulnerable learners where interventions have not supported them to access a full-time education.

Language

The discourse and terminology relating to absence from school has evolved over time. ['Working Together to Improve School Attendance'](#) provides us with clear definitions of persistent and severe absence and the associated impact this can have on children and their families. Locally, we would discourage practitioners from the use of broad terms such as: 'school refusal', 'avoidance' or 'phobia'. Care must be taken not to attribute cause or motivations which are unknown or misleading and can lead to negative reinforcement. For example, the term 'refusal' is increasingly seen as unhelpful as it suggests a wilfulness on the part of an anxious pupil which can obscure the underlying cause.

Terminology that is more specific should only be used to describe a pupil's absence where a thorough assessment has taken place to determine what the root causes and barriers to attending school are. Subsequent planning should seek to respond specifically to the individual needs of the child rather than over-reliance on generalised terms and generic responses to absence.

Supporting guidance:

The information in this document is designed to complement national and local guidance and provide a framework for managing school attendance. Detailed guidance and advice on specific issues can be accessed via:

School Attendance Toolkit

Norfolk County Council's Attendance Team have produced this toolkit to support education settings maintain high levels of school attendance through the development of a rigorous, whole-school approach that exceeds statutory requirements. In addition, the toolkit provides further guidance on effective planning and formal support options where required in response to persistent and severe absence.



Just One Norfolk

Provides resources for families, schools and other professionals on a wide range of issues related to children's health, wellbeing and development including specific information about school life.



A Staged Approach to Managing School Attendance

Universal & Whole School Approaches:



Responses to need:

Services provided routinely and available to all children & families by schools, nurseries, 0-19 Healthy Child Programme, midwifery, GP and Voluntary and Community Organisations. Services are the foundation support for families and will often continue to be involved with families at every level of need.



Schools are expected to:

- Have a clear school attendance policy.
- Develop and maintain a whole school culture where everyone promotes the benefits of good attendance and celebrates good or improved attendance.
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers.
- Have robust daily processes to follow up absence.
- Have a dedicated senior leader with overall responsibility for attendance.



The Local Authority will:

- Embed the Attendance Strategy and make school attendance a key focus of activity.
- Support schools to embed a Family Networking Approach through FNAS service offer.
- Provide advice, guidance and training to schools through Attendance Team with named contacts in each School & Community Zone.
- Provide the facility for groups of schools to come together to share practice through attendance networks.
- Offer termly targeting support meetings to all Provide the facility for groups of schools to come together to share practice through attendance networks.
- Offer termly targeting support meetings to all schools and use these to build strong relationships and work collaboratively with school attendance leads.



All Other Partners should:

- Promote school attendance.
- Ask curious questions about school and education.
- Develop their knowledge and awareness of school attendance.
- Contribute to the delivery of our local strategic approach to addressing absence from school.



Suggested Resources to support presenting needs:

[Attendance is Everyone's Responsibility](#)

[Attendance Toolkit](#)

[Attendance Self-Assessment](#)

Contact the [Attendance Team](#)

[Family Networking](#)

Low-level, Emerging Needs:



Responses to need:

Self-Help & Information, Advice & Guidance:

Where children, young people and families – including unborn babies/pregnancy – can get useful advice and guidance that assists them with finding solutions to situations without requiring referrals to other services.

Services accessed via the Family Hub model may offer advice & guidance to families where there is not the requirement for ongoing support or intervention.



Schools are expected to:

- Engage feeder settings to access information to identify target cohorts prior to transfer.
- Have in place a first day contact/response system.
- Instigate school-level responses in line with attendance policy including but not limited to letters, informal meetings with parents, mentoring, home visits.
- Use a Family Networking Approach by asking questions to understand support around a family.
- The Virtual School would expect attendance to be recorded on the statutory Personal Education Plan for Children in Care document or Voluntary Personal Education Plan for Previously in Care and any concerns/worries, plans and targets to be shared.
- For Children in Care, schools are encouraged to seek additional information, advice and guidance from the Virtual School as soon as issues emerge.



The Local Authority will:

- Offer termly targeting support meetings to all schools signposting to services for pupils who are at risk of becoming PA.
- Track and regularly review local attendance data to prioritise support and unblock area wide attendance barriers.
- Provide access to the Family Hub & Start for Life Offer.
- The Virtual School will monitor the attendance of the Children in Care cohort weekly.
- The Virtual School & Attendance Team will collaborate with schools and relevant professionals to monitor and improve the attendance of children with a social worker.



All Other Partners should:

- Consider school attendance as part of any assessment processes.
- Support schools to identify and address barriers to attendance within the scope of their service's reach.
- Use a Family Networking Approach e.g. ask questions to understand support around a family.



Suggested Resources to support presenting needs:

[Family hubs in Norfolk](#) – Norfolk County Council

[Healthy Child Programme & JON](#)

[Norfolk Community Directory](#)

[Family Information Service](#) – Norfolk County Council

[SEND Local Offer](#)

Early Intervention:



Responses to need:

Early Help is the initial response offered by all services in contact with children, young people and families when they need extra support to flourish.

As well as informal planning and whole school approaches to the management of school attendance it might be appropriate to consider undertaking an Early Help Assessment alongside a family.



Schools are expected to:

- Support pupils and parents by working together to address any in-school barriers to attendance.
- Consider the use of Penalty Notices as an early intervention tool for parentally condoned absence.
- Implement attendance reviews/clinics as a process of escalating concerns where appropriate.
- Instigate attendance plans for children at risk of becoming persistently absent to understand and address barriers to attendance; this may include provision of mentoring, careers advice, college placements, 1-2-1 tuition.
- Use a Family Networking Approach by asking questions to understand support around a family.
- Where the needs are wider and a whole family response is required, consider a Family Network Meeting and/or EHAP.



The Local Authority will:

- Through Targeting Support Meetings, identify, discuss and agree targeted actions for pupils at risk of becoming persistently or severely absent.
- The Virtual School will identify pupils within their remit where attendance is a concern and work with schools to promote change unless there are identified medical needs that impact on engagement.
- Provide support from School & Community Teams where SEND and attendance is a primary presenting factor.



All Other Partners should:

- Implement integrated plans informed by an assessment that identifies the root causes of emerging attendance issues and considers a holistic response.
- Where responses require a coordinated team around the family approach, enact an Early Help Assessment & Plan (EHAP).



Suggested Resources to support presenting needs:

[Early Intervention Attendance Plan](#)

[Family hubs in Norfolk](#) – Norfolk County Council

[Joint medical protocol](#)

[FPNs](#)

[Family Networking \[justonenorfolk.nhs.uk\]\(https://justonenorfolk.nhs.uk\)](#)

[Early Help Assessments & Plans \(EHAPs\)](#)

School & Community Teams

Targeted Persistent Absence (90% and below):



Responses to need:

Where absence escalates and pupils miss 10% or more of school (equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight across a full school year), schools and local authorities are expected to work together to put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers to attendance. Approaches should sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence and understand the importance of school as a place of safety and support for children who might be facing difficulties.



Schools are expected to:

- Formalise planning for children where informal interventions and support have not improved attendance, utilising EHAPs where appropriate.
- Hold daily or weekly check-ins to review progress and the impact of support from the school and any ongoing action plans.
- Contribute to multi-agency meetings where applicable and ensure the presenting needs are addressed through that plan (EHAP, CIN, CP).
- Welcome pupils back following an absence and provide catch-up support to build confidence and bridge gaps.
- Contact Attendance Team to discuss legal intervention where support is not working or being engaged with.
- Consider consultation with CADS where barriers to school attendance indicate risk of harm and early/informal multi-agency support and intervention measures have been consistently applied and not effective. Advice will be provided on the basis of the individual circumstances of each case and impact on their development.



The Local Authority will:

- The Attendance Team will work with schools to formalise support options and consider enforcement through the full range of legal measures where appropriate, promoting the offer of Family Group Conferencing at Intent to Prosecute stage.
- Ensure suitable education, such as alternative provision, is arranged for children of compulsory school age who would not otherwise receive a suitable education.
- Consider providing the Lead Practitioner where the risk or need requires a level of management of targeted intervention, assessment and planning that we feel a partner would be unlikely to offer. This does not replace the requirement for partners to lead an EHAP where the primary needs can be met through such a plan. It may be the case that the Local Authority provides the Lead Practitioner where the need requires a more targeted intervention that cannot be provided or obtained by the lead agency.



All Other Partners should:

- Work with schools and other services to formalise support options and contribute to plans informed by an assessment that identifies the root causes of attendance issues and considers a holistic response.
- Take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the school and other partners and contribute to a voluntary early help assessment where appropriate.
- Consider providing the lead practitioner where the family and/or all partners agree that the service is best placed to lead.



Suggested Resources to support presenting needs:

[Medical Needs Service](#)

[Early Help Assessments & Plans \(EHAPs\)](#)

Contact the [Attendance Team](#)

Fast Track to attendance – Schools [norfolk.gov.uk](https://www.norfolk.gov.uk)

[CADS](#)

Acute: Severe Absence 50% and below:



Responses to need:

Severely absent pupils may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and as such are likely to need more intensive support across a range of partners. A concerted effort is therefore needed across all relevant services to prioritise them. All partners should work together to make this group the top priority for support – this may include specific support to overcome the barriers to being in school.



Schools are expected to:

- Continue to offer a range of supportive and formal interventions as above.
- Agree a joint approach for all severely absent pupils with the local authority.
- Follow their safeguarding procedures in all cases where the barriers to non-attendance indicate a safeguarding concern.



The Local Authority will:

- Ensure all services make severely absent pupils the top priority for support.
- Ensure that where there are safeguarding concerns or parallel planning those plans address individual barriers to attendance, prioritise regular school attendance and consider support of calling-in services such as ISSS, TYSS.
- Where appropriate, conduct a full children's social care assessment if all avenues of support have been facilitated by schools, local authorities, and other partners, and the appropriate educational support or placements have been provided but severe absence for unauthorised reasons continues.
- The Virtual School will be aware of those young people within their remit who are identified in the acute concerns category (below 50%). They will be monitored closely with the team around the child (TATC) unless there are medical needs that impact on engagement.
- Routinely share severely absent data with named senior leaders across Children's Services.
- Interrogate data and provide a governance structure to review the most severely absent children where interventions are not having an impact on poor attendance.



All Other Partners should:

- Make severely absent pupils the top priority for support,
- Seek advice and support from the Attendance Team and/or CADS where they identify severely absent children.
- Continue to work with the family and wider network, school, lead practitioner and other partners to proactively address the barriers to school attendance.



Suggested Resources to support presenting needs:

Contact the [Attendance Team](#)

Fast Track to attendance – Schools [norfolk.gov.uk](https://www.norfolk.gov.uk)

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