

Schools Forum – 10 October 2018

Education Welfare Services update

Recommendation(s)

That the forum note the work done by the Education Welfare Workers to deliver the Core Offer for Education.

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities

PART A

The forum requested in October 2017 that I return to forum with an update on the delivery of the service.

PART B

Background

Schools Forum agreed in October 2017 to reduce the funding to the local authority provided Education Welfare Services (EWS) to a statutory “core offer.” The remaining funding (£757k) was redistributed to individual maintained schools. As the council EWS offer reduces it was acknowledged that some schools may wish to commission the council to provide enhanced EWS support above the statutory offer.

The council agreed to circulate potential commissioning options to all schools and you will have received an e-mail correspondence from Karl Hobson dated 15/12/17 to this effect. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact Karl Hobson, County Manager.

Current Position

Education Welfare Workers(EWW) remain within the management structure of the Local Support Teams, however, since April 2018 they have implemented the Core Offer to schools, and therefore their presence in schools has significantly reduced. Whilst the service remains under the management of the LST’s there are some limitations on the transition to the full core offer, however, it is hoped that within the next year they will transfer to the direct line management of the county manager for targeted education services. The data provided therefore covers a period during which this transition took place.

Outcomes against Core offer. September 2017 – August 2018

The “core” Education Welfare offer is delivered by the local authority, which remains responsible for delivering the statutory requirements for attendance, children missing education and elective home education including:

1.Reviewing and processing cases for prosecution for irregular attendance under section 444 (1) and (1A)

Cases dealt with- outcomes	
Attendance not Improved	31
Attendance Improved no statutory action required	99
Medical evidence provided- closed	7
Moved out of area- closed	8
Penalty Notice issued - Closed	85
Declined / Paperwork Incomplete	60
Removed from school roll	15
School leaver	14
Ongoing	120
Grand Total	439

The above data shows that in 25 % of the cases there was a positive outcome, with a further 20% of cases progressing to a Penalty Notice been issued. Only 7% of cases are recorded as not having improved attendance. The 60 cases declined are following a conversation with the schools, in which they would have been informed why the case could not proceed. Some of these relate to the instigation of the Core Offer from April 2018 when the EWW's could no longer take on case work to address irregular attendance.

In respect of the 85 penalty notices issued and closed 73% have led to improved or stabilised attendance.

In addition to the above the service is now leading on children missing out on education (CMOOE). We will shortly have a new live platform for schools to enter the details of all students who are on reduced or alternative timetables. EWW's will be contacting schools to ensure that we are offering the appropriate and suitable level of education to students and that it is been properly reviewed and progressed.

2.Issuing Penalty Notices for:

Unauthorised leave in term time	Total 3298 (April-Aug = 2589)
Persistent absence and lateness	Total 167 (April-Aug = 91)
Being in a public place during the first 5 days of exclusion	Total 0

3.Undertaking police and criminal evidence interviews for S444(1A) prosecutions – This is part of the prosecution process.

4.Initiating and processing School Attendance Orders for pupils not on a school roll – We currently have 10 cases at some stage within the SAO process. We also have a small number of cases open due to concerns surrounding the parents' choice to EHE, and possible coercion/ misinformation prior to parental decision been made.

5.Undertaking Parenting Orders and assessments requested by magistrates – None requested

6. Preparing papers to put before Family Court for an Education Supervision Order and to then manage the order – None Requested

7. Casework for children identified as Children Missing Education (CME)

During 2017/18 we have dealt with 350 cases, see details below:

Status/outcome	Number
Elective Home Education	3
Emigrated School Unconfirmed	6
Now Receiving Education	106
Referred to Other LA	7
Remains open	228
Grand Total	350

EWV's are now also addressing the issue of children without a school base, or children who have moved school in year and we have not had confirmation of their new destination. This leads to the child being classed as having no base. Currently this stands at 562 open activities

8. Annual Register inspections (maintained schools only)

During 2017/18 we undertook register inspections in both maintained and academy schools, however, this year this will only be offered to maintained schools.

9. Child Employment and Licensing which involves:

- Administration and issuing of work permits and visits to workplaces
- Administration and issuing of licenses for children to participate in entertainment performances
- Administration and issuing of Licensing chaperones for children in entertainment
- Undertaking venue checks for children in entertainment

Area	Total
Employment licences issued	255
Chaperone applications approved	357
Entertainment – number of individual productions licenced, each production on average is about 40.	572

Regular visits are carried out on performances across Staffordshire by EWW's, these entail checking the venue, licences of children performing and ensuring safeguarding measures are in place. The EWW's have also carried out a number of visits relating to child employment which have resulted in employers been issued with a cease to employ notice, due to concerns about the working conditions.

Future plans

The service is now approaching school's with its traded offer. Following consultation with schools, it has been agreed to offer:

- Half day attendance clinics to be run in the school
- Telephone support line which will provide expert advice on attendance issues, what processes to follow and how to complete the paperwork needed for statutory action. It will also offer standard template and bespoke letters to address irregular attendance.

In addition the service has developed a guidance document for all schools to assist schools in considering what statutory action they could use to address poor attendance. The emphasis is very much on early intervention by using penalty notices to give parents the opportunity to address their child's attendance without recourse to the Courts.

There is developmental work to do in respect of child employment to ensure that we actively encourage our children to take on employment in a safe manner, preparing them in some small way for employment beyond school. The same is true in child entertainments where we want to ensure that all performances involving children are properly managed and the child safeguarded.

Over the next year we will be developing the function of parental contracts, which can be used to address poor attendance. Whilst these are not legally binding contracts they do form part of the evidence needed to take statutory action, and offer parents the opportunity to address the behaviours or external factors which are causing them to fail in their responsibility to ensure their child attends school every day.

The service will continue to support schools in improving school attendance, and supporting vulnerable children within and outside education.

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