

# Children first and at the heart of all we do

## Latest Updates: Early Help/Schools

### Families Come First Service

As you are all aware, the Families Come First Service is currently part of Family Solutions.

I would like to let you all know that as of June 21 the FCF team will move over to Children's Social Care. Head of Service for the team will be Edward Wong and Service Manager will be Lorna Nolan.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank James McDonald for all his hard work and support in developing and launching this service in Dudley.

James leaves Dudley on the 21 June and will return to Worcestershire.

### Virtual School Management Board

The DVS would like to extend an invitation for a Secondary Head Teacher to join the Management Board from September 2022. The group meets termly to review the work of the Virtual School supporting our Children In Care (CiC), those that have been Previously Looked After (PLAC) and Children With a Social Worker (CWSW). Please contact Andy Wright ([andrew.wright@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.wright@dudley.gov.uk)) for further details.

### Anna Freud Link Programme

The Virtual School and the Educational Psychology Service are currently conducting a baseline audit around the approaches currently in place within and across Dudley schools to support our children and young people's emotional well-being and mental health. Please can all schools support this by providing the information requested by the link member of staff.

### Family Hubs and Start for Life

In October 2021, as part of the Autumn budget, the Government announced £301.75m to transform Start for Life and Family Hub services in 75 upper-tier local

# Children first and at the heart of all we do

authorities across England. In Early April 2022, Dudley learned that we had been selected for additional funding.

This programme will fund a network of Family Hubs, Start for Life and family help services, including breastfeeding services, parenting programmes and parent-infant mental health support.

There has been significant Dudley engagement through a series of webinars and focus groups including a number of additional focus groups to ensure that the central Government team are testing policy thinking as broadly as possible. Further workshops are taking place on the topics of outcomes, workforce, and frontline professionals.

Dudley will learn our financial allocation during June/July 2022

For any questions, please contact Scott Jones – Head of Family Solutions

[scott.x.jones@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:scott.x.jones@dudley.gov.uk)

## Supporting Families

The Supporting Families programme (formerly known as Troubled Families) will continue nationally for a further three years with a focus on providing targeted interventions for families with complex interconnected problems.

These problems include unemployment and financial instability, poor school attendance, mental and physical health problems, involvement in crime and antisocial behaviour, domestic abuse and poor family relationships, children who are at risk of abuse and exploitation, substance misuse and insecure housing.

The four key principles of Supporting Families remain:

- early intervention
- whole family working
- multi-agency working and;
- measuring outcomes and data

The national programme continues to provide local authorities with an annual grant and also funding through Payment By Results linked to family outcomes.

Work is currently taking place to ensure the programme is able to deliver on the new framework that moves from six areas of need to ten from October 2022.

- Getting a good education
- Good early years development

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- Improved mental and physical health
- Promoting recovery and reducing harm from substance use
- Improved family relationships
- Children safe from abuse and exploitation
- Crime prevention and tackling crime
- Safe from domestic abuse
- Secure housing
- Financial stability

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## Child Friendly Dudley

In Autumn 2021, Dudley made the important decision for the borough to become Child Friendly. This international initiative sets a very high aspirations for towns, boroughs and cities to put children at the heart of all decision making in areas of work not only focussed on children's needs but also, in a wider decision-making contexts such as planning, business growth and regeneration.

Dudley is now committed to following the tenets of UNICEF's Child Friendly principles where children:

- Are protected from exploitation, violence and abuse.
- Have a good start in life and grow up healthy and cared for.
- Have access to quality social services.
- Experience quality, inclusive and participatory education and skills development.
- Express their opinions and influence decisions that affect them.
- Participate in family, cultural, city/community and social life.
- Live in a safe secure and clean environment with access to green spaces.
- Meet friends and have places to play and enjoy themselves.
- Have a fair chance in life regardless of their ethnic origin, religion, income, gender or ability.

# Children first and at the heart of all we do

We know there are already great examples of child friendly work across the borough. We also acknowledge we can go much further and provide even greater opportunities for children, young people and their families to have great experiences and successful lives.

This work is being driven by a dedicated project team involving children and young people influencing and shaping how Dudley and our public and private sector partners put children at the forefront of decision making in planning and delivering services.

Children and young people are working with the core team and partners to recruit key posts, develop our Child Friendly priorities and establish measures of success. This is a transformation of how children and young people genuinely influence the key decisions that will affect them now and into the future and clearly puts children first and at the heart of all we do.

For any questions please contact Scott Jones – Head of Family Solutions

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## Attendance Strategy (DRAFT) – 5 Point Plan

We are currently developing a new 5 Point Plan for school attendance throughout the LA. This will ensure that we meet the aspirations of the new Government guidelines with implementation from September 2022, in preparation for the proposed legislative changes from September 2023.



### Step 1: Leadership at all levels

***‘Attendance is everyone’s responsibility to ensure all children are in full time education. Everyone in the structure is a leader in driving good attendance’***

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School is good for all children, it keeps them bright, healthy, strong and helps them walk into worlds preparing them for the future. Getting children and young people to school is a collective role for families, communities and schools, working together ensures school attendance is everyone's business.

## **The role of the local authority teams**

The key principle which underpins the local authority's procedures for managing attendance is the belief that regular and punctual attendance is the key to academic and social development. This will in turn safeguard vulnerable young people and will improve their life chances. All teams within the LA have a part to play in this. Joined up strategy is key.

Attendance and inclusion therefore are key priorities for our work with children, young people, families, partners and schools to embed the concept of early intervention and prevention and keep children and young people safe. The local authority has a duty to ensure parents fulfil their legal responsibility in respect of their child's education. This is usually through ensuring attendance at school.

In addition to meet its duty the local authority will rigorously track local attendance data to devise a strategic approach to attendance that prioritises the pupils, pupil cohorts and schools on which to provide support and focus its efforts on to unblock area wide barriers to attendance.

Through the collection of attendance data from all schools, there will be a continued drive for improving attendance, identifying the pupil cohorts, schools, and neighbourhoods/ towns on which to focus efforts. This will include benchmarking against neighbouring local authorities (both geographic and statistical) and regional and national averages to identify patterns and trends of concern.

The Education Support Service will offer Targeting Support Meetings thereby holding termly conversations with schools, using their attendance data to identify pupils and cohorts at risk of poor attendance and agree targeted actions and access to services for those pupils.

The Attendance Strategy has an early help and prevention approach at its heart. The introduction of the early help approach ensures that issues and difficulties faced by children and families are identified early and dealt with holistically and in a timely manner by services from across the local area, including schools.

The approach aims to build closer co-working relationships with families through early identification by schools and other services. Bespoke models of triage, screening and the delivery of a graduated response will better meet the needs of the children, families and schools across the borough.

# Children first and at the heart of all we do

We will ensure that promoting good school attendance has a high profile within our community and local services and that council services across the community understand that attendance is everyone's business. This will be particularly the case in our wider contextualised safeguarding work and within Children's Services generally. Critical to this work will be partnerships with community wardens, community leaders and housing providers.

The plan will be underpinned by a comprehensive communications strategy which will make good attendance high profile. The local authority will seek to work closely with communities across the borough in championing the needs of young people and promoting the importance of attendance and the benefits of a good education. When appropriate, if support options provided to parents, have not succeeded, the Education Support Service will take the lead role on behalf of any school in using legal powers as a last resort when this is necessary to address poor attendance. This statutory intervention will be available to all schools.

## **Step 2: Policy and Personalised Protocol**

***'Robust systems are in place, communicated, understood and followed by all stakeholders'***

Good attendance management all starts with policy. All schools must have a clear policy that sets out its expectations of attendance and punctuality and explains the procedures that it will follow whenever a student does not attend or is late for school or lessons. This must be personalised for each setting but have the same underlying principles, as detailed in the DfE Attendance Guidance <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

## **Step 3: Effective Identification**

***'Knowing your children, knowing their circumstances and respond with support and challenge to their needs'***

Once the policy has been agreed and communicated, and the causes and solutions to non-attendance have been targeted and personalised, schools must approach the management of attendance and punctuality with continual high expectations, regular communication and effective identification of issues.

## **Step 4: Data Driven Intervention**

***'Data tells the story. We need to know the story and know what needs to be done to drive improvement. Use this to inform future approaches'***

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Data driven intervention is about rewarding good attendance and tackling poor attendance. Each should be given equal measure to celebrate success and deal with underperformance.

## **Step 5: Family and Partnership Engagement**

***‘Ensuring personalised support for each child, recognising all families are individual and their needs are specific.’***

It is important that parents or carers are not only informed about matters relating to attendance but are also fully involved in the process. Parents should be regarded as partners in securing good attendance. In this way they will better understand its importance and be more able and willing to uphold high expectations at home, accepting any sanctions or referrals to outside agencies.

For any questions, please contact Martyn Palfreyman – Head of Education Outcomes and Inclusion

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