

Children, Families and Skills Scrutiny Committee
Meeting to be held on Wednesday 13 March 2024

Electoral Division affected:
(All Divisions);

Corporate Priorities:
Supporting economic growth;
Caring for the vulnerable

Education Strategy Update

Contact for further information:

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Brief Summary

This report seeks to provide an update to the Children, Families and Skills Scrutiny Committee on the work of the Lancashire Education Strategy from September 23 to Mar 24.

Recommendation

The Children, Families and Skills Scrutiny Committee is asked to:

- i. Reflect on the information provided; and
- ii. Consider ways to further support work in this area.

Detail

Delivering high quality advice, training and support for schools and families

We are two years into the Lancashire Education Strategy. The progress towards the outcomes of the Education Strategy is strong so far and this report should provide you with an update of our work for this first half of the academic year 23/24.

Education Strategy

Priority 1 – Improve Take Up in Early Years

We have made good progress in increasing the number of early years children accessing a funded 2-year-old place in the last 12 months. This has been achieved through strong partnership work with our internal colleagues within Children's Social Care, Children & Family Well Being Service, Cultural Services and Public Health. We have also worked closely with schools, Health Visitors, Department for Work and



Pensions, District Councils, and the Voluntary, Community & Faith sector to raise awareness of the early years funded entitlements.

Actions:

- Corporate campaigns to promote key messages through social media, radio advertising, TV advertising, external advertising, radio interviews, targeting particular communities and areas of low take up.
- Production of publicity materials (e.g., posters, leaflets, flyers) for professionals and families to raise awareness) in a variety of different languages.
- Community sessions for families to drop in and learn more about how to access a funded place linked to family hubs work.
- Delivery of termly webinars for social workers, foster carers and prospective adopters.
- Supplying information to schools about their pupils who have younger siblings who are eligible for a funded place, so that schools can proactively target and support these families to access a place.
- Promoting and sharing key information through the weekly sessions that are delivered in libraries for families with young children e.g. Bounce & Rhyme, Story Time, Rhyme Time. Raising awareness through the community & faith leaders in areas where take up is lower.

Impact

We have now our highest figures ever with 93% of 2 year olds taking up their offer in comparison to 90% at this time last year and a 5% increase on last term.

District	Eligible Population (DfE)	No. of children	% take up	% Change since last term	% Change since Autumn 2022
Burnley	433	395	91.2	7.8	1.5
Chorley	247	242	98.0	-0.5	-1.2
Fylde	119	110	92.4	-0.7	-19.3
Hyndburn	413	366	88.6	5.3	5.5
Lancaster	368	381	103.5	10.5	3.5
Pendle	412	352	85.4	5.8	3.3
Preston	544	459	84.4	6.7	1.3
Ribble Valley	73	76	104.1	-3.9	-6.0
Rossendale	194	195	100.5	8.3	12.3
South Ribble	218	213	97.7	4.9	1.2
West Lancashire	246	217	88.2	-6.3	-4.8
Wyre	236	219	92.8	-4.2	-1.3
Unknown	7	24	342.9		
Total	3510	3249	92.6	5.2	2.0



Priority 2 – Further reduce exclusions, both permanent and suspensions

A significant amount of work has been undertaken this year alongside our colleagues in Inclusion to further reduce exclusions in schools. This work will take time to make an impact so even though we have seen an increase in permanent exclusions in Lancashire this year, our suspensions have remained the same and in our highest excluding schools, where we have focused our efforts, these numbers have come down significantly.

Actions:

- An extra 70 schools have undertaken the 3-day intensive trauma informed practice training to equip staff with the right tools to manage children's behaviours more effectively. This means 207 schools have now been through this training.
- The two behaviour consultants have developed a comprehensive training programme for schools and attendance at these has been excellent.
- A behaviour network of school to school support based practice has been developed and training undertaken for these behaviour mentors.
- The Behaviour Quality Mark has had another cohort of 12 schools join its ranks.
- The Relational toolkit has been developed with the Educational Psychologist Team and Virtual school to enable schools to review their behaviour policies in light of evidence-based research around managing behaviours.
- Sixty children who have been permanently excluded from school have not been automatically placed in a short stay school. Instead, further information has been gathered from the headteacher, parents and through us of the child's voice, where possible, to see if a mainstream school would be more appropriate for the child. Action has then been taken to support them with this transition. This has meant a significant change in processes and communications with schools around these changes.
- Exclusion training for governors continues to be well attended.
- The inclusion and engagement service continue to provide vital support for children at risk of exclusion with SEND. This service now has a waiting list as it is so in demand by schools.
- The children's champions continue to provide extensive support to schools for children at risk of exclusion. Four more champions will be recruited due to funding from the schools forum to focus on reintegration and children who have been permanently excluded.
- Short Stay Schools are being encouraged and supported by CFW and the pupil access service to reintegrate pupils back into mainstream when they are ready.
- The Fair Access Protocols (which ensure children without a school place or from challenging circumstances can be placed in schools and fairly distributed) have been revised and new panels set up so each district now has a functioning FAP panel.
- The Genesis programme is a programme which we have written to formalise the process for reintegration from a PRU setting into a mainstream. It sets out the expectations of all involved and has been drafted in consultation with



headteachers in the East. The pilot for the programme will start from February to March and headteachers have agreed to a roll out from Easter. This should significantly support our AP strategy to move to a short stay school model and reintegrate children back into mainstream with the right support.

Impact

Unfortunately, the overall number of permanent exclusions has remained static. However, in the areas where we provided the most challenge last year, (Lancaster and Chorley) these have improved significantly. West Lancs remains committed to embedding trauma informed practice throughout their schools which has contributed to the reduction in exclusions here. However, there are still significant issues in some areas which need to be improved.

Autumn term 22/23 to Autumn term 23/24

District	22/23	23/24	% Change
Burnley	5	6	20%
Chorley	10	1	-90%
Fylde	2	3	50%
Hynburn	9	10	11%
Lancaster	12	4	-67%
Pendle	6	8	33%
Preston	7	16	129%
Rossendale	2	17	750%
South Ribble	9	13	44%
West Lancashire	13	5	-62%
Wyre	7	10	43%

Priority 3 – Addressing numbers of EHE where this is not in the best interests of the child.

This is a key priority for this year. The list of EHE children has been cleansed to ensure its very clear who we have contact with and who we don't. We have then used the list of those who haven't been in contact for over a year and have checked this across with council tax databases. This has removed some children from the list as they have moved away, but as we are reliant on district councils this is quite a lengthy process. Our next step will be to contact the families on the list to reiterate their need for annual contact and escalate this to home visits if necessary. If families do not contact us, they will be referred to CME but only after all attempts to contact them have been exhausted. A CME/EHE officer has been recruited and will start in March. This officer will be responsible for speaking to parents who have just decided to EHE and ensuring that they understand this commitment and to broker relationships with schools where required. It is hoped this work could mean less children becoming EHE. Nationally, the draft guidance for EHE has been updated. This provides the local authority with the ability to challenge parents to provide annual contact and evidence regarding a suitable education. Once this is implemented this will be very helpful to our work moving forward.



Priority 4 - Improve outcomes for vulnerable children.

Balance System

Working closely with public health, the service has helped to establish the Balanced system in Hyndburn, reducing speech and language referrals from 52 weeks to zero over a 12-month period. This will now be rolled out in Preston by April 24, Fylde and Wyre May 24, and South Ribble and Chorley by Dec 24. There are ongoing negotiations with other ICB/NHS boards for the other districts.

Attendance

Our new attendance lead has been appointed and is working on analysis of all the attendance visits from the Autumn term to identify the wider themes. We know that mental health and extended leave are coming through as the main reasons for persistent absence. Focus groups will take place in the Summer term to consult with children and families on how we can improve attendance and this will feed into the new attendance strategy in September. There has been a pilot to encourage families to shorten extended leave. Rather than fine after 15 days we have told parents that we would move to a prosecution instead. This has deterred significant numbers of families from taking more than 15 days out of school and therefore we are looking to roll this out across the county.

Impact

Lancashire continues to be higher than both national and regional averages for attendance, but this is lower than it was in the Autumn Term.

January 2024

	Lancashire	North West	England
Primary	93%	93%	93%
Secondary	90%	90%	90%
Special	88%	86%	86%

Inclusion Summits

In the Autumn Term, both heads of service attended all 12 districts to discuss how to create a more Inclusive Lancashire. We shared data on new to country, CME, exclusions and SEND data to demonstrate the changing picture in each district and how we can meet this new demand collaboratively. Out of these summits we have created a number of actions which we are acting on to move these forwards. These include setting one transition date for Year 7 across Lancashire, creating a directory of best practice and best practitioners across Lancashire, working out how to streamline the processes around consultation for EHCPs and development of further training and support in schools from all of our services. Further meetings will take place with Governors and Early Years settings prior to the summer, and it is expected that these consultative sessions will be able to inform the new Education/Inclusion Strategy for 2025 – 2028.



Priority 5 – Increase the number of children and young people in Education, Employment and Training

This is the second priority for 2023/2024 academic year. A NEET action plan has been created in collaboration and consultation with multi agency partners and will begin in September 2023 after approval by the Scrutiny committee.

The new Youth Futures Team are making a strong start engaging our districts with the highest numbers of children who are NEET, by creating local careers leads meetings and ensuring it is a TASS priority focus in the locality groups. The team have been working closely with colleges on how to retain young people and what mental health/local authority support they need in order to help young people stay in education.

However, we are seeing the impact of the reduction in flexible part time courses across Lancashire due to the change in funding from EFSA to UKSPF. This means that young people need to attend colleges/apprenticeships full time which is sometimes too big a step for them at this time.

Across all 16 and 17yr olds, compared to November, we have seen a reduction in the not knowns, from 6.0% (1,743) to 3.5% (1,020). This equates to 723 fewer young people. As a result, our NEET figures have increased by 230. Whilst this shows that 493 not knowns were actually in a positive destination, we are seeing the NEETs rising – there are 217 more young people in the NEET group than December 2022.

As always, it is important to note that there are more young people in the cohort (737) but the team is noticing the change and the percentage of young people who are NEET is rising – from 2.5% last year to 3.2% this year

The Youth Futures Team, and also the casual staff we use, have contacted the not known young people several times now, so we are looking at other ways to tackle this – contacting their secondary school, contacting other LAs for data etc.

With regard to the NEET group, the Youth Futures Team have said that there are four key reasons why young people are NEET – there isn't any appropriate provision for them; they want a job but can't get one; they have mental health issues preventing them from participating, or they just don't want to do anything.

16 and 17yr old CLA (LCC only) – the position is not as positive as last year with 18.7% of the cohort being NEET compared to 14.2% in December 2022. Also, the NEET position has increased from last month, with 64 young people being NEET in December, compared to 56 in November.

There are currently 342 CLA young people in the 16/17yr old cohort, which is 46 more than last year. 16 and 17yr olds with EHCP – we had an issue with the September 2022 to March 2023 data in the last academic year in that this was for 17yr olds with an EHCP only, so it is not possible to provide a direct comparison to last year. There were 23 young people with an EHCP who were not known in December, compared to 51 in November so this position has improved.



There are currently 1,285 young people aged 16/17yrs old living in Lancashire who have an EHCP issued by LCC. In the 16 and 17yr olds with SEN Support cohort there are 2,808 young people, which is 1,746 more than December 2022. In December 2023, 88.1% of these young people are in EET, compared to 94.7% in December 2022

This all suggests that the impact of the rise in mental health needs, SEND needs and lack of flexible provision are having an impact on the numbers of NEET in Lancashire.

Next steps

The wider Consultant and Advisory Team continue to support schools and most schools continue to have Good and Outstanding judgements from Ofsted. The training offer continues to be refined to ensure we are meeting the needs of schools and stronger links are being built with our inclusion colleagues to ensure that there is no duplication of work and that we are providing a consistent approach to schools with the right support.

Consultations

N/A

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Risk management

The report celebrates the effective work of the service in the last term, however, the risks this year are the rise in permanent exclusions, NEET and the changes to early years funding which will be our challenges this year.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
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N/A

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A

