

A pathway for supporting non-attendance.

We have an increasing number of children being referred to the attendance service for statutory legal enforcement, due to sustained absence from school.

Schools and wider professionals, involved with families, should consider if pupil and family needs have been identified and attempts made to address these to impact better school attendance.

*Where all voluntary support options are unsuccessful or are not appropriate (e.g. an unauthorised holiday in term time), the local authority's school Attendance Support Team should liaise with school and the early help lead practitioner or social worker (where applicable) to take forward attendance legal intervention in line with section 5 to formalise support and/or enforce attendance. **Working together to improve school attendance, DfE, 2022***

This pathway has been established to avoid unnecessary legal action against vulnerable families and to encourage reflection prior to escalation.

If at any stage in this process, you identify a need for additional support for the family this should be formally planned and implemented within an existing plan i.e., Early Help, Child in Need, Child Protection, Child Looked After (Personal Education Plan). Please note we do not proceed to legal enforcement for CLA but would look to escalate within children's social care.

Any discussion or referral should include a clear offer of support and evidence if it is not successful or refused by the family or child.

*Set out clearly for pupils, parents, and schools when and how attendance legal intervention will be used where voluntary support is not appropriate, or where absence was not for legitimate reasons and support has not been engaged with and/or been successful. **Working together to improve school attendance, DfE, 2022***

The following process offers a guide to schools and wider professionals to support improved school attendance. It is specifically designed to support your graduated approach to meeting need.

At each stage of this pathway, we would advise schools and professionals keep a robust record or advice and action to support attendance.

Each step of this pathway is aligned to 'Working together to improve school attendance' DfE 2022.

This pathway should be considered alongside local and national guidance to improve school attendance. For example

'Reducing Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) Guidance 2023'

'Supporting pupils with medical conditions at schools' 2015

Prevention of non-attendance UNIVERSAL	Schools and wider professionals have communicated a clear expectation to children and families regarding good school attendance. They have identified a potential emerging issue and are putting steps in place to avoid escalation.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Has good attendance been discussed with the parent to make sure they understand the implications of school non-attendance?• Have the child and family had opportunities to discuss their attendance concerns and any support they feel would improve attendance?• Do professionals who are involved with the family include attendance targets in their planning to support this child and their family?• Have other siblings been taken into consideration? Is there a pattern of non-attendance?• Have schools and professionals investigated any mitigating circumstances outside or inside school that could be impacting the child's attendance? Have actions been taken to address them?

Identify and Understand TARGETTED GROUP/INDIVIDUAL	Schools and wider professionals will use attendance records to monitor groups at risk of poor attendance. If barriers to school attendance are identified, schools and wider partners will work together to understand and address need.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have conversations taken place to listen and understand the children and families' reasons for declining attendance?• Are children approaching or classed as persistently absence (90% and under)?• Have the barriers impacting attendance been identified, explored, and have appropriate interventions been put in place?• Has school implemented appropriate support to address barriers?• Have individual assessments taken place to address any behaviour or learning needs?• Have school-based circumstances, reasonable adjustments, been considered? i.e., timetable management, uniform adaptations, etc.• Are SMART targets in place to include attendance specific targets for the child, family, school, and wider professionals' action?

Support for the child and family TARGETTED INDIVIDUAL	A robust plan will be developed and actioned to support the child and their family. This may include support in or out of school and should include all partners taking a proactive role to act in the best interest of the child and improved school attendance.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the voice of the child been captured and considered within the expectations of engagement? • Has a holistic assessment taken place to outline clear actions required to remove barriers to attendance? • Have referrals to outside services been considered? Does the child or their family require support beyond the school gate? • Is there a SMART plan in place and have appropriate interventions been put in place including wider professionals? • Have action plans and targets been reviewed to assess impact? • Do plans include SMART targets for the child, family, and professionals? • Have appropriate referrals/support pathways into wider services been considered to support improving attendance? 	

Formalise support. SPECIALISED	If no improvements are evident a formal attendance support plan should be put in place. If an existing formal plan is in place (EH, CIN, CP, PEP) this should be utilised to formally plan the child's attendance.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despite attempts to address barriers has the child's attendance continued to decline. • Has the child's level of attendance fallen into severe absence (50% and under)? • Have all strategies and interventions been exhausted and clearly evidenced within the plan? • Is there clear evidence of non-engagement from parent despite sustained attempts to support the child and family? • Is prosecution, and any resulting legal action appropriate to this families' circumstances? • Considering the wider needs, it in the best interests of the child to pursue a legal enforcement route? • Will legal action have a positive impact on the child's attendance and likely result in improved access to their education? 	

When all elements of the process above have been undertaken and clearly evidenced within the existing plan, a referral to enforcement can be considered.

Enforcement Referral	Cases of significant non-attendance where intervention has been ineffective the lead professional will progress and discuss the most appropriate pathway.
<p>Referral to enforcement action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear management oversight is required and should be evidenced within the plan. • Lead Professional or the most appropriate service/individual to email AttendanceEnforcement@wigan.gov.uk to request a time to discuss the case at the next pathway meeting. A time/date will be emailed to you to inform acceptance of this request. • Please provide child's name, date of birth and the school they are on roll at. • In the meeting you will provide an overview of the case and presenting concerns, alongside evidence to outline the appropriate interventions attempted. 	

- The outcome from the meeting will be either approval to submit a referral for escalation to enforcement or agree further recommendations to consider and review within your existing plan. This could include escalation within wider service involvement.