

ATTENDANCE STRATEGY

2006 – 2009

DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

APRIL 2006

Building the future together



ATTENDANCE STRATEGY 2006-9

1. Statement of Purpose

Concern about truancy and attendance is a central feature of the Government's Social Inclusion Strategy primarily because:

- regular and punctual attendance is essential to the process of raising attainment.
- young people not in school are more likely to drift into crime or other anti-social activity.

Although the enforcement of school attendance is the responsibility of Wigan Council, the task of improving attendance is a multi-agency one. Only through a commitment to work in a collaborative way by all the agencies that work with children and families will any significant further progress be made in improving current attendance rates in Wigan schools.

This document outlines the Attendance Strategy for Wigan that will lead and guide the work to improve attendance levels from 2006 onwards.

The strategy defines who the partners are, their roles and responsibilities and sets those against the expected targets agreed with the DfES.

Many of the elements of the strategy are already in place and embedded in normal working practices, others need to be developed.

2. Key Principles

Attendance has been identified as one of the key issues in the Children and Young People's Services Plan 2006-09. This issue is underpinned by the following principles:

- The Children and Young People's Services takes seriously its responsibilities to promote the regular school attendance of all children of compulsory school age.
- Punctual and regular school attendance is an essential pre-requisite to effective learning.
- Irregular attendance leads to educational disadvantage.
- Raising of achievement for all pupils and young people is a clear responsibility for schools and the Children and Young People's Services.
- Early identification of problems and intervention with solutions is paramount.
- Guidance, training and support should be available for all schools, teachers, and other staff to enable them to promote attendance wherever possible and develop their skills in managing absences from school in the most effective and positive manner.

3. National Strategy

The Government Strategy from 2004 onwards, aims to improve children's educational achievement, well-being and life chances by increasing school attendance levels.

National and LEA-level targets via performance indicators have been set to reduce the current high levels of unauthorised absences. The Government have introduced

new PSA targets to reduce total absences by 8% by 2008, based on the 2002/03 returns.

The Government looks to LEAs, through their Education Welfare Services (EWS), Advisory and other support services, to focus their efforts on achieving these targets.

They have also brought in new Attendance setting regulations whereby schools' governing bodies have to set their own total absence and hence attendance targets for 2005/06, 2006/07 and 2007/08.

The Government's other solutions include:

- raising the profile of school attendance as a national priority
- raising performance and driving best practice through the system
- changing parental attitudes and behaviour and promoting parental responsibility
- implementing wider reforms e.g. schools working in collaboration

4. Audience

In Wigan it is EWOs / Youth Workers / PAs working in integrated teams, as part of Positive Futures who take the lead in promoting school attendance. However, Positive Futures is clear that support is needed from other local authority based services and other partner agencies to take the issue forward. Attendance will be a key priority for all services within Children and Young People's Services. In addition, the following key partners have a significant role to play.

- Parents
- Elected Members
- Schools
- Health
- Community Protection
- Housing
- Chamber of Commerce
- Safeguarding Board
- Police
- Courts and Magistrates
- Voluntary Organisations

It is essential that there is a clear understanding about responsibilities in relation to school attendance within all the agencies / partners identified above. Section 7, Partnership Working of this strategy clarifies the role to be played by key teams within Children and Young People's Services and partner agencies.

5. Links to Other Documents

The LEA Attendance Policy is underpinned by this Attendance Strategy to be reviewed on a regular basis in order to target the priorities in achieving the aims outlined in the policy. Although the Attendance Strategy must also be viewed as part of a wider framework, we are currently in a period of transition and at the time of writing this Strategy, it is linked to the following policies and strategies:

LEA Mission Statement
Strategic Aims
Education Development Plan 2
Inclusion Policy
Inclusion Strategy

Positive Futures Strategic Plan 2004-2007
Individual Business Plans reviewed on a yearly basis

However, with effect from April 2006, the Attendance Strategy will be underpinned and supported by the Children and Young People's Services Plan for Wigan.

6. Priorities and Success Criteria

6.1 Priorities

Over the past four years, the percentage of Unauthorised Absences in Wigan primary and secondary schools has fallen which resulted in Wigan meeting the initial Government PSA Target to reduce Unauthorised Absences by a third by 2002. Wigan also met the next Government PSA Target to reduce Unauthorised Absences by a further 10% by 2004. Over the same period, Authorised Absences in secondary schools also fell which resulted in the average attendance at Wigan secondary schools rising to above 92%, the best ever achieved for many years. Authorised Absences in primary schools also fell resulting in an average attendance of over 94.5%. These improvements meant that the average percentage of both Unauthorised Absences and attendance in Wigan primary and secondary schools was above that of the National average and that of our Statistical Neighbours.

The key factors that assisted Wigan in meeting these targets included:

- The introduction of an EWS Allocation Formulae for schools
- The introduction of Penalty Notices
- The implementation of a fast-track to Prosecution process
- The development of community based truancy initiatives
- The continuation of Truancy Sweeps
- The introduction of diagnostic attendance health checks in schools
- The development of school attendance panels
- Integrated team working between EWOs/Youth Workers/PAs

Unfortunately, this very positive trend was not sustained in 2004/05, demonstrating how much more challenging improvements from our existing high level of performance will be. The following priorities / strategies have been identified in order to get us back on track to meet our 2008 target:

- The involvement of a wider range of stakeholders in addressing attendance issues
- Improvement of access for Officers to real-time data on attendance in schools (Electronic Registration) to enable more timely intervention
- The targeting of schools not meeting their own targets
- The introduction of a RAG (Red, Amber, Green) Analysis and Action Plan for schools
- Monitoring of the Wigan Local Authority RAG Analysis and relevant Action Plan
- The development of the role of the Attendance Leader in Children and Young People's Services/Local Authority (see Appendix1)

Preventative actions which schools can take to reduce levels of unauthorised absences and improve attendance are outlined in the Wigan LEA Guidance to schools. A number of good practices are also available on the DfES website.

6.2 Success Criteria

Best Value PIs and Targets submitted to the DfES for LA Level

| % of half days missed by pupils in all Maintained Primary, Middle and Secondary Schools | | | | |
|--|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| | Actual 2004/05 | 2005/06 | 2006/07 | 2007/08 |
| Primary Schools | 5.40 | 5.28 | 5.23 | 5.18 |
| Secondary Schools | 7.94 | 7.72 | 7.60 | 7.53 |

| Attendance Targets | | | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| | Actual 2004/05 | 2005/06 | 2006/07 | 2007/08 |
| Primary Schools | 94.6 | 94.69 | 94.77 | 94.82 |
| Secondary Schools | 92.06 | 92.28 | 92.40 | 92.47 |

| Unauthorised Absence Targets | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| | Actual 2004/05 | 2005/06 | 2006/07 | 2007/08 |
| Primary Schools | 0.28 | 0.25 | 0.23 | 0.20 |
| Secondary Schools | 0.86 | 0.60 | 0.58 | 0.55 |

| Trajectory to meet the new Government PSA Target to reduce total absences by 8% on those achieved in 2002/3: | | | | |
|---|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| | Actual 2004/05 | 2005/06 | 2006/07 | 2007/08 |
| | 6.64% | 6.47% | 6.45% | 6.44% |
| This is a combination of both Primary and Secondary Schools Total Absences. | | | | |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Termly attendance returns to be submitted to the DfES |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target re CYPPC - to narrow the gap in educational achievement between CYPPC and their peers, and improve their educational support and the stability of their lives, so that by 2008, 80% of children under 16 years who have been looked after for 2½ or more years will have been living in the same placement for at least 2 years, or are placed for adoption. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To meet the target of no more than 9% of LAC in any one school year having more than 25 days (50 sessions) absence. |

7. Partnership Working

| GROUP | ROLE |
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| <p>Children and Young People's Services:</p> <p>Education Welfare Service</p> <p>Youth Service</p> | <p>The EWS in Wigan is delivered via a network of multi-agency disciplinary teams including EWOs, YWs and PAs as part of Positive Futures and is a key player in helping schools to manage absences and to promote attendance. EWOs aim to work closely with schools and families to resolve attendance issues. The key to success is an effective working relationship between schools, the EWS and other services/agencies based around an agreed Partnership Agreement covering the following features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shared policies and operational practices between schools and services (including the EWS) • clearly defined roles of school staff and EWS; • clarity around how much time the EWO will devote to a particular school; • stated expectation of the quality of EWO service; • information sharing arrangements • arrangements for referral; • regular review, monitoring and evaluation through termly register checking; • clear procedures for resolving enquiries and disputes. <p>The Youth Service in Wigan is delivered via a network of multi-agency disciplinary teams including EWOs, YWs and PAs as part of Positive Futures in support of improving attendance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Workers deliver group work sessions alongside a range of partner agencies (school staff and EWOs) to young people who have been excluded from or who are at risk of being excluded from school. • Young people with attendance issues are also supported by Youth Workers through community based youth work projects. Liaison between the Youth Worker and the EWO is crucial in ensuring the attendance of those young people improves |

| GROUP | ROLE |
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| Connexions Service | <p>The Connexions Service in Wigan is delivered via a network of multi-agency disciplinary teams including EWOs, YWs and PAs as part of Positive Futures in support of improving attendance. It is the advice, guidance and support service for 13-19 year olds, which aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support young people in making key decisions about their future, by advising them of the range of options available to them and helping them to overcome any barriers that may be affecting their choice. • commit to working closely with EWOs and other services/partners, to support young people whose attendance puts them at risk of under-achieving and making a poor transition from school to further education, training or employment. This is achieved by joint working activities such as joint groupwork in schools and home visits. |
| Advisory Service | <p>Involving the Advisory Service is essential to supporting schools to improve attendance management. The sharing of attendance data, the appropriateness of the curriculum, teaching styles and school management issues are critical to raising attendance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance data will be shared with the Advisory Service on a termly and annual basis • Where attendance data is poor the Advisory Service will use the data in their discussions with schools • Termly meetings will take place between the Education Welfare Service managers and Advisory Service representatives to discuss particular schools and monitor / share data • Where the appropriateness of the curriculum and /or teaching styles are identified as having an impact on attendance, then the Behaviour & Attendance Consultant/Link Advisor will take up the matter with the school. |
| Admissions, SEN & Alternative Provisions | <p>It is crucial to promote effective re-integration plans for young people transferring between school (mid-phase) and to support the re-admission of excluded pupils. Pupils with SEN often present specific challenges in terms of attendance issues. Pupils who present as most vulnerable are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • given a higher priority and supported through a linked EWO working closely with Admissions/SEN staff • reviewed to establish the most appropriate placement • regularly reviewed and followed up. <p>Many pupils who attend alternative provision are disaffected and the level of absence in this group is of</p> |

| GROUP | ROLE |
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| | <p>particular concern. Ensuring that such pupils are appropriately engaged in learning and vocational experiences will not only promote their achievement but also prevent their possible involvement in anti-social or criminal activities whilst absent from school.</p> |
| <p>Educational Psychology Service</p> | <p>Teams such as Educational Psychology will provide specific advice concerning programmes of intervention to help student attendance when there are specific needs to be addressed. Advice and support can be given on enabling settings to meet all their populations' educational needs.</p> |
| <p>CYPPC Strategy Group</p> | <p>Targeted support to raise achievement and attendance levels of Children in Public Care has been identified as a priority</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A virtual team of professionals working with this group has been established to support, develop and review progress • Good school attendance is a priority in order to ensure educational achievement • The focus is to strengthen and target support for young people in public care, foster carers and key workers in children's homes |
| <p>YOT</p> | <p>The Youth Offending Team has a Link Education Support Worker responsible for identifying most vulnerable young people and supporting their reintegration into mainstream school or other educational provision. Contact is made with the responsible EWO directly where there is a query regarding a young person's attendance.</p> |
| <p>Sure Start</p> | <p>Wigan Sure Start Team works with all early education and childcare providers to improve quality and standards of service delivery.</p> <p>For those delivering Early Education (soon to become Early Years) entitlement, clear contractual obligations require settings to inform the department if there are changes in attendance for those children in receipt of grant funding. In addition sample auditing helps to identify if settings are conforming to these requirements. Attendance and tracking to early years, childcare and Sure Start services, including Children's Centres, is an area of development for the team and is being addressed and monitored in a number of ways:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early years entitlement and provider register. • Sure Start / Children Centre membership scheme. • DfES quarterly and annual monitoring returns. |

| GROUP | ROLE |
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| <p>Teenage Pregnancy Service</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ofsted Inspection Reports particularly under categories relating to Health and Safety and Partnership with Parents. • Outreach support provided to all settings in respect of sustainability and quality (Service Development Staff and Advisory Teachers) • Information and targeted support to / for parents about their children's entitlements, how to identify good quality early years and childcare services, and the benefits to their children from regular attendance. • Regular audits in relation to demand for existing and new services. <p>One of the key difficulties in relation to attendance is the non-statutory nature of most of the services being offered. This results in difficulties administering a system that identifies an immediate absence - clearly this is an area for future development.</p> <p>The Teenage Pregnancy strategy has 3 main aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to reduce under 18 conception rates in the Borough by 50% by 2010 • establish a downward trend in the rate of under 16 conceptions • to reintegrate more teenage parents into education, employment or training to reduce the risk of long-term social exclusion. <p>The role of the TP strategy group is to review current provision across agencies in terms of Services (sexual health & contraceptive), Support, Media & Communications and Prevention for young people. It also has a role to support the pump-priming and development of new creative / innovative methods of delivery based on local and national evidence / best practice models. The work of the TP strategy has a core theme of trying to ensure that initiatives, following any pump-priming, are then in a position to be mainstreamed by partner agencies.</p> |
| <p>Extended Schools Team</p> | <p>The Extended Schools Team supports and advises schools and partners to develop Extended Services.</p> <p>Many schools are already offering extended services to pupils, families and communities. In some cases schools are involved in the delivery or direction of these services, while other schools are working in partnership to provide access to enhanced opportunities for their pupils and communities.</p> |

| GROUP | ROLE |
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| | <p>Definition of an extended school “An extended school is a school that recognises that it cannot work alone in helping children and young people to achieve their potential, and therefore decides to work in partnership with other agencies that have an interest in outcomes for children and young people, and with the local community”. (DfES 2004)</p> <p>This is recognition that teachers cannot do everything nor should they. It is an acknowledgement that multi-agency approval to overcoming barriers to learning is needed. There is an expectation that all schools will provide access to a ‘core offer’ of extended services by 2010. The core offer comprises high quality wraparound childcare available from 8.00am – 6.00pm, a varied menu of study support/out of school hours learning such as breakfast clubs, sports and interest clubs etc.</p> <p>Parenting support including family learning, swift and easy referral to a wide range of specialist support services and provision of wider community access to ICT and sports and arts facilities including adult learning.</p> <p>By working in partnership and consulting with children, young people, parents and carers and the wider community the self-esteem, aspirations and well being of everybody should be raised. As a consequence this should and will have an effect on overall attendance and engagement. By challenging and overcoming the barriers that face families will in turn support the young person to engage fully in all educational provision.</p> <p>Examples of how Extended Schools can support the Attendance Strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breakfast Clubs – if non-attendance is identified as an issue in a school, setting up a breakfast club could be a strategy that is used to improve attendance • By a school being involved in family learning and parenting support attendance could improve. |

| GROUP | ROLE |
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| <p>Parents</p> | <p>Parents are expected to carry out their legal responsibility to ensure that their child(ren) receive an appropriate education, usually at school by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring their children attend regularly and on time. • notifying school on first day of absence • confirming absences via written communication where relevant • only requesting holidays in term-time in very exceptional circumstances • not keeping children away from school for trivial reasons |
| <p>Elected Members</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To promote attendance by stressing the importance of education and qualifications whenever the opportunity arises. • In their various roles to support and challenge reports on attendance at pertinent Board or Panel meetings. • Appropriate members to respond to media queries on attendance/absence where relevant. • To support parents in every way they can and by making education as enjoyable and relevant – the 14-19 agenda should help here and parity of esteem for vocational education will also be of benefit. |
| <p>Schools; School Attendance Leader, Governing Bodies, Teachers, Support Staff, Pupil Forums</p> | <p>Schools have a primary responsibility to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support parents in ensuring children and young people attend school • Recognise and accept ownership of school attendance and have in place policies, strategies and practices that tackle poor levels of attendance. • Ensure a senior member of staff is responsible for attendance matters (Attendance Leader) • Have an expectation that full time punctual attendance will be the norm and all absences will be followed up. • Use Parent's Evenings, Newsletters and other written communications between home and school to raise the profile of regular attendance. • Have a declared intention to contact parents of targeted pupils on the first day of absence • Make use of attendance competitions and award schemes • Have a commitment to a minimum termly monitoring of attendance levels • Have a practice of regular reporting to governors on attendance matters (Governing Bodies) |

| GROUP | ROLE |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and act upon problems which link attendance, behaviour and self-worth • Set targets for improving behaviour and attendance with individual pupils and review progress • Have willingness on the part of all staff to accept that improving attendance is the responsibility of everyone and not just that of the Headteacher or Pastoral Care Staff. |
| <p>Health: including Medical Officers, GPs, School Nurses, CAMHS</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development of drop in sessions to assist children and young people with stress factors to remain in school • To provide a second medical opinion/review if parent is saying child is continuously absent due to a specific illness • The Primary Care Mental Health Team can provide frontline professionals with advice where children and young people are experiencing mental health issues • GPs are now identifying Young Carers and developing links with support & understanding of the issues |
| <p>Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust</p> | <p>WLCT provides opportunities and facilities for children and young people to take part in a range of leisure and cultural activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in such activities provides an influence on children and young people having a more positive attitude to attending school. • WLCT publishes The Link newspaper for young people. This provides opportunities to highlight positive outcomes from young people, often gained in a school setting. |
| <p>Community Protection Department</p> | <p>Community Protection Department aims to provide an affordable home of choice within a safe, well-kept neighbourhood. In relation to children and young people this includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring homes are decent, support is provided to vulnerable and homeless people; • reducing crime and anti-social behaviour through a balanced approach involving enforcement (including contact cards, Good Behaviour Agreements and ASBOs) and support in partnership with GM Police, housing services and support services including a range of Children and Young Persons services; |

| GROUP | ROLE |
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| <p>Housing</p> <p>Chamber of Commerce</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • minimising under-age sales of alcohol, cigarettes, fireworks etc; • enforcing litter, dog fouling and fly-tipping legislation, including action against young people; and • ensuring the air we breathe, the water we drink and the food we eat is safe (including the enforcement of food safety standards in school kitchens). <p>Wigan and Leigh Housing is committed to inter-agency working to promote school attendance including:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated Education Welfare Officer working with homeless families in the temporary accommodation to promote school attendance. • Asylum Seeker Support Team working closely with the Education Welfare Officer and local schools to ensure the children of asylum seeker families attend school • Agreeing procedures for housing staff working in communities to report non-attendance issues • Improving housing conditions to promote the general wellbeing of children • Involvement in the extended schools initiative <p>The Chamber of Commerce is fully supportive of any campaign to promote increased attendance at school because of:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The impact on the educational achievement of young people which further down the line impacts potentially on the quality of recruits to members' businesses • The link between truancy and issues around business crime-not just shop lifting but more serious incidents that occur on many of the industrial estates around Wigan. |
| <p>Safeguarding Board</p> | <p>A child's attendance at school is clearly an important factor in knowing they are safe/supervised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to support and promote the welfare and well being of pupils • to ensure pupils are safe and free from bullying in school and abuse in their home and community in order to experience a fulfilling life in mainstream education |

| GROUP | ROLE |
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| Police: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing School -based Police Officer role • Continuing focus on Truancy Sweeps (Section 16) 1998 Crime & Disorder Act • Street crime initiatives/nuisance (Contact Cards via Community Support Officers) |
| Courts and Magistrates | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to fastrack prosecutions • Deterring un-co-operative parents • Realistic / appropriate sentencing |
| Voluntary Organisations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children & Young People who join voluntary groups or projects are taught about self- reliance and to learn self- respect, using a very disciplined approach where time keeping is important. • Other schemes such as the Duke of Edinburgh stretch children & young people's abilities and challenge them to do the best that they can. These philosophies provide an indirect influence on children and young people having a more positive attitude to attending school. |
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8. Reporting and Monitoring Mechanisms

This strategy has been endorsed by the Children, Young People's and Families Strategic Partnership and approved by Wigan Council Cabinet.

Actions to deliver the strategy will be specified within the Children and Young People's Plan for Wigan.

Progress towards those actions and achievement of the targets specified in Section 6.2 will be monitored as part of the Children and Young People's Plan monitoring arrangements.

In addition an annual summary / health check report will be presented to each school governing body, covering the level of attendance at the school, the involvement of the Education Welfare Service and other services contributing to attendance improvements. This will include data on attendance, information about a number of referrals, legal action taken and the outcome and any general comments about arrangements for dealing with attendance in the school.

APPENDIX 1

The Role of the Attendance Leader in the Children and Young People's Services/Local Authority

The Attendance Leader will:

- in co-operation with the Children and Young Persons Strategic Partnership take responsibility for the co-ordinating and production of the Children and Young People's Services Strategy for Attendance. This should include priorities, action plan and outcomes to improve and sustain high levels of school attendance;
- work with other agencies and units within Children and Young People's Services to ensure cohesive multi-agency support mechanisms are in place and working to support the Children and Young People's Services Attendance Strategy;
- ensure that schools can gain assistance to produce an attendance strategy which defines clear actions and outcomes to meet school attendance targets;
- work in partnership with schools to ensure that all schools have an Attendance Leader who will promote attendance and will be the vehicle for dissemination of good practice;
- take a leading role to ensure the co-ordination of data collection and analysis of data which can be used to inform schools and Children and Young People's Services of future actions needed;
- ensure that where Children and Young People's Services/LA have schools that are subject to specific attendance targets profiles of each targeted school are compiled and updated drawing out operational strengths and weaknesses and reporting progress to Elected Members, Children and Young People's Services and key stakeholders;
- work closely with the school Improvement Partners attached to schools;
- establish mechanisms to support the local and regional dissemination of good practice, providing examples to the DfES on effective practice and contributing to national dissemination through a variety of approaches;
- ensure the Children and Young People's Services can provide advice to schools with regard to implementing action plans, developing and implementing procedures for regular data analysis which will assist the school to monitor, challenge and support the school to reach its targets;
- lead in communications with the media, local community, parents, children and young people in relation to expectation and actions that Children and Young People's services intend to promote school attendance. This should include providing information on successful and improving schools.