

<b>Report to:</b>	<b>EDUCATION ATTAINMENT IMPROVEMENT BOARD</b>
<b>Date:</b>	20 June 2023
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Catherine Moseley – Head of Access Services
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE UPDATE</b>
<b>Report Summary:</b>	This report updates the Board of the work that is being done to implement the new ‘Working together to improve attendance’ guidance for September 2023. The report presents the latest version of the self assessment and shares the draft Tameside attendance strategy.
<b>Recommendations:</b>	It is recommended that the Board agrees to support the consultation on the draft Tameside attendance strategy
<b>Corporate Plan:</b>	The proposals contained within this report will support the theme of starting well, aspirations and hopes.
<b>Policy Implications:</b>	None currently but the DfE guidance may necessitate policy change in future and a further governance report will be brought to EAIB and Executive Cabinet
<b>Financial Implications:</b> <b>(Authorised by the statutory Section 151 Officer &amp; Chief Finance Officer)</b>	There are no direct financial implications from this Working Together to Improve School Attendance update. However improving pupil attendance will provide potential cost avoidance benefits over the long term alongside improved outcomes for Tameside young people.
<b>Legal Implications:</b> <b>(Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)</b>	<p>There are a number of legal powers and duties that govern school attendance and explains how they apply to local authorities, head teachers, school staff, governing bodies, pupils and parents</p> <p>These requirements are contained in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Education Act 1996 - sections 434(1)(3)(4)&amp;(6) and 458(4)&amp;(5)</li> <li>• The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006</li> <li>• The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010</li> <li>• The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011</li> <li>• The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013</li> <li>• The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 201</li> </ul> <p>The draft strategy supports the delivery of these duties.</p>
<b>Risk Management:</b>	<p>The DfE Working Together to Improve School Attendance guidance is non statutory, however, the Council must have due regard to the guidance in operating services</p> <p>Without a priority around attendance, there is a risk that our children and young people will not reach their potential and catch up on lost learning due to the pandemic</p>

**Access to Information:**

**NON-CONFIDENTIAL**

This report does not contain information, which warrants its consideration in the absence of the Press or members of the public.

**Background Information:**

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting Catherine Moseley, Head of Access Services



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Members will recall that the Board considered a report on 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' at its meeting in October 2022. At that time, it was envisaged that the guidance would become statutory through the Schools Bill. The Bill was abandoned last December and so the guidance remains non-statutory. Organisations still have to have due regard for the guidance.
- 1.2 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' places expectations on schools, Councils and other partners to take a multi agency approach to effectively support pupils to attend school.

## 2. THE SELF EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

- 2.1 As part of the implementation of the new guidance, all local areas were allocated support from a Department for Education (DfE) appointed Attendance Advisor. Tameside's advisor is Diane McConnell.
- 2.2 Diane has met with Tameside colleagues three times so far. As part of the support for local areas, DfE Attendance Advisors have asked all areas to complete a self-assessment of their readiness to implement the new guidance from September 2023. The latest version of Tameside's self-evaluation framework (SEF) is attached at **Appendix 1**. The SEF has been RAG rated in all areas and has been used to inform the work of the Attendance Strategy Steering Group.
- 2.3 Diane has provided feedback on the SEF and has been very complimentary about the number of agencies that have contributed to the document and the richness of its content. Diane commented that it is the most collaborative SEF that she has seen from the 20+ areas that she is working with and has sought permission to use our SEF as an exemplar of good practice.
- 2.4 The document will be updated at regular intervals but provides a comprehensive overview of where the area is in readiness for implementation of the guidance from September 2023.

## 3. THE DRAFT ATTENDANCE STRATEGY

- 3.1 The Attendance Strategy Steering Group made the decision very early on in the implementation process that it wanted to develop a strategy for Tameside that all agencies could adopt for work in their area rather than having single agency strategies.
- 3.2 Attached at **Appendix 2** is the draft strategy that is currently being consulted upon and covers the following areas:
  - Why regular attendance (in learning so including early years and post 16) is important
  - What the key issues in Tameside are
  - The impact of Covid on attendance in the area
  - What we know already about why children don't attend learning opportunities
  - The importance of multi agency working to support attendance in learning
  - What the strategy is aiming to do
  - Proposed action.
- 3.3 The attendance conference taking place on 21 June 2023 will be used to consult with a range of providers and agencies on the strategy.
- 3.4 The final version of the strategy will be brought back to the Board at its next meeting in October.

## **4. THE ATTENDANCE CONFERENCE**

- 4.1 The attendance conference will take place on 21 June 2023. A range of schools, providers and agencies have been invited to attend and the conference publicity is attached as **Appendix 3**. The majority of attendees will be schools but we also have colleagues from colleges; mental health providers; early help; parent and carer forum; population health; children's social care; educational psychology; pupil support services; elected members; Children's Services leadership Team; other LAs involved in the Attendance Action Alliance; Virtual School; voluntary sector.
- 4.2 The conference will cover the following areas:
- An introduction to the conference from Cllr Feeley and Ali Stathers-Tracey
  - An overview from the DfE perspective on the guidance ie intentions and expectations and an acknowledgement of the challenges that implementation brings; an update on the progress of the guidance becoming statutory and a view on where Tameside is up to from Diane McConnell DfE Attendance Advisor
  - Consultation on the draft strategy
  - The importance of attendance from a school perspective
  - Impact of poor attendance on vulnerable pupils and the important of early intervention
  - Tameside Pupil Referral Service work to support attendance
  - Update on emotionally based school avoidance and mental health in young people and the impact on attendance
  - An opportunity for organisations to sign up to Tameside's attendance pledge.
- 4.3 All schools have been encouraged to bring two attendees including the Headteacher and the attendance lead. The conference will also provide an opportunity for networking.

## **5. NEXT STEPS AND CONCLUSION**

- 5.1 Attendance in learning still remains a priority for Tameside. Whilst Tameside continues to outperform the national average for absence, the Covid impact is still affecting the level of attendance in learning in the borough which remains significantly higher than pre- pandemic.
- 5.2 Much work has been done to ensure that the new attendance guidance is implemented for September and to have a cohesive approach across the borough and agencies. This has been reflected in the self-evaluation and endorsed by Tameside's Attendance Advisor. A good example of this has been the recent practice week in Children's Services where attendance in learning has been the theme.
- 5.3 However, there is still work to be done for example, the Attendance Steering Group is formulating a communication plan to ensure there are consistent messages being used across agencies to promote attendance in learning across the borough.
- 5.4 The Attendance Steering Group will continue to meet after the September implementation deadline to develop and evaluate further initiatives to promote attendance in learning into the future.

## **6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.1 As set out at the front of the report.