Department for Education

Attendance toolkit for local authorities

Introduction

July 2025

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Introduction | Getting started in the toolkit

What's in the toolkit?

Tackling absence is at the heart of the government's mission to break-down barriers to opportunity. This toolkit contains examples of effective practice in implementing '*Working Together to Improve School Attendance*', identified during three years of DfE's attendance adviser programme. Some examples go beyond statutory expectations or deliver them in context-specific ways - **none of them should be seen as prescriptive**, but as a resource to generate ideas to help you think through your own approach.

Section 1 is based on the **six core expectations** of local authorities in the guidance. Each page points you to the relevant section of the guidance, asks questions to help think through your approach, gives examples of how other LAs have approached things in their areas, and top tips based on the experience of DfE's attendance advisers.

Section 2 provides further detail on how you can **use data** to develop your strategy, focus your core offer, and identify and tackle specific barriers to attendance. This includes how other local authorities have done this in their contexts.

Senior LA leaders, leaders of other teams

Although this toolkit is designed first and foremost for attendance leads, much of it will also be helpful for anyone working in wider areas connected to school attendance (e.g. **early help, housing, CSC, admissions & pupil placement, SEND, Virtual School, school improvement, public health**), as well as **senior leaders and elected members**.

You may wish to view the page on **Why Attendance Matters** before hearing how successful attendance improvement requires it to be **Everyone's Business**.

Depending on your role, other sections that may be relevant are **Strategic approach**, **Multi-disciplinary support**, **Children with a social worker**, and some of the case studies on specific **barriers to attendance**.

Attendance service leads – where to start in the toolkit

Before starting, we recommend you review your team's existing practices using the self-assessment tool. Even if you have previously completed this, an up-to-date assessment will equip you to focus on the sections of the toolkit which will be of most help to you.

Each part of the self-assessment corresponds to a page in Section 1. To see a walk-through for Section 1 click here. Alternatively, to go straight to the section that you wish to focus on first, click on the arrow below.

Attendance officers and lead practitioners

Most of the toolkit will also be helpful for attendance officers and other practitioners.

For those new to attendance the **Quick guide for practitioners** is a particularly good place to start, as well as the page highlighting **what is available on VYED**. It is also worth bookmarking the **links** referenced at the end of the toolkit.

1. Strategic approach
2. Comms & Advice
3. Targeting Support Meetings
4. Multi-disciplinary support
5. Legal intervention
6. Children with a social worker

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Introduction | Why attendance matters & the challenge for LAs

Thanks to the efforts of the sector, absence is moving in the right direction with children attending over 3 million more days in 24/25 compared to the previous year, but there is further to go. **Severe absence now presents the biggest challenge with 170,000 children missing 50% or more**. Local authorities have a central role: they are uniquely placed to provide strategic leadership and drive access to support.

Attainment & earnings

Pupils missing just 10 days more than their peers have half the odds of achieving good GCSEs.

For each extra day of absence between Y7 & Y11, controlling for other factors, a typical pupil loses £750 in future lifetime earnings.

Reducing disadvantage

Significant variation exists in absence rates between areas, and between disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and their peers, which risks perpetuating inter-generational inequalities. More than 1/3 of children eligible for FSM were persistently absent in 2023/2024, compared to 1/7 ineligible for FSM.

Lifeline for the most vulnerable

Good attendance offers an additional safeguard for the vulnerable, via meaningful activity, access to trusted adults, and wellbeing support. But in 2023/24, children on a child protection plan missed over 8 weeks of school on average compared to under 3 weeks for all pupils.

Improving Health

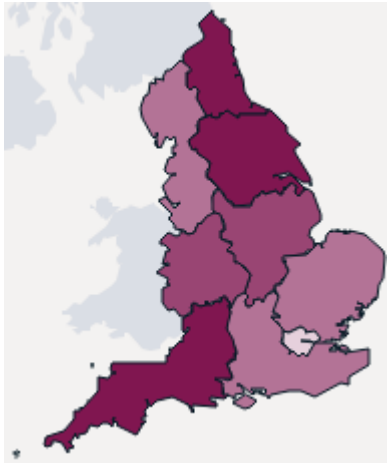
The mental health of children who are severely absent is around twice as bad compared with those who miss only 1% of schooling.
Long-term, education serves as a protective factor for adult health.

Risky behaviours

81% of children cautioned or sentenced for any offence had been persistently absent. For serious violence offences it was 85%.

What does this mean for LAs?

- Statutory guidance sets clear expectations for schools, trusts and LAs. Most intervention happens in school, but LAs have a vital role both in supporting schools to do what they can and in leading where barriers are more complex and/or beyond the school gates.
- Reducing absence is key in improving life chances & reducing demand on costly crisis services (e.g. CSC, Alternative Provision, NEET support).



How is your LA doing?

- LAs can use the DfE's Monitor your school attendance service to compare absence in their areas with other areas and access a dashboard and reports including 'similar schools' comparisons to help target action.
- LA-level data is also published fortnightly (Pupil attendance in schools), as well as the more detailed but less frequent census data.

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Introduction | Data: Six things every leader of attendance should know

One

The share of children in school almost every day has fallen from almost two-thirds to under half. But there are green shoots, in 2022/23 over 150k more attended almost every day.

Fewer secondary aged children attending 95%+**, more** children missing 5-15% and **more** children severely absent

Two

A lot of absence is children missing the occasional day - where schools can make a difference

In the average secondary school, **approaching half of absence can be attributed to pupils missing 15% of sessions or less**

Three

Every extra week counts when it comes to attainment

Students **attending over 95%** (up to 2 weeks missed) are **twice as likely to achieve grade 5 in English & Maths** than students **attending 90% of the time** (up to 4 weeks missed).

Four

Taking action early really matters, and can make all the difference

The tipping point is surprisingly low and between year changes can have a big impact

Five

The attendance drop off in year 7, and again in year 8, is a big opportunity

Years 6 to 8 are key to making progress, especially slowing the double transition attendance dip, which is bigger for those eligible for Free School Meals

Six

Attendance practice can have a real impact on school attendance levels

A large part of differences between schools **can't be explained by demographic factors alone**; practice and approach can unlock real improvement, closing gaps between similar schools

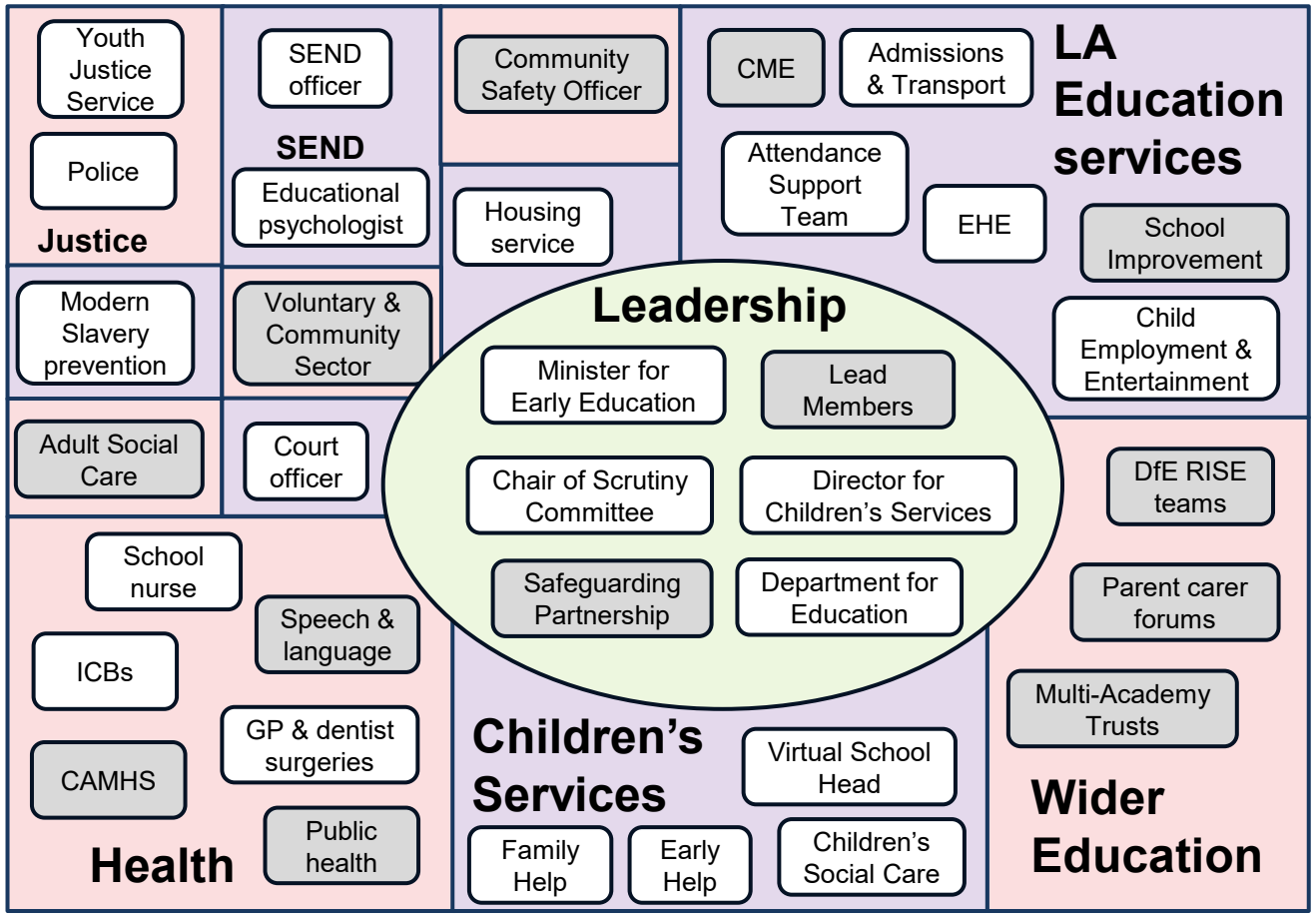
For a more detailed look at these data insights, click here.

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Introduction | Improving Attendance is Everyone's Business

Improving attendance is everyone's business. All the leaders and practitioners in the diagram below have an interest in school attendance, and contribute towards it. Where the box is white, you can click on it to hear someone in that role explaining why. Alternatively, watch the whole video here.

The diagram is not exhaustive – depending on your local context, there may be many more roles that have an interest in good school attendance and that contribute to removing barriers to it.



Top tips for developing joint working across and beyond your local authority

1. Identify everyone in your LA and wider partnership who has a role to play.
2. Explain and demonstrate the value of working together on attendance.
3. Make the data flow to all the partners you've identified.
4. Start small (with a few key partners) and build out from that.
5. Agree tangible commitments from each service/partner you've identified.
6. Create opportunities (or use existing platforms) to review progress.

Watch the video **here**.

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Introduction | Quick guide for practitioners

Attendance 101

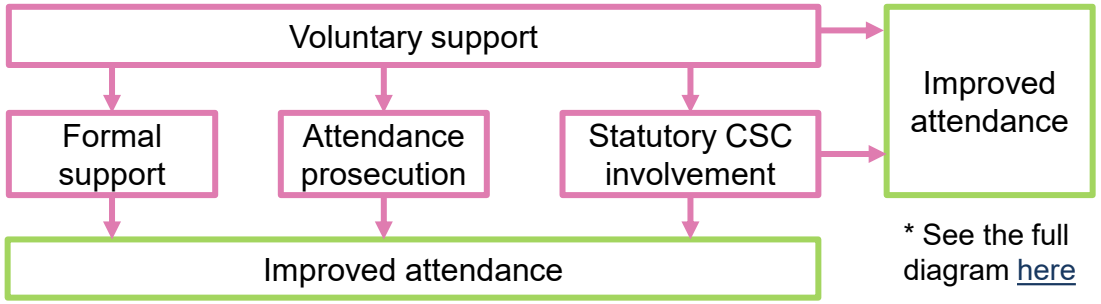
- The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances.
- DfE's statutory attendance guidance contains expectations for schools, trusts, governing bodies, and local authorities. It also includes more detail on the keeping of school attendance and admissions registers, which are governed by the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.
- This guidance embeds a support-first approach, with all partners working together to remove barriers to attendance by putting the right support in place. Most pupils will be supported in school, but those with more entrenched absence may require a multi-agency response.
- Where, and only where, support is not successful, not engaged with, or not appropriate (e.g. term-time holidays), the law protects pupils' right to an education. There are a range of interventions available, and decisions to use them should always be made on a case-by-case basis. Further detail can be found in Chapter 6 of DfE's attendance guidance.

10 features of a great practitioner

A great local authority attendance practitioner …

1. *Has high expectations for all pupils at all schools.*
2. *Makes decisions with pupils' and families' needs at the heart.*
3. *Sees attendance as part of the solution (particularly for the most vulnerable), and not just another problem to be solved.*
4. *Is curious about what the data says.*
5. *But doesn't just look at data by averages.*
6. *Regularly seeks feedback from schools and acts on it.*
7. *Sees schools as an equal partner, and works together with them on specific cases.*
8. *Has established constructive relationships with colleagues in a variety of roles across and beyond the LA, including those key to providing multi-disciplinary support.*
9. *Always knows why they are pursuing a particular legal intervention route.*
10. *Is always ready to revisit support.*

For more detail on what effective decision-making looks like, watch this video **here**.



* See the full diagram here

Section 1:
Service Delivery

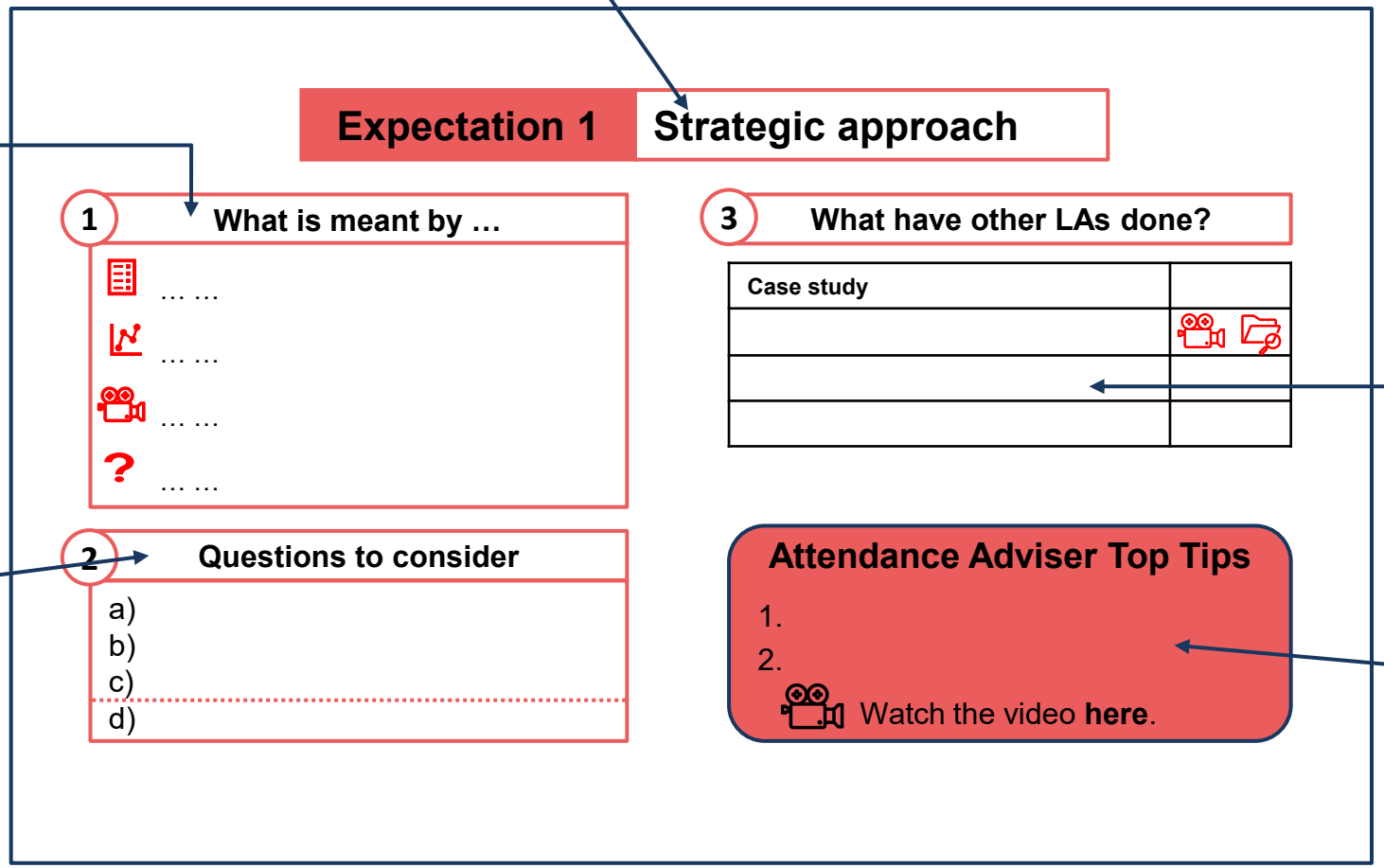
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Section 1 Walkthrough

Working Together to Improve School Attendance contains six core expectations for local authorities. In Section 1, a page has been allocated to each one of these expectations.

This section includes resources that will help you understand what this expectation means in practice, including:

- A link to the relevant paragraphs in statutory attendance guidance
- DfE published statistics
- Recent webinars & other recordings



A list of questions contained in the self-assessment tool to help you consider your current approach, as well as some additional questions if you'd like to go further.

A DfE attendance adviser provides top tips based on their three years' experience of supporting LAs to deliver attendance support. Combined with the 'Questions to consider', this will prompt ideas on what you might want to tackle next.

In these case studies, local authorities explain how they have tackled aspects of this expectation, and provide links to useful resources. The case studies are designed to give you ideas of novel approaches that you could adopt in your LA, as well as ways of tackling common barriers.

Page 15 also provides a summary of some of the useful practices from the case studies that you might wish to adopt in your own area.

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Expectation 1 Strategic approach

1 What is meant by 'strategic approach'?

To address and ultimately remove wider barriers to attendance, LAs require a **strategic approach across their services** that prioritises the **pupils, cohorts and schools** on which to focus efforts. For more detail on what is involved see paragraphs 88 and 89 of Working Together to Improve School Attendance.

For more detail on the use of data to inform your strategic approach and to identify specific barriers on which to focus your efforts, please also refer to Section 2 of this toolkit.

2 Questions to consider

a) Do we have a strategy? Do people know about it?
b) Is our strategy informed by data from all our schools?
c) Does our strategy include tangible short & long-term aims?
d) Does our strategy encourage schools to take a twin-track approach, tackling both lower-level absence (where they hold more levers) and severe absence?
e) Does our strategy consider the needs of specific cohorts, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups?
f) Is our strategy aligned with wider LA strategies (on SEND/safeguarding/etc)?
g) Has our strategy led to tangible contributions from wider LA services?
h) Have we engaged other partners (e.g. police, ICBs)? What about schools, parent/carer forums & pupil voice?
i) When did we/senior leaders last review our strategy?
j) Do we have the resources to deliver and maintain our strategy?

If we're meeting the expectation but want to improve further

k) Could we invite external scrutiny, or learn from other LAs?
l) Does our strategy include agreed commitments from across/beyond the LA?
m) How can we encourage schools to use our strategy to inform their own policies?

3 What have other local authorities done?

Case study	
Portsmouth City Council: City-wide Strategy inc. deciding areas of focus, governance structures, multi-agency case working & comms to schools/parents	
Durham County Council: Local Attendance Alliance inc. agreeing pledges with other services, school self assessment tool and one stop shop, joint working with health, virtual school and social care [30 mins]	
Sheffield City Council: City-wide Attendance Charter inc. locality model, working with multiagency partners, pledges from services, staff training, city-wide comms campaign [11 mins]	
LB of Lambeth Partnership Working: Youth Justice Service inc. governance and ideas for joint working, working with speech and language specialists and parenting support	
Gloucestershire County Council Partnership Working: Educational Psychology Service inc. guide for parents & schools, training for school staff [10 mins]	

Attendance Adviser Top Tips

1. Senior leaders must be invested.
2. Partners need to be included & share ownership from the outset.
3. The voluntary and community sector can play a key role.
4. Creating an implementation group helps keep you focussed and on-track.
5. The best approaches are continually evaluated and tweaked.

Watch the video **here**.

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Expectation 2 Comms & advice

1 What is meant by 'Comms & advice'?

Good **communication and sharing of effective practice** are essential to good joint working between schools and LAs. For more detail on what is expected see paragraph 91 of Working Together to Improve School Attendance.

In reviewing your approach, you may wish to consider what good practice you want to encourage in schools. This webinar provides examples.

When sharing advice, you may wish to make use of existing DfE resources, including a webinar and Q&A on attendance and absence codes.

2 Questions to consider

a) Do we know who the attendance champions are for each school in our area?
b) Does each school know who their named point of contact is in the LA?
c) Do our schools clearly understand what they can access free of charge (including support/advice outside of their TSM)?
d) Do our schools clearly understand what support they should have offered prior to LA involvement?
e) Do we provide opportunities to share good practice and tackle common issues?
f) Have we asked schools what they value in terms of comms and advice?

If we're meeting the expectation but want to improve further

g) How could we use technology to:
   - Facilitate more sharing of good practice
   - Make resources readily available to schools when they need them?
h) Could we create opportunities for attendance officers in schools to work collaboratively with each other, e.g. to share expertise on complex cases?

3 What have other local authorities done?

Case study	
Kent County Council: Setting a clear offer for schools inc. simplifying routes into the service, checklist and online handbook for schools [9 mins]	
LB of Camden: Communicating with Schools through Single Points of Contact inc. weekly drop ins, newsletter and online resources [12 mins]	
Lincolnshire County Council: Communicating with Schools through Single Points of Contact inc named contacts, FAQs document and cluster meetings [10 mins]	
Bristol City Council: Communicating with schools inc. newsletter, attendance toolkit, network meetings, email helpline [14 mins]	
City of Bradford MB Council: Additional traded offer to schools beyond the core statutory service [11 mins]	

Attendance Adviser Top Tips

1. Schools find it helpful to understand what their LA can and can't offer, and why.
2. Effective approaches take into account what schools need and when.
3. The best place to start is by using existing communication structures.
4. Using technology allows you to reach the biggest audience most effectively.

Watch the video **here**.

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Expectation 3 Targeting Support Meetings

1 What is meant by TSMs?

Targeting Support Meetings [TSMs] are **regular conversations between local authority and school**, using the school's attendance data to identify pupils and cohorts with, or at risk of, poor attendance (particularly **severely absent** pupils) and agreeing targeted actions and access to services. For more detail see paragraphs 92-97 of Working Together to Improve School Attendance.

To watch a **webinar** on how to hold effective TSMs click here.

TSMs are a partnership between school and local authority. To read a school leader's perspective on what they value in TSMs, click here.

2 Questions to consider

a) Are the schools in my area prioritised, and offered TSMs, according to need?
b) Have schools provided input into the structure of TSMs?
c) Is my team trained on how to conduct a TSM?
d) Do we have a structured way of capturing the discussion from TSMs?
e) Do we agree concrete action plans for all severely absent pupils, and for persistently absent pupils who require a multi-agency response?
f) Do we follow up plans in the next TSM?

If we're meeting the expectation but want to improve further

g) How can we request information in a structured way in advance, allowing the meeting to be more focussed?
h) How can we use DfE's *VYED* tools to inform TSMs, including new AI-reports that compare schools to 20 similar ones, not just national averages?
i) Do we use the feedback from TSMs to inform our attendance strategy?
j) Can we use TSMs to share experience from schools that have tackled similar issues and/or put schools in touch to share practice?
k) How can we use our own data analysis capabilities to support schools?

3 What have other local authorities done?

Case study	
Norfolk County Council: Delivering TSMs across a Large Rural LA inc. booking system, use of virtual meetings, electronic recording proforma [9 mins]	
Swindon Borough Council: Making Most Effective Use of TSM Time inc. meeting template, approach to in person meetings, comms in between meetings, collecting feedback [18 mins]	
Southampton City Council: Making the Most Effective Use of TSM Time inc. meeting template, referrals to multi-agency partners, checklist of strategies to consider	
LB of Wandsworth: Working Effectively with Independent Schools inc. developing relationships, TSMs, data sharing, developing and sharing resources	
West Berkshire Council: Working Effectively with Independent Schools inc. developing contacts and relationships, TSMs [7 mins]	

Attendance Adviser Top Tips

1. The best TSMs are co-designed with schools.
2. Logistics can be streamlined to develop routines and to make most effective use of the time you've got together.
3. For TSMs to work, the right people need to be in the room.
4. Meetings only lead to meaningful results with agreed actions, names, dates and follow-up.

Watch the video **here**.

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Expectation 4 Multi-disciplinary support

1 What is meant by 'multi-disciplinary support'?

Most pupils will be supported in school. However, where there are **multiple issues** requiring other service involvement or the barriers to attendance are outside the school gates, schools, LAs and other partners are expected to work together to provide **more intensive whole family support**. For more detail see paragraphs 98-103 of Working Together to Improve School Attendance.

Families of severely absent pupils who face out-of-school barriers and do not have a social worker should routinely be assessed for Family Help. The Families First Partnership programme guidance provides more information.

Click here for a video on effective practice in providing alternative provision for medical needs, and here for a summary from the LGSC Ombudsman.

2 Questions to consider

a) Do our schools know how to make appropriate early help assessments or referrals?
b) Do we have strong relationships with services across the LA? Who's missing?
c) Do we have strong relationships with services beyond the LA (e.g. on health)?
d) Do we share attendance data with relevant services providing support?
e) Do front-line officers understand what help is available, and how to refer families?
f) Do families receive a single assessment, plan & (where needed) lead practitioner?
g) If the lead practitioner isn't an attendance lead, do we advise them on attendance?

If we're meeting the expectation but want to improve further

h) Could we establish a forum (or use an existing one) for people across/beyond the LA to discuss attendance cases?
i) Could we conduct an audit of plans to review what was put in place and inform plans going forward?

3 What have other local authorities done?

Case study	
Bury Metropolitan Borough Council: Attendance Clinic for schools [9 mins]	
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council: Attendance Solution Panel to Facilitate Multi-Agency Working inc. engaging partners & involving schools [13 mins]	
Sefton Council: Attendance Pathway and Team Around the School to Facilitate Multi-Agency Working inc. establishing the pathway, buy-in, auditing plans [15 mins]	
Dorset Council: Embedding Attendance in a Locality Family Help Model to Enable Multi-Agency Working (training delivered to DCSs in 2022) [30 mins]	
Telford and Wrekin Council: Providing Attendance Training to Family Help Teams to Facilitate Multi-Agency Working inc. training for LA teams, attendance clinics and briefings for school staff, communication with families, attendance action plans. [13 mins]	
South Gloucestershire Council: Joint Working with Public Health to Deliver Family Link Work Service inc. use of TSMs to highlight cases, attendance panel meetings, deciding the lead practitioner, 6 month support plans [9 mins]	
Newcastle City Council: Section 19 and Provision of Education to Pupils with Medical Needs inc. pathway for schools and LA to work together, reintegration plans, training for schools, EBSA resources, guide for parents [8 mins]	
York City Council: Supporting schools through early help inc. attendance action group, prioritising pupils, securing promises from wider services [8 mins]	

Attendance Adviser Top Tips

1. Effective joint working isn't a hand-off from schools but a continuation of attendance support.
2. The best approaches make full use of what is already available across the area, including on mental health.
3. The lead practitioner does not have to be the attendance lead.

Watch the video **here**.

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Expectation 5 Legal intervention

1 What is meant by 'legal intervention'?

Where support **is not successful/not appropriate/not engaged with**, the law protects pupils' right to an education & provides a **range of interventions**. For more detail see paras 136-202 of Working Together to Improve School Attendance, and this webinar on Penalty Notices.

This article from the Magistrates' Courts Legal Briefing provides a background to the use of legal intervention to improve attendance.

DfE and AEWM have also co-produced a template penalty notice code of conduct and template notice to improve, which can be adapted to your needs.

2 Questions to consider

a) Do we always offer support first (except where inappropriate eg holidays)?
b) Have we set out clearly for parents/pupils/schools how legal intervention will be used, including a code of conduct on the use of penalty notices?
c) Do we choose from the full range of formal support/enforcement options?
d) Do we take forward prosecution as a last resort?
e) Do we work effectively with social care services where we have safeguarding concerns/absence becomes severe?
f) Do we issue 'notices to improve' as a final warning when appropriate?
g) Do we use monies collected first for administration of the system/prosecution, and secondly for attendance support?

If we're meeting the expectation but want to improve further

h) Do we have a clear multi-agency decision-making process for moving cases forward (i.e. a graduated response)?
i) Do we have systems in place to continually loop back from enforcement to support (e.g. in communications to parents, notice to improve)?
j) Could educational neglect be articulated in our CSC threshold of need?

3 What have other local authorities done?

Case study	
Isle of Wight Council: Effective use of Attendance Contracts and Education Supervision Orders inc. engaging parents, support plan meetings, enforcement panel, Parenting Support, Multi-agency reintegration, making the case [31 mins]	
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council: Effective use of Notices to Improve inc. use of language, final offer of support, and graduated response [7 mins]	
East Riding of Yorkshire Council: Effective use of the National Framework for Penalty Notices inc. working with legal, warning letters, consistency & communication [14 mins]	
Warrington Metropolitan Borough Council: Reflections on first year of issuing penalty notices following introduction of the National Framework for Penalty Notices inc. criteria for issuing, code of conduct, Notices to Improve [12 mins]	
Central Bedfordshire Council: Effective use of Prosecution as a Last Resort inc. support first, gathering evidence, presenting cases, securing effective outcomes [19 mins]	
South Tyneside Council: Effective use of prosecution as a last resort inc. ensuring support first, use of 'positive' prosecution, improving case files, making the case to Magistrates, joint working between the attendance and legal teams [9 mins]	
Nottingham City Council: Effective use of Parenting Orders inc. when there is parental non-engagement, and deciding on responsible officers [10 mins]	
LB of Lewisham: Developing an Educational Neglect Policy inc. working with CSC & Safeguarding Partnership, agreeing a definition & developing a pathway (18 mins)	

Attendance Adviser Top Tips

1. It's never too late to keep offering support.
2. The most successful legal cases have a clear purpose and use the most effective tool for the family.
3. A strong working relationship with your legal team is crucial.
4. Training school staff will help improve consistency & benefit you both

Watch the video **here**.

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Expectation 6 Children with a social worker

1 What is expected?

In addition to the benefits for all pupils, good school attendance provides an **additional safeguard for vulnerable pupils**. For more detail, including on the role of the **Virtual School**, see paras 105-107 of Working Together to Improve School Attendance. You may also wish to consult para 177 of Working Together to Safeguard Children, and the CSC National Framework.

To watch a **webinar** highlighting effective practice in this area, including a case study from Oxfordshire County Council, click here.

In 23/24, children on a CPP missed over 8 weeks of school on average, compared to under 3 weeks for all pupils. The CSC dashboard contains outcomes for your area: select 'family support' and then 'child wellbeing and development'.

2 Questions to consider

a) Do we work with the Virtual School to set (and monitor progress against) aspirational targets for the attendance of children with a social worker?
b) Do we work with the Virtual School to ensure attendance is reflected in personal education plans for pupils looked-after? How successful is our LA (as corporate parent) in securing the regular attendance of looked-after children?
c) Do we ensure designated teachers/safeguarding leads are trained on attendance?
d) Do we remind social workers of the importance of good school attendance?
e) Is attendance built into every CiN/CPP plan in our LA where needed?

If we're meeting the expectation but want to improve further

f) How could we employ innovative approaches to train social workers on the importance & benefits of attendance? Alternatively, could we embed it in their existing training?
g) How could we embed attendance in safeguarding training for schools?

3 What have other local authorities done?

Case Study	
Cheshire East Council: Building Effective Joint Working with Children's Safeguarding Partnership inc. attendance roadshow, working with the Safeguarding Partnership, training, parenting assessments, building attendance into plans [12 mins]	
LB of Newham: Building Effective Joint Working with the Virtual School inc. sharing data across services, staff training, integrated IT & individual support plans [22 mins]	
Northumberland County Council: Improving Attendance of Children with a Social Worker inc. auditing cases, training staff, moving to relational practice [11 mins]	
Shropshire Council: Improving Attendance of Children with a Social Worker inc. drop-ins, dedicated officer, training for staff, workshops, step-down decisions, [24 mins]	
Norfolk County Council: Auditing Social Care Cases inc. data sharing, cross-agency discussions, training & awareness for social workers (also listed in Section 2) [9 mins]	
LB of Croydon: Improving Attendance of Children with a Social Worker inc. regional service networking, use of data, drop in sessions, Educational Psychology [11 mins]	
Durham County Council: Joint Working with the Virtual School inc. safeguarding leads, dedicated officer, use of data, toolkit, pilot (also listed in Exp 1) [6 mins]	

Attendance Adviser Top Tips

1. Remember that attendance is part of the solution, not just another problem.
2. All professionals need (easy) access to data.
3. Support plans should reflect a child's engagement with education.
4. Effective approaches have tangible actions for social workers in their day-to-day work.

Watch the video **here**.

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Service Delivery | Practical examples of where to start from the case studies

Strategic approach

- An attendance alliance or charter, with commitments/pledges from partners
- A school self-evaluation and one-stop shop (video link here)
- A comms campaign
- Staff training (video and resources)
- Educational psychology-informed guidance for schools & parents
- Wider front-line council officers enquiring about school-age children they encounter
- Smart attendance targets on every kind of children's plan
- Partnership with a wide range of VCS organisations

Comms & advice

- Attendance checklist & handbook
- Newsletter for schools
- Weekly/termly drop-in for schools
- Cluster meetings for schools in a locality
- Attendance toolkit for schools in the area (video link here)
- Network meetings
- Webinars for specific knowledge areas
- FAQ for school officers
- Survey your contacts to ask what they need/value

TSMs

- Electronic proforma
- Booking system
- Collect feedback from schools
- Checklist of strategies to consider
- Prepare the data in advance
- Link into existing wider meetings

MDS

- Attendance Clinic for schools to share practice
- Cross-LA Attendance Solution Panels
- Attendance Action Group
- Audit of plans
- Team around the school
- Pathways/flow charts for attendance support, and for mental-health related absence
- Use of a locality model
- Attendance training for LA teams
- Family link workers
- Section 19 guide for parents
- Medical needs reintegration plans
- EBSA resources
- Map-out what's already available

Legal intervention

- Ensuring support is exhausted first
- Appropriate use of Single Justice Procedure & improving case files (video here)
- Parent early support conversations
- Support plan meetings
- School Attendance Enforcement Panel
- Parenting support
- Warning letters for unpaid penalties
- Training for school staff
- Making individual case decisions
- Presenting cases effectively & securing outcomes that will lead to behavioural changes
- Parenting Orders following prosecution
- Ed Neglect Policy & Continuum of Need

Children in need

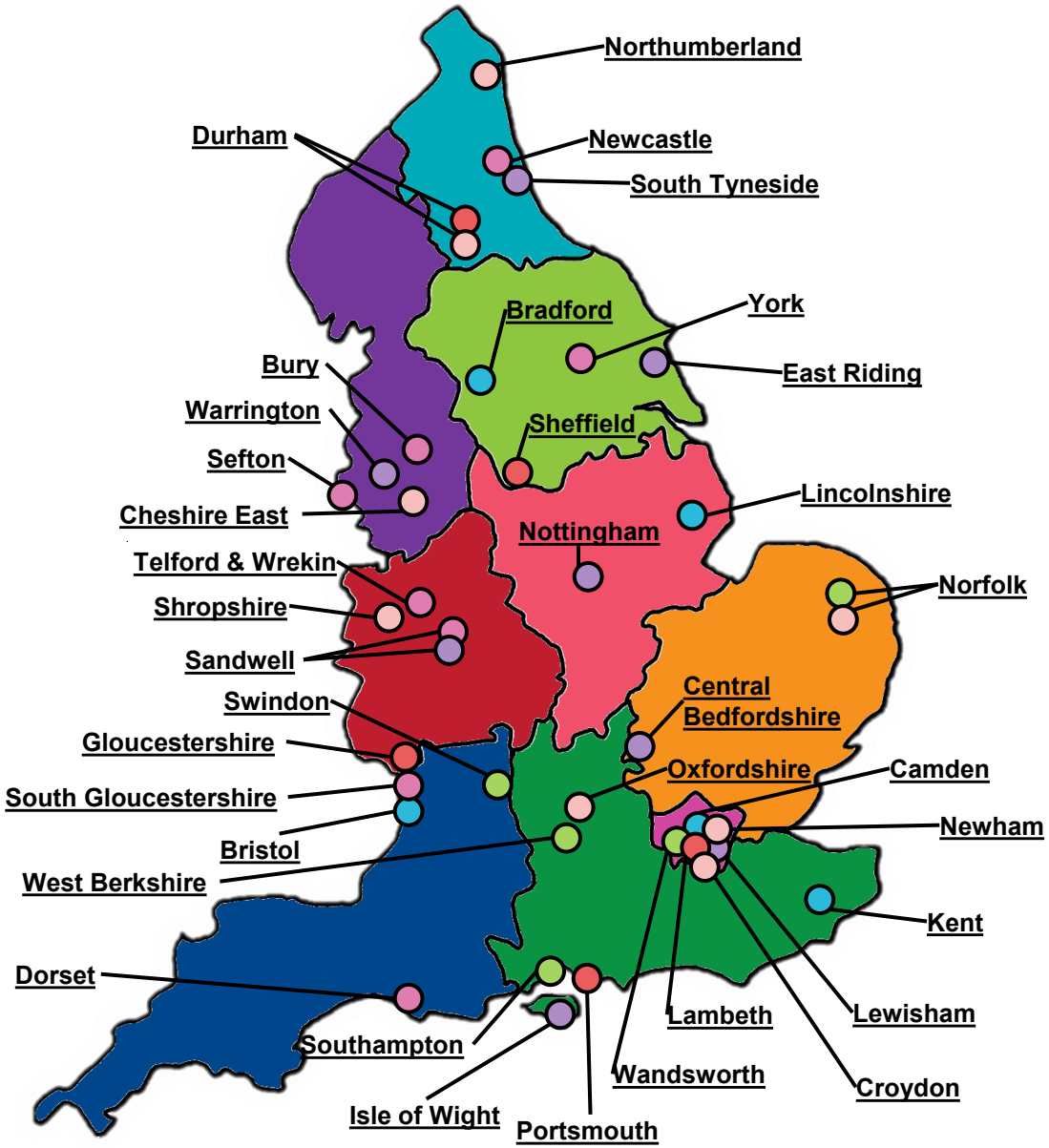
- Attendance Roadshow, and working with the Safeguarding Partnership
- Attendance clinics for professionals
- DivertEd team (educational experts working in CSC)
- Identifying children with a social worker who don't have a school place
- Case auditing (here and here)
- Training for staff
- Individual 1-2-1 approaches
- Case advice drop-in sessions
- Dedicated officer for children with a social worker (here and here)
- Cross-team panel meetings to review data

Service Delivery | Map of LA case studies

This map provides a summary of all the local authority case studies that have been provided throughout Section 1 of this toolkit.

Each example is specific to that local authority's context, but has been included to prompt your thinking as you develop and continuously improve your service offer.

- Strategic approach
- Comms & advice
- Targeting support meetings
- Multi-disciplinary support
- Legal intervention
- Children with a social worker



Section 2:
Use of Data

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Use of Data | Introduction

1 Why is use of data important?

As detailed in Section 1, all local authorities are expected to provide the **same core attendance services**. However, you will be working in your own **specific context**, and face your own attendance and welfare challenges.

Local authorities who have devised an effective strategic approach to attendance have done so by using data **to identify pupil cohorts, schools and neighbourhoods/towns** on which to focus their efforts.

Ensuring good flow of data **across and beyond your local authority** is also a key enabler to making attendance 'Everyone's Business', and ensuring that individual teams can monitor the impact of their interventions.

Attendance Adviser Top Tips

1. Connect with your data experts in the LA to explore VYED together
2. Identify which data tools and reports are useful for teams across your LA
3. Ensure that all teams can access the VYED system – spread your logins far and wide.
4. Ensure that all staff are trained and confident to use the data tools and reports that are relevant to them and can aid their work
5. Undertake regular exploration of the data to get beneath the headlines, identify trends, spot variation and identify capacity
6. Adopt a sequential approach to data analysis and action planning (6-step cycle) and keep refining your approach.
7. Establish a data reporting cycle to track progress, reflect on performance and plan for improvement

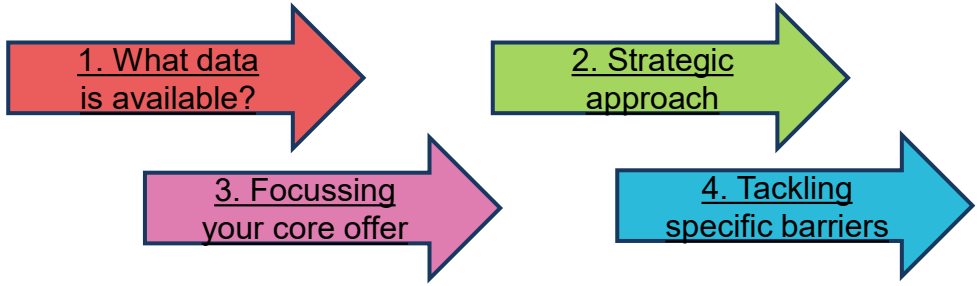
Watch the video **here**.

2 Questions to consider

a) Does everyone in the attendance team (& anyone else who needs to) have a DfE sign-in to get access to VYED?
b) Are we sharing data with appropriate teams & colleagues, in line with our data protection assessment?
c) Is attendance data used as an 'early-warning' system for other parts of the LA?
d) Do we regularly benchmark ourselves against other LAs and regional and national averages (including for vulnerable cohorts)?
e) Do we set tangible short- and long-term aims (and review them) as part of our strategy?
f) Do we look at the whole distribution of absence to identify where we can have the most impact?
g) Do we use the VYED AI-powered 'similar schools' reports to understand how schools in our area compare, identify which have made the most improvements, and find out how?
h) Do we include data & promote VYED tools in our comms to schools?

If use of data is already quite well embedded, but we'd like to go further:

i) Are we making full use of the new VYED tools to move beyond raw averages in how we look at data?
j) As part of our analysis, do we match attendance data to other data sets the local authority holds?



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Use of Data | What is available?

What can I see on View Your Education Data?

Daily data collected from schools is made available to local authorities via DfE's 'Monitor your school attendance' tool, available on the View your education data (VYED) service. These tools play a key role in facilitating **early identification and support** for pupils and identifying **school-level variation**. They can inform your core offer to all schools. They are also particularly helpful in additional governance oversight of schools you maintain.

Watch this video to see a walkthrough of what the VYED tools look like in practice. **The best way to see what is available is to explore for yourself**. Instructions for requesting access are available here.

The tool currently includes:

- **Pupil level data** for all state-funded schools in your area, with an insights dashboard to summarise
- **Absence bandings report** for all state-funded schools in your area
- **AI-powered similar school reports** which show how schools compare nationally &, critically, against 20 statistically similar schools.
- **Insights summary report** for schools in your area, showing their collective position relative to national averages
- The ability to **download data** to share with other teams/agencies
- Data visualisations showing **changes over time**

VYED is a growing service – do keep checking for new tools and analysis. The following are coming soon for local authorities:

- Automated reports on pupils in scope for an **attendance return**
- A **session-level code breakdown**
- A report on pupils who have been **removed from a school roll** and not appeared on another school roll anywhere in the country
- **Postcode functionality** for pupils living in your LA but going to school elsewhere

What other data should I use?

There is no prescribed list of data you should use to inform your strategy, but it is likely to include many or all of the following:

- **Census data**, including for children in need specifically.
- Data and background information collected from schools within the context of **Targeting Support Meetings**
- **Mandatory returns** from schools under Regulation 13.
- Your local authority's **legal intervention data**.
- Broader data from across your authority and other partners, e.g. **exclusions**, **Family Help** assessments, **health** data.
- **Pupil voice**

What have other local authorities done?

In this video, Windsor & Maidenhead describe how they have **secured specific resource** to ensure they can analyse the wealth of data available to them.

Click here to hear about the work Bury have done to **collect pupils' views** on school attendance matters, and to ensure this informs their strategy.

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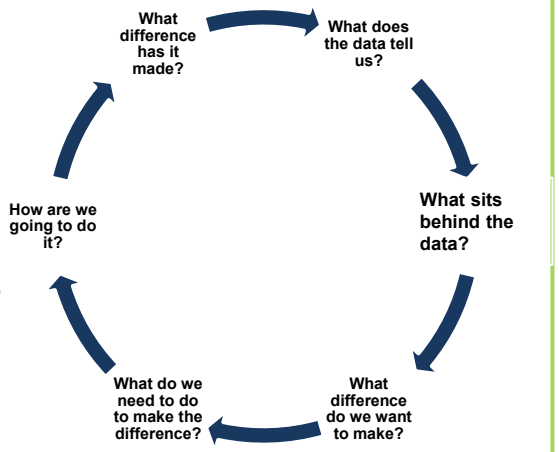
Use of Data | To develop your strategic approach

Data is key to developing a strategic approach, both in equipping you to hone and focus your approach, and in equipping all parts of the council to play their part. After reviewing the material on this page, the 'Questions to consider' will help you to work through what this looks like in your area.

6 Six-step process to identifying and tackling barriers

Identifying issues from the data is only the first step in finding the solution. You may find the following six-step process useful in terms of taking next steps.

One of DfE's attendance advisers talks through the process in more detail here.



Sheffield City Council case study

Sheffield explain how they have used the 6-step cycle to inform their strategy. Watch the video here.

Questions to consider:

1. Are there aspects of the Sheffield case study that we could utilise in your LA?
2. How could we use the 6-step cycle to inform your strategic approach?
   a) What is the one thing we will do immediately?
   b) What will we plan for in the medium term?

Flow of data across and beyond your LA

Because Attendance is Everyone's Business, it is not just the attendance team who should be using attendance data to inform their strategy and delivery. To note, there is **no limit on the number of VYED logins** that you can request within your local authority.

This diagram illustrates an example flow of attendance data, although the needs in your area will be specific to your context.

Local authorities can also export VYED data. Where data needs to be **shared with other agencies** supporting children, the **LA as data controller can determine what is appropriate** in accordance with the Information Commissioners Office – Data Sharing Code of Practice

Questions to consider:

1. How well does the data flow across/beyond our LA?
2. Where is data flow restricted?
3. How does this impact our work?
4. How will we tackle this?
5. What is missing from the example data flow above? How could other teams in our LA use attendance data?

To hear about how Somerset are working to **share data with partners**, click here. The resources associated with the video can be accessed here.

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Use of Data | To focus your core offer

In the examples below, local authorities talk about how they have used the six-step process to think through and structure aspects of their core offer to schools. The 'Questions to consider' after each case study will help you think through how you could apply this to your own situation.

LB of Camden: Use of data to inform sharing of communication & advice

Watch the video here

Questions to consider:

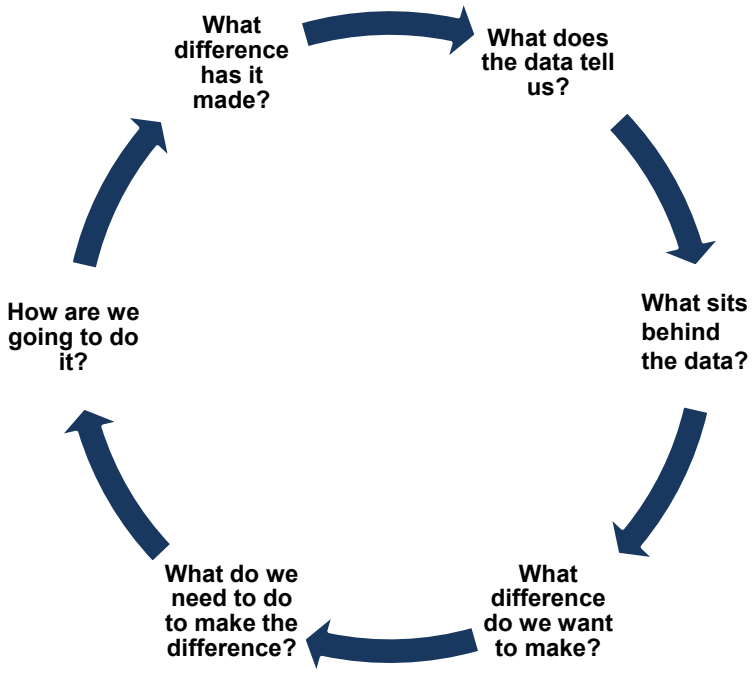
1. Do we share local and national data insights with schools in our area? If so, could it be more forensic?
2. How do we promote and the support the use of school and trust data tools within communications?

Lincolnshire County Council: Use of data to inform specific points of contact

Watch the video here

Questions to consider:

1. How have we used data to inform SPOC allocation in your LA?
2. Are there tweaks we've had to make in response to the data since launching SPOCs?
3. How could we use the LA summary reports, school summary reports and similar schools data to inform allocations?



Norfolk County Council: Use of data to inform Targeting Support Meetings

Watch the video here

Questions to consider:

1. How could we use LA/patch/school level data & similar schools data to shape TSM agendas?
2. What impact has using data to differentiate TSM delivery had in our LA?
3. How could we refine our approach further based Norfolk's case study?

West Northamptonshire Council: Use of data to inform network meetings

Watch the video here

Questions to consider:

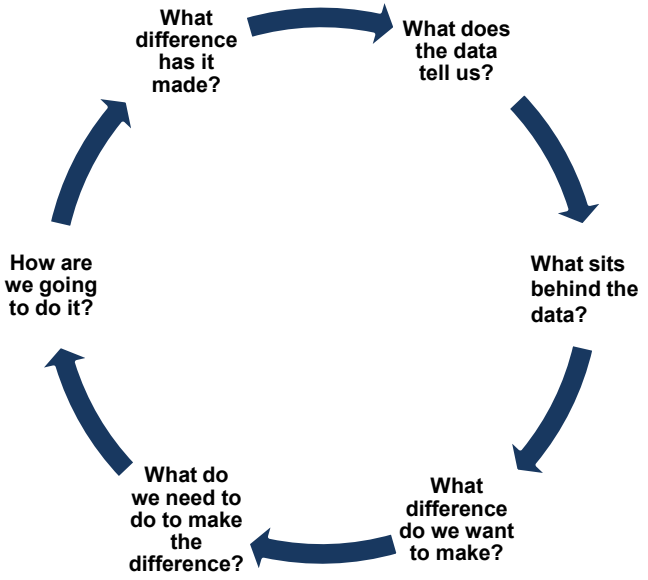
1. How could we use network meetings to share and reinforce the data picture for our LA, and the resulting priorities?
2. How could we use LA/patch/school level data to shape the agenda of network meetings?
3. How could we use network meetings to build capacity and address data priorities?

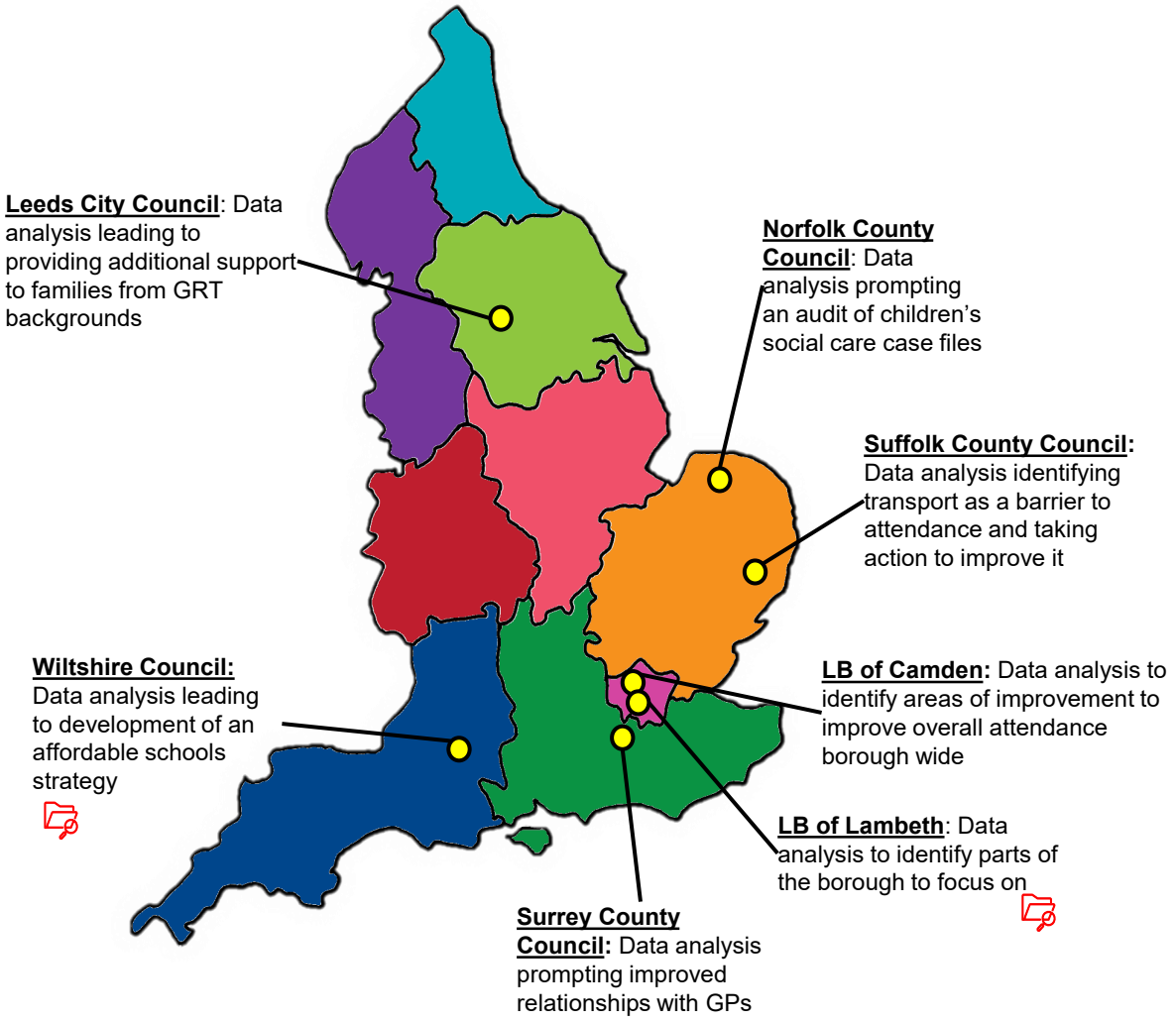
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Use of data | To tackle specific barriers

The six-step process can also be used to identify and tackle specific barriers to attendance for particular cohorts. In the examples on the map, local authorities talk about how they have done this. Where resources are provided, click on the icon to access these.

Each case study is specific to that local authority's context, but has been included to prompt your thinking as you develop and continuously improve your service offer.





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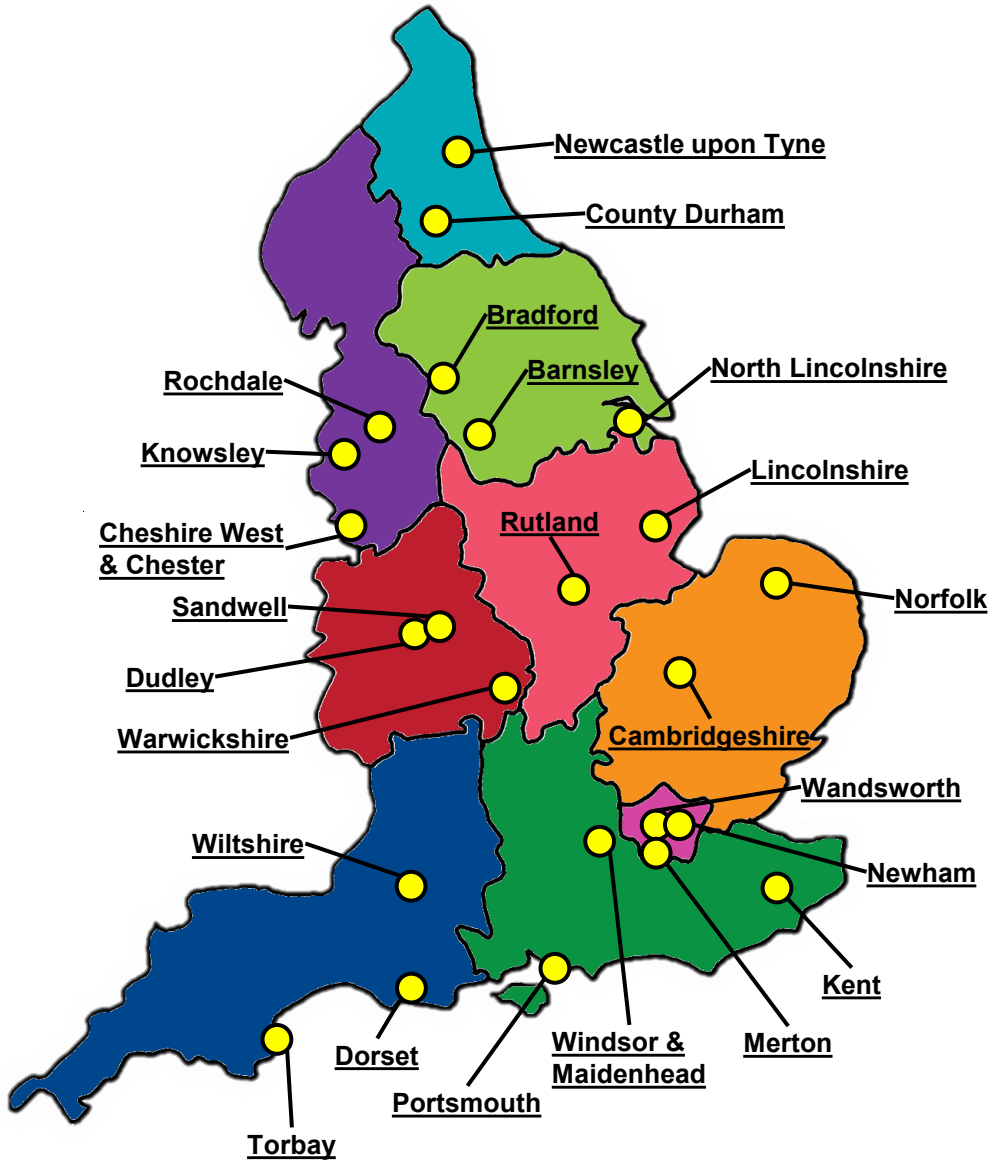
Annex A: Effective practice examples in implementing Working Together to Improve School Attendance

By clicking on the place names on the map on the right, you can access videos recorded as practical examples of how local authorities were making progress in implementing the non-statutory version of Working Together to Improve School Attendance in its first year.

We hope that you will find them useful as you think through your own approach, but please bear in mind that the content relates to 2022-23. Whilst Working Together to Improve School Attendance is still in effect (and is now statutory), some aspects of policy and of individual local authority approaches will have changed since then.

A webinar **summarising effective practice** collated across the country during the same time period can be viewed here.

A more recent webinar **Celebrating LA successes in implementing Working Together to Improve School Attendance** can be viewed here.



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Acknowledgements and further links

Acknowledgements
We are grateful to all the local authorities who have shared their practice over the course of the Attendance Adviser programme, including those who have provided case studies, videos and resources for this toolkit. We are also grateful to the working group of local authorities who provided input on draft versions of the toolkit.

Selection of case studies & use of resources
Local authorities have been invited to contribute to the toolkit because aspects of their delivery have been identified as containing effective practice that could be helpful for other areas. Inclusion in the toolkit should not be seen as an endorsement of that local authority's overall approach but as a prompt to your thinking as you develop and continuously improve your service offer.

It is also worth noting that the examples are all specific to that local authority's context and the time the video was recorded or document written. The resources should only be used as a starting point, and updated and adapted to your own operational needs and service areas.

Accessibility
We have endeavoured to make the toolkit as accessible as possible within this format. However, some users may find it helpful to refer to the accessible version coming very shortly.

Guidance and legislation
- **Statutory attendance guidance** can be found at Working Together to Improve School Attendance, and other relevant legislation and guidance is listed at page 93 of the guidance

DfE webinars and sharing of effective practice
- In addition to this toolkit, you may also find it helpful to refer to (and share) the **Attendance Toolkit for schools**
- The DfE **YouTube playlist** includes webinars on attendance coding, data returns, deletion from roll TSMs and penalty notices
- The 'Questions to consider' throughout Section 1 have been collated in our **self-assessment tool** here
- Guidance on accessing daily **school attendance data** is found here

Further links & guidance
- The **Children's Commissioner's** Back into School resources for children, schools and families, including Guidance for parents on how to seek support with attendance challenges
- 'Is my child too ill for school?' **NHS guidance** to aid parents in making judgements about mild illness
- Letter from the **Chief Medical Officer** to school leaders on mild illness and school attendance
- **Royal College of General Practitioners**' Five principles to support school attendance
- **ImpactEd** Understanding school attendance reports: here and here
- **Education Endowment Foundation** resources (primarily aimed at school leaders & attendance teams)