

EE5. FUTURE ROLE, PURPOSE AND SUSTAINABILITY OF THE ATTENDANCE PANEL

The Education Executive considered a report by the Director of Children's Services providing information on (a) the current resources for the operation of Attendance Panels; (b) an assessment of their impact and effectiveness, and (c) recommending changes to the way in which the Education Service dealt with attendance in future.

Attendance Panels were established in August 2005 by the former Education and Leisure Committee. This created a two stage process allowing cases to be dealt with at an earlier stage by the Panels and enabling the Attendance Committee to focus on those referrals where prosecution was a probable outcome.

Arrangements and measures, including the rolling out of an automated call system (Groupcall) and a revised Service Circular 29, had improved secondary school attendance in 2006/7 and there was a rise in attendance from 89.9% in 2006/7 to 91.8% in 2013/14. This rise, however, could not be solely attributed to the operation of the Panels.

Panels were currently held approximately 3 times per school session and were chaired by a Team or Service Manager. Most referrals came from secondary schools and in particular at S3. There were fewer referrals from primary schools.

Over a school session the total Education staff time supporting Panels represented approximately 122 hours. This was not considered to be best value in contributing to increasing young people's potential and school attendance.

Panels had been introduced in conjunction with other measures at a time when Education Services was required to focus on improving attendance as part of the Raising Attainment Strategy. Over the past 7 years the model has not changed significantly to take into account current thinking which reflects the Scottish Government's advice on attendance in schools and 'Getting it Right for Every Child' (GIRFEC) approaches.

The analysis over the past 2 years evidenced the limited impact Attendance Panels had on improving attendance. The diminishing human resources from central teams also impacted on the capacity for the Panels to be sustainable and effective.

Decision

The Education Executive agreed that:-

- (1) Attendance Panels be removed from the attendance circular and staged process;**
- (2) a 'pathways' checklist for schools be incorporated into the revision of Service Circular 29: Non Attendance and Truancy to ensure a consistent approach;**
- (3) schools make Attendance Committee referrals to the Service and school improvement division for scrutiny which will either refer back to the school in cases where there is scope for further supportive action or refer to the Attendance Committee; and**

- (4) an updated report be submitted to a future meeting later in the year on the pattern of attendance following the removal of the Panels.