

Telford and Wrekin Belonging Strategy

April 2019

'Belonging' is that sense of being somewhere where you can be confident that you will fit in, and feel safe in your identity. As schools are one of the few shared social institutions which can create a sense of belonging or exclusion, it's vital that they are places of welcome and belonging.

A school is just a building. What happens in any school is down to the people in and around it: the children, their families, the staff - and the leaders. How leaders think, decide, act and reflect, and draw on their knowledge to create a roadmap of possibilities is critical to the well-being of children and adults.

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Preface

This Belonging Strategy is an overarching strategy that describes the priorities for all partners across Telford and Wrekin in addressing some of the key issues described through an increased sense of belonging. This is underpinned by a Belonging Action Plan where progress towards delivering the objectives described will be tracked. It is also underpinned by the Fair Access Protocol which describes the operation of the Fair Access Panel and the support available to young people and schools. The Hard to Place Protocol which sits under the Fair Access Protocol describes the process to ensure that the most vulnerable young people are placed in a fair and equitable way.

The governance of these protocols and progress towards actions will be through reporting to both the Primary Heads Forum and the Secondary Heads Forum with the Education Strategic Partnership Board having an overview to ensure equality of access for all.

The purpose of developing this Strategy is to promote a move away from traditional behaviour management approaches (which place a huge emphasis on rewards and sanctions linked to behaviour) towards a more humanist, relational and universal approach, which is inclusive for all, and can benefit the whole school community.



1. Introduction

In Telford and Wrekin we hold the ambition that every child will have a sense of belonging in their school or setting and that there is the right support in place to enable every child to succeed. A clear focus on ‘the right support at the right time’ is recognised as a priority for Telford and Wrekin Council and for all partners. There is an emphasis in this strategy on creating the right environment, not just the physical environment, but also the ‘social’ environment to enable children and young people to gain that sense of belonging. Allied to this, is the belief that early identification of additional needs coupled with early intervention to meet those needs is essential. Rigorous self-evaluation, action planning to address gaps in provision and appropriate staff development will ensure that all staff are equipped to both identify and meet the needs of all children and young people. For some young people, school is the one constant in their life and therefore creating that environment where they belong is their lifeline to becoming active members of the community as they move into adulthood.

This Strategy aims to develop a more consistent, borough wide approach to including children and young people (CYP) with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs within the changing context of Local Authority provision. It recognises, and aims to take account of, the huge challenges that schools and settings face in managing to include pupils with complex SEMH needs, and meet targets around attainment and governmental scrutiny, particularly within the current climate of funding pressures. It also acknowledges the responsibility held by senior leaders for looking after the well-being of all members of the school

community, particularly teaching staff, who are often under immense strain as a result of increased demands. Supporting Children and young people who present with complex SEMH needs, including challenging behaviour, is not an easy task.

This strategy acknowledges that schools and settings across Telford and Wrekin have different values which are unique to them. Schools across our Local Authority also face different challenges and are at various stages of developing their behaviour policies and practice.

For some young people, particularly for those with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs, and for some with Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC), there is a strong link between the principles within this Strategy and those outlined in the SEND Strategy. The principle of early identification and intervention is common to both strategies as is the graduated response through the Assess-Plan-Do-Review cycle.

This Strategy is intended to describe the principles which underpin the work of the Local Authority and all educational settings in the Borough to ensure that every child has a school to which they feel they belong. It is the intention to set a benchmark for schools in terms of the support for the most vulnerable young people and to provide approaches and strategies that they might then employ. It will also build on the good practice which already exists in the Borough and consider how this can be shared across all provisions. It is not intended to be prescriptive and no school is expected to employ every approach described within. It is intended to provide a toolkit of approaches which better meet the needs of all children and young people.



2. Vision, Ethos and Principles

In April 2018, the LA hosted a conference for all schools within the Borough to consider how we could best support vulnerable learners. This led to a consultation document which schools responded to over the summer term of 2018. The following Vision, Ethos and Principles have been agreed with schools through both the conference and the consultation.

Our Vision

Every child deserves, and should receive, an excellent education and the chance to fulfil their potential, whatever their background, needs or location in the borough.

Ethos

All schools, settings, provisions and the Local Authority within Telford and Wrekin should work together in partnership, sharing information, ideas and best practice to achieve this vision. We are all collectively responsible for the young people of Telford and Wrekin and hold a shared responsibility for emotional wellbeing, and for fairness and equity for all.

Our Principles

These principles underpin the ethos of partnership working. It is recognised that schools, settings and provisions are autonomous and will manage and implement these principles in their own way.

- Successful outcomes and wellbeing for all children and young people should inform all decisions.
- Access to mainstream provision will be fair and equitable for all.
- No child should be without a school place for more than 15 school days.

- All transitions within the borough, including reintegration into mainstream schools and managed moves, should be carefully planned to support the needs of the young person, the school and the school community.
- Permanent exclusion is rarely the right outcome for a young person and should only be used as an absolute last resort.
- Fixed-term exclusions add to the sense of rejection for many young people and therefore should rarely be applied and if so for as short a period as possible.
- Early identification of need and early intervention is essential in supporting young people.
- All pupils have access to the right provision when required; there is equality of access to all provisions based on need.
- A range of appropriate, flexible provisions is available to meet needs, interests, wishes and aspirations of young people and is accessible to all pupils.
- Children, young people, parents and carers are fully informed and involved in decision-making about their options and opportunities.
- All provision must be of a high quality to meet the specific needs of children and young people and enable them to fulfil their potential and aspirations.
- Staff in all provisions and schools are passionate, enthusiastic and motivated to support young people and have appropriate training available to enable them to meet need.
- There should be transparency in all communication and in all processes to foster the partnership and to ensure equity.

3. Our Priorities

We will deliver the Vision, Ethos and Principles through 5 Key Priorities outlined in the following pages. These priorities and their underpinning delivery objectives, along with the vision and principles described above, have been informed by consultation and co-production with partners.

Priority 1

To ensure that every child has a sense of belonging and feels part of the school, setting or college community, irrespective of background, needs or culture; to enable them to achieve positive outcomes.

Priority 2

To support the wellbeing and social, emotional and mental health needs of all young people to enable them to be successful in their place of learning.

Priority 3

To work with partner agencies to make sure that there is a systemic approach to working with the families of our most vulnerable learners to ensure effective early interventions to meet need.



Priority 4

To ensure that all young people are ready for the next phase of learning and that transitions support them in developing a new sense of belonging in the new environment.

Priority 5

To ensure that additional support is available for young people and for schools and settings where there is a breakdown in the sense of belonging in any learning environment.

Priority 1

To ensure that every child has a sense of belonging and feels part of the school, setting or college community, irrespective of background, needs or culture; to enable them to achieve positive outcomes.

This is important because... Every child is entitled to an education. Young people are most successful when they are educated as part of their community in their local mainstream school or setting. By creating a positive learning environment where young people feel secure and wanted, their lower order needs such as the psychological needs of belonging and self-esteem will be supported. Once these lower order needs are met, this will lead to self-actualisation which will then lead, in turn, to increased chances of success.

Our Delivery Objectives:

1.1 Provide a framework for all schools and settings to self-assess their provision and support for vulnerable young people who need additional interventions within a mainstream environment.

1.2 Develop a whole school training programmes which builds positive relationships between staff and students so that every child feels like they have a 'champion'.

1.3 Develop a menu of training providers and approaches that schools and settings can use to support the development of positive relationships.

1.4 Develop an agreed suite of assessment and diagnostic tools for use in schools and settings to assess the needs of young people.

1.5 Reduce in year transfers of young people between schools within the borough; this reduces the sense of belonging.

1.6 Develop a training programme for schools and settings to implement 'Restorative Justice' practices.

1.7 Review operation of modified timetables and issue new guidance for appropriate use.

1.8 Develop a programme of training for schools and settings to support the implementation of the principles of nurture and safe spaces.

1.9 Introduce a curriculum focus group to work alongside Telford College and develop a Borough wide Alternative Curriculum offer.

Our Success Measures:

1a Significant reduction in fixed term exclusions to no more than national average.

1b Reduction of in year transfers between schools in borough.

1c Reduced use of modified timetables

1d Increased engagement from schools and settings in training packages to develop approaches such as Restorative Justice, Co-regulation and Nurture; which will have a positive impact on school exclusion data.



Priority 2

To support the wellbeing and social, emotional and mental health needs of all young people to enable them to be successful in their place of learning.

This is important because... There is an increased number of young people who are displaying high levels of anxiety and other mental health or neurodevelopmental needs. As a result, there is increased demand on services to support young people and increasing waiting lists. Early intervention and support for young people will not only provide for the needs of the young person but also reduce demand on high level services. We will work together to provide a range of approaches and help schools and settings to select from this to provide the right support at the right time. All of the objectives below should build on the work of the 'Future in Mind' programme so that there is a coherent approach across schools and settings.

This priority links to the Telford and Wrekin Early Help Strategy 2018-20 Priority 1: Develop emotional resilience and healthier lifestyles. It also links to the Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Transformation Plan for Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing 2018-2021.

This priority is supported by the publication Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools – DfE, November 2018

Our Delivery Objectives:

2.1 Identify a 'Designated Senior Lead for Mental Health' in each school or setting and establish network meetings (Green paper 2017)

2.2 Introduce a Youth Mental Health First Aid programme.

2.3 Develop a programme of 'Emotionally Friendly Schools'.

2.4 Introduce an Emotion Coaching and Co-regulation programme for schools and settings.

2.5 Promote increased take up of the 'Emotional Literacy Support Assistant' (ELSA) training and ongoing supervision.

2.6 Promote the 'Calmbrain' approach in schools and settings.

2.7 Develop a programme of Attachment Awareness and Attachment Friendly Schools.

2.8 Promote the Autism Education Trust programme of Autism Awareness in schools and the Earlybird programme in Early Years.

2.9 Develop a model which allows joint working between Behaviour Support and BeeU to assess the needs of young people.

Our Success Measures:

2a Reduced numbers of referrals to higher level BeeU services.

2b Pupil voice surveys identify increased positive mental health and emotional resilience.

2c Pupil voice surveys identify that young people are clear where to go for help when they need it.

2d Increased engagement from schools and settings in training packages to develop approaches to support mental health needs.

2e Schools and settings to achieve recognition of their approach such as 'Emotionally Friendly School' or 'Attachment Aware School' awards.



Priority 3

To work with partner agencies to make sure that there is a systemic approach to working with the families of our most vulnerable learners to ensure effective early interventions to meet need.

This is important because... School is only one element of a young person's life. To support a young person's needs we need to take a more holistic view across the home environment as well as school. By using a systemic approach to look at need, all agencies, and parents, can then focus on a co-ordinated approach to meeting the needs of the young person and their family.

This priority links to the Telford and Wrekin Early Help Strategy 2018-20 Priority 3: Maximise local community assets to deliver early help and reduce demand on specialist and high tier services. This also links to the Serious Crime Strategy Board Action Plan.

Our Delivery Objectives:

3.1 Develop a co-ordinated approach to working across families and young people; building current interventions such as those from the Behaviour Support Advisory Team (BSAT) and the Assessment and Intervention placements at the Linden Centre together with Early Help approaches.

3.2 Further develop and grow a family learning approach and family learning hubs.

3.3 Develop a community based approach, using community resources to support interventions in schools and settings.

3.4 To develop schools as a hub for a range of services such as counselling services, health clinics and life skills work.

3.5 To work alongside colleagues in the police to provide a co-ordinated offer to raise awareness of child criminal exploitation and vulnerability.

3.6 To further develop use of Summer Schools to provide a holiday activity to support young people's health and social needs.

3.7 To ensure that the Early Help Assessment and Early Help Support Plan process is used at the right time to support young people and that the right partner agencies are involved.

Our Success Measures:

3a Education objectives and actions considered in all appropriate Early Help Support Plans.

3b Early Help Assessment and Early Help Support Plan in place for all young people with higher level interventions.

3c Increase uptake of family learning opportunities.

3d Mapping of and access to services delivered in the community through schools and settings.

3e Colleagues from the police engaged in all schools to deliver programmes to raise awareness around child criminal exploitation and vulnerability.



Priority 4

To ensure that all young people are ready for the next phase of learning and that transitions support them in developing a new sense of belonging in the new environment.

This is important because... For some young people any transition between schools and settings can be daunting. By developing the processes around this transition, we can reduce anxiety. Transfer of information on approaches and interventions that work for young people ensure that appropriate support is in place. Each phase of education needs to ensure that each student is 'ready' for the next phase.

Our Delivery Objectives:

- 4.1** Develop language and confidence from an early age, using the Voice 21 approach.
- 4.2** Develop and share approaches across schools and settings to support successful transitions, for example School Transition and Adjustment Study 'STARS'.
- 4.3** Develop sharing of best practice between phases with a particular focus on readiness for the next phase and mirroring successful provisions from the previous phase.
- 4.4** Further develop Early Years Hubs to support collaboration between early years and childcare providers and schools within a locality to establish a shared understanding of 'school readiness' and support the transition of the most vulnerable pupils from Early Years to Primary.
- 4.5** Agree a programme and criteria to identify vulnerable young people for transition at each phase change and the handover of key information for all relevant parties.
- 4.6** Develop a pupil passport that identifies key behaviours, needs, interventions at each tier and triggers that can be used for each phase change.
- 4.7** Develop mechanisms for better transfer of information and better transition process between secondary schools and post 16 providers and from post 16 to the working environment (Life Ready, Work Ready).

Our Success Measures:

- 4a** The Voice 21 approach and models for transition lead to increased confidence with fewer young people not being successful in their first year of secondary education.
- 4b** Increase in number of Early Years settings working with their local primary school in an Early Years Hub.
- 4c** Vulnerable young people for transition identified and pupil passport used to ensure the next phase has key information.
- 4d** Reduced dropout rate in Year 12.



Priority 5

To ensure that additional support is available for young people and for schools and settings where there is a breakdown in the sense of belonging in any learning environment.

This is important because... Whilst the other priorities aim to support young people to be successful in their mainstream school or setting; for a small minority of young people there is a breakdown in their sense of belonging or their needs are such that there is a need for support beyond that available in a mainstream environment. We need to ensure that suitable, high quality alternatives are available when this happens and that where possible, plans and processes are in place to support the young person to return to a mainstream environment as soon as they are ready to do so.

Our Delivery Objectives:

5.1 Develop the Behaviour Support Advisory Team (BSAT) traded offer to ensure interventions are available at the earlier levels described in this document.

5.2 Introduce a Behaviour Inclusion Advice and Support Panel (pre-FAP) to share strategies across schools and settings to support the needs of young people.

5.3 Review and develop the offer from PRUs, including introduction of a time limited (eg 12 week) full-time Assessment and Intervention offer at the Linden Centre and review of capacity at Kickstart.

5.4 Review and develop alternative provision for those with high levels of anxiety who struggle in a mainstream environment.

5.5 Reduce fixed-term exclusions through use of alternative approaches, including the development of in house or in cluster alternative provisions.

5.6 Review the Student Engagement Programme offer, including developing a behaviour intervention approach as an alternative to fixed term exclusion.

5.7 Provide stronger links between schools and PRUs with members of PRU staff attached to clusters of schools.

5.8 Invite schools to share approaches to Alternative Provisions, with opportunities to describe their provisions under defined headings and to facilitate sharing of best practice through learning visits between schools.

Our Success Measures:

5a New Behaviour Support traded offer in place with increased uptake from schools and settings.

5b Behaviour Inclusion Advice and Support Panel in place with positive feedback from schools.

5c Offer from PRUs reviewed and any new model of working introduced.

5d Offer for those with high levels on anxiety reviewed and any new model introduced if appropriate.

5e Reduction in fixed term exclusions to no more than national average.



4. Leadership of Change

To deliver the principles described in this Belonging Strategy, we aim to work with schools and settings to develop a toolkit of approaches and strategies. Building on the school improvement cycle will allow senior leaders to evaluate current practice, to action plan both in the short term and longer term, to build in appropriate performance management processes for all staff and to improve staff skills through professional development opportunities.

Self-Evaluation

We will produce a self-evaluation document which will allow schools and settings to benchmark the support they provide for young people against performance descriptors. We will also explore how this could be moderated and the possibility of awarding a quality mark for those schools and settings who demonstrate good practice. This self-evaluation tool should also generate an action plan to provide a framework to help schools and settings plan the next steps to develop improved practice.

Professional Development

We will signpost training opportunities across a range of partners to help schools and settings identify professional development opportunities both for whole school and individual members of staff. The self-evaluation and action plan should identify where this training is needed along with the school's performance management processes.



5. ACEs

There is a growing recognition of the impact of stressful events occurring in childhood, called Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), on outcomes, both health and behaviour. The greater the number of ACEs in a person's background the more likely they are to achieve poorer outcomes.

It is important for us to recognise the ACEs in the young people we are supporting. Exposure to adverse and stressful experiences can have a long term impact on ability to think, interact with others and on learning.

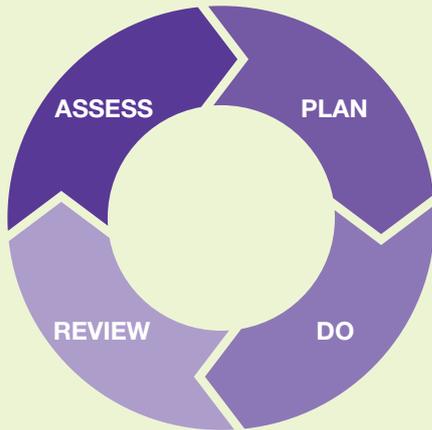
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) include:

- Domestic violence
- Parental abandonment through separation or divorce
- A parent with a mental health condition
- Being the victim of abuse (physical, sexual and/or emotional)
- Being the victim of neglect (physical and emotional)
- A member of the household being in prison
- Growing up in a household in which there are adults experiencing alcohol and drug use problems.



Appendix 1 – Framework for Delivery

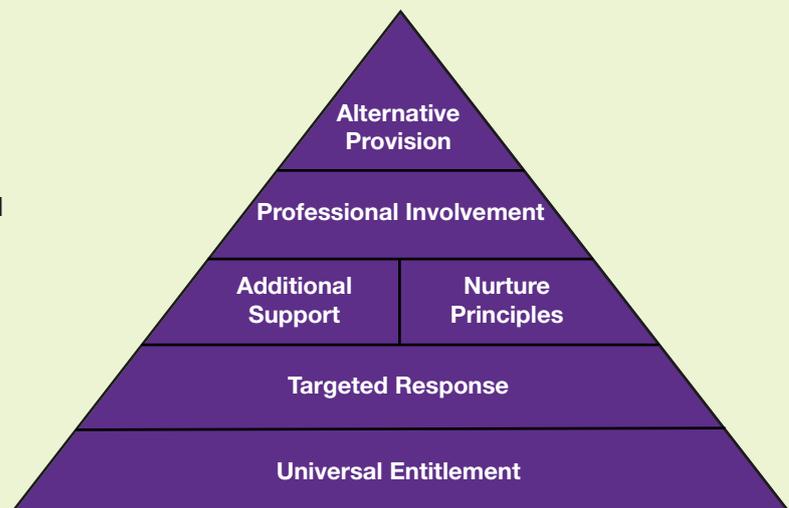
The priorities detailed above are underpinned by a ‘graduated response’ to the needs of each young person. Any graduated response should follow an Assess-Plan-Do-Review cycle.



The approach described below enables appropriate support to meet the level of need. This is not prescribed and there is no expectation that particular interventions are applied. However, schools and settings will be expected to have demonstrated support and interventions appropriate to the needs of the young person under each heading below should they require further support, for example through a Fair Access Panel referral.

There should not be an automatic step-up to a higher level intervention if the current interventions do not have an impact. It might be that different interventions at the same level would be appropriate. Conversely, in exceptional circumstances, for young people showing significant needs, it might be appropriate to provide support at a higher level without using some of the interventions at a lower level. However, for most young people there would be an expectation that early interventions will mean that lower level approaches should be employed.

The approaches follow a ‘Pyramid of Numbers’ principle, with ‘Universal Entitlement’ intended for all young people, through to ‘Alternative Provision’ intended for a very small number of young people. This is illustrated below.



Universal Entitlement

Description

Engagement of learners in lessons to ensure that they have a positive attitude to learning; with behaviour management techniques used as early interventions to diffuse situations arising. All staff have a clear understanding of the needs of the young people, including vulnerable groups, with systems and processes in place to respond to these needs in everyday practice. Support includes universal health entitlements such as that provided by School Nurses and the Future in Mind programme. *This is a minimum offer for all young people. The extract from the Teaching Standards (Appendix 4) demonstrates the expectation on all teachers.*

Examples

- **Quality First Teaching** – schools' and settings' teaching and learning policy and performance management practice ensures that teaching engages young people in learning and caters for the range of learning needs and styles within any class.
- **Behaviour Policies** – behaviour policies and staff implementation of these are consistently effective in managing most presenting behaviours. Policies meet the needs of all learners and allow for the range of needs. Staff have relevant training to make appropriate responses to the needs of the learners.
- **Communication** – systems are in place so that teachers have full knowledge of the needs of all young people, including vulnerable groups.
- **Transition** – arrangements are in place to support a smooth transition between phases for all young people with systems and processes in place to share information and practice for the more vulnerable learners.

Support Available

- The Behaviour Support Team Leader can work with the leadership team to review and evaluate behaviour policies and practice to ensure that this is able to meet

the needs of all learners. This will be a traded offer.

- Support for individual teachers ties into the performance management process, including observations of classroom practice and development of behaviour management techniques.
- Support to develop transitions programmes such as STARS.

Targeted Response

Description

Responses, beyond the universal offer, that meet the needs of individuals and are bespoke to the needs of that individual. This will often include the setting of targets for individuals to demonstrate improvements in their approaches to learning with regular review of these targets. At this level, young people will remain in mainstream lessons but may need a short period out of class for an assessment of their needs. The link with parents/carers is essential and an Early Help Assessment might be appropriate.

Examples

- **Assessment of need is important** - this could include assessment of reading, spelling, comprehension, dyslexia screening as well as other assessments such as Pupil's Attitude to Self and School (PASS), Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) and Boxall Profile. It is also important to gain the child's view.
- The outcomes of the assessment are used to develop an Individual Behaviour Plan (IBP).
- This might include use of a pupil passport or report card to monitor responses in lessons.
- Other interventions may be required as an outcome of the assessment of need.

Support Available

- Training available for staff to develop and use the assessment tools described and in developing suitable interventions through the IBP.

Additional Support

Description

Modification of the universal offer to better meet the needs of the individual.

Examples

- This could include modifications to the curriculum, for example where a young person struggles in a particular subject, they might be withdrawn for one to one support to diffuse the situations arising. They might be withdrawn for behaviour reflection, anger management, resilience or emotion coaching.
- Use of support staff to help meet the needs of the individual could also be employed.
- This would also include modifications made to support individual needs such as 'Exit' cards and Safe Spaces.
- Use of restorative justice.
- Early Intervention for mental health related issues, eg BEAM, KOOTH, Mental Health First Aid.

Support Available

- **ELSA training** for support staff.
- **Restorative Justice training** for schools or key members of staff.
- **Co-regulation and Emotion Coaching training** – helping the young person to understand and regulate emotions.

Nurture Principles

Description

Withdrawal from elements of mainstream lessons for small group targeted support to reduce anxiety or help the young person to develop resilience or to develop behaviour self-management techniques.

Examples

- **Nurture Units**, small classes or 'mini-school' aimed at increased resilience and providing a therapeutic response to the young person's needs.
- **One-to-one support** outside of the classroom; counselling from school based counsellors.
- **Use of external providers** to provide a nurture environment, for example this could be based on equine therapy or other animal therapy.

Support Available

- Nurture Group Training.
- Audit of school/setting based nurture provision.



Professional Involvement

Description

Once in-school/setting approaches have been exhausted, further assessment or support from professionals outside of the school or setting should be employed. Advice can then lead into at least one further Assess-Plan-Do-Review cycle.

Advice and support could include: BSATS, LSATS, EP and a CAMHS (BeeU) referral

Referral to the Behaviour Inclusion Advice and Support Panel to gain a wider view of other strategies available could also be used at this stage.

If an Early Help Assessment isn't in place by this tier, it is now essential.

Examples

Example of Professionals that could be employed include:

- Behaviour Support Advisory Team
- Learning Support Advisory Team
- Educational Psychology
- Mental Health Services (CAMHS / BeeU)
- Anger Management, Counselling, Therapies etc.

Support Available

For example, the Behaviour Support Advisory Team can support through a package of support over a defined period. This will include an observation and potentially an assessment of the young person's needs. Throughout this support, a range of strategies to use with the young person will be discussed with the school/setting and an appropriate menu of strategies will be agreed and developed.

Alternative Provision

Description

Alternative provision involves the young person learning outside of mainstream for part of their timetable, usually with an aim to re-engage their interest in learning. Alternative provision takes many forms from in-school alternative provision centres through alternative provision across a group of schools (cluster) to external alternative provision with places bought in.

Observation from the Head of the Linden Centre, Head of Kickstart or the Head of the Student Engagement Programme to assess suitability for placements at Linden Centre (for a 12 week assessment and intervention placement), Kickstart or House 1. Any FAP presentation will include feedback from this visit.

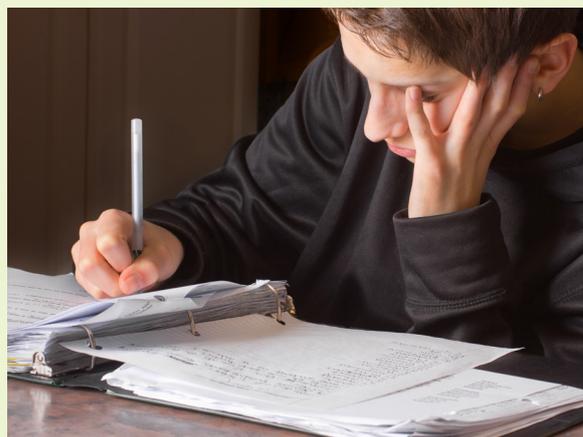
N.B. As part of Priority 5, we will review the offer from the PRUs.

Examples

There are several providers that offer Alternative Provision placements. A menu of these is in development.

Support Available

- The Student Engagement Programme offers Alternative Provision Packages at AFC Telford, Sutton Hill and House 1.
- The Behaviour Support Advisory Team can support the quality assurance of in-school or in-cluster based alternative provision.
- Visits to the Linden Centre or Kickstart to learn from approaches used there.



Appendix 2 – National Context

Every child has the right to an education. Discipline in schools must respect children's human dignity.

The responsible body of a school must not discriminate against a pupil by not providing education for the pupil.

The responsible body of a school must not discriminate against a pupil by excluding the pupil from the school.

Excluded children are the most vulnerable: twice as likely to be in the care of the state, four times more likely to have grown up in poverty, seven times more likely to have a special educational need and 10 times more likely to suffer recognised mental health problems.



There is an increase in zero-tolerance behaviour policies, contributing to the rise in exclusions and increase in pupils attending alternative provision. There needs to be flex in the system and reasonable adjustments should be made to accommodate behaviours that arise from a child's special educational needs, and zero-tolerance behaviour policies don't allow for that.

Research estimates that each excluded child will cost £370,000 of public money over their lifetime – and 6,685 children were permanently excluded from school last year.

Some headteachers tell us that new Progress 8 measures give an incentive for exclusion.

(Extracts from the publications below)

Making The Difference - Breaking the link between school exclusion and social exclusion; Institute for Public Policy Review, Oct 2017

Nowhere is Britain's social mobility failure more obvious than in the example of school exclusion in England. Excluded children are the most vulnerable: twice as likely to be in the care of the state, four times more likely to have grown up in poverty, seven times more likely to have a special educational need and 10 times more likely to suffer recognised mental health problems. Yet our education system is profoundly ill-equipped to break a cycle of disadvantage for these young people.

This problem is much bigger than previously recognised. As mental ill health in young people rises, and more children are subject to interaction with social care services each year, more vulnerable children spill into the alternative provision (AP) sector. Too often this path leads them straight from school exclusion to social exclusion. Excluded young people are more likely to be unemployed, develop severe mental health problems and go to prison.

There are increasing numbers of children with complex needs – where mental ill health, unstable or unsafe family environments and learning needs combine. Yet a lack of workforce development in schools compounds the challenge students face. Half of school leaders say their teachers cannot recognise mental ill health, and three in four say they cannot refer effectively to external services.

Forgotten children: alternative provision and the scandal of ever increasing exclusions; House of Commons Education Committee, July 2018

Mainstream schools should be bastions of inclusion, and intentionally or not, this is not true of all mainstream schools. We have also seen an alarming increase in ‘hidden’ exclusions. The school environment means that schools are struggling to support pupils in their schools, which is then putting pressure on alternative providers. Pupils, parents and schools can end up in conflict, putting further pressure onto a system that should be supporting all pupils to achieve.

Between 2006/7 and 2012/13, the number of permanent exclusions reduced by nearly half, but has since risen, with a 40% increase over the past three years. In 2015/16, 6,685 pupils were permanently excluded from school. In the same year there were 339,360 fixed period exclusions. However, the AP population is made up of a greater number of students than those who are just permanently excluded. There are 16,732 pupils who attend pupil referral units, AP academies or free schools and other provision like FE colleges. This doesn't include a further 9,897 pupils who also attend AP but have a mainstream school as the main school at which they are registered. 22,848 pupils are also educated in other forms of AP, which includes, but is not exclusive to, independent schools and providers that are not able to register as a school.

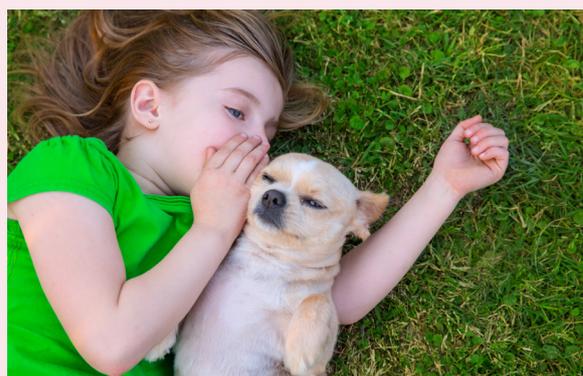
The demand for places, driven by the high numbers of exclusions, is greater than the sector can provide, with many alternative provision schools oversubscribed. This in turn puts pressure on the AP sector, which then affects the quality of education that can be provided to pupils who should be able to access alternative provision.

Witnesses to the inquiry described many challenges facing schools which might contribute to their inability or unwillingness to identify problems and then provide support. These include a lack of expertise in schools that would allow them to identify problems. Schools and school representatives told us that schools no longer have the financial resources to fund pastoral support, including teaching assistants,

that would often help keep pupils in mainstream schools. This raises the possibility that financial pressures are affecting schools' capacity and ability to identify and support problems and provide the early intervention that is necessary.

There is an increase in zero-tolerance behaviour policies, contributing to the rise in exclusions and increase in pupils attending alternative provision. On curriculum, the same as with behaviour policies, the more rigid you make a structure the more difficult it is for children who are different to fit into that. There needs to be flex in the system and reasonable adjustments should be made to accommodate behaviours that arise from a child's special educational needs, and zero-tolerance behaviour policies don't allow for that. The evidence we have seen suggests that the rise in so called ‘zero-tolerance’ behaviour policies is creating school environments where pupils are punished and ultimately excluded for incidents that could and should be managed within the mainstream school environment.

Off-rolling — the process by which pupils are removed from the school's register by moving them to alternative provision, to home education or other schools — was raised by many witnesses, and we were told that the accountability system and Progress 8 was a major factor. We were concerned to hear some headteachers tell us that new Progress 8 measures give an incentive for exclusion. An unfortunate and unintended consequence of the Government's strong focus on school standards has led to school environments and practices that have resulted in disadvantaged children being disproportionately excluded, which includes a curriculum with a lack of focus on developing pupils' social and economic capital. There appears to be a lack of moral accountability on the part of many schools and no incentive to, or deterrent to not, retain pupils who could be classed as difficult or challenging.



Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools – DfE November 2018 (summary)

Schools have a central role to play in enabling their pupils to be resilient and to support good mental health and wellbeing. There should be a structured school environment with highly consistent consequence systems. This should be paired with an individualised graduated response when the behavioural issues might be a result of educational, mental health, other needs or vulnerabilities.

It is essential to intervene early to create a safe and calm educational environment and strengthen resilience before serious mental health problems occur. Prevention: creating a safe and calm environment; equipping pupils to be resilient; teaching pupils about mental wellbeing through the curriculum; and reinforcing this teaching through school activities and ethos

Where a pupil has a mental health condition that amounts to a disability and this adversely affects their behaviour, the school must make reasonable adjustments to its policies, the physical environment, the support it offers, and how it responds in particular situations. Published behaviour policies need to be consistent with the legal requirement that treating all pupils the same may be unlawful where a disability affects behaviour.

It is important that schools consider how best to use some of their SEN resources to provide support for pupils with mental health difficulties that amount to special educational needs.

The culture, ethos and environment of the school can have a profound influence on both pupil and staff mental wellbeing, this goes beyond the teaching in the classroom to pervade all aspects of school life, including:

- Culture, ethos and environment: the health and wellbeing of pupils and staff is promoted through the ‘hidden’ or ‘informal’ curriculum, including leadership practice, the school’s policies, values and attitudes, together with the social and physical environment;

- Partnerships with families and the community: proactive engagement with families, outside agencies, and the wider community to promote consistent support for children’s health and wellbeing

The school should also emphasise the importance of promoting positive mental wellbeing. Teaching through curriculum subjects such as relationships education, relationship and sex education, health education or PSHE; counselling; positive classroom management; developing social skills; working with parents/carers; or peer support.

Continuous professional development to ensure that staff are aware of some common symptoms of mental health problems

Early intervention to address underlying causes of disruptive behaviour should include an assessment of whether appropriate provision is in place to support any SEN or disability that a pupil may have. Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later.

Evidence shows that where support is provided to help manage behaviour at home, alongside work being carried out with the child at school, there is a much greater likelihood of success in reducing the child’s problems, and in supporting their academic and emotional development.

Improving the educational outcomes of Children in Need of help and protection, Interim Findings; Department for Education, December 2018

The impact of trauma or adversity is compounded by the frequency of transitions that Children in Need experience. For Children in Need to have the opportunity to achieve good educational outcomes, they need practitioners from all agencies to understand their role, work together to identify the barriers faced, and provide support to overcome them.

Recognising barriers

Children in Need require social workers and teachers to understand and identify how their experiences create barriers which make it

difficult for them to achieve good educational outcomes, and can limit the support they receive elsewhere from parents, carers or wider support networks. Barriers will be specific to individual children, but those most commonly reported include:

- **Attendance:** difficulties getting to school where parents are experiencing issues such as mental ill-health or substance misuse, or due to caring responsibilities; children having health complications; challenges in accessing school transport
- **Learning:** difficulties concentrating due to worries about family circumstances; a difficult home learning environment and limited support with homework; special educational needs, including learning disabilities and developmental delays; arriving at school not ready to learn, for example due to a lack of breakfast
- **Behaviour:** socially inappropriate or challenging behaviour linked to attachment issues; challenging behaviour triggered by stress or confrontation; communication difficulties; limited time spent in classroom due to behaviour
- **Wellbeing:** concerns about bullying; worry and anxiety; mental health difficulties; low-confidence; fear of stigma

Any of these barriers is likely to mean that a child will struggle to access education and make progress, or may take longer to reach the same level of education as other pupils. Information about children's attendance, learning, behaviour and wellbeing is being used by some social workers, as well as teachers, to inform plans for Children in Need's safety and welfare.

We found that some schools do already have established procedures for assessing barriers for Children in Need. Alongside listening to children, actions include reviewing pupil data, observations, and assessment tools which support an understanding of social, emotional and language development, for example the strengths and difficulties questionnaire. Often, this is done in parallel, or incorporated into, existing assessment and planning mechanisms such as for children with SEN as outlined in the SEND Code of Practice.

Practitioners should consider the long-term impact of adverse experiences as part of their assessment; this can help schools plan long-term support they can offer. Education is an integral part of considering children's developmental needs. All Looked After Children must have a care plan, of which a Personal Education Plan is an integral part: a 'living', evolving, comprehensive and enduring record of the child's educational needs, experience, progress and attainment. Education would equally be covered in a good Child in Need or Child Protection plan, where some local authorities already promote the inclusion of educational outcomes beyond attendance as a measure of safety.

Understanding behaviour as a means of communication is crucial in recognising barriers to education for Children in Need. Challenging behaviour is immediately visible but it is important to recognise that a child acting in a withdrawn manner also communicates need. Too often practitioners focus on adolescents presenting 'risky behaviour' rather than the underlying reasons.

Effective behaviour support approaches often see behaviour as an expression of an unmet need and teachers and social workers should remain curious about the underlying causes behind a particular behaviour. This type of support can prevent unnecessary escalation in challenging behaviour, allowing children to re-engage with their education. Well-designed support, based on an assessment of children's needs, can help overcome significant barriers to education.

Schools must ensure the fundamentals of good teaching are in place in order to raise their outcomes. Senior leaders in these schools recognise the complexity of the barriers faced by disadvantaged pupils more widely and drive a holistic support strategy, embedding an ethos which motivates all school staff to think about children's needs.

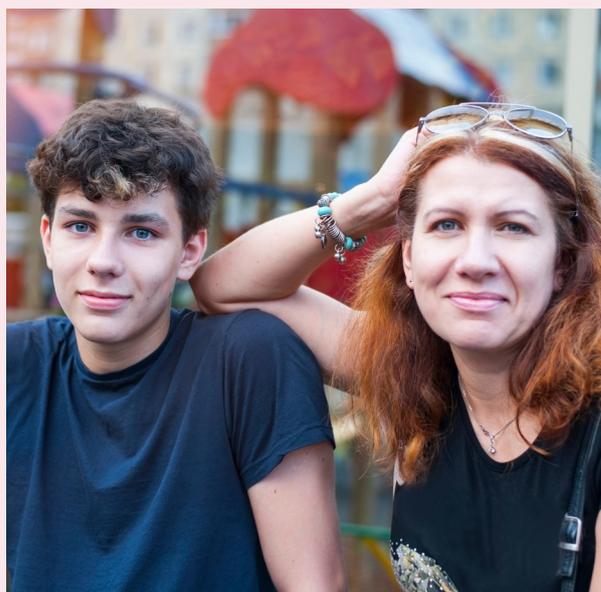
Creating a culture in which all children feel like a valued member of the school community, school leaders fully explore the causes of a child's behaviour or lack of attendance and exhaust all efforts to address underlying issues before considering the exclusions process.

Making proportionate adjustments for Children in Need can enable them to engage in education and prevent behaviour from escalating, to the benefit of all pupils. For example, a teacher who knows that a child has witnessed domestic abuse and is particularly sensitive to shouting, could adjust how they use a raised voice and be alert to their emotional needs. Knowing that a child is suffering neglect, a school can speak to the family and social worker about arriving at school in the correct uniform, instead of sanctioning the child.

Adjustments must be tailored to individual needs. Children and young people have talked consistently about the fine line between making adjustments that do not make them feel different from their peers, but that give them the time, space and direction needed to do well at school.

Effective support to improve the educational outcomes of Children in Need cannot be accomplished without developing stable, trusting relationships with children and families. Children and families need to be heard, to have their voice shape decisions about their care and support, and to be confident that any concerns are taken seriously.

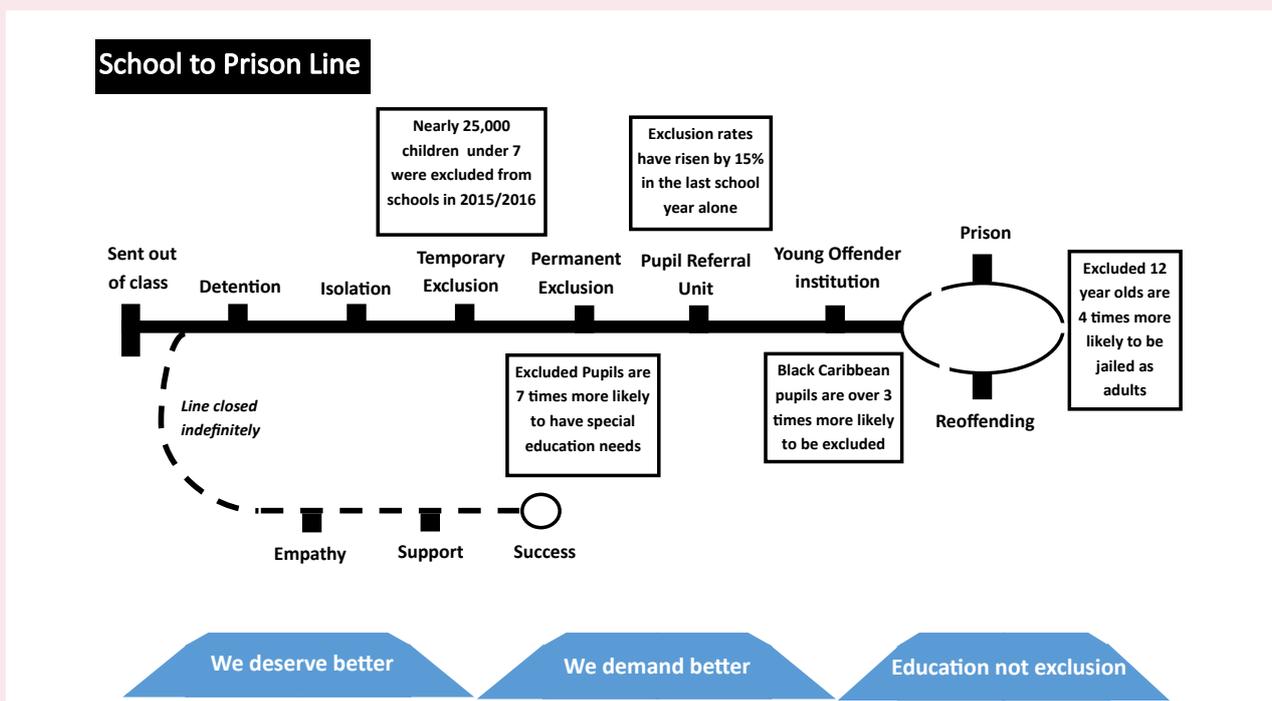
Practitioners and children alike stressed the importance of Children in Need having a consistent adult who they can talk to about their situation; unconditionally supportive, consistent adult can help promote the resilience of Looked After Children.



Education Not Exclusions Group, August 2018

Perhaps the most powerful message came from a group of South London students on GCSE results day 2018, where they used a poster campaign to highlight the plight of excluded young people.

The key purpose of this strategy is to 'reopen' the line leading to 'Empathy, Support and Success'



Appendix 3 - Telford and Wrekin Context

The rates of fixed term exclusions in 2017-18, whilst reduced from the high of 2016-17, are still around twice the rate nationally. Across the secondary phase the rate of fixed term exclusions is consistently higher than national rates. Historically, Telford and Wrekin have had low rates of permanent exclusions and we have worked well in partnership across schools to find better alternatives for our young people than to permanently exclude. In 2017-18 the rate of permanent exclusion has increased and could now be at national average. The sense of belonging and the early help and interventions described in this document are intended to have a positive impact on rates of both fixed term and permanent exclusion.

Young people are also leaving schools for other reasons. Increased numbers are leaving school to be electively home educated. These are often our most vulnerable learners and in many cases the education at home is then deemed unsuitable. These young people then return to school but have, in effect, had a period of time out of education and therefore have fallen behind their peers. It is therefore essential that we reduce the number of new electively home educated young people through this belonging strategy and that those that do elect to home educate do so for their own valid philosophical reasons.

There are a number of families who choose to move their child from one school to another within the borough when they have not moved to a new house. This also impacts on the sense of belonging of the young person and causes a disruption to their education. The measures described in this strategy should have an impact on this. Further detail can also be found in the Fair Access Protocol and the Hard to Place Protocol, both of which sit underneath this strategy and aim to reduce the in-borough mobility by helping young people to gain that sense of belonging.

Young people have a range of needs and the majority of these could and should be met in a mainstream school setting. It is estimated (October 2018) that there are 3,100 young people across Telford and Wrekin with a diagnosed mental health problem, in particular conduct disorders, emotional disorders and

hyperkinetic disorders (source: Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Transformation Plan for Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing 2018-2021). There will be many more young people with mental health needs which haven't been diagnosed. Typically, in a class of 30 students, 3 will have emotional or mental health needs. Children in Care are more likely to have mental health problems than other children. This strategy aims to ensure that we create the right environment in all schools to support these young people and to recognise and meet needs.

Telford and Wrekin have a successful Early Help Strategy and the Strengthening Families programme which has supported families to function more effectively. Education is at the heart of these, with indicators such as attendance and exclusion used to assess families for these programmes. However, young people who are in households which experience domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse and mental health issues are often not ready to learn in schools as their basic needs are not being met. A more co-ordinated response with education services such as the Behaviour Support Advisory Team and Assessment and Intervention Centres should form a key element of the new approach to Early Help Assessments and Family Support Plans.



Appendix 4 – Extract of Teaching Standards

The approach described in Appendix 1 presupposes that pupils are in receipt of good quality teaching and that the minimum teachers standards are being met, particularly that behaviour generally is being managed effectively in the classroom to ensure a good and safe learning environment and that teaching is being adapted to respond to the strengths and needs of all pupils. The extract from the Teaching Standards below illustrates this:

- Have clear rules and routines for behaviour in classrooms, and take responsibility for promoting good and courteous behaviour both in classrooms and around the school, in accordance with the school's behaviour policy.
- Have high expectations of behaviour, and establish a framework for discipline with a range of strategies, using praise, sanctions and rewards consistently and fairly.
- Manage classes effectively, using approaches which are appropriate to pupils' needs in order to involve and motivate them.
- Maintain good relationships with pupils, exercise appropriate authority, and act decisively when necessary.
- Know when and how to differentiate appropriately, using approaches which enable pupils to be taught effectively.
- Have a secure understanding of how a range of factors can inhibit pupils' ability to learn, and how best to overcome these.
- Demonstrate an awareness of the physical, social and intellectual development of children, and know how to adapt teaching to support pupils' education at different stages of development.
- Have a clear understanding of the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs; those of high ability; those with English as an additional language; those with disabilities; and be able to use and evaluate distinctive teaching approaches to engage and support them.



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