

PA43 YOT Managers, Head of Service, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

Senedd Cymru

Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg

Absenoldeb Disgyblion

Ymateb gan Rheolwyr Timau Troseddu Ieuentid,
Pennaeth y Gwasanaeth, Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol
Rhondda Cynon Taf

Welsh Parliament

Children, Young People and Education Committee

Pupil absence

Evidence from YOT Managers, Head of Service,
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

Record your views against the inquiry's terms of reference, which have been grouped into 5 themes.

1. Reasons

Covid has played a significant part in absenteeism at the current time and has disrupted regular attendance patterns, especially for those children who are difficult to engage. In part, this has led to a significant increase in referrals into prevention arm as well as statutory youth justice services. Insufficient support for children combined with inconsistent parenting linked to the uncertainties of Covid period has exacerbated the situation also for those who once would have been regular attenders. For many, disengagement was embedded from an earlier age as a result of traumatic childhoods. Unmet or unidentified needs has been an issue for YJS when children come to our service, especially in relation to additional learning needs (ALNs). Often, YJS's create their own assessments then and information share with education. Information flow between YJS and Education depts not always effective. Other factors/problems include poor relationships with teachers which can lead to disruption with lessons. Bullying, illness, transport issues, peer pressure can lead to social anxiety and social isolation. Reduced timetables are all too common now and can have a negative impact on attendance rates – with the child's perspective being “why bother/it's not worth it/they don't want me there”).-

Whether it's higher, and if so why non covid related absenteeism is higher than prior to Covid?

Opinion may differ depending upon YOS or area/region reporting. For example, it would appear to be higher in some regions as disruption of Covid has led to increased lethargy about attendance, and as above, often little parental control or boundary setting. (possible contributory factors to increase in ASB and exploitation issues).

- Reason why persistent absenteeism is more prevalent among particular groups of pupils?

Lack of confidence, self esteem, aspirations, lack of support, pro offending identity or home circumstances such as caring for another family member? Inconsistent parenting, numerous placement moves for those children who are looked after (CLA), traumatic childhoods and children affected by experience of domestic violence or domestic abuse. Seeing an increase also in children being criminally exploited (drug running etc) by older males.

2. Risks and consequences

Reduced academic success and few or no opportunities for children to realise their potential. Also, lower or no aspirations, and reduced training and employment opportunities. Reduced friendships and potentially reduced social skills, confidence and self esteem. For many children and young adults this will inevitably

lead to contact with youth justice services, involvement in crime or on the periphery of criminal activity, and a clear vulnerability to criminal and sexual exploitation.

3. Impact

- Impact on pupil's learning and attainment?

Above factors clearly associated with lack of attainment. Some YJS's undertake incremental learning with children and young adults in order that they feel they are achieving...often linked to restorative justice, reparation work or other initiatives.

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- Whether absenteeism has resulted in a higher level of pupil de registration, and any cross over with elected home education?

Home education would appear to have increased during the past few years but there seems to be a lack of understanding by parents regarding their responsibilities when this is agreed upon. For example, financial implications of ensuring children can take exams?

4. Effectiveness of policies

- Effectiveness of WG policies and guidance?

More scrutiny needed as part of school data returns and inspections regarding the educational status of children engaged with the youth justice system and their entitlements.

- Level of effectiveness of action and support from schools, local government and the WG?

Children engaged with the youth justice system are still not receiving their full entitlement. Estyn inspections have evidenced this time and time again. YJB KPI evidences this every quarter and yet no action is identified to focus on this cohort of children to improve the situation at a strategic level nationally. What is being done to prevent school exclusions for children engaged with the youth justice system?

- How effectively parents are engaged and supported?

Parents are best placed to answer this question. However, communication has to be a two-way process. Schools should have good parental communication in place which should use a variety of methods and embrace the use of technology - through email, text messaging, social media, and a user-friendly school website. Even when a school has established an effective engagement strategy there are likely to be some parents who remain hard to reach and it is this group of parents who are often those that a school needs to have more contact with. Their reluctance to engage may be due to their own experience of school or because they have difficulty with communicating, for example, their own low literacy skills, understanding of the English language or cultural differences.

5. Other

No

