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**SCHOOL ATTENDANCE TASK AND FINISH REVIEW GROUP**  
**FINAL REPORT**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member – Councillor McEwan, Children’s Services Portfolio**  
**Responsible Director(s) – Margaret Asquith, Director of Children’s Services**

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**Purpose of Report**

1. To report the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee’s recommendations on the outcome of the School Attendance Task and Finish Review Group.

**Information and Analysis**

2. The Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting held on 11th April, 2005, established a Task and Finish Review Group to consider statistical information on attendance at school, including comparative data with other local authorities and projections for the future.
3. The Task and Finish Review Group presented its final report (**attached as an Appendix**) to the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held on 31st October, 2005.
4. The Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee supported the recommendations of the Task and Finish Review Group, as detailed below, and referred them to Cabinet for consideration:
  - a) That the Education Welfare Service be congratulated for the work being done to reduce absence in Darlington Schools.
  - b) That the 5 Secondary Schools and 18 Primary Schools who have achieved improvements in attendance during 2005/05 be congratulated.
  - c) All schools should be encouraged to call home on the first day of absence.
  - d) Attendance targets need to be challenging but realistic.
  - e) Consideration should be given to the use of an alternative curriculum in certain instances as a way of reducing absence.
  - f) School Governors’ training should include attendance/absence issues.
  - g) The use of parenting programmes be further developed.
  - h) Consideration should be given to ways of ensuring funding for on-going publicity campaign/initiatives to reduce absence.
  - i) That attendance figures be regularly report to Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee.

## **Directors Comments**

5. Children's Services welcomes the report and findings from the Task and Finish Review Group. Children's Services is committed to improving outcomes for children, and school attendance is a key area which the whole of Children's Services is working together to improve. We support the recommendations.

## **Outcome of Consultation**

6. No formal consultation was undertaken in the production of this report other than the consultation undertaken by the Review Group itself.

## **Legal Implications**

7. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

## **Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998**

8. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. It is not considered that the contents of this report have any such effect.

## **Council Policy Framework**

9. The issues contained within this report do not represent change to Council policy or the Council's policy framework

## **Decision Deadline**

10. For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does not represent an urgent matter.

## **Recommendation**

11. That the School Attendance Task and Finish Review Group recommendations be supported.

## **Reasons**

12. To improve outcomes for children.

**Margaret Asquith**  
**Director of Children's Services**

## **Background Papers**

Report to Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee held on 31st October, 2005.

Christine Bates Extension 2387