

**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY  
25 APRIL 2022**

---

**VULNERABLE PUPIL PANEL REVIEW**

---

**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To share with Members the work and impact of the Darlington Vulnerable Pupil Panel, a multi-agency panel, of which the Local Authority is a part.

**Summary**

2. The Vulnerable Pupil Panel (VPP) was created in 2019 to replace the previous arrangements of the Schools Behaviour and Attendance Partnership (SBAP). Since its inception the VPP has formed a dynamic multi-agency partnership which aims to avoid children disengaging from education due to any cause.
3. The VPP supports the Local Authority with the discharge of its statutory duties related to Fair Access admissions, and exclusions.
4. In the lifetime of the VPP there has been a reduction in permanent exclusion and persistent absence and the gap between all children and vulnerable groups has also reduced for both metrics.

**Recommendation**

5. It is recommended that :-
  - (a) The contents of this report are noted by committee members.
  - (b) The Local Authority continues to support the operation of the Vulnerable Pupil Panel.
  - (c) Local partner agencies are encouraged to continue to support the work of the Vulnerable Pupil Panel.

**Tony Murphy**  
**Assistant Director of Education & Inclusion**

## Background Papers

### Vulnerable Pupil Panel Protocol

Calvin Kipling: Extension 5581

S17 Crime and Disorder	Reduction of antisocial behaviour and increased engagement in education
Health and Wellbeing	
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	No direct impact
Diversity	Reducing impact of education disengagement by vulnerable groups
Wards Affected	All
Groups Affected	Disadvantaged children of statutory school age
Budget and Policy Framework	DSG High Needs Block
Key Decision	No
Urgent Decision	No
Council Plan	Children and Young Peoples Plan
Efficiency	
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

6. The Vulnerable Pupil Panel was created in 2018 to replace the previous arrangements of the Schools Behaviour and Attendance Partnership (SBAP). SBAP was structurally unsuited to enact legislative changes with respect to Admissions, Fair Access and Exclusion and a new approach was required.
7. In 2018 there were high rates of exclusion. The permanent exclusion rate in Darlington was 0.18 per 100 for all pupils and 0.23 for disadvantaged pupils and this was in 87th and 80th national percentile respectively. Fixed Term Exclusions (now Suspensions) were 6.07 per 100 for all pupils and 13.81 for disadvantaged pupils. Persistent absence was at national average at 10.7%, but slightly above national at 17.6% for disadvantaged groups.
8. The local authority has specific obligations in relation to exclusion from school. These are set out in this guidance:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/921405/20170831\\_Exclusion\\_Stat\\_guidance\\_Web\\_version.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/921405/20170831_Exclusion_Stat_guidance_Web_version.pdf)

9. The Vulnerable Pupil Panel (VPP) was inaugurated to provide more structure and support to disadvantaged pupils. The VPP also supports the Local Authority in discharging its statutory duties related to exclusion. The VPP encompasses membership from a broader range of multi-agency partners than was previously the case with SBAP.
10. The membership includes the headteacher of every primary, secondary and special school (36 headteacher members and 6 Academy trust CEOs), Rise Carr College, Home & Hospital Teaching Service, Traveller Education and Achievement Service, Specialist Community Public Health Nurses, CAMHS, Durham and Darlington Police, Darlington Fire Service Arson Reduction Young People Coordinator, Community Resilience Officer. From DBC Assistant Director Education and Inclusion, Head of Children’s Services, Education Safeguarding Officer, SEND Inclusion Advisor, Education Information Officer, Head of Education Partnerships, Inclusion Lead Officer, Young People’s Engagement and Justice Service, Virtual School Headteacher, Head of SEND, ASB Civic Enforcement Operational Team Lead, ASB and Civic Enforcement Manager, Elective Home Education Advisor, Principal Educational Psychologist, Learning & Skills and Education Partnerships Quality Manager.
11. The VPP has developed its protocols over time. The current VPP protocol can be found in Appendix 1 The VPP enacts the statutory Fair Access Protocol for Darlington (FAP). It gate-keeps admissions to Home and Hospital Teaching Service, Rise Carr College and Clifton House. The VPP also co-ordinates and monitors managed moves between schools.
12. Every local authority must have a FAP in place. Once it is agreed with the majority of schools in its area, all admission authorities must participate in it. FAPs exist to ensure that vulnerable children, and those who are having difficulty securing a school place in-year, are allocated a place as quickly as possible. Relevant guidance about FAP can be found here:  
  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1012993/FAP\\_Guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1012993/FAP_Guidance.pdf)
13. The VPP operates on a case referral basis. Any partner can refer a child for consideration. A QA panel made up of partner representatives on a rota, determine if the referrals meet the thresholds set out in the protocol and proceed for discussion at the whole panel. Decisions are then taken by the whole panel, where a solution-focussed approach is taken by all partners.
14. Table showing the number of referrals received each year

Year	Referrals Considered	Managed Moves requested (successful)	Clifton House Placements	Home and Hospital Placements	Rise Carr College placements
2019/20	111	32 (19)	9	13	6
2020/21	144	31 (18)	11	12	13
2021/22 to date	66	20 (10)	7	7	7

15. In addition to the individual cases considered, the VPP collects intelligence from all partners about their work and emerging themes. This has included responses to COVID in relation to EHE return to school requests, a protocol on the response to possession of offensive weapons in schools, enhanced transition for vulnerable pupils, an exclusion working group and providing clarity on threshold for legal action in case of school absence.
16. The VPP has had some success in preventing disengagement from education. Persistent absence has improved to 9.8% and is 0.7% better than national for all pupils and 17.1% for disadvantaged pupils now 2.9% better than national. Both metrics have improved more rapidly than national and the gap has narrowed as a result of the work of the VPP. Overall absence for disadvantaged groups has remained static at 6.2% but the gap with national has improved by 0.5%.
17. Over time a significant number of potential exclusions have been avoided by as a result of access to the new provision as detailed above or by other services present at the VPP being alerted to the young person and providing or signposting additional support that maintained the current placement. A benefit of multiphase meeting has enabled families to be considered in the round and the impacts considered by a number of schools at once. It has also promoted continuity of relationships with children and families with primary colleagues and facilitated transition arrangements.