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# NOTICE OF MEETING

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## SCHOOLS FORUM

WEDNESDAY, 13 JULY 2022 AT 4.30PM

## VIRTUAL REMOTE MEETING

Telephone enquiries to 023 9283 4060

Email: [jane.didino@portsmouthcc.gov.uk](mailto:jane.didino@portsmouthcc.gov.uk)

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### Membership

#### Schools Members

Two head teacher representatives - primary phase

One head teacher representative - secondary phase

One head teacher representative - special phase

Four academy representatives - primary proprietor

Five academy representatives - secondary proprietor

One academy representative - special proprietor

One governor - primary phase

One governor - secondary phase

#### Non School Members

Four Councillors (one from each political groups)

One 16-19 Education Providers representative

One Early Years Providers representative

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(NB This agenda should be retained for future reference with the minutes of this meeting).

Please note that the agenda, minutes and non-exempt reports are available to view online on the Portsmouth City Council website: [www.portsmouth.gov.uk](http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk)

## **AGENDA**

- 10 Improving school attendance and reducing exclusions - focus on relational practice. (Pages 3 - 66)**

#### Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek Schools Forum endorsement for a three year commitment from the DSG carry forward in order to support a renewed collective effort on reducing time lost at school through non-attendance,

suspensions (previously known as fixed term exclusions) or reduced timetables. Any such endorsement will require Secretary of State approval.

1.2 Specifically, it is seeking support for a city-wide relational practice programme, a whole-school approach that has the potential to transform this agenda, building on previous work to implement restorative practice in schools, excellent evidence-based practice in the city and Wave One of the Relational Practice programmes that commenced in Autumn 2021 and which has so far involved up to 17 schools.

**RECOMMENDED that the Schools Forum endorse a three-year total commitment of £530,000 from the DSG carry forward as set out in section 4, in order to support the implementation of the strategy to improve school attendance and reduce suspensions, and specifically support a city-wide relational practice programme. Any such endorsement by Schools Forum will be subject to Secretary of State approval.**

# Agenda Item 10



<b>Title of meeting:</b>	Schools Forum
<b>Subject:</b>	Improving school attendance and reducing exclusions - focus on relational practice
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	13 <sup>th</sup> July 2022
<b>Report from:</b>	Sarah Daly, Director of Children, Families and Education
<b>Report by:</b>	Mike Stoneman, Deputy Director, Education
<b>Wards affected:</b>	All

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## 1 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Schools Forum endorsement for a three year commitment from the DSG carry forward in order to support a renewed collective effort on reducing time lost at school through non-attendance, suspensions (previously known as fixed term exclusions) or reduced timetables. Any such endorsement will require Secretary of State approval.
- 1.2 Specifically, it is seeking support for a city-wide relational practice programme, a whole-school approach that has the potential to transform this agenda, building on previous work to implement restorative practice in schools, excellent evidence-based practice in the city and Wave One of the Relational Practice programme that commenced in Autumn 2021 and which has so far involved up to 17 schools.

## 2 Recommendation

- 2.1 **It is recommended that Schools Forum endorse a three year total commitment of £530,000 from the DSG carry forward as set out in section 4, in order to support the implementation of the strategy to improve school attendance and reduce suspensions, and specifically support a city-wide relational practice programme. Any such endorsement by Schools Forum will be subject to Secretary of State approval.**

## 3 Background

- 3.1 The city-wide strategy to improve school attendance and reduce exclusions was recently approved by the PEP Strategic Board (refer to Appendix 1). The strategy sets out a renewed collective effort on reducing time lost from school as a result of non-attendance, suspension/exclusion or reduced timetables, set against the background of the learning loss that so many of our children and young people have

experienced throughout the pandemic. It also responds to the relatively high levels of exclusion and absence seen historically across Portsmouth schools when compared to similar LA areas. The strategy was also subject to a deep dive review by the DfE earlier this year in response to an invitation from the DfE to have a DfE attendance adviser work with us to review the strategy and our approach. The adviser was extremely positive about our approach and the actions that are being taken or are planned.

- 3.2 The strategy builds on several years of work and a range of initiatives, many of which will continue to be delivered under this strategy. However, this strategy takes a whole system strategic approach to tackling school absence and suspensions, a major strand of which is around relational practice, building on previous work to support restorative practice in schools and making this central to a school's culture and ethos.
- 3.3 Relational practice involves a universal approach to teaching and learning which influences whole school ethos, systems and policy, as well as everyday practice. It is also a targeted approach to support those children who are most in need. A whole-school relational approach enables children and staff to develop strong positive relationships, through an intentional set of systems and strategies, which has measurable impact on child and staff wellbeing, educational inclusion and indeed some international evidence of impact on learning outcomes. In addition, young people attending schools that have adopted Relational Practice have reported positive impacts on their mental health.
- 3.4 The strategy sets out the case for why a renewed effort is required. Relatively low levels of attendance and high levels of suspensions, particularly in secondary schools, have been a feature of the Portsmouth education landscape for a long time - these are not new findings. We remain concerned about the impact of low attendance and continuing high levels of suspensions on the life chances and wellbeing of individual children. We know that being in school consistently is crucial to children making progress and gaining the qualifications they need for success in their lives. We also know that being out of school places children at significant risk in terms of criminal exploitation, involvement in criminal activities and other safeguarding risks. Children also miss out on support for special educational needs and mental health problems.
- 3.5 Data from the last set of reliable data in 2018/19 highlights the distance we have to travel if we are to match national averages and those of our statistical neighbours (refer to page 5 in Appendix 1). Data has also been provided for 2019/20 for suspensions and for 2020/21 for absence (Appendix 2). The latest data indicates an improving picture but due to the impact of the pandemic we need to be cautious about the veracity of this data. Even allowing for the improvements, the challenge for Portsmouth clearly remains. The impact of poor school attendance on progression into post 16 and the proportion of young people who become NEET (not in education, employment or training) is clearly demonstrated in Appendix 3.

- 3.6 The strategy provides details of what has been done over the past few years to improve attendance, including more recent work that has been initiated during the pandemic. Much of this work will continue, as will the significant efforts by every school in the city to increase attendance, the resources for which are already in place.
- 3.7 But clearly we need to do more and the focus on Relational Practice represents a key strand of this strategy which Members of the PEP Strategic Board are convinced has the potential to make the greatest impact based on similar work done in cities such as Hull and Leeds. We now have a stand-out example in the city, **Trafalgar School** (part of Salterns Academy Trust), who have exemplified what can be achieved through relational practice and by taking the whole-school approach, with one clear measurable impact being extremely low suspensions, underlined by the fact that in 2020/21 the school recorded just two suspensions and the same in 2021/22 compared to mainstream secondary school averages of 95 and 120 respectively. This is in addition to other anecdotal and measurable impacts of relational practice in several other Portsmouth schools since 2016.
- 3.8 Schools have been invited to participate in 'Waves' of implementation over the next 3 years, with the ambition of running at least 3 Waves during this period. 17 of our 61 schools have been involved in Wave 1 of the Relational Practice Programme which commenced in Autumn 2021, and many more have indicated a willingness to join in future waves, with Wave 2 scheduled for January 2023. The council has been fortunate enough to be able to secure some one-off funding through the DfE Regional Recovery Fund which, together with some funding from the council, has funded the support given to schools in Wave 1.
- 3.9 A summary of the support schools in Wave 1 have received (and which will be expanded upon in future waves) is set out below:
- Headteachers from the schools participating in Wave 1 visited Trafalgar School during the Autumn and Spring terms to see first-hand how relational practice is being embedded in the school and the impact it is having on behaviour, attendance and suspensions. Two delegates from each school (headteacher and one other) are receiving group coaching during the Summer and Autumn terms 2022. This covers 'developing a restorative mindset and culture', restorative conversations and language, using circles and holding meetings differently and dealing with conflict and practicing sustainability in your schools. All of the sessions are delivered within a restorative framework of high challenge and high support.
  - Pastoral leaders from participating schools have received 3 days training on 'Restorative Practice in Action'. This provides delegates with practical skills and underpinning knowledge.
  - Participating schools are receiving bespoke support from Trafalgar School's senior leadership team and Director of Relational Practice to develop and implement an action plan for their school.



3.10 There are **four key resources** that will be needed to roll out Relational Practice in our schools:

- **A commitment from each Headteacher and their senior leadership team, governing board and Multi Academy Trust** (where relevant) to ensure a whole-school approach is adopted and consistently followed through
- **Capacity within Salterns Academy Trust** to share good and effective practice, facilitate school-to-school learning and support, provide professional development and enable networking. **This capacity will be extended to include other Trusts and schools with primary expertise.**
- **Support and co-ordination from the council** to work in partnership with Salterns Academy Trust and all schools to develop resources, share practice, develop links with other LA areas, monitor the programme and support evaluation and impact. The council will also support a systematic approach to working relationally with schools extending this to all partners including children's social care, early help, health and the police.
- **Specialist support in relational practice** providing a bespoke package of support for schools working closely with Salterns Academy Trust and coaching / support for the seconded Directors of Relational Practice.

3.11 In terms of **governance** the Portsmouth Education Partnership and the SEND Board already have in place structures which can oversee and monitor the implementation of the strategy and the focus on relational practice, in the shape of the Removing Barriers to Inclusion Group (RBIC) and the Behaviour and Attendance Group (BAG) which reports into the RBIC. Much of the current and planned work set out in the strategy sits within these groups and it is therefore proposed that the implementation of this strategy and the work on Relational Practice will be monitored through these structures. A **Schools Relational Practice Steering Group** has been set up, chaired by the Director of Children, Families and Education, to monitor the progress of the programme and ensure sufficient resources are in place.

3.12 The ambition is to develop and build a city-wide whole school relational culture and ethos, establishing practices that become "the way we do things in Portsmouth". The plan includes developing leadership within schools and across the PEP, establishing networks and developing CPD packages support and resources as required. Once embedded, with a clear underlying ethos, the ongoing maintenance of relational practice should be sustainable through school-to-school support.

## 4 Costs

- 4.1 Schools Forum is being asked to consider a commitment for three calendar years, commencing January 2023, from the DSG carry forward as set out in below, to support at least 3 more waves in 2023, 2024 and 2025, as well as some continued support for those schools that have been involved in Wave 1 and for those that will be involved in future waves.
- 4.2 A breakdown of the annual costs is given below. These provide an outline of the estimated costs each year. Staffing costs incorporate:
- project co-ordination which will be managed by the council;
  - senior school leaders (referred to as directors of relational practice) who will be seconded from primary and secondary schools, in order to provide bespoke support for schools and training, CPD and resources, as has been the case for Wave One.

<b>Estimated costs to implement Relational Practice across Portsmouth</b>				
<b>Calendar Year</b>	<b>2023 £</b>	<b>2024 £</b>	<b>2025 £</b>	<b>Total £</b>
Staffing Costs: Project Co-ordinator and Directors of Relational Practice from primary and secondary	148,600	155,600	163,800	468,000
Specialist RP training and coaching (including materials), evaluation and communications	20,200	20,600	21,200	62,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>168,800</b>	<b>176,200</b>	<b>185,000</b>	<b>530,000</b>

## 5 Reasons for recommendations

- 5.1 Portsmouth needs to make a step-change in how we address educational inclusion in terms of raising attendance, reducing suspensions and wider wellbeing for children and young people. Relational Practice in schools, as seen across the country, and specifically seen locally in Trafalgar School, offers us the opportunity to make that step change and move Portsmouth from the bottom decile nationally for educational inclusion. If the impacts seen in relational schools is mirrored across all Portsmouth schools, the impact would be dramatic and in terms of value for money, this would be one of the most cost-efficient investments seen in education in a very long time
- 5.2 Testimonials from three of the schools involved in Wave 1 highlight the early benefits and support for the programme (refer to Appendix 5).
- 5.3 There is clear evidence from other local authority areas and in some schools in Portsmouth that a commitment to relational practice and a whole school and system approach, can lead to transformational results in terms of improvements to school attendance, reduction in suspensions and savings in children's social care. A good example of this is in Leeds, details of which can be found on page 23 of our city wide multi agency strategy to improve school attendance and reduce exclusions (Appendix 1). An extract taken from the paper '*From Restorative Justice to Restorative Culture*' (Appendix 4 - page 30) shows the transformational impact



restorative practice and culture has had on school attendance and exclusions at Monmouth Comprehensive School in South Wales.

- 5.4 The delivery model, primarily through school to school support, is aligned with the approach of partnership working through the Portsmouth Education Partnership. Seconded staff from primary and secondary schools in the city will give a range of skills and allow bespoke delivery according to the needs of each school. External coaching and mentoring from RP experts will bring challenge and support and will help to build capacity within the PEP to sustain the programme longer term.
- 5.5 The evidence and feedback outlined above and in Appendix 5 indicates that this programme will have a significant impact, not just in terms of improving attendance and reducing suspensions, but also in terms of attainment and progression and staff recruitment and retention. Improved relationships in schools, means less conflict and swifter resolution of the conflicts that do occur. This frees up resources within schools to work proactively and preventatively with children, young people and families and having a positive impact on not just their educational outcomes but also their wider long-term outcomes. Keeping children and young people successfully in school reduces financial pressures such as the demand for SEMH support and alternative provision and the impact that this potentially has on the High Needs Block of the DSG
- 5.6 Other Local Authority areas are now also investing in this approach. Two current examples include:
- Gloucestershire CC which has committed £200k p.a. to support a team of 4 council officers and commission training consultants. Currently working with 43 primary, 5 secondary and 4 special schools/ APs
  - Staffordshire CC which has one lead officer, supported by mentors, plus additional resource from a specialist RP consultant. They are currently working with 16 schools, plus 7 in the Autism in Schools Project and 20+ in solution focused circles.

## **6 Dedicated Schools Grant**

- 6.1 The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is a ring-fenced grant for Education and can only be used for the purposes of the Schools Budget as defined in the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations
- 6.2 As set out in clause 4 and schedule 1 of the above regulations the DSG should not be used for the "non schools budget", it further clarifies that those areas of expenditure that fall outside of schedule 2 should also be considered as "non schools budget". The proposals set out in this report fall outside of the regulations and the funding provided for the admissions and attendance service funded as part of the central schools services block of the DSG.
- 6.3 This initiative does support all pupils in mainstream, alternative provision and special schools in Portsmouth, and aims to support improve educational attainment and



attendance. It is also seen as an Invest to Save initiative as it could reduce the need for Education, Health and Care Plans and the use of Alternative Provision in the City. Whilst the regulations do not include the use of the DSG carry forward for this purpose, the regulations do allow an application to be made to the Secretary of State to disapply the regulations for this purpose. Should the use be granted, it would still leave £3.8m for other preventative and Invest to Save initiatives.

## **7 Legal implications**

- 7.1 The Schools Forum is a statutory body which must be consulted on the use of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). Final decisions however on the funding distributed to schools, proposed spends on central services and the High Needs budget are matters to be determined by Cabinet and Council, having taken into account the responses from the Schools Forum. For the purposes of this particular initiative, an application will be required to the Secretary of State, should the decision be taken to proceed.
- 7.2 The proposals for the initiative will assist Portsmouth schools and the Local Authority in meeting their statutory duties around safeguarding, inclusion, engagement, attainment and achievement.

## **8 Director of Finance's comments**

- 8.1 Financial comments are contained within the body of the report.

Signed by (Director)

**Appendices:** see below

### **Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972**

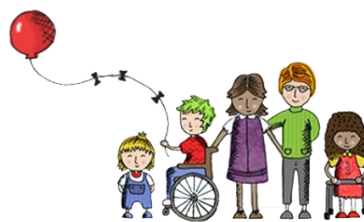
The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

The information upon which this report has been based has been drawn from a variety of sources: however much of the information used is held in budget files prepared by the children and Education Finance Team. Please contact Angela Mann, Finance Manager, if required.

<b>Title of document</b>	<b>Location</b>
City wide multi agency strategy to improve school attendance and reduce exclusions in Portsmouth	Appendix 1 of this report
LAIT data for attendance and suspensions	Appendix 2 of this report
Impact of poor school attendance on NEETs in Portsmouth	Appendix 3 of this report
From restorative justice to restorative culture by Belinda Hopkins	Appendix 4 of this report
Testimonials from schools involved in Wave One	Appendix 5 to this report

# **A city wide multi agency strategy to improve school attendance and reduce exclusions**

FINAL VERSION - FEBRUARY 2022



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## A. Purpose

1. This strategy sets out the case, and a proposed way forward, for a renewed collective effort on reducing time lost from school through non-attendance, exclusion or reduced timetables against the background of the learning loss that so many of our children and young people have experienced throughout the pandemic and unfortunately for some continue to do so.
2. The strategy **builds** on several years of work and a range of initiatives, many of which will continue to be delivered under this strategy. However, this strategy takes a **whole system strategic approach** to tackling school absence and exclusions, a major strand of which is around a whole school approach to **relational practice** building on previous work to support restorative practice in schools.
3. A central theme of the PEP education strategy is **inclusion** and this will be the case for this strategy - *creating an educational environment that is welcoming to all children and young people and not giving up on any child whatever their circumstances*. Inclusion is about ensuring that there is in place comprehensive Ordinarily Available Provision that meets the educational needs of the majority of children; that any additional needs are identified early and support is put in place, as part of a graduated response, to avoid exclusion and enable children to make progress with their learning; and that children are able to attend their local mainstream school wherever possible
4. The strategy has strong links with the PEP Education Strategy (Priority 8) and the SEND and SEMH Strategies, focusing on improving inclusion for all children, but with a particular focus on the provision of education for children with SEND / additional needs and improving outcomes for vulnerable children and young people including children in need, looked after children, children at risk of or already being exploited and/or experiencing the criminal justice system, children receiving targeted early help and other children identified by schools as requiring additional support.

## B. Rationale and why this matters

5. Relatively low levels of attendance and high levels of fixed term exclusions, particularly in secondary schools, have been a feature of the Portsmouth education landscape for a long time - these are not new findings. We remain concerned about the impact of low attendance and continuing high levels of fixed period exclusions on the life chances and wellbeing of individual children. We know that being in school consistently is crucial to children making progress and gaining the qualifications they need for success in their lives.
6. We also know that being out of school places children at significant risk in terms of criminal exploitation, involvement in criminal activities and other safeguarding risks. Children also miss out on support for special educational needs and mental health problems.
7. Where children are looked after, periods out of school or with poor attendance can threaten the stability of their placements, leading to more enforced changes for them and harming their emotional wellbeing. Being fully part of their school community is essential to the sense of belonging and self-worth which is the right of all children. It is

crucial to the developmental progression and social networks which will sustain them beyond their statutory school years.

8. The argument for **fixed term exclusions** (now officially renamed as **suspensions**) is we believe generally weak based on the evidence available to us. For some children fixed term exclusions can work first time round, but for the majority of children who receive more than one exclusion, however, it quickly ceases to act as a deterrent to poor behaviour. Instead it becomes normalised by children as something they come to expect, and contributes to a vicious cycle of low self-esteem and expectations. For teachers who suffer from the impact of poor behaviour and lack of respect, the temporary exclusion of a child demonstrates that school leaders acknowledge the impact and also provides them with a short period of respite. It is also sometimes seen as the only equitable way to maintain clear consistent and expectations of good behaviour. However, the price paid by a minority of children for this approach is very high. There is moreover no evidence that the threat of exclusion is what keeps the behaviour of other children good.
9. In the case of **reduced timetables** for children, the reasons for such measures should be exceptional and limited, short term and require parental consent. A clear plan should be in place to support early transition back into full time education. Early Help Assessments should be considered for all cases. Reduced timetables that go well beyond six weeks rarely succeed in positive outcomes for the children concerned.

### C. Background

10. Schools in Portsmouth have had to endure two extraordinary academic years in which the global Coronavirus pandemic has put significant pressure on school leaders, teachers and other staff. This has extended to early years settings and post 16 providers. They have all been faced with the immense challenges of providing Covid secure and safe environments when children and young people have been in school, developing and delivering remote learning options at speed to ensure learning can continue at home and supporting families practically and emotionally in a wide range of ways. Despite the full return to school and easing of restrictions, the impact of Covid on school attendance continues and many children are continuing to have learn at home for short periods as a result of having to self isolate.
11. It is true to say that the vast majority of children have returned to face to face learning since the restrictions were eased in June 2021 and most have returned with enthusiasm and are keen to learn, with some having developed new resilience and adaptability through their experience of the pandemic. However, in common with other areas we know that there are still a significant number of children who are not regularly returning to school when they could be. We also know that some children have experienced fixed term exclusions from school over this course of time. We also know that a significant number of children are on reduced timetables, which whilst not subject to a formal fixed exclusion, are nevertheless not able to attend school full time.
12. It is clear from the studies which have been undertaken nationally, and from the evidence Portsmouth school leaders have shared, that the pandemic has had a significant impact on children's learning. Historically, we also know that children in Portsmouth have experienced, pre-pandemic, more lost school time than most other

areas, including areas with as much or greater levels of social and economic deprivation than Portsmouth.

#### D. The evidence base and why change is needed

13. There are a number of key performance indicators around school attendance and exclusion which the DfE publishes for all upper tier Local Authority areas. The tables below outline the most reliable position (pre-pandemic) with regard to these key indicators, including our position against all 152 upper tier LA areas.
14. Exclusions data is also available for 2019/20 which paints a rather more positive picture but due to the impact of the pandemic the figures have to be treated with a high degree of caution. The DfE did not collect absence data for the Spring and Summer Terms 2020 due to the pandemic and there is therefore no full year 2019/20 absence data to provide comparisons with.

<b>Overall absence primary</b>	<b>2018/19</b>	<b>2019/20</b>
	4.1%	n/a
National rank	82 <sup>nd</sup>	n/a
3 year trend	Steady	n/a
Comparators: for this measure, Portsmouth is 2 <sup>nd</sup> highest compared to 11 most similar LA areas. Only Telford and Wrekin has better outcomes.		

<b>Overall absence secondary</b>	<b>2018/19</b>	<b>2019/20</b>
	6.7%	n/a
National rank	146 <sup>th</sup>	n/a
3 year trend	worsening	n/a
Comparators: the only LA areas with worse performance are: Salford, Knowsley, Middlesbrough and Hartlepool.		

<b>Persistent absence primary (% of pupils)</b>	<b>2018/19</b>	<b>2019/20</b>
	8.7%	n/a
National rank	94 <sup>th</sup>	n/a
3 year trend	worsening	n/a
Comparators: for this measure, Portsmouth is 2 <sup>nd</sup> highest compared to 11 most similar LA areas. Only Telford and Wrekin has better outcomes.		

<b>Persistent absence secondary (% of pupils)</b>	<b>2018/19</b>	<b>2019/20</b>
	17.9%	n/a
National rank	144 <sup>th</sup>	n/a
3 year trend	worsening	n/a
Comparators: the only LA areas with worse performance are: Blackpool, Redcar and Cleveland, Salford, Knowsley, Hartlepool and Middlesbrough.		

<b>Fixed term exclusions (suspensions) primary</b>	2018/19	2019/20
	1.58%	1.1%
National rank	108 <sup>th</sup>	100 <sup>th</sup>
3 year trend	Improving	

<b>Fixed term exclusions (suspensions) secondary</b>	2018/19	2019/20
	17.94%	7.5%
National rank	134 <sup>th</sup>	97 <sup>th</sup>
3 year trend	Worsening (nearly quadrupled)	

<b>Permanent exclusions primary</b>	2018/19	2019/20
	0.01%	0.02%
National rank	39 <sup>th</sup>	104 <sup>th</sup>
3 year trend	No change	

<b>Permanent exclusions secondary</b>	2018/19	2019/20
	0.15%	0.09%
National rank	47 <sup>th</sup>	50 <sup>th</sup>
3 year trend	Improving	

15. There are three other key measures of educational absence where robust and official national data is unavailable:

- Reduced (or part-time) timetables
- Chronic non attendance (CNA) - less than 50%
- Requests for elective home education (pupil deregistrations from school)

16. Local data is provided below for reduced timetables. The figures indicated that the number of pupils commencing a reduced timetable has increased but this also reflects a greater level of tracking and monitoring by the Local Authority

<b>Reduced Timetables</b>				
	Autumn Term 17/18	Autumn Term 18/19	Autumn Term 19/20	Autumn Term 20/21
Number of pupils commencing a reduced timetable	55	60	100	125

17. By the end of the Autumn term 2021 there were 360 **chronically absent children** of which:

- 156 have a social worker or Early Help worker as lead Professional with a relevant safeguarding/care or early help plan in place



- 204 are without an LA Lead Professional. Many had school-led plans of differing types but the quality of these is unknown
- 28 children had not been to school at all in the term
- 67 children have EHCPs of which 31 were at Harbour, 4 at Cliffdale, 5 at Redwood Park and 6 at Mary Rose
- 70 are under the age of 11 (NCY 6 and below). 290 are of secondary age

18. Portsmouth is not a wealthy city and there is a **correlation between deprivation and poor childhood outcomes**. To provide further context, three deprivation indicators are given below with the city's ranking compared to other local authority areas. The figures demonstrate that there are other many other areas that have higher levels of deprivation than Portsmouth and yet are doing better when it comes to school attendance and rate of exclusions.

- 97<sup>th</sup> of 152 in terms of % children in low income families (where 1st is low)
- 127<sup>th</sup> of 152 for % of primary children eligible for Free School Meals
- 119<sup>th</sup> of 152 for % of secondary children eligible for Free School Meals

#### **E. Previous and current work in the city to improve school attendance and reduce exclusions**

19. Over the past few years there have been a number of pieces of work aimed at, among other things, improving school attendance and reducing exclusions. Much of this work has been city wide and multi-agency, involving the council, education settings, health, the voluntary sector, etc. Details of these are summarised below:

- a) **High profile school attendance campaign 'miss school miss out'** and the subsequent welcome back and return to school campaigns and associated resources for schools. The *miss school miss out* campaign was relaunched in Sept 2021 following a pause as a result of the pandemic.
- b) **Work of the Behaviour and Attendance Group (BAG)** - tracking and monitoring of school attendance and exclusions. The Group is now a sub group of the PEP Removing Barriers to Inclusion Group.
- c) **Implementation of the SEND Strategy**
- d) **SEMH Partnership, Vision, Principles and Framework** - in 2018 we established regular meeting with partners to co-ordinate provision in school (school nurses. CAMHS, MABs, etc). We also agreed a Vision for SEMH Inclusion, a set of principles and outlined a 4 tier framework to structure our work around reducing demand for Alternative Provision, including reducing exclusions.
- e) **Emotional Wellbeing Strategy** - in 2017 we rolled out the Strategy including a wide range of improvements to address a range of mental health issues impacting on children's inclusion and learning.
- f) **PACE** - in 2018 we launched the **Turnaround Project** and more importantly in terms of driving inclusion - the PACE Training - with over 160 school professionals trained in the PACE model.

- g) **Restorative Practice in Schools** - since 2017, we have trained professionals across 30 schools in RP, set up the RP School Network and provided intensive whole school support to some schools in partnership with Portsmouth Mediation Service.
- h) **Attachment Aware Schools** - up to 2019, 17 schools had received training from the Virtual School.
- i) **Near-to-School and Short Stay School** - have been developed as options to avoid long-term exclusions.
- j) **Ordinarily Available Provision** - in 2018 we published a shared OAP for the city including expectations of schools vis-à-vis SEMH support.
- k) **Portsmouth Inclusion Education Quality Mark (PIE QM)** - In 2018 we launched the PIE QM to improve school leadership, culture and practice around inclusion - this is a self assessment supported by peer moderation, in order to identify strengths and areas for development in relation to inclusive practice. Consistent use of the PIE QM across our schools offers a real opportunity to drive inclusion and reduce exclusions. Mainstream schools have been asked to self-assess against the first two standards 27 schools have now completed this. They will be completing the remaining standards over the course of this academic year - seven schools have already done so.
- l) **Elective Home Education (EHE) Protocol** - agreed by all schools in 2019 and which has successfully reduced demand for EHE pre-pandemic as well as resulting in only a small increase during the pandemic - in stark contrast to most other LAs in the South East who have witnessed significant increases in EHE.
- m) **Reduced Timetables** - revised process and tracking by the LA of those children on reduced timetables that exceed 6 weeks and where there is no clear plan in place to ensure a transition to full time education.
- n) **Team Around the School** - in 2019 the LA piloted two schools for joint work with leadership teams to improve SEMH and safeguarding practice, building on previous work.
- o) **Inclusion Outreach Service** - in 2019 the LA launched the new outreach model, with a more flexible, multi-agency offer of support for schools where they have concerns about meeting children's additional needs. The outreach support is available to all mainstream schools, delivered by a range of professionals from a partnership of services including Multi-agency Behaviour Service (MABS), Solent Academies Trust, Children's Therapy Service, and experienced Outreach SENCOs from mainstream schools in the city.
- p) **PCC traded services** including Attendance and Education Psychology.

- q) **Identifying schools needing focussed support** - in 2019 we used data (and a new way to stratify schools) which identified 9 'very high' or 'high' excluding' schools and 10 medium excluding schools to work with
  - r) **Mental Health Support Teams** - in 2019 we commissioned (Wave 2) MHSTs with an additional (Wave 4) Team secured in 2020. All schools now have access to MHSTs
20. Since the pandemic started, more work and planning has taken place all of which have the potential to impact on school attendance and exclusions. These include:
- a) **LA Education Link Co-ordinators** - during the pandemic, systems were established with schools to track vulnerable children and respond to a wide range of issues impacting on families as a result of the lockdown, including RAG-rated child level data on spreadsheets, LA Link Co-ordinators attached to schools and colleges and the Children's Hub. These systems have now been adjusted with a particular focus on children who are chronic non-attenders, with attendance below 50%. The vulnerable children tracking team has now been established as a permanent team, with additional funding and recruitment to 3 dedicated Link Co-ordinator posts, due to the positive impact of this work. This being extended further to include Early Years and Post-16 providers.
  - b) **Guidance for schools** - updated school attendance guidance for schools was published in September 2021. It provided: guidance on a range of strategies to improve school attendance; graduated response flowchart and guidance; chronic non-attendance flow chart; and initiatives and local support available to schools to help improve school attendance.
  - c) **Studybugs** - using real-time attendance and exclusion data at child-level to reduce absence and exclusions. 60 of 61 schools have signed up to this.
  - d) **Early Help Assessments (EHA)** - a multi-agency working group is redesigning the EHA to make it easier to use for schools to be lead professionals and do holistic family-based assessment to reduce exclusions/raise attendance (to be known as Family Support Plans). This is being trialled with five pilot schools before it is rolled out to all schools.
  - e) **Review of in-school Alternative Provision (AP)** - the LA has commissioned Delta Education Trust to review on site secondary AP (tier 3 of our model). The reviews are being undertaken during the Autumn 2021.
  - f) **Tailoring MHSTs to meet local need** - extending the MHST offer, in addition to the CBT model to better focus on children with 'behavioural' challenges. Better alignment with MABS and a more sensible approach to whole school work in line with our principles and approaches.
  - g) **Termly LA School Resource Allocation Meetings** - ensuring the local authority support services are appropriately and proportionally allocated to schools supported by a termly review of all schools.

- h) **Supporting neuro-diverse children in school** - Portsmouth has been successful in securing innovation funding from NHS England which will allow us to work in partnership with a number of schools across the City to transform support for children who have a level of neuro-diversity that is impacting on their engagement with and enjoyment of school. The programme will have 4 key areas of focus: training and development for the school; a programme of specific support for schools; development of our existing Parent Carer Forum to create a central hub from which small, local forums will be set up; and development of a digital platform that provides families, young people and practitioner's access to a range of resources and tools, up to date information and interactive functions, building on existing good practice such as the new Portsmouth ND Resource Pack.
- i) **Expansion of the health related absence project** which has been running for the last few years involving a handful of schools. The project has demonstrated impact and reduced levels of school absence due to health related issues. Plans are in hand to expand this as a traded service from Sept 2022.

21. All of the above is in addition to the significant efforts by every school in the city to increase attendance and reduce exclusions. It should also be noted, that all of these initiatives build on a long standing set of very good arrangements in terms of the local authority's Inclusion Services (statutory and traded), the Multi Agency Behavioural Service (MABS) and wider health, early help and safeguarding services.

## F. What collectively we need to do - positive success factors

22. We believe that there are a number of **positive success factors** which it is realistic for us as a Partnership to achieve, working together. They may seem obvious and we know they reflect many existing aspirations in schools, but we believe they are worth setting out here to underpin the work we want to take forward over the coming months and years:

- a) **High quality external challenge and support for families who need it by services beyond school which work hand in hand with schools**, and which champion strongly the importance for children of full attendance and positive participation in school life. The LA is committed to continuous improvement in its targeted tier 3 and 4 services for families and are aiming to be judged "Outstanding" by Ofsted. A key part of this is the best possible joint work with schools to support attendance and good behaviour by children. The LA want to hear from schools when they fall short in this aspiration and recognise that there will probably always be a feeling in schools that more of this support is needed than the LA is able to provide. Investment by the LA has been consistent over recent years with a cross party commitment to continue to invest in targeted early help as well as statutory social care. Ofsted judge the quality of the support to be "Good" and peer scrutiny continues to be positive. With continuing feedback from schools we should be able to build on this foundation to keep improving the contribution which these services can make.
- b) **A consistent approach to championing school attendance by all agencies including the NHS**. The LA and NHS partners are also committed to maintaining strong health visiting, school nursing and other NHS services which support

families' understanding of the importance of education. Services which are not supportive, for example GPs who do not sufficiently challenge negligent behaviour by families, will be robustly challenged by the LA through the strong partnership networks and by colleagues in other parts of the NHS, particularly local commissioners of GPs.

- c) **High quality early help support and challenge for vulnerable families by pastoral teams in schools**, using the revised Early Help Assessment (EHA) planning tool (Family Support Plan). Across the country, schools provide early intervention support and challenge for families and Portsmouth schools are no exception. We know that pastoral capacity is stretched. We also know that the right conversation with a family, at the right time, including connecting families with other support in the city such as VCS organisations, housing and welfare support, can make a real difference. The revised EHA, to be known as the Family Support Plan, will be trialled in five schools before it is fully rolled out to all schools. There will be an expectation that in the case of any child who is chronically absent there should be a Family Support Plan in place.
- d) **A consistent city-wide culture in schools of high expectations for all**, in which all children feel both challenged and supported to meet those expectations and where all children know that they belong. **Developing and maintaining an effective restorative culture in schools with high behaviour expectations** is not a "soft approach to discipline". It is very challenging for both children and adults. We know from examples both elsewhere in the country and in Portsmouth, however, that such a culture can be created and maintained. Consistently championed it could reduce significantly the school absence, voluntary and enforced, which blights the lives of too many children in our city. A key strand of this strategy is to take forward a whole school approach to relational practice building on previous work to support restorative practice in schools. Details of this approach is set out in Section G.
- e) **High quality, effective teaching of an appropriate and ambitious curriculum.** Planning to teach the knowledge and cultural capital that our children need in order to access and understand the curriculum is vital to enable them to engage with education and go on to thrive in later life. We know that this is already the key aim of all schools in the city, as is the identification of barriers that some children face in school and within each subject discipline. It is important to underline its importance, however, in increasing attendance and reducing exclusion.
- f) **A rich extra-curricular offer, and expectation, for all children.** Many children in Portsmouth take full advantage of the enrichment opportunities schools offer, in sport, arts or other interest areas. Children who look forward to doing things they love want to come to school and are motivated when they are there.

## G. Focus on chronic absence

- 23. As referred to in section D and the snapshot of data from October 2021 we continue to have a relatively high number of children (309) who are chronically absent from school, i.e. less than 50% attendance. And of these children, less than half have a named Lead Professional.

24. A key strand of this strategy will be to ensure all chronically absent children have a plan in place either through an Early Help Assessment (Family Support Plan as it will be known as in the future) (refer to 21 c)) or plans developed as a result of being open to tier 3 and 4 services, including an expectation of having a Lead Professional in place.
25. Partners will continue to share information with the Missing Exploited and Trafficked (MET) Group and Early Help, encouraging schools to complete an Early Help Assessment (Family Support Plan) and have a Lead Professional in place, working with Early Help and / or contacting MASH where school interventions and previous legal sanctions have failed.
26. The role of the LA Link Co-ordinators will be an important factor, working closely with schools to track and monitor chronically absent children and to make sure that appropriate plans are in place.

## H. Focus on relational practice

27. The work on Restorative Practice in schools from 2016 - 2019 had some notable successes, with 32 of our (then) 64 schools engaged in training, our schools network and implementing various pieces of work. Most schools tended to focus on restorative practice with specific children and held the work in their pastoral and safeguarding functions, rather than necessarily taking a whole-school culture approach - more Restorative Justice than Restorative Practice. In addition, there has been a lot of work done on Restorative Practice in social care, early help and a number of VCS organisations in the city.
28. However, we now have a stand-out example in the city, **Trafalgar School** (part of Salterns Academy Trust), who have exemplified what can be achieved by taking the whole-school approach (referred to **relational** rather than restorative practice) with one clear measurable impact being very low exclusions. This is in addition to other anecdotal and measurable impacts in several other Portsmouth schools since 2016. We also know from cities like Hull and Leeds where this whole-school approach has been adopted by the majority of schools in these areas, that exclusions have been markedly reduced as a result. See Appendix 2 for evidence of impact in other areas.
29. The Portsmouth Education Partnership (PEP) Strategic Board has agreed that the city needs to take a whole-system strategic approach to tackling the very high levels of absence and exclusion in the city and there is wide consensus that Relational Practice in schools should be a major plank of the strategy to improve outcomes in these areas.
30. Relational Practice is not a silver bullet and there are other things we need to do as part of a strategy to reduce schools days lost as set out in this strategy and detailed in sections E and F. Curriculum flexibility for particular pupils being one amongst many others. Moreover, we know the things that count can't always be counted and we do expect to see a wide range of other major benefits from relational practice in schools including improved relationships, children feeling safer and happier at school, reduced anxiety etc. The direct and indirect impact on mental health and educational progress and attainment should not be underplayed. Nonetheless, it is reasonable to set an early expectation that relational practice in schools will make a very significant impact on:

- Days lost to exclusion
  - School attendance, and in particular, reducing the proportion of children who are persistently and chronically absent
  - Number of pupils on reduced timetables
  - Demand for Alternative Provision
31. Schools have been invited to participate in **'Waves' of implementation** over the next 2-3 years. 17 of our 61 schools have expressed an interest to be in Wave One starting in 2021/22, with the addition of The City of Portsmouth College.
32. There are three key resources that will be needed to roll out relational practice in our schools:
- A commitment from each Headteacher and their senior leadership team, governing board and Multi Academy Trust (where relevant) to ensure a whole-school approach is adopted and followed through
  - Support from the Local Authority which will be through a partnership with the Salterns Academy Trust who will lead this work on behalf of the Portsmouth Education Partnership facilitating school visits, school-to-school support and networking
  - Support from L30 (Mark Finnis) who will provide a bespoke package of support for schools in Wave 1 during the course of 2021/22 working closely with Salterns Academy Trust.

## I. A shared mission

33. Back in the late 1990s, Portsmouth was the highest permanent excluding (now referred to as expulsions) local authority in England - 152<sup>nd</sup> out of 152. Within three years, we had moved to the top half of that table. 20 years later we remain in the top quartile. We have also made improvements in recent years in the levels of reduced timetables and elective home education.
34. Whilst fixed term exclusions, part-time timetables and absence are more complex issues, history does suggest that radical improvement across the public service delivery system can be done at pace and be sustained. Under the auspices of the Portsmouth Education Partnership, and alongside partners in the police, NHS, parent representative bodies and the voluntary and community sector, we co-produce and jointly deliver a coherent, ambitious strategy to make a radical difference to levels of attendance and exclusions in the city. The success factors set out in section F reflect a view about some key elements, but we need to work together on a shared mission - with across the board commitment - to make that step change.
35. To do this, we believe that we should hold ourselves and each other to account in a restorative and relational *high support: high challenge* way. We should be prepared to do things differently, change the structures of accountability and planning, be unafraid to learn from what works and doesn't work locally, and be open to learning from other places and the evidence of what works nationally and internationally. Equally, we must not throw everything away - the long list of initiatives set out in section E includes some very good work, much of which has not had the chance fully to impact due to the pandemic. The city has an abundance of good thinkers, good developments and good

practice from which to build. We see this mission as a joint leadership challenge, led by the PEP, but involving everyone with a role to play.

## **J. Governance, accountability and targets**

36. The Portsmouth Education Partnership and SEND Board already have in place structures which can oversee and monitor this strategy in the shape of the Removing Barriers to Inclusion Group (RBIC) and the Behaviour and Attendance Group (BAG) which reports into the RBIC. Much of the current and planned work set out in section E sits within these groups and it is therefore proposed that the implementation of this strategy and the work on Relational Practice will be monitored through these structures.
37. The Groups will be accountable to the PEP Strategic Board who will receive reports on a termly basis. For 21/22 the PEP Strategic Board has agreed that one of its four top priorities will be a focus on reducing exclusions and improving school attendance, and will therefore be committed to scrutinising and supporting this work.
38. The success of this strategy will ultimately be measured by improvements in school attendance and a reduction in school suspensions, against the last set of reliable data from 2018/19.
39. A set of 3-year targets are set out below to achieve by the end of the 2023/24 academic year. These targets have been set following analysis of local, national and statistical neighbour performance. The rationale for the targets is that for Primary phase (where we have historically stronger performance), Portsmouth should aim to be at or near the top of the statistical neighbour pack and that for Secondary phase we should be aiming for above statistical neighbour average. This would represent significant progress whilst at the same time being proportionate, ambitious and achievable.


	<b>2018/19 (pre-pandemic baseline)</b>	<b>2023/24 Target</b>
Overall absence rate in primary	4.1	3.5
Overall absence rate in secondary	6.7	5.0
Persistent absence rate in primary	8.7	6.8
Persistent absence rate in secondary	17.9	13.5
Fixed term exclusions / suspensions in Primary	1.08	0.6
Fixed term exclusions / suspensions in Secondary	7.47	5.5
Reduction in the number of children on reduced timetables	125	70
Chronically absent children to have a Named lead Professional and a plan in place	44%	100%

40. In addition to the Local Authority level targets, the PEP expects MATS and schools to set and review aspirational targets to improve attendance and reduce exclusion at an individual school level. It is recommended that schools set targets that would place them in, at least, the top half of similar schools nationally, such as FFT and EEF.







## Action plan 2021/22

This is a working document that will be regularly reviewed and updated. Last reviewed May 22


Actions / priorities	Milestones / timescales	Timescales	Lead	Progress
1. <b>Relational practice</b> - launch of a whole school approach to restorative practice (relational practice), led by Salterns Academy Trust in partnership with PCC and L30.	<p>Wave 1 2021/22: 17 schools and 1 college</p> <p>Wave 2 2022/23:</p> <p>Wave 3 2023/24:</p> <p>Visits from Wave 1 schools to Trafalgar</p> <p>Funding secured from Schools Forum</p> <p>SLA agreed with Salterns</p> <p>Coaching programme with HT and SL from Wave 1 schools 4 x ½ day</p> <p>RP in Action - 3 day training course Wave One schools</p> <p>Outreach work led by Director of RP</p> <p>Implementation in Wave One schools Introduction of Wave 2</p>	<p>January 22</p> <p>February 22</p> <p>January 22</p> <p>March - July 22</p> <p>May 22</p> <p>Spring/ Summer 22</p> <p>September 22</p>	Sarah Christopher	<p>Completed</p> <p>Wave 1 secured</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>Scheduled, on track</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>In progress</p> <p>To be amended to Jan 23</p>
2. <b>Attendance campaign</b> - relaunch of the #missschoolmissout attendance media campaign including social media messaging, resources for schools and materials for partner organisations and all professionals who are working with families.	 <p>attendance campaign plan 2021-</p> <p>Attendance campaign to be relaunched date tbc. Actions and milestones to be confirmed</p>	To be included in campaign relaunch	Neil Stevenson	

	Relaunch of campaign includes links to MH pathway work			
<b>3. Making school attendance everyone's business</b> - working with partners to provide additional needs based support that contributes to improvements in attendance, running termly school attendance network meetings and continuing to make school attendance everyone's business including health workers, social workers, school nurses, Early Help family workers, CAHMS, GPs	<p>Planned dissemination of the guidance produced by Fran/ and Neil regarding graduated response. Including messaging GPs and other health colleagues</p> <p>Share expectations of each partner in relation to school attendance</p> <p>Review attendance network meetings to include participation and updates form partners.</p> <p>Standing items at attendance network meetings - reduced timetables and CNAs</p> <p>Thresholds document to be reviewed to provide clarity about tier 4 intervention (or not) for chronic non-attenders.</p> <p>Agree messaging with partners around high support and high challenge for CNAs. Support still in place when pursuing a punitive route</p> <p>Standing item on Early Help and Prevention Board</p> <p>Standing item in discussions with CCG</p> <p>Discussion 0-5 strategy group</p>		<p>Health and Wellbeing Board</p> <p>and</p> <p>Behaviour and Attendance Group</p>	

<b>4. Portsmouth Inclusive Education Quality Mark (PIE QM)</b>  1. Welcoming school and ethos (includes access and environment) 2. Leadership and management 3. behaviour and safeguarding 4. Curriculum and opportunities 5. Social and emotional health and wellbeing 6. Teaching and learning 7. Monitoring progress and attainment 8. Participation of students and young people 9. Partnerships with stakeholders (families, governors, community) 10. Transition	 Commitment to supporting SEND ver  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completion of standards 1 and 2</li> <li>• Completion of standards 3 and 4</li> <li>• Completion of standards 5 and 6</li> <li>• Completions of standards 7-10</li> </ul> Analysis of responses to identify practice to share and issues completed termly	  July 2021  January 2022  May 2022  September 2022	Sarah Christopher/ Mike Bowen	  28/56 mainstream schools working on the PIE QM         Not yet taken place
<b>5. Chronic Non-Attendance</b>	Meeting with health, education, CSC, EH to explore options of how we support chronic absence and how to best use any additional funding that we receive via supporting families. Plan and milestones developed during the meeting on 9 <sup>th</sup> December  All CNAs discussed during regular link coordinator calls  Standing item at attendance networks, early help and prevention board	3 <sup>rd</sup> March	Fran Shaul and Neil Stevenson	         Additional calls scheduled to focus on these pupils Summer Term 22
<b>6. Studybugs</b>	Data is reflected back to schools	Sept 21	Neil Stevenson	Ongoing

	<p>Reflect health related absence back to schools and health SNS and public health</p> <p>Wider workforce able to access the attendance of their caseloads</p>	<p>April 22</p> <p>July 22</p>		
<p><b>7. Revision of EHAs (Family Support Plans)</b></p> <div>  <p>EHA pilot with schools.msg</p> </div> <div>  <p>Revised EHA Process.msg</p> </div>	<p>Pilot to run from November 2021 for at least 3 months</p> <p>Quality assure the completed tools and seek feedback from professionals and parents, so we can make any adjustments needed before rolling out the new tools to all universal services across the city.</p> <p>Roll out approximate date. This is dependence on having a central place to record completed plan and the number of plans completed during the pilot phases (sufficient to provide QA)</p>	<p>November 21 - Feb 22</p> <p>April 22</p>	Lucy Rylatt	Pilot underway
<p><b>8. Neuro-diversity Project in Schools</b></p> <p>Implementation of the project with 4 key areas of focus: training and development for the school; a programme of specific support for schools; development of Parent Carer hubs and development of a digital platform</p>	<div>  <p>210716-Autism Schools Project Subn</p> </div> <p>Schools recruited to the project</p> <p>Engagement of SLT in participating schools. School level plan agreed Training offer developed Bespoke offer to schools Parents hubs established</p> <p>Evaluation of project</p>	<p>December 22</p> <p>January 22</p> <p>January 22 January 22 February 22</p> <p>September 22</p>	Anthony Harper	<p>Learning walks in progress</p> <p>Plan shared with schools Coordinator recruited</p>

	Roll out learning to other schools	2022/23		
<b>9. Health Related Absence Project</b>	6 schools signed up  Data around the impact of the project to increase engagement	September 21  January 22	Karin Downer and Anthony Harper	Project to be reviewed / revised
<b>10. Review of in-school Alternative Provision</b>	School reviews scheduled Feedback to individual schools  Report with findings to include citywide milestones for development and sharing good practice  Forum for AP to network	Autumn 2021  March 2022  March 22	Neil Stevenson	Reviews all taken place  Report still pending
<b>Works of Teams that are integral to the success of this strategy</b>				
This plan will be shared with all teams, who will have their own delivery plans				
<b>11. LA Education Link Co-ordinators</b> - continue to deploy LA Link Co-ordinators building on the success of the previous academic year, working with schools to identify and support those children who have struggled to return to school successfully, following the partial closure of schools due to the pandemic. 3 dedicated, permanent LA Link Co-ordinators have been employed since November 2020 to deliver this support to schools	Link co-ordinators will play a key role in implementing this plan.  RTT and CNAs standing items for discussions with schools / colleges / settings  Highlight practice to share and issues raised at fortnightly Vulnerable Tracking Oversight meetings		Fran Shaul	

	<p>Feed into termly SRAM meetings</p> <p>Continue to provide join up between partners and between schools and partners. (Working as a de facto part of the attendance team)</p>			
<p><b>12. Inclusion Outreach Service</b></p> <p>Individual level - contribution to the plan in general</p>	 <p>IOS Business Plan 2021-22.doc</p>		Lisa Caine	
<p><b>13. Mental Health Support Teams</b></p>	<p>Extend offer of whole staff session led by MHST to all schools. Publicise via Bulletin and school level contacts</p> <p>Agree structure to align MHST with Early Help and Prevention Service to allow greater joint working and mutual support.</p> <p>Link Coordinators to check whether the school has considered referral and/or consultation with MHST where there's low attendance relating to poor mental health such as anxiety</p>		Fungayi Zinyemba and Sarah Christopher	
<p><b>14. Turnaround Project</b></p>	<p>Manager in Place December 2021</p>		Lisa Caine	Standing Item on the RBIG agenda
<p><b>Business as Usual integral to the success of this strategy</b></p>				
<p><b>15. Elective Home Education</b> - continue to implement the EHE protocol and address any increase in EHE as a result of the pandemic and parents wishing to</p>	<p>Awaiting any updated guidance from DfE following the outcome of the JR.</p>		Neil Stevenson	

continue to educate their children at home.				
<b>16. Reduced Timetables</b>	<p>Process in place</p> <p>Ensuring RTT are reported in forums ensure wider workforce are aware and challenging</p> <p>Discrete item on agendas</p>		Neil Stevenson	
<b>17. NEET prevention Strategy</b>	<p>Establish a network of Year 11 progression leads in schools</p> <p>Improve the provision for young people who are NEET. This work will focus on courses with regular entry points and partnerships with other providers</p> <p>Ensure there is proactive support from all professionals who work with young people</p> <p>Review of the Youth NEET Prevention Programme</p> <p>Embed Windmills iCAN programme across schools and colleges in travel to learn area</p> <p>Carry out a deep dive of the NEET data to review the information we have about specific groups including SEND seek suitable a venue for a drop in and group work activities for young people who are NEET or risk of NEET.</p> <p>Develop the Flying Start Live Programme</p>	<p>Details in NEET prevention strategy and action plan</p>	Amanda Percy	

## Appendix 2: Evidence of the Impact of Relational Practice in Other Local Authorities

Some evidence of outcomes and impact Relational Practice at whole system and culture change level in a multi-agency setting and across large local authorities.

### *Leeds Children's Services*

"A unique investment and commitment to "Restorative Practices" is having a transformational impact on culture and professional practice across both social work and the Children's Partnership. This places children, young people and families at the heart of decisions that affect them" Ofsted Report - Leeds City Council, 2015

- Leeds looked after children figures down by 132
- Leeds child protection plans halved -1232 to 687
- Time spent in the social care system (from 34 weeks to 24 weeks) and average saving per family of £755

Leeds Children Service were rated by Ofsted as Good across the board with outstanding for leadership – Restorative practice was explicitly named in report 2015. Leeds was subsequently rated Outstanding by Ofsted in 2018

**LA wide data for Leeds** on suspensions and permanent exclusions indicates a positive and sustained impact in these areas.

	18/19	19/20	National Rank	3 year trend
Primary Suspensions	0.95	0.63	41	Improving
Secondary Suspensions	11.94	7.21	85	Improving
Primary Exclusions	0	0	1	Maintaining
Secondary Exclusions	0.02	0.02	9	Improving

### **Examples of school level impact in Leeds**

#### *Carr Manor Secondary*

Over a period of 3 years:

- Pupil attendance increased from 89.5% to 95%
- Attendance of pupils receiving FSM 84.5% to 94%
- Persistent Absence reduced from 12.5% to 6.8%
- Fixed Term Exclusion reduced from 165 a year to 14

#### *Collingwood Primary School*

Over a period of 18 months:



- Pupil attendance increased from 87.7% to 95%
- KS2 exclusion from class during lessons (average per week) - reduced from 60 to 1
- Racist Incidents (average per week) - reduced from 4 to 1

#### *Endeavour High School*

Over a period of 18 months

- Fixed term exclusion reduced from 272 to 151
- Incidents of verbal abuse reduced from 114 to 62
- Staff absence reduced from 1380 days to 517 days

#### **Other area wide impact**

#### *Stockport Children Services*

Whole system, whole family, partnership working underpinned by restorative practice across Stockport, contributing to £1.2m savings for looked after children

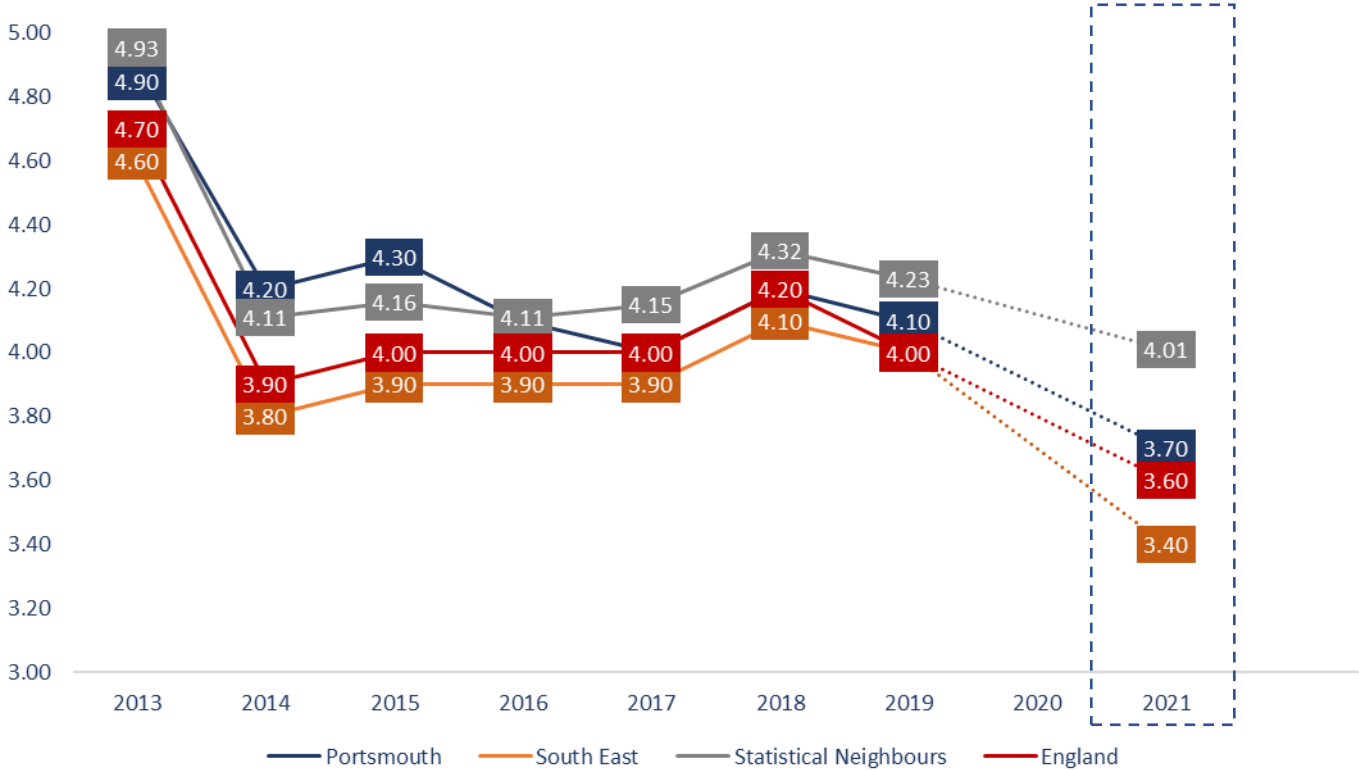
#### *N E Lincolnshire*

- The number of children on child protection plans down by 50%
- The number of child in need cases down by 18%

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Total primary absence

Dropdown Description	Indicator description	Last Updated	Next Updated	PCC Score	South East	SN Ave	England Ave	Ranking		Quartile	Distance from SE	Distance from SN	Distance from Nat	Change from last read
Total Primary Absence	Total absence from Primary Schools - authorised and unauthorised - (inc State funded Schools only from 2011)	2021	Mar-23	3.70	3.40	4.01	3.60	80		C	0.3	-0.31	0.1	Improved

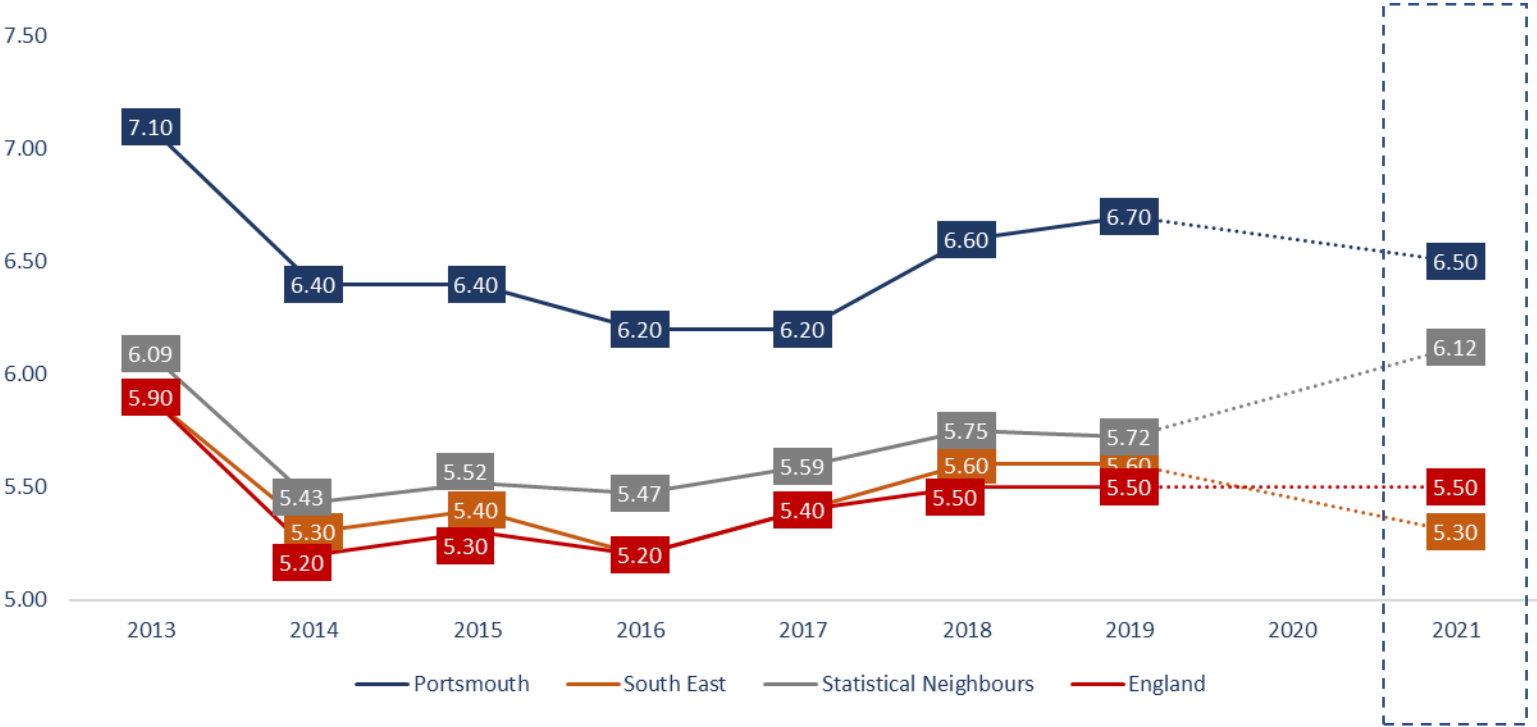


PCC is registering **lower primary absence rates than the SN average**. Despite improvements registered since the last read, primary absence rates for PCC remain higher than the national picture and that of the South east.

# Total secondary absence

Dropdown Description	Indicator description	Last Updated	Next Updated	PCC Score	South East	SN Ave	England Ave	Ranking
Total Secondary Absence	Total absence from Secondary Schools - authorised and unauthorised (inc. State Funded Schools only from 2010)	2021	Mar-23	6.50	5.30	6.12	5.50	132

Quartile	Distance from SE	Distance from SN	Distance from Nat	Change from last read
D	1.2	0.38	1	Improved



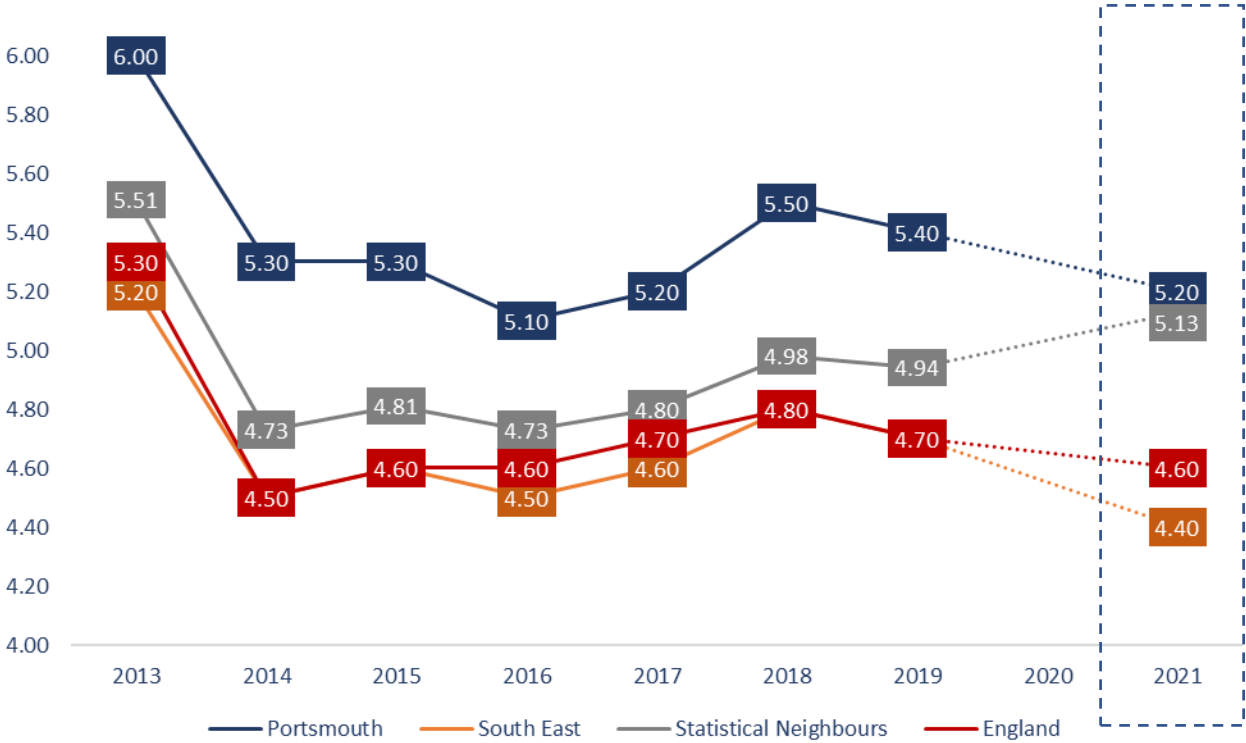
Although the absence rate has dropped since last read, PCC still have higher rates than national, South East and SN averages – placing PCC in the bottom quartile of all LAs.

Total absence

Dropdown Description	Indicator description	Last Updated	Next Updated	PCC Score	South East	SN Ave	England Ave	Ranking
Total School Absence	Total School Absence - authorised and unauthorised	2021	Mar-23	5.20	4.40	5.13	4.60	127

Quartile	Distance from SE	Distance from SN	Distance from Nat	Change from last read
D	0.8	0.07	0.6	Improved

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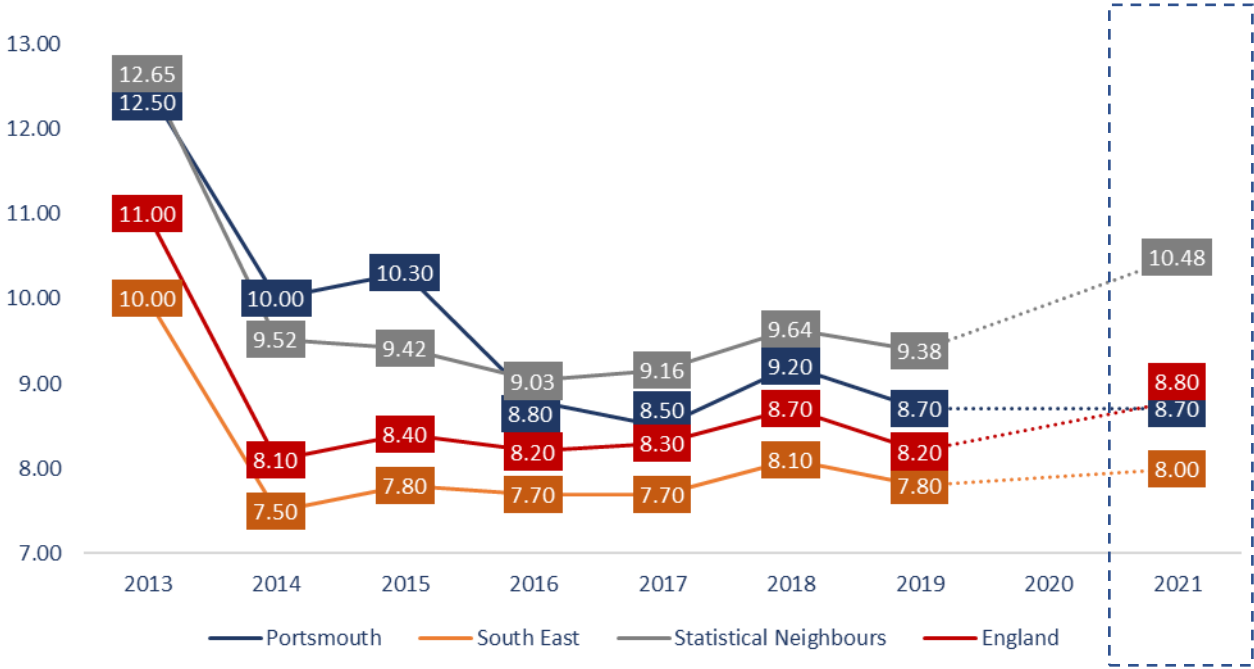
Total absence rates have improved since last read but remain higher than national, South east and SN averages. PCC are in the bottom quartile out of all LAs.

# Primary Persistent absence

Dropdown Description	Indicator description	Last Updated	Next Updated	PCC Score	South East	SN Ave	England Ave	Ranking
Primary Persistent Absence (new definition)	State Funded Primary persistent absence rates (New definition)	2021	Mar-23	8.70	8.00	10.48	8.80	79

Quartile	Distance from SE	Distance from SN	Distance from Nat	Change from last read
C	0.7	-1.78	-0.1	No significant change

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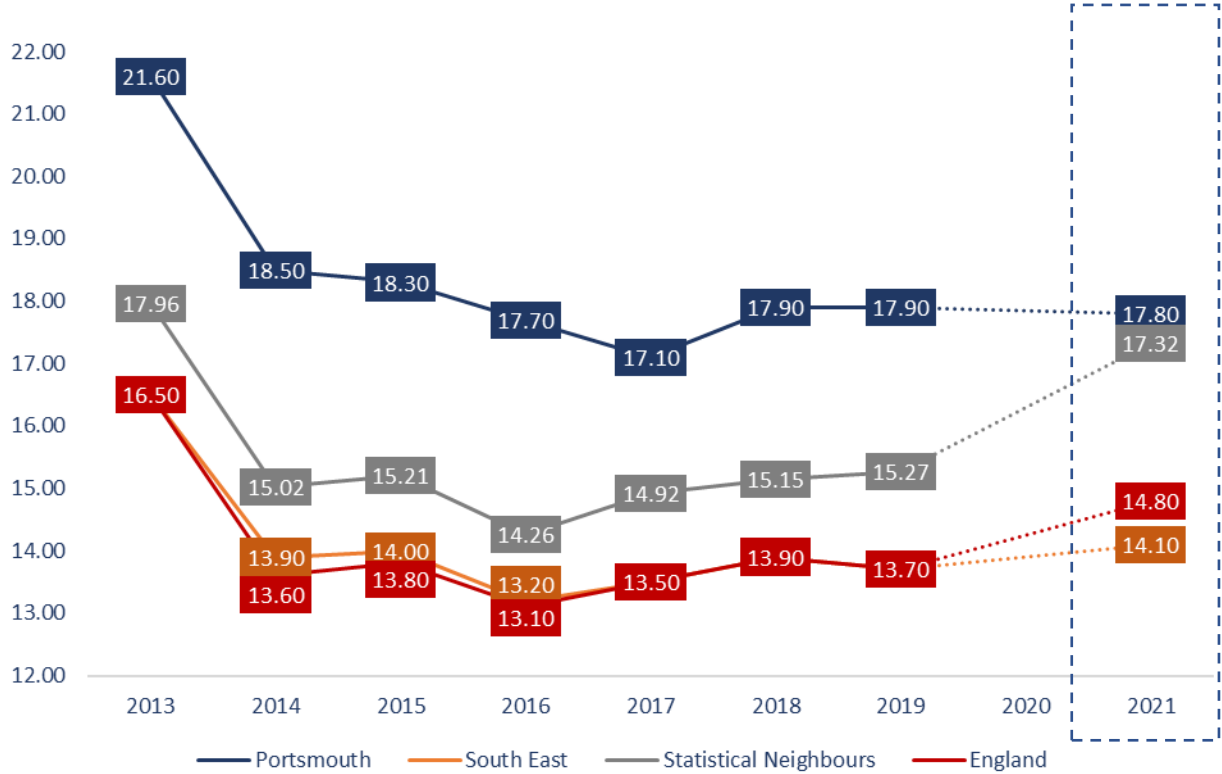
Primary persistent absence rates remain unchanged for PCC since the last read, despite other comparators recording an increase. Below the national figure and SN average, they remain higher than that of the South East. **Currently PCC are ranked 79<sup>th</sup> out of all LAs.**

Secondary Persistent absence

Indicator description	Last Updated	Next Updated	PCC Score	South East	SN Ave	England Ave	Ranking
State Funded Secondary persistent absence rates (New definition)	2021	Mar-23	17.80	14.10	17.32	14.80	124

Quartile	Distance from SE	Distance from SN	Distance from Nat	Change from last read
D	3.7	0.48	3	Improved

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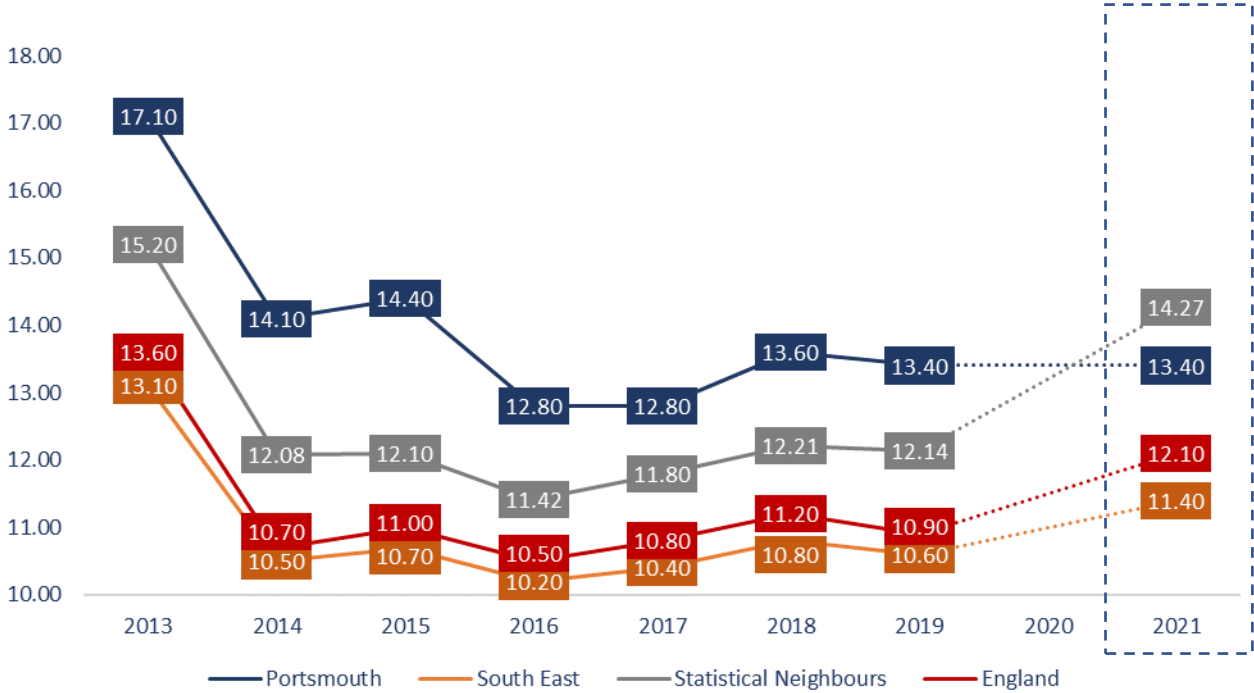
PCC has recorded a slight decrease in the secondary persistent absence rate but still remains higher than comparators as is **currently in lowest quartile and ranked 124<sup>th</sup> out of all LAs.**

Total Persistent absence

Dropdown Description	Indicator description	Last Updated	Next Updated	PCC Score	South East	SN Ave	England Ave	Ranking
Total Persistent Absence (new definition)	State Funded Total persistent absence rates (New definition)	2021	Mar-23	13.40	11.40	14.27	12.10	144

Quartile	Distance from SE	Distance from SN	Distance from Nat	Change from last read
D	2	-0.87	1.3	No significant change

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Over all persistent absence rates have remained unchanged for PCC. PCC remain in the bottom quartile and are ranked 144<sup>th</sup> out of all LAs.

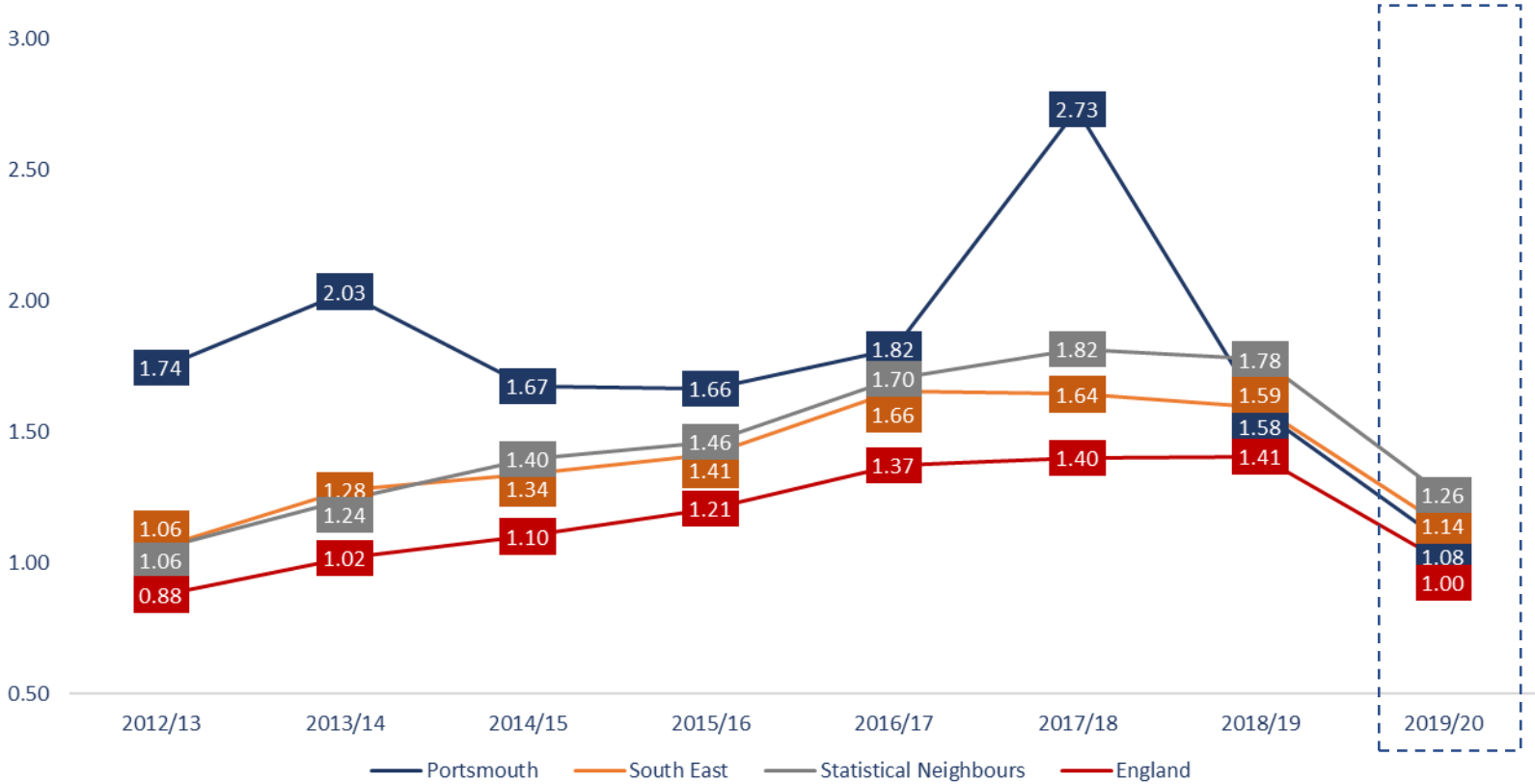


# Primary Suspensions

Dropdown Description	Indicator description	Last Updated	Next Updated	PCC Score	South East	SN Ave	England Ave	Ranking
Primary Suspensions	Number of Primary school suspensions expressed as a percentage of the school population.	2020	Jul-22	1.08	1.14	1.26	1.00	99

Quartile	Distance from SE	Distance from SN	Distance from Nat	Change from last read
C	-0.06	-0.18	0.08	Improved

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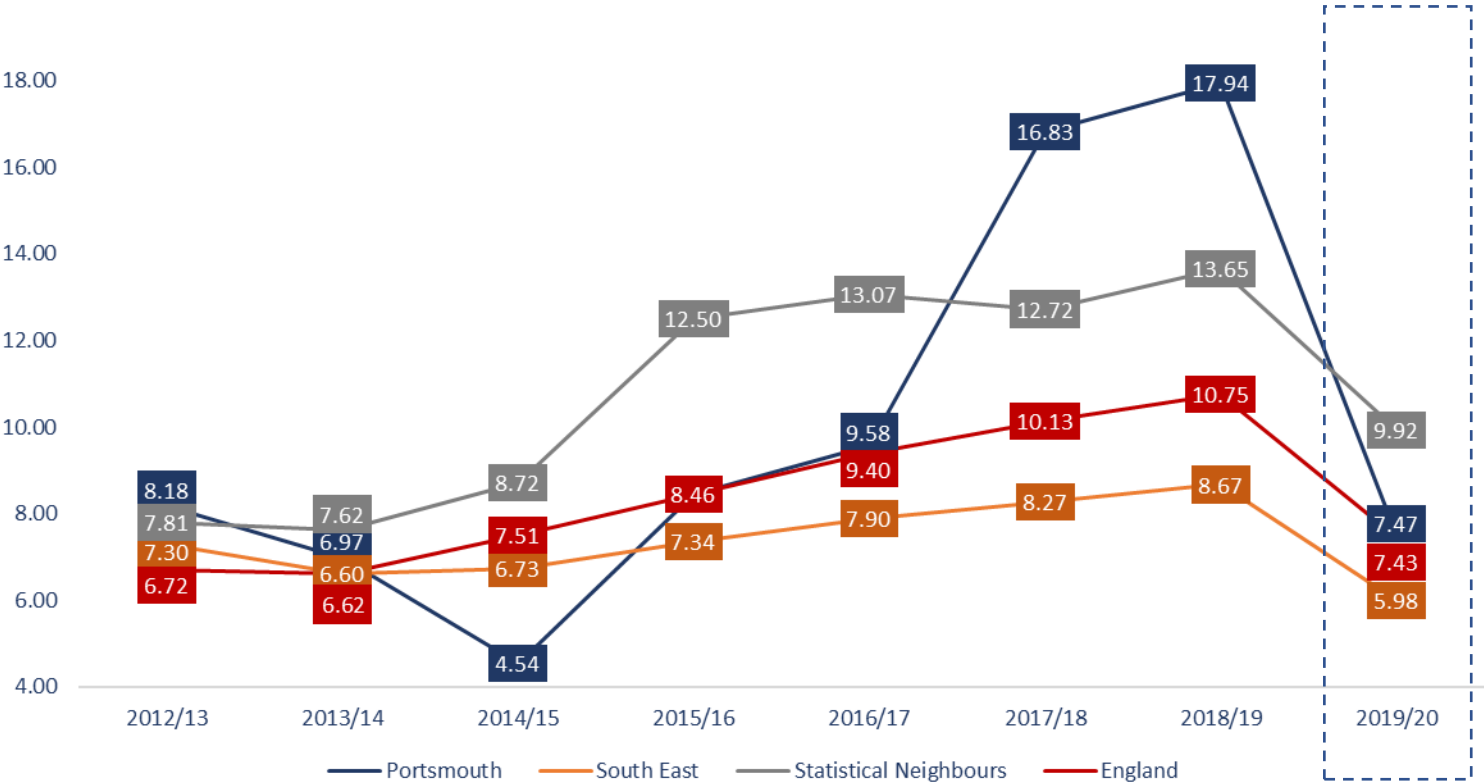
The proportion of primary suspensions has recorded **a decrease in PCC and is lower than the SN average**. It is still higher than national and places PCC in the second lowest quartile of all LAs.

# Secondary Suspensions

Dropdown Description	Indicator description	Last Updated	Next Updated	PCC Score	South East	SN Ave	England Ave	Ranking
Secondary Suspensions	Number of Secondary school suspensions expressed as a percentage of the school population.	2020	Jul-22	7.47	5.98	9.92	7.43	97

Quartile	Distance from SE	Distance from SN	Distance from Nat	Change from last read
C	1.49	-2.45	0.04	Improved

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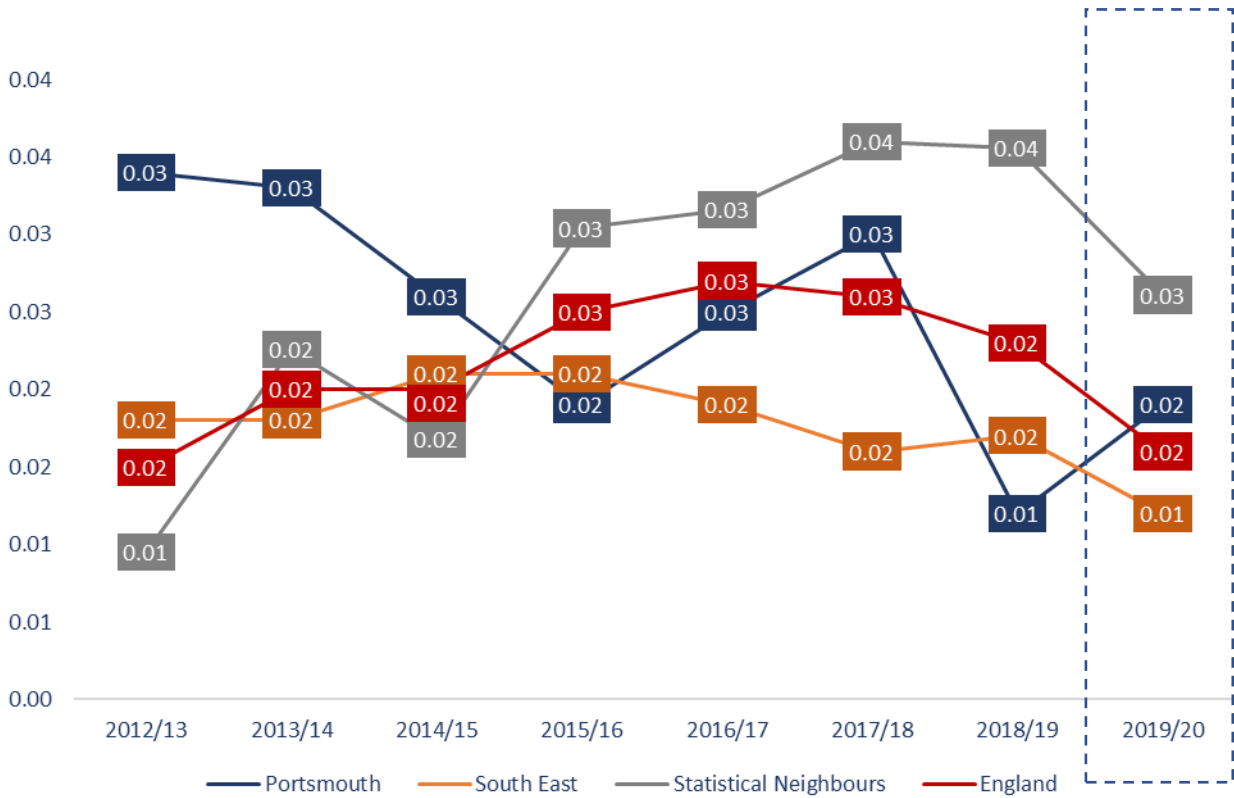


A marked improvement has been recorded for PCC in terms of secondary suspensions. Although higher than national and South East figures the figure is now below that of the SN average.

# Primary Exclusions

Dropdown Description	Indicator description	Last Updated	Next Updated	PCC Score	South East	SN Ave	England Ave	Ranking
Primary Permanent Exclusions	Primary Permanent Exclusions from school as a percentage of the school population	2020	Jul-22	0.02	0.01	0.03	0.02	104

Quartile	Distance from SE	Distance from SN	Distance from Nat	Change from last read
C	0.01	-0.01	0	Worse

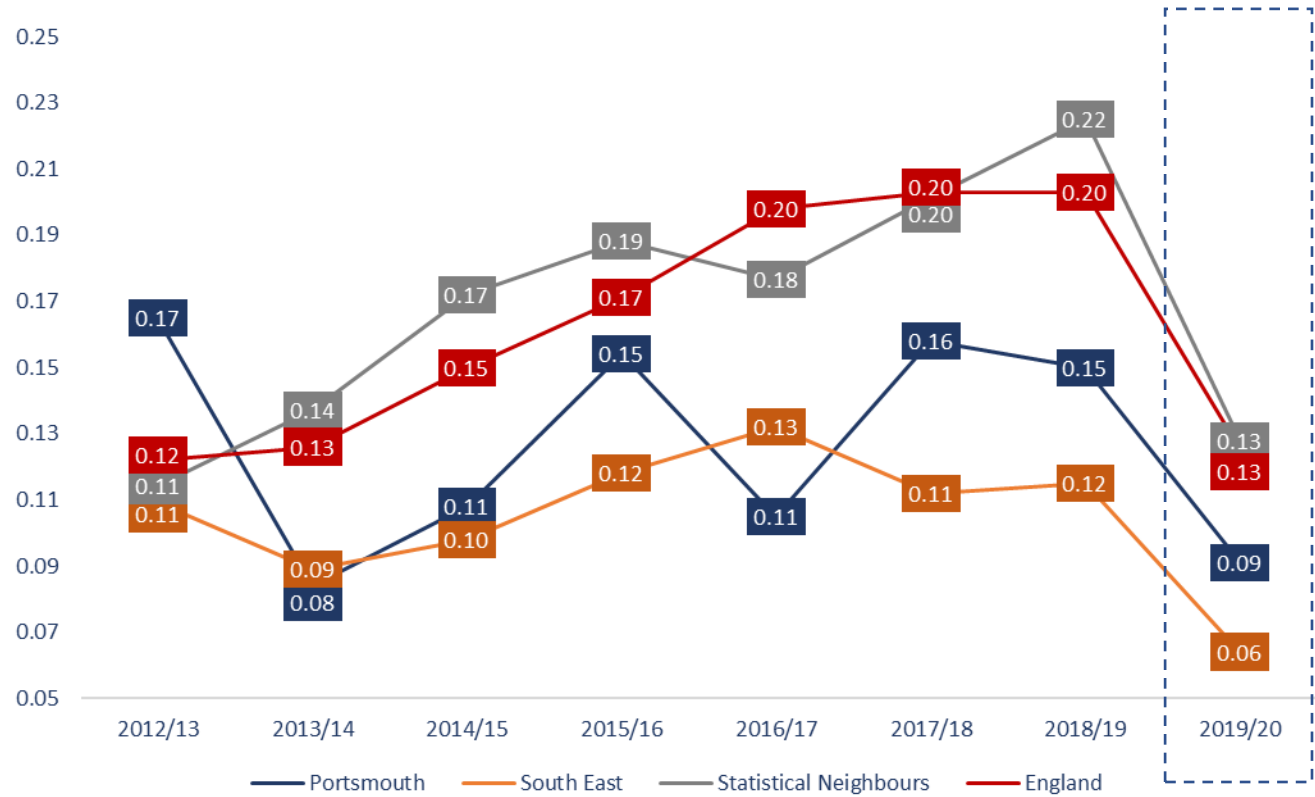


PCC has registered a slight increase in the percentage of primary exclusions. The figure is now in line with national figures but **remains lower than the SN average.**

# Secondary Exclusions

Dropdown Description	Indicator description	Last Updated	Next Updated	PCC Score	South East	SN Ave	England Ave	Ranking	Quartile	Distance from SE	Distance from SN	Distance from Nat	Change from last read
Secondary Permanent Exclusions	Secondary Permanent Exclusions from school as a % of the school population	2020	Jul-22	0.09	0.06	0.13	0.13	49	B	0.03	-0.04	-0.04	Improved

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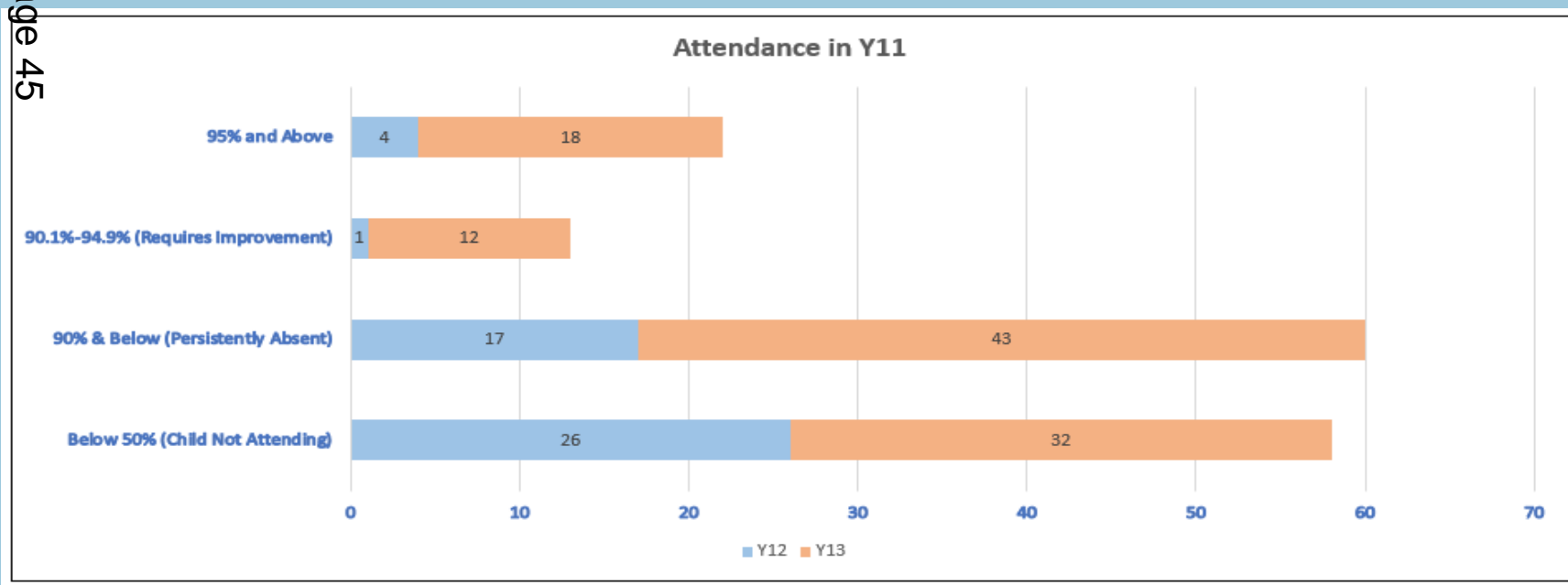
As have all comparators, PCC has recorded a decrease in the proportion of secondary exclusions. The figure is now below that of the SN average but **remains higher than the South East.**

# NEET ANALYSIS – ATTENDANCE IN Y11

Attendance in Y11												
	Below 50% (Child Not Attending)		90% & Below (Persistently Absent)		90.1%-94.9% (Requires Improvement)		95% and Above		Not Known *		Grand Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Y12	26	45.6%	17	29.8%	1	1.8%	4	7.0%	9	15.8%	57	100%
Y13	32	25.4%	43	34.1%	12	9.5%	18	14.3%	21	16.7%	126	100%
Grand Total	58	31.7%	60	32.8%	13	7.1%	22	12.0%	30	16.4%	183	100%

\* Not Known - Young person attended an Out of Area school or they were Home Educated

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# From Restorative Justice to Restorative Culture

Belinda Hopkins\*

**Abstract.** *In its original conception Restorative Justice was an innovative process adopted to address criminal behaviour in such a way as to reduce re-offending and, subsequently, to increase victim satisfaction. In the past 20 years the philosophy, values, principles, skills and applications of restorative justice have been applied in all manner of hitherto unforeseen ways. This paper reflects on the benefits to staff teams themselves of adopting a restorative culture in their own workplaces and the role of their senior managers and leaders in modelling this new way of thinking and behaving. Reference is made to developments in schools, the author's main area of experience and expertise, and a major source of international inspiration for the growth of other restorative milieus. The lessons learnt in implementing culture change in school settings is being applied more widely as an increasing number of public sector employees in particular learn about what restorative practice can do not only for their daily interactions with clients and service users but also in-house, for themselves as a team.*

**Keywords :** restorative justice, restorative practice, culture transformation

## Introduction

Much has been written about the impact of Restorative Justice<sup>1</sup> interventions on those involved in situations where there has been a criminal offence, wrongdoing, harm or anti-social behaviour. The literature about Restorative Justice has, for the last 20 years, been of a pioneering nature – making the case for what was initially an innovative approach to offending behaviour ; debating what is and isn't 'restorative', discussing its limitations and its versatility. This paper differs in that the main focus of attention is not on criminal justice services, nor simply on responsive 'victim-offender' interventions. Instead it considers the contribution that restorative approaches can make in public sector services, in institutions, organizations and indeed in most public or private work places. More specifically it pays attention to the impact on staff in these environments and also on the leadership teams when a restorative culture is adopted, not just for client/service user interaction but internally and systemically – as 'the way we do things around here'.

The paper begins with some historical context to link where I believe the field is now to where it has come from. This paper identifies how Restorative Justice and its philosophy, practice and application, have developed in the last 20 years from its roots in the criminal

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justice system to its adaptation and application in a wide range of settings. It identifies the values, principles and practice of Restorative Justice that has been so inspiring for so many people and have led to these wider applications. It reflects on the challenges in how we now talk about 'Restorative Justice' when these wider applications often involve *pro-active* relationship and community building, and so are not 'restorative' in the truer sense of the word, and nor are they necessarily being applied in traditionally 'justice' settings.

The paper also describes the development in thinking amongst pioneer trainers and training providers identifying the need not only for high quality practice from restorative facilitators but the vital role played by the milieu or environment in which the practice is happening. These developments have been in large measure inspired by those of us working in schools and care settings. We have sought to identify how to support these environments in ensuring that the interventions we have trained them in, also have a longer term, lasting impact on those involved. In effect we have had to become not only trainers of skills, but also change agents, supporting communities in culture transformation, and having to learn much from other sectors in order to do this effectively. Our experiences have shown us that the day-to-day thinking and practice within an institution is key to this. Furthermore, most research and evaluation of pioneering initiatives have indicated the important role of the senior leaders, and this will be further explored.

There is a risk of diluting what Restorative Justice actually means and why it offers something very unique. In the UK therefore it has been helpful to have clear guidelines and quality standards to which everyone can adhere even when moving beyond Restorative Justice's original roots. A later section of the paper therefore affirms and recognises the importance of external validation at local government and government level to support the development and growth of restorative practice, and the value of nationally agreed and respected norms. For this section I also draw on my experience of working closely with the Restorative Justice Council (RJC)<sup>2</sup> for many years.<sup>3</sup>

The paper concludes with a reflection, in England and Wales at least, on the growth of interest in becoming a restorative institution (school, care home, prison etc.), a restorative town or city and even a restorative county or local authority. The work to support and sustain the enthusiasm for these culture transformations is in its infancy. What will be the key elements of success?

## From process to practice

As a concept and as a process Restorative Justice was first developed and applied in the criminal justice field in the late 1990's and early 2000's, building on work that had already been done in the field of victim-offender mediation (Hopkins, 2004; Liebmann, 2007). Initial inspiration for practice in the UK came from New Zealand via Australia, but elsewhere practice has its origins in a variety of community practices (Boyes-Watson, Pranis, 2010; Pranis et al., 2003). In essence a restorative approach to offending behaviour is one in which the repair of relationships and of the harm caused takes precedence over assigning blame and applying a sanction. This mind-set shift *from* what is often a deep-seated attachment to punishment as a response to wrongdoing (Roberts, Hough, 2002), to a desire for healing and closure, following genuine connection and communication between all those involved, is at once simple and yet profound.

Initial definitions of Restorative Justice focused specifically on the process involving those affected by a crime or wrongdoing. One by Marshall was also adopted by the United Nations Crime Congress and is still widely used



... a process whereby all the parties with a stake in a particular offence come together to resolve collectively how to deal with the aftermath of the offence and its implications for the future. (Marshall, 1998, 32)

This definition did not specify nor explain the process referred to, and around the world restorative processes differ. However, this initial attempt at a definition did link Restorative Justice to the notion of a victim-offender encounter. The choice or choices of practice often depended on the source of the inspiration for the approach in that part of the world. In New Zealand the main process used in the criminal justice field, integral to the youth justice process, is the family group conference (FGC), inspired by community practice amongst Maori peoples. In Australia a process called a restorative conference has been developed, taking inspiration from the New Zealand FGC model but distinct from it. This model relies on the facilitator following a scripted process (Moore, O'Connell, 1994). In the USA and Canada several models are used, including face-to-face victim-offender mediation and sentencing circles. The former has developed since the innovative work by two youth justice workers in Hamilton, Ontario in the 1970's and the latter was initially developed by Judge Barry Stewart inspired by First Nation community circle practices. Kay Pranis has continued to develop the Circle practice model in communities and in schools (Boyes-Watson, Pranis, 2014 ; Pranis et al., 2003). The Australian scripted model, used by Real Justice (O'Connell et al., 1999) has also influenced the work done by the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP). This organisation has global reach and so their model is being disseminated widely. In Europe there is much diversity, as different countries turn to existing models for inspiration and also to new emerging models. As well as most of the models mentioned above, the work of Dominic Barter using a blend of restorative circling with Nonviolent Communication (Rosenberg, 1999) is proving increasingly popular for example. This model has developed from Barter's work with people from the favelas in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Initially the main driver for the adoption of Restorative Justice as a process, whichever process was chosen, had been the desire to re-think our response to crime and wrong-doing (Zehr, 1990). However, right from the outset there have been those who identified the value of the process not simply as a one-off response to an isolated incident, but as a mindset shift in thinking about incidents when someone is perceived as having caused harm to others. Pioneering Police Forces in the UK in the mid-90's, for example, not only began training their operational teams to use restorative conferencing with the general public, but also encouraged the use of restorative responses for addressing internal complaints and grievances. Thus already there was an acceptance that there was more to Restorative Justice than simply one process, and more potential beneficiaries than victims, offenders and their communities of support.

It became increasingly obvious to those working in schools and care homes that there was a need for consistency across the institution in the way staff addressed behavioural issues, whether minor or major (Hopkins, 2004 ; Hopkins, 2009). Using a restorative conference for a serious incident whilst still responding punitively to playground conflict or disruption caused confusion among staff and students. For young people to embrace the approach they needed to trust that staff would respond restoratively if they, the students, were honest about what they had done. The logic of the restorative response necessitated a wholesale review of the way staff thought about their role as carers and educators, the way they thought about 'wrongdoing' and the way they communicated with young people on a daily basis. For some schools this has also involved reviewing their approach to pedagogy. There began a movement away from a simple process, and more to a way of thinking differently and doing things differently, an overarching (or underpinning) consistent approach.

These developments in thinking did not simply occur in one country. During the early and mid 2000's, across the globe, in the UK (Hendry, 2009 ; Hopkins, 2004 ; Warren, 2004 ;

Warren, Williams, 2007), New Zealand (The Restorative Practices Development Team, 2004), Australia (Blood, 2005 ; Blood, Thorsborne, 2005 ; Thorsborne, Vinegrad, 2002 ; Thorsborne, Vinegrad, 2004), the USA (Riestenberg, 2000 ; Riestenberg, 2001 ; Stutzman Amstutz, Mullet, 2005) and Canada (Morrison, 2005a, 2005b) many people were thinking along similar lines. Personal experiences were backed up by research (Kane et al., 2007 ; Skinnis et al., 2009) which indicated that for restorative interventions to be effective in the long-term everyone in a school needed to subscribe to the principles and values underpinning the intervention and be using these principles day-to-day in their interactions. McCold (2002) refers to this as a restorative milieu and the term ‘whole-school restorative approach’ was often used by trainers and researchers, without their necessarily being a consensus on what this might mean. Working towards a ‘whole-school approach’ could mean all manner of things – an issue this paper will return to.

It was the pioneering work done in schools and children’s care homes (this latter in England and Wales primarily) that has driven the innovative culture transformation work that is now just beginning across other public sector services and indeed in the private sector as well. Thus over the last ten years or so the Restorative Justice field has developed far beyond its original roots and continues to develop. It is no longer simply advocated as a response to crime and anti-social behaviour. The Restorative Justice Council in the UK now has a different definition on its website under the title – What is Restorative Justice?

Restorative justice enables victims to meet or communicate with their offender to explain the real impact of the crime. This is part of a wider field called restorative practice.

Restorative practice can be used anywhere to prevent conflict, build relationships and repair harm by enabling people to communicate effectively and positively. Restorative practice is increasingly being used in schools, children’s services, workplaces, hospitals, communities and the criminal justice system.

Restorative practice can involve both a proactive approach to preventing harm and conflict and activities that repair harm where conflicts have already arisen. (RJC, 2015)

## **The challenges of moving from definitions involving a process to those explaining practice**

Research has now established the efficacy of Restorative Justice (sic) and this helps to explain the increasing support for it as a practice in many countries (Campbell et al., 2006 ; Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary et al., 2011 ; RJC, 2006 ; Shapland et al., 2008). However even in the criminal justice field there is still a long way to go before it becomes the norm across the world, despite its endorsement by the United Nations (UN, 2006). For this reason there are some people who are concerned about the widening of the term ‘restorative’ beyond the Justice domain and fear that this will lead to a dilution of its uniqueness and make it impossible to define it in a way that can bring about reform. Walgrave warns :

Paradoxically, one could even say that the most important threat to restorative justice is the enthusiasm with which it is being implemented. Enthusiasm leads to poorly thought-out implementation, an overestimation of possibilities, negligence of legal rights, and the blurring of the concepts and confusion with the aims and limits of restorative justice. (Walgrave, 2003, ix)

However the field is moving ahead despite such views, and bodies like the European Forum for Restorative Justice, initially founded to bring about criminal justice reform in Europe, may find that despite its initial founding vision it too can embrace the natural evolution of what many are calling a new social movement or even a new social science (Wachtel, 2013). Nevertheless the warning is apposite – the onus is on those ‘widening the net’ to be clear what they mean by ‘restorative practice’.

Widening the net of Restorative Justice to include day to day interactions both at home and at work is not a completely novel idea. Strang and Braithwaite (2001) asserted that it is only by widening the vision to encompass families, schools and the community that the true potential of restorative justice will be realised in the criminal justice field:

If the social movement for restorative justice is about more than just changing the practices of states, if it can have an impact on an entire culture, if it actually succeeds in changing families and schools towards more restorative practices, the effects on crime should be much more considerable. (Strang, Braithwaite, 2001, 6)

Sullivan and Tifft (2001) also had a vision of a just and non-violent society in which people use the principles and practices not only in their working lives but also at home and with friends. Furthermore they saw in restorative justice direct links to a vision of social justice; in their view, unequal and divisive systems and structures which currently cause pain and suffering are just as harmful as offending and anti-social behaviour and as such have no place in a truly restorative society. Wachtel and McCold (2001) offered a model based on four basic approaches to relationships, initially called the Social Discipline Window, that could be applied in a variety of settings.

These ideas have not had as much traction as they might have had until recently – perhaps because of the tendency to focus on the responsive potential of restorative practice and the demand for training by people seeking more effective strategies to address conflicts and challenges. The message that essential changes might be needed across a whole institution, and in every individual within that institution, have been more difficult to put across – not least because of the time commitment for such a culture change and the associated investment of funding.

However, the debate about what constitutes restorative *practice* and what it means to be a restorative organisation or institution is now gaining traction, certainly in the UK. Linked to these wider issues is the question of what it means to *act restoratively* or to *be restorative*. All of these challenges face those working as trainers and, by extension, as consultants in culture change management, with individual institutions such as schools and, more excitingly, across the public services in whole towns, counties or local government jurisdictions. This has become the new frontier for pioneers in the field. These are exciting times.

## Values, principles and core beliefs

Bearing in mind Walgrave's concern (2003) that restorative practitioners working beyond the justice system run the risk of diluting the meaning of 'restorative' and 'restorative practice', it is important that there is a shared understanding of what the terms mean. The term 'Restorative Justice', to define a process, is now more often being replaced by terms like 'Restorative Practice' or 'Approach', to define not only a whole range of interactions, proactive as well as responsive, but even a whole culture within a workplace or across a community. Howard Zehr, one of the founding fathers of Restorative Justice, reminds us of the vital need to always remain in touch with these core values as we move forward (Zehr, 2004). Following on from the values are the core principles informing practice and these too are fundamental. These values and principles of restorative justice define the philosophy and ethos which, in turn, inform the skills needed to behave in a 'restorative' way (Hopkins, 2004). Clarity in all of these areas will help guard against dilution and also will enable practitioners to explain what is unique and special about restorative practice and what it can bring to an organization, institution or workplace setting.

The underlying values and principles<sup>4</sup> of restorative justice cited in the literature include, variously : openness, self-determination, collaboration, flexibility, equality, non-discrimination, non-violence, fairness, respect, empowerment, trust, honesty, voluntarism, healing, personal accountability, inclusiveness, empathy and accountability (Barton, 2003 ; Quill, Wynne, 1993 ; RJC, 2004 ; Wallis, 2014). These principles tend towards a ‘restorative mindset’ (Hopkins, 2011, 34) when facilitating the process :

- a recognition that every individual will have their own unique perspective or interpretation on any given situation or event and need the chance to be heard ;
- an appreciation of the importance of enabling people to express their thoughts, feelings and needs and listen to the thoughts, feelings and needs of others ;
- the focus on the impact or affect of what has happened (or may be going to happen, in situations where a restorative approach is used in advance of making a decision) ;
- the belief that it is those most affected by an issue who are the ones best placed to find a way forward, and that people respond best when involved in decision-making about issues that affect them ;
- the trust that by listening to each other, and taking the time to reflect on what they have understood is important to everyone there ; in this way people are able to make decisions that reflect their respect and empathy for each other.

The values, principles and skills already mentioned are not unique to restorative practice. What is unique perhaps is the *combination* of these values, principles, skills and practices – and it is this combination that has proved to be such an inspiration to practitioners in a wide variety of fields.

## **Implementing a restorative milieu into an institution, organisation or workplace**

People want to know what it will look like, sound like and feel like to work in a restorative environment or culture. What will they do or say ? How will that influence the way they think, their beliefs and attitudes ? Indeed – what, if anything, do they need to change ? Over the last 15 years I have been seeking in my own practice ways to clarify these issues. I have studied the core values and principles and reflected on the practices that have developed from these. With input from others<sup>5</sup> I identified 5 essential beliefs that seem common to all models of practice. These 5 core beliefs have provided a framework or ‘mindset’, of language and of practice that many people are finding exceptionally useful. I have begin to call it the 5:5:5 model – five core beliefs, five areas of language, five steps or stages in a range of restorative processes that can be used for all manner of interactions and interventions (Hopkins, 2009 ; Hopkins, 2011 ; Hopkins, 2012).

What people need is a clear, consistent, replicable, and teachable framework for their practice, enabling people to feel secure that they understand ‘the way we do things around here’ in their daily work. These core beliefs can be integrated into a wide range of restorative interventions and practices, as each in turn informs a step in any process that could be described as restorative.

It is not the only model or framework, but it is significant that there have been positive responses to the model from many very different quarters. One very experienced businesswoman, with many years in the construction industry, thanked me for articulating for the first time what had helped to make her so successful with people all her working life. Another, from a senior police officer was that this model encapsulated what modern-day policing should be all about.

The first Core Belief<sup>6</sup> is that everyone has their own unique perspective on a situation or event and needs an opportunity to express this in order to feel respected, valued and listened to. In school classrooms for example, there would be...

...opportunities for individual expression of views, ideas and experiences and also opportunities for listening to the views, ideas and experiences of others are features of a restorative classroom. Young people learn that it is not only acceptable that people have differing views, but predictable and interesting that they will. They develop the quality of curiosity and wonder, fascinated to discover that even when people have shared an apparently identical experience they will all have made something different of it. Differences of opinion become opportunities for learning how to negotiate, make compromise, work towards consensus or even agree to differ. (Hopkins, 2011, 34)

In staffrooms and other workplaces staff will be developing the skill of non-judgemental active listening and creating mechanisms whereby everyone feels listened to – regular staff circles amongst senior leadership teams, departmental heads, and also circles both within and across staff hierarchies (and the hierarchies themselves may become flatter as there is a greater sense of consultation, collaboration and involvement in decision-making when it involves the entire work force team), buddying systems, staff counselling, peer-to-peer mentoring schemes. Gradually, an organization/institution or workplace can develop a culture of listening and acceptance, in which every employee matters and everyone's ideas are valued. Employees' need for recognition, acceptance and appreciation are met.

The second Core Belief is that what people think at any given moment influences how they feel at that moment, and these feelings inform how they behave. The thoughts and feelings are 'beneath the surface' and yet very important to understand. To engage authentically with other people we need to 'lower the waterline' and share our own thoughts and feelings and also be curious about theirs, whilst also respecting their right to privacy if they choose. Regular meetings in circles, as small teams or departments as well as in larger groups when appropriate, can create the trust and safety for people to 'lower their waterline' and share more authentically. Work teams can aspire to become more emotionally literate, recognising that although their thoughts and feelings are invisible to others they nevertheless help to explain what they do and say. Colleagues can aspire to make what is invisible visible by talking about, and listening out for, thoughts and feelings and recognizing them as important.

The third Core Belief holds that empathy and consideration for others is crucial to the health and wellbeing of us all. Everything we do is likely to have an impact on those around us. If we have respect for those around us we need to take this impact into account before we act. Critical questions to bear in mind include :

- How do my actions impact on others ?
- How will others be affected if I do such and such ?
- How were others affected when I did such and such ?

At one level we are not necessarily directly responsible for others' emotional reactions and responses to our behaviour. Individuals interpret what they see and hear differently, and this interpretation or story inevitably impacts on the feelings that arise, as the previous belief makes clear. Nevertheless there is a degree to which our actions and words do inevitably impact on others' wellbeing and as social beings our own health and wellbeing depends in large measure on the health and wellbeing of those around us. We enjoy doing what we can to promote the happiness of others and from a pure efficiency angle, people work much better if their emotional needs are being met, as the next core belief will endorse. If our actions – words or deeds – have caused harm or upset then, if we are to maintain our relationship with those around us, we need to be willing to listen to how what we have done has affected others and, if appropriate, seek to put things right. Offices, teams, workplaces can strive to be caring and considerate towards each other, knowing that what is said or done has an effect on everyone else. There can be a collective will to become more mindful of one another.

The fourth Core Belief is that our unmet needs drive our behaviour. If our physical and emotional needs are met we are able to function at our best – and if they are not we are



under-resourced and less able to cope – especially in challenging situations. Potentially harmful behaviours such as violent language or actions are likely to be expressions of unmet needs. I am deeply grateful to the inspiration from Marshall Rosenberg (1999) founder of the Nonviolent Communication Movement for this aspect of our framework.

Any piece of work I begin with a staff team, in any workplace, I start by inviting people to identify the needs they have to be able to give of their best at work, using a collection of laminated cards to help initially. The vocabulary of needs can be challenging at first as people often associate the word need with the verb ‘need to’ (as in – I should, I ought, I must) or as a command – others need to ... ; she/he needs to ... Gradually however it is possible to develop an awareness of, and a vocabulary for our universal human needs – things like respect, appreciation, recognition, belonging, understanding and so on. Whether someone has caused harm or has been on the receiving end of harm they are likely to have similar needs. Until these needs are met the harm may not be repaired and relationships can remain damaged. Furthermore, without the unmet needs being addressed and more constructive ways found to meet them in the future, behaviour change is unlikely.

The fifth and final Core Belief on which we have based our restorative practice model is that the opportunity to engage in empathic collaborative problem-solving affirms and empowers people. People respond best when they are involved in making decisions that affect them, and make constructive decisions when they are in touch with their own and others’ thoughts, feelings and needs. In the workplace, people respond much better, and feel more motivated and enthused in their work if they feel involved and committed to a shared vision, collectively arrived at. The working atmosphere in a team can dramatically change when people believe that it is up to everyone to make their team, their service, their company, their school etc. the best it can be. There can be a very positive transformation when staff agrees to plan together, make decisions together, solve problems together, and help each other out if things go wrong. Within this collective agreement there is a high degree of shared responsibility, commitment, accountability and expectation. A restorative working environment is not only a nice place to work, it is a place where the job gets done to the best of everyone’s ability and everyone is striving for high quality performance for the benefit of those whom the staff serves.

The 5 Core Beliefs help explain how a Restorative Culture could be achieved and we also use them as the basis for our five-step model of restorative interaction. These five steps would be familiar to most restorative practitioners in whatever domain they practice :

1. Following initial introductions and explanations people share their experiences of what has happened.
2. Everyone shares what was going through their mind and how these thoughts impacted on their emotional responses.
3. Everyone then reflects on the impact of what has happened, who has been affected and how.
4. People reflect on what needs had been unmet or ignored at the time of the incident and what they need to move on.
5. Using these needs as the basis for discussion everyone collaborates to find mutually acceptable ways forward.<sup>7</sup>

This structure can be helpful in face-to-face discussions, interpersonal conflict resolution, and mediation between two people and also in group-problem-solving and formal encounters between those harmed and those responsible for the harm. The 5-step structure can also be used pro-actively for planning. However, we emphasize that each one of the core beliefs and areas of language have significance and worth in themselves, as a way to lead one’s life and interact with others.

## **From external use for service users/community, to internal staff procedures/practices**

A clear framework based on the five core beliefs described above has helped staff teams to understand how their own internal staff culture can be enhanced as well as their day-to-day interactions with those whom they serve. These core beliefs, as well as certain practices such as regular meetings in circles for team building and problem-solving, enable staff in any working environment to understand how they can benefit as a team from the restorative philosophy. This can come as a surprise to staff who may have attended an initial training course thinking they were going to learn some new tools to use in their job. Teaching staff may attend wanting to improve their behaviour management skills. Care staff may attend to enhance their skill in dealing with very challenging behaviour and find alternative responses to calling in the police which can have long-term detrimental impact on a looked-after young person. Youth justice staff may be seeking the skills to simply be able to facilitate a restorative conference between a young offender and those whom they have adversely affected by an anti-social or criminal act.

Of course this skill development is also important. However, trainers increasingly encourage participants to make use of their skills and the processes they learn for both internal staff support, as well as externally. Nonviolent Communication is often integrated by many restorative trainers and practitioners into their restorative work as they discover the overlaps with this approach. The ability to engage in a mutually respectful dialogue, in which both sides are mindful of the others' and their own thoughts, feelings and needs, can enhance working relationships. A staff culture of positivity and empowerment can impact on effectiveness and productivity. A willingness to listen to all sides when things go wrong, rather than assign blame, can transform team dynamics. Staff skilled in mediation can be invaluable when teams or individuals within the team experience a conflict.

Regular use of the Circle Process can help staff through challenging times or when decisions need to be made. In a Circle Process all voices are heard in turn around the Circle, with ground rules agreed to ensure people have their say without interruption or challenge, and this can develop better links between staff members, ensure everyone feels valued and included. This kind of Circle can be used on a regular basis simply to build a sense of belonging, with staff teams using simple 'check-ins' and 'check-outs' each day so that people know how best to support one another. Within such a culture, high expectations can also be nourished as everyone feels more ready to take responsibility and be accountable for their actions, knowing that when mistakes are made they will be addressed in a restorative manner and viewed as valuable learning experiences.

The importance of regular Circle meetings is agreed upon almost universally by advocates of whole-institution restorative approaches – for example, all the pioneers in school work already cited would agree on this. It is the basis on which all other restorative practice can flourish, and in fact may well make the more responsive processes less necessary. If these staff teams or classes or service user circles are used to establish in part group norms through the identification of what everyone needs to give of their best, and if the circle participants can subsequently reach a consensus about how best to address these needs, then people will feel happier, safer and more fulfilled, and less likely to get into conflicts or act in negative ways towards others.

## **Applying restorative principles and practice across the public sector**

In recent years, training in a range of restorative approaches has been offered in the UK, not only to justice professionals and in schools, but also to residential social workers in children's homes, to foster careers and those who support them, to local authority behaviour support staff (including educational psychologists, school welfare officers, school attendance officers and those supporting young people with special needs), to those who work with more needy and vulnerable families, to community support staff working as mediators in communities, to youth workers and to staff working in sheltered accommodation for vulnerable people. In all of these examples it is clear that the original formulation of a restorative process as a 'victim-offender' encounter is not a valid one, but the essential values, skills and principles of a restorative approach still apply. Staffs vary in the aspect which they find most innovative. 'Lightbulb' moments vary, from group to group and from person to person. For some it is the move away from being judgmental or punitive when their clients behave in negative or disruptive ways. For others it is the notion that they no longer need to feel responsible for solving their clients' problems. Facilitating meetings in a way that those most affected are trusted and empowered to find ways forward for themselves offers a way forward that previously had not been thought possible.

However, one of the most powerful learning points for those new to restorative practice is the gradual realisation that the biggest change in the practice will come about through individual personal development and embodying the changes not only in their professional lives but also at a personal level, with parents, family and friends. This is the point at which people realise that restorative practice is not just something one *does*, but it is a way of *being* in the world.

## **From 'being on-board' to 'knowing how to drive the bus' – the importance for leaders of being the change they want to see**

Experiences with staff teams where this 'in-house' use of restorative values, skills and practice have been largely positive in my own experience and that of my own team. Many people who attend training courses are struggling at work because of staff issues and the lack of collegiality. They welcome a chance to reflect on their own needs to be able to give of their best. However, many foresee an obstacle to the adoption of this staff care model – and this obstacle is the resistance they anticipate from their middle and senior managers, who have in the past been conspicuously missing from training courses. Those who have attended attest to the vital importance to their leaders having the same training.

In school research, the evidence suggests that unless the Head teacher is 'on board' with the new approach the initiative will fail (Kane et al., 2007). This has also been my personal experience. However, it is timely to reflect on what the term 'on board' actually means. For some schools this has meant the acquiescence of the Head, who has delegated the initiative to a senior member of the team. In fact, the responsibility to drive the initiative forward has been at times laid at the door of a middle manager or perhaps someone even lower down the pecking order. Often this has come about due to a misunderstanding of what Restorative Practice is about – the association with the justice concept and the belief that what is at stake is a fresh look at behaviour management.

In this 'Restorative Justice as a new tool' model (sic), a few individuals are trained in restorative facilitation – whether between 2 people or a larger group involving the family/



careers of young people and possibly members of staff. These people are called upon following an incident but most of the time the rest of the staff manage their own classrooms as they have always done, with more or less use of authority and sanctions, depending on their personal style and character. In such a model, the culture of the school is barely affected by the training. Life goes on as usual – the values and principles implicit in the restorative meetings that those trained are using may only be limited to the meetings themselves. Indeed even those trained may only subscribe to the restorative values and principles when actually facilitating a meeting or conference.

Some schools do much better than this – offering training to as many middle managers and senior leaders as possible – and gradually bringing a fresh approach to incidents, with the necessary changes in policy, procedure and even timetabling to enable people to make time for the conversations and meetings that need to be held to help people resolve difficulties. Taking it a stage further, some schools are embracing the idea that the real impact of a restorative approach is when the values, skills and principles are taught and modeled by staff in classrooms, and become part of the way they teach. Adopting a restorative mindset would encourage teachers to respond to any behaviours that have negative ripple effects to ask themselves what may be the underlying experience of the young person and what may be the unmet needs driving their behaviour. Modeling an empathic response provides other young people with an ideal model of how to respond when another behaves in ways they feel unhappy about – ideal education for the future workplace and for their lives in relationship with others and as parents.

To return to the acceptance that the Head or Principle must be ‘on board’ for all these practices to develop, there is another factor that has at times been ignored. This is the model of behaviour given by the Head himself or herself and the way that the staff team are encouraged to be with one another. It is not enough for a senior manager or leader to be ‘on board’ – they need to know how to drive the bus themselves (to extend the ‘on board’ analogy). A genuinely restorative leader would not be the only driver of course – and here the analogy breaks down somewhat. The model they provide is one of a democratic, empathic listener, willing to listen to the team, able to support colleagues in conflict, ready to mediate between colleagues and parents/careers if need be, and modeling the use of Circle processes big and small with external agencies, visitors and the School Board.

This argument has been framed in terms of a school experience, but the argument holds good for any institution, organisation or workplace which on the one hand is seeking to offer restorative responses to its service users/clients/customers, whilst also seeking to create a positive and effective staff culture. This ‘lightbulb’ moment is an important first step for leaders to experience, and realise that if they want to truly embrace a restorative culture in their workplaces then the change needs to start with themselves. I have recently facilitated leadership seminars for head-teachers, senior police officers, the executive team of a local authority (local government) responsible for housing, environment, education, finance, staff development and elected members of the local government cabinet. In every case the personal learning was immense and yet the ‘content’ of what we covered in each seminar was relatively limited – no PowerPoint slides, no lectures, very few handouts. Instead we all sat in a circle, developing safety and trust so that people could reflect on what they each needed to be able to give of their best, reflect on whether these needs were currently being met and how, as a team, they could work in ways that ensured these needs would be met – so that they could then lead their own teams effectively, modelling restorative thinking and skills. These days involved developing trust and safety in the room and some groups were more ready for this than others. Where there has been interpersonal conflict there may need to be some mediation and healing before future-focused discussions can be had.

## A case study – Monmouth Comprehensive School, South Wales

An on-going experience I can provide of a school, its staff and the senior leadership team embracing an institution-wide restorative approach is one secondary school in Monmouth, South Wales. I have personally had the privilege of being the trainer and consultant working with this school alongside the Deputy Head for the last 5 years. Last year, the school became the first secondary school to be awarded the RJC's Quality Mark in recognition of its restorative culture and effective practice.<sup>8</sup>

- The impact of the approach can be noted in part from recent statistics after the academic year 2013-2014, collected by the school:
- Exclusions are down by 93%, with only 13 days lost last year due to exclusion.
- Detentions and merit awards are no longer used as extrinsic behaviour control mechanisms and instead young people are encouraged to develop internal self-regulation.
- Beyond the school gates, referrals to the Youth Offending Service are down 78% and anti-social behaviour attributable to young people in the town is down by 48%.
- In the academic year 2013-2014 the school had its best ever results at both advanced (A) level (national exams taken at age of 17/18) and general certificate of school education (GCSE) level (exams taken at age of 16). The school attributes these results in part to the restorative culture which ensures that the needs of staff and students are attended, and thus has enabled everyone to give of their best. They also point to the deepening of engagement with the subject matter through restorative pedagogy. In the academic year 2014-2015, 99% of students attained A\* – C grades at GCSE, an exceptional achievement and yet further improvement on last year.
- Staff absenteeism with a stress-related tag is down by over 60%, which represents a saving of over £60,000 – a testimony to how beneficial the approach can be for staff health and wellbeing.
- Attendance is at its highest ever level – over 94% and rising.

For the purposes of this paper the most significant statistic is the one showing the reduction in absenteeism due to stress amongst staff. Put simply, a restorative environment is good for staff health and well-being. With more skills to address challenges, staff are feeling more confident and more able to do their job of teaching. The use of regular staff circles ensures they feel supported and heard by their colleagues. The modelling of restorative skills (including empathic listening) by the senior leadership team helps staff to feel valued and cared for. The Head Teacher's door is never closed, for example. If he is in, then anyone is welcome to pop in for a chat.

## External validation, quality standards, accreditation and quality marks

As Restorative Practices evolve, it is vital that there are regulatory bodies supporting best practices and ensuring that there is a consistency and an agreement about what constitutes restorative thinking, its values, principles and applications. This can ensure that wherever restorative practice is developed people can be confident that those offering training and consultancy are regulated, but also that what is being called 'restorative' bears some relation to what is generally accepted as best practice.

A major factor in the growth of restorative practice in the UK, both in the criminal justice sector and in the wider public sector, including in schools and care settings has, in my view, been the tireless work by the Restorative Justice Council in providing this national bench-mark of best practice, developing initially *Principles of Best Practice* (RJC, 2004), and then, in

consultation with a wide group of professionals over several years, Best Practice Guidelines (RJC, 2011). The Guidelines then enabled a professional body tasked with developing nationally accepted accreditation – Skills for Justice – to develop modules of practice based on precise performance indicators to support restorative facilitators in ensuring they were practicing to the highest standards. These are called the National Occupational Standards (NOS) and they are applicable in sectors other than the criminal justice domain for which they were originally developed (This said there is still work to be done to make them accessible and relevant for those not tasked with facilitating formal restorative meetings regularly).

With Ministry of Justice funding, the RJC is now developing a draft of accreditation and awards to further encourage the development of high quality practice. Restorative services – including schools, care homes, prisons and secure units – can gain the Restorative Service Quality Mark by ensuring they meet requirements across a range of criteria. The emphasis is on establishing a restorative culture across the staff team, including the leadership team, as well as ensuring that practice with clients/service users is professional.

Recently, a new Quality Mark is being trialed for those providing training to ensure that again high quality materials as well as knowledgeable, experienced and competent people are offering training in restorative principles and skills. The requirement to adhere to already developed standards – the Principles, the Best Practice Guidelines and the NOS ensures a high and consistent standard. As it has already been said this means that there still needs to be accommodation made for people that only interact on a one-to-one basis with clients or perhaps only over the phone. Restorative skills have much to offer to these people who are often in the frontline of conflict and challenge, but current training and accreditation does not necessarily recognise these skills. Nevertheless, the example of the RJC's work on quality standards and accreditation puts it at the forefront of such developments in the world.

## Conclusions

This paper has charted the journey from the use of Restorative Justice as a process in the criminal justice system to the development of a Restorative Culture in a wide variety of settings, through the application of Restorative Practice. It has identified the importance of ensuring that fundamental values and principles are adhered to as Restorative Practice is offered to an increasingly wide range of environments. This is pioneering work, and there is still a dearth of research in this field, especially on the benefits to staff themselves of a restorative culture in-house.

However, the types of transformation possible are not without precedent. The values, principles and core beliefs are not unique to Restorative Practice and so there will be evidence that supports our case. As has been said, what makes the offer of a Restorative Culture in an environment so compelling is its unique *combination* of values, principles, skills and processes. This unique package operationalises better known concepts such as 'health and wellbeing at work'; 'dignity in the workplace'; anti-bullying; distributed leadership; happiness quotients and 'flow' (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990).

Our challenge as practitioners, writers and trainers, in the effort to widen the scope and reach of Restorative Justice to embrace Approaches and Practices, is to ensure we do not dilute its powerful message, we do not lose its unique gifts to transform the way we respond when things go wrong between us, we do not undermine its capacity to transform justice systems across the planet.

I personally believe 'Restorative Justice' (sic) is not at risk. Its practitioners and proponents have excellent evidence, experience and passion to continue to make their own case. The

ball is now in the court of those of us embracing Restorative Approaches and Practice in our own working and personal lives to make our case, to gather our evidence and use our passion to offer a more fulfilling ways of being, and of working with people in all walks of life across the globe.

## Notes

1. The term 'Restorative Justice' is used in various ways – as a concept, a philosophy, an approach, a process and as a set of practices. In this paper I will use the term 'Restorative Justice' when referring to the concept or philosophy, Restorative Practice when referring to the practical application of this philosophy in an environment and Restorative Approaches when referring not only to the practice but to the underpinning values, principles and mindset that informs the practice.
2. The RJC is the UK's umbrella organisation for the development of quality standards and practice in restorative approaches.
3. Over many years I have been on the Board of Trustees and served at one time or another as a member of the working parties that have developed the Best Practice Guidelines and advised on the National Occupational Standards; as a committee member concerned with Standards and Accreditation and most recently as a member of the new Expert Advisory Group appointed to maintain the high quality restorative practice that the RJC is committed to supporting.
4. There is an interesting debate to be had about the difference between a value and a principle, which this paper is too short to allow for.
5. Notably Caroline Newton and Luke Roberts whom I would like to acknowledge and thank for early interactions of the model.
6. The ideas about core beliefs here are adapted in part from earlier work found in my book *The Restorative Classroom* (2011).
7. These are the steps we train people to use when they facilitate a restorative meeting of any size as recommended in The Restorative Justice Council's Best Practice Guidelines (RJC, 2011).
8. The data has been shared by the Monmouth Deputy Head Teacher in a private correspondence, but the main details can also be found on the website [www.transformingconflict.org](http://www.transformingconflict.org).

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## **Appendix 5: Relational Practice in Portsmouth - testimonials from Wave One schools**

### **Admiral Lord Nelson School**

At the ALNS OFSTED inspection last week, the work we have done this year on Relational Practice in terms of community building and the enhancements it has made to our vertical tutoring system resulted in extremely positive feedback about our approach to safeguarding in all aspects of our work at school; to the inclusive nature of all elements of the academic and personal development curriculum; and the fact that staff and students all articulated clearly that they felt like 'had a voice' and were listened to. Bullying was cited as being rare and students felt safe to report incidents of unkindness when they occurred secure in the knowledge it would be appropriately dealt with. Inspectors saw evidence of high support for students underpinned by strong relationships which led to a sense of calm around the school.

*Nys Hardingham, Executive Headteacher, Admiral Lord Nelson School*

### **Priory School**

Priory School is one of ten secondary schools in Portsmouth and one of eight Secondary Schools in the Bohunt Education Trust. I do not speak to any Headteacher who is not experiencing an alarming increase in behavioural challenges driven by COVID.

Every school I work with has been underpowered because of staff absence and struggling to meet the behavioural demands of its student population. An increase in students that have experienced so much disruption and isolation in the last three years, combined with an impaired capacity for schools to intervene meaningfully has left school exhausted.

The danger in such circumstances is that, as we have been simply trying to stay open and function for our communities; to survive if you will. The consequence of this is that we become immersed in reacting to circumstances rather than actively building our cultures.

Relational practice provides a structure and language that helps us to see a more proactive response to some of these huge challenges. It is not new and it will resonate with those who work in education as being common sense but common sense is not always common place. Priory is currently engaging in Trafalgar's training programme and it has provided us with reassurance, expertise and a form and structure to help us reflect and plan. It is good work.

Ultimately, we are aiming to shift our culture when maladaptive coping strategies amongst our students have become alarmingly familiar. This cannot be short term work but it will be absolutely crucial to addressing the needs of our staff and student population and, as a consequence, will be a key factor in supporting Mental Health, safety staff retention and staff recruitment in our city.

I would consider support for this work to be critical.

*Stewart Vaughan, Head teacher, Priory School*

### **Milton Park Primary School**

At Milton Park we effectively build and develop supportive and meaningful relationships with our children and families by exploring their individual needs.

To achieve this, we spend quality time listening and getting to know our children both on a one-to-one basis and in a group or classroom setting.

We value and share important information with parents and relevant staff as and when necessary.

The direct impact of this practice builds resilience in all aspects of our children's and families wellbeing.

This is clearly demonstrated by the number of children and families that actively seek out support for many diverse and unique situations.

This has resulted in a decrease in instances of unsafe behaviour in our school. There is a clear structure and whole school policy which is set in place for all staff to follow and promote.

Our children are aware of the support available, procedures to follow and strategies to use in times of crisis or need.

As a result of this practice and children effectively applying the use of taught coping strategies, we have observed a substantial increase in the capabilities of our children being able to self soothe and regulate their own emotions.

*Layla Glover, HLTA, Milton Park Primary School*

I feel like communication has massively improved during my time at Milton Park and, again, being on the same page really helps us all to know where we stand and what the expectations are.

All these little things build up confidence and self-assurance within the workplace. This then allows you to be the best version of yourself at work.

*Kayleigh Garnett, Year 1 Teacher, Milton Park Primary School*

The relationships I build in my class through relational practice ensure that children learn in a safe and trusting environment. Our children feel comfortable to talk to a range of adults and can name these and understand that their opinions are valued in activities such as pupil leadership meetings. We look at the whole child, rather than just their attainment and progress and aim to support the whole child, including their families and situations, in order to ensure that they are ready and able to access learning. I would describe this school as a family and the positive and thorough relationships we build make the difference to our behaviour and learning.

*Elizabeth Noice, Year 6 Teacher and Year 5/6 phase leader Milton Park Primary School*