



Department  
for Education

## Attendance Action Alliance

Notes of meeting held on 28 June 2022, 15:30-16:30, Secretary of State's Office, Department for Education and virtually via MS Teams

### Chair

Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi MP, Secretary of State for Education

### Attendees

- Ade Adetosoye OBE (Children and Families Spokesperson, SOLACE)
- Steve Crocker OBE (President, Association of Directors of Children's Services)
- Leora Cruddas (Chief Executive, Confederation of School Trusts (CST))
- Dame Rachel de Souza (Children's Commissioner)
- Susan Douglas CBE (CEO, Eden Academy Trust)
- Tina Emery (Co-Chair, National Network of Parent Carer Forums & South West Regional Steering Group Member)
- Anna Feuchtwang, Chief Executive of the National Children's Bureau (NCB)
- Professor Peter Fonagy (National Clinical Advisor on Children's Mental Health, NHS England)
- Commander Catherine Roper (Head of Profession, Crime Prevention, Inclusion and Engagement, Metropolitan Police)
- Mrunal Sisodia (Co-Chair, National Network of Parent Carer Forums & East of England Regional Steering Group Member)
- Amanda Spielman (Her Majesty's Chief Inspector)
- Rob Tarn (CEO, Northern Education Trust)

### Apologies

- Geoff Barton (General Secretary, Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL)) *represented by Anne Murdoch, Senior Advisor, ASCL*
- Professor Dame Clare Gerada (President, Royal College of General Practitioners)
- Isabelle Trowler (Chief Social Worker for Children and Families *represented by* Lauren McCrum, Private Secretary to the Chief Social Worker for Children and Families)
- Sir Peter Wanless CBE (Chief Executive, National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children)
- Paul Whiteman (General Secretary, National Association of Head Teachers)

## Officials in attendance

Official attendees updated to include only the names of Senior Civil Servants in attendance [February 2024]

- Becky Benwell – Joint Head of Attendance Strategy and System Support Unit
- Jocelyn Shaw – Deputy Director, Attendance Division
- Sophie Taylor – Director for Families Group and Senior Responsible Officer for Attendance
- Officials from Vulnerable Children’s Attendance Team and Attendance Programme Management Office
- Private Secretary to the Secretary of State

### 1. Welcome

**Owner:** Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi MP, Secretary of State for Education (Chair)

The Secretary of State thanked Alliance members for attending. Rob Tarn’s work on the North Shore pilot scheme was commended, with Secretary of State acknowledging Rob Tarn’s letter to the Department regarding this pilot scheme.

### 2. Safeguarding and Attendance – the role of the Police

**Owner:** Commander Catherine Roper, Metropolitan Police

Commander Roper’s presentation to the Alliance focussed on the different ways in which the Police support young people, and the importance of officers being aware of the vulnerabilities created when children miss school.

Tina Emery raised the importance of forces being involved in the team around the school, highlighting how the police could be more involved in these.

**Action** - Commander Roper is to work with the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) to identify how data can be used effectively to evaluate the effectiveness of police interventions in youth offending and attendance, as well as school officers.

**Action** - Commander Roper to engage with Ofsted and the DfE to explore the possibility of sharing police information on unresolved concerns.

Steve Crocker raised the importance of restorative policing practices in working with children and young people (CYP), with Commander Roper stated that she is exploring how these practices can be integrated at a national level as part of her work with the YEF.

The Secretary of State thanked Commander Roper for her presentation, stating that it would be beneficial to identify the effectiveness of interventions and how these could be scaled up.

### 3. Summer Communications – Back to School

**Owner:** Attendance Programme Management Office official and Juliette Cammaerts

Attendance Programme Management Office official thanked the Secretary of State for his full support on the Department's September communications plan, which has been formed alongside the Children's Commissioner's Office (CCO) and the Chief Social Worker's (CSW) Office.

Key aspects of the communications plan were emphasised both from the Department and the CCO. This included a webinar series, pre-recorded assemblies, tutoring programmes, online resources and an additional planned attendance audit on looked after children and patterns which trigger poor attendance.

**Action** - The DfE to explore how summer communications options can be joined with any communications Ofsted had planned on attendance.

Tina Emery raised a concern that for some children, the barrier to attendance is the availability of appropriate specialist school provision. She felt that in seeking 100% attendance, the Children's Commissioner was not fully acknowledging this issue. Delegates around the table agreed that this was indeed a barrier to attendance that was worthy of a separate discussion between officials and Tina.

**Action** - The DfE is to set up a further meeting regarding support for SEND pupils' attendance.

## 4. The Success of the Alliance – preparation for July meeting

**Owner:** Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi MP, Secretary of State for Education (Chair)

How the Alliance has succeeded in working in a very different way to other working groups was detailed, with many sectors looking to this group for action, activity and inspiration. At the July meeting, Alliance members will be asked for their reflections on how the Alliance should progress in the next academic year, particularly given that during next year new data will have become available.

The Secretary of State supported a more regional focus in the Alliance next year, with Leora Cruddas and Steve Crocker echoing that the attendance data could support agile local responses to issues.

## 5. Closing remarks

The Secretary of State thanked Alliance members, emphasising the importance of this work.

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