

Leicester City Council

Scrutiny Review

Topic: Persistent Pupil Absence - causes, prevention and solutions (secondary school age)

Scoping document for a review of the Children, Young People and Schools Scrutiny Commission

5th December 2017

Background to scrutiny reviews

Determining the right topics for scrutiny reviews is the first step in making sure scrutiny provides benefits to the Council and the community.

This scoping template will assist in planning the review by defining the purpose, methodology and resources needed. It should be completed by the Member proposing the review, in liaison with the lead Director and the Scrutiny Manager. Scrutiny Officers can provide support and assistance with this.

In order to be effective, every scrutiny review must be properly project managed to ensure it achieves its aims and delivers measurable outcomes. To achieve this, it is essential that the scope of the review is well defined at the outset. This way the review is less likely to get side-tracked or become overambitious in what it hopes to tackle. The Commission's objectives should, therefore, be as SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic & Time-bound) as possible.

The scoping document is also a good tool for communicating what the review is about, who is involved and how it will be undertaken to all partners and interested stakeholders.

The form also includes a section on public and media interest in the review which should be completed in conjunction with the Council's Communications Team. This will allow the Commission to be properly prepared for any media interest and to plan the release of any press statements.

Scrutiny reviews will be supported by a Scrutiny Officer.

Evaluation

Reviewing changes that have been made as a result of a scrutiny review is the most common way of assessing the effectiveness. Any scrutiny review should consider whether an on-going monitoring role for the Commission is appropriate in relation to the topic under review.

For further information please contact the Scrutiny Team on 0116 4546340

To be completed by the Member proposing the review		
1.	Title of the proposed scrutiny review	Persistent Pupil Absence - the causes, prevention, and solutions (secondary school age)
2.	Proposed by	Cllr Lynn Moore, Chair of Children, Young People and Schools Scrutiny Commission
3.	Rationale Why do you want to undertake this review?	<p>The Department for Education introduced changes to the threshold for Persistent Absence in 2015–2016 reducing it from 15% to 10% from September 2015.</p> <p>All parents and carers have the legal responsibility to ensure that a their child receives an efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise (ie where education is provided otherwise, this means that the child is home educated and not on a school roll). Where a child is registered at a school, absence taken during the school term can have a negative impact on their education.</p> <p>Whilst 90% is an excellent result in a test, an attendance level of 90% is poor, children are classed as persistently absent and children’s outcomes in school can be badly affected. Any absence that is not authorised by the school is a reason for concern.</p> <p>In 2015/16 persistent absence in Leicester secondary schools (defined as pupils with 90% or below attendance) was 14% and pupil absence overall was 5.5%. This was slightly higher than national, regional and statistical neighbours.</p>
4.	Purpose and aims of the review What question(s) do you want to answer and what do you want to achieve? (Outcomes?)	Following the Department of Education changes to persistent absence thresholds from 15% to 10% - the scrutiny members want to be assured that the methods and procedures used by secondary schools are effective in tackling persistent pupil absence.
5.	Links with corporate aims / priorities How does the review link to corporate aims and priorities?	<p>Leicester City Council Annual Education Performance Report 2016 states: <i>‘ our aim is for all pupils to attend school regularly and for the city performance to at least match performance nationally by 2018’</i></p> <p>School Attendance and Enforcement Information for Parents: http://www.leicester.gov.uk/media/183986/school-attendance-leaflet-every-school-day-counts.pdf</p> <p>https://www.leicester.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/school-and-colleges/attendance-behaviour-and-welfare/attendance-and-truancy/</p>

6.	<p>Scope Set out what is included in the scope of the review and what is not. For example which services it does and does not cover.</p>	<p>The scope of this review will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Leicester Secondary Schools b) Education Welfare Service c) Children, young people and parents / carers d) Secondary School Partnership
Develop a draft Project Plan to incorporate sections seven to twelve of this form		
7.	<p>Methodology Describe the methods you will use to undertake the review.</p> <p>How will you undertake the review, what evidence will need to be gathered from members, officers and key stakeholders, including partners and external organisations and experts?</p>	<p>Evidence gathering will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) To understand the Department of Education legislation and the role of the LA and Secondary Schools relating to school attendance, enforcement and persistent absence policies and threshold. b) To explore the key issues and triggers for persistent pupil absence c) To identify what action is being taken by schools to tackle persistent pupil absence. d) To gather evidence from a selection of children, young people and parents / carers to explore their views (possible focus group). e) To capture relevant data, statistics and trends relating to persistent pupil absence.
	<p>Witnesses Set out who you want to gather evidence from and how you will plan to do this</p>	<p>Witness evidence will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Assistant City Mayor (Executive Lead) for Schools and Childrens Services. b) Director and leads from Welfare Education Service c) School heads d) Secondary Schools Partnership e) Children, young people and parents / carers
8.	<p>Timescales How long is the review expected to take to complete?</p>	<p>4/5 months</p>
	<p>Proposed start date</p>	<p>December 2017</p>
	<p>Proposed completion date</p>	<p>March 2018</p>
9.	<p>Resources / staffing requirements Scrutiny reviews are facilitated by Scrutiny Officers and it is important to estimate the amount of their time, in weeks, that will be required in order to manage the review Project Plan effectively.</p>	<p>This review will be facilitated by the Scrutiny Policy Officer.</p>

	Do you anticipate any further resources will be required e.g. site visits or independent technical advice? If so, please provide details.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To consider arranging evidence gathering sessions in secondary school locations. Expert advice from the Education Welfare Service will be required.
10.	Review recommendations and findings To whom will the recommendations be addressed? E.g. Executive / External Partner?	The evidence gathered will be compiled into a review report of findings and recommendations which will be presented to the City Mayor and Executive for consideration.
11.	Likely publicity arising from the review - Is this topic likely to be of high interest to the media? Please explain.	<p>This review is likely to attract medium interest from the local media.</p> <p>The communications team will be kept informed.</p>
12.	Publicising the review and its findings and recommendations How will these be published / advertised?	<p>The findings and recommendations will be publicised via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Leicester City Council Website. b) Children, Young People and Schools Scrutiny Commission (public meeting).
13.	How will this review add value to policy development or service improvement?	<p>It is hoped that recommendations and findings from the review will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Identifying the key issues and causes for persistent pupil absence in secondary schools b) Identifying best practice, initiatives and solutions to tackle persistent pupil absence.
To be completed by the Executive Lead		
14.	Executive Lead's Comments The Executive Lead is responsible for the portfolio so it is important to seek and understand their views and ensure they are engaged in the process so that Scrutiny's recommendations can be taken on board where appropriate.	<p>This task group can add to our understanding of Persistent Pupil Absence in schools and recommendations can contribute to how the local authority and schools work with young people and families to improve attendance.</p> <p><i>Cllr Sarah Russell, Assistant City Mayor, Children, Young People and Schools, Leicester City Council</i></p>
To be completed by the Divisional Lead Director		
15.	Divisional Comments Scrutiny's role is to influence others to take action and it is important that Scrutiny Commissions seek and understand the views of the Divisional Director.	<p>This important review is welcomed and will provide useful information for the Department. I am pleased to see the range of witnesses, in particular children, young people and parents/carers as well as schools.</p> <p><i>Frances Craven, Strategic Director of Children, Young People and Schools Division.</i></p>

16.	<p>Are there any potential risks to undertaking this scrutiny review?</p> <p>E.g. are there any similar reviews being undertaken, on-going work or changes in policy which would supersede the need for this review?</p>	No significant risks identified.
17.	<p>Are you able to assist with the proposed review? If not please explain why.</p> <p>In terms of agreement / supporting documentation / resource availability?</p>	Yes
	Name	Frances Craven
	Role	Lead Director, Leicester City Council
	Date	5 December 2017
To be completed by the Scrutiny Support Manager		
18.	<p>Will the proposed scrutiny review / timescales negatively impact on other work within the Scrutiny Team?</p> <p>(Conflicts with other work commitments)</p>	This review can be managed by the Scrutiny Policy Officer within the existing workload.
	<p>Do you have available staffing resources to facilitate this scrutiny review? If not, please provide details.</p>	Yes resources available within the scrutiny team to facilitate this review.
	Name	Kalvaran Sandhu, Scrutiny Support Manager
	Date	5 December 2017