

Update from the Children and Families Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Group on School Exclusions

The Council's Children and Families Scrutiny Committee agreed last November to set up a Task & Finish Group to examine the reasons, drivers and impact of school exclusions on children, young people and their families, including those who may have special educational needs and disabilities, in Somerset.

We are at the midpoint of our review and are aiming to present our final report to the April meeting of the Committee. This report is designed to provide a summary overview and update of our progress.

We recognise that only the Head teacher can decide to exclude a pupil permanently and the reasons for that exclusion will be individual and specific to each child and setting. During our review we have been interested to hear from Head teachers at different settings to help inform our review. We want to understand what inclusive best practice looks like and enable that to be shared across Somerset.

What we have done

We have held an intensive enquiry period to gather and examine relevant local evidence and this also included an overview of national research and best practice in respect of fixed term and permanent exclusions. We have visited a number of schools (primary, secondary and PRU), across the County and used those opportunities to speak with various staff and pupils. This has provided us with valuable first-hand experience of those that have experiences of exclusion. We have also engaged other stakeholders such as Public Health, Clinical Commissioning Group, Young Somerset and FE providers.

What we are going to do

We will hold a day of evidence gathering with a series of meetings with representatives from primary schools, secondary schools, special schools, FE Colleges and parents. We will use this opportunity to ask each group a series of agreed questions to try and obtain a point of view from different perspectives. This exercise was arranged so that the Task & Finish Group members could meet on a face to face basis a wider group of stakeholders to encourage discussion. This open discussion would also benefit the Task & Finish Group as it would provide more information to support with the writing of the final report.

The final stage

We hope that once we have completed our information gathering that our final report will help contribute to improved outcomes for children and young people at risk of exclusion and those who have been excluded, we hope to be able to highlight alternatives to exclusion and the prevention of exclusions. The information we will have acquired during the enquiry will equip the Task & Finish Group with the information it needs to support and challenge the system and we hope the resulting recommendations will be considered by Somerset's schools and partners.

To aid our understanding Officers helpfully compiled a reading list for us. We are including this below so you can see the background information we have available to us. There were three broad categories of reading: i) What is driving exclusions; ii) The impact of exclusions; and iii) How could exclusions be reduced. As the enquiry progresses there may be other information to read, this will be added to the reading list under the appropriate category.

What is driving exclusions?

[DfE \(2019\) School exclusion: a literature review on the continued disproportionate exclusion of certain children](#)

[DfE 2016/17 Permanent and Fixed Term Exclusions in England](#)

[Exclusions review: Call for evidence Written evidence from The Children's Society The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2018/19](#)

The impact of exclusions

[Parliament UK \(2018\) Forgotten children: alternative provision and the scandal of ever-increasing exclusions](#)

[Pippa Allen-Kinross \(2020\) Article - Hold schools 'responsible' for excluded pupils who join gangs, says children's commissioner](#)

[IPPR | Making The Difference Breaking the link between school exclusion and social exclusion](#)

[TES Off-rolling: Free school 'pushed home education'](#)

How could exclusions be reduced

[All-Party Parliamentary Group on Knife Crime \(2019\) BACK TO SCHOOL? Breaking the link between school exclusions and knife crime](#)

[Children's Society \(2018b\) Transforming children & young people's mental health provision: The Children's Society's response to the departments of Health and Education's green paper](#)

[Centre for Social Justice \(2018\) Providing the alternative: How to transform school exclusion and the support that exists beyond](#)

Statutory Guidance: [DfE Statutory Guidance School Exclusion](#)

The Task & Finish Group would very much still welcome input and views from school leaders, staff, parents, children and other stakeholders. If you would like to share anything with the Group, which will be treated confidentially and anonymised, please contact us using 1 of the email addresses below.

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Task and Finish Group support: Neil Milne: ndmilne@somerset.gov.uk; Samantha

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Should you wish to make contact directly with our Chair Cllr Redman you can, iredman@somerset.gov.uk;