

## Making Attendance Everyone's Business

### 'Team Around Models' Briefing Sheet

#### Background to this Project

Supported with funding from Anglo American, during 2023 Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council worked with research specialist Alan Graver (Skyblue) to convene 13 workshops engaging 104 different people across the local system to shape the UK's first [Theory of Change](#) linked to the challenge of **addressing persistent and severe absence** from school and college. We also participated in Attendance Network meetings and have seen good practice being shared amongst contributors to those sessions.

#### Everyone's Business – 'system and services'

The workshops awakened more curiosity and knowledge about the ways in which attendance is something that many different people can or could contribute towards – across education and learning settings, the virtual school, public health, youth justice, serious violence and crime services, social care, early help, family services and hubs, inclusion, welfare, attendance, the voluntary & community sector infrastructure and others. There is a desire to prevent, not just alleviate the challenges faced.

#### Lived Experience

The work highlighted the central role of each child, young person and family, by purposely seeking out lived experiences from those that have struggled with their attendance but went on to turn that situation around into more stable, healthy routines. We discovered from each story the importance of listening to each child / young person / family / carer and understanding each circumstance before trying to 'fix a problem.' Trust and strong relationships seem vital for any 'process' to work.

#### Data and intelligence

We also started to understand the scale of the challenge by working with services that have data and intelligence – but we found they could be even more joined up to work around the needs of each child, young person and family.

As a result of these 3 'workstreams' (lived experience, data & intelligence, system, and services), by the end of 2023 RCBC felt more confident about who is most affected by persistent and severe absence, the reasons for these struggles and behaviours and the wide variety of support available to improve the situation. This led to more thinking about how change might be stimulated in a way that puts relationships first and where barriers are systematically removed.

#### The next phase of the Project in 2024 and 2025 – why we are contacting you

Anglo American have agreed to continue supporting this Project enabling time to explore some of the ideas and solutions that were starting to be gathered last year. One such idea was about getting a better understanding of 'Team Around....' Models active across the Borough.

The specific area of inquiry we would like to explore with your school if you are willing and can see a benefit from it, is to work with you to understand the persistent / severe absence challenge in your context, and understand what 'teams around' the child / family are currently active to help you address this challenge; and further still, whether you feel there is a 'team around your school' with support from different services in the system, but also from the voluntary sector and communities wherein your students and families live. We take our inspiration from the Children's Commissioner for this:

## Building a team around the school

‘Fundamental to any model for improving attendance is improving the support available to children and their families. Support needs to be co-ordinated and meet children where they are, meaning multiple agencies working together and delivering support through local facilities familiar to the child, such as schools or family hubs.

*‘There is a need for improved professional services – better quality professionals – which could be assured if the schools trust had oversight and selection criteria. There needs to be something in between the local authority provision and school-level – to have quicker access, lower threshold of access and prevention before escalation’ - Schools partnership manager.*

The attendance audit identified ‘team around the school’ models as a successful strategy for delivering joined up support. Implemented by local authorities, teams around the school gives access to local services such as mental health support, family hubs and the police.

In one school, the ‘team around the school’ enabled them to allocate a family worker to support a family where the child’s attendance had dropped, and they worked on a plan of support together. The ‘team around the school’ enabled the school to respond proactively and arrange help as soon as they identified a family in difficulty. The ‘team around the school’ model brings support to where children are, rather than requiring children and families to navigate multiple different systems to receive support.

Local authorities are crucial to building ‘teams around the school.’ They need to ensure they are establishing robust teams around the schools in their area. Local authorities can bring the right people together to support children, they need to ensure this service deals with more than just managed moves but looks at how to provide early help and support. There needs to be a robust framework for delivery of a team around the school model, and implementation and evaluation should be under the purview of Ofsted inspections of children’ (Reference: [CC A4 HEADER \(childrenscommissioner.gov.uk\)](#). Pages 17-18

### Why are we inviting you to get involved in this part of the Project?

As a Redcar & Cleveland pilot school for the Achieve Education programme, Anglo American would like your school to be given the opportunity to engage with this work first which we hope will add further value to the other practical activities and delivery being made available through the Programme. This is an attempt to support whole school change through a topic of clear importance in the Borough.

### What are we proposing

We envisage 3-4 meetings of roughly 2 hours each time over an agreed time scale that is convenient to you (as little as within one term or spread over 3 terms as preferred) with any staff you feel would like to be involved in the work. Amanda Olvanhill from RCBC along with Alan Graver from Skyblue would facilitate the process. Whilst we have an objective to understand the models and then publish a paper about them – validated by yourselves of course prior to any wider sharing of insights - the opportunity is here to scope what it looks like and should include together.

**Would you be available for a first meeting 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> of May please?**

**Please confirm arrangements or otherwise with [Amanda.Olvanhill@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk](mailto:Amanda.Olvanhill@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk)**

We think it will partly be about understanding how your school currently approaches targeted responsive interventions, but equally our conversations may identify opportunities for strengthening team around models based on your experiences. Amanda and Alan would have conversations with other system partners as identified / agreed with you to see what (if anything) could be done (more or better) to provide connected, ‘Team Around Child / Family / School’ Models that benefit everyone. The work *may* lead to further opportunities to make the case for investment in models that will work, particularly linked to plans for at least one place based ‘attendance’ pilot in the Borough from 2025.

