

PREVENTION OF EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING
REPORT ON THE NATIONAL SITUATION

Interviews in England

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Interviews with elected politicians with 'Educational Responsibility' and 'Permanent Officers'

WHAT STATISTICS ARE MAINTAINED?

- The percentage of students leaving Derbyshire schools at 16 without any qualifications
- The number and percentage of pupils electing for home education
- The percentage of pupils absent from school for 20% or more of the school year
- The number of pupils permanently excluded from school

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR MAINTAINING STATISTICS?

The 'Information, Research and Analysis' section of the 'Children and Younger Adults department.

WHAT ARE THE 3 MAIN REASONS FOR 'DROP OUTS' BEFORE THE AGE OF 16?

- Pupils withdrawn by parents for 'Elective Home Education' (EHE)
- Pupils excluded from school
- Persistent non attendance
- Long term illness or pregnancy

WHAT ARE THE 3 MAIN REASONS FOR 'DROP OUTS' POST 16?

This information not maintained apart from statistics for:

- The proportion of Y11 'leavers' progressing into post 16 learning
- The proportion of 16-18 year olds not in education, employment or training

WHAT ARE THE MAIN STRATEGIES ACROSS DERBYSHIRE TO PREVENT 'DROP OUTS'?

- The 'Advisory Service' monitors EHE pupils
- Referrals can be made to the Education Welfare Service (EWS) for parenting orders where the quality of EHE is poor
- The Education Welfare Service monitor attendance
- Support from the Behaviour Support Service
- Support from the Educational Psychology Service
- The District structure is developing systems to co-ordinate services to the community, in particular those vulnerable to social exclusion
- The Youth Support Strategy
- The 'Every Child Matters' agenda is primarily designed to bring services together to plan better outcomes for young people

WHAT FUTURE NEW STRATEGIES ARE PLANNED?

'Future plans are to ensure that the strategies in place are fully embedded and monitored on a regular basis to ensure they are effective in improving the outcomes for young people'

HOW DOES THE POSITION COMPARE WITH 'DROP OUT' RATES NATIONALLY AND IN EUROPE?

See section 1 above for details of what statistics are available – these do not include 'drop out rates'

From the statistics which are available Derbyshire's position compares quite well with 'statistical neighbour' average figures and national figures where these are available. e.g.

Percentage of pupils educated at home: 2006/7 Derbyshire 0.25; Neighbour average 0.24

Percentage of persistent absentees: 2006/7 Derbyshire 6.0; Neighbour average 6.5; National 6.7

Percentage of permanent exclusions: 2007 Derbyshire 0.26; Neighbour average 0.23

Percentage of Y11 'leavers' progressing to 'Post 16' learning: 2006 Derbyshire 87.1; Neighbour average 87.9; National 87.2

Percentage NEET 16 -18: 2006 Derbyshire 6.4; Neighbour average 6.2; National 7.1

WHAT TRAINING COURSES ARE AVAILABLE TO HELP TEACHERS AND OTHER PROFESSIONALS PREVENT 'DROP OUTS'?

- Derbyshire has a 'Course and Conference Programme' that offers training to school staff on a wide range of curriculum and provision issues
- Training is focused on the effective inclusion of all pupils and the recognition of the needs and difficulties of vulnerable or potentially vulnerable pupils
- Derbyshire offers specific training focusing on pupils with 'Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulties – these focus on whole school issues such as developing emotionally intelligent schools and on specific approaches such as managing behaviour, reducing exclusions etc.
- The National Strategies Behaviour and Attendance Programme
- The implementation of the National Programme for Specialist Leaders in Behaviour and Attendance

Interview with the Learning and Skills Council (LSC)

WHAT STATISTICS ARE MAINTAINED?

The LSC does not have its own systems in place to monitor school 'drop outs' but relies on information supplied by either the Local Authority or the Connexions Service.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR MAINTAINING STATISTICS?

The LSC does not have its own separate statistical monitoring systems.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN REASONS FOR 'DROP OUTS' BEFORE THE AGE OF 16?

In Derby City:

- Inadequate social skills, which impede progress and affect employability
- Deprivation and a background of deprived communities
- Low levels of aspiration
- Emotional or behavioral problems
- Those involved in the 'Youth Justice' process
- Those who arrive in a school after the start of KS4 (last two years at school)

In Derbyshire:

- Family instability & deprived social background
- Low skills levels
- Emotional or behavioral problems
- A wide range of disabilities
- Psychological problems
- Substance misuse/victim of violence/known to the police
- Inadequate social skills
- Low aspirations

WHAT ARE THE MAIN REASONS FOR 'DROP OUTS' POST 16?

- Teenage parents and parents to be
- 'Looked after Children' (i.e. those not living with parents)
- Young people with 'Learning Difficulties'
- Those who are homeless or who have a period of homelessness
- Those with alcohol or drug misuse issues

WHAT ARE THE MAIN CURRENT STRATEGIES ACROSS DERBYSHIRE TO PREVENT 'DROP OUTS'?

The LSC has worked with Derbyshire to produce a 'NEET Prevention Strategy for 2007-2010'. This is a very useful document clearly setting out the county strategy with clear definitions of actions, timings, responsibilities and monitoring.

The aims of the strategy are:

- To reduce NEET year on year to achieve a November 2010 target of 6.1% (in 2005 the actual was 6.5%)
- To contribute to an increase in the number and percentage of young people who remain in learning up to the age of 19 and beyond
- To contribute to an increase in the achievement of both age 16 and age 19, achievement targets

This strategy includes:

- Client Tracking – knowing where the students are and what they are doing
- Delivery of information, advice and guidance
- Effective Early Intervention
- Supply of Learning Provision
- Financial Incentives

WHAT FUTURE NEW STRATEGIES ARE PLANNED?

The LSC has just entered into an open competitive tendering round to procure innovative provision to support young people who are at risk of becoming NEET, using European Social Funding.

HOW DOES THE POSITION COMPARE WITH 'DROP OUT' RATES NATIONALLY AND IN EUROPE?

The LSC does not have bespoke systems to monitor drop outs locally or in Europe. However some statistics are available on the proportion of 16-18 year olds who are NEET:

	NEET numbers	2006%	2007%	2010 Target
England	97,115	8.8%	7.7%	6%
East Midlands	7,956	7.8%	7.0%	
Derbyshire	2,049	10.1%	8.7%	
Nottinghamshire	1,537	6.9%	5.5%	

WHAT ARE THE ORGANISATIONS IN THIS REGION WHICH WORK TO KEEP STUDENTS ON COURSES?

- Learning Providers i.e. schools and colleges
- Connexions Service
- Derbyshire Network of Training providers

CAN YOU RECOMMEND ANY CURRENT AREAS OF RESEARCH?

No

CAN YOU SUGGEST ANY OTHER AREAS OF RESEARCH WHICH MAY HELP OUR PROJECT?

Research into the 'churn effect' for young people who have had more than one learning experience / provider and who move between providers hoping to find the right course / programme for them and who may have periods of NEET between courses

Interview with the Connexions Service

WHAT STATISTICS ARE MAINTAINED BY CONNEXIONS?

The Connexions Service does not have its own systems in place to monitor regional numbers of school 'drop outs', although we do of course have information about the number of students we support at each school.

We can also confirm:

Currently there are 20,891 young people aged thirteen to 16 year olds in Derbyshire and of these 156 (0.75%) are not on a school roll. In Long Eaton, which is where Wilsthorpe college is situated, there are 1,441 of whom 25 (1.73%) are not on a school roll¹.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR MAINTAINING STATISTICS?

N/A for school 'drop outs'

WHAT ARE THE MAIN REASONS FOR 'DROP OUTS' BEFORE THE AGE OF 16?

- An inability to cope with school, not 'fitting in' socially
- Disciplinary / behavioral reasons
- Family circumstances
- Bullying
- Falling behind with work and not being able to make up the ground

WHAT ARE THE MAIN REASONS FOR 'DROP OUTS' POST 16?

- Bullying
- Financial reasons – because they need to earn money or believe they need to earn money
- Boredom, perhaps because the course was not what they thought
- Failure because they didn't do the work

WHAT ARE YOUR MAIN CURRENT STRATEGIES TO PREVENT 'DROP OUTS'?

- Early identification by teaching staff using a 'needs analysis' form
- Publicity about the service both to teachers and students, often leading to 'self referral'
- Intensive support for each individual, trying to 'peel away the layers' to reach the root of the problem
- Work in school with the 'Alternative Curriculum' group and students with 'Special Needs'
- Try to offer an incentive for continued education
- Help to overcome 'barriers to learning'

WHAT FUTURE NEW STRATEGIES ARE PLANNED?

- New 'Diplomas' should be a good alternative to existing qualifications
- More 'work related' courses

HOW DOES THE POSITION IN DERBYSHIRE COMPARE WITH 'DROP OUT' RATES NATIONALLY AND IN EUROPE?

- No information available

WHAT ARE THE ORGANISATIONS IN THIS REGION WHICH YOU WORK WITH TO KEEP STUDENTS ON COURSES?

- Learning and Skills Council (LSC)
- Youth Offending Service
- Behaviour Support service
- 'Breakout'
- Organisations which help with parenting skills

CAN YOU RECOMMEND ANY CURRENT AREAS OF RESEARCH?

No, although we do occasionally come across research documentation

CAN YOU SUGGEST ANY OTHER AREAS OF RESEARCH WHICH MAY HELP OUR PROJECT?

- 'Research to have a greater understanding of how the labour market works so that we can more accurately predict what the skill shortages are likely to be – current predictions don't go far enough ahead' e.g. a shortage of plumbers was anticipated but no thought was given about the effect of inward movement of skilled plumbers from Europe
- The effect on small businesses of the need to allow time to train new young employees

Interview with 'Safe Speak'

WHAT STATISTICS ARE MAINTAINED BY SAFESPEAK?

Safe Speak has been supporting young people in Derbyshire for 5 years. In the academic year 2006-07 our 11 counsellors saw 378 children and young people aged 9-19 for 1012 sessions of counselling, using 28 different venues.

This compares to our first year when a team of 4 counsellors saw 166 young people and offered 514 counselling sessions.

Other school based Safe Speak work:

- Drop-ins attended by children and young people = 246
- Group sessions with children and young people = 64
- Meetings with school staff about a student = 300+
- Contacts with parents to support their child = 30+
- Contacts with other agencies = 80+
- Talks and assemblies in schools = 122

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR MAINTAINING STATISTICS?

Safe Speak maintains its own statistics

WHAT ARE THE MAIN REASONS FOR 'DROP OUTS' BEFORE THE AGE OF 16?

- Emotional distress
- Disciplinary / behavioral reasons
- Family circumstances affecting ability to stay focused e.g. witnesses to domestic abuse
- Family bereavement
- Bullying and peer relationship difficulties
- Ill health

WHAT ARE THE MAIN REASONS FOR 'DROP OUTS' POST 16?

See above 'Reasons for 'drop outs' before 16

WHAT ARE YOUR MAIN CURRENT STRATEGIES TO PREVENT 'DROP OUTS'?

- Offering a full professional counselling service responding creatively to the emotional and psychological needs of young people facing difficult life experiences
- One to one counselling and allied activities
- Publicising the work of Safe Speak (a quarter of all referrals are self referrals)

WHAT FUTURE NEW STRATEGIES ARE PLANNED?

Suggestions from 'Safe Speak Evaluation – All Sites' are:

- 'Offer more solutions / ideas about problems without telling them what to do'
- 'Make the service more available so that there is a shorter waiting time'

HOW DOES THE POSITION IN DERBYSHIRE COMPARE WITH 'DROP OUT' RATES NATIONALLY AND IN EUROPE?

- No information available

WHAT ARE THE ORGANISATIONS IN THIS REGION WHICH YOU WORK WITH TO KEEP STUDENTS ON COURSES?

- School Child Protection Officer
- Social services
- Police
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health services (CAMHS)
- School Nurses
- Specialist housing and bereavement services

CAN YOU RECOMMEND ANY CURRENT AREAS OF RESEARCH?

'A detailed study of the pupils with statements of SEN permanently excluded in the last academic year' by Kathryn Pomerantz and V Graham (2005)

CAN YOU SUGGEST ANY OTHER AREAS OF RESEARCH WHICH MAY HELP OUR PROJECT?

'More research on the long term benefits of 'pastoral care' as an early intervention strategy to prevent 'drop outs'. This means teachers being sensitive to these issues and being able to signpost and support students to support services, ideally based in school, so they are easy and discrete to access'.

Head Teacher Interviews

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

All head teachers interviewed were at secondary schools in Derbyshire or Nottinghamshire with student numbers ranging from 900 to 1350 and a student age range of 11-18.

NUMBERS DROPPING OUT

Numbers 'dropping out' in the last 3 years in each school ranged from a minimum total of 8 to a maximum total of 14 (one school did not maintain separate 'drop out' statistics, only details of students leaving, without full details of the reason).

This is felt to be one indicator of the scale of the problem in the United Kingdom.

COMPARATIVE 'DROP OUT' RATES

None of the schools had access to comparative 'drop out' rates at other local schools – this links in with the difficulties experienced in obtaining national statistics.

MONITORING OF 'DROP OUT' / LONG TERM TRUANCY RATES

There were significant differences between the schools, with monitoring being done either daily, weekly, monthly or termly.

CONTACTS WITH FAMILIES

All schools maintained regular, often daily, contact with students and their families, but the person actually making the contact differed in each school and depended on the nature of the contact e.g. a formal meeting or telephone call checking on why the student was not in school. Contacting roles were:

- Attendance Officer
- Home-School Liaison Officer
- Education Welfare Officer
- Family Resource Worker
- Year Heads / Managers
- Tutors

WHAT ARE THE MAIN REASONS FOR 'DROP OUTS' / LONG TERM TRUANCY?

There were a variety of reasons cited:

- Poor behaviour leading to permanent exclusion
- Mental Health
- Late entrants – students who did not join at the start of the term
- Family trauma / breakdown
- Disaffection late in Year 11 (last year of compulsory education)
- Peer group pressure
- Family history of similar problems (Dysfunctional Families)

WHAT ARE THE WARNING SIGNS FOR IDENTIFICATION OF POTENTIAL PROBLEMS?

- Attendance record – electronic attendance monitoring
- Regular lateness
- General disaffection and lack of participation in lessons
- Anti-social behaviour – learning a low priority
- Pastoral System

DOES THE CURRENT EDUCATION SYSTEM HAVE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON ‘DROP OUT’ RATES?

- ‘No, students today have more choice than ever before’
- ‘We feel we have appropriate courses to meet every individual need’
- ‘Relevance is the key and there is a need to increase vocational provision’
- ‘We still have a lot to do to satisfy the ‘ECM’ (Every Child Matters) agenda’
- ‘We talk about ‘personalisation of the curriculum’ but still teach ‘whole groups’
- ‘The main impact is family based - a lack of appreciation of the value of education and low aspirations’
- ‘Would do if we weren’t flexible on curriculum’
- ‘Not enough external support available for learners prior to their return after exclusion’

WHAT STRATEGIES ARE USED TO PREVENT ‘DROP OUTS’?

- Early Intervention and regular monitoring
- Engagement with families
- Pro-active Education Welfare Officer
- Intervention at Year Head / Tutor level
- Ensuring appropriate curriculum / course offered (especially vocational courses)
- Counselling
- SEN (Special Educational Needs) support
- Engagement Programmes
- Drama Therapy
- Partnership with other local schools enabling students to be offered placements at other schools
- Behaviour Support Plans
- Individual Education Plans

WHAT ACTIVITIES ARE USED TO IMPROVE CONTINUITY?

- Catch-up courses
- Re-take of examinations
- Taster Sessions before course selection
- Alternative courses more suited to individual students
- Work based learning opportunities
- Student Support Centre intervention
- Use of Adult and Community Learning Provision
- KS3 (11-14) and KS4 (15/16) Support Centres

WHAT IS THE IMPORTANCE OF TEAMWORK TO AVOID FAILURES?

All Head teachers were unanimous in their belief that teamwork and multi-agency support is absolutely essential.

AGENCIES USED BY SCHOOLS

- Connexions
- Social Services
- CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services)
- Police & Youth Offending Teams
- YISP (Youth Inclusion and Support Panels)
- Behaviour Support Service
- Barnardos
- SafeSpeak
- Counsellors

HOW IS MONITORING AND EVALUATION UNDERTAKEN?

- Individual Reviews
- Via Individual Education Plans (IEPs)
- Attainment levels
- Disciplinary system records
- Attendance Records
- Pastoral meetings of relevant staff

WHAT NEW STRATEGIES ARE PLANNED?

- Employment of Curriculum Support Assistants
- Employment of Teaching Assistants
- Restructuring of administration support
- An increase in vocational provision
- An increase in pastoral support to help 'remove barriers to learning'

WHAT IS THE DEPENDENCE ON FUNDING AVAILABILITY

All Head teachers were unanimous in their belief that funding plays a huge part in their ability to prevent 'drop outs' – 'Without funding support from external agencies e.g. SafeSpeak, Barnardos, Behaviour Support Service etc is not readily available in large enough quantities and their help can make a huge difference'

OTHER SUGGESTED AREAS OF RESEARCH

- Pre-school intervention, concentrating on parenting skills
 - Research on the links between different styles of parenting and student performance / attitudes
 - Research on the benefits of more individualized learning programmes and new more cost effective methods of course delivery
-