

West Berkshire LSCB – School Exclusions Audit

Purpose of the audit

Whilst overall our rate of exclusions in West Berkshire is comparable to other comparator similar authorities; West Berkshire LSCB partner agencies have become concerned about the increase in exclusions of our most 'vulnerable' children and young people (referred to as children from now on). West Berkshire LSCB noted in an exception report focused on exclusions on 10 December 2015 that fixed term exclusions of vulnerable Primary school pupils has risen from 37% in 14/15 Autumn Term to 53% in the spring and summer terms (2014/15)¹.

On 10 December 2015 West Berkshire LSCB Board agreed to conduct a multi-professional audit of school exclusions in West Berkshire occurring during the period September 2015 to December 2015. Specifically the audit sought to understand:

- i) why an apparently disproportionate number of children and young people who are defined as 'vulnerable' are being excluded
- ii) what is leading to the exclusions
- iii) what support both in school, and from other agencies, is most helpful to the children involved and to the schools seeking to meet the child's needs
- iv) whether during the period of exclusion, the risks to the affected children change

All schools with a pupil on their roll who was excluded between September and December 2015 were asked to contribute to the audit.

1) Multi-professional engagement

Over 150 audit returns were submitted to West Berkshire LSCB relating to 39 children and young people selected to be reviewed in the Exclusions audit. There was an excellent range of partner agency contributions including:

- all of the schools (over 20 schools) and Newbury College who were asked to contribute, which added considerable value to this audit.
- 15 audits from General Practice, which is a significantly larger audit return from the sector and added significant value to the audit findings.
- BHFT CAMHS and school nursing.
- Criminal justice and YOT.
- Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust.
- West Berkshire Education Welfare services.

¹ The % of fixed term exclusions of vulnerable pupils during the term

Audit returns were received belatedly from West Berkshire Children and Families services, which limited the multi-professional analysis of West Berkshire Children's Social Care records. West Berkshire YOT audit returns included routine review of social care records, which provided a partial picture to inform the analysis.

Headteacher and Newbury College colleagues in West Berkshire are specifically thanked for their engagement with the audit process and their attendance at the Quality and Performance workshop on 27th April to contribute to the analysis work.

In addition, Reading Children's services representatives, including the Virtual School Head and representatives from Primary Mental Health services, joined the LSCB Quality and Performance sub-group to contribute to the discussion.

2 Audit Cohort

2.1 Of the 39 children subject to multi-professional review in the audit:

- 31 children had been subject to exclusions in the period of the audit; of these children 6 were permanently excluded.
- 10 children reviewed in the audit were subject to 'managed moves' in the same period i.e. to avoid exclusion; 2 of these children went onto be excluded.
- 1 school nominated an additional child who had been excluded outside of the period of the cohort analysis, but yielded helpful multi-professional learning.

2.2 Pan-LSCB cohort

Of these 31 children 35% of the children were Reading Local Authority representatives and 65% were West Berkshire local authority residents.

2.3 Gender & Heritage

73% of the children excluded were boys and 27% were girls.

77% of the 31 children excluded from school were of 'White British' heritage; the remaining 23% were drawn from Albanian (1); White Other (2); White Western European (1); Portuguese (1) and Any Other Mixed Heritage (2) backgrounds.

2.4 Age

The majority of exclusions occurred in academic Years 9, 10 and 11; which is consistent with national analysis (see Appendix 1):

- Year 9 – 32%
- Year 10 – 45%
- Year 11 – 13%
- Years 5-8 – 13%

The LSCB is asked to specifically note that the youngest child excluded was a reception age child aged 5 years (fixed term exclusion of 5 days).

2.5 Economic Deprivation

7% of children were living in households where audits indicate the families were in receipt of out of work benefits; these households also lived with uncertain or temporary housing, or were facing risk of eviction.

3 Trigger factors that led to the exclusion(s) – What is leading to Exclusions?

School audits identified the following trigger factors leading to exclusion:

- 26 % Physical assault against a student (55% of these children were on the ASD/ADHD pathway)
- 17% Verbal abuse (43% of these children were on the ASD/ADHD pathway)
- 10% violent threats (50% of these children were on the ASD/ADHD pathway)
- 12% 'disruption' (20% of these children were on the ASD/ADHD pathway)
- 7% physical assault against staff member (66% of these children were on the ASD/ADHD pathway)
- 4% Lack of compliance/defiance (one child was on the ASD/ADHD pathway)
- 4% damage to property (two children were on the ASD/ADHD pathway)
- 2% Racism (this child was on the ASD/ADHD pathway)

4 Summary analysis of contributory needs or risks contributing to exclusion

The most common needs or risks were:

- 54% - Request for CAMHS support for 21 of the 39 children; the vast majority of these children were directed to the ASD and ADHD pathway. Of the children referred to CAMHS: 8 showed suicidal ideation; 2 were self harming; 2 had been victims of sexual offences; 1 had psychotic episodes; 1 had a recent bereavement (please note these risk factors were not exclusive).
- Of the 39 children, 22 were known to the Royal Berkshire Hospital (56%). Only 4 had been seen in the last year: 2 of these children are receiving ongoing care from Community Paediatrics. 3 young people had episodes of not being brought for appointment.

- 19% of children had contact with Education Welfare Service (EWS) for lower than expected levels of attendance. EWS note that exclusions exacerbated attendance challenges; however the audits also noted that few EWOs had considered risk of exclusion in their work with families.
- 22% - were children receiving support from Children's Social Care; either as children subject to Child Protection Plan or Looked After Children. Over half of these children were the responsibility of other Children's Social Care services (Reading, Hampshire and Buckinghamshire); these children were Looked After by their host authority, but placed in West Berkshire.
- 13% of children were living with parents/carers convicted of criminal offences and of these, 11% of children had a parent in prison.
- 10% of the children excluded had been hospitalised in their early years i.e. following birth or in their first 4 years of life, leading to periods of separation from their families e.g. disrupted early life attachment.
- 10% of children were living in households where there were identified alcohol/substance misuse needs.
- 10% of children were living in households where there were reports of domestic abuse
- 8% of children were identified as young carers.
- 8% of children were living in households where the parent/carer(s) was unemployed.
- 8% of children were living in temporary accommodation or were facing risk of eviction.
- 1 child was identified as living in a household with Toxic Trio risk factors
- 1 child was linked to risk of Child Sexual Exploitation
- 1 child was linked to missing episodes.

All of the children audited had a minimum of three of these risks present at any one time.

These risk factors had, for the most part, been identified before an exclusion occurred. The evidence in the audit supported a broad conclusion that emotional health and social care risk factors increased after exclusion. However, there were specific examples of individual children for whom exclusion caused professionals significant anxiety, particularly where children were perceived to be 'safer at school' than at home. All contributors agreed that exclusion should therefore be seen as a last resort; this is a particularly crucial learning point, when considered in the context of learning point 10a (see Findings and Recommendations section).

5 The support school colleagues thought was most effective internally and reduced the likelihood of exclusion

Most schools highlighted the work of key individuals within the school environment who had showed commitment or creativity in working with a child at risk of exclusion, to reduce the likelihood of exclusion.

- 3.1 Over half of schools highlighted the effective use of internal isolation or internal exclusion, as a warning to reduce the likelihood of formal exclusion following.
- 3.2 Use of restorative approaches was highlighted by four schools as an effective approach to de-escalating challenging behavior; this was triangulated with restorative practice pilot training (Building Community Together programme) for all but one school. The fourth school described using a restorative approach; but the detail of the audit did not substantiate application of restorative principles.
- 3.3 Staff or peer mentoring of children at risk of exclusion
- 3.4 Littleheath school highlighted that where children had been given the opportunity to make recompense for their behavior e.g. 'give something back' to their school or local community, this was seen as particularly effective.

6 The support school colleagues value the most from external partners

In order of popularity, the following support was most highly valued by schools:

- 1st - Outreach from re-integration service
- 2nd - Support from Cranbury College (Reading)
- 3rd - Children and Families support and advice (West Berkshire CSC)
- 4th - ASD advisory support
- 5th - Schools commissioning private therapeutic support for children on CAMHS waitlists

7 Good practice to share

The Downs School – when as a final resort a child was excluded colleagues at the Downs school worked everyday with mum to ensure that the child was cared for and adequately supervised at home; because home was not identified as an environment in which the child was being adequately supported.

St Finian’s School – clearly identified Toxic Trio risk factors in the life of a child, other agencies had not identified these risks and made a child protection referral. St Finians’ continued to pursue multi-professional help for the child and spent considerable time adapting the school environment to accommodate the specific needs of this student and provide ‘safe spaces’ for the child to retreat to when they needed to; avoiding further exclusions.

Littleheath – had a range of creative examples of using restorative practices, peer to peer and staff to peer mentoring and ‘giving something back’ e.g. reparation opportunities; to reduce the likelihood of repeat exclusions.

Long Lane – sought ASD specialist advice, whilst waiting for CAMHS support for the child, to create a nurturing and safe support system for a child with ASD at risk of exclusion; this included an hourly support system and the creation of a ‘safe space.’

In summary, analysing the good practice of these schools in the context of child development and psychology, these schools identified as providing a nurturing environment were all:

- Providing safe and quiet spaces or individuals for children to be able to ‘calm down’ and experience an increased feeling of safety or assurance – in the context of the early attachment traumas many of these children have experienced, this is a particularly crucial area of local learning and good practice that can be disseminated.

8 What audit contributors thought could be done differently

Many partners highlighted the need for **proactive ASD and ADHD outreach advice to schools** to help managing challenging behaviours in a school context; given the average wait times for ASD and ADHD pathway

See below West Berkshire CAMHS wait times from February 16:

	0-4 wks	5-7 wks	8-12 wks	Over 12 wks	Grand Total
West Berks Borough Council					
CAMHS A&D Specialist Pathway	6	2	7	41	56
CAMHS ADHD Specialist Pathway	7	3	5	76	91
CAMHS ASD Diagnostic Team	11	11	15	306	343
CAMHS Specialist Community	7	1	9	12	29
CAMHS CPE & Urgent care	54	14	40	0	111
Grand Total	85	31	76	434	628

- 8.1 Some schools suggested that **more outreach from the re-integration service** to provide behavior management advice would be of benefit
- 8.2 In all of the **Out of Borough placements of LAC children** within West Berkshire there was evidence **of insufficient analysis of risk, sharing of risk management and joint planning with the receiving schools**. All partners contributing to audits on these children highlighted the need for urgent improvements to information sharing from Reading, Hampshire and Buckinghamshire.
- 8.3 A number of schools and Newbury College identified **that transition information** from the preceding school (following 'Fresh Start' i.e. managed moves; or following re-integration after exclusion in a previous school) **was insufficiently detailed to inform integration and management**.
- 8.4 One school suggested that referrals to Children & Families Services that included **Toxic Trio risk factors need to be treated more seriously by West Berkshire CAAS**; the Headteacher and Service Manager for CAAS are meeting together to review the historic practice on this specific case and review the improvements in CAAS team identification of Toxic Trio risk factors, following West Berkshire LSCB Toxic Trio audit reported in December 2015. This joint review of the case will identify if any further improvements are required
- 8.5 Voluntary sector colleagues have challenged LSCB partners to consider what **more can be done to support primary schools managing challenging behavior**; in specific response to qualitative evidence in the audit suggesting that children had needed to be asked to wait outside classrooms in more than one school setting in order to manage the challenging and sometimes violent behaviour of one pupil.

9 Findings and Recommendations arising from multi-professional workshop (27th April 16)

10a) Challenging perverse incentives in our system

Headteacher colleagues contributing to the workshop were clear that the way in which our children's services system is currently structured provides a perverse incentive for schools to exclude children in order to receive additional help and support to manage their needs.

This system anomaly does not promote the safeguarding or welfare of our children and young people and must be addressed promptly. This was brought into particularly sharp

focus when attendees reviewed children who were perceived to be at their 'safest' in a school environment.

The audit returns evidence that suggests that few services had considered the risk of exclusion before an exclusion occurred; and in addition that schools and Newbury College were sometimes working with an incomplete picture of need and risk, particularly where a LAC child was placed by another Local Authority area. Workshop discussion and audits both suggests that exclusions were not being effectively analysed or understood in the context of wider holistic needs. In the context of the national evidence of 'what works' with children at risk of exclusion (see Appendix 1); it is evident that holistic assessment is crucial. The current piloting of the Early Help Assessment tool in some West Berkshire schools provides an opportunity to reinforce and support this change in practice. A number of schools highlighted the reductions in school commissioned Family Support Worker resource and how enabling strong multi-professional co-ordination and planning with families was of particular relevance to improving practice, which is congruent with national research highlighted in Appendix 1.

The opportunities provided by the new Headteacher led forum 'Pupil Placement Panel' overseeing children experiencing exclusions, or at risk of permanent exclusion, between schools was noted as an effective way of schools considering the holistic needs of a student and prioritising their educational continuity in the midst of challenging behaviours; however, this was being limited by the regular lack of attendance of some schools.

Recommendations:

10ai) All children's services to review their responsiveness to children at 'risk of exclusion'; to ensure early intervention and support is prioritized to avoid exclusion.

10aii) West Berkshire Children's Delivery Group (H&WBB) to ensure that the re-design of Targeted Prevention services includes reducing the likelihood of exclusion as a priority. In addition, that the Children's Delivery Group promotes through the roll-out of the Early Help Assessment tool and wider workforce development strategy the evidenced based practice (identified in Appendix 1).

10aiii) That schools are encouraged to invest in personalised learning programmes including extra curricular activities and support; to maximize to promote the unique skills and talents of each child and promote inclusion.

10aiv) That West Berkshire Education services engage with schools regularly not attending the Headteacher led Pupil Placement Panel to ensure that the shared responsibility for safeguarding children and promoting their inclusion in mainstream schools is equally shared by all schools.

10av) That West Berkshire LSCB Chair writes to the identified LSCBs in this report from which improvements in information sharing relating to levels of need and risk for LAC children, placed within West Berkshire from outside of district.

10b) Pre-diagnosis support and advice.

The high proportion of children on the CAMHS ADHD or ASD pathways and the associated delays in receiving diagnosis was of particular relevance to reducing the likelihood of exclusions. Outreach to schools to provide ASD and ADHD behavior management advice was identified by all attendees as a gap in service.

It was also agreed that ensuring that identifying potential ADHD/ASD in early years settings would be of particular benefit to introduce coping and behavior management strategies would be ideal. Secondary school colleagues presented a view that all Primary schools would benefit from investing in Emotional Health Academy service outreach to intervene early with emotional health needs that often contribute to risk of exclusion at secondary phase.

Recommendations:

10bi) That Berkshire West CCG Children's Commissioning group ensure that the June 16 workshop on ASD/ADHD support to families on CAMHS pathway waiting lists is directly informed by the findings from this audit and ensures that commissioning support to schools and early years settings is reviewed as a priority.

10bii) That West Berkshire's Emotional Health Academy (EHA) managers review the findings from this audit and develop a ADHD/ASD advisory support programme for schools. That West Berkshire EHA learns from established good practice in Reading Borough re: parenting programmes for children with ASD or ADHD.

10biii) That Reading and West Berkshire education leads specifically consider how outreach from specialist education providers with expertise in ADHD and ASD could be facilitated to support secondary school inclusion practice.

10c) Local Offer

Many attendees were uncertain what additional support was available to children at risk of exclusion and there were particular confusions for schools serving children across the West Berkshire and Reading border; particularly for children demonstrating behaviours associated with ASD or ADHD .

Recommendations:

10ci) That Berkshire West CCG Children's Commissioning Group ensure that the BHFT website and Berkshire West Councils Local Offer websites clearly signpost to ASD and ADHD help or support services. That this information is shared in a clear format with all Reading and West Berkshire schools.

10d) Sharing best practice

Good practice in schools could be effectively shared by using the ELSA network and Behaviour Leads network more fully to share what is working well and disseminate evidenced based practice (Appendix 1).

Recommendations:

10di) That West Berkshire Education Services adapt the design and implementation of the ELSA and Behaviour Leads networks to share information more effectively.

10e) Influencing PRU service re-design

All attendees agreed that the PRU service redesign provides opportunities for a review of the outreach and advice, service to schools seeking support to manage challenging behavior. In addition, a particular focus on ensuring there is sufficient resource at Key Stage 3 was recommended by Headteachers in attendance.

Recommendations:

10ei) That West Berkshire Education Services incorporate these findings into the re-design of PRU services.

There were 3 children who had not been brought for appointment at the RBFT. This can be an indicator of neglect or concerns at home.

Recommendations

That RBFT ensure there is a robust pathway for children not brought for appointment so that children are followed up appropriately.

Pan-LSCB communication

West Berkshire LSCB will share the findings from this audit with neighbouring LSCB areas and in particular with Reading LSCB; and will ensure that neighbouring areas are specifically asked to ensure that information associated with the risks and needs of Looked After Children placed out of borough are shared with the receiving school.

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