



# Scottish Government Debate: Attainment

## Briefing from Includem for MSPs

### **About Includem**

Includem is a charity which helps Scotland's most vulnerable and challenging young people to achieve positive change in their behaviour and relationships and move towards leading fulfilling lives. We are there 24/7 and believe young people are never beyond help. By achieving better results for them, we also reduce public spending in the immediate and long term.

### **Our vision**

We support the Scottish Government's focus on raising attainment and improving educational outcomes for all young people in Scotland and in particular the renewed focus on Scotland's most disadvantaged communities.

Our vision is that young people and their families are supported with targeted and personalised wraparound support as part of core school provision and that those children who face the greatest barriers to involvement in education are given the support they need so they can achieve their full potential.

### **What Includem does**

The Scottish Parliament recently completed an update to their 2012 inquiry into the educational outcomes for looked after children and although some progress has been made, the statistics for those most vulnerable young people continue to cause concern – the attendance levels for children who are looked after at home is 79% compared with 93% for all pupils.

Includem is a specialist provider which works through commissioned arrangements with local authorities to provide services for these vulnerable young people and their families in their own homes and communities. We deliver this out with school hours with one to one tailored support at evenings and weekends alongside access to a 24 hour support framework via our free helpline.

Includem's work is focused on our experience that all children are ready to learn when they are emotionally stable, with positive relationships in their lives and when they are encouraged and supported to attend school regularly.

We work in various local authorities including as a delivery partner in Dundee for the Inclusion Plus Public Social Partnership alongside Apex Scotland and SkillForce. Through this partnership Includem provides four of Dundee's secondary schools (all in areas of deprivation and with previously very high rates of exclusion) a home and parental support service for those children whose home and family lives are known to be a barrier to both attendance and attainment.

This work recognises that to raise attainment in a sustainable way support must be provided to improve child/parent relationships, child/school relationships and parent/school relationships. Identifying and addressing underlying causes of problems is key.

### The key elements of the programme are:

- Practical support to ensure school attendance such as reinforcing bed times, getting up routines etc;
- Proactive work with parents to set boundaries and manage difficult behaviour at home;
- Supporting young people to think about communication and relationships, managing their frustration, anger, emotions etc;
- Work with parents to access help for health, housing, finance and other problems which undermine their own parenting capacity and the young person's family and home life;
- Work with parents on their attitudes to education and responsibilities – giving them the confidence to engage with education;
- Close working with pupil support services and other agencies and linking in with each school's attainment and inclusion policy;
- Age and stage appropriate support for the child out with school hours which develops and reinforces attendance and engagement as well as confidence, motivation and ability to participate in school work.

A case study which highlights the importance of work 'beyond the school gates' to improve attainment is attached at the end of this briefing. Although the young person, Kenny, is 16 the lessons from his experience are relevant to interventions with children and young people of all ages.

### What Includem believes is required to raise attainment

Whilst we welcome additional funding for and focus on raising attainment, it is important that the implementation of this policy focuses not just on the school experience but **the whole approach** taken to engaging children and young people in education.

What happens to a young person when they go home is fundamental and in Includem's 15 years of experience working with families we know that **a stable family life is critical to a young person's personal development and to their educational achievement.**

The June 2014 report<sup>1</sup> by the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission into the 'Lessons from London' research concluded that whilst the importance of encouraging early achievement in primary schools is evident, "we should not completely discount the role of secondary schools in sustaining achievements into post-16 outcomes". **We would echo this conclusion and in particular we would encourage more support for young people in the crucial and oftentimes challenging transition from primary school to secondary school and for services to recognise the importance of getting transitions right.**

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/321969/London\\_Schools\\_-\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/321969/London_Schools_-_FINAL.pdf)



Finally, we would encourage the Scottish Government to **invest in measures at all ages** which will recognise and tackle the complexity and challenges of some young people who are most at risk of disengaging from education.

**For further information please contact Michael Shanks, Communications and Policy Manager on 0141 427 0523 or [michael.shanks@includem.co.uk](mailto:michael.shanks@includem.co.uk).**

## **Case Study:** Kenny's Story

Kenny was 16 when he was referred to Includem. He was a cause for concern for his school on account of his poor attendance (lower than 50%), frequent exclusions and a recent charge of breach of the peace in the local community.

Kenny was defeatist and unengaged. He believed he was never going to succeed at school and he had challenges at home – he was often the sole carer for his mum who had mental health problems and he had a challenging relationship with his dad. Neither of his parents offered him any encouragement to attend school.

Includem worked with Kenny to build up his confidence and to get him to think about his goals and ambitions. He worked through our cognitive toolkit, "A Better Life" and thought through all his relationships – good and bad – and what they meant to him. Through this work we supported Kenny's mum and dad to think of ways they could engage better with him and both parents agreed to take more responsibility for his actions at home.

His negative behaviours were challenged head-on by encouraging his parents to set down boundaries. As a result of this Kenny started to get into more of a routine including thinking about homework, going to bed at reasonable times and getting up in time for school each morning. Both Kenny and his parents used our 24/7 helpline to reinforce these boundaries and to seek help before his behaviour escalated.

As his attendance at school improved we started to work constructively with the school to encourage him to become more involved in his classes and to take part in lessons. He prepared an exam timetable with our workers as part of thinking through his future plans.

After 38 weeks Kenny exited our services and he is now reengaged with education with much improved attendance and reduced late coming. He sat every exam he was enrolled in and has now attended a college interview showing his willingness to continue to engage in education beyond school. He has not picked up any further charges in the community.

