



Combating Truancy: A Family Lives Report

By Jane Colechin

Executive Summary

Truancy is a significant problem for schools, families and children alike. On any given day, it is estimated that 64,000 children will skip school without permission¹. Missing out on school can seriously affect future life chances and has been associated with a whole host of difficulties including educational disadvantage, teenage pregnancy, criminal behaviour, unemployment in later life and a tendency to perpetuate a cycle of truancy into the next generation². The effects of these problems, and the costs to both society and the individual, can be considerable.

This report looks at statistics and information from Family Lives' national helpline, Parentline, and reviews the literature and research evidence to examine what steps should be taken to reduce the numbers of children and young people persistently absent from school.

Combating Truancy

A Family Lives Report

Statistics from Parentline showed that the majority of parents concerned about truancy had children at secondary schools:

- 67% of parents called about children aged 13-15 years old and 20% of parents had children aged 16 to 18.
- In contrast, just 2% of parents phoned up for children aged between 4 to 9 years old and 9% for children aged 10-12.

This reflects a national picture where more children are missing secondary school. However, a worrying trend has emerged over the last five years, where unauthorised absence in primary schools has increased by 56%, while secondary schools have seen an increase of 21% over four years, with a small decrease of 3% in the last year³.

"I have 16 year old son who is driving me mad, we have had nothing but trouble with him since he was 15. First it was skipping school, then he got in with the wrong crowd and got into drugs, drink and trouble with the police. We have been to court with 3 times for shoplifting, burglary and for affray... He has taken valium, cocaine and cannabis and maybe other drugs. I have been at the end of my tether and at the bad times even thought of ending my life as that's how far he has pushed me."

Persistent absenteeism is seeing a downward trend, but figures remain significant and for those who are regularly missing lessons, outcomes are significantly worse, both socially and financially with effects at the individual, family, school and national levels. The report finds that truancy has a negative impact on:

- A child's educational attainment. Data from Parentline calls taken between April 2010 and March 2011 shows that the parents of truanting children are particularly concerned about educational issues. Over half of parents (55%) made mention of their child's education when calling about truancy, compared to just 7% across all other call issues.
- A child's engagement in risky behaviours. Parents who called Family Lives about truancy were much more likely to mention issues about risky behaviours than in calls about all other subjects. Parents were five times more likely to mention issues with drugs (21% in calls about truanting versus 4% in other calls); six times more likely to talk about their child stealing (20% compared to 3%); smoking (20% compared to 2%); and over five times more likely to mention alcohol (17% compared to 3%).
- Family Relationships. Some 40% of callers mentioned conflict as part of their call about truancy, where conflict typically features in only 16% of all other calls.

- A report by New Philanthropy Capital puts a figure on the overall cost of truancy to the exchequer, estimating that some 198,000 persistent truants would cost £8.8bn or £800m per annum at 2005 prices.

"My grades at school have gone right down and I'm bunking off when my mum's at work because I can't face all the lessons I have with the bullies. I'm being called names about my weight and I have nobody to go around with at break. When I sit down with my packed lunch the others get up and move away. I'm taking so much time off that my mum is going to find out soon. I've told my head of year and she spoke to them but they're still doing it. This is making me feel very depressed and I've self-harmed a few times".

Bullying UK Website User

This report identifies four interconnecting categories of reasons for truancy:

- Child Centred reasons, which included low self-esteem and mental health problems. Parentline data found that parents were much more likely to report that their child had self-esteem issues when discussing truancy compared to all other calls (12% of calls compared to 4%). Parents were also much more likely (53% of truancy calls compared to 14% of all calls) to speak about their child's anger and more likely to state that their child was stressed (30% compared to 16% of all calls)
- Home and parental pressures, which include a lack of parental engagement in their child's education and learning, or a chaotic home environment.
- Peer Relationships, most significantly bullying which can cause children and young people to fear going into school.
- School based reasons, including systemic issues, leadership issues or a failure on the part of the school to prioritise strategies to prevent truancy.

Over the last decade the number of parents who have been prosecuted has risen dramatically. In 2001, there were 1,961 prosecutions. By 2008 this figure was 9,506.

Currently the coalition government is investigating new ways to tackle truancy as part of their social policy review and has tasked Charles Taylor, a head teacher and the Government's discipline advisor to consider proposals to cut benefits to parent with children who truant⁴.

Despite the already numerous sanctions that can be imposed on parents, research is unclear on whether punitive measures work to bring down overall rates of truancy. Jailing parents for their children's truancy can hit the headlines, but research suggests that it makes no difference to overall national statistics on school attendance. Over ten years, from 1997 to 2007, prosecutions rose by 76% to over 10,000 prosecutions per year whilst incidences of truancy over the same period increased⁵.

Part of the explanation for this is that punitive measures only target parental behaviour and explicitly parentally condoned absences in cases where there is an absence of countervailing circumstantial or familial pressures which would lead to pupil absences irrespective of the potential sanctions. Families who are in different circumstances, and who therefore may have other needs, will require other measures to address their own particular issues.

Many of the families Family Lives works with have experienced a fundamental breakdown in the parent – child relationship that leaves them unable to enforce boundaries. They have tried everything they can think of to persuade, cajole, bribe or force their children to attend school and have no other strategies to employ. Family Support can help give that parent new skills to get the parent-child relationship back on track and empower the parent to regain their child's respect and their position of authority, enabling them to enforce boundaries.

The report makes three recommendations to reduce levels of truancy:

- Government should consider how to encourage all schools to offer family support as part of a core strategy for addressing truancy. Mechanisms for sharing good practice between schools and clusters of schools should be considered, enabling schools to

make the most of extra money afforded as part of the pupil premium.

- Schools should give thought to their strategies for engaging parents. Strong parental engagement in education improves outcomes including attendance, but many parents encounter barriers to participating in their child's education which may include their own poor experience of education. Schools must be aware of the potential barriers and consider strategies for engaging all parents.
- Ofsted have retained a measurement of schools' work to engage parents under the leadership and management section of the new draft framework for school inspections which is due to come into force in January 2012, pending the successful passage of a Bill through Parliament. It is essential that inspectors recognise the importance of this measure and its relationship with other factors such as attainment, behaviour and attendance, and continue to prioritise it in the new streamlined inspections regime

Introduction

Truancy is a significant problem for schools, families and children alike. On any given day, it is estimated that 64,000 children will skip school without permission⁶. Missing out on school can seriously affect future life chances and has been associated with a whole host of difficulties including educational disadvantage, teenage pregnancy, criminal behaviour, unemployment in later life and a tendency to perpetuate a cycle of truancy into the next generation⁷. The effects of these problems, and the costs to both society and the individual, can be considerable.

Every year Family Lives receives hundreds of calls from parents concerned about their children's truancy. Truancy can take a particular toll on parents and families, especially as it is parents who are responsible for ensuring that their children attend schools and incur punishments if they fail to deal with children who persistently truant. Family Lives recognises the multiple pressures that families can face when dealing with truancy. We provide essential support to over 1 million families per year making happier families and a stronger society. We offer support in a number of different forms, including a free helpline, a website which includes web based support and we also work in partnership with local and national agencies to develop innovative and practical ways to shape and expand support to parents and families.

The recent summer riots have returned the issue of truancy to national prominence. Michael Gove stated in a recent speech to the Durand Academy in south London, that there is a clear link between educational failure and the recent riots. For some children he states "education is a tragic succession of missed opportunities... poor boundaries and failure to learn to read in primary school leads to disruptive behaviour, truancy and exclusion... it is from that underclass that gangs draw their recruits,

young offenders' institutions find their inmates and prisons replenish their cells"⁸

Truancy is a complex problem that urgently needs to be addressed. We welcome the recent announcement by the coalition government to review measures to tackle truancy in school and to investigate new ways to tackle it.

Using call data from our family helpline, Parentline, we seek to unpick the issue of truancy, to understand some of the major causes behind it and to review evidence-based solutions to tackle the problem. Tackling truancy is a major challenge, but there is clear scope for achieving significant reductions in absence. In this report we make a small number of recommendations for Government, Schools and school inspectors that we hope will help identify a way forward to tackling truancy

We believe that families are the lynch-pin in the relationship between schools and children and the key to overcoming truancy. This claim is supported by a strong evidence base, a general consensus in the research community and by practitioners: Developing the interaction between parents, pupils and schools is the best method to achieve sustained improvements in attendance⁹. Parental support and family interventions can make a real difference in this respect. Being tailored to suit individual circumstances, up-skilling parents through flexible support is much more likely to be effective than one-size-fits-all measures and punitive penalties¹⁰

Case Study

I first heard about Family Lives when I was at my wits end. My son, a teenager at the time, would not go to school. At first I thought the school was being helpful and supportive but it soon became clear that they were just paying lip service to the problem.

My son would not talk about what was wrong at school. We went to the GP who could only offer counselling. When my son started to self-harm, the school took a little bit more notice, but not a lot.

I phoned the school one morning to tell them I was having problems getting him in to school so we would be a bit late and was told by the teacher: "that's ok but you will end up in prison if he carries on not attending."

The teacher then went on to tell me about Family Lives whom I contacted out of desperation. (at first the meetings felt like I was being punished) then I attended some groups and found other parents with difficulties. Through small changes I have a much better relationship with my son. I don't get stressed when he has a problem with school and now he wants to stay on to sixth form.

The Scale of the Problem

The word truancy means different things to different people and there are various types of truancy. They include deliberately missing school without good cause but there the simplicity ends. A range of conventionally understood types of school absenteeism can be classified as being truancy. These include specific lesson absence or specific lesson truancy and even parentally condoned truancy¹¹.

There are no universally agreed, uniform national statistics which makes accounting for true extent of truancy complex¹². Currently, the Department of Education (DfE) asks local authorities in England to report 'authorised' and 'unauthorised' absence and these are usually defined as:

- **Authorised Absence:** absence is with permission from an authorised representative of the school and includes absence rates for which a satisfactory explanation has been provided.
- **Unauthorised absence:** absence without permission of the school and includes all unexplained or unjustified absences¹³

Central collection of unauthorised absence gives an approximate measure of truancy in England. However, this is not without its difficulties. These definitions can present problems for head teachers as they try to differentiate between children who are absent from school without parental knowledge and those who, while not too ill to attend, are absenting themselves with parental permission¹⁴.

In addition, the recording of pupil absence can vary between different institutions. For example, schools have discretion to allow up to 10 days absence in a school year in special circumstances, but in practice, a school will decide whether to authorise absence on a case-by-case basis. In addition, each school will have a different

policy on what constitutes a special circumstance and hence what absence will be recorded as authorised or unauthorised¹⁵. Practical and policy differences between internal procedures for recording absence is one of the main reasons for the existence of large variations in rates between schools' attendance¹⁶.

According to figures for maintained schools from DfE (which records figures for every half day of school missed), authorised absence across all schools has been falling over the last five years (by 13%) but the level of unauthorised absence has incrementally increased year-on-year until 2009/10 (by 30% over 4 years), where there has been a slight reduction in numbers of pupils (a fall of 1%). This is shown in table 1 on the next page.

Table 1**Truancy in England¹⁷**

	2004/ 2005	2005/ 2006	2006/ 2007	2007/ 2008	2008/ 2009	2009/ 2010
Numbers of day pupils	6,704,920	6,568,155	6,332,065	6,244,890	6,182,245	6,163,875
Authorised Absence (%)	5.77	6.05	5.49	5.28	5.21	5.00
Nos. of pupils AA	386,874	397,373	347,630	329,730	322,095	308,194
Unauthorised Absence (UA) (%)	0.81	0.92	1.00	1.01	1.05	1.04
Nos. of pupils UA	54,310	60,427	63,321	63,073	64,914	64,104
Total Absences (%)	6.58	6.97	6.49	6.29	6.26	6.04
Nos. of Primary School Pupils (Maintained Sector)						
	3,565,050	3,509,550	3,306,905	3,263,380	3,231,375	3,232,455
Unauthorised Absence (UA) %	0.43	0.45	0.52	0.57	0.64	0.67
Nos. of UA pupils	15,330	15,793	17,196	18,601	20,681	21,657
Nos. of Secondary School Pupils (Maintained Sector)						
	3,037,010	2,983,045	2,952,355	2,910,515	2,879,555	2,859,695
Unauthorised Absence (UA) %	1.23	1.42	1.52	1.49	1.49	1.45
Nos. of UA pupils	37,355	42,359	44,876	43,367	42,905	41,466

As can be additionally seen from table 1, the overall rate of unauthorised absence is much higher in secondary schools than primary. Such figures are supported by Family Lives data for calls taken between April 2010 and March 2011. The majority of parents calling Parentline concerned about truancy had children at secondary schools. 67% of parents called about children aged 13-15 years old and 20% of parents had children aged 16 to 18. In contrast, just 2% of parents phoned up for children aged between 4 to 9 years old and 9% for children aged 10-12.

Unauthorised absence has increased in both primary and secondary schools, but the largest proportional increase has occurred in primary schools. Over the last five years, the rate of unauthorised absence in primary schools has increased by 56%, while secondary schools have seen an increase of 21% over four years, with a small

decrease of 3% in the last year. The increase of unauthorised absence at primary school is a worrying trend as research shows that the habit of staying away from school develops at an early age. It is estimated that 36% of all truants begin their histories of non-attendance whilst at primary school. The earlier truancy begins; the harder it is to break the pattern¹⁸.

Since 2006, schools have reported numbers of pupils who are persistently absent, which is currently defined as pupils who are absent for more than 20% of lessons¹⁹, meaning that a student will typically miss one day or more of school per week. These pupils include the most serious truants, who are concurrently more likely to suffer the more severe social and educational difficulties in later life, although missing significant amounts of schooling for any reason (i.e. for unavoidable illness) will have impacts on future outcomes.

Overall, persistent absenteeism is falling. As can be seen in Table 2, the numbers of persistently absent pupils (including both authorised and unauthorised absence) has fallen from 4.1% to 2.9%, a reduction of nearly 30%. Focusing on those who do not have authorisation for their absence (and who are therefore likely to be persistent truants rather than simply absent due to illness) the rate of unauthorised persistent absenteeism has fallen from 0.52% to 0.42%; a decrease of 20%.

Table 2

Persistent Absenteeism in England²⁰

	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Total number of pupil enrolments	6,582,425	6,478,155	6,408,545	6,387,685
Number of pupil enrolments who are persistently absent (PA)	272,955	232,810	208,380	184,020
% pupil enrolments who are persistently absent (PA)	4.1	3.6	3.3	2.9
Unauthorised Absence (UA) by PA (%)	0.52	0.49	0.46	0.42
No. of UA pupils who are persistent absentees	34,229	31,743	29,479	26,828

While these figures are welcome, there remains a significant minority of pupils who are missing out on substantial amounts of schooling and these will have significant costs, both for the individual and society.

The costs of truancy

The costs of truancy and persistent absenteeism are high, both socially and financially and each has effects at the individual, family, school and national levels.

Educational Disadvantage

Foremost of the costs of truancy is disengagement from education and subsequent low attainment, which is unambiguously related to young people's disadvantage. Recent evidence from the Scottish National Study showed that pupil's non-attendance was directly correlated with academic achievement. Pupils who truanted from school were regularly outperformed in terms of academic achievement at every level of schooling from primary to secondary and sixth-form phases, irrespective of natural ability as measured by IQ scores²¹. Similarly, the National Audit Office (2005) found that only 13% of persistent truants in the 2002 16 year old cohort achieved five or more G.C.S.E's at grades A-C compared to 60% of non-truants²². Three tenths (29%) of persistent truants did not achieve any G.C.S.E passes or equivalent in year 11²³. This view is supported by international evidence.

Claes, Hooghe and Reeskens (2009) conducted a multi-level analysis from a 28 nation comparative survey of 14 year olds to detect general patterns in causes and consequences of truancy. They found that high truancy levels at schools reduce test scores of pupils, even after controlling for socio-economic factors²⁴. As many teachers have noted, the costs of absence cannot be simply accounted for in individual terms; other pupils and teachers are paying a price for the poor attendance of others. Dealing with attendance means that teachers must follow up reasons for absence, help absentees catch up on lost work, monitor the most frequent non-attenders and spend time persuading, supporting and encouraging pupils to come to school²⁵. This takes time and focus away from other students

Data from Parentline calls taken between April 2010 and March 2011 shows that the parents of truanting children are particularly concerned about educational issues. Over half of parents (55%) made mention of their child's education when calling about truancy, compared to just 7% across all other call issues.

Risky Behaviours and Crime

A recent NatCen analysis of the Longitudinal Study Young People in England found a very pronounced relationship between truanting behaviour at 14 years old and the aspirations of young people and their subsequent disadvantage. Truancy is especially predictive of becoming involved in risky behaviours including criminal activities, substance misuse, underage drinking and smoking²⁶. The Youth Justice Board found that 65% of truants had committed criminal offences and an analysis of the Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime found that long-term truants were significantly more likely to use drugs than intermittent truants (two thirds of long term truants as contrasted with 43% of intermittent truants and 12% of those reporting they never truanted)²⁷. Skipping classes allows young people more time spent unsupervised by adults, which is of course conducive to engaging in these activities.

In Family Lives' data from Parentline calls taken between April 2010 and March 2011, parents who called about truancy were much more likely to mention issues about risky behaviours than in calls about all other subjects. Parents were five times more likely to mention issues with drugs (21% in calls about truanting versus 4% in other calls); six times more likely to talk about their child stealing (20% compared to 3%); smoking (20% compared to 2%); and over five times more likely to mention alcohol (17% compared to 3%).

The profile of risky behaviours by truanting pupils is affecting family relationships according to our own data. 71% of parents calling about their child's truancy were

concerned about their child's behaviour, compared to behaviour being an issue in 27% of all other call subject matters. Some 40% of callers mentioned conflict as part of their call about truancy, where conflict typically features in only 16% of all other calls.

"I have 16 year old son who is driving me mad, we have had nothing but trouble with him since he was 15. First it was skipping school, then he got in with the wrong crowd and got into drugs, drink and trouble with the police. We have been to court with 3 times for shoplifting, burglary and for affray... He has taken valium, cocaine and cannabis and maybe other drugs. I have been at the end of my tether and at the bad times even thought of ending my life as that's how far he has pushed me."

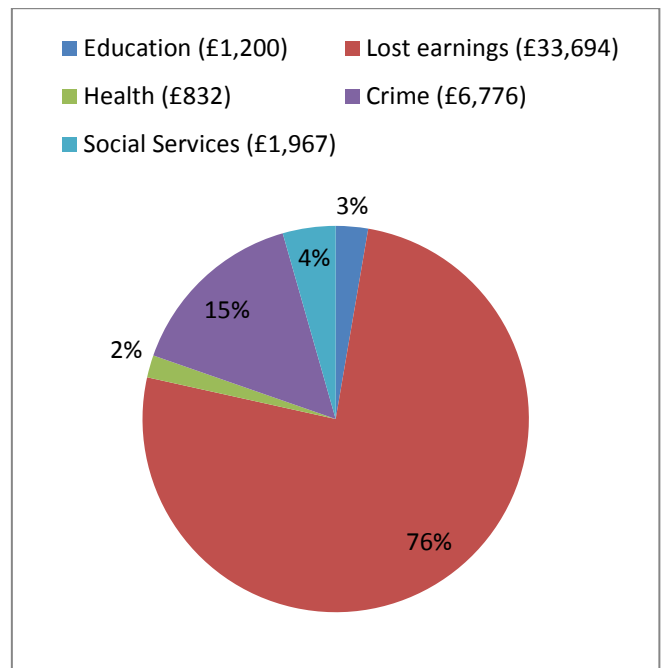
Family Lives Website User

Teenage Pregnancy

In some studies truancy is thought to increase the likelihood of teenage pregnancy²⁸. However, the association is often indirect, for example unprotected sex is linked by alcohol misuse and thus the association negates a clear causal link²⁹. Family Lives' data from Parentline calls taken between April 2010 and March 2011 confirms this view. Parents who phoned to discuss truancy were no more likely to talk about their child's sexual behaviour and the rates for those who did were low, at just 3%. In this way, it is not apparent that truancy is necessarily related to teenage pregnancy risk.

The Financial Costs

New Philanthropy Capital estimates the cost of persistent absence at an average of £44,468 per pupil in the UK at 2005 prices. This figure splits roughly fifty-fifty between costs to the individual and costs borne by the rest of society (£22,562 to the individual, £21,906 to society). The £44,468 cost per pupil breaks down as follows:



Using figures from the Youth Cohort Study which surveys children in England and Wales³⁰, on the basis of estimates that 2% of children truant (defined as weeks at a time), the New Philanthropy Capital report estimates that across the whole UK school population some 198,000 persistent truants would cost £8.8bn or £800m per annum³¹. As the breakdown of costs shows, the overwhelming majority of the costs to society and the individual are generated by lost future earnings and this is in great part an outcome of low educational attainment. Truancy, leading to disengagement from education and a lack of educational qualifications, leads to average lower pay and greater risks of unemployment. These figures are endorsed by a more recent KPMG Foundation Report on the long term costs of literacy difficulties. The evidence shows clearly that literacy difficulties and truancy are associated with costly SEN provision, exclusions, increased health risks and the likelihood of being involved in the criminal justice system. These increased risks operated over and above those associated with social disadvantage in general. They estimate a cost of between £44,797 and £53,098 at 2008 prices³². Clearly the financial stakes of not dealing with truancy are high. As a society, we cannot afford the financial consequences of a loss of potential squandered through truancy and persistent absenteeism.

What causes truancy?

Since 2006, schools have reported reasons for unauthorised absence. Central collection of the data reveals that the numbers of students who are away from school on holiday without authorisation has risen over the last four years, although these absences account for a small proportion of the overall figure, as can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3.

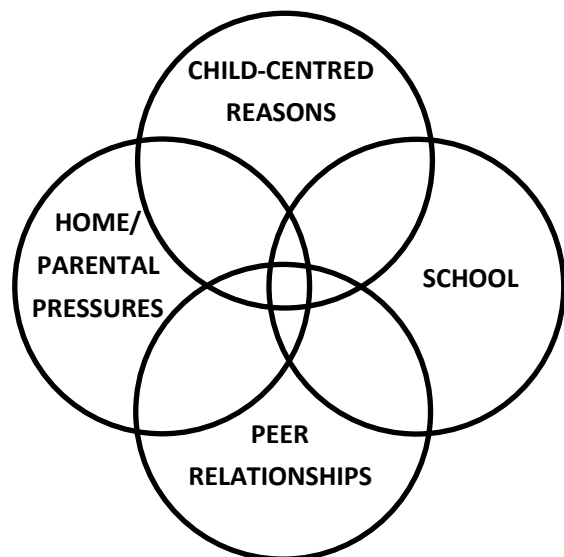
Reasons for Absence³³:

	2006/ 2007	2007/ 2008	2008/ 2009	2009/ 2010
Total absences %	6.49	6.29	6.26	6.04
Unauthorised %	1.00	1.01	1.05	1.04
Of unauthorised absence:	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Family Holiday	7.0	8.9	11.4	12.5
Lateness	7.0	6.9	6.7	6.7
Other reason	56.0	58.4	61.9	64.4
No reason yet	28.0	20.8	19.1	16.4
Unclassified	2.0	5.0	1.0	0.0

In the latest figures, over 80% of unauthorised absence is unaccounted for by official statistics. This is reflective of the fact that the causes of truancy are diverse and multifaceted. There are as many causes of non-attendance as there are non-attenders; each child has their own unique story which may include a variety of overlapping causes.

Research has sought to capture some of the main reasons for which children truant and these can be grouped in the following ways:

Truancy: a multifaceted problem



Child-Centred Reasons

It is simplistic to assert that children truant because they just don't like school. At the individual level, it has been established that truants are characterised by lower levels of academic and general self-esteem than their regularly attending peers³⁴. Family Lives' Parentline data found that parents were much more likely to talk about self-esteem issues when discussing truancy compared to all other calls (12% of calls compared to 4%). Low self-esteem can affect social skills and confidence, potentially damaging peer group relations and attitudes to novel or challenging experiences. Similarly, a low academic self-concept can adversely affect attitudes towards learning, teachers and produce negative responses to attempts by parents to involve themselves in a child's learning. These can often display as a lack of concentration, self-management skills and occasionally, aggression³⁵.

Teachers state that truanting and disruptive pupils chose 'fight' or 'flight' as parallel responses to schools from which they feel alienated. For some children with challenging behaviour, it may feel simpler to skip school rather than face altercations with their teachers.

A lack of academic ability has been cited as a cause of truancy (in addition to being a *consequence* of truancy) with young people playing truant in order to avoid the stress associated with difficult schoolwork or a fear of being humiliated because of being a weak reader, for instance³⁶. Research shows that pupils who are persistently absent tend to display signs of academic anxiety, sometimes even leading to symptoms of neuroticism³⁷.

Evidence from the National Behaviour and Attendance Review (NBAR) found that pupils with low levels of literacy or numeracy have a greater tendency to develop into pupils who develop behavioural and/or attendance problems during either the primary or secondary phase³⁸. Similarly a 2006 DfES analysis of Year 9 pupils showed that pupils who entered secondary school with very low literacy skills had an exclusion rate five times that of other pupils. In addition, 9% of those who had been very poor readers at the end of primary school were classified as persistent truants in Year 9, compared to 2% of those who had been average or above average readers³⁹.

Truancy in these cases can become a self-perpetuating cycle; attending school becomes an even less appealing prospect for a child struggling to catch up⁴⁰. In some cases, anxiety can develop into a more serious form of school phobia. In these situations, even if a child wants to return to school, their anxiety manifests as physical ill health (such as stomach aches, panic attacks or insomnia), consequently making them unable to attend⁴¹.

It is estimated that up to 10% of 5 to 15 year olds have clinically defined mental health needs⁴². The lengths of time spent away from schools can vary considerably. Getting referrals to mental health professionals can be frustratingly lengthy process as waiting lists can be long.

Family Lives' Parentline data shows that calls about truanting were associated with children's mental health issues and highlight the multiple stresses that families can be under in such circumstances. Parents were much more likely (53% of truancy calls compared to 14% of all calls) to speak about their child's anger and also more likely to state that their child was stressed (30% compared to 16% of all calls). Children who have mental health, anxiety and self-esteem issues may present a real challenge to schools and many parents of children with these issues will be extremely concerned, even to the extent of feeling unable to cope. In these cases, children may require long term support to become reintegrated into school, re-engaged in their learning and return to regular attendance.

Hi. I'm having problems with my 12 year old daughter. I have trouble getting her to go to school - I've explained that she has to go to school or I will get into trouble, her answer to this "oh well". She is very rude and aggressive towards everyone at home. I really do not know how much more of it i can take I'm totally at my wits end with her. If someone can help me i would really appreciate it.

Family Lives Website User

Home/Parental Pressures

Home and family circumstances can have a profound effect on a child's attendance patterns and in many cases induce some children to truant, either sporadically or more regularly. Research shows that family health, poverty, abuse and neglect, domestic violence, inflexible work hours, community safety issues, drug or alcohol use at home and generalised lack of support by parents/guardians can all impact upon whether a child will attend school on a regular basis⁴³.

Research into truancy has identified that persistent absence and tendencies to truant are often the outcome of children having caring responsibilities in the home. There are no precise figures on the number of young carers nationally, with estimates of those providing regular and substantial care to another family member

ranging from 19,000 to 51,000. NSPCC research found that 4% of 18-24 year olds had been regularly involved in caring for ill or disabled relatives during their childhood and other studies have estimated that up to 10% of school absence is due to caring responsibilities⁴⁴. Young carers come from a range of backgrounds, although the likelihood of children having caring responsibilities increases with age and girls are more likely to be involved in caring than boys. As Osler and Vincent found in their study of girls and exclusion, caring responsibilities are a major barrier restricting girls' access and participation in education and that this 'self-exclusion' may be widespread but largely invisible in the national statistics on attendance as much of this absence will be parentally condoned⁴⁵.

The pressure on children in these circumstances can be intense. Wilson *et al.*'s (2005) survey study explored pupil attitudes to truancy and the data confirmed that many children would resist the temptation to truant for frivolous reasons or to avoid difficult work, but would be faced with a serious dilemma if asked to stay off school to help with a sick relative or a family crisis⁴⁶. In addition, Local Education Authority representatives surveyed stated that young carers could experience acute stress and often had difficulties completing homework and participating in extra curricula activities.

The changing nature of family life and in particular the evolution of the structure of the family unit itself can create difficulties for both parents and children to achieve good attendance at school. Families are less stable than in previous generations. Children often grow up with different parents – in stepfamilies, or with one parent figure missing⁴⁷. Recent evidence suggests that some young people are becoming increasingly confused by their home-school arrangements, especially when parents do not live in the same locality. Some children now routinely stay at different homes with different parents or carers at different times during the week, month or year.

Risk factors of truancy have been shown to increase where a child's parents have alcohol and substance

misuse problems⁴⁸. Analysis of the General Household Survey and Health Survey in 2009 has shown that an estimated £3.4 million children in the UK under 16 live with an adult binge drinker and roughly 7-9% of these (approximately 957,000 children) lived with at least two binge drinkers (typically both parents). The combined data sets indicated that 1.9% of children (representing 221,437 children) lived with an adult binge drinker with concomitant psychological distress which may be exacerbated by their drinking behaviour⁴⁹. According to the NPMS (National Psychiatric Morbidity Study) 0.6%, representing 71,757 children in the UK, were living with an injecting drug user⁵⁰.

"I used to have really trouble getting my daughter to school, she would shout and scream at me in the street but was mousey and quiet when at school. When she started getting physically aggressive towards me it was really affecting my younger two girls. She went back to live with her Dad and returned to her old school as she was adamant that was the reason she won't go but it started again there and he didn't bother sending her for a whole year. In the end she came under the Attendance Officer for the county and I got a caution even though she was not living with me. My daughter did go back to school and is currently seating her exams but only achieving C-D where she missed so much work she was easily achieving A's previously".

Family Lives Website User

All of the above parental and home issues can be exacerbated or tempered by parental attitudes to education and these will have a knock on effect on whether children are encouraged to prioritise their own learning in such circumstances. A 2010 report, *Beyond the School Gate*, produced jointly by Family Lives and the Teacher Support Network, found that where parents themselves have had a negative experience of the education system they may place less emphasis on the importance of getting a good education. Other research has shown that in instances of acute stress or crisis, parents who attribute little value to education may not see their child's learning in these circumstances as a

priority⁵¹. In this way, Head Teachers and local authorities consider parental attitudes to education to be the external factor that is more closely associated with high rates of absence and truancy. Changing the views of parents and carers takes time. For many parents, the school remains an alien and intimidating one, leaving them feeling anxious and panic stricken during dealings with teachers and school staff. To get the best results, schools need to integrate positive influences on parents into the whole school ethos and develop lines of communication.

Peer Relationships

Peer relationships are another significant factor in rates of children's truancy. In particular, peer-to-peer bullying can have a devastating effect on children's confidence, self-respect and feelings of self-worth; all factors which contribute to a fear of school and disengagement from education. A Family Lives report, '*Families matter: The realities of family life in Britain today*' (2011), defines bullying as a subjective experience which entails 'harmful behaviour, carried out by an individual or a group which is repetitive, wilful or persistent and involves an imbalance of power, leaving the person being bullied feeling defenceless'⁵².

Evidence from court prosecutions of parents and research suggests that bullying in all its forms (physical, psychological, cyber) is increasingly becoming a cause of pupil's non-attendance and truancy⁵³. Analysing the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England, Ross (2009) found a clear association between being bullied and disengaging from school. In fact, students who were bullied in the last 12 months were about 1.7 times more likely to be disengaged from school than all other children⁵⁴. The average number of young people who experienced bullying tended to fall off as they moved through Years 9 to 11, yet at the same time the risk associated with being bullied and disengaging increased. This suggests that children who are persistently bullied are most at risk of disengaging and going on to truant from school⁵⁵.

The School's White Paper, *The Importance of Teaching*, recognises the need for more to be done to combat the insidious effect of bullying in schools, particularly racist and homophobic bullying⁵⁶. Teachers, pupils and charities report that prejudice-based bullying in particular is on the increase. Two thirds of lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils have experienced bullying. Pupils with Special Educational Needs and disabilities are also more likely to be victims of bullying, with 81% of pupils with statements of SEN reporting being bullied and bullying specifically relating to their special needs increasing⁵⁷. Other research has identified that for girls in particular, bullying can be a significant factor in decisions to self-exclude. However, bullying amongst girls is not easily recognised and there is an institutional failure to tackle bullying among girls effectively⁵⁸.

"My grades at school have gone right down and I'm bunking off when my mum's at work because I can't face all the lessons I have with the bullies. I'm being called names about my weight and I have nobody to go around with at break. When I sit down with my packed lunch the others get up and move away. I'm taking so much time off that my mum is going to find out soon. I've told my head of year and she spoke to them but they're still doing it. This is making me feel very depressed and I've self-harmed a few times".

Bullying UK Website User

The nature of bullying is changing in response to technological developments. The internet, the widespread ownership of mobile phones and growth of social networks all present new challenges for both practitioners and parents and their abilities to be aware of and deal with the effects of these new potential mediums through which bullying can take place. Cyber-bullying for instance can take place 24/7, with a bigger audience and more accessories as people forward on content at a click⁵⁹. Whilst acknowledged as a serious problem, the particular effects that cyber bullying has on truancy are not yet fully understood or known and warrants more research⁶⁰. In addition, and of particular concern, are

instances of child-on-child violence as part of bullying. In a commissioned survey, Beatbullying found that more than one in three young people reported having suffered some form of physical violence at the hands of their peers (40% male; 19% females) and over half of these reported this as a single isolated incident. 11% of this sample said that it occurred more than 10 times⁶¹.

Inappropriate sexual behaviour and violence is increasingly becoming of concern to researchers and practitioners. According to a recent NSPCC report, *Child Cruelty in the UK 2011*, 3 per cent of children has been raped or coerced into sex by another child or young person. Recent research carried out by the NSPCC and *Sugar* (a magazine targeted at teenage girls), found that 45% of girls surveyed had been 'groped' against their wishes and 28% had received sexual images⁶².

Alarming this behaviour is often dismissed as playful behaviour or justified through humour. Family Lives believes schools need to do much more to address these issues and delivers workshops in schools to tackle issues around gendered and sexualised bullying, through its charity Teen Boundaries.

School

The school institution itself can have a major impact on absentee levels and the practices of particular schools can potentially induce or mitigate truancy. In particular, the level of school involvement from parents, methods of communication and its ability to provide a supportive and authoritative school environment can both be important factors as to whether a school will have a good attendance record or not⁶³. Whilst levels of truancy are related to the socio-economic background of their intake - for instance truancy levels are much higher in schools with a high percentage of children with free school meals⁶⁴ - clear variations exist between schools even after controlling for contextual factors⁶⁵. Evidence from research of Local Education Authorities (LEAs) indicates that some schools have disproportionately high levels of truancy and other forms of absenteeism. Some schools have experienced these problems consistently over a 30 year period despite all their best endeavours⁶⁶.

Teen Boundaries has worked with a number of young people who skip school or classes because of sexual bullying:

Suzanne who is 14, truanted throughout the school year after being sexually bullied by a group of boys when she was in Year 9 and they were in Year 11. She reported to the school what had happened leading to the boys receiving a 2 day suspension. However Suzanne did not feel satisfied with the school's response and she would avoid the classes she had on a Friday in the same building as the boys to avoid any possibility of seeing them. Suzanne and her mother explained to the school when they investigated her missed lessons that they felt that the boys should have been excluded.

Amy, 13, avoided lessons with Nick, also 13, after he would try and put his hand up her skirt and would call her a 'sket' in front of his friends in the class. Amy would sit on the woody part of the school field, which is hidden from the school view.

David, 16, would avoid PE as one particular girl (15) had led her group of friends in teasing him that he had small genitals and grabbed David's crotch.

The general school ethos, its leadership, scheme of behaviour management and procedures for attendance, are the key factors in determining whether a school has a good attendance record and has the ability to effectively deal with truancy. If the leadership of school (including not just the head and the senior management team, but all those who have a responsibility to lead such as class teachers), shows that regular, punctual attendance matters and is valued, then pupils and parents will respond accordingly⁶⁷.

Communication between parents, schools and local authorities is arguably one of single most important factors in whether a school has a good record on truancy or not⁶⁸. It is well established from evidence-based truancy programmes that the best practices are communication with parents and children individually, conducting home visits and gathering information from other service providers⁶⁹. However many schools do not achieve this. A 2010 survey report, *Beyond the School Gate*, produced jointly by Family Lives and the Teacher Support Network, found that 62% of parents who responded reported that they had felt patronised, sidelined or ignored when trying to deal with an issue in their child's school. When parents (and pupils) receive constantly negative feedback about their children's academic and behavioural progress they may tend to judge teachers and their school as being unsympathetic, ineffective and even unsafe. On occasion, this can bring parents and schools into conflict⁷⁰. A comprehensive truancy programme must have family involvement as one of its key pillars; engaging families in all truancy prevention and intervention efforts and address family-based need to support attendance.

In addition, research consistently shows that practices of behaviour management also have an important role to play in managing truancy. The Steer report (2005), for instance, indicates that principles and practice which facilitate a consistent approach to behaviour management, teaching and learning include: effective school leadership and classroom management; the appropriate use of rewards and sanctions; the teaching of good behaviour; effective staff development and support;

sound pupil support systems and pastoral care; open liaison with parents and other external agencies; managing pupil transition; and a school's organisation and internal facilities⁷¹. Where elements are not effective or where links are broken or are not developed, truancy in schools is likely to increase.

At the systemic level, research findings have highlighted the importance of co-ordination with other key services. Donoghue (2011) suggests that addressing school non-attendance effectively is contingent upon successful inter-agency working between Education Welfare Officers (EWOs), the school, and the family⁷². In instances where the work of education welfare services are not closely integrated into that of local schools, they become isolated from the range of other agencies and services involved in supporting children and their families and this has negative impacts for communication and cooperation between parties involved in truancy cases, leading to poor outcomes and ineffective enforcement.

Recent studies have suggested that many disaffected pupils have become disenchanted with the content and repetitious nature of the National Curriculum in England and Wales. It is hoped that the recent trend towards giving more vocational choices will help to reinvigorate some potentially disaffected youngsters⁷³.

Truancy is a multifaceted problem

As the preceding discussion demonstrates, the reasons for why pupils may truant are multifaceted and each can potentially overlap with each of the others. Whilst each explanation for truancy (as outlined above) can produce a distinct reason for or cause of truancy by itself, more often than not, truancy is a result of a mix of causes. As the situations and factors that cause truancy layer upon one another, the risk of persistent truancy increases - and with this - the potential harm to both the child and society. What is clear is that truancy is a complex phenomenon and at the individual, family and school level there will be varying levels of help needed to overcome it.

What works and what doesn't work to combat truancy?

Practitioners, researchers and the government have all sought to improve rates of truancy and there are already various sanctions and measures in place which attempt to combat the problem. The current measures seek to regulate children's attendance via criminal and other punitive sanctions against their parents in cases of unauthorised persistent absenteeism.

Currently, in England and Wales, section 7 of the Education Act 1996 sets out a parental duty to secure the efficient education of children by ensuring the child's regular attendance at school or otherwise. Breach of the section 7 duty may give rise to a range of sanctions. Firstly, penalty notices may be issued to parents by head teachers, council officers and the police. The penalty is £50 if paid within 28 days of the receipt of the notice. It rises to £100 if paid after 28 days but within 42 days of the notice. Afterwards, the LA must either prosecute for the offence or withdraw the notice⁷⁴. The regulations state that it will be for the parent to prove reasonable justification for the absence and that local authorities should not conclude that some justifications are automatically unreasonable. Every case should, however, be considered on its merits⁷⁵.

Over the last decade the number of parents who have been prosecuted has risen dramatically. In 2001, there were 1,961 prosecutions. By 2008 this figure was 9,506⁷⁶. Local authorities may also issue softer measures such as parenting contracts, parenting orders, school attendance orders, education supervision orders and make truancy sweeps in areas of particularly high truancy rates⁷⁷.

Currently the coalition government is investigating new ways to tackle truancy as part of their social policy review and has tasked Charles Taylor, a head teacher and the Government's discipline advisor to consider proposals to cut benefits to parent with children who truant⁷⁸.

Despite the already numerous sanctions that can be imposed on parents, research is unclear on whether punitive measures work to bring down overall rates of truancy. There is very little evidence to demonstrate that the reform agenda as it stands has reduced truancy levels or has any substantive positive impacts on truanting children themselves⁷⁹. There is a particular lack of empirical evidence to show that the use of custodial sentences makes any significant impact on truancy levels⁸⁰. Jailing parents for their children's truancy can hit the headlines, but appears to make no difference to overall national statistics on school attendance. Over ten years, from 1997 to 2007, prosecutions rose by 76% to over 10,000 prosecutions per year whilst incidences of truancy over the same period increased⁸¹.

As the figures in the preceding sections of this report highlight, rates of unauthorised absence continue to incrementally climb upwards and whilst there has been some reduction in the rates of unauthorised persistent absentees, a significant minority continue to miss significant amounts of schooling. Part of the explanation for this is that punitive measures only target parental behaviour and explicitly parentally condoned absences in cases where there is an absence of countervailing circumstantial or familial pressures which would lead to pupil absences irrespective of the potential sanctions. As the current guidance on parental sanctions states 'a penalty notice is [only] a suitable intervention in circumstances where the parent is judged capable of securing their child's regular attendance or whereabouts but is not willing to take responsibility for doing so'⁸². Families who are in different circumstances, and who therefore may have other needs, will require other measures to address their own particular issues.

From the evidence that we have compiled in this report, it is likely that the core numbers of persistent truants face multiple pressures which impact their rates of attendance.

In these circumstances there is no single solution to secure the child's regular attendance at school. To be truly effective, measures to combat truancy need to be delivered in both a more nuanced and more comprehensive manner.

Flexible Parental Support: tailor made solutions to combating truancy

Family Lives believes that flexible, non-judgemental family support is the key to overcoming truancy. As has been discussed in the preceding sections, schools which suffer from high levels of truancy often have poor lines of communication between both parents and their children. Moreover, truancy is a multifaceted problem with the potential for numerous factors to layer upon one another. As such, no one-size-fits-all solution is likely to address the majority of reasons behind children's truancy. Families that are in crisis, parents who are struggling to engage with their children for a whole host of different reasons, be it health or mental health issues, educational disenfranchisement or bullying will need different kinds of responses and have varying levels of support needs

Working with families

Many of the families Family Lives works with have experienced a fundamental breakdown in the parent – child relationship that leaves them unable to enforce boundaries. They have tried everything they can think of to persuade, cajole, bribe or force their children to attend school and have no other strategies to employ. Family Support can help give that parent new skills to get the parent-child relationship back on track and empower the parent to regain their child's respect and their position of authority, enabling them to enforce boundaries.

We believe that the strongest strategy is one that seeks to strengthen families and support parenting. Holistic support that is adaptable to the individual needs of children and their families is much more likely to be effective at getting to the root of the problem and will ultimately provide tailor-made resolutions to persistent absenteeism and truancy. By engaging with families in

this way, we see parents as part of the solution to the problem rather than simply viewing them as *the problem*.

An effective truancy program will be prepared to assess and address the needs of parents/guardians and other family members when devising a community response or individualized treatment plan. Removing a child from his/her family for nonattendance has not been an effective method for reducing truancy⁸³. It is costly and may cause additional harm to families and youth. A stronger strategy will focus on family-strengthening activities⁸⁴.

Family Lives knows from our own work that family interventions can produce remarkable results with limited costs and such investments pay dividends for individuals, families and society at large.

I have a 14yo daughter who i have no control over, she has had a long history of being violent which has got worse and worse as she has got older, she has refused to go to school for over a year, she is on her final police warning for attacking me and throwing her sister down a 10ft drop, she is out all hours of the day and night and sometimes for days on end, she is addicted to cannabis and drinks 4 plus nights a week, social services have been involved for a long time but have been no help, they have offered no practical advice at all and i can no longer cope.

Family Lives Website User

Involving parents, guardians and family members in truancy prevention and intervention is critical. There is a large body of evidence from behavioural research that parenting is a key driver of many child outcomes and is a learned skill – it is what parents do, not who they are, that

matters. There is robust evidence that parenting interventions can strengthen parenting skills, particularly from Family Intervention Programmes⁸⁵.

School based interventions

Involving parents/guardians and family members in truancy prevention and intervention is critical. There is a large body of research demonstrating the positive outcomes associate with increased parent/guardian involvement in school activities including improved academic achievement and reduced likelihood of dropout⁸⁶. By having a planned strategy for engaging families in their child's education, schools can address a number of the home based factors that could be contributing to children missing school.

Research clearly indicates that almost all parents in this country, in all social classes and cultural groups, value education for their children⁸⁷. Conversely, parents of truants can be atypical. Dalziel and Henthorne (2005) have identified four types of parents and carers who are involved in raising poor attenders and/or truants. These are: those who try hard to tackle poor attendance; those who appear to be over-protective or dependent upon their child; those who describe themselves as either apathetic about tackling poor attendance or who appear not to engage with school or with other support professionals⁸⁸. If a family are disengaged from the school community, do not encourage their child to prioritise education because of their own experiences of education, or are not aware of their child's truancy or academic progress, that child is more likely to truant with or without parental authorisation.

Many parents experience barriers to engagement which include carrying their own negative experience of education with them, low levels of literacy, cultural barriers, language barriers and structural barriers, such as being a non-resident parent and struggling to get access to information as easily as the resident parent may. For some parents, school is an intimidating place and teachers and school staff may seem unapproachable⁸⁹. Brown (2004) finds that many economically and educationally disadvantaged parents have had less positive experiences with schools⁹⁰. When parents (and pupils) receive constantly negative feedback

about their child's academic and behavioural progress they may tend to judge teachers and their school as being unsympathetic, ineffective and even unsafe. On occasion, this can bring parents and schools into conflict⁹¹.

Schools should be aware of all of the potential barriers that parents may be facing to engaging in their child's learning and be actively trying to break them down. They should give thought to their strategies for engaging parents. Strong parental engagement in education improves outcomes including attendance, but many parents encounter barriers to participating in their child's education which may include their own poor experience of education. **Schools must be aware of the potential barriers and consider strategies for engaging all parents.**

Surveys of parents repeatedly show that whilst some school are achieving excellence in their work to engage parents, provision in this area is patchy. A report by Family Lives and Fiona Millar for the Pearson Centre for Policy and Learning in 2011 found that parents were experiencing extremely varied provision of information about their child's schooling and progress⁹². The inspections framework is a key lever for directing schools focus and energies. Family Lives was therefore glad to see that Ofsted inspectors will still be required to consider how schools are working with parents in the new draft inspections framework due to come into force in January 2012. **We hope that Inspectors will recognise the reasons for this important measure and continue to rigorously measure schools progress in this area.**

Conclusion

Punitive measures against parents designed to combat truancy do not present a complete solution to securing children's regular attendance at school. Some parents have tried a number of different strategies to get their children to attend school but have been unsuccessful. Punitive sanctions are unlikely to enhance their parenting skills to the point of enabling them to facilitate their child's return to school: A new strategy is needed for those parents including a package of parenting support to up skill parents and empower them to support their children to return to regular school attendance.

Bill through Parliament. It is essential that inspectors recognise the importance of this measure and its relationship with other factors such as attainment, behaviour and attendance, and continue to prioritise it in the new streamlined inspections regime

Recommendations

- Government should consider how to encourage all schools to offer parenting support as part of a core strategy for addressing truancy. Mechanisms for sharing good practice between schools and clusters of schools should be considered, enabling schools to make the most of extra money afforded as part of the pupil premium
- Schools should give thought to their strategies for engaging parents. Strong parental engagement in education improves outcomes including attendance, but many parents encounter barriers to participating in their child's education which may include their own poor experience of education. Schools must be aware of the potential barriers and consider strategies for engaging all parents.
- Ofsted have retained a measurement of schools' work to engage parents under the leadership and management section of the new draft framework for school inspections which is due to come into force in January 2012, pending the successful passage of a

¹ DfE (2011) 'Pupil Absence in Schools in England, including pupil characteristics: 2009/10', First Statistical Release, National Audit Office, available at:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/D>

Davidson, J (2005) 'Bunking off: The impact of truancy on pupils and teachers', *British Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 34(1) p.3; Reid, K (1999) *Truancy and Schools*, London: Routledge; Barnes, M, Green, R, Ross, A (2011), 'Understanding vulnerable young people: Analysis from the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England, Research Report DFE-RR118 NatCen report for DfE, March 2011.

³ These are figures calculated from DfE statistical releases. DfE (2011), op. cit.; DCSF, (2010), 'Pupil Absence in Schools in England including Pupil Characteristics: 2008/09: First Statistical Release'; DCSF (2009) 'Pupil Absence in Schools in England, including Pupil Characteristics: 2007/09'

⁴ BBC (2011) 'Truants' parents could face benefits cut, says PM', 9th September 2011.

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ DfE (2011) 'Pupil Absence in Schools in England, including pupil characteristics: 2009/10', First Statistical Release, National Audit Office, available at:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/D>

⁷ Wilson, V, Malcolm, H, Edward, S and Davidson, J (2005) 'Bunking off: The impact of truancy on pupils and teachers', *British Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 34(1) p.3; Reid, K (1999) *Truancy and Schools*, London: Routledge; Barnes, M, Green, R, Ross, A (2011), 'Understanding vulnerable young people: Analysis from the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England, Research Report DFE-RR118 NatCen report for DfE, March 2011.

⁸ BBC (2011), 'Gove: Truancy push to tackle 'educational underclass'; <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-14748268>

⁹ Malcolm, H, Wilson, V, Davidson, J and Kirk, S (2003) *Absence From School: A Study of its causes and effects in seven LEAs*, DfES research report; National Audit Office, 2005 *Improving School Attendance in England* (London: HMSO).

¹⁰ Reid, K, (2002), *Truancy: Short and Long term solutions* (London: Routledge); Donoghue, J (2011) 'Truancy and the Prosecution of Parents: An Unfair Burden on Mothers?', *Modern Law Review*, Vol. 74(2): 214;244.

¹¹ Reid, K (2010) 'Finding Strategic Solutions to Reduce Truancy', *Research in Education*, Vol.84 November 2010: p.1.).

¹² Reid, K (2002), op. cit., p.2.

¹³ Wilson *et al.*, (2005), op. cit. p.2.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ DCSF (2008), 'Keeping Pupil Registers: Guidance on applying the Education Pupil Registration Regulations', June 2008.

¹⁶ Reid, K (2002), op. cit. p.3.

¹⁷ DfE (2011), op. cit.; DCSF, (2010), 'Pupil Absence in Schools in England including Pupil Characteristics: 2008/09: First Statistical Release'; DCSF (2009) 'Pupil Absence in Schools in England, including Pupil Characteristics: 2007/09'.

¹⁸ Wilson *et al.*, (2005), op. cit.: 13; Reimer, M and Dimock, K (2005), *Best Practices and Model Truancy Programs*, National Dropout Prevention Center.

¹⁹ On the 12th July 2011 the government announced that the definition of persistent absence would be changed from 20% to 15% of absence. The new threshold will be published in statistical releases from October 2011 onwards. The latest figures show that 184,000 students missed 20% of lessons. With the new definition some 430,000 students will be considered to be persistently absent, DfE, 2011, 'Government changes definition of persistent absence to deal with reality of pupil absenteeism in schools', available at:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/inthenews/inthenews/a00192057/government-changes-definition-of-persistent-absence-to-deal-with-reality-of-pupil-absenteeism-in-schools>

²⁰ Figures adapted from DfE (2011) op. cit.

²¹ Reid, K (2010) op. cit. p.2.

²² National Audit Office (NAO), (2005), *Improving School Attendance in England*, (London: HMSO).

²³ DfES (2005) 'Youth Cohort Study: The Activities and Experiences of 16 Year Olds: England and Wales 2004', SFR 04/2005 National Statistics.

²⁴ Claes, E Hooghe, M and Reeskens, T (2009) 'Truancy as contextualised and

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²⁶ Barnes, M, Green, R and Ross, A (2011), *Understanding vulnerable young people: Analysis from the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England*, Ref DFE-RR118, NatCen report for DfE, May 2011; McAra, L (2004) *Truancy, School Exclusion and Substance Misuse*, The Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime Number 4; Henry, K, L, and Thornberry, T, P (2010), 'Truancy and Escalation of Substance Use During Adolescence', *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, 71(1) 155-124.

²⁷ Reid, K (2010) op. cit., p.3: McAra, 2004, op. cit., 12-13.

²⁸ Reid, K (1999), op. cit.

²⁹ Barnes, Green and Ross (2011) op. cit.

³⁰ DfES (2005) 'Youth Cohort Study: the activities and experiences of 16 year olds in England and Wales 2004' SFR 04/2005.

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³³ DfE (2011), op. cit.

³⁴ Claes, Hooge and Reeskens, (2009) op. cit. p.5.

³⁵ Kinder, K, Harland, J, Wilkin, A & Wakefield A (1995) *Three to remember: strategies for disaffected pupils*. Slough: NFER.

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³⁷ Claes, Hooghe and Reeskens, 2009, op. cit. p.4-5.

³⁸ NBAR (2008), *The National Behaviour and Attendance Review (NBAR) Report*, Cardiff: WAG p.4.

³⁹ KPMG,(2006) op. cit.

⁴⁰ Brookes, Goodall and Heady (2007) op. cit. p,

⁴¹ DfES (2004) op. cit. p.96-97.

⁴² *ibid*: 107.

⁴³ Reimer and Dimock (2005), op. cit. p., 14.

⁴⁴ DfE (2004) op. cit. p. 117.

⁴⁵ Osler, A and Vincent, K (2002), 'Girls and Exclusion from School', Joseph Rowntree Foundation Research Report.

⁴⁶ Wilson et al., op. cit. p.6.

⁴⁷ Jenkins, S, Pereira, I and Evans, P (2009), *Families in Britain: The impact of changing family structure and what the public think*, Ipsos MORI/Policy Exchange Report.

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⁴⁹ Manning, Best, Faulkner and Titherington (2009) "New estimates of the numbers of children living with substance misusing parents: results from UK national household survey", *BMC Public Health* 9.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*: p.8.

⁵¹ Cusworth (2009) op. cit. p. 115.

⁵² Family Lives (2011), *Families matter: The realities of family life in Britain today*. p.39.

⁵³ Reid (2010) op. cit. p.10.

⁵⁴ Ross, A (2009) *Disengagement from Education among 14-16 year olds*, Research Report DCSF-RR178, NatCen.

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⁵⁷ *Ibid*: p. 35.

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