

Pre- Court Panels

Pre-court panels will be held four weekly at The Education Department County Hall. Their purpose will be to consider which Education Welfare cases of poor school attendance should be forwarded for legal action. As well as this power, the panel will discuss and authorise any Penalty Notice applications received from Education Welfare Staff, Head Teachers and the Police and any parenting orders in respect of school exclusions.

The panel will consist of four members, they will include the Senior Education Officer (Access and Inclusion), both Senior EWO's and a head teacher or senior manager representative from schools. It is proposed that a representative from each of the three school phases will attend on a rolling term basis e.g. Autumn term - High School representative, Spring term – Middle school representative and Summer term – Primary School representative.

Panels will be pre-booked for the whole academic year. They will start at 1.30 p.m. and finish at 6.00 p.m. The first hour of the meeting will be dedicated to Penalty Notice applications and Parenting Order applications in respect of exclusions. From 3.00 p.m. to 5.30 p.m. half an hour appointments will be made for cases of poor school attendance to be considered for legal action. Education Welfare staff will contact a Senior EWO in advance and book a half an hour appointment.

However, extraordinary panels will be convened to consider a large number of prosecutions following an attendance exercise within a school or geographical area.

The panel will consider the following sanctions:

- Education Supervision Orders
- Parental Prosecutions
- Parenting Orders, including those for school exclusions
- Penalty Notices

The parents and the child or those with parental responsibility for education will be invited to the panel by the Education Welfare staff using the EWS3 letter.

Reports and attendance printouts should be submitted to the panel at least five working days prior to the event. These reports should be completed on the report form provided and copies should be supplied for the family members.

Staff should contact the parents the day before the panel sits to remind them that their attendance is required and that if they do not attend a decision may be made in their absence.

The EWO/A will present the case and detail the work that has been conducted by the school and Education Welfare Service. Family members will also be invited to discuss the reasons surrounding the poor school attendance.

The chair of the panel shall complete a checklist of questions, to ensure that reasons such as bullying have been discounted. Another panel member will be responsible for taking the minutes. The family will be asked to leave the meeting room whilst a decision is being made by the panel members. This will ensure that honest and frank discussion can take place and any disagreements can be sorted in a professional manner. The family will be invited back to the meeting room and informed of the panel's decision. They will be strongly urged to seek legal advice if the matter is to be referred for consideration by the courts.

The decision of the panel will be notified in writing to the parents/guardians, with copies sent to the Senior EWO's, EWO and Head Teacher of the child's school.

It is essential that the panel's run smoothly as there is only half an hour per case. To ensure this happens, the chair of the panel must make every effort to start and finish each meeting within the time constraints. EWO/A's must ensure that reports are submitted in advance to the panel members and those members should ensure that they read the report and are familiar with it's contents prior to the meeting. EWO/A's should also ensure that referrals to the panel are for consideration of legal action only, they are not to be used for cases that are "stuck", these should be discussed during supervision or at the good practice discussions at the beginning of team meetings.

Pre-court Panels for the Academic Years 2004/2005

These panels will be held at the Education meeting room, The Education Department, County Hall, Newport on the following days from 1.30 p.m. until 6.00 p.m.

Tuesday 28th September 2004
Tuesday 19th October 2004
Tuesday 30th November 2004
Tuesday 18th January 2005
Tuesday 22nd February 2005
Tuesday 22nd March 2005
Tuesday 26th April 2005
Tuesday 24th May 2005
Tuesday 21st June 2005
Tuesday 19th July 2005

Pre-court Panels for the Academic Years 2005/2006

These panels will be held at the Education Meeting Room, The Education Department, County Hall, Newport on the following days from 1.30 p.m. until 6.00 p.m.

Tuesday 27th September 2005
Tuesday 18th October 2005
Tuesday 22nd November 2005
Tuesday 13th December 2005
Tuesday 31st January 2006
Tuesday 28th February 2006
Tuesday 28th March 2006
Tuesday 25th April 2006
Tuesday 23rd May 2006
Tuesday 20th June 2006
Tuesday 18th July 2006