

## **GUIDANCE NOTES FOR REFERRAL TO THE EDUCATION WELFARE SERVICE (EWS)**

When concerns about attendance are initially identified by the school there should be some attempt to resolve the concern.

Schools should develop a clear procedure for managing pre-referral work, which identifies who will be responsible and what steps will be taken. The flow chart in Appendix 9 of *School Attendance Matters* gives a possible framework. It is best practice to develop standard letters and recording formats with agreed trigger levels.

Concerns may be addressed in a variety of ways such as a telephone call to parents/carers, sending a letter home, or holding a meeting in school, the evidence of which should be retained by the school.

Any contact with the family should be recorded; the record should contain basic details such as:

- The name of the pupil
- The name of the person/s contacted
- The date and time of the contact
- Information shared/gathered during the discussion
- The actions agreed or the outcomes of the contact

Many schools have developed standard letters for use in addressing attendance concerns. This is good practice and some specimen letters are provided in Appendix 10 of *School Attendance Matters*. The letters could be sent when certain trigger points are reached, such as attendance below 95%. The first letter sent might be less formal; if this fails to bring about an improvement then a more formal letter could be sent.

The next step might be to invite the parent or carer into school for a meeting, the minutes of which should be circulated to all present. Any meeting should result in an agreed action plan for improvement and a timescale for review.

If all these attempts to resolve the concern prove unsuccessful the parent/carer should be informed that a referral will be made to the EWS. The referral form can then be completed and sent with a copy of the attendance record, a brief chronology of the actions taken by the school to resolve the concern and copies of the relevant records (letters, minutes of meetings). These records should date back no further than three months.

If a referral is received by the EWS that does not contain the evidence of pre-referral work it is likely to be returned to the school so that initial work can be completed by school staff, or that the evidence can be provided

