

Children Missing Education
Policy and Practice

Children's Services

September 2015

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Lincolnshire County Council is committed to ensuring every child and young person in the county has the opportunity to grow up in a safe community.
- 1.2 The County Council is responsible for improving outcomes for children and young people living in Lincolnshire. It aims to meet this responsibility by enabling and encouraging children to attend and enjoy school, achieve their potential and be in a good position to make a positive contribution to the society in which we live.
- 1.3 Lincolnshire County Council is concerned about any child missing education not only in the way that it impacts on the individual's potential attainment but also in relation to their safety and welfare.
- 1.4 The purpose of the Children Missing Education (CME) Policy is to ensure that children and young people missing education are re-engaged in appropriate education provision in the shortest possible time, with lasting success and that 'no child slips through the net'.

2.0 Legal Context

- 2.1 The Children Act 2004 placed a duty on all agencies to work together to promote the welfare of children and share information.
- 2.2 The Education and Inspections Act 2006 placed a new duty on all Local Authorities in England and Wales for them to make arrangements to identify children missing education in their area. The duty applies to all children of compulsory school age who are not on a school role and are not receiving a suitable education.
- 2.3 A child missing education is not necessarily 'missing' i.e. a runaway. There are different procedures for dealing with a child who goes missing. Unless further information comes to light whilst investigating a child missing education, the child is deemed to be in the care of their family and is considered only as a child who is not in an educational provision. Further investigations may result in identifying the child as vulnerable if there are additional concerns for the family and the location of the family is unknown. In these situations, the process will link with the missing person protocol.

3.0 Purpose of the CME Policy

- 3.1 The purpose of the CME Policy is to establish a set of principles which all schools, services and partner organisations can sign up to in order to ensure children and young people living in Lincolnshire are safely on roll of a school, placed on alternative educational programmes or electively home educated at the request of parents.
- 3.2 The CME Policy has been designed to help the council meet its statutory duties in relation to the provision and the safeguarding and welfare of children. It does not replace any of the current child protection procedures, existing safeguarding procedures and therefore this policy should be read in conjunction with existing safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures.

4.0 Aim of the policy

4.1 This policy is intended to inform local authority officers, schools, governing bodies and other agencies of the procedure and practice to be followed in order to track, monitor and maintain contact with children missing from education and those at risk of going missing from education.

4.2 The policy will:

- Inform schools, services and partner agencies about their role in assisting the local authority in identifying children missing education
- Raise awareness of the notification process
- Explain how children will be tracked and monitored until they are re-engaged in education
- Explain the mechanism available to access appropriate education provision
- Provide clarity to stakeholders on how children can be tracked across boundaries when a child moves to another Local Authority area.

5.0 Definition of Children Missing Education

5.1 For the purpose of this document a child missing education is defined as:

Any child of compulsory school age (5-16) who is not on a school roll, nor being educated otherwise (e.g. at home, privately, or in alternative provision) and who has been out of any education provision for a substantial period of time (practice nationally is four weeks)

5.2 The process of looking for children who are absent from school and their whereabouts is unknown starts as soon as the school has sufficient evidence to confirm this.

6.0 Definition of Children at Risk of Missing Education

6.1 Children and young people with poor school attendance are often the most vulnerable and are more likely to become children missing from education.

6.2 It is the responsibility of the school/education provision to ensure a child attends school once they are on the school roll. A child is not considered to be a CME whilst the school have knowledge that the child remains in the area and their school remains the nearest available. Where non-attendance is raised by the school, they are encouraged to manage this either in house or through external agencies.

6.3 For the purpose of this document (agreed locally) a Child at Risk of Missing Education is defined as:

6.4 Any child of compulsory school age (5-16) who is on roll of a school but has less than 50% attendance in a school term

6.5 Any child of compulsory school age (5-16) who is subject to a modified/reduced timetable for more than one school term

6.6 Where a child is at risk of missing education, the local authority may notify the school or academy that this child has been brought to their attention. The local authority will request evidence of attendance and seek confirmation that the case is being managed.

- 6.7 Children on <25 hours education are reported on a monthly basis via Children Services Performance Data. This information is recorded through:
https://lccdataexchange.lincolnshire.gov.uk/less-than-25-hourseducation/2237_article
- 6.8 Schools are required to input details of any child who is in receipt of <25 hours. For any child who is on a reduced timetable without an assessment, contact will be made with the school to look at what support can be offered.

7.0 Why children go missing from education

7.1 Children and young people can go missing from school or agreed education provision, for a wide variety of reasons. Their personal circumstances or those of their families may contribute to the withdrawal process. Children can go missing when there is no systematic process in place to identify them and ensure they re-engage with appropriate provision.

7.2 The most common reasons why children miss education include:

- Failing to register at school at age 5
- Failing to make successful transition from infant to junior and primary to secondary
- Cease to attend, due to exclusion (formal/illegal withdrawal)
- Mid-year transfer of school
- Unable to find a school place after moving into the Local Authority
- Victims of bullying
- Frequent moves of house including periods of homelessness or periods in a refuge
- Transience/ family mobility
- Family breakdown
- Frequent absence leading to low attendance (especially Yr IO and Yr II)
- Disaffection resulting in parents withdrawing the pupil or 'being asked to leave'
- Involvement in youth offending

7.3 Certain vulnerable groups are more likely to be affected by the factors listed in 7.2; these are

- Young people who have committed offences
- Children living in women's refuges
- Children of troubled families i.e. suffering bereavement, trauma, domestic violence, homelessness
- Young runaways
- Children with special educational needs
- Refugee and asylum seeking children
- Travelling families
- Looked after children
- Teenage parenthood
- Children with mental health
- Young carers
- Children who are permanently excluded from school
- Young people being forced into marriage
- Children involved in substance misuse

7.4 The local authority records all children who are not in a suitable education as Children Missing Education. Within this wide category, children can be in one of the following

- Location of child unknown
- Child referred from other authority, child possibly within the local authority borders
- Location of child known but not in education
- Child returned to education but at risk of missing education in near future
- Child returned to education through school attendance order

8.0 The Role of the Inclusion and Attendance Team

8.1 To reduce the risk of children and young people falling out of the education system, the Authority has created a dedicated team to support the work needed in this area. This team works closely with other relevant service areas i.e. admissions, exclusions, education welfare and ethnic minority and Travellers education. The team will ensure the process for identifying, investigating and finding children missing education is carried out. The specific duties and responsibilities of this team are as follows:

- Tracking children missing education through a dedicated CME Tracker
- Ensuring all notifications of CME are correctly recorded on the Integrated Children Services (ICS) database following the agreed procedures
- Investigating relevant databases e.g. S2S, Lost Pupil Database, G2, Aspire etc.
- Coordinating casework in relation to investigating Children Missing Education including working closely with relevant services and agencies to determine appropriate provision for the child
- Working closely with Admissions team with regards to admission into school under the Authority's Fair Access Protocol
- Reviewing cases held until re-engagement in education is successfully secured e.g. children placed through school attendance order
- Providing relevant reports on policy compliance and progress
- Hold regular CME meetings to review and risk assess complex and urgent cases
- Raise awareness of the CME policy and practice through training/ awareness raising events for school governors, partner organisations as necessary
- Reporting children not found following CME process to the Police as part of the Missing Person protocol.

9.0 Key Stakeholders

9.1 The Children Act 2004 places a duty on all agencies to work together to promote the welfare of children and share information. In order to fulfil the requirements of the CME policy the authority has agreed to work in collaboration to ensure the early identification and intervention of children who are not receiving a suitable education. In many establishments or services, stakeholders have a CME lead who will act as a direct link to the CME Tracker officer.

9.2 In relation to the CME Policy key stakeholders include:

- Children's Services including Admissions, Education Out of School Team, Ethnic Minority and Traveller Education team Parent Partnership, Education Welfare Service, , Locality Teams, Careers Advice Team

- Schools and Academies including Teaching and Learning Centres
- Health/PCT
- Youth Offending Service
- Voluntary Organisations
- Housing Associations
- Police
- CAMHS
- Homeless Services
- Job Centres
- CME tracker officers in other authorities

10.0 Reducing the Risk of Children Missing Education

- 10.1 All LCC officers, schools, academies and the general public have a degree of responsibility in relation to children missing education. Parents who do not ensure their children are accessing a 'suitable' education can be deemed as breaking the law. Anyone who becomes aware of a child or young person who does not appear to be accessing education should refer this child to the Inclusion and Attendance team through the Customer Service Centre (CSC) (refer to CME procedures)
- 10.2 The authority in partnership with the other agencies listed in 9.2 aims to ensure that all colleagues in all agencies who become aware of a child who is living in the county but not in identified education provision, will notify the Inclusion and Attendance team through the CSC.
- 10.3 Data sharing agreements have been set up in order to search for children where internal procedures have failed to find them. Current this is between health and police.

11.0 The Role of Children's Services

- 11.2 Individual services within the Children Services' Directorate play a role in **preventing** the risk of children missing education. These services will continue to be proactive in addressing issues related to non-attendance/poor attendance at the same time working in partnership with the Inclusion and Attendance team to monitor and investigate children who meet the criteria under the definition of children missing education and at risk of missing education.
- 11.3 Below is a table of services and the part they play in addressing issues related to Children Missing Education. Full details of the remit of each service area will be available through the contacts provided.

Name of Service Area	Roles and Responsibilities	Contact details
Inclusion and Attendance (I&A)	Overall responsibility for tracking and monitoring CME	01522 552427 cme@lincolnshire.gov.uk
Education Welfare Service (EWS)	Ensuring targeted schools are following procedures and supporting implementation of strategies to reduce risk of CME	01778 382573
Education Out of School Team (EOOST)	Facilitating the education of CME children who are hard to place Ensuring that excluded or hard to place children are notified as CME if they are not on roll or in suitable education within the agreed timescales.	01522 552572
Admissions	Ensuring all children are registered as CME once normal procedures for placing in education provision are completed, These are children who <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fail to register at 5, • fail to transfer from infant to junior or at end of key stage 2 • are unable to find a school place within the timescale 	01522 553339
Ethnic Minority and Traveller Education Team	Supporting families who have recently arrived in the county or are from a Travelling background to understand the school system, support school place applications and ensure inclusion in order to prevent potential CME in future.	01427 787190 emtet@lincolnshire.gov.uk
Additional Needs	Monitoring children with statements of special needs ensuring provision needed is in place.	01522 553332
Parent Partnership	Supporting parents of children with special education in relation to regular school attendance	01522 553351
Alternative Provision	Liaising closely with all relevant services above to provide suitable education for those currently CME and to those at risk of becoming CME.	01522 553390
Looked after Children	Monitoring the attendance of LAC and responding to early identification of children at risk of CME.	01522 782111
Locality teams	Addressing the needs of Children missing education through TAC, CiN and CP,	01522 782060
Lincolnshire Police Force Control Room	Attends to referrals of missing person or person absent from appointment (see below 13.3)	101 if you are referring a child
The Safe Team	A multiagency hub leading on identification, prevention, investigation and prosecution of cases of Child Sexual Exploitation	thesafeteam@lincs.pnn.police.uk

12.0 The role of Schools and Academies

- 12.1 Schools and academies have a duty under section 10 of the Children's Act 2004 to work in partnership with the local authority with a view to improving the wellbeing of children in the authority's area.
- 12.2 Section 175 of the Education Act puts a duty on all schools to exercise their functions with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. This includes identifying children who are not receiving education.
- 12.3 It is expected that schools and academies will have carried out all reasonable enquiries within their capacity to ascertain the whereabouts of the young person and engaging them in education prior to informing the local authority that the child is missing education.
- 12.4 Where it has been brought to the attention of the local authority that a child is missing education and the school/academy has failed to report a child as CME, the local authority will write to the school/academy requesting details of the child's attendance and may, if an academy, contact the Secretary of State.

13.0 Safeguarding of Children Missing Education

- 13.1 A significant number of children referred as missing education are either found in education following initial investigations or found but not in education and subsequently supported to return. There are a number of children who are not found in education as the family cannot be located following the normal investigations.
- 13.2 A child who is not found in education following CME investigations does not infer that the child is at risk however, it is appropriate to escalate the concerns to consider potential risks to the child. A process is in place to facilitate this.
- 13.3 The Missing Person Coordinator is part of Lincolnshire Police Force and is responsible for responding to and analysing referrals of missing persons including those absent from appointments. They are part of the Safe Team. The I & A team work closely with the missing person coordinator to identify children at risk. Children who are absent from school should be referred through the CME process allowing the I & A team to implement the process and refer to the issuing person coordinator following a risk assessment. Where the school have knowledge that the child alone is missing from home, it would be appropriate to refer directly to the Lincolnshire Police Force Call Centre 101.

14.0 Monitoring the policy and procedures

- 14.1 The CME Policy will be reviewed annually taking into consideration local changes and national legislation.
- 14.2 Schools and services are regularly reminded of procedures through service updates.