



One minute guide

Children Missing Education

No. 21, June 2022

What is meant by the term children missing education?

Children missing education (CME) are children of compulsory school age who are not on a school roll and who are not receiving a suitable education otherwise (e.g. privately, electively home educated (EHE) or in alternative provision).

CME is different to children missing or absent from home or care. However, in a small number of cases this may also apply. Please see the one minute guide on children who are missing or absent from home or placement for further information.

Why is this area of work so important?

We need to identify children missing education to ensure that every child and young person has the opportunity to fulfil their potential and that they receive the universal services to which they are entitled to. We also need to make sure that they stay safe from harm and do not 'slip through the net'. Children missing education can be (but are not always) at risk of concerns about safeguarding, health, domestic violence, forced marriage, child sexual exploitation, child trafficking, female genital mutilation, or behavioural issues.

The law requires us to know where all children are and what school they attend, even if they have left the country. [Clause 4 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006](#) places a duty on the local authority to identify children missing education and section [436A of the Education Act 1996](#) (school attendance) requires all local authorities to make arrangements to establish (so far as it is possible to do so) the identities of children in their area who are not receiving a 'suitable education'.

What should all partner agencies, schools and parents do?

It is the responsibility of schools, health services and other partner agencies to act when they are aware of or believe that a child is missing from education. Reasonable enquiries should be made in the first instance and as much basic information should be collated as possible including names, addresses, contact details, emails, details of other family members, friends etc. before the Children Missing Education Team in the local authority is notified.

Schools should act quickly to make all reasonable enquiries to try and ascertain the child's whereabouts to prevent the child becoming CME. If the child's whereabouts are still unknown, the school should complete a child missing education referral form and email to the CME Team within four weeks of being aware that the child is missing from school. Schools should include information about any specific concerns they might have about the child.

Parents must tell the school if they no longer need the child's school place (whether leaving the school, local area or the UK), even if leaving for a short period of the time.

Who leads on this work in Children and Families?

Within Children and Families in Leeds, we have a Children Missing Education (CME) Team who have a statutory responsibility to identify CME, and to make reasonable enquiries to locate the child and ensure that they are accessing the education they are entitled to. CME who are known to be living in Leeds are allocated a keyworker to support transition back into school via the School Attendance Service. The School Attendance Service is responsible for supporting the family to ensure that the child accesses suitable education within the local authority.

Where there is no known active address for the child in Leeds and the CME referral/enquiries suggest that the child is living in another local authority, the CME Team will notify the receiving local authority CME team of the child and family's known whereabouts as a CME referral. It is the responsibility of the receiving local authority to track and identify the child and support the family to ensure that the child accesses suitable education.

If CME enquiries/ referrals suggest that the child may have left the United Kingdom, the CME team are responsible for undertaking reasonable enquiries to ensure that this is the case. They would do this by attempting to obtain some independent verification from a receiving school or similar professional agency in the new country if this is possible.

The CME Team receives referrals to carry out this work, which are prioritised by the level of risk identified on the referral. The CME Team track cases through various enquiry pathways available to them such as interrogating Children's Social Work Service and other available databases, undertaking home visits, scrutinising various search engines including social media platforms, and making telephone enquiries to family members, other professionals, benefits agencies and the border agency. When another local authority believes that a child has moved to Leeds and may be missing from education, they will notify the CME Team. The team also receive referrals for children who are new to the country.

Who are the key contacts?

Notifications and [referral forms](#) should be sent by email to: cme@leeds.gov.uk
Enquiries to the email address or the CME helpline Tel: 0113 3789686

Want to know more?

You can find out more from the Department for Education [website](#)

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