



One minute guide

Children Missing Education

No. 21, November 2024

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).

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. We also need to make sure that they do not 'slip through the net' and stay safe from harm. Children missing education can be (but are not always) at risk of safeguarding concerns. For example, domestic violence; forced marriage; child sexual exploitation; child criminal exploitation; child trafficking; female genital mutilation or health concerns and sometimes behaviour concerns.

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](#) 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/ carers 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 promptly made in the first instance to try and ascertain the child's whereabouts. As much basic information should be collated as possible including names, addresses, contact details, emails, details of other family members, friends etc. before the local authority is notified. If the child's whereabouts are still unknown, the school should complete a child missing education referral form and email to the Children Missing Education (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/ carers must inform the school if they no longer need the child's school place (whether leaving the school, Leeds, or the UK), even if leaving for a short period of the time.

The CME team is part of the wider Children Missing Out of Education team (CMOOE), which also incorporates the School Attendance Service, Elective Home Education team and the Exclusions Monitoring team. Please see the [CMOOE page](#) of the Leeds for Learning website for more information.

Who leads on this work in Children's Services?

Within the Children missing out of education team (CMOOE team), we have dedicated Children Missing Education (CME) Officers, 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. Children who are identified as CME and 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 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. They track cases through various enquiry pathways available to them such as scrutinising Children's Social Work Service systems and other available databases, undertaking home visits, using various search engines including social media platforms, 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. They also receive referrals for children who are new to the country.

Key contacts and further information

Notification and referral forms and guidance on how to complete them can be found on the [CME pages of the Leeds for Learning website](#), and should be completed and sent via email to cme@leeds.gov.uk. Enquiries can also be sent to this email address, or by contacting the team via the CME helpline—tel: 0113 378 9686.

Further information is available from the government's statutory guidance, [Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#), published in August 2024.

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