

NORTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP

# CHILDREN MISSING FROM EDUCATION

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## 1. DEFINITION

“Children missing from education” refers to all children of compulsory school age:

- Who are not on a school roll or being ‘educated otherwise’.
- Who have been out of any educational provision for a substantial period of time (usually agreed as ten days without provision of reasonable explanation).
- Who will be deleted from a school admissions register (after the school and local authority have made reasonable enquiry to locate the child before the decision is made); because they have continuous unauthorised absence from school for a period of twenty school days; leave a school and future provision is unknown; fails to return from extended leave within ten school days.

Each year children either fail to start in a new school or appropriate education provision or become lost from school rolls or fail to re-register at a new school when they move home.

This procedure should be read alongside **North East Lincolnshire Local Authority’s Children Missing from Education Policy** and [Referral Form](#) and **Children missing education: statutory guidance for local authorities (September 2016)**.

## 2. RISKS

These 'missing' children can be vulnerable; it is essential that all services work together to identify and re-engage these children back into appropriate education provision as quickly as possible. It is important to establish the reasons for the child being missing at the earliest possible stage.

Possible reasons that should be considered include:

- Failure to start appropriate provision and never enter the system.
- Fail to start school at year reception entry, hence never entering the authority’s system.
- Fail to complete phased transition at: key stage 1 to 2 (infants to juniors); or key stage 2 to 3 (primary to secondary).
- Stopped attending, due to illegal/permanent exclusion or withdrawal by parent/carer.
- Failure to complete a transition between schools.
- Children from refugee and asylum seeking families.
- Children from families who are highly mobile i.e transient and traveller families.
- Arrive in the country via asylum, refugee status or as EU nationals.
- Children at risk of a forced marriage.

- Children experiencing abuse and neglect or medical reasons.
- Cease to attend for an unknown reason.

It is to be noted that personal circumstances of the child or those of their families may contribute to the withdrawal process and the failure to make a transition, e.g. parents / carers escaping domestic violence, families moved quickly under the police witness protection scheme.

Children who remain disengaged from education are potentially exposed to higher degrees of risk such as antisocial behaviour and/or sexual exploitation.

Families moving between local authority areas can sometimes lead to a child becoming 'lost' in the system and consequently missing education. Where a child has moved, local authorities should check with other local authorities - either regionally or nationally - and share information in order to ascertain where a child has moved. Once the location of the child is established, the relevant local authority must ensure that the child is receiving an education either by attending a school or otherwise.

### **3. INDICATORS**

#### **SCHOOLS**

As a result of daily registration, schools are particularly well placed to notice when a child has gone missing. If a member of school/educational establishment/college staff becomes aware that a child may have run away or gone missing, they should try to establish with the parents/ carers, what has happened. If this is not possible, or the child is missing, the designated safeguarding teacher/advisor should, together with the class teacher, assess the child's vulnerability.

In the more general circumstances of a child going missing who is not known to any other agencies, the head teacher / principal or appropriate member of staff should inform the local authority's School Admissions / Children Missing from Education Service and Education Welfare Officer of any child who has not attended for 10 consecutive school days without provision of reasonable explanation.

#### **OTHER AGENCIES**

Where any agency in contact with children and families believes that a child is not on the roll of a school or receiving education otherwise via parental preference to home educate, then this information should be passed to the local authority's School Admissions /Children Missing from Education Service with all relevant details they have of the child/family in question.

The School Admissions/Children Missing from Education Service should ensure in conjunction with the Education Welfare Service where necessary that reasonable enquiries are made - e.g. home visits, liaison with Children's Social Care Services and/or housing - and notify the school if it appears that the child has moved out of the area.

If no information is forthcoming within 2 days, and the child is known to social care or there are safeguarding concerns, the School Admissions/Children Missing from Education Service should alert the team manager, who should inform Children's Social Care Services and/or the Police.

In a case of urgent safeguarding, concerns should be raised /referrals made to both Children's Social Care Services and the Police immediately.

### **4. PROTECTION AND ACTION TO BE TAKEN**

Head teachers should inform the School Admissions / Children Missing from Education Service and the child's social worker immediately a child subject to a Child Protection Plan is missing. Further guidance can be found in the **Safeguarding Policy for Education Establishments 2019**.

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In the following circumstances a referral to Children's Social Care and /or the police should always be made promptly:

- The child may be the victim of a crime.
- The child is subject of a Child Protection Plan.
- The child is subject of s47 enquiries.
- The child is looked after.
- There is a known person posing a risk to children in the household or in contact with the household.
- There is a history of the family moving frequently.
- There are serious issues of attendance.

Where a child on a school roll is missing, the child's name may not be removed from the school roll until s/he has been continuously absent for at least 20 school days and both the school and the education services have failed, after reasonable enquiry, to locate the child and her/his family. After 20 school days the child's Common Transfer file should be uploaded to the Department for Education secure site for the transfer of pupil information when a pupil moves between schools. The CME Officer in the local authority must also be informed.

In these circumstances the child's name is kept on the local authority's centrally held management information system (Capita One) and should be clearly identified as 'missing from education'.

Where the child's name has been removed from the school roll, but s/he has not been located, the head teacher/principal should arrange for the child's records to be retained until the child is located or after a reasonable time uploaded to the Lost Pupil Database via the s2s website.

Where a head teacher/principal has been notified by a parent that a child is receiving education other than at school i.e. being electively home educated, and has removed the child's name from the school roll, notification must be given to the local authority's School Admissions/Children Missing from Education Service as soon as the pupil's name is to be removed from the admission register who will in turn refer the case to the local authority's Elective Home Education Service for monitoring.

If a school receives a new child without receiving information about the child from his or her previous school, the school should contact the former school in the first instance. However, if there are any ensuing concerns in obtaining confirmation of the child's former provision this can be raised with the School Admissions/Children Missing from Education Service for further enquiries to be made with the originating local authority.

If the School Admissions/Children Missing from Education Service becomes aware the child has moved to another school, s/he should ensure all relevant agencies are informed and arrangements made to forward records from the previous school.

## 5. ISSUES

A child missing from education is not in itself a child protection matter, and there may be an innocent explanation for this. However, regular school attendance is an important safeguard and unexplained non-attendance can be an early indicator of problems, risk and vulnerability.

Schools should endeavour to deal with this problem in three ways: by preventing poor school attendance and truancy; acting once absence occurred to establish children's safety and try to get them back to school; and taking action to trace children whose whereabouts were not known.

## 6. CHANGES TO THE EDUCATION (PUPIL REGISTRATION) (AMENDMENTS)(ENGLAND) REGULATIONS 2006

**North East Lincolnshire Local Authority's Children Missing from Education Policy and Referral Forms**

**North East Lincolnshire Council's Education Welfare Service (EWS)**

## NORTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP

This guidance should be read in the context of the statutory duties upon local authorities and parents as set out in the following:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Education Act 2002
- The Children Act 1989
- The Children Act 2004
- Statutory guidance for local authorities; Children missing in education (January 2015)
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England)(Amendment) Regulations 2006, as amended (Education law regarding pupil registration where a child is on a school role): The Education (Pupil Registration) (England)(Amendment) Regulations 201.;
- **The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016.**

In particular the guidance provides for professionals seeking to exercise their duty under the following Acts to ensure that their functions are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

- Section 175 of the Education Act 2002; and
- Section 11 of the Children Act 2004.

Additionally, this guidance seeks to ensure that the duty to co-operate to improve the well-being of children under section 10 of the Children Act 2004[32] is discharged. All schools will have a designated teacher for looked after children. These teachers are ideally placed to assist when identifying those looked after children currently in school who may be at greater risk of going missing from education.