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| CHILDREN MISSING FROM EDUCATION |
| Practice Guidelines for School Staff  May 2023 |

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# The Context

Partners across Aberdeenshire have in place an agreed Multi-agency Missing Persons Protocol to co-ordinate how we work when we believe a person is missing. Key objectives for that protocol include:

* Provide a consistent approach for the relevant agencies when a person is missing.
* Mitigate the risk to the people who go missing.
* Ensure that the multi-agency response delivers on the objectives contained within the National Framework.
* Set out the roles, responsibilities, and actions to be taken by each agency in respect of missing persons.
* Ensure that single agency protocols are reflected in this protocol and reflect the National Missing Persons Framework for Scotland and are subject to ongoing evaluation and review.
* Ensure that there is a shared understanding across agencies about risk assessment and management.
* Provide a collaborative approach when single agency searches require more support

In Education, The Children Missing from Education (CME) guidance directs how we work when a child or young person is thought to be a child missing from education. This guidance links to the multi-agency protocol.

Every child or young person has the right to be safe and protected, and to feel safe and protected from any avoidable situation or acts which might result in that child being harmed.

All individuals who go missing are at risk of harm. However, for some individuals, this harm can be exacerbated by their circumstances

There is a responsibility on agencies with a duty of care for an individual, at the time of them going missing, to ensure that the Aberdeenshire Multi-Agency Missing Person’s Protocol and the supporting Children Missing from Education Guidance, are followed.

Education staff have a key role to play in recognising actual or potential harm to a child, in sharing concerns and initial information gathering.

Children and young people may disappear from the view of schools and the Authority for many reasons. Our responsibility is to help maintain and support young people in Education and to take action where we believe their safety or wellbeing is at risk.

Where a child or young person appears to be missing from education, our first concern is for the safety of the child.

# Is this a Child Protection Matter?

If there is any suspicion that the child is missing ie not at school or at home, or they are thought to be at risk, then Police and Social Work must be contacted.

A missing person is defined as anyone whose whereabouts are unknown and:

* Where the circumstances are out of character or,
* The context suggests the person may be subject to crime or,
* The person is at risk of harm to themselves or others

In all cases the first and most important factor to consider is the safety of the child or young person.   
  
Should there be any concern that the child may be at risk then Child Protection procedures must be followed.   
  
All children and young people who go missing are vulnerable. This could be a young person whose presence is totally unknown or who is going missing for parts of the day.

# About the Guidelines

These guidelines set out the procedures to be followed by Education staff when a child is thought to be missing from Education. **Where there is a concern for the safety of a child, Child Protection Procedures must be followed without delay.**

The CME Procedure is for missing children and young people only – **those whose whereabouts are not known**. For truancy/absence issues, the [Promoting and Managing Pupil Attendance Policy and Guidance 2022 s](https://asn-aberdeenshire.org/policies-and-guidance/)hould be followed.

# Definition of Child Missing from Education

‘Children missing from education include those of compulsory school age who are not on a school roll and are not being educated otherwise (at home, privately or subject to any alternative educational provision). It may also include those who have not attended school for a period of time’

[*National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021*](https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/advice-and-guidance/2021/09/national-guidance-child-protection-scotland-2021/documents/national-guidance-child-protection-scotland-2021/national-guidance-child-protection-scotland-2021/govscot%3Adocument/national-guidance-child-protection-scotland-2021.pdf)*, 4.308 Pg 183*

# Child Missing from Education Flow Diagram and Checklist

The flow diagram (pg 6) and checklist (pg 7) guides staff through the CME process. The initial emphasis is on risk assessment and quickly identifying what is known about the child or young person, their history and current situation and whether they are believed to missing.

Where the child or young person is thought to be at risk then Child Protection procedures should be followed without delay.

The flow diagram then guides schools through the CME process. **Schools are reminded to maintain records of their search, any information gathered and decision making along the way. This information will be required to support any further searches by the CME Coordinator.**

**Early Learning and Childcare (ELC)**

The Scottish Government Children Missing in Education process applies to school age children and young people only.

Although it is not mandatory for children to attend an ELC setting, if CME concerns are raised regarding a child then these should be treated with the same diligence as for school age children.

A priority action must be to contact the child’s Named Person in Health and share information and concerns. Where there are child protection concerns, contact should be made with the Child Protection and Duty Team or the allocated Social Worker.

A diagram of a work flow

Description automatically generated with low confidence

**Checklist for Education Staff:**

Checklist for the school/Early years setting should take **after third day** of no contact (**or sooner** if child has been identified as at risk and vulnerable). **Keep a record of all searches completed including dates and times.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **If there are Child Protection concerns regarding the pupil missing school, Child Protection procedures must be followed** |  |
| Contact all emergency contact numbers (including parent mobiles, other family members) |  |
| Check what other staff and siblings know |  |
| Ask other children in the class/school (consider confidentiality and sensitivity) |  |
| Liaise with other relevant agencies e.g health, social work, voluntary agencies |  |
| Arrange for a home visit to be carried out |  |
| All reasonable and practical effort should be undertaken to locate the child/family, including speaking to any known extended family, neighbours or community members, friends/acquaintances |  |
| Contact Health Visitor/School Nurse/GP Practice with whom child registered |  |
| Contact Social Work if child is known to Social Work, contact Duty Social Work if there is a significant wellbeing concern |  |
| Contact Police on 101 if a welfare check is required |  |
| Send an email to the Parents (EAL Service can aid in arranging translations) |  |
| Send a letter to the Parents (EAL Service can aid in arranging translations) |  |
| Record all communication, contacts and attempts to reach the family within SEEMIS pastoral notes |  |
| Request checks from SEEMIS using school2school@aberdeenshire.gov.uk to enable check to be carried out with Aberdeenshire schools. |  |
| If child is not located make contact with CME Coordinator: |  |
| **To request a Children Missing from Education Wider Search which is completed by the CME Coordinator:**  School Staff to complete **Appendix 1** and send to [cme@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:cme@aberdeenshire.gov.uk)  The CME Coordinator will commence further checks |  |

# Families moving away from Aberdeenshire

For cases where the family has informed the school that they are moving away from the area the form on Appendix 2 can be used to detail their now location. Once their new school application has been processed the receiving school should make a request for the Pupil Progress record (PPR) as soon as application is made. If a request has not been received within two weeks (depending on the level of concern for the pupil as you may advance on this sooner), the following action should be taken:

* If the family report that they are moving within Aberdeenshire the current school should contact the incoming school.
* If the family have reported that they are moving out with Aberdeenshire and have named a school, the current school should make contact with the reported receiving school.
* Where there is no resolution, or the identification of the new school is unknown the school should refer to CME Co-ordinator by completing the CME Referral form in Appendix 1. The CME Co-ordinator will undertake further checks

**If there are concerns for the child, or they are on the Child Protection register, or on an order from the Children’s Reporter the school lead should liaise immediately with the Lead Professional to determine what action should be taken. Children should not be removed from the roll until there is confirmation from the other school that they have been enrolled.**

# Children From the Gypsy/Travelling Community

It is important to be aware of the diversity of lifestyles in Scotland which an inclusive education system must acknowledge and embrace. Gypsy / Travellers have a way of life which is diverse and may be different from that of other pupils. Flexibility and solution-focused approaches are essential in working effectively in the best interests of Gypsy / Traveller children. To ensure that they and their families do not become disengaged or alienated from the education system a reflective and sensitive approach is crucial.

It is important that schools are aware if a family is part of the Gypsy/ Travelling community, and that they develop a positive relationship with Gypsy / Traveller families and children which helps the school to be more aware and understanding of the family’s lifestyle.

Information which can be useful when tracing a child may include the travelling patterns of the family, whether they are settled, family links and any places or areas the family might move to when travelling. It is very important that schools explain the importance of families sharing their intentions to move to alternative locations, to support the school’s management of the attendance of children and young people. Through the family understanding the expectations of attendance, it may support the attendance of the children and young people at school, and the communication between home and school.

If a child from the Gypsy Travelling community is missing from school without explanation schools should consider:

* Contacting the family by phone and text
* If there are Child Protection concerns: follow child protection procedures.
* Contacting the Gypsy / Traveller Liaison Officer (GTLO) [gypsytravellerliaison@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:gypsytravellerliaison@aberdeenshire.gov.uk)
* Further checks can be carried out via other Scottish GTLOs by the GTLO where this is felt to be required
* Where their whereabouts are unknown, a date of return is unknown and no communication has been received from the family explaining that they will be travelling for a period, Children Missing from Education procedures must be followed.

# Pupils for Whom English is an Additional Language:

Families may arrive in Scotland unaware of how to access education services in the local area and be unaware of the legal duties of parents /carers in Scotland regarding the education of children particularly when this differs from their country of origin.

The English as an Additional Language (EAL) Service can offer translation and/or interpreting support to aid the admissions process for a child/ young person into a school. Information gathered at enrolment on the previous address and school can be of great importance should the child unexpectedly leave. This support by EAL can also be offered if a child/ young person leaves or transfers to another school.

It is also essential that prior to the family moving the school seek the intended address and the school the child will be enrolled in. (Appendix 2). If the intended school is unknown before moving, EAL have created a letter to be given to the family that they can pass to the new school. This letter prompts the new school to contact the Aberdeenshire school to confirm the child’s enrolment and complete the transition process for the child/ young person.

Where there are concerns about the welfare or safety of the child follow child protection procedures.

# Home Educated Pupils When considering whether a child is missing it is also important to consider the Aberdeenshire Guidance ‘[Working Together to Support Home Education’](https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/media/24972/homeeducationpolicyaugust2019.pdf) . Regarding the option of Home Education:

# Parents do not have to seek consent to home educate if their child has:

* never attended a local authority school
* their child is being withdrawn from an independent school
* their child has finished primary education in one school but has not started secondary education in another
* the school the child has been attending has closed

# The Role of the CME Coordinator

When the CME Co-ordinator receives the form in Appendix 1 they will use the information to support liaison with colleagues locally, nationally and internationally. This could include liaison with Police Scotland, NHS Trusts, colleagues in Council Tax, colleagues in Children’s Social Work and The Scottish Government to help locate the family. They will also ensure that colleagues in schools are kept informed of the outcome of searches. The CME Co-ordinator flowchart will be followed which is located within the Practice Guidelines for CME Coordinator

**It is imperative that the school lead person informs the CME Co-ordinator if a child reappears as soon as possible**

# Removing from Roll

Children / young people should **not** be removed from the roll until there is confirmation from the other school that they have been enrolled. If an extensive search has been completed by the school and the CME Coordinator the evidence of the search will be presented to the Head of Education to decide whether the pupil can be removed from roll. This decision will be shared with the school via the CME Coordinator.

**Appendix 1: CME Referral Form**

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| --- | --- |
| **CME Case Details** | |
| **Case Referred to CME Coordinator by:** | |
| **Name:** |  |
| **Designation:** |  |
| **School:** |  |
| **Email address:** |  |
| **Telephone Number:** |  |
| **Date:** |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Details of Local Investigations Completed** | | |
| **Local Searches Completed:** | **Date Carried Out and By Whom** | **Outcome** |
| **Enquiries made with other children in the class** |  |  |
| **Enquiries made with other school staff** |  |  |
| **Enquiries made with other establishments where siblings are known to be or where siblings were enrolled** |  |  |
| **Home contact attempted** | | |
| **By phone** |  |  |
| **By email** |  |  |
| **By visit** |  |  |
| **By letter** |  |  |
| **Contact made with relatives/ emergency contact** |  |  |
| **Contact made with other agencies** | | |
| **Social Work** |  |  |
| **Health** |  |  |
| **Voluntary Agencies** |  |  |
| **Police** |  |  |
| **Other** |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Family Details** | | | | |
| **Father’s Name** |  | | | |
| **Mother’s Name** |  | | | |
| **Father’s Contact Details (including address, phone number and email)** |  | | | |
| **What language is used to communicate with the Father** |  | | | |
| **Mother’s Contact Details (including address, phone number and email)** |  | | | |
| **What language is used to communicate with the Mother** |  | | | |
| **Other names family are known by** |  | | | |
| **Last Known Address** |  | | | |
| **Is either Parent in Military** | **Yes** |  | **No** |  |
| **Is anyone in the family an asylum seeker** | **Yes** |  | **No** |  |
| **Is anyone in family a refugee** | **Yes** |  | **No** |  |
| **Emergency Contact Details: (including name, relationship to family and contact details)** |  | | | |

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| **Any Additional Background Information?** |
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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Child (rens) Details**  Please include in this section any other background information about why this case has been referred and/or any other relevant details which the CME co-ordinator should be made aware of e.g. medical issues, confidentiality etc. | | | | |
| **How many sets of child’s details are being sent with this referral** |  | | | |
| **First Child** | | | | |
| **Forename** |  | | | |
| **Surname** |  | | | |
| **Date of Birth** |  | | | |
| **Gender** |  | | | |
| **SCN (Scotland only)** |  | | | |
| **UPI (Outside Scotland)** |  | | | |
| **Ethnic Background** |  | | | |
| **How is child educated e.g school, Home Ed** |  | | | |
| **Name of School Last Attended** |  | | | |
| **Stage of Pupil** |  | | | |
| **Date of Last Attendance** |  | | | |
| **Reason for Leaving** |  | | | |
| **Previous schools attended** |  | | | |
| **Is child on Child Protection Register** | **Yes** |  | **No** |  |
| **Has Child Been on Child Protection Register in last 24 months?** | **Yes** |  | **No** |  |
| **Are there Child Protection concerns for this child?** | **Yes** |  | **No** |  |
| **Does this child have a history of Unauthorised absences?** | **Yes** |  | **No** |  |
| **Does this child have a history of exclusions?** | **Yes** |  | **No** |  |
| **Is this child looked after at home by the local authority in terms of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995?** | **Yes** |  | **No** |  |
| **Does this child have an additional support need?** | **Yes** |  | **No** |  |
| **What is the nature of the additional support** |  | | | |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Second Child** | | | | |
| **Forename** |  | | | |
| **Surname** |  | | | |
| **Date of Birth** |  | | | |
| **Gender** |  | | | |
| **SCN (Scotland only)** |  | | | |
| **UPI (Outside Scotland)** |  | | | |
| **Ethnic Background** |  | | | |
| **How is child educated e.g school, Home Ed** |  | | | |
| **Name of School Last Attended** |  | | | |
| **Stage of Pupil** |  | | | |
| **Date of Last Attendance** |  | | | |
| **Reason for Leaving** |  | | | |
| **Previous schools attended** |  | | | |
| **Is child on Child Protection Register** | **Yes** |  | **No** |  |
| **Has Child Been on Child Protection Register in last 24 months?** | **Yes** |  | **No** |  |
| **Are there Child Protection concerns for this child?** | **Yes** |  | **No** |  |
| **Does this child have a history of Unauthorised absences?** | **Yes** |  | **No** |  |
| **Does this child have a history of exclusions?** | **Yes** |  | **No** |  |
| **Is this child looked after at home by the local authority in terms of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995?** | **Yes** |  | **No** |  |
| **Does this child have an additional support need?** | **Yes** |  | **No** |  |
| **What is the nature of the additional support** |  | | | |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Third Child** | | | | |
| **Forename** |  | | | |
| **Surname** |  | | | |
| **Date of Birth** |  | | | |
| **Gender** |  | | | |
| **SCN (Scotland only)** |  | | | |
| **UPI (Outside Scotland)** |  | | | |
| **Ethnic Background** |  | | | |
| **How is child educated e.g school, Home Ed** |  | | | |
| **Name of School Last Attended** |  | | | |
| **Stage of Pupil** |  | | | |
| **Date of Last Attendance** |  | | | |
| **Reason for Leaving** |  | | | |
| **Previous schools attended** |  | | | |
| **Is child on Child Protection Register** | **Yes** |  | **No** |  |
| **Has Child Been on Child Protection Register in last 24 months?** | **Yes** |  | **No** |  |
| **Are there Child Protection concerns for this child?** | **Yes** |  | **No** |  |
| **Does this child have a history of Unauthorised absences?** | **Yes** |  | **No** |  |
| **Does this child have a history of exclusions?** | **Yes** |  | **No** |  |
| **Is this child looked after at home by the local authority in terms of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995?** | **Yes** |  | **No** |  |
| **Does this child have an additional support need?** | **Yes** |  | **No** |  |
| **What is the nature of the additional support** |  | | | |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Fourth Child** | | | | |
| **Forename** |  | | | |
| **Surname** |  | | | |
| **Date of Birth** |  | | | |
| **Gender** |  | | | |
| **SCN (Scotland only)** |  | | | |
| **UPI (Outside Scotland)** |  | | | |
| **Ethnic Background** |  | | | |
| **How is child educated e.g school, Home Ed** |  | | | |
| **Name of School Last Attended** |  | | | |
| **Stage of Pupil** |  | | | |
| **Date of Last Attendance** |  | | | |
| **Reason for Leaving** |  | | | |
| **Previous schools attended** |  | | | |
| **Is child on Child Protection Register** | **Yes** |  | **No** |  |
| **Has Child Been on Child Protection Register in last 24 months?** | **Yes** |  | **No** |  |
| **Are there Child Protection concerns for this child?** | **Yes** |  | **No** |  |
| **Does this child have a history of Unauthorised absences?** | **Yes** |  | **No** |  |
| **Does this child have a history of exclusions?** | **Yes** |  | **No** |  |
| **Is this child looked after at home by the local authority in terms of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995?** | **Yes** |  | **No** |  |
| **Does this child have an additional support need?** | **Yes** |  | **No** |  |
| **What is the nature of the additional support** |  | | | |

School Staff to complete Appendix 1 and send to [cme@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:cme@aberdeenshire.gov.uk)

The CME Coordinator will commence further checks. Close communication between CME Coordinator and School is essential in case of any changes to the situation.

# Appendix 2

**School advised by Parent/Carer that Child is moving School**    
  
Basic details form which can be given to parents to gather information on the move. Parents cannot be required to provide you with this information.

**School advised by Parent/Carer that Child is moving School**

Dear parent/carer,

I understand that your child will be moving school. I would be grateful if you could provide the information below as this helps us to pass on your child’s school records.

Thank you for your help with this.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Parent /Carer’s Name** |  |
| **Parent/Carer’s contact telephone number** |  |
| **Parent/carer’s contact email** |  |
| **Name and Date of Birth of children moving school.**  **1st Child** |  |
| **2nd Child** |  |
| **3rd Child** |  |
| **4th Child** |  |
| **New Address** |  |
| **Town** |  |
| **Post Code** |  |
| **Country** |  |
| **Name and address of school if known** |  |
| **Date of move** |  |