



Department
for Education

Improving support for children missing education

Call for evidence

Launch date 18 May 2023

Respond by 20 July 2023

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Introduction

Children missing education (CME) are children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. The Department for Education (DfE) is conducting a call for evidence to understand the sector's current approach to identifying and supporting CME, and to inform any changes which will help us to improve this support.

Who this is for

- Parents and children, including those with experience of missing education
- Schools and teachers, and their representative organisations
- Multi-academy trusts
- Local authorities
- Children's social care agencies and representative organisations
- Charities, organisations and think tanks which support CME
- Those undertaking research into CME

Issue date

The call for evidence was issued on 18 May 2023.

Enquiries

If your enquiry is related to the policy content of the call for evidence you can contact the policy team by email:

CME.CALLFOREVIDENCE@education.gov.uk

If your enquiry is related to the DfE e-consultation website or the consultation and call for evidence process in general, you can contact the DfE Ministerial and Public Communications Division by email: Consultations.Coordinator@education.gov.uk or by telephone: 0370 000 2288 or via the [DfE Contact us page](#).

Additional copies

Additional copies are available electronically and can be downloaded from [GOV.UK DfE consultations](#).

The department's response

The responses of the call for evidence and the department's response will be [published on GOV.UK](#) in 2023.

How to respond

Respond online

To help us analyse the responses please use the online system wherever possible. Visit [DfE consultations on GOV.UK](#) to submit your response.

Other ways to respond

If for exceptional reasons, you are unable to use the online system, for example because you use specialist accessibility software that is not compatible with the system, you may request and complete a word document version of the form.

By email

CME.CALLFOREVIDENCE@education.gov.uk

By post

Improving support for children missing education
Attendance Division
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

Deadline

The call for evidence closes on 20 July 2023.

About this call for evidence

Access to excellent education in childhood is essential to successful outcomes in adulthood. All children of compulsory school age¹, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to a full time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have.² There is no statutory definition of the word 'suitable' but suitable education may be obtained in settings including schools, alternative provision, and through elective home education (EHE).³ For those enrolled at school, regular attendance is vital for children's education, wellbeing and long term development.

The government is committed to ensuring that all children, especially the most vulnerable in our society, are safe and have access to an excellent education. Children missing education (CME) are children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at school.⁴

CME are at significant risk of underachieving and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life because they do not benefit from the opportunities that a high-quality education provides.⁵ They are also at significant risk of being victims of harm, exploitation and radicalisation.⁶ The drivers behind the factors that lead to CME can often be complex and variable, including: children who have never been registered at a school, children who have been taken off a school roll (e.g. by their parents or because they have not returned following a leave of absence and reasonable efforts have been made to locate the child)⁷, and children excluded from school, who are not being provided with suitable education at home or in another setting.

It is vital that CME are identified and supported into education as quickly as possible, to minimise the negative impact of missing education. To support this, under the legislative framework⁸, parents, schools and local authorities have responsibilities relevant to CME, including:

- **Parents** have a duty to ensure that their children of compulsory school age are receiving efficient and suitable full-time education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise⁹ (for example, through EHE).

¹ A child is of compulsory school age on or after their fifth birthday and until the last Friday of June in the school year that they reach sixteen.

² [Section 7 of the Education Act 1996](#)

³ Section 2.10 of [Elective home education: Departmental guidance for parents 2019](#)

⁴ [Section 436A of the Education Act 1996](#)

⁵ Parish N, Bryant B, Swords B. '[Children missing education](#)' ISOS partnership and Local Government Association 2020

⁶ Parish N, Bryant B, Swords B.

⁷ Section 7 of the department's [working together to improve school attendance](#) guidance outlines acceptable situations in which a pupil can be removed from a school roll.

⁸ [The Education Act 1996](#)

⁹ [Section 7 of the Education Act 1996](#)

- **Schools** need to make reasonable enquiries, jointly¹⁰ with the local authority, to establish the whereabouts of a child who has been absent for a prolonged period¹¹, before removing the child from the admission register.
- **Local authorities** have a duty to make arrangements to enable them to establish, as far as possible, the identities of CME in their area.¹² They also have a duty to ensure that there are sufficient schools available for children in their area.¹³

In 2016, the Department for Education issued statutory '[Children missing education](#)' guidance for local authorities. This statutory guidance sets out key principles to enable local authorities in England to carry out their legal duty to make arrangements for identifying, as far as it is possible to do so, CME.

The Government knows that local authorities, schools and other agencies often use robust and innovative practices to identify and support CME in their local areas. This can include regular contact between CME teams within local authorities and other local services (e.g., school nurses and social workers) to share information and effectively identify CME. In addition, many local authorities follow an escalating checklist of reasonable enquiries to ensure all routes are taken to locate CME. We know that a lack of access to relevant data can hinder the ability of the sector to identify CME in a timely manner and can prolong the period that these children are not receiving an education.

There is currently variation in how the sector identifies and supports CME, and we want to ensure that everybody has the information, skills and tools they need to do this effectively.

We want to understand current best practice, and how local authorities, schools and other agencies can be supported and empowered to go further to identify and support CME, ensuring that every child has an opportunity to an education wherever they live and whatever their background.

This call for evidence will build on a 2019 review¹⁴ of updates to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016.¹⁵ The review found that providing clearer CME guidance could ensure local authorities are better able to comply with their duty to make arrangements to establish the identities of CME in their area – and reduce burdens on local authorities. This call for evidence will further the department's efforts to improve understanding of CME.

¹⁰ Under regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by regulation 4 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016

¹¹ Either ten school days after an authorised absence (under regulation 8(1)(f)(iii) of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006) or twenty consecutive school days without authorised absence (under regulation 8(1)(h)(iii) of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006)

¹² [Section 436A of the Education Act 1996](#)

¹³ [Section 14 of the Education Act 1996](#)

¹⁴ Department for Education '[The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016: Post Implementation Review](#)' 2019

¹⁵ [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016](#)

This document does not put forward any specific government proposals for change; instead it seeks comments, evidence and suggestions regarding:

- How local authorities, schools and other agencies currently identify and support CME.
- The challenges that local authorities, schools and other agencies face in identifying and supporting CME.
- Suggestions as to how these challenges can be addressed and how best practice in identifying and supporting CME can be promoted.

We want to address any challenges that exist in the system and empower local authorities to identify and support CME into education quickly. We welcome views and comments on the effectiveness of current CME arrangements and suggestions for improvement to inform future policy.

Once CME are identified, it is vital that these children are supported to access suitable education. The department has developed a comprehensive school attendance strategy which includes:

- [“Working together to improve school attendance” guidance](#), which sets out expectations for schools, trusts, governing bodies and local authorities to manage and improve levels of school attendance.
- Establishing a better flow of pupil level attendance data – [collecting data directly from schools’ electronic registers](#) to help the system identify those in need of support earlier.
- Deploying expert [Attendance Advisers](#) to work with every local authority in England (and a small number of multi-academy trusts) to support them to meet the new expectations in guidance.
- Specific support for the most vulnerable children, including through the [Supporting Families](#) programme and [Virtual Schools Head extension programme](#).

The government is also committed to:

- Progressing statutory local authority Children Not in School registers and a duty on local authorities to provide support to home educators, when the legislative timetable allows. This will support local authorities with their existing duty to make arrangements to identify CME.¹⁶
- Reforming the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and alternative provision (AP) system to improve the outcomes and experiences of children and young people with SEND and in alternative provision, within a fair and financially sustainable system.¹⁷ This includes strengthening the protections for children and young people in unregistered alternative provision settings, so that every placement is safe and has clear oversight. Last year we issued a call for evidence on 11 July 2022 to better understand current practice. We will set out

¹⁶ Department for Education [‘Children not in school: consultation response’](#) 2022

¹⁷ Department for Education [“SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan”](#)

further proposals for unregistered alternative provision following our analysis of the responses and further discussion with commissioners and providers.¹⁸

- Reforming children’s social care through our published strategy: *Stable Homes, Built on Love*¹⁹ to improve outcomes for children in care and care leavers. We recognise that stability in a child’s education is critical to their success, which is why we have a care mission to ensure that children live close to their communities when they come into care, so they remain at the same school wherever possible. We expect this to be a key feature in decision-making for children in care, alongside maintaining loving relationships. Through our reforms, we are also delivering a more effective and robust child protection system to keep children safe from significant harm – inside and outside the home.

Overview of the call for evidence

This call for evidence is split into eight sections.

The first section, *about you*, asks:

- Who you are and who you are responding on behalf of.
- Your contact and confidentiality preferences.

The second section, *defining children missing education*, sets out the current scope of the statutory duty in relation to CME and asks for views on:

- Whether the current statutory duty in relation to CME²⁰ includes the correct cohort of children or whether other children should be included.

The third section, *children missing education activity within schools*, outlines the responsibilities²¹ on schools regarding CME and asks for information regarding:

- The activities schools and local authorities currently undertake as part of their statutory duties.
- What barriers, if any, schools face in undertaking reasonable enquiries.
- Whether changes should be made to the expectations of schools regarding CME.

¹⁸ Department for Education [‘Understanding the use of unregistered alternative provision’](#) 2022

¹⁹ Department for Education [‘Stable Homes, Built on Love: Strategy and Consultation’](#) (2023)

²⁰ Section 436A of the Education Act 1996 requires local authorities to make arrangements relating to children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise. These children are known as ‘children missing education’ although this is not itself a statutory term. [Section 436A of the Education Act 1996](#)

²¹ Department for Education [‘Children missing education: statutory guidance for local authorities’](#) 2016

The fourth section, *children missing education activity within local authorities*, outlines the responsibilities of local authorities regarding CME²² and asks:

- For views regarding the barriers local authorities face in meeting their duties and how these barriers could be overcome.
- What information local authorities gather on CME and what action they take to locate CME.
- For views regarding the effectiveness of local authorities' current actions, processes and systems at identifying CME.
- What further changes local authorities would like to see to the CME identification process.

The fifth section, *identifying children missing education: working with other agencies*, outlines the expectations of local authorities in working with other agencies²³ and asks:

- Which agencies and professionals local authorities currently engage with to identify CME, and any other agencies they would find it helpful to work with but are currently unable to.
- For views regarding the barriers local authorities face in accessing the information they need on CME, and how these barriers could be overcome.

The sixth section, *elective home education*, outlines the statutory duty of local authorities to check that children receiving EHE are being suitably educated and asks:

- What checks local authorities conduct to ensure that children receiving EHE are being suitably educated.
- What would support local authorities to identify unsuitable EHE more effectively.

The seventh section, *supporting children missing education into education*, asks for views on:

- The barriers local authorities face in seeking a suitable place for CME.
- The activity local authorities undertake while a child is CME to ensure that they are safe.
- What works well to integrate former CME into full time education and how the process could be improved.
- The effectiveness of school attendance orders (SAOs) in bringing CME into education.
- Current activity respondents undertake to prevent children from becoming CME.

²² Department for Education '[Children missing education: statutory guidance for local authorities](#)' 2016

²³ Department for Education '[Children missing education: statutory guidance for local authorities](#)' 2016

The final section, *conclusion*, asks for:

- Views regarding the top five barriers respondents face in identifying and supporting CME.
- Views regarding how the process of identifying CME could be improved.
- Any further comments on identifying and supporting CME.

Next steps

This call for evidence will, it is hoped, give ample scope to all interested parties to provide evidence on what works well and what works less well in identifying and supporting CME. It is also intended to allow respondents to put forward ideas and proposals for change, and justification for such change. The government has not made any decision on these issues but does want to hear what more can be done to improve the CME system to support all children to achieve their potential.

When the closing date is reached, the government will consider the responses, and publish a response. We will use the responses to inform future policy.

The government invites comments on this call for evidence by 20 July 2023.

Section 1: About you

Questions

For all

1. What is your name?

Max. 10 words

For all

2. Do you consent for the Department for Education (DfE) to contact you via email about your response?

Please select one item below:

- Yes
- No

If yes, please provide your email address:

Max. 1 email address

For all

3. Would you like us to keep your response confidential?

Information provided in response to consultations, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 2018 or the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

If you want all, or any part, of a response to be treated as confidential, please explain why you consider it confidential.

If a request for disclosure of the information you have provided is received, your explanation about why you consider it to be confidential will be taken into account, but no assurance can be given that confidentiality can be maintained. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

The Department for Education will process your personal data (name and address and any other identifying material) in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, and in the majority of circumstances, this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

Please select one item below:

- Yes
- No

If yes, please explain your reason for confidentiality:

Max. 30 words

For all

4. In what capacity are you responding?

Please select all that apply:

- As a parent/carer of a child registered at a school or college (e.g., mainstream school or college, alternative provision schools, or independent schools)
- As a parent/carer of a child not registered at a school or college (e.g., home educated, non-school AP settings, etc.)
- As a parent/carer of a child with experience of missing education
- A child/young person
- On behalf of a school or college
- On behalf of unregistered alternative provision
- On behalf of governors
- On behalf of a nursery or childminder
- On behalf of a local authority
- On behalf of a representative body
- On behalf of a charity
- Other education professional
- On behalf of a voluntary or community organisation
- Prefer not to say
- Other – please specify (max. 10 words)

If responding on behalf of a school or college, please specify the type of school or college.

Please select all that apply:

- Mainstream school maintained by a local authority
- Mainstream academy or free school
- Alternative provision school
- Independent school
- Special school
- Post 16 College
- Other – please specify (max. 10 words)

Section 2: Defining children missing education

Background

We want to understand how local authorities, schools and others in the sector define children missing education (CME).

The statutory duty relating to CME (as per section 436A of the Education Act 1996) applies to any children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at school.

Children who are on school rolls and aren't attending regularly are not CME, but should instead be supported through the measures outlined in the [Working together to improve school attendance](#) guidance.

Questions

For all

5. Do you believe that the statutory duty relating to children missing education applies to the right children (any children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at school)?

Please select one item below:

- Yes
- No

For all

6. Are there any children currently excluded from the statutory duty relating to children missing education that you think should be included?

Please select all that apply:

- No, the current scope is suitable
- Children of compulsory school age on part-time timetables
- Children of compulsory school age who are flexi-schooled (see s.10.7 of [Elective Home Education](#) guidance)
- Children of compulsory school age who have ever been permanently excluded
- Children of compulsory school age who have been permanently excluded, for a certain time period after the exclusion – please specify suggested time period (max. 30 words)
- Suspended children of compulsory school age

- Children not on school roll who are under age 16 and attending colleges
- Children of compulsory school age attending illegal settings
- Children of compulsory school age attending unregistered settings
- Children of compulsory school age with low attendance (i.e., severely absent – missing 50% or more of school)
- Non-compulsory school aged children
- Other – please specify (max. 100 words)

Please explain why you think additional children should/shouldn't be included in the statutory duty relating to CME:

Max. 100 words

Section 3: Children missing education activity within schools

Background

Schools have an essential role in helping local authorities to identify CME. As stated in [DfE's CME guidance](#), schools:

- Must enter pupils on the admission register at the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the school.
- (If a pupil fails to attend on the agreed or notified date) should undertake reasonable enquiries to establish the child's whereabouts and consider notifying the local authority at the earliest opportunity
- Must monitor pupils' attendance through their attendance register. Schools should monitor attendance closely and address poor or irregular attendance – referring pupils' poor attendance to the local authority.
- Should agree with their local authority the intervals at which they will inform the local authority of the names and addresses of pupils of compulsory school age who fail to attend regularly, or have missed ten consecutive school days or more without authorised absence.
- Must remove a pupil of compulsory school age's name from their admission register when:
 - the pupil has not returned to school within ten school days after a leave of absence or is absent from school without authorised absence for twenty consecutive school days, and;
 - the school and the local authority have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquiries, to establish the whereabouts of the pupil. This only applies if the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or unavoidable cause.
- Must notify the local authority when a pupil's name is to be removed from, or is added to, the school admission register at a non-standard transition point (or, if the local authority asks for this, at a standard transition point).
- If the school is a maintained school or academy, it must arrange full-time education for excluded pupils from the sixth school day of a suspension.²⁴

We are interested in receiving views, especially from schools and local authorities, on how these duties are supporting identification of CME.

²⁴ Suspension is a reference to what is described in the legislation as an exclusion for a fixed period

Questions

For schools and local authorities

7. What activities are undertaken as part of reasonable enquiries to establish a child's whereabouts?

Please select all that apply:

- Contact parents or other relatives
- Contact neighbours
- Check local databases within the local authority – please specify which (max. 30 words)
- Check [Get Information about Pupils](#) (GIAP) or [school2schools](#) (s2s) systems
- Follow local information sharing arrangements and make enquiries via other local databases and agencies – please specify which (max. 30 words)
- Check with UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) and/or Border Force
- Check with agencies known to be involved with the family
- Check with the local authority and school from which the child moved originally
- Check with any local authority and school to which the child may have moved
- Check with the local authority where the child lives (if different from where school is)
- Check with the Ministry of Defence (MoD) Children's Education Advisory Service (CEAS) (in the case of children of Service Personnel)
- Conduct a home visit
- Don't know
- Other – please specify (max. 100 words)

For schools and local authorities

8. How confident are you in your ability to identify what enquiries are reasonable on a case-by-case basis?

Please select one item below:

- Very confident
- Confident
- Neither confident nor unconfident
- Unconfident
- Very unconfident
- Don't know

For schools and local authorities

9. What works well in supporting schools and local authorities to jointly undertake reasonable enquiries?

Please select all that apply:

- We do not jointly undertake reasonable enquiries
- Regular conversations between schools and LAs about pupils who have not returned to schools for ten days after an authorised absence or are absent from school without authorisation for twenty consecutive school days
- Division of tasks between schools and LAs to identify pupils who have not returned to schools for ten days after an authorised absence or are absent from school without authorisation for twenty consecutive school days
- Regular meetings between CME-leads in neighbouring local authorities
- Other – please specific (max. 100 words)

For schools and local authorities

10. What, if any, barriers are schools facing in meeting their responsibilities regarding CME as outlined in DfE’s CME guidance ?

Please select all that apply:

- None – schools are meeting these expectations
- Lack of resource
- Lack of understanding of CME requirements
- Data and information sharing challenges
- Don’t know
- Other – please specify (max. 50 words)

If identified any barriers

11. What changes, if any, would help to address the barriers identified in the previous question?

Please select all that apply:

- Clearer expectations on schools
- Clearer expectations on local authorities
- Best practice and case studies exemplifying what is expected of schools
- Best practice and case studies exemplifying ‘reasonable enquiries’
- Best practice and case studies exemplifying data and information sharing practices
- Standardised process to notify local authorities of CME
- Other – please specify (max. 100 words)

Section 4: Children missing education activity within local authorities

Background

Local authorities have a duty under [section 436A of the Education Act 1996](#) to make arrangements to enable them, as far as possible, to establish the identities of children of compulsory school age in their area who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise i.e., CME.

As stated in [DfE's CME guidance](#), local authorities:

- Should have robust policies and procedures in place to enable them to meet their duty in relation to CME, including:
 - effective tracking and enquiry systems
 - a named person to whom schools and other agencies can make referrals about CME
 - consideration of the reasons and circumstances that can lead to CME
- Should have in place arrangements for joint working and information sharing with other local authorities and agencies.
- Should undertake regular reviews and evaluate their policies and procedures to ensure that these continue to be fit for purpose.
- Should utilise other powers and carry out other duties to support CME, including:
 - Arranging suitable full-time education for permanently excluded pupils from the sixth school day of exclusion
 - Safeguarding children's welfare, and their duty²⁵ to cooperate with other agencies in improving children's well-being, including protection from harm and neglect
 - Serving notice on parents requiring them to satisfy the local authority that the child is receiving suitable education, when it appears to the local authority's attention that a child is not receiving such education
 - Issuing School Attendance Orders (SAOs) to parents who fail to satisfy the local authority that their child is receiving suitable education, if the local authority deems it is appropriate that the child should attend school
 - Prosecuting parents who do not comply with a SAO
 - Prosecuting or issuing penalty notices to parents who fail to ensure their school-registered child attends school regularly
 - Applying to court for an Education Supervision Order for a child to support them to go to school.

We are interested in understanding how local authorities are undertaking these activities to identify and support CME.

²⁵ [Section 10 of the Children Act 2004](#)

Questions

For local authorities

12. What, if any, barriers do you face in meeting the expectations on local authorities under section 436A of the Education Act 1996 and DfE's CME guidance?

Please select all that apply:

- NA – we do not face any barriers
- Resource pressures within the local authority
- Lack of mainstream school places
- Lack of special or alternative provision school places
- Lack of unregistered alternative provision
- Difficult to acquire information regarding who is CME
- Time delays in receiving information and responses to referrals about CME
- Difficultly engaging parents and children
- Difficulty collaborating with schools
- Difficulty collaborating with other local authorities
- Difficulty collaborating with other agencies and professionals
- Other – please specify (max. 50 words)

For local authorities

13. Of the total time you spend identifying children missing education, how much time do you spend on children who you believe are missing but after investigation, you discover are on a school roll or receiving suitable education (e.g., are attending school in a different local authority area, are attending an independent school, or are being electively home educated)?

Please select one item below:

- Approximately 100% of the time – after investigation, no child is CME
- Approximately 75% of the time
- Approximately 50% of the time
- Approximately 25% of the time
- Approximately no time – after investigation, every child is CME
- Don't know

For local authorities

14. What action do you take if a child missing education cannot be located through reasonable enquiries?

Please select all the apply:

- Refer to the police
- Refer to children's social care
- Continue checks – please specify for how long (max. 50 words)
- Remove from CME register
- Other – please specify (max. 50 words)

For local authorities

15. What children, if any, do you record on your children missing education list?

Please select all that apply:

- NA – we do not maintain a CME list
- Children not on a school roll, awaiting a school place
- Children not on a school roll, going through the Fair Access Protocol (FAP) process
- Children not on a school roll or in suitable education, not awaiting a school place or going through the FAP process
- Children in elective home education, in receipt of suitable education
- Children in elective home education, in receipt of unsuitable education
- Children on part-time timetables
- Children being flexi-schooled
- Non-compulsory school aged children (before a child's fifth birthday and after the last Friday of June in the school year that they reach sixteen)
- Permanently excluded children
- Suspended children
- Children attending illegal settings
- Children attending unregistered settings
- Children who are severely absent (missing 50% or more of school)
- Children who are persistently absent (missing 10% to 49% of school)
- Don't know
- Other – please specify (max. 50 words)

For local authorities

16. What information do you gather on children missing education?

Please select all that apply:

- Name
- Date of birth
- Age
- Home address
- School year
- Sex

- Ethnicity
- Child in need/child protection plan/looked after child status
- Special educational need support/education health care plan status
- Free school meal eligibility
- Ever attended alternative provision
- Parent's address and phone number
- Other – please specify (max. 50 words)

For local authorities

17. Under what circumstances do you remove children from your children missing education list?

Please select all that apply:

- NA – we do not maintain a CME list
- Child has been located in another local authority's area, including when this local authority is not aware of their presence
- Child has been located in another local authority's area and this local authority is aware of their presence
- Child has been located in another country, including when the local and/or national government of this country is not aware of their presence
- Child has been located in another country, and the local and/or national government of this country is aware of their presence
- Child has been assigned a school place, but hasn't yet started
- Child is on a school roll
- Child is receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school (e.g., home educated or non-school alternative provision)
- Reasonable enquiries have been made but child has not been located
- Other – please explain (max. 50 words)

For local authorities

18. What, if any, further guidance and/or clarity around when to remove a child from your children missing education list would you like the department to provide?

Max. 100 words

For local authorities

19. How effective do you believe your actions, processes and systems are at identifying children missing education?

Please select one item below:

- Very effective – identify every CME
- Somewhat effective
- Neither effective nor ineffective
- Somewhat ineffective
- Very ineffective
- Don't know

For local authorities

20. How do you measure the effectiveness of your actions to identify children missing education?

Please select all that apply:

- We do not monitor effectiveness
- Use child population estimates to estimate how many children reside in the local area – please specify which child population estimates you use (max. 50 words)
- Track and monitor the duration of time children remain CME
- Track and monitor the duration of time it takes to conduct reasonable enquiries to locate a child
- Seek feedback from schools, families and other agencies on CME activity
- Other – please explain (max. 100 words)

Section 5: Identifying children missing education: Working with other agencies

Background

As part of their CME duty, local authorities should have in place arrangements for joint working and information sharing with other local authorities and agencies to enable them to identify potential CME.

[DfE's CME guidance](#) provides some examples of who this information could be shared with and how. We know that practice currently varies nationally and we want to understand what effective information sharing looks like and what barriers, if any, local authorities are facing in accessing the information they need to identify CME.

Questions

For local authorities

21. Which agencies/professionals do you engage with to identify children missing education?

Please select all that apply:

- Other local authorities
- Devolved administrations (Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales)
- Other countries outside of the UK
- State-schools
- Independent schools
- Multi-academy trusts
- Colleges
- Social workers within the local authority
- Virtual school heads within the local authority
- Police
- Refuges
- Youth Justice Services
- Health services (including health workers, GPs, A&E)
- Other services and agencies within the local authority
- LA-provided services and agencies in other local authorities
- UK Visas and Immigration
- Border Force
- HMRC
- Ministry of Defence Children's Education Advisory Service (for children of Service Personnel)
- Charities and third sector organisations
- Other – please specify (max. 50 words)

For local authorities

22. Which agencies/professionals, if any, hold potentially useful information on CME but you are currently unable to access information from them?

Please select all that apply:

- None – we can access all the CME information we need
- Other local authorities
- Devolved administrations (Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales)
- Other countries outside of the UK
- State-schools
- Independent schools
- Multi-academy trusts
- Colleges
- Social workers within the local authority
- Virtual school heads within the local authority
- Police
- Refuges
- Youth Justice Services
- Health services (including health workers, GPs, A&E)
- Other services and agencies within the local authority
- LA-provided services and agencies in other local authorities
- UK Visas and Immigration
- Border Force
- HMRC
- Ministry of Defence Children’s Education Advisory Service (for children of Service Personnel)
- Charities and third sector organisations
- Other – please specify (max. 50 words)

For schools and local authorities

23. What barriers, if any, do you face in accessing the information you need to identify children missing education?

Please select all that apply:

- Parents unwilling to share information on their children
- Uncertainty about which children are in scope of CME activity
- Agencies unwilling to share information due to privacy concerns, including concerns about GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation)
- Agencies unwilling to share information for other reasons – please specify (max. 50 words)

- Agencies don't routinely collect information on whether children are receiving education, so don't know when information should be shared and to who
- Difficult to share or receive information due to incompatible technology
- Difficult to identify a specific child across different datasets
- Difficult to access information from devolved administrations (Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales)
- Difficult to access information from countries outside the UK
- Difficult to access information from other local authorities
- Information is often not shared in a timely manner
- Unsure where to access the information needed
- Resource pressures within local authority/school
- Unaware of unregistered alternative provision arranged by the school
- Other – please specify (max. 100 words)

For schools and local authorities

24. What would make it easier for you to access information regarding potential children missing education?

Please select all that apply:

- Standardised information sharing expectations
- Clearer expectations of response times for agencies involved in the process
- Clearer expectations on schools regarding CME
- Schools notifying local authorities when they arrange unregistered AP
- Clearer expectations on local authorities
- Clearer expectations on other local agencies
- Clearer guidance regarding information sharing with devolved administrations (Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales)
- Clearer guidance regarding information sharing with countries outside of the UK
- Template data sharing agreements
- Clearer guidance regarding information sharing and GDPR
- A standardised case system for local authorities to record CME cases
- A consistent identifier used by agencies working with children to identify and match children
- Access to data on where all children living within the local authority area attend school (including children attending a school in another local authority area or an independent school within the local authority area)
- Other – please specify (max. 100 words)

Section 6: Elective home education

Background

The government supports the right of parents to educate their children at home. When educating otherwise than at a school, parents have a duty ([section 7 of the Education Act 1996](#)) to ensure that their children of compulsory school age are receiving efficient suitable full-time education.

If a local authority deems a child is not enrolled at a school and is not receiving a suitable education through elective home education, they are considered to be CME. Local authorities should take action to address this.

We are interested in understanding how elective home education (EHE) is managed by local authorities, and how they determine whether children are receiving a suitable education or whether they are CME.

Questions

For local authorities

25. Once you are aware that a child of compulsory school age is being electively home educated, what checks do you undertake to determine that this child is being suitably educated and isn't missing education?

Please select all that apply:

- Meet with parent and child in home
- Meet with parent and child outside of home
- Meet with parent only in home
- Meet with parent only outside of home
- Conversation with parent over phone
- Conversation with parent over email
- Conversation with education provider (where they are not the parent of the child being electively home educated e.g. private tutor)
- Request evidence of child's education from parent
- Other – please specify (max. 100 words)

For local authorities

26. What would help you to identify unsuitable EHE more effectively?

Please select all that apply:

- NA – we do not need additional help
- Clarity regarding “suitable education”

- More resources/funding
- Revised EHE guidance for local authorities and parents
- Duty on parents to notify local authority of decision to EHE
- Duty on parents to notify school of decision to EHE
- Further training on EHE
- Other – please specify (max. 100 words)

Section 7: Supporting children missing education into education

Background

Children are defined as CME until they are registered as a pupil at a school, are receiving a suitable education in a setting other than school or until they are no longer of compulsory school age (i.e. the last Friday of June in the school year that they reach sixteen).

We are interested in the activity local authorities and others undertake to effectively support CME into education. This may include:

- Ongoing safeguarding activities.
- Securing a suitable school place for CME.²⁶
- Supporting former CME to regularly attend education.
- Use of School Attendance Orders for parents who fail to satisfy the local authority that their child is receiving suitable education, if the local authority deems it is appropriate that the child should attend school.

In addition, we are interested in any preventative measures local authorities, schools or others take to reduce the likelihood of children becoming CME.

Questions

For local authorities

27. What barriers do you face, if any, when seeking suitable education for CME?

Please select all that apply:

- Lack of mainstream school places
 - Lack of special or alternative provision school places
 - Lack of unregistered alternative provision
 - Lack of suitable places for specific need (e.g., special educational needs support or Education Health Care Plan)
 - Lack of school place in family's local area²⁷
 - Available school places don't meet family's preferences
-

²⁶ Local authorities have a duty to ensure that there are sufficient schools available for children in their area ([Section 14 of the Education Act 1996](#)) and to arrange suitable education (at school or otherwise) for any children of compulsory school age who may not otherwise receive it (section 19(1) of the Education Act 1996).

²⁷ Statutory walking distance for children aged under eight is 2 miles and for children aged 8 and over, 3 miles. Section 444, Education Act 1996.

- Lack of engagement from parents
- Time taken by school admission authorities to process applications²⁸
- Lack of understanding within the local authority regarding which schools have places available
- CME aren't explicitly prioritised under the Fair Access Protocol, unless they have been out of school for 4 weeks or meet another criteria²⁹
- The Fair Access Protocol does not always secure a school place for a child
- Exceptional circumstances creating high demand for school places, e.g., arrival of large numbers of asylum seeking children and refugees
- Other – please specify (max. 100 words)

For local authorities

28. What activity do you undertake while a child is missing education to ensure that they are safe?

Please select all that apply:

- Always refer to the police
- Refer to the police in specific circumstances – please specify which (max. 30 words)
- Always refer to children's social care
- Refer to children's social care in specific circumstances – please specify which (max. 30 words)
- Regular check-ins with the family – please specify how often (max. 30 words)
- Other – please specify (max. 50 words)

For all

29. Once a school place has been secured, what works well to integrate a former CME into full-time education?

Please select all that apply:

- Part-time timetables
- Flexi-schooling
- Use of alternative provision settings
- In-school integration plan
- In-school mentoring support

²⁸ Outside the normal/late admission round when local authorities co-ordinate admissions to schools the [School Admissions Code](#) requires admission authorities to 'aim to notify the parents of the outcome of their application in writing within 10 school days, but they must be notified in writing within 15 school days'.

²⁹ Department for Education '[Fair Access Protocols: Guidance for school leaders, admission authorities and local authorities](#)' 2021

- Working closely with the child and family – please specify how (max. 50 words)
- Other – please specify (max. 100 words)

For all

30. What, if anything, would make it easier to integrate CME into full-time education?

Max. 100 words

For all

31. How effective do you think the use of School Attendance Orders are in supporting CME into education?

Please select one item below:

- Very effective
- Effective
- Neither effective nor ineffective
- Ineffective
- Very ineffective
- Don't know

Please explain your response:

Max. 100 words

For all

32. What preventative measures do you take to stop children from becoming CME?

Please select all that apply:

- NA – we do not take preventative action
- Engagement with families of pre-school children (children below age five)
- Targeted support for children on school rolls with persistent absence (absent 10% or more of the time)
- Targeted support for children on school rolls with severe absence (absent 50% or more of the time)
- Targeted support for children in groups/cohorts at risk of being or becoming CME – please specify which groups (max. 30 words)
- EHE outreach and/or stakeholder engagement
- Other – please specify (max. 50 words)

Section 8: Conclusion

Background

Identifying and supporting CME into education isn't always a straightforward process.

We are interested in your views on how DfE can help the sector to support CME most effectively.

Questions

For all

33. What are the top five issues that you face in identifying and supporting CME?

Please select up to five:

- Unknown unknowns – children unknown to local authorities, schools and other services
- Children who live in one local authority area and attend school in another local authority area
- Difficulty placing asylum seeking children and refugees in nearby schools
- Difficulty coordinating and collaborating with other local authorities to receive information
- Difficulty placing CME into education
- Difficulty placing children with SEN (either SEN Support or an Education Health Care Plan) into education
- Tracking children who have moved to another local authority area
- Tracking children who have moved to another country within the UK (Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales)
- Tracking children who have moved to another country outside of the UK
- Accessing information from other services and agencies within the local authority on CME
- Accessing information from other services and agencies outside the local authority on CME
- Resourcing and capacity
- Other – please specify (max. 100 words)

For all

34. How, if at all, do you believe the processes of identifying children missing education could be improved?

Please select all the apply:

- NA – don't think they could be improved
- More expectations on schools and multi-academy trusts (MATs) – please specify (max. 50 words)
- Clearer expectations for response times to CME referrals
- Information on children most at risk of becoming CME
- Best practice and case studies regarding identification of CME following standard transition points
- Best practice and case regarding identification of children moving between local authorities/countries
- Opportunities for training and to share good practice between local authorities
- Standardised process of referrals
- A system of registration for children not in school
- Other – please specify (max. 100 words)

For all

35. Please include any further comments you have regarding identification or support for children missing education:

Max. 100 words



Department
for Education

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