

# Children Missing Education (CME) in the Early Years

## Best practice guidance for early years providers

### **Purpose:**

This good practice guidance is intended for all early years providers. It outlines the processes, steps and procedures which are recommended as good practice in Leicestershire in relation to the attendance of children in your care and during a young child's transition to school.

There is no national guidance for children of non-statutory school age, but this advice has been developed in line with the statutory guidance for local authorities on children missing education (DfE 2016).

In being aware of and following this guidance you are helping to keep children safe and ensuring that they receive an appropriate education.

**These processes and procedures do not replace safeguarding procedures. If you have reason to believe a child is at risk of significant harm you should contact First Response in accordance with the Safeguarding Children Partnership's (SCP) procedures.**

### Introduction:

All children of non-statutory school age have the right to health and early years services to help them achieve their full potential. All professionals within early years services should seek to engage families to ensure that no child slips through the net.

The safeguarding of children in Leicestershire is of the highest priority and, to ensure that children and families who fail to engage or disengage from services are located, response needs to be quick. All agencies have a responsibility to share appropriate information, work together and ensure all reasonable efforts are made to trace children and their families.

Recent national and local serious case reviews indicate there is no room for complacency. It is vital every professional is even more vigilant of the signs that may indicate a child is at potential risk – this includes identifying children who go missing from early years services and/or education.

*“194. Although attendance at the setting is not mandatory, inspectors will explore how well providers work with parents to promote children’s attendance so that the children form good habits for future learning. In particular, inspectors will consider the attendance of children for whom the provider receives early years pupil premium.”*

Early Years Inspection Handbook for Ofsted registered provision

In your role as an early years provider, you should be aware of and give consideration to the following suggested processes, steps and procedures relating to monitoring, recording and retaining records relating to children's attendance:

### **Non-attendance:**

**If there are significant and immediate concerns, contact the First Response referral line on 0116 305 0005**

As an early years provider you will be constantly monitoring the attendance and assessing the vulnerability of the children in your care. The following appendices attached to this document will support you in this:

**Appendix 1 - Actions Log and Risk Assessment.** This form should be used to support your search for children – It is **not** a referral form, but it can support your risk assessments, decision making, conversations, communications and record keeping.

**Appendix 2 - Good practice pathway for children entering early years provision.** Use this document to ensure all necessary processes, steps and procedures are put in place right from the start of a child's time in your provision.

**Appendix 3 - Flowchart for absent and missing early years children.** This details the recommended steps to follow should a child be missing from early years provision.

- Ensure you have clear and effective strategies and procedures for promoting, supporting, recording, monitoring and retaining records in relation to children's attendance/non-attendance
- Consider having an attendance policy which is shared/written in consultation with parents
- Keep records of and look for patterns in non-attendance; record actions, decisions made, conversations, agencies contacted, etc. when trying to locate children and their families
- Ensure you make the child's health visitor aware of any concerns re: attendance – *Early Years providers can contact the Health Visiting team by calling the Healthy Together Helpline on 0300 300 3001.*
- Do everything possible to work with families, schools and other agencies (e.g. health visitor) to share relevant information and to support in the search should a child be missing from education - i.e. not attending the early years provision
- Do what is reasonable in terms of searching and timescales

## **Recording and retaining information:**

- Routinely record and amend children's details at every opportunity and remind parents/carers to inform practitioners of any changes of addresses, contact details, etc.
- Ensure you comply with the requirements of the Statutory Framework for the early years foundation stage relating to information and records. e.g.
  - *Childminders/Providers must maintain records, obtain and share relevant information (with parents and carers, other professionals working with the child, the police, social services and Ofsted or their CMA) as appropriate. This is to ensure their setting is safe and efficiently managed, and the needs of all children are met. Childminders/Providers must enable a regular two-way flow of information with parents and/or carers (and between other providers, if a child is attending more than one setting). If requested, childminders/providers should incorporate parents' and/or carers' comments into children's records.*
  - *Records must be easily accessible and available (these may be kept securely off the premises). Confidential information and records about staff and children must be held securely and only accessible and available to those who have a right or professional need to see them. Childminders/Providers must be aware of their responsibilities under the Data Protection Legislation and, where relevant, the Freedom of Information Act 2000.*
  - *Childminders/Providers must ensure that they and any assistants/all staff understand the need to protect the privacy of the children in their care, as well the legal requirements that exist to ensure that information relating to the child is handled in a way that ensures confidentiality. Parents and/or carers must be given access to all records about their child, provided that no relevant exemptions apply to their disclosure under the Data Protection Act.*
  - *Records relating to individual children must be retained for a reasonable period of time after they have left the provision.*
- You should store any records relating to First Response referrals or any other contacts with Social Services or the Safeguarding Children Partnerships (SCP) for 24 years in line with the Limitation Act, 1980.

## **Where to seek further advice and information on recording and retaining information:**

- You can contact Public Liability Insurers for legal/other guidance on keeping and retaining records

- If you are a member, you can refer to support organisations such as the National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA), Early Years Alliance, Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY)
- Regularly refer to local Safeguarding Children Partnership procedures for further information on safeguarding children
- In the event of your early years provision closing, you should seek advice from the Information Commissioners Office website [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk) regarding record retention

### **Transition to the reception year in school:**

**In your role as an early years provider, you should be aware of and give consideration to the following suggested processes, steps and procedures relating to a young child's transition to the reception year in school:**

- Share all relevant information regarding the child and family with the school, including any previous or existing concerns re: the child's attendance, any safeguarding issues, etc.
- Schools will, where possible, use the information they have from School Admissions to inform you which children they are expecting to start school in September. You may then be able to identify children who are not allocated a school place.
- If you are aware of any child whose parents/carers have not applied for a school place, establish the reason why and fill in the [School Admissions contact form](#)
- Schools may call you if children do not attend settling in sessions. Work with the child and family to:
  - establish reason(s) for non-attendance
  - raise awareness of the importance and benefits of attending settling in sessions
  - overcome concerns, misconceptions or barriers - e.g. the family may benefit from an accompanied visit to school
- If a family notifies you that their child will not be attending school ;  
or
- If a child continues to attend your provision despite being of the age where they could be in the reception class of a school, ensure:

- both you and the child's parents/carers are clear about the reasoning behind this (e.g. wishing to delay starting school, appealing against the school place offered, not aware their child could be in school and haven't applied for a place)
  - parents/carers are advised to fill in the [School Admissions contact form](#) if there are any uncertainties or remaining questions (follow this up at a later date)
  - the child's prospective school (if known) is made aware
  - you fill in the [School Admissions contact form](#)
- If a family notifies you that they intend to home-school their child, be aware that:
    - unless the child has SEND, parents/carers of non-statutory school age children do not legally have to notify anyone – but practically it is much better if they do
    - Leicestershire County Council prefer that parents call the Inclusion Service on 0116 305 2071 /email [homeeducation@leics.gov.uk](mailto:homeeducation@leics.gov.uk)
    - practitioners should support parents/carers if necessary to notify the LA – see the Inclusion Service webpage on [elective home education](#)
    - call the Inclusion Service (0116 305 2071) and fill in the [School Admissions contact form](#) if you have any reason to believe that the LA are not aware
    - you can also fill in and send the [Inclusion Service Referral Form](#) – tick the box for ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION and fill in the relevant details, also completing section 2
      - \* If you are unable to complete the Inclusion Service Referral Form, call the service on 0116 305 2071
- If a child does not start school as expected, the school may well contact you. You should work with the school to provide any information you have which may be relevant to try to establish the whereabouts of the child and family
  - If you are aware of any child previously in attendance at your provision who hasn't taken up a school place but could have, fill in the [School Admissions contact form](#)

## **Key questions to consider when passing on information to schools:**

- Have there been any concerns regarding the attendance of the child at this early years provision, including any unexplained absences or absences due to medical reasons?
- Is there a history of the family moving on suddenly without any explanations as to why?
- Are there reasons why the family are less likely to engage with pre-school services? e.g. looked after children, gypsy/traveller background, living in women's refuge or temporary accommodation, family with a transient lifestyle, migrant children, etc.
- Is there any school or local authority intervention in relation to older siblings' attendance?