

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 2015).

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 LSCB 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.

“160. Although attendance at the setting is not mandatory, providers should be alert to patterns of absence that may indicate wider safeguarding concerns. Inspectors will explore how well providers work with parents to promote children’s good attendance, especially the attendance of children for whom the provider receives the early years pupil premium.”

Early years inspection handbook, p.40

Ofsted, August 2015 ref: 150068

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 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 - Referral Form and Risk Assessment for Children Missing Education (CME) in the Early Years This document should be used to support your search for children - it can support your 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 or your link health visitor aware of any concerns re: attendance
- 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.
 - *3.68. Providers must maintain records and obtain and share information (with parents and carers, other professionals working with the child, the police, social services and Ofsted or the childminder agency with which they are registered, as appropriate) to ensure the safe and efficient management of the setting, and to help ensure the needs of all children are met.*
 - *3.69. 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.*
 - *3.70. Providers must ensure that 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.*
 - *3.71. Records relating to individual children must be retained for a reasonable period of time after they have left the provision (Individual providers should determine how long to retain records relating to individual children).*
- You should store any records relating to First Response referrals or any other contacts with Social Services or the LSCB 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 NDNA, PLA, PACEY
- Regularly refer to LSCB 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 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
- 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 contact School Admissions on 0116 305 6684
- 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 contact School Admissions on 0116 305 6684 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 call School Admissions on 0116 305 6684

- If a family notifies you that they intend to home-school their child, be aware of the following:
 - 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 Pupil Services on 0116 305 2071 /email homeeducation@leics.gov.uk / send a letter to outline their intentions:
Pupil Services , Room 100B
County Hall
Glenfield
Leicester LE3 8RF
 - practitioners should support parents/carers if necessary to notify the LA
 - call Pupil Services (0116 305 2071) and School Admissions (0116 305 6684) if you have any reason to believe that the LA are not aware
- 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, call School Admissions on 0116 305 6684

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?
- 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?

The Early Learning and Childcare Service will continue to develop and expand on this good practice guidance and keep early years providers updated of any changes and/or additions.

Referral Form & Risk Assessment for Children Missing Education (CME) in the Early Years



Section a

Child Information:			
First name(s):		Family name: (AKA)	DoB:
Early Years Pupil Premium: Yes / No	Gender: Male / Female	Ethnicity:	NHS number:
Child's address:		Health visitor:	
		GP:	
		Early years provider(s) accessed:	
Post code:			
Tel no:			
Family Information:			
Title / Name of Parent(s)/Carer(s)	Relationship to child?	Parental responsibility	Address (if different to pupil)
		Yes / No	
		Yes / No	
Name(s) (Siblings):		DoB (Siblings):	School / Setting (Siblings):
Contact number/s:		Email Address:	


Social Care Involvement:	
Is the child known to Social Care? Yes / No	Name of Social Worker:
History of local authority care? <i>If yes, please explain</i> Yes / No	Is there a Child Protection Plan in place? Yes / No
Details of SEN support and examinations:	
Does the pupil have an EHCP? Yes / No	
Is the pupil undergoing assessment for an EHCP? Yes / No	
Has a SEND support plan been initiated? Yes / No	
Does the pupil have access to school identified SEN support? Yes / No <i>If yes, at what level?</i>	

Attendance:
Date last attended:
Please comment on attendance:

Section b

Initial actions to be taken by early years provider/referrer:	
Please ensure that all of these actions are completed before making this referral	
Action	Outcome (Include date completed)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • call parent(s)/carer(s) • call emergency contacts • email above contacts if relevant 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • post a letter/note through the door of the property (check! Does the property appear to be occupied?) 	

Section c

Agency checks taken by early years provider/referrer:		
Please ensure that any relevant agencies have been contacted before making this referral		
Possible agency/early years services	Dates	Outcome
Children's Centre Health Visiting team Family GP School admissions Other early years provision (e.g. PVI provider, childminder) School(s) Services for younger/older siblings Services for mothers/fathers/carers Other e.g. housing		
 Please take advice from First Response consultation line (0116 305 5500) prior to contacting non-professional sources - e.g. extended family members.		

Section d

Risk Assessment:

Please complete the table below to support you in assessing vulnerability

	Vulnerabilities, Warning Signs & Risk Indicators (for the child and/or family)	Yes, No or Unknown (Y/N/U)?	Current, Historic or Unknown (C/H/U?)	Child, Family or Both (C/F/B?)
1	Subject to a Child Protection Plan?			
2	Goes missing from School, Home or Care?			
3	Breakdown of living and/or family relationships <i>(sometimes leading to staying out overnight)</i>			
4	Whereabouts unknown (or unclear) – whether day or night			
5	Exclusion and/or unexplained absences from school <i>(or not engaged in education, employment or training)</i>			
6	Bereavement or loss			
7	Social and/or learning difficulties			
8	Isolated from peers / social networks <i>(not mixing with their usual friends)</i>			
9	Low self-esteem / Self-harm requiring medical treatment / Eating disorders / Emotional Health issues <i>(including anxiety related issues, suicidal ideations etc)</i>			
10	History of mental health difficulties			
11	History of domestic abuse / violence			
12	Aggressive behaviour towards others <i>(sometimes leading to fixed term exclusions)</i>			
13	History of being bullied or being a bully			
14	Involvement in criminal activities <i>(Possible offending patterns in the family)</i>			
15	History of sexual, physical and/or emotional abuse			
16	Displaying inappropriate sexualised behaviours			
17	At risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) <i>(known or suspected)</i>			
18	Gang member or association			
19	Migrant / Refugee / Asylum seeker			
20	Evidence of poverty and/or deprivation			
21	Drug / alcohol and/or substance misuse			
22	History of abuse / neglect			

Based on the above indicators, if there are any safeguarding concerns or worries, have you:

- **Made a referral to Social Care?** Yes / No
- **If so, did you gain consent from parents?** Yes / No

Section e

Professional judgement – re: vulnerability of child

Refer to the completed Risk Assessment table (section d) – now use your professional judgement to reflect upon the indicators you have ticked and consider the health, welfare and safety of the child in question.

Rating scale

No concerns
0

Very concerned
10



On a scale of 0-10 how concerned are you about this child? Please indicate this on the line above.

If you have reason to believe a child is at risk of significant harm you should contact First Response (0116 305 0005) in accordance with the LSCB procedures.

Section f

Professional Assessment: Please ensure you take the time to complete all of the sections below	
<p>What do you think is working <u>well</u>?</p> <p><i>Include protective factors:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>People, situations & actions that contribute to the wellbeing of the child.</i> • <i>Actions already being taken to make sure the child is safe</i> 	<p>e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>child's attendance previously good</i> • <i>parent(s) supportive</i> • <i>grandparent very actively involved in caring for the child</i>
<p>What are you worried about?</p> <p>See part d - assessing vulnerability list. <i>Include risk factors, present or historic. Be as specific as possible.</i></p> <p><u>Questions to ask yourself:</u> <i>What has happened that makes you worried?</i> <i>What evidence do you have?</i> <i>What is the impact on the child?</i> <i>What is the worst thing in this?</i> <i>How often has this happened?</i></p> <p><i>When was the child last seen by you or other agencies?</i></p>	<p>e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>child not attended for (X) sessions out of (X) over the last week(s)</i> • <i>unable to contact parents - no reason given for absence</i> • <i>this is unusual for this child and family</i>
<p>What do you think needs to happen <u>next</u> regarding the concerns you have raised in this professional assessment?</p>	<p>e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>try to establish contact with family</i> • <i>ensure Leicestershire County Council are aware the child is missing early years education</i> • <i>seek to take action to re-engage the family asap</i>

Referring Early Years Provider to complete:	
Name or referrer:	Position/job title:
Setting name:	Phone number:
Email address:	Date of referral:
Leader/manager's name and details if different to above:	

If you have any queries then please contact the Children Missing Education team using the email address below or by telephone using the following numbers:	
Pupil Services Team	 0116 3052071
Advice Line	 07966 111081

Due to the highly sensitive nature of this documentation, it should only be returned to LCC in one of the following ways:

- via AnyComms+ to "Pupil Services" as a "CME data return"
- delivered by hand (envelope must be marked "Private and Confidential") to



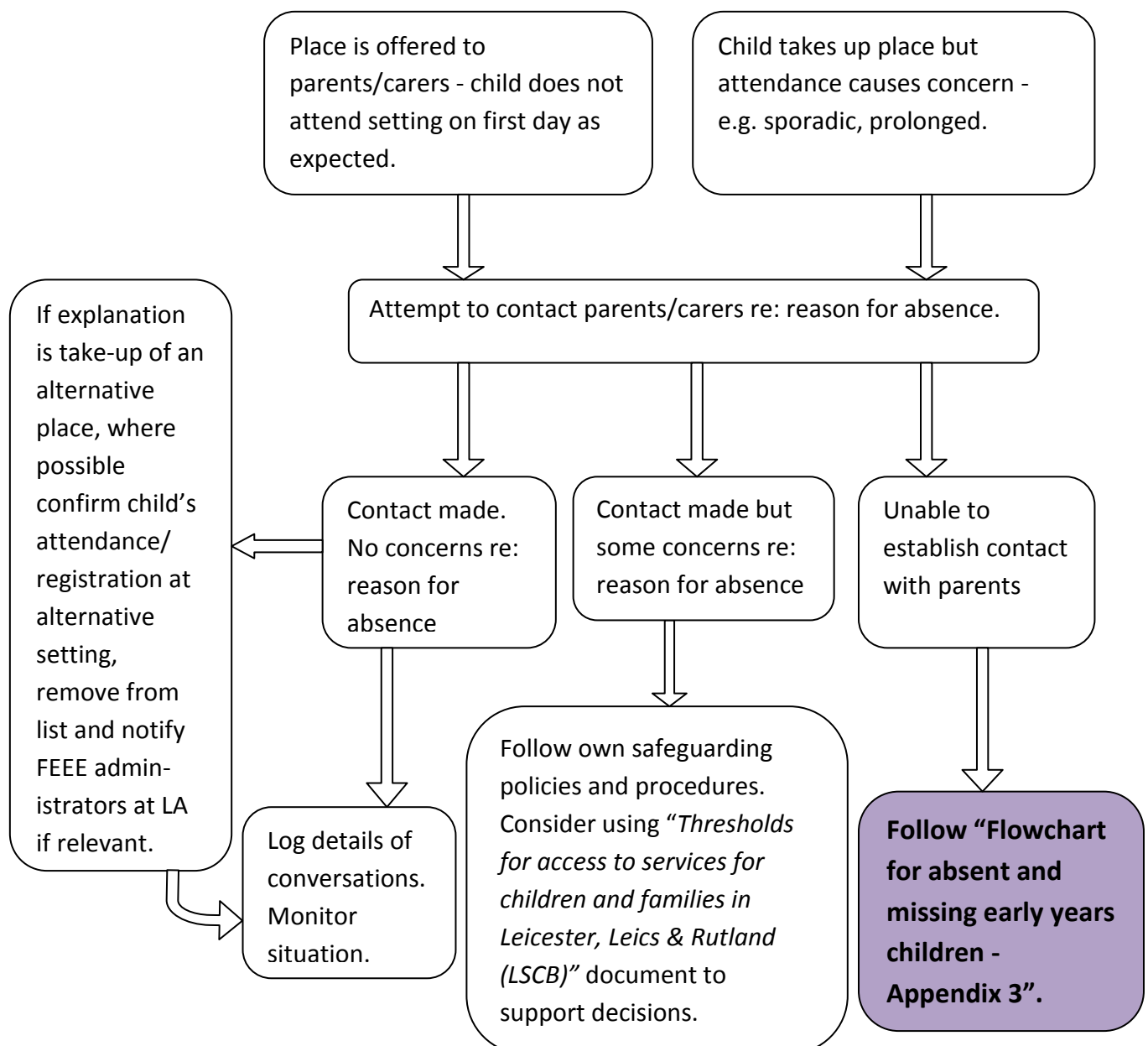
Children Missing Education
Pupil Services
Children and Family Services
Leicestershire County Council
County Hall
Glenfield
Leicester
LE3 8RF

Good Practice Pathway for children entering early years provision - Appendix 2

The early years provider ensures that the following information is requested of parents/carers when the child starts at the setting and at regular intervals throughout:

- parent/carer contacts and additional contacts (name, address, contact numbers, relationship to the child)
- health visitor/GP (name, surgery, address, contact numbers)
- family involvement with other agencies/practitioners (name, agency, contact numbers)
- signature(s) of consent to sharing of information

The early years provider shares with parents/carers their policy and procedures for non-attendance/absence.



Flowchart for absent and missing early years children - Appendix 3

Constantly assess the vulnerability of the child involved - use sections d and e from "Appendix 1 - Referral form and Risk Assessment" to support you.

If you have reason at any point in this pathway to believe a child is at risk of significant harm, contact First Response on 0116 305 0005.

Child is absent. Initial attempts to contact parents/carers have been unsuccessful.

Completes **section a** and undertake **Initial Actions (section b)** of Appendix 1.

If unsuccessful, complete any relevant **Agency Checks** (section c) of Appendix 1. Complete Appendix 1 and use parts e and f to support your conversations with other agencies.

Child missing from early years provision.

No additional concerns.

Child missing from early years provision.

Some underlying concerns.

Child missing/ whereabouts unknown.

Significant concerns and/or social worker involvement.

Contact **First Response consultation line** for professionals requiring safeguarding advice on 0116 305 5500.

Contact First Response referral line on 0116 305 0005 and complete online referral form.

Contact **Pupil Services** on 0116 305 2071/07966 111081.

You need to have completed appendix 1.

Use "Appendix 1 - Referral form and Risk Assessment" to support your conversations, communications and record keeping in relation to your search.
If you are ever unsure, ring the relevant teams and ask questions!