

Appendix A

Children Missing Education Strategy

April 2014

Purpose of the CME Strategy

This strategy is designed to enable the County Council to fulfil its statutory duties in relation to education provision and the safeguarding and welfare of vulnerable children. It is intended to guide the work of local authority officers, schools and other agencies in the procedures and practices to be followed in order to track, monitor and maintain contact with children and young people at risk of or already missing education. This will prevent vulnerable children and young people becoming 'unknown' to relevant professionals and therefore becoming even more high risk.

Context

The relevant DfE guidance which governs this area of work is the Statutory Guidance on Identifying Children not Receiving a Suitable Education 2012. Ofsted has also published guidance on children missing out on education as well as having a clear focus on the subject within the Ofsted Inspection Framework.

Children and young people who do not access school or appropriate alternative education are deemed to be vulnerable and their risk is increased as they continue to be without a school place. Safeguarding children and young people continues to be a key shared responsibility of the LA with schools and other external partners. High quality education provides children and young people with the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding as well as vital social and emotional skills to prepare for a confident future.

Nottinghamshire County Council is committed to the development of a strategic and coordinated strategy to ensure that every child and young person is 'known' and is accessing education appropriately. This requires all staff to be alert to situations which might indicate that a child or young person may not be on the roll of a school or attending appropriate alternative education. This demands a culture of shared responsibility where all staff, whatever their role, remain alert to children who are not on a roll or attending school

Underpinning principle

The Council is committed to ensuring that every child and young person of statutory school age is on a school roll, with the exception of those children and young people who are electively home educated.

Why should children and young people be on a school roll?

All children and young people of statutory school age are legally required to be on a school roll and to access full time education unless there is a medical reason that makes this inappropriate or they are being formally electively home educated. Schools are responsible for keeping children and young people safe during the school day and have the knowledge, expertise and resources to ensure that children and young people access their educational entitlement to fulfil their potential within the aspirational contexts of school.

For a small minority of children and young people, the 'traditional' school setting may not be appropriate for all or part of their experience. However, it is important that the school remains the commissioner of any externally provided education or support and accepts responsibility for the outcomes of the provision they have commissioned. This quality assurance is the best guarantee that children and young people can have of receiving appropriate education that equips each young person with the necessary skills for the future and keeps them safe.

Current situation

Nottinghamshire County Council has an officer whose sole duty is to monitor and track children missing from education. This officer sits within the Safeguarding an Independent Review group and is responsible particularly for:

- Children and young people whose whereabouts are unknown but who are on a school roll
- Children and young people whose whereabouts are known but who are not on a school roll i.e. moved into the area

There is clear policy and protocol agreed with schools to ensure that CME are identified and reported to the Local Authority. The CME officer works in partnership with other CME officers across the country and with partner agencies to ensure that school aged children are located and supported to return to school. The CME officer and Fair Access officer have an agreed protocol to ensure that once a CME is identified, a school place is secured quickly through the Fair Access protocol. There has been significant investment in raising school and academic awareness of the CME process through formal communication, newsletters and safeguarding board training. Schools are therefore regularly updated and are aware of their responsibilities to ensure accurate information is shared. Officers are prepared to challenge schools which remove children and young people improperly or illegally from their roll or will not accept pupils onto their roll who need to join them.

Who are the children and young people at risk of missing education?

The vast majority of children and young people engage positively with school, attend regularly and are actively encouraged to do so by their parents and carers. It is vulnerable young people who are most likely not to attend school. The numbers overall are relatively small and Nottinghamshire County Council recognises their responsibility to identify these vulnerable children and young people individually to ensure that the Council's resources are targeted on those who need them most.

The Children Act 2004 places a duty on all agencies to work together to promote the welfare of children and share information. In order to implement the requirements of the County Council's CME strategy, the County Council has a nominated a Service Director to ensure that the work of a wide range of professionals is brought together to do all that is possible to prevent individuals or groups of young people becoming 'not known' to appropriate professionals and therefore passing from the Council's protection.

What has the County Council been doing?

The Council has recognised that keeping children on a school roll and accessing their education entitlement is a key part of keeping children safe. As a result, a wide range of professionals has been brought together under the leadership of the Service Director with responsibility for Education, Standards and Inclusion to review current practice, share good practice and identify gaps through which children and young people can fall. The Council recognises the commitment and good practice that can currently be identified but also acknowledges that there has been insufficient sharing of knowledge, information and data.

Under the leadership of the Admissions of Vulnerable Children Group, chaired by the Service Director, approaches and systems have been discussed and shared so that inconsistencies can be identified. All officers responsible for a particular vulnerable group have been tasked to review their current practice in relation to knowing who their children are and to begin to develop at team level, a system to identify children and young people who are at risk of failing to access appropriate support or become 'unknown'. This will inform the development of a departmental action plan, to be shared with schools and other key partners, that aims to develop new ways of working across services and partners. The effective sharing of information to identify children and young people at risk of becoming "unknown" will allow services to take appropriate action to re-engage these children and young people with school or other alternative provision. The list of children and young people who are most likely to be subject to this strategy are listed in Appendix A (i). This list also shows the officer responsible for each of these vulnerable groups of children and young people

Appendix A (i)

Coordinator of the Virtual School

- Looked After Children
- Looked After Children placed out of Nottinghamshire
- Other LA Looked After Children placed within Nottinghamshire
- Children on the edge of care
- Asylum seeking children in dispute over age assessments

Fair Access officer

- Children on a school roll but not in full time education
- Children without a school place accessing interim NCC provision
- Fair Access pupils
- Children educated other than at school
- Children on roll of a school receiving NCC funded provision to ensure continued access to education
- Children out of school
- Children on managed moves
- Children who are known to be on part time provision
- Children leaving Elective Home Education seeking a school place

Children Missing Education Officer

- Children whose whereabouts are unknown but are on a school roll
- Children whose whereabouts are known but who are not on a school roll (i.e. moved into the area)

Youth Justice Coordinator

- Young offenders
- Young people in custody
- Young people on remand

Targeted Support

- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) families not engaged with education
- Young people receiving education in FE settings dropping in and out
- New or returning Travellers to Nottinghamshire without a school place
- Eastern European migrants without a school place

Locality Coordinators for health related education

- Pregnant young girls and young mothers
- Children without a school place accessing health related education

Educational Psychologists and other Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Officers

- Children with SEND accessing alternative provision within Nottinghamshire
- Children with SEND accessing provision outside of Nottinghamshire
- Children with SEND with a statement
- SEND children with a statement or Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) receiving Elective Home Education
- Primary aged children who have been permanently excluded
- Children on roll at Pupil Referral Units
- Children in Year 12 accessing post 16 alternative provision

Early years and Early Intervention Officers

- Vulnerable 2,3,4 year olds not accessing funded provision

Children's Social Care Officers

- Children in need and children on child protection plans
- Children and young people who are hospitalised long term
- Children at risk of sexual exploitation, human trafficking, female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage
- Children in homes experiencing domestic violence

- Young carers
- Children and young people who self-harm and/or misuse illegal drugs and alcohol

Data, Policy and Provision Officers

- Children not transitioning between key stages