

Children Missing Education Guidance Document

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1. Introduction

All children, 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. Section 436A of the 1996 Education Act (added by section 4 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006) requires the Local Authority to establish the identities of children within the area who are not registered at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. Children of compulsory school age within this category are regarded as Children Missing Education (CME) and should be returned to full time education. The Local Authority should also have procedures in place to prevent children at risk of becoming CME.

Safeguarding children and vulnerable members of society is a key priority for Government. The Home Office, 'Missing children and adults, a cross government strategy', outlines the government's objectives for all agencies to comply with:

- Prevention – reducing the number of people who go missing – for Kent County Council, this means all relevant services working closely with all agencies to break the cycle for those who repeatedly go missing.
- Protection – reducing the risk of harm to those who go missing - for Kent County Council, this means ensuring that the cases of CME are investigated thoroughly and as quickly as possible to locate pupils and close cases.
- Provision – providing missing people and their families with support and guidance - for Kent County Council, this means signposting families to appropriate supportive agencies.

Kent County Council's PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service, Fair Access Service and Virtual School Kent work together to ensure Kent County Council's statutory duty is upheld and takes consideration of all relevant guidance. These services provide guidance and advice to schools and other agencies about CME. There is a regular review of the established procedures to ensure that Kent County Council is adherent to the DfE guidance '*Children Missing Education. Statutory guidance for local authorities – September 2016*'.

2. Rationale

This guidance document has been created to assist schools and other professionals who work with children and families within Kent, to ensure that they

- Meet statutory duties relating to the provision of education and safeguarding the welfare of children missing education.
- Have robust multi-agency systems in place to identify and track children missing from education or at risk of doing so.
- Establish monitoring and reporting systems for all children missing from education and at risk of becoming CME.

3. Definitions

3.1 Children Missing Education (CME) refer to all children who are of compulsory school age and are not on a school roll, nor being educated otherwise (e.g. privately or in alternative provision) and who have been out of any educational provision for a substantial period of time. In Kent, school refers a pupil to the Local Authority for further investigation if s/he has been continually absent for more than 10 school days without permission and the school has carried out reasonable checks and failed to establish the child's whereabouts and the reason for absence.

3.2 Compulsory School Age – A child reaches compulsory school age on or after their fifth birthday. If they turn 5 between 1st January and 31st March they are of compulsory school age on 31 March; if they turn 5 between 1st April and 31st August they are of compulsory school age on 31st August; if they turn 5 between 1st September and 31st December they are compulsory school age on 31st December. A child continues to be of compulsory school age until the last Friday of June in the school year they reach sixteen.

A **Parent** is defined in Section 576, Education Act 1996 as:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not

- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person
- Any person who has care of a child (having care of a child or young person means that the child lives with and is looked after by that person, irrespective of their relationship).

School – For the purposes of this policy ‘school’ is used in reference to all maintained schools, academies, free schools, independent schools, alternative provision schools or any education provision where a child is registered as their main education base.

4. Identifying CME

Typically there are the following categories of CME:

- On a school roll, not attending and the family’s whereabouts are unknown.
- Of compulsory school age but not on a school roll, and not receiving a suitable education otherwise than being at school, e.g. at home, privately or in alternative provision
- Of compulsory school age but not on roll and whose whereabouts are unknown

Examples include:

- A child who has moved to Kent with no school identified
- A child who has left private schooling with no school identified
- A child who is deemed not to be receiving suitable education whilst being Electively Home Educated
- A child who was due to take up an allocated school place but has failed to attend, despite school checks
- A child who has 10 or more days of continuous absence from school without explanation, despite school checks
- A child who is not at their last known address despite school checks
- A child who has suddenly and unexpectedly left school and their destination is unknown despite school checks.

5. Role and Responsibilities

5.1 Schools' Duties

All schools have statutory safeguarding responsibilities (sections 157 & 175 of the Education Act 2002). Schools must investigate any unexplained absences. If a child fails to attend school, school staff must try to establish the family's whereabouts before making a CME referral. Schools should

- Use their contact telephone numbers to attempt to speak with the parent/carer or other family member
- Speak to siblings and/or known relatives within the same school
- Speak to friends of the child who is not attending
- Speak with school staff of known siblings at other schools
- Home visit(s) to attempt to ascertain if the family are still in the same home at different times of the day
- Discuss with the linked School Liaison Officer

5.2 School Liaison Officer – Response to a CME referral

Upon receipt of a fully completed CME referral, a School Liaison Officer will assess whether the suspected CME issue may actually be a school attendance concern. The School Liaison Officer will investigate and conduct home visits to determine whether the child's absence from school is as a result of a child missing education or is an attendance issue. The latter may involve the School Liaison Officer having to use statutory duties as appropriate.

Once the suspected CME investigations have been completed, the School Liaison Officer will advise the school, CME Team or relevant agency of the outcome and advise on an appropriate off-roll date where such advice is needed. Once a case has been referred to KCC as a potential CME, schools must not delete a child from the school roll until advised by the School Liaison Officer. The advice provided by KCC is strictly in line with The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. Where a disagreement arises, the regulations are used to reach a final decision in relation to off-rolling in order to ensure legal compliance.

5.3 CME Officers in Fair Access Service - Identification, Tracking and Monitoring

The Kent Fair Access CME Team receives referrals from School Liaison Officers following an initial investigation. Referrals from external agencies and the general public are made direct to the CME Team via the Digital Front Door: [PIAS Front Door](#).

The CME Team have access to databases against which the child's details can be checked. The team contact partner agencies and colleagues in other Local Authorities to establish whether the children or young person is in receipt of education provision.

Where the CME Team receive a report that a child is not in receipt of education provision and an address is known, relevant checks are made and the family is contacted. Where the CME Team's initial tracking and contact fail to receive a response, the matter is referred to the School Liaison Officer to arrange a home-visit.

Where the whereabouts of the child cannot be ascertained following an in-depth investigation, the CME Team carry out a risk assessment of the individual case. For further guidance refer to Section 7. (See Appendix **B** – Kent CME Risk Assessment Form)

5.4 Virtual School Kent - Ensure Every CiS Receives Suitable Education

Virtual School Kent (VSK) has a team of dedicated Education Welfare Officers (EWO) who work to ensure every Child in Care (CiC) receives full and suitable education. Assessment, support and monitoring are carried by the team using the tool of EPEP. (See Appendix **C** - EPEP template for CiC who are not attending any educational provision - CME).

CiC attendance is monitored on a daily basis by the use of a contracted call centre agency (currently Welfare Call), quality assured by VSK. VSK Locality Teams are alerted by the specialist EWO team if attendance falls to 95%. They are also alerted if a CiC has been

moved to a new care placement without prior planning so that a new school place can be identified in a timely fashion.

If a CiC to Kent County Council (KCC) is identified as CME due to not being on the roll of a school, VSK ensures that the CME team are aware, but continues to take the lead with Social Workers and Admissions Officers in identifying a suitable education placement. If a CiC to KCC is identified as CME due to being a Runaway or Missing from Home or care (RMFHC) then the Social Worker follows the KCC RMFCH protocol as identified in the DfE Statutory Guidance January 2014 and VSK ensures that the CME Team are aware.

While School (Pupils Registration) Regulations 2006 set out circumstances in which a pupil should be deleted from a school register, it is accepted good practice that a CiC should not be off rolled by a school until a new school has admitted the CiC.

6. The referral process

6.1 Schools

Following the school's completion of their attempts to locate the child, if there are 10 days of continuous unexplained absence, the school should notify KCC using the PIAS Digital Front Door: [PIAS Front Door](#). If **all** possible enquiries have been completed prior to the 10 day period, the Area Inclusion and Attendance Team may accept the CME referral earlier.

For clarification, please follow this referral guide: [CME Referral-guide.pdf](#)

6.2 Other Agencies

Any partner agency or service involved with children has a duty to notify Kent County Council of any child or family who are missing from education.

If a school or an agency has identified a child as not in receipt of education provision, the referral should be made directly to Kent Fair Access CME Team: [PIAS Front Door](#). Any queries can be sent via email to cme@kent.gov.uk

The CME Team, Inclusion and Attendance Team and Virtual School Kent will respond to every CME referral or enquiry received and will work in partnership with key stakeholders in Kent.

7. Safeguarding

Children identified as Missing Education who are not on a school roll are investigated by the Fair Access CME Team. Investigations are thorough and information requests are sent out to other local authorities, NHS, Local councils, and external agencies. Officers research in depth using a number of Kent County Council databases to enable the officers to identify where the child or young person (CYP) is living. Where investigations lead us to believe that the CYP has left the country and there are safeguarding concerns, a referral is made to the Home Office to clarify the family are no longer in the UK, on receipt of confirmation the CYP has left the Country the case is closed.

CME is part of Kent County Council's Children Missing Strategy (Children Missing from Home and Care Procedures – March 2020) [Kent children missing from home or care procedures](#) When all avenues of investigation are exhausted the file is then risk assessed by the CME Officer. Where the outcome of the risk assessment is red, advice should be sought initially from the Education Safeguarding Team to consider what actions are required. According to the level of risk, if further advice and guidance is required then CME Team will contact the Central Referral Unit team for a Consultation (see Appendix E) to discuss the concerns. If a referral is required they will then submit an Interagency Referral Form which is available via www.KSCB.org.uk. The risk assessment should also be forwarded to Kent Police Missing Person Co-Ordinator.

The risk assessment ensures that appropriate professionals are aware of the young person and their circumstances should they or their family come to their attention. Kent CME Team do not close any cases where the Child or Young Person(CYP) is not found, the case is filed as dormant and the files reviewed monthly until information is received that confirms the whereabouts of the CYP.

Safeguarding of all children is paramount and this policy must be considered in accordance with the Local Authority's safeguarding procedures. If you have a serious concern about the immediate safety of a child you **must** contact Kent Children's Social Care or the Police. Don't assume that someone else will take responsibility and make that phone call. You could help to save a child's life. If you are worried, report it now, call Kent Child Protection reporting line on 03000 411111.

If a child is in immediate danger CALL 999

The Kent Local Safeguarding Children Board provides guidance and protocols relating to situations that may result in CME. For example, PREVENT, Child Protection, Child Sexual Exploitation, Children Missing from Home or Care in Kent, Forced Marriage, Honour & Ritual Killings, Female Genital Mutilation (inc Breast Ironing), Child Slavery or Trafficking and any form of child harm. <http://www.kscb.org.uk/>

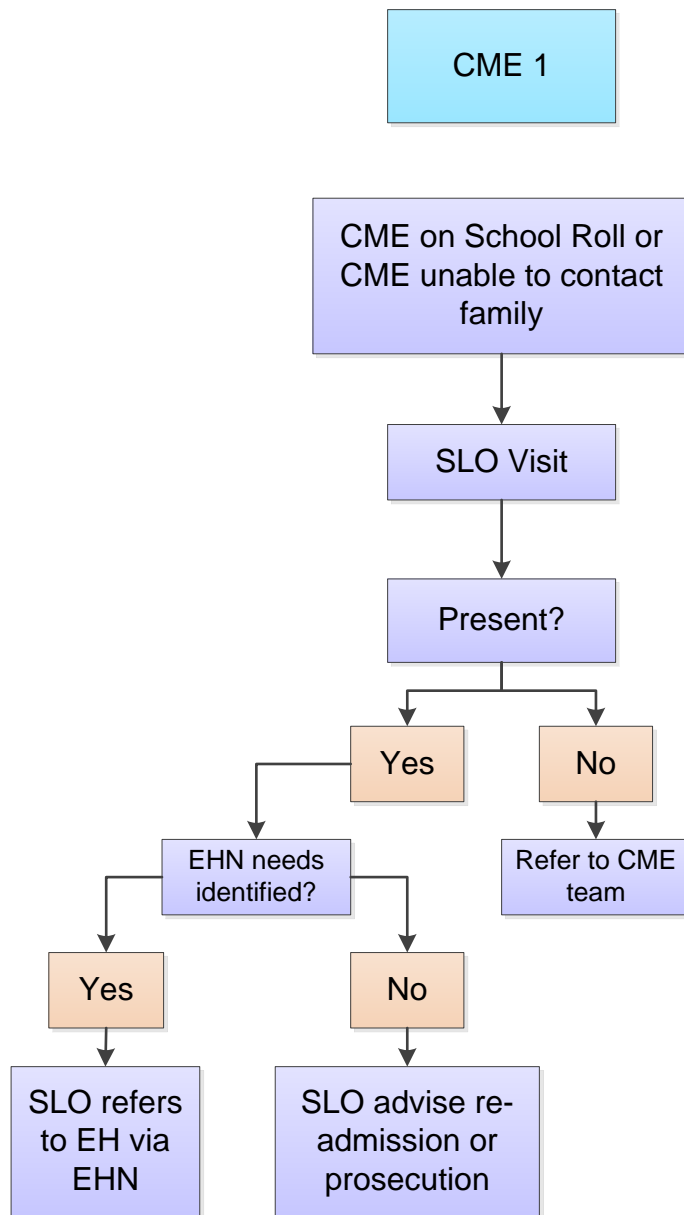
Education and Young People's Services

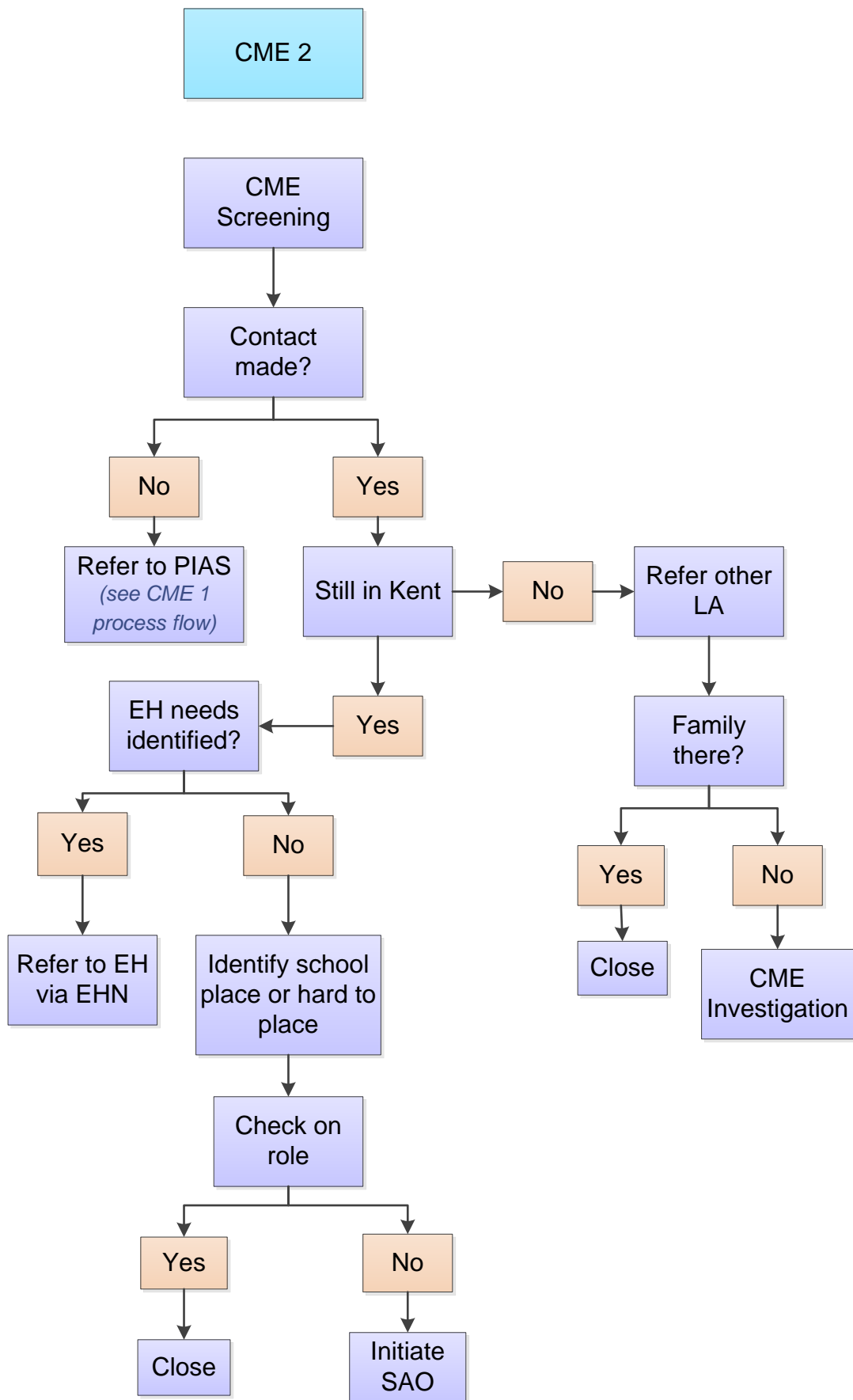


Children Missing Education

Appendices & Further Sources of Information

Appendix A – KCC CME Procedure





Appendix **B** – Kent CME Risk Assessment Form

Parent Name:	Synergy PSS	School Census
	Synergy Admissions	Borough Check
	SCS	Liberi
	Free School Meals	Keys to Success
	Core+	EH
	Government Department checks	NHS checks
Last known address:		
Date at last known address:		
Date of CME referral:	Date of Assessment:	

Risk Level:  **Low Risk**  **Medium Risk**  **High Risk**

Factor			Supporting information (mandatory if yes selected)
Were there any safeguarding concerns on the Children Missing Education Referral?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes No Unknown	
Did any safeguarding concerns come to light during the Children Missing Education investigation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes No Unknown	
Has any crime been committed by anyone in the family that has been reported to the police?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes No Unknown	
Are any of the children subject to Child Sexual Exploitation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes No Unknown	
Were the family fleeing Domestic Abuse?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes No Unknown	
Are any of the children of an age to consider forced marriage or honour based violence?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes No Unknown	
Are the family known to Social Services?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes No Unknown	
Are the family known to Early Help?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes No Unknown	
If age appropriate, is there any information on Liberati Database?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes No Unknown	
Have all phone numbers and emails been contacted?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes No Unknown	
Has Early Help or School Liaison Officer been to knock on the door?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes No Unknown	
Have the Borough Council confirmed family have moved?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes No Unknown	
Have benefit payments stopped for the family?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes No Unknown	
Have Dr's been contacted for any information regarding their whereabouts, concerns, last visit?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes No Unknown	
Was there any response from school emails or follow up with other agencies/ local authorities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes No Unknown	
Has a Government Department check been completed? (nb agency initials stated)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes No Unknown	
Was the school attendance for children below 95%?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes No Unknown	

Summary of Referral (To be recorded in the form of bullet points):			
Given the information above, indicate the level of perceived risk ticking the relevant box below.			
<input type="checkbox"/> Low Risk	There are no concerns for the child; no criminal activity has taken place.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Medium Risk	There are some risks identified, and there may have been a referral to social services		
<input type="checkbox"/> High Risk	There are substantial grounds for believing that the child is at risk. There is Police and/or social services involvement.		
Officer completing risk assessment:	Risk Assessment Sent to:		
	Safeguarding Team	Social Services	Kent Police
Authorised by: Date authorised:			

CME is part of Kent County Council's Children Missing Strategy. When all avenues of investigation are exhausted the file is risk assessed by a CME Officer. Kent CME Team do not close any cases where the Child or Young Person(CYP) is not found, the case is filed as dormant and the files reviewed monthly until information is received that confirms the whereabouts of the CYP.

- **Low risk** – the child will be made dormant on Synergy.
- **Medium risk** – check social services are aware if there is concern for the child's wellbeing, child made dormant on Synergy and reviewed monthly by a CME Officer. If further advice and guidance is required then the officer will contact the Central Referral Unit team for a Consultation to discuss the concerns. If a referral to SCS is required then an Interagency Referral Form which is available via www.KSCB.org.uk is submitted. The CME officer will also forward a copy of the completed Risk Assessment to Kent Police Missing Person Co-Ordinator.
- **High risk** – advice will be sought in the first instance from KCC Education Safeguarding Team to consider what actions are required. Where further advice and guidance is required the CME assistant will contact the Central Referral Unit team for a Consultation to discuss the concerns. If a referral to SCS is required then an Interagency Referral Form which is available via www.KSCB.org.uk is submitted. The CME officer will also forward a copy of the completed Risk Assessment to Kent Police Missing Person Co-ordinator.

For internal use only : Cases are made dormant on Synergy by selecting the 'No Action' radio button on the referral page, and completing the date the case was last reviewed. (The ceased to review button – 'No further action' **MUST NOT** be used for these cases.)

If there are significant concerns for a child's safety or wellbeing, a referral to social services and/or the Police will be completed at that point of the investigation.

Appendix C – Virtual School Kent CME EPEP

Assistant Heads: Please use following guidance for completing a PEP for CIC who are currently not attending education (CME) in your locality.

(Use Nina's CME report as a guide – located on K Drive).

Section A : Completed by EPEP team and / or SW

Essential Pupil information should include:-

- (i) Personal Information – Name, DOB, Gender, Ethnicity, Legal status, 1st language, perhaps UPN
- (ii) Care Information – Carer's address, date came into care, PR
- (iii) Education information – will not be applicable
- (iv) Contact Information – family
- (v) Key Contacts

Section B

Educational information will be N/A

Section C

Young person's views will be N/A

Section D The PEP Meeting

- (i) Organise a PEP meeting



- (ii) The PEP meeting **COMPLETE THIS PART**

.....(child's name) was not at the meeting.

Discussed the difficulties of engaging her in anything.

VSK EWO will continue to try and engage with her to support move back into education.

Is the Child / Young Person receiving suitable education?
Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Known
If No please give reasons
Tick No and copy and paste information from Nina's CME list for reasons.



- (iii) Targets - **These need to be copied and pasted into the PEP document**

TARGET 1

- **Area of focus?** Attendance
- **What will be done?** Arrange to meet with the network of professionals with responsibility for the CIC. Discuss current situation to identify options available and seek a solution to the issues. Draw up a plan of actions, selecting the most suitable option and follow up with CIC and any other appropriate services e.g. Admissions or SEN officer.
- **Intervention type?** Inclusion
- **Improvement expected?** Attendance at school

TARGET 2

- **Area of Focus?** Academic achievement
- **What will be done?** Organise assessment of short term academic / training needs; then initiate use of PP+ / AIF as appropriate. Secure educational support. Liaise with SW to arrange further PEP meeting
- **Intervention type?** 1:1
- **Improvement expected?** Subject?

Further sources of Information

Guidance

- Children missing education. Statutory guidance for local authorities (September 2016)
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/395138/Children_missing_education_Statutory_guidance_for_local_authorities.pdf
- School Attendance (Updated May 22)
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/518586/Advice_on_school_attendance.pdf
- Missing children and adults. A cross government strategy (December 2011)
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/117793/missing_persons-strategy.pdf

Related legislation

School Attendance:

Education Act 1996 (section 7, 8 14 & 19)

Education act 2002 (section 21)

Education and Inspections Act 2006 (section 4 & 38)

The Education (pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

Safeguarding:

Children Act 1989 (section 17 & 47)

Children Act 2004 (section 10, 11, 12 & 17)

Education Act 2002 (section 175)

Working together to safeguard children (July 2018) – (A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children)

Keeping Children Safe in Education (2022)

Appendix D – Consultation Document CRU

Introduction

Working with children and their families can be complex and challenging. There will be times when professionals working in this area, however experienced they are, are unclear as to what action they should take. This will require them to seek advice and support from other experienced practitioners across the child care network. This leaflet describes structures and processes that are in place to ensure that this advice, support and consultation can happen within and between agencies across Kent.

Consultation within your own agency

All statutory agencies should offer means by which staff can seek help and advice on individual cases. All organisations are required to have named/designated safeguarding professionals and you should make yourself familiar with their contact details. You may also take advice through your line manager or the person who offers you safeguarding supervision.

Professional consultation with another agency

There are two types of professional consultation. The first, where you ring to discuss and share information on an identified child, and the second, where you may want to talk through a situation about a child but without sharing the child's details. The first requires you to inform the family, the second does not.

Sharing information on an identified child

Professionals may wish to have a discussion about an identified child who may be known to another agency or on whom the other agency may hold information. There will be situations where the level of risk to the child may not be fully evaluated by a single practitioner/agency and part of the consultation is about the safety of information sharing with the family, what to share, how and when. In these circumstances the family/child

should be informed that this discussion will be taking place unless by telling them the child is felt to be put at further risk of harm, in which case a referral should be made. The family will also need to give consent if it is felt that the threshold for sharing information (significant harm) is not met and they should be informed on how they will be told the results of the discussion.

Sharing information without naming the child

Across all agencies there should be the facility to have a professional consultation/discussion without naming the child to clarify whether a particular child's situation based on the presenting circumstances and known information appears to meet the criteria for making a referral and/or what other action should be taken. In these circumstances it is appropriate to phone another agency consultation line or a named/designated professional in an agency and ask for a general professional consultation.

If it is agreed that further action needs to be taken following the consultation then the family must be informed of that agreement unless it is felt that to inform the family may put the child at risk of harm, in which case a referral should be made under child protection procedures.

Record Keeping

Records should be kept according to agency guidelines

Further action

- If following a consultation more information comes to light or the situation changes, the professional can seek further clarity by consulting again.
- Any professional who believes that the response they have received following a consultation is inadequate, does not meet the needs of the child/family or leaves a child at risk of harm may still make a referral in the usual way or escalate the concerns through their normal agency process.

Who do I phone?

The Central Referral Unit can be contacted for Professional Consultations regarding non-open cases

Tel: 03000 41 11 11

Consultations regarding cases with an open referral should be held with the case holding team directly