

Wiltshire Council

Children's Select Committee

20 September 2022

Children Missing Education (CME) / Children Missing Out Of Education (CMOE) – Policy and Data

Executive Summary

All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to a full-time education, suitable to their age, ability, aptitude, and any special educational needs they may have.

Children and young people who are not being educated quickly become at risk of failing academically and socially. If their whereabouts are unknown, they may be particularly at risk of physical, emotional and psychological harm.

Section 436A of the Education Act 1996 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.

Wiltshire Council is committed to ensuring that children and young people are in receipt of a suitable form of education and facilitated back into education where this is not evident.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To share the current CME (Children Missing Education) policy, describe monitoring arrangements for CME/CMOE (Children Missing Out Of Education) and provide data.

2. Definitions

- 2.1 **Children Missing out of Education (CMOE)** refers to:

Any child of compulsory school age who is NOT registered at any approved education activity, alternative provision or elective home education (EHE) AND has been out of educational provision for at least 4 weeks.

Children on EHE (elective home education), alternative or part time arrangements which are not stable or are of concern.

Children Missing Education (CME) refers to:

Those children and young people who are missing i.e. their family or their individual whereabouts are unknown.

3. The CMOE Group

- 3.1 The strategic group meets six times a year (termly) to review the CMOE data set and act on priorities to reduce the risk of children missing access to education. Since January 2022, this group has been chaired by the Head of Targeted Education. The group is attended by representatives from both the Education and Skills and the Families and Children directorates.
- 3.2 CMOE sub-groups meet once each week, on rotation, during the school term to identify children where there are concerns about risks of missing education, to agree next steps and to review impact.
- 3.3 Sub-group priorities are:
- Reduced Educational Provision
 - Exclusions
 - CME and Elective Home Education
 - Children with a Social Worker
 - Education Other Than At School (EOTAS)

4. Purpose of CMOE

- 4.1 The purpose of CMOE is to ensure a coordinated approach is taken in corporate oversight of children who are identified as not being in statutory education, or where education provision is unsuitable, or not meeting the needs of the child. This will include children whose parents/carers are not discharging their parental responsibility to ensure their child receives education.
- 4.2 Children of interest will be those who:
- Are permanently excluded from school
 - Have a high rate of suspension from school (fixed term exclusion) and/or children at risk of permanent exclusion
 - Have no school place or are waiting for a school place to be identified
 - Are identified and reported by schools as Children Missing Education (CME)
 - Are deemed medically unfit for school
 - Are accessing a reduced educational provision offer (REP)
 - Are being Electively Home Educated (EHE) and provision is deemed unsatisfactory

- 4.3 Group oversight is not intended to replace individual agency procedures nor replace other actions that workers may take to ensure children are in receipt of appropriate education and are safeguarded.

The group focuses on identified stuck cases, finds solutions and ensures a cohesive joined up approach is undertaken by all of the services, with appropriate senior management oversight.

Robust challenge may be made to workers, agencies and professionals where it is clear that there has been no progress in resolving a case. Cases may be escalated where there are concerns that a resolution cannot be reached.

- 4.4 The CME policy (Annex 2) will be reviewed in October 2022 to reflect new national reporting requirements for CME/EHE pupils.

5. **CMOE Data**

5.1

EoY Indicator	2020-21	2021-22	Current
Total Number of EHE Learners	731	811	766
Open CME	118	102	81
REP (reduced educational provision)	194	294	286
Medical Needs Open Cases	14	10	21

- 5.2 EHE analysis is presented to the committee at item 9 on this agenda.

- 5.3 Children missing education procedures are followed where a child or young person has not taken up an allocated school place as expected and/or has 10 days or more continuous absence from school without an explanation and/or has left school suddenly and the destination is unknown.

Schools are required to start to complete the Children Missing Education Checklist if a pupil has had a maximum of 5 days of non-school attendance and where the school has been unable to contact the parent/carers.

Any concern of a Child Missing Education should be reported to the Local Authority through the Education Welfare Service.

Electronic registration forms for CME and EHE are being developed by the Council's data systems team to increase notification accessibility for parents and professionals, beyond existing well-established 'pupil moves' email notification systems used by schools.

During the 2022/23 academic year, DfE will be collecting aggregate termly data regarding children who receive elective home education (EHE) and children missing education (CME) from local authorities, on a voluntary basis.

- 5.4 There is no statutory requirement for schools to inform the Local Authority when a pupil is accessing reduced educational provision (REP). However, the Education Welfare Service has implemented a REP notification, monitoring and review process and Wiltshire schools understand the importance of following this process.

Nearly all Wiltshire schools are now connected to Group Call, a system that provides live attendance data to the Local Authority. Since March 2022 this has been an additional tool to support identification of children with reduced provision and where a CMOE response is required.

- 5.5 The Medical Needs Education and Re-integration Service (MNERS) is a statutory function of the Local Authority and discharges the LA's duty under Section 19 of the Education Act 1996 to "provide suitable education for children of compulsory school age who, by reason of **illness**, exclusion from school or otherwise, may not for any period receive suitable education unless such arrangements are made for them"

MNERS also provides the 'Hospital School' function for the LA, for in-patient children and young people at Salisbury District Hospital. The service supports children to continue to achieve and progress with their education, during periods when they are too unwell to attend their school; reintegrates children back into their school; and works holistically with children and young people, their families, schools, health colleagues and other professionals.

The service has experienced an increase in referrals and open cases. Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been an increase in the number of Section 19 enquiries made to the Local Authority in respect of children with anxiety and emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA). Work is underway to establish a secure data set for analysis of increased demand within this category of need.

- 5.6 Permanent exclusion rates in Wiltshire are very low, with only two during Academic Year 2021/22. The Behaviour Support Service works closely with schools to seek solutions and build capacity to meet the needs of children with behaviour that challenges.

Wiltshire's secondary schools' commitment to preventing the need for permanent exclusion through the terms of the Service Level Agreement (SLA) has meant that no secondary aged pupil has been permanently excluded for two years.

Total number of permanent exclusions	Total
2017/18	15

2018/19	19
2019/20 (School closures)	23
2020/21 (School closures)	2
2021/22	2

For 2020/21, Wiltshire was ranked 10 of 156 Local Authorities by the DfE and is in Quartile Banding A with regard to low rates of permanent exclusion.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 CMOE priorities are central to the Schools Bill (announced May 2022) currently before Parliament. As part of the bill, new legislation is being introduced to bring into force new statutory guidance on attendance. There will also be a requirement for creation of local authority administered registers for children not in school, reducing the risk of children becoming vulnerable to poor standards of education or risks to their safety and wellbeing.

In Wiltshire we are already responding to these changes on a non-statutory basis and are in a strong readiness position for when these become legislative requirements.

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Children Missing Education: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities

Appendix 2: Wiltshire Council CME-CMOE Policy

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