

## Wiltshire Council

### Children's Select Committee

Date 05 March 2019

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## Children Missing Education

### Purpose of Report

1. To provide an update to Children's Select Committee relating to the current position in Wiltshire of those children who are classified as Children Missing Education (CME).

### 2. Background

- 2.1 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 other than at a school. Children of compulsory school age within this category are regarded as Children Missing Education and should be returned to full time education.
- 2.2 The Department for Education (DfE) issued updated statutory guidance relating to Children Missing from Education in September 2016 and Local Authorities must have procedures in place to comply with the Statutory Guidance. DfE guidance is attached as Annexe 1 and Wiltshire Council Policy 2018 is attached as Annexe 2.

### 3. Main Considerations for the Council

- 3.1 **Children Missing Education (CME)** refers to those children and young people who are missing i.e. their family or their individual whereabouts are unknown. Generally this will be children who have moved out of Wiltshire and their destination is not known and they do not appear to be on the roll of another school in England.
- 3.2 This report is not about Children Missing Out on Education; that is those permanently excluded or on part-time timetables etc.

### 4. Wiltshire Data

- 4.1 Data accurate at 14.02.2019

Current CME figure	80 children
2018	92
2017	130

The number of CME children is reducing based on data from the preceding 3 years. This can be attributed to improved data reporting and additional processes that are being undertaken more routinely. This will be detailed later in the report.

#### 4.2 CME Gender Breakdown

Female	31 (38.75%)
Male	59 (61.25%)

#### 4.3 CME Ethnicity Breakdown

Asian	1 (1.25%)
Any other black background	2 (2.5%)
Any other ethnic group	4 (5%)
Any other mixed background	1 (1.25%)
Any other white background	17 (21.3%)
Black African	1 (1.25%)
Gypsy/Roma	5 (6.3%)
Indian	1 (1.25%)
Unknown	10 (13%)
Traveller of Irish heritage	22 (28%)
White British	14 (17.5%)
White Irish	1 (1.25%)

#### 4.4 CME SEN Breakdown

Known to have SEN	11 (13.75%)
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It should be noted that these children were in receipt of SEN support at school but do not have an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP).

#### 4.5 Length of Time CME

More than 2 years	26 (32%)
1 – 2 years	18 (22%)
6 months – 1 year	6 (7%)
October – December 2018	20 (25%)
January 2019 – present	12 (14%)

32 (39%) of these children are believed to have left the country from information obtained from last school place. The majority of the remaining children are from traveller families; and likely to be home educating their children but without the formal assessment being undertaken to confirm this is acceptable.

- 4.6 It should be noted that there is no national or regional reporting of CME so there is no benchmark information.

## **5. Safeguarding Considerations**

- 5.1 Missing education affects children's educational attainment, and can also impede socialisation. There are also potential safeguarding concerns around children missing education.
- 5.2 Wiltshire policy and procedures ensure a consistent approach to the management of pupils who are CME.
- 5.3 Schools must notify the local authority when a pupil's name is to be removed from the admission register at a non-standard transition point under any of the fifteen grounds set out in the regulations (found at the end of Annexe 1) as soon as the ground for removal is met and no later than the time at which the pupil's name is removed from the register. This duty does not apply at standard transition points – where the pupil has completed the school's final year – unless the local authority requests for such information to be provided.
- 5.4 Data relating to CME is currently captured in a data management system which is being phased out and replaced with the EYES module within Liquid Logic which is the integrated case management system within Families and Children's Services. This will enable easier sharing and cross referencing of information about these pupils with other services and will bring efficiencies in the CME process.
- 5.5 New stages of investigation have been introduced to the current CME procedures which has reduced the number and will continue to do so. These include;
- i. Border Agency enquiries where children are believed to have left the country
  - ii. PNC checks with Police
  - iii. NHS Spine checks to establish where children were last presented for health services
  - iv. Links with MOD Children's Education Advisory Service where the children are from Service families
- 5.6 Changes to processes will be reflected in Education Welfare Service Practice Standards scheduled for completion by end of March 2019 and in amendments to the CME Policy and Procedure.

## **6. Service Priorities 2018-2019**

- 6.1 Our business priorities going forward during the 2018-2019 academic year within the Support and Safeguarding Service for Children Missing Education are as follows:-

- i. To ensure that all relevant case related information is transferred to the new case management system when it is implemented later this year.
- ii. To complete work with the Border Agency to confirm that children have left the country.
- iii. To develop links with DWP to share information relating to the parents of CME and to ascertain if whereabouts are known.
- iv. To monitor where children are being removed from the roll of schools and challenge schools where information is not being shared with the Local Authority in a timely manner or within statutory guidelines.
- v. To continue to reduce numbers of CME to no more than 50 children by the end of March 2019 by robustly using all strategies currently available to Wiltshire officers.
- vi. To complete Education Welfare Service Practice Standards document by end of March 2019 incorporating new stages of CME checking.
- vii. To revise the CME policy to incorporate new processes.
- viii. To monitor the CME numbers and review resource accordingly to ensure compliance with Practice Standards and national statutory guidance.
- ix. To continue to develop and improve capture of data to measure effectiveness of CME processes.

## 9. **Business Analysis Matrix**

Procurement and implications	Review of the Education Welfare Service remains as work in progress and will be considered as part of the RESET programme.
Equalities impact	The figures for CME show that a significant number of children are believed to be overseas – the majority of these are thought to be within Europe. It is unclear whether these children are accessing education provision. Children from Travelling communities also make up a significant proportion of CME.
Financial considerations	Education Welfare Service delivery is set

	within the agreed Local Authority financial allocation. Currently CME work can be met within existing resource. There may be some additional financial costs from the procurement of interpreter services in the location of children thought to be overseas.
Legal Implications	Select Committee are asked to note the statutory duty of the Local Authority to ensure that all children are in receipt of a suitable education and the role of the Local Authority in ensuring that this is the case for CME children.

## 10. Conclusions

- 10.2 Select Committee is asked to note this report and the role of Wiltshire Council in delivering services relating to Children Missing Education; requesting an annual update.

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20.02.19

**Background Papers: None**

## Appendices

Annex 1 Children Missing Education: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities

Annex 2 Wiltshire Council CME-CMOE Policy

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