



City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council – Children’s Services

CME / Access Policy and Procedures

1. Purpose
2. Introduction / Scope
3. Legislation & Other Relevant Documentation
4. Local Authority responsibilities and outline of procedures
5. Children with Special Educational Needs
6. The Bradford Education Access & CME team
7. Off rolling
8. What we do / Children we have failed to track

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to clarify the City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council’s (CBMDC) children missing education (CME) procedures and the joint responsibilities of all agencies, schools (including their governing bodies) and the local authority.

Children missing education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, sexual abuse and child sexual and criminal exploitation (Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2022)

2.0 Introduction / Scope

This policy applies to all children of compulsory school age who reside within the CBMDC boundary and to all schools and voluntary and community organisations.

The government defines CME as:

Children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school.

This does not include:

- Children who are receiving tuition provided by the local authority (known as Education Otherwise Than at School or EOTAS).
- Children who are registered at an education provision but not attending regularly.
- Children who are being electively home educated i.e. parents have taken responsibility for education provision.

However, until the local authority is satisfied that a home-educated child is receiving a suitable full-time education, a child being educated at home is potentially in scope of the CME (s436a) duty.

Every child believed to be a CBMDC resident who has attended pre-school provision in the city, or who has a record on the education database as a result of an involvement with professionals, or data sharing agreements in place, will be captured as part of our CME process.

Alongside the local authority, the biggest stakeholders in the CME process are schools. It is a school’s decision & responsibility to remove children from roll, not the local authority, but we will support schools to ensure that removals from roll are lawful and a robust audit trail exists where pupils are removed from roll. The Bradford Schools Online CME page [HERE](#), provides detailed advice and guidance on the steps that should be taken, prior to removal from roll, to attempt to locate the whereabouts of a pupil.

Everyone who is involved with children and families has a role to play in CME. The Children Act 2004 places a duty on all agencies to work together to promote the welfare of children and to share information. Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 states that fears about sharing information must not be

allowed to stand in the way of the need to promote the welfare and safety of children. These principles underpin this policy and there is an expectation that all agencies will work together to ensure CME are identified and safely enrolled in school.

3.0 Legislation and Other Relevant Documentation

Education Act 1996

Parents have a duty under section 7 of the Education Act 1996 to ensure that their children of compulsory school age are receiving suitable full-time education.

Local Authorities have a duty under section 436a of the Education Act 1996 to make arrangements to establish the identities of children in their area who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise. (This duty only relates to children of compulsory school age.)

Children Missing Education: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities 2016

States that all children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to an efficient, full-time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have.

Affirms that schools and local authorities must work together to establish the whereabouts of a child prior to removal from roll.

Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2022

Emphasises that improving school attendance is everyone's business, as it is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils.

Expects schools and local authorities to work together to overcome barriers to attendance.

Clarifies that the local authority where a pupil attends school should normally take the lead in any action to improve attendance.

KCSIE 2022

Outlines the duties of schools in relation to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 and subsequent updates

Define the grounds under which a child can be removed from a school's admissions register.

The Children Act 2004

Places a duty on all agencies to work together to promote the welfare of children and to share information.

CBMDC Fair Access Protocol for Children and Young People

The requirement for local authorities to have a Fair Access Protocol is contained in the School Admissions Code 2021. CBMDC will operate a protocol in line with the code.

CBMDC Guidance for CME

Adhering to all relevant legislation and guidance, this dedicated page for schools and other professionals explains the context and processes associated with CME in CBMDC.

4.0 Local Authority responsibilities and outline of procedures

- 4.1 When the local authority becomes aware of a child of compulsory school age who is reportedly in the Bradford district but not registered at a school or receiving suitable education otherwise, we will make reasonable enquiries to determine whether this is the case.
- 4.2 Referrals received from other professionals internally are expected to be made using the Children Missing Education (CME) referral form as agreed & submitted into the CME inbox (CME@bradford.gov.uk). Every referral made to the CME team will be recorded on CapitaONE and data relating to referrals and outcomes will be regularly reviewed to aid with service delivery.

- 4.3 Referrals received from other sources such as the public will be dealt with based on the information provided.
- 4.4 Children who are identified to be in the Bradford district through enquiries will be supported back into suitable full time education promptly. Those children registered at school, will remain on roll there whilst enquiries are conducted. Should their whereabouts be confirmed in Bradford during these enquiries, the registered school will be asked to facilitate the child's return. Children without a registered school in Bradford can be referred to the Education Access officers to allow them to provide support to return to full time suitable education.
- 4.5 As part of the enquiries made, the local authority will always attempt to consult the parents of the child when establishing whether the child is receiving suitable education. Home visits may be required, for example if contact cannot be made by other methods such as telephone, email, WhatsApp or Text message.
- 4.6 The local authority has joint working and information sharing arrangements in place to support the function of tracking and enquiring in relation to children who are missing from education. Working together to safeguarding children statutory guidance supports this inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- 4.7 Where required, officers will support Lead Practitioners in undertaking an Early Help assessment.
- 4.8 Where there is concerns for a child's welfare, relevant referrals will be made to the Integrated Front Door for Children's Services. If there is reason to suspect a crime has been committed or there is imminent risk of harm, the police will also be involved.
- 4.9 Where practice and procedure falls short of expectations, action will be taken to escalate this. This includes practice within the team and externally.
- 4.10 Where children have been previously recorded as CME, officers will endeavour to offer support and provide assistance to the family in returning to full-time education.
- 4.11 The local authority undertakes regular reviews and evaluations of the policies and procedures in place for children missing education (CME).

5.0 Children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

- 5.1 If a school is to remove a child with an EHCP from roll, they should make contact with the local authority SEND team, as a review of the EHCP is needed. Children with an EHCP who are registered at a special school should not be taken off a school roll unless approval is given via a review of the EHCP in conjunction with the local authority SEND team.

6.0 The Bradford Education Access and CME Team

- 6.1 The Bradford Education Access and CME team sits within the Education Safeguarding Team. This service is within Bradford Council's Directorate of Children's Services.
- 6.2 The team consists of a Team Manager, 2 Senior Education Access Officers, 2 Business Support Officers, 1 Referral Officer and 5 Education Access Officers. Enhanced DBS clearance is mandatory for all our staff and specific mandatory training is delivered including Safeguarding, Equality and Diversity and Health and Safety including lone worker arrangements.
- 6.3 The Education Access and CME team will explore the options for signposting to other services and facilities (internal and external to the council), within available resources.
- 6.4 The Local Authority's duty to ensure children of compulsory school age are receiving a full-time education sits within the Education Access and CME team. Signposting to Early Education otherwise will be made where relevant. This includes children who are approaching compulsory school age in the upcoming term. Currently, responsibility for the Local Authority's duty to

promote effective participation post 16 lies with Skills House. Families will be signposted to Skills House where relevant.

7.0 Off Rolling

As defined by Ofsted: “Off-rolling is the practice of removing a pupil from the school roll without a formal, permanent exclusion or by encouraging a parent to remove their child from the school roll, when the removal is primarily in the interests of the school rather than in the best interests of the pupil.”

Schools who do not notify the Local Authority of children being removed from their roll as per the guidance above may potentially place children at risk of significant harm by failing to ensure that children no longer receiving an education receive appropriate support. Local Authorities are duty bound to notify Ofsted of any safeguarding incidents. A failure to comply with Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations i.e. by failing to notify the local authority of a child being removed from roll OR incorrectly removing a child from roll is a criminal offence under Section 434(6) of the Education Act 1996. It is therefore very important that schools contact the Education Safeguarding Team if they are in any doubt whether or not they need to notify the local authority of a child being removed from roll.

Further guidance can be found on Bradford Schools Online [HERE](#).

8.0 What we do / Children we have failed to track

What we do

Once the Local Authority receives and accepts a Children Missing Education (CME) referral, we will:

- Check local databases
- Attempt to make contact with the parent, relatives and neighbours using known contact details
- Check school2school database (DfE Lost Pupil database)
- Check Get Information About Pupils
- Liaise with Admissions
- Conduct external checks with health, police, Children’s Social Care and other partner agencies.
- Conduct additional home visits if required
- Send warning letters to the family reminding them of their legal duty as a parent to ensure their child receives a suitable education
- Contact other Local Authorities/areas if required
- Border Force checks in specific cases
- Make enquiries with HMRC
- Feedback outcomes of enquiries to initial referrer.

This list is not exhaustive; cases are taken on an individual basis meaning that enquiries may differ case to case. We endeavour to complete all reasonable and necessary checks in as short a time as possible, however timescales are often dictated by process especially as we liaise with multiple external agencies.

Triage and Assessing Risk

Each referral received is triaged and risk assessed by way of CME Officers auditing safeguarding or CP concerns identified in the referral (including current or historic CSC involvement). Those referrals with identified markers are prioritised and we aim to complete initial enquiries within 5 working days (where a Social Worker is involved, contact during the 5 days is made to ensure sharing of information received).

Children we have failed to track

There can be instances in which we may fail to successfully track a child and the duty placed on local authorities is to carry out enquiries as far as it is possible to do so; and by carrying out the checks detailed above, we endeavour to adhere to this duty.

Where no evidence of safeguarding concerns exists, once the steps listed above have been taken (as appropriate / relevant to the individual case) the records of these children will be made inactive.