



# ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

Education and Children's Services

## **Children Missing from Education Policy**

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*Version: March 2018*

*Date for review: September 2020*

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## Introduction

Children and young people may disappear from the view of schools and education authorities for many reasons. Children have a right to education and local authorities have a duty to provide education for all children in their area. Action must be taken at school and education authority level to locate families and to try to re-engage them with services at the earliest opportunity.

**In all cases the first and most important factor to consider is safety. Should there be any concern that the child may be at risk, it is essential that local Child Protection procedures are followed immediately.**

All children and young people who go missing are vulnerable. Children are recognised in law as a vulnerable group in our society as they require additional protection from the risks posed to them by different forms of harm, therefore a child-specific response is necessary. If there is

any suspicion that the child is genuinely missing or at risk, then Police and Social Work services should be contacted at the earliest opportunity.

## **Definition**

Children 'missing from education' are children and young people of **compulsory** school age who are not on a school roll and are not being educated otherwise (at home, privately or in an alternative provision) this includes those who have not taken up or returned to places allocated to them. They have usually not attended school for a period of time. This Policy also applies to children who are on a school roll but disappear from view.

Children missing from education will have wellbeing needs around inclusion and achievement. Consideration also needs to be given to other issues in their lives relating to non-attendance.

Children who are missing from education will be covered by local policy in line with the [National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2010](#) and the best practice identified by The Scottish Government Children Missing from Education (CME) Service.

Although children in Early Years settings are not officially classed as 'Missing from Education', settings should make use of this guidance and enclosed checklists to support their safeguarding arrangements.

## **Getting it right for every child – Named Person**

The final parts of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 Act are expected to commence in 2019. The Act includes arrangements for local authorities to provide a Named Person Service for every child and young person of compulsory school age up to the age of 18. The Named Person Service for Pre-school children is provided by the NHS.

The core functions of the Named Person make them ideally placed to be part of the process as the child's absence will raise a concern about the child's wellbeing. The Named Person will, due to their role, have an oversight of known issues in the child's life and will be able to use that oversight, in collaboration with other services, to assess risk and make a professional judgement on the most appropriate and proportionate course of action. In many cases this will include eliciting further information and assistance about the child missing from education with

partner services, such as Social Work and/or Police and liaison with the Local Authority CME Coordinator.

Professional judgement should always be used and Child Protection procedures followed whenever there are concerns for the immediate safety of a child/young person. It is important to consider that several wellbeing concerns may indicate a Child Protection concern.

## **The Role of the School or Early Years Setting**

In most cases, parents and carers advise schools and settings if children and young people are going to be absent. All schools and settings have well established procedures to contact parents and carers within a limited time frame when they have not been advised of absence, these approaches and the content of this Policy should be clearly communicated with parents and carers. The checklists in Appendix A will help the Named Person/Early Years Manager undertake checks within maximum timescales to safeguard children and young people.

Where patterns of non-attendance are emerging in school aged children, the Aberdeen City Attendance Procedures should be followed to support improved attendance at school. Concerns about Early Years attendance should be shared with the Named Person from Health Services so that agreement can be reached on how best to ensure the child's safety.

When the Named Person/Early Years Manager finds it impossible to make contact with the parents and carers over a three day period they should make use of the Stage 1 checklist contained in Appendix A. When there are on-going concerns for a child or young person's wellbeing schools should take action more quickly.

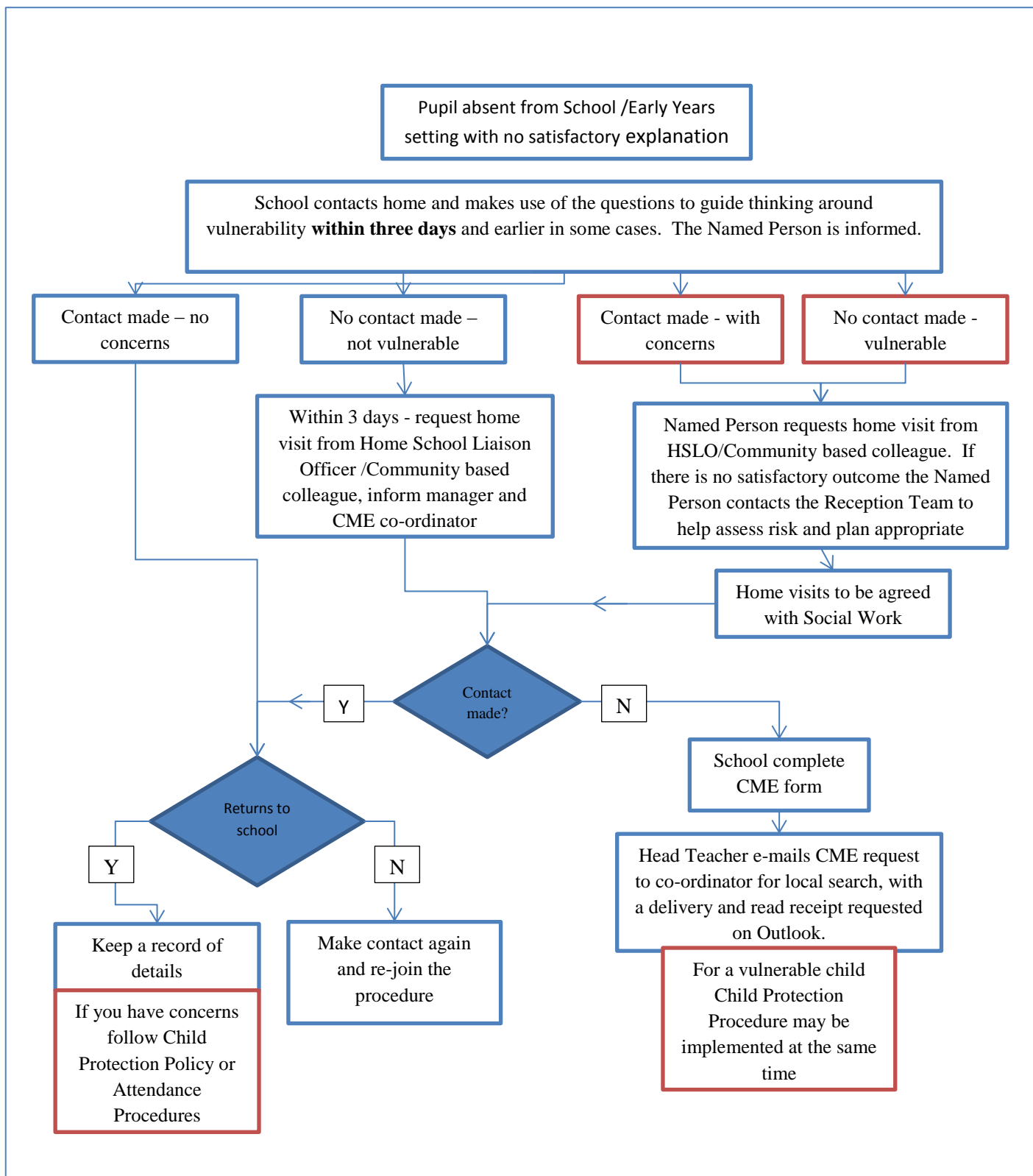
If the Named Person of a school aged child assesses that the child or young person is not at immediate risk they should seek support from the Home School Liaison Officer to undertake a home visit, in other cases it may be decided to approach other agencies for information immediately. Colleagues can seek support from colleagues in Children's Social Work to help assess the child's vulnerability to determine appropriate next steps. Where a child is open to Social Work the Lead Professional should always be contacted. Where the child is not open to Social Work the Reception Team may be contacted for support.

Where the missing child is of pre-school age guidance should be sought from the Early Years Team, who may advise contact with the Reception Team.

Where home visits have not resulted in contact with the family, the full checklists in Appendix A should be considered and used. If attempts remain unsuccessful, the school should complete the Children Missing from Education (CME) and send it to the Authority CME Co-ordinator. The CME Co-ordinator will undertake a further local search before linking with partners and national organisations. It is vital that timescales set out in the flowchart are followed.

**Where a child is considered vulnerable and at risk the school should immediately contact the child's Lead Professional. This will include children on the Child Protection Register, those subject to a current Child Protection investigation, those who are Looked After, those with involvement with the Children's Reporter, those at the centre**

of a custody dispute or those with significant additional support or wellbeing needs. Child Protection procedures should be followed when a Lead Professional is not in place.



## Children not returning following a holiday period

The Named Person should follow the procedure detailed above when children do not return to school following a school holiday period.

Parents and carers advising schools of an extended holiday out with school holiday periods should be advised that this procedure will be followed if the child does not return on the day stipulated to encourage effective communication. Parents and carers should be asked to confirm a contact telephone number that can be used when away from home. This is particularly important for families who have regular movement, such as those from a Gypsy/Traveller background.

If children do not return to school the procedure detailed should be followed to help determine that the child or young person is not currently residing in the city. If the HSLO/Community based colleague cannot locate the child, the form in Appendix B should be completed and sent to the CME Co-ordinator to allow further local, national and where necessary international checks to be carried out. **Children and young people should not be removed from a school roll until the Named Person has made contact with the receiving school or approval has been granted by the Local Authority to remove the child from education provision.**

## Families moving away from the city

For cases where the family has informed the school that they are moving away from the area, the receiving school should make a request for the Pupil Progress record (PPR) as soon as application is made. If a request has not been received within two weeks the following action should be taken:

- If the family report that they are moving within the city the current Named Person should contact the incoming Named Person.
- If the family have reported that they are moving out with the city and have named a school, the current Named Person should make contact with the reported receiving school.
- Where there is no resolution, the Named Person should refer to CME Co-ordinator by making use of the form in Appendix B. The CME Co-ordinator will undertake further checks and will assume responsibility at this point.

The procedure on page 4 should be followed when the family has not informed the school of their intentions as the child is classed as missing from education.

To safeguard against incidents of CME schools should make use of opportunities, such as inductions and enrolments to communicate to parent/carers that if they intend to move to another school, Local Authority or country, they should inform the school at the earliest possible time to prevent Aberdeen City Council initiating Children Missing from Education

processes. Raising awareness will be supported by literature produced by Aberdeen City Council which will be posted on school websites and shared with families at appropriate opportunities.

**If there are concerns for the child or they are on the Child Protection register or on an order from the Children's Reporter the Named Person should liaise immediately with the Lead Professional to determine what action should be taken. Children should not be removed from the roll until they have been enrolled in another school.**

## **The Role of the CME Co-ordinator**

When the CME Co-ordinator receives the form in Appendix B they will use the information to support liaison with colleagues locally, nationally and internationally. This could include liaison with Police Scotland, NHS Trusts and colleagues in Children's Social Work and accessing The Scottish Government register to help locate the family. They will ensure that colleagues in schools are kept informed of successful resolutions. However, colleagues in school should also make contact with the CME Coordinator through the email address provided for submission of CME forms if they are not updated on progress within 2 days from the submission of the form.

Given the quickly escalating processes required to safeguard our children and young people who are missing from education, it is imperative that the Named person informs the CME Co-ordinator if a child reappears as soon as possible.

In keeping with the National Missing Person's Framework the CME coordinator will monitor the impact of this policy through planned analysis of data and make amendments as necessary.

## APPENDIX A

### Stage 1 – Steps the school/Early years setting should take after third day of no contact (or sooner if child has been identified as at risk and vulnerable)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Ask other children in the class/school (consider also confidentiality and sensitivity)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Check what other staff and siblings know
<input type="checkbox"/>	Contact all emergency contact numbers (including parent mobiles, other family members)
<input type="checkbox"/>	HSLO/Community based colleague to deduce if child/family are residing at home.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Consider the need to follow Child Protection Policy including contacting the Police.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Early Years Settings should contact the Named Person

<input type="checkbox"/>	All reasonable and practical effort should be undertaken to locate the child/family, including speaking to: any known extended family, neighbours or community members, friends/acquaintances, Named Person/Lead Professional and other agencies as appropriate
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### Stage 2 – School initiate databases search

<input type="checkbox"/>	Request checks from SEEMIS by contacting the SEEMiS Team
<input type="checkbox"/>	Contact partner services as appropriate and request relevant information
<input type="checkbox"/>	Check Health Visitor/School Nurse/GP Practice with whom child registered
<input type="checkbox"/>	Check with Housing as appropriate
<input type="checkbox"/>	Check with Social Work as appropriate
<input type="checkbox"/>	Check with Police and ask for information as appropriate

### Stage 3 – Children Missing from Education wider search - This stage can only be completed by CME Co-ordinator

<input type="checkbox"/>	School completes the 'Request for a Search' Form. The Head Teacher should send this form to <a href="mailto:EDUOpsSupport@aberdeencity.gov.uk">EDUOpsSupport@aberdeencity.gov.uk</a> . When emailing the 'Request for a Search Form', a <b>delivery</b> and <b>read</b> receipt should be requested on Outlook by clicking on Options on the toolbar and checking 'Request Delivery Receipt' and 'Request Read Receipt'. The CME co-ordinator will start further checks.
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Please give the following details for who referred this case to the CME Co-ordinator.	
Name:	
Designation:	
School:	
Telephone number:	
Email:	
Date:	

**Details of local investigations for all children in this case to be included in the search:**

Local searches completed	Date carried out and by whom	Outcome
Enquiries made with other children in the class		
Enquiries made with other school staff		
Enquiries made with other establishments where siblings are known to be or where siblings were enrolled		

Home contact attempted :	Date carried out and by whom	Outcome
– by phone		
– by visit		
Contact made with relatives/emergency contact		
Contact made with parent's last known employer		
Contact made with other agencies:		
- Social Work		
- Housing		

- Health		
- Voluntary Agencies		
- Police		
Other		

How many sets of child details are being sent with this referral?	
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<b>Family details:</b>		
Family surname:		
Last known address:		
Other names the family has been known by:		
Mother's first and maiden name (if known)		
Father's name:		
Is either parent in the military?	Yes	No
Is anyone in this family an asylum seeker?	Yes	No
Is anyone in this family a refugee?	Yes	No
Other known family whereabouts and telephone numbers:		
Emergency contact and telephone number:		

**Any other background information** Please include in this section any other background information about why this case has been referred and/or any other relevant details which the CME co-ordinator should be made aware of e.g. medical issues, confidentiality etc.

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**Child Details - Please complete and return one set of details for each child**

Forename(s):		
Surname:		
Date of Birth:		
Gender:	Male	Female
SCN (Scotland only):		
UPI (Outside Scotland):		
Is this child to be included in the search?	<b>Yes</b> look for this child – please <b>complete section 2</b> and leave section 3 blank.	
	<b>No</b> for information only – please <b>go to section 3</b> .	

**Please give as much detail as possible about schools the child has attended:**

Name of School	Address of School	Stage of Pupil	Date of Enrolment	Date of last day of attendance

Is this child currently on the Child Protection Register?	Yes	No
Has this child been on the Child Protection Register in the last 24 months?	Yes	No
Does this child have a history of unauthorised absences?	Yes	No
Does this child have a history of exclusions?	Yes	No
Is this child looked after at home by the local authority in terms of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995?	Yes	No
Is this child looked after away from home by the local authority in terms of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995?	Yes	No
Does this child have an additional support need?	Yes	No
What is the nature of the additional support:		

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**Section 3** Please complete this section if you gave us these child details for information only

Do you know the whereabouts of this child?	Yes	No
Details of child's whereabouts:		
Contact telephone number for this child:		
Any other relevant information:		