

Tower Hamlets Attendance & Welfare Service

GUIDANCE ON CHILDREN MISSING FROM EDUCATION (CME), MISSING CHILDREN AND THE MISSING CHILDREN REGISTER

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

It is recognised that children missing education (CME) are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of abuse, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later on in life.

Section 436A of the Education Act 1996 (added by section 4 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006) places a duty on local authorities' to ensure that arrangements are in place to enable them to establish the identities of children of statutory school age in their area who are not registered pupils at a school, and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school.

The Department for Education has issued updated guidance 'Children missing education: Statutory guidance for local authorities' (DfE, January 2015). This specifies that local authorities should have **robust procedures and policies** in place to enable them to meet their duty in relation to these children, including appointing a named person that schools and other agencies can make referrals. Local authorities should undertake regular reviews and evaluate their processes to ensure that these continue to be fit for purpose in identifying and dealing with CMEs in their area.

Local Authority related duties and powers

The Local Authority (LA) is able to use other duties and powers to support its work on CME including:

- Providing suitable full-time education to permanently excluded pupils from the sixth school day of exclusion;
- Safeguarding children's welfare, and their duty to cooperate with other agencies in ensuring children's safety;
- Serving notice on parents requiring them to satisfy the LA that their child is receiving suitable education when it comes to the local authority's attention that a child might not be receiving such education;
- Issuing School Attendance Orders (SAOs) on parents who fail to satisfy the local authority that their child is receiving suitable education, and in the opinion of the authority it is appropriate that the child should attend school;
- Prosecuting parents that do not comply with an SAO;
- Prosecuting or fining parents who fail to ensure their school-registered child attends school regularly;
- Applying to court for an Education Supervision Order for a child.

This particular LA guidance supercedes that of December 2013 and provides schools, nurseries, children's centres/settings, services and relevant local agencies in Tower Hamlets with comprehensive guidance on the referral process for:

- (i) children who are out of school; and
- (ii) children who go missing from a local school, nursery or children's centre.

The aim is to increase information sharing between schools, nurseries and children's centres/settings and Tower Hamlets agencies and other Local Authorities (LAs) on children out of school and children who go missing so that action can be taken to engage them in education and safeguard their welfare.

Named Person

The named person for CME in Tower Hamlets is:

Brendan Mulcahy

Specialist Attendance & Welfare Advisor for CME/Missing Children.

A. CHILDREN MISSING FROM EDUCATION (CME)

1. WHAT IS A CME?

- 1.1. When a child is identified in the local area as being vulnerable as a result of not being on any school register, (s)he is considered to be a child missing from education (CME). Sometimes, CME's are also described as COOS (Child out of school).
- 1.2. The Specialist AWA for CME in Tower Hamlets receives referrals of such CME cases from all children's agencies services in the Borough. Direct assessment with the child and family takes place to support a smooth pathway to an appropriate educational placement.

2. WHAT ARE THE CATEGORIES OF CME?

- 2.1. Typical examples of CME referrals from statutory agencies and include the following: -
 - (a) Children in families who are victims of domestic violence and have moved into Tower Hamlets.
 - (b) Families living in temporary accommodation/ refuges/ etc. in the local area.
 - (c) Children who have offered a school place in Tower Hamlets but the family are refusing to admit the child because the offered school is not the preferred school.
 - (d) Physical disability or mental health issues, preventing access to education.
 - (e) Exclusions from independent schools, academies or free schools in Tower Hamlets.
 - (f) Home educated children where the standard of education has been found to be 'unsuitable'.
 - (g) Children from the Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities.
 - (h) New arrivals from other countries.
 - (i) Children who arrive from another LA and have had previous Social Care involvement or who are the subject of a Child Protection Plan.
- 2.2. Children out of school are monitored and tracked on the Pupil Services Admissions database. This includes permanently excluded pupils and children who are home educated

3. REFERRALS TO THE CME TEAM

3.1. Schools

- 3.1.1. At the beginning of the academic year a letter is sent to all Tower Hamlets schools (i.e. LA Maintained, Academies, Free Schools and Independent Schools) advising them of the steps to take once a pupil has been off-rolled, or has gone missing. Attached to the letter is a notification to be sent back to the LA informing of any children that have been taken off the school admissions and/or attendance registers (See Appendix A).
- 3.1.2. A similar letter and template is sent to all of the voluntary agencies that work with young people in Tower Hamlets asking them to contact the School Admissions Team or the CME Team, if they come across any pupils out of school.
- 3.1.3. The CME team also contacts all nurseries and children's centres/settings in Tower Hamlets, to inform them about Missing Children procedures.
- 3.1.4. A letter/ template (See Appendix A) is sent to the Royal London Hospital asking for the relevant information on any children found to be missing from education (CME). The information is subsequently disseminated to all of the appropriate staff in the hospital asking them to contact the Pupil Admissions Team or the CME Team if they come across any pupils who report as being completely out of school.

3.2. Tower Hamlets Social Care

- 3.2.1. All Tower Hamlets Social Care sections are also alerted at the beginning of each academic year of what to do if they come across children who are completely out of education. Referrals of CME's are regularly reported by the following departments: -
 - Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) incorporating the Integrated Pathways & Support Team (IPST)
 - Advice and Intervention Team
 - Family Support and Protection
 - Permanency and Adoption Support Team
- 3.2.2. Once the child found to be out of education has been supported by the Specialist AWA for CME with being admitted to a suitable school/education provision, the 'lead professional' role is transferred back to the allocated social worker for the family, who has on-going contact with the young person.

3.3. Other Agencies

3.3.1. Regular referrals of CME's are also received by the Specialist AWA for CME from the following agencies:

- CAMHS
- Special Educational Needs Section (SEN)
- Pupil Admissions Team
- Education Departments from other LA's
- Parents Advice Centre (PAC)
- Youth Offending Team (YOT)
- Tower Hamlets Police Missing Persons Section (TH MISPERs)
- Local GP's.

3.3.2. Many children move into Tower Hamlets mid-way through the year, often coming from other local authorities or other countries. Some of these children may have experienced disruption in their previous educational placements. Such pupils are referred to the Specialist AWA for CME by the previously mentioned children's agencies. When a child has been referred to the Specialist AWA for CME as being out of school and vulnerable, a CAF can be carried out with the family and young person to support a successful return to education.

3.4. CME Solutions

3.4.1. The following steps are taken to support CME's in returning to education: -

- A home-visit is conducted to meet the family at their home and an assessment using the common assessment framework (CAF) format is completed in partnership with the child and her/his parents/carers.
- Recommendations in relation to suitable educational provision are made to the Chair of the Social Inclusion Panel (SIP) and the Head of School Admissions (who may consider offering financial support for the identified school under the Fair Access Protocol [FAP] or to fund a period of reintegration support [RIG] at the Pupil Referral Unit [PRU]).
- In most cases where a pupil had been excluded from a mainstream school, a period of Re-integration (8 weeks) at the PRU is recommended before a return to mainstream education.
- A Team around the Child (TAC) meeting is established once the young person has started at the new school.
- The 'lead professional' role is handed over to a more appropriate professional who will have day to day contact with the young person.

B. THE MISSING CHILDREN REGISTER

1. WHAT IS THE MISSING CHILDREN REGISTER?

- 1.1. The Tower Hamlets Missing Children Register is an electronic database created solely for the purpose of actively tracking down children aged 18 and under who have gone missing from the borough and once they have been found, making sure that they are referred on to the appropriate agencies. Missing children from other LA areas are recorded and checked against the Register.
- 1.2. The Missing Children Register records and logs the details of the child concerned and also has an active information seeking and sharing component which links up with local Tower Hamlets agencies and with London wide databases.

2. WHAT IS THE DEFINITION OF A MISSING CHILD?

- 2.1. The whereabouts of children who are defined as missing are unknown to statutory agencies and include the following: -
 - Children in families who are victims of domestic violence who have to go into sudden hiding.
 - Children in families who have disappeared without leaving a forwarding address.
 - Children in families who have gone on extended leave and have failed to return when due to do so.
 - Runaways. (See Appendix B for detailed guidance for schools and the Attendance and Welfare Service (AWS)).

3. HOW ARE REFERRALS MADE TO THE MISSING CHILDREN REGISTER?

3.1. Schools

- 3.1.1. The designated member of staff with responsibility for attendance should make enquiries about children who are not attending school AND refer them to Tower Hamlets Attendance and Welfare Service in accordance with the referral criteria.
- 3.1.2. In tracking a missing child, a school should have made the following checks before referring to the Attendance and Welfare Service:
 - Contact all the emergency contact numbers on the missing child's file.

- If the missing child is on the Child Protection Register, or is a looked after child, or Children's Social Care are known to be actively involved, refer the matter straight away to Children's Social Care.
- Write to the family at the last known address, including e-mail address.
- Check for rumours in the school of the possible whereabouts of the pupil. This will be most effective by asking known friends of the missing child.
- If the child has not been found after these checks, refer to the Attendance and Welfare Service.

3.2. Children's Centres, Day Nurseries, Playgroups and Childminders (See Summary version of guidance at Appendix C)

3.2.1. Enquiries should be made and the following checks undertaken:

- Telephone all the contact numbers available for the child.
- If the missing child is on a Child Protection Plan, or is a looked after child, or Children's Social Care are known to be actively involved, refer the matter straight away to Children's Social Care.
- Write to the family at the last known address, including e-mail address.
- Check for rumours of the possible whereabouts of the child with friends of the child and family. (i.e. Is there anybody in contact by e-mail, Facebook, etc.).

3.2.2. If the child has not been found after these checks, contact the Admin Officer for the Missing Children Register for a referral form.

3.2.3. If the child turns up after the referral is made or information is received on the child's whereabouts, contact the Missing Children Register on 020 7364 3450.

3.3. Other Agencies

3.3.1. Statutory and voluntary services working with children in Tower Hamlets concerned that a child's whereabouts is unknown should contact the child's last known school. The majority of children living in the borough will be accounted for on schools' or the Pupil Services databases. For children who have gone missing and are not attached to any school (e.g. Under 5 children not in any provision and Home Educated children,) Tower Hamlets professionals should exhaust their enquiries and can then contact the Missing Children Register direct.

3.3.2. When a child has moved out of borough, or is missing, the school still has responsibility for referring the pupil to the Attendance and Welfare Service if the destination is unknown. The Attendance and Welfare Adviser undertakes the checks above and if necessary, refers to the Missing Children Register.

3.3.3. The requirement for agencies to refer first to the child's last educational placement should prevent searches being made for a child who is not, in fact, missing. By following the filtering process of the school / AWS checks, the children who are truly missing will be the cases that are actively sought through monitoring by the Register.

3.4. The Attendance and Welfare Service (AWS) Responsibility

3.4.1. When a child is not attending and his / her whereabouts cannot be determined by the school, there are certain checks required on the part of the Attendance and Welfare Advisor (AWA) to see if the child can be located. The checks must be undertaken for children living in Tower Hamlets in the following order:

- Establish what actions the school have undertaken and what contacts have already been attempted.
- Pupil Admissions check.
- Local Housing Office check.
- Local Housing Benefit Office check.
- Children's Social Care Duty Officer check.
- Home-visit to last known address.

3.4.2. After these standard checks have been completed and the child still remains missing, the AWA should complete the Missing Child referral form (Appendix A) and forward it to the Admin Officer - Missing Children Register, Tower Hamlets Attendance & Welfare Service, 4th Floor - Mulberry Place. The referral must be counter-signed by the Team Manager in the AWS. The AWA will also complete referrals to the Register for children resident in other boroughs.

3.4.3. AWAs should also follow the procedure for Runaways at Appendix B.

3.5. Out of Borough Children

3.5.1. Children who do not reside in Tower Hamlets and who go missing from Tower Hamlets schools and other provision are subject to the same procedures. After completing the checks in paragraphs 3.1.2 or 3.2.1 a referral should be made to school AWA. Other providers should refer to the Tower Hamlets Missing Children Register, which will notify the home LA.

4. WHAT HAPPENS TO REFERRALS TO THE MISSING CHILDREN REGISTER?

4.1. When a child is referred to the Missing Children Register there will be a number of checks and searches undertaken to match the details of the missing child with other records and databases. Some of these databases are national, London-wide or just locally based. The

Missing Children Register does on-going checks with the following agencies:

- IMPULSE: School Admissions Database
- NOTIFY: a London-wide database that tracks children in temporary accommodation.
- The s2s online register on the DfE web-site with databases for Missing Pupils and Unique Pupil Numbers (UPNs)
- FRAMEWORKi (FWi) Tower Hamlets Social Care Missing Persons Database
- Tower Hamlets Health (National Tracking System -NSTS)
- MISPERs: Tower Hamlets Police Missing Persons

5. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

- 5.1. If the child is located as a result of these checks, the AWA will be informed and will notify other relevant professionals. Children who are not located will be placed on the Missing Children Register (MCR).
- 5.2. The Admin Officer will notify the AWA who will advise the school by e-mail that a child's name has been placed on the Missing Children Register for a note to be made in the school's Admission Register.
- 5.3. Any information in the future received by the MCR will be relayed to the school AWA.
- 5.4. Missing children's details remain on the Register, if necessary, until school leaving age.

6. ENQUIRIES FROM OTHER LOCAL AUTHORITIES

- 6.1. Enquiries about missing children from other local authorities will be dealt with by the MCR Admin Officer. Contact details are on page one.

7. CONTACTS FOR ENQUIRIES:

Brendan Mulcahy, Specialist Attendance and Welfare Advisor for CME
Tel: 020-7364 3426
Email: brendan.mulcahy@towerhamlets.gov.uk

David Hough, Principal Attendance & Welfare Advisor
Tel: 020-7364 3437
Email: david.hough@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Mohammed Ali, Admin Officer – CME/Missing Children Team
Tel: 020-7364 3450
Email: Mohammedl.Ali@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Appendix A

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

Notification of child out of school

Date

/ /

School Admissions Team
Town Hall Mulberry Place
4th Floor
5 Clove Crescent
London
E14 2BG

The following child is no longer on our school roll:

Name: _____

Date of birth: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Name and job title: _____

Address: _____

Please send this form to: Pupil Admissions Team, 4th Floor Town Hall
Mulberry Place, 5 Clove Crescent, London E14 2BG,

Telephone: 020-7364 5006 or **Fax to:** 0207 - 364 4311, or

Email to: school.admissions@towerhamlets.gov.uk

PROCEDURE FOR RUNAWAYS - Appendix B

Once it comes to notice that a child or young person has run away the Head Teacher must be informed and the following done:

The Head Teacher or responsible senior member of staff must inform the AWA and social worker or team manager and placement immediately where a child or young person is:

- on a CP Plan (or subject to a Child Protection referral)
- a looked after child or young person who runs away or is removed (i.e. abducted)
- known to a statutory agency, or social worker, because there are developing concerns for their safety.

For others not in the above categories, schools should seek to confirm with the parent / carer that the child or young person has been reported missing to the police and must refer to THAWS as soon as possible. The AWA must undertake the checklist listed on Paragraph 3.4 of this guidance.

- AWA should carry out a home visit and confirm that the child or young person has been reported missing to the police and liase with Children's Social Care. The school should be kept informed in writing.
- Where practicable, the AWA will exhaust enquiries within 2 working days of receipt of the referral. If there is no further information the AWA will inform a manager and Children's Social Care, the Missing Children Register for Tower Hamlets LA and the Police Child Protection Unit in writing.
- The AWA will advise schools when a child or young person's name may be removed from the school roll. A missing pupil's name must remain on roll for a minimum of 20 school days.
- Most runaways will return to their schools. The child or young person's school records should be kept at the school until they are requested from a new school. The school should inform the AWA of the new school.
- If the AWA becomes aware the child or young person has moved to another school he or she should ensure all relevant agencies are informed.
- The AWA must report runaways to the Missing Children Register in accordance with the procedure in the Tower Hamlets guidance on the Missing Children Register (January 2015). All agencies concerned with the care and protection of children should therefore ensure that schools and the AWS are informed of all children and young people who are missing from home.



Tower Hamlets Missing Children Register –

Guidance for Childminders - Appendix C

Introduction

This guidance advises Childminders of what to do if a child they have been minding goes missing and it is not known where they may be. This can happen, for example, when families move suddenly without telling anyone. It also informs Childminders about how and when to refer missing children to the Missing Children Register.

What is the Missing Children Register (MCR)?

The Tower Hamlets Missing Children Register is based in Mulberry Place. It keeps all the details of children who go missing from Tower Hamlets. Checks are made with local agencies such as Children's Social Care and the Police and also with other databases.

What you should do if you do not know where a child you have been minding is?

1. Telephone all the contact numbers available for the child.
2. If the missing child is on the Child Protection Register, or is a looked after child, or Children's Social Care are known to be actively involved, contact Children's Social Care straight away.
3. Write to the family at the last known address, and e-mail address.
4. Check for rumours with friends of the child and family.

Referring to the Missing Children Register

If the child has not been found after you have made these checks, telephone the Missing Children Register on 020-7364 3450 and ask for a referral form. Complete it and send it to the address on the form. If you need advice on completing the form the MCR Admin Officer will help.

If the child turns up after you have sent the form or you get information on where the child might be, telephone the Missing Children Register and pass the information on.

Contact for Enquiries


If you have any queries or would like a copy of the full guidance, contact: -

The Admin Officer, Missing Children Register.

Tel: 020-7364 3450

Email: MohammedI.Ali@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Appendix D – Referral form for when a pupil goes missing from a Tower Hamlets School

		Register Number (office use only)	
<h3>Referral to the Missing Children Register 2014/15</h3>			
Child's first name		<input type="text"/>	Surname <input type="text"/>
If the child is known by any other name, please give details <input type="text"/>			
Last known address: <input type="text"/>			
Contact Tel Nos: <input type="text"/>			
Email Address <input type="text"/>			
Last school / provision <input type="text"/>			
Male <input type="checkbox"/>	D.O.B	<input type="text"/>	Name of parent/guardian <input type="text"/>
Female <input type="checkbox"/>			
UPN (school children) <input type="text"/>		Language spoken at home	<input type="text"/>
Ethnic Origin (for monitoring purposes only. (Please underline))			
White British Irish Traveller of Irish Heritage Turkish/Turkish Cypriot Greek/Greek Cypriot Gypsy/Roma Any other white background White European White Other	Mixed/Dual Background White & Black Caribbean White & Black African White & Asian Any other mixed background Asian or Asian British Indian Pakistani Bangladeshi Any other Asian Background	Black or Black British Caribbean African Somali Other Black African Any other Black Background	Any other Ethnic Group Vietnamese Chinese Any other ethnic group Unknown Not obtained Refused to say
Confirmation of checks undertaken - tick Yes or No			
		Is the child on a Child Protection Plan?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
		Has a letter been sent to the last known home address?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
		Have all contact numbers/emails for the family been tried?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
		Have enquiries been made with friends of the child and family?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Date started at school / provision		<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Last day attended		<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Checks to be made before referral is passed to the Missing Children Register			
	Date	Outcome	Please include the name of the person you spoke to
Local housing office check	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Local benefits check i.e free school meals/housing	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Framework I Check	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Home visit to last known address (Check with Neighbours, Etc)	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
P.T.O.			

Provide a brief summary (typed or written) of your last contact, the names of other people you have spoken to and any other relevant information:

Please tick all that apply:-

In Public Care/Looked After
 Domestic Violence Issues
 Privately Fostered child

Statement of SEN
 Forced Marriage

Runaway

Print name

Signature
Address

Agency

Telephone

Email

Date

PLEASE SEND OR FAX TO: Brendan Mulcahy
MISSING CHILDREN REGISTER, ATTENDANCE & WELFARE SERVICE, 4th FLOOR, MULBERRY PLACE, E14 2BG
fax: 020 7364 3433 tel: 020 7364 3426 e-mail: brendan.mulcahy@towerhamlets.gov.uk

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