

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP OVERVIEW AND SCUTINY COMMITTEE

7 MARCH 2023

REPORT OF ASSISTANT DIRECTOR PARTNERSHIPS

A.1 Children Missing Education

(Report prepared by Rebecca Morton, Executive Projects Manager & Anita Patel-Lingam, Statutory Education Compliance Manager, Essex County Council)

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

This report provides an update in regards to the issue of “children not in education” – the previous CLOSC agenda item from 21 March 2022:
“To enquire into the safeguarding and educational position concerning those of school age not attending mainstream schools.”

INVITEES

Anita Patel-Lingam, Statutory Education Compliance Manager, Essex County Council.

The presentation will provide the Committee with an update on children of school age not attending mainstream schools, where parents are not proactively seeking a school place or where parents have stated their intention to electively home educate and the local authority has concerns regarding their home education arrangements. Anita Patel-Lingam will be available to answer questions.

BACKGROUND

In recent years, Essex has seen a significant increase in the number of children and young people who are listed as being in receipt of elective home education (EHE). In addition, due to the number of families moving into Essex from other local authority areas, we have a number of children and young people who are without a school place and where there is not evidence to suggest that parents are proactively seeking school places. The Education Compliance team within Essex County Council actions all referrals relating to children missing education and will act on any concerns regarding the provision of EHE by parents.

As at 31st December 2022, 45 (11 primary phase and 34 secondary phase) of the total 330 children and young people listed as ‘children missing education’ across Essex reside within the Tendring district (13.6%). Tendring has the fourth highest proportion of the total Essex cohort of children missing education.

As at 31st December 2022, 402 (124 primary phase and 278 secondary phase) of the total 2616 children and young people listed as ‘electively home educated’ across Essex reside within the Tendring district (15.4%). Tendring has the second highest proportion of the total Essex cohort of electively home educated children and young people.

ECC colleague/s will present the committee with an update relating to children not in mainstream education in Essex including Tendring.

DETAILED INFORMATION

What is the statutory definition of children missing education?

Children missing education are defined 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.”

Local Government Association (LGA), Children Missing Education Report 2020

The LGA report also identifies the main scenarios which occur whereby children potentially end up missing out on their entitlement to a formal full-time education, and in some of the scenarios described this outcome becomes highly likely:-

- Children who leave school at the instigation of their parent, e.g. because the parent for example doesn't believe the school is meeting the child's needs
- Children who leave school at the instigation of the school, e.g. permanent exclusions
- Children who remain in school but do not access full time, e.g. multiple or prolonged fixed term exclusions
- Children and families with poor health, e.g. children not able to attend school due to their own physical or mental health
- Children that cannot be provided with a suitable place, e.g. children on the waiting list for a special school
- Highly mobile children and families, e.g. children who have never been on a school roll - new arrivals or unknown to children's services

Nationally, there is a rising trend in numbers of children missing education. Research would suggest that this trend is not a result of one single issue, in fact it is a combination of three factors that, taken together, have given rise to this trend. These factors are:

- the changing nature of the needs and experiences that children are bringing into school
- pressures and incentives on schools' capacity to meet those needs
- the capacity of the system to ensure appropriate oversight of decisions taken regarding children's entry to and exit from schools

What is the potential impact on children missing education?

Research suggests the impact of children missing education can include the following:-

- slower progress in learning
- worse prospects for future employment
- poorer mental health and emotional wellbeing
- restricted social and emotional development and
- increased vulnerability to safeguarding issues and criminal exploitation

Children missing out on a formal full-time education can also have significant emotional and financial implications, be detrimental to communities, reinforcing stereotypes and increasing isolation.

The LGA report also highlights the complexity of trying to identify missing children; *“Children missing education can be found in a variety of both formal and informal education settings, they can be found at home receiving different forms of educational input or none at all, they can be found in employment and they can be simply unknown to those providing services in the community.”*

For further information: LGA – Children Missing Education Report 2020 – LGA link: <https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/children-missing-education#download>

There are certain children within our communities who are more at risk of missing education which includes:-

- Children at risk of harm/neglect
- Children of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families
- Families of Armed Forces
- Missing children/runaways
- Children and young people supervised by the Youth Justice System
- Children who cease to attend a school

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee determines whether it has any comments or recommendations it wishes to put forward to the relevant Portfolio Holder or Cabinet.