

<b>MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL</b>	
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<b>Report of:</b>	Interim Director of Education and Partnerships - Caroline Cannon
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<b>Relevant Executive Member:</b>	Deputy Mayor and Executive Member for Education and Culture - Cllr P Storey
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<b>Submitted to:</b>	Executive
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<b>Date:</b>	8 October 2025
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<b>Title:</b>	Final Report of the People Scrutiny Panel - Children Missing Education
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<b>Report for:</b>	Decision
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<b>Status:</b>	Public
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<b>Council Plan priority:</b>	A successful and ambitious town
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<b>Key decision:</b>	Yes
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<b>Why:</b>	Decision(s) will have a significant impact in two or more wards
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<b>Subject to call in?</b>	Yes
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<b>Why:</b>	Non-urgent Report
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<b>Proposed decision(s)</b>
<p>That Executive:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Notes the report of the People Scrutiny Panel into Children Missing Education and the accompanying recommendations; and</li> <li>2. Approves the Action Plan prepared by the service in response to the recommendations.</li> </ol>

<b>Executive summary</b>
<p>Children missing education (CME) are a distinct group of children defined by the Department for Education (DfE). CME are uniquely vulnerable because they do not enjoy the protection and support offered by schools.</p> <p>The People Scrutiny Panel has carried out an investigation into the issue, and created a report and action plan setting out its intention to help tackle the problem. The aim of Scrutiny Panel is to reduce the overall number of CME and hence make children safer.</p> <p>This report provides background and contextual information to support the Council's decision making regarding the actions identified by the People Scrutiny Panel.</p>



## Purpose of this report and its contribution to the achievement of the Council Plan ambitions

Our ambitions	Summary of how this report will support delivery of these ambitions and the underpinning aims
<b>A successful and ambitious town</b>	The People Scrutiny Panel Report focuses on reducing the number of CME, and hence reducing the number of school days missed by the children contained within this cohort. By being in school more and therefore able to learn and achieve, it is hoped that the overall level of academic achievement improves. Simultaneously this group of vulnerable children will benefit from the oversight and care of professionals in school.
<b>A healthy place</b>	Promote inclusivity for all.

### 1. Recommendations

That Executive:

1. Notes the report of the People Scrutiny Panel into Children Missing Education and the accompanying recommendations; and
2. Approves the Action Plan prepared by the service in response to the recommendations.

### 2 Rationale for the recommended decision(s)

2.1 The CME cohort is a highly vulnerable group of children who should be in school where they can learn, grow and be cared for. Taking positive action as outlined in the People Scrutiny Panel report which aims to reduce the size of the cohort, will result in more children achieving well in school and benefitting from the professional oversight that schools provide.

### 3 Background and relevant information

#### 4.1 Definition:

Children missing education (CME) is a term used by DfE to identify a particular subset of children who are at increased risk and are not attending school.

To be CME, children must satisfy all three of the following criteria:

- be of compulsory school age
- not be registered at a school
- not be receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school

#### 4.2 LA Responsibility:

Local Authorities have a duty under section 436A of the Education Act 1996 to make arrangements to establish the identities of children missing education and return them

to full time education. Where there is concern for a child's welfare or criminal activity, then other key partners should be involved such as Children's Social Care and the Police.

In addition, LA's have a range of other duties which include:

1. Arranging suitable full-time education for permanently excluded pupils from the sixth school day of exclusion.
2. Serving notice on parents requiring them to satisfy the local authority that the child is receiving suitable education, when it comes to the local authority's attention that a child might not be receiving such education.
3. Issuing School Attendance Orders (SAOs) to parents who fail to satisfy the local authority that their child is receiving suitable education, if the local authority deems it is appropriate that the child should attend school.
4. Prosecuting or issuing penalty notices to parents who fail to ensure their school-registered child attends school regularly.
5. Applying to court for an Education Supervision Order for a child to support them to go to school.

#### 4.3 Middlesbrough's Context:

The various categories of CME children are as set out below:

***Children who are referred by schools to the Authority as missing.***

- The number of referrals the LA receive from schools varies each month, but on average the LA receive around 25 referrals. Within the Access to Education Service there is a dedicated CME Officer who manages these referrals and conducts extensive searches across other local authorities in an attempt to find the children. In the majority of cases the children are believed to have left the UK and returned to their country of origin.

***Children who are electively home educated, but the Authority has deemed are not receiving an adequate education.***

- The Elective Home Education team (EHE) review the quality of education that parents are providing for their children. Where this is deemed to be inadequate, the team will make arrangements for the child to return to school. This may involve use of our statutory powers by way of a School Attendance Order. New legislation which is about to be introduced gives LA slightly more power to intervene when children at risk are considering EHE.

***Children who have recently arrived in the town and are awaiting a school place.***

- Historically there has been a shortage of primary school places in the town centre which has resulted in newly arrived children waiting for a suitable place to become available. There are however sufficient places available for all the children in Middlesbrough but sometimes families find it difficult to travel longer

distances to attend school in other parts of the town. Over recent months the problem has become less acute as the number of newly arrived families has reduced.

***Children who have been permanently excluded from school and are not in a full-time alternative setting.***

The Local Authority has a duty to arrange suitable full-time education for permanently excluded pupils from the sixth school day of exclusion.

- Education arrangements for children who have been excluded from school are managed by the Inclusion Team. This team is responsible for the placement of children following an exclusion, regular placement reviews and the quality assurance of alternative provision.
- In Middlesbrough, 6<sup>th</sup> day education provision is delivered by several registered alternative provisions/ schools.
- At times when exclusion figures are high, some pupils wait for a placement to become available at one of the registered providers. During this period, they receive an interim education package which is coordinated by the Local Authority.

***Children in the Authority's care for whom full time education has not yet been secured.***

The reasons why care experienced children may not be in school vary, but they usually fit one of the criteria below:

- They have special needs and are awaiting a suitable specialist provision to become available
- They have recently come into care and had no school place prior to this, so a suitable school is in the process of being identified.
- They have been moved to an out-of-town location for safeguarding reasons.

In addition, the LA consider children who access school on a reduced timetable basis. Although this cohort is not CME, it nevertheless represents a group of children who may be vulnerable and for whom the LA needs to be additionally vigilant. Similarly, as part of the approach to prevention and early intervention, the LA provide specialist support for children in schools who are in danger of becoming permanently excluded. This work is delivered as a partnership between schools and the LA Inclusion and Outreach Team and is complemented with a range of commissioned intervention places at several registered alternative provisions.

The LA has a robust understanding of the issues underpinning CME and a clear line of sight across the individual children's circumstances. The LA is actively engaged in work to reduce the overall number of children involved. This activity includes:

1. Developing local provision to support CLA who are CME to join a school roll.
2. Working in partnership with schools to review the processes for supporting the children to identify good practice and areas for development.
3. Seeking additional resource to bolster the EHE team so that more support can be delivered.
4. Delivering a SEND & Inclusion Sufficiency plan to ensure adequate, appropriate and good quality provision for children with special educational needs, and those at risk of exclusion or who have been excluded from school.

## 5 Ward Member Engagement if relevant and appropriate

Not relevant

## 6 Other potential alternative(s) and why these have not been recommended

6.1 The Council could continue with the current delivery model and processes but in doing so the cohort of CME is likely to continue to increase in size resulting in more children missing out on their education.

## 7 Impact(s) of the recommended decision(s)

Topic	Impact
Financial (including procurement and Social Value)	There are no financial implications.
Legal	The report and actions do not have any legal impacts.
Risk	The report and actions do not create any additional risks for the Council.
Human Rights, Public Sector Equality Duty and Community Cohesion	There are no impacts or implications for human rights, public sector equality duty or community cohesion.
Reducing Poverty	The recommendations are likely to reduce poverty as the children in the cohort access more education, achieve better and enhance their life chances.
Climate Change / Environmental	There are no climate change or environmental implications.
Children and Young People Cared for by the Authority and Care Leavers	Any member of the cohort who is looked after presents an even greater level of vulnerability so ensuring they are in school and well supported is of crucial importance.
Data Protection	Data protection has been considered in all sections of the report and no concerns are anticipated.

7.1 The action plan responding to the recommendations from the People Scrutiny Panel can be found in Appendix 2 of this report.

## Appendices

1a	Final Report of the People Scrutiny Panel
1b	Final Report of the People Scrutiny Panel – Appendix A
1c	Final Report of the People Scrutiny Panel – Appendix B
2	Service Area Response

## Background papers

Body	Report title	Date
n/a		

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