

<b>Committee(s)</b>	<b>Dated:</b>
Safeguarding Sub Committee	26 January 2017
<b>Subject:</b> Update on the Work on Children Missing Education	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Director of Community and Children's Services	<b>For Information</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Pip Hesketh - Service Manager, Education and Early Years	

### Summary

This report is provided at Members' request. It provides a summary of work to date on children missing education (CME). This includes:

- an update on the legal framework and forthcoming changes to legislation
- an update on the work to track the school location and confirm school attendance
- casework
- communications programme and future priorities.

### Recommendation(s)

- Members are asked to note the report.

### Main Report

#### Background

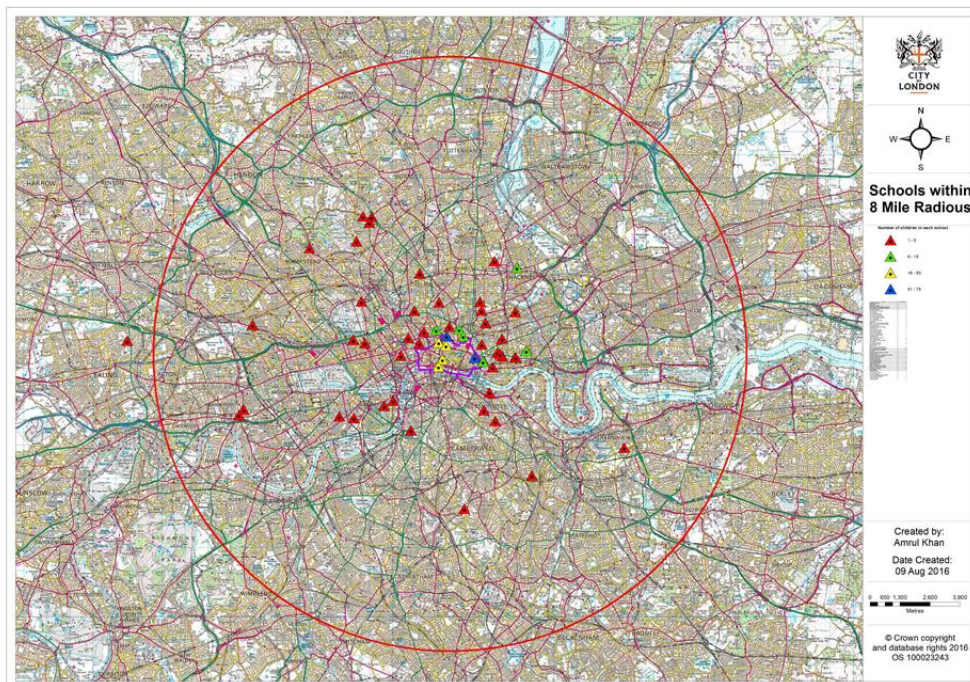
1. The City of London has a unique educational landscape in that it has only one maintained primary school and no maintained secondary schools. Most of its primary school age children and all of its secondary aged children are educated either in the independent sector or outside the City altogether. This puts them outside the standard reporting and/or legal framework that governs the City of London's statutory responsibilities.
2. At the present time, the City of London Corporation (CoLC) is legally bound to monitor the school attendance only of children within its local area; in order words, those attending a (maintained) school within the local authority boundary or living in the area and not on the roll of any school. In the City of London, that means having certainty about the safety and wellbeing of a maximum of 210 children of the 648 school age City residents. It currently has no authority to monitor the attendance of non-City resident children at independent schools.

## Current Position

3. In April 2015, in advance of forthcoming changes in legislation, the City of London undertook to look beyond the children on roll at Sir John Cass foundation Primary School and challenge its own thinking about whether there might be children missing education who have simply not been visible previously. Missing education can be symptomatic of a number of familial and other issues for young people, so the City chose to take a whole-child approach by tracking all City school age children to confirm their regular attendance at school. It also undertook to work with independent schools to up-skill them and support them when working with children missing education.

## Working closely with City schools

4. Since September 2015, the City of London has been working with all City schools on the issue of attendance, regardless of the school's legal status. The Education Welfare Officer is now making termly visits to each school to support and advise them on strategic, operational and case-specific issues. This has had a positive impact on schools and strengthened partnership working. More importantly, it has enabled rapid intervention and support to help children to return to school where attendance has been poor.



**Figure 1: Distribution of City schools attended by City resident children**

## Tracking City resident children

5. Department of Community and Children's Services (DCCS) officers have also made major progress in tracking over half the school locations of those 506 City of London resident children who do not attend school within the City itself, in order to confirm their safety and regular attendance. This means that 68% of the total resident children have been located and confirmed as safe. Good progress is being made on locating the remaining 32% of children, though school holidays create natural periods of consolidation and planning for the following term.

### Changes to legislation

6. There is expected to be a change to the law following a Department for Education (DfE) consultation in March 2016: for the first time, independent schools will come within the scope of the schools' duty to report children missing education. This change is expected to come into force in September 2016 after consultation results were strongly in its favour. The City of London will benefit from the fact that its systems have already begun to take shape, and there is a clear expectation on the part of the schools that they should proactively report on the matter. The timing of the legislative changes may mean that an update will need to be presented at the Safeguarding Sub-Committee meeting.

**Table 1: Summary of numbers**

City resident children and young people 0–19 years	c.1,000	
Statutory school age resident children 5–16 years	648	
Children attending maintained City schools	210	Current legal responsibility
Resident children attending City schools	142	
Total children attending all City schools	2,355	
Resident children attending schools outside the City	506	
Total children either attending school in the City or City resident 5–16 years	2,861	Included within scope of CoLC CME work
Total City resident children located and confirmed as attending school	399	
Total children located and confirmed as attending school	2,754	The City currently has no <i>authority</i> to monitor attendance of non-City resident children at independent schools. The law will change in September to allow the authority to monitor leavers and joiners rather than attendance more broadly.
Still to locate	249	

### Casework

7. The Education and Early Years Service now requests a termly update on the attendance of all children. Where attendance drops below 95%, immediate discussions are held with the school concerned to ascertain the underlying cause and support if required. There have been a small number of successful interventions with children now attending 100% of the time from previous attendance of below 50%.

### Communications programme and future priorities

8. 'Back to School?' is an awareness-raising poster campaign designed within DCCS and endorsed by the City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Board (CHSCB) which launches in September 2016. Three graphic scenarios of children missing education are depicted on posters with key messages to raise awareness and encourage the public to take action where they believe there is a case of CME. The posters will be distributed across the City on JC Decaux poster pods. Leafleting activity will be co-ordinated to coincide with the poster launches. The

campaign is timed with the start of the education year when it will be more noticeable if children do not return to school with their peers.

9. Other work includes working with the Housing and Health teams to ensure they understand the risks associated with CME and how to report concerns.
10. September also brings with it a new target of a further 100 children to locate during the autumn term as well as intervention work with those families where children do not start school at the beginning of the year. The CME policy and strategy are currently being re-drafted to embed the recent work as legitimised mainstream practice.

## **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

11. This work supports priorities 1 and 2 within the Children and Young People's Plan 2015 which are as follows:

### **SAFEGUARDING AND EARLY HELP**

Children and young people in the City are seen, heard and helped, they are effectively safeguarded, properly supported and their lives improved by everyone working together.

### **CLOSE THE GAP FOR VULNERABLE GROUPS**

Every child and young person in the City has the right to educational attainment, participation, confidence, health and wellbeing. We identify and provide early support and help to particularly vulnerable groups in the City to ensure they are able to have the very best opportunity to succeed, regardless of their background.

## **Conclusion**

12. This is a progressive piece of work in which the picture is live and subject to considerable change. While the City has undertaken to go beyond its statutory duty, in doing so it has also effectively set a benchmark for other authorities. This work was praised by Ofsted, in particular for the way partnerships have been built with independent schools.

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