

Children who are not in school policy

Introduction

The increasing number of children not attending school has garnered significant national attention in recent years. In Sheffield, this issue has been a focus for some time, prompting the development of a policy to address the growing population of children outside traditional schooling. Recognising the complexities and interdependencies involved, Sheffield has introduced this policy to describe how we will aim to identify, monitor and support children either not in a registered school or who are accessing education through alternative means.

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Review Date	December 2026

What does this policy cover?

In this policy, we define 'children not in school' as children of compulsory school age, who are not registered pupils at a registered independent school or any type of state-funded school. This includes children:

- Accessing education on a part time basis – reduced timetable
- Receiving education through Education Other than at Setting (EOTAS)
- Electively Home Educated (EHE)
- Severely absent from school
- Children Missing Education (CME)

This policy outlines both the Local Authority's statutory responsibilities for children who are not in school and the local arrangements by which we operate.

Our Vision

In Sheffield our vision is set out through the belonging framework – for every child to be in a loving home, in their local school, valued and visible in their community. In order to achieve this, we work collaboratively across the Education, Health and Care partnership and with children and families to make the right decisions about the right support and education at the right time.

Accessing education on a part time basis (Reduced timetable)

General Rule

Reduced timetables should only be used in very limited and exceptional cases. All children are entitled to full-time education. Reduced timetables should only be used when a child's physical or mental health needs require a shorter period in school. A school should not place a child on a reduced timetable to manage their behaviour.

Reduced timetables should have parental agreement and be used for a short period, with regular reviews. The school would be expected to have a contract in place with the parent and the child (where appropriate) to highlight the expected attendance, the support in place and the review periods.

When to Use

For children who have trouble attending school for long periods due to emotional needs, school challenges, or family issues.

Children who have been through an operation, medical procedure or period of longer-term illness may require a gradual phased return to learning.

Children who are on a treatment plan for their physical or mental health may require reduced hours to allow them to access medication, appointments or rest.

Some children arrive in Sheffield having never attended formal education in the classroom. A gradual introduction to school can support their wellbeing, forming of relationships and feeling of safety within the school.

Children who have been inpatients at the hospital, CAMHS lodges, Treatment Centre, Aldine House or Youth Detention may require a gradual return to education.

As part of a planned, temporary intervention for children with identified SEMH needs, when it is identified there would be a benefit to the child of shorter days, rather than due to staffing concerns.



Reduced timetables shouldn't be used to:

- Manage Behaviour.
- Maximise teaching and Teaching Assistant resources.
- Give respite to school staff.

Conditions for Implementing Reduced Timetables



Schools must use the graduated approach, starting with assess. They need to consult with the health professional, understand the treatment plan, recognise the reasonable adjustments required and create a plan to support the child to be in school as much as possible. The number of hours, review periods, and weeks before full time can be discussed in the initial meetings. The Team Around the Child must be involved and an agreement reached to agree and formalise the RTT contract.

Exhaust All Options

Schools must try all other support options first, including discussions with support services and referrals. A wide range of reasonable adjustments are available to all schools. Reasonable adjustments should be considered to increase the amount of time the child is engaged with their learning, for example:

- A child needing to come into school avoiding the hustle and bustle of the school entrance could come into school earlier and attend breakfast club or some private study time rather than coming in later.
- A child requiring rest time could have this between lessons where they undertake private study in a nurture room rather than going home early every day.
- Alternative curriculum and provision.

Special Cases

Children Looked After	Children with EHC plans	Children with Child Protection or Child in Need Plans
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consult the Virtual School, Headteacher and Social Worker.• Record the agreement in the Personal Education Plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consult the SENDSARS Inclusion Officer or Locality Manager.• Ensure the EHCP provisions are met.• Convene an early Annual Review if needed.• Ensure health professionals are involved, including the Health Needs in Education Team.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conduct a multi-agency review.• Consult the Virtual School for advice.

How the local authority responds to this

Schools and settings are legally no longer required to notify the local authority when a child has a reduced timetable. However, the Inclusion and Attendance team encourage this to continue so they are able to understand the needs that are not being / aiming to be met through the reduction in time in school. Discussions will take place at all Targeted Attendance Support Meetings.

The linked Inclusion & Attendance Specialist will work with the school to ensure an appropriate package of support is in place for the child and family, and the plan is reviewed regularly.



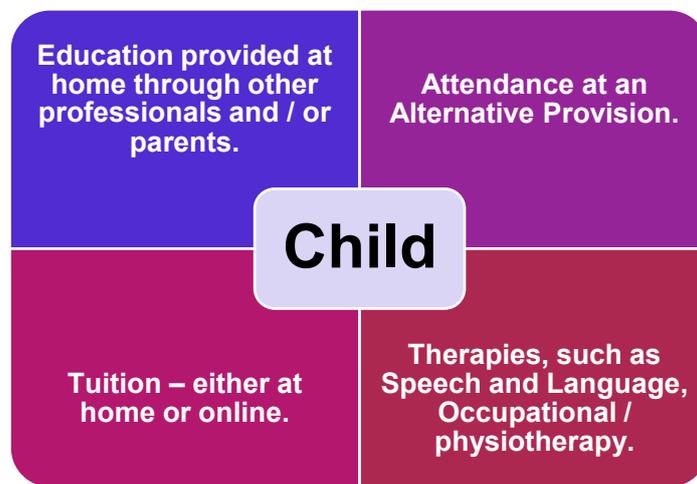
Accessing Education through Education Other than at Setting / School

EOTAS stands for education other than at setting / school. This can only be used for children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP), when it is inappropriate for them to attend a formal registered school. If part of a child's education, health and care plan provision is appropriate to be delivered in a formal registered school, EOTAS cannot be considered.

EOTAS is a way of providing an education that doesn't take place in a registered school or setting, the legal definition of this is found in Section 61 of the Children and Families Act 2014. The decision making for EOTAS is slightly different as Parental Preference, as described in Section 9 of the Children and Families Act 2014 does not apply.

EOTAS packages will be written into the Provision Section (Section F) of a child's EHC plan, as only formal education registered bases can be named in the placement section (Section I) of an EHC Plan.

What could EOTAS look like?



How is EOTAS made possible?

Examples where EOTAS may be appropriate include, but are not limited to:

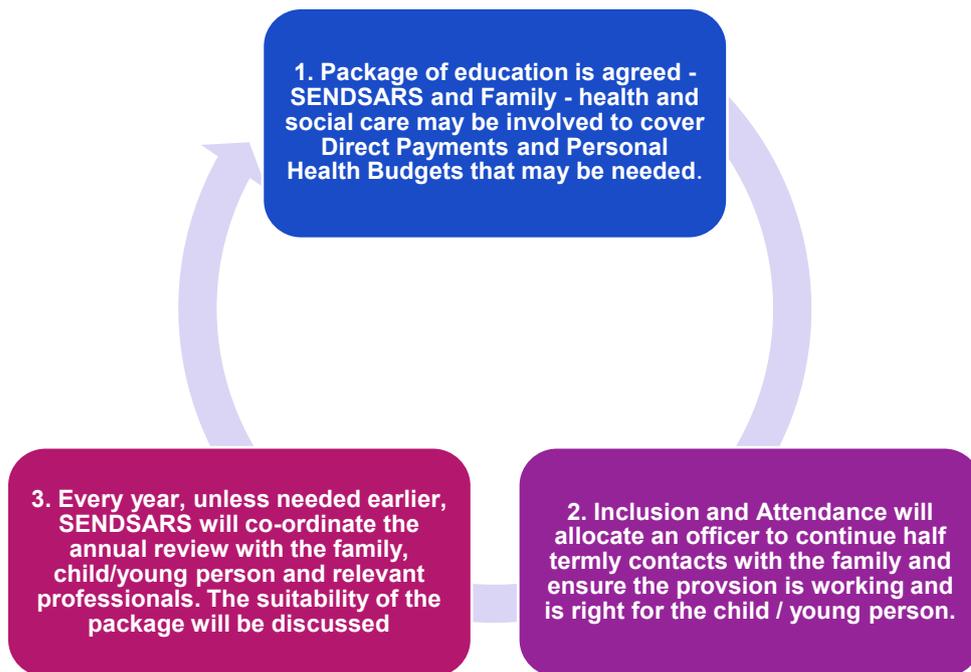
- children unable to attend school due to long-term illness or disability
- a range of other special education provision in schools has been tried unsuccessfully

Arranging provision

- If it is agreed that no provision can be delivered via a school placement, the Local Authority will work with families, children and young people to ensure that an appropriate EOTAS package of support is in place to deliver the provision detailed within the EHC plan.
- The Local Authority will use the Element 3 funding to provide the education agreed through a personal budget. This can be used only on the support set out in an EHC plan; this can include:
 - Funding for the special educational, health and social care support that will help to achieve the outcomes set out in the EHC plan.
 - It won't cover payment for a place at a school or college, or any general provision required by all children or young people.
- A family can request specific providers to deliver the education (Section F of the EHC plan). When requests are made, the Local Authority will ensure the providers are suitable and provide quality provision.
- If a child is eligible for funded (free to parents) school meals [Apply for free school meals - GOV.UK](#) evidence of eligibility should be passed to SENDSARS who will ensure the £15 per week for meals is built into the payment of a personal budget.



How the Local Authority will agree, monitor and review the provision

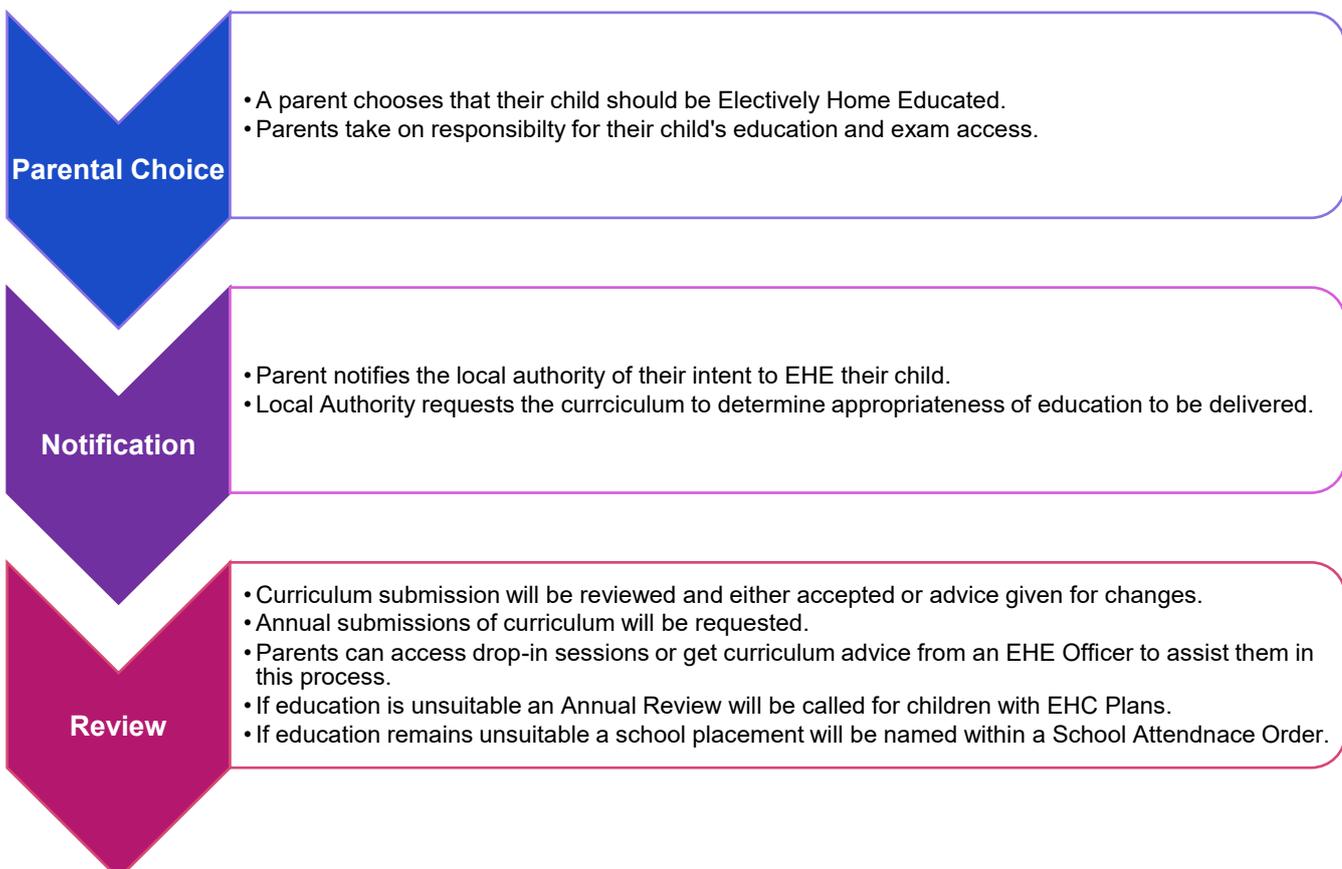


Examination entry

If a young person with an EOTAS package in place requires entry to an examination, the Local Authority will work with the family to ensure that this is facilitated whenever possible

Elective Home Education (EHE)

When a parent chooses to Electively Home Educate their child, it becomes their responsibility to ensure their child is accessing a full-time education.



Special Cases:

Child with an EHC plan and in a special school:

An annual review must be called, and the Local Authority must agree to a child being removed from the special school into EHE before this can move forward.

Children Looked After:

The social worker and virtual school would have to be consulted with about whether this would be appropriate, as the corporate parent the local authority must agree to EHE of a child who is looked after.

Exam Access:

When deciding to EHE, it is important to know that exam access and all other associated costs become the responsibility of the parent alongside the full-time education provision.

Children who are Severely Absent from School

Most children attend school regularly and on time. When children attend between 50% and 90% of the sessions available to them, they are persistent absentees. If children attend less than 50% of the time they are known as Severely Absent.

Why Children Should Attend School Full Time?			
School provides an opportunity to all children to make academic progress.	Children's well-being can improve through attendance at school and belonging in their community and local school.	Children in schools have access to social situations that will help their social development.	Children who attend school regularly are more likely to gain full time employment.

Compulsory Attendance

All children of compulsory school age must attend school regularly as mandated in Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. Parents have a duty to ensure their child receives an education suitable for their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have, and attends regularly.

Identification and Monitoring

- ✓ Data for each child on roll at a school is transferred to the Department for Education daily.
- ✓ Children are identified by a banding system that reflects the amount of absence they have missed cumulatively that academic year.
- ✓ School staff will use the banding report to identify their severely absent pupils.
- ✓ The child's voice will be captured at the point their attendance starts to deteriorate, and will be heard regularly to identify the support, interventions and reasonable adjustments they require.
- ✓ Parents/guardians will be notified promptly if their child is identified as severely absent. As a child's attendance is deteriorating parents will be invited to meet with key staff members to identify the barriers, cause and next steps required to support the child to re-engage with their learning more regularly.

Support for Students and Intervention Strategies

Schools will provide support to help students overcome barriers to attendance, including academic support, family support, or help with their SEND.

Further detail can be found in the Sheffield Attendance Policy 2024: [Sheffield Attendance Policy - Working together to improve attendance Aug 24.](#)



Strategies include:

- Meetings with the child on a regular basis to capture and listen to the child voice.
- Meetings with parents/guardians to discuss attendance issues.
- Referrals to support services for addressing underlying causes of absenteeism.
- Development of an attendance improvement plan tailored to the student's needs.
- Identification of reasonable adjustments, mentoring, key adult in school or appropriate interventions.
- Provide reasonable adjustments, timetable changes, form groups, toilet passes etc
- Careers advice will be identified for children to explore and think about their future, and how educational engagement can forge their pathway to employment.

Collaboration with External Agencies



- A pattern of Assess, Plan, Do, Review will follow the identification of declining school attendance. Professionals will collaborate with each other families to ensure support services and other relevant agencies are involved.
- Professionals will work together with families and children to provide assessments of a child's health and learning to enable engagement with learning.
- Parenting seminars, Early Help workshops, discussion groups, adult training and parent support will be identified for the parents to enhance their skills and confidence.

Legal Consequences

Parents/guardians may face legal consequences, including fines or other penalties, if they fail to ensure their child's regular attendance. If all support has been exhausted, parents will be invited to a meeting to formalise the expectations around regular attendance before a Notice to Improve Letter is issued by the Local Authority. Where it is felt that the parent is preventing their child from attending regularly Education Neglect will also be considered.

What is Section 19 of the Education Act 1996?

Section 19 of the Education Act 1996 says that a Local Authority must arrange suitable education at school, or otherwise than at school, for those children of compulsory school age who, by reason of illness, exclusion from school or otherwise, may not for any period receive suitable education unless such arrangements are made for them.

The Local Authority has responsibility to arrange the continuation of education, however the payment for packages of education that are not in schools must be paid for by the school the child is registered at.

The education provided must be full time, unless it is determined that it would not be in the best interests of the child or young person, for reasons that relate to their mental or physical health. Where a child is unable to attend school for any other reason the Local Authority will consider the individual circumstances of each case taking into account all available evidence, to inform its decision making and any action required.



Children's Services within the Local Authority work with schools to:				
Identify children who are not in school full time through the attendance coding in registers and the Targeted Attendance Support Meetings (termly)	Work with schools to understand the reasons for absence and the support that is needed	Work with health teams to ascertain if there is a health and wellbeing concern / response	Work with care colleagues to ascertain whether situational circumstances are preventing attendance at school and require support.	Work with family's and professionals who know the family to ensure the right access to education is formulated short and long term.

(this includes when children have been permanently excluded from their school)

Continuation of Education

When a child is identified as being 'unable to attend' the continuation of education will predominantly be delivered through:

- ✓ Health Reasons: Becton Outreach Medical Alternative Provision
- ✓ Exclusion: Sheffield Inclusion Centre, School Based Intervention Sites or an Alternative Provision package
- ✓ Otherwise: A package of Alternative Provision

Permanently Excluded Pupils

When a child has been permanently excluded from school the Local Authority will carry out a home visit to meet the child and their parents/carers. The options for continuation of education will be discussed and preferences made.

Collaboration with External Agencies

Every 4 school weeks a multi-agency panel meets to consider pupils identified as unable to attend due to their Health, or Otherwise needs. The panel consists of representatives from the Local Authority, CAMHS, the ICB, Health Needs in Education, Becton Outreach and the Nexus Academy Trust. Decisions are shared with the referrer and the parents after the panel.

Reengagement / Reintegration

The plan with any continuation of education is for the child/young person to be back in school, attending lessons on a regular basis as soon as possible. Initial timescales will be identified by health professionals in line with the treatment plan. Unless health professionals feel differently the plan will be one term of reengaging with learning, and one term of reintegrating back into the same school, or another school. In Key Stage 4 the plan may be until the end of Year 11 to ensure the child is able to sit and attain GCSE examinations.

Legal Consequences

Where a child does not engage with the continuation of education identified the parents will be in breach of their duty to ensure their child receives a suitable education, and could be at risk of attendance legal processes being initiated or consideration of education neglect.

Where appropriate and suitable education is being provided by the current School, and attending the school is reasonably possible, and reasonably practical for the child to attend the Local Authority's Section 19 duty will not be met. Parents and the School will be informed the criteria is not met, and the Local Authority will support the child, parent and school to consider reasonable adjustments, support and interventions to re-engage the child with their learning at school.



Children Missing from Education (CME)

Definition of CME

Children missing education are those of compulsory school age who are not registered at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise.

Responsibilities

Local Authorities have a duty under Section 436A of the Education Act 1996 to make arrangements to establish the identities of any children in their area who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise. The duty applies only to children of compulsory school age.

Identification and tracking of Children Missing Education

The CME team operates identification, engagement and tracking systems which comply with the statutory CME duty. The team actively monitor children who are identified as CME through the engagement with school process. The CME team uses its full range of support parents in helping them to access school and also utilises its enforcement powers to address any barriers to engagement.

All children who are identified as living in Sheffield and not on a school roll (PNOR) are identified by the Admissions team, who will contact the parent and secure an application form. Where an application is not returned within 10 school days due to difficulty in re-establishing contact with the parent (e.g. parent not responding to telephone calls or emails), the details of these children are forwarded to the CME team who will conduct a home visit and secure an application form.

Children identified with additional education needs but no EHCP (for example, they are new to the country)- will be flagged with key agencies such as the Inclusion and Attendance Team, Educational Psychology and Family Intervention Service via the completion of an Early Help Assessment. Alongside this process, the parent will be supported to apply for a mainstream school place

Safeguarding

The Authority ensures that all children Not on a School Roll are safeguarded through regular 'Safe and well' checks. Safe and well checks are completed by the allocated CME Officer at least every 6 weeks, and more regularly where there is a need. These checks are conducted in addition to any non-face to face communication with the family.

CME officers have completed statutory safeguarding training, Signs of Safety Training, attend Early Help seminars/briefings, and are in the process of attending the NSPCC Graded profile training (Level2). This ensures that CME case Officers have the necessary skills and knowledge to identify and assess needs/risk

Refugee Children

The Education Resettlement Team is commissioned by the Home Office to provide 12 months of education support to refugee children and families who have been placed in Sheffield. The Education Resettlement Team provides expert advice and support to schools around meeting the needs of newly arrived refugee children and briefing to other services. The team works closely with the New Arrivals Team which provides advice and support to schools around assessment, language, and curriculum for pupils for who English is not their primary language (EAL). The Education Resettlement team will secure additional 'enhanced funding' from the government for children who have additional education needs. This money is passported to the school in line with their approved funding request.



Fair Access Protocol

The Fair Access Panel is embedded and is used to secure school places for children who meet the Fair Access criteria and have not secured a place. This function is undertaken by the multi-agency panel which meets weekly on Tuesday. The Panel has oversight of previous placements to ensure an equitable distribution of allocations. The panel has the authority to identify and allocate additional support to assist with the admission to school, to help with the smooth transition into school and overcome any potential barriers to re-engagement. All schools can provide the panel with a contextual statement about specific school circumstances.

Collaboration with other agencies to safeguard the welfare of CME

The CME team safeguards children who 'move out of the area' by employing a graduated tracking process, which involves intervention at the school level, followed by local checks and then external checks. The external checks include enquiries to other LA CME teams, HMRC and Border Agency. These multi agency checks ensure that children who move out of the area (to another LA or abroad), are quickly located and safeguarded from harm.

The CME Team has an in-depth knowledge of other services and will signpost additional support as required based on individual families. For example, the CME team will work with the Virtual School Headteacher and the allocated social worker to quickly place Care Experienced Children into education provision.

Support for Schools

The Authority has updated the CME Handbook to reflect and ensure compliance with the changes outlined within the Working Together to Improve School Attendance Statutory Guidance (2024), and School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. The Handbook provides a comprehensive framework for implementing the requirements outlined within the statutory guidance and compliance with the CME statutory duty.

The CME team has distributed the Handbook to all schools via Anycomms+ (secure messaging) and is available on School Point (LA & Schools Communication portal). To improve awareness and compliance of the changes within the Handbook, the CME team has delivered face to face training and advice sessions to specific Schools, Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL), and through the Attendance & Inclusion Schools Networking Sessions. The team are working collaboratively with Attendance and Inclusion colleagues to get the key messages disseminated to schools.

Schools can consult on or report any cases of CME to the local authority.

The CME team will continue to provide briefings sessions to schools on an individual basis (as required) and engage with them around any feedback around the new processes. The Handbook will be reviewed and refreshed in the summer term 2025.

As part of the Safeguarding response, the CME team regularly interrogates the LA Education Database (Capita ONE) and referral data to identify children who have been removed from school roll incorrectly and 'leavers with no destinations'. The CME team shares this information with specific schools and requests that schools correct the data and/or make a referral to the CME team. This process ensures that children who may be missing from school rolls are effectively safeguarded. The CME team has a similar process and follow up to address children who are 'Rising 5' (children who have attained statutory school age but not on roll at a school). For these cases the CME team works collaboratively with the LA Admissions Team and local schools.



Parents/Guardians

CME and Resettlement Officers help and support parents to apply for a school place. They will assist with any language barriers and travel plans to support attendance at the allocated school.

Officers support parents to access a school place. They will however invoke legal procedures if parents refuse to engage and do not ensure that their child is receiving a full time suitable education.

The LA has established a clear pathway to secure the support of social care colleagues to assist with parents/carers whose children continue to experience 'education neglect' and disengagement, despite the range of interventions being exhausted. The Education Neglect Pathway enables a collaborative discussion between education and care colleagues, which can lead to the child being picked up by social care.

