

MCC ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION POLICY

Appendix 3

Criteria of Reasonable Cause for Concern in relation to children who are home educated

Manchester has a multi-agency approach to working with families if there are any concerns about the wellbeing of a child, with agreed levels for Early Help and for a referral to Advice & Guidance Service (IAG), Social Care. This is detailed in the 'Multi-agency Levels of Need and Response Framework' developed by the Manchester Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB), now the Manchester Safeguarding Partnership (MSP).

The framework reflects that Universal support is available to all children whatever level of need they may have and that they may move between levels at times in a non-structured way.

The Guiding Principles of the Response Framework recognise that in most cases, parents and carers are best placed to meet the needs of children with the support of universal services and extended family but good parenting is challenging and additional support – in some cases statutory – may be required.

The point is also made that the voice of the child is vital and must be sought when considering their needs.

The majority of home educating families are covered within Level 1 - 'Children, Young Person or families whose needs are being met, or whose needs can be met by universal services'. However the agreed levels are designed so that additional needs can be addressed eg if the family's circumstances change and parents start to find it difficult to cope.

In each level, there are 5 areas that are considered - home life, work life, school/college life, social/community life and health & emotional wellbeing and there is list of triggers against each area that could cause concern. The range of issues includes financial struggles, substance mis-use, parents unable to meet child's basic needs, worklessness, inappropriate risk-taking behaviour, unmet health needs, frequent accidental injuries, young carers with inappropriate caring responsibilities and many more.

Levels 4 and 5 include children where previous interventions have failed to improve outcomes, children who are at serious risk of harm or children who are in immediate danger.

The triggers described that are specifically about education include:-

Level 2	'inappropriate home education'
Level 3	'Child or young person underachieving significantly compared to age-related expectations without an underlying special educational need' 'Parents not responding to support provided to help them engage in child's learning'
Level 4	'Parent/Carer has received support but is still struggling to support the child in

terms of attendance/behaviour/progress and emotional wellbeing'

'Young people refusing to access appropriate education, training or employment post-16 years and has limited or no qualifications'

Level 5 'Parents are inappropriately or intermittently engaged with their child's education and lack awareness of their responsibilities'

If a concern arises, a decision will be made by the relevant agencies about the next steps, taking into account previous engagement with the family and whether the child has been seen over the past year. Next steps could include contacting the parents to discuss the concern, signposting to support, if appropriate, and/or arranging a home visit (either single agency or joint).

If parents do not engage over a period of time and there are serious concerns, a referral to the IAG may be made.

Examples of concerns which have been raised in Manchester about home educated children include:-

- the Anti Social Behaviour Team concerned about children who been involved in vandalism and harassment
- a Health professional concerned about the emotional needs of a child and a parent who appeared to be over-controlling during a visit to a GP
- an Early Help Practitioner concerned about a parent whose circumstances had changed and who had reported that they found it difficult to continue with home education
- a Housing Provider concerned about the home environment
- Police and Social Care concerned about a child reported missing from home