

The multi-agency response to vulnerable children with significantly reduced educational engagement.

Summary of key learning for effective practice

IF YOU DO ONE THING Ask yourself at every stage,

“Would this be good enough for my child?”

If not, what needs to change?

Quality of assessment and understanding of the child’s lived experience

- Ensure that reduced educational engagement is explicitly analysed within the context of the child’s lived experience, parenting capacity and wider risks, with clear consideration of thresholds for [educational neglect](#).
- Strengthen holistic assessment practice by adopting a whole-child and whole-family approach, ensuring presenting issues (including educational engagement) are understood in the context of trauma, attachment, development and cumulative harm over time.
- Embed the use of existing multi-agency tools (e.g. Neglect Toolkit, single and multi-agency chronologies, “Day in my Life tool”) to support identification of cumulative harm, track patterns over time and ensure timely escalation of concerns.
- Use chronologies of significant events effectively (single and multi-agency) to build a coherent understanding of the child’s lived experience, identify patterns, and inform decision-making and long-term planning. For further information see [Practice Principles for Chronologies of Significant Events](#)
- Prioritise direct engagement with children, ensuring they are seen alone where appropriate, and use creative approaches to capture and understand their lived experience.
- Ensure the child’s identity, sense of belonging and visibility are actively considered, particularly where children are not in school or have significant absence, recognising increased vulnerability and reduced professional oversight.

Effective multi-agency practice, planning and decision-making

- Promote a culture of professional curiosity, challenge and triangulation, ensuring practitioners test parental narratives against wider evidence, particularly where absence, non-engagement or “Was Not Brought” patterns persist.
- Ensure multi-agency plans are outcome-focused and impactful, with clear, measurable actions, defined timescales, oversight of reduced timetables, and contingency planning where progress is not achieved.
- Strengthen reflective discussion and challenge within multi-agency forums to support robust shared decision-making and effective long-term planning.
- Ensure fathers and wider family networks are routinely identified, engaged and meaningfully involved in assessments, planning and decision-making, with clear analysis of their role, strengths, risks and protective capacity.
- Schools have a legal obligation to inform the Local Authority of any student removed from roll within 5 days. If a child has become Electively Home Educated, the school Designated Safeguarding Lead should be complete the Elective Home Education (EHE) Exit from School Roll Form within 10 days from the date parents confirm their intention to home educate. This must include:
 - Any safeguarding information regarding the family, including any recent referrals to Children’s Social Care / the Multi Agency safeguarding Hub (MASH)
 - Any agencies the child has been referred to or is currently involved with, giving key worker (if known)
 - Professional judgement on whether there is anything which might impact on the parent/carer’s ability to provide a suitable education

If the pupil is removed from the roll to be electively home educated, the school should also transfer the child protection/safeguarding file to the local authority’s Elective Home Education (EHE) team. Please see [Guidance on the Retention and Transfer of Child Protection \(CP\) Records](#)

Oversight and transitions

- Ensure reduced hours provision is used appropriately, as a planned and time-limited intervention with clear rationale, risk assessment, reintegration planning and regular review.

- Strengthen the role of schools in safeguarding at transition points, ensuring information is coordinated, analysed and shared effectively, particularly when children leave school roll. For further information see [Retention and Transfer of Child Protection Files guidance \[For schools\]](#)
- Schools must be aware of and fulfil their duties in relation to Elective Home Education, as set out in the [Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026](#). They should apply professional curiosity and appropriate challenge, consider wider safeguarding risks when parents/carers are considering home education, and hold timely, well-informed conversations to support decision-making. Schools should also retain a child's school place for a period of two weeks following notification of elective home education, enabling parental reflection and the opportunity to reconsider.

Use of reduced hours provision and supporting re-engagement

- Use reduced hours provision as a supportive, carefully planned intervention that maintains a strong focus on keeping children connected to education, relationships and a sense of belonging.
- Ensure the impact of time out of education is clearly considered, including potential risks to safety, wellbeing and reduced protective oversight (e.g. exploitation or harm), with these reflected in assessment and multi-agency planning.
- All reduced timetables should be time-limited, regularly reviewed, and underpinned by clear, outcome-focused plans that prioritise increasing attendance and achieving a timely return to full-time education.
- Work collaboratively across agencies to support reintegration, ensuring plans are coordinated, responsive to need, and consistently focused on improving long-term outcomes for the child.

Learning and Development

- The IOWSCP provides via its website an extensive, free, multi-agency [Learning Programme](#) for professionals who work with children and families on the Isle of Wight.

Supporting Resources

Local Guidance and Resources

- ➔ [Inter-Agency Referral Form \(IARF\)](#)
- ➔ [IOW Threshold Chart](#) for assessing level of risk/concern.
- ➔ [IOW Threshold Pathway Guidance](#)
- ➔ [Educational Neglect Advice](#)
- ➔ [Practice Principles for the completion of chronologies](#)
- ➔ [Day in my life tools](#): Unborn baby, baby, preschool child, child, child with disabilities, adolescents
- ➔ [Signs and indicators of Child Sexual Abuse template](#)
- ➔ [Child Sexual Abuse Response Pathway](#)
- ➔ [Elective Home Education multi agency roles and responsibilities](#)
- ➔ [Engaging Parents who are Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse in Child Protection Processes](#)
- ➔ [Multi Agency Standards for Child Protection](#)
- ➔ [Understanding the links between trauma and neurodiversity](#)
- ➔ [Recognising and responding to the impact of cumulative harm](#)
- ➔ Resources to support [working with children with additional needs \(including complex needs and disabilities\)](#)
- ➔ [Professionals meeting guidance](#)
- ➔ [Working Together to Resolve Professional Differences](#)
- ➔ Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton [\(HIPS\) Procedures](#)

National guidance and Resources

- ➔ [Toolkit for schools: communicating with families to support attendance](#)
- ➔ National Panel Toolkit [Safeguarding children not in school](#)

Hampshire and IOW Safeguarding Children Partnership Toolkits

Wide range of [IOWSCP toolkits](#) developed to aid professionals to better understand and respond to safeguarding concerns, including:

- ➔ [Adopting a family approach toolkit](#)
- ➔ [Child Sexual Abuse toolkit](#)
- ➔ [Child Exploitation toolkit](#)
- ➔ [Neglect toolkit](#)
- ➔ [Safeguarding Adolescents toolkit](#)