

## **Guidance on education for children who are unable to attend school due to ill health**

### *Who is this guidance for ?*

This guidance applies to those children and young people where their learning and attendance at nursery or school is interrupted due to prolonged ill health for a range of reasons such as accidents or trauma, chronic, long term, life limiting or terminal conditions, mental health issues, and conditions which require repeated medical intervention, such as dialysis. This does not extend to those young people who have left school and as such are no longer the responsibility of the education authority.

### *When should education be provided ?*

The aim for any child or young person is to continue their education wherever possible, but recognising the practical limitations of provision of education within a hospital setting. Most provision is likely to be made within a child's own local authority. Where a child or young person's illness is known, or reasonably thought, to be likely to extend to or beyond 5 days, then education should proceed immediately, if medical assessment permits. This usually takes the form of work being shared between home and school. Where there is less certainty over the possible length of any absence, education outwith school should start at the earliest opportunity and no more than 15 working days of continuous or 20 working days of intermittent absence.

### *Responsibilities*

Parents have a responsibility to inform their child's school or nursery of their absence from school, the reasons and likely timescale.

In most cases, children and young people return to school or nursery after a period of absence due to ill health and continue with their education.

In practice, it is likely that responsibility for referral for, and management of, arrangements for education outwith school will lie with the child or young person's own school. Staff within the child's or young person's own school will best understand a child's educational and support requirements. In most instances the school retains the lead role and where appropriate, works with the education provider in a hospital or outreach service to ensure education provision is appropriate and supports and maintains the child or young person's prior learning.

Classroom or subject teachers should record missed work to help ensure effective education outwith school, maintain the learner's links with their school and to help reintegration on return as part of broader transition planning. Good practice would include the school routinely providing information for parents about the statutory duties relating to and arrangements for the provision of education of children and young people who are too ill to attend school within their school handbook.

In some cases, where there is a prolonged period of absence, alternative arrangements may need to be made so that education can be continued without unnecessary interruption for the child or young person.

The Named Person has a key role for maintaining communication with parents and carers and the child or young person, though it may be that in practice, in more complex or longer term cases, a lead professional is designated as the main point of contact. For children attending ELCC, the Named person will normally be a health visitor, whilst for school aged children or young people the Named Person will normally be the head teacher.

### Process

Whatever the circumstances, it is important that the child's educational entitlement and wellbeing are met. The process followed in each case is likely to differ depending on individual circumstances, but across all stages is the need for clear lines of communication between staff in education and health boards and the child/young person and their parent or carer.

### **Awareness**

As part of a school's attendance and absence policy, parents are expected to inform schools whenever their child is ill, even if it is just for one day. As soon as it is clear that the period of absence is going to exceed the timescales indicated, arrangements should be made for the provision of education outwith school. In the case of intermittent or longer term absences, which cause a barrier to learning, the school should identify, assess and make provision for additional support within school to ensure that any resulting gaps in learning are covered. The health services should make contact with the child or young person's home local authority and/or school and named person if contact has not already been established, particularly where the child has travelled from another part of the country or from an independent school. Parents should be involved or made aware of these discussions and agreements.

### **Assessment**

Any medical assessment made by the health service will influence the scale and scope of educational provision that may be planned and provided. Once it is considered that educational provision is appropriate, the home authority is responsible for ensuring that an education plan is discussed and agreed between the child or young person, the parent, the school, the host authority and hospital staff. Any plan should take into account the views and expectations of the child or young person and the parents/carers. The child's or young person's health and medical needs and appropriate educational provision should be subject to regular review by all parties. The plan should also take account of identification and planning of additional support for learning already in place.

Where an assessment of wellbeing indicates that a targeted intervention is required to promote, support or safeguard the child's wellbeing, consideration should be given to drawing up a Child's Plan (which will include education outcomes), in line with national guidance. It would be for the named person, or the lead professional, to coordinate the assessment and planning process within the GIRFEC framework. Where the child or young person is already receiving support coordinated through a Child's Plan, the absence due to illness is likely to be a trigger to review that plan.

### **Education Provision**

The nature of the education provision will vary depending on the setting (for example at home or in hospital), the type and severity of illness etc, but should, as far as is practicable, support and maintain the child or young person's learning. The use of Information and Communications Technology may complement the quality of education and help the child or young person stay

connected with their school. However, technology should be used to enhance rather than replace face to face provision in circumstances where relationships will be important in promoting wellbeing.

Where a child or young person has a stay in hospital as a result of their ill health, the Named Person should be made aware of this, usually from the parent/carer. Depending on the length of stay and severity of illness, a plan should be made between school staff and parent/carer to ensure continuity of the child or young person's education. Where it is likely that the stay in hospital or at home is beyond 15 working days, the Named Person should make arrangements with their local authority about education provision, such as outreach teaching to the home or hospital.

The Outreach teacher will have weekly hospital contact to discuss admissions. When it is clear a young person's stay in hospital will exceed 15 days, the teacher will contact the home authority's named person to agree an appropriate education plan.

### ***Resolving concerns***

Where there are concerns regarding the educational provision made for children and young people who are receiving support for their education due to ill health, there are a number of ways in which those concerns can be resolved. Concerns should be raised in the first instance with the school or establishment which is making provision for the pupil. If concerns remain there are a range of mechanisms available through which concerns about support can be resolved. These include mediation, independent adjudication and further formal routes. Further information is available from <http://enquire.org.uk/20100622/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/resolvingdisagreements.pdf>.

### **Reference:**

*Guidance on the education of children unable to attend school due to ill health* (Scottish Government, 2015) <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2015/06/6846>

### **Who to contact for further information**

If you require further information or have any queries about education for children and young people unable to attend school due to ill health, you can contact your local authority representative below.

#### Dundee City Council:

**Education Support Officer (ASN)** Dundee House, 50 North Lindsay Street , Dundee, DD1 1NL  
Tel: 01382 433984 [janette.kerr@dundeecity.gov.uk](mailto:janette.kerr@dundeecity.gov.uk)

**The Outreach Team (0-18)**, St Ninian's Primary School, Dochart Terrace, DD2 4HB Tel: 01382 432980 [outreach@dundeecity.gcsx.gov.uk](mailto:outreach@dundeecity.gcsx.gov.uk)