

# **Report of the Strategic Director to the meeting of Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on 14 March 2017**

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**AM****Subject:****HMRC CME Data Sharing Pilot****Summary statement:**

We entered into a pilot with HMRC in January 2017 which involves us sharing details of those children who are missing from education (CME) after we have exhausted our enquiries when trying to find them. HMRC will then check if the family are in receipt of benefits, and if the address they hold is different from the one that we hold, they will share this information with us, to aid in our efforts of locating the children.

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**Portfolio:****Education, Employment and Skills**

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**Overview & Scrutiny Area:****Children's Services**

## **1. SUMMARY**

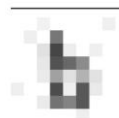
As part of the LA's statutory responsibilities around locating Children who are Missing in Education (CME), the Education Safeguarding Team have entered onto a data sharing pilot with HMRC, in order to reduce the number of CME cases we hold. This is the second phase of this pilot; the first took place with Sheffield LA, whereby they located over 40% of their CME using the data sharing agreement.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The statutory responsibility for children missing education is issued under Section 436A of the Education and Inspections Act 1996 and requires all local authorities to make arrangements to enable them to establish (so far as it is possible to do so) the identities of children residing in their area who are not receiving a suitable education. In relation to children, by 'suitable education' we mean efficient full-time education suitable to her/his age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs the child may have."
- 2.2 This is the first time that data has been shared with this organisation, and until now we have not been able to obtain address details of families who are in receipt of Child Benefit. The pilot will run from January to June 2017.
- 2.3 We will share details with HMRC of those children who are missing from education (CME) after we have exhausted our enquiries when trying to find them. HMRC will then check if the family are in receipt of benefits, and if the address they hold is different from the one that we hold, they will share these details with us in view of trying to locate the children. They will then write to the family advising they have reason to believe they are no longer living at the address they hold, asking them to get in touch as well as being at risk of losing their benefit payments.
- 2.4 The pilot commenced on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2017. We have so far sent in two data returns consisting of 15 cases. We have had one return with a possible address in Wolverhampton and one that we were closing as enquires exhausted, as HMRC have identified them as left the country. Data returns are submitted on a weekly basis.

## **3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

- 3.1 HMRC will only share details of those we have identified as CME. If HMRC are aware that more children are in a particular family or household due to them being in receipt of child benefit, then HMRC will not advise us that there are more children in that family. We are still in negotiation with HMRC about them sharing this additional information with us, in order for us to establish any potential 'unknown' children in the district.



#### **4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL**

- 4.1 There is more information we could share with HMRC in view of supporting them in clamping down on benefit fraud and ultimately saving money. Such as, when families advise schools that they wish to take their children off the school roll due to moving abroad or relocating to other parts of the UK. This happens quite frequently within our South-East Asian communities as well as our Central and Eastern European families. If HMRC had access to this data in real-time, then they could ensure that families weren't claiming various benefits for children or other family members when they are no longer entitled to do so. Therefore reaching a much bigger savings outcome.

#### **5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES**

- 5.1 A Memorandum of Understanding between HMRC Benefits and Credits and the Local Authority was agreed and signed before the pilot commenced.

#### **6. LEGAL APPRAISAL**

No issues at this time.

#### **7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

##### **7.1 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY**

No issues at this time

##### **7.2 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

No issues at this time

##### **7.3 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS**

No issues at this time

##### **7.4 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

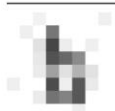
No issues at this time

##### **7.5 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT**

No issues at this time

##### **7.6 TRADE UNION**

No issues at this time



**8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS**

None

**9. OPTIONS**

N/A

**10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the Committee notes the report as an update to the HMRC pilot on matters relating to Children Missing Education.

**11. APPENDICES**

None

**12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

[Memorandum of Understanding](#)

