

## **UKAPA Inaugural Conference**

**Birmingham University**

**12<sup>th</sup>– 13<sup>th</sup> September 2024**

**Title:** Children Missing from Education in Nottingham

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### **Abstract**

The national scarcity of reliable and comprehensive data regarding the numbers of children missing from formal full-time education was highlighted in a report from the Local Government Association (LGA/Osos, 2020). Following the LGAs' report, and in order to understand the CME situation in depth within a local context, NBS investigated the experience of the CME Team in Nottingham City Council using the databases available for the period 2016-2021. The study looked at the geographic and demographic patterns of CME cases in Nottingham and analysed the characteristics of CME cases, identified the main circumstances and the 'triggers' that have resulted in referrals of CMEs, and the resolution of cases (Liu-Smith *et al.*, 2023).

Without a clear sense of the numbers in England, it is very difficult to be precise about the scale or nature of intervention that might be needed either locally or nationally to address the issue. In Feb. 2024, the government released 'estimated' figures as "official statistics in development" for Children missing education (CME). The media and public response to this release was both surprise and alarm with CME estimated at 33,000 in 2023 compared to 24,700 in 2022. This paper will analyse additional data from Nottingham covering the last two full years of data to assess how the pattern of CME has changed and whether the latest national figures are reflected locally.

### **Preamble to the CME presentation and information for delegates**

Although the subject of Children Missing Education has recently elicited national publicity the presentation to UKAPA 2024 will be based upon data collected by Nottingham City Council from 2016 to the end of 2023. Previous (pre-Covid) studies (May-Chahal & Broadhurst 2006, Botham 2011, LGA/Isos 2020) have shown that children missing education are difficult to identify; are not from homogenous backgrounds and are often vulnerable with complex social, behavioural, educational, medical, or mental health needs. Ofsted (2013) had previously reported that many local authorities had little understanding of how much education vulnerable children with complex needs actually received, and many failed to arrange suitable

education, monitor the effectiveness of their education, collect relevant information and analyse this to gain knowledge and understanding of this group of children in pursuance of the direct, institutional and statutory duty of care.

The first outputs from our research were reported to the council and we published a working paper on the NTU website "*Meeting New Challenges in Education*" (Liu-Smith *et al*, 2023), which covered data from 2016-2021, and included the period of the pandemic. At that stage neither the council team nor the research team could know how much of the insights emerging were long term or how much they resulted from disruptions due to the pandemic. Having made our initial findings to the Council in 2022 and published the working paper online in 2023 we decided to collect and analyse a further two years of data. It is the findings from the extended database that will be presented.

We are currently intending to produce a development paper from this database and our findings to-date. The reason for producing a development paper rather than a full case study is due to the unusual boundary for the administrative area of the city council. Nottingham City is an 'under bounded' city where the administrative boundary of the of the city council is far from co-terminus with the boundary of the built-up area and many of Nottingham's' suburbs are outside the city administratively and are in the county. This means that many school age children domiciled in the city go to schools that our within the administrative area of Nottinghamshire County Council and vice versa (the same is true for many other public services such as NHS GP registrations).

In the latest figures there has been a sharp increase in referrals from other Local Authorities in 2022 and 2023 with approximately 20% of CMEs referred from 'other LAs'. We anticipate some of these children will be from Nottinghamshire and others be from further away. In order to get a more accurate picture of what is happening in the city we need to look at what is happening in the adjoining areas of Nottinghamshire County Council, which is the Education Authority for the rest of the built-up area. We are currently seeking the cooperation of Nottinghamshire County Council CME team as this would require the research team to have access to the equivalent database to that of the city.

We have published the working paper and hope to publish a development paper to place the information to-date in the public domain but also because we would like to attract and undertake some comparative research on what is happening to CME in other cities and in the regional context of the East Midlands.

## References

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