

Continuity of education provision for children and young people with additional health needs

2026

1. Context and Purpose

Wiltshire Council is committed to ensuring that all children and young people of compulsory school age receive a suitable education, even where barriers arise due to physical or mental health needs. Children and young people with additional health needs may experience short-term, recurrent, or long-term absences from school. Without timely, coordinated support, this may place them at greater risk of underachievement, social isolation, and disruption to wellbeing and future outcomes. Wiltshire Council therefore seeks to ensure children and young people receive the encouragement and support they need to feel secure and confident, to enjoy their education, to make a positive contribution and to achieve their full potential.

This policy sets out:

- How Wiltshire Council and schools work together to support continuity of education where attendance is affected by *health needs*
- The circumstances in which Section 19 of the Education Act 1996 applies (illness category)
- The roles and responsibilities of the Local Authority, schools, parents/carers, and partners
- How decisions are made, reviewed, and communicated
- Links to relevant Wiltshire services, including the Medical Needs Education and Reintegration Service (MNERS)

This document should be read alongside:

- Wiltshire Council Section 19 (S19) Policy (2026)
- DfE statutory guidance:
[Arranging education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs](#) (2023)
[Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions](#) (2015 – under consultation)
[Working together to improve school attendance: July 2026](#)

2. Legislation:

2.1 Section 19 of the Education Act 1996

Under Section 19, Local Authorities must make arrangements for the provision of suitable education at school or otherwise than at school for children of compulsory school age who, by reason of illness, exclusion, or otherwise, would not receive suitable education unless such arrangements are made for them.

‘Suitable education’ means efficient education that is appropriate to the child’s age, ability and aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. The duty applies whether or not a child is on a school roll.

In essence, where it is not reasonable possible or practical for a child to attend school/access suitable education, there will be circumstances where the Local Authority is responsible for making suitable education arrangements.

In determining whether a duty under the illness category applies, the Local Authority will review available medical and other information. Medical evidence should be:

- Used to better understand the needs of the child
- Proportionate to the circumstances
- Reviewed alongside other relevant information

The Local Authority will consider all evidence provided but is not required to defer to medical opinion where there are rational grounds not to do so.

The Local Authority's section 19 duty only relates to children for whom the Local Authority is responsible.

2.2 Statutory and other guidance documents informing this policy

Further to section 1 above, the following documents are of relevance to this policy:

- [SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years - GOV.UK](#)
- [Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK](#)
- [Working together to safeguard children 2026](#)
- [Equality Act 2010: advice for schools - GOV.UK](#)
- [Alternative provision - GOV.UK](#)
- [Section 100 Children and Families Act 2014](#)
- Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO): *Out of school, out of sight?* (2022) and *Supporting Children out of School* (2025)

2.3 Principles underpinning medical tuition provision

In Wiltshire, the Medical Needs Education and Reintegration Service (MNERS) is part of the Local Authority's 'Section 19' support arrangements for children and young people who fall under the illness category of this legislation. MNERS also delivers Hospital School support for in-patients of compulsory school age at Salisbury District Hospital and undertakes some education oversight functions for children and young people who are in-patients at Tier 4 mental health units/hospitals.

Wiltshire Council and partners will ensure that:

- Children are not left without suitable education, particularly once it becomes clear that absence due to illness/health condition will reach or exceed 15 school days (consecutive or cumulative)
- Education is of good quality, equivalent to mainstream provision¹ as far as health needs allows. Part-time education may be arranged if the local authority considers this to be in the child's best interests e.g. for reasons relating to their health. Full and part-time education should aim to achieve good academic attainment particularly in English, Maths and Science
- Decisions are individualised, evidence-informed, and proportionate

¹ DfE 2023 *Arranging education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs*

- All education support arrangements are regularly reviewed, with a clear reintegration focus
- Children and young people's voices, and the views of parents/carers, are considered
- Equality, SEND, and safeguarding duties are integral to all decision-making.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 Local Authority Responsibilities

Further to the above, Wiltshire Council will:

- Maintain a published Section 19 policy and associated procedures
- Have a named Officer for Children with Health Needs:
Manager, Medical Needs Education and Reintegration Service (MNERS)
Enquiries: EnquiriesMNERS@wiltshire.gov.uk
- Identify, assess, and decide whether Section 19 duty (including by reason of illness) applies in individual cases
- Arrange suitable alternative education where required – including medical tuition through MNERS
- Ensure provision is reviewed regularly and supports reintegration
- Ensure compliance with Equality Act 2010 and SEND duties

3.1.a. Education of non-compulsory school age pupils (early years and post-16)

The Local Authority section 19 duty relates to children of compulsory school age i.e. a child aged 5-16. For children and young people who are above compulsory school age and admitted as in-patients to a hospital, or Child & Adolescent in-patient Mental Health Unit, then the Local Authority may consider requests for continuing educational support from registered Hospital School services. See [Participation of young people: education, employment and training - GOV.UK](#)

For children and young people who are above compulsory school age and have and a statutory Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP), arrangements for post-16 education and/or training will be coordinated by the SEND Service.

3.1.b. Education of pupils without a school roll:

Wiltshire Council has responsibility for children and young people who are not on a school roll and/or are identified as Children Missing Education (CME). Review of CME cases is undertaken by the Education Welfare Service under the LAs Children Absent from Education (CAFE) monitoring arrangements.

The children of parents/carers who have registered them as being electively home educated (EHE) are not regarded as CME, as their parents/carers have elected to accept responsibility for their education.

MNERS support is not ordinarily available for pupils who are EHE. In exceptional circumstances, the Education Welfare Service may refer to MNERS for children and young

people without a school roll e.g. a pupil has moved into Wiltshire from another area or School Attendance Order is in place.

3.1.c. Supporting pregnant pupils and young parents:

Pregnancy is not an illness and therefore schools should make any appropriate and reasonably practicable adjustments needed to assist pregnant pupils to continue to attend school. Should the pregnant pupil have additional health needs (which may be pregnancy related) that prevents them from attending school, then referral to MNERS may be made. Referral to the [Family Nurse Partnership \(FNP\)](#) scheme and grant for childcare costs, where applicable, ([Care to Learn GOV.UK](#)) may also be made.

Following the birth, if the pupil remains of compulsory school age, then it is expected that the pupil will reintegrate back into their registered school, with appropriate support arrangements (e.g. to accommodate breastfeeding, for example). The Education Welfare Service can provide information and advice to schools, in these circumstances.

3.1.d. Pupils with SEND and Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs)

See sections 4.1 and 4.2 below.

3.1.e. Children who are Looked After

The Local Authority's section 19 duty in relation to children looked after (CLA) is managed outside of the section 19 panel process as part of business as usual by the Virtual School Team [The Virtual School | Right Choice](#). Virtual School Officers may refer to MNERS should this applicable where a medical need is identified.

The Local Authority is only responsible for the section 19 duty of children looked after by the Local Authority (Wiltshire). Where children are looked after by another local authority as corporate parent, but they reside or receive their education in Wiltshire, the section 19 duty (including illness category) is the responsibility of their corporate parent local authority.

3.2 School Responsibilities

Schools retain responsibility for pupils on their roll at all times, including where alternative education, such as through MNERS is in place. Where possible, schools should continue to provide education to children with health needs who can attend school, with appropriate support. The Local Authority does not need to become involved in such arrangements unless there is reason to believe the education provided is unsuitable, or the school can no longer reasonably meet the child's needs. Schools should:

- Take a 'support-first' approach, addressing in-school barriers to attendance: [Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school - GOV.UK](#) and [Working together to improve school attendance: July 2026](#)
- Maintain safeguarding oversight for all pupils on roll
- Maintain regular contact with pupils who are absent due to illness
- Provide education and materials during short-term illness

- Be aware of their responsibilities when mental health issues are impacting on a child's attendance [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools - GOV.UK](#)
- Implement and review:
 - > Individual Healthcare Plans (IHPs)
 - > Personal / Medical Education Plans (MEPs)
 - > Reduced Educational Provision (REP) Plans where appropriate
- Notify the Local Authority where concerns arise about sustained absence
- Engage fully with Section 19 enquiries and review processes (including MNERS referral and review processes)
- Support reintegration planning and ongoing monitoring.

3.3 Parents, Carers and Young People

Parents/carers:

- Hold a legal responsibility under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 to ensure their child receives a suitable education
- Are expected to work in partnership with schools and the Local Authority
- Should provide medical evidence where available, and provide updated advice and evidence where reasonably possible

Children and young people should:

- Be involved in decision-making in ways appropriate to their age and understanding
- Be supported to remain connected to education and peers wherever possible

4. Local Authority Services in Wiltshire

4.1 Medical Needs Education and Reintegration Service (MNERS)

MNERS provides specialist education and reintegration support for pupils of compulsory school age whose health needs prevent school attendance. Referrals are made by schools with consent of parents/carers, and provision is personalised and informed by advice from treating medical professional/s. Reintegration planning is integral to all MNERS placements and all pupils open to MNERS will be regularly reviewed.

MNERS does not accept referrals for children and young people who are EHE or attending school on a part-time basis timetable. For children and young people with an EHCP, the SEND Team will manage any bespoke education provision needs.

Further information about MNERS is available on the Right Choice website: [Medical Needs Education and Reintegration Service | Right Choice](#)

How to refer and supporting medical information:

A MNERS referral form is available for use by schools on the Right Choice website. Up to date written medical evidence (usually from a specialist/consultant level clinician) is required for all referrals and should be provided by the school. Medical evidence will continually be reviewed with the expectation that medical advice is updated every 6-months. This assists the service to make ongoing decisions about education provision and/or reintegration planning. Should medical evidence no longer be available, or recommends a return to school, then MNERS input will cease.

Where a referral is declined or is considered unsuitable, advice and information will be provided to the referrer. The MNERS Manager may also forward such referrals for further consideration by the LA's section 19 panel.

Where a pupil has a life limiting or terminal illness, Wiltshire Council will work supportively with parents/carers and medical staff to provide education where it is deemed appropriate to do so. If the pupil and parents/carers wish to withdraw from education, and this is supported by medical advice, such wishes will be respected.

Costs of MNERS provision:

At the time of writing, MNERS is not currently a traded service within Wiltshire Council. This position remains under review².

4.2 SEND and Inclusion teams

Specialist Advisory Teachers can provide information, guidance and advice to Wiltshire schools for children and young people with complex medical needs and/or physical, visual and hearing impairments and SEN. This can assist schools to adapt their practices and/or make reasonable adjustments to accommodate individual medical needs in school. Information on Inclusion Support and other LA Services in Wiltshire is available on Right Choice and the Wiltshire Council Local Offer websites: [Services | Right Choice \(wiltshire.gov.uk\)](#) and [SEND Local Offer - Wiltshire Council](#)

For some pupils with significant medical conditions and needs, their progress may not reflect that of their peer group and a formal request to the LA for statutory assessment of education, health and care needs (EHCNA) may be considered. Further information is available on the SEND Local Offer website pages.

4.3 Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service

The Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service (EMTAS) can provide expert advice and support to schools and other professionals where there may be specific cultural issues in relation to illness or medical needs.

² DfE 2023 *Arranging education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs*

4.4 Education Welfare Service

Education Welfare Officers (EWOs) can offer guidance and support to school staff on the procedures and requirements for continuity of education for pupils with medical needs.

EWOs will conduct routine inspections of registers in schools and will identify pupils who may have recurrent patterns of absence due to illness and who may require additional support. EWOs may also advise schools to consider other support such as Early Help Support Assessment (ESA).

5. Health Services

Health professionals can play a key role in providing advice and support to parents/carers and education professionals where there is medical absence from school. Such advice may include predicted length of absence from an educational setting, appropriateness of educational provision and specialist information relating to the management of specific conditions.

For children and young people with chronic or recurrent conditions that may be managed within school, specialist nurses and school nurses can assist schools with Individual Healthcare Plans (IHPs), which could include information on the general management of the condition and the administration of medication. Templates and guidance for schools on completing IHPs is available at: [Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school - GOV.UK](#)

School nursing service: [5-19 Years \(School Aged Health Service\)](#)

6. Parents, Carers and Young People

Wiltshire LA will, as far as is reasonably practicable and following the advice of the medical practitioner involved, take account of the wishes and views of parents, carers and young people in the planning of educational provision where attendance at the young person's usual place of education is not possible because of medical need. It is however for the LA to decide what constitutes suitable education provision arrangements.

In cases where it is necessary to implement an IHP or MEP, there is a section included which considers the views of the young person and their parent/carer. Parents/carers and young people will be encouraged to be actively involved in support plans, including at review with the MNERS team.

7. Hospital in-patients

Children and young people who are in-patients on Sarum Ward at Salisbury District Hospital (Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust) may receive bedside education support provision on site, provided by MNERS.

Children and young people of compulsory school age who are being treated in hospitals outside of Wiltshire LA may receive education from on-site Hospital Schools or Ward

Teaching Units. On occasions, the NHS may place children and young people in privately funded hospitals, for example for the treatment of some mental health conditions. These pupils remain the responsibility of Wiltshire Council, who will ensure continuity of education for children admitted to hospital, whether locally or out of area, in line with statutory guidance.

For such pupils with an EHCP, the SEND Service will coordinate oversight of any education arrangements. For pupils without an EHCP, the MNERS Team will monitor in-patient pupils' education provision progress, attendance and discharge/transition arrangements. (See also section 3.1 regarding pupils in hospitals who are above compulsory school age).

8. Review, Reintegration and Outcomes

All pupils referred to MNERS will be regularly reviewed to ensure that their provision remains suitable and proportionate. MEP and reintegration plans will, in conjunction with the child/young person's school:

- Be tailored to the individual pupil
- Include both academic and social and emotional wellbeing considerations
- Aim to increase attendance as health allows.

9. Complaints

Any concerns about a MNERS referral should be raised in the first instance, where applicable, with the referring school (the pupil's on-roll school), and/or the MNERS Manager.

Further information on Wiltshire Council's complaints procedure is available at: [Complaints and putting things right - Wiltshire Council](#)

10. Additional information:

Information for referring schools:

- [5-19 Years \(School Aged Health Service\)](#)
- [Allergy safety in schools - GOV.UK](#)
- [Care to Learn: Overview - GOV.UK](#)
- [Children and Young People Emotional Wellbeing Service](#)
- [Education Welfare Service Information | Right Choice](#) and Section 19 policy: [Education Welfare Service resource page | Right Choice](#)
- [Emotional Barriers to School Attendance \(EBSA\) | Right Choice](#)
- [Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service Information | Right Choice](#)
- [Equality Act 2010: advice for schools - GOV.UK](#)
- [Family Nurse Partnership \(FNP\)](#)
- [Medical Needs Education and Reintegration Service | Right Choice](#)
- [SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years](#)
- [SEND Local Offer - Wiltshire Council](#)
- [Sensory Impairment, Physical and Medical Service Information | Right Choice](#)
- [Special Educational Needs and Disability 0-25 Service \(SEND Service\) | Right Choice](#)
- [Specialist SEN Service \(SSENS\) Information | Right Choice](#)
- [Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school - GOV.UK](#) (under consultation/review)
- [The Virtual School | Right Choice](#)
- [Working together to improve school attendance](#)
- [Young Work Wiltshire - Work Wiltshire](#)
- Medical Needs Toolkit (under review)

The following MNERS guidance documents and templates for schools can be found on the **Resources for Schools pages** (log-in required) at: [Medical Needs Education and Reintegration Service | Right Choice](#)

- MNERS Referral form
- MNERS Referral Pathway for schools
- Medical Education Plan (MEP) meeting template for schools
- MNERS Service Information document for referring schools.

Officer: MNERS Manager (LT)

Date: August 2026

Review: This policy will be reviewed in line with legislative changes and Wiltshire Council's Section 19 Policy.