1. **PURPOSE OF REPORT:**

   The purpose of this report is to seek Committee approval to implement the revised Children Missing from Education Policy in Aberdeen City schools.

2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

   It is recommended that Committee approve the refreshed Children Missing from Education Policy contained at Appendix A and that this be implemented immediately.

3. **BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES**

   3.1 **The Current Policy**
   
   The current policy on how to safeguard children missing from education was written in 2009. There have been a number of changes in legislation and guidance since that time and schools face new challenges not comprehensively covered in the 2009 Policy. These changes have led to a review of the current policy to ensure that it fully supports our safeguarding arrangements.

   3.2 **Children Missing from Education – A Definition**
   
   Children ‘missing from education’ are children and young people of compulsory school age who are not on a school roll and are not being educated otherwise (at home, privately or in an alternative provision). This includes those who have not taken up or returned to places allocated to them. They have usually not attended school for a period of time with no reasonable explanation for their absence.
Children and young people may disappear from the view of schools and education authorities for many reasons. Action must be taken at school and education authority level to locate families and to try to re-engage them with services at the earliest opportunity.

Children who are missing from education may be at risk or have wellbeing needs around inclusion and achievement. Consideration also needs to be given to other issues in their lives relating to non-attendance.

### 3.3 The Revised Policy on Children Missing from Education

The revised Policy on Children Missing from Education is based on national guidance and is aligned with other Authority Policies. The Policy provides guidance for colleagues in schools on how to locate and effectively gain assurances about the wellbeing of children and young people who are missing from education. It builds on the established systems already in place and clarifies the roles of responsibilities of education staff and other partners in safeguarding this vulnerable group. Helpful checklists are included to guide practice.

### 4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no financial implications arising from the refresh of the policy. The clarity around roles and remits will improve our efficient use of resource.

### 5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Children have a right to education and local authorities have a duty to provide education for all children in their area. Action must be taken at school and education authority level to locate families and to try to re-engage them with services at the earliest opportunity to ensure that Aberdeen City Council fully complies with the legal duties to education children.

5.2 The Children (Scotland) Act 1995 places a duty on Local Authorities to protect children and young people. The Children Missing from Education Policy outlines effective practice in safeguarding children and young people to ensure that the Council fully complies with legal duties.

### 6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

6.1 Financial

Failing to locate children who are missing from education puts children and young people at risk. This vulnerability increases the financial risks associated with not putting effective support in place at the earliest opportunity. Effective and timely implementation of this Policy significantly reduces this risk and ensures that the risk remains low.
6.2 **Employee**

Not being able to safeguard children and young people can present a risk to the wellbeing of employees. The policy will help reduce the risk as the steps to be taken and responsibilities are clear. This clarifies ensures that the risk remains low.

6.3 **Customer / citizen**

Children and young people who do not enjoy regular school attendance are less likely to have positive longer term outcomes and are more likely to be at risk of harm. The policy mitigates the risks to children and young people as they will be quickly located and guided to re-engage with services. Adhering to the Policy ensures that the risk remains low.

6.4 **Environmental**

Children and young people who are in school are less likely to present an environmental risk. The Policy will ensure that the risk remains low.

6.5 **Technological**

No risks identified

6.6 **Legal and Reputational**

The revised Policy reduces potential legal and reputational risks associated with not taking action within the context of current legislation and best practice guidance. Adhering to this Policy will ensure that legal and reputational risks remain low.

7. **IMPACT SECTION.**

7.1 **Economy**

The Policy will ensure that children and young people are fully accessing education and more likely to contribute to the economy.

7.2 **People**

The Policy will impact positively on all children and young people and ensure that any immediate difficulties do not impact negatively on their long term outcomes. The policy also takes account of families who may leave the United Kingdom due to Brexit. An EHRIA has been completed and the policy will impact positively on both race and disability.
The policy will help colleagues in schools confidently discharge their duties and reduce any anxiety experienced when safeguarding children and young people.

7.3 Place

No impact identified.

7.4 Technology

No impact identified.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

No background papers have been referred to.

9. APPENDICES (if applicable)

Children Missing from Education Policy – Appendix A

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