

Elective Home Education Update

Lead Officer: Phil Curd

Author: Phil Curd

Contact Details: pjcurd@somerset.gov.uk 01823 355165

Cabinet Member: Cllr Faye Purbrick & Cllr Frances Nicholson

Division and Local Member: All

1. Summary

- 1.1. This report details progress made since a report provided to the Committee in May 2018.
- 1.2. On 2 April 2019, the DfE published its updated guidance relating to Elective Home Education (EHE):

[Elective Home Education: Departmental guidance for local authorities. April 2019](#)

This guidance replaces that previously issued in 2007 and updated in 2013.

The guidance itself does not introduce anything 'new' but is intended to help LAs understand their existing duties and powers in relation to children who are being educated at home. This guidance also sets out the obligations of parents who choose to Electively Home educate their child/ children.

Its aim is to enable LAs meet statutory duties to identify children not receiving a suitable education and the actions to be taken. This includes duties under Keeping Children Safe in Education 2018 and Working Together 2018.

2. Issues for consideration / Recommendations

- 2.1. The Committee is asked to consider and comment on, the recommendations of the DfE as set out below:
- 2.2. **Impact on Local Authorities**

To enable the LA to meet its statutory duties in relation to EHE, the DfE recommends each LA should:

- Have a written **policy** defining how it will meet its duties, **co-produced with home educators** and review it regularly
- Provide clarity on what constitutes a **suitable** education
- Set aside resources to implement its policy effectively
- Consider organisational structures to align expertise relating to suitability, attendance and safeguarding
- **Offer advice** (on rights, obligations, good practice and resources) to parents who choose to educate their children at home
- Consider operating a voluntary registration scheme – something the DfE is

currently consulting on: <https://consult.education.gov.uk/school-frameworks/children-not-in-school/>

All LA's are required to develop a **Co-produced Policy**.

Within that policy, clarity will be needed as to what constitutes a **'full-time'** education and how it can be considered as both **'efficient'** and **'suitable'**.

'Full-time', the following factors must be considered:

- There is no legal definition of what constitutes 'full-time' education in school or the home
- Children of compulsory school age would typically receive 4-5 hours of education a day, 190 days a year
- Independent schools are required to operate for at least 18 hours a week
- There is likely to be a significant amount of continual one-to-one contact within a home education setting and this impacts upon full time
- That home education may take place outside of normal school hours and term times
- There is an expectation that parents will be able to evidence how much time is being devoted to a child's home education in terms of hours per week and weeks per year

'Efficient' whatever provision is put in place, it must achieve what it sets out to achieve

'Suitable' must take in to account the following factors:

- Enable a child to participate fully in life in the UK- intended values or behaviours cannot be in conflict with 'Fundamental British Values'
- Provision would not need to align to the National Curriculum or the 'broad and balanced' curriculum required of academies or the independent school standards, however doing so would constitute strong evidence of suitability
- That while locally there may be a requirement in relation to literacy and numeracy, it must be applied in relation to a child's abilities and aptitude
- Academic learning, although a key factor, must be supported by activities which enable socialisation
- Impact of the home or learning environment on the child's ability to learn and progress

3. Background

3.1. Current Activity and impact in Somerset against new guidance.

Structures and resources; Somerset has already consulted on new structures to support the development of a stronger focus on EHE, attendance and safeguarding of pupils, and this will be delivered through the new Safeguarding in Education team.

Resources for this team have been identified as part of the consultation and staffing is jointly funded through the LA and the central school services block of the DSG.

No further actions are therefore considered necessary to meet new guidance requirements.

Policy development and Advice/Guidance; Somerset's approach to EHE has been strengthened over the last 18 months and focussed on improving advice and guidance.

Joint meetings have been held between Education Welfare, Education Safeguarding, Educational Psychology Service, Learning Support Service and parents who educate their children at home. This has improved relationships between the LA and elective home educating parents and has supported joint activities which are under development eg how parents can access support.

A new process for EHE starters was agreed through the Education Welfare Service. This process can be summarised as:

- Parent(s) writes a letter to school to inform them of intent to EHE child
- School completes an Exit from School Form and sends it to LA with parent letter
- Where there are concerns (from school / social care), these are collated
- LA arranges for a supportive visit to parent(s) to discuss decision to EHE, any concerns and share details of EHE groups and resources
- Where concerns remain, LA will enable parent(s) to address them before considering legal process to return child to school

This group will now undertake further work to develop a co-produced Policy in line with the new guidance alongside the development of advice and guidance for parents.

Regional Links and Voluntary Registration Schemes

Somerset continues to attend and currently chairs the regional EHE meetings.

The Association of Elective Home Education Professionals (AEHEP) will be discussing the possibility of developing a standardised model of assessing 'suitable education' which LAs can adopt and which may include voluntary registration schemes.

Somerset will consider any such models as they become available.

3.2. Current Numbers and Profile of EHE in Somerset

Weekly data reports are generated to enable officers to monitor EHE numbers, in terms of starts, returns and the overall number of Somerset children who are EHE (1065 – 23.04.19). This represents around 1.4% of Somerset's school age population.

While there have been 351 starts in this academic year, the overall number of children who are EHE has only risen by around 150. This suggests that around 200 EHE children have returned to school this academic year.

In terms of the profile the current EHE cohort:

- 50:50 in terms of gender.

- KS3 has the highest number of EHE children (359), followed by KS4 (319)
- KS3 (347) is also the most common stage at which the current cohort became EHE, KS4 (134) is the lowest. Therefore, 185 of the current KS4 EHE cohort must have become EHE at an earlier key stage.
- 24 children with EHCPs are EHE while a further 221 were considered to have SEN needs at SEN support. These 24 children with EHCPs represent 1.04% of Somerset's EHCP cohort.

4. Consultations undertaken

- 4.1. Parents which electively home educate their children will be actively engaged in the co-production on Somerset's new EHE policy.

The new policy will only be implemented once it has been through a formal decision-making process.

5. Implications

- 5.1. As per section 2

6. Background papers

- 6.1. Recently published statutory guidance can be found here:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/elective-home-education>

Note: For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author