

# Agenda Item 56.

<b>TITLE:</b>	<b>Elective Home Education</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 21 March 2017
<b>WARD</b>	Non-specific
<b>DIRECTOR</b>	Judith Ramsden, Director of People Services

## **OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY**

Children & Young People in the Wokingham Borough who are Electively Home Educated (EHE) are monitored within the limitations of the law.  
Members are informed of developments in the provision of services to children and families who choose Elective Home Education.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Members are recommended to challenge and question actions noted in the report, and to receive further reports as proposed.

## **SUMMARY OF REPORT**

WBC has a current population of 114 children & young people registered for Elective Home education (EHE). The EHE coordinator carries out annual visits (if agreed by parents) to assess the suitability of education provided to those on the EHE register but it should be noted parents can opt not to comply with us. If the child has never been on roll at school, they do not have to register with us. This register provides opportunities to monitor in terms of educational and safeguarding priorities.

### **Elective Home Education:**

Elective Home Education offers families and carers the opportunity to provide education for the children and young people in their care independent from Local Authority or established school provision. The law states that the responsibility for a child's education rests with their parents/carers. Whilst education is compulsory, attending school is not.

### **Process:**

A parent/carer can elect to home educate at any age or stage of a child's educational career. Should this option be taken from the earliest stage then the child will never be registered on any school roll. If the option is taken at a later stage then schools complete a form to inform the LA and the accountable service, in our case the Virtual School, and deregister the pupil from their roll. The LA holds a register of families/carers who have

elected to home educate – but their names appear only if they give consent. This cannot be enforced.

Provision:

The parent/carer must ensure that the education programme delivered provides an ‘efficient and suitable education that primarily equips a child for life within the community of which he/she is a member’. Consistency with National Curriculum is not required. However, the programme must not foreclose the child’s options in later years.

LA Duties:

- Provide clear information on EHE setting out the legal position, roles and responsibilities for parents/carers and LA.
- Statutory duty to make arrangements to identify EHE in their area.
- No statutory duty or power to monitor quality of EHE on a regular basis BUT can intervene if it appears that parents/carers are not providing suitable education (school attendance orders may then be issued if necessary).
- Duty to promote safeguarding. This does not extend to empowering LAs to enter homes or see children for purposes of monitoring the quality of EHE provision. Where there are grounds for concerns in relation to safeguarding/welfare LAs can insist on seeing the child, backed by social care but not EHE legislation.

Wokingham context:

As part of the development of the Virtual School and its remit to oversee the effectiveness of education for our most vulnerable learners, an Education Coordinator has been in post as of the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2016. This role has the specific remit to oversee EHE. Prior to this the role was part of the Education Welfare Service. We have effective processes in place for notifications and maintain a register of EHE families and carers. We are aware that there are some who have elected not to register. We offer annual visits for those registered and the majority engage with us.

Current EHE roll analysis as of 07/03/2017:

114 EHE cases registered;

Male	52 (45.6%)
Female	62 (54.4%)

GRT children = 22 (19.3%) As can be seen from this data Wokingham EHE cohort has a large percentage of GRT children and young people represented – currently at 19.3% of the total EHE population, where GRT is more like 1% of the WBC pupil population as a whole.

## Age

The tables below provide a breakdown by National Curriculum Year group (NCY) and age. There are two 4 year olds on our register, but they are not of statutory school age until September 2017. From each table it appears that secondary transfer becomes a point at which the incidence of EHE increases, although latterly EHE cases have arisen where places have not been available at parents' preferred primary schools. More details are given below.

NCY	Number	% of caseload
R	4	3.5%
1	10	8.8%
2	10	8.8%
3	5	4.4%
4	9	7.4%
5	4	3.5%
6	12	10.5%
7	11	9.6%
8	12	10.5%
9	12	10.5%
10	14	12.3%
11	11	9.6%

Age	Number	% of caseload
4	2	1.8%
5	4	3.5%
6	15	13.2%
7	5	4.4%
8	9	7.4%
9	5	4.4%
10	10	8.8%
11	7	6.1%
12	17	14.9%
13	10	8.8%
14	9	7.4%
15	14	12.3%
16	7	6.1%

The breakdown of ages and NCY groups shows a bulge of children aged 6 (in Years 1 and 2) and another bulge at age 12 (year 6 and 7). This year we also have larger numbers in Year 10 and 11.

The numbers of Year 1 and 2 children appear to have been taken out of school for a variety of reasons, but generally there appear to be two main reasons – some special educational needs are beginning to be identified at this age and the children are beginning to struggle within a mainstream setting. There is also a feeling amongst some parents of this age group that the new national curriculum puts too much pressure on their young children.

The bulge of children being registered as EHE in Years 6 and 7 can be explained by parents removing their children from SATs, not gaining the secondary school place they wanted and home educating until places become available and GRT pupils (usually girls) not transferring up to secondary level. GRT boys tend to be withdrawn a little later, in Year 8 or 9.

We have seen a marked increase in Year 10 and 11 being withdrawn this year, most often due to mental health issues or a diagnosis of ASC where the young person is struggling to cope with the demands of attending school.

#### EHE children with Special Educational Needs:

- 1 with an EHCP plan, 1 with a statement.
- 1 with a previous statement, which was stopped on the parent's insistence.
- 25 who were SEN Support (SA/SA+) when they left school (21.9%)
- 86 with no noted SEN (75.4%)

LA's responsibilities for SENs are not removed when EHE applies, but practically to deliver those becomes very challenging.

#### Reasons for electing to home educate:

This has been added to the revised registration forms. However, we do not always receive these back from parents and they do not always volunteer this information.

#### Safeguarding concerns:

There are 113 children with no current safeguarding concerns recorded and 1 child on a CIN plan. There are 14 children who have not been seen this year as parents have been resistant and refused visits. All except 1 has supplied suitable evidence of education taking place. This reflects the key EHE dilemma, where for most pupils national policy relies on schools as a universal service able to identify early concerns, but has determined, perhaps inadvertently, that no such protection should be available for EHE children.

'Elective Home Education: Guidelines for Local Authorities 2007' paragraph 4.7 states: 'The welfare and protection of all children, both those who attend school and those who are educated at home, are of paramount concern and the responsibility of the whole community. Working Together to Safeguard Children 2007 states that all agencies and individuals should aim proactively to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. As with school educated children, child protection issues may arise in relation to home educated children. If any child protection concerns come to light in the course of engagement with children and families, or otherwise, these concerns should immediately be referred to the appropriate authorities using established protocols.'

'Children Missing Education: Statutory guidance for local authorities' January 2015 refers to the above guidance but incorporates further advice about safeguarding children EHE from Working Together 2013 guidance. As for any child living in Wokingham all efforts to protect and safeguard children and young people who are

home educated should be made by all agencies. This should include ensuring that the families/carers taking this option are informed regarding key safeguarding practices such as safe recruitment and employment of staff to work with their children (tutors) and the LA should lead on ensuring all safeguarding concerns that are enforced within schools (FGM / CSE / Radicalisation) are applied to EHE families.

Next Steps:

- Revision of current EHE policy – this has been completed and sent for legal advice for checking before being presented to People Services Leadership Team.
- Use the Virtual School structures to strengthen appropriate EHE links to children's social care and safeguarding systems.
- Explore links with GRT support systems and the characteristics of the GRT / EHE group.
- Revision of key information leaflet and website for families.
- Revision of information template for schools and settings

It is of paramount importance to develop and maintain positive working relationships with the EHE community and ensure an open-door approach, because it is only by parents' consent that any engagement takes place under current legislation. This strategy will enable WBC to support effective learning and positive outcomes for the children and young people involved and will facilitate ease of re-engagement should families choose to re-engage with formal education at any point. These relationships also enable closer support for any safeguarding activities required.

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