


Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board 16 November 2020

Subject:	Elective Home Education Working Group
Cabinet Portfolio:	Councillor Joyce Underhill - Cabinet Member Best Start in Life
Director:	Executive Director of Children's Services – Lesley Hagger Director of Education Skills and Employment– Chris Ward
Contribution towards Vision 2030:	
Contact Officer(s):	Sue Moore - Group Head for Education Support Services Sue_moore@sandwell.gov.uk Deb Breedon - Democratic Services Officer Deborah_breedon@sandwell.gov.uk

DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board:

1. consider and agree the scope for the Elective Home Education Scrutiny Review;
2. To receive an update presentation of current demand and emerging issues for Elective Home Education Support in Sandwell.

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To consider and agree the scope of the review of Elective Home Education and note the progress of the Elective Home Education Working Group.
- 1.2 To consider the increasing demand for home education support in Sandwell.

2 IMPLICATIONS FOR SANDWELL'S VISION

- 2.1 High quality education improves the life chances of children and young people and acknowledge that children and young people have a right to enjoy their childhood as well as enabling them to develop the confidence and aspirations for a successful adulthood.

3 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 Nationally, there has been a very significant increase in the number of children being educated at home. Elective Home Education numbers over the last 5 academic years has risen in Sandwell.
- 3.2 Childrens Services and Education Scrutiny Board, 20 July 2020 considered a report relating to Elective Home Education (EHE) in Sandwell. The report and presentation highlighted that there had been an increase in numbers of elective home education cases and it was questioned why parents were choosing to home educate and whether current support provision was sufficient? The Board wanted to know more about the range of ways to carry out education out of the school system and to hear the child's voice about home education.
- 3.3 The Scrutiny Board on 21 September 2020 was advised that there was an increase in the numbers of parents considering EHE and highlighted the need to progress with the EHE working group.
- 3.4 The review aims to gather evidence to understand the have, needs and wants for Elective Home Education in Sandwell and to raise awareness of the limitations placed on the Local Authority (LA).
- 3.5 At a meeting of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families and Directors of Children's Services (DCS) in September 2020, off-rolling and increases in numbers of children in elective home education were discussed. Some Local Authorities (LAs) had seen an increase in EHE. It was considered that the pandemic had heightened the risk that some children may be inappropriately withdrawn from school for EHE, either because parents have reservations about sending children to school, or because they are encouraged to do so by schools. There was a general view that LAs need greater powers and that parents may not understand fully the longer-term implications of EHE.
- 3.6 Previously the Government published updated guidance for parents and Local Authorities (LAs) relating to Elective Home Education in April 2019 following a DfE call for evidence in April 2018. This was followed by a consultation relating to 'Children not in School', to consider establishing a

local authority registration system for children who do not attend state funded or registered independent schools.

3.7 There was a new call for evidence in October 2020.

4 THE CURRENT POSITION – WORKING GROUP

4.1 The report and presentation to Childrens Services and Education Scrutiny Board 20 July 2020 [Elective Home Education](#) provided evidence and set the scene for the review.

4.2 The Elective Home Education Working Group was established and the membership was agreed with the Vice-Chair:

Cllrs Preece (Chair), Z Hussain, McVittie, Millar, Shackleton.

4.3 A core officer group and the Vice Chair of CSE Scrutiny Board met to develop the scope and the timelines for the review. The working group met on 8 October to develop the scope document (appendix 1) which sets out the rationale and the way forward for the working group to review Elective Home Education in Sandwell.

4.4 The working group agreed to utilise a range of methods to gather evidence including desk top research, witness evidence at meetings, surveys for parents and children in home education and a virtual forum to meet with parents, children and EHE teachers.

4.5 The work group will also consider best practice, alternative methods to support education at home and any emerging guidance from DfE.

4.6 The Key Lines of Enquiry – Elective Home Education

- a) What is the current LEA offer?
- b) Why do parents choose to educate at home, what are the drivers?
- c) What do children need and want?
- d) What are the attainment levels of home educated children and how does this impact further education and employment trends?
- e) How does the LEA support and safeguard children in home education?

4.7 The working group intention is to understand more about current demand and provision for Elective Home Education in Sandwell and to hear a range of perspectives from young people, parents, teachers and people that support home education about what is needed, what they think about

current arrangements and how they may be enhanced.

4.8 The aims of the review:

- To understand the current numbers and whether support for Elective Home Education in Sandwell is sufficient.
- To capture young people's perspective on education at home.
- To establish the attainment level and further education and employment trends for children educated at home.
- To raise awareness of the limitations placed on the LA and bring findings to the attention of the Secretary of State for Education.

5 **NEXT STEPS**

5.1 The Working Group meet on 9th November to consider a scene setting report, case studies and to receive an update on surveys.

5.2 The Working Group will carry out a focus group meeting with parents, teachers and children on Wednesday 25th November 2020 and plan to meet in December to review the evidence gathered by survey and at the focus group.

6 **CONSULTATION (CUSTOMERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS)**

6.1 The working group have developed two surveys to consult with Parents and children who are educated at home.

7 **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

7.1 The purpose of the review is to consider current support for Elective Home Education and if it meets the needs of young people and parents, findings will inform if the Council should consider alternative options.

8 **STRATEGIC RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 There are no specific financial implications arising from this report.

9 **LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS**

9.1 There are no current considerations.

10 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 10.1 All young people should have equal access to education to give them the best possible start in life.

11 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 11.1 There are no current requirements for a data protection impact assessment to be carried out relevant to this paper.

12 CRIME AND DISORDER AND RISK ASSESSMENT

- 12.1 There are no crime and disorder risks specifically relating to this report, however, it must be noted that the impact of engagement of children in education and positive activities has implications for crime reduction.

13 SUSTAINABILITY OF PROPOSALS

- 13.1 The sustainability of services is reliant on the continued provision of funding for services to meet the demand.
- 13.2 There continues to be increasing demands on the EHE service due to increasing numbers of children being educated at home.

14 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOCIAL VALUE)

- 14.1 Good education and attainment levels increase the wellbeing of children and young people and contributes to them having the best possible start in life.

15 IMPACT ON ANY COUNCIL MANAGED PROPERTY OR LAND

- 15.1 None.

16. CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 16.1 The Review of Elective Home Education will inform future support for home education and align with the cross-cutting themes outlined in the Council's Corporate Plan.

17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

17.1 Elective Home Education Report and Presentation – CS&E Scrutiny Board 20 July 2020

18. APPENDICES:

18.1 Appendix 1 – Scope Document