

	Evidence gathered																								
1	EHE Notification Trends	There is an upward trend 575 and rising. This had started in 2019 way before school closures, it is possible that the impact of Covid (school closure, remote learning and fear of sending children to school) has had an impact on rising numbers electing to home educate. Monitoring data is ongoing and the extension of timelines for the working group will potentially give a more balanced view, as some children will return to school education.																							
2	New EHE by area since April 2020 165 - primary 87 - secondary	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Town</th> <th>Total 252</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Oldbury</td> <td>42</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Rowley Regis</td> <td>37</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Smethwick</td> <td>41</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tipton</td> <td>50</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Wednesbury</td> <td>23</td> </tr> <tr> <td>West Bromwich</td> <td>50</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other / Unknown</td> <td>09</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Town	Total 252	Oldbury	42	Rowley Regis	37	Smethwick	41	Tipton	50	Wednesbury	23	West Bromwich	50	Other / Unknown	09				
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	Additional HMI information since April 2020	5 children on CIN plan; EHCP 5, SEND 34, no obvious pattern; 90 children given Covid related reasons for choosing EHE; fairly even across the wards – no obvious pattern; no schools have seen significant increase to EHE referrals.																				
5	Active EHE in the period																					

		New EHE referrals	280						
		Closed EHE referrals	<u>75</u>						
		Current EHE referrals	569						
		Total active EHE referrals during the period					644		

6	EHE Equality characteristics	Ethnicity	Female	Male	Total
		<unknown>	15	6	21
		African Asian	0	1	1
		Any Other Asian Background	0	2	2
		Any Other Black Background	6	4	10
		Any Other Ethnic Group	3	3	6
		Any Other Mixed Background	4	6	10
		Any Other White Background	4	7	11
		Black - African	2	4	6
		Black - Ghanaian	0	1	1
		Black - Somali	1	1	2
		Black Caribbean	11	10	21
		Black European	1	0	1
		Chinese	1	0	1
		Egyptian	1	0	1
		Indian	7	7	14
		Information Not Yet Obtained	10	12	22
		Other Pakistani	0	1	1
		Pakistani	7	7	14
		Traveller of Irish Heritage	1	0	1
		White - British	44	33	77
		White - English	4	2	6
		White - Irish	0	1	1
		White / Asian	1	3	4
		White / Black Caribbean	9	8	17
		White Other	0	1	1
Total	132	120	252		
7	Survey Parents and children	<p>The Working Group carried out a survey aimed to learn more about EHE in Sandwell and why families were choosing it as an alternative to school. The survey was distributed on 2 November 2020 to all home educating families registered in Sandwell, which represents 561 young people. Parents and children were invited to fill in separate surveys.</p>			

		<p>The Working Group received analysis from 15 adult surveys and 19 children surveys, some families had included all of the children in a single survey. The low response rate was disappointing, but the feedback received was very positive about EHE support in Sandwell and provided some useful comments.</p> <p>The responses received (3.5 - 4.0%) show that those who respond are often those carrying out good standards of home education and in the main are the supported families where we have no concerns. Their responses demonstrate that at the heart of their decision to home educate is the desire, not only, to provide a good home education with clear goals and aspirations involving accreditation and careers, but more importantly doing this within a safe and nurturing environment that looks after the emotional, physical and mental wellbeing of their children.</p> <p>All responders, whether welcoming advisory visits or not, appear to have a very positive view of Sandwell's Elective Home Education Service and genuinely have a desire to share their experiences and to offer up suggestions to help us improve services.</p> <p>Overall, the adults and children appear to share the same opinions about home education. The quality and richness of what they have shared provides us with a valuable insight into how we can develop services and move forward. Working in partnership with families and other organisations and will undoubtedly aid the Service's development plan into the future with collaborative ways of working with families, utilising their expertise and insight.</p> <p>It is evident also that those who responded to the survey took the decision to electively home educate based on the individual needs of their child. The full narrative version of this survey is added as an appendix to this report.</p>
8	DfE	<p>Progress of the Education Select Committee's review of EHE https://parliamentlive.tv/event/index/280ccb44-6c91-47bb-b7f9-aa3d417e19bc</p> <p>Sandwell Council will share their review with parliamentary policy colleagues to help inform the national picture. The policy team said they would be more than happy to receive intel/data especially as you are getting the views of children, families, and teachers.</p>

		Opportunity for members to engage with parliamentary process – a follow up response is expected from the select committee and policy team.
9	LA Comparison data	<p>Unlikely to give a representative comparison because each local authority is different and we would not necessarily be comparing like with like: Birmingham, for example is 4 times larger than Sandwell and has an EHE population of 2,147 (October 2020) supported by a team of six people, including 4 teachers / advisers.</p> <p>Table focus on the website and support offer.</p> <p>Note: Sandwell's increase in EHE is higher than the 38% National average - As at 30th October 2020, Sandwell had received 220 new EHE referrals (including 90 citing Covid as the primary reason) representing an increase of 49% in comparison with the previous academic year.</p>
10	Association of Directors of Children's Services and Education (EHE)	<p>A survey of 151 councils by the Association of Directors of Children's Services has found that the number of home-schooled children in England has risen by 38% year-on-year, from 54,656 on October 1 2019 to 75,668 on the same date this year. Councils reported that fears around COVID-19 were the top reason given by parents for home-schooling their children, with many families saying they intend to send their children back to school once their concerns over risks associated with the pandemic are alleviated. Gail Tolley, chairwoman of the ADCS's Educational Achievement Policy Committee, said directors "want to be able to support these families to make sure they are making an informed decision and are equipped to offer a good and broad education", but cautioned that "without a statutory register it is impossible to know of every child or young person who is being electively home educated." The Government has yet to publish its response to a 2019 Department for Education consultation on setting up a register of children and young people who are not educated in school.</p> <p>ADCS Main points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As the recently published ADCS annual EHE survey shows, there has been a significant increase in number of pupils EHE with an alarming number of pupils being withdrawn from school rolls since September (more than 19,000) • Government yet to respond to the 2019 consultation though some views within DfE that LAs already have sufficient powers. DfE hopes to publish response to consultation before xmas but may slip to NY • DfE recently issued an updated suite of comms and guidance to schools, to parents and sharing of good practice in terms of schools advising LAs of EHE pupils

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All agreed that we thought it likely that a good proportion of those pupils who've become EHE since September will return to school rolls when the pandemic abates but this will require careful monitoring • ADCS clear that the EHE cohort is now so large that LAs simply do not have the resource to fulfil their duties in relation to children receiving a suitable education. ADCS acknowledges that a mandatory Register alone will not safeguard EHE pupils, there must be a duty and attendant power of entry to make at least an annual visit but this will require full funding • ADCS noted that presently we have the worst of both worlds, that successive governments have not addressed these issues and parental rights to home educate continue to have precedence over a child's right to a suitable education • Moreover, the government has, rightly, made much of the importance of children and young people continued to attend school/college during the pandemic. We have a robust school inspection regime that makes professional judgements on the quality of teaching yet we allow 'teaching amateurs' to educate their children at home if they so choose • DfE acknowledged the libertarian dilemma for the government, that the inspectorate might have a role in any registration system, and the possibility of a multi-agency approach to suitable education/safeguarding of EE pupils
11	Estimated cost of EHE in Sandwell	The current estimated cost of EHE support in Sandwell is £130,200 (Excluding resource or administrative support or any costs associated with the line management / supervision).
12	Funding streams	<p>The Local Authority is responsible for setting a local schools funding formula for 2021/22. later this year the Government will be putting forward plans to move to a "hard" national funding formula in the future, which will determine school funding allocations directly, rather than local funding formula. Ultimately this means that when this becomes effective there would be a need to invoice schools for those services provided by the LA via the De-delegated and education functions budgets. The government may in the future change the funding rate and what it covers.</p> <p>Education Directorate funding at present is based on several funding streams including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. De-delegated budget / Delegated schools grants 2. Education Functions budget

		<p>3. Central School Services budget 4. Penalty Notice Income - suspended post March 2020</p> <p>As there is no dedicated budget, the future funding for Elective Home Education presents a degree of uncertainty and questions remain about the sustainability of existing and future EHE services. This is most concerning given the statutory need to ensure that all children in Sandwell receive "efficient full-time education appropriate to their age, aptitude and special educational needs".</p>
13	Safeguarding	<p>We continue to work with partners including colleagues in social care and targeted early help to raise awareness of elective home education to enhance assessments in relation to vulnerable children etc. Please see email sent on 3rd November 2021 to employees in Children and Education, Sandwell Children's Trust and partner agencies in relation to professional curiosity and children not in school.</p> <p>The Working Group highlighted that social workers have access to homes that the Local Authority would not when dealing with children who are not on a school roll. The Working Group planned to invite the Group Head Front Door SCT to attend meetings to strengthen collaborative working and raise awareness of home education.</p> <p>The working group considered whether it is "neglect" if the parents were not educating at home as they believe every child should have the education they require. These issues were further discussed at the QPP Neglect conference on 8 June 2021 attended by Emeritus Professor Jan Horwath who is on record in relation to educational neglect. The QPP sub-group have also been requested to undertake an audit of assessments and the inclusion of education/EHE matters where relevant.</p>
14	Off rolling / backdoor exclusions	<p>Back door" exclusion is a term that has developed to describe situations where a family feels under pressure to withdraw their son/daughter from their school or find an alternative school placement if they are at risk of permanent exclusion. There is no legal definition of the term, but such practices are not acceptable.</p> <p>Schools Week press release in December had highlighted that Ofsted has 'rapped a council' after discovering potential off-rolling of children in care, with the number of pupils educated at home shooting up more than 20 per cent. Analysis found that nine of the ten children's services visits conducted since September mentioned a rise in the number of children being home-educated,</p>

		<p>although, the watchdog recognised many councils had effective processes in place to track such changes.</p> <p>The Working Group has found that Sandwell processes are working very well. Whilst trends data confirms a rise in EHE numbers (see Appendix 4 Section1) there are no Sandwell Looked After Children who are home educated.</p>
15	SEND / EHCP	<p>The Working Group questioned parental engagement with assessment processes for children with special educational needs and/or behaviour issues. They also asked if there is a stigma attached in these circumstances.</p> <p>Answers to these questions were anticipated via a Teacher/Headteacher focus group</p>
16	EHE Support	<p>The offer of support while parents have a right to home educate their children if they wish, they don't have an automatic right to support from the local authority. In Sandwell we offer support to all families at the level of involvement they'd prefer – from the occasional call or email to comprehensive interventions where necessary. We also have parents who decline support completely. Some local authorities offer no such support at all, so we pride ourselves in reaching out to families; the majority of whom accept our offer willingly.'</p> <p>Home-schooling parents take legal challenge against council 'harassment' Parents whose children are permanently home-schooled have commenced legal action over alleged "harassment" by Portsmouth City Council. Portsmouth Home Education Group claims the local authority has issued legal "threats" to families ordering them to send children to mainstream schools. The council said it has a duty to ensure that children are receiving education that is suitable. <u>BBC News</u></p>
17	Parent School discussions	<p>What window was available to discuss the child remaining in school?</p> <p>On 1st December 2020 the Association for Education and Welfare Management had discussed 'Elective Home Education and School Attendance'.</p>

		<p>There could be a number of reasons why the parent was upset or angry but there was no cooling off period for parents/schools to discuss the implications or prepare for home education – once the letter was handed to the school the Head teacher was obliged to remove the child from school immediately. The Working Group want to talk about how the school and parents could work together more productively, where meetings were open to planning a way forward.</p>
18	Bullying	<p>Was bullying a factor in children being removed from school either by parents to protect them or by schools removing the bully through exclusion? There was also bullying online to take into consideration. There was an anti-bullying charter in schools but what more can teachers do to identify children in need?</p> <p>Were parents too quick to remove the child rather than talk to the school and discuss the options. What was the school ethos, do schools have an open-door policy and do they address the situation? Do schools have workshops about bullying, do head teachers have sessions with parents /children about bullying?</p> <p>An evidence based review of the risks to children and young people who are educated at home (2017) Final Report https://orca.cf.ac.uk/111924/1/Home%20Education%20Report%20Final%204.10.17.pdf</p> <p>5.2.1 Bullying Brown et al (2011) estimate as many as 1 in 5 children are home educated due to bullying. Bullying appears to underlie dissatisfaction with school whether it directly leads to de-registration (Smith and Nelson, 2015; Wray and Thomas, 2013; Morton, 2010; Hopwood et al, 2007; Arora, 2002; Anderson et al, 2002) or indirectly as worries deter parents from sending their children to school (Bhopal and Myers, 2016). According to evidence presented at the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Bullying 2011-2016 (2017), schools do not acknowledge that some children may ‘disappear’ from school due to severe bullying. Some schools may actively encourage de-registration whilst others may opt instead to identify anxiety as the</p>

		<p>cause for disappearance, especially if this occurs around the time of transition from primary to secondary school (Hopwood et al, 2007). Home education in these instances serves as an escape from a difficult situation, rather than reflecting parental preference or capacity, including financial, academic and/or emotional ability to support and home educate their children.</p> <p>Sandwell schools have an anti-bullying charter</p>																
19	College	<p>Sandwell College took a decision to discontinue KS4 courses. To provide a KS4 course would require an additional layer of safeguarding in place for 14-16 year olds. Children attend Walsall and Halesowen College from the Sandwell area.</p> <p>Evidence to CS&E Scrutiny Board re- Vocational qualifications could have further impact on EHE students.</p>																
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