

Name of Meeting: Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

Date: 4 November 2019

Title of report: Update on Elective Home Education Ad-hoc Scrutiny Panel

Purpose of report:

To provide an update on the progress of the work of the ad-hoc scrutiny panel in relation to Elective Home Education, and to outline work still to be completed.

Key Decision - Is it likely to result in spending or saving £250k or more, or to have a significant effect on two or more electoral wards?	Not Applicable
Key Decision - Is it in the <u>Council's Forward Plan (key decisions and private reports)?</u>	Not Applicable
The Decision - Is it eligible for call in by Scrutiny?	Not Applicable
Date signed off by <u>Strategic Director</u> & name	Not Applicable
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance IT and Transactional Services?	Not Applicable
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning Support?	Yes 24.10.19
Cabinet member portfolio	Councillor Carole Pattison - Learning, Aspiration And Communities

Electoral wards affected: All

Ward councillors consulted: Not Applicable

Public or private: Public

Has GDPR been considered? Yes GDPR has been considered.

1. Summary

- 1.1** Further to the request for a progress report by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, this report provides an update on the work of the ad-hoc panel considering elective home education.

2. Information

- 2.1** Elective home education (EHE) is the term used by the Department for Education (DFE) to describe parents' decisions to provide education for their children at home instead of sending them to school. This is different to home tuition provided by a Local Authority, or education provided by a Local Authority other than at a school.

- 2.2** The Terms of Reference of the Ad Hoc Panel are:

To scrutinise Elective Home Education in Kirklees, with a particular focus on;

- Developing an understanding of why some parents and carers choose to home educate, and for how long children are typically home educated for.
- Scrutinising the Local Authority's responsibilities for home educated children.
- Scrutinising how the Local Authority identifies, supports and ensures the safety and wellbeing of electively home educated children.
- Scrutinising elective home educated children's progression onto further education and employment and the outcomes achieved at Key Stage 4 & 5.

- 2.3** The Panel began by developing an understanding of why some parents and carers choose to home educate. The Panel heard that the reasons for deciding on this approach were varied, as are the styles of education undertaken. For a significant number of families this was a decision based on their philosophical, spiritual or religious outlook, for others it was to meet the specific needs of a child or children. However, the Panel was informed that some parents have reported that an issue at school had led to their consideration of electively home educating their child.

- 2.4** Numbers of electively home educated children in Kirklees fluctuate throughout the year, for a variety of reasons. In addition there are children that are being educated at home that the Council may not be aware of, as it is not a legal requirement to register. At the start of September 2019 approximately 350 children were recorded as home educated.

- 2.5** Visits were made to talk to parents of electively home educated children at 3 drop-in events in September and December 2018. The Panel also spoke to those who had previously home educated, to understand the educational and employment achievements of their children.

- 2.6** The Panel also met with officers from C & K Careers who outlined the work that they undertake with EHE children who would be in the equivalent KS4 cohort.

Recent Work:

- 2.7 New guidance was issued by the Government in April 2019; 'Elective Home Education, Departmental Guidance for Local Authorities' (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/elective-home-education>) and the implications of this for Kirklees are under consideration. The Panel met with officers from Early Learning and Support, in September, to understand the potential implications of the guidance for Kirklees and what the current position is within the Council. It was noted that the guidance was non-statutory but set out the view of the DfE about how local authorities should manage elective home education.
- 2.8 The Panel also met with the owner of a website dedicated to providing information and support to home educators, who is a recognised expert in this field, and two current home educators from within Kirklees, on 20th September 2019. The Panel discussed the new guidance with them along with the key ways that they considered the Council might better support home educators.
- 2.9 The session on 20th September elicited information in relation to certain key issues for home educators, a number of which were also echoed in guidance. These included the need for a clear and transparent policy, setting out how the authority will engage with parents, preferably drawn up in consultation with local families. Also, the importance of an established, clear point of contact with this person/people having good knowledge and understanding of elective home education. It was pointed out that there were potential benefits for the local authority of improved communication and engagement with home educating families.

3. Implications for the Council

- **Improving outcomes for children**

The Panel would like to ensure the best possible offer for children who are electively home educated. The panel will continue to scrutinise the Local Authority's responsibilities and offer for electively home educated children.

- **Other (eg Legal/Financial or Human Resources)**

The Home Education (Duty of Local Authorities) Bill completed its House of Lords stages on 24th July 2018 and was presented to the House of Commons on the same date. Details of the Home Education Bill can be found at:-

<https://services.parliament.uk/bills/2017-19/homeeducationdutyoflocalauthorities.html>

Should the Home Education (Duty of Local Authorities) Bill gain Royal Assent, this will increase the duty of the Local Authority and will have financial implications on the service.

4. Consultees and their opinions

Not applicable.

5. Next steps and timelines

- 5.1 The Panel agreed that it was important that the voice of the child was heard in considering this issue. Arrangements are being made to seek the input of young adults who have been home educated about their experiences and the support that they were offered.
- 5.2 The Panel will also be seeking information from; local head teachers, in relation to issues such as flexi-schooling and the provision of information when a child is removed from roll; and adjacent local authorities, to ascertain their offer to home educated children.
- 5.3 The Panel hopes to be able to complete the information gathering and pull together its recommendations by the end of the year.

6. Officer recommendations and reasons

That the ongoing work of the ad-hoc scrutiny panel be noted and the approach set out in paragraph 5 be endorsed.

7. Cabinet Portfolio Holder's recommendations

Not applicable.

8. Contact officer

Sheila Dykes, Principal Governance & Democratic Engagement Officer
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9. Background Papers and History of Decisions

Elective Home Education – Terms of Reference

10. Service Director responsible

Julie Muscroft, Service Director, Legal Governance and Monitoring