

Name of meeting: Cabinet

Date: 15th December 2020

Title of report: Final Report of Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel on Elective Home Education

Purpose of report: To present the final report of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel – Elective Home Education.

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>?	Key Decision – No Private Report/Private Appendix - No
The Decision - Is it eligible for call in by Scrutiny?	No Why not? -Report of Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel
Date signed off by <u>Strategic Director</u> & name	Mel Meggs 30/11/20
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance?	N/A
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning?	Julie Muscroft 4/12/20
Cabinet member <u>portfolio</u>	Cabinet Members for Learning, Aspiration and Communities, and Children

Electoral wards affected: All

Ward councillors consulted: N/A

Public or private: Public

Has GDPR been considered? There are no GDPR implications arising from the report.

1. Summary

In November 2017, the Children's Scrutiny Panel considered a report on elective home education. This was submitted against a background of increasing numbers of home educated children in Kirklees; a trend which was replicated in both neighbouring authorities and nationally.

The report provided background information, including an overview of the legislative framework and the current practice in Kirklees, and explained that the rights of parents that had chosen to home educate their children were fully respected. It recognised that there were many excellent examples of home education and acknowledged that learning took place in a wide variety of environments. The report explained that there was a strong commitment within Kirklees to support children, young people and their families who had chosen to home educate.

There was a desire, therefore, to review the relevant protocols and the support currently provided, in consultation with local home educating parents. The aim being to develop the offer to try and ensure that families were supported so that the best possible outcomes for children who were electively home educated could be achieved.

From the start, Members acknowledged that a number of families made a positive choice to home educate but there were some who found themselves in that position through circumstance. They were keen to ensure that appropriate support was available to all these children. They therefore recommended that an Ad-Hoc Scrutiny Panel should be established, to allow the matter to be considered in greater depth.

Further to the agreement of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, on 27th November 2017, an Ad-Hoc Scrutiny Panel was formed, with the Terms of Reference set out below:

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. Information required to take a decision

Between December 2017 and December 2019, the Panel used a range of methods to gather the evidence used to inform the report, with the following people making valued contributions:

- young people and their parents
- the creator of the 'Ed Yourself' website
- representatives of Calderdale & Kirklees Careers Service
- officers from the other West Yorkshire authorities
- a number of schools within the district
- officers from within the service area responsible for elective home education.

They considered evidence submitted in respect of:

- The reasons for choosing home education and its benefits.
- The challenges faced by home educating families and how Kirklees might be able to provide more support.
- The Authority's statutory responsibilities. Relevant legislation, associated guidance and research studies.
- Practice in Kirklees and that of neighbouring local authorities.
- Attainment and outcomes, including access to careers support and issues around provision for Key Stage 4.
- Ofsted's approach.
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).
- The options available to the Authority to address non-attendance where there were concerns.
- Examination facilities and costs.
- Off-rolling.
- Flexi-schooling.

They also took account of new non-statutory guidance, published by the Government in April 2019, which set out the view of the Department for Education on how local authorities should manage elective home education.

This guidance acknowledged that local authorities do not receive funding to support home-educating families (except in relation to high needs SEN) and that the level and type of support would therefore vary between one local authority and another. It included recommendations about the minimum offer to electively home educating families and gave examples of other ways in which home educating families could be assisted, depending on the resources available.

The Panel completed its work in early 2020 and produced a final report incorporating a summary of the evidence received, together with its findings and seven recommendations.

The draft final report was submitted to an informal meeting of the Children's Scrutiny Panel on 13th March 2020. The Panel welcomed the report and agreed that officers should be given sufficient time to consider and respond to the recommendations and to produce an Action Plan. It was requested that updates should be submitted to the Panel in the future.

The Final Report, including the Panel's findings, recommendations, and the Action Plan, is appended to this report. The Action Plan includes the response to each of the 7 recommendations by the relevant Strategic Director/Cabinet Members.

3. Implications for the Council

There are no specific implications for the Council at this time.

4. Consultees and their opinions

Not applicable.

5. Next steps and timelines

The Children's Overview and Scrutiny Panel will monitor implementation of the Action Plan.

6. Officer recommendations and reasons

That Cabinet notes:

- (i) The recommendations of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel in relation to Elective Home Education; and
- (ii) The responses included within the associated Action Plan

7. Cabinet Portfolio Holders recommendations

I welcome this report on Elective Home Education and its recommendations and it is particularly helpful at this time. We are in the middle of a pandemic which has seen not only enforced Home Education earlier this year but also more parents and carers choosing to avail themselves of this option to educate their children at this time. It is also timely in as far as we are undertaking a review Education Safeguarding currently and these recommendations will be built into this review where appropriate. I would also wish to thank all of those who took part in the production of this report, the panel, officers and consultees, it is a job well done.

8. Contact officer

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

Not applicable

10. Service Director responsible

Julie Muscroft, Service Director – Legal, Governance and Commissioning