

Name of meeting: Children's Scrutiny Panel

Date: 14th January 2019

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

Purpose of report

To provide an update on the work being done by 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 Council's Forward Plan (key decisions and private reports?)	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?	Julie Muscroft 13.12.2018
Cabinet member portfolio	Cllr Masood Ahmed

Electoral wards affected: All

Ward councillors consulted: Not applicable

Public or private: Public

1. Summary

- 1.1 In July 2017, the Director of Children's Services met with the Chair of the Children's Scrutiny Panel, and requested that Elective Home Education be added to the panel's work programme for the 2017-18 municipal year. Following consideration at the Children's Scrutiny Panel meeting on 6th November 2017, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee subsequently agreed that an ad-hoc scrutiny panel be formed to consider the issue.
- 1.2 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.
- 1.3 The Panel began by developing an understanding of why some parents and carers choose to home educate. The Panel has heard that the reasons for deciding on this approach are many, as are the styles of education undertaken. For a significant number of families it is a decision based on their philosophical, spiritual or religious outlook, for others it is 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 has led to their consideration of electively home educating their child.
- 1.4 The Panel was advised that schools are not required to give detailed information as to why a child would be taken off roll from their school. Therefore, officers often only have limited information as to what may have happened to influence a parent's choice to electively home educate. Although contact is always made with parents following a child being taken off roll, parents are not obliged to take up the offer of a meeting.
- 1.5 The Panel has concerns about the practice of removing children off a school roll in order to protect schools' performance results, often called "off-rolling". In Kirklees, the highest number of electively home educated children is in the Key Stage 4 cohort, and the Panel will continue to explore some of the reasons behind this. The Panel are concerned about children's progression onto further education and employment, and will be talking to parents about their experiences of off-rolling.
- 1.6 Numbers of electively home educated children in Kirklees vary and change on a frequent basis. This is for a variety of reasons. Some children move out of the area and others return to school education. 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. For the academic year 2017-18, approximately 450 children were registered as being electively home educated for either all of part of the academic year. At the start of September 2018 around 300 children were known to be home educated.
- 1.7 The Panel has been informed that there is currently no facility in Kirklees for children who are electively home educated to take their GCSE's should they wish to do so (it is not a requirement of children who are electively home educated to sit any exams). This is an area that will be explored further by the Panel.
- 1.8 The Panel met with parents and carers of electively home educated children at 2 drop-in events in September. The panel also spoke to those who had previously home educated, to understand the educational and employment achievements.

1.9 The Panel has 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.

2 **Information required to take a decision**

A decision is not required, however the ad-hoc panel may make recommendations to the Cabinet member for Learning and Aspiration following the conclusion of the investigation.

3 **Implications for the Council**

3.1 **Early Intervention and Prevention (EIP)**

As part of the current review the introduction of an early help strategy will be considered.

3.2 **Economic Resilience (ER)**

N/A

3.3 **Improving Outcomes for Children**

3.3.1 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.

3.4 **Reducing demand of services**

3.4.1 The work of the Panel is informing the proposed future arrangement for the local authorities approach.

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

3.5.1 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. The second reading is at the House of Commons on 1st February 2019. Details of the Home Education Bill can be found at:-

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

3.5.2 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**

N/A

5. **Next steps**

5.1 The Panel will meet a number of other witnesses to gather information including:-

- A leading elective home education expert
- Other local authorities in the area, to consider their offer for elective home educators
- Parents of those local authorities mentioned above to explore their experiences
- Head Teachers forums (primary, secondary and special schools)

6. **Officer recommendations and reasons**

That the Children's Scrutiny Panel note the work of the ad-hoc scrutiny panel to date, and continues to supports the approach outlined in section 5.3.

7. **Cabinet portfolio holder's recommendations**

N/A

8. **Contact officer**

Yolande Myers, 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