

# CHILDREN AND LIFELONG LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL

<b>DATE</b>	14/11/2024
<b>REPORT OF</b>	Jennifer Steel - Service Director for Education, Inclusion and Integration
<b>SUBJECT</b>	Elective Home Education
<b>STATUS</b>	Open

## CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS

The North East Lincolnshire Council Plan 2023 – 2026 sets out the key aims of a listening council that is ambitious in its drive to create stronger economies and stronger communities.

Receiving an education regardless of whether this is within a traditional school setting, or within the home environment will contribute towards enabling our children to

- Reach their full potential through skills and learning
- Enjoy good health and wellbeing

And feeds into the Children and Families Vision

- Supporting children so they are ready for school and ready to learn;
- Enable more children and young people to lead lifelong healthy lifestyles with improved social, emotional wellbeing and reduced health inequalities;
- Work in partnership with schools to champion education so all children attend inclusive provision, have high aspirations and are supported to achieve their full potential;
- Help young people into adulthood, to develop life skills, and be ready for work;

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to an efficient, full-time education which is suitable to their 'age, ability, aptitude' and any special educational needs they may have. Parents have a duty to ensure that their children of compulsory school age are receiving suitable full-time education; this can be in a traditional school setting or at home.

Nationally, post-pandemic, every local authority has seen a rise in EHE numbers, however North East Lincolnshire's numbers are higher than our statistical neighbours.

## MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

This report to Scrutiny Committee provides an overview of matters related to Elective Home Education (EHE) children of compulsory school age, covering:

- National context and policy
  - Local (NEL) policy and practice
  - Current and historical EHE data within NEL
  - Managing risks
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# 1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

## NATIONAL POLICY & CONTEXT

### National Context

Educating children at home, can work well when it is a positive, informed and dedicated choice. Legally, any parent in the United Kingdom can choose to provide an education for their child at home. This is a right enshrined in law. Parents do not have to register their child at school.

There are many reasons for parents/carers choosing to home educate. The following reasons are suggested in the DfE guidance as possible rationales for EHE:

- Ideological or philosophical views which favour home education, or wishing to provide education which has a different basis to that normally found in schools.
  - Religious or cultural beliefs, and a wish to ensure that the child's education is aligned with these.
  - Dissatisfaction with the school system, or the school(s) at which a place is available.
  - Bullying of the child at school.
  - Health reasons, particularly mental health of the child.
  - As a short-term intervention for a particular reason.
  - A child's unwillingness or inability to go to school, including school phobia.
  - Special educational needs, or a perceived lack of suitable provision in the school system for those needs.
  - Disputes with a school over the education, special needs or behaviour of the child, in some cases resulting in 'off-rolling' or exclusion.
  - Familial reasons which have nothing to do with schools or education (e.g., using older children educated at home as carers).
  - As a stopgap whilst awaiting a place at a school other than the one allocated.
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## Current National Policy

Elective Home Education guidance is non-statutory but based on section 7 of the Education Act 1996 which gives parents the right to educate their children at home, also known as Elective Home Education (EHE)

The government wants the many parents who do EHE well to be supported. It is recognised that parents devote time, financial resources and dedication to the education of their children. Most parents who take up the weighty responsibility of home education, do a great job, and many children benefit from being educated at home. It is the parents' responsibility to fund the resources for educating their child, including the associated examination costs.

The Department for Education's (DfE) guidance (April 2019) available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/elective-home-education> provides guidance for Local Authorities in relation to their powers and duties for EHE children, and guidance for parents to ensure they understand their obligations. This includes the requirement that:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable

- (a) to age, ability and aptitude, and
- (b) to any special educational needs, he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise “

There is currently no statutory legislation for insisting that families must register with their local authority or follow any specific framework, curriculum or educational ideology in the UK.

The legal responsibility for a child's education remains with the child's family, meaning the local authority is limited in regulatory powers around education. Families can choose any methods they wish for educating their children and these do not have to reflect traditional, established notions of education as “schooling.” Indeed, many families choose to home educate specifically because of a particular philosophy around education that differs from the beliefs held by the state and schools. This includes not following a traditional timetable and set school times for delivery of the education.

Since publication of the April 2019 Guidance, there has been an increased national focus on examining risks and support for families to strengthen home education requirements. This included an Education Committee examination and a consultation on proposed legislation for children educated outside of school. The aim of the consultation was to ascertain views on the proposal of a national ‘Children Not in School’ register, which would enable LAs to employ safeguarding and educational responsibilities more robustly for those children and young people who are not based in education settings.

The Government's response to the consultation was published in February 2022. It set

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out the Government's continued intention to legislate for a register of children not in school, and that the Government would engage further with LAs and the home educating sector in developing its proposals.

## **North East Lincolnshire Policy and Practice**

### **Local authority responsibility**

Although local authorities have no formal powers or duty to monitor the provision of education at home, we recognise the need to have oversight of EHE and have therefore, developed and implemented a local policy framework to identify, monitor and review our EHE cohort. It is also important to engage with our families and children and young people who are EHE and may have experienced previous poor learning experiences in a school setting. Our policy which was last reviewed September 2024, has been designed on the basis of the DfE's non-statutory guidance.

Upon receipt of a notification from a school the EHE team make immediate contact with the family offering support with a return to school and advise parents of their roles and responsibilities when educating their child. In addition, the associated safeguarding checks are made and where relevant the child's social worker is informed.

### **School responsibilities**

Where the young person is being withdrawn from school or academy, they will be required to provide information for the LA and parents. This should reach the Local Authority within the ten school days immediately following the date on which the pupils' name is removed from their register. (Education Pupil Registration Regulations 1995). Schools should avoid pressuring parents and carers to choose Elective Home Education (off-rolling). Where parents cite this is the case, this information is shared with Ofsted.

### **Parent responsibilities**

The parents will inform the school in writing of their decision to withdraw their child from school.

The local authority will assess that the efficiency and suitability of education being provided is appropriately focussed in accordance with the young persons' age, ability and aptitude.

The lead EHE officer with qualified teacher status, will quality assure the provision based on the following characteristics:

- consistent involvement of parents or significant other carers
- showing signs of commitment and enthusiasm, and recognition needs, aptitude, and future aspirations,
- opportunities for the child to be stimulated by their learning experiences,
- involvement in a broad spectrum of activities which cater for interests appropriate to the young persons' stage of development
- access to appropriate resources and materials.

The evidence for the educational provision need not be in terms of a physical home visit but must be sufficient enough to assure of its content – this could include one or more of the following;

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- Visit to the home
- Teams video call
- Meeting on neutral ground
- Report from the parents
- Philosophical report
- Letter or report from a third party with sufficient expertise

The parent is fully responsible for managing their child’s education should they choose to educate them at home. This means that it is a parental responsibility to financially fund the education (textbooks/tutors/exam fees etc.) Examination costs are the responsibility of parents, and it is important that parents understand virtual learning will not be provided for them, however, information, advice and guidance could be provided in the form of signposting to suitable education websites and materials.

### Current and historical EHE data

Once a child has been recorded as being EHE on our Capita system, data can be pulled into a dashboard which enables us to track and monitor numbers, trends and patterns.

The rapid and continual rise in numbers of children being educated at home within North East Lincolnshire reflects the national and regional trend, however, NELC’s numbers are higher than our statistical neighbours.

Nationally we were ranked 10<sup>th</sup> Highest in Q1 24-25 out of 148 LAs.

### LA Trend Chart (RIIA dataset) - Rates

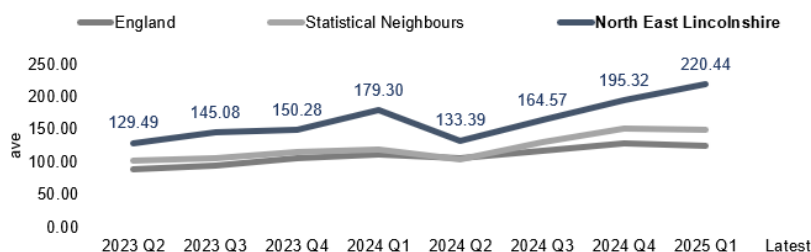
Select *Indicator* from drop down list

EHE

Rate per 10,000 aged 5-16	2023 2	2023 3	2023 4	2024 1	2024 2	2024 3	2024 4	2025 1	Latest	% change from prev. to latest.
<b>North East Lincolnshire</b>	<b>129.49</b>	<b>145.08</b>	<b>150.28</b>	<b>179.30</b>	<b>133.39</b>	<b>164.57</b>	<b>195.32</b>	<b>220.44</b>		<b>Up 13%</b>
England	89.54	94.64	106.60	110.84	106.32	116.52	128.47	125.82		Down -2%
Statistical Neighbours	102.87	106.67	115.61	119.63	104.05	130.50	151.74	149.70		Down -1%
Yorkshire and the Humber	92.29	102.35	115.30	117.20	106.86	125.12	147.11	141.45		Down -4%
Custom Group										-
X Codes Group										-

\*For details of any possible data issues with your LA's comparators, see the "Data Quality" tab

EHE by quarter (RIIA dataset) - Rate per 10,000 aged 5-16



## **Possible reasons for NEL position**

NEL deprivation indicator - 20<sup>th</sup> most deprived out of 326 local authority areas (indices of deprivation 2019)

26% of children living in poverty compared to 17% nationally (2016)

Significant differences between most deprived wards and most affluent re the proportion of children living in poverty

High levels free school meals Primary 30.3% v National average 23.1%  
Secondary 27.7% v 20.9% National average (2022)

As of 28 10 2024 figures stood at 461 children who are EHE in North East Lincolnshire, with data indicating:

- highest numbers of EHE pupils in year groups 9,10,11
- greater proportion of NEL EHE are female
- almost ¼ of EHE have special educational needs (EHCP or SEN support)

## **Communication and awareness raising via;**

Newsletters

Pop up events

Weekly drop in sessions- face to face or TEAMS for professionals and families

Attendance at Headteacher and Child Protection Coordinator meetings

Accessible manned inbox

## **Partnership working with;**

Attendance and behaviour teams

Youth Justice team

Regional EHE networks

Children social care - information sharing and training for social workers

Public health

Educational Psychology

Schools and colleges

Young Peoples Support Service

## **Managing risk**

It is important to note that there is no causal or inherent safeguarding risk in families electively home educating. Most families respond to informal enquiries positively and provide information that satisfies the EHE officer.

The DFE guidance does however recognise

*"...the past few years have seen a very significant increase in the number of children being educated at home, and there is considerable evidence that many*

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*of these children are not receiving a suitable education. There is a less well evidenced but increasing concern that some children educated at home may not be in safe environments.”*

On occasions where a family do not respond at all; or do not satisfy our enquiries we may issue a statutory School Attendance Order (SAO) which has legal weight to insist the parent registers their child with school.

Should the EHE officer identify or suspect a child is at any risk of harm or neglect, they will use existing safeguarding reporting and referral systems.

### **Children who are being supported by social care**

The general duties of local authorities in relation to safeguarding are the same for all children, however they are educated.

The EHE team will liaise with children’s services teams and take steps to ensure that relevant information on individual children is shared.

## **2. RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

As this report is for information, there are no direct risks posed to the Council as a result of the details contained herein.

## **3. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS**

The positive benefit to the Council’s reputation will be achieved via the facilitation of information and guidance for children and families who may be considering entering into EHE and the practical support that can be provided at such time a young person would like to return into fulltime education.

The local offer page provides a communication page signposting parents, professionals and other stakeholders to weekly drop in sessions to discuss Elective Home Education [NELC SEND Local Offer | Elective home education and SEND - NELC SEND Local Offer](#)

Regular updates on Elective Home Education are provided to headteachers and designated safeguarding leads within schools.

## **4. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

There are no specific financial considerations to acknowledge.

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## **5. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS**

If children do not receive a suitable education, or achieve the appropriate qualifications, this limits their future career and job prospects. For those children who do not mix with their peers, this can impact on their mental health, increase their likelihood of social isolation, and in turn, affect their ability to return to a mainstream school environment successfully.

The Elective Home Education team actively support children in returning to school where this is parental choice.

## **6. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no specific direct implications on climate change as a result of changing EHE figures, however it is important to ensure our children are exposed to this crucial agenda and to allow them to understand their role in the future workforce of a Green Borough.

## **7. MONITORING COMMENTS**

In the opinion of the author, this report does not contain recommended changes to policy or resources (people, finance or physical assets). As a result no monitoring comments have been sought from the Council's Monitoring Officer (Chief Legal Officer), Section 151 Officer (Director of Finance) or Strategic Workforce Lead.

## **8. WARD IMPLICATIONS**

All wards are affected as children who are Electively Home Educated live across North East Lincolnshire

## **9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None relevant

## **10. CONTACT OFFICER(S)**

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Head of Service responsibility for Elective Home Education.

**JENNIFER STEEL – SERVICE DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION, INCLUSION AND  
INTEGRATION**

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