

CABINET

DATE	10 December 2026
REPORT OF	Councillor Margaret Cracknell, Portfolio Holder for Children and Education
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	Ann-Marie Matson, Director of Children's Services
SUBJECT	North East Lincolnshire Elective Home Education Strategy
STATUS	Open
FORWARD PLAN REF NO.	CB 12/25/05

CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS

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

For children to receive a high-quality education, be that in a traditional school setting or otherwise, is essential for children to achieve their full potential.

Children who develop into young people with the skills and qualifications to be equipped for the local economy is fundamental to achieving council aims.

This strategy also contributes to the aims of the Council to be a 'Marmot Place', by addressing social inequalities for a growing number of families, allowing our children to lead healthy lives regardless of their background.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report sits alongside the completed North East Lincolnshire Elective Home Education Strategy. This strategy is the result of extensive transformation work to understand our families choosing to educate at home, having input from children, young people, their families, and a wide array of professionals from across the partnership.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Approves the North East Lincolnshire Elective Home Education Strategy.
2. Delegates responsibility to the Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children and Education, to implement and publish the North East Lincolnshire Elective Home Education Strategy.

REASONS FOR DECISION

Identifying and making arrangements to establish the suitability of education for children not on a school roll is a statutory responsibility for the local authority under

S436A of the Education Act 1996. For a number of years, there has been an increase in the numbers of children educated at home across the country, with North East Lincolnshire mirroring this trend.

Adoption of this strategy, seeks to underline the commitment across the Partnership of professionals in North East Lincolnshire to ensure that the children who are educated at home are in receipt of a quality education, and to collectively recognise the benefits and the risks of EHE whilst working together to promote the best outcomes for our children.

1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

1.1 National and Local Context In the UK, parents have the legal right to home educate their children instead of registering them at school. All children are entitled to a full-time education suited to their needs, which can be provided at school or through elective home education (EHE), as outlined in the Education Act 1996.

Most families who choose EHE deliver a good quality education, particularly when this decision is well-informed. Department for Education guidance notes there is no proven link between home education and safeguarding risks, but highlights that inadequate education may affect a child's development.

The number of home-educated children has risen nationally in recent years, with an increasing proportion of the school-age population now learning at home. Main reasons include mental health concerns, dissatisfaction with school, and lifestyle or philosophical preferences. In North East Lincolnshire, there has been a notable increase in the number of children who are electively home educated, reflecting patterns seen at the national level. Locally, mental health concerns and dissatisfaction with school are the most common reasons for home education, highlighting the need to address challenges both in schools and for home-educating families.

1.2 Voice of children and families Input from children, young people, and their families who are electively home educated has shaped North East Lincolnshire's understanding and approach to home education. The Council has used this feedback to create a strategy that reflects real experiences and diverse reasons for choosing home education. This ensures practical, transparent services across the whole partnership that build trust, promote equity, and better align with the community's needs and expectations.

1.3 Service transformation to date

The transformation project has developed extensive insights from children, families, professionals and other stakeholders around Elective Home Education in North East Lincolnshire. Operational reviews have allowed significant changes to the service which are informed by data and insights, allowing early identification and support for families. This has been supported by the necessary transformation contribution to employing a Co-ordinator and additional officer to the team.

1.4 Partnership contributions to EHE to date

Partners have been involved throughout the transformation project and the

development of this strategy, as well as the operational reforms within the service. As a result of the increased capacity, there has been significant focus on socialisation of EHE amongst professionals, extensive training across the partnership for all agencies, and the development of partners' abilities to reach the EHE community.

1.5 Marmot Place. North East Lincolnshire Council has publicly committed to becoming a Marmot Place. Key tenets of this Public Health initiative are to reduce health inequalities and improve outcomes for our population. This strategy is written with the input of colleagues in Public Health and has remained rooted in the spirit of ensuring Marmot applies to our children who are not educated in a traditional education setting.

1.6 Children's Wellbeing & Schools Bill. The local authority will, following Royal Assent of this Bill projected for December 2025, have enhanced responsibilities with regards to children who are electively home educated.

The local authority will have a statutory duty to maintain an accurate list of all children not on a school roll, and undertake actions to assure ourselves of its accuracy. Within this strategy is the commitment from the partnership to work alongside the EHE team to ensure this list is fully comprehensive.

A crucial additional responsibility will be the scrutiny of children on a Child Protection Plan, with powers to approve or deny a request to home educate, and powers to return a child on a Child Protection Plan to an education setting where necessary. This strategy works with the commitments of working in partnership across our education settings, the expertise of our EHE team, and Children's Social Care to ensure we are able to deliver for our most vulnerable of children.

2. RISKS, OPPORTUNITIES AND EQUALITY ISSUES

2.1 There are no risks directly apportioned to the adoption of this strategy in relation to equalities, environmental, GDPR or otherwise.

3. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

3.1. The option remains to not adopt the attached strategy, however the risks of this outweigh the benefits in terms of supporting children and families across North East Lincolnshire.

4. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

4.1. The intended impact on the Council's reputation and communications is wholly positive. As a result of the transformation work that has taken place, and the additional resource capacity allocated to ensure Department for Education guidance is adhered to, relationships with families who have chosen to home educate have significantly improved.

4.2. There have also been significant improvements in relationships that our partner organisations have with the aforementioned families, as a result of the renewed focus and awareness raising as a result of officers of the Council.

4.3. Whilst there are some families who elect to philosophically disengage with the formal education system and choose to electively home educate, the Council's duties in line with the Education Act 1996 remain unchanged. These families have generally engaged well with the EHE team and do not view the focus on their child's education as negative.

5. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1. Elective Home Education is funded through core council budget and cannot be paid for through the Dedicated Schools Grant. In order to ensure an appropriate level of staffing is in place to maintain oversight of the transformation activity, strategy and growing number of children who are electively home educated additional staffing requirements have been identified. A budget pressure of £84k has been submitted as part of the 2026/27 budget planning process. This request will be considered as part of the process over the coming months.

6. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. This strategy directly impacts those children and young people who are, or seek to become, electively home educated. Every child has the right to a full-time education suitable for the age, ability, aptitude and special educational needs. Where a child is educated at home, it is important for the partnership to recognise the local authority's responsibilities and powers under the Education Act 1996, so that it may act in the child's best interests.
- 6.2. From a corporate parenting perspective, it is the duty of the Virtual School Head to ensure that the education of a Child in our Care maximises the child's potential life outcomes. Whilst it is legal for a Child in our Care to be educated at home, the EHE team under this strategy would work in partnership to ensure that the decision on a Child in our Care's education provision is best suited to a child's age, ability, aptitude or special educational needs.
- 6.3. Those children on Child Protection Plans will be impacted by the upcoming legislation. This strategy seeks to prevent the likelihood of these children becoming electively home educated in the first instance, and that partners work together to commit to assuring ourselves of a child's safety, as well as their receipt of a suitable education.

7. CLIMATE CHANGE, NATURE RECOVERY AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. There are no direct implications on climate change, nature recovery and the environment.

8. CONSULTATION WITH SCRUTINY

- 8.1. To be added following consultation with Scrutiny.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. In order to support the EHE transformation programme and on-going strategy a request for funding of £84k in relation to increased staffing levels has been submitted as part of the budget planning process for 2026/27. This will be considered through the budget planning process over the coming months.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. As referenced within the above report, Section 436A of the Education Act 1996 is relevant and requires local authorities to make arrangements to identify children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education. This includes efforts to establish the identities of these children and ensure they receive the necessary support to return to full-time education. Local authorities must have regard to guidance

from the Secretary of State when fulfilling this duty. The section emphasizes the importance of safeguarding children and promoting their welfare, ensuring that all children have access to suitable education. This strategy commits the Council, and our statutory and non-statutory partners to share information with the EHE team to ensure the education received is in the child's best interests.

11. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

There are currently two employees on fixed term contracts.

If the decision was taken to end these fixed term contracts, then the appropriate People and Culture policies and procedures would be applied.

12. WARD IMPLICATIONS

12.1. All wards are affected.

13. BACKGROUND PAPERS

13.1. Please see paper and minutes of Special Scrutiny from 5th February 2025.

13.2. <https://www.nelincs.gov.uk/assets/uploads/2024/12/3.-Elective-Home-Education.pdf>

14. CONTACT OFFICER(S)

14.1. Joseph White – Deputy Service Director Inclusion

14.2. Jennifer Steel – Service Director – Education, Inclusion & Integration

COUNCILLOR MARGARET CRACKNELL

PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR CHILDREN & EDUCATION