

Elective Home Education Policy

Committee name	Residents, Education and Environmental Services Policy Overview Committee
Officer reporting	Laura Palmer – Head of Access to Education
Papers with report	12 November 2020 - Cabinet Report - Changes to the Elective Home Education Policy
Ward	All

HEADLINES

Elective Home Education (EHE) is a term used to describe a choice by parents to provide education for their children at home - or in some other way which they choose - instead of sending them to school full-time.

The current Elective Home Education Policy was last reviewed in 2012. The purpose of the review was to update the policy in line with the Department for Education's latest guidance and to ensure that the increase in home education provisions are taken into consideration before a final policy is approved. The review also reflected a more balanced approach to both safeguarding issues and the rights of parents, as well as considering a number of other ways to improve information and communication between the Council and EHE parents.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Committee:

- 1. Review the proposed updated Elective Home Education Policy and changes as provided in the cabinet report for November 2020;**
- 2. Consider responses from the consultation that will be provided during the meeting; and**
- 3. Provide comments to be included in the Cabinet report which will be presented in February 2021.**

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Details regarding the reasons for the review are included in the cabinet report provided.

Summary of proposals for comments

- Proposal A - Layout of the policy - To remove repetitive sentences and ensure that the policy is clear, effective, parent focused and to avoid misinterpretation.

Classification: Public

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- Proposal B- To provide information on dedicated social care involvement and support, when a child has an open referral to their service - The amended policy will include the School Placement and Admissions team process to follow when safeguarding concerns are raised regarding a child who is receiving elective home education.
- Proposal C - Introduction of a flowchart - To include a flowchart in the policy of the proposed procedure. This will provide clear guidance/steps that will be taken by the Local Authority when a parent makes the decision that they would like to provide elective home education for their child and cease their attendance in a school setting.

Implications on related Council policies

A role of the Policy Overview Committees is to make recommendations on service changes and improvements to the Cabinet who are responsible for the Council's policy and direction.

How this report benefits Hillingdon residents

The Elective Home Education Policy is a valuable document in supporting those parents that choose to home educate. The updated policy will ensure that support and expectations are clear, transparent and parent focused. It will offer the prospect of developing the relationship with parents that home educate.

Local Authorities have a duty to establish whether a suitable education is being provided but do not have a role in assurance of this. Every child has the right to a high-quality education in a safe learning environment and Hillingdon must do everything possible support this right.

Hillingdon Council have experienced a significant increase in elective home education as a direct result of Covid-19. It is vital that we have an Elective Home Education Policy that is current and fit for purpose.

Despite schools fully re-opening in September 2020, the number of pupils being home educated rose dramatically in Hillingdon as they did nationally. Parents have stated that Covid-19 has attributed to their concerns over the health of their children attending a school environment. In addition, some parents have stated that their positive experience of home education during the partial closure of schools has led them to make the decision to home educate formally. Furthermore, in many instances families chose to home educate their children with the intention of this being a short-term measure until the threat of the virus has receded. Consequently, in these instances, the decision to home educate is made much more quickly with less discussion with the school prior to removing the child or young person from the school roll.

Some parents are anxious about the health and safety of their children at school and opting to home educate to avoid challenge over non-attendance. Parents routinely state that their children would be in school if it were not for Covid-19, and that they plan for their children to return 'when it's all over'.

The increase that we have noted indicates that parents are not removing one of their children from a school roll to home educate them (as would have previously been the case) but are in fact removing all of their children from their respective school rolls due to their anxieties relating to the

pandemic.

Financial Implications

Corporate Finance has reviewed the cabinet report and confirmed that there are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations set out.

It is important that the Committee considers cost effective proposals that benefit resident taxpayers in relation to this review, which would ultimately be determined by Cabinet as part of the Council's broader budget planning process.

Legal Implications

The Department for Education ["DfE"] issued guidance for local authorities in relation to elective home education in April 2019. The status of the guidance is that it is non-statutory which means that it does not have the force of law. Nevertheless, it is a helpful and informative document which sets out good practice and principles which it is in the interests of the Council to follow.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

12 November 2020 - Cabinet Report - Changes to the Elective Home Education Policy.