

MAJOR REVIEW: ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION

Cabinet Member	Councillor David Simmonds
Cabinet Portfolio	Education & Children's Services
Officer Contact	Gill Oswell, Central Services
Papers with report	Education & Children's Services Policy Overview Committee Review of the Elective Home Education Policy

HEADLINE INFORMATION

Purpose of report	To receive the Education & Children's Services Policy Overview Committee on their review of Elective Home Education and consider its recommendations.
Contribution to our plans and strategies	Hillingdon Children's & Family's Trust Plan priorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keeping children and young people safe• Ensure all children have a good start to life
Financial Cost	There are no direct cost implications arising from this report.
Relevant Scrutiny Committee(s)	Education & Children's Services
Ward(s) affected	All

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet:

1. Welcomes the review of the Elective Home Education Policy from the Education & Children's Services Policy Overview Committee and gives formal approval to the updated EHE Policy;
2. Approves the recommendations of the Education & Children's Services Policy Overview Committee as set out below:
 - a). That an annual Borough network meeting take place between LBH EHE Parents and the local authority to enable networking to take place between different EHE groups.
 - b). That officers review the EHE correspondence which is sent to EHE parents to ensure that their tone is empathetic and their contents are not open to misinterpretation.
 - c). That EHE parents be provided with information on London Borough Exam Centres that will accept EHE children.
 - d). That Cabinet be recommended to approve the updated policy on Elective Home Education and that the policy be reviewed on an annual basis.

INFORMATION

Reasons for recommendation

The current Elective Home Education policy was agreed in 2009 in partnership with the Local Safeguarding Children's Board. The review gave Members and EHE parents the opportunity to update the Elective Home Education policy to better reflect a more balanced approach to both safeguarding issues and the rights of parents, as well as consider a number of other ways to improve information and communication between the Council and EHE parents.

Alternative options considered / risk management

The Cabinet could decide to reject all or some of the Committee's recommendations.

Supporting Information

1. The Terms of reference of the reviews were as follows:-
 - To look at the reasons why parents opt for EHE.
 - To analyse at what stage parents decide to opt for EHE.
 - To consider the needs of specific groups within the EHE Community for inclusion in the policy.
 - To look at all sources of good practice and to recommend a revised the policy to Cabinet.
2. The review took place between September 2011 and March 2012 and received evidence from Cllr Carol Melvin, an education Officer, safeguarding officer, a representative from the Home Education Advisory Service, parents providing EHE and children that had been home educated.
3. The recommendations of the review will enable the Local Authority to work in partnership with parents to ensure the best outcomes for children that are home educated.
4. The review initially focused on the concerns that had been highlighted by a small group of EHE parents, some being Hillingdon Residents. They had expressed concerns that unannounced 'safeguarding' ad-hoc visits to homes by Council officers were unlawful and unwelcome. Subsequently, the ad hoc visiting element of the Hillingdon EHE Policy has been on hold pending a full review of the policy before Cabinet at this meeting.
5. Following the completion of the witness sessions, the Committee sought advice from the Borough Solicitor and recommended that much wider consultation should take place with those parents who home educate their children and are registered with Hillingdon, seeking their views on the draft policy. Responses were received to this, which are summarised in the Committee's review report for information.
6. Based upon the legal advice set out in the Committee's report, Cabinet is recommended to approve the update policy, which has taken into full account the views of the variety of stakeholders involved.

Financial Implications

There are no direct cost implications arising from this report.

EFFECT ON RESIDENTS, SERVICE USERS & COMMUNITIES

What will be the effect of the recommendation?

The Elective Home Education Policy is a valuable document in supporting those parents that choose to home educate and the outcomes of the review will offer the prospect of developing the relationship with parents that home educate.

Consultation Carried Out or Required

The Committee took evidence from a range of witnesses as described in the review report and consulted all the parents that home educate their children and are registered with the Council.

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Corporate Finance

Corporate Finance has reviewed this report and confirms that there are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations above.

Legal

The Borough Solicitor has reviewed the Elective Home Education Policy and his comments have been included in the Report of the Education and Children's Services Policy Overview Committee.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.