

Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny

Dorset County Council



Date of Meeting	5 th July 2018
Officer	Sylvie Lord and David Alderson
Subject of Report	Elective Home Education Update
Executive Summary	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Dorset's ethos in relation to Elective Home Education (EHE) is that the best way to ensure that a child will receive a suitable education at home and be safeguarded is to engage parents and offer support wherever possible.2. The Local Authority (LA) maintains a register of home educated children. When the LA becomes aware of a child being home educated within Dorset, from whatever source, the child's details will be added to the EHE database. A parent enquiring about EHE will be directed through to the Alternative Provision team and given comprehensive advice about the implications of EHE. A written guidance document is also sent out.3. In line with the Elective Home Education Guidelines for Local Authorities (DfE, 2007 and 2013), parents are offered a visit from an EHE Visiting Officer after one month of becoming EHE. This is followed up with a further visit after 3 months and then annual visits thereafter. DCC employs four part-time EHE Visiting Officers who are all former senior teachers who visit those families who have requested a home visit.4. When schools inform the LA of a child moving into EHE, they are asked to explain any concerns they have about the child's wellbeing or safety. The EHE team share information with other agencies such as Children's Social Care, SEN and Health. When the LA has concerns about the quality of the home education received by any child, the EHE Adviser will write to the parents stating that this appears to be the case, giving the reasons for this opinion and inviting them to respond within 14 days. If satisfactory improvement is not made, parents will be informed that they need to apply for a school place.5. Currently, Dorset has 454 young people on its Elective Home Education register.

	<p>6. The Elective Home Education team has positive impact by the way in which it works effectively in partnership with other agencies and gives proactive advice and support.</p>
<p>Impact Assessment:</p> <p><i>Please refer to the protocol for writing reports.</i></p>	<p>Not currently applicable</p>
	<p>Use of Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dorset County Council data on Elective Home Education - Department for Education 2007 and 2013 Guidelines in relation to Elective Home Education
	<p>Budget:</p> <p>Costs of a part-time Elective Home Education Adviser and 4 part-time Elective Home Education Visiting Officers (see Sections 2 and 3 below)</p>
	<p>Risk Assessment:</p> <p>Medium Safeguarding Risks are mitigated as a result of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clear process for parents and schools for notifying the Local Authority when young people are being Electively Home Educated - Good, experienced Elective Home Education Officers trained in relation to the latest Safeguarding identifiers and latest Curriculum initiatives - Good partnership working with Safeguarding and Children's Social Care teams when safeguarding concerns are raised
	<p>Other Implications:</p> <p>There is intermittent media interest in Elective Home Education and Freedom of Information requests in relation to Dorset Elective Home Education numbers are sometimes made by Elective Home Education lobby groups. Dorset County Council Media team have been very good in supporting Officers in responding to this interest and requests.</p>
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>The recommendation is that Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee receives this Report as an update on the Dorset Elective Home Education process and numbers and the impact of the work of the Dorset Elective Home Education team.</p>
<p>Reason for Recommendation</p>	<p>Elective Home Education has featured as an area evaluated by OfSTED and Joint Targeted Area Inspections and it is therefore important that the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee is kept up to date in relation to Dorset's approach to Elective Home Education.</p>
<p>Appendices</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>Background Papers</p>	<p>Not applicable</p>

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1. Aims and purpose of this Report

This brief report aims to share the work of the Local Authority in relation to Elective Home Education in order to keep Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee up to date and informed.

2. Elective Home Education Process

Dorset's ethos in relation to Elective Home Education (EHE) is that the best way to ensure that a child will receive a suitable education at home and be safeguarded is to engage parents and offer support wherever possible.

- The Local Authority (LA) maintains a register of home educated children. When the LA becomes aware of a child being home educated within Dorset, from whatever source, the child's details will be added to the EHE database.
- A parent enquiring about EHE will be directed through to the Alternative Provision team and given comprehensive advice about the implications of EHE. A written guidance document is also sent out.
- The enquiry is captured on our database and, if no EHE notification is received, we follow up the school where the child is/was on roll to check they are still there.
- The EHE Adviser will write to the parent(s) within a week of their decision to Home Educate and send out an information pack and a registration form. These downloadable documents are available on the Dorset-for-You website.

3. Visiting Elective Home Education Officers

Parents are offered a visit from an EHE Visiting Officer after one month of becoming EHE. This is followed up with a further visit after 3 months and then annual visits thereafter. DCC employs four part-time EHE Visiting Officers who are all former senior teachers who visit those families who have requested a home visit. The Visiting Officer will write to parents within two weeks of any contact summarising matters discussed. Over 2016/17 academic year, 60% of parents took up this offer and the figure is currently similar for 2017/18. This work is carried out in line with the Elective Home Education Guidelines for Local Authorities (DfE, 2007 and 2013) which state in Section 2.15 that "Local authorities have general duties to make arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children (section 175 Education Act 2002 in relation to their functions as a local authority)...However, such powers do not bestow on local authorities the ability to see and question children subject to elective home education in order to establish whether they are receiving a suitable education".

4. Education concerns and how they are dealt with

If the LA still has concerns about the quality of the home education received by any child, the EHE Adviser will write to the parents stating that this appears to be the case, giving the reasons for this opinion and inviting them to respond within 14 days. If satisfactory improvement is not made, parents will be informed that they need to apply for a school place. This formal notice represents the first stage in the process and may lead to a School Attendance Order under Section 437, Education Act 1996. If the LA is not satisfied, the EHE Adviser will refer the case to the Children Missing from Education Officer. So far this academic year, 64 children have returned to mainstream education via this route.

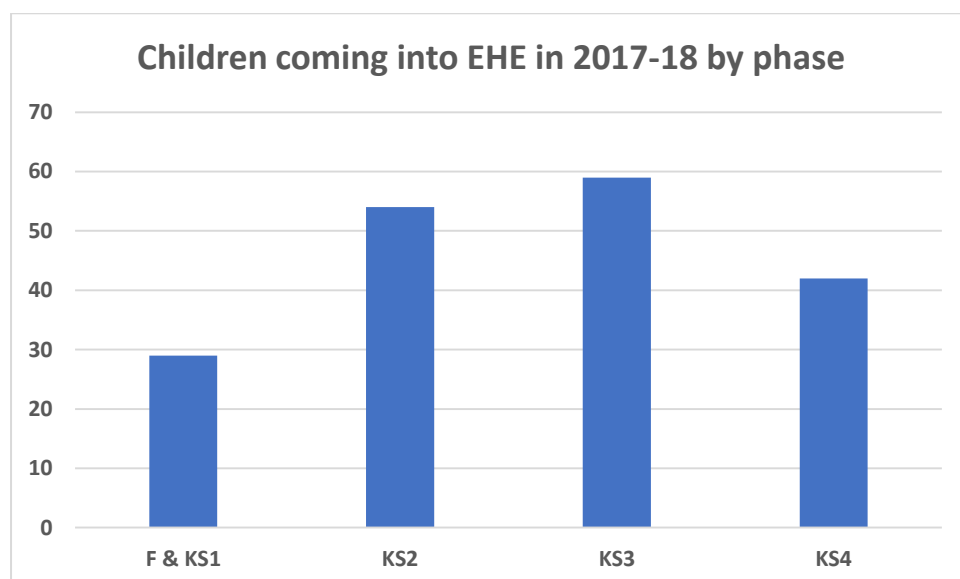
5. Safeguarding issues and how they are dealt with

When schools inform the LA of a child moving into EHE, they are asked to explain any concerns they have about the child's wellbeing or safety. The EHE team share information with other agencies such as Children's Social Care, SEN and Health. Visiting Officers are required to engage in regular bespoke safeguarding training and all do so. Any safeguarding concerns from home visits are reported immediately following Dorset policy and process.

6. Numbers of Children registered as Electively Home Educated in Dorset

On 22nd May 2018, Dorset had 454 children on the register as currently Home Educated. The graph below identifies the numbers of young people currently in Elective Home Education according to their ages in school-based phases. So far this academic year, 184 children have moved into Elective Home Education.

There has been a steady increase in Electively Home Educated young people in Dorset since 2012/13. There is an increase in KS4 pupils - some of this is due to children staying in EHE throughout their school life. There have also been an increasing number of children withdrawn from EHE back in to the secondary sector - 68 children in 2012/13 compared with 108 so far in 2017/18.



7. What impact does the Dorset Elective Home Education team have?

- Works effectively in partnership with other agencies to safeguard young people moving in to and actually in Elective Home Education
- Gives proactive advice and support to potential Elective Home Educators in order to ensure that parents/carers are making a carefully considered decision
- Gives good advice and support to Elective Home Educators based on safeguarding and teaching experience and good Elective Home Education practice

Nick Jarman
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June 2018