

Safeguarding

Local authorities have the same safeguarding responsibilities for children educated at home as for other children.

Home-educated children are NOT automatically 'vulnerable' but some children educated at home do fall into that category, and evidence from many local authorities is that the proportion who do is increasing.

Unsuitable / inadequate education can also impair a child's intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development, and may therefore bring child protection duties into play. Steps are taken to ensure information on such children is shared.

Locally, the education at home group work with police to visit those not seen.

What is Elective Home Education?

Elective home education is a term used to describe a choice by parents to provide education for their children at home - or at home and in some other way which they choose - instead of sending them to school full-time. This is different to education provided by a local authority otherwise than at a school - for example, tuition for children who are too ill to attend school.

Educating a child at home is a rewarding but challenging task. Parents may choose to engage private tutors to assist in providing a suitable education.

Parents take on financial responsibility for the cost of EHE, including the cost of any external assistance used such as tutors, parent groups or part-time alternative provision. Examination costs are also the responsibility of parents.

Reasons for EHE

Reasons are varied any may include ideological / philosophical views, religious / cultural beliefs, dissatisfaction with the school system, bullying, health, as a short term intervention, attendance, special education needs or the child's behaviour, familial reasons or as a stop gap whilst awaiting a different school place.

These various reasons for home education are not mutually exclusive. For some children, several of these factors might apply.

Parental rights and responsibilities

Parents of compulsory school age children must ensure they receive efficient full time education that is suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs they may have.

Education does not need to include any particular subjects or have reference to the national curriculum and there is no requirement to enter children for public examinations.

There is no obligation to follow the 'school day' or have holidays which mirror those observed by schools.

Elective Home Education

Suitable education

It is difficult for the Local Authority to know which children are not receiving suitable education without asking parents to provide details about the education they are providing.

To make sure the Local Authority carry out these duties, the local education at home group request that parents provide an outline of what education is to be provided and how and examples of the child's learning or a report detailing the education that the child has received / is receiving.

Specialist officers meet with parent(s) and the child at an early stage to discuss proposals and provide helpful information.

Local Authority responsibilities

The Local Authority has a duty to know (as far as it can do so) who the children are in their area who are not receiving suitable education and intervene if it appears this is not being provided.

Where it appears parents are not providing suitable education, the Local Authority will try to address the situation informally.

If there is no satisfactory resolution, the Local Authority will serve a notice on the parent requiring them to satisfy the Local Authority of suitable education. If not satisfied, a school attendance order naming a school where the parent must register their child is served. Non-compliance with the order is a criminal matter.

Local Education at Home Group

Durham's education at home group includes specialist officers who are able to provide families with tailored information to meet a child's needs.

Specialist officers include SEND casework, improving progressions, an education welfare officer, a vulnerable groups education support officer, children's services, health, officers from the gypsy roma and traveller service, equalities team, housing and the police.

The Local Authority's education development service's subject Specialists are able to offer guidance about specific subject areas, examinations and awarding bodies.