



Report to Children, Young People and Family Support Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee

Report of: Requested by the Committee

Subject: Elective Home Education in Sheffield

Author of Report: Venetta Buchanan, EHE Lead

Summary:

Members received a report on Elective Home Education in November 2017. A request was made for a follow up report addressing further specific issues.

Type of item: The report author should tick the appropriate box

Reviewing of existing policy	
Informing the development of new policy	
Statutory consultation	
Performance / budget monitoring report	
Cabinet request for scrutiny	
Full Council request for scrutiny	
Community Assembly request for scrutiny	
Call-in of Cabinet decision	
Briefing paper for the Scrutiny Committee	✓
Other	

The Scrutiny Committee is being asked to:

Consider and comment on the content of the report and issues raised.

Background Papers:

House of Commons Briefing Paper
Home Education in England
February 2018

Category of Report: OPEN

Elective Home Education in Sheffield

1. Introduction/Context

1.1 The responsibility for a child's education rests solely with the parent. Parents may fulfil this responsibility by sending their children to school or providing an 'education otherwise' – generally referred to as elective home education (EHE). The parental right to educate at home is endorsed by Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act which states -

"The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable -

(a) to his age, ability and aptitude, and

(b) to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise."

The process by which parents assume personal responsibility for educational provision is fairly straightforward; if their child attends a mainstream school the parent merely needs to write a letter to school informing them of their decision to educate at home. The school then has a duty to inform the local authority and remove the child from its roll. The only exception to this is when the child is registered at a special school. In this case, the parent writes to school regarding their intention to home educate and the school informs the SEN department. A review meeting is then held to discuss the proposal. If the child has never attended school, parents are not required to inform anyone of their decision to keep their child at home.

Whilst parents removing their children from school assume personal responsibility for subsequent provision, local authorities have a duty to ensure parents fulfil their obligation. Central to this task is the requirement to confirm that children educated at home are receiving a suitable and efficient full time education which meets their needs. However, current guidance states that parents are under no obligation to meet with the Home Education Advisor or routinely provide access to their children or their children's work. Other than the need to provide a suitable and efficient education there are no basic requirements or specific standards parents must follow. Government guidance for local authorities clearly states that parents are not required to:

- teach the National Curriculum
- provide a broad and balanced education
- have a timetable
- have premises equipped to any particular standard
- set hours during which education will take place
- have any specific qualifications make detailed plans in advance
- observe school hours, days or terms
- give formal lessons
- mark work done by their child
- formally assess progress or set development objectives

- reproduce school type peer group socialisation match school-based, age-specific standards

Whilst current government guidance does not specify what parents are required to do when educating at home, it does state that the LA may reasonably expect provision to include -

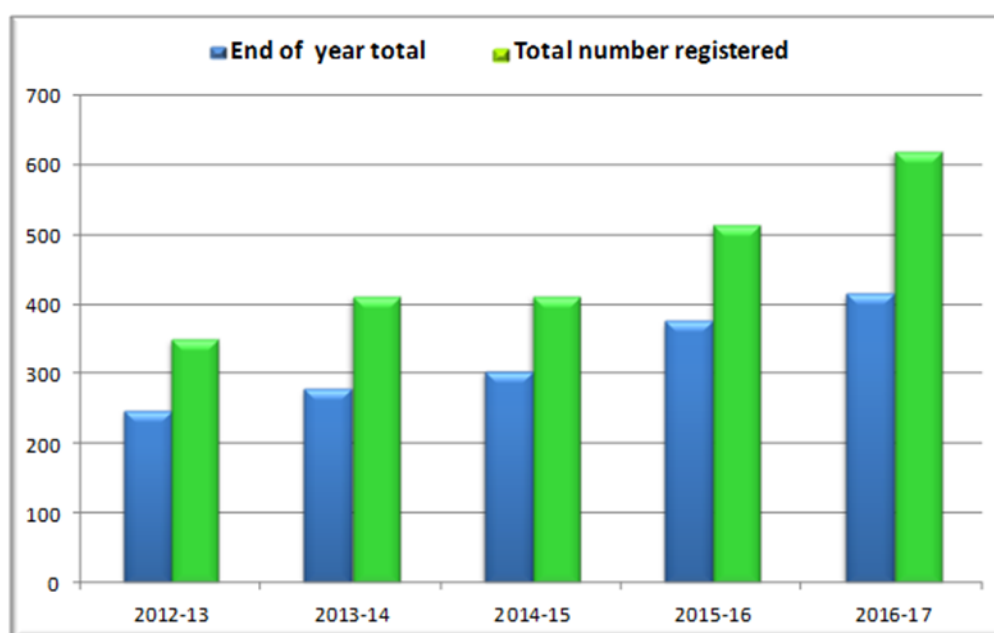
- consistent involvement of parents or other significant carers
- recognition of the child's needs, attitudes and aspirations
- opportunities for the child to be stimulated by their learning experiences
- access to resources/materials required to provide home education for the child - such as paper and pens, books and libraries, arts and crafts materials, physical activity, ICT and the opportunity for appropriate interaction with other children and other adults

Earlier this year the government agreed to revise its guidance relating to home education with a view to clarifying the responsibilities of parents and local authorities. Draft guidance is currently being produced for consultation.

2. Main Report

2.1 The number of children educated at home has been increasing annually both locally and nationally for the past 10 years. During 2016-17, 619 children were registered with the EHE service at some point in the academic year - an increase of 21% from 2015-16 – with 415 children registered at the end of the year. Over the past 5 years the total number of children registered with the EHE service has increased by 77%. There are currently 513 children registered as home educated.

Figure 1: End of year totals



The majority of children educated at home are white British (48%) and there are slightly more females (51%) than males (49%). EHE children are distributed throughout the city, with a higher incidence in S5 followed by S6, S8 and S9. (Figure 2)

The EHE population is a fluid one, with children entering into and leaving home education throughout the academic year. In 2016-17 over 200 children left home education, the majority of which had been registered with the service for less than 6 months. (Figure 3)

Figure 2: Current EHE students' by post code

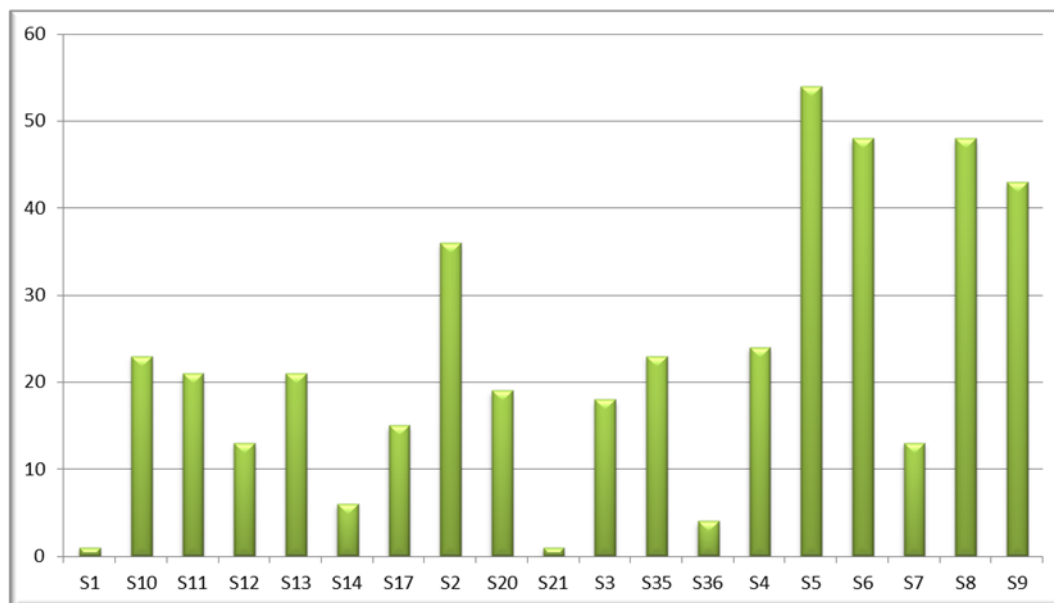
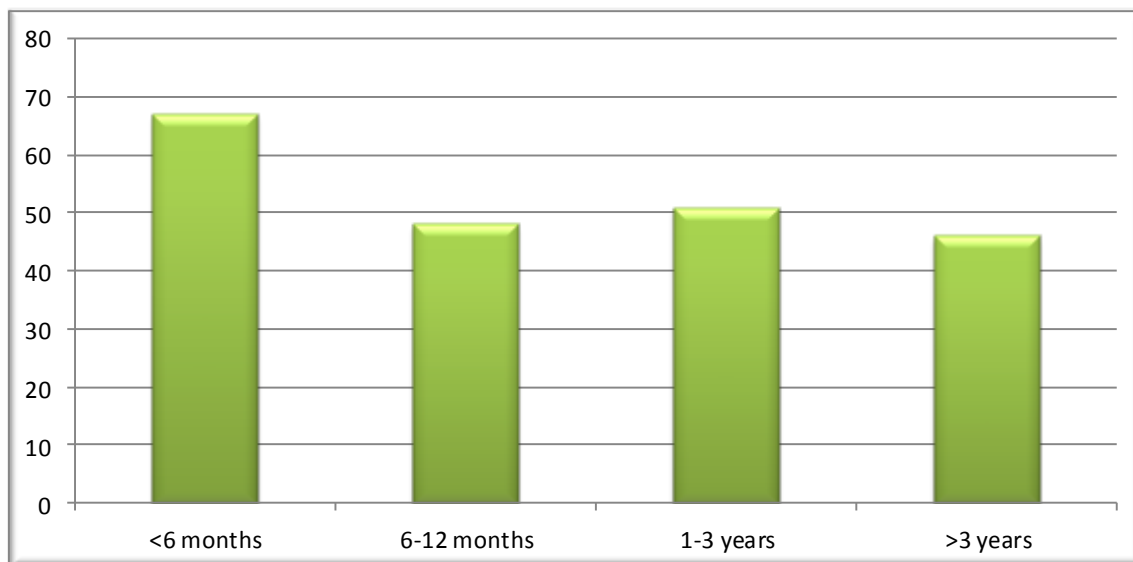


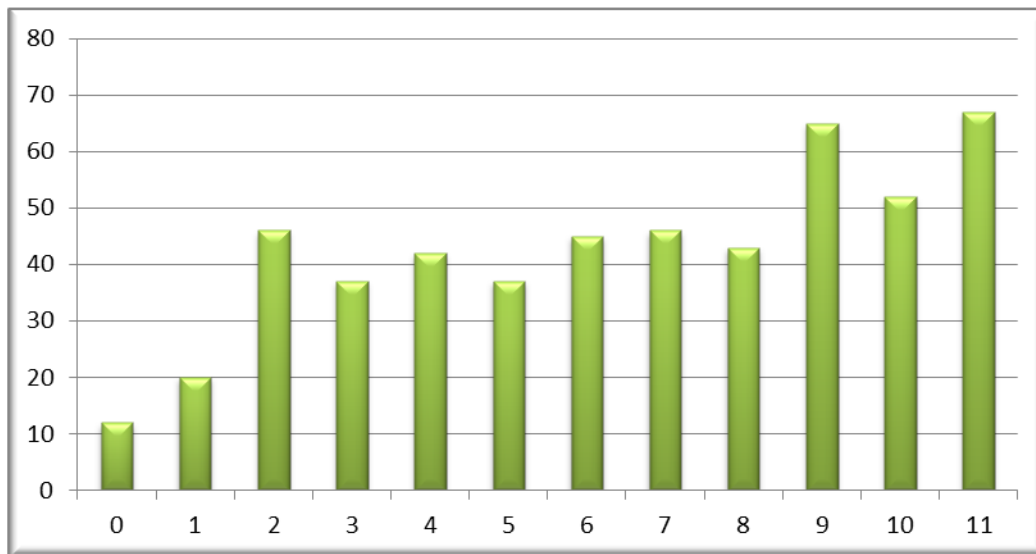
Figure 3: EHE leavers 2016-17



The majority of the current cohort of students are secondary school age with 274 students across key stage 3 and 4. The majority of students are Y11, closely followed by Y9. This trend of increased numbers in key stage 4 is in line with other local authorities. The fact that a significant number of students return to mainstream schooling within 6 months of parents electing to educate at home

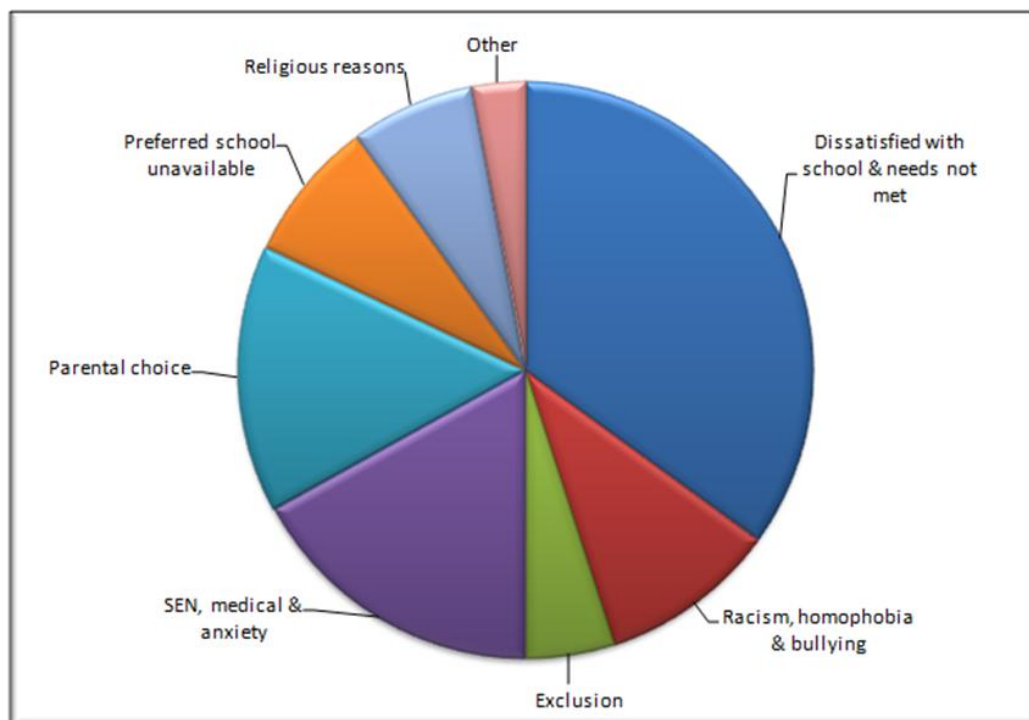
indicates that elective home education is not always chosen for the right reasons and the Authority must continue to provide challenge and support to parents.

Figure 4: Current EHE students' year groups



Parents are asked to indicate their reasons for educating at home at the point of de-registration

Figure 5: Reasons for EHE 2016-17



2.2 Case studies

The following are actual examples of where parents have elected to educate at home:

Case study 1

Child A was deregistered from key stage 1. EHE had been considered as an option during nursery. Child A has a younger sibling who will also be educated at home. The family submitted curriculum information and we have met on two occasions and provided signposting and further information. EHE was an ideological preference and provision is full time and suitable.

Case study 2

Child B was de-registered from key stage 4 to avoid a potential permanent exclusion due to behavioural issues. Attendance was less than 30% and this child was in receipt of SEN support. The family felt they were misinformed and unable to provide an education at home. I liaised with the family, other professionals and school. Child A was returned to school under the 12 week agreement. Under the agreement, Headteachers have agreed to re-admit a student who was removed from roll to be educated at home, if they wish to return within 12 weeks.

3. What does this mean for the people of Sheffield?

- 3.1 The reasons behind parents electing to educate at home are complex. On the one hand there is a significant population in Sheffield that has a philosophical commitment to home education and provide a suitable education for their children. There are other parents who might feel that home education is their only alternative where they have become disaffected with the school system or the provision that their children receive.
- 3.2 Elective Home Education is a right. The Lead Teacher works closely with the EHE community and is supportive of this right. Sometimes, parents choose to home educate but realise quickly that they cannot provide a suitable education for their child. Monitoring the reasons behind parental decisions to home educate also enables the authority to identify any shortfalls within the education system that that can be improved.

4. Recommendation

- 4.1 Members are asked to receive and note the report. If any further information or analysis is required Officers would be happy to report back as required,