

# Learning on a Page: Elective Home Education

## What is Elective Home Education?

Elective Home Education (EHE) is a phrase used by the Department of Education to describe when parents choose to provide education for their children at home. All children have a right to education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. The responsibility for children to receive education rests with their parents. However, this does not have to be in a school setting.

Parents therefore have a right to home educate and do so for a number of reasons. These reasons can be philosophical, related to the child's health, dissatisfaction with the 'system' or due to religious or cultural beliefs.

## Content of Elective Home Education

There are no specific rules or legal requirements as to the content of home education as long as it is suitable to a child's age, ability, aptitude and special educational needs.

This means content does not have to include any particular subjects, follow the national curriculum or a child be entered for formal exams like GSCSEs. There is no obligation to follow a 'school day' or take holidays at the same time as school settings.

Many families that home educate do follow an academic structure based on topics and with a timetable to help plan a child's day. For families that take a more flexible approach it should not be assumed that this is less satisfactory.

## Regulation & Monitoring

Local Authorities have no formal powers or duties to monitor the provision of education at home. However, they have a statutory duty (under s.436A of the Education Act 1996) to make arrangements to establish the identities, so far as it is possible to do so, of children in their area who are not receiving a suitable education.

Local Authorities should; seek to offer guidance to all known home educating families in their area about their rights and obligations; provide advice on good practice and available resources for parents who request it and make contact with home educating families at least on an annual basis.

If it appears a child in their area is not receiving a suitable education Local Authorities must make contact with families to assure themselves and this may include serving a notice on the family to provide information. Local Authorities can also issue School Attendance Orders if they continue to believe that a child is not in receipt of a suitable education at home.

## Why is it Important to Know about Elective Home Education?

Home education can be a **positive** choice for families with children receiving a successful and suitable education. Consequently, there is no evidence to suggest a direct causal link between home education and increased safeguarding risks.

**However**, professionals do not necessarily see a home educated child on a regular basis. This can cause particular vulnerabilities for a small minority of home educated children. **Plymouth** and **national** safeguarding case reviews that feature home education have highlighted the following learning themes.....

**Invisibility of Children:** Some families already struggling with a range of issues or trauma may use home education as a means of avoiding the attention and support of services. Children can become invisible, especially if the family also moves across areas. **In one case a young person had not left their home or seen a professional for 3 years.**

**Neglect:** The levels of neglect can be significant for children home educated by parents/carers who struggle with their own complex trauma, e.g. adult mental health. **In one such case a child entered into a primary school setting, having been home educated for an extended period, barking like a dog, crawling on the floor and unable to communicate.**

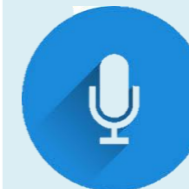
## Non-Engagement & Professional

**Curiosity:** Patterns of family non-engagement add to a child's vulnerability. For example, families may not respond to Local Authorities attempts to see evidence that a suitable education is being provided. It may be that parents request to rearrange appointments regularly or answer a phone call following a period of no contact. Given parents are under no legal obligation to have contact with Local Authorities, or provide information requested, a false reassurance can develop that a child is receiving a suitable education when they are not.

Showing **Professional Curiosity** can help gain a true picture of what like is life for a child and gather a more accurate picture of family engagement.

## Learning into Practice

**Be the Voice of the Child:** Always think 'What does that child need me to do?' as they may be in a home education system



that has lost sight of them and living in a family that is struggling with a range of complex issues. They may need you to be their voice at a time in their lives when they have very little contact with professionals or the wider community. So, if you are aware that a child isn't in

school during usual school hours ask yourself why not? Ask the family in a polite way 'How are the children being educated?' If you are not in a position to ask you can notify and get advice from the **Education Welfare Department** on **01752 307405** [educationwelfare@plymouth.gov.uk](mailto:educationwelfare@plymouth.gov.uk)

**Be Curious:** As well as being the voice of children we need to also be curious. Professional curiosity helps keep children safe so exploring



situations, asking open respectful questions, following up information, not taking things at face value and checking the accuracy of information is essential. **This is especially important if there have been previous safeguarding concerns and a family**

**requests to home educate.** Lift yourself out of a situation and notice any patterns in family engagement, delays in contact or impact on the child's development. For example you might notice a child's development is significantly harmed during times of home education but improves when in a school setting. If this pattern is a consistent one and a parent repeatedly requests to home educate their child this would cause concern. **Good reflective supervision or reflective conversations with colleagues can help us be curious.**

**Be Informed:** This **Learning on a Page** aims to improve awareness of elective home education and the learning from case



reviews. It's really important we understand and are informed on the guidance and arrangements relating to elective home education as it's often an area not widely known about. We've given you the key headlines as part of

this Learning on a Page to help make sure we all have a shared baseline knowledge **but for more detailed information go to...**

[\*\*Plymouth City Council Home Education Information and Policy\*\*](#)

[\*\*Department for Education Elective Home Education Guidance for Local Authorities\*\*](#)

[\*\*Department for Education Elective Home Education Guidance for Parents\*\*](#)