

Practice guidance for professionals working with children who are Electively Home Educated (EHE)

What is Elective Home Education?

It is the term used to describe a choice by parents to provide education for their children at home or in some other way in 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/academy, for example, tuition for children who are too ill to attend school (EOTAS – Education Other Than at School).

Section 7 of the Education Act (1996) states that the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education, suitable to age, ability, aptitude, and to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. Where parents have chosen to home educate, Barnsley Council wants the home educated child to have a positive experience and aims to achieve this by developing positive, supportive relationships with parents and by working together, to ensure the provision is in the best educational interests of the child. Parents are solely responsible for ensuring their child receives a suitable education through EHE.

The Education Welfare Service is responsible for ensuring pupils receiving EHE are registered as EHE and that the education they receive is suitable. We ensure registration by working in partnership with schools and other professionals to identify those choosing EHE and we assess the suitability of education by undertaking an annual visit to the family home to assess the work provided. Professionals must be aware that parents can refuse this visit and produce evidence of education only for assessment.

The Education Welfare Service strives to establish positive relationships with families choosing home education. Where this is achieved, it enables us to better understand parents' educational provision and preferences, offer them support, and provide a sound basis for investigation if we receive information that a suitable education is not being provided.

How do we work together to ensure children that are in receipt of EHE are safeguarded?

All professionals have a duty to be curious about how children are engaged in education, and they should discuss this with parents' carers and with young people as part of their assessment. Engagement in education is a protective factor that enables young people to thrive, develop and reach positive outcomes.

If a child is electively home educated, professionals must assure themselves that the child is registered as EHE by checking with the Education Welfare Service by emailing EHE@barnsley.gov.uk.

If professionals are working with a family who are considering EHE, professionals must work with the school to remove any barriers to learning in the school-based environment. Professionals can seek additional support from Education Welfare Service by contacting EHE@barnsley.gov.uk. If intervention fails and parents continue to choose EHE, professionals must ensure that the Education Welfare Service are notified of this decision by contacting the EHE inbox.

If a child is electively home educated, professionals must consider as part of their assessment the impact of the child not being seen in a school setting. Professional must assess whether EHE increases the vulnerability to the child and if it does, they must make this clear when requesting support across the thresholds. Early Help assessments and safeguarding referrals should reference that the child is not seen in school so that this added vulnerability can be accounted for.

When working as a single agency all professionals must consider that they may be the only professional that meets the child regularly, therefore their records should reflect that the child is EHE and that the impact of this has been assessed as part of their intervention. We encourage professionals to seek permission to see the child alone so that their voice can be captured.

In Barnsley, we want all children to succeed and meet their outcomes, therefore we expect professionals to be curious about why parents have chosen EHE, and we expect professionals to work with parents and children to remove the barriers to returning to school based education. This work should be reviewed and continuously revisited throughout professional involvement as EHE does not have to be a long-term choice for parents and children.

Professionals working with children who are EHE must capture and record their voice to understand if the choice of the child has been considered when EHE has been chosen by the parent. Professionals must also understand the reasoning for this choice and assess if this decision is in the best interests of the child and not because the child and family feel it is something they must do. It is possible that they feel they have no other available options or because support has not been provided to remain engaged in school-based education. In instances where there are unresolved issues, professionals should work together to find a suitable pathway to return to education. Education Welfare Service will support agencies to negotiate this pathway, they can be contacted for support via EHE@barnsley.gov.uk

If professionals are working together at an early intervention level, they must utilise the EHA (Early Help Assessment) and TAF (Team Around the Family) action plans to ensure that partnership working is effectively implemented, and intervention is tracked to prevent drift and delay.

If a child has an EHA, CIN (Child in Need) or CP (Child Protection) plan, education must be a feature in the discussions and planning. If the education provision is EHE we must consider how this has the potential to isolate the child and family. Safety planning must be in place to assure professionals that the child is seen regularly as the child is not being seen through mainstream school attendance. Professionals must include within this planning an assessment on whether they feel EHE is in the child's best interests and what steps are being taken to remove barriers to return to school-based learning if appropriate. Good multiagency working should evidence that all areas of the child's development have been considered.

If an EHE child has an EHA, CIN, or CP plan this must be kept as part of professional's record keeping with the most up to date minutes of meetings and action plans. If the chair of the most recent meeting has not distributed these promptly, all professionals have the responsibility to request these to effectively contribute to meetings and plans.

If a Child who is EHE is to be stepped down from CP or CIN planning, education must feature within the stepdown plan. It might be appropriate to step down plans more gradually as the impact will not be regularly monitored through attendance at school.

Professionals working with families who are EHE should discuss the implications of this within their case supervision and the supervisor should be aware of and help the worker consider the additional vulnerabilities EHE can pose. The implication of EHE should be considered within the wider context and the supervisor should question and support the case worker to consider this. An understanding of access to education, what this looks like for the child and how they integrate with their community and peers because of being removed from school-based learning is essential.

All professional's working with school age children should engage in EHE training which is delivered through POD (Personal Online Development) termly.