

Report to	Performance Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting	07 March 2024
Lead Member / Officer	Gill German (Lead Member for Education, Children and Young People) and Geraint Davies (Head of Education)
Head of Service	Geraint Davies, Head of Education
Report authors	Jayne Williams (Electively Home Educated Advisory Teacher) and Geraint Davies (Head of Education)
Title	Supporting and monitoring the delivery of Elective Home Education.

1. What is the report about?

1.1. To examine the Authority's policies and procedures in relation to supporting and monitoring the delivery of Elective Home Education (EHE)

2. What is the reason for making this report?

2.1 Ensuring that the Council meets its statutory responsibilities with regards to pupils who elect to be educated at home, whilst also ensuring they are appropriately supported and safeguarded.

3. What are the Recommendations?

3.1. Scrutiny are invited to discuss the details of this report and to identify any matters raised that require further clarity or examination in the future.

4. Report details

Context

- 4.1. Home education is a term used when parents educate their children at home instead of sending them to school. Home education reflects a diversity of approaches and allows for an individualised approach for children tailored to the specific needs and interest of each child. Many home educating parents feel that they are able to meet their children's individual needs and learning styles more effectively than in a classroom.
- 4.2. Children who are home educated are not required to follow the Curriculum for Wales or any other specified curriculum or meet criteria for the number of learning hours. The home education approach can be anywhere on a continuum from a formal, structured, schedule-based through to autonomous or child-led education.
- 4.3. Statutory guidance for EHE was finalised in June 2023 to support Local Authorities in exercising their functions under section 436A of the Education Act 1996. This places a duty on Local Authorities to make arrangements to establish the identities of children in their area who are of compulsory school age, who are not registered learners at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school.

Responsibilities

- 4.4 The responsibility of the parent is to provide a suitable, efficient, full-time education, in line with the child's age, ability and aptitude.
- 4.5 The role of the LA is to identify children or young people who are NOT receiving a suitable, efficient, full-time education. It is not our role to provide the education, but we can support. The ways in which we fulfil this role can take on many different forms. The most important is by engaging in a positive, supportive manner with the families and building a relationship so we can identify what learning is taking place and its suitability.

Supporting families

- 4.6. Before Learners are taken off the school register, the [Welsh Government Statutory Guidance](#) should be shared with families in order that they know what is expected of

them to Educate at Home. Once the families move over to EHE, the Denbighshire Protocol, updated in February 2024 (See Appendix 1) is sent out to families to support them in getting started.

4.7. All EHE families are offered a home visit to discuss the provision taking place. This is an effective way to link with all families and is a great opportunity to meet the learners and hear from their point of view. It also gives learners a chance to explain what they have been learning in their own words. Families do not have to accept a home visit. Some families prefer to send in an educational report or a third-party endorsement report.

4.8. Many families enquire about where to begin and where to find work and a support sheet with examples of various websites, workbooks, and apps to support learning is available. Families are also signposted to various groups and gatherings within the local community in order for them to make connections and be part of a wider network. There is also a specific area on the DCC website that supports families to navigate through to access the most up-to-date information and contact details (Appendix 2).

Denbighshire Profile and Funding

4.9. Currently Denbighshire have 158 learners registered as EHE. This is a noticeable increase since August 2016 where the LA had 94 learners registered as EHE. Numbers of EHE learners can fluctuate during the school year.

4.10. Every year the local authority (LA) are awarded a Welsh Government grant to support the learning of EHE families. In October 2023, out of the 141 families registered at that time, 76 showed interest and were supported financially. The most popular item being gift vouchers to purchase learning resources (75 vouchers), followed closely by the Theatre gift voucher (63) and the Denbighshire Leisure pass (62). We also contributed towards exam fees and subscription costs for online educational programs.

Non engagement

4.11. Unfortunately, as in line with other LAs, Denbighshire have a small number of families who either refuse or are reluctant to engage. As an LA, we actively try to engage with these families through a structured process of specific letters that are distributed at specific times. Each of these letters escalate with each step. In between these letters, phone calls, emails and unannounced visits take place to try and engage and support the families. The EHE officer works closely with the Education Social Work Team in these cases and to ensure that any safeguarding concerns are dealt with promptly.

4.12. If there is still no engagement, the LA can serve a School Attendance Order which has 3 stages and could result in prosecution.

Partnership with others

4.13. An up-to-date flowchart has been shared with all schools across Denbighshire to ensure a smooth transition from School to Elective Home Education. All schools follow this flowchart successfully and information is transferred effectively to the LA for when learners come off the school register. The EHE Officer has strong relationships with schools and makes regular contact with schools to offer support where needed and share good practice.

4.14. The LA EHE officer is also a member of a regional team of EHE officers who meet termly to discuss topics of concern or to assist one another with any queries. Sharing practice across the 6 LAs within North Wales is an effective way to further support families. There is also a national team of EHE officers who meet online with Welsh Government every term to discuss updates on a national basis.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Plan 2022 to 2027: The Denbighshire We Want?

5.1. This area of work contributes towards making Denbighshire a healthier and happier place where young people want to live and work and have the skills to do so. It also contributes to make Denbighshire a place where young people can learn and make good progress in their skills, learning in a fair and safe environment. This will help ensure all learners have the best start in life and can realise their full potential.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

- 6.1. The Local Authority continues to utilise Welsh Government Grants to support the growing number of families choosing to Electively Home Educate. Due to rising numbers, a full time Teacher has been employed to monitor and support EHE.
- 6.2. Due to the increasing number of EHE learners with additional learning needs (ALN), the EHE officer works closely alongside the ALN team, often accompanying ALN Advisory Teachers to conduct Annual Reviews of individual development plans (IDPs) and Statements.
- 6.3. Children's Services also work alongside EHE to support in various Home Visits to families who can sometimes be more difficult to engage with.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

- 7.1 There is no decision or proposal for change required and therefore a Well-being Impact Assessment is not required.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

- 8.1. A presentation to the Chair of Clusters to explain the flowchart for parents and schools was well received and was distributed well through the clusters. This presentation was also delivered to Governors to increase awareness and understanding.
- 8.2. Feedback on the new Statutory Guidance was asked for during the consultation phase which was welcomed and fed back to Welsh Government.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

- 9.1 Costs are met through the Equity element of the Local authority Education Grant.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

- 10.1. Some families are reluctant to engage with the LA due to various circumstances. Denbighshire is in line with the national trend of a rise of non - engagement. We

continue to try and engage with all families, as best we can. We work closely with agencies to whom we signpost families to such as Careers Wales, The Transition Team, Health, Third party Endorsement Companies, CAMHS and Children's Services.

11. Power to make the decision.

11.1 Section 436A of the Education Act 1996

11.2 Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 and Section 7 of the Council's Constitution outlines Scrutiny's powers with respect of policy development, review and performance matters.