

ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION

DRAFT WORKING DOCUMENT

CHOOSING TO EDUCATE YOUR CHILD AT HOME

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS/CARERS

**Produced by Staffordshire County Council in consultation
with members of the Home Educating Community
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1. INTRODUCTION

The legal responsibility for a child's education rests with his/her parents. Parents can meet this responsibility in a variety of ways: sending them to state school, sending them to private school, or home educating their children are the 3 most common ways. Staffordshire County Council aims to work in partnership with home educating parents and this booklet is designed to offer information to any parent considering home education.

The decision to educate your child at home is an important one. You will have the freedom to offer activities and styles of learning that are specific to your child, you will not be constrained by terms or hours of schooling but you will also be responsible for ensuring that your child receives a proper and suitable education. Home education can potentially take up a great deal of parents' time, energy and money, so you are advised to think very carefully before you make any decision and to talk to other home educating parents.

You may wish to consider the following:

- Your child's interests and personality – some children will need lots of interaction with other people, others will prefer more time alone; some will learn best by initiating all their own learning, others will thrive on the interactions with a tutor, peer or parent.
- The likely costs involved – books, equipment, exam fees, tutors, loss of parental income
- How to provide the social interaction that your child may need, such as meeting and mixing with new friends, specialists in a particular field of interest and interesting people who can expand their horizons
- How to provide activities such as group work, access to special facilities and equipment e.g. for science or sport, trips and visits

Many parents choose to home educate for positive educational and/or lifestyle reasons. If you are considering opting for home education as a result of a disagreement with the school which your child attends, it would be advisable for you to try and resolve the problems with the school before deciding on home education. Local Support Teams at the Council can help you with this if you require support.

The contact details for some of the national and local organisations that support home educators can be found at the back of this booklet.

Choosing to educate your child at home is not a once and for all decision, and neither is sending your child to school. You can always change your mind. The important thing is to think carefully before making any decision and be aware of the impact on your lifestyle including your employment, entitlement to welfare payments and other family needs.

Abbreviations used in this booklet:
EHE – Elective Home Education

LA – Local Authority
SEND – Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
Deschooling – transition from school to home
EHEFP – Elective Home Education Family Partnership, arms length department at SCC.

Elective Home Education is the term used by the Department for Education to describe parents' decisions to provide education for their children at home instead of sending them to school. This is different to home tuition provided by an LA or education provided by an LA other than at school.

Home education is an option that any family may consider for their children. The reasons for deciding on this approach are many, as are the styles of education undertaken. The following list is by no means exhaustive but does contain examples of some of the common reasons for home educating:

- a lifestyle choice
- religious or cultural beliefs
- philosophical or ideological views
- distance or access to a local school
- dissatisfaction with the current education system
- bullying
- a child's unwillingness or inability to go to school due to anxiety or mental health issues
- as a short term solution for a particular concern
- special educational needs
- parents' desire for a closer relationship with their children

Home education comes in many different formats and can look different in every family.

Insert the type ups of flip charts here or refer to appendix? Maybe a summary here?

2. PARENTS

Parents are legally responsible for ensuring that their children receive a suitable education.

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 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, aptitude, and*
- b) to any special educational needs he may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise”.*

Parents who choose to home educate are not required to register or seek approval or agreement of the Local Authority. If a child has previously been registered at a school, parents must follow the deregistration process and the

school is required to notify the LA. Staffordshire County Council offers a range of support to home educating families, see section 7 for more details.

Home educating is often a learning process for parents as well as their children. Children who have been to school will usually benefit from a period of 'deschooling' – time to transition to being educated differently, e.g. maybe having greater say in their activities or styles of learning, not needing to know the learning outcomes of every activity before they start etc. – parents often take longer to adjust than their children. Most parents will have completed their education at school and it can be difficult in the beginning to see the learning that is happening for your child when said learning doesn't look like school. Take your time, be gentle on yourself and your child. Every big life change takes time to settle into, home educating is no different. There are very many gatherings and activities arranged within the home education community around the County (details of the signposting group can be found at the back of this booklet), support and interaction with other home educators is often just as important for parents as it is for children.

The type of educational activity can be varied and flexible. It is recognised that home-educating parents offer a personalised curriculum but are **NOT** required to:

- teach the National Curriculum
- 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 lesson
- 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

Parents are entitled to, and often do, make use of the services of private tutors. It is the parents responsibility to ensure that any tutors they use are suitable to have access to their children. The LA can offer support / signposting for parents wanting to carry out Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, see section 6 for further details.

3. DEREGISTRATION

Mainstream Schools: Parents are required to notify the school in writing when withdrawing a child, registered at the school, for EHE. For children with a Statement or an EHCP, the LA should be notified as well in order to amend the Statement or EHCP.

See Appendix 1.

Special Schools: Children educated at Special Schools are done so under the terms of an agreement between the parents/carers and the LA (Statement / EHCP). Both parties must agree changes to that contract in writing. As a result of this, consent from the LA is required to deregister pupils currently educated at a special school.
See Appendix 2.

4. SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITIES

On receiving notification from a parent / carer that a child is being deregistered, schools must remove the child from the school roll, complete a school exit form and inform the LA that the child is no longer registered at the school.

Schools are not permitted to promote elective home education as a solution to attendance concerns / high levels of absence, as an alternative to school exclusion or because of any Special Educational Needs or Disabilities.

5. LOCAL AUTHORITY SUPPORT RESPONSIBILITIES

- Information and signposting can be provided to home educating families
- If you need proof of home education, the LA will write an official letter confirming a families home educating status to enable them to make use of discounts offered on amenities and resources
- The EHEFP holds periodic meetings with home educating families in Staffordshire (both known and unknown families welcome, first names only will be asked for to enable the meetings to run smoothly)
- Home educating families are able to access the SEND Family Partnership and access to EHCPs / other specialist services is maintained / made available where necessary
- The LA can put you in touch with other Children's Support Services e.g. Admissions, GRT Teachers, CAMHS, Autism Outreach Team
- The Libraries Service offers a home educators membership – no fines levied, ability to loan more books
- An examination centre is provided for home educating families that can arrange SEND support for exams e.g. extra time, a scribe made available when necessary
- SEND Family Partnership offer a range of workshops for parents, all are available to home educating parents, some are specifically for home educating parents
- Annual celebration of EHE by SCC
- Advise parents on how to go about taking up appropriate references or undertaking Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks on tutors / service providers for their children

Child Employment

Regulations regarding Child Employment apply to all children of compulsory school age, whether they attend a school or are home educated. Children may not work until they reach the age of 13 years. Before a child is able to start any form of employment, he/she must obtain a Work Permit. A Child Employment leaflet for employers and parents and an application form for a work permit can be obtained by contacting the Child Employment office on 01785 278965.

Children in Entertainment

Regulations regarding children in entertainment apply to all children of compulsory school age whether they attend a school or are home educated. A Performance Licence is required if a child is engaged in paid work in the theatre, in a film or television performance, in modeling or sport. Further information is available from the Children in Entertainment Office on 01785 278927.

6. WHEN THERE ARE CONCERNS

There are times when not everything goes to plan, when additional support is required. Similarly, there are concerned neighbours or members of the public who are not aware that school is not compulsory (although education is). If it appears to the LA that a child of compulsory school age in their area is not receiving a suitable education, they have a legal responsibility to look into the situation further. This means that if there are concerns about the education of your child, perhaps as a result of a member of the public reporting them as being out and about during school hours, or a concerned professional you have contact with, the LA will need to contact you and ask for information.

The Education Act 1996 places supportive legal duties upon the Local Authority. Section 437 states:

“If it appears to a local education authority that a child of compulsory school age in their area is not receiving suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise, they shall serve a notice in writing on the parent requiring him to satisfy them within the period specified in the notice that the child is receiving such education.”

Sometimes, the information provided will be as simple as confirming that your child is indeed home educated and not playing truant, other times information regarding the education itself will be necessary.

“If – a) a parent on whom a notice has been served...fails to satisfy the local education authority, within the period specified in the notice, that the child is receiving suitable education, and b) in the opinion of the authority it is expedient that the child should attend school, the authority shall serve on the parent...a school attendance order...requiring him to cause the child to become a registered pupil at a school named in the order.”

Section 443 then states:

“If a parent on whom a school attendance order is served fails to comply with the requirements of the order, he is guilty of an offence, unless he proves that he is causing the child to receive a suitable education otherwise than at school.”

The LA will only consider serving a School Attendance Order if it has reasonable grounds to consider that a child is not receiving a suitable education. Prior to this it will try to work with the parents in order to address the situation informally.

If the concerns raised relate to the child’s welfare, rather than their education, these will be referred to the appropriate Children’s Services as in all cases concerning child welfare or safeguarding.

Staffordshire County Council is committed to working with home educating parents in a spirit of partnership and cooperation in order that both parties – parents and the council – can effectively meet their respective duties under existing legislation.

7. RESOURCES

EHE team –

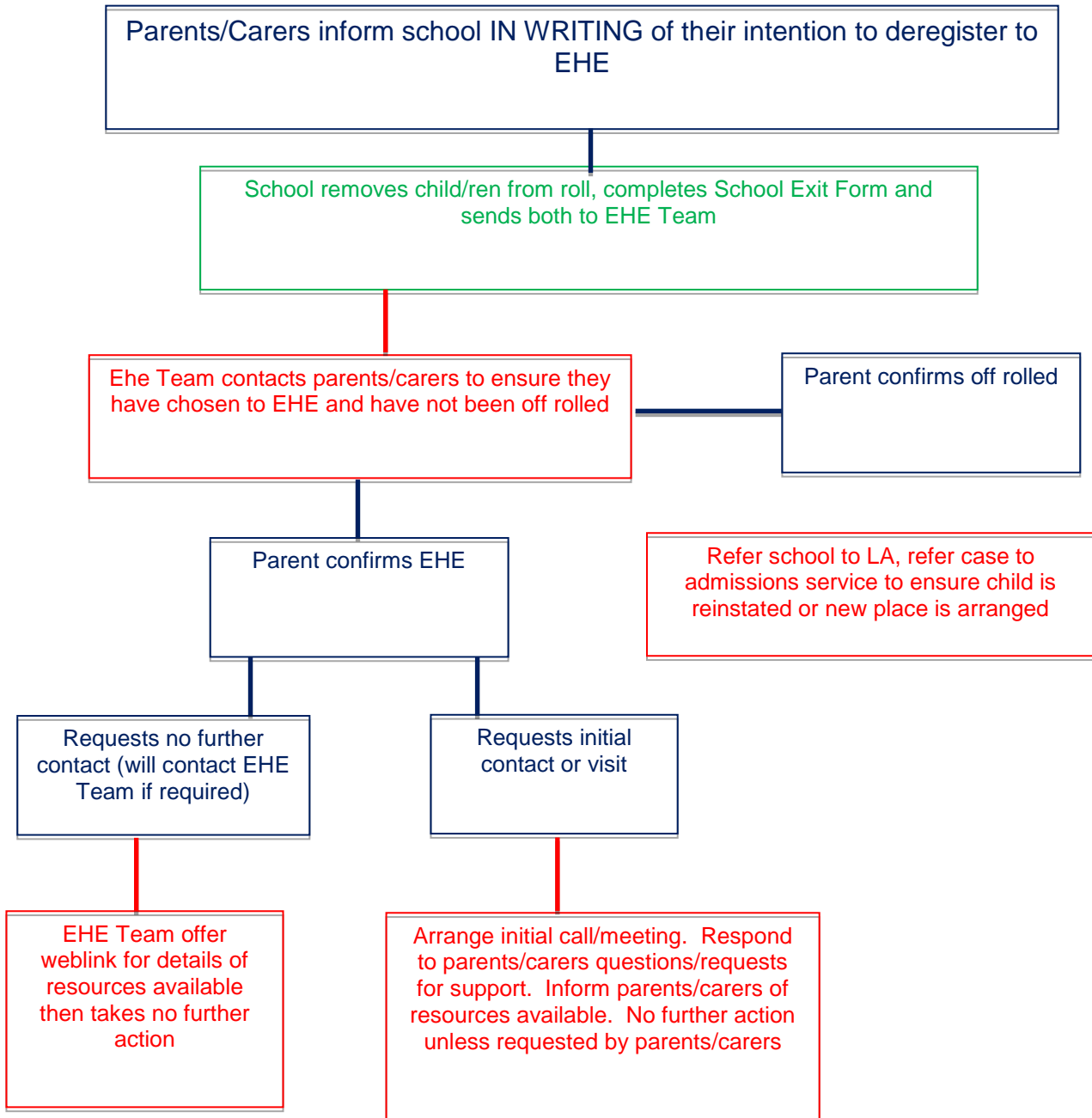
SEND FP IAG Service –

Local EHE community –

Appendix 1

Procedure for Deregistering from Mainstream School

- Parents/Carers
- Schools
- EHE Team



Appendix 2

Procedure for Deregistering from a Special School

1. Consent to deregister from a special school:

a. Who decides if a child can be deregistered from special schools?

- Best practice would be for an early Annual review of the statement usually held at the school with parents and a representative of the EHE service, SEND assessment and planning team .
- At this meeting parents would be asked to provide information regarding their plans to provide suitable education.
- Agreement can be given at the meeting.

b. What is the involvement of EHEFP?

- The purpose of EHEFP contact information etc. needs to be shared by the community.
- At this moment in time I am assuming that the newly developed service has plans to support in a similar way to the SEND family partnership Information and advice service.
- If that is the case then one role would be supporting the family in sharing their plans for the suitable education in likelihood pre and during the meeting

c. What are the criteria for the decision and where are they written in policy?

- Criteria is not written down in policy at present its based on case law.
- Currently the following guidance is worked with
- “SEND key worker requests the parents provide information which suggests that they have plans to provide their children with a suitable education and take into consideration the child’s needs on statement/EHC plan.”
- This may be an area of work that in consultation we could move forward on
- e.g. clarity in partnership on the following :
- *consent to be given on the basis of the ability of the parent to provide a suitable education for that child taking into account their age, ability, aptitude and SEN, and therefore it would seem sensible for a trail period to exist whilst the child is in the home, but without attendance enforcement action being taken.*

Appendix 3 EHE Methods and Philosophies (An Introduction to)

School
at home

Radical
Schooling

There is no 'right' or 'wrong' when it comes to home education, there is however a broad spectrum of methods and philosophies. Some parents choose to recreate school at home whilst others act as partners to their children, supporting and facilitating the child's learning as led and chosen by the child. Some philosophies apply only to education, others relate to all aspects of life. Many families move around the spectrum throughout their home ed journey, even having one method for a particular area/subject and a different method for others. The methods/philosophies on the right side of the diagram above tend to be the hardest to understand and assess, and often look very different to school/school at home.

Key features: School at Home

This is not supposed to be a checklist of things to look for, more a list to give a flavour of what just one method of home education might look like

- May have a classroom/school room at home
- Possibly follows a curriculum or teaches subjects
- May have a timetable or specific learning/teaching times
- Differentiates between learning and living
- Often structured, focusing on things a child 'needs' to learn

Key features: Radical unschooling

This is not supposed to be a checklist of things to look for, more a list to give a flavour of what just one method of home education might look like

- Does not differentiate between living and learning
- Parents partner their children, supporting them in their interests, researching resources, activities, people that may help them find out more

- Learning what food makes them feel good is as important as learning to read (just one example)
- Trusts (and works hard to facilitate when appropriate) that children will learn the skills they need as and when they need to. This can mean not learning to read until 12 or older, but to be reading at their age level within just a couple of months; or being able to pass exams with just a short study period (not always the case)
- Focuses on the child's interests. Radical unschoolers tend to know their children very well, what they enjoy, how they learn, what motivates them etc. This makes it possible for them to 'strew' information, resources, activities that may help the child deepen or broaden their understanding/knowledge
- Rarely has a classroom/school room at home
- Can look like 'holidays' all the time - lots of outdoor time, unlimited access to computers, games, books, toys
- Only follows curriculum at child's request
- Children often stay up late, wake up late, wear 'interesting' outfits, eat at conventional times/'unhealthy' food....this does NOT mean they are neglected/at risk! RU parents believe (IME) that children need to experience things to understand them (very simplistic - will explain more at meeting)