

Elective Home Education (EHE)

What is Elective Home Education?

Elective home education is a term used to describe a choice by parents to provide education for their children at home or in some other way they desire, instead of sending them to school full-time. This is known as 'Elective Home Education' and sometimes referred to by the abbreviation "EHE".

Duty of parents to secure education of children of compulsory school age.

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

- (a) to their age, ability, and aptitude, and
- (b) to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

(Section 7 of the Education Act 1996)

It is important to note that:

- Parents do not need to be qualified teachers to home educate and do not need to employ tutors or teachers to provide their child with an education at home (although some will do so).
- Parents do not need to work to a particular timetable or to fixed hours, days, or times. The EHE Guidelines recognise that descriptions of a 'full-time' education are not appropriate in relation to EHE, where education may be taking place on a more continuous or one-to-one basis.
- Parents do not need to teach the National Curriculum and do not need to mark work or formally assess their child's progress or set development objectives. The EHE Guidelines recognise that there are many acceptable approaches to education and when determining whether a parent is providing their child with a 'suitable' education, it is suggested that examples from a variety of sources should be used, including examples of work, projects, diaries and records of educational visits.

What do I need to think about before deciding to educate my child at home?

Deciding to educate your child at home instead of sending him or her to school is a step which should not be taken lightly. It will mean a major commitment of your time, energy, and money.

There are a range of reasons why you may be considering educating your child at home, including:

- Ideological or philosophical views which you feel would be better promoted through education at home
- Religious or cultural beliefs
- Dissatisfaction with the school system
- Distance to a local school
- Bullying
- As a short-term intervention for a particular reason
- The child's unwillingness or inability to go to school
- Special educational needs not being met within the school system
- Health reasons, particularly mental health

If you are considering home education because the school system is not currently working well for your child, or because you have other family problems which make it difficult to ensure school attendance for your child, you should consider what other steps you could take to secure a more satisfactory education.

Pressure should never be put on you as parents by a school to remove your child from a school to avoid formal exclusion, or because your child is having difficulty with learning or behaviour. This practice - sometimes called 'off-rolling' - is unacceptable, and if pressure of this sort is put on you by any state-funded school you should inform the local authority.

If you choose to educate your child at home, you as parents must be prepared to assume full financial responsibility for the child's education, including bearing the cost of any public examinations (which would have to be entered via an external examinations centre, which may be some distance from your home). Other costs to consider include books, paper, IT and other equipment, and educational visits and sporting activities.

Bear in mind also that if you remove your child from a school in order to educate at home, but then change your mind, there is no guarantee that a place would still be available at the school; an application would have to be made in the usual way through the local authority's process for in-year admissions – or if applicable, direct to the school. If no place was available at your child's former school, the local authority would then be obliged to find a state school place or arrange for education to be provided otherwise than at school.

In summary, therefore, as parents you should consider:

- Why are you thinking of educating your child at home?
- What does your child think about the idea?
- Do you have the time, resources, and ability to teach your child properly?
- Is your home suitable for undertaking teaching and learning, in terms of noise, space and general environment?
- What support do you as parents have from others? What would happen if you were unable, perhaps through illness, to provide teaching for your child for a period of time?
- Can you provide social experiences, access to positive experiences and physical exercise, to help your child develop?
- Do you plan to educate your child at home for the whole of their time of compulsory school age, or only temporarily? What are your long-term intentions for the education of your child?

If I choose to educate my child at home, what must I do before I start?

BCP Council requires that where a child is enrolled at a school, the parent must inform the school in writing that they wish to withdraw their child for the purpose of home education and request their name be removed from the school roll. Parents' right to educate their child at home applies equally where a child has Special Educational Needs. This is irrespective of whether the child has an Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP) or not.

However, if your child is currently at a special school you will need the consent of the Local Authority for them to be removed from the school roll. Once the Local Authority know about your intention to home educate your details will be passed to the EHE Team who will contact you.

Once the child's name is removed from the admissions register, their EHC plan (if they have one) should also be amended by the Local Authority to reflect the fact that the child is being educated at home. Where a child has an EHCP and is home educated, it remains the local authority's duty to ensure the child's needs are met, to maintain the EHC plan and to carry out a review of it on at least an annual basis. However, this does not mean that it is the local authority's duty to arrange or fund special educational provision.

If a child is being electively home educated, it will be expected that a parent is making their own suitable arrangements for the child's special educational provision, and this will mean that the Local Authority will be relieved of its duty to secure the special educational provision specified in the EHC plan.

This is an important point for a parent to bear in mind if they are considering EHE for their child. If there are therapies or special educational provision which you would wish the Local Authority to continue to provide, then they would only be able to secure those if the EHC plan specifically stated that the child or young person required "education otherwise than in a school or college"

Parents should ensure that when making a decision to home educate their child, they only do so if they are prepared and able to deliver the special educational provision that their child requires, without Local Authority support.

The Local Authority could choose to offer to make a financial contribution towards the cost of making that special educational provision, but they would be under no duty to continue this long term and so this would not offer a high degree of protection if a child required expensive therapies.

It is worth noting that if a parent wishes the Local Authority to carry out an assessment of their child's SEN, then the fact that they are being home educated will not affect their right to make a request for an EHC needs assessment.

If you are educating a child at home already and come to believe that he or she has special educational needs, you can ask the local authority to carry out a statutory assessment or reassessment of your child's special educational needs and the local authority must consider the request within the same statutory timescales and in the same way as for all other such requests.

What are the responsibilities of the local authority?

As previously stated, Local Authorities have no duty to provide financial support to those parents who choose EHE for their child. However, they should offer support and advice to parents on EHE, if requested.

Local Authorities have no powers to enter the home of a home educating family, but they have a duty to ensure that a suitable education is being provided. They can seek such information from a parent as they consider necessary to check that is the case. Parents are under no duty to respond to such requests for information or to meet with the Local Authority, but the EHE Guidelines confirm that it would be sensible to do so.

The Local Authority has a duty to satisfy itself that the alternative arrangements for special educational provision being made by a parent or young person are suitable. If the Local Authority considers that they are not, then it would be open to them to name a school or college within the EHC plan, and to take action against a parent if they continued to choose not to send their child to that school.

Where can I get more information, advice, or support?

SENDiass4BCP can:

- provide you with further advice and support on EHE
- accompany you to meetings
- provide you with details of other organisations, support groups and services that may be of help