

From: Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform
Patrick Leeson, Corporate Director, Education and Young People's Services

To: Education and Young People's Services Cabinet Committee 30 March 2017

Subject: Elective Home Education (EHE), Children Missing Education (CME) Update

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: None

Future Pathway of Paper: None

Electoral Division: All

Summary: The Elective Home Education (EHE) and the Children Missing Education (CME) teams are located within the Fair Access Service under the 'Planning and Access to Education' section of the EYPS Directorate. Service delivery has been adapted following a restructure and now delivers a more efficient service with targeted interventions, for children who are educated at home, and those missing education. Over the course of the last 18 months, a new approach has been developed, in line with the revised EHE Policy, focused on ensuring EHE and CME access suitable education. Whilst officers work along side one another in a collaborative way, it is important to recognise that EHE and CME are quite separate and distinct areas of work.

Recommendation(s):

1.0 **The Education and Young People's Services Cabinet Committee** is asked to note and endorse, or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Education, Health Reform on the ongoing approach to EHE and CME adopted by KCC including the new approach of the team and the following service priorities:

1.1 Ensure all families are contacted within 5 days of opting to Home Educate

1.2 Ensure families who feel advised into home education are given the support necessary to enable their children to return to school without delay.

1.3 Maintain a dedicated web page on kent.gov.uk to signpost home educating families to useful resources and other home educating groups providing clarity on best practice, legislation and what help can be expected.

1.4 Expect parents to demonstrate their children are accessing suitable education in line with county EHE Policy to enable the LA to meet its legal obligations.

1.5 Ensure children registered as missing from education are promptly identified and passed to the relevant departments and agencies until found or shown to be accessing education

1.6 Effectively track and monitor both EHE and CME numbers and associated data to maintain an awareness of vulnerability within the groups and to help influence future policy in this area.

1. Introduction

1.1 Elective Home Education (EHE), Children Missing Education (CME) are now integrated into the Fair Access service, alongside In Year Admissions, Senior Access to Education Officers (SAEO) and the Education Programme (formerly home tuition), in order to improve collaborative working and to ensure that Children and Young People without a school place are offered appropriate education provision at the earliest opportunity.

1.2 The main element of the role of the officers within the EHE and CME teams is to identify and support the most vulnerable learners who are not in receipt of an education, by assisting parents in sourcing and securing appropriate education. This is achieved through engagement, monitoring, reporting and where appropriate referring cases with additional complexities and that require professional support to colleagues in the Early Help Service, or where there are safeguarding concerns to Specialist Children's Services. By working in a more integrated way within Access to Education, any duplication of case work is avoided and Children and Young People who present without a school place are identified more expediently. It also enables sound data capture. (Detailed in Appendix 1, 2 & 3.)

1.3 In addition to this core work, officers also help and advise families seeking to home educate and use the KCC website to share best practice and act as a 'notice board' for home educating families who may wish to learn about and connect with other home educating groups.

2. Financial Implications

2.1 The EHE and CME teams have a combined operating budget of £250k

3. Bold Steps for Kent and Policy Framework

3.1 By ensuring children home educated and those missing from education quickly and consistently access suitable education the team are able to contribute to all three of the following themes:

- To help the Kent economy grow
- To put the citizen in control
- To tackle disadvantage

3.2 In addition, KCC's strategic outcomes "Children and young people in Kent get the best start in life" and supporting outcome 'All children and young people are engaged, thrive and achieve their potential through academic and vocational education'.

4. EHE and CME Overview

4.1 Kent currently has 1769 children and young people registered to EHE and 370 open cases of CME. Since September 2016, the team have received 586 new EHE referrals and 1172 new CME referrals and closed 923 CME cases and 569 EHE cases.

4.2 Following a restructure of both the EHE & CME services, new teams were recruited in 2016 and the revised EHE Policy was embedded in working practice. The Kent EHE Policy has been well received by the DfE and other local authorities. Other local authorities have shown an interest in Kent's model and requested permission to use the Kent policy in the development of their own.

4.3 Cases of children and young people who are EHE or CME are recorded on the data base, Impulse Social Inclusion Module, which provides a clear overview of referrals received. Tracking occurs from the point of referral to closure, reporting the designated provision and onward route of the child or young person. Tracking and reporting will be improved further when EHE and CME transfer over to the new CITRIX data base in late summer 2017. In time for the new academic year we anticipate having an integrated system enabling all KCC departments with an interest to have a single point of information relating to children registered with education. Current detailed data is held on individual records to ensure valuable information is not lost in the transfer process.

4.4 Historically, families, who registered their child to EHE, were on the whole reluctant to engage with the Local Authority. However, this has changed dramatically, following the implementation of KCC's revised policy. With the policy in place the newly assigned Support and Advice Officers are provided with a sound foundation on which to assist families and recognise their legal position. Officers are consistently seeing more families that might previously have not engaged with the LA, who are now being far more receptive to visits and intervention from the Local Authority where this is necessary. The outcome is an increase of visits to newly registered EHE families. The Local Authority has no statutory duty to monitor and track children and young people who are EHE, however it does have a duty under section 437 (2) of the Education Act 1996, to intervene if it appears that parents are not providing a suitable education. Our experience is families are now beginning to recognise that officers do not want to impose a particular approach to education on them but instead simply need to be satisfied the children are accessing suitable education.

4.5 Through continuous improvements in communication and cross-department working the aim is to ensure that where it is evident a child or young person is not in receipt of education, the length of time a child is without a school place will decrease. New operational procedures ensure that all newly registered EHE families are contacted and the success rate of securing a visit has increased. In line with our Policy, where certain criteria are met which would indicate the child may be vulnerable and the family refuse a visit. Officers will regard this as an indication that no education is taking place and in such circumstances School Attendance Orders are raised. The process is embedded in working practice and the number has significantly increased to 32 such orders since the start of the academic year. On the flip side it's pleasing to note that over 95% of EHE families last year allowed the EHE Support and Advice Officers to visit them and there appears to be a genuine growing appreciation amongst home educators, that we are there to offer advice and support. We continue to build on those relationships.

4.6 Kent has high numbers of EAL and GRT families who are often transient and may leave and return at a later date. To enable the teams to better track and locate

these families, a service level agreement has been put in place with the Home Office and another with the NHS, to have access to their knowledge. This intelligence has enabled officers to trace families whose whereabouts previously could not be detected. As an additional safeguarding measure, the CME team cross check census data to enable them to find children and young people who have not been reported through the appropriate channels. This highlights where a school has 'off rolled' a children and young people to EHE or who may be CME, without reporting it to the LA. This practice has now been greatly reduced following the introduction of new legislation which came into force on 1st September 2016. Registration Regulations now require that all schools must inform the LA when they 'off roll' a child or young person and Kent has provided a digital front door (DFD) portal on the Kelsi website to enable all schools in Kent to do this. The digital front door has increased the number of referrals and as more schools become aware of the legislation and process for reporting, it is anticipated these numbers will continue to rise. To raise awareness of the new legislation with colleagues and Headteachers, the EHE and CME Co-ordinator has attended KCC officer meetings in each locality.

4.7 Historically where a child or young person was reported as CME who could not be traced, following a set period of time and when all tracking options had been exhausted to officers, cases were closed. This was considered to be high risk to the children and young people concerned and has led to the LA requiring more stringent practice. The current process is to continually monitor CME cases however historic, and where there is evidence of high risk following completion of a risk assessment; CME officers consult and report to SCS Central Duty Team and Kent police.

4.8 Where a child or young person is identified as not in receipt of education and parents are not proactive in securing a school place, cases are referred to the Senior Access to Education Officer (SAEO) who presents the case at 'In Year Fair Access' Panels in each district, where the child or young person is expected to return to the school they attended prior to Home Educating. If the school place offered is not taken up by the family the child or young person is referred to CME and a School Attendance Order is initiated.

The EHE and CME Co-ordinator has worked closely with the Education Safeguarding team and presented at the KSCB Annual Safeguarding Conference.

5.0 Data

5.1 Better reporting has allowed KCC to capture data on EHE families that had not previously been collated. It is evident from this data that there are peaks of registrations prior to formal examinations (SATS and GCSE's) which can only be school driven. The increase in the number of Year 7 pupils shows that the processes schools have in place to support the transition for some children to Secondary school requires further investigation and review by government. The high numbers that reflect Year 11 pupils are also a concern.

5.2 The data shows evidence of high numbers of families in G category (mosaic categories) which in real terms is made up of large numbers of Gypsy Roma Traveller (GRT) families, for whom Kent does not hold comprehensive ethnicity data. The next most prominent areas highlighted, are groups M (family basics) and groups O (municipal challenge). The report evidences that the number of families Home Educating is increasing in deprived areas, and this is backed up by the data which shows that children and young people who are registered with Kent to EHE are disproportionate to the cohort on school rolls in those areas. This presents a very different picture from the commonly received one of home educated children

necessarily coming from families who are making a deliberate choice reinforced by having the resources and skills to deliver a well-rounded education to their children.

6.0 Next Steps

6.1 The new CITRIX database will improve further the information sharing and enable officers to see a visual record of each individual CYP and identify any professional involvement. This will enable those vulnerable learners to be more quickly identified and ensure resources are better targeted at those children and families.

6.2 Where there is non-engagement or the parent acknowledges that they are ill-equipped to Home Educate, the child or young person is returned to school, through In Year Fair Access or with a School Attendance order. However it is acknowledged that more needs to be done to ensure all families who have been registered with the LA are visited and an additional EHE Support and Advice officer has been recruited to enable a better distribution of caseloads.

6.3 KCC will continue to review the current policy, especially in relation to the implications of parents electing to home educate where there is a Child Protection Plan or the child is recorded as a Child in Need.

7. Recommendation(s)

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7. Background Documents

7.1 Home Education Policy (Appendix 4)

8. Contact details

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