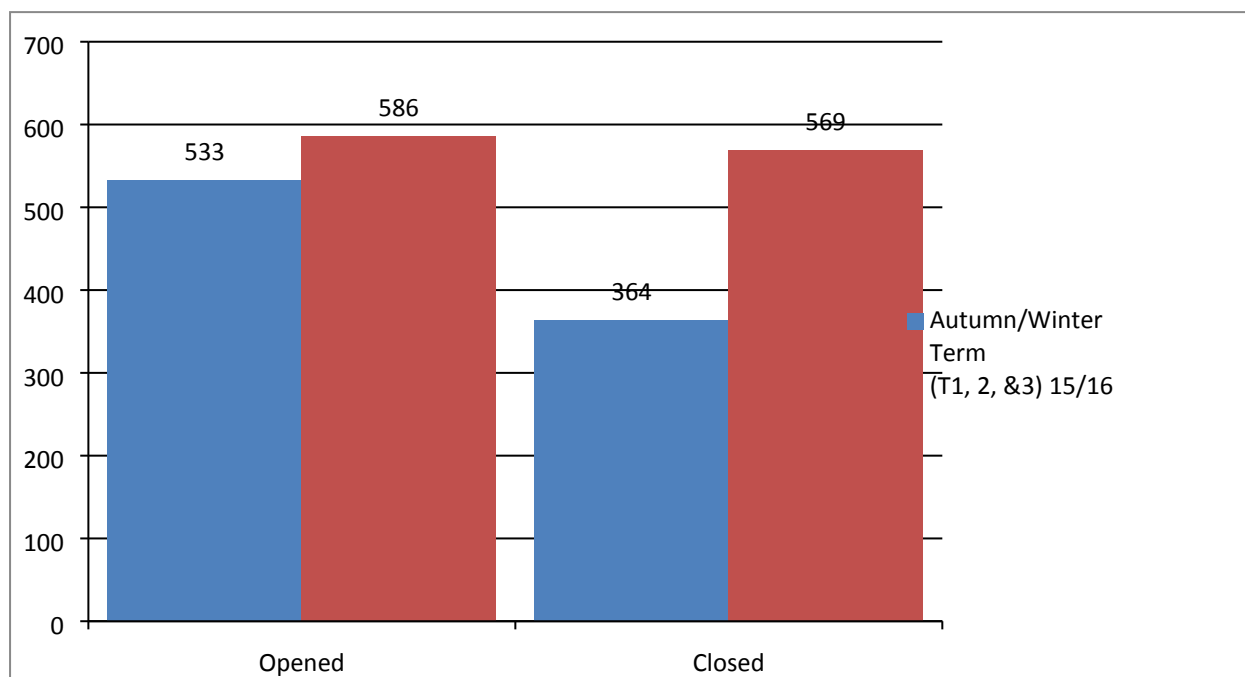


Elective Home Education Report  
Autumn/Winter Term 2016/17

Team	
Total EHE Referrals	586
Total closed	569

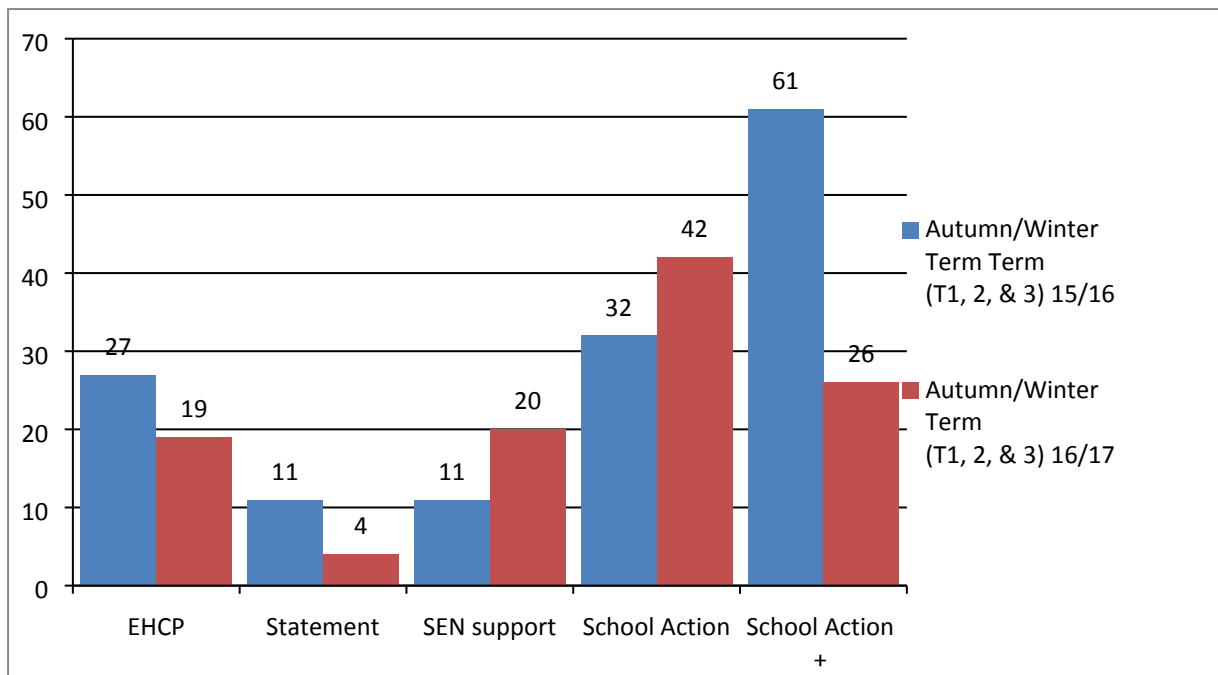
Figure 1 - EHE referrals opened/closed in the Autumn/Winter Term



The team have experienced a 9.0% rise in referrals in comparison to last academic year. In the face of these growing numbers, the number of closed referrals grew by 36.0%. This is largely due to the NEET prevention work being completed by both EHE and CME teams which has resulted in less Year 12 and 13 CYP being registered as EHE for their post statutory education. Over these three terms the number of EHE CYP accessing further education or apprenticeships has increased by 60.2% in comparison with last year.

According to Special Educational Needs Data compiled in July 2016 there was a 1.1% rise in the total number of pupils in Kent between January 2015 and January 2016. This shows that despite increases in the general population, Elective Home Education is becoming a more popular choice.

Figure 2 - EHE referrals with SEN needs in the Autumn/Winter Term



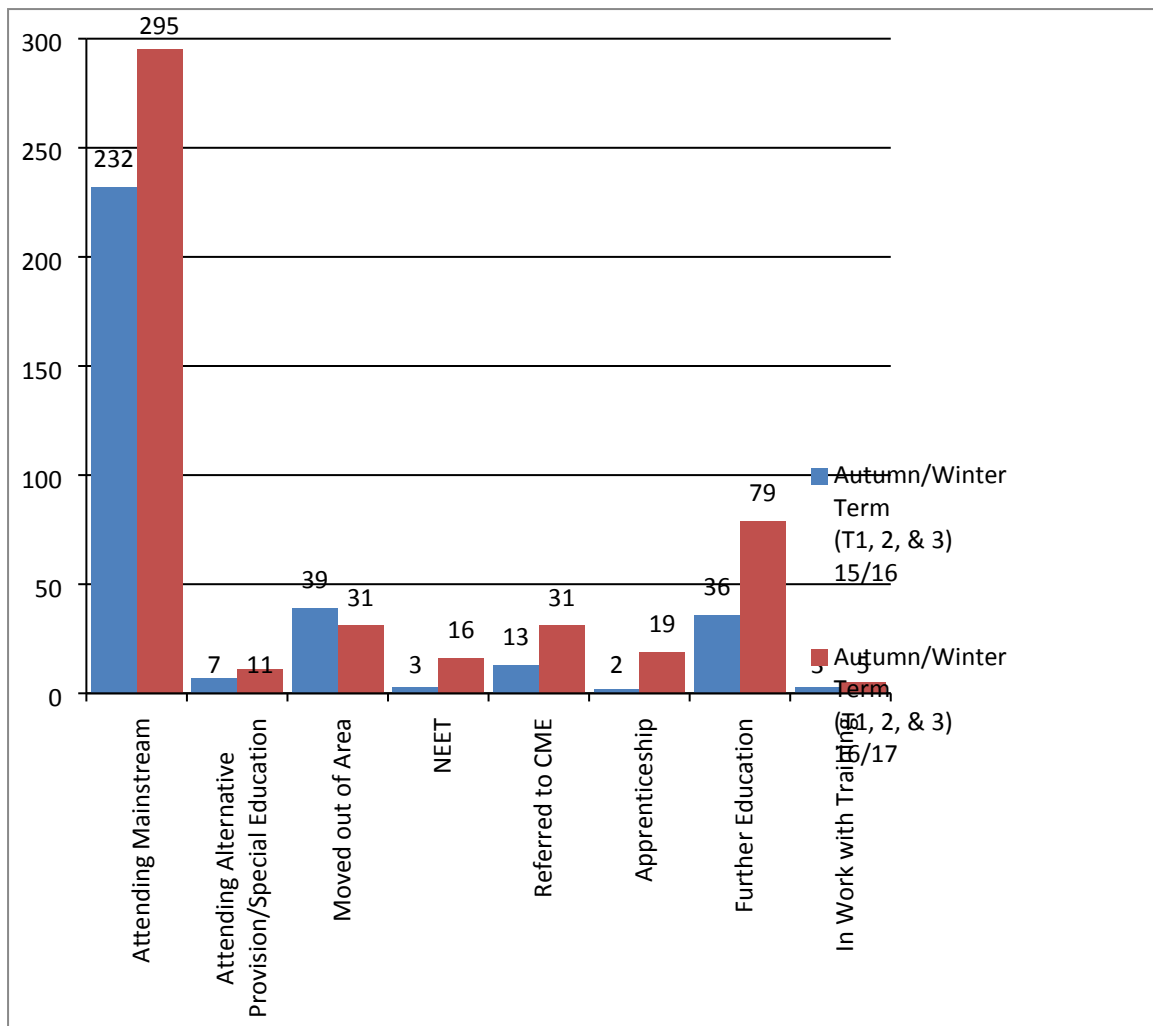
The number of CYP with an SEN need who have been registered as EHE, has dropped compared to last academic year.

- 18.9% of all EHE cases opened in this period have some form of SEN. This is an improvement on the same period last year where, 26.6% of new EHE referrals had an SEN need. Despite this positive improvement, 18.9% remains above Kent's school average of SEN need which is 12.8%
- Whilst there was an increase in those with SEN support, this is likely due to the change in categorisation from School Action/School Action Plus to SEN Support. However across these three SEN categories there was an overall decrease of 21.8%.
- There were 39.5% fewer CYP with an EHCP or a Statement registered as EHE this term.

The most likely reason for this drop in numbers of EHE pupils with EHCPs is due the increased use of High Needs Funding within schools across Kent resulting in fewer EHCPs being issued overall. For future monitoring purposes however it may be useful to have a marker to indicate whether pupils who register as EHE are entitled to High Needs Funding and this change will be introduced to our reporting.

This reduction in numbers may also be due in part to improved communication between Fair Access and SEN. The two teams now work closely together to identify whether EHE is a suitable option before the CYP's EHCP is amended. The EHE Officers facilitate an initial visit and report their findings back to SEN to make the final decision.

Figure 3 - Reason for closure of EHE referrals in the Autumn/Winter Term

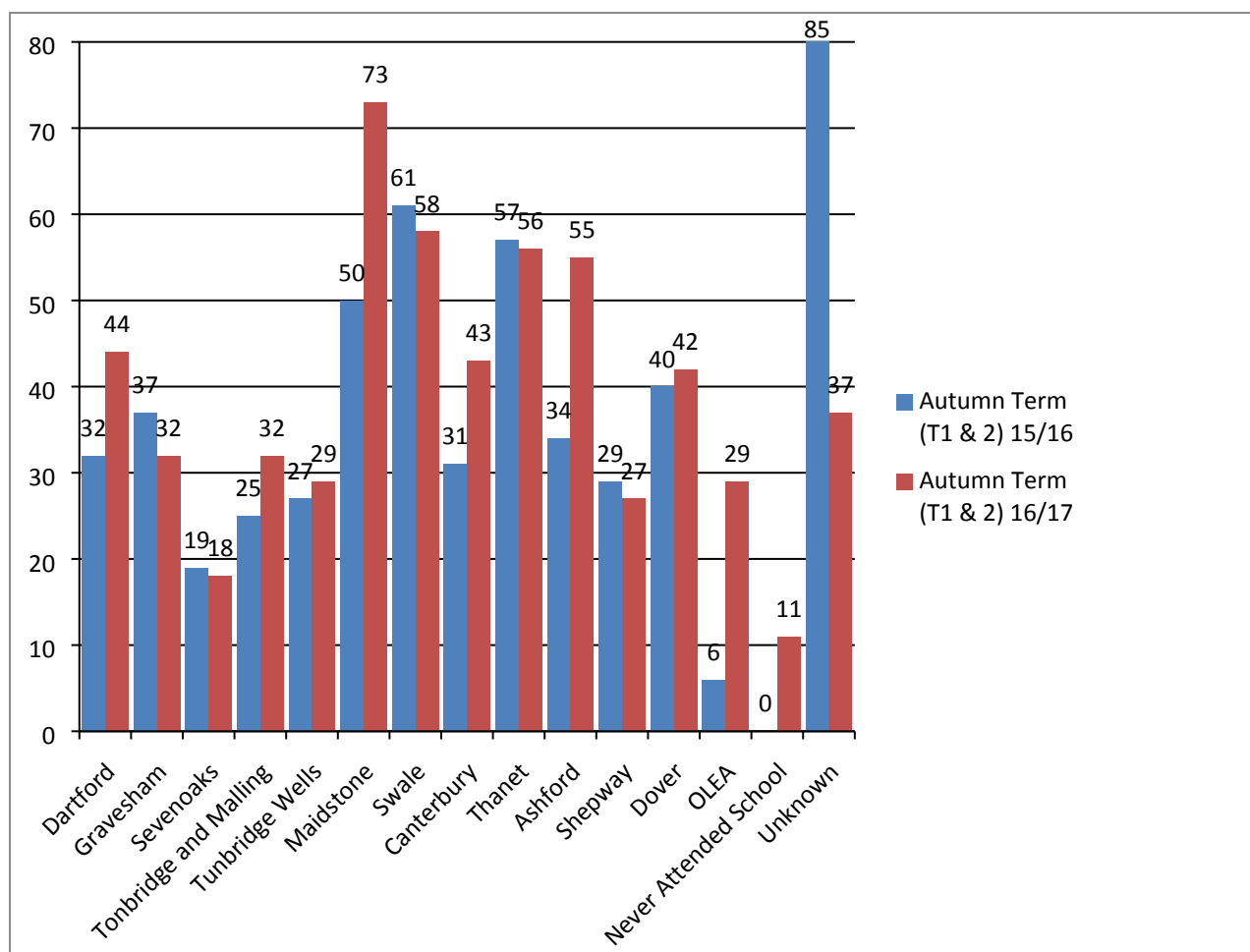


As previously stated, the EHE Team has closed 36.0% more referrals than this period last year. The breakdown of closure reasons above highlights the changing trends and in particular the increased focus upon the NEET strategy and the creation of a new post within the team to focus on NEET prevention.

- 89.5% increase in CYP going onto apprenticeships
- 58.1% increase in referrals to CME where education is deemed unsuitable
- 54.4% rise in CYP going into Further Education
- 21.4% increase in CYP returning to mainstream school

THE EHE team's improved tracking mechanisms have also identified more CYP who are not continuing with EHE nor seeking further education, employment, or training. In this instance learners are closed to EHE and referred to the Skills and Employability Team who work with the families to secure further education and training opportunities. They remain under the remit of Skills and Employability until such a time as a placement is found.

Figures 4 - EHE referrals by school district in the Autumn/Winter Term



The most prominent changes with regard to the number of EHE referrals received by school district during the autumn and winter terms are:

- 38.2% increase in Ashford
- 31.5% increase in Maidstone
- 27.9% increase in Canterbury
- 21.9% increase in Tonbridge and Malling
- 56.5% decrease in Unknown School District

The contrast between increases and decreases shows that there is a very mixed picture between districts. The overall increase of EHE cases from West Kent schools is 23.9%, and South Kent schools' EHE referrals are up by 16.9%. These are the only significant increases in comparison to the overall rise of 9.0%. There is a growth in property development in Maidstone and Malling at present and this may be contributing to the increased number of referrals as families move to Kent from out of county and are unable to find a place at their preferred preference school. There is also an increase in GRT families who are choosing to EHE.

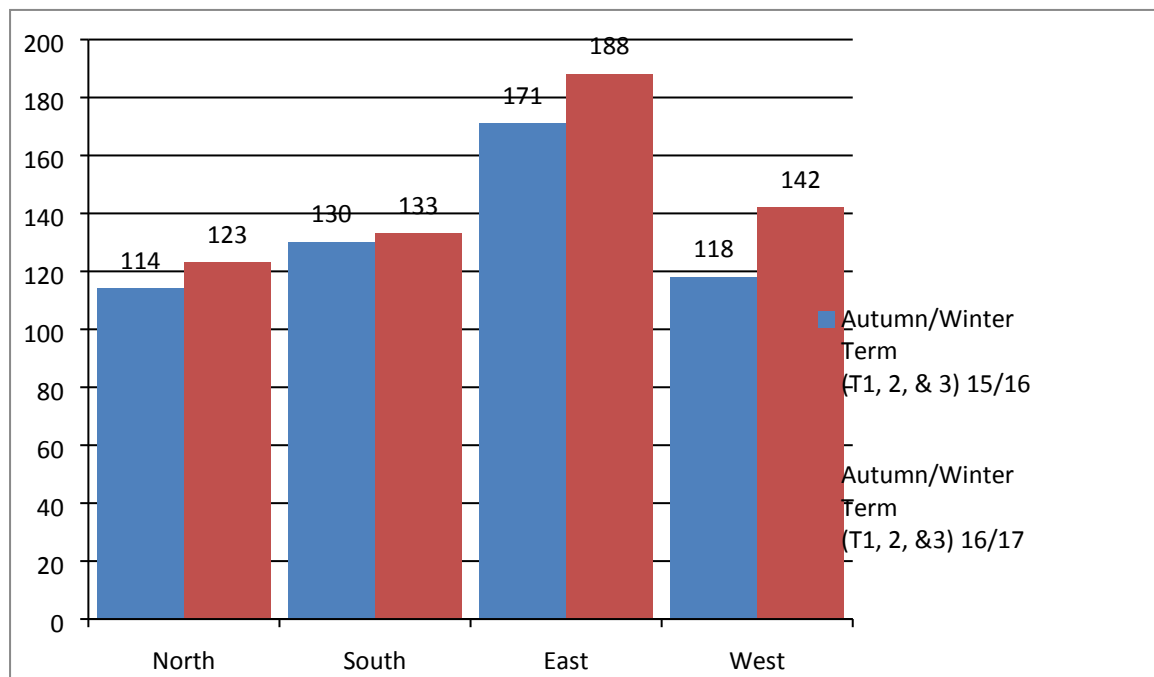
Having discussed this increase with the EHE Officers there are a number of factors that could explain this increase. Evidence suggests that families opt to EHE as a way of solving pupil's issues within school particularly to avoid prosecution for attendance and behavioural difficulties. The team has

been made aware by parents of schools suggesting EHE to avoid permanent exclusion and as an alternative for pupils who are too ill to attend school rather than submitting a referring to Kent Health Needs.

The following secondary schools; Cornwallis, Homewood, Mascalls, New Line Learning and Swadelands Academies have a large population of GRT (Gypsy Roma Traveller) CYP who are frequently withdrawn to EHE for cultural reasons in secondary school.

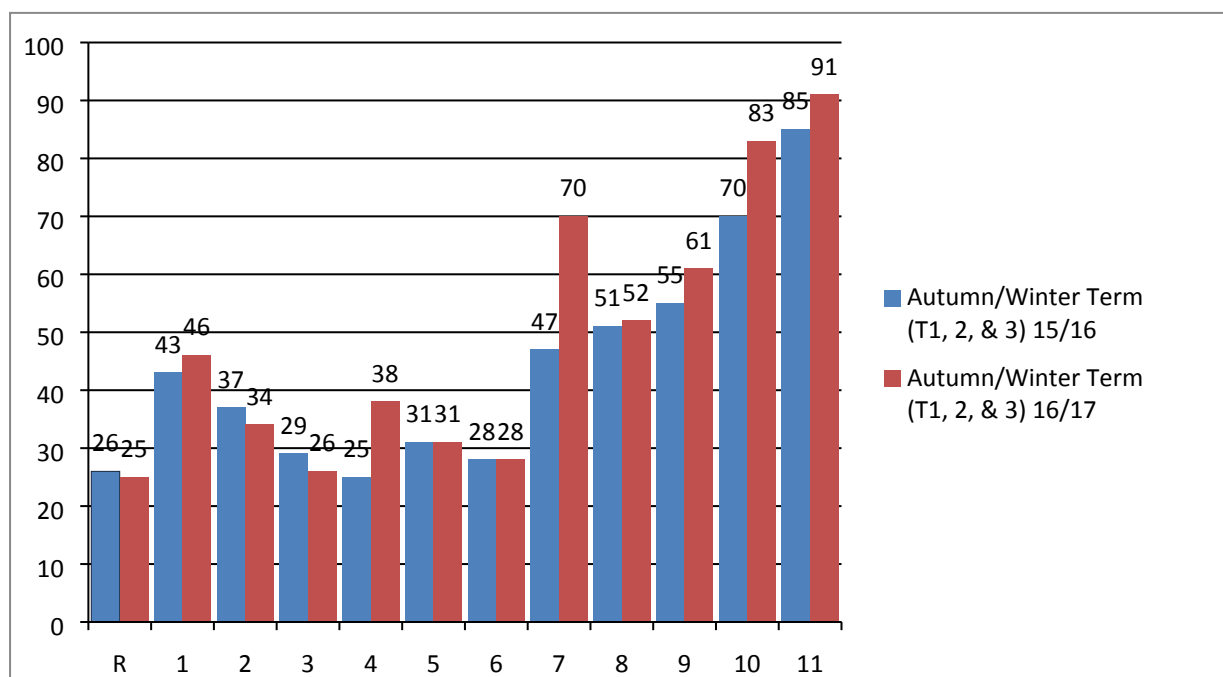
The pressure on secondary school places in several Canterbury schools at present, may have contributed to a rise in EHE families who are waiting for a place to become available at a preferred school.

Figures 5 - EHE referrals by home area in the Autumn/Winter Term



On the whole, areas where the numbers of new EHE referrals have increased this term appear to directly reflect rises in numbers of GRT families. Some schools appear to be encouraging EHE, and a slight shortage of spaces in desirable schools will also have driven up numbers. Other possible factors impacting these areas are increasing numbers of new “affordable” homes encouraging families to Kent from other areas. Wider media coverage of EHE may also be driving this trend.

Figures 6 - EHE referrals by year group in the Autumn/Winter Term



The greatest changes with regard to the number of EHE referrals received by year group during the autumn term are:

- 32.9% increase in Year 7 referrals
- 34.2% increase in Year 4 referrals
- 9.8% increase in Year 9 referrals
- 15.7% increase in Year 10 referrals

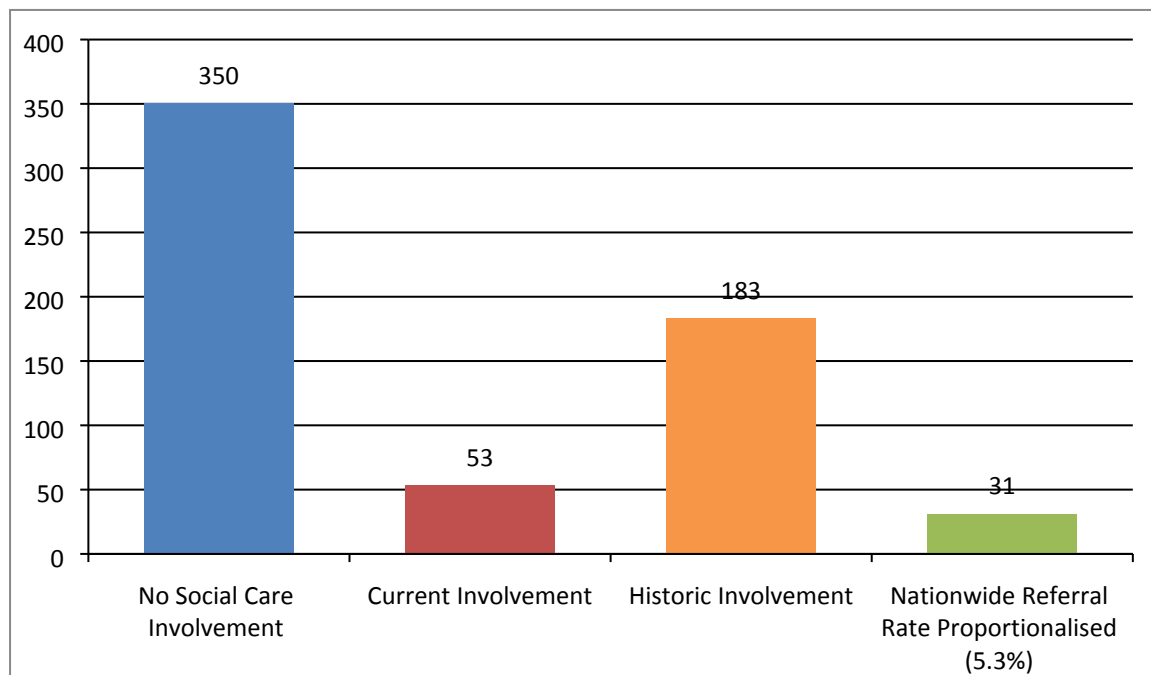
Overall:

- 13.7% increase in Secondary CYP
- <5% increase in Primary CYP (insignificant against the overall rise)
- Despite the comparatively low increase of 9% in Year 11 referrals, they still make up 15.6% of all new EHE cases

The increase in secondary age CYP registering as EHE is likely to be due to a number of factors. As well as the issues previously highlighted regarding a large GRT presence in Kent and a shortage of school places in desirable schools, behavioural and social issues have more of an impact on secondary age pupils. This sometimes leads schools to offer EHE an alternative option for CYP they are unable to manage effectively.

There has been a growth in parents withdrawing their children to EHE due to a perceived insufficient response to bullying within schools – something that is obviously more prevalent in secondary schools where adolescence intensifies any issues. Bullying, social media and the increased pressure of a more demanding curriculum have also led to an increase in referrals due to mental health issues (mainly anxiety and depression).

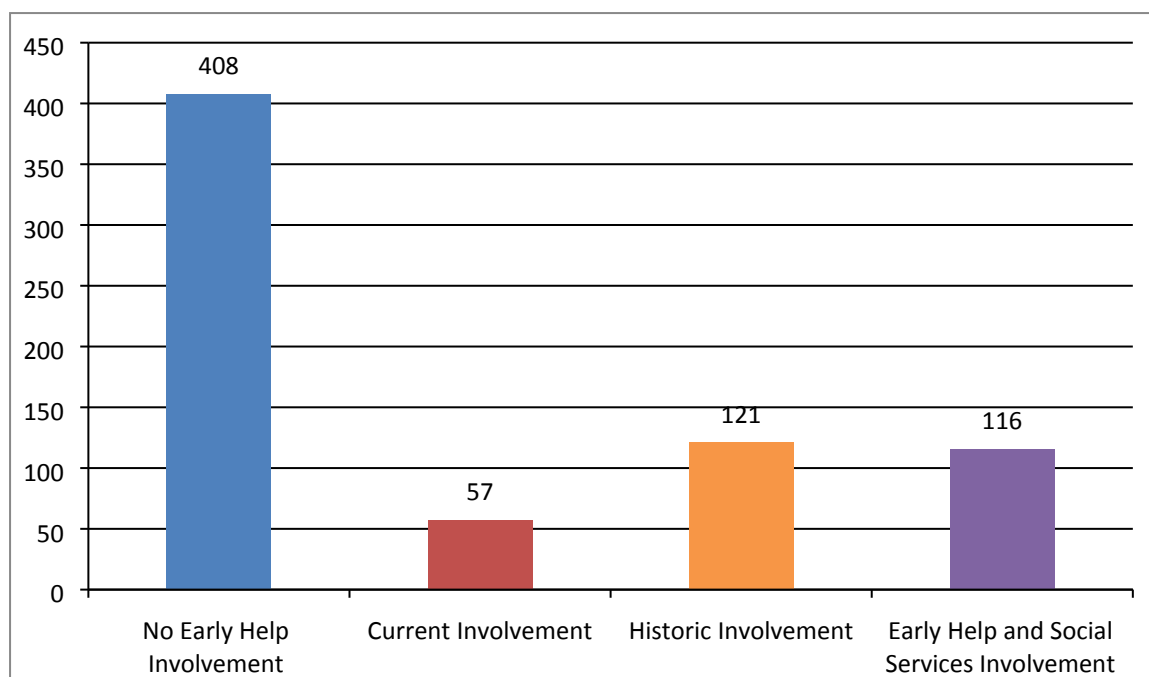
Figure 5 – EHE referrals in the Autumn/Winter Term with Social Services Involvement



From the beginning of this academic year the EHE team has had the facility to add an indicator to highlight if the CYP in a new referral is known to social services (An Open Referral, Child In Need, Missing Persons Episode or Child Protection) and whether that is current involvement at the time of the referral to EHE or historic involvement.

- 40.3% of all cases opened in this period were known to Social Services (either currently or historically).
- 22.5% of these were open at the time of their EHE referral.
- The national average for CYP who have had a referral to social services is 5.3% (Children in Need Census 2016, SRF52/2016); this is reflected proportionately in the above graph.

Figure 6 - New EHE referrals in the Autumn/Winter Term with Early Help Episodes



From the beginning of this academic year an indicator has been added to highlight where a child registered as EHE is known to Early Help (EH episode/CAF) at the point of registration.

- 30.4% of all cases open during this period were known to Early Help (current/historic).
- 32% of these were open at the time of their referral.

Combining the Early Help data with Social Care data provides a clear picture of the proportion of new EHE referrals that have had preventative/specialist support from KCC professionals.

- 50.9% of all children referred to EHE in this period were known to Kent Preventative/Specialist Children's Services.
- These figures do not include CYP who were open to Social Care or Early Help in other Local Authorities – only those known to Kent.

### **Data summary**

The presented data is based upon EHE referrals received within Kent County Council's term dates and therefore may be marginally different to the figures in Management Information's monthly reports.

### **Safeguarding**

Recently added social care indicators evidence that the proportion of pupils requiring preventative/specialist support is approximately seven times greater than within the general population (*Characteristics of children in need: 2015 to 2016, SFR 52/2016, 3 November 2016. Department for Education*). This makes it clear that vulnerable children are disproportionately being driven towards this method of education.



Characteristics of children in need: 2015 to 2016 (*SFR 52/2016, 3 November 2016. Department for Education*) states that “Schools, Health Services, LA Services, and Education Services” make up 47.1% of all referrals to social services nationally. Without this first line of safeguarding defence the risk of harm going unidentified is greatly increased. Whilst referrals to social care from the Police make up 27.6% of all referrals, it is considered that police officers and community support officers have limited contact with families allowing more subtle abuse/neglect to go unnoticed.

The balance of 25.3% of national referrals in 2015/16 came from other sources: “Individuals (General Public), Housing, Other Legal Agency, Other, Unknown, and Anonymous” (*Characteristics of children in need: 2015 to 2016, SFR 52/2016, 3 November 2016. Department for Education*). This presents a unique risk associated with Electively Home Educated children and young people whereby their lack of contact with council/governmental agencies reduces the likelihood of signs of harm being reported. Where currently the Local Authority cannot legally insist on a visit, there is a significant risk that the pathways for reporting may be restricted to this small selection.

Additionally, *Characteristics of children in need: 2015 to 2016 (SFR 52/2016, 3 November 2016. Department for Education)* states the main factors identified at the end of a social worker’s CHIN (Child in Need) assessment are mostly those that occur in the home (Domestic Violence, Mental Health, Substance Misuse, Emotional Abuse, etc) and so are unlikely to be identified by the public or professionals who do not have regular contact with the family. Visible factors such as disability, socially unacceptable behaviour, gang membership etc are only present in 35.9% of cases assessed. Without legislative change, local authority professionals are limited in their capacity to effectively safeguard children in EHE families.

### **Management Summary**

Following the restructure of the EHE team and the appointment of five EHE Support and Advice Officers, there has been a marked improvement in the engagement of our families, particularly those who are new to EHE.

Despite our ever increasing number and the challenges that this brings, all new EHE families are offered a visit and the team are also working to contact and visit historic referrals. The officer’s refreshed approach and their joined up working with the CME team and the Senior Access to Education Officers means that pupils who are not in receipt of a suitable education are identified earlier and a school place is identified where necessary.

One major area of improvement is the number of CYP who are leaving EHE to go onto further education or apprenticeships. The officers have been working closely with colleagues in the Skills and Employability team and have built connections with local colleges and training providers to ensure that CYP are aware of their options after Year 11. Given our growing numbers, in order to continue to effectively support and build upon the progress that has been made in the area; we have recently appointed a NEET Administrator.

We are incredibly proud of the work that the EHE team is doing as our model is one that other local authorities are keen to replicate. As one of the largest local authorities, we hope to be at the forefront of future legislative change to ensure that all CYP access the level of education to which they are entitled.

The team has recently invited an internal audit of our processes and procedures and will be actively engaging with the DFE to offer evidence and examples of best practice with the hope of influencing important legislative changes in in this area to better safeguard children in the future.