

Durham County Council Equality Impact Assessment

NB: The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010) requires Durham County Council to have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people from different groups. Assessing impact on equality and recording this is one of the key ways in which we can show due regard.

Section One: Description and Screening

Service/Team or Section	Resources/ Strategy – Overview and Scrutiny
Lead Officer	Tom Gorman
Title	Elective Home Education Review
MTFP Reference (if relevant)	
Cabinet Date (if relevant)	8 July 2020
Start Date	September 2019
Review Date	

Subject of the Impact Assessment

Please give a brief description of the policy, proposal or practice as appropriate (a copy of the subject can be attached or insert a web-link):

The purpose of the Scrutiny review was to gain an understanding of concerns associated with the number of children and young people in County Durham being educated at home following four key lines of enquiry

- a) The level of EHE in County Durham; data overview including location, age, gender and ethnicity analysis.
- b) Whether children being home educated are receiving a 'suitable' education
- c) Whether children being home educated are supported, safeguarded and protected from harm
- d) How the Local Authority works in partnership with other agencies.

The review highlighted that when a parent removes their child from school to educate at home, they are free to do so and take of full responsibility for their child's education including all financial responsibilities. Legislation is not a framework for regulation of elective home education but a system of identifying children and ensuring they are receiving a suitable education.

Without a national framework for local authorities and the reluctance of families to engage with the local authorities makes it difficult for a children's progress to be monitored. Not all local authorities provide the same level of support to families. Durham County Council has clear policies and procedures in place to ensure that appropriate checks are made. DCC provide training to other local authorities in the region on how they manage elective home education. DCC has robust safeguarding arrangements to ensure that children who are home educated are seen by officers of DCC or partner agencies.

Evidence indicates that in County Durham 0.5% of the school age population are receiving an elective home education. This equates to 400 out of an approximate 74,000 school aged children living in county Durham in 2018.

Parents have no requirement to provide a reason for removing their child from the school roll and it is the school who informs the local authority of the child's removal. Where a child has never attended school, the local authority may only become aware them being home educated if a parent chooses to tell them or if other services advise them.

Evidence indicates that in recent years there has been a significant increase in the number of children receiving an elective home education with numbers doubling since 2012. During 2018/19 there was a 5% rise in the number of children home educated in County Durham compared to the previous year.

The demographic of children who are home educated is largely white British, which is in keeping with County Durham's population. 62 children were known to be from Gypsy Roma Traveller communities. Most of the children on the service database had previously attended school and the gender split was equal. There was no specific area in County Durham where elective home education was more prevalent, but numbers tended to be built up in urban areas.

Evidence indicates that a higher proportion of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) are being home educated and there was concern that children with SEND were overrepresented in the elective home education cohort.

The Education at Home Group support families who are home educating and work with partners from FE colleges to enable young people who are home educated from the year 10/11 age group to access vocational and core GCSE subjects.

Primary research carried out with parents who home educate indicated that bullying was a key driver for home education, opportunities for building stronger engagement between home and educating parents and the need to improve SEND training for staff in schools. Members felt that schools should ask why parents are removing their child from the roll and this should be included in the Head Teacher's report for discussion with the governing body of the school and anti-bullying policies should be reviewed continuously.

The primary research carried out also highlighted the benefits of engagement between the service and families in similar situation. Parents had also indicated in their experience there were differing levels of SEND training within the County's schools.

Within this context the review identified five recommendations:

Recommendation One

That Cabinet consider lobbying regionally and nationally for a common framework to improve oversight of the quality of education and safeguarding of children and young people who are Elective Home Educated. That such a framework should include a national register of all children and young people who are home educated; the reasons why they are home educated are recorded and for a review of the government's elective home education guidelines.

Recommendation Two

The Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Service continue to work with the Principals of Further Education Colleges in County Durham to provide places to enable access to vocational and core GCSE courses for year 10 and 11 pupils who are electively home educated and work toward developing capacity to meet the need to ensure all children and young people who are electively home educated have the opportunity to access these courses.

Recommendation Three

The Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services work in partnership with all County Durham's schools to promote a high understanding of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities including autism and encourage all schools to provide appropriate training to staff so that children and young people with a special educational need or disability receive the appropriate level of support whichever school they attend.

Recommendation Four

That the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services develop a reporting model that will encourage all schools to include within their Head Teacher report to the Governing Body on an annual basis:

- a) Discussion of reasons given for Elective Home Education
- b) Where bullying is cited as a reason that this is discussed
- c) Ensure that anti-bullying policies are continuously reviewed.

Recommendation Five

The Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services to hold an annual event for families who home educate their children to engage with the service, meet other families in a similar position to themselves and for the children to have an opportunity to interact and socialise with other children who are home educated.

Who are the main stakeholders? (e.g. general public, staff, members, specific clients/service users):

Children who are educated at home and their parents, DCC staff from Children and Young People's Services, Partners in Durham Police, Durham and Darlington NHS FT.

Screening

Is there any actual or potential negative or positive impact on the following protected characteristics?

Protected Characteristic	Negative Impact Indicate: Y = Yes, N = No, ? = unsure	Positive Impact Indicate: Y = Yes, N = No, ? = unsure
Age	N	Children may be home educated until 16 years of age.
Disability	N	Some of the children receiving a home education have special educational needs and disabilities and emotional and behavioural issues.
Marriage and civil partnership (workplace only)	N	N
Pregnancy and maternity	N	N
Race (ethnicity)	N	Some of the children receiving

		a home education are from Gypsy Roma Traveller communities.
Religion or Belief	N	N
Sex (gender)	N	N
Sexual orientation	N	N
Transgender	N	N

Please provide **brief** details of any potential to cause adverse impact. Record full details and analysis in the following section of this assessment.

Negative impact is not anticipated as a result of the proposed recommendations.

How will this policy/proposal/practice promote our commitment to our legal responsibilities under the public sector equality duty to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation,
- advance equality of opportunity, and
- foster good relations between people from different groups?

The recommendations will enable children in County Durham who are educated at home to have access to vocational and GCSE courses; for schools and governing bodies to discuss and address issues associated with reasons for parents choosing to electively home educate their children and for a consistent high level of support to be offered to children and young people with SEND in County Durham schools. The final recommendation is intended to encourage engagement between DCC and children and families who educate at home.

Evidence

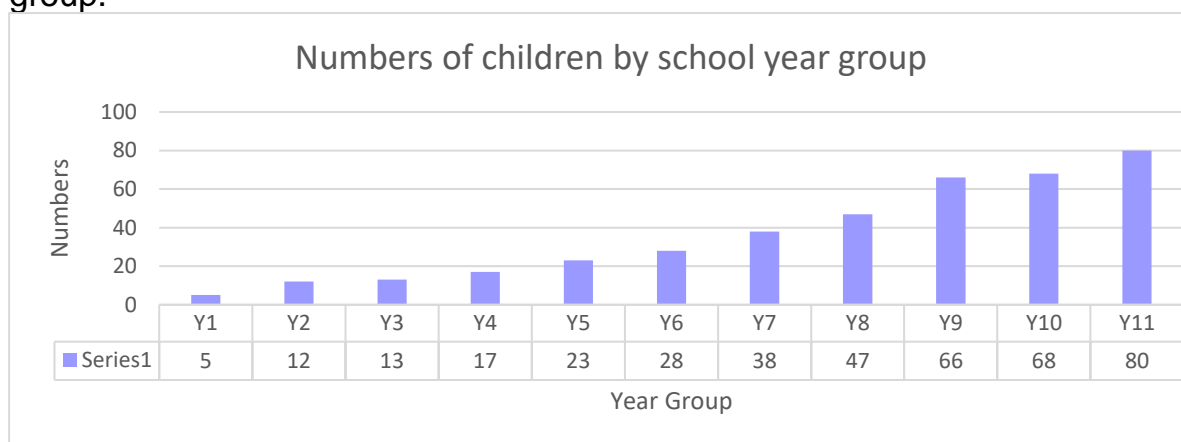
What evidence do you have to support your findings?

Please **outline** your data sets and/or proposed evidence sources, highlight any gaps and say whether or not you propose to carry out consultation. Record greater detail and analysis in the following section of this assessment.

Evidence was received from Durham County Council’s Children and Young People’s Services and partners who make up the Durham Education at Home Group. In addition to evidence from these colleagues a short survey was carried out with parents known to home educate and a focus group was held with parents to get their views and experiences of home education in county Durham in relation to the support they receive from the service.

At the time of the review there were 68 children from Gypsy Roma Traveller families on the database, which equates to 16% of all children on the register.

The chart below gives an indication of the number of children by school year group.




Source: Information given to review group meeting 11 September 2019

Screening Summary

On the basis of this screening is there:	Confirm which refers (Y/N)
Evidence of actual or potential impact on some/all of the protected characteristics which will proceed to full assessment?	Individual EIAs will be undertaken by the relevant service grouping following agreement by Cabinet of any of the recommendations contained in the review report.
No evidence of actual or potential impact on some/all of the protected characteristics?	

Sign Off

Lead officer sign off: 	Date: 10/06/2020
Service equality representative sign off: Mary Gallagher, E&D Team Leader	Date: 11/06/20

If carrying out a full assessment please proceed to section two.

If not proceeding to full assessment please return completed screenings to your service equality representative and forward a copy to equalities@durham.gov.uk

If you are unsure of potential impact please contact the corporate research and equalities team for further advice at equalities@durham.gov.uk