

**17 February 2022**

**Update on Elective Home Education (EHE)**

**Ward(s): All**

**Portfolios: Councillor Chris Towe**

**1. Aim**

The aim of this report is to provide the current position concerning Elective Home Education (EHE) and an update on how Walsall continues to meet its statutory responsibility in regards to EHE and to present and explain EHE data.

**2. Recommendations**

That the Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers the contents of this report and decides whether there should be further information or updates.

**3. Report detail – know**

Following the Elective Home Education scrutiny report that was presented to the committee in January 2021 that outlined the statutory responsibilities in relation to EHE, this report updates the committee on the current position and updates the committee on some current activities being undertaken.

- There has been a significant reduction in the number of EHE registrations this academic year. In part, this has been achieved by early Intervention and working collaboratively with other services and schools. Early intervention includes pre-EHE meetings with professionals, and where appropriate, working with schools to conduct an early review of an Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP). An early review ensures the child's needs are accurately identified prior to the parent making a formal decision to home educate. The early intervention has been extremely successful as although we are still receiving a large number of enquiries, less of these are now translating to EHE registrations. Together with the fact that more children who were EHE are returning to school means we have a reduction in the number of EHE registrations.
- At the end of December 2021, there were 380 open Elective Home Education cases. This is less than the 463 open EHE cases at the end of December 2020 and is similar to pre Covid-19 levels when we had 379 open at the end of December 2019.
- Between the beginning of September 2021 and end of December 2021, 86 EHE new registrations were recorded. This is a notable decline to the 178 new registrations recorded between September and December 2020 and more in line with numbers recorded between September and December 2019 (99). The

number of open registrations at the end of December 2021 is therefore comparable to pre Covid-19 for the same reporting period.

- In order to meet the demands of Covid-19, which led to an increase in EHE enquiries and registration, and many parents citing anxiety as a reason for EHE, we have expanded staffing within the service. We now have an emotional literacy support officer within the team who offers face-to-face, virtual and group sessions for those children who are identified as experiencing emotional or mental concerns. The emotional literacy support has been utilised to support reintegration back to school, referrals to school health etc. and to support parents to fulfil their responsibility to provide a suitable and full time education. The weekly sessions that the emotional literacy support officer implements also means that we have a greater oversight of EHE children.
- A greater oversight of EHE children has also been achieved by completing more interim reviews than previously, which has in turn led to a marked increase in children being reintegrated back to school when the educational provision has been judged unsuitable.
- We have strengthened joint working with other professionals and raised the profile of EHE as we have delivered training for health visitors, the special educational needs service, school nursing and early help.
- The most vulnerable children including those under a Child Protection (CP), Child In Need Plan (CIN) or those receiving Early Help (EH) or in receipt of an EHCP are offered additional support and guidance as we contribute to all of the relevant meetings and review all EHCPs on a termly basis.
- We have developed and implemented a new EHE policy and processes (See Appendix A)
- The recent Ofsted Inspection of Walsall local authority children's services report noted ***'There is robust oversight of children who are electively home educated (EHE). There is strong partnership working with schools through a new EHE policy and positive relationships with families.'***

### 3.1 EHE audit

A Quality Assurance audit was carried out in June 2021. The purpose of the audit was to check the quality of the service to ensure that vulnerable learners have fair access to education and training. To achieve this we examined the data of 10 EHE vulnerable learners. This included CP, CIN, EH and those with an EHCP.

We explored the following:

- Whether our enquiries are timely and effective.
- Whether we work closely with other services to secure the best outcome for the child.
- Whether we return children and young people to school in a timely manner, when home education is not demonstrated to be suitable.

The audit identified the following good practice:

- We are supporting and working with parents who are EHE.
- Weekly reviews were completed to identify where current children or young people with EHE provision are new to Walsall Children's Services and this

was leading to timely contact and improved collaboration with internal services as well as other professionals.

- Regularity of reviews of EHE provision is based on the child/young person's needs and current circumstances
- There were weekly or fortnightly calls with parents who require further support with their child's learning.
- There were collaborative annual reviews of the EHCP to set specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-based targets

The following actions were identified:

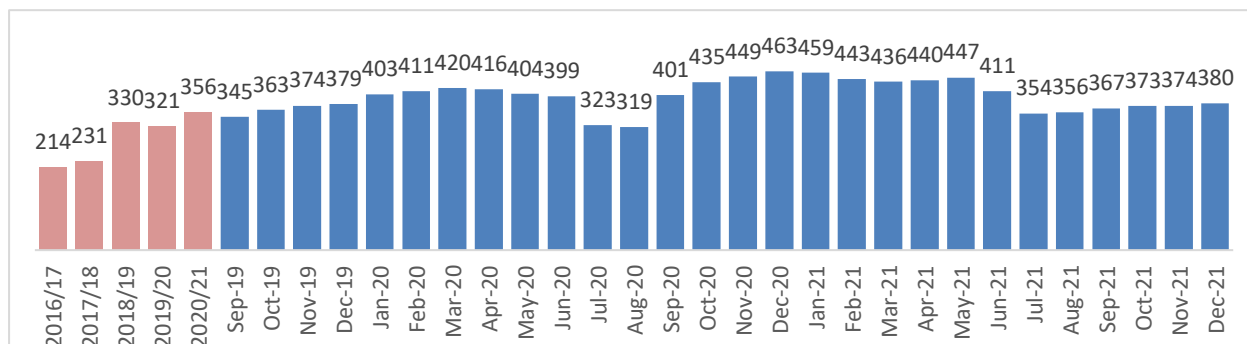
- To identify those cases where parents have persistently refused actual or virtual visits over the last 6 months.
- To identify EHE children/young people who are part of a sibling group, to understand whether there may be other EHE siblings that we may not be aware of or who may be missing education
- To employ a specialist in emotional support
- Identify EHE cases who have an EHCP and work with the special educational needs and disabilities team to prioritise reviews, particularly for those who are likely to return to school or home education has been deemed as not suitable
- Refresh EHE review process to ensure that the child's cultural needs are being considered as well as any risks of exploitation or enticement from others, including older siblings not to attend school

Following the audit we have actioned the following:

- An Emotional literacy support officer has been employed
- We are identifying children and young people who have refused a visit in the last 6 months and offering them visits again.
- Visits have been offered to all those who have cited Covid-19 as a reason for EHE to offer support and to discuss whether parents would now consider a return to school and if so how we can support a return.
- Visits and support sessions with the emotional literacy support officer have been offered to all those who cited anxiety as a reason for EHE.
- Visits have been offered to all those eligible for free school meals or pupil premium.
- Visits and additional support has been offered to all our Gypsy Roma Traveller families.
- Visits and termly reviews have been offered to all those with an educational health care plans (EHCP).
- Processes have been developed to ensure we check the education base of siblings of those who are EHE. Additionally, when communicating with parents we check whether they have any other children who are not attending school.
- EHE training was delivered to health visitors and the school nursing service to further strengthen collaborative working and to ensure they alert us to any EHE children who we may not be aware of.

## 4. Elective Home Education Data (EHE)

### 4.1 Number of EHE open at the end of the year/month



- The above graph illustrates how on average the number of open elective home education registrations is lower for the autumn term 2021 compared to the autumn term 2020. The figures for the autumn term 2021 are very similar to the pre Covid-19 2019 autumn term.

### 4.2 Number and percentage of Initial EHE enquiries that lead to an EHE registration.



- The graph above shows that less initial EHE enquiries are leading to EHE registration.

As EHE potentially has huge implications for the child, where possible the EHE service offers parents guidance and support before they formally decide to home educate.

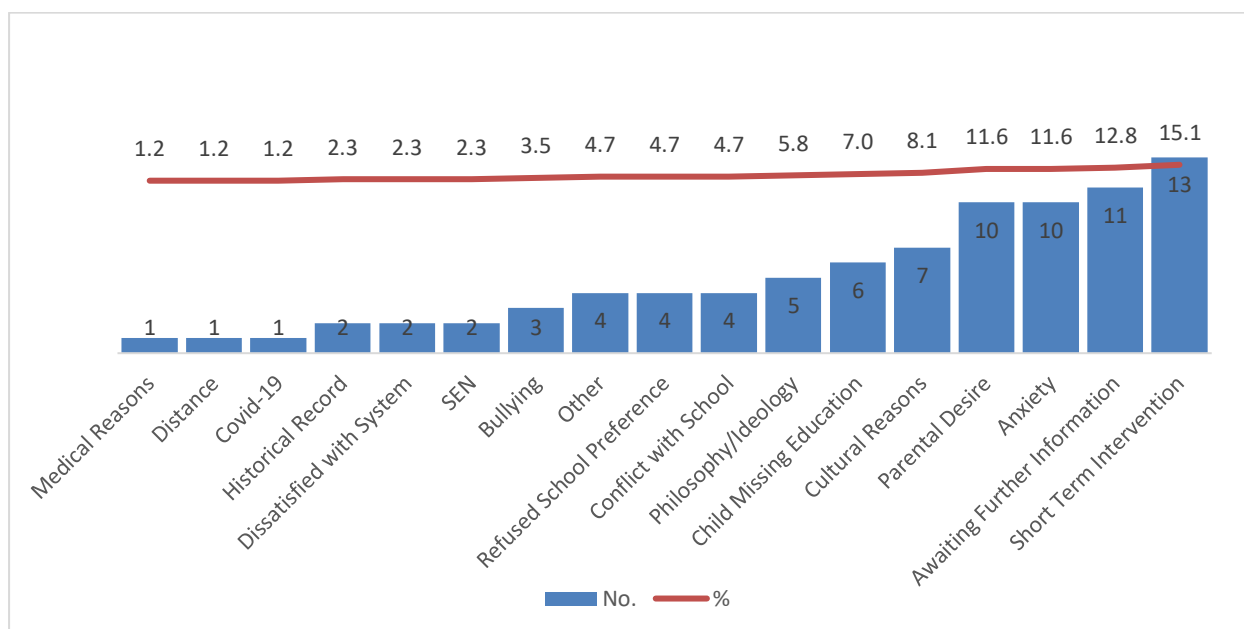
Parents, professionals and schools are encouraged to contact the service if parents are considering EHE. The service also coordinate pre EHE meetings between school, child, parent and other relevant professionals to resolve potential issues in school, which may be the cause for the decision to home educate.

The Pre EHE education meetings are also an ideal opportunity to remind parents they are taking on a duty of care to ensure their child's educational, social, emotional and mental health needs are met when they elect to home educate. It is reiterated that there is no financial support available for EHE education.

The EHE policy and the EHE information booklet are also available on the Local Authority website alongside a webpage which ensures parents have easy access to the appropriate information to make an informed choice.

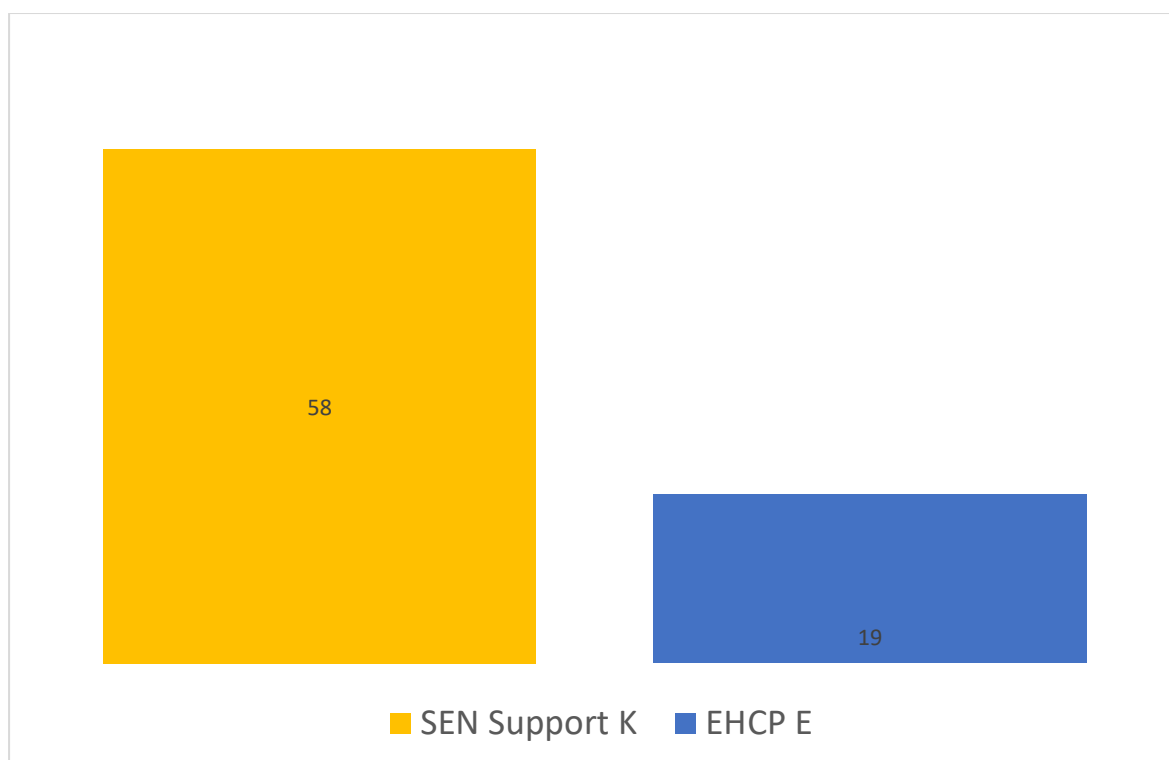
[https://go.walsall.gov.uk/home\\_education](https://go.walsall.gov.uk/home_education)

#### 4.3 Primary reasons for new EHE registrations from 1 September 2021 to 31 December 2021



The graph above shows the most popular reason for EHE is now 'short term intervention' and 'anxiety'. 'Short term intervention' is generally cited when parents choose to EHE whilst they are waiting for a place at their preferred school or when they intend to address a key concern they may have in regards to their child's education. By home educating, these parents can deliver personalised learning in order to better prepare their child for school by either focusing on academic, emotional or social needs. In order to support these families we offer regular educational reviews, emotional literacy support, teaching and learning guidance, support with school applications and a support package to reintegrate the child back to school.

#### 4.4 Number of EHE registrations open at the end of December 2021 by special educational needs (SEN) stage



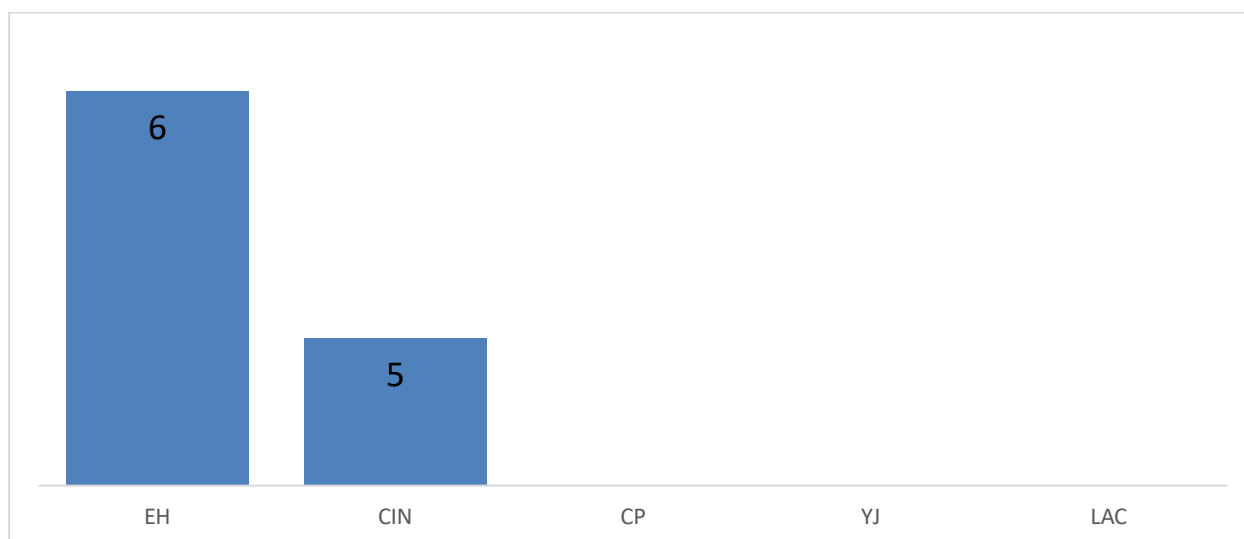
The graph above shows that of those registered as EHE, 15% have a special educational need (SEN) and 5% have an Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP).

These children are effectively monitored and supported as the EHE officer that leads in supporting these children is an experienced special educational needs coordinator (SENDCo).

We have implemented a new process so that we are now leading on EHCP reviews so that all EHE with an EHCP have a termly review, to ensure the children are in the most appropriate provision and receiving the best support.

If an initial EHE enquiry is received for a child who has an EHCP, the school are advised to arrange for an early annual review of the EHCP to assess whether the child's need have changed and to coordinate a pre EHE meeting. All relevant professionals involved attend e.g speech and language therapy, child & adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), school health, educational welfare, pastoral support and SENDCo. This provides assurances for parents and children that they have other options other than EHE, as all professionals work together in a child centred approach.

#### 4.5 Number of EHE registrations open at the end of December 2021 by Child in Need (CIN), Child Protection (CP), Early Help (EH), Looked After Child (LAC) and Youth Justice (YJ).



The above chart shows the low number of vulnerable learners that are registered as EHE. Early intervention and robust monitoring processes ensure these children are closely monitored and supported. Two of the CIN and two of the children receiving EH have weekly face-to-face sessions with the Emotional literacy support officer.

One of the CIN has an EHCP and is offered termly reviews. We have coordinated for one of the CIN children to attend college three times a week and weekly reports are received in regards to attendance and progress.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined for the purposes of the EHE corporate policy (See Appendix A) as:

- protecting children from maltreatment;
- preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development;
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

Local Authority officers within the EHE team do not have the power to enter the homes of, or otherwise see, children for the purposes of monitoring the provision of EHE under current legislation. However the Children Act 2004 allows local authorities to insist on seeing children in order to enquire about their welfare where there are grounds for concern.

If the EHE Officer has concerns about a child during the course of engagement with children and families or otherwise they will follow procedures as set out in the Walsall Safeguarding Partnership and the Continuum of Need procedures.

Staff members know and understand indicators that may suggest that a child or young person is suffering or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or harm and if the EHE service have any concerns about a child's welfare, they act on them immediately by following Walsall's Child Protection and Safeguarding procedures.

The EHE service fulfils its safeguarding responsibilities by the following:

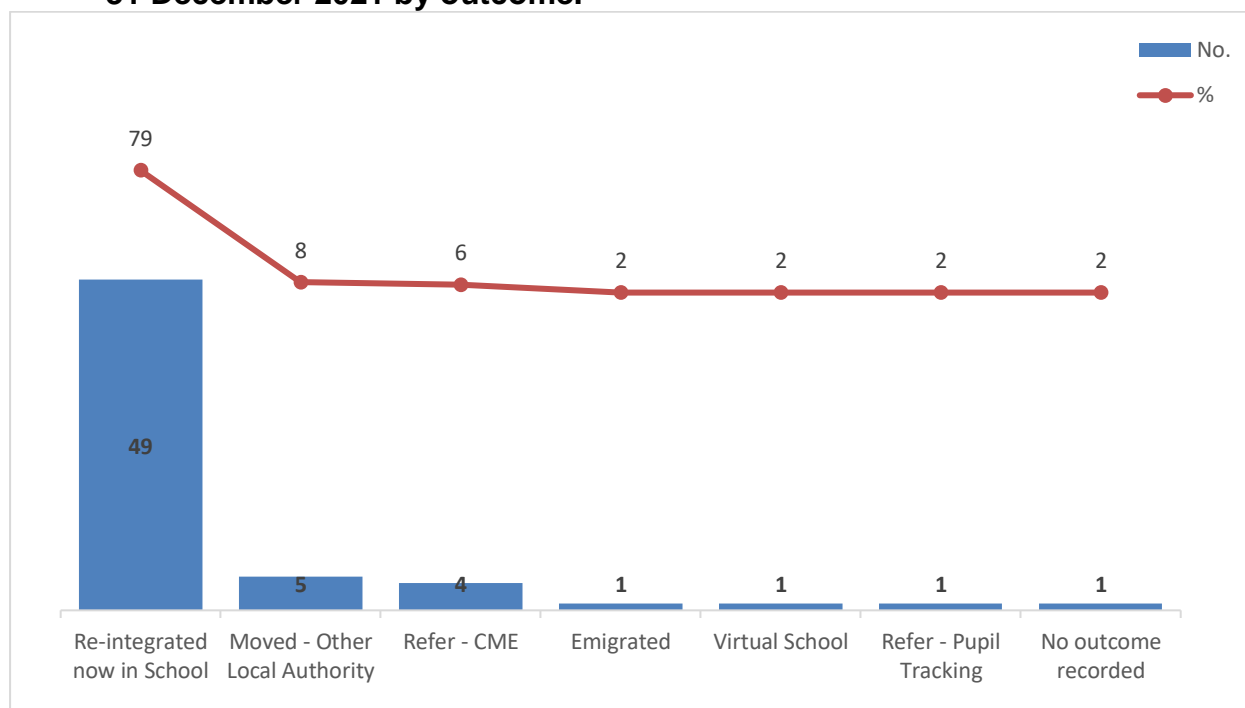
- To report a concern the EHE education service understand that the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is the first point of contact for any professional or concerned individual who has concerns about a child. MASH will be contacted. The EHE service can contact children's social care for advice and guidance, early help support or to refer a child in need of safeguarding.
- When an initial EHE enquiry is received schools are asked to share any safeguarding concerns.
- All appropriate professionals are invited to the Pre EHE meeting, including school nursing, social workers and Early Help etc
- School Nursing are notified of any new EHE registrations
- Upon receipt of an initial EHE enquiry and upon registration, checks are completed on Mosaic (social care system) and on Capita (education database) and regular communication is maintained with professionals.
- Weekly reports are created to identify any children who have just become known to social care or Early Help and the appropriate professional is immediately contacted.
- EHE officers are up to date on all relevant safeguarding training and are confident in using the relevant tools to support an assessment of need including Child Sexual Exploitation and Female Genital Mutation screening tools to support an assessment of need.
- The EHE officers understand the process for making a referral to social services and will send all information to the Multi Agency Service Hub using the Multi Agency Referral Form. This form is used to support all verbal referrals and be sent within 24 hours.
- EHE officers represent the service if a child is being assessed for a Child in Need Plan or Child Protection Plan, and produce the required information and reports for such assessment.
- The EHE service are aware of the vulnerabilities that children may face and have procedures in place to safeguard appropriately.
- The EHE officers are Prevent duty aware and discussions are had at visits in regards to content of learning, social opportunities outside the home and attendance at other settings for education to ensure they are not against British values and to ensure learners are safe from the dangers of radicalisation and extremism.
- Written records are made in a timely and appropriate manner, these records are shared appropriately and, where necessary with consent.
- Early help is offered to families from first contact and schools are also encouraged to offer this to families.
- Robust processes are in place if children move in and out of the area. Detailed information is exchanged with other local authorities; checks are completed with the previous school and other relevant professionals. If there is no engagement from the parent, a visit would be attempted to verify the address and social care and data checks are completed. A referral to pupil tracking would also be actioned if we are unable to ascertain the child's address.
- The EHE service manager is a member of (AEHEP) Association of Elective Home Education Professionals and termly attends the Midlands forum - this



provides networking opportunities and discussion around agreed good practice when new children/young people move in and out of neighbouring authorities.

- EHE training has been provided for early help, social workers health visitors and School nursing to consolidate joint working to ensure we help those children who are at risk of abuse and need early help or statutory social care involvement.

#### 4.6 Number and percentage of closed EHE cases between 1 September 2021 and 31 December 2021 by outcome.



The graph above shows the high number of EHE registrations that have been closed. It is pleasing to see the vast majority of learners are returning to school. This can be attributed to the good working relationships we have built with families, schools and other services.

By offering more visits and weekly sessions with the emotional literacy support officer we have a greater oversight of the children and we are therefore identifying those who are receiving an unsuitable education and returning them to school in a timely and effective manner.

## 5. Financial information

There are no direct financial implications of the report. As a result of the increase in the number of elective home educated children an additional post was created in October 2020. This is a two year fixed term post. In August 2021 £107,000 was allocated from the Public Health Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF). This has funded two additional EHE officer posts and an emotional literacy support officer - all employed as agency staff.

The allocated budget for the financial year April 2020 to March 2021 was £77,589, and the actual spend was £75,745 and this funded from the Dedicated Schools Grant.

The total projected budget for April 2021 to March 2022 is £165,677. This includes the COMF funding.

## **6. Reducing Inequalities**

The principal objective of the local authority is to continue to identify characteristics of good practice in addressing inequalities in elective home education, with particular attention to the following factors: gender; ethnicity; and Special Educational Needs (SEN).

Our aim is to work towards the position where the needs of all young people are addressed in school or alternative provision and parents are only electing to home educate as a positive choice rather than being evoked due to dissatisfaction/conflict with schools or a or conflict with schools.

## **7. Decide**

Scrutiny may decide to note the current position.

The Committee may decide to request further information or assurance in respect of the progress of elective home education.

## **8. Respond**

Any recommendations made by the Committee will be assessed against the Access and Inclusion work programme and performance board.

## **9. Review**

Elective home education is under constant monitoring and assessment via Children's Services Performance Board.

### **Author:**

Manni Uppal  
Specialist Officer for Elective Home Education  
☎ 652937  
✉ [manni.uppal@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:manni.uppal@walsall.gov.uk)

Rob Thomas  
Head of Access  
✉ [rob.thomas@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:rob.thomas@walsall.gov.uk)