

OCC Response to DCSF Review of Elective Home Education February 2009

1	Name of LA	Oxfordshire County Council
2	Tel. No of main contact	01865 810545
3	E-mail of main contact	rennie.thompson@oxfordshire.gov.uk
4	Would you be willing to take part in the next phase of the research in February/March (including in-depth interviews with key personnel in your organisation)?	Yes
5	Which team(s) have the main responsibility for supporting and monitoring home educated children within the local authority and other agencies?	EHE Service SEN Service ESWS Children Missing Education (CME)Service
6	List all teams / professionals involved in supporting home educating families	EHE Team, Education Social Work Service (ESWS), SEN Team, a variety of other professionals depending on the individual case
7	List all teams / professionals involved in monitoring home educating families.	EHE Team, Education Social Work Service (ESWS), SEN Team, a variety of other professionals depending on the individual case
8	Describe how you ensure collaboration and communication between these teams / individuals	Joint working between teams; named individuals in EHE, SEN teams with responsibility for EHE; protocols negotiated in collaboration; shared procedures document; website information; training in EHE offered to ESWS; CME officer also EHE Service manager; EHE team meetings with invited partners
9	How many children are currently home educated in your local authority of primary age (Registered with LA)	62
10	How many children are currently home educated in your local authority of primary age (Non-registered with LA)	don't know
11	How many children are currently home educated in your local authority of secondary age (Registered with LA)	162
12	How many children are currently home educated in your local authority of secondary age (Non-registered with LA)	don't know
13	Total (Registered with LA)	224
14	Total (Non-registered with LA)	don't know
15	Are these figures accurate or based on estimates?	Accurate
16	If accurate, where do you get this data from?	staff keep this information up to date
17	If accurate, how do you know the data is accurate?	
18	If estimated, what data have	We have hearsay evidence of families on EHE who are

	you used to arrive at this figure? (List all sources)	not registered but it is not gathered into one common database of information. We also have referrals to CME and to ESWS. As soon as we are aware they are EHE, we add them to our known database and follow procedures.
19	How confident is the local authority in the accuracy of this data?	Very confident
20	How often does the local authority get updated data? (List frequency for each source separately)	individual cases are reported on a daily basis to EHE, ESWS and/or CME as appropriate
21	What proportion (as a percentage) of your home educated population is stated for SEN? (please state whether accurate or estimate)	4.9%
22	What proportion (as a percentage) of your home educated population is non-stated for SEN (please state whether accurate or estimate)	95%
23	What proportion (as a percentage) of your home educated population is from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller heritage (please state whether accurate or estimate)	7.6% not accurate
24	What proportion (as a percentage) of your home educated population is made up of other Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups	23% not accurate
25	Please list which BME groups.	The groups we define are: BLF African MWB White/Black Caribbean BLG any other black NOT info not obtained REF refused APK Pakistani CHE Chinese MBA white/black African MOT any other mixed BLB black Caribbean
26	Do you believe the local authority knows about all the home educated children in your area?	We probably do not know about a fair number of home educated children in the area
27	Do you think that you will be better able to track children in your area in the near future? e.g. planned changes to your own systems, Contact Point, other system improvements?	yes
28	Please use this space to add detail to the answer you have just given	The guidance on EHE relies on families offering to inform us they are home educating. If a child is coming directly out of a school, then it is usually the case that the parent and/ or the head teacher let us know. Pupils moving from other counties are not so easily tracked whether they

		have been in schools or not. Information on pupils in the independent sector is not easily accessed. Contact Point may be helpful in tracking on a national basis.
29	How does the local authority ensure families know about their rights and responsibilities in relation to home education? (List all approaches used)	EHE Visits: A variety of LA Officers (eg EHE Team, Social Inclusion Officers(SIOs), ESWs, SEN officers) available to discuss with professionals and with the public; Website information; publications
30	What support does your local authority provide to home educating families? (List all forms of support offered)	No funding. No resources. Advice and guidance, signposting and networking should it be requested from EHE Visitors; suggestions for improvement should education be unsuitable; maintaining the SEN statement by SEN officers; Education provided in the Hospital School if an EHE pupil is a patient
31	How does the local authority let families know about the services provided to support them in home educating their children? (List all approaches used)	EHE Visits: A variety of LA Officers (eg EHE Team, Social Inclusion Officers(SIOs), ESWs, SEN officers) available to discuss with professionals and with the public; Website information; publications
32	Following the initial assessment visit, are further monitoring visits made to a home educated child?	Yes
33	If yes, how often, on average, are these carried out?	Once a year
34	Please use this space to add detail to the answer you have just given	The EHE Team aim to visit once a year for families who are providing suitable education. We visit more often should we have concerns
35	On average, how often is the child seen when a visit is made?	Usually, but not always
36	Please use this space to add detail to the answer you have just given	In most cases, when a visit takes place, the child is seen as the EHE visitor prioritises this. In some cases, the visitor is shown samples of the child's work but does not see the child. In some cases, the EHE visitor is not welcome to visit and the parent submits a outline of their education plan - this is sometimes accompanied by the child's work but not always.
37	If the child is seen, where is s/he usually seen?	In the home
38	Please use this space to add detail to the answer you have just given	We encourage the visits to take place in the family home. Some visits take place in another venue. Some refuse to meet at all.
39	If you are not permitted access to a child, is any further action taken?	
40	If yes, what further steps are taken?	Depends on the case but we investigate as far as possible within our rights and respecting those of the parents to ensure the child is safe. We have taken advice from our legal services on what we can accept on a case by case basis.
41	How is the suitability of the education provided to the child	The Team consists of 5 EHE visitors who are all qualified, experienced teachers. They rely on their professional

	assessed? (Please describe)	expertise to make the assessments on a case by case basis. In brief, their main focus in assessment is being able to demonstrate progress in the child.
42	Is the local authority clear about what the definition of a 'suitable education' is?	No
43	Please use this space to add detail to the answer you have just given	The term 'suitable' is subject to wide variation in its application. It would be difficult to argue in a legal context (for both parties). Although we have an understanding of it within our EHE team, its subjective nature and wide interpretation are a cause for concern.
44	Does the local authority have systems in place to track the educational progress of home educated children?	Yes
45	Please use this space to add further detail to the answer you have just given	The EHE visitors monitor progress on their visits and reports are completed by EHE visitors and audited by the manager.
46	Of the home educated children in your area of whom you have knowledge, what proportion (as a percentage) in your estimation is receiving a suitable, full time (20hrs a week) education? (Please describe)	We are working with a number of families on improving their provision. Difficult to quantify.
47	Does the local authority take any further steps if a home educated child's education was found to be unsuitable or not full time?	Yes
48	Please use this space to add further detail to the answer you have just given	After offering the parent advice and negotiating an improvement plan (which might include the suggestion of returning to school), if we are still unsatisfied, we refer the matter to the ESWS. They usually pursue a school attendance order.
49	Does the local authority face any challenges in assessing whether home educated children receive a suitable education?	Yes
50	If you answered yes to Q49, please describe the challenges and what you think could be done to overcome these	Access to the child and the child's work is the first hurdle. Sensitive changes to government guidance to allow access to the child and their work sensitively balanced with the parents' rights would be a great help. Clarification of 'suitable education' would help both parents and LAs.
51	Thinking about your local area, in the last five years, how many cases have you come across that use the premise of home education as a 'cover' for child abuse, forced marriage or other aspects of child neglect?	.

52	Please use this space to add detail to the answer you have just given. Please include the number of Serious Case Reviews you know about that have a home education element.	Difficult to quantify as I am loath to cast suspicion through hunches or hearsay information. Appropriate safeguarding procedures are always followed
53	Do you think the current system for safeguarding children who are educated at home is adequate?	no
54	Please use this space to add detail to the answer you have just given	The LA has serious concerns about this. We acknowledge and evidence that there are many families who are genuinely committed to EHE and are doing an excellent job, their children are safe and achieving positive outcomes. However, there are families who have elected to home educate for reasons that are not based on education philosophy. Some of these children are at risk of a variety of negative experiences related to their education, their achievement of the ECM outcomes and in extreme cases they are seriously at risk within the terms of child protection/ safeguarding. Our over-riding concern is that EHE is being used to avoid these risks being identified and the current guidance is making it difficult to monitor and track such children who may be at risk.
55	Do you think that home educated children in your local authority are able to achieve the five Every Child Matters outcomes? Please say why you think that for each of the five outcomes	Be Healthy. Parents can actively involve their children in healthy lifestyle through home education. Be Safe. Parents can keep children safe and can guide them in safe practices through home education. Enjoy and Achieve. Parents can ensure the programme of learning (whether a fixed programme or through autonomous learning) can allow children to enjoy and achieve. Achieve Economic Wellbeing. Parents can equip their children to access further education/ training/ employment through home education. They can equip them with skills beyond the remit of school education. Parents may be in a position to personalise learning more easily than schools. Make a Positive Contribution. Parents can involve children in many activities outwith the home, giving them the opportunity to make a positive contribution to society.
56	Do you think there should be any changes made to the current system for supporting home educating families?	Yes
57	Please use this space to add detail to the answer you have just given	Use of the common assessment framework (CAF) to identify support required for a home educating family prior to them starting to home educate would be a robust way to start EHE for a child. It would identify the support needed from all aspects of the child's needs, not just education. Targetted support could then be identified.
58	Do you think there should be	Yes

	any changes made to the current system for monitoring home educating families and ensuring that home educated children are able to achieve the five outcomes?	
59	Please use this space to add detail to the answer you have just given	Clarification of 'suitable ' and 'efficient' and relating to the 5 outcomes would be helpful to children & Young people and the LA. Whether it would be welcomed by EHE parents is another matter. Whatever changes we make need to enable us to safeguard those at risk and without the right of access, we are unable to monitor. Another concern lies in the time that can be wasted in contacting families and arranging appointments - evasive tactics can be used to delay intervention by officials.
60	Has the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children and Young People seen and agreed with the answers you have given above?	No (unable to share – see request below. Will be shared when copy is returned by DCSF)
		Children Young People and Families, Young People and Access to Education. *** Rennie Thompson OCC contact re EHE - I would appreciate a copy of this completed response form as I have been unable to save it or print it due to restrictions you appear to have placed on it. It is possible that I will be asked under the FOI act to disclose this response.