



To: Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

Date: 9th April 2026

Subject: Elective Home Education Task & Finish Group

1 Purpose of the Note

- 1.1 To inform Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee on the work undertaken by Elective Home Education (EHE) Task & Finish Group and to outline the recommendations based on its findings.

2 Recommendations

2.1 Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee are recommended to:

- 1) Recommend that the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills:
 - a) Write to the Secretary of State for Education to highlight Coventry's effective, relationship-based home education practice and emphasise the additional burdens the new Children's Wellbeing Bill will place on Local Authorities.
 - b) Engage directly with colleges on expanding 14-16 provision for EHE pupils and use influence to support establishment of Coventry-based provision.
- 2) Add a review of 14–16 and post-16 provision for EHE students, identifying gaps and opportunities to expand access to qualifications to the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board work programme for 26/27.
- 3) Note and promote Coventry's strong safeguarding approach, including effective multi-agency working, its above-minimum offer to families, and the resource implications of rising EHE numbers.

3 Information and Background

- 3.1 The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board established a Task and Finish Group to examine the growing number of children and young people being electively home educated in the city, understand the reasons behind this trend, and review how effectively the Council and partners are supporting these families. The Board requested that Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee consider the recommendations to enable additional time for scrutiny to take place.
- 3.2 The group aimed to identify practical improvements, highlight gaps in policy or practice, and ensure that Coventry fulfils its statutory responsibilities while supporting positive outcomes for children.

3.3 Several local and national factors contributed to the decision to set up the group:

- Rising numbers of EHE registrations following the pandemic and continuing year on year growth.
- Increased complexity of cases, with more children leaving school due to anxiety, unmet SEND needs, bullying concerns, or dissatisfaction with school provision.
- National focus on attendance, inclusion and safeguarding, with government guidance placing stronger expectations on local authorities.
- Resource pressures within the EHE service preventing deeper casework and proactive visits.
- Concerns from schools and elected members about off rolling, hidden disengagement, and inconsistent support pathways for families.

3.4 Membership of the task and finish group was:

- Cllr L Kelly (Chair)
- Cllr M Mutton
- Cllr S Nazir

4 Activity Undertaken by the Group

4.1 Reviewed the scoping document which can be found in **Appendix A**.

4.2 Education Services officers provided detailed evidence on the support offered to home-educating families, outlining Coventry's proactive and partnership-based approach. This includes early engagement, multi-agency information-gathering, and constructive communication with families, with officers emphasising that Coventry frequently exceeds statutory minimum expectations and is recognised for strong practice and positive relationships with home educators.

4.3 The group examined quantitative data on EHE numbers, trends, and case characteristics, noting continued growth in the cohort and a shift toward families choosing EHE due to unmet needs or adverse experiences in school. Members also considered data on repeat cases where children return to mainstream education and later withdraw again, highlighting opportunities for earlier intervention and improved support pathways.

4.4 Members reviewed EHE safeguarding processes, including the referral information provided by schools at deregistration—such as risks of exclusion, exploitation concerns, and involvement with professionals—and how the local authority assesses these risks. The group considered the step-by-step escalation process for non-responsive families, including missing education notices and attendance visits, and explored how safeguarding concerns determine whether a child remains on the home education register.

4.5 The group explored the legal powers and limitations relating to refusing home education, with officers confirming that local authorities cannot refuse EHE unless there is clear evidence that education is unsuitable or not being provided. Members discussed the limited ability to enter homes, the circumstances under which police or social care can intervene, and how these constraints shape case management and safeguarding responses.

- 4.6 The group considered the criteria used to assess “suitable education,” noting that suitability is judged flexibly and individually for each child. Officers explained that while English and maths are strongly encouraged, there is no statutory curriculum requirement, and that assessments take into account wider indicators such as social development, physical activity, personal progress, and the safety and appropriateness of the home learning environment.
- 4.7 Members reviewed case studies and heard lived-experience testimony illustrating the diversity of EHE journeys, including families who choose EHE for philosophical reasons and those who feel driven to EHE due to unmet needs, anxiety, or difficulties with school SEND support. Case studies highlighted both positive relationships with the local authority and significant challenges, such as the financial burden of exams and tutoring and mistrust arising from past negative educational experiences.
- 4.8 The group reviewed national guidance and statutory duties, considering how Coventry’s current practice aligns with expectations around safeguarding, monitoring suitability, and supporting families. Officers also outlined anticipated shifts arising from the Children’s Wellbeing Bill, which is expected to introduce more formalised monitoring requirements and increase responsibilities on both local authorities and families.
- 4.9 Members identified key barriers affecting EHE practice, including capacity constraints within the local authority, inconsistent early help pathways for families, and varied experiences within schools—particularly around SEND and behaviour—which often influence decisions to withdraw children. These findings highlighted the need for clearer system pathways and adequate staffing to support a growing and increasingly complex EHE cohort.
- 4.10 The group examined financial barriers facing home-educated children, particularly the high cost of private exam entry fees and tutoring. Members recognised that limited access to affordable GCSEs significantly restricts young people’s progression onto higher-level college courses, even when they are academically capable, and discussed the inequity created by reliance on privately funded routes to qualifications.
- 4.11 The group assessed the potential impact of the Children’s Wellbeing Bill, noting concerns about increased administrative requirements for families, potential reductions in activity providers willing to accept home-educated children, and the significant increase in workload for the local authority. Officers highlighted that additional staffing may be required to maintain current support levels and ensure that families continue to receive constructive, relationship-based engagement.
- 4.12 Members reviewed the current offer for 14–16-year-old home-educated learners, noting that most funded provision is located outside Coventry, such as at Nuneaton College, and that local options remain limited. The group considered ongoing work to establish a satellite provision within Coventry and acknowledged how gaps in local access—combined with high private exam costs—create barriers to securing GCSEs and vocational pathways for EHE young people.

5 Conclusion

- 5.1 The Task and Finish Group formed its recommendations by drawing together key evidence presented throughout its meetings. The update from the Elective Home Education (EHE) Coordinator highlighted Coventry’s strong, relationship-based approach, effective safeguarding practice, and the challenges created by rising EHE

numbers and the forthcoming Children’s Wellbeing Bill. This context shaped the group’s view that Coventry’s model should be recognised nationally and that the Education Secretary should be asked to ensure proportionate expectations and provide clearer powers and a compulsory national register.

- 5.2 The lived experiences shared by Cllr R Reeves as Home Educator emphasised barriers faced by families—particularly the cost of exams, social isolation, and concerns about the Bill—which reinforced the need for national clarity and local action to support accessible pathways for qualifications. Evidence on emerging 14–16 provision informed the recommendation for the Cabinet Member to work proactively with colleges to expand and secure provision.
- 5.3 To ensure continued oversight of qualifications access and college engagement, members agreed that Scrutiny Board 2 should add a focused work programme item for 2026/27. Finally, given the consistent emphasis throughout the meeting on effective safeguarding and multi-agency working, the group agreed to highlight Coventry’s strong practice and the need to build capacity as EHE numbers grow.

Appendix 1: Scoping Document

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