



# Elective Home Education

## Guidance for Parents



September 2024

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## Introduction

The purpose of this guidance is to help you as parents and home educators understand your obligations and rights and the way in which Northumberland County Council (LA) and Education Welfare (EW) carries out its duties under the Education Act 1996, with regard to elective home education (EHE).

The Department for Education guidance for parents about EHE contains the following definition: Elective home education is a term used to describe a choice by parents to provide education for their children at home or in some other way they choose instead of sending them to school [Elective home education: guidance for parents (DfE 2019)]

If a parent of a child on a school roll opts to home educate, they must confirm in writing, in the form of dated letter or email to the head teacher, that they wish to remove their child's name from the register because the child is to be educated other than at school. However, if a child is on a special school roll parents must seek approval from the Local Authority Special Educational Needs team first (see appendix 2)

By producing this guidance, it is hoped that all parents in Northumberland who choose to educate their children at home do it well and are helped to do so. This guidance also aims to set out what parents need to consider and when they should seek help.

## Education Welfare

The aim of EW is to create positive working relationships with home educators and, bearing in mind the wishes of the parents/carers, we will offer support and advice as we are able:

- On initial contact, we will offer prompt information and advice to parents considering educating children at home
- To encourage good practice by providing written information which clearly sets out the legislative position and provides advice on roles and responsibilities of parents and the LA in relation to children who are home educated
- To establish whether the education children are receiving is suitable, efficient and full time by offering visits to homes or any reasonable alternative venues parents identify, or considering a range of information provided by parents at regular intervals
- To inform parents of a range of resources and information available via websites, publications, etc which they may find useful
- To build trust and effective relationships with home educators that function to safeguard children's educational interests
- To respect the diversity of approaches and interests demonstrated by home educators in providing suitable education
- To work with other agencies as and when necessary to safeguard and promote the welfare of children educated at home

If at any time you need to discuss a problem concerning the education of your child please contact EW on 07803815161.

The LA receives no funds from central government to support elective home education and cannot accept any responsibility to plan or provide resources your child's education you may require, neither can it organise or fund access to public examinations.

## When is education compulsory?

The law requires a child to be educated from the age of five to the age of sixteen (i.e. the last Friday in June in the academic year in which the child turns 16 years old) and you are responsible to see that this happens either in school 'or otherwise'.

Article 2 of Protocol of the European Convention on Human Rights states that:

*"No person shall be denied the right to education. In the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching is in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions."*

This right is enshrined in English law.

Section 9 of the Education Act 1996 provides that:

*"In exercising or performing all their respective powers and duties under the Education Acts, the Secretary of State, Local Education Authorities and funding authorities shall have regard to the general principle that pupils are to be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents, so far as that is compatible with the provision of efficient instruction and training and the avoidance of unreasonable expenditure."*

The Department for Education specifies that the school leaving date for all children, whether 'at school or otherwise', is, 'the last Friday in June in the school year in which a child reaches age sixteen'.

## Parents'/carers' duty

Parents/Carers have a duty to ensure that their children receive a suitable full-time education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise:

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states:

*'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable:*

*(a) to his age, ability and aptitude, and*

*(b) to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise."*

Elective home education is a form of 'education otherwise than at school'. The law allows parents/carers to educate their children at home instead of sending them to school, if they fulfil certain conditions. This is where the LA has a responsibility.

If you decide to home educate and your child is attending school, you must tell the head teacher or chair of governors, in writing, that you wish them to remove your child's name from the school roll because the child is to be educated otherwise than at school.

The school must delete your child's name from their admissions register upon receipt of written notification from you. However, schools should not wait for parents to give written notification that they are withdrawing their child from school before advising their LA.

Once the LA has received this information from school and completed a school leavers form, your child's details will be entered onto the Elective Home Education register.

Failure to notify the school in writing of your intentions to educate at home could result in prosecution for failing to ensure regular attendance at school.

If your child has not started school you are under no legal obligation to inform the LA, however it may be useful to do so at the earliest opportunity to ensure that support and advice can be offered if required.

There is no formal curriculum for education at home, and you do not have to follow the National Curriculum as this only applies to the education of children in state schools.

Parents who choose to educate their children at home must be prepared to assume full financial responsibility, including bearing the cost of any public examinations.

### [Routine Health Checks that are carried out by schools](#)

You should let your GP know that you are home educating your child so that they can provide information and guidance about routine health checks that would normally happen in school and other health support services that visit schools regularly. Northumberland school health services can be contacted on the following numbers;

- Child Health Centre, Wansbeck Hospital, Ashington - 01670 564048
- Eddie Ferguson House, Blyth - 01670 629670
- Corbridge Health Centre, Hexham – 01434 636939
- Broomhill Health Centre, Amble – 01670 761908

Some of the routine [health checks and immunisations for children](#) include:

- Eye checks
- Height and weight in Reception and Year 6
- Cervical cancer vaccination HPV for girls at around 12-13 years of age
- Diphtheria, tetanus and polio booster given a single vaccine between 13 and 18 years of age.

### [The Local Authority's responsibility](#)

Once informed of your decision to home educate, the LA then has a responsibility to make informal enquiries of you to satisfy itself that you are providing a suitable education for your child.

Parents and guardians who choose to home-educate their children are responsible for providing a *suitable education* and ensuring that the education provided is:

- **efficient** so that the education provided 'achieves what it is intended to achieve'
- **full-time** which means 'occupying a significant proportion of a child's life'
- **suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude**

- **suitable to any special educational needs the child may have**

These definitions are in the DfE guidance for parents. It also sets out some more general points that should be considered, including:

- even if there is no specific link with the National Curriculum, there should be an appropriate minimum standard aimed at, and the education should enable the child, when grown up, to function as an independent citizen in the UK, including beyond the community they grew up in;
- the education should not directly conflict with the fundamental British values as defined in Government guidance, although there is no requirement to teach these

There is no definition of suitable education in statute law, but DfE guidance explains that this means the education “must be age-appropriate, enable the child to make progress according to his or her particular level of ability, and should take account of any specific aptitudes.”

The LA has a responsibility to determine that a suitable education is taking place for the child, rather than endorsing any particular method of education. If parents fail to respond to enquiries regarding home education, the LA is entitled to conclude from the absence of any response, that it appears your child is not receiving a suitable education. (see appendix 1)

Under Section 437(1) of the Education Act 1996, LAs can intervene if they have good reason to believe that parents are not providing a suitable education. This section states that:

*“If it appears to a local education authority that a child of compulsory school age in their area is not receiving suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise, they shall serve a notice in writing on the parent requiring him to satisfy them within the period specified in the notice that the child is receiving such education.”*

## Procedure

When you decide to educate your child at home, an officer will contact you to offer an appointment.

The officer often undertakes this task by making home visits at times that are mutually agreed.

You may or may not wish your child to be present at these visits.

These visits will take place during school term time and preferably during the working day. All appointments will be confirmed in writing.

We acknowledge that you may, at any stage, not wish to meet the officer in your home and instead may prefer to let us know about the education you are providing in other ways.

For instance, you may choose one or more of the following:

- meet at another venue
- meet with or without your child being present
- send a report setting out your educational plans with examples of work
- demonstrate education provision in some other mutually acceptable way.

In all cases, sufficient time is made for the family to make their arrangements for home education to proceed and to choose how they will present examples of the education provision.

No visit will take place unless you have agreed to one and an appointment has been made in advance.

You may wish to show examples of your child's work, including such things as handwriting, artwork, poetry, maths, recordings, craft work, photographs etc. If a structured programme is being followed then a timetable linked to programmes of study might be useful. If a less structured approach is being used then a record in the form of a diary might form extra evidence that would be of assistance. Anything that you and the officer agree will assist in showing the quality of the educational experiences of the child may be included.

Open discussion, without the need for parents to provide masses of paperwork, can be a simple and satisfactory way of demonstrating suitable education provision.

Please be aware the LA is unable to offer direct teaching or to provide materials for children being home educated. There may be occasions when home educators are willing to share or pass on books and materials to other families.

Please do not assume that any materials passed on in this way are, or need to be, endorsed by the LA. Once you have met with the officer and we have received information from yourselves concerning the education of your child, we will respond with a short report that will include one of the following recommendations:

- that the education provision is satisfactory. The LA will make informal enquiries of the family again at agreed dates, but we shall always take the wishes of the family into account.
- that the education provision is unsatisfactory and reasons will be given.

If the LA is not satisfied that a suitable education is taking place, further visits and/or consultations will be offered with the aim of helping you to overcome the difficulties within a mutually agreed time scale (please note that there is a list of support agencies at the end of this booklet that may be able to give you advice).

One of these meetings could be an education planning meeting where a specific plan will be agreed to ensure satisfactory education can be achieved.

If at this stage the LA still considers that your child is receiving a less than satisfactory education, it may be necessary to serve a notice (known as a s437(1) notice). You will have 15 days to respond to the notice. If a parent fails to respond, then the LA has a legal obligation to serve a school attendance order (SAO). This will require you to send your child to a school named on the order (Section 437, Education Act 1996). Failure to comply with the order is a criminal offence.

The taking of the above measures would be a last resort and only after all reasonable avenues have been explored to bring about a resolution.

Please note that at any stage following the issue of a school attendance order process, parents may present evidence to the LA that they are now providing a suitable education and apply to have the order revoked.

## [Safeguarding children](#)

Under Section 175(1) of the Education Act 2002, LAs also have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. This section states:

*“A local education authority shall make arrangements for ensuring that functions conferred upon them in their capacity as a local education authority are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.”*

The Northumberland Safeguarding Strategic Partnership (NSSP) has the statutory responsibility for ensuring that all agencies within Northumberland promote the safeguarding of children in all settings.

This includes ensuring agencies that work with and have contact with children educated at home by their parents, are aware of their responsibility to consider whether children are being adequately safeguarded within those settings and, where appropriate, to notify other agencies of their concerns. EW work alongside all agencies including the Multi Agency Service Hub (MASH) to ensure that safeguarding duties are undertaken. If EW have concerns regarding the safeguarding of your child a referral will be made to Children's Social Care.

The service also works alongside health colleagues to ensure EHE pupils have access to all entitlements including immunisations and vision screening and the careers service to give advice on post 16 provision.

Section 175(1) does not give LAs powers to enter the homes of children undertaking elective home education. (see appendix 3)



## What should I do if my child has Special Educational Needs?

A parent's right to educate their children at home applies equally where a child has special educational needs and/or an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). If your child attends a special school, you will need permission from the LA to remove your child from the school.

If you decide to educate your child at home, the EHC Plan must remain in force. The LA must ensure that parents can make suitable provision for the child's special educational needs. If satisfied, the LA remains under a duty to maintain the plan and review it annually.

If at any point the LA considers that home education is no longer suitable, it must ensure the special educational provision in the EHC plan is made available as well as taking steps set out in relation to school attendance.

A parent who is educating their child at home may ask the LA to carry out a statutory assessment of their child's special educational needs and the LA must consider the request within the same statutory timescales and in the same way as other requests.

A range of information relevant to the families of children and young people is available on the website: [www.northumberlandsend.co.uk](http://www.northumberlandsend.co.uk)

If you wish to speak to an EHCP Coordinator please phone: 01670

### Who do I inform if we decide to move home?

Please let the officer and the SEND Team (if your child has a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan) know your new address. The LA is required to keep in touch.

## Work Placement

Work experience may take place during the last two years of compulsory education and is possible only when the arrangements for it are made or approved by a local Education Authority under section 560 of the Education Act 1996 and is not a statutory requirement.

Children receiving EHE may undertake work experience providing the parents take responsibility for ensuring the placement is safe, insurance is in place and all health and safety criteria are met.

A Local Authority cannot be held liable for any child being injured whilst on work experience when they have not organised it, which will be the case with children who are being Electively Home Educated.

It is also very important that the employer offering the work experience placement is made fully aware that the child is being Electively Home Educated and that it is not a school arranged placement.

Any work experience opportunity undertaken by children receiving EHE must be unpaid and clearly seen to be enhancing the child's education and life experiences and cannot be used as a replacement of the education programme you are providing for your child.

## Qualifications

### GCSE'S - planning ahead

If your son/daughter decides he/she wants to take GCSEs, then you should make your preparations as early as possible.

It is also essential to find out at the same time where your son/daughter can sit the examinations. This must be an accredited centre.

Contact your local school or Further Education College to see if it will accept external candidates. You will have to use the same syllabus/exam board as the school/college and for this reason it is important that you contact school(s) very early in Year 10 (or even Year 9) to find out what subject/syllabus is being followed.

Entries should be made by October in Year 11 at the latest, but earlier discussion is advised.

### Exam Board Information

All examination boards offer examinations for external candidates. When you contact them tell them this is the information you need.

You also need to tell them when (in which year) your son/daughter is going to sit his/her GCSEs. Parents/Carers should contact the individual examination boards about the most appropriate syllabus to follow.

The contact numbers and websites for the exam board for England are:

- AQA Exams Officers enquiries- 08001977162 [www.aqa.org.uk](http://www.aqa.org.uk)
- Pearsons Qualifications 0344 463 2535 <https://qualifications.pearson.com>
- OCR - 01223 553998 - [www.ocr.org.uk](http://www.ocr.org.uk)
- Home Education in the UK <https://home-ed.info/gcse>

## Careers Guidance Team

The Careers Guidance team has qualified IAG Advisers based throughout the county. IAG Advisers provide independent and impartial advice, guidance and support for young people at risk of NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training), in education and unemployed aged 16-19.

Support for young people at risk of becoming NEET includes those in alternative provision and those who are electively home educated.

IAG Advisers are qualified, professional advisers that work in locations across Northumberland who can help young people find up to date information about careers, jobs, education courses, volunteering and training opportunities so that they can make informed choices about all the options open to them.

The support that they can offer to young people who are home educated, will focus on those in year 11 who are most at risk of not making a transition to education, training or employment with training. For more information e-mail [careersteam@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:careersteam@northumberland.gov.uk)

### [What if I want my child to return to mainstream school?](#)

If at any time you should wish your child to return to school then please contact school admissions at [schooladmissions@northumberland.co.uk](mailto:schooladmissions@northumberland.co.uk) or contact EW.

More information can be found at [Northumberland County Council - School admissions, places & appeals](#)

### [Home Education support networks](#)

Education Otherwise - [www.educationotherwise.org](http://www.educationotherwise.org)

Home Education Advisory Service - [www.heas.org.uk](http://www.heas.org.uk)

Home Education in the UK - [Home Education in the UK \(home-ed.info\)](http://home-ed.info)

## [Useful Contacts](#)

If you require any further information on Elective Home Education please contact

Sarah Wintringham  
Principal Education Welfare Officer  
Email: [ehe@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:ehe@northumberland.gov.uk)

Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND)  
01670 622759  
Email: [sen@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:sen@northumberland.gov.uk)

School Admissions  
01670 624889  
Email: [Schooladmissions@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:Schooladmissions@northumberland.gov.uk)

## [Appendices](#)

- Appendix 1: Suitable Education Checklist
- Appendix 2: EHE flowchart
- Appendix 3: Protocol for Safeguarding Children Educated at Home

## Appendix 1: EHE Suitable Education Checklist

### Elective Home Education

#### Guidance for parents providing home education

#### Definition of SUITABLE EDUCATION

##### What does home education have to include?

Parents and guardians who choose to home-educate their children are responsible for providing a *suitable education* and ensuring that the education provided is:

- **efficient** so that the education provided ‘achieves what it is intended to achieve’
- **full-time** which means ‘occupying a significant proportion of a child’s life’
- **suitable to the child’s age, ability and aptitude**
- **suitable to any special educational needs the child may have**

These definitions are in the DfE guidance for parents. It also sets out some more general points that should be considered, including:

- even if there is no specific link with the National Curriculum, there should be an appropriate minimum standard aimed at, and the education should enable the child, when grown up, to function as an independent citizen in the UK, including beyond the community they grew up in;
- the education should not directly conflict with the fundamental British values as defined in Government guidance, although there is no requirement to teach these.

##### Who provides the education or does the teaching?

Parents can teach and provide the education themselves or choose to employ private tutors or online tuition to assist them (but there is no requirement for them to do so).

##### Where does the education take place?

Learning may take place in different locations and does not have to be limited to the child’s home.

##### How does home education differ from education provided at school?

Parents are not required to provide a broad and balanced curriculum and do not have to follow the National Curriculum.

##### How is home education funded?

Home educating parents must be prepared to assume full financial responsibility, including the cost of any public examinations.

##### What is suitable education?

There is no definition of suitable education in statute law, but DfE guidance explains that this means the education “must be age-appropriate, enable the child to make progress according to his or her particular level of ability, and should take account of any specific aptitudes.”

Even though the DfE does not define exactly what a suitable education is, local authorities do have a duty to identify children in their area who are **not** receiving a suitable education and to intervene.

In Northumberland this work is done by the Education Welfare service. As recommended by the DfE, the Education Welfare service contacts people home educating on at least an annual basis to be aware of the suitability of the education being provided.

Parents and guardians are expected to provide evidence of a suitable education and will be asked the following about the education provided for the child during the previous year.

<b>Annual Review</b>	
<b>Assessment of suitable education</b>	<b>Yes/No/notes/comment</b>
The child was seen at the annual review visit	
Who the main educator is eg mother or father, named alternative provider	
Brief description of where the home education takes place	
An outline of the education plan/programme that was in place at the beginning of the year eg termly plan, timetable	
Brief information about the curriculum being followed eg National Curriculum, subjects, online resources being used (Twinkl, Khan Academy, Reading Eggs, Epic, Mathematics Enhancement Program etc)	
Some examples of any teaching resources, including schemes and text books, that have been used	
Any field visits that have taken place eg to castles, mines, science and historical museums, zoos and outdoor places	
What additional support, if any, has been put in place for the child(ren)	
What challenge, if any, has been included in the education programme	
Enrichment activities eg ballet, swimming club, Scouts	
Links with EHE community eg joint trips and lessons	
Evidence of the child's written work in literacy and numeracy, on-line blogs, presentations	
A description of access to IT and the development of IT skills	
The child's views about their year of education	
Evidence of other achievements eg passing music exams, competitions, speech and drama	
Brief description of the opportunities the child has had to socialise with other children during the year	

A summary of the progress made and what the child has achieved		
<b>Is the recommendation that suitable education is being provided?</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
Comments (if any)		
<i>For the Principal/Lead Education Welfare Officer</i>		
<i>No further action</i>	<i>Further action required YES/NO</i>	
<i>Evidence indicates that suitable education is being provided</i>	<i>Evidence indicates that suitable education is not being provided</i>	
<i>Signature: Principal/Lead EWO</i>		
<i>Date:</i>		

Where the Education Welfare Officer has made an annual visit, has seen the work, and has probably seen the child, the outcome is likely to be a recommendation that suitable education is being provided.

#### **When is education considered to be not suitable?**

Although we would strongly encourage parents and guardians to develop positive relationships with the Education Welfare service, they do not have to meet with officers or answer all of the questions that they may be asked.

However, a lack of information or evidence that is unacceptable may lead the officer to be unable to consider that the education being provided is suitable.

The following is not a definitive list, but indicates what is **NOT acceptable as evidence that suitable education is being provided**:

- The education provision described lacks detail and it is difficult to ascertain what is being taught, the education being received or what subjects are being studied
- There is no or very limited examples of work or learning submitted
- There is no or very limited information regarding teaching resources used
- There is no or very limited detail of how the child's progress is being planned for, monitored or examples of work or learning to demonstrate academic progress
- The education provision described lacks detail in how it will enable the child to participate fully in life, or plan for the future eg access to FE and HE
- The evidence provided is unacceptable, for example:
  - photographs of text books
  - Photographs of work books with no commentary

#### **What happens if the education provided is not suitable?**

If the Education Welfare service is concerned that a child is not receiving a suitable education then they will intervene to:

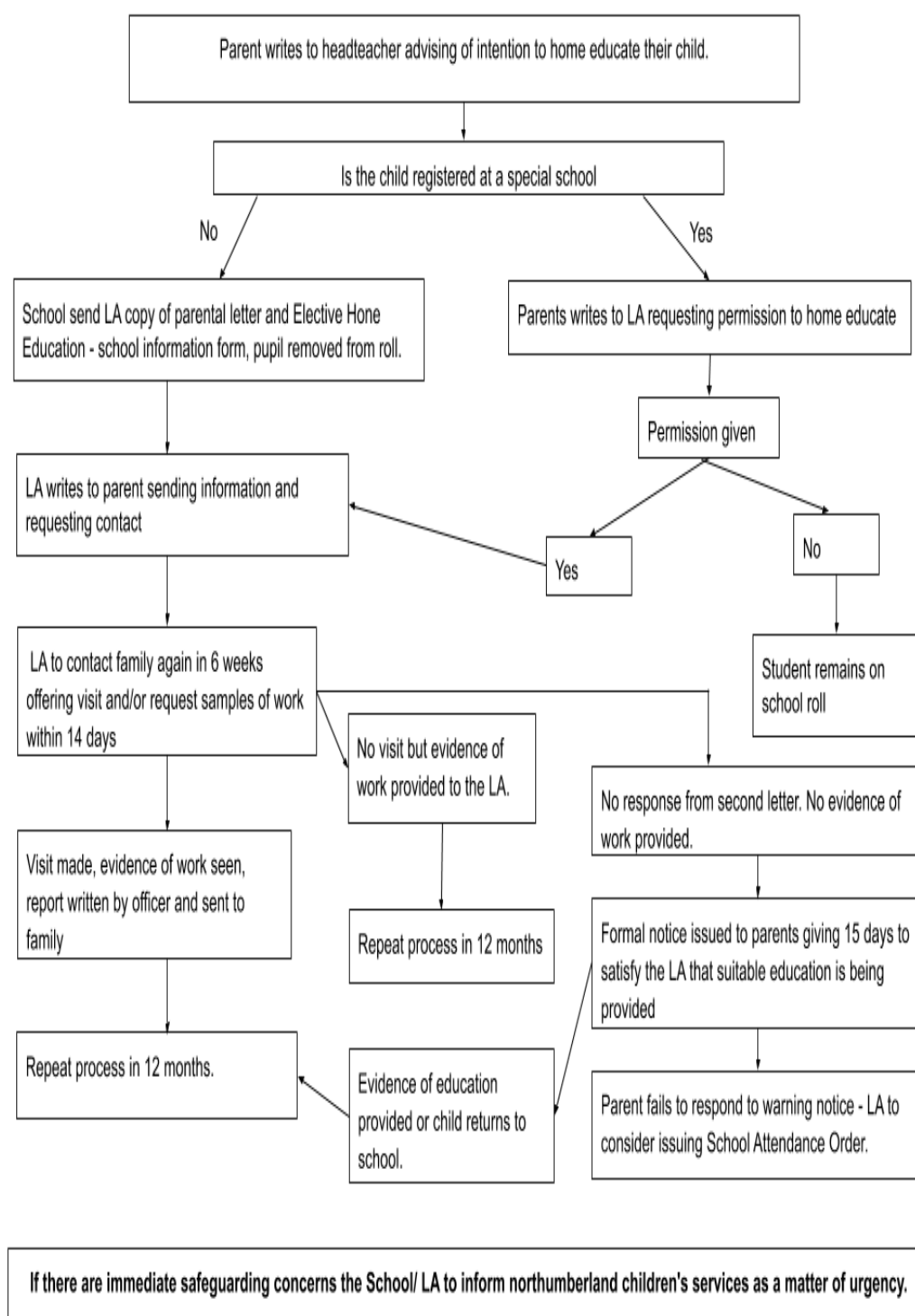
issue a School Attendance Order that means the child has to return to school

use powers relating to safeguarding if it appears that the lack of suitable education is affecting the child's well-being and likely to impair their development. (These duties apply whether a child is educated at home or at school).

Education Welfare Officers will always work proportionately with parents and guardians before any intervention takes place.

Northumberland's comprehensive *guidance for parents* who are considering Elective Home Education for their child(ren) is updated regularly and is available on the [Virtual School page](#) of the Council's website.

## Appendix 2: EHE Flowchart





## Appendix 3: Protocol for Safeguarding Children Educated at Home

This protocol is underpinned by the following documents:

- Children Act 1989
- Safeguarding Children in Education – DfES 2004
- Working Together to Safeguard Children – HM Government 2006
- Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families DOH 2002
- ‘What to do if you are worried a child is being abused’ – HM Government 2003
- Every Child Matters – DfES 2004

### The Role of the Northumberland Children and Adults Safeguarding Partnership

The Northumberland Children and adults safeguarding partnership (NCASP) has the statutory responsibility to ensure that all agencies within Northumberland promote the safeguarding of children in all settings.

This includes ensuring that agencies that come into contact with children educated at home by their parents are aware of their responsibility to consider whether the children are being adequately safeguarded within those settings and, where appropriate, to notify other agencies of their concerns.

### Legal Framework for Home Education

The Education Act 1996 endorses a parent’s legal right to educate their children outside of a school environment.

In Northumberland the responsibility for overseeing children electively home educated resides with the Education Welfare Service.

### Safeguarding Issues

Most parents who decide to educate their children at home will have positive and valid reasons for doing so.

Some parents may feel that their child’s needs are not being met within school.

Others may see home education as an answer to difficulties their child has experienced at school, or have philosophical or religious reasons for wishing to arrange their child’s education themselves.

However, in some cases where parents elect to home educate, there may be a history of concerns regarding the care the child is receiving or the parental commitment to education.

Being out of school means the child does not have the routine monitoring of their welfare and day to day contact with a range of professionals that is afforded to children at school.

This will require all agencies in contact with home educated children to ensure that the child's welfare is being promoted.

*Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2023) states:*

“Where a parent/carer has expressed their intention to remove a child from school with a view to educating at home, we recommend that LAs, schools, and other key professionals work together to coordinate a meeting with parents/carers where possible. Ideally, this would be before a final decision has been made, to ensure the parents/carers have considered what is in the best interests of each child. This is particularly important where a child has special educational needs or a disability, and/or has a social worker, and/or is otherwise vulnerable. Where a child has an Education, Health and Care plan local authorities will need to review the plan, working closely with parents and carers”

It is therefore implicit that, as well as ensuring a child being home educated is receiving a suitable education, the local authority should ensure that outcomes for home educated children are promoted.

To this end the Northumberland Children and Adults Safeguarding Partnership requires agencies within Northumberland to ensure they promote the wellbeing of home educated children in all aspects of their development.

#### Process within Northumberland

If any agency comes into contact with a child being educated at home and has concerns for their welfare then they should follow the procedure outlined by Northumberland County Council.

Alternatively reference can be made to: 'What to do if you are worried a child is being abused'. (HMG 2006)

#### Safety on the Internet

Technology is integral to the lives of children and young people. The internet, other digital information and communication technologies can promote creativity and assist with the development of key social skills. It can also be a valuable educational resource for children. Conversely, it can also provide a medium whereby inappropriate material such as pornography and abusive images can filter through, cyber bullying can take place and on line grooming by predators can occur.

These are just some of the potential risks for children and young people.

You can seek advice and information on keeping children safe whilst on the internet by visiting:

<http://ceop.police.uk/> <http://www.saferinternet.org.uk/>  
Thinkuknow – <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk>