



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

www.gov.wales

Home education

Non-statutory guidance for
local authorities



A consultation for children and young people

The Welsh Government wants all children and young people in Wales to have the best education possible.

Most families send their children to school but others choose to educate their children at home. This is called elective home education (EHE).

Even though parents/carers tell their child's school when they're going to home educate, there is no law that says parents/carers have to tell local authorities. If a child is not already on a school register, because a child has never been to school, local authorities are not always told that the child is being educated at home. This means that we don't know exactly how many home-educated children are in Wales.

In 2012 we had a consultation about changing the law so families had to register and let local authorities know. Lots of people had a say. The Minister for Education and Skills listened and decided not to carry on with those plans.

However local authorities still need clear guidelines on how to support home-educating families.

This booklet tells you about this new guidance for local authorities.

We have already asked some home-educating families, groups and professionals to help us write this but we want to know what you think.

Why do local authorities need this new guidance?

We want:

- ✓ all children and young people to be able to reach their goals and be kept safe
- ✓ local authorities to work with families and understand their needs and the different ways people choose to educate their children.



1. Home education in Wales

For some children and young people and their families school is not how they want to be educated. Across Wales there are lots of different types of families from different backgrounds who choose to home educate their children for lots of different reasons.

Some of these reasons are:

- their ideas about the type of education they want
- their culture or religion
- problems with bullying
- waiting for a place in the school of their choice
- flexibility for family life.

How is it done?

Home education can happen in different ways and in different places.

Families don't have to follow a curriculum or learn for a set number of hours.

Some families choose:

Structure – they may have a timetable, curriculum, trips, groups, courses and activities to help with learning.

Independent learning – following what children want to learn. Children choose subjects or projects that interest them and parents/carers make sure they have everything they need to learn.

Un-schooling – the child is encouraged to learn and explore what they want to learn, when they want to. Parents/carers don't lead or guide what is studied.



2. The law

We have many different laws in Wales that make sure all children get an education.

This includes the:

- Education Act 1996
- Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011.

The Education Act 1996 means:

- Parents (or carers) must make sure that their children of school age have an education that meets their needs. This can be at school or at home.
- Local authorities have to make sure that all children in their area are receiving a suitable education.

We know this can be difficult because they would need to know about all children who aren't in school and be able to check they're getting an education.

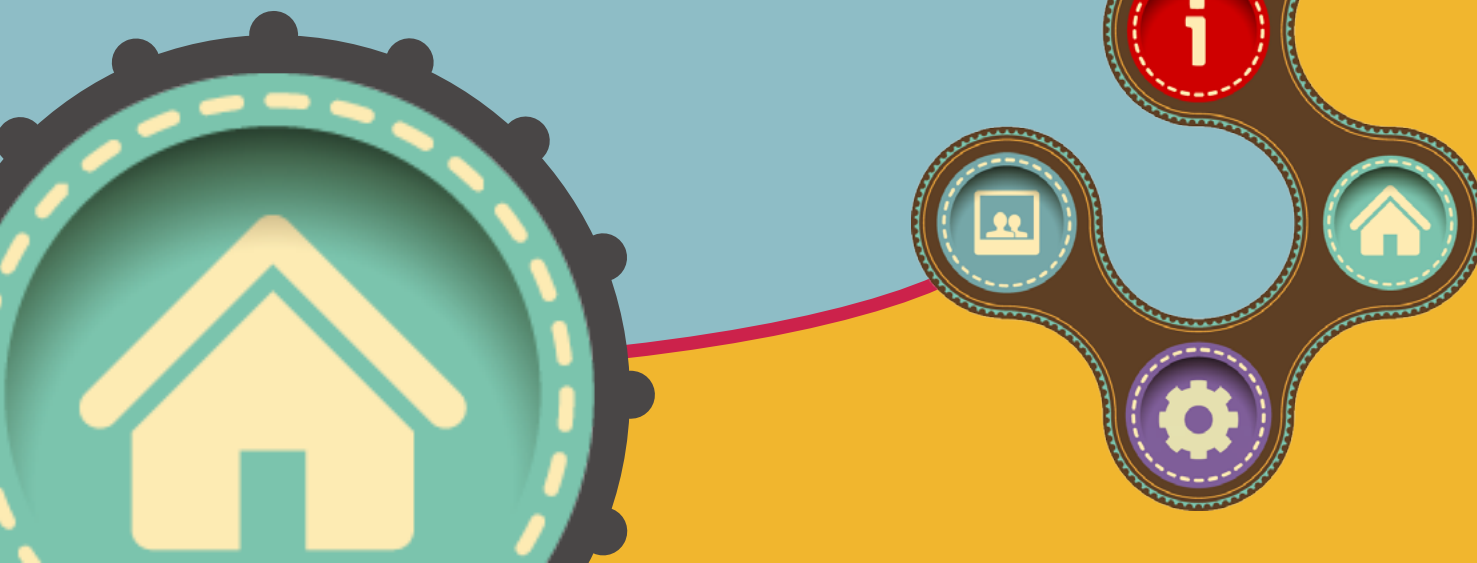
Removing a child from school

To avoid legal problems parents/carers must get the school to remove their child from the register if they are going to take them out of school to home educate. This is normally done with a letter or e-mail.

After the school does this they tell the local authority. Local authorities should:

- ✓ send a letter back to parents/carers confirming that it's been done
- ✓ get advice from education welfare services if they're concerned about a child.

If families decide to send a child back to school they have to apply for a place again.



Attendance orders

We want parents'/carers' decisions to educate their child to be respected and understood.

However, if a local authority has serious concerns that a child is not getting a good enough education they can send a notice to the parents/carers letting them know what these issues are.

This gives parents/carers 15 days to show how that child is getting an education.

After this, if there are still serious concerns then the local authority can send a School Attendance Order to the parents/carers. The School Attendance Order will say the parents/carers must register their child as a pupil of a named school and make sure their child attends. If the parents/carers don't do this they are breaking the law.

Children's rights

In Wales we agreed to follow the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 2011. This means that Welsh Ministers have to think about children's rights in everything they do. This includes their right to an education.

Local authorities have to make sure that they give all children and young people an opportunity to take part and have a say in decisions that affect them.



3. Local authorities

Stepping in early with support

We know that parents/carers who choose to home educate have given it a lot of thought.

Sometimes it happens because there's been problems between families and the school because of issues like bullying or how to meet a child's needs.

Local authorities should make sure:

- parents/carers get all the information and advice they need to make decisions
- families have a chance to be heard
- they follow up on what has been agreed.

Home education families

Trust between families and local authorities is really important.

Many families who home educate make sacrifices like:

- living on one wage as one parent/carer gives their time to educating
- having to pay for materials or exams.

If a family contacts the local authority then it should give them all the advice and appropriate support they need.

In Anglesey the local authority holds a meeting with families who home educate twice a year to share information on things like GCSE exams and internet safety, and to help families get health services and Careers Wales advice.



Named contact

We want families to be able to find support when they need it. Local authorities should have a named person families can contact if they need advice or support.

This person should:

- have a background in education
- understand different ideas and ways of educating
- have positive connections with home-educating parents/carers and groups
- make sure local authority staff know about and understand home education
- link families to opportunities and networks that can help them.

Regional consortia

We have four regional consortia (groups) across Wales made up of professionals in education. Local authorities might want to work with their regional consortium to have one contact for home-educating families so that their needs can be met, and so that home-educating families have the same advice and appropriate support if they want it.



Having policy statements

Policy statements are documents that explain what local authorities do, so that everyone knows what to expect. Local authorities will have lots of different policy statements for different situations. These policy statements should have details of advice, appropriate support and links to other services that may be useful.

We want everyone to know the part they play in supporting families. Local authorities should work with home-educating families to develop a policy statement on home education.



Working with home-educating networks or groups

There are many groups that help and support home-educating families across Wales. They often provide:

- information for parents/carers
- learning experiences and courses
- visits or trips
- opportunities to meet and make new friends.

Local authorities need to let new home-educating families know about the groups in their area and across Wales.

Supporting children and young people

There is no legal duty on local authorities to give financial support to families home educating their children. However, all local authorities should let families know what's available for them to use in the area. This includes:

- free learning opportunities
- support services like careers advice and youth services
- independent counselling for all 11 to 18-year-olds
- youth support services that offer learning opportunities to young people aged 11-25.

Some local authorities give out information packs to home-educating families to help do this.

Bridgend Home Educators and Bridgend County Borough Council are working together in new and interesting ways. Some of these include the local authority giving them a grant for exam costs and the use of a local community hall while the group works with local authority staff so they understand home education better.

There are 200 children and young people getting support through this group.



4. Checking on the education needs of the child

We need to make sure that all children and young people get an education that meets their needs and local authorities have to check this is happening in their areas.

Local authorities should:

- encourage parents/carers to take up the offer of advice and support
- have a first meeting with families to discuss what they're planning and the support they think they need
- meet once a year to share information, listen to concerns and check evidence like study diaries or samples of work
- listen to the views of children and young people about their education
- write a report after the meeting that includes any support agreed on and send a copy to the family.

These meetings can be in the home or at any other suitable place the family want.

Local authorities can't insist to watch education happening or demand to go into a home.

We want all local authority staff to know what they should and should not be checking when meeting home-educating families.



What local authorities should and shouldn't be checking

Local authorities **should** look at:

- ✓ how involved the parents/carers are in making sure education happens
- ✓ the child's needs
- ✓ opportunities for the child to have learning experiences
- ✓ what resources are available like books, physical activity and ICT
- ✓ if Careers Wales should be involved at a suitable age
- ✓ if children are getting numeracy and literacy skills.

Local authorities **don't have to** check:

- ✗ curriculum or timetables
- ✗ if the home has certain equipment
- ✗ the number of hours or days learning happens
- ✗ parents'/carers' qualifications
- ✗ if they cover the same subjects as school
- ✗ if plans are made
- ✗ if lessons match school age.

If home-educating families ask local authorities for advice about any of the above, then the local authority should share with them advice and appropriate support.

Statements of special educational needs (SEN)

If a child with a SEN statement is taken out of school the statement doesn't stop. Local authorities check each year if the needs of the child are being met at home. If they are, no extra advice and support is needed. If the local authority decides the needs of the child are not being met at home they will discuss with the family what needs to be done. Sometimes a mix of different types of learning will be best for the child.

Good ideas

Local authorities should share ideas that have worked well and support each other. This will help make sure that they improve locally, regionally and across Wales.



5. Child welfare

We want to make sure all children are safe but this can be a challenge because we still don't know exactly who is home-educated or what level of education they are getting.

Home-educating groups or charities can help with this and local authorities need to work with them to keep children safe.

Educating at home doesn't mean that a child is more at risk. However, there are times when local authorities should check with social services.

Information sharing

Sharing information in right ways is important for keeping children and young people safe. All local authorities must have systems in place to make sure this can happen.

Truancy sweeps

We need to make sure children are in school when they should be. This is important because it helps to keep them safe. When local authority staff or police stop children to check why they're not in school, they should understand that they may meet home-educated children. No action will be taken but parents/carers should understand that professionals may need to check the information they've been given if the child isn't on the local authority's home-educating list.



Thanks for reading this!

Please answer the questions on the next page and send them to

WellbeingShare@wales.gsi.gov.uk

or

Pupil Wellbeing Branch
Department for Education and Skills
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

by 3 July 2015.



1. Do you think this new guidance will help local authorities to support home-educating families?

Yes No Don't know

Comment

2. Is there anything missing from this new guidance that you think should be included?

Yes No Don't know

Comment

3. Does this new guidance clearly set out the law about home education in Wales?

Yes No Don't know

Comment

4. Is there anything else we haven't thought about?

Yes No Don't know

Comment