

Elective Home Education Policy Review

Stakeholder engagement and Consultation feedback

1. Stakeholder engagement

Parent/ carer drop in sessions

Two sessions were offered at Riverside House Café (afternoon and early evening). Three home educators attended the sessions. Feedback was generally positive, with attendees commenting on the positive working relationships with RMBC. Comments about what suitable education should mean in Rotherham were that it should include information about which subjects should be covered, how many times a week, what went well and at what level, including progress and outcomes. One attendee commented that a template may be supportive. Two attendees commented that the cost of GCSEs was prohibitive to some families and that any support RMBC could offer in terms of activities and drop-in sessions may be useful.

A further five responses were received via Email from parents who could not attend, three highlighted positive experiences of working with the Elective Home Education (EHE) Team, one made comments about a poor experience of communicating with the team and one felt that contact directly with the team had been 'limited but reasonable'.

These comments were taken into account in the drafting of the 'suitable education' section of the draft Policy that was consulted upon. Although there is no support RMBC can offer in respect of the cost of examinations, the Elective Home Education Team ensure that all parents contemplating EHE or new to EHE are provided with this information at the earliest opportunity, either through direct contact with the team or via resources provided to all schools. A drop-in session is being considered by the team.

Partners event

A stakeholder event was held for partners and was well attended. Rotherham Parent Carer Forum presented the views of 49 parents and carers, which concluded that dissatisfaction with how schools meet Special Educational Needs (SEN) was the primary reason for these families choosing EHE (45%). Families found EHE beneficial in terms of personalised learning and flexibility, but challenges such as lack of support and social opportunities persist. Addressing these issues through enhanced training, support networks and resource allocation could significantly improve the EHE experience for families.

A key comment regarding suitability of education was that whilst a prescriptive definition shouldn't be adopted in Policy, guidelines in relation to intended outcomes

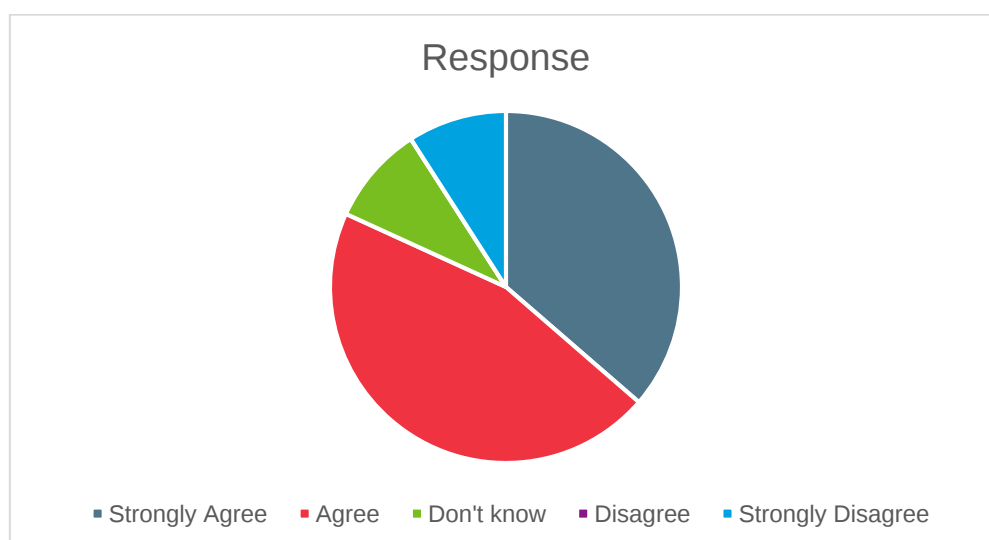
regarding preparation for adulthood may be useful and that learning environment and access to social opportunities were of importance. Comments about parental engagement included consideration to drop-in or meet and greet type events, with information accessible to home educators in a range of formats. Views were sought about Rotherham's approach to situations where EHE appears unsuitable, with attendees highlighting the importance of considering the wider context, being alert to any potential safeguarding issues and the possibility of educational neglect. A multi-agency approach to such situations was thought to be most beneficial.

The proposed Policy places a heavy focus on early and ongoing support, over and above the statutory obligations placed on the Local Authority. This commitment is reinforced by the recent agreement for additional staffing to the team. Training for schools in relation to SEN continues to be provided by education support services on request. Guidelines in relation to suitability were consulted upon within the revised Policy and wording has been revised to ensure that actions in the event that EHE is thought to be unsuitable are clearly defined. Parent and carer drop-in sessions are being considered.

2. Formal consultation

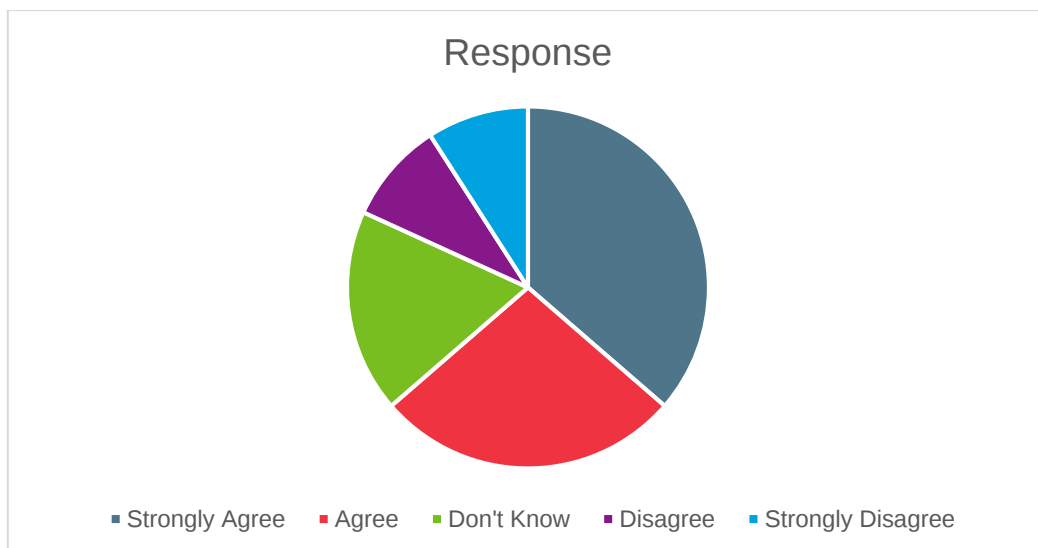
A period of formal consultation was held 16 April - 17 June 2025 via the Council's website. There were 11 responses received through the consultation hub. The consultation asked 4 questions and the responses to each are summarised below.

- i. **How strongly do you agree that the proposed Rotherham EHE Policy reflects the recommendations set out in the Department for Education guidance?**



- The majority of respondents (9) either agreed or strongly agreed that the proposed Policy reflects the recommendations set out in the Department for Education guidance.
- Three respondents complimented the EHE team on the service they provide to home educators.
- One respondent expressed strong disagreement and commented that 'home education isn't monitored neither is it compulsory to do 25 hours'. The proposed Policy seeks to enable RMBC to discharge statutory duty as set out in Section 436a Education Act 1996 and not to monitor home education, neither does it make suggestion that 25 hours of education is what is expected of home educators as full-time education is not defined in the proposed Policy.

ii. **How strongly do you agree that the ways of working described in the proposed Rotherham EHE Policy promote partnership working between home educators and the Local Authority?**

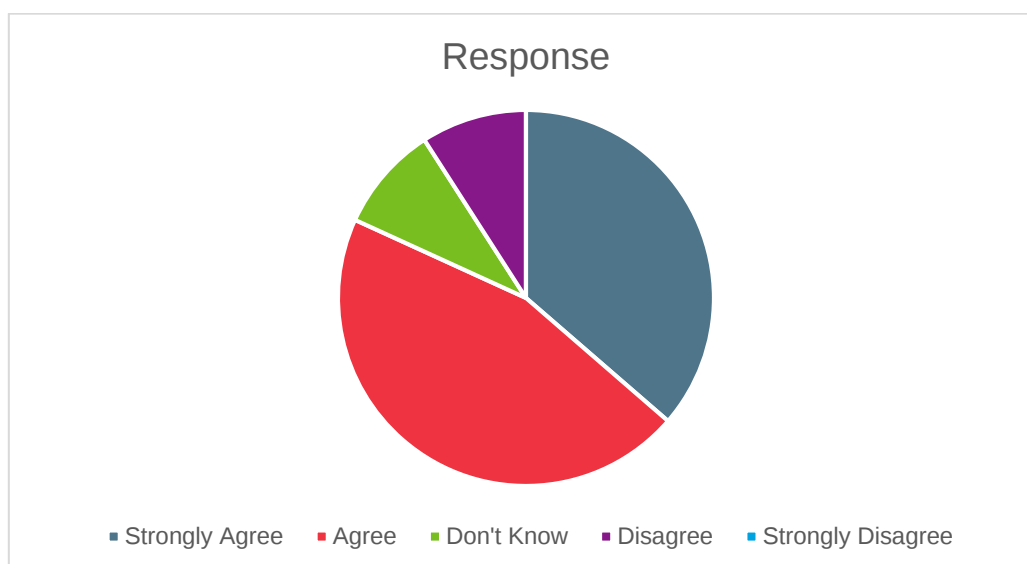


- 7 respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the proposed Policy promoted partnership working between home educators and the Local Authority.
- 2 respondents complimented the ongoing partnership working with the EHE team.
- 2 respondents answered that they 'Did not Know', with one of these commenting that when decisions are made for further actions such as enforcement the decision is made by the Local Authority and is done to them not decided with them. Although the EHE service will continue to work collaboratively with families where provision is unsuitable, it does need to be recognised that the Local Authority has a statutory duty in line with s436a of the

Education Act 1996 and is therefore obliged to act in such circumstances, with or without parental agreement.

- 2 respondents expressed disagreement or strong disagreement with this statement, commenting that they hardly heard anything from the Local Authority and that they felt that the Local Authority could do more to support home educators, for example by supporting with exam provision arrangements or holding events at transition points. RMBC currently ensures that all year 11 students are referred on for post 16 advice and this offer is included within Policy.

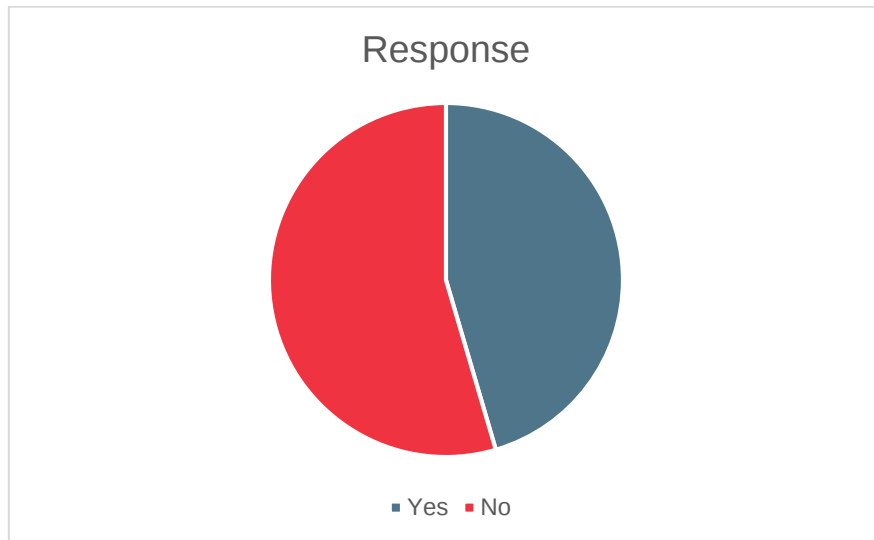
iii. **How strongly do you agree that the guidelines in Section 7 describe the components that should be considered when determining suitability of education?**



- The majority of respondents (9) either agreed or strongly agreed that the components that should be considered when determining suitability of education were described.
- One respondent disagreed with this statement, commenting that 'the guidelines are currently a one size fits all' and 'do not break down at what stage certain information is necessary to provide or is required.' The proposed Policy is intentional in not being prescriptive about what is required, as this position is not supported by DfE Guidance. The proposed Policy aims to make clear what factors may be considered in decisions regarding suitability, but that these will be made based on individual circumstance.

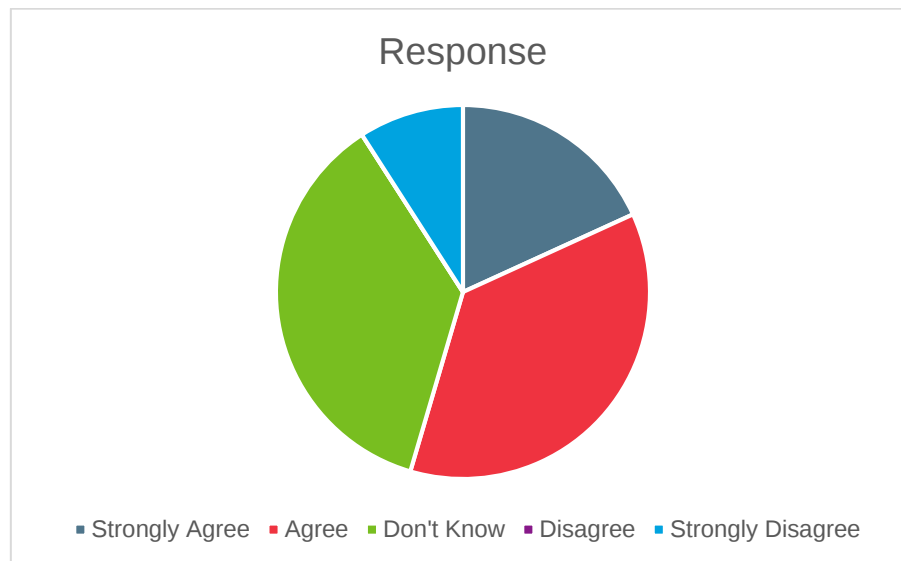
Do you feel there is anything missing from these guidelines?

A supplementary question asked respondents to identify if they believed anything to be missing.



- 6 respondents answered 'no'
- 5 respondents answered 'yes', with comments:
 - Fully state whether or not it is just English and maths that have to be done;
 - Frequent visits/ communication and stronger guidelines for parents and care givers;
 - Guidelines should have a foundation of additional needs children and how EHE is different;
 - Situations where parents are incapable or unwilling to provide children with an education need to be addressed;
 - The guidelines are a one size fits all.
- All comments received have been taken into consideration and there is assurance that the comments raised are either addressed within the proposed Policy or sit outside of the statutory duty of the Local Authority.

iv. **How strongly do you agree that the 'Situations where EHE is unsuitable' in Section 8 reflects this approach?**



- The majority of respondents (6) either agreed or strongly agreed that the 'Situations where EHE is unsuitable' section reflects the support first approach adopted in Rotherham. One comment was received that the proposed Policy still appears weighted towards EHE being a negative choice and more should be done to demonstrate EHE in a positive light, such as networking events or subsidised activities. These sit outside the statutory duty of the EHE team, but a drop-in event is being considered in response to feedback received.
- 3 compliments were received regarding the way that the EHE team works with home educators.
- 1 respondent strongly disagreed with this statement, stating that 'the section on unsuitable education simply does not outline what it means to the Local Authority for it to be deemed so'. It was suggested that some real life examples of scenarios could be shared. Whilst RMBC appreciates that the proposed Policy is not prescriptive about what may constitute unsuitable education this is the approach supported by the DfE guidance. Decisions are made on an individual basis taking many factors as described in the proposed Policy into account and RMBC does not seek to prescribe the education that should be received by children who are EHE.