**TOWER HAMLETS CHILDREN AND CULTURE DIRECTORATE**

**POLICY**

**ON**

**ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION**

It is the policy of Tower Hamlets that every home educated child should be seen in person at commencement and thereafter at least once every 12 months to ensure that the child is receiving an education and that the wellbeing of the child is safeguarded. The Local Authority will seek to undertake these duties and responsibilities in full cooperation and partnership with home educating parents/carers.

September 2023

## Foreword - How Tower Hamlets aims to work with home educating families

* 1. In Tower Hamlets we value education highly, particularly as it shapes the life chances of children and young people. We are proud of our schools; their curriculum offers and their achievements. At the same time, we respect the legal right of parents/carers to educate their children at home instead of at school if they choose to do so, as long as they provide their child with a ‘suitable’ and ‘efficient’ education so they are able to take advantage of the opportunities offered to them later in life. We recognise that there are many approaches to educational provision, not just a "school at home" model, as what is suitable for one child may not be for another. However, we believe that all children should be involved in a learning process suited to their age, ability, aptitude and any special needs that they may have and should make positive progress.
	2. The purpose of this policy is to describe:
1. Clear information on the responsibilities for the Local Authority, parents/carers and schools in relation to home education.
2. Procedures that Local Authority teams should follow in relation to home educated children and young people.
3. Procedures for the Local Authority and home educated children with Special Educational Needs.
4. Information about how the Local Authority fulfils its responsibilities in relation to safeguarding of home educated children and young people.
5. The Local Authority position on part-time and flexi education.
	1. This policy follows the Department for Education Elective Home Education Guidance for Local Authorities (DfE, April 2019).
	2. In Tower Hamlets we aim to ensure that all children including those educated at home by their parents receive a suitable and efficient education and that their wellbeing is safeguarded. The Local Authority will seek to undertake these duties and responsibilities in full cooperation and partnership with home educating parents/carers ensuring that all parties involved in elective home education being aware of their roles, rights and responsibilities.

## The current picture of home education in Tower Hamlets

* 1. The number of home educated pupils in Tower Hamlets, although smaller than many other areas, is increasing over time, with around 246 (Rec to Yr11) at the latest count including a number of post 16 children with special educational needs and Education Health Care Plans. Of these children the proportion of boys and girls are evenly split. More children being home educated are of primary age (62.2%) than secondary age (37.8%). In line with the local demography 45% of children on the EHE register are of Bangladeshi followed by other mixed background 10.5%, Black African 9.7%, any other White Background 7.3% and White British with 6.5%%.
	2. When families tell us why they have chosen to home educate, these are the main reasons.
* Philosophy/faith/ethnicity and issues;
* Being a minority with a different culture to the majority of pupils in a school (‘isolated learners’);
* Poor match of school places on offer to parental choice;
* Perceived lack of a child’s progress;
* Experience of bullying or behaviour issues that parents see as unresolved;
* School attendance issues;
* A short-term intervention for a particular reason, such as a child's unwillingness or inability to go to school;
* To meet a child’s particular special educational needs/talents, such as a sports training programme.
* Dissatisfaction with the school system
* Concerns about Covid-19

## Tower Hamlets Local Authority responsibilities in relation to home education

* 1. The council must maintain a policy and keep it under review, posting it on the Council website.
	2. Tower Hamlets officers should give information about home education to parents/carers on request.
	3. The Home Education in Tower Hamlets Parents Booklet provides families with national and local information and a copy is provided upon registration.
	4. The Local Authority does not provide any funding to home educating families, but engagement activities and events are facilitated twice yearly to support the parents and children.
	5. Tower Hamlets has a duty under section 175(1) of the Education Act 2002 to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. This section states: “A local education authority shall make arrangements for ensuring that the functions conferred upon them in their capacity as a Local Authority are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.”
	6. In addition, the Local Authority has a statutory duty under section 436A of the Education Act 1996, inserted by the Education and Inspections Act 2006, to make arrangements to enable them to establish the identities, so far as it is possible to do so, of children in their area who are not receiving a suitable education. The duty applies in relation to children of compulsory school age who are not on a school roll, and who are not receiving a suitable education otherwise than being at school (for example, at home, privately, or in alternative provision). The duty under s.436A means that local authorities must make arrangements to find out so far as possible whether home educated children are receiving suitable full-time education.
	7. These duties to make arrangements to establish the identities, to safeguard and promote the welfare of children include powers which allow local authorities to insist on seeing children in order to enquire about their welfare where there are grounds for concern (sections 17 and 47 of the Children Act 1989). However, such powers do not bestow on local authorities the ability to see and question children subject to elective home education in order to establish whether they are receiving a suitable education.
	8. Although local authorities have no statutory duties in relation to monitoring the quality of home education on a routine basis, under Section 437(1) of the Education Act 1996 local authorities shall intervene if it appearsthat parents are not providing a suitable education.
	9. Law does not give local authorities automatic powers to enter the homes or, otherwise see, children for the purposes of monitoring the provision of elective home education, however Tower Hamlets officers aim to establish good relationships with parents/carers who elect to home educate and will aim to see and meet with children who are being home educated at commencement and thereafter at least once every 12 months by arrangement with the parents/carers to ensure that the child is receiving an education and that the wellbeing of the child is safeguarded.
	10. In accordance with guidance from Department for Education and Tower Hamlets Safeguarding Children Partnership (THSCP) procedures, the Local Authority is committed to working in partnership with parents/carers to safeguard the wellbeing of children. This commitment applies to parents/carers who elect to educate their children at home and the Local Authority will seek to offer advice and support as appropriate.
	11. It is the policy of Tower Hamlets that every home educated child should be seen in person at commencement and thereafter at least once every 12 months to ensure that the child is receiving an education and that the wellbeing of the child is safeguarded.
	12. As part of this commitment, it is intended when Pupil Services receive notifications of a child being electively home educated , a Specialist Advisor for Elective Home Education in Tower Hamlets Education Safeguarding Service (THESS) will make contact with the home educating families, meet with the parent/carer(s) and the child, provide an information pack and discuss the home education being provided.
	13. The Specialist Advisor for Elective Home Education will complete a Statement of Arrangements (SoA) form with the parents and child detailing the education being provided. The Specialist Advisor will then advise the parents on the suitability and efficiency of the education being provided and offer support.
	14. Thereafter, the Specialist Advisors will seek to meet with the parents and child annually to review and update the Statement of Arrangements (SoA) form.
	15. The THESS have a duty to report any concerns they have about the wellbeing of children to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) in Tower Hamlets Children’s Social Care. This will include concerns where they are not able to see and meet with the children who are being home educated.
	16. The Local Authority will seek to undertake these duties and responsibilities in cooperation and partnership with home educating parents/carers.

## Responsibilities of parents/carers in relation to home education

* 1. The responsibility for a child's education rests with their parents.In England, education is compulsory, but school is not. Parents may decide to exercise their rights to educate their child at home rather than school. Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 provides that:

*"The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable –*

*to his age, ability and aptitude, and*

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

An "efficient" and "suitable" education is not defined in the Education Act 1996 but "efficient" has been broadly described in Case Law as an education that "achieves that which it sets out to achieve", and a "suitable" education is one that "primarily equips a child for life within the community of which he is a member, rather than the way of life in the country as a whole, as long as it does not foreclose the child's options in later years to adopt some other form of life if he wishes to do so".

* 1. Parents may decide to exercise their right to home educate their child from a very early age and so the child may not have been previously enrolled at a school. They may also elect to home educate at any other stage up to the end of compulsory school age. Parents are not required to register or seek approval from the Local Authority to educate their children at home.
	2. 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. However, local authorities are encouraged to provide support where resources permit.
	3. Parents must ensure that their children receive a suitable and efficient full-time education for as long as they are being educated at home.
	4. If parents engage tutors or other adults to work with their children whether in the family home or at other premises, they should be mindful to ensure that they have the necessary Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks clearing them as suitable for working with children and that health and safety requirements are fully complied with.

## Procedures for home education in Tower Hamlets

* 1. Parents
1. Plan and put in place ‘suitable’ and ‘efficient’ arrangements to home educate their child.
2. Notify the school in writing of their intention to home educate their child.
3. Understand that once they have sent the written notification to the school their child will be taken off the school roll and that a place might not be available there if they decide at a subsequent time that they would like the child to return to the school.
	1. Schools
4. Once a parent/carer has expressed their intention to remove a child from school with a view to educating at home, school, Attendance and Welfare Advisor and other key professionals work together to coordinate a meeting with parents/carers. Ideally, this meeting should be convened before a final decision has been made, to ensure the parent/carer has considered what is in the best interests of the child. This is particularly important where a child has SEND, is vulnerable, and/or has a social worker.
5. Once parents/carers have made the decision and notify the school of their intention to home educate, schools should inform the Pupil Services Team by completing the Mid-Term Transfer form, being sure to flag up any concerns or issues on Part B as part of general safeguarding procedures. Pupils cannot be taken off roll until the Local Authority receives this form.
6. Send the parent/carer the most recent report of attainment and progress, just as a transfer of assessment form would be completed if the child were moving schools.
7. When receiving a parent/carer’s written notification of intention to home educate and the child is recognised to be vulnerable, such as being the subject of a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan, being a Looked After Child (LAC) or having an Education Health Care Plan, then the school must liaise with the keyworker/lead professional in the first instance.
8. When receiving a parent/carer’s written notification of intention to home educate and the child is the subject of current legal action by the Local Authority in relation to non-attendance at school then the school must liaise with Tower Hamlets Behaviour & Attendance Support Service (THBASS) in the first instance.
	1. Tower Hamlets Local Authority
9. The Pupil Services Team will record a parent/carers’ intention to educate their child at home and notify the THESS. The relevant teams will amend their records accordingly.
10. The THESS will undertake record checks with the THBASS, Children’s Social Care and the Special Educational Needs Section and liaise with key professionals as necessary.
11. A Specialist Advisor for Elective Home Education in the THESS will arrange a meeting with the parent/carer(s) and the child to provide an information pack, discuss the home education and to complete a Statement of Arrangements (SoA) form with them.
12. The Specialist Advisor will then advise the parents on the suitability and efficiency of the education being provided and offer support.
13. Feedback and the completed Statement of Arrangements form will then be uploaded on the THESS MIS and shared with other key professionals as necessary.
14. As part of Tower Hamlet’s duty to safeguarding all children living in the borough, the THESS have a duty to report any immediate concerns they have about the wellbeing of children to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) in Children’s Social Care. This will include concerns where they are not able to see and meet with the children who are being home educated.

## Elective Home Education and Special Educational Needs

* 1. Children with statements of SEN or Education and Health Care Plans may be educated other than at school because parents have made suitable arrangements on their own. Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 recognises parents’/carers’ right to choose to educate their children at home. Such arrangements are described as ‘education otherwise than at school.’ In such cases, if the child has a statement of special educational needs, it remains the Local Authority’s duty to ensure that the child’s needs are met. The statement must remain in force and the Local Authority must ensure that parents/carers can make suitable provision, including provision for the child’s special educational needs.
	2. If the arrangements are suitable, the Local Authority is relieved of their duty to arrange the provision specified in the statement. If, however, the parents’ attempt to educate the child at home results in provision which falls short of meeting the child’s needs, then the parents are not making ‘suitable arrangements’ and the Local Authority could not conclude that they were absolved of their responsibility to arrange the provision in the statement. Even if satisfied, the Local Authority remains under a duty to maintain the child’s statement and to review it annually.
	3. When a child with a statement of SEN is educated otherwise than at school, the general timetable and arrangements for their annual review will be the same as for children in schools. However, in these circumstances the Local Authority will convene the review meeting and the range of professionals involved may be wider and, in some respects, different from those involved in a school-based review.
	4. The child’s parents must always be invited to the review meeting. The review meeting should take place in the most appropriate location, such as Local Authority offices, a hospital or the parents’ home, and should normally be chaired by the Local Authority. A Specialist Teacher works with home educating families where the child has special educational needs and an Education Health Care Plan to support good communication.

## How Tower Hamlets works with home educating families

* 1. Action for first contact
* Pupil Services and the THESS work together and exchange information on home educated children to fulfil the duties to ensure that the children receive an education and that their wellbeing is safeguarded.
* The Pupil Services Team (PS) maintain a register of home educated children by adding names as pupils are withdrawn from school, or reported by another agency such as GPs. They register parents’ intentions to home educate and inform the THESS of the children’ names.
* The THESS will undertake record checks with Children’s Social Care and the Special Educational Needs Section and liaise with key professionals as necessary.
* A Specialist Advisor for Elective Home Education in the THESS will then send a letter of appointment to arrange to meet with the parent/carer(s) and the child to provide an information pack including the booklet ‘Guidance on Home Education in Tower Hamlets’, discuss the home education and complete a Statement of Arrangements (SoA) form with them.
* The Specialist Advisor will then advise the parents on the suitability and efficiency of the education being provided and offer support. If the provision is initially deemed to be not yet ‘suitable’ or ‘efficient’, they give advice and make arrangements for a follow up meeting.
* Following this the Specialist Advisor will upload the completed Statement of Arrangements form and a report from the meeting onto THESS MIS.
* Where children have special educational needs and an Education Health Care Plan then the Specialist Advisor shares the feedback and completed Statement of Arrangements form with the Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) Section. A Specialist Teacher then advises the parents on the suitability and efficiency of the education being provided and offer support. If the provision is initially deemed to be not yet ‘suitable’ or ‘efficient’, they give advice and making arrangements for a follow up meeting.
* The Specialist Advisor for Elective Home Education in THESS is the main point of ongoing communication between parents and the Local Authority and records all communication.
* Where children have special educational needs and an Education Health Care Plan then the SEND Section and Specialist Teacher are the main points of ongoing communication between parents and the Local Authority and record all communication.
* Should the provision for an electively home educated child remain unsatisfactory the Specialist Advisor for Elective Home Education in the THESS will initiate further follow-up and, if necessary, apply for and issue a School Attendance Order.
* Where children have special educational needs and an Education Health Care Plan and the provision for an electively home educated child remains unsatisfactory then the SEND Section and Specialist Teacher will initiate further follow-up.
	1. Monitoring the Local Authority responsibility for Home Educated Children
* Whilst most parents register their intention to home educate with a school which contacts the Pupil Services team, a minority of information comes from other sources, such as neighbours or another agency or professional such as Children’s Social Care, Health Visitor, GPs, the Police or the Royal London Hospital. The THESS ensures that guidance is in place and shared with partner agencies and services to facilitate reporting of information about children thought to not be attending a school.
	1. The meeting between Families and the Specialist Advisor for Elective Home Education.

This meeting is normally at the family home. At the beginning of the meeting the Specialist Advisor clarifies the role of the Local Authority in relation to home education with a view to discussing and completing the Statement of Arrangements (SoA) from detailing the education provision in place for the child. The Specialist Advisor will then offer advice in relation to the ‘suitability’ and the ‘efficiency’ of the education provided at home. All or any of the following topics may be covered, depending on the circumstances of the discussion and the parents’ wishes;

1. The reasons of the parent/carer for choosing home education;
2. Information on the educational programme provided, covering any educational approaches, teaching materials, resources, tutors, courses/on-line courses and programmes, any tutor provision and plans for examination entries;
3. An understanding of the child’s prior learning and experience through talking to the child, listening to them read, asking them about a topic of interest (if appropriate to the child’s needs);
4. Any routines or approaches to recording and assessing progress in learning;
5. Any links the family has with Education Otherwise and/or other organisations and families supporting home education;
6. The use made of services and resources from the locality, such as the Ideas Stores, libraries, the Family Information Service, Family Learning classes, local museums and galleries etc;
7. Advice and information on teaching resources and educational visits;
8. Talk about national standards and benchmarks expected of children at certain ages and stages.
	1. Local Authority officers are looking for the parents’/carers’ approach to educational provision. This can include:
* a clear statement of intent from the parents, describing their aims for their child’s or children’s education.
* an awareness of how they will help their child/children to achieve these aims.

For example:

* an organised programme (not necessarily to replicate a school timetable);
* a balance over time of learning activities to include the basic skills, some humanities subjects, science, practical, creative and physical activities.
* opportunities for the child to meet and socialise with other children both inside and outside of the family.
* how they talk about progress and learning with their child.
	1. After the meeting
1. The Specialist Advisor will write a letter summarising the main points of the discussion, including any information or advice and make a judgement on whether the provision of education is ‘suitable and efficient’ or ‘unsuitable and inefficient’. A copy of this letter goes to the parents/carers and is uploaded onto the THESS MIS.
2. If the education provided is deemed to be ‘unsuitable or inefficient’, then parents will be given an opportunity to make improvements. The Specialist Advisor makes a follow up appointment within three months and if they judge provision to be ‘unsuitable’ or ‘inefficient’ after this time, they will initiate further follow-up and, if necessary, apply for and issue a School Attendance Order.

##  Part time flexi schooling

The government advice on school attendance permits schools to agree to flexi-schooling arrangements. School governing bodies are free to consider individual applications and to decide whether to grant these requests taking into account the school’s current situation, their ability to maintain appropriate continuity of learning and/or social development for the child and their ability to ensure that the wellbeing of the child is safeguarded.

**Contact details for Tower Hamlets Information on home education**

**The Tower Hamlets Education Safeguarding Service (THESS)** is the first point of contact for parents/carers seeking information about home education and supports schools and children and families in relation to children missing education and oversees safeguarding, this includes children who are home educated. The THESS convenes and chairs the termly Home Education Steering Group and keeps the policy up to date.

**Jody Dempsey / Jeasmin Begum** (Specialist Advisors for Elective Home Education in the THESS)

**Telephone 0207 364 3431**

**email:** jody.dempsey@towerhamlets.gov.uk, Jeasmin.begum@towerhamlets.gov.uk

**Sharifa Chowdhury** (Education Safeguarding Manager)

**Telephone 020 7364 3431
Email:** sharifa.chowdhury@towerhamlets.gov.uk

**The Pupil Services Team** receive notifications of children being home educated, maintain a register of home educated children known to the Local Authority and provide information to families about school places.

**Rehanaz Begum** (Operations Manager - Children missing education, elective home education and scholars travel)

**Telephone 0207 364 1427
Email:** rehanaz.begum@towrhamlets.gov.uk

**The Parent and Family Support Service** provide information and advice services for all parents and carers through schools and a range of forums, the Parent Carer Council and the Family Information Service/Local Offer. An annual Home Educators Information Event facilitated by the team also brings together organisations and service providers to ensure Home Educators have access to current and accurate information.

**Jill McGinley** (Head of Parent & Family Support Service)
**Telephone 020 7364 4946
Email:** Jill.McGinley@towerhamlets.gov.uk

**The Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Section** are responsible for liaising with families of home educated children with special educational needs and an Education Health Care Plan in order to ensure that they receive suitable provision and to organise annual reviews.

**Lorraine Ettridge (SEN Case Worker for EHE)**

**Tel: 020 7364 4433
Email:** Lorraine.ettridge@towerhamlets.gov.uk