

Summary Analysis of the ADCS Elective Home Education Survey October 2017

Executive summary

In October 2017, the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) issued a survey to all 152 local authorities (LAs) in England to understand better the volume and characteristics of the cohort of children and young people who are known to be home schooled and the support on offer to them and their families. Headline findings from this exercise, include:

- 118 responding LAs recorded a total of 35,487 children and young people known to be home schooled in their localities on school census day, Thursday 5 October 2017. It could be inferred that approximately 45,500 children and young people were being home schooled in England.
- 92% of respondents reported year-on-year increases in the number of children and young people being home schooled.
- Overall, slightly more males are known to be home schooled than females up to the end of key stage three, however, this trend reverses in key stages four and five where there are more females than males known to be home schooled. Overall, there is a significant jump in the number of children being home schooled between key stages one and two.
- This cohort of children and young people is extremely fluid with the aggregated results of this survey suggesting between 35,819 and 49,154 were home schooled at some point in 2016/17, an in-year variation of 37%.
- The majority of respondents reported over 80% of their known cohort had previously attended school, with general dissatisfaction with school being the most commonly cited reason for families choosing to home school.
- 92% of respondents reported 0 – 10% of their known home schooling population had special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- 37% of respondents reported they were aware of children in their area who were home schooled yet attending unregistered schools or tuition centres. Serious concerns about the quality of education on offer and the safety and welfare of attendees were reported.
- Whilst the majority of home schooling families engage with their local authority and take up the offer of visits, respondents reported a small number of families refuse to meet or to share evidence of the education provided at home in different ways e.g. via samples of work or report from a tutor.
- 65% of respondents reported having one or fewer full time equivalent staff to coordinate and monitor home schooling provision in their locality.

Commentary provided by LA staff highlighted concerns about the growth in numbers of children and families choosing to home school, many noted the absence of a registration requirement hinders the fulfilment of LA's statutory duties to identify children who are not receiving a suitable full-time education and to safeguard them. The growing complexity of this cohort's needs, links with unregistered schools and apparent breakdowns in the relationship between schools and families were also raised as issues multiple times. LA staff recognised that home schooling experiences can be suitable and nurturing, however, concerns arise when the education provided is not suited to the child's aptitude and ability or where the choice to educate at home is a further component of abuse and neglect. When the LA is denied the opportunity to see and speak to a child this is when the greatest concerns arise.

ADCS believes parents and carers who opt to electively home educate should register with the LA and LAs should be resourced to establish systems and safeguards to assure themselves that children and young people who are home schooled are receiving a good standard of education, delivered in a suitable learning environment, and that they are safe. These conclusions were first drawn in the Badman review of elective home education in England in June 2009; ADCS members firmly believe that many of Badman's recommendations remain pertinent to this day and should be adopted.