



## Access to Education Group

**Date:** 21<sup>st</sup> Jan 2026

**Chair:** Chris Owen (stepping in for Ming Zhang)

**Attendees:** Jon Willcocks & Pauline Martin Ellis (Hants), Katy Daly & Annette Borg (BFC), Cathy Shaw (M Keynes), Vidy Narayan (ESCC), Katy Daly (Bracknell), Cathy Edwards, Simon Smith & Jesse Alderton (Kent), Clare Raffaelli & Rosie Gossage (RBWM), Anjali Sidhu (Slough), Carole Vernon (Wokingham), Maria Langford & Katie Johnson (Surrey), Melissa Perry (W Berks), Emma Block & Chrissie Clarke (Medway), Jas Didiaily (Oxfordshire), Chris Owen.

Apologies: Gavin Thomas (BHCC), Sarah Speedie (ESCC), James Fowler (Bucks), Neil Stevenson (Portsmouth), Olly May (BFC), Sarah Hughes (W Sussex), Colin Mayo (MKC), Fiona Hostler (Reading).

### Notes

#### Actions

- Raise the revised s19 proposed regional position on children with an EHCP to SE SEND leaders and aim for regional agreement.
- Raise with Education Directors about uncertainty where, within LAs, s19 data are being reported and monitored (beyond at case level with a focus on safeguarding).
- Circulate the s19 and alternative provision clarification note from the LGSC Ombudsman.
- Circulate the EHE-related presentations.
- Topics for March: exclusion / suspension.

#### 1. Welcome and matters arising

The notes from November were reviewed and agreed as accurate.

Matters arising:

- Some attended the LGCSO webinar about their practitioners guide. The content was largely along the lines of the previous inputs to the A2E Group, the LGCSO produced a note in response to questions. Katy shared with Chris for circulation.

#### 2. Elective home education (EHE)

Colleagues did a round-up of trends in EHE numbers in their area and developments there had been over 2025. Surrey shared more details about how the work of their Children Not In School teams had developed, plus a summary on EHE was shared from Hants.

Themes:

- EHE numbers still increasing in most areas: two or three LAs (plus a further 3 from autumn 2025 data) were reporting more of a plateauing of numbers. Whereas the majority mirror national trends: approximately 12% year-on-year increase in number of EHE children. The skew of EHE is towards the older age group and KS4 young people are prioritised by teams. Concerted strategies being adopted include identifying schools with spikes in deregistrations to then provide briefing / training and policies that commit to return to original school if this is within 12 months of deregistration (supported and undertaken via FAP Panel).
- Increased focus on the most vulnerable and in early assessment: triaging deregistrations so the more vulnerable are identified and prioritised for an early visit / assessment. This has led to earlier preference for return to school for more parents.
- Concerted strategies with parents who EHE: to build relationships and enable parents to support one another, as well as to better understand their responsibilities. With GRT families, arranging to meet all who EHE at a site at the same time and in a less formal way.
- Dissatisfaction with school is the largest reason given for deregistration: this is cited by parents; in some LAs it is because the parent wants their child placed in their preferred mainstream school. This is partly a reflection of disillusion across the wider school system.
- LAs described work with health, including their training input: positive relations with health have promoted better access for families to vaccinations. One example was training for GPs that resulted



in proactive case monitoring between LA and GPs. Training for schools and social care to both better understand EHE and the arrangements / responsibilities for parents. For some a result was an increase in invitation to meet with parents before deregistration, with positive outcomes.

- Is there a trend of some parents deregistering as a way to push towards s19 education? A few have identified an increasing group of parents, often of a child with SEN, who appear to be unhappy with their mainstream school and are deregistering as a step towards making a case that their child is not at school and should be assessed for s19 provision. This will be explored at a future meeting.

- Staffing capacity continues to be a challenge, but some report success with growth bids: The increasing numbers and the work involved in supporting reintegration for vulnerable pupils stretches capacity in all LAs. Prevention can be enhanced by regular multi-agency liaison meetings and prioritising vulnerable families for home visits. Increasing duties are proposed under the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill but it is unclear what additional resource their might be. A few successful bids have focused on reduction of safeguarding risks.

Single justice process: this is reported by one LA as an approach that has helped to reduce the 12 – 18 month delay on court hearings for SAOs when enforcement is pursued.

### 3. EHE – CME Dashboard

- Reminder: deadline for Jan census return (13<sup>th</sup> Feb to [Ryan.Hinton@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:Ryan.Hinton@brighton-hove.gov.uk) ). No further suggestions to improve the spreadsheet for the s19 return.
- When asked s19 data is collated by your LA and what strategic is there, most could not identify any regular reporting. Chris will raise with Education Directors on Friday.
- Medway and Kent are starting to look at how to report and include in dashboards, partly to raise awareness of the issue.

### 4. S19 practice sharing groups

- Group A: the 'EHCP and not' decision-making process was discussed with SE SEND Strategic Leads and a revised wording requested. This is yet to be discussed by them.
- Group B (finance & partnership with schools): three Berks LAs have taken an approach to change their policy and consulted via Schools Forum. BFC have started implementing their policy of recoupment of 80% of AWP, plus 50% of element 2 and /or EHCP top-up from a school. Little or no pushback from bursars so far. A SE position is still being discussed by the Education Directors.

### 5. AP Task-and-Finish Group

The group aims to produce by April 2026:

- Case study(s) that offers pointers to robust LA oversight of non-school AP and commissioning arrangements for children placed by the LA.
- Examples of local frameworks for QA and guides that support best practice by local mainstream schools when commissioning placement in non-school AP.
- Test an approach to sharing information about non-school AP providers between LAs: themes such as ensuring robust safeguarding and health and safety, and the development of local markets for non-school AP.
- Case study or framework for involving young people's voice in the QA processes.
- By April to advise SESLIP and the Education Directors Network about priorities for future support of practice and learning for LA oversight of AP.

For a future meeting:

- Schools white paper and implications of Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill.

### Agenda Items for Next meeting:

- March: Exclusions and suspensions theme
- Exploration of link between deregistrations from school and s19 provision request.

