

## Written evidence submitted by the Centre for Social Mobility, University of Exeter

Evidence regarding: The effect of cancelling formal exams, including the fairness of qualifications awarded and pupils' progression to the next stage of education or employment:

### The Voice of Experienced Elective Home Educating (EHE) parents: the risk of missing home-educated children in the education policy response to school closure and lessons for adapting home learning

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The Centre for Social Mobility at the University of Exeter is a joint practitioner-academic centre set up to advance social mobility through robust research and evidence-based policy and practice.

*"The lockdown has exposed our HE experience to the mainstream and I think this could be positive in some ways, e.g. making elective HE better understood and accepted. However, the extent to which our **situation is misunderstood** by the educational establishment has been **shockingly exposed through the failure of Ofqual to find a solution to provide grades to private candidates entered for exams this year.***

***They seem to have had no notion that children can study independently and successfully and that HE families are doing this in such numbers."** (Experienced Home-educator of three children)*

*"We are all '**crisis schooling**' at home. While school going families think they are 'home schooling' because they are at home – Experienced Home Education (EHE) families might feel like they are at school, being held up in a building and yard all day - every day. The 'home' in home-ed, home schooling, home education and EHE has always been a **misnomer.**" (Experienced home-educator with 7 years of home education experience and two children)*

## Executive Summary

Our research:

1. provides a voice of the experienced home education (EHE) community - an estimated **54,656 children** (ADCS 2019) were home-educated prior to the Covid-19 enforced school closure. The actual number of home educated children is largely unknown, the figures are derived from school children deregistered, however if parents have not applied for a school place for their child they are not counted in the numbers.
2. is based on evidence from **401 survey and 53 interview responses** collected from experienced home-education parents (EHE) collected between 25.03.20 – 08.07.2020
3. is based on a wide range of diversity within home educating families across the United Kingdom; location and areas; curriculums; ethnicity and diversity; educational background; socioeconomic circumstances; level of family income; and job status.

**Key Policy finding:**

**1. The policy of cancelling exams excludes the needs of home-educated children:**

There is a significant and detrimental impact on home educated children due to take exams as private candidates. Typically home educated students sit exams as independent candidates at schools or exam centers, **leaving many without either an exam or a predicted grade. The policy of cancelling examinations without offering suitable substitutes risks failing a generation of home-educated children from the educational progression into post-16 and post-18 education they would normally access.**

2. Home educators **college and university places** are being **jeopardised** as well as apprenticeships and vocational courses. Many have been left without a solution. Parents are urgently trying to negotiate with **local providers** in the **absence of exams which are impacting on EHE children's future education opportunities.**
3. **Home educators are not able to mark their children's work for a predicted grade nor have they sat marked Mock Exams so cannot use mocks as a form of predicted grade.** Each exam center interpreted Ofqual guidelines differently creating **a lottery of opportunities for EHE children.**
4. Home educators study independently and successfully for GCSE and A 'level Exams. Several of our research participants described organising community activities and exam support for home educators spanning the last 26 years. Participant responses suggest **home educated children have successfully sat as independent candidates in high numbers for at least the last 20 years** although there are no official figures.
5. There are **significant learning opportunities for schools and policy makers to be gained from experienced EHE** about how to prepare for and undertake education in a home setting, this relates to taking a holistic view of children and their academic and emotional well-being needs, being child-centered, child-led and flexible to achieve learning.

Our key general findings show that Home Educating families:

1. experience a **negative impact for their children due to predicted grades policy** as their children rely on examinations taken in schools or exam centres
2. **draw upon a wide range of skills and expectations** about their education provision, adapting more easily to school closures.
3. have their home environments **well-prepared** for creative, productive and engaging teaching and learning activities.
4. consider the enforced remote schooling as “**crisis schooling**” **not Home education**.
5. focus on **opportunities to develop teaching and learning skills** that they may not have otherwise learnt.
6. **welcome the wider availability of online educational resources**.
7. have a **holistic view** of education.
8. find that there are **contrasting experiences** where they have both children at school and are home educating another child at home.
9. experience **wide variations** in local and national engagement and opportunities during the Covid-19 school closure from Local Authorities (LA).

## Detailed Report:

### Research context

Our research explored the perspectives of ‘experienced home educating families’ during the effects of Covid-19 enforced school closures, restrictions on movement and assembly, and government enforced lockdown protocols.

An estimated 54,656 children were home-educated prior to the Covid-19 enforced school closure (*ADCS 2019*). However, they are often a hidden sector within education and their voice and experience are not routinely considered and represented in government decision making. We thought this was an important research and advocacy gap to fill for two reasons: we might miss some learning that would benefit all parents schooling from home now or in the future and we

might miss important aspects of their experience that would benefit from policy consideration now. Our research exceeded expectations for policy demands and learning from the EHE community.

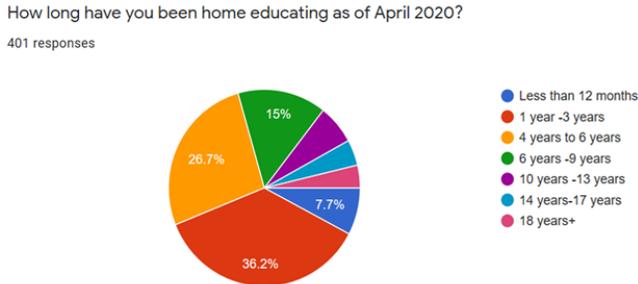
We knew from our other rapid response research at the Centre for Social Mobility at the University of Exeter that parents with children with SEN reported lower wellbeing than other parents, and we expected this group to face additional challenges in providing education to their children. We wanted to understand how parents experienced in home education were developing and changing their learning practices during the school closures.

The research project gained ethical approval from the University of Exeter, and took place between 25<sup>th</sup> March and 8<sup>th</sup> July 2020. A mixed-methods study was undertaken, consisting of a largely open-ended questions survey with 401 respondents, and interviews with 53 respondents. This study sought to understand the impact on school closures and a changing policy environment on families who have chosen to electively home educate their child/children for at least 12 months prior.

In preparation for this submission, we added a very quick response survey open for only 12 hours on the 19<sup>th</sup> of July to gauge the view of home educating parents on the cancelled examinations. We received over 100 accounts of the impact on children with significant concerns about how to provide opportunities for home educated private candidates missing out on the opportunity to have their educational achievements certified through GCSE / A-level equivalent examinations or predicted grades. We are submitting this evidence separately to Ofqual.

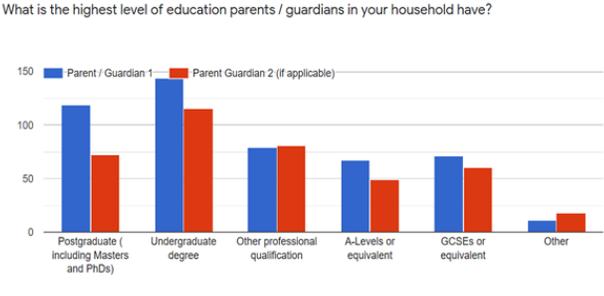
The vast majority of survey respondents – 2/3<sup>rd</sup> had been home-educating for between 1 and 6 years (Table 1).

Table 1: Length of home-education



Of the participants a high number of parents reported a postgraduate level of study; 191 participants out of 454 (see Table 2) but it is noteworthy that home-educators are a diverse community with parents having a wide range of educational and professional backgrounds (see appendix). Of the participants 55.1% of families reported no children with special educational needs, compared to 45.4% that did having at least one child with special educational needs. A quarter of respondents were educating 1 child at home and 16 per cent were educating four or more children at home with the vast majority of parents educating two (38%) or three (20%) children at home. The reasons for choosing to home-educate varied as discussed in appendix 2.

Table 2: the educational profile of EHE in our survey



### Findings Section 1: The policy of cancelling exams excludes the needs of home-educated children.

The policy context for our findings is that home-educated children are often not eligible for predicted grades. This is what the OFQUAL consultation found: “...**we could not identify any reliable way to calculate grades for private candidates...**”(Ofqual. 2020. Publishes Initial Decisions on GCSE and A Level Grading Proposals for 2020 [article], May 2020). Ofqual observed that “There was broad support for our proposal to only allow exam boards to issue results for private candidates for whom the Head of Centre is confident they can submit a centre assessment grade and include them in the centre’s rank order...**Most of those who disagreed were students who are private candidates themselves and their parents or carers.**” (Ofqual [news story] 2020)

The exam boards estimate about 20,000 private candidates were planning to enter for exams this summer (Ofqual, 2020;pg52) while Chris Spraggett, chief executive of Tutors and Exams told the BBC they had received about **38,000 enquiries from "displaced" candidates** - not all homeschooled - within 48 hours after exams were cancelled. There are no official figures for the number of home educated students due to sit exams (BBC ‘Homeschooled Pupil “in

Limbo” over GCSE Move’, 2020). The Government document explains “A third category of students will have studied independently. The exam boards are considering whether some of these students, whose progression will be hindered if they do not receive a grade this summer.” (Ofqual, 2020;pg52).

- 1.1 In interviews, home-educators explained that private candidates ‘were not always part of a ‘cohort of students’ at a centre so were largely left without hope of a grade’ (interviewed home educating parent with two children both GCSE candidates). A Centres cohort can be school children taking re-sits or studying at the center as part of course towards exams. Ofqual guidance did not take into account Private Candidates who studied independently and whose first contact with the exam center is to sit the exam.
- 1.2 We had not included a direct question on exam cancellation in our survey, however, 27 parents choose to comment unprompted on their child having exams cancelled or deferred. A further 95 participants mentioned planning to study IGCSE’s with their children or wanting Local Authorities to support with Exams for Home Educators, including providing more exam centres. Those completing the survey in March may not have known how their GCSE’s would be impacted.
- 1.3 **The policy of cancelling examinations without offering suitable substitutes for home-educated children who are usually not eligible for predicted grades risks failing a generation of home-educated children from the educational progression into post-16 and post-18 education they would normally access.**
- 1.4 Our research finds that there is a significant detrimental impact on home educated children due to take exams. Typically home educated students sit exams as independent candidates, this has left many without either an exam or a predicted grade and financially impacted.

Home educators were thus asking the government to “*facilitate access to exams for those HE children who wish to take them. And remove the fees! It costs up to £250 for each exam at exam centres.*” (Home educator with 9 years home educating experience).

Another parent voiced this concern: “*The amount of home educators that have lost out nationwide due to the exam fiasco is horrendous. **Many do not use tutors are unable to get predicted grades and have lost a lot of money with the prospect of paying again for an exam that may still not take place.** Extra hardship, extra stress. A lot of these children are those that were taking exams despite being failed by schools.... and now feel let down again. Little has been thought about the impact on the home ed community by those outside it.*” Home Educating parent

- 1.5 Initially 24 families reported problems with their home educated children accessing exams due to disruptions and cancellations during Covid-19 with different examples in each county. Home educators reported the government and Ofqual's response had ignored the home education community during Covid-19 exam cancellations and disadvantaged their children's academic progress and opportunities. We have collected a further 100 case studies that demonstrate the breath of impact and are submitting these to Ofqual.
- 1.6 Some families reported traditionally using Open University as an alternative way to access higher and further education. Although this provision varies significantly in availability in different LA's. In June 2013, following the publication of the Wolf Report, the Government issued Guidance to Local Authorities, Colleges and Sixth Form Centres on the Full-Time Enrolment of 14-16 year olds which some home educated childrens choose as well as examples in the report of standard college entry **or** apprenticeship. Colleges make local arrangements as they deem appropriate (Education and Skills Funding Agency, 2017)
- 1.7 A significant number of students are facing re-sits next year and delaying their current education plans, some face having to add English and Maths to their college course and some are still in limbo without a resolution to their child missing out on their Exams. Home educators study independently and successfully for IGCSE's and A 'level Exams. 'For home educated children who have studied independently for a public exam like GCSE or A level independently, through a private tutor or via a correspondence course, it is usually the pupils own responsibility to find an exam center, register for the exam, find a qualified person to assess coursework and enter examinations' (*Tobias. L, 2020.*) (*Nicholson. F, 2020.*). This is all done at the parents own cost. The survey suggests EHE have done this in high numbers for at least the last 20 years using schools and exam centers to sit as independent candidates according to long term home educators experiences.
- 1.8 Home educators are not able to mark their children's work for a predicted grade nor have they sat marked Mock Exams so cannot use mocks as a form of predicted grade. Home educators **college and university places** are being **jeopardised** as well as apprenticeships and vocational courses. Many have been left without a solution. Parents are urgently trying to negotiate with **local providers** (which are varying in response) regarding re-sits, marked portfolio work through private tutors (at additional costs) or having to defer educational progress for a year in the **absence of exams, impacting on EHE children's future education opportunities.**

1.9 Some exam centers simply said NO private candidates at all. Some got OFQUAL requirements confused with CAIE (Cambridge Assessment International Education; an exam provider) and put an age limit or time limit on submitting acceptable work and interpreted the guidance differently. One home educating tutor reported *“I was a tutor for about 25 CAIE students who were affected. Only about 8 or 9 were able to have me submit portfolios for them, because each centre made up its own rules. Some just said NO private candidates at all. Some got the OFQUAL requirements confused with CAIE and put an age limit or time limit on acceptable work. It was truly a shambles, and I’m remembering which centres went out of their way to help home educators.”*

Home educating parents continue to be unclear about what the government will do to support their children missing out on exam results and lost progression opportunities to the detriment of their children’s education.

## Findings Section 2: Home educating families draw upon different skills and expectations about their provision, adapting more easily to school closures

*“We have only had to adjust the balance in lock down, we will simply readjust back in a way that works best for our team and their needs.” (Experienced home-educator with 7 years of home education experience and two children aged 6 and 10 years)*

- 2.1. Many parents felt the same challenges with restrictions on assembly, movement and social isolation as schooled families. While many home educating parents have different skills and expectations of what education is about, when it comes to school closures, they have been able to use those skills and expectations to leverage education in a successful way.
- 2.2. The survey showed many parents used ‘lockdown’ **as an opportunity to teach life skills and coping skills, develop emotional literacy, mental health and wellbeing skills.**
- 2.3. The survey suggests that this adaptable approach led to more enjoyable experience and more learning for the children, focused on both creative and practical learning processes as a catalyst for independent learning.
- 2.4. Parents showed high levels of leadership and organisation and encouraged their childrens to be independent in their learning and in communicating with friends through digital platforms.
- 2.5. Families relied upon well-established and strong communication skills between its members, which contributed to a strong sense of trust and resilience to any unfolding challenges.
- 2.6. Parents reported being used to having flexible and adaptable schedules in home education provisions, which are intuitive to their children’s interests and abilities, or availability of outdoor activities.
- 2.7. Parents suggest a sense of not fundamentally changing the way home education takes place, noting that social distancing and restrictions of assembly affected families’ ability to access external cultural education spaces, blended learning and community groups and activities.

- 2.8.** Parents reported a focus on social, emotional and personal wellbeing and had an understanding that children needed to feel safe and secure to be able to fully engage in their learning.
- 2.9.** There is a significant amount of trust in homeschooling children wanting to learn and being capable of directing their own learning. Families did not differentiate between 'school day' and 'home', adopting blended approaches where home education operates as an 'extension of parenting'.

*Home education is a wonderful, life affirming choice which enables children to learn at their own pace about things of interest to them. It should be encouraged as a viable option and resources put in place to support it. (Experienced home-educator with 17 years of home education experience and two children aged 10 and 22 years.)*

## Findings Section 3. Home educating families have environments prepared for productive teaching and learning activities.

*“I've been reminded how much I appreciate the flexibility and the freedom to make our own decisions. I've also been reminded that the qualifications aren't the be all and end all, enjoying the ride and gaining knowledge are more important. We've made few practical changes though in how we home-ed.” (Experienced home-educator with 14 years of home education experience and two children aged 14 and 18 years).*

- 3.1. Despite differing socioeconomic status, home-educating environments participants described being suitably resourced, with parents making use of available digital and practical resources.
- 3.2. The survey shows parents having already taken financial responsibility for their children's education, preparing, planning and organising materials necessary to carry out home education.
- 3.3. Home educating families expressed a great deal of empathy for schooled families and most thought that it was right for the home educating community to be supporting these families through this time.
- 3.4. Parents with younger children reported a less structured more informal 'child led' approach, whereas children approaching formal examinations such as GCSE are introduced to more structured learning.
- 3.5. Many families reported in interviews that they did not take holidays defined by school opening times, and were flexible taking time off when necessary.
- 3.6. Home educating parents reported having a wide range of learning resources and material at home as well as a range of educational games, toys and art material, often informed by holistic education experts including Waldorf Steiner, Maria Montessori, Charlotte Mason.
- 3.7. Parents note children being comfortable in making use of the free digital resources available during Covid-19 to add to their bank of resources, being experienced using web-based applications and websites, and video conferencing tools.
- 3.8. Home education families with children described as SEND reported harder transitions from physical to digital learning environments. However, families

reported mitigating distress by being more creative with their child's learning at home and increasing engagement with their child's interests where possible.

*"I saw education was achievable in many different ways, outside of the school system. Having trained as a primary school teacher, I wasn't anti-school, I was simply pro 'education otherwise" (Experienced home-educator with 21 years of home education experience and five children aged 13, 19, 21, 23, 26 years.)*

*"Contrary to what most people expect the home ed community is vast and extremely social... [my children] learn about the world around them. All of that has had to stop...What has not stopped is our semi-formal side of things. My children are still accessing the same online courses that we have always used. The STEM boxes still come through the door monthly - although they are not opened for 3 days. This part of their routine has not changed and that is helping them through this."(Home-educator with 13 years of home education experience and four children aged 13 and 16 years.)*

## Findings Section 4. Home-education families consider the enforced remote schooling as “crisis schooling”

*“No, I do not feel 'home schooling' is the same as 'home education'.*

*The current rise in 'home schooling' is based on work sent home, like an online school, and does not focus on the individual child's needs, ideas, desire for learning, and does not follow interests as such. I think it focuses on a pre-made curriculum and completing tasks set for the child, rather than allowing the child to make decisions and take time to explore. In no way does it resemble home education as home education takes place anywhere and everywhere, indoors and outside, daily, at all hours.” (Experienced home-educator with 6 years of home education experience and four children aged 18months, 8, 11 and 14)*

4.
  - 4.1. Parents were unanimous that learning through home education is not comparable to “crisis schooling” at home during school closures.
  - 4.2. Home educators are not under pressure to complete work set by schools. Home educators did not enforce learning upon the child and generally did not see themselves as teachers. Parents instead described their role as ‘facilitators of learning’ which links to their philosophical views of education.
  - 4.3. Families report home practice had not changed but they were missing a significant element of their practice which was to enjoy doing the social side of learning and peer to peer engagement or play.
  - 4.4. The participants were of mixed opinion whether home education rate would rise but suggested that this experience of crisis schooling would not reflect accurately what home education was in reality.
  - 4.5. Participants were near unanimous in predicting that the only families that might transition to home education were those that already had an interest in home educating and were already considering it before lockdown.
  - 4.6. Many parents discussed their education philosophy forming the foundation of their practice, something participants were adamant is based on the process or journey of learning, exploration and discovering through life through intrinsic motivation conducted both in the home and more widely within the community.

## Findings Section 5. Home education families focus on opportunity to develop teaching and learning skills that they may not have otherwise learnt

*“Our approach is tailored to stimulate and provide the practical life and academic skills necessary to live happily, healthily and achieve potential, in whatever area our child wishes to explore.” (Experienced home-educator with 10 years of home education experience and one child aged 13 years.)*

5.1 Families report planning on spending more time at home to allow for more in depth study of subjects and topics that the children are interested in and more time at home to play, to think and to have quiet days.

5.2 Families experienced an understanding of the value of quiet time and space and saw this as an opportunity for recovery and recuperation not of trauma.

5.3 Typically parents spend a significant amount of time preparing and planning their children's education whether they had a fully structured practice or unstructured and informal there was still an element of planning and differentiation for each child.

5.4 Parents reported using the lockdown situation as an opportunity to demonstrate coping skills and self-care practices during stressful life events

***“I have been impressed with how resilient my children have been. There’s been no tears or complaints they’ve just carried on as normal, even when their holiday was cancelled. I used to worry that we didn’t do enough groups etc but now I think we had it about right”*** (Experienced home-educator with 9 years of home education experience and three children aged 4, 10 and 12 years.)

*“It has brought me closer to my children and more in tune with their needs - I will forever be grateful for that.”* (Experienced home-educator with 4 years of home education experience and four children aged 11, 11, 13, 13 years)

## Findings Section 6. Home education parents welcome the availability of online educational resources, but recognise the importance of social contact

*A lot of parents are simply trying to keep up with work sent by school. The school is still considered as the authority in respect of the child's education. Also, true home education under "normal" circumstances, encompasses a lot of activities outside of the home, which is not possible now. **Home education groups can't meet at all currently, which impacts home ed children significantly.**" (Home-educator with 18+ years of home education experience and four children aged 14, 16 and others are adults.)*

- 6.1 Many parents reported no change to their home based learning but were clear that home learning was only a part of the whole experience of home education. The activities out of the home, the socialisation and community based learning were missing during lockdown and this meant that their usual practice on the whole was very disrupted and did not look at all the same during lockdown.
- 6.2 Home educating families use free and paid subscription game based apps developed around the curriculum children have regular access to. Home education families had a flexibility of when the child completed learning (see 1.10).
- 6.3 Families reported groups had moved to zoom and that the children had regular access to friends via online platforms. Where some children did not enjoy the interactions, the parents were aware of the need to support their child with increased interpersonal interaction with them through games and conversation.
- 6.4 The report showed a small number of SEND families expressed concern about post covid19 life and adapting to managing changes with their children from social isolation to social contact.
- 6.5 Parents report easy transition in using blended education providers such as tutors using digital tools until face to face can be resumed. Parents report using YouTube tutorials for learning support as well as live workshops or talk, where children can experience participatory learning remotely using digital platforms to socialise.

*I do not believe that the home schooling that is being practised in the light of school closures is home education. It is, as far as I understand, distance learning in a trauma based situation. Home education is broad and individual. Very little is done predominantly at home...**Home education is external activities, lots of interaction with caregivers, meeting with friends from the home education community and other adults (such a people working in shops, libraries, museums for example). It is not normally***

***something done in isolation.***” (Home-educator with 14 years of home education experience and two children aged 10 and 22 years).

## Findings Section 7. Home education families maintain a holistic view of children's education

*“Home Education explores learning holistically and can span many subjects within one project or topic. It doesn't have to look like school or any form of traditional learning. Home education happens everywhere and at any time. Moments of wonder and realisation can occur whilst walking, in conversation. It is in the conversations that I heard much learning being worked out and absorbed by my own children. Home Education is organic and humanistic, creative and encourages many problem solving, multi-sensory and multiple intelligences....**Home schooling is linear and logical**, it is about compartmentalising knowledge and skills by subjects, imparting and regurgitating knowledge, rather than following a child's interests. **Home schooling is replicating school at home with a timetable, structure, chair at table, written work, marking, homework**, it is often following the National Curriculum” (Home-educator with 20 years of home education experience and four children aged 13, 18 and 20 years).*

- 7.1. Home educating parents prefer to focus on their child's learning journey and the process of learning rather than the outcomes.
- 7.2 Parents reported a closer relationship with their children and saw their education encompassing more than traditional academics but included all aspects of life.
- 7.3 Many parents had an understanding of what had worked for their children's education and had an awareness of their children's strengths and difficulties.
- 7.4 Families maintain their belief that education is not just about exams and attainment, but a fully individualised focus on children during challenging circumstances.
- 7.5 Parents refocused this time, moving away from their normal practice to focusing on mental health and wellbeing and maintaining and strengthening relationship/friendships through covid19.
- 7.6 Parents reported frustration with public perception of home educators. Many felt that they were perceived as 'hippy' rather than experienced and serious bespoke educators. See appendix 2 referring to the survey data for Level of Education and appendix 5 Parent Profession.

*“Home Ed is a whole lifestyle not learning time and family time in separation. Learning and family life are intertwined and indistinguishable from each other. Many home schooling families have struggled because they are replicating school at home and it does not work (and I say that as a trained teacher as well as a home educator.)” (Home-educator with 9 years of home education experience and three children aged 9, 17 and 21 years).*

## Findings Section 8. There are contrasts in the experiences of home education children and that of children normally at school.

*“They for the first time during lock down have asked about my education provision in 17 years”. (Home-educator with 17 years of home education experience and two children aged 9 and one adult.)*

- 8.0.** The survey showed 42 families had responded unprompted about one or more children at school and one or more children home educated. Participants reported that they didn't feel stressed about home educating but did feel significant stress maintaining the work from school, some having to set their children up at workstations to be online for school. *“I have a child in school and their school is fully running online. Timetabled lessons are still at the same time, even including assembly. So in her case it is complete school running at home.”* Home educating parent of three children with one in school.
- 8.1.** This is very different to home education. We determine our own timetable and are not following a curriculum. When a concept is understood we move on to something else as opposed to requiring completion of particular learning points. So whilst we might set objectives for a half term, sometimes we complete in a month and move on, other times it can continue for a few more weeks.
- 8.2.** Parents reported their schooled child getting more tired and feeling stressed and fed up that their home educated child. Parents reported an increased stress of receiving work set externally and having to be 'teacher'.  
*“No. Its just school in the same format but at home. 13 yr old now at secondary school, 10 yr old still home ed. The workload for 13yr old is ridiculous, they are expecting the child to sit and work to the same daily timetable as when at school. We have reverted to chilling the heck out for 13yr old. Mental health more important than box ticking. Home educating parent with one child in school and one home educated.*
- 8.3.** A significant number of participants in this situation reported reverting to home educating all their children and dropping the school structure for their usually schooled children where possible to alleviate the stress at home.
- 8.4.** In the survey parents talked about a difference in home education being a facilitator to their children's learning not a teacher, learning alongside their children and

following their interests. Participants expressed that during this time of national crisis what children needed for parents to be parents and not teachers.

## Findings Section 9. Variations in local and national engagement to home education families during Covid-19

*“Even in lockdown period LA's are actively chasing up proof of education being provided of children whom are electively home educating and threatening SAO when quarantine home educated children and their parents are not having this additional stress and their schools are not as parental fines suspended, Ofsted inspections suspended, do your best attitude for parents forced into home ed through quarantine.” (Home-educator with 3 years of home education experience and one child aged 8).*

- 9.1.** Families across the United Kingdom report being contacted by their local authorities to produce evidence of learning during lockdown, despite government announcements that Ofsted inspections were suspended.
- 9.2.** Families reported being disappointed that local authorities had used this time to contact them or ‘hassle them’ rather than reaching out for support or leaving them to be contacted at a later date.
- 9.3.** The report revealed the majority of Home educators expressed experience of what they experienced as harassment on the part of LA.
- 9.4.** Families report local authorities varying in response prior to and during school closures, with no consistency in approaches of engagement.
- 9.5.** Families wanted there to be a more uniform response to home education from every LA. Some participants describe being engaged with home educating community groups, who have been very good in liaising with families and LA.
- 9.6.** Many families report mistrust of local authorities due to what they experienced as hostile actions including inconsistent demands for work, being referred to safeguarding authorities without, in their eyes, any obvious cause for concern, and fear of engagement with Education Welfare Officers whom the EHE community experienced as lacking understanding of home education practices.
- 9.7.** Parents report government guidelines on home education presume that home education practice takes place in a tutoring style, with guidance (Protective Measures for Out-of-School Settings (OOSS) during the Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Outbreak, gov.uk July 2020.) referring to “*working safely in other people’s homes*” which demonstrates a lack of understanding of how home education is usually conducted.

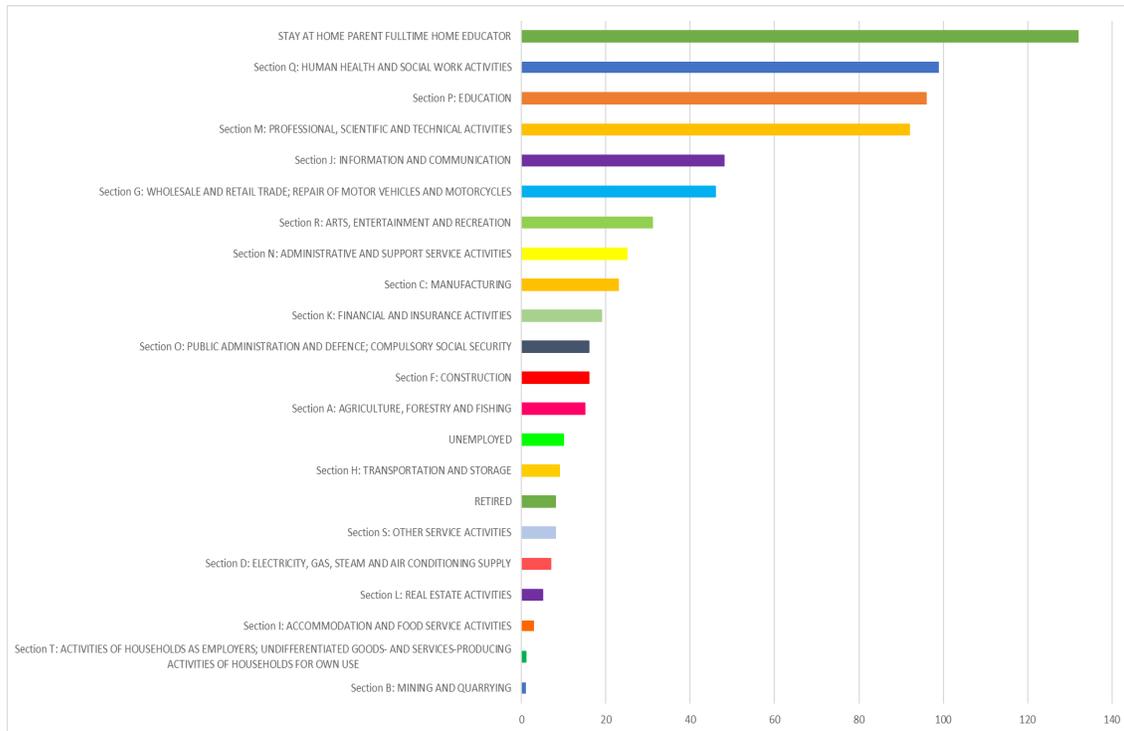
*“Parents (including guardians and foster carers) who have chosen to home educate their own child are not OOSS providers for the purpose of this guidance. Any group activities undertaken by home educators involving their own children but taking place outside of their own household should be carried out in line with current government guidance, such as Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19) in other people’s homes”.* **Protective Measures for Out-of-School Settings during the Coronavirus (COVID-19). Updated, July 2020 from gov.uk**

- 9.8.** The report revealed examples of good practice from some LA’s. Home educators discussed the need for national training for Elective Home Education outreach staff in LA’s which they predicted would remove the fear around registering and see higher numbers registering and engaging with LA. In examples where home education has collaborative relationships families felt there was a positive way forward.
- 9.9.** Home educating families would like to see a deeper understanding of home education practice and an acknowledgement of home education as a viable and successful and healthy choice for families by schools and government both nationally and locally.
- 9.10.** Our survey also showed that participants rated the majority of LA’s as “appalling”, “overstepping their remit” “awful” “no one trusts them here” “you have to know your rights then they back off”. These answer categories were chosen by respondents and not set by the researchers. Participants mentioned 70 LA’s in our study Hampshire, Devon, and Coventry had largely positive after engaging and working with local home education community groups.

*“Our LA have recently engaged positively with some experienced home educators to improve their contact and approach to the community. This has been helpful and beneficial. I would now say the relationship is positive”  
(Home-educator with 13 years of home education experience of four children aged 8, 14, 17, 18.)*

## Appendix 1:

### Parents Profession: Job Sector Category



Parents Profession by National Statistics Job Sector Category (*Standard Statistical Regions (December 2005) Names and Codes in England, n.d.*) \*additions of 3 categories: stay at home parent/full time home educator, unemployed, retired.

## Appendix 2: **Reasons for choosing to home-educate**

The Survey showed some common ground in *approach* to home education. The most common in nearly all respondents was “*child led*”.

- Home education families describe a common belief in being able to provide a holistic education provision, they felt enabling better preparation to continue education effectively during lockdown.
- EHE reported education should be focused not just on outcomes, exams and attainment, instead having a fully individualised focus on the child development as a whole person.
- Parents chose to focus on life skills and coping skills they felt would benefit the children learning during lockdown that they wouldn't have learnt otherwise.

- d) Families ranged in number of children and reflected a wide range of parent professions including many teachers and NHS key workers.
- e) Some families came to home education after delaying school starting age, through leaving school, as a lifestyle choice, as a viable alternative to school, or because they were home educated themselves.
- f) Concerns over a lack of Special Educational Needs support in school was a common reason for families deciding to electively home educate. *“Dissatisfaction with the structure and content of the current education system, particularly in the context of delivering special needs/neurodiversity in the classroom and making appropriate adaptations. Worsening mental health and lack of accommodations meant I decided to take responsibility for their education and cater to their needs. Home Education Parent with 4 children and 6 years of EHE experience.*
- g) Some home education families suggest informal exclusion and ‘off-rolling’ by schools informed decisions to electively home educate.
- h) Children had faced bullying in school or been labelled ‘behind’ as well as gifted learners being held back by age expectations.
- i) Most expressed disagreement with the ‘one-size fits all’ school system and preferred the personalised, individualised approach of home education.
- j) Availability of more online resources also helped parents and children to provide a continued provision.
- k) Many families view the national curriculum as ‘too narrow’ and felt they could offer wider and more diverse teaching and learning opportunities through home education.
- l) Most families valued the multicultural community aspect of home education and the emphasis on a wide range of interests that were shared through peer social groups organised by home educating families.
- m) Most reported a significant increase in quality of life, freedom of education, individual and family happiness.
- n) Home educating families would like to see a deeper understanding of home education practise and an acknowledgement of home education as a viable, respected, successful and healthy choice for families by schools and government both nationally and locally.

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