

# CABINET

21 JULY 2023

## REFERENCE REPORT FROM THE COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

### **A.1 SCRUTINY OF CHILDREN MISSING FROM EDUCATION**

(Report prepared by Keith Durran)

#### **BACKGROUND**

On 7 March 2023 (minute 26 refers) the Community Leadership Overview & Scrutiny Committee ("the Committee") received a report on the progress made since the Committee's meeting on March 21, 2022 (minute 53 refers) in relation to Children Missing from Education.

Members had previously heard from representatives of Essex County Council (ECC) regarding their efforts to promote measures related to education legislation with the government, which the council had decided to support. The Committee expressed a desire to revisit the issue and receive an update on the situation concerning people who were home-educated or missing from education. The Council's Executive Projects Manager, Rebecca Morton, provided information on the safeguarding and educational status of school-age children who were being home-educated instead of attending mainstream schools. She referred to an email response from the Department of Education, which confirmed their position on the matter.

The ECC representatives, Anita Patel-Lingam and Michael O'Brien, then updated the Committee on the rising numbers of children being home-educated across Essex, a trend that was also observed nationally. It was highlighted that many families had chosen to continue home education even after the COVID-19 pandemic, and the various reasons families opt for home education were explained. The Committee was presented with the statistics showing the increase in home-educated children in Essex and Tendring.

The Committee invited a group of parents who provided home education for their children to speak about their experiences. The parents shared their reasons for choosing home education, how they structured their children's education, and the benefits they perceived. They also discussed the challenges they faced, such as limited access to exam centers for subjects beyond English, Maths, and Science, as well as the cost of resources and opportunities. Anita Patel-Lingam acknowledged these issues and expressed the council's awareness and willingness to address them.

The committee further questioned the parents about the support they received from the home education community, the resources they utilized, and their views on other parents who may not be as dedicated to home education. They also discussed concerns about parents who choose not to engage with local authorities, and Anita reassured the committee that decisions regarding mainstream education placement would be made in the best interest of the child. The committee deliberated on the development of guidelines for home education, and the parents emphasized the importance of flexibility in teaching methods.

#### **COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION(S) TO CABINET**

**RECOMMENDED TO CABINET:**

- a) That representations be again made to see Academies provide access to sites in the locality where those that are home schooled can take examinations in a range of subjects close to home;
- b) That efforts be made to encourage further enhancement of a positive relationship between home educators and the County Council's education service. Including in policy development and home visits; and
- c) to support the collaborative work that was being talked about to identify those that are not attending school or being effectively home educated and taking the necessary steps to get them back into education.

**PORTFOLIO HOLDER COMMENT(S) AND RECOMMENDATION(S) TO CABINET**

**The response of the Partnerships Portfolio Holder is as follows:-**

*"I would like to thank the Committee for their comments and recommendations. I have asked Officers to raise these matters at the next meeting of the Tendring Education Strategic Board, Attendance sub-group."*

**RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET:**

**That the recommendations made by the Community Leadership Overview & Scrutiny Committee be noted and that the response of the Partnerships Portfolio Holder thereto be endorsed.**