

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb hwn i'r [Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg](#) ar [Llwybrau at addysg a hyfforddiant ôl-16](#)

This response was submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee](#) on the [Routes into post-16 education and training](#)

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Ymateb gan: Education Otherwise

Response from: Education Otherwise

Routes into post-16 education and training

Quality of information given to learners about the full range of post-16 options (vocational and academic routes post 16, i.e. further education, sixth form, apprenticeships and training, and onward to higher education)

The question refers to EOTAS children (children educated otherwise than at school by arrangement with the local authority) and not to Electively home Educated (EHE) young people. My response is in respect of EHE young people.

The quality and nature of information provided to home educated young people is entirely dependent on their parents who themselves, struggle to find good quality information. In part this is due to EHE families becoming increasingly less trusting of Welsh Government as a result of changes to EHE guidance and proposed introduction of regulations which parents consider to be draconian. This mistrust is reflected in reluctance to engage with services such as Careers Wales.

Education Otherwise has tried to work with Careers Wales to promote services to EHE young people, but our feedback is that there is no understanding of EHE in the service and that it has little to offer. Unfortunately, plans to create EHE registers (albeit not referred to as such by Welsh Government) have adversely affected this situation as parents are suspicious of contact from public bodies.

The extent to which further education colleges are able to engage directly with learners in schools.

In England, EHE young people can access colleges at age 14-16 and this service has greater demand made on it than it can meet as it is highly valued in the EHE community. Unfortunately, Welsh Government has never agreed to this provision and consequently, EHE young people have no contact with colleges other than if they or their parents actively seek out information.. If colleges were opened up to the EHE cohort it would be highly advantageous for those young people.

The extent to which learners in schools are made aware of the options available to them in school sixth forms and local further education colleges, and how closely schools engage with local colleges. Are there any conflicts of interest between sixth forms and further education colleges and is this more prevalent in some areas of Wales more than others?

EHE young people receive limited information on post 16 options and that which is received is after they actively seek it out. The cohort would benefit from colleges and sixth forms offering tailored material to EHE young people based on high quality advice and training. Please note that the training provided to local authority EHE officers by Welsh Government, prior to the publication of new EHE guidance last year was of extremely poor quality and lacked understanding of the cohort. As a charity, Education Otherwise provides CPD courses to public bodies and would support an initiative to provide well informed training to colleges and sixth form.

The extent to which employers are able to engage directly with learners in schools, for example at careers events.

Employers are mostly unaware of EHE young people and only make contact with them if already within their social sphere.

Who else influences learners future career choices (e.g. parents, teachers, peers), and how well are those people supported to do this.

Parents influence career choices for EHE young people to a lesser extent than with school children as home education places a strong emphasis on self determination. However, this can lead to young people seeking advice from peers which need not necessarily be good quality advice.

The EHE cohort has changed in the last two to three years and a greater number of young people are coming to EHE because schools do not meet their special needs and mental health needs. This sub cohort is more likely to be dependent on advice from peers due to fractured relationships with public bodies and schools.

How effective careers support is at compulsory school age

To what extent careers support at pre-16 is resulting in positive or negative outcomes post-16 e.g. young people finding themselves not in education, employment or training (NEET).

Research has found that EHE young people in Wales are considerably less likely to be

NEET than their school based peers. This is generally as a result of the emphasis within the EHE community and families on self determination and self motivation.

Whether work experience opportunities for learners of compulsory school are operational, effective and meaningful and any barriers in that regard.

For EHE young people, work experience is almost always arranged through personal social contact with parents or in parents' own businesses. Unfortunately, rather than viewing such work experience as a positive factor in the young person's life, it can be treated with suspicion by some local authorities who view it as failing to receive education rather than actively receiving relevant career education. There is also a great deal of misunderstanding of what can and cannot constitute work experience.

Changes in routes post-18

Is there evidence that learners are changing their choices post-18, including a drop in Higher Education enrolments, and if so why?

There has been an extremely worrying development within state benefits which has severely affected choices available to EHE young people. Child Benefit (CHB) regulations allow for EHE young people to be qualifying young people for CHB purposes. However, if the young person comes 'newly' to EHE post 16, CHB is stopped. This means that if an EHE young person aged 16 wishes to try college, but it does not work out for them and they wish to return to EHE they cannot do so without parents losing CHB and passported benefits. Consequently, parents are reluctantly for their 16+ EHE young people to try college if they are not confident that they will cope. Universal Credit (UC) regulations have no such provision, but UC staff routinely stop payments if a young person is not in an institution for their education.

The most severely affected young people are those with special needs who can remain in education up to age 25, as DWP regulations place them at severe disadvantage compared to other cohorts of young people.

Welsh-medium provision

The availability of post-16 options (both academic and vocational) through the medium of Welsh, and how this (affects) young people's choices.

Welsh medium education is available to a very small minority of EHE young people whose parents are fluent and supportive of their language use.

Equity of access

Are some groups of learners disadvantaged by the current system (e.g. pupils from low-income households, learners with travel needs)?

As above, families who are dependent on state benefits who EHE are severely disadvantaged compared to other families.

One specific inequality faced by EHE young people is that Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) of £40 per week for 16-18-year-olds who remain in education is not paid to them. EHE young people are specifically excluded from receiving EMA regardless of income. This is sorely felt by low income families whose 16-18 year olds want to continue in education.

What support is available for learners to improve access (financial or otherwise)?

Is there any regional variation in the information and support provided about post-16 across Wales?

As above, no financial support at all is provided and EHE young people are reluctant to engage with Careers Wales. Welsh Government narrative portrays EHE young people as 'hidden' or somehow lesser', whereas policy excludes those learners from access to EMA, 14 – 16 college provision and makes access to post 16 services difficult. EHE families not only feel unsupported by Welsh Government, but they also feel 'under attack'. This situation was worsened during Mr Jeremy Miles' tenure as Education Minister as a result of his very negative approach to EHE families.

Are there any particular challenges facing learners in rural areas?

Education otherwise is aware of difficulties faced by some EHE families in rural areas with access to internet and transport, both of which are essential for young people moving toward independence.

Are there any other equality issues?

Prejudice against EHE young people is endemic and Welsh Government is viewed by many EHE families as institutionally prejudice against them. Welsh Government does not work openly and respectfully with Education Otherwise nor with EHE families and it has taken no steps to address its own misinformed narrative of EHE families as deviant or even abusive. EHE families frequently refer to the Welsh Government as propounding that narrative in order to undermine them.

To give examples, some EHE young people struggling to enter their chosen careers have provided Education Otherwise with recordings of interviewers including an RAF recruiting officer stating that all EHE young people are socially inept and a police officer on a recruiting interview commenting that EHE families are 'weirdos'.

EHE young people struggle with university applications as UCAS forms require information from third parties which is not available to them and UCAS has failed to address this despite repeated requests to do so over more than a decade.

Post-16 destination data

Is there sufficient post-16 destination data collected to understand trends and inform what education institutions deliver? If not, what data is required to fully understand the post-16 landscape?

Independent research from 2012 and 2017 examined destinations for EHE young people but this is not data which can readily be collected by those outside the EHE community due to significant lack of trust in public bodies.

Research found EHE young people to be considerably less likely to be 'NEET' than their school based peers, only 10% as likely to commit an offence as their school based peers and also more likely to be gainfully employed as adults.

Welsh Government's role

How effective is the Welsh Government's approach to support participation in the full range of post-16 education and training options?

For EHE young people, Welsh Government is a barrier to engagement and appear not to wish to act as a bridge. Welsh Government could take steps to change this but appears to have no appetite to do so.

Are learners, their families and schools aware of available Wales-wide support and programmes, such as the Young Person's Guarantee?

The Young Person's Guarantee is not well known or well respected within the EHE community. This is primarily due to it being mistrusted and also lacking knowledge of or practical understanding of EHE.

To sum up, EHE families in Wales want their children to achieve suitable further education and employment and EHE young people have aspirations similar to their school based peers. However, Welsh Government is viewed by many as placing barriers in the way of EHE young people's attainment by its policies, practices and narrative. At the same time, Welsh Government is viewed blaming EHE young people who do not overcome those barriers.