



Career  
Connect

Research  
and Impact



# Elective Home Education:

The facts, figures and trends

June 2026

## Executive Summary

This report provides an analysis of the latest DfE figures on Electively Home Educated (EHE) children, including data trends over the past five-years (2020–2025), at both a National (England) and local (Northwest) level.

The analysis finds that EHE numbers in England have risen by over two-thirds in the past five-years, with figures projected to reach almost a quarter-of-a-million children in England by 2030. The report also provides recommendations to help mitigate the potential negative impact of EHE on children's educational outcomes and career journeys.

### Key findings

#### How many home educating children are there?

- **In England**, the latest DfE figures (Autumn 2025) showed 126,000 children were EHE – the equivalent of over 5,300 empty classrooms.
- **In the Northwest**, the latest DfE figures (Autumn 2025) showed 14,780 children were EHE – the equivalent of over 630 empty classrooms.

#### What do the trends show?

- **England** saw a 66.5% increase in EHE children over the past five-years (2022–2025). Analysis suggests there will be 230,000 EHE children in England by 2030.
- **The Northwest** saw a 121.9% increase in EHE children over the past five-years (2020–2025). Analysis suggests there will be almost 30,000 EHE children in the Northwest by 2030.

#### Who is more likely to be home educating?

- **In England**, Females were disproportionately more EHE (2% more females); yet there were 2% more males educating in-school. This trend was mirrored in the Northwest figures.
- **The region with the highest rate** (per-capita) for EHE was Southwest England (2.0%). Northwest England was third lowest overall (1.3%).
- **EHE rates increased dramatically** (from 6% to 19%) during Secondary School (Years 7 to 11), following transition from Primary School.
- **Mental Health** (16%) was increasingly the most commonly specified reason for parents choosing EHE in England. This figure was higher in the Northwest (20%).

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## Recommendations

### Early help and equitable access for EHE and at-risk young people

As this analysis will show, EHE rates increase significantly through Secondary School, with mental health and unmet needs frequently contributing to disengagement. Additionally, many parents are unaware of the loss of CIAG and responsibility for exam entry when electing to home educate, while young people themselves face reduced access to structured support.

To address these challenges, Career Connect recommend a joined-up approach that integrates early, targeted interventions for those at risk of disengagement, along with ongoing support for EHE children, beyond the school system.

#### Career Connect recommend the following:

1. Targeted early intervention from Year 9, identifying and supporting those at risk of disengagement, exclusion, or EHE.
2. Interventions that raise aspirations, build hope, and improve wellbeing through meaningful social interaction, particularly for those at risk of disengagement or experiencing EHE.
3. Equitable access to Careers Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG) for EHE young people, aligned with Gatsby Benchmarks, ensuring parity with in-school peers.
4. Support for exam access, including guidance and pathways to mitigate financial and practical barriers for parents.
5. Integration with local authority Early Help and participation systems, ensuring all EHE young people are offered structured support.

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## Introduction

### Context

The vast majority (9.03 million) of children in England are educated in a school setting, yet a growing number of children are being electively home educated, meaning parents receive no support from the state to educate their child, or to provide careers advice and guidance.

While education in England is compulsory until 16 years of age, parents are allowed to remove their children from the school-based education setting and to provide 'suitable education'<sup>1</sup>. However, exacting definitions of what constitutes suitable education are not provided, and as home education occurs behind the closed doors of the home, any specific requirements would be difficult to both assess or enforce.

For those electing to home educate their child, the only guidance is that parents should inform the school of their decision (to avoid risk of prosecution for non-attendance), beyond which there are no further requirements<sup>1</sup> unless, as outlined in the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act, there are specific safeguarding issues affecting the child<sup>2</sup>.

While the process of removing one's child from mainstream education to home-based learning appears surprisingly simple, the reasons for home educating are often far more complex and nuanced. Research by Career Connect found that parents opted for EHE as a 'short-term solution to broader challenges'; however, they were typically unaware of the wider consequences of deciding to home educate (Career Connect 2024<sup>3</sup>).

For many parents, there is a lack of understanding on what is *not* provided to the home educating child. This is perhaps most true of exam registrations, which for school-based learners is facilitated by the school's staff and funded through the school. Career Connect's research<sup>3</sup> highlighted the extent to which EHE parents were unaware of their responsibility to enrol their child for exams (including

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<sup>1</sup> Department for Education (2019). Elective home Education: Departmental guidance for local authorities [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66bf6d2bdcb0757928e5bd47/Elective\\_home\\_education\\_departmental\\_guidance\\_for\\_local\\_authorities.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66bf6d2bdcb0757928e5bd47/Elective_home_education_departmental_guidance_for_local_authorities.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act: what parents need to know](#) – The Education Hub

<sup>3</sup> Career Connect (2024); Gary Mundy, Karen Parry & Sarah Vaughan (23 Jan 2024): Setting new benchmarks for the provision of careers support for home educating families: findings from action research, *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, DOI: 10.1080/03069885.2023.2299218

choosing the correct exam board and syllabus) and paying for exam costs. Career Connect's research showed that parents often incorrectly assumed that their child would still be registered for exams at their former school – which they are not.

In addition, schools have a statutory requirement to provide Careers Information Advice and Guidance (CIAG). This provision is key to helping children to understand their next steps by giving them the advice needed to make informed choices, including understanding the necessary steps and requirements for employment and further education. The long-term positive implications of effective CIAG, is well documented (Gatsby, 2024<sup>4</sup>, Hanson et al 2021<sup>5</sup>, Percy 2020<sup>6</sup>, Impetus 2019<sup>7</sup>). However, once removed from the school setting, children no longer have guaranteed access to professionally delivered CIAG. Career Connect's research<sup>2</sup> noted a lack of understanding of this provision among EHE parents, who are themselves typically unequipped to deliver the same standard of careers information.

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<sup>4</sup> Gatsby (2024) Good Career Guidance: The Next 10 Years (2024)  
<https://cdn.gatsbybenchmarks.org.uk/app/uploads/2024/11/good-career-guidance-the-next-10-years-report.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Hanson, J., Moore, N., Clark, L., & Neary, S. (2021). Evaluation of the North East of England pilot of the Gatsby benchmarks of good career guidance. Gatsby Foundation.  
<https://www.gatsby.org.uk/uploads/education/ne-pilot-evaluation-full-report.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Percy, C. (2020, August). Personal guidance in English Secondary Education: An initial return-on-investment estimate. Analysis and paper conducted for Careers and Enterprise Company.  
[https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/media/wa1dsjc2/partial\\_roi\\_estimation\\_for\\_personal\\_guidance\\_-\\_chris\\_percy\\_2020\\_vpublic.pdf](https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/media/wa1dsjc2/partial_roi_estimation_for_personal_guidance_-_chris_percy_2020_vpublic.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Impetus. (2019). The long-term NEET population. Impetus Research Briefing.  
<https://www.impetus.org.uk/assets/publications/Youth-Jobs-Gap-The-Long-Term-NEET-Population.pdf>

## About this report

EHE (as this analysis will show) is a growing trend in England, with implications for parents in the short-term and implications for children and their career prospects in the long-term. This analysis provides an overview of the scope and scale of the issue regarding how many children are currently EHE in England and some of the reasons behind this.

Since 2023, the Department for Education (DfE) has released termly census data on children who are EHE (up to age 16 – Key Stage 4). The data ranges from Autumn 2022 to present (Autumn 2025<sup>8</sup>). In addition, prior to DfE publishing this data, the Association of Directors of Children’s Services (ADCS), provided survey data on EHE figures, from 2016. These data sources combine here to provide analysis of EHE trends from 2020–2025.

## About Career Connect

Career Connect is a national charity, based in the Northwest of England. We help people of all ages build the confidence, skills and knowledge to move forward in education, training and employment.

Career Connect provide CIAG to over 270 schools and colleges, supporting over 50,000 young people each year, alongside careers support to those in the criminal justice system to help them move towards a new path. We are proud to have been named Careers Provider of the Year 2025 at the UK Career Development Awards.

Many of our service users are based in the Northwest, some of whom are home educating. This report, therefore, reflects both the national picture across England, alongside that of the Northwest<sup>9</sup>.

Career Connect’s online research library<sup>10</sup> includes a growing number of reports on EHE, including a 2023 analysis<sup>11</sup>, on which this report is based. For more information or to view our wider research, visit [www.careerconnect.org.uk](http://www.careerconnect.org.uk) or email [research@careerconnect.org.uk](mailto:research@careerconnect.org.uk)

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<sup>8</sup> DfE Elective Home Education, Autumn Term 2025/26. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/elective-home-education/2025-26-autumn-term>

<sup>9</sup> DfE Data on EHE is confined to England only.

<sup>10</sup> <https://careerconnect.org.uk/our-research-and-analysis/our-research/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://careerconnect.org.uk/our-research-and-analysis/our-research/analysis-elective-home-education-a-growing-challenge-for-schools-and-local-authorities-in-the-north-west/>

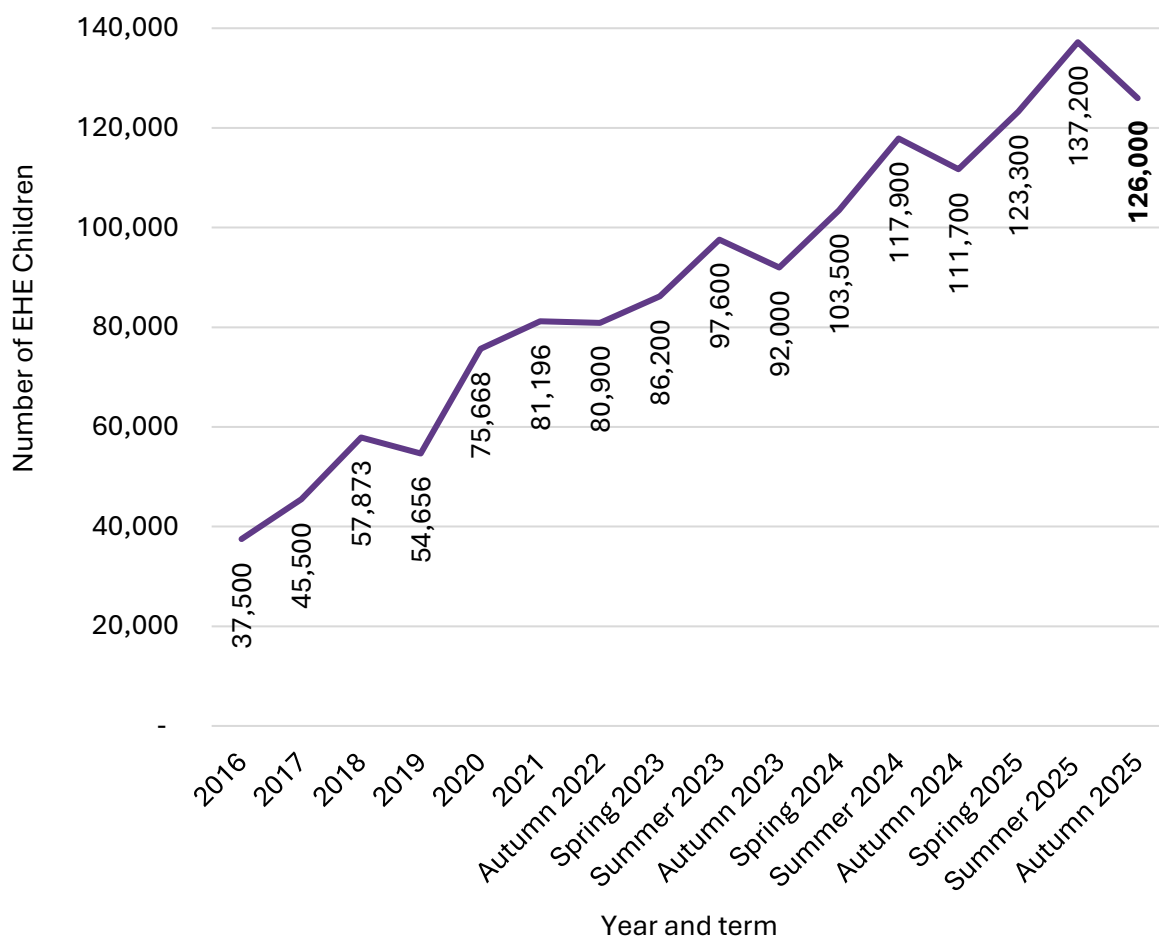
## Analysis

### What do the figures for England tell us?

Figure 1 shows the number of EHE children in England. The graph shows that 126,000 children were EHE in England during Autumn 2025. To place this figure into context, it represents a 66.5% increase over the past five-years.

Data presented in Figure 1 includes DfE data (2022–2025), along with data collected by the Association of Directors of Children’s Services (2016–2021). These two sources combine to provide a picture of EHE numbers from 2016 to 2025. When combined, the overall, national figures across the past nine-years show an increase of 88,500, representing a staggering 236% rise in EHE children in England between 2016 and 2025.

**Figure 1: The number of EHE children in England in 2025**

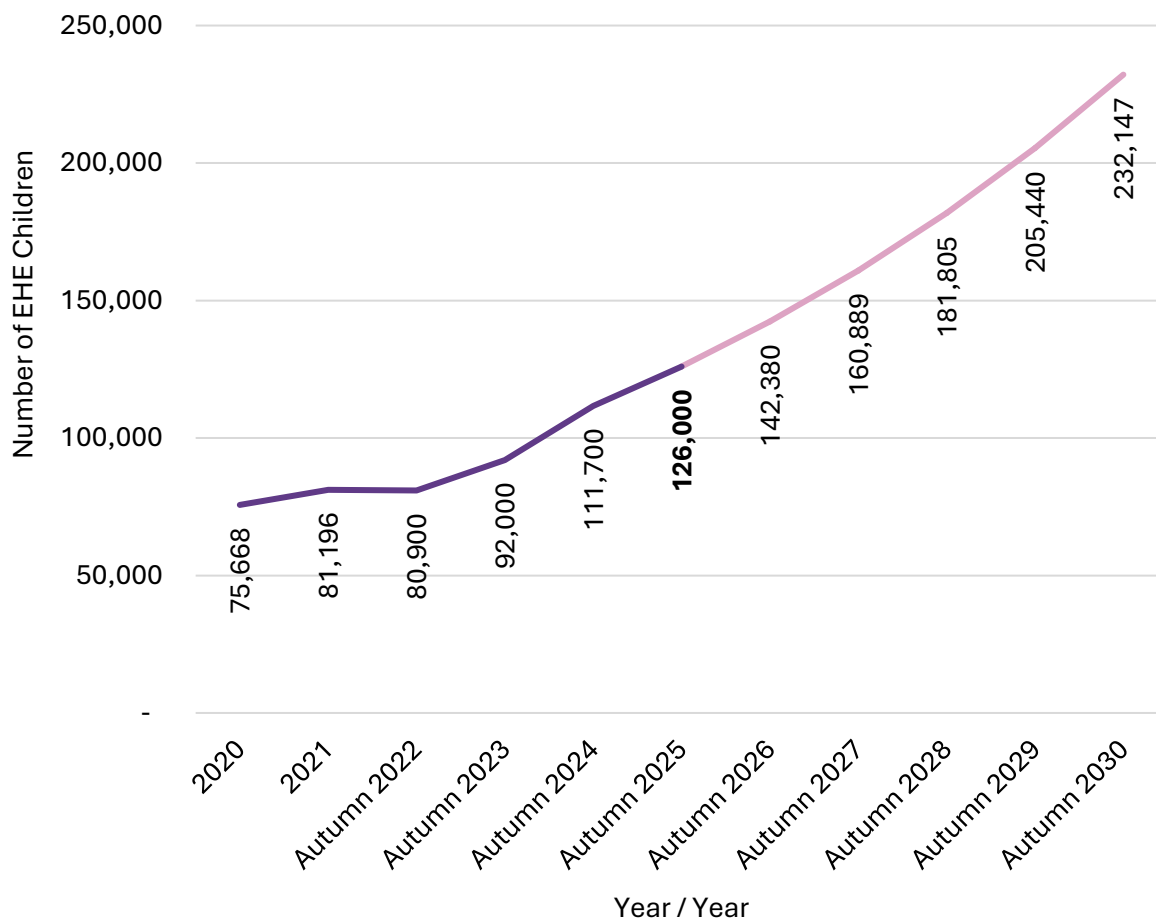


As seen in Figure 1, during each Autumn term, there is a slight drop in the number of EHE children. This is because during the Autumn term some EHE children obtain their school preference and are no longer EHE; and the cohort of previous Year 11 children cease to be of compulsory school age and therefore 'age out' of the dataset<sup>8</sup>.

As shown in Figure 1, in the previous year alone, (Autumn 2024-2025), EHE figures in England increased by 12.8% which is slightly lower than the 16% mean increase over the past three-years.

Figure 2 provides a projected illustration of where the rising percentage of EHE children in England could reach by 2030. Assuming a 13% increase each year, we would expect EHE figures to reach 142,000 by Autumn 2026, and over 230,000 by 2030.

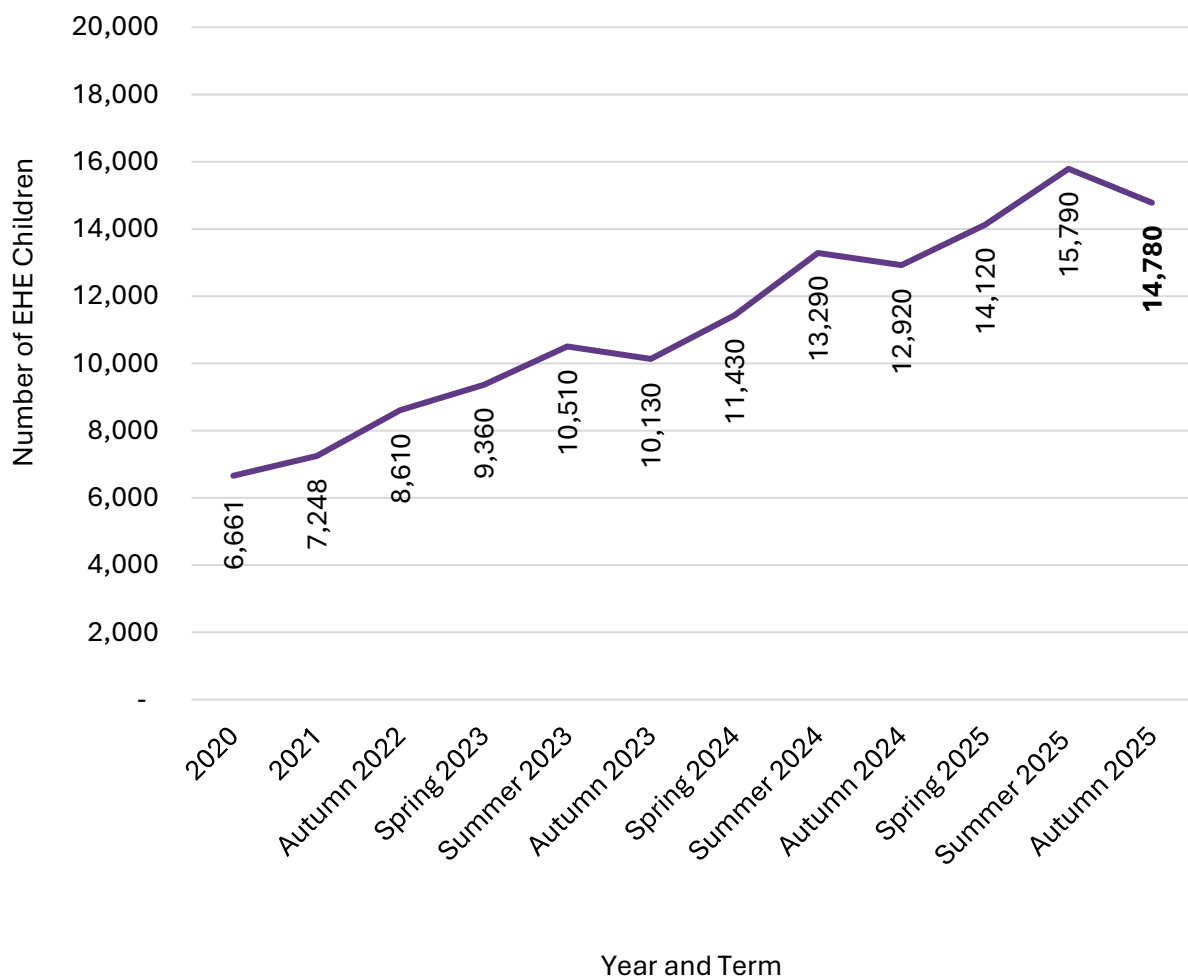
**Figure 2: Projected number of EHE children in England by 2030**



## How do Northwest figures compare to the national picture?

Figure 3 shows the number of EHE children in the Northwest of England between 2020 and Autumn 2025<sup>12</sup>. Over the past year, EHE figures had once again risen, with a 14% increase from Autumn 2024 to Autumn 2025. The overall trend shows a 121.9% increase in the number of EHE children over the past five-years from 2020 (6,661) to 2025 (14,780).

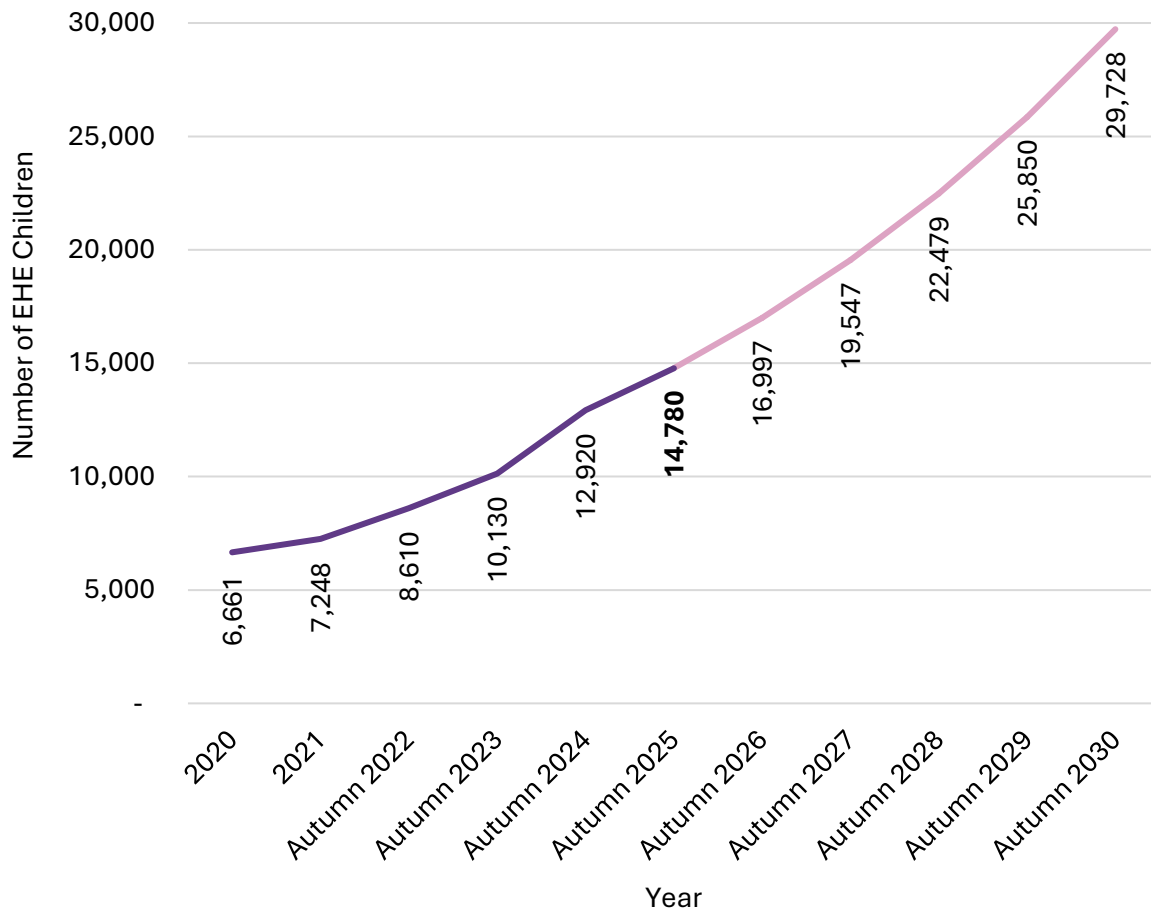
**Figure 3: Number of EHE children in the Northwest in 2025**



<sup>12</sup> From Autumn 2022 onwards, the DfE has published termly figures. Prior to this, data was collected by the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS).

Figure 4 shows that in the previous year alone, (Autumn 2024–2025), EHE figures in the Northwest had increased by 14.4% (lower than the 19.9% mean increase over the past three-years). Assuming a 15% increase each year, we would expect to see Northwest EHE figures reach almost 17,000 by Autumn 2026. By extension, this would equate to almost 30,000 EHE children in the Northwest by 2030.

**Figure 4: Projected number of EHE children in the Northwest by 2030**



## Placing EHE figures into context

Table 1 shows the equivalent number of empty classrooms based on DfE data for Autumn 2025. According to DfE statistics, the average class size differs for Primary schools (26.4 pupils) and Secondary schools (22.5 pupils).

The analysis shows that in England, the current 126,000 EHE children represent the equivalent of 5,338 empty classrooms. In the Northwest, the 14,780 EHE children equate to 631 empty classrooms.

**Table 1: Equivalent number of empty classrooms**

Number of Children	England	Northwest
Total number of Primary School EHE children	37,200	4,190
Total number of Secondary School EHE children	88,400	10,610
<b>Total Number of EHE Children</b>	<b>126,000</b>	<b>14,800<sup>13</sup></b>
Equivalent number of Primary School classrooms (average class size of 26.4 pupils)	1,409	159
Equivalent number of Secondary School classrooms (average class size of 22.5 pupils)	3,929	472
<b>Total Equivalent number of Empty Classrooms</b>	<b>5,338</b>	<b>631</b>

## How do regions across England differ?

Figure 5 shows the percentage of school-aged children that were home educating (per 100 children of school-age) across each region in England.

While the information is limited to per-capita of school children, it does provide a picture of national differences in EHE numbers. In the Northwest, 1.3% were EHE. By comparison, 2% were EHE in the Southwest and only 0.9% in Inner London (1% outer London).

<sup>13</sup> DfE Figures for Northwest England include an unaccounted additional 20 pupils within the year-group breakdown. For transparency, the official figure is included in Table 2, and the additional pupils do not affect the percentages as reported.

**Figure 5: Percentage of EHE children (by region in England) in August 2025.**



### Is EHE more prevalent in certain ages and school years?

When exploring trends by age and school year, it is useful to understand the ‘Key Stages’ of the education system in England in more context.

Table 2 outlines the compulsory education Key Stages in England, which starts at foundation level (reception) and concludes at age 16 (Key Stage 4). Following completion of Key Stage 4, the individual may choose to undertake further education (Key Stage 5), or to enter the workforce.

**Table 2: Education Key Stages in England**

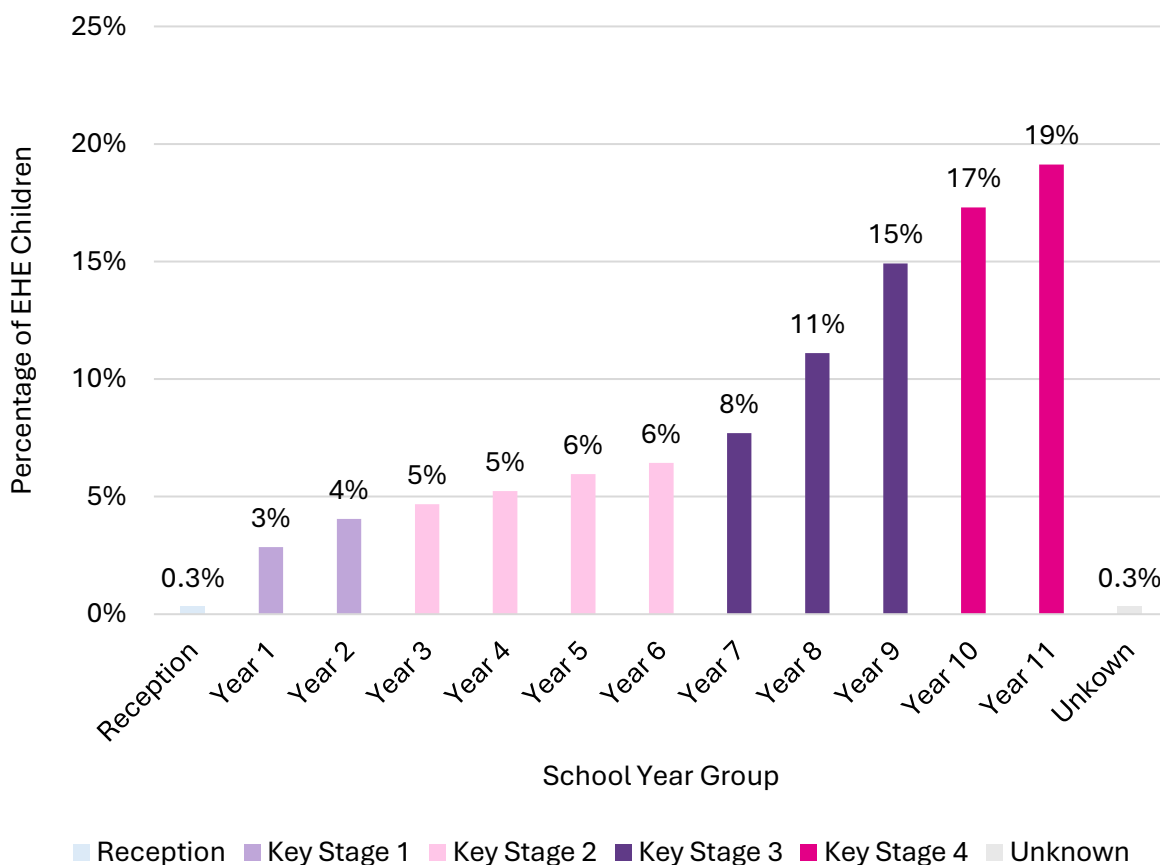
Education stage	School years	Child’s age	Qualification	Institution
Early years	Foundation	Age 4–5	None	School Reception
Key Stage 1	Years 1–2	Age 5–7	None	Primary School
Key Stage 2	Years 3–6	Age 7–11	None (SATs)	Primary School
Key Stage 3	Years 7–9	Age 11–14	None	Secondary School
Key Stage 4	Years 10–11	Age 14–16	GCSEs, Vocational (Level 1/2)	Secondary School
Key Stage 5	Years 12–13	Age 16–18	A-levels, T-levels, BTECs (Level 3)	School 6 <sup>th</sup> Form / College

Figure 6 shows the percentage of EHE children in England, by school year group and Key Stage in Autumn 2025.

There is little difference between Key Stage 1 and 2 (Primary School), with only a 3% increase between Year 1 and Year 6. However, from commencing Secondary School starting in Year 7 (Key Stage 3) to Year 11 (Key Stage 4), there is a compounding 2%–4% increase between year groups, which equates to a 13% overall increase between Primary (Year 6) and Secondary School (Year 11)

The trend in Figure 6 for England mirrors that of the Northwest almost exactly, with home education becoming increasingly more common as children progress through Years 7–11.

**Figure 6: Percentage of EHE Children in England, by School Year and Key Stage**



## Is EHE more prevalent in one gender?

**Figure 7: Gender Split of EHE Children in England**

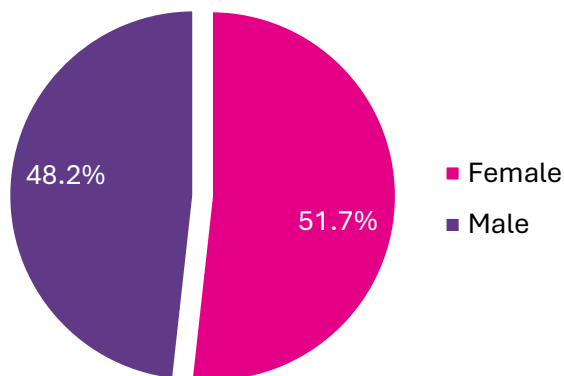


Figure 7 shows that just over half (51.7%) of EHE children in England were female in Autumn 2025<sup>14</sup>.

DfE data going back to 2022 shows this gender split to be typical each year, as females slightly outnumbered males in EHE figures (51% in 2022; 51% in 2023; and 52% in 2024<sup>15</sup>).

The EHE Gender Split in the Northwest mirrors that of England, with females accounting for 52.4% of all Northwest EHE children during Autumn 2025.

The EHE gender split becomes more interesting when compared to the wider in-school gender split. DfE data on in-school educating children (2022 to 2025) shows that in England, males outnumbered females each year by around 2%. This figure, which is also mirrored in the Northwest data, shows that females are slightly, yet consistently overrepresented in EHE figures; especially when compared to their in-school educating peers.

## Why are parents choosing to home educate their children?

Research suggests that at a basic level, the decision for a parent to home educate their child is based on either personal preference, or necessity to home educate due to circumstances beyond their control (Long & Danechi, 2022)<sup>16</sup>.

Although DfE data does not attribute reasons for home educating to individual year groups, it does provide overview figures for each term. Figure 8 shows the reasons why parents in England chose EHE for their children in Autumn 2025.

<sup>14</sup> Data for 2025 includes 0.2% of children for whom gender was not known.

<sup>15</sup> Data is from Autumn terms of each year. Figures presented are rounded to the nearest whole number.

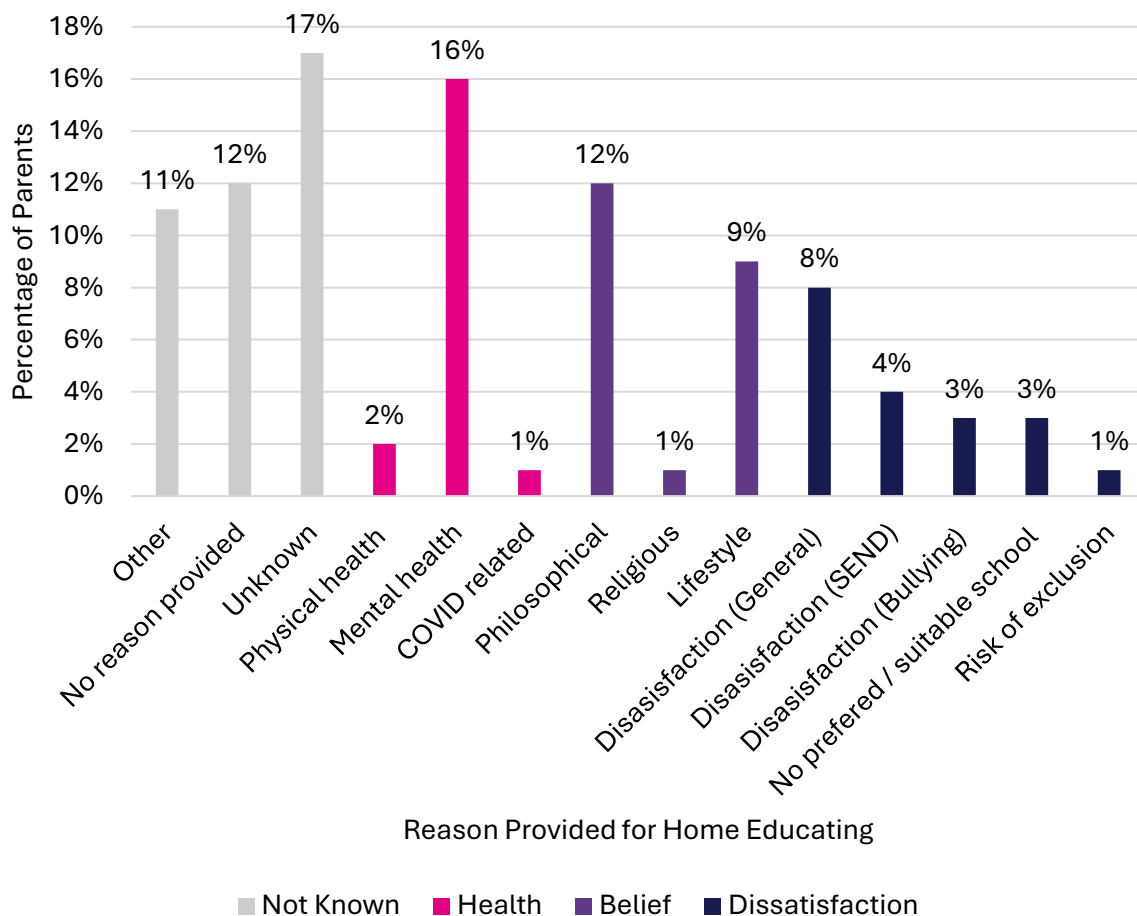
<sup>16</sup> Long, R., & Danechi, S. (2022). Home education in England. House of Commons Library

In total, 40% (combined) of parents did not specify a reason, of which 11% was described as 'Other'<sup>17</sup>. Of those that specified, beliefs (22% combined) were slightly higher than health (19% combined) and dissatisfaction or preference (19% combined).

While reasons of a philosophical nature were commonly cited by parents (12%) in England, mental health accounted for the largest singular reason given by parents (16%).

Further analysis revealed mental health being given as a specific reason for EHE in England, had increased from 9% in 2022 to 16% in 2025 (+7% in three-years).

**Figure 8: Percentage of Parent's Reasons for EHE in England**



<sup>17</sup> “Primary reason ‘other’ includes instances where systems recorded two or more of the data collection reasons in a single category, for example mental and physical health, or religious and philosophical reasons.” – From Data Guidance files in the Autumn 2025 download. Available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/elective-home-education/2025-26-autumn-term>

Reasons given by parents in the Northwest for choosing EHE were very similar to those across England, with mental health also being the largest specified reason; however, mental health represented 20% of specific reasons given. As with England, further analysis revealed that mental health, as a specific reason for EHE, had, as seen across England, increased from 13% in 2022 (+7% in three-years).

Previous research by Career Connect (2024)<sup>3</sup> found that ‘unmet emotional and mental health needs’ was a common reason for parents to choose EHE. According to 2023 NHS data<sup>18</sup>, ‘20.3% of children aged 8 to 16 years had a probable mental disorder’. The NHS data also showed that ‘having a probable mental disorder was more common for 11- to 16-year-olds (22.6%) than for those aged 8 to 10 years (15.7%)’<sup>18</sup>. A recent worldwide meta-analysis of 192 mental health studies found that the average (median) age of onset for mental health disorders was 14.5 years old (Key Stage 4)<sup>19</sup> (Solmi et al 2022).

Previous research by Career Connect (2025)<sup>20</sup> found that learners in Year 12 (Key Stage 5) requiring Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) support were more likely to spend time NEET (Not in Education Employment or Training) compared to their peers without SEMH needs. This was especially true for those with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and SEMH needs.

While that research was undertaken with learners at Key Stage 5 (beyond the cut-off for school aged EHE children), such issues are not confined to being 16 to 18 years old. They are also likely due to a culmination of factors experienced during the preceding years (Key Stages 3 and 4), which aligns with the analysis presented in this report.

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<sup>18</sup> Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2023 - wave 4 follow up to the 2017 survey <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-of-children-and-young-people-in-england/2023-wave-4-follow-up/part-1-mental-health#:~:text=of%20each%20survey.-,Mental%20health%20in%202023,of%20the%20Excel%20data%20tables>.

<sup>19</sup> Solmi M, Radua J, Olivola M, Croce E, Soardo L, Salazar de Pablo G, Il Shin J, Kirkbride JB, Jones P, Kim JH, Kim JY, Carvalho AF, Seeman MV, Correll CU, Fusar-Poli P. Age at onset of mental disorders worldwide: large-scale meta-analysis of 192 epidemiological studies. *Mol Psychiatry*. 2022 Jan;27(1):281-295. doi: 10.1038/s41380-021-01161-7. Epub 2021 Jun 2. PMID: 34079068; PMCID: PMC8960395.

<sup>20</sup> Career Connect (2025). Lost in transition: the impact of social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs on educational continuity. Career Connect

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## Conclusion

### What does the latest DfE data tell us?

The vast majority (9.03 million) of children in England are educated in a school setting, yet a growing number of children (currently 1.4%) are EHE. While this figure sounds small when compared to the overall school population; it is an increasing trend, with potential long-term implications for each EHE child's future outcomes. This is especially relevant in terms of missing specialist CIAG delivered in schools at critical periods when a child is forming their understanding of routes to further education, training and employment.

**Across England:** Over the past five-years, EHE figures have risen by 66.5% (2020-2025). In the previous year alone, (Autumn 2024-2025), EHE figures increased by 12.8%. Looking ahead (assuming a 13% increase each year), we would expect to see EHE figures reach over 230,000 children in England by 2030. Data revealed that there were 126,000 EHE children in England in Autumn 2025, which represents the equivalent of 5,338 empty classrooms.

**In the Northwest:** Over the past five-years, EHE figures have risen by 121.9% (2020-2025). In the previous year alone, (Autumn 2024-2025), EHE figures increased by 14.4%. Looking ahead (assuming a 15% increase each year), we would expect to see Northwest EHE figures reach close to 17,000 by Autumn 2026. By extension, this would equate to almost 30,000 EHE children in the Northwest by 2030. Data revealed that there were 14,780 EHE children in the Northwest in Autumn 2025, which is the equivalent of 631 empty classrooms.

**Growing concern:** Although EHE figures equate to <2% of the national school population, the figures presented in this report represent a growing number of children who will not be receiving the same level of CIAG support as their in-school peers. In addition, parents may experience challenges with their EHE child's exams, including with enrolment and costs. These factors potentially have long-term socio-economic implications for what is predicted to be almost a quarter of a million children in England by 2030.

**Transition to Secondary School:** The analysis highlighted the distinct rise in EHE numbers following transition from Primary School to Secondary School, with a noticeable, compounding yearly increase in EHE numbers from Year 7 to Year 11. Findings from Career Connect's recent research (2025)<sup>20</sup> showed this trend continues into Year 12 (further education), with FE being the most common destination before becoming NEET.

**Mental health is a contributing factor to EHE figures:** This analysis highlights the growing impact of mental health on young people experiencing challenges in their education, and by extension, their career journey. Mental health was the most common singular reason for choosing EHE. Career Connect's research (2025)<sup>20</sup> showed SEMH needs significantly impacting on Year 12 learners (the year immediately following High School), especially for those with wider support needs (SEND and EHCP), who were five-times more likely to be NEET than their peers in Year 12.

## Recommendations

### Early help and equitable access for EHE and at-risk young people

As this analysis shows, EHE rates increase significantly through Secondary School, with mental health and unmet needs frequently contributing to disengagement. Additionally, as Career Connect's research has shown, many parents are unaware of the loss of CIAG and responsibility for exam entry when electing to home educate, while young people themselves face reduced access to structured support.

To address these challenges, Career Connect recommend a joined-up approach that integrates early, targeted interventions for those at risk of disengagement, along with ongoing support for EHE children, beyond the school system.

Evidence from local practice, including Sefton's Early Intervention model<sup>21</sup>, shows that early, sustained, and client-centred careers support can improve participation and reduce NEET outcomes, particularly for vulnerable cohorts.

#### Career Connect recommend the following:

1. Targeted early intervention from Year 9, identifying and supporting those at risk of disengagement, exclusion, or EHE.
2. Interventions that raise aspirations, build hope, and improve wellbeing through meaningful social interaction, particularly for those at risk of disengagement or experiencing EHE.
3. Equitable access to Careers Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG) for EHE young people, aligned with Gatsby Benchmarks, ensuring parity with in-school peers.

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cd6p9yyg64vo>

4. Support for exam access, including guidance and pathways to mitigate financial and practical barriers for parents.
5. Integration with local authority Early Help and participation systems, ensuring all EHE young people are offered structured support.

## **Additional information and research from Career Connect**

For more information on the topics explored in this report, visit [careerconnect.org.uk](https://careerconnect.org.uk)



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