

## Analysis

### Elective home education: a growing challenge for schools and local authorities in the Northwest

Since 2023, the Department for Education (DfE) has released termly data on young people who are electively home educating. This is a very welcome move which helps us to understand both the number of young people that are home educating and their reasons for doing so. Prior to this, and since 2020, regional data was collected and published annually by the Association of Directors of Childrens’ Services (ADCS).

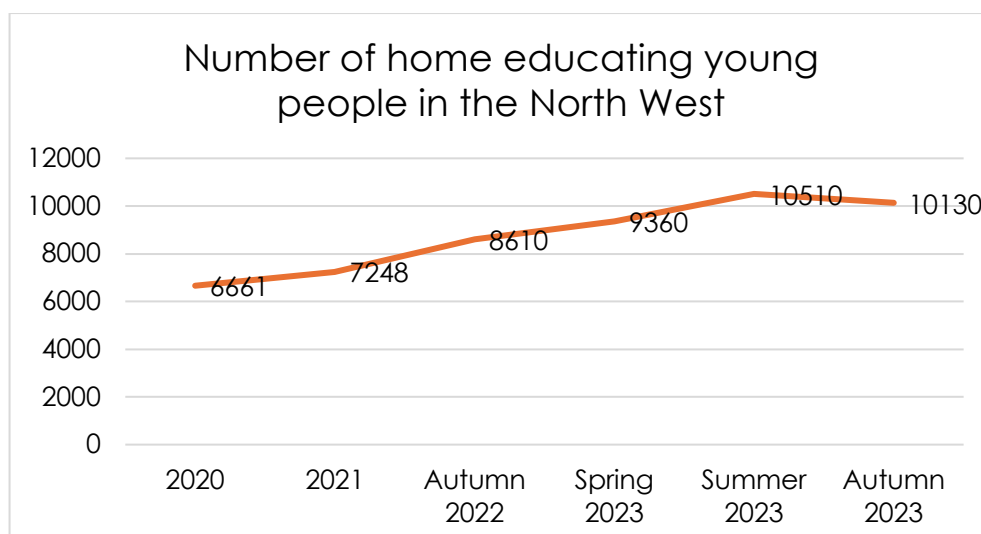
This short analysis looks at the picture in the Northwest of England, where Career Connect provides professional careers information, advice and guidance in partnership with eight local authorities and more than two hundred schools.

The national DfE data can be obtained at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/elective-home-education/2023-24>

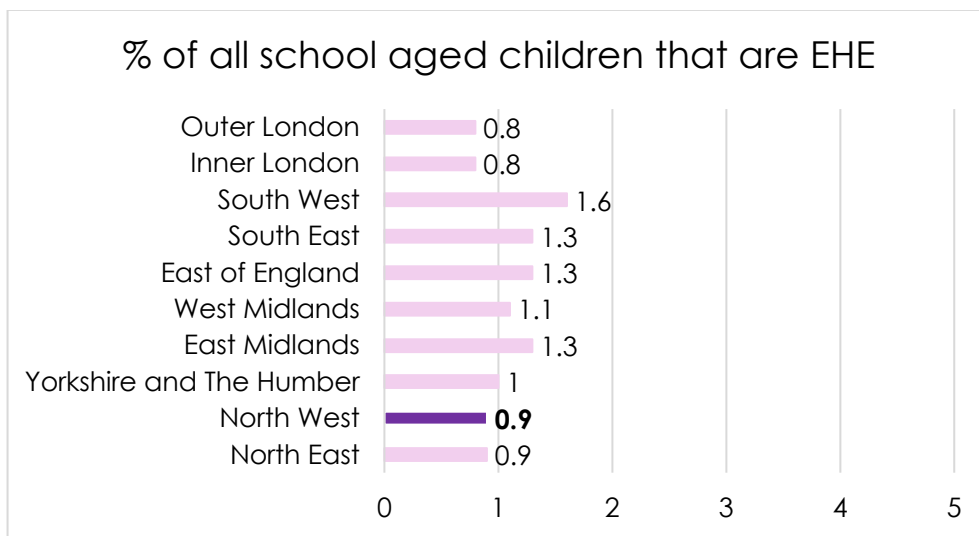
**Here are four things that the latest DfE data tells us.**

- 1. Since 2020, there has been a 52% increase in the number of young people in the Northwest that are home educating - from 6,661 in 2020 to 10,130 in Autumn 2023.**

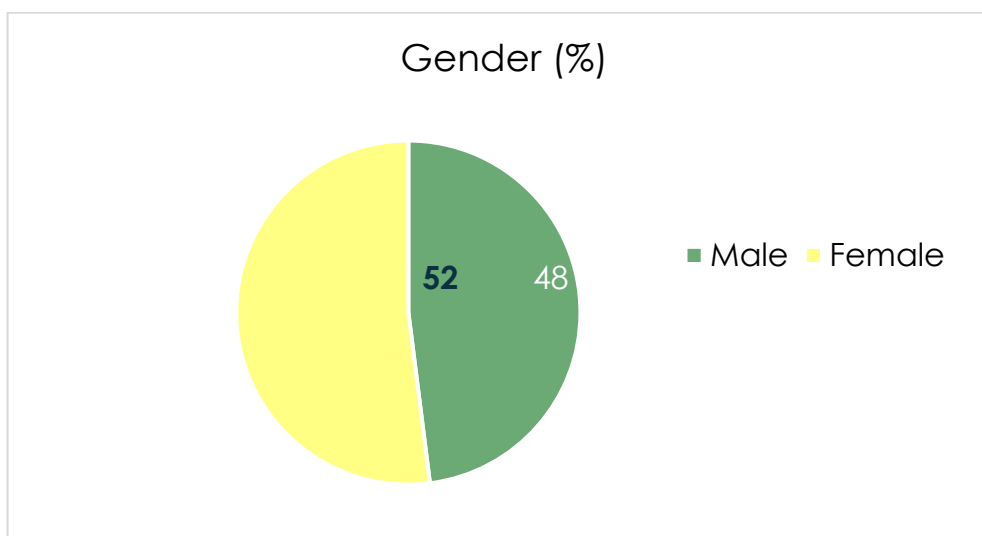
The scale of the increase is in line with what we are seeing nationally. The Autumn 2023 numbers are slightly lower than those reported in the previous term (Summer 2023), but we do not yet have a full year of termly reported data from DfE, so it is difficult to say whether this is the beginning of a reduction in numbers or if Autumn numbers are routinely lower than those in the Spring. It is an increase of 1,520 young people from Autumn 2022.



This means that, in Autumn 2023, 0.9% of school-aged children in the Northwest were educating at home. This is at the lower end nationally, where regions range between 0.8%-1.6% of young people home educating.



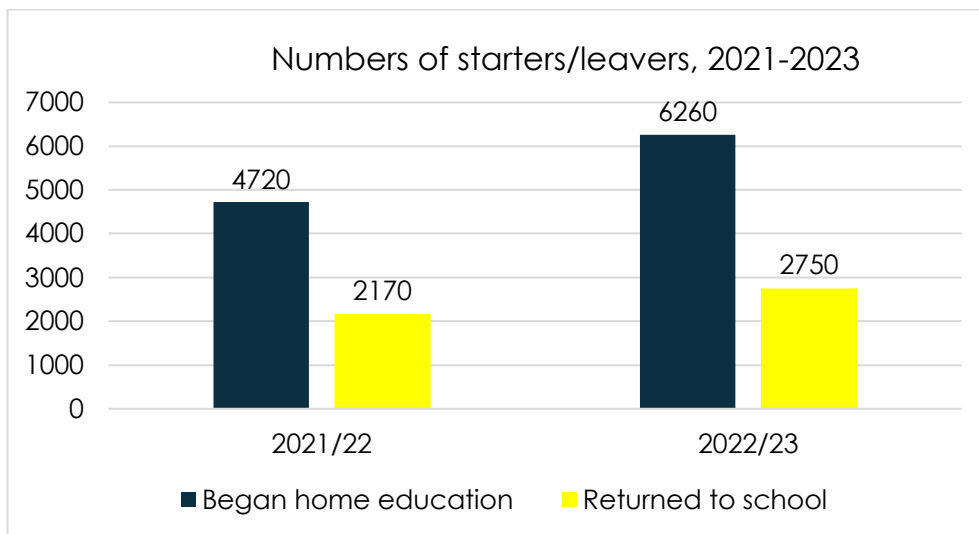
Home educating young people in the Northwest are slightly more likely to be female than male.



**2. Home educating young people in the Northwest are not a static or stable population.**

Many young people that have taken the choice to home educate later return to school, and many complete several years of school before taking the decision to home educate.

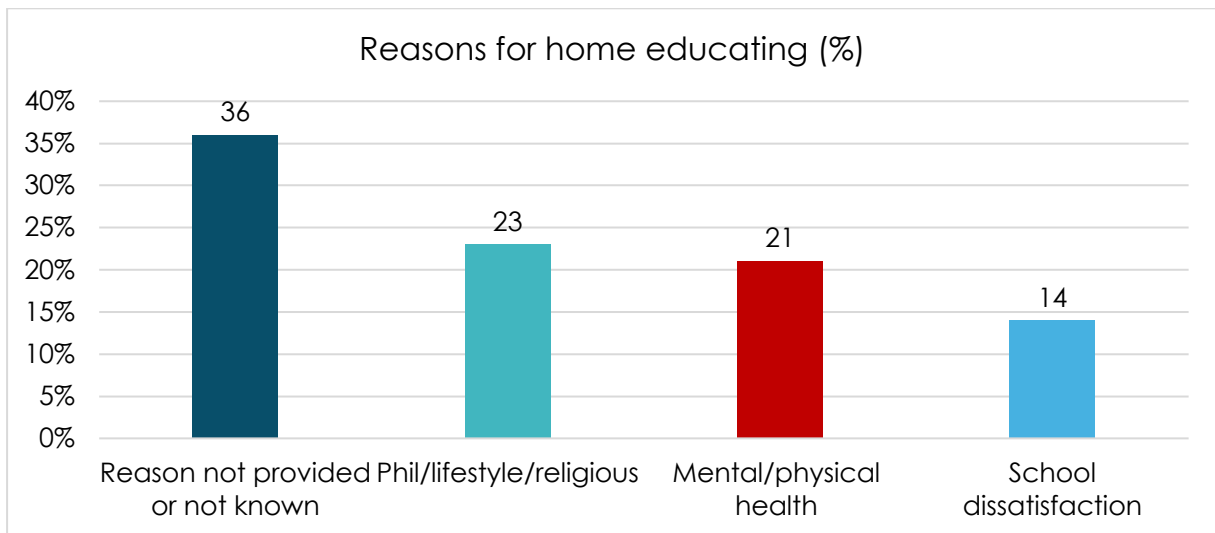
In the full school year 2021/22, approximately 2,170 young people that were previously home educating returned to school, increasing to 2,750 during the 2022/23 school year. There was, however, a larger increase in those withdrawing from school and starting to home educate. This increased from 4,720 in 2021/22 to 6,260 in 2022/23.



**3. For over one-third of young people home educating in the Northwest in Autumn of school year 2023/24, the reason they have made this choice is not known.**

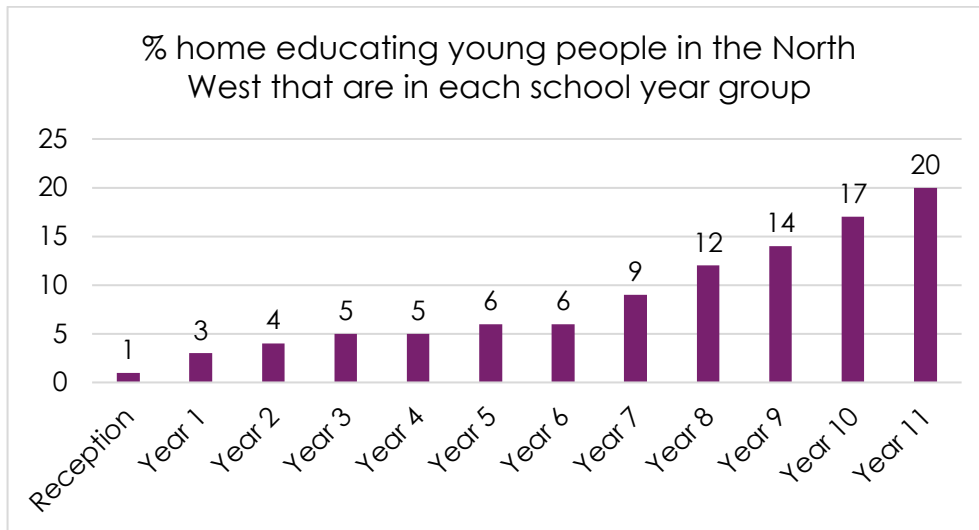
For those where a reason is known, the most common are reasons of lifestyle/philosophical/religion (23%) (with 'philosophical' reasons being the most common of the three), and health (21%) where mental health is more common by some distance than physical health (15% v 6%). A further 14% are outside of school because of dissatisfaction with school provision.

The DfE data suggests that local authorities in the Northwest of England are improving the information they have on reasons for home educating. In Autumn 2022, the reason for home educating was not known for 46% of those that have made the decision. This has reduced to 36% in Autumn 2023.



**4. The number of home educating young people in the Northwest increases by school year group, with 72% being in years 7-11, and 20% in year 11 alone.**

This suggests that, as well as being a population in flux, it is largely one that is at a critical stage of their preparations for education, employment, and training post 16. It also suggests that most home educating young people in the Northwest had spent a significant amount of time in school before withdrawing.



While we welcome DfE's reporting, this data paints a worrying picture for thousands of young people in the Northwest who are outside of school.

We know from these figures, from our [previous research](#), and through working with families in parts of the region, that many young people and families feel that they have no choice but to withdraw from school.

We also know that the implications of the decision to withdraw are often not understood, and that, for many, they are left without the support that their children need to prepare them for decisions that will have a major effect on their future career options. More support is needed for these young people.

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To find out more about Career Connect's research into home education, contact Gary Mundy, Director of Research and Evaluation: [gary.mundy@careerconnect.org.uk](mailto:gary.mundy@careerconnect.org.uk)