

Northern Ireland Review – Call for help.

HedNI, the Northern Ireland HE support group has asked for our help to protect home education. So if you could please read the following and offer whatever assistance you feel able to, it would be greatly appreciated.

There is a review of Home Education policy currently underway in N. Ireland which is proposing drastic restrictions on home educators. These new restraints include mandatory registration, approval of curriculum, inspections of homes, and interviews with children. These proposed changes are obviously very alarming for parents and their families who only want the freedom to teach their children in peace. The draft policy is currently under consultation and will end on 27 June, 2014. If these draconian proposals are passed, they will present the most restrictive policy on home education found anywhere in the United Kingdom, so please consider helping. So how can we help?

1. Please sign the change.org petition which HedNI has created to oppose these changes. The HedNI petition can be found by following this [link](#) and clicking HedNI petition. If you could share the petition on facebook, it would also be greatly appreciated!
2. Please write an email to John O'Dowd, Minister for Education at john.odowd@mha.niassembly.gov.uk and Mervyn Storey, Head of the Education Committee (N. Ireland Assembly) at mervynstoreymha@gmail.com and urge them to oppose changes to policy on home education in N. Ireland which are intrusive and go far beyond what the law requires.
3. Please reply to the consultation yourself by indicating that you disagree with all of the questions, as HedNI rejects the legal premise upon which they are founded.

Note:

- See link to the policy documents and Graham Stuart's letter below
- The law in Northern Ireland is worded differently to that in England but has approximately the same meaning, although the case law is also different. So take care how and what you quote when supporting your case.

Example 1) question 3.1 says

"Provides relevant information about the Board's responsibility for Elective Home Education, clearly and concisely."

HedNI disputes that the Board has any legal responsibility for home educators as the law only permits intervention when there is evidence of educational neglect, while it says nothing about an on-going responsibility for children who are home educated; as is the case in England and Wales.

Example 2) would be the numerous times that they ask if the policy "Clarifies" an issue such as in question 3.5

"Clarifies the role of the Education Welfare Service/Officer in relation to children who are home educated."

HedNI disputes that there should be such a "role" at all, as there is no legal basis for monitoring home educators across the province.

To respond to these issues:

The consultation document and response form is the same for each of the five boards in Northern Ireland, but to have the most impact you would need to email or post it to each of them, as the consultations are being evaluated by each Board separately. (see below).

Appendix A

The address to respond to the consultation for each Education & Library Board is:

1. Belfast Education & Library Board Attention: Liz Fairclough (EHE) 40 Academy Street Belfast BT1 2NQ Or by email to: liz.fairclough@belb.co.uk
2. North Eastern Education & Library Board Attention: Corporate Development Officer The North-Eastern Education and Library Board Antrim Board Centre 17 Lough Road BT41 4DH Or by email to: electivehomeeducation@neelb.org.uk
3. South Eastern Education and Library Board Attention: Best Value Officer Grahamsbridge Road Dundonald Belfast BT16 2HS Or by email to: mark.donnelly@seelb.org.uk
4. Southern Education & Library Board Teresa Connolly CMSU SELB HQ 3 Charlemont Place The Mall Armagh BT61 9AX Or by email to: teresa.connolly@selb.org
5. Western Education & Library Board Attention: Siobhan Devlin Children & Young People's Services 1 Hospital Road Omagh Co-Tyrone BT79 0AW Or by email to: Siobhan_devlin@welbni.org

Appendix B

The web address for each Board's copy of the policy and response can be found here:

Belfast Education & Library Board:

http://www.belb.org.uk/Parents/elective_home_education.asp

North Eastern Education & Library Board

<http://www.neelb.org.uk/schools/elective-home-education/?locale=en>

South Eastern Education & Library Board

<http://www.seelb.org.uk/index.php/en/schools/53-elective-home-education?highlight=WyJlbGVjdG12ZSIsImhvbWUiLCJlZHVjYXRpb24iLCJlbGVjdG12ZSBob211IiwZWXIY3RpdmUgaG9tZSBlZHVjYXRpb24iLCJobj211IGVkdWNhdGlvbiJd>

Southern Education & Library Board

<http://www.selb.org/news/news2014/ElectiveHomeEducation/index.htm>

Western Education & Library Board

http://www.welbni.org/index.cfm/go/publications/cat/128/parent_Key/190

Appendix C

[Legalbriefing.pdf](#)

[Graham Stuart - Letter to John O Dowd120514.pdf](#)