

Report to the Secretary of State on the Review of Elective Home Education in England

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Summary of Recommendations taken from Ch 12

Recommendation 1

- That the DCSF establishes a compulsory national registration scheme, locally administered, for all children of statutory school age, who are, or become, electively home educated.
- This scheme should be common to all local authorities.
- Registration should be renewed annually.
- Those who are registering for the first time should be visited by the appropriate local authority officer within one month of registration.
- Local authorities should ensure that all home educated children and young people already known to them are registered on the new scheme within one month of its inception and visited over the following twelve months, following the commencement of any new legislation.
- Provision should be made to allow registration at a local school, children's centre or other public building as determined by the local authority.
- When parents are thinking of deregistering their child/children from school to home educate, schools should retain such pupils on roll for a period of 20 school days so that should there be a change in circumstances, the child could be readmitted to the school.
- This period would also allow for the resolution of such difficulties that may have prompted the decision to remove the child from school.
- National guidance should be issued on the requirements of registration and be made available online and at appropriate public buildings. Such guidance must include a clear statement of the statutory basis of elective home education and the rights and responsibilities of parents.
- At the time of registration parents/carers/guardians must provide a clear statement of their educational approach, intent and desired/planned outcomes for the child over the following twelve months.
- Guidance should be issued to support parents in this task with an opportunity to meet local authority officers to discuss the planned approach to home education and develop the plan before it is finalised. The plan should be finalised within eight weeks of first registration.

- As well as written guidance, support should encompass advice from a range of advisers and organisations, including schools. Schools should regard this support as a part of their commitment to extended schooling.
- Where a child is removed from a school roll to be home educated, the school must provide to the appropriate officer of the local authority a record of the child's achievement to date and expected achievement, within 20 school days of the registration, together with any other school records.
- Local authorities must ensure that there are mechanisms/systems in place to record and review registrations annually.

Recommendation 2

That the DCSF review the current statutory definition of what constitutes a "suitable" and "efficient" education in the light of the Rose review of the primary curriculum, and other changes to curriculum assessment and definition throughout statutory school age. Such a review should take account of the five Every Child Matters outcomes determined by the 2004 Children Act, should not be overly prescriptive but be sufficiently defined to secure a broad, balanced, relevant and differentiated curriculum that would allow children and young people educated at home to have sufficient information to enable them to expand their talents and make choices about likely careers. The outcome of this review should further inform guidance on registration. Home educators should be engaged in this process.

Recommendation 3

That all local authorities analyse the reasons why parents or carers chose elective home education and report those findings to the Children's Trust Board, ensuring that this analysis contributes to the debate that determines the Children and Young People's Plan.

Recommendation 4

That the local authority should establish a Consultative Forum for home educating parents to secure their views and representative opinion. Such a body could be constituted as a sub-group of the Children's Trust with a role in supporting the development of the Children's Trust, and the intentions of the local authority with regard to elective home education.

Recommendation 5

That the DCSF should bring forward proposals requiring all local authorities to report to the Children's Trust Board making clear how it intends to monitor and support children and young people being educated at home, in accord with Recommendation 1.

Recommendation 6

That local authorities should where appropriate commission the monitoring and support of home education through the local Children's Trust Board, thereby securing a multidisciplinary approach and the likely use of expertise from other agencies and organisations including the voluntary sector.

Recommendation 7

The DCSF should bring forward proposals to change the current regulatory and statutory basis to ensure that in monitoring the efficiency and suitability of elective home education:

- That designated local authority officers should:
 - have the right of access to the home;
 - have the right to speak with each child alone if deemed appropriate or, if a child is particularly vulnerable or has particular communication needs, in the company of a trusted person who is not the home educator or the parent/carer.

In so doing, officers will be able to satisfy themselves that the child is safe and well.

- That a requirement is placed upon local authorities to secure the monitoring of the effectiveness of elective home education as determined in Recommendation 1.
- That parents be required to allow the child through exhibition or other means to demonstrate both attainment and progress in accord with the statement of intent lodged at the time of registration.

Recommendation 8

That reasonable warning of intended visit and invitation to exhibit should be given to home educators, parents and carers, not less than two weeks in advance. A written report of each visit must be filed within 21 days and copied to the home educating parent and child. A suitable process for factual correction and challenge to the content must be in place and made known to all parties.

Recommendation 9

That all local authority officers and others engaged in the monitoring and support of elective home education must be suitably trained. This training must include awareness of safeguarding issues and a full understanding of the essential difference, variation and diversity in home education practice, as compared to schools. Wherever possible and appropriate, representatives of the home educating community should be involved in the development and/or provision of such training. It is recommended that all officers be trained in the use of the Common Assessment Framework.

Recommendation 10

That all local authorities should offer a menu of support to home educating families in accord with the requirements placed upon them by the power of wellbeing, extended schools and community engagement and other legislation. To that end local authorities must provide support for home educating children and young people to find appropriate examination centres and provide entries free to all home educated candidates who have demonstrated sufficiently their preparedness through routine monitoring, for all DCSF funded qualifications.

Recommendation 11

That in addition to Recommendation 10 above, local authorities should, in collaboration with schools and colleges:

- Extend and make available the opportunities of flexi-schooling.
- Extend access to school libraries, sports facilities, school visits, specialist facilities and key stage assessment.
- Provide access to specialist music tuition on the same cost basis.
- Provide access to work experience.
- Provide access to post 14 vocational opportunities.
- Signpost to third sector support where they have specialist experience and knowledge, for example, provision for bullied children.

Recommendation 12

- BECTA considers the needs of the home educating community in the national roll out of the home access initiative
- That local authorities consider what support and access to ICT facilities could be given to home educating children and young people through the existing school networks and the use of school based materials
- That the QCA should consider the use of ICT in the testing and exam process with regard to its impact on home educated children and young people

Recommendation 13

That local authority provision in regard to elective home education is brought into the scope of Ofsted's assessment of children's services within the Comprehensive Area Assessment through information included in the National Indicator Set (Recommendation 25), the annual LSCB report (Recommendation 21) and any other relevant information available to inspectors.

Recommendation 14

That the DCSF require all local authorities to make an annual return to the Children's Trust Board regarding the number of electively home educated children and young people and the number of School Attendance Orders and Education Supervision Orders as defined in the 1996 Education Act, issued to home educated children and young people.

Recommendation 15

That the DCSF take such action as necessary to prevent schools or local authorities advising parents to consider home education to prevent permanent exclusion or using such a mechanism to deal with educational or behavioural issues.

Recommendation 16

That the DCSF bring forward proposals to give local authorities power of direction with regard to school places for children and young people returning to school from home education above planned admission limits in circumstances where it is quite clear that the needs of the child or young person could not be met without this direction.

Recommendation 17

That the Ofsted review of SEN provision give due consideration to home educated children with special educational needs and make specific reference to the support of those children.

Recommendation 18

That the DCSF should reinforce in guidance to local authorities the requirement to exercise their statutory duty to assure themselves that education is suitable and meets the child's special educational needs. They should regard the move to home education as a trigger to conduct a review and satisfy themselves that the potentially changed complexity of education provided at home, still constitutes a suitable education. The statement should then be revised accordingly to set out that the parent has made their own arrangements under section 7 of the Education Act 1996.

In the wake of the Ofsted review, changes to the SEN framework and legislation may be required.

Recommendation 19

That the statutory review of statements of SEN in accord with Recommendation 18 above be considered as fulfilling the function of mandatory annual review of elective home education recommended previously.

Recommendation 20

When a child or young person without a statement of special educational needs has been in receipt of School Action Plus support, local authorities and other agencies should give due consideration to whether that support should continue once the child is educated at home – irrespective of whether or not such consideration requires a new commissioning of service.

Recommendation 21

That the Children's Trust Board ensures that the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) reports to them on an annual basis with regard to the safeguarding provision and actions taken in relation to home educated children. This report shall also be sent to the National Safeguarding Delivery Unit. Such information should be categorised thereby avoiding current

speculation with regard to the prevalence of child protection concerns amongst home educated children which may well be exaggerated. This information should contribute to and be contained within the National Annual Report.

Recommendation 22

That those responsible for monitoring and supporting home education, or commissioned so to do, are suitably qualified and experienced to discharge their duties and responsibilities set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children to refer to social care services children who they believe to be in need of services or where there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm.

Recommendation 23

That local authority adult services and other agencies be required to inform those charged with the monitoring and support of home education of any properly evidenced concerns that they have of parents' or carers' ability to provide a suitable education irrespective of whether or not they are known to children's social care, on such grounds as

- alcohol or drug abuse
- incidents of domestic violence
- previous offences against children

And in addition:

- anything else which may affect their ability to provide a suitable and efficient education

This requirement should be considered in the Government's revision of Working Together to Safeguard Children Guidance.

Recommendation 24

That the DCSF make such change as is necessary to the legislative framework to enable local authorities to refuse registration on safeguarding grounds. In addition local authorities should have the right to revoke registration should safeguarding concerns become apparent.

Recommendation 25

That the DCSF, in its revision of the National Indicator Set indicated in its response to the recent Laming Review, should incorporate an appropriate target relating to the safeguarding of children in elective home education.

Recommendation 26

DCSF should explore the potential for Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services (C4EO) and other organisations, to identify and disseminate good practice regarding support for home education.

Recommendation 27

It is recommended that the Children's Workforce Development Council and the National Safeguarding Delivery Unit include the needs of this group of officers in their consideration of national training needs.

Recommendation 28

That the DCSF and the Local Government Association determine within three months how to provide to local authorities sufficient resources to secure the recommendations in this report.