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Josephine DCSF OFFICIAL

From: [REDACTED] E.O. OFFICIAL
 Sent: 20 February 2009 09:21 DCSF OFFICIALS
 To: PEU, Information; CONSULTATION, Unit; [REDACTED] MINISTERS, DCSF
 Cc: Government Policy Address; disabilityawareness@education-otherwise.org
 Subject: Education Otherwise Response to Home Education Review
 Attachments: homeedreviewEO0209.pdf



homeedreviewE
0209.pdf (113 KB)

Please find attached review response from Education Otherwise.

The online questionnaire format wasn't very suitable for our response.

We aren't entirely sure where to send this so covering all bases.

We are very pleased that Graham will be meeting with some home educating families in a group setting as part of the Review process.

We look forward to hearing from you and to our next meeting with Graham.

[REDACTED] E.O. OFFICIAL
[REDACTED]

Chair Education Otherwise Government Policy Group
Member Education Otherwise Disability Group
Trustee Education Otherwise

Education Otherwise Association Limited
Registered Charity No. 1055120
A company limited by guarantee and registered in England and Wales, No. 01917107
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Please specify in what capacity you are responding to this questionnaire

Check "Other organisation"

Please Specify:

Education Otherwise. Home education support charity.

1 Do you think the current system for safeguarding children who are educated at home is adequate? Please let us know why you think that.

Yes. But nobody listens. We say the same thing over and over to the DCSF. Please read our responses to previous Government consultations.

<http://www.education-otherwise.org/Legal/Consultations/2008.htm>

<http://www.education-otherwise.org/Legal/Consultations/2007.htm>

Particularly the consultation responses on Elective Home Education Guidelines, Staying Safe, Children Missing Education, Children at risk of not receiving suitable education,

Why do we think that? Because it is the case. Because we speak from experience. However by answering the question we do not accept that the question is legitimate.

Education Otherwise takes the safety of children very seriously. Please take a moment to read our Safeguarding Children Policy.

<http://www.education-otherwise.org/policies.htm>

http://www.education-otherwise.org/About/Safeguarding_Children_Policy.pdf

Name redacted
[REDACTED] is an independent social worker acting as Designated Safeguarding Children Person for Education Otherwise. [REDACTED] provides the experience and expertise Education Otherwise needs to deal with child protection issues. The appointment follows a review of how Education Otherwise should address this sensitive subject and extensive consultation with NSPCC, who were extremely helpful and very satisfied with the measures we have put in place and in the appointment we have made.

In addition we stress that should members have concerns about, or evidence of, circumstances that a child or children may be exposed to, or suffering from, abuse in any way, the concern should be reported to either the NSPCC (0800 800 5000), the local authority or the police. However, as an organisation we also recognise that some members may have doubts about their concerns and wish to discuss them confidentially with the DSCP, who will help callers decide on what course of action they should take in line with best practise.

Please ask us "Do you think the current system for safeguarding children who are educated at

school is adequate.” Because we would have to give a resounding NO. Many, many home educated children are de-registered from school following bullying. It is particularly common for children with special educational needs to be bullied. The National Autistic Society has said :

“It is essential that every child has the opportunity to flourish and is able to stay safe and free from harm, wherever they are educated.

- School provision often does not meet the needs of children with autism, and outcomes for many children with autism are poor.

- We have strong concerns about the Review's focus on child protection. In our experience many parents of children with autism who home educate make the decision because they feel that their child's needs are not being met at school. In some cases, this puts the child's well-being at risk. Parents take the decision to home educate, a sometimes costly decision for them, in the best interests of their child. We have been contacted by a number of parents who are very worried about the emphasis of the review.

The NAS believes in the crucial importance of all children being kept safe and protected from harm, no matter where they are educated. However, we are deeply concerned about the extent to which the Review intends to focus on home education and its potential use as a 'cover' for child abuse. A number of parents have contacted us because they are concerned about the review's focus on child abuse, feeling that it stigmatises and even "demonises" them, rather than focusing on the importance of support for families who make the decision to home educate, often because their child's needs are not met in school. Here is a typical comment from a parent:

"I am worried, as the reason we took our daughter out of the system was because we found that the education system was unable to educate our daughter due to her ASD [autism spectrum disorder], nor could they protect her from bullying. Is it not somehow ironic that many people like myself who home educate ASD children precisely to protect our kids from abuse are now being tarred with this?"

Do you think that home educated children are able to achieve the following five Every Child Matters outcomes? Please let us know why you think that.

2 a) Be healthy

Yes

Because we speak from experience. However by answering the question we do not accept that the question is legitimate. Please ask us whether we think school-educated children are able to achieve the outcome of being healthy. We would have to say probably not. It should be noted that not all children are able to be healthy, wherever they are educated.

2 b) Stay safe

Yes

Because we speak from experience. However by answering the question we do not accept that the question is legitimate. We hope that Graham Badman and the review team are aware of the press releases issued by Education Otherwise on this topic which we are including here for reference:

<http://www.freedomforchildrentogrow.org/pr230508.pdf>

<http://www.freedomforchildrentogrow.org/SPRY%20EMBARGOED%20PRESS%20RELEASE%20090607.pdf>

<http://www.freedomforchildrentogrow.org/SPRY%20PRESS%20RELEASE.pdf>

We understand that the Review Team will be assessing Serious Case Reviews and we would be happy to assist with this process.

2 c) Enjoy and achieve

Yes

Because we speak from experience. However by answering the question we do not accept that the question is legitimate. Please ask us whether we think school-educated children are able to enjoy and achieve. We would have to say probably not.

2 d) Make a positive contribution.

Yes

Because we speak from experience. However by answering the question we do not accept that the question is legitimate. Please ask us whether we think school-educated children are able to make a positive contribution. We would have to say probably not.

2 e) achieve economic well-being

Yes

Because we speak from experience. However by answering the question we do not accept that the question is legitimate. Please ask us whether we think school-educated children are able to achieve economic well-being. We would have to say probably not.

3 Do you think that Government and local authorities have an obligation to ensure that all children in this country are able to achieve the five outcomes? If you answered yes, how do you think Government should ensure this?.

No. Of course not. There is no such obligation in law nor could there be. We say the same things over and over to the DCSF but nobody listens.

Firstly, we should like to submit to the DCSF for the third time points made about children's rights by Lord Adonis to Lord Judd during the passage of the Education and Inspection Act through the House of Lords in October 2006.

“Lord Judd

House of Lords

London

SW1AOPW

13 October 2006

Since Committee stage I have given a great deal of consideration to your amendment to introduce a simple statutory 'right to education' at the outset of the Education and Inspections Bill.

Let me say that I was strongly attracted to this idea in principle. I understand the potential declaratory value of such a statement; and since there is nothing more central to the society