

Sent 19/12

View your response

The information you provide in your response will be subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Environmental Information Regulations, which allow public access to information held by the Department.

This does not necessarily mean that your response can be made available to the public as there are exemptions relating to information provided in confidence and information to which the Data Protection Act 1998 applies.

You may request confidentiality by ticking the box provided, but you should note that this will not necessarily exclude the public right of access.

View your response

Personal Details

First Name:

Last Name:

Email:

Organisation: Nottingham City Children's Services

- Please tick if you want us to keep your response confidential.
- Please tick if you are responding on behalf of an organisation.
- Please tick if we can contact you in the future.
- Please tick if you would like us to acknowledge your response.
- Please tick if you would like us to inform you when the consultation results are published.

Respondent Information Questions

Please specify in what capacity you are responding to this questionnaire

- A home educating parent
- A home educated child
- Working in local authority with responsibility for home educated children
- Working in local authority with other responsibilities
- Working with children or families in another capacity (e.g. third sector)
- Member of the public
- Other organisation / capacity (Please specify)

Please Specify: Elective Home Education Co-ordinator for Nottingham City Council

Consultation Questions

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
- No
- Not Sure
- No Response

Comments: Under the current guidelines we are unable to request to see the child or home; therefore we would not know if there were any new safeguarding concerns. We are notified by the previous school if they had any concerns and after gaining permission from the parent we also liaise with social care to see if the child has been on the child protection register. If a parent does not want us to do these checks, could they be

covering something up? it could be possible for a parent/carer to abuse the law of home education and take the child out of school knowing that the child does not have to be seen.

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
- No
- Not Sure
- No Response

Comments: If home education is taken seriously and a suitable programme is provided the outcomes could be being achieved. Again, as we do not have the power to meet with parent/carer or child we are unaware whether the child is achieving this outcome. However, it could appear that some children may not be achieving this outcome. For example under 'mentally and emotionally' some parents choose to take their child off school roll due to emotional and behavioural difficulties and in some cases this helps the child but in others it could cause further 'mental and emotional' problems especially if there is a lack of social interaction. As there is no funding for home education it is hard to make referrals to other services that would normally become involved within a school setting. Some parents are also known not to stay in touch with health professionals. It could be said that in some cases where a suitable education is not being provided and young people are left with inadequate supervision they could be more vulnerable to inappropriate relationships ('sexually healthy') and 'illegal drug taking' if in the wrong environments.

2 b)

Stay safe

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure
- No Response

Comments: If the home education programme being provided is suitable then the majority of home educated children and young people will be safe. However as mentioned above if the young people are left unsupervised they could be vulnerable and become involved in 'crime and anti-social behaviour', 'accidental injury and death' and 'bullying and discrimination'. Home education has also been known to help with children who have experienced bullying at school. As mentioned previously under safeguarding, the guidelines do not enable to see the child or into the home so we would be unaware if the child is being subject to 'maltreatment, neglect, violence and sexual exploitation'. We would however, be aware of any concerns that had been logged with social care and on the child protection register.

2 c)

Enjoy and achieve

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure
- No Response

Comments: The current definition of an 'efficient' education is 'achieves that which it sets out to achieve' and 'suitable' is defines as one that 'primarily equips a child for life within the community of which he is a member, rather than the way of life in the country as a whole, as long as it does not foreclose the child's options in later years to adopt some other form of life if he wishes to do so' so, if an efficient home education is being provided, then this will enable the child to enjoy and achieve especially if they are part of developing the home education programme. However, the achievement of a 'suitable' education could be more difficult to achieve. The meaning of this

is left too wide open. The aims of the outcome include 'achieving national standards at primary school' and 'achieving national standards at secondary school' in home education there are no minimal requirements or a requirement to follow the national curriculum, this is parental choice. Therefore these standards are not applicable. As repeatedly mentioned if a good standard of home education is being provided then all aspects of this outcome could be achieved, but how do we do know this without being able to access the education programme being provided?

2 d)

Make a positive contribution.

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure
- No Response

Comments: It is possible that the aims of this outcome could be achieved and exceeded by home educated children and young people. The child being home educated needs to be given the opportunity to contribute to the programme of study and this is not the case in some circumstances. As mentioned previously home educated children and young people could be more vulnerable to being involved with anti-social behaviour. It is hard to make referrals to agencies that could help with 'engaging in law-abiding and positive behaviour' for these vulnerable cases due to the lack of funding available for home education. It could also be hard to achieve 'self confidence and deal with significant changes and challenges' if the reasons for home education are a lack of confidence or emotional and behavioural difficulties. As previously mentioned home education could help or make things worse.

2 e)

achieve economic well-being

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure
- No Response

Comments: Most home educated young people do achieve economic well being. Young people go on to further education to take GCSE courses or employment. However as there are no minimum requirements in home education some young people may fall behind peers who attended school and therefore may find it difficult to go on to employment or further education. Difficulties could also be caused if there is a lack of social interaction during the years of home education.

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?

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure
- No Response

Comments: The government should give local authorities the power and financial support for advisers to be able to visit all parents to help the outcomes to be achieved. Referrals to other agencies would then also be able to be made for extra support.

4

Do you think there should be any changes made to the current system for supporting home educating families? If you answered yes, what should they be? If you answered no, why do you think that?

- Yes

No

Not Sure

No Response

Comments: We understand that there are genuine reasons for a parent/carer to home educate. All Local Authorities should be given a per capita budget in order for suitable resources to be made available to those who may be struggling to afford these. However, as home education could be used as a way to avoid sanctions e.g. to avoid attendance fines, we need to be careful how much help and support we offer as home education could be abused.

5

Do you think there should be any changes made to the current system for monitoring home educating families? If you answered yes, what should they be? If you answered no, why do you think that?

Yes

No

Not Sure

No Response

Comments: Local Authorities need to be given the power to visit home educated children to ensure that they are receiving a suitable and efficient education. Local Authorities are aware of the different types of education and they aim to respect these. However, children will start to fall behind if minimum standards are not required. The guidelines are currently very contradictory, for example if the LA feels that an education is unsatisfactory then they are able to make enquires, but lack of access to the home inhibits the collection of information about the quality of education provided. These children and young people should achieve all of the outcomes and be given the opportunity to make decisions. In some cases children could be pushed in to home education if it is the parent's wish but not their own..

6

Some people have expressed concern that home education could be used as a cover for child abuse, forced marriage, domestic servitude or other forms of child neglect. What do you think Government should do to ensure this does not happen?

Answer: Before a child is taken off a school roll or starts home education, the LA should be able to meet with that parent to discuss plans for home education. However, as with other matters a parent/carer could come across as being extremely caring and organised and hiding any issues. The only answer to this is to enable the LA to see the child and his environment on a regular basis.