

Home Education - registration and monitoring proposals

Consultation Response Form

The closing date for this consultation is: 19
October 2009

Your comments must reach us by that date.

department for
children, schools and families

THIS FORM IS NOT INTERACTIVE. If you wish to respond electronically please use the online or offline response facility available on the Department for Children, Schools and Families e-consultation website (<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/consultations>).

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 neither this, nor an automatically-generated e-mail confidentiality statement, will necessarily exclude the public right of access.

Please tick if you want us to keep your response confidential.

Name Rennie Thompson
Organisation (if applicable) Oxfordshire County Council
Address: County Hall, New Road

If your enquiry is related to the policy content of the consultation you can contact the Public Communications Unit on:

Telephone: 0870 000 2288

e-mail: xxxx@xxxx.xxx.xxx.xx

If you have a query relating to the consultation process you can contact the Consultation Unit on:

Telephone: 01928 794888

Fax: 01928 794 311

e-mail: xxxxxxxxxxxx.xxxx@xxxx.xxx.xxx.xx

Please tick the box that best describes you as a respondent.

<input type="checkbox"/> Home educated child/young person	<input type="checkbox"/> Home educating parent	<input type="checkbox"/> Organisation representing home educating families
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local Authorities	<input type="checkbox"/> Other organisation with responsibility for children (please specify in box below)	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify in box below)

Please Specify:

1 Do you agree that these proposals strike the right balance between the rights of parents to home educate and the rights of children to receive a suitable education?

Agree

Disagree

Not sure

Comments:

The recommendations are an improvement on current guidance and strike the right balance between the rights of parents to home educate and the rights of children to receive a suitable education. They address issues of potential safeguarding concerns.

2 Do you agree that a register should be kept?

Agree

Disagree

Not sure

Comments:

A register supports good safeguarding practice, reducing the risk of a child missing / missing education.
A register identifies home educated children and allows an independent party (the LA) to ensure that the child's right to education is fulfilled.

3 Do you agree with the information to be provided for registration?

Agree

Disagree

Not sure

Comments:

This can be kept to a necessary minimum.

We welcome greater clarity around registration and more clarity around what parents will be required to provide.

There should be assurances that protocols on confidentiality, data security and information sharing will be followed.

4 Do you agree that home educating parents should be required to keep the register up to date?

Agree

Disagree

Not sure

Comments:

This would minimise the risk of children missing / missing education and enhance safeguarding.

Updating is particularly important for families who move around the country frequently. Better support could be designed for such highly mobile families if they wanted it.

5 Do you agree that it should be a criminal offence to fail to register or to provide inadequate or false information?

Agree

Disagree

Not sure

Comments:

These proposals are rooted in safeguarding. LA resources should be used efficiently and to provide best value. False or inadequate information could potentially waste such resources and generally would not be in the interest of Children and Young People. Sanctions could be imposed but criminal proceedings should be taken only in extreme cases.

6 a) Do you agree that home educated children should stay on the roll of their former school for 20 days after parents notify that they intend to home educate?

Agree

Disagree

Not sure

Comments:

A 20 working day period on school roll would be extremely helpful to children, LAs and schools. There would be distinct advantages for pupils such as those who opt for EHE following behaviour sanctions in schools or bullying incidents and who may wish to return to school following resolution of the problems.

The only issue of concern around attendance would be the coding used for the 20 day period after first notification. If the child remains on roll but is actually being home educated could we have clarity on the use of codes so schools do not carry unnecessary absence?

Keeping the school place open would cause difficulty under current admissions law, but a protocol could be established to allow the place to be kept open for potential EHE pupils for 20 days.

6 b) Do you agree that the school should provide the local authority with achievement and future attainment data?

Agree

Disagree

Not sure

Comments:

This information would greatly help the LA EHE visitor to establish whether the child is making progress. ECM outcomes should also be considered. The EHE visitor would take other factors into consideration and would not use this exclusively as the measure of the child's progress.

7 Do you agree that DCSF should take powers to issue statutory guidance in relation to the registration and monitoring of home education?

Agree

Disagree

Not sure

Comments :

If it is optional, then the LA can monitor only those who volunteer. Statutory guidance for registration and monitoring of home education would strengthen the LA's ability to safeguard children and young people and establish whether their right to education was being fulfilled.

Grater clarity would be appreciated in the meaning of suitable education.

Greater clarity would be appreciated around the responsibilities of the parents of a child with SEN in providing specialist interventions for their children if they are stipulated on the statement.

Has this document given full consideration to children and young people who might have complex needs requiring a special school whose parents have opted out of that system?

8 Do you agree that children about whom there are substantial safeguarding concerns should not be home educated?

Agree

Disagree

Not sure

Comments:

This would need to be considered in the context of each individual child and the nature of the concern. In general, for most cases with a significant safeguarding concern, home education would not be appropriate.

9 Do you agree that the local authority should visit the premises where home education is taking place provided 2 weeks notice is given?

Agree

Disagree

Not sure

Comments:

Yes, access to the main base for the provision of education would be helpful in assessing suitability of education. This may present some difficulty when the child is receiving education in a variety of venues but the main venue at least should be visited. Two weeks notice is reasonable.

10 Do you agree that the local authority should have the power to interview the child, alone if this is judged appropriate, or if not in the presence of a trusted person who is not the parent/carer?

Agree

Disagree

Not sure

Comments:

Interviewing a child alone is not good practice. Interviewing a child about the education provided without the parent present would need to be with the approval of the parent and in the presence of another responsible adult.

There is great importance in being able to speak with/communicate with the young person...in person. This will need to be very clear in the case e.g. of pupils with severe ASD. The presence of appropriate others at the time is essential.

11 Do you agree that the local authority should visit the premises and interview the child within four weeks of home education starting, after 6 months has elapsed, at the anniversary of home education starting, and thereafter at least on an annual basis? This would not preclude more frequent monitoring if the local authority thought that was necessary.

Agree

Disagree

Not sure

Comments:

Yes the LA should visit the premises and interview the child. Priority cases should be visited urgently and within 4 weeks. For most cases, visiting within 4 weeks would not be manageable or necessary. Contact should be made within 4 weeks by phone, e-mail or letter but not necessarily by a visit and interview. The time of the next visit should be determined by the first visit and where home education is seen to be 'suitable', annual follow up visits would suffice. Where the education is not demonstrably 'suitable', then a revisit should be arranged within a negotiated time (e.g. 2 months, 6 months, depending on the individual situation) giving the parents sufficient time to be able to demonstrate suitability. There should be access for both parties for further communication at any time in the light of changes or developments.

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge individual responses unless you place an 'X' in the box below.

Please acknowledge this reply x

Here at the Department for Children, Schools and Families we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, would it be alright if we were to contact you again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

xYes

 No

All DCSF public consultations are required to conform to the following criteria within the Government Code of Practice on Consultation:

Criterion 1: Formal consultation should take place at a stage when there is scope to influence the policy outcome.

Criterion 2: Consultations should normally last for at least 12 weeks with consideration given to longer timescales where feasible and sensible.

Criterion 3: Consultation documents should be clear about the consultation process, what is being proposed, the scope to influence and the expected costs and benefits of the proposals.

Criterion 4: Consultation exercises should be designed to be accessible to, and clearly targeted at, those people the exercise is intended to reach.

Criterion 5: Keeping the burden of consultation to a minimum is essential if consultations are to be effective and if consultees' buy-in to the process is to be obtained.

Criterion 6: Consultation responses should be analysed carefully and clear feedback should be provided to participants following the consultation.

Criterion 7: Officials running consultations should seek guidance in how to run an effective consultation exercise and share what they have learned from the experience.

If you have any comments on how DCSF consultations are conducted, please contact Donna Harrison, DCSF Consultation Co-ordinator, tel: 01928 794304 / email: xxxxx.xxxxxxxx@xxxx.xxx.xx

Thank you for taking time to respond to this consultation.

Completed questionnaires and other responses should be sent to the address shown below by 19 October 2009

Send by post to:
Consultation Unit
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East Lane
CastleView House
Runcorn
Cheshire
WA7 2GJ

Send by e-mail to: xxxxxxxxxxxxx.xxxxxxxxxxxx@xxxx.xxx.xx