

**FOI 1629**

**Request:**

1. Please supply me with an electronic copy of the Local Authority's reply to the Independent review of Home Education recently conducted by Graham Badman at <http://www.myopinion.org.uk/dcsf/homeeducation/index.cfm/>
2. Please also supply any official reply made to the open consultation that was hosted at the DCSF's e-consultation site, and any emails that have been sent direct to the homeeducation.review@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk email address available for wider comments.

**Response:**

1. This survey was completed on-line via the DCSF website which would not allow us to print, save or copy the data as entered. However, we did record the information in a separate document for our own records and it is this that we are sharing with you.

**DCSF INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF HOME EDUCATION IN ENGLAND Jan '09**

<b>Q1</b>	<b>Name of LA</b>
	Suffolk County Council
<b>Q2</b>	<b>Telephone Number of main contact</b>
<b>Q3</b>	<b>Email address of main contact</b>
<b>Q4</b>	<b>Would you be willing to take part in the next phase of the research in February/March (including in-depth interviews with key personnel in your organisation)?</b>
	Yes
<b>Q5</b>	<b>Which team(s) have the main responsibility for supporting and monitoring home educated children within the local authority and other agencies?</b>
	Home Education Consultants
<b>Q6</b>	<b>List all teams / professionals involved in supporting home educating families</b>
	Home Education Consultants Traveller Education Service Social Care CAMHS

	Schools (flexi-schooling) Connexions Children & Young People's Services (including EOTAS Co-ordinators and SEN and Advisory teams)
<b>Q7</b>	<b>List all teams / professionals involved in monitoring home educating families.</b>
	Home Education Consultants Traveller Education Service Social Care SEN teams
	Home Education Consultants, although 'monitoring' requires regular access to information and current guidelines and case law do not give Local Authorities a right to this. See Paragraph 3.6 of 2007 Guidelines which refers to the ruling in Phillips v Brown (1980) "If a local authority asks parents for information they are under no duty to comply although it would be sensible for them to do so."
<b>Q8</b>	<b>Describe how you ensure collaboration and communication between these teams / individuals</b>
	Home Education Consultants liaise closely with colleagues and other agencies and share information with them and between themselves. There are strong links across the Suffolk Children and Young Peoples Services and with Partner agencies.
<b>Q9</b>	<b>How many children are currently home educated in your local authority of primary age (Registered with LA)</b>
	<i>See grid</i>
<b>Q10</b>	<b>How many children are currently home educated in your local authority of primary age (Non-registered with LA)</b>
	Not known
<b>Q11</b>	<b>How many children are currently home educated in your local authority of secondary age (Registered with LA)</b>
	<i>See grid</i>
<b>Q12</b>	<b>How many children are currently home educated in your local authority of secondary age (Non-registered with LA)</b>
	Not known
<b>Q13</b>	<b>Total (Registered with LA)</b>
	<i>See grid</i>

<b>Q14</b>	<b>Total (Non-registered with LA)</b>
	Not known
<b>Q15</b>	<b>Are these figures accurate or based on estimates?</b>
	Accurate in the case of registered cases
<b>Q16</b>	<b>If accurate, where do you get this data from?</b>
	Parents Schools Education Attendance Service Social Care Connexions Traveller Education Service A & E Members of the Public
<b>Q17</b>	<b>If accurate, how do you know the data is accurate?</b>
	EMS One Records of Parents informing schools of intent to educate otherwise than at school Sharing of information Data kept by and shared between Home Education Consultants
<b>Q18</b>	<b>If estimated, what data have you used to arrive at this figure? (List all sources)</b>
	Non applicable
<b>Q19</b>	<b>How confident is the local authority in the accuracy of this data?</b>
	Very confident for data on parents who have informed the LA or who have been identified by CYP services and partner agencies
<b>Q20</b>	<b>How often does the local authority get updated data? (List frequency for each source separately)</b>
	Ongoing. Information received by families choosing to home educate is entered on EMS regularly, as is data received from other sources.
<b>Q21</b>	<b>What proportion (as a percentage) of your home educated population is stated for SEN? (please state whether accurate or estimate)</b>
	<i>See grid</i>
<b>Q22</b>	<b>What proportion (as a percentage) of your home educated population is non-stated for SEN (please state whether accurate or estimate)</b>
	See grid. Figures can only be an estimate as School Action and School

	Action Plus are institutionalised measures and we have to rely on parental views and professional judgement and, in some cases, we do not have the opportunity to see the child.
<b>Q23</b>	<b>What proportion (as a percentage) of your home educated population is from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller heritage (please state whether accurate or estimate)</b>
	<i>See grid</i>
<b>Q24</b>	<b>What proportion (as a percentage) of your home educated population is made up of other Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups</b>
	<i>See grid</i>
<b>Q25</b>	<b>Please list which BME groups.</b>
	GRT Dual heritage Bangladeshi Other white European
<b>Q26</b>	<b>Do you believe the local authority knows about all the home educated children in your area?</b>
	We probably do not know about a significant proportion of home educated children in the area. While there is no legal requirement for parents/carers to register that they are home educating this will remain the case.
<b>Q27</b>	<b>Do you think that you will be better able to track children in your area in the near future? e.g. planned changes to your own systems, Contact Point, other system improvements?</b>
	No
<b>Q28</b>	<b>Please use this space to add detail to the answer you have just given</b>
	Whilst we can continue to develop our own systems and ContactPoint may bring some benefits, until there is a change in the law, requiring parents to register with Local Authorities that they are home-educating their children and giving Local Authorities the right to seek information regularly from such families, the current situation will not change. ContactPoint will only be useful in this context if it provides a list of school-age children who are not on roll at any recognised educational institution.
<b>Q29</b>	<b>How does the local authority ensure families know about their rights and responsibilities in relation to home education? (List all approaches used)</b>
	Home educating families who become known to Local Authorities are issued with written guidance which is also available on the Suffolk County Council Website and from area education offices.

<b>Q30</b>	<b>What support does your local authority provide to home educating families? (List all forms of support offered)</b>
	Home Education Consultants give advice on request either over the phone or at meetings with parents. This includes advice on resources, curriculum, public examinations, teaching and learning strategies and information regarding SEN assessment and mental health assessment and the role of Connexions. They lead Annual Review Meetings of Statements and signpost other organisations which support home-educating families. They also offer support through the work of CAF panels, Social Care meetings and liaison with schools and advisory teams.
<b>Q31</b>	<b>How does the local authority let families know about the services provided to support them in home educating their children? (List all approaches used)</b>
	Via the services of area offices and Home Education Consultants Through the Councils Website Through Schools and by direct contact with home education groups
<b>Q32</b>	<b>Following the initial assessment visit, are further monitoring visits made to a home educated child?</b>
	Yes
<b>Q33</b>	<b>If yes, how often, on average, are these carried out?</b>
	Once a year
<b>Q34</b>	<b>Please use this space to add detail to the answer you have just given</b>
	The frequency of visits depends on the extent to which we judge further monitoring and support are needed. We are concerned that current legislation and guidelines do not give Local Authority officers secure rights to visit, to see the child or to monitor progress, either initially or during subsequent visits. Parents who do not wish to co-operate in the monitoring process seem to have case law to support them (Phillips v Brown 1980).
<b>Q35</b>	<b>On average, how often is the child seen when a visit is made?</b>
	Usually, but not always
<b>Q36</b>	<b>Please use this space to add detail to the answer you have just given</b>
	Some parents request that all communication be in writing, so the child is never seen. Local and national EHE support groups provide advice to parents on their rights and on the limited powers of the LA. Even with County Legal Services involvement some families identified by the team appear to have been supported to evade contact. This situation is not acceptable and requires a change in the law.

<b>Q37</b>	<b>If the child is seen, where is s/he usually seen?</b>
	In the home, occasionally at the request of less co-operative parents meetings have taken place in area education offices and public libraries.
<b>Q38</b>	<b>Please use this space to add detail to the answer you have just given</b>
	We remain concerned that current legislation does not ensure access to the child at any point in some cases. This denies the child a voice. In some cases where the Home Education Consultant sees a child, he or she is the only outside agency with access to that child.
<b>Q39</b>	<b>If you are not permitted access to a child, is any further action taken?</b>
	This depends on the circumstances.
<b>Q40</b>	<b>If yes, what further steps are taken?</b>
	We have no right to insist on access to the child on the basis of an EHE enquiry, Only if there are other safeguarding concerns can this be followed up.
<b>Q41</b>	<b>How is the suitability of the education provided to the child assessed? (Please describe)</b>
	Professional judgement of the Home Education Consultant, sometimes in consultation with a wider team of professionals.
<b>Q42</b>	<b>Is the local authority clear about what the definition of a 'suitable education' is?</b>
	Yes
<b>Q43</b>	<b>Please use this space to add detail to the answer you have just given</b>
	Yes, see paragraph 2.3 in the 2007 Guidelines. However, we do not feel that DCSF Guidelines are robust enough to ensure that the objectives of 'Every Child Matters' are achieved consistently for this group of children.
<b>Q44</b>	<b>Does the local authority have systems in place to track the educational progress of home educated children?</b>
	No
<b>Q45</b>	<b>Please use this space to add further detail to the answer you have just given</b>
	The Guidelines give us the right to enquire about the nature of the provision only. Visits are not statutory unless Local Authorities have information to suggest that provision does not exist.

<b>Q46</b>	<b>Of the home educated children in your area of whom you have knowledge, what proportion (as a percentage) in your estimation is receiving a suitable, full time (20hrs a week) education? (Please describe)</b>
	We are not in a position to judge as we work to the DCSF Guidelines. See Paragraph 3.13, 'There is currently no legal definition of "full-time".'
<b>Q47</b>	<b>Does the local authority take any further steps if a home educated child's education was found to be unsuitable or not full time?</b>
	Yes
<b>Q48</b>	<b>Please use this space to add further detail to the answer you have just given</b>
	Further monitoring and support is put in place. In some cases referrals are made to the Education Attendance Service with a view to serving a school attendance notice.
<b>Q49</b>	<b>Does the local authority face any challenges in assessing whether home educated children receive a suitable education?</b>
	Yes
<b>Q50</b>	<b>If you answered yes to Q49, please describe the challenges and what you think could be done to overcome these</b>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The unwillingness of some parents to respond to requests for initial information about their provision.</li> <li>2. The reluctance of some parents to provide information (eg annually) after supplying initial information.</li> <li>3. Not being able to see the child in some cases.</li> </ol> <p>The law needs to be changed to allow Local Authorities to monitor adequately the quality of education provided and to assess the welfare of each child. The law appears to support families that wish to avoid contact with Local Authorities. The latest review of guidance to Local Authorities weakened their already limited powers (eg the expectation of annual monitoring was removed).</p>
<b>Q51</b>	<b>Thinking about your local area, in the last five years, how many cases have you come across that use the premise of home education as a 'cover' for child abuse, forced marriage or other aspects of child neglect?</b>
	We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this directly in a follow-up to this survey.
<b>Q52</b>	<b>Please use this space to add detail to the answer you have just given.</b>

	<b>Please include the number of Serious Case Reviews you know about that have a home education element.</b>
	See above. No Serious Case Reviews.
<b>Q53</b>	<b>Do you think the current system for safeguarding children who are educated at home is adequate?</b>
	No
<b>Q54</b>	<b>Please use this space to add detail to the answer you have just given</b>
	Current legislation and case law do not give Local Authorities enough power to fulfil their responsibilities in terms of 'Every Child Matters'. Current law appears to protect the right of parents to home educate rather than the rights of the child to a broad and balanced education and to be protected from neglect or abuse.
<b>Q55</b>	<b>Do you think that home educated children in your local authority are able to achieve the five Every Child Matters outcomes? Please say why you think that for each of the five outcomes</b>
	Current law and guidance do not allow Local Authorities to collect this level of detail.
<b>Q56</b>	<b>Do you think there should be any changes made to the current system for supporting home educating families?</b>
	Yes
<b>Q57</b>	<b>Please use this space to add detail to the answer you have just given</b>
	Change in the law is needed to guarantee the right of home-educated children to receive a broad and balanced education for the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century and to be protected. In order to ensure this, Local Authorities need clear powers. In some other European countries children's rights to a minimum level of education are more effectively enshrined through legislation.
<b>Q58</b>	<b>Do you think there should be any changes made to the current system for monitoring home educating families and ensuring that home educated children are able to achieve the five outcomes?</b>

	Yes
<b>Q59</b>	<b>Please use this space to add detail to the answer you have just given</b>
	It would be in the interests of children if there were a clear definition of a “suitable education” linked to ‘Every Child Matters’.

**Grid in respect of Questions: 21, 23 and 24 above:**

	<b>Northern Area Numbers</b>	<b>Southern Area Numbers</b>	<b>Western Area Numbers</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Primary Pupils</b>	39	37 (+ 3 potential new cases)	43 (+2 potential cases)	<b>119</b>
<b>Secondary Pupils</b>	76 (+ 6 potential new cases)	44 (+ 1 potential new case)	55 (+1 potential new case)	<b>175</b>
<b>Pupils with Statements (Accurate)</b>	14	10	5	<b>29 (9.9%)</b>
<b>Pupils with SEN</b>	18	18	8	<b>44 (15%)</b>
<b>Travellers/Gypsies/Roma</b>	12	9	7	<b>28 (9.5%)</b>
<b>Other BME</b>	1	14	1	<b>16 (5.4%)</b>

2. We have not issued any replies nor sent any e-mails.