

Introduction

This report has been based on 5208 responses to the consultation document.

As some respondents may have offered a number of options for questions, total percentages listed under any one question may exceed 100%. Throughout the report, percentages are expressed as a measure of those answering each question, not as a measure of all respondents.

The organisational breakdown of respondents was as follows:

Other*	2389
Home Educating Parent	2221
Home Educated Child/young person	436
Local Authorities	82
Organisation representing home educating families	40
Other organisation with responsibility for children	40

**Those which fell into the 'other' category included anonymous responses, and those who did not specify a respondent type. The other category also included 'campaign' style responses which were received after groups such as the Christian Institute, Education Otherwise, and the British National Party lobbied their members to reply to the consultation via their own websites.*

The report starts with an overview, followed by a summary analysis of each question within the consultation.

Annex A (i) provides a statistical analysis of responses by respondent 'type'. Comments expressed by less than 5% of respondents appear in Annex A only.

Annex A (ii) provides a statistical analysis of responses from Local Authorities.

Annex B lists suggestions and comments made by respondents in answer to each question. This annex is intended to provide context to the summary and statistics and is not intended as a formal part of the report for publication.

Annex C provides an overview of responses from local authorities.

An excel spreadsheet has also been included to provide a list of respondents who replied to the consultation. Those anonymous respondents who did not have an email address have been removed.

Overview

Overall, there was a very negative response to the consultation.

Most respondents said there seemed to be confusion in the DCSF recommendations between the powers necessary to ensure a suitable education and powers needed to ensure a child's safety from abuse of various kinds and these should not be grouped indiscriminately together. They felt current legislation ensured that both were dealt with by the appropriate authorities, who were also trained to deal with matters arising in their field of expertise. Respondents suggested that local authority (LA) education officers were not the appropriate people to assess children at risk and this job was more suitably done by social services.

The majority disagreed with the need for a register and suggested that singling out home educators for a register was discriminatory, and would penalise decent home educating families. Most respondents were also of the opinion that a register as proposed would be used for control and monitoring and to forcibly return children into state education. Many respondents however said much would depend on the use of a register and how confidential and safe the information would be. Some had no objection to registering a child as home educated as long as this was in the form of a simple list of names. Most respondents expressed concern about providing a statement of approach to education and said this would not allow for the many different approaches to education that could be explored whilst home educating. Some respondents believed such a statement inferred that only state assessed attainments were valid.

Most respondents said it was completely unacceptable to criminalise parents for not registering and this would not be beneficial to a child. Some respondents mentioned that giving false information to hide the fact that a child was being abused was a criminal offence; but not registering was a different matter entirely.

Most respondents strongly rejected the need for the DCSF to take powers to issue statutory guidance in relation to registration and monitoring of home education and believed the report had demonstrated that the DCSF had a lack of understanding of home education, and had failed to produce any evidence to suggest any problems with the current system.

The vast majority of respondents believed the proposals to interview a child alone, and visit the premises where education took place was a serious intrusion of family privacy and made it appear that home educating parents were guilty until proven innocent.

Summary

Q1. 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?

There were 4830 responses to this question.

Agree 229 (5%)

Disagree 4495 (93%)

Not Sure 106 (2%)

The vast majority of respondents disagreed that these proposals struck the right balance between the rights of parents to home educate and the rights of children to receive a suitable education. They were of the opinion that there was no conflict between these rights, and the responsibility for the education of children and young people lay with the parents and should not be appropriated by the state.

2221 (46%) believed it was the right of parents to raise their children, and that these proposals would remove that responsibility. It was mentioned that under section 7 of the Education Act 'parents had a specific duty to provide an education' not a specific 'right' to home educate. Respondents said it was parents and not the government who had the responsibility to ensure that children received a suitable education, and the proposals were heavily weighted towards a state run and prescribed system of education. They also said parents and children were not opposing forces as parents were the best guardians for their own children therefore there was no balance to be struck between their rights.

750 (16%) said these proposals represented a serious infringement not only on the rights of parents to home educate their children in a way that best suited the needs of the family, but also on their civil liberties. Respondents were of the opinion that the proposals were draconian and had the mark of a totalitarian regime, taking away parental choice in order to control what children were learning. It was mentioned that the 'Badman recommendations' had used Germany as an example. Respondents thought this was ill-conceived as under Stalin and Hitler the state asserted primary responsibility for the purposes of control.

661 (14%) respondents suggested that many children were home educated because currently schools were failing in their duty to provide a suitable education. They said home education and the school system were two different methods of educating a child, and within home education there were many different pathways. They believed that the proposals implied that only a state sanctioned education could be classified as 'suitable' and this was not the case as 'one size did not fit all'. Respondents mentioned that schools were failing because of the following reasons:

- The curriculum was too prescribed
- There was too much testing
- Respondents disagreed with the teaching of sex education and alternative religions
- There was a lack of pastoral care
- Teachers had a low expectation
- Children were being bullied.

610 (13%) suggested that the review had produced no evidence that parents were not doing a good job in the home education of their children, and nothing had been proved regarding the 'abuse' allegations that were being suggested as reasons for these new proposals.

223 (5%) respondents said further clarification was needed to define what was meant by 'suitable' and 'efficient' education especially as the recommendation suggested that inspection arrangements were to be developed. It was mentioned that any definition must not limit the intention of the home educator to provide an autonomous and personalised education.

Q2. Do you agree that a register should be kept?

There were 3948 responses to this question.

Agree 620 (16%)

Disagree 3012 (76%)

Not Sure 316 (8%)

The majority disagreed with the need for a register and believed in terms of child protection it would be of little use in eradicating the minority of parents who were abusive or neglectful. Respondents suggested that singling out home educators for a register was discriminatory, would penalise decent home educating families, and drive abusive parents underground. They were also of the opinion that a register as proposed would be used for control and monitoring and to forcibly return children into state education. However, those who agreed said a register was logical so that disputed statistics of the numbers of home educated children could be made known. Respondents in favour also mentioned it could be useful for identifying funding and support for home educating families.

537 (14%) said there would be no point to the introduction of a register as it would be a waste of money and resource which should be spent on vulnerable children to provide support and intervention. It was also suggested that many home educating families had been let down by the state school system and the proposals expected parents to apply to the very people who had just failed their children to approve and licence them.

383 (10%) strongly disagreed with re-registering annually. Respondent thought the report did not recommend a simple registration system or list, but proposed some sort of licensing scheme whereby home educating parents would have to reapply yearly for permission to home educate. They believed the term 'register' indicated authorisation and in the long term would be used to ensure implementation of a national based curriculum for home educated children and give discretion for local authorities to find fault and deny the ability to home educate.

262 (7%) strongly believed that registration should be a choice, especially if parents and children had to comply with certain conditions. Respondents said they would be happy with a voluntary register which would indicate a partnership rather than interference and would enable them to receive support and guidance. It was also suggested that a voluntary register would be more likely to have a higher sign up rate.

251 (6%) mentioned that the state already had details of each child at birth, through child benefit and enrolment with a GP and therefore another register would just

create more paperwork and bureaucracy. Respondents also mentioned the fact that children were deregistered from school when they were removed from state education and so again, were already known to the authorities.

180 (5%) believed the ContactPoint database would show a child's educational provision and therefore a new register was unnecessary duplication.

Q3. Do you agree with the information to be provided for registration?

There were 3568 responses to this question.

Agree 356 (10%)

Disagree 3022 (85%)

Not Sure 190 (5%)

The majority of respondents disagreed with the information necessary for the register, because simply they did not agree with the need for a register in the first place. They said this question presupposed agreement with the introduction of a register database for electively home educated children. Those respondents who did agree said the information requested was a reasonable minimum amount which was not overly intrusive.

424 (12%) disagreed with the requirement to provide a statement of approach to education. Respondents said home education was different from a prescribed state school education as it was more flexible and had the ability to be adapted to encompass changes in children's interest's abilities and circumstances. They believed providing a 12 month statement of approach to education would stop this flexibility of learning. Respondents also mentioned that if parents were required to state specific goals for the year, they could be assessed according to whether or not these goals had been achieved, which could ultimately be used against them to stop home education.

148 (5%) had concerns on who would be able to access such sensitive information and expressed concern that the Government had a poor record in the safeguarding of data. Respondents stressed the need for the register and any information it contained to be fully secure and safeguarded.

Q4. Do you agree that home educating parents should be required to keep the register up to date?

There were 3602 responses to this question.

Agree 454 (13%)

Disagree 2972 (82%)

Not Sure 176 (5%)

Again the majority of respondents disagreed with the need for a register and again said this question presupposed agreement with the introduction of a register database for electively home educated children. It was mentioned however that if the register should come into force then it must be kept up to date or it would become pointless. Those respondents who agreed believed that as parents had a legal responsibility to educate their children it would be reasonable to expect them to keep the register up to date.

638 (18%) did not agree with the need for a register and stressed that they had no wish to comply with this proposal. They believed the review had produced no

evidence to justify any changes to the current legislation regime. Respondents also said there was no evidence to suggest that significant numbers of home educated children were not receiving a suitable education and felt the register was intrusive and stripped them of their civil liberties. It was mentioned that the register in its proposed form meant that many home educators would refuse to sign even if this meant it would be a criminal offence.

172 (5%) said home educating parents should be spending their time educating their children and not filling out forms and paperwork. They believed keeping the register up to date would be very time consuming, and they stressed that they did not want the bureaucracy currently imposed on schools inflicted on them.

Q5. Do you agree that it should be a criminal offence to fail to register or to provide inadequate or false information?

There were 3784 responses to this question.

Agree 244 (6%)

Disagree 3409 (90%)

Not Sure 131 (4%)

The vast majority disagreed that it should be a criminal offence to fail to register or to provide inadequate information and suggested this was outrageous and completely disproportionate. Respondents mentioned however that under the current system it was already an offence to provide false information and deliberately or intentionally lying was completely different to that of making an honest mistake.

1030 (27%) strongly believed that criminalising was a step too far and respondents were deeply concerned that law abiding citizens should be criminalised for simply wishing to home educate their children and not 'jump through government hoops'. Respondents also had concerns about who would decide whether the information was adequate or not. They were of the opinion that the Government was trying to interfere and control home education which could result in unsettling the relationship between parents and local authorities.

241 (6%) said this would cause additional stress for families and asked how would labelling a parent a criminal help a child's education and benefit their future.

238 (6%) agreed that providing false information was unacceptable and was were of the opinion that this was already an offence, but disagreed with the proposal to give innocent parents a criminal record for not registering and keeping paperwork up to date, and said this was excessive.

Q6 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?

There were 3512 responses to this question.

Agree 475 (13%)

Disagree 2621 (75%)

Not Sure 416 (12%)

The majority disagreed with that home educated children should stay on the roll of their former school for 20 days after parents had notified that they intended to home educate. It was mentioned that fundamentally parents delegated their responsibilities

to the state and therefore it was their right to withdraw this arrangement at any time. Those respondents who agreed were of the opinion that this would have been extremely helpful to them and would have given them a period of time to make absolutely sure that they had made the right decision to home educate.

747 (21%) respondents were of the opinion that once parents had notified the school that they were removing their child from the school roll then that should be acted upon immediately. They said it was not a course that was usually taken lightly as home education required significant commitment on the part of the parents and was often decided on as a result of failure on the part of the school or education system. They also believed that it would be very traumatic for a child to be returned to school during this period if they had suffered from bullying or the school could not provide a child's special educational needs.

356 (10%) respondents could not understand the purpose or the point of this proposal and thought it could be quite confusing. They were of the opinion that children could get back into any school quite easily anyway if this was necessary. The following issues were also raised:

- 20 days would not be sufficient to resolve any issues if they were not sorted out in the months leading to the removal of the child
- The welfare of the child may be dependent on deregistration from school
- The rules for transferring to home education should be the same as if a parent decided to transfer their child to another school as currently home education had equal status in law. They believed it would be confusing and discriminatory to apply separate rules
- This would not work where a child had been removed at the end of a term as there may not be 20 days left in that term. This could deny another child a place at the school for the following new term if the deregistered child did not return.

283 (8%) said this proposal was an invitation for hostile school authorities and LA officials to attempt to bully parents into changing their minds about home education, at a time when it was already unbearably stressful for the family.

236 (7%) thought this was a good idea and provided an opportunity for reflection on the decision to home educate. Respondents said this period would allow time for discussions between parents and the school to talk through the reasons for the child's withdrawal and for parent's to re-assess their intentions should they wish to do so. It was also suggested that this 'cooling off' period would be very helpful to both parties in these situations.

180 (5%) believed it was not clear if a child would have to attend school for these 20 days and this must be clarified. Respondents said that the child must not be expected to go to school for the 20 days whilst any issues were sorted out. Respondents also noted that a child who was on a school roll but was not attending the school would be classed as truancing, and therefore would be registered as 'unauthorised absence'. It was suggested that a new code could be used which did not count towards absence figures and could therefore be treated as authorised absence during this 20 day period.

Q6 b) Do you agree that the school should provide the local authority with achievement and future attainment data?

There were 3547 responses to this question.

Agree 340 (10%)

Disagree 2959 (83%)

Not Sure 248 (7%)

Again the vast majority of respondents disagreed that the school should provide the local authority with achievement and future attainment data. Respondents said once the child had left school there was no further role for the school in providing this information. Respondents also expressed concern that this could be used as a means of testing the suitability of the home education provision or a guide by which the parent could be deemed to have failed for not keeping the child on the supposed target level of attainment previously set by the school. It was also mentioned that it would be impossible for the school to provide achievement data or to predict future attainment data for children who had never been to school.

566 (16%) respondents said a child's achievement or future attainment as a home educated child could not be measured or predicted in the same way as that of a child in school, as they did not follow a prescribed curriculum, have tests, or achieve set targets. They believed to do this would be very limiting in terms of the wide range of topics home educated children studied and the variety of methods by which they learned. Respondents said it was the breadth, variety and freedom of home education which were the differences between school and home education and this made them completely incompatible.

432 (12%) respondents said predictions of future attainment were completely meaningless, and revealed far more about the school's expectations of the child than about the child's true potential. They suggested that future attainment was unpredictable and would not guarantee future attainment as for the most part it would be guess work.

422 (12%) were of the opinion that if a child was being home educated then the LA should have nothing more to do with the child's achievements and attainment. They said the responsibility for this information must be passed to the parent.

413 (12%) suggested that schools could record a child's achievements differently than they may actually be, either due to lack of knowledge, time for staff to fully assess a child's abilities, or by the child being able to hide difficulties by being assisted by peers. They believed this could lead to an artificially high or low estimate of abilities which could lead to serious issues if the child was assessed differently once in the home setting. Respondents also mentioned that schools could deliberately falsify records if they were failing a child in some way, or the family were in disagreement with the school, suggesting this could be treated in a pre-judged and prejudicial way.

182 (5%) were of the opinion that schools had already failed in its attempt to educate the child, therefore it would be impossible for them to be able to correctly produce achievement data or predict future attainment once they had left the school in order to be home educated.

Q7. Do you agree that DCSF should take powers to issue statutory guidance in relation to the registration and monitoring of home education?

There were 3775 responses to this question.

Agree 299 (8%)

Disagree 3281 (87%)

Not Sure 195 (5%)

The majority of respondents strongly rejected the need for the DCSF to take powers to issue statutory guidance in relation to registration and monitoring of home education, as they disagreed with compulsory registration and routine monitoring in its entirety. They believed the report had demonstrated that the DCSF had a lack of understanding of home education, and had failed to produce any evidence to suggest any problems with the current system. Those respondents who agreed mentioned that a standardised national system would prevent a plethora of guidance, methods and different systems and ensured that everyone would be receiving and working to the same criteria.

837 (22%) respondents did not accept the need for any new legislation and therefore believed that there was no need for the DCSF to issue new guidance. They said allowing DCSF to issue new statutory guidance would undermine parliamentary process, the rights of parents and would be an abuse of power. Respondents were of the opinion that the Home Education Guidance issued in 2007 was well received by home-educators, and was an accurate and helpful explanation of the current legislation. They suggested that local authorities could use 'school attendance orders' in cases where it appeared that children were not receiving a suitable education, therefore expensive new legislation was unnecessary. Respondents believed that the current law was entirely sufficient if it was fully understood and applied correctly by fully trained government officials.

398 (11%) respondents said the upbringing and education of a child was the parent's responsibility and the state should not assume to take responsibility and interfere. They believed there was too much statutory guidance already which infringed on civil liberties and common sense.

196 (5%) were of the opinion that home education was such a diverse method of education that monitoring it would be impossible. They said home educators rarely followed the national curriculum, and much of the education provided for their child was tailored to that child's interests and needs. Respondents suggested that there was no place for a 'one size fits all' approach to home education.

Q8. Do you agree that children about whom there are substantial safeguarding concerns should not be home educated?

There were 4136 responses to this question.

Agree 576 (14%)

Disagree 2371 (57%)

Not Sure 1189 (29%)

There were mixed views on this issue as respondents believed the question was very unclear as it confused safeguarding issues with educational standards. They were of the opinion that home education was irrelevant to this question and if there were serious enough concerns about a child, then they were not safe whether they went to school or not. They thought that home education did not put children at higher risk,

any more than being educated in school put them at lower risk. Respondents suggested this was a dangerous standard, and any safeguarding concerns should be referred to social services and was not a matter for local authorities to deal with. Respondents who agreed said children should not be home educated if there was clear evidence that parents were not fulfilling their responsibilities and education was not taking place.

1663 (40%) respondents said the report was confusing home education and child abuse. They were of the opinion that safeguarding children was a welfare issue and not an educational one, and therefore should be dealt with under existing child protection legislation and not home education.

654 (16%) said if concerns were really that substantial, then children should not be in the home at all. They believed there was no situation where a child would not be safe enough to be home educated, but safe enough to remain with the parent in family care. Respondents mentioned that if the intent of this proposal was to restrict the concerns to the likelihood of significant harm within the family home, it was wrong to suppose that a child could be safe in the home during evenings, weekends and school holidays, but be at risk between the hours of 9am and 3pm on school days.

487 (12%) respondents did not believe that attending school was a guarantee of a child's safety. They thought this question implied that children were safe from harm at school and many were not.

447 (11%) said the definition of 'substantial safeguarding concerns' was open to a range of interpretations and a clearer definition was needed. Respondents thought that whilst logic said that a child must be safeguarded there was a need to define exactly what constituted safeguarding concerns to ensure a uniform approach and also to ensure that unfounded hearsay could not be used as evidence. The following issues were put forward by respondents:

- The vagueness of substantial safeguarding concerns indicated that this could be abused as an excuse to prevent people home educating. They believed that some LA officials could consider home education itself to be a substantial safeguarding concern
- Would section 47 be applicable i.e. 'likely to suffer significant harm', and asked if the working definition was going to be much broader.

288 (7%) believed this to be a 'blanket statement'. Respondents said this would be entirely dependant on the situation and each safeguarding case must be considered on its own merits thereby not preventing home education for a child who would benefit from it. They thought that if a child was at risk then the authorities must protect that child in the best way possible and the situation must be dealt with fairly and correctly with all concerned parties.

219 (5%) agreed that home education may not be appropriate in these cases, but stressed that there would need to be substantiated proof and concrete evidence to suggest that the child was at risk at home, and it must not be judged on opinion or subjective judgement. It was mentioned that proof, in the form of evidence should go through a court process and be validated by a judge.

Q9. Do you agree that the local authority should visit the premises where home education is taking place provided 2 weeks notice is given?

There were 3803 responses to this question.

Agree 471 (12%)

Disagree 3106 (82%)

Not Sure 226 (6%)

The majority felt this was unwarranted intrusion into family life and said that it was completely wrong that anyone should have an automatic right of entry to the home of a citizen unless there were strong reasons to believe that they had committed a crime. Respondents believed that trying to enforce and legislate would only alienated home educating families and would destroy the goodwill and good relationships that already existed. It was stressed that it must not be mandatory for local authorities to visit the premises where home education was taking place. Those respondents who agreed said that the visits should be undertaken by competent educators who were there to offer guidance and help rather than to cause disruption to the education or to family relationships.

1088 (29%) expressed concern that the Government should have the right to enter someone's home simply because their child was being home educated, and were of the opinion that this contravened article 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights. Respondents also believed this to be discriminatory as on every other occasion an official could not enter someone's home without a court order. They said a home was a private space, and no one should have a legal right of entry as families would feel threatened and intimidated, which would not foster good rapport with the visiting LA officer.

320 (8%) believed there must be no compulsory visits as this was a big change to current procedures and meant that people's private homes would be invaded by officials. They were of the opinion visits must be at the request of the parent for support and guidance, and should be agreed in advance with plenty of notice as home educators were busy people and could not cancel things at short notice to fit in with the demands from the local authority. Respondents also mentioned that they believed the present system to be fine, whereby families could opt for a home visit or submit a written report.

289 (8%) respondents thought this question misunderstood the nature of home education. They said most home educators did not regard education as taking place at a 'premises' but at a vast number of locations. They also said home education didn't only take place in the home between the hours of 9am and 3pm Monday to Friday, but took place all day everyday. Respondents therefore asked if the LA was proposing to visit such places as museums, weekly home education clubs, and parks as it would be resource intensive for the LA to visit all these places.

239 (6%) were happy to have a LA visit if it was not held within the family home but was held in a completely neutral venue such as a local library. Respondents mentioned that a home educating centre would be a good idea because this was an informal environment which would allow the LA representative to meet with the parents and satisfy themselves that all was well.

220 (6%) believed that some parents would not agree to home visits because very often LA representatives were untrained and this ultimately made the current system of support a postcode lottery. Respondents were of the opinion that many local

authorities often didn't abide by the current law and didn't have a good understanding of home education. They said it was vital that any staff undertaking these visits were knowledgeable and unbiased towards home education.

Q10. 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?

There were 4655 responses to this question.

Agree 214 (4%)

Disagree 4360 (94%)

Not Sure 81 (2%)

Few respondents agreed with this and believed this was the most disturbing and worrying of all the proposals as no other groups of people would be subjected to being interviewed alone. They said the LA should never under any circumstances be permitted to interview a child alone and thought this was an extremely serious infringement of civil liberties and would be a dangerous route for the Government to take.

1703 (37%) said this was the most draconian recommendation in the report, and the state had no right to cross the threshold of a child's home in order to forcibly seek out their views. Respondents suggested that even the police needed a warrant, and did not have the power to interview a child alone. They mentioned that this proposal confused welfare with education, and there was no need to interview a child about their education as the current methods and guidance were more than sufficient for assessing it. Respondents stressed that they would never allow their children to be interviewed alone by a stranger as they had taught their children that it was unwise to talk to strangers but this proposal would force them to do exactly that.

1119 (24%) were of the opinion that this constituted a gross violation of the privacy of the family and also had the potential to undermine the parent/child relationship as it introduced an outside authority over the parent. Respondents also believed that this was a breach of human rights which would inevitably result in court cases if any local authorities attempted to interview a child alone. It was also suggested that this proposal was paramount to child abuse in itself as it disregarded the rights of a child to have a parent present whilst being interviewed.

967 (21%) said that interviewing a child alone had the potential to be upsetting for the parent, and would be incredibly stressful, frightening and distressing for most children. They mentioned that it was possible that abused children would not reveal anything under these circumstances. Respondents believed that children would be traumatised by the mere act of being left alone with a stranger, and this recommendation totally disregarded a child's well-being and defeated the object of that which it aimed to achieve as children may be put at risk both physically and emotionally.

701 (15%) agreed that the LA could interview children as long as their parents were present. Respondents mentioned that interviewing a child alone implied that parents could not be trusted and this would cause a further lack of trust to all parties involved.

414 (9%) expressed concerns that a child could be asked leading questions and tricked into saying things they didn't mean or forced to answer questions they didn't

understand if they were interviewed alone. Respondents said it would be very difficult to accurately assess anything in these circumstances, and therefore was open to misjudgement that could prove to be devastating for a family.

390 (8%) said any child causing safeguarding concerns should be dealt with according to current practice through the local safeguarding boards who had highly trained social workers who worked in this area. Respondents thought untrained LA employees would not be the most appropriate people to undertake any interviews with children, and should this prove necessary in a family it should be up to social services to make such a decision. They believed a LA officer had no knowledge or training in this highly specialised and sensitive area of child protection. Respondents mentioned that it was not appropriate for LA staff to interview a child alone simply to address an educational issue.

342 (7%) were of the opinion that the wording on this was too vague and asked how 'judged appropriate' and 'trusted' were to be defined. Respondents mentioned it was not clear if the trusted person was one trusted by the LA, by the child or trusted by the parent. Respondents also thought it was unclear whether the inspectors were intending to look at child protection issues or at educational provision. They believed it was common policy amongst nurseries, and playgroup workers etc to ensure that staff were not put in the situation of being alone with a child for the protection of both parties and yet this proposal appeared to put both interviewers and children in this very position. Because of the recent high profile nursery child abuse cases, concerns were raised that children could be put in an unsafe situation because the interviewer could potentially be an abuser, and respondents mentioned they had lost all confidence in CRB checks.

234 (5%) said there was no need for interviewing, monitoring or other interference unless there was specific concern for the safety and welfare of the child and such safeguarding was nothing to do with home education.

Q11. 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.

There were 4716 responses to this question.

Agree 310 (7%)

Disagree 4217 (89%)

Not Sure 189 (4%)

The vast majority disagreed with the proposed level of monitoring, and thought these arrangements were excessive, unjustifiable, and potentially tantamount to harassment. Respondents said the proposed legislation presumed that parents were unable to be trusted to care and educate their children unless they were subjected to continual checks, and asked why the state believed that it could protect and educate children any better than their parents. It was also mentioned that a premises was a 'family home' and as such was not a place to be inspected.

1238 (26%) were of the opinion that the current law was clear and adequate and that home education satisfied this law. They believed that systems were already in place if home education was failing and new legislation would not be needed if the current

laws were applied fairly and correctly. Respondents were of the opinion that the Government must reject the Badman recommendations entirely.

709 (15%) said if a parent had elected to home educate their child then the State or the LA had no responsibility regarding that child's education. Respondents said home education alone was not a reason to suspect that a child was missing education and believed there was tremendous potential for abuse of the system over issues about freedom of speech, and religion and parental rights and responsibilities.

373 (8%) respondents expressed concern that inspecting a family's educational provision three times during the first year of home education was extremely discriminatory and said for this to be fair school children would have to be subjected to the same amount of visits. They noted that Ofsted inspections of schools occurred much less than this, and respondents asked why and what justification there could be for inspecting home education more frequently than school education.

360 (8%) expressed concern that four weeks after home education had started was too early for a visit for most families and many said they would only be ready after 6 months to a year. Respondents mentioned that children were still in the very early stages of adapting to a completely new form of education and thought that if a family were just embarking out on home education such frequent visits at the beginning would give them no time for de-schooling, and no time for parents to 'find their feet'. They thought that visits from people within the state system who had little if any experience about more holistic forms of education were not helpful and could sometimes be detrimental as they could undermine the confidence of the family in what they were trying to achieve.

332 (7%) said they were appalled at the waste of public money involved in arranging and undertaking frequent home visits to thousands of good home educating families when children's services were overstretched and unable to provide adequate support to families with urgent and serious needs. They also believed funding would be better spent attempting to support the children and adults caught up in the failing state education system instead of attempting to fix imaginary problems within home education.

275 (6%) agreed with the visits as long as they offered support and resources but not if they were solely to check up on whether educational plans were being followed, or to monitor and criticise. Respondents mentioned they were in favour with some of the more positive aspects of the review such as easier access to flexi-schooling, and access to school facilities such as libraries, sports facilities and music lessons. They also believed it would be helpful if home educating families didn't have to pay for their children to take examinations.

264 (6%) were not convinced that given that no additional funds were being made available to local authorities to implement these proposals, that education officers would have sufficient training and understanding of home education to be able to appropriately determine whether or not a child was receiving a suitable education at home. Respondents believed it was important that LA staff must be knowledgeable supportive and be unbiased whilst assessing the suitability of a child's education.