

From: Educational Freedom [REDACTED]
Sent: 12 September 2016 11:12
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Elective Home Education

Dear [REDACTED]

We think there has been some confusion, this is not a request that requires an FOI, we are asking if you would be willing to engage with us to improve your service. The questions are for you to consider whether your website is up to date and whether we can help improve them.

The only information we are asking for is a known home ed figure, which seems excessive to make an FOI for?

We hope this clarifies the matter.

Best wishes.

[REDACTED]

www.educationalfreedom.org.uk

THE place for all things Home Ed.

From: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]
CC: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Elective Home Education
Date: Mon, 12 Sep 2016 09:42:07 +0000

Good morning,

I refer to your email referenced below.

Please note the answers to questions raised. They are marked in **bold red** below.

Please note that future enquiries should follow the freedom of information process as referenced here:

<http://www.lambeth.gov.uk/elections-and-council/foi/freedom-of-information-foi-guide>

Information relating to educational processes may also be found via the Lambeth website:

<http://www.lambeth.gov.uk/>

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Education, Learning & Skills
London Borough of Lambeth

[REDACTED]

Website: <http://www.lambeth.gov.uk>

[REDACTED] International House

Canterbury Crescent
Brixton
London
SW9 7QE
Lambeth – a cooperative Council

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 10 September 2016 16:21

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: [REDACTED]

Dear Elective Home Education team (please forward to your EHE team if this does not reach them).

We are writing to every local authority in the country and we ask for a few moments of your time to read and respond to our email.

Many of you will know who we are, some may not, Educational Freedom has been supporting and providing information to Home Educators and Local Authorities for more than 3 years, our staff of volunteers have been doing the same for a decade or more. In those 3 years our not for profit Home Education information and support website has seen more than a million hits and our social media has grown rapidly and our reach is often into the hundreds of thousands. Our website offers an up to date fresh approach to supporting families and has quickly become the go to place for anyone wanting information on Home Education. We have volunteers from all around the UK and we work closely with existing support organisations with the common purpose of making sure every Home Educator has access to support and information. Many of you or your predecessor have worked with us in the past, we hope this can continue.

In the last month we (and other groups) have seen a massive increase in enquiries (more than triple from previous years) and also a huge increase in people contacting us saying they no longer home educate due to a lack of support. In fact over 20 people in the last week alone have told us they thought they were the only family in their area. **To help us get an accurate picture of Home Education in your area, please provide us an up-to-date figure on known Home Educators at present in your area. 114**

We know this time of year sees a heightened interest in Home Education, but this years increase has been extraordinary. However, most queries followed the same trend: the information they were finding was contradictory, the law says one thing but the LA website says another. The majority of people thanked us for providing a website full of accurate information as well as details on local groups, Home Ed. styles, SEN, how to deregister, days out and more.

Our volunteers spent time looking at the LA websites and we found that in most cases it was difficult to find the relevant information on Home Education, at least 20 have no page for Home Education at all. When we did find the relevant page, the content was regularly legally inaccurate, misleading or lacking any real information that would be deemed helpful. We notice that many LAs include information about how they will monitor the provision, which is actually a breach of the Education Act and EHE guidance '2.7 *Local authorities have no statutory duties in relation to monitoring the quality of home education on a routine basis.*

However, under Section 437(1) of the Education Act 1996, local authorities shall intervene if it appears that parents are not providing a suitable education.'

Of course there are some Local Authorities who have excellent website information. These websites provide brief but accurate details about the LA and parents' legal duties as well as what is and isn't expected of both parties. They all included a phone number and email contact, links to various support organisations, links to local groups, as well as local educational outings. They were easy to navigate and understand.

We found most websites were lacking contact information for the EHE person, more than 2/3 have no email address, many had phone numbers that went to the wrong department, and some had no discernible way of contacting anyone at all.

Very few contained up to date external support organisations or ideas on where to find local families.

The reason we are making contact with every local authority is to ask that we work together to ensure no home educator feels alone and they are provided with accurate information. This is supported within the 2007 Elective Home Education Guidance, in fact it's mentioned many times, (we won't include them all):

'2.5 The DCSF recommends that each local authority provides written information about elective home education that is clear, accurate and sets out the legal position, roles and responsibilities of both the local authority and parents. This information should be made available on local authority websites and in local community languages and alternative formats on request...'

And '3.1 The DCSF recommends that each local authority should have a written policy statement on elective home education, and be willing and able to provide guidance for parents who request it... The DCSF also recommends that local authorities should regularly review their elective home education policies so that they reflect current law and are compatible with these guidelines. It is recommended that local authorities seek input from home educating families and home education organisations in developing their elective home education policies. Home education organisations' contact details may be found through an internet search Paragraphs 4.10 to 4.11 cover reviews of policies and procedures.'

'4.5 The provision of clear information has an important role to play in the promotion of positive relationships. Local authorities should provide written information and website links for prospective and existing electively home educating parents that are clear and accurate and which set out the legal position, and roles and responsibilities, in an unambiguous way. We also recommend that contact details for home education support organisations should be provided. Home education organisations' contact details may be found through an internet search. All written information should be made available to parents in local community...'

We are writing to ask that you check your website and literature:

Do you have a Home Education page (is it easy to find)?

<http://www.lambeth.gov.uk/schools-and-education/lambeth-education/educating-children-at-home-guide>

Is the information legally correct? **minimal information provided on the page so as to ensure parents make contact and the pupil details are registered as being home educated,**

detailed information is supplied in a parental guide booklet we issue after registration has occurred

Does it explain what parents do and don't have to do? **The guide does**

Is there a contact email and phone number? **Phone number on the website, full contact details in the booklet**

Do you have details on how to find local families? **We are reliant on being notified of home education occurring**

Are there links to external organisations? **Yes**

Please add our website www.educationalfreedom.org.uk and our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/educationalfreedom1/> and our email

[REDACTED] to your website and literature, stating that we have an in-depth easy to understand website full of information, plus we have volunteers all around the country and we can put people in touch with locals.

Adding other organisations is advisable so people have a choice, Education Otherwise and HEAS are both very good.

Do you provide a newsletter with local events? Most areas will have a Home Educator or two willing to help write a regular update. The areas that do this find more families are happy to engage with their LA. We would like to suggest a mail out to all of your families providing information about local groups or how to find them therefore ensuring families do not feel alone.

We would like to offer our free consultation service to help improve your website, literature and policy, we can advise on improvements that could be made to make your information accurate and also helpful. We have extensive knowledge of the legalities of Home Education as well as knowing the kind of thing a Home Educator needs to know at the beginning of their journey. Making the initial information a Home Educator sees clear and accurate can make settling in to Home Educating much easier. Our volunteers have extensive experience of rewriting policies and website information, if you are interested in improving your information then please do contact us. We work alongside local families and the LA to ensure the literature fully represents all parties.

Something that we have noticed lately surrounds the term used to describe Home Education, we have seen an increase in the term home schooling appearing on LA websites. There's been an increase in media coverage this year, mostly showing Home Education in a negative light. To create a negative image they use the term home schooling. The few positive articles written use the term Home Education. We have spoken with journalists who have explained that this is done to conjure images of school at home which causes confusion and anger when the general public find out that this is not what most Home Educators do, resulting in verbal attacks. Some of the emails, social media messages and comments on news articles are horrific. We have also heard how some Home Educators have been verbally attacked in public with accusations that they are neglecting their children by not sending them to school. So we kindly ask that your sites and literature use the correct term of Home Education or Elective Home Education. In fact most home educators associate home schooling with a child enrolled at school but too ill to attend so has a tutor come to the home.

Thank you for your support on this matter. We hope we can work together in the future to provide legally accurate information and support specific to your LA area to all home educators. We look forward to your reply.

Kind regards.



Owner and lead LA liaison officer.

www.educationalfreedom.org.uk