

Petitions Committee: home education

Activity

The Petitions Committee ran an online survey to ask petitioners about their experience of home education and their views on the Government's plans to introduce a statutory register for children not in school.

The survey was sent to people who signed the following petitions:

- [Do not impose any new requirements on parents who are home educating](#)
- [Do not require parents to register home educated children with local authorities](#)

The survey was also shared with home educators who had attended an activity day for home educators at the Parliamentary Education Centre.

We have summarised the key themes below and illustrated them with relevant statistics and quotes from respondents.

Response

There were 4,506 responses to the Committee's survey.

Methodology

Committee staff manually reviewed hundreds of individual comments and answers, using both subject searches and randomised selection. Survey questions which produced statistical results have also been analysed.

Results

About the respondents

- **64%** of respondents said they were home educators. **36%** of respondents said they were interested individuals.
- **55%** of home educators said the child or children they educate were primary school age, **35%** secondary school age and **5%** sixth form age.
- **16%** of home educators had been home educating for less than a year, **34%** for 1-3 years, **21%** for 4-6 years, **12%** for 7-9 years and **15%** for over 9 years.

Home educators gave a variety of reasons for choosing to home educate their child or children

- **97%** said the standards of education in school were a 'very' or 'moderately' important factor in their decision to home educate.
- **96%** said the ability of schools to tailor teaching to a child's needs was a 'very' or 'moderately' important factor in their decision to home educate.
- **89%** said that their child's mental health (for example anxiety, depression) was a 'very' or 'moderately' important factor in their decision to home educate.

- **79%** said that interactions with other children were a 'very' or 'moderately' important factor in their decision to home educate.
- **79%** said that wanting to follow non-traditional education approaches (such as child-led learning) was a 'very' or 'moderately' important factor in their decision to home educate.
- **75%** said the quality of teaching staff was a 'very' or 'moderately' important factor in their decision to home educate.
- **69%** said exams, testing and assessment were a 'very' or 'moderately' important factor in their decision to home educate.
- **65%** said the national curriculum was a 'very' or 'moderately' important factor in their decision to home educate.

Quotes

- "Home educated children have such a lovely life. They get to study all the subjects that they would at school but they have so much freedom and time to follow lots of other pursuits that they wouldn't be able to do in school (for example sewing, crocheting, cooking, sailing, rock climbing, forest schools, science clubs and loads more)."
- "Home Education is having the freedom to follow a different path to the one offered. Having restrictions, tick boxes and certain standards isn't offering freedom. We home educate because the school system

wasn't working of our children. Their needs weren't being met and their mental health was in a negative place."

Many home educators educated children with SEND and said SEND provision in schools was an important factor in their decision to home educate

- **40%** of home educators said one or more of the children they educate have special educational needs, with many saying their child was autistic or has ADHD.
- **64%** of home educators said that SEND provision in schools was a 'very' or 'moderately' important factor in their decision to home educate.

Quotes

- "The school system is not built for neurodivergent students. Even with accommodations, it others and discriminates against any child who is different in any way from the idea of a "normal mind" [...] Teachers and institutions lack training on the Neurodiversity Paradigm, and still treat neurodivergent students (and families) as having a disorder instead of respecting and valuing difference."
- "Most [home-educating] parents I believe [...] do not use the traditional school system because it does not meet their children's educational, mental and physical needs."

Home educators said home education has had a positive effect on many areas of their child's life

- **98%** of home educators said home education has had a 'very positive' or 'positive' effect on their child's learning outcomes.
- **96%** of home educators said home education has had a 'very positive' or 'positive' effect on their child's mental health.
- **89%** of home educators said home education has had a 'very positive' or 'positive' effect on their child's physical health.

Quotes

- "I have happier, healthier children since beginning home education. They have gained confidence, learned to express themselves as individuals, grown independent and rediscovered their love of learning. Without this step, my children would have had severe mental health problems that could not be solved by attending school."
- "[Home education] has been wonderfully liberating and has saved my daughter from years of mental health problems. Her spark returned once she was removed from school and she can pursue her interests and concentrate on her own health, happiness and personal, bespoke learning journey."

Home educators' experience of interacting with their local authority varied considerably

- **67%** of home educators said they had been in contact with their local authority about the child or children they home educate.
- **29%** of home educators described their interaction with their local authority as 'positive' or 'very positive'. **37%** said contact had been 'neither positive nor negative'. **25%** said contact had been 'negative' or 'very negative'.
- **45%** of home educators said they would like less contact with their local authority, **43%** said they would like about the same amount of contact and just **1%** said they would like more contact.
- **69%** of home educators said they had been in contact with their local authority about once a year or less. **6%** said at least four times a year and **1%** said at least once a month. **24%** said they weren't sure or preferred not to say.
- **47%** said they had corresponded with their local authority via written communication such as email or letter. **17%** had communicated via phone or video call. **10%** said they have had a home visit from their local authority.

Some home educators told us about positive experiences of engaging with their local authority about home education

- “I was part of a group that met regularly with the LA without children involved. That was a positive experience because we were working with them to improve access to libraries, sports centres and other things that would benefit the children. I never had to deal with an inspector specifically about my own child.”
- “The local authorities organised sports activities for home educated children which was a positive experience.”
- “We are very aware that we are lucky to have the Local Authority rep that we do. He is interested in our plans but not intrusive. He is happy to communicate by email and has offered us ideas such as local college courses he thinks may be relevant as and health courses etc.”
- “The person I have seen has been friendly and it has been good to get their opinion if they think I am teaching my daughter the right things. I don't really see the need to change from how it is now to home ed families being registered.”

Some home educators expressed concern that their local authority does not have sufficient knowledge or experience with home education

- “[The] local authority are not knowledgeable about home education and have not been able to offer any useful help. I would prefer not to be in contact with them unless I chose to.”
- “The local authorities don't hire people who are educated in how home education works. They are biased towards mainstream and fail to see the positive effects home educating has on a child and family.”
- “Local authority staff have no lived experience of home education (and lack training, empathy and understanding). With an agenda where ‘school is best’ and school provides a ‘world class education’, there is no desirable outcome to interactions with an LA.”

Some home educators said they found contact with the local authority intrusive

- “For the council to demand a formal report requesting evidence of progression of learning and examples is both intrusive and an extremely stressful experience. We should not be pressurised to write official reports where we have had no experience or training in report writing.”

- “I find the intrusion of the State into my home patronising and unnecessary. We decided not to place our child into State or private educational institutions precisely because we value our autonomy, freedom, and independence.”

Over a third of respondents wanted more financial support from the Government or their local authority

- **34%** of home educators said home education has had a ‘negative’ or ‘very negative’ effect on their family finances.
- **37%** of respondents said they would like more financial support from the Government or their local authority.
- **26%** said they did not want any support from their local authority.
- **6%** said they wanted support accessing educational resources.

Most respondents opposed the introduction of local authority registers for children not in school, with many saying this would encroach on their freedom and privacy

- **82%** of respondents said they oppose the creation of local authority registers for children not in school.

Quotes

- “That is a breach of privacy and the right to enjoy a quiet life peacefully. It is treating us with suspicion rather than as pioneers.”
- “It takes away the freedom of choice and the freedom to educate in whatever way is suitable for your child, to travel, and experience the world. If someone is watching your every move, it takes away that freedom. I can see in a way the need sometimes to keep an eye on children or families who are maybe known to social services, especially if there is a risk of harm and neglect. But when there is not, then there should be no restrictions imposed.”
- “It would depend on how the register is used. If it was a means to assign support, for example access to exam materials etc. I believe it could be a positive. I’ve been concerned at the terms of the debate which appear to equate home educating to a child welfare issue and I’m mindful that the register could be used to “monitor” and scrutinise my child’s development in a way that is intrusive and entirely inappropriate.”

- “The proposed register is excessive, intrusive, offensive and borne out of stereotyped opinion that lacks research based evidence to support its need.”
- “Home Educated children are already registered at birth, registered with doctors, dentists, the library [...] There are already countless pick up points and existing legislation to cover should there be concerns about children who happen to also be home educated. Creating a register presumes their manner of education is itself a cause for concern or risk factor. Is there a register for all privately educated children? [...] I think the existing legal framework for EHE and existing child protection law is already enough to ensure children are suitably educated and kept safe.”