

Written evidence submitted by the Association for Education Welfare Management

Association for Education Welfare Management

Association's Response to UK Parliament Consultation

<https://committees.parliament.uk/work/620/home-education/>

The AEWM has been at the forefront of wanting the various governments to strengthen legislation on Elective Home Education (EHE). We welcomed Graham Badmans recommendations in 2009 and support the Association of Directors of Children Services (ADCS) annual consultations on EHE. We also work closely with the Association of Elective Home Education Professionals (AEHEP) who have tried hard to raise this issue.

The ADCS had some 118 LA responses to its last consultation. This leaves 30 plus LAs where EHE is unknown to the wider professionals. The AEWM & AEHEP do not have representation in all LAs but try hard to do so and are perhaps the best professional groups placed to monitor EHE in LAs.

1. The duties of local authorities with regards to home education, including safeguarding and assuring the quality of home education.
 - While the 2019 DfE statutory guidance is an improvement on previous guidance it is still not legislation, merely recommendations. This allows Local Authorities (LAs) to interpret the guidance differently. Which in turn creates different funding levels of support for EHE. Some LAs have dedicated teams who visit families annually, some merely an administrator who adds the name to a database.
 - A LA can only safeguard if they know the family exist in their area, have the right to visit and see the child in situation and have appropriate funding to maintain an EHE team. Kyra Ishaq, Dylan Seabridge and Jordan Burling were unknown to services or not allowed to be seen. All were EHE or had been prior to reaching statutory school age.
 - Until there is a definition of 'suitable education' for EHE quality is a grey area.
2. Whether a statutory register of home-educated children is required.
 - Yes a statutory register is required. Presently, the true number of EHE children is unknown across the UK. This will also need to be funded appropriately by Government.
 - We are concerned that latest Government recommendations suggest a LA to hold a meeting prior to decisions to EHE being made. Though

this would be seen as good practice by AEW current legislation and resources does not allow this to be appropriate.

3. The benefits children gain from home education, and the potential disadvantages they may face.
 - Many children thrive from their EHE where parents have the time and ability to educate them; most offering one to one time or very small groups. Such families are usually very happy to share their child's work and welcome inspection. Benefits are very well given by the various home education groups that abound. However, it is the few whose parents do not support well, do not link to support groups, see EHE as a way of avoiding their statutory duties on school attendance or have been persuaded to EHE to avoid an exclusion that need to be helped or challenged.
 - Without the best support some children can be isolated from peers, become involved in anti-social activity like County Lines or be groomed by on-line others.
4. The quality and accessibility of support (including financial support) available for home educators and their children, including those with special educational needs, disabilities, mental health issues, or caring responsibilities, and those making the transition to further and higher education.
 - Presently, without specific funding, EHE support from LAs differs across the country. From having well-funded teams to being only an administrative task; adding a name to a list!
 - Some families have found support through specific yr 10 & yr 11 programmes offered by FE Colleges. However, if a young person stops attending they are merely taken off the college's roll. Nothing more is done. This is not well regulated.
 - There seems to be a rise in private tutors offering their support of EHE. Yet there is no quality control on such tutors.
5. Whether the current regulatory framework is sufficient to ensure that the wellbeing and academic achievement of home educated children is safeguarded, including where they may attend unregistered schools, have been formally excluded from school, or have been subject to 'off-rolling'.
 - Legislation on exclusion from school and any off-rolling can be challenged through current frameworks. Though what Academies & Private Schools do is outside of any LA scrutiny.
 - Currently, there is nothing in place that would qualify or quantify a EHE young person's academic achievement. Though it would be an interesting question to ask FE colleges.
 - Wellbeing of anyone EHE is down to the parent. Though recent cases like Dylan Seabridge would show some parents have little value on wellbeing.

- There seems to be a rise in private tutors offering their support of EHE. Yet there is no quality control on such tutors.
6. The role that inspection should play in future regulation of home education.
 - Inspection should be by suitable teams such as Ofsted. However, until there is accepted definition of what constitutes suitable education how can any inspection happen as there is no baseline.
 7. What improvements have been made to support home educators since the 2010-15 Education Committee published their report on 'Support for Home Education' in 2012.
 - This is unknown across LAs as information is not captured. This would be a good question for the ADCS to ask in their annual consultation on EHE or be asked by 'the suitable' inspection body; if ever set up.
 8. The impact COVID-19 has had on home educated children, and what additional measures might need to be taken in order to mitigate any negative impacts.'
 - AEWM members report that there has been an increase in known EHE numbers from between 10% to 30% depending upon which Local Authority.
 - Covid-19 is preventing & will prevent any visits from taking place, which may increase vulnerability around education provision and safeguarding.
 - Better links with Health and Social Care should be allowed without GDPR restrictions and sharing agreements being placed upon us.

The AEWM and its members remain committed to keeping the needs outlined above at the forefront of education so more deaths can be avoided. One more death is one too many.

Tony Waller

Vice President – AEWM

October 2020