

Written evidence submitted by [a member of the public]
[Note: This evidence has been redacted by the Committee. Text in square brackets has been inserted where text has been redacted.]

1 November, 2020

To the Education Committee:

I am a home educating mother of three boys, ages [age], [age], and [age], who have never attended school or nursery. Education is one of my personal passions: I earned an MA in Education with distinction from [city] University in [year] and I am committed to developing my own practice as an education through reading, application, and reflection. I am also active in my local home education community, running a [study group] for home educating families, as well as [a club] on educational philosophy for home educating mothers. I am pleased to submit evidence from my experience in response to your inquiry on elective home education.

[The benefits children gain from home education, and the potential disadvantages they may face](#)

I do not believe it is possible to quantify the benefits my children have gained from home education, but I would like to highlight a few of the most significant advantages they have received.

- **Extended time in self-directed, open-ended play.** Evidence abounds for delayed academic training for young children. In our home, we have seen the fruit of postponing academic lessons. Our children have immense creativity, large vocabularies, and vibrant imaginations. Their executive function is also impressive, because they practice governing their own time through much of the day.
- **Age-appropriate, individualized lessons.** As my eldest son has grown a bit older, he benefits daily from lessons that are suited to him, not to a group of 30 children. He is neither ahead nor behind, and I am able target lessons to where he is at the moment. Home education is extremely efficient. In less than two hours a day, four days a week, my son and I are able to cover history, geography, literature, maths, science and nature study, poetry, art and music study, and religion, leaving the rest of his time available for that precious free play and for family life. His education is rich and life-giving.
- **Assessment that encourages learning, not performance.** Because my children do not face exams, we are not learning to a test. Instead of needing to repeat information for an exam, my children are assessed in a way that encourages them to remember the ideas they learn over the long term. My children are asked to 'tell back' the stories we have read. This simple process of recall is one of the most efficient ways to retain information and ideas. It also focusses on what the child knows rather than what they don't, so it is a positive experience.

Do my children face any disadvantages as a result from homes education? None that are not recompensed multiple times over in the benefits they receive.

[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.](#)

The impact COVID-19 has had on my children is a fraction of the impact it has had on school children. Where school children have faced incredible disruption in their education, and in far too

many cases, paltry attempts at online learning, my children remained in a normal routine, working through our curriculum as I had planned. My children received in-person lessons from me, rather than sitting in front of a screen (the effects of young children spending much time in front of a screen, even for school, are detrimental). When the world felt chaotic and unpredictable, my children found comforting routine and consistent expectations, and as a result, they flourished despite the challenges.

Still, we missed regular contact with our wider home education community. While schools were shut, this was understandable, and we are glad to have the *Guidance for Out of School Settings* explicitly state that our educational groups can meet. However, for younger children particularly, 'educational' and 'social' are practically synonymous, and you would be hard pressed to find early years teachers who would disagree with the idea that a large part of education for our young children is learning how to get along with peers. The negative impacts of Covid could be mitigated by adopting a wider understanding of 'educational' in this guidance.

The duties of local authorities with regards to home education, including safeguarding and assuring the quality of home education; whether a statutory register of home-educated children is required and the role that inspection should play in future regulation of home education.

All too frequently I learn of yet another school that has been forced to join an academy because it has failed an OFSTED inspection. In other words, *the local authority failed to assure the quality of education provided by the school*. Responsibility is regularly taken away from local authorities to monitor and support schools. Why, then, should local authorities be trusted to assure the quality of home education? To me, the first argument against local authority oversight (including a statutory register and inspections) is their repeated failure (according to OFSTED) to ensure the education of children to whom they *already have a duty*. They simply cannot and should not be trusted with more responsibility of this nature, particularly when that responsibility resides with parents in the first place. It would be removing a duty which home educating parents by and large fulfil well, and placing it with institutions that have repeatedly failed to fulfil its duty.

Safeguarding is a separate issue from education. Instead of a hyper-focus on the tiny minority of home educated children (the vast majority of whom are in loving homes that abundantly provide for their wellbeing), our social services, health visitors, and NHS need proper funding in order to *do their jobs for all children*. Children's centres need to be reopened. Health visitors should have the capacity to do more than just routine visits a few times in a child's life. Social services need the funding to do their job well.

I hope that this evidence is helpful to you. I would be pleased to answer any further questions or expand on any of my points.

Sincerely,

[name]

November 2020