

## 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.]**

The Committee invites written submissions addressing any or all of the following points:

- 1) The duties of local authorities with regards to home education, including safeguarding and assuring the quality of home education;

### **Response to point 1)**

From our experience the LA have made contact to establish we are Home Educating and the provision provided, they were welcomed into our Home to see how we provide support for our Child.

However, the LA can at times insist on further visits and inspections, which are not a requirement and these also can have a negative impact on a child whom has had a bad experience in a LA run School. By virtue of an expected visit induces unnecessary stress to the Child & Family, it also disturbs the flow of Education provision for the Child.

It is our view that the LA should maintain a service whereby they can be contacted by Families if they require support from them, no further contact or inspection should be made. The Child/Children are Educated privately by the Parents/Guardians and therefore do not call under the remit necessary to warrant any scrutiny; unless there has been a valid cause for concern raised to them.

In our experience we had the LA coming to us for advice and for details of schemes they could direct new families to, again whilst it was heartening to be able to help this became a burden and appeared to be their sole reason for contacting us, causing me a great deal of work and upset for our Child.

Children who are Home Educated are not hidden, they are able to participate in daily life as any other child does, in fact more so as they are not hindered by School attendance.

Local Authorities should provide parents with access to lists of Private Tutors who have been DBS checked and also provide lists of Teachers who have been struck off, as the first thing most do is set up as a Private Tutor. If this Government is serious about Safeguarding, then please make all of your tools available to parents & guardians too, we can then make the best choices for our children's provision and ensure their safety without the need to turn private detective ourselves, when you are already sitting on the information. Home Education is not a safeguarding issue, withholding Safeguarding information from us is.

Children deserve to have their voices heard and respected, Home Education provides a safe haven for those who would not flourish in a mainstream environment.

- 2) whether a statutory register of home-educated children is required

### **Response to point 2**

Home Education is the responsibility of the Parent/Guardian of the Child/Children, it is not appropriate to call for a statutory Home Education register of Children whom the state has no authority or responsibility to provide Education to.

3) the benefits children gain from home education, and the potential disadvantages they may face;

### **Response to point 3**

#### **Advantages:**

Children & Families benefit greatly from the flexibility of Home Education, the Child is happier than they would be in Mainstream.

From our experience it has allowed us to correctly support our Childs physical and emotional needs, which were not being met at School – despite an EHCP being in place.

A Child can study subjects they are truly interested in and learn at a pace suited to their individual needs & learning style. Home Educated Children are independent learners and are forward thinking, they have the key skills to be flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances. In the world we live in today, these are key skills and in the future Home Educated children will thrive and help society adapt to the changes it faces.

I can honestly say that Home Educating has given us the freedom to discover Education in a form that is inspiring and adaptable. We have had our work hailed by officials we have worked with. We have helped, and are continuing to do so, to develop work for mainstream children to use during lockdown – this was all unpaid work and we took part to share our experience and to help all the children in the UK flourish. I wonder if anyone in Government is aware of this fact. You would do well to unite with Home Educators and learn from their wealth of knowledge and experience to better the current mainstream system.

Our Child has access to a large support network we have built up over the years, had they been in school this would not have existed and they would not have achieved all they have to date. Ultimately for us the priority is our Child is happy & healthy, supported and protected, to enable them to be the best citizen they can be.

#### **Disadvantages:**

The greatest disadvantage to Home Education from our experience is the prejudice held by those with no or little experience of effective Home Education. We have

experienced negative points of view and comments about Home Education whilst attending medical appointments, it was wholly inappropriate and degrading – no child or family should be subjected to bigotry from anyone, let alone public servants.

We are working hard to raise the profile of a positive outlook on Home Education, we are in many ways ahead in the game and our children will be the stronger for it.

It should be a right to have a their choice of Education respected and not used as an opportunity to exclude Children & Families participating in events.

Exam Centres & Colleges should not be able to refuse entry or support.

- **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;
- 
- **Response to point 4**

From our experience there has been no offer of support for our Child's SEND needs from the LA, despite an EHCP being in place & them being registered disabled, nor has any been sought.

Most Families we know make their own provisions for their Child/Children and go on to do so through Further Education too.

No support has been offered with regards to potential Exam support or access to local Centres to take private exams. The current system actively blocks Home Educators accessing Exams for their Children.

- 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';
- **Response to point 5**

We were effectively off rolled by our Child's School, they made life so difficult and were obstructive to the point it was causing our Child harm. They refused support cushions as the other children would 'want one too', [personal information] The SENCO at the School took to running away from us, rather than address the many issues they caused. We chose to then Home Educate after speaking to our LA & GP for advice, to ensure our Child's safety, resolve the problem and afford us time to make a decision where best to send them. However, the LA said they had no place available to suit their needs, which were by no means hard to meet – every local School had been called by the old School and summarily closed the door to us – some citing they could not 'accommodate' a wheelchair.

During this time we discovered that Home Education suited our Child, we made adaptations and I gave up my professional career to both care for and Educate our Child. We have not looked back and hope we will be able to continue in the future.

Schools need to be held to account, the SENCO & Head Teacher should be responsible for failing to support a Child & their Family appropriately. The current system allows them room to avoid any redress, this needs to be changed for everyone's sake. All they ever do is move on to another School to do it all again elsewhere.

Most of the problems raised here are not a bi-product of Home Education, they are due to the current process in the Mainstream School system, this is not a Home Education issue it is a state issue and should be dealt with separately.

The provision of Education as a Home Education Family is the sole responsibility of the Parents/Guardians of the Child/Children.

6) the role that inspection should play in future regulation of home education;

- **Response to point 6**

Inspection does not have any grounds and would be a pointless invasion into the privacy of a Family Home. Home Educators cannot be inspected and judged against a National Curriculum as we do not, necessarily, follow one. It is improper to impose the burden of scrutiny on a basis of nothing other than it is regarded as needed, current laws are already in place to Safeguard Children & Parents who Home Educate, an inspection would not make any difference to this and if anything would cause harm due to the unnecessary stress it induces on the Family.

What good is an inspection where there is no basis for supporting any proposed improvements, should they need to be made, or indeed offer support when no funding is made available.

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; and  
**Response to point 7**

We have been Home Educating since 2015 and in our experience we have seen a LA who have over stepped their remit and used our data for purposes other than disclosed. It is not our job to do their job for them. I had to remind them that despite their written insistence that an Annual Home Visit was required by Law, that in fact it was not. We allowed a visit and also gave them regular updates and visited their offices too, I soon realised they were using our work to pass onto others as an example of 'best practice' without our permission. It was not an exercise to see how our Child was, it was purely to get our information and claim it as their own.

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.'  
**Response to point 8**

We have been involved in numerous (unpaid) projects to assist professionals prepare work for Mainstream Children during lockdown, we have trialled work and given feedback to improve programmes before they went live. It would be encouraging to have this acknowledged and recognised, we have worked hard to help thousands of others who are blissfully unaware of this.

My Husband is a Key worker and worked fully all through lockdown supporting both the NHS & Schools and our Child was shielded as per advice from our G.P., this was an immensely difficult and challenging time as we had no support from the state at all. But never the less we met the challenge and did our best to maintain as normal life as possible. Our Home Education carried on as normal, just minus the trips out due to restrictions imposed in lockdown. The additional work trialling programmes was a challenge, but one we took on willingly knowing it was for the greater good for the mainstream school Children in the UK.

What would be beneficial going forwards is the inclusion of Home Education Groups in the statements with regards to meeting in public places & groups during lockdowns/restrictions. It should be clarified as to what is appropriate with numbers attending groups etc, some Tutors & Private Education providers have taken it upon themselves to say due to 'covid restrictions' parents have to wait outside & not be able to see their child whilst the group or session takes place. This again leaves a grey area and some parents are not confident this meets with safeguarding criteria as only one Adult is present with the Children, it should be stated that a parent or guardian has the right to remain with the Child at all times.

Home Educated Children & Families should be able to access Library services during times of lockdown and where safe to do so be able to attend their group meetings or at least be able to form small Education bubbles with at least one other household whilst the schools remain open.

We hope these comments are of assistance to you.

November 2020