

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.]

I began educating my three children in [date] when-[children's ages]. My Eldest was home educated for [time period] and returned to the system in-[school year] as he wanted to pursue a journey into the industry of medicine. My youngest two are still home educated although my middle child did return to school for-[school year]-

Safeguarding is a huge topic. Although I believe that it is everyone duty to look out for each other and the most vulnerable of society; which includes children. I feel as though the meaning of safeguarding has become a bit muddled. Children also need to be safeguarded whilst at school and home should not be the place of suspicions. My eldest was not safe at school; he was bullied daily, and the teachers could not help him in the same way that I could. He displayed some interesting traits whilst at school which was seen as a cause for concern such as hiding under tables to get away from the children who were going to hurt him and [sensitive information]. This caused the Big Brother System to turn their eyes to his home life rather than deal with the issues happening under their noses.

People look at home educators like they are the problem and many worry that children are not seen when at home. However, they are seen. They have birth certificates like any other child, they are registered with doctors, have passports, go to the, park, supermarkets and travel on buses. They do not just disappear because they are educating at home. My son would say thank you to me all the time when he finally did not have to learn at school anymore. He loved learning (which was one of the reasons he was bullied) and he hated being distracted from the science classes or being punished for the behaviour of children in his class when he had done nothing wrong! This feeling was instantly removed when he was home educated and his environment was optimum for him, especially at an age where he was still learning about the world and himself. As mentioned above he is now [school year] which shows that he was able to integrate back into the school society but he is now in control of his learning as he was able to choose the school and the areas of focus.

My children have learned so many skills since being home, particularly in the areas of reading and making money which in school would come under maths and English. They are all business minded and my daughter currently runs a [pet] business where she sells treats for [pets] and offers advice and support for [pet] owners – she is [age]. My [age of child] is currently working on the customisation of trainers and is starting a clothing line. My eldest is doing voice acting on the side as well as studying three subjects at A level. They all play instruments and was able to pursue their own interest in things such as pony care, stitching club, basketball, volleyball, parkour, athletics, debate classes, science classes and so much more. Home education is very individualised and my children have developed so many life skills as they have spent so much time at home. This includes things like changing bulbs, cooking, baking, gardening, ironing, removing fuses from plug socket, dealing with people from a variety of ages as they are no longer bound to working alongside peers of the same age all day, every day. As I am with them I can support them in any area as and when it arises such as Maths, we spent a whole month working on algebra as my son found it really hard and now he is able to work on it completely unaided and he has been able to teach his younger cousins.

I absolutely love having my children at home with me, yes, all the time! Which is often met with shock and surprise when I tell people this. However, each day feels like an adventure and reminds me of how short childhood really is. My children have also expressed a joy at spending more time with me and they say they feel safe at home. My eldest was bullied a lot at school and felt as though he did not fit into school. He hated it and I felt irresponsible dropping him off every day even though I knew it was affecting his mental health. The minute I took him out of school he was instantly happier, and the anxiety left him. Home is the best place for children and more and more parents should realise this fact. Home education solves so many problems. One being the lack of school choice for some families. If more families home educated this would balance out that issue. This fact is opposite to what the media portray, and the public are worried that children are not seen if they are home educated but this is just not true. The home is the safest place for children, and their parents are the children's strongest and most passionate protectors and advocates.

Regarding the statutory home educated register, I really do not believe that this is necessary. I still do not actually understand why it is being suggested now when there has never been one. A register will not improve child welfare in any way. Social services should be looking after children who come to their attention whether home educated or not but should not treat home educated parents as suspicious just because they want to teach their children at home. Home educated children are our children! We love them. We brought them into this world and love them more than anyone would. I want more for my children than any teacher would. A teacher is with a child for 9 months on a year. Why would they value my children more than me? I remember once my middle child came home from school with a chip in his tooth, blood on his shirt collar and a ripped jumper. This was because a child in [school year] decided to try out wrestling with him. If we were to flip it and he went to school like that. I would expect to have a knock at my door from social services demanding an explanation. When I went down to the school to find out what had happened, no one even knew. As my son was one of 32 children in one class and one of [number of children] in a school, he was just a number. The dinner ladies had not seen anything, and I was a mad woman for demanding an answer and I guess that could also warrant a referral to social services too. Parents will never get it right, but it makes no sense to me.

As a single parent I gave up a full time job to home educate and although we have less income than before; we are happier and my children see me work just as hard but now I work from home alongside them. I would not want any money from the government if it was met with having to do something that I did not think would benefit me or my children. Other families may choose to receive something though, I guess a no obligation grant could help many families with education supplies but I think it would be more beneficial if their was services available to home educated families instead.

The current regulatory framework is sufficient under the 1944 Education Act for home educating families and allows us the freedom to educate otherwise than school. We are doing nothing illegal by home educating our children and we really believe we are contributing well to society and this freedom should remain. I despise being treated like a criminal because I home educate and this is causing anxiety in a generation of home educated children who witness it all and see their parents being questioned and treated like they are doing something wrong by wanting to be with their children during the day. Unless there has been a referral then I do not feel that home visit is acceptable or even necessary. I do not welcome intervention from strangers and especially from people who do not

understand or value the meaning behind educating a child at home. Home education is not school at home so will look different for all families. How do you police this?

I found it so sad watching how many children had been affected by the impact of COVID-19. The Exams were affected after they had worked so hard on the subjects. The beauty of home education has been that my children's education was not affected in any way. We use the A.C.E Curriculum and they can get a qualification during a pandemic and outside of any pandemic. As we are all inside the same household nothing much changed. They did however miss doing outdoor activities that were also shut and missed going to the park when the local authority had locked all the gates.

The family is still the most powerful institution, and this will not change by forcing families to send their children back to schools. Which in my opinion are outdated and unstable and need more safeguarding measures that home educating parents need?

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