

Written evidence submitted by London Borough or Camden

Submission from LB Camden

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

We would welcome strengthened guidance for LAs for their roles and statutory duties in this area especially around the quality of the education offered by parents and the ability to meet with children to ensure they are educated by their parents. The increase in cases as a result of Covid 19 has made this more important to ensure that with registration, common standards and monitoring all home educated children are safeguarded and have access to a good education. For most home education children there are few concerns about their welfare or the education they are given. But an increased number of pupils being withdrawn because of Covid could impact on the long-term education of children many of whom missed months of school during lockdown.

- whether a statutory register of home-educated children is required;

This would enable LAs to identify appropriate support for families. It would also help establish those parents who move into the LA that we are not always aware of them. A register will also help LAs identify those pupils who are vulnerable and may need additional support and access to services to help protect them.,

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

When Home education is good and there are motivated parents and children it is done well. However, parents do see it as a way putting a break in the systems especially around exclusions and or court prosecutions.

Some parents feel that home education is an easy option and their views of what is a good quality education can be what a motivated parent would supplement with enrichment activities in addition to school.

- 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;

LAs are only given the money that is assigned for home education, as numbers have increased the funding attached to this area has not kept pace with the support. LAs could do so much more if the money that schools got for pupils via the school census came back to the LA in the same way as for exclusions. This would enable LAs to offer additional visits to home educators, run master classes in key subjects such as maths and English, run home education groups and pay for exam fees for pupils when needed.

Home educators find the transition to further and higher education difficult; we refer all year 11s to our connexions / careers advisors who offer individual appointments. Many home education young people do not have the qualifications to enter sixth form colleges and further education colleges and many colleges are unaware of the funding they can draw down for home educated pupils to access courses.

- whether the current regulatory framework is enough 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';

We are not aware of this practice within our borough but we are aware that it can happen and we closely monitor all off roll notifications from schools especially in the run up to the school census return in January for year 11 students and have made schools aware that we would challenge this behaviour. We offer additional support to home educated pupils who are known to safeguarding services and we check our core list with social services each term. We also offer an annual meeting with all parents as a minimum as well as advice and guidance at any time throughout the year.

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

We would welcome inspectors meeting with home educators, however very few of them may wish to take up this option.

- 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

We have reviewed our resources available for home educators in line with the advice from the DFE. There is one Department but two sets of guidance. Attendance guidance states parent must write to the school to remove the child from a school roll in line with off roll regulations. Elective Home educators’ states that they should notify the school but there is no requirement for this to be made in writing. It would be good if the advice could be harmonised. We have an agreement with a school to act as an exam centre for home educated pupils. Parents are charged the same as the school would be charged for their pupils. We update schools each year on good practice and changes in regulations via our annual attendance leads conference. We have also introduced a new Education Outline Plan for which is used with new referrals and also as part of the annual meeting to help parents identify where they may need additional support for their child and where the LA can offer support to help ensure that the education is satisfactory.

- 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.’

We have seen 93 new cases in the first two months of the school year, this is 32 more new referrals than we had for the entire previous academic year and we anticipate that the second lockdown may result in some more referrals. Both schools and the LA has worked together to ensure parents are aware of the steps taken to ensure children are safe in schools. This resulted in some parent’s fears being reduced and their children staying in school. This was a time-consuming for both school and the LA given but without this intervention from schools and the LA the numbers of pupils coming out of school would have been larger. The increased number of referrals will mean resources in LAs will be stretched further in the coming months leaving less time to offer as much support that we were previously able to offer.

During first lockdown we were able to get two children assessed by the LA exam centre for home educated pupils. However, a couple of home educated pupils were unable to submit enough evidence to the exam centre to gain an award.

Parents how do use our exam centre are only charged the same amount the school would pay but it can be expensive if they enter multiple exams. There is currently no funding available for this within our LA.

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