

Written evidence submitted by [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.]

Generally speaking – Local Authorities do not have the time or funds or the will to support home education. Almost no staff employed have any direct experience of home educating their own children, in fact, advertisements for staff to work in the Elective Home Education Department much prefer for staff to have Social Work – teaching – Safeguarding and even Prison Service experience! Probably one of the few advertisements where no experience whatsoever – either personal or at least having a knowledge of the law around Home Education – is a pre-requisite. Hardly an inspiring start to what should be a partnership between parent and Local Authority.

All children should be taught in a safe place so am unsure why the figures show Home Educated children are far more likely to be reported to Social Services – usually on deregistration from school by a Head who suddenly considers parents pose a risk to a child although no such concerns were raised when in school – and far less likely to have direct input by Social Services on investigation.

The vast majority of children start school – are then deregistered for an assortment of reasons – so therefore the Local Authority will be aware of the family. So a list of children who are home educated is already held by the Local Authority.

The advantage of Home Education is a bespoke education that is tailored specifically to a child – as opposed to a one size fits all education that schools offer. The majority of school children get a good education – for some it is a haven from a chaotic home life and for some it is a living hell.

The vast majority of parents want the best for their children. The advantage for home educated children is an education that works best for their learning style. The potential disadvantage is the unnecessary intrusive nature of some Local Authorities. Door stepping families saying if the children do not go to school the parents will go to prison. Saying parents who they feel are not academically qualified are "not allowed" to Home Educate. Sending the Police round for a "Safe and Well" check as the children have not been "seen". Reporting them to Social Workers for unsubstantiated reports of "concerns" Maybe look at [Local Authority] who regularly takes Home Educated families to Court and then stops the action the day before – as they know they will lose – but puts families through a nightmare for months. Exactly how much public money has been spent on this course of action? In contrast to [Local Authority] who on the whole work in partnership with Home Educating parents. And yet are both are in [County]. A massive contrast in attitudes from a Unitary town and a County.

Support for Home Educators?

Zero

Where exactly was Ofqual – the government – Exam Boards this summer? Over 20,000 Home Educated children were not able to access exam this summer – my daughter included. Despite paying £200 to take one Maths exam – no entry and no refund until November 2020 although paid in February 2020.

If children are attending unregistered schools then that is a matter for the Police and Ofsted – it is illegal and these children are not Home Educated so don't conflate the issue

Off Rolling – where schools "suggest" to a parent that either they Home Educated or the pupil is expelled. That is illegal and there are laws in place to deal with this.

Formally excluded pupils are not Home Educated and the Local Authority has a duty of care to ensure they receive an education. And not the paltry 5 hours per week for a Secondary aged pupil with the vain hope that they can at least aim for an English and Maths pass. Particularly when these subjects are crucial for any further education.

If the Local Authority cannot get its school pupils to pass 5 x GCSEs at grade 4 and above then personally I don't think they are qualified to inspect a Home Educators provision, so that will be pretty well all Local Authorities. Should you feel that some sort of record of achievement is required for Home Educators then the first thing that is needed is an appropriately qualified Consultant – with knowledge of various aspects of child learning. Not a teacher more used to crowd control. Certainly not one who cannot understand the basics of the .gov guidelines and thinks local policy trumps national law.

What improvements have been made since the 2012 Guidelines? Zero.

A few Local Authorities would like to help more but have no money. Most Local Authorities have policies that go far beyond the .gov version. Useful support would be to help children with SEN get access to facilities that would assist in their education

Access to Exam Centres ala [name of exam centre] in [place] style. [County] has nowhere to take exams as a private candidate. Almost 2/3 of schools – centres are now refusing access to Home Education students. It would be far more useful if the LA would facilitate access – so parents like me don't have to drive from [county] to [county] so my daughter can take a GCSE in Maths in November as that is the nearest centre.

Covid had a catastrophic effect on Home Educated students when it came to exams as most families do not employ tutors and most schools abandoned these candidates as Ofqual just couldn't make up its mind how it was going to support these students – so they didn't. The Exam Boards gave out contradictory advice and private centres increased their fees up to 500% for late entries.

So lets not have another debacle summer 2021 as my daughter has another exam booked. We have entered and paid for the exam already – November 2020 for an exam that I am hoping will take place in summer 2021 – no dates set yet.

November 2020