

## 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.]

WRITTEN EVIDENCE SENT BY A CONSTITUENT OF [constituency MP]

I am extremely concerned at the Children's Commissioner seeking to introduce termly inspections of home-educating families. This is an intolerable attempt at interfering in normal family life.

The right for Parents to educate their children at home is presently enshrined in UK Law. Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 says: "The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education... either by

regular attendance at school or otherwise." I believe the wording "otherwise" has been held to include the home education of children.

This Law also makes it plain that parents have the prime responsibility for the education of their children. Schools and Teachers are merely educating children on behalf of the parents and not the state. I very much hope we shall not enter an age in the UK similar to some countries where the state sees education as a means of controlling its citizens.

As a Grandparent who chose to have my children educated in a private, parent-run school I would point out that when parents choose to educate their children in using an alternative means, such as home education, they are doing so because they believe it is best for those children. Home education requires an extra special commitment and self-sacrifice on behalf of the parents and should be applauded and not looked upon with suspicion. One of my own Grandchildren is home educated by his Mother and the local authority inspector has always been highly impressed, saying that he is far ahead of many children of his age.

If home education had been more greatly encouraged in the UK the impact of our present crisis would have been lessened on many of our county's children. Certainly, those children home educated have not suffered major interruptions in their education, as have the majority.

At present, the local authorities have a duty to ensure the quality of any home education and ensure the safety of such children (safeguarding). I would fully agree that such oversight is important and the current procedures strike an excellent balance between the right of family privacy and child protection. I believe that local authorities already have significant powers to intervene should they consider there could be a problem. I suspect that already overstretched local authorities would veer towards risk aversion to protect themselves from criticism. This could lead to placing law-abiding families having their home-life interfered with in a way that could adversely affect the children's education. It could also add to the local authorities burden, diverting them from safeguarding those

children most at risk. It would also add to the pressure on local authorities already limited resources.

I am particularly concerned about a proposed mandatory register of home educated children. Such a move would grant the state unwarranted power over parents. In a free, democratic society such as the UK, it is just wrong and unacceptable that parents should have to register with the state to educate their own children. Surely, any parent who might be of concern just would not so register in any case? I am extremely concerned that the UK state is already increasingly seeking interfere in the ordinary lives of its citizens. Requiring mandatory registration of home educating families would be a totally unacceptable interference in family life.

There are many benefits in home education and the present level of inspection is not only adequate but has proved, in my Grandchild's case, to be helpful and welcome. I just wish I had removed all my children from the state school system. Despite the politically correct denials of all the schools involved, bullying was rampant within their environs.

As for myself, my experience of state education was one of daily pressure from one teacher to allow him to sexually abuse me over a period of five years. That experience meant that my education suffered, which has affected the whole of my life. It also made me very wary of any in authority. Back then, teachers were especially protected by society's norms and approaches to the Headmaster just led to the school further protecting itself, but not me!

I feel thoroughly ashamed that I did not take my own disgusting experiences as a guide to the better schooling of all my own children through home education.

There is much else I could say, however, this has already become an extensive essay! I will just summarise other areas that the committee might consider:

- There are many, many benefits for children from home education;
- Whilst the present level of inspection is not too intrusive, it has shown no evidence to support even its present involvement in home education - it certainly has shown no evidence for home education placing children at risk;
- Linking home education with unregistered or illegal schools is unfair and uncalled for;
- Wrongly linking home education with child abuse is completely uncalled for. In fact, children would experience less bullying and exposure to the kind of abuse I suffered from if home education became the norm. I believe there was a report concerning Child Protection in 2015 which showed that home educated children were much less likely to be the subject of Child Protection Orders, despite being more likely to be referred to Social Services;
- There seems to be little to no evidence of any problem within the present regulatory framework regarding home education;

- There are, of course, a number of areas where the state could help home educators and their children. However, I suspect that under the present circumstances the government would wish to steer away from any further financial burdens!

I shall forward a paper copy of this, to enable your full response. Please do your best to ensure the Education Committee receives and takes notice of my small contribution and concerns.

Yours sincerely,  
[name]

November 2020