

## Written evidence submitted by a Member of the Public

16<sup>th</sup> November 2020

[Note: This evidence has been redacted by the Committee. Text in square brackets has been inserted where text has been redacted.]

Dear Mr Halfon,

**Home Educated Children**

I very much hope my letter finds its way to you.

I welcome the need for a register for children being home educated, which is well overdue. It's extremely important that a National Register is produced for all children receiving an education, particularly from a safeguarding aspect. After listening to you on BBC Radio 4 this morning I felt the need to write to you with my experiences of the education system, perhaps highlighting why some parents are selecting to home educate their children.

I currently work in a small Independent School which offers part-time support for children with dyslexia. Children accessing our school attend weekly on a sessional basis, i.e. of a morning, afternoon or a full day. The children are either home educated or attend school from the State or Independent sector. We have children travelling from approximately 4-5 Counties to attend our school. My observations are that parents have developed more of an awareness over recent years on how the education system isn't meeting the needs of their children. During this year parents have been tasked too with the role of educating their children from home due to Covid19. This has only magnified the concern for some.

Children with dyslexia are visual learners, they see and learn in a different way to those without dyslexia. Some view dyslexia as a disability where as it should be viewed as a gift. With an ever-changing world that we now all face, it's those with the natural ability to be 'out of the box thinkers', as dyslexics often are, who will solve the world's greatest challenges. My view is that our current educational environment is disabling for most dyslexic pupils (primary and secondary), it's not the individual. I am convinced there needs to be a real overhaul of the education system, with much smaller class sizes. The scientific evidence is out there, what is required is for the Government to take this issue seriously and invest in the future of our children. Out of a class of 30 children, 4 children are said to be dyslexic and 1 severely dyslexic, which is a huge number if you calculate all the schools across the entire U.K! If the investment is made in children and their education at the very beginning of their schooling, their future outcomes would be vastly improved and more importantly their mental health and confidence left intact. I am sure with better life experiences whilst attending school we would produce a much more rounded society.

Sadly, there are many bright children still receiving little or no help at school. Funds assigned to help children who are 'struggling' never actually reach these children. Schools are underfunded, unless you are either a 'switched on parent', have money behind to extra tutor your child or fortunate enough to have your child attend a school where the Head Teacher has an eye on SEN, then the system will fail your family. On arrival to our school these children characteristically lack confidence and self-belief to begin with. The current education system sucks any confidence the child may have out of them. Children with dyslexia attending main-stream education are often removed from their class for further support, thus attract unwanted attention from their peers for being treaded different. If class sizes were smaller, no more than 20, this would not need to happen. Children with

dyslexia characteristically do not start their educational journey with behavioural problems but often develop issues due to years of being misunderstood and are largely forgotten.

There is plenty of research to suggested some adults in prisons are dyslexic, leaving school with few or at worst no qualifications.

There is an inequality in education system throughout the world but primarily in the U.K. I grew up and went to school in the 1970's in Kent. Very early on, around the age of 6-7yrs, it became clear that I didn't appear the learn in the same way as my peers. I went through primary and into secondary school feeling educationally segregated and misunderstood. Seeing how different the educational opportunities were for those I socialized with outside of school, I became resentful. It later became clear that I was probably dyslexic. In the 1970's and 1980's dyslexia were largely dismissed within the education system, often children 'struggling' were viewed as being 'lazy'. Fortunately, I am quite a determined person and have managed to achieve in life since leaving school despite limited formal education. I have taken opportunities as they arose and forced myself to not let my past effect my future outcomes. I held with me throughout life, a sense that I really began to learn after leaving school at 16 years of age.

In my late teens at the back of my mind I thought, "if ever I go on to have children of my own, education will have surely moved on and 'they' will not suffer as I did. They will hopefully experience a supportive and positive education". One where with the advances in science and increasing understanding of how the brain operates, education will become more inclusive". I went on to have a daughter and two sons with my husband, all have variances levels of dyslexia. Much to my shock and surprise the education system had not moved on. Teacher training is far from perfect when it comes to understanding different brain types and how individuals learn. There is such an imbalance across the U.K even today on how best to support and educate children with dyslexia in main stream education. School funding simply is inefficient and class sizes too large. Even if you are lucky enough to find your child being taught by a teacher with a genuine interest in supporting children who are dyslexic, they are invariably are unable to really reach those children due to lack of time, funding or Head Teacher support.

As my children reached [age], my husband and I paid for our three children to be fully assessed by an Independent Educational Assessor, which incidentally is an exhausting and stressful experience for any child. As parents of children with dyslexia, if you want to stand any hope of your child accessing any support whilst at school (i.e. extra time in exams) a full Educational Assessment by a Psychologist is required. If you don't undertake a full Educational Assessment yourself the school will undertake their own assessments, where the minimal support if any is offered. In order for our children to stay at a similar level as their peers they have had to work twice as hard throughout the whole of their schooling. They have had tutors outside of school hours and extra support from us as parents with the filling in any gaps. Two of our children have gone onto University and one will take his GCSE's [date].

We have been on a bit of a journey with our youngest son, who is still in education. As well as being dyslexic, he has difficulty writing his thoughts down on paper in a classroom situation and requires the assistance of a teacher scribing for him. Seeing what little available support was on offer for his brother and sister, we decided to remove him from State Education into Independent Education. This period provides a whole story in itself and not my main reason for making contact with you. Our journey with our youngest son has made me seriously question the education in the U.K today. He is happy and very supported at his secondary school and on track to gain good GCSE grades in all

subjects. Incidentally, I have met many families able to tell a similar story, not all however able to select an Independent route as we have.

If you wish to find out more **BBC's – 'Word of Mouth', Feb 2019 with Michael Rosen and Prof Maggie Snowling** aired an interesting programme, touching on the problems with current education system for children with dyslexia.

Some of the most successful, creative and influential people to have ever lived (or living) are dyslexic: Albert Einstein, Leonardo da Vinci, Tom Cruise, Walt Disney, Orlando Bloom, Keira Knightly, Whoopi Goldberg, Richard Branson, Jamie Oliver, Pablo Picasso, Lewis Hamilton, Steven Spielberg, Thomas Edison, Winston Churchill, the list goes on and on. People like **Dr Tracy Packiam-Alloway** have published many books on the brain and how we learn. New online programmes like **Bullet Map Academy** are like a breath of fresh air to parents with children who are dyslexic. They make learning accessible for all, however you take in information. Let's hope change will come for all those children yet to come through the education system. I am sure the Government are only too aware of many aspects of what I have written to you today, with the huge amount of research from across the world written on the subject.

Yours very hopefully,

[name]

November 2020