

Written evidence submitted by Mrs Emma Turner

I am writing as a parent who has a daughter due to take GCSE's (and iGCSE's) next year and to implore you to consider the impact of decisions being made regarding exam structure and how this will affect home educated students.

My daughter wasn't due to sit exams this year but is next year, so, although we were not caught up in the heart-breaking and stressful experience many suffered, we are experiencing the fallout as are many who were forced to defer their exams and/or are attempting to put in place plans for next year. The uncertainty in relation to what is going to happen next year, although stressful for all children, is being especially felt by home educating families. If we are to look at the evidence of how home educated children were regarded this year, these families are understandingly concerned that if the same side of the desk consideration is given again the impact will be devastating.

I am not aware of any invite to representative(s) of the home education community to give evidence to the committee when it considers its plans. Any conversation regarding the impact of the upset for this year's exams must also include making sure that home educated students are not disadvantaged and are able to access exams equally - we cannot have plans which make it significantly harder or impossible for home educating families. For example, I am reading in various trusted sources that teacher assessments (essentially marked coursework) would form part of the grade. This would automatically exclude home educators as exam boards will not accept course work from outside a school setting. This year, despite the exceptional circumstances, in the majority of cases evidence of learning and attainment (coursework, assessments and mocks) which had been independently verified by qualified teachers, who were tutoring home educated students as part of a long standing relationship and where that teacher was employed directly by the parent, were not eligible to have their evidence accepted. In the cases where it was accepted parents were forced to pay high fees at short notice to enable this. Furthermore, as I am sure you are aware, many exam centres requested evidence of students work, as was required, to provide a grade, but subsequently informed parents that the work would not be accepted after the deadline for submission had passed thereby meaning those parents were not able to seek an alternative solution. Even more distressing, some exam centres which are schools, also declined to accept work when they were concerned it could affect the rankings of their own students, again, sometimes not informing the parents until after the deadline had passed.

Although this is a difficult situation for everyone, home educated children deserve to be treated as equal to their school educated peers. Whether the committee agrees with Home Education or not, it is a legal right to do so. Any policies that make it more difficult or impossible to take exams, for any group, should be viewed in the same way as any discriminatory policy, that is, such policies have no place in today's society.

Thank you for reading this submission and I hope you further investigate the experience of home educated students and their needs and the committee will be inviting representatives of this community to speak on its behalf.

Kind regards
Emma Turner

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