

Written evidence submitted by a Parent

Submission for the committee discussion on the Impact of Covid 19 on Education and Child's Services

Introduction

I am writing as a mother of a child who has been home educated for the last two years and was due to sit eight GCSE exams as a private candidate this summer. The cancellation of exams has resulted in my daughter receiving no exam grades and the expectation that she will need to sit these exams in the autumn or next summer. The sixth form college she was due to attend do not know when they will be able to confirm if she has a place to study A levels.

Submission

Background

My daughter attended a local state secondary school until the age of 14 (end of year 9). She had previously suffered from anxiety and emetophobia and during her time at school she was bullied. She also required two operations for an ear condition and she took some time to recover after each of these, mainly as a result of her mental health being affected. We kept the school informed of all this but the school decided to penalise her due to her absences which meant that she had to get a Drs letter before it could be marked as an authorised absence. Due to her mental and physical health being poor for some time she had had a great deal of interaction with medical professionals and as a result had become increasingly distressed when attending medical appointments, sometimes even having panic attacks before appointments. We tried to explain this to the school but they did not accept this and as a result my daughter ended up with a few unauthorised absences as we did not want to take her to the Drs when she did not need to go. Due to the ongoing bullying and the pressure she felt under to attend school even when she was unwell meant that her health suffered even more and she eventually ended up in a classroom where children worked who couldn't cope with the mainstream classes. However, the support for children was poor and she was really working on her own and still suffered from bullying. After trying and failing to work with the school my daughter asked if she could be home educated and we eventually agreed as it appeared that the school could not support her needs and we could find no spaces in other local schools.

Home educating

Home educating is not a cheap, easy option to take and not one we had thought we would need when my daughter started secondary school. We had to work hard to understand how the home educating system worked, what subjects she could take as a private candidate and to find online support for my daughter as we did not have the funds for tutors for each of the subjects. My daughter worked extremely hard over the two years working through the curriculum for each subject. I entered her for eight GCSEs for this summer, again not a cheap process as the cost was almost £1000.

Covid 19

When the exams for this year were cancelled, we presumed that all children, including home educated children, would receive a grade to ensure that they could progress to the

next stage of their education. However, following the consultations on the exam cancellation it transpired that it was only children who had worked with the exam centres and, the tutors working with these centres, who may be able to receive grades. As I had booked my daughter's exams with the local sixth form, which accepted private candidates but is not an exam centre, it meant that she has been left with no grades and will need to sit the exams at a later date. We do not know if the sixth form college she has applied to will allow her to start her A level studies without any GCSEs and if they do then she will be working on her A levels and revising for her GCSEs at the same time. If she is not allowed to start her A level course until she has taken her GCSEs this will mean she will be separated from her friends who remained at school and will receive grades for their GCSEs. As you can imagine neither of these situations is ideal and, not surprisingly, the position we find ourselves in due to the cancellation of exams has caused a lot of distress to my daughter.

Conclusion

I believe that home educated children have not been taken into account enough following the cancellation of exams, especially those children who will have no grades as a result of the cancellations. I therefore wanted to highlight our experiences so that the committee was aware of the difficulties some children and families are facing.

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