

3rd July 2010

Dear Mrs Davenport

Re: Lancashire County Council Home Education Protocols and Procedures.

We are a group of Home Educating parents who live in Lancashire. We don't claim to represent the entire local HE community as it is of course composed of individual families.

Our purpose in writing to you is to let you know our concerns about the current EHE Protocols and Procedures as we believe that many changes are needed to your current documentation and handling of Home Educators in the County.

We would also like to continue the process which was started in early 2009 to form an official forum for liaison between Lancashire County Council EHE department and Home Educating families from across Lancashire. This should benefit all parties as we would all be able to consider the impact of any policy on those of us to whom it applies.

Examples of important issues that we would like to have the opportunity to discuss are:

- 1) The Council's procedure of directing the school to notify the CME team when a child has been de-registered from the school to be electively home educated when these children are not missing education.
- 2) The way the Council gives parents the impression that they are obliged to have visits from an EHE officer.
- 3) The possibility of offering our group as an outreach facility for parents considering Home Education.

We attach some of our comments on the current EHE Protocols and Procedures and also on the recommendations from the Review of EHE that was done last year to enable you to see where we feel improvement is needed.

These documents and others are attached to this email.

Also attached are direct quotes from the current laws affecting Home Education along with an interpretation of the law written by a group of Home Educators; including thoughts on ways to enable LAs to carry out their duty within the legal framework. We have included a number of links to information on Home Education that may also be helpful to you.

We very much want to be involved in any changes made to the Protocols and Procedures for Lancashire. Obviously any resultant changes to the Protocols and Procedures will be made in consultation with the larger Lancashire HE community. Information on any review can be circulated very effectively by informing the "known" HE families by post. Families who are not known could be informed by advertising in local libraries and providing information on the LA website.

The documentation must be corrected to reflect existing regulations. The de-registration process stated quotes the 1995 regulations and does not the current ones from 2006. These regulations changed two years before the Head of LEIS reviewed the Protocols and Procedures document.

Given that the legality of whether the LA should have automatic involvement in monitoring HE families is in question, we would hope that such consultation would provide reassurance that

responding to the consultation would only result in LA intervention if there was genuine reason to think that the family were not providing a suitable education.

We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

Tricia Farey, on behalf of

Lancashire Home Education Forum Group

cc: Mike Hart, Director of Children's Strategy and Resources
cc: Helen Denton, Executive Director for Children and Young People
cc: Angela Robinson, EHE Team Lead

The following engaging TED video is on the topic of self directed learning and how it relates to our society and education. It's American so worth bearing in mind that they created their compulsory schooling system in 1850 and we followed in 1870.

<http://www.tedxatlanta.com/videos/05182010-relearn/gever-tulley/>

A couple of articles on the topic if you have time to delve in at this point.

<http://www.infed.org/biblio/home-education.htm>

<http://blog.personalisededucationnow.org.uk/2010/04/21/a-scenario-for-change-paul-henderson/>

Details of MPs with knowledge and special interest in Home Education can be found here

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmllparty/register/memi349.htm>

Caroline Flint gave a well thought through speech on the topic in Parliament (from column 493 in Hansard)

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmpublic/childs/100204/pm/100204s08.htm>

This letter to the Guardian showed widespread disagreement with the proposed changes to law following the badman review.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2010/jan/11/home-schooling-education-children-policy>

Michael Gove explains why home education for their children is every parent's human right

<http://conservativehome.blogs.com/parliament/2010/01/michael-gove-explains-why-home-education-for-their-children-is-every-parents-human-right.html>

Yesterday saw the Second Reading of the Children, Schools and Families Bill in the Commons. In the below extracts from his speech, Shadow Children, Schools and Families Secretary, Michael Gove makes a strident defence of parents who decide to educate their children at home and expresses his concern about the bureaucratic burdens the Government is seeking to place upon them:

"I am deeply concerned about the additional bureaucratic burden that will now potentially be placed on thousands of our fellow citizens whose only crime is to want to devote themselves as fully as possible to their children's education. It is a basic right of parents to be able to educate their children in accordance with their own wishes, and to educate them at home if

they so wish. There may be many reasons why parents take that decision: they might be dissatisfied with local provision; their child might have a specific educational need that they feel can be better supported at home; or they might have philosophical objections to the style of education on offer at the local state schools that are easily accessible.

"Each of these decisions can sometimes be illuminating, in that they can tell us what is wrong with current provision-there might be a lack of diversity, for instance. Ultimately however, this is a basic human right that every parent should have, and I feel the Bill erodes that right, because, as I read it, it allows the state to terminate the right of a family to educate a child at home if the education offered is not deemed suitable according to regulations that the Secretary of State writes."

"I do not know of any home educating parent who supports these provisions. I, like almost every Member of this House, have been inundated by correspondence, telephone calls and e-mails from, and had private meetings with, home educating parents who are deeply concerned about this legislation, because it undermines the right of a family who have broken no laws and placed no child in danger to decide what is in the interests of their child.

"As the debate on home education has developed, I have become particularly worried about the way in which various issues have been conflated; I am especially worried about the conflation of safeguarding and child protection with quality of education. I deeply regret the way statistics have been used to suggest somehow that children are intrinsically at greater risk if they are being home educated; I believe I am right in saying that not a single home-educated child has had to be taken into care as a result of a child protection plan, yet there are those who have sedulously spread the myth that somehow children are at greater risk through being home educated.

"One of my specific concerns is that this legislation means the state will take it upon itself to regulate what may or may not be taught in the home. Proposed new section 19C in schedule 1 provides that parents will have to produce a report in accordance with regulations laid down by the Secretary of State explaining what they propose to include in the education programme for their child. They will then have to allow an inspector in at an appropriate point, and that inspector will have to be satisfied that the education being provided is suitable, according to the regulations laid down by the Secretary of State. If that education is not considered suitable by that local authority employee, the right of that individual to be home educated can be revoked. So this is not about safeguarding or even about child protection; this is about the Secretary of State being able to say that an individual home educating parent is not providing an education that he deems appropriate and therefore they should not have the right to educate that child at home."

Read the whole speech here:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100111/debtext/100111-0009.htm#10011123000118>

The critical response to Ofsted's report from Graham Stuart, Chair of the Education Select Committee:

<http://cnes4education.wordpress.com/2010/06/17/education-select-committees-chairmans-statement-on-home-education-report/>

The Ofsted report itself, based on questionnaires from a small number of HE families:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Documents-by-type/Thematic-reports/Local-authorities-and-home-education>

This is of course a plethora of information in the hope that some of it at least may be useful to you in your role.