

Response to DfES re Consultation for

GUIDELINES FOR LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITIES ON ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION

We in Lancashire welcome the guidelines in principal as it is helpful to have clarification on many issues affecting families educating at home. We met to discuss the draft guidelines and would like to make the following comments:

Part 1

1.1 From 1st April 2005 local education authorities no longer exists as such - it will be the Children's Services Authority. This will need to be reflected in the document.

1.2 "Home-educated" does not necessarily mean educated in the home, but we were not sure what is meant by "in the community". Could this refer to using local community resources, such as the library or museums or parents grouping together to form a small school, as in Burnley 2003?

1.4 We realise the list is not exhaustive, but feel that bullying should be added to the list, as it came high on the list of reasons in our own survey. The list as it stands could not be used to collate information as there would be a lot of discrepancies because diverse interpretation- it needs to be more specific. We would like a list that could readily be used to collate the data for analysis, ("a child's unwillingness or inability to go to school" - for what reason?)

1.5 "dissatisfaction with the public system of education provision"... are you suggesting that authorities should collate these responses and analyse the reasons for referral?

Part 2

2.4 "from birth" - need to add "or at any other stage up to compulsory leaving age"?

"efficient", defined as "achieves that which it sets out to achieve", is not a very helpful definition in this context, as some parents may not have any aims to start with. It is difficult for authorities to determine whether it is efficient.

2.5 We do stress in our new letters to parents that they must assume financial responsibility. However, we would like funding arrangements for Y10 and 11 pupils who wish to attend College part time for particular courses. Many of our local Colleges would like to allow home educated pupils to go to college for certain courses.

2.9 How can we "safeguard and promote the welfare of children" if we cannot get to see the child?

The "multi-agency approach" may work better under the new regime. Perhaps the law would need to be changed to allow someone from the authority to at least see the child.

Parts

3.1 Does it mean the teacher's own standards or standards you expect of the education provided?

3.2 There are 2 separate issues here - EHE children and children with medical difficulties. Is there a need to mention medical needs at all?

There should be a named senior officer responsible for Elective Home Education and this may be the same person who has responsibility for education otherwise than at school.

3.3 In Lancashire it is not 'Education Officers' that have contact with parents. We have a team of specialist support **teachers**. This works well, as it is easier for specialist teachers who are used to working co-operatively with parents to develop positive working relationships with them. We only have 1% of families who do not allow us to visit and we do not have complaints. We ask that the words "Education officers" is replaced by 'those'.

3.4 Initial contact with schools is not always "constructive" and "positive", as schools do not know enough about EHE. Maybe schools need to be better informed regarding EHE.

This implies that the authority does not need to be informed if a child with SEN in a mainstream school opts for education at home. We would like this clarified in the guidelines.

3.5 The last sentence of this section is almost redundant in our County as schools themselves (usually through their EWOs) inform the authority through our EHE team. Does this mean that our information pack for parents should state that parents are asked to inform us?

3.9 "It is recommended that..." is not congruent with "might be encouraged" in 3.5 above. It was felt that "to avoid unsettling the child unnecessarily" was not needed.

In the last sentence, "submit their proposals" sounds too legalistic and in Lancashire, we no longer ask parents to submit their proposals in writing, but discuss their plans and aims with them on our first visit and note them in our record of visit.

This now means that we can see them a lot earlier to offer support and suggestions. We do not have to wait for replies. (We realised that those parents who needed most guidance tended to be the ones that took the most time to respond and needed many reminders. They did not make a good and positive start.)

It would be better to say "to consider how they will educate their child".

3.13 Children in school do not spend "between 22 and 25 hours working" each week, as much time in school is spent moving around and instructions being given to others etc. List of points - these are not essential requirements, but our teachers do look out for some of them on their home visits.

3.15 This is a good list of what the provision should include. It was felt that the last part of the last bullet point, "opportunity for appropriate interaction with other children and other adults" is important and should be a separate bullet point.

Also, need to add "the child himself (herself) is satisfied with home education".

3.18 Following "it is recommended that the authority should ordinarily make contact on an annual basis", should add "but parents may request more frequent contact if they wish", as some parents prefer visits more frequently. In Lancashire, we usually visit 6 months after the initial visit (as at the first visit have often not finalised their plans) and then annually.

Part 4

4.6 "named contact" - can this be the specialist teacher who will normally visit?

4.9 We refer to ourselves as "specialist teachers". Educational welfare officers may be named differently as part of the Children's Services agenda.

Child Protection - would prefer this to be **Safeguarding Children**.

4.11 "local information sharing arrangements" - these have not happened yet.

4.12 Add the word "Further" at the beginning of the sentence.

4.13 CRB checks free of charge - yes, this is a good idea.

Parts

5.2 We would be keen to adopt a flexible approach on funding - However the DFES ought to consider a full or modified AWPU for each pupil who is formally known by the authority to be educated at home so that it can provide such support.

5.3. Suggest taking out the word "normal" at the end of first sentence, to put "attending school". EHE children do not take SAT tests, so it was felt that this paragraph should be amended.

5.4 "Prolog" - what is this?

5.6 Agree in principle with "Flexi-schooling" but don't have funding available to do it. If flexi-schooling is in operation, can the school get all or part of the AWPU and can that be used also to enter candidates for examinations? We in Lancashire have had parents that want their children to attend school for Art or Science and educate them at home for the rest of the time. Unfortunately at present there is no funding mechanism for doing this. Can the guidelines clarify how this will operate? Would the children be included in school targets for attendance or academic results? We thought it was the governing body that had to agree, not the "head teacher"

Not sure what is meant by "in many cases".

5.8 By whom should consideration be given? Responsibility for insurance provision should remain with the parents.

5.9 "pupils" normally means children and young people educated in school, not at home. Who has prime responsibility? Implication is that the authority does as well, but it should surely be the parents of EHE children.

5.12 We give EHE children a dated card confirming that they are registered for EHE.

5.14 This section seems discriminatory. We are concerned that this suggests a different response for Travellers than for other families.

Part6

6.1 Yes, we do provide this, plus the following additions were suggested as things we do well:

- offers regular visits by specialist teachers
- gives EHE children a dated card
- provides telephone advice
- provides a list of suitable websites
- puts parents in touch with library services and Connexions

It is hoped that our comments are useful.

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