

Consultation response - October 2009

Personal details

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Organisation: **gloucestershire county council**

Please tick if:

- you want us to keep your response confidential.
- you are responding on behalf of an organisation.
- if we can contact you in the future.
- if you would like us to acknowledge your response.
- if you would like us to inform you when the consultation results are published.

Please tick the box that best describes you as a respondent.

- Home educated child/young person
- Home educating parent
- Organisation representing home educating families
- Local Authorities
- Other organisation with responsibility for children (please specify in box below)
- Other (please specify in box below)

1 Do you agree that these proposals strike the right balance between the rights of parents to home educate and the rights of children to receive a suitable education?

Agree

2 Do you agree that a register should be kept?

Agree

Comments

LAs will need to tell parents what data is kept on the register and how/when data is shared with other agencies.

3 Do you agree with the information to be provided for registration?

Agree

4 Do you agree that home educating parents should be required to keep the register up to date?

Agree

5 Do you agree that it should be a criminal offence to fail to register or to provide inadequate or false information?

Agree

6 a) Do you agree that home educated children should stay on the roll of their former school for 20 days after parents notify that they intend to home educate?

Agree

Comments

It needs to be made clear that such a measure would be put in place to allow thinking time for families and to prevent the place being quickly given over to another child. It would not involve the child having to attend for those 20 days.

6 b) Do you agree that the school should provide the local authority with achievement and future attainment data?

Agree

Comments

Parents could use this attainment data to help them with plans for their child's future education. Given that home education is necessarily very different to education that is planned for a school setting it would not be appropriate for LA officers to expect parents to demonstrate that their child attains in ways predetermined by schools.

7 Do you agree that DCSF should take powers to issue statutory guidance in relation to the registration and monitoring of home education?

Agree

Comments

Statutory guidance would need to be clear on exactly what is meant by monitoring. Parents still will be responsible for their child's education.

8 Do you agree that children about whom there are substantial safeguarding concerns should not be home educated?

Agree

Comments

There will need to be clear guidance on what constitutes substantial safeguarding concerns and appropriate training for EHE staff as well as procedures for sharing concerns with families

9 Do you agree that the local authority should visit the premises where home education is taking place provided 2 weeks notice is given?

Disagree

Comments

It should not be necessary for LA officers to insist on visiting the home of home educating families in order to exercise their duties. The vast majority of families are happy to meet at home and those that don't are usually concerned about judgements LA officers might make about their home, based on values probably not discussed with families and irrelevant to home education.

10 Do you agree that the local authority should have the power to interview the child, alone if this is judged appropriate, or if not in the presence of a trusted person who is not the parent/carer?

Disagree

Comments

It would never be appropriate for LA officers within the role of supporting families with home education to insist on interviewing a child alone. The LA officer is not at all likely to be someone a child knows well or trusts and such power gives the impression that LA officers do not trust parents and believe

they can get to some hidden truth by seeing children alone. LA officers need to share any concerns about the child's education with parents and in cases where the LA officer has concerns about the welfare of a child, the usual safeguarding procedures apply.

11 Do you agree that the local authority should visit the premises and interview the child within four weeks of home education starting, after 6 months has elapsed, at the anniversary of home education starting, and thereafter at least on an annual basis? This would not preclude more frequent monitoring if the local authority thought that was necessary.

Agree

Comments

LA officers should arrange to meet families within the time frames outlined above but not necessarily within the family home and not necessarily involving an interview with the child. LA officers will need to talk to parents if/when a child is not seen during a meeting and decide on balance whether this represents a cause for concern. In such cases officers would need to explain concerns clearly to parents as well as what LA officers plan to do next and what steps parents can take to allay concerns.