

From: [REDACTED] "DfE Official"
Sent: 26 March 2020 11:36
To: [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Waltham Forest LA Official; "DfE Official"
Cc: [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Waltham Forest LA Official; "DfE Official"
Subject: RE: EHE and findings from SCR

Hi [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

It was good to speak with you both yesterday. Apologies there isn't a great deal we can contribute in respect of definitive actions the government may take in response to improving the safeguarding around children who are educated at home. However, I've provided below some lines that we've used in previous similar instances, and also when answering queries from MPs (such as in the [REDACTED] [REDACTED])

In such situations as this, we like the opportunity to clear the lines used before anything is released publicly. So once the final report/publication is put together, the opportunity to review the bits relevant to home education and Department lines, would be appreciated.

- Home Education, in many cases is appropriate, well-delivered and involves the parents in considerable sacrifice.
- In recent years, however, there has been a significant increase in the number of children being educated at home and there is considerable evidence that many of these children are not receiving a suitable education. There is also a safeguarding issue around the oversight of home-educated children, though there is no evidence of an increased risk compared to children who attend school.
- Nevertheless, a child being educated at home is not necessarily being seen on a regular basis by professionals, such as teachers, and this logically increases the chances that any parents who set out to use home education to avoid independent oversight may be more successful by doing so.
- Local authorities have a duty to identify, in so far as possible, children of compulsory school age who may not be receiving a suitable education. They also have safeguarding duties in respect of all children, whether or not they are attending school. The government wishes to support local authorities in these roles and better understand how they can exercise the oversight of children not in school effectively and proportionately.
- To that end, the department published strengthened guidance for EHE in April 2019. This updated guidance confirmed the existing statutory duties of local authorities and brought into sharper focus the action that they can, and should, be taking in light of any instance where children are not receiving suitable education. The guidance also set out ways in which local authorities should explore the scope for using agreements with health bodies, general practitioners and other agencies, to increase their knowledge of children who are not attending school.
- Further to this, the 2019 government consultation on Children Not in School sought views on four proposals:

- a duty on local authorities to keep a register of all children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a state or registered independent school/Non-Maintained Special Schools, showing where they are receiving education, whether at home and/or in some other settings;
 - a duty on parents of children to supply information for such a register;
 - a duty on proprietors of various defined settings to supply information on relevant children; and
 - a duty on local authorities to provide support to home educating families.
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- We are considering the responses received to the consultation as well as our analysis of these and the government will publish a consultation response in due course.

 - Our aim is to ensure that home education is suitable and delivered well, but in any instance where this is not the case and children are not receiving suitable education, local authorities are able to identify them more easily and take appropriate action.

Please do keep us posted on how the SCR progresses when you meet with the One panel.

I've also copied one of our Comms colleagues, [REDACTED] who helped coordinate lines linked to the [REDACTED]. Please keep him copied in too as we'll want to be prepared for any press queries this may pick up when it comes to publication.

Thanks,

[REDACTED]

Independent Education and Boarding Team
Department for Education

[REDACTED]