

UPDATE REGARDING NATIONAL CONSULTATION ON ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION

Education, Participation and Skills



The Department for Education consulted on a number of proposals for legislation which would affect local authorities, parents of children who are not attending state-funded schools or registered independent schools, and proprietors of some education settings.

The proposals within the consultation related to a statutory local authority registration system for children who do not attend state-funded or registered independent schools and came about following the consultation and call for evidence on elective home education held by the Department for Education in 2018.

The proposed legislation would establish a register maintained by local authorities of children not attending mainstream schools, together with associated duties on parents and the proprietors of certain educational settings. It also consulted on proposed legislation to establish a duty to support parents who educate children at home and seek support from their local authority in doing so.

The consultation focussed on proposals to create the following duties:

- Local authorities to maintain a register of all children of compulsory school age in its area who are not registered at state funded or registered independent school.
- Parents to register their child with local authority if not registered at state funded or registered independent school.
- Proprietors of specified types of education setting and who are providing education to children during normal school hours, to respond to enquiries from local authorities about children who may be in scope of the register.
- Local authorities to provide support to parents who educate children at home.

The consultation closed on 24th June 2019. We would support all of the proposals and continue to await the government response to the consultation.

In terms of what the implications of this will be for Plymouth children and young people, we are due to start a local consultation relating to the new Inclusion and Attendance Strategy in the new year. We have a clear vision for all children and young people in this city. Our aim is to implement an outcomes-based improvement programme which will embed robust arrangements for schools and families. The ultimate goal of the work plan is to achieve improved outcomes for children and young people who are missing out on, or, at risk of missing out on education, including home educated children.

The new Home Education Policy was produced in partnership with home educators across the city. We have agreed a cycle of quarterly review and meetings have been scheduled for the next 12 months in order to make this happen. All home educators will be invited to contribute to review and the ongoing development of home education policy within the city. In addition to this, as part of our forward plan, home educators, children and young people will be consulted regarding the new strategy.

Since 1st September 2019, support for families who decide to educate their children is being provided by the Inclusion, Attendance and Welfare Service, following the ending of the contract with the previous provider.

We recognise the rights of parents to home educate their children; for a number of children and their families it can be a positive and rewarding experience. However, as an education partnership we also need to acknowledge the unprecedented rise in the numbers of children being withdrawn to home education. We need to work together and with families to try and reduce the rate at which children are being deregistered for home education. This partnership working with families has commenced with regular sessions which are available to families to access in order to keep up to date with the support offer of children which is available in the City. In addition, the way that we are gathering information from parents who are electing to home educate has changed. Over the next 12 months we will use this information to get a better understanding of the experience of children, young people and parents who elect to home educate.

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