

Response ID ANON-ZVYB-ASDG-A

Submitted to Home education guidance
Submitted on 2022-07-12 17:33:00

Questions

1 The purpose of this guidance is to set out the relevant law, to provide advice on the roles and responsibilities for local authorities and families in relation to home education; and to encourage the development of trust, mutual respect and positive relationships.

Not Answered

2 The law does not foresee flexi-schooling, or make provision for it. Flexi-schooling is not the same as home education. Is this made sufficiently clear in paragraph 1.4?

Yes

Please give us your views:

3 How can local authorities hear the individual and collective voices of home educated learners?

Please share your examples here:

See our answer to question 10 on the issue of maintaining a national register of home schooled children and home schooling parents. Without knowing the details of children who are being home schooled within their area it is difficult to imagine how an authority can hear the voices of individual children or conjure up a credible collective channel of communication for an uncertain number of children of undetermined ages or whereabouts.

4 Please share examples of collaboration and involvement in the delivery of support and guidance for home educating families.

Please share your examples here:

5 Do you have any comments on paragraphs 3.1 – 3.11?

Please give us your comments:

There is a problem throughout this consultation with the use of 'parents' plural and 'family' singular. It is not simply a matter of apostrophes and loose grammar. Our casework generally concerns parents who have divorced or separated or who have never lived together. It is our concern that a decision by one parent with whom the children live most of the time to move to home schooling can be a means of marginalising the other parent. Given that the Scottish Government and its predecessor, the Scottish Executive, has stressed the benefit to children of the full involvement of their parents in education as a public good in itself it is unsatisfactory in the extreme that there is no protection for the child or the other parent when one parent makes a unilateral decision to home school. The benefit to children that comes with the full engagement of both parents even when they do not live together is expressed with some passion in the in the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 and the accompanying Statutory guidance. In his foreword to the first Statutory Guidance, then Education Secretary, Peter Peacock, wrote, "All the evidence shows when parents, carers and other family members are effectively involved in their children's education, the outcome for their children is better." The assertion has been repeated as benefit to individual children and as a public good in successive Scottish Government Action Plans since. It is incomprehensible therefore that the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act should be referred to only in one sentence in the supporting documents - to say it does not apply to home schooling. Cases brought to us have fallen under two of the scenarios listed where local authority consent is not required including move from one authority to another, withdrawal at the end of primary school. The perception of the 'non-resident' parents involved - all fathers - is that home schooling has been invoked as a means of detaching them from their relationship with their children and effectively removing their children from their previous relationship with the father, their extended family and their previous social circle of friends and playmates. It effectively takes them off the radar and beyond educational scrutiny. It has been reported that when a child moves from one local authority to another the previous authority to whom the child was known in the state sector has no further responsibility to the non-resident parent but neither does the receiving authority which does not even need to know the child is there. The UNCRC receives minimal mention in the consultation documents save for a helpful pointer towards those articles that specifically mention the word 'education'. However helpfully that may have been intended our view is that if the UNCRC is to mean anything it must be taken as a whole, including the references to the maintenance of parental and family relationships. It is difficult to see how the laissez faire approach to home schooling and the broad interests of the children within it can be squared with the requirements of GIRFEC. In sum, we feel any new system within which home schooling may sit must include protection of family relationships that may be threatened, undermined or excised by one parent using home schooling as an escape route from accountability. When only one parent makes the request without the agreement of another parent with unmodified Parental Rights and Responsibilities then that should be an alarm bell and a reason for the local authority to make enquiries with both parents. It may well be that its enquiries will conclude for various reasons that the decision should be supported.

6 Is it helpful for a local authority to provide a structure for parents to use to provide information on their education plans. For instance, broad questions or a template to support parents to think through their planned provision?

Yes

Please share your examples here:

7 Does 6 weeks provide sufficient time for a local authority to issue a decision regarding consent to withdraw a child from school?

Not Answered

Please provide details here:

It depends on the extent of the enquiries the local authority intends to conduct - in particular whether the application has been made by only one parent and without the agreement or even knowledge of the other.

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8 Do you consider in-person contact between the local authority and home educating family to be important?

Not Answered

Please give your examples here:

9 How can local authorities best keep general data on the numbers of home educated children and young people within their area?

Please give us your views:

10 What is your opinion of a national approach to information management, for example, a national register?

Please give us your views:

Children should not be allowed to disappear from the educational radar either within a local authority or within Scotland. It does not dilute the overall permissive principle underpinning home schooling that all children should have their educational status recorded and known. Without data how can government ever assess with confidence or credibility whether the home school system is working for children in general or for any child in particular? How can it benchmark the educational outcomes for children or even help the state sector learn from the home schooling sector? How can it assess the extent to which children need protection home schooling or whether home schooling is a form of excluding one parent from knowledge and involvement with his/her children.

11 What factors can facilitate home educated learners to access qualifications? What barriers or solutions may there be to accessing qualifications?

Please provide details here:

Please provide details here:

About you

12 What is your name?

Name:

John Forsyth

13 What is your email address?

Email:

jf@sharedparenting.scot

14 Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

Organisation

15 What is your organisation?

Organisation:

Shared Parenting Scotland

16 The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference:

Publish response with name

17 We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

Yes

18 I confirm that I have read the privacy policy and consent to the data I provide being used as set out in the policy.

I consent

Evaluation

19 Please help us improve our consultations by answering the questions below. (Responses to the evaluation will not be published.)

Matrix 1 - How satisfied were you with this consultation?:

Slightly dissatisfied

Please enter comments here.:

It does not feel that there is sufficient robustness in the supporting documents to underpin clear answers to the questions.

Matrix 1 - How would you rate your satisfaction with using this platform (Citizen Space) to respond to this consultation?:

Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

Please enter comments here.: