

FIRST MAJOR REVIEW - WITNESS SESSION 1

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REASON FOR ITEM

To enable the Committee to gather evidence as part of their First Major Review in relation to Elective Home Education.

OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO THE COMMITTEE

1. Question the witnesses
2. Highlight issues for further investigation
3. To make a note of possible recommendations for the review

INFORMATION

At this Committee's last meeting of 5 July 2011 Members gave consideration to three draft scoping reports on Elective Home Education, Parental Skills in Education Attainment and Risky Behaviours.

The Committee decided that their first major review would be Elective Home Education. The Aim of the review was to reach consensus on the EHE Policy adopted by the Planning Environment Education and Communities (PEECS) and the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (HSCB) – ensuring lawfulness and mindful of the views of Residents.

The Policy and Overview Committee is to hear from witnesses as follows

First Witness Session

Deborah Bell
Paul Hewitt
Cllr Carol Melvin

Second Witness Session

Parents that Home Education and have contact with the Local Education Authority
Parents that Home Education and have no contact with the Local Education Authority
Young people that have been home educated

Key Issues and areas of possible questioning

Scale of elective home education

1. How many children are currently being educated at home in Hillingdon?
2. How many parents advise the Council each year that they are electing to educate their child/children at home?

Quality of home education

3. What information is kept about the suitability of home education being provided in Hillingdon?

Hillingdon EHE adviser home visiting

4. How many home visits are made each year to homes where a child or children are receiving home education?
5. Does every home educator receive a visit at least once a year?
6. How are visits arranged? Are some announced and others unannounced?

Safeguarding and suitable education

7. Child Safeguarding involves careful assessment of risk and sharing of information. There is no power under the Education Act 2002 for local authorities to enter homes of children receiving home education.
 - a. What arrangements are in place for assessing any risks to children where a parent elects to educate at home?
 - b. How is information shared between services working with children when Hillingdon is considering its duties on safeguarding and provision of suitable education?

Information and advice

8. Hillingdon's draft policy on Home Education says that guidance can be provided on request. The Council website has a leaflet which provides a limited amount of information for parents.
 - a. How have parents been consulted on the new draft policy?
 - b. The existing Hillingdon leaflet on the Council website and the draft policy both aim to be clear but in fact are not clearly worded include a lot of jargon. There are better examples of information and guidance available elsewhere. For example, Westminster City Council provides clear information on its website along with guidance which takes a positive view of home education and gives practical advice in clear plain language. Could Hillingdon seek to emulate the positive clear information provided by Westminster and others?

<http://www.westminster.gov.uk/services/educationandlearning/schoolsandcolleges/schoolsinformation/educationwelfare/elective-home-education/>

http://www3.westminster.gov.uk/docstores/publications_store/Guidance%20For%20Parents.pdf

PAPERS WITH THE REPORT

Scoping report attached as Appendix A.

SUGGESTED COMMITTEE ACTIVITY

1. Members question the witnesses and identify important issues for their review.
2. Members identify areas where further information and evidence is required to help greater understanding of the issues.
3. Members to give consideration to initial recommendations for the review.