

- 3.14** It is important to recognise that there are many, equally valid, approaches to educational provision. Local authorities should, therefore, consider a wide range of information from home educating parents, in a range of formats. The information may be in the form of specific examples of learning e.g. pictures/paintings/models, diaries of educational activity, projects, assessments, samples of work, books, educational visits etc.
- 3.15** In their consideration of parents' provision of education at home, local authorities may reasonably expect the provision to include the following characteristics:
- consistent involvement of parents or other significant carers - it is expected that parents or significant carers would play a substantial role, although not necessarily constantly or actively involved in providing education
 - recognition of the child's needs, attitudes and aspirations
 - opportunities for the child to be stimulated by their learning experiences
 - access to resources/materials required to provide home education for the child - such as paper and pens, books and libraries, arts and crafts materials, physical activity, ICT and the opportunity for appropriate interaction with other children and other adults.
- 3.16** If a local authority considers that a suitable education is not being provided, then a full written report of the findings should be made and copied to the parents promptly, specifying the grounds for concern and any reasons for concluding that provision is unsuitable. If the authority is not satisfied that a suitable education is being provided, and the parents, having been given a reasonable opportunity to address the identified concerns and report back to the authority have not done so, the authority should consider sending a formal notice to the parents under section 437 (see paragraph 2.7) before moving on, if needed, to the issuing of a school attendance order (section 437(1)). See paragraphs 2.9 - 2.11.

Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

- 3.17** Parents' right to educate their child at home applies equally where a child has SEN. This right is irrespective of whether the child has a statement of special educational needs or not. Where a child has a statement of SEN and is home educated, it remains the local authority's duty to ensure that the child's needs are met.
- 3.18** Local authorities must have regard to the *Special Educational Needs Code of Practice*¹⁶. Although this document primarily covers special educational needs in the school and early years' settings, it does give information about SEN in relation to home education (paragraphs 8.91 - 8.96 of the Code). The Code of Practice emphasises the importance of local authorities and other providers working in partnership with parents. The Code of Practice is statutory guidance and schools, local authorities and others to whom it applies must have regard to it. This means that, apart from the references to the law, these bodies do not have to follow the Code to the letter but they must be able to justify any departure from its guidance. The foreword states that the Code is designed to help these bodies to "make effective decisions but it does not - and could not - tell them what to do in each individual case".

¹⁶ SEN Code of Practice is available at: <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/docbank/index.cfm?id=3724>

- 3.19** If the parents' attempt to educate the child at home results in provision that falls short of meeting the child's needs, then the parents are not making "suitable arrangements", and the authority could not conclude that they were absolved of their responsibility to arrange the provision in the statement. Parents need only provide an efficient, full-time education suitable to the age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs the child may have as defined in Section 7 of the Education Act 1996. It is the authority's duty to arrange the provision specified in the statement, unless the child's parent has made suitable provision, for as long as a statement is maintained. In some cases a combination of provision by parents and LA may best meet the child's needs. Local authorities should consider, for example, providing access to additional resources or treatments where appropriate.¹⁷
- 3.20** Even if the local authority is satisfied that parents are making suitable arrangements, it remains under a duty to maintain the statement and review it annually, following procedures set out in chapter 9 of the SEN Code of Practice. In some circumstances the child's special educational needs identified in the statement will have been related to the school setting and the child's needs may readily be met at home by the parents without LA supervision. It may be appropriate, once it is established that a child's special needs are being met without any additional support from the LA, to consider ceasing to maintain the statement. This may be done at the annual review or at any other time. Where the statement is reviewed it should be made clear to parents that they are welcome to attend, but they are not obliged to do so.
- 3.21** Where the authority is satisfied that the child's parents have made suitable arrangements it does not have to name a school in part 4 of the child's statement. There should be discussion between the authority and the parents and rather than the name of the school, part 4 of the statement should mention the type of school the LA considers appropriate and that "parents have made their own arrangements under section 7 of the Education Act 1996".
- 3.22** The statement should also specify any provision that the local authority has agreed to make under section 319 of the Education Act 1996 to help parents to provide suitable education for their child at home. If the child who is to be withdrawn from the school is a pupil at a special school, the school must inform the local authority before the child's name can be deleted from the school roll and the authority will need to consider whether the elective home education is suitable before amending part 4 of the child's statement.
- 3.23** A parent who is educating their child at home may ask the local authority to carry out a statutory assessment or reassessment of their child's special educational needs and the local authority must consider the request within the same statutory timescales and in the same way as for all other requests. Local authorities should provide information to home educators detailing the process of assessment and both local authorities' and home educators' responsibilities with regard to provision should the child be given a statement. The views of the designated medical officer for SEN should be sought by the local authority where a child with a statement is educated at home because of difficulties related to health needs or a disability.

¹⁷ Section 319 of the Education Act 1996

Part 4

Developing relationships

- 4.1** As noted in the Introduction to these guidelines, the central aim of this document is to assist local authorities in carrying out their statutory responsibilities with respect to elective home educated children. The DCSF hopes that this will enable local authorities to build effective relationships with home educators that function to safeguard the educational interests of children and young people: relationships that are rooted in mutual understanding, trust and respect. The guidelines outline a number of recommendations that are geared towards the promotion of such relationships.
- 4.2** Whilst there is no legal obligation on local authorities or home educators to develop such relationships, doing so will often provide parents with access to any support that is available and allow authorities to better understand parents' educational provision and preferences. A positive relationship will also provide a sound basis if the authority is required to investigate assertions from any source that an efficient and suitable education is not being provided.

Acknowledging diversity

- 4.3** Parents' education provision will reflect a diversity of approaches and interests. Some parents may wish to provide education in a formal and structured manner, following a traditional curriculum and using a fixed timetable that keeps to school hours and terms. Other parents may decide to make more informal provision that is responsive to the developing interests of their child. One approach is not necessarily any more efficient or effective than another. Although some parents may welcome general advice and suggestions about resources, methods and materials, local authorities should not specify a curriculum or approach which parents must follow.
- 4.4** Children learn in different ways and at different times and speeds. It should be appreciated that parents and their children might require a period of adjustment before finding their preferred mode of learning and that families may change their approach over time. Parents are not required to have any qualifications or training to provide their children with a suitable education. It should be noted that parents of all educational, social, racial, religious and ethnic backgrounds successfully educate children outside the school setting and these factors should not in themselves raise a concern about the suitability of the education being provided.

Providing information for parents

- 4.5** The provision of clear information has an important role to play in the promotion of positive relationships. Local authorities should provide written information and website links for prospective and existing electively home educating parents that are clear and accurate and which set out the legal position, and roles and responsibilities, in an unambiguous way. We also recommend that contact details for home education support organisations should be provided. Home education organisations' contact details may be found through an internet search. All written information should be made available to parents in local community

languages and alternative formats on request. From April 2008 local authorities will have a legal duty¹⁸ to broaden the information they make available to parents to support their children.

- 4.6** As noted in paragraph 3.3 we recommend that local authorities should, if the parents wish, provide them with a named contact within the authority who is familiar with elective home education policy and practice and has an understanding of a range of educational philosophies. If the authority invites parents to meet the named contact (see paragraph 3.6), any such meeting should take place at a mutually acceptable location and the child concerned should also be given the opportunity, but not be required, to attend that meeting, or otherwise to express his or her views. Either during such a meeting, or otherwise, the parents and the authority should consider and agree what future contact there will be between them, recognising that in many instances such contact might be beneficial but is not legally required.

Safeguarding

- 4.7** The welfare and protection of all children, both those who attend school and those who are educated at home, are of paramount concern and the responsibility of the whole community. *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2006*¹⁹ states that all agencies and individuals should aim proactively to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. As with school educated children, child protection issues may arise in relation to home educated children. If any child protection concerns come to light in the course of engagement with children and families, or otherwise, these concerns should immediately be referred to the appropriate authorities using established protocols.²⁰
- 4.8** Parents may choose to employ other people to educate their child, though they themselves will continue to be responsible for the education provided. They will also be responsible for ensuring that those whom they engage are suitable to have access to children. Parents will therefore wish to satisfy themselves by taking up appropriate references and local authorities should encourage them to do this. A small number of local authorities choose to assist home-educating parents in this task by undertaking Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks free of charge on independent home tutors and the DCSF endorses this helpful practice. Tutors employed by a local authority or an agency may also undertake work for home educating parents, in which case CRB checks ought to have been made already.
- 4.9** Paragraph 2.12 to 2.15 details local authorities' duties to make arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

¹⁸ Section 12 of the Childcare Act 2006

¹⁹ *Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2006* is available at: <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/IG00060/>

²⁰ *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2006*

Reviewing policies and procedures

- 4.10** Local authorities should review all of their procedures and practices in relation to elective home education on a regular basis to see if improvements can be made to further develop relationships and meet the needs of children and parents. Home education organisations and home educating parents should be involved in this process of review. Effective reviews, together with the sensitive handling of any complaints, will help to secure effective partnership.
- 4.11** Local authorities should bear in mind that Ofsted report on the way local authorities cater for elective home educating families within their areas. Local authorities should keep home educators and home education support organisations informed of the policies and procedures of Ofsted reviews and any input they will have.

Part 5

Support and resources

- 5.1** When parents choose to electively home educate their children they assume financial responsibility for their children's education.
- 5.2** Local authorities do not receive funding to support home educating families, and the level and type of support will therefore vary between one local authority and another. However, we recommend that all local authorities should adopt a consistent, reasonable and flexible approach in this respect, particularly where there are minimal resource implications. As a minimum, local authorities should provide written information (which is also available through the internet) on elective home education that is clear and accurate and which sets out the legal position (see paragraphs 4.5 - 4.6). Some local authorities may be able to offer additional support to home educating parents, but this will vary depending on their resources. Examples of additional support include:
- provision of a reading or lending library with resources for use with the home educated children
 - free, or discounted, admission into community programmes (including local authority owned community and sports facilities)
 - access to resource centres (including local school resources where feasible)
 - National Curriculum materials and curricula offered by other educational institutions
 - information about educational visits and work experience
 - providing assistance with identifying exam centres willing to accept external candidates.

The National Curriculum

- 5.3** Although home educated children are not required to follow the National Curriculum a number do. National Curriculum tests and assessment arrangements are developed and administered by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) on behalf of the Secretary of State. Information to support these arrangements is provided both electronically and in hard copy through the QCA's website at www.qca.org.uk or by telephoning their publications office on 08700 606015.
- 5.4** In addition, the DCSF's website at www.dcsf.gov.uk will allow access to the National Curriculum and associated schemes of work, aimed at setting standards across all schools. Some documents are also distributed via Departmental publications which can be accessed through links on the Stationery Office site at www.tso.co.uk/ or by telephoning 0845 602 2260.

Connexions Service

5.5 The Connexions Service is an England only service. Its purpose is to provide support to all 13 to 19 year olds and to young people who have not yet reached 25 years if they have a learning difficulty, in order to encourage, enable or assist their effective participation in education or training. The Connexions Service also assists young people to obtain suitable employment and related training and education. Its services and responsibilities cover children and young people who are being educated at home. From April 2008 each local authority will be funded and have responsibility for the provision of Connexions services in its area. The local Connexions Service is responsible for maintaining an overview of the learning and work status of all young people that are covered by its remit and seeks to ensure that none fall between the responsibilities and remit of different agencies and thus become marginalized or lost to the system. Sections 117, 119 and 120 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 make provision about the supply of information to Connexions providers, subject to normal data protection principles.

Flexi-schooling

5.6 This paragraph has been removed (March 2013). See main web page on Elective Home Education guidelines.

Local authorities' role in supporting work experience

5.7 Work experience is not a statutory requirement. However, the Government's objective is for all Key Stage 4 pupils to undertake work experience in the last two years of compulsory schooling. Over 95% of Key Stage 4 pupils go on placements each year. The law relating to the employment of children generally places statutory restrictions and prohibitions on employers in this respect. Where the employment is in accordance with arrangements made by a local authority or a governing body, with a view to providing pupils with work experience as part of their education in their last two years of compulsory schooling, these restrictions will generally not apply.²²

5.8 Children educated at home have no entitlement to participate in work experience under arrangements made by a local authority but we encourage local authorities to assist the parents of home educated children who wish to pursue work experience through such arrangements. Where home educated children do participate in such schemes, consideration should be given to the extent to which such children are covered by, for example, the health and safety, child protection and insurance provision made on behalf of school children, often by intermediary bodies, which are necessary to safeguard the child.

²² see section 560 of the Education Act 1996, as amended by section 112 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998

Education Maintenance Allowance

- 5.9** Education Maintenance Allowance is an income tested weekly allowance available to learners over the age of 16 as an incentive to stay on in education at school or college after GCSEs. It is not available to learners whose parents elect to home educate them after the age of 16.

Truancy sweeps

- 5.10** When planning and running truancy sweeps, LAs should refer to the DCSF's *School Attendance and Exclusions Sweeps Effective Practice*²³. This includes a section on children who are educated outside the school system. Those taking part in the sweeps, including police officers, police community support officers, local authority staff and anyone else taking part in the sweep should be fully familiar with this guidance, act in accordance with it and be aware that there is a range of valid reasons why compulsory school-age children may be out of school.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Children

- 5.11** Local authorities should have an understanding of and be sensitive to, the distinct ethos and needs of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. It is important that these families who are electively home educating are treated in the same way as any other families. Home education should not necessarily be regarded as less appropriate than in other communities. When a Gypsy, Roma and Traveller family with children of school age move into an area, they are strongly encouraged to contact the local Traveller Education Support Service for advice and help to access local educational settings. Most LAs provide such a service. Further guidance can be obtained from the DCSF's Guide to Good Practice on the education of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children - *Aiming High: Raising the Achievement of Gypsy Traveller Pupils* which can be obtained from DCSF Publications (reference DfES/0443/2003). Another (external) source of information is www.gypsy-traveller.org/education/.

Gifted and talented children

- 5.12** Although the Department does not have hard data, anecdotal evidence suggests that many home educated children would be identified as gifted and talented were they to attend a school. Some home educated children are likely to be exceptionally able; others will have additional educational needs.
- 5.13** Local authority support for home educated children should take into account whether they might be gifted and talented. Through the lead officers for gifted and talented education, these children may be able to access local and regional learning opportunities alongside pupils from local schools. Authorities are encouraged to draw parents' attention to Young Gifted and Talented (YG&T), the Learner Academy for gifted and talented children and young people aged 4-19. YG&T is available to home-educated learners as well as to those in schools. They can access free and priced opportunities advertised in its Learner Catalogue, use its discussion forums and benefit from other resources and support as they become available. Electively home educated children and their parents can register with YG&T at www.dcsf.gov.uk/ygt.

²³ Available at www.dcsf.gov.uk/schoolattendance/truancysweeps

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