

## **THE BADMAN REVIEW OF ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION (EHE) IN ENGLAND**

### **Background on Elective Home Education in Oxfordshire**

EHE families are an eclectic group. A wide variety of reasons for home educating are presented e.g. distance or access to local school; religious or cultural beliefs; philosophical or ideological beliefs; dissatisfaction with the system; bullying; short term intervention or inability to attend school; special educational needs; parent's desire for a closer relationship with their children; health. A wide variety of approaches to education provision are taken e.g. autonomous, career focussed, distance learning, exam focussed, highly structured, internet based, National Curriculum, project based, religion based or workbook schemes. Only some families choose to register with the Local Authority; we have in the region of 300 children registered. The Local Authority aims to visit each family annually unless there are concerns. The majority of families we see are cooperative and are providing a suitable education. However, some families are known to use EHE to avoid problems rather than choosing EHE for its principles and children may not be accessing suitable education. There is concern that EHE may be used to cover child protection issues and that vulnerable children may add to their vulnerability by being in EHE.

Graham Badman conducted a review of Elective Home Education in England this year and presented 28 recommendations to the DCSF. The DCSF responded to Graham Badman's Paper on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2009. This is available on

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/ete/independentreviewofhomeeducation/irhomeeducation/> . A summary of the response has been prepared by the Service Manager identifying main service areas likely to be influenced by or involved in these possible changes and is available for you.

### **Key Issues**

- **The DCSF Response to the Badman Recommendations**

The Local Authority welcomes some of the recommendations of the report and is pleased that the DCSF plans to support these with statutory guidance and funding. For example, we welcome the establishment of a national register as currently we do not know of all children on EHE (Badman estimates that there 20,000 children in England at present who are known but there may be up to 80,000 in total; Oxfordshire has

approximately 300 children registered in EHE). They plan to develop a training package for EHE staff covering safeguarding, equal opportunities and home education practice, the latter being particularly welcome. It is recommended that more support is given to EHE families relating to exam fees and centres, flexi schooling and Special Educational Needs support; these will need to be given careful consideration as there are implications for schools, colleges, the Learning Disability & Difficulties Service as well as significant funding implications. The DCSF intends that statutory guidance should include establishing a strong link to the Children's Trust. Recommendation 7 suggests that there is a right of access to the home and that a child can be interviewed about their education one to one, without the parents being present and we do not support that recommendation (the DCSF response indicates that they will give this further consideration). Further details are available on the accompanying documents.

- **The Response of Elective Home Educators**

Some home educators are pleased to cooperate with the local authority and have no strong objections to most of the recommendations. However, there is a strong body of opposition to the Badman Review amongst some of the home educators (some of whom feel they are being labelled as child abusers by the tone of the review). This body is not representative of the whole range of home educators, but it is strong and active. There have been many Freedom of Information requests and there is significant activity within EHE networks at meetings and online. MPs have been approached by some home educators expressing their concerns. In Oxfordshire, EHE staff are finding resistance to their approaches from some families with whom they have previously had good relationships, as the families feel threatened by or opposed to the review. Meetings have taken place between the Service Manager, Strategic Lead for Inclusion, the EHE local contact for Education Otherwise (a charity run for home educators) and other home educators to share views and find some common ground and open dialogue is being established.

**Next Steps:**

- Information about the proposals is being communicated to relevant services and agencies.
- The Local Authority needs to participate in further consultations with the DCSF.
- The Local Authority needs to engage with developments as they progress.

- Continued dialogue with home educators on the progress of the review is planned.

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