

Request for practice examples: elective home education and safeguarding

Context

As part of its work in seeking to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families, the Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services (C4EO) is urging local authorities and Children's Trusts to share their examples of work which is helping to make a difference to the lives of children and their families. At present, we are particularly interested in the ways in which local authorities support home educators; how they deploy staff and resources; what training is provided to those staff supporting home educators; and the systems which local authorities have in place to ensure that all areas of the local authority with an interest in home educated children are kept informed. We are also interested in the arrangements which local authorities might have with the third sector, schools or other providers to help support home educators.

This is a complex topic for a number of reasons, including that:

- Parents may decide to exercise their right to home educate their child from a very early age and children may not have been previously enrolled in school.
- Parents are not required to register or seek approval to educate their child at home.
- Local authorities have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their area and can apply to the courts for an order to enable an assessment of a child, where there are grounds for believing that he or she may be suffering or are likely to suffer significant harm.
- Home education visits are primarily undertaken to ensure that suitable education is being provided. How these visits are undertaken and by whom may vary between local authorities and may not involve staff with knowledge and skills in recognising when a child may be being abused or neglected and taking appropriate action, or in assessing whether a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm.
- Children who are not at school are not synonymous with those children who are home educated, and those 'not in school' include:
 - Children who do not have the usual access to universal services, such as children from traveller families, or refugee families, or those who are not known to universal services.
 - Children withdrawn from school because they experience difficulties there, such as bullying.
 - Children and families who disappear from view.

Request

We are keen to establish how Children's Trusts and local authorities understand and address the complexities outlined. We would therefore be grateful to learn how, in your local area, these issues are identified and addressed and how:

- You establish, among those being home educated, those who are not receiving a suitable education.
- You support home educators by deploying staff and resources.
- You monitor these arrangements and act on the information this provides.
- You train those staff supporting home educators.

We are also interested in:

- Where responsibility for this work sits within the local authority.
- Who undertakes the work, and what information and support is offered to parents.
- The additional knowledge and skills required and how staff are trained to undertake work with a focus on well being, welfare and safety in a home education context.
- The procedures and practices that exist.
- The protocols which exist, for example, does a school go beyond notifying the local authority of withdrawal from school and identify any safeguarding concerns.
- The cross agency arrangements that support the above work so that it is proportionate, efficient and effective.
- The systems you have in place to ensure that all partners of the Children's Trust with an interest in home educated children are kept informed.
- Any arrangements you might have in place with the third sector, schools or other providers to help support home educators.
- Whether and how your arrangements for children missing from education have had an impact on the identification of both children missing from education and children receiving home education.
- Whether you have arrangements in related areas of practice that could inform future practice, for example, where families have difficulties accessing universal services, or where children and young people are withdrawn from school for whatever reason.

Our intention is that, by sharing this information, you will enable C4EO to begin to draw a map of existing practice, and indicate future work required on developing the safeguarding and promoting welfare aspects of home education responsibilities for Children's Trusts.

Any information you can provide in response to the above questions would be very gratefully received by emailing C4EOTeam@nfer.ac.uk. Our deadline for responses is **Friday 19th February 2010**.

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