

Plain English Version



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Welsh Government

Consultation Document

**Have your say about proposals
on home education – proposals
to register and monitor
home-based education**

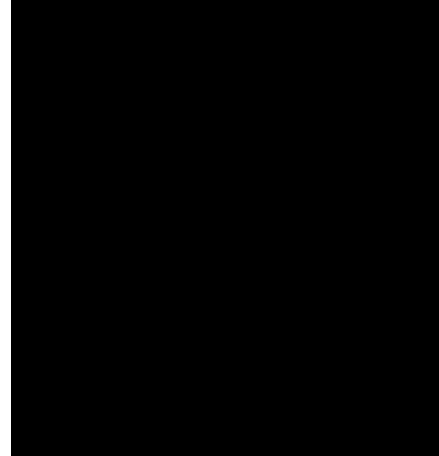
Date of issue: 3 September 2012

Action required: Responses by
23 November 2012

**A plain English version of the
consultation on 'Registering and
monitoring home-based education'**

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Summary

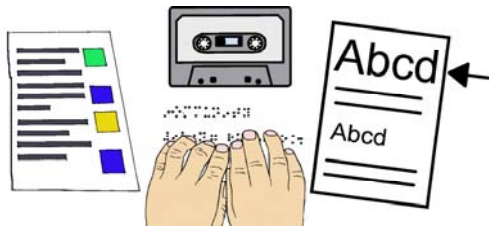
Local authorities need to keep track of children who are being educated at home.

Local authorities need to be able to assess that children who are being educated at home have good opportunities to learn.

To do this we want to:

- **set up a register for children who are educated at home**
- **check that children are learning the right skills for their age and ability.**

We want to know what you think about our proposals.



Different versions

This is a plain English version. It is for people who prefer to have a document where the words and their meaning are easier to read and understand. It has been prepared for the Welsh Government by Learning Disability Wales.

You can also ask for the consultation document in:

- large print
- Braille
- other languages.



Having a say

We would like you to tell us what you think about our proposals.

To help you give your views we have produced a plain English response form for you to fill out and return.

To tell us what you think, e-mail or post the response form by 23 November 2012 to the address below.

Pupil Wellbeing Branch
Department for Education and Skills
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

e-mail: wellbeingshare@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Tel: 029 2080 1076

More information can be found on our website at www.wales.gov.uk/consultations



Data protection: how your responses will be used

All responses will be seen by Welsh Government staff dealing with the consultation. It may be used to help other Welsh Government staff when they consult with people.

We will publish a summary of the responses we receive.

Sometimes we publish all of the responses we receive. When we do this, we usually publish the name and address (or part of) the person or organisation who gave their views. This shows that we consulted people properly.

If you do not want us to publish your name and address, please tell us when you give us your views. We will then blank them out.

The **Freedom of Information Act 2000** means people can ask to see information held by public organisations, like the Welsh Government.

The law allows us to keep some information private. If you ask us not to publish your name and address, we will try to keep it private.

Sometimes we have to reveal names and addresses. If this happens we will get in touch with you before we do anything.



A word from Leighton Andrews, Minister for Education and Skills

Every child has the right to an education. Different people are responsible for making this happen.

When a child is very young, most of their learning takes place at home. For children 5–16 years old, parents (or the person with parental or caring responsibility) must make sure their child has an education that suits their age and needs.

Most parents send their children to school for this. Some parents choose to educate their child at home.

To make sure children have the best opportunities to learn, local authorities and parents need to work together. We want to support parents who are educating their children at home and make sure that children receive the education they need.

To do this we have to know what children are being educated at home and what they are learning.

We want parents to tell their local authority if they are educating their child at home.

We want to find good ways to assess what children are learning and to review this every year. We also want local authority staff to have more training to understand the differences between home and school-based learning.

I look forward to hearing what you think.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leighton Andrews." The signature is written in a cursive style.

Leighton Andrews, Minister for Education and Skills



Background information

In the UK we have laws to make sure children are educated.

The **Education Act 1996** asks parents (or the person with parental or caring responsibility) to make sure children aged 5–16 years old take part in full-time education. This can be at home or at school.

The **Education Act 1996** asks local authorities to find out which children in their area are not on a school register. They also have to find out if these children are receiving a suitable education.

In 2010 the Welsh Government produced guidelines to help local authorities to find and help stop children from missing out on their education.

At the moment it can be difficult for local authorities to find out how children are being educated if they are not at school.

To protect the rights of children to a suitable education, we want to make it easier for local authorities to do this.

Our proposals include introduction of a system that requires children educated at home to be included on a register. The parent will be required to register their child.

Definition of home educated

This is when a child aged 5–16 years old is being educated outside of established schools, particularly in the home.

The education is provided by the parent, carer or in some cases another person. These people are called home educators.



The issues

There are three issues we have been looking into.

1. Keeping track of children who are being educated at home.
2. Making sure home education is suitable for the child.
3. How much say children should have in decisions made about them.



Keeping track of children who are being educated at home

School does not suit all children.

There are several reasons why children are educated at home. The reasons include:

- some families want to educate their children because of their beliefs and values
- there may not be a place at the school of their choice
- some children may have been bullied at school
- some children may have special educational needs.

Currently, we are not sure how many children are home educated. Parents do not have to tell the local authority – unless their child is in special education.

Even when local authorities work with other organisations that are in contact with the child and family, it can still be difficult for them to keep track of children who are not in school.

Although local authorities have an informal register of home educated children, this is often incomplete as it relies on parents letting local authorities know that they are

educating their child at home. If a child has never been to school, the local authority may not know about them.

It can be especially difficult for a local authority to keep track of home educated children:

- if the decision to home educate is taken before the child reaches school age
- at the time between primary and secondary school
- when the family moves area.



Making sure home education is suitable for the child

Children who are educated at home do not have to learn the same things that children who attend school do. This means that styles of learning vary a lot. Learning can be formal or informal – where the child decides what they want to learn.

It can be difficult to decide what a suitable education is for an individual child. It can mean different things for different children. A suitable education is described as one that prepares the child for life as a member of their community, but does not stop them from choosing to live another sort of life if they wish to in the future.

Assessing whether home education is suitable or not is difficult because there is little guidance or training for local authority staff to understand the differences.

Separate to this consultation, we propose to issue new legal guidance that will assist local authorities to ensure children receive a suitable education. We will consult separately on this new guidance. It will include the following issues.

- Is the education suited to the age, ability, personality and interests of the child?
- Does the education cover a wide range of learning topics and experiences?

- Does the education develop the social, personal and emotional skills of the child?
- Does the education ensure basic reading, writing and maths?

We will also develop training materials for local authority staff to support a fair and consistent way to check the suitability of the education provided at home. The training will:

- show the differences between school and home education
- show that home-based education can be equally suitable, or in some cases, more suitable for the child.



How much say children should have in decisions made about them

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is an agreement that protects the rights of children under 18 years old.

Welsh Government considers children's rights when making decisions about the well-being of children.

For these proposals we have taken into account the rights of children to:



- have an education
- have a say about the decisions that affect them.

We have produced this plain English version to make our proposals easier to read and understand. This will help children and young people who are home educated to have a say in our proposals.

Our proposals



Proposal 1: To introduce a scheme that requires children educated at home to be included on a register

The register will help the **local authority** know:

- who is being home educated
- that home educated children are receiving a suitable education.

If a child is not on the register or is not receiving education organised by the local authority, then they should be at school

Parents who want to educate their child at home will:

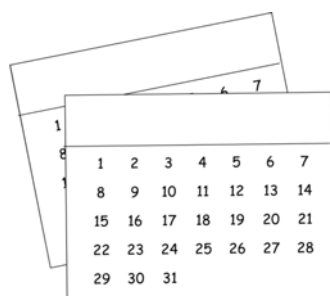
- have to put their child's name on the register
- need to register each child separately if they have more than one child being home educated
- have to re-register the child if the child then goes to school and later returns to home education
- have to ensure that their child receives a full-time education suitable to the child's needs.

The **register** will include:

- contact details of the child and the parent
- where a child is being educated
- the type of education they will get.

A parent will need to keep the local authority informed of any changes to this information.

Home educators do not have to follow the national curriculum. Home educated children do not have to take national exams or have assessments. We do not propose any changes to this.



Applying to register the child for home education

When the home educator applies to register their child for home education, the local authority will meet with the parent, the child and the home educator (if they are not the parent).

Meeting: A meeting will take place within six weeks of applying to join the register.

The meeting will talk about:

- the child's education so far
- what education the child receives or will receive at home
- gifts or talents the child has
- any formal assessments the child has had
- any additional learning needs the child may have
- what progress the child has made while being home educated
- what progress the child thinks they have made.

Additional learning needs: We understand it can be difficult to assess a child's education when they have additional learning needs. To make sure the assessment of their education is fair, the views of an expert in the child's additional needs will form part of the assessment. This will ensure that learning goals are achievable.

Decision: Within another six weeks the local authority will let the home educator know if the child can be home educated.

They will advise one of the following outcomes:

- registration is accepted
- more information is needed before they can make a decision
- registration is refused.

Most people who apply to join the register will be accepted. They will only be turned down if:

- the education offered does not meet the child's needs
- there are welfare or safety issues putting the child's education at risk
- home educators do not let the local authority check a child's progress.

Sometimes registration will be refused.

If the home educator is refused registration they will be told why.

If the home educator does not agree with the decision, they will have the right to appeal.



Proposal 2: Assessing the child's learning – every year

Once the child has been included on the register, the local authority will meet once a year with the parent, the child and the home educator (if not the parent).

The meeting

The meeting will need to take place where the child is educated if this has changed since the last meeting.

If the meeting does not always take place where the child is educated then a certain period of time will need to be agreed when the next meeting takes place in the place of education.

The meeting will talk about:

- how the child is being supported to develop their thinking, social, emotional and physical skills
- activities organised to achieve this support and time spent doing it
- what the child has learned
- how learning can be shown
- what the child thinks about their education and what they have learned
- what support, advice or guidance the local authority can give.

Decision: Six weeks after the meeting the local authority must tell the home educator one of the following:

- they are happy that the child's education is meeting the required needs
- they need more information to make a decision
- the child can no longer be educated at home.

The local authority must explain their decision.

If the parent disagrees with their decision, they will have the right to appeal.