

Brought to you by HEdline – Brighton & Hove home educators  
campaigning to keep home education free from government monitoring and control

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## Council asks home educators for help to write new policy

A small group of home educators met in January 2007 with Barbara Benson, Brighton & Hove Council's Head of Education Otherwise Than At School (EOTAS). The meeting was very positive and constructive and resulted in several important steps towards a better relationship between the council and the home education community.

### Policy review

The Council is to completely review its policies on contact with home educators, and has invited input from our community from the earliest stage of this process. There will also be a full consultation, so that everyone will have a chance to put their views.

The next joint meeting to take this process forward will happen in March. Anyone who would like to get involved is welcome. See our contact details on the back page.

### Friendlier face

The Council has accepted our offer to redraft the initial letter and leaflet they send to home educators, so that they are less intimidating and misleading than the previous versions.

We plan to suggest a letter that politely requests information, in any form chosen by the home educating family, and does not appear to insist on a home visit. Barbara Benson acknowledged in the meeting that there is no obligation on home educators to accept a home visit or to give information in any particular form.

### Awareness raising

Barbara Benson is currently working on a programme of training for council officers and other government officials who work with children, which includes explaining to them about home education.

She invited us to participate in some of these sessions. Anyone who is willing to help with this important work is very welcome to get in touch.

If you have come into contact with any public servants who appeared misinformed or hostile to home education, please let us know, so that we can suggest priority areas for this training and awareness programme. All information will be treated confidentially.

### Visits

All visits to home educators in Brighton & Hove should now be carried out by Barbara Benson or Anne Diver of EOTAS.

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## Launch of AHed

A new national organisation has been launched to campaign for the rights of home educators. **AHed – Action for Home Education** is an internet based organisation. Any home educator who agrees with the aims set out on its website ([www.ahed.org.uk](http://www.ahed.org.uk)) can join AHed for free.

In the announcement of AHed's launch, the founders stated:

"According to New Labour mantra, every child matters, yet it blatantly attempts to prescribe the same diet of schooling to every child regardless of his or her individual needs and wishes.

AHed asserts that **each child matters**, individually.

Each child matters individually to parents and it is parents who have the duty to make important educational decisions. But AHed members are deeply concerned that current proposals by government threaten to remove parental responsibility and substitute the state as the arbiter of what is best for children - from what goes into lunch boxes to what is put into minds; from the portions of vegetables eaten per day to the content of every lesson at every stage for every child. As an alliance of concerned home educating families who put our children's needs first, we intend to make our voice heard by government."

To join AHed, email  
[enquiries@ahed.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@ahed.org.uk)

## Council meeting news (continued from page 1)

The Education Welfare Service should not be involved in visiting home educators unless it is as part of a 'handover' to the EOTAS department.

If you or your children would prefer not to have a home visit from EOTAS, you can provide information in any way you choose, as long as it would satisfy a reasonable person that you are providing an education that is

suitable to the age, aptitude and abilities of your child(ren).

If you do agree to a visit and you would like another home educator there to support you and take notes, contact Winnie Durdant-Hollamby, the East Sussex Local Contact for Education Otherwise (EO) on 01342 826087.

If you are willing to support other home educators in this way, Winnie would be very pleased to hear from you.

## What is HEdline?

We are a group of home educators set up with the aim of working with Brighton & Hove council to develop a constructive relationship between the council and the home education community. We are asking the council to adopt and implement a clear policy in relation to home educators which:

- is decided on following full consultation with the HE community

- complies with the law

- makes clear that parents have the right to supply information about their educational provision in any way they choose (not just via a home visit)

- shows an understanding of the diversity of educational styles used by home educators

- is applied consistently in relation to all home educators, without making distinctions based on the reason for choosing HE or the family's cultural background

Our underlying principles are:

- support for educational freedom and diversity

- respect for children's privacy and right not to be subject to de facto testing by local authority staff

- affirmation that parents are responsible for the education of their children

- an expectation that the local authority should fulfil their duties as public servants, and should therefore be responsive and accountable to the public

- opposition to prejudice based on assumptions related to class, educational or cultural background, disability, or family circumstances

- a belief that information about individuals, held by local authority officers, should be treated confidentially and respectfully

- a conviction that the presumption of innocence should underlie any approaches by the local authority to home educators

We welcome involvement from any home educators in Brighton & Hove who support these aims and principles. To get involved or just to be kept informed, email us at **allie@ahrensd.freeseve.co.uk**

## What the government is planning for home education...

The government has said it intends to launch a full consultation on home education early in 2007, lasting 12 weeks.

At a meeting with national representatives of EO in December, the DfES said that the consultation will propose possible changes to legislation.

The government is responding to calls from some Local Authorities for greater powers to inspect, monitor and assess home educated children.

The changes will focus on:

- compulsory registration of home educated children

- standards defining "suitable" education, and

- arrangements for the monitoring of home education.

There is a real danger that the government will propose a national standard for home education, which will seriously interfere with our freedom to provide an education that suits the particular needs of each child.

## ... and what we can do to stop them

Join the new HEdline email discussion group at <http://groups.yahoo.co.uk/group/hedline>, to discuss ways we can work together to respond to the consultation

Write to Elaine Haste of the Elective Home Education Department (DfES) at [info@dfes.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:info@dfes.gsi.gov.uk) and ask to be included on a list of those who receive information about the consultation.

Talk to other home educators about the consultation. Start thinking about whether any home ed groups you go to

could send in a group response.

Get ready to send in your own response to the consultation. Many of us have powerful stories to tell about why home education is the best, safest and most effective way for our individual children to learn – let's make sure they hear our voices!