

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

HEdline News is free • please copy and distribute among home educators • donations welcome to help with printing costs

## Council agrees more open approach to home educators

Members of HEdline met on March 7<sup>th</sup> with Barbara Benson, Head of EOTAS at Brighton & Hove Council.

The meeting was again positive and constructive, and focused mainly on redrafting the letters sent by the council to home educators when they deregister their children from school.

The new letters will:

- Acknowledge that families need some time to adjust to home education after deregistering, and will therefore not ask for any information in the first two months
- Explain that information can be given in any form chosen by the family
- Offer a visit or meeting, but not assume the right to make home visits

Information about local and national home education groups will be sent out in response to all enquiries about home education.

There will no longer be a questionnaire sent to new home educators, as Barbara Benson understood that this was causing families to feel there was one 'approved' way of doing home education.

### Leaflet also to change

We also began to redraft the information leaflet the council sends out to accompany their letters.

This process will continue at the next joint meeting, on April 23<sup>rd</sup>.

HEdline's standpoint is that the leaflet the council sends out should:

- State accurately what is required of home educators by law, and what the council's legal duties and powers are
- Take care not to present council policy or opinion as a legal requirement
- Help to dispel some common myths about home education, and encourage parents to seek support from other home educators.

We welcome all offers of support in this process. If you would like to come to the meeting on April 23<sup>rd</sup>, or to see the draft leaflets presented at the March 7<sup>th</sup> meeting, please email us: [enquiries@hedline.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@hedline.org.uk)

### Home educated children are not 'missing'

Barbara Benson was concerned to hear our reports of home educating families being contacted inappropriately by the council's Educational Welfare Service, under the government's initiative to

## Campaign workshops

Education Otherwise is organising a series of regional workshops, to discuss how best to campaign against the government threat to regulate and control home education.

Two workshops will be held within travelling distance of Brighton & Hove:

**Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> March**, 10.45-3.00,  
Westbourne Grove Church **London** W11

**Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> April**, 10.45-3.00  
Crofton Road, **Orpington, Kent**, BR6 8PR

Some members of HEdline are intending to go to the London workshop – anyone who wants to come along is very welcome.

The publicity flyer for the London workshop can be found at [www.freedomforchildrentogrow.org/londonflier.pdf](http://www.freedomforchildrentogrow.org/londonflier.pdf)

The flier says that there will be a briefing in the morning, followed by discussions, information and ideas for action.

There is a crèche planned, and there are rumours of cake!

Westbourne Grove Church is on the corner of of Ledbury Road and Westbourne Grove, W11. Notting Hill Gate is the nearest tube.

identify children missing from education.

She promised to contact other departments within the council to clarify the procedures that should be followed, and remind educational welfare officers of the law on home education.

She agreed with us that where a child is not registered at school, any

approach to the family should be made on the basis of a presumption of innocence.

If you are contacted by any council officer and you don't feel you have been treated reasonably, please let us know. We would of course treat all personal details confidentially.

Contact: [enquiries@hedline.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@hedline.org.uk)

## Three things you can do today, to help save home education

### 1. Join 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 also working to support the campaign to keep home education free from unnecessary government interference.

All local home educators are welcome to get involved.

You can join HEDline by going to <http://groups.yahoo.co.uk/group/hedline>

### 2. Make some hands

Check out the lovely **Hands Up for Home Ed** campaign at <http://www.handsup4homeed.blogspot.com>

To raise your hands for home ed, all you need to do is draw round your hands, write your first name on each palm, and decorate the hands however you choose. Email a picture of your lovely hands, with a wish for your life and your home ed, to [handsup4homeed@aol.com](mailto:handsup4homeed@aol.com)

Anyone of any age can join in – it's a simple but powerful thing to do as a family.

### 3. Write to your MP

There's been a lot of misinformed comment in the media lately. We need to give our MPs a more accurate picture of home educators – who we are and why we choose home ed.

Why not contact your MP to protest at the recent DfES statement, widely quoted in the media, that: *"Standards have never been higher and with record funding in our schools we believe the best place to educate a child is actually in school."*

As we all know, school is not the best place for every child. HE is an equally valid legal option, and the DfES has no place commenting on our choices in this way.

## News round up

### EO campaign website launched

Education Otherwise has launched a campaign website at <http://www.freedomforchildrentogrow.org/>. The site includes background information on the threatened consultation, sample letters to MPs, and latest news.

### Consultation delayed

National home education campaign group AHed has been told by the DfES that *"final decisions as to what might be included in any consultation have not yet been made,"* and that *"the content of the consultation is still under review within the Department"*.

This is a change from the emails sent to home educators at the end of 2006, which were definite that the consultation would take place early in 2007, and that the aim would be *"to explore what light touch changes we might implement to strengthen the monitoring arrangements for home education."*

The interest shown in this consultation by home educators and home education groups has clearly made them think twice about pushing through the drastic changes they are considering.

Any pressure we can keep up at this time could be crucial.

### York Consulting Report published

Private research company, York Consulting were paid £38,500 by the DfES to carry out a feasibility study, to find out whether it is

possible to assess the number of home educators, and the reasons why people choose to home educate.

The report was published in February, and fully justifies the suspicion of many home educators about the real agenda behind this 'research'.

After talking to 9 Local Authorities and 18 home educating parents, they concluded that a larger scale study would not be effective in finding out how many home educators there really are.

Although their sample of LAs is so small that they advise caution in interpreting their own findings, they are nevertheless bold enough to recommend that the DfES should take action to *"more effectively define what constitutes an efficient and suitable education for the purposes of LA monitoring."*

The report's authors accept without question the claims by LA officers that their duty to safeguard children's welfare is at odds with home educating families' rights to privacy, and that the law on what constitutes a suitable education is "vague".

To read the report for yourself, see [www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR827.pdf](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR827.pdf)