

# HEdline News

Local and National  
News for the Home  
Education community  
Issue 6: January 2008

Brought to you by HEdline – Brighton & Hove home educators working for a positive and respectful relationship between home educators and government

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## Home Education policy review launched by Brighton & Hove Children's Trust

The EOTAS team at Brighton & Hove City Council has written to home educators in the city inviting their comments on a review of EOTAS policy and procedures relating to home education. In order to make this process accessible to all home educators in the town, we have published on our website Barbara Benson's letter, the current EOTAS policy documents and the survey results and proposals for change sent out with the letter.

### Disappointed

HEdline has been asking Brighton & Hove Children's and Young People's Trust to consult the local home education community as the first stage in the development of a new **Trust-wide** policy on home education. We wanted an acknowledgement that officers of the Trust working in the Education Welfare Service, Social Services and the Health Service may come into contact with home educating families, and should therefore have an understanding of the law on home education. These staff should have an overarching policy that gives them guidance as to how to behave respectfully and lawfully when dealing with home educators.

The process announced by the EOTAS team falls far short of this aim, and we are disappointed that the Trust has not responded to our repeated requests for a full consultation.

### Serious problems

Nevertheless, there are serious problems with the current policy of the EOTAS team, and we urge all local home educators to respond to this policy review.

HEdline's proposal for a new EOTAS policy statement can be seen on our website at <http://tinyurl.com/33tl2c>. We suggested this revision to the council in July 2007 (at their invitation), but there have clearly been no changes made to the document in response to our input.

The main problems as we see them are:

- *The Trust say:* "the responsibility of the council is to ensure that parents provide their children with a suitable education".  
*We say: this is not true.* The law gives **parents** the responsibility to ensure that children receive a suitable education, not the local council

- *The Trust say:* "The LEA is committed to ... fulfil our legal duty by tracking the arrangements made by home educators".

*We say: They have no such duty.* In fact the DCSF guidelines for local authorities issued in November 2007, state clearly that "Local authorities have no statutory duties in relation to monitoring the quality of home education on a routine basis." (para 2.7).

continued overleaf

### How do I participate in the review?

If you have not been sent a letter about it by Barbara Benson, you can see the documents at [www.hedline.org.uk](http://www.hedline.org.uk)

You can send your views to Barbara Benson by email: [eotas@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:eotas@brighton-hove.gov.uk) or by post: Kings House, Grand Avenue, Hove, BN3 2SU

If you are not currently known to the council but wish to take part in this review, you could respond by email using a web-based email address (such as hotmail).

Or talk to others at any home education groups you attend about putting together a group response.

# EOTAS policy review

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- *The Trust say:* “A home education programme should include, as a minimum, basic life skills – literacy, numeracy, physical activity and social interaction, so that children can grow up healthily and function to their potential in society”

*We say:* It is not up to the council to dictate what parents should include in their “home education programme”. The only standard that applies is the one set out in Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 – that the education should be efficient, full-time and suitable to the age, aptitude and ability of the child.

What is suitable for an individual child, especially one with special needs and/or particular talents, may look very different indeed to the “one size fits all” that has to

apply in school. Only the people who know a child best can say what is suitable to that child.

- *The Trust say:* “We will offer an initial home visit to: ... establish whether the parents have a fair picture of their children’s needs”

*We say:* How can an officer who has never met a child before possibly establish this?

- *The Trust say:* “We will arrange to agree with parents how we will continue to keep up to date with a child’s home education programme, an annual visit being the minimum contact”

*We say:* The Trust cannot insist on visiting home educating families. This is made very clear in the new guidelines from central government and deliberately NOT made clear in the Brighton & Hove guidelines.

In fact, this policy relies on home educating parents either not knowing their rights, or feeling too intimidated to assert them.

In fact, it is entirely up to the family to decide how they will provide information (if asked) - and there are several families in Brighton & Hove who already choose to send information to the EOTAS team in writing. The policy should reflect the law, which is that home educators have a free choice about how to provide information to the council.

As part of this policy review, Barbara Benson is hoping to set up a small “reference group” of local home educators. If you wish to take part in the group, contact Barbara Benson - [barbara.benson@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:barbara.benson@brighton-hove.gov.uk)

## New Government guidelines published

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DSCF) published its guidelines for Local Authorities on home education in November 2007.

The consultation on these guidelines attracted an unprecedented level of response from home educators.

While the guidelines are not as clear as we would wish in several areas, they do contain important assurances for home educators.

Paragraph 2.4 states “Parents are not required to register or seek approval from the local authority to educate their children at home.”

In paragraph 2.5, “The DCSF recommends that each local authority provides written information about elective home education that is clear, accurate and sets out the legal position, roles and responsibilities of both the local authority and parents.” and explains that “Local authorities should recognise that there are many approaches to educational provision, not just a “school at home” model.”

Paragraph 2.12 makes clear that “Section 175(1) [of the Education Act 2002] does not extend local authorities’ functions. It does not, for example, give local authorities powers to enter the homes of, or otherwise see, children for the purposes of monitoring the provision of elective home education.”

In paragraph 2.16, the guidelines state that “Section 53 [of the Children Act 2004] does not extend local authorities’ functions. It does not, for example, place an obligation on local authorities to ascertain the child’s wishes about elective home education as it is not a service provided by the local authority.”

The DCSF recommends, in paragraph 3.1, “that each local authority should have a written policy statement on elective home education” and “that local authorities should regularly review their elective home education policies so that they reflect current law and are compatible with these guidelines.”

We were particularly pleased to see the recommendation in paragraph 3.3 that “Local authorities should organise training on the law and home education methods for all their officers who have contact with home educating families.”

The full guidelines are at <http://tinyurl.com/2qxypf>

A response to the guidelines from home education campaign organisation AHed can be seen at <http://tinyurl.com/26dhuh>

### Useful links

- Contact HEdline on [enquiries@hedline.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@hedline.org.uk)
- Read the latest news on our website at [www.hedline.org.uk](http://www.hedline.org.uk)
- Join our email list at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/hedline>
- Brighton & Hove Home Educators email list: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/bhhe>